

GBAGYI PHILOSOPHY AND TRADITIONAL OBJECTS

KawamaVirgilius

Veritas University Abuja

Bwari, Abuja

virgokaw@yahoo.com

Abstract

Gbagyi is a cover term for all the Gbagyi-speaking people. It can mean the tribal name of the people or the language of this specific people we are dealing with. Chigudu define Gbagyi as the name and the language of Gbagyi ethnic group who are predominantly found in Central Nigeria, with a population of about 12 million people. Gbagyi people inhabit Niger, Kaduna, Kogi and Nasarawa States, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. This paper presents the Gbagyi philosophy of traditional objects. That is the Gbagyi understanding of traditional objects and how much attention is attached to it. The study will cover the following areas of interest: Philosophy, Traditional Objects, Personal and Communal Traditional Objects, Man-made and Natural Traditional Objects, Relevance and Value of Traditional Objects, Relationship between Philosophy and Traditional Objects, Philosophy and Traditional Objects' impact on personal development.

Keywords:Gbagyi, Philosophy, Objects, Traditional

Introduction

This paper presents the Gbagyi philosophy of traditional objects. That is the Gbagyi understanding of traditional objects and how much attention is attached to it. The study will cover the following areas of interest: Philosophy, Traditional Objects, Personal and Communal Traditional Objects, Man-made and Natural Traditional Objects, Relevance and Value of Traditional Objects, Relationship between Philosophy and Traditional Objects, Philosophy and Traditional Objects' impact on personal development. Thereafter, a brief conclusion will be given.

Gbagyi is a cover term for all the Gbagyi-speaking people. It can mean the tribal name of the people or the language of this specific people we are dealing with. Chigudu define Gbagyi as “the name and the language of Gbagyi ethnic group who are predominantly found in Central Nigeria, with a population of about 12 million

people. Gbagyi people inhabit Niger, Kaduna, Kogi and Nasarawa States, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja”¹. *Gbagyi philosophy* is “the product of the thinking and experiences of the forefathers and mothers, that is men, women and children of former generations”². The ancestors and elders formed Gbagyi traditional ideas, they formulated traditional beliefs, they observed traditional ceremonies and rituals, they told proverbs and myths which carried traditional meanings. They also evolved laws and customs which safeguarded the life of the individual and the community. Gbagyi philosophy of traditional objects is “written not on papers but in people's hearts, minds, oral history, and rituals”³. The basis of Gbagyi philosophy of traditional objects is built on reasons drawn from the rationality, the psyche, the fantasy, and the feelings of the people. People belonging to Gbagyi ethnic group have strong trust in the beliefs and practices of their traditional ancestors. They turn to their beliefs and practices for whatever they are looking for. The philosophy of traditional objects dominates, in many ways, human life, thought, feelings, ethical codes, social life, political and economic activities.

It goes without saying that nothing academically is talked of or pursued without considering how the thought has been influenced by its history and culture. *Gbagyi* philosophy or way of thinking has its own historical and cultural background in the Gbagyi philosophical culture. The starting point of any philosophy can “be extracted from the cultural, linguistic and historical background of the people, if that philosophy is to have relevance and meaning for the people”⁴. *Gbagyi* philosophy provides its relevance and meaning to the Gbagyi people because it is grounded in the cultural, linguistic and historical background of the Gbagyi people themselves. The sources of Gbagyi philosophy of traditional objects are found in proverbs, oral traditions, stories, symbols, ethics and morals of the society. They are among “the major traditional vessels where African philosophy, religion and culture have continued to be preserved”⁵. They serve as templates for community coherence, continuity, courage, hope and joy. The sources are unique to the Gbagyi people who understand their traditional elements better. They have been affirmed and found essential by different generations. The affirmations follow a process or take some times because it is from the various experiences of life people form their traditional concepts of objects and over a period of time, these concepts become established. It takes time for any teaching to be accepted as an official teaching of the particular group of people. It is supposed to be a result of different experiences made by various

¹ Chigudu T. T. *Gbagyi and the Question of Leadership*, 45.

² Mbiti, S.J. *African Religions and Philosophy*, 4.

³ Mbiti, S.J. *African Religions and Philosophy*, 13.

⁴ Gyekye, Kwame, *Akan Concept of person*, 42.

⁵ Kanu, I.A., *Igwebuike: An Operative Condition of African Philosophy, Religion and Culture*, 20.

people who appreciate what they underwent and recommend it for the larger community.

What is Traditional Objects?

Tradition could be understood as something in existence which is part of a certain long-term established way of doing things, or something done in accordance with how they were done in the past. McBrien states that tradition is “both the process of handing on the faith and that which has been handed on”⁶. This is about the handing over of the peoples' traditional values from one generation to the next. The period something has been in existence and how the concerned people embrace it, is what determines whether an element is traditional or not. Wehmeier defined traditional as “being part of the beliefs, customs or ways of life of a particular group of people that have not changed for a long time”⁷.

In other ways it can be stated that tradition is what is “usual or established; acceptable, accustomed, acknowledged, ancestral, classic, classical, common, conventional, customary, doctrinal, fixed, folk, habitual, historic, immemorial, old, oral, popular, prescribed, regular, rooted, time-honoured, transmitted, universal, unwritten, widely used, widespread”⁸. What Kipfer has done is simply to provide some words which means or closely linked with the word 'traditional'. It has to be historical or immemorial, meaning whatever is traditional has to be in existence for many years. The tradition is to be acceptable and acknowledged by her followers, to remain with the same values of proper guidance to all who embrace it, and it has to be transmitted from one generation to the next, and this transmission nobody knows when it will end, if it will end at all.

Objects are known to carry meanings in themselves as concrete expressions of human intentions towards God, oneself and the invisible world. The objects where supernatural interventions are addressed by the elders of the families or communities on behalf of those who have no right to do so are called sacred. At this stage an object has become special meant only for special people made so either by age or appointment. Apart from those designated to perform rites on these places, nobody is permitted to play around the traditional objects.

Once objects are used for religious purposes they automatically become religious objects. They can be any objects under the earth used for religious reasons. Makumba says that “through objects of faith the visible world penetrates the invisible world, and man symbolically presents or offers the visible world to the invisible world”⁹.

⁶ McBrien, R. P. *Catholicism*, 1258.

⁷ Wehmeier, S. (Ed.). *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, 1569.

⁸ Kipfer, A. B. (Ed.). *Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus*, 815.

This is because what we see with our naked eyes leads us to what we cannot see with our naked eyes, but through our spiritual eyes, from the visible to the invisible reality. The common objects used for religious purposes that becomes religious objects include cattle, sheep, goats, kola nuts, money, beads, domestic utensils, old rugs, and so on. It is recommendable to understand that people do not necessarily have beliefs about these particular items. It is the intention and occasion of their use which make them religious objects. Once the objects are offered at shrines and other religious places they become religious objects. So they are not religious objects until the intention and occasion of their use is made clear and is acceptable.

Traditional objects are used for various ways including worshipping purposes because of the strong belief that they contain the spirit of God or of a deity. They can “be seen, felt or perceived as article, body, entity, fact, mass, matter, phenomenon, reality, something, substance”¹⁰ (Kipfer, 554). Traditional objects among the Gbagyi people of Tafa Local Government include trees, stones, mountains, rivers, bushes, forests, animals, and birds. Traditional object is “where the elders gather to exercise their authority and their power of intercession for the benefit of individuals, of groups and of the whole tribe”¹¹. The elders use the traditional objects not only for themselves but also for the benefits of every community member.

Traditional objects points towards something and participates in that to which it points. This is because traditional objects make people receptive to qualities of the world encountered. They open people's hearts to the new qualities with which that world, in cooperation with the spirit of man, can clothe itself. They enable people to see and feel the dimensions of the world better, the order of splendour, and of man's experience in and with it. Through traditional objects people understanding deeper the reality of life. Nevertheless, “the judgement on the dimension of an object can vary according to the importance the object has for the perceiver”¹². The same object can be more important to one person than the other. How disposed the person is to specific objects coupled with the influence an object might have had on the life of an individual determines its vitalness.

Cencini also realised that “the social value attributed to an object can influence perception, to the extent of making it appear larger than it is in reality”¹³. The society influences individual perception of traditional objects. When the society give special reverence to an object, every community member treats that object with honour and

⁹ Makumba, M. M. *Introduction to Philosophy*, 146.

¹⁰ Kipfer, A. B. (Ed.). *Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus*, 554.

¹¹ Novelli, B. *Karimojong Traditional Religion*, 72.

¹² Cencini, A. and Manenti, A. *Psychology and Formation*, 230.

¹³ Cencini, A. and Manenti, A. *Psychology and Formation*, 231.

respect. But if the community fail to acknowledge an object, no wonder how influential it has been on an individual life, in the eyes of the society that object does not matter. The “objects of negative value for the subject are often perceived as smaller in dimension, than in reality”¹⁴. The reality of a traditional object is determined by the influence of the traditional object on the individual and community life. The reality is unchangeable but depending on the individual or community that reality can be perceived to be smaller or bigger. Smaller when the life impact is little or negative and bigger when the impact is great or life changer.

It is true that “the property attributed to a stimulus is capable of modifying our perception. If a thing has a great value, I exaggerate it; if it has little value, I underestimate it; and if it is indifferent, I perceive it objectively”¹⁵. Therefore, how the object is treated very often has to be determined by the perceiver. This is because “the perception of an object varies according to the function it has in a given culture. An object that is necessary in one culture for its survival, can be irrelevant in another culture”¹⁶. The researcher, therefore, conclude that traditional objects should not be taken for granted. They are important in one's life the way it cannot be in another's life. They are more peculiar, and their peculiarity are as a result of the cultures they have foundations in.

Personal and Communal Traditional Objects

The researcher discovered that in Gbagyi village or family traditional setting, there are personal and communal traditional objects. These traditional objects may look the same but used for different specific functions as determined by the concerned people. There are many traditional objects in a Gbagyi land, some of which “belong to private individuals and families, while others belong to the whole community”¹⁷. They include places like shrines, groves, hills, mountains, rivers, amulets, charms, and masks. At the traditional objects, people make or bring sacrifices and offerings, such as animals, fowls, food, utensils, tools, and coins. They also make prayers there. They regard such places as holy and sacred places where people meet with God or gods.

Personal Traditional Objects

The researcher found out that some traditional objects belong to individual families, such as those connected with departed members of the family or their graves. These graves, acting as traditional objects for an individual or family, are usually placed at the centre of their home compounds. They are not made far from where people stay

¹⁴ Cencini, A. and Manenti, A. *Psychology and Formation*, 232.

¹⁵ Cencini, A. and Manenti, A. *Psychology and Formation*, 232.

¹⁶ Cencini, A. and Manenti, A. *Psychology and Formation*, 250.

¹⁷ Mbiti, S.J. *African Religions and Philosophy*, 11.

for various obvious reasons. The graves are at the middle of the immediate family members or behind ones' house because the traditionalists find that to be convenient, any time the personal or family need may arise, whether daytime or during the night, they can easily access them for immediate solutions or intervention of their ancestors. In this sense, Mbiti was correct when he said that "Personal sacrifices and offerings are normally made in or near the home, and in some areas people have shrines in their homes for this purpose. They may also be made in public places of sacrifices, or as the ritual elder or diviner may direct"¹⁸. The proximity of traditional objects to individual or family homes is to make it easy for the people whenever they need to talk to their ancestors. Since the object is within the compound, whether at night or day, people are free to go on with their inquiries.

These traditional objects can also be in the possession of the individual for his private or family use. They are "carried in a bag, or tied to his body (for example; to the wrist, ankle, neck or waist), or kept in the house, on the rooftop, at the gate to the homestead, or in the fields. They include preparations made by the medicine man, objects used for rituals, bones, roots or branches of trees, certain stones, domestic utensils, and so on. Some are intended to ward off evil magic, others to discourage thieves from stealing, some are concrete reminders of the living dead, and some simply assist the person in performing religious rituals or saying prayers"¹⁹. As it can be observed from the quotation, there are limitless forms of personal or family traditional objects. There are also uncountable reasons why people need traditional objects. They can be used for personal or family protection, as religious tools for prayers and sacrifices. Some traditional objects are exposed to the eyes of everyone while some are hidden like those found on the waist of an individual.

Communal Traditional Objects

Some traditional objects belong to the community and these are often in rocks, caves, hills, mountains, and trees. Communal sacrifices and offerings are normally made at shrines, groves, lakes, or waterfalls. The community come together for the common purpose because "People want to identify with each other and find solutions as a community. By getting together as a group to solicit God's help, the people not only strengthen and encourage one another in the face of distress, but they make the burden of suffering lighter to bear"²⁰. It is like coming together to help each other in carrying their daily burdens, sharing in individual pains and distress. It is a moment of consolation for every participant. They believe that those who attend and are convinced in the power of community life do not go back to their homes in the same

¹⁸ Mbiti, S.J. *Introduction to African Religion*, 20.

¹⁹ Mbiti, S.J. *Introduction to African Religion*, 144.

²⁰ Mbiti, S.J. *Introduction to African Religion*, 72.

way. There is a change that lightens individual burdens at the end of every communal ceremony.

Man-Made and Natural Traditional Objects

Traditional objects are in different forms as determined by the way they come into being. Some of these traditional objects are man-made, while others are made so by nature or they are natural. Mbiti has this to say about the traditional objects, “Some are made by men, but others are taken in their natural form and set apart for religious purposes”²¹. Those made by men are usually very close to the people like temples constructed within the environment, while natural traditional objects tend to be secluded, they are situated away from the people's homes and fields. The natural traditional objects include mountains, trees, stones, and water bodies, while the man-made traditional objects include temples, graves or shrines.

Man-Made Traditional Objects

Man-made traditional objects are not made for common or careless use. They are constructed for the purpose of community usage like religious inspiration or feelings. These objects are used for religious activities like praying, making offerings and sacrifices, and major ceremonies and rituals. It is the people who decide to make specific places for religious purposes. These include “temples, altars, shrines and graves”²². They are used by different people to satisfy their various hunger or thirst including good health, progress, and children.

Natural traditional objects are used for praying, making offerings and sacrifices, and major ceremonies and rituals of the communities. The natural traditional objects include “groves, forests, trees, waterfalls, rivers, lakes, rocks and mountains. They are symbolically the meeting-point between the heavens or sky and the earth, and therefore of the invisible and visible worlds. People use them for rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices, offerings and praying”²³. People believe natural traditional objects are the best means to present their aspirations or grievances.

These natural objects are the focus of communal faith, values, and sentiments. Groves, forests and trees are set apart for religious activities like rituals, ceremonies, prayers and sacrifices. For that reason, “people do not graze their cattle there or turn them into fields for growing their crops, and in many cases they do not use them for hunting or cutting firewood. If animals or people hide in sacred groves and forests, they may not be killed”²⁴. Whether traditional object is known to be sacred or not, as

²¹ Mbiti, S.J. *Introduction to African Religion*, 11.

²² Makumba. M. M. *Introduction to Philosophy*, 147.

²³ Makumba. M. M. *Introduction to Philosophy*, 149.

²⁴ Makumba. M. M. *Introduction to Philosophy*, 150.

long as it is considered to be traditional object, people are not allowed playing with it. Being traditional is enough reason to be highly respected by every cultured person.

Rocks, hills and mountains are used for rituals, sacrifices, offerings and prayers. These rituals, sacrifices, offerings, prayers, etcetera are made either facing the objects or at the foot of them. All the objects used in connection with the acts of mediation, understood in its wider sense, “tend to be considered sacred themselves, because of their connection with the persons who own them”²⁵. Implying that I may have the same object with the other person, but if I am not a community spiritual mediator, though this object is sacred to a mediator, mine will not be considered so. The office of an individual determines the sacredness of what he holds and use. That is why the young always look up to the elders whenever they wish the intervention of the ancestors in their life endeavours.

Relevance and Value of Traditional Objects

Kunhiyop states that “values are underlying, fundamental beliefs and assumptions that determine behaviour”²⁶. It is in these values that one's morality or ethical actions springs from. They are to be underlying fundamental beliefs and assumptions that determine the moral behaviour of every person. Traditional objects have a lot of relevance and value to a native of a Gbagyi land. These traditional objects make them unique from other ethnic groups. Their human acts cannot be adequately considered apart from having expressed their community deep-rooted beliefs. To ignore traditional objects is to deny a Gbagyi's beliefs, attitudes and practices. This can lead to a lack of understanding Gbagyi's behaviour and problems.

Traditional objects have played a vital role in building up people's confidence in their knowledge. According to Kunhiyop, “The traditions that are passed on from generation to generation become the scriptures of the people, that is, their source of knowledge about what God requires. This knowledge is maintained by the elders, who are the custodians of the rules and regulations that guide the whole community”²⁷. The people believes God is the one who handed over traditional objects' values and relevance to the ancestors or elders. The more reason why people should not take whatever the elders tell them for granted. The elder's voices are the voices of God; their good wishes for humankind are the wishes of God. The elders are selected or appointed partly due to their good reputation in the community, they are seen to be role models to others, and their age does not matter but only their commitment to the common good of the community counts.

²⁵ Novelli, B. *Karimojong Traditional Religion*, LXXIII.

²⁶ Kunhiyop, Samuel Waje, *African Christian Ethics*, 5.

²⁷ Kunhiyop, Samuel Waje, *African Christian Ethics*, 9.

The role of traditional objects in human life cannot be underestimated. The traditional objects are at the heart of every Gbagyi person. It is the objects that act as means of bridging the gap between a traditional man and God. Traditional objects, which are in material form, do not oppose the spiritual because through the material things we can reach the spiritual world. Traditional object is the link between humankind, the natural and supernatural world and God. In some circumstances, traditional objects “represent the voice of the people and express the interpretation of their beliefs, principles of life and conduct. It expresses the moral attitudes of a given culture, and reflects the hopes, achievements and failings of a people”²⁸.

The attitude towards traditional objects is generally of great respect, of veneration and, sometimes, even of fear. Everybody knows that from the way one behaves with them, depends on the quality of one's life, since it is through them that it is possible to obtain what is needed for one's personal life, for that of his family and for the prosperity. People are to take care of how they relate with the traditional objects as their relationships helps a lot in determining their future life.

Traditional objects promote the “areas of peace and tranquillity, health and general wellbeing of individuals, families, and of the whole community”²⁹. So the traditional objects not only unite god and his people, but also traditional people with their ancestors. They are part and parcel of human life. They have a great and important value that attracts people in a specific traditional land. They offer protection and blessings.

Relationship between Philosophy and Traditional Objects

When talking about philosophy and traditional objects, the first thing that comes to the mind of a critical thinker is to find out the link between the two terms. It is crystal clear that there is a strong relationship between philosophy and traditional objects, how people thinks and what influences their thinking. How philosophy interprets a situation is very much affected by the knowledge people have about the traditional objects. Traditional objects acts as source of knowledge and revelation to people of so much wisdom of the ancestors; it is what is revealed that guides one's perception of things. Ogundowole will say that, “The essential feature of Philosophy is its liberating effect”³⁰. The knowledge of traditional objects liberates people and aid them appreciate who they are and what they have. Philosophy tends to approach life critically with the use of reason, and yet no one can refute the fact that reasoning is affected by the knowledge one has about objects.

²⁸ Kanu, I.A., *Igwe Bu Ike as an Igbo-African hermeneutics of national development*, 59.

²⁹ Mugambi J.N.K. *A Comparative Study of Religion*, 40.

³⁰ Ogundowole, Kolawole, E., *Philosophy and Society*, 5.

Philosophers examine what is believed, why it is believed, what is meant by believing it and how that belief is practically expressed. In this case, it is finding out the philosophy behind traditional objects, reflecting on the reality, and examining what makes people of a certain tribe at ease with it. Philosophers generally have the background conviction that philosophy is basically a critical pursuit of the truth. To philosophize therefore means to reflect on the totality of things we encounter, in view of their ultimate reasons. Knowing in philosophy means knowing with certainty and by causes. It is only a philosophy that has the truth for its objective will strive to be in touch with the life of the people among whom it is nurtured and has its roots. It cultivates a spirit of communication in its quest to satisfy the thirsty for knowledge and the desire for the truth.

We cannot talk of philosophy in the vacuum; we need a specific people in the specific environment and culture to come up with a concrete philosophy. Philosophy “comes from a people and is the product of specific environments and is also placed in specific cultures”³¹. In our study, we are speaking of the philosophy of the Gbagyi people as expressed through their traditional objects. We want to know the truth about the traditional objects and how they affect the Gbagyi people who believe in them. Philosophy is behind the thinking and acting of every people. A study of traditional objects brings us into those areas of tribe lifestyles. According to Mbiti, through “word and action, we may be able to discern the philosophy behind. This involves interpretations of the information before us”³². It is the traditional objects that help a non-Gbagyi to understand the Gbagyi way of life better. The traditional objects around them affect all their thinking, philosophy, and lifestyles.

Philosophy is a science, which operates within the scope of natural human reason and seeks the ultimate causes of reality. It is this “inner nature of philosophy that gives it its bridging capacity to relate with human culture, with the particular sciences, with the contemporary world and with faith. It is therefore difficult to undervalue or suppress philosophy in the process of formation toward a true and authentic humanism, and especially in view of the mission to humanity of those under formation of whatever kind”³³. It is clear from this that philosophy is a human science involved in the concrete life of the human person and therefore the problems with which it deals have to do with human life, seeking to find lasting solutions to them, solutions that respond to the human person's highest aspiration. This will fulfil the dream of Kolawole Ogundowole who said that, “The essential feature of philosophy is its liberating effect”³⁴. Philosophy liberates people from some unanswered queries of their lives.

³¹ Makumba. M. M. *Introduction to Philosophy*, 8.

³² Makumba. M. M. *Introduction to Philosophy*, 1.

³³ Makumba. M. M. *Introduction to Philosophy*, 12.

³⁴ Ogundowole, Kolawole, E., *Philosophy and Society*, 3.

In life, at times people just find themselves at the crossroad. This is a moment of confusion. They do not know where to go. At times they do not even perceive which direction could be the best and be able to offer greatly desired results. It is in this point in time that people are to appeal to philosophy which is “the critical analysis of fundamental concepts of human inquiry, and the normative discussion of how human thought and action ought to function, as well as the description of the nature of reality”³⁵. The reality at hand when critically analysed can give people answers to their inquiries. Philosophy critically throws light in the meaning, nature and structure of traditional objects. Richmond James defines philosophy as “an inquiry into reality as a whole”³⁶. Philosophers do not wish to take traditional objects for granted but use their realities to add to the wisdom local people already have. They do not want people to follow the transmitted wisdom found in the objects without critically analysing them. According to Fredrick Ferre, philosophy is “one’s way of thinking most comprehensively”³⁷. Philosophers think comprehensively about the traditional objects. And as they do so, their knowledge of things is widened.

Philosophy has always been for the good of the people. It does not criticise people’s way of life or thinking to bring them down but to elevate them. Its driving force has been “the attempt to provide arguments or good reasons for our conclusions”³⁸. In short, philosophy would not like to leave any issue hanging; it wants to find tangible solutions to questionable situations. Philosophy involves love and search for knowledge. Olusegun Oladipo will say that philosophy is a “criticism of the ideas we live by”³⁹. If people continue living and encountering new ideas, then there will be cause for continuous philosophising. This continuous philosophising will always bring in new knowledge that will help people live their lives within time and not out of time.

Fadahunsi will say that Philosophy “implies not only a body of ideas but also an outlook and attitude to life, issues, and problems relating to life and the world. It is an embodiment of ideas in various combinations and forms which every conscious being possesses directly or indirectly”⁴⁰. In this sense, philosophy encompasses all what surround human beings. Chatalian conceives philosophy “essentially as the pursuit of wisdom and consequently, the search for the guide to life”⁴¹. Philosophy becomes the compass to direct people into different paths, of course, the right paths by avoiding the wrong ones. The philosopher is expected to “promote a better

³⁵ Geisler, L., Norman and Paul, D., Feinberg. *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian perspective*. 17.

³⁶ Richmond, James. *Theology and Metaphysics*, 1.

³⁷ Ferre, Fredrick. *Language, Logic, and God*, 2.

³⁸ Lawhead, F. William. *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, XXVI.

³⁹ Olusegun Oladipo. *Thinking about Philosophy: A General Guide*, 18.

⁴⁰ Fadahunsi, Ayo. (Ed.). *Philosophy and Society: An Introduction for Beginners*, 3.

⁴¹ Chatalian, G. *Philosophy, the World, and Man: A Global Conception*, 8.

understanding of the human condition, as a means of enhancing the human capacity to cope with the challenges of life. The function of philosophy everywhere is to examine the intellectual foundations of life, using the best available modes of knowledge and reflection for human well-being”⁴². The intellectual foundation of life for the Gbagyi is their traditional objects. Rickman will say that the philosophic spirit “leaves no valuations and aspirations unexamined and no piece of knowledge isolated; it seeks the grounds for the validity of whatever is valid”⁴³. Philosophy and traditional objects are bonded by the philosophic spirit that demonstrates how much they depend on each other. Philosophy needs traditional objects for continuous assessment of human knowledge while traditional objects also need philosophy for it to be understood and appreciated by people. There are so many traditional objects declared to be important, but philosophy will not just accept until their importance is being tested and confirmed. It is after this conscious tests and confirmation that people's new ideas and values will improve “the quality of human relations between the people”⁴⁴. People's dream is to let any source of knowledge improve human relations. The knowledge acquired through the study of traditional objects is to facilitate the relationships between people, and to extend this relationship to God and the creation in general led by the spirit of interconnectedness.

The human reason and sense of feeling help the human person to discover that life is a relationship, and that a sense of community and relationship is indispensable for the achievement of the meaning of life. This relationship “goes beyond the meaning of the individual human life to include questions about the meaning of the life of humanity as a whole, without excluding all biological life and all of space and time existence. It is within the context of relationships that the human person finds his or her completeness and makes his or her contribution to the human community and world as a whole”⁴⁵. This is what gives meaning to the human life. There is no meaning outside of the discovery of this completeness and his or her contribution to the world that holds him or her.

Philosophy and Traditional Objects' Impact on Personal Development

The philosophy and traditional objects have marvellous impact on personal development. It is what individuals are told about their traditional objects and how they become source of knowledge that affects their thinking about everything pertaining with their lives. Kunhiyop thus states, “the oral tradition, that is, the main stories and legends by which knowledge is transmitted across generations by way of the spoken, as opposed to the written, words. This tradition includes myths and

⁴² Akanmidu, R.A. (Ed.). *Footprints in Philosophy*, 11.

⁴³ Rickman, H.P. (Ed.). *Dilthey: Selected writings*, 129.

⁴⁴ Ottaway, A.K.C. *Education and Society: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education*, 210.

⁴⁵ Kanu, I.A., *Igwebuike as an Igbo-African Perspective of the Meaning of Life*, 12.

stories, liturgies, songs and proverbs”⁴⁶. A serious person will not joke with any story or legend as told by the elders. In them there is knowledge and wisdom to guide an individual into what he is expected of by the society. Kunhiyop emphasize this point stating that the “myths and legends are traditional stories about something that happened in the past which explains something in the present”⁴⁷. Though they are old stories, they are still valid in the present age, they link present events with the past events, and they are a proof that history repeats itself. Though they are not written on hardcopy papers, they are written in the minds and hearts of our elders. As the consequence of that fact, the more respect people offer the stories, myths, or legends, the more they gain for their personal development or growth.

The philosophical development of every human being is affected much by the spiritual and social beliefs of the community. And since the Gbagyi people have given a special status to traditional objects such as particular mountains, rivers, lakes, caves, forest, and animals, philosophically the natives approach life in a special way that seems normal to them. From childhood, those brought up in the traditional setting regard objects as sources of healing, as objects of contacts with the spiritual being, as objects of revelation and transformation. This confirms the words of Kanu that “Life is a life of sharedness, one in which another is a part thereof”⁴⁸. The values attached to traditional objects, which are shared by all people available, no doubt affect the philosophical development of the Gbagyis. Their reasoning to a larger extent is controlled by what they hear from their parents and elders whom they believe to be the greatest initiator of traditional values.

According to Mbiti, philosophy “refers to the understanding, attitude of mind, logic, and perception behind the manner in which Africans think, act or speak in different situations of life”⁴⁹. Every knowledgeable Gbagyi person feels duty bound to promote the philosophy or knowledge of traditional objects, as they believe it affects their perceptions of things. Even where some natives seems to have forgotten, some Gbagyis act as a reminder for others, encouraging the young people to study better their traditional objects as this will lead to a more reasonable future of the society. Philosophical development is affected positively or negatively by everything that goes on in the society. Once there is confusion in the society, the people's philosophical growth is also confused. And due to confusion, as days goes on; people will try to resolve some cultural problems they might have been growing up with.

⁴⁶ Kunhiyop, Samuel Waje, *African Christian Ethics*, 10.

⁴⁷ Kunhiyop, Samuel Waje, *African Christian Ethics*, 11.

⁴⁸ Kanu, I.A., *New Africanism: Igwebuikwe as a Philosophical Attribute of Africa*, 95.

⁴⁹ Mbiti J.S., *African Religion and Philosophy*, 8.

Philosophy is an attempt “by human beings to understand themselves and their environment, is not only a means of forming a view of life, but also an instrument for examining ideas”⁵⁰. In other ways, people would not like to take life for granted but treat whatever happens with ultimate seriousness so as to gain better knowledge. They are able to understand and interpret their environment with a more realistic view and examined ideas.

Members of an ethnic group “share certain beliefs, values, habits, customs, and norms because of their common background. They define themselves as different and special because of cultural features. This distinction may arise from language, religion, historical experience, geographical isolation, kinship, or race. Makers of an ethnic group may include a collective name, belief in common descent, a sense of solidarity, and an association with a specific territory, which the group may or may not hold”⁵¹. *Gbagyi* philosophy of traditional objects facilitates personal development of the people who realises their common historical background and cultural features that needs to be preserved always not only for the good of the present time but of the future generation too. All what makes an ethnic group special is the philosophy behind it. And this philosophy behind a specific group of people is to be promoted so as people may remain rooted into their cultural and historical uniqueness and values.

Conclusion

The Gbagyis have a very strong belief in traditional objects. The way they talk about their traditional objects reflects the fact that they are ready to pass on good values of traditional objects to the future generation. They believe the values of Gbagyi traditional objects will continue being in existence for many years to come. In times of trials, they turn to their traditional objects for solutions. The attitudes of the Gbagyi people towards their life experience as individuals and communities, what they feel, undergo, and how they respond to life situations cannot be explained without mentioning how the philosophy of traditional objects affects them.

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⁵⁰ Akinyemi, Onigbwide, *The Human Exploration: An Introduction to Philosophy*, 5.

⁵¹ Ryan, S., *Ethnic Conflict and international Relations*, xiii.

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