

**USMANU DANFODIYO UNIVERSITY, SOKOTO
(POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL)**

**A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY OF BOSSO DISTRICT OF
MINNA EMIRATE, NIGER STATE: 1923-2011**

**A Dissertation submitted to the Postgraduate School,
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of the Degree of Master of Arts (History)**

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Dedication

This research work is dedicated to the memory of my late parents: Mallam Ibrahim Baruwa and Mallama Moji Ibrahim. May their souls rest in perfect peace; Amen.

Certification

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Glossary of Gbagyi Words

Abwagyi	-	Gbagyi traditional festival
Afwadai	-	Hunter
Akwu	-	Heaven
Apizakumoi	-	A leader of a family
Azabyi	-	Traditional grave diggers
Baje	-	Title Chief
Bangajiya	-	Title Chief
Baruwa	-	Title Chief
Bente	-	A piece of cloth sewn in triangular shape used to cover manhood
Bhesse	-	The original pronunciation of Bosso
Damidami	-	Traditional King maker in Bosso District
Dato	-	Traditional King maker in Bosso District
Eje	-	Local wine prepared with guinea corn
Fa ma bhesse ya	-	Let me have a rest
Fako	-	Family farm
Fapa	-	Communal labour
Gaduma	-	Traditional King maker in Bosso District
Gbagyi Nkwa	-	A dialect among the Gbagyi people popularly regarded as Gbagyi Yamma
Gbagyiye	-	Gbagyi traditional attires
Gbakko	-	Funeral drum
Gunduma	-	Ward Head
Jagaba	-	Title Chief
Jami	-	Title Chief
Kaba	-	A typical traditional sitting room which also serves as the entrance to a compound
Kulikuli	-	Groundnut cake
Kushi	-	Gbagyi traditional festival

Kuyambana	-	Title Chief
Machi	-	Traditional King maker in Bosso District
Madawa	-	Gbagyi traditional festival
Manzhiya	-	Women leader
Mkama	-	Title Chief
Mobai	-	Chief priest
Mudu	-	A container used for measurement of grains
Mula	-	Bride
Nugba	-	Individual farm
Otsu	-	Chief
Pada	-	Title Chief
Shakwu Zhediyi	-	Cooking pot
Shanpa byi	-	Pot for serving soup
Swashe	-	God
Tachi	-	Title Chief
Tukura	-	Title Chief
Wiga	-	Bundle of guinea corn
Wungbye	-	An intermediary between the bride and the groom's families
Wombai	-	Title Chief
Yeifa	-	Farming done on in-laws farm
Zhebudu	-	Pot for storage
Zhiba	-	Gbagyi traditional festival

Abstract

This research is a study of the social and economic history of Bosso District from 1923-2011 within the framework of the socio-cultural practices of the people, which also shows how the advent of Islam and Christianity into the district gradually affected some of the traditional practices. The economic activities of the people during colonial and post-colonial eras when agriculture happened to be the mainstay of the economy were analyzed; colonial economic policies viz cash crop production, colonial taxation, commerce and forced labour which affected the socio-economic life of the people have also been discussed. The political and socio-economic transformation in the district during the post colonial period up to 2011 was also analyzed. Lastly, the dissertation discusses how Colonialism led to the influx of migrant groups from other parts of Nigeria to settle in the district as well as the intergroup relationship that had existed between the host communities (Gbagyi people) and the migrant groups.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Bosso District is situated in Bosso Local Government Area of Niger State. It is also one of the districts in Minna Emirate. Minna, the capital city of Niger State is enveloped by the district. Bosso is pronounced 'Bhesse' in its original form but was later corrupted. The word *Bhesse*, was coined from a Gbagyi phrase '*fa ma bhesse ya*' meaning 'let me have a rest'. It came about as a result of an activity of a hunter who decided to take refuge on the top of the hill of Bosso during a hunting expedition. After he had chosen the place as his resting point, it became his place of abode and later developed as a settlement.¹ Bosso District comprises of five village administrative units, namely; Bosso, Beji, Shako, Shatta and Pyatta.² The administrative headquarters of the district is located at Bosso, which is about five kilometres away from the city of Minna in the northward direction. The districts belong to the region hitherto regarded as 'stateless society' i.e. non- centralized state in Nigeria prior to colonialism.³ The earliest inhabitants of the district are the Gbagyi speaking people who belong to the Gbagyi Yamma (west) Stock.⁴ Today the area is populated with different ethnic groups.

Bosso District from the onset has experienced different forms of political and socio-economic transformations. From little autonomous societies sprang a village growing into a large settlement. At the inception of the British colonial administration at

¹ Alh. Musa Abubakar, District Head of Bosso (82 years), interviewed at his Palace in Bosso on 19/3/2012.

² Ibid.

³ S.A. Abubakar "The Northern Province under Colonial Rule: 1900-1959" in O. Ikime, *Groundwork of Nigeria History*, Ibadan, Heinemann Publishers, 1980, P.466.

⁴ N.F. Byanyiko, *Topics on Gbagyi History*, Jos Idakula Press, 1979, P. 14. See also S. Ibrahim, *The Nupe and Their Neighbours from the 14th Century*, Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books, p. 124.

the turn of the 20th century, the district witnessed administrative restructuring, which placed her under various administrative units. Bosso with other Gbagyi chiefdoms were formerly under Zaria Province until 1908 when they were grouped under Kuta Division in the Nupe Province.⁵ By 1910, Bosso along side Minna, Maikunkele and Paiko were absorbed into the jurisdiction of Wushishi District.⁶ This arrangement was part of the colonial policy, which placed the non-Muslim societies under Muslim administrative rule.⁷ The artificial colonial arrangement did not last long as Bosso later regained independence in 1923 and Minna was placed under her control between 1923 and 1949 before the appointment of late Alhaji Amadu Bahago, as the Paramount Chief of Minna and Chairman of the Gbagyi Federation Council in 1950.⁸

Like any other African societies, the people of Bosso District have a unique culture. The traditional religion of the people involved a variety of local deities and honouring ancestors. The socio-cultural practices of the people varied in traditional religious practices, marriage rites, burial rites, sacrifices, naming ceremony, etc. These practices were sometimes interwoven. The spread of Islam and Christianity in the mid 20th century in the area brought some changes that affected the people's culture.⁹ The infiltration of the two religions in the area saw a systematic obliteration of some cultural practices. In the past, ritual ceremonies were performed but with the grip of Islam and

⁵ I. Baba, 'An Appraisal of Military Conquests, Slavery and British Over Rule: A Case Study of Gbagyi Districts in Former Niger and Nasarawa Provinces C 1800-1930' *Gbagyi Journal* Vol.2, No.3, 2007, Pp. 24-25.

⁶ NAK: Minprof 115/1910 Re-organization of Kuta Division, Niger province, 1910 S.C. Taylor. Alh Musa Abubakar, Op cit interviewed on 19/3/2012.

⁷ F.D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, (5th edition), London, Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1965, P. 198.

⁸ M.M. Bawa, *The Biography of an Icon: Alhaji Ahmadu Bahago, First Emir of Minna 1916-1987*, Kaduna, Nadabo Print Production, 2007, P. 42.

⁹ I.A. Zakari, "Sir Ahmadu Bello: The Sardauna of Sokoto's Conversion Campaign and the Spread of Islam among the Gbagyi People in Minna Chiefdom", Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 2006, Pp. 82-90.

Christianity, cultural ceremonies became modified; and the ritual aspects discarded. The arrival of Christian Missionaries in the area also led to the establishment of schools and the spread of western education.

The ecological zone of Bosso district and its viability encouraged the people to practice agriculture. Located in a Guinea Savanna region, the area is blessed with resources like fertile land, rivers and other natural resources which provided opportunities for developing viable societies. Majority of the people in the area are farmers and the staple crops grown include yam, guinea corn, maize, beans, rice etc. They practice subsistence farming using local farm inputs. The abundance of food crops and other valuable commodities contributed to the growth of markets in the district. Other economic activities practiced in the area include domestication of animals, fishing, local industries (crafts), hunting and engagement in small scale enterprise.

The influx of immigrants from different parts of the country especially the Hausa, Nupe, Yoruba, Igbo people into the area from the early part of the 20th century as a result of the construction of railway line in Minna contributed to the social and economic transformation of the district. The activities of the immigrants that settled in this area impacted positively on the people's way of life. The district had continued to witness some transformation due to its proximity to Minna, the capital city of Niger State. The physical expansion and urbanization of Minna had gone a long way in the transformation of some settlements in the district. Today, most of the urban settlements in the district like Chanchaga, Maitumbi, Bosso, Tudun Fulani, Shanu village have all become suburbs of Minna.

This study is therefore an attempt to examine the social and economic history of Bosso District from 1923 to 2011. It is divided into seven chapters. Chapter one gives the general background to the work. Chapter two deal with the land and people of the district. Chapter three focuses on the pre-colonial economic activities of the people. Chapter four analyzes the advent of Islam and Christianity into Bosso District. Chapter five discusses colonialism and economic development in Bosso from 1923 to 1960. The sixth chapter is on the political and socio-economic transformation that has taken place in the district from 1960 to 2011. The last chapter deals with the social and intergroup relations between the Gbagyi people and other ethnic groups in the district.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The area which is today regarded as Bosso District formed part of the region that was regarded as ‘stateless society’ prior to colonialism. The early inhabitants of the area were formerly hill top settlers before they descended to the plain land during the colonial era. The study of Bosso has not attracted much attention by scholars in spite of its rich historical socio-cultural and economic activities. Most literatures written on this part of the region are centred on Minna with just a mere passing reference to Bosso District. It is on this basis that this research intends to fill in the gap that has been created.

Consequently, this research attempts to provide answers to the following pertinent questions;

- i. What is the historical origin of people of Bosso District?
- ii. Did religion and culture play any role in the history of the people of Bosso District?

- iii. Why and how Islam and later Christianity came into Bosso and what impact did both have on the lives of the people?
- iv. What were the major pre-colonial economic activities in Bosso and how did colonialism affect the district?
- v. What major transformation has occurred in the district since 1960 to 2011?
- vi. With the transformation of Bosso into a suburb of Minna that saw the influx of migrants, how did this affect intergroup relations?

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The broad aim of this research is to analyse the social and economic history of Bosso District. The specific objectives include the following:

- i. To trace the historical foundation of Bosso District.
- ii. To examine the religious and cultural practices of the people of Bosso District.
- iii. To assess the impact of Islam and Christianity as social institutions in Bosso District.
- iv. To identify the major economic activities of the people of the district and the impact of colonial economic policies on the people of Bosso District.
- v. To identify the major changes that has occurred in the district up to the present.
- vi. To examine the inter-group relations between the Gbagyi and other ethnic groups in the district overtime.
- vii. To fulfil parts of the requirements for the awards of M.A. History of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on Bosso District in Minna Emirate of Niger State. The district covered almost the entire area that forms the present Bosso Local Government Area. The five villages in the district include; Bosso, Beji, Shako, Shata and Pyatta. The study covers the social and economic activities of the people during the colonial period and has also examined the transformations that have taken place in the area after independence up to 2011.

The period being studied spans from 1923 to 2011. The choice of 1923 as the commencement period for this study is significant because that was when Bosso regained her autonomy after been placed under various administration the last being the District Head of Wushishi since 1910 by the colonialists. In 1923, the District Head of Wushishi was given the option to return to Wushishi or stay in Minna after ruling Bosso, Minna, Maikunkele and Paiko for thirteen years. Sequel to the departure of the District Head of Wushishi, the status of Bosso was upgraded to a district status in 1923. The year is also significant because it was the same year that the administration of Minna was placed under the jurisdiction of Bosso District up to 1950 before the appointment of Ahmadu Bahago as the first paramount Chief of Minna.

The choice of 2011 as the terminal period of the study was considered important because it was in 2011 that two more additional village administrative units were created thereby raising the number of the village units in the district to five. During the year, the status of ward head of Shatta and Pyatta were upgraded to the status of village heads. The creation of more village areas in 2011 ushered in a new political development in the district.

The major impediments encountered during this research were lack of local pre-colonial written record on the area. These would have provided an insight into the history of the district and, of course aided the research. Secondly, some of the informants interviewed especially the illiterates were adamant in providing information because of the fear of unknown.

1.5 Research Methodology

The data used for this research work was derived from the two main sources- the primary and secondary sources. The first involved oral interviews method with individuals regarding the study area from its earliest time to the present. Both structured and unstructured questions were used during the interview. The interviews were mostly conducted in Gbagyi and Hausa languages. The respondents interviewed cut across traditional rulers, religious leaders and people who have useful knowledge about the district. A mini tape recorder was used in recording responses from individuals in addition to note-taking. Responses in local language of Gbagyi and Hausa arising from un-structured questions were transcribed, analyzed and collaborated by the researcher with a view to balancing the facts. In addition to the interview, the researcher visited National Archive Kaduna, Niger State Archive Minna and Bosso Local Government Secretariat at Maikunkele where several relevant documents were consulted regarding the study area.

On the secondary sources, although there are few written documents regarding Bosso District, which one can lay hands on, the researcher was able to make use of the available relevant ones both published and unpublished works. Sources for this work

were thus obtained from books, journals, seminar papers, public lectures, biographies, theses, dissertations and projects.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The idea to undertake this research is predicated on the ground that little attention has been paid to the history of Bosso. Most studies around this geographical zone tend to centre on Minna, even though Minna and Bosso can hardly be separated. The existing literatures dealing with Bosso District are superficial. This study is an attempt to place the history of Bosso in its proper perspective by analyzing the scanty literature on the area. The study has brought to the fore a documentary history of Bosso by way of investigation into the socio-economic activities of the people. Thus, it is a pioneer work on the history of our area of study. It will certainly provide documentary records for future research by students, scholars and the general public. The study will help to bring the history of Bosso to lime- light and above all, a contribution to the history of Gbagyi people in general.

1.7 Literature Review

Various literature abound on the history of Minna and the Gbagyi people in general. However, much emphasis has not been shown on the studies of Bosso District. The researcher in the course of searching for materials for review considered literatures that are either directly or indirectly concerned with the history of the area. Some of the literatures reviewed are works that made passing statements on Bosso land in connection with other areas as well as literatures which are centred on the Gbagyi people generally.

One of these works is that of Bawa¹⁰ that traced the historical origin of Bosso from its earliest time. According to Bawa the people of Bosso migrated from Kuta. Although Bawa's work only made a passing reference on Bosso, it has however shown the pattern of migration of the people. The work further revealed the political tussles that occurred in the polity of Minna and consequently led to the emergence of Gwodeyinze ruling dynasty on the eve of Colonial era. However, since Bawa's work is not specifically on the history of Bosso people, he did not dwell much on their detailed history to cover their social, economic and political institutions.

Parts of Kuta's work¹¹ discussed the different traditions regarding the foundation of Bosso and the role played by Abubakar Zarumai Lawu in the polity of the area. He further discussed the social and economic life of the Gbagyi people including the Bosso people. Kuta's work is significant to this study because it has made generalized studies on the Gbagyi people that can be implied to Bosso.

Bawa, while writing on the socio-economic history of Paiko District, argued that the district is comprised of different ethnic groups with the Gbagyi being the most dominant. He noted that agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of Paiko District with other economic activities like local craft and commerce as subsidiaries. He identified low level of education and unemployment as some of the challenges facing the area.¹² Although Bawa's work is not on Bosso, however, the work is relevant to this study because the two areas belong to the same geographical region, with some common similarities in their socio-economic life.

¹⁰ S.G. Bawa, *Gbagyi and the Nigerian Nation*, Minna, Luradd Ventures, 1999.

¹¹ B.A. Kuta, *Notes on some Aspect of Gbagyi History...* Op. cit.

¹² A.M. Bawa, "The Socio-economic History of Paiko District", Unpublished B.A. Project, UDUS, 1996.

Rufai's work is another important source material. The work, which centered on Minna, shows how Minna gradually evolved from a hill top settlement to an urban centre as a result of colonial railway that passed through the area in 1910.¹³ Rufai's work did not discuss much on the polity of Minna and the role played by Mallam Abubakar Zarumai Lawu, the District Head of Bosso who ruled Minna from 1918 to 1949 before the appointment of Ahmadu Bahago as the paramount chief of Minna. It is important to note that no meaningful work would be carried out on the history of Minna during the colonial era without mentioning Bosso District. The weakness notwithstanding, Rufai's work has helped in providing a green-light to the study of Bosso during colonial period.

Shehu¹⁴ conducted a historical survey of the history of Kuta in the 19th and 20th centuries. He discussed the origin and socio-economic activities of Kuta people. According to him before the advent of colonialism in the 20th century, Kuta was regarded as the Headquarters of other Gbagyi chiefdoms like Bosso, Paiko, Maikunkele, Galadima Gogo and Fuka. Bosso, according to him owe allegiance to Kuta that was under the suzerain of Zaria. This, therefore, implies that Bosso and Kuta have things in common.

Galadima's public lecture tagged 'Bosso: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow'¹⁵ gives a concise account of Bosso District from its inception to the present day. He discussed the role played by Bosso in the polity of Modern Minna and also stressed the

¹³ M.A. Rufai, "Growth and Urbanization of Minna: 1910-1999". Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 2009.

¹⁴ I.S. Minna, "A Survey of Kuta Town in 19th and 20th Centuries: A Tentative Historical Analysis", Unpublished B.A. Project, UDUS 1987.

¹⁵ M. Galadima, "Bosso: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" Being a Paper presentation in Honour of the Executive Governor of Niger State, Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu (Talban Minna) during a Civic Reception on a Gbagyi Day, 2008

challenges facing the district. The work did not however give a full historical account of the social and economic history of the people; even though it serves as a guide to this study.

Colonial administrators and anthropologists such as Gunn and Conant,¹⁶ Meek¹⁷, Temple¹⁸ also provided an insight into the Gbagyi culture in general. They made a general account on the migration pattern and the social, economic, and political system of the people during the pre-colonial Nigeria. For example, Gunn and Conant studied the different people of Africa in respect to location, natural environment, economy, social structure, political organization, religious beliefs and cults. Gunn and Conant explained the political nature in Gbagyi land and stated that a Gbagyi settlement was a district-like organization. The book discussed the economy of the Gbagyi as predominantly agrarian. Meek did an extensive cultural comparison in which the Gbagyi people featured throughout. Temple on the other hand traced the origin of the Gbagyi people and asserts that the Gbagyi migrated from Zamfara to the southern part of Zaria province before inhabiting their present locations. He maintained that these people occupied an extensive region of south of Hausa land and that they never lived as a group under a central authority. He opined that the dispersed and wide settlement pattern accounted for why they could not live as a group under a central authority.

Although these European scholars did not discuss Bosso as a separate entity, it should be noted that Bosso District belongs to the region discussed by the authors. Thus, the works of Gunn and Conant, Temple, Meek and others had provided abundant information on the Gbagyi people generally and Bosso in particular. However, most of

¹⁶ H. Gunn and P.F. Conant, *People of the Middle-Niger Region: Northern Nigeria*, Sydney Press, 1960.

¹⁷ C.K. Meek, *Northern Tribes of Nigeria*, London, Frank Cass, 1925.

¹⁸ O. Temple, *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Nigeria*, Lagos, 1922.

their write up on the Gbagyi people were dependent on informants who were not of Gbagyi origin and know little or nothing about whom they reported. Little wonder most of their works were found to be biased. The literatures found nothing good about the people. For example, they considered the Gbagyi people as uncivilized, very dark people without physical cleanliness, pagans, unproductive and economically backward. They regarded their crop as of poor quality.

Another work worth reviewing is the work of Baba¹⁹ who did an in-depth study on the political evolution of state system among the people that inhabited the River Kaduna Valley. He made analysis of how the various Chiefdoms in the area were brought together to form a confederated state which later metamorphosed into Minna Emirate. The study shows the role played by the Chief of Bosso, Abubakar Zarumai Lawu in the evolution of what is today known as 'Modern Minna'. The work reiterated that the affairs of Minna were transferred to the District Head of Bosso in 1923 after the departure of Sarkin Wushishi. He stressed that Minna was transferred to Bosso due to the leadership style of Otsu Abubakar Zarumai Lawu. However, since the work of Baba is not directly on Bosso District, the author did not dwell much into the details of their history. Nevertheless, the work has helped our discussion on Bosso under colonial rule.

On the general Gbagyi socio- economic activities, the works of Byanyiko²⁰ and Galadima²¹ are complete treatise. These authors in their separate publications approached the origin of Gbagyi using the Hamitic Hypothesis as a frame of reference. The works discussed the general life pattern of the Gbagyi people. They maintained that

¹⁹ I.N. Baba, "The Evolution of the State Systems Among the Gbagyi of River Kaduna Valley C 1860 – 1981" *Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis*, University of Abuja, 2006.

²⁰ N.F Byanyiko, *Topics on Gbagyi History*, Jos, Idakula Press, 1979.

²¹ B. Galadima, *Gbagyi (Gwari) as a Native*, Minna, Famous Publishers, 2000.

agriculture was the bedrock of Gbagyi economy. The publications although did not focus directly on Bosso area, it however provided us with relevant information in understanding the social and economic life of our study area considering the fact that the culture of the Gbagyi people are similar in nature. Similarly, Baba²² and Chiroma²³ in their separate publications discussed the history of Gawu. These two works discussed the socio-economic life of the people of Gawu. The two materials also served as a guide in dealing with the social and economic history of Bosso.

The work of Mohammed has shown how the British colonial government disrupted the Gbagyi political organization in and around Minna. Mohammed stated that activities of colonial government led to the establishment of the Gbagyi Native Authority which later transformed into the creation of Minna emirate.²⁴

Mohammed,²⁵ in another work maintained that most Gbagyi settlements, Bosso inclusive, were located on hill tops before British colonization of the area in the 20th century. He identified factors such as farming, hunting, religion, and slave raids as reasons that influenced hill settlements among the hill dwellers in Nigeria. The work is of relevance to our study because the reasons raised by the author also necessitated the settlement of Bosso people on the hill.

The work written by Shekwogaza²⁶ in a reaction to a handbook during the turbaning ceremony of Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu Talban Minna, has argued that Minna was founded by the Gbagyi. Shekwogaza gave account of stewardship of

²² I. Baba, *History of People of Gawu*, Nanbo Investment Ltd, Minna 1998.

²³ A.S. Chiroma, *The Gawu History and Traditions 1937 to Date*, Radesco Printers, Minna, 1995.

²⁴ S .Mohammad, "The Impact of British Colonial Rule on the Gbagyi, 1900-1960: A Study of Political Change" Unpublished M.A. Thesis, A.B.U Zaria, 1988.

²⁵ 'Pre-Colonial Gbagyi Hill-Top Settlements: An Examination' *Degel: The Journal of the FAIS*, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Vol. VII, 2007.

²⁶ S.G. Shekwogaza, *Minna as Gbagyi Land: The Truth Must Prevail*, Minna, 2001.

Abubakar Zarumai Lawu, as the Chief of Bosso and Minna inclusive as from 1918 to 1949, when he was requested to vacate his palace from Minna to Bosso. Shekwogaza also informed the readers about the conflicts that later ensued between Abubakar Zarumai Lawu and the Hausa settlers over the leadership of Minna.

Another related work worth reviewing is the work of Ibrahim.²⁷ Ibrahim asserted that the Gbagyi were vassal states to Nupe kingdom before the advent of colonial rule. But the work failed to support the arguments with any historical evidence. Of relevance to this study is his discussion on the socio-political set-up of the Gbagyi people. The author classified the Gbagyi of Bosso with other areas like Minna, Maikunkele, Paiko as belonging to the Gbagyi Yamma stock. The work states further that agriculture is the mainstay of the Gbagyi economy. Thus, Ibrahim's work is relevant to this research work.

Burns,²⁸ writing on the history of Nigeria shows that the Gbagyi inhabited the area west of the Bauchi plateau and were scattered around this land. According to him, the Gbagyi were not at any time conquered by the Fulani, but suffered terribly from being constantly raided for slaves. This, therefore, shows that Bosso chiefdom was not at any time conquered by the Fulani as it is often claimed by some scholars like Mohammed.²⁹

It should be seen that the major weakness of some of the literatures reviewed above is their scope of coverage either in terms of geographical area of coverage or in terms of specific enterprises under focus. Although all the materials are relevant to this work, the researcher has not come across any earlier work that has made a specific

²⁷ S. Ibrahim, *The Nupe and Their Neighbours from the 14th Century*, Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books, 1992.

²⁸ A. Burns, *History of Nigeria*, London, 1978.

²⁹ S. Muhammad, *History of the Emirate of Bida to 1899 AD*, Zaria, ABU Press Ltd, 2011.

study on the social and economic history of Bosso District. This therefore informed and justifies the researcher's attempt to undertake this study in order to bridge the existing vacuum.

CHAPTER TWO

LAND AND PEOPLE OF BOSSO DISTRICT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the geography and historical background of Bosso District, the ethnic composition of the district as well as some socio-cultural activities of the Gbagyi people. Similarly, the chapter highlights the political economy, the socio-political set-up of the people and the contribution of Abubakar Zarumai Lawu to the growth of the district.

2.2 Geographical Location of Bosso District

Bosso District is situated in Bosso Local Government Area of Niger State. The district lies on latitude 9⁰40 North and longitude 6⁰28 East on a geological base of undifferentiated Basement Complex of mainly gneiss and magmatite.¹ The district covers Minna, the capital city of Niger State and almost encapsulates Maikunkele District which is also a district in Bosso Local Government Area. (See Fig: 2.1 on page 19). It has an approximate land area of 272 Square kilometers.² The district is bounded in the west by Wushishi Local Government Area and in the south-east by Paikoro Local Government Area. The southern part is bounded by Katcha and Gbako Local Government Area respectively. On the north, the district shares boundary with Shiroro Local Government Area.³

The topography of the northern part of the district lies in an undulating Plateau which rises from the bank of river Seyi in the north and extends as far as to Bosso town

¹ The Master Plan for Minna; 1979-2000, Final Report 1980, Town Planning Division, Niger State Ministry of Housing and Environment, Max Lock Group.

² B.A. Kuta, *Notes on some Aspect of Gbagyi History*, Minna Abayi Resources Production, 2008, P. 68.

³ A.M. Karuma, 'Environmental Consequences of Deforestation of Bosso Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria', Unpublished M.Tech. Thesis, Federal University of Technology, Minna, 2008, P. 7.

and Minna to the east; it then slopes down to the plain and stretches south-west to river Chanchaga (Gbago). The eastern part of the district is thickly wooded and forms the southern part of Kuta and Fuka in Shiroro Local Government Area. On the north-eastern part of the district is River Seyi which separates Kuta from the district. The south east boundary has river Chanchaga, which also separate Bosso from Paiko district.⁴ The plains of the district are drained by River Chanchaga, Seyi, Tagwai, Goada, Kwaladna, Ejina and other minor streams. Most of the rivers are tributaries of River Niger. The peak flows of these rivers are generally in September due to the influence of the raining season.

The climate of Bosso District and the entire Bosso Local Government Area is the tropical continental type (hot and dry). There are two seasonal climates i.e. the wet and dry seasons. The raining season is well defined and comparatively regular, starting from the month of April to the month of October.⁵ The mean annual rainfall is about 1293mm, spread over 190-200 days with the highest monthly record received between July and September. The mean maximum temperature is about 25⁰c in September with an average annual sunshine duration of about 7.2 hours. The annual potential evaporation is about 1429.6mm, while relative humidity is above 60% during the raining season. During the dry season, the area is influenced by the North East (N.E) trade wind, which brings cool and dry harmattan wind.⁶

The vegetation of the district is that of Guinea Savannah. It is a mixture of natural and cultural vegetation due to prolonged human interference. The vegetation is

⁴ I.N. Baba, 'The Evolution of the State Systems Among the Gbagyi of River Kaduna Valley C, 1860-1981,' Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Abuja, 2006, p. 42.

⁵ NSAM: APN/695 Niger Province (Geography, History and Notes on the Division), 1950, p. 1.

⁶ A.M. Karuma, 'Environmental Consequences of Deforestation of Bosso Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria'... op.cit, p. 8.

greatly influenced by human activities as a result of the pattern of land use and agricultural practice. Where the natural vegetation exists, it is dominated by ‘Mixed Leguminous Wooded Savannah’ labelled as Northern Guinea and Southern Guinea Savanna.⁷ During raining season, grasses and leaves are fresh and green, but in the dry season they wither and die, bush-fire often consumes most of them. The vegetation belt of the area is characterized with grasses and varieties of trees. Among the notable economic trees in the district are Shea-nut trees, Locust bean trees, Baobab, Mango and Cashew.

The climate and the vegetation of the area, which is not in the extreme, naturally make the occupational choice of the people to be agriculture. The land is humus and its fertility provides the opportunity for the people to cultivate crops. The soil is a mixture of both sandy and loamy soil. The productivity of the land is viable as it supports the cultivation of both cereal and root crops. Among the staple crops grown in the area are yams, sorghum, maize, millet, beans, cassava, and potatoes. There are vegetable crops like okro; tomatoes, pepper and fruit. Rice and sugar cane are also cultivated in swampy areas. The vegetation also provides opportunity for grazing of animals. The activities of people such as deforestation and bush burning have led to the disappearance of wild animals.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 9-10.

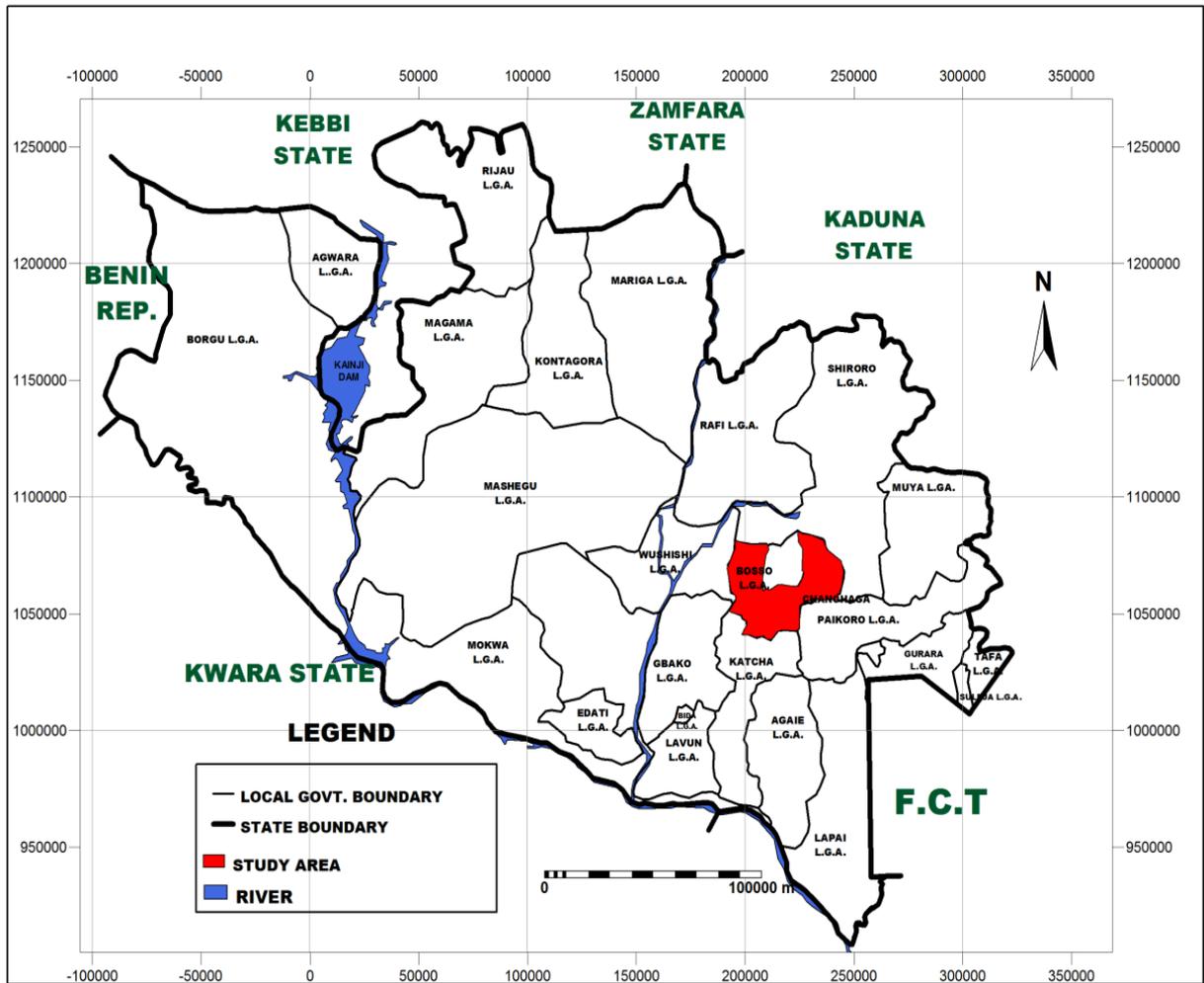


Fig. 2.1: Map of Niger State Showing both Bosso Local Government and Bosso District

Source: Department of Urban and Regional Planning, FUT Minna

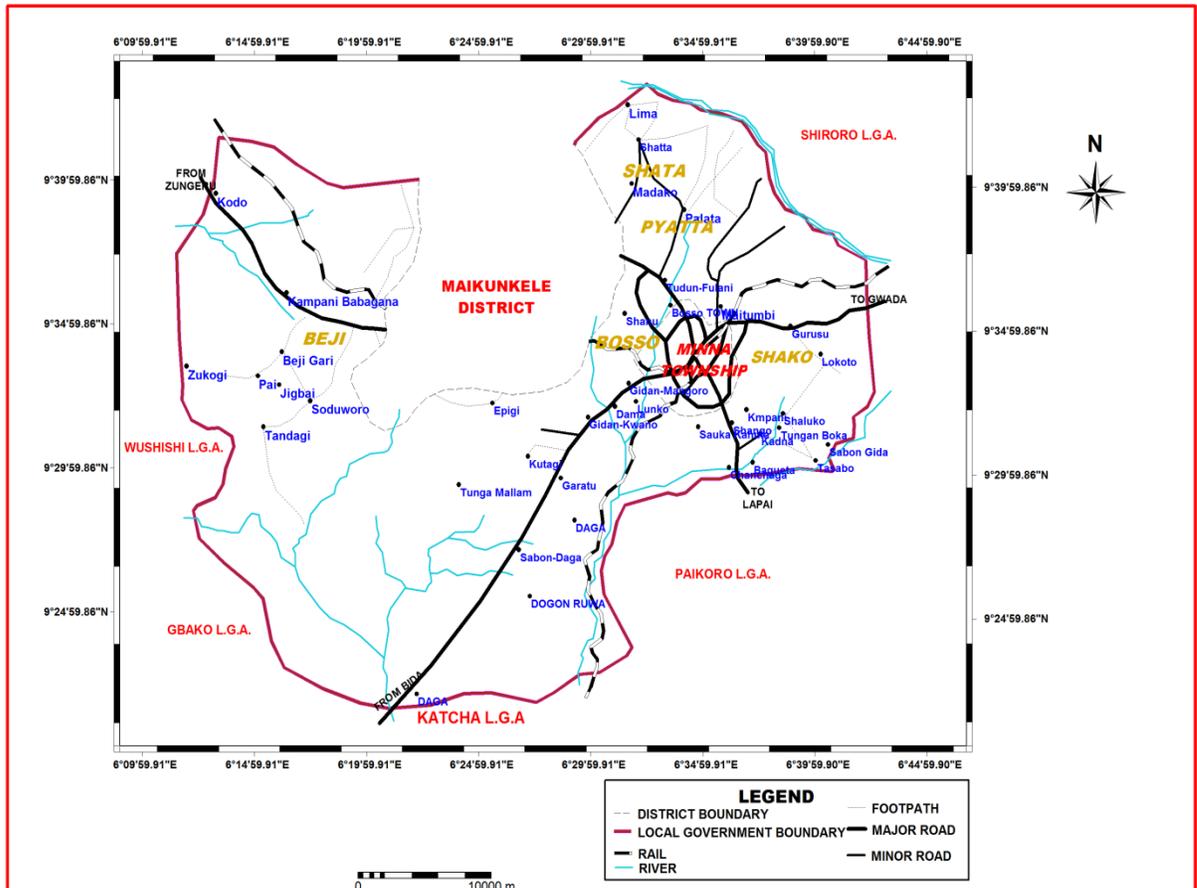


Fig. 2.2: Map of Bosso District

Source: Department of Urban and Regional Planning, FUT Minna

2.3 Historical Origin of Bosso District

The absence and paucity of publications on the history of Bosso creates a situation that calls for heavy reliance on oral sources. According to my informants who were unanimous in their views, asserted that their forefathers migrated from elsewhere and settled in their present location. Like many other Nigerian communities, the origin of Bosso is traced through oral traditions. According to one of the traditions, the name Bosso originated as a result of activity of a hunter called Kankpe, who had his rest on the top of Bosso hill while hunting. It was reported that the first day he climbed on top of the hill he said to himself '*fama Bhesse ya*' i.e. 'let me have a rest'. After choosing the place as his refreshment point while on hunting expedition, the area later became his place of abode and gradually developed into a settlement.⁸ The settlement was named as *Bhesse*. Bosso therefore is a corrupted version of the word *Bhesse* in Gbagyi language.

The second version of the tradition suggests that the founder of Bosso known as Kankpe migrated from Borno through Zaria and settled at Kuta with his brother. Kankpe's brother, who was called Bodo, founded Kuta while Kankpe left on a hunting expedition southward and settled at Zhigba hill in Pyatta. After a short while, Kankpe moved eastward and finally settled at the top of Bosso hill before the settlement expanded with fugitives from other Gbagyi settlements who migrated there in large number.⁹

⁸ Alh Musa Abubakar (80 years), the District Head of Bosso, Interviewed at his Palace on 19/3/2012.

⁹ Alh Umaru Wakili (72 years), Tukuran Bosso, Interviewed at his House in Jikpa-Bosso on 20/3/2012.

Another tradition according to an informant, Bosso means “may all evils pass us by”. In another accounts it sometimes means the “hidden place”.¹⁰

The above accounts were corroborated in the work of Bawa who states that

The people of Bosso had originally settled at a place called Nagusa in Kuta territory. But because Kuta people would not allow them some peace of mind; they moved and finally settled at their new site called Basseya.¹¹

From the foregoing, it is evident that the people of Bosso migrated elsewhere and settled at their present location. However, what is not clear or known is the period of their migration. Migration has since been a common phenomenon in human history. This was because in the past, states, empires or settlements emerged as a result of people leaving their area to another in their processes of historical interactions such as conflicts, drought and search for fertile land for agricultural activities etc. The settlement of early inhabitants of Bosso District started on the top of hills. Hill-top settlement was a common feature of the Gbagyi people in the central region.

Mohammed states that

Most Gbagyi settlements were located on Hill tops before British colonization of Gbagyi areas in Northern Nigeria in the twentieth century. Some of the settlements were Minna, Bosso, Maikunkele, Zhigba, Pyatta, Shatta, Bwaya (Bwari), Kurupe and Birni Gwari.¹²

The settlement of the Gbagyi people on hill-top was for protection against the attacks of their enemies, especially the slave raiders. On top of the hills, people were

¹⁰ Mal. Shehu Kafinta (57 years), Carpenter, Interviewed at his shop in Bosso on 4/5/2013. See also I.N. Baba, “The Evolution of State Systems Among the Gbagyi of River Kaduna Valley C. 1860 to 1981”, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Abuja, 2006, p. 43.

¹¹ S.G. Bawa, *Gbagyi and the Nigerian Nation*, Minna, Luradd Ventures, 1999, p. 34.

¹² S. Muhammed, ‘Pre-Colonial Gbagyi Hill-Top Settlement Examination, *Degel: The Journal of the FAIS, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto*, Vol. VII, 2007, P. 108.

able to sight their enemies from a far distance and defensive actions were taken to protect the community. For example when the Jihadists intensified their raiding the people of Bosso, almost all the vulnerable inhabitants ran into forests or the top of the hills as natural fortification. The hills were vantage points for locating enemies.¹³ Hills also attracted human settlements due to the opportunities that it offered. Mohammed also pointed out that factors such as farming, hunting and religious activities encouraged hill top settlement among the Gbagyi people.¹⁴

The people of Bosso, from their inception have been hill dwellers until the 1950s when they descended to the plain. When the population of settlement on the hill increased and coupled with modernization as a result of European influence, Bosso people decided to descend to the plain for settlement. Also as the threshold of the hills in the plain became choked up, people dispersed into the interior of the district area to cultivate patches of land for agricultural purposes. The movement into the hinterland consequently led to the establishment of villages, hamlets and farm settlements. The area has passed through the hands of different rulers. But because of the periodization of this research, we may not be able to go into their contribution to the development of the district. We shall however discuss the contribution of Abubakar Zarumai Lawu who ruled as the District Head of Bosso as from 1918 to 1960 in the subsequent chapter.

¹³ M.A. Filaba and L.A. Gojeh, *Koro and Gbagyi Sub Group Relations*, Ethiopia, Gaddel Integrated Services Ltd, 2008, p. 65. R.K. Udo 'Environment and Peoples of Nigeria: A Geographical Introduction to the History of Nigeria', in O. Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Heinemann Education Books, 1980 Pp. 8-10. M.A. Rufai, 'Growth and Urbanisation of Minna: 1910-1999', Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 2009, P. 36, See also C.L. Temple, *Notes on Tribes of Northern Provinces, Emirates and States of Northern Nigeria*, London 2nd edition, 1922, P. 29.

¹⁴ Muhammed, 'Pre-Colonial Gbagyi Hill-Top Settlements: An Examination' ... op cit., Pp. 110-111.

2.4 Ethnic Composition of Bosso District

The Gbagyi people, the focus of this study, constitute the largest ethnic group in the district. They were the founders and the early inhabitants of the district. The Gbagyi of Bosso District belongs to the Gbagyi Yamma stock¹⁵ that speaks Gbagyi *Nkwa* dialect. The origin of the Gbagyi people generally still remains obscure just like it is in the case of many other ethnic groups in Nigeria. Some scholars are of the view that the Gbagyi people migrated from Borno through Zaria and later settled in their present locations.¹⁶ These scholars maintained that the Gbagyi were displaced by the Hausa speaking people during the era of state formation. But on the contrary, linguistic classification shows that the Gbagyi neither migrated from Borno nor Hausa land as claimed by scholars like Smith, Byanyiko, Temple, Gunn and Conant among others. Using the linguistic classification, Gbagyi are classified among the kwa-sub branch of Niger-Congo language family. They are categorized along side Nupe, Igala, Igbira and Gade in the same family group.¹⁷ Based on the latter argument, the Gbagyi may have been among the earliest group in the Niger-Congo language family to have migrated from Niger-Benue confluence and occupied their present territories. This, therefore, means that the original homes of the Gbagyi people could not have been far apart. It is

¹⁵ N.F. Byanyiko, *Topics on Gbagyi History*, Jos, Idakula Press, 1979, p. 14. See also S. Ibrahim, *The Nupe and Their Neighbours from the 14th Century*, Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books, p. 124.

¹⁶ H.D. Gunn and P.F. Conant, *People of Middle Niger Region: Northern Nigeria*, London, Oxford University Press, 1966, Pp. 87-89. A. Smith, 'The Early States of the Central Sudan', in J.F. Ajayi and M. Crowder (ed.), *History of West Africa*, London, Longman, 1979, Pp. 157-159. N.F. Byanyiko, *Topics on Gbagyi History...* Op cit., Pp.8-11. S. Nabi and A. Hassan, *Gwari, Gade and Koro Tribes*, Ibadan, University Press, 1969, Pp.2-3. See also C.L. Temple, *Notes on the Tribes Provinces...* op cit., P. 534.

¹⁷ J.H. Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa*, 2nd Edition, Bloomington, Indian University, 1966, P. 8. S. Mohammed, *The Gwaris, Their Origin and Early History*, *Departmental Seminar*, ABU Zaria, 1985, Pp. 14-15.

apparent, therefore, to say that it was in the process of migration that the people moved northwards and settled at their present sites.¹⁸

Apart from the Gbagyi, there are other ethnic groups that are found in the district. These groups are migrants and they include amongst others Hausa, Nupe, Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo. Most of these groups migrated and settled in the district since the colonial period. However, the Hausa and the Nupe are among the earliest settlers in the midst of the Gbagyi. These groups had contact with the Gbagyi people since the period of trans-Saharan trade. Other groups later migrated into the area when railway line reached Minna in 1910 during the colonial era. Most of these people came to the area to work as labourers, businessmen, clergymen or colonial workers.¹⁹ As of today, the migrant groups have grown in their numerical strength in the district. Most of the urban centres in the district that are suburbs to Minna town are populated mostly by these groups.

The environment of the district plays a crucial role for large settlement of both indigenes and non-indigenes alike. The rapid increase in population in the district was due to collaborative efforts of the natives and those coming from other areas that utilized their skills coupled with the environment. Farming and other form of economic opportunities attracted many settlers to the area. In addition, the proximity of the district to Minna, the Niger state capital, also contributed to the large concentration of people in the district. Most of the settlements in the district are suburbs of Minna. The actual population figure of the district is not known because of lack of statistical data. But total population figure of Bosso Local Government Area, based on the 2006 National

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 15.

¹⁹ M.A. Rufai, 'Growth and Urbanisation of Minna: 1910-1999'... op cit, P. 46.

Population Census stood at about 147,359 people.²⁰ Based on the above population data of the entire local government area, the population of district can be estimated to be about 100,000 people, since it occupies about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total land area of the local government with a larger population than its sister district i.e. Maikunkele District.

2.5 Socio-Cultural Activities of the People of Bosso District

Customs and traditions are cultural values which are cherished by societies and taken as a normative civilization. These are expectations and practices that make the people's life meaningful and for the anticipation of better tomorrow. The values are ideals that make the people to be responsible, full of initiative, conform and also orient the younger ones to cherish the attitude.²¹ Prior to the advent of Islam and Christianity in Bosso, the Gbagyi people were attached to their traditional beliefs and civilization. Among the cultural practices of the people to be dealt with here include traditional religion and festivals, superstitious beliefs, marriage rites, burial system, and traditional naming ceremonies, among others.

2.5.1 Gbagyi Traditional Religion

Before the coming of Islam and Christianity, the Gbagyi like any other African society, had their own traditional belief system. These people believed in varieties of gods. They worshiped inanimate objects which they referred to as their gods. Although, the people believed that God exists, but the way and manner which the God was worshipped was a total deviation from the two modern religions i.e. Islam and

²⁰ This Data was obtained from Bosso Local Government Council Secretariat based on the 2006 National Population Census.

²¹ M.A. Filaba and L.A. Gojeh, *Koro and Gbagyi Subgroup Relations...* Op cit, P. 77.

Christianity.²² The Traditionalists believed in the existence of one Supreme Being which they called *Swashe*. The Supreme Being was however considered to be too great and far away from man to approach directly; hence He was to be reached through divinities, ancestors and spirits. These gods and goddesses were carved images or revered places, special trees, river sides, rocks and other objects held with great reverence. Mbiti states that:

Every African people recognised God as one. According to some cosmologies, there are besides Him other divinities and spiritual beings some of whom are closely associated with Him. These beings are generally the personification of God's activities, natural phenomena and national heroes or spiritual being created by God as such.²³

In Bosso District, apart from the general divinities that were worshipped by most of the larger communities, each family had a particular god that was worshipped. Most of these gods were symbolized by stone or tree. People make incessant supplication to the gods. Most communities had shrines where oracles were consulted from time to time. Each community also had a priest who served as a mediator between the god(s) and the members of the society. Sacrifices were carried out from time to time to please the gods. Spirits were called upon to give their blessings at the beginning of each seasons of the year.²⁴

Traditional religion in Bosso District was associated with festivities and cults. The most common of them were *Madawa* cult, *Kushi* cult, *Zhiba* cult etc. *Madawa* was worshipped in almost every house. A sandy corner was devoted to it in each house

²² Alh. Sani Mohammad (62 years) interviewed at Gidan Kwano on 9/4/2012. See also S. Ibrahim, *The Nupe and Their Neighbours from the 14th Century...* op cit., p. 143.

²³ J.S. Mbiti, *Africa Religion and Philosophy*, London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1969, p. 36.

²⁴ Mal. Umaru Mallam (69 years), Maianguwa Tungan Mallam, Farmer, Interviewed at Tungan Mallam on 25/3/2012.

where sacrifices were made to it by all the members of the household. The gods of *Madawa* punishes neglect and bring good fortune when it is regularly worshipped and adored. Its emblems were a miniature, iron, bow and arrow, axe, pot and calabash.²⁵ The festival was carried out when there was an emergency like death, sickness, or any form of calamities. Whenever any of these occurred, the worshippers would contact the shrine to ascertain the cause of the problem to see whether it was natural or caused as a result of mischievous acts.²⁶ The festival involves drinking of *eje* (wine) and dancing. During the festival, some of the dancers become possessed, fall down unconscious and remain unconscious until a special incantation is rendered where upon they are revived.

Kushi cult which was another form of worship was widely practised by the people of the district. It was a form of worship that was associated with the departed members of the society. The Gbagyi believed in the influence of the dead people on the welfare of the living and therefore make propitiatory offerings and prayers. They believed that the departed members of their society play a significant role in the affairs of the living. The departed were worshipped and propitiated with the belief that the happier they are as a consequence of their being duly propitiated the more they will bless the living. The feast was performed in the night when people had taken their dinner. The cultists appeared dressed in leaves and goes round the town. Women and boys who have not reached the age of puberty were not allowed to watch as they were told to stay in-door on the night of the festival. The ceremony was accompanied with

²⁵ C.L. Temple, *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Nigeria*, Lagos, 1922, p. 135.

²⁶ A. Adamu, 'Impact of Islam on the Traditional Culture of Gbagyi People in Niger State' Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 2010, p. 30.

drinking of *eje* (wine) and sacrifices. Cooking of food was usually done outside the house. Certain trees, caves or rocks were believed to harbour the spirits of the dead.²⁷

Zhiba, a household idol was also worshipped by some families in the district. The idol was usually placed at the entrance of men's bedrooms or local huts where grains were stored after harvest. A cock was slaughtered and its blood and feather was stuck on the stone around it. *Eje* (wine) was poured over the stone. It was believed that the soul of an ancestor lodges in the pillar and was invoked in time of trouble. The propitiation was done to ensure the well being of the family.²⁸

Another form of cult that was also common to the people of the district was the *Abwagi* cult. *Abwagi* was performed in the room or any hidden place. The worship was usually accompanied with sacrifices like goat, cock and food. The worship of *Abwagi* was done to enable the worshipers to excel in any occasion or activities.²⁹

By and large, the Gbagyi people of Bosso District believed in the existence of omnipotent gods, who can punish when necessary. In times of bad harvest, famine and war, they made incessant supplication, while in prosperous time they do not think it necessary to worship the gods.

2.5.2 Superstitious Beliefs

Superstitious beliefs were considered as part of the values of the Gbagyi society. A breach of any of the beliefs was considered as an act of taboo. The beliefs varied from family to family. However, there were certain beliefs that were common to the generality of the people in the society. One of such was the belief in the power of the

²⁷ Mal. Umaru Mallam (69 years) op cit. See also S. Nabi and A. Hassan *Gwari, Gade and Koro Tribes*, University Press, 1969, p. 11.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

dead on the living. As earlier stated, the people attached much importance to ancestral worship. It was believed that the dead need to be adored and fed. Therefore, if someone was named after his ancestor and he was sick, the soothsayer would ask him to make sacrifices to the ancestor by slaughtering a cock so that he gets well. Such person after farm harvest was not expected to use the crop until he makes sacrifices to the ancestor to get his blessing. The name of the ancestor was called and part of the crop was thrown into the bush. This signifies that he has given the food to his ancestor. It was also the belief of the people that the spirit of the wicked usually comes back to the earth in form of bird at night to harm people.³⁰

The human head was considered as the sacred part of body that harbour the brain; as such it was to be free from excessive load. Consequent upon this, the Gbagyi women preferred to carry load on the shoulder instead of the head. This they considered as a mark of respect for their head.³¹

As part of their superstitious belief, new born babies were confined in the room and were not to be exposed outside because of the fear of witches until the third day after delivery. Some food and meat were considered forbidden to some family. To those that considered such food as forbidden, they believed that when a member of their family eats such forbidden food or meat it will cause either illness or misfortune to the family member.³²

When a lady conceived in her parent's house the man responsible for the pregnancy was expected to present a he-goat or a cock and some *mudus* (quantities) of guinea corn to the parent of the girl. These items were believed to cleanse the girl's

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

compound. Failure to present such items, calamities may befall the house. Such calamities usually include poor farm harvest or sickness of family members.³³ Therefore having pre-marital affair between a boy and a girl was considered a taboo that was seriously frowned at.

It was also the belief of the people that while righteous people go to heaven (*akwu*) after death, the evil ones who are rejected, return to earth as ghosts. Since they are denied interaction with all their relations and others, they wander about until they are too old and tired. At this stage, they may be transformed into any kind of animal. These ghosts turned into animal, are said to be usually very vicious.³⁴

2.5.3 *Marriage Customs*

Marriage as an institution is as old as man himself. It is a social institution that is practised all over the globe. However, the way it is conducted varies from people to people and religion to religion. In Bosso, prior to the people's acceptance of Islam and Christianity, the people had a unique way of conducting marriages based on their culture. Before a marriage could take place, the suitor (man) must seek for the hand of the lady either directly or through an intermediary. If the lady agreed to the proposal, then, the consent of her parent was sought and a *Wogbyi* (middleman) was appointed to serve as an intermediary between the two families. As part of the tradition of the people, the man was required to work on his in-laws farm which was referred to as *Yeifa* for a period of seven years. It was also expected of him to present to his in-law some numbers of *wiga* (bundle of corn) on annual basis after every harvest. Farming on the

³³ Ibid..

³⁴ J.A Shekwo, *Gbagyi Folktales and Myths*, Vol. 1, Abuja, Garkida Press 1980, P.1

in-law farms and presentation of guinea corn were expected to end two to three years after the actual marriage had taken place.³⁵

The wedding was in three different dimensions. The first of this was through a formal arrangement between the two families. On an appointed day, dowry and food items were presented by the groom's family to the family of the bride. After all necessary formalities were observed as demanded by the culture; rituals were also performed with a view to seeking the blessing of the gods in the marriage. The *mula* (bride) was accompanied to her husband's house by her relatives and friends. The arrival of a *mula* to the groom's house was welcomed with dancing, eating and drinking as a mark of celebration. The ceremony usually last for seven days. On the seventh day before the departure of those who accompanied the *mula* to her husband's house, food was prepared and taken to the in-law's house. A young girl of ten to twelve years stays behind with the bride for four days to assist her in domestic work.³⁶

The second aspect of the marriage was done without the prior notice of the lady. After all arrangement was completed, the representative of the suitor was invited together with a *wugbyi* to the bride house at night. On their arrival, they stayed outside and a member of the family of the girl will invite her outside. As soon as she stepped outside, she was abducted by force and taken to the husband house. The dowry was paid a day after. This form of marriage arrangement was usually done when the lady intends to betray her proposed husband.³⁷

The last form of marriage arrangement was in form of kidnapping. It was also done without the consent of the lady. The suitor and his friends arranged for the kidnap

³⁵ Mallam Musa Lokoto, Sarkin Noma Gurusu (81 years), Farmer, Interviewed at Lokoto on 27/3/2012.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ B. Galadima, *Gbagyi (Gwari) as a Native*, Minna, Famous Publishers, 2000, Pp. 27 - 32

of a lady either in the market square or during a ceremony. After two to three days, the man will report back to his in-laws that he had abducted his wife. If accepted by the in-law; other marriage formalities were to follow later.³⁸

2.5.4 Funeral Rites

Death is a natural phenomenon which occurs without any prior notice. Burial among the Gbagyi people was done without delay except the death of an elderly person which some times were delayed because of rituals. Corpse of children and youths who were not married were buried away from the house, while married persons were buried near the entrance of the compound i.e. *kaba* except elders who were known with questionable characters while alive. The mourning of the death of elderly people usually last longer than that of the young people. The death of an old person above seventy years was celebrated with *gbakko* (a funeral drum).

The grave for burial was dug in form of a well. It was circular in shape with a diameter of about 700mm and 900mm deep. Inside, it turns horizontal and rectangular in shape and the distance depends on the position where the body was intended to be laid to rest. The body was wrapped in a special cloth, hand woven in either dark-blue, white and dark-blue or white only for old men and chiefs. A cock was taken into the grave and some incantations were recited in seeking permission of the ancestors to open their door and accept the one coming in to join them. The cock was killed and the blood mixed with honey and millet flour. This was placed beside the stone and placed at the feet of the deceased. Thereafter, the cock was roasted and eaten by *Azabyi* (the traditionalists). Family members and relatives were expected to present gifts in form of

³⁸ Ibid.

money to the deceased. The gifts were not buried with the dead person but shared by the Azabyi. The ceremony was then followed with the beating of drum.³⁹

The burial of more than one person in a grave was sometime practised by some families in the district, although this was not in any way compared to mass burial. What happened was that more than one rectangular section would be made to accommodate at least two persons, that is, about four persons could eventually be buried in the same grave. It was only the circular section, which was about 1500mm that was backfilled. The section where the body was placed remained hollow. When the grave was re-opened, the bones of the preceding dead one would be packed and arranged in the corner in order to create space for the in-coming body. The time of death of the older bodies was always kept in view so that the side of the rectangular section to be opened would not be the side that harbours a relatively fresh body.⁴⁰

2.5.5 Traditional Child Naming Ceremony

Child birth in every society is seen as a welcome development. This is because children are gifts from God and blessing to the society. The Gbagyi people like any other group, accords great priority to child bearing. Procreation was indeed seen as a duty each adult must perform to ensure the survival and continuity of the community. Children were regarded as wealth. Barrenness in family could lead to polygamous marriage and in some cases outright divorce. A Gbagyi woman gives birth to as many children as she could until the age of menopause comes in to intervene.

³⁹ Alh. Galadima Kwalakwata (70 Years), Galadiman Bosso, Interviewed at Kwalakwata on 20/3/2012. I.A. Zakari 'The Socio-cultural Ceremonies Amongst the Gbagyi in Minna in the 19th Century' *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History: Journal of the Department of History and Archaeology, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2009. Pp. 90-92. See also B. Galadima, *Gbagyi as a Native...* Op cit., P. 60

⁴⁰ Ibid.

When a woman was pregnant, herbs were usually taken to guard her for a successful delivery. Whenever she was in labour, a soothsayer was consulted to find out who among the ancestor want to come back to earth, in form of re-incarnation.⁴¹ A new born baby was usually confined to a room for three days before the baby was taken out. This was done to protect the child against witches. For one good week the mother was not expected to do any work except to eat, sleep and in some cases join others in taking care of herself and the child.

There was no much elaborate ceremony attached to child naming among the people. But much importance was attached to the names bestowed on a child. The importance attached to children in the society necessitates the type(s) of names to be given to them. Each name has its specific meaning. In most cases, a child was named based on the idea or explanation of reincarnation. After confirming from soothsayers which ancestor has come back to live among the people, the child was therefore named after him or her. A baby could also be named after a person (dead or alive) of whom he or she was immortalized. Sometimes, child names may reflect the circumstances surrounding the birth of the child or the socio-cultural development at the time of the birth.⁴²

Names in Gbagyi culture was an important pointer to the time and situation during which the bearer was born. Children were sometimes named haphazardly as it serves as a remembrance or gratitude to the gods. In addition, children were also named after important events in the family especially events that coincide with the child's birth. Names also reflect great occurrence in the live of the community at large.

³⁹ A. S. Chiroma, *The Gawun History and Traditions 1737 to Date*, Minna, Radisco Printers, 1995, p. 42.

⁴² Traditional Child-naming Among the Gbagyi of Abuja, Published by Research and Documentation Division, Abuja, Council for Arts and Culture, Abuja, 1992.

2.6 Land Tenure System and Labour Organization

Land in the pre-colonial setting was an integral part of the politico-economic relations of the people. In Bosso District, it was regarded as the property of a family or clan rather than the individual, the family being a corporate body that cannot die. As such, every family or clan had its own well-known boundaries be it in the bush or a cultivated area. Similarly, there was family ownership of the rights to fish pond, palm, shea and locust beans trees. These properties were looked upon as common property of the state. Private ownership of these trees only arose from those grown in individual farm land. Thus, whatsoever was cultivated on the land belongs to the family.⁴³

The village head-man was empowered to give out any land within his boundary not already given to someone else. The receiver of the land was in turn expected to pay bundle of guinea-corn the first year. Land so granted was not to be taken away again and was held by the grantee in perpetuity, but it was not to be alienated except by voluntary resignation to the village head man. Lands that were permanently deserted, that is not merely resting or in fallow automatically reverts to the village head-man. In the district, there was no limit in size of land an individual could own or control provided he had the labour and economic potentials to work on it. Individual could use the land provided permission for use was granted by the head of the community. Land was leased to individuals (natives and migrants) that indicate interest for farming or to settle on it. Some of the commonest demands on new comers varied depending on the circumstances. Disputes over land between villages were settled by the village head

⁴³ I.N. Baba “The Evolution of State Systems Among the Gbagyi of River Kaduna Valley C 1860 – 1981”. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Abuja, 2006. P. 31.

while over farm boundaries between families were settled by ward head and his elders.⁴⁴

The organizations of labour among the people were in three different forms. They include family labour (*Fako*), individual labour (*Nugba*) and communal labour (*Fapa/Fadagbe*). Labour relations were the most and basic binding forces. Blood relations were stressed in order to have access to the labour and support of members. The main form of labour was the family labour. Members of a family, consisting of a man, his wife or wives and children owned and worked on a farm. The products realized from the family farm were used by the head of the household to cater for the needs of the family members like feeding, income generation, marriage, naming and others. The household was the basic unit of production. The house head determines its members' labour and the sharing of the house produce. Apart from the family labour, individuals owned their farm (*Nugba*). Produce realized from *Nugba* was purely the personal property of the individual who does whatever he wishes to do with it.⁴⁵

Faba/Fadagbe which could be translated to mean cooperative farming was made up of ten or more members under the supervision of an elderly person in the ward. The services of members were mostly sought at the beginning of the rainy season and two to three days of the week were devoted on such a farm on rotational basis. A member could utilize the services of the cooperative farm for his intended in-law before wedding. This practice was in itself a vehicle for social mobilization, aimed at

⁴⁴ Umar Mallam, (69 years), Farmer, interviewed at Tungan Mallam, on 4/5/2013. See also S. Naibi and A. Hassan, *Gwari, Gade and Koro Tribes...* Op cit., Pp. 24-25.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 32. B. Galadima, *Gbagyi (Gwari) as a Native*, Minna, Famous Publishers, 2000, p. 52.

forging a common identity among the people providing opportunities to exchange ideas on state matters.⁴⁶

2.7 Socio-Political Organization of Bosso District

The area today inhabited by the Gbagyi people was part of the region that was referred to as a stateless society or non-centralised society during the pre-colonial Nigeria.⁴⁷ This area comprised of semi-autonomous states (chiefdoms and settlements), that were independent of one another, with defined structures. Each of the states had its own political structures that were similar in principles and practices. Before the introduction of district system of administration in Bosso District, the chain of administration of the area started from the head of household to the head of the farm settlement that invariably channelled all complaints to the village head. The political units were governed by a clearly defined structure of state apparatus starting from the household, compound, village and township.⁴⁸ The political structure relied heavily on the operation of patriarchal system where the family lineages were traceable to the extended family.

Bosso operated a free, egalitarian and democratic political system. Major decisions were taken at the level of council of elders with the head of each family serving as a representative at the forum. The decision of the council were usually communicated to each household vide the head of a family called *Apizakumoi*. The administration was sedimentary in nature as issues regarding the land were taken

⁴⁶ See I.U. Muhammed "Relationship Between the Gbagyi and Hausa in Minna in 28th century... Pp. 14-15.

⁴⁷ S. Abubakar, 'The Northern Province under Colonial Rule: 1900-1959' in O. Ikime (ed.) *The Groundwork of Nigeria History*, Ibadan, Heinemann, 1980 P. 466.

⁴⁸ S. Mohammad, 'Pre-colonial Gbagyi Hill-Top Settlements: An Examination; *Degel: The Journal of FAIS*, Vol. vii, 2007, Pp. 113-114. S. Naibi and A. Hassan, *Gwari, Gade and Koro Tribes*, Ibadan, University Press, 1969, P. 7. See also I.N. Baba, 'The Evolution of the State Systems among the Gbagyi of River Kaduna Valley C. 1860 to 1981... Op cit., p. 1.

democratically at the village square. The elders assembly constituted the highest decision making body while youths and men of middle ages served as the major working class. Youths were used as labour force. Women were not left out in the administration, as each village areas has the position of women leader known as *Manzhiya*. They helped to coordinate the affair of women in their respective areas and also contribute to the smooth functioning of the political machinery.

With the advent of colonial rule, the system of administration changed based on the introduction of the indirect rule system. The administration of the district was to follow the pattern of Hausa traditional political system as practised in other parts of Northern Nigeria. In 1923, when Bosso became a district, a new political structure was introduced. The new administrative structure was headed by a District Head called *Otsu* i.e. *Hakimi*. The district developed an efficient system of government which emerged out of gradual expansion of the capital town through the absorption or conquest of outlying territories. The position of *Hakimi* became the highest traditional political office in the district. The district was sub-divided into village levels with each village having farmsteads and hamlets under it. (See Fig. 2.2 on page 20) The *Otsu* (District head) performs both political and judicial functions. He arbitrated disputes and had certain limited and informal judicial powers. He controlled all the villages under the district. The District Head receives annual gifts in kind from all the villages under him. Succession to the position of *Hakimi* was hereditary.

The political machinery of the district could be compared to a federal system of administration. At the top of the district administration was the District Head, followed by the Village Heads that operates in form of states while farmsteads or hamlets served

like local governments. All the villages were headed by Village Heads i.e. *Dagatai* who also bear the title of *Otsu*. Although, the Village Heads bears the title of *Otsu* they were not in any way equal in rank with the District Head at the district level. Each village was given a quasi autonomy to operate at its village level. The real administration of the district was therefore bequeathed to the village heads. They were however responsible to the District Head. The position of the District head was that of supervisory role. The village heads were the political head of each of the village area.

A Village Head was assisted by a Council of elders that doubled as kingmakers. The palace had four designated king makers namely; *Machi (Madaki)*, *Gaduma (Galadima)*, *Damidami (Dan-Madami)* and *Dato (Dallato)*.⁴⁹ The kingmakers represent their respective clans in the palace and perform the role of advisory body. They constituted the body responsible for electing a new king. The head of the Council of elders was Machi. And like what obtains for the position of the District Head, succession to the throne of the village head was hereditary. The rightful successor of the *Otsu* was usually the son of the deceased *Otsu*. But if the son was still underage, then the younger brother of the deceased *Otsu* was appointed. The appointment of a Village head was usually confirmed by the District Head.⁵⁰

Each village was divided into wards and each of these wards was headed by title holder called *Gunduma*. *Gunduma* were members of the royal family and were very influential in the administration of the area. In the absence of the *Otsu* they spearhead the administration of the area. There were other titled chiefs who also assist greatly in the administration of the land. Some of these chiefs reflect the occupation of the holders

⁴⁹ Late Alh. Abubakar Lolo (73 years), Village Head of Bosso, interviewed at his Palace on 15/4/2012 before his death on 15/05/2012.

⁵⁰ Ibid

and family. Principal among the titled chiefs were: *Tukura, Tachi, Baruwa, Mkama, Baje, Pada, Bangajiya, Kuyambana, Jagaba, Jami* and *Wambai*. Although the village head had power to appoint title holders but the appointments were done with the consultation and approval of the council of elders before a title was bestowed on an individual.⁵¹

Other important personalities in the district were the priest called *Mobai*. Each village had its own priest. The priest of each village was the chief custodian of the customs and traditions of the land. He was in charge of religion, festivals and other cultural rites in the village. The village priest was the link between the people and ancestral gods.⁵² After a selection of a new chief, the information was immediately passed to the priest for rituals at the ancestral shrine outside the town. He was therefore responsible for the installation of a new chief. An emblem of authority made up of a knife, a spear and a hoe was handed over to a newly appointed chief by *Machi*. Deadlocked decision by the chief and his council were always resolved through the intervention of the chief priest, who invoked the powers of the ancestral gods to give the final verdict.

For maintenance of law and order, not all cases were brought before the village heads. Minor cases were handled at family or ward level except those cases that required the intervention of the *Otsu*. Land dispute, murder, theft, divorce, rape and witchcraft were cases referred to the head of the village. Culprits were punished in accordance with the gravity of the offence committed. The dispensation of justice was

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² H.D. Gunn and F.P. Conant 'People of the Middle Niger Region of Northern Nigeria' in D. Forde, *Ethnographic Survey of Africa*, London, West African Institute, 1960, p. 95.

carried out in accordance to the customary law of the land.⁵³ For example, a person having been caught and accused of either murder or robbery was brought before the village head. If found guilty of the case, the thief, as in the case of robbery, would be stripped naked with only the 'bante' left on him for the male offender, or the 'Patari' for the female offender. A 'dogari' would then be directed to lash the thief, after which the person will be taken as slave into the chief's house. The number of lashes and period he would be required to stay as slave in the chief's house depends essentially on the magnitude of offence committed. As for case of murder, the case was investigated in the traditional way and if found guilty, the person might be sent on exile or forced into slavery in different town. Other alternatives include a situation where a 'stone jacket' was prepared and the convicted murder would be asked to wear the jacket after which he was led to a big river and pushed into it. With the weight of the stones on him, the murderer would immediately drown.⁵⁴

2.8 Otsu Abubakar Zarumai Lawu, the first District Head of Bosso

Otsu Abubakar Zarumai popularly known as Lawu was born to the family of Otsu Ali Gwodenyize and Mama Shakala. He embraced Islam at his early age and acquired Quranic education at Wushishi. He also travelled to Kontagora and Gwandu in search of Islamic education.⁵⁵ Lawu spent most of his youthful age at Wushishi. Prior to his assumption of the throne of Chief of Bosso, he had served in the capacity of an

⁵³ Late Alh. Abubakar Lolo... op cit.

⁵⁴ Umar Mallam, Op cit. For further details on dispensation of Gbagyi justice, see B. Galadima, *Gbagyi (Gwari) as a Native*, Minna, Famous Publishers, 2000, Pp. 68-69.

⁵⁵ Alh. Usman Abubakar (57 years), Ubandoma Bosso, Civil Servant, Interviewed in his Office in Minna on 22/3/2012.

intermediary between the Chief of Wushishi and his father. Lawu also worked as a messenger in the Colonial District Office at Minna for a short period of time.⁵⁶

His appointment as the Chief of Bosso in 1918 was quite unique when compared to previous Chiefs of the district. According to Abdulkadir, Lawu on hearing about the death of his father, Ali Gwodenyize while he was at Wushishi, left the next day to Bosso in the night and sneaked into his father's bedroom. While the family members as well as the entire people of Bosso were mourning the death of their chief, Lawu who sneaked into the compound unnoticed crowned himself as the Chief. The next morning people woke up and found a chief already seated on the throne in the palace. This surprised many people because nobody knew when he came back from Wushishi. Being the first son of his father, his action was not contested.⁵⁷ This singular process of assumption to leadership position by Lawu made his subject to accord him high respect and regard. He was considered as the God chosen leader by his people.

The reign of Abubakar Zarumai Lawu from 1918 to 1960 is regarded as the period of transformation in the socio-political history of Bosso District. His administration coincided with the period of colonial rule in Nigeria. Lawu was considered as a brave, sociable and intelligent leader. His leadership qualities made him to be accorded with so much respect and admiration by his subjects.⁵⁸ One of his notable contributions to the district was in the area of spread of Islam. His contribution to the growth of Islam in the districts is discussed in chapter four.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Prince Mohammad Abdulkadir Kawu Bosso (62 years), Retired Civil Servant, Interviewed at Bosso on 20/3/2012. B.A. Kuta, *Notes in Some Aspect of Gbagyi History*, Minna, Abayi Resources Productions, 2008, Pp. 76-78.

⁵⁸ M. Galadima, 'Bosso: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow', A Public Lecture Presented During a Civic Reception in Honour of the Executive Governor of Niger State, Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu, Taliban Minna, Bosso, 2008.

It was during the reign of Lawu that Bosso District witnessed expansion in its territory. Many villages, settlements and hamlets that were formerly not part of the district were incorporated into it. For example, in 1923, when Sarki Ibrahim Modibo left Minna to Wushishi after ruling the Gbagyi settlements of Bosso, Maikunkele, Minna and Paiko for thirteen years, the jurisdiction of Minna was later transferred to Bosso. The placement of Minna under Bosso was done by the colonial officials on the basis that the chief of Bosso was more competent to handle the affairs of Minna which was fast growing than the Gbagyi in Minna. It was also a way of compensating the district after organizing large number of labourers during the construction of colonial offices at Zungeru. Apart from Minna, other settlements that were incorporated into the jurisdiction of Bosso district were Beji, Shatta, Gurusu, Pyatta and Daga.⁵⁹ Prior to this period, these settlements and villages were independent from Bosso. Specifically, Shatta, Pyatta and Beji had almost the same political status with Bosso before their conquest. The only neighbouring chiefdom that Lawu was not able to conquer was Maikunkele District though some parts of the district were absorbed into Bosso District.

The generosity of Lawu attracted many migrants to settle in the district. When he was at Minna, Lawu donated houses and land to migrant settlers free of charge. He was considered as a generous leader and his generosity cut across all people irrespective of tribal or religious affiliation. Example of such gesture was the allocation of his farmland at Kuturuko village (now Fadigbe) in Minna free of charge to Mal. Mohammed Dokochi, a Nupe migrant from Bida. Also according to the same informant, house no 302A Kwangila in Minna was donated by Lawu to an Igbo Man, Mr. M. O. Nwaboku who worked with him as his interpreter. Lawu's hospitality and

⁵⁹ NAK: Minprof 115/1910 Re-organisation of Kuta Division in 1910, G.G. Taylor, p. 5.

kindness attracted many migrants from different walks of life to migrate in large number and settled in Minna.⁶⁰ His style of leadership promoted a cordial peaceful relationship among the Gbagyi people and the migrants to the extent that many of the settlers did not go back to their original place of origin.

Mal. Abubakar Zarumai Lawu contributed in the area of infrastructural development of the district. He assisted in the mobilization of free labour for the colonial government to undertake projects in the district. Like his predecessor, Lawu mobilized large number of Gbagyi labourers during the construction of railway line from Zungeru to Minna and also Minna to Kaduna. The people also worked during the construction of colonial offices at Zungeru, i.e the former Northern Nigerian Headquarters. He personally undertook some rural community projects like the construction of feeder roads that linked most of the villages and settlements in the districts. He spearheaded the construction of Bosso-Pyatta-Shatta road, Beji-Lashenbe-Nagawu road, Gurusu-Pmasi-Tawei road, Bosso-Epigi-Dagah road, Bosso-Kwalakwata-Pyawu-Gbada-Lunko road among others. Lawu personally laid the foundation of Bosso dam which was completed in 1947. The labour of the Gbagyi people was used in the construction of the dam. Archival sources revealed that 126 labourers from Bosso were used during the clearing of the site of the dam for three months.⁶¹

In the area of education, Lawu donated land free of charge to the Christian missionary for the establishment of St Malachy Teachers' College Bosso, now Federal

⁶⁰ Alh. Usman Abubakar Op cit., NAK: Minprof 6342 Petition by Sarkin Bosso 1948. In his Petition to the Colonial Government, Lawu mention in his Letter those houses which he gave free of charge to non-Gbagyi settlers in Minna.

⁶¹ NAK: Minprof 6342 op cit.

University of Technology, Minna (Bosso Campus), Vahonoueven College now Government Technical College, Chanchaga and Niger Baptist College now Ahmadu Bahago Secondary School, Minna. As a result of his contribution to western education, the Niger State Government in 1980s named one of the capital schools after him i.e. Zarumai Model School, Minna.⁶²

Lawu's style of leadership made him popular among his colleagues in the defunct Kuta Division during the colonial era. He did not allow himself to be used as a rubberstamp chief by the British colonial officers in the division. He was very firm in his decision and on many occasions wrote protest letters on the colonial officials on matters regarding his territory. It was one of his petitions that led to the setting up of a committee of inquiry to investigate the activities of the Minna Township Council which consequently led to its dissolution.⁶³

In the economic sphere, Lawu encouraged his people to actively engage in agriculture. He encouraged the production of both cash and food crops. The economic potentials of the district contributed to large settlement of migrants.

Abubakar Zarumai Lawu ruled for forty two (42) years. By 1947 he was ordered by the colonial officials to vacate his palace at Minna because of the incessant conflict of interest between him and the leader of Minna Township Council. The apparent conflict between Lawu and the Minna Township Council could probably explain the decision of the Colonial Masters to appoint a neutral and more learned person, i.e. late Alhaji Ahmadu Bahago as the Chief of Minna.⁶⁴ This development was not accepted

⁶² Alh. Usman Jagaba Bosso (49 years) Information Officer, Bosso Local Government Council, Interviewed in his office at Maikunkele on 26/3/2012.

⁶³ NSAM: APN/984, Sarkin Bosso and Minna Township Re-organisation 1947-1950.

⁶⁴ M. Galadima, 'Bosso: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow', op cit.

without protest by the Chief as he demanded for explanation for his removal from Minna. After being persuaded by the Resident Colonial Administrator, Lawu finally returned to his former palace at Bosso and later resigned from the throne in 1960 due to old age. He was succeeded by his nephew, Mallam Adamu Dodo Laka, the son of Lenze Shabayako.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ B.A. Kuta, *Notes in Some Aspect of Gbagyi History...* Op cit., p. 85.

CHAPTER THREE

PRE-COLONIAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF BOSSO PEOPLE

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the traditional pre-colonial economic activities of people of Bosso District. The bottom line of the existence of individuals, groups, nation and nation states is what they produce to subsist and exchange. Production is the creation of essential foods and goods from the environmental opportunities by engaging in agriculture, crafts, manufacturing, trading and investment. It is all about wealth creation for sustaining and improving livelihood.¹ In Bosso District, people engaged in different forms of economic activities with agriculture being the bedrock of all forms of economic activities.

3.2 Farming

The dominant occupation of most Nigerian people in the past and in the present is farming. In the past subsistence farming was practised to sustain settlement life. The surplus generated from farming was usually sold when the need to cater for certain necessities of life arose. The land of Bosso is fertile and well drained with streams, good flora and fauna, all combining to favour agriculture. The sustainable crops grown in the district for the purpose of food and sources of income were yam, maize, guinea corn, millet, cassava, rice, beans etc. Other crops that were cultivated mainly for additional income were groundnut, pepper, beniseed, soya beans, melon, tomatoes, shea nut, sugarcane, tobacco, cotton etc. Among these crops, the production of yam, maize and guinea corn were the people specialty and they were produced in large quantity by each household.

¹ M.A. Filaba, 'Gbagyi Traditional Economy', *Gbagyi Journal* Vol. 2, No. 2, 2005, p. 28.

Farming being the traditional occupation of the people was source of food supply, raw material for industries, source of income, and large employer of labour. Shifting cultivation was the common system of farming in the area. Lands were left to fallow for some time to return to its normal fertility before it was cultivated. Farmers depend largely on the traditional farm implements like hoe, cutlass, knife, sickle, axes etc to cultivate crops. Modern farm implements and inputs such as tractor, fertilizers, agro-chemical etc were out of the reach of the farmers.

Although farming was mostly done by men, women also played a crucial role in farming. They provided a complimentary hand. They were not involved in the physical tilling of soil, they were however highly utilized during planting, harvesting and processing of crops. During planting season for example, the women assist in the distribution of yam seedlings on top of the heaps for the men to plant. They helped during harvesting of crops like picking of beans, carrying of yams and guinea corn to the house for storage and sale. The Gbagyi women also helped in the preservation of perishable food items like pepper, okro, melon, yam flour and processing of groundnut cake (*kulikuli*), beans cake etc.

Land and labour constitutes important factors of production in agriculture. In Bosso district, land was owned by various lineages or small communities. The members of each lineage did not own specific piece of land but could use the land provided permission for use was granted by the head of the lineage. The right of an individual to farm on a land was inalienable. If there was a conflict regarding the use of a particular piece of land, the head of the lineage or *Otsu* would settle the matter. Farmers sometime

moved about in the district or even to other villages outside the district as to take advantage of the best soil for farming.²

In the past, farming in the district influenced the life of the people by reducing idleness and unemployment as everybody had something to do. Farming was also one of the major factors that influenced the rural sparse settlements patterns among the Gbagyi in order to have access to large acreage of fertile land that occasioned bumper harvest.

3.3 Livestock Production

Animal husbandry is an important occupation in the savannah region. In Bosso District, many people keep animals for various purposes, since the vegetation of the district provided opportunity for livestock production. Farmers in the area practiced mixed farming where animals like cow, goats, sheep, fowl, pigeon and ducks were reared. The rearing of animals by the farmers was to provide them with meat, milk, hide and skin, source of income and manure for the crops. Due to abundant animal fodder (crop residues) in the region, confined management of animal was practised by some households. Most of the livestock were of the indigenous type and were well-adapted to the environment. Sheep, cow and goats were found almost in every household. Their management was aimed at providing manures for the farm as well as provides cash in time of need. Poultry on the other hand provided meat for the family and guests.

The vegetation of the region encouraged the migration of cattle Fulani from the northern part of Nigeria to settle in the area. There were large numbers of cattle in the

² Alh. Sani Mohammad (62 years), Farmer, Interviewed at Gidan Kwano on 9/4/2012.

district which were owned by the nomadic Fulani who moved with their cattle to the district during dry season.

3.4 Trade

No society is self sufficient. Differences in the nature of production of goods among communities always call for exchange of goods and services. Bumper harvest of farm produce usually leads to surpluses that were above the subsistence level. These surpluses would need to be disposed of and this partly explains why trading was an integral part of the economy of the district. Until of recent, most markets in the area were periodical i.e. on weekly basis except *Kasuwan Gwari* which was established during the colonial era and was patronised on daily basis. The periodical markets were held at intervals of seven days. These markets were fixed on different days of the week to avoid clashes and make for maximum participation. The natives will carry varieties of food stuff to the markets for sale and in turn buy other commodities that they required.

The small scale traders often combined farming with their local trading activities. Most of the natives actively participate in trading activities during dry season after harvest. Traders in the area had also engaged in long distance trade with their neighbours during the pre-colonial period. Hausa, Nupe, Yoruba and Koro traders visited most of the Gbagyi ancient markets in Kuta, Pinna and Kurapi to buy their products in exchange with other commodities like kola nut, dress, salt, potash, garlic and some European goods.³.

³ M.A. Filaba, 'Gbagyi Traditional Economy'. Op cit., p. 38.

3.5 Local Industries

The non-agricultural sector of the African economy like pot making, smithing and weaving formed part of the economy of the district. Pottery is regarded as one of the oldest local industries among the Gbagyi people. Beji and Payi communities in the district have been in the industry from time immemorial. Pot making requires professional skills therefore not all women could do it. The production of pots was done in different shapes and designs. The commonest types include pot for cooking (*Shaknu Zheduyi*), pot for fetching and storing water (*Zhebudu*) pot for storing food stuff, pot for serving soup (*Shanpa biyi*) etc. These pots were usually displayed in the market for sale.⁴

Cloth weaving was another craft that was prominent in the district. Cloth weaving in Gbagyi land can be distinguished from those of their neighbours as weaving was done by both men and women. But men weave on vertical looms that are narrow while women weave on wide ones. The Gbagyi weavers produced traditional attire known as *Gbagyiye* (Gbagyi clothes).

Another important craft in the district was blacksmithing. Before the colonial conquest, iron work was one of the important industries that were common in the African societies. Different economic activities of the people influence their high demand for iron implements. For instance, farming, crafts and hunting require large iron implements like hoes, cutlass, knives, sickle, spears, traps, arrow and hooks⁵. Also, some cults in the district like Madawa used metal jewellery in form of chains, iron, bells

⁴ D.C. Tarachi, 'The Life and Times of Dr. Ladi Kwali', *Gbagyi Journal*, Vol. 1., No. 3, 2003, p. 6.

⁵ A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History West Africa*, London, Longman, 1973, p. 44.

and arrows as their symbols of membership. Blacksmithing improved techniques on hunting, fishing and other forms of food processing.

Wood carvers produced household materials like mortar, pestle, stools, weaver's sword stick and floor trowels. Equally important was straw weaving. Mat and basket of different sizes were produced in the district. Some of the straw materials were dyed in various colours. Most of these craft making were done on part time basis during the dry season.

3.6 Fishing

Traditional fishing was a seasonal occupation. It was a supplementary activity to farming. People living in the riverine areas in the district engaged in fishing at subsistence level. Professional itinerant fishermen from other areas obtained temporary fishing rights from the natives to do fishing on a full-time basis. Traditional fishing was done in the rivers and in the lagoons that were formed in the Fadama of the major rivers following flooding. Although these rivers and streams abound in fish, the catch was not regular throughout the year. Traditional Fishing equipment such as hooks, nets, traps and toxic chemicals were used.

3.7 Hunting

Hunting is one of the earliest socio-economic activities of man. It played a similar role to agriculture in the development of the economy of a society. It was a dry season activity which was embarked upon after harvest had been completed. It was not possible to have a person or an entire society that take hunting exclusively as an occupation as it was combined with other professions like farming.

Forest and grassland in the region provided the opportunity for hunting activities. Hunting was classified into two. There were those who hunt on temporary basis. This group was regarded as part-time hunters as they surface during the dry season immediately after the harvest of all farm produce. They set out to hunt for fauna with their weapons and returned home in the evening. They dig out rodent and shoot birds. The second groups of hunters were people who leave their houses and spend two or more days in the jungle before returning home. This group sometimes numbered more than ten. They leave their settlement with different types of hunting implements like Dane-gun, bow and arrows, spears, trap, knives etc. They were regarded as *Afwadai* i.e. Community hunters.⁶

Hunting was not only considered as a means of livelihood, but it was also regarded as a hobby. It improved the stratagem of the people. During the dry season, certain days were set aside for hunting expedition. Hunting rallies enhanced cohesion. Apart from the fact that some people derive some income from meat and animal horns and tusk, the skin of crocodiles, snakes and feathers were also used for treatment of illnesses and sometime used as King's regalia. In the past Gbagyi people were buried with the skin of lion, tiger and bull.⁷

⁶ Alh. Sani Moh'd (62 years) op cit.

⁷ M.A. Filaba ' Gbagyi Traditional Economy' op cit p. 38.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ADVENT OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the advent of Islam and Christianity in Bosso District. In doing this, an attempt was first made to discuss the emergence of Islam and the contribution of Otsu Abubakar Zarumai Lawu to the spread of Islam as well as the impact of Islam on the people of the district. The activities of Christian Missionaries particularly the role of the Roman Catholic Church in the propagation of Christianity and its impact are also examined in the chapter.

4.2 The Coming of Islam into Bosso District

It is not certain when Islam was first introduced into Bosso District. This is because there is no record to show the actual period when the religion reached the district. It is said that Islam was first introduced in Nigeria between the 9th and 14th centuries in Kanem-Borno Empire and Hausa land respectively.¹ It gradually spread to the central parts of the country in later years. The Sokoto jihad of 1804, made a great impact in the spread of Islam in the central and other part of Nigeria. It was during this period that the Bosso people began to witness a new form of faith in the name of Islam.² The early influx of Islam into Gbagyi land began with the activities of Hausa immigrants who came and settled in the area. The immigrants who were mostly traders came to harness the economic opportunities offered by the district as a result of new

¹ S.A. Balogun, 'History of Islam up to 1800' in O. Ikime (ed.), *Ground work of Nigerian History*, Ibadan, Heimann Educational Books, 1980, Pp. 200-223. See also .T.G.O. Gbadamasi and J.F.A. Ade Ajayi, 'Islam and Christinity in Nigeria', in O. Ikime (ed.), *Ground Work of Nigeria History...* Ibid, Pp. 347-348.

² M.T. Usman and I.A. Zakari, 'Islamization Campaign in the Gbagyi Areas of Former Minna Chiefdom, 1963-64' *Lapai Journal of Central Nigerian History: Journal of the Department of History and Archaeology...* op cit. P. 113.

railway in 1910.³ When Islam started to penetrate into the district it was first accepted by a few, as majority of the people considered the religion as an alien belief.

The spread of Islam in the area began to gain momentum in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a result of the activities of Nagwamatse⁴ who was on raiding expedition on the Gbagyi, Kamuku, Nupe and Kambari settlements of central Nigeria. Nagwamatse constantly raided most of the Gbagyi settlements, but was not able to institute full political control on the area. He attacked Bosso unsuccessfully, but finally won it through diplomacy. He established a camp in Shatta where he left some of his disciples who were later displaced to Bogi in Wushishi.⁵ In the course of the spread of Islam, the Jihadists raided and captured the Gbagyi people as slaves and most of them were taken to Wushishi and Kontagora as war captives. Some of the slaves who were returned back to their home as freed Muslims helped in the propagation of the religion. Although the jihadists did not record much progress politically, they however succeeded in undermining some traditional religious practices to some extent and also influenced some people to accept Islam

The arrival of Mallam Mu'azu Basakwace to Bosso during the reign of Ali Gwodenyize was a land-mark in the spread of Islam in the District. Mu'azu was one of the disciples of Nagwamatse who decided to stay behind at Paiko after the war. The then Chief of Bosso, Otsu Ali Gwodenyize invited Mu'azu to stay with him at Bosso and appointed him as his scribe, court clerk and personal mallam. Mallam Mu'azu

³ M.M. Bawa, *The Biography of an ICON: Alhaji Ahmadu Bahago (OON), The First Emir of Minna, 1916-1987*, Sokoto, Nadabo Print Production, 2007, P. 62.

⁴ Umaru Nagwamatse was a descendant of Usman Danfodiyo who carried out a religious campaign in the Central Sudan. He succeeded in the conquest of the Kambari people and instituted a political control over the people of the area.

⁵ E.G.M. Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Nupe Province*, 1920.

influenced Gwodenyize and his family members to accept Islam. He converted many Gbagyi people into the fold of Islam. Mua'zu did not limit his preaching to Bosso District as he was able to penetrate other Gbagyi areas of Minna, Kuta, Paiko, Guni, Maikunkele and Galadima Kogo. Mu'azu established Quranic Schools in Bosso before his relocation to Minna in 1910.⁶ His relocation to Minna was based on the directives of the Chief of Bosso who sent him to assist the Village Chief of Minna at Paidahill in carrying out the job of an interpreter and settlement of disputes between the various settlers in the area.⁷

The construction of railway line in Minna in 1910 led to mass migration of settlers from within and outside the area of Minna. Minna provided economic opportunities to many of these migrants as they worked as businessmen, preachers, labourers and staff of Native Authority. Among the migrants were Muslim Hausa, Kanuri and Nupe who through interaction with the Gbagyi people, made them to accept Islam. Some of the migrants permanently settled in the district and engaged in different economic activities⁸. It needs to be pointed out that in spite of this interaction the population of Muslims was still very low. According to an informant, the low level of converts into Islam in the area was because most of the Gbagyi did not want to abandon their traditional religion. The attitudes of some of the early Muslim migrants who distanced themselves from the indigenous population contributed to the low conversion. Most of the Mallams abandoned their mission for worldly pursuit and ended in the preparation of divination and even offer prayers for some few privileged individuals

⁶ I. A. Zakari, "Sir Ahmadu Bello, The Sardauna of Sokoto's Conversion campaigns and the Spread of Islam Among the Gbagyi people in Minna", Unpublished M.A Dissertation UDUS, 2006, Pp. 52-53

⁷ S.G. Bawa, *Gbagyi and the Nigerian Nation*, Minna, Luradd Ventures, 1999, p. 19.

⁸ Alhaji Umar Wakili.... Op cit

who were not Muslim for monetary gain.⁹ Another informant also said that most of the Gbagyi refused to accept Islam at the initial stage because the people constantly reflected on the Nagwamatse army of those years so that they came to view Islam as a religion of slave raiding and those of the Merchants.¹⁰

The spread of Islam in Bosso District reached its climax in the second half of the 20th century i.e. in the 1960s after Nigerian independence. During the First Republic, the Premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello (Sarduana of Sokoto) carried out Islamization campaign in Northern Nigeria with the aim of converting thousands of Northern non-Muslims into the religion. By this time, politics was not separated from religion in the north. The political classes campaigned for political office and preached Islam at the same time. Sardauna seeing himself as the great grandson of Usmanu Danfodiyo saw it as his responsibility to continue from where his forefathers stopped in terms of spread of Islam. This, he was unmindful of or even in recognition of his political leadership in the North. Sarduana was able to establish viable machinery for the crusade. He encouraged many of his lieutenants and other influential northern Muslims to assist in the propagation of the religion. In Kuta division of the defunct Niger Province, the crusade was received with enthusiasm. The then Emir of Minna, late Alhaji Ahmadu Bahago spearheaded the crusade in the Division. Because of the efforts made by the first Emir of Minna, he was decorated with 'Usmaniyya medal' on 12th June 1965.¹¹ Majority of the District Heads in the emirate gave their total support. During the campaign, the Chief of Bosso, late Abubakar Zarumai Lawu was already a learned Muslim; he spearheaded the conversion activities in the district by employing

⁹ Mal. Muhammadu Kungu (70 years), Business Men, Interviewed at Bosso on 7/4/2012.

¹⁰ Alh. Muhammed Shayi Bosso (70 years), Businessman, Interviewed at Bosso on 7/04/2012.

¹¹ M.M. Bawa, *The Biography of an ICON: Alhaji Ahmadu Bahago....*, op cit., p. 66.

the services of Mallams to go into the nooks and crannies of the district to preach Islam among his people.

Public preaching was done from village to village. Mosques and Quranic schools were established in the district. The District Head of Bosso along with other district heads in Minna Emirate worked closely with the Premier of Northern Nigeria and used all incentives to encourage non-Muslims to accept the religion. The Gbagyi were motivated with gifts like dresses, turban, rosaries, cash and Islamic books for those that could read. Some people were offered employment opportunities as labourers in the Nigerian Railway Corporation and Kaduna Textile Industries.¹² The Gbagyi Native Authority employed the services of Muslim teachers to propagate Islam in schools. Most of these teachers were recruited from Wushishi, Kontagora, Bida, Agaie and Lapai. Islamic organisations such as the Jamatul Nasril Islam played a very important role in this regard. Some of the by-products of this crusade include late Mallam Hassan Dutse Kura, Alhaji Pyatta, Alhaji Adamu Gidan Kwano, Alhaji Muhammad Kungu among others.¹³ During the course of the Islamization campaigns, the preachers faced hostility from the local people. In some cases they were sent away by those who refused to answer their calls. As for the newly converted Muslims, they suffered boycott in most of their affairs by their family members and relations because they were considered to have betrayed their forefathers by accepting another faith at the expense of their indigenous religion. As ways of punishment, some of the converts (Muslims) were denied farm lands and marriages among the non- Muslims.

¹² Ibid, p. 64.

¹³ Mal. Moh'd Kungu op cit.,

4.3 The Role of Otsu Abubakar Zarumai Lawu to the Spread of Islam

One individual who contributed greatly in the spread of Islam at its early age in the district was Otsu Abubakar Zarumai Lawu. When he was young, his father who was the chief was found of inviting Islamic Mallams, where he kept them and allowed them free passages to conduct their activities. It was at that point in time that Lawu became a Muslim. In 1918, when he succeeded his father, he encouraged the propagation of Islam in the district because majority of his subjects as of that time were still non-Muslims. He invited Muslim scholars to the district to help in the spread of Islam to his people. One of the Islamic scholars that first settled in the District was Mallam Mu'azu Basokwace. Mallam Mu'azu had earlier worked closely with Lawu's father, Ali Gwodenyize.¹⁴ Lawu in conjunction with Mallam Mu'azu played important role in converting large number of the Gbagyi people into Islam. He was one of the sub-lieutenants of Sir Ahmadu Bello during his Islamization campaign among the Gbagyi people. Lawu was influenced by the ideology of the Premier which made majority of the people to abandon their traditional religion to embrace Islam. Lawu toured villages in the district with Islamic preachers on weekly basis. He was in the forefront in coordinating all the Islamic activities in the district. He financed the building of Central Mosques at Bosso, Chanchaga and Beji. His efforts yielded positive result as people turned out to renounce their traditional religion for Islam.

4.4 The Impact of Islam on the People of Bosso District

The spread and establishment of Islam in Bosso District brought some changes in the society. Prior to the introduction of Islam, majority of the people in the district

¹⁴ U. Junaid, 'The role of Ulama in our Society: A Case Study of Minna Town', Unpublished NCE Project, College of Education, Minna 2000, Pp. 7-8.

worshipped varieties of gods and other inanimate objects. These objects were considered by the people as intermediaries between them and God and were held with high reverence. However, with the spread of Islam in the District, there was gradual conversion of large number of Gbagyi people to the fold of Islam. Those that accepted Islam abandoned their traditional religion, pagan practices and sacrifices. The converts imbibed Islamic tenets and practices such as prayers, Fasting, Zakat, and Hajj etc. Some of the informants interviewed asserted that the introduction of Islam in Bosso District went a long way in shaping the life of the people. They opined that most of the traditional belief system of the people that were not in conformity with Islam were discarded.¹⁵ The Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) as the major source of Shariah are now guiding the life of the Muslim Gbagyi in the district.

In the same vein, Islam made majority of the people in the district to do away with some of their traditional socio-cultural practices. Some of the traditional religious practices or festivals like Madawa, Kushi, Zhiba and Bori that were hitherto practiced by the people gradually disappeared in the society. Certain cultural practices that were considered repugnant to Islamic teachings were thus stopped. For instance, traditional marriage practices were reduced to the barest minimum. People began to conduct marriages in accordance with Islamic rites. But those traditional marriage formalities that were not in conflict with Islam were still adhered to by the people. As for naming, Islamic names came to replace the Gbagyi traditional names. The Gbagyi traditional names like Shagabwo, Luwa, Kaima, Vinsa, Woda etc are not much in common. The idea of consulting a soothsayer before a new baby was named were gradually being

¹⁵ Alhaji Salihu Abubakar, (67 years), Islamic Scholar, interviewed at his house at Gidan Kwano on 18/8/2012.

phase away. Also the traditional burial rite was replaced with the Islamic burial system. All sacrifices hitherto associated with Gbagyi burial rites were abolished by the Muslim Ummah in the district. Muslim corpses were no longer buried in the compound. The Gbagyi belief in the power of the dead on the living also started to decline. People became conscious of Allah and started to seek for His guidance and help as against the old belief where supplications were directed to ancestors.¹⁶

Islam being a complete way of life did not leave any stone unturned. As such, it has also influenced the way of dressing of the Gbagyi people. Prior to the acceptance of Islam, most Gbagyi people used to dress half naked. They used *bente* to cover their waist while leaving other parts of their body exposed. This type of dressing was abandoned when people began to realize that the religion frowned at such type of dressing. Men began to wear gowns, caps, robes and turbans. On the part of women, they use wrappers, long skirts or trousers, head ties and Hijabs.¹⁷

Islam has also helped in regulating the life of the people by reducing some societal vices among its followers. Social vices such as drinking, gambling, fornication and witchcraft that were part of the life of the people of the district were drastically reduced. Good virtues like kindness, love and truthfulness were imbibed based on the doctrine of Islam. Islam came to foster brotherhood among its followers. The observance of Salat (prayer) in congregation, payment of Zakat and other Islamic practices helped in promoting unity among the Muslim Ummah.

The spread of Islam in Bosso District has helped in acquisition of Islamic knowledge among the Gbagyi people. The coming of Islam led to the erection of

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid. See also I.A. Zakari, "Sir Ahmadu Bello, The Sarduna of Sokoto's Conversion Campaigns and the spread of Islam Among the Gbagyi people in Minna..." op cit, P. 97.

Mosques and the establishment of Qur'anic schools in the district. Some of these mosques built around 1960s are still visible today in Bosso town and Beji. The schools led to the emergence of some early Islamic Scholars like Late Mallam Hassan Tukura Dutse Kura, Mallam Muhammed Kungu, among others. Most of these Mallams belong to the Tijjaniya sect except recently when other Islamic sect like Izala started to emerge in the district.¹⁸

The coming of Islam in the district has helped in the uplifting of the position of women.¹⁹ The growth of Islam in the district enables the Gbagyi women to enjoy certain rights that they were formerly denied. Prominent among these rights are rights to inherit the wealth of their heirs and also the right to own personal property among others.

The acceptance of Islam among the Gbagyi people has helped in promoting the harmonious relationship which exists among the diverse ethnic groups living in the district. The Muslims in the district in spite of their different backgrounds see themselves as one; thereby fostering a peaceful co-existence between the host tribe and other migrant groups.

The coming of Islam in the district led to a systematic obliteration of some cultural practices among the Gbagyi people. However, there are still some traces of traditional religion and culture which still prevail in the society. There are still some traditionalists who are tied to their old belief system. Even among the Muslims there are nominal Muslims who practice Islam with some of the traditional cultural practices. Some of these people find it difficult to dissociate themselves from some of their

¹⁸ Alh. Salihu Abubakar... op cit

¹⁹ Mal. Hassan Musa (52 years), Chief Iman Lokoto Central Mosque, Interviewed at his house on 19/8/2012.

ancestral worship and belief system. This is to say that the coming of Islam has not been able to wipe out completely some of the ancient faiths and creed among the people. The Gbagyi traditional cultures are still being held in high esteem among this category of people in the district. Although this is not peculiar to Bosso District, as it is a common feature among many Nigerian societies.

4.5 Christian Missionary Activities in Bosso District

The interest of Christian missionaries to engage the whole of Northern Nigeria had been unabated for long. The plan of the missions in the entire northern Nigeria was to evangelize the vast area, which Islam was fast growing. The crusade started with the activities of Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, during the Niger expeditions of 1841 and 1854. His evangelistic vision was later shared by many Christian missionary bodies who visited the region at the end of the 19th century.²⁰ Christian activities in Niger Province were generally very low due to Islamic influence. In the Gbagyi speaking area, Christianity did not have a good footing because the local people were reluctant to accept the religion. This was because Islam had already being firmly entrenched in the area much longer before the coming of the Christian Missionaries.

Missionary activities in Bosso District started in 1911 with the activities of the Society of African Mission (SMA) in Minna. Although the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) had arrived in Niger Province since 1903, its activities were however constricted at Bida, Wushishi, Baro, Dikko and Paiko areas. Berengario Cermenti, a strong member of the SMA and also a pioneer priest in SMA evangelical activities in northern Nigeria

²⁰ T.G. Gbadamosi and J.F.A. Ajayi, 'Islam and Christianity in Nigeria' in O. Ikime (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan, Heinemann, 1980, p. 350.

spent a night at Minna and celebrated the first Mass on 18th April, 1912.²¹ This was followed by the Sudan Interior Mission who also established a base in Minna in 1913.²² The opening of the railway line in Minna in 1910 brought about the concentration of large number of migrant population in Minna and its environs. This also led to the influx of large number of Christian Yorubas who migrated from the south-west of Nigeria, particularly from Ogbomosho to settle in Minna and its environs. Most of these Christian Yoruba engaged in evangelism. They mingled with the local people and moved into the nooks and crannies of the district to preach the gospel of Christianity. Majority of this group belonged to the Baptist Mission. The Baptist Mission built their first church in Minna in 1924.²³

The cardinal principle of the Christian Missionaries and their churches was to preach the gospel to the people so that they can accept Jesus Christ as their lord and saviour. In the early years, their activities were slow, painstaking and frustrating. The early days of the Christian Missionary activities in northern Nigeria generally were the days of railway apostolate. The railway was a great gift to the early missionaries. Walker describes the missionary's use of the railway thus:

To us, as missionary workers, these wonderful roads and railways have yet another significance: they may become highways for our God. Along them the messenger of Christ may travel swiftly to the people they seek to reach.²⁴

²¹ NAK: Min Prof 240/1918 Roman Catholic Mission in Minna.

²² Y. Turaki, *An Introduction to the History of SIM/ECWA in Nigeria 1893-1933*, Jos, Challenge Press, 1993, Pp. 103-105.

²³ E.A. Bamigboye, "The Baptist Church in Northern Nigeria: The Role of the Yoruba Traders, Foreign Missionaries and Northern Indigenes 1901-1975", Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Jos, 1998, p. 95.

²⁴ F.D. Walker, *The Romance of Black River (The Story of the C.M.S. Nigeria Mission)* quoted in E.O. Connor, *From the Niger to the Sahara: The Story of Archdiocese of Kadua*, Ibadan, Itec Printers, 2009, p. 20.

Most of the first generation churches that were established in the Minna area were therefore not far away from the railway station.

Christian missionary activities in the country during its early period were done through mission schools. The missionaries believed that establishing a mission seemed to have more to do with opening primary schools than baptizing.²⁵ Therefore the SMA established schools in Shatta, Shakwata and Bosso and other neighbouring villages like Maikunkele, Paiko and Tutungo. It was clear that for the churches to root in an area, establishment of schools was to be a vital part of that rooting. In Bosso town, the SMA opened an Elementary Teachers' Training Centre, which later metamorphosed into St. Malachy's Teachers' Training College at Bosso on 12th February, 1949.²⁶ As far back as 1927, the Baptist had established a mission school in Minna. These schools were an important stage in the growth of the prefecture especially for the indigenes of Niger province.²⁷

It was through these schools that most Gbagyi people enrolled their children and consequently led to the conversion of some into Christianity. Majority of the early educated elite in Bosso District like Late Mr. Francis M. Bosso, Late Mr. Peter Tukura, Prof. Musa Galadima, Rev. Peter Maku were by-products of the missionary schools. At the onset of missionary schools, the response of the Gbagyi people was not encouraging. They preferred farming to enrolling their wards in schools. Out-station schools were opened by the Missionaries in villages where converts were taught reading, writing and the Bible. The schools later produced teachers, clerks and clergy men. For example the Catholic Church produced late Rev. Fr. Clement Shatta from

²⁵ E.O. Connor, *From the Niger to the Sahara...* Op cit., p.

²⁶ Catholic Dioceses of Minna, St. Michael Catholic Church Minna, Minna Mission Diary, 1939-1941.

²⁷ Rev. Peter Maku (PRO CAN, Niger State Chapter), 52 years, Interviewed at Bosso 20/6/2012.

Shatta village as the first indigenous priest among the Gbagyi people in Niger State.²⁸ In the course of time, most of the out-stationed school that were known as ‘Yaki da Jahilci’ (War against Ignorance) or ‘Karatu don Kowa’ (Education for all) were later closed down because of poor response of the people to enrol their children.²⁹

The churches also used the provision of health care services as another means of evangelism.³⁰ The missionaries established mission health centres in Minna, Bosso, Beji and Chanchaga. Also in the course of their evangelism they moved with mobile health centres. The Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) opened a rehabilitation centre at Chanchaga in 1946 where orphans, lepers and other outcasts were cared for. The Catholic established dispensaries in schools where pupils and students were treated free of charge.³¹ Bunza opined that the mission hospitals, dispensaries and leprosy centres generally speaking, were avenues of converting patients to Christianity in Nigeria,³² and Bosso was not an exception to this general fact.

As time went on, church activities continue to grow in the district. There were catechists, teachers and church members who gradually founded their own organizations such as the Zumuntar Mata (women), Zumuntar Maza (men) which were active members of established organizations like the Legion of Mary, Young Christian Students e t c.³³

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ E.O. Connor, *From the Niger to the Sahara: The Story of Archdioceses of Kaduna...* op cit., p. 101.

³⁰ See R. Schran, A History of the Nigerian Health Services, quoted in A. Labbo, “Colonial Medical Services in Argungu Division Circa 1906-1960”, Unpublished M.A. History Dissertation, UDUS 2013, p. 2.

³¹ Mrs. Lami Makun (71 years), Retired Civil Servant and women activist, interview at her house in Bosso 24/8/2012 .

³² See M.U. Bunza, *Christian Missions among Muslims: Sokoto Province, 1935-1990*, Africa World Press, USA, 2007, Pp. 46-58.

³³ E.O. Connor, *From the Niger to the Sudan...*Op cit., p. 5.

Christian missionary activities in Bosso District did not achieve much of its desired goal of converting the majority of the people, but a number of the mission centres like schools and clinic greatly helped in the socio-economic development of the area. Of the various missions, the Roman Catholic needs special discussion.

4.6 The Role of Roman Catholic Church in the Propagation of Christianity in Bosso District

The Catholic Diocese of Minna, which started as an out-station of Lokoja had its areas of influence which included Bosso District. The Society of African Mission (SMA) was the first missionary body to carry out evangelical activities in the district. Having celebrated its first mass on 18th April 1912, under the leadership of Rev. Fr. Lion Bourge, it began to expand its activities in the District.³⁴ Following the need to meet the spiritual demands of the growing population which resulted from the railway construction, the catholic priests (Mission) house was built at No. 2, Station Road (now St. Joseph Parish) in 1919, while St. Stephen church was built also in 1919 along the Keterin Gwari road in Minna (near Dr. Farouk Bahago primary school, Minna). The church grew from an out-station to a mission territory under the SMA Fathers. Between 1911 and 1962, the priests worked tirelessly in building out-station churches under its territory.³⁵ The expectation of the Missionary was to have Minna as a base where other rural population could be reached.

The first church that was established in Bosso area was St. Malachy's Catholic Church built in 1949. The church was first established as an out-station of St. Michael's parish of Minna until in 1987 when it became a full parish and Rev. Fr. Thadeus Guzuma was appointed the first parish priest of the church. Prior to his appointment as

³⁴ www.catholicminna.org: History of Catholic Church Minna.

³⁵ Ibid.

the priest of the church, Rev. Fr. Guzuma and other priests of the church were priests posted from Minna who used to take care of all services in Bosso. The Church was initially located at the present site of Federal University of Technology, Minna (Bosso campus) before its relocation to Tundun Fulani in 1983. Other out-station churches in the district built by the Diocese include St. Clement Catholic Church Shatta and St. Dominic Catholic Church, Gbaiko.³⁶

As part of the strategies adopted by the missionaries in the spread of Christianity, the Catholic Diocese of Minna established schools in the district. The missionary regarded schools as the most effective way of inculcating the norms and teachings of Christianity in the minds of the people. They considered education as a medium to win the hearts of the people into Christianity. In the early 1940s, the church established St. Malachy's Elementary school, Bosso to provide free education for converts. By 1949, St. Malachy's Teacher Training College, Bosso was also established. Initially the College was situated at Guni as St Theresa's Teachers College before it was transferred to Bosso. St. Malachy's Teacher Training School was the only Teacher Training School in Niger province. It developed into a famous institution where boys were trained morally and academically. Being a boarding school, its students were drawn from different parts of Northern Nigeria.³⁷ Among the pioneer products of the school were Mr. R.O. Lamayi, Mr. Peter Onu, Prof. Oba Abdulrahman, Mallam Muhammed Chado, Alh. Usman Nagogo, Gregory Tagwai, Mr. Martins Sanda, Prof. Benard Mafeni among others. By 1953 St. Malachy's Teachers Training College started

³⁶ Mr. Emmanuel Samari (66 years), Retired Civil Servant and Secretary Parish Council, St. Malachy Catholic Church Tudun Fulani, interviewed at his residence at Bosso lowcost on 11/10/2012.

³⁷ Ibid.

admitting Muslim children into the institution.³⁸ However, with the creation of Niger State in 1976; the State Government took over the administration of the school and re-named it Government Teachers College Minna.

Apart from the St. Michael Elementary and Teachers College, Bosso, the missionary also established some out-station elementary schools at Pyatta, Shatta and Beji. These schools were established as part of the churches to enable the converts learn how to read and speak in English language. The out-station school provided adult education for the Christian converts. The services provided by the catholic schools in the villages motivated some of the local people to embrace Christianity. Catechists were trained to teach the converts some catholic doctrines and the fundamental principles of the religion in the local language.³⁹

According to an informant, Rev. Fr. Kerr, one time Principal of St. Malachy's Teacher Training College, Bosso and Rev. Fr. John were in the fore front of the evangelical activities in Bosso District. The two Rev. Fathers occasionally visited the Chief of Bosso, Otsu Lawu to persuade him to encourage his subjects to send their children to school and accept Christianity. The informant further revealed that the Priests at times presented gifts to the people to enable them accept Christianity. Some children from Muslim homes who were enrolled into the mission school were converted into Christianity. While some later returned to Islam, some remained as Christian through out their life time. A good example of them includes Mr. Francis M. Bosso, Capt. James Baitachi (Rtd), Mrs. Lami Maku who was from Muslim home but became

³⁸ Ibid. For further information see St. Malachy's Catholic Parish, Bosso: Historical Perspective, Unpublished Material.

³⁹ Mr. Saleh Jankaro (50 years), Civil Servant and Chairman Parish Council, St. Malachy Catholic Church Tudun Fulani, Interviewed at his office in Minna on 19/10/2012

Christian because of the influence of mission school. The church through their medical team provided free medication to patients. A dispensary was built at Bosso and Chanchaga and these helped in providing clinical services to the respective communities⁴⁰ In spite of the social services provided by the church, the rate of conversion into Christianity in the district was still very low. This is because the district was predominantly a Muslim area. The Muslim considered Christianity as the religion of *Nasara* (Europeans) while the traditionalists saw the religion as alien religion which they were not ready to accept.

The Christian Missionaries were faced with some challenges with the introduction of new form of worship and life styles. This new idea of missionaries to their host communities abuses some norms and values of the people as such it led to threat in the life of some missionaries. According to Abdullahi, most early converts felt they were being deprived of certain rites, beliefs and social practices that were adorable by them. Hence, they had a rethink thereby renouncing their new faith.⁴¹ Thus, this accounted for the low level of conversion of people to Christianity in the area. There was passive resistance to missionaries' activities among the Gbagyi people after they realized that more of their children were converted as a result of school. Some rituals and Dominic act were performed by some communities against the missionaries. Another challenge which the missionaries faced was language barrier. Language studies became a most for every pioneering missionary to overcome the problem. The Gbagyi language was to be mastered otherwise there was no basis for communication.

⁴⁰ Alhaji Yusuf M. Bosso, Zarumai Minna (56 years), Civil Servant, interviewed in his house at Bosso on 20/10/2012.

⁴¹ A.D. Yahaya, "Christianity Among the Gawu Community of Gurara Local Government Area, Niger State, 1937 – 1999". Unpublished M.A. History Dissertation, UDUS, 2012, Pp. 71-73.

4.7 Impact of Christian Missionary Activities in Bosso District

Although Christianity did not record much success in term of number of converts in the district, the missionaries were however able to make some impacts on the life of some people. One of such impact was that the missionaries were able to introduce a new religion into the area i.e. Christianity. It was with the advent of Christian missionary's activities that people began to accept Christianity and abandoned their indigenous traditional religion. The activities of missionaries made some Christian converts to abandon some cultural practices like polygamous life, traditional festivals and ancestral worship, which were not in line with the Christian doctrine. The acceptance of the religion made the Gbagyi Christian to adopt Christian names, ways of dressing and eating habits.⁴²

The introduction of western education went hand in hand with Christian evangelism. Both the Catholic and Baptist churches established educational institutions in the district. The development of western education was to facilitate the spread of Christianity among the people. The pupils who enrolled in the schools formed the bulk of those who adopted Christian names. It was some of these Christian students who later helped to spread the gospel to the rural areas. The mission schools helped in the intellectual development of the people. The schools were avenue for the spread of European culture and civilization to the local people. It provided vocational training and skills that made some of the converts to be self sufficient. Among the early people of the district to have benefited from the system were late Mr. Francis Maigida Bosso, Prof. Musa Galadima, Mr. Daniel C. Tarachi, Mrs Lami Makun, Late DCP John Maiyaki, Late Dr Yahaya Bawa Bosso, Late Rev. Fr. Clement Shatta, Alh. A.A Bosso,

⁴² Mr. Emmanuel Samari ... op cit

Mr. Joseph Loyi, Mr. Patrick Waziri, Mr. John Nakura, Late Coach Laka Bosso, Cpt. James Baitachi (Rtd) etc.⁴³ Some of the personalities that passed through the missionary schools became strong Christian faithfuls while some later converted to Islam. The literate class became pace setters in the district who continued to advance the people's cause. One other impact of western education was the introduction of English language as medium of communication in school and nation's lingua franca.

The spread of Christianity in the district touched on the lives of some people by improving their living standard. The church introduced modern health care system. The missionaries were first to introduce the use of orthodox medicine in the treatment of some sickness among the local people, which were hitherto mystified. Dispensaries were established at Bosso and Chanchaga.⁴⁴ The medical services rendered by the missionaries helped in improving the social condition of the people. Health centres were also attached to some of the Mission schools in order to cater for the school children. The kind gesture was not denied to the Muslims. In addition to the health care services, the missionaries educate the local people on personal hygiene as a preventive measure against some common diseases.

The missionaries also helped in improving the socio-economic well-being of some less privileged individuals in the society.⁴⁹ Some of the new converts were offered casual jobs like cleaners, cooks, catechists, watchmen, attendants, laundrymen, gardeners etc in the house of their priests. This category of workers received material gifts from the priests, which helped in improving their well-being. The missionaries also

⁴³ Mrs. Lami Makun... op cit

⁴⁴ Ibid. P. Makun, "Factors Affecting Evangelisation Among Gbagyi People of Niger State", Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomosho, 2001, Pp. 14 -15. See also M.A. Rufai, "Growth and Urbanization of Minna 1910 – 1990 Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 2009, Pp 59 – 60.

taught their followers the new techniques of farming such as the use of fertilizers, herbicides etc. They introduced different species and varieties of crops to farmers in the area.⁴⁵

The spread of Christianity in the district also helped in minimizing some social vices among Christians. Societal vices like drunkenness, fornication, stealing, and witchcraft gradually reduced among the Christian converts.

Although Christian Missionary have impacted to some extent on the life of their followers, they were however unable to convert large number of people in the district compared to Islam. Some of the vices that the religion preached against still persist even in some Christian homes today. Some Christians are still found of mixing Christianity with traditional practices like keeping more than one wife, drunkenness etc.

⁴⁵ Rev. Peter Maku...Op cit.

CHAPTER FIVE

COLONIALISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BOSSO DISTRICT,

1923 – 1960

5.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the economic development of Bosso District during the colonial era. The chapter examines the administration of Bosso under colonial rule and how colonialism transformed the economy of Bosso District through various policies including colonial taxation, trade as well as new agricultural policies based on the massive production of cash crops.

5.2 Political Development in Bosso under Colonial Rule

The charter of Royal Niger Company was revoked in December 1899 and Lord Frederick Lugard was appointed a High Commissioner on 1st January, 1900. Lugard made a formal proclamation of the protectorate of Northern Nigeria and also sent the Arabic translation of the proclamation to the Sultan and his Emirs. Earlier before this time, the Royal Niger Company (R.N.C.) had already established a base in the region. Although the proclamation of Northern protectorate took effect as from 1900, effective occupation of the region was not completed until 1903.¹ Lugard established a military base at Wushishi under Major O'Neil. The people of Bida and Kontagora felt threatened by this action. Before Bida and Kontagora could make any attempt, the West African Frontier Forces (WAFF) under the military command of Colonel Kemball, launched military offensive against the two emirates.²

¹ T. Falola, et al., *History of Nigeria 3: Nigeria in the Twentieth Century*, Lagos, Longman, 2003 Pp. 2-3.

² D. Mohammad, *Zungeru: The Forgotten Capital of Northern Nigeria*, Lagos, Bolukunwa Printing Press, 1991, p. 37. Kontagora and Bida Emirates were the first areas in Northern Nigeria to be attacked

The defeat of the Emirs of Bida and Kontagora in 1901 by the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) saw to the fall of the Gbagyi states. The conquest and subjugation of the states in the region by the British Colonial Government commenced immediately after the establishment of Zungeru as the capital of Northern Protectorate. With the submission of Wushishi, the British troops began a systematic policy of subjugating one district area after another in the region. The Gbagyi areas comprised of small states and chiefdoms with varying scales of political organization that were independent of one another. The occupation of the entire Gbagyi land Bosso inclusive by the British therefore did not witness much resistance from the natives except from the town of Gusoro.³ In Bosso District there was no evidence of any form of military resistance against the British colonial administration. Instead the people were recruited for the construction of Zungeru, headquarters of the Northern protectorate in 1900.⁴

At the inception of the British colonial administration in the turn of the 20th century, Bosso along with other independent Gbagyi states in the present day Niger State were grouped under Zaria Province in 1906 with the impression that the Gbagyi once came under the local administration of Zaria during the Sokoto caliphate. This was done with the view to getting a full control of the natives under one central administration for effective control. By 1908, the chiefdoms were transferred from

by the British Forces. Kontagora was first attacked in early February 1901 and two weeks later Bida was also attacked. Both battles ended in decisive British victories and the Emirates fell under British control.

³ S. Abubakar, 'The Northern Provinces under Colonial Rule: 1900-1959' in O. Ikime (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan, Heinemann, 1980, Pp. 446-7, C.C. Jacobs, 'The Incident of Gussoro, 6th May 1909: The Baro- Kano Railway, Forced Labour, and Gbagyi Resistance', *Gbagyi Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2003, Pp. 26-40. The People of Gusoro attacked a British Colonial Officer Mr. A.R. Vanrenen in 1909, while he was on his way to restore a disposed Chief which the Gussoro people had driven out. He was ambushed and killed together with twelve of his Police Escorts.

⁴ NAK: Minprof 115/1910 Re-organisation of Kuta Division 1910 ...op cit.

Zaria Province to a newly established Niger province.⁵ The province was sub-divided into divisions and the Gbagyi Chiefdoms were grouped under the Kuta Division with its Headquarters at Kuta but later transferred to Minna in 1910.

In furtherance to the re-organization, the Resident of Niger Province, Captain S.C Taylor, recommended the relocation of Sarkin Wushishi to Minna to take control over the jurisdiction of Minna, Bosso, Maikunkele and Paiko in 1910. It is important to note here that before the imposition of Chief of Wushishi on Bosso in 1910, Bosso was an independent chiefdom. This artificial arrangement was done mainly for administrative convenience as a result of establishment of government station and new native town in Minna. According to the Residents, it was important to have a powerful chief in Minna to control the alien elements and the neighbouring settlements. The population of the area was fast growing because of the construction of railway line which attracted immigrants. The Chief of Wushishi, Mal. Ibrahim Modibo was therefore saddled with the responsibility of supervising the railway labourers in Minna. This organization was part of the general policy for placing non-Muslim areas closer to the authority and supervision of Muslim emirates by the British colonial government.⁶

Following this development, the status of Bosso was reduced to a village level under the control of Wushishi District. The Chief of Bosso, Ali Gwodenyize continued with the local administration of Bosso but received order from the District Head of Wushishi. The Gbagyi settlement on the top of Minna hill was also under the control of the Chief of Bosso. The Chief assigned his own son Abubakar Zarumai Lawu to serve as a messenger in the office of the District Head of Wushishi. The absence of a

⁵ In 1910 Nupe Province was renamed Niger Province. The Capital changed over time from Bida in 1901-1907, Chiwai Angulu 1907-1908, Minna 1908-1913, Bida 1913-1924 and Minna 1924-1976.

⁶ F. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, 5th edition, London Frank Cass, 1965, p. 198.

powerful political figure controlling the entire Gbagyi region as it was practiced elsewhere made the British to regard the Gbagyi people as not capable of ruling Minna and its environs, which were fast growing. This notion was corroborated by a British Colonial writer who states that

The Gbagyi apparently lacks (sic) all the essential qualities for a progressive race and can watch unmoved his gradual social extinction without making the slightest effort to counteract it. The Gwari mind shows no capacity for ruling.⁷

This was the impression the British had over the natives. This therefore calls for the imposition of Sarkin Wushishi on the Bosso people. There was no immediate reaction to this colonial arrangement from the Gbagyi people. This was because the Chief of Bosso remained as the head of the entire area including the new Minna. Secondly, the new Minna was viewed as an outpost created by the British Officials for administrative purpose.⁸

In 1923, when the Kuta division was re-organized, the Chief of Wushishi was given the choice to either remain in Minna or to return to Wushishi. The Chief quickly returned to Wushishi because he was sceptical of the intention of the British for his relocation to Minna. According to an informant, Ibrahim Modibo was not comfortable with the plan of the British and did not want to lose his kingship position in Wushishi.⁹ Following the departure of Ibrahim Modibo to Wushishi and the re-organization of Kuta Division, Bosso regained its sovereignty and was ranked among other districts in the

⁷ NAK: Minprof 115/1910 Re-organisation of Kuta Division.

⁸ Alh. Adamu Ibrahim (50years), Ex-Chairman, Bosso Local Government, interviewed at Pyawu on 7/4/2012.

⁹Ibid. NAK: Minprof 70/1919 Wushishi District, Kuta Division Reassessment Report 1920 by H.M. Bricemith.

region. At this juncture Bosso was upgraded to District level and the entire Minna was placed under the jurisdiction of the Chief of Bosso.

In 1931, when Sir Donald Cameron became the new Governor General of Nigeria he injected a new philosophy into the administration of the non Muslim areas of Northern Nigeria. Cameron observed that the practice of placing non-Muslims under alien rule was against the principle of indirect rule system.¹⁰ In line with this new philosophy and in order to reduce administrative cost due to the World Economic Depression, village areas, Districts and Divisions were reorganized in the country. Based on this, the number of districts in Kuta Division was reduced from ten to seven. Maikunkele District was merged with Bosso District. In 1933, a federated administration was established known as Gwari/Kamuku Native Authority.¹¹ The Merger was aimed at creating some form of centralized administration among the people. The Gbagyi – Kamuku Federation had its headquarters at Minna since the headquarters of Kuta Division was moved from Kuta to Minna. Under the new arrangement, all the Districts were represented at the Federation by their Chiefs and Councils known as Subordinate Native Authority. The federation was chaired by the District Head of Kuta as its President, with a single Native Treasury and Judiciary.¹² The life span of the federation was short when it was later separated in 1936 into the Gbagyi and the Kamuku federations.

¹⁰ A.M.K Kirk-Greene, *Sir Donald Cameron 1931-1935: The Principles of Native Administration in Northern Nigeria*, (selected documents 1900-1947) London, Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 325.

¹¹ NAK SNP/17/24373, Vol. II, Kamuku Districts, Kuta Division, Niger Province Report by Mr. F.F.H. MacBride, 1935. NAK: Minprof M 331 Kuta Division Annual Report 1932 Pp. 1-3.

¹² I.N. Baba 'The Evolution of State Systems Among the Gbagyi of River Kaduna Valley C. 1860 to 1981', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Abuja, 2006. Pp. 126-127.

At the District level, the Palace of District Head of Bosso was located at Minna. But because of the complex nature of the town as a result of large concentration of migrant population the colonial government established Minna Town Council in 1936 with representatives from various ethnic groups of Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and Nupe. The Council was subordinated to the Gbagyi Native Authority. The leadership of the Council was to be on rotational basis.¹³ In 1939, conflict arose between the District Head of Bosso and the Council under the leadership of Sarkin Hausawa. The Chief of Bosso who noticed the political ambition of the leadership of the Council under the chairmanship of Sarkin Hausawa, Mallam Abubakar started to protest the position of Sarkin Hausawa in Minna. One of his protest letters to the colonial administrator reads thus:

With due respect, I want to notify you that I no longer need the Hausa leader in my land due to the fact that you can not have two leaders at same time in one land. More so, I have not seen a situation where a Hausa man would be made the King of Minna. Therefore I seek for the return of Minna Kingdom to my full control as it was before. Otherwise peace will no longer exist between us. And all workers in Minna should be under my control because I'm the sole king.¹⁴

The conflict between these two parties continued until 1949 when a committee was set up to investigate a petition from Abubakar Zarumai Lawu who alleged that the Council was involved in embezzlement of colonial tax. The Achemba Libel's Committee found the Council guilty of embezzlement of over \$800 in the general tax collection treasury. This led to the dissolution of the Township Council in 1949 and the president of the

¹³ NSAM ACC/11/APN/984 Sarkin Bosso and Minna Town Re-organisation 1947-1951, File P. 30.

¹⁴ NSAM/APN/984 Bosso. Minna Town Re-organisation, 1947-1948.

dissolved Council, Mallam Abubakar was sentenced to imprisonment for tax irregularities.¹⁵

Following the scrapping of the Council, conflict between Abubakar Zarumai Lawu and the Sarkin Hausawa over the affairs of Minna continued. To bring the crisis to an end, the colonialists decided to re-organize the administration of Minna by appointing a paramount chief. Minna was separated from Bosso and a paramount Chief was appointed to oversee the area. This arrangement saw to the appointment of late Ahmadu Bahago as the Paramount Chief of Minna in 1949 and he was made the Head of the Gbagyi Federation. Ahmadu Bahago was a Gbagyi man who hails from Kuta District. He was the son of Chief of Kuta, Mallam Umar. Ahmadu served with the colonial government as Agricultural Officer until 31st December, 1938 when resigned his appointment to join the Gbagyi Native Authority. Ahmadu Bahago held various positions to the Native Authority before he was promoted as chief scribe to the Gbagyi Native Authority. This was the position he occupied until 1950 when he was appointed as the first paramount chief of Minna by the colonial authority.¹⁶

Prior to the appointment of the Paramount Chief of Minna, the British ordered the Chief of Bosso to vacate his palace at Minna and return to Bosso. This order was challenged by the District Head of Bosso. In another letter in 1948, Lawu petitioned and demanded for an explanation, thus:

I have the honour to refer back to our conversation of last week, in which your honour commanded that I be removed from my palace in Minna Township finally to Bosso on the 8th

¹⁵ S.G. Shekwogaza, *Minna As Gbagyi Land: The Truth Must Prevail*, 2nd Edition, Minna, Abayi Resources Production, 2001, p. 11. See also B.A. Kuta, *Notes on Some Aspect of Gbagyi History*, Minna Abayi Resources Production, 2008, p. 137.

¹⁶ See M.M. Bawa, *The Biography of an Icon: Alh. Ahmadu Bahago (OON), First Emir of Minna, 1916-1987*, Kaduna, Nadabo Print Production, 2007, Pp. 5-29.

January, 1948. This Palace was built by my late father Ali Gwodenyize with the assistance of his relations (Gwari), and not with the Native Authority funds and temporarily occupied by the late Sarki Wushishi later on by my father and afterward myself for 37 blessed years. That your reason for my removal from the Palace is not clear to me and I will be grateful if your honour will state in writing this I am awaiting before removing my property from the palace and I will submit my petition to the Chief Commissioner at Kaduna asking for commission of enquiry on my removal.¹⁷

With pressure and threat from the British Colonial officers, Lawu finally moved his seat to Bosso. Alh Ahmadu Bahago became the District Head of Minna before he was subsequently upgraded to the position of an Emir in 1981. All the District Heads in the emirate were directly responsible to the Emir of Minna.

As colonialism progressed, the Gbagyi Native Authority continued to act as local agents for the British Colonial Authority. The Native Authority was in charge of collection of taxes and remitting same to the District Officer for onward transmission to the Resident Commissioner. The Native Authority was also saddled with the responsibility of maintaining law and order through the instrument of the Native Authority Police. The District and Village heads were allowed to continue with their traditional ways of dispensation of justice. A Native Court was established at Bosso town by the colonial government to dispense justice in the district area. Minor cases were settled at the village level while major cases were decided at the native court at Bosso.

In the quest for development, the Native authority promoted Western Education in the district. This was pioneered by the Christian Missionaries. Social facilities that were provided in the district include feeder roads, construction of Bosso Dam in 1947,

¹⁷ NSAM/APN 1984... op cit.

the construction of St. Malachy Teachers' School and the Baptist School in Bosso. Most of the graduates of these schools later became teachers, catechists and clerks. At the initial stage, most families were reluctant to send their children to schools, and when compelled, usually because of a levy or a quota they were apt to send wards/children or orphan that were deemed lazy and not good for farming.

5.3 Colonial Economy

The partition of Africa among the European powers was aimed at exploiting the economic resources of Africa. Imperialism was an attempt by the colonizers to articulate the African natural economy into the world capitalist system.¹⁸ To some scholars like Onimode, colonial economy was a distinct feature of imperial exploitation that involved the appropriation of the economic surplus of one country by another through enslavement, forced labour, low wages, acquisition of mineral rights, land alienation and capital export, all for the generation of huge profit for the imperialist.¹⁹

All colonial states in Africa were to promote capitalist relation through policies aimed to regulate labour, taxation, land distribution and business. Most of all the states directs the development and maintain the continuity of primary commodity production, the dominant needs of metropolitan capital.²⁰ In Nigeria, this was done through the system of articulation of modes of production. This process involved interaction through which the indigenous pre-capitalist modes were subjected to contradictory destruction, preservation and transformation as their internal social forces were subsumed under metropolitan capitalism. In deeper sense, articulation involved

¹⁸ Lenin considered Imperialism as the Highest Stages of Capitalism. For more details on Lenin theory on imperialism see H. Brown, *World History, 1750-1900*, London, 1974, p. 160.

¹⁹ B. Onimode, 'Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria' Quoted in S.T. Apev "Colonial State and Forced Labour in Tiv Land, 1900-1945", Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 1987, p. 35.

²⁰ See S.T. Apev "Colonial State and Forced Labour in Tiv Land... Op cit., p. 53.

extracting surplus products from or forcing labour into capitalist or quasi-capitalist relations of production within or outside the pre-capitalist formations, thereby partially transforming them and making their self reproduction impossible.²¹

One of the preoccupations of the British government after the conquest of Northern Nigeria was to find a workable formula through which revenue generation would be implemented so as to extract the maximum yield from the conquered area. The British government believed that with the conquest of Northern Nigeria, the security of peasantry was ensured and thus there was no need for the peasantry to congregate in the walled towns.²²

With the establishment of colonial rule and subsequent division of the Gbagyi settlements into districts areas, the colonial government came up with some economic policies as it was the case in other parts of Nigeria. Thus, the process of incorporating Bosso into colonial economy started in the first half of the 20th century. Colonial taxation, cash crop production, trade, and forced labour were among the major colonial economy policy in the district.

5.3.1 Colonial Taxation

Under colonial rule, peasants provided the resources with which they were governed. The colonial government introduced a new form of taxation, even though taxes were not new to some societies. It was aimed at redirecting the people into more productive sectors of the society. Colonial taxation was to provide requisite funds for administering the colony as a field of exploitation. The colonial government ensured

²¹ Ibid. p. 53.

²² F. Lugard, *The Political Memoranda* (3rd ed.) Quoted in I.H. Dawaki, "Dorayi: A History of Economic and Social Transformations in the 19th and 20th Centuries Kano Emirate, Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 1994, P. 48.

that the local people paid for the upkeep of the colonial officials. Unlike the pre-colonial taxation that was in kind, the colonial taxes were monetized. Money taxes were introduced on numerous items- cattle, land, houses and on individual. Male were to pay taxes using the European currency. This therefore requires the tax payer to cultivate cash crops and sell before meeting up with the tax demand.²³ Taxes were imposed on the people to compel them produce the export crops which they could sell to the European traders.

Colonial taxation gradually came to replace the former voluntary gifts on which the social security of nobilities used to depend. The collection of taxes was left in the hands of traditional rulers in the district. Taxes levied on the peasants were used for the payment of salaries of colonial officials; construction of roads, hospitals etc. Part of the fund was also used as substantial reserve fund for unseen expenses such as famine. The introduction of new form of taxes using the colonial currency affected the peasant productivity in the district. Majority of the peasants could not cater for the requirements which the tax collectors demanded because their mode of production and economic conditions were weak. Where a tax collector could not afford to pay a tax, his properties like animals were sometime confiscated and sold to procure money for the tax he was suppose to pay. This therefore made majority of the natives to be recruited for the provision of free labour during construction works.

5.3.2 Colonial Agriculture

Agriculture was the matrix which other economic activities depended upon during the colonial period. Bosso people were predominantly farmers since the pre-colonial era. Agricultural development during the colonial era was similar with the pre-

²³ C. Orr, *The Making of Northern Nigeria* (2nd ed.), London, Frank Cass, 1965, p. 156.

colonial epoch, but with slight difference. Prior to colonial rule, agricultural production in the area was basically for subsistence. Production was for consumption and the remnant if any were sold to cater for basic needs of the people. There was no added incentive to create surplus yields. The coming of the British however significantly altered the age-old system with the enactment of law on cash crops production and the introduction of taxation.²⁴ The introduction of colonial currency also marked a sharp difference in the volume of trade.

Though the economy of the people was still tied to agriculture, a significant shift in the nature of crops that were produced was introduced or enforced. Under this policy, farmers were encouraged to produce cash crops that were needed as raw materials by the colonial home industries. Production of groundnut, cotton and shea-nuts were encouraged. Groundnut and cotton were cultivated alongside food crops like maize, millet, yam etc. However, much preference was given to cash crops than food crops production. The introduction of colonial taxation intensified the production of cash crops because the farmers needed money to pay their taxes. The colonial agricultural policies propelled agricultural production. Ordinances were enacted to show how much importance the colonial officers attached to these crops. The Gbagyi (Gwari) Native Authorities were used to satisfying the colonial economic interest. New improved seedlings were imported and sold to the farmers through Agricultural Institutes for better yield. In 1953 for example, 15 bags of cotton seeds were distributed in the district.²⁵ The seeds were sold to those farmers who show interest in the production in

²⁴ T.Wuam, 'Benue in the Twentieth Century: A Socio-economic Review', *Lapai Journal of Central Nigerian History: Journal of the Department of History and Archaeology, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2007, p. 144.

²⁵ NSAM: Cotton Plantation and Seed of 1941-63, p. 32.

order to increase the production rate. Apart from distribution of improved seedlings to farmers, the research institutes advised farmers on the use of compost manure, mucuna and other legumes for the restoration of soil fertility.²⁶ With this incentive, most of the peasant farmers were encouraged to grow export crops which they sold to acquire cash which they needed to pay taxes as well as to fulfil some of their social responsibilities. The colonial economic policy which integrated Nigeria into the capitalist economy also stimulated and induced mass production in the quest to make money and wealth.

Regarding the mode and means of production, farmers clung to their traditional way of cultivation by using their primitive implements. With increase in production of export crops more land were brought under cultivation. Different forms of labour were utilised to increase production. Some individual resulted to hired labour to work for them for a token sum of money or food stuff as a form of remuneration. Farm produce were transported from villages to markets where middle men buy and sell to the European firms. The railway stations in Minna, Beji and Shakwata served as the collection centres for the transportation of agricultural produce to the Nigerian coast for onward shipping to Europe. Although the British promoted the cultivation of groundnut and cotton in the district since 1910, the production of these crops was not favoured by the people. It was on this basis that a Colonial Anthropologists wrote thus:

It has been reported recently, crop (among the Gbagyi) are usually 'rather poor' allegedly because of lack of interest and ignorance of poor crop rotation, inadequate fallow periods, poor ridging, late planting and the much debated custom of burning potential farmland.²⁷

²⁶ W. Oyemakinde, 'The Role of Government in the Promotion of Agriculture' In G.O. Ogunremi and E.K. Faluyi (ed.), *Economic History of West Africa*, Ibadan, Rev. Charles Publication, 1996, p. 159.

²⁷ H. Gunn and P.F. Conant, *People of the Middle Niger Region, Northern Nigeria* Quoted in M.A. Filaba 'Images of Societies and Politics in the Colonial Histography: The Case of the Gbagyi of Northern Provinces of Nigeria' *The Journal of Zaria Historical Research (ZAHIR)*, Vol. 1, No. 1. 2001, p. 60.

Gunn and Conant went further to state that:

The yield of the groundnut in Gbagyi country is small (sic) and they do not constitute the major article of diet, yams are recent production though wild yams (sic) have always been imported in the diet in terms of scarcity. Cotton, that is grown extensively is said to be of poor quality, locally it is used however to produce a superior, rugged homespun cloth.²⁸

This was the colonial assessment of Gbagyi crops when they discovered that the Gbagyi people were not meeting the high demand of extensive cash crop production. It was a calculated attempt to belittle the contribution of the Gbagyi to the colonial economy which was dependent on cash crops production. The negative propaganda was intended to cover the harsh colonial repression which the colonial economy exerted on the population.

5.3.3 Colonial Trade

The introduction of colonial currency intensified trading in Nigeria. Development in transportation facilities like construction of feeder roads and railway lines also promoted trading activities in the district. Motor came to replace the use of animals in carrying goods from distant areas. Trade during colonial era became more pronounced with the promotion of cash crop production. Increase in cash crop production led to an increase in commerce in the district. The natives produced cash crops and sell them to the European firms through the Nigerian middle men. The firms in turn import European finished goods for Nigerians. Trade became intensified when migrants began to settle in Minna as a result of railway development.

Archival materials have shown that four trading firms including the Royal Niger Company, John Holt, SCOA and Paterson Zochonis (PZ) established their branches in

²⁸ Ibid p. 61.

Minna market and participated actively in the purchase of farm produce like groundnut, cotton, shea nuts and minerals like gold. They built warehouses for packaging of agricultural raw materials before transporting them overseas. Markets in the area were attended to by people from Maikunkele, Bosso and Paiko. The European firms obtained shea butter and groundnuts from the inhabitants and, in turn, supply finished goods like cloth, salt, shoes, mirrors etc to them.²⁹ The flow of European goods provided incentives to the peasant farmers to increase their production. The colonial firms determined the prices of local goods. Thus, peasants were exploited with low prices of their produce. Peasants worked for large numbers of hours to produce a given cash crop and the prices of the product was the price of those long hours of labour. This follows that the buyer and the user of the raw materials were engaging in massive exploitation of the peasants. The differences between the prices of African exports of raw materials and their importation of manufactured goods constituted a form of unequal exchange. The huge amounts of profit realized by the European firms were transferred abroad instead of being invested in Nigeria.

The importation of European finished goods had negative consequences on the home industries as it distorted the local industries. Even where the local products were cheaper and better, people still preferred the European products. People began to abandon their jobs in the face of cheap available European industrial goods. Improvement in weaving, blacksmithing, pottery etc all bowed out of existence. This trend has continued up to the present.

²⁹ NAK: Minprof 316/1917 Bosso District, Kuta Division Assessment Report 1917 by A.E. Vere Walwyn p. 3.

5.3.4 *Forced Labour*

Forced labour means forced extraction of African labour by the colonial state in order to sustain the colonial economy. After colonization, the state discovered that, for effective social control and to effectively exploit the surplus of the colonized people, it would be possible to provide some basic infrastructure, namely, administrative offices residential houses to settle the colonial officers and schools to produce colonial functionaries. Roads, rail line, water and dispensaries were also necessary for the reproduction of peasants labour for commodity production. To provide these infrastructures, which would facilitate the articulation, labour was seriously needed.³⁰ The colonialists took measures by reducing the natives (Gbagyi) to labour reservoirs to build colonial projects whenever this was found necessary.

In Bosso District, the Native Authority was made under the colonial requirements to mobilize through every given apparatus of their disposal, labour strength needed for job works. Just as elsewhere in colonial Nigeria, the people of the district were recruited for the construction of colonial offices in Zungeru, the first Headquarters of Northern Nigeria.³¹ They were mobilized during the construction of Baro-Minna-Kaduna rail lines in 1910. The labourers were also used during the construction of Bosso dam in 1947. Other public works includes construction and maintenance of feeder roads and paths, building of bridges, sanitation etc.

³⁰ A.T. Adamu, "Colonial Capitalism and Craft in Northern Nigeria: State and Articulation in Sokoto Province 1903 to 1960", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Stanford University, 1985, p. 162.

³¹ C.C. Jacobs, 'The Incident of Gussoro, 6th May 1909: The Baro-Kano Railway, Forced Labour and Gbagyi Resistance, *Gbagyi Journal*.... Op cit., p.

5.4 Impact of Colonial Economic Policies

The colonial economic policies had direct negative impact on the people. The Gbagyi Native Authority was required to mobilise free labour that were needed for the construction of roads, railway line, building of bridges, colonial offices and roads. The hard work and appalling conditions led to the death of large number of those engaged in work on the railway. Rodney states that

The simplest form of forced labour was that which colonial governments used to carry out 'public works.' Labour for a given number of days per year had to be given free for these public works -building castles for governors, prison for Africans, barracks for troops, bungalows for colonial officials. A great deal of this forced labour went into the construction of roads, railways and ports to provide the infrastructure for private capitalist investments and to facilitate the export of cash crops.³²

Although this work was much resented, since it was unpaid, it made an important contribution in linking the rural communities to each other and the administrative centres.

The colonial economic policies opened a new chapter in the political economy of the district. The British policy which compelled mass production of agricultural export crops intensified agricultural economy among the people in order to service the British export economy. The production of cash crops was done at the expense of food crops production. In other words, the British agricultural policy was not aimed at improving crops which had internal or domestic value³³. This uneven development underlined the selfish economic interest of the colonial ruler. The cash crop economy introduced into the rural communities incrementally brought about a dislocation of the

³² W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped African*, Abuja, Panaf Publisher, 1972, P. 199.

³³ T. Falola *et al.*, *History of Nigeria 3: Nigeria in the Twentieth Century*, Lagos, Longman, 2003. Pp35

rhythm and values of traditional peasant life and gave rise to a new assertive, competitive and grasping individualism which aided the material aggrandisement of the strong, influential and ambitious at the expense of the weak and humble members of the peasant communities³⁴. The Gbagyi pre-colonial modes of production were articulated with capitalist mode of production, thus making it easier for capitalist mode of production.

Like agriculture, the British commercial policy in the region was directed towards promoting the interest of the colonial home industries. It was designed to encourage the peasants to sell their agricultural products to the European firms as raw materials for their home industries. Although the colonial trade led to the spread of European manufactured goods in the district and in Nigeria at large, it however undermined the traditionally and locally manufactured goods in the market. This was because the former were more preferred and some time cheaper than the latter. This state of affairs led to the decline of local crafts production. The development of trade during the colonial period also led to the introduction of the British currency which replaced the traditional currency and trade by barter. The introduction of British currency facilitated the trade more.

It was the British colonial policy, like that of every other European colonial power in Africa that her colonies should be financially self-supporting. This means that all public works in the colony like construction of roads, railways, schools, hospital had

³⁴ S.O. Osoba, 'Development of Trade Unionism in Colonial and Post-Colonial Nigeria', in I.A.A. Akinjogbin and S.O. Osoba (ed), *Topics on Nigerian Economic and Social History*, Ile-Ife, University of Ife press, 2980, Pp 189.

to be paid for out of locally raised revenue³⁵. On the basis of that, the peasants were forced to pay taxes. Like in the other part of Nigeria, those peasants in the district who could not afford to pay tax as at when due were sometime punished. The punishment ranged from flogging, seizing of defaulters wives or daughters by the tax scribe until their taxes were payed as well as seizing and detaining of people's property. In view of the above, some tax defaulters on seeing tax collectors or the Native Authority Police would disappear into the forest and stay there until it was dark. The rate of tax collected on behalf of the British by the District Head through the Village Heads had effect on the economic well being of the people. The end result was that for those who could not afford to pay they decided to provide free labour and some times migrate to other places to seek for alternative means of livelihood in order to subsist.³⁶ Thus, the policy led to the displacement of some family members.

5.5 Development of Colonial Education

In the preceeding chapter, we had earlier stated that western education was introduced into Nigeria through the activity of Christian missionaries. The primary concern of the Missionaries was of course, religious conversion. But it could not be carried out effectively without introducing the converts to Western education. In almost all the mission stations, mission schools were invariably established. Development in education in the district and the whole of Northern Nigerian was pioneered by the Missionaries before the colonial Government intervention at later years. At the on-set most people were not interested in acquiring the western education.

³⁵ G.I.C. Eluwa *et al.*, *A History of Nigeria for Schools and Colleges*, Onitsha, African FEP, Publishers, 1987, P218.

³⁶ M.S. Abdulkadir, 'Resistance to Colonial Taxation in Northern Nigeria in the 1930s', *FAIS: Journal of Humanities*, Vol. I, No. 2, 2000, P. 37.

Apart from St. Malachy Teachers Training College, Bosso and Vahonourven College, Chanchaga most of the schools established around this region during the colonial period were situated in Minna. The first batches of the mission schools were Baptist Primary School, Minna established in 1928, Baptist College, Minna established in 1930 and Our Lady of Fatima Secondary School, Minna established in 1934. Others were St. Andrew Primary School, Minna established in 1947, St. Michael Primary School, Minna established in 1948 among others.

Development of western education in the region improved when Native Authority began to involve in the establishment of elementary Schools. However, in Bosso District, unlike the other part of Northern Nigeria, it was the children of the poor peasant who were sent to school or children who were considered too lazy in farming or those who were physically challenged. In the words of Abubakar, the Missionaries and the school teachers had to beg people sometimes to come or sent their children to schools. Throughout the first half of 20th century western education was not popular in the district. Although schools were built in Minna and its environs, most pupils that were enrolled were mostly from other district areas and the non-Gbagyi speaking people. Very few men and women from the district enrolled and pursued their educational career during the colonial period.

Table 5.1 shows some names of Gbagyi natives in the district that were enrolled in Mission schools and were able to continue with western education.

S/n	Name
1.	Dr. Yahaya Bawa Bosso
2.	Mr. Francis Maigida Bosso
3.	Alh. Yusuf Abubakar Bosso
4.	Mrs. Lami Makun
5.	Mrs. Josphine Aishatu Sanda
6.	Mr. D.C. Tarachi
7.	Hon. Capt. James Baitachi (Rtd)
8.	Prof. Musa Galadima
9.	Rev. Fr. Clement Shatta
10.	Alh. Aliyu Abubakar Bosso
11.	Engr. A.A. Bosso
12.	Mr. John Nakura
13.	Coach Adamu Laka
14.	DCP John Mayaki
15.	Mr. Joseph Loyi
16.	Mr. Patrick Waziri
17.	Justice Aisha Lami Bawa Bwari
18.	Alh. Garba Audi

Source: Mal. Abubakar Adamu Bosso

CHAPTER SIX

POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION OF BOSSO

DISTRICT, 1960-2011

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter the political and socio-economic transformation that has taken place in the district between 1960 and 2011 were discussed. The chapter also identified some major challenges facing the district as well as the way forward.

6.2 Political Development

Bosso District has been undergoing political transformation since the beginning of 20th century. From a little village, it grew to a district area. Since 1923 during the colonial period, the district has continued to maintain its district status under different administrative units. When Nigeria got her independence in 1960, the district area was under the defunct Niger province in Northern Nigeria. In 1967, shortly before the civil war broke out, the Federal Government decreed the division of the country into twelve states and Bosso District remained under Niger province in North-western State.

In 1976, the Federal Government embarked on the creation of additional states. This saw to the creation of Niger State out of the defunct North-Western State. The 1976 states creation also led to the replacement of the Native Authority System of administration with the creation of Local Government administration in Northern Nigeria. The new system of Local Government administration took over the function of the traditional rulers in governing the areas of their jurisdiction. Most of the powers and privileges of the traditional rulers were taken from them. Bosso District was placed under Chanchaga Local Government Area. The nomenclature of the Local Government

was changed to Minna Municipal Council in 1984. The District has remained under the Local Government Area until 1991 when the Federal Government embarked on the creation of additional Local Government Areas. This development saw to the creation of Bosso Local Government Area.¹

Bosso District is presently one of the two districts areas that constitute Bosso Local Government Area. The Local Government was created on Friday, 27th August, 1991 following the nationwide Local Governments' creation exercise by the then military administration of President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. The Local Government has its headquarters at Maikunkele, which is twelve (12) kilometres away from the city of Minna². The creation of the Local Government area took the inhabitant of the area by surprised, because nobody from the Council area seemed to have lobbied for it. Secondly, nobody from the area seemed to have been consulted before its creation. Thus, the announcement of the Council alongside with other Local Governments brought a mixed feeling especially by the inhabitants of the area. While there were those who viewed its creation as an attempt by President Ibrahim Babangida to dispossess the Gbagyis of Bosso of their legitimate claim to the ownership and control of Minna town, others interpreted it as an attempt to enhance the socio-economic development of the area³. The Local Government area was carved out of Chanchaga Local Government Area along with Paikoro and Shiroro Local Government Areas. The creation of these three Local Governments out from Chanchaga Local

¹Alhaji Yusuf Abubakar (51 years), Director Personnel and Management, Bosso Local Government Council, interviewed at his residence at Jikpa, Bosso on 1/11/2012.

² Ibid.

³ P.S. Sarki, "Bosso Local Government Council: The Journey so Far: Challenges Ahead" Being a text of Lecture Delivered at 2-Days Workshop organized by Participatory Development Consultancy, Maikunkele, 2005.

Government drastically reduced the territorial size of Chanchaga Local Government Area to Minna metropolitan city.

As from 1991, when Bosso Local Government Area was created, the Council has helped to bring the government closer to the rural people. One of its achievements is the creation of job opportunities for the people of the area. Secondly, it has to some extent helped in the provision of social infrastructure for the local people. The creation of the local government has also helped in promoting unity between the people of Bosso and Maikunkele Districts who had formerly being at logger heads with one another since colonial period⁴.

The traditional political institution in the district has also undergone transformation since 1960. As at 1923, the district had only two administrative village units i.e. Bosso and Shako villages. Following the agitation of some communities to have their own village head out side Bosso village, Beji ward was upgraded to a village level in 1991 and the ward head was elevated to a Village Head. Pyatta and Shatta wards were also upgraded to village units on 30th July, 2011 each with its own Village Head (Dagaci). With this development, the number of village areas in the district increased to five. The year 2011 also witnessed the creation of more wards heads and conferment of traditional chieftaincy titles on individuals in the district. Information gathered in the course of this research revealed that plans are underway by the District Head to elevate Dagah, Gurusu, Epigi and Jigbai to village units in a no distant time.⁵

⁴Alhaji Usman Jagaba (49 years), Information Officer, Bosso Local Government Council, Maikunkele, interviewed in his office on 26/3/2012.

⁵Alhaji Musa Abubakar (80 years), District Head (Hakimin) Bosso, interviewed at his palace on 19/3/2012.

The kingship institution of the district since its creation had also continued to evolved. As stated in chapter two, handful of chiefs had ruled Bosso chiefdom before it was made a district area in 1923. In 1923, Mal. Abubakar Zarumai Lawu became the first officially recognized District Head of Bosso. He was succeeded by Mal. Adamu Dodo Laka who also doubled as Magajin Gari Minna, a very powerful title in the palace of the Emir of Minna. With the death of Adamu Dodo Laka, he was succeeded by Alhaji Musa Abubakar as the District Head, the position he had occupied up to date.

Another significant political development in the district since 1960 was the appointments and elections of some personalities from the district area into some government functionaries. Among these personalities were Alhaji Aliyu Abubakar Bosso as Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Niger State in 1979; Dr. Yahaya Bawa Bosso as Director General Ministry of Education, Niger State in 1979 and Mr. D.C. Tarachi as the first Sole Administrator for Bosso Local Government Council in 1991. Others were the election of Hon (Capt) James Baitachi (Rtd) as Member, House of Representative, representing Bosso/Paikoro Constituency at the National Assembly from 1999 – 2011; Alhaji Abdullah Baizagi Pyatta as Chairman, Bosso Local Government Council from 1999 – 2007; Alhaji Isah Waziri Adiga as Chairman, Bosso Local Government from 2007 – 2011; Alh Abubakar Mohammed Bosso, Chairman Niger State Independent National Electoral Commission (NSINEC) in 1999, Hajiya Ladidi Bawa Bosso, Chairperson, Bosso Bosso Local Government Council 2011 to date⁶

. Bosso Local Government comprises of ten (10) electoral wards and out of these, eight are from Bosso District. The district since 1960 has continued to grow in

⁶ Mal. Abubakar Adamu (52 yrs), Civil Servant, interviewed at his house on 4/5/2013.

size and population with an estimated population figure of over 100,000 people⁷. The proximity of the district to Minna town has influenced mass movement of people into the area. This has led to growth in population and the urbanization of some urban centres of the area especially along the areas contiguous to the boundary of Minna. The urban centres of the district include Bosso, Maitumbi, Chanchaga, Nyikangbe, Shanu, etc. Just as the state capital (Minna) is expanding into the district so also are its agricultural lands, residential, industrial, transportation, institutional and other land uses are expanding deeper and deeper into the interior of the district.

6.3 Socio-Economic Developments

Development is elusive. It is perceived not only as a condition of life but also as a goal to be attained, and seen as the capacity to grow, change and develop⁸. A society is considered to be developed when there is utilization of all available human and natural resources of a place. And when it is economic development, it invariably suggests the maximum exploitation of land, labour and entrepreneurship of a place, for the growth of the place. Development therefore is more than an increase in the number of physical structures erected in a place. Economic development cannot be discussed as a unique experience aside from other forms of development. It contains aspect of cultural, political and social development. It is about a people's survival and of a nation's growth. It is about a people peculiar response to the economic wealth of their place, and the possibilities of its exploitation and utilization. It also involves the socialization process in which contacts are made with other people from other places. It is about

⁷ There is paucity of data at our disposal concerning the total population of the district. The estimated population figures is based on the 2006 National Population Census figures of Bosso Local Government Area which is 147,359 people.

⁸ A. Ikotun, *Strategies for Promoting Integrated Rural Development in Nigeria*, Lagos, Matram Company, Ltd, 2002. P5

people's determination to tap the social natural gifts located in their environment through human labour, concentration, and subsequent utilization, for the sake of others "branches" of development.⁹

Socio-economic development of Bosso District was made difficult during the colonial era. This was not only because of shortage of investable capital and advanced technology but also due to lack of political will of the colonial government to develop her colonies. The colonial institutions were never designed to respond to demands for social and economic development. The colonial governments were concerned with the maintenance of law and order in the district so as to ensure a reasonable degree of security to allow the exploitation of the hosts' resources. Thus, most of the projects embarked in the district like construction of feeder roads and railway lines were all geared towards the exploitation of African resources. Even schools, that were built, were meant to provide basic literacy to the local people whose services were required as clerks and messengers under the colonial rule. With attainment of independent in 1960, Bosso began to witness some socio-economic development. These developments were in the area of social infrastructure, agriculture, markets and education.

6.4 Infrastructural Development

Major socio-economic development in the district commenced with the attainment of independence. One area of social development was through the provision of social infrastructure. Between 1960 and 2011, successive governments have tried to provide some basic amenities like provision of portable water, road construction, building of schools, building of dispensaries and health centres and provision of market

⁹ S.G. Bawa, Gbagyi and the Nigerian Nation, Minna, Luradd Ventures, 1999, p. 116.

stalls. During this period, Bosso District began to witness the appearance of some modern social services

6.4.1 Water Supply

Bosso Dam, which was constructed during the colonial era in 1949, was the only sole source of water supply to Bosso and Minna. With the attainment of independence, Chanchaga water works was constructed to increase the source of water supply to Minna and its environs. In 1979, Tagwai dam was also constructed and these increase the daily output of water supply to Minna and the urban centers of Bosso District¹⁰. Field survey shows that, apart from pipe borne water provided by the state government in the urban centres of the district, there are quite a number of hand pump boreholes dug around the villages in the district by Bosso Local Government. Source revealed that as at 2011, there were about sixty five (65) boreholes dug by Bosso Local Government in the district.¹¹ These boreholes provide water for domestic use for the people. However, due to population growth in the urban centers and some of the semi-urban areas, perennial water problem has continued to be on increase in the district. The resultant effects of inadequate water supply made individuals to restorted to digging and drilling of wells and boreholes in their areas.

6.4.2 Transportation Network

Good transport network had been identified as one major feature for economic development. Development in the transportation sector in the district started during the colonial era when railway line reached Minna in 1910 from Lagos and passed through the district. The second rail line which linked Minna to Kaduna also passed through

¹⁰ This is Minna, Niger State Ministry of Information, Social Development and Culture, 1991. P 12

¹¹ Mal. Hassan Usman Bosso (48 years) Deputy Director, PHC, Bosso Local Government, intervred in his office on 13/5/2013

some village areas in the district. The development in railway lines were however made to exploit the economic resources of the peasant farmers during the colonial period. During the post colonial period, development in road network became the priority of successive Nigerian Government. In Niger State, government embarked on the construction of roads to link major cities in the state. Most of these roads passed through Bosso District to other towns and Local Government headquarters. Good examples of such roads are Minna-Bida road, Minna-Suleja road, Minna-Bosso-Zungeru road and Minna-Sarkin pawa road. The Rural Development Scheme Project embarked upon by the Niger state government in 1978, led to the construction of feeder roads in the district. Government also embarked on the construction of township roads within the urban centers in the state. In the district, township roads were constructed in Chanchaga, Maitumbi and Bosso¹². At the local government level, a number of feeder roads had been constructed since 1991. These feeder roads have helped to link many villages and towns. Although, most of the roads are sometimes not motor-able especially during the rainy season, it has however, helped in the area of communication especially in the transportation of farm produce to markets.

6.4.3 Health Services

In the area of health sector, there had been increase in the number of clinics and dispensaries in the district since 1960. During the colonial period the first modern hospital to be established in Minna was in 1918, known as Minna Native Hospital. The hospital serviced all the districts under the defunct Kuta Division. There was also a leprosy clinic established at Chanchaga for treatment of leprosy patients. As from 2011, there were thirty two (32) rural health centres established in the district. Out of these

¹² This is Minna,op cit, .

numbers, three were rural hospitals located at Beji, Kodo and Sabon-Dagah. Private hospitals were also established during the period under review.

6.5 Agricultural Development

The ecological zone of Bosso District has continued to attract people to practice agriculture as their major occupation. People from other parts of the country scavenge the district to cultivate varieties of agricultural produce. There have not been many changes in the pattern of agricultural activities in the district when compared to the colonial period except in the nature of the types of crop produced. During the colonial period, much attention was directed towards the production of cash crops namely groundnut, cotton and sheanuts because the crops served as raw materials for the European industries. With the attainment of independence, the nature of agricultural production among the peasants began to change from cash crop production to some varieties of crops. Production of crops like yam, maize, rice, beans etc became the farmers' priority in the region. The climatic condition of the region favoured the production of these crops more than the cultivation of groundnut and cotton that were hitherto imposed on the people. Although, farmers in the area still produced groundnut in some quantity, the volume of its production has drastically reduced compared to the colonial era. Production of cotton has gradually disappeared in the district because the environment does not favour its production. The production of yam and other food crops in the district has continued to serve as both food and cash earning crops.

One remarkable development in agriculture in the district is the improvement in the method of cultivation. The use of modern farm input, such as fertilizers, insecticide, herbicide, use of tractors etc. has intensify bumper harvest at the end of every farming

season. Successive administrations in the country have introduced different agricultural programmes that were aimed at enhancing agricultural development. These programmes like Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Back to Land, State Agricultural Development Project, Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure have helped in the development of agriculture in Nigeria at large and Bosso District in particular their shortcomings notwithstanding.

Agriculture has continued to remain the largest employer of labour in the district. Each household in the district engages in one form of agricultural activities or the other. The district provides the entire Minna town with foodstuff. During the dry season, trucks are seen transporting crops like yam and grains from Beji and Garatu markets to other states of the federation. Apart from Benue state there is no place in Northern Nigeria where yam and grains is as cheap as in Bosso District. The abundance of fertile land for agriculture has encouraged the emergence of large scale farmers in the district. Some of the farms in the district include Maizube farm, Talba's farm, Ibrahim Aliyu's farm, Subale farm etc. These farms produce variety of crops, livestock, fruits and poultry. Apart from ensuring food security in the state, the farms also serve as employer of labour to the teeming youths in the area.¹³

Although agriculture has witnessed tremendous improvement in the district, farmers have however faced some challenges. Some of the challenges include their inability to have access to modern farm inputs, lack of credit facilities, pest and diseases, lack of modern storage facilities, lack of agro-allied industries in the area, poor market system and effect of climate change and so on.

¹³Isah Mohammed Shaba (41 years), Farm Attendant at Maizube Farms, Sabon-daga, interviewed at his house on 30/10/2012.

6.6 Markets

Commercial activities among the people had been identified as part of their economic activities since the pre-colonial period. During that time, the Gbagyi engaged their neighbours with trading activities. Trade became more prominent during colonial period with the establishment of a centralized market called Kasuwan Gwari. As from 1980s onward, more markets came into existence in the district. These markets were largely attended by traders particularly during dry season after harvest. Out of these markets, Kasuwan Gwari, Garatu and Beji markets are considered more prominent. Attempts have been made to discuss these markets as follows.

6.6.1 *Kasuwan Gwari*

Kasuwan Gwari was established during the colonial period and it was the only famous market in the area. The market started as a refreshment point before it gradually developed into a market during the colonial period. The arrival of the railway line in Minna in 1910 pulled people from different walks of life to Minna. With the growth in population, the establishment of market became necessary for exchange of goods and services to take place. The market was established in 1918 at the present Obasanjo Complex. It was initially named *Kasuwan Dare* because it was a centre of relaxation for people after the days job. Most of the labourers that worked in Minna converge at the site at night not only to buy and sell food items but also for leisure and entertainment¹⁴. The market was multi-functional as it performed socio-political functions besides the commercial. It was a place of entertainment as well as an amusement park which enabled drummers, singers and poets to practise their arts.

¹⁴ M. Jiya "History of Minna 1900 – 1995" Unpublished NCE Project, C.O.E. Minna, 1995, Pp 17 – 18. See also M.A. Rufai, "Growth and Urbanization of Minna 1960 – 1999", Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 2009 p48.

The market gradually developed into a full market in 1920 as a result of increase in population in Minna. With increase in its patronage, the colonial government ordered for its relocation to a new site. Following the relocation, the market was later renamed Kasuwan Gwari. Traders within and outside Minna attended the market because of its prominence in different agricultural and non-agricultural commodities. Most of the European trading firms like John Holt, United African Company (UAC), General Buyers Organisation (GBO) and Paterson Zochonis (PZ) established their warehouse near the market site.¹⁵

Following a gradual expansion in commercial activities in Minna, a migratory flow of population began to congregate in Minna and its environs to participate in different forms of business opportunities. As colonial economic policies continued to influence the production of cash crops, traders from other town continue to migrate to Minna and its neighbourhood to take advantage of the commercial activities. All the villages in Bosso District and other surrounding districts of Maikunkele, Paiko, Kuta, and Kafinkoro supplied the market with export crops which the European firms purchased for exportation. To strengthen the market more, the Gwari Native Authority in 1956 took loan from the Northern Region Development Corporation, Kaduna, for the construction of market stalls and its maintenance. The enacting of Northern Region Law No. 14 in 1955 legalized the establishment of Northern Region Development Cooperation in January 1956. The corporation was empowered to grant loans to native authorities and public organizations for development. Although we could not lay hand on how much was granted to the Gbagyi Native Authority as loan, it was however

¹⁵ GAM file No 266, Minna Market Affairs

stated that during the financial year 1959 to 1960, about €802,558 was granted as loans by the corporation.¹⁶

Physical development of Minna market continued during the post colonial period. In 1989, during the administration of Col. Lawan Gwadabe, the Niger State Government in collaboration with Chanchaga Local Government Area embarked on the construction of a modern market at Kasuwan Gwari. The market was opened on a daily and weekly basis. It contained a large number of market stalls. The market was constructed in a way to ensure a free flow of goods and movement of customers into and outside its vicinity. However, in spite of such planning, the existing moveable spaces was still inadequate for the passer-by who continuously criss-cross the narrow lanes. The authority of the market tried to organize the pattern of trade along the guild set-up, but on several occasions they were frustrated by hawkers who carelessly and disorderly continued to display their goods in any available space.¹⁷

The weekly market was located on an open space closed to the main market. Every Wednesday and Saturday of the week were set aside as the market days. On these two days farmers from Bosso and Maikunkele Districts patronize the market with different farm produce. The two market days were usually attended by large crowd from morning to sunset. Transactions on these two days were done on the open space. Agricultural produce available at the market were yam, maize, guinea corn, millet, local rice, beans, tomatoes, pepper and melon. Other items sold include manufactured goods

¹⁶ E.R. Olufemi, *An Economic History of Nigeria 1860 – 1960*, London Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1973 Pp. 247 – 248. M.M.Z. Garba “The Economic History of Minna from 1950 – 1976”, Unpublished B.A(ED) Project, C.O.E Minna affiliated to ABU Zaria, 2006 Pp 80. See also S. Jamilu, “Markets in Katsina: A Comparative Study of Charanchi and Jibiya Markets in the 20th Century, Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 2006, P. 39.

¹⁷ Alhaji Adamu Pada (49 years) Revenue Officer, Chanchaga Local Government Council, Interviewed in his office in Minna on 30/10/2012.

like leather products, second hand cloths, and domestic utensils. Also found in the markets were some livestock like goats, ram and fowl¹⁸.

The location of the market at the heart of Minna has for long caused a lot of social menace. Apart from causing pollution at the centre of the town, the market was also responsible for traffic congestion at Mobil Roundabout. On that basis, the Niger State Government in 2005 embarked on the construction of a new market site for the relocation of the market to the outskirts of the town. A section of the market was completed in 2011 and the market has since been relocated to the new site which is known as Engr. A.A Kure Ultra Modern Market. The new market consists of facilities such as administrative block, bank, fire station, police station, dispensary, toilets and large number of stalls.

6.6.2 *Garatu Market*

Garatu market is one of the recently established markets in the district. It emerged around early 1990s with the creation of Bosso Local Government Area. Located about 18 kilometers south of Minna, the market is situated along Minna-Bida road. The market is seasonal and it flourishes more during dry season. It is one of the major yam markets in the district and the state at large. About ten to fifteen trucks transport yams out from the market to other states on daily basis during dry season¹⁹. The yams are mostly taken to Lagos, Ibadan, Kano, Maiduguri, Sokoto and Portharcourt on daily basis. Traders from other parts of the country congregate in the market to buy yams. The peak of the market is always between the months of November to May every year; the period during which yams are readily available.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Alhaji Ahmadu Garatu (67 years), Chairman Dadin kowa Yam Seller Association, Garatu Market, interviewed at Garatu Market in 22/10/2012.

Farmers from all the villages in the district and beyond supply yams to the market on daily basis. Yams are sold in hundred tubers to buyers who are mostly Yorubas from South-west of Nigeria. Traders congregate in the market during the dry season to take advantage of the yam business. Other agricultural produce found in large quantity in the market includes pepper and tomatoes. Most of the buyers of these two products come from Abuja, during the rainy season. Food items like Maize, Beans, Guinea corn are also available in the market but not in large quantity.

According to the officials of the market, Garatu market since its inception has been one of the economic back-bone of Bosso Local Government Area. This is because a substantial amount of revenue is generated from the market on daily basis. Lack of market stalls has however remained one of the major problems facing the market. Despite the amount of revenue generated from the market, the Local Government has not been able to build permanent stalls in the market. Transactions are still done on an open space with the people using thatched roof and trees for shades²⁰.

6.6.3 *Beji Market*

Beji market is another famous market in the district. It is located 30 kilometers away from Minna, along Minna-Zungeru highway. The market was established in 1984 in an open space close to the palace of the Village Head of Beji before its relocation to its present site in 2010. The location of the market along a highway and at the local government boundary between Bosso and Wushishi Local Government Area attracts large number of traders to patronize it. Beji market is a periodical market which holds at an interval of six days. Traders meet every Wednesday of the week to sell and buy

²⁰ Mal. Mohammad Sani Bosso (43 years), Market Supervisor, Garatu Market, Interviewed at Garatu Market in his office in 20/10/2012.

goods. The market is usually filled to capacity as it is the only market around the locality. Almost all the requirements of consumers are found in the market. Traders from far and near used to attend the market with varieties of commodities. It is another famous yam market beside Garatu market. People converge at the market every Wednesday to transact business.

As a result of increase in the volume of trade in the market, Bosso Local Government Council decided to embark on the construction of a permanent market in 2007 in a wider area. The market was relocated to its present site in 2010 with a total of 220 stalls and a large open space for loading and off-loading goods²¹. On market days, traders converge from morning to sunset to buy and sell commodities. The market attracts more people during dry season when harvest is completed. Most farmers used to transport their goods to the market as from Tuesday evening before the market day. On market days, buyers of yam, grains and livestock come from other states to purchase commodities through their brokers. About 10-15 trucks load of yams and grains are usually transported out of the market to other part of the country every Wednesday²².

Another important section of the market is the *Kara* Market. Business in livestock is transacted within a large space wall which delineates the livestock. Beji market is the major livestock market in the whole of Bosso Local Government Area. People from the southern parts of the country including Abuja patronise the market to buy livestock such as cow, sheep, ram and goat. Assembly of livestock in the market starts on Tuesday evening while loading and transportation of goods to various

²¹ Alhaji Danladi Maianguwa (46 years), Market Supervisor, Beji Market in his office on 24/10/2012

²² Ibid.

destinations starts usually on Wednesday²³. Apart from being a commercial centre, Beji market also provides opportunity for the local people to interact among themselves. The market square is a social institution which promotes social interaction among different communities and different ethnic groups in the district.²⁴

Like Garatu market, the Local Government generate huge amount of revenue from Beji market. The two markets are the back-bone of the internally generated revenue of Bosso Local Government. Official of the market revealed that about ₦80,000 and N100,000 are generated from Beji market and Garatu Market respectively on weekly basis.²⁵

6.7 Educational Development

Development of western education in the district continued to be very low even after the attainment of independent in 1960. To promote western education, the Northern Government in 1962 established Local Education Authorities that were saddled with the responsibility of controlling over primary schools. The voluntary agencies like the Christian Missionaries that owned most of the schools in the state were requested to transfer their schools to the Local Education Authorities.²⁶ In an attempt to make education attractive to the people, the government provided some incentive like free learning materials. In Primary and Secondary Schools, students were supplied soap free on weekly basis for washing their uniforms. Also, in an attempt to make parents especially the rural dwellers realize the advantage to be gained from western education,

²³ Alhaji Buba Musa (65 years), Secretary Cattle Dealers Association Beji Market, Interviewed at Beji market on 24/10/2012.

²⁴ Alhaji Ibrahim Ma;aji (60 years), Sarkin Kasuwan, Beji Market, interviewed on 24/10/2012

²⁵ Isah Mohammed (39 years), Revenue Collector, Beji Market, interviewed on 24/10/2012

²⁶ M.M. Inuwa, 'The Development to Western Type of Education in Northern Nigeria and the Nothernization policy 1951-1965', Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 1987, P. 75. See also M.M. Jagaba, "The Costs of Primary Education in Niger State 1976-1986", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wales, 1991, Pp. 60-65.

Adult Education Centres were introduced in the villages.²⁷ Between 1960 and 1976, there were only four Primary Schools in Bosso District namely; Bosso Primary School established in 1950, Beji Primary School established in 1966, Chanchaga Primary School established in 1974 and Maitumbi Primary School established in 1976. As of that time the district had only one post-primary school i.e Government Teachers College, Bosso. The Launching of the Universal Primary Education in 1976 by the administration of General Olusegun Obasanjo marked a turning point in the development of western education in the district. The scheme led to proliferation of Primary Schools from four to fourteen in the district with an increase in pupils' enrolment in the schools. More schools were built in the nooks and crannies of the district to allow people to have access to education.

In spite of the development in the growth in number of schools there was still great resistance to Western Education among the Gbagyi people. Parents were sometimes begged to send their children to schools. During wet season it was impossible to hold pupils in the schools as they were seriously engaged in farm work. Ignorance and poverty were among the two major contributory factors for low enrolment of children into schools. Parents often withdraw their children to the farm as a result of economic hardship and for them to hawk or send into early marriage (as in the case of females). In order to reduce the number of school drop out in the state the Niger State Government under the leadership of Lt. Col. David A.B. Mark promulgated an Edict in 1989 prohibiting the withdrawal of children from school until their

²⁷ Ahmed Kpetu (48 years) Educational Secretary, Local Education Authority, Bosso Local Government, Interviewed at his office on 20th December, 2012.

completion of secondary education.²⁸ The promulgation of the edict created fears into the mind of some parents and consequently reduced the number of school dropout in the state.

Educational institutions in the district also received another boost as from 1999 when President Olusegun Obasanjo launched another scheme called the Universal Basic Education. The launching of the scheme was aimed at providing free and compulsory education to the Nigerian children up to Junior Secondary school level. As at 2011, the district had a total of seventy five Public Primary Schools and fifty two private schools. The district also had twelve governments owned Post-primary Schools.²⁹ The establishment of two tertiary educational institutions i.e. the Niger State College of Education, Minna in 1976 and the Federal University of Technology, Minna in 1983 in Bosso District has also helped in educational advancement of the area. In spite of this, the people attitude to education especially the Gbagyi people in the district is still not encouraging.

6.8 Some Major Challenges Bosso District Faced up to 2011

Bosso District like any other district area in the state had its own peculiar challenges. Although, the district had no excuse for not being one of the leading district areas in the state because it is blessed with both human and material resources. Its proximity to the state capital gives it advantage over other district areas in the state in terms of educational opportunity and social infrastructures. Most of the educational, socio-political and economic activities of the state have their nerve centres in Bosso land. However, in spite of these advantages, the district still bedeviled with number of

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Mallam Sanda Beji, (48 years), Sectional Head, Planning, Research and Statistics, Education Department Bosso Local Government Area, Interviewed in his office on 3/5/2013.

challenges. Among these challenges are low children enrolments in schools, poor infrastructural facilities, unemployment, incessant sales of farm land etc.

One of the problems hindering the development of the district is the refusal of the majority of its people to embrace education. In spite of all the educational opportunities provided in the district, the Gbagyi people of the district have refused to take any of it. Majority of the people of the area are farmers. They were always on the move in search of farmland. They have nonchalant attitude toward acquisition of western education. Due to their natural flare for social and occupational mobility, the people are confined to exploiting the earth for cultivation. Instead of embracing development they always move into the hinterland in search of land for farming. All the educational opportunities one can think of abound in the district. The district is a host to two tertiary institutions in the state i.e. the Niger State College of Education and the Federal University of Technology, Minna with quite a number of primary and post primary schools. Yet the people have refused to take advantage of this opportunity. Many parents often deny their children the opportunity to attend schools. And for those that are privileged to start school, they drop out after Primary or Secondary education. There had been an alarming rate of school dropouts among the school age children in the district³⁰. The numbers that reach tertiary institutions are highly insignificant and most often specializes not in professional fields of study. Some of these school dropouts prefer to seek for elusive white collar job in towns or engage in motorcycle business instead of furthering their education. The high rate of illiteracy among the people of the district is one of the banes of their development.

³⁰ Mr. BakoWakili Bosso (42 years), Civil Servant, interviewed in his office at Federal University of Technology, Minna on 10/11/2012.

Most of the schools in village areas are on the verge of collapse. The environments are often not conducive for learning. Unqualified teachers are often posted to rural schools thereby undermining effective learning. The net effect of low enrolment of children into schools is that a lot of talents are left untapped as a result of nonchalant attitude of the people.

Poor infrastructural facilities in the district are another impediment to the development of the area. Most remote areas in the district do not have portable water. This has occasionally led to outbreak of gastric and other related diseases. Even in the urban centre in the district, people find it difficult to source for good portable water. The State Water Board hardly supplies water for domestic purposes. People trek long distances to source for water and some depend largely on truck pushers to get water.³¹

Roads in rural areas are in bad condition. During rainy season, some of the roads that link village areas are not motorable. Being an agrarian area, farmers are faced with problems of how to transport their farm produce to market because of poor road network. Examples of such roads are Gurusu –Lokoto road, Tudunfulani- Pyatta-Kube road, Garatu-Tunga-Mallam road, Beji-Nagawu road etc³².

Apart from poor road network, there have been inadequate health care facilities particularly in the rural areas. The numbers of health care centres in the villages are inadequate to the increasing population and high demand of the people. Inadequate power supply is today considered as a national problem. In Bosso District, it is even more compounded with non electrification of many of the semi-urban centres. One would assume that Niger State being a power state, most large settlement in the state

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

should have been connected to the national grid. For example Beji; one of the commercial nerve centres of the district is yet to be electrified despite the attempt by the State Government since 1999.

Youth unemployment is another area of concern. The high rate of unemployment in the district has led to an increase in social vices amongst youths. Some of the unemployed youths are used as political thugs during elections thereby causing insecurity in the society.

One other pressing problem facing the district is the constant taking over of peasant farmland with little compensation by government and indiscriminate sale of land by the people themselves at give away prices. This development has made the majority of the farmers to remain landless. The proximity of the district to the state capital made the inhabitants of the area to dispose their land to eke out a living. The local people resorted to sales of land because they believed that the individual sales attract more value than payment through compensation. Some of the land acquired by the government are at times not well compensated or sometimes not even compensated at all. Examples of these was the 10,600 hectares of land acquired by the government for the permanent site of the Federal University of Technology, Minna and other hectares of lands acquired by some prominent individuals in the state for their own commercial farms which has put the local people at a disadvantage.

The action of the state and some of the highly placed individuals in the state has prompted the local people in the district to embark on frequent sales of land. This development has created land scarcity among the populace. The land scarcity has

pushed many of the farmers out of the district to other local government areas and states as paupers and wanderers in search of fertile land for farming.³³

High rate of poverty among the people has also been identified as one of the problem of the area. The economic capability of the majority of the populace in the district is very low. Most of the inhabitants are subsistent farmers whose production cannot meet up their daily needs. Being an agrarian society, the people have remained subsistent farmers to the extent that some of the farmers cannot even subsist from their farm work. The poverty level among the people continued to worsen. The political class has not been helping matters as they have failed to improve the lot of the people. The politicians have failed to deliver the dividends of Democracy that will help to empower the people economically.

The problems identified aboved and those not mentioned here, have continue to affect the socio-economic well being of the people of the district. The high level of illiteracy among the populace for example, is one of the reasons why the people have continued to lack behind and being marginalized by other groups. Although, some cultural associations in the state like PAMKUKO, Ayojebwo and Gboknu-boku had tried to addressed some of these challenges through awareness campaign, not much success have been recorded.

³³ Ibid

CHAPTER SEVEN

SOCIAL AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS IN BOSSO DISTRICT, 1923-2011

7.1 Intergroup Relations: An Overview

The concept of intergroup relation is traced to the beginning of human existence and civilization when man began to cooperate with one another in a rudimentary division of labour and trade in order to obtain his material needs¹. No human society has always been self sufficient and this therefore calls for interdependence among societies and groups. No society whether simple or complex can be treated in isolation. Scholars have described intergroup relation as an interaction between groups of separate identities with each group contributing to the activities of the others in many areas. These relationships include areas of social, political, economic, and cultural as existence entails interdependence and sharing of natural resources.²

Inter-groups relation between ethnic groups in Nigeria predate the colonial period. During the pre-colonial Nigeria there were no defined boundaries among societies and as such people moved in and out of their traditional abode or boundaries.³ Geography, trade, religion, war, and cultural factors have remained among the determinant factors in human interactions in Nigeria. Geography for example, has continued to shape the activities of various groups, their habitat and vegetation as well as their level of interaction. Prior to colonialism, various Nigerian people related with one another through economic, military, diplomatic, religious and cultural activities and

¹ R.I Gofwen, *Religious Conflict in Northern Nigeria and Nation Building: the throes of two decades, 1980-2000*, Kaduna Human Right Monitor, P.46.

² M.A. Filaba and L.A. Gojeh, *Koro and Gbagyi Subgroup Relations*, Ethiopia, Gabdel Integrated services, 2008, Pp 32-33. See also S.A. Okibe, *Intergroup Relations between Agita area of Idomaland and Ngbo area of Igboland from Pre-colonial to the present day*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Benue State University, 1999, P.12.

³ M. Omolewa, *Certificate History of Nigeria*, Lagos, Longman, 1986, P.9.

were aware of each others existence. Ethnic groups had common markets, shared farmlands and neighbourhood, practiced similar cultures and consulted one another during festivals, contracted labour across ethnic bounds and exchanged articles. Some groups inter married; some raided others, while some had semi-confederal politics and so on⁴. Interaction among groups seemed to have been very strong in the 20th century; a thorough examination indicates that this goes far back to the pre-colonial period. The relationship was not only limited to some particular groups, as historical studies of the Nigeria area has shown that the history of Nigeria before colonial period can be much more than just a collection of the histories of individual people's political and ethnic units. This is because the compact nature of the Nigerian environment have often provided a favourable platform for the movement of goods and ideas as well as the interaction of people, even though this was more within it than with people outside.⁵ This relationship continued to exist among Nigerian groups during the colonial and post colonial Nigeria in spite of some minor differences among the groups.

In Bosso District, the interaction between the Gbagyi people and other groups also predate the colonial era. The Gbagyi had for long intermingled with other groups like the Fulani, Hausa, Nupe Yoruba, Igbo, Tiv, Koro and Kambari. Interaction between Gbagyi, Nupe and Hausa for example started long before the coming of the British rule in Nigeria. Their relationship with other groups manifested much during the colonial era especially with the construction of railway line in Minna in 1910. This chapter is therefore an attempt to epitomize the relationship between the Gbagyi and

⁴ M.A. Filaba and L.A. Gojeh, *Koro and Gbagyi Subgroup Relations* op cit P.33

⁵ R.K. Udo, 'Environments and people of Nigeria' in I. Obaro (ed), *Groundwork of Nigeria History*, Heinemann, Ibadan 1989 pp1-10.

some selected dominant migrant groups in the district namely the Hausa, Nupe, Yoruba and Igbo.

7.2 Gbagyi and Hausa Relations

The Hausa constitute the largest migrant group in Bosso District and the entire Minna emirate. The actual date of the arrival of the Hausa people to the districts is not known. However, the relationship between the groups goes back to the pre-colonial period when the two groups had contact through the activities of trade and religion. The Hausa and the Gbagyi had for a long time engaged in long distant trading activities with each other. The Hausa traders used to visit the Gbagyi communities during dry season after harvest to buy their products like yam, pots, mats and in turn sell to the Gbagyi some commodities like cloths, salt, metal goods etc. The second form of interaction between the Hausa and the Gbagyi was through religious activities. There were some itinerant Islamic clerics from Hausa land who travelled with their *almajirai* (roving students) to different part of the Gbagyi communities for religious purposes. They engaged in teaching the Quran, praying for people, divination, preparing charms and preaching during the month of Ramadan.⁶ Apart from co-existing through religious and trading activities, these two groups also had contact through slave raids. Slave raids characterized the relations between the Hausa and the Gbagyi in the pre-colonial period. It is on record that the Gbagyi people suffered a lot from the perennial Hausa slave raiders especially during the Nagwamatse war.⁷

As trade, religions as well as slave raiding relation continued to exist between the two groups, some Hausa elements began to settle down among the Gbagyi people.

⁶ S.S. Omotosho, "The Socio-Cultural Impact of Islam on the Gwari of Niger State" Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, 1999, P.17.

⁷ Alh. Musa Nasidi (70 years), Businessman, interviewed at Minna in his house on 11/9/2012.

The settlements of Hausa people in the district during the pre-colonial time were very low until during the colonial era when the relationship became more intense. The opening of Minna through railway line during the colonial period attracted many Hausa migrants to the district. The migration occurred in waves and groups. The pre-colonial relation between the two groups encouraged the Hausa people to trickle into the district to serve as colonial labourers, traders, gold miners as well as itinerant and petty traders. The early Hausa dwellers in Bosso and Minna attracted many other Hausa migrants to the district. The early migrants like Mallam Muazu Sokoto, Mallam Danjuma Sokoto, Mallam Abubakar Sokoto, Alhaji Jido Maikeke, Mallam Bashir etc initially provided accommodation for their kits and kins.⁸

The British colonial policies of forced labour, taxation and artificial scarcity due to environmental factors forced some Hausa people to migrate to some new colonial settlement like Minna, Kaduna, Jos, etc for settlement work. This was because fewer people could subsist by performing their pre-colonial activities.⁹ Thus, some Hausa migrants settled in the district to harness the economic potential of the area.

The arrival of the Hausa people to the district was welcomed by the Gbagyi people. The groups interacted on a good mutual relation. Musa stated that the good rapport between the two groups was due to the peaceful and accommodative nature of the host (Gbagyi) to their guests and the manner in which the Hausas initially organized themselves in carrying out their activities. According to the informant, the two groups enjoyed the services of one another. He said while the Gbagyi provided lands free of charge to the Hausa migrants, the Hausa in turn provided religious services to their

⁸ Ibid

⁹ See A. Alhassan, "The Hausa People in Zuru Emirate: A Study on Intergroup Relations" Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 2002 P.98.

host.¹⁰ Agriculture, religion, and trading activities provided a platform that encouraged a harmonious relation among the two groups.

The colonial policies which imposed Chief of Wushishi (a Hausa man) on Bosso District as from 1910 to 1923 saw the infiltration of many Hausa people into the district. As from 1936 when Minna was still part of Bosso District, the entire population of Hausa people in Minna metropolis alone was about 1,486.¹¹ The Chief of Bosso encouraged the settlement of the Hausa people in the district more than any other ethnic group because of their role in the spread of Islam. Some Hausa clerics like Mallam Mu'azu initially served as the Secretary and Qadi (judge) in the palace of Chief of Bosso. The two groups related well to the extent that intermarriage between them began to set in. The political and entrepreneur skills of the Hausa people gave them the advantage in the district over other migrant groups. Madhi noted that "a major reason for the acceptance of Hausa migrants almost wherever they went was their general aloofness for the politics of their host....."¹² It is a fact that in almost all cases, whenever Hausa immigrants entered an area for the first time, they tried to win recognition at the seat of power and perform the roles of 'royal' priest, trading agents, partisans, secretaries, advisers, in-laws etc and in these ways they lowered themselves to the authorities whose protection and open favour they would then start to enjoy. With the royal courts on their side, it was never difficult for them to capture the favour of the common people.¹³

¹⁰ Alhaji Mohammadu Musa Dan Gusau (70 years), Islamic scholar, interviewed at his residence in Minna 2/9/2012.

¹¹ NAK; Minprof Minna Town Re-organisation 1947-1951

¹² M. Adamu, *Hausa Factor in West African History*, Zaria, ABU Press, 1978, P.182

¹³ Ibid P.182.

The Gbagyi-Hausa relation was cordial until 1939 when suspicion arose between the Chief of Bosso, Mallam Abubakar Zarumai Lawu and the Sarkin Hausawa, Mallam Abubakar over the leadership tussle of Minna town which was under the jurisdiction of Bosso. The peaceful co-existence between the Gbagyi and Hausa began to take a new dimension. The Chief of Bosso accused the Sarkin Hausawa who was the leader of the defunct Minna Township Council of trying to usurp the Gbagyi political power.¹⁴ This strained relationship continued until the colonial officials in Minna intervened and dissolved the Township Council. The intervention of the British official also led to the relocation of the Chief of Bosso from Minna to Bosso and consequently led to the appointment of a neutral person as the Chief of Minna in 1950.

The strained relationship between the Gbagyi and Hausa in the Bosso District subsided for some time until during the second Republic when the issue resurfaced again. The politics of the second republic in Niger State was played on tribal affiliation. The Gbagyi elite considered the Hausa people in the district and other Gbagyi towns as migrant groups. They (Gbagyi) accused them (Hausa) of trying to usurp the Gbagyi traditional political power ordinarily which should be left for the Gbagyi alone. The Gbagyi elite blamed the Emir of Minna for the frequent interference of the Hausas into the local politics of the emirate. They blamed him for the conferment of traditional chieftaincy titles on non-Gbagyi people. The elite considered most of the chieftaincy titles introduced into the District as alien to Gbagyi culture.¹⁵

¹⁴ I.U. Mohammed, "Relationship between the Gbagyi and the Hausa in Minna in the 20th Century, Unpublished B.A. project, UDUS, 1985, P.27

¹⁵ Ibid

The activities of the elite metamorphosed into the formation of a tribal association known as PAMKOKU.¹⁶ PAMKOKU was formed in order to protect the interest of Gbagyi people and to embark on development of the Gbagyi speaking areas in the state. Members of the association felt that the Gbagyi people were being marginalized by Hausa particularly in Minna town. They claimed that the Hausa were competing for the Gbagyi traditional headship in Minna Emirate. The membership of the association comprised of Gbagyi elite from Bosso, Minna, Maikunkele, Kuta, Paiko, and Kafin-koro. The primary aim of the association was to fight against all forms of domination and marginalization of Gbagyi people in the state. Two Gbagyi commissioners, Mr. Samuel Bala Kuta and Alhaji Abubakar Aliyu Bosso were accused by the State Government of not only serving as signatories to most of the activities of the association but spearheading the activities of the association. Their actions were considered by state government as anti-party activities. Mr. Samuel Bala Kuta was relieved of his appointment while Alh. A.A. Bosso voluntarily withdrew his service as a mark of solidarity to Mr. Bala Kuta. The association accused the government of Alhaji Awwal Ibrahim of marginalizing the Gbagyi in the state by not carrying them along in his administration. According to Alhaji Shayi, the Gbagyi were disappointed after given their total support for the election of Alhaji Awwal Ibrahim as governor of Niger State during the 1979 election in the state. It was a political arrangement between the Hausa and the Gbagyi people to come together in the same camp to fight the Nupe people for the fear of Nupe political domination. After the election, the Gbagyi alleged that the government was assigning more political position to the Hausa people in the state.

¹⁶ PAMKOKU was an umbrella organization of the Gbagyi Development Association in Niger State. The name PAMKOKU is a conglomeration of words PAM-KO-KU representing Gbagyi in Paiko, Minna, Kafin Koro and Kuta district areas as biological members of the associations.

Some aggrieved Nupe people also accused the government in the same direction.¹⁷ There was mass boycott and protest by state civil servants. Government continued to threaten the existence of PAMKOKU but this did not lead to its dissolution rather the association waxed stronger.¹⁸

During the 1983 general election, the memberships of PAMKOKU with some aggrieved members of Ndaduma (a Nupe Tribal Association) decided to join the Nigeria People's Party (NPP), an opposition party and contested for the gubernatorial position in the state. Alhaji A.A Bosso, a strong member of PAMKUKO was nominated by the party as the running mate to Alhaji Alhassan Badakoshi, the NPP Gubernatorial candidate from Bida. The 1983 election led to bloodshed in Bosso District and the state in general. There were constant clashes between the supporters of NPN and NPP that comprised of Hausa and Gbagyi people respectively. The clash was bloodier in Bosso because each of the parties had their strong supporters.¹⁹

Peace was later restored into the district between the two ethnic groups when military took over power on 1st January 1984. Normal socio-economic activities were restored between the two groups. However, with the advent of another civilian rule in 1999, tribal politics sets in again. But this time around, there were no tribal clashes. The common people realized that the politics of bloodshed was not in their own good interest. They realized that what happened during the Second Republic was fuelled by

¹⁷ Alh. Muhammad Shayi Bosso, (70 years), Business Man, Interviewed in his house on 4/5/2013.

¹⁸ I.N. Baba, "The Evolution of the State Systems Among the Gbagyi of River Kaduna Valley C 1860-1981", Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Abuja, 2006, Pp 208-210.

¹⁹ Alhaji Ibrahim Adamu (49 years), Politician, interviewed at his residence at Pyawu on 9/9/ 2012.

the elite from the two groups for their own selfish interest. They found out that it was the common man that usually suffers during political upheaval.²⁰

The relationship between the Gbagyi and the Hausa in the district has not been so bad when compared to situations in Kaduna, Jos, and Bauchi. Although there had been some pockets of conflicts at different times, the groups have continued to enjoy the services of one another. Intermarriages and religious activities are among the factors that have continued to promote harmonious relationships among the groups in the area. The migration of Hausa people to the district has continued to be on the increase on daily basis and this is due to the peaceful nature of their host. The Hausa had helped in boosting the economy of the district. The Hausas controlled the economy of the district through their trading activities. While the host tribes, the Gbagyi mostly engaged in agriculture activities.

7.3 Gbagyi and Nupe Relations

Gbagyi and Nupe have co-existed from time immemorial. Apart from sharing common boundary, the two groups share a lot of things in common which has helped to promote their cordial relationship. They shared some cultural practices like tattoo, ways of burials, ceremonies, craft production techniques, housing styles, approaches to disease and so on. Linguistically, the two languages have some words in common. Little wonder, linguists has classified them to belong to the kwa-sub family of Niger-Congo group of languages²¹. The relationship between the Gbagyi and other tribes of kwa-sub family of the Niger Congo group of languages especially the Nupe started since the time

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ J.H. Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa*, 2nd Edition, Bloomington, Indiana University, 1966, P.46. See also A. Obayemi, 'The Yoruba and Edo-speaking peoples and their Neighbours before 1600' in JFA Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds), *History of West Africa*, Vol. 1, London 1976, P.200

they inhabited the confluence of River Niger and Benue from the middle stone age to the present. In spite of the differences in language and political organization, the two groups share and borrow a lot of cultural traits from each other to forge a common identity.

Located almost in the same geographical terrain, the Gbagyi and Nupe have complement each other in all aspects of their historical development i.e economic, social, political as well as their cultural life²². Prior to colonialism, the Gbagyi engaged the Nupes in trade. The early trade relations between the two groups featured more on their border areas. This was during the period before the formation of mega states among the two groups. Those involved in the trade were individuals who were attracted to some products on both sides. Nupe products such as farming and hunting implements were the most sought for by the Gbagyi people, whereas Gbagyi products such as agricultural produce, pots, mats, baskets etc were more attractive to the Nupes.²³ With the emergence of states among the two tribes, there came to be better organized trading relations between them. Nupe traders began to visit Gbagyi towns. Apart from land trade routes that linked the Gbagyi states with the Nupe towns, Nupe also relied on the River Niger as a trade route in their trade with the Gbagyi and others.²⁴

Another means of contact between the two groups before colonial era was through slave raids on the Gbagyi people by some Nupe warriors. The slave raid against

²² R.K. Udo, 'Environment and peoples of Nigeria in I. Obaro (ed), *Groundwork of Nigeria History*, Ibadan, Heinemann, 1980, Pp1-10.

²³ S. Mohammed 'Gbagyi and their South-west Neighbours up to 1898' in A.A. Idris and Y.A. Ochefu (eds), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Areas*, Vol. 1, Lagos, 2002, P.518.

²⁴ Ibid P. 519

the Gbagyi was the one led by Masaba, a prominent leader in Bida. Although his expedition was unsuccessful as only few slaves were captured²⁵.

There is, however, no clear record to show any form of Nupe settlement in our area of study before colonial era. This could be attributed to the settlement pattern of the Gbagyi people on top of hills during the pre-colonial period. The interaction between the Gbagyi and Nupe became more pronounced during the colonial period. The transfer of the headquarters of Nupe province from Bida to Minna in 1908 attracted some Nupe to migrate from Bida to Minna and its environs. The impact of construction of railway line to Minna in 1910 increased the social and physical mobility of the people. A good number of Nupe people came to work in Minna as colonial labourers and also engaged in other economic activities. The mass influx of Nupe people into Minna during the colonial era was as a result of dislocation of their indigenous economy and political life by colonial capitalism. The high rate of Nupe population in Minna and its environs informed the colonial officials to involve them in the administration of Minna Township Council which was under the jurisdiction of Bosso District.

The influx of Nupe to Bosso District in large number occurred during the post colonial period. The creation of Niger state in 1976 with Minna as its capital city attracted large number of Nupe people to the state capital and by extension to Bosso District. Since the creation of Niger state, the Nupe have been the dominant group in the state civil service, hence their large concentration in the capital city. The geographical location of Bosso District, which enveloped Minna, enables the majority of the state civil servants to reside in the district. The population of Nupe people in the urban centre of the district that are suburbs of Minna outnumbered all other ethnic groups even their

²⁵ Ibid P. 523

host tribe i.e. the Gbagyi people. Nupe people have helped in the propagation of Islam in the district. The Nupes were another group that promoted the growth of Islam among the Gbagyi people to the extent that they dominate most of the Islamic activities in the district and Minna Township. Like other migrant groups they have been living peacefully with the Gbagyi people and have been contributing their quota towards the development of the district. The cordial relationship between the Gbagyi and the Nupe people had metamorphosed into inter-tribal marriages among the two groups. Although in the past, Nupe people do not allow their daughters to marry other ethnic groups except in rare cases because an average Nupe man according to Yahaya believed that other tribes divorce their women on the slightest provocation.²⁶ In spite of the cordial relationship between the Gbagyi and Nupe, the Nupe people have often been accused of dominating other tribes in the state civil service. Their numerical strength in the civil service is as a result of their natural flare for western education and probably the unity among them.

7.4 Gbagyi and Yoruba Relations

The Yoruba constitute the second largest ethnic group in Nigeria after the Hausa. They occupy the whole of western Nigeria. The coming of Yoruba people to Bosso District started during the colonial period particularly when railway line reached Minna in 1910. Like many other migrant groups, the Yoruba also came to explore the economic potentials of the district. They first arrived Minna as colonial workers, traders and Christian missionaries.

²⁶ Mal. Ndagi Yahaya (49 years), Civil servant, interviewed in his office at Federal University of Technology, Minna, on 7/10/2012.

The colonial economic policies such as taxation, cash crop production and forced labour drove people into new places. Colonial land policy culminated into the emergence of a landless peasant class among the Africans which led most of the Yoruba to migrate to the northern part of Nigeria to engage in various economic activities. The Yoruba took advantage of the railway line and migrated to the northern parts of Nigeria. They engaged in trading activities and also participated in the services of the colonial government. In Bosso District, the Yoruba served as agents of the European firms that traded in the region such as John Holt, SCOA, GBO and UAC etc. These firms first appeared in Minna after the arrival of railway line in Minna. For example GBO arrived in 1912, UAC in 1918, John Holt in 1922 etc.²⁷ The colonial government later allocated plots to the firms to erect permanent structures in form of warehouses, stores, shop and residential quarters at Minna in 1932.²⁸ The mass movement of Yoruba to Bosso District increased in number after the attainment of independence. The post-independence constitutional reforms made it clear that Nigerians irrespective of the religion, tribal and political backgrounds were free to live in any part of the country. With this assurance by government, the Yoruba continued to migrate in waves into the remote areas of the district. One distinctive feature of the Yoruba was their ability to adapt to any type of circumstances. They were known for their natural disposition to mix freely anywhere they found themselves.²⁹

The early Yoruba migrants in the district were offered free land for settlement in Minna by the Chief of Bosso. Their initial settlements were in Kwangila and Kateren

²⁷ GAM File No/FF/104/Minna Market.

²⁸ See M.A. Rufai, "Growth and Urbanization of Minna 1910-1999", Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 2009, Pp. 61-62.

²⁹ A. Owen "The Gbagyi and their Neighbours in Minna Metropolis: A Study in Intergroup Relations" Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UniJos, 2006, P.50.

Gwari along the railway line in Minna. It was at these settlements that they began to disperse to other parts of the district in no distant time. While a good percentage of the migrant Yorubas engaged in civil service and petty trading, some of them were involved in missionary activities. They were also the major government and company contractors. Those that engaged in missionary activities helped in the spread of Christianity in the district. They spearheaded the establishment of most of the African independent churches in the district.³⁰

Since the arrival of Yoruba people in the district, they have been able to live peacefully and impacted on their host community and other migrant groups. They dominated the transport industries in the urban centre of the district. They owned most of the commercial buses and taxis plying the township roads. They also dominated some artisan activities such as carpentry, mason, automobile technician, vulcanizing, barbing etc.³¹

7.5 Gbagyi and Igbo Relations

The Igbo speaking people occupy the South-east of Nigeria. They are however found in all nook and crannies of other parts of the country. Like the Yoruba people the coming of the Igbo people into Bosso District started during the colonial period. The construction of railway lines attracted the Igbo people to the Gbagyi areas.

The earliest Igbo migrants to our area of study were colonial workers who worked with colonial officers and with the railway. Majority of them worked with the railway in different capacity depending on their training or skill. Apart from those that worked as colonial workers, there were other group of business men, miners etc. The

³⁰ Mr. Kolawole Alabi (66 years) Business man, interviewed at his residence at Gbaganu on 12/10/2012

³¹ Ibid.

most notable Igbo settler in the district was chief Green Mbadiwe who was among the early settlers in Minna. Chief Mbadiwe was a licensed gold miner who hailed from Arondizuogu. His success in mining business attracted his kinsmen to settle in Minna. The initial settlement of Igbo in the district was initially concentrated in Minna before their settlement later expanded to other areas of the district.³² This is because Minna provided them with facilities for comfort.

The migrations of Igbo into the district continue en mass during the post colonial period. This was later curtailed during the Nigeria civil war which started from 1967 to 1970. Many Igbo who had earlier established themselves in the district returned to the East as a result of the war. The Igbo lost a considerable number of their people during the war, but within the first two decades after the civil war, the population of the Igbos in the district later doubled that of the pre-war years as many of them find their way back to the northern part of the country.³³

Mass movement of Igbo migrants to Bosso and other parts of northern Nigeria was aggravated largely due to over population and land scarcity in their region. Apart from over concentration of large population, the land in the eastern part of Nigeria could only support subsistence agriculture. The land was often washed away due to erosion because of heavy rains and floods. This, therefore, caused land scarcity and hence the need for some of the Igbo to migrate to other parts of Nigeria where they

³² A. Owen, "The Gabgyi and their Neighbour in Minna Metropolis: A study in Intergroup Relations.... op cit P.51 see also G. Abubakar, "Government Policies and people in Diaspora: A Case Study of Igbo Community in Minna" Unpublished NCE Project, COE Minna, 2002, P.16

³³ Chief Obinna Kingsley (69 years), Business man, Interviewed at his residence at Bosso 14/10/2012.

prove remarkably successful as clerks, railway workers and traders in order to seek for a means of livelihood.³⁴

The Igbo were very enterprising. They were found in all the villages in the district. As a result of their entrepreneurship skills they took advantage of the economic advantage offered by the areas. They specialized and controlled most of the merchandize business. They are dealers of automobile spare parts, building materials, electronics, pharmaceutical products, boutique business etc. They also controlled a large number of hotels and guest houses in the urban centres. With the ban on the sales of alcohol and prostitution in Niger state in 2001 during the administration of Alhaji A.A Kure large numbers of Igbo lose a great number of their businesses. This has made many of them to leave the state to other states.

7.6 The Impact of Intergroup Relations between the Gbagyi and the Migrant Groups in Bosso District

Interaction between cultures is often rewarding and beneficial to the groups concerned. In Bosso District the relationship between the Gbagyi and the migrant groups could be described as cordial. It is cordial despite the fact that there exist some minor differences sometimes. The relationships between these groups have impacted on the political, social, economic and cultural life of the people. While some of the migrant groups have been co-habiting peacefully with their host communities, some of the groups have gone a long way in shaping the lives of their hosts.

The interaction between the Gbagyi and the migrant group especially the Hausa people has led to cultural assimilation of the indigenous communities in the district. The

³⁴ D. Stanley, Nigeria: 'Model of Colonial Failure', as quoted in A. Bako, 'Ethnic Relations in Colonial Setting: The Settlement of Sabon Gari Kano, 1913-1960', FAIS: Journal of Humanities, Vol. I, No. 2, 2000, P. 65. See also D. Bawa, "Migrant Communities in Zuru" The Case of the Yorubas", Unpublished B.A. project, UDUS, 1996 Pp 46-47.

Hausa people brought in new ideas which have been adopted by their host communities. The influence of the Hausa people on the Gbagyi people has made the Gbagyi people to discard some of their own culture and adopt some of the Hausa culture. A good example of this is the way of dressing, child naming, marriage rites etc. The long relation between the Gbagyis and the Hausas has led the Gbagyi people to adopt Hausa language as their second language.³⁵ Mahdi states that

Their culture continues to captivate all those who came in contact with it to the extent that presently not even Beriberi and Fulani culture can stand ground against the Hausa particularly in semantic side.³⁶

The Hausa language is widely used in the district; at home, market, offices and in public gatherings. The language is easy to understand and is spoken widely by the diverse ethnic groups in the district. Mohammed observed that during a visit to most urban centres of the district, one can hardly notice that it is a Gbagyi town because of the rate at which Hausa language is spoken among the different groups³⁷. The use of Hausa language as means of communication among the Gbagyi people is much common with the educated elite. There are those that have been 'Hausanized' and hardly speak their mother tongue fluently.

The cordial relationship between the Gbagyi and the migrant groups in the district has encouraged inter-tribal marriages. This type of social relationship is much common between the Hausa, Nupe and the Gbagyi people. These groups give out their daughters in marriages among themselves. In fact quite a number of prominent Hausa

³⁵ Mal. Yusuf M. Bosso (58 years), Civil Servants, Interviewed at his residence at Hayen Gwari on 29/10/2012.

³⁶ M. Adamu, *Hausa Factor in West African History*... Op cit, P.181.

³⁷ I.U. Mohammed, "Relationship Between the Gbagyi and the Hausa in Minna in the 20th Centuryop cit, P.31.

people in the district have Gbagyi mothers. Example of such prominent individuals in the district includes Alh. Yusuf Baba, Mallam Yusuf Sani, Alh. Usman Abubakar, Mallama Shamsiya Isah Kagara, Dr. Hussaini Maku etc.³⁸

Another impact of the relationship between the Gbagyi and the migrant groups is in the area of religion. We have earlier stated that Islam was introduced into the district through the activities of the Hausa migrants. The coming of the Hausa to the district made the majority of the Gbagyi people to abandon their traditional religion and accepted Islam. The Nupe have also influenced the host communities in this direction. The coming of Islam led to the introduction of dispensation of justice based on Islamic law. Prior to this period, disputes were settled by the village head in accordance to the customary law. The acceptance of Islam by the majority of the Gbagyi people has made the people to abandon some of their socio-cultural practices. The convergence of people at different religious obligations such as prayers, marriages and naming ceremonies, *id* festivals, *Maulud* etc has helped in promoting harmonious relationship among the divergent groups. While the Hausa and the Nupe had helped in the spread of Islam in the district, the Yoruba and Igbo have also assisted in the spread of Christianity among their host. Most of Gbagyi Christians in the area are close associates of the Christian migrants. The Yoruba in particular were able to move into the nook and crannies of the district to spread Christianity among the indigenous communities.

The relationship between the Gbagyi and the Hausa has led to the adoption of Hausa traditional political system. The Gbagyi have adopted some Hausa chieftaincy titles in the district. Ibrahim states that

³⁸ Mallam Abubakar Adamu, (52 years), Civil Servant, Interviewed in his house at Jikpa on 5/4/2013.

Gbagyi titles are similar to those of the Hausas. Indeed the titles which have survived to our day are in the Hausa language. It is of course possible that there were earlier forms which have now given way to Hausa ones. It may be the long association of the Gbagyi with the Hausas that explains the adoption of the Hausa titles.³⁹

Hausa chieftaincy titles like *Galadima, Madawaki, Waziri, Wakili, Chiroma, Talba, Sarkin Yaki* etc were incorporated into the traditional political system of the district. Smith observed that the Hausa people used migration as a tool to spread their political ideas and thought among the non-Hausa population which is an important movement in the political history of the Hausa people.⁴⁰ The long stay of Hausa people in the district have therefore paved way for their involvement in the administration of the district. In most urban centre of the district, there is always Sarkin Hausawa who serves as a link between the indigenous traditional Institutions and the Hausa migrants. The office of Sarkin Hausawa in the district has further helped to cement the relationship between the people.

All the migrant groups in the district have helped in the economic development of the area. Apart from agriculture that is controlled predominantly by the Gbagyi people, most of other economic activities like trade are controlled by the migrant groups. For example sales of provisions are mostly carried out by the Hausas. Artisan jobs such as carpentry, mason, vulcanizing, mechanic, transport services etc are in the hands of the Yoruba people. The Igbos on the other hand, controlled business in pharmaceutical products, building materials, electronics, motor spare parts etc.

³⁹ S. Ibrahim, *The Nupe and their Neighbour from the 14th Century*, Ibadan, Heinemann, 1992, P.131.

⁴⁰ A. Smith 'Some Consideration Relating to the formation of States in Hausaland' *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol.5 No. 3, 1970 quoted in A. Alhassan, "The Hausa People in Zuru Emirate: A Study in Intergroup Relations", Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, UDUS, 2002, P.97.

Markets centres where goods are exchanged are some of the places of social interaction among the people. Mosques and churches as well as other religious functions have also helped to create harmonious relationship among the people. The settlement pattern of the urban centres where people of different ethnic backgrounds, co-exist side by side and in some cases live in the same buildings, improved co-operation among the people. Also the schooling system which is not restricted to a particular ethnic identity or religious affiliation has created opportunity for cross breeding of ideas and relationship among the people in the district.

Having identified the positive aspects of the relations between the Gbagyi and other tribes in the district, we must not forget to state that the nature of the relationship had led to the adulteration of some good aspect of Gbagyi culture by the migrant groups. It is also worth noting that even though, there had been not much frictions between the groups, the Gbagyi have always accused some prominent Hausa of denying them the political chances to rule the state. The 2007 gubernatorial election which Barrister David Umar was alleged to have won, is a good example of their argument. This has therefore created a crack among the Gbagyi and their neighbours.

Summary

This research is an attempt to examine the history of Bosso District from 1923-2011. The research is made up of seven chapters. Chapter one is the introduction which provides an overview of the study. The data used in writing the work included both primary and secondary sources in which oral sources and written materials were utilized. Relevant literatures that deal either directly or indirectly with the study area or on the subject matter were reviewed accordingly.

Chapter two examined the geography, the historical origin and the socio-cultural practices of Bosso District. It has been shown that the district is situated in Guinea Savanna with diverse flora and relief features which favoured agriculture. The chapter also discussed the origin of the people of Bosso District where oral tradition has it that the people migrated from Kuta area, the present headquarters of Shiroro Local Government Area in Niger State to their present location. In addition, the chapter has further examined the socio-cultural practices of the Gbagyi people of the district as well as their traditional political system. The people were associated with several traditional practices that shaped their society.

An attempt was made to discuss the introduction of Islam and Christianity in the course of time into the district which was embraced by the people. The contributions of Islam and Christianity to the development of the district were examined. Information gathered in the course of the research shows that the spread of the two religions in the area succeeded in undermining the traditional religious practices to some extent. The influence of Islam and Christianity made the majority of the inhabitants to discard some of their cultural practices.

The traditional economic activity of the people of the district shows that agriculture is the back bone of the economy of the district. Production of food crops especially yam is peoples' specialty. The study also shows how the area metamorphosed from a village area to a district level. Sequel to the British conquest and the establishment of colonial rule in the country at the beginning of the 20th century, Bosso was erroneously placed under the leadership of Chief of Wushishi, in the pretext that it once came under the yoke of the Fulani of Wushishi. The colonial re-organization

of the district areas in Niger province saw to the establishment of Bosso District in 1923.

The dissertation brings to the fore the transformation of Bosso District under the colonial dominance in the 20th century. It was during the colonial period that there was a change over from a subsistent agriculture to cash crop production and the introduction of colonial taxation, forced labour and new commercial relations. These economic policies affected the socio-economic life of the people in the district.

Chapter six examined the transformation of Bosso District which started from the period of Nigeria's independence in 1960s to 2011. We have been able to consider some political and socio-economic changes that have taken place in the district. Some major challenges affecting the district area were also examined.

The last chapter discusses the social and intergroup relations between the host communities and the migrant groups. Intergroup relations which have acquired important position in reconstruction of African history, consequently impacted on the life of the people. Contrary to the misconceived idea that Nigeria is an artificial creation of the British colonialists, the study of the intergroup relation in the district has shown that the relationship between some groups and Gbagyi people predate the colonial era.

Conclusion

This study shows that the pre-colonial social lifes of the people of Bosso District were associated with varieties of cultural practices, while agriculture was the mainstay of their economy. However, with the spread of Islam and Christianity into the district in the 20th century, some of these long-aged cultural practices gradually disappeared.

The advent of colonialism and the establishment of colonial rule in Nigeria in the 20th century, transformed the economy of the district. Colonial economic policies such as colonial taxation, cash crop production, forced labour, and colonial trade policy opened a new chapter in the political economy of the district. As from 1960 to 2011 the district also experienced transformation in all ramifications. The proximity of the district to Minna, the capital city of Niger State had led to mass influx of people to the area thereby making some of its settlements to become suburbs of Minna.

Bibliography

List of Informants

S/N	Name	Age	Occupation	Place of interview	Date of interview
1.	Alh. Musa Abubakar	80	District Head of Bosso	Bosso	19/3/2012
2.	Prince Mohammed Abdulkadir Bosso	62	Retired civil servant	Bosso	20/3/2012
3.	Alh. Galadima Kwalakwata	70	Galadiman Bosso	Kwalakwata	20/3/2012
4.	Alh. Usman Abubakar (Ubandoma Bosso)	57	Civil servant	Minna	22/3/2012
5.	Mal. Umaru Mallam	69	Farmer/ward Head	Tungan Mallam	25/3/2012
6.	Alh. Usman Jagaba Bosso	49	Civil servant	Maikunkele	26/3/2012
7.	Mal. Musa Lokoto	81	Farmer	Lokoto	27/3/2012
8.	Alh. Mohammed Shayi Bosso	70	Business man	Bosso	7/4/2012
9.	Alh. Adamu Ibrahim	50	Politician	Pyawu	7/4/2012
10	Mal. Sani Mohammed	62	Farmer	Gidan kwano	9/4/2012
11	Mal. Mohammed Kungu	70	Islamic scholar	Pyatta	7/4/2012
12	Alh. Umaru Wakili	72	Tukuran Bosso	Bosso	10/4/2012
13	Late Alh. Abubakar Lolo	73	Village Head of Bosso	Bosso	15/4/2012
14.	Alh. Mohammed Umar Beji	67	Business man	Beji	18/6/2012
15.	Rev. Peter Makun	52	PRO, CAN Minna	Bosso	20/6/2012
16.	Alh. Salihu Abubakar	67	Islamic Scholar	Gidan kwano	18/8/2012
17.	Mal. Hassan Musa	52	Chief Iman Lokoto	Central Mosque, Lokoto	19/8/2012
18.	Mrs. Lami Makun	71	Retired civil servant and a women activist	Bosso	24/8/2012
19.	Mr. Emmanuel Samari	66	Secretary St. Malachy Catholic Church	Tudun Fulani	11/10/2012
20.	Mr. Saleh Jankaro	50	Civil Servant/ Chairman Parish Council St. Malachy Catholic Church, Tudun Fulani	Tudun Fulani	19/10/2012
21.	Alh. Yusuf Abubakar Bosso	56	Civil Servant	Bosso	20/10/2012

22.	Alh. Adamu Pada	49	Civil servant	Minna	20/10/2012
23.	Alh. Ahmadu Garatu	67	Chairman, Dadin Kowa Yam Sellers Garatu Market	Garatu	22/10/2012
24.	Mal. Mohammed Sani Bosso	43	Civil Servant/ Market Supervisor	Garatu	22/10/2012
25.	Alh. Danladi Maianguwa	46	Civil servant/ Market Supervisor	Beji	24/10/2012
26.	Alh. Buba Musa	65	Secretary Cattle Dealer Association Beji Market	Beji	24/10/2012
27.	Alh. Ibrahim Ma'aji	60	Sarkin Kasuwan Beji Market	Beji	24/10/2012
28.	Alh. Musa Nasidi	70	Business man	Minna	1/9/2012
29.	Mal. Isah Mohammed	39	Civil servant	Beji	24/10/2012
30.	Alh. Mohammed Musa Dan Gusua	70	Islamic Scholar	Minna	2/9/2012
31.	Mal. Ndagi Yahaya	51	Civil servant	Minna	7/10/2012
32.	Chief Obinna Kingsley	69	Business man	Bosso	14/10/2012
33.	Mr. Kolawole Alabi	66	Business man	Gbaganu	12/10/2012
34.	Isah Mohammed Shaba	41	Farmer	Sabon daga	30/10/2012
35.	Alh. Yusuf Abubakar	51	Civil servant	Jikpa	1/11/2012
36.	Mr. Bako Wakili	47	Civil servant	Gidan Kwano	10/11/2012
37.	Mr. Ahmed Kpetu	48	Civil servant	Bosso	20/12/2012
38.	Mal. Sanda Beji	48	Civil servant	Maikunkele	3/5/2013
39.	Mal. Shehu Kafinta	47	Carpenter	Jikpa	4/5/2013
40.	Mal. Abubakar Adamu	52	Civil servant	Jikpa	4/5/2013
41.	Mal. Hassan Usman Bosso	48	Civil servant	Maikunkele	13/5/2013

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