

**Nigeria and the Global Economy
Since 1900**

**Essays in Honour of
Professor Olutayo C. Adesina**

Edited by
**Monsuru Muritala
Mutiat Oladejo
Felix Ajiola
Wasiu Alabi**



Published by **JOHN ARCHERS** (Publishers) Ltd.
First Floor Egun Isola House 53 Gbadebo Str. Mokola
GPO Box 339, Dugbe, Ibadan © 0803 4476 916, 0701 085 1055
e-mail: archersbooksonline@gmail.com
johnarchers@yahoo.co.uk

© Monsuru Muritala, Mutiat Oladejo,
Felix Ajiola, Wasiu Alabi 2024

First published 2024

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission of the Editors, who are the copyright owners.

ISBN 978-978-60834-2-1

Editors' Acknowledgement

This book would have been inconceivable without the vision, invaluable commitments and input of individuals within and outside the academic world.

First and foremost, a special debt of gratitude is owed to the forty-one Contributing Authors of this book. Their richly researched chronicles of Nigeria's economic situations, problems, and prospects since 1900 provide perspectives for students, teachers, researchers, and interested publics on the Economic History of Nigeria.

Second, our appreciation goes to Dr. Oluwakemi A. Adesina, whose commitment and support we have found inestimable since we told her about our intention to present a surprise gift, so to say, to our Teacher and Mentor, Professor Olutayo Charles Adesina. Her words of encouragement and support are indeed, invaluable.

Third, we are indebted to the following individuals for their commitment to the book project, especially at the production stage of the manuscript: Professors Akanmu Adebayo, Siyan Oyeweso, Victor Edo, Rasheed Olaniyi, Noah Echa Attah, Dmitri Van de Berselaar, and Drs Adewumi Adebayo, Gerardo Serra, Katharina A. Oke, Mr. Idowu Awoderu and Ms Uzoamaka Nwachukwu.

Finally, our profound gratitude goes to John Archers Publishers Ltd for their professionalism and industry in the editing, typesetting and publishing of the book.

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	ix
<i>List of Contributors</i>	x
Chapter 1: Introduction <i>M. Muritala, Mutiat Oladejo, F. Ajiola and W. Alabi</i>	1
SECTION A: PERSPECTIVES ON COLONIAL ECONOMY IN NIGERIA	
Chapter 2: Migrant-Indigene Employment Challenge in Colonial Lagos: Informal Sector Perspective <i>Monsuru Muritala</i>	11
Chapter 3: The Urban-Rural Transportation Network in Ibadan in the 20th Century <i>Wasiu Alabi</i>	28
Chapter 4: British Colonial Economic Policies and Oil Palm Plantations in Nigeria <i>Noah Echa Attah</i>	47
Chapter 5: Kolanut Trade in Osun Division of Western Nigeria, 1900-1960 <i>Abiodun Ajayi</i>	64
Chapter 6: Colonisation and Urbanisation in Owerri, Nigeria, 1902-1930 <i>Ononiwu Oparah</i>	74
Chapter 7: Colonial Taxation, Protest and Migration in Igalaland, 1904-1960 <i>Okpaniachi Amodu</i>	97
Chapter 8: <i>Iya Alaso</i> in the Commercial Exchanges of Textile Trade in Western Nigeria, 1930s-1970s <i>Mutiat Oladejo and Dhikru Adewale Yagboyaju</i>	119
Chapter 9: Roles and Conditions of African Middlemen During Colonial Rule, 1930-1960 <i>Rosemary Akpan</i>	131
Chapter 10: Crafting Nigeria's Path: World War II, Imperial Forces, and the Dynamics of PostColonial Dependency <i>Oluwakemi A. Adesina and Jacob Olaoluwa Adesina</i>	153

Chapter 11:	The Police, Labour Protests and Nationalist Agitations in Colonial Nigeria, 1945-1960 <i>Saheed Amusa</i>	169
Chapter 12:	The "Peasant Proprietor": World War II and Colonial Industrialisation Process in Nigeria <i>Olusegun O. Olaniyi</i>	183
Chapter 13:	Plantain Trade and the Growth of Apomu Indigenous Economy, 1900-2015 <i>Adedire Adegboyega</i>	194
SECTION B: NIGERIA AND GLOBAL ECONOMIC INITIATIVES		
Chapter 14:	African Enterprise, Foreign Business and Economic Development: The Relationships Between the United Africa Company (UAC) and Local Entrepreneurs in Nigeria <i>Dmtri Van den Bersselaar</i>	205
Chapter 15:	Statistical Pan-Africanism: The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in the 1960s <i>Gerardo Serra</i>	226
Chapter 16:	The Structural Adjustment Programmes and the Nigerian Economy, 1980-2000 <i>Felix Oludare Ajiola</i>	245
Chapter 17:	Foreign Aid, Democracy and Development in Nigeria Since 1999 <i>Adeola Jesuye Iyanuoluwa and Oladayo Bode Akanbi</i>	262
Chapter 18:	Reimagining Women in Development and Social Transformation in Ibadan, Western Nigeria <i>Olusola Ojo</i>	282
SECTION C: NIGERIAN ECONOMY SINCE INDEPENDENCE		
Chapter 19:	A Historical Evaluation of Government Economic Policies and Nigerian Economic Growth, 1960-2010 <i>Babatunde Olabiyi Osiyale and Jamiu Kolawole Audu</i>	309
Chapter 20:	An Historic Survey of the Nexus Between Economic Development and Nation Building in Nigeria, 1960-2015 <i>Henry Olalekan Adebodun</i>	344

Chapter 21:	Nigeria and Russia Since 1960: A History of Bilateral Relations <i>Kayode Omotade and Adcola Oluwafemi</i>	357
Chapter 22:	Poverty and Inequality Reduction Within the Frame of Nigeria's PostColonial Economic Development <i>Jacob Olayemi Ogunniyi</i>	372
Chapter 23:	Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Academics in Nigeria's Public Universities <i>Fehintola Tunbosun Akinwale</i>	394
Chapter 24:	Global Coronavirus Pandemic and its Lockdown Antecedent: An Explorative Impact in Lagos <i>Moses I. Olatunde Ilo and Olayemi Jacob Ogunniyi</i>	409
Chapter 25:	Mass Transit System and Economic Development in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja <i>Umunnakwe Cherish, Osoria Vanessa and Akanbi Oladayo</i>	428
Chapter 26:	Where is the Border? Food Security and the Trans-Border Yam Flour Trade in Oyo North, Nigeria <i>Jacob Olusola Bamigbose</i>	446
SECTION D: SOCIOECONOMIC THOUGHTS ON NIGERIA		
Chapter 27:	The Right Hand in Indigenous African Economic Thought: Case of the Benin People of Southern Nigeria <i>Idahosa Osagie Ojo and Victor Osaro Edo</i>	461
Chapter 28:	Lumpen Childhood – <i>Almajirai</i> Phenomenon in Northern Nigeria <i>Taofiki Aminu, Mas'ud Bello, Yusuf Amuda Jimoh and Aliyu Muazu</i>	483
Chapter 29:	Ladipo Market Mosaic: The Dynamics of Social Networks and Commerce in a Nigerian Market <i>Olumide Ekanade and Tinuola Ekanade</i>	497
Chapter 30:	Nation-Building, Economy and the Challenges of Religion in Nigeria, 1914-2010 <i>Ayodele Samuel Abolorunde (formerly, Aborisade)</i>	523
	<i>Index</i>	551

Foreword

In the rich tapestry of contemporary Nigerian historiography, few names resonate with such significance and scholarly rigour as that of Professor Olutayo Charles Adesina, FNAL. This festschrift, dedicated to the esteemed Professor Olutayo Charles Adesina, FNAL, is a compendium of unique scholarly insights on Nigeria's socioeconomic history from the colonial era to contemporary times. Representing diverse perspectives, it serves as a significant addition to the historiography of Nigeria in particular, enriching our understanding of the country's narrative and contributing to the broader discourse on African history.

Assembled to celebrate Adesina's academic and historical scholarship, this collection of essays, curated from the minds of scholars both within and beyond Nigeria, delves into key areas of his research interests, including the Economic and Social History of Nigeria, Development Studies, Regional Integration, and African History. Adesina's indelible contributions in these fields not only establish him as a distinguished African scholar but they also underscore his global academic eminence, exemplified by his recent accolade—the United Kingdom's Global Professorship Award for 2023–2024 bestowed by the British Academy.

The essays contained within this festschrift delve into myriad aspects of Nigeria's economic and social history, spanning the colonial era to the postcolonial period. Organised into four principal sections, they offer a comprehensive examination of Nigeria's socioeconomic landscape. The inaugural section meticulously dissects various dimensions of colonial economic history, shedding light on pivotal topics such as British colonial economic policy, taxation systems, migration dynamics, urbanisation trends, labour movements, trade and commerce, nationalist movements, and the industrialisation process.

Transitioning to the second section, the focus shifts to Nigeria's engagement with the global economy. Here, contributors explore Nigeria's economic interdependence with the global community, offering nuanced analyses of key initiatives and partnerships. For example, one chapter scrutinises the dynamic interplay between the United Africa Company (UAC) and local entrepreneurs, critically evaluating their participation in the colonial economy. Additionally, while one chapter examines the impacts of Structural Adjustment Programmes on Nigeria's economy from 1980 to 2000, another explores the ramifications of foreign aid on Nigeria's development trajectory since 1999.

The third section of this festschrift turns its gaze towards the Nigerian economy since independence, offering a comprehensive analysis of the country's economic trajectory under successive governments, both civilian and military, since 1960. These essays provide valuable insights into post-independence economic policies and their implications for Nigeria's development journey. In addition to economic

policies, the discourse in this section is punctuated by a range of pertinent issues, including Nigeria–Russia relations, the pervasive challenges of poverty and inequality, and the socio-economic impact of contemporary phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Concluding the festschrift, the fourth section delves into profound socioeconomic reflections on Nigeria. Here, scholars delve into indigenous African economic paradigms, examining intriguing topics such as the role of indigenous economic thought among the Benin people of Southern Nigeria, the complexities of childhood dynamics embodied in the Almajirai phenomenon in Northern Nigeria, and the vibrant social networks and commercial dynamics of markets exemplified by the Ladipo Market mosaic. Additionally, essays reflect on the intersection of nation-building, economy, and religion in Nigeria from 1914 to 2010, offering insightful perspectives on the country's socioeconomic landscape.

Considering the richness of its content, this book comes highly recommended to historians, aspiring historians, scholars, and general readers alike. Through meticulous analysis and scholarly inquiry, it offers invaluable insights into the socio-economic history of Nigeria, enriching our understanding of the country's past and present. In essence, this festschrift stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of Professor Olutayo Adesina, FNAL, whose over three decades of academic engagement and knowledge production have left an indelible mark on the landscape of historical scholarship in Nigeria and Africa at large. It is a fitting tribute to a scholar whose contributions have earned him global academic recognition, underscoring the significance of his intellectual pursuits and the enduring impact of his scholarship.

Professor Rasheed Oyewole Olaniyi
Head, Department of History
University of Ibadan, Ibadan

CHAPTER SIX

Colonisation and Urbanisation in Owerri, Nigeria, 1902-1930

Ononiwu Oparah

Introduction

Colonial rule in Owerri became possible as a result of European conquest and dominance, first in the coastal cities, then in the hinterland, in which Owerri is an integral part of that interior. Every other interior part of eastern Nigeria equally came under colonial rule sequentially. For instance, by 1895, the Niger Coast Protectorate authorities had developed strong footings at the coast and stood on this firm control at the coastal cities as a springboard to have a leeway into the southern part of Igboland. By so doing, the British next line of action was to make inroad to the hinterland proper. However, they had an obstacle in maneuvering the Ibibio and Aro, who were at the crossroads of the British pathway to the hinterland.¹

At this time, the imperial government of the British had concluded that only by defeating the Aro could they achieve the clamor for military and political control of the hinterland people. In the quest for actualisation of this ambition, the British government began the Aro expedition in late November 1901, and by Christmas Day of the same year, the Aro had been defeated without much resistance. Subsequently, by March 1902, the final execution of the war against the Aro had ended with the British on the victorious side.² With the British standing in this vantage position, one Ibibio and Igbo Village group succeeded in falling into the hands of British military forces.

The point of emphasis and concern here is that the success of the British campaign in the interior, starting with the Aro and their Ibibio neighbors, paved the way for the British occupation of Owerri as part of the Igbo

-
- ¹ A.E. Afigbo (1980). *The Eastern Provinces Under Colonial Rule. Groundwork of Nigerian History*. O. Ikime (ed.), Ibadan: HEBN, 413.
 - ² A.E. Afigbo (1980). *The Eastern Provinces Under Colonial Rule . . .* 413 and Anene, J.C. & Brown, G. (1966). *Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 282-283.

hinterland. It is important to be reminded that the overthrow of the authorities and independence of the Igbo village states were accomplished in two main ways: by treaty and by war.³ Although Owerri was not known to have put on coordinated resistance to the imperial forces of the British colonial government, other parts of the Igbo hinterland, such as the Olokoro clan of Umuahia, Uzuakoli in Bende, Afikpo, Umuahia, Akwete, Onitsha Hinterland, Ezza, Ovoru, Ahiara, Isikwuato, Etche, Ntarakpu, and others, were not conquered by British forces of expedition to the hinterland without resistance.⁴ In fact, during the 20-year period between 1900 and 1920, the people of south-east Nigeria engaged British troops in about 300 battles.⁵

It was the British access and occupation of Owerri in 1902 that led to the alteration of the people's pattern of settlement to what is now known as urban inhabitation. The paper seeks to examine British colonisation in Owerri and how this laid the foundation for urbanisation and brought about a change in the pattern of settlement in the area during the period under study. In 1928, there was already a clear demarcation between the settlement of indigenous people of Owerri and that of the colonial government of the British. This ostensibly affected the settlement pattern of the indigenous people living within 4 kilometers radius of the area mapped out for Owerri government station. The Owerri government station plan of 1928 not only included school, quarters, sick bay but also provided cemetery for the use of Europeans within government residential areas.

Review of Related Literature

J. Uyanga, *Towards a National Urban Policy*, emphasises Nigerian urban structural growth in general. He reiterates that urbanism in Nigeria predates British colonisation. The book reveals that the history of urbanisation in the

³ Max Siollun. *What Britain did to Nigeria: A Short History of Conquest and Rule*. London: Hurst and Company, 2021, p. 214 and Afigbo, A.E. (1981). *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture*. Ibadan: University Press Limited. 285.

⁴ Siollun. *What Britain did to Nigeria: A Short History of Conquest and Rule*, p.188. See also Afigbo, A.E. (1980). *The Eastern Province Under Colonial Rule ...* 413-414. Note: After defeating the Aro and Ibibio by 1902, other hinterland areas starting from 1902 fall to the British military forces sequentially. Up to 1917, the British forces were still subduing various pockets of resistance in the Igbo hinterland.

⁵ Siollun. *What Britain did to Nigeria: A Short History of Conquest and Rule*, 188.

northern part of the country was well elucidated by Clapperton in 1829, Barth in 1857, and Leo Africanus in 1896, where the writers describe the wealth and economic activities of Kano, Katsina, Kanem, Bornu, Sokoto, and Gummel as a result of their involvement in trans-Saharan trade. Similarly to the Western Nigeria of Yorubaland, Johnson states in 1921 that many of the towns came into existence as early as the 7th and 8th centuries, about the same time that some northern towns were flourishing.⁶ Notwithstanding, a greater part of the Yoruba urbanisation was attributed to colonisation of the region by the British in the nineteenth century.

Uyanga espouses that the development of towns as urban centres in the eastern part of the country has been more recent and was closely associated with the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the British colonial period.⁷ He demonstrates that the colonial administrative effect on the nature of urban development in Nigeria could be summarised in terms of two factors: the integration of the country and the establishment of a network of rail communication. He argues that these two factors had a tremendous impact on export crops and trade development, as well as on the development of port cities and new administrative centres.⁸

Above all, developments of urban centres in eastern Nigeria within the period of our study, such as Aba, Onitsha, Enugu, Port Harcourt, and Calabar, are mentioned, but no clue is left to understand the nature and structure of urban development in Owerri during the colonial period.

Falola on the article "The Cities" published in *Nigeria Since independence* re-emphasised that cityin Nigeria as product of urbanisation is neither post-independence nor colonial phenomenon. He argues that the growth of trans-Saharan trade and trade contacts with other parts of West Africa sustained the grassland cities of Katsina, Yelwa (Maiduguri), Zaria, and Kano. He equally cites the 19th century Jihad, which was responsible for the decline of a few towns while favoring the expansion of others, like Sokoto.⁹ As Falola contends, the trade with Europeans from the 15th century onward promoted the rapid expansion of towns such as Lagos, Ijebu Ode, Benin, Kalabari, Bonny and others that directly benefited from the contact.

⁶ J. Uyanga (1982). *Towards A Nigerian National Urban Policy*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1.

⁷ J. Uyanga (1982). *Towards A Nigerian National Urban Policy* . . . 1 & 2.

⁸ J. Uyanga (1982). *Towards A Nigeria National Urban Policy* . . . 2 & 3.

⁹ T. Falola (1989). 'The Cities.' *Nigeria Since Independence: The Society (Vol. 1)*. Edited by Usman Y.U. Ibadan: Heinemann Education Pub, 213.

He is of the view that, owing to colonial exploitation, new political, economic, and spatial organisation were introduced, the cities (urban areas) were subjugated, and the pre-colonial system of urban hierarchy was disrupted, especially from the coast to the interior through the railway system. Since the rail routes were designed to pass through areas with agriculture and mining potential for export, several towns were bypassed. Such towns as Kaduna, Jos, Enugu, Aba, and Port Harcourt, through which railways passed, developed rapidly.¹⁰ In Falola's write-up, urban development in Owerri remains wide open.

J. N. Obiegbu's thesis on *The Growth of Aba as An Urban Centre, 1900-1960* regards urbanisation in the modern sense as a phenomenon that has much to do with the availability of certain kinds of infrastructure, such as good roads, water supply facilities, and electricity. He reiterates that in the absence of these facilities, many urban areas would be no more than glorified villages. In fact, these facilities, as Obiegbu contends, are the main inducements for rural-urban migration, as young people of working age in particular leave rural settings in search of a better life in the cities.¹¹

Obiegbu equally states that the European conquest and penetration, the evolution of Western education, and Christian missionary activities were major impetuses that stimulated urban development in and around Aba in eastern Nigeria. Amidst his expository remarks on what a modern urban centre ought to be and the various elements that accelerated the growth of Aba as an urban area, it does not cover the evolution of Owerri as an urban centre during the colonial period.

Fourchard's article "African Urban History: Past and Present Perspective" is an expository essay on urban history in Africa, where he argues in a provocative manner that the 'ethnic bias, the emphasis on rural societies, the formulation of monographs of ethnic groups, the strong focus of family structure, and religious life left little information on the change that could have occurred within African cities'.¹² He states that because priority was

¹⁰ T. Falola (1989). *The Cities. Nigeria Since Independence: The Society (Vol. 1)* . . . 214.

¹¹ J.N. Obiegbu (1992). *The Growth of Aba as an Urban Center, 1900-1960: A Study of the Relative Contributions of Internal and External Factor*. Ph.D Thesis. Department of History, University of Ibadan, 134-135.

¹² L. Fourchard (2008). African Urban History: Past and Present Perspective. *The Context of Non-Linear History: Essays in Honour of Tekena Tamuno*. D. Layiwola, O. Albert and B. Muller (eds.), Ibadan: Sefer Books Ltd. 160-163.

given to theories of dependency, political history, and nationalism, historians were not dealing with urban history. Most of the time, historians were generally passing through the town without being concerned with urbanism or urbanisation.¹³ The central argument of Fourchard is that adequate attention has not been given to the study of African urban history since the pre-colonial era. Based on his perception, it is the combination of social, political, and religious scales that informs the way urban societies change identities and territories.

Fourchard courageously demands the need for adequate historical scholarship on African urban history, starting from the pre-colonial period. He equally refers to the evolution of urban development in western, northern, and coastal cities of Nigeria before colonial dominance and how colonial presence contributed to urban development in the eastern Nigerian hinterland in general, not specifically Owerri.

Conceptual Clarifications

Colonisation

Colonisation is the process of establishing foreign control over target territories or people for the purpose of cultivation (plantation) and exploitation of resources, often by establishing colonies and possibly by settling in them. Colonisation is the process of colonialism; as Horvath points out, people feel strongly about colonialism. It has either been a dirty business engaged by exploitative intention for the false purpose of saving the wretched, savage, or unfortunate.¹⁴ Colonisation is associated with the occupation of a foreign land by superior powers with the intention of settling colonists.¹⁵ Also, colonisation is when the act of colonialism is accomplished. For instance, when one country violently invades and takes over control of another country, it claims the land as its own and sends people to live and control the settlement.¹⁶ A typical example

¹³ L. Fourchard (2008). African Urban History: Past and Present Perspective . . . 165.

¹⁴ Ronald J. Horvath. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1972), 45-57. www.jstor.org/stable/2741072

¹⁵ Stephen Howe. *Empire: Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press), 21-31.

¹⁶ Jamil Osman. "What is Colonialism? A History of Violence, Control and Exploitation." October 11, 2020. www.teenvogue.com Accessed 02/06/2023.

of this is the British occupation of Nigeria, of which Owerri was an integral part.

Urbanisation

The meaning of urbanisation, urbanism, urban development, and cities varies from the ideas of some scholars. According to Lodha in the *Academic Dictionary of Geography*, the word "urban" originated from the Latin words *surbanus* and *urbs*, meaning a town in contrast to rural. Urbanisation is the process of an increasing concentration of people in towns, and when there is an increase in the percentage and in the number of people residing in a particular area, that area could be referred to as an urban settlement.¹⁷ While the urban explosion was a result of over-urbanisation, that is, the unprecedented rapid growth of cities associated with the industrial revolution, urbanised area is a central city and its contiguous built-up suburbs. Similarly, an urban settlement is a settlement in which the principal occupation of the residents is secondary or tertiary sector employment.¹⁸ The implication is that population growth, housing clusters, availability of daily markets and stores, secondary or tertiary sector employment, rural-urban migration, and lesser agrarian settlements are major characteristics of an urban center.

Segregation

Segregation simply means the action or state of setting someone or something apart from others. It also means the practice or policy of keeping people of different races, religions, etc. separate from each other.¹⁹ In the case of Owerri during the period under study, colonisation in Owerri carried a model that perpetuated segregation of the indigenous people. This led to the establishment of two settlement patterns in Owerri by demarcating European quarters from Native quarters. The features of these two settlements also varied in terms of building structure, construction, and the provision of amenities. However, this type of action (policy) is not in any way peculiar to Owerri people. Rather, it is common in Africa wherever colonisation happened.

¹⁷ R.M. Lodha (2010). *Academic Dictionary of Geography*. New Delhi: Academic Publisher, 112.

¹⁸ R.M. Lodha (2010). *Academic Dictionary of Geography* . . . 112.

¹⁹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary S.V: "Segregation," 2024.

Owerri Under Colonial Rule

After a major part of the hinterlands had been conquered, the colonial administration quickly set in to ensure the consolidation and protection of the British sphere of interest in the area. The British colonial administrative structure established three divisions in the Eastern Province, of which Owerri became part. These were the Eastern division centered at Calabar, the Cross River division administered from Ediba, and the Central division anchored at Onitsha. The British colonial power reached Owerri through the Cross River Division, where the division areas of jurisdiction embraced much of the unspecified territory. It is noted that the three divisions remained the basic administrative structure of the area until the Southern Nigeria Protectorate was amalgamated with the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos in 1906.²⁰ With this new development, it provided the British with a resounding leverage to establish their government in Owerri proper. It is essential to point out that by 1902, the British Colonial Government had come into Owerri, and a system of native council was established against the wishes of the indigenous inhabitants of Owerri. Starting in 1902, Owerri directly began to be administered together with Oratta (Uratta) communities in the local government structure as part of the Oratta Clan.²¹

The amalgamation of Southern and Northern Nigeria in 1914 created a dramatic change with reorganisation that saw the then southern provinces broken into nine smaller provinces. Four of these newly created provinces that lay east of the Niger were the Owerri, Calabar, Onitsha, and Ogoja Provinces, which virtually embraced all the people of the Eastern Region created in 1939. In turn, each of the provinces was split into divisions, and each division was equally divided into districts.²² Some major reasons were

²⁰ A.E. Afigbo (1980). *The Eastern Province Under Colonial Rule . . .* 415.

²¹ *Profile on Owerri Municipal Council, Imo State*. A publication of the Owerri Municipal Council, 23rd October, 2007. Note: The main area that made up of Oratta (Uratta) Clan then were the present three local government of Owerri Municipal Council, Owerri West local Government Area, Owerri North Local Government Area and Ngor Okpala.

²² A.E. Afigbo (1980). *Eastern Province Under Colonial Rule . . .* 415, National Archives of Nigeria, Enugu (NAE). *Sessional Paper No: 46*. 1940. Also Afigbo, A.E. (1981). *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press Limited. 310. Here in the book, *Ropes of Sand . . .* dividing the south more than the North after the amalgamation of 1914 was given Lugardian

known to be responsible for this breakdown of the provinces into divisions and districts. One common observation obviously noticed with this kind of arrangement was the difficulties emanating from the subjugation of the Eastern Province into a single administrative unit. Two, it was for the purpose of administrative convenience through the introduction of indirect rules in the area.²³ Close observation has shown that at the initial stage, only Owerri and Calabar were regarded as the first-class provinces east of the Niger. Based on this position, both the resident and the officers under the two provinces were in charge of political affairs, education, agriculture, prisons, and other aspects of indigenous people's lives that required the attention of the colonial officer in charge of the area.²⁴

The Owerri Province, though predominantly Igbo, included other non-Igbo groups such as the Eastern Ijo, Ogoni, Abua, and others. At this initial stage, Owerri Province started off with four divisions, namely Owerri, Aba, Okigwe (Okigwi), and Degema, with non-Igbo elements dominantly in this last division.²⁵

The Native Administrative Council, established in 1902 by the British colonial government, took control of the native council in Owerri. The people did not stage formal resistance against this new unfamiliar power, seen as an imposition of foreign rule against the common interest of the indigenous people. With the establishment of native authority, the colonial government developed a strong foothold and by 1906 colonial administration had become pronounced in Owerri.²⁶ Henceforth, district officers were appointed to directly run the affairs of Owerri division and report to the resident officer, who lived in Port Harcourt and Umuahia most of the colonial period, in charge of the province whenever the need arose.

interpretation by ironically seeing the South as more heterogeneous than that of Northern Nigeria.

²³ T.N. Tamuno (1980). *The British Colonial Administration in Nigeria in the 20th Century*. Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: HEBN. 395. Also, ObaroIkime (2006). *History, the Historian and the Nation*. Ibadan: HEBN. The listed books outlined reasons why the colonial authority adopted system of Indirect Rule in the then Eastern Region and the Southern Protectorate.

²⁴ A.E. Afigbo (1980). *Eastern Province Under Indirect Rule* . . . 415.

²⁵ A.E. Afigbo (1981). *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 311.

²⁶ A. Ononiwu. *Oparah, Urban Development in Oweri, 1900-1960*, An M.A. Dissertation Submitted to the Department of History, University of Ibadan, 2015, 34.

Notwithstanding the fact that District Officers (D.O.) administered the Divisional Office, in some cases, Assistant District Officers were appointed to assume the position of D.O. For example, Assistant District Officer W.F.H. Newington, in charge of Owerri District at Owerri Government Station in July 1938, stated, "I hereby certify that I have handed over to Mr. A.E. Cook, District Officer, all government stores and equipment of the Provincial Administration hitherto under my charge."²⁷

District Officer Harold M. Douglas, who introduced the Owerri Native Administration Council at the beginning, concentrated more of his administrative telescope on the Oratta Clan, which comprises the host communities for Owerri Government Station. It could be inferred that the D.O. Douglas was prudently busy making acquaintances with Owerri and its environs before expanding his territorial horizons. Nevertheless, H.M. Douglas made somewhat impressive remarks and rendered efficient services both to the local people and the imperial government by opening up the Owerri area between 1902 and 1910, when his tenure was deeply felt.²⁸ D.O. Douglas also helped the provincial government by opening roads connecting to Owerri government station for easy onward movement of colonial administrators. For instance, one Onyekakie member for Ezinihite at the Owerri Native Administration Council meeting reported to F.C. Royce, who was the district officer in charge of the Owerri government station overseeing the divisional area of Owerri and the district in 1930, that "a road made from Nguru through Eke Isu to Okpala, which was made by Douglas, is due for maintenance."²⁹

Also, Amadikwa of Abaja noted in a similar manner that an old road opened by Mr. Douglas that runs from Owerri through Emekuku to Nguru requires attention by emphasising the importance of the road. In reply to the above complaints, F.C. Royce acknowledged the effort of Mr. Douglas in connecting

²⁷ National Archives of Nigeria, Enugu (NAE). File No: 21/38/Vol.3 OWDIST 9/18/16. Handing Over Note of Mr. W.F.H. Newington, Assistant District Officer to Mr. A.E. Cook, District Officer, 1938.

²⁸ Profile on Owerri Municipal Council, Imo State . . . 1, Ahumibe, C. & Orisakwe, A. (1996). *The Anglican Enterprise in Egbu*. Owerri: Upthrust Design and Print Unlimited, 13-14 and Ofurum, E. (2002). *A Short Story of the Coming of the Missionaries to Egbu*. Owerri: Christ Church, 14-15. For more detail about the activities of Harold M. Douglas in Owerri District, see Siollun, *What Britain did to Nigeria: A Short History of Conquest and Rule*, 307.

²⁹ NAE. File No: 114/1930. OWDIST 19/16/28. Native Administration Council. 1930, 8.

the road from Owerri through Emekuku to Nguru and pleaded, "All these things deserve a lot of thinking. We shall mark all out and consider those that are more important."³⁰ Mr. Royce pledged to consider the repair request as soon as he settled down, having recently taken over as the District Officer (D.O.) for Owerri.

The arrival of the team of Captain F.C. Royce as District Officer, G.I. Stockley, E.N. Dickingson, and I.R.P. Heslop, all as Assistant District Officers to Royce, not only facilitated laying a solid foundation for colonial rule in Owerri but also restructured the Native Administration Council to a more unifying state. By this readjustment, each village was meant to appoint a representative to the Owerri Native Administration Council, and these representatives were drawn from the body of chiefs who now possess British warrants of authority, a position created by the same colonial power. The first meeting held by F.C. Royce with the representatives of the council took place on July 30, 1930. Evidence of this could be seen in the memorandum forwarded to the resident of Owerri Province by the new district officer, which reads:

1. Forward herewith two copies of a summary of the minutes of the first meeting of the representative of Chiefs from Owerri Division.
2. The Chiefs have been elected by their people (as representatives) with only one objection against UdoUzoka of Oguta.³¹

The newly constituted council was made up of the following members: Oke Nkwazema of Nekede and AzuomaAnumudu of Orji as members for Owerri-Uratta; J.N. Nwaneri of Akabo; EhirimDuru of Ubomiri; and AriierisimNwachukwu-Nga of Inyishi for Owerri-Isu; Oparaocha-Ekwe of Ulakwo; Nwachukwu-Agu of Umuneke; and Eke Iwuala of Obike for Opkala. Other members were three representatives for Nguru, three for Okpala, two for Ezinihite, three members for Umuokpo, three members for Obohia, and three members for Oguta.³²

³⁰ NAE. File No. 114/1930. OWDIST 19/16/28. Native Administration Council. 1930, 8.

³¹ NAE. File No. 114/1930. OWDIST/19/16/28. Memorandum, 1930, 4.

³² NAE. File No. 114/1930. OWDIST /19/16/28. Native Administration Council. 1930. 1. F.C. Royce, the new District Officer also included a photograph he took with Assistant District Officers—G.I. Stockley, E.N. Dickingson, I.R.P. Heslop and the Chiefs along with the memorandum of the first meeting to the Resident, Owerri Province.

At this first meeting of Royce as District Officer, issues bordering on assessment, tax collection, wells (water supply), roads, employment, medical, school, leper settlement, estimates, accounts, and the establishment of the Agbaja Native Court were on the top agenda. The council members agreed not to recommend a re-assessment before next year, as the people do not yet understand what it means. The council members accepted the responsibility to educate the clan and the people. The council agreed that taxes should be collected every year in the month of November. In addition, the council members agreed that applications for employment should not be encouraged, that they can be called for when necessary, and that funds must be watched so that too much money does not go into salaries. The council equally appreciated the effort of the D.O. to establish Leper Settlement, probably in Bende District, and for the execution of this project, Owerri N.A. was authorised to contribute £1000 towards that year. On issues concerning estimates and accounts, it was noted that members who had been chosen on the basis of their understanding of money matters were at liberty to inspect the N.A. accounts and have any questions answered by the treasurer.³³

The meeting assembled at 10 a.m. on July 25, 1930, and reassembled at 9.30 a.m. on July 26, 1930. At the end of this first meeting of the Owerri Native Administration (N.A.), Oparaocha-Ekwe of Ulakwo was elected President of the Council.

Capt. Royce (D.O.), on the second meeting of the N.A. Owerri on August 18, 1930, addressed Oparaocha-Ekwe (President of the Council) and other council members as follows:

LISTING CAREFULLY! You have heard that the Resident, I.G. Capt. Wauten, and D.I.C. Major Walker are tax payers. You have been told you can get the proper rate of your wish by assisting the district officer and Assistant District Officers to count land, etc., and the number of people fed from the various land. The government wants to know how many people there are and what amount of chop they consume. The rate is worked out, say, £100 = £1 tax. This is not heavy, as you all can agree. Putting it more simply, if a man plants 100 yams and the Native Administration takes one as tax, it is not very hard on him, I think. If you get a hundred pounds and give one away, you do not take notice of it. If you explain it well to your people, there will be no trouble. It is not a new thing. Books say tax had been going on since 2000 years ago, but it was not until 2 or

³³ NAE. File No. 114/1930. OWDIST 19/16/28. Native Administration Council. 1930, 2-3.

3 years ago that you people and some other parts of Niger were called upon to pay. You were considered by the world to be the most backward race. We want to open your eyes; it means many things. Nobody wants harm in this Division. You should contribute toward its upkeep. The next important thing is discipline. A son respects his father; the father is his head of compound; and so on to the heads of towns and clans. You will see that the Native Administration money is used on visible things, such as roads, wells, new schools, hospitals, etc.³⁴

From the above quotation, one could see how important tax payment was to the colonial administrators during this period in Owerri and beyond. The most interesting thing is the level of persuasion and the language used in addressing this issue of tax collection. For example, apart from telling members of the council that the ratio is 100:1, they were reminded that the government just started asking them to pay barely 2 or 3 years ago. For the reason of not paying tax before this period, the indigenous people were regarded by the colonial powers as being backward. The misguided idea of "supremacy" and "divine mandate to liberate the savages" that Europeans believed in and carried out with utmost desire during the colonial period is being played out here.

Another item on the agenda that Capt. Royce considered a matter of paramount importance was the issue of road opening and construction. Assessments of roads that needed urgent attention were based on their linkages to the government station at Owerri, to the missions (churches), roads with bridges, and roads situated at trade routes. Each time an issue of road expansion or construction was raised, Capt. Royce's response would be, "How many bridges are there? Or where does trade go there?"³⁵

On the relationship between the chiefs as members of the council and their people, Capt. Royce warned the chiefs as follows:

Do not flatter yourselves by saying; I am a council member and so on. Do not continue talking about labeling yourselves with such things as badges, etc.; a council member is known by his people without any such emblems. I am talking for the interest of Obuji (of Awara-Umuakpo). Owerri chiefs have given up their caps and have found there is no need for them.³⁶

³⁴ NAE. File No. 114/1930. OWDIST 19/16/28. Native Administration Council, 1930, 4.

³⁵ NAE. File No. 114/1930. OWDIST 19/16/28. Native Administration Council ... 7.

³⁶ NAE. File No. 114/ 1930. OWDIST 19/16/28 ... 10.

From the above address of Capt. Royce to the Chiefs, it could be deduced that some of the Warrant Chiefs of that period might have been carrying themselves in an arrogant and pompous manner in front of the people they claimed to be representing. Two, the chiefs in question must have decorated themselves to appear different from their people, with special caps and badges as emblems. A particular chief was equally called out to desist from such an attitude. Ironically, the same colonial power that created the position of warrant chief in the area without the people's consent was also the one cautioning the chiefs on their attitude and relationship with their people.

The tenure of F.C. Royce, who came in around 1929, was remarkable and popular, like that of the era of Mr. H.M. Douglas, who opened colonial administration in Owerri between the periods of 1902 and 1910 as a District Officer. By the year 1938, colonial administration had acquired its own identity by having developed a well-organised structure and pattern in the affairs of indigenous people. Mr. W.E.H. Newington who took over from H.C. Stevenson with the rank of Assistant District Officer handed it over to Mr. A.E. Cook, District Officer in July 1938. Mr. Newington had carried out a lot of reforms during his tenure. For instance, at the time of handing over in 1938, there were already 22 Native Courts "D" grade, a divisional Native Administration treasury, and two separate treasuries for Owerri Native Administration. The council, which was re-elected every six months, now consists of 43 members representing six village groups. In the handover note, he further stated that "though most of the members are illiterate, they are beginning to show a fair grasp of their finances."³⁷ He (Newington) created two separate treasuries for the Oratta (Owerri) Native Council and the Oguta. Newington acknowledged that "of the two separate treasuries opened on April 1, 1938, Oratta has made far more progress than Oguta."³⁸

On taxation and assessment, Newington was able to consolidate on the collection system that D.O. Royce introduced by maintaining November as a month for tax collection. During the official handover, he stated that since he took over in March, some permanent buildings had been erected. While some have been completed, others are under construction. By way of illustration, the following buildings were the ones being completed. They are:

³⁷ NAE. File No. 21/ 38/ Vol.3. OWDIST 9/18/16. Handing Over Note of Mr W.E.H Newington, Assistant District Officer to Mr. A.E Cook, District Officer. 1938, 1-5.

³⁸ NAE. File No. 21/ 38/ Vol 3. OWDIST 9/ 18/ 16 . . . 3.

- (1) Two European rest houses at Obohia and Mbieri.
- (2) Two Native Courts at Awara and Oratta
- (3) Semi-permanent kitchens for government school teachers.

Buildings under construction were:

- (1) European Rest House at Itu.
- (2) Native Court at Aro-Umunwoha.
- (3) Interpreter's Rest House at Obohia.
- (4) Interpreter's Rest House at Ohoba.
- (5) Court Messenger's Rest House at Ikeduru.³⁹

Colonial Pattern of Settlement and Building of Government Station in Owerri (1918-1930)

The colonial pattern of settlement in Owerri took the same form that could be virtually seen in all the nooks and crannies of the country where colonial enterprise manifested and held sway during the period under study. One common feature of this pattern of settlement was the policy of segregation. The colonial government in Owerri then traded on the same path, similar to that of their counterparts operating in other provinces, by living in a secluded environment too. In Owerri, the divisional head, from the onset, mapped out an area within the proximity of Owere-Nchi-Ise, comprising the following villages: Umuoronjo, Amawom, Umuonyeche, Umuodu, and Umuoyima (indigenous inhabitants of Owerri main town), but away from the village settlement, for the purpose of building Owerri Government Station.

With regards to building, the year 1918 saw a remarkable development in the colonial administration of Owerri and other areas under its jurisdiction. As of June 12, 1918, most colonial officers were yet to get permanent accommodation in Owerri due to inadequate buildings to accommodate the officers. For instance, the then Medical Officer at Owerri in charge of vaccination wrote to the D.O. as follows:

Sir, I beg most respectfully to lay this complaint before you. About two months ago, I was turned out of my house by A.D.O. (Assistant District Officer) because one of the resident clerks was coming over to my house, and he made a promise to me that he would build another house for me. Since then, I have not seen any movement, and I was staying in a part of the dispensary house that was built for

³⁹ NAE. File No. 21/ 38/ Vol.3 OWDIST 9/18/16 . . . 9.

one man and not for two. Therefore, I humbly beg you to see that my house is under construction before I proceed to Okigwe. I hope this will meet with your kind approval.⁴⁰

The above appeal was made sixteen years after colonial rule was established in Owerri. The medical officer's request to the D.O. shows that colonial authorities were not all housed early enough, until later in 1930, when permanent structures began to be erected in the area mapped out for the construction of the Owerri government station within the residential areas meant for such purposes and also for permanent accommodation for the European staff.

The period 1918 saw the beginning of building permanent structures for colonial officers, especially police barracks, clerk quarters, native courts, and administrative buildings.⁴¹ The then District Officer, on June 18, 1918, wrote to the contractor (Chief Obilonu) through C.N.C. Owerri, stating that "the District Officer Owerri presents his compliments to Chief Obilonu, requesting him to forthwith continue work on police barracks according to arrangement with the late District Officer".⁴² From the sentence, it could be said that the death of the then-district District Officer might have halted the police barracks building project until the new district officer deemed it fit to continue with the project.

On March 5, 1919, the C.N.C. Owerri, reporting to the district officer on how far work had gone with some unclaimed money under his possession, stated thus:

The sum of £25 for building houses, etc. at Owerri is still unclaimed with me. Chief Nkwazema and other chiefs were told to bring their men who worked to witness payment and receive a share. They have not done so. Please arrange for the boys and their chiefs to see me so that payment can be made.⁴³

From the above quotation, it is obvious that the Warrant Chiefs appointed by the colonial power around 1912 in Owerri were responsible for the supply of labour used in the construction and building of Owerri government station, prison quarters, police barracks, native courts, and roads. The implication is that the indigenous people constituted the major block of labour supply

⁴⁰ NAE. File No. 36/18. OWDIST 9/4/4. Buildings, 1918, 9.

⁴¹ NAE. File No. 36/18. OWDIST 9/4/4, 9.

⁴² NAE. File No. 36/18. OWDIST 9/4/4, 5-7.

⁴³ NAE. File No. 36/18. OWDIST 9/4/4, 14.

employed in the construction and building of these structures during the period.

To show the spate of work done within a decade, a plan was underway to have permanent buildings for Owerri Government School and to carry out repairs for temporary houses within this period. On July 22, 1928, the District Officer, Owerri, forwarded a memorandum to the Resident, Owerri Province, asking:

for £750 to be allocated for building a permanent block for Owerri Government School. The fact that such a building has long been required is obvious. Plans will have to be approved by the Director of Education, and I ask, therefore, that this work, as it affects a department, should be undertaken by the Public Works Department on Reimbursement from the Native Administration.⁴⁴

On August 2, 1928, the Resident, Owerri Province, replied to the memorandum of the District Officer, Owerri, by acknowledging the memo of July 28, 1928. The Resident, in response to the said memo, said that:

Before we start erecting any permanent school buildings, it appears necessary to find a roomy site for the school buildings and play grounds, as with money available, the school should eventually be a large one, possibly having Europeans on staff. At the present site, we have no room for extension, so can you let me know a suitable site? Possibly a really roomy area could be found near the Hausa settlement or on the Orlu or Okigwe roads. The buildings should be suitable and lasting.⁴⁵

From the above dispatches, the major concern was not just a permanent school building; rather, a site that would give room for future expansion was necessary. Therefore, the Resident Owerri Province deemed it essential that available space for expansion was not just important but compulsory, as some European members of staff would live in the said premises whenever completed, especially the teaching staff.

The new site for Owerri government school became a matter of important consideration, such that the then District Officer (D.O.) of Owerri replied that he could not find any definite record or plan of the boundaries of Owerri Government Station in his office. He argued that "it is possible that the Township boundaries (Township Plan 828) may coincide with the limits of government land".⁴⁶

⁴⁴ NAE. File No. 104/1928. OWDIST 9/14/93. Owerri Government School, New Building Site. 1928, 1.

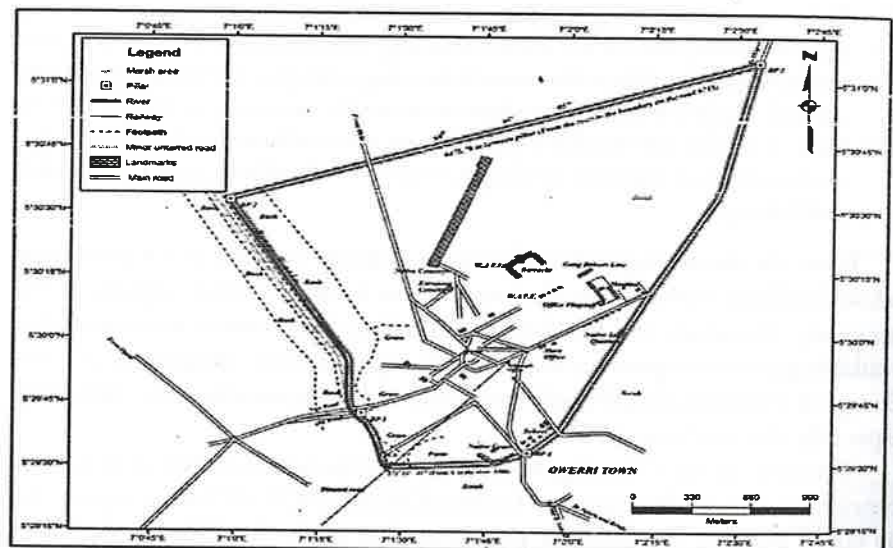
⁴⁵ NAE. File No. 104/ 1928. OWDIST 9/14/93 . . . 2.

⁴⁶ NAE. File No. 104/1928. OWDIST 9/ 14/93 . . . 3.

The D.O. concluded that in case of any eventual opposition from the Owerri people when the construction for the new site began, the old "Intelligence Book" contained information that could be used as a guide against any opposition from the indigenous peoples. The old intelligence book entry reads as follows:

Should any query ever arise as to the ownership of the land on which the District Headquarters are situated, it may be well to record that the site was occupied and the District constituted in the early part of 1902 during the operation of the Aro Field Force. The land would therefore appear to belong to the government by right of conquest, but in addition, the sum of £60 or £70 was, I was informed on my arrival in April 1902, paid over to Head Chief Njemanze by the Political Officer (Colonel Gallway, I think) attached to the column. Some record of this payment will probably be found in the A.F.F. Record, 21/6/09.⁴⁷

Owerri Government Station (GRA) Separated from Owerri Town, 1928



Source: NAE, File No. 104/1928. OWDIST 9/14/93.

⁴⁷ NAE. File No. 104/1928. OWDIST 9/14/93 . . . 3. The A.F.F. Records means the colonial conquest records of Aro Field Force (AFF). Note that Owerri was one of the stationed camps used by the colonial forces for the conquest of Arochukwu that began in 1901.

The D.O. equally suggested that before any plans could be made for extension (in respect to the new school sites) to the north of Owerri, it would be advisable to be certain of the land title and extent of Crown Land, if any, in that area. The new government school in question was finally cited at the north of Owerri main town by Okigwe Road before Clark Quarters while coming from Owerri Government Station, known as Owerri Government School, and was completed in 1935.⁴⁸ The reason for the choice of the position where the school is cited was to suit the colonial pattern of settlement in Owerri. It is important to point out that the aforementioned school was the only government school running post-primary education in the district. Secondly, the colonial government was directly in charge of the school with its European staff and pupils. Therefore, this necessitated the need to locate the school within the environs of the government residential area.

On August 20, 1928, the Resident, Owerri Province, forwarded the map for the Owerri Government Station Plan to the District Officer at Owerri, indicating government reserved areas (GRA) guided by Crown land occupation. In the dispatches of August 20th, the resident added by asking whether "the Chiefs realise the boundaries? If so, we can go ahead."⁴⁹

It should be acknowledged that within this period of kick-starting the permanent site of government station buildings at Owerri, old temporary government buildings were at the same time undergoing renovation. By May 4, 1928, the Office of the Divisional Surveyor (Eastern Division), post and telegraphs, Enugu, had written to the District Officer Owerri, asking the latter to advise the office on the approximate sum that would be "included in the 1929-30 estimates in respect of repairs to the clerks quarters, offices, postmasters quarters, and temporary buildings for the government station at Owerri."⁵⁰

As of the 9th day of March 1931, steady work was ongoing on the building of the Owerri government station. For instance, the then District Officer of Owerri, H.O. Stevenson, totally rebuilt the two Assistant District Officers' houses, which he claimed were overdue for repairs. The D.O. affirmed that he had:

⁴⁸ Field Work: the said Owerri Government School is now known as Government Secondary School, Owerri, popularly called Government College, Owerri. The school is still situated at its permanent site mapped out by colonial authorities in 1928.

⁴⁹ NAE. File No. 104/ 1928. OWDIST 9/14/93 . . . 4.

⁵⁰ NAE. File No. 104/1928. OWDIST 9/14/93 . . . 5.

sufficient funds to build at least one house as a semi-permanent structure and propose to build the other with a view to installing an iron roof thereon, as funds were made available. The materials for the houses were made of blocks faced with cement with 16 concrete pillars. The roofs consisted of sawn timber rafters and beams.⁵¹

The D.O. requested the approval of the design submitted and of the sites selected for the houses within the Owerri Government Station Plan (GRA) area. In return, on the 12th day of March 1931, the Resident Owerri Province approved the submitted designs and the site selected as well.⁵²

The services of Miller Brothers Limited of Liverpool, a subsidiary of United African Company (UAC) Limited (incorporated in England) residing at Oguta in Owerri Division, were greatly engaged in the supply of building material during the construction and building of the Owerri government station. The reply of the company manager to the District Officer at Owerri, H.O. Stevenson, on March 13, 1931, demonstrated this fact by revealing, "As requested in your letter of the 10th instant, we enclose our statement of account for twelve barrels of cement supplied to you in January last".⁵³ Similarly, further evidence of building material supply by Miller Brothers Ltd. to the D.O. (H.O. Stevenson) was shown in the manager's communication to the D.O. stating that:

As requested, we have enclosed herewith our debit note numbers 92, 93, and 95, as well as debit note number 94 addressed to the Native Administration, Owerri. We will have these goods sent to you at the very first opportunity and anticipate the Port Harcourt goods coming forward on Monday.⁵⁴

In one of the correspondences between Miller Brothers, its parent company (UAC), and the colonial government at Owerri, the then Acting District Officer replied to the company and acknowledged thus: "With reference to your letter sent to me at Oguta, I have to inform you that the amount of £25. 12. 2d. owing to your firm for corrugated iron and other articles supplied is not chargeable to Owerri Native Administration but is a government liability."⁵⁵

⁵¹ NAE. File No. 86/1931. Vol.1 OWDIST 9/17/97. Government New Buildings, Owerri Station, 1931, 13.

⁵² NAE. File No. 86/1931. Vol.1 OWDIST 9/17/97 . . . 14.

⁵³ NAE. File No. 86/1931. Vol.1 OWDIST 9/17/97 . . . 22.

⁵⁴ NAE. File No. 86/1931. Vol.1 OWDIST 9/17/97 . . . 36.

⁵⁵ NAE. File No. 86/1931. Vol.1 OWDIST 9/17/97 . . . 141.

On the 3rd day of July, 1931, Mr. Stevenson issued a memo to the Resident, Owerri Province, expounding that one of the new houses in the government station had been completed and had been, for the time being, allocated to Mr. Trumble, Assistant Commissioner of Police. The D.O. also divulged that the supposed "completed house had a galvanised corrugated iron roof and that the ceiling was made of Essex board, the roof was supported on concrete pillars, the walls were made of mud block and were cement-washed, while the floor was of concrete throughout."⁵⁶ He further disclosed that the house was similar to, but not a replica of, that occupied by the medical officer, who was drawing half a bush allowance.

From the foregoing, the purpose of H. O. Stevenson's detailed description of the completed house at Owerri government station was not only to notify the resident, Owerri province, of progress made but also to give a description of the quality of houses being erected in the district, to seek permission, and to know what rate of bush allowance should be drawn by the occupant of the new house as it was done during this period.

The houses built at Owerri government station during the period of Mr. Stevenson as D.O. Owerri were not just of good quality but gained acclamation by his superiors and colleagues as well. For instance, F.P. Lynch, Secretary, Southern Provinces, Enugu, wrote a letter of commendation to the District Officer through the Resident Officer and declared thus: "I am directed by the Acting Lieutenant-Governor to inform you that on his recent visit to Owerri, His Honour was much impressed with the excellent value of a locally constructed house, which it is understood was erected at the cost of £130, and considers that other provinces might (emulate) benefit by building houses of a similar type."⁵⁷ Also, the District Officer of Okigwe District made a positive remark about the new type of semi-permanent European houses erected at Owerri and demanded that the D.O. of Owerri furnish him with a rough plan and a statement of the cost of the materials for erecting such houses. In the same vein, the District Officer, Owerri, acknowledged his good observation and gladly forwarded the particulars of the locally constructed houses at Owerri to the D.O. of Okigwe, as requested.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ NAE. File No. 86/1931. Vol.1 OWDIST 9/17/97 . . . 45. Note: Bush Allowance as referred here was money being paid to European Staffs inhabiting in such house with bushes surrounding the premises for its upkeep.

⁵⁷ NAE. File No. 86/1931. Vol.1 OWDIST 9/17/97 . . . 52.

⁵⁸ NAE. File No. 86/1931. Vol.1 OWDIST 9/17/97 . . . 116-117.

Native Quarters in Owerri

With the system of native administration in place, the colonial authorities, through their representatives, established Native Staff Quarters in Owerri. The quarters were exclusively meant for indigenous peoples who were employees of the colonial government in Owerri. The most obvious characteristic of these native staff quarters was that they were located at the edge of the area designated for Owerri Government Station, where the colonial government regarded as government residential areas exceptionally made for European staff, its visitors, and businessmen of European decent. This is the reason why segregation (policy) was a common feature in Owerri, as it was in other places where colonial enterprises thrived. The area stipulated as Native Staff Quarters in Owerri during the colonial period was domiciled at Okigwe Road on the right, opposite Government Secondary School Owerri when coming from Government House (Douglas House), and extended to the Orji area. There were no African Quarters established in Owerri during the colonial period; rather, they were known and regarded as Native Staff Quarters, which later changed to Junior Staff Quarters.

It is interesting to note that areas where the so-called African Quarters flourished during this period were places where colonial powers extracted and exploited mineral resources. For example, in places such as Enugu and Jos where mining of coal and tin was an unavoidable incentive for the British colonial government to hold sway in those areas, African Quarters featured prominently there.⁵⁹ Another place where African quarters were visible was in Zambia, where they grew into African towns.⁶⁰ Of course, the railway line served as a prop to these mining areas for monitoring and subsequent evacuation of solid minerals. So, it could be right to argue that in places where solid minerals and railways were present, African quarters were likely to be found there.

What should be kept in mind is that both the structure and quality of European and Native Quarters were never the same during the period. There were great differences between the two. In Owerri, European settlements were well structured and constructed with cement, concrete, pillars, corrugated

⁵⁹ D.C. Obialo (2005). *Housing Nigerians: Trend in Policy, Legislation, Funding and Practice, 1914-200*. Owerri: Global Press Limited, 36 (See page 48 and 49 for quality of European houses built in Owerri during this period).

⁶⁰ H. Heisler (1974). *Urbanization and the Government of Migration: Inter-relation of Urban and Rural Life in Zambia*. London: C Hurst & Co., 103.

roofs, and galvanised iron, but houses situated in Native Quarters were not constructed with such quality materials. A typical description of the standard of Native Quarters was expressed in the words of J.C. Maxwell, Commissioner of Owerri Province; he states thus:

The quarters for political offices vary greatly; in some cases, they are good, but in the majority of cases, they are not, and they require to be replaced by buildings more suitable (houses) for occupation by Europeans. Quarters are also provided for the native members of staff. In most stations, these are of native constitution—mud walls and palm thatch roofs—and are kept in repair either by prison labor or by contract with natives. This is quite a satisfactory arrangement.⁶¹

It is crystal clear that while European Quarters enjoyed houses with durable materials, Native Quarters, where indigenous African staff lived, were made of mud walls and palm thatch houses. This situation was equally seen as normal, and the arrangement was regarded as satisfactory. As time went on, some changes were made to upgrade the standard of houses in those native quarters. Besides, the houses that experienced these upgrades were those native quarters converted to junior staff quarters.

A good example of the standard upgrade was visible in the conversation between the then District Clark, Mr. Ogbolu, and the Junior Administrative Officer in charge of Owerri Division. When the office of the District Clark received a new allocation of £400 for maintenance of semi-permanent and temporary buildings, Mr. Ogbolu recommended to the administration office as follows: "I therefore seriously suggested that this balance be used in building out-houses (kitchen, latrine, and bathroom) for our Junior Service Quarters Nos. 5, 6, and 8 presently occupied by Messrs. C.O. Okafor, K.O. Oji, and A.S. Akandu of this office . . ."⁶² In respect of this request from Mr. Ogbolu, the Admin Officer (Junior) wrote to Mr. Onyeche, Inspector of Works in the Public Works Department, Owerri, on November 21 and stated as follows:

We are intending to erect semi-permanent out-houses for the Junior Service Quarters at Orji. What I have in mind is a two-room out-house (kitchen and store/boys house) built of mud block with cement plastering, a cement floor,

⁶¹ NAE. File No. E.P. 1308/2.CSE 12/1/343. Owerri Provincial Annual Report, 1914, 27.

⁶² NAE. File No. 1792. OWDIST 10/1/557. Junior Service Quarters, Owerri Division-Maintenance, 1955, 916.

and a pan roof. Mr. Ogbolu, the district clerk, would be pleased to show you the sites if you have time to spare.⁶³

What is interesting to note from the above communication between the District Clerk and the Junior Administrative Office is that the Admin Officer agreed to erect a house for junior staff but only two rooms out-houses with a kitchen and a store/boys house without a latrine and bathroom, as Mr. Ogbolu suggested. The second point of emphasis here is that by this period, Junior Staff Quarters had started having houses with mud blocks, cement plastering, and a cement floor with a pan roof. It was no longer only a mud wall with a palm thatch roof. Inasmuch as houses for Junior Staff Quarters were still not of equal standard with houses at European Quarters, noticeable improvement had occurred during this period.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper is a study of colonialism and urbanisation in Nigeria, with a focus on Owerri Township, from the period of 1902 to 1930. One important thing to mention is that it was not until the Owerri people were subdued by the British superior firearms that colonisation took root in the area. This made it necessary for the British colonial government to settle in Owerri in the early period of 1900. With this scenario, the need to establish a permanent settlement arose, and the colonial authorities responded by constructing and building what was regarded as European quarters in Owerri. Of course, before the end of the third decade of colonial rule in the area, precisely in 1928, a clearly demarcated settlement pattern had been established in Owerri that distinguished the European staff quarters commonly known as government residential areas (GRA) from those of native staff quarters.

The labour mobilisation for the construction and building of the Owerri government station was carried out through the Warrant Chiefs through the recruitment of indigenous people on behalf of the colonial government in Owerri. Note that by the year 1915, the colonial government had already issued about 900 warrants (authority to rule) to the local chiefs in Owerri province alone. Finally, this work unravels the uniqueness of the interface between colonisation and urbanisation in Owerri. The study contends that colonialism laid the foundation of urban growth and development in Owerri during the period under study.

⁶³ NAE. File No. 1792. OWDIST 10/1/557 . . . 1955, 917.