

GENDER EQUALITY IN GBAGYI WOMEN'S FAITH AND CULTURE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATION

Jake O. Otonko

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Nasarawa State University, Keffi

&

Eucharika Ugochi, Opara

Department of Religions and Intercultural Studies
Veritas University, Abuja, oparaureuk@gmail.com

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Abstract

Religion and culture intertwine. Knunu illustrates the Gbagyi community's religion-culture relationship. Both men and women worship Shekwoi, God the omnipotent deity. Indigenous faith-based societal norms and values validate Gbagyi men's and women's diverse gender roles. Women cannot sacrifice to God and their ancestors on prescribed altars, unlike men. In politics, economics, and society, women are often subordinate to men. Gbagyi's gender inequality has been extensively studied. Gbagyi women's parity contexts seem understudied. This ethnographic study examines gender parity in Gbagyi faith and culture. This study uses ethnography. Primary data came from focus group discussions, interviews, and personal observations, with secondary data from library sources. Farming, pottery, and textile production show little gender disparity in economic empowerment. Family needs and festival cultural presentations are financially important. Social equality is most lacking in political power distribution. The research suggests assertive advocacy and civic education, among other measures. Gbagyi men and women work hard to support their families. Women must also be included in decision-making.

Keywords: Gender, Faith, Culture, Gbagyi-tradition, societal development

Introduction

The Gbagyi indigenous community can be traced back to a historical context that is evident in their inherited cultural practises. The religious and cultural beliefs of the Gbagyi people are intricately interwoven with their traditional customs. The knunu represents a significant embodiment of the religious and cultural customs of the Gbagyi community, with both aspects being closely interconnected. The aforementioned statement signifies their adherence to their belief in *Shekwoi*, an all-encompassing and innovative power responsible for the

existence of both concrete and abstract entities. In Kuta's assertion, *Shekwoi* is depicted as a deity embodying qualities of great importance, kindness, and authority (Kuta, 2008: 163). Both genders exhibit equivalent levels of respect and dedication towards *Shekwoi*. This study examines the division of gender roles within the context of faith and culture among the Gbagyi aborigines, with a focus on the aforementioned manifestations evident in their daily lives. The Gbagyi community, like many African communities, exhibits a patriarchal system that values and prioritises male offspring within families and societies while placing female offspring in a subordinate role. The term "patriarchy" denotes a social construct characterised by a hierarchical organisation wherein men occupy positions of power and authority while women are often marginalised and excluded from such roles. Paternalism can be defined as a hierarchical structure in which individuals in positions of authority restrict the autonomy and responsibilities of those under their control, purportedly for their own welfare (Hasa, 2021). The male constituents of the settlements bear the responsibility of performing the rituals of supplication and offering to *Shekwoi* as well as the ancestral spirits. In contrast to specific ethnic groups found in Nigeria and Ghana, namely the Yoruba, Igbo, and Akan, wherein women occupy roles as priestesses and diviners, the Gbagyi ethnic group adheres to a distinct cultural practise. Within this social group, it is the males who assume the responsibility of establishing the moral guidelines, while the females adhere to and support these guidelines. According to Kayode (2013, p. 6), The Gbagyi community accords significant significance to the role of *Knunu*, which encompasses their religious and cultural practises, in their everyday existence. The manifestation of a community's culture is most prominently exemplified through its ceremonial traditions. The observance of significant life events, including but not limited to birth, marriage, death, and transitional phases, holds great importance within the cultural traditions of the Gbagyi people. The Gbagyi ethnic group is recognised for their traditional gastronomy, which includes dishes such as *ezhe* and *knadolo*. Additionally, they are known for their cultural attire, called *ajesuda*, as well as their esteemed occupations, which involve engaging in agriculture, hunting, and pottery craftsmanship. The cultural heritage of the Gbagyi people possesses the capacity to function as a catalyst for the advancement of economic development and the promotion of tourism. The Gbagyi women demonstrate a notable level of self-regard in their ability to bear significant burdens on their shoulders, as they consider the head to be a sacred and essential vessel for the preservation of wisdom. The research will utilise an ethnological methodology. The primary data for this study was collected through

focus group discussions, interviews, and personal observations. In contrast, the secondary data was acquired from library databases. This study elucidates the operationalization of gender equality within the Gbagyi indigenous community. The primary objective of this initiative is to augment the participation and recognition of Gbagyi women in societal discussions and affairs. The imperative nature of avoiding gender discrimination in societal and communal affairs cannot be overstated. Both genders exhibit the capability to engage in informed and rational decision-making processes in the context of advancing sustainable development.

The indigenous people of Gbagyi

In a given geographical area, it is common to find an associated ethnic group comprising individuals who inhabit that specific locale. Individuals who possess a shared lineage often exhibit a propensity to assemble and form tribal societies that facilitate the cultivation of cultural and religious customs. Jarumi and Ayuba (2016) assert that the Gbagyi indigenous population can be historically linked to their involvement in a migration originating from the Bornu Empire, located in the northeastern region of Nigeria, during the year 1750. The Gbagyi ethnic group has been historically associated with Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Zamfara, and Zaira (Yamma, 2015:3). The Gbagyi people's ancestral roots in the Kanuri ethnic group can be inferred from the presence of identical tribal markings and the tradition of carrying loads on the shoulder. Yama posits that there is an oral tradition indicating that the aforementioned group has its origins in Borno, belongs to the Beriberi lineage, and has historically utilised the Beriberi language (*ibid.*, 4). The migration of the Gbagyi people is characterised by a gradual process, during which they gradually settled in different locations over a period of time. The Gbagyi ethnic group is one of the prominent indigenous populations that inhabit the northern-central region of Nigeria. The ethnic group under consideration was widely referred to as Gwari or Gbari, with the specific term used varying based on the specific geographical location in which they resided. Based on oral tradition, the region was initially inhabited by a hunter who ventured into the dense Paikokun forest of Abuja for the purpose of hunting. The indigenous population of the area chose to settle in a geographical location characterised by a prominent elevation referred to as Paikokun.

The Gbagyi community has primarily lived in mountainous areas throughout history because they believe they offer greater security than the lowlands. Nevertheless, the impact of Western civilization

ultimately compelled them to relocate to regions with lower elevations. The individuals mentioned above were the early settlers who established a long-standing settlement in the region now recognised as the Abuja Federal Capital Territory. It is conceivable that they had previously been present among the populations of specific states located in the vicinity of the capital. The states mentioned above include Nassarawa, Niger, Kogi, and Kaduna. The Gbagyi or Gwari indigenous community, currently residing in the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, were the original settlers of the town before it was divided into sections to serve as the country's capital. The collective is recognised as Gwari. The concept of establishing a "no-land" zone in the central region of Nigeria was conceived by the military administration in 1976. The notion of a "no-land" was formulated with the intention of establishing a designated area where Nigerians could assemble without being subjected to the authority of any specific faction. The previous military regime in Nigeria formulated a strategic plan to create a designated area devoid of ownership or control, commonly referred to as "no-man's land," in the central region of the country. The designated area in question would be officially recognised as a neutral zone, free from any political affiliations, and would serve as a meeting place for all Nigerian citizens. The geographical area encompassing the capital city, including the Presidential Villa, the National Assembly, various parastatals and federal institutions, suburban communities, and shopping centres, amounted to an estimated 8,000 square kilometres. The land that remained was under the ownership of the Gbagyi people. Onyeakagbu (2022) posits that the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja is constituted by six area councils. The term "Gwari" refers to the starchy underground tuberous root vegetable that is widely recognised as "yam".

The appellation "Gbagyi" is frequently linked to a range of connotations, including benevolence, ingenuity, reliability, magnanimity, allegiance, and a profound inclination towards familial relationships. The Gbagyi ethnic group is renowned for their distinct propensity to embrace others, their openness, and their dedication to promoting harmony. The Hausa phrase "muyi shi Gwari Gwari" signifies the adoption of a Gbagyi-centric approach in carrying out a particular activity. This approach is distinguished by its adherence to established rules and principles as well as its dedication to transparency, clarity, and integrity. (Bala, 2008:5) Individuals hailing from the northern region and residing within the Gbagyi locality commonly employ this proverb. The Gbagyi ethnic group has established itself as a discrete subgroup within the Nigerian population. The degree to which this uniqueness is

demonstrated in their culture is proportional to their comprehension of the fundamental elements of their surroundings. Despite facing various obstacles, individuals place a high emphasis on the pursuit of existential significance in their everyday existence. Individuals experience pleasure from engaging in physical activity and being exposed to auditory stimuli.

The estimated population size of the indigenous Gbagyi people is in the thousands. According to the findings of Kuta's (2008) study, the national population census carried out in 2006 indicated a total population of 5.8 million individuals. On the other hand, considering the considerably increased resources that are accessible for supporting life and prolonging its lifespan, it is plausible that these statistics could be significantly higher. They have been residing in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja for a significant period of time without experiencing any adverse incidents. The creation of the Federal Capital Territory in Abuja has brought about a process of modernization and urbanisation, which has consequently influenced the traditional practises and cultural perspectives of the Gbagyi community.

The emergence of Islam and Christianity served as catalysts for the Gbagyi community's establishment of hybrid civilizations and belief systems. Throughout history, the Gbagyi indigenous population has made a deliberate choice to establish their settlements on elevated terrain. This decision was driven by their desire to obtain a strategic advantage by having a vantage point that allowed them to effectively monitor and observe both potential adversaries and allies. The Gbagyi way of life, encompassing religion and culture, commonly known as Knunu, underwent substantial transformations as a result of the modernization waves and the establishment of the Federal Capital Territory. Gbagyi has attracted a significant influx of individuals from various backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures who have migrated with the primary objective of pursuing employment prospects within the federal government. What are the distinctive attributes employed in the identification of a female individual affiliated with the Gbagyi ethnic community? The practise of Gbagyi women carrying heavy goods or burdens on their shoulders is a notable attribute that has garnered significant recognition. The head is widely regarded as a repository of wisdom and knowledge. Based on their belief system, the head is regarded as the ultimate authority over the entirety of the body, thus rendering any disruption to it inappropriate. The term "Bwaya" refers to the anatomical region utilised by individuals for the purpose of storing their personal belongings. Moreover, they argue that the weight is

comparatively less burdensome on their shoulders as opposed to their heads. It remains extensively employed in modern times.

Gbagyi's Faith

The Gbagyi community practises a religious system centred on the veneration of shekwoi. The comprehensive and elusive quality of existence symbolises the transcendent, supreme reality, and divine being accountable for the formation of the universe. Both genders hold Shekwoi in high regard and engage in acts of reverence towards him. Within the settlements, religious rituals are conducted by men, specifically those who are elderly or have been designated as priests by the community. These rituals primarily involve prayers and sacrifices, which are performed to pay homage to Shekwoi, the spirits, and the ancestors. Shrines are constructed in both individual households and shared public spaces. Regarding the aspect of making sacrifices, it is evident that Gbagyi women do not assume any specific role. Communal or familial prayers are prohibited for them. The active involvement and consent of Gbagyi women in the rituals, offerings, and supplications performed by men within the communities are considered indispensable. They assume a passive role and serve as subordinate members within the societal hierarchy.

The inhabitants of Gbagyi, located in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, demonstrate a significant focus on their religious beliefs. The existence of faith facilitates the process of embracing revelations without hesitation. The notion of faith within the context of Shekwoi encapsulates a fundamental facet of existence. The Gbagyi notion of "Knunu" serves as a manifestation of the intricate relationship between religion and culture. Individuals of diverse genders hold deep respect and admiration for Shekwoi, an all-powerful deity who occupies a central role in the religious beliefs of the community. The indigenous religious practises of the Gbagyi community serve to establish and validate the gender-specific roles and expectations that are upheld within their social structure. According to prevalent beliefs, it is commonly held that a deity serving as an individual's personal god or guardian spirit is believed to possess a designated shrine situated within a specific tree within the kurmi. As a customary practise, individuals often present offerings of chicken and beer as a means of paying homage to this particular deity. Based on the Gbagyi belief system, it is posited that all natural entities possess a spiritual essence and energy, irrespective of their level of vitality, which can manifest in either beneficial or detrimental consequences. The Gbagyi community

maintains regular communication with the staff members of Kununu. According to Kwkudee's (2013) research, the Gbagyi community maintains a belief system wherein specific individuals are attributed distinct magical abilities.

Religious beliefs within the Gbagyi community do not rely on gender-based distinctions. Faith can be described as a steadfast conviction in the goodness, generosity, and abundance of a divine being, resulting in productive outcomes and successful endeavours. The Zokuda and Ashigbeda indigenous communities adhere to a belief system that encompasses the utilisation of divination techniques and traditional medicinal practises, which are carried out by individuals commonly referred to as diviners, medicine women, and medicine men. These individuals demonstrate exceptional capabilities that empower them to inflict harm and exercise dominance over individuals whom they perceive as their adversaries. The practise of witchcraft is employed as a powerful means to attain the intended result. In instances of sleep, individuals are often subjected to assailants who exploit their *zafun*, commonly referred to as their "soul." Dreams are also employed as a mechanism to induce illness and impose psychological distress on individuals. As per the cited source, the concept of fertility deities is widely prevalent and primarily manifested through the medium of wood.

In the past, Gbagyi women were socialised to have a reliance on men and perceive them as occupying a superior social position, until the advent of the women's liberation and empowerment movement. This specific belief and perspective persisted until a more contemporary era. The customary religion of the Gbagyi people experienced significant changes as a result of the introduction of Islam and Christianity. Nevertheless, a potential association can be observed between the practise of polygamous marriage among the Gbagyi tribe and the use of talismans. Furthermore, women in this tribe tend to prefer engaging in solitary prayer within their homes rather than participating in communal religious activities. The notion of utopia is a collective aspiration among individuals of all genders.

Gbagyi demonstrates a strong commitment to the Islamic faith and exhibits a deep understanding of its principles and teachings. Islam is a monotheistic religion that upholds the principle of the unity of God, known as Allah, who possesses omnipotence and benevolence. Additionally, it maintains that Mohammad was designated as Allah's messenger. Individuals who identify with the Gbagyi community and

follow the Islamic faith are expected to adhere to its fundamental doctrines. Islam is a holistic ideology that provides guidance to adherents on leading a harmonious existence with Allah, fostering feelings of satisfaction and tranquilly. The Islamic notion of faith encompasses three essential pillars: belief in Allah, affirmation of His truthfulness, and submission to His commands. The following list encompasses the six essential principles of religion, each of which is considered necessary to be recognised and affirmed. Providence. Abu (2022) asserts that the Islamic religion encompasses the fundamental tenets of belief in Allah, His messengers, and His angels, along with His books and the Day of Judgement. The Islamic faith does not exhibit gender discrimination. In accordance with Christian teachings, individuals of both genders strive to achieve salvation in paradise.

The Gbagyi community is composed of both male and female individuals who identify as indigenous Christians. Theologically, faith refers to a supernatural gift that the divine bestows on people, enabling them to accept and embrace the truths and revelations that God communicates without reservation or doubt. This statement implies a tacit comprehension that could be attributed to a transcendent entity. The biblical passage found in Hebrews 11:1 provides a definition of faith as a state of being characterised by confidence in one's hopes and assurance in matters that are beyond the realm of sensory perception. Christian adherents uphold the theological principle of the Holy Trinity. The Christian doctrine asserts that Jesus is the divine progeny of God and the saviour of humanity, based on the acceptance of a Trinitarian deity consisting of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This theological framework is characterised by an everlasting and harmonious unity. He assumes the roles of both the Messiah and the Saviour. Based on Christian tradition, it is believed that the person in question was conceived by the Virgin Mary, lived as a mortal, performed extraordinary acts, was crucified under the jurisdiction of Pontius Pilate, experienced mortality, was buried, and was subsequently resurrected after a span of three days. Christians participate in the act of prayer, directing their supplications towards Jesus Christ, whom they regard as the exclusive bestower of salvation. The act of embracing the Christian faith involves the establishment of a unique connection characterised by trust and surrender to God through his Son, Jesus, and the significant presence of the Holy Spirit. The primary objective of your Christian ministry, as articulated on the website <https://www.christianityetc.org>, is the propagation of the message concerning Jesus' redemption of mankind from the state of sin.

Faith serves as the foundational and concluding element in every religious tradition. The concept of faith extends beyond a narrow belief in the truthfulness of a particular idea. The essence of the issue pertains to the acknowledgment of a fundamental principle serving as the basis for one's daily actions. An individual who lacks faith can be metaphorically compared to a vehicle devoid of a steering wheel, leading to directionless navigation through a turbulent expanse of uncertainty and confusion. Christians maintain the belief that, as a result of the creation of human beings in the image and likeness of God, they were granted the capacity to exert dominion over the earth and were given the task of responsibly managing it from the very beginning of human existence. The Gbagyi community exhibits a lack of distinction between the privileges and rights granted to male and female individuals who adhere to the Christian faith, allowing them to freely engage in religious practises and pursue lives of spiritual purity.

Concept of Gender in Gbagyi's Culture

The classification of sexual organisms into discrete male or female categories is commonly denoted as "gender." The assertion establishes a differentiation between males and females starting from the point of conception, with the sex assigned at birth acting as the decisive criterion. The young girl strives to imitate adult females, who are frequently regarded as members of the weaker gender according to societal norms and are frequently assigned domestic duties and tasks that are deemed less masculine. In numerous cultural contexts, there exists a prevailing notion that male progeny possess enhanced physical power, often leading to their identification as "men" and their subsequent recognition as the dominant gender within the familial structure. As a result, he is allocated a greater number of demanding responsibilities, which encompass tasks such as tilling the soil, cutting firewood, clearing vegetation, planting seeds, and harvesting agricultural produce (Obi, 2018:2). Gbagyi males are assigned traditional masculine roles within their culture, encompassing various responsibilities such as resource provision, community protection, decision-making, leadership, organisation, management, administration, governance, military capabilities, and spiritual guidance. The Gbagyi community has implemented a patrilineal kinship system. The individual who holds the highest position of authority at the lowest level within the extended family compound is typically the eldest male. The collection consists of small residences and rectangular structures. In a Gbagyi community, the highest position of power and authority is occupied by the Esu, who is accompanied by a group of individuals known as kingmakers and

highly respected elders. According to Abu (2023), male individuals participate in agricultural activities, hunting, and forestry work. The patriarch assumes the position of leadership within the family unit and exercises authority over all matters pertaining to the family. Within the Gbagyi culture, there is a customary expectation for women to demonstrate characteristics such as submissiveness, obedience, respect, subservience, docility, cooperation, and support towards men. This is particularly observed within the realms of agricultural activities and household responsibilities. Moreover, it is the Gbagyi women who bear the responsibility of transmitting traditional and cultural knowledge to their progeny. Gbagyi women encounter limitations in their involvement in familial decision-making processes. The Gbagyi women are acknowledged for their tradition of shouldering loads, as they adhere to the belief that the head is a revered anatomical component, symbolising authority over the body and housing intellect and erudition, thus warranting utmost respect and preservation. Furthermore, it is evident that she consistently offers words of encouragement.

The term "culture" encompasses the social behaviours, institutions, and customs that exist within human societies, as well as the individuals who make up these groups and their cognitive frameworks, beliefs, and abilities. The origin or development of culture is frequently ascribed to a particular geographic region or locality. The religion and culture of the Gbagyi indigenous community, known as Knunu, play a pivotal role in shaping their daily existence. The manifestation of cultural identity becomes apparent through the observance of ceremonial customs by individuals. The Gbagyi culture is manifested through a range of ceremonial practises, including those associated with birth, marriage, funerals, and festival rites. The Gbagyi culture encompasses a range of elements, including culinary practises, traditional clothing, and a unique way of life. The Gbagyi traditional cultural marriage holds significant importance. As stated by Unumen (153), it is customary for a man to undertake a laborious commitment of seven years on the agricultural estate owned by the father of the bride, subsequent to the manifestation of his affection towards her. During this period, it is anticipated that he will engage in diligent labour and contribute to the provision of sustenance for the household of the bride, thereby ensuring her adequate nourishment. The execution of tasks has been modified by contemporary society. Currently, it is customary for the groom to provide financial compensation known as the bride's price rather than fulfilling a seven-year period of residence in the bride's father's home. The cultural lifestyles of Gbagyi women are being equally influenced by

modernity. There is a discernible shift among women from a traditionally passive, submissive, and inactive lifestyle towards a more proactive involvement in cultural pursuits within their respective communities.

The preservation and practise of Gbagyi culture, commonly referred to as "Knunu," necessitate the active involvement of all members of the community. The Gbagyi indigenous people exhibit comical facial expressions that have emerged in a naturally tranquil setting. The Gbagyi indigenous community places considerable importance on specific forms of entertainment as a means of fostering happiness. Examples of such entertainments include various forms of dance, traditional cultural festivities, and theatrical performances featuring the use of masks. The Gbagyi ethnic group is well-known for their vibrant dance performances, which are distinguished by distinctive movements and techniques, including a pronounced low waist bend, backward stepping, and waist shaking accompanied by lowered hands. A diverse range of percussion instruments, encompassing drums of different sizes, stringed instruments like lyres, hollowed-out calabashes, and wind instruments such as flutes, are utilised. Ajesudas represent the customary attire of the Gbagyi ethnic group, predominantly donned during celebratory dance rituals. In situations where blouses are unavailable, women often use a fabric garment to provide support for their breasts, while men employ a comparable piece of material to secure their buttocks. In contemporary society, women are opting for white blouses in diverse styles and materials to create a multitude of straightforward designs through the practise of sewing as they adapt to the evolving requirements of contemporary lifestyles. In contemporary times, the domain of men's fashion has witnessed a notable expansion, incorporating a diverse range of styles, including loose-fitting trousers, cropped trousers that extend to the mid-calf, and tops that are often complemented with various forms of headwear. Furthermore, the Gbagyi community derives a sense of contentment from participating in celebratory events. Individuals engage in thorough planning and preparation for a diverse range of significant occasions in their lives.

The Gbagyi festivities occur on a yearly basis and consist of a wide variety of masquerade exhibitions from nearby areas. These exhibitions showcase captivating demonstrations of magic and masquerade dances that take place throughout the festival grounds. The act of actively listening to and acknowledging the oral traditions and wisdom that have been transmitted from preceding generations is currently taking place. The aforementioned items encompass a range of elements,

including humorous remarks, guidance, commendations, and enigmatic statements. The inherent cadence found in musical compositions and choreographed movements functions as a mechanism through which individuals can derive pleasure, elation, and entertainment. The act of expressing affection through the exchange of various food and drink items is a fundamental aspect of social entertainment. Free food and drinks are offered to all individuals and organisations. Families engage in the preparation of a wide array of culinary dishes, encompassing wyizhe, ezhe, and zhepwo, among others. The Gwari ethnic group exhibits a strong affinity for the culinary traditions of the Wyizhe cuisine. The product under consideration is derived from the same strain of maize grown in Guinea, which is also used in the production of a unique beverage called Zhepwo. The Gwari ethnic group exhibits a preference for knadolo soup, a culinary concoction derived from the fermentation and preparation of locust beans.

The Gbagyi community incorporates zhepwo, a traditional ingredient, into their culinary traditions. It is commonly accompanied by a condiment that shares similarities with a sauce made from locust beans, onions, pepper, and garden eggs. One of the more seasoned individuals made a comical allusion to it as "Gbagyi pepper soup." According to the research conducted by Oluwalanu (2021), it is a traditional practise to serve this particular dish alongside knandolo and roasted fish. A considerable segment of the population, particularly males, frequently engage in the consumption of a wide variety of beverages, encompassing beer, water, and alcoholic beverages. The Gbagyi culture is characterised by a conspicuous lack of gender discrimination, as both male and female individuals participate equally and actively in diverse facets of society.

The Gbagyi people use the Gwari language as a mechanism for preserving and promoting their cultural heritage. In Nigeria, it is customary for various ethnic groups to maintain their own unique indigenous language in addition to the dominant language spoken within their respective geographical areas. The Gbagyi ethnic group is located in the northern-central region of Nigeria and is primarily comprised of individuals from the Hausa-speaking Northern population who use English as their secondary language. A considerable segment of the population residing in Gbagyi exhibits proficiency in reading and writing in both the Gbagyi and Hausa languages. The Gbagyi (also known as Gbari) ethnic group primarily occupies the central region of Nigeria. According to the source, the

individuals in question primarily speak Gbagyi or Gbari, with the plural forms being Abagyi or Agbari.

The Gbagyi ethnic group is officially acknowledged as the legitimate indigenous population of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Based on the referenced source, it is indicated that the Gbagyi language is classified as belonging to the Kwa sub-group, which is a constituent of the larger Niger-Congo language family. Based on available sources, it has been observed that the indigenous population employs two distinct dialects for communication, which are widely recognised as the Gbari (Gwari yamma) and Gbagyi dialects (Ibid.). The two dialects demonstrate a significant level of resemblance. The Gbagyi language has been standardised by Gbagyi scholars through the practise of dialect harmonisation. The study of this language has become a prominent focus in educational institutions at various levels, mirroring the trajectory of other indigenous languages in Nigeria that have experienced substantial growth and advancement. The Gbagyi ethnic groups integrate gender into their linguistic framework.

Ajesuda, Gbagyi wedding ceremony attire



Gbagyi and Culture

Gbagyi Women's Economic and Sustainable Development Inclusion

The Gbagyi women play a pivotal role in upholding the overall welfare of the rural economy. The recognition of women's pivotal role as food producers and suppliers, as well as their substantial contribution to the maintenance of family food security, has been a recent development. Notwithstanding the fact that women bear the responsibility of producing 50% of the food in the most economically disadvantaged nations worldwide as well as contributing to 50% of the global food supply, The women belonging to the Gbagyi community demonstrate unwavering commitment in their diligent endeavours to actively contribute to the long-term progress and advancement of the nation. The following enumeration encompasses a range of food commodities, specifically beans, maize, Guinea corn, millet, and Hungry Grain. *Acha* grain, groundnuts, yams, and cassava are considered prominent staple foods within the region. According to Bala (2008:48), *Acha*, a variety of grain, is mentioned as an example of a food source that has the potential to alleviate hunger. Bala Kuta asserts that the act of spinning and grinding grains constitutes a substantial means of food production.

Moreover, the female constituents of the community were involved in a multitude of activities, encompassing the care of domesticated animals, the practise of knitting, the collection of firewood, the mastery of the techniques of tying and dyeing, and the creation of locally crafted mats, caps, and bags. Commodities were sought after by customers worldwide, who were willing to travel long distances to acquire them due to their widespread production and distribution. The agricultural tasks within the community were predominantly executed by the male members, whereas the female members assumed primary responsibility for activities such as planting, weeding, and harvesting the crops. The male individuals were tasked with the responsibility of constructing ridges and adjusting the angle of the soil in order to optimise the agricultural procedures. The male participants in the activity also participated in the construction of elevated land strips and the modification of the slope of the Earth's surface. The Gbagyi people, comprising both males and females, are primarily responsible for the production of the majority of the nation's food supply. Women are responsible for the transportation of food items to their respective markets for the purpose of selling them, despite facing various challenges in the process. By engaging in the practise of cultivating a wide range of grain and vegetable varieties, individuals are capable of

ensuring the provision of sustenance not only for their own well-being and that of their immediate communities but also for the larger population at a national level. This signifies a crucial method through which individuals can contribute significantly to the progress of sustainable development within the limitations of their respective abilities.

Moreover, women residing on Gbagyi land actively participate in the pottery industry alongside their contributions to agricultural activities. The art of ceramics entails the manipulation of clay to create diverse types of vessels. The Gbagyi women demonstrate remarkable proficiency in the art of pottery, crafting a wide array of artefacts characterised by their diverse dimensions, forms, and designs. The assortment of items encompasses necklaces, earrings, bowls, cups, and plates that are embellished with floral motifs. Pottery artisans who have achieved international acclaim have honed their craft through overseas training programmes. Hajia Ladi Kwali exhibited outstanding scholarly achievement. The artist's adeptness in amalgamating conventional and contemporary techniques facilitated the creation of visually appealing pottery artefacts that harmoniously integrated traditional and modern elements, all without recourse to predetermined design blueprints, sketches, or the utilisation of a potter's wheel. As per the findings of Gbakighir and Egbe (2018), the aforementioned institution assumed responsibility for the production of the nation's inaugural glazed pottery. The individual in question has been honoured by having her name engraved on the Nigerian currency, specifically the twenty naira note (#20), as a means of acknowledging her significant contributions to the progress and development of the country. A considerable proportion of Gbagyi women are actively engaged in utilising their skills and capabilities to contribute towards the advancement of Ushafa. The field of arts and cultures encompasses a wide range of creative expressions, including the production of various forms of pottery, decorative elements, and containers. The pottery skills exhibited by Gbagyi women have had a significant and noteworthy impact on the sustainable development of Nigeria.

Potter and Pottery

If given the chance, the Gbagyi women residing in Abuja have the potential to demonstrate diligence and make significant contributions to the progress and development of the country. Despite the various limitations experienced by Gbagyi women, they actively contribute to the acquisition of resources necessary for societal advancement. The

textile enterprises owned by the Gbagyi community offer economic advantages to individuals of both genders within the community. The Gbagyi region comprises multiple localities that function as residential areas for textile enterprises. It is fascinating to understand that the cotton used in the production of the fabric employed to manufacture Ajesude is domestically cultivated in the fields. The production of Gbagyi cultural fabric has experienced a significant transformation in recent times as a result of the impact of modernization. As a consequence, there has been a notable influx of contemporary-grade wool textiles and a progressive transformation in design trends over the course of time. The aforementioned patterns are generated through the amalgamation of a diverse spectrum of hues with patterns in black. Textile materials are currently employed in the production of a wide array of garments, encompassing different sizes and styles, including trousers, headgear, hats, sarongs, dresses, tops, and blouses. Cultural attire holds substantial importance for individuals within the Gbagyi community, irrespective of their geographical location, whether residing within their native land or abroad. The presence of appropriate attire is an obligatory prerequisite for attendance at wedding ceremonies.





A Potter and Pottery vessels

Conclusion

The classification of sexual organisms into discrete male or female categories is commonly known as "gender." The assertion posits a differentiation between individuals of male and female genders, beginning from the point of conception, with the assignment of sex at the time of birth being the decisive criterion. The young girl strives to imitate adult females, who are frequently regarded as members of the weaker gender according to societal norms and are frequently assigned domestic duties and tasks that are deemed less masculine. In numerous cultural contexts, there exists a prevailing notion that male progeny possess heightened physical power, frequently denoted as "men," consequently establishing their perceived dominance within the familial structure. As a result, he is tasked with more demanding responsibilities, such as tilling the soil, cutting firewood, clearing vegetation, planting seeds, and harvesting agricultural produce (Obi, 2018:2). Gbagyi males are culturally designated with traditional masculine roles encompassing the provision of resources, safeguarding the community, engaging in decision-making processes, assuming leadership positions, organising and managing various aspects, administering affairs, governing, demonstrating military prowess, and offering spiritual guidance. The Gbagyi community has implemented a patrilineal kinship system. The individual who holds the highest position of authority at the lowest level within the extended family compound is typically the eldest male. The collection consists of small residences and rectangular structures. In a Gbagyi community, the highest position of power and authority is occupied by the Esu, who is accompanied by a group of individuals known as kingmakers and respected elders. Abu (2023) asserts that male individuals participate in agricultural activities, hunting, and forestry work. The patriarch

assumes the position of leadership within the family unit and exercises authority over all matters pertaining to the family. Within the Gbagyi culture, there is a customary expectation for women to demonstrate characteristics such as submissiveness, obedience, respect, subservience, docility, cooperation, and support towards men. This is particularly observed within the realms of agricultural activities and household responsibilities. Moreover, it is the Gbagyi women who bear the responsibility of transmitting traditional and cultural knowledge to their progeny. Gbagyi women encounter limitations in their involvement in familial decision-making procedures. The Gbagyi women are acknowledged for their custom of bearing burdens on their shoulders, as they maintain the belief that the head possesses a sacred nature within the human body, functioning as the sovereign of the body and the repository of wisdom and knowledge, and thus ought not to be disturbed. Furthermore, it is evident that she consistently offers words of encouragement.

The term "culture" refers to the social behaviours, institutions, and practises that exist within human communities, as well as the individuals who make up these groups and their cognitive frameworks, beliefs, and abilities. The origin or development of culture is frequently ascribed to a particular geographic region or locality. The religion and culture of the Gbagyi indigenous community, known as Knunu, play a pivotal role in shaping and influencing their everyday existence. The manifestation of cultural identity is readily apparent in the ceremonial customs and traditions observed by individuals. The Gbagyi culture is manifested through a diverse range of ceremonial practises, including those associated with birth, marriage, funerals, and festival rites. The Gbagyi culture encompasses a range of elements, including culinary practises, traditional clothing, and a unique way of life. The Gbagyi traditional cultural marriage holds significant importance. As per Unumen (153), it is expected that a man, upon declaring his love for the bride, must undertake a seven-year period of labour on the agricultural estate owned by the bride's father. During this period, it is anticipated that he will engage in diligent labour and contribute to the provision of sustenance for the bride's household, thereby ensuring her proper nourishment. The execution of tasks has been modified by contemporary society. Currently, it is customary for the groom to provide financial compensation known as the bride's price rather than fulfilling a seven-year period of residence in the bride's father's household. The cultural lifestyles of Gbagyi women are being equally influenced by modernity. Women are undergoing a transformation from a traditionally passive, submissive, and inactive lifestyle to

actively participating in cultural endeavours within their respective communities.

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