

Aspects of Socioeconomic Change in Ikorodu District of Lagos Colony under Colonial Rule

Boge, Faruq Idowu, PhD

Abstract

The fact that colonialism impacted African communities cannot be over-emphasised. The predominant perception among Africanist scholars seems to support the argument that colonialism was exploitative and impediment to development in Africa. Conversely, there is some form of socioeconomic changes that accompanied colonial rule, particularly at the micro level. This study examines the foundation of socioeconomic development in Ikorodu district of Lagos Colony during colonial rule. It analyses the socioeconomic structures and configurations of the district and endeavours to substantiate the argument that colonial rule laid the foundation of transformation of Ikorodu district from an agrarian society to a commercial and industrial hub. The paper adopts a qualitative research methodology using historical approach to data collection and interpretation. It concludes that colonial rule influenced socioeconomic change in what became the Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria.

Keywords: colonial rule, socioeconomic change, Ikorodu district, lagos colony

Introduction

The modern-day Ikorodu local government area (LGA) metamorphosed from what was Ikorodu district under colonial rule. The area has gradually become a commercial and industrial centre within Lagos State, the commercial nerve-centre of Nigeria (Lagos State Government, 2013:1-5). It is strategically located in the north-eastern part of the State and its proximity to Lagos Island and Ikeja (the administrative and industrial capital of the State) provides socio-economic linkage advantages. Furthermore, the LGA houses the largest Industrial Estate and Thermal Power Station in Nigeria (Bawa-Allah, 2011:55). These attributes assisted in stimulating the transformation of the area from a largely agrarian economy to a fast growing industrial, commercial, and service economy. However, a careful examination of the socioeconomic developments within the area would reveal the impacts of colonial rule. Prior to colonial rule, the people of the area practically engaged in farming, hunting, fishing, and trading activities for economic survival. These occupational and economic adventures were largely conducted at traditional level using crude implements and methods.

Some historians have argued that the propelling objective for coloni-

sation was economic exploitation (Hopkins, 1973:9, Falola, 1987). The colonists therefore introduced series of economic policies which culminated into the reconfiguration of the economic structures of many African communities. This reconfiguration accidentally assisted in laying the foundation of economic developments that were witnessed in many of these communities. Specifically, economic consideration was the main factor for the imposition of colonial rule on Ikorodu and environs. Towards this end, many colonial policies were initiated that contributed to the reconfiguration of the socioeconomic structures of the district. In the lights of the foregoing propositions, this paper endeavours to interrogate the impacts of colonial rule on the transformation of the economy and social infrastructures of the Ikorodu district. The paper generally establishes the interconnections between political development and socioeconomic change. To ascertain the changes that occurred during the period under consideration, it is appropriate to examine the characteristics of the people's economy prior to colonial rule.

Aspects of Precolonial Economic Activity

The precolonial economic activities of Ikorodu district were predominantly based on agriculture and commerce. Agriculture was the basis of all economic activities, and it constituted the mainstay of the people's livelihood. Contrary to the arguments of substantive economic historians about the predominant subsistence level of agriculture in West Africa (Ogunyemi, 1996:14-15), there were commercial agricultural activities in the Precolonial Ikorodu district. The first settlers of the area were farmers and hunters. The geographical terrain of the area gave credence to its economic viability, particularly in terms of agriculture, fishing, hunting, tie and dye, crafts, and commerce. In fact, the beginning of settlement in the area was influenced by economic expansionism which was engendered by the fertility of the land (Abimbola, 1991).

With respect to agriculture, farming practices such as mono-cropping and mixed farming were adopted. These practices were enhanced by the availability of large expanse of fertile land and the land tenure system which was based on communal ownership of land (Ward-Price, 1933:32-33). Simple implements such as cutlass, hoe, digging stick among other tools were used to perform agricultural activities. The common farm produce of the area included varieties of yams (such as *akosu*, *obisu*, *koko*, and *isu alo*), vegetables, maize, cocoyam, cassava, plantains, bananas, kola nuts, pepper, pineapple, melon, pawpaw, oranges, and oil palm (Agiri, 1974:465-83, Ekiyoyo, 2013:27-29). Some of these crops were introduced from other areas because of Intercommunity trade particularly during the eras of slave trade and legitimate trade. Though A. J. Ulsheimer demonstrated that Lagos in the early seventeenth century had in abundant

some of these crops (Agiri and Barnes, 1987:19), Lawal (1994:91) asserted that Ikorodu and environs supplied Lagos with appreciable number of these farm produce during the eighteenth century.

Fishing constituted another notable economic activity in the Precolonial Ikorodu area. Due to its proximity to the lagoon and the existence of some coastal communities, fishing was of a good economic value (Lagos State Government, n.d.:91). Fish of various kinds were dried in the sun or smoked to preserve them for long or short distance market. Fresh fish were marketed mostly in short distance areas owing to the perishable nature and lack of adequate storage facilities. Fishing activities became even more prominent in the mid-nineteenth century when the dynasty struggle in Lagos stimulated the settlement of some people from Lagos Island along the coastal areas of the district (Agiri, 1987:199-200). Fishing thrived mainly along the Lagoon on the Ikorodu lake waterfronts at Ipakodo, Ijede, Ibeshe, Bayeiku, Oreta, Ofin, and Majidun. The settlement of some Awori and Ilaje elements in some of the coastal regions also assisted to stimulate fishing activities in these areas. However, there is the need to emphasise that large number of fish and other maritime products such as salt and mats were imported from Lagos which seemed to have the comparative advantage on these products. Lawal (1995:139) corroborated this assertion when he stated that “The fishing activities of the early Lagos people thrived to the extent that Lagos exported fish to her neighbours like Ikorodu from where yams and vegetables were supplied to her in exchange.”

Evidence of migration and settlement substantiate the fact that hunting was one of the earliest economic activities in the precolonial Ikorodu area (Alobaloke and Adesalu, 2006:1-4). Hunting during this period took the form of setting of traps for small animals such as squirrels, and alligators. It also took the advance level of hunting for larger animals such as elephant and crocodile. Hunting was usually carried out with the assistance of charms and incantations in the remote forests. It was a dependable source of meat and animal skin for shoe and drum making. Oga, the widely acclaimed progenitor of Ikorodu, engaged in hunting expeditions and likewise other progenitors of some surrounding towns. Furthermore, hunters were useful in security, and this could be examined from two perspectives (Interview with Pa Abudu Dosumu-Alashe, 15 September 2018). In the first place, the responsibility for protecting the people, their properties, and the entire communities even against external aggression, were majorly rested in the hands of the hunter groups. Secondly, the hunters assisted in enhancing food security by assisting farmers to disperse rodents from destroying crops on the farmlands.

Another important precolonial economic activity of the people was trade and commerce. During the nineteenth century, the area became important

trading post and junction market-place for the people from the hinterland (Smith, 1978:8, Agiri, 1974:465-83). This was enhanced by its strategic location along the trade route between Lagos and the hinterland. Due to this location, the port of Ikorodu was one of the major channels through which Portuguese traders usually passed to obtain local pots, calabashes, plates, and local cloths including the *Jebu* clothe (Smith, 1978:10). The people also developed a coastal market at Ipakodo where trade in cloth dyeing, farm produce, bush meat, salt, and fish took place. Traders from the hinterland participated in the weekly market where wears such as mirror, arms and ammunition, gunpowder, tobacco, cotton cloth and others were exchanged for local products (Bawa-Allah, 2011:73).

Another form of traditional economic activities of the people was cloth dyeing. Specie of vegetable called *Odu* (something that blackens) was very abundant in Ikorodu. This specie of vegetable was usually soaked to produce black lotions used for cloth dyeing. Hence, the people took cloth dyeing for a trade. There were many *Iya Alaros* (women-who-dye-clothes) in some parts of Ikorodu area using very big clay-pots to soak dyes for cloth dyeing business (Interview with Alhaji A. A. Adaboyon, 8 September 2018). The area therefore became prominent for this business and people from neighbouring communities brought their clothes for dyeing. In addition, craftworks such as drum-making and drumming, blacksmithing, clay-making, and clothe weaving were practised by the people. Though some of the farm implements were brought to the district from neighbouring communities, the indigenous and local blacksmiths also engaged in the production of simple farm implements such as hoes (*oko*), cutlass (*ada* or *eele*), *akoro*, amongst others (Alhaji A. A. Adaboyan, Interview). There was also a commercial manufacturing of pottery as a significant local industry. These economic activities were improved upon during colonial rule, paving way for continuity and change in the economic aspects of the district.

Aspects of Economic Development under Colonial Rule

It is indisputable that colonialism was economically exploitative (Ake, 1981:26-29, Falola, 1987). This assertion is extrapolated from the fact that colonialism generally retarded economic development in many African states. For instance, in Nigeria, colonial economic policies hindered indigenous industrialisation but promoted the production of raw materials like cash crop and minerals. Colonial Nigeria served as source of cheap raw materials for industries in Europe and market for finished products from Europe, America, and Asia (Ekundare, 1973:162-173). Specifically, the Colonial Development Act of 1929 was passed in Britain to promote agricultural development in the colonies. The essence of the colonial agricultural development programmes was to make the metropoli-

tan countries self-sufficient regarding essential raw materials for beverages and fruits (Afolabi, 2018).

Having affirmed that colonial economy was disincentive to industrial development in Nigeria, it must be stressed that it accidentally made some positive socioeconomic impacts. For instance, the origin of modern transportation, communication, markets, and banking systems in Nigeria is traced to the colonial era. As for the agricultural sector, scientific knowledge was introduced by the colonialists to boost agricultural produce. Specifically, the colonial government established a botanical garden in Ikorodu town in 1897 to encourage the cultivation of cocoa, coffee, rubber, and kola nuts (Agiri, 1987:204). The creation of the garden helped to improve the quantity and quality of these cash crops in Ikorodu district. The government sold the seedlings of these crops to farmers in the district and crops such as palm produce, cocoa, kola nuts, maize, cassava, yams, banana, and plantain were further planted (Bawa-Allah, 2011:73). Varieties of pepper such as *rodo*, *sombo*, *ata ogijo*, tomatoes amongst others were also grown in various parts of the district. Madam Tawakaltu Ekundayo (Oral Interview) narrated that her father had an expansive farm where these varieties of pepper were grown in abundance at Igbosoro outskirts of the district during the colonial period. In the same vein, Alhaji Fasasi Ayinde Akinpelu explained that he used to perform series of agricultural activities in his father's big farm during the 1930s (Oriwu Sun Newspaper, August 1985).

Private agricultural enterprises such as Ricketts Enterprise and Isiu Industrial Farmers Union assisted in the expansion of agricultural production within Ikorodu district. The colonial government, however, inspected the produce to prevent adulteration and the inspection was handled by the Agricultural Department (National Archive Ibadan, NAI, CSO. 26/09512/vol. iii). The government further assisted to boost the local farmers' interest in agriculture through the establishment of the Colony Development Board which granted loans to farmers in Ikorodu district. The loans assisted farmers to establish poultry farms and purchase implements such as incubators, wire-netting, and iron-sheets. Pig rearing and large plantations of variety of cash crops were also promoted through these loans. Specie of kola nuts (botanically called *kola nitida*, and locally called *obi gbanja*) became largely cultivated within the district. The favourable soil texture and the movement of Hausa migrants into the district in the 1930s assisted to boost the cultivation of the *kola nitida*. Thus, by the 1940s, Ikorodu district had become a hub for the supplies of *kola nitida* to Lagos and Ibadan.

Cassava, maize, yam, *egusi* seeds, and bananas were largely cultivated in Ikorodu district both for subsistence and commercial purposes (NAI, CSO RG/FA: 48). Small amount of rice was cultivated also. Cassava was a very impor-

tant commodity in the local economy and was converted into farina (popularly called *gari*) by women. Prominent among the local people that engaged in cassava processing was Iyalode Patricia Efun (the women leader of Ikorodu town) who had a motor-driven mill which processed cassava into farina (NAI, CSO. 29664/S.1: 10). In addition, farmers at the Oke-Eletu area of the district erected work-sheds where large amount of farina was manually processed (NAI, CSO. 29664/S.1: 13). The farina was sold at various markets in the district, but a large proportion was shipped to Lagos for commercial purpose. Reasonable quantity of maize and rice were also regularly shipped from the district to Lagos. In fact, the district's farmers had the opportunity of matching their crops cultivation with the demands from Lagos. Specie of leaves, locally known as *ewe gbodogi*, grew abundantly in the district during this period. This leaf was also an important export commodity from Ikorodu to Lagos. It was in high demand because it was useful for wrapping varieties of foods such as cooked-rice, *mai-mai*, *akara*, *ifokore*, *asaro*, *robo*, *adalu*, *eko* (pap), *fufu* and the like.

The coastal and riversides of the district such as Ijede, Oreta, Ofin, Baiyeku, Ipaka, Aiyetoro, Ibeshe, and Ebute-Iga continued with their traditional fishing and other maritime activities during the colonial period. To substantiate this, Gibbon's Intelligence Report revealed that "no fewer than 112 out of 120 taxpayers described themselves as fishermen" at Oreta (NAI, CSO. 29664/S.1: 7). To enhance the growth of fishing activities within the district, the colonial authority also made some attempts. An officer from the colony fishing department visited the fishing communities periodically to educate the fishermen about best fishing practices according to government rules (NAI, IKE DIV 5LD: 7). The agricultural produces and fishes were marketed at principal markets in the district. One of these was the *Ajina* market which was held every nine-day at Ikorodu town. The market recorded a weekly average of 2000 traders during the early decades of the twentieth century (NAI, CSO. 26/09512/vol. iii: 70). The coastal market at the Ipakodo area of the district was another principal market where the agricultural produces from the district and neighbouring communities were marketed. The coastal market was largely attended by many people from other Ijebu communities, Yoruba hinterland, and eastern part of the country (Interview with Alhaja Sekinat Shoneye, 2 September 2018). These people brought agricultural produce and other varieties of goods to the market at nine-day interval through lands and by water.

Prior to the 1920s, transportation from Ikorodu to Lagos was cumbersome. This was because of the usage of the slow-paced rowing boats to convey goods and people through the lagoon. This amounted to series of manpower and time loss, and especially loss of lives because of storms. This situation was further worsened by the fact that boat operators from Lagos were always charging high-

er fares. The complaint by the people of Ikorodu and other Ijebu communities yielded no result as the colonial government felt that the issue was solely a private business affair (NAI, CSO. 26/51045, 7-8). Mr Joshua Ricketts of the Agbowa Enterprise started a motor launch ferry in 1921 (Agiri, 1987:204, Adefuye, 1983:135-152). The company's ferry (named *Letitia*) provided a more efficient service in terms of time and capacity. Mr Joseph Shonubi's ferry (named *Iyalode*) which started operation in 1925 competed with the *Letitia* but the overall advantage of the motor launch was that it helped to improve the commercial activities between Lagos and Ikorodu. The boat service enhanced the movement of goods and people from Ikorodu ports to Lagos (Adedipe, 2010:441-446).

European firms such as the United African Company (UAC), *Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale* (CFAO), *Société Commerciale de l'Qu'est Africain* (SCOA), and John Holt dominated the aspects of export and import of the economy (Oduwobi, 2011:19-29). As for Ikorodu district, European commercial firms such as John Holt, Miller Brothers, African Oil Nuts Company, Hamburg Nigeria Company, Ollivants, the Niger Company, Anglo Guinea Produce Company, Jurgens, and J. W. Jackal opened their branches in Ikorodu district (NAI, CSO. 26/09512/vol. iii: 72). The presence of these firms assisted to improve trading activities within the district and the services of local people were employed. Other factors such as the prevailing high prices for cash crops, the opening of motor transport on the district inner roads, the desire of the firms to buy produce from up-country and only make Lagos a shipping depot, and proximity of the district to Lagos contributed to the burgeoning commercial activities. According to Gibbon's Intelligence Report, the head account conducted in the 1930s reflected that there were more traders than farmers in Ikorodu town because while there were 1,265 tax-paying farmers, 1,314 tax-payers were traders and businessmen (NAI, CSO. 29664/S.1: 10).

Furthermore, indigenous entrepreneurs also established industries in and outside the district. Among these indigenous entrepreneurs was Chief J. M. Shonubi (alias Owolowo) whose business activities covered ferry transport, stock fish importation, and tobacco trade. Chief S. O. Gbadamosi established a business outfit which ventured into tobacco distribution, brewing, and ceramic production in the Lagos around 1934 (Forrest, 2005:82-83). Chief J. F. Kamson owned a textile mill in Lagos. Kamson's textile mill was able to secure £30,000 from the Colony Development Board in 1953 (NAI, CSO. 26/095/2/S.2: 45). Both Chief S. O. Gbadamosi and Alhaji R. A. Allison jointly established the Ikorodu Trading Company (IKOTRACO) and the Ikorodu Ceramic Industry (ICI). The ICI engaged in the production of branded crockery such as dishes, sauces, plates, tea sets, mugs, water jugs, and other household items which were made of earthenware. The firm was able to obtain loan of £65,000 from the Colony

Development Board in 1953 (NAI, CSO. 26/095/2/S.2: 53). Also, the Western Region Finance Corporation granted a loan of £25,000 to ICI to enhance its activities (Federal Ministry of Information, 1962:10-11). Many other Ikorodu district indigenes were successful in the textile business including Mr Enigbokan and Mr O. A. L. Araba who owned the Igbehin Asan Stores and Messrs Araba & Company respectively (NAI, AC 974: 8).

Due to the emerging socioeconomic activities within the district, there was an increasing flow of mails. This flow started from the first decade of the twentieth century and was supervised by the colonial authority. The administrative clerk acted as Subpostmaster where the authorized postal stock at Ikorodu in the 1910s was £60. There was a weekly service between Lagos and Ikorodu by canoe throughout the 1920s (NAI, CSO. 26/51045: 13-20). In the 1930s, the District Clerk acted as the postal agent while a full-fledged post office was opened in Ikorodu town in 1953. This adventure guaranteed communication between Ikorodu and Lagos and enhanced socioeconomic linkages where ideas and opportunities filtered into Ikorodu district.

Taxation was a fulcrum of the colonial fiscal policy (Ake, 1981:32-33). The tax regime that was introduced was completely different from the Precolonial tax system in Ikorodu district. Revenue was raised through the imposition of taxes which were channelled through village and town heads. After collection, the native authority retained a share of the taxes collected in their respective areas of jurisdiction, while the remaining portion went into the government's purse. By the virtue of the 1938 administrative re-organisation, the Ikorodu Native Authority and Treasury was created. The revenue generated into the treasury was used for the maintenance of local government administration. Other towns such as Igbogbo, Baiyeku, and Ipakodo were in the jurisdiction of the Ikorodu Native Council. There was also the Ijede Native Council which had its accounts domiciled with the Ikorodu Native Treasury though under a different estimate (NAI, Session Paper No. 9 of 1939: 53-54).

The period 1939 to 1945 was a period of global conflict which impacted the sociopolitical and economic history of Nigeria. Economically, cost of living was high, prices of export products soared, and there was a rising inflation in the country (Mordi, 2009:235-357). These indices culminated into the outbreak of the 1945 industrial action in Nigeria (Gavin and Oyemakinde, 1980:513). The production of food crops which was *ab initio* given less incentive, gained momentum. During this period, the imperial administration in Nigeria anchored its economic policies in favour of protectionism (Okuntola-Aboderin, 2015:11-27). As a result, the colonial government placed bans on the exportation of certain products to the United Kingdom to safeguard the British factories and mer-

chants. Sometimes, highly discriminatory duties were imposed on palm kernel from Nigeria to discourage the exportation of the produce.

Among the economic impacts of the war was that it stimulated increase in the production of local foodstuffs, particularly within the colony districts. Ikorodu people who were majorly farmers and traders gained from this scenario. This was because there was a fall in the price of cash crops like cocoa and palm kernels which made the farmers to concentrate more on food crops. While the prices of imported articles increased exponentially, local foodstuffs witnessed price reductions (NAI, Session Paper No. 9 of 1939: 19). During this period, the leading industries in Ikorodu district increased their business activities. Another impact of the war on the socioeconomic transition of Ikorodu was that it stimulated population movements. For instance, the war activities paved way for economic change in Lagos which necessitated an increase in the demand for labour. As this demand increased, more people from the suburbs of Lagos including Ikorodu district moved into Lagos for socioeconomic engagements. This accelerated the Preexisting rural-urban migration between Ikorodu and Lagos thereby making many of the district's young persons to migrate to Lagos (Adedipe, 2010:441-446).

Aspect of Socioeconomic Development under Colonial Rule

Scholars have observed that the commitment of the colonial authority towards social development was lukewarm and racially motivated. Olukoju (2003), for instance, asserted that provisions of social amenities in the colony were concentrated at the resident areas of the colonialists. Attention was later paid to the provision of socioeconomic infrastructures to strengthen colonial administration (Osoba and Fajana, 1984:587-588). For instance, the provision of transport infrastructure was largely to ensure that produce from the interior were easily transmitted to the ports for exportation. In another vein, water facilities were provided to enhance the living conditions of colonialists and the merchants. The efforts towards the provision of education were led by the missionary bodies from the mid-nineteenth century (Ajuzie, 2017:56-58). By the 1870s, the colonial government began to show some concerns with respect to the provision of education in Nigeria. This interest began with the provision of certain interventions to augment the activities of the missionary groups. The government began to introduce regulations which were meant to coordinate the educational sector (Noah, 1985:154).

Later, the government started to establish government schools majorly to produce catechists and civil servants for effective colonial administration. The provision of formal education in Ikorodu district is traced to the efforts of the missionary groups. This process started when the Wesleyan Mission

School (now Methodist Primary School) and Bethel School (now African Bethel School) were established at Ikorodu in 1914 and 1916 respectively (NAI, CSO. 26/51045:20). The Ahamadiyah School and C.M.S. School were also established in Ijede in the 1930s (NAI, CSO. 26/09512/vol. vii: 244). There were also Salvation Army School, Ikorodu opened in 1936 and Muslim School, Isele, Ikorodu which was opened in 1947. Other missionary schools such as Methodist School Agura, Methodist School Igbogbo, Methodist School Oke-Eletu, and C.M.S. School Ibeshe were later established in various parts of the district. A few Native Authority schools were also established in some parts of the district. By 1949, there was a Native Authority School in each of Isiu and Oreta (NAI, IKE DIV 5, LD 864). Another one was established at Baiyeku in 1950. The Library Committee that was established by government was responsible for organising debates and managing the reading room. Also, a domestic science class was also created for teaching Home Economics to women.

An adult education programme was established by the Native Authority towards the close of the 1940s (NAI, IKE DIV 5, LD 864). Two separate classes of the programme were usually conducted at Muslim School Isele and Bethel School Ijomu focusing mainly on primary school education. However, there was no secondary school in the district till 1949 and only a few families could afford the secondary schools which were located outside the district. In fact, Professor Kunle Wahab (2012:4-10) argued that many children had to settle for using their primary school certificates to work as primary school teachers or clerical officers in private establishments in Lagos.

This situation prompted the indigenes to lobby for the establishment of a secondary school within the district. Ikorodu students and residents in Lagos played significant role towards the permission for the creation of the premier secondary school (Oriwu College, Ikorodu) in 1949 (NAI, Comcol. 2182/C. 27). Meanwhile, the school was only permitted to run Forms I to IV where the graduates of the school were only awarded GIV Certificates. Many of the students terminated their education pursuit and got engaged in menial employments while others moved to the cities for the completion for their studies. Oriwu College was unable to extend its classes to Form V due to its inability to fulfil accreditation requirements. These deficiencies included inadequate educational facilities, inadequate number of qualified personnel, and lack of commitment from the founders (NAI, CSO. 26/09512/S.2: 31-32). In 1959 however, the authority of the Western Region gave a full-fledged approval for Oriwu College. Another step towards higher education in the district was the establishment of Elementary Teacher Training College, Ikorodu in 1953 (NAI, CSO. 26/09512/S.2: 32). Candidates from various parts of the colony attended the training college which was financed from the purse of the Colony Welfare and Development

Funds. In addition, the Local Authority Secondary Modern School and the Anglican Secondary Modern School were established in 1954 and 1955 respectively (Western Region Government, 1962: 67). Both Ikorodu Students Union and Ikorodu Literary Society contributed to the development of education within the district by providing scholarship to indigenes across levels of education (NAI, Comcol. I, 248/S. 137, NAI, Comcol. I, 248/7).

Another aspect of colonial social policy is the provision of health facilities. In 1917, the Public Health Ordinance which gave priority to sanitary observations was pronounced by the colonial government (NAI, Colonial Reports – Annual, No. 1008: 16-18). It introduced sanitary rules to ensure healthy living conditions. To this end, sanitary inspectors who inspected latrines, incinerators, and slaughter slabs were stationed in Ikorodu district. Despite these provisions however, there were reported cases of diseases. For example, there was the outbreak of influenza epidemic which took several lives in Ikorodu in 1918 (NAI, CSO. 26/51045: 10). Also, there were reported cases of small-pox in the district in September 1919 (NAI, CSO. 26/51045: 10). Another aspect of sanitary measures was cemetery management. Traditionally, the people were used to burying their dead bodies inside the house or compound. In 1909, the colonial authority requested the Oloja and Council to provide plots of land for the establishment of separate cemeteries for the Christians, the Muslims, and the Pagans (NAI, CSO. 26/51045: 6-7). This request was rejected by the traditional council and similarly in 1917 and 1919. The non-compliance led the colonial authority to place embargo on the issuance of permits for further interment of dead bodies in the compounds. As a result, pieces of land were provided for Christian and Muslim cemeteries but the one for the pagans was not provided due to religious-cultural beliefs. The colonial authority therefore instructed that every pagan grave should be well concreted (NAI, CSO. 26/51045:6-7).

The traditional health-care delivery system through herb concoctions and incantations was gradually supplemented by that of the western model. The completion of the Ikorodu Maternity and Infant Centre in October 1942 marked the beginning of modern health-care delivery in Ikorodu district (NAI, CSO. 26/09512/Vol. XII: 7). From inception, officers of the Lagos Medical Centre were posted to the centre. Apart from officers from Lagos however, health sisters were also posted to the maternity from the Ijebu Province. Attendance and deliveries at the centre between 1942 and 1947 are represented in the table below:

Table 1: Attendance and deliveries at Ikorodu Maternity Centre, 1942–1947

Years	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
Attendance	240	695	1,241	1,288	3,788	3,710

Years	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
Deliveries	2	21	38	55	182	263

Source: Annual Reports of the Colony, 1942-1947, NAI, CSO 26/09512, vol. xii

The attendance at the health centre was grossly incommensurate with the actual population of the district. This was because of the problem of distance and attachments to traditional ante-natal practices. Another reason for the low deliveries was that many of the attendees were allowed to deliver at home under the attention of the medical officers of the centre. People were also discouraged from visiting the centre owing to occasions of shortage of drugs and dressings (NAI, CSO. 26/09512/Vol. XII: 17-18). In addition to the centre, dispensaries were also established at Ijede and Imota. In addition to the medical personnel that were posted by the government, the Ikorodu Native Authority also employed sanitary inspectors. The Native Authority ensured that the indigenes of the district were recruited into the medical service. These support staff were trained before resuming with the centre. In 1949, a new building was erected for the Ikorodu Maternity Centre while the Native Authority also established the Health Committee to give more credence to the efforts at health care deliveries (NAI, IKE DIV 5, LD 864).

Some motor road projects were embarked upon in the district during colonial period. For instance, an extensive bush clearing on the Ikorodu-Sagamu Road in 1920 (NAI, CSO. 26/51045: 22). In the same year, the construction of the Ikosi-Ikorodu Road was executed using voluntary labours. This road provided a light motor transport for the Ijebu people to trade with Ikosi and Ikorodu. In 1927, the Public Work Department carried out maintenance on the Ikorodu Beach Road which was constructed in 1864 (NAI, CSO. 2/09512/Vol. IV: 91). Furthermore, voluntary efforts were adopted in the construction of the Ikorodu-Baiyeku Road. In 1948, other constructions such as the Ikorodu-Imota-Agbowa and the Ikorodu-Ijede Roads were embarked upon (Olubomehin, 2012:35-47). These roads enhanced the promotion of trade and commerce within the district. Through these roads, lorry and local buses brought passengers from the hinterland to the Ikorodu beach thereby adding to its socioeconomic development. The colonial government was unable to construct the proposed Isheri to Ogun River Road which was expected to link-up with Ikorodu (NAI, CSO. 26/09512/Vol VII: 238-239).

The roads were originally constructed to cater for internal socioeconomic activities and business interactions with the hinterland. The alternative routes to Lagos like the Abeokuta and Ibadan overland routes were very long and cumbersome. As a result, virtually all the commercial and economic activities pass-

ing from and through Ikorodu to Lagos were facilitated through water transportation. The challenges of substandard ferry operations and the increasing socioeconomic activities within the district necessitated the provision of alternative means for transportation. The need for an alternative means of transportation was essentially driven by the recurrent boat accidents on the lagoon and concomitant loss of lives and properties. In 1930 for example, the *Iyalode* Boat capsized because of overloading with many casualties. Despite the government regulations through inspections and mandating boats to carry life jackets and marine licence, boat capsizes still occurred. On 15 January 1942, another devastating boat mishap involving the *Iyalode* occurred, again because of overloading (Agiri, 1987:205).

Arising from the constant incident, Ikorodu, Ijebu-ode, Epe, and Sagamu indigenes residing in Lagos formed a fund-raising committee for the construction of an overland road linking Lagos and Ikorodu (Bawa-Allah et al, 2013:21). The committee was christened the Ijebu-Lagos Road Construction Committee under the auspices of the Ikorodu Improvement Society. Mentioned must be made however, that the desire to have this road constructed had been initiated since 1917 when the Ikorodu people wrote a petition to the colonial administration requesting for the construction of the road. Though the demands for this road continued and were given credence by similar petitions by the Awujale of Ijebu Ode, the Akarigbo of Sagamu, and other Remo kings, the government was not convinced about the viability of the road.

The road construction was expected to provide an alternative route to Lagos by land thus cushioning the effect of the recurring boat accidents on the water ways. The formation of the construction committee was made at a meeting of the Ijebu people held on 1 June 1942 at the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos (Bawa-Allah et al, 2013:21). The committee's membership mobilised kith and kin within Lagos to start the clearing of the road from the Lagos end on 15 August 1942. The colonial government gave approval for the project in January 1943. Apart from physical efforts that the committee mobilised, members also contributed money for the execution of the construction. They also solicited moral and financial support from well-wishers across the country. Finally, in 1945, the colonial authority took over the project and the Public Works Department commenced the construction of the road (Bawa-Allah et al, 2013:22). It took a period of eleven years before the road was completed. Delay in completion was attributed to difficult terrains which were located along the road, necessitating the construction of seven separate bridges. The Lagos-Ikorodu Road which gulped £198, 000 was 15½ Miles, each mile consumed a little above £13, 000 (Bawa-Allah et al, 2013:29-30).

Another aspect of the colonial social policy was the provision of water sup-

ply. Two major water schemes were initiated in the district. One was the Ikorodu Water Supply Scheme which was meant to supply piped borne water for Ikorodu town. The project started in 1949 with the Apeka stream as the source of supply (NAI, IKE DIV 5, LD 864). The second was the Rural Water Supply. Through this scheme, several wells were constructed within the district. Also, sporting activities were encouraged within the district. There were flourishing tennis, boxing, and football clubs. Occasional games were organised between these clubs and those of neighbouring communities.

Conclusion

This study is a micro-history of Ikorodu district during colonial rule. It focuses on the socioeconomic changes that took place in the district during colonial era. Though the study acknowledged the fact that colonialism was generally exploitative, it demonstrated that colonial rule assisted in laying the foundation of socioeconomic developments in the study area. To this existent, colonial administration consolidated the Preexisting economic interactions between Ikorodu and Lagos. It also enhanced the position of the Ikorodu and adjoining environs as centres for commercial and trading activities. Elements of the colonial economy such as agriculture, commerce, taxation, transportation, and communication reflected on the socioeconomic transformation of the district and these reconfigurations assisted in laying the foundation of the district's economic progress which was later witnessed in the postcolonial era.

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