THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BASSA: 1830-1987.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BASSA: A STUDY IN CULTURE, IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE, 1830-1987.

BY

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Abstract

The conventional study of social change had tended to perceive the values, attitudes, and cultural institutions of non-Western peoples as "obstacles" to the "rational" organization of society. Policy makers, "modernizing" states and "development" agencies have sought to create institutions which would supposedly diffuse values needed to promote rationality. Though this Modernist position has been severely criticized in the last two and a half decades by Dependency, Underdevelopment and Marxist theorists, the critics themselves have not departed from some of the fundamentally Eurocentric premises of Modernism. Despite the recognition of the role played by the historical linkages between the Western Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America in precipitating the condition described as "underdevelopment", it is taken for granted that the desired goal of "development" is the creation of Western type "advanced" societies.

The case of the Bassa indicates the dreams and aspirations of the targets of "development", may differ fundamentally from the agendas of governments and development agencies. People in rural communities like the Bassa have their "development" agenda, an agenda informed by priorities derived from their unique historical experiences. Their case suggests that some of the questions development planners and theorists must start addressing are: What do the people themselves want? What are their dreams? What are their visions of the "good life"? In what context(s) are these aspirations formed? Can these be legislated or thought for them by planners and experts? The Bassa case shows that historical experiences are processed and

reconstructed through cultural reference points and go on to inform a community's sense of "Who we are" "What is good for us" and "What we want". As communities transform their consciousness and behaviour patterns, new identities emerge. These identities become the instrument for the bestowal of roles in relation to the definition of their sense of "our problems". For the Bassa, struggling for power with their neighbours has involved reformulating the meaning of being "Bassa" in the late 20th century. Assailing "community-powerlessness" has meant developing new definitions for age- old institutions and reinterpreting the value of formal education. Their story shows culture is not the "iron-caged debris of bygone ages. Rather, culture is as alive as the human beings who create it and for whom it is a reference point for action. The Bassa experience suggests culture is a dynamic sense of collective history and "group consciousness" which is transformed as new challenges to survival emerge.

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Chapter 1.

Introduction.

1.1 Research Problem and Conceptualization.

Nasarawa Local Government is located in the West African country of Nigeria and can be found at the south-western end of Plateau State. Nasarawa, the local government's headquarters is about two hundred and fifty kilometres from Abuja, Nigeria's new federal capital and about three hundred kilometres from the city of Jos, the capital of Plateau State. This places Nasarawa Local Government in central Nigeria and close to the confluence of Nigeria's two principal rivers, the Niger and Benue. Nasarawa Local Government Area has been split into two parts and now comprises Nasarawa and Toto Local Government Councils. These two administrative units are home to about six major ethnic groups, mainly the Bassa, Egbirra, Gbagyi, Afor, Gade and the Hausa-Fulani.

When this area became part of the British Protectorate of Northern Nigeria at the beginning of this century, the balance of power changed drastically and culminated in a situation where the Muslim Fulani and (their co-religionists and in laws), the Egbirra found themselves at the apex of power. Other groups, most notably the Bassa and Gbagyi, virtually lost their administrative autonomy in the Native Authority system of administration.

Nasarawa Local Government has become the theatre of political and inter-ethnic conflicts since elections were held for the State and Federal Houses of Assembly in 1979. That election seems to have become the watershed for attempts by the Bassa community

to question and demand changes in the structure of local administration. Subsequently, the Bassa and Egbirra have been locked in a struggle which continues to be the dominant feature of political life in Umaisha and Toto districts, where the two groups mainly reside.

The struggle between the two communities has led to the creation of three (3) government panels of inquiry. The first, the Dr. Abdullahi Panel created in 1985, was an aftermath of the refusal of the Bassa to pay their community taxes except through their own chiefs and leaders. Violence broke out on May 7 1986 between the Bassa and Egbirra communities, and resulted in the creation of the Lt. Col. Ugomudia Panel. This was followed by the John Samchi Panel which made proposals for the administrative re-organization of the Nasarawa Local Government. A Government White Paper on the John Samchi Report created a new formula for the division of powers between the Bassa, Egbirra and Gbagyi. The Bassa accepted the new formula and demanded its immediate implementation. The Egbirra on the other hand have taken the Government of Plateau State to court on the grounds that their 'human and traditional rights' were violated by the government's decisions in the White Paper. The Jos High Court has instituted an injunction on the implementation of the White Paper pending judgement on the case. In the interim, the Bassa now live in a state of un-legislated and non-formalized autonomy.

In the Nasarawa Local Government area, there are nearly 75,000 Bassa. The Bassa are mainly an agrarian community and despite the rapid spread of Islam in the 19th century, retained a religion centred on the worship and veneration of their ancestors. The Egbirra number approximately 26,000, are more inclined towards commerce and trade and are predominantly Islamic. The two groups live in close proximity and share some

settlements such as Umaisha, Toto, Ugya, and Sofiyo. The reason for this proximity, claim the Bassa, lies in the history of violence which accompanied the expansion of the Fulani and the spread of Islam in the area in the 19th century. Before the Egbirra converted to Islam in the mid- 19th century, claim the Bassa, it was their practice to seek refuge in Bassa walled villages in order to escape Fulani attacks. With time, some of these refugees became permanent residents. The Bassa also claim that the history of Egbirra proximity to them also lies in the Egbirra practice of "exploiting" the agricultural abundance of Bassa communities and their need for the "Bassa market." The Egbirra on the other hand claim they were, from "time immemorial", residents of the settlements the Bassa claim are theirs, and that the Bassa are their "guests".

The violence which broke out in 1986 was preceded by nearly 60 petitions written to the governments of Plateau State by the Bassa community within the previous decade. In these petitions, the Bassa claim they were victims of the British Native Authority system which favoured the Islamic Fulani and Egbirra and was hostile to groups which had retained their independence from the Fulani. They argue that their non-centralized political organizations did not fit into the autocratic and dictatorial nature of the Indirect Rule System of government. The Bassa further claim that the religious and marriage ties which developed between the Egbirra and Fulani after the former's conversion to Islam, resulted in the Egbirra being set as **jekadu/sagba** or political agents/ tax-collectors over Bassa villages. They argue that Bassa have always resisted the impositions of Egbirra rulers over their domains and claim that their subjection under the Native Authority system was founded on the punitive military expeditions sent to subdue them by the

British. They further claim subsequent governments have continued to perpetuate this arbitrary rule because of the access of the Egbirra to government resources. In their petitions, the Bassa demand things must "change" or they will make the process of government impossible in Umaisha and Toto districts.

Despite these arguments, there appear to be a common consensus among the Bassa today (a consensus to be verified in later chapters), that their administrative marginalization is also partly their own fault. They claim, that even if their ancestors had reasons to resist Fulani jihadists and the activities of the British Royal Niger Company in the Benue Valley, they should never have resisted Western education through formal schools. They appear to be blaming themselves for having been too resistant to anything new or non-Bassa. They appear to be claiming that their administrative marginalization, especially after the departure of the British, was a direct result of their having continued to rebuff the agencies of Western education when other groups were embracing it. The argument of the Bassa can be understood in light of the following factors. Firstly, certification, which comes with going through the formal process of education, is a prerequisite for holding positions of power in the formal bureaucratic institutions of government. This is especially so for positions in the Federal and State bureaucracy. A second and more important reason is the argument put forward by some Bassa that, if all they had to deal with were Egbirra village heads and chiefs, they would have solved the "Egbirra problem" long ago. They argue that their difficulties stem from the influence Egbirra hold in the state and Federal bureaucracy. This influence prevents the Government of Plateau State from implementing the drastic measures needed to free them

of the Egbirra yoke. This argument became strong (as we shall see later) when highly placed Egbirra officials prevented the publication of the Dr. Abdullahi Panel's report in 1985. Egbirra public officials and "money-men" also stalled the implementation of the recommendations in a Government White Paper on the reorganization of village administration in Umaisha and Toto districts in 1987. The Bassa argue that, if they had their own people in similar positions of power, their demands for change would have been facilitated and the influence of Egbirra public officials would have been countered. Such influential and powerful persons are however lacking in their community, argue the Bassa, because they did not send their children to school when the Egbirra did. Thus, the Bassa argument appears to be, that, because they resisted schools, especially between the 1940s and very early 1970s, they have been unable to develop the skilled and certified personnel needed to occupy the positions of power which would make them a "free" and "independent" people.

In sum, the Bassa appear to think, that the problems of the community are the result of their political marginalization and exclusion from institutions of power. The "cause" of this problem is not only the imposition of Egbirra rulers over them, but their refusal in the past to send children to formal schools. While they need to resist their marginalization through acts of "political rebellion" and agitation at the local level, they see the ultimate answer to their problems to be development of the skilled personnel needed to occupy positions of power and authority in the state and Federal bureaucracy. The way to do this, many now argue, is to send their children to formal schools.

The most immediate neighbours of the Bassa, the Egbirra reacted to schools

differently. They began sending their children to colonial schools as early as the late 1940s. This appears to be the reason why the Egbirra dominate all the levels of local government, have highly placed persons in the state government and a crop of contractors and businessmen. Today, political life in Nasarawa and Toto Local Governments consists of attempts by the Egbirra to maintain the status quo and Bassa attempts to change it.

The sociological questions which emerge in the study of the events and situation in Nasarawa Local Government are:

(1) Why did the Bassa resist Western education in the first place? While the Egbirra and other Nigerian groups were sending their children to schools, the Bassa seemed to have decided that they did not need schools. One may also go on to ask, 'Why is Bassa resistance to Western education of sociological interest?' The sociological issue here lies in what appears to have been a conflict between two opposing cultural systems, mainly the socialization processes represented by Western education and the indigenous socialization processes of the Bassa. The question therefore is, 'Why did it appear to the Bassa that their socialization processes and Western education were incompatible, at a time when another indigenous group, the Egbirra, found no contradiction between being Egbirra and sending their children to school?' The issue here seems to lie in the dynamics of inter-cultural contact and the way different cultures, even within the same environment, react differently to external changes and stimuli. As a sociological inquiry, what concerns the study here is: 'What happened when Bassa culture and Western formal education met?'

(ii) Now that the Bassa appear to have redefined their interpretation of the value of

schools, what is the basis of this redefinition? Are the Bassa calling for a wholesale replacement of their socialization processes by Western education or have they negotiated a "settlement" between Western model schools and "Bassa ways"? The sociological question here is, 'What takes place when a non-Western community decides to adopt formal schools as a tool of socialization?' That is, what happens when a non-Western community decides to adopt formalized socialization practices like schooling? Would formal schools, as argued by modernization theory "diffuse modern attitudes" (Inkeles,1973: 163-178; Inkeles and Smith,1974: 133-143; Holsinger,1973: 180-201;) or would the role formal schools play be determined by the cultural environment in which they are implanted? (Armer and Youtz,1971: 301-316; Stephenson,1968: 265-275; Schnaiberg,1970: 399-420).

(iii) The third issue is, why do the Bassa now want change? This question could be asked within a wider sociological context, 'Why do communities want change?' Why would people in a particular cultural environment want to introduce the institutions of another culture into theirs? Does this imply the jettisoning of their own institutions in a wholesale espousal of "new and Western ways? What type of change do communities want? Do they seek to preserve anything within their culture? If so, what do they seek to preserve and why are those things important to them? What decisions affect what they want changed and what they want preserved?

1.2. Conceptualization

To begin trying to understand the research problem outlined above, it may be useful to start from the sociological tradition that accepts that change is a basic characteristic of all social systems. This orientation is expressed by Sorokin when he noted:

> "Any system, especially a sociocultural system, being a 'going concern,' incessantly functioning, inevitably changes as long as it continues to exist and function, even if it is paced in a wholly static environment. Change is the inherent property of all functioning systems.(Moore and Cook, 1967: 68).

The causes of change in a social system, argues Sorokin, are inherent to the system itself. Whether the system is scientific, religious, aesthetic or philosophical, whether it is represented by a family, a business firm or state, "it bears within itself the seeds of incessant change, which marks every action and reaction even in a fixed environment." (ibid: 69).

While change is a social reality as indicated by Sorokin, he however seems to present an extreme "internalist" notion of change. Systems, be they natural or social do not exist in isolation from their environment. We may therefore ask, "Do social systems react to disturbances in the external environment?" "Could change not be a reaction to external stimuli?" Sorokin acknowledges that social systems do respond to external factors, but gives external factors the role of either accelerating, retarding, facilitating or hindering the realization of the social system's potentialities. External factors do this by distorting or over-developing a system's characteristics (ibid: 69-70). External factors, he further argues:

> "cannot transform a given system into something fundamentally different from its essential nature, cannot make it unfold properties it does not possess, cannot radically alter its immanent course."(ibid:70).

Do social systems have an "essential nature" and "immanent course?" as Sorokin implies? How can such a "nature" and "course" be determined?

While change is certainly an attribute of all living things, arguments about the inherency of change do not tell us what is changing or why it is changing, especially when studying change in concrete and real life situations. The notion of an "immanent course" also down-plays the role external factors play in radically re-routing and altering the direction of social evolution. Dependency theory, for instance, highlights the importance of external factors in determining the direction of change in the countries of Africa and Latin America. Even if all African societies had an "immanent course" on which they were all set by the force of "destiny", the effects of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, the debt-trap and other results of contact with the West would leave their imprints on any direction of change African countries might pursue. A realistic position to take may be to argue that the "externality" or "internality" of the sources of change cannot be determined in the abstract. The "causes" of change must be defined within the context of a social system's specific history.

The acceptance of the inherency of change in every social system also does not answer other sociological concerns about the nature of change, namely:
(i) What is changing?, (ii) What is the direction of change?, and (iii) Who or what are the agencies of change? (Lauer, 1991: 5). In the case of the Bassa, knowing that change is inherent in every social system does not tell us why the Bassa resisted Western education,

how they have redefined the role of schools, why the Bassa want change or what "change" means in the mind of a Bassa person. This implies that the principal questions of social change can only be answered through a study of concrete and historically specific situations.

If change may be understood only through a study of specific cases, then the place to begin is the study of what makes every human group unique and distinct in relation to the specific issues, themes, or "problems" around which a particular study of change is centred. What, in the orientation of this study distinguishes human groups from each other, giving them their unique characteristics, are culture and history. The answers to the questions raised in this study may lie in pursuing a "cultural-historical analysis paradigm", based on looking at Bassa culture, society, and some aspects of its history and present day social-political conditions. Only on such a foundation can we understand why Bassa resisted Western education, how they have redefined their perception of schools and what they define today as desirable change.

1.3. Culture

Culture consists not only of a people's know-how, customs of food and dress, mentality, values, socio-political and economic behaviour (Verhelst, 1990:17), but also:

> "that level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life, and give expressive form to their social and material-life experience...it is the practice which realises and objectivates group-life in meaningful shape and form...A culture includes the 'maps of meaning' which makes things intelligible to its members...Culture is the way the social relations of a group are structured and shaped...the way those shapes are experienced, understood and interpreted." (Clarke,et. al: 1987: 53).

For an anthropologist like Clifford Geertz, the analysis of culture is so central that,

> "there is no such thing as human nature independent of culture. Men without culture would not be the clever savages of Golding's Lord of the Flies thrown back up the cruel wisdom of their animal instincts; nor would they be the noblemen of the Enlightenment primitivism.... They would be unworkable monstrosities with very few instincts, fewer recognizable sentiments, and no intellect: mental baskets cases.... Without men, no culture, certainly without culture, and more significantly, no men." (Geertz,1973: 49).

Culture is composed of many elements and includes symbols without which, Geertz argues, there would be no mediums for the expression of a person's biological, psychological and social existence (ibid). Thus, religion has been identified as a major symbolic expression of culture. Religion is a type of symbolic universe that transcends and orders reality wholistically, giving it its sacredness. Religion embraces the individual in a transcendental framework, supplying him with meaning and motivation (Wuthnow, 1987: 39).

Culture also includes those myths which express the relationships between man and nature (Coward and Ellis, in Bennet: 1987: 448). In a culture, signs also play the role of being conveyors of meaning. Volosinov describes signs as instruments for projecting cultural ideologies and notes that, "Wherever a sign is present, ideology is present too. Everything ideological possesses a semiotic value." (in Bennet,1987: 442). Religion, myths, signs, values, definitions of the ultimate good, the meaning of life and the afterlife, values, mores, customs, traditions, the instruments for the creation of material life, the forms and organization of labour could all be described as the elements of culture.

Of central concern to the questions of this study is the question of how culture is transmitted through the process of **socialization**. The issues of socialization are relevant for the question: 'Why did the Bassa resist schools?" Nordskog notes that:

> "Each child is born potentially equipped to understand and acquire a patterned integration of culture which becomes part of himself. The process whereby individuals are conditioned and adjusted to live harmoniously with others in the same society is called"socialization" -a process without which there would be no culture, no personality structure, and no social structure."(1960:40).

Socialization has also been defined as, "the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and disposition that enable them to participate as more or less effective members of groups and the society (Campbell,1975: 1). Socialization is therefore the process by which we learn the ways of a given society or the social group so that we can function within it (Elin and Handel,1989: 2).

Three things stand out in these definitions. First, that socialization is a process. Secondly, this process involves acquiring cognitive assets and skills. Thirdly, that these cognitive assets and skills equip the social actor for the performance of functions within a given system of roles and status relationships (ibid: 31). Those who do not have such assets, skills and abilities become non-functional and incapable of operating in a given social system. Every human society is therefore a network of socialization processes. Indeed human society is impossible without socialization, since it is the process by which "the newborn organism is transformed into a social person..." (Handel,1989: xi). It will be argued here that the reasons for Bassa resistance to formal schools may lie in the perception of incongruence between schools and Bassa culture, especially those processes through which the Bassa equip their children for adult roles in the community. The questions which emerge here are: 'Why did Bassa parents consider formal education incongruent with being Bassa? Why do they think today that there need be no contradiction between being Bassa and receiving formal education? What are the reasons

for this transformation of consciousness? Are the roots of this transformation to be found within Bassa culture itself or do they lie in the political environment in which Bassa society is situated? That is, are the sources of change in Bassa internal or external?

Two concepts which may help in providing an understanding of these processes are **acculturation**, and **pluralization of life worlds.** Acculturation is defined by Nordskog as:

> "the subjective phase of culture formation and covers the ways in which individuals or groups take on new culture traits."(op. cit. 40).

This implies culture is not a static or frozen state, and that individuals in a culture do create new meanings for themselves and seek new forms for the expression of their material and spiritual existence. This occurs through the process of the "pluralization of life worlds", which Peter Berger et al. describe as the "multiplication of worlds in primary and secondary processes"; an appreciation of the world as "peculiarly differentiated" and a perception that the social world is an "unstable and unreliable reality" (1973, 63,77). Thus, a transformation of consciousness could be the result of the crisis or dilemmas that members of a cultural group face. The concepts of acculturation and pluralization of life-worlds may help us understand why the Bassa have redefined their perception of formal education. These concepts indicate that socialization is a continuous learning process and that some of the sources of knowledge which eventually become "cultural knowledge" are derived from outside the boundaries of a given culture. The questions for sociological study in the case of the Bassa are: 'Why did they consider formal schools irrelevant sources of knowledge for over forty years? Why have they changed this perception and now view schools as useful tools for the transmission of knowledge and acquisition of

power? What material, social, political or institutional "pressures" could be responsible for the redefinition of the role of schools? What do the Bassa want schools to do for them? What are the expectations of Bassa parents in their redefinition of the value of schools? How do they want schools to relate to other aspects of Bassa culture?

The first question demands a review of Bassa culture, especially the socialization processes. The second question requires an examination of Bassa social and political conditions today, while the third and fourth questions require data of the kind that could help us understand what changing Bassa attitudes are, and what they expect schools to do for them. That is, how they define schools with relation to other aspects and elements of Bassa culture.

1.4. The Analysis of Culture.

(a) The Structuralist Approach.

The analysis of culture can proceed in two thrusts. The first is to look at culture as a system within which individuals construct meaning, relate to other individuals and their environment. This is also the approach used by Harry Triandis (1973, 3: 143-158). His format for the analysis of culture includes an examination of:

1.

The **ecology,** that is the physical environment, resources, geography, climate, fauna and flora of the place where the study is situated.

2.

The **subsistence system**, that is, the methods for the exploitation of the ecology

in the process of survival, through agriculture, fishing, gathering, industrial work, etc.[1]

3.

The **cultural and man-made** part of the environment, that is, the objective culture, mainly earthly goods. It also includes the external subjective culture, mainly norms, roles, values and all the "moral forces" which exist outside the individual[2].

4.

The **social system**, mainly patterns of interaction such as the formation of groups, roles, family structure and institutional behaviours.

5.

The **inter-individual or socialization system**, mainly social behaviours of conformity, helping[3], aggression, intimacy, covertness, and methods of child rearing.

6.

The **projective system**, mainly the myths, dreams, fantasies, folklore.

7.

The **individual system**, mainly perceptions, learning, motivational patterns, individual attitudes, perceived norms, roles, values, and other aspects of the subjective culture which connects the individuals with the cultural system.

This approach, which is "structural-functionalist" may be useful in looking at a culture "as it is", that is, in looking at culture not as some disjointed phenomenon, but as an integrated system for the creation of meaning, reflected in every facet of a social actor's experience. This model however has serious weaknesses. In leaving the analysis of culture

at level of the "system", it makes social actors hopeless appendages of structure. It presents human beings not as history makers, creators of new meanings, adaptors to new circumstances or agents of change, but as the nuts and bolts of an immutable cultural machine. In the case of the Bassa, a system-functionalist may be limited in its usefulness for the interpretation of why the Bassa want change today, especially if change consists of a redefinition of the situation. This is not to say that there is no pattern or regime to culture which could be amenable to a "systemist" analysis. What is being argued is that in studying how people change, it may be necessary to explore the ways in which culture itself may be the spring-board for the creation of new meanings. This may be best done within an interpretive and social psychological perspective. The strength of this perspectives lies in amenability to the argument that people are not only influenced by culture, but are its creators.

(b) The Symbolic Interactionist/Social Psychological Approach.

The interpretive and social psychological analysis of culture proceeds in two thrusts. The first is expressed in the words of Berger and Luckmann. They note that:

> "Reality is socially defined. But the definitions are always embodied, that is, concrete individuals and groups of individuals serve as definers of reality. To understand the state of the socially constructed universe at any given time, or its changes over time, one must understand the social organization that permits the definers to do their defining. Put a little crudely, it is essential to keep pushing questions about the historically available conceptualizations of reality from the abstract, 'What?' to the sociologically concrete 'Says who?'" (Berger and Luckmann: 1966: 134).

Berger and Luckmann present a dialectical notion of the relationship between culture and individual action. The actor does not act in a vacuum. He/she acts within the context of a structure or organization of reality (what is called culture). But the final "objectifier" of intentions, motives or emotions are real flesh and blood individuals. This means that between the individual and culture there lies a grey area representing the individual's "independence" and "autonomy" from culture. Though culture remains the individual's frame of reference, he/she is no slave of culture.

The second thrust in the interpretive approach to culture assumes human beings learn throughout their lives (Orville in Hollander,1971: 115-125). Sociologists have long recognized this as secondary socialization or re-socialization (Berger and Luckmann :op. cit: 182).

Since new knowledge is gathered within the context of what is already known, culture could be expected to play a role in the interpretation of new experiences. As individuals confront the inroads of other cultural environments, they encounter new "universes of meaning". In such encounters, individuals test the efficacy of culture based knowledge for dealing with the problems of survival posed by new situations. In some instances, individuals may observe that their cultural encyclopedia has no definitions or reference points for the new experiences encountered. The new situations may include different contexts of meaning, new economic currents, novel political institutions, a different rationality or morality and artifacts created in different contexts of meaning. In some circumstances, the novelties encountered may even have their roots in the activities of innovators within an individual's own culture. When an individual's world of meaning

continues to enhance his/her existence, for example the control of economic resources, social status and ability to influence the life of others (power and authority), confidence in that world of meaning is reinforced. When on the other hand, the individual perceives that the known culture handicaps the ability to cope with new dispensations, confidence in that culture may be undermined. Individuals may begin seeking ways to widen or diversify their world of meaning with conceptual tools needed to make their culture more "adaptive" or responsive to the new situation.

The strength of the interpretive and social psychological approach to culture lies in it recognition of the fact that "actual human behaviour" in a particular situation is not necessarily culture bound. This approach recognizes that "actual behaviour" and "cultural action" are not of necessity, synonymous. The former refers to action by the actor based on the actor's "definition of the situation" at any particular time. The later refers to action which an observer could readily interpret as a product of the individual's cultural background. Thus Murdock notes that:

> "Actual social behaviour, as it is observed in real life, must be carefully distinguished from culture, which consists of habits, or tendencies to act and not of actions themselves. Though largely determined by a bit, actual behaviour is affected by physiological and emotional state of the individual, the intensity of his drives, and the particular external circumstances (in Hollander and Hunt, 1971: 93).
> Subsequently, though "action" may be culture based and culture inspired, "action" is itself, independent of and a step ahead of culture in any situation[4]u.

On the question of the relationship between "action" and "social change", Murdock argues the seeds of cultural change are sown through "actions" which are independent of

culture. Cultural change may thus result from the effects of innovation, invention, "tentation" (trial and error) especially during conditions of crisis, and through "cultural borrowing". Actual behaviour which may at first be dissonant with established cultural knowledge could become integrated into the general pool of acceptable cultural practice, especially if such behaviour is associated with prestige, rewards and when such behaviour can be successfully integrated with other elements of the existing culture (ibid, 93-100). This is why the study of how people in one culture adopt the ways of another culture (acculturation) and the processes involved in diversifying the interpretation of the world (pluralization of life-worlds) may be useful themes for understanding the process of social change in Bassa.

A fundamental aspect of the interpretive-social psychological approach to culture is founded on the social psychological principle of the **definition of the situation**. John Hewitt notes that:

> "Human conduct takes place within situations that are defined by participants, who act toward one another, the situations themselves, and the objects they contain on the basis of their definitions....People do not act in relation to any objects in their world but to specific objects they indicate at particular times and places (1976, :105-106).

The interpretive approach to culture is itself derived from the sociological and social psychological traditions of symbolic interactionism. Herbert Blumer described the basic tenets of this tradition as based on the premise that the action of human beings towards things is dependent upon meanings those things have for them. These meanings are themselves social products derived in the course of interaction in human society and are altered or modified through an interpretive process used by individuals in handling the

things they encounter (in Reynolds, 1990: 120). Thus human beings in any cultural setting are instrumental actors, actors created by culture and actors who continuously create culture. Describing symbolic interactionism, Zadrozny wrote it is:

> "An approach to understanding human conduct which is based on the views that the human is primarily an active, goal-seeking person (not merely a responsive organism)" (1959,: 339).

The foregoing is not intended to imply that the structural- functionalist approach to culture may have no relevance for the study of culture. But to use that perspective, we fist have to lift culture out of history and assume social life is static. It is therefore limited for studying actions which cannot be attributed directly to socialization and cultural habits. This is a serious limitation especially in the study of social change. The interpretive approach can be applied to the study of an historical action especially where it can be proved that the human actors based their "definition of the situation" on information other than established cultural habits. The difficulty in using this approach in the study of the past lies principally in the problems associated with providing convincing social psychological data about historical events.

In general, the theoretical approach of the study could be described as **cultural** and **historical-documentary**. The cultural empirical data relate primarily to Bassa culture, the present day "definition of the situation", and expectations about Western education. The historical-documentary data focus primarily on the social and political condition of the Bassa in the recent past, in the present, and especially the political framework within which change is being demanded.

The approach taken in this study is as follows: The second chapter will describe

the methods used in the collection of data. This will include the Bassa description of their past, their present circumstances and interpretation of the changes impinging on Bassa society. It will also include what their perspectives are on how they think children should be prepared for adult roles in light of their interpretation of the world.

In the third chapter, the historical background of existing power relations between the Bassa and their neighbours, especially the Egbirra and the Fulani will be examined. The objective here is to provide the general context within which Bassa culture and society are situated and the background within which the questions of change are being asked.

In the fourth chapter, Bassa history and culture (especially socialization practices) will be examined within a theory of culture. The objective here is understand why at a certain time in history, Bassa parents thought Western education was not relevant for the preparation of their children for adult roles. The purpose is to provide the historical and institutional context within which the Bassa defined their situation.

The fifth chapter will be a discussion of the data with regard to the questions and problems of social change raised earlier in this introduction.

Chapter six will be a summary and conclusion of the questions raised and the answers which data analysis suggests.

1.5. Conclusion.

What has been attempted in this introduction is a brief statement of the research problem, mainly the desire of the Bassa people of Umaisha and Toto districts for change and how this has brought them into conflict with their neighbours the Egbirra. It is also argued that the Bassa situation arouses sociological curiosity around some of the questions of social change, mainly: 'What is changing?'; 'What are the agencies of change?'; 'What is the direction of change?' 'What does change mean to the subjects of change? It is noted that while sociologists regard change as immanent in every social system, the discipline's traditional questions about change cannot be answered in the abstract. The questions of change must be situated in history and culture through the study of specific cases. Culture is perceived in this study as a historically specific cognitive and conceptual context and process. It is both a context and process whereby human beings create and interpret the meaning of their human and natural environment. The study's approach to culture is basically interpretive and social-psychological. Within this approach, human beings are perceived as more than mere appendages of social structure. They are seen as active constructors of meaning and creators of what ultimately becomes cultural knowledge. Within this logic, the inadequacies of a pre-existing cultural situation in providing the cognitive and conceptual tools needed for analyzing new situations, may become the springboard for social and cultural change.

The principal sociological concepts which would guide this study include: socialization, acculturation, the pluralization of life-worlds and the definition of the

situation. The theses of the study are crystallized around the proposal that Bassa resistance to schools may have been the result of the incompatibilities the Bassa defined as existing between the preparation of Bassa children for adult roles and Western education. It is proposed that social change in Bassa may possibly be expressions of cultural consciousness in response to the political dis-empowerment experienced under British rule from 1900 to 1960 and in the years after Nigeria's formal independence. It is also proposed that the Bassa re-evaluation of the roles of schools may be the result of the perception by Bassa parents that schools would increase their children's chances for obtaining the positions of power they think individuals in the community lack.

Endnotes

1. This would also include the mode of the organization of labour.

2. What Durkheim would call the material and non-material social facts.

3. Including reciprocity.

4. For example, in Bassa culture, it is taboo for a man to cook anything except ritual or sacrificial food. Cooking is regarded as an "effeminate" and "weak" task, unbefitting of a man. A Bassa husband in Canada may however consider it "unreasonable" to ask his wife to cook and serve the table after an eight hour work day. This Bassa husband may not only cook for his wife, but may do the "unmanly" thing of serving the food to his tired wife. This Bassa has acted outside the confines of his culture and acted based on his definition of the situation.

Chapter Two.

Methodology.

2.1. Fieldwork Tasks.

Two sets of germinal questions were taken to the field. The first was: Why did the Bassa resist Western education? What do the Bassa say on why they did not find formal schools acceptable for nearly half a century? What, in their own evaluation, have been the effects of their resistance to Western education? How could the reasons for this resistance be linked to issues in Bassa history and culture? The second set of questions were centred on this: What is the Bassa "definition of the situation" today? What could be described as Bassa consciousness regarding the value of formal schools as instruments of socialization? Since the "definition of the situation" and "consciousness" are founded on issues of social process and social learning, the data collection process was sensitive to seeking evidence for new meanings and redefinitions of old definitions of the situation.

2.2. Social and Economic Environment of the Fieldwork.

Data collection is part of a social process. The problems encountered during the fieldwork cannot be separated from the social characteristics of the individuals and communities found in the field. The conflicts between the Bassa and Egbirra communities is one of such characteristics. Being Bassa, the researcher could not possibly interview Egbirra. The researcher would have been viewed, at the least, with grave suspicion.

Another factor which affected the data collection process was the gender question. While the responses of both males and females were desired, the females tended to refuse answering any questions, since in most cases, they claimed their husbands had said all they had to say, or that they "knew nothing" and their answers would be no use to the researcher. This problem was a feature of the division of labour between the sexes in Bassa society. The men are expected to deal with all matters relating to the "outside world", mainly government officials, the tax collector, police, male visitors, community governance, etc, while the women are in charge of the domestic domain or "inside world", mainly the raising of the children, household chores, the preparation of meals, entertainment, etc. On the question of parental decisions on the socialization of children, the data really necessary to make valid arguments are the responses of Bassa fathers, since schools are a part of the "outside world". By Bassa custom, the father owns his children. It is the male parent who decides whether or not a child should go to school. This does not mean that women play no role in this. Mothers make their input especially where decisions regarding daughters are concerned. It must be noted however that in Bassa society, daughters are married off when they reach the age of seventeen or eighteen. Thus whenever children are sent to school at all, it is most likely to be the male children. Daughters are mainly trained to manage the "inside world" or domestic domain and Western education is not considered necessary for roles in this domain.

Another social aspect of the field which affected the collection of data is the fact that Bassa do not cooperate too easily with strangers. Though the researcher is Bassa, he is not known to all Bassa and was a virtual stranger to most villagers. Being without the

traditional Bassa facial marks of identification, he could have been mistaken for an Egbirra or some other "alien". Being able to get access to a village through local contacts was therefore crucial. Without these contacts, the fieldwork would have been very difficult indeed. The local contacts play the role of "ambassador" and "soften" the grounds for the researcher by making him less of a stranger and more of "one of them". The trust and confidence the contact builds is necessary for the work to proceed in any location. A problem associated with the use of "ambassadors" is the issue of bias. How would the choice of an ambassador affect who is interviewed and who is not? Would the ambassador direct the inquirer only to people who would "cooperate"? The way the problem was overcome was to keep "checking" the ambassador's direction. If he said, "I will lead you to Sheneni's house. He lives near that hill." The researcher would insist he also wants to talk to "Kaura" who the ambassador had said "never cooperates with anything new" or "Jimba" who is not "too friendly" and "Kaku" "who always disagrees with everybody else." That way, the prejudices of the ambassadors were at least minimized.

Most of the population are peasant farmers and the study was conducted between the months of June and early August, which is the height of the farming season. This meant most farmers were not available and arrangements had to be made, especially at the weekend for the interviews.

The Bassa population is predominantly illiterate. This implied that information could only be obtained through verbal interaction. The researcher speaks Bassa well, and this was an advantage both in the collection of data and in making him appear less of a

threat.

A factor which had more to with the economics of the fieldwork was money. Nigeria is reeling under hyper inflationary trends in the economy. Transportation and cost of living factors were unusually expensive. The site of the fieldwork, Umaisha and Toto districts, have a highway linking them with Nasarawa and most of the Bassa population is concentrated off the highway in the rural interior. In the interior, there was a severe paucity of transportation. Each trip to an interview site had to be arranged bearing these costs in mind. Some areas in the Bassa hinterland could not be sampled either because they were not linked to a motor road or because getting there would have entailed incurring serious mechanical damage to vehicles. This placed limitations on the size of the sampling frame. Therefore, villages had to sampled on the basis of their accessibility to motor vehicle transportation. That is, they had to be located either around the highway or were at least linked by a motorable rural route. These rural routes are earth roads built either by the local government or through communal effort by the villages near them.

2.3. Research Instrument.

The research instrument chosen for the collection of data was the interview method. This method suited the research situation where a majority of the informants are illiterate. The social psychological task of grabbing a respondent's "definition of the situation" is best done through a means which creates a bridge of communication between the everyday commonsense experience of the informant and the researchers's questions. This is why Cicourel credits the interview method with being able to grab the "meaning

the interview process is rooted in the "categories of common sense thinking" of the research subject (ibid: 79). The interview method also has the quality of being able to acquire introspective or historical information (Chadwick, et al, 1984: 103). This was especially significant in aspects of the study where written historical evidence was lacking or where the Bassa definition of the situation forty years ago was required.

The interview method however has its problems. Once a linkage has been created between the respondent and the informant, how does the researcher continue to maintain the scientific detachment and objectivity necessary? Thus the researcher is torn between two conflicting roles, that of someone involved in the world of the informant and someone required to be detached from the informant. In the case of this study, the situation was even more complicated. The first issue had to do with the fact that the researcher is Bassa. Could he exercise complete detachment from the issues of the study especially when among other Bassa? Secondly, this clean shaven, well fed and Western educated Bassa was asking other Bassa to evaluate the value of Western education! The researcher kept asking himself, "Am I not a message on the possible values of Western education?"

The first step taken to tackle these problems was for the researcher to mentally reassure himself that these were not problems without a bright side. In the first place, the study would have been impossible if the researcher was not Bassa. Few Bassa would have granted a stranger, say from Newfoundland, the audience and information volunteered. In a study aimed at capturing the informant's definition of the situation, the familiarity of the researcher to the informant was a great advantage. During the interviewing process,

the researcher observed that, what seemed to encourage respondents to really "open up" was the sense among them that "he is one of us", "he understands us" and "he means us well". This way, the researcher could elicit detailed information which could not have been got any other way. Therefore, the bulk of the problem the researcher faced was not so much with being Bassa as with asking the right questions. The main task lay in asking the questions which could capture the motives and reasons behind an action or attitude. The questions which proved useful were the "Why?" questions. Thus if a respondent said, "I think school would be good for my children", the next question would be, "Why do you think schools would be good for your children?" If the respondent listed a group of reasons, the next question would be, "Why do you think these reasons are of better value to you compared to the benefits of raising them in Bassa ways, for example as farmers?"

Not much could be done about the fact that the researcher is a Western educated Bassa. Respondents were therefore always encouraged to mention what they thought could be the disadvantages of formal schooling. If for instance a respondent said, "I stand to gain a lot if my child goes to school", another question would be, "What do you stand to lose if your child goes to school?" "What about the work on your farm? Who will help you now that you want your child to go to school?"

The interview schedule was a structured one and contained one hundred and thirty-six questions. The interviews lasted any thing from one to three hours depending on the willingness of the informant to continue with the interviewing process.

2.4 Sampling Decisions.

The economic and social environment of the study has already been described above. The universe of the study is nearly seventy-five thousand people, distributed in twenty-six (26) village areas (Umaisha and Toto District Tax Assessment). The time available for going to Nigeria to collect the data was only fifty-nine days. Because of the number of questions involved, the amount of details required in each interview and limitations in funds, it was obvious even before the fieldwork began, that only a small sample could be taken. The sampling decisions were guided by the questions, "Who should be interviewed?" "How do we get a fair representation of Bassa, despite the problems of accessibility and costs?" "How should these persons be selected or sampled?" "What would 'fair representation' mean, bearing in mind the Bassa population?"

In answering the question "Who should be interviewed?", Other questions were asked, mainly, "Who takes the decision on whether or not a child goes to school?" The answer was of course the parents. The next logical question was, "Do both parents have an equal say on the matter?" The answer was of course no. As noted above, it is the male parent, the father, who decides whether or not a child goes to school. It became obvious that the persons to talk to would be Bassa fathers. But the researcher was also interested in hearing the opinions of female parents, the mothers, since it was expected there may be some gender differences in parental opinions on the questions.

Since the main concern of the study is with the Bassa definition of the situation today regarding Western education, it was logical to conclude that the persons who could best provide the information required were Bassa who have been or are in a situation

where decisions have to be taken on whether or not a child goes to school. These Bassa are of course parents. The next question was, "What sort of parents?" In order to present a total picture of the dimensions of Bassa reaction to Western education, it was decided to interview three categories of parents. The first is Bassa parents who have never sent their children to school. The second are those who have sent only some of their children to school and thirdly, those who have sent all of their children to school. The first kind of parent was expected to represent the "classic" Bassa attitude of resistance to formal education. The second was expected to represent those who for some reasons think schools have their value, but also consider Bassa ways to be valuable. These are the parents who may somehow have "negotiated a settlement" between the value of schools and the continued relevance of Bassa ways. The third was expected to represent those parents who think schools should be the principal means of preparing their children for adult roles today. These categories are not based in reality. Only the data can determine what the reality is. These categories were created only to assist in the classification of parental responses during the fieldwork. In real life, social reality does not present itself in such neat categories. A parent who has sent all his children to school for instance, does not of necessity consider Bassa ways to be valueless, except that his definition of what is valuable may differ from the definitions made by parents who have refused to send any of their children to school. What is valuable in Bassa culture thus becomes a matter of personal definition, something for which new categories have to be created in the data analysis.

On the question of "Who should be interviewed?" it had been argued at the

proposal stage of the study that because of a possible linkage between changing Bassa attitudes to Western education and aspirations for political power, chiefs may possibly appreciate the value of schools more than other Bassa. Being persons who hold positions of authority in the Bassa community, it was assumed they would feel the "pain" of exclusion from positions of power in the local government structure more than other Bassa. It was therefore decided to include chiefs in the sample of Bassa parents taken.

On the question of what fair representation would mean within the context of the Bassa population, the indicator of "fairness" was taken to mean a situation where respondents who follow the Bassa ancestral religion, Christianity and Islam would be adequately represented. There was no population data base from which the actual numbers of the persons who espouse these belief orientations could be quantitatively determined. The severe dearth of statistics is a major problem in African studies. The researcher therefore relied on his acquaintance with the field in deciding which or what village would have a "fair representation" of the followers of the three religions.

An answer to the question of "fair representation" would have been to get a random sample, since random samples have the quality of giving every element of the population a chance to be represented. Despite this advantage, the study could not afford one in light of the economic environment in which this research was situated. It was therefore decided that the villages from which parents would be interviewed would be purposefully selected on the basis of costs and accessibility, while ensuring that the three religious orientations in Bassa were represented. This is a non-random sampling technique, which has been criticized as being of limited use as the basis for generalization

(Chadwick et al., ibid: 65). But in light of the constraints described above, nothing better could be done. The villages selected were:

(1) Rapkam.

(2) Gbokoro.

(3) Sardauna and

(4) Yimua.

The chiefs were selected from:

(1) Asepi

(2) Utu.

(3) Gbokoro

(4) Rudu and

(5) Gbonokwo.

These villages are classified according to their nearness to the highway linking Toto and Umaisha towns. The nearer a village was to the highway, the more accessible it was and the more affordable was the research in that village. The degree of nearness was categorized into three classes, mainly Class 1, 2 and 3 degrees of nearness. Class 1 nearness is any village between five (5) to nineteen (19) kilometres from Toto, the local government's headquarters. Class 2 is any village between twenty (20) to thirty-nine (39) kilometres from Toto town. Class 3 nearness is any village forty kilometres and above from Toto.

The villages are described as follows. Rapkam is one of the oldest Bassa settlements and is about thirty-five kilometres from Toto, the local government

headquarters. It is classified as having Class 2 nearness to the highway. The main advantage in choosing Rapkam lay in its history as an ancient Bassa settlement where the residents mainly follow the Bassa religion. It has mainly Bassa residents and there are no major differences on the grounds of religion here.

Gbokoro is located on the major highway linking Nasarawa with Umaisha and is about seven kilometres from Toto. It is predominantly Bassa, but has Egbirra residents. Most of the Bassa here are Christians and Muslims. It is classified as having Class 1 nearness to the highway. The advantage in selecting this village lay in its proximity to Toto town, the local government headquarters, the highway, and in its multi-religious character. Thus, it is an example of a Bassa settlement, divided along religious lines, with non-Bassa residents and close to urban influences.

Sardauna is about forty kilometres from Toto and far off the main highway. The population is almost evenly split between Christians and Bassa who follow their traditional religion. Sardauna was a Christian missionary base and there are no Muslims here. It is classified as having Class 3 nearness to the highway. The main advantage in selecting Sardauna lay in its being away from the urban influences of Toto town. It is typically rural and presents a good example of where the Bassa traditional religion and Christianity meet "face to face".

Gbonokwo is not far from Sardauna and is in the Bassa rural interior. This village has a notoriety among Bassas for their "lack of cooperation" with other Bassas in the " liberation struggle". They make little or no contributions to the community pursue and have left many Bassa "nationalists" frustrated. It is classified as having Class 3 nearness

to the highway. The advantage in selecting Gbonokwo lies in its being a village which seems to have rebuffed attempts by other Bassa villages to include it the "nationalist" bandwagon and which wanted to be left alone.

Yimua is located in the rural interior of Bassaland, off any major road. Most of the people here follow the Bassa religion. It is classified as having Class 3 nearness to the highway. The advantage in selecting Yimua lay in its being located in the Bassa heartland. It is typically rural, has no non-Bassa residents and most residents follow the Bassa traditional religion.

Asepi is located close to Yimua. The residents here predominantly follow the Bassa religion. It is located in the rural interior away from any major highway. It is classified as having Class 3 nearness to the highway. The main advantage in selecting Asepi lay in its being in the Bassa heartland. The chief of the village is an avowed "traditionalist". An indication of the attachment of this village to tradition may be their retention of ancient Bassa settlement patterns and architecture.

Utu was a site of violent confrontations between Bassas and Egbirras. The chief of this village has experienced arrests, detention and prosecution in the struggles and conflicts of the Bassa community. The village is predominantly Bassa, but has non-Bassa residents. The Bassa here follow mainly their traditional religion, but are surrounded by Muslims neighbours. It is classified as having Class 3 nearness to the highway. Utu is important because it is an example of a Bassa village where the question of administrative autonomy has led to violence and where the contention for power between Bassas and Egbirras in Umaisha district has been really fierce.

Rudu is also off the main highway linking Toto and Umaisha. It is completely Bassa and was the village were the late Galadima of Rudu, Baba Jasa began organizing Bassas against local Egbirra officials. It is classed as having Class 2 nearness to the highway. Rudu was selected because it also is a place where Bassas and Egbirras have been contending for power, especially on the question of village area headship within Ugya. The "political" question is really very important to the people in this village.

It was also resolved that there would be a need to interview Bassa parents who have gone to school and live in urban areas. The circumstances surrounding their going to school and their opinions on the socialization of children for adult roles were considered a possible basis for comparison with the attitudes of rural dwelling Bassa parents. The towns where most Bassas are employed were also selected for the interviews. These are: (1) Jos, (2) Nasarawa and (3) Toto.

Jos is the capital of Plateau State and has a multi-ethnic population of over 300,000. It is the site of many educational institutions including a federal university, the University of Jos. Apart from being the home of many government employees, it is the location of industries in the area of confection, breweries and agro-allied industries. Jos is famous for its temperate weather.

Almost three hundred kilometres from Jos is the town of Nasarawa. Nasarawa is multi-ethnic and is located on a major highway. It is linked to the rest of the world by telephone, has pipe borne water and receives television services. Most of the Bassas who live in Nasarawa work in the health sector as community health officers.

Toto, the capital of the new Toto Local Government is located nearly 120

kilometres from Nasarawa. It is populated mainly by Bassas, Egbirras, Gade and Nupes. Some of the Bassas are employed with the local government or are elected officials, though most make their living by working the farmlands adjoining Toto town.

Seventy (70) persons were interviewed all together. The question of "How much" in research is an open one. Chadwick (1984: op. cit) argues that 30 is a reasonable number. The tax assessment records indicate that a Bassa hamlet or village could have anything between forty-five and ninety tax paying adults. The problem with tax payer records is that it represents only male tax payers, that is, only potential male parents. It excludes females since women do not pay taxes. Using "statistics" do research in Nigeria can be a very tenuous business since no adequate or sufficient statistical data base exists, especially for the rural areas. One can only make the best use of what is available.

Rapkam village has a population of 51 tax paying adults.[1] Ten (10) parents, that is, 19.60 per cent of the parents were interviewed. Gbokoro has a population of sixty-nine tax paying adults[2]. Nine (9) parents were interviewed, that is 13 per cent of the parents. Sardauna has a population of 123 tax payers. Eleven (11) parents were interviewed, that is 8.94 per cent of the tax paying population. Yimua has a population of twenty-five tax payers and seven (7) parents were interviewed, that is 28 per cent of the tax payer population.

Determining the total population of Bassa parents in Toto town is not a straight forward matter since the town has many hamlets and sub-villages. The ward from which the Toto town sample was drawn is Toto Central and has 166 Bassa tax payers. 15 parents were interviewed here, that is 9.03 per cent of population. The tax paying

population of Bassa parents in Nasarawa Town Central is approximately thirty-six persons. This excludes parents in the environs of Nasarawa like Tammah. Eight (8) parents that is, 22 per cent, were interviewed. Jos has approximately nineteen (19) Bassa parents. The figure is not constant since job related relocations are frequent. Five (5) parents, that is 26 per cent of the population were interviewed. Bassa parents in Jos, Nasarawa and Toto are by far fewer than those in the rural areas. The strategy adopted for the urban areas was to compile a list of Bassas in the location. Out of the list, the names of the individuals who were married and had children were identified. Since the population of Bassas in the urban areas is by far smaller than that in the rural areas, drawing a "sample" in the formal sense was not considered necessary. The intention was to interview as many urban parents as were willing and available. Because more Western educated Bassa parents were available in Toto town, Toto has a higher representation of parents than Jos and Nasarawa.

As noted already, the parental categories interviewed were parents who had sent "none" "some" and "all" of their children to school. How were these identified in each village? Since the researcher was a relative stranger in most of these villages, he had to depend on the knowledge of his contact or guide in each village as to which parents belonged to what category.

Some clarification also needs be made regarding the chiefs. The objective in interviewing the chiefs was to find out how these traditional holders of authority felt regarding their exclusion from the formal positions of power in local government.
in Umaisha and Toto districts. In some villages, both "chiefs and commoners" were

interviewed. This was the case in Gbokoro and Sardauna. But in Rudu, Utu, Asepi, Gbonokwo, this was not the case. These chiefs were however placed in one category labelled "chiefs". Each chief was interviewed as parent and as a chief. Since his interview was not done in the presence of his subjects, it was felt the chiefs could be treated as individuals. It must be noted that the chiefs were very favourably disposed to the interviews. This must be understood within the context of a consciousness among Bassas today that the a chief should be an agent of "progress". Most of such "progress" is defined as coming from the "outside" through contacts with strangers, governments and sources of new influence. Chiefs therefore see it as part of their duty behave "diplomatically" and "properly" towards visitors and guests to the village. The interviewer recalls receiving honourary and customary parting gifts from three of the chiefs, as part of protocol.

The "classic" setting of an interview differs depending on whether one is dealing with a chief or "commoner". With a common parent, the interviewer is treated as a personal interaction between an "important guest" (the interviewer) and the head of the house. The presence of children and women was therefore not desired since such matters did not "concern them". The person interviewed, would not mind having his male friends around, since he was uncertain as to what the "stranger" was up to. The presence of friends (if any where available) was desired in case the person interviewed needed "help". In most cases, the presence of the informant and guide was enough to allay the fears of my informants. The interviewer's fairly good command of the Bassa language aided greatly in presenting him as someone with friendly intentions. The anxiety of informants

must be understood within the context of a place where most well- dressed strangers are usually government officials with not so friendly intentions. The presence of the contact, a Bassa speaking stranger and at times friends, helped greatly in making the interview process very friendly. There were problems in cases where the respondent had more than two friends around, especially if one of the friends was talkative and rather domineering. Such friends had a tendency to "finish off" an answer wherever they perceived their friends as being "stuck" . For example, if the interviewer asked a question like this:

"Why did you not send your child to school?"

The respondent might be taking his time, trying to contemplate an answer. His friend would perceive his silence as a signal that he needed help. This friend might say: "What else? You needed the boys on the farm." The respondent would then say, "Oh yes! I needed the boys on the farm!"

While such an answer could be anticipated, the interviewer would have preferred to hear it directly from the "horse's mouth".

For the chiefs, the interviewer managed to get private "one on one" interview sessions with all of them except one. For one of these chiefs, the interview session was a "diplomatic and administrative" event. He had his two of his ministers and councillors around during the interview. The interviewer tried all he could to make the "process" as private as possible, but could not prevent a minister coming to the aid of his chief from time to time. Some of such "interruptions" were however helpful, especially when the minister helped to elaborate or clarify issues about culture or the feelings of the Bassa about events.

2.5. The Measurement of Bassa Consciousness and Definition of the Situation.

The sociological issue which the questions were designed to measure were those of consciousness. This can be summarised in the questions: How do the Bassa define the situation today? What do they think are the problems and challenges of being a Bassa in this age, in light of Bassa history? What do the Bassa think they require in order to fulfil themselves both as individuals and as a community? What role do Bassas think Western education can play in the fulfilment of their aspirations? The first questions in the interview schedule were demographic questions, mainly those of gender, age, marital status, number of children, occupation, religion, etc.

Some of the issues of the study are historical and age was considered an important factor. It was expected for instance, that older parents would be able to tell us how they reacted to schools, say thirty years ago and what they think about schools now. Thus an older Bassa parent would be asked a question like this: "Did you send your children to school?" If the answer was "No" then a question like this could follow: "Why did you consider schools unnecessary?" "What do you think of schools now?" "Why do you think Bassa today need to send their children to school?" "Have the Bassa suffered anything for not sending their children to school" etc. A younger parent could be asked: "Do you miss anything for not having gone to school?" "Will you send your children to school?" "Tell me what you think you will gain by sending your children to school?" "What do you think of the decision by Bassa parents, forty years ago, not to send their children to school?" etc.

Occupation was also considered a key factor. In an area where people make most of their livelihood from agriculture without the use of machines, the family is a very important source of labour. This was considered a factor which could determine a parent's response to formal schools. Thus a parent who makes his living as a farmer could be asked a question like this, "Would you still send your child to school in spite of the fact that he would not be able to help you in your farm work?"

Religion has been recognized as a major instrument for the creation of meaning. It was therefore expected to be factor in parental attitudes, actions and decisions regarding how their children should be socialized. It was expected for instance, that parents who hold the Bassa traditional religion would value formal education less than the parents who espouse the literary religions of Christianity and Islam. For parents who hold the Bassa ancestral religion, a question like this could be asked: "How would you want your children raised? Do you want to raise them in the ways of the ancestors, like Tiribi or do you want them to go to school?" If he said he wanted the children to go to school, the next question would be: "But what about the way of the ancestors? Can they go to school and still know the ways of their fathers?"

The focus of the study is the socialization of children in relation to the wider questions of social power. The place and value of children was therefore very central. Questions were therefore prepared to find out what Bassa parents thought about children. Linked to this was the question of finding out the place and role of children in the household, the meaning and place of work, and the preparation of children for roles in the work life of Bassa parents. To find this out, a question like this was asked: "What are

the advantages of having children?" It was assumed that responses to this question may help us know the significance of a informant's answers to questions about the socialization of children. For instance, an answer like this would be very significant for studying consciousness transformation. If a respondent said, "My children are my security for the future" and also said, "I think schools are the best way to prepare them for the future", this would imply a major attitude change in a community where farming is defined as the basis of economic security.

If Bassas have had a history of resisting formal education, what do they think about formal schools today? Are there Bassas who still think formal education is incompatible with Bassa ways for preparing children for adult roles? Are there Bassas who think the "world is changing" and that formal education may have a place in the Bassa world? What kind of "settlement" if any, are Bassas "negotiating" with Western education in light of a constantly changing socio-political environment? Thus parents were asked questions like: "What do you think is the greatest problem of the Bassa people today?" "Do you think the Bassa would have this/these problem(s) if they had sent their children to school?" "How can sending children to school solve these problems?" "What do Bassa stand to gain by sending their children to school?" These questions were asked in connection to what the Bassas themselves think are the effects of their resistance to Western education. The question was based on the assumption that if the Bassa are redefining the place of formal education in the preparation of their children for adult roles, this may be in response to issues in their political environment. It was assumed while the questions were being prepared, that a way to evaluate the attitude of Bassa

parents to Western education could be in the dreams parents had for their children. Questions were therefore designed to find out the futures parents dreamed for their children, why they had such dreams and the way(s) they thought these dreams could be achieved. They were also asked to compare the efficacy of Bassa traditional socialization with formal schools as instruments for the realization of such dreams. Thus parents were asked questions like, "What dreams do you have for your children?" " Would you want your son to be known as the best farmer in Bassa or would you want him to be working in a big town or city?" "Why do you want him to work in a big town or city?"

There is the contention in modernization literature that schools in themselves inculcate "modern attitudes" (Inkeles and Smith, 1974). Another contention (Armer and Youtz, 1971), suggests that among indigenous cultures, the role formal schools play is largely defined by the demands of the larger culture in which schools are situated. The objective here was to explore how the aspirations of Bassa parents could be a factor in any function formal schools could play in a society like the Bassa's. Thus questions like these were asked: "Do you want Bassa children who go to school to know the culture of their people as much as they would Western education?" "How can Bassas who have gone to school enhance Bassa culture?"

In other to determine that the Bassa community has indeed become politically mobilized as argued in the Introduction, questions were asked about voting behaviour and involvement in local political organization. Part of the objective here was also to find out the agencies which have been involved in the organization and mobilization of the Bassa community in their struggles for power with their neighbours. Thus question like these

were asked: "Do you belong to any organization." "Have you voted?" "Why did you vote?"

2.6. Cultural and Historical Data.

Bassa elders were asked questions about culture, mainly Bassa religion, concepts of life, the after-life, and socialization. Details were also sought on the cultural definitions of the role of children, especially their obligations and duties to parents and other members of the household. Information on the ways children are prepared for spiritual roles within Bassa religion was also sought. The aim here was to find out how the requirements of Bassa organization of work and labour could have affected their reaction to schools and how parental aspirations in these areas, could be affecting the Bassa definition of the situation today.

Documentary evidence was also sought on Bassa history and Bassa versions of their own history. This entailed discussions with elders and authorities on the history of the Bassa people. These elders were consulted because of their vast knowledge on the history of their people. The information they gave was used to verify, corroborate or question the written documents on Bassa history.

Endnotes.

1. Toto District Tax Assessment 1972-1973. Householder and Tax Payer.

2. Ibid.

Chapter Three

Historical Background.

3.1. Preamble.

An assumption made at the beginning of this work was, that the Bassa redefinition of the role of schools may be an expression of cultural consciousness in response to politically "dis-empowering circumstances" in their recent history. From about 1979[1], members of the community appear to have decided their dis-empowered state must end. An argument which flows from this first thesis is, that schools are possibly being presently defined by Bassa parents as instruments for the enhancement of the power chances of Bassa individuals. These assumptions are about a community's loss of power over their own affairs within a certain period of in time, and their aspiration to regain power within another period in time. To proceed with a "sociological analysis" of Bassa social life, without reviewing their history, with the objective of locating in time those events and processes they consider to be "dis-empowering", would be to proceed in an analytical vacuum. This study is about real people and it may be useful to consider that the present situation of the Bassa, may indeed be a coagulation of the experiences of the past. What makes the Bassa situation today of sociological interest, may actually lie in the historical issues which feature so prominently in their petitions, issues which if ignored, may jeopardize the sociological quality of the study.

This chapter will therefore be a review of the evolution of power relationships between the Bassa, the Fulani, the Egbirra and the nature of Anglo-Bassa relations before colonial rule began effectively in 1900. The way these relationships affected the evolution

of power between the Bassa, Egbirra and Fulani under the Native Authority system will also be examined. This effort may not be fruitless, since the Bassa appear to be re-defining the role of schools within the context of the power in-balances between their community and their immediate neighbours, especially the Egbirra.

The second task of this chapter would be to examine the reaction of the Bassa and their neighbours to the immediate question of Western education.

Thirdly, a brief survey of Bassa efforts to question and change their status in the structure of local administration will be done. This may be important because it may be in this regard that the Bassa redefinition of the role of schools is taking place. What may be happening is, that the Bassa are redefining schools, as they search among alternatives, as "instruments" for the acquisition of political power by members of the Bassa community.

3.2 Problems of Historical Setting.

Defining hard and fast boundaries for a study of communities in Nigeria can be quite problematic. The proposal for this study was hardly finished when Nasarawa Local Government was divided into two new parts, mainly Nasarawa and Toto Local Governments. The Bassa of the former Benue and Kwara states also found themselves in a new state, Kogi State. While the problems of this study are defined within the context of the administrative boundaries of what is today called Umaisha and Toto Districts (in Plateau State), it must be noted that these boundaries are artificial, since many of the historical events which are relevant for an understanding of the issues of the study occurred outside these boundaries. In this historical chapter therefore, some references

will be made to events and places referring to Bassas and Egbirras who are today situated in the Koton Karfi area of the present day Kogi State. When these events occurred, the actors did not regard themselves as "Plateau" or "Kogi" Bassas and Egbirras, but as simply Bassa or Egbirra.

3.2 Bassa Genesis and Expansion.

Roger Blench has noted that, "Apart from the Hausa and Fulbe (Fulani), the Bassa people are probably the most widespread people in the whole of Nigeria."(1988: 1). The Bassa langauge has been classified under a group known as the **Bassa-Kamuku Group** of languages, a subset of the Kainji Group of Benue-Congo languages (Blench, ibid:1). This makes the Bassa relatives of the Ngoi, Kamuku, Gurmana, Baushi, Ura and Pongu. Linguistic and oral evidence indicates the Bassa derive their origin from two sources, mainly the Kamuku and Hausa. The Kamuku ancestors of the Bassa, nicknamed by the Hausa as "Makangara" or "undefeated" or "rebels" are described as "fiercely independent" and in "appearance have long narrow eyes and high cheekbones" (Gunn and Conant, 1960:64-65). The Kamuku-Hausa union that produced the Bassa is said to have taken place when Habe (pre-Islamic) Hausa military adventurers fused with the Kamuku populace around the ancient settlement of Gumna in the Upper Niger region. The military roots of the Bassa nation is said to be responsible for their rapid expansion eastward into the Benue valley. A historian has noted that:

> "a party of Habe Hausa led by a son of the ruling house of Zaria established itself among the Kamuku speaking people of the lower Gumna valley some fifteen miles north of Zungeru, and began to form a military power. The result of this association was the rise of Bassa, Kamuku in

> language but Habe Hausa in culture. Within a few decades, its conquests extended into what is now Kontangora, and the Bassa pioneers spread eastward into the Gurara basin..." (Husaini, 1986: 31).

Bassa expansion eastward reached a crescendo with the creation of the kingdom of Kerekwu[2], on the banks of the Benue River. This eastward expansion, according to Temple, took place in "the old Habe days" (Temple, 1965; 41). Bassa presence in the Nasarawa area may therefore date back as early as circa 16th century AD. The height of this presence was the control of access to the river port at Orokwo on the banks of the Benue River as late as 1850. The kingdom of Kerekwu appears to have maintained contacts with Zaria, which the Bassa regard as their ancestral home and whose memory they immortalized in folklore and in the titles of their chiefs and rulers.

Like in the histories of other African societies, the boundaries of the pre-British era Bassa domain are not easy to define today. There is however no doubt that the power of the Bassa confederacy of which Kerekwu was paramount, was felt from the Bassa boundary with the Agatus in the east, to the fringes of Koton Karfi in the west.

3.4

Muslims and "Pagans": The Bassa and Fulani: 1830-1900.

The purpose of looking at the Bassa- Fulani relationship is to enable us grasp the nature of the wider relationship between "Muslims" and "Pagans" in the Nasarawa area. The terms "Muslim" and "Pagan" (pejorative as this term is), are significant not only because they are terms frequently encountered in the colonial literature with reference to types of communities in northern Nigeria, but their importance also lies in the way this classification affected the colonial administration's policy in the distribution of power

between Northern Nigerian communities. The "Muslim", typified by the Fulani, was considered "civilized" and thus possessed the political organizations needed for British "Indirect Rule", while "Pagan" societies were considered "savage" and "barbaric" and thus less amenable to Indirect Rule (Lugard, 1919)[3]. How this applied in the case of Nasarawa Local Government, and the way it affected power differentials between the Bassa, Fulani and Egbirra communities will be examined below.

The Fulani were originally migrants from the area of Futa Jallon and Futu Toro in the Senegal and Gambia regions. They migrated into the Hausa city states of Gobir, Kano and Zaria as scholars (city-Fulani) and cattle herders (nomadic Fulani), some time around the 16th century. It was in the region of Gobir in 1804 that a Fulani Islamic scholar and cleric, Uthman Dan Fodio began a religious revolution aimed at purifying the Islam practised by the Hausa city-states. Within a decade, the Hausa states of Gobir, Kano, Zaria, Rano, Katsina, etc, fell under the sway of the Fulani. From Hausa land, the jihadists, with the support of a Hausa peasantry which had turned against their rulers, spread their Islamic revolution to the rest of Hausaland. Fulani expansion went as far as the Benue valley, Nupe and Ilorin. Their spread into southern Nigeria was stopped by the Yoruba war-chiefs (**baloguns**) of Ibadan whose fighting men were armed with European rifles.

In northern Nigeria, the Fulani encountered the stiffest resistance to their expansion among the smaller less centralized ethnic groups of the Middle Belt. They maintained only pockets of control in the Upper and Lower Benue. The Fulani inherited the feudal political organization which the Habe Hausa **Sarkis** (kings) had developed.

They also inherited Hausa military organization, mainly the use of a cavalry based army and a quasi-professional military class. From the Hausa, the Fulani also inherited an elaborate machinery for the extraction of taxes. Everything from hoes, to cattle, dyes to farms were taxed. There were taxes on the merchant classes and tolls were taken on the major trade routes. It was such excessive taxation that stirred the Hausa peasantry (**talakawa**) against the Habe **Sarkis**, thus providing popular support for rebellious Fulani Islamic clerics. Fulani society had a professional judiciary called **alkalis** under a chief judge called a **Qadi**. There was also a **literati** made up of Islamic scholars who had mastered the Arabic script, the Koran and other Arabic literature. These scholars served the Fulani emirs as secretaries and advisers on matters of state. It was for these reasons that the British found Fulani social and political organization a useful and effective means for the policy of Indirect Rule.

The Fulani consolidated themselves in Keffi early in the 19th century, possibly around 1815. Due to the internal politics of Keffi, Umoru Makama Dogo, a slave who had risen through the ranks to become a distinguished general was expelled from Keffi on the grounds that he was becoming too ambitious. He sought and was given refuge by the Bassa of Tamma. Tamma is about three kilometres from Nasarawa (which became the Fulani capital). The Bassa king of Kerekwu, Aguma Adama, permitted the fugitive Fulani general and his followers to raid territories to the east, which the Bassa had used as their reserve of slave labour. In return the Fulani paid a toll for every slave captured. Seeking to have direct access to this reserve of labour and in their desire to stop paying tolls to the Bassa, the Fulani attacked Kerekwu two times. The attacks were successfully repulsed

(McGregor, 1854: 152).

The Fulani appear to have adopted diplomacy when the military approach failed and resumed friendly relations with the Bassa. This may explain the confidence the Bassa king of Kerekwu had in using Fulani mercenaries to crush rebellious subjects (Hutchinson, 1855: 72). This proved to be a tactical error on the part of the Bassa. Having entered a defence perimeter usually protected by Bassa ambushes, the Fulani turned their diplomatic advantage into a military one by attacking the Bassa capital of Orokwo and other major towns, taking advantage of the ongoing Bassa-Fulani alliance (Hutchinson, op. cit: 72-73). This triggered a state of bitter warfare between the Bassa and Fulani right up to the beginning of British rule in 1900 (Ohiare, 1988: 15; Kirk-Greene, 1971: 18; Crowther, 1968:68-69; Temple, 1968: 41). Despite the loss of Orokwo (which the Fulani renamed Loko), the Bassa remained independent of Fulani rule right up to 1900. The Bassa settlements of Zwere, Kongbo, Fofuru, Meteni, Gbaram, Gbemgbem (Sardauna) Tawari, became famous in Bassa oral tradition as places were the Fulani suffered defeat at the hands of the Bassa. Robert Armstrong alludes to this resistance when he noted that:

> "In 1889 the Emir of Nasarawa paid a midnight visit incognito to the Mockler-Ferryman Expedition at Loko to plead for arms, saying that pagan resistance had increased and that without arms he could hardly meet his annual requirement of 200 slaves as tribute to Sokoto." (Armstrong in Brown, 1955: 97)[4]

The first Fulani emir, Makama Dogo, made Nasarawa his capital and from that base, continued in his attempts to bring groups like the Agatu, Gade, Gbagyi, and Afor within the control of the Nasarawa emirate.

The significance of the rise of Nasarawa Emirate was that with Keffi, a society

run along feudal political structures was established in the Benue Valley, an area hitherto inhabited mainly by people with non-feudal social organizations.

In the area of the present Kogi State, Bassa resistance to Fulani expansion is also recorded. An account notes that Umaru Majigi, the Fulani ruler of the Nupe sent:

> "Shaba Maliki son of Usman Zaki...to Tawari country. Maliki was driven back across the Gurara by the Bassas and returned to Bida. (Kirk-Greene, op. cit, 1971: 18) Gunn and Conant also note that:
>
> "Koton-Karfi was pretty thoroughly devastated in the last half of the 19th century by the Nupe from the west: only Tawari, through the military and diplomatic genius of Aguma Tawari was left unscathed and unconquered." (op. cit: 79).

Revs. Crowther and Taylor, African missionaries and eye-witnesses to some of the events of the Niger-Benue Confluence in the 19th century noted that the Bassa stood in the way of the Fulani expansionist, Masaba. They note that:

> "The Bassas...have opposed Masaba's ambition, and with their poisoned arrows expelled his soldiers from their rocky defences. In consequence of this the Bassas, who appear to be irritable in their temperament and violent in their manners, are very suspicious of any stranger who attempts to enter their towns and villages, and look upon them as traitors who come to betray them into the hands of the Fulani. We have always heard of the rough conduct of the Bassas and have experienced something of it, but we could not previously arrive at the true cause, which is explained above." (Crowther and Taylor, op. cit: 68-69).

These details are being given to prepare a background for an understanding of Bassa-Fulani relations before the British introduced the Indirect Rule system of government. Under this system of government, the British ruled various ethnic groups through "local rulers". As we shall see, such "local rule" was affected by the conflicts and rivalries which existed before British rule and in the case of the Bassa, laid the foundations for the administrative legacies which are today the target of their demands for change.

3.5. The Bassa and Egbirra.

The Egbirra claim descent from the Igala who live to the south of the Bassa, on the banks of the Niger, below the Niger-Benue Confluence. The Egbirra claim that one Ohimi, the son of an Attah (king) of the Igala crossed the Benue in 1750. The grandson of Ohimi, Ohimnegedu is said to have set up the chiefdom of Panda, 20 miles north-east of the present day Umaisha (in Plateau State), while Ohaiten, a son of Ohimi, set up the chiefdom of Igu also called Koton Karfi (in Kogi State) (Brown in Forde, 1955:57). Egbirra society is centred around a king called the Ohimege. The Egbirra, like the Igala and Jukun, are unique in the sense that unlike most groups of the Middle Belt, political power is centred around a king, whose power is not merely symbolic, but real in terms of the possession of near absolute power over the affairs of his community. Egbirra political structure could therefore be described as semi-feudal.

The Egbirra language is a dialect cluster of the Nupe language (ibid:58). The Egbirra had a traditional religion based on the worship of ancestors, but after Ohimege Oyigu was slain by the Fulani in 1850, many Egbirras converted to Islam.

Evidence suggests that Egbirra pioneers encountered Bassa residents right from the onset of their entry into the Benue-Niger area. This may be the background to the state of warfare which existed between the Bassa and Egbirra. Probably regarding the Egbirra as trespassers, the Bassa raided Igu-Ugbaka, one of the original Egbirra settlements. Due to incessant Bassa raids, Ohetenye, the Ohemege of Igu-Ugbaka moved to another settlement called Gerinya (Greene-Kirk, 1972:46; Husaini, op. cit:15-16). Relations between the Bassa and Egbirra were not always violent. Before the conversion

of the Egbirra to Islam and when the Fulani was still a common enemy to both the Bassa and Egbirra, the Bassa did give protection services to the Egbirra. Temples notes that:

> "The Bassa of Tawari...repelled the attacks of the Fulani and gave shelter to the people of Koton Karfi[5], who were less fortunate." (Temple, op. cit: 41).

What appears to have been a commercial rivalry may be responsible for Bassa attacks on Egbirra settlements. We read that the, "...Egbirra were defeated by the Bassa in a battle..." (Husaini, op. cit: 49) and that Egbirra merchant canoes were subjected to Bassa attacks on the Benue River (Laird and Oldfield: 1832: 1-3). While describing relations between the Bassa and Egbirra in the mid-19th century, Laird writing about the Bassa noted that: "...this marauding tribe have destroyed towns and villages in Panda..."[6]. E.A.J. Thomas, a late 19th century missionary in the Benue area records in his dairies complaints by the Egbirra that, "...the Bassa troubled them greatly." (Ohiare: op. cit: 10-11). He also described the Bassa as "...these warlike inhabitants of the hinterland..." (Ibid). Joseph Ohiare argues these Bassa-Egbirra conflicts were over issues of trade (Ibid).

The Fulani became the rulers of the Egbirra of the present day Umaisha and Toto around 1850. Conversion to Islam followed on a large scale after conquest. Marriage linkages developed between the Egbirra and Fulani. In fact, the second emir of Nasarawa was born by an Egbirra mother. The Fulani ruling house of Nasarawa and some of the emirs's counsellors have strong maternal relations with the Egbirra.

3.6. The Bassa, the Royal Niger Company and British Administration.

The main European trading firm on the Benue River was Britain's Royal Niger Company (R.N.C.) especially from 1887 to 1899. Being located on the strategic river port towns of Umaisha and Ogba, and the trading town of Koton Karfi (Igu), the Egbirra soon became trading allies of the R.N.C. The relations between the R.N.C. and the Muslim Fulani could at best be described as one of "cold diplomacy", since the Fulani held the "Christian" British with suspicion, but needed the R.N.C. for the supply of firearms in their battles with "pagans". The Egbirra appear to have used their linkages with the R.N.C. to settle old disputes and grudges with the Bassa. This resulted in the R.N.C. sending punitive expeditions against the Bassa, on the grounds that they were:

> "blocking the trade routes and threatening the company's station....continually interfering with the company's patrols and several of the loyal towns... " (R.N.C. cited in Ohiare: Ibid: 10).

It was common practice for the Egbirra to give logistical support to the forces of the R.N.C. in these punitive expeditions against the Bassa (Ibid).

The royal charter of the R.N.C. which had given the company quasi-administrative mandate in the Benue-Niger confluence was revoked in 1900, since Britain wanted to begin implementing the policy of "effective administration" agreed upon by all the European powers in the Berlin Conference of 1884-5. The man with whom the Colonial Office entrusted the task of doing the groundwork of effective administration in northern Nigeria was Sir Frederick Lugard. His first headquarters was Lokoja on the Niger-Benue confluence. Lugard's contacts with the Bassa were not friendly. One of Lugard's officers,

the Hon. David Carnegie, son of Lord Southesk, died at the hands of the Bassa when he was sent to capture a fugitive who had sought refuge in the Bassa town of Tawari (Dusgate, 1985:130). Carnegie had fallen into an ambush as he returned to Koton Karfi. The consequences were both dramatic and tragic. Dusgate notes that:

> "Lugard's response was characteristically firm. As soon as news of Carnegie's death reached him, he immediately ordered punitive action against Tawari. The force under Lowry-Cole, who had returned from Ashanti soon after the relief of Kumasi in July consisted of three officers, one MO, seven BNCOs, and the 127 RFF Company 2WAFF Maxims[7] and a seven pounder....It left Lokoja on 6 December 1900 and arriving in Koton Karfi in the same evening...Lowry made a night march 22 miles over rough, overgrown tracks to Tawari, reaching it by 8 a.m. next morning...Tawari was a walled town surrounded by a deep ditch. It was well fortified and the approaches were 'difficult of access'. Initially it was stubbornly defended, and the WAFF were greeted with showers of poisoned arrows and a few musket shots. However the Tawari's martial ardour quickly dissolved when the Maxisms and artillery went into action. While the defenders were swept from the walls by Maxim fire from close range, the seven pounder blew in the main gate and the storming party went in with bayonets fixed led by Capt. Rose. A private was killed and another wounded, but the defenders fled under volley fire from the infantry, Maxim fire and shrapnel from the seven pounder. The leading citizens and ringleaders were killed and captured and the town set on fire, and razed to the ground. Lowry returned to Koton Karfi the same day " (Dusgate, ibid: 130-131).

The Bassa and the British had clashed in the days of the Royal Niger Company and the events at Tawari only worsened relations between the two. It earned the Bassa the label of being "hostile" to British interests in the region. This may account for British insensitivity to the question of Bassa autonomy vis- a- vis the Egbirra, who were considered "friendly". The fact that a British punitive force used an Egbirra town, Koton Karfi, as its base in its action against the Bassa was itself very symbolic of the understanding between the British and Egbirra.

Though the Fulani had contact with the British since the days of the R.N.C., the emir of Nasarawa did not formally submit to British rule until 1900. This submission to "Christians" was due to the superior fire power of the British as displayed in their many conquests, especially those of Ilorin, Bida and Kontangora. The model of administration the British adapted was built around the principle of Indirect Rule. Indirect Rule involved British administrators, called Residents, Divisional and Districts Officers giving orders to a local ruler, who then ordered his subjects to do what the "bature" (whiteman) wanted in matters of trade, tax collection, forced labour and the administration of justice. While this was quite feasible in areas where the Fulanis were undisputed overlords, like in the case of their rulership of the Egbirra, implementing Indirect Rule was not so simple among groups like the Bassa who had maintained their independence. While Fulani political structure was centred on the "emir" and a feudalistic circle of "natural rulers" and councillors who ruled on the basis of "command and control", groups like the Bassa had a loosely confederated system of government in which the **Aguma** (king-chief) was merely a symbolic leader of his equals. Such a system was not amenable to and lacked the dictatorial character of Indirect Rule. The British were clearly biased in favour of groups with centralized institutions like the Fulani. Groups who had non-centralized institutions and who happened in most cases to be non-Islamic were pejoratively referred to in colonial administrative parlance as "pagan" and as possessing "inferior" political institutions. The notes of the architect of colonial rule in Nigeria, Lord Lugard reflects this:

> "A great part of the North, on the other hand, had come under the influence of Islam, and the Hausa states and Bornu had an elaborate

> administrative machinery...The system of Native Administration in the separate Government of Northern Nigeria had been based on the recognition of the authority of Native Chiefs...there remained however in the north a vast population of pagans in a similar state of savagery to those in the South." (Lugard, op. cit: 12,14).

For a centralized and autocratic system like indirect rule, Northern Nigeria's "vast population of pagans" did not fit into the straight-jacket of Indirect Rule. As the history of what is now called the Middle Belt[8] indicates, the colonial government's solution to the "pagan problem" was a programme of mass subjection of "pagan" communities to Fulani rule. Many groups without centralized political systems became targets of "pacification" by the colonial armed forces, especially in the present day Plateau, Bauchi, Taraba, Gongola and Niger states and in the Federal Capital Territory.

Under the British policy of indirect rule, we find that from 1900 onwards, the Fulani found themselves overlords of communities which had resisted their influence and hegemony for nearly a century. Thus the lands of the Mada to the northeast, the Ggbayi to the northwest, the Bassa to the south and Afor to the east, all fell under a single administrative unit labelled Nasarawa Emirate within Nasarawa Province.

By choosing to rule other native groups through the Fulani, the British facilitated not only the creation of the Fulani as the ruling class, but also the consolidation of Islamic tenets and ethics in the system of local administration. One of the teaching of Islam which was to affect the distribution of power between communities is the teachings that power can only be given to or shared with fellow Muslims. Subsequently, in the Native Authority system, the "pagan" Bassa could have only one place in government: that of "subjects". This may explains why Egbirra Muslim **jekada/sagba** (political agents

and tax collectors) were set over Bassa villages and territories in Nasarawa Province.

The immediate reaction of the Bassa to the imposition of Egbirra rulers was to attack Egbirra towns. British archival records note that:

> "In September 1914, the Bassa rose against the Egbirra of Umaisha and Ogba-Pati and a party of 40 B&F visited the District and restored order."(Kirk-Greene, op. cit: 21).

The protestation of the Bassa was severely punished as the community was fined and asked to rebuild the town of Ogba-Pati which they had destroyed (National Archives Kaduna:File AR/ASS/INT/N/12/p.1).

In Koton Karfi area, Bassa resistance to the imposition of Egbirra rulers had more bloody consequences. Like their kinsmen in Umaisha and Ogba, the Bassa of Koton Karfi resolved to throw off the yoke of Egbirra rulership which was being imposed on them. British archival records note:

> "In the Koton-Karfi District alone was there any disaffection...and this only among a section of the community, against who it was necessary to have a recourse to force in order to restore order and check the disturbance and bring the offenders to proper account. Early in September that year, the Bassas rose up in arms against Koton Karfi, looting and burning en route all towns in which there were alien natives tribes as well as those towns who refused to join in their lawless acts. This rising which could hardly have occurred at a more unfortunate moment, is said to have originated at Umaisha and Ogba in Nasarawa Province and caused great anxiety among the inhabitants. The situation seems to have been saved by the presence of a small escort of seven Police Constables in Koton Karfi town as well as the District Officer Captain Dyer's timely arrival on the scene of the action. Twenty-three police under the command of Mr Chartes, Commissioner of Police, consequently hurried thither and were reinforced by 25 soldiers under Sergeant Smith...The operations were necessary to convince the Bassas, who were a constant source of unrest, that the government had the power to break down organized resistance and establish law and order. The Bassas suffered 13 casualties in number, eight villages were burnt. A fine of bows and arrows and $238 in cash was paid by those villages which had participated in the burning of Oporudu,

> Dinjere, and Gadege...These three villages were rebuilt by the Bassa.....One Gadaga a ring leader of the Koton Karfi Bassas was tried and given seven years imprisonment." (Kirk-Greene, op cit: 49).

The events at Koton-Karfi must have sent a clear signal to all Bassas that the "Whiteman" was on the side of the Egbirra and in the new order, the Egbirra were the "local rulers" recognized by the British.

The punitive conduct of British administrators toward the Bassa was a carry over of Anglo-Bassa hostilities during the days of the Royal Niger Company. This punitive conduct continued in almost every step in the creation of the new administrative order. Tawari's fate is a clear example of this. Tawari had defied conquest in pre-British times and had remained independent. But when another British District Officer was killed in the vicinity of Tawari some time around 1934, the Aguma of Tawari was punished by being made a mere village head under the Egbirra Ohimege of Koton Karfi. Gunn and Conant note that:

> "On the advent of the British it seems probable that an independent Bassa district, comprising at least Tawari and dependent villages might have been organized, but for the murder of a District Officer at Tawari...in the course of peace negotiations: this resulted ultimately in the administrative subordination of the Aguma Kubiri[9] to the Ohemegi, though as recently as 1935 no Aguma Kubiri submitted to investiture at the hands of the latter."(op. cit: 79).

It appears the desire to punish the Bassa for their hostility to British interests became the basis of administrative policy toward the Bassa in the new order.

Archival records reveal it was not the British alone who treated the Bassa in a punitive and vindictive manner. The Fulani and Egbirra ensured Bassa chiefs exercised little or no power even over their own villages. This was done to a point where effective

administration was being hindered. In 1915, A British Assistant District Officer in Umaisha noted that:

> "The result of the incapacity of the District Head has been that the District has been divided up among several emissaries, instructed to look after and collect taxes from a certain number of villages respectively. I consider this system bad in the extreme as I found that nearly all the Bassa Sarkis[1] of the groups were well able to manage their own affairs and should not have their authority undermined by sending emissaries from the District Head to them."(Morgan, Assessment Report, 1915: 3-4).

Egbirra emissaries were sent to the Bassa under the **Jekadu/Sagba** system. This was a feudal system of tributary relations practised by groups like the Fulani among "pagan" populations. Since the British had made them virtual overlords of the Bassa, the Fulani now sent their "emissaries" or "ambassadors" in this case their Egbirra in-laws/co-religionists, to collect "tribute" from the Bassa. Because of Fulani and Egbirra vested interests, the British did not implement their displeasure with the abuses of the **Jekadu/Sagba** system. Some British officers however did not stop criticizing a system which appeared to be a vindictive "over-kill" of the authority and morale of Bassa chiefs. Sixteen years after Morgan's report, a British officer of the Benue Province noted that:

> "In direct contravention to the written orders which are in possession of all District Heads this pernicious practice seems to be freely indulged in. Such "Jekadu" are of necessity dishonest and tend to break down the close liaison between the District Head and Village Area Head which is so essential for proper administration."(File AR/ASS/N/13).

The reason for the persistence of the **Jekadu/Sagba** system could be attributed to two factors. Firstly, it raised the prestige of one ethnic group over another, and confirmed the status of "overlord" and "subject" in the new administrative order, in this case, the

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[1] Chiefs.

Muslim Fulani and Egbirra as "overlords" of the "pagan" Bassa. Secondly, unlike other northern provinces, where cash crops like groundnuts and cotton where the basis of surplus accumulation, the major source of colonial surplus in Nasarawa Province was taxation. The more people a ruler had under his control, the more access he had to taxation surpluses. In the case of Umaisha and Toto districts where the Bassa are in the majority, control over the Bassa meant access to substantial surpluses. The termination of the **Jekadu/Sagba** system would have denied the Fulani and Egbirra access to these. While Fulani and Egbirra chiefs received statutory stipends, their access to "informal" surpluses through corrupt practices were significant. This is why the Resident noted that "...such 'Jekadu' are of necessity corrupt..."(ibid). Village administration in Umaisha and Toto districts were, until very recent times, characterized by a plethora of unofficial fines and taxes both in cash and in kind.

The British had arranged that Bassa chiefs would at least be symbolically present whenever their people were on trial. This was supposed to be a compromise between divesting Bassa chiefs of all their erstwhile judicial powers and maintaining some semblance of an authority structure in Bassa villages. Even in this area, the Fulani and Egbirra prevented the effectiveness of Bassa chiefs. A British official noted that:

> "The Native Court was constituted in April 1917. It is regrettable that the District Head had made little attempt to establish the Court along lines of the Warrant. The Bassa village heads are entitled to sit in this court in cases in which Bassas are concerned...It was found that the district head had deliberately ignored the Bassa members of whose assistance he had in no case availed himself. The Native Court had further been the instrument of various malpractices." (NAK: File/AR/ASS/N/18/4).

The conflict ridden relationship between the Bassa and Egbirra did not escape the

attention of another British officer, Cmdr. B.K.M. Waters, who described the administration of Toto district as difficult. He noted:

> "I say difficult because it is inhabited chiefly by Bassa and Igberas of whom the latter are full of **munafuci**[10]. In nine cases out of ten if trouble is caused amongst the Bassas in this Division it is caused by an Igbera."(Assessment Report, Toto District: 1916).

It is not surprising that the Bassa word for "government" "law" and "order" are synonymous with the words for "slavery" and "bondage" **tu jama**.

What has been done in the preceding pages is to situate historically the context within which the Bassa demand change. This was done with the conviction that we would be discussing change in a vacuum if the historical roots of the political structures in Umaisha and Toto districts are not examined. The review of the evolution of the power relationships which emerged between the Fulani, Egbirra and Bassa may help in highlighting the context within which the Bassa think schools would be useful instruments for enhancing the community's quest for changing the balance of power in Umaisha and Toto districts.

3.7. Bassa Struggles to Change the Balance of Power in Umaisha and Toto Districts.

Writing about Bassa attempts to change their position in the structure of local administration in Umaisha and Toto districts, amounts to writing a history of their struggles with the Egbirra community in recent times, especially from 1979 to the present. In their petitions, the main thrust of Bassa arguments is that the structure of power is distributed in favour of the Egbirra. This they argue, allows the Egbirra to use the local

government system to lord it over the Bassa.

The first object of Bassa complaints was the structure of village administration. Within the local government structure, villages are clustered into what is called village areas, the equivalent of Canadian electoral ward. A village area may be composed of villages numbering from say five to ten villages. Out of this cluster, the head of one village would be designated as the village area head. This village area head is responsible for the collection of taxes and approves the appointment of village heads for each village under his jurisdiction. The arrangement the British made was such that the Bassa chiefs of Kayefu, Meteni, Rakpam, Shege. Rudu, Zono, Ugya, Dausu, Utu, Kongbo, Fofuru and others were village area heads or village heads whose authority was recognized through the payment of an honourary monthly salary. Before the British left in 1960, part of the preparations for self-government was a local government review carried out in 1956. At the end of the review in Nasarawa Division, all Bassa village area heads, except those of Shege and Meteni ceased to receive recognition as village area heads and subsequently lost their honourary monthly stipends. These Bassa chiefs now functioned as mere village heads without salaries, under salaried Egbirra village area heads. This implied that the investiture of a Bassa village head was not "legal" without the approval of an Egbirra village area head. This indeed allowed Egbirra village area heads to interfere in the internal politics of Bassa villages, as they gave approval only for the selection of Bassa candidates they thought they could "work with". That was the situation until 1984. This situation is confirmed by an October 15th 1984, report made by the Nasarawa Local Government. In that report, it was mentioned that all the 13 village areas in Toto district,

mainly, Toto, Adadu, Gate, Shafan Kwoto, Shafan Abakwa, Kuru, Zono, Ukya, Kuwa, Kolo, Toto Gabiya, Ugya and Meteni, were headed by Egbirra village area heads, except Meteni. In Umaisha district, the 13 village areas of Umaisha, Zenaiku, Igwa, Dausu, Utu, Shege, Angura, Katapka, Fofuru, Iggi, Kayefu, Kongbo and Zwere were all headed by Egbirras, except Shege (NLG: 1984: 2-7). The Bassa resented this arrangement for the following reasons. The practice of having the investiture of their chiefs done by Egbirra village area heads only consolidated a subject-status they resented. Secondly, the non-recognition of their chiefs, by their not being given administrative responsibilities in a function as basic as tax collection, institutionalized their portrayal as a people "subject" to the Egbirra in the ladder of local power. The Bassa felt this portrayal was illegitimate and had no historical basis since their forebears were conquered only by the British and not the Egbirra or Fulani. In a petition on this matter, the Bassa community wrote to the Governor of Plateau State:

> "Bassa villages belong to the Bassa and must be administered by Bassa traditional chiefs...These are the natural or traditional rulers that the Bassa know and pay allegiance to. The practice whereby Bassa villages are allotted to the imposed Egburra salaried village area heads on the baseless assumption that the Egburra are the 'traditional' rulers is intolerable. Whose tradition?" (Petition to Governor, 1984: 2).

The other aspect of local government the Bassa found unacceptable was the mode for the selection of district heads. A district is the equivalent of a county. In some parts of Nigeria, district headship is an office tied to the functions of a hereditary ruler. Since there was no local ruler in Umaisha and Toto districts who could claim traditional headship of both the Bassa and Egbrira, district heads were selected by an electoral college of village area heads. In the formula for the selection of district head of Toto for

instance, the Egbirra had six (6) members in the electoral college, while the Bassa had two (2). In any situation, the arrangement permanently conferred the position of district head on an Egbirra. In their protest against this, the Bassa in a petition to the Sole Administrator of Nasarawa Local Government wrote:

> "We the chiefs and elders of the Bassa...reject totally the unjust and offensive distribution of villages eligible to vote in the process of selection of a district head. We consider it unacceptable in the arrangement in which the Egburra being the smallest ethnic group in our district has six villages..." (Petition to Sole Administrator, 1985: 1).

The other aspect of local administration which the Bassa sought to change was the question of paramount rulership. A legacy of the Native Authority system was the office of Paramount ruler. A paramount ruler is the equivalent of a "king" or "duke" of an ethnic area. In places where the population was homogeneous, there was little difficulty in choosing a paramount ruler. But in multi-ethnic districts like Umaisha and Toto, the matter is quite complex. A paramount ruler has the symbolic function of being the statutory "traditional/tribal" ruler in any domain designated as his "chiefdom". By the way the Bassa and Egbirra communities are distributed and interspersed, there was no way a Bassa or Egbirra could be declared a paramount ruler without also being a "ruler" of non-Bassa or non-Egbirra persons. Until 1979, the government had avoided conferring the title of paramount ruler on either a Bassa or Egbirra. Only the Fulani Emir of Nasarawa had the title of paramount ruler. When the civilian government of Solomon Lar took over the administration of Plateau State in 1979, he created many chiefdoms supposedly to spite the Fulani who had almost exclusively enjoyed paramountcy in many parts of northern Nigeria. The creation of chiefdoms among non-Fulani communities was viewed by the

Lar administration as a form of "emancipation" and "freeing" of non-Fulani communities from "Hausa-Fulani feudalism". Chiefdoms and paramount rulers emerged in almost every nook and corner of Plateau State. In Nasarawa Local Government, four new chiefdoms were created and of these, the Egbirra had two. This was Solomon Lar's reward to the Egbirra community for the support they gave him in his quest for the office of governor. The complaint of the Bassa community, which had supported Solomon Lar's opponent, was that the domains designated as Umaisha and Toto chiefdoms were Bassa territory (Petition to Governor Lar, ibid: 2). The creation of the chiefdoms was so hurriedly done, that even some Egbirra chiefs opposed it (Petition to Governor Atukum, 1984:1-3). Protesting the creation of the chiefdoms, the Bassa noted:

> "Has the Egbirra been freed from Hausa-Fulani domination in order to be given unrestricted freedom to lord it over and torment the Bassa tribe? For the elevation and staffing of the Ohimege Panda to 3rd Class chief had been interpreted even in high quarters to mean the Government's confirmation of the rule of the 'superior' Egbirra minority over the 'inferior' Bassa majority. Yes, there is now an 'Ohimege Panda.'
> But neither the title or incumbent is Bassa." (Petition to Governor Lar, 1980: 4).

Without a chiefdom, Bassa chiefs were excluded from membership of the Nasarawa Local Government Traditional Council. Of the nine members of the council, the Egbirra had two members and the Bassa majority had none.

A coup took place in late 1983 under General Buhari. In 1984 therefore, a military administration was in charge of the affairs of Plateau State. The Bassa continued protesting the creation of two chiefdoms for the Egbirra over territories they argued were theirs. In a petition addressed to Navy Capt. S.B. Atukum, Governor of Plateau State and dated August 27th 1984, the Bassa wrote:

> "A government would not create chiefdoms to rule over inanimate objects but human beings. Some pertinent questions need be asked:
> (i) Where is the Egburra population that qualifies the tribe for even one chiefdom?
> (ii) Who are the human subjects that these chiefs expect to rule?
> (iii) Are the Bassa people who owe no natural/and traditional allegiance to these superimposed rulers expected to be amenable to such obvious injustice?" (Petition to Governor Atukum, 1984: 1).

In a petition to the Commissioner for Local Government,

the Bassa wrote:

> "We believe everything that has a beginning (and this includes the apartheid system) must also have an end. The end to the apartheid system in Nasarawa must also have an end...Mr Commissioner, please permit us to ask the following questions:
> 1.
> If a people are aggrieved, it is not correct for them to present their case before the authorities?
> 2.
> Would not the authorities in return look into their grievances and redress them accordingly?
> 3.
> Why is the case of the Bassa the exception to the rule?
> 4.
> Does it mean that all our PETITIONS to the Government lack merit and have been dismissed with a wave of the hand?
> 5.
> How did the authorities arrive at that conclusion?
> 6.
> Must an evil system be perpetuated forever and the innocent suffer for ever?...What is happening is that a just and honest people are being given bad names in order that they be hanged. **For we are painfully aware of our disadvantaged position vis a vis the Egburra Koto:(a) We have no soul in government service and/or corridors of power. (b) We are completely rural paupers and educationally very deprived.** (Emphasis are mine). But despite the popular epithet in describing us as (ignorant' 'backward' 'poor' etc) we are still human beings all the same." (26th September 1984).

In this petition, the Bassa link their problem of administrative marginalization to their not having a "soul in government service/corridors of power" and their being "very

educationally deprived".

The Bassa practically demonstrated their refusal to accept the status quo by organizing a tax revolt. In September 1984, the Sole Administrator noted in his situation report, the refusal of the Bassa community to pay their taxes:

> "In another development, the Bassa Community in Umaisha and Toto Districts are bitterly protesting against their being oppressed by the Kwatos or Egbirras. Having had several meetings with the Bassa community, I was made to understand that the Bassa Community, though in the majority have been relegated to the background in that they have no equal representation in both the State and Local Government Affairs...The disagreement between Kwatos and Bassas is constituting a lot of problems in Poll Tax and other collections in the area as the Bassa Community would not agree to pass their collection through to either the Ohimege or Ohinoyi Ogye. Meanwhile efforts are being made to collect such money without threat to peace." (NLG, Situation Report: 1984).

In October of the same month the situation became grave enough for the Sole Administrator to call the attention of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Local Government:

> "I wish to bring to your notice the blatant refusal by the Bassa Community to pay their 1984 Community Tax through the appropriate channels, i.e, Hamlet Head-Village Head- Maigunduma-District Head and finally the Local Government Treasury. The refusal is due to tribal conflicts that have long been existing between the Bassa and Kwato both in Umaisha and Toto Chiefdoms...I have had several meetings with some Bassa elders from both Umaisha and Toto in the presence of the Divisional Officer...Their present stand is that they are prepared to pay their taxes anytime but directly to the Sole Administrator while on the other hand the Kwato Village Heads and Maigundumas would not accept such a move as it would render their position void." (NLG, 1984: 1).

The significance of the Bassa Tax Revolt of 1984 seems to have been its practical demonstration of the numerical superiority of the Bassa. Nasarawa Local Government was financially crippled during the tax revolt.

The government of Navy Capt. S.B. Atukum took note of the complaints of the Bassa. The Commissioner for Local Government, Mr. S.N. Gyang visited Nasarawa Local Government and had a meeting with the elders and chiefs of the Bassa community. This was a major achievement for the Bassa, since they had succeeded in bringing their grievances to the attention of the state government. The outcome of the meeting with Mr. Gyang was the creation of the Dr. Abdullahi Panel. The panel was given the responsibility to look into the history of local administration in Umaisha and Toto districts and to determine the population and economic role of the Bassa vis a vis other ethnic groups in Nasarawa Local government area.

The Abdullahi Panel invited memoranda from the public on the 12th of July 1985 (**The Nigeria Standard**: 2). The panel also sat in Nasarawa and received oral statements from the public. The panel afforded the Bassa the opportunity to tell their own version of the events which had shaped the history and politics of Nasarawa Local Government in the past one hundred and fifty years. The refusal by the Egbirra community to participate in the last 2 days of the panel's 5 day sittings suggests they thought the panel believed the Bassa's version of history. The willingness of the Bassa to pay their taxes to the Local Government at the urging of the panel also showed Bassa confidence in it.

The Abdullahi Panel finished its work and returned to Jos. The public, especially the Bassa, waited eagerly for the publication of the findings of the panel. While this was being awaited, a coup took place, bringing General Babangida into power. Navy Captain Atukum lost his job as governor of Plateau State. The new governor appointed to Plateau State was Colonel Chris Mohammed Alli. He was an Egbirra from Koton-Karfi. For the

Bassa community, it appeared fate was playing a cruel game on them. For the Egbirra, Governor Alli's intervention was like a favourable sign from the heavens. The report of the Abdullahi Panel was never published. Governor Alli's policies only aggravated a situation which was already worsening. The interest of Governor Atukum's government in reviewing local administration in Nasarawa was not pursued; instead Alli heaped more powers on his kinsmen. Egbirras received appointments to the boards of government companies, and arrangements were made to promote the Egbirra chiefs of Umaisha and Toto to a higher status.

The Bassa decided to take their case to the highest body in the land, the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC). In a letter dated 20th February 1986 and addressed to President Babangida, the Bassa wrote:

> "We are thoroughly alarmed. Who will save us? It is now conclusive that for Lt. Col. Mohammed Alli the die is cast and he is with his Egburra kinsmen of Plateau State. And who is that serving member of an executive council who will stake his job by disagreeing with a visibly decided chief executive in an issue in which the object sacrifice is not of direct personal interest?...In the context of today's reality in Plateau State it is impossible that we would ever free ourselves from oppression and injustice by relying on the normal state machinery of seeking redress and justice as this has proved to be an exercise in futility and self-deception. **And this is because the Bassa do not have any soul anywhere in any position to champion our cause and speak on our behalf in the decision making councils of Plateau State and indeed the entire Federation of Nigeria...Must we perish because we are the peasant poor with nobody in the corridors of power?**" (Emphasis are mine) ("Save our Souls" Letter to Chairman AFRC: 4).

Again we find the Bassa community linking their situation to the lack of people in corridors of power.

The Bassa also decided to appeal the "collective conscience" of all Nigerians by

publishing their case in northern Nigeria's premier newspaper, **The New Nigerian**. In an advertiser's announcement, the Bassa protested plans by Governor Alli to upgrade the Egbirra chiefs and his suppression of the Abdullahi Panel report (**New Nigerian**, February 22 1986). The Egbirra responded with a statement in the same paper in which they declared their good fortune in having a governor from their ethnic group and expressed their wish that Governor Alli would have a happy tenure of office. (**New Nigerian**, March 5 1986).

The Bassa communicated their displeasure over Alli's plans to upgrade the Egbirra chiefs in a letter addressed directly to him:

> "The thinking of the Government seems to be that the situation in Toto and Umaisha is normal and that there is therefore nothing to bother about the administrative structure of the two Districts: the time is therefore opportune for festivities! If this is the posture, then it is clear that the path to redress had eluded this administration in respect to the Bassa/Egburra situation...On our part, we have nothing to celebrate in as much as we have nothing to do with extraneous chieftaincies like the 'Ohimege' and 'Ohinoyi' and disassociate ourselves from an inauspicious mirth...Although the installations are meant to dramatise our helplessness yet the Almighty God cares even for the sparrows. For while it is within the purview of a temporal power to deny justice, GOD, Who is no respecter of persons WILL NOT" (Letter to the Military Governor of Plateau State, 2nd May 1986).

Governor Alli was determined to go on with the upgrading the Egbirra chiefs. On the eve of the installations, violence broke out between the Bassa and Egbirra communities. The **Nigeria Standard** reported that:

> "Five persons were said to have been murdered in a chieftaincy dispute in Umaisha in Nasarawa Local Government Area of Plateau State on Wednesday. Police sources disclosed that during the clash, a petrol station, several houses and motor cycles as well as foodstuff were burnt. The source disclosed that the killings and wanton destruction of property were sequel to a clash between the Egbirra and Bassa tribes over the chieftaincy

> of Umaisha. A unit of mobile policemen were despatched to Umaisha from Jos, while other mobile police formations were detailed to despatch their anti-riot squad to join in restoring law and order in the area...The Plateau State Governor, Colonel Chris Alli, was expected to arrive Umaisha yesterday and present a second class staff of office to the Ohimege Panda today... The security forces say that the clashing parties have threatened to disrupt the installation ceremony if the governor insisted in going on with the ceremony...the number of people killed so far is unknown and police are already investigating the clash." (**The Nigeria Standard**, May 9 1986).

Apart from Umaisha, clashes were reported in Kayefu, Utu, Katakpa and other places. Police and security forces reported sighting about five hundred armed Bassas in Kayefu (PLSG, 1986:14). Some eye witnesses also claimed that armed Bassa parties were sighted from the direction from Aganje on their way to Umaisha. Unofficial sources said possibly fifty persons may have died in the conflict, though the official figure of dead is ten (**The Nigeria Standard**, December 4 1986). Umaisha and Toto districts were occupied by about three formations of the Mobile Police Unit for about three months to prevent an escalation of the conflict.

On May 15th 1986, the government established the Lt. Col. Ugomudia Panel to investigate the causes of the clash. The panel reported it was their view that, "... it was the Bassas who destroyed both lives and property...(PLSG, op. cit: 14). Many Bassa chiefs and elders were detained and tried for murder, arson, conspiracy, riotous assembly, mischief making etc. Some of those charged with murder narrowly escaped the hangman's noose as there was no conclusive evidence to link them with the deaths which occurred during the clash.

The Ogomudia Panel concluded its report by highlighting the need to over-haul the administrative machinery of Nasarawa Local Government. It noted that:

> "It is recommended that Government should carefully look into the present structure of village areas in the two Districts with a view to giving fair and equitable opportunity to all ethnic groups to have villages under their control, particularly the Bassa..." (ibid: 8).

The panel also criticized the plans to upgrade the Egbirra chiefs. It noted:

> "Looking back in perspective one would be justified to reflect if upgrading the two chieftaincies (Ohimege and Ohinoyi) was not laying things a little bit too thick. Government may wish to examine the desirability of retaining both chieftaincies or merging them into one, i.e. Panda chiefdom. It should be borne in mind that the Bassas are demanding a similar favour of having a paramount ruler in each of the two districts..."(Ibid: 8-9).

The panel recommended that Bassa chiefs be granted stipends and salaries from government and that Bassas and Egbirras rotate the post of district head. It further noted, that:

> "Considering the numerical strength of the ...Bassa...it is would be a pity that they have no representation in the Local Government Traditional Council. Government would need to look into this with a view to including suitable Bassa ...individuals in the Traditional Council..."(ibid: 10).

In the end, The Ogomudia Panel increased the credibility of demands which the Bassa had made in all their petitions to the governments of Plateau State. Governor Alli did not have time to accept or reject the panel's recommendation. He was removed as governor of Plateau State and replaced by Lt. Col. Lawrence Onoja. But before he left, he appointed a Bassa as chairman of the executive council of Nasarawa Local Government.

The person now at the helm of affairs in Plateau State was Colonel Lawrence Onoja. One of the first tasks the administration of Governor Onoja addressed was the Bassa-Egbirra question. On 27th October 1986, he appointed the John Samchi Panel and gave it the task of re-organizing the system of local administration in Toto and Umaisha

districts. Onoja also appointed a Bassa to the board of Plateau State Government's company that manages its interests in the private sector, the Plateau Investment Company (P.I.C).

These developments brought Governor Onoja and the Egbirra community at logger heads right from the start. Buying air time on Radio Kaduna, the Egbirra community through innuendos and insinuations criticized the Onoja administrations decisions on the Bassa-Egbirra conflict. The Bassa came in defence of the governor in an advertiser's announcement placed in **The New Nigerian** of March 20th 1987.

One of the conclusions of the Samchi Panel was that it found no legitimate grounds, historical or traditional, for the concentration of administrative powers in the hands of the Egbirra in Umaisha and Toto districts. The panel reported that:

> **"Having gone through the memoranda and appendixes hitherto, it is the considered opinion of this panel there is yet no evidence (oral or written) to support the claim by the Egburra that they were the first to settle in the area now covering the present Umaisha and Toto Districts...Historically the Bassas and Egburra were existing independently..."** (PLSG, 1987: 11).

This was a very significant conclusion because the argument of the Egbirra had always rotated around two poles, first that had always been the "traditional rulers" of Umaisha and Toto districts since time "immemorial" and that they were the "first residents" of Umaisha and Toto districts while the Bassa were "guests" from some foreign land. The legitimacy of the status of their chiefs as heads of the villages of Umaisha and Toto districts, according the Egbirra, was based on the strength and sanctity of "tradition" and "history". For the Bassa, the conclusions of the Samchi panel on the question of history and tradition were major historical landmarks in correcting what they considered was the

tangling and mangling of their history by British colonial officers. One such misrepresentation of their history, was that made by J.C. Sciortino, who in the bid to justify placing Egbirra rulers over the Bassa, described the Bassa as having been subjects of the Egbirra in Panda, despite abundant contrary evidence.[11]

The Samchi Panel also concluded:

> "That for peace to return to the disturbed districts of Toto and Umaisha in particular...there is the urgent need to review the structural composition of Village Administration through the re-alignment of wards and the adjustment of village headship." (ibid: 11).

They further recommended that village headship be invested in the ethnic group with the largest population, as reflected in the tax-payer population. By the panel's formula the headship of Adadu, Kuwa, Meteni, Ugya and Zuano in Toto districts went to the Bassa. The headship of Fofuru, Kongbo, Kayefu, Katakpa, Shege, Utu and Zwere in Umaisha district, also went to the Bassa. The Ohinoyi Ogye ceased to be the paramount ruler of Toto district and the title became "Chief of Toto" and was open to all "male adult indigenes of Toto" (ibid:26). The panel noted it would have recommended a chiefdom be created for the Bassa had the government not placed a ban on the creation of further chiefdoms (ibid: 26).

The Egbirra took the Plateau State Government to court on the grounds that the panel made its conclusions without consulting them, thus violating their right to a fair hearing (High Court of Justice: Suit No PLD/J/217/87). A Jos High Court granted the Egbirra a request for an injunction on the implementation of the Government's decision until their objections were heard in court. Today, the Umaisha and Toto districts are in a state of administrative flux. The Bassa, taking the Government White Paper as the legal

basis, manage their village affairs without recourse to Egbirra chiefs. A Bassa was once asked what his reaction would be if ever asked to pay his taxes through an Egbirra chief as it used to be. He replied: "Then this land will burn!"

3.8. Conclusion.

The foregoing has demonstrated that the Bassa are not demanding change in a vacuum. It is assumed that as products of and actors in history, Bassa redefinition of the place of schools in their community may be related to events and episodes in the Bassa remote and recent past. What has been done in this chapter is first, a brief description of the origins of the Bassa as a people, the relations which developed between them and neighbours who have featured prominently in their history, mainly the Fulani and Egbirra. The way these relationships affected the distribution of power between the Bassa, Fulani and Egbirra under the British system of Indirect Rule is also reviewed. Bassa demands for change and their struggle to re-order local administration in Umaisha and Toto districts is examined in order to provide a more recent picture of the context within which the Bassa have come to re-define the place and role of schools in their community.

Endnotes

1. The year 1979 is significant because that was when the elections into the Plateau House of assembly took place. In the preparations leading to that election, the Bassa community, under the auspices of the Bassa Cultural and Development Union, resolved to oppose the local power arrangements which excluded them.

2. The capital Orokwo, the present day Loko.

3. The question of "Muslim" and "Pagan" runs through Mahmmod Tukur's thesis on British violence against the "pagan" groups of the Middle Belt. The same subject also appears in Professor Justin Tseayo's book **Conflict and Incorporation in Northern Nigeria:The Incorporation of the Tiv** where he discussed the resistance of the Tiv to a "pagan" status.

4. The Fulani emirates regarded the Sultan of Sokoto (the seat of Uthman Dan Fodio's jihad) as head of all Muslims in northern Nigeria. To maintain their recognition by the Sultan, an annual tribute of slaves was required.

5. The Egbirra to the West.

6. Panda was the name of the Egbirra kingdom and port on the River Benue.

7. The Maxim gun is a type of machine gun.

8. The Middle Belt includes states like Plateau, Benue, the southern parts of Bauchi state, Kogi, Taraba and Gongola states and parts of the Federal Capital Territory, with non-Islamic peoples and who were subjected to the Native Authority system as "pagans".

9. That is, the ruling Bassa Kubiri Clan of Tawari.

10. "Munafuci" is the Hausa word for treacherous, conniving and dishonest person.

11. J.C. Sciortino had written that:
"From Nasarawa, Umoru Makama Dogo conquered the Egbirra, and their subject Bassas, and so broke up the Kingdom and destroyed the town of Panda."

See the Gazetteers of the Northern Provinces: The Central Kingdoms. London, Frank Cass, 1971, pp,17. J.C. Sciortino made this statement despite written evidence by Hutchinson, Oldfield and Lander on the existence of the Bassa kingdom of Kerekwu. This is an example of how the history of groups targeted by the British for subjection was deliberately ignored or distorted.

Chapter 4

Bassa Society, Culture and Schools.

4.1. The Cultural Interpretation of History.

This chapter is not an essentially "theoretical" one. Rather, in it we seek to answer a historical question through the means of a theory. The task in this chapter could be put in the form of a question: Why did the Bassa resist Western education for over forty years? The logical approach to this question would be to use "historical facts". Historical "facts" are however never used in a vacuum, especially if such "facts" are used to "explain" the motives of human action (Collingwood, 1948: 166; Dilthey, 1961: 25-30). All "explanations" are based on theoretical assumptions about how "facts" relate to a particular sequence of events. Thus, while most of this chapter will utilize historical documents and oral accounts of how Bassas reacted to schools, it is necessary to specify how Bassa activities in history will be interpreted. The assumption guiding this inquiry is that the reasons for Bassa resistance to Western education lie in their history and culture.

Answering a historical question through an analysis of culture is no simple task. If the Bassa had recorded their reasons for resisting Western education in diaries and other written form, all that would be required is for us to consult these sources as archival data. Since such evidence does not exist, the best we can do is consult the records of missionaries and teachers who tried to bring Christianity and Western education to the

Bassa.

The other course of action is to talk to Bassas themselves, especially the elders, in finding out what they thought about schools in the past. The interest of this study however lies beyond stringing oral and written references together. Our interest lies in seeking to understand Bassa actions, especially why they resisted schools, "sociologically" and within definite cultural contexts.

In seeking to understand the cultural contexts of Bassa reaction to formal education, it may be useful to make references to anthropological interpretations of culture. Anthropology, as we shall see has its conceptual problems, but it has the oldest tradition of the study of culture. The theoretical approach being adopted here is an interdisciplinary marriage of the symbolic interactionist view of human action and the anthropological description of the cultural context within which such actions take place.

Before proceeding any further to answer the question: "Why did the Bassa resist Western education?", it must be pointed out that western education is a historical and culturally specific form of the transmission of knowledge, characteristic of the Western European countries which colonized Africa. Formal schools were therefore bearers and reflectors of the social and economic environment in which they developed. Western education, as a form of education, expresses the social relations of western or European modes of production, in this case, capitalist modes. The study is therefore sensitive to how the interaction between Western education and Bassa society may reflect the broader conflicts between Bassa society and the mode of production represented by British imperial rule. Terms like "modes of production" will therefore be used whenever

necessary, with reference to forms of economic and social organization.

Culture is seen in this study as the historically specific conceptual and cognitive context within which human beings act, on the one hand under what may be called "cultural influence" and on the other hand, on the basis of their judgment of "what needs be done" to achieve an end. This, in the parlance of Symbolic Interactionism is called the "definition of the situation". In the evaluation of past events, what must be done is to examine actions which through habits became "culture", especially those perpetuated through the organizations and institutions of Bassa society. The way Bassas conducted their affairs through such institutions will be analyzed as the cultural context of those actions. Human beings are, however, more than creatures of structure. As learners and innovators, they seek to create new meanings. Culture is therefore a Janus-faced reality. On the one hand it is a context for action. On the other hand, it is a process for creating new experiences. It is this dialectical nature of culture which has posed conceptual and definitional problems for cultural anthropologists. Writing about the disagreement among anthropologists on the subject of culture, Leslie White noted that:

> "Virtually all cultural anthropologists take it for granted that, no doubt, culture is the basic and central concept of their science. There is, however, a disturbing lack of agreement as to what they mean by this term. To some, culture is learned behaviour. To others, it is not behaviour at all, but an abstraction from behaviour-whatever that is...Culture exists only in the mind, according to some; it consists of observable things and events in the external world to others. Some anthropologists think of culture as consisting of ideas, but they are divided upon the question of their locus: some say they are in the minds of the peoples studied, other hold they are in the mind of the ethnologists. We go on to 'culture as a psychic defence mechanism' 'culture consists of **n** different social signals and **m** different responses' 'culture is the Rohrschach of society', and so on, to confusion and bewilderment." (in Dillingham and Carniero: 1987: 173).

The only way to avoid being drawn into a full blown anthropological debate on what culture means, is to specify what makes the concept of culture interesting to us. This interest is very well expressed in the words of White and Dillingham:

> "Man is an animal. But he is not 'just another animal.' Man alone among all species, has the ability which, for want of a better term, we call the ability to symbol. The ability to symbol is the ability to freely and arbitrarily to originate, determine, and bestow meaning upon things and events in the external world and the ability to comprehend such meanings....Symbolling, therefore, involves the comprehension of meanings as well as originating and bestowing them." (White and Dillingham: 1973: 1).

Symbols and the process of symbolizing are key concepts in the study of culture. They are also important in any quest for the motives of human actions. Thus in seeking to find out why X did what he did, we must find out what X 's actions meant for him within the context of X's world of meaning (his culture). Symbols are socially created. They are defined in interaction and not established in nature (Charon, 1985: 40). People create symbols and agree on what they shall mean or represent. Symbols are therefore meaningful representations of collective consciousness. An object, an act or body of actions and practices could all have symbolic value. Symbols are significant and are intentionally and purposefully used as expressions of sentiments or as mediums for communicating the culturally significant (Ibid). For a Bassa for instance, sacrificing a goat at the feet of a dead relative is a symbolic act, the height of the expression of honour and reverence. Symbols are therefore useful contexts for the studying human action because their significance and "meaningfulness" do serve as motives and contexts for human action.

Thus, in the study of human action, we seek to translate the historically specific

meanings of behaviour within the context of cultural situations. Richard Barret notes that:

> "Whenever an anthropologist studies another culture, he attempts to 'make sense' out of the customs and practices observed; that is to say he tries to place the behaviour of the people in a frame of reference that renders the action intelligible or meaningful." (1984: 76).

The task of this chapter therefore consists of trying to make Bassa actions at a certain time in history "intelligible" to us by describing the context within which these actions were "rational" or "sensible".

The interpretation of culture is a subjective exercise. Not only is the choice of what "needs be studied" informed by subjective interests, but what is presented as anthropological or sociological "knowledge" are constructions of what we imagine our subjects to be (Geertz, 1973: 14-15). This is because scholars tend to subject their observations to idiosyncrasies of their discipline. Sociology is not the "social world" just as the physical world is not physics (Ibid : 15). Anthropological or sociological works are only "interpretations" (Ibid, :15). Thus Geertz notes that:

> "Cultural analysis [is] (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape."

The most a student of human culture can aspire to, is to seek to gain access to the conceptual world in which the subjects of study live and "in some extended sense of the term, converse with them." (Ibid: 24). Because of the nature of the sociological and anthropological enterprises, "Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete." (Ibid : 29) tentative and subject to improvements.

The symbolic interactionist notion of the "definition of the situation" requires

further elaboration since we intend using it as the theoretical basis for analyzing Bassa actions within a culture context. The way to do this may be to ask this question: "Where does individual action and culture intersect?" This question could be approached in two ways. The first is to assume that any time human beings act, they do so on the basis of a definition of the situation. Secondly, we could assume that human beings define a situation in two major ways. The first is the **cultural** definition of the situation, while the second is the **personal** (Thomas in Manis and Meltzer, 1972 :338-339). The cultural definition of the situation refers to the effects of collective representations and shared standard meanings on individual action. Such meanings are embedded in culture and are learnt thorough socialization (Ibid). Members of the community are aware that others recognize and utilize a particular definition the same way they do (Ibid). The cultural definition of the situation therefore, acts as reference point for the individual when action is directed toward other members of the community. For example, when a Bassa household head asks other members of the community for assistance in a labour exchange arrangement called **itime, enu**, it is understood by all involved that the household receiving assistance will the reciprocate the assistance in the future.

The personal definition of the situation refers to a person's interpretation of events rarely or never encountered in the community (Ibid). In such a situation, no cultural reference points exist. The individual "must improvise his own interpretation, usually basing his synthesis on the nearest personal or collective equivalent." (Ibid). Thus for a Bassa acting within a cultural definition of the situation, an immediate judgement about formal schools would be that schools hinder his children's availability for farm work. This

is what a Bassa is likely to think within the logic of his/her culture. How each Bassa would act in actual situations may, however, differ according to their personal definitions of the situation. The "definition of the situation" is therefore, something which has to be biographically and historically determined. The position taken in this chapter is to describe what a Bassa would do, based on a cultural definition of the situation. Supportive oral and documentary historical evidence and the statements of Bassas themselves are used in this effort.

In seeking to define the context within which the Bassa reacted to formal education, it also may be useful bearing in mind Berger and Luckmann's observation about the nature of the interaction between cultures. They note that:

> "The appearance of an alternative symbolic universe poses a threat because its very existence demonstrates empirically that one's own universe is less than inevitable...Two societies confronting each other with conflicting universes will both develop conceptual machineries designed to maintain their respective universes." (Berger and Luckmann: 1966: 126).

This understanding is preparatory to the position which would be taken throughout the rest of the thesis that Bassa resistance to Western education may have been attempts on their part to maintain their universe of meaning, especially at a moment in history characterized by uncertainties. These attempts at "universe maintenance" may be what we have observed throughout the work as Bassa "resistance" to the inroads of westernization.

Before proceeding to look at Bassa history and culture, it is necessary to describe even if briefly, the general features of the Bassa environment, economy and society.

4.2. The Bassa Environment, Economy and Society.

The Bassa have been described as a people of the Lower Benue (Udo, 1970: 142), though some live in the Middle and Lower Niger region. The Bassa terrain is mainly woodland savannah and the light forest vegetation of the Benue valley. The soils ranges from the sandy-loamy types in the Keffi and Nasarawa plains to the heavy black soils of the marshlands of the Benue River's tributaries. The area receives rainfall of between 40" and 60" (Udo, ibid: 2, 4-5). This allows the Bassa to plant a wide variety of crops. This includes over three varieties of yams, guinea-corn, rice, millet, four varieties of beans, maize, two varieties of okra, peppers, groundnuts (peanuts), millet, melon, potatoes, etc. The Bassa farming calendar begins about November and runs through to September. The farming techniques include those of shifting cultivation and multiple cropping. Multiple cropping is used as a defence against crop failure, pest invasions and drought. The main tools of production are the hoe and cutlass (machete).

Bassa society is organized around the household (**e'hue**), which is headed by the eldest male patriarch, called **aguma hue**). Members of a household work on a collection of farms which had been passed on to them by generations gone by. Each adult male is given a plot to work using the labour of his wives and children. Each male member of the household has a barn (**uruvu**) from which his wives and children are fed. The household may also have a collective barn which is used as a reserve against emergencies, funeral ceremonies and as a means for acquiring cash.

The household has at its disposal a communal labour arrangement called **itime'enu**, where the community work on the farm(s) of members of the household on

the expectation that the household receiving assistance would reciprocate the same when called upon by another household. Another labour resource is called **idinde,** and is a labour arrangement where friends work as a labour cooperative. The other, called **uyara**, is a farming festival where members of the community compete on a selected individual's farm. The contest is aimed at testing the endurance capacity of the young members of the community.

The household head is the immediate judge and priest of his household. He settles family disputes, sees to it that no member of the household neglects his wives or children and ensures that widows and orphans are taken care of. As the priest of the house, he is consulted on all spiritual matters. He officiates in the sacrifices and rituals in which the ancestors are honoured or called upon during emergencies.

The village (**ushipu**) is a collection of households and is headed by the **aguma**, who is selected by the village's council of kingmakers. The **aguma** is usually a descendant of the chieftain who founded the village or who organized its defence against invaders. The **aguma** deals with all political and administrative matters in the village and serves as the liaison with the government on matters affecting his village. He is assisted in his tasks by a council of ministers called **tuzhigba ta aguma**.

4.3. Historical Reasons for Bassa Resistance to Formal Schools.

One place to begin in seeking to answer the question, 'Why did the Bassa resist Western education?' is by asking another question. Could there be any reasons in Bassa history which predisposed parents to be against formal schools in the 1930s and 1940s? To gain some insight in answering this question, it may be helpful to remember our study of Bassa-Fulani relations in the 19th century, and Anglo-Fulani-Bassa relations in the early 20th century. In chapter three, we noted that Bassa -Fulani relations was characterized by a state of warfare, especially between 1830 and 1900. We also noted that the "local rulers" through whom the British implemented the policy of Indirect Rule were the Fulani. The colonial government sought to establish schools in order to train a local staff for the Native Authorities. The records indicate that in 1936, pupils from the Egbirra , Gade, Arago, Yeskwa and Gwandara groups were sent to the colonial school at Toro (Annual Report on Northern Provinces, 1936). There are no written records indicating the recruitment of any Bassa pupils. However, a Bassa did go to the colonial school in Abuja around 1940. The Native Authority had the practice of sending out "recruiters", usually the Fulani, to get children for schools. The experience of this Bassa who went to school in Abuja may help to paint a picture of the way the Bassa perceived the process of recruiting children for schools. This person will be called SHENENI (a common Bassa name) and this is his story:

> "The Fulani[1] arrested my grandfather. They pushed him to the ground and rolled him in the dust, and tied his hands, all because they wanted to take me to school. My father had hidden me in the bush and I had spent four days in the forest. My father refused to admit he had a son, but they did

not believe him. They kept my grandfather hostage to get my father to bring me out. They hit him hard and he fainted many times....When my father could no longer bear his fathers' agony, he came to me with tears in his eyes and asked me to return home with him. I had my bow and arrows and was ready to kill the Fulanis. When I got home, they released my grandfather...but I ran a way again and headed for the forest. My father, senior father and the Fulani began tracking me....I fell into the stream and hid myself in the mud. My senior father and an elder from the Akunyakunya clan followed my tracks to where I was hiding. They raised an alarm, 'Everybody this way! We have found him!'. I became angry. Danduru'uwa![2] I grabbed the Akunyakunya elder, punched him and pushed his head under the mud and began drowning him the way you drown a pig. My father called out to me, 'Leave the old man alone, He is not to blame! It is the fault of the Fulanis!' he cried. The Akunyakunya elder was taken out of the muddy water and water was pressed out of his belly. That day, I was taken away by the Fulanis. The women cried, 'Ada ngbo! Ada ngbo![3] There was crying everywhere. I cried as I said goodbye. I was taken to Dangara where I started school and was later taken to Abuja. There were no roads then. They said a road was going to be built and they took our fathers away to build the road. They flogged them with cowhide whips as they made the roads. Oh! our people suffered! When they returned, they looked thin from hunger and their skins were full of wounds made by the cowhide whips...Suleiman Barau was the emir of Abuja then. I did not finish school because my father was ill and I was his only son. That was why I stopped going to school. The emir took interest in me because I passed every examination, everyone of them, but my fathers's illness made me return home. I started liking school and the emir did not want me to leave. He said God had given me a good head, but my father was ill and I had to return home. I regret not finishing school, but my children go to school."

From Sheneni's story, it could be deduced that the Bassa's unfavourable disposition to schools was linked to the suspicions they had of their old enemies, the Fulani. In Bassa oral history, "Bugwain" the Bassa name for the Fulani is linked with war, kidnapping and the slave trade. In Bassa reasoning, "Bugwain" was the most hostile element of **inyinzo inyenzegu** (the non-Bassa world). A Bassa parent would have considered handing over his child to a Fulani as the equivalent to sending it into slavery.

That was why for SHENENI and his relatives, going to school was perceived as a tragic and sorrowful event.

During the fieldwork, an informant, a teacher said:

> "Bassas used to hide their children because those who came to take them to school were the Hausa-Fulani, enemies of the Bassa and slave traders. The Bassa father feared his child was being taken into slavery, he did not know if the child would come back alive and feared it would be harshly treated by the Fulanis."

Another informant, a seventy year old chief, said:

> "The world was different from what it is now. We did not want our children to be far away from us. In my time, children were hidden in barns to keep them away from the Fulani who came to take them to school. They took children as far away as Nasarawa, five days journey on foot! We feared the Fulani would make our children Fulanis."

Part of the concerns of a Bassa parent was the kind of treatment his child would receive at the hands of a Fulani guardian. From Sheneni's account and the colonial history of the period, we know some Bassa had served on the forced labour gangs which built colonial roads. These labour conscripts were also used in the building of the railway line which linked northern and southern Nigeria. During the fieldwork, the researcher met an ninety year old man who said he was part of the labour gang that built the famous Langalanga railway, about three hundred kilometres away from Bassaland. The experiences of these Bassas were not pleasant. Apart from the whipping and flogging which were common, the conscripts were under fed. The images the Bassa associated with the "outside world" (**inyinzo inyezegu**) were those representing hostility and harshness. We could assume these images affected the attitude Bassa parents had toward having their children sent to school in the care of "Agwain" guardians.

A question which could be asked is, "What did the Fulani stand to gain from the recruitment of "pagan" children for school?" It could be argued that, when going on recruitment drives, the Fulani were doing more than obeying the commands of their British masters. This is because of the conditions of labour which emerged with the advent of British rule. The British had made domestic slavery illegal and many slaves, most of whom were captives from the "pagan" groups, had returned to their homes. The practice which emerged and which continued until recent times was for Fulanis to seek the guardianship of children from "pagan tribes". The arrangement was, that "pagan" children, mostly from the rural hinterland would go to school in an urban centre like Nasarawa, under the guardianship of a Fulani mentor. In the household of the Fulani mentor, the day of the school going "pagan" child was split between going to school in the morning, from 8 AM to 1 PM and carrying out domestic chores from say 2 PM to bedtime, which is about 10 PM These chores included fetching water, the collection of firewood for fuel, laundry, cleaning and maintenance of the household grounds, errands and farm work. "Pagan" children were particularly useful for farm work because of their early training in this area. The demand for "pagan" school-going wards may have arisen as a result of the abolition of domestic slavery. This may have caused a labour shortage especially among the urban dwelling Fulani where the women are kept in purdah[4] and the housework was done by slaves in pre-British times. Thus, a Fulani going on a drive to recruit "pagan" children for school was, in effect, looking for domestic labour. The continued need for "pagan labour" may account for the violence which was dealt to Bassa parents who refused to give up their children for school. This situation, and the

experiences of Bassas who had served in the labour gangs, may have made Bassa parents associate the world of the outsider (**inyinzo inyezegu**) and the schools which were a part of that world, with the "harsh life" (**bauta**) and "servitude-slavery" (**tujama**).

The next step is to examine Bassa culture in the bid to find out incompatibilities which may have existed between formal schools and the Bassa way of life. It must be noted that formal schools did not appear in the Bassa world as some "neutral" socialization agencies. Schools came either as part of government personnel training programmes or as part of the evangelization strategies of Christian missions. Schools therefore came to the Bassa as bearers of the values of alien cultural systems. In seeking to find out the reasons for Bassa resistance to schools, we must study how Bassa values and these alien cultural systems clashed.

4.4 (a) Bassa Culture, Christianity and Schools.

The study of Bassa reaction to Western education is linked to a study of the history of Christianity in Bassa land. The agency through which the Bassas were exposed to Western education on a large scale were Christian missionaries. It is therefore necessary to briefly review the nature of Bassa-Christian contact before beginning to address the cultural factors which may have been involved in Bassa resistance to formal education. This is important because the schools were some of the most important vehicles for spreading Christianity.

The Christian mission which worked among the Bassa was the Belfast based Qua Iboe Mission (Q.I.M). Groundwork for setting up a missionary base began in 1934 by a

team consisting of Herbert Dickson, Jim Westgarth and Eddie Dornan. The first resident missionary was the Ulsterman George Curry, who came to Bassa in 1936. Various missionaries followed Curry's footsteps, including David Calias Gilmore from County Down in Northern Ireland, Ken Williams, a Welshman and linguist, Michael Kelsey, an English man, Crampton, another English man, David Griffith and Sisters Gold and Branan. Missionaries found working among the Bassa very frustrating. Reminiscing on his career as a missionary, Herbert Dickson, in a section of his biography aptly titled the "The Challenge of Bassa" wrote:

> "Somehow, that journey seemed to symbolize the frustrations and set-backs experienced over the years in bringing the Gospel to the Bassa people....In spite of ....the sacrifices of dedicated workers, the story of Bassa has been a discouraging one....each effort in progress has been followed by a reverse....Some designated to the task, never even reached the field....Over the years there have been many occasions when we have questioned, 'Is it worth holding onto this hard field?....Why has the enemy of souls launched his fiercest attacks upon the missionaries and churches in this area?" (1981: 107-114).

The Christians did make some converts, though not on the scale of success the Q.I.M had experienced in their endeavour in Ibibio and Igalaland to the south. One of the converts made was a ten year old boy called Shigaba Zeinaba also called Aguma Shomokwu[5] the youngest son of Tukura Tegembi of **Ehu'eh** Rakpam (House of Rapkam). The story of this boy's conversion and the reaction of his family may be relevant for understanding, first, how the Bassa saw the missionaries and secondly, for understanding how the Bassa saw the schools which came with the missionaries. This case is being used as model in the absence of other data. The following information came from long discussions and interviews with Shigaba Zeinaba Tukura.

Shigaba's father Tukura was born into the Akunyakunya ruling house of Wusa in Rapkam. He left Rapkam and resided at Dimbekwu because that was where his wife Susu could receive treatment for an illness. Before the missionaries came to Dimbekwu, Shigaba's father Tukura, was in a state of spiritual crisis. He felt his ancestors were failing him despite his devotion to them. When the missionaries came and preached about showing Bassas the way to **Agwatana**, the Almighty and Most High God, the God every Bassa knew exists but who nobody knew how to reach. Tukura told his children they could follow the teachings of the missionaries if they wanted to. Some of Shigaba's senior brothers and sisters began attending the teaching sessions of the missionaries. Tukura remained a non-believer, neither following the ways of his ancestors nor accepting the teachings of the missionaries.

Shigaba said he was drawn to the missionaries by curiosity. As a mark of identification with them, he added the name "Daniel" to his names. He found their ability to read stories from scribbling on paper mysterious. He wanted to know the "magical scribbling" the whitemen knew. He began watching them and listened attentively to their teachings. Herbert Dickson took note of this and recounted the following in his memoirs:

> "I began to notice a small boy from a village a few miles away, who always seemed to know when I arrived. He stayed around, watching my movements with interest, and found out I had schools under my management in Igala. He did not attempt to talk to me for I was a white man and he a small boy, but I was to find out later what he was thinking- 'That friendly man. If I get to him he might help me go to school.'" (Ibid: 114).

David Gilmore had become a resident missionary and was based at Kayefu, which was three miles from Dimbekwu. Shigaba had seen him on his visits to Dimbekwu. On

one such visit, Shigaba told Gilmore he wanted to go to school. The nearest missionary school was almost 120 miles away at Idah in Igalaland. Gilmore was impressed with Shigaba's determination. On an appointed day, Shigaba slipped quietly away from home and headed for Kayefu. There Gilmore gave him a note which had something like this written on it:

> "To whom it may concern: Please assist this boy to get to Mr. Dickson at the Qua Iboe Mission house at Idah."

To get to Idah, one had to take a boat from the river port at Umaisha to Oguma on the other side of the Benue River. From Oguma, a three mile trip had to be made to Sheria. From Sheria, there lay a 80 mile journey to Idah through Dekina and Ayinbga. Shigaba's first task was getting to Umaisha without being seen by the market women from Dimbekwu who went to both the Umaisha and Sheria markets. Gilmore had a plan. He arranged for his Igala assistant to hide Shigaba at Umaisha until he could embark undetected on a boat heading for Ogba in Oguma. Shigaba recounted how he saw from his hiding place Dimbekwu market women who would have identified him quite easily. Shigaba got to Sheria and showed the note he was given to the owner of a big lorry heading for Idah. This person read the note and gave Shigaba a ride first to Dekina and then to Idah the next day. Dickson recounts that:

> "After returning to Idah from one such visit, a market lorry drove to the door of our house. A small figure jumped out and sat on the steps. Coming out to see what the driver was bringing, I said, 'What can I do for you?", 'This small boy met me about eighty miles away,'replied the driver. 'He had no money but was sure Mr. Dickson would pay me. Knowing you sir, I brought him, and there he is'. He pointed to the little fellow who was watching eagerly to see my reaction, although he could not understand what was being said. His only garment was a triangular piece of cloth around his waist, and his complete possessions were tied up in another

> piece, the size of a handkerchief. His age would have been about eight years. Having paid the driver, I called an interpreter, and I got the following answers to my questions-'My name is Daniel Tukura and I come from Dimbekwu near Kayefu. I always see you when you come to visit us. Please let me go to school...I looked into the small and upturned face and anxious eyes as he waited for my reply. Then thinking of the Saviour who loves little ones, I assured him I would look after him" (Ibid: 115).

There was nothing short of pandemonium in Ehu'eh Rapkam when Shigaba disappeared. Memories of the days of the slave trade and the disappearance of children which was common, came back to the mind of Tukura and the people of Dimbekwu. As the days went by, the family learnt from market women that they had seen Shigaba at Sheria. The Christian community also informed Tukura that the whiteman had helped his child get to school. Tukura's household was in a state of mourning, since what had happened was for them the equivalent of a death. Tukura would never have allowed his youngest child to go to school, particularly to an alien tribe 120 miles away! It was only when Shigaba returned for his first holiday that the fears of the family where allayed.

Even if Shigaba had not gone to school, the whole issue of Christianity was bound to bring about the family crisis which followed. The Christians forbade many Bassa customs, among which was participation in the burial ceremonies and rituals. The Christians called these "pagan" rites unbefitting of true believers. This was a serious matter for a large household like Ehu'eh Rapkam which was not only a chieftaincy house, but one in which many older members were proudly awaiting the day their sons and relatives would bury them with dignity. In Bassa religion, the rites and sacrifices associated in preparing someone for the afterlife are called **usa.** These rites are so sacred that no one but a son (and in the absence of one, a close relative) was allowed to perform

them. If the rites of **usa** are not properly performed, the relative going into the after-life could be denied entry into **e'uye,** the Bassa heaven or Valhalla and condemned to become a roaming and wandering **ugwugwu,** the Bassa version of Hell. The older members of Ehu'e Rapkam especially Shigaba's aunts, Shimua Gwagwa and Shimua Wodi told Tukura the family's romance with Christianity must stop if their future in the afterlife were not to be seriously jeopardized. Shigaba's senior brothers, mainly Ndazhaga and Huleji and his senior sisters Ladi, Suyi and Wananje were asked to stop attending the meetings of the Christians to please the older members of the household.

Despite the fact that his children went back to the religion of their fathers, Tukura's doubts about his ancestors developed into apostasy when he openly confessed his faith in the God of the Christians. His second wife Omu Martha zealously joined in her husband's faith. The depth of Tukura's conversion was proved when he asked the Welshman Ken Williams to bury him in the Christian way any day he died. To the rest of the family, especially Tukura's junior brother Aguma Kure Tegembi, Tukura had by this act, condemned himself to the Bassa Hell (**ugwugwu**).

Tukura's wife, (Omu Martha) was to prove her faith in a very unusual way. She defied the representation of the spirit of the ancestors, the masquerade called **tua**! When this masquerade appears, all women are expected to run. Even an accidental encounter with a **tua** is considered an act of sacrilege which can only be remedied by the payment of a fine or the making of sacrifices to the angry ancestral spirits. Omu Martha was working in her kitchen when the masquerade appeared. She continued her work indifferent to the **tua**'s presence. When the masquerade accosted her, she attacked it with

one her kitchen tools, a ladle called a **ohingilo**. By touching a **tua** she had committed a sinful act which no sacrifices in Bassa could remedy. A death sentence by the angry ancestors was the only penalty. She was expected to die seven days after the incident. This event took place in the late 1940s. Omu Martha died on the 3rd of September 1992, over four decades later! A Bassa woman who had believed the teachings of the Christians had successfully defied ancient beliefs.

From the history of the encounter of Ehu'eh Rapkam with Christianity some significant implications can be deduced. Christianity had posited a different conception of the afterlife to Bassas. This meant that any Bassa who became a Christian, experienced a spiritual estrangement from Bassa notions about preparations for the afterlife. The importance of the afterlife is reflected in the duties of children to their parents. During the burial rites (**usa**) for the transition to the Bassa heaven (**euye**), the sons of the deceased must be there to ensure the fulfilment of every stage of this essential rite of passage. If one's children became Christians, a parent saw himself as facing the possibility of being banished from a blissful eternity (**euye**) by the angry ancestors (**ozomoyikwo**). Christianity was therefore, on a direct collision course with the significant symbols of Bassa spirituality.

The reason for a parent's anxiety over Christianity were both social and spiritual. Socially, it was a source of great shame if there are no close relatives to carry out one's **usa**[6]. There is great prestige and honour in having the **usa** done by a son or sons. To have one's children refuse to perform their father's **usa** because they had become Christians was a great tragedy indeed. It was the equivalent of dying childless. A person's

usa is performed by non-relatives only under very unusual and some time shameful circumstances, like those associated with dying childless or facing sudden death far away from home. Spiritually, the Bassa believe that on getting to **euye**, one would have to stand before the ancestors, and be judged about the state of affairs among their "seed".[7] If Christianity has made inroads into a household with its attendant abandonment of the "ways of the ancestors" , the deceased risked banishment. Banishment followed if the ancestors in anyway blamed the deceased for not preventing the apostasy of their "seed." The displeasure of the ancestors would especially be over the rituals given in their honour, mainly the sacrifices of **u'rope jile** (ancestral spirits of the family). This ritual is considered essential for the continuity of the household and the clan. Any act of negligence on the part of members of a household regarding this and other rituals, is believed by the Bassa to result in strange and untimely deaths, illness, crop failure and disasters. When these practices are abandoned, as converts to Christianity were wont to do, the Bassa believed the ancestors would visit the household with chaos and instability. In the mind of the Bassa therefore, Christianity had the objective of supplanting the symbolic order of the Bassa way of life.

The conflicts between Christianity and the symbols of Bassa spirituality and culture was reflected in the struggles converts experienced. These struggles are mentioned in Frederick Smith's history of Christian missionary activity in Bassa:

> "Since the pioneer years of George Curry and Archie McLellan work in Bassa has fluctuated between hopeful and disappointing. Right from the start the young church had suffered persecution from the animistic society out of which its members had been snatched. Chiefs, priests and councillors soon recognised the danger to their whole way of life when their sons and daughters began to adopt 'this new way'" The first

> Baptismal service at Kanyehu signalled the fact that this was no passing phase, easily to be ignored, or absorbed into the culture. The crowd who watched Hulobu, Daudu, Mejida, and blind Huleji and the woman, Tukworo, go down into the river proclaiming Jesus as their only Lord and Saviour, may not have understood all that was involved, but some certainly 'wondered where to this thing would grow'." (Smith:41).

George Curry, the first resident missionary in Bassa provides us with the details on how Bassa parents reacted whenever their children became Christians. He details the reaction of the parent of two young concerts:

> "After dark two boys crept into the mission compound and presented themselves to Paul and George. They were very distressed. Their father had evicted them from the house because they had refused to eat meat offered to idols. They stayed the night, but the next day their father came with twenty men. His fury knew no bounds. For over an hour he screamed abuse at the preacher and missionary alike, before storming off. George had been completely unable to reason with him. The missionary wrote home: 'I was sorry to leave Paul behind in the midst of all this trouble but we had to push on...This is a hard place. We returned to Kanyehu with a heavy heart..." (Ibid: 43).

Christianity also posed a challenge to the Bassa patriarchal social organization, mainly the relationship between men and women in Bassa spiritual life. In Bassa religion, women could only reach the ancestors through men. The position of women in the spiritual order was reinforced by regulations and taboos. For instance, a woman having her menses cannot enter the male section of the house where the symbols of guardian ancestral spirits are kept, let alone touch a man or anything a man would eat. Bassa Christian men placed no such regulations on their women. On the matter of sacrifices for instance, women make their **u'rope** (sacrifices) through men, even when the women have to bear the expenses and costs of the rituals. A woman may provide the sacrificial goat, but only the men would eat the meat since she is forbidden by custom from eating ritual

food. In the case of Omu Martha (Tukura's wife), using the new spiritual premises provided by Christianity, she defied the male dominated spiritual order by her attack on the **tua.** By this act, a woman had defied and questioned the patriarchal spiritual order of her society. A belief system which would empower a Bassa woman to attack a **tua** must have been perceived by Bassa men as grave threat to the spiritual foundations of their society. When Tukura died, Omu Martha was expected to shave her head, take cold baths in the stream and be in state of mourning for six months. She not only refused to do these, but danced and sang since she claimed Tukura had been taken by the angels to rest with Agwatana and His Son Jesus Christ in heaven. This was nothing short of an act of spiritual rebellion.

These events indicates Bassa parents would have considered the schools which came with Christianity as sources of dysfunctional spiritual influence. This argument is supported in the history of the Dimbekwu School Project, the school which was set up in Bassa under the umbrella of the Qua Iboe Mission (Q.I.M.)

The village of Dimbekwu has already been mentioned in the story of Bassa contacts with Christianity. Dimbekwu is located about three miles from Kayefu and about five miles from Umaisha, the headquarters of Umaisha district. This village is important in the history of the Bassa because it was the site for the first encounter on a large scale, between the Bassa world and Western education. Some of the first Bassas to become Christians and who received Western education hailed from this village.

Studying the case of the Dimbekwu School Project (D.S.P.) is important. The history of the D.S.P. may allow us see how the Bassa reacted to formal education as it

was brought to them within the framework of a missionary organization, the Q.I.M. The D.S.P. is also important for an understanding of Bassa resistance to Western education since it was located in a wholly Bassa village and was managed by a "son of the soil", Daniel Shigaba Zeinaba Tukura. Unlike the colonial schools located in Abuja, Nasarawa or Toro, the D.S.P. lacked any association with the old enemies of the Bassa, the "Agwain" (Fulani).

The nature of Daniel Tukura's relationship with the Q.I.M on the matter of the D.S.P. needs some clarification. The Q.I.M provided the organizational and curriculum framework on which the D.S.P. operated since legally, Daniel Tukura could not open up a school on his own. However, the task of pupil recruitment and daily administration of the D.S.P. were essentially his. In this sense, the Q.I.M followed a format most missionary organizations did in other part of Nigeria, that of operating schools through Western educated "natives" and indigens. It was difficult outfitting these schools with European teachers and instructors due to personnel and financial costs.

Since, the story of Daniel Tukura and his family featured in the account of early Bassa contacts with Christianity, we may need to continue his story up to where the idea of the D.S.P. was conceived. After he completed his primary education at the Q.I.M mission school at Idah, he proceeded to attend the Okene Teachers College. Graduating as a certified teacher in 1960, he worked in the Igala town of Ankpa. In the interview, he mentioned the circumstances surrounding his decision to open up the school and the stiff opposition he received from Bassa parents:

> "I was not working among my people the Bassa, but among other people. I was working in Igalaland. I felt I should be doing this service among my

> people because they deserved it. When I left Igalaland and came back home to open a school for Bassa children, a majority of Bassa parents were against this. The old Bassa opposition to removing his child from him and sending him to school was still there. But there were a few, in the minority who lauded my aim of opening a school. They were mostly Christians. Christians were barely five percent of the population, probably less. I got pupils for my classes through the churches. But these were never enough, despite the willingness of the converts to send their children to school. The other way was to approach the children directly. Most of these children wanted to go to school despite the opposition of their parents. These children ran away from home and came to meet me at Dimbekwu That was why the parents hated me. It was like voluntary kidnapping! This was the major strategy for getting pupils. After I speak to the children in secret, they would disappear from home and meet me at Dimbekwu. Whenever their parents came to remove them from school, I threatened to call the police and have them arrested. Once I got the consent of their children, I now used threats to keep their parents from taking them away. If I did not do that, the children will be taken away by their parents, back to their villages, against their will....The parents reacted by cutting off all material and parental support."

Despite the fact that the D.S.P. was managed by a Bassa, the experience was that most Bassas still found schools unacceptable. Why did the Bassa continue their resistance despite the fact that the D.S.P. was located right in their midst at Dimbekwu? Why did they continue to resist schools even when the D.S.P was administered by one of their own "sons"? This implies we may have to further explore Bassa culture and the ways in which formal schools "did not fit" into the Bassa way of life. Instead of looking at Bassa culture in general, it may be useful looking at one major aspect, mainly socialization. The question to guide our search is: How were the major symbols of Bassa culture transmitted to Bassa children? How did these clash with the values associated with Christianity and formal education? To answer these questions, it would be necessary looking at some of the agencies of Bassa education, especially the institution of **Tiribi**.

4.4 (b) Tiribi: Spiritual Education of Bassa Children, Christianity and Schools.

The information used here was collected as part of the 'cultural data' gathered during the fieldwork.[8] We have already examined some of the elements of the Bassa conception of the afterlife and the importance of **usa**. The Bassa child learns the basic tenets of the veneration and worship of his ancestors from the home. From his elders, he learns the names of his ancestors, the various rituals and sacrifices done in their honour and how to call on them during emergencies. Another institution which is crucial for socializing the Bassa child for religious and other roles in the community is the institution of **tiribi**.

Tiribi is an institution whose focus is on training Bassa males in the arts, rituals and mysteries of death, burial and the spiritual world. **E'ribi** or initiates into **tiribi** are in four categories. The first category are the older members called **N'yare** headed by **i'hyu daje**, the head of the institution of **tiribi.** The second category is **atua shashe** or the "middle-people". These are middle aged members who have received all the training needed to be an **e'ribi** but who are not old enough to be called elders. They are followed by **ekere** or the "cubs" or "tadpoles" the youngest members of the groups who are still being instructed in the basic arts of being an **e'ribi**. The least category are the **atua lua** the "messengers" who go on errands and build the ritual fire during a gathering of **e'ribis**.

These categories are categories of seniority and authority. Orders from a member from a higher category are obeyed without question. During a meeting of **e'ribis**, not

even a parent has the authority that the **ihyu' daje** has over a child. Discipline can be harsh and parents cannot complain about a disciplinary act meted out to a son. The significance of this institution lies in the following. It is in **tiribi** that the Bassa child encounters Bassa society as a "collective" reality which is superior to the child's individuality. This awareness is built in the child when he observes that the authority of the **e'ribi** is higher than even the authority of his parents. In fact, this reality is first impressed on the mind of the child the day he is recruited into **tiribi**. The recruitment process is similar to the "press-gangs" of the British Royal Navy in the 16th century. A Bassa father would usually ignore the cries of his son when he is being "captured" and made to sit in his first **e'ribi** gathering.

The **e'ribi** also perform judicial functions in that they adjudicate among disagreeing parties and their decision can only be questioned by the **aguma** (the chief). But even then, in most cases **agumas** are **e'ribis** themselves and would not question their decisions.

In **tiribi**, the young Bassa male learns the secret rites of burial and the preparation of a Bassa for the most important "journey" in his life, that of going to meet the ancestors in **e'uye**. All the procedures of **usa** which the child would use when performing the burial rites of his father or that of a close relative are learnt here. Other things learnt are the magical arts and formulas the Bassa identify with "manhood" the equivalence of "invincibility". During the research, informants claimed that in the mind of the Bassa, a man who has not gone through training as an **e'ribi** is considered "unschooled" in the ways of being a Bassa. Such a person is not a "man" and cannot expect the respect of his

peers and women.

How could all these have affected Bassa attitudes to formal schools? Formal schools, in the mind of most Bassa parents had no practical value in equipping their children for the duties and tasks needed to please the ancestors and in helping parents achieve a happy afterlife. In a situation where there were hardly any dividing lines between Christianity and formal education, schools were seen mostly in dysfunctional terms. Schools did not only prevent the child from becoming a farmer (**bufuashe**) or "real man" (**buribi**) and faithful worshipper of one's ancestors, but the content of formal education tended to despise these valued Bassa symbols. These Bassa ways were looked upon in the formal schooling process as "pagan" and as the "ways of **Ibiri**" (the Devil). Yet it was these "ways of the Devil" that the Bassa considered their "way of salvation". The founder of the Dimbekwu School Project commented on how Bassa parents thought schools could lead to their being "damned" in the Bassa Hell"

> "Bassa parents associated schools with Christianity and they feared that if their children went to school, they would become Christians and would refuse to perform their **usa**."

An informant, a sixty year old chief from Sardauna, made a statement which reflects the fear Bassa parents had, and some still have, about the effect of formal education on Bassa religion:

> "The young ones say they do not want the ways of the ancestors any more. What can I do? Would I force them? They say the ways of the ancestors are now forbidden to them. They say the days of the old ways are gone. But what tradition will they pass on to their children? If I want to perform a sacrifice to the ancestors, none of these children (points to some youngsters sitting nearby) will collect money from me to buy a hen for the sacrifice. They will not even help me carry the hen if they know it will be

sacrificed! They say it is now all forbidden!"

A Bassa child who became a Christian because he went to a missionary school almost certainly ceased to be a **biribi**, since all further training would be stopped. Since converts had to avoid all "pagan" ways, Christians who found themselves out of concert with mainstream Bassa life moved out of their ancestral households and congregated in communities called "**Romu**" or "Rome". These communities were named after the first century Christian community which lived in "pagan" Rome. In these communities, no "pagan" practices were permitted and ancestral masquerades, **tua**, which normally can enter any Bassa household, were not allowed to enter these Christian residences. These "Romes" represented "Christendom" in Bassa. In the mind of the Bassa parent therefore, Christianity and schools were instruments of social fragmentation which not only did not equip children with the skills needed to be "good" Bassas, but dissolved the bonds of authority and duty linking parents to their children, and Bassas to their ancestors. Evidence suggests that Bassa parents were not mistaken in associating schools with Christianity and proselytization. Archie McLellan, another missionary in Bassa clearly indicates that the schools were for them grounds for evangelization. He wrote that:

> "The school at Oguma (on the south side of the River Benue) is still under our supervision, securing for us the opportunity to present the Word of God daily to thirty boys. A church has been built near the school and the teachers will conduct the services." (in Smith: 44).

Thus, Frederick Smith notes about the Bassa situation, that:

> "It became the 'in' thing for young people to break with the old animistic customs. The incompatibility of education and paganism caused a rift between parents and children: the former becoming angry and confused by the new ideas, and the latter becoming provocatively high-handed with

their elders." (ibid: 106)."

The association between schools and Christianity may explain why the founder of the D.S.P. received most of his support from the small Bassa Christian community. It therefore appears that those Bassas who on their conversion to Christianity, replaced the Bassa "world view" with the Christian one, may have had less difficulties going to school than Bassas who still held their ancestral religion. Concurrently, Bassas who held their traditional beliefs and "experimented" with formal schooling also tended to espouse Christianity. The classroom situation may therefore have had both manifest and latent evangelizing effects. The data collected from the field also confirms the fears of Bassa parents that schools were an attack on their religion. Twenty-six per cent of the sample taken during the fieldwork who identified themselves as Christians, and who have formal education, associated their "conversion" with their schooling experience. Twenty per cent said they were "motivated to go to school by their conversion to Christianity" or their "conversion to Christianity encouraged their going to school."

Every culture has a material dimension. If culture is the basis for the explanation of Bassa resistance to Western education, then we need to ask another question. What aspect of Bassa social economic and social organization could have been incompatible with formal school? That is, how did Bassa parents perceive schools vis- a- vis the sources and organization of farm labour?

4.5. Schools and the Bassa Farm Economy.

During the interview, the founder of the Dimbekwu School Project said:

> "Children were the major source of farm labour for Bassa parents. Bassas did not work for other people. Labour came from the family. That is why if you wanted to take a Bassa child away, you were directly affecting the family's subsistence. Some of the parents of the children were aging and could not work for themselves. In some cases, what I did was to take pity on those parents. When you want to take the child of such a parent, he would say, 'If you want to take this child away, please take me along, because from today, I will no longer have a farm from where to feed.' This will make me sad. But I never betrayed my emotions and stood my ground that it was better to send the child to school. What I then did was to allow the children who I knew their parents were really having a bad time to go back home and help their parents for about a week. When the first batch returned, I would send away another for the same reason. I had to do this because the parents really needed their children. The Bassa had no conception of hired labour and working for somebody for money."

A fifty-seven year old respondent said:

> "When the people who took children to school came looking for me, I ran away and hid in the farm....Our fathers did want to send us to school because they needed us on the farms. They needed us to produce food."

A respondent, aged sixty said with emphasis:

> "Farming! Because of food! That was why our people hid their children. They thought schools will keep their children from helping fathers produce food."

A fifty-eight year old respondent said:

> "When our fathers first heard of schools, they did not like it. They refused to send us to school because they wanted us to help them on their farms...."

Another respondent, aged fifty said:

> "Even if a child was already in school, a Bassa parent will bribe the teacher in order to get the child out! It was not completely the fault of these parents. They were in darkness. They did not know school education is useful. That was why they rejected it. They thought farming was the most valuable occupation."

These are typical responses whenever the "Why" question for not sending their children to school in the past is posed to Bassas. It must be understood that Bassa society was basically organized along the lines of a communal mode of production. All labour was human labour and animals or machines were not applied to production. The productive capacity of a household was measured by the number of human beings in it. Social relationships were largely unstratified along the lines of groups or persons who appropriated the surpluses or labour power of others. The only form of exploitation which existed was the exploitation of the labour power of children and women by their fathers, husbands and elders. Slave labour was not unknown to the Bassas, but even then, slaves became adopted members of the household. By requiring that parents give up their children to the formal education process, Western education was demanding the most vital economic power of the household: the labour power of their children. The formal schooling process was in direct competition with the work day of the Bassa child. School opened from 7 AM and closed at 1.30 PM. Some schools required their pupils to return to school at 4 PM for evening games and activities which ended between 6 and 7 PM. The work day of the Bassa child began at 6 AM when Bassas head for their farms. There is a break at noon or 1 PM when the sun is over head and work became difficult because of the high temperature. Work resumed at about 3 PM and ended between 5 and 6 PM. Within the requirements of the Bassa farm economy, a child given up to the formal

education process was literally lost to the father economically.

It is not surprising therefore that Bassas associated schools with four concepts which described different states of social dysfunctionality. These are **u'ruona**, which literally means laziness, slothfulness and lack of moral discipline. The second is **u'fuu**, which means being useless to one's father and family due to a lack of farming skills. The third is u'damuo, which means being hopeless and never being able to be of use to one's self and community. The fourth is buzundo which literally means "thief" , but which in the Bassa language has a deeper meaning. It refers to a condition where a person has no reliable source of livelihood and is this prone to being involved in ploys and schemes to "take what belongs to others".

Since Bassa parents saw no direct linkage between sending their children to school and their definition of what a "good way to make a living" was, no "sensible" parent thought formal schools were places to prepare a child for adult life.
Within the context of Bassa culture, the farm (e'hilo), was the "school" needed to prepare a child to be a "good" Bassa. Asking a parent to send his child to school was tantamount to asking him to take out that child from what was defined as "schooling" within Bassa culture.

The logic and rationale of Bassa resistance to Western education may also be sought in the reciprocal labour arrangement binding a community in which all work is done through human labour. Some of the stages of Bassa agriculture, like land clearing, the making of mounds and ridges for crops like yams, cassava, guinea-corn, and harvests, some time required more labour that a household had. A household could ask for

assistance from a labour arrangement called **itime enu**, which literally means "the kind of farming where you are sent" or "ambassadorial farming". Work which could have taken a month to do, could be done in one day. The household being assisted provided food and entertainment during the duration of the work. Such a household was expected to send its work team whenever another household required assistance. Sending children to school could undermine a household's ability to participate in such reciprocal labour relationships.

4.6. Conclusion.

Four conclusions can be made after surveying Bassa history and culture in the bid to answer the question: Why did the Bassa resist Western education? The conclusion at the historical level is: that at the early stages of the advent of schools, schools were associated with the hostilities which had characterized Bassa-Fulani relations in the 19th century.

The second conclusion is at the level of cultural values. Formal schools were associated with Christianity, a belief system whose practice sought to undermine the major symbols of Bassa spiritual culture and order.

Thirdly, and at the cultural/economic level, formal education competed with the major source of economic power in the household, mainly the labour power of children. Bassa parents therefore perceived schools as threats to their economic vitality and the continued existence of the household as a unit of production.

Fourthly and at the theoretical level, it could also be said that schools represented a mode of socialization associated with societies with social and economic organizations

where surplus appropriating categories had emerged. In such societies, the child may not necessarily be a major productive force, but could be an appropriator of the surpluses produced by servile members of the household, hired labourers or machines. In Bassa society, the child was a producer of surplus. His non-involvement in the production process could contribute to the economic collapse of the household as a productive unit. In societies like the Bassa's, the educational process was not differentiated from the production process. The interruption of production also interrupted the educational process. The meeting between Western education and Bassa society was in fact a reflection of the society wide conflict between the capitalist mode of production which colonial rule represented and the communal organization of society represented by Bassa society. In contrast, it was not surprising that semi-feudal groups like the Fulani and Egbirra could afford to free the labour power of their children to the formal education process, since there were servile social groups or hired labourers within their societies to replace such lost labour.

Endnotes

1. Whom the Bassa call "Agwain".

2. A curse, similar to "son of a bitch!".

3. This is a Bassa's utmost cry of distress. It is used to express a sense of hopelessness and loss.

4. Muslim ritual seclusion of women.

5. Named after his maternal grandfather, the Zongulo Chief (Aguma) of Shomokwu.

6. My information on the significance of Usa comes from discussions with a Bassa elder. Each clan has its peculiar rites of usa, indeed the clans are distinguished by some of these peculiarities.

7. This information comes from discussion with Bassa elders. The Bassa notion of judgement after death is called **U'shiria** .

8. Credit is given to the Chief of Utu, the Chief and elders of Sardauna, Nuhu Sardauna, and Mr Daniel Tukura for the cultural data.

Chapter 5.

The Bassa Definition of the Situation Today.

Being a phenomena of the present, consciousness can be studied through the interactive process of an interview. Bassa parents were interviewed in the summer of 1992 in order to determine what they think about formal education today. Only parents were interviewed because these are the Bassa to whom questions about parental socialization choices could be validly posed. The data to be presented here therefore, come from the interviews of Bassas with children. While the views of non-parents could be of sociological interest, these were not within the immediate research objectives. Before presenting the data, it may be useful reiterating the objectives of the study. The study is about consciousness and its transformation among the Bassa regarding Western education, a means of socialization they had rejected for nearly half a century. What has been done in the preceding chapters has been to determine the cultural and historical circumstances in which Bassa resistance to formal education was situated. What shall be done in this chapter is to explore the dimensions of Bassa consciousness with regard to Western education and its relationship to culture and definition of the meaning of being Bassa in Umaisha and Toto districts today.[1]

It may be useful recalling the role of "ambassadors" in the data collection process. In Chapter 2, the ways in which their effect in creating bias in the sample was indicated. Because of the possibility of a bias due to the role of the "ambassadors", the conclusions drawn from examining the data will be made with respect to the "Bassas interviewed".

Forty-three of the parents interviewed live in the rural areas, while twenty-seven live in the urban areas. It was intended to interview both male and female parents, but as Table 2 shows, most of the respondents are male. This is a reflection of the division of labour between males and females in Bassa society. Legally and culturally, the man owns the children. It was therefore logical to get our information principally from the men. In fact, talking to a woman about a child's future would be considered impolite or improper or talking to the wrong person. Responses like "The child is not mine, talk to the father." "What do I know as a woman?" or 'My husband has said all I want to say." would be a common response from the women. However, the interviewer did manage to convince some women to talk. The other factor was, that the interviewer was regarded as an element of the **external domain**. His business was therefore with the men. As noted in Chapter Two, strangers and any business from the external environment of the household is considered the business of males. This implies that while the responses of women may be quoted as examples of or expressions of Bassa consciousness, no significant analysis can be done on questions of gender. This is an example of how the social characteristics of the field affects the kind of data collected and the analysis which can be validly pursued.

A point which needs be mentioned is how the coding of qualitative statements was done. The interview process is like a conversation or discussion. Respondents can be ambiguous and inconsistent. Before placing a response into a particular cell, the respondent asked the same question in in different ways and noted the persistent or repeated themes. This was then related to the informant's response to other questions

during the interview with the objective of establishing where his answers "leaned the most". If the respondent appeared to be saying "two things at the same time", this method was applied to ensure that the respondent was really holding a position which cannot be fitted into one cell. In such a cases, a cell for "double-barrelled" responses was created. An example are responses to questions on how Bassas should raise their children. Some parents may say they want "Bassa ways" others may say "Schools only" , while some may say "Both schools and Bassa ways are fine". [2] The third answer is an example of a "double-barrelled" response.

5.1. Characteristics of the Data.

In this section, the general characteristics of the sample will be described and presented.

Residence.

As Table 1 shows, most of those interviewed live in the rural areas. An overwhelming majority of the Bassa, like in other Nigerian groups, reside in the rural areas. Migration and movement to Nigeria's urban areas is associated with the acquisition of certificates and the pursuit of non-farm occupations. For a group like the Bassa who responded

Table 1.

Bassa Rural and Urban Residents.

Residence	Number	Percentage (%)
Rural	43	61.0
Urban	27	39.0
Total	70	100.0

"lately" to Western education, most of the population is almost entirely rural dwelling.

Gender.

The sample is almost entirely male. The reasons for these have been given in Chapter Two and in the first pages of this chapter.

Table 2.

Rural and Urban Samples by Gender.

Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
Male	63	90.0
Female	7	10.0
Total	70	100.0

Due to the small number of females in the sample, no meaningful analysis can be done with respect to gender questions.

Age.

In a society where birth records were not written, it was difficult determining age. This was the case especially for the rural respondents. This was no problem with regard to the urban respondents. Having had some degree of formal education, they had definite answers to questions ragarding their age. The best that could be done in the case of the rural respondents was to estimate their age and have it categorized. The best way to determine age in a rural setting is to look out for the physical signs of aging, ask the respondent how many "moons" or "rainy seasons" have passed since they were born, and what major event occurred at his/her birth.

Table 3.

Rural and Urban Respondents By Age.

Age Category	Number	Percentage (%)
19-30	20	29.0
31-40	19	27.0
41-50	9	13.0
51-60	13	19.0
61-70	6	8.0
71 & Above	3	4.0
Total	70	100.0

Marital Status.

In the rural sample, 20 persons (46.0 per cent) have one wife each. Eleven persons (26.0. per cent) have two wives each. Three persons (6.0. per cent) have four wives each. Three women (7.0 per cent) are all married to one husband each. Of the four women in the urban sample, one is widowed, while three of them (11.0 per cent) are all married to one husband each.

In the urban sample, seventeen persons (63.0 per cent) reported having one wife each. Five persons (12.0 per cent) reported having two wives each, while one respondent

reported having three wives. None in the urban sample reported having more than three wives. One person, a woman, is widowed.

The number of wives one has is an indicator of socio-economic status in Bassa society. The more wives a person has, the more his status, since the wives are considered an indication of wealth. Thus, in the rural sample, the 11 persons (26.0 per cent) who reported having two wives have a higher socio-economic status than the 20 persons (45.0 per cent) who reported having only one wife. The three persons, (6.0 per cent) with 3 wives and three (3) persons (6.0 per cent) with 4 wives, have the highest socio-economic status in the rural sample. Not surprisingly, most of them (4), are chiefs.

In the urban area, having more than one wife is not necessarily an indicator of socio-economic status, since there are monogamous persons in the cities with power, money and status. In the urban areas, polygyny is more of an indication of belief orientation than status. Thus, those who reported having more than one wife in the urban sample are Muslims.

Number of Children.

Most of the respondents have between 1-4 children. Respondents in this category constitute 68.0 per cent of the rural sample and 57.0 per cent of the urban sample.

Table 4. Parental Data: Number of Children.

	1-4 %	5-9 %	10+ %	Total (n) %
Rural	68.0	25.0	7.0	100.0 (43)
Urban	59.0	41.0	-	100.0 (27)
Grand T	64.0	33.0	3.0	100.0 (70)

Parental Types: None; Some and All.

Three types of rural parents were interviewed, namely those who have sent none of their children to school (46.0 per cent), those who have sent only some of their children to school (26.0 per cent), and those who have sent all of their children to school (28.0 per cent). These rural parental types are presented as follows:

Table 5. Rural Parental Types.

None %	Some %	All %	Total (n) %
46.0.	26.0.	28.0	100.0 (43)

Parents who have sent none of their children to school comprise a clear plurality, being 46.1 per cent of the sample of rural parents. This supports the claims made in the earlier

chapters about the "resistance" of Bassa parents to Western education.

Occupation.

The occupation of most of the persons in the sample confirms the arguments made in previous chapters about farming being the main occupation of the Bassa people. Ninety-three per cent of the rural sample make their living as peasant farmers, and nobody in the rural sample described themselves as "government workers". Even those who had some part-time interests in some form of trade or crafts, regard themselves primarily as "farmers". Only 15 persons, 21.0 per cent of the total sample described themselves as government workers. The category, "government worker" includes community health workers, teachers, a policeman and a technician. Thus, only 21.0 per cent of the sample could be described as people in the non-farm sector of the economy.

Table 6. Occupational Structure of Rural and Urban Samples.

	Farmer (%)	G/Worker (%)	H/Wife (%)	U/emplyd. (%)	Total (n) (%)
Rural	93.0	-	7.0	-	100.0 (43)
Urban	16.0	60.0	15.0	8.9	100.0 (27)
G.Total	65.7	21.4	8.6	4.3	100.0 (70)

The occupational and age characteristics of the sample leads to an important conclusion. The fact that 85.0 per cent of the urban sample is under 40 and most of the sample are

farmers, further indicates the "late" acceptance by the Bassa of the certification experience needed for jobs in the cities. Looking at Table 6, one may wonder why 16.0 per cent of the urban sample reported being "farmers". These respondents come from Toto town. Toto is the less urban than either Jos or Nasarawa. It has adjoining farm lands, thus permitting some of its residents the pursuit of farming as an occupation. Even in larger cities like Jos, it is not uncommon for city residents to have farms in the neighbouring rural areas.

Religion.

The sample has a Christian majority, 53.0 of the sample. Bassas who practice their ancestral religion constitute 30.0 per cent, while Muslims are 17.0 per cent of the sample. A major characteristic observed is that no urban dweller claimed being a follower of the Bassa ancestral religion.

Table 7. Religious Orientation.

Religion	Number	Percentage %
Bassa Ancestral	21	30.0
Christianity	37	53.0
Islam	12	17.0
Total	70	100.0

This is an indication of the tendency for Bassas who go to school (and eventually move to the urban areas), to convert to Christianity or Islam. A secondary factor is the prestige associated with claiming to be a follower of either of these monotheistic religions. The ancestral religions are associated with the agrarian and folk ways of the rural areas and considered "backward" by urban dwellers. Thus, a person who for instance in moments of personal crisis may visit the village healer (shaman, witch-doctor) or call on the gods of his fathers, may consider it prestigious to refer to him/herself as a Christian or Muslim. None of the chiefs described Christianity as his religion. This is partly because the duties of this office demands religious and priestly responsibilities, like annual rituals to the ancestors. This is not tolerated by the Christian community, though it may be allowed by the non liberal form of Islam practised by many of the chiefs. Islam also allows polygyny, a form of marriage associated with royalty and status in traditional Bassa society. Because of the impact of the emirate system in Umaisha and Toto districts, Islam was associated with the "ruling class". It thus enhances a chief's social status, especially when dealing with the local government authorities, to describe himself as a Muslim. Thus, in Table 8, all those who follow the religion of their fathers are rural dwellers, while urban respondents tended to declare only Christianity and Islam as their religions. The relationship between residence and religion was not significant (Cramner's V, = 21., p.= n.s.). The Crammer's V is being used in this instance as a measure of the association or relationship between two variables or values. In the coding procedure, Bassa Ancestral religion and Islam were coded as "Other". The details for "Other" are as follows: Bassa Ancestral religion is coded "BA" and has 21 adherents in the rural areas. Islam is

coded "IS" and has 3 adherents in the rural areas. For the urban cell, all the 9 respondents under "Other" are Muslims.

Table 8.

Religion by Residence.

	Other	Christianity	Total (n) (%)
Rural	BA= 21 IS-3 24	19	43 (61.0)
Urban	9	18	27 (39.0)
Total	33	37	70 (100.0)

Another observation made was that younger persons tended to declare Christianity as their religion than older persons. Please see Table 9.

Table 9.

Religious Orientation By Age.

	Christianity	Other	Total (n) (%)
Below 40	29	10	39 (56.0)
Above 40	8	23	31 (44.0)
Total	37	33	70 (100.0)

The association between age and religious orientation was significant (Crammer's V. = .48., p. = 00.). This significance may be because younger persons think it more prestigious to associate one'self with Christianity than with "pagan" "idol worship".

Traditional Education.

It was considered crucial to find out the kinds of traditional education persons in the sample had been exposed to, since so much has been written in the preceding chapters about Bassa education.

Table 10. Traditional Education of Rural and Urban Respondents.

	Tiribi, Tuwa, Ushiga %	None (Men) %	None (Women) %	Total (n) %
Rural	67.0	26.0	7.0	100.0 (43)
Urban	18.0	63.0	19.0.	100.0 (27)
G. Total	48.9	41.0	10.0	100.0 (70)

The bulk of the of the sample, 43 persons (67.0 per cent) who live in the rural areas, have been initiated into Tiribi and received other forms of Bassa education like tuwa (healing arts) and Ushiga (divination). Only 18.0 per cent of the urban sample received such training. This supports the claim made earlier that children who enrol in schools eventually "drop out" of or never even get "enroled" in traditional Bassa institutions of socialization. Only 26.0 per cent of males in the rural areas have never received training in Bassa institutions of learning like Tiribi. Sixty-three per cent of the urban sample did not receive training in Tiribi. This shows, that the fears Bassa parents had, that children who go to school would abandon the ways of their fathers is justified by these data.

The amount of formal education the persons in the sample have was considered a useful indication of what Bassa response to Western education has been. The data on this is presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Formal Education of Rural and Urban Respondents.

	None (%)	Prim (%)	Sec/T (%)	Com.H (%)	Total (%)	n
Rural	74.0.	21.0	5.0	-	100.0	(43)
Urban	15.0	18.0	41.0	26.0	100.0	(27)
Total	51.0.	20.0	19.0	10.0	100.0	(70)

Most of the rural respondents have had no formal education. Seventy-four per cent of the rural sample have never been to a formal school. This is further indication of the late response of the Bassa to the agencies of Western education. Twenty per cent of the rural sample have had some primary education. Only 5.0 of the rural sample have had secondary/technical education.

Before discussing the education of the urban sample, there is a need to describe what Community health training is all about. This is a government programme in which persons who have had primary education are trained as nursing aids, supervisors for community clinics and heads of community health centres. A Community Health Assistant has the equivalent of a high school diploma. A Community Health Officer is the equivalent of a college diploma. The urban data shows that most of the Bassas who live in the towns do so on the basis of the formal education they have received and the jobs

such education has enabled them to have. Eighteen per cent of the urban sample have some primary education. Forty-one per cent have had secondary education. Twenty-six per cent have had community health training, while only 15.0 per cent of the urban have no formal education.

5.2 What Do The Bassa Think About Schools Today?

A first step in studying the Bassa definition of the situation was the question, **"What is the greatest problem of the Bassa people today?"** The responses have been grouped into three broad categories, since these are the themes around which the answers revolved. For instance, there was no point providing a separate column for a response like, "The problem of the Bassa today is that we suffer too much! The other tribes hate us!" from "The problem of the Bassa is the Egbirra! They control everything! They do not want to share anything with us!" Knowledge of the polities of Umaisha and Toto districts enabled the researcher to know that both responsdents were referring to the Egbirra domination of the local government structure of Umaisha and Toto districts. A response like, "We lack people who know the ways of this new age" has the same meaning as, "We do not have people who the government would listen to." Both respondents are saying they lack a Western educated personnel. The responses were therefore grouped according to their contextual meaning.

Table 12. Bassa Definition of their Problems.

	Oppression %	Lack of educated personnel %	Not Sure %	Total (n) %
Rural	54.0	41.0	5.0	100.0 (43)
Urban	53.0	47.0	-	100.0 (27)
G. Total	54.0	43.0	3.0	100.0 (70)

Fifty-four per cent of the rural sample claimed "oppression" by their neighbours, a phenomenon the Bassa describe as orugusu , was the major problem of the community today. Forty- one per cent of the rural sample, thought their lack of a Western educated personnel, people who can hold positions of power, was the major problem of the community. The Bassa describe this as **u'zawa atua na mepi e'yi**, literally meaning, "lack of people with the know-how" or "lack of those who know and matter".

In the urban sample, 53.0 per cent of the sample, claim "oppression" by their neighbours was the major problem of the community, 47.0 per cent described the lack of a Western educated manpower is the major problem of the community. During the interviews, statements, like the one made by this farmer from Sardauna were common:

"Our greatest problem today is that we have been left behind by the other

> tribes...I would be proud if there was a big government position held by a Bassa. We lack Bassas with big positions. Today, people from other tribes control our land, we need powerful positions which others people will reckon with."

Another informant, a woman from Yimua said:

> "The problem of the Bassa today? It is the Egbirras! They oppress us. But we have decided to stop this oppression."

A chief who holds the rank of Madaki Sarkin Samari (leader of the youth) said:

> 'What bothers the Bassa people most is their being oppressed by other tribes."

A village chief (an aguma), said:

> "The problem of the Bassa today is the lack of a paramount ruler and people who have gone to school. Without people who have gone to school, the Bassa people cannot stand."

Another informant, a 57 year old farmer said:

> "Our problem is that we do not have people who have gone to school. The other tribes have more people who have gone to school. Our fathers are to blame for this. We could have been stronger than we are today. We have realized the value of going to school at a time when other tribes have gone far ahead of us. This is our greatest sorrow today."

The identification of "oppression" and "lack of educated personnel" as the greatest problems of the Bassa community was observed in all age categories and applied irrespective of rural or urban residence (see Tables 13 and 14).

Table 13.

Identification of Problems of the Bassa by Age.

	Oppression by our Enemies %	Lack of Educated Personnel %	Total % (n)
Below 40	23	15	38 (55.0)
Above 40	17	14	31 (45.0)
Total	40 (58.0)	29 (42.0)	69[3] (100.)

The association between age and identification of the problems of the Bassa was not strong (Crammer's V, = .05., p.= n.s.).

Table 14.

Identification of Bassa Problems by Residence.

	Oppression by our Enemies %	Lack of Educated Personnel %	Total % (n)
Rural	24	18	42 (61.0)
Urban	16	11	27 (39.0)
Total	40 (58)	29 (42.0)	69 (100.0)

The association between residence and the problems of the Bassa was not significant (Crammer's V = .02., p. = n.s.).

What could not be missed during the interviews was the comparison the respondents made between the amount of Western education their neighbours the Egbirra have and the power this has given them over the Bassa. So a question asked was: **"Bassas have not had peace with some of their neighbours. Do you think these problems would exist if the Bassa had sent their children to school?"** All the rural and urban respondents (100.00) said "No!". So the question "Why?" was asked. An informant, a farmer in Toto said:

"That is what gave the Egbirras positions of power and that is why they

have been able to oppose the Government's White Paper."

An informant from the village of Yimua said:

> "The root of our oppression is our lack of Western education. That is why our neighbours oppress us."

A farmer from Sardauna said:

> "They would not have been able to oppress us. We would have been enlightened too."

Another respondent from Sardauna, a woman and wife of a farmer said:

> "Nobody would be cheating us today if we had gone to school. Nobody would be taking advantage of our lack of knowledge."

A thirty- eight year old farmer from Sardauna said:

> "Education is what has given our enemies positions of power and influence.."

A sixty-nine year old farmer said:

> "No! We would not have had trouble with our neighbours! If you can read and write no one can cheat you or you into trouble."

A twenty-seven year old farmer from Yimua summarized the feelings of most of the respondents when he said:

> "Education has given our enemies an advantage over us."

The Bassa parents interviewed saw education as a kind of weapon which would serve anyone who has it. They think of Western education as the "secret weapon" which has given their Egbirra neighbours advantages through granting them access to the agencies of government. The Bassa appear to think their main "weakness" vis a vis their neighbours is "ignorance" of the ways of the "new age". They think this has resulted in their "powerless" condition, since most Bassas lack the credentials for access to the

organs of the state.

A question which followed was: "Are the Bassa doing enough to solve these problems?" Forty persons, (93.0 per cent of the rural sample) said "Yes", while three persons (7.0. per cent) said they were "Not certain". For the urban sample, twenty-six persons (96.0.per cent) said "Yes" while one person (4.0 per cent) said "No". That is, 66 persons, (94.0 per cent of the sample) believed the Bassa were doing enough to solve the problems of the community. Another question was asked: "In what ways are the Bassa trying to solve these problems?"

Table 15. Bassa Ways of Solving Their Problems.

	Sending Children to school. (%)	Resisting Egbirra control of L.Govt. (%)	Total (%)	n
Rural	58.0	42.0	100.0	(40)
Urban	39.0	61.0	100.0	(26)
G. Total	47.0	53.0	100.0	(66)

"Sending children to school" is described by a majority of the rural sample (58.0 per cent), as the way Bassas are dealing with the problems of "oppression" and "lack of power" For the urban sample, 61.0 per cent thought "resisting Egbirra rule" was the way Bassas were solving their problems. Four persons thought the Bassa were not doing enough to solve their problems. For example 1 person in the urban sample thought not enough Bassas were sending their children to school. Three persons in the rural sample said they were not certain if the Bassa were doing enough to solve their problems at all.

A moderately strong relationship was observed between the identification of how Bassa are trying to solve their problems and residence (Crammer's V, = .39., p. = 00.).

Table 16.

Residence and Views on How Bassa's are Trying to Solve their Problems.

	Sending Their Children to School	Resisting Egbirra Control of Local Govt.	Total (%)
Rural	19	15	34 (52.0)
Urban	7	25	32 (48.0)
G. Total	26 (39.0)	40 (61.6)	66 (100.)

Most urban residents thought resisting Egbirra domination of the government was the way most Bassa were trying to solve their problems. The reason for this may be because of the "strong feelings" Bassas urban residents have regarding the way "their people" are treated in the local administration of Umaisha and Toto districts. The prominence of the theme of "resisting Egbiira" in the minds of urban dwelling Bassas could also be attributed to other reasons. Urban dwelling Bassas have participated in helping their rural dwelling kith and kin organize and maintain resistance to the Egbirras through the writing of petitions and press statements (examples of which we saw in Chapter 3) and the mobilization of legal defence. The success of the 1984-85 Tax Revolt was partly due to the role urban dwelling Bassas played in mobilizing and sustaining "resistance" as

members of the executive of the B.D.C.U. The input of Western educated Bassas was also very significant in the sittings of the Dr. Abdullahi, Ogomudia and John Samchi panels. This created a deep impression in the minds of Bassa parents on the advantages of knowing the "whiteman's knowledge". It is not surprising that for many rural dwellers, sending their children to school was the main issue in their definition of "How we are trying to solve our problems".

A question prepared to directly test Bassa consciousness about formal education was: How do you think Bassa parents should raise their children? Should they continue raising them in the ways of their fathers as farmers and initiates into Tiribi and other Bassa ways, or should they send them to schools?

Table 17.

Parental Views on How Children Should Be Raised.

	Bassa ways only. %	Schools mainly. %	Some to schools and other by Bassa ways %	Total (n) %
Rural	4.0	47.0	49.0	100.0 (43)
Urban	-	75.0	25.0	100.0 (27)
G. Total	3.0	57.0	40.0	100.0 (70)

Only two persons in the sample (4 per cent) wanted Bassa children to be raised only in the traditional ways of farming and **Tiribi**. One of these, a old man over seventy years old said to me:

> "Those are the only ways I know."

The other, a sixty-nine year old farmer who holds the title of Madaki (Chief's prime minister) in one of the villages said:

> "As for me, I prefer the ways of my ancestors. Those who are younger have their ways, but if I am to make a choice, I would choose the way of my fathers."

Forty persons in the sample, 57.0 per cent, want formal schools to be the main instrument

for preparing Bassa children for adult roles. While there is clearly a change in Bassa attitude towards formal schools, the interviewer could not but notice that most rural dwelling Bassa, despite their appreciation of the value of schools, seemed to believe there should be a **division of effort** within the household. Some parents think only some children should go to school, while the others continue receiving training in Bassa ways. Forty per cent of the total sample, thought there should be this kind of **division of effort**. This may be understood within the context of the fact that most of the rural sample make their living as peasant farmers. As peasants, the household, mainly sons, are the main source of farm labour. Despite the attitudinal change in Bassa parents, the demands of the Bassa farm economy still place constraints on the actual **act** of sending children to school. Since only two parents had opted for traditional Bassa ways of socialization, the responses of the other sixty-eight parents were tested for the degree of association with age and residence. No significant association was observed between age and choice of child rearing method (Crammer's V, = .19., p.= n.s) However, most parents under 40 years of age tended to prefer formal education as the way Bassas should prepare their children for adult roles. It was not surpring that a significant relationship was observed between residence and choice of child rearing method (Crammer's V, = .33., p. =,00.). While the number of rural dwelling parents who chose formal education was comparable to the urban dwelling

Table 18.

Choice of Method of Child Preparation for Adult Roles by Residence.

	Formal Education %	Division of Effort Approach %	Total %
Rural	44.0	56.0	100.0 (41)
Urban	78.0	22.0	100.0 (27)
G. Total	57.0	43.0	100.0 (68)

parents who did the same, most rural dwelling parents preferred the "division of effort" approach.

The forty (40) parents who said they want Bassa children prepared for adult roles mainly through formal schools were then asked the question, "**Why do you think this way.**"

Table 19.

Why Parents Want Children Prepared For Adult Roles Through Formal Schools.

	Liberation (%)	We suffer because we rejected schools. (%)	Schools will open a wider world (%)	Total & (n)
Rural	75.0	21.0	4.0.	100.0 (19)
Urban	70.0	30.0	-	100.0 (21)
G.Total	65.0	33.0	2.0	100.0 (40)

Sixty-five per cent of the parents who want Bassa children raised mainly through formal schools describe schools as the instrument of "our liberation". A respondent at Nasarawa said:

"Education is the key to our struggle"

Thirty-one per cent of these parents who want schools made the main way for preparing children for adult life blame the "oppression" of the Bassa people today on their having

rejected formal education in the past. Liberation for the Bassa community appears to mean having "people in positions of power", "people who can defend us against our enemies", people who would change the balance of power with their Egbirra neighbours. A farmer in the village of Sardauna said:

> "I prefer schools! No matter how good we are at farming and the ways of our ancestors, will that make the government listen to us? With Western education great things would come our way."

Another respondent, aged thirty-five said:

> "Farming alone cannot save us. It cannot make us grow! Only schools can. Because all we did was farm, we are today unprepared for the changes on our world."

Another respondent, aged fifty-seven said:

> "For me, in this age, I do not think the old Bassa ways can save us. We have even lost the mystical powers our ancestors employed in warfare. If our children employ the wisdom found in books, we will be saved. Even though farming has its uses, if the Bassa people will ever be saved from their present troubles, it will be by those who have gone to school..."

This respondent reflects an opinion which was common among many respondents, mainly that every age has its wisdom. In the days gone by, when warfare was common, the wisdom of the ancestors was useful. But in these days of peace, a new kind of wisdom, the sort found in books and schools is needed. One aspect of this consciousness is an awareness of the obsolescence of force and the need for the "arms of this age". Thus a respondent, a title holder with the rank of **Gezhima** (Senior Adviser) said:

> "We cannot go to war any more. War was the Bassa way of creating peace. That was the way of our ancestors and that was what we knew. But today, the way to create a good life is to go to school."

A forty-one old woman from Sardauna said:

> "The best way to raise Bassa children is to send them to school because everything these days requires an understanding of the new ways.

Another informant, aged thirty-six said:

> "Farming is good and has its benefits. But Western education is needed to resist oppression."

Another farmer, aged thirty and the father of a five year old child said:

> "My stand is that schools are the best way to educate children in this age...That is what would help us. It could open up the world to the Bassa people. Bassa ways alone cannot do it. Farming is good, but no matter what a good farmer you are,you can never become famous- you will not stand out. Farming and Bassa ways cannot give you power."

A respondent in Yimua indicates the tendency of the Bassa today to link "education" with "liberation":

> "My wish is that Bassas would send their children to school. This will set us free from our present darkness, which has made it possible for other tribes to oppress."

The twenty-eight parents who opted for the "division of effort" approach were also asked the "Why" question. Their response are presented in Table 20.

Table 20.

Why Some Bassa Parents Want Some Children To Go To School While Others Are Trained in Bassa Ways.

	Farming cannot be abandoned. %	Both the old and new ways are useful. %	Total (n) %
Rural	66.0	34.0	100.0 (22)
Urban	33.0	67.0	100.0 (6)
G. Total	75.0	25.0	100.0 (28)

Seventy-six per cent of the parents who believe in the "division of effort" approach, do so because of their continued belief in the need for Bassas to continue maintaining the farm economy. Twenty-five per cent think both the "old" and "new" ways are good, seemed to be more concerned about the preservation of the ceremonial and ritual aspects of Bassa culture. One of the respondents put it this way:

> "I would like some children to go to school, while some stay at home. If a person has three children, he should let two go to school while one helps him with the farm work. When a father becomes old, the child at home would be there to give assistance and those who have gone to school can also make their own contributions when they get work."

A chief, from the village of Gbokoro, said:

> "Bassa must not abandon farming because it is our heritage. School is

> important, but when learning the ways of another culture, you do not have to abandon what you inherited from your forebears. People must know you have a culture and a past. Some Bassas may go to school and if they succeed, they should continue in it. If they do not succeed, they should come back home and become farmers. We need both farmers and people who have gone to school."

There was a clear awareness on the part of the respondents that formal schools are the "ways of another culture". But Bassas have to accept these "alien" ways as a "necessary evil" which must be accepted to give Bassas access to positions of power in a world which has become bigger than theirs.

The awareness that schools are the "ways of another culture" was closely studied, especially with relation to how parents thought schools would affect the practice and continuation of Bassa culture. Since the parents who preferred the "division of effort" approach had indicated their desire to see Bassa culture preserved, it was judged that the group to whom to present questions on how schools would affect Bassa culture are parents who had said Bassa children should be raised mainly through formal schools. This question was therefore asked: **"As parents who want Bassa children prepared for the future through schools mainly, would you want them to know Bassa ways as much as they would Western education?"** The response among the nineteen (19) rural and twenty-one (21) urban parents (57.0 of the total sample) was "Yes". Then a "Why" question was posed: "Why do you want Bassa children who go to school to know Bassa culture as they would Western education?"

Table 21 (a)

Why Bassa Parents Would Want Children Who Go To School To Know Bassa Culture.

	They need to know their identity. %	Their education is not complete without culture. %	Total (n) %
Rural	73.0	27.0	100.0 (19)
Urban	36.0	64.0	100.0 (21)
G. Total	45.0	55.0	100.0 (40)

This group of parents, despite the views on the value of Western education, think that knowledge of "Bassa ways" is critical for the identity of Bassa children. Indeed, most of these parents 55.0 per cent of the group, thought knowledge of Bassa ways is necessary for the "complete education" of their children. By "complete education" was meant the combination of knowledge acquired through formal education and "knowledge of their people's culture". A common statement the researcher heard was one made by a farmer, a father of three:

> "Western education is not enough. The children must have roots in their culture."

Another respondent, a chief from Rudu, said:

> "The children must not forget their culture and heritage as Bassas. They must not lose their identity."

A respondent who strongly expressed his feeling on the need for school going children to know their people's culture said:

> "Yes, I want them to know Bassa culture as much as they would Western education....If Bassa culture is lost, it would be a great loss to me because I would be without roots and would loose my identity. **My corpse would be a body of contention (ru'uo ra shamanje)**[4]. People will doubt my Bassa identity..."

An informant, a farmer from Gbokoro said:

> "It would bother me if Western educated Bassas do not know the culture of their people. Bassas may lose their traditional rights without knowledge of their history."

Another farmer from Sarduana said:

> "A person without culture, is a bastard!"

For these respondents, the cultural knowledge that school going Bassas need includes knowledge of tribal rituals, their significance and mastery of the Bassa language and history.

The other 40.0 per cent of the total sample, the twenty-eight parents who believed in the "division of effort" approach were also asked the question: **Would you want Bassa children who go to school to know the culture and traditions of their people as much as they would Western education?** Their answer was "Yes". The "why" question followed. The responses of these parents were centred on the following issues:

Table 21 (b)

Why Bassa Parents Want Children Who Go To School To Know Bassa Culture.

	Identity. %	Preservation of Bassa Culture. %	Total (n) %
Rural	41.0	59.0	100.0 (22)
Urban	67.0	33.0	100.0 (6)
G. Total	46.0	54.0	100.0 (28)

In other to further understand Bassa consciousness with regard to Western education, another question was posed to the respondents: "If Bassas send their children to school, these children would not be around to help their parents on farms and may not know Bassa ways like Tiribi and **Tuwa**. Do you still want Bassa children to go to school in spite of this"? This question was considered mostly relevant for respondents who were actively making their living in agriculture and for whom institutions like **Tiribi** are a feature of village social and religious life. The question was therefore posed to the rural respondents.

Table 22.

Rural Parental Responses on the Effects of Schooling on the Bassa Way of Life.

	Not all should go to school. %	All children should still go to school. %	Children should go to school, but must be taught Bassa ways. %	Total %
Rural	35.0	46.0	19.0.	100.0 (42)

Forty-six per cent of the sample want Bassa children to go to school and do without **Tiribi** and have their parents forego their being part of the household's labour supply. Thirty-five per cent of the sample, however prefer the "division of effort" approach. These parents comprise sizeable proportion of the sample. Nineteen per cent of the sample say they want Bassa children who go to school to be made to learn the culture of their people. When this group is combined with the 35.0 per cent who want the "division of effort" strategy, one can observe an overwhelming concern with the questions of "identity" and "cultural preservation". When those concerned with these issue are combined, they constitute the majority with 54.0 per cent of the total rural sample.

To further explore the issue of cultural identity and preservation, it was resolved

to ask a question asked before with different words. In research, it is useful repeating a question about the same thing in different ways, to see if the response would be constant. The question was: **How would you want Bassa children who go to school to relate to the culture and traditions of their people?"**

Table 23. **Parental Views on How School Going Children Should Relate to Bassa Culture and Traditions,**

	Both ways must be studied hard. %	There is need for a division of effort. %	Total (n) %
Rural	88.0	12.0	100.0 (43)
Urban	100.0	-	100.0 (27)
G. Total	91.0	9.0	100.0 (70)

Eigty-eight per cent of the rural sample, want Bassa children to "Go to school and still learn Bassa culture as much as they would Western knowledge". Twelve per cent of the rural sample, not being certain that children who go to school may be able to learn Bassa ways, preferred the "division of effort" approach. All the parents in the urban sample want Bassa children who go to school to learn the culture of their people as they would

Western education. The "Why" question again followed. This question was posed to the 37 rural parents who said they want Bassa children who go to school to learn the culture of their people and the 27 parents in the urban sample (total of 64 parents).

Table 24.

Why Parents Want School Going Children To Learn Bassa Culture.

	Western education is not subtitute for Bassa Culture %	Bassa culture must never be lost. %	The children need to know their identity. %	Total (n) %
Rural	42.0.	24.0	34.0.	100.0 (37)
Urban	56.0	26.0	18.0	100.0 (27)
G. Total	51.0.	22.0.	27.0.	100.0 (64)

As the response to this question indicates, what was of paramount importance to parents are questions of the "continued necessity" of Bassa culture. The question which emerges in light of the above is: If Bassa parents think knowledge of the 'ways of their ancestors' is as important as knowledge of the "ways of the whiteman", how do they

want these two bodies of knowledge to co-exist in the consciousness of their children? What roles in Bassa material and social life have parents assigned these bodies of culture? What the data indicates is that, because of changes in the political economy of the environment in which Bassa society subsists, parents have given Bassa culture the role of being the markers of Bassa identity for children going into a multi-ethnic and diversified world. Parents seem to have resolved that the children sacrificed on the altar of change must bear certain cultural tribal marks, the marks which would identify their children as Bassas wherever they go. This, many of the parents seem to think, is necessary, not only to provide their children with cultural reference points and but to serve as sources of identity.

Since children who go to school effectively cease to be a significant part of the household's source of labour, some parents have also gone on to redefine Western knowledge as a potential source of economic security for themselves. Thus Western education has been given a dual role in the consciousness of Bassa parents. On the one hand, it is expected to provide them with economic benefits while at the same time providing the Bassa community with the personnel needed to rectify power imbalances between Bassas and their neighbours. This conclusion was arrived at when examining the responses to two questions. The first was: "**What do Bassa parents who send their children to school stand to gain?**" The second question was: "**What would the entire Bassa community gain from sending their children to school?**"

Table 25.

Parental Views on the Expected Benefits of a Child's Going to School for the Individual Parent.

	Economic Support %	Protection from Harassment %	Total & (n) %
Rural	68.0.	32.0	100.0 (42)
Urban	44.0.	56.0.	100.0 (27)
G. Total	57.0	43.0.	100.0 (69)

Sixty-eight per cent of the sample think that for the individual parent, the benefits of a child's formal education are economic, mainly in the form of providing him money to invest in the farm or support in their old age. A parent from Sardauna said:

> "No father who has sent his children to school will ever be hungry. Even if it is only one child who succeeds in completing his education and getting a job, that one child can feed us all. No matter how hard we work on our farms, we can never provide the ourselves the good things that one child can."

Factors which could be described as "political" also feature significantly in the response of parents. Thirty-two per cent of rural parents describe one of the

benefits of a child's education as "freedom from harassment". An aspect of rural political life, especially for a community like the Bassa is the myriad of unofficial fines charged by the police and petty local government officials. Officials have been known to extort money from villagers in accordance with "this or that law", laws the villagers know nothing about. Bassa parents have realized that individuals with Western educated children suffer less of such harassment. When in a harassing situation, such parents ask their "enlightened" children for help. Such help could include suing a government official, writing an official petition against an offending officer and in some cases, hiring the services of a lawyer in defence of his parent's rights. Thus apart from being a potential source of economic support, Bassa parents have defined Western educated children as potential upholders of what is in effect are their "fundamental human rights" in a local government system which has a history of hostility to the community. During the interviews, one of the parents, a farmer from Yimua said:

> "A child who has gone to school will protect his father from cheats and oppression. Bassas cannot deal with oppression in this new age because of our ignorance."

A forty-nine year old farmer from Sardauna expressed what was commonly heard from many parents. He said:

> "If the government sends a letter to this village, the child who has gone to school will read it to us who have not. That child would be able to protect himself from **orugusu** (oppression and aggression) and he would be able to go anywhere without fear. If you have no knowledge someone would come along and cheat you out of what is yours, all because he has the knowledge. If you have no knowledge you are blind. You will be asked to do things you should not do- all because the one who oppresses you has more knowledge.... A Bassa with knowledge will be kinder to you, unlike someone from another tribe. The oppression we suffer today is all because we did not go to school."

A chief from Utu said:

> "A child who goes to school will bring good things to the father, for example reading letters from the government and being able to carry petitions to the authorities."

Another respondent from Yimua, said:

> "If you ask me the benefits of school, this is my answer. If you can read and write, you cannot be easily cheated. You can detect deception very easily. Bassa ways cannot help you that way."

A fifty-seven year old farmer from Sardauna said:

> "In the past, when we were blind, the other tribes used to cheat us, But now that some of our children have gone to school, some of the oppression has stopped."

A common feeling among the Bassas interviewed is, that the root of all their troubles is "ignorance of the whiteman's ways". They describe this as **zawa iyi tumapa** (lack of knowledge) and **ulubuo** (blindness). This, they think leads to **orugusu** (oppression). Oppression in this age, many also seem to think, can only be resisted through **iyi tumapa** (knowledge) which comes from schools. While before the European came they resisted oppression through warfare, in this age, the way to resist oppression, according to many of the respondents, is knowledge of the ways of **biyivo** (the whiteman). In their opinion, their ignorance of **e'huene inyinzo fuo** (the ways of the new age) is what makes it possible for their Egbirra neighbours to oppress them.

On the other benefits of a child's education, an informant from Sardauna said:

> "A child who has gone to school and gets a job can help the father. The father would also become more important in the village as his sons give him money, hires labourers for his farm and sets his family free from oppression. Because of the position the son will gain, the father will find rest from his sufferings."

A titled elder from Sardauna said:

> "A child who has gone to school is of use to the parent. Such a child could send the parents money in times of need."

Thus, in the Bassa redefinition of the place of schools today, economic motives are closely tied to the political ones. All the knowledge acquired in the past, knowledge which is presented today as the rituals and practices of Bassa culture, have been given the role of being the badges and markers of Bassa identity for the children venturing into a culturally diverse world. As the results of the interviews were being examined, it increasingly appeared that what was going on in the consciousness of Bassa parents was more than a sudden realization of the value of Western education. It appears Bassa parents have in their minds, resolved to enter into a **cultural exchange relationship** with the changes in their environment. They appear prepared to give up a vital part of the community's labour force (their children or some of their children) to the raging torrents of change. In return, they hope to get back economic benefits and the power needed to make life fulfilling for Bassa individuals and the community. What also appears to be happening in the consciousness of these parents is, that having realized that Western education is in itself the product of another culture, the culture of the whiteman, they do not want to lose their children to the whiteman's world. Before sending forth their children, they want them tagged with the cultural markers of Bassa identity. These cultural markers of identity play the role of certificates of claims or are in effect cultural stock certificates. They also appear to have three purposes. Firstly, these certificates ensure the investments do not get lost in the process of the exchange. Secondly, they ensure that the investment, that is the school going child, can find its way "back home".

way "back home". Bassa parents hope these "markers" will guarantee that the Western educated Bassa has no doubts as to "who he really is." Thirdly these "cultural markers" allow the Bassa community to make good their claims on whatever benefits may emerge from the cultural exchange transaction, as these Western educated Bassas defend the interests of their ethnic group.

This cultural exchange relationship becomes even more manifest as the responses to the second question is examined. The question was: What would the entire Bassa community gain from sending children to school?

Table 26.

Parental Views on the Expected Benefits of a Child's Going to School for the Bassa Community.

	Powerful people in government. %	People with wealth and influence. %	Liberation from oppression. %	Total (n) %
Rural	42.0	15.0	43.0	100.0 (42)
Urban	86.0	-	14.0.	100.0 (27)
G. Total	60.0	7.0	33.3	100.0 (69)

The expected benefits of a child's education for the entire Bassa community, according to 60.0 per cent of the sample could again be described as "political", mainly the issue of the acquisition of power by Bassa individuals. The question of "liberation from oppression" also has a sizeable response of 33.0 per cent. The issue of "liberation" however seems to be more important for the rural sample than the urban sample. For the rural sample, 43.0 per cent mention "liberation from oppression" as an expected value of a child's acquisition of Western education. For the urban sample, only 14.0 per cent mention this factor, and even then, this is only in Toto town, which is closer to the rural areas that Jos and Nasarawa. The prominence of this response in the rural sample is a reflection of the fact that most police harassment and extortion by local government officials is more likely to be experienced by a rural dwelling Bassas than say, a factory worker or government official in a city. The harassment of their people by local government officials has been a subject of many petitions by Western educated Bassas. Thus, the association of Western education with "liberation" by Bassa parents is something derived their recent experiences. For example, during the interviews, a sixty-nine year old farmer from Yimua said:

> "Look at us in Bassaland today. We are grateful. We breathe more freely because of our sons who went to school. We are reaping the benefits of the labours of those of our sons who endured and went to school. Today the Fulani do not collect our taxes, neither do the Egbirra. It is now Bassas who collect taxes from Bassas. This was brought about by our children who went to school...We have finished this discussion with laughter and goodwill. If it was a Fulani or Egbirra, there would be no laughter between us, only shouts and commands. Our children who went to school have set us free! If they had not gone to school, how would they have saved us?"

A chief from Asepi said:

> "Were it not for Bassas who went to school, our tribe would have been in a hopeless situation. We are very happy with the Bassas who went to school. That is why I encourage my grandchildren to go to school."

Being over seventy years old, I thought this chief would be a good source of information on how Bassas reacted to school say, about forty years ago. So I asked him this question:

> **Interviewer:** When your children were of the age of going to school, did you send them to school?"
>
> **Chief:** Ah! (Laughs) I never thought of that then! I wanted them to help me on the farm. We used to hide our children in the forest!"

An informant, from Sardauna, with the title of **Saarda** (the chief's minister of information) said:

> "Before, we had to go through the humiliation of having people from other tribes turban [install] our chiefs. Our taxes were also collected by them. But today, it is Bassas who collect our taxes. It is Bassas who turban our chiefs. We are becoming ourselves again and I am glad."

This was a common sentiment among the Bassa interviewed whenever asked to evaluate the benefits of Western education in the community.

In order to further understand the nature of the exchange relationship which may be taking place it was important finding out answers to these questions: What do the Bassa consider very valuable in their culture? It is assumed here, that it is these valuable aspects of their culture that would play the role of the "badges" and "markers" of Bassa identity. It is also these markers"that parents would want their cultural voyagers to wear in the quest for the golden fleece. These questions were therefore posed to the parents. The first question was:"**What do you like about Bassa culture? What is it that makes you proud to be Bassa?**" The second was:"**How do you want Bassas who go to school**

to relate to these aspects of Bassa culture"?

Table 27.

What Parents Value in Bassa Culture.

	Bassa History and Language. %	Farming skills and industry. %	Songs, ceremonies and dances. %	Total (n) %
Rural	57.0	18.0	25.0	100.0 (27)
Urban	60.0	-	40.0	100.0 (43)
G. Total	60.0	11.0	29.0	100.0 (70)

Fifty-seven per cent of the rural sample and 60.0 per cent of the urban sample, Bassa history and language are the most valuable aspects of their culture. For twenty-five per cent of the total sample, the most valuable element of Bassa culture are the dances, especially the group's national dance, **ugunu**. One informant said:

"Only a dying Bassa would not rise to the drums of the **ugunu** dance."

This dance is a mark of identity for all Bassa groups and can be found among the Bassas of the Upper Niger down to the Bassas of the Lower Benue. During the dance, Bassa warriors line up in columns, in a manner similar to the Bassa battle order. The warriors

brandish swords captured from the Fulani and display a precision of movement which is supposed to prove their prowess and impress the womenfolk. In many respects, the **ugunu** dance is the "mascot" of the Bassa ethnic group. The other dances include **araga**[6], **u'taci** and **e'ke**.

The other question was: **How do you want Bassas who go to school to relate to these aspects of Bassa culture?** The response to this is presented in Table 28.

Table 28.

Parental Views on How Western Educated Bassas Should Relate to the Most Valued Aspects of their Culture.

	Study & write Bassa hist. and promote reading & writing in Bassa. %	Make Bassa dances known to the world. %	Total (n) %
Rural	77.0	23.0	100.0 (43)
Urban	60.0.	40.0	100.0 (27)
G. Total	72.0	28.0	100.0 (70)

Seventy-seven per cent of the sample considered the recording of Bassa history and the promotion of reading and writing in the Bassa language as one of the things Bassas who go to school should do. They would want them to write down the oral traditions and turn the Bassa language in a written one. A common statement with this regard was:

"Once it is written, it cannot be lost."

The impression got during the interviews, was that, parents want Bassa history and language preserved in writing both for the sake of those who go to school and those who choose to continue in Bassa ways. The informant from Sardauna with the title of **Saarda,** who was earlier on referred to said:

> "Some aspects of Bassa culture may be lost, but not all. When a child returns from school, he would record the things his father tells him about history."

Parents seem to hope that as their children who receive Western education record Bassa history and traditions, and write down the Bassa language, they would reaffirm and reinforce their Bassa identity. This, they seem to hope, would make them less vulnerable to a condition Bassa parents frequently referred to as being "lost" (**tuo ina**). Being certain of their "Bassaness" and by identifying with their Bassa heritage through its linguistic form (the Bassa language) and its artistic form (Bassa dances), parents hope the Bassa community would be able to maintain the loyalty of the sons being sent to explore the cultural world of the whiteman. It is on the basis of this "loyalty to the tribe" that the community would be able to reap the benefits of the exchange between the world of the Bassa (**inyinzo Bubassa**) and the forces of change. The expected benefits of the transaction, as noted above are economic support and protection from harassment for the individual parent and the enhancement of the political power for the Bassa community.

By having Bassa their history recorded and their language written, Bassa parents hope not only to reinforce the Bassa identity of the children who go to school, but also hope to make literacy an aspect of the tool-box of Bassa culture. Thus literacy would have the functional role of being a preserver of Bassa culture for generations yet unborn. This is a context within which the common statement heard from parents, "Once it is written, it cannot be lost" could be interpreted.

An area which was considered useful for seeking evidence for consciousness transformation among Bassa parents is the dreams parents have for their children. This

question was therefore asked: **If you are asked to choose any of the following futures for your children, which one would you choose: (i) A farmer in the village? (ii) A Western educated Bassa working in the city?** The persons for whom this question was considered mist relevant are rural dwelling farmers. The responses have been coded: FIV for a "Farmer in the village"; (WEC) for "Western educated and working in the city and (BW) for "Both ways have their merits". The responses are presented in Table 29.

Table 29.

The Aspirations Rural Bassa Parents Have for their Children

	WEC %	**BW** %	**FIV** %	Total (n) %
Rural	47.0	51.0	2.0	100.0 (43)

The sample is almost evenly split on this matter and the response is similar to that on an earlier question in which the farmers had been asked: How do want Bassa children to be raised? Should they be raised in Bassa ways as farmers and initiates into Tiribi or should they be sent to school? In the Table 29 we see 51.0 per cent saying being a farmer or working in the city are both acceptable futures for them. This time 47.0 per cent think being Western educated and working in the city is the future they want for their children. While the reasons for which parents want their children Western educated have been discussed above, the persistence by some parents in seeing the continued necessity of Bassa ways like farming is a very significant aspect of parental responses. When asked: **Why do you say both choices have their merit?** A common response from the parents

was: "Farming and other Bassa ways cannot be abandoned." That is, in spite of their desire to send their children to school and all the benefits which they think would comes with being Western educated, the vitality and validity of " Bassa ways" is not in doubt to many parents. If the consciousness of parents who believe in the "division of effort" approach is to be put in words, what they seem to be saying is this: "While I would have considered my son's going to school a personal loss in the past, I do not think so any more. Those Bassas who went to school have helped us a great deal. Schools, like farming, have their value. I will not stand in the way of any of my children who wants to go to school. In fact I will send some of children to school and keep others at home to help me in my farm work." For parents who think schools should be the main way of preparing children for adult roles, their consciousness could be expressed this way: " I have been a farmer all my life. However, looking at the way the world around me is changing, I cannot think of a better way of preparing my son for a better tomorrow than sending him to school." This seems to be what the farmer in Sardauna who was earlier on quoted meant when he said:

> "What I have seen is this. No father who has sent his children to school will ever be hungry. Even if it is only one child who succeeds in completing his education and getting a job, that child can feed us all..."

What becomes apparent here are two levels of the transformation of consciousness. It is apparent that both categories of parents have all received some form of re-socialization and re-education about the value of schools in their adult lives. Their responses and decisions are however not the same. Some parents have resolved that despite the immediate demands of the Bassa household economy, especially the labour

aspects, schooling is a worthy investment for which immediate sacrifices should be made. These parents could be described as possessing a **futuristic consciousness**. Having seen the benefits which Western education has brought to the Bassa community through the few Bassas who sent their children to school, these parents are literally ready to thrown in all they have into preparing their children for adult roles through formal education. These parents are futuristically goal orientated, risk taking and almost entrepreneurial in their outlook.

The other group of parents, those who prefer the "division of effort" approach have a more **conservative consciousness**, characterized by a cautious approach to change. Despite the benefits of Western education, these parents want to continue to make the age old and time tested Bassa methods a vital aspect of preparing children for adult roles. That may be why they want some children to go to school, while the others receive traditional Bassa education.

The reasons for which some parents said their dreams for their children is to see them Western educated and working in the city were also centred on political factors. The responses were coded thus: "This will give Bassas people with positions of power and influence" was coded "Power"; "This is a new age. We must find new ways" was coded "New Age", while "To support me" was coded "Support".

Table 30.

Why Rural Parents Want Their Children to be Western Educated and Working in the City.

Power	New Age	Support	Total	
%	%	%	%	n
75.0	14.0	11.0	100.0	(20)

The persistence by Bassa parents in associating Western education and urban based occupations with power must be understood in the light of two facts. The first has to do with the political economy of urban-rural relations. Urban areas are the centres of power in Africa and many parts of the Third World. The administrative policies which affect the governance of the rural hinterland originate in the cities. The cities are also the centres of affluence, wealth and commerce. In the case of Umaisha and Toto districts for instance, it is common belief that the only reason Egbirra chiefs still hold positions of power (at least symbolically) is because of their "influential sons in the cities". Many Bassas think, if they had to deal with local Egbirra chiefs alone, they would have "buried" Egbirra hegemony long ago. This became apparent when influential Egbirras mobilized the money and finances needed to take the Government of Plateau State to court over the White Paper.

The Bassas who have struggled for the administrative autonomy of their people are also city based. The petitions which were written on behalf of the Bassa community and many

of the delegations which pleaded the Bassa case before the authorities were prepared on the instigation of the city based "sons of Bassa". In fact, the Bassa Cultural Union (B.C.U.), which later developed into the Bassa Cultural and Development Association (B.C.D.U.), had a branch which was called the "B.C.U Abroad", with "abroad" referring to city based Bassas.

The second reason for the association of Western education with " power" and "liberation" lies in the fact the Bassa blame their "oppression" on their rejection of schools in the past. This is very apparent in the response of parents to this question: "For some time Bassa parents did not like sending their children to school. Looking back now, what do you think of this?" This question was posed only to the rural sample (42 respondents, less 1), since most of the urban sample are Western educated. Thirty eight (38) parents, that is, 91.0 per cent of the sample replied, "I think such parents acted wrongly." Four (4) of the parents, that is, 9.0 per cent of the sample said, "These parents had their reasons, though I now think they were wrong." This question followed: "Why do you say these parents acted wrongly?"

Table 31.

Why Rural Parents Think Not Sending Children to School in the Past was "Wrong".

	That is why the "Guinea-Fowls" oppress us. %	That is why we are ignorant of the ways. %	Total (n) %
Rural	79.0	21.0	100.0 (42)

Note: "Guinea Fowls" is a pejorative term used by the Bassa with reference to the Egbirras.

When asked to evaluate the decision by parents not to send children to school in the past, a respondent from Sardauna said:

> "Ah! Parents acted unwisely! If I had gone to school, I would have been wise in the ways of this age. Nobody would be able to oppress me."

A twenty eight old year old farmer from Gbokoro said:

> "These parents took the wrong decision, that is why the Bassa are behind other people today.

A forty year old farmer from Yimua said:

> "The decision by parents in the past to refuse to send children to school was very unwise indeed. That is the root of our Bassa problems today."

The woman from Sardauna said:

> "Our people refused to send their children to school because they thought

> the Fulani were after their children...Such thinking did not help us."

A chief from Gbokoro said:

> "The decision to refuse to send our children to school was made on darkness...and by doing so hindered our children from understanding the ways of this new age."

The state of Basss consciousness today is that Western education is the most important asset individuals in the community need to remove all the vestiges of administrative marginalization characterizing their condition in Umaisha and Toto districts.

5.3. Discussion.

What are the implications of consciousness transformation for the Bassas in the sample? The basis of this transformation, as we have noted, is the struggles for power with their neighbours, a struggle Bassas think is necessary to end their being "oppressed". The Bassa think that, if like their neighbours they also develop a Western educated personnel, they would be able to tip the balance of power in their favour. The study has endeavoured to situate this "power struggle" context historically. The data presented above have also linked the consciousness transformation process to issues of cultural identity. Knowledge of their "Bassa identity" has been noted as the basis which the Bassa parents interviewed hope would commit their Western educated children to the "liberation" of the community.

We also observed that despite evidence of a transformed consciousness, a characteristic of the Bassas interviewed was their confidence in the validity of their

cultural heritage. Western education, many of the parents seem to believe, is no substitute for knowledge of "Bassa ways". These parents think of culture as a "mark" or "badge" of identity. This identity, as we further observed, is the surety that they would reap the benefits of "investing" in the formal education process. This led to the conclusion that these Bassa envision sending their children to school as a cultural exchange/transaction relationship with the agencies of Western education. This exchange/transaction consists of the readiness by parents to forego the labour power of their children in return for Bassas who will be equipped for roles in the institutions of power.

The belief of those interviewed in the continued validity of their culture and the whole subject of "Bassa identity" is certainly a subject of sociological interest. In the first place, these concerns are evidence of the awareness that Western education is itself the agency of another cultural system. While "modernist developmentalists" would like to perceive Western education as "universal", the parents interviewed seem to be aware of the cultural underpinnings and "alien rationality" underlying what would be taught their children in schools. While they believe in the efficacy of Western education for equipping their children for roles in the bureaucratic organs of power, they do not believe such knowledge would make them "total personalities" or "complete persons". This raises questions about the place and significance of identity and the process of identification in social life. What role do identities play? McCall and Simmons describe identities as tools for the creation of balance and order in an otherwise chaotic social universe. They argue that:

> "Personal identities serve as the pegs upon which social identities and personal biographies can be hung. If an individual could not be recognized

> from one occasion to the other as the same person, no stable social relationships could be constructed, and therefore there would be no social identities at all." (1966 : 65).

Without identities, human beings find it impossible to plan since,:

> "....we act towards things in terms of their implications for our plans of action, and therefore we have to discover the identity and meaning of everything we encounter. For every plan of action, there is a classification of things in terms of their relevance to that plan." (Ibid).

As tools for creating orderly and stable relationships and as a medium for making it possible to plan future actions towards others, identities play a **regulatory role**. Apart from this, identities also have **role casting** functions, since they go hand in hand with **role expectations**. The role casting effects of identities is expressed in what McCall and Simmons describe as **social positions**. They note that:

> "we hold certain expectations toward the occupant of a position, and these expectations exhibit a normative as well as an anticipatory aspect. The set of expectations held toward a given social position is said to constitute the social role associated with the occupancy of that position."(Ibid: 66).

On the linkage between roles and identity, Berger notes that, "Every role in society has attached to it a certain identity" (Berger, 1963: 98). Identity is not something given or natural. It is bestowed in acts of social recognition and every identity requires social affiliations for its survival (Berger, ibid : 103). In the case of the Bassas interviewed, the desire that children going to school know Bassa culture is part of a process of **identification** and the **imprinting** of the Bassa image in the world of affiliations called **inyinzo buBassa** (the world of the Bassa). The consequence of this imprinting is being cast into a role. Within the context of the history and politics of Umaisha and Toto districts, this role is that of the tribal warrior, the wager of war against the enemies of

Bassa. It is a role aimed at remedying the Bassa group's sense of **community powerlessness**. Whether or not a Western educated Bassa would perform this role depends eventually on the individual himself. McCall and Simmons describe the conflicts between social expectations and individual action as **role interaction**. According to them, "Social position alone is not sufficient to specify role behaviour." (Ibid: 67).

The process of identification is dialectical in nature. While the Bassas interviewed are using the mould of the fibre of their culture to create a new Bassa warrior, they are also reacting to a process of identification which negated their sense of **who we are**. The Native Authority system had given them the identity of "pagan" underdog and expected them to play submissive and subject roles. The espousal of Western education by these Bassa parents is an attempt to contradict this negative identification with a positive one, one forged in the womb of concept of **Who I am** or **Who I should be**. Because of their historical and situational nature, identities can be expected to change (Berger, 1963: 106). They can be subject to manipulation and reconstruction, depending on the prevailing values of community. It is not therefore surprising that issues of identity feature so prominently in inter- ethnic power relationships. In such conflict situations, someone is resisting a negative identity and refusing to play a role assigned him/her by the dominant power structure. That person is involved in remaking and remoulding him/herself along a continuum of valued self-definition. **Identity** and **rebellion** are related concepts under conditions of social closure, usurpation and power struggles.

The existence of diverse identities and solidarities (Berger, 1973 : 168) within the boundaries of modern nations has been described as trouble spots for emerging (and some

old) states (Geertz, 1973: 261). These diverse identifications have the potential to undermine the "integrative potency" of the state (Berger, ibid). If the operators of modern states possess identities founded on "collective consciousness" other than that of the nation, then questions arise about the viability of statehood in area of high ethnic diversity like Africa. The central issue is probably not that diverse identities exist. The key sociological questions lies in how these identities intersect with class interests and how through hegemony, a dominant class imposes unanimity. The other key question may be expressed in the question: Under what conditions do these identities become significant enough to disrupt the engine of the state?

The Bassa study also raises this question: Is it cultures that change or people? This question is tied up to debates about the meaning of culture (Dillighman and Carneiro, 1987: 173-196). The one addresses this question depends on the nature of the problem being studied. The Bassas interviwed suggests, "Culture does not "work", "move", "change", but it is worked, is moved, is changed" (Lynd, 1939: 39). While culture remains the context for human action, it is also an intervening variable and vehicle for the processes of change. Culture is the historical vehicle and agency of social change. Such change occurs as human beings reinterpret the role of cultural symbols and seek to transform and redeploy them as agencies for expressing the new meanings of new situations. The Bassa child who goes to school may no longer effectively be a member of the Bassa institution of **Tiribi**, but his father would want him to know the functions of **Tiribi** as part of his being Bassa. The child is transformed from being a **Biribi** to being merely a bearer of the knowledge of what **Tiribi** is. In the Western educated child,

the Bassa parent retires **Tiribi** as an active institution of Bassa culture and transforms it into a mere symbol of identity. This complex process of redeployment and redefinition cannot be done by culture in the abstract, but by flesh and blood human beings. In the household for example, the child is transformed from being part of the supply of labour into a knight on an errand. He is expected to obtain the "whiteman's" knowledge in order to create a **greater** and **free** Bassa. Despite redefinitions and transformations, culture remains the terms of reference of change. This inclines us to look at culture as a dynamic and continuous learning process. It changes as the people who bear it change. It changes as people reinterpret and reformulate their conception of "the problem". This dialectical relationship between human beings and the agency of culture has been described thus:

> "Man is an animal. A human being that is an animal plus culture. Culture was brought into being by man, but once in existence culture acquired a life of its own and has moulded men and women into human beings with each generation that has followed. But culture is, first and last, dependent upon man; it will live while he lies and dies when he dies." (Dillingham and Carneiro: ibid: 355).

Individuals confronting change seem to be aware that they are moving into the unknown, into non-familiar territory. While they have expectations about what change will bring, they cannot be absolutely certain about the outcome of change. They therefore seek to ground themselves on the **terra firma** of tried and tested ways. This may be the reason why culture dies hard. It places individuals on familiar ground and provide an insurance against the incalculable.

The case of the Bassa parents interviewed also indicates the process of acculturation (Nordskog, 1960: 40) is very complex. The notion itself is meaningless until grounded in how people in particular cultural settings recruit reinterpret and re-fashion

the ways of another culture into tools for expression of the values of their culture. For the Bassa, acculturation is a concept relevant only within the context of the changing meaning of power. At a certain phase of Bassa history, power came from the warrior's arrows. Through warfare, the Bassa maintained their independence from the Fulani and were strong enough to victimize the Egbirra of Igu and Panda. From 1900, the context and meaning of power began to change. The commercial interests of the British had no tolerance for the ways of the warrior. Power now came from the institutions of trade, government and formal education. It took the Bassa nearly half a century to grasp the import of this changing context. But when "reality dawned" "acculturation" took place as the Bassa began reconsidering the value of what was for a long time, a nuisance from the whiteman's world.

A key theme emerging from the interview of these Bassa parents is the question of community values. Their story suggests that for communities, change is motivated by the pursuit of values. These values are not necessarily religious or ethical issues, but are ideals, and definitions of what their world ought to be within the context of their historical experiences. For these Bassa parents, the values motivating their desire to espouse Western education are their desire to be "free from harassment" and "oppression". This further reveals another dimension of the nature of culture, that it is a sense of the community's collective awareness of survival. It includes shared formats on how to respond to the questions, issues, events which impinge, threaten or enhance the survival of the social body. The body of this collective knowledge is congealed in values. Since the questions of survival are never the same in any historical setting, the values across

societies cannot be expected to be the same. Within this logic, it becomes apparent that arguments about the inevitability of change (for example Sorokin in Moore and Cook, 1967:68), fail to specify the reasons and conditions when change becomes "inevitable". The Bassa case indicates change becomes inevitable only when the dreams and aspirations of a community achieves a value -status or acquires congealment as a social value. The mere physical proximity of a potentially change inducing force in the vicinity of a culture is not a sufficient reason for that culture to change. Islam and the agencies of Western education are all potentially change inducing agencies. Islam had been in the Bassa environment for a century before the advent of Western education. Yet, the Bassa remained resistant to these change inducing forces until the moment in history when such change became both necessary and meaningful. The Bassa parents interviewed re-evaluated their perception of Western education only when it appeared as a possible vehicle for the expression of a specific set of cultural values. Apart from the **value-path** to change, the only other way change can be induced is conquest and force. Even then, as the Fulani conquest of Hausaland shows, the zeal of the jihadist can be cooled by the waters of the dominant culture of the conquered. Arguments about the inevitability of change must therefore be grounded on notions about the historical and cultural conditions of change.

Some of these themes will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Endnotes.

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1. The "sociology" of how Bassa parents are actuating their transformed consciousness in terms of decisions as to who or what child goes to school cannot be presently addressed due to insufficiency of data.

2. See examples in Tables 17 and 22.

3. 1 case was classified as a missing case for someone who responded "Not sure".

4. In Bassa culture, nothing expresses a person's identity like the rituals surrounding his burial. **Ru'uo ra shamanje** or literally, "a corpse of contention" is someone no one can identify. The informant uses this to describe the state of a Western educated Bassa without knowledge of his cultural heritage.

5. There was 1 missing case at Yimua.

6. A newspaper article in the **Nigerian Herald** once described **araga** as the possible roots of Jamaican reggae music. Unfortunately, I do not have the date the article was published.

Chapter Six.

Community Values, Identity and Development.

6.1. On Situating Values.

The linkage between values and development has long been recognized. Modernists and other neo-evolutionists have defined specific "pattern-variables", values and roles described both as evidence of and facilitators of development. Such values are believed to rest on the generalized principles of "rational formality" (Parsons, 1966: 2). These principles are supposed to have universal applicability and are written about like the laws of nature. All a society seeking "development" is required to do, according to modernist logic, is to have the values and institutions of developed societies "diffused" into their societies (Hoselitz, 1952: 29-35). The diffused values and institutions are supposed to bring about the transformation of production techniques and the "structural differentiation" associated with being "modern" (Smelser, in Long, 1977: 10). Part of this transformation involves a "take-off" into development (Rostow, 1960: 4-11; 26-57). Formal schools and factories have also been described a agencies for the transmission of these "modern" and "developing-inducing values" (Kahl, 1968; Ineke, 1972; Inkeles, 1974). Their critics have argued for the need to recognize the intervening variables of society and culture (Stephenson, 1968; Schnaiberg, 1970; Armer and Youtz, 1971; Holsinger, 1973; Kleinberg, 1973).

The argument of this work differs from those made by Inkeles and Smith and other modernists on questions of the contexts in which values emerge and develop.

Inkeles and Smith identify "calculability"; "openness to new experience"; "individualistic orientation" "instrumental activism" and a list of other behaviour orientations as characteristics of the "modern" person. They argue, as earlier noted, that formal schools and factories do transmit these value orientations and transform the identities of "traditional" persons into "modern" ones (Inkeles and Smith, 1974). The questions this study raises are: Are values universal? Can societies with different historical and cultural experiences produce the same values? Even when these values appear the same, do they hold the same meanings for and in all societies? Can we write about values the way we would the laws of gravity? The case of the Bassa has shown that the values of a community are neither apparent nor easy to define. They cannot be understood without studying the events and processes which have and continue to define the questions of survival. Values change as the challenges to individual and collective survival are transformed. They mutate as people create new meanings and identities in conformance to new circumstances. Can theorists therefore specify any set of themes as "the" values "X" and "Y" societies "need" to "develop"? The experience of the Bassas interviewed suggests that the designation of values outside specific historical and cultural settings is to walk the slippery route of ethnocentrism and the "imperialism of ideas". Values are of necessity parochial, localized and are tied up with situational definitions of the meaning of power and human dignity.

The modernist orientation in development has been extensively criticized in the literature for its implicit ethnocentric arguments and ahistoricism. By seeking to universalize the experiences of the countries of Western Europe, modernization theory

neglects not only the historical specificity of the Western European experience, but the effects of the West's rise to world dominance on other parts of the world. In fact, the critique of modernization theory has spawned an autonomous body of literature variously referred to as "Dependency" and "Underdevelopment" theory (Frank, 1969; Dos Santos, 1970; Sunkel 1973; Palma, 1978; Cardoso and Faletto, 1979).

Dependency and underdevelopment theory has itself drawn criticism from Marxist and non-Marxist theorists. Some of the themes in the critique of dependency theory are similar to those directed at modernization theory. Dependency theory has been charged with lack of concern for historical specificity and an overt emphasis on external factors to the neglect of internal social and class conditions (Laclau, 1971; Leaver 1977; Matthews 1983). Of late, even the Marxist critics of dependency theory have been charged with ethnocentrism. This ethnocentrism, according to the critic, lies in Marxism's neglect of the values of indigenous societies and the viability of the economic and social systems developed by non-Western cultures. Marxism does this by portraying an essentially Western vision of socialism, as the desired universal model of social and economic organization (Verhelst, 1990).

The unresolved issues of development theory therefore appear to be the questions of **historical** and **cultural specificity**. The Bassa case seems to indicate that the key to understanding what makes every development experience unique are the **values** held by members of the community and the processes involved in the formation of their **identity**. These values are not universal, as argued by modernist theorist, but are created in the course of historical experience. These values consist of community definitions of what

their world **ought to be** in light of their history and present circumstances. Such values cannot therefore, be prescribed by outsiders. The burden of their definition lie on members of the community, not "experts". For the Bassa, the goals of "development" are products of their struggles to cope with the power imbalances triggered by colonial conquest. Bassa values of "development" were expressed as "freedom from harassment", "liberation from oppression" and "economic enhancement". We identified these values not by reading the World Bank's manuals on development in Sub-Saharan Africa or studying the Nigerian president's "Development Plan". These values were identified by studying Bassa history from 1830 and by talking to Bassas in 1992. The way to define the values of a community seem to lie in studying the past, in order to understand the rationale behind the aspirations of the present.

Values are dynamic. They change as priorities shift during the course of a society's transformation. The Bassa case further indicates that, the values held by communities may be completely different from the development agenda of the state and "development" organizations. Indeed, it could be argued that African communities and states present a yoking of parallel values about "development". The African state pursue values rooted in the demands of the world economy and in the strategies of rulers to stay in power. Communities on the other hand have their dreams about the "good life", dreams located in the power struggles within their locale and the daily tasks of material survival. The "development" agenda of communities is also tied to questions of identity. Because the basis of identity formation in communities is parochial and localized, they could exist in complete insulation from the formal development models of the state. Yet, these

parochially formed identities inspire the way communities and individuals respond to the state, its institutions and "development" programmes. Identities are important because among many things, they are the bases of commitment (Matthews, 1983: 23-24) and action. To ignore the historical and cultural situations in which the identities of the "targets" of development are formed is to ignore the fact that development is about human beings.

6.2.

Identities and Culture as Agencies of Change.

Clifford Geertz recognized the importance of identities when he described the competition between "community" based identities and "national identity" as one of the dilemmas of "modern" nation-states (1973: 261). What are the basis of identity? How do these relate to questions of development and social change? In the case of the Bassa, the entire gamut of the values and desires for a better tomorrow are tied up with issues of their identity as a people. In the first place, they want to change the "pagan" and thus "subject" status with which they were identified under the Native Administration system. To negate the identity assigned them by the dominant political structures of Umaisha and Toto districts, the Bassa counter-posited a model of a Bassa free of "oppression" and "harassment". In this model, the Bassa is a powerful actor, not a submissive and passive receiver of orders. Their new interpretation of the value of schools is part of attempts to transform and rebuild their identity in conformance with what being Bassa means in their consciousness. By jettisoning the identity imposed on them by their "oppressors" and

"enemies", the Bassa have set themselves on the path of rebellion.

Identity, consciousness, rebellion and power appear to be factors which cannot be ignored in the study of change. It is no surprise that the concept of identity has never failed to attract scholarly attention. Arnold Dashefsky refers to identity as a "higher order concept" used as an "organizing referent" (1976: 5). Anya Royce describes identities as a means for generating order and constancy on the basis of "us" and "them" (1982: 2-21). Personal identity is tied with group identity (Thompson, 1989: 55) and is socially constructed (Matthews, 1983: 22). Identities are linked up with role behaviour (Dashefsky, op. cit: 5). Since the process of identification is tied up with the definition of self (Dashefsky, ibid: 6) and the sense of "Who I am", (Royce, op. cit: 33), they have been referred to as the legitimate basis of sociological analysis (Matthews, op. cit: 14). How then are identities created? Why are they important? Many theories have been posited about these questions. The group of theorists Thompson describes as "Premordialists", think identities are founded on primeval blood ties, on ethnic connections and are the "natural bonds" of "we-ness" rooted in ancestry and common origin (Thompson, op. cit: 52-60). This position is opposed by theorists who argue that though such "bonds" are important, they are not eternal or "natural", but historically constructed" (ibid: 59). What therefore, makes identities important is the role they play as "**agencies**" of historical process and activity. Thompson argues that:

> "What needs be addressed, then, are the social, political, and historical circumstances that cause ethnic or racial identities-identities based on real or assumed ancestry or 'ties of blood'-to become symbolically, emotionally, and politically forceful." (Thompson, ibid: 59).

Why is being "Bassa" so important? Why did the individuals called "Bassas" struggle in

the name of "The Bassa Community?" Why do Bassas want a "Greater Bassa?" What do communal identities mean to people? Identities, be they ethnic, religious, racial or tribal, may therefore be regarded as the symbols of "Who I am" "Who we are" and "What we want". They are culturally and historically based foundations for ideals, values and action. Thus for the Bassa individual, the values of individual freedom, "freedom from harassment" "liberation from oppression" are aspects of their "Bassa-ness" or the state of being a Bassa. This state of consciousness aids the Bassa individual in directing his/her actions towards goals which bring about personal fulfilment both in the world of the Bassa (**inyinzo buBassa**) and in the world of the "outsider" (**inyinzo inyenzegu**). Since identities are founded on socialization and the collectively shared experiences of communities, culture which is the basis of identities, must be inseparable from the understanding of the meaning of development. Culture must be an agency of the "development" experience.

Identities are also important in social life because they aid in the definition of "the problem". People create identities not only for themselves but for their problems. For the Bassa, the problems of his/her community is symbolized in the "Egbirra". The "Egbirra" is the symbol of the agencies which deny him/her power in the affairs of Umaisha and Toto districts. "Egbirra" has become more than the name of a neighbour. It is the symbol of "oppression". The name evokes the emotions and sentiments needed to assail obstacles to the Bassa's sense of political autonomy. The name Egbirra has been transformed into a "concept" which "codifies" and "signals" the unpleasant experiences of the 20th century. It also helps the Bassa individual to define a plan of action on how to deal with the

problems of his/her age. Identities therefore serve as tools for defining the desirable and undesirable. For example, for poor American whites, "black" may be the symbol of "the competition" for the meagre dropping of welfare programs. For the African-American, "white" may be the symbol of the institutions which have kept him/her marginalized in American society. The identities we create, be they racial or ethnic, serve the purpose of making our historical or biographical experiences easier to refer to. They also serve as the signals for "how we should act" or respond to situations.

Since identities emerge in different historical and cultural contexts, modernist, dependency and Marxist development theorists have to reformulate their arguments to enhance relevance to concrete situations. This is precisely because identity is the basis of commitment and commitment is a crucial force in the process of making choices. In his study of three Newfoundland communities, Matthews observed that the values of economic planners conflicted with those of the "targets" of "development" (Matthews, 1976). Planners were preoccupied with questions of "economic growth" and "efficiency", while the values of the communities to be "developed" were centred on issues of "social viability" and "political validity". The planners and the communities did not have the same definition of "economic viability" (Matthews, 1983: 151). Planners were concerned with formal indicators of "growth", while for the residents of these communities the key issues were the informal economic networks they had developed, the channels of communication which facilitated their sense of "community" and the leadership which they recognized as valid representations of their interests.

An example will be given from Nigeria to further illustrate this point. The

Nigerian government invested millions of dollars in what was described as Agricultural Development Projects (A.D.Ps) in the 1970s and 1980s. These were World Bank coordinated projects in which the Federal and state governments provided land and capital while the World Bank supplied the personnel, equipment and technical backing needed to operate model farms and support "progressive farmers" in the rural areas. The "progressive farmers" were large scale farmers who were ready to accept the advice of World Bank's experts. The researcher studied one of these projects, the Lafia Agricultural Development Project (L.A.D.P) in Plateau State between 1983-84 (Tukura, 1985).

Apart from the "progressive farmers", there was a group of farmers the project labelled "traditional farmers". A characteristic of these farmers was their habit of taking only what they thought they needed from extension workers, while rejecting all the other "expert" advice and "going on to do their own thing". The L.A.D.P. recommended and supported the adoption of mono-cropping as a farming method. This involved planting plots with only one crop, mainly maize. Mono cropping made it easier to apply the L. A.D.P.'s "technical packages", mainly fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and high yielding varieties of seeds. For the "traditional farmers", mono cropping "did not make sense". They preferred multiple cropping since that served as insurance against crop failure, pest invasion and drought. Instead of one crop, a farmer plants between three to five crops on the same plot, with each crop having different degrees of resistance to the vagaries of the environment. Experts found this frustrating.

The values of the A.D.P. were essentially quantitative and were motivated in part by the desire to market the new technologies. The farmers had more qualitative objectives

and were motivated by a "survival rationality" founded on many years of experience with their environment. The choice they made also fitted into the distribution of land in their society. Mono cropping is more feasible where people own large tracts of land. Small scattered plots characterized land ownership in the communities of Lafia. Mono cropping would have led to land concentration, the dispossession of farmers and created a landless population. This could have caused a social upheaval as the material foundations of communities and ethnic groups would have been undermined. It was no surprise that in Kaduna State, with its crop of retired generals and "money-men", there were many progressive farmers and the dispossession of peasants was common. The ensuing crisis warranted a government investigation (Kaduna State Land Investigation Committee, 1979-80).

6.3. Values, Class and Power.

The need to link issues about development to questions about "what people value" does re-echo especially in the work of development ethicists. Peter Berger notes that:

> "Every human being knows his own world better than any outsider (including the expert who makes policy). Those who are the objects of policy should have the opportunity to participate not only in the specific decisions but in the definition of the situation on which these decisions are based." (1974, xii-xiii).

Matthews writes that:

> "the first step towards good development planning should be a regard for the values and preferences of the people who are affected, and the subsequent incorporation of these values into policy planning wherever possible." (1976, :11).

Making community values the basis of development planning does raise a question

rooted in the nature of values. Because of their situational nature, values differ from group to group. How then can values be made the basis of development in situations where there exist power differentials between groups? The extent to which communities can make their values part of development planning depends on the amount of social power they possess. In fact, the dominant "development policies" are the values of the powerful. The classes which control economic resources and the organs of the state, influence what becomes "development" policy. Values cannot therefore be discussed in isolation from the questions of class, power and the state. The issue is further complicated by the fact that community identity and values are not constant. The Bassa community's sense of identity and the values they hold are not eternal. They will change as the community is differentiated along economic and social lines. The concept of "being Bassa" will remain a significant symbol, evoking commitment from Bassa individuals. But the meaning of the symbols would continue to change as Bassa society is transformed. The issues may no longer be "freedom from harassment" and "liberation from oppression" and the Egbirra may cease to be the symbol of "oppression". The symbols of "oppression" may even emerge from the community itself, depending on the degree to which the society is differentiated from within. This implies the development itself must be situational. Develop models and plans must be made flexible enough to accommodate shifting values, changing meanings and mutating contexts.

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Interview Schedule For Parents.

Basic Demographic Data.

Site of Interview_____

Name of Household_____

Clan of Respondent_____

Name of Respondent_____

Sex of Respondent_____

Age: 19-30 [ ]

31-40 [ ]

41-50 [ ]

51-60 [ ]

61-70 [ ]

70-Above [ ]

Occupation

Primary Occupation:

Farming [ ]

Homemaking [ ]

Trading: [ ]

Other [ ]

Secondary Occupation:

Fishing [ ]

Handicrafts [ ]

Musician [ ]

Marital Status (Number of Wives):

One Wife [ ] Divorced [ ]

Two Wives [ ] Widowed [ ]

Three Wives [ ]

Four and Above [ ]

Religion:

(i) Bassa Ancestral [ ]

(ii) Christianity [ ]

(iii) Islam [ ]

Traditional Bassa Education

(i) Are you a **Biribi?** Yes [ ]

No [ ]

(ii) Are you a **Buwaa** Yes [ ]

No [ ]

(iii) Have you also learned any other mystical/medical arts, like **ushiqa**; **tishino**; **nibituzuno**

ushiqa Yes [ ]

No [ ]

tishino Yes [ ]

No [ ]

nibituzuno Yes [ ]

No [ ]

Status in the Community.

Do you have any title/office(**tizhiqba ta aguma**):?

(i) Yes [ ] (ii) Title/office_____

(ii) No [ ]

Formal Education

.

[Primary Education]

(i) None at all [ ]

(ii) 1-3 Years [ ]

(iii) 4-7 Years [ ]

[Secondary/Teacher Education]

(i) None at all [ ]

(ii) 1-3 Years [ ]

(iii) 4-5 Years [ ]

[Pre-University Education]

(i) 1 year [ ]

(ii) 2 years [ ]

[University Education]

(i) 1-2 Years [ ]

(ii) 3-4 Years [ ]

(iii) Degree Earned [ ]

Is there a school in this village/town?

Yes [ ]

No [ ]

Parental Data.

(i) How many children have you got? (or did you have)

01 [ ] 02 [ ] 03 [ ] 04 [ ] 05 [ ] 06 [ ]

08 [ ] 09 [ ] 10 [ ] More than 10 [ ]

(iii) Their Sexes: All boys [ ]

All girls [ ]

No. of boys [ ]

No. of girls [ ]

(iv) What is their actual/estimated age?

1 month- 1 year [ ]

2 years- 5 years [ ]

6 years - 10 years [ ]

12 years- 16 years [ ]

17 years- 21 years [ ]

21 years- 25 years [ ]

26 years and Above [ ]

_____

_____

(v) Is any of school going age?

All are [ ]

Some are [ ] If so, how many:_____

None is [ ]

Q1. Do you belong to any organization/associations or social clubs?

Yes [ ] (If "Yes" ask Q2)

No [ ] (If "No" ask Q3)

Q2. If yes, can you name them please?

_____

_____

Q3. Can you tell me why you do not belong to any organization?

_____

Q4. Have you ever talked or written to a government official or political leader about your opinion about something or a problem?

Yes [ ] (If "Yes" ask Q5)

No [ ] (If "No" ask Q7)

Q5. Which official did you talk or write to?

_____

Q6. What problem did you talk/write to the official about?

_____

_____

Q7 Are you telling me you have had no problem requiring the attention of the government or are you saying the government cannot solve your problem (s)?

Yes [ ]

No [ ]

Further explanation:

Q8. Have you ever voted?

Yes [ ] (If "Yes" ask Q9)

No [ ] (If "No" ask Q12)

Q9. Why did you vote?

(i) I was supporting a particular candidate [ ] (if so ask Q10)

(ii) I did not want the opponents of the Bassa to have their way [ ] (ask Q11)

(iii) I thought it was my duty as a citizen to vote [ ]

Q10. Why did you support that particular candidate?

(i) He was Bassa [ ]

(ii) I thought he would best represent Bassa [ ]

(iii) I knew him. He was a friend or relative [ ]

(iv) He belonged to the "right" political party [ ]

Q11. What do you mean by opponents of Bassa? Who are these and why do you refer to them as such?

(i) They always stand on the way of our progress [ ]

(ii) They do not like the Bassa and want us to remain "behind" [ ]

(iii) They want to keep the benefits of government to themselves [ ]

Q12. Why did you not vote?

(i) I did not know it time to vote [ ]

(ii) Such matters do not concern me [ ]

(iii) Such matters are not important to me [ ] (ask Q13)

Q13. Why do you say this, why is voting not important to you?

(i) I had more serious things to do [ ] (ask Q14)

(ii) I am too old, such matters are for young people [ ]

(iii) Such things are for lazy, idle babblers [ ]

Q14. Can you tell me what some of these "more serious things" are:

(i) Farm work [ ]

(ii) Family problems [ ]

(iii) A funeral [ ]

(iv) Ill health [ ]

Further explanations:

On Sources of Knowledge.

Q15 Some say a child learns the deepest truth from the elders, while say the deepest truths are best learnt by a child from books and school. What is your opinion about this?

(i) Deepest truth learnt from elders [ ] (If so, ask Q16)

(ii) Deepest truth learnt from both elders and books/school [ ] (if so skip to Q17)

(iii) Deepest truth learnt from school [ ]

Q16 Why do you think the elders know the deepest truth?

(i) They are more experienced [ ]

(ii) They have more knowledge [ ] (is so, skip to Q18)

Q17 Why do you think both the elders and schools are sources of truth?

(i) There are thinks the elders know that books and schools cannot teach [ ]

(ii) There are things taught in books and schools, which the elders do not know [ ]

(ii) The elders know a lot, but not all their knowledge is relevant for this age [ ]

Q18 Why do you think the elders have more knowledge?

On the Value of Children.

Q19 What are the advantages of having children? What good things come with having them?

(i) Continuation of the family name [ ]

(ii) Enhances sense of manhood/womanhood [ ]

(iii) Source of farm labour [ ]

(iv) Extra source of income [ ]

(v) Source of security in old age [ ]

(vi) Source of companionship [ ]

(vii) Source of prestige [ ]

Q20 What are the disadvantages in having children?

(i) There are no disadvantages [ ]

(ii) The children may be badly mannered [ ]

(iii) They could bring dishonour to one's name [ ]

Q21 If you had your way and could support all your children, how many would you want to have?

(i) I am satisfied with what I have [ ]

(ii) 01 [ ] 02 [ ] 03 [ ] 04 [ ] 05 [ ] 06 [ ]

07 [ ] 08 [ ] 09 [ ] 10 [ ] 11 [ ] Over 12 [ ]

On the Place and Value of Work.

What does your work (farm/office/business) mean to you? What has it made you and how would life be without it?

(i) Without my work, I would not be a "somebody" [ ]

(ii) Without my work, life would be meaningless and hard [ ]

(iii) Without my work, I would have no source of livelihood [ ]

(iv) Further explanation/factors:

_____

Being Bassa and Individual Identity.

Q22 What does being "BASSA" mean to you? How does it make you feel to be "BASSA"?

(i) I have no choice, that is what God made me [ ]

(ii) Being Bassa makes me somebody. It gives me an identity [ ] (If so, ask Q23).

(iii) Being Bassa has meant trouble for me [ ]

Q23 Do you feel proud to be Bassa or would you want to be something else?

(i) To desire to be something else would be to go against God's will.

(ii) I am proud to be Bassa. I would never want to be something else [ ] (if so ask Q24)

(iii) I wish to be something else [ ] (if so, ask Q25)

Q24 What makes you proud to be Bassa?

(i) Bassa culture, music, dance etc are wonderful [ ]

(ii) I am proud of the traditions and history of my people [ ]

(iii) I love the language and people [ ]

Q25 Why do you want to be something else? What do you dislike about being Bassa?

(i) The Bassa face too many problems today [ ] (if so ask Q26)

(ii) Bassa culture is not as rich as some other cultures [ ]

(if so, skip to Q27)

Q26 What are these problems? Can you specify them?

(i) Administrative marginalization [ ]

(ii) Struggles with neighbours [ ]

(iii) Unpreparedness for the changes in a modern Nigeria [ ]

(iv) Other reasons/factors

Q27 In what areas does Bassa culture lag behind? Please explain.

On the Problems of the Bassa Community.

Q28 Would you tell me the greatest problem facing the Bassa community today?

(i) Lack of western educated persons [ ]

(ii) Lack of government personnel [ ]

(iii) Not too many people in business [ ]

(iv) Other problems [ ]

Q29 Do you think Bassas are doing enough to solve these problems? [ ]

Yes [ ] (If so, ask Q30)

No [ ] (If so, ask Q31)

Q30 How are Bassas solving these problems?

(i) They are sending more children to school [ ]

(ii) More Bassas are taking non-farm jobs in business/commerce. etc and making money [ ]

(iii) Bassas are getting more politically organized and active [ ]

(iii) Other answers:

Q31 Why do you say Bassas are not doing enough to solve these problems?

(i) Not many Bassa parents are sending their children to school [ ]

(ii) Bassas are still politically disorganized [ ]

(iii) Many Bassa are still insensitive to the changes around them [ ]

(if so ask Q32)

Q32 What do you mean by this? Can you explain why you think Bassas are still insensitive to these changes?

(i) Many still resist western education [ ]

(ii) Many just don't care about what goes on around them [ ]

(iii) Other reasons:

Morality and the Place and Value of Religion.

Q33 What does religion mean to you? What advantages do you get for practising your religion?

(i) It is part of what makes me Bassa [ ] (If so ask Q34)

(ii) We must appease the ancestors [ ]

(iii) It makes me someone at peace with God [ ] (If so ask Q36 if respondent is a Christian or Muslim)

(iv) It guarantees my eternal salvation [ ] (If so, ask Q36 if respondent is a Christian or Muslim)

(v) It is my guide to moral and right conduct [ ] (If so, ask Q40)

Q34 Would you feel less Bassa without your religion?

Yes [ ] (If Yes, ask Q35)

No [ ]

Q35 Can you please tell me why?

(i) It is my ancestors who make me Bassa [ ]

(ii) The ancestors are necessary for my welfare [ ]

(iii) They are the link with my past as a Bassa [ ]

(iv) Other reasons:

_____

_____

Q35 (b) As a Bassa who follows the religion of his/her fathers, can you tell me what urope means to you? What role does it play in your life?

_____

_____

Q36 As a Christian/Muslim, are you saying the religion of your ancestors cannot give you peace with God or guarantee your eternal salvation?

Yes [ ] (If so, ask Q37)

No [ ] (If so, ask Q38)

Q37 Why do you think Bassa religion cannot give you peace with God or guarantee your eternal salvation?

(i) Bassa religion does not really have a grasps of God's will and purpose for man [ ]

(ii) Bassa religion is man made and misleading [ ]

(iii Unlike the Bible/Quoran, Bassa religion is not based on God's revelation to man [ ]

(iv) Bassa religion is pagan and fetishistic. It will condemn a person's soul to hell [ ]

(v) Other reasons:

_____

_____

Q38 Please explain what you mean:

_____

_____

Q39. Can a person find a guide to "moral" and "right" conduct outside religion?

(i) Yes [ ] (If so, ask Q40)

(ii) No [ ] (If so, ask Q41)

Q40 Please mention other possible guides for moral conduct.

(i) Science [ ]

(ii) Philosophy [ ]

(iii) The Constitution [ ]

(iv) Others/Further explanation:

Q41 Why do you hold this opinion?

(i) Extra-religious sources of morality are man made and misleading.

(ii) Man's ideas are influenced by the devil [ ]

(iii) Philosophy, science and the constitution are not divinely inspired and are thus unreliable [ ]

(iv) Other reasons/Further explantion:

Bassa Consciousness On Western Education and Socialization of Children.

Q42. How do you think Bassa parents today should raise their children? (i) In the way of "their fathers" as farmers; initiates into tiribi and other Bassa ways? [ ] (If so, ask Q43)

(ii) Bassa ways with some western education [ ] (If so, ask Q44)

(iii) Western education only [ ] (If so, ask Q45)

There are Bassa parents who think the best thing to do is continue to train children as farmers and in the ways of their fathers like tiribi.

Q43. Why do you hold this opinion?

(i) Because Bassa culture must continue? [ ]

(ii) Without that, Bassa culture will die [ ]

(iii) The children must be taught how to make a living [ ]

(iv) The Bassa must continue to have tiribi and tua for their vitality as a community [ ]

Q44 Why do you want the education of the children to comprise Bassa ways and some western education?

(i) The need to know the Whiteman's ways, just as much as they need to know the ways of their ancestors [ ]

(ii) The children must be taught to make a living, just as much as they need to have some western education [ ]

(iii) Other reasons/Further explanation:

Q45 Why do you think western education is all Bassa children need?

(i) It is because of too much emphasis on Bassa education that the community has ill-equipped for roles in government and administration.

(ii) Bassa culture would be in no danger if much emphasis is placed on western education for now [ ]

(iii) This must be done, if the Bassa community would not find itself completely isolated in modern Nigeria [ ]

Further explantion:

Q46. Some Bassa parents think it is good to train children as farmers and all the ways of the ancestors , but at the same time, it is good to send such children to school too just for a little education, so that they can read and write.

Do you think the argument of such parents have any merit?

(i) There is a lot of merit in that argument [ ] (If so, ask Q47)

(ii) There may be a little merit in that argument [ ] (If so, ask Q48)

(iii) I disagree completely with that argument [ ] (If so, ask Q49)

Q47. Why do you think so?

(i) That is a good balance, Bassa children will know the ways of both worlds [ ]

(ii) Bassa culture will teach them how to make a living and western education will teach them how to read documents [ ]

(iii) That is the best way to get Bassas to know the ways of the new world without destroying Bassa culture [ ]

(iv) Other reasons/Further explanation:

_____

_____

Q48. Why is the merit of that argument "little"?

_____

_____

Q49. Why do you completely disagree with this argument?

(i) Because that is not enough to prepare Bassas for a changing Nigeria [ ]

(ii) The children must receive all levels of western education possible if they are to get into meaningful roles in Nigeria [ ]

(iii) Other reasons/Further explantion:

_____

Q50. Some Bassa parents think the best thing to do is send Bassa children to school, train them in all the ways of the Whiteman, leave out training them as farmers and airibi, so that they can go to the big towns and work in the world of the Whiteman (**inyinzo biyivo**).

Do you agree with such Bassa parents?

(i) I do not agree with them [ ] (If so, ask Q51)

(ii) I agree with them to some extent [ ] (If so, ask Q52)

(iii) I agree with them completely [ ] (If so, ask Q53)

Q51. Why are you of this opinion?

(i) Such a decision would mean the end of Bassa culture [ ]

(ii) Accepting the ways of the new world, does not mean we should forget the culture of our fathers [ ]

(ii) Other reasons/Further explanation:

Q52. Why do you agree with them only to "some extent"?

(i) There is a need to balance accepting the Whiteman's ways and protecting Bassa culture [ ]

(ii) Children must be grounded in both cultures [ ]

(iii) Other reasons/Further explanation:

Q53. Why are you of this opinion?

(i) Because the Bassa require manpower for positions in government, administration, business and commerce [ ]

(ii) The Bassa must do this, if they are to have meaningful roles in modern Nigeria [ ]

(iii) That is the only way out of the Bassa's administrative and other

types of marginalization in modern Nigeria [ ]

Q54. For some time Bassa parents did not like sending their children to the Whiteman's schools. Bassa parents even used to hide children in barns to keep them out of the way of teachers looking for school children! Looking back now, what do you think of the way Bassas acted?

(i) I think they acted rightly [ ] (If so, ask Q55)

(ii) I think they had their reasons [ ] (If so, ask Q56).

(iii) I think they acted wrongly [ ] (If so, ask Q57)

Q55. Why are you of this opinion?

(i) Without such action, Bassa culture would not have survived [ ]

(ii) They needed those children for work on the farms and training as Bassas [ ]

Q56. What were some of these reasons?

(i) Farm work [ ]

(ii) Training of children in religious roles [ ]

(iii) The fulfilment of marriage obligation involving the children.

(iv) Other reasons/factor/arguments:

_____

_____

57. Why do you think they acted wrongly?

(i) That is why Bassas are marginalized in administration today [ ]

(ii) That is why some of Bassa neighbours are a problem to them today.

(iii) Other reasons/Further Explanation:

_____

_____

Q58. You know that if Bassa parents send their children to school, these children may not be around to help their parents on the farms and may not

know how to farm. How does this fact affect what you think about sending Bassa children to school?

(i) For this reason, I think parents should not send their children to school [ ] (If so, ask Q59)

(ii) For this reason I think parents should find a way of getting help from their children on the farms and at the same time get them to school [ ] (If so, ask Q60)

(iii) I think parents should let their children go to school in spite of this [ ] (If so, ask Q61)

Q59. Why are you of this opinion?

(i) Parents need the help their children can give [ ]

(ii) Children need to be trained on how to make a living [ ]

Q60. Why are you this opinion?

(i) Getting help from one's children for work on the farm, is as important as sending them to school [ ]

(ii) While children need to help their parents and learn farming techniques, they also need to know about the new world [ ]

Q61. Why are you of this opinion?

(i) It was because of such considerations that our fathers did not send their children to school in the past. That is why the Bassas are marginalized in positions of power today [ ]

(ii) If the Bassa reason this way, our neighbours would continue to monopolize access to the government power [ ]

(iii) Other reasons/Further explanation:

_____

_____

_____

Q62. If Bassa parents send their children to school, you know they may not be able to learn the ways of their fathers like tiribi and tua. How does

this affect what you think about western model schools?

(i) For this reason, parents should not send their children to school. (If so, ask Q63)

(ii) I think parents can find a way of having their children be in tiribi and still have time to go to school. (If so, ask Q64)

(iii) I think children should go to school and do without tiribi and other Bassa ways [ ] (If so, ask Q65)

Q63. Why are you of this opinion?

(i) Bassas need tiribi, so their sons will know how to deal with the spirit world and bury the dead the way our fathers did [ ]

(ii) Other reasons/Further explanation:

_____

_____

Q64. Why do you think so?

(i) I think children can be initiated into tiribi and still learn the ways of the new world [ ]

(ii) Other reasons/Further explanation:

_____

_____

Q65. Why do you think so?

(i) Bassas do not need training in tiribi in this new age [ ]

(ii) Other reasons/Further Explanation:

_____

_____

Q66. Do Bassa parents who send their children to school stand to gain or loose?

(i) They stand to gain [ ] (If so ask Q67)

(ii) They stand to loose [ ] (If so, ask Q70)

Q67. What do they stand to gain?

(i) Money [ ] (If so, ask Q69)

(ii) Position and power [ ]

(iii) Prestige [ ]

(iv) A good means of livelihood [ ]

(v) Knowledge of the "new world" [ ]

(v) Other gains/benefits/advantages:

Q69. Why do you think western education will give them: **Money, Position, Power, A good means of livelihood** and all these other things?

(i) Because in today's world, you cannot get these things without western education [ ]

(ii) In today's world, you cannot get these things by just farming and following Bassa ways.

(iii) Other reasons/Further Explanations:

Q70. What do you think they would loose?

(i) Knowledge of the ways of their fathers [ ]

(ii) A secure means of livelihood [ ]

(iii) Other loses:

Q71. What does the entire Bassa community stand to gain?

(i) Manpower in government positions [ ] (If, so ask Q72)

(ii) Ability to compete for government resources: [ ]

(iii) More rich people in the community [ ]

(v) Improvement of Bassa culture [ ]

Other gains/Further explanation:

Q72. Why do you think the Bassa community will gain all these thing through western education?

(i) Because Bassa farming and culture cannot provide them [ ]

(ii) This is a new world, western education is the path to these good things of life [ ]

(iii) Other reasons/Further explanation:

Q73. What would the Bassa community loose?

(i) Loss of the continuation of Bassa culture [ ]

(ii) Loss of knowledge of the ways of their fathers [ ]

Other loses/Further explanation:

Western Education and Bassa Culture 1.

Q74. How would you want Bassa children who go to school to relate to the culture and traditions of their people?

(i) They should not bother learning Bassa culture [ ] (If so ask Q75)

(ii) They should learn Bassa culture as much as they learn the ways of the new world [ ] (If so, ask Q77)

(iii) They should seek to improve Bassa culture with knowledge gained at school [ ] (If so ask Q78)

(iv) Other ways of relating:

Q75. Why do you say they should not bother learning about Bassa culture?

(i) Bassa culture belongs to an earlier age. They should learn the ways of the new age [ ] (If so, ask Q76)

(ii) Bassa culture cannot prepare them for a modern Nigeria [ ]

Q76. What do you mean by a new age? How is it different from Bassa culture and why do you seem to prefer it?

Q77. Why do you think they should learn Bassa culture as much as the ways of the new world?

(i) Because they need knowledge of both worlds to be balanced people.

(ii) Education is not complete without knowledge of one's culture [ ]

(iii) Other reasons/Further explanation:

Q78. How can Western educated Bassas improve Bassa culture?

(i) By promoting the reading and writing of the Bassa language [ ]

(ii) By documenting the history and traditions of the Bassa people [ ]

(iii) By popularizing Bassa culture to the rest of the world [ ]

(iv) Other ways of improvement:

Relations with their Neighbours.

Q79. Over the past five years, Bassas have not had peace with some of

their neighbours. Do you think Bassas would be facing all these troubles if they had sent their children to school in the past?

(i) **No**. They would not be facing these problems [ ] (If so, ask Q80)

(ii) **Yes**. They would still be facing these problems [ ] (If so, ask Q81)

Q80. Why do you think so?

(i) That is the advantage our neighbours have over us [ ]

(ii) That is what gave them positions of power in government and administration [ ]

(iii) That is what gave them money [ ]

(iv) That is what gave them influence [ ]

(v) Other reasons/Further explanation:

Q81. Why are you of this opinion?

(i) Because even if Bassas had gone to school, some Bassa would still find reasons to fight other Bassas [ ]

(ii) Other reasons/Further explanation:

Dreams Parents Have for their Children

Q82. As a parent, if you are asked to choose the following futures for your child/children, which would you choose?

(i) Being a farmer in the village [ ] (If so, ask Q83a)

(ii) Being a trained biribi or buwaa [ ] (Ask Q83b)

(iii) Working in a big town in the new world [ ] (If so, ask Q84)

Q83 (a). Why are you of this opinion?

(i) Farming is the most secure way to make a living [ ]

(ii) Other reasons/Further explanation:

Q83 (b). Why would you want your child to be a biribi ?

(i) Bassas need aribis, it is a way of the fathers we cannot abandon.

(ii) Other reasons/Further explanation:

Q84. Why do you want your child to work in the new world and not as a Bassa farmer in the village?

(i) I am not a farmer. I am employed in the new world and I want the child to follow in my steps [ ]

(ii) Working in the new world is the best way to provide a child access to security, prestige and power [ ]

(iii) Further explanation:

Religiious History.

Q85. What religion do you practice?

(i) Bassa Ancestral Religion [ ]

(ii) Christianity [ ]

(iii) Islam [ ]

(iv) No religion [ ]

Q86. Did you receive your religion from your parents or were you converted?

(i) Was converted [ ]

(ii) Received it from my parents [ ]

(iii) Other sources [ ] Please explain

Q86. If you were converted, how did it happen?

Q87. Since you have formal education, may I ask if you were converted at school?

Converted at school: [ ] (Ask Q88)

Not converted at school: [ ]

Q88. Why did you prefer Christianity/Islam to the religion of your ancestors?

(i) Bassa religion and western education cannot go together

[ ] (Ask Q89)

(b) I saw the light! I thought the spiritual ideas of my fathers were mistaken and my new religion was the true "way" [ ]

(Ask Q91)

Q89. Why do you say Bassa religion and school could not go together?

Q90. Since you have formal education, may I ask what came first? Where you converted before you went to school or did conversion come after going to school?

Converted before going to school [ ]

Converted while at school [ ]

Further explanations:

Q91. (If the respondent is western educated, ask Q89 & Q91 before asking Q91) Now the question: Could you explain what you mean by "I saw the

light!" Are you saying Bassa religion was "darkness"? Please explain:

On Western Education.

Q92. Do any of your children go to school now or have any ever gone to school?

Yes, I have children who go to school [ ] (ask Q93 & Q98)

Yes, only some of my children go to school [ ] (ask Q94 & Q97)

Yes, my children used to go to school [ ] (ask Q95 & 109)

Yes, my children have finished school [ ] (ask Q96 Q116)

Yes, some of my children have finished school, while some are still in school [ ] (ask Q116)

No, None of my children go to school [ ] (ask Q104)

Q93. What schools do they go to now?

Q94 Who goes to school and whose dose not?

(i) The older ones go to school [ ]

(ii) The younger ones do not [ ]

(iii) The younger ones go to school [ ]

(iv) The older ones do not [ ]

(v) The boys go to school [ ]

(vi) The girls do not [ ]

(vi) The girls go to school [ ]

(vi) The boys do not [ ]

Q95. Which school(s) did they used to go to?

Q96. Which school did they attend?

Q97 Why do some go to school, while some do not?

(i) I needed the older ones on the farm and I thought I could spare the younger ones to go to school [ ]

(ii) I did not know the value of western education when my older children were younger [ ]

(iii) There was no school here when my older children were younger [ ]

Q98. Did you send the child to school or did he/she go by him/her self?[1]

(i) I sent my child/children to school [ ]

(ii) He/she/they went on his/her/their own [ ] (ask Q99)

Q99. How did you react when your child went to school on his/her own?

(i) Was angry and upset [ ] (ask Q100)

(ii) I tried to dissuade him/her but failed [ ]

(ii) It did not bother me, I allowed him/her to continue [ ] (Ask Q102)

Q100, Why were you angry and upset?

(i) Because school was going to stand on the way of training at home.

(iii) Because I thought school was a bad idea [ ] (ask 101)

(iii) Other reason/Further explanation:

Q101. Why did you think school was a bad idea?

(i) The child/children were taking an uncertain path to the future.

(ii) Farming is the best way of making a living [ ]

(iii) The child/children would miss receiving Bassa training at home.

[1] *In some cases, it is the children who register in schools on their own.*

(iv) Other reason/Further explanation:

Q102, Why did it not bother you?

(i) The child was young and I did not need his/her services urgently.

(ii) I knew school was good for him/her any way [ ] (ask Q103)

(iii) Other reasons/Further explanation:

Q103. Why is school good for him/her?

(i) It would give the child a good source of livelihood [ ]

(ii) It would give the child prestige and a position of power

[ ]

(iii) I knew it could be a good investment for the family some day [ ]

(v) Other reasons:

Q104. Why is your child or none of your children going to school?

(i) I thought they did not need to go to school [ ] (ask Q105)

(ii) I never thought school was important [ ] (ask Q105)

(iii) I wanted them to work with me on the farm [ ]

(iv) I want them to stay at home and learn the culture of their fathers [

]

(v) I needed them to fulfil some marriage obligation (tushomu)

Other reasons:

Q105. Why do you think school is not important? Why do you think your children do not need to go to school?

(i) They have all they need in this village [ ]

(ii) I think going to school is a form of idleness [ ]

(iii) Farming is the best way to make a living [ ]

(iv) Other reasons:

Q106. Do you still feel school is <u>not important?</u>

Yes [ ] (ask Q107)

No [ ] (ask Q108)

Q107. Why do you think school is still unimportant?

(i) I still think there is more security in the Bassa way of making a living [ ]

(ii) I still think the children are better off knowing the ways of their fathers [ ]

(iii) I want to ensure the preservation of the ways of my fathers [ ]

Other reasons:

Q108. Please tell me why you have changed your mind.

(i) I now realize the children would have a better future if they go to western model schools [ ]

(ii) I realize the children must stay in school if the Bassa community would have people in positions of power [ ]

(iii) I realize western education could help in the advancement of Bassa culture [ ]

Further elaborations:

_109. Why did your child/children go to school for some time and then stop?

(i) They stopped going on their own [ ] (ask Q110)

* (ii) I stopped them from going on [ ] (ask Q111)

(iii) The school closed down [ ]

Other reasons:

Q110 (a). Why did they stop going to school? (Note: Interview the child/children on the subject of why they left school, if you can)

(i) I think they just lost interest? [ ]

(ii) The teachers were harsh and used to beat them [ ]

(iii) They did not find school interesting [ ]

(iv) Later, I think they preferred being at home, going to the farm with me, hunting, playing and just being Bassa children! [ ]

Q110 (b) How did you react when you realized your child/children had stopped going to school?

(i) It did not bother me [ ] (ask 110 (c))

(ii) I was worried [ ] (ask 110 (e).

Q110 (c) Why were you not bothered?

(i) I did not want the child/children to go to school any way [ ] (if so, ask Q110 (d))

(ii) Other reasons:

Q110 (d) Why did you not want the child/children to go to school?

(i) They face an uncertain future with school [ ]

(ii) I needed him/them on the farm [ ]

(iii) I wanted him/her/them to learn Bassa ways at home [ ]

Other reasons:

Q110 (e) Why were you worried?

(i) I thought the child/children would miss the chance to get equipped for the new world [ ]

(ii) Other reasons:

Q111. Why did you stop them from going to school?

(i) I thought school was a waste of time [ ] (ask Q112)

(ii) I thought the child/children were loosing a chance for learning the ways of their fathers [ ]

(iii) I could no longer bear the cost for keeping them in school [ ]

(Ask Q113)

Q112. Why did you think school was a waste of time?

Q113. If you have the money now, will you send any child of school going age to school?

Yes [ ] (ask Q114)

No [ ] (ask Q115)

Q114. Could you tell me why you would do this?

(i) Because I believe there is great value in going to school

[ ]

(ii) Others reasons:

Q115 (a). Why would you not pay to send the child to school?

(i) I have lost confidence in the value of school [ ] (If so, ask Q115 (b)

(ii) Other reasons:

Q115 (b) Why have you lost confidence in the value of schools?

(i) Some young Bassas who have gone to school are without jobs. They are back to their villages! [ ]

(ii) Some young Bassas who went to school did not succeed in getting their diplomas and are now of no use to their parents on the farms! [ ]

(iii) Some young Bassa just used school as an idle excuse to escape the rigours of hard farm work [ ]

(iv) Other reasons:

Q116. What schools did your children attend?

What Gains from Western Education?

Q117. Why did you bear the expense of seeing them get western education?

(i) I had attended institutions of western learning myself and I wanted them to follow in my steps [ ]

(ii) There was no better way for giving them a secure future [ ]

(iii) I wanted them to play roles in modern Nigeria, like holding positions in government or having their own careers [ ]

(iv) I did not want them to suffer the effects of illiteracy like I did [ ]

(v) I did not want them to suffer the effects of a low level of formal education like I did [ ]

(v) That was the best way to ensure they would have access to money, power and prestige in Nigeria [ ]

(vi) Other reasons/Further explanation:

Q118. Since all or some of your children have finished school, would you say the dreams and goals you had in sending them to school have been realized or are in the process of being realized?

Yes [ ] (Ask Q 119)

No [ ]

Q119. What specific goals are being realized?

(i) Careers [ ] (Ask Q120)

(ii) Jobs [ ] (Ask Q120)

(iii) Money [ ] (Ask Q121)

(iv) Prestige [ ] (Ask Q122)

(v) Access to positions of power [ ] (Ask Q123)

(v) Others:

Q120. What careers do your children have or are being trained for:

(i)----------

(ii)----------

(iii)----------

(iv)----------

(v)----------

Q121. Do you know how much money your child/children earns or may earn? Please specify figures if you can?

(i) A few hundred **naira** a year [ ]

(ii) Thousands of **naira** a year [ ]

(iii) Millions of **naira** a year [ ]

Q122. How much prestige do you think western education has endowed or will endow your children?

(i) Very little prestige [ ]

(ii) A minimum level of prestige [ ]

(iii) A lot of prestige [ ]

Q123 What are the chances for your children getting access to position of power, now that you have given them western education?

(i) Very little chance [ ]

(ii) Some minimum level of chance [ ]

(iii) Very high chances [ ] (ask Q124)

Q124 Can you give examples of positions of power and responsibility which any of your children have had already-if any at all?

(i)----------

(ii)----------

(iii)----------

(iv)----------

Q125. Do you think your children would have achieved any of these or stood a chance of achieving any of these, if all you did was train them in Bassa ways only?

(i) Yes! Certainly [ ] (Ask Q126)

(ii) Possibly [ ] (Ask Q126)

(iii) No! Certainly not [ ]

Q126. Please explain what you mean:

Western Education and Bassa Culture 11.

Q127 (b) As a Bassa parent who has trained or is training his/her child/children in schools, I want to ask you this question: If you had your way, would you want your child/children to know Bassa culture, as much as they are western educated?

Yes! [ ] (If so, ask Q127(b)

No! [ ] (If so, ask Q127(c)

Q127(b) Why do you have this wish?

(i) I am Bassa and I want my children to have a root in their culture. Getting then western educated was a matter of necessity

[ ] (If so, ask Q127(d)

(ii) Western education is not enough. The children must have roots in their own culture [ ]

(iii) Other reasons/arguments:

Q127(c) Why do you not have this wish?

(i) I think western education is enough for them [ ]

(ii) I have made my choice: Western education is the best thing for my children [ ]

(iii) I cannot have it both ways [ ]

(iv) Other reasons/arguments:

Q127(d) Why do you say "Western education was a necessity"?

(i) I had to get my self and family ready for the changing times [ ]

(ii) Western civilization is a reality of day. Change was a must for my family [ ]

(iii) The benefits of western education were obvious to me and I thought my family must have them [ ]

(iv) Other ethnic groups [give an example----------] were changing and my family had to change too [ ]

(v) Other reasons/arguments:

Q127(e) Do you think there is a price being paid for all this? Is there any regret you have at all regarding what you think your child/ children may have missed or are missing about Bassa culture?

No! None at all! [ ]

Yes! There is some slight regret [ ] (ask Q128)

Yes! There are many regrets [ ]

128. What is this "slight regret" all about?

(i) I wish my children could have all the western education in the world and still know all about the culture of their fathers

[ ]

(ii) While I value western education, I fear that too much of it may be the end of an active Bassa culture [ ]

(iii) I regret the fact that my children could not learn some aspects of Bassa culture within Bassa society [ ] (if so, ask Q129)

Q129. Is there no way this can be remedied? Can't western educated Bassas embark on a study of the culture of their people afterwards?

(i) Yes! That is a great possibility [ ] (If so, ask Q134)

(ii) Yes! That is possible but there may be difficulties [ ] (If so, ask Q130)

(iii) No! I do not think so [ ] (If so ask Q135)

Q130 What are the difficulties?

(i) There is no better way to learn a culture than in "really doing it" [ ]

(ii) Some of the younger generation may not be interested in learning the culture of their people [ ] (If, ask Q131)

(iii) Other reasons:

Q131. Does this bother you? That some western educated Bassas may not bother to learn the culture of their people?

(i) Yes! It bothers me a lot [ ] (If so ask Q132)

(ii) It bothers me a little [ ]

(iii) Does not bother me at all [ ] (If so, ask Q133)

Q132. Why does this bother you a lot?

(i) We may learn all the ways of the white man that we can, but we are still Bassa [ ]

(ii) No matter how western educated Bassas are, they need the culture of their fathers [ ]

(iii) Western education is no substitute for a cultural foundation in one's own people [ ]

(iv) Other reasons:

Q133. Why does it not bother you?

(i) I made my choice long ago. One cannot have it both ways: Western education and Bassa culture [ ]

(ii) I simply think Bassa culture belongs to another age [ ]

(iii) Other reasons:

Q134. Please tell me the possibilities of western educated Bassas learning the culture of their people.

(i) Doing research in Bassa culture, history and traditions [ ]

(ii) Promoting literacy skills in the Bassa langauge [ ]

(iii) Making Bassa culture known to the world [ ]

(iv) Popularizing Bassa culture to younger Bassas born in the cities [ ]

(v) Making the Bassa language one which could be used in science, mathematics, philosophy, and the study of human relations and development [ ]

Q135. Why do you hold this opinion?

Q136. One of the after effects of westernization in Nigeria have been a widening gap between the rich and the poor, unemployment, urban crime, a disillusioned youth, a food and economic crisis, etc. This has raised questions on the value of westernization for African societies. Being Bassa, would all these discourage you from encouraging westernizing influences like schools?

(i) Yes [ ] (If so, ask Q137)

(ii) No [ ] (If so, ask Q138)

Q137. Please tell me what you mean.

(i) I think Bassas should protect their culture, traditional ways of

education and resist westernizing influences [ ]

(ii) I think westernization and its educational system has its advantages, but Bassas must adopt it with caution.

(iii) Other points and arguments:

Q138. What do you mean by this?

(i) Westernization is here to stay. Bassas must accept the reality of the West's effect on Nigeria and adapt to it [ ]

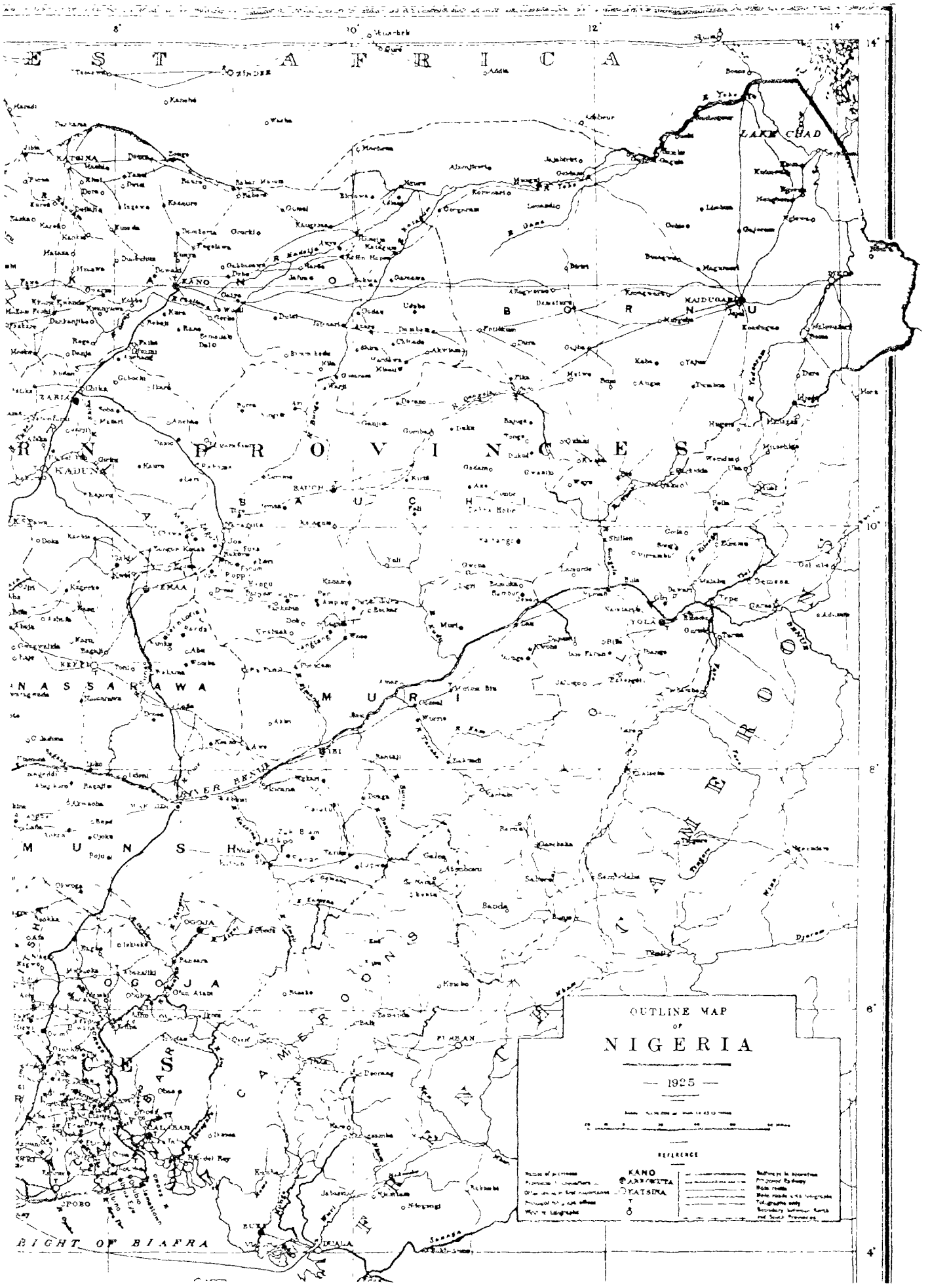
(ii) Bassa society must westernize in some aspects if they are to maintain their integrity as a community in Nigeria [ ] (If so, ask Q139)

(iii) Bassa society must acquire certain tools of western culture if it is to have a meaningful place in Nigeria, but it need not westernize hook, line and sinker [ ] (If so, ask Q139)

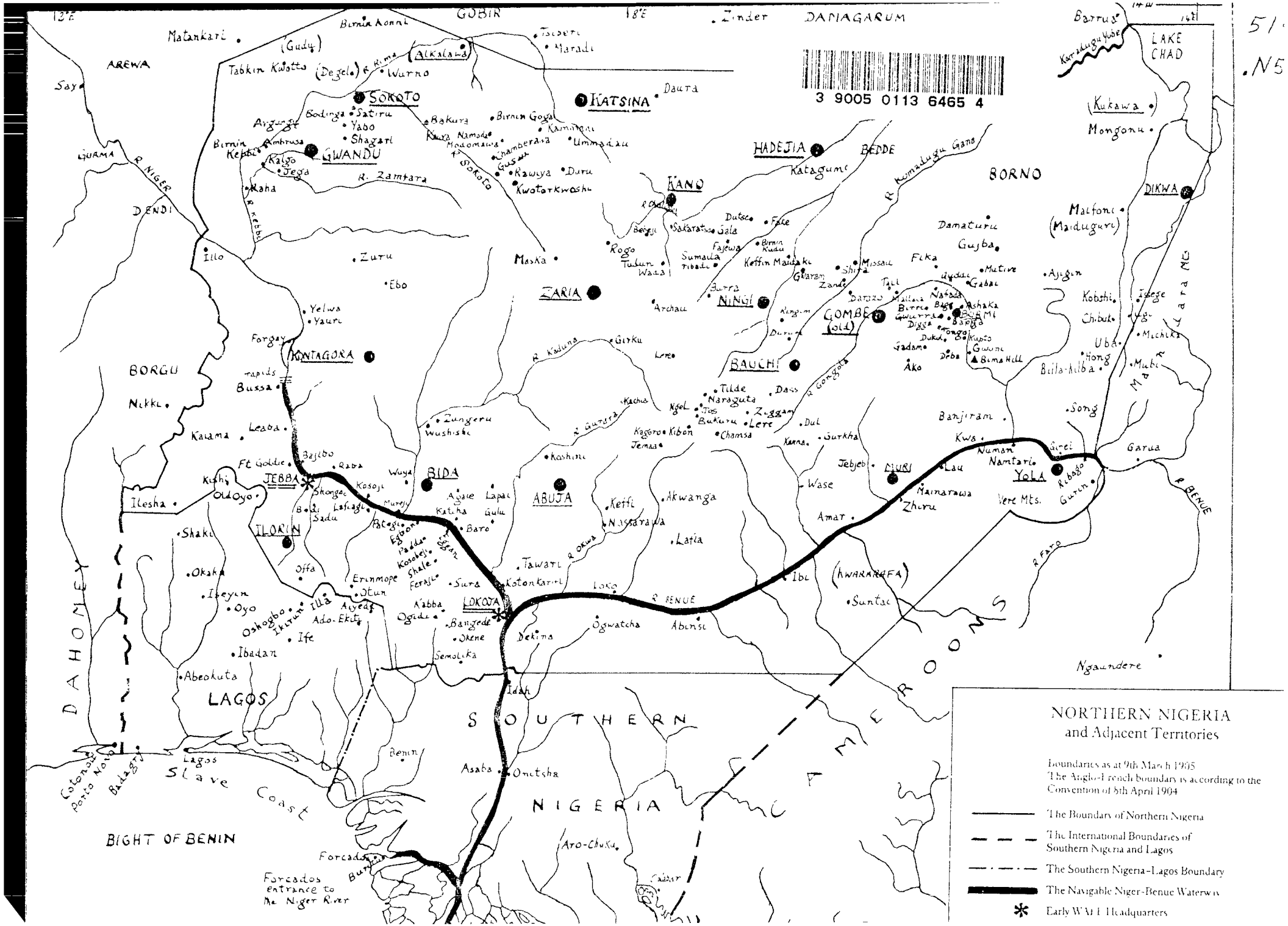
(iv) Other arguments:


NIGER
CHAD
Lake Chad
Sokoto
Katsina
Nguru
Birnin Kebbi
SOKOTO
Kaura Namoda
KANO
Kano
BORNO
Maiduguri
Zaria
KADUNA
Kaduna
BAUCHI
Bauchi
BENIN
NIGER
Minna
Jos
N I G E R I A
Abuja
FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY
Niger
Benue
Yola
KWARA
Ilorin
Baro
PLATEAU
GONGOLA
OYO
Ogbomosho
Oyo
Oshogbo
Iwo
Okene
Makurdi
BENUE
CAMEROON
Ibadan
ONDO
Abeokuta
OGUN
LAGOS
Lagos
Benin City
ANAMBRA
Enugu
Koko
BENDEL
Sapele
CROSS RIVER
IMO
Warri
Niger
Bight of Benin
RIVERS
Aba
Calabar
Port Harcourt
6 Kilometres 200
NIGERIA

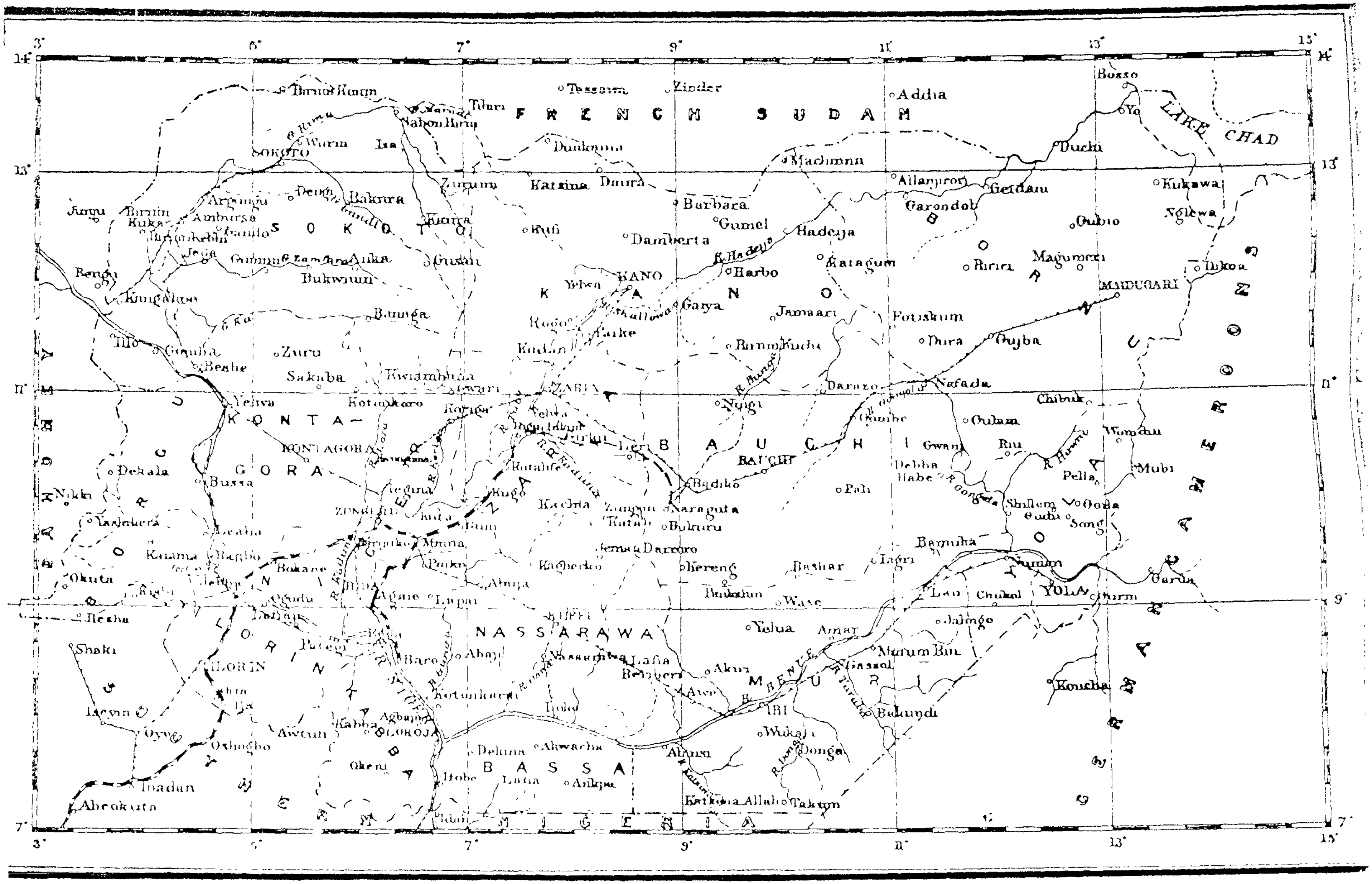
Appendix 1


OUTLINE MAP
OF
NIGERIA
— 1925 —
REFERENCE
KANO
ZARIA
KATSINA
BIGHT OF BIAFRA

Appendix 2


NORTHERN NIGERIA
and Adjacent Territories
Boundaries as at 9th March 1905
The Anglo-French boundary is according to the Convention of 8th April 1904
The Boundary of Northern Nigeria
The International Boundaries of Southern Nigeria and Lagos
The Southern Nigeria-Lagos Boundary
The Navigable Niger-Benue Waterway
Early W.A.F.F. Headquarters
SOKOTO
KATSINA
HADEJIA
KANO
ZARIA
NINGI
GOMBE (old)
BAUCHI
KONTAGORA
BIDA
ABUJA
JEBBA
ILORIN
LOKOJA
GWANDU
DIKWA
MURI
YOLA
BORNO
BORGU
NIGERIA
SOUTHERN
CAMEROONS
DAHOMEY
LAGOS
BIGHT OF BENIN
Slave Coast
LAKE CHAD
Ngaundere
Forcados entrance to the Niger River

OUTLINE MAP OF NORTHERN NIGERIA.



Scale 1/4,000,000 or Four Inches to 64 Miles

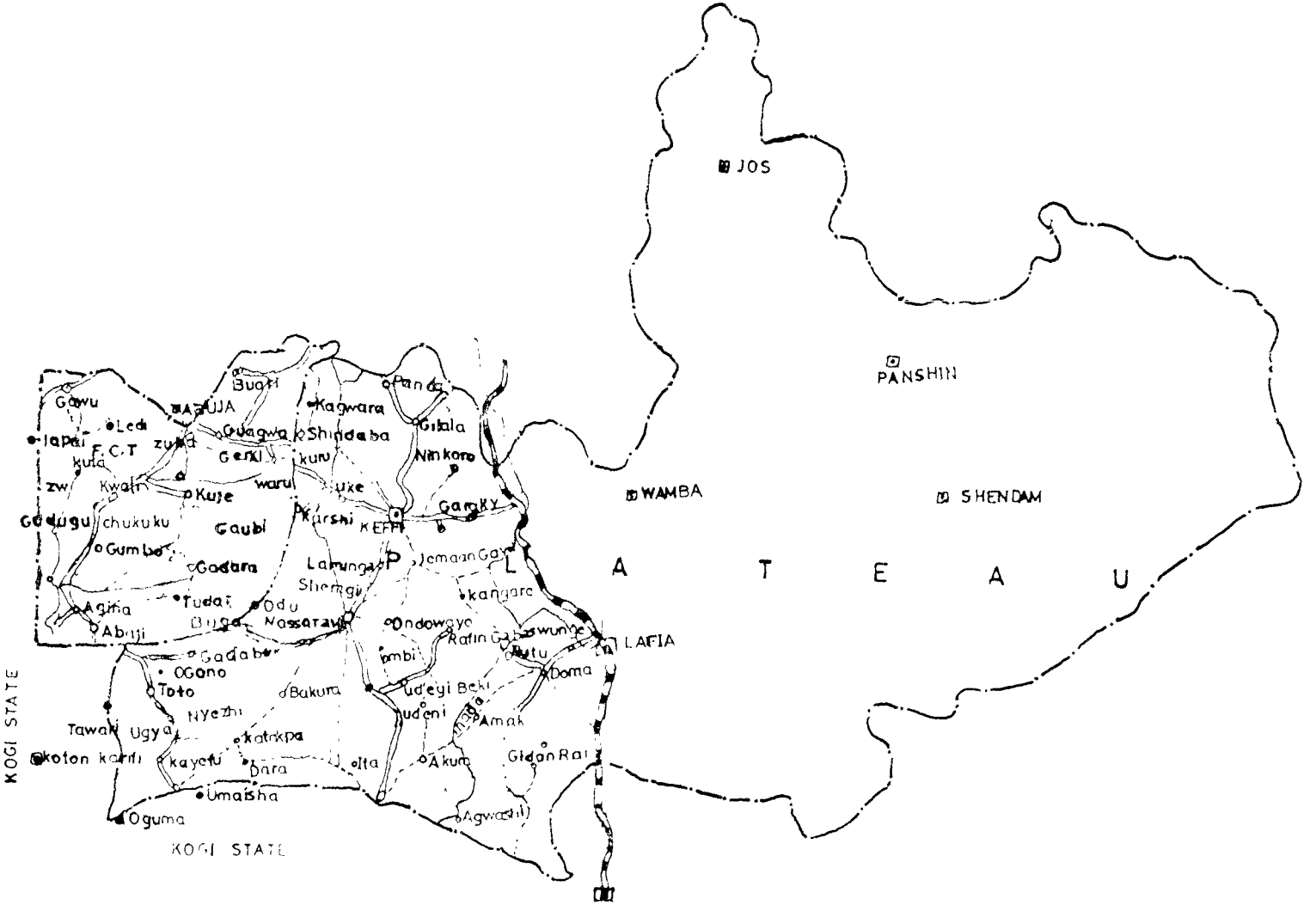
Miles 60 40 20 0 100 200 400 600 Miles

REFERENCE

Railway constructed		Telegraph constructed	
" under construction		" under construction	
Road proposed		" proposed	

Appendix 4

MAP OF PLATEAU STATE SHOWING SOME OF THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES MENTIONED IN THE STUDY.



Appendix 5

MAP OF PLATEAU STATE SHOWING THE 23

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL'S WITH TOTO.

Source: PLATEAU STATE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

Appendix 6