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The Gbagyi *Bayekpe* (Education) and Imperialism in Minna, 1928 – 1960

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Abstract

This article discussed the Gbagyi *Bayekpe* (education) and imperialism in Minna, 1928-1960. The contact of the Gbagyi in Minna with imperialism dates back to the early part of the twentieth century. The *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi which was a process of preparing the children and every individual for happy and useful living and to prepare the Gbagyi individual who will be honest, responsible, skilled, cooperative and conform to the social order of the day as a result of the encounter of the Gbagyi with the imperial power was supplanted with a new system of knowledge.

This new order which was explicitly designed to restructure the social pattern of the Gbagyi and his society began in 1928 and by 1960 had replaced the Gbagyi Bayekpe (education). This development, the paper explained marked the starting point of the dependency syndrome which characterized the Gbagyi modernity and remains an obstacle to the growth of Gbagyi and his Minna society. The paper exposed the effect of this alien knowledge system on the Gbagyi in Minna and made a case for the redefinition of the Gbagyi knowledge system different from western tradition of education which holistically emphasizes dominance as a measure of education attainment.

Introduction

The intercourse between the Gbagyi in Minna and its surrounding areas with imperial powers i.e., British, dates back to the early part of the twentieth century. Prior to this contact, the Gbagyi in the study area had a knowledge system which promoted a better output and provided the people with creative originality which enabled their children and youth to function as a worthy agent of change. It was the above factor and many others that make the Gbagyi knowledge system relevant and significant and the typical Gbagyi utilizes this in the development of her Minna society. However, in the course of history, *Bayekpe* (education) was holistic and integrated with spiritual as well as physical dimension and was directed to enduring the survival of the Gbagyi ethnic group. The society suffered not only subordination but also disappearance in the intellectual climate of the world.

A Brief Overview of Gbagyi Bayekpe (Education) in Minna in the Pre-Imperial Period

Prior to the British incursion which occasioned the imperial activities in Minna, the Gbagyi in the area have their *Bayekpe* (education) i.e., their system of training and educating the children and youth (Adamu 2007, p. 3). The consideration of *Beri* (herbalist/healer), *Kpakreshai* (soothsayer), *Borisuyi* (manipulator of jinns), *Zalugoi* (nobleman), *Nagbai* (hunter) and *zhaiwoyiagyimarinyi* (person with good character) or anyone who combines the later features with specific skills as educated and integrated citizen of his community gave birth to *Kpenyi* (idea) of *Bayekpe* (education) (Byanyiko 1979, p. 64) among the pre-imperial Gbagyi, those of Minna inclusive.

Education for good life was the persistent concern of the Gbagyi *Bayekpe* (education). Throughout their history, the system of educating and training their children and youth was built on social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual and moral values (Dikko 1988, p. 62) which gives an idea that children and adolescents in Minna in the pre-imperial era were engaged in participatory education through ceremonies, rituals, libitations, recitation and demonstration. In the same vein, Gbagyi children and youth under examination were taught practical *Fanubey* (farming)

Nyikawabey (fishing), *Nyalubey* (weaving), *ynadubey* (cooking), *Nyashebey* (carving) (Iyasare 1994, p. 46) etc.

Similarly, in their curriculum, there existed recreational subjects such as *Koshebey* (wrestling), *Ynaynabey* (dancing), *Shegadangba* (acrobatic display) (Shekwo 1986, p. 46), etc. Besides these, there was intellectual training such as the study of local history, legend of the environment, local geography, plants and animals, reasoning, riddles, proverbs, storytelling and story relays (Shekwoaga Wumenze 02/06/2014).

In addition, there was also integrated experience which combined physical training with character building, manual activity with intellectual training; secret cults were taught to one child. This serves as a further education (Bawa 2000, p. 25). It was at this level, according to the researcher's source, that the Gbagyi were taught the secret of power, real imagery, profound native philosophy and science (Shekwoaga Wumenze 02/06/2014).

It is pertinent to note that in respect of the level of training given by the Gbagyi in the period under examination, every aspect of Gbagyi life was touched, ranging from habit of speech, method of work, style of dressing, the love of beauty, hatred of evil, to care of the old and sympathy for the weak which prepared children and youth for full life, to be useful and acceptable members of the society (Nuhu 1996, p. 25).

Fundamentalism was the main guiding principle of the Gbagyi *Bayekpe* in the pre-imperial Minna. It was not only for the preparation of Gbagyi children for adulthood but to train the individual Gbagyi which enabled him to shoulder the responsibilities of life (Adamu 2007, p. 3). In essence, the *Bayekpe* of the Gbagyi in Minna in the pre-imperial period was functional, relevant, fulfilling the desires and demands of the people in the region and above all was providing the Gbagyi in the study area with employment opportunities (Kpotu Shagabe 06/01/2015), prior to the contact of the Gbagyi and his *Bayekpe* (education) in Minna with the imperial powers in the early part of the twentieth century.

The Gbagyi *Bayekpe* (Education) and Imperial Contact Situation 1928 -1960

In 1908 the British imperial power arrived Minna, the Gbagyi country. This inevitable appearance of the British imperialist in the study area in this period did not only occasion the occupation of the region and the beginning of the British imperial activities in the area but also marked a turning point in their political, economic and social life (Zakari 2016, p. 66) and it included the *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi in Minna. The failure of the *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi to conform with the western philosophy of education made the British imperial power on arrival in Minna not only to attack but to consider the Gbagyi education which was a home grown system of knowledge built on indigenous Gbagyi philosophy of education and was

providing the need of the Gbagyi and his society, primitive, savage and barbaric (Kalamu Adamu 20/03/2014).

Besides this, the British imperial power went further to berate the Gbagyii indigenous knowledge system conservative, limited in goal, geared towards the basic needs of the Gbagyi in his restricted Minna environment and in totality could not train children and youth to face the challenges and changes that those aspects considered repugnant and unprogressive within the system (Angulu Dangbe 07/02/2014)

Based on the above consideration and criticism, the British imperial power in Minna, in their bid to consolidate their colonial rule and policies, argued that a system of knowledge with the above characteristics/features/attributes lacked the strength to function as a weapon for growth and development. Therefore, they opined that such a knowledge be replaced by British philosophy or system of education. The journey for the subordination of the *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi by the British imperial power, began in 1928 and by 1960 when the colonial rule came to an end in Nigeria, Minna inclusive with disregard to the development potential inherent in the *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi (Musa 2008, p. 23) was completely replaced with the British system of education which advanced knowledge out of imperialism, thus making imperialism knowledge system the starting point among the Gbagyi in Minna between 1928-1960 and it continued up till today (Nuhu, op.cit., p.25).

For the replacement/subordination of the *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi with imperial alien knowledge system, formal schools/institutions were established between 1928-1960 throughout the length and breadth of Minna (Bawa & Zakari 2015, p. 35). Though, through these institutions the Gbagyi were introduced among others, English in speech and outlook, basic literacy which served as an agent of socialization that shaped their values, attitudes, widened their horizon as it provided the Gbagyi with Europeanized techniques of handling the affairs of their society for themselves etc. (Tanko 2008, p. 30). On the other hand, the Europeanized learning institutions established in Minna by the British imperial power between 1928-1960 provided the Gbagyi, like their fellow Africans in the imperial era, not only with information, weak potential for positive transformation but presented the Gbagyi with imperial knowledge of the other in terms of their imperial origin designed to legitimize the colonial rule and policies (Joseph Dada 05/09/2015). Commenting on this view, Ugwannanyi declared thus:

... denies the colonized useful knowledge about themselves and their world which at the same time transmits a culture that embodies and is designed to consolidate slave mentality. Hence the colonized are taught that they have no history that their history started with the arrival of the European conquerors on their mission to civilization (Ugwannanyi 2008, p. 201).

Equally too, the Gbagyi through the westernized knowledge system were introduced to new desires, appetite, taste, vision and above all were prepared to play the role of junior partner (Mosalisu 1994, p.13). Capturing the motive of imperial knowledge system in Africa, Minna - Gbagyi land inclusive Ayandele (1969) remarked:

It is naturally inoculated in the contemporary European ideas, justice, equality, democracy as well as style of life and pattern of thinking to believe that the recipients of this dosage of education would be dosage of education would be doculemoral being of imagination who would not accept but endorse the status quo including second class citizen (p. 268).

Nevertheless, from the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the Gbagyi, like their Africa brethren in the imperial era were introduced to alien knowledge system which was not relevant enough, making them unable to contribute meaningfully to the overall development of their society. The above development as observed, gives an idea that a knowledge system which is not built on or anchored on a Gbagyi philosophy is bound to have serious consequences/effects (Maku Musa Shamo 06/10/2015) on the lives of the Gbagyi in their Minna society.

Effects of Imperial Knowledge System on the Gbagyi in Minna

The effects of the imperial knowledge system on the Gbagyi in Minna in the imperial period and beyond are enormous. In the first place, the Gbagyi in Minna were made to accept the Europeanized knowledge system at the expense of their own traditional pattern of *Bayekpe* (education) (Muhammad Musa Bawa 06/10/2015). This forceful acceptance of the new order did not only lead to the possession and the control of the Gbagyi in Minna's ambition but also brought about the creation of a new pattern of knowledge (Yakubu Wakili 05/06/2014) This development invented in Gbagyi's mind an idea which made him to conceive the imperial knowledge system as a fresh project. This project from 1928 – 1960 contributed greatly in undermining the very humanity of the Gbagyi as a person (Daniel Yakubu 03/07/2014).

Second, the introduction of the Gbagyi to false ego (Shazhi Baze 06/08/2015) is another effect of the imperial knowledge system on the Gbagyi. The effect which was equally cultured into Minna society brought to Gbagyi in the region false sense of importance which defined the attitude of the western educated Gbagyi elites on the conducts of the affairs of their society (Ayandele 1974:65). This fact as put by one source is the hall mark which is master slave mentality that reveals itself in dominance of the weak by the strong (John 1962:68). The above development gives an idea that the imperial knowledge system did not permit any space for traditional Gbagyi idea and value which needed to redefine its ideals and achieve a balanced GbagyiMinna society (Joseph Dada 05/09/2015).

Third, superiority complex demonstrated by the Gbagyi elite who are opportune to have acquired or trained in an imperial way present an effect of the imperial knowledge system on the Gbagyi in Minna. These Gbagyi see themselves superior to their fellow Gbagyi thus creating class distinction (Maku Musa Shamo 02/10/2014) in the periods under examination. This has resulted in the disintegration of family ties among the Gbagyi in Minna (Kalamu Adamu 20/03/2014). In addition to the above, this effect did not provide the basis for the creation of an authentic character and personality in the human fora. This is because in the global community the westernized Gbagyi is not a leader but a follower (Shaba Shugaba 03/04/2015). He wears suit in a terrible heated sun in initiation of educated imperialist. Besides, this he addresses his Gbagyi brethren in foreign language i.e English purely to validate his claim to knowledge and learning. This becomes possible for Gbagyi as a result of the displacement completely the Gbagyi language with English language which remained and continued to be used as a medium of imparting knowledge between 1928-1960 and beyond at all levels of learning in Gbagyi Minna society (Sagar 1959:25).

Fourth, the domination of the Gbagyi by western alien/ imperial views/ ideas is another effect of imperial knowledge system on the Gbagyi. These imperial / alienviews/ ideas have no relevant to Gbagyi situation, this is because it undermines, destroys his own personality and humanity, culture and identity and above all has made the Gbagyi to suffer a certain crisis of identity, lacking in critical reasoning (Muhammad Bawa Musa 06/10/2015). These indeed have contributed greatly in the production of intellectual hybrid among the Gbagyi who live in Minna society, now defined by others rather than invented Minna or the one that is able to produce and market African, including the Gbagyi in Minna cultural products, be they material or spiritual (Shekwoaga Wumerenze 02/06/2014).

Fifth, the perpetuation and plantation into Gbagyi in his Minna society the seed of dependency syndrome represent another palpable effect of the imperial knowledge system on the Gbagyi in the study area. The Gbagyi in this region between 1928 – 1960 and beyond has not been able to liberate himself including his Minna society. This has made it difficult for Gbagyi to be master of his destiny, defining and evaluating himself through self-concern (Baje Yunusa 05/04/2014). In addition, the effect has not allowed the Gbagyi to liberate himself both mentally and materially, thus making it difficult for Gbagyi to expand and realize his possibilities. The consequences of this is mental and material dependence of the Gbagyi and his society on other races of mankind (Yakubu Wakili 05/06/2014).

This represents the state of affairs as regards to Gbagyi *Bayekpe* (education) in Minna and imperialism 1928-1960. Though, efforts were made by Gbagyi in Minna between 1928-1960 beyond to free himself from this mental and cultural imperialism through

publication of variety of literature on Gbagyi's life and culture their effort in this regard up to the present day has remained elusive or fruitless.

Several factors accounted for these failures. In the first place, the object of education which has the capacity to achieve the meaning in manner that gives moral relations status has refused to accept not only the input but also the *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi which qualifies it to withstand its rights and equal terms (Makama Ndagiwa 07/05/2015).

Second, the role of imperial government in the periods under examination contributed greatly in making the efforts of the Gbagyi to liberate himself from the mental and cultural imperialism impossible. The threats and the role of the imperial government on Gbagyi's efforts has not been helpful instead of the imperial government to promote the Gbagyi *Bayekpe* (education), they ended up promoting imperial /alien notion on Gbagyi at the expense of self-knowledge of Gbagyi in Minna (Shekwoaga Wumenze 02/06/2014).

Third, the problem of inability of western oriented Gbagyi think tanks and those in position of authority to use skills, positions to influence the formulation of theories and principles for Gbagyi *Bayekpe* (education) has rendered the efforts of the Gbagyi to liberate himself from mental and cultural imperialism fruitless. These Gbagyi have not encouraged or initiated any move to actualize the inclusion of the study of Gbagyi language in the curriculum of National policy on education (Daniel Yakubu 03/07/2014). They have, to a large extent preoccupied themselves with means and methodologies of imperial education system without a serious interrogation of the goal and desire of education in relation to Gbagyi Minna society (*Ibid*). Besides, being a victim of imperial knowledge system the Gbagyi scholars instead of encouraging the inclusion of Gbagyi language as a core subject to be taught at all levels of learning in Minna, they ended up promoting and justifying the ideology of imperialism (Shazhi Baze 06/08/2015).

Nevertheless, with the subordination/substitution and adoption of imperial knowledge by the Gbagyi in Minna at the expense of his traditional / indigenous form of knowledge, the pertinent question that needs to be asked here is that is there any future for Gbagyi *Bayekpe* (education) in Minna?

Redefining Gbagyi Bayekpe (Education) in Minna and future

Several measures have been advanced not only on how to reposition the Gbagyi *Bayekpe* (education) to catch up with the deficient modern culture but also to divorce the Gbagyi indigenous knowledge system from imperialism.

In the first place, the Gbagyi(education) planners and its policy makers should first and foremost dissociate the education from political power in Minna Gbagyi society (Adamu Kuta 2010:15). This attitude would lead to a curious interpretation. The

education among the Gbagyi in Minna should begin from severance of political authority from intellectual authority which heralded imperial knowledge system in Gbagyi land Minna inclusive (Muhammad Musa Bawa 06/10/2015).

Second, the foundation for Gbagyi *Bayekpe* (education) should move from conceptual decolonization to conceptual Gbagyinalization. This would be done by seeking to instruct the ideas first as they are conceived by Gbagyi or in a Gbagyi context and their relevance within the Gbagyi cultural world. This medium as observed is necessary to establish a state of knowledge of any item in Gbagyi before their disruption occasioned by imperialism (Joseph Dada 05/09/2015)

Third, another measure to reposition and divorce the *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi Minna from imperialism is that the *Bayekpe* (education) should be given an ideological focus and anchored on the ideals of Minna Society. By this measure Minna Gbagyi society would reject the liberal option in favor of a pattern of knowledge that would not subordinate but promotes Gbagyi in Minna ideals (Nuhu, op.cit., P.36).

Fourth, the use of Gbagyi language in teaching and learning is another measure to reposition and divorce the *Bagekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi in Minna from imperialism. The study of the language should be encouraged and reduced the use of alien language i.e English at all levels of learning in Minna Gbagyi society (Muhammad Musa bawa 06/10/2015). To achieve this, the manner of applying the Gbagyi language be examined, Gbagyi child should be encouraged to learn Gbagyi language and be made to understand that the knowledge he is trained to acquire is not alien and that the item in this knowledge however seemingly alien are what his *Khunu*-culture and society have desired in the first place (Maku Musa Shamo 02/10/2014). As observed educating Gbagyi child in his mother tongue will not only provide him with the capacity to understand but also to identify the child with mind that accepts the world culture positively without crisis of identify (Adamu, op.cit., P.22).

Fifth, the involvement of Gbagyi traditional authorities i.e., Gbagyi who have bulk ideas of Gbagyi life holistically in knowledge production in Gbagyi land Minna inclusive in formal sector would also serve as measure to reposition and divorce the *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi from imperialism. These Gbagyi should not only be involved in the education process but also be invited to schools and other institutions of learning in Minna to teach their acquired wisdom to Gbagyi. Through this, as observed it would among others narrow the gap between Gbagyi *Bayekpe* (education) and imperial (knowledge system, enabled the knowledge to be acquired from original status in Minna society (Sada, 1996, p. 18) and above all, it will reduce the gap that exists between the educated and uneducated among the Gbagyi in Minna society which has led to social fragmentation and dislocation of the study area (Yakubu Wakili 05/6/2014).

Nevertheless, for *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi in Minna to have strong footing and embrace the future, the Gbagyi in the study area have to go back to the days of telling stories by moonlight; this is because it is anticipated that the knowledge acquired here will lead to the emergence of an authentic Gbagyi personality who will not be an imitator of any society anywhere in the world (Sada, op.cit., p.19). This is because it is anticipated that the knowledge acquired here will lead to the emergence of an authentic Gbagyi personality who will not be an imitator of any society anywhere in the world. (*Ibid*).

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that imperialism worked hardship not only on the development and subordination of the *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi but its disappearance in Minna, in the period between 1928-1960 and up to the present day. All the imperial knowledge infrastructures did not reflect anything to Gbagyi in content and context. The system was designed in such a way to completely replace the *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi and set him on course that leads to the complete disappearance of the Gbagyi indigenous knowledge system. The imperial knowledge system has been essentialized as British in origin and nothing like *Bayekpe* (education) of the Gbagyi in Minna exist today. Therefore, to redeem and redefine the *Bayekpe* (education) the Gbagyi in Minna should go back to their past *Khunu* (culture) such as *Gbenu, Pairi, Amwamwo, Amadawa, Kushi* etc cultural festivals and revive them. This is because people cannot prepare for the future without perceiving what they have created as well as the means they used to create it.

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Interviews

- Interview with Dr. Muhammad Musa Bawa (History Teacher) at Niger State College of Education, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 6th October, 2014.
- Interview with Malam Angulu Dangbe (a retired Teacher) at Kubwa, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 7th February, 2014.
- Interview with Malam Baje Yunusa (Head Teacher) at Tungan Danboyi Primary School Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 5th April, 2014.
- Interview with Malam Kalamu Adamu (Staff with NOA) at Paigo, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 20th March, 2014.

Interview with Malam Makama Ndagiwa (Civil Servant) at Sayako, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 10th May, 2015.

Interview with Malam Maku Musa Shaba (retired Head Teacher) at Bosso, Minna Niger State, Nigeria 2nd October, 2014.

Interview with Malam Shaba Shugaba (Civil Servant) at Gbangbapi, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 3rd April, 2015.

Interview with Malam Shazhi Baze (a retired Teacher) at Fuka, Minna, Niger State Nigeria 6th August, 2015.

Interview with Malam Shekwaoga Wumenze (Authority in Gbagyi *Bayekpe* (Education) at Paidna, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 6th July, 2015

Interview with Mr. Daniel Yakubu (a Curriculum Studies Teacher) at Federal College Education, Kontegora, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 3rd July, 2014.

Interview with Mr. Joseph Dada (a retired Director Higher Education Nigeria State Ministry of Education) in Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 5th September, 2015.

Interview with Mr. Kpotu Baje (Civil Servant) Sayako, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 6th January, 2015.

Interview with Mr. Yakubu Wakili (Social Studies Teacher) at Federal College of Education, Kontegora, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 5th June, 2014