

Infrastructural Growth and Development in Nigeria, 1900-1960

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Abstract— *The research studied infrastructural development during the colonial period; analyzed the prevailing factors that led the British to build substructures, organizations to exploit the land space called Nigeria. The paper defined infrastructure and proved its relationship with development and the British exploitation of its colony. The study relied heavily on documentary data and lightly on oral data. The oral data were based on unstructured interviews with some feminist scholars; and the documentary data were sourced from colonial government annual departmental reports, correspondence, books and magazines. The oral data were transcribed for analysis. The documentary data were subjected to textual and contextual analysis. Like Janus, Infrastructures built by the British played a dual role. They were used by the British to exploit Nigeria and also to develop its economy.*

Keywords— *British, Nigeria, Infrastructure, Growth, Development.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In order to satisfy the interest of France and Germany that were agitating to control certain regions of Nigeria, decided to sign agreements with Germany called Heligoland Treaty of 1890 and Anglo French treaty of 1898 (Ediagbonya, 2017). This was to ensure that French and Germans recognize British right over areas in Nigeria. As a final measure to secure the territory for Britain, the British government decided to terminate the charter granted the Royal Niger Company and by 31st December, 1899 took control of the region (Buhari, 2017). Before this time in 1891, Britain declared the Niger Delta area as the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1893 and extended the protectorate over the hinterland and renamed it the Niger Coast Protectorate. In 1900 the Niger Coast Protectorate became the protectorate of Southern Nigeria. That same year, Britain declared a protectorate over Northern Nigeria. In 1906, the colony and protectorate of Lagos was merged with protectorate of Southern Nigeria. Finally on 1st January, 1914, Nigeria became the colony and protectorate of Nigeria (Ediagbonya, 2017). Frederick Lugard was then made the Governor General in charge of North and South. In order to exploit the Nigerian land space for the enrichment of the mother country (Britain), infrastructures had to be developed and this brings to context British role in developing the Nigerian territorial land space which is a concern for this study.

It is not a matter of rhetoric or hearsay that basic infrastructure in Nigeria is in a semi-comatose state, and this can be traced to the events during the colonial times. Infrastructure is the basic physical structures needed for the operations of nations or the services and facilities necessary for an economy to function. The concept of infrastructure development can be defined as progressive movement from the simple to the complex and higher stages in the provision of social amenities in efforts at raising the standard of living of particular citizens of a country. It suggests quantitative and qualitative changes in structure, composition and performance of the social amenities established in a society (Aliyu, 2010). The basic aim of infrastructure development is changing the material conditions of a particular people of a country. Jeffrey Fulmer sees infrastructure as the technical structures that support a society, such as roads, water supply, sewage control, electrical grids, telecommunication... etc. (Fulmer, 2009). He defined infrastructure as “the physical components of interrelated systems providing commodities and services essential to enable, sustain or enhance societal living conditions (London Borough of Richmond, 2009). These have been further categorized placing roads under the transportation infrastructure which also include railways, air and sea/water transportation (Abubakar, 2011). Water infrastructure includes processing and distribution of drinking water, water supply, sewage collection and disposal drainage etc. Electricity is considered under energy infrastructure that involves the generation, storage and distribution of electrical power, gas, petroleum and coal processing and distribution (Abubakar, 2011). The health care system ranging from physical structures like hospitals, to financing, regulations, discipline, monitoring evaluation etc. fall under social infrastructure. Roads, water and power supply belong to the group of what is generally referred to as public services which are provided by the government to the people as a help rather than to make profit (Abubakar, 2011). Other call this group of services social infrastructure which they define as physical facilities for individuals or communities infrastructure has been defined as large scale public system, services and facilities of country or region that are necessary for economic activity, including power and water supplies, public transportation, roads, schools

and telecommunication (Abubakar, 2011). Material infrastructure is understood to represent capital goods in the form of transportation, education, health facilities, equipment of energy and water provision, facilities for sewage, garbage disposal and air purification, building and housing stock, facilities for administrative purposes and for the conservation of natural resources (Afaha, 2011).

However, infrastructure can be categorized into three:

a) Economic infrastructures are those infrastructure put in place to help solve economic problems. In this regard, such infrastructures can be local, state and national in nature, depends on where and what infrastructure is mounted for checkmating the national economy towards maintaining a balance in the economy and meeting up with the demands of the people

b) Social Infrastructure can be regarded as those infrastructures that are meant to attend to the need of social problems in a given society.

c) Political Infrastructure is known to be of political administration. This political infrastructure has been structured into three arms and three tiers of political administration (Oriakhi, 2011).

II. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The British began the introduction of modern infrastructure during the colonial period. The genesis of infrastructure such as roads, rails water transport, electricity... etc. can be traced to the colonial times. Electricity for instance dates back to 1869 when it was used in Lagos (Akinwumi, 2011). This was fifteen years after its first use in England. The pattern of electricity development then was in the form of individual electricity scattered all over the town. Some of the electric powered area were undertaking by the colonial bodies, some by the Native Authorities, and other by the Municipal Authority (Akinwumi, 2011). Modern rail transportation in Nigeria started with the building of a rail road in 1912. The building of the rail road from Lagos to Kano changed the direction of mercantile trade in the Nigerian land space. Nigerians began to do business or trading in agricultural produce with their Northern brother. Alan McPhee, a British, averred that “half the tragedy of Africa lies in country’s transportation system by introducing modern means of transport such as rails, motor road-lorries, buses and cars, all of which were vital to the economic exploitation and political domination of Nigeria” (Iweze, 2012). In 1909 vehicles were imported into Nigeria. Before 1909, the land space later called Nigeria had no car stationed in it. In 1946, only 705 kilometers of tarred road were constructed (Afolabi, 2019).

Prior the 20th century, the Lagos colonial office had in 1887 established the Lagos Marine as a transport and military organization. The Lagos Marine became a part of the Southern Marine Department in 1894 and in 1900 the Northern Marine Department was established at Lokoja (Nigerian Maritime Department, 1956). The marine department had the responsibility for the hydrographic survey of all ports, rivers, and inland water ways; the building, maintenance and operation of government craft, ocean and inland waterways;

and survey of shipping and inland water craft, port administration, examination and the operation of government dockyard (Duyile, 2016).

The construction of railway line started in Lagos in 1896 the line was extended to Ibadan in 1901. By 1909, it had reached Jebba, which was over 700 miles north of Lagos. Railway reached Kano in 1911 (Colonial Railway Report, 1926). The Port Harcourt – Enugu line, linking Northern and Eastern parts of the country was completed in 1926. The Eastern Railway that is the Port Harcourt to Kaduna railway line and the other most important link between Northern and Southern Nigeria and indeed the rail was extended to Jos from the Kafanchan Junction. The line which reached the Jos terminal in 1927, provided direct and shorter access between Jos and Port Harcourt (Colonial Railway Report, 1926). Although the railway was constructed purposely to facilitate effective transportation of goods from the hinterland to the coastal states, it also enhanced an influx of migrants from the hinterland particularly from the northern parts (Muritala, 2011). The railway facilitated trading activities. The railway served two parts: Lagos and Port Harcourt and the lines extended to Ilorin, Kaura, Namoda, Nguru, Jos and Maiduguri as well as the Baro-Kano routes (Muritala, 2011).

The transportation system also applies to the harbor networks in Nigeria. Nigeria has a major harbor suitable for marine transportation. The major harbor is the Lagos harbor. The importance of the Lagos harbor in the trading network of Nigeria owes its origin to the works that began in 1908. It must be noted that in the 1920s the Lagos harbor was Nigeria’s main port. It had dredging feet of twenty five feet in this period. In 1908, the construction of the Lagos harbor had begun and by 1928, 25000 tons of groundnuts had been shipped from the port. Lagos stands some five miles from the ocean on an island, round the northern and western sides of which the outlet channel that constitutes the Lagos harbor (Duyile, 2016). The lagoons run west and east parallel with the coast for many miles and are fed by numerous streams. There is a tidal rise and fall in Lagos of two or three feet (Skutil, 1956).

It is not merely from the geographical conformation of Lagos that has given the town the most important later on in the nation but its economic and political attributes as well. The history of European settlements in Lagos during the four centuries and the fact that it was the most vital economic and political town in Nigeria adds to its special place. The only other ports on the coast in West Africa with the draught of the Lagos Magnitude are the parts of Takoradi and Freetown (Duyile, 2016). Lagos is a natural habitat for harbours and a beehive of maritime trade. In the colonial period, the Federal Inland Waterways Department operated its first ferry called “Shanahan”, a renowned Roman Catholic Missionary on the River Niger in 1927 (Iweze, 2012). In a report made on the harbour of Nigeria in 1928, the imperial shipping committee recommended the possibility of having a second harbour in Lagos (Duyile, 2016). This, however, did not materialize. The Europeans inhabited the Marina (Lagos), described as the “most important street of Lagos”, the Brazilian repatriates lived at Portuguese Town or Popo Aguda; the Saro or Sierra

Leoneans (re captives or liberated slaves from Sierra Leone) lived at Olowogbowo; while the indigenous Lagosians occupied the rest of the Island. The Lagosians at this period were classified into two groups (Edo, 2012). Firstly, Lagosians who do not have any other home or place to call their homes such as the Brazilian descendants, the Sierra Leonean descendants, and most importantly the Awori who lived in Isale Eko; they are the majority population of Lagos. In the second category were the contemporary migrants who came to Lagos in search of livelihood, most especially people at Oke Popo, Oke Awo and Oke Aarin area of Lagos (Edo, 2012). There are also migrants from Igboland, Delta area and the Northern parts of Nigeria such as the Igbo, Urhobo, Ijo, Egbe, Nupe and the Hausa. Besides, there the migrants from the neighbouring states of Ivory Coast, Liberia, Togoland, Gold Coast and Dahomey popularly referred to as the Aganyin, Ajase and Kurumo. They resided mostly at Araromi and Lafiaji area of Lagos. The Koras, Syrians and Lebanese also lived along Ereko, Tinubu square and Idumota area of Lagos while the British colonialists occupied Ikoyi as their home but worked in the Colonial Civil Service offices at Onikan, Broad Street and Race Course (Muritala, 2011). The transformation of Lagos from an essentially rural and swampy terrain to a modern metropolis was undoubtedly a function of the British modernization drive.

The British colonial governments Department of Agriculture was also aligned to the infrastructural developmental policy of exploiting the Nigerian economy. These policies, which formed the backbone of the colonial economy, were important weapons for establishing colonial control and bringing the economy of all colonized peoples under effective foreign control. The administrative headquarters of the Department of Agriculture of the Northern provinces was located in Samaru, Zaria. In 1924 when a Botanist was employed by the Department of Agriculture, Samaru became an Agricultural Research Station. A chemist was employed three years later, in 1927, to carry out research on soils in Northern Nigeria. In the same year, a herd of cattle was brought by the colonial regime to Samaru and year later, in 1928, research on cattle breeding and management began (Ibrahim, 2012).

During the colonial times, the absorption of the marine department into the Nigerian Railway also engendered a debate. The contention that the working of port and railway administration was too closely interrelated to be separated was however not supported by some notable Nigerian Marine officers such as Jack Cooper and C.D Hughes (Duyile, From the Marine Department to the Nigerian Navy: The Development of Nigeria's Maritime Capability, 1913- 1983, 2015). It should be noted that the Apapa and Port Harcourt wharves were already being managed by The Nigerian Railways as at 1950 (Duyile, The Nigerian Marine Department Contribution to the British Colonial Economy, 2016). The Chief objection by those who were against the absorption of the marine department by the railway was that the Railway would not be interested in the development of the river ports where the evacuation of cargo is entirely by inland water transport. The shipping community was strongly

opposed to any suggestion of combining the railway and port administration into one corporation (Duyile, The Nigerian Marine Department Contribution to the British Colonial Economy, 2016). The shipping community espoused that the technical knowledge required for maritime transport is different to that of the railway transport system. Their argument concerning the problems of operating a railway was fully appreciated by all interested parties. For those who supported this absorption into the Railway it was a matter of what made economic sense and in any case both systems can be adapted to suit each other. This was another ploy of the colonial administration to exploit the Nigerian economy. The Marine Department had always been a priority for the colonial government. For instance, the cash revenue of the department was 405, 118 in 1945 and by the time it was winding up, its revenue had risen to almost two million pounds in 1955 (Nigerian Maritime Department, 1956). The Marine Department was not just an ordinary department; it was both a public administration outfit and a business venture. The Marine Department was into sea transportation, pilotage, ferry service, hydrographic survey and many other marine-related duties. The Marine Department was also involved in the building of monuments, one of which was in helping to build the Carter Bridge in Lagos. A major infrastructure was the Carter Bridge named after Gilbert Carter, the colonial conquistador who expanded the then Lagos colony into Yorubaland- initially, the bridge was constructed between 1896 and 1901, with a width between hand rails of twenty and half feet, it became "inadequate for meter traffic net to mention bicycles, pedestrians, cows and sheep etc. (Omoyele, 2011), when the city developed phenomenally in the 1930s.

For the performance of its role, the Marine Department was divided into six divisions. These are the Lagos-West Division, Port Harcourt Division, Calabar Division, Victoria Division, Niger Division, and Lokoja Division (Oriakhi, 2011). The Lagos-West Division had the following types of vessel: sea-going vessels, dredgers, tugs, ferries, motor barges, water boats, harbour pinnaces, and dumb craft. The Port Harcourt Division had ferries, touring launches, motor barges, harbour pinnaces, and dumb craft. The Niger Division had a steam wheeler, ferries, motor barges, touring launches, harbour pinnace, motor steel canoes and dumb crafts. The Calabar Division had sea-going launches, harbour pinnaces and dumb craft. The Lokoja Division had the touring launches, motor dinghies, and dumb craft (Duyile, The Nigerian Marine Department Contribution to the British Colonial Economy, 2016).

While the organisation of the Marine Department into six divisions appeared rational, that the headquarters of the Marine Department in Lagos was over-concentrated with vessels appeared problematic. The services rendered by the various divisions were port administration, pilotage services, hydrographic surveys, dredging and reclamation, ferry services, and navigational duties (Nigerian Maritime Department, 1956). From the services rendered before its absorption into the Nigerian Port Authority in 1955, not many were related to security but were mostly connected with commerce.

The role envisaged for the Marine Contingent as set down in the gazette of 1914 had not been retained; rather, in the course of its development, the functions of the Marine Department had become largely civil. The civil functions had gone side by side with the other functions of the Marine Department since the era of the Southern and Northern Marine departments. This goes to prove the colonial legacy of building institutions that only exploited their colonies. Perhaps, the most important benefit by the setting up of the organisation for the Nigerian colony was the development of harbours and the dredging of Nigeria's waterways. There can be no doubt that the construction of the harbours and the dredging of Nigeria's waterways were to the benefit of the Nigerian maritime environment, however, it must be said that the Marine Department had performed very little naval function before the year 1955. Such naval function was carried out by one of its ships called *Chaser* with which it did the work of coastal patrol and anti-smuggling operations (Colonial Railway Report, 1926). Added to the constabulary role of the Marine Department was its involvement in naval diplomacy during the colonial period. Occasionally, the Marine Department received international visitors, as it is the tradition of navies around the world. For instance, a Portuguese sloop *Alfonso de Albuquerque*, and the destroyer *Lima* and *Teju* called at Lagos on May 17, 1954 for refueling only. In addition, the Spanish gunboat, *Canova Del Castillo*, visited Lagos from March 16 to 24, 1955 for her annual dry-docking (Duyile, From the Marine Department to the Nigerian Navy: The Development of Nigeria's Maritime Capability, 1913-1983, 2015). The Marine Department also operated the colonial government's yacht, *Valiant*, which was used mainly for ceremonial cruises for the colonial governor-general.

Before its absorption into the Nigerian Ports Authority, the number of staff belonging to the floating department of the Marine Department were 1,399 (Skutil, 1956). Three hundred and twelve of the total number of staff of the Marine Department belonged to the Clerical Department and 1,326 of the total number worked in the Shore Department (Skutil, 1956). The Marine Department also had a total of 1,350 daily paid employees in its final year of existence as an establishment (Duyile, The Nigerian Marine Department Contribution to the British Colonial Economy, 2016). The officers were entirely British. Virtually all the British expatriate members of staff were either retired Royal Navy personnel or simply marine professionals.⁵⁸ In 1955, the second building forming part of the Seaman's Branch of the Nigerian Marine Training Establishment, NMTS *Quorra* was completed. Also seventy six ordinary seamen were entered as recruits out of which seventy-three of the recruits completed the course and received Certificate of Competency (Duyile, The Nigerian Marine Department Contribution to the British Colonial Economy, 2016). The expansion of the training facilities made it possible to start the petty officer training course in 1954. The Technical Institute owned by the Marine Department was renamed NMTS *Beecroft* in 1955 after the armed stern wheeler which was acquired in 1891 based at Calabar (Nigerian Maritime Department, 1956).

Prior to the change in 1955, officers of the Marine Department underwent training within the organisation by their transfer to all Marine divisions of Nigeria, which embraced all major and minor ports. This was to enable them to have a clear picture of Nigeria's ports and a sound knowledge of the approaches to these ports through the various rivers and creeks, and also a knowledge of the inland water traffic, port working facilities, and the operation of the various commercially-owned wharves (Duyile, The Nigerian Marine Department Contribution to the British Colonial Economy, 2016). It is pertinent to understand the progression path of officers working for the Marine Department; by tracing the career biography of two important officers.

The first of these is Jack Cooper. Cooper was a former Royal Navy officer, born in 1914 and fought in the Second World War. He started his career in the Marine Department, when he was appointed as the executive officer of the Marine Dockyard, Apapa, in May 1946. In 1950, he was appointed to the Harbour Authority administering the ports of Port Harcourt and Abonema, officer-in-charge of the Marine Dockyard and later chairman of the Port Harcourt Pilotage Board. He was elected chairman by the shipping lines representatives of the Port Harcourt Advisory Committee. Finally, in 1952, he was appointed to the Harbour Authority administering the port of Lagos, chairman of the Lagos Berthing Committee, and chairman of the Lagos Pilotage Board (Nigerian Maritime Department, 1956).

The second officer is William Skutil (he later became the first Chief of Naval Staff). He started as the marine superintendent of the Nigerian Marine in 1930. From then until the outbreak of the First World War he held marine posts at Apapa, Calabar, Lokoja, and the delta ports. During the War, he served with the Nigerian Marine and was engaged in naval control services, port examination, and minesweeping. Skutil survived the Second World War and proceeded to the Far East in 1948 as Assistant Director of Marine and Marine Magistrate to Hong Kong. He returned to Nigeria in 1951 as Deputy Director and took over the directorship in 1953 (Duyile, The Nigerian Marine Department Contribution to the British Colonial Economy, 2016).

Throughout the decade, the survey unit of the hydrographic office had been constantly employed at work within the port of Lagos and on the river bars and inland water ways. Professor P.P. Jansen of Delft University in Holland visited the Niger Delta in 1952 on the invitation of the colonial administration (Duyile, From the Marine Department to the Nigerian Navy: The Development of Nigeria's Maritime Capability, 1913- 1983, 2015). He was in Nigeria for a month, during which period he was to make a reconnaissance of the delta, from the air and by touring launch, for the purpose of ascertaining if a scientific investigation of the Niger Delta would point out the most advantageous entrance to develop and also to investigate the development of an inter-coastal waterway route (Duyile, The Nigerian Marine Department Contribution to the British Colonial Economy, 2016). The results of his investigation were forwarded to the colonial government in February 1953 in the form of a report, and it was decided by the colonial government that a full-scale

investigation by Dutch engineers from the Netherlands Engineering Consultants (NEDECO), which commenced its own investigation in June 1953, be carried out (Skutil, 1956). The engineers of NEDECO completed their scientific investigation of the lower Niger Delta in 1955, and their report was considered by the colonial government and significant aspects of it adopted. Staff development was based on the promotion of workers through their career lines. The Harrigin Report gave some officers increased salaries in 1950. The report increased the salaries of thirty-one officers as a result of the amendments provided for. However, it is also pertinent to say that career progression of the Nigerian Marine/Marine Department staff was based on periodical promotion (Nigerian Maritime Department, 1956).

The colonial government on recognition of the centrality of research component in the development of infrastructure established the West African Building Research Institute (WABRI) in 1952 as a regional building research Centre in Accra to provide research support to Ghana (Colonial Railway Report, 1926). The railway system also provided transportation links between productive and well populated ports of the country with traffic origin and destinations in areas well separated. In fact in the areas of performance, passengers carried on board railway rose from 7,015,000 in 1959 to 7,881,000 in 1960, while tonnage handled decreased from 3,077,000 in 1959 to 2,803,000 in 1960 with the resultant effect on the freight receipt that declined from 27,108,000 in 1959 to 23,108,000 in 1960.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is obvious from this academic exercise that the colonial administration pursued grandiose scheme of modernizing the navigational route and the transport on land. Thus, there is a correlation between the mercantile pursuit of the colonial government and its interest in having a maritime industry and a railway industry. Most importantly, British priority was the commercial development of infrastructure to exploit the Nigerian people. The impact of colonialism on Colonial Nigeria, at the general level, has evoked differing perspectives. One perspective argues that colonialism represented a complete break with the Nigerian past. It sees colonialism as a departure marking the dawn of a completely new era. This perspective is hinged on the view that Africans had created nothing and had no history, hence the colonist started on a clean slate in places such as Nigeria. This view is wrong because infrastructures had existed in Nigeria before the Europeans came to the land. The second perspective argues that prior colonialism, Nigerian society, systems and institutions stagnated. It opines that in all of Nigeria, social change, transformation, and reforms occurred in the colonial period. The third perspective believed that Nigerian nationalities would have thrived better in terms of infrastructure growth if colonialism had not appeared. However by 1955, port and railway installations in Nigeria had undergone extensive modernization. This made it

necessary to bring in ports and railway experts to see what could be the best trajectory for the Marine Department and Railways

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