



Urbanisation in the Lower Cross River Region: 1882-1960
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Abstract

This paper examines the evolution of urbanisation in the Lower Cross River region of Nigeria. The paper links the evolution of urbanisation in the region to the colonial enterprise, the European traders and the missionary enterprise. The rudimentary foundation of urbanisation was laid in the region in 1882 when the British Consul for the Bight of Benin and Biafra Edward Hewett finally moved the consulate headquarters from Fernando Po to Old Calabar. In 1885, the British Government declared a protectorate over the "oil rivers" while effective administration began in 1891 with the assumption of office by Claude Macdonald as the High Commissioner over the area. With this development, various government departments such as Custom, Police, Judiciary etc. were established. In the present-day Akwa Ibom State, Ikot Abasi (Opobo), Itu and Oron also emerged as the earliest urban centres. With the increased activities of the British agents, infrastructure such as road network, improved water transportation, banking services, etc. were put in place. Urbanisation has resulted in the progressive concentration of population in these places and is also a vital constituent of modernisation. However, the colonial cities developed as centre of commerce and administration, rather than industrial production. They served as the gateways for the massive transfer of African raw material to the metropole. The absence of

industries in these early urban areas to cater for the influx of migrants from the rural areas resulted in unemployment. This ugly trend could not be corrected at Independence in 1960. The paper adopts a historical narrative methodology.

Introduction

One of the most significant developments that is associated with the colonial enterprise in West Africa is urbanisation. Urbanisation took a new direction in the 17th century with the development of maritime trade. The commercial function of the seaports was complemented in the 19th century by the implantation of the colonial structure, first on the coast and then gradually in-land. Public administration was further boosted by the colonial experience. Commerce and government continued to overshadow industry in cities of West Africa (Gugler and Flanagan, 1978).

The colonial cities developed as centre of commerce and administration, rather than industrial production. It originated as a means whereby the metropolitan rulers established a base for the administration of the countryside, the exploitation of its resources, and consequently the transfer of the surplus extracted from the countryside to the metropolis. At the same time, the city itself engaged in the parasitical extraction of a surplus from the countryside (William, 1970).

In the Lower Cross River region, the seed of urbanisation was laid in 1882 following the final movement of Consul Edward Hewett to the area. The inauguration of the Protectorate administration boosted urbanisation of the area occupied by the British officers, missionaries and traders. For instance, in 1891, the Government Hill was cleared and within a few years, numerous government establishments were built there. Similar experience was recorded in Ikot Abasi (Opobo) and Itu in the Calabar hinterland, now Akwa Ibom State.

Apart from the colonial enterprise, the activities of European traders and the missionary enterprise also boosted the spate of urbanisation. It should be noted that these four urban centres are chosen because of the high rate of cross-cultural contacts generated there, particularly during the colonial and immediate post-colonial era.

The Concept of Urbanisation

Urbanisation could be seen as a phenomenon that leads to progressive concentration of population in towns and cities. It is a steady increase in the proportion of urban dwellers in these areas. The process of urbanisation is a vital constituent of modernisation of any society and the development of the economy. It is also viewed as one of the most compelling factors of population re-distribution. The process of population re-distribution from rural and semi-rural areas to major urban areas is an impulsive exercise. It is a spontaneous default to achieve a balance between human population and natural resources. (Onyekwelu, 2001).

Ezeani posits that urbanisation consists of at least four components namely:

- (i) the territorial identification of urban places
- (ii) the increase or decrease of population in urban places;
- (iii) an increase in the number of people from structural changes and economic growth; and,
- (iv) the existence of a distinctively built environment and organisation in cities that encourage ways of life that are described as urban and generally differ significantly from the mode of life in rural areas, although increased access to the mass media and other means of communication are making this distinction less relevant.

Urbanisation leads to social transformation which involves shifts in the pattern of population settlements, shifts in the locus of power and influence from rural area. Also, urbanisation leads to changes in patterns of behaviour and values which are the products of social transformation. As

the process of migration occurred particularly from rural areas to urban areas, small and medium-sized towns began to emerge. This development became imperative as larger towns and cities began to draw population from small and medium-sized towns. Thus, relieving the pressure of direct migration from rural areas to major urban areas (Ezeani, 2001).

Evolution and Trend of Urbanisation

An urban society today represents a system of people and activities. It is an interactive spatial entity of people with activities. These activities are carried out for maximum economic benefit of the urban populace. An urban area can thus be seen as an agglomeration of people engaged in activities within a spatial framework. The organisation of these activities is spread out among three major land users in the urban environment viz: industrial, commercial and residential. The city or urban area is therefore the focus point around which economic transactions are centred (Onyekwulu, 2001).

The present pattern and condition in West Africa owe much to the colonial past. This is true not only of the atmosphere and location of towns but also with regard to the nature of the role which these towns have played and are continuing to play in the economic development of the independent states. The general pattern of distribution of towns and cities in West Africa is largely the result of events and conditions dating from the era of coastal trade and the colonial period. Certainly, large towns and cities remain on indigenous sites; but in the coastal and central regions, these bear the heavy imprint of colonial and modern European culture (Gugler and Flanagan, 1978).

During the colonial era, the majority of the towns of West Africa were located on the coast or close to it. Virtually, all of them were so situated at one time or another; their sites served important contact points for Africans and Europeans. The locations were determined by their accessibility from the sea and by the productivity of their hinterlands. The Portuguese in the

16th and 17th centuries were the first to establish settlements, which were generally only small forts, along West African coast. Not all the early forts grew into cities, nor have they all survived until the present-day; but the ports and later European-initiated sites together constituted an organising force for West African economies, directing attention and trade toward the coast, the colonial metropolis, and eventually the world economy. In turn, the pattern of urbanisation proceeded to a very large extent according to the pull, the pattern of trade toward the coast and foreign markets. Seaports grew in size and importance at disproportionate rates and became the seats of colonial administration (Gugler and Flanagan, 1978).

According to Gugler and Flanagan (1978) and Akpan (2018), in the period, whether or not interior settlements would be created or develop into towns was largely a function of the resources and accessibility of these areas to coastal ports. Areas closest to the sea were generally the most accessible. Some rivers, such as the Niger and the Cross River, provided ready-made highways, but they were slow and inflexible arteries that were not fully navigable for a great part of the year. With the development of railroads, automobile roadways, the rivers and the river ports that had sprung up beside them declined in importance, and new towns developed as old ones expanded.

The Advent of the Colonial Enterprise in the Lower Cross River Region

From 1849 to 1900, Southern Nigeria came under consular jurisdiction of the Foreign Office in Britain. During the last half of the 18th century, the industrial revolution took place in England. It created a demand for natural products to keep the factories humming – and Africa was a store-house of untapped wealth. In Southern Nigeria, the most important resources were palm oil and palm kernels (used in making soap, margarine, vaseline and various kinds of lubricating oil for industrial machinery), Britain also needed new markets for finished products and new fields for investment of surplus capital made possible by industrial revolution. With the new

opportunities afforded by the industrial revolution, Britain turned her back on the slave trade. At the same time, she prohibited her subjects from taking part in it. The British merchants in Southern Nigeria were forced to find a new source of income; consequently, they turned to the buying of and selling of natural products (Udo, 1983).

The British outrageous attempt to eliminate the role of the coastal chiefs as middlemen who controlled the trading inlets to the hinterland to foist favourable price regime resulted in the opposition of the Africans. There was also the problem of international trade competition, especially between the French and the English. This led to the establishment of consular rule. The British Consul was to protect the British commercial interests on the coast and pre-empt any hostile activities and warfare, which led to stoppage of trade (Udo, 1983; The Story of the Old Calabar, A Guide to the National Museum at the Old Residency, 1986).

The first British Consul, John Beecroft, visited the trading rivers regularly and kept to his instructions of facilitation of the overseas trade and non-interference in local affairs. He was friendly with the Old Calabar river chiefs and traders and it was owing to his influence that they remained pro-British during the European scramble. His successors became increasingly involved in the activities and politics of the coastal states (The Story of the Old Calabar, A Guide to the National Museum at the Old Residency, 1986).

Through the instrumentality of the missionaries who operated in Calabar from 1846, various consuls made several attempts in (1856, 1872 and 1882) to move their headquarters to the Old Calabar River. Their power lay mainly in campaigns of the British warships (men-of war), on board which they used to patrol the rivers, signing treaties, settling disputes and dispensing British "justice". The presence of the powerful outside forces – missionaries, traders and consuls, led to increased political pressure and interference in the local economic and political mechanism, which further

weakened the fibre of the indigenous society and increased the internal frictions. In 1882, the British consul, Edward Hewett, finally moved the consulate headquarters from Fernando Po to Old Calabar. In 1885, the Oil Rivers Protectorate was established; however, effective administration was established in 1891 with the arrival of Claude MacDonald, the High Commissioner. In 1892, the protectorate territories were extended inland under the name of the Niger Coast Protectorate; it covered the Southern Nigeria areas from the outskirts of Lagos to the Rio del Rey in the Cameroon (Noah, 1980; The Story of the Old Calabar, A Guide to the National Museum at the Old Residency, 1986).

The Oil Rivers Protectorate consisted of two main Provinces, but for the purpose of administration, it was divided into three distinct Districts, each of which was under the supervision of a Divisional Consular Officer, Udoma (1987) notes that the districts were:

1. Eastern District: which consisted of the area embracing the Cross River and the Qua Iboe or Akwa Ibom River,
2. Central District: comprising the areas covered by (formerly the Opobo) now Ikot Abasi and Brass River: and
3. Western District: was made up of Benin and the Warri Rivers.

Rudimentary Urbanisation in the Cross River Region

Following the above developments, various government departments: Customs, Police, Judiciary, Administration etc., were established. One of the priority assignments of the High Commissioner MacDonald was to ensure financial viability of his administration by replacing the trade "comey" with official custom duties on drinks, tobacco, gun-powder, lead and salt. In 1891, the revenue was £96,000 and in 1892 it increased to £162,000. The collection of the custom duties went together with the improvements in communication facilities along the coast and the establishment of postal services at each vice-consulate establishment (The

Story of the Old Calabar, A Guide to the National Museum at the Old Residency, 1986).

Recreation activities were allowed and even recommended, for which purpose golf-links and sports clubs for regular afternoon relaxation (and drinking) sprang up in each colonial settlement. Special European reservation areas, European hospitals and European cemeteries served the colonial administrative, missionary and trading communities. New technological inventions were employed to make communications and transportation more effective. From the beginning of the 20th century, bicycles, motor-cycles and later, cars, telegraphs and telephones, electricity generations and water pumps were introduced in the colonial territories as soon as they reached the metropolitan markets (Noah, 1980; The Story of the Old Calabar, A Guide to the National Museum at the Old Residency, 1986).

Urbanisation in Ikot Abasi (Opobo)

Geographically, Ikot Abasi (formerly known as Opobo) is strategically located at the right bank of Ikot Abasi River. It is a border town separating both Rivers and Abia States from Akwa Ibom State. In other words, the town is located at a confluence where Imo River and Ikot Abasi River empty into the Atlantic. Being a town with a natural seaport, a port capable then of receiving large ocean going vessels, the area competed very favourably with Calabar in export trade during the era of trade in staple commodities. Also, the rich facilities made Ikot Abasi one of the earliest communities in West Africa to attract European missionaries and colonial administrators, the geography of the place being instrumental to the establishment of the early colonial administration (Udoka, 1996).

As noted by Udoka, until very recently, scholars interested in the history of southeastern Nigeria had completely obscured the contributions of Ikot Abasi to the evolution of Nigeria by erroneously and variously referring to

Following the establishment of consular administration in the Bight of Biafra and Benin and the establishment of the Court of Equity in 1856 consisting of prominent European traders and a few influential African aristocrats to adjudicate trade disputes arising between the European and African counterparts, the nucleus of colonial administration was established in Ikot Abasi. In 1891, when Claude Macdonald arrived Calabar

administration. Abasi, the place was selected as experimental ground for colonial. Through privileged information received from European traders in Ikot Abasi was easily accessible to the rampaging European invaders. Ikot Abasi was strategically located and opened directly to the Atlantic Ocean, administrative structure conducive to colonial interests. As a coastal remains one of the known places in Nigeria to develop politico-administrative structure conducive to colonial interests. The area between Ikot Abasi (Opobo) and European colonial administrators, the area of King Jaja of Opobo and his agents. Because of the long standing contacts a major source of supplies to European supercargoes through the exploits Abasi an international outlook. As early as the 1870s, the area had become Economic forces in the late 19th and early 20th centuries helped to give Ikot

1996). Government was addressed and known as "Opobo Division" (Udoka, Obasanjo's administration, the area now designated Ikot Abasi Local out by the Federal Government of Nigeria under General Olusegun far-fetched. Until 1976, when the Local Government reforms were carried studying the island town of Opobo. The reason for this development is not town of Ikot Abasi, these scholars create the impression that they are study the rich socio-cultural and politico-economic history of the mainland Egwanga by colonial chroniclers. Therefore, when scholars attempt to century. At other times, Ikot Abasi has been variously designated as it as Opobo in most pieces of writing. Ikot Abasi, a settlement in Ibibio land

as the Commissioner and Consul-General of Oil Rivers Protectorate, Ikot Abasi became a Vice-Consulate, headed by a Vice-Consul. In 1895, as a result of the creation of the Niger Coast Protectorate, Ikot Abasi became a District under the Eastern Division with headquarters in Calabar (Udoka, 1996; Akpan, 2018).

The Vice-Consulate or Administrative District headquarters was established at Norah Beach at the mouth of Ikot Abasi River with William Cairn Armstrong as Vice-Consul. The area of jurisdiction of the District covered not only Opobo Town and Ikot Abasi area up to Essene market, but also extended to Akwette in the Upper Imo River. Norah Beach remained the administrative centre of the district till 1902, when it was replaced by Egwanga on the Ikot Abasi bank of the river. The administrative control of Ikot Abasi also extended to Eastern Andoni and Ogoni areas. These boundaries were further enlarged to cover some Ngwa Igbo communities (Abasiattai, Ekpo and Ezebube, 1997).

Water transportation with the creeks and riverine areas remained predominantly by canoe. Throughout the 1900s and occasionally thereafter, the Marine Department cleared the Imo River and other waterways of fallen trees to facilitate navigation. The establishment of government headquarters at Ikot Abasi and the provisions of transportation and communication facilities there soon attracted European as well as African traders to the place. In his remarks during a visit to Ikot Abasi in 1908, the High Commissioner, Sir Walter Egerton, disclosed that "Ikot Abasi was far more important and healthier than Bonny". He ordered that the divisional headquarters of all departments should be at Ikot Abasi and not at Bonny. As the European population at Ikot Abasi increased, comprising mostly British colonial officials and European traders, a European (or Government) Reservation Area was created in March 1906 in accordance with a Government Ordinance proclaimed four years earlier (Abasiattai, Ekpo and Ezebube, 1997).

The establishment of colonial administration enhanced development in Ikot Abasi and its environs. A number of offices and departments were established by 1915. These included a Mess, District Custom Offices, Mortuary, Police, Prisons, Post and Telegraph, Judiciary, Transport, Education Treasury, Medical and Forestry Departments. European officers were appointed to man the different offices and departments. By December 1909, a European hospital, quarters for Europeans and African subordinate staff and Police Barracks were built. All these made up what was known as the Government Station.

Communication and transportation infrastructure was initiated in 1901 with a mail service between Ikot Abasi and Eket using mail runners. The mail route, maintained by "Opobo runners," carried message within short periods to far and near, running through Essene, Minya, Ukam, Awa and Ukat (and then by water to Eket), soon developed into a bicycle tract, the first modern road in the area. Besides, a launch was stationed permanently at Egwanga for use by the District Officer. There were also gigs in the station for the Customs Department and one for the Medical Officer, for use in his tours to different parts of the district. By 1904, a telegraph line was established from Eket to Ikot Abasi. By 1909, Ikot Abasi was linked by telephone to all European factories nearby. By 1911, further telegraph lines linked Ikot Abasi with Azumini and Opobo with Bonny. By September 1911, when Ikot Abasi-Azumini-Aba trunk road was completed, Ikot Abasi had vital telephone, telegraph and road links with surrounding region (Abasiattai, Ekpo and Ezebube, 1997).

By 1915, a number of European trading firms had established factories in Egwanga. They included African Traders and Company, G.L. Gaiser and Company, African Cold Storage and African Association. The result was that by 1929, there were a total of 35 European factories in Opobo District. In 1916, access roads had been constructed to link Egwanga, Azumini, Ekparakwa, Ibesit, Ibagwa and Eket. In the following year, more and better

roads were constructed throughout the District. Bicycle usage by traders, especially in Ikot Abasi, in conveying goods, particularly palm oil and bales of cloths to markets such as Awa, Eket, and Azumini increased. Egwanga was also connected by telegraph wires with many places such as Awa, Eket and Azumini and by water to Bonny (Cited Akpan, 2018).

The establishment of Port Harcourt in 1913, following the discovery of coal at Udi, near Enugu in 1912, and the construction of railway from Port Harcourt to Enugu in 1916 greatly undermined the economic development of Ikot Abasi. Enterprising traders in the upper Imo River and Western Ogoni areas who hitherto traded with Ikot Abasi started to take their palm produce to Port Harcourt. The result was that more produce started to go that way, leaving less for Bonny and Ikot Abasi traders. Gradually, they were put out of business. There was also retrenchment of workers by European trading firms, which directed their attention to Port Harcourt. All the benefits gained from the presence of these immediate institutions began to disappear (Abasiattai, Ekpo and Ezebube, 1997; Akpan, 2018).

By 1917, Ikot Abasi was formally designated a Second Class Township. Besides serving as a Government Station and European Reservation, Ikot Abasi was also an important port particularly for the trade in palm oil and palm kernel. Clearly, the convergence of roads, telegraph, telephone, the creeks and the main Imo River at Ikot Abasi, coupled with protective shield of the colonial headquarters, provided the main inducement for the flow of trade to the town. As trade increased, so did shipping at the port. In 1922, for instance, 78 vessels entered the port while 81 cleared it. The corresponding figures for 1923 were 87 and 88 (Abasiattai, Ekpo and Ezebube, 1997).

According to Abasiattai, Ekpo and Ezebube (1997), a much more fundamental impact was the agglomeration of population at Ikot Abasi, heterogeneous in nationality and ethnicity, and varied in culture, skills and

standards of living. Apart from the so-called "non-native foreigners," there were "native foreigners" – Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba who visited or settled at Ikot Abasi for trade or were engaged as artisans or contractors. Another important element of the town's population was the "native Africans" from the Division and neighbouring regions. They included the Ogoni, Obolo (Andoni) and Umani (Opobo). They visited for trade at the main public market, or at the European beaches or they came to attend the government native hospital – the only hospital for Africans in the Division. Others attended the Egwanga Native Court or the Magistrate and High Court at the Divisional headquarters. Many others were labourers performing various public works.

In January 1950, the Opobo port located at Egwanga was closed down. This brought about economic eclipse in the area. For, with the closure of the port, much of its trade in palm produce was diverted to Port Harcourt and business generally came to a stand-still. But the doors to development were not permanently closed. In 1951, a year after the closure of the port, Nigeria's premier boat building yard was established at Egwanga by the Department of Commerce and Industry on a site occupied by the United African Company. Within a few years, the industry manufactured a number of power-driven river craft including launches, freight-carrying barges and fishing boats. It also offered employment to many Nigerians.

Urbanisation in Itu

The geographical location of Itu spreads on both sides of the bank of the Cross River at its most acute bend, watered by the confluence of the Enyong Creek and the Cross River. The mainland Itu is situated on the left bank of the area of the Cross River. Itu featured prominently as one of the largest slave markets in West Africa. Slaves from the hinterland parts of Ibibio land such as Itam, Ibiono Ibom, Arochukwu, Enyong, Umon, Agwagune, etc., were evacuated to Calabar from Itu. With the abolition of the slave trade and the emergence of the commodity trade, Itu also served as a centre of

the trade. With time, European trading companies namely: Paterson Zachonis (PZ), United African Company (UAC), G.B. Olivand, etc., opened their factories in Itu from where palm oil, palm kernel and related products were evacuated to Calabar. Imported goods were also brought to Itu by the trading agents. Further discourse on the nature of relations between Akwa Ibom and her neighbours, particularly with the Efik and other groups in present-day Cross River State, Igbo, Cameroon, Fernando Po, would reveal the crucial position of Itu which was made possible because of modern infrastructure put in place by the colonial administration (Ukpong, 1986).

According to Ukpong (1986), during the colonial period, the port of Itu became integrated with the world market. The produce sold at Itu during the colonial period was drawn from a very wide and almost "unlimited" hinterland. It came from the Upper Cross River area as far as Ogoja, Abakiliki, Arochukwu, Ohafia, Umuahia, Obubra, Ikom, Mamfe in the Cameroon and Afikpo by boat. By 1921, Itu was important enough to be classified among other 17 commercial and administrative towns in Nigeria as urban town. There were 12 such second-class towns in the South-Itu, Onitsha, Opobo, Port Harcourt, Warri, Aba and Abeokuta. Others were: Calabar, Enugu, Forcados, Ibadan and Sapele.

The colonial regime gave early attention to the development of water transportation for the purpose of linking the hinterland with the producers at the coast. To this end, Captain Steward of the Manchester Regiment surveyed the Enyong Creek from its confluence with the Cross River at Itu to a point six miles northwards of Arochukwu in 1902 and reported that the Enyong Creek was navigable for any sized puncheon canoe, many of which he found in the villages as he passed. Some portions of the Moya and Aboniya rivers, tributaries of the Cross River, were dug to connect them with the Calabar and Qua Iboe River. Martin observes that the Cross River became a highway for steamers and the Imo River and its extension, the Aba River, were cleared so that steel canoes could travel up to Aba by 1907.

The whole transport of the Cross River goes through this station in the dry season and during the wet season; half the stations are supplied via Itu. As early as the first decade of the 20th Century, an officer of the Marine Department was stationed at Itu. Writing in 1910, E. Falk, Assistant District

states that:

centre for Ibibio land and parts of Igbo land. C.B. Wanton, cited in Ukpong, decades of the 20th Century. Calabar was then the exporting and importing the Upper Cross River area, including Uzuakoli and Ogoja, in the first two parts of Igbo land including Aba and Owerri, Ibibio land and Calabar and navigation in the shallow waters. The port of Itu was the main link between and three of the motor launches used in the services were adapted to began in 1905 along with other services, ran regularly in Eastern Nigeria coast or navigable rivers from about 1905. The Cross River Transport, which in Southern Nigeria, the government maintained marine services on the

(Ukpong, 1986; Martin, 1988; Akpan, 2018).

cleared parts of the Enyong and Ikpa Creeks of snags and other obstructions Marine Officer, Lt. Jones, visited the Enyong Division in March 1944 and River, the Qua Iboe River and the Ikpa Creek. It is also reported that a job. As reported in 1928, a Marine snagging party worked in the Cross Expedition of 1901-02, Colonel Montanaro assigned Captain Child to this attention to clearing them of obstructions. Shortly after the so-called Aro years during the colonial period. The colonial administration devoted The rivers and creeks were often silted and blocked with snags for many

village of Ihie (Akpan, 2018).

to ten-puncheon) trade canoes up to Ife, which is near the Ngwa-Ukwu which recurred annually. By 1927, Imo River was navigable for large (eight fell across them in the rainy season and destroy the screw pine growth Imo, Otamini, Sombereiro and Qua Iboe River, to blow up the trees which A programme of annual clearance was instituted on long stretches of the

Commissioner, is reported to have stated that the river transport service was well maintained during the year. A European "motor mechanic" was stationed at Itu for the dry season to effect minor repairs and supervise the native engineers (Ukpong, 1986: 93).

In the same vein, Major R.O. Summer states that in 1928, the launch "Mosquito" was kept in Itu and made the trip up the Cross River every Wednesday. A steel canoe was attached to the Division. Thus, the launches and boats of the Marine Department provided cargo services across Itu, Calabar and the Upper Cross River area in the first three decades of colonial rule.

The firm of Elder Dempster Lines had operated ferry services linking Itu, Calabar and the Upper Cross River area as far back as the first decade of the 20th Century alongside the services of the Marine Department. In the 1940s and early 1950s, it continued to operate ferry services across Itu, Ikoneto and Calabar on Tuesdays and Thursdays of each week. The town of Itu was thus linked up with ferry services with the neighbouring region for a greater part of the colonial period (Ukpong, 1986).

There had been some roads improvements in the period 1891 to 1914, but these had been geared mainly to administrative needs, and consisted essentially of path widening. The Roads and Creeks Proclamation of 1903 empowered a District of Provincial Commissioner to call on any warrant chief to recruit un-paid labour for the clearing of roads and creeks in his area of control. Each adult was on demand, to mandatorily contribute six working days' labour in a quarter on the roads or creeks. During the inter-war years, on the other hand, there was a drive to construct roads of all-season motorable quality. In 1921, lorries owned by Miller Brothers, Weeks Transport and Holt Brothers were already transporting produce along the main road between Aba and Itu (Martin, 1988).

Even in the 1930s, many "motorable" roads were probably more suitable for bicycles than for cars. The Roads and Creeks Ordinance was abolished in 1927 after direct taxation had been introduced into Eastern Nigeria. The introduction of direct taxation made it possible for government to have a little more fund for the servicemen. By the end of the 1920s, Uyo and Itu were linked with Ikot Ekpene by a motorable road. By the early 1940s or a little earlier, the Itu-Atan-Arochukwu Road had been made motorable particularly in the dry season. Throughout the colonial period, passengers, cyclists, motor cyclists and motor vehicles (sic.) travelling to Arochukwu from Itu and back, were ferried across the Enyong Creek at Itu by a wooden pontoon propelled manually by bamboos or sticks. There was no mechanised ferry service in most parts of Nigeria during the colonial period (Cited Akpan, 2018).

As noted above, the use of commercial motor transport started in Nigeria in the 1920s. In Itu, the experience started in the 1930s or a little earlier. One "Okon Enyong", so-called because he came from Enyong, operated commercial motor transport between Itu and Aba. As also stated above, at the same time, Weeks' Transport Services also ran lorry services between Itu and Aba. It should however be added that the vehicle was driven by a white expatriate. Passengers travelled from Itu to Aba and returned the following day. The fare from Itu to Aba was one Shilling. Travelling was very slow. Most lorries could hardly move uphill. Because of the limited number of cars, the existing ones carried only passengers. However, by 1939, some Igbo enterprising businessmen operated a number of commercial vehicles along Aba-Itu and Uyo-Ikot Ekpene roads. In about May 1939, one B.J. Dike applied to the Divisional Office, Itu, to operate his lorries numbered OW 2387 (Dodge), OW 2270 (Chevrolet) OW 2001 (Chevrolet) along the Itu-Aba, Itu-Umuahia and Itu-Ikot Ekpene roads respectively (Ukpong, 1986).

The bicycle played an important role in the economic life of the people in the 1930-60s. More than 100,000 bicycles were imported into Nigeria between 1922 and 1929. Clearly, the numbers were small relative to the total population of Nigeria; and only richer farmers could hope to buy one. In 1918, bicycles retailed at between 12 and 16 guineas each, and although their price fell gradually over the period 1922-29, it still stood at about 5 10s 0d at the ports on the eve of the Great Depression.

Itu District was linked with postal and telecommunication services with other parts of Eastern Nigeria as early as the first decade of the 20th century. By 1910, a post office had been opened to replace the old postal agency. There was a telegraph wire provided from Calabar via Itu to Ikot Ekpene. In 1910, there were 2,072 official and 2,237 private messages forwarded or received at Itu. It is also reported that in 1911, the telegraph line to Ikot Ekpene from Itu was very clear. Itu post office had been a head post office and mails for Uyo and Arochukwu passed through it (Ukpong, 1986).

Urbanisation in Oron

According to Uya, the colonial interlude, short as it was, marked a significant turning point in Oron history. For the first time, the different groups were brought under one recognised unit of administration first under the Native Administration and later the County Council system. This no doubt promoted conflict between the people (Uya, 1984).

He adds that the construction of roads, such as Eket/Oron Road in 1905 and the Oron/Aba Road later, helped in enhancing the relations between Oron and other groups. Oron was part of Eket District. The introduction of bicycles in the 1920s and 1930s facilitated deeper exchanges of visits and trade. The colonial economy, with its emphasis on trade in palm oil and kernel, provided opportunities for enterprising traders. Oron (Akani Obio) matured into a major township under the impact of the colonial and missionary influence and attracted permanent residents from all parts of

Eastern Nigeria, especially from Igbo hinterland. Indeed, Igbo traders dominated the markets at Oron town and by 1964, the Market Master, an extremely sensitive and lucrative post was held by an Igbo man (Uya, 1984).

The emergence of Oron town as an important crossroad between Calabar and the rest of the country was further strengthened by the developments in water transportation during the colonial period. The Oron/Uya-Oron berths were used by the United African Company to transport produce, especially palm oil and kernel to Calabar for export to Europe since the early colonial period. By the 1930s, Elder Dempster operated ferry services between Oron and Calabar using a steam powered vessel. The service was considerably expanded with the introduction of the large, diesel fueled and faster M.V. Oron (1938) and later M.V. Eket (1950). While the M.V. Oron provided first and third class passages, the M.V. Eket provided first, second and third class passages. The fares between Oron and Calabar were Ten Shillings (first class) Six Shillings (first class) and Nine Pence in (1938), increasing to One Shilling and Nine Pence (1954) for third class. Both vessels had facilities for carrying motor vehicles and goods (Uya, 1984).

The introduction of these services, which provided the major link between the Igbo, Ibibio hinterland and Calabar, catapulted Oron into a major cross road for the movement of people and goods. People from Aba, Eket, Ikot Ekpene, etc., travelled through Oron to Calabar. The ferry services were supplemented by canoe transportation. It was thus during the colonial period that Oron emerged as the major gateway between the Ibibio hinterland and Calabar. The importance of this route was much felt after the creation of the South Eastern State, when Calabar became the state capital. Oron remained the major link between the parts of the state and the state capital until the construction of the Calabar-Itu Road (Uya, 1984).

The Nexus Between Urbanisation and Industrialisation

Industry produces goods and services which the community uses. Industry includes manufacturing, mining, quarry and construction activities. But in a restricted sense, the word "industry" is used to describe the industrial establishments that change raw materials into finished products. Generally, industrialisation, to a lay man, means the process of transforming the productive and commercial enterprises by the use of motive machines. This simple meaning of industrialisation can be further expanded to take into account all the processes which must be technically transformed before a community can achieve sustained increase in productivity (Akpan, 2019).

World Bank Report (1995) cited in Ndebio (1991) identifies the components of an industrial sector in any economy to include: manufacturing, mining, construction, electricity, water and gas. Studies made have shown that the manufacturing sub-sector is the most dynamic part of the industrial sector, and without it, industrial development is impossible.

By 1939, there were virtually no modern industries in the whole of Nigeria. The only modern industries in Nigeria before that period were a soap factory located in Lagos, and a singlet factory. It was not the intention of the colonisers to industrialise Nigeria and other colonial territories before the World War II. Colonies were to serve as exporters of raw materials for British factories and as markets for the manufactured goods of such factories. The industrialisation of the colonial territories would have conflicted with the aims of colonialism (Ukpong, 1986).

At the end of World War II, the attitude of the colonial regime towards industrialisation changed a bit. However, in the area of study, the only kind of industries that were set up were the palm mills used to extract the palm oil and crack the kernel to release the nuts. This was done primarily to encourage the export of the products. Based on the obvious fact that urbanisation in the Lower Cross River region did not evolve alongside the

industrial sector, requisite development did manifest not alongside with the phenomenon.

Conclusion

Urbanisation is a phenomenon that has played a crucial role in both theoretical and empirical studies of modernisation and development. Attah and Akpan opine that urbanisation is certainly one of the key aspects of development. The increased size of cities, the enhanced political importance of urban residents, the concentration of cultural, economic and religious institutions in large cities and the growth of a distinctively urban way of life are almost everywhere identified explicitly or implicitly with the process of development (Atah and Akpan, 2007).

The World Bank and UNDP equally associate urbanisation with development and conclude that the latter substantially results from the productivity of economic activities in expanding cities. The strong association between urbanisation and development derive from a number of variables. One of such is that urbanisation is associated with the development of industrialisation.

In the Lower Cross River region of Nigeria, the foundation of urban life was laid in 1882 when the British Consul Edward Hewett transferred the headquarters of the Protectorate administration from Fernando Po to Calabar. With this development, some basic infrastructure and amenities were put in place by the colonial authorities. Particularly, technological innovations were employed to make communications and transportation more effective. From the beginning of the 20th century, bicycles, motor-cycles and later, cars, telegraphs and telephones, electricity generations and water pumps were introduced.

The phenomenon also developed in other coastal territories of present-day Akwa Ibom State such as Ikot Abasi (formerly Opobo), Itu and Oron. Some

modern facilities and amenities were put in place like in Calabar to enhance the stay of the Europeans and also facilitate the export of raw materials particularly palm produce from the Lower Cross River region to Europe.

Throughout the period under review, there was no industry in any of the above named locations. This limited the pace of development of the areas in particular and Nigeria in general. It should be noted that only European trading companies such as African Traders and Company, G.L. Gaiser and Company, African Cold Storage and African Association etc. However, roads, bridges across rivers, hospitals, post offices, courts, etc. existed, were established. The establishment of Port Harcourt in 1913, following the discovery of coal at Udi, near Enugu in 1912, and the construction of railway from Port Harcourt to Enugu in 1916 tremendously diminished the enterprising disposition of Ikot Abasi (Opobo).

Fundamentally, urbanisation triggered the agglomeration of population for instance, at Ikot Abasi people from diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds converged in the city and brought alongside their varied culture, skills and standards of living. In other words, it created a melting pot for the so-called "non-native foreigners," – Ghanaians, Liberians, Sierra Leoneans etc. and "native foreigners" – Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. In addition, neighbouring groups such as Ogoni, Obolo (Andoni) Igbani, Okrika, Ikwerre, Umani (Opobo) etc., enjoyed robust diplomatic intercourse. They visited for trade at the main public market, or at the European beaches or they came to attend the government native hospital – the only hospital for Africans in the Division. Others attended the Ekwanga Native Court or the Magistrate and High Court at the Divisional headquarters. Many others were labourers performing various public works.

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