

**Impact of Migration on the Identity and Development of Bassa Nge,
1850-1991**

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Abstract

This paper discusses the impact of migration on the history, culture and identity of the hitherto Nupe people now called Bassa Nge from 1850 to 1991. The Impact of migration cannot be overemphasized world over. It ranges from displacements, relocation, and depopulation. This paper brings to the fore, how the Bassa Nge lost their identity as a result of division and separation from their land of origin since the early part of the 19th century. With their migration, they are integrated into diverse cultures while in the process of migration into their present place of abode. It addresses the impact migration could bring to bear on their development and how these problems could be solved. The fact that these problems have become part and parcel of the people for a very long time which they have been grappling with, makes this work a viable topic of historical discussion. This paper uses a historical method of data collection and analysis to advance, corroborate and contend ideas. Findings show that the Bassa Nge people are now a Nupe minority group in the western fringes of Igalaland that occupies Kogi Eastern Senatorial District. Like many other minority groups in Nigeria and other parts of the world, they are not free from marginalization due to their minority status in their present place of abode. Also, the migration and the subsequent merger of Nupe ethnic group now called Bassa Nge with another Bassa migrant group that originated from Fulani Bororo in 1917, mean that they are gradually losing their cultural identity. This made some Bassa Nge elites in the past to see the need for an identity reversal which has further disunited Bassa Nge aborigines along diverse opinions. This work offers insights into the lacunas and therefore, serves as a source linking Bassa Nge migration

history to their current situations of underdevelopment within the larger history of Nupe people in Nigeria.

Keywords: Bassa Nge, Migration, Identity, Culture, Impacts, Development

Introduction

Bassa Nge is a Nupe stock that migrated from Gbara. Gbara is located in present Niger State, just a few miles from Bida the current capital of Nupe.¹⁶⁴ The migration of Bassa Nge started in circa 1820 from Gbara and ended in 1850 in present day Kogi State.¹⁶⁵ The significance of 1850 is in their settlement at which point their study could be meaningful. Half a century after 1850 came colonialism from 1900. As such, the impact of their migration spanned through pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial Nigeria. Before 1850, they were distressed with movements here and there. From 1850 and beyond, they encountered the problem and challenge of identity which continued well into the present.

They were the largest group of Nupe at their initial migration. However, migration has brought so many changes into their socio-political, economic and social life. Migration and its impact cannot be overemphasized. For instance, it could lead to apparent cultural differences in the host community between the ethnic groups that met (hosts and the guests). Assimilation may also occur over time, as migrants settle in their host communities. There could also be segregation or discrimination and a

¹⁶⁴ J. A. Tebu, (1984). "A Survey of the History of the Bassa Nge: 1840-1896", B. A. Dissertation, Bayero University Kano, pp. 10-35

¹⁶⁵ C. A. M. Lakpini, (2004). *History of Bassa (Nge) Ethnic Group of Nupe Origin and the Autobiography of Pa Chief Christopher Amos Mawo Lakpini, CHM*. Lagos: CSS, pp. 1-8, Interview with Jigah Isaac, at Gboloko, Kogi State, conducted by the author on September 13, 2023.

handful of cultural clashes. The impact is mixed. Mixed in the sense that they could be both positive and negative. As such, this paper explores the socio-cultural, economic and political impact of the Bassa Nge migration ranging from their almost assimilation with Bunu ethnic group to war of independence against Massaba raid and the Igala. It also examines a change in their cultural identity from Nupe to Bassa Nge and the problems and challenges of development they now face since their settlement in Bassa Province. Very often, the Bassa Nge people want to change their new identity by reverting back to their original Nupe identity. Even though the development problems are general, there are peculiarities and some are more backward than the others.

Migration and its Impact on the Socio-cultural Identity of Bassa Nge People

The impact could best be explained in the following words: borrowing, cultural diffusion, assimilation, integration, depopulation, marginalization and underdevelopment. Some of these words were borrowed as seen in the table below:

Greeting:

<u>Nupe</u>	<u>Bassa Nge</u>	<u>Yoruba/Bunu</u>	<u>English Words:</u>
Kubo tsu	kubo tsu/kwatse	Ekun- ise	welldone
Kubo boi	Kabo	Kabo/ekabo	welcome
Ewo	Awu	Ewu	Gown
Kingbagba	Aguto	Agutan	Sheep
Ena	Ina	Ina	Fire
Jishirin	kpalemo		Prepare

Agike	Ajekwu		leftover food
Yawo	Iyawo		Wife/Bride
Eba Yawo	Eba Yawo	Oko Yawo	Husband/Groom
Kubo boi	Kubo boi	Kaabo/ekaboa	Welcome

Source: C. A. M Lakpini, (2004). *History of Bassa (Nge) Ethnic Group of Nupe Origin and the Autobiography of Pa Chief Christopher Amos Mawo Lakpini*, CHM, Lagos: CSS Bookshops, pp. 9-11.

Cultural diffusion was necessitated as a result of intergroup relations with the people they met all through their journey to the present place of abode. The Bassa Nge first met with the Koro, Yagba and Bunu people down to Lokoja. In their journey in Bunuland, they adopted some Bunu words, such as *kpalemo*, *ajekwu* and so on. Being accommodated, they inter-mingled and inter-married with their hosts.¹⁶⁶ Their long settlement in Bunuland for about thirty eight years where they enjoyed initial cordial relationship made them to begin to inter-marry and adopt each other's culture and language. This is why Elphinstone, stated that owing largely to the Nupe Civil War that was partly fought in Yorubaland of Sobi and Ilorin, the ethnic groups in the then Kabba Division are so mixed¹⁶⁷. He further noted that the Yagba, Bunu, Aworo and Kakanda seem to have paid tribute to the Nupe¹⁶⁸. It is therefore most certain to say that the political influence of the Nupe migrants in these people partly explain the interwoven cultural similarities on a reciprocal basis which led to the cultural dynamism of the Bassa Nge people. According to Aseniye, the Nupe settlers in Bunu began

¹⁶⁶ C. A. M. Lakpini, (2004). *History of Bassa (Nge) Ethnic Group of Nupe Origin...* pp. 1-8

¹⁶⁷ K. V. Elphinstone, (1921). "Nupe History" in *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province* File 1/42/606, Kaduna: AREWA House, pp. 7-8

¹⁶⁸ K. V. Elphinstone, (1921). "Nupe History"...

to adopt their words in place of their own original Nupe words probably because they considered the words as shorter and easier to be pronounced in Bunu than in Nupe language.¹⁶⁹

Other words are: *Iyawo* in Yoruba and *Yawo* in Bassa Nge for bride, *Eba yawo* in Bassa Nge for groom and *Oko yawo* in Yoruba and *Rinna* for intermediary for bridegroom during marriage while in Yoruba it is *Alarina*.¹⁷⁰ There is also *Ji shirin* which means to be ready in Nupe but now most have adopted Bunu word *palemo* and *kube boi* in Nupe which means welcome was exchanged for *kaabo or ekaabo* instead and *kingbagba* which means sheep in Nupe is now *Agutan* in Bassa Nge which is a Yoruba word. There is also the word *wa-kpo* in Yoruba meaning come and be carried on the back and *Ba-kpo* in Bassa Nge meaning the same thing where a mother will call a child to carry him or her back. Others are *itsu* for yam in Bassa Nge while in Yoruba is *isu*; *tankeleko* for draw soup in both languages. Pepper in Bassa Nge is *aikpo* while in Yoruba is *akpokpo*; vegetable is *aleifo* while in Yoruba is *ajefowu*; money is *awo* while in Yoruba it is called *owo*,¹⁷¹ and so on. Coconut, for instance, is called *noba* by both Bassa Nge and their Igala neighbours. This cannot be a mere coincidence. The Ebirra and Bassa Nge also call - No as *Eiye*. Masquerades and deities also share some similarities suggestive of borrowing. For instance, *Abule* masquerade in Igalaland and *Ogbodu* or *Omachonu* clan masquerade in Idah share similarities with *Egbunu* deity

¹⁶⁹ V. K. Aseniye, (2012). "Traditional Marriage Institution among Bassa Nge in the 19th Century", Unpublished B. A. Dissertation, Kogi State University, Anyigba, p. 17

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Metseru Solomon, at Oguma, Kogi State, conducted by the author on August 12, 2023.

¹⁷¹ C. A. M. Lakpini, (2004). *History of Bassa (Nge) Ethnic Group of Nupe Origin...* p. 8; N. I. Usman (2010). "History of Kimta Festival of the Bassa Nge 1968-2009" Unpublished B.A. Dissertation, Kogi State University, Anyigba, p. 36

of the now Bassa Nge as they serve the purpose of crime control and for forestalling and exposing witchcraft activities.

That is why Yakubu is of the opinion that it was in the course of their movement and settlement among the Bunu that their language, Nupe, became adulterated with adopted words of Bunu language. Examples can be found in greetings. *Kwatse (ekun-ise)* meaning: well done for someone at work, *kabo* or *kurin (edun erun)* for welcome and names like *Legbam (illegbami)*, *ajekwu* for food left overs. Because of this adulteration, the Bassa Nge people now speak a dialect of Nupe which differs essentially in intonation and sometimes even in meaning.¹⁷² Lakpini, in narrating their ordeal stated that the language of the Bassa Nge is originally Nupe language which has been seriously corrupted or adulterated, their religious ways and worship changed and their family totems, appellations and language changed up to about ten percent. This notwithstanding, they still retain up to ninety percent of their original Nupe language.¹⁷³ Without this retention, it would have been difficult to claim that the Bassa Nge are originally of Nupe stock. Their migration and dwelling among the Bunu for about thirty eight years made them to eventually adopt certain Bunu words, custom, tradition and culture which altered the language to the extent that their mode of greetings changed a great deal and their way of respect to elders also became adulterated.

Muhd Kuta corroborated this when he noted that, cultural diffusion had led to a remarkable difference in the language tone of the Nupe people and this tone differential is based on individual's location in the zonal distribution

¹⁷² Y. H. Habi, (1987). *The People Called Bassa Nge*, Zaria: Tamaza, p. 22

¹⁷³ C. A. M. Lakpini, (2004). *History of Bassa (Nge) Ethnic Group of Nupe Origin...* p. 8

of the Nupe people. For instance, the people around Lafiagi, Pategi and Bacita have a distinct tone. Similarly, the tone of Nupe from Lapai is clearly different from those in others zones. But there is a common understanding when the Central Nupe language is used. This is because they are made of the same stock.¹⁷⁴ He also pointed out the fact that, the use of Nupe in its spoken term is still pure. However, it is noteworthy that due to long time of inter-cultural activities between Hausa and Fulani and others like Ebirra, Igala, Bassa Komu and Yoruba, it is most likely that certain words seem to have been integrated into the lifestyle and expression in Nupe culture. More so, sharing of practices based on the common principles of Islam (the predominant religion of Nupe) and subsequent Jihadist activities have left traces of language sharing and the combination of Nupe and Hausa words. A similar trend is observed among the Nupe in Lafiagi and the Igbomina Yoruba in the South Western Nupeland through inter-marriages.¹⁷⁵

As a result of intergroup relations between Bassa Nge and the Igala, their marriage rites were influenced such as the use of kolanut, use of money as dowry, singing and drumming among others which though, may not be peculiar to each one of them. For instance, it is a taboo for a man to marry from his maternal or paternal home or within his lineage and people related to him. More so, there are similarities in their traditional matrimonial practices, especially in the payment of dowry and other marital procedures. For instance, a token amount not too exorbitant is usually paid as dowry unlike in some communities like that of Igbo where huge sums are usually

¹⁷⁴ K. Y. Muh'd (2003). *The Nupe People of Nigeria*. Ibadan: Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, University of Ibadan, p.103

¹⁷⁵ K. Y. Muh'd (2003). *The Nupe People of Nigeria*... pp. 103-4

paid. Equally, in some instances, parents did choose spouses for their children. For instance, the Igala and Bassa Nge traders marry from among themselves especially women from the communities located on the highways to facilitate peaceful coexistence. This development provided the ground for assimilation among them. It is often difficult to distinguish between Igala and Bassa Nge especially those that are bilingual. This account for the reason why most Bassa Nge today who do not know their history and origin as descendants of the original Nupe ethnic group see themselves as separate entity despite the fact that, they could still speak their original Nupe language.

Belief in deity and oracle also promotes intergroup relations and cultural diffusion. Oracles were consulted for the settlement of disputes, appeasement of the gods to attract economic blessings and success in wars. They were also consulted for the cleansing of the contaminants of the land and purification from sacrileges. They were objects for worship and they symbolized the authority of the kings who served as the paramount rulers and the priests for carrying out rituals. The importance of this is to punish offenders either by fine, enslavement, banishment or death. The Igala also have the *Ibegu* through which law and order are maintained. Similarity in culture helped to foster peaceful coexistence among the Igala and the Bassa Nge. This was possible through borrowing of ideas. The contact of Bassa Nge with the Igala made their culture in a way to be so diffused. This could be seen in their economic activities, trade and commerce, religion, similarity in dressing and some food intakes.

Obaje stated that, the Bassa Nge culture was influenced by the culture of the Igala due to their interaction with each other in the pre-colonial era.

Igala culture was also altered to some extent as a result of its contact with the Bassa Nge ethnic group.¹⁷⁶ For instance, different deities, irrespective of the name adopted by various groups and practice, were applicable to Nupe, Yoruba and the Igala which serve as a clear evidence of cultural diffusion.

Other values which impacted on the culture of both the Igala and the Bassa Nge ethnic groups is dressing code, language, pattern of eating, hair-do, wearing of bangles and beads around the neck, wrists, waist and legs, tribal marks and burial ceremonies. Another similarity that bore witness to cultural diffusion is the fact that they both build their traditional houses of mud walls, with thatched roofs constructed in a rectangular manner. According to Boston, the central location of the Igala people and the Bassa Nge people has exposed them to wide range of linguistic as well as cultural influences from other ethnic groups in the country.¹⁷⁷

Trade also promoted interrelationship through sharing of market routes and boundaries because houses were built along the market routes serving as a linkage for the trade and communication links for the sharing of ideas and learning of languages of each other. According to Obaje, the Igala and Bassa Nge men and women learnt one another's languages in the market and without market routes, interaction and learning of each other's culture, understanding each other's languages would not have been possible.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ J. E. Obaje, (2021). "Igala-Bassa Nge Relations in the Pre-colonial Era" B. A. History Dissertation, Department of History, Kogi State University Anyigba, Pp. 43-44

¹⁷⁷ J. S. Boston (1968). *The Igala Kingdom: The History of the 9th Largest Tribe in Nigeria*, Ibadan: NISER. Pp. 1-2

¹⁷⁸ J. E. Obaje, (2021). "Igala-Bassa Nge Relations in the Pre-colonial Era" B. A. History Dissertation, Department of History, Kogi State University Anyigba, P. 50

M.S. Abdulkadir, in some of his expositions, highlighted the significance of these interwoven economic relationships.¹⁷⁹

In the same vein, the introduction of Islam and Christianity are influential factors in promoting intergroup relations. Umar gives an insight on the religious activities of the Bassa Nge and the Bassa Komo who are neighbours right from the precolonial time. Their practice of Islam and location in the same environs suggests borrowing.¹⁸⁰ It is most likely that the Nupe migrants influenced the religion of the Bassa Komo because they have more Muslims than the Bassa Komo. Also, the Komos are more of a pagan ethnic group and they practice more of Christianity than Islam. Whichever way, they have lived harmoniously over the years.¹⁸¹

Effect of Migration on Bassa Nge Politics

The Bassa Nge migrated to their present place of abode in 1850 prior to the advent of colonialism in 1900. By 1900, their settlement became part of the conquered territories of Nigeria. They gave in to British colonial policies. According to Shaba, colonialism led to the collapse of Bassa culture and social order by lumping different ethnic groups together and paradoxically set them against each other.¹⁸² This, in a way, set their teeth on edge as they became political enemies, everyone, trying to assert himself for political gain.

¹⁷⁹ M. S. Abdulkadir (2014). *An Economic History of Igalaland: 1896-193*, Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, pp. 67-74

¹⁸⁰ A. B. Umar (1988). *Islam among the Bassa Komo and the Bassa Nge in the 20th Century: 1900-1976*, M. A. Thesis, Bayero University Kano.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Metersu Solomon, at Oguma, Kogi State, conducted by the author on August 12, 2023.

¹⁸² S. A. Simon (n.d.) *The Niger Migrants: the Changing Phases of Bassa Society*. Makurdi: Oracle, p. 61

The Bassa Nge started having contact with the Europeans around 1854 during the second expedition led by Dr. William Baike assisted by Rev. Ajayi Crowther with the purpose of opening up stations along the Niger. By 1857, the missionaries opened a station in Gbobe in Bassa Nge area. The Royal Niger Company (RNC) also came in. The RNC was given Royal Charter in July 1886, by the British Government to conduct businesses and administer some parts of Nigeria as a colony. Captain William Wallace was appointed as a Provisional Resident for the then Bassa Province with headquarters in Lokoja. At this point, the politics of Bassa Nge as part of the larger Nigerian society became affected by their rule.¹⁸³ By 1900, the whole of Nigeria came under British rule and by 1906, Southern Protectorates and Colony of Lagos were amalgamated to form the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. In 1914, Southern Protectorate was amalgamated with the Northern Protectorate. Bassa Nge District was merged with Igala Native Authority under the leadership of Atta Igala in 1918 during the reign of Etsu Mopa when Captain Byng-hall called on all the chiefs of Dekina, Ankpa, Bassa Nge and Bassa Komu for this purpose. Though the chiefs in Bassa (Nge and Komo) resisted, they were convinced that it had no ulterior motives but to create

1. A federated independent body or Native Authority
2. A unified body with a paramount ruler and
3. Native Treasury for the whole area for financial stability and easy fiscal system.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Y. H. Habi (1987). *The People Called Bassa Nge*, Zaria: Tamaza, pp. 66-67

¹⁸⁴ Y. H. Habi (1987). *The People Called Bassa Nge...* pp. 69-70

Evidence to substantiate this claim is in the constant and persistent appeal of the Bassa Nge to the colonial office in Lokoja to be independent of the Igala.¹⁸⁵

But later developments after a unified Native Authority show grievances by the lesser groups (Nge and Komo). For instance as Habi points out that, under Native Authority Ordinance, the local chiefs became mere agents of the Native Authority for carrying out orders emanating from the colonial office through the Resident. He further points out that, by this ordinance, the Atta Igala could appoint and dethrone any local Chief or District head at will and the power as well as authority of Etsu who was a paramount ruler became a second class chief even though he had a first class status having been given autonomy by the Royal Niger Company.¹⁸⁶ Appointing an Igala man to rule the Bassa Nge at this point in time, is clear evidence to this claim. This idea was corroborated by Simon Shaba when he states that, the merger led to social interaction but because Igala were the dominant group, there was inequality.¹⁸⁷

Habi claimed that, the Etsu became a subordinate chief and second class to Atta Igala and that it took the effort of Military intervention in 1966 to restore the political autonomy of Bassa Nge. Military intervention in the Nigerian politics in 1966 was said to have given a levelled playing ground for both Bassa Nge and the Igala as the status of the Etsu was raised and was no longer under the direct control of Atta. This is because, the area was divided to form three autonomous divisions namely: Ankpa, Idah and Dekina and the powers of the Native Authority were relegated to the

¹⁸⁵ NAK/“Bassa Nge District, Igala Division, Kabba Province Administration”/SNP 17/22410; 19276

¹⁸⁶ Y. H. Habi, (1987). *The People Called Bassa Nge...* pp.71-73; NAK/“Bassa Nge District, Igala Division, Kabba Province Administration”/SNP 17/22410; 19276

¹⁸⁷ S. A. Simon (n.d.). *The Niger Migrants...* pp. 80-81

background with the cancellation of House of Chiefs and Council of Chiefs.¹⁸⁸ Although the Atta of Igala was seen as the custodian of their culture, these developments should not be seen as the effort of all the Igala against the Bassa Nge inclusion in politics.

The remoteness of Bassa area and their location at the bank of River Niger does not allow for immediate economic and political activities.¹⁸⁹ For instance, they have been contacting the Federal Government and the successive regimes in Kogi State through their cultural union to construct a bridge across the Niger River for easy accessibility to Dekina and other areas of Igalaland.¹⁹⁰ This will, no doubt, foster their unity and development. River Niger has made the land landlocked for both economic and political activities. Once bridge is constructed, one supposes the land will develop due to its closeness to Lokoja the state capital. For example, settlement in Lokoja will expand since there is no enough land space in Lokoja except along Kabba-Okene axis which is farther than Bassa Nge land. Also, available land in Bassa Nge areas across Shintaku can be used for the siting of the long awaited Kogi airport. It is when the land is open up for economic activities that they can begin to compete favourably and contribute their quota in wider Kogi and in the Nigerian politics.¹⁹¹

Another major political problem is the lack of local government of their own. Since independence, they have never had an autonomous local government. In 1976 when nineteen (19) states were created by Late General Murtala Mohammed, Bassa under Dekina came under Benue state

¹⁸⁸ Y. H. Habi (1987). *The People Called Bassa Nge...* pp. 76-77

¹⁸⁹ Y. H. Habi (1987). *The People Called Bassa Nge...* p. 24

¹⁹⁰ S. A. Simon (n.d.). *The Niger Migrants...* p. 61

¹⁹¹ S. A. Simon (n.d.). *The Niger Migrants...* p. 61

along with Ankpa, Idah and Dekina formally in Kwara State. The Nasir Commission on boundary adjustment created Bassa Local Government Area comprising Bassa Komo, Bassa Nge and Mozum Districts.¹⁹² This made Bassa Nge to begin to demand for autonomy.

Nasir Boundary Adjustment Panel, and the subsequent boundary adjustment by the military in 1976 impacted on the political development of Bassa Nge. For instance, Idah, Ankpa and Dekina (former Igala Division) were excised from Kwara to form part of Benue State.¹⁹³ According to Metseru Solomon, the Bassa Nge were opposed to this idea on the basis of fear of marginalization and the desire to remain in Kwara.¹⁹⁴ This play out in recent proposal for the creation of states when they publicly declared their lack of interest to join the proposed Okura State.¹⁹⁵ Up to date, they have no local government of their own.

The Late Governor of Kogi State, Prince Abubakar Audu attempted to carve a local government for them but was truncated following his death on 22nd November, 2015. The Igala-Bassa Federal Constituency created in Kogi State has been dominated by the Igala. Even the single local government called Bassa is still shared by other ethnic groups such as Bassa Komo, Epira Mozum and some Igala indigene groups according to Umar Habiba.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² S. A. Simon (n.d.). *The Niger Migrants...* p. 61

¹⁹³ Y. H. Habi (1987). *The People Called Bassa Nge...* pp. 82-84

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Metseru Solomon, at Oguma, Kogi State, conducted by the author on August 12, 2023

¹⁹⁵ I. Benjamin (2025). "Bassa- Nge District Rejects Inclusion in the Proposed Okura State," Leadership Newspaper, Sunday March 9, 2025, retrieved from <https://leadership.ng/bassa-nge-district-rejects-inclusion-in-proposed-okura-state/> accessed on Sunday, March 16th 2025, 9 am; "Kogi Reports: Group Kicks Against Inclusion of Bassa Nge District in Proposed Okura State," By Admin, February 26, 2025, 10:40 am, retrieved from <https://kogireports.com/group-kicks-against-inclusion-of-bassa-nge-district-in-proposed-okura-state/> accessed on Sunday, March 16th 2025, 9:10 am

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Umar Habiba, at Anyigba, conducted by the author on 16th September, 2023

Another political impact of migration was war of supremacy popularly known in some parlance as *Ekú Anupe* wars. Lakpini, holds that, the Bassas fought a war of independence against the original inhabitants of Gbobe, Shintaku, Egeneja, and the Shaba of Atta Igala in Gwalawo [Ugwolawo] during their early settlement in 1850s.¹⁹⁷ This is corroborated by Temple who states that,

The migration [of Nupe] continued year by year, the Bassa Nge clearing forest as they acquire the land, till the Igala became afraid and opposed their advance. The Bassa Nge defeated them in battle, declared their independence and occupied the river banks from Itobe to Gbobe and from Gbobe to Mozum on the southern bank of the Benue, stretching a few miles inland to Odugbo.¹⁹⁸

This indicates that in the course of their migration and settlement, they fought and defeated those they met. This position is valid considering the fact that the places mentioned by Temple are occupied by the Bassa Nge from then to date. It is however, important to note that, it is only the areas they occupied that they conquered. It is also on record that they were given asylum by the Igala. In my submission, the two must have played out.

Migration and the Challenges of Economic Development among Bassa Nge People

Migration is often linked to either economic development or under-development. This is because, when one moves from point A to B, economic opportunities cannot be the same again. Different places offer different political and economic resources. The challenge of economic development among Bassa Nge could be viewed from the perspective of

¹⁹⁷ C. A. M. Lakpini, (2004). *History of Bassa (Nge) Ethnic Group of Nupe Origin...* p. 58

¹⁹⁸ O. Temple (1922). *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Province of Nigeria*. London: Frank Cass, P. 306; Y. H Habi, (1987). *The People Called Bassa Nge.....*P. 25

lack of equal opportunities with other dominant groups in Kogi and lack of adequate representation. There are marginalization claims which may not be unfounded. These are the problems bedeviling their development since their settlement in their present place of abode in 1850.¹⁹⁹

Habi claims that, the dominance of the Igala over the Bassa Nge during the colonial period was as a result of Native Authority System which places the Atta above the Nupe migrants. This has economic implication because, developments were attracted to Igalaland. He further maintained that, in the field of education, the Native Authority ignored Bassa Nge for any educational development as schools were built more in various towns and villages of Igalaland in the 1920s and 1930s especially at Ochaja. This formed the basis of the formation of Bassa Nge National Union (BNNU), which has led to the establishment of three Native Primary Schools in Bassa Nge areas especially in the late 1950s. The schools that the Bassa Nge and the environs enjoyed were mission schools. There was no single training college in Bassa Nge areas during colonialism even though BNNU was said to have written to Ondo Diocese for the establishment of a teacher training college.²⁰⁰ Education is necessary for development to take place and to preserve the existing global social and economic order. The current Etsu Bassa Nge always has this to say, “The problem of my people is development and not change of ethnic name”.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Solomon Yacim at Lokoja, Kogi State, conducted by the author on August 12, 2023.

²⁰⁰ Y. H. Habi (1987). *The People Called Bassa Nge*... pp. 73-77

²⁰¹ A. A. Mopa (2021). “Etsu Bassa Nge, Gboloko in a Press Release at his Palace in Response to Change of Name in December”

Conclusion

The migration of a Nupe group now called Bassa Nge had impacted the lives of the people in both positive and negative ways. Positively, they have interacted with diverse cultures on the way to their present place of abode and this has gone a long way in shaping their identity and culture part of which were changes in their original Nupe language and borrowing of words which led to the adulteration of their original Nupe language. However, the adulteration is insignificant to the extent of denying them their Nupe origin and identity. Also, migration has led to separation from their kinsmen. The feeling of marginalization has led to the recent call for change their name from Bassa Nge to Nupe for lack of inclusive politics in Kogi State in order to reunite with their ancestral brethren. The Bassa Nge blamed colonialism and the Native Authority System for the lack of development in the area even long after the colonial period. The current problem could be viewed from their historical past due to migration and separation from the main Nupe body in Gbara.