



Uluslararası Sosyal Arařtırmalar Dergisi
The Journal of International Social Research
Volume: 3 Issue: 12 Summer 2010

THE INDIGENOUS FACTOR IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF OLD OGOJA PROVINCE OF NIGERIA, 1930 – 1955

Patience O. ERIM*

Rev. Joseph O. AJOR*

Abstract

Old historiography often overemphasised the predominant role of colonialism in the socio-economic development of Africa to the neglect of the indigenous contributions. This study asserts that improvements recorded in the economic life of the people of Old Ogoja Province of Nigeria between 1930 and 1955, was to a much larger extent thanks to the initiatives of the people themselves than is generally recognized. The work posits that several community-based projects such as the building of roads, bridges and market centres, which were executed during the period of study, contributed to the upliftment of the people's standard of living. The ingenuity of the people also reflected in the diversification of the local economy as evident in the production of a variety of food and cash crops such as yams, rice, poultry products, legumes, benniseed, cocoa and palm produce, among others. All these achievements which were mostly by the initiative of the indigenous people, had often been played down by earlier scholars.

Key Words: Native Authority, Road Network, Economic Development and Diversification.

Introduction

The popular belief among some early European writers was that pre-colonial Africa lacked institutions which could promote growth and development. For instance, Allan Mcphee (1970:8) emphasized the predominant role of colonialism in the socio-economic development of Africa. In other words, this school of thought attributed whatever improvements that were made in the standards of living in most African communities during the colonial era to European colonialism. In this regard, colonial historiography tended to ignore African initiatives or contributions in promoting better living standards for themselves during the colonial period.

The extent to which infrastructure such as roads and bridges, built through communal efforts, contributed to the economic development of the people of Old Ogoja Province from 1930 to 1955, is the main focus of this study. There is no intention to suggest that Old Ogoja society did not witness significant economic development during the colonial period. It is, however, wrong to consider European colonialism as the sole determinant of such development. Evidence from Old Ogoja shows that their pre-colonial institutions were dynamic enough to foster growth and development of the area even prior to the imposition of colonial rule in 1905 (Erim, 1992:1-64). There is evidence to show that the people's pre-colonial institutions suffered serious dislocations arising from the implementation of various colonial policies, particularly during the period 1905 – 1929 (Erim, 1992: 133-241). Nonetheless, the dislocations did not imply the loss of initiative

* Ph.D., Department of History & International Studies, University of Calabar.

by the people and their age-long socio-political and economic institutions. It is contended that the economic development that took place in our area of study during colonial rule was achieved more through indigenous actions than has generally been acknowledged.

The above viewpoint necessitates a working definition of the term development. Michael P. Todaro (1977:9), quoted in A. I. Nwabughuogu (1993:16), states that:

Development must... be conceived as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty. In essence, development must represent the entire gamut of changes by which an entire social system, tuned to diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory and towards a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better.

In other words, development involves transformation of a people's institutions, structures and values; it is purposeful and directional, whereby natural resources, manpower and finance are effectively harnessed to enhance living standards in a given people.

The situation described above applies with force to Old Ogoja Province during the period under study. At the inception of British colonial rule, government policies related to education, health and the economy were not development-oriented. Rather, they were geared towards the attainment of colonial economic objectives – the creation of a conducive atmosphere under which trade could flourish to the benefit of the colonizers, (Erim, 1992: 326). This accounts for the general resentments of the people of Eastern Nigeria against the unpopular policies which culminated in such violent disturbances as the Aba Women's War of 1929. And for the first time, the administrative anomalies that were inherent in the Lugardian system of administration were brought to the fore. This was sequel to the findings of the Donald Kingdom's Commission of Inquiry which in 1930 investigated the causes of these disturbances. The intention here is not to catalogue the Commission's findings and recommendations as these have adequately been taken care of by other scholars such as Nwabughuogu (1993:102 – 104), Afigbo (1999: 421); and Erim (1992:268–274). However, it is significant to note that the implementation of the Commission's recommendations led to what Afigbo (1999: 421) referred to as "root and branch reforms". These, in effect, were the re-organisations (in the 1930s) of the administrative and judicial systems of government in the Eastern Provinces, of which Old Ogoja Province was an integral part.

Dawn of a New Era

Excerpts from Donald Cameron's minutes provide an insight into the reorganization exercise which for the most part, was a clear departure from the Lugardian system of indirect rule. That system collapsed at the wake of the Women's War. As clearly indicated by Erim (1983: xii), that system not only hindered the socio-economic development (of Old Ogoja Province) before 1930 but, also, either destroyed or held in check, those traditional dynamics which had ensured the development of the area in pre-colonial times.

In the minutes cited above, Cameron expressed his desire to discourage the imposition of alien rule "root and branch". Rather, Native Authorities were to be constituted according to the wishes of the people. In this way, those traditional institutions that had helped to foster growth and development of their communities in pre-colonial times, were to be incorporated into the machinery of government. Cameron was also prepared to admit the educated elements into the colonial administration. The Lugardian system ignored both the educated elements and the indigenous institutions or relegated them to the background. Neither were government policies geared towards the development of the area under its jurisdiction. But, unlike that system, Cameron was prepared to gear the administrative officers towards the socio-political and economic development of the people and their territory, as long as such development was consistent with the overall economic aim of colonial rule.

The Native Authority Ordinance that was promulgated in the course of the reorganization in 1933, was an attempt by the colonial administration to accord legal recognition to the traditional authority, of course within limits. The Native Authorities were expected to conform with indigenous customs. An Annual Report on Old Ogoja Province written by P. M. Riley in 1945 indicates that a total of 169 Gazetted Native Authorities were constituted in the Province. The Authorities were to see to the affairs of government at the local level, make rules for law and order and enhance development in their communities. Also, Native Authorities were charged with the responsibility of tax assessment and collection. It was against this background that Nwabughuogu (1993: 108) rightly observed that the re-organisation exercise:

... was to open the gate to political, social and economic development of Eastern Nigeria by beginning the dismantling of the colonial attitude and policies that obstructed rapid socio-economic transformation of the area.

Indeed, here was a situation where a unit of government had been constituted largely according to the wishes of the people. Needless to stress the obvious, however, that unit of government had to operate within the guidelines set by the colonial administration. This could help explain Cameron's insistence (July 1934) on utilizing only those traditional institutions which had been useful in the past "and which the people of today are willing to recognize and obey". The relaxation of colonial policies and attitudes towards the governed provided a conducive atmosphere under which communal and private initiatives could and did thrive. This was, however, facilitated by a corresponding change of attitude on the part of the people towards government's policies. In effect, some measure of co-operation between government and the people began to emerge as will be demonstrated presently.

Native Authorities were to embark on projects designed to meet the needs of the people under their jurisdictions. On their own part, the people realized that their needs would have to be met in part by their own effort, as of old. To make funds available for the desired projects, they began to pay their taxes promptly. Among the other responsibilities of the Native Authorities were the disbursement of revenue, as well as determination of how best to expend their money. Tax evasion all but vanished since people were being assessed according to their capacity to pay. Besides, they were in a position to know how their tax money was spent. This could also account for the people's positive response to the colonial government's advocacy that they should help develop their area through community-based projects. Thus, the traditional spirit of self-help for societal problem solving was revived. According to an Old Ogoja Provincial Annual Report written by the erstwhile Resident, Riley (1949),

Among the most spectacular events of the year have been the various enthusiastic demonstrations of the "self-help" doctrine. It is dawning on the people of Ogoja that they are being left behind in the race for prosperity and that sitting back and hoping for government to provide free for all their wants is getting them nowhere. Administrative Officers have during the past three years persistently drummed into the minds of the gradually awakening Native Authorities that "God helps those who help themselves" and that although the District Officer may still be the father of his people he is no longer the wet nurse. That is now bearing fruit as shown in several directions.

What needs to be emphasized at this juncture is that that spirit of self-help which had been revived to meet their needs, was at the root of the economic development that took place in our area of study during the period under reference. The role of the colonial administrators was essentially facilitative, for example by making funds available to the Native Administrations for the execution of the desired projects. This section examines some projects executed during the new era of co-operation or empowerment of the local people.

Road Networks

From the outset, the various colonial governors of Nigeria, beginning from Frederick Lugard, were acutely aware of the need to furnish the country with roads. In his *Dual Mandate*, Lugard had insisted that

the material development of tropical Africa could be summed up in one word - Transport. Accordingly, in his instruction to political officers, Lugard (1965:475) opined:

It is a matter of the first importance to interest the native administrations in road-construction, and to train native road-markers who should be capable of directing the work under occasional supervision, leaving the bridging to be done by the Public Works Department.

However, the fact remains that prior to 1930, the colonial authorities had no interest in developing local communities for their own sake. Rather, the belief was that imperial needs must determine British priorities in the colonies. Thus, projects that had immediate direct bearing to the development of the people were largely ignored. A good example could be drawn from the present highway linking Calabar to Ikom whose building was proposed in 1919 by the colonial administration. The idea was to open up much of the trans-Cross River district to commercial cropping, but the scheme was dropped (Ndoma-Egba, 1972: 43), possibly on grounds of the usual excuse – lack of finance. The neglect to build this road, in particular, hindered local trade expansion in Old Ogoja Province. For the most part, only feeder roads were constructed for the evacuation of export crops to the point where they were shipped to Calabar.

With the re-organisation exercise initiated by Cameron, and continued by his predecessors, the colonial government became more favourably disposed to the economic development of the colonized. Available evidence indicates that by 1935, a total of 563.8 kilometres of cycle roads were maintained in the Province (Cochrane, 1935; Erim 1992: 343). But these cycle roads were, primarily, for the administrative convenience of the colonial officers. However, prior to that date, during the period between 1930 and 1934, the colonial administration made grants totalling £3150 to some Native Administrations for the construction of roads and bridges as shown in the table below:

Table: GRANTS TO NATIVE ADMINISTRATIONS IN SOME DIVISIONS, 1930 – 1934

Division/Year	Amount	Purpose for which Grant was Made
Obubra (1930)	£600	For conversion of Ediba/Ugep road into a motor road.
(1931)	£500	For the same work on the said road
Ogoja (1932)	£600	Special Expenditure on the Ogoja/Yahe motor road
(1932)	£600	For construction of the Ogoja/Yahe/ Abakiliki/Enugu road. (Construction commenced in 1930).
Ikom (1934)	£850	For bridge and road construction to link the centres of Boje and Aboabam with Ikom

Sources: National Archives Ibadan (here-after NAI), Chief Secretary's Office (here-after CSO). NAI File No. 11967 Vol. IX CSO 26/2 Annual Report Ogoja Province 1930 by P. A. Talbot. NAI File No. 11967 Vol. XI CSO 26/2 Annual Report Ogoja Province 1932 by L. H. Shelton. NAI File No. 11967 Vol XII CSO 26/2 Annual Report Ogoja Province 1933 and 1934 by K. A. B. Cochrane.

No doubt, the table above does not indicate how many kilometres of roads were constructed in those areas during the period. It does, however, indicate Government's interest in the matter of road/bridge building. Between the late 1930s and 1940s, a total of 1,500 kilometres of feeder roads had been constructed by the Provincial Native Administrations (Cochrane, 1934; Riley, 1942). Apart from these feeders, motor roads were also constructed to link various towns during the period. The first motor road in the Province had been completed in 1921 to link Enugu and Abakiliki, to facilitate the export of produce and the distribution of imported goods. But, with the increased interest in infrastructural development from the 1930s, several kilometres of motor roads were constructed to facilitate the movement of people and freight within and outside the Province. For instance, a total of 346.4 kilometres of motor roads were constructed and maintained by the Abakiliki and Afikpo Divisional Native Administrations. A motor road of no specified length was also completed to link Ogoja town and Yahe during the said period. Thus, in 1936, for instance, the Provincial Native Administrations maintained a total of 1,238 kilometres of motor roads (Williams, 1936 and Erim, 1992: 350). As already indicated, funds for the various road projects came mostly from government grants. The inhabitants of the areas through which these roads passed, provided free labour and local materials to reduce construction costs, so that available funds could spread more widely.

Without doubt, the emerging road network led to increased economic activities in all the communities, and, these generated demands for more roads. This is understandable considering the fact that the 1,500 kilometres of feeder roads and the 1,238 kilometres of motor roads mentioned earlier were inadequate for a Province which covered an area of over 8000 square kilometres, and whose population, estimated at 692, 019 in 1949, was widely dispersed. Indeed, the use of community labour on voluntary basis for the construction of roads and bridges, became very popular in most of the Divisions in the Province. For instance, indigenes of Afikpo, Ogoja and Obudu Divisions were reported to have embarked on the construction of roads which later came to be known as the "People's Roads" (Riley, 1949; Erim, 1992: 381). Actually, roads which were constructed through communal efforts were usually referred to as the "People's Roads". Excerpts from Mr. Walter, District Officer for Ogoja, quoted in the Provincial Annual Report (Riley, 1949) are note worthy:

It is most difficult to even attempt to estimate the value of voluntary labour expended during the year on what has come to be termed the "People's Roads". Suffice it to say that efforts, though localised have been quite startling.

The same report also has it that in 1949, the sum of £200 was raised by some groups of people in Afikpo Division, and presented to the District Officer for the purchase of materials for bridging and other construction works. Similarly, about 160 men in Ikom Division were reported to have contributed at least £1 each, and also offered free labour for the construction of a 72-foot motorable bridge at Ajassor. The Iso Bendeghe road and Abaragba cycle track were also constructed through communal labour. The same was true of the Ikom/British Obokum, as well as the Nde road projects which were completed and opened to motor traffic in 1953 (Hennessy, 1953). Thus, through voluntary labour and financial contributions, the people of Old Ogoja Province were able to provide their road network which impacted on the economy considerably.

Economic Impact of the Road Network

The construction of the road networks shown above was designed to expand trade and, thus, promote the economic growth and development of the people. As E. E. Monjok (1988: 233) has aptly stated,

An adequate, reliable, well integrated and efficient system of transportation in any country, not only facilitates productive economic activities, it also unifies and integrates various regions or states within a country and various local government areas and communities within the state...

Both the colonial administration and the people in our area of study recognized the importance of road networks. Besides acting as the key to economic growth, road networks, by linking one community or town to the other, promote inter-group relations. But, our concern here is the economic impact of these roads. In other words, we intend to show the extent to which the existing road networks contributed to increased economic activities during the period covered by this study.

There is evidence to show that the Ogoja/Gboko/Obudu road, for instance, facilitated the movement of palm produce and benniseed from Obudu to Ogoja and the Benue region. The same was true of the Ogoja/Obudu motor road, which provided an important link between Ogoja and the Benue Province. The road provided an easy access into our area of study particularly, for the Tiv traders who came to the area and bought palm oil that they sold to consumers in the Northern Provinces. Also, large quantities of yams and other commodities were transported from Abakiliki to Enugu through the Ngbo/Abakiliki/Enugu road. Again, traders from Igboland and its environs, who thronged to the Okuku and Ikom markets to purchase various items of local produce, conveyed these goods to their various destinations through the Ogoja/Yahe/Abakiliki/Enugu road (Cochrane, 1934; Riley, 1942).

Meanwhile, the Bansara/Ikom/Mamfe road, constructed by the Public Works Department between 1941 and 1945, became the main route for the transportation of cattle and potatoes from Bamenda in the Cameroons to Eastern Nigeria (Johnson, 1951). The strategic importance of this route was enhanced with the construction of a bridge over the Cross River at Nfum in 1951. The bridge facilitated trade between Nigeria

and the Cameroons. And as V. K. Johnson (1951) has shown, the road not only became an international highway but also increased the volume of motor traffic and trade to the Province during the period.

Meanwhile, increased economic activities in our area of study may also have contributed to the gradual disappearance of distrust of the government by the people. As earlier indicated, the change in official attitude towards the governed was adequately reciprocated by the latter. This was demonstrated in the active interest taken by all the people in measures to promote their welfare, and their readiness to respond whenever a lead was given to them (Johnson, 1950). For instance, the Ikom/Bendege Ayuk/Bashua road was constructed through voluntary labour as well as some local voluntary donations to augment official funds. It was opened to motor traffic in 1949, and this led to increased cultivation of cocoa and other food crops, though verifiable data are not available. According to Johnson, (1950):

The encouragement to local initiative which this road has brought is demonstrated by the greatly increased farming, both of cocoa and foodstuffs which is noticeable most of the way alongside the road and the site of lorries and kitcars busily transporting produce along this road to Ikom market and for shipment down river to Calabar is gratifying to the writer as it is to the local people.

And to exploit the economic opportunities provided by the road, the people embarked on extensive cultivation of export as well as food crops to improve their economic condition. As Nwabughuogu (1993:17) rightly asserts:

... in Africa, colonialism was both a developing and a retarding force but ... whichever role it played in a given African society depended on the response of the colonized peoples themselves. Thus the dynamics of change and development in colonial Africa must be sought not only in the actions of the colonial authorities themselves but mainly in the nature of African responses to and initiatives under colonial rule, themselves products of the societies' pre-colonial attitudes and not of colonialism. Thus, where during colonial rule enormous changes and development took place, African initiatives, not European colonial action, should be seen as having played the more crucial role in bringing these about.

The people in our study area realized that the provision of essential amenities would be slow if this was left to the Native Administrations alone. For the Native Administrations were hardly in the position to meet the demands from all the communities.

With improved transportation system, it became necessary to diversify the local economy. The people's contribution in this regard was equally significant. Some of the measures which were designed to diversify their economy included the introduction of rice, cocoa and rubber cultivation; the improvement of produce processing and yam farming; as well as improved care of livestock, among others. Some of these agricultural innovations generated a lot of interest among the various groups. A typical example was the people's reaction when the Provincial Agricultural Department established experimental cocoa plots both at Bateriko, in the former Obudu District, as well as at Irruan and Ikom. These cocoa plots served as seed production and demonstration centres for these areas. Like people desiring to exploit a long-awaited opportunity, several indigenes of these areas applied to the Forestry Department for assistance in laying out cocoa plantations. By 1949, a good number of the people and communities had embarked on large-scale cultivation of cocoa (Riley, 1949; Erim, 1992: 355).

The people of Ikom may have also realized that cocoa-buying could be lucrative business, if effectively organized. Hence in 1950, 126 people formed themselves into a cooperative society, and began the cocoa-buying business. By 1951, the society's membership had increased to 146 (Johnson, 1951). Competing with the above society in the cocoa-buying business was the Ikom Cocoa Producers Marketing Society which, in 1953, had a total of 192 members (Hennessy, 1953; Erim, 1992: 356). Members of these Societies visited cocoa farms and purchased dried cocoa beans from farmers at reasonable prices, and re-sold same to the United African Company Limited at substantial profits (Johnson, 1951; Erim, 1992: 356). Also in 1953, the Eastern Regional Production Development Board acquired a total of 1022 acres near British

Obokum also in Ikom, for cocoa plantation. Several indigenes of the area responded to the job opportunities provided by the Government Cocoa Estate at Obokum, which paid the labourers a wage of 2/-6d *per diem*. (Hennessy, 1953).

Meanwhile, the Provincial Ministry of Agriculture had introduced rice cultivation to Afikpo, Abakiliki and parts of Ogoja in the 1940s. And, as in the case of cocoa, demonstration plots were established in the areas, and large quantities of paddy distributed free of charge to farmers. Their initial cash returns encouraged these farmers and several other indigenes of these areas to go into rice cultivation. In 1948, 330 farmers in the rice producing areas were said to have planted 9,000 acres which yielded about 6,500 tons of paddy valued at nearly £100,000. And to step up rice cultivation in the Izi area, in particular, the Izi Clan Council (in Abakiliki) was reported to have encouraged the people to make rice their staple diet “during the hungry months” (Riley 1945 and 1949, Erim 1992: 353 – 354) that is the period before the harvest of new yams.

Another important measure designed to increase economic activities in the Province was the relaxation of the 1916 Forestry Ordinance and Regulations. This Ordinance had empowered the colonial government to establish and control Forest Reserves in Nigeria. From that date, a total of 2993 square kilometres of the total area of the Province (about 19 percent of its land area), were held under reserve. In an area where farming (particularly of yam), was the main occupational pursuit of the people, the Forestry Ordinance severely limited farming activity. When in 1932 the Ordinance was relaxed, large areas of farmlands were returned to their owners who, consequently, embarked on extensive yam farming as of old. And occasionally, bags of fertilizers were distributed to the farmers free of charge by the Department of Agriculture to improve their yields. Report has it that the greater part of Abakiliki, Obubra and Ogoja Divisions earned most of their incomes from export of yams to Enugu, Port Harcourt and Calabar (Williams, 1936).

The people’s readiness to diversify their economy was also evident in other ways. Unemployed school leavers throughout the Province, were sent on six weeks of training on different aspects of farming, including livestock farming, at the Agricultural Farm in Abakiliki. At the end of the programme, the graduands were generally encouraged to take up farming. In this way, they would be in a position to impart their knowledge to others within and outside their immediate communities, and also become employers of labour. The programme is said to have generated a lot of interest among the school leavers who saw it as an opportunity to acquire new skills (Johnson, 1951; Erim 1992: 364 – 365).

In a bid to put their knowledge into practice, a good number of the beneficiaries of the agricultural programme embarked on large-scale poultry farming, thus becoming suppliers of poultry products both in and outside their communities. In the same vein, those who had no formal training in poultry-keeping received practical instructions in that field from their own local “experts”. And with the knowledge they acquired, it did not take them long to open their own poultry farms. At this initial stage, the poultry-keeping was usually done on a small scale, as much of the work was done by the farmer and his household; hence there was hardly any need for local or external labour. In time, however, some increased their production beyond the capacity of their household labour. As a result they had to engage outside labour, who earned a living thereby.

The degree of the people’s success in the diversification of their economy became evident during an agricultural show, which was staged at Abakiliki on 23rd November, 1953. Many farmers from various parts of Eastern Region took part in the show which featured the display of a variety of agricultural products such as rice, yam tubers, cocoa, cocoyams, palm oil, poultry and legumes, among others. The quality of these products displayed by some indigenous farmers impressed the organizers of the programme. At the end of the exhibition, Ikom was the runner-up to Afikpo Division in total prize money (Hennessy, 1953; Erim, 1992: 362 – 363).

Among the spread effects of increased economic activities was the development of markets. No society, at any given time, has ever been self-sufficient. Even in pre-colonial times, people engaged in trade in order to sell the products of their economic activities, or procure those commodities which they lacked. Ndoma-Egba (1972:1) rightly observes that:

Markets originated from economic forces within the African society; the genesis being the individual's propensity to barter. The need for local exchange, consequent upon deficits in one area and surpluses in another, would thus provide conditions for the beginning of a local market.

Thus, trade in West Africa, in general, does not owe its origin to external factors or the European presence as some schools of thought have reasoned. Quoting an excerpt from Hodder (1965:97), Ndoma-Egba (1972:1) maintains that "the African was an economic being, prior to external contact, producing, distributing and consuming". Therefore, it is historically misleading to assert, as Dike did (1956:1), that the history of modern West Africa is largely the history of five centuries of trade with European nations.

Contrary to Dike's theory is Flint's assertion (Ajayi and Crowder, 1975:380) that the trade with Europeans, though of great historical importance, was in reality but a very minor part of the normal economic activities of the mass of West Africa's populations during the nineteenth century. Indeed, the peoples of West Africa had been linked with each other by a network of commercial activities long before the arrival of the Europeans in their territories. The same was true of the area which later came to be known as Old Ogoja Province. Prior to the imposition of colonial rule on the area, there were trading activities for which markets were a corollary. Each community saw it as a duty to establish its own market centre where traders from other areas met on stipulated days to sell their wares and procure those items they needed. The village markets were mostly periodic. In other words, each of the markets met on a particular day in the week to avoid clashes and divided attendance. The imposition of colonial rule did not alter this pre-colonial cyclical arrangement. Rather, the colonial presence led to the emergence of markets where none had existed before. Such markets emerged around the courtyards in all the Divisional headquarters, in some cases as a deliberate government policy.

Meanwhile, the various road networks facilitated the movement of people and their farm produce from one market centre to the other. Further more, the roads being less circuitous shortened the distances between the towns they linked, besides making the towns easily accessible to motor lorries and cars which plied the routes. Some of the vehicles were owned and operated by indigenous entrepreneurs, one of whom was the late Chief Ndoma-Egba, (erstwhile paramount ruler of Ikom) a renowned cocoa farmer from Akparabong. He owned a company called Charity Transport Company and had the late Pa Robinson Odey Erim, a renowned poultry farmer from Yala Nkum (in Ikom), as the Managing Director. The Company's fleet of lorries which carried the inscription "Money Hard", plied several routes both within and outside the Province, transporting farm produce and traders from one town and market centre to the other (Ndoma-Egba, 2008). In this way, cash and food crops such as cocoa beans, rubber, rice, yams, cocoyams, benniseed, palm produce and plantains, among others, were transported from one locality to the other.

With time, several market centres sprang up in many parts of the Province and were connected to most of the new roads. Among such market was that of Yache Gabu in the northwest of Ogoja district located on a cattle trade route, much attended by Fulani and Tiv traders. By 1958, this market still served as an assembling centre for all the cattle that were meant for export. However, the building of the Trunk A road and its feeders, respectively, by the Federal and Regional governments in 1960, from Enugu to Nfum in the Republic of Cameroon, further stimulated the growth of trade and markets in Old Ogoja Province.

Over the years, the Cross River had remained an important highway into our area of study. And despite the opening of motor roads in the Province, a good number of the indigenes continued to patronize the river transportation. With the building of the Trunk A road in 1960, the Cross River began to wane in importance as the volume of trade which passed through it diminished. It seems it was dawning on the people that river transportation was slow and stressful, when compared with transport by road. Not only did they abandon the river trade, they diverted this trade to inland market centres. Intermediary roads adjoining the Trunk A road also emerged, terminating in important villages, while along the road itself, many markets developed. Among these was the Four Corners market located at Ikom, which developed in 1955. Others like the Yahe, Bansara, Afi and Nfum markets developed in the early sixties as the road network expanded (Ndoma-Egba: 43 – 44).

CONCLUSION

The various economic activities examined above, placed the Old Ogoja Province on the threshold of economic development during the period covered by this study. What was actually needed was a conducive atmosphere under which private and communal initiatives could thrive. The relaxation of colonial policies and attitudes towards the governed did the trick. The purposive response of the people to the enabling environment caricatures the notion of the “lazy native” which was used to justify Europe’s subjugation of the colonized Africans. Through communal efforts and individual entrepreneurship, the people were able to prove for themselves direly needed infrastructure and also to embark on other occupational pursuits that raised their living standards. The over all result was that at the end of colonial rule in 1960, Old Ogoja Province was in a position to compete favourably with other Nigerian groups.

REFERENCES

- AFIGBO, A. E. (1980). “The Eastern Province Under Colonial Rule” in O. Ikime (ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Nigeria: Heinemann Educational Books Plc.
- CAMERON, Donald (July 13 1934). Memorandum Titled “The Principles of Native Administration and their Application”. Lagos.
- DIKE, K. O. (1956). *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830 – 1885*. London: Oxford University Press.
- ECHON, James 80 yrs, Farmer, interviewed at Ibiaragidi, Bekwarra, Ogoja on 5/05/2006.
- ENEJI, Obi. 43 yrs, Businessman, interviewed at Yala on 16/07/2005.
- ERIM, Patience O. (1984). “Ikrom Division Under Colonial Rule, 1890 – 1940: A Study in Social Change”, unpublished M. Phil. Thesis (History) University of Calabar.
- ERIM, Patience O. (1992). “Impact of Colonial Rule on Old Ogoja Province, 1905 – 1955”, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (History) University of Calabar.
- ERIM, Patience O. (2005). “Colonialism and the Development of Health Services in Old Ogoja Province, 1914 – 1950”. *African Journal of Economy and Society*. Vol. 6, Nos. 1 & 2, January – December.
- FLINT, J. E. (1975). “Economic Change in West Africa in the Nineteenth Century”, in J. F. A. Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds) *History of West Africa*. Vol. II. London: Longman Group Limited.
- LUGARD, F. (1965). *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.
- MCPHEE, Allan (1970). *The Economic Revolution in British West Africa*. New York: Negro University Press.
- MONJOK, Emmanuel E. (October 18, 1988). “Economic Infrastructures in the Cross River State”; a paper delivered at the symposium on the Cross River State organised by the Cabinet Office Calabar.
- NDOMA-EGBA, Bassey (1972). “The Evolution of Rural Markets and Their Role in a Developing Economy: A Case Study of Cross River Village Markets, Southeastern Nigeria”, Unpublished M. A. Thesis (Economics) Dalhousie University, Canada.
- NDOMA-EGBA, Rowland, 58yrs, Medical Practitioner, interviewed in Calabar on 28/03/2008.
- NWABUGHUOGU, Anthony I. (1993). *The Dynamics of Change in Eastern Nigeria, 1900 – 1960: Indigenous Factor in Colonial Development*, Owerri: Esther Thompson Publishing Company.
- National Archives Ibadan (here-after NAI) Chief Secretary’s Office (here-after CSO). NAI File No. 11967, Vol. XII CSO 26/2 Annual Report Ogoja Province 1934 by K. A. B. Cochrane.
- NAI File No. 11967, Vol. XIV CSO 26/2 Annual Report Ogoja Province 1936 by G. B. Williams.
- NAI File No. 11967, Vol. XVI CSO 26/2 Ogoja Province Annual Report 1940 Onwards by E. N. Mylius.
- NAI Annual Report Ogoja Province 1942 by P. M. Riley. NAI Annual Report Ogoja Province 1945 by P. M. Riley.
- NAI File No. 11967, Vol. XVII CSO 26/2 Annual Report Ogoja Province 1949 Onwards by P. M. Riley.
- NAI Annual Report Ogoja Province 1950 by V. K. Johnson.
- NAI Annual Report Ogoja Province 1951 by V. K. Johnson.
- National Archives Enugu (here-after NAE) Ogoja Provincial Office (here-after OGPROF). NAE File No. OG 538 OGPROF Annual Report Ikrom Division 1953 by J. Hennesy.
- OKARACHE, James. 58 yrs, Farmer, interviewed at Ugboro-Bekwarra on 5/01/2006.