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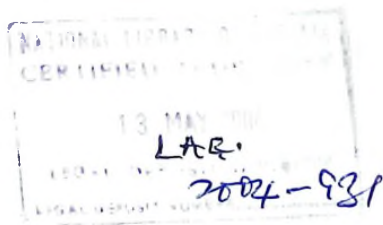
**HISTORY OF BASSA (NGE)
ETHNIC GROUP OF NUPE ORIGIN
AND THE**

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
PA CHIEF CHRISTOPHER
AMOS MAWO LAKPINI, CHM**

C.A.M. Lakpini, CHM



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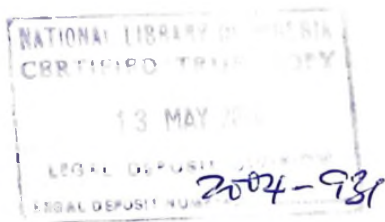


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Dedication

To my late beloved father and mother respectively and my loving wife, children and their own children and close and distant relatives — blood and otherwise.



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Preface

This "Knowledge" book, which by my research, has taken me about sixty (60) years to write, deals widely and comprehensively with the history of the Bassa (Nge) of Nupe origin, the varied and various connections or relationships of the Bassa (Nge) ethnic group with Lokoja and with such tribes like the Bunus (Abunu), the Ebira Irehi, the Egbura Panda or Koto, the Oworo, the Kakanda, the Junkun (Appah) the Igala, who are connected with the Junkun and the Idoma as a result of their many years of migration from their motherland, Nupeland.

The final settling down of some of the clans of the Bassa (Nge) on the left hand side of the River Niger, where some of them live up till today, thereby forming a district after crossing Rivers Niger and Benue has also been treated. The cultural, political, religious, educational and social methods of governance as well as the war-like attitude of the people; their major preoccupation of farming, fishing and hunting and their culture of marriage, naming, burial and other social systems are also discussed.

The past status quo of the people and their Etsu, the paramount chief, the present status quo as compared with the past of the people as well as their district; the future of the people, as seen by my eyes of vision, more or less prophetically, their district and the Etsu, the paramount chief are issues which have also been thoroughly discussed.

Foreword

When Papa, chief C. A. M. Lakpini, CHM, handed the final manuscript of this book to me, I assumed that everything necessary for the publishing of the book was complete. It was not until the CSS Press phoned me about twenty-five days to the launching that I was aware that there was no foreword to the book, even though I was almost convinced that I noticed a script of what could have been regarded as the foreword in the manuscript. I therefore have not been commissioned by Papa to write this foreword, but have consulted others with whom we agreed to fulfill all righteousness.

When the manuscript was handed over, Papa was filled with joy and a sense of accomplishment that I asked him why he felt so happy. It was then he explained to me that it had taken him over sixty years to write this book and that the original manuscript got lost or burnt after it was given to the then printer and that he had to produce this new manuscript "all afresh" by dictation because of his failing vision.

I never intended to read this book before publication, but when Papa mentioned some incidents he recorded therein, I became so excited that I decided to read those aspects we discussed. I was surprised that I was able to read the whole book within two days, because Papa was very detailed in his narration. His style of writing is not common. He appeared to be very sure of his research and

confident about the need to spread his ideas and thoughts to all and sundry. Papa was convinced that his story should be told so as to encourage others to contribute to the debate about who the Bassa-Nge are and what the future of the Bassa-Nge should be. He was of the opinion that the truth about the Bassa-Nge would emerge through honest dialogue and discussions in such a way as to bring pride to the Bassa-Nge.

There is no doubt that Papa was a very controversial figure. He was never afraid to speak his mind. He had the courage to challenge anything "challengeable". In my interaction with him, he unusually also had that rare humility to accept a proven fact even when it is contrary to his original view.

Until his death on Sunday, 28th March, 2004 at about 4.00 a.m., his wish was that this book be published. I therefore pray fervently that the Almighty God would richly bless those responsible for the publishing of this "wonderful" resource book.

Having read the book, I can now understand why Papa's face "glowed" with the smile of satisfaction. I therefore recommend this book to every Bassa-Nge and indeed all people, because Papa did not just restrict himself to the Bassa-Nge, his detailed explanations extended to other ethnic groups. This book, consisting of gems of valuable information is a "MUST" for everyone to read.

The peace of the Lord be with you always...Amen.

✠ George Lokoja

The Rt. Revd. George Bako, OON

Diocesan Bishop,

Diocese of Lokoja.

"Low Sunday", 2004

CHAPTER 1

Bassa (Nge) and their Origin

The name Bassa (Nge) is for a people who are of Nupe origin and migrated from Gbara, a town of about 15 miles (24 kilometres) South-West of Bida in Nupe land. The book *People of the Niger and Benue Confluence* says, "Bassa Nge, a group of Nupe-speaking dialect, appears to have left the mother country about a century ago, before the Fulani conquest. They lived first on the right bank of the Niger where Lokoja now stands but at the founding, moved to the left bank where they are today".

Secondly, Professor Nadel in his book *A Black By Zantium*, said that "the Nupe Kingdom reached its zenith during the reign of Etsu or King Muazu (1778 - 1795) and that after his death in 1795, there was dynasty struggle for the legitimate successor to the throne, and that the claim of Jimada was disputed by his cousin Majiya II". This, according to Professor Nadel, led to the split of the kingdom into two parts. He said while Jimada reigned in Gbara, the ancient city capital, Majiya II built for himself a new capital in Raba. Nadel further said that it was as a result of the inter - tribal war between the forces of Jimada and Majiya II, that a group of over 15,000 people who now call themselves Bassa Nge migrated from Gbara.

Nadel uses the name Bassa Nge in his book but this

book of 'Knowledge' wants to make it categorical, however, to all its readers or by whomsoever the book is read, that, prior to the unfortunate amalgamation of 1918 when a distinction was necessary, (so it was thought, for naturally, culturally, traditionally and historically, there are clear and glaring distinctions between the people who chose to call themselves "Bassa", since originally and historically, they are of Nupe tribe, and the people who originally were called "Abacha") between the two Bassas (those who start their question with "an attention-drawing word" MGE, (not NGE) meaning fully in Nupe, "MI GA E", meaning in English "I say E", while the questioner or the statement maker waits to receive the needed attention from the person to whom he or she is speaking or questioning; and those Bassas who originally were known and called "Abacha", who greet themselves with the word KOMU or KWOMU).

The former, the Bassa, being originally and naturally Nupe, are known historically to have migrated from the area of Egypt to Nupe land in Nigeria, while the latter, the Abacha, now Bassa, are originally and naturally said to have migrated to Nigeria from the Bantu race in South Africa.

The Bassa (Nge) were simply known and called Bassa, a shortened form of the Nupe sentence, "BA BO SA" meaning "here is nice or here is beautiful or here is suitable". The question that naturally follows is "for what?" and the answer naturally is, "for settling down or for living in".

Why the Name Bassa?

In the 1919 notes on The Tribes, Provinces, Estimates and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria by O. Temple, edited by C. L. Temple, page 462, it is stated clearly that the Bassa-Nge tribe inhabits or are found in the then Agbaja Division and the then Bassa Province where they then numbered 12,441 in population. It is known from records that Agbaja Division then comprised almost entirely the then Kwara

Federated N. A. or Kwara Division, the then Kabba Division and the then Igbirra Division.

It must be realised and accepted throughout the world that any group of people or any country or settlement must normally or usually derive its name from an event, or an object or a circumstance. For example, Ilorin derives its name from ILO IRIN, an object for sharpening iron. I went to see the object in Ilorin where it is historically preserved. Igbominas are said to be Ife Yoruba descendants whose leader came out from Ile Ife with a staff called "Ogbo" which the migrants believe was leading them on the right way to their new place of eventual settlement. It is clear and without any ambiguity that from that circumstance, the Igbominas got their name, "Ogbo lo mo ona" meaning, "It is Ogbo that knows the way", now formed into an ethnic group of the Yoruba tribe, known as the "Igbominas". The Dantoro Panel or Commission on which I served in 1976, that recommended the creation of more local government areas for Kwara State was shown the Ogbo staff during its tour of the then Igbomina-Ekiti Local Government Area.

Bida, headquarters of Gbako Local Government and largest city of Nupe land is from the Nupe sentence *Be yi da* meaning, "Come and let us go". Bida was said to be an Inn or resting place for travellers who after resting and were ready to go, would tell those not ready yet, "Bida", a shortened form of the sentence *Be yi da*. Idah, the headquarters of Idah Local Government Area, derives its name from the Igala sentence *Ile dah ke o* meaning, "the journey is eventually ended here". This was so when from historical narration, the Junkuns were pursuing the Igalas who could not cross the River Niger and could not continue their journey".

Not only Nigerian languages, but most languages all over the world like to shorten their sentences for convenience and to save time. Time and space will not

permit me to give too many examples in various languages but it is pertinent in this book to further give few other examples in both Hausa and Yoruba as follows: The name Sokoto is a shortened Hausa sentence. The full sentence is "SA KWATO" meaning, "put it in the sheath", indicating that perhaps a war or a fight had just ended and the warriors should put back their arrows in their sheaths. Gusau, the commercial town of Sokoto State where I lived for eleven (11) years, is in Hausa *Gun sau ka* and means in English, "a place for lodging or an Inn". Kontagora is a shortened Hausa sentence, *Kwanta a go ra* meaning, "rest on the ground", indicating perhaps, during the wars, the only way to cross from one side of the river or stream was to rest one's chest - stomach on the ground before getting to the other side. Ibadan, the largest city in Africa, south of the Sahara, in Yoruba means, "EBA ODAN" meaning, "the side of a fertile soil" while Abeokuta town in Yoruba means "ABE OKUTA" meaning, "under a rock or stone". Enugu in Ibo means the mouth or the bottom or side of a hill or hills. The word "boycott" derives its meaning from the name of Charles Cunningham Boycott, a retired army officer, who became an agent in 1873 for the Estates of Lord Ernie in Ireland, in an attempt to force the English Government to deal with the Irish situation, when in 1880, the country people refused to hand their crops over to Boycott, neither selling him any goods. Boycotting Boycott came in for heavy penalty under Crime Act of 1887.

One can go on multiplying names of places and tribes whose names are derived from events and circumstances throughout Nigeria and other parts of the world, but for the limitation of this exercise in this book, I should stop here.

So the word Bassa as far as it concerns Bassa (Nge) means in Nupe "Ba bo sa", unless one can, with acceptable authority, give an alternative and meaningful substitute.

I had as far back as 1956 suggested strongly and meaningfully that the name "Bassa" should be changed to "Nupe" or "Nupe tako" in view of the confusion that arose in the identical names between the Bassa (Nge) and the Bassa (Komu), and in view of the most annoying mixing up of the Bassa (Nge) - a distinct ethnic group of Nupe origin with nothing cultural, traditional, customary or way of life which identifies them as similar to the other ethnic group, the Bassa Komu.

The confusion was openly exhibited by the late Reverend Canon J. R. Oliver, an Anglican authority in charge of Lokoja/Bassa District Church Council, who out of ignorance asked me if there was any difference between the Bassa (Nge) and the Bassa (Komu). The question was a rude shock to me, as it should be to any, irrespective of tribe, who knows and can see clearly and naturally the differences between the two tribes. I however, told the late Rev. Canon J. R. Oliver, with humility and self-contained patience, that, if he was a conscientious Superintendent of Lokoja/Bassa District Church Council of the Anglican Mission for about four years, then living in Lokoja and dealing in any way or form with the two ethnic groups, he should have known the distinct differences between the two tribes in their characteristics, mode of dressing, mode of carrying loads, culture and other idiosyncrasies. The Bassa Komus were to be evangelised then from the Ondo Diocese, and, Kpata, the traditional headquarters of Bassa (Nge) land, and the original headquarters of the C. M. S. (Church Missionary Society), not only in the Bassa (Nge) District but the whole of the then Igala Native Authority, was suggested to be the headquarters of the evangelisation.

Late Mr. M. T. D. Ajakpo and I strongly objected reasonably and advised that the proposed headquarters be taken to the heart of Bassa Komu land because, the Bassa Komus were the ones to be evangelised. In addition, a

confusion would be caused if Bassa (Nge) land was used for the work.

This was because:

- (i) The first baptism by Bishop Ajayi Crowther between Lokoja and Bassa (Nge) land took place on 14th September, 1862 at Gbobe in Bassa (Nge) land. Thus, evangelism started with the Bassa Nge in 1862.
- (ii) The Bassa (Nge) Evangelists evangelised most part of Nupe land, especially the old Bida Emirate, the whole of (Bassa Nge) land and the whole of Oworo land.
- (iii) It would be an irony of action to evangelise in 1856, the land and people evangelised in 1862 and who themselves, evangelised as in (ii) above.

Oguma was then made the headquarters of the evangelism by the Ondo Diocese. The name "Bassa" without the word "Nge" attached to it also appears in the population census of Nigeria, held in November 1973, for Kogi Division, Lokoja District Historical Events, where it is clearly stated that it was the combination of Oworo, Nupe and Bassa that formed Lokoja in 1860.

Furthermore, in the map drawn by Dr. David William Balfour Baikie in 1854, it also shows clearly that the Bassa (not Bassa Nge) tribe or land was concentrated around Mount Pati of Lokoja and that the bulk of the ethnic group lived there. Up to the present time, a sizeable population of Bassa Nge live in and are natives of Adankolo (where a Bassa man from time immemorial had been the Etsu-village head, and where up to the present, a Bassa man is still the Etsu) as well as places like Banda, Eganaja, Geregu, Kpoko, Ero, Zongondaji, and others, and in which Bassa men in most cases are the Etsus - village heads and in each case,

the Bassa Nge population is in the majority.

There is no argument or doubt whatever, that these places, including Ajaokuta and other villages not mentioned here, have been their indigenous homes for well over a century or two.

CHAPTER 2

Bassa (Nge), Nupe and their Dialect

The Bassa Nge language which is originally Nupe language is seriously adulterated or corrupted as a result of the people's migration and domicile in Bunu land for about 38 years. They so wholeheartedly imbibed and adapted the Bunu dialect, custom, tradition and culture that even their own mode of greeting changed a great deal. Their way of respect to and for elders became adulterated, their way of religious or cultural worship changed a great deal, while even their family totems (family appellations) and their original Nupe language became distinctly corrupted into Bunu dialect, that is, corrupted Yoruba language, up to about ten per cent (10%).

All these facts notwithstanding however, it is a thing of joy to note and see that the Bassa Nge dialect retains about 90 per cent of its original Nupe language. But for this retention, it would have been most difficult and an uphill task to prove to anyone that the Bassa Nge is clearly a Nupe tribe.

A number of carefully selected 99 (ninety nine) words covering almost every aspect of human existence, religious, physiological, biological, and almost every human undertaking in life as shown in this chapter, will convince

anyone of the fact that the Bassa Nge ethnic group is simply and naturally Nupe. Here are the words so carefully and linguistically selected:

NUPE	BASSA	YORUBA	ENGLISH
Tinyi	Atinyi	Irun	Hair
Eti	Iti	Ori	Head
Yegun	Yegu	Iwaju ori	Forehead
Eye	Aye	Oju	Eye
Nyika	Aiko	Eyin	Tooth
Kpatsu	Kpatsu	Orun	Neck
Egwa	Agwo	Owo	Hand
Gbako	Gbako	Ikun	Stomach
Biye	Biye	Idi	Bottom
Bici	Bici	Ese	Foot
Ewo	Awo	Owo	Money
Ewo	Awu	Ewu	Gown
Yawo	Yawo	Iyawo	Bride
Eba	Iba	Okò	Husband
Egi	Igi	Omo	Child
Nda	Nda	Baba	Father
Nna	Nna	Iya	Mother
Magi	Magi	Bimo	Give birth
Kata	Kata	Ile	House
Zukun	Iku	Okò	Hoe
Zelibo	Zalibo	Ronu piwada	Repent
Kan	Kam	Okò	Farm
Cigba	Cigbo	Igi	Wood
Eyi	Ayi	Oka baba	G. Corn
Eci	Ici	Isu	Yam
Kaba	Kaba	Agbado	Maize
Ena	Ina	Ina	Fire
Eni	Ini	Obe	Soup
Ku be bonyi	Kabo	Kabo	Welcome
Babo	Bana	Nibi	Here
Woga	Wogo	Gboran	Obey
Soko	Soko	Olorun	God
Pati	Pati	Oke	Hill
Kuso	Kuso	Igbo	Forest
Nuwon	Nuwon	Omi	Water
Etswa	Atso	Osupa	Moon

NUPE	BASSA	YORUBA	ENGLISH
Tswangi	Tswangi	Irawo	Star
Yigidi	Igidi	Orun	Sun
Alubarika	Alubarika	Alubarika	Blessing
Enya	Inya	Ilu	Drum
Lafiya	Lafiya	Alafiya	Peace
Harilo	Harilo	Lilai	Forever
Etsu	Itsu	Oba	King
Katamba	Katamba	Afin	Palace
Roni	Roni	Ade	Crown
Bayele	Abaile	Jigi	Mirror
Egitsu	Igitsu	Omooba	Prince
Ekun	Iku	Ogun	War
Egun	Igu	Ogun	Inheritance
Tsutsu	Tsutsu	Iku	Death
Tswa ni mio	Tso nimio	So 'ra re	Be careful
Ekun	Iku	Oku	Corpse
Ninma	Ninma	Idunu	Joy
Sama	Sama	Sanma	Heaven
Ele	Ale	Ojo	Rain
Ligbe	Ligbe	Ogun	Medicine
Ege	Ige	Otin	Wine
Tsaka	Tsaka	Sokoto	Trouser
Tso ba mi	Tso bam	Sun mo mi	Come near me
Ebiko	Ebiko	Ida	Sword
Yele	Yele	Ana	In - law
Doko	Doko	Esin	Horse
Bishe	Abishe	Adie	Fowl
Nyika	Nyiko	Eja	Fish
Nyankpa	Nyakpa	Irin	Iron
Nampa	Napa	Ikoko	Hyena
Nanko	Anako	Malu	Cow
Naka	Nako	Eran	Meat
Manim	Manim	Ma a yo	Rejoice
Tswaba	Tswabu	Sora	Watch
Wangi	Ana	Ewure	Goat
Kingbagba	Aguto	Agutan	Sheep
Esa	Iso	Iyo	Salt
Edu	Edu	Oya	River
Duwa	Eduwa	Esumare	Rainbow
Gaba	Gaba	Kiniun	Lion
Kagbo	Kagbo	Agbara	Power

NUPE	BASSA	YORUBA	ENGLISH
Dagba	Dagba	Erin	Elephant
Gbogi	Gbogi	Obo	Monkey
Yema	Yema	Lakaye	Common sense
Zawangi	Azawangi	Enia	Human being
Esa	Esa	Ijoko	Seat
Eli	Ali	Iwa	Habit
Talaka	Talaka	Talika	Pauper
Yinze	Nze	Aiye	World
Egwagbaci	Agwagbaci	Alaini	Pauper
Magi	Magi	Bimo	Deliver child
Ewon	Iwon	Oyun	Pregnancy
Bakomba	Bakomba	Ibeji	Twins
Jinyebo	Jiyebo	Dupe	Give thanks
Bici	Bici	Sare	Run
Daza	Dazo	Rin	Walk
Epa	Ipa	Awo	Leather
Ekpo	Ekpo	Ferese	Widow
Nuguci	Nuguci	Egbon	Senior
Ndako	Ndako	Babanla	Grand father
Nnako	Nnako	Iyanla	Grand mother
Zabolugwa	Zabolugo	Olugbala	Redeemer

From the above selected names or words, one sees that except where "a" or "i" is placed before the Bassa Nge names or words, about 90 per cent of Nupe names or words are Bassa Nge names or words with the same meanings and the same pronunciation. It should be noted and it is interesting to know also, that where a word or a name is different in Bassa Nge dialect from that of Nupe, such a word or name has the same meaning in Yoruba language, even though the spelling may be different. For instance, the word "Kingbagba" in Nupe is "Aguto" in Bassa Nge, and "Agutan" in Yoruba, meaning the same thing. This means the Bassa Nge must have borrowed this name from the Bunu land during their domicile there, because, it is easier and quicker to be pronounced than the Nupe "Kingbagba".

The point I am making and which I believe I have abundantly and convincingly made is that the dialect of Bassa Nge as it is now being spoken, is originally Nupe language, and appears to be the true original Nupe language, as the Nupe language of the BINIS of Nupe land (the inhabitants of Doko area and its suburbs) is the original Nupe language. It is not the Bida Nupe language, which is mixed up, or corrupted with Hausa-Arabic words and definitely dominated by the two languages (Hausa and Arabic).

The present Nupe language as spoken in Bida and some other cosmopolitan Nupe towns and other towns throughout Nigeria is an admixture of Nupe, Hausa and Arabic as I have already highlighted. Some sentences are made to drive in my point and to convince us of the fact of my finding, they are:

- (i) *Mixture:* Mi wa wala a.
 Real Nupe: Mi wa sunga a.
 Meaning: I do not want trouble.

- (ii) *Mixture:* Lokoci nana zo re
 Real Nupe: Kami nana zo re
 Meaning: This time is hard

- (iii) *Mixture:* Etun mamaki wo lo sosanyio
 Real Nupe: Etun enyayeka wo lo gboro nyi o
 Meaning: You have acted marvelously.

Some or all of the words used in the mixture are Hausa - Arabic words borrowed through social, trade, religious or political interactions between the Nupe and the Hausa over centuries as it is a common phenomenon throughout the world. For example, a preponderance of English words are borrowed from Latin and French, while

words like, Salanga, Sanma, Arewa, Sango and so on are Yoruba words borrowed from the Hausa or Arabic language. These all come through factors that I have mentioned above. It is clear that this sort of healthy aspect of human activity will continue as long as the world lasts and as long as human tendencies about life are the same everywhere, given the same conditions and opportunities.

CHAPTER 3

Migration of the Bassa (Nge)

This group of Nupe people numbering over 15,000 in population and who later called themselves Bassa (no Bassa-Nge) migrated from Gbara in Nupeland, as already said in chapter I of this book. They migrated before the Fulani conquest in 1804, journeyed southwards and crossed the River Niger at a point opposite the present town of Patigi in Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Every research I have made shows that they were Nupes and were known and called so in their mother country - Nupe land before circumstances forced them to migrate. They were never called Bassa or Bassa Nge when they were in Gbara, neither were they called so immediately after leaving Gbara. But on their crossing the River Niger and settling down as a group and traditional and natural farmers, they found that the area was good for settlement and for farming purposes. They therefore sent some of the members of their group left behind and told them that where they crossed to was nice, pleasant and good for settlement, and that they should come and meet them at their newfound land. The full expression of the message in Nupe would be "Ba bo sa" but the shortened or colloquial form of the expression is "BA SA" instead of "BA BO SA". Since the group was generally and commonly known as

expressing and describing their new-found land as "BA SA" in most of their joyous expressions, they called themselves the "BA SA" group of the 15,000 Nupe tribe or people who left their mother country. Since the people called themselves as "BA SA", they became popularly known and called by all and sundry around them as "BA SA ZHI", meaning the Nupes who always expressed their newfound land as "BA SA".

During my 60 years of research, I happily discovered that such phenomenon is not akin to the Bassa(Nge) alone and that it is common all over Nigeria. For instance, among the Yoruba tribe or nation, you have the Ijeshas, the Ijebus, to give only few examples. From the original history, the Ijeshas derived their mythical name from an ancestor who was said to have been given as a sacrifice or a scapegoat to the "gods" hence, the name "IJE ORI SA", meaning the "food for the gods".

Similarly, the Ijebus are said to derive their name from an ancestor who was a "sacrificial lamb" or a "scapegoat" and was thrown into the forest to perish there. It is said that from these two "scapegoats", descendants of Ijeshas and Ijebus came out, hence they are called Ijeshas and Ijebus but they are naturally Yorubas. This is why even though the Nupe group of 15,000 people gave themselves the name Bassa, they are nonetheless Nupes naturally.

In the heart of the far north, we have exclusive and natural Hausa people who generally are known as Hausa. But, for example, people in Katsina and suburbs call themselves "Katsinawas" and people in Kano and suburbs call themselves "Kanawas" even though they are natural Hausas. So also in the Ibo area, almost all areas covering Igbo speaking people are known and called Igbo, but specifically, the area of Asaba, even though Igbo speaking, with a dialect not completely Igbo, is known as "An Ochas" and the people regard and call themselves as "Ane Ochas"

In the recent past, they would not take it kindly if you call them Igbo until the arrival of Zik — Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who unified and united the whole of Igbo speaking area one. From the few examples given, it is clear that the Bassa Nge people are naturally Nupes.

The Migration

The Bassa Nge, during their migration, settled down briefly at Kusogbogi, Bassagi, Patigi and Koro, all in Edu Local Government Area. Koro is a small town founded by the Bassa Nge and, up till now, the Koros proudly elaborate themselves by saying *Mi na a ma koro ezhi Bassa o na* meaning "I who was born in Koro the town or settlement of the Bassa". Nge is not added because, the word "Nge", was never added to the word "Bassa" until 1918. The Bassa Nge people settled down in Bunu land in Oyi Local Government Area (now Kabba/Bunu L.G.A.), where my research reveals the people domiciled for about 38 years. They accepted and adapted the totems (Yoruba oriki, Nupe kaye), such as Moagbo, Moori, Mooji, Ma agede, Moade, Modina, and so on which are being used up till today and, I believe, will continue to be used in centuries to come. Up till now, my research reveals there is a traditional festival in Bunu land which, when it takes place, a token sum of money traditionally belonging to the Bassa Nge group must be given out. One does not know who claims the money today but one is apparently safe to believe that such money is claimed by the descendants of the Bassa Nge who still remain in Bunu land and have become undoubtedly an rightfully natives of Oyi Local Government.

The Bassa Nge people, being original and industrious farmers, nearly occupied the whole of the farmland in Bunu land and it is said that, that annoyed the Bunus, the original settlers of the land, hence, quarrel ensued and the Bassa Nge people, not desiring to go to war or open conflict with

the friendly Bunus, decided to call it quits and continue their migration to the present Okehi and Okene Local Government Areas where they settled down and spread to the present Oworoland, founding the settlement of Emu, (corruption of the word Emi), in Nupe, meaning, home or village. The Bassa Nge occupied the then Agbaja Division covering places like the valley of the hills opposite Osara (Bassa Nge word for the wild tall grass known as *Atsara* which grows widely and abundantly around the whole valley of the stream), near the farm of the late Atta of Ebira, in Okehi Local Government and presently in Adavi Local Government Area; Apata, Obajana, Shokoshoko, now in Kogi Local Government Area, and spreading to Mt. Pati of Lokoja, where they definitely settled down and ruled permanently, occupying places like Ajara, Adankolo, Eganaja, Gaduma, Kpoko, Ero, Agbada, Geregu, Kere, and some of the places which are now in Kogi, Okene, Okehi, and Adavi Local Government Areas.

Some of the Bassa Nge traditional, cultural and historical relics or antiquities still exist and can be found in places like Mt. Pati, the valley around the hills near Osara and the farm of the late Atta of Ebira, Ero hill, Agbada, and other locations. These places were visited during the research of this work in order to identify and confirm the historical relics like the Bassa Nge pots, grinding and sharpening stones and the traditional trees usually planted by the Bassa Nge people. Trees like Aila, egu, yeye, egici, magaiwa, adere and so on, were planted in and around their homes or compounds.

Professor Nadel says the inter-tribal war between the followers of Jimada and Majiya II, respectively, made the 15,000 Nupe group, (later known as Bassa Nge), to migrate from Gbara, and continued their migration until they settled down on the right bank west of the River Niger on Mt. Pati of Lokoja. He said further that the war of tribal dynasty

continued to the people's new settlement and this caused them to abandon their secured home for the eastern bank of the River Niger.

Dr. David William Balfour Baikie, the leader of the Niger Expedition of 1845 confirmed this. He said that the people (Bassa Nge) were led by their king, Eshida, who died in 1832. When the Bassa Nge were forced to evacuate some of them still settled down at the right bank of the River Niger in places already mentioned in this book, while a great number crossed the river, led by Ashimwo Nyakp (1832 - 1860). They forcibly occupied Kpata (meaning all which was and is still the traditional headquarters of the Bassa Nge people. Other towns or villages where the people settled down earlier on the left bank of the River Niger are Ecewu (ye ce yi wu) meaning, you people come to our help or aid; Shitte, being pronounced as "Ezhi ette" meaning the village or settlement for catching fish; Shintaku, being fully pronounced as "Ezhi takun" meaning, the village containing stones. The names of other villages in Bassa Nge District will be clearly shown in a map in this book.

The first inhabitants of the present Bassa Nge land were the Appahs (now known as Junkuns), the Okpotos (now known as the Idomas), the Igbirra Kotos (historically known as Igbirra Kpanda), the Kakandas (who mostly and always are on the river), and, known or called by the Bassa Nge as Shebes, from their greeting, "Wa shiaba". The Igalas were also found on the land. Some of these inhabitants lived and are still on the left bank of both Rivers Niger and Benue in towns or villages known as Mozun, Gande, Gbobe Shintakun, Adanakpa and Koji.

It is significant and a thing of joy to know that the Bassa Nge people did not only live among these tribes peacefully and happily when they crossed from their various homes on the side of Lokoja, but that these tribes (Kakanda, Igbirra koto, Igala) and they, were inter - marrying happily before

the advent of the Europeans and are still inter-marrying. They were ruled by the Etsu of Bassa Nge but Mozun, however, has never come under the rule of the Etsu Bassa Nge. It has always been a separate small district on its own under the Atta of Igala.

It is surprising but interesting to know that the migration of the Bassa Nge extended to Akunu in Ondo State of Nigeria. The Akunus, who ever since have their district dialect and speak Yoruba as a second language, are historically Bassa Nge. This fact of history is confirmed by the elders of the Akunu people. One of the principal figures of their elders is Reverend Aaron A. Obasoro, a centenarian who died only about two years ago and who worked for many years as an Evangelist and an ordained Anglican Priest in Lokoja/Bassa Nge District Church Council. He was about 105 years old when the Rt. Rev. Herbert Haruna, the Anglican Bishop of Kwara Diocese, his wife, my own wife and I, visited him at Akunu in 1985.

The parting of the Akunus with the Bassa Nge, their original ethnic group, was said to have come between 1842 and 1860, when the present Lokoja was established by the combination of Nupe, Oworo, and Bassa in 1860. The parting took place at Eganaja when the great grandfathers of the present Bassa Nge people insisted on crossing the Niger to the other side and the great grandfathers of the present Akunus decided to migrate Southwest. The Bassa Nge call them Akuya while the Yoruba call them Akonu meaning, those thrown away or those we have left behind. The Akunus call themselves Bassa up till today historically.

It is also interesting to know that the great grandfathers of the present Bassa Nge in addition, appeared to have crossed with a minority group known as 'Gene'; a group completely absorbed by the Bassa Nge, even though the group has its original dialect, custom, tradition and culture. The members of the group are professional blacksmiths

throughout Bassa Nge land and concentrate in Kpata, where one finds some concentrations of them dotted here and there in the land. Their totem (family group appellation) is "Moogun" as it is in Yoruba. *Omo ogun* means the "son of the god of iron". So, in Bassa Nge land, if anyone is greeted with that totem — "Moogun", one knows that the one so greeted is a "Gene" by origin and not original Bassa - Nup tribe. The Genes are, like they are in Ebiraland, the experts in the making of hoes of different sizes, suitable for various cultivations of farm work; making cutlasses, axes, arrows of different categories for hunting various sizes or species of animals; fish darts, sickles, hand darts and dane guns.

The generation of practical and practising Genes is apparently diminishing, especially in Kpata. It is important that we must not allow this group of people to die out. In other places like in Ebiraland, their descendants are still practising and very much modernising the industry or trade even though they have western education and training. The Genes, as already mentioned, are so completely absorbed by integration into Bassa Nge custom, tradition and culture that the present generations of both the Genes and the Bassa Nge do not and cannot differentiate between them and from each other.

We have become an indivisible one, but water will always find its own level and yet be useful and serviceable to its own and other surroundings.

CHAPTER 4

The Scheme of Crossing

The compelling force that necessitated the inevitable migration of the Bassa Nge who had settled down and inhabited Mt. Pati of Lokoja (the name "Pati" being given by the Bassas to the Niger Expedition of 1841, who were met on the mountain), Ajara, Eganaja, Akpacha, Gboga, Ero, Kpoko, Kere, Geregu, and Ajaokuta, was the devastating raids by the horsemen troops of Masaba, Etsu Nupe, between 1840 and 1860.

One Ameh Aboko, the village head of Gbobe, revealed to the Expedition that the incessant raids of Masaba's horsemen troops for about two years disturbed the Bassas (*Nge was yet to be added to the name*) and caused their migration from Lokoja side. O. Temple, in his writing, told us that the Bassa Nge inhabited and settled down in places like Kogbe, Eganaja, Ero, Patigo (a place opposite the present Zangon Daji near Lokoja Army Barracks on Okene-Kabba Road). Bassaman, from time immemorial and up to the present time, is the village head of Zangon Daji and its suburbs.

The groups and their clan leaders crossed the Niger-Benue Rivers at different strategic places as shown in tabular form below:

The Scheme of Migration by Clans

Group	Clan Leader	Area of Take-Off	Area Migrated To	Approximate Year
A.	KUTAIDU	Egeneja	Kpata Takunkporo	1850 - 60
	ANKULE AMEDE	Eganja	Kegbo	"
	ASHIMWO	"	Gom	"
	AJIBOLE	"	Kogbe	"
	KILAYE EKUM	"	Emitifi	"
	<i>Sub-Clan Leaders</i>			
	AKPALE	"	Kpata-kpale	"
	EGUN	"	"	"
	BALA	"	"	"
	LEDE	"	"	"
B.	<i>Clan Leaders:</i>			
	AICIM	Gbaga	Ecewu	"
	EGUN	"	"	"
	SHIBAYE	"	Shitte	"
C.	<i>Clan Leaders</i>			
	MOKO	Kpoko	Koji	"
	DICE	"	Akpotoku	"
D.	<i>Clan Leaders</i>			
	AKO	Ajaokuta	Dodogbagi	"
	MELEM	"	Kpobi	"
		"	Agadagbafu	"
		"	Ayeregaga	"

My research and circumstances surrounding the migration across the River Niger show without contradictions that groups A and B were ferried across from the Lokoja side by the canoes of Ameh Aboko, the village head of Gbobe and that groups C and D were ferried across by the canoes of Amanambo, the village head of Adanakpa. It is also clear in the history and village locations of the area that both Gbobe and Adanakpa villages are among the existing riverine settlements on the other side of Lokoja and that the village heads of both villages were fief holders from the Atta of Igala before the powerful clans of the Bassa Nge crossed from Lokoja side.

As to the date of migration by each clan from Lokoja side, one can say with a degree of certainty that the well

organised migration was between 1850 and 1860 for the following reasons:

- (a) In the account of the Niger Expedition of 1854, as given by Ameh Aboko, the village head or chief of Gbobe, who kidnapped Bishop Ajayi Crowther, his son Dandeson, the other son, and others in September 1867, which eventually resulted to the killing of Mr. Fell by poisoned arrows; and as given also by Dr. David William Balfour Baikie, the leader of the Expedition, the former told Dr. Baikie that the people called Bassas had settled down at Kpata (spelt Patta) and Ecewu (spelt Tsewu), who were the inhabitants of Mt. Pati and who were met there by the Expedition in 1841, were forced to evacuate their settlement because of the disturbances caused by Masaba's devastating raids for two years.
- (b) The expedition also remarked that the settlements at Mt. Pati and other places on the side of Lokoja were considerably reduced in 1854 as compared with the settlements in 1841; this was 13 years after.
- (c) To confirm the years of the organised migration, O. Temple in his account in 1919, when the Bassa became known and called Bassa Nge, said that the Bassa Nges inhabited Kabba Province in the neighbourhood of Ero, Kogbe, Eganaja, and Patigom and paid tribute to the Emir of Bida and that about the year 1840 to 1850, when they had no more slaves with which to pay the Emir as usual, and armed force was sent against them.

From this account, it is clear that that was the period the entire Oworo and Bunu areas were devastated and the

Bassas, knowing what had earlier caused their original migration from their motherland in Nupe land, chose to embark and did embark on another organised migration across the Niger, this time doing it unitedly, wisely and successfully between 1850 and 1860.

From that time, over 130 years ago, up to the present time, all the areas that the clan leaders and their followers migrated to have become Bassa Nge land and are both politically and administratively known as Bassa Nge District. Even though history and tribal wars that ensued after the crossing prove that it was not all that smooth sailing for the Bassa Nge people who crossed to the other side or eastern bank of the Niger, events proved also that those who crossed had, after serious inter tribal wars, at last found another newfound land for permanent settlement, especially at the arrival, very fortunately, of the Royal Niger Company and the take over of the political administration of the former Kabba Province and later, the conquest of Bida and the entire Northern Nigeria by the British colonial administrators from 1890's. The wars and their results, which the Bassa Nge went to with few other tribes after crossing, are recorded in Chapter 9 of this book. The sections or groups of the Bassa Nge people who were adamant not to cross but remained and founded new settlements from Eganaja right down to Ajaokuta were no longer disturbed or raided, as the Royal Niger Company and the British colonial administrators took over effectively, the administration of the entire Kabba Province. There was relative peace everywhere as slave trading and raiding for slave tributes were stopped. Thanks be to God.

During this long interregnum when the Bassa Nge ethnic group of the Nupe tribe were physically separated, a group on the other side (left) of the Niger and the other group of this side (right) of the Niger, it is joyful and interesting to know from my research and personal

observation, that the "oneness" of the people had never been toyed with or given out for negotiation on an unpatriotic circumstance. The Bassa Nge dialect did not change and has not changed from both sides of the Niger except for some 'provincialism' (which does happen to all tribes anywhere) and which we, the Bassa Nge, call "Bassa Tako", but which does not cause any difference in the meaning of words, but only in pronunciation.

For one or two examples, majority of the Bassa Nge people will say, *A zam zhi* while a few minority will say, *A sam si*, or *M cece*, while a few minority will say *M she she* all meaning the same. "*Azam zhi*" in English means "my people", while "*m cece*" in English means "I have not just"...

It is the same in Yoruba where a section of people say, *ki lo n se?* and another section will say *ki lo n se?* without a dot at the bottom of the 's' or without making 'h' to go with the 's'.

The Bassa Nge man or woman, boy or girl is a Bassa Nge of the Nupe tribe anywhere under all circumstances, so we are one in name but may differ in character, which is natural all over the world even if people come out of the same womb. Even though the crossing to the left bank of the River Niger is real, there are still pockets of the Bassa Nge in Ogaminana, Obangede and Kuroko areas who are natives of the areas but claim their origin to the Bassa. The former Governor of Kwara State, Alhaji Adamu Atta said this in 1979 when the Bassa Nge delegation went to congratulate him at Ilorin. Up till now, there are people in Kuroko who for all intent and purpose are Ebira, but claim to be Bassa by origin. They say proudly, *Emi ozi Bassa*. The original name for Kuroko was "Iku-Oroko" meaning "war always". This shows that the Bassas first settled at Kuroko before moving because of war.

CHAPTER 5

Settlement on Left Hand Side of the Niger

As has already been highlighted, the Bassa Nge people were forced to evacuate their new - found settlements on Mt. Pati of Lokoja and suburbs, and left for the eastern bank of the River Niger. It must be noted however, that even after majority of them had left their settlements on the side of Lokoja, such as Ajara, Kporo, (opposite where Zangondaji now situates on the old Lokoja - Okene - Kabba Road) Ero, Iti' Anyi, known as Meme bridge, the Bassa people did not completely leave their settlements on the right hand side of the western bank of the River Niger because, in 1919, they still remained, as they remain today as one of the indigenous tribes in the then Agbaja Division. The division then, covered Kogi, Koton karfi, part of the present Yagba West and Yagba East, Okene, Okeho, Ajaokuta, and Adavi Local Government Areas.

The Kporo settlement of Lokoja side is the same name given by the leader of the Kutaidu group or clan which first crossed the River Niger from Kpede when the clan settled down near Kpata at a place near the present site of Eriwota, the trinity stone shrine of Kpata. The quarters of the clan in Kpata where the clan settled down permanently later and up till now is called Takunkporo. It is popularly

and authoritatively said, as recorded in chapter four of this book, that five clans or groups of the Bassa Nge crossed the River Niger for settlement at Kpata. These clans or groups are as follows in order of crossing:

1. Kutaidu clan or group.
2. Kilaye - Ekun clan or group.
3. Ankule - Amede clan or group.
4. Ajibole clan or group.
5. Ashimwo clan or group.

Their quarters or wards at Kpata are as follows, up till today:

Kutaidu ward (Efu, in Nupe/Bassa)	Takunkporo
Ekun ward	Emitifi
Ankule - Amede ward	Kegbo
Ajibole ward	Kogbe
Ashimwo ward	Gom

The new but inevitable migration by the Bassa Nge from their areas of settlements on the side of Lokoja was confirmed by Dr. Baikie, the leader of the Niger Expedition of 1845. He said the people called Bassa Nge established settlements at Kpata and Ecewu and that the people were led by their king, Eshida, who was, until his death in 1832, the king or Etsu of the Bassa Nge. Etsu Eshida was of Kutaidu clan and of Takunkporo ward of Kpata. It is said that after the death of Etsu Eshida in 1832, Ashimwo Nyakpa succeeded him from 1832 - 1860 and that Amkpolo ruled from 1860, when the present Lokoja was established by the combination of Nupe, Oworo and Bassa, to 1888. The details of the traditional chieftaincy or ruling houses of Bassa Nge are given in Chapter Six of this book.

Besides, Kpata (meaning all) was the traditional headquarters of the Bassa Nge and also the administrative

headquarters until 1918, when for obvious reasons that will be given in this book, the administrative headquarters were taken or moved to Gboloko. All the same, Kpata, for various reasons, stands conspicuously as leader - town for all Bassa Nge towns and villages. There are several other towns and villages occupied, founded or colonised as settlements by the Bassa Nge people as they crossed, such as Ecewu, Shittu, Kpobi, Gboloko, Takete, Akabe, Ake, Emiboci, Emitsado, Amonoku, Effin, Atte, Egene, Emi - Awale, Kpata - kpale, Ajigido, Atsagba, Emi-fobida, Emi-eronu, Magana, Egeneja, Amewa, Agbaitsu, Adum Woiwo, Emi Abaida, Elule, Emi Abogo, Egbo, Eforo, Tekumen, Ekido, Emi Audu, Emi Acinze, Emi Anderu, Emi Labuja, Emi Dojo, Emi Elegun, Dodogbagi, Eroko, and many other hamlets besides places like Gbobe, Atakpa, Gande, Shintaku, Adanakpa, Koji in the District and which serve as local river ports to the district.

The length of Bassa Nge District is 42 miles ($67\frac{1}{5}$ kilometres), while the breadth is 17 miles ($27\frac{1}{5}$ kilometres). There are settlements on both banks of the Niger and Benue Rivers whose citizens are Igbirra (Egburra) koto, Igala and Kakanda tribes respectively with fairly reasonable Bassa Nge born elements living among them and inter - marrying among all the tribes as citizens. All the citizens, as well as their settlements, are ruled by the Etsu Bassa Nge, who is the paramount traditional ruler of the land. To avoid any iota of doubt, I have earlier said some groups of the people did not cross over to the left-hand side of the River Niger but remained and still remain from Adankolo down to Ajaokuta where they are indigenous citizens by every qualification and consideration. It has also been proved as stated in Chapter Three, that a group known as Akunu migrated down to Ondo State of Nigeria where they are undoubtedly and rightly indigenous citizens since then and up to the present time.

Even though the various clans of the Bassa Nge that

crossed the Niger to the left hand side or bank appeared to have settled down fairly peacefully and happily, there remains a lot of organisation to be carried out in each of the settlements in order to claim satisfactory control and supremacy over the land and the tribes that had had settlements in the land before the new comers - the Bassa Nge ethnic group of the Nupe tribe, came and settled down. The Bassa Nge ethnic group had had the administrative techniques of governance from their motherland, Gbara, in Nupe land, and as a group, they had kingship and dynastic organisation even when they were in their settlement on the Mt. Pati of Lokoja. As it has also been clearly and indisputably proved that there was the king or Etsu Bassa (not Etsu Bassa Nge) on the Mt. Pati of Lokoja in 1832 when the Niger Expedition got there, and that it was the Etsu Bassa who told the leader of the expedition, after questioning to know the name of the settlement, that the name was "Pati", meaning "mount or hill", in Nupe/Bassa, hence the settlement or mount was called "Mount Pati", the expedition little realising that Mount means Pati and vice versa.

In Chapter Nine, the involvement of the Bassa Nge people after their settlements in their new homes, in six serious wars, in order to prove their supremacy over the tribes they met there and in order to achieve peace and peaceful co - existence is clearly narrated. It is said, and I believe correctly too, that if you want peace, you must be prepared for war and this appears to be the case for the Bassa Nge ethnic groups of the Nupe tribe who crossed and found each a new home or settlement on the left hand side of the great River Niger between 1850 and 1860.

After the wars and the intervention of the Royal Niger Company, as well as British colonial masters, there was peaceful co-existence in the Bassa Nge District and among all the tribal citizens occupying the land with Etsu Bassa Nge as the paramount natural ruler of the land.

CHAPTER 6

Traditional Chieftaincy Titles and Sub-Chiefs

Under the five clans of the Bassa (Nge) groups that crossed the River Niger and settled down at Kpata, it has been said that King or Etsu Eshida was the Etsu Bassa Nge until his death in 1832 and that Etsu Ashimwo Nyakpoda succeeded him from 1832 to 1860, when the present Lokogbo was established, with the combination of the Nupe, the Oworo and the Bassa. All these took place at the Lokogbo side of the River Niger and it was established indisputably that the Bassa Nge had continued to have traditional paramount chiefs even when they were migrating from place to place and this proves their hereditary rulership and traditional administrative powers from time immemorial.

The following leaders, the names of their clans, the wards, their ruling houses, their approximate period of rule, the number of years they ruled and the necessary remarks that are shown very clearly are reviewed after the author's painstaking and long years of careful research. A research which convincingly proves, except for human tendencies of fallibility, these facts are as recorded below:

- A. (i) Name of leader: Eshida and Ajoto
- (ii) Name of clan: Kutaidu
- (iii) Name of ward: Takunkporo

- B. (i) Name of leader: Kilaye and Ekum
(ii) Name of clan: Ekum
(iii) Name of ward: Emi tifi
- C. (i) Name of leader: Ankule
(ii) Name of clan: Amede
(iii) Name of ward: Kegbo
- D. (i) Name of leader: Ajibole
(ii) Name of clan: Ajibole
(iii) Name of ward: Kogbe
- E. (i) Name of leader: Ashimwo
(ii) Name of clan: Ashimwo
(iii) Name of ward: Gorn

Ruling House A:

Name of Ruling House: NYAKPA

Name of Etsu (King): Ashimwo Nyakpa

Approximate Year of Rule: 1833 - 1860

No. of years Ruled: 27

Remarks: Ruled on Mount Pati of Lokoja

Name of Etsu (King): Amkpolo Nyakpa

Approximate year of Rule: 1860 - 1888

No. of Years Ruled: 28

Remarks: Ruled at Kpata.

Ruling House B:

Name of Ruling House: ETAN

Name of Etsu (King): Mayaki Etan

Approximate year of Rule: 1888 - 1912

No. of years Ruled: 24

*Remarks: Granted independence by Lord Lugard;
turbaned by Ag. Governor William Wallace*

at Lokoja. He was sent to Bida to receive recognition from Etsu Nupe, grandfather of the present Etsu Nupe, HRH Alhaji San'Allah Ndayako. He was empowered by the British governor to appoint his policemen and messengers for enforcement of order throughout Bassa Nge land. The names were Sidi, Agbem, Eja, and Ashe. They were dreaded and called "Korofo Mayaki" throughout the land. Captain Bynhall, the powerful Resident of Kabba Province, Lokoja, in his official report in 1914, confirmed the appointment and recognition of Mayaki Etsu as Etsu Bassa Nge District by William Wallace, the Ag. Governor of the Royal Niger Company.

Name of Etsu (King): Eri Etan

Approximate year of Rule: 1912 - 1914

No. of years Ruled: 2

Remarks: Mayaki and Eri were of the same father and were both from Eta Ruling House. He had all the powers Mayaki Etan, his elder brother had.

Name of Etsu (King): Mopa Mayaki

Approximate year of Rule: 1915 - 1930

No. of years Ruled: 15

Remarks: He was the first Etsu Bassa Nge to receive official paraphernalia, that is staff of office - trumpet (Kakaki) and hammock. He was the first Etsu Bassa Nge to live in Gboloko because of Takete war and disturbances by the order of Resident Bynhall of Lokoja. Of all the traditional reigning Etsus of Bassa Nge, he was the most elegant, the best horse rider,

the best known ceremoniously-dressed Etsu in pomp and pageantry and was full of wisdom and practical justice. He used to say "*Emi Mopa Mayaki agbo ma bi*" meaning, "I, Mopa Mayaki, who am wise and I know or recognise faults". In Yoruba, it is "*Emi, Mopa Mayaki mo logbon mebi*". He was popularly known in Lokoja and throughout the former Kabba Province. He was a friend to the late Atta of Ebira and Tsoniya (Saraoniya Queen), the woman ruler or chief of Stobe (Itobe) who visited him with pomp and pageantry between 1921 and 1922 as the Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon in Jerusalem as recorded in 1st Kings, chapters 10 to 13. His reign was typical of the styles of reigns of northern Emirs and Chiefs in that he had not less than six horses, eight royal drummers, and six horse guides (Zagis) with befitting uniforms.

Name of Etsu (King): Lerama Amkpolo Nyakpa

Approximate year of Rule: 1934 - 1939

No. of years Ruled: 5

Remarks: He refused to regard himself as a subordinate chief to the Atta of Igala. The Resident of Kabba Province then, Mr. E.K. Featherstone threatened to distool him if he (HRH Lerama Amkpolo Nyakpa), insisted in refusing to regard the Atta of Igala as his superior. He carried on with his threat because Etsu Lerama stood his ground firmly by saying that the history of the royal ruling houses of the Bassa Nge did not tell him that the Bassa Nge Etsus were ever under the Atta of Igala and that his own father, Amkpolo (Gadagba)

was never under any of the Attas of Ig
Etsu Lerama was distooled in 1939. He
not regret as he was convinced that
tradition and his people were solidly beh
him.

Name of Etsu (King): Ali Mopa Mayaki Etan

Approximate year of Rule: 1939 - 1944

No. of years Ruled: 5

Remarks: He agreed, unfortunately, to be a sub
ordinate Etsu Bassa Nge to the Atta of Ig
He did not get genuine support of his peop
he did not reign long and was removed.

Name of Etsu (King): Umoru Eri Etan

Approximate year of Rule: 1944 - 1946

No. of years Ruled: 2

Remarks: He was brought from Koton Karfi whe
he was the N. A. Treasurer. He was the N.
Treasurer that earlier paid salary to the At
of Igala who first earned salary from th
government or the N. A. He was removed
Idah from his royal stool to become th
Councillor for all districts in the Igala N.
apparently to destroy Bassa Nge chieftainc
tradition and was forced to be brought bac
by the strong and effective agitation an
protests of the then powerful Bassa Ng
National Union (B. N. N. U.).

Name of Etsu (King): Umoru Eri Etan

Approximate year of Rule: 1956 - 1962 (Second time)

No. of years Ruled: 6

Remarks: He was cleverly removed to Idah again for
the same post. The B. N. N. U. again protested

strongly to the Resident, Kabba Province and he was returned; he left the stool finally on his own.

Name of Etsu (King): Adama Lerama Amkpolo
Nyakpa

Approximate year of Rule: 1969 - 2003

No. of years Ruled: 34

Remarks: He was one of the sons of Lerama. His father was wrongly distooled for refusing to regard himself as subordinate to the Atta of Igala. He has training in Local Government Administration. He was tricked to allow Bassa Nge District to go to Benue State despite the massive and popular opinions and demonstrative actions against the bemeaning incident. As a result of this unfortunate merging of the Bassa Nge District with Benue State, the Etsu Bassa Nge became an Etsu (our paramount and guarded chief) without an official staff of office which the B. N. N. U. fought for and regained for the Etsu during Governor Bamgboye's regime. As this remarks aspect on HRH Adama Lerama was concluded in 1988, I said, " I pray for the regaining of his appropriate staff of office wherever the Bassa District is but Bassa Nge people do not belong to Benue State, all facts considered".

After many years of the author's chronological research, it can be seen, as a matter of fact, that there are two ruling houses (KATAMBAZHI) in Bassa Nge land and both are in Kpata, the traditional headquarters of the land. All facts of history support and confirm that both Mayaki and Eri were

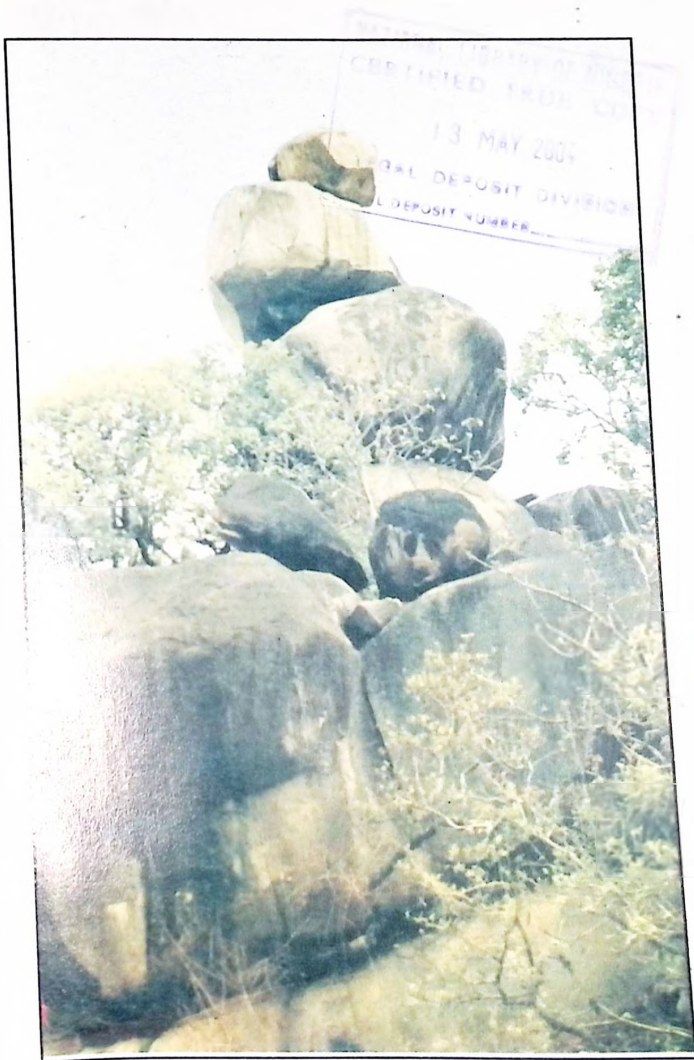
born of the same father, Etan and therefore, in science history, there could not have been a Ruling House of May separately and a Ruling House of Eri separately. Etan is focus and base from where both Mayaki and Eri "sprang up" and so, both Mayaki and Eri biologically, are the direct descendants or descendants of Etan. The correct ruling houses of Bassa Nge land should be and are therefore:

1. EMI NYAKPA (Nyakpa Ruling House)
KATAMBA NYAKPA, from where Amkp and Lerama descended.
2. EMI ETAN (Etan Ruling House)
KATAMBA ETAN, from where Mayaki and Eri descended.

Sub-Chiefs or Traditional Rulers

Throughout Bassa Nge land or District, there are traditional sub - chiefs known as Gagos (Egbagi in Nupe) who owe traditional allegiances to the Etsu Bassa Nge, the paramount traditional ruler. The name Gago is a borrowed word and should be known in Nupe or Bassa Nge as EGBA and should be better called Egbazhi. The word in full Bassa Nge or Nupe is *Yi e gba* or *Yi a gba* meaning, "we the sub - chiefs have surrendered to the paramount chief, we are following him".

By my research, out of the 14 Gagos (Egbas) in Bassa Nge District, only five are of Igala origin while the remaining nine are of Bassa Nge origin but all owe traditional, administrative and political allegiance to the Etsu Bassa Nge, the paramount ruler.



The Symbolic Kpata Rock



The Kpata Mission House



Ecewu Traditional Market



HRH Late Alhaji Adama Lerama
Etsu Bassa Nge
(1969 - 2003)

CHAPTER 7

Non-Traditional or Politically Appointed District Heads of Bassa (Nge) Land

It is interesting and remarkable to know that the then Igala Native Authority used all devices at its disposal to destroy the traditional ruling houses of Bassa Nge immediately after the so called amalgamation of Bassa Nge land with the Igala land in 1918. As a result of the unfortunate amalgamation and the Igalas using their numerical strength and position, with the Atta of Igala as the highest traditional ruler and the Igalas taking advantage of their earlier settlement on the land before the Bassa Nge crossed to the land to settle down, and with the support of our colonial administrators and masters, three non - traditional chiefs or district heads were forcibly and politically imposed on the Bassa Nge District by the then Igala Native Authority.

The non - traditional chiefs were:

1. Anaja Wujwo, from Gbobe, ruled from 1928 - 1933 (after the reign of HRH Mopa Mayaki Etan, the Etsu Bassa Nge from 1915 - 1928 [13 years]). Anaja Wujwo was removed from office for misrule after ruling for five years.

This was as a result of several petitions by the Bassa Nge elements against his misrule generally. He was jailed in the Lokoja Prison for reasons into which the government instituted an inquiry and found him guilty.

2. Audu Gboloko from Egeneja, ruled from 1948-1956, against genuine and rightful opposition, after the reign of HRH Umoru Eri (1944 - 1946), who was tactically and cleverly removed to Idah as Councillor for District in order to destroy the traditional chieftaincy of the Bassa Nge land. Audu Gboloko was also removed from office after several petitions and rightful protests by the Bassa Nge people including the author for utter misrule and his non-entitlement by tradition, culture or custom, to rule Bassa Nge land and people. He was removed by the government when the powerful, well-organised, well-administered and united Bassa Nge National Union rose truthfully and unitedly against him and proved his misdeeds, such as oppression, victimisation, suppression and other vices. A solicitor and advocate, Mr. Ayodele G. Onagoruwa, from the Western Region of Nigeria was employed by the B. N. N. U. in 1955 to prove and defend their case in the Court of Justice. B. N. N. U. later and rightly won the case and Audu Gboloko was removed from office by the government, in 1956.

3. Abdullahi Ajo, another man from the same Egeneja, ruled from 1963 - 1969, after the second tenure of HRH Alhaji Umoru Eri (1955 - 1963).

- 1962). Abdullahi Ajo was appointed and removed by death before the district could succeed to cause his removal by the government as did happen to Audu Gboloko, his predecessor in the act of usurping the traditional throne of the Bassa Nge land and people. HRH Alhaji Umoru Eri, was, for the second time, removed to Idah for the same purpose of destroying Bassa Nge traditional chieftaincy rule, but, Abdullahi Ajo's appointment was vehemently kicked against as in the case of the first mentioned two non-traditional and politically-appointed District Heads.

It is certain that no local government in the Federal Republic of Nigeria will permit or support the erosion or destruction of any traditional chieftaincy in the way that of the Bassa Nge District was eroded and destroyed tactically by the then Igala Native Authority from 1918 to 1969. The glaring and painful injustice in this action is recorded in the population census of Nigeria of November, 1973, in the Historical Events for Kogi Division, Lokoja District; where it clearly stated as follows, "Atta of Igala and Atta of Igbirra seized Bassa Nge and Lokoja respectively in 1918". That was how Lokoja District and Bassa Nge District came under the rules of the then Igala Native Authority and the then Igbirra Native Authority until each area or district fought and liberated itself.

The fate of Lokoja District and Bassa Nge District each seems to be the same and tied together historically as revealed in this book but, thanks be to God that each district is independent today and each paramount chief (Maigari of Lokoja and Etsu Bassa Nge) has got his official staff of office restored to him. The Maigari of Lokoja now with First

Class staff of office and the Etsu Bassa Nge now with Second Class staff of office, with expectation of First Class staff of office in the near future.

Thanks to God Almighty, the era of imposing non-traditional and politically-appointed chiefs or paramount rulers, like that which unfortunately happened in both Bassa Nge land and Lokoja has gone forever. It is believed that by the exit of such era, genuine tradition, culture and custom of the people will be given a sincere chance to grow naturally and progress, development, peace and happiness will reign supreme in the land.

CHAPTER 8

The Role of Kpata Before and After the Crossing

The role the leaders of the Bassa Nge people on the other side of Lokoja played while they were there and the role they played in some groups or clans crossing, and, after some had crossed to Kpata, Ecewu, Shitte and other places in Bassa Nge land has already been established. There are incontrovertible factors showing the role Kpata played as some clans or groups crossed and settled down in their present settlements in the district.

Firstly, Kpata, the traditional, administrative and political headquarters of Bassa Nge, until HRH Mopa Mayaki Etan, the paramount ruler was ordered to go to Gboloko and live there as a result of the Takete war and frequent disturbance, when it was believed that one Captain Cooper, a British soldier, was killed at Takete, which proved later not to be true, was looked up to by the entire Bassa Nge District for guidance, protection and leadership.

Secondly, the two traditional ruling houses of Bassa Nge land as shown in this book, were and are still in Kpata. They are, for avoidance of doubt, as follows:

1. EMI or KATAMBA NYAKPA
2. EMI or KATAMBA ETAN

As already shown in chapter six, Mayaki and Eri are

descendants of Etan and so it is grossly erroneous to say Mayaki Ruling House and Eri Ruling House. Equally true, Amkpolo and Lerama are descendants of Nyakpa and so it is erroneous to say Amkpolo Ruling House and Lerama Ruling House. Indisputedly, the two ruling houses are Kpata, one at Gom Ward and the other at Kogbe Ward. This means that the remaining three wards, namely Takunkpor, Emitifi and Kegbo, though in Kpata, cannot and should not naturally, traditionally and otherwise present a candidate for the Etsuship of the Bassa Nge District or land. They may have appropriate traditional chieftaincy titles of Kpata or Bassa Nge land as any Bassa Nge deserving person (man or woman) may have the title conferred on him or her by the Etsu of Bassa Nge land. Such an appropriate title can equally be conferred on any deserving non-Bassa Nge citizen in or outside Bassa Nge land by the Etsu of Bassa Nge land.

Thirdly, both Eshida, who until his death in 1832 and Ashimwo Nyakpa, who succeeded him from 1832 - 1866 were Etsu Bassa Nge, settled down in Kpata the then traditional, administrative and political headquarters of Bassa Nge land until the seat was moved to Gboloko.

Also, Kpata is the original home of places like Agbaitesu, Takete, Atsagba, Ajigido, Kpata kpale, Emi Agbaida, Emi Adama, Magana, Emi Gunni and others because these settlements were founded by Kpata people.

There is hardly any village or town in Bassa Nge land that Kpata families have not got one or more of the members of their families in. This means that Kpata, virtually, is substantially related to almost every town or village in Bassa Nge land either by marriage (which is blood relation), or by founding the village or town, or by usual settlement in the village.

Every town or village looked up to Kpata traditionally, administratively, socially, judicially, religiously and

politically, especially in times of internecine wars.

Lastly, Kpata's prowess in wars made her play conclusive and lasting saving role in the entire Bassa Nge land and beyond.

Today, Kpata is still playing some of these roles even though in varied and circumstantial ways and capacity but, as the natural name indicates, Kpata is for all and the head of all Bassa Nge land and people; and the average and well meaning Bassa Nge man, woman, boy or girl knows this and or should know this. If this was not known earlier than now, with thanksgiving to God, this is the major reason why this selfless research has taken 60 years to produce this "Knowledge" book.

CHAPTER 9

The Six Wars

After the well-organised and successful group crossing of the leaders and their groups to the left hand bank of the Niger and Benue Rivers, there were, as must be expected of new immigrants trying to find settlements in a new area, a lot of problems facing the Bassa Nge people. Such problems as usual, could be many, such as facing antagonism (open and secret) from the people who were earlier settlers of the land; jealous rivalry on areas of farmlands; fish ponds and all such human related matters. All these gradually developed into open wars.

The First War

This was between the Appahs (Jukuns) and the Bassa Nge clans who settled down around the walled city of Kpata where the Appahs lived. It was between 1850 and 1852. When most of the members of the five clans, led by Kutaidu clan crossed, they settled down around Kpata in places like Gbangede, between Ebu riverlet and Kpata; Takunkporo where the trinity stone shrine exists and where the Eriwota shrine was worshipped by the Appahs but since then inherited by Kutaidu descendants of Takunkporo.

But, between 1850 and 1852, Ashimwo clan, which was the third in crossing to Kpata, forcefully entered into the

city wall and real fight ensued between the Appahs — the original inhabitants and the five Bassa clans. The Bassa clans, after serious fighting, conquered the Appahs who after clear-cut negotiation evacuated the walled town of Kpata and handed the Eriwota shrine to Kutaidu clan, the first clan to settle down around the shrine at Takunkporo.

This was the first war won by the Bassa clans of Kpata when the Appahs were completely rooted and left Bassa land. The Bassa Nge people describe the Appahs as follows: *Tukpa tukpa o a kpe Appah e* meaning, one knows or recognises the Appahs from their ears and further indicates that naturally, the ears of the Appahs were normally broader or larger than the ears of other ethnic groups around them. This looks like a worldwide phenomenon where the Eskimos are recognised by their stature and natural physiognomy; the Red Indians are recognised by the redness of their skin and the Chinese are also recognised by their natural stature and physiognomy.

The Second War

It was known as Gbobe war (between 1854 and 1858). Although after the successful migration by the Bassa Nge people across the Niger - Benue Rivers from the Lokoja side, the Bassa Nge villages were independent of each other politically, the people were firmly united and realised that even though they were in clans or groups, they were not only of the same stock from the same motherland, but also of the same tongue and, above all, the same destiny. The Bassa Nge people then, unlike the unfortunate and self seeking experiences that have been existing for about seven decades or more now, were usually united very readily, forgetting self, against any enemy trying to wage war against any Bassa Nge village or people generally with attempt to destroy the unity, solidarity and peaceful existence of the people.

That was how it was resolved to attack Gbobe, a northern Bassa Nge town that insulted the Bassa Nge people and sought to destroy them. The Bassa Nge people quickly mobilised themselves, made military arrangements unitedly, village by village, and attacked Gbobe. The Anajiri head of Gbobe, quickly organised his able bodied men for a counter attack but the Bassas, in the account given by the Niger Expedition of 1854 with Dr. William Balfour Baikie as the head, killed many Gbobe inhabitants and took several others into slavery.

The account says, "the process was followed by Bassa proficient archers almost daily until Gbobe was defeated and many people were killed while many more were carried into slavery in 1854 and Gbobe totally subdued under the rule of Etsu Bassa".

The Third War

This was the Shintaku War (between 1868 and 1874). Mayaki Etan became the Etsu Bassa (Nge) in 1888. Before he became the Etsu he was the Atuu (messenger) who could rightly or officially be regarded as a Regent of His Royal Highness Amkpolo Nyakpa who ruled from 1860 to 1888.

Mayaki Etan was very influential, wise, tactful, diplomatic and powerful, he appeared to have begun to reign and rule by his wonderful diplomacy ever before he became the traditional and officially recognised Etsu Bassa (Nge). During that time, there was one Obaje Ohikpa, the village head of Shintaku, the present most popular river port of Bassa (Nge) land. He was said to be oppressive and wicked and was ill-treating the Bassa (Nge) people whenever they went to Shintaku to the extent that it was said he would arrest and rope some people on the neck and ask them to be barking like dogs.

The Bassa (Nge) people in their usual peaceful approach to matters exercised patience with him and endured the

inhuman treatment for a long time but planned what rightful action they would take. In the course of this however, it was said that Obaje Ohikpa connived and plotted with Shaba Mamudu from Bida who was sent by Masaba (1859-1873) the second Emir of Bida or Etsu Nupe, to wage war against Kpata and the entire Bassa (Nge) land so that Shaba Mamadu could become Etsu Bassa (Nge) or ruler of the Bassas. Shaba Mamadu, an heir apparent of Nupe kingdom, then camped at Eganaja, near Lokoja - the ferry port from Lokoja to Shintaku during the rainy season in September when the Rivers Niger and Benue had overflowed their banks and Ebu tributary passing by Gbobe and emptying itself near Shintaku, had also overflowed the Egun tributary between Kpata and Shintaku — three miles between or 4/45 kilometers between.

The Ete Egun stream of tributary empties itself into the mixture of Rivers Niger and Benue near Ecewu river port. Shaba mamadu was at Eganaja with his troops of men, of horseriders and of his foot soldiers but could not cross to Shintaku with his horsemen. He was waiting anxiously for the river to recede, but few of his foot soldiers were able to cross to Shintaku waiting for the horse troop.

Nyakpa Amkpolo, the Etsu Bassa (Nge) and Mayaki Etan, the Atuu had already been hinted (Eganaja was and is Bassa (Nge) settlement from the 1830's) about the plot of Obaje Ohikpa of Shintaku with Shaba Mamudu of Bida and they (Amkpolo and Mayaki) were seriously planning to launch an attack on Shintaku before Shaba Mamudu could cross to Shintaku with his horsemen to attack Kpata or the whole of Bassa (Nge) land.

Towards the end of October of the same year however, as the river was receding gradually, one Agun Kutom of Kpata who went and settled at Atsagba village for farming purposes and who was a powerful man in war and was one of the advisers to Etsu Nyakpa Amkpolo, went and

inspected Ete Egun tributary and strongly advised that Kpata, Kpata kpale and Ecewu should mobilise themselves, get their sickles ready, go and cut massively some grass and fill up the Ete Egun stream to enable Kpata, Kpata kpale and Ecewu combined troops cross to Shintaku and launch a serious attack on the village of Shintaku. He advised them that if they waited any moment longer than the beginning of October, the Goyis (Bida - Nupe - Fulani - horse warriors) led by Shaba Mamaudu would cross the Niger-Benue with their horses and invade Kpata and the rest of Bassa (Niger) land. Agun Kutom's advice was taken immediately, all that was said was carried out without "a let" and Shintaku was attacked; a great number of the inhabitants were murdered and the village was burnt down.

Obaje Ohikpa himself was murdered and for about six years after, Shintaku was not inhabited by anyone. It was after six years that the father of Bigbeja who became the Amaki of Shintaku (village head of Shintaku) went to Kpata to pray to Etsu Nyakpa Amkpolo and Mayaki Etan to allow him to come and settle at Shintaku and promised never to plot against Kpata or any other part of Bassa land again. He was then permitted to come and settle at Shintaku. The horse warriors of Shaba Mamudu and he himself left Eganaja as their hopes were dashed to the ground by the destruction of Shintaku.

The Shintaku War was confirmed in writing by Michael Mason, a member of the Niger Expedition of 1857 headed by Crowther and Taylor. The account says; "Around the late 1868, king Masaba sent a contingent of soldiers to protect the confluence area. The soldiers occupied themselves in preying on and kidnapping the people of Lokoja and its environs against which the missionaries and the traders protested vigorously. The soldiers crossed to the left bank of the Niger at Shintaku where an Igala ally of Masaba seems to have offered the Etsu's followers a new opportunity to establish a

bridge head in Northern Igala. But the Bassas who had settled in this area after fleeing from the depredation of the Bida soldiers were determined not to be oppressed any further. They — the Bassa (Nges) attacked the town of Shintaku with a heavy body of archers and within two hours, the town was reduced to ashes and a great many of the Nupe troops which had crossed were killed, wounded and caught and driven into the Niger". Here was the supremacy of the Bassas in war since the 1850's in Bassa¹ land. There will be more proofs in the course of reading.

The Fourth War

This was known as Royal Niger Company War, (between 1890 and 1892). This war was said to be caused as a result of slave raiding by Bassas. Slavery in those days was a very lucrative job or occupation not only for the Bassas but almost for all ethnic groups throughout the whole of Africa, even in Europe, before William Wilberforce championed incredibly its abolition in 1813 in parliament and by parliament. But the Royal Niger Company had earlier banned the trade and had made specific agreement with all the leaders or chiefs of ethnic groups never to engage themselves in the trade. It was however said that one Atuman and one Elogungbe, both of Kpata, crossed the Niger in early 1890's to Akpacha, near Lokoja and kidnapped a woman called Ebirin and that she was sold into slavery. The unfortunate incident was said to have triggered and was reported to the Representative of the Royal Niger Company, Ag. Governor, William Wallace at Lokoja, and on thorough investigation, it was discovered that the kidnappers were from Kpata.

The account revealed that William Wallace despatched two policemen to Kpata which was a walled city or town to demand the release of Ebirin, the captured woman. Etsu Mayaki Etan who had earlier been appointed as the

paramount chief of the Bassas by the Ag. Governor William Wallace himself in Lokoja, denied the allegation and told the policemen that there was no such strange woman in Kpata. But the policemen insisted on the fact that the said woman was in Kpata. On their insistence, Etsu Mayaki Etan became annoyed and felt insulted in his position by the policemen who refused to believe him. The policemen were then ordered to leave the town immediately or face military action. Kpata then, was comparatively a large town with an estimated population of about 3,000, excluding children. The policemen, seeing the Etsu of Bassa Nge annoyed and also realising the military prowess of Kpata from past war records, left the town immediately for Lokoja and delivered the message of the futility of their mission to William Wallace.

Wallace therefore resolved to subjugate Kpata people for humiliating him through his policemen and it was said that a contingent of the Royal Niger Company's constabulary was despatched to Kpata to punish the people. The troops were said to have been sent through Gbobe where they camped till midnight and Gbobe people, as a result of the hostile and humiliating actions Kpata people had meted to them during the war with Kpata, refused to pass on the information of the troops camping in their town to Kpata people. They deliberately refused to inform the Kpata people of the imminent danger against them.

It was said that before the dawn of the next morning, the walls of Kpata town were surrounded by troops and between 5:00 a.m and 6:00 a.m, the inhabitants were woken up by the unusual and very unexpected sound or booming of guns. Some people were killed and the rest of the inhabitants evacuated the town as it was not possible to resist the sudden and unexpected attack. The whole town was said to be set ablaze but it was said that the Etsu Mayaki Etan courageously remained in the town and told the

attackers, when asked why he did not escape from the town, that it was untraditional, uncultural and unbecoming of a chief of his status or calibre to run away from an enemy whatever power that enemy possessed. He was said to be captured and taken to Lokoja as the only prisoner of war.

The account said he was released unconditionally after about two weeks since no counter attack as might have been expected from the Bassas was forthcoming. This was the only war (even though the Bassas were united, aggressive and militant in wars in places like Kpata kpale, Ecewu, Ajigido and other villages were ready to come to the aid of Kpata) in which the Bassas were humiliated and conquered as a result of the superiority of the weapons of the Royal Niger Company against them. The war actually, for some time, caused economic drawback and famine to the Bassas and their neighbours. It also caused some political reorganisation as it was as the result of the war that the Ag. Governor, William Wallace invited Mayaki Etan, the courageous and politically-mature Etsu of Bassas to Lokoja, asking him to summon all important leaders throughout Bassa land to Lokoja on an appointed date. The account does not say categorically whether the leaders were indeed summoned to Lokoja by Mayaki, but it was said that Mayaki decided to honour the invitation alone in spite of all efforts to dissuade or discourage him from going to Lokoja.

Mayaki was known or noted for wisdom, courage and political sagacity. He then left for Lokoja with his half-brother (Wasa, in Nupe or Bassa) Eri Etan, who was said to be determined to suffer whatever fate would befall Mayaki as rumours speculated were that Mayaki was invited by William Wallace to be killed.

An account of the incident says on the arrival of Mayaki and Eri Etan at Lokoja, William Wallace inquired from Mayaki what had become of the other leaders of the Bassas

and that Mayaki told him that he, (Mayaki) as the most important leader of all Bassa leaders and the other Bassa leaders being preoccupied with one thing or another, was capable of representing them (other leaders of Bassas) in all matters affecting the entire Bassas and all their settlements all over the land. By the intelligence, manliness, deeds of courage and political wisdom of Mayaki, William Wallace, as the Representative of the Royal Niger Company was convinced that, if he (William Wallace) as a single man could represent the entire Royal Niger Company of the United Kingdom, he saw no reason why a man of Mayaki's quality and calibre was not capable of representing all the Bassas and of serving the Royal Niger Company commercially, politically and administratively.

William Wallace, there and then, decided to appoint and did appoint Mayaki Etan as the paramount leader of the Bassas and, realising also that the Bassas are originally Nupes, conferred on him the traditional chieftaincy title of "Etsu Bassa". That was between 1892 and 1896, knowing that the Bassas had in the immediate past accepted some major clannish leadership from the onset.

The leader of the Niger Expedition of 1845, Dr. William Balfour Baikie, confirmed that inter-tribal war between the followers of Jimada and Majiya II, made the 15,000 Nupe group (who later called themselves Bassa) migrate from Gbara and in their continued migration, settled on the right hand bank west of the River Niger on Mt. Patti of Lokoja. The struggle for the tribal dynasty also continued to the people's new settlement and caused them to abandon their secured homes to the eastern bank of the River Niger. He said the people were led by their King Eshida, who died in 1832 when the Bassas were forced to evacuate Mt. Patti of Lokoja, while some still settled down at the right hand side of the River Niger on the side of Lokoja in places already named in Chapter Four.

He said a great number crossed to the left hand side, led by Ashimwo Nyakpa (1832 - 1860) and forcibly occupied Kpata. Knowing the above facts of history therefore, when Mayaki Etan was traditionally and officially appointed as Etsu of the Bassas by William Wallace between 1892 and 1895, and (although, there had never been such an official appointment and recognition by a foreign power but that had been the case with other traditionally recognised and appointed Chiefs, Emirs, Obas, and Obis in Nigeria, especially in northern Nigeria, then, when various Emirs and/or Etsus or chiefs were so officially appointed and recognised by foreign powers who were our colonial masters) for the Bassas, the apparent or seeming strangeness and uncompromising attitude, which made some clan leaders, like Melem of Eforo protest were caused by vagueness of human beings as it could be anywhere in the world.

Accounts show that Melem of Eforo was ordered to Lokoja by force and his fate was not known as he was not known to have returned. People speculated that he was killed but, it is safer to believe that he was detained or imprisoned and probably died by accident or through suicide as leaders of such courage would not like to live and see humiliation. They always feel too manly, powerful or courageous to be so humiliated by any human power on earth.

Eshida was said to have died about 1832 and from what is geanologically stated in Chapter Six of this book, he was not appointed by any foreign power as Mayaki Etan was appointed. The record shows clearly that Mayaki Etan had reigned for about four years before he was officially appointed or his appointment confirmed by the Ag. Governor, Sir William Wallace in 1892; as the paramount chief (Etsu Bassa) of the Bassas and later sent to Bida to the Etsu Nupe (Maliki, 1884 - 1895) to pay him homage and

obtain traditional recognition as brother Etsu of the ethnic group down the River Niger.

When Mayaki Etan was politically, administratively and traditionally appointed and turbaned, Eri Etan, his brother was also appointed as the Shaba (his presumptive Kenga of Kpata as the Kpetu (second his presumptive while Adiku of Kpata was appointed as Makun, the third in rank to the his presumptive. Other traditional chieftaincy titles by Nupe tradition, such as Lakpe, Benu and so on were not exhausted but record does not show that Etsu Mayaki Etan appointed anyone as such. Instead, Emissos (later known and called Gagos after the amalgamation with the Igalas), wards of Kpata and a group of a number of villages in the environs of Kpata. Some of the Gagos were originally Atta's fief - holders and had (and still have) Atta's bead decorations but turbaned by the Bassa Nge land, while the greater number of the Gagos (and are) turbaned by the Etsu Bassa without bead decorations.

The two types of Gagos absolutely owe political and administrative allegiance to and are controlled by the Etsu Bassa, even though those with beads and are Igalas or Igbirra kotos or Panda originally may, by nature and with their beads, traditionally look up to Atta Igala. This has been specially so since the Etsu Bassa regained his official staff of office and the Bassa Nge District also regained her independence given her by Lugard himself. They, the Gagos, who are of Igala origin, however, owe their official administrative and political existence and life to the Etsu of Bassa Nge who is their paramount chief (Etsu) and not the Atta of Igala. Officially also, they do not toy with the tradition, culture and custom of the Bassa Nge ethnic group of the Nupe tribe throughout the land. He who pays the piper calls the tune.

The Fifth War

This was known as Egeneja War (between 1894 and 1895). There was a man called Ekeyi, an Akpoto by tribe, who was said to be the founder Egeneja in Bassa Nge land. He was said to be wicked to the Bassas and became a highway robber and was killing some people on the highway. His appellation was said to be "Ekeyi, agegelebu, Akpoto gba ga Bassa", (the meaning of agegelebu is not known but perhaps it means "one who rides high" with ritual power). The appellation may then be interpreted as "Ekeyi, the one who ritually rides high; Akpoto is wiser than Bassa".

As he thought that he was uncontrollable and unconquerable by anyone or the Bassa Nge authority, he went to Ake Emiboci, a village founded by one Boci (a herbalist or doctor), who had a horse that he was riding. Ekeyi then went to Emiboci and stole Boci's horse called "Ewu". This daredevil and broad daylight robbery was reported to Etsu Mayaki Etan, Etsu Bassa Nge by Boci. The Etsu then organised an action immediately and on the third day sent his warriors to meet the people of Emiboci.

The Etsu's warriors then laid a siege to Egeneja, which was attacked and burnt down. The horse stolen by Ekeyi was said to be recovered as the warriors of Mayaki pursued Ekeyi who had escaped to Kporobi where he fled to for safety under the protection of Kwengwele, the traditional woman ruler of Kporobi. Kwengwele, the woman ruler, pleaded and told the warriors of Mayaki, it was said, that she had put Ekeyi under her private part and sat on him and that the warriors should cover her secret. The warriors accepted her plea and left Ekeyi in her hands, but it was not long after, the account says, that Ekeyi died. It is said that that type of indiscipline never reared its head again from any individual or a group of individuals throughout Bassa Nge land during and after the reign of Etsu Mayaki Etan. The authorities at Kpata took an immediate action,

meted a very justifiable punishment to Ekeyi and nippe future occurrence of such indiscipline and wickedness in the bud throughout Bassa Nge land.

The Sixth War

This was Adagba Gende War, (between 1898 and 1899). Round about this time, the village head or leader of Gende called Adagba, who was a farmer, was visited by some slaves who were said to be owned by the Shaba (or next in rank to the Atta of Igala, at least by Nupe or Bassa status or ranks). It was then the tradition or custom that if slave visited the head of a village or the leader of a settlement in that manner, such slaves automatically became the bonafide property or personal refugees of the head of the village so visited. But, if their owner or owners came and claimed the ownership and begged for their release, they would be released to the owner or owners.

The Shaba of Atta of Igala who was stationed at Gwalawo then, learnt that his slaves were at Gende with Adagba and he, therefore, sent to demand their release by force. Adagba then sent back, the account states, and said that he would not send the slaves back since Atta's Shaba was using force in demanding them. The Shaba then declared war against Adagba of Gende and attacked the town but his (Shaba of Atta's) army was repulsed and driven back.

Adagba, sensing that the Shaba at Gwalawo would reinforce and attack Gende again with stronger military men, quickly sent four cows to Etsu Mayaki Etan for help and deliverance from the hands of the Akpotos as the people of that area were then called by the Bassas and generally by the people of the former Kabba Province. By that time, war was already waged against Kpata people by the Royal Niger Company; Kpata subdued and Ag. Governor William Wallace turbaned Mayaki Etan as Etsu Bassa Nge at Lokoja.

Before the message from Adagba of Gende came to Etsu Mayaki Etan, William Wallace had ordered the Etsu and the entire Bassa Nge people never to engage in slave trade and also not to go to war with one another.

Etsu Mayaki Etan kept strictly to the orders and so he was said to have taken two of the four cows sent to him by Adagba of Gende to Ag. Governor Wallace at Lokoja and reported that, the Akpotos were warring against his people and that he therefore, was sent to report accordingly. The account said that Ag. Governor Wallace was so pleased with the responsible and wise action of Etsu Mayaki Etan that he despatched two companies of his soldiers to Kpata to follow Etsu Mayaki Etan's fighters to Gende to defend the village. The army of Ag. Governor Wallace from Lokoja and the fighters of Etsu Mayaki Etan from Kpata defeated the Akpotos and drove them near Gwalawo. When the reigning Atta of Igala heard of this, he came and met Ag. Governor Wallace and begged him to pacify the Etsu Bassa Nge for the wrong action of his Shaba at Gwalawo.

The account says Ag. Governor William Wallace accepted the pleading of the Atta of Igala and since then, no tribe in the former Igala Native Authority or the former Kabba Province attempted to wage war against the Bassa Nge people again and peace has continued to reign ever since. It is on record as it is proverbial that, the Bassa Nge people are one of the peaceful and peace - loving tribes in Nigeria since the advent of and occupation of Nigeria by our colonial masters. Up to the present day Nigeria, the Bassa Nge people culturally, traditionally, politically, socially and religiously always pursue any wrong done to them; not violently but patiently and constitutionally with a sense of maturity and authority.

Evidence of facts and figures abound clearly to prove this since the so called amalgamation of 1918 with the Igalas and, very painfully, the unexpected wrong merging of the

Bassa Nge District with Benue State in 1976. With the wonderful qualities, the Bassa Nge people are endowed culturally and naturally by God, one can never be in doubt that the day will surely dawn after the creation of Kogi State that the land and the people will achieve their independence formerly granted them by Lord Lugard. They will be rightly merged with their kith and kin in Kogi Local Government or be given a separate local government of their own Kogi State of Nigeria.

Bassa (Nges) Supremacy in War

In all the wars the people were forced to face, after being driven to the wall, like the wars against Gbobe, Shintaku, Egeneja and the Shaba of Atta Igala in Gwalawo, during which the Bassas proved their prowess and supremacy in war against other ethnic tribes amongst whom they lived. No account, oral or written, states that any war was taken into any Bassa Nge village or that the Bassa Nges were defeated, except in the Royal Niger Company war against Kpata. Before that war (Royal Niger Company war), the Bassas, having subjugated all their immediate neighbouring communities, namely, Igala, Igbirra koto or Panda, Kakanda of Gbobe, Shintaku, Adanakpa, Gboloko, Egeneja, Gende, Elule and so on, began to enjoy a period of peaceful coexistence with exchange of agricultural products, trade by barter as well as bush games like antelope, grass cutter and bush pigs from the Bassas for fish — fresh and smoked, from non - Bassa riverine communities.

The largest and most popular market established by the Royal Niger Company and very much patronised all over the area including Lokoja and beyond, covering areas of Kabba, Okene, Ikare or the whole of the former Kabba Province including Ilorin and part of the former Niger Province, was Gbobe market. Gbobe became the most important river port for all communities on the Niger and

Benue and beyond from where all crossings to Lokoja were made by various types of canoes. Account of history shows that one Anene of Gbobe was controlling the port as the "Sarkin Kwata" (Etsu Kpata, Nupe and chief of the port in English) and that the fare across to Lokoja was one Penny (1d) per head.

Marriage Affinity

It must be clearly stated that in spite of these wars between the Bassa Nge people on one hand, and the other neighbouring tribes like the Igalas, the Igbirra koto, and the Kakandas on the other, there was cordial marriage affinity amongst them during that time and even up till today. For instance, the late Ohimege of Koton karfi, HRH Alhaji A. Aguye, got married to a Bassa Nge woman who produced many children who are very important in Nigeria and beyond today. One of the author's elder sisters, Late Elizabeth Yawoibo Awumbo, grandmother of Rtd. Colonel Emmanuel Bala Gbogbo, got married to her husband who was originally Kakanda. There are many hundreds of such examples and it is certain that it is this sort of inter tribal marriages among the tribes in Bassa Nge land that brought about more peaceful coexistence in the land. For it is clear that the inter-tribal marriage between HRH Late Alhaji Umoru Eri Etan, Etsu Bassa Nge, father of Hon. Justice Ali Umoru Eri, Kogi State Chief Judge, and his Igala wife that brought about more peace between the Bassa Nge people and the Igalas. But for this relationship, things would perhaps, have been strained.

CHAPTER 10

Achievements of Bassa (Nge) Politically and Generally

By their system of migration from their motherland Nupe land - before 1804, as a result of the chieftaincy dispute and intertribal war between the forces of Jimad and Majiya II, as recorded by Professor Nadel; and the system of governance of the Bassa Nge people even during their migration nearly two centuries ago, it is very clear that they have achieved a lot politically, in spite of the ironical odds against them, even up to the present time. Under this chapter and at the risk of necessary repetition it is very essential and crucial to define and redescribe the Bassa Nge land more clearly in order to refresh the reader's mind.

Bassa Nge land is a district which situates after crossing the mixed Rivers Niger and Benue, and is almost in its entire length, facing Lokoja; having Gende, Gbobe, Shintaku, Ecewu, Adanakpa, and Koji as its conspicuous river ports, with Shintaku as its most important river port. This fact is shown in the Bassa Nge District map produced in this book and is also known to everyone who is conversant with the area and goes across from Lokoja to the other side of the Niger. The nearest place from Bassa Nge District to Lokoja

across the Niger is about 3 miles ($4\frac{1}{5}$ km); while the farthest place is about 25 miles (40 km).

The length of Bassa Nge District from the north to the south is about 42 miles ($67\frac{1}{5}$ km); its breadth is about 17 miles ($27\frac{1}{5}$ km); and it is 714 square miles ($809\frac{2}{5}$ sq. km). The population of the district by census was 21,000 while its taxable adults were 8,750. Its inhabitants are either Christians or Muslims, as the number of traditional religionists is definitely very negligible but can be put safely at 10 per cent of the population.

In 1968/69, there were about 10 primary schools and one secondary school, but, the number in either case is far more as at the time (1988) I completed the work of special history of Bassa Nge Ethnic Group of Nupe origin, which I began in 1928 - when I was only 14 years of age.

Former Status of the District

It was an independent district and the independence was given by Lord Lugard himself. The written authority of this statement is in the book, *The Emirate of Northern Nigeria* by Hogben; the book clearly states as follows: "On the advent of British administration, the Nupe Empire, which has stretched from Benue, in the south of Gbagede in the North, was shorn of some of its power and jurisdiction, for Lugard felt that the Bida - Kontagora complex was too strong to leave intact; Yagba, Bunu, Bassa and Kakanda became independent Districts ". The status of independence for Bassa was given during the reign of Etsu Mayaki Etan (1888 - 1912), as shown under traditional chieftaincy titles of Bassa Nge and sub - chiefs in Chapter Six.

Paraphernalia for Etsu Bassa (Nge)

When Bassa Nge District became independent, the Etsu, Mayaki Etan, was turbaned by Ag. Governor Wallace, at Lokoja. Later, when his son, Etsu Mopa Mayaki Etan (1915

- 1930) became Etsu, he was given the following as his official paraphernalia:

- (i) an official staff of office
- (ii) an official trumpet (Kakaki)
- (iii) an official umbrella
- (iv) an official cloak
- (v) an official hammock

In 1918 however, the amalgamation (what should have been known as Federated Native Authority) of the districts in the former Igala Division, was introduced and carried out. It was this unfortunate amalgamation that deprived the Bassa Nge District of its independence and relegated the Etsu Bassa Nge to a subservient and powerless District Head. This rendered the Bassa Nge land and people to a second class rate of land and people to Igala land and people.

Events of 1921-1922

Between 1921 and 1922, for a reason which none of us now living and our elders living or dead can point to as justified or justifiable, except that it was believed and is still believed that it was a clash of personalities between the then reigning Atta of Igala on one hand and the then reigning Etsu Bassa Nge on the other hand, Etsu Mopa Mayaki Etan was stripped of his official staff of office and official trumpet. This was also a simultaneous and unfortunate event in Bassa Nge District and Lokoja District when the official staff of office of HRH Muhammadu Maikarfi I of Lokoja, father of Late HRH Alhaji Yahaya Muhammadu Maikarfi II and the grandfather of the reigning Maigari of Lokoja HRH Alhaji Kabir Muhammadu Maikarfi III was removed from him and Lokoja, very unfortunately, became a subservient district under the then Igbirra (Ebira) Native Authority.

Realisation and Appeals

It was during that time that the Bassa Nge elements at home and abroad realised the foresight, the vision and the wisdom of the late respected and revered Etsu Mopa Mayaki Etan's initiative and blunt refusal in the first instance to amalgamate with the then Igala District, a much larger district which later absorbed all other districts in the former Igala Division. The Bassa Nge elements, at home and abroad, realised, but painfully then, that their district and they themselves were a mere "plaything" and "second-rate citizens" in the hands of the then Igala Native Authority. Appeals, several of them, were then made to the then Government of Northern Nigeria through District Officers and Residents of the then Kabba Province by some individuals and unions of Bassa Nge; to separate their district from the then Igala Native Authority and to restore the status quo ante of both the Etsu Bassa Nge and the District.

In all humility and modesty, I am happy to say I was one of the foremost individuals who single-handedly wrote several reasonable and convincing petitions or appeals to the government on this burning issue from 1938-1969; when the Kwara State Government, then headed by Lt. Col. David Lasisi Bamgboye granted the former status quo to Bassa Nge District by returning an official staff of office (though not the appropriate one but thanks be to God that one was restored at all) to the then Etsu Bassa Nge land, HRH Adama Lerama.

Kudos to the then Military Governor of Kwara State of Nigeria that one was given at all to the Etsu for both the honour of the Etsu and the people of the Bassa Nge District. HRH Lerama Amkpolo Nyakpa II, (the father of the Etsu) was the one removed from office in 1939 because he bluntly refused to stoop down for the then Atta of Igala; as he was historically, traditionally, politically and rightly convinced

that no Etsu Bassa Nge, including his own father, had ever owed allegiance or had ever become subservient to any Ati of Igala until the unfortunate amalgamation of 1918.

In response to one of my many appeals, the Resident of former Kabba Province, Lokoja, wrote me a letter Ref. No. 3225/20 of 9th September, 1950. I quote the letter hereunder: " I was glad to see your letter regarding the future development of Bassa Nge District. When you return to Kabba Province, the Divisional Officer Igala or I will be glad to see you and acquaint you with the development plans which have been drawn up for Igala Division. Constructive suggestions particularly those showing how the wealth of the people can increase so as to allow for development are always welcome ".

When I left Zaria for home in January 1951, I paid a courtesy visit to the Resident who received me warmly. He and I had a very understanding and understandable cordial dialogue on the then entire Province of Kabba, with particular reference to Lokoja and Bassa Nge District. The Resident was Mr. Gunn.

Strength and Achievement of Bassa Nge National Union (B.N.N.U)

The Bassa Nge National Union (B. N. N. U.), founded in 1942, was a powerful, liberating, and widespread union not only in Bassa Nge land but also throughout the former Kabba Province and wherever there was a community of Bassa Nge people throughout Nigeria. The union did liberate Bassa Nge land and people in various aspects of life, socially, religiously and educationally. To prove the strength and popularity of the union, I give here below, the statistical data of its membership, town by town, village by village and alphabetically as on 11th January 1957.

<i>Town or Village</i>	<i>Membership</i>
Atte	216
Adum woiwo	90
Ajigido	30
Agwaida	149
Dekina	87
Ecewu	85
Effin	97
Emi Abaida	65
Edogbo	67
Emi Ainika	222
Eroko	12
Gboloko	108
Kpobi	147
Kpata	91
Kpata kpale	127
Koji	69
Lando	68
Mawo Dojo	58
Magana	33
Olowa	67
Takete	87

It should be noted that the above membership record is what was possible to be made available as on 11th January, 1957 as I was told that there were many more town or village area membership books which were not available for one reason or another. The above membership record does not include membership of important towns like Lokoja, Minna, Jos, Makurdi, Kaduna, Zaria, Kano, Ilorin, Sokoto, Gusau, Lagos, Bukuru, Burutu, Onitsha, Idah, and other places throughout Nigeria then. This must be so because of about 44 small towns and villages in Bassa Nge District, there was hardly anyone that did not embrace the liberating B. N. N. U.. It was a well-organised, peaceful and peace-

seeking union, respected and listened to by the authorities of the Divisional, Provincial, and Regional Government of Northern Nigeria in those days. Enrolled members of the B. N. N. U. throughout Nigeria then were not less than 10,000.

One of the liberating actions of the union is clearly recorded in Chapter Eight when and as it became absolutely necessary for the union to go to court, requesting the government to remove one of the non-traditional and politically appointed District Heads of the land because of many oppressing reasons besides the fact that he was not of the two ruling houses in Kpata. By engaging the services of one of the brilliant solicitors and advocates from the Western Region of Nigeria in person of Mr. G. Ayodele Onagoruwa, the B. N. N. U. won the case happily and the District Head was removed; to the joy of preponderous majority of the citizens of the district both at home and abroad. Before the removal of the District Head who imposed himself on the entire Bassa land, our seven patriotic, dynamic, and loyal men, who were oppressed and victimised through the instrumentality of the impostor and were detained in the cell and later fined, were released on bail on the action of the union.

CHAPTER 11

Traditional Religions of Bassa (Nge)

There are a great number of traditional and cultural fetish practices of the Bassa Nge. A number of fetish and religious beliefs existed and still exist, like with all other human beings all over the world, among the Bassas. It is apparently safe to say some of such beliefs existed with them from their motherland in Gbara, Nupeland, especially the belief in Egbunu (Ndako Gboya in Nupe); and that as they migrated for about 200 years, they adapted, accepted, and practised other strange beliefs practised by such people they came in contact with in various forms like the Bunus (Abunu), the Ebiras and the Oworos. The proofs of such assumptions are not difficult to give as will be shown in this chapter.

That human being is a specially created animal of various beliefs in ONE GOD, the creator of the universe and all things in it, is an incontrovertible fact. Whatever any human being temporarily enjoying freedom of thought, of expression and of action may think, in that at the moment in the existence of mankind, there are about fourteen (14) well known major religions in the world. Some of the adherents of those religions accept the existence and

worship of "ONE GOD" through an acclaimed, trusted and approved mediator; while a greater number of people all over the world worship things created by GOD, such as water, stone, wood, trees, animals on land and in water, creeping and flying creatures, sun, moon and stars. These beliefs stretch across the length and breadth of the entire world irrespective of colour, race, position, status, education, knowledge, wealth and age.

It is therefore not strange that before the advent of Christianity and Islam to Bassa Nge land, the Bassas were traditional believers and worshippers of certain elements and not "ONE GOD", the creator of all things as well as the sustainer of all human beings throughout the universe. However, they also believed and still believe and also recognised and still recognise "Soko Baitsa", which in Nupe and Yoruba can be interpreted "God, the King of gods".

Recognised Important Religious Beliefs of Bassas

- (i) Egbunu
- (ii) Eriwota
- (iii) Agana
- (iv) Twin worship
- (v) Emituragbada
- (vi) Akpanda
- (vii) Eri
- (viii) Agbatungba
- (ix) Akwo
- (x) Wodzo
- (xi) Kimta
- (xii) Dugbe

Besides these, the following social, traditional, or cultural practices existed and still exist during marriages, naming and burial ceremonies: Imadi, Paradi, Acice, Agbam, Ataki, Irungbe, Gombe, Angale, Badekolo, Eleibo

masquerade, Amda masquerade, Eka masquerade, Ewuma masquerade, and so on.

EGBUNU: This appears to be believed in and practised by all the Bassas but principally by Kpata, Gboloko, Ecewu, Takete and Kpata kpale. There are two types of Egbunu, namely, Egbunu Aniso, whose worshippers use the flexible branches of a climbing tree dominant in the forest in Bassa land as part of their dress. The functions of this branch of Egbunu with the Nna Egbunu are to warn the people of an impending danger, like an unpatriotic citizen or citizens planning to bring and cause an epidemic such as smallpox into a town or village; like a witch or wizard planning to kill his/her child or relation after such a witch or wizard had already accepted and eaten the mysteriously converted body of someone else's child or relation and to expose such a wicked person and save the victim; to warn those selling pitto (native beer) with undersized measures and to punish them by confiscating the whole drink prepared for sale, if they refuse to heed the warning.

Normally, it is the Nomba (leader of the Egbunu troop) that announces the disciplinary action and causes it to be carried out by the followers. It is always a fearful sight and this "social evil-prevention act " cuts across edible things like Madidi, Gbonkuru in Nupe; Gbongbo in Bassa dialects; akara, ekwo, and other edibles. The disciplinary action was always precise and decisive without partiality and was popular with the people so that women were always very careful not to fall as victims. By this, such offences like cheating, inflation, selling with undersized measures anywhere in Bassa land were eradicated and the poor enjoyed fair and reasonable prices.

This type of Egbunu comes out often as it was or is necessary to check malpractices and evil plans. It brings popularly accepted social justice to all.

EGBUNU INYA ACHA: The worshippers normally come once a year but as its practice involves a lot of expenses the worshippers may decide to come out every other year or every three years or on special occasions. The practice involves the worshippers staying for a number of days in the forest, the decoration of their bodies is by marking them with local whitewash, white and coloured chalk, the decorating or dressing of themselves with costly wrappers, costly beads and bangles, mirrors of different sizes and decorated crowns on their heads.

The Nna Egbunu (mother of Egbunu), who is a very powerful spiritual, cultural and physical leader is always dressed up in a circled residence at the approved field (Egbo) with a tall stick wrapped up with white cloth. The Nna Egbunu detects and announces any evil plan against any of the participating worshippers (Igi Egbunu) and orders for immediate punishment or discipline against such evil minded person or persons. I had personally seen and witnessed such detection and punishment at Kpata in the early 1930's. People involved in the decoration and wealth-exhibiting Egbunu Inya Atsa, may number up to 500 or more or less, depending on the size of the town or village exhibiting or celebrating the ceremony or on the wealth or status of the person for whom the ceremony was or is arranged.

ERIWOTA: This is an exclusively Kpata affair inherited by the Eshida family. Account shows that the origin of Eriwota, where you have the trinity stone shrine was from the Appahs (Junkuns) who were met at Kpata and who later had to evacuate by various methods used on them, including force of war by the five clans that migrated to Kpata from Lokoja side as already stated in Chapter Four of this book.

Eriwota is a deep and serious cult with some spiritual

power. It detects evil plans, it punishes or disciplines the evil planner and saves the victim or the whole town from the hands of the evil planners. Ordinary people, especially women, are not permitted to come out from their homes or even from their rooms when the ceremonies are going on. Any disobedience may mean the disappearance of the disobedient. The shrine is sacred and disobedience may result in payment of a prescribed ransom.

AGANA: This appears to be an entirely Ecewu, Egbo or Eroko cult, similar in all its ramifications to the Eriwota of Kpata. The method or mode of worshipping may be different but all the implications are virtually the same. The shrine is also sacred but my research does not pinpoint its original source, although it appears it has its source from the Igbirra Panda or Igbirra Koto.

TWIN WORSHIP: It takes the same form throughout Bassa land. Twins were regarded as a special and peculiar gift different from any other gift of children by God and so they were regarded as a special class of children to be worshipped, and failure to do so might result, according to the believers, in some disaster to the parents of the twins. The twins usually dictated the lives of the parents, especially their mothers. But this, with Christian and Islamic religions, has apparently died out throughout Bassa land today, although non-Christian and non-Islamic parents who may be very few now, may still practise the belief, perhaps secretly.

EMITURAGBADA: This also appears to be peculiar to Kpata and was and is celebrated once in every three or five years as need arose or arises. It is an expensive social cult, the masquerade of which generally came or comes out in the night with tall, decorated pole with fire coming out on the

topmost end of the pole. Its objective, like almost all other cults mentioned here, is to condemn all evils and wrong social actions or interactions and to usher in good relationship, peace, progress and happiness all over the land.

Other cults already mentioned like Eri, Wodzo, Kimta are common to the Bassas and are meant to serve the land and the people for peace, happiness, progress, good harvest, fertility of the soil and so on; but a few like Gbatungba, Agbanda, Akwo and others not mentioned here are individual cults belonging to some specific villages in the land and, I believe, exist to serve the same social, peaceful and progressive purposes of the whole land or the specific area concerned.

WODZO: This appears a cultural mesmerism which is conducted during a memorial or burial ceremony of an important deceased person of a reasonably old age. The dead is said to be sending a message to the living in a dead person's voice to a relation of the deceased. The message is always that of consolation and assurance and is audibly heard from a room in broad daylight. The social, traditional and cultural practices as listed for marriages, naming ceremonies, appear to exist and are practised in the whole of Bassa Nge land, among the people.

IMADI: This is carried out after the death of a wealthy, courageous, important, and popular person or a traditional chief. It is mainly performed for men but women of the same calibre with men are normally accorded the rite and honour. It is a war-like ceremony carried out with weapons of war such as bows and arrows, guns, cutlasses and swords but no record ever proves, happily, that anyone has ever been injured during such a ceremony. It is done to show or exhibit the quality, status and courageous deed of the

deceased. The dressings of the celebrants are definitely those of warriors and the look and performance of each celebrant are also those of a warrior and can be terrifying.

PARADI: This is an expensive and prestigious social ceremony carried out with beautifully selected women, dressed in gorgeous apparels such as beads, bangles, trinkets, necklaces and carrying costly and specially decorated load-carrying calabashes or load-carrying enamel dishes which are dressed up to the teeth with equally costly velvetine wrappers or ankara (Accra) wrappers, or native woven wrappers, mirrors of various sizes, cowries and real coins. The special women who may number up to thirty, fifty or more, depending on the status and riches of the deceased, will parade the town or village, dancing to the melodious tunes of the latest Agbam music singers and Kerengu drummers. At the end of the parade, the heads of the deceased children, brothers, sisters and other relations, are traditionally bound to put down, so the custom is, each *para* (load) with an amount affordable by the family.

ACICE: This is an organised singsong with wise and definite sayings by an expert who is always regarded as a serious personality with words of wisdom and philosophy. It is a social singsong in a ceremony where and when a lot of lessons can be learnt about life in general. It was and is always conducted by a man, and, the only real professional and widely acclaimed man throughout Bassa Nge land then was one Benu from Kpata. There were, no doubt, lesser professional or amateur Aci singers.

AGBAM: This was and probably still one of the most crowd-pulling social gatherings in Bassa Nge land. It suits almost all traditional and cultural ceremonies such as marriage, naming, burial and others. The lead singer may be a male

or female but male singers are normally more than female. The musical instruments mostly comprise Kerengu (shoulder - hanging talking drums of varied sizes) with mostly women voices accompanied by powerful clapping of hands. The music thus supplied is always solemn while the dance varies from the tempo of music supplied and the singing ability of the lead singer. In addition to the shoulder hanging talking drums, some round deep-sounding and bigger drums are also used; while gourds with decorated cowries, with accompanying locally-made bells of different sounds are also used. The melody is always attracting and urging one to dance.

ATAKI: This appears original Nupe and therefore Bassa real music with its accompanying dance in which big shoulder hanging beating drums supply the music along with the varied sizes of shoulder-hanging talking drums. The dancers normally dance in flowing robes acrobatically with real agility. In both Agbam and Ataki, the leading artist showers encomium on individuals especially the dancers and the owners of the ceremonies in order to get out money from them. Most of or all the musical instruments used in Agbam are usually used in Ataki music.

GOMBE: This appears originally Christian social music and introduced into Bassa land in a latter part of 1920's. It started from Kpata, Ecewu and spread like wild fire all over the land. All sections of Bassa Nge community use Gombe in most ceremonies irrespective of religion, as it is popular. The musical instruments comprise varied sizes of drums. There was and is always the leading artiste or singer in the supply of Gombe music to the extent that in 1926 up to 1930 Christmas celebrations, the popular music and accompanying dance was as follows: *Gombe Eroni, gombe eroni ki ci ka be ye Jesuwa kpala o, gombe eroni, kici ka be ye*

Jesuwa kpata o, gombe eroni literally, this means "the Gombe music of Aaron, the Gombe music of Aaron, which Gombe music can be likened to that of Joshua in Kpata? Which Gombe music can be likened to that of Joshua in Kpata?". This was popularly sung all over Bassa Nge land and means clearly that there was no Gombe music throughout the length and breadth of Bassa Nge land that can be likened to that of both Aaron and Joshua. Late Rev. A. A. Haruna and Mr. J. K. M. Atuci were natives of Kpata and were among the first set of Christian young men then who played on Gombe throughout Bassa Nge land. In their days, they were leaders of good examples in good things of life. They also died in Lokoja and Kpata respectively as good Christian leaders.

ANGALE AND BADA KALO: These are of recent existence in Bassa land. The two seem to have been introduced from Lokoja and are of Nupe and Hausa origins respectively. The two have musical drums comprising various sizes, beaten by one single man or a set of men. The music is melodious and danced to gracefully. In most cases, the dancers are young girls and boys with special costumes or uniform dresses and are so trained that even their dances are uniformly performed to the admiration of all onlookers. Angale and Badakalo musical drums and dances are becoming so popular today almost throughout the whole of the eastern area of the former Kabba Province (now Kogi State); and a great portion of the western region (especially areas of Kogi and Koton karfi Local Government Areas) of Kogi State.

ELEIBO: This is a dancing masquerade depicting a beautiful teenage lady. It is always gorgeously dressed and it is not certain if it is of Bassa Nge origin. According to my research, the masquerade appears so common to the Igalas, Igbirra

Pandas, Bassas in almost every social ceremony among the three ethnic groups. From my closer research and observation, however, I feel it is a masquerade of Igbin Koto or Panda origin adapted by the Igalas and Bassas for their social ceremonies. Further research may reveal more.

EKA: This is a masquerade which also appears not of Bassa origin. It appears to be accepted and adapted from the Abunus (Bunus). It is a masquerade of the youths after such boys have been initiated. The Eka generally comes out in the night in the moonlight when guinea corn is nearly ripe for harvesting. It is more or less a physical and racing exercise masquerade as it runs with a whip in his hand to flog young men, especially those who abused or are supposed to have abused the masquerade of passing watery excreta indiscriminately or uncontrollably. The masquerade then will pursue the abuser furiously using his whip on the abuser. No music is played for this masquerade by anyone except singing that is conducted by his followers.

EWUNA AND AMDA: These are masquerades which are also not of Bassa origin. They appear foreign but have been accepted and adapted by the Bassas. Ewuna seems to be Igbirra koto or Panda masquerade while Amda seems to be Igala masquerade. They have been however integrated into Bassa masquerade as both are used for dancing in many social ceremonies in Bassa land.

All that the modern Bassa Nge people need to do, be they Christians, Muslims and other religionists, is to come together, reorganise, modernise and re - orientate these social and sociable dances, music, dancers and dancing instruments all over Bassa Nge land and wherever the Bassa Nge people domicile in Nigeria or anywhere in the world; so that these festivals cum social bodies can be accepted in

any modern society or gathering in order to give pride to Bassa / Nupe tradition and culture anywhere in the world. To do this is to make, as much as it is practically reasonable, the fetish beliefs in the masquerades non - effective, except where it is impossible.

CHAPTER 12

Advent of Christianity in Bassa (Nge) Land

Christians throughout the world are those who worship God, the Creator of the universe, through Jesus Christ who all Christians all over the world believe is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. From the beginning of the creation of the world, He has been with His Father, with God always, and will continue to be with God until He comes back to the world to judge the quick and the dead physically. A Christian prays and always endeavours to do like Christ in all things in his or her life because he or she believes that Christ came to the world to save mankind and did all good things for mankind before He ascended into heaven to meet His Father and to prepare a place for each Christian who does the will of God. When He comes back to the world the second time to judge, He will finally take up all His own to the place He has prepared for them all. Christians believe sincerely in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

The resolution of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), passed in 1842 to the effect that former slaves who were conversant with speaking the languages of the tribes of the Niger and Benue confluence area should be trained

for evangelism and for the conversion of the people of the area to Christian religion, caused the establishment of a training institution for that purpose in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The objective was to train and return such trainees who were freed slaves to their homes to teach their own people and translate their own languages for the purpose of evangelism. This made a training college which later became Fourah Bay College, to be established in Freetown, Sierra Leone as already said above. That was where the freed slave boy from Osogun, a village in Oyo State, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, was 'ordained' as a C.M.S. (Church Missionary Society) Deacon (and later priested) in London on Trinity Sunday, 11th June, 1843.

How Christianity was established in and spread all over different parts of Nigeria can be found and read in various books, but, our concern here is how the religion came to Bassa Nge land and, of course, crossed to Lokoja.

As it is morally, physically, ethnically, politically, and traditionally impossible to refer to Bassa Nge in all crucial matters without connecting Lokoja, the homestead of the Bassa for many years before the migration of the majority of them across the Niger and Benue Rivers to the left hand bank, it is therefore, relevant and appropriate to start with the establishment of Christianity by the C. M. S in Lokoja in 1857, when Bishop Ajayi Crowther (then Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther) visited Lokoja and, through his activities, the present Holy Trinity Anglican School was opened in 1865, as the first ever in the whole of the former Northern Nigeria, to teach secular subjects.

The first baptism by Bishop Ajayi Crowther in Gbobe, then known as Laird's Town in Bassa Nge land, was on 14th September, 1862. Account records that eight adult converts and one infant were baptised at Gbobe. By this record, it goes without gainsaying, that the seed of Christianity (baptism) was first planted or sown in the soil

of Bassa Nge land in the area of Niger-Benue confluence. Gbobe was already virtually a Muslim town then as it is today, and as the preponderance of the inhabitants refused to accept Christianity and Bishop Crowther had already focused his alternative attention on Lokoja where he had begun preliminary evangelisation in 1857, the authorities shifted to Lokoja. But a small wooden church was established in Gbobe in spite of real odds against Christianity. A wooden station house, the type of Lorrain Lugard's bungalows in Lokoja, was also built. I personally grew to know and sleep in that house at Gbobe in the 1920's.

Although the first baptism was conducted in Gbobe in 1862, my research reveals that Bishop Crowther, with his team, started planting the gospel of Christianity in Gbobe in 1851 before visiting Lokoja in 1857 and that later in 1863 after the first baptism at Gbobe in 1862, the gospel was extended to Kpata. It is on record that Commander Glove, a member of Bishop Crowther's Expedition in 1857 said when a wooden church was built in Gbobe, that the mustard seed that was being sown in Gbobe by the building of the small wooden church, would germinate, blossom, grow, and spread throughout that part of the country. One can say certainly that the prophetic saying of Commander Glove, was fulfilled when in 1857, after the touring of Bassa Nge District, with the base of the missionaries at Kpata and the missionary journey to Bida by Bishop Tugwell, a strong base was established in Bassa Nge land. Mr. Obadiah Thomas, who served the C. M. S. for 39 years and was a Vicar - in - charge of Holy Trinity Church, Lokoja for 9 years and who, by speculations was known to be either a Bunu, a Bassa, or an Oworo, was ordained and appointed a missionary for Bassa land with headquarters at Kpata.

This means, in effect, that although Christianity planted its feet in Gbobe in 1862 by the nine people baptised there, the first town ordained missionary was stationed in Bassa

Nge land as headquarters was Kpata. At that time, Kpata was also the traditional headquarters of Bassa Nge land, as it is up till today, as well as political and administrative headquarters of the land. It was not until 1915, during the reign of Etsu Mopa Mayaki Etan, as a result of Takete War and incessant trouble in Takete, where Captain Cooper was thought to have been murdered, but which was and is still not true, that Etsu Mopa Mayaki Etan, was ordered to shift his political and administrative headquarters to Gboloko in order to contain the Takete trouble more easily, effectively and conveniently.

At Kpata, a mission building usually referred to as Crowther Building or Mission House, similar to that of Lokoja, was erected with thick walls about three (3) feet thick. It was a rectangular building specially built by experts, about 10 ft. high, with two special bedrooms measuring between 18ft. wide and 22ft. long. The building, in which I lived for three years, 1925-1927, inclusive as a boy, had a wide verandah all around it with two special rooms attached and facing the inner compound; as well as a special room accommodation on the south-eastern side for lodging guests or visitors. The verandahs had a wall about 2 ft. thick and 2½ ft. high all around the building except the north - western and south-eastern sides of the building. Almost all the furniture in the house were said to be imported. They were all of special wood material, well polished and shining daily. The doors and windows of the house also looked specially made or imported. The building was perfectly and professionally pan roofed and the eaves of the roof fixed or supplied with rain-water collecting device in which drinking water flowed into specially imported tanks for safe storage for an appreciable period in the year.

The building which was put up between 1895 and 1907 was most elegant and modern at that time in the whole of

Bassa land and should have been preserved as a monument or historical relic or antiquity for the land. Unfortunately however, it was caused to be pulled down about the same time the Crowther House of Lokoja was caused to be pulled down by the Late Miss Katherine Elizabeth Ritsert of Akabe between 1943 and 1944. I wrote strongly to Miss Ritsert to condemn the unfortunate action, copying the late Most Rev. L. Gordon Vining, the first Archbishop of the Church of the Province of West Africa. After I had a clear dialogue with Miss K. E. Ritsert on 1st January, 1951 at Akabe, telling her that by her action which I believed (and still believe) was deliberate in pulling down the Crowther Houses of Lokoja and Kpata, she had destroyed the Christian historical foundation of evangelism of both Lokoja and Kpata and that she had deprived our children born and yet unborn of our Christian historical heritage, relic and pride; she appeared to realise the folly and, therefore, the seriousness of her action and promised to make some amends. But even if she did, and as far as I know, I cannot see the amends she made and in reality, no amends can ever bring those buildings back to us.

I was reliably informed that the Hon. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first and last Nigerian Governor-General of the Federation of Nigeria, queried the pulling down of the Crowther House, Lokoja, when he visited Lokoja in 1964, and found the unfortunate action of Miss Ritsert as destroying the historical heritage and antiquity of the C. M. S. in Lokoja. I was also reliably informed that Dr. Azikiwe asked of the whereabouts of Miss Ritsert and was told that she had already been withdrawn and sent back home to England by the C. M. S. and, like me, it was told that he was happy to hear the late Miss Ritsert was withdrawn from the service of the C. M. S.

Early Christian Converts

It is saying the obvious, all things being equal, that the early Christian converts were from Kpata and some few names of such converts cannot but be given in this book. From account of records, the following are worthy of mentioning:

Pa Andronicus Alaye Aroniyo; Pa William Toto; Pa Jonah Egujam; Pa Rufus Tsedu Ateko; Pa Abraham Aboko; Pa A. Esenyi; Pa Daniel Kudagba; Pa Paul Fojule; Pa Stephen Oluwum Mayaki; Pa Peter Egbunu Shelika; Pa David Ebinom Onishe; Pa Jacob Egbunu Mayaki, and a host of others all from Kpata. Pa Jacob Bagi Elegun; Pa Solomon Adanu and others from Ecewu. Pa Josiah Timanyi from Emitsado; Pa Peter Ayo from Emiboci, and a host of others such as will be mentioned later in this book. Majority of the converts especially those named above, were sent to Bida where the C. M. S. Secretary, Mr. Thos E. Alvarez used as his headquarters for training them to read and write the Nupe language as well as to evangelise Nupeland.

The set of the selected Evangelists, especially those from Kpata, did not only evangelise Nupeland, but also Bassaland, Oworoland and part of Keffiland.

Missionary Workers Sent to Kpata

The following missionaries were sent to Kpata from where they spread the Gospel of Christ. They were: Rev. Joshua J. Williams (a Sierra Leonian); Pa Paul Aigba Aribido (believed to be Bunu); Pa Daniel Ajodomo (believed to be Igala); Pa Jonathan A. Bako (believed to be Oworo), then a Catechist at Kpata and later sent to Kabba and also later ordained as a full Priest; Pa Rev. Obadiah Thomas (believed to be Bunu or Bassa originally, but came from Sierra Leone); Pa Rev. W. A. Thompson (from Jamaica in West Indies) who did not live in Kpata permanently but was visiting frequently on itineration from Lokoja; Pa Rev. Canon Aaron A. Obasoro (from Akunu who was originally Nupe/ Bassa), who served

as both Evangelist and ordained Priest before retiring and was still alive in Akunu when the manuscript of this book was completed in 1988. He died about four years ago at about 110 years of age. Pa Rev. H. G. D. Miller (from Wusasa Zaria), who was more or less forced to retire by the missionary powers that be and whose case was resolved by the late Archbishop L. Gordon Vining, the Archbishop and Primate of the Church, Province of West Africa. Rev. H.G.D. Miller who was later made a Canon (posthumously) by Rt. Rev. Herbert Haruna, Bishop of Anglican Diocese of Kwara, as was done by the same Bishop to Pa Rev. J. A. Bako and Pa Rev. E. Z. Fearon, who were missionaries of recent years; Pa Rev. Daniel Obadiah (from Kabba) who served as both Evangelist - Catechist and was ordained Priest before his transfer from Akabe, Bassa land. Pa Mr. Ernest Campbell (believed to be Igbirra koto originally), who served as a school teacher fully and partly as Evangelist.

Other earlier converts besides those already mentioned, in and around Emiboci, Akabe, Effin, Kpata kpale and other places, were: Pa Jonah Asala, Pa Abraham Adoga, Pa Samuel Elukpo, Pa Peter Elukpo, Pa Daniel Timanyi, Pa Aaron Agwojinya. In addition to those named to have worked in Bassa land, at least two Nupe Evangelists had worked there and they were Pa Paul Ndagi, later Rev. Paul Ndagi, whose only son was the first Vice-Chancellor of the Federal University of Technology Minna, Niger State; Pa Solomon A. Mama later Rev. Canon D. A. Mama, whose son is now Dr. Eli Mama, a medical practitioner in Kaduna, alongside his other sisters and brother who are all playing their roles creditably in the development and progress of this great country of ours in various ways. Notable among them are Mrs. Janet Lugard, Mrs. Lucy Kafenwo Bandele and Mrs. Margaret Nnawo Mejabi (now deceased). Mr. E. O. Bandele from Kabba, Oyi Local Government, was one of the first civil commissioners of Kwara State; Mr. J. E.

Mejabi was the first Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Kwara State and retired voluntarily as Permanent Secretary Ministry of Agriculture, Kwara State during the regime of Governor Bamgboye. Both of them are sons-in-law of Late Rev. Canon Solomon A. Mama who was Bishop elect of the once proposed Church Union of Nigeria, between 1968 and 1972.

Later Evangelists

Some of the later Evangelists who lived in Lokoja but carried out fairly regular itinerations to Bassa land were Messrs. Daniel Alhassan Kolo of Nupe origin, Samuel Hore Sa'angu of Cameroun origin, Edwin Idowu Bako believed to be of Oworo origin, Solomon Mama Jiya of Bunu origin, and some others who served the C. M. S. both as school masters and Evangelists. They were all well trained at Lokoja as teachers by Late Mr. Simpson, a great Jamaican educationist and school master. As at that time, the present Holy Trinity School in the old township was more or less a teacher training institute producing, throughout the then Northern Nigeria, categories of teachers known and recognised as follows:

- (i) First Year Pupil Teachers with one stripe on each shoulder of the smart black and white official *danciki* type of gowns.
- (ii) Second Year Pupil Teachers with two stripes on each shoulder of the same official gowns.
- (iii) Third Year Assistant School Masters with three stripes on each shoulder of the official gowns.
- (iv) All round and hemmed sides and neck of the black and white official gowns indicating that the trained teachers have become full and qualified teachers after four calendar years of training.

The black gowns were worn every day of the week Monday to Saturday, while the white gowns were worn every Sunday or on some special occasions or festivals. The teachers were really, truly and academically trained teachers in all advanced subjects which, perhaps, were more advanced than what the present Nigerians with National Certificate of Education (NCE) are being trained today. Their training for the four years was so sound and academic that they could stand their own anywhere in any field of learning or endeavour in Nigeria.

For instance, when any of them left teaching, he would readily become an asset in any government department or any commercial firm. The following people who did undergo the training in those golden days will prove what sort of training they underwent. Late Pa D. A. Kolo of U. A. C. (United Africa Company) became a great asset to the company. Late Pa. S. H. Sa'angu of John Holt fame became an asset to the company. Late Pa. S. Jiya of Nigeria Marine fame, became an asset to the Marine of Nigeria. Late Pa. E. I. Bako of U. A. C. fame became an asset to the company. Late Pa David B. Baikie (later Mr. Ogazuma) of Northern Nigeria Government Administration, became one of the first northern Nigeria administrators, and in addition, was the first from Lokoja to attend the C. M. S. Grammar School in Lagos. Late Pa. S. Johnson of P. W. D. (Public Works Department) fame was one of the Upper Segment officers in the department.

One can go on and on mentioning them and their efficiency in all spheres of their employments. They had excellent, all round qualitative training in advanced English, Arithmetical processes, Mathematics, Geography, Writing, History, Methodology, General Science, Physical Education, Psychology, Music, Artistic drawings, and real Grammar in English. They were really sound in their training, the type of which is very rare today.

In addition to the above mentioned late teacher - evangelists of Lokoja, who took part occasionally to evangelise Bassaland, there were other earlier teacher - evangelists who did the same evangelism. These were Late Pa. Simon Baikie of U. A. C. fame and later of Kano fame, whose son, Professor Adamu Baikie, was one time Vice - Chancellor of the Universities of Benin and Zimbabwe accordingly; Late Alfred Baikie of U. A. C. fame whose only daughter and child is Miss Mary Tanimowo Baikie, who is now late, departing this wicked world on 11th March, 1994 at Lokoja. All these and their descendants are our pride in Bassaland, Lokoja, the entire former Kabba Province (now Kogi State), and Nigeria in general. I have it on authority that the late Dr. David William Balfour Baikie, the Scottish medical officer, one of the protagonists of the Niger Expedition and founder of our present historic and ancient town of Lokoja in 1860, was and is the progenitor of all the Baikies of Lokoja whose name they adopted and passed on to their children and inherited by their grandchildren up to the present time. This is obviously an act of gratitude to and reasonable appreciation of what the late Scottish medical officer did for them in form of freedom, conversion to Christianity and educational upbringing.

All facts and revelations also go again to prove that it is naturally, historically and morally impossible to bring a wedge between Bassa Nge and Lokoja in order to separate the people. They are inseparable forever because there is hardly any compound throughout the length and breadth of Lokoja in the five wards, from Lokongoma - Adankolo, through the main historic and ancient township to Sarkin noma and Afubena, that one will not find the blood of Lokoja - born Bassa man, woman, boy or girl, born to one or the other of the multifarious tribes who now rightly, naturally and legally claim Lokoja as their place of origin.

As to evangelism, besides the few evangelist - teachers

mentioned already, there are others who were not strict paid evangelist - teachers, like late Pa Thomas King of Ijumu (Ogalle) origin in Oyi Local Government (now Ijumu Local Government). He was the first Christian elite of Lokoja who travelled abroad and whose descendants were late Mrs. F. Bako, late Mr. Joseph King - a great pathologist of Ibadan, Kano, Zaria and Ilorin fame. He was also the grandfather on the maternal side, of Mr. Micah K. Amihere, Principal of Lokoja Training College who has since retired. Among the Christian leaders who contributed to evangelism were people like Pa Sawyerr, an Egba (Yoruba) origin, one of the commercial stalwarts in early Lokoja with reputable descendants like Mr. D. O. Sawyerr, one of the old lawyers in Nigeria and the first Public Complaint Commissioner in Kwara State; late Miss Mabel Sawyerr, a dynamic businesswoman and the first bread baker who established engine-bakery in Lokoja. Others were Pa Moses Omole of Ijumu origin, Pa David Garuba of Ijumu origin, and so on.

One can continue mentioning a great number of those who participated in the early evangelisation of the Bassa Nge land and around Lokoja in one way or the other like late Pa Walter Bako, father of late Rev. Canon Jonathan A. Bako, late Pa Edwin Bako, late Mrs Baikie and late Mrs Williams. Late Pa Walter Bako was killed in Koton karfi District where he was shot with poisonous arrows when spreading the Gospel of Christ and thus became the first known martyr of the Gospel in this part of the country.

For the scope of this book and this chapter, I feel that enough has been said on this aspect about Lokoja on the evangelisation of Bassa Nge land, but under some early Christian converts of Kpata and a few other places, the following important persons are worth mentioning in fairness to them and the entire evangelisation mission. They are: Pa Matthew Makun of Kpata, late Pa Nathanael Fayomi of Kpata, late Pa Josiah Timanyi Aimana of Emitsado, late

Pa Peter Akaiku of Ecewu, late Pa Abraham Agunzi Ajakpo of Kpata, late Pa Samuel Atebiye of Ecewu, late Pa Josiah Wandza, late Pa David Kidzugi of Kpata, late Pa Titus A. Mayaki of Kpata, and so on. There are several others who were young when they were converted whose names have not been mentioned here but who became ordained Priests and have risen to the posts of Canons, Archdeacons and even a Bishop of the Anglican Communion. They include late Ven. Arch Titus L. K. Waniko of Ecewu; Ven. Arch. Benjamin A. Kato of Akabe; Rt. Rev. Bertram B. Ayam of Emiboci; Ven. Cornelius A. Akanya of Akabe; late Rev. Aaron A. Haruna of Kpata; Rev. Canon Robert Egbunu of Kpata; Rev. Canon Jonathan L. Labuja of Magana; late Rev. Canon James Ogbeha of Kpata kpale; late A. A. Tsuzom of Akabe; Rev. L. M. Chinga of Effi; and several other laymen who were also young when they were converted. Each of these categories is near seventy years of age or little above seventy years. These men include late Samuel O. Esenyi, late Joshua B. Fayomi, Mr. Nathanael Ainika, Benjamin Ketome, late Michael Bako, late David Igu and a host of other men and women.

Miss C. Matthews and Miss K. E. Ritsert

Later in 1930, two European missionary ladies, Christine Matthews, a much older lady and Katherine Elizabeth Ritsert, were posted to Lokoja/Bassa Church District to be stationed at Kpata. History, thus, repeated itself correctly and justly because the first ordained missionary (Rev. Obadiah Thomas) in Bassaland after Gboke was stationed at Kpata, the headquarters, besides Lokoja, of the C. M. S. Both Miss Matthews and Miss Ritsert were, for a short time, between 1928 and 1929, at Kataeregi in Nupeland preparatory to the missionary work in Bassaland and Lokoja. The two missionary ladies were living in Kpata in the Crowther or Mission House that was later pulled down

by Miss Ritsert after the questionable and suspicious exit of Miss C. Matthews from Bassa land and Lokoja/Bassa Church District between 1938 and 1939. She, Miss Matthews, went on forlough to England never to return to Nigeria again.

Both missionary ladies lived together seemingly peacefully and in unity and love at Kpata from 1931 to 1934. In 1934, Miss Ritsert was posted to Akabe for the following reasons:

- (a) expansion of evangelism
- (b) Miss Ritsert being a midwife, the mission arranged to open a maternity clinic in Akabe to enable her to carry out her profession and thereby bring a tremendous help for a surer, safer care delivery to all women in Bassaland and environs, thus relieving almost all families of frequent death of pregnant women in the process of child birth and the tedious and risky journey of crossing the River Niger by paddle - pulled canoes to and from Lokoja General Hospital, for most deliveries of children.

The laudable and generally welcome project started immediately after necessary permission by the health authorities concerned and the clinic began functioning in a temporary building at Akabe. The two missionary ladies, between 1935 and 1936, had caused both permanent living house and maternity clinic to be erected and serious, progressive and fruitful work started. The maternity clinic became very popular not only in Bassaland but also throughout the former Igala Division and across Lokoja and other divisions of the then Kabba Province. Unfortunately and painfully, the maternity clinic did not function properly for many reasons which are not relevant or appropriate to be enumerated here and finally got closed down to the

retrogress of the Bassa Nge land and people in particular, and other ethnic group users in general. It must be noted with pleasure that before this period:

- (a) Both missionary ladies were living happily together, or so it seemed to all, at Kpata, the headquarters of Bassa Nge missionary work from 1895, the time Rev. Obadiah Thomas was posted to Kpata.
- (b) That the first missionary storey building in Bassa Nge land, was organised by Miss C. Matthews and built by the combined and united community labour of all the Bassa Nge Christians at Kpata. It is known as Miss Matthews' House up till today and ~~needs~~ rehabilitation for an important project which will benefit not only Kpata but the entire Bassaland, the entire former Igala Division, people across Lokoja and its environs, Kogi State in particular, and Nigeria in general. The building was erected in 1934 before Miss K. E. Ritsert was posted to Akabe for her special assignment.
- (c) That the popular belief by tradition and practical activities was that Miss Matthews allowed the posting of Miss Ritsert to Akabe for the special assignment in appreciation of and in order to compensate Akabe people for the major role they played in the erection of the missionary storey building at Kpata.

Foundation of Early Secular Primary School

Earlier, between 1924 and 1925, the foundation of secular primary education was laid in Kpata by late Pa Ernest W. Campbell, one of the twin brothers of Lokoja who was believed to be Igbirra koto origin. He was then the school

master in charge of the school and, I and other Kpata boys namely, late Samuel Esenyi, late Sergeant Joshua Fayom, late Benjamin Ketome and many others, attended the school. I remember in 1924, when the late Ernest Campbell the schoolmaster called me "LUGBE" a "HAWK" in the school and asked other children to call me so; they did and I reacted and ran out of the class. The children were ordered to chase me but they did not catch up with me until I got home. My late mother was annoyed and warned late Ernest Campbell never to attempt that again. My elder brother late Pa Jacob Mayaki, came from Lokoja coincidentally and, on hearing this, punished me to the displeasure of our mother. It is interesting to know that it was the custom of Bassa Nge fathers to ask their young sons to blow their tobacco pipes for them before they (the fathers) smoked the pipes, thus indirectly teaching the boys smoking.

Late Ernest Campbell was my wife's Godfather in 1926 during her baptism. He was a capable teacher, speaker of many Nigerian languages, an interpreter in Lokoja General Hospital up to the latter part of 1950's. He was a linguist in short, and spoke fluently Bassa dialect, real Nupe, Yoruba, Igbirra koto, Ebira Irehi, Kakanda, Ibo, and of course, English. He loved me very dearly and his first son, who worked in the marine Lokoja who had died since, was one of my beloved young ones in Lokoja.

With this short background, the real secular primary school, which was, I believe, approved by the Education Department, Kabba Province, was laid in Kpata between 1930 and 1932. That of Akabe, even though Miss Ritsert did not finally move to Akabe until 1934, was founded between 1932 and 1934. Records seem to conflict but it is clear that the two schools were not simultaneously founded as one is given to understand from certain quarters, but the two were opened by the two missionary ladies. The significant but unfortunate event that happened was that

while Akabe school was going from strength to strength, with even boarding facilities up to the 1960's, Kpata school began to dwindle after the unfortunate departure of Miss Matthews in 1938 and was ironically closed down until 1958 when by the grace of God, I became the Visiting Teacher for the then Kwara Division, and God used the then Kabba Provincial Education Officer, Mr. J. E. Eadle, who, knowing the facts of the case why Kpata school was closed down, occasioned the re-opening of the school in 1958. To my mind, the two schools are now functioning purely on their merits, thank God.

Other primary schools in places like Ecewu, Kpata kpale, Gboloko (N. A. School), Adum Woiwo, Atte, Emi Eronu, Effi, Koji (N. A. School) and other places, were later founded by the Anglican Mission under the supervisorship of then Mr. H. T. M. Abenemi now Chief H. T. M. Abenemi. To the glory of God, I contributed seriously and sincerely to the establishment of the first N. A. School at Gboloko in the Bassa Nge District. This is evident in my petitions of 1950-1951 which I sent to the then Resident, Kabba Province, which brought about the establishment of the N. A. School, Gboloko, between 1950 and 1951.

CHAPTER 13

Advent of Islam in Bassa (Nge)

Very scanty records, oral or written, exist to state exactly how and when Islamic religion did penetrate into Bassa Nge land, but, there are dotted information or oral records here and there to give some sufficient and authentic information to satisfy one's curiosity on this subject matter. Apparently, there is no such written information, with all my research, by any one as to how some original Bassa Nge elements and the Bassa Nge land itself embraced Islam. Between 1888 and 1892, HRH Mayaki Etan, Etsu Bassa Nge was turbaned by Ag. Governor William Wallace at Lokoja and received mandate to go to Bida for recognition by the Etsu (Emir) of Bida, Etsu Maliki, 1884 - 1895. It is also clearly known that Gbobe and Gende were already Islamic towns before Christianity got to Bassa Nge land.

Oral account says that Mayaki Etan, the Etsu, on reaching Bida, was initiated into Islamic religion by the persuasion of the Emir of Bida. This was exactly what happened to the then reigning Maigari of Lokoja who was a Christian and was attending the Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Lokoja, before he was taken to Bida for recognition by the Emir. As a matter of fact, the first two reigning Maigaris of Lokoja, namely, HRH Jacob Mieux popularly known as Musa Maigari (1870) and HRH Daniel Abiga

(1902), were Christians before they were converted to Islam just exactly what we know happened to HRH Mayaki Etan, Etsu Bassa Nge in 1895.

The account appeared to be confirmed to me by HRH the Late Revered Ndayako, Emir of Bida, father of the reigning Emir of Bida, HRH Alhaji Sanda Ndayako on the occasion of my being taken to the Emir for introduction by the late Rev. Canon S. A. Mama of Bida fame on my transfer to Bida in January 1952, when the Emir was told that I came from Lokoja and that I was Bassa Nge of Kpata in particular. The Emir welcomed me warmly and said that I was a native of Nupeland and also a prince of one of the ruling houses of Nupe and that the original motherland of the Bassa Nges who chose to call themselves Bassas, was Gbara. He said when his own father was the Emir (pointing to the photograph of his father which was hanging on the wall), after slave raids, the Nupes would leave some of the captured slaves at Kpata city, the town of Mayaki Dodondawa, leaving some in Lokoja with the Maigari of Lokoja and would bring the remaining slaves to Bida. He concluded by telling me and Rev. Canon S. A. Mama that I was a son of the soil.

The deduction I then made and which I still hold on to was that if HRH Mayaki Etan (1888 - 1912), Etsu Bassa Nge, was not a Muslim then, he would not easily find such a favour and cordial understanding with the Emir and his Nupe warriors. In addition to this, it is on record that:

- (a) HRH Eri Etan (1912 - 1914) was a muslim
- (b) HRH Mopa Mayaki Etan (1915 - 1930) was a muslim
- (c) HRH Lerama Amkpolo (1934 - 1939) was a muslim
- (d) HRH Ali Mopa Mayaki Etan (1939 - 1944) was a muslim
- (e) HRH Umoru Eri Etan (1944 - 1946 and 1956 -

- 1962) was a muslim
 (f) HRH Alhaji Adama Lerama Amkpolo (1962-
 2003 was a muslim.

It is obvious and more than a coincidence that the continuity of the Etsus of the two ruling houses of the Bassa Nge ethnic group of the Nupe tribe has been established since 1892, but it is still a thing of joy that the obvious possibility of any future Etsu Bassa Nge being a Christian is not and can never be in doubt, as there are several descendants from the two ruling houses who are Christians who may or will definitely decide as of right traditionally, to occupy the stool of their grandfathers or great grandfathers as Etsus of Bassa Nge in future. In addition to this, the relationship of all the past and present Etsu Bassa Nge who were and are Muslims with the Christians was and is always cordial as it is with all Christian and Muslim Bassa Nge men, women, boys and girls everywhere.

Above all, members of the past and present royal families of the Bassa Nge ruling houses are so interwoven on point of religion since many are Christians and many are muslims, that, they can find no factors in the two religions to disunite them; if any factors there are, they seem to unite them stronger and more solidly than to divide them. In fact, this is the happy and ideal situation in Bassa Nge land generally, among all and sundry. Christians and Muslims so interact, inter - relate and inter - socialise that one finds it difficult to differentiate between the two religious adherents except at the time of separate religious worships.

Here, we must thank God for this peaceful co-existence, knowing what it is like in some parts of Nigeria and in some other parts of the world where bitter religious intolerance, even among members of the same family with inseparable blood relationship exist. People may have to

learn from the Bassa Nge people all over the world as far as this aspect of human being is concerned. It is a very strong universal brotherhood of mankind and, with this, the future of Bassa Nge people, in spite of their temporary disunity caused by selfishness, inordinate ambition and poverty, is bright and great.

Early Muslim Bassa (Nge) People

There are a few early Muslim Bassas dotted here and there who are of living memory, such as the late Mallam Kpetu Mopa Mayaki Etan, a member of one of the two ruling houses of Bassa Nge land; Mallam Tseniwa Mopa Mayaki Etan of the same royal family; late Mallam Sule Tailor of Kpata; late Mallam (Sgt.) Yakubu Baji of Kpata whose sons are Mr. Michael Yakubu, an executive manager of an Internal Audit firm in Kano and Dr. Haruna Ibn Yakubu, formerly a senior lecturer in the College of Education, Minna and now a Director in the Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja and one of my contacts in my research in writing this book; late Mallam Alfa of Kpata originally from Bida; late Mallam Kabunu of Takete and Madaki, the traditional ruler of Takete; late Mallam Sule Painter of Ecewu whose son, Jonathan Sule, one of the church leaders of St. Luke's Anglican Church Adankolo, Lokoja, was a civil servant of the Inland Waterways, Lokoja; late Mallam Ole of Kpata and many other such early converts into Islam all over Bassa Nge land

There were a few Nupe Muslim citizens, especially in Kpata, like Mallam Ndako who was selling or trading in dresses and wrappers of assorted kind; Alfa, who was a farmer and drummer, and a few such others. Their descendants have so integrated with inter - marriages that one cannot easily differentiate them from the original Bassa Nge people. This is more so since the Bassas are originally Nupe people themselves.

CHAPTER 14

Indigenous Industries of Bassa (Nge)

Traditional or indigenous industries of the Bassa Nge people may be classified as: Farming, Fishing, Trading, Communal or Community work, Hunting, with other subsidiary industries.

Farming

Farming can be grouped into three:

- (a) Individual farming
- (b) Family farming
- (c) Group farming.

Individual farming is, according to the name, organised and carried out by every individual who establishes a farm, be it yam, rice, corn, beans or melon farm, according to the strength or ability of his household as well as his financial standing. Farming is the main industry of the average Bassa man, young or old, who has to leave home between 6. 00 a.m and 9. 00 a.m daily, except on Sundays if he is a Christian, and returns between 6. 30 p.m and 7. 00 p.m or later occasionally, and who can even live in the farm (in the olden days) when necessary, till weekend. Habitable huts were usually built in the farm for the accommodation of the farmers. This system is no more in vogue as serious

farming has been abandoned by most people in Bassa Nge land. Some individual farmers employ the services of some friends and relations on communal basis and provide food and drinks each day such communal farming takes place.

Family farming is practised where the head of the family is lucky to have an appreciable number of elderly men and young men in the family to farm for him. Although each grown up member of the family may be an independent farmer, some days may be set aside to farm for the head of the family. Like communal farming, whenever this happens, the head of the family is naturally responsible for feeding and providing drinks for the younger members of the family. The family method of farming does not however, necessarily stop communal farming, since communal farming is obviously like mechanical farming, where more amount of work is done in a day by a number of people who may number up to 10, 20 or 30, according to the financial strength of the host farmer.

Group farming is another name for communal farming. It takes the same form as communal farming in that the group, which may number up to 10 to 40, will be given food and drinks by the host farmer. It has the same advantage as communal farming. However, for some years now, it appears that there is a new method of farming by hiring one or two people because of financial reason, since it costs less to do this than to go by communal farming.

Women's Involvement in Farming

In Bassa Nge land, women or girls are not generally or directly active or engaged in farming as it is done in some other parts of Nigeria. They are involved or engaged principally in sowing or planting, in traditional harvesting, in carrying the grains, marketing and selling the harvest. It is interesting to know that the average Bassa Nge farmer or husband reposes confidence in his wife and trusts that

she will be honest and faithful in selling his farm produce in the markets without his presence, even though the husband himself may accompany the wife to the market.

With the present so called civilisation, one hopes that the Bassa Nge wives still command the morals and social respect and qualities which their mothers and grandmothers commanded and which gave room to the husbands reposing confidence in them and trusting the honesty and faithfulness implicitly.

Main Crops

The main crops in the farm of the average Bassa Nge farmers are usually raised by rotational farming. They are yams, rice, beans, guinea corn, millet, cassava, cotton, sweet potatoes, gourds, onions, melon, okro, groundnuts, pepper and, of recent, tomatoes; growing of bananas, plantain, oranges, cocoa and kola nuts are crops that have recently been undertaken by the Bassa Nge farmers, especially those on the hills like Effi, Atte, Amonoku and other places, to produce even in commercial quantities.

The best of yams (awala), which were very popular not only in Bassaland but even across Lokoja, Kabba, Okene, Ikare and their environs were formerly grown in places like Kpata and the suburbs. But it appears the type does not popularly exist any longer in an appreciable quantity. It is a type of yam most suitable and palatable for making "pounded yam".

If the farmers of Bassa Nge land are encouraged by the local government and other authorities by supplying them with the right type of fertilisers and modern farming equipments, there is no reason why the land should not be able to yield enough farm products to feed a great portion of Benue, Kogi, Kwara States and beyond.

Fishing

Fishing in Bassa Nge land is done by individual or communal system. The individual system is carried out in the Rivers Niger and Benue or any of the accessible streams or tributaries. It is carried out by fishhooks, fishing nets thrown into the river from a small sized special canoe, hand fishing nets specially constructed, fish catching baskets and fishing darts. Individual fishing is generally carried out privately by an individual or a pair of individuals, depending on the fishing instrument used. Such fishing is normally carried out either in the early hours of the morning – between 5.00 a.m and 9.00 a.m and latter part of the day – between 4.00 p.m and 6.00 p.m. Fish caught during such fishing exercise are either for personal consumption or for sale or both.

Communal Fishing: this is more prominent and common in Bassa Nge land. It is done by the order of an authority and common agreement of the whole district, with the Etsu Bassa Nge giving permission as to the dates each of the fish ponds must be visited for communal fishing. There are a number of such ponds such as Ete Emeko, Ete Emegba, Ete Egun and a number of others. The entire district normally congregates in large numbers at the specific pond scheduled for fishing on a particular day between 9.00 a.m and 10.00 a.m, when fishing would begin after a powerful authority should have normally been given to do it. This done, every one would dash into the stream with his fishing instruments and fishing would begin in earnest. It is like the Argungu or Patigi fishing regatta. Musical drumming would be supplied while jubilation would continue as the fishing process progresses. The Etsu Bassa Nge and obviously all the Gagos, the traditional title holders and sub-rulers, would normally be represented as their own shares of each person's catch must be taken for the rulers,

especially the Etsu, the paramount ruler.

Communal fishing throughout Bassa Nge land takes place annually from about November or December of one year to February or March of the following year. If anyone is caught going to fish in any of the communal streams or ponds secretly, he is in trouble, he would be disciplined. Fish got from communal fishing are for both individual and commercial consumptions but more for commercial consumption as the catch may be so large that it cannot be consumed domestically.

Fishing instruments normally used are specially woven from soft tree branches into special baskets (Akishi) for catching fish; specially woven hand nets for catching fish; special darts (Atundu) for stabbing big fish; sizeable double-edged hand knife (Akwo); gourds (Godo) with covers if possible, for storing the catch made. The communal fishermen normally make provision to have a lunch of roasted fish and roasted yams, generally, during the ceremony before leaving the pond for their respective homes, between 1.00 p.m and 3. 00 p.m.

Hunting

There are strictly two methods adopted in Bassa Nge land for hunting and they are:

- (i) individual hunting
- (ii) group or communal hunting

Individual hunting, as the name indicates, is done by a private and individual hunter who may go out in the day or in the night to hunt games such as antelopes, grasscutters, guinea fowls, patridges, squirrels and so on, with or without his hunting dog or dogs. He uses such weapons as dane gun, bow and arrows, hunting traps which he sets for the animals, two-edged sharp knife as well as two-edged special sword. He is usually well equipped with trusted weapons for his hunting expedition. In modern time, he

may use a hunting lamp in the night if he can afford one, as he may hunt far into the midnight. Normally, the individual hunter is always a bold and fearless man with confidence in himself and the weapons he uses. He is never discouraged if he fails to get games on one, two or even more occasions as he always believes in luck. Whenever he sets out for hunting, his faith at times yields him good dividend or profitable result as he may get reasonable games on several occasions for personal or domestic consumption as well as commercial consumption.

Group or communal hunting, as the name connotes, is carried out by a group of good hunters whose objective games are bush pigs, antelopes, crocodiles and a few wild but edible animals on land and in water. The hunting is done on an appointed day or time and it is done both in the night and day by powerful hunters, who are experts and may be regarded as professionals and who are proficient in the use of their hunting weapons and whose hunting activities may be hereditary. Their hunting weapons are virtually the same as those of the individual hunters but are more concentrated with power to terminate the lives of such wild animals. It is known that such individual and group hunters who are powerful possess hunting weapons with powerful concentration and are permitted or licensed to hunt games for which special permission is normally given by the government. Games such as hippopotamus and elephants are in the group of such games for which permission is normally sought and given before eliminating them. Whenever such games are got by any hunter or a group of hunters, the meat is for both domestic and commercial consumption.

Other Industrial Activities

Other known and practised industrial activities, are as follows:

- (i) Trade industry
- (ii) Pottery industry
- (iii) Brewery industry
- (iv) Poultry industry
- (v) Blacksmith industry
- (vi) Weaving industry
- (vii) Carving industry
- (viii) Sewing and dress decoration industry
- (ix) Building industry
- (x) Medical and healing industry

Trade Industry: Even though the main industry of the Bassa Nge people, men in particular, is farming, there is no doubting the fact that there are a few men who engage themselves in some small trade in addition to farming. Some men in the land, who may not be Bassa Nge originally, do engage themselves in buying and selling of cloths and dresses and other valuable articles in their homes from and in the market places. They may do little farming in addition but their main industry is buying and selling. But most Bassa Nge women engage themselves in trade industry of one type or another such as buying and selling of various types of grains, namely: rice, beans, guinea corn, millet, some yam tubers, cassava tubers and cassava flour, from market to market. Particularly, there is no edible stuff or article of trade that the average Bassa Nge woman who has the means does not trade in. She is naturally a potential trader for she is a direct partner-in-progress with her husband economically and domestically, keeping and maintaining the home especially in feeding the members of the family.

Mothers also try to bring up their daughters especially in trading activities even if they go to school. This is the main reason why the average Bassa Nge wife is always assigned with the responsibility of selling the farm products of her husband.

Pottery Industry: Pottery industry in Bassa Nge land is virtually women's affair and is carried out in very few villages or towns. Magana is a popular and conspicuous village where pottery is carried out, although there are other locations. Various categories of pots, such as drinking water pot, water carrying pot, pitto (native beer) brewing pot, drumming music pot, washing hand pot, pitto selling pot, porridge making pot, frying pot, soup making pot, and so on. Naturally, pottery can only be carried out where clay is available as raw material. It appears however, that pot making is vastly dying out in Bassa Nge land. Every effort ought to be made, in spite of imported pots of different categories being sold in the market, to keep the industry going in places where clay is available and potters can be found.

Brewery Industry: Brewing of different types of drinks like pitto, burukutu, kudo and others, is an industry for women in Bassa Nge land. The most popular, expensive and profitable drink is pitto. It is a drink full of alcohol and can be very intoxicating. The grain stuff used in preparing it is guinea corn and the process of brewing is long and tedious. It takes about three days to get the drink ready for consumption after the guinea corn has been soaked for germination in specially prepared baskets or hygienic place for some days, preparatory to fermentation. The pitto drink, when brewed, can be preserved for three or more days and will still retain its alcoholic value or may even be more alcoholic in content than when freshly brewed and will still be fit and hygienic for drinking, depending on the method of preservation. The brewing takes about 12 to 18 hours on the fire depending on the quantity of the guinea corn used as well as the degree of fire used for brewing. It is sold in different sizes of pots in different monetary values, but comparatively far cheaper than any imported alcoholic drinks sold.

The drink, Kudo, is generally prepared by teenage girls and presupposes that it is a drink for the youth. It is non alcoholic and is also a drink for the teetotallers. The ingredients used comprise either the golden or greyish millet, some slices of sweet potatoes ground into powder to sweeten the drink, some alligator pepper to give the drink a little bit of pepperish taste. The average teetotaller, man or woman likes drinking kudo. It is about the cheapest drink brewed in Bassa Nge land and contains both carbohydrate and protein and it is good for the body.

Burukutu drink is also brewed by the Bassa Nge women, but, except of fairly recent time, the drink was not as popular as pitto. Its ingredient is normally millet and the method of its preparation is not as hygienic as pitto. It also has alcoholic content and can be intoxicating when taken, especially in large quantity. In value or cost, it is far cheaper than pitto and its liquid appearance looks dull and not as attractive as pitto. It is greenish in look while pitto is golden in look.

Poultry Industry: Poultry industry in Bassa Nge land is generally women's affair and it is normally on a very low establishment where a very sizeable number of chickens are reared. The poultry usually consists of local hens and cocks. The hens would lay eggs, which would be hatched, as the eating of eggs as part of normal food eating items was not part of the food eating custom of the Bassa Nge people. With time and the knowledge of the advantage of mixed or balanced diet, however, coupled with education for the younger ones, eggs are being normally eaten now as part of food items.

The main objective of poultry industry in Bassa Nge land originally, was to make the hens hatch the eggs laid, rear the chickens guardedly by freeing them from being snatched away by hawks and by taking the grown up

chickens to the market for sale. Now that there is a wind of change in the food items of the average Bassa Nge people, especially the new generation, both the eggs and the chickens are known to be of nutritious value and are consumed. In this way, poultry has taken a new dimension in the land and even some men have entered into the industry both for domestic and commercial consumption.

Blacksmith Industry: The group in Bassa Nge land that carries out blacksmith industry is the Gene group. The Genes inherited this industry and no Bassa Nge man ever ventures to embark on it. Like the Masaga group in Bida in Nupeland, Gene is the group which carries out everything connected with blacksmith industry while the average Nupe man is excluded from that industry, the average Bassa man is equally excluded from the industry in Bassaland. No Nupe man believes in and ventures to undertake the industry of the Masaga group because, the group is specially endowed with it. I have been reliably informed during my research that several efforts made for many years by any Nupe man who does not belong to the Masaga group to dabble into Masaga group industry had failed and will continue to fail.

The 'Genes' make various hoes of ploughing, making of ridges and cleaning the farm. They also make axes, traps, arrows, darts, swords and many other farming, fishing and hunting implements as well as kitchen utensils. But the generation of the Genes appears to be diminishing in Bassaland. I appeal to the living descendants to organise and modernise the industry. In both Okene and Okehi Local Government Areas in Ebiraland, where the Genes are carrying out the industry, the industry is being modernised and made to flourish. Why not in Bassa Nge land too?

Weaving Industry: Weaving, especially of different types of cloths, is principally the industry of women in Bassa Nge land. But weaving of other items, like sleeping mats, load carrying bags, load tying net, is men industry. It is unfortunate and regrettable however, to note that weaving industry generally, is dying out steadily in Bassa Nge land. One can remember the artistic and beautiful cloths of different sizes and designs the average Bassa Nge woman was engaged in a few decades ago. Such cloths would be for covering by men (*agudu*), for wrapping by women (*dzudzu*), for girdling by women (*Ndeko*), for covering the shoulder by women (*akpakpe*), for covering the head by women (*Itikpe*), and for tying the head by women (*rufuta* or *tsofo*).

All these have given place and substituted with imported cloths in Bassa Nge land. But the Ebira women in both Okene and Okehi Local Government Areas have completely taken over even in a very modern way nearing international recognition, appreciation and admiration. The Bassa Nge woman should wake up for a healthy competition and rivalry with their Ebira counterparts. So also have the men abandoned mat weaving, especially the artistically decorated ones (*Azhibi*). A new awakening is required and necessary in order not to let the industry die out completely in the land.

Carving Industry: Carving industry is practically men's affair in Bassa Nge land but it appears to be altogether abandoned at the moment. Most of the things that used to be carved comprised of:

- (i) Images representing the gods the people worshipped.
- (ii) Mortars and mortar pestles for pounding yams or crushing hard materials or substances.
- (iii) Calabashes for carrying marriage property (*para*) and gourd bowls for eating and for

- decoration of homes of wealthy and traditional people.
- (iv) Sitting stools for wealthy and traditional people or for those who can afford and are interested.
 - (v) Laddles for eating or drinking pap and for cooking soup.
 - (vi) Big and very sizeable gourds used as boxes for keeping dresses like wrappers, gowns, trousers and other valuables.

Carving industry should not be allowed to die out in Bassa Nge land among the people. It should be revived by the descendants of the traditional carvers wherever they are in the land.

Sewing and Dress Decoration Industry: My research carries me so far back to some centuries even from Gbara, the motherland of the Bassas, when the men of the Nupe origin who chose to call themselves Bassas, for the acceptable and very convincing reasons, began sewing and started the dress industries. The women were specifically for weaving but the men became reputed for sewing and decoration of dresses, so that, as recent as the 1920's, one would hardly find one Bassa Nge woman sewing or decorating dresses. Most of the tailors using modern machines for sewing and decorating dresses especially for men were men themselves. For instance, we had the following popularly known tailors:

Jacob Tailor of Emiboci; Jonathan Tailor of Ecewu; Joshua Tailor of Kpata, later of the General Hospital Lokoja; Aaron Tailor of Kpata, later Rev. Haruna of Pankshin; Sule Tailor of Kpata; and a number of other men employed in sewing and in dress decoration. Later, however, some women, mostly wives of some of the Evangelists whose husbands could afford to purchase hand sewing machines

for them, entered into the trade and began sewing women Bubas, wrappers and other dresses for themselves.

As for decoration of dresses, it had been mainly men's affair until of recent, when some women by training, got themselves involved in decorating dresses for women by using machines and the knowledge of knitting. Many women tailors are good at it is today in Bassaland.

Building Industry: Traditional building of houses in Bassa Nge land is generally carried out by the average Bassa Nge male adults assisted by the young ones. But there are a few professional or expert builders known as " Ndagbas", meaning "expert builders". They are expert in the following ways:

- (i) Mixing the mud with either grass or other raw materials for building.
- (ii) Making of mud blocks of different sizes and designs.
- (iii) Determining the type of mud blocks for thickness and height of any type of building.
- (iv) They are efficient, honest and conversant with putting up any type of building satisfactorily, with durability.

The Ndagbas are generally helped by a group of women or men in their building industry by communal effort, and are normally fed by the owner of the building on the day the building work is being carried out. The Ndagbas usually charge for their workmanship. Traditional building structures are of different types such as:

- (i) Round type for commercial purposes which are meant principally for women for brewing pitto, frying edible cakes and cooking of other edibles, all meant for either breakfast or to be taken as refreshment between meals. They are either for domestic or commercial consumption.

- (ii) Round type of building for living purposes. This is a generally large building occupying a very large area of land where almost all the members of the family (especially the female and the young ones) sleep on special beds made of mud (Erikpo), under which fire was generally made especially in the night during the wet and cold season. In such a large building, goats and or sheep usually have a portion where they would sleep and there was usually a special building within the main building (which in the Court of Justice is known as trial within trial in certain complicated cases). It is specially fortified in the centre of the mother building called "Aku Nim ", meaning " inner building or strong room ", with special door, lock and key and strongly decked, where wealth or personal effects and cash of the entire family are treasured or kept for safety purposes.

The building for the head of the family, the husband, which may be of the round type but generally of a rectangular type, is traditionally put up separately. It is clearly known and practised that it is not the culture of the Bassa Nge men to share the same bedroom with their wives or any female counterpart. There are many reasons for this, some of which are as follows:

- (a) The husbands want to keep their secrets secret.
- (b) The husbands, especially if they are polygamists, will always like to call any of their wives to their houses or rooms when and, as it is necessary without any other wife interfering.
- (c) The husbands may have their own special

soup pots as normally practised by the Bassa Nge men for the type of soup which is quite different from the general family soup, that they may order their wives or one of the wives to prepare.

All these and other related reasons make it imperative for an average Bassa Nge man to have his own separate building within the compound of the family. It is saying the obvious that before the advent of western civilisation, all buildings in Bassa Nge land were thatch-roofed while all building materials were of local production. Today, it is also an obvious fact that, throughout Bassa Nge land, between 70 per cent and 85 per cent or more of the buildings in every village or town are roofed with corrugated iron sheets, and the buildings are of rectangular form. In short, most buildings are modernised with sufficient ventilation and light.

Medical And Healing Industry: Healing of the sick industry among the Bassa Nge people before the acceptance of western civilisation, was (and is still) practised, recognised and accepted by native doctors, soothsayers, men and women of different cults, each group with its merits and proficiency in its profession and practise, winning clients of sick people.

Before Christianity or Islam, it was unthinkable if any Bassa man or woman existed who did not believe in soothsaying and who did not attribute whatever happened to him or her to one or the other superstition. This sort of belief made soothsayers - cum native doctors to be numerous in Bassaland. It is however, very heartening to note that there were devoted, real and capable native doctors practising their profession with the fear of God, who were truly treating and curing several diseases, even though such doctors were few to come by. Some of them

inherited the power to cure from their fathers, mothers and forefathers and kept strictly to the rules and ethics of what was handed over to them by their parents and grandparents. For instance, however tempting the sickness worrying their patient was, they would charge the traditional and token sum of say 1 ½ d or 4½ d. They would ask the patient or the relation to bring, according to tradition, a white or black chicken or any other needed materials as dictated to them by their methods of consultation as inherited by them. They would ask for no more or less; they would prepare the various types of drugs, liquid, powdered or ointment for drinking, licking or putting in pap or in the ordinary water for drinking. They may also use it to rub the part of the body affected in the manner they were inherited and, as they trained, leaving the cure of the patient(s) in the hands of God.

The native doctors would ask for the amount of money absolutely necessary for the preparation of the drugs and no more; they would say in genuine cases, that when the illness was cured, the patient should bring a token amount or that the patient should pay whatever he or she could afford. They put God first in all their attempts to effect a cure of any disease however serious or complex or simple, and they were miraculously always proficient and successful. Such genuine, sincere, honest and God - fearing native doctors did exist in Bassa Nge land in the past, but, perhaps, one may not find 5 per cent of such native doctors today. Almost all are after false acquisition of wealth or riches and have thrown away to the dogs without the fear of God, the traditionally inherited power and ethics to cure, because of inordinate ambition for wealth and money, thereby grasping the chaff (bad name) and leaving the substance (good name).

This is why it is rare today to find any of the present native doctors cure diseases which their parents or grand-

parents would cure very easily within two or three weeks or within three months. I am confident and certain that there is natural efficacy in the traditional medicines and treatments of our traditional native doctors not only in Bassa Nge land but throughout Nigeria, but, such efficacy as well as its power to cure and bring happiness to the patients, their relations and mankind generally, has been destroyed by the craze for wealth and money which culminate in deceit and of false and inordinate claims of material wealth in cash and kind from the patients without any show of sympathy and love. Such native doctors need re - orientation or to be born again in order to resuscitate the efficacy of the powers of their forerunners in curing diseases and making the sick and their relations happy in life. The Bassa Nge native doctors had resident clinics around them and within their easy reach for their patients of diverse diseases and were very proficient. They were so good that, in appreciable number, women patients who perhaps had no husbands, such women after cure would easily be married to the native doctors and would produce children for them. Equally, if male patients were so cured, they might decide to move to the villages or towns of the native doctors and live there permanently. Such decisions are clearly in appreciation of the work of the native doctors. Could such a situation not come back to Bassa Nge land and people for history to repeat itself? May God bring it. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

Marriage and Naming Ceremonies

Marriages, by Bassa Nge people, take three different forms, namely:

- (i) Traditional form
- (ii) Admixture of traditional and Christian form
- (iii) Admixture of traditional and Islamic form

The Traditional Form

A man, young or old, fixes his eyes on a young girl from a particular family by studying her ways and characteristics and, after admiring the qualities of such a girl whose family background is also known and admired by the would-be spouse or bridegroom, makes some undescribed or undisclosed but loving advances to the young girl and some of her relations. Later, as the advances prove favourable, a reliable middle woman in most cases, is assigned with the responsibility of speaking to the girl who in a way of shyness may accept the approach. Initially, the approach in a way of shyness may be rejected. At this stage, if the girl is truly in favour of the wishes of the would-be husband, a further step is taken by sending a delegation of two or more middle women (Nnem - Bassa, Nna mi - Nupe) from the family of the would-be husband to the parents or guardians

of the girl to submit the wishes of the would-be spouse. If the wishes are acceptable, the foundation of a future marriage between the girl and the future husband is laid and interaction, open and cordial relationship between the two families of the girl and the would-be spouse would begin to function.

Wooing: The wooing of the girl may take one, two, three or more years, depending on the age of the girl and circumstances prevalent before the wooing begins. In any case, the truly, morally and traditionally begun and carried out marriage of the Bassa Nge people would never be done in what is now known as "I love you, you love me, and we care less for our parents' consent or approval".

Obligations: During the wooing period, the bridegroom-to-be has to carry out some obligations in order to satisfy the parents or guardians or some relations of the bride-to-be. Some of the obligations, if the bride groom-to-be is living in the same town or village or nearby with the parents or guardians of the girl are, to farm for the parents of the girl, to help in building living houses for them when and where necessary and carry out any other traditionally accepted obligations. The bride groom-to-be is also obliged to provide occasional gifts for the bride-to-be, especially during festivals like Christmas if the members of the family are Christians and Sallah if the members of the family are Muslims.

Brideprice and Knowing the Relations: Towards the end of the wooing period, and as the girl is becoming marriageable, the brideprice is demanded and paid for by the would-be-bridegroom while he and any relation of his are taken round to know some of the important relations of the girl. The amount of the brideprice varies from

personality to personality and from family to family, but, there is usually a generally accepted brideprice such as ₦10.00 (before the Naira was terribly devalued) or ₦14.00. There are some members of some families who do not usually demand any brideprice for their daughters but would simply say to the bridegroom-to-be, "pay whatever you can afford, or would say, we want no brideprice for our daughters". There are also some members of some families or parents who demand heavy brideprice to compensate for their expenses on the upbringing and educational expenses of their daughters.

Kidnapping of Bride-to-be: It was the tradition of the Bassa Nge people in the olden days to kidnap, especially in the market places or on market days, the bride-to-be, who had reached marriageable age and on whom the bridegroom-to-be had carried out necessary obligations but who was not released normally by the parents or guardians to the bridegroom-to-be for marriage. Kidnapping was therefore an approved and recognised tradition in a case like this throughout Bassa Nge land.

Marriage Ceremonies: The traditional marriage ceremonies vary in pomp and grandeur from personality to personality and from family to family, depending on the status and wealth of the families concerned. The ceremonies are basically the same and include the prevention of the bride-to-be from going out for a number of days while she remains in the parents' or guardians' home with her contemporary friends, beating calabashes as drums, singing, dancing and eating. On the eve of the marriage, the bride-to-be is bathed with a pant on with soap and cam wood on a specially bought mortar by experienced elderly women in the open compound of the parents or guardians, while music goes on. This appears to be a mixture of Bassa tradition and

Islamic culture.

Before this, a ceremony of blessing (abara) must have taken place when the blood of some chickens or goat or ram slaughtered, is poured, thus invoking the blessing of God and ancestors on the marriage. This also appears a mixture of Bassa tradition and Islamic culture, as no average true Christian believes in such sacrifices made in order to invoke the blessing of God, because he or she believes and is convinced and assured that Christ Jesus has been made a sacrificial lamb once for all and stands for all occasions and circumstances of life. Ironically and unfortunately, some Christian bridegrooms-to-be give money to the parents or guardians of their brides-to-be for the ceremony in order to satisfy the wishes of such parents or guardians.

After the traditional ceremonies have been completed, which may take seven days, the bride-to-be is finally led from the parents' or guardians' home to the home of the bridegroom-to-be with drumming, singing and dancing. Her property which may include some boxes, beds, beddings, earthenwares and other expensive properties, depending on the wealth and status of her parents or guardians, will be carried to the bridegroom's house. The bride-to-be, who is now a real bride, is always accompanied by her bridesmaid and a number of her contemporary friends with one or two maid servants who are usually her younger sisters, cousins or near relations and who may live temporarily or permanently with her, depending on the circumstances obtaining or existing.

The night the bride is led to the bridegroom's house, her marital home is usually an epoch making night when the bride and bridegroom should make their first love sexually and announce the next morning whether the bride is a virgin or not. If she is, she and her parents or guardians, especially the mother of the bride if she indeed brought her up, receives praises and laurels from not only the

bridegroom and his parents or relations but also from well wishers and loved ones. The bride is popularly respected for keeping herself chaste and virtuous and she constantly deserves honour and respect from the husband and those who know her.

For many years now, especially nowadays unfortunately, the reverse is the case and it is a cankerworm that has seriously and shamelessly eaten into the fabric of Nigerian society, as most girls even pride themselves in shameless immorality which they regard as civilisation, modernism and modernity.

Admixture of Traditional and Christian Marriage

The descriptions of the marriage ceremonies given above in certain cases are the same except that there are some fundamental variations when it comes to Christian marriage in the following aspects:

- (i) If it is a marriage in accordance with the ordinance and after the completion of some of the acceptable traditional ceremonies, the bridegroom-to-be completes appropriate forms, and registers his intentions in the appropriate office of the government of the area he intends to be wedded to his bride-to-be.
- (ii) If this is satisfactorily completed and by prior consultation with the Priest of the church, the names of the would-be couples would be announced three times, that is, three consecutive Sundays, of their intention to be married. The announcements are made to the congregation of the church wherein the marriage is intended to take place.
- (iii) After the three consecutive announcements and there is no hair raised against the two

marrying each other, the marriage can then take place at anytime as arranged and as convenient to all concerned.

Bachelor's Eve and Final Acceptance of the Bridegroom
Presents comprising principally the Holy Bible (the best of all the presents) and a few other valuables like dresses, wrappers, drinks and so on, are taken to the house of the parents or guardians of the bride-to-be with drumming, singing and dancing ever before the marriage. This is a prelude to ensuring that the parents or guardians of the bride-to-be have finally consented to give their daughter as wife to the bridegroom-to-be. The acceptance of the presents signifies total and undisputed consent and real marriage may take place anytime from then as may be planned and agreed upon by families, especially the two principal persons concerned – the couple-to-be.

But if it is only the blessing of marriage in the church, all the ceremonies highlighted in the marriage in accordance with the ordinance will not come up after the usual traditional ceremonies. The marriage will be blessed in the church for the recognition and acceptance only of the bride and the bridegroom as wife and husband. In all and from the marriage procedures, ceremonies and finalities of the Bassa Nge people which comprise admixture of Bassa Nge tradition, Christian and Islamic marriages, one may conclude that except for some minor modifications that may be necessary from time to time, in view of the fact in the affairs of man, nothing is truly static, the marriage system is admirable.

Naming Ceremonies After Birth

From time immemorial, before the advent of Christian and Islamic beliefs, the naming ceremony of any baby boy or girl with whom God has blessed any family, normally

would take place on the eighth day of delivery. In Bassaland, and of course, Nupeland, naming literally, is the bringing out of a baby child on the eighth-day for naming ceremony.

Main Objective: The main objective of the eighth day naming ceremony may be classified into four:

- (i) To name the new child who should not be named until the eight day, even though the child may come into the world with its natural name, like Egbunu, Abi Bako, Bagi, showing the way the child came into the world and what he or she is. The child may be called by what he or she is or the way he or she came into the world, but the naming ceremony must be carried out.
- (ii) To give freedom to the mother of the child to go out and equally take the child out when necessary.
- (iii) To enable the child to be called by his or her names as given by the parents, relations and other people.
- (iv) To give the mother free chance to go about some duties, if she is healthy and can do so.

The naming ceremony itself takes different forms depending on the status and wealth of the parents of the child, but generally, the child is normally named on the eighth day between 5. 00 a.m and 9. 00 a.m depending on the environment or locality. One or more rams or even chickens may be slaughtered but rams and goats are the traditional animals for slaughtering in naming ceremonies, even though the status of the parents is normally taken into consideration. In any case and whatever happens, the blood of a traditionally accepted animal is very obligatory, if not mandatory, to be poured on the ground on the eighth day naming ceremony in any part of Bassa Nge land. Food and

drinks are usually provided while drumming, singing and dancing for merriment normally go on at the ceremony.

With the advent of Christianity and Islam, naming ceremonies are, in some cases, an admixture of traditional Christian and Islamic undertakings by some parents. But, some Christian and Muslim parents go strictly the way of their faith and allow the traditionalists to do theirs separately. With some Christians, the eighth day naming ceremony goes *pari passu* with the baptism or dedication as well as circumcision of the child, if he is a boy, while with others, the two latter ceremonies take place separately at different times as may be convenient to the parents.

CHAPTER 16

Burial and Remembrance Ceremonies

Like in most parts of the world, these ceremonies can be expensive in Bassa Nge land. They can also be time consuming depending on the status, historical, cultural and traditional background of the dead, especially if he or she dies at a ripe age or fairly ripe age, which can be anything between seventy and eighty (fairly ripe age) or ninety and one hundred and more years (ripe age). When a sick man or woman is declared dead in his or her home or another village or town, understandably within Bassa Nge land, what readily comes to the mind, if the death occurred in another village, are:

- (i) How would the corpse be conveyed to the deceased home immediately for burial
- (ii) How soon would the corpse be buried so as to avoid unnecessary and unwanted decomposition, since really, effective and scientific preservation method of the corpse for more than 24 or 36 hours was not available.

As these problems are solved, the ceremonies of the burial then would be undertaken. The first was the digging of the grave or tomb (Eriwo), to be supervised by professional gravediggers and buryers of the dead.

Traditionally, the dead are buried in their homes at the porch of their verandahs or right inside the room of a special building used for their trade, especially if the dead was a woman of repute and a business tycoon, or right in the room of the house of the dead. In this case, the grave, in almost all cases, was used as a bed (Erikpo) on which living relations sleep or while away time or take siesta in the day time.

The grave was always dug with a design to contain more or less a sitting room and one or two inner rooms depending on the status and historical background of the dead. It was the tradition, as more elderly people may still remember, that some slaves were usually buried with their lords, men and women, with the conviction, traditionally, that they would be in their lord's company in the great beyond, to prepare them their smoking pipes and run other errands as done here on earth.

As the grave was being dug, the corpse, which would be specially dressed up in costly cloths or wrappers, would be laid on a specially decorated easy chair or bed. The wealth of the deceased would be exhibited for all to see and admire side by side with where the corpse was lying-in-state. With this ceremony, drumming, booming of guns, singing, dancing, eating and drinking with other cultural ceremonies would be going on, of course with bitter weeping from professional weepers as well as from some of the relations.

Burial: The dead would, within 36 hours, be buried with some of his or her wealth, believing that he or she would use them in the great beyond, while a portion would be left to the children for sharing, if the dead has children or a child and relations, according to approved tradition. Some of the sympathisers would remain with the relations of the dead up to seven days and on the eighth day, a winding up ceremony would take place and the burial ceremonies

would be brought to a close until the fortieth day, particularly if the dead is a Muslim, when another, not too elaborate ceremony would take place. After this, the next ceremony (Amba), when the dead would be remembered would be arranged.

Generally, the fixing of the time for this remembrance ceremony was and is still left in the hands of the immediate and close relations of the dead. It might take six months, one year, two years, five years, or even more before the ceremony would take place. Uniform dresses for different groups were made and worn and people within the vicinity and beyond were invited to the ceremonies, which might last three or more days, depending on the status of the deceased and the relations. Children and relations of any deceased persons would think twice, plan well, with wise patience, before fixing and announcing a period for the remembrance ceremonies of their dead ones. This is because of the expenses the undertaking involves.

Both the burial and remembrance of the dead are good tradition and custom of the Bassa Nge people but they need to be modified economically in view of the cut-throat expenses involved, especially in terms of spending. I believe a better philosophy and modernised tradition which we should advocate and hand over to our children and the generation yet unborn should emphasise on:

- (i) How to maintain and make our parents and elderly relations happy when they are alive.
- (ii) How to make them feed well in order to keep healthy, lively and strong.
- (iii) How to make them live in very sanitary and hygienic homes and environments.
- (iv) How to develop clean thoughts, speak clean words and carry out clean actions.
- (v) How to draw nearer to God in all things and at all times.

If we can succeed gradually as individuals, then as a community, we should have satisfied not only ourselves but also our parents and elderly relations that the parts we have played during their lifetime have overshadowed the hitherto expensive burial and remembrance ceremonies for them. Institutions, schools, medical clinics, agricultural projects and other institutions for remembrance of our deceased parents, brothers and sisters, could be established in Bassa Nge land or outside Bassa Nge land for posterity.

CHAPTER 17

Cultural Eating Habit

The Bassa Nge people by their eating habit, normally have three organised meals a day. They are the breakfast (Lazhi gu - Bassa; Lazhin gun - Nupe); the lunch (Igidi ji - Bassa, Yigidi jin - Nupe); and the dinner (Lozu ji - Bassa, Lozun jin - Nupe). Although, eating between meals is also very much practised by individuals.

The breakfast, though organised and takes different forms, between 7. 00 a.m and 11. 00 a.m in different homes with different families, does not follow rigid procedure. With most families, the breakfast which may consist of hot pap, akara balls, gbonkuru (gbongbo), moinmoin (lele), kpakpa (fried partially ground maize), may be bought and taken by women and their children while the men are already on their way to their farms or are away fishing or hunting. Although, generally, men may provide breakfast for their families, many or majority of women are usually responsible for their breakfast and that of their children. Some men who are not already on their way to their farms, hunting or fishing exercise, do take breakfast at home. However, most men appear by practice to take their breakfast when they are away from home on duty. The breakfast then may be roasted or cooked yams, roasted maize or any other food.

The lunch, though organised, may be taken according to prevailing circumstances in a home because:

- (i) The men may all be at work in the farm or in the bush hunting or at the stream or river fishing; there they would take their lunch.
- (ii) The women may all be away to various markets, or in the farm helping their husbands or in the bush fetching firewood for cooking at home or for sale. There, if possible, they too would take or return home early for lunch.
- (iii) Provision is normally made for the children who remain at home for one reason or the other to take their lunch at home.

In any of these cases, the lunch may comprise cooked yam, jollof rice, pounded yam, pottage, porridge, or any make-do-food, again depending on the economic status of the home concerned.

Dinner is the truly and fully organised feeding time in most homes of the average Bassa Nge man or woman. The members of the family are normally complete in the home from their various and varied vocations and are fed to the full at dinner. The food may consist of pounded yam, porridge, (Ije - Bassa, Eje - Nupe), which may be of guinea corn diluted with cassava flour with palatable soup made of vegetable, okro, or stew, with smoked or fresh fish, or beans soup or melon soup with bush meat, depending on the economic strength of the home concerned.

The average Bassa Nge woman's soup is very palatable, flavourful and nutritious, while the containers for serving the soup and the food are meticulously washed to appear white and clean, since before modern time, the containers were the calabashes carved and decorated or left plain in appearance. The kitchens would sanitarily be kept attractive while the cooking pots would also be kept in the same manner.

The dinner, when men and boys, women and girls, eat communally in love, normally takes place between 7. 30 p.m and 9. 00 p.m, unless a hitch has occurred to make it later than the normal time. It is significant to note that communal eating in love has been the cultural habit of the Bassa Nge people except now that things have greatly and unpleasantly changed as a result of imbibed new culture brought about by the so called modern times. In my opinion, the so-called new culture of not eating communally in a home by a family appears to be imported by our missionary masters, imbibed by us without question, hook, line and sinker. We need to rethink, as both Christian and Islam religions support eating together in love, thus supporting our culture and tradition to eat together in love.

The culture also shows and trains our younger ones to show respect for elders and the elders to equally know their responsibility as well as exhibit their disciplined behaviour to the younger ones by eating together in the same dishes and leaving a portion of the food when it is finishing for the younger ones to finish it. This means in Bassa (Nupe), leaving the remaining food for the younger ones to satisfy themselves — *ke wo ya dzankangi*. This simple and apparently unimportant culture, is full of philosophical meanings unfolded to the future lives of our people. All these are lost today and one would love seeing communal eating revived in Bassa Nge land and among Bassa Nge people anywhere in the world.

CHAPTER 18

Traditional Dressing

Women

In a complete cultural dress by a Bassa Nge woman, the following are used:

- (i) The skirt (tobigi) which runs from the waist down to the upper knees.
- (ii) The big wrapper (ede dzudzu) for tying round the waist, running down to the ankles but now modernised and in some cases, not reaching the ankles.
- (iii) The smaller wrapper (Ndeko) tied round the belly or chest and running down to the thighs.
- (iv) Another smaller wrapper (akpakpe) used for covering one of the shoulders and covering parts of the front and back of the body.
- (v) The headtie, which can be of any size for tying the head.
- (vi) Earrings, necklaces and bangles for the wrists.

Until the wearing of buba was introduced, the Bassa woman's dressing outfit did not include the wearing of any buba nor did it necessarily include the wearing of shoes, slippers or sandals. The necklaces include costly or expensive beads, which may cost hundreds or thousands of naira, depending on the social status of the woman.

Dresses for girls are simpler and may be without all

the items for women but they are basically the same with those of their mothers. No traditional Bassa woman believes her dress is complete for any important function or even for a real visit to an important personality, which does not consist of all the items listed above.

Men

For men, the items for complete dressing are as follows:

- (i) A triangular pant with one of the three angles so long that it is usually brought back and tucked in. The Bassa people say *wun a la sa lalu*.
- (ii) A baggy or tight knee-long trousers (tsaka), which may run down to the ankles or stop at the legs immediately between the knees.
- (iii) An underwear (kamgbolugi) or danciki over which the big flowing gown is worn.
- (iv) A big flowing gown which normally runs down to the ankles.
- (v) A bangle worn between the elbow and the shoulder of the left or right arm.
- (vi) A cap, which generally is a woven one. The cap may be a round one or a dog-eared type.

Wearing of shoes did not normally come in as an item of clothing; of course, today, it is generally used. In the days of internecine wars, the average Bassa man would not consider his clothes complete, especially when travelling out of town or village, without equipping himself with bows and arrows, a two-edged handy and sharp knife in a sheath and some protective means for self defence and preservation.

Boys' clothes are very much simpler but almost take the same pattern with those of their fathers or elder brothers. Foreign dresses have completely taken over our dresses today for many reasons, but, I would advocate that we should make, preserve and use our traditional and befitting dresses when an occasion demands so.

CHAPTER 19

Cultural Respect

The Bassa Nge ethnic group of the Nupe tribe has cultural respect, which can be grouped very admirably into many sections. Some few examples may be sufficient in this book as follows:

Respect for Elders

All elderly people, irrespective of age, sex, status or position in life, or in community or family background and religion, are respected. The younger ones bow the knees or are on their knees when greeting the elderly ones, especially if the elderly ones are truly elderly in age. This is equivalent to the Yoruba culture of placing the chest on the ground (in the case of male persons), while female persons bow the knees or are on their knees. Although Christian – English culture modifies this by removing the cap or hat from the head, the original and admirable culture of respecting the elders still exists. It should not be discontinued because it is simply natural and pleasing to all.

Where and when it is reasonably impossible to be on the knees to give such respect to the elders, the Christian - English culture should understandably be used with special emphasis shown and exhibited.

Respect for Names

In Bassa Nge culture, names are respected, category by category, as follows:

- (i) Children do not call the names of their fathers at random except in a very strict and compelling circumstance, like asserting their personalities or who they are; like emphasising a valid promise of carrying out an act or a duty and, like invoking the names of their fathers in an imminent or seeming appearance of danger, when the Bassa man or woman will naturally and very involuntarily say, "Ndam Baba" meaning, "my father, my father". Sometimes the emphasis will be, 'I, the son or daughter of 'so, so and so' naming the father with an air of pride and dignity.
- (ii) Wives do not call the names of their husbands' parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews, nieces and practically all relations of the husbands. They have special names for all like "Ibam" (my husband), "Ndagim" (my small father), "Nnagim" (my small mother), "Kpolacim" (my husband apparent), "Tsocim" (my lord), and a host of such names of respect.
There are several other names coined by wives, which are used in calling each of the relations of the husbands. Any deliberate deviation from or disobedience to this beautiful culture by any wife may end up in divorce in a very strict and disciplined family home.
- (iii) Children call their mothers by name. To me, and perhaps to many others, this appears strange. I too, following the examples of my elder brothers and sisters, was calling my

mother by her name, "Aitukpa", for "Aishitukpa", meaning, "they are listening to hear about me or what may befall me, or about my progress". My father too called her by her name.

After several years of experience and study, especially on this particular culture of calling our mothers by their names, as to whether it is a sign of disrespect to or a spite to our mothers, I have come to realise and appreciate mysteriously, that it is a sign of a special and inexplicable LOVE for our mothers. The fathom of that love cannot be unearthed as it is an unseen CORD OF LOVE for the mothers which ties the children and their mothers together, biologically, spiritually and perhaps everlastingly. That cord of love is entirely different from the cord of love that ties the fathers and their children together as that of the fathers has a taint or an element of a loving - authoritative final say, while that of the mothers is a loving - authoritative passionate say. The key word in both is LOVE.

Respect for Authority

Respect for those in authority leads to a total obedience that the Bassa man or woman has for any authority, be it governmental, religious, social or cultural. Such respect by the average Bassa man or woman is never in doubt. This accounts for the peaceful coexistence of all people in Bassa Nge land as well as the smooth running of any organisation in the land, even though, as it is known all over the world, there must be a few recalcitrant elements whose actions and general behaviour may run counter to the good and peace of the community. The Bassa man or woman is always conscious of the law and order of the land and is therefore always trying to obey it even, sometimes, against odds that may face him or her or may be against his or her personal interest, future progress and development.

CHAPTER 20

Tribal Marks

It did not appear that the Bassa Nge people from origin strictly adopted specific tribal marks. I found during my research and by long careful observation, that there are many family groups that do not apply any type of marks on their children. However, there appears to exist about four types of tribal marks adapted by the people. They are as follows:

- (i) Kpaku type of marks
- (ii) Abuku type of marks
- (iii) Ayagi type of marks
- (iv) Bile type of marks.

The Kpaku Type of Marks

The kpaku type is the one marked perpendicularly, nearly from the temple of the head of both sides of the face right down to the chin. It consists of about seven marks on each side. This type of marks which appears to have died out with the passing away of the more elderly men and women, appears to be Yoruba or Gobir in origin and adapted by the Bassa Nge people during their mixing with the Yorubas and migration to Bunuland.

This type of marks has virtually found its way out of Bassa Nge land as it is very probable, from my research, to find a living Bassa man or woman with Kpaku marks today.

The generations seem to have passed away and the following and present generations have dropped the marks for good.

Abuku Type of Marks

The Abuku type of marks appears to have some Bassa Nge origin and became more popular during the mixing of the people with the Patigi Nupes, the Yorubas, the Bunus and the Oworos. The marks are more or less horizontally made across each side of the face between the eyes and the nose. They run down to the lower part of the jaws, ending near the neck. The Abuku marks of the Bassa Nge, the Yagbas, the Bunus and the Oworos are generally made on the two sides of the face while those of the Patigi Nupes are usually made on one side of the face. The details of the historical and traditional background of the difference in these marks are not for this publication, but, it is traditionally significant to mention here that the marks (especially with the Patigi Nupes) border very much on royalty or traditional chieftaincy of the ruling house of Patigi Emirate.

Ayagi Type of Marks

The Ayagi type of marks can be described as short marks, marked horizontally on both sides of the front of the face, with three equally short marks, marked perpendicularly sideways on each side of the face. The marks appear to be adopted originally by the Nupes, extending to the Igalas, the Afemai (formally called Kukurukus), Igbirra kotos, Kakandas, Oworos, Kupas and other ethnic groups in former Kabba Province.

They are worn like the other two marks, — Kpaku and Abuku, by both male and female persons. It appears that the name Ayagi (Bassa), Eyagi (Nupe), was given because the marks tend to resemble some Yoruba marks since Ayagi

or Eyagi in both Bassa and Nupe means Yoruba and further means small friend.

Bile Type of Marks

The Bile type of marks is marked a little bit longer and more conspicuously on both front sides of the face. The people of Ilorin metropolis and the Ebiras of Okene and Okehi Local Government Areas are distinct in adopting the marks. The styles of the marks of the Ondos are more distinct and are longer than those of the Ilorins and the Ebiras. Some other tribes such as the Hausas do adopt this type of marks.

The Arm and the Leg Marks

The arm and the leg marks are style of marks artistically made on the arms or legs, especially of the women. Such marks appear to be universal according to the researches carried out. Since people, men and women, from Europe, Asia, India, America, and so on, do adopt this type of marks, the styles of marks vary from place to place. Some mark the names of their fiance or fiancée, some mark their own names, some just mark artistically certain animals, birds, snakes and lizards.

It appears that the arm, leg and neck mark, have some religious or love connections or connotations; showing that human nature all over the world is virtually the same.

Chest and Back Marks

The chest-belly-back marking is not very common with the Bassa Nge people, but, one can see some few people with such marks. It is said that the reason for such marks varies from family to family. Some Yoruba, Kakanda, Ebira Irehi, and Igbirra Koto adopt this style of marks. The marks are usually made in threes horizontally, on the chest-belly and in some cases, on the back. They seem to have connection with tradition of a sort or heredity of a sort.

Circumcision

It is automatic with the Bassa Nge people that any male child should be circumcised either on the eighth day – the day of the naming ceremony, or at any other opportunity, depending on the circumstances prevailing. No Bassa Nge man or woman will leave his or her male child uncircumcised whatever the circumstance, for too long or indefinitely. It is unheard of and untold that culturally, a Bassa Nge man is uncircumcised, whatever the age. He will be ostracised not only by women but also by men and will have no Bassa Nge woman to get married to until he is circumcised.

Before now, circumcision was for both boys and girls, but with time, girls' circumcision for many reasons has been dropped.

Child Delivery and Child Care

Child delivery and child care are obviously two matters but are definitely interwoven that one cannot treat one and leave the other. Like in any other part of the world, there are few Bassa Nge women who are naturally unproductive in child bearing. From my careful research for over thirty or more years, I have discovered that out of 100 married Bassa Nge women, about 90 per cent have always been pregnant and delivered of children easily and happily, while about 2 per cent of the 90 per cent have invariably had one difficulty or the other in delivering children. Unfortunately, the rest, for one reason or the other, are non-child bearing. As a complete layman with extremely little medical knowledge and experience, my research has to be authoritatively proved and confirmed or corrected by medical experts now or in the future.

The Bassa Nge people, by their culture and tradition, did not develop or organise the payment or employment of midwives for delivery of children but, certainly, by their tradition, the people have recognised, approved and made

use of highly experienced, kind hearted, old and middle aged women as midwives. These women exist in every village or town of Bassa Nge land and are used for not only child delivery but also for child-care. They, by years of experience, know and handle any complications in child delivery and in the care of the child except where and when some complications, which are backed by some powers of darkness or mystery occur or exist. If and when this happens, the midwives do cry out to more powerful people (men and women) to come to their aid for safe delivery and, in most cases, unless it is too late, the results are fruitful and the delivery comes up satisfactorily, to the joy and happiness of all.

CHAPTER 21

Conclusions and Future of Bassa (Nge) Land and People

In concluding this humble attempt of producing the first ever comprehensive and revealing "Knowledge Book" of the great but unassuming, peaceful, culturally-civilised and warm-hearted ethnic group of the people of the great Nupe tribe of Nigeria, who chose to call themselves "Bassa" after leaving their mother country in Nupeland about 300 years ago; a book which also reveals my about 60 years of patient, painstaking and deep research, it is only proper and rewarding to say, with hearty thanks to God, the Almighty, All Knowing, the Omnipresent, the Merciful and the Loving in the word of prophet Joshua, "EBENEZER", "Thus has the Lord helped us".

I am very much aware that some few individuals, principally, the late Mr. Methuselah Titus Dikpa Ajakpo, our veteran Headmaster and educationist of Holy Trinity Anglican School, Lokoja fame in particular and of Kabba Province in general, had attempted to write the history of the Bassa Nge people but for one reason or another failed. Others like late Rev. Aaron Amesa Haruna of Kpata, Mr. J. A. Abaniwo of Emi Anderu and retired Administrative Officer of Kwara State Government, Mr. Isaiah B. Tsebam,

a teacher, Dr. Haruna Ibn Yakubu of Kpata and Senior Lecturer in the College of Education, Minna and now Asst. Director, Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, Mallam Ibn Yakubu of Political Science Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and now Registrar, Federal University of Abuja, attempted and wrote excellently on Bassa Nge people and land.

I too, on the request of Kpata Development Association wrote a short but chequered history of Kpata for "AMKPOLO DAY", which came up at Kpata on Tuesday, 26th December, 1978. But that was the history of Kpata, traditional and cultural headquarters of Bassa Nge land and people.

Why History of Bassa (Nge) People?

In so far as we know, history is always derived from the following sources, three of which the Bassa Nge people have in abundance, as follows:

- (i) Legendary facts (known as oral history), handed over from generation to generation and though oral, it could be full of real facts and substance.
- (ii) Folklore facts (which could also be oral), which are traditional beliefs, tales and culture of a people, again handed down from generation to generation and full of evidence of circumstances.
- (iii) Monumentary or monumental facts which can be of an inscription or a book of some lasting values or of a production handed down from generation to generation.
- (iv) Book facts which are not oral but are written from one or the other of three sources mentioned above and which can be read, circulated and kept in personal or public libraries for reference anytime or anywhere, from generation to generation.

All human existence, in fact, everything existing universally or beyond this world, whether we believe it or not, has a fact of history solidly behind its existence. It may be scientifically, biologically, religiously or demonstratively proved or not. There is a satisfying justification in historical study as printed out by Keith Thomas who says, "The justification of all historical studies must ultimately be that it enhances our self consciousness, enables us to see ourselves in perspective and helps us towards the greater freedom which comes from self knowledge".

Basis

It is on this basis that the legendary facts of the Bassa Nge people may not gradually disappear, that the folklore facts of the people may be inherited by us and our children yet unborn, that the monumental facts of the people may continue to be cited and identified by us and our generations yet to come. Also, that whatever scanty book facts, strenuously, selflessly and sacrificially produced and published or unpublished by other patriotic Bassa Nge people or any other Nigerian, should be cherishly preserved along with this "Knowledge book" that I have, by the grace of God used these 60 years to produce.

Regaining Independence by Bassa (Nge) Land and People

The then Etsu Bassa Nge, HRH Alhaji Adama Lerama, regained his official staff of office after nearly 50 years of its withdrawal — although it was not the original status of the official staff of office that was restored. The regaining came by rightful and regular petitions and struggles by both collective and individual loyal and right thinking Bassa Nge elements everywhere, without violence, but by consultations and dialogues. After the regaining of the official staff of office, the status quo of the Bassa Nge District continued to hit the rock at least three consecutive times when

opportunity offered itself for regaining it through commissions and/or panels on dialogue and submission of our case. The three commissions through which Bassa Nge should have regained its status quo as an independent district are as follows:

The Wilinks or Minorities Commission

This commission was set up between 1957 and 1958. It was otherwise known and called Minorities Commission, set up before the independence of Nigeria in 1960. The commission was set up by the colonial government to collect the views both orally and in writing, of all Nigerian minorities as regards boundary disputes and the wishes of the minorities all over Nigeria, as to where they would like to belong with regard to divisions or provinces. The commission toured the whole of Nigeria and had sittings at various important provincial headquarters, including Lokoja.

At Lokoja, it sat in the hall of the present High Court of Lokoja where both written and oral representations were made by the Bassa Nge District and people. Both late Mr. M. T. D. Ajakpo and I, gave historical, comprehensive, factual and convincing evidence in support of the claims of the Bassa Nge people to be merged with the then Kwara Federated Native Authority, now Kogi Local Government. HRH Alhaji Aliyu Obaje, the present Atta of Igala, late Mr. Peter Achimugu, late Mr. Daniel Akomogu and Mr. Daniel Ogbadu were present at the sitting and listened to our submission which they also defended by their own submissions. But fortunately, it was not only apparent but obvious that our submissions won the day as openly remarked by the commissioners and the gathering spectators in the High Court hall.

This achievement, made by the submissions from us notwithstanding, however, was foiled by some saboteurs

in their own selfish interest so that the hopes and the overall interest and expectations of the district and the people of Bassa Nge, who were left to grope in the dark by leaving them with the then Igala N. A. instead of merging them with the then Kwara N. A., with the headquarters at Lokoja, where they have their kith and kin and to where they naturally, ethnically and linguistically belong, were shattered.

The Ahman Patigi Panel

This was another commission set up by the Kwara State of Nigeria in 1967 and headed by the late Alhaji Ahman Patigi, former minister of the former region of Northern Nigeria. It was also set up to allow the minority groups in the state to air their wishes as to which division in the state they would like to belong to. As usual, majority of the Bassa Nge groups and individuals opted for Kogi Division and, even though their claims were supported by facts of history, some self seeking elements sabotaged the wishes of the majority to the detriment of the development, progress, peace and happiness of the land and its people. It was reliably learnt that the decision of the Kwara State Government to merge the Bassa Nge District with the Kogi Division actually came to the white paper stage but, unfortunately, only to be changed at the last moment and the district was painfully left in the wilderness of subservience in the then Igala N. A. And the independence eluded us the second time.

The Nasir Boundary Adjustment Panel

This panel was set up in 1976 by the Federal Government of Nigeria when the government decided to create additional states and threw it open to all Nigerians to express their wishes. Kwara State and the then Benue/Plateau States were to be split into two each and the present

Benue was to be created from both Kwara and Benue/Plateau States respectively because, the Igalas specifically, in Kwara State and Idomas in Benue/Plateau States, strongly agitated to have a separate and independent Benue State mainly for ethnic reason. The Bassa Nge people also strongly agitated to remain in Kwara with their kith and kin – the Nupes of Patigi and Lafiagi, Kpada, Lade, Share, Eggan, Tsonga, Tsaragi, Nupe and Bassa groups of Kogi in each of the district of Kogi and Koro, a place founded by the Bassas.

The agitation of the Bassa Nge was supported, as usual, with facts of history. The late Colonel Ibrahim Taiwo, the second military governor of Kwara State politically, administratively and historically supported the rightful stand of the Bassa Nge people in all sincerity to remain in Kwara State where they belong. In the same year, 1976, before the creation of the additional states, a delegation of two people namely, Dr. Timothy E. Elukpo, medical director of Ankuri Hospitals, Ilorin, and my humble self, Christopher A. Mawo Lakpini, then of Kwara State Schools Board, in charge of finance, was sent to Lagos to the then retired Chief of General Staff, later the Head of State of Nigeria, General Olusegun Obasanjo, to present the strong case of the Bassa Nge people.

The delegation was warmly received by the then Chief of General Staff at Dodan Barracks, Lagos. The delegation revealed to the Federal Government through the Chief of General Staff that, the Bassa Nge people, were (and are still) Nupes originally from Bida area of Niger State of Nigeria. The submissions were supported with historical facts, properly and correctly documented. The retired general was very much impressed and convinced and gave his words to the delegation to the effect that originally, the panel, which was to go round the country to hear the boundary adjustment cases was not to sit at Gboloko, the district

headquarters of the Bassa Nge people, that because of the convincing presentation of the delegation of two — Dr Elukpo and Mr. Lakpini — the Federal Government would give directive for the panel to sit at Gboloko. The delegation arrived at Lagos on 11th February, 1976. These were the three categorical statements in substance of assurance given to the two delegates. It was more or less on the eve of the unfortunate coup d'etat of 13th February, 1976; because the delegation left Lagos on the afternoon of 12th February, 1976.

The failure, caused by some selfish and unpatriotic Bassa Nge elements as usual, of the Bassa Nge District and people, to be merged with their kith and kin in Kwara State was another historical and very unfortunate suicide of Bassa Nge political struggle, progressive development and opportunity to gain back the people's independence given them by Lord Lugard himself.

At Gboloko, headquarters of the Bassa Nge District on that fateful Saturday, 17th July, 1976, a time never to be forgotten by any selfless or sincere and patriotic Bassa Nge man, woman, boy or girl, thousands of Bassa Nge elites from all walks of life, who had made and were making selfless sacrifices in money and time, gathered in obvious majority to see their district and people redeemed from the apparent slavery and bondage, in which the land and people continued to be since the unfortunate amalgamation of their district in 1918; and to remain in Kwara State of Nigeria with their kith and kin. But the unpatriotic and self-centred Bassa Nge elements, made sure, even with the obvious majority of the Bassa Nge people favouring and openly demonstrating to remain in Kwara State, that the district was carved out from Kwara State and merged to Benue State. Some of the Nigerian newspapers like the *Nigerian Herald* and the *New Nigerian*, carried the news of what happened between Shintaku and Gboloko on that

Saturday, 17th July, 1976.

The Bassa Nge history is fraught with some dangerous and unpatriotic elements, who in a real situation of patriotism and selflessness, should have, by all means, stood for the liberation of the Bassa Nge land and people since the struggle began in 1918 to the present time. History and the children yet unborn will tell the rest of the story but, one thing is certain and that is, that no sinner will go unpunished. Some of the saboteurs have already written their own names very unfavourably by their own utterances and actions for posterity to read. Some of these people who had been foremost and earlier supporters that the Bassa Nge District must be liberated by all means, as a result of self-centredness, did make a "U" turn in 1976 at the Nasri Panel for boundary adjustment and even later.

This book is not out to destroy individuals by quoting in black and white what such individuals had written or signed or said during and after the episode of the creation of Benue State and the unfortunate merger of the Bassa Nge District to the Benue State, but, it must be abundantly known and fully understood by all, that the records are kept and are available for posterity. But here is a sincere poser for all of us to answer very sincerely, it is this: "If by mere accident or coincidence, the 13th February, 1976 coup de'etat had met Dr. Timothy E. Elukpo and me, Christopher A. Mawo Lakpini, in the Dodan Barracks, Lagos, or in the streets of Lagos, where the coup took place and, Dr. T. E. Elukpo and C. A. Mawo Lakpini were killed as a result of the coup and, in our patriotic and selfless service to our fatherland, the whole of the Bassa Nge people for the liberation of the land and the people, what would some of the people - Bassa Nge people, who later sabotaged our over seventy years struggle to liberate the land and people, say or do?". Think on this long and carefully worded poser with clear conscience and the fear of God, our Creator, to

whom we shall all give ultimate accounts of our earthly life !

I am sure God Himself, the land itself and the people themselves, including myself as well as Dr. T. E. Elukpo, will forgive the saboteurs if they sincerely and penitently have changed or will change and begin again to honestly contribute to the ultimate liberation of the land and the people to join their kith and kin with whom they have historical, ethnic and linguistic affinity for time immemorial, so that we, the Bassa Nge people and ethnic group of the Nupe tribe of Nigeria, will enjoy and have a permanent sense of belonging in our state and in our local government in Nigeria.

Educational Progress of Bassa (Nge) People and Land

Right now, from my patient and painstaking research of 60 years, and especially from 1948 up to date, the educational progress of the entire Bassa Nge people can and should be regarded as very encouraging in spite of so many odds against the land and the people. My research appreciates the progress from the very early years (from the 1920's), when secular education began in Bassa Nge land. But I have chosen 1948 and 1968 respectively, purposely because, 1948 was the year the first Bassa Nge young man, Mr. S. S. Waniko from Ecewu, started in the now Barewa College Zaria, as the first potential Bassa Nge material for a university and entered the University College, Ibadan between 1951 and 1952. He was the first ever known Bassa Nge student and, definitely one of the first students from the former Kabba Province to be admitted in the then University College, Ibadan. Mr. Waniko, now in Kaduna and on his own, became the first northerner to serve as Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Transport and Federal Ministry of Education, after obtaining honours degree in History at the then University College, Ibadan.

1968 also was the year the first Bassa Nge girl (then Miss Mary Ali, now Dr. Mary Olutimayin), obtained her first degree at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. She has since obtained her doctoral degree in the United States of America and she is the first Bassa Nge so far known to do this and was a senior staff of the Federal Ministry of Education, Lagos.

From that year, 1968 to 1988, when by the grace of God, I brought my research to completion, my research reveals that at least, a total of about 200 Bassa Nge students, by annual calculations, obtained their degrees in addition to those who obtained theirs between 1953 and 1957. These, by my research and calculations, number about 60 in all thus, in each year, the Bassa Nge people produced about four fully-qualified degree holders from various universities during that period. Of recent, it is a thing of joy to see the first Bassa Nge academician, in person of Professor Charles O. N. Wambebe, now Director General of The National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and Development, Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, Abuja, appointed to a professorial chair. So far as we know, he is the first Bassa Nge to be so appointed.

By the time this research in history was to be published, I was reliably informed and with happiness that, at least two Bassa Nge academicians namely, Ven. Dr. Cornelius Bello and Dr. Amdi, of the Teaching Hospital, University of Jos and the Federal University of Abuja respectively, have been raised and have become professors. Here, we give thanks and glory to God as an ethnic group and as individuals and by the grace of God, many more are coming up to the enviable status in life among the Bassa Nge academicians. The disciplines I researched into and which some of the Bassa Nge academicians got themselves trained in include: Human Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Political Science, Mathematics, Law, Physical Education,

Accountancy, Engineering, Economics, Religious Studies, English Language and English Literature, Home Economics, Pharmacy, History, Fine Arts and Designs, Architecture, Mines, Survey, Sociology, Philosophy, and various other disciplines pertaining to sciences and other such important disciplines that are not mentioned here. From my research, there is hardly any of these disciplines that one does not find five or more qualified Bassa Nge graduates in their first degrees or post - graduate degrees or Higher National Diploma (HND) or, Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE).

The population of Bassa Nge District, by 1963 census was 21,000, using only 2 per cent increase in population ($3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent per annum appears to be the conventional yardstick) per year for the increase of the population, the population would rise to 21,420 in 1964 and, with cumulative increase by 2 per cent yearly for the past 20 years, the population of Bassa Nge may now be put at 31,000 approximately. If we use $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, the population in 1964 would be 21,735 and with cumulative increase by $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent for the past 24 years, the population would be 38,640 in 1988. But I choose to use 2 per cent only.

If to a population of about 31,000 we have an approximate number of 380 graduates of various disciplines produced from various institutions of higher learning in Nigeria and abroad, and these disciplines cover various known academic achievements of human endeavours, one sees in this and it suggests that the Bassa Nge people by every humble standard, have admirable educational qualifications and the manpower that can run their affairs in all disciplines, if right steps are always taken towards sincere and genuine unity by every man, woman, boy and girl, irrespective of religion, status, place of birth and social placement in life.

This is especially, a bright future for admirable progress

in all human endeavours for all the Bassa Nge people if the DISCOURSE, in form of warning advice — I have made, is heeded by all and sundry for the unfailing achievement of future greatness of the Bassa Nge people generally, and for the peace, joy and happiness of the people themselves and their neighbours around them and far away from them.

Following my continuous research on the development and progress of the Bassa Nge land and people, especially educationally and socially, as from the time I brought this 1928 - 1968 research on the history of the Bassa Nge land and people, a "target - close", I am happy to say that the educational development and progress of the land and people have become astronomical, in that, from my continued research, there is hardly any family home, in and outside Bassa Nge land as of now, where at least, a graduate in one discipline or the other, has not been produced. My serious research reveals that in some Bassa Nge family homes, almost half of the grown up children or even all the grown up children are graduates of various disciplines. This is a wonderful achievement in the existence of an ethnic group all over the world, especially in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular. This achievement notwithstanding, however, the future of our land in other aspects of life and very realistic life-saving and social aspects too - are very much unfortunately, not admirable since apparently, some very much unpatriotic, unprogressive men, women and teenagers, are, from what is happening in the Bassa Nge land, opposed to social development and progress of our young and dynamic men and women, who believe and practise the truth that North and South, East and West, home is the best. I will not elaborate on this aspect of the shortcomings of the Bassa Nge land and people but, a careful study and understanding of Chapter Eleven of this book suffices in proving to the reader of this portion of the book, what I am saying and seriously pointing to here.

Besides our Christian and Islamic strong beliefs and practice, our traditional religionists have got to be up and doing in the true aspect of their traditional religion or belief and make sure that the wicked and unpatriotic men and women as well as the teenagers of Bassa Nge land are brought to book and completely overpowered and stopped from their wicked deeds which prevent our progressive and forward - looking men, women and even teenagers from developing Bassa Nge land socially and happily as other ethnic groups are doing. The Christians, the Muslims and other believers must come together unitedly, to speak with one voice, act like indivisible one person and stop, ostracise and eliminate, as our forefathers did in their days, the wicked, unprogressive, unpatriotic and enemies of God and man on our land and wherever we are on this land. God is with us, men and women of God are with us, and surely, all governmental authorities are with us in our lawful, modern and peaceful action towards the true, progressive development of our land and people. Our true and acceptable "motto" as individuals and ethnic group of the Nupe tribe of Nigeria should be that of Bassa Nge Anglican Grammar School, Gboloko, Kogi State: "TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND OUR FATHERLAND."

Present and Future of the Bassa (Nge) Land and People

The Bassas - better and more correctly known and called Nupes - for that is what they are originally, I am indeed happy that the TRUTH is now out, for we have a great future. I have every reason to be proud of our culture, tradition and progress and give thanks to God for His wonderful mercies upon us all.

The long and oral history before the migration of the Bassa Nge, otherwise known as Nupes to Nigeria, suggests that they had the civilisation of Egypt as they migrated from that region and settled in their motherland (Nupeland)

(Page 319 of *Notes on the tribes, provinces, emirates and states of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, compiled by O. Temple and edited by C. L. Temple). It is authoritatively said, that some authorities traced a connection between the Nupes and the Gah, erstwhile inhabitants of Egypt. In short, Nupes are from the East and from Egypt, and the Bassas who are Nupes are therefore from Egypt.

The future of the Bassas (Nupe) is beams with brightness, progress, and successes as long as we fear God, do His will and love our neighbours as we love ourselves, coupled principally with the following:

- (i) We should come together in true unity to pursue our genuine goals like our forebears did, forgetting ourselves in the interest of all of us, all around us and the entire country, Nigeria as a whole.
- (ii) We should accept sincere, selfless and truly patriotic leaders and their leadership as our forefathers did, differentiating the chaff from the real substance, throwing away the chaff and keeping the valuable and real substance for the good and happiness of all. Dr. Lester Sumrall, President, Sumrall Evangelistic Association Inc. South Bend, in his book *Jihad the Holy War*, published in October 1980, says on leadership or prophet as follows: "So often when we are not positive to produce the persons God wants to lead and guide, the devil will give counterfeits. So many times, the one God wants is not available because people are not ready for such a one."
- (iii) If Bassa (Nupe) people had accepted such persons that God wanted to lead and guide since 1922, when the status of the land, politically and administratively was

cunningly forced out of our hands, and had not allowed the devil to give counterfeits, the present unfortunate, undeveloped, unprogressive and sorry situation in Bassa (Nupe) District of her people would not have existed. Yagba, Bunu and Kakanda Districts, who were granted independence at the same time with the Bassa District by Lord Lugard himself between 1820's and 1895 are still enjoying their independence each, with their traditional paramount chiefs enjoying their status quo. Our rights, in all these years of our struggle to regain our correct independence and the elusions that followed were due to the wrong, selfish and counterfeit leaderships that had been allowed to be given us by the devil.

- (iv) We must give honour to whomsoever and to whichever village or town the honour and respect are due. Either by our history or self performances in the interest, progress and happiness of the land and its people.
- (v) We must advice, admonish, condemn, ostracise or boycott sincerely and firmly, anyone, whatever his or her position and status in life, who we are aware of are saboteurs, purely from selfish point of view to the general good course of the land and people.
- (vi) We must honour, respect and make a hero of anyone, male or female, who sincerely, selflessly and very genuinely champions the general good goal of the people, whatever is his or her position, status (poor, rich, low, high, highly-literate, semi literate) in life and

from whatever part of Nigeria or the world he or she may come from, as long as he or she is Bassa (Nupe) or even a non - Bassa (Nupe) person or by providence from any part of the world.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!



**Pa (Chief) Christopher Amos
Mawo Lakpini, CHM**

Autobiography of Pa Chief Christopher Amos Mawo Lakpini, CHM

My Birth

I was born to the family of Late Papa Lakpini Amtu and Late Mama Aishitukpa, one of the former senior wives of Late HRH Maiyaki Etan — one of the two colonially approved ruling houses of Bassa land, on 25th October, 1914 at Kpata — the traditional and administrative headquarters of Bassa land before the coming of British rule to Nigeria. On the 8th day of my birth, my father named me SOKOMAWUNO, meaning God has born him into the world. The reasons for this name are that: my mother was believed to be too old to deliver a child at that time as she was about sixty - five years, and, there were speculations that my mother's wealth was of God and not of man. But later, one Rev. C. W. Thompson, a Jamaican from the West Indies and C. M. S. Superintendent of Lokoja / Bassa District Church Council, by his doctrinal conviction convinced my people, except my father and perhaps few others that my name should be changed to MAWO, and to drop the word "SOKO". So it appears that the name Mawo has been first borne by me throughout Bassa land, Lokoja, and environs. Since I became knowledgeable, I have been

convinced that the name SOKOMAWUNO given by my father is a God-inspired name although the name MAWO is retained and popular.

Education

Between 1924 - 1926, I attended St. Paul's C. M. S. School, Kpata with the Late Ernest Campbell from Lokoja as headmaster.

1927 - 28, I attended the Holy Trinity C. M. S. School Lokoja, the first school teaching secular subjects in Northern Nigeria, founded by Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther in 1865, and with Late Ernest Campbell also as headmaster.

1929, I attended Government School at Idah with Late Ven. Thomas, a Lokoja-born Sierra Leonean as headmaster.

Between 1930 - 31, I again attended the Holy Trinity C.M.S. School Lokoja, with E. O. Audu, sent from Wusasa, Zaria as headmaster.

In 1932 - 33, I was at St. George's School, Zaria (then Church of England), with Mr. U. Iro from Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar as headmaster. There, at St. George's School, I became the first, in 1933, to obtain the Middle Two Certificate. Professor Christopher Chikeobi, the mathematician too obtained the same certificate from St. Mary's Catholic School, Zaria that same year. Because of this singular honour God used me to bring glory to St. George's School, Zaria. I was appointed by the authority of the school in February 1934, as a Probationary Teacher on a salary of 1 Pound 5 per month. Most of the Probationary Teachers all over Nigeria then were paid either 15 Shillings or 1 Pound per month.

As Probationary Teacher

As a Probationary Teacher, we were asked to train on the job with promotion, so, in 1934, I started as a Probationer and Trainee. And so, in 1935, during Routine Inspection, I

was marked by, Zaria Provincial Education Superintendent, Mr. R. F. S. Parry as the best teacher in Physical Education and English and was promoted to C-Teacher with an increment of 10 Shillings, which was usually 2 and 6 Pens per month.

Between 1936 and 1937, in the course of being trained on the job, I was promoted as C/S (Special C-Teacher), indicating that I could be made an assistant headmaster, with a salary of 2 Pound 5 per month. It was here, (1937), a special opportunity was offered me to go to either Oyo Teacher's College or Awka Teacher's College, but each offer was foiled by the Zaria Provincial Education Superintendent that I should be sent to Anglican Christ School Gusau in Sokoto Province. Also, within this period, I was appointed as part - time Police English teacher, Zaria directly from Kaduna, with 4 Pounds per month as wages after undergoing written tests in English and Hausa, but, my service as trainee on the job still continued. Before the end of December 1937, the Provincial Education Superintendent, Zaria, as said above approved my posting to Gusau with effect from 1st January, 1938. All avenues to proceed for institutional training were closed to me, especially when World War began in 1939 and my school was chosen as Depot for all war recruits in Sokoto Province. I therefore, in addition to training on the job, began training courses by correspondence after I had been appointed officially in 1940 as Assistant Headmaster of Christ School Gusau.

In 1941, I was appointed as the Headmaster of the same Christ School, Gusau, which lasted up till 1947. It was during this period that I had my correspondence training courses in Diploma in General Education, British Institute of Education, London, (1942 - 1945), and, Clavening Institute for Advanced English, London (1943 - 1945). But, I could not obtain the Diploma in these courses because of the World War problem, but have however gained

immensely with these correspondence courses.

In 1948, the authorities of the Anglican Schools, Northern Nigeria, appreciating how the Christ School Gusau was run efficiently by me, from 1941 to 1947 as headmaster, and labelling the school as one of the best primary schools in Sokoto Province, decided to post me back to St. George's School, Zaria (Church of England) my alma-mater, as one of the Assistant Headmasters. The school then ran, except Kano school, as the largest Anglican School in the North. In 1949, I was awarded the equivalent of the Higher Elementary Teachers Certificate.

I should have obtained my Senior Teachers Certificate by or before 1947 if the war had not seriously interrupted everything. When I sat for the examination in 1950, the war problem continued, as the prescribed books in English, History and Geography could not be obtained. Also in 1948, the Anglican authority, through the plan of the C. M. S. to send three Nigerians abroad for higher education, chose me as one of the three. One from the West, one from the East. The courses were Bachelor of Theology and Master in English specially. One of the conditions was to be ordained as an Anglican Priest, but, as I had made up my mind from my youth not to work in the Lord's Vineyard as an ordained man, but as a layman, I rejected the offer, and, I do not regret remaining in the Lord's Vineyard as a layman up till today. However, the Lord in His wisdom and power, used me and Late Mr. M. T. D. Ajakpo, through the administration of Late Bishop S. O. Odutola, to take Late Rt. Rev. B. B. Ayam to Gusau in 1940, and became the first ordained Bassa-Nge Priest and later the first Bassa-Nge Bishop. God also used me in 1948 through the same Bishop S. O. Odutola to take Late Archdeacon T. L. K. Waniko to become an ordained Priest under Canon Doherty at Jos.

In 1953, I was regarded as one of the best headmasters in the North to head the St. John's C. M. S. Primary School,

Bida, a boarding school. This was because, three headmasters, two Yoruba and one Igbo, were sent there, each spending one-year but could not run the school effectively. As for the three years - running, no child could pass the Common Entrance Examination, and, as hard work and grace of God would have it, my first year in the school produced ten candidates who sat for and passed the Common Entrance Examination. The school, as a result, was regarded as the best in Niger Province. I was then, still pursuing my progress in my educational qualification. In 1953, the Ministry of Education, Northern Nigeria, offered me a scholarship to study in Scotland, English, as a second language, but, fortunately or unfortunately, my Manager of Schools, Rev. T. D. S. Broadbent, played it out, saying that the C. M. S. would offer me a scholarship to study a full degree course later. That again was foiled, yet, the Federal Director of Education from Lagos remarked on his visit to my school, "This is the best primary boarding school in the north".

Executive Posts

In 1954, the Kwara Federated Native Authority advertised for appointment of a Visiting Teacher for the Federal Native Authority, and I quickly applied for the post from Bida. Of the five candidates who applied, I was chosen as the best and was appointed as Grade II Visiting Teacher the same year. The Anglican Voluntary Agency, sensing that it would lose me quickly promoted me at the same time as District Education Supervisor for Kano. The letter, was written by Miss J. V. Harclot, the Anglican Diocesan Education Secretary General, in Ibadan, but, I quickly rejected the offer. Later, I had the following promotions:

- 1961 - 63, Education Secretary, Kwara N. A. Lokoja.
- 1964 - 67, Education Officer, Kwara L. E. A. Lokoja.
- 1968 - 73, Chief Education Officer, Kogi L. E. A. Lokoja.
- 1974 - 75, Secretary, Borgu L. E. A. New Bussa.

Back to Education Qualification

Between 1962 and 1963, the Ministry of Education, Northern Nigerian Government, decided to run all its primary schools under the umbrella of Education Authority, and, special educationists were recruited from England and Scotland. The leader of the educationists was one Mr. Oldman, who taught all the administrative provinces in the north. During the period, especially in 1963/64 academic year, thirty educationists throughout the north were selected for the course, which was run at the Ahmadu Bello University, Kongo Campus, Zaria. I was exactly 50 years old then and was the oldest in age on the course. Because of my all - round performances, I was popularly known as the " Encyclopaedia " on the course. The course, which normally should have taken two clear academic years, was packed into only one academic year, and, only twenty-three of the thirty came out successfully after the one - year hectic course. There I obtained the Certificate in Educational Planning & Administration and was interviewed and offered each of the following posts:

- (a) Provincial Education Secretary, Sokoto Province.
- (b) A Lecturer on the special course, and
- (c) A Statistician in the Ministry of Education, Northern Nigeria, Kaduna.

But I declined each of the offers for personal reasons.

Membership of Various School Boards

Along with my official duties as Visiting Teacher Grade II, I was made to serve as from 1954 as member of the following government secondary schools advisory boards and Anglican agency secondary schools Board of Governors:

- (i) Okene Teachers' College, Okene
- (ii) Government Secondary School, Okene (now AAMCO)

- (iii) Government Craft School, Idah
- (iv) Government Secondary School, Dekina
- (v) Government College, Kaduna
- (vi) Queen Elizabeth School, Ilorin
- (vii) Crowther Memorial College, Lokoja
- (viii) St. Barnabas Secondary school, Kabba
- (ix) Lennon Memorial College, Okene
- (x) Bassa-Nge Anglican Grammar School, Gboloko, where I became the Chairman of the Board of Governors.
- (xi) Borgu Secondary School, New - Bussa
- (xii) Government Secondary School, Koton -karfi via Lokoja.

Service in Voluntary Organisation

In my service to voluntary organisations as from 1942, I held the following positions and received the following commendations:

- (i) Assistant Rover Scouts leader, 1st Sokoto Crew. Received commendation signed by Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell, the founder of scouting in the whole world.
- (ii) District Commissioner of Scouts, Kogi L.G.A.
- (iii) Assistant State Commissioner of Scouts, Kwara State.
- (iv) Practical first aid certificate of British Red Cross of Nigeria
- (v) British Red Cross Commandant, Kabba Province.

National Honour & Award of Local Merits and Chieftaincy Titles

By the special grace of God, I received the following as an honest, dedicated, trusted, and true British colonial citizen, as well as Nigerian-born citizen:

- (i) On 1st October, 1964, Nigeria Honours and Awards, was made to me, as later communicated to me from the office of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, in the letter, Ref. No. 58358/S. 5/XI/ 147, on 18th June, 1980.
- (ii) Confirming the Honour and Award, Sir Ahmadu Bello, GCON. KBE., LL. D., Sardauna of Sokoto and Premier of Northern Nigeria in his letter to me, dated 5th October, 1964, said "I am greatly honoured to join with you in rejoicing at the honour done to you in the award of the Nigerian Honors made on the National Day, 1st October, 1964. It is a great pleasure for me to offer you my personal good wishes and congratulations in this singular recognition, which is so well deserving of your public services".
- (iii) Another award is from Kogi L.G.A. Lokoja. Their letter to me with Ref. No. KOG/ ADM/ 502/528, dated 21st September, 1995 says partly, "I am directed to convey to you, Council approval for nominating you as one of its award winners, conferred on you for your selfless services to humanity and as appreciation of your contributions to the people of this Local Government Area".
- (iv) **The Bassa - Nge Development Union (BNDU) Certificate of Honour:** On 26th December 1990, the Bassa - Nge Development Union awarded me a merit certificate which reads as follows, "This certificate is issued in appreciation and recognition of the contributions of Mr. C. A. M. Lakpini to the development of Bassa - Nge land and people".

- (v) **Bassa-Nge Traditional Chieftaincy Gboloko:** On the 26th of Nov., 1994, a certificate of Bassa-Nge Traditional Chieftaincy title was awarded me by HRH Alhaji Adama Lerama, a Second - Class Chief of Bassa - Nge land and people, Bassa - Nge district as the WAZIRI of Bassa - Nge land. The certificate reads as follows, " This is to certify that the chieftaincy title of WAZIRI Bassa - Nge has being conferred on Mr. C. A. M. Lakpini on this day, Saturday, 26th Nov., 1994, by HRH Alhaji Adama Lerama, the Etsu Bassa - Nge", in view of your meritorious contribution and services towards the development of the entire Bassa-Nge land.
- (vi) **Kpata Chieftaincy Certificate:** On 29th June, 1996, the Kpata Development Association (KDA), an offshoot of an organisation founded nearly seventy years ago known as Kpata Improvement Sons' Society (KISS), awarded a traditional certificate of Kpata chieftaincy title, which reads as follows, " In recognition of your meritorious and selfless service to KPATA community, the Traditional Title Committee, under the auspices of KDA has recognised you, Mr. C. A. Mawo Lakpini as the NAGENU of Kpata. With effect from 29th June, 1996, you will be saluted as GIMBA".
- (vii) **Appreciation:** Indigenes of Kogi Local Government resident in northern states, Kaduna, in their letter to me, dated Sept. 13, 1991, wrote as follows, "Members of this organisation wish to place on record their sincere appreciation for your role as the

Chairman of Kogi State Movement in Kogi L.G.A. "Your role and that of your movement eventually led to the creation of our beloved Kogi State. When the history of our State would be written, your name and those of others who struggled tirelessly for the creation of the State would be written in GOLD. We wish you long life and prosperity to enable you continue in the building of our new State and making the history of our land and people".

Other National Services after My Retirement in 1975

By God's own appointment, immediately after my retirement on 30th June 1975, I was appointed to serve this country in each of the following positions:

- (i) Permanent Member for Finance, Kwara State Schools Board, (1975 - 1977)
- (ii) Member Dantoro Panel for creation of Kwara State Local Government Areas, (1976)
- (iii) Permanent Member, Kwara State Market Authority, (1977 - 1978)
- (iv) Permanent Member Kwara State Local Government Service Board, (1978 - 1979)
- (v) Part-time member, Nupe Language Project Committee, Kwara and Niger States (1979 - 81)
- (vi) Magistrate Grade III, Kwara State (1981 - 88).
In continuation of my services to Nigeria, I was appointed a Grade III Magistrate and was sworn in as written hereunder on 30th July 1982, by Hon. Justice A. A. Ekundayo, the AG. Chief Judge of Kwara State then, at the High Court No. 2 Ilorin. The Judicial Oath is as follows:

"I, Christopher Amos Mawo Lakpini swear that in the service of my Country in the Office of Magistrate Grade III. I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to the Federal Republic of Nigeria at all times. I will well and truly exercise the judicial functions entrusted to me and will do right to all manner of people in accordance with the Constitution of the Federation as by law established and in accordance with the laws and usage of the Federal Republic of Nigeria without fear or favour, affection or ill - will. I will always place service to the nation above all selfish interests, realising that a public office is a public trust. I will always perform my judicial duties diligently and efficiently and will not engage or be involved in any activity in conflict either directly or indirectly with this pledge. I will, in the performance of my judicial duties, eschew corruption in all its facets. I will always follow the path of justice, honesty and concord amongst all the people of Nigeria in all I do. So help me God."

- (vii) Chairman, Kogi State Movement in Kogi Local Government Area, when the movement toured the domains and headquarters of the first class chiefs then in Kwara and Benue States, such as, the Attah of Igala, the Ohinoyi of Ebira, the Obaro of Kabba, the Maigari of Lokoja, the Olujumu of Ijumu and one or two of some of the second class chiefs, to brief and discuss fully with them, the implications and benefits, in the creation of the then proposed Kogi State. Also, our top ARMY BOYS in Jaji, to mention a few, Tunde Ogbeha, Chris Ali, and Dr. Ahmadu Ali, a retired army officer then, were visited and briefed by my movement. It approximately took the movement about nine months of hard and genuine work

before, by the grace of God, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, then Head of State, created our beloved Kogi State, on the 27th of August, 1991. The contents of the letter to me as chairman by the Kogi natives resident in northern Nigeria for the creation of the state is clearly reflected here under "appreciation".

My Marital Life

By the plan and approval of God, despite various temptations from girls, parents, and mistresses of the schools I taught and headed, far and wide, to get married to them, as a young but agile and responsible headmaster, I did not stain my integrity. I religiously obeyed the representatives of my parents, such as Mama Lydia Majiya, (my aunt and my mother's immediate younger sister), the Iya - egbe (president) of St. Barnabas Anglican Church, Ecewu; Madam Joanna Njanya, my first cousin and active leader of Ecewu women both in the church and in the community; my sister, Madam Elizabeth Yaibo, also a leader of women in Ecewu community; my brothers, Mr. Jacob E. Mayaki, an Evangelist in the C. M. S. , and Mr. Jonathan A. Mayaki, a tailor by profession, who were both of the Mayaki Etan ruling house of Bassa-Nge land; who insisted that I must get married to my wife with whom we have stayed together since marriage.

The Marriage Proper

On Thursday, the 3rd of January, 1946, after courting my wife, former Miss Comfort Titi Onishe, from 1938, we got married. She was the daughter of Late Pa Senior Evangelist David E. Onishe and Mama Esther T. Onishe, who were being trained by the two missionary ladies, Miss C. E. Matthews and Miss K. E. Ritsert, stationed at Kpata Mission House, where many girls from Bassa land and Oworo land,

Lokoja were trained. The marriage which took place in the Holy Trinity Anglican Church (the present Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity), Lokoja, was conducted by Rev. A. W. Smith, the Vicar of the church and an Anglican Priest from the present Cross - River State of Nigeria. It was a colourful ceremony.

The marriage has been very blessed with seven children. They are:

1. Christiana Funmilayo Zuyeali Lakpini, now Dr. (Mrs.) Matthias Alfa Gordon Akale.
2. Dr. Clarence Ayodele Mawo Lakpini.
3. Cassandra Abaya Ebun Lakpini, and now Mrs. Vincent Ninma Egbunu.
4. Mr. Clement Atumye Mawo Lakpini.
5. Mr. Constant Wambebe Danlami Mawo Lakpini.
6. Mr. Cyril Ndako Mawo Lakpini.
7. Caroline Lare Lakpini, now Barrister (Mrs.) Olasheni Ibiwoye.

Christian Services

In 1926, at the age of twelve years, I became the youngest Evangelist in the then Lokoja/Bassa District Church Council, including Oworo area, under my late cousin, Pa Peter E. Shelika, stationed at Kpata, and Senior Evangelist in Bassa land. My late father in-law, Pa David E. Onishe was then Pa Peter Shelika's second in command. During our first tour of evangelism in May 1926, my wife was born, little knowing then that she was going to become my wife. Our tour then, covered Atte, Egeneja, Amewa, Emi-olokun, and a few other villages, and, while the Evangelists proper, were propagating and explaining the gospel of Christ to the new converts, I was teaching Christian choruses and hymns as well as Nupe alphabets. This was my permanent division of labour all over Bassaland. I did this more or

less for about three years even when I was in Holy Trinity C.M.S. School in 1928.

In 1930, a new way of Christian evangelism came up in Ikare, now in Ondo State, when, one Prophet Joseph Babalola from Odo-Owa, close to Iloffa and Omu - Aran, now in Kwara State, and also a staff of Ministry of Works, was said to have seen a vision and began to spread the gospel of Christ, performing miracles publicly. By this incident, many Christian men and women, boys and girls, and even non-Christians, trooped from Bassa-Nge land, Lokoja, and environs to Ikare on foot, as there were no transport facilities at that time. My own evangelism came in, even though I was in school, when I had to lead or accompany my aunt, who was the immediate younger sister to my mother, and some of my sisters, whose names I have mentioned earlier in this book under " my marital life". I became singularly conspicuous at Ikare because I was the interpreter, dancing with the prophet and all his disciples on the large dais in the field at Ikare.

In 1944, Late Archbishop L. G. Vining, of the Church Province of West Africa licensed me as a Lay Reader, of the Anglican Communion, Lagos Diocese, for the District of Gusau. In 1954, I became a member of the Anglican Diocesan Synod of Northern Nigeria. In 1955, I became a member of both Ondo and Benin Anglican Diocesan Synod. Between 1968 and 1972, I served as the President, House of Laity, Ondo Diocese. In 1974, I became a member of Anglican Diocesan Synod, Anglican Diocese of Kwara until when the Diocese of Lokoja was created in 1994. Also in the same 1974, I was a member of the Anglican Diocesan Board up till 1994 when Lokoja Diocese was created. In 1976, I was appointed as the Chairman Kwara Anglican Diocesan Board of Finance, and was also a member of the Anglican Board of Trustees. This also lasted up till when Lokoja Diocese was created.

Extraordinary, Historic, Informative and Educative Account

I have titled this portion of my brief history deliberately in order to add impetus to the account, because, the information contained here is extraordinary.

My Father's Origin: He was one of the Nupe / Bassa ethnic group leaders from Gbara. In 1952, when I was transferred from Zaria to Bida, and was taken to the Emir of Bida, the father of the present Emir, for introduction, by Late Rev. Canon S. A. Momoh, the Emir said, *Egi kin two yio*, meaning "you are the son of the soil", *Ezi ye cio na Gbara*, meaning "your city is lying over there, Gbara". He also greeted me with Lakpini's appellations, *Lakpini, nyandalu, dagba e da eyaa, koresu abakin Lanza*, meaning "Lakpini, the powerful prince, an elephant does not generally go into a canoe, drive the enemy from the mouth of the Lanza riverlet". Lanza Riverlet runs through Bida City. I was the darling headmaster of the Emir until I left Bida in 1954.

Lakpini is divided into two powerful clans, one from Nupe tribe and the second from Yoruba tribe. The Nupe tribe is really spelt as this: LAKPEANEA, meaning, he has not known yet so the spoil cannot be shared or divided. The Yoruba Lakpini is spelt thus: ALAPINNI, meaning, the divider or sharer of the spoils or property. On both sides, the property is government property or the property after the war. The seemingly two Lakpini's, originally coming from Gbara, settled at the old Oyo, which was situated near Jebba in the northern provinces. The Nupe one migrated down to Lokoja, crossing the Niger, and the Yoruba one migrated to Oyo during the Mugba-Mugba War. They have the same physiognomy, that is, the same facial resemblance. But, the Oyo Lakpini is today far more powerful than the Nupe Lakpini, for instance, he is a member of the Oyomesi, that is, executive council of the Oyo kingdom, the Olori-egungun, that is, the head of the secret cult of Oyo. He was

also the one who led the delegation sent by the Alaafin of Oyo to deliver his and Oyo condolences to Chief (Mrs.) Awolowo, when the husband died.

My father was truly of the privileged and God-blessed class, because, his mother, Mama Mjemge, was one of the richest women in the Atte and Egene areas of Bassa-Nge land. His industrial life led him to Geregu, where he cultivated a big forest between Geregu and Ajaokuta, which is popularly known in that area as "Kuso Lakpini", meaning "The Forest of Lakpini". It is known by elderly people and perhaps younger ones now, because, I understand a large estate has being built by either the Ajaokuta Iron & Steel Company or any of the companies working with it or the Ajaokuta Local Government Area itself.

My Mother: As earlier recorded under "My birth", she was also one of the wealthiest Bassa-Nge women as she and her mother, Leboye, and her mother's immediate younger sister, Abaya, were industrious women known all over Bassaland. As in the case of my father, space would not allow to say more on my parents.

My intimate connection with Lokoja is according to historical facts. There is no Nupe/Bassa ethnic group, man or woman, boy or girl, that is not connected with Lokoja. Even though the present Lokoja was not founded till 1860, by Dr. David Balfour William Baikie, a medical practitioner and explorer, the early explorers, led by McGregor Laird, in 1832, when there was nothing like Lokoja, met a king on Mt. Pati, who was called Etsu (King) of Bassa. It was this King of Bassa and his people, the Bassa, when asked by the explorers the name of the settlement, that said the name on the present Lokoja hill was Pati. This is how Mt. Pati got its name up till today.

Although I was born in Kpata, in more or less a royal house, I started my connection with our beloved historic

ancient town, *Lokoja Garin bature*, meaning the town of the white, when I was vaccinated in Lokoja against small pox two weeks after my birth. Because, according to historical facts, all Kpata babies, including its environs, were always sent to Lokoja for this vaccination at that time. The marks of my vaccination are still boldly seen on my left arm. I was frequenting Lokoja almost monthly from 1916 until my cousin, Late Pa Peter E. Shelika, the Senior Evangelist at Kpata sent me to Lokoja, in 1928. And, because of my frequency in Lokoja, I became automatically, a member of the choir of the Holy Trinity C. M. S. Church, now the Cathedral. Because of my singing ability, I was given to Late Mr. Solomon Momoh Jiya, the young Marine Clerk, who got married that year and was one of the best organists and musicians of the church. The organ in the Holy Trinity then, was a Pipe-organ, the like of which we were told, could be found only in Lagos and Onitsha. The church has been blessed with organists in the past. We have, besides the ones mentioned, the following: Adamu Johnson, Mr. D. B. Ogazuma, M. T. D. Ajakpo, and a few others. In that year 1928, I was the best Treble singer in the Holy Trinity C. M. S. Church, but, circumstances did not permit of my living long with Late Mr. Jiya, and as Late Mr. Joseph Garuba, of the Residents Office, then, was going on transfer to Idah in 1929, he requested my cousin, Late Pa Peter E. Shelika that I should follow him to Idah. Late Mr. Garuba and I lived together as brothers until his death in Lokoja In 1932. Because of my music propensity, when the Late Mr. Jerry Sumaila Johnson, who was also one of the best organists and musicians in the church, was transferred to Zaria Province, Zaria, as a First-Class/Chief Clerk of P.W.D. (Public Works Department), he requested strongly, that I should be allowed to follow him to Zaria, where I made my wonderful marks in St. George's School, Zaria (Church of England). Late Mr. J. S. Johnson was one of the brightest,

efficient, and respected civil servants in the whole of Northern Nigeria at that time. One would not know that he was not my real brother except for the name "Lakpini" instead of "Johnson". So it was, that the love between Madam Lydia Johnson, one of the prominent women leaders in the Holy Trinity Church, now Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity Lokoja, that no one would know that I was not a junior brother to her. Late Mr. Johnson's only surviving daughter, Aduni, who got married to one of the Late Attorneys-General of the Federation, who lives in Kano, has always communicated with me.

Paradoxically, almost all the elders of Lokoja, Christians and Moslems have special love for me, my family, nucleus and expanded. And, above all, the late Maigari of Lokoja, HRH Alhaji Yahaya M. Maikarfi, had incredible love for and belief in me, and always said when he was alive Mr. *Lakpini nyandalu, dagba eda yaa, koresu abakin lanzu*, as already said to me by the late Emir of Bida, *Ke mi a so we yion?* meaning "Mr. Lakpini, the powerful prince, the elephant does not go into a canoe, drive the enemy away from the mouth of the Lanza River, what am I going to hide from you?". The late Sage did everything to award me a Lokoja traditional chieftaincy title, which I historically produced and that of Bassa-Nge land, but I rejected it for many reasons. He had to report his displeasure about this to my wife before he died, but I stood my ground.

My Politics (Non-Partisan)

All human beings are natural politicians, but, there is a clear difference between non-partisan politics, which embraces clear God-fearing activities, and an I DON'T CARE ungodly partisan politics. From my tender age (youth), as shown in this account, my policy is "THE FEAR OF GOD", which is the beginning of wisdom, and, the clear teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, "DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WANT

OTHERS TO DO UNTO YOU".

In 1938, while in Gusau, now capital of Zamfara State, I came to the conclusion that, the Etsu Bassa, HRH Lerama, one of the Etsu's from one of the two ruling houses of Bassa land, and father of HRH Adama Lerama, Second Class Chief of Bassa, should not be a subservient chief under any Attah of Igala, because, history and historical facts do not show this. So, on 11th of November, 1938, when I visited Lokoja, I got a strong petition written on this issue and later, I showed the petition to Late Miss C. Matthews, the head of the two lady-missionaries stationed in Kpata, the then headquarters of Bassa land. She encouraged me and asked me to do everything with the fear of God. I organised and made the Etsu Bassa, Lerama, and seventy-nine Bassa leaders of opinion throughout the land, including myself, to sign the petition which was forwarded to the Resident, Mr. Rosdale of the then Kabba Province. That was the beginning of my personally showing the light to my people so that they could find the way.

In 1948, I led a delegation of Nigerian Union of Teachers, Northern Nigeria, to the annual conference at Calabar, during which time, the northern delegates convinced the conference to let the Secretary-General, Mr. E. E. Isua, MBE, visit the north for the first time, in June, 1948.

In 1951, in the days of Bassa-Nge National Union, (BNNU), the powerful government and Igala N. A. respected union of the Bassa-Nge at that time, when in October, the first general election in Northern Nigeria took place, the Senior Divisional Officer (D.O), Igala Division, Mr. Adams, who was unpopularly known as *ran ka dade*, meaning "may you live long", wrote me an official letter, that, the BNNU has chosen me to represent the whole of Bassa-Nge land to stand for the election. The Senior D. O., Lokoja, Mr. Pedrezzar, also sent a similar letter to me. I was

then an Assistant Headmaster in St. George's School, Zaria (Church of England). I nearly declined to go to Idah, but, our Manager of Schools, then Venerable I. G. A. Jadesimi, later Rt. Rev. I. G. A. Jadesimi, the Bishop who brought up the wife of our present Bishop, Rt. Rev. George Bako, OON, encouraged me by all means to go, and I went. It was a terrible election, the Senior D. O., *ran ka dade*, and I, had verbal clashes, but in the end, the Lord gave me victory over him though I was not allowed to win the election. That was the election the Late Mr. Peter Achimugu won and became one of the early Ministers in Northern Nigerian government. The Resident, Mr. Guns, gave me his full support and, later, Mr. Adams *ran ka dade*, was transferred to Kaduna as Administrator, Kaduna capital territory.

In 1958, the British government appointed a commission, known as "WILLINK'S COMMISSION OR, MINORITY'S COMMISSION", to go into the complaints of all the minority tribes in Nigeria. Both the Commissioner or the Head of the Commission, and the Secretary, were from Britain. The Commissioner was Mr. Willinks, and the Secretary was Mr. Reeds. The Commission in Kabba Province sat at Lokoja High Court building in November 1958. The following people represented Igala and Bassa - Nge tribes respectively:

For the Igala: The present Agaba idu, Attah of Igala, HRH Alhaji Aliyu Obaje, Late Mr. Peter Achimugu, Late Mr. Daniel Ogbadu, who also became a junior Minister, and, Late Mr. Daniel Ako Ameh Ogu.

For the Bassa-Nge: Late Mr. M. T. D. Ajakpo, a veteran headmaster in Nigeria, and, my humble self, C. A. Mawo Lakpini, an educationist.

The historical facts between the Igala tribe and the Nupe/Bassa ethnic groups were convincingly shown or proved to the Commission that day. It was clearly revealed that, there is nothing to prove, except for the clever

amalgamation of 1914, which was established between Igala and Bassa, that the Etsu Bassa, from the beginning was under the jurisdiction or control of the Attah of Igala, even though it was also proved that the Igalas were driven to their present land by their kith and kin and are therefore refugees, and that, the Nupe / Bassa ethnic group were also driven to their present land as refugees by their kith and kin. And therefore, by the events which occurred during that time, the Igalas were senior and more numerical refugees by migration, while the Nupe / Bassa were junior and less numerical refugees by migration, where both now call their lands.

Thanks be to God, from this brief history, God Himself has blessed Lakpini and has continued to bless his children, grandchildren, and, according to God's injunction, his grandchildren to the fourth generation forever and ever, *Amen*.

Summarising the Thanks

Naturally and biblically, we have been brought up to give thanks in all things the Lord God has done for us. In this summary therefore, there are innumerable thanks I should give to God through my parents, some elders in Bassa land and some elders in places I have worked. Also, through some younger generations I have had connection with, in school, in the community, in the church, and in the general walks of life, during my short stay in the world.

I express my thanks to God who provided me with parents who took very good care of me until I became knowledgeable, though my stay with them was short. I continue to give thanks to God, to my elders, men and women in the family, who catered for my education from the infant level to the primary level. My thanks also go to some early Christian Evangelists of Kpata, such as Pa Andronicus Aroniyo Alaiye, one of the early evangelists

who, from all I know, was the first Kpata or Bassaland citizen, who bought and played the accordion in the early twenties. He also became an employee of John Walkeden in Lokoja and Idah respectively. His popular song on the accordion was *Oka gi nya a gbako to bi, ba bo anifani dan o?* meaning if you overeat and stab your stomach with a knife, what profit have you gained? I gained tremendously in history, written and oral, because I was close to him at Idah in 1929.

My thanks also go to Papa C. A. Panaki, popularly known as Papa Gabidoko of Lokoja, who built a trading shop at Kpata in the early twenties. He got married to a Kpata young girl who gave birth to another girl named Mary Panaki. She worked in Tudun Wada General Hospital then and is now retired as Community Nursing Sister, but still lives in Zaria. The father was philanthropic and was also the one who bought the Pipe organ I mentioned earlier where I talked of being sent to Lokoja by my cousin, Late Pa Peter E. Shelika in 1928. He also ordered specially designed three tilley lamps for the Holy Trinity Church, the type of which I ordered for my school, Christ Anglican School, Gusau in 1942. Also, in 1946, when my wife and I got wedded, he gave me his bedroom, sitting room and the dining room for my honeymoon.

My expression of thanks to God is the provision He made for me in Zaria. For making an elderly woman and her son, Madam Tabitha Thomas and Joseph Archer, (later Yusuf Ndalugi, from where the Ndalugi's of Lokoja got their name) to be more or less my mother and my senior brother. Unfortunately, both Mama Thomas and brother Ndalugi became Moslems when I was away from Zaria. It was the work of the devil. But however, the Lakpini family and the home of Mama Thomas and brother Ndalugi move together as two families up till now.

When I was transferred to Gusau in 1937, the school

was then known to always reject headmasters within one or two years, and, based on this, I felt reluctant on my transfer to the school. But, over there, all the elders loved me, especially one Pa J. A. Akinosho, who was the Nigerian head of John Holt in the whole of Sokoto Province. He was an Egba man, was the Pastor's warden of the church and a very godly man. But for him, I would have joined the ROF (Reformed Ogboni Fraternity), even though many members of our church then were members. He was monitoring me like his son in everything and was able to mould my life, which became acceptable to God. He was indeed a Sage. My real educational progress for myself, my staff in the school, and my scholars in the school started in Gusau, for which I must continue to give thanks to the Almighty God. For instance, the first two Yoruba boys, Biliaminu Oyekan, of the Oyekan ruling family in Lagos, and Yunusa Bashorun, of the Bashorun ruling family also in Lagos, who passed out from my school became Permanent Secretaries in Lagos in the early sixties. Again, I give thanks to God for this. In Gusau, one of my outstanding staff, Late Hon. Justice E. O. Fakayode, who went to England to study Law in 1942, became the Chief Judge of the old Oyo State. He was one of the people who congratulated me when I was appointed Magistrate Grade III in 1982. He expressed his joy because according to him, he knew my qualities. It was in Gusau that one of my staff, Late Mr. Emmanuel O. Bandele of Kabba, worked so hard in John Holt that he became one of the young John Holt Directors in Nigeria. My thanks go to God. It was in Gusau also, that the only son and child of Late Rev. Paul Ndagi, Jonathan Ndagi, was sent to me in 1940, and, God in His miraculous way has made him my darling in education. He is the first of my students who became a professor, the foundation Vice-Chancellor of the Federal University of Technology, Minna. He was also one of the Nigerian High Commissioners to Australia. There

are indeed many reasons for my summary of thanks.

In 1948, when I was transferred back to my alma-mater, St. George's School, Zaria (Church of England), one of the things I should give thanks to God for is for being able to teach the son of one of the elders of Lokoja, Adamu Baikie, of Pa Jacob Baikie, who, from my class has several years become a professor. He was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin, and later Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lesotho. One of the numerous thanks I have to give to God is that He made me to be transferred to Bida and made me do many things which could not be done there by three predecessors. One of such things is my connection with the Angulu family. For, Revd. Canon John Ndace Angulu, the head of the family, though older than me, has been a good friend even from Lokoja. His two children, Michael Angulu, one-time Registrar of Ahmadu Bello University and JAMB Secretary; Dr. Uriah Angulu, one-time Director of Education, Ahmadu Bello University; and Professor Ndagi, were all my strong staff in St. John C.M.S. Primary Boarding School, Bida. They were my children but also my backbone in Bida. As a result, all members of Angulu family as well as Lakpini family became one. At Bida also, many of my scholars became important personalities in education and in administration. A few names can be mentioned here: the present Bishop of Minna, Rt. Rev. Yisa, Rtd. Isah Doko, the former head of Air Force of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, James Gana, one-time Secretary to the Military Government, Niger State and several Permanent Secretaries in Niger State.

On leaving Bida in 1954 for home, Lokoja, I involved myself in matters I felt I should involve myself and in which I have been involving myself even when I was in the far north. For instance, I became more active in our cultural organisation, BNNU (Bassa-Nge National Union). I founded a union called Lokoja Improvement Union, all for

the development of Bassaland, Lokoja, and Kabba Province as a whole. For these, I give thanks to God. In God's own way, and for the happiness of the people, the BNNU got the Etsu Bassa-Nge to be removed from office by government because of his many ill doings. The BNNU, through the activities of Chief A. A. Fojule, the Secretary General of the union, stopped all the ill practices of some of the workers of the Igala N. A. on the economic trees of the land, to the extent that, the Igala Native Authority had to write to the BNNU that they were going to cooperate fully with the union, which they did. The Provincial Administration too was fully in cooperation with the BNNU. All the wonderful developments and changes in Bassa-Nge land led to the appointment of Chief A. A. Fojule and Dr. T. E. Elukpo of the Ankuri Hospital, as two of the first commissioners.

In Lokoja, my personal unity and connection with the late Premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello, when we worked together, he as Manager of Schools and I as headmaster of school, for five years, under Sokoto Province, made him to have special love for me. In education, my thanks go to God for the way He has used me to make the development of education real in Kabba Province. One of my joys, in November 2001, was to see Late Professor Onimode, who came out of the gathering at a luncheon in Crowther Memorial College, to hug me and say, Papa, "One of your boys, and I said, Professor Onimode, you are one of my prides". He then said, we are proud of you too, not knowing that his time was near. In all these wonderful things the Lord has helped me to do, I give all the praise to Him.

Continuing my innumerable thanks to God, I can remember that during my very youthful age, between 1924 and 1928, I was very close to HRH Mopa Maiyaki, the Etsu of Bassa - (Nge) land and people. The Etsu then used to call my mother "NNAM", meaning "My Mother". I used to

stay with him then in his Nupe - type palace. The whole frontage of the palace was rectangular, with a big verandah all around it, and also contained a rectangular walled building where the throne of the Etsu was built, in Kpata. Most cases, both civil and criminal, in Bassa - Nge land, were tried in the Palace Court. I used to stay then by the side of the throne listening to the cases where, at my age, I became knowledgeable of the lands court cases. When the court was closed on each day, the Etsu would hold my hands and take me into his inner house in the palace and would make me dine with him. He on a chair, I on the floor. The relevance of this point is that I had the opportunity of seeing, holding, and taking up the official staff of office of the Etsu of Bassa - Nge in his room. I also saw and became conversant with other paraphernalia of the Etsu, like, the trumpet, the armour and a large and beautifully decorated umbrella. During my inquisitiveness and research on Bassaland and people, from 1928 to 1988, for the preparation of my book: *Nupe/Bassa Ethnic Group History*, I have come to know that the paraphernalia had being seized through the Igala Native Authority and Bassa-Nge District amalgamation brought to be only in 1918.

I should also give thanks to the Almighty God for giving me rare opportunities, from this part of Nigeria, to train, or bring up many young educationists, in the former Kabba Province, now Kogi State. Though comparatively old now, these have become important personalities in the church, in the government – Federal, State and Local, and in the commercial world. I feel it appropriate to mention a few of them, such as, Professor Ibrahim Aguye, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Professor Charles Wambebe, former Director General, National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD), Abuja; Professor Samuel Amdi, Special Adviser; Professor Ven. C. Bello, Medical

Practitioner, Saudi Arabia; and other renowned educationists in various universities of Nigeria and abroad.

Although the giving of thanks by me, my family – nucleus and extended, to God, will never end. I am winding up by adding the following: Mr. Syrenius Sidi-Ali Waniko, the first student from Bassa-Nge land, from the former Kabba Province now, Kogi State, of the former northern Nigeria, to be admitted into the University College, Ibadan in the early fifties, must have to be mentioned. He was almost the first Permanent Secretary, Northern Nigeria, Federal Permanent Secretary, Education and Transport and, Nigerian Government Attaché in London, in the sixties.

The last point in my thanksgiving to God, is, my final active service in June 30, 1988 to Nigeria, as Magistrate Grade III, and, my final active service to the Anglican Mission as Historian, as well as the Diocesan Education Coordinator of the Diocese of Kwara, on the 30th of December, 1988. I am now the Diocesan Historian of the Anglican Diocese of Lokoja, Kogi State. May the Lord's name be praised forever and ever, *Amen*.

In closing my expressions of thanks to the Almighty God, I must add the following events that happened during my lifetime, as God helped me to live it. Late Mr. M. T. D. Ajakpo, the veteran headmaster, and I, were more or less cousins. He was a few years older than I was, started education a few years before me, under the Late Rev. Canon J. A. Bako, whose daughter became his wife. He was one of the leading educationists in the former Kabba Province, now Kogi State. We got married the same year, 1946, but my wedding took place about four months before his. His own children too have been blessed like my own, though in different ways. He was the headmaster of my wife in the Holy Trinity C. M. S. School, Lokoja, and took good care of her before he was transferred to Badagry.

After the transfer of Chief Ajakpo, Late Mr. Solomon S.

D. Ogbeha, the senior brother of Late Chief J. Abu Ogbeha, also of Lokoja, who became one of the first civil commissioners along with Late Chief A. A. Fojule, became the headmaster of the school. He was a very good organist and took very good part during my marriage. He was a few years older than I was, but we were good friends until his death in 1956.

In continuation of my thanks to God, especially in Zaria and Gusau, I happened to teach under the Late Rev. Canon Jonathan Albert Bako, the father of our present Bishop, Rt. Rev. George Bako OON. He was a disciplinarian to a fault. Between 1936 and 1937, he being a Manager of St. George's School, Zaria (Church of England) and I, a C/S Teacher, with the powerful financial assistance of the Late Mr. D. S. Cole, a Sierra Leonean of the London and Kano firm, built the then St. George's School's new and modern building, within six calendar months.

Looking at my life, which, I must confess, compared with other colleagues of mine, the Lord has not only provided me and of course my wife, with a long one, but has also blessed me wonderfully, with my children, grandchildren, and other extended Lakpini family. I therefore render these thanks and also want you to join me in giving all thanks, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to the Creator of the universe, with my whole heart, forever and ever, Amen.

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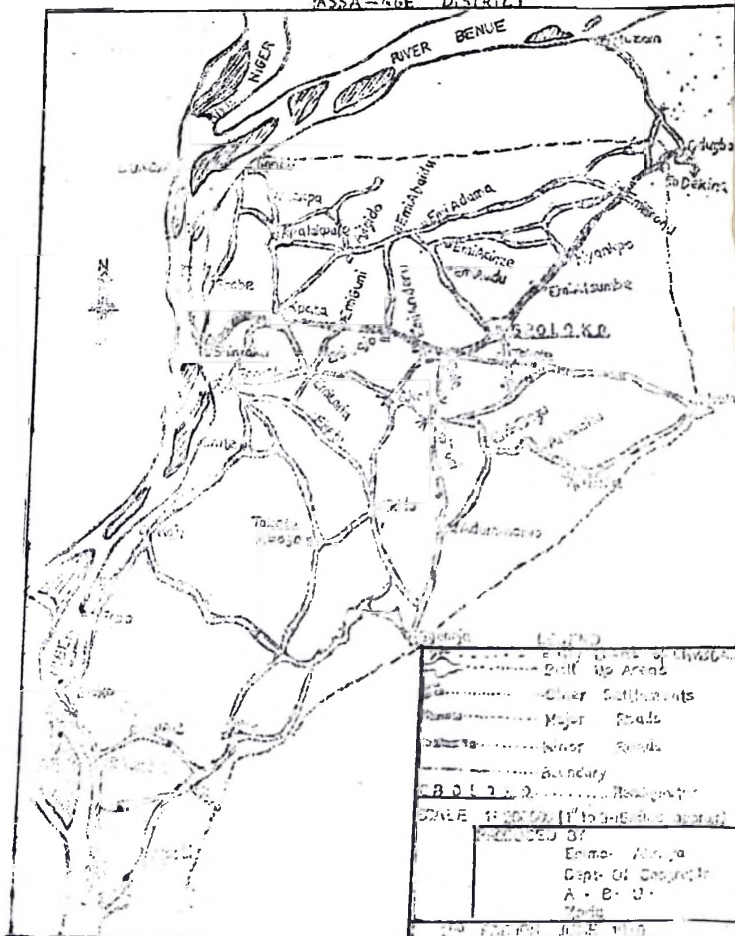
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PASSA-ROBE DISTRICT





This "Knowledge" book traces the history of the Bassa (Nge) of Nupe origin and deals widely and comprehensively with their connections or relationships with other tribes. It gives an account of the crossing of the Rivers Niger and Benue and the final settlement on the left hand side of the River Niger where some of them live up till today.

The cultural, political, religious, educational and social methods of governance of the Bassa Nge people; their major preoccupation of farming, fishing and hunting and their culture of marriage, naming and burial ceremonies have also been treated.

The book, which consists of detailed explanation and valuable information, is recommended to every Bassa Nge man in particular and all people in general.

THE AUTHOR



Pa Christopher Amos Mawo Lakpini, CHM, was born at Kpata — the traditional and administrative headquarters of Bassaland. He attended various schools in Kpata, Lokoja, Idah and Zaria after which he obtained the Middle Two Certificate and was appointed as a probationary teacher. There, he became an Assistant Headmaster and was regarded as one of the best Headmasters in the North to head St.

John's C.M.S., Bida.

He was appointed various times as Education Officer and Chief Education Officer of the Federated Native Authority, Kogi L.E.A. A seasoned educationist and administrator, he was on the governing board of many schools.

A devout Christian and active church leader, he remained steadfast till he breathed his last on Sunday, 28th March, 2004.