

GWAGWALADA:



BLAZING THE BASSA TRIUMPH

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Gwagwalada

That ancient dwelling city
The 'Gbagba gala' palm fronds
Providing a shielding safety
To the defense of the Bassa bounds
From the arsenal of the enemy

A secured environment from the jihadists
Under the guise of proselytism
For the earthly gains of religious imperialism
Gwagwalada so later christened
By cultural version so corrupted
Inhabited by a peaceful people

Fastidiously trained for battle
Resisting the caravans with swords
In their tempest hot pursuit
But with their bows and arrows
Ensuing from *Berezhe Barde's* sheath
Hushing down an end to the sorrows
The cause of Dan-Fodio's futile forces

The Conquerors having provided a fortress
For the oppressed of the Nigeria's habitats
From far and near to find a safe haven
Roosting from life's tribulations and trepidations

Gwagwalada the epic center,
The cradle of the Bassa people
Accommodating the Nigerian settlers
From their troubled enclaves
To the restful respite
In a new Federal convergence

Their peaceful exude of attitude to life
Beckoning on all ethnic entities
To a secured and endearing abode
A burgeoning domicile of growth

Gwagwalada the pioneer of the new capital city
Enrouting nerve to the Northern domicile
Enriching the growth of our collective Nationality
Yet marginalizing the prospects of the local Entities

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Bassa people of Nigeria in general and those of Gwagwalada in particular; for their sagacity in stopping the Fulani warriors, and being so peace loving citizens of the country in whose land the Federal capital Territory found a secured environment “without hindrances”.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With regards to this epic work, in dealing as it concerns the history of the Bassa people of their ancestral domicile in Gbagba'gala later known today as Gwagwalada, a corrupted version of its original name by the Hausa community, I have the sincere and singular obligation to accentuate the great value of knowledge and invaluable contribution received from Alh. Magaji M. of the FCT. I immensely appreciate his wealth of knowledge on the people of Bassa in Gwagwalada.

I also wish to acknowledge with great gratitude the painstaking efforts of WO John Shigaba for his supply of archival materials on the subject matter. Honestly, the encouragement I received from Dr. Adamu Shaibu, spurring me on the subject is so immense. The Elders of the Palace, Aguma of Gwagwalada, whose names are mentioned here as contributors for their historical memoirs which helped in strengthening the facts about Gwagwalada and the Bassa people.

Let me place it on record that the initiator of this project, the Person and his Eminence, the Aguma of Gwagwalada, Alh Mohammed Magaji, and whose palace convivially, provided the venue for all meetings and discussions, with his grace accommodated to project the historical antecedents of his progenitors, the Gwagwalada Bassa people. This goes with sincere thanks to the queen of the palace Hajiya Mohammed Magaji for her insightful and thought provoking agitation for the bringing to posterity the culture of the Bassa people.

By the privilege of the Almighty, I luxuriantly, explode in the emotional pleasure to congregate the aesthetic beauty of the cultural gift of the Bassa people whose convergence habited here, which has given life and sustenance to the people, a peculiar people. As said in several quarters, "where there is no culture", the peoples' originality remain lost. But the Bassa people are here, freely sustained by God, their Creator.

Thank you so greatly, God!

PREFACE

Today Gwagwalada has become a place of accentuation for all ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Federal Government of Nigeria found the land of Gwagwalada to situate its new Federal Capital Territory; a land free from both cultural and physical hindrances.

But the Bassa people had habited the place called Gbagba'la, today corrupted as Gwagwalada. The cultural riches of the Bassa people expressly deposited here is far reaching to the posterity of timelessness. The author has craftily exposed the origin of Gwagwalada and its inhabitants hitherto unknown to many. But those who conceived the idea of relocating the headquarters of the Nigerian Government to its new place know that the Bassa people are the inhabitants of Gwagwalada and its environment.

No wonder Gwagwalada became the first place of abode in the creation of the new Federal Capital Territory with the siting of various facilities and institutions in the area. Having provided such a peaceful and harmonious environment, the Ministerial Residential quarters, the Radio house, the Abuja University and other institutions are located in the Council. As an enroute to the Northern part of the Country, it became a hob nob for Economic, Social and Commercial activities.

It should be noted however, that the coming to place habitation of the FCT in Gwagwalada has its historical antecedents. The major war between the Bassa and the Hausa-Fulani during the Usman Dan Fodio jihad saw the the Bassa man triumphantly defeating the sword and horse weapons of the enemy. And thus Gwagwalada came to be.

It is therefore the obligation of the Governmental Administration to do a retrospect in handling matters that concern the protection and welfare of the original inhabitants of the land. To take care of their social wellbeing and preserve their ancestral welfare, need not be over emphasized.

The Gwagwalada Traditional Institution be elevated to higher status as recommended by the author. In so doing, fairness and justice would have been met to assuage the deprived rights and privileges of the people.

I wish to commit this piece of work to all Nigerians and the Bassa people in particular as a compendium in the emerging face of hostilities, aggression and attempted illicit moves from other ethnic groups to short change the ancestral domicile of the Bassa people.

FORAWARD

This work has aptly, captured the life and times of the Bassa Nation in its historical perspectives. The Bassa tradition and culture intricately woven and presented to all readers as the torch light of the people called Bassa in the middle belt of the Country.

The Writer decided to expose the place and history of his people at a time when the Nigerian Government opened a vista for a new Federal Capital Territory owing to the disadvantage that was found in the Lagos colonial choice of its Headquarters. Gwagwalada became one of its discoveries.

By coincidence, Gwagwalada became part and parcel of the Federal Capital Territory amongst the six other Area Councils that constitute the land mass of the new Federal Capital and its territory. The Choice was not influenced by the Bassa people but for finding the territory peaceful and capable of guaranteeing the growth and needed development in the country.

The great culture of the people is widely depicted here for the posterity of those unborn. Temples, C. made attempts at detailing the practices in his earlier works but fell short of its meaning and originality. Though vitiated today as a result of the rising wave of religious and western lifestyles, it nonetheless remains the life of the people to suffice.

The traditional stool of the Gwagwalada people remain sacrosanct, the rights and sanctity of the Bassa people. The Author did a historical genealogy of the times of the chiefdom in Gwagwalada. Having defeated the Fulani people in the war that ensued, owing to the dexterity of the *Berezhe* (captian) Barde Sunuwa, settling down to business was now the fundamental responsibilities of the Chiefdom from the *Oguta* clan up till the present day Aguma Muhammed Magaji who ascended the throne in 1993 till date.

Today, it is not lost on the Writer the burgeoning nature of expansion that has been brought to the enclave as a result of the relocation of the Federal Capital of Nigeria to its new Territory. The Abuja University, the Abuja Radio station, the Abuja School of Nursing and College of Education and many more Government institutions are located all in Gwagwalada. The first Ministerial Residences were sited in Gwagwalada. Military Barracks got its formation within the environment. Hotels and other business ventures have sprung in the area following this milieu.

The Wrier recommends some panacea for the rehabilitation of the people to assuage the loss of their ancestral backgrounds, farms and land.

Oh thanks to the Bsaa people!

I wish to endear you to read about the Gwagwalada Bassa people!

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Chapter one

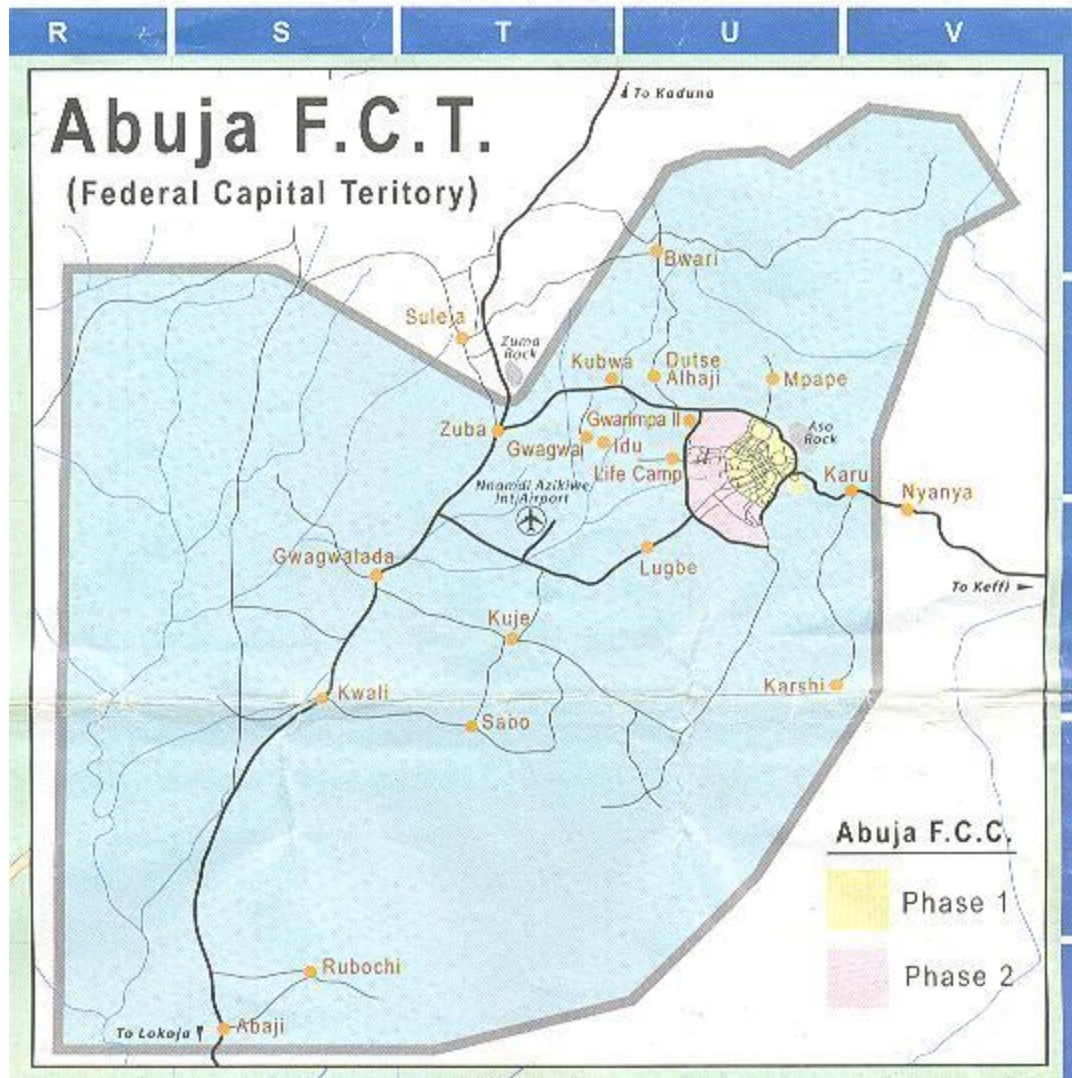
INTRODUCTION:

The Federal Capital Territory situated in the heartland of the Nigeria geographical entity consist of a land mass of about 1,476 square kilometers. Centrally located, was meant to accommodate easy accessibility of all the Nigerian people; socio-economic and political activities of its entire people. The idea to relocate the Nigerian Federal Capital was muted by the then Head of State, Late General Murtala Mohammed in 1976 having looked at the congestion that was becoming Lagos, the Colonial Headquarters of the Nigeria peoples. Located by the lagoon it was becoming obviously necessary that a looming crisis be avoided in future and to do nothing about the congestion was dangerous.

In light of the ethnic and religious [divisions of Nigeria](#), plans had been devised since Nigeria's independence to have its capital in a place deemed neutral to all major ethnic parties, and also in close proximity to all the regions of Nigeria. The location was eventually designated in the centre of the country in the early 1970s as it signified neutrality and national unity.^[29] Another impetus for Abuja came because of [Lagos](#)' population boom that made that city overcrowded and conditions squalid.^[30] As Lagos was already undergoing rapid economic development, the Nigerian regime felt the need to expand the economy towards the inner part of the country, and hence decided to move its capital to Abuja.^[31] The logic used was similar to the way Brazil planned its capital, [Brasília](#).

The Federal Military Government of Nigeria, promulgated decree No. 6 on 4 February 1976, which initiated the removal of the Federal Capital from Lagos to

Abuja. ^{[32][33]} The initial work for Abuja's planning and implementation were carried out by the Military Government of General's Murtala Mohammed and Olusegun Obasanjo. ^[34]





Nigeria: Location of FCT

Consequently, the Aguda Commission which visions the land of mass that was less populated, flat and would give room to all components of expansion and creation of facilities without natural, cultural or artificial hindrances, hitches and conflicts. Thus, as concocted by Wikipedia above, the area hitherto located as the FCT was part and parcel of present day Kogi, Nasarawa, Kaduna and Niger States. This enclave was inhabited by three major ethnic groups; the Gbagi, Bassa and Kakanda covering areas that include Gwagwalada, Kuje, Abuja Municipal, Bwari, Kubwa, Kwali, Zuba, Giwa, Bassa Njiwa (Bassa Village), Nuelege, Kuchuaku, Abaji, Kweita, Ruboji, Karshi and the environs of the present day FCT.

Other ethnic groups found in their minorities include the Gwandara, Ebira-Koto, Hausa, Ganagana, Gades, Koro in smaller settler communities of Abaji, Yaba, Rubochi and many more.

The story of Gwagwalada is not a far cry from the desire of the Nigerian people to own a place that will be convenient for their administrative operations and ginger the up-liftment of lives; Social, political and economic well-being of its citizens. Gwagwalada community consists of the largest settlement of the Federal Capital Territory inhabitants; a flat land mass bounding Kuje and Abaji (from Lokoja) and Zuba, way to Kaduna State. It has remained largely an en-route to the Northern part of the country from the Benin Kingdom, Delta areas, Akure, Ondo, Okene moving up to the hinterlands of Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa States.

Consequently, the first major settlement of persons in the new Federal Capital Territory of the Nigeria people began in Gwagwalada, the entry point and express way to Kaduna State. The Ministerial residential quarters were built in phase 1 of the city. Other facilities and amenities built preparatory to these were the Radio House, the University of Abuja, the Federal Medical center, Military and Para-military zone, Federal College of Education, Zuba and several other establishments before expanding to the East-south, called the Municipal Area Council.

In the creation of Area councils of the FCT, Gwagwalada became one of the six largest Area Councils to be created in 1983. Hitherto, Suleja being part of the FCT was eventually excised from the land mass that constitutes the Federal Capital Territory and subsumed into Niger State.

Originally, inhabited by the Bassa people, with a population of about 3, 448, Gwagwalada as at the count of these days, has burgeoned to accommodate all groups of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria amounting to about 475,000. As at today, the commercial activities that throng the city, day by day has brought in several people from all spheres of economic endeavors. As the hub-nub of business activities, you will find in Gwagwalada large numbers of the Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Gede, Egbira-Okene, Nupe, Ijaw, Isoko, Urobo, Itsekiri and many more communities from all over the country finding respite and refuge in a peaceful atmosphere of the fledgling city.

The Bassa Community who long ago found the settlement headed by their traditional leader, the "Aguma of Bassa", was joined later by the Hausa

community and sequentially by the Gbagi ethnic group. Having moved away from the marauding Usman Dan-fodio Jihad, through Mina, Gwagwalada was a safe haven for the Bassa people. Incidentally, the Jihadist could not penetrate beyond Suleja in their ambition to Islamize the land having been defeated by the Bassa people. Other group of the Bassa people moved over to present day Nasarawa State, some found themselves in kpanaja of Nasarawa State while others who also crossed over the Benue River settled in what is known today as Bassa Local Government of present Kogi State. Many more moved to Tawari in Koto-karfe Local Government of Kogi State.

Gwagwalada has become a large settlement today because of the accommodating and naturally peace loving entity of the Bassa people as demonstrated by all the settlements they inhabit. People of different tongues have thronged to the Area Council.

Chapter Two

GWAGWALADA

Gwagwalada became an Area Council in October 16, 1986. Hitherto, it was under the Kwali District of Abuja, under Suleja Emirate. It covers a land mass of about 1,043 square km. In 1950 Gwagwalada had a population of about 3,488. Today with its strategic importance to the FCT and Nigeria as a whole, this population has plummeted to 475, 000 projected population growth of 2.62% from the 2006 census, the largest increase in the African Continent (Wikipedia).

Bounded from the south by Kwali Area Council, to the North by Kaduna State and Suleja Local Government Council in Niger State, Gwagwalada is also bounded to the east by the Abuja Municipal Area Council. Thus, maintaining a somewhat centralized domain within the FCT.

The meaning of Gwagwalada according to the indigenous inhabitants was curled from the Gbagbagala (Gbanga), a place that was full of Gbanga, palm frond trees. Contrary to this however is the fact that Gwagwalada was not hitherto known as called today. Its original name was "Gbagbagala"; the name of the raphia-palm tree that was ubiquitous in the area, forming a forest around the settlement. The Hausa-fulani incursion corrupted the name to Gwagwalada. Gbagbagala, this raphia palm-like tree was used to construct shelter, mat and seclusions for the people. Today this wholesome adulteration has come to stay and the city today is known as Gwagwalada Bassa. Though, the natives still prefer to call it **Gbagbagala** till this day.

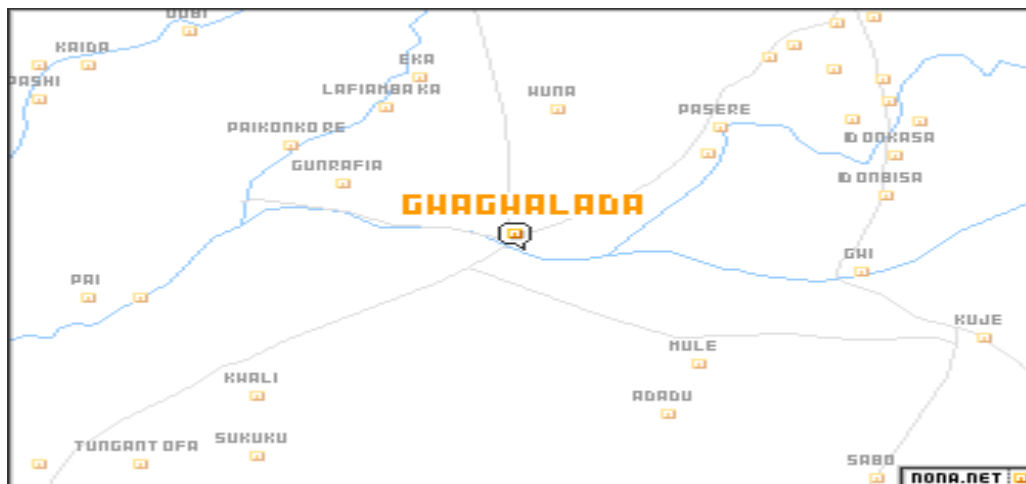
The Bassa people found the land economically habitable for their farming activities in their course to escape the Usman Dan Fodio Jihad of 1804 that ensued. Consequently, they fought the Fulani-Hausa and defeated them at the Suleja Borders. Perhaps the only ethnic group that hushed up the rampaging jihadist from proceeding further south. Subsequently, the Hausa community joined the Bassa people and sequentially, the Gbagi and many more. Gwagwalada

has become a metropolitan city with the convergence of all ethnic groups in Nigeria, being an Area Council in the FCT in itself.

In his work: Tribes and Emirates of Northern Nigeria, O.C. Temples has this to say;

They also settled in Gwagwalida, in Kundu, Pai and Ashera , where they are mentioned as being particularly closely connected with the royal house of Gumna, where they have inter-married with the Filane inhabitants, making an approximate total of 34,000 in Nassarawa Province . The Bassa of Tawari migrated thither from Bugu, in Nassarawa Province. They successfully repelled the attacks of the Filane and gave Shelter to the people of Koton Karifi, who were less fortunate. Those residing in Bassa Province are called Bassa - Komo,...

Today as a result of insecurity, conflicts, banditry and all forms of insurging threats to life and property, Gwagwalada has become a safe haven for victims and fortune seekers. Many have come into the city to seek for the Golden Fleece of life. And some have run into the area to seek safety from impeding threats to their lives, avoiding interface from their aggressive neighbouring communities. Consequently, Gwagwalada has bourgeoned into a bustling city under the pressure of migrants finding a peaceful place of respite.



Upon the creation of the Federal Capital Territory in 1978, Gwagwalada became one of the areas captured as part and parcel of the FCT administration.

Consequently, it was found to accommodate major facilities for the FCT take off administration. Amongst these are the present day FCT Radio House, Broadcasting from Gwagwalada for the development and awareness of the FCT activities and creating entertainment for its listeners. The Specialist Hospital providing medical care to the people of the FCT began in Gwagwalada which today caters for the health needs to a whole volume of people.

To underscore the educational needs of a tertiary institution, the University of Abuja, Gwagwalada was put in place immediately. This has graduated quite a number of persons in both first degrees and higher degrees for the manpower needs of the FCT and the Nigerian people as a whole. There is also, the Federal College of Education and the Federal Capital Territory School of Nursing, located in Zuba. Further are the special Schools; School for the Gifted, Christ The King College, Holy Rosary College, Major and Minor Seminaries from private Missionaries' investment in the Education sector.

It is interesting to note that the first Ministerial Residential quarters were built in phase 1 of Gwagwalada Area Council to enable the smooth take off of the Administrative requirements of the new capital Territory. With the take-off of the FCT, the Ministers of Police and FCT had their premises and residencies at Gwagwalada where they operated in both their official and private capacities.

In addition to these, the Custom Command and Staff College is located at Gwagwalada. Same for the Customs, Immigration and Prison (Correctional) Services/Commission which is situated also in Gwagwalada, FCT as other Federal MDAs are in Gwagwalada.

When Gwagwalada was created as an area Council along with six others, the Secretariat along with other facilities was developed to enhance the socio-economic development of the Area. This has engaged the dwellers in the administration of both economic and political activities of the area under its jurisdiction.

Commercial activities have sprung up giving room to branch offices of Banks, filling stations, sales and services of business ventures, private primary and

secondary schools, private Clinics, Hotels and restaurants, parks and gardens have all situated its lifestyles in the city of Gwagwalada. Estate Developers and business premises of various sorts have all sprang up in the community. Land speculators, new development areas have all been carved out for the future of the Area Council and its inhabiting peoples.

Constituting one of the political hub-nubs in the FCT, it is secondary to the Abuja Municipal Area Council in attracting more political activities than any of the Area Councils in the FCT due to their population density.

The Bassa people have not been left out in these activities though overwhelmed by the presence of more competition despite their population; they are un-able to stand their grounds. Severally, they have made en-route into the political sphere but rivalry, stiff competition and complicity would not give them victory of day! By political machinery they have served as Secretary to the Council at only one point in time. Several other Counselors have also emerged but recently this has become stiffer for them to attain.

ETHNIC GROUPS AND SETTLEMENTS

There are many ethnic groups in various communities at the Gwagwalada and its environs. The Koro, Gedes, Gbagi (Gwari) and many more settled in different areas such as Giri, Dagiri, Kutunku, Chikuku, Kiyi, Paiko-kore, Geshe-Paiko, Kache, Shipu-kudi, Shaowo, Kasanki, Kuleta, Alaomo, Wuyewuye, Wuzuba, Lukuku, Daákwo, Dangayi, Jabira, Gbargada, Dobi, Kpagada, Wuna, Pasere, Kaida, Keremi-gunyi... and mostly populated by Bassa people.

The main occupation of these and Bassa people are farming which as much as possible sustains their economy. They engage in crops like Maize, Beans, Guinea-corn, millet, cassava, yams, Benniseed, garden-egg, rice, melon and water-melon. The people also practice as pastime activities, palm wine tapping, and crafts (such as Weaving). As a result, the area could be said to have produced and sustained the food life time of the FCT. Occasionally, these food stuffs are bought in quantity from the rural communities and transported far away to

Kaduna, Kano, Lokoja and other places by those in commercial activities for higher turn-over.

BUSINESS IN GWAGWALADA

There are 860 listings and 37 available flats, houses, land and commercial property in Gwagwalada, Abuja, Nigeria as at writing. The property had been listed by estate agents who contact information is also provided for each property listing.

In order to achieve a holistic economic endeavor for all and sundry, Standard Hotels of different categories to accommodate both the high and mighty individuals in the city have been erected. Banks have sprout out to lend credence to small and big industrial enterprises existing within the city and grant financial opportunities to any feasibilities that are worth encouraging for human development and well-being.

Estate developers have come in, taking advantage of the overflowing population and business activities in the city. From low rise building to skyscrapers, the mortgage industry have evolved in competition to provide conducive accommodation to all manner of people; a dwelling haven for the teeming population that throng the city daily.

The market is one of the commercially busy points at the city-center with hawkers of all sorts of goods and services.

Chapter Three

THE BASSA PEOPLE



The Bassa people of Gwagwalada Area Council are of the same stock with the Bassa people of Toto and Doma Local Government Areas of Nasarawa State. They are also the same Bassa speaking people found in Tawari and environs of Kogi (Koton-Karfe) Local Government Area as well as those in Abaji, Kuje, Kwali, Abuja Municipal and Bassa Local Government Council of Kogi State. Quite a number of them are found in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State and some parts of Niger State.

Students of etymology may readily agree that there is an existent connection between the Bassa and the Hausa languages, most probably as a result of long history of co-existence, which goes to buttress the place of origin of the Bassa. The similarities of the following words and meanings (and many other words) speak of this linguistic affinity.

Bassa	Hausa	Meaning
Lapiya	Lafiya	Health, Well-being
Saah	Sa'a	Luck
Takerde	Takarda	Book /paper
Rombwo	Romo	Sauce (from meat or fish)
Sai	Sai	Till
Ogogo	Agogo	Clock / time
U'kara	Kara	Court summons
U'rogwo	Rogo	Cassava
Bizhinga	Bindiga	Gun
Udenji	Dangi	Ethnic group (tribe)
Rongwemi	Rangwame	Recuperation
Karuwa	Karuwa	Prostitute
Mungunta	Munguta	Wickedness
U'rain	Rai	Life
U'sadaka	Sadaka	Sacrifice
U'jirima	girima	Growth/increase
E'wenche	Wake	Beans
Le'mi	Lemu	Orange
Utogwobi	Takobi	Sword
Anpani	Afani	Usefulness
U'sutullah	Fitila	Lantern
Shuru	Shuru	Silence
E'rikishi	Rikichi	Trouble
Shinichi	ciniki	Trading art

Kezhere	gajere	Dwarf
Yefiyefi/Yeshiyeshi	Yayyafi	Light showers
Sauchi	Sauki	Ease/Better
U'kuroro	Kuroro	Long bag (locally woven)
Seida	Shaida	Witness/mark
I'ppepe	Faifai	Hand fan/form of pan
Randa	Randa	Earthen pot[for water]

ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The Bassa people, like many other ethnic groups in Nigeria, had no written records of their origin before the advent of the Europeans. Therefore, the origin of the Bassa people is based on oral tradition and/or from anthropological study of the people.

The above notwithstanding, it is believed that the Bassa originated from Egypt. This tradition, according to Wodi (1979.7), takes into cognizance the similarities in the burial rites of the people. Just like the ancient Egyptians, the Bassa people bury their dead with a lot of ornaments and clothes. This, to them, would enable the deceased live comfortably in the other world.

Some people claim that the Bassa people came from East-Africa because the women of certain tribes, like the Bassa, carry loads on their shoulders. They believe that the hair is the beauty of the woman and the head as the think-tank of the body, is too fragile for heavy loads. Studies are currently going on to ascertain the veracity of claim as to the similarities of customs, culture and other characteristics affinity of the Bassa found in Liberia. This could not be farther from the truth as the Bassa people had their own sad history of being ravaged by a trade that was notorious for inhumanity, raided taken and sold as slaves by the Hausa-Fulani people.

Oral tradition concerning the place of the Bassa people in the 15th century has it that they are from Zungeru in the defunct Niger Province. Others claim they are from Yauri in Kebbi Province.

Whichever of these claims are true, the fact still remains that the Bassa are a scattered people till today. According to Wodi (1979:7), the Bassa people migrated from Zungeru in the defunct Niger Province, but that the inter-tribal wars with the Hausa-Fulani forced them to move southwards to settle at Tawari and in places that much later came to be known as Gadabuke, Toto and Umaisha (now in Nasarawa State). Lastly, some crossed the Benue River and settled at present-day Bassa Local Government Area of Kogi State.

The causes of the wars could not be absolutely ascertained but pointers are that the people resisted being captured as slaves and refused the imposition of Islam by the Jihadists who prosecuted the 1804 Jihad led by Usman Dan Fodio. The Bassa people stuck to their own religion and preferred to fight wars against the adulteration of their traditional religion.

Yet, another source of oral tradition has it that the Bassa lived long ago in Yauri in Kebbi State and for reasons of inter-tribal wars with neighbouring Hausa, they fled for their safety. They moved and settled in places like Abuja; Gwagwalada, Kwali, Kuje, Zuba (in FCT) etc. Others moved to settle at places that are known today as Nasarawa, Toto down to Umaisha and yet still some subsequently crossed the Benue River to settle in present Bassa Local Government Area of Kogi State.

Apart from oral tradition, pertaining to the origin and history of the Bassa people, Temple (1922:41), who did a major work on the tribes of the Niger, has a vivid and documented account of the Bassa people. He found out in concurrence with existing tradition that; “The Bassa people left Gumna in old Habe days and

migrated to a place now called Nasarawa. They (Bassa) descended from Filane Bororo... South of Zaria Province...” He deposed as follows;

The Bassas migrated into the middle belt in 1840 after defeating the Fulanis and the Igalas.

The Bassa tribe are probably indigenous to that country to the south of Zaria , now known as Kwongoma, whence they have extended to the neighbouring territories of Katsina and Zamfara but, though they claim to be indigenous to the Gumna neighbour hood (Kwongoma), whilst others assert that they were descended from the Filane Bororo and in support of this theory adduce the fact that in Ashera the Bassa practised the Borroro ordeal of manhood or However that may have been, centuries have passed since their headquarters were at Gumna, which, though now an independent district in Niger Province, was under Zaria in pre - Jihad days, when it formed the most important unit between the kingdoms of Zozo and Nupe . It is note -worthy that the Gumna royal family intermarried with the Habe Kings of Zozo. It was from Gumna that the exodus of Bassa took place: some went north, “via Kamberi and Dawaikin Bassa, to the Zarfara towns of Bungudu, Gedda and Kotorkoshi, where they appear to have become merged with the native population. Others settled in Kontogora Province, some having migrated there while others sojourned for a while at Bugu, in Nassarawa Province, then at Tawari, near Lokoja, before proceeding there. They are now scattered over the Niger Province.

To him, in the continued Fulani raid, some Bassa people crossed the Benue River: “In consequence of the Fulani raid a proportion of these (Bassa) crossed the Benue and settled at Oguma in the latter half of the 19th century”.

As for the settlement in Bassa Local Government Area of Kogi State, he noted

“Other large numbers joined the pioneers that Attah became alarmed and ordered their removal from Igala territory, but he was met with resistance and after six months the Bassa-Komu triumphed and occupied Amageddi...”

Although it is difficult to give a consistent account of the early history of the Bassa people, tradition and documents have not been silent about the people (Wodi 1979:31), as these traditions and documents are consciously stated to explain their indefinite past, ultimate origins and sources of migration especially during the period between the Jihad wars of 1804 and 1805 when the people migrated.

It is worthy of note, however, that in spite of their place and origin, the history of the Bassa people had been the history of a race that had suffered migration as a result of injustice, search for independence and peace, which like a mirage they are yet to find even in modern day Nigeria.

Chapter four

THE AGUMA OF GWAGWALADA

The genealogy of the present day Aguma of Gwagwalada tracing to the past four generations has not been a matter of debate over the rising wave of tribal interests, conflicts and intrigues. The present Aguma of Gwagwalada in person of His Royal Majesty, Alhaji, Muhammed Magaji took over his seat of power 1993.

It is common now for the issues of traditional rulership to generate controversies, conflicts, confusion and even the break-down of law and order. This is why any responsive government exhausts avenues of investigations (with historical antecedents) towards the enthronement of peace and fair play in any given polity. It is not an accident of history that whoever founded a settlement or community became its head.

The Aguma of Gwagwalada has been a long standing institution of the Bassa people, before and after the creation of the Federal Capital Territory. The traditional institution has not suffered any controversy of its integrity. Like in all other domains where the Bassa traditional council holds sway, the Aguma of Gwagwalada has long been coroneted to head the rulership of his father's domain after their exits to life beyond.

THE FULANI WARS AND BASSA

The wars, to all intents and purposes were proselyte in nature. And giving the antecedents of the traditional beliefs of the Bassa people, it was never in their interest to be converted to any form of religion. Consequently, they shifted grounds from Yauri in Kebbi, down southwards. But the Islamic jihadist never gave them respite until they got to Gwagwalada and felt that enough was enough to tame the stubborn pursuit of their nation.

Oral tradition has it that a man of valor, a giant named Barde Sunuwa was a warrior of a sort. He fought many battles and was ever victorious killing twenty enemies with a single arrow. He was believed to be a super man with extraordinary large feet and a stout physique who tormented his environment. Consequently, Gwagwalada suffered deprivation in terms of social amenities until 1976 whereas smaller surrounding settlements like Kwali, Gwako, Zuba, Kuje, Dafa, Dobi, Yebu, Dangara, Paiko, Kore and others enjoyed the benefits of Schools and clinics in their domains to the neglect of Gwagwalada.

Their strategic weapons of the Bassa man was his bows and arrows against the swords and horses of their enemies. In the war that lasted between 1830–1840, the Bassa people fought against the insurging Fulani raids at the battle fields of the Suleja and Pai borders. Inhabiting under forested areas and by river banks gave them coverage (security) against their enemies.

Their arrows in sheaths and the bows at hand set in battle array. Initially, the arrows got finished and the Fulani gave the chase against them. Newer means of resisting the war were improvised. Since the horse stampeded them, it was alleged, they took a distance away from the enemy, aimed a precision shot in the sky, at the enemy. The arrow went, shot the enemy far ahead and came back to the sheaths. Thus, the Fulani were falling to pieces without sight of their adversaries.

It was also further alleged that when the arrows were to hit the Fulani, the man severed self to two at the point the arrow was to strike. The arrows found a hollow space and passed through without any effect. The Bassa man improvised another devise where the arrows stood *in wait* for the enemy to join back, and then struck. The arrow was to strike only once and the victim was dead or was to die later. By so, the Fulani men came to the futility of their purpose and ran on their heels for escape, pursued by the Bassa until victory was secured for them.

Today, the Bassa war *Bunkers* and artifacts are found in Bassa-Jiwa, of the Abuja Municipal. So also were they scattered in Places like, Nuelege, Anguwa Bassa (Airport Village) Souka, Kuchiaku, Kiyi, chukuku, Dagri, Kwali, Rubochi, Karshi, Pai, and other places.

THE GENEALOGY OF AGUMA GWAGWALADA

The Bassa people took off from Gurmana and began to spread towards Kotongora up to Zaria Province. In consequence of the Fulani wars, many became settlers in the middle belt of Nigeria while some crossed River Benue and settled in a place called Bassa Local Government Area in present day Kogi State as deposed by C. Temples in his; Notes on The Tribes of Northern Nigeria.

According to Galadima, they built no central authorities and had no recognized settlements as a result of the wars but lived in thousands of villages among the Kamuku, Kambari and others.

As for their settlement in Gwagwalada, traditional (Oral) History is not silent on their immediate past record that dates their settlement to about 1682, 300 years ago. According to Alh. Galadima, the founder of Gwagwalada was a man named Gbaje Daruwana who was selected for the chieftaincy of Kagoma. The skirmish between him and his brother Wumani let him abandon the office while he sought a safe haven in the raffia forest called gbagbagala from where the name Gwagwalada by the Hausa community evolved today.

The Bassa community having settled to their victory from the raiding Fulani jihad began accepting visitors and settlers into their domain. The first to be accommodated by the Bassa people where the Hausa settlers who joined the Bassa people in Zheshi by the Bassa people but now christened Jeshi by the Hausa community. Subsequently, other communities like the Gwari, Gades, joined in settling in Gwagwalada. They all remain loyal and paid allegiance to the paramount Chief, the Aguma of Gwagwalada.

It should be put on notice that the Gwari who today are part and parcel of the FCT enclave were alleged, according to Alh... "...to have originated from Zaria Province while others from Kano. They came to settle in this area during the reign of Aguma Alafi, the 6th Gwagwalada Chief. Those of Bwari were living on the hills for fear of the Fulani wars. But the Bassa people gave them protection from these marauders.

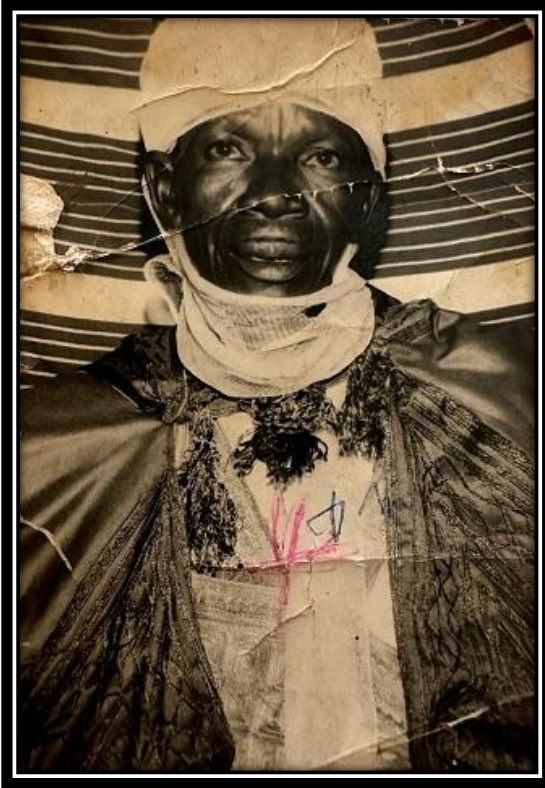
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The genealogy of the Aguma of Gwagwalada has spanned from 1683 to the present day consisting 11 (eleven) chiefs. The certainty of years could only be adduced to the years each of them served and another took over. Below are the Aguma (shuguma);

1. Aguma Gbage Daruwana	1683 -	1740
2. Aguma Alu Gbage	1740 -	1778
3. Aguma Waje Wambayi	1778 -	1803
4. Aguma Bawa Masaje	1803 -	1861
5. Aguma Dogora Bawa	1861 -	1876
6. Aguma Nufe Alafi	1876 -	1896
7. Aguma Bala Karapka	1896 -	1915
8. Aguma Sheneni Bala	1915 -	1939
9. Aguma Alabara Karakpa	1939 -	1984
10. Aguma Mohammedu Waziri	1984 -	1993
11. Aguma Mohammadu Magaji	1993 -	Date

It is worthy of note that the "Oguto", the ruling clan according to Galadima, in the chieftaincy of the Aguma Gwagwalada has become hereditary owing to the fact that the founder of a place incidentally becomes the Chief of the settlement. The selection of an Aguma is undertaken by a Council of Kingmakers. This comprise of the;

- a. Madaki
- b. Sarkin fada
- c. Galadima
- d. Barde
- e. Maáji



One of the old Aguma of Gwagwalada, Mohammedu Waziri

Although the installation of the first Aguma was done by the Emir of Abuja, in conjunction with the traditional Chief Makers as enshrined in Bassa culture this has now become the responsibility of the FCT Minister. The Aguma in view of the metropolitan nature of the city today appoints major ethnic heads, district and village heads.

And many more as may be necessary from time-to- time are coroneted by the Aguma himself.

ALH. MUHAMMADU MAGAJI (AGUMA OF GWAGWALADA)



Aguma Alh. Mohammed Magaji

Alh. Magaji is the present day Aguma of Gwagwalada. He assumed his father's throne as the 11th Aguma of Gwagwalada in 1993. He travailed in the development of the city but eventually triumphed in it. He has been grappling to see to the emancipation of the Gwagwalada Bassa people who have been traumatized and unrecognized by the Government of the Federal Capital and Nigeria in general in spite of their place and origin.

It is expected that the traditional Ruler of Gwagwalada should have been a First Class Chief among others. The Bassa people have been neglected in Board appointments, undermined in major political appointments in the Area Council despite their political heavy weights from the Council.

But the Aguma Magaji has succeeded in ensuring that a befitting market was built for the Gwagwalada people. He has good rapport with the Area Council and the FCT minister in ensuring that requests from these quarters are promptly adhered to and executed. His Royal Highness ensures that Gwagwalada is heavily ruled with peace and tranquility among major players. He will be counted as one who ruled the Kingdom with utmost zeal to promote unity.

Chapter five

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Bassa community was indeed stratified or organized into hierarchical order on the basis of status and role. At the apex of the pyramid in the community was the chief called the “Aguma” who was the traditional head of the land. Each clan had its “Aguma” who presided over affairs within the area of his jurisdiction. Below him was the Madaki who also, in his own right, headed various villages. He was the mediator between village heads and the clan head.

At the village level, the Madaki is looked upon as the ‘Aguma’ who in turn appoints a Madaki to act on his behalf on matters of importance. The general duties of the ‘Aguma’ are to decide on cases such as land disputes, adultery, theft and other related cases. He organizes communal labour in such public places or functions as market square, construction and clearing of roads, building of bridges etc. He also organizes social and religious functions such as festivals (Kusauye) and rainmaking (Azhiba) and summons village meetings when it becomes necessary.

Below the Madaki is the “Aguma Semberi” who is the chief of the youths. He oversees the affairs of the youths and presides over matters affecting them.

The Aguma also appoints other retainers to assist him in the discharge of his duties. These categories of persons include the town criers who convey any information to the people, the messengers who carry and deliver the ‘Aguma’s’ messages and summonses, the band leader, etc, for the convenience of Aguma’s administration.

It is, however, worthy of note that the appointment of any chief is based on the consensus of the people. The Council of Elders of the Ruling House would

normally present their candidate for the throne. Such a candidate, if approved by the people, would thereafter be crowned amidst fun and fanfare. Otherwise, the people have the right to reject any unpopular candidate, even before he was crowned. A situation for the rejection of a candidate is very rare as the entire village might have informally consulted with the Ruling House on their choice of candidate. Such is also the case for an ‘Aguma’ who was becoming unpopular and in such instances would be quietly replaced by the people’s choice. No violent demonstrations or riots are necessary because the Bassa people cherish the peace of their community. The pattern of succession in the event of death follows a similar pattern.

At the base of the pyramid is the family circle. The family, recognized as the nucleus of the society, is usually characterized by polygamy where a man, his wife or wives dwell together with their grown-up children, married and unmarried. Each child has his room(s) with his wife or wives within the compound. In some cases the children moved out to form their individual compounds. Otherwise, they stayed behind to inherit the compound upon the death of their father. The cycle is replicated by the family generation. The family system is “patrilineal” in nature, permitting the married sons to still live under the tutelage of their parents’ control and command, for the purpose of instilling discipline and good conduct in them to safeguard the family’s moral values.

HIS LIVING ENVIRONMENT

The Bassa man lives in simple modesty. This reflects in his appearance. His apparels are chosen for different occasions. Casually, at home and within his environment he pulls a locally woven wrapper over his left shoulder with an ash or blue colour tilting cap to match as a Tiv anger. When he moves outside his environment for ceremonies and occasion, he is adorned in flowing gown

(A'gbada) and the same tilting cap to match. The women simply wear shirts and tie wrappers on their waists.

Averagely, the Bassa man prefers to live in an environment devoid of the bustle and hustle of life. Consequently, to secure his peaceful environment, he makes his compound at the periphery of the town. This is to enable him dash to his farm at any time without having to walk through the streets with his hoes and cutlasses before arriving his farm.

His house is usually made up of round mud huts and thatched roofs. Other huts form a circle in the compound where each of his wives and dependents stay. In the middle of the compound is the resting place (U'dulo) where cooking take place and other vital domestic materials are kept. Here, refuge is taken from the sun and rain before individuals retire to their huts.

Behind the cyclical compound are the barns (U'rubu) where farm products like millet, maize, guinea corn etc are kept. Yams are usually stored in the farm until they are ready for either consumption or sales. Firewood heaps are also stored around the compound to readily power the cooking. Somewhere behind the man's hut is his shrine, if at all he prefers to have any. Members of the family are usually buried within the compound so as not to let them be lonely in cemeteries.

The graves are usually in a unique conical shape of a sand mound. The vertical length below stretches to six feet with a horizontal diversion at the base (either to the east or west depending on the sex) where the deceased is laid to rest. After many years such an area could be reclaimed for other purposes such as a building project or another grave.

The band accompanying the corpse to the final place of internment indicated the various stages of the processes. Each event changes to a new tune of drumming from the carriage to the grave, when the corpse is lowered to the grave and when

they undertakers finally emerge from laying the dead at rest. Celebrating the exit of a life well spent.

Trees, including fruits and vegetable are planted around the compound to provide shade and food supplements. The Bassa man loves and cherishes his environment very much dearly.

SOCIAL GROUPS

The Bassa people have social structures that organize the people into age groups and religious functions. These groups consist of “Nyaro” (elders), “Esemeri” (youths) and “maun” (children). ‘Eribi’ and ‘Awaa’ are religious groups who perform such functions including burial rites for the community.

The “Nyare” (elders) carry out exclusive activities such as performing rituals, village rites, shrine routines and generally oversee the welfare and well-being of the community. They commune with deities and find solutions to problems such as epidemics, drought and crimes. They are also involved in the administration of oaths on behalf of the community on the subjects over serious matters.

The “Esemeri”, which is the youth-age group, constitute the labour and military force. They perform and carryout communal labour and form themselves into communal workforces known in Bassa as “itime nyenu”. They are mobilized to prevent any encroachment on their territory or ward off any aggression. The military might of the community is determined by the strength and ability of the group.

The ‘maun’, that is, the children normally assist the other groups in their own capacity. They hang around them to learn and to carry out such messages as

would be necessary to prepare them for succession as youth leaders or elders, subsequently in life.

Male persons of teenage age and adults are conscripted into the “ERIBI”, a kind of cult group whose activities are more or less exclusive. One could liken them to community undertakers. They are responsible for the burial rites of the dead and all attendant rituals. Death in Bassa is both agonized and celebrated. Agonized where a youth dies and celebrated when an elderly person dies. The dead is mourned for a period of seven days except for the death of a chief which may extend to weeks or months when he is said to have, “sojourned to a distant land” such as Kaduna, Lagos, London, America, India or any strange but popular place.

The death of anybody in the village is first of all reported to the chief who then communicates the loss to the entire village, except for small babies. It is an offence not to do so and severe sanctions is meted out to violators. No dead body is buried without the official notice of the Aguma.

The ceremonies differ with regard to the sex of the dead. The male adult who dies demands more elaborate ceremonies and rituals than the female adult. As a rule, no woman is allowed to see the corpse of a man, not even when he is the husband or father of the female. Where this happens by accident, the woman is required to confess and propitiate with a reasonable quantity of wine. The location of the male corpse is barricaded from public glare. Only males are allowed inside this secluded arena.

The “awaa” consist mainly of elderly persons and their young recruits. Being part and parcel of the “Eribi”, they operate a distinct cult and membership is sometimes hereditary and a rigorous initiation ceremony is strictly adhered to. Always present at male burials, they entertain using musical and magical displays. Their instruments include the beaded gourd or ‘sekere’ and the gong. They move

from house to house entertaining with music, magic and songs, and receive appreciation in cash and kind. It is claimed that this group could magically make the corpse of their dead colleague walk to his graveside after the funeral ceremony. This myth is yet to be proven as this cult groups are the only ones responsible for the burial of its member.

The agony of death is usually the painful exit of a loved one, exit from sight and ears in this world, never to be encountered again. The physical departure of such an individual is sorrowfully mourned for some period of time or even the life time of aggrieved relations. That notwithstanding, the loss must be prepared for burial. The undertakers are shown the place of final rest of the deceased by family members. A life goat was slaughtered on the very spot. The diggers move into action. A hatchet or an ax was lifted up by the team leader; he points to the East (sunrise) and points to the West (sunset), symbolically, signifying his/her rise and fall; was born and has died. He rose at his birth and his sun has set at his dusk in death, enchanting those words; “you rose and your sun has set dusk for you. It’s finished!” and simultaneously strikes the earth, the place of burial with the axe. Thereafter, it was an offence for any member of this group or anyone visiting them to weep or hold any mournful mood. Such a fellow was fined mercilessly. They eat and drink happily!

Suffice to say that, the rich cultural attributes of the Bassa have been played down with the arrival of western civilization. Christianity, Islam and the incursion of ‘aliens’ in their population appear to have watered down the people’s culture, especially where such ‘aliens’ are found in large numbers in Bassa Communities.

THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The other important function in the land is the system of adjudication. The judiciary was not perverse because it was a people's court. It consisted of the Council of Chiefs at the clan level; a representation of all village heads. The "Usa'ada" acted as the judge. Land disputes, theft cases, adultery and other disputes among villages were settled at this council (level).

The components of modern judicial system were embedded in the Bassa judicial process. The counsel according to their respective interests represented the prosecution and defense counsels. As such, this guided the pattern of questions, interrogations or cross-examination that preceded any judgment. After hearing the complaint, an accused or defendant was asked to state his side of the case. Thereafter, the Chiefs-in-Council asked the questions to each party. The "Usa'ada" acted as the judge who passed the final judgment as operated in our present judicial system today. But the Aguma, as the Chief Judge, awarded the penalty.

The court sessions were held by open hearing. The side comments assisted the judge and his council in the exercise of their discretion. There existed room for recess and adjournments as was necessary for a speedy but fair judgment. The guilty was fined or penalized appropriately according to the laws of the land; usually in compensation, restitution, apologies and or a giant pot of locally brewed wine.

The penalty for adultery was the payment of certain sums of money to the plaintiff and a large pot of wine for the Council's consumption. For theft cases, according to late SP Elijah Shigaba (a Police Officer) the culprit was to refund the stolen item or paid a sum commensurate to the value of the stolen item, and was

also made to face public ridicule. A bell was chained to the culprit's waist and he was paraded in the village. This acted as deterrence.

A case of murder hardly existed. What obtained (and these in rare cases) was instances of manslaughter, which occurred mostly during hunting expeditions or at funeral rites where accidental discharges of gun explosion killed somebody. The culprit was to cleanse the land with the sacrifice of an adult male or female goat, and a pot of wine. Thereafter, the culprit was also advised to go on self-exile or never to visit, for a long period of time the domiciliary where the victim was accidentally killed so as not to arouse emotions and temptation to avenge. In the very rare event of murder, the murderer was to hang himself on a tree, assisted by executioners in public glare to ensure that justice had finally been done.

It was this system of adjudication that complemented and consolidated the people's attribute to honesty, love, considerate, trustworthy, hard work etc such that an average Bassa man was godly. Those who have had the opportunity to work with many a Bassa-man would attest to this fact. This was because the judicial system did not give room to perverseness; it could not be wholly corrupted, there were no influences of godfathers, bribery and there was no element of wits display, deception, manipulation and misinterpretation of rules.

To avoid perversion of justice at the family level because of emotions and sentiments a neutral arbiter was invited to deliver judgment. A case of bad judgment could be attributed to incoherent presentation, contradictions, conspiracies and/or collaborative statements of a witness or witnesses on a matter.

Where one was not satisfied with the ruling, appeals to higher levels were allowed from the family head to the village head, to the clan head and central authority. But the final appeal of the Bassa man's case rested in the Supreme power of Heaven; the Supreme God.

In cases where there were strong doubts, accusations and counter-accusations and denials, an oath (known as “Ashimwa”) was administered. This was made up of water or wine, which having been offered as libations to the ancestral spirits is given to both parties as drink offering. A much stronger oath was the “ijile” which could cause the culprit to face consequential calamities or die after all. Consequently, the guilty one or the culprit was haunted until a confession was made and truth was known.

BELIEFS AND DEITIES

Every society has its belief system as a check on its activities. According to Ason Bur (1993: 18), beliefs instill fear, discipline in youths and respect for elders. They act as checks on the moral conduct of such society and could prevent abnormalities. Beliefs place emphasis on the values of any society. Values that are dear and sacrosanct to that society which most often are moral in nature. These are the unwritten constitution of such a society (Ode:2002:1). Such values according to Nnamani (2001:30) are those centrally propped which induce accepted conduct. Violations of such beliefs go with dire consequences. According to Ode (2002:1) beliefs in any society are precise rules and regulations, which guide the behaviours of the people, the things one does and says as well as one’s social relationships.

The Bassa people have their own belief system, which is responsible for the moral upbringing of their young ones as well as guide the conduct of adults. First and foremost, they acknowledge the supremacy of the Almighty God who knows, sees, hears and oversees all things. They believe that the sky represents the dwelling abode of God Almighty.

While the Bassa believe in God taking charge of the whole universe and handling matters of injustice between one and another, man to man, the different families resort to the worship of certain deities where sacrifices are offered for the needs, good harvest and general welfare of the family. No form of initiation was necessary but members in the compound were compelled to observe certain rules and regulations, as this was the price tag. It is worthy of note that while performing any libations and or incantations, they more often than not, pray to God Almighty to grant the wishes for the sacrifice being offered.

Below are some of the deities the people believed in prior to the advent of Christianity and Islam.

EDENGU (TWINS)

Unlike in most African societies, the Bassa people instead of killing twins worship them. Their early departure (death) meant that they have become deities to be worshipped; fed with wine, water, foods, and even money. The Bassa people believe that these wonderful creatures of God were still very much around in an unseen form and thus their negligence could cause one to lose some fortune in life: poor sales at the market, poor harvest from the farm, home mishap or journey palaver, etc. the sudden disappearance or misplacement of money or clothing is attributed to them. When treated well or cared for, they could be a source of wellbeing for the family. Such two small pots (where both were dead), representing each of the twins are placed on top of a mound positioned in the corner of a house, symbolizing their perpetual presence. Here, they are cared for with different types of foods, wine and money. Because of their enigmatic creation, any set of twins in Bassa that die(s) is/were not considered dead, but were assumed to have only gone to the market or for shopping that they may never return, at all.

IJILE

This was a family deity in charge of any act of cheating, stealing, lying, witchcraft and other immoral behaviours. This god struck ill any member of the family that was engaged in any of these vices. Knowing that not every headache or stomach ache was the consequence of *Ijile*, consultation with *Ijile* only became necessary where an illness became protracted; extending in time and intensity. The *Ijile*, through a soothsayer would reveal the cause of the ill-health and recommend appeasement if the victim were to recover his or her normal health. The news was then communicated to the victim and where the victim was too weak to respond, the members of the household performed the rites on his/her behalf. If no much damage had been done to his or her health, the victim would be well again.

Oaths were also administered under this deity for very serious allegations, counter allegations and denials. This is similar to oaths administered in Israel as found in 2Chronicle 6:22-23. Of course, the consequences, though not immediate, might result in pre-mature death. Thus family members are encouraged to imbibe good conduct, moral behaviours and hard work and shun evil ways.

ASHIMWA (TUWA TU PA)

This was basically an oath taking ceremony between two bitter enemies or two bitter rivals in a family. It was administered to ensure that none of the aggrieved parties maintained a rigid, protracted and intense animosity against the other. Both parties were by this oath advised to sheathe their swords and embrace peace in the overall interest of the family. This oath was only administered after having tried to settle, watched and appealed to both parties to embrace peace over a long period of time to no avail. It was used only as the last resort. The obstinate party was to suffer one calamity or ill health for failure to adhere to the oath. By so doing lasting peace and harmony was brought to bear and secured in the family.

AZHIBA

This is a village deity inhabiting huge hills or mighty trees. The elders of the village would consult among themselves when there is lack of rain during the farming season or during an epidemic. The elders would usually decide to celebrate this feast known as “Azhiba” to find solution to a prevailing situation. This is usually preceded by a two-day ceremony. On the third day, they would either move to the hill or to the foot of the tree where, the ‘Azhiba’ resides and perform the ritual. In the case of drought the rains would usually come down in torrents. The ‘coincidence’ is often unmistakable.

This same shrine is consulted in the case of an epidemic such as cholera often believed to have been caused by witchcraft. They would go round each compound invoking the spirit of witchcraft to depart the village amid a form of drumming known as “ogidigbo”, a gong, guttural voice songs and a propelling wooden sling (short of a ruler length), held by a tread and swung in the air producing a voom-voom-voom sound. The effect of which was meant to exorcise the spirits of witchcraft. This may not be synonymous with the witch hunt that took place in Europe in the early 20th Century, but this is a chase for the witchcraft. A curfew from dusk to dawn and dusk was imposed on the people where no markets were held under such prevalence. Such epidemic is usually dissipated and finally dispelled. Although medical science has challenged this practice, it had worked for the people. The prove lie in the fact that limiting movement of persons gradually erodes the spread and contagious nature of such epidemic. The COVID 19 here is a pointer to this analogy. They conquered their situation by their beliefs. They had no inoculations but their “Azhiba” and herbal concoctions were their remedy and cure for all ailments until the arrival of orthodox medicines.

(B) Kusa-uye Festival (Breaking of Thirst)

A festival such as 'Kusa-uye' was usually done at harvest time. A whole week was set aside for the celebration of this feast. It was an occasion in which as many families as could afford it in the village brewed local wine. Villages organized this feast in turns to enable them exchange visits, especially among neighbouring villages.

The brewed wine is offered as libation to the dead who must have been thirsty and to God who had afforded them the health and strength for the farming season. It is a festival in memoriam of all the dead in the village. This feast was celebrated with lots of drumming. It is quite entertaining, and a touristy just as it is a recuperative pastime after seasonal farming.

(C)Ugunu (Festival of Danc)



This festival is celebrated after a major victory in war or after a good harvest. It is also celebrated after a good fortune had been found. The captain (unaba) was usually dressed in leopard's skin. He enters the dancing arena demonstrating how he stormed and broke the gate, attacked and conquered the enemy's camp. And the dance commences in earnest.

While the women prepared the wine, the men went into hiding (seemingly in the bush) for seven days. On the seventh day, they appear in the village square (play-ground) in such demonstration of victory, where the "ugunu" dance was displayed. It was believed that any patient who couldn't peep out from the sick bed to the dancing arena was indeed at his or her terminal point, because of the exhilarating, ecstatic performance and the audience it attracted.

Much wine was drunk; it was a carnival-like show. A period every farmer rested and recuperated from the year's hard work. It was a tourist attraction with more visitors from neighbouring villages in attendance. Unlike Kusa-uye, it is dominated with dances and fun-fare.

Notwithstanding the ecstasy of the people at harvest or festivals, women who were in their menstrual periods in every family were not allowed to touch and mingle freely with the others or touch items that had to do with the family's foods. They were regarded as unclean like the Israelis in Lev. 15:19-27. She had her separate cooking pot, fire place, plates, foods and a menstrual stool. The males would avoid any contact with her until her menstrual period was over.

THE DEAD/REINCARNATION

The Bassa people indeed share a lot of beliefs with the Jews. Their belief in the dead (Isaiah 8:19) played a lot of role in shaping the conduct of the living

towards life. It helped man's relationship with man, especially within the family circle. The people believe in life hereafter. They believe there is life after death. Life never just ended after death. It continued in another world. This belief is not anchored on any religious theology but by traditional belief that, the dead live in an unseen form.

Consequently, the people believe the world is being monitored by those they call "the people of the unseen world". From time to time, intermittently, they pour out libations or oblations to them for the protection of the living. They ascribe to them the angelic function (ozomoyikwo) in the family set up. They are seen as the intercessors between the living and God Almighty. Once in a while, you would see a Bassa man offer sacrifice of goats or chickens slaughtered to his ancestors whose neglect could make life a night-mare for the son, daughter or brother, while living. It is required that as often as possible, sacrifices be made to departed relatives as the occasion may demand. They believe that the people of the unseen world behold the unseen injustice against any member of the family and would thus intervene in ameliorating the situation.

Death usually should follow the order of age. A death that does not follow a chronology was viewed as unnatural and is suspect of some foul play or witchcraft, which must be investigated by ritual inquest. If two persons in a family had a bitter and protracted quarrel and one of them happened to die and suddenly the other followed suit in death, it was believed that the people of the unseen world had summoned him for judgment. If he had fallen into a coma, everything was practically done to rescue (resuscitate) him/her from lapsing finally to the world beyond. He was expected to give an account of his sojourn; Out of Body Experience (OBE).

At burial ceremonies, the dead is usually invoked to report the cause of his/her death to the people in the other world and where possible make reprisals immediately.

Like the Biblical imagery of heaven (as recorded in the book of Revelation), the Bassa people believe that the people of the unseen world live in a perfect world of excellence; a paradise of blissfulness. Like in a trance into the world of angels draped in white garments and beautiful scenery, so also the Bassa people see in the unseen world; a clean environment, neat pots, calabashes and family members who had passed on, living in a state of perfection; a scenery devoid of hardships, tears and sorrows.

It is the belief that after many years sojourn in the unseen world, they are reincarnated and born as babies into the family again, especially where such a child displays similar mannerisms and attributes with which a dead relation was noted for. Thus, life and death for the Bassa people is cyclical. Where there is no information, the people wallow in ignorance and stability is threatened. Therefore, the Bassa people device ways of information dissemination is vital for peace, tranquility and unity.

COMMUNICATION/INFORMATION SYSTEM IN BASSA

Communication is vital for peace, harmony and tranquility and unity in any community. Where there is no flow of information, people wallow in ignorance. Consequently peace and stability are threatened. This is why the Bassa people device ways of information dissemination that is both fast and effective.

There are two major/officially recognized ways of information dissemination for different purposes. In cases of emergencies, the town-crier, would announce in the evenings with the gong at vantage positions in the village, for instance, that there would be community work the next day. This could be for

market rehabilitation, road repairs or diversion of an overflowing stream causing serious flood or erosion and where not timely arrested would cause serious ecological harm to the community. Buying wine usually sanctioned absentees or in disobedient to this when circumstances determined, they were left to bury their dead being so isolated.

Reported loss of an item was followed by the village crier's announcement that whosoever was in possession of the item was required to kindly, release it to the Aguma or a place where it could be easily found for its owner. One was not necessarily required to give self up for reprimand but would be personally liable for any adverse consequences that might accompany the threat of harm by the owner. With this threat, more often than moral remorse, the item would be found at a location.

Other pieces of information that required discretion such as crucial discussions and meetings or such as threats to the community, deaths were conveyed or transmitted by relay method to every family compound. The messenger took the message, which usually would emanate from the 'Aguma's compound, to the next compound. This next compound had the responsibility of relaying same message to the next compound and so on until the entire village was informed. Each compound knows its next compound to relay such information. Usually, the message terminates at the 'Aguma's house from the last compound close to him as evidence that the information had gone round. Serious penalty awaited any compound that failed to relay the information to the next compound. Without much ado, information was passed, meetings were convened and matters were resolved.

MARRIAGE: THE BASSA CONCEPT

Marriage between man and woman is defined from various perspectives. Most often, people refer to marriage as the (legal) union of a man and a woman, which transform them connotatively, as husband and wife with all rights and privileges from and to each other.

From the legal perspective, marriage is regarded as the contract between a man and a woman. This contract legally binds the man and the woman together and imposes certain inhibitions or limitations; both parties are subject to some rudiments of law. For instance, one must be of a certain age else they would need to seek appropriate consent before documents are signed conferring on them the status of husband and wife. Likewise, nullifying this contract requires the adjudication of the courts.

On the other hand, there is the religious perspective particularly in the Christian faith. Marriage, therein consist in the joining of two people (bodies); man and woman to become one (Matt. 19:5, Mk. 10:8-9). The oneness obviously is expressed in the spiritual composition of the two and their capacity to operate in that form.

These two perspectives have overwhelmed the concept of marriage among the Bassa People. Both perspectives believe in one-man one wife. However, the Bassa people are given to marrying polygamously. The limitation to this is ones inability to cater for a large family. Such an individual will settle for one wife. In many cases, the wives would desert a man at the stage of barely eking out a living when survival for them becomes for the most enduring wife or the one who loves most. Generally, it was the norm and a thing of pride to have more than one wife. It was an ego booster and a status symbol; it showed how hardworking and successful one was. The Islamic religion has also influenced many marriages in Bassa for those who embraced it and its perspective.

When a young man desired a wife, he made his overtures to a nubile girl of his emotional, sensual and physical interest. Sometimes he approaches his friends or the girl's friends to approach her where he was either too shy or circumstances such as social and environmental influence prevailed against him to do so. Hereafter, the man starts making visits to the girl's house to consolidate his interest.

The girls are encouraged to bring in their suitors into the house. This would enable the parents or guardians to assess the virtues and vices of the suitor(s) such as humility, mannerisms, egotism, talkativeness or loquaciousness, gluttony, shyness, respectfulness, braggartism etc. These visits by the suitor(s) may extend to passing nights though in a separate (guest) room of the girl's family. The next day he may assist the parents of the girl in their farms. His hard work as demonstrated might become an added advantage to his interest and application.

The entire household sometimes determined the choice of a suitor. A generally and well-accepted suitor in the house even if not the girl's choice, wins the approval of the parents. Every insinuation was made to discourage the girl from perceived bad suitors. Family background also account for choice of suitors. A good suitor from a family with a known history of witchcraft, theft, laziness, pride, dishonesty, flirtation and other social vices was likely to lose out in the screening process.

The voted suitor was given encouragement to send his elders for the settlement of bride price (paid by the suitor), which more often than not ended up as a free gift to the suitor for having appreciated the worth of what (the daughter) God had given them as parents. The men usually held discussions; the mother was involved for her information only. Thereafter, wine was drunken with the entire neighborhood being part of this ceremony to foreclose any neighbors from further

receiving messages of marriage proposals to the girl. Doing so after such ceremony, was usually frowned at.

From this moment, the suitor was welcomed for frequent visits and intimacy with the girl. He is expected to bring his age group to assist in the girl's parent's farm. This continued annually or biannually by the son in-law as long as the marriage lasts.

When the groom was ready to take home his bride, he did so modestly. The bride never walked to the groom's house. She was compelled to go to the husband's house by 'force' else it would give the impression that she was eager to consummate the marriage after all. The groom will arrange an ambush and the bride would be swept off and carried away by the friends of the groom. This is done either on her way from the farm, market, and stream, or when an in house accomplice had sent her on an errand. In most cases, the girl was taken unawares. Though she might have an idea of her being taken to her husband's house, she might not know the date. Even if she knew, she is expected to feign resistance.

The bride having been "caught in marriage" is kept in a friend's house or the groom's neighbor's house. In the evening, she is transferred to the groom's house away from glaring eyes. At the wee hours of the next morning, the women will beat pots with calabashes and sing indicating the arrival of a new bride, a way of informing neighbours of this event and if they should get to see her at all in daytime. At dawn, the women signifying a welcome into her new home washed the bride's feet. That night the groom's friends will gather to play; singing, dancing and have fun till daybreak. At daybreak, the bride is dressed in her best apparel and presented to the public. She is then showered with gifts. Amidst this ceremony, water by an unknown arrangement was splashed on both the bride and the groom with cheers from the public. Marriage had taken place!

The couple remains bound to each other. She would be allowed to go for her belongings afterwards.

In some cases, where the bride had not properly made up her mind, as she seeks permission to go for her items in her house, she may never return or took her longer than necessary to do so. Where this was envisioned, emissaries would be sent to persuade or convince her on the propensities to oblige the wholesome arrangement! If she wanted to return, the women folk after a little while would go to the bride's house to fetch her back home. Where she accepts, her female siblings and friends would accompany her to her new home.

Another form of marital tie was "Marriage by Exchange" known as "Tushomu". This consisted in exchange of sisters between two male adults. A man admires a girl and gives in exchange his sister to the other family for marriage. The sister was not compelled to marry the other family but was persuaded for the love of the brother or to enable the lonely, ageing or disabled brother to raise a family of his own. The arrangement failed where the girl was not interested and a new arrangement would be made until the right choice was found for the sister. In some cases she accepted contractually or conditionally for some years and thereafter, returned to her home to find a more suitable husband. But where her conditions became better or blessed contrary to her imaginations, she simply stays put or she rather prevails against all odds to form a family there.

Marriage by inheritance was also condoned as in Jewish custom and tradition as recorded in Matt. 22:24. If a man died leaving behind a wife, the immediate younger brother was encouraged not to let her go home to her parents, but to continue the marriage with the family for either the sake of the children, to raise children for the family and or for the love of the company and joy they had all shared together. She stayed if she liked. There was no compulsion compelling her to marry any brother of the late husband.

The woman's first marriage in Bassa is considered the most valid till death even after a legal divorce had taken place, especially where she had a male child with the first husband. This however, precludes conjugal relationship between them except after a reconciliation had occurred which traditionally nullifies such divorcement. At death, the first husband or her son(s) brought the wife's remains back to be interned in the family house.

Marriage in Bassa has a far-reaching relationship than the ordinary, as there was no divorce but separation. She could be welcomed back into the matrimonial home as a wife even after a long period of separation if both parties so desired.

DELICACIES

The average Bassa man indeed is hard working. He abhors laziness. St Paul admonishes that he who does not work should not eat (2Thes. 3:10-11). In his letter to the Hebrews 6:12, St. Paul admonishes against being slothful just as the Book of Proverbs 10:4 warn that lazy hands make a man poor. The Bassa man labours hard all year round for the up keep of his family.

But the Bassa woman is even more resourceful and enterprising in the domestic affairs of her home. She complements the adage that "beside every successful man is a woman". When it matters most she could make out a meal simply out of nothing for her family to survive.

While it is the tradition that the Bassa woman does not go to farm except to bring in the harvest, the Bassa man naturally labours from sunrise to sun set to provide for his family and dependants as the breadwinner. Predominantly, as a farmer, he ensures that food was available throughout the year. His major crops are yams, cassava, maize, millet, guinea corn, beans, rice, and at seldom times plant melon, okra, pepper, and recently Beni-seed etc. As a hobby he sets traps in the

bush and fishing nets in the river to provide both meat and fish in the home. With these he provides foods and is economically empowered to run the home.

Though the Bassa woman does not go to farm, she is not only resourceful but also industriously works hard. While she remains loyal to the man and relies on him, she complements the man in many ways. She does not just sit at home while the man is on the farm. Her domestic activities are more tasking and demanding and complementarily rewarding. She rises up very early like the Jewish woman (Prov. 31:15), warms the food, and goes in search of firewood, which is also sold to earn her some money. She picks pepper, okra, vegetables (including mushrooms) and other food condiment from the farm. She fetches water from its source (wells or streams) for all domestic use; cooking, washing, bathing etc.

The Bassa woman's ingenuity at culinary activities is amazing as she could churn out a variety of cuisines from a single crop. From okra; leaves and flower, she could make a delicious meal of vegetable soup (odowuno, tutsumbo, ajishikpa) respectively. From yams, cassava and corn the Bassa woman could create more than thirty varieties of mouth-watering and tantalizing cuisines. This could range from solid/molded food (tuga) to porridge; jollof, pap and stews. Her cooking place (kitchen) is made up of a couple of tripod pots to enable two or more cooking activities go on simultaneously. The dry wood is her source of energy for cooking.

The major staple food of the Bassa is pounded yam. The soup may vary from okra, egusi, yam flour (white soup) and or vegetables. Other staples include corn, millet and cassava flour. The Bassa people have little appetite for rice. Ordinarily, the seasoning is the locally processed locust beans.

Occasionally, she brews her soft drinks (kunu), fruit wine (tuwumo/tichina) and other forms of beverages from African berries, fruits, millet and corn. She also brews alcoholic wine (pito and burukutu) for commercial purposes, festivals and other occasions for recess and relaxation.

The Bassa woman recognizes the age long aphorism that the way to a man's heart was through his stomach. This she does superbly by ensuring that the meals are properly cooked, appealing and tasty. The man reciprocates by expressing appreciation, love and sustained hard work. On the contrary, and by nature, Bassa men are polygamous and as such the wives have to contend with each other as this gives birth to keen competition among the women for either the affection or the affectation of the husband for a healthy family life.

NAMING CEREMONY

The Bassa people cherish and value the arrival of new born babies but do not hold elaborate naming ceremonies for them. He believes that babies are the embodiment of confidence for a sustained family generation and community in general. He is excited when his wife is pregnant and at birth, he is full of happiness and proud at the product of his manhood.

After delivery, usually assisted by local midwives (which could consist of both specialized men and women) the mother and child are kept in their room until the eighth (8th) day. On the eighth day, the child is brought to the eldest member of the family for naming.

Several factors, situations or circumstances determine the elder's choice of name for a new born baby. Names are not just given to babies but reflect circumstances, events and situations; days of the week or market days and sometimes positional placement of the baby at birth, or if death had recently occurred in the family of a person (elderly or not), if the woman had given birth to children that did not survive, or had had many boys or girls, or given birth after a long period of waiting reflecting such event that unfolded itself etc. As such, you would hear the following names:

BOYS

NAMES		MEANING
Sheneni	-	Lack of males
Huleji	-	Too many males
Gbaje	-	Earth mound (are you another to die)
Daku	-	Ant hill (same as above)
Tashelane	-	Still waiting for (God, you, love, something)
Gwatana	-	God's gift, God's power, God's love etc
Chabane	-	Where are you from (if fatherhood were disputed), surprise birth of a male child
Yizogembi	-	The world is big
Jassa	-	Warrior (born during battles, skirmishes or quarrels between families, villages or societies).
Shaba	-	Chief's right hand man/Chief of the House

GIRLS

NAMES		MEANING
Ine	-	She missed road (to the house)
Zebiye	-	I have no luck (with having boys, people, my Husband)
Helechi	-	Deceiver (you have come to go again!)
Zhenambe	-	Going to the bush (to die again)
Zhanane	-	She will go again
Chibe	-	This is a lie! (Never thought possible)
Ndane	-	He (God) did it for (me, us, and them)
Dukwo	-	Born on a market day/Connotatively, to gather a crowd

- Laruba** - Born on Wednesday
- Shiriya** - If fatherhood were disputed or born was during a major dispute.
- Zamenhien** - Have nothing to say
- Zajeme** - Can't say anything

Chapter Six

TRADITION AND CULTURE

The Bassa having tribal affinity with pongo, bahause, Fulani bororo, the kamaku and the Bantu tribes; hithert practiced similar traditions. By mention here are some of the practices Bassa people engaged in those Habe days;

To ascertain the veracity of a lie, hot oil was administered on a culprit. He was to drink it in that state, if he spilled it, then the confirmation of his lying status was proven.

In the case of a theft or misdemeanor in a family or group of people, a nutty-fruit, big as a coco-nut fruit, was tied to a rope and inserted into the earth about a feet and a half or so and the other end tied to the neck of each suspect, with each suspects hands tied at the back to prove the culprit. Each suspect was required to pull with the neck, the nutty-fruit buried from the earth. If you were innocent, it pulled out easily otherwise where it showed resistance, it was adduced to the individual as confirmation of being the culprit to the offence or the theft. This was called “U’gbaku” in Bassa.



Bassa lad with I'gbe (Hand washing pod)



Bassa Attire in Bente (Beche) form.

Bassa Dances

The Bassa dances are many and of various purposes and significance. Some are for funerals or entertainment. For instance, the **Araga dance** is usually in honor of the death of an old person, male or female. It could also be used for the entertainment of visiting quests dancing and singing round the drummers at the center.

Utache dance: It is performed mainly in the day time. The performance could be at any type of ceremony. Its performance is usually tied to or informed by another ceremony like the Ugunu, Ukusuaye or even a coronation ceremony. It consist of big drums beaten by as many as ten, fifteen or more in rhythmic unison and the

men and women throw up their legs and arms in swirling big gowns (A'gbada) in heavy entertainment.

Ike Masquerade Dance: It is usually performed by the male youths of the village. The masquerade is made with fresh palm leaves, woven and tied round the waist, and to the head. In the dance, they twist their waists to enable the grass to also twist rhythmically presenting a beautiful entertainment pattern.



The Ike Dance

ALAYI

Another form of dance known to the Bassa people is the *alayi* dance mostly recognized and performed as pastime for the girls while the boys only watched. It was usually moonlight evening playtime. They formed a semi-circle singing and clapping hands. A dancer moved away from the rest group, leapt backwardly into the air, to fall into the waiting hands of her mates who sprang her back to her feet. In turn each participated wearing the night into the depth its mysteries when men and women received dreams, vision and inspiration for sustenance of life in a somnolent rest.

The '*alayi*' was symbolic of a group (people) who lent support to their own from falling and failing completely. As a mate leapt into the air and was coming

down, she was oblivious of every other thing save only one fact— falling down. But the mates would not let that happen to her as they would all put their hands together to support her up in a springing manner back to her standing position again.

There were however, conspiracies as in all human machinations for betrayal. At times, a particular peer group would let loose and let go of their mate crashing onto the ground. While some would laugh at this treachery, conspiracy, and betrayal, the siblings of the victim would take it personal for such let down of trust and amity. The party would break up in disarray and every one would go to his or her tent, sealing the excitement of the night for the day.

Chapter Seven

WISDOM WORDS

The famous Chinua Achebe, a prolific writer of our time, did say in one of his books; *Things Fall Apart*, (1958) that proverbs in Ibo, were the palm oil with which words were eaten. So also, would you hardly find a gathering of the Bassa people in which any conversation, meetings, judgments, musical concerts, jokes or any sermonization that proverbs are not often used. They are used to convey meanings or messages and mitigate emotions, which direct expressions could not have had the desired effect. It is part of the people's culture as they express themselves daily. The list of wisdom lines or proverbs in Bassa is inexhaustible. Here are some of them:

1. The name you give to your dog, that's what people will call it. (*Izechi na a'bu po u'wewe bu, ibe azha a'suyana bu*).
2. You don't sever a limb because a baby has defecated on it. (*E'jeji shi u'wunto, u'wene yeu nyizhi tuwin nu bwa-o!*).
3. When you have not attained full growth, call no one a dwarf. (*A'buta huwi she u'wana, taswana butu u'kazhere-o!*)
4. If one bird had its beak broken, should others not eat? (*U'nono u'kwo dwonu u'gwugwa a'navwe su zha she a ya iyi*)
5. A day's sunshine does not render rotten a dead toad. (*U'wana uko, fo'shishinje u'kuto-o!*)
6. The size of a ghost is determined by the size of the corpse of the dead person. (*U'baratu, ya gombo no ru'wo*)
7. A stubborn tsetse fly shall be confronted with the tip of the broom. (*Bishi na u'hwuje u'we, bizhe ba mash nu bu'humbe bu sheshe!*)

8. A fly enticed by the savour of a dead body, would end up in the grave. (*Bishi na u'wa wa Latu ru'wo, buzhe ba ku'nanga nu uye*)
9. If you were addressed as "Mr. Big head," you needed to nod it. (*A'bu hien, u'huhu kpoku, a'sha zhinginto un!*)
10. A man walks in shorts where his thighs/legs are admired. (*O'fona a'bu dumanga adamashe a'pata obo rungo nu okutu*).
11. He who is dissatisfied with the size of his testes may be contented with an over-bloated scrotum. (*ya she a'bu hien ilemwe bu twa su, a'sha nwana ya a'bvula tu kpoku*)
12. He who declares another person's child ugly should give birth to his own. (*A'bu hien yewi butu zhe she-o, asha mata unebi!*)
13. If you visited a village and found monkeys excitedly jumping from tree to tree, do not conclude that there are no hunters there. (*e'bi zhe nu shopu na ebgeregi a;hilanga, ta hien a'jala zaba-o*)
14. A woman who separates her husband should not destroy the pawpaw trees in the house in case she might return afterwards. (*Biyi'kwo na gengi vwolo, kede ba jaja'ga tu komburu nu hwe-o*)
15. An old woman may desire to die, but not the death by the blow of a pestle. (*I'denwu ba'jala tu'wo, a'maa she tuwo ta alala-o!*)
16. If you were given the powers of magic, you needed self-wisdom. (*A'bu peni tu'gwama, a'hansa she anabu!*)
17. A hunted sparrow that flies into the forest/jungle is gone/safe (*u'jeje na leyi nu wwapa buji-o!*)
18. A chase for the kite, a caution for the chicken. (*A'hien u'chepi hei, a'hien a'luma hei*)

19. The grave yard admonishes thus: If you were close, come closer/fast but if you were far off, better run faster away. (*E'wuye hein oohy, o;bu gumonu, zhe kakai, ama a'bu dulumu, gozhigo ta dulo*)
20. You may borrow things desired, but you don't borrow a desired face. (*a'ba una iyi bu kulani, bu yeri shi ba una u'pishika na'bu kulani-o*)
21. A bad mortar has its bad pestle. (*O'numu o'weh, nu a'lala o'weh*)
22. You (could) kill an elephant with attempts. (*a'kuna u'dagba natu makana*)
23. You can clean dirt with water but you don't clean water with water. (*a'yanshinga tiri nu meni ama a'yanshinge she menie ni meni-o*)
24. What a child likes is what takes away his money. (*iyine kulani yeu, i'be ya yabu u'kuribi*)
25. If your father has no sister who do you call your Aunt? (*bishi bu zasa bu ngofo, ga'aba kun u'she ya u'shumwa bu?*)
26. Once it is dark you need no cover of shade. (*u'juta shiwo, bu zasa ya u'hunu tu rungo-o*)
27. A friend of a thief is same a thief. (*Bo'jilo buzundo, shi du bu'zundo*)
28. The throat does not divide its portion with anyone. (*U'roro dwoto'gonu she iyimeye*)
29. The poor man is a patient man. (*Bu'talaka, u'shi butu ba a'melomu*)
30. A little red oil does not spoil the soup. (*mu'zhimi chwen nje she shipa u'fu*)
31. The river dries but the sand remains. (*meni ma hwan, ama a'zhetu a bwa*)
32. People from afar off (unwittingly) eat the rot of the land. (*a'twa dolu abwa aya I'ne weh*)
33. When the fire goes off, the ashes remain. (*u'la weji, ma'állu ma vwa*)
34. Catarrh can only claim the voice but not the senses. (*I'lípe ya sugo runhun, a'ma i'suji shi a'hansa-o*)

35. If you could not resist being blind, how could you refuse optical blightness.
(*A'bu lacheshi u'lubo, ba laka u'ngo e'shee-o*)
36. No matter how someone's mother loves you, she cannot be compared to
yours. (*Kwo bine butu bi lubi, i'zha she ya sha ganna bu naábu-o*)

Chapter Eight

CONCLUSION

Nigeria is a geographical group of various ethnic nationalities put together. And the history of every community is the history of Nigeria in its smaller form. The desire of the Nigeria people to found a new Federal Capital neutral to all the major ethnic groups in the country discovered a place in the hinterland, middle of its geographical formation in the Abuja land enclave.

The Federal Capital Territory, a place that is proudly located in between the States of Kogi, Niger, Kaduna and Nasarawa is quite suitable for the economic and socio-political activities of the Nation. It has so far carried its function in uniting the various nationalities of the country without hindrances to administrative, economic, social and political activities.

However, the land upon which this project got executed was inhabited by a group of people called by various ethnic names. They have been displaced; their farm lands have been seized, their ancestral homes demolished to make for the new arrangements. They have been deprived economically, culturally and socially submerged. Their antecedence has become oblivious. They have simply been oppressed by the sudden changes in their lifestyles.

Gwagwalada is one the ancient towns that has suffered these negativities in the quest to host the new milieu. The inhabitants of Gwagwalada, the Bassa people have suffered untold losses. The surging population as a result of these displacements has had a lot of incalculable harm to the very innocuous people of Bassa. Their contributions to national growth in the country has been taken for granted as even other ethnic groups are now clamoring for the ownership of a land built, inhabited and headed by their ancestors.

Politically, the gang up against them gives them no room to be represented in their own land.

Sequentially, Government in whose responsibility it is to assuage the pains of the community by several interferences has failed to wade into their woes.

Amongst some of the things ought to have been done include shielding the natives from the vagaries of economic misplacement. Scholarships should be given to children of this enclave. Although in some communities, quasi accommodation not befitting humanity were provided to a taciturn people. Reserved percentage appointments for the people of this area in all the Ministries and Parastatals should have been the case. They should be represented in Board appointments where possible.

The expansion of the Gwagwalada city by now should be considered to promoting a First Class Traditional Ruler amongst the traditional rulers of the FCT. Historically, it is an age long institution. As such its First Class status is long overdue.



Gwagwalada is a local government area in the Federal Capital Territory in Nigeria. Gwagwalada has an area of 1,043 km² and a population of 157,770 at the 2006 census. It is projected to have a 6.26% growth between 2020 and 2025, the largest increase on the African continent.

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