COLONIAL URBANISATION IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA: WARRI 1891 -I960

By

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CERTIFICATION

This thesis titled ***Colonial Urbanisation in Southern Nigeria: Warri 1891- 1960*** by Anthony A. Diden meets the regulations governing the award of the Degree of **M.A. (History)** of Ahmadu Bello University and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literacy presentation.

Supervisor — Date: 24/11/98

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Dean, Post Graduate School — Date: 02/05/00

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the product of my own research and has been written by me.

It has not at any time been presented for a higher degree at any other University. All quotations have been acknowledged and distinguished by footnotes and quotation marks.



Anthony A. Diden

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, who have by the grace of God done so much for me.



A. A. Diden

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I would like to express my profound gratitude to everybody, who in one way or another contributed to the completion of this work.

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ABSTRACT

The intense human interaction which takes place within the urban centre has made it more often than not the centre of historical study, whether consciously or unconsciously. Surprisingly, the impact of colonialism on the urban process in Nigeria is a theme which has hardly received the attention it deserves. Recent works are now coming to light in thesis and published form, expressing concerted efforts to delve into this hardly explored theme.

This work is thus a contribution to our understanding of the impact of colonialism on the urban process in Nigeria with special reference to Warri.

In our attempt to do this we have located Warri within the Nigerian colonial economy which in turn is located within the global capitalist economy. By so doing, we have come to realise that Warri's urban development and function within the colonial system was determined by its integration into the world capitalist economy and British colonialism. Because of its strategic location, Warn as early as 1891 developed as an important colonial administrative centre and commercial trading post.

We showed how Warri on account of its dual significance was used to exploit and dominate, for British interests, certain parts of the Nigerian area.

Our work also shows that Ward's importance as an administrative and commercial centre attracted a large population to the area. Therefore we focused on the nature of Warri's urban administration within the context of colonialism. We analysed residential development and road construction as well as the provision of urban utilities, health, educational and recreational facilities to meet the needs of Warri's growing population.

We concluded that Warri's dual purpose as an instrument of political domination and exploitation through unequal exchange manifests the essence of British colonialism in Nigeria. In the light of this observation, Warri aptly fits the description of a colonial urban centre as it was the product of colonialism, manifesting colonialism's basic features and functioned within the colonial system to sustain and maintain it.

PREFACE

Urbanisation is the process of a given population organising space, settlement and society to meet changing economic and social needs. This phenomena is characterised mainly by an increase in population, a transformation from an agricultural economy to a commercial or industrial one and a social system which transcends kinship ties.

Bearing this definition in mind, we will analyse the impact of colonialism on the urban process in the Western Niger Delta with special reference to Warri. Tracing its development from 1891-1960 we will examine how its position within Nigeria's colonial economy influenced its urban development, society and economy.

In order to lay a proper foundation chapter one will define certain key concepts used in the thesis as well as establish a suitable theoretical framework for the study. In our first chapter we will examine the pre-colonial urban process in the Western Niger Delta area, with special reference to the Itsekiri. This is important in that it will lay a foundation for comparison with colonial urban centres like Warri established with the penetration of Finance capital and colonialism.

In our attempt to fully grasp the roles Nigeria and Warri in particular played in the international capitalist system, chapter two examines the economic situation in capitalist Europe by the late 19th and early 20th century. In this chapter we discussed how finance capital had reached such a mature stage that the only alternative for its continued growth and sustainance was to seek areas outside of Europe where profitable investments could be made, as well as to acquire raw materials and markets for its industrially produced goods. We will argue that it was therefore necessary for capitalist Europe to subjugate countries like Nigeria in order to achieve their aim.

With this in mind we will, in this chapter examine the process of political domination of the Nigerian area with particular reference to the southern parts. We will also highlight Warri's role in this process as well as the impact of this role on her urban development up to 1929.

Our chapter three brings out Warri's political significance within the colonial administrative machinery. Here, we argued that Warri was a significant colonial administrative centre during our period of study. Also we examined Warri's urban economy locating it within Nigeria's national colonial economy. We also showed how its urban economy was inevitably interwoven into the global capitalist economy by virtue of colonial domination. An important aspect of our thesis will be that

Warri's dual function as an administrative and commercial centre contributed in no small measure to the urban process there. We closed this chapter with an examination of significant urban developments in Warri from 1930 to 1945. These developments include road construction, residential developments, water and power supply, the provision of health and recreational facilities and other urban infrastructure.

Chapter four examines the impact of the second World War on Warri's urbanisation process and economy. Here we argued that there was an increase in the development and economic activity as a result of post war developments.

Our final chapter focuses on Warri's urban society. Here we bring out the trend in Warri's population growth during our period of study as well as showing its ethnic composition. We also examined the classes that characterised our area of study highlighting their salient features and role in Warri's urban society.

We close this chapter with a discussion on ethnic relations particularly between the Itsekiri and Urhobo in Warri province and how it manifested its self in Warri urban during our period of study, especially in the 1940s and 50s. We trace the historical antecedents of the Itsekiri Urhobo rivalry in order to grasp fully the nature and essence of the struggle that we witness between the two groups during the era of party politics, which characterised the dawn of Nigeria's political independence.

GLOSSARY

Key: Bini = B, Hausa = H, Itsekiri = I, Latin = L, Yoruba = Y

Aja Kgporo (I)	=	Town
Aja tie (I)	=	Small settlement, village
Ara ilu (y)	=	Members of an Ilu
Ara Oko (y)	=	Farm people
Bakauye (H)	=	Villager
Birane (H)	=	Cities
Birni (H)	=	City
Dan Birni (H)	=	City dweller
Ebi (I)	=	Family
Eju oniye funo (I)	=	Civilised
Eko-Etile (Y)	=	Farm land on the outskirts of an Ilu
Gari (H)	=	Town
Kauyuka (H)	=	Villages
Oba (Y)	=	King
Ode (I)	=	Out side

Ogbe (B)	=	Royal quarters
Ogiame (Y)	=	Lord of the Waters
Ogboworu (I)	=	Leader of the host
Ojoye (I)	=	Titled men in the employ of the Olus council
Oko-Egan (Y)	=	Bush farm
Olare-aja (I)	=	Eldest male in the ward
Oleghoro (I)	=	Judicial and administrative head of the compound.
Olu (I)	=	King
Onare (I)	=	Head of a lineage
Origho ebi (I)	=	Family head
Per diem (L)	=	An allowance for daily expenses, per day
Uba (I)	=	Village, bush man
Umale Okun (I)	=	Sea gods/spirits

Abbreviations

A.B.U.	=	Ahmadu Bello University
C.D.W.A.	=	Colonial Development Welfare Act
C.F.A.O.	=	Campaignie Francaise d'Afrique Occidental
C.O.	=	Colonial Office
C.S.O.	=	Chief Secretary's Office (Nigeria)
C.U.P.	=	Cambridge University Press
E.R.A.	=	European Reservation Area
G.R.A.	=	Government Reservation Area
J.A.H.	=	Journal of African History
J.H.S.N.	=	Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria
L.A.	=	Local Authority
N.A.I.	=	National Archives Ibadan
N.P.A.	=	Nigerian Ports Authority
O.U.P.	=	Oxford University Press
P.	=	Page
PP.	=	Pages
P.W.D.	=	Public works Department
R.C.M.	=	Roman Catholic Mission

R.N.C.	=	Royal Niger Company
S.C.O.A.	=	Societe Commerciale de L'Ouest Africane
T.A.B.	=	Township Advisory Board
U.A.C.	=	United African company
W.A.P.C.B.	=	West African Producers Control Board

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Chapter One

UBANISATION AND THE PRE-COLONIAL WARRI KINGDOM

Introduction

In the light of developments in the world today, urbanisation has proved its self to be one of the most sweeping phenomena of the twentieth century. At no time in history, has man shown the desire to live in large numbers in relatively small non-agricultural settlements as he has done in the last 185 years. To buttress this observation, the following statistics will bring out clearly the rapid development of this phenomena.[1] In 1800 2.4 percent of the world's total population lived in urban centres. By 1950 the percentage had risen by 20.9 percent. By 1973 we find that 1 billion people lived in some 2000 cities all over the world. In 1985 41 percent of the earths inhabitants lived in urban centres being 1.6 billion people.

Monitoring the urban process as it has been manifesting over the past century, the United Nations has estimated that by the year 2000 A.D, half the world's population will be living in cities scattered all over the earth.

The aim of this work is to clearly identify the impact of British colonial

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1. "Cities: Their Original Growth and Human Impact". In *Scientific America* (W.H. Freeman Press, Sanfransico 1973) Preface and Sarre, P. And Smith, P. *One World for One People; Saving the Environment* (Earth Scan Publications Ltd, London 1991), pp.74-75.

administration and policy, upon the urban process in Mid-Western Nigeria, with special reference to Warri. The essence of this chapter is to define certain key concepts that will be used in this work and to justify the use of the theoretical framework within which our analysis and understanding of the urban process during our period of study will be located. In this chapter we will also attempt to examine the pre-colonial urban process in the Itsekiri region of the Niger Delta area. This we believe will provide a basis for comparison as we will be able to compare it with the urban process in the same region as it was influenced by British colonial domination.

1.1 Urbanisation

A.L. Mabogunje,[2] rightly makes the argument, that the definition of the concept urbanisation has a cultural aspect to it. This view is upheld in the face of arguments made by scholars like M. Weber,[3] that early urbanisation was a feature observable only in European capitalist society. This ethnocentric understanding of urbanisation is hinged on the view that the urban process is connected with economic development. Such economic development (associated with capitalism) Weber believed, was only observable in Western Europe, as this part of Europe he

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2. Mabogunje, A.L. *Yoruba Towns* (Ibadan University Press, Ibadan 1962).

3. Weber, M. *The City*. (Free Press, New York, 1958), p.54.

argues was the only place which had the socio-economic environment capable of stimulating and sustaining capitalist economic activity.[4]

With this understanding of urbanisation in mind, a popular misconception about the urban process in precolonial Africa has been expressed in certain literature. For instance, the works of G. Sjoberg and G.V. Childe also express an ethnocentric view to the understanding of urbanisation.[5] Childe strongly believes that a major attribute of an urbanised society is its ability to invent and use the art of writing.[6] Sjoberg who agrees with Childe is much more explicit. He argues quite plainly that in addition to size, heterogeneity, public works and the like, writing is essential to the characterization of the city. The existence of a writing system, according to Sjoberg, distinquishes the city, the nucleus of civilization from other types of early settlements.[7] Therefore any settlement (according to such exponents) described as urban in societies like Africa which fail to display forms of writing have been wrongly attributed the description 'urban'. In line with this observation is the view that Africans lived in isolated unstructured bush

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4.For greater detail on this see Weber, M. *Op.cit.*, p.53 ff.

5.Sjoberg, G. *The Pre-Industrial City* (The Free Press, Glenoe, Illinois 1960); Childe, G.V. *Social Evolution* (Watt, London 1951).

6. *Ibid*, p.161.

7. Sjoberg, G. *Ibid.* P.33.

communities, with little or no understanding of architectural design or appreciation for the principles of town organisation.[8] In the light of these arguments, exponents of this school of thought agree that the urban process in Africa is the product of European presence in the area. That is, the presence of the 'civilized west' in Africa during the colonial period of African history.

The propagation of this conception of urbanisation in Africa is hardly surprising. This we belive, as it is easy to presume that this phenomena is a product of economic development, particularly industrialisation; as the highest levels of urbanisation today are found in the most industrially developed nations like America, Canada, Japan, China, Russia and the like. Therefore one cannot deny the fact that as a nations economy develops along industrial lines, its level of urbanisation tends to increase accordingly.[9] But to reduce the understanding of urbanisation to a process observable only in the capitalist West, with precolonial Africa devoid of any form of its manifestation, is to portray an ignorance of a true understanding of the concept urbanisation. Secondly it draws a negative distinction between African and Europe. At a time when progressive scholars are seeking for means to better the prospects for further analysis of human society,

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8. Hull, R. *African Cities and Towns Before the European Conquest*, (W.W. Norton New York 1976), p.1.

9.Mabogunje, A.L. *Ubranisation in Nigeria*, (London University Press London), p.26.

concepts like urbanisation should be used as a general term to enhance a clearer and more objective explaination of societal development; instead of using it with racial bias. With this desirable objective in mind Dr. S. Abubakar in his work,[10] believes that:

> "Cities are indeed universal in that they are the product of broadly similar processes... However the precise combination of material, cultural and historical conditions that make up these processes are not the same in all cases and at all times. And often settlements (in Africa) denied the appelation 'city' have in the material and cultural conditions of their existence functioned and have been recognised as such."

Imbedded in this theory is the argument that the material and cultural conditions influencing and determining a process in one area should not and cannot be used to examine, assess and define what is termed a similar process in another area, which features different cultural and material conditions.

The impact of industrialisation and economic development on the urbanisation process in Western Europe has influenced their understanding of the 'urban centre', the product of urbanisation. Therefore in the light of their own experience, a settlement in Africa with a population of 200,000 of which 40% are engaged in agricultural production should be regarded as a large agricultural

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10.Abubakar, S. "*Birni Shehu*: The City of sokoto a Social and Economic History, 1809-1903" (Unpublished Ph.D. Thehsis, History Department, A.B.U., Zaria 1982), p.233.

village and should not be termed urban.[11]

But A.L. Mabogunje, acknowledging the cultural aspect when defining concepts like 'urban centre' and 'urbanisation' argues that pre-colonial Yoruba towns though housing a significantly large agricultural populace are in the Yoruba cultural context significantly distinct from what the Yoruba refer to as villages.[12] Besides having an elaborate system of administration, they also acted as centres of intense commercial activity and centres for small scale industry for instance arts and crafts production, metal works, textile production and the like. Given this cultural interpretation Mabogunje concludes that a Yoruba settlement with even a minimum populace of 5,000 is definately urban.[13]

In defining urbanisation we should thus arrive at an interpretation that cuts across cultural and racial boundaries. Therefore we accept a definition for urbanisation forwarded by Dr. E. Oyedele.[14] He see's it as a

> "A continuous process... A social process involving people in social relationships in a new kind of physical environment. The process

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11.Sanda, P.O. "Urbanisation: Trends and Problems of Urban Administration in Nigeria", in Adedeji, A. And Rowland, L. (Eds.) *Management Problems of Rapid Urbanisation in Nigeria*, (University of Ife Press 1973, p.165)

12.*Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14.Oyedele, E.O. "Colonial Urbanisation in Northern Nigeria: Kaduna 1913-1960", (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, History Department, A.B.U. Zaria 1988), pp.16-17.

> involves population increase, also an increased transformation from an agricultural to a non agricultural economy and a structural change in the nature and form of settlement *in which social interaction takes place.* (Words in italics are my own.)

An equally relevant definition of urbanisation is given by G.I. Nwaka.[15] He defines urbanisation as:

> "A continuous process whereby a given population adjusts and organises space and settlement to serve changing social and economic needs."

The above definations of urbanisation are devoid of any cultural influence. They highlight the basic features of the phenomena as it has manifested itself through history all over the world. Mabogunje, A.L. an influencial scholalr in the area of urbanisation argues, and we believe rightly, that the transformation of the economy from an agricultural to a nonagricultural urban economy refers to a later stage of the urban process.[16] This view he holds as evidence shows, that urban centres begin with large percentages of their population engaged in agricultural activity. As the urban process continues and specialisation of economic activity increases, more attention is paid to nonagricultural endeavors. Secondly, as means of transportation imporves; and the need to feed a growing urban population

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15.Nwaka, G.I. "Urban Developments in Eastern Nigeria: Some Problems of Concepts and Methods in African Urban History" in *African Urban Notes*: African Study Centre, Michigan State University (Safe Publications, Inc. California 1975) p.26.

16.Mabogunje, A.L., *op.cit*, p.26.

hightens, farmers find it more convenient and profitable to reside on their farm lands.

Thus we venture to say that urbanisation is a social process featuring man engaging in a new form of economic activity (non agricultural) in a changing physical and social environment characterised by densely populated settlement patterns.

For a clearer understanding of the concept urbanisation let us turn to its end product the urban centre. For us to achieve this aim, we will briefly examine what consitutes an urban centre and those forces necessary for its growth and development.

1.2 Urban Centre

The idea of what constitutes an urban centre, town or city has existed among Africans long before the Europeans ever knew Africa existed.

For instance among the pre-colonial Hausa, the society was sharply divided into *Dan Birni* translated as 'city dweller' and *bakauye* translated as villager.[17] *Birni* which means city also refers to the wall, which encloses the city. A point we must borne in mind, is that not all walled settlements were refered to as *Birane*

17.Sa'ad, H.T. "Between Myth and Reality: The Aesthetics of Traditional Architecture in Hausa Land." (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Michigan 1981), p.32.

centre or town prior to the arrival of the British colonialists were the Yoruba.[21] Among the Yoruba, society was divided into *Ara'oko* (farm people) and *Ara'Ilu.*[22]

Ilu' here refers to the name given to both the nucleated settlements and the advisory executive council of chiefs, who in conjunction with the *Oba* or king constituted the government that ruled the *Ilu'*. *Ara'oko* among the Yoruba is also used to refer to those people devoid of any institutions of kingship.

The status accorded an *Ilu* depended mainly on the size of the settlement and population as well as the tradtional prestige bestowed upon its ruler. On the other hand, the prestige bestowed upon a traditional ruler or *Oba* was in itself affected by considerations of the size of the population, and territory he controlled. Consequently the *Soun* of Ogbomosho and the Olubaden of Ibadan were the most respected rulers of the two of the largest and most populous *Ilu'* or towns in Yorubaland.[23]

The *Ilu'* is seen as the core of the Yoruba state, often surrounded by a wall outside of which is the immediate hinterland or *Oko etile* (farm lands on the out skirts of the *Ilu*). Out side of these are more distant farm lands refered to as *Oko*

21.Krapf-Askari, *Yoruba towns and Cities: An Inquiry into the Nature of Urban Social Phenomena.* (O.U.P. London), p.25.

22.The former is commonly used to show contempt to whoever the term is refered.

23.Krapf Askari, E. *Op.cit.* P.26.

Egan or bush farms merging imperceptbly with the *Oko egan* of another town.

Groups of people engaged in economic production residing in Yoruba towns (*Ilu*) normally fell into two groups. The first group comprised of agriculturalists who farmed the immediate hinterland *Oko etile*. Bearing this significant feature of Yoruba towns in mind, Western trained urban sociologists, expert in Western industrial cities find it difficult to conceive traditional Yoruba towns as urban.

These farmers though possessing houses in the town resided most of the time in farm camps on their farms. Despite this fact, the farmers looked upon the *Ilu* from which they came, as their real homes to which they owed direct allegiance. This was based upon the belief that there they owned house, land and were members of a lineage already established in the town.[24]

The second group was engaged in urban production of goods and services, specializing in craft production like weaving, dying, blacksmithing, carpentry and the like. Among the Yoruba such occupations are associated with the *Ilu* type settlement. This was so not only because they were practised mainly in the towns but also because the goods and services associated with this nonagricultural activity required a market which could only be provided by the large dense population of the *Ilu* type of settlement.

24.*Ibid*, p.35 and 155.

From the above we can clearly see that there existed in pre-colonial Nigeria an understanding of what constitutes an urban centre or town as opposed to what made up a village. This understanding, we believe, goes hand in hand with our modern day conceptualisation of what an urban centre is.

Today an urban centre is generally understood to be a large densely populated settlement. The population is made up of people from diverse ethnic and lineage backgrounds. These people are engaged in a specific mode of production which sustains and provides for their daily lives. Agriculture here is not practised on any significant scale, mainly because the urban centre is a settlement for those whose labour is not needed in the agricultural sector.

The fuel for the urban process and the resources needed to sustain the urban centre are provided by the generation, extraction and concentration of significant amounts of socially derived surplus produce. It is argued[25] that before urbanisation can take place and the urban centre sustained, three basic conditions must be met.

Firstly, there must exist a surplus of agricultural produce to feed the nonagricultural producers located in the urban centres. This implies that agricultural production must be developed above the subsistence level, thus farmers are able to produce more than enough to meet their needs, therefore having

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25.Mabogunje, A.L. *op.cit*, p.34.

a surplus to sell.

Secondly, there must exist a powerful ruling class in the urban centre, with enough authority over the agricultural producers to cause them to divert their agricultural surplus to feed the urban populace.

Thirdly there must exist a class of traders and merchants to facilitate the exchange of goods and services in the city.

In full agreement with the first and third points, we believe the second factor may have to be rephrased. We believe that necessity will motivate the farmers to take their surplus produce to urban areas which constitute a ready market. From such exchange the farmers will be able to obtain those goods and services that they cannot produce by themselves. For instance, farm impliments, cloth, weapons, household utensils and the like. We believe that the main contribution of the presence of a powerful ruling class to the urban process is their ability to produce a condusive atmosphere within which economic activity can be engaged in by both the rural and urban dwellers. Under such conditions production is both intensive and profitable; also commercial and industrial activity will be engaged in without fear or hinderance.

Having defined urbanisation and its end product, we will now establish a theoretical framework within which we will analyse the urban process during our period of study.

1.3 Marxist Political Economy and Colonial Urbanisation

For a proper and scientific study of the urban process in our area of study a suitable theoretical framework must be established and used. I will liken this situation to a man with poor eye sight in search of a pair of medicated spectacles to correct his eye deficiency. If he is given the wrong pair, his eye sight will be blurred. He will find it difficult to distinguish between objects or interprete what is going on around him. Thus, unable to see clearly he may do more harm than good by giving presumed correct information of what he claims is going on around him. Such information can be misleading and damaging to one who desires to know and understand.

Bearing this in mind, we will use the Marxist political economy approach as a theoretical framework for our study of the urban process in Warri during our period of study.

This theory puts forward the view that for one to have an objective understanding of the motives behind human behaviour, views and general socio-political developments; one has to dig to the roots from which springs the whole stream of socio-political life which is material production.[26] Material production can be defined as that aspect of mans interaction with his natural environment, in

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26. Ilyin, S. And Motylev, A. *What is Political Economy?* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1986), p.12.

which he transforms it into products necessary for his existence. Without this form of interaction the human race will definitely die out. Though economic, political and social systems may change, with one form giving way to another, material production will always remain the bases of human existence.

Marxist political economy studies the social relations which evolve between peoples in the process of production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods in society at the different stages of its growth and development.

The theory we propose to use emerged as a science during the assertion of capitalism as a major mode of production in Europe, delving into its economic laws. It defined not only the conditions necessary for its existence but also the trend of its development. Marxist political economy lays bare the exploitative nature of capitalism which is based on the private ownership of the means of production and the corresponding system of relations of production that emerged from it. The relations of production characteristic of the capitalist mode of production is bedeviled with class contradictions between the owners of the means of production and the labour they employ.[27]

We believe that this approach to the analysis of the urban process during our period of study is appropriate for the following reasons:

27.Leontyev, L. *Political Economy: A Condensed Course*, (International Publishers, New York 1975), p.15-16.

(a) It is a science which adopts a historical approach in its study of society, tracing the historical development and transformation of society moving from one stage to another, based upon its changing modes of production. The relations of production operating in societies characterised by antagonism are also examined, highlighting those aspects of the mode of production responsible for such crisis.[28]

(b) Marxist political economy also analyses the social and political superstructure that emerges out of the prevailing mode of production practised in a society.

These important features of our proposed theoretical framework are vital to our study of urbanisation. Providing us with an indepth analysis of the workings of the capitalist system, we propose to use our method of investigation to trace the historical development of Warri Urban; which will give us a clearer picture of the urban process as it developed during our period of study. Also, since urbanisation is a social process, our theoretical framework will turn our attention to the workings and nature of the social relations of production necessary for the sustainance of urban centres like Warri during our period of study.

Secondly, with the knowledge of the capitalist system provided by the Marxist political economy, we will be able to understand why there existed the

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28. Sergei, I. *Op.cit*, p.115.

types of political and social systems that dominated the colonial urban scene in Nigeria as a whole and Warri in particular.

Our theoretical framework will aid us in our understanding of the economic motive that forced the British to dominate Nigeria. It will also assist in our understanding the structure and functions of Warri urban within the colonial state during our period of study. Marxist political economy upholds that although the economic base determines the socio-political superstructure, this superstructure also exerts a reciprocal influence on the economic base accelerating or slowing down its development. For instance in present day capitalist societies the state has been actively intervening in the relations of production in order to intensify the exploitation of labour, moderate the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production as well as to strengthen the capitalist system.[29]

Naturally many deep rooted phenomena in the economy and politics of present day capitalist societies cannot be understood without a profound understanding of the essence and forms of such state intervention. Therefore the role of the British colonial government in the creation of Warri urban will be fully brought out as well as the impact of British colonial policy on its economic and political significance in an overall capitalist colonial system.

29.*Ibid*, p.114-115.

We believe this approach to our study is superior to bourgeois political economy. Avoiding a study of the actual relations of production which characterises the capitalist society, bourgeois political economy focuses its attention on the distribution and exchange of goods and services; scarce productive forces and economic policy. They turn our attention to the superstructure of society and not its economic base from which the superstructure emerges. It neglects a study of the internal laws of the capitalist mode of production, attempting to gloss over its contradictions and create a semblance of "harmony" among the various classes. Such an approach would not give us a concrete understanding of the urban process in Warri during the colonial period, as it neglects to examine the roots of the capitalist economy and has moved research to the sphere of technological laws and external economic forms disguising the antagonistic contradictions of capitalism as well as finding means to preserve it. Therefore in using such an approach for the study of colonial urban development, Warri's role as an instrument of exploitation and domination in colonial Nigeria will be undermined in favour of an analysis of the distribution and exchange of the goods and services.

Using this perspective which tends to underplay the exploitative nature of capitalism, colonialism will be viewed merely as a contact of cultures.

Warri's urban development during our period of study will be attributed to

internal developments rather than external forces.

The very nature of bourgeois political economy will restrict our analysis to a superficial study of Warri's urban process during our period of study, preventing us from examining and discovering the actual economic process which produced Warri and obscuring a scientific analysis of the socio-political environment within which it emerged.

In the light of our chosen theoretical framework we will argue that urban centres like Warri developed and functioned as a result of Nigeria's participation in a world capitalist economy. The emergence of such urban centres had a negative impact on the economic development of the region, by strengthening the colonial metropole (economically) and weakening the colony. This we will delve into in the subsequent chapters.

In using the political economy approach to our understanding of the urban process in Warri, we will see the urban centre as a social product a spatially structured environment of a particular sort. To enable the onward growth and development of this predominantly nonagricultural society the inhabitants must possess a mode of production and social organisation capable of generating, accumulating and distributing sufficient quantities of material goods and services. With this inmind we will argue that the most objective approach to the study of urbanisation is to study it within the context of the prevalent mode of production

within which the urban centre is located and developes. This is because the urban centre has become the pivot around which the dominant mode of production is organised.[30] Using the Marxist political economy, our thesis will argue that the particular socio-economic environment within which an urban centre developes, to a large extent determines the essence and nature of its structure, nature and function. Consequentially we will situate Nigeria within a global capitalist economy within which individual countries and urban centres play particular roles. Their individual prosperity and economic development depends greatly on the role they play in this global net work. Therefore we will examine Warri as part of a world economic system and analyse how her role in this system influenced her urban development, social and political systems.

We will identify urbanisation as it took place in the underdeveloped parts of the world during their colonial history as "colonial urbanisation" which is also refered to as 'dependant urbanisation' by M. Castells.[31] Colonial urban centres like Warri were created as a result of the reorganisation and restructuring of the production process in Nigeria to meet the needs of the European capitalist states. This form of urbanisation is based on a dialectical relationship between the colony

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30.Harvey, D. *Social Justice and the City* (Howard Arnold, London, 1973), p.237.

31.Castells, M. *The Urban Question: A Marxist approach* (Edward, Arnold, London 1977).

and the metropole. Our work will show that urban centres created as a result of deliberate colonial policy, were a very effective means through which colonial powers like Britain were able to penetrate, control and exploit Nigeria's economic potentials. Our approach to the study of the urban process during our period of study, will show that Nigeria was colonised to satisfy the economic needs of the western European capitalists. Firstly in the area of economic market, Nigeria was to provide a guranteed market for mass produced industrial goods, manufactured in Britain. Secondly, countries like Nigeria were to be sources of raw materials to feed European capitalist industries. Thirdly, colonies were to provide sources of cheap labour to produce agricultural and mineral raw materials for export. Lastly, these colonies provided an outlet for the profitable investment of surplus capital generated in Europe. Within the context of economic exploitation, colonial urban centres played various roles in the colonial economy to the best interest of the colonial powers.

Urban centres like Kaduna and Warri in Nigeria and Entebbe and Lusaka in Uganda and Zambia respectively, acted as administrative centres from which the British controlled the socio-political activity in the vast areas around them. Urban centres like Chingola and Kitwe near the Nchanga and Nkana Copper mines respectively in Zambia and Jos in Nigeria developed as mining towns, extracting

and processing mineral resources to be exported.[32] The earliest colonial urban centres were ports cities, like Abidjan, Accra, Lagos, Daressalam, Port Harcourt and Monrovia. Such port towns, played a very important role in the colonial economy, in that they acted as import and export centres for European goods and Nigerian raw materials. These urban centres were usually leading towns in their countries because of the revenue they generated via custom duties as well as being centres for commercial and industrial activity.

Colonial urban centres also sprang up as a result of the rich agricultural potential of their hinterland. Precolonial towns like Kano, Zaria and Oshogbo developed as big commercial centres and clearing points for the large quantities of agricultural produce farmed in their hinterlands. To facilitate the export of these agricultural cash crops the above mentioned towns were invariably connected with the colonial transport network i.e. rail or trunk roads. These inevitably wound up at the coastal ports like Port Harcourt or Lagos. Areas of little or no economic significance were hardly integrated into the colonial transportation network, therefore experiencing little or no urban and economic development.[33]

In view of the above observations we propose to study Warri's urban

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32.Hanna, W.J. and Hanna, J.L. *Urban Dynamics in Black Africa: An Interdisciplinary Approach.* (Aldire Atherton, New York 1971), p.15

33.Mabogunje, A.L. "Urbanisation and Change" in Paden, J.N. and Sofa, E.W. (Eds.) *The African Experience* (Nurth Western University Press, Evanston 1970), p.344.

development within the global capitalist system that produced it and determined its nature and function. C. Manuel identifies three interelated economic and political developments which must be fully grasped before one can proceed to understand the process of colonial urbanisation.[34] These are as follows:

(a) **Colonial Domination**: This refers to the direct administration and intensive exploitation of the resources of the colonies, through the direct political overlordship exercised by the European capitalist powers. This rule is upheld by military force and the policy of divide and rule.

(b) **Capitalist Commercial Domination:** This is achieved through unequal exchange seen in the purchasing of raw materials below their value from the colonies and the opening up of markets for foreign manufactured goods sold at prices much higher than their production cost.

(c) **Imperialist and Industrial Financial Domination:** This is achieved by the colonial capitalist through speculation, investment and opening of small scale industries in the colonies.

The Marxist political economy which emphasises that the study of phenomena should be located within the socio-political system in which it arises and developes, we believe will give us a better understanding of the process of

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34.Maunel, C. *Op.cit*, p.44.

colonial urbanisation. The understanding of the process of colonial domination, capitalist commercial domination, and imperialist, industrial and financial domination is imperative for our understanding of the urban process in colonies during the colonial period. Therefore these features of colonialism will be imbedded in our work as a foundation for the understanding of the colonial urban process in Warri.

For a meaningful analysis of the colonial urban process and its impact on the urban process in the Itsekiri Delta region we feel it is necessary to examine the nature of pre-colonial urbanisation in the region before the advent of British imperialism. We will now turn to the area where Warri is located, examining the geographical and socio-political environment and their impact in the pre-colonial urban process.

1.4 The Itsekiri People of the Western Niger Delta

(a) Physical Environment

The Itsekiri people of the Pre-colonial Warri kingdom, live in the most western part of the Niger Delta; bounded approximately by latitudes 5° 20' and 6°N and longitudes 5° 5' 40' east. Their neighbours, apart from the Urhobo to the east are the Ijaw to the south, the Bini to the north and the Yoruba of Ondo State to the

north west.[35] Most of the area inhabited by the Itsekiri lies within the Deltic belt of mangrove swamps. This area is watered by three large rivers being the Benin, Escarvos and Forcardos Rivers. These rivers are connected by a network of creeks, which are navigable only by small boats. The area lies completely within the equitorial region, with no mountain ranges; capable of interfering with the free movement of moist air from the Atlantic Ocean. The ground level is 100 - 350cm above sea level. Indeed, the region is a low land area surrounded by bodies of water. The absence of mountain ranges makes the influence of land and sea breezes over the area a characteristic feature of the regions climate. Therefore the climate of this part of the delta is influenced by two systems. These are the rain bearing southwest monsoon winds, which blow from the Atlantic Ocean and the dusty north east trade or harmattan winds, blowing in from the Sahara desert.[36] With these wind forms in mind our area of study is characterised by four seasons: A long wet season which starts in mid-March till July followed by a short dry season starting in July and continues till August. A short wet season follows the August break lasting from September to October. This is followed by a long

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35.Ikime, O. *Niger Delta Rivalry: The Itsekiri Urhobo Relations and the European Presence 1884-1936* (Longman Green and Co. Ltd 1969), pp.29-30.

36.Warri Local Government Area, Bendel State Tourist Guide 1988, p.3.

hamattan period which follows and continues from November to mid-March.[37]

The area understudy can be described as having the attributes of a flat topography, characterised with soft sedimentary rock. About two thirds of the region is swampy and uninhabitable. Located within this swampy environment are a number of elevated areas of land or islands; which are dry and habitable all year round. It is upon such elevated pieces of land that exist Itsekiri settlements like *Ode*-Itsekiri, Gborodo, Gbokodo Usele, Ogidigbe and others.

The Itsekiri area covers an area of about 1,520 square miles. The area features vegetation which is primarily dominated by white and red mangroves swamp and fresh water zones. The trees grow very close together. The raphia palm is another common tree found in the region.[38]

We will be quick to point out here that the nature of the environment to a large extent influenced the economic and cultural life of the Itsekiri people and her interactions with her neighbours especially the Urhobo. This we will delve into later in the chapter. We shall now turn to the Itsekiri people answering the questiosn who they are? And where they came from?

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37. *Ibid.*

38.Bradbury, R.E. "The Benin Kingdom and the Edo speaking Peoples of South Western Nigeria with a Section on the Itsekiri by P.C.Lloyd" in *Ethnographic Survey of Africa: Western Africa Part XIII.* (International African Institute, London 1957), p.173.

(b) **The People**

The widely accepted version of the Itsekiri's legend of origin, is associated with Ginuwa's migration from the Benin kingdom about the late 15th century being about 1475.[39] As the legend goes Ginuwa was a son to an *Oba* called Olua reigning in Benin. Both were very unpopular among their subjects. Therefore the *Oba* advised his son to establish his own kingdom outside the Benin kingdom to safe guard his future. The *Oba* tricked seventy of his titled chiefs to allow their sons to go with Ginuwa, who he said was going to offer sacrifice to their gods.[40] The first place it is said that Ginuwa and his entourage settled after leaving Benin, with his entourage was Effurokpe on the Jamison river. In a bid to get further away from Benin, he sailed into the Escarvos river and settled on the sea banks of Amatu. From here he moved to Oruselemon. It was from here that Ginuwa and his entourage moved to a settlement called Ijala, where he remained for three decades. After this time had elasped, Ginuwa, according to tradition, received news that the seventy Benin Chiefs who had been tricked into allowing their sons to travel with him had dispatched a troop of soldiers to attack him and retreave their sons. But before Ginuwa could move further inland, in a bid to escape the Benin forces, he

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39.Lloyd, P.C. "The Itsekiri in the Nineteenth Century", *J.A.H.* Vol.4, No.2, 1963, p.209.

40.Moore, W. *A History of the Itsekiri* (Frank Cass, London, 1970), p.17.

passed away. His first son Ijijen buried his father at Ijala[41] and proceeded to lead the party to present day *Ode* Itsekiri which eventually developed into the capital of the Warri kingdom.[42]

It was from *Ode* Itsekiri, popular tradition goes, that Ijijen slowly exercised control over its immediate environs and later further abroad. The Itsekiri believe that Ijijen may very well have been the first to be refered to as *Olu* or king with the additional title of *Ogbowuru* memaning "leader of the host" in Itsekiri language.[43]

The Itsekiri legend of origin also forwards the belief that the name 'Itsekiri' used to describe this particular ethnic group was the personal name of one of the earlier inhabitants of *Ode* Itsekiri (prior the arrival of Ijijen).

As the story goes, on the arrival of Ijijen and his host the indigenous inhabitants of the settlement fled. Only Itsekiri remained and paid homage to Ijijen acknowledging his suzerainty and served him loyally.[44]

As has been discovered, most "legends" of origin of the Nigerian peoples tend to discuss the development of state like institutions among them or the movement of their forefathers from one part of the Nigerian area to their present

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41. Ijala till date remains the traditional burial ground for all Itsekiri, *Olus*.

42. Moore, W. *Op.cit*, pp.18-19.

43. Ayomike, J.O.S., *A History of Warri* (Ilupeju Press Ltd, Benin City, 1988), p.77.

44. Ikime, O. *Op.cit*, p.32.

place of abode.

These legends do not attempt to tell us how the people refered to in the traditions came into actual being as a people. The Itsekiri legends is not exception.

A critical examination of the popular Itsekiri legend will show that it is not an actual account of the origin of the Itsekiri people. In an attempt to go beyond this superficial account we will use archaeological findings, linguistic materials and oral traditions. By so doing we shall attempt to build up some semblance of a coherent and probable narrative on the origins of the Itsekiri people.

First of all we will like to point out that the ancient kingdom of Benin plays a very prominent role in the legends of origin of the peoples of the south central Nigerian area.[45]

In a paper presented by Professor A.E. Afigbo[46] the observation is clearly made that the political and economic significance of the Benin empire is treated by some scholars as the most influencial factors determining the history of the peoples of South Central Nigeria, particularly those peoples organised on a smaller socio-political scale.

45.This area refers to the region of Southern Nigeria, east of Yoruba land and west of the Nsukka highlands.

46.Afigbo, A.E., "The Beni Mirage and the History of South Central Nigeria", in *Nigerian Magazine*, No.137, 1981.

For instance in the work of late J. Egharevba,[47] the peoples of Aboh, Isoko, Onitsha, and the urhobo all migrated from the Benin kingdom to their present settlements.[48] Also according to Egharevba the Eka, the Ibo speaking peoples on the west bank of the Niger and the Ishan people also migrated to their present locations from the same area (Benin).

The late Professor R.E. Bradbury also believes that the bulk of the peoples populating the Urhobo, Isoko, Ishan and Afenmai areas can be accounted for mainly in terms of migrations from ancient Benin.[49] The late Professor K.O. dike also attributes Benin origin to the Ibos of Onitsha, the Ijaw of the Niger Delta and the Aboh of the lower Niger.[50]

A major reason for the acceptance of this monocausal explanation for the demographic history of the area is that Benin occupies a central position in the oral traditions of her immediate neighbours to the north, east, and west, the Itsekiri inclusive.

In an attempt at making a case for adopting a new approach to the

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47.Egharevba, J. *A Short History of Benin* (Ibadan University Press 1968).

48.*Ibid*, p.5.

49.Bradbury, R.E., *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria... op.cit*, pp.101, 112, 127, 129-130.

50.Dike, K.O., *Trade and Politics on the Niger Delta*. (O.U.P., 1956), pp.21-23.

understanding of the processes responsible for the emergence of the peoples of South Central Nigeria, we may argue that where a group of people no longer remember its prior place of origin it is likely to choose one that is reputed, powerful, old and distant enough to pose no danger to its autonomy.[51]

Therefore for most of the Ijaw of the Central and eastern Niger Delta, Benin satisfied all these conditions. But those of Ijaw groups situated on the western Delta fringe close to Benin and under the direct shadow of the empire do not claim Benin origin. This is possibly due to their fear of being intergrated into the Benin empire.[52] To further buttress our point that it is common for people to identify with the great and successful, the people of Benin trace their own origin to ancient Egypt and the genesis of their monarchical system of government to Ile-Ife.[53]

It should also be noted that unless such legends of origin are supported and confirmed by other scientific methodology, they should be seen as attempts to explain or legitamise existing institutions and cultures established in those societies where they are found. Therefore what light do archaeology, linguistic and ethnographic analyses throw on the issue of Itsekiri origin. Or in what ways do

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51. Alagoa, E.J., *A History of the Niger Delta: An Historical Interpretation of Ijo Oral Tradition.* (Ibadan, I.U.P. 1972), p.187.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Egharevba, *op.cit*, p.1.

down to the Niger Delta may very well have been occupied by early forms of wild life thus forming the sites of early hunting and gathering societies. Later with climatic and environmental changes the Niger Delta became more riverine in topography. This may have triggered off migrations further inland. The indigenous Itsekiri and other lower Niger Delta inhabitants may be the remains of earlier hunting and gathering societies which once dominated the Niger Delta, but have now adopted themselves to a new type of environment. These inhabitants may have been those Ijijen met at *Ode* Itsekiri refered to in Itsekiri tradition as the *Umale* or water spirits.

Here we will be quick to point out that in the absence of concrete archaeological evidence proving human habitation of the Delta area the above posited thesis is speculative and superficial, but till further archaeological findings are uncovered, it provides food for thought concerning the origins oof the Itsekiri people.

According to linguistic information majority of the languages found in Nigeria fall under the Niger Kordofanian language group. This language group can be divided into two sub-groups the Niger Congo and the Kordofinian.[57]

57.Hansford, K. Bendor, S. And Stanford, R. "A Provincial Language Map of Nigeria" in *Savannah: A Journal of Environmental and Social Sciences* (A.B.U. Publishers) vol.5, No.2 Dec, 1976, p.116.

Of interest to us is the Niger Congo subgroup. This group can again be divided into seven language groups one of which is the Kwa speaking group. This group of languages stretches west and northwards from the Delta region to the Niger-Benue Confluence area embracing the Igbo, Idoma, Yoruba, Edo, Igala, Nupe, Itsekiri, Igbira languages and many others.[58]

A preliminary excursion into the glottochronology of the Niger Congo language group yelds the suggestion that the members of this group spoke a single ancestral language as far back as 10,000 years ago.[59] Historians using linguistic and archaeological findings are more or less convinced (in the light of the distribution and alignment of the Kwa language groups) that it is mot likely that the members of the Kwa speaking group originated and later dispersed from the regions of the Niger Benue Confluence area especially between Bida and Kotonkarfi more than 6,000 years ago.[60] The discoveries of stone implements of the sangoan assemblege unearthed in the Niger Benue Confluence area indicate

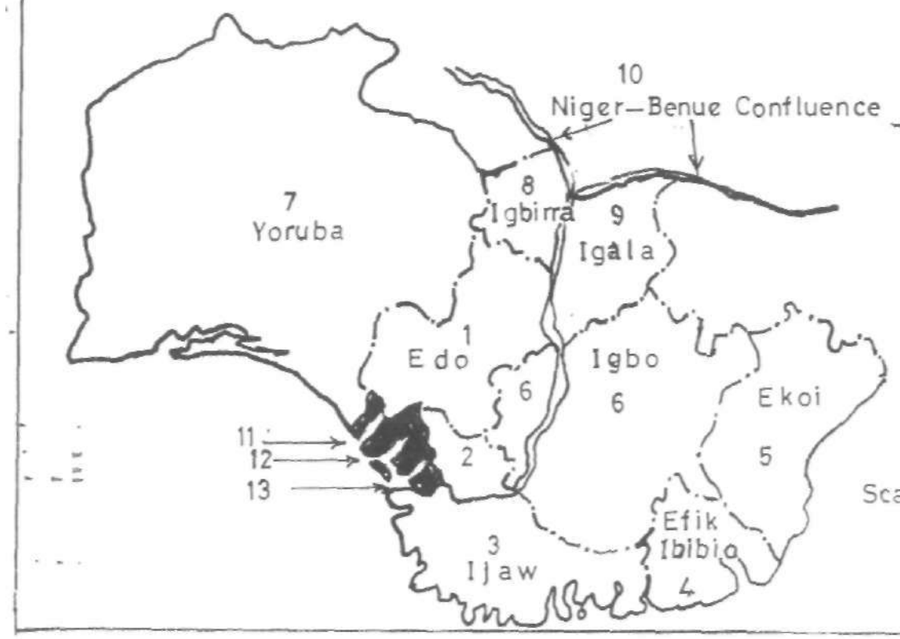
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58.*Ibid*, p.116.

59.Armstrong, R.G. *The Studies of West African Languages*, (I.U.P. Nigeria 1964)., p.12.

60.Afigbo, A.E., *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture*. (University Press Ltd, Ibadan 1981), p.7; Obayemi, A. "The Yoruba and Edo Speaking Peoples and their Neighbours Before 1600." in Ajayi and Crowder (eds) *History of West Africa*, Vol. I, 2nd edition, (Longman, London, 1971), p.201; Henderson, R.N., *The King in Every Man*. (New Haven and London Yale University Press London, 1972), p.72.

Map 1. The Itsekiri And Other Ethnic Groups Of Southern Nigeria





2	Urhobo
11	Benin River
12	Escavos River
13	Forcados River
	Itsekiri

Scale 50 0 50 100 150Km.

Source:-Duze M & Afolabi O.
Macmillan Senior Sch. Atlas
(Macmillan Education Ltd. 1977 P.10)

Fig 2

that man may have lived here for the past 40,000 years.[61]

Bearing this in mind we may hazard the veiw that a series of population movements from the Central parts of Nigeria southwards gave rise to more population movements pushing peoples into the Niger Delta region. Therefore population pressure in the Niger Benue Confluence, migrations and population adjustments leading to further migrations may be said to account for the peopling of the Niger Delta region and thus the arrival of the Itsekiri people into the area.

Linguistic data also informs us that the speakers of the languages in the Niger Delta region must have been living in the region for hundreds and in some cases thousands of years. Based on linguistic experience Dr. Kay Williamson forwards the view that different languages located in an environment manifesting genetic resemblance come more and more into being with length of time and settlement in a particular place.[62] This observation implies that the Itsekiri and other ethnic groups of the Niger Delta probably inhabited this region long before the emergence of the Benin empire circa 1300. Therefore their claims to Benin origin are highly questionable.

It should also be noted that the Itsekiri language has been classified a dialect

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61. Shaw, T., "The Pre-history of West Africa" in Ajayi and Crowder, *History of West Africa*, vol.1, 2nd edition, *op.cit*, pp.49-50.

62. Willaimson, K. "Languages of the Niger Delta" in *Nigerian Magazine*, No.96, 1968, p.129.

of the Yoruba language,[63] on account of their genetic resemblance. Because of their genetic semblance K. Williamson has classified the Itsekiri under the "Itsekiri-Igala" language group of which the Yoruba is the largest and best known member.[64]

This conclusion may lead us to two possibilities concerning the origin of the Itsekiri. Firstly that the Itsekiri are of Yoruba descent, who migrated into the Itsekiri area devoid of human occupation and with time developed a variant of the Yoruba language. Or the Itsekiri are a mixture of the indigenous inhabitants of the Itsekiri area and Yoruba migrants moving into the area.

Oral tradition seems to favour the second possibility. For instance the traditions of the Olukumi of the Odiana clan in Aniotcha district of Delta state. They claim that they are the descendants of migrants who migrated from Akure in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The tradition states that an off shoot of the Olukumi migrants in the course of fishing moved down the Niger to settle in Irigbo quaters of *Ode* Itsekiri among the *Umale* before the arrival of Ijijen.[65]

63.Bendor, S. and Co., *op.cit*, p.91.

64.Williamson, K. *Op.cit*, p.128.

65.Ayomike, op.cit, p.110. The Umale we believe are the indigenous inhabitants of the Itsekiri area. Most of the traditions of the various Itsekiri settlements state that on their arrival to the Itsekiri area that they either settled in settlements already established by the Umale or established their own and intermarried with the Umale who were eventually absorbed by the incoming migrants. Even today the worship of

The traditions of the Itsekiri of Ugborodo Omadina and Ureju state that before the arrival of Ginuwa they migrated from Ode, in Ijebu kingdom situated along the southern coast of Yoruba land into the Itsekiri area.[66] To corroborate this the traditional ruler of Ode the "Lenuwa" states that some of his people did migrate into the Itsekiri area but he is not sure of the date.[67] P.C. Lloyd and Ayomike are now of the common belief that these migrations into the Itsekiri area may have taken place about the fifteenth century.[68]

Igala traditions also claim that the Itsekiri are an off shot of a major wave of Yoruba migrants moving west ward from Igala country. The tradition states that while the bulk of the migrants moved towards Ife a small band opted for a water route down the river Niger settling in the Itsekiri area.

Though we have cited traditions to support our argument that the Itsekiri may be a mixture of indigenous inhabitants of the area and migrant Yoruba we are not ruling out possible migrations into the area from neighbouring Urhobo and

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the Umale plays a central role in Itsekiri traditional worship.

66. Nanna, A.I., "The Historical Roots and Roles of Ritual in the Social and Political Organisation of the Pre-Colonial Itsekiri", A Research paper presented at the History Department of the University of Benin, 1993.

67.Bradbury, R.E., *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo Speaking Peoples of South-western Nigeria... op.cit.* P.178.

68.Ibid and oral interveiw with Ayom Ike, J.O.S. 8/8/96.

Ijaw areas but these we believe may not have been on a scale large enought to influence a people and culture that was already maturing along Itsekiri lines.

Finally we may argue that if the Itsekiri had emerged from the Edo speaking people of Benin even as recently as a thousand years ago there would definately still be much affinity between the two languages, a feature which hardly exists. This implies that even though the Edo and Itsekiri languages emerged from the same proto language (Kwa), they are today so distinct from each other as to indicate that these peoples must have emerged as separate people long before Ginuwa or Benin arrived on the scene.

At this point it is clear to observe that the Itsekiri legend of "origin" refers only to the establishment of state like institutions (hitherto absent in the area) by migrants from Benin. Since it is believed that Ginuwa arrived in the Itsekiri area in the late fifteenth century, the legend of "origin" speaks for the most part of events which may have taken place 520 years ago. But archaeological and linguistic evidence shows that the actual origin of the Itsekiri people lies well beyond this time span.

Cautious in our use of linguistic material and in the absence of solid archaeological findings our investigation into the origin of the Itsekiri is as earlier stated, is tentative and lacks a possible chronological frame work or setting. But from the usuable material available a picture has been pieced together as to the

possible origins of the Itsekiri people.

In establishing the possible origins of the Itsekiri let us now examine the urbanisation and state formation process as it manifested itself in the Itsekiri area before colonial domination, observing the internal and external dynamics responsible for the phenomena.

1.5 Pre-Colonial Urbanisation and the State Formation Process among the Itsekiri

The establishment of *Ode* Itsekiri as the state capital, with its political authority extending over its subject towns and villages, marked the final stage in the development of the Warri kingdom. For a meaningful discussion of the state formation process and the political machinery of government of the precolonial Warri kingdom we will have to examine them within the context of urbanisation. This line of analysis we believe is appropriate bearing in mind that the capital and seat of authority under conditions of natural evolution did not begin as an urban centre. Therefore as the urban process develops it is accompanied with corresponding changes in the political and social systems. To fully understand the impact of urbanisation on the socio-political life of the Itsekiri we will divide the urban process into three phases: The pre-Ginuwa period, *Ode* Itsekiri and the Itsekiri state and 19th century urbanisation on the Benin river.

(a) **Pre-Ginuwa Period**

In the absence of detailed information on the urban process before the arrival of ginuwa into the Itsekiri area, we will use some general theories and assumptions coupled with ethnographic data to piece together a picture of what we believe may have been the bases upon which the state formation process in Warri may have been built.

In describing the topography of the Itsekiri area we observed that the region is characterised by a number of elevated areas of dry land. These are surrounded and separated from each other by numerous creeks, mangrove swamps and rivers. Therefore land is scarce and is of uttermost importancne for good production and settlement. The creeks and rivers are also important for fishing and salt making which are dominant features of the Itsekiri economy.

Under the subsistence economy practised by the early Itsekiri inhabitants the buying and selling of land is ruled out. With land in such limited supply, the only means of land acquisition would most certainly be by inheritance.[69] This will definatley imply a strong tendency for young men to settle near their relations, in most case paternal, from whom they expect to inherit land or fishing rights to surrounding creeks and rivers.

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69 Horton, R., "Stateless Societies in the History of West Africa", in Ajayi and Crowder (eds) *History of West Africa*, vol.1, *op.cit*, p.77..

With the passage of time as men with their families continue to settle down near closely related kinsmen, the population of the settlement continues to increase. We thus begin to witness the formation of a settlement based upon a considerable number of paternally related kinsmen, related through whatever lineage determines land and fishing rights inheritance.[70] In the light of this development it is of immense importance to the male individual to identify himself with his paternal lineage as it is the basis for his claim to political, economic and social rights within the society.

Among the Itsekiri the lineage is made up of a number of individual families or *Ebi* with a family head or *origho Ebi*. Among the Itsekiri the lineage or *Gogo Ebi* settle in nucleated compounds headed by the elder the *onare*. He heads the compound as a micro unit of the village. The *Onare* is chosen on account of his age and geneaological proximity to the founder of the lineage. He is also refered to as the *Oleghoro* that is the judicial, administrive and legislative head of the compound.[71] When pressure on land increases, men may decide to leave, settling on unoccupied land thus starting new settlements. When this happens, in most cases they settle as close as possible to their former settlements. This is so firstly

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70.*Ibid.*

71.Nanna, A.I., Oral Interview 8/8/96.

because they have established close links of co-operation with their initial place of abode. Secondly, they desire to use the lands they hope to inherit there as well as use their newly acquired lands. As the various paternally related settlements expanded they developed into wards.[72]

In some instances the eldest male in the ward *Olare-aja* heads the meetings of all lineage heads. The ward head and the compound elders *Onare* constitute the executive body of the ward, executing all judicial legislative and ritual exercises binding on the ward members. But in most cases the oldest member of the founding lineage of the ward was appointed the ward head even if he was not the oldest of the ward.[73]

The above has been described as the basis upon which the urban process in Itsekiri land may have been built. Prior to the establishment of *Ode* Itsekiri as the state capital of the Warri kingdom there exists no record or tradition of a centralised state incorporating all the Itsekiri peoples. What existed were wards; settlements of kin related families under compound and ward heads.

(b) **Ode Itsekiri and the State**

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72. In the course of our field work our informants were unable to provide us with an Itsekiri word capable of describing the settlement pattern portrayed above. We will thus use the term 'ward' to describe the settlement made up of paternally related quaters.

73. Nanna, A.I., Oral Interview 8/8/96.

As the process so urbanisation continues situations arise where land in the ward becomes grossly inadequate. Lineage members leave the ward passing through the territories of their kin, ending up seeking for land from groups with whom they have little or no kinship ties. In settlements made up of diverse lineage groups solidarity is based not on terms of kinship but on terms of co-residence on a more or less clearly defined tract of land. In such settlements, organs of administration are geared towards cutting across or even working against lineage organisation and the divisions they can create. Thus age grade systems and initiation associations are employed dividing the community into young, middle and old, or initiated and non initiated.[74]

In some cases the settlement can be divided into land owners (initial settlers) and late comers. Here the oldest lineage among the initial settlers is regarded as a royal lineage, which produces a head over all the diverse lineage groups. It is within such settlements that the germs of centralised state organisation and ideology develope. Here common residence on a defined tract of land and submission to the laws santioned by the community leaders are important factors contributing to the political integration of the society. These pave the way for the idea of sovereignty that is a defined territory within which all the

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74.Horton, R. *Op.cit*, p.91.

inhabitants new and old, are subject to a definate body of laws and government.

One of the major forces behind the urban and state formation process in the Niger-Delta area was the internal trade net works that developed within the area and more popularly the over seas trade with the Europeans.[75]

In the Itsekiri area centres of trade sprung up thriving on local trade with her Urhobo and Ijaw neighbours. Trade routes were also established with Benin and the natives of Bonny and new Calabar.[76] The point we desire to raise here is that centres of commerce like *Ode* Itsekiri attracted settlers desiring to engage in whatever profitable trade they could. Such settlements attracted not only traders but artisans and peoples of various occupations. Thus a society based on lineal linkages gradually gives way to a more open and cosmopolitan society. *Ode* Itsekiri strategically located close to the Urhobo and Ijaw boarder developed into a thriving commercial centre doing trade with the Urhobo and Ijaws under a local system of governance cutting across lineal lines.

In turning back to the development of the Itsekiri state; we are of the view that since Ginuwa left Benin with the intention of establishing his own kingdom he must have been accompanied bya sizable military force. Also being royalty and

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75. Alagoa, E.J., "Long Distance Trade and States in the Niger Delta" in *J.A.H.* Volxi, No.3, 1970, p.319.

76. These will be lookekd into later in the chapter.

accompanied with the sons of seventy chiefs Ginuwa's entourage of slaves and court officials must have been quite large. This large company of migrants we believe, established themselves over the *Ode* Itsekiri community by virtue of their military strength. Here they established themselves as the ruling class and used the settlement as their seat of authority to extend their political authority over the surrounding villages and peoples.

It is recorded that the Portuguese first met Ginuwa at Ijala in 1516[77] and it was three decades later that Ijijen Ginuwa's eldest son led the camp to *Ode* Itsekiri. We can therefore assume that Ijejen arrived at *Ode* Itsekiri round about 1546-1550. Afigbo rightly argues that for the seed of centralised government to germinate, grow and flourish it needs lots of time.[78] With this in mind *Ode* Itsekiri may not have been fully established as a state capital till about 1600. This hypothesis for the transformation of *Ode* Itsekiri into a state capital seems to agree with Ryder, A.F.C. who in his work,[79] forwards the view that based on the documented records that have so far come to light (and even to date) there exists no evidence to prove that there existed an independent Itsekiri state before 1530 A.D. Ryder goes

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77.Moore, W. *Op.cit.*, p.86.

78.Afigbo, A.E, "Beni Mirage", *op.cit*, p.23.

79.Ryder, A.F.C., "Missionary Activity in the Kingdom of Warri to the Early 19th Century", in *J.H.S.N* Vol.2, No.1, 1960, p.1.

further to state that the first reference to *Ode* Itsekiri as a state capital was by the Portuguese missionaries in the late 16th century.[80]

In the light of the above we may hazard the conjecture that between 1546-1600 Ijijen was able to take advantage of an already socio-politically developed society, using it as a base to establish his hegemony over the surrounding area. Settlements in the immediate environs of the capital would have been subdued at an early stage in the development of the kingdom. Those on the banks of the Escravos river some 32 miles away to the east of the capital may have enjoyed a larger measure of independence. This veiw may be upheld by the argument of the people of Ogidigben and Gborodo Itsekiri settlements, who claim that they never fell under the authority of the *Olu* of Warri.[81] Settlements scattered around *Ode* Itsekiri like Obodo, Orere, Elume and Gbolokposo trace their founders to sons of Ijijen or his successor Irame, who moved out of the capital to establish their own settlements though all being subject to the *Olu*.

Established as a state capital, the urban process of *Ode* Itsekiri began to increase. Early in the 19th century capital John Adams gave a clear description of

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80.*Ibid*, p.3.

81.Moore, W., op.cit, introduction, p.viii; The Guardian News Paper, 25th April 1997, p.18; Ayomike, J.O.S., *op.cit*, p.25.

the capital.[82]

> "The town is situated on a beautiful island about 5 miles in circumference... It is a little elevated above the surrounding country... It is well cultivated and has the appearance of an extensive park... The capital of Warre is divided into two towns, distant from each other by half a mile... the combined population amounts to probably to 5,000 souls."

Going further, Adams gives a graphic description of the basic architectural design of the houses here.[83]

> "The houses are built of clay (bricks) baked in the sun, and are cemented together by the same material in a liquid state; and there is a degree of neatness and uniformity in their construction... Many of the houses have projecting roofs in front which are supported from the ground by wooden pillars and form piazzas which allow the inhabitants to enjoy the air without being exposed to the sun or rain."

Where John Adams work stops at telling us that the capital was divided into two, J. Sagay's work, using oral tradition goes beyond this.[84] He tells us that *Ogbe*, a Bini word refering to the royal quaters in the Benin kingdom, was used to describe that part of the *Ode* Itsekiri that housed the *Olu* his descendants and titled chiefs in the employ of the *Olu* (Ojoyes). The other part of the town was where the free born or common people resided. This section of the town housed the largest

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82.Captain John Adams, *Remarks on the Country Extending from Cape Palms to the River Congo* (Frank Cass and Company Ltd, London 1823), p.121.

83.*Ibid*, p.128.

84.Sagay, J., *The Warri Kingdom* (Progress Publishers), pp.20-28.

population of the capital.

As from the sixteenth century, the *Olu's* were preoccupied with the promotion of economic activity to enable them sustain their government. Strategically located on the banks of the Warri River it was not long before the Portuguese in the 16th and 17th centuries were doing trade here.[85] With the arrival of European trade and the increasing need to control it in order to generate revenue, the *Olu* established the office of 'Gofine'[86] His job was close to that of a finance minister, who collected 'comey' or custom duties from the Europeans. It was a powerful post because his effectiveness determined the financial and political strength of the Olus government.

The *Olu*, being the biggest trader in the capital sustained his wealth and power, by promoting economic activity especially foreign trade through which he received arms and ammunition and other goods and services.

The political and economic significance of *Ode*-Itsekiri relative to any other settlement in the kingdom drew towards it a large population. Landolphe, J.F. a French trader in the region estimated its population at 11 - 12,000.[87]

Though this figure may be subject to speculation it indicates a teeming

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85.Ryder, A., op.cit, pp.1-3; Lloyd, P.C., *Ethnographic Survey...*, *op.cit*, p.181.

86.A corruption of the word Governor.

87.Lloyd, P.C. "Itsekiri in the 19th Century", *JAH*, *op.cit*, p.208.

population. Although the *Olu* did not have a monopoly of trade with the Europeans, his position was strongly boosted by the fact that European traders saw him as the ruler and looked to him for the protection of their personel and property. Therefore the *Olu* was paid protection money and in order to curry favour with him European traders sold their goods cheaper to him compared to other native traders.[88]

The basic features of the Itsekiri kingdom places it within the category of 'mini state' as defined by the Late Professor Ade Obayemi.[89]

The features of such a state are that it is characterised by a number of settlements distributed all over the Itsekiri territory. Each settlement has a name of its own but its membership as part of the overall state is generally acknowledged. He goes further to state that in every mini state there is more or less a well defined office of headship. This head holds little real power and is perhaps most important as a symbol of the political and ritual unity of the kingdom.

This description we believe fits the character of the *Olu* and his kingdom. As far as written documents and tradition goes, there seemed to be no organised machinery to extract tax, agricultural surplus or tribute for the capital from those

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88.Oral interviews with Ayomike, J.O.S., and Ikime, O., 11/8/96 and 29/7/96 respectively.

89.Ade Obayemi, *op.cit*, pp.205-207.

subjects to its authority. According to Professor Ikime[90] payment of tribute to the *Olu* by ward and village heads was more or less customary; given more out of respect than fear of reprisal for not paying. Also the position of the *Olu* was held in high esteem because of the central role he played in the ancestral worship of the Umale Okun or sea gods a ritual of great importance to the traditional Itsekiri people. But even this ritual the *Olu* had to perform with *Umale* priests from other villages.[91]

The extent of the Olus political authority was more pronounced within the capital's immediate environment. But in areas far flung from the capital like Gborodo area at the mouth and banks of the River Escravos and areas like the Benin river almost 60 miles away, the authority of the *Olu* was minimal. The *Olu's* authority over such areas was more in theory than in practise with such settlements looking to Ode Itsekiri as a symbol of Itsekiri unity rather than a dominating and authorirarian seat of power.

(c) 19th Century Urbanisation: The Benin River Area

The late 18th and early 19th century witnessed a steady decline in the political and economic significance of Ode Itsekiri. This was characterised by a

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90.Oral interview, 29/7/96.

91.Lloyd, P.C., *Ethnographic Survey of Africa*, vol.13, *op.cit*, p.195.

steady movement of royalty, and traders away from the capital to the Benin river area; the new centre of economic activity in the region. The growing economic potential of this area coupled with population movement in no small way speeded up the urbanisation process in this part of the Itsekiri kingdom.

To fully grasp the context within which this process developed let us examine the political and economic situation within the kingdom. The period of the late 18th and early 19th century was a turbulent period in the Itsekiri kingdoms economy and politics. From the middle of the 18th century the impact of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade was beginning to tell on the economy of the state capital. Her participation in this trade was her major source of revenue and its abolition saw a steady decline in the *Olu's* prosperity.[92]

In view of the immense profit made by European slavers many still desired to engage in the infamous trade. But due to the fear of being arrested and their cargoes seized by British naval antislave patrols, they stopped anchoring off the forcados river on whose bank *Ode* Itsekiri rested. They subsequently began to use the Benin river instead, as it provided easier roots of escape from British naval patrols.[93] With the gradual move from the slave to the oil palm trade, Europeans

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92.Ikime, O., Proceedings of the Itsekiri Language Workshop organised by the Iwere Club of UNIBEN, 1982, p.16.

93.*Ibid.*

saw the Benin river as an important gate way to obtaining this commodity from the region. Itsekiri traders now moved to this area to continue their role as middlemen between the Urhobo oil palm producers to the hinterland and the European traders on the coast. Here, they established trading settlements like, Jakpa, Bobi, Olobe, Ebrohimi, Obaghoro, Koko, Obaghoro and others. In realising the growing economic importance of the Benin river district European traders by the late 18th century had stopped sailing up to Ughorton the port of Benin and were now docking at or sailing up the benin river. Also, *Ode* Itsekiri was seen by this period as 'too far' up stream compared to Benin river area to be bothered with by the Europeans.[94]

During this period of economic instability *Olu* Akengbuwa (1807-1848) was on the throne. With traders and nobility leaving the capital in droves in search of better economic opportunities, Akengbuwa became autocratic and despotic. In an attempt to wrestle with the situation he began to enforce crushing taxs on the people and traders and came into open conflict with nobles who had via trade become powerful and wealthy coming close to rivaling the authority of the Olu.[95] Such nobles eventually left the capital with their family, slaves, and dependeants

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94.Nanna, A.I, *The Western Niger Delta to 1900: Society, Polity and Economy.* (COEWA Publishers Warri, Delta State, 1996), p.93.

95.Lloyd, P.C. *Ethnographic Survey, op.cit,* p.180.

to establish new settlements on the Benin river. For example the chief spokes man in the Olus council and custodian of his royal regalia the *Uwangue* during the reign of Akengbuwa left the capital to establish Jakpa. Akengbuwa's sister Uwala established Batere also located on the benin river as a potential refuge for her sons and brothers, possible heirs to the throne of Akengbuwa, whose lives may be threatened by the Olu.[96]

In 1848 Akengbuwa died and his two sons either of whom would have succeeded him died mysteriously in quick succession.[97] This threw the seat of government into a political crisis. The leading royal families struggled among themselves to produce an *Olu*. There was much blood shed with royal family members and citizens fleeing the capital and establishing settlements like Ugbu-Uwangue, Jakpatie and Usele within the vicinity of Ode Itsekiri.[98] As a result of this crisis no Olu was appointed over the Itsekiri till 7th February 1936. This break down in the political and economic order manifested in the form of a rapid decline in the political and economic status of the Olu monarchy and the urban process of Ode Itsekiri. By the middle of the 19th century the bulk of the Itsekiri royal

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96.*Ibid.*

97.Ayomike, J.O.S., *A History of Warr, op.cit,* p.80.

98.Lloyd, P.C., *Ethnographic Survey, op.cit,*, p.181.

families and big traders had left the capital to Batere on the Benin river.[99]

Torn apart by internal political crisis, impoverished by economic hardship and mass migrations away from Ode-Itsekiri Consul Cambell of Lagos on a tour of the Niger Delta region captures quite clearly the scene of a once bustling urban centre. In 1856 he writes,[100]

> "We accordingly proceeded to Warree. Once a town of great importance when the slave trade flourished now in appearance of a deserted village.

The wealthy traders and nobles from Ode-Itsekiri moved to Benin river the new focal point of economic activity and new trading communities. From here they organised and co-ordinated their trading activities with the Europeans. Made up of their immediate and extended family members, slaves, close friends and dependants. The founder of the trading settlement was looked upon as the head and chief authority. These new settlements were principally commercial in nature. Each settlement constituted a single corporate trading concern. Each member had a common interest in promoting the trade of their settlement and defending it

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99. Ikime, O., Proceedings of the Itsekiri Language Workshop, *op.cit*, p.17.

100. Talbot, P.A., *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol.1 (Frank Cass, London 1926), p.334.

against encroachment from rival trading towns.[101]

Migrants into the area unable to establish trading settlements of their own identified with established trading towns by acknowledging the founders over lordship by so doing he was allowed to reside and trade there. Though there was a degree of central control over trade in these new settlements a great deal of commercial freedom was granted to ordinary members of the towns. The founder and his descendants remained the leading traders, and to him (the founder or chief authority) and his consultative council of elders did the community look to for leadership in times of peace and unrest.

Political power and wealth during the socio-political instability of the Itsekiri was transfered into the hands of big time traders heading the new commercial towns on the Benin river. With no *Olu* and the royal houses fighting among themselves, only these rich and wealthy traders commanded the respect of the Itsekiri. In the light of these new developments a new body of men such as Idiare, Idibofun, Olumu, Numa and Nana, emerged, who began to speak on behalf of the Itsekiri. For instance in the absence of an *Olu*, it was the above mentioned traders who signed a trade agreement with Consul Beecroft in 1851-54 binding on all Itsekiri. Also we see traders like Nana of Itsekiri and others signing a treaty of

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101.Ikime, O. *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta.* (Heinemann Educational books Ltd, Ibadan 1968), p.43.

protection, which brought the Itsekiri kingdom under the British empire in 1884.[102]

Royalty, in the light of these significant changes no longer determined the role one played in the political arena in the 19th century but wealth amassed via oil palm trade with the Europeans. In veiw of cut throat competition, many of these new towns on the Benin river developed into large fortified trading communities equipped with cannons and war canoes with gun bearing slaves to protect oil pam and European goods from pirates who infested the area. A classic example of such a setlement was Ebrohimi under the famous Nana of Itsekiri.

What we can therefore deduce from the urbann process in precolonial Itsekiri kingdom is that Ijijen was able to establish a centralised form of government in an area or environment that was poltically mature enough to receive it. On the whole the idea of a centralised state may not have been totally alien to the early people of the Itsekiri area. As Afigbo puts it,[103]

> "Like a biological organism a social institution needs a suitable soil or ecosystem in which to germinate and grow. This we must bear in mind when we try to postulate the 'introduction' of the state idea by some benevolent alien aristocrates amongst a people to whom the idea is supposed to be foreign."

One may thus venture to say that the Itsekiri people may have eventually

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102. Ikime, O., *Niger Delta Rivalry, op.cit,* p.42.

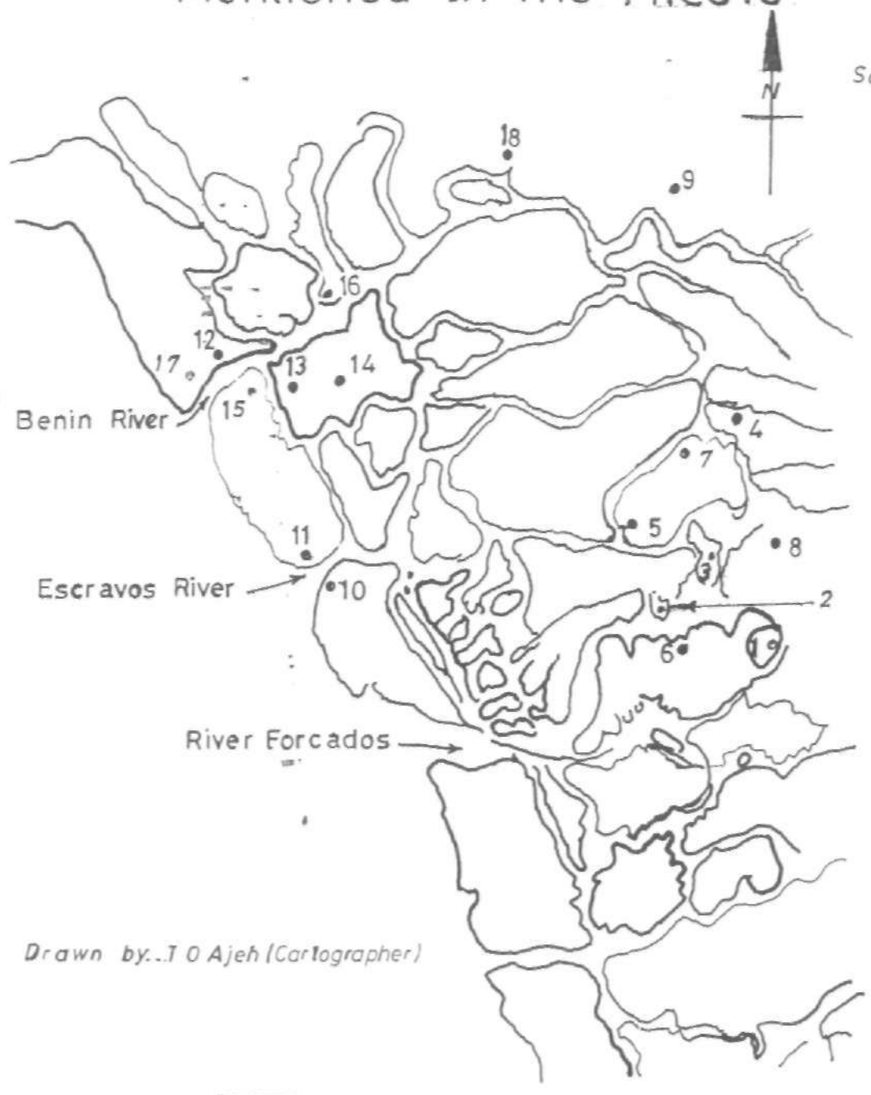
103. Afigbo, "Beni Mirage", *op.cit*, p.23.

established their own state system without the arrival of Ginuwa and Ijijen. This we believe to be true in the light of developments leading towards urbanisation in the area and the emergence of distinct figures of headship among expanding multilineage settlements.

Coupled with military conquest, migrations and a foot hold in foreign trade *Ode* Itsekiri developed as an urban state capital. But when the seat of commercial activity moved away from the Escravos river, on which the capital was located, and internal political crisis set in we witnessed a steady decline in the political and economic significance of *Ode*-Itsekiri and a mass exodus from the capital towards the benin river, the new centre for European trade. Here we witness a flurry in urban activity seen in the rapid growth of urban commercial centres, controlled by a new ruling elite; who dominated the political and economic scene; more on account of their wealth acquired from trade than by royal birth. Here we see trade and politics intricatly interwoven.

In trying to examine the pre-colonial urban process we have seen that it is impossible to isolate it from the political and economic environment within which it is located. We will now attempt briefly to examine the political machinery of the kingdoms seat of authority, the economy of the people in general and the social structure of Itsekiri society.

The Itsekiri Area And Settlements Mentioned In The Thesis



Source:-(A) Bradbury, R.E, The Benin Kingdom and Edo speaking people of south western Nigeria with a section on the Itsekiri by P.C. Lloyd--Op. Cit. P. 212

(B) Ikime O. Niger Delta Rivalry---- ----Op. Cit P. 234

1	Ode Itsekiri
2	Usele
3	Orugbo
4	Ugbeji
5	Ijala
6	Inorin
7	Ifie
8	Gbolokposo
9	Ogu
10	Ogidigben
11	Gborodo
12	Jakpa
13	Bobi
14	Bata
15	Olobe
16	Ebrohimi
17	Obagboro
18	Koko

Scale 0 — 10 Miles / 0 — 16·09 Km.

Drawn by..T O Ajeh (Cartographer)

1.6 Warri Kingdom: Its Political System, Economy and Society

(a) Political System

Political administration at the village level has already been examined, let us now look at the political administration of the kingdom as a whole. At the top of the political administrative structure was the *Olu* or king who also bore the additional title of *Ogboworu* translated as leader of the host.

He is also saluted as *Ogiame* meaning in Edo "Lord of the Waters".[104] He was aided by a council of 70 Chiefs *Ojoyes* given titles and holding offices similar to those held by the Oba of Beni's Council of Chiefs.[105]

The *Olu* and his Chiefs resided in the state capital. According to C.O. Omoneukarin[106] and Lloyd, P.C. and other local historians only 31 titles held by these chiefs *Ojoyes* can be remembered.

But it is generally believed that they were classified into senior and junior categories. The former category is made up of the *Olu's* immediate advisers. These being the *Ologbotsere* or Prime minister and Chief adviser to the *Olu*. He is followed by the *Iyatsere* or war lord. Next is the *Uwangue*. He is the custodian

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104.Lloyd, P.C., *Ethnographic Survey, op.cit,* p.182.

105.Ikime, O., *Niger Deltla Rivalry, op.cit,*, p.32.

106.Omoneukanrin, C.O., *Itsekiri Law and Custom*, (Ife-Olu Printing works, Lagos 1942), p.52.

of the *Olu* royal regalia and chief spokes man in the Council. The *otsodin* is the custodian of the Olus harem. The *ojomo* is the captain of the army. Other important officials are the *Idibie* the chief physician and diviner for the Olu and the *udofi* the chief executivioner.[107] The rest of the *ojoyes* constituted the junior class.

The *olu* and his *ojuyes* in council, made up the highest executive, legislative and judicial body in the kingdom. In most cases the *olu* sat with the council of 70 to take decisions and see to the enactment of policies, but it is known for the council to sit in the *olu's* absence with their decisions conveyed to the *Olu* by the most senior *Ojoye*. The *Olu* is not bound to the decisions of this chief's and where a difference in opinion arises the Ifa orcale is consulted. Its pronouncement is accepted as final.[108]

The Olushiip is hereditary, based on the principle of primogeniture only sons born to an *Olu* during his reign can be possible heirs to the throne. It was the *Olu* who had the sole prerogative to appoint an *ojoye*. But if an *ojoye* died during the reign of an *Olu* that post was left vacant till the reigning *Olu* died and his successor

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107.Olueh, A.J. "Changing System of Local Government in Itsekiri Land A.D. 1900-1976" (unpublished B.A. Thesis, History Department, University of Benin, June 1984), p.52; Omoneukanrin, C.O. *op.cit*, p.52; Nanna, A.I., *op.cit*, p.99.

108.Ikime, O., Niger Delta Rivalry, *op.cit*, p.34.

would chose a new chief.[109]

This centralised form of government cut across lineage boundaries and its basic characteristics are features of urban state capitals of the mini state type as described earlier.

(b) **Economy**

the swampy and riverine environment of the Itsekiri to a large extent influenced her economy. The Itsekiri are predominantly fishermen. They are widely known in the Delta region as suppliers of crayfish, a valuable article of trade in the area. Due to the nature of their environment the Itsekiri have never been farmers to any great extent and at no time in their history did they ever grow enough food to feed themselves. Thus they depended heavily on local trade with neighbouring Ijaws especially with the Urhobo.

The Urhobo located further inland to the east of the Itsekiri are intensive farmers, farming lands not prone to floods during the rainy seasons. They farm crops like yams, plantain, cassava, corn, pepper, bannana, oil palm and the like. These food items they exchanged for Itsekiri fish, crayfish, locally manufactured salt, earthen pots, jars and other cooking utensils. This local trade was crucial for

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109.Oral interviews chiefs E.N.A. Begho and Okorodudu 15/8/96 and 17/8/96 respectively which suppliment P.C. Lloyd Ethnographic survey, *op.cit*, p.193.

the sustenance of the Itsekiri.[110] This economic interaction between the Urhobo, Itsekiri and Ijaws to the south spured social relations between the groups often ending in marriages. The family is the smallest economic unit, with division of labour based mainly on sex. The men are engaged mainly in fishing and trade[111] while the women are engaged in salt and earthen pot manufacture and mat weaving.

With the arrival of Europeans to the Delta region about the 16th century, Itsekiri economic activity was to take a new turn.

The existence of a centralised form of government and being strategically located along the western Delta coast, enabled the Itsekiri to play an important role as middlemen traders between the Europeans and the Delta hinterland. This role was prominent during the slave and oil palm trade.[112] In comparison with the eastern and central Delta states of Opobo, Bonny, Akassa, Brass, and Nembe, the Itsekiri, it would seem were less successful in their dealings with the Europeans. But the ruling class participation in the slave trade provided them with enough wealth to sustain their kingdom.[113]

110.Ikime, O., Niger Delta Rivalry, *op.cit*, pp.47-48.

111.Women are often engaged in trade also.

112.Oral Interview with Ikime, O. 29/7/96.

113.Ikime, O., Proceedings of the Itsekiri Language Workshop, p.15.

According to Ryder[114] by the close of the 16th century the Portuguese were trading with a people known as the Itsekiri. We can assume that some of the slaves she sold to the Europeans were obviously obtained through her local trade with neighbouring ethnic groups.

The Itsekiri were known to sell cotton cloth to the Europeans which indicated her contact with the Bini people, well known weavers. Pepper, and some ivory obtained from the Urhobo also passed to the Europeans through the Itsekiri.[115] Various writers have shown graphically that European trade stimulated local trade through which the Itsekiri for example were able to obtain the goods desired by the Europeans. In exchange for slaves and local produce the Itsekiri received flint lock guns, gin and rum, textile goods, glass beads, iron works of sundry sorts and so on.

Though the slave trade in the region was relatively small[116] it was quite profitable. In the 18th century the Itsekiri were trading with the city states of the Niger Delta. Bonny, Elem-Kalabari and Membe merchants sailed to Ode-Itsekiri

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114.*Op.cit*, p.1.

115.Ikime, O., Niger Delta Rivalry, *op.cit*, p.46.

116.For instance between 1760-1779 Landolphe, J.F. (Capt) was only able to piece together 2 ships loads of slaves of less than 400 each. Nanna, A.I. *op.cit*, p.109.

with slaves.[117] These slaves were then transported by canoe to the main slave Port of Bobi and Eghoro on the Benin river. As a result of the importance of foreign trade to the *Olu* he established the office of *gofine* as earlier discussed, who collected custom duties from the Europeans. It will be emphasised here that only a small portion of the Itsekiri were engaged in trade with the Europeans. The bulk remained fishermen and local traders. This is because trade in slaves and oil palm with the Europeans required large amounts of capital in both cash and kind. Indeed large scale trade tended to be the monopoly of the more wealthy traders and ruling class; who employed others not in a position to trade for themselves. Describing this development Professor Ikime states:[118]

> "Thus grew up around each great middleman trader a body of people involved in his commercial enterprise. Some of these people could be his kith and kin; others would be non relatives eager to make a living; yet others would be slaves."

In establishing and sustaining its government the *Olu* and ruling elite depended more on external trade than on exploiting surrounding villages. It was when the Olu lost control of foreign trade that his political and economic power declined. As a result of this, out lying urban centres emerging on the Benin river took advantage of their distance from the capital and weakening of the central

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117.Adams, J. *Op.cit*, p.122.

118.Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta, *op.cit*, p.2.

government's authority to seize control of foreign markets in their area. Thus deriving powers and competing with the authority of the Olu.[119] Local trade with her neighbours was also very important in sustaining these villages and urban centres. In that they provided the basic food stuffs the Itsekiri could not produce themselves. Therefore trade both local and foreign was crucial to the development and sustainance of these urban centres *Ode* Itsekiri and those located on the Benin river.

(c) **Social Structure**

In the capital, society was divided into two main classes, *Otun Olu* that is the descendants of Ginuwa who made up the royal family and the *Omajaja* or free born citizens. The latter group comprises of the *Ojoyes* or title holders and members of the Olus council of chiefs. They are not seen as royalty, in that they are not related by blood to the royal family. However, they are accorded more respect than ordinary non title holding citizens and are associated with the ruling class.[120]

With the development of slavery into the Itsekiri society a new and third class was introduced into the capital. These were the *eru* or slaves. Slaves formed

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119.Cathrine Coquery Vidrovitch, *Research on an African Mode of Production*, pp.79-84 in Gutkind, P.C.W. and Waterman, P. (eds) *African Social Studies: A Radical Reader* (Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1977).

120.Ikime, O., Niger Delta Rivalry, *op.cit.*

a large portion of Itsekiri society and since it was a social stigma for one Itsekiri to enslave another, these slaves were made up primarily of Urhobos, Benin and Ijaws. These slaves were used as paddlers of trade canoes for big traders, or assisted their masters in manning trade posts in the Urhobo interior. They also acted as soldiers or body guards. In some cases they were used as surety for an unpaid debt.[121] Slaves were the property of the rich and powerful. As male and female slaves were allowed to marry, their population increased, hence the emergence of *Otun-eru* descendants of slaves.

Though slaves were regarded as second class citizens, they could however be granted freeborn status if they married into a free born family.[122]

Slaves were located mainly in the capital and later the urban trade towns of the Benin river, where the rich and powerful who could employ their services resided.

The economy and politics of these centres were geared towards sustaining themselves and not a foreign power. They were independent of any external political authority even though they relied significantly on foreign trade. Birth and group status played an important role in determining ones position in political and

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121.Oral Interview, Ikime, O. 29/7/96.

122.Omoneukanri, C.O., *op.cit*, pp.21-22.

economic activity. Therefore, the *Otun Olu* were accorded more respect and took a more active role in state activities than a commoner of older age.[123]

Conclusion

In this chapter we have attempted to establish a theoretical framework within which the urban process of Warri town will be located. Here we have decided to use the Marxist political economy approach. This we believe is a scientific and objective methodology for a study such as urbanisation in Nigeria during the colonial period. Also we have attempted to examine the nature of the urban process as it manifested in precolonial Itsekiri area, relating it to the state formation of the Itsekiri kingdom. Here we emphasised the role of trade, highlighting the roles also of migration and military conquest.

We have examined the nature of the political and social structures as it featured in these urban centres. We will now turn to the European penetration of the Delta region as stimulated by capitalist developments in Europe and examine the emergence of Warri town as a new commercial and political stronghold of the British in the region and its consequential impact on its urban process.

123.Ikime, Niger Delta Rivalry, *op.cit*, p.36.

Chapter Two

BRITISH PENETRATION OF THE NIGER-DELTA AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF WARRI TO 1929

Introduction

Using the political economy approach, we will examine the development and growth of Warri town within the context of the world capitalist economy, the dominant mode of production by the late 19th and early 20th century. This we believe will enable us have a meaningful understanding of the colonial urban process in Warri as well as to fully appreciate its position as an important colonial commercial and administrative centre. In this chapter we desire to prove that Warri did not develop in isolation. Her growth and development was in response to global forces outside her control. Therefore to meaningfully understand Warri's urban development and function we must come to graps with those forces that influenced her urban growth.

Thus this chapter will begin with an analysis of British penetration and political domination of the Nigerian region, with special reference to the Niger Delta area. The growing political and economic significance of Warri town in this process will also be highlighted.

Urban developments in Warri between 1891-1929 will also be discussed,

with reference to urban administration, residential developments and road construction.

The controversial issue of who the town belongs to will also be delved into as this issue has significant contemporary relevance.[1]

2.1 British Subjugation of the Niger Delta Region and the Development of Warri as a Colonial Administrative and Commercial Centre

V.I. Lenin, N. Buhkarin, and Walter Rodney[2] have exhaustively examined the economic situation in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century which warranted European capitalist nations to colonise Africa, Asia, Central and Southern America.

These works show quite clearly that the development and concentration of capital in Europe by the late 19th century had become so high that it lead to the creation of monopoly concerns which played an important role in their national economies. The works also trace the development of competing international monopolies which divided the world into competing economic units. These units

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1.Today, each of the three major ethnic groups resident in Warri, the Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ijaw, lay claim to ownership of Warri each arguing that the town is on their 'home land'.

2. V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, (Progress Publishers, Moscow 1978); N. Buhkarin, *Imperialism and World Economy*. (Merlin Press, London, 1972); W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (Bogle-Louverture Publications London 1972).

struggling for markets for their goods, areas of raw material, areas for capital investment as well as sources of cheap labour divided the today third world nations among themselves in an attempt to meet their economic needs.

We will now at this point trace British activities in the Niger Delta region leading to the subjugation of the area and its merger into the British economic empire, and the role Warri was to play in it.

With increased European interest in the African interior, European explorers financed by capitalist concerns began exploring into the African interior as early as 1789.[3] In the case of West Africa, britain, whose presence in the Bight of Benin and Biafra was quite well established,[4] had a great desire to navigate the river Niger. In so doing she hoped to establish a highway through which the penetration of the Nigerian hinterland would be possible; for the purpose of expanding trade and political authority.

By 1855 explorers like Richard and John lander, Huge Clapperton, John Beecroft and Dr. B. Baikie had unravelled most of the mystery of the interior of West Africa. Due to the geographical, social and economical knowledge they had acquired, countries like Britain now had a vast understainding of the West African

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3.Onwubiko, K.B.C., *History of West Africa: 1800 to Present Day*. (Africana-Fep Publishers Limited 1973), p.163.

4.Dike, K.O., *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*. (O.U.P., 1956), p.128.

hinterland. Armed with this knowledge, British and other European traders began to penetrate into the Niger Delta area in an attempt exploit its economic potentials, particularly to buy its oil palm and kernels. Trade, by the middle of the 19th century between the Europeans (particularly the British) and the natives of the Niger Delta region was established to a large degree. In exchange for palm oil and kernels, cocoa, camwood and other dye woods, ivory and pepper the European merchants gave gin, rum, tobacco, guns, gun powder, matchets, cotton and silk goods and the like.[5]

By this time British commercial interests in the Niger Delta region was deemed significant enough to warrant the appointment of John Beecroft as consul for the Bight of Biafra and Benin to supervise and protect British trading interests in the region. In understanding British political domination of the Niger Delta region, we find that prior to 1849 British intervention in the Niger Delta politics was negligible.

John Beecroft[6] realised the economic potentials of the Niger Delta especially the central and western parts, which by 1845 was exporting 25,000 tons

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5.Dike, K.O. Ibid, pp.101-102; Anene, J.C. *Southern Nigerian in Transition 1885-1906* (Cambridge University Press, London 1960) p.141.

6.According to Dike K.O., "Beecroft J." in *J.H.S.N.* Vol.1 December 1956, pp.5-7; John Beecroft had spent more than 20 years in the region of Fernandopo, the Bight of Biafra and Benin as a Trader and Adventurer.

of palm oil.[7] In view of the large quantities of oil palm derived from the rivers of the Bight of Biafra European traders described this area as the 'oil rivers'.[8] Beecroft, even before his appointment realised that in the light of Britains need for this raw material (oil palm) to feed her industries at home, Britiain's political domination of the region should not be delayed.

According to Dike[9] "from the day of his assumption in office (as Consul) his activities were guided by this awareness." The period of his consulship saw an end to the period of noninterference in the indigenous political activities of the Delta region by the British. His consulship marked the beginning of an era of interference and the merging of the area into the British overseas colonial empire.

In 1850 Beecroft visited all the states under his jurisdiction, from Lagos to Bimbia in the Cameroons. In each part of the Delta he visited, he read aloud his commission as delegated by the British government. This he did in order to demonstrate to the natives that he was the accredited representative of great Britain in the region.[10] Beecroft recognised, that the African chiefs stood in great fear of the awesome British war ships. Therefore Beecroft invariably visited the areas

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7.Dike, K.O., *Trade and Politics... op.cit*, p.99.

8.Jones, G.I., *The Trading States of the Oil Rivers*, (O.U.P. 1963), p.22.

9. *Op.cit.*

10.*Ibid*, p.129.

under his jurisdiction in these war vessels. By this move Beecroft associated his presence with power and strength in the eyes of the chiefs. Beecroft also introduced the practise of settling trade disputes between European traders and the natives on these war ships. Here Beecroft puts aside the old practise of settling such disputes in the courts of the native chiefs. By so doing the Consul associated the presence of the British with law and order.

In 1852 J. Beecroft presided over the election of a new king in old Calabar. His authority to do so was not challenged. This implies that by this time the British Consul in the region was a figure of unquestionable power and authority. Beecroft passed this position of power and authority to succeeding British Consuls. Consequently, these Consuls even before the advent of the Berlin Conference in 1884, had succeeded in making British rule familiar to the natives in the Niger Delta region. Naturally they encountered bitter opposition from certain quarters, but with time the natives came to acknowledge the consul as the defacto authority in the Bight of Biafra and Benin.[11]

In accordance with British colonial motive, British Consuls frowned upon any chief who challenged their authority in the political and economic sphere. In line with this they dethroned or removed any king or principal trader, by force if

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11. *Ibid*, p.128.

necessary, if they acted contrary to British socio-political interests. Examples of such Chiefs and traders who fell victim to the wrath of the British Consuls were king Kosoko of Lagos in 1851, King Pepple of Bonny in 1854, Jaja of Opopo in 1887 and Nanna of Itsekiri in 1894. Those dethroned kings were replaced by chiefs of a more 'friendly' disposition; meaning those who would be willing to accept British law and domination. It was through the activities of these Consuls aided by gunboat diplomacy that the British were able to trick and intimidate the chiefs in this region into signing treaties of protection. It was with the signing of these treaties, that the Delta region was invariably brought under British control.

Courts of equity were established in the area to settle trade disputes between European and native traders as well as disputes among the European traders themselves.[12]

In 1872, on account of the lawlessness of some British traders, the British government for the first time directly defined the legal and formal status of the Consul. Most significantly,[13]

> "... the Consul was empowered to carry into effect and to enforce the observance of the stipulations of any treaties and conventions between the British and the chiefs of old Calabar, Bonny, Cameroons New Calabar, Brass, Opobo and Benin Rivers..."

12.Jones, G.I., *op.cit.* p.73.

13.Anene, J.C. *op.cit.*

This particular function of the Consul exposes him as more than just a mediator between squabbling traders, but as a foreign political agent out to entrench British political domination in the region.

2.2 The Berlin Conference and the Niger Coast Protectorate

In an attempt to bring sanity to the European scramble for colonies in Africa, the Berlin West African Conference was held in Berlin in 1884. Prior to this conference of leading capitalist powers Leonard Woolf[14] described the European powers as falling an Africa "like a pack of snarling, tearing, quarrelling jackals," in their frenzied rush for colonies. At the conference it was decided that any claim to African territory must be backed by "effective occupation". This implied that an established political administration must be on the ground in any area dominated by a colonising power. Such an administration could only be established in an area where treaties of protection had been entered into between the natives of the area and the colonising power. On meeting these criteria another European power did not have the right to lay claim to the colonised region.

Thus emerged what came to be called "Protectorates."[15] This being the protection of 'uncivilized peoples' by 'civilized peoples'. In the eyes of the

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14. Woolf, L., *Commerce and Empire*. (London 1920), p.4, cited in Anene, J.C., *Ibid*, p.61.

15. Anene, J.C., *Ibid*, p.62.

Europeans the "moral basis" for the colonial domination of the African region was the 'voluntary' placing, by the native chiefs, of the sovereignty of their state into the hands of the occupying power by their signing of the treaties of protection.

Based on the rules established during the Berlin Conference, the British, in accordance with the treaties signed in the Niger Delta announced the creation of the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1885. The Protectorate included the Niger Coast east of Lagos excluding the Cameroon area which came under a German Protectorate.

In 1891 Sir Claude Macdonald was appointed Commissioner and Consul General of the Oil Rivers Protectorate. Assisted with a team of vice-Consuls and other necessary staff Macdonald set out to implement a more effective mode of colonial administration in the region.[16] On a tour of the region under his jurisdiction in 1891, he established vice consulates at strategic locations. In the Itsekiri area, he set up two vice Consulates one at Jakpa on the Benin river area and another at Warri our area of study. On Warri, Macdonald in his report[17] observed:

> "As trade here (Warri) promises to be one of the most flourishing in the protectorate ... I thought it politic to establish a separate vice Consultates at this place..."

This observation implies that Consulate were not located haphazardly, but were

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16.Ikime, O. Merchant Prince, *op.cit*, p.69.

17.*Ibid*, p.69.

situated in areas of economic potential which could be exploited to the advantage of the occupying power. This was why vice Consulates were established in commercial areas like Benin River, Warri and Sapele.

In 1893 the area under British administration was extended further inland to Lokoja and the Benue area. That same year the name Oil Rivers Protectorate was changed to 'Niger Coast Protectorate'. By this change of name British wished to convey the message that her presence in the Deltla region had been consolidated, therefore she could change the name of the region under her jurisdiction at will.[18]

There was no doubt that by 1893 British rule in the Delta region was established. The Commissioner by this time was enforcing legislative measures, without consulting the local chiefs if they found the measures suitable or not. These measures included (i) Post Office Ordinance; (ii) Medical and Sanitary Regulations; (iii) Customs Ordinances; (iv) The Constabulary Ordinance; (v) The Niger Coast Fire Arms Ordinance.

We have so far tried to bring out the nature of British colonial penetration into the Niger Delta, as she was motivated by economic purposes. It was within the context of these developments that Warri was selected to be the site of a vice

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18.Anene, J.C., *op.cit*, p.146.

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Consulate, around which (eventually) Warri town was to develop. Warri was now to act as a seat of British authority in the region from where Britain could launch her politicall authority further into the hinterland behind the coast as well as supervise the economic exploitation of the region. The Consulates were reminders or pointers to consolidated British rule in the Niger Delta. The first vice Consul in Warri was Major Copland Crawford.[19]

Let us now turn to Warri town itself analysing the trend of developments leading to its initial development and growth as a colonial town.

2.3 Warri: Circa 1891 - 1929

(a) Early British Activities in Warri: Commercial, Administrative and Residential Developments

With the decline of the transatlantic slave trade and the increasing significance of oil palm to the European capitalist industry, Itsekiri nobles and traders left *Ode* Itsekiri to the Benin river area where the oil palm trade with European traders was a fast moving business.

Another area which was also growing in commercial significance by this time was a settlement 5 miles up the Warri river refered to as *Ogbe* by the

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19.*Ibid*, p.150.

Itsekiri.[20] For certain reasons *Ogbe*, in the eyes of the European traders, provided a more ideal location for trade and commerce than the Benin river area.

Goegraphically, *Ogbe* was much closer to the Urhobo hinterland, a major source of oil palm than the Benin river trading locations. Secondly, as the Forcados river provided the best entrance for European steamers into this part of the Delta, *Ogbe* which is favourably located on the banks of the Warri river where it is over 400ft wide provided ample space for sea traffic. Unlike *Ode* Itsekiri, though located on the Warri river the creaks connecting it to the Warri river are too narrow, res op.citricting assess to European steamers and cargo boats desiring to load and off load goods. Thus *Ogbe* (refered to as Warri by the British) by 1891 was already a thriving commercial centre.[21] Here commercial significance accounted for the presence of European firms like Bey and Zimmer in 1885, Elderdempster in 1890, African Association and Messrs Alexander Miller Brothers in 1898.[22] We also find United African Company (U.A.C.), John Holt, G.B.

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20. Ayomike, J.O.S., *op.cit*, p.61 and Oral interview with Chief Okorodudu and wife, 17/8/96

21. The Concul general over the oil rivers protectorate commented in 1891 that by this time "Warri promises to be the most flourishing trade station in the protectorate".

22. Lloyd, P.C., "Ethnicity and the Structure of Inequality in a Nigerian Town in the Mid 1950s", in Cohen, A. (Ed.) *Urban Ethnicity* (Travistokk Publications Ltd, London, 1974), p.227.

Olivant and French companies like S.C.O.A. and C.F.A.O.[23]

These firms were in most cases established along the Banks of the Warri river. They engaged in trade with the urhobo hinterland and peoples of the Delta region via their native agents and individuals who brought produce from the hinterland and sold them to these European firms.[24]

The increasing presence of these firms coincided with the effective occupation of the region by the British. This implies that as British political and military presence in this part of the Delta was gradually becoming more established she was able to produce an atmosphere that was conducive and profitable for European trade, particularly for British traders.

In an attempt to move further inland from the coastal areas for economic and political purposes; the British closed down her vice consulate on the Benin river and reopened it at Sapele and another at Warri in 1891 as their growing commercial significance was obvious to the British authorities. With the establishment of a vice consulate in Warri European firms thronged to the area,

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23.Societe Commerciale de L'Quest Africane (S.C.O.A.) And Compagnie Francaise d' Afrique Occidental (C.F.A.O.).

24.Udi, E.W., *Development of a Provincial Capital: Warri 1900 - 1960* (Unpublishehd B.A. Thesis History Department, University of Ibadan 1988), p.6.

sure of greater protection[25] and to exploit the areas economic potentials. Settlements in the area like Pessu, Odion, Okere and Agbassa began to witness growth in population as natives began to move into Warri to partake of the growing commercial activities taking place there.[26] Not only did people move into Warri for commercial purposes but also to seek employment. Many gained employment with the trading houses as clerks, shopkeepers and casual labour. Others were employed in the vice consulate as interpreters and messengers. Men from Gold Coast of the Fante ethnic groups were employed as cask (barrel) makers into which processed oil palm was poured for export. Natives of the Delta and other West Africans were also employed by these European firms to extract the oil palm from the palm kernels.[27]

James Pinnocks[28] a British traders gives a vivid description of Warri vice-Consulate and its environs in the late 19th century.

> "... Warri stands about 40 miles from the sea... This is certainly one of the cleanest and finest trading stations and governments on the Niger (by no means the largest).... On one side of the stream a strip of some half a mile has been hewn out of the cotton woods... and

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25.Ijaw Pirates were common in the Niger Deltla area so were raids from rival traders both European and Native.

26.Udi, E.W., *op.cit*, p.6.

27.Bindless, H. And Pinnocks, J. *Op.cit*. P.151.

28.*Ibid*, pp.143-144.

here trading factories stand. There are 4-5 in number.. While another occupies a site lower down on the opposite bank. All are raised on piles; roofed with red painted iron and white washed dazzlingly, with a shaddy verandah running round it. Beneath stand long oil sheds.

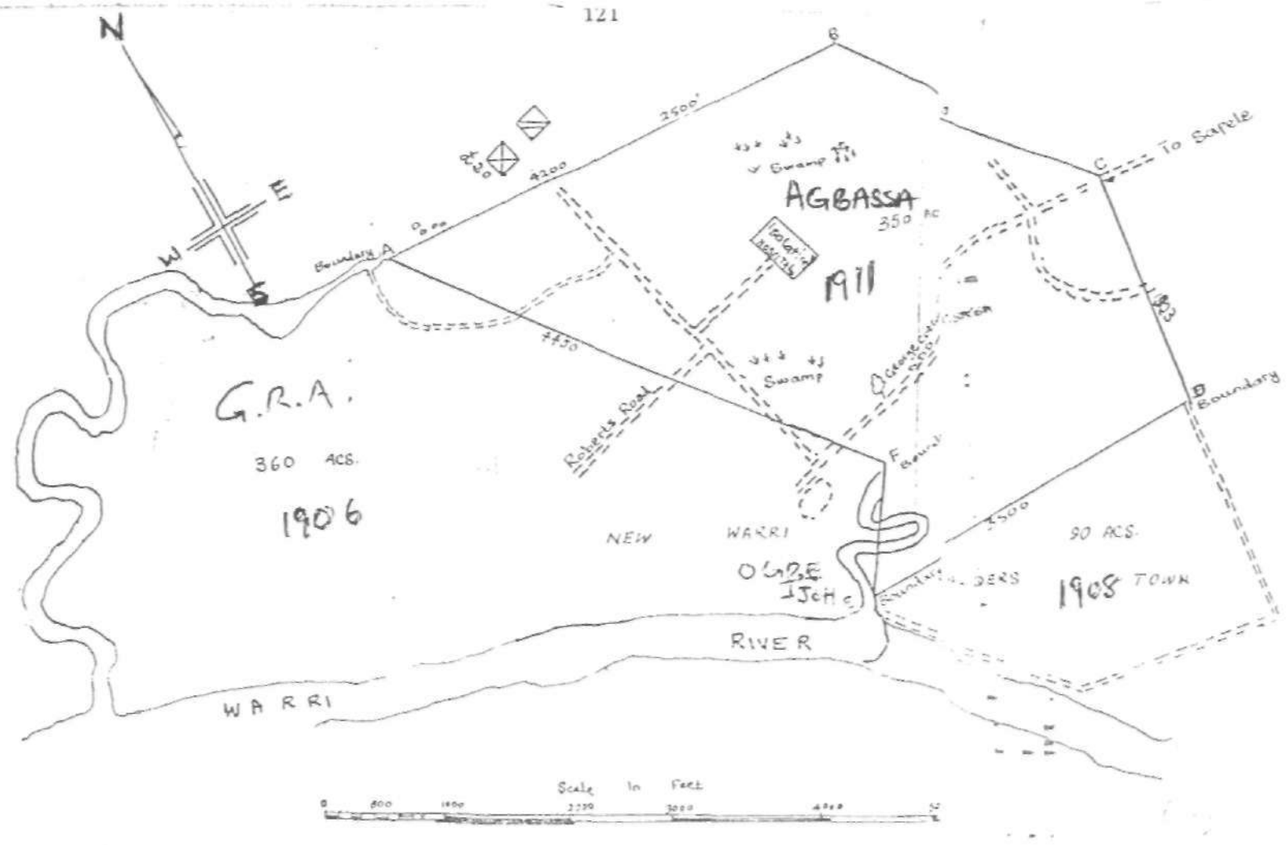
In the centre there stretches a dusty compound where the union jack floats over the dusty protectorate consulate. A handsome wooden building white roofed and white washed.. With a cool verandah with the space underneath between its supporting piles turned into a spacious court room and offices..."

With Warri's population gradually expanding, the British colonial government in the Delta region in the form of the Niger coast protectorate under commissioner and consul general C. Macdonald realised the need to formally plan Warri's structural growth. Secondly, there was an increase in the demand for land in Warri for both residential and commercial purposes as individuals were expressing their desire to build their own houses, the colonial government also desired to accommodate employees and the foreign trade houses needed land to build their trading houses and in some cases house their workers.

It was to meet these needs that the Britishh applied for and received portions of land leased to them by Chief Dogho in 1901, 1906, 1908 and 1911. These lands made up an area refered to as "New Warri' by the British, located about half a mile from the vice-Conculate.[29] New Warri's total land area by 1911

29. In deference to its antiquity and its traditional significance to the Itsekiri *Ode* Itsekiri received the appendage "Big Warri".

Warri By ~~1911~~ 1911.



was 800 acres.[30]

Between 1891-1894 several government buildings were erected in the western part of New Warri an area which was reserved as a European Residential Area (E.R.A.).[31]

A police barracks was built in this area. A Customs house was built near the Warri part located to the extreme west of the E.R.A.[32] A prison was constructed in 1904 where it still stands today, along Okere road in the lower parts of Okere district of Warri. In 1905 a telegraph line was completed, linking Warri to Lagos via Sapele and Benin. Though this line was completed in 1905 it was not officially put into use till 1906.[33]

In 1906 Warri was made the Provincial Capital of Central Province. In line with this new development a Provincial Commissioners house and accompanying offices were erected in the E.R.A. To the east of the E.R.A. was the native quarters made up collectively of Pessu, Wilkey and Fugbe popularly known as

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30.Obiomah, D.A., *Warri Land Overlords and Land Rights: Facts, Fiction and Imperialism*. (GKS Press Warri), p.13.

31.This category of residential settlement was renamed Government Reservation Area (G.R.A.) In 1937. Cited in Urquhart, A.W. *Urban Land Scapes of Northern Nigeria: A Case Study of Zaria.*

32.Talbot, P.A, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, vol.1 (Frank Cass, London, 1926), p.342.

33.*Ibid.*

Alderstown. This section of Warri housed the native civil servants and traders, businessmen and other natives who desired to reside in Warri. By 1914 what was known as Warri comprised the E.R.A. which housed the police barracks, provincial administrative offices, native and consulate courts as well as the residential quarters of the colonial administrators and expatriate traders and commercial executives. It should be noted at this point that the colonial administrative offices were located in the European quarters as this was where the colonial administrators lived, therefore it was more convenient to have their offices nearby. Secondly, we believe that the offices of the colonial administration in Warri were located in the E.R.A. as it associated the control of political power with the Europeans. Therefore it is clear to see that the residential and office lay out of Warri was made to reflect British colonial power.

We will now examine the impact of the 1917 Township Ordinance on the urban development of Warri during our period of study as the policy and its implementation was to influence the nature of the urban process in the area.

(b) Township Ordinance of 1917

A major feature of the colonial administrative machinery in Nigeria is what is refered to as 'indirect rule'. Here the indigenous political administrative and governmental bodies were left more or less intact. These bodies were supervised by the colonial government through its Governor and local representatives. This

was a highly effective means of colonial administration since there were few British colonial officers and scarce funds to administer the vast areas of colonial Nigeria. Also the traditional administrative bodies of the north and western regions of Nigeria were geared towards administrating extensive areas. These traditional administrative bodies were refered to as Native Authorities by the British.[34] Their jurisdiction covered those areas which traditionally fell under its authority, whose occupants were subject to the traditional law and custom of the land as administered by its traditional rulers.[35] This mode of administration, the British argued was to "protect" the indigenous culture from the "influence of European civilization".[36]

But British colonial administrative and economic policies attracted European, Nigerian and West Africans of various ethnic backgrounds into areas under native authority to which they were not traditionally subject.

For example in the case of Warri by 1914 her population was made of Europeans including British, French, and Lebanese, West Africans from Sierra Leone, and Gold Coast as well as Nigerians from Lagos, Benin, Urhobos, Ibos,

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34.Lugard, F.D., *Political Memoranda, 3rd Edition*, (Frank Cass and Co Ltd, 1970, London), p.299.

35.*Ibid.*

36.Nwaka, G.I., "Calabar: A Colonial Casualty" (Part 1) in the *Calabar Historical Journal*, vol. No.1, June 1976, p.30.

Ijaws and Itsekiris.[37]

In order to prevent a 'subversive effect' upon native administration[38] these 'foreigners' or cosmopolitan populace were to settle in an area that would be considered out side of the jurisdiction and authority of the Native authorities.

Prior to the passing of the 1917 Township Ordinance a flurry of terms was used to describe this mixed settlement of Europeans and diverse African ethnic groups for example we had: Sanitary District, Government Station, Cantonment, Area adjacent to a cantonment, municipality and so on.[39] Before the passing of the 1917 ordanance cosmopolitan settlements like Warri had no defined urban administration. According to G.I. Nwaka,[40]

> "... The European reservations established by an ordinance in 1902, received what planning attention there was. There was little money specifically for the development of the town except ad hoc grants made to local officials for sanitary purposes. Physical planning of the town at this stage was on a purely *adhoc* and informal basis. It consisted mainly of amateurish and un-co-ordinated endeavours of different government and private agencies e.g. the P.W.D., African and European traders, Missionaries and indigenous land owners... each and all trying to cater for their conflicting needs..."

Three years after the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, the

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37. Ayomike, *History of Warri*, *op.cit*, p.64.

38. Nwaka, G.I., *op.cit*, p.36.

39. *Political Memoranda*, *op.cit*, p.407 paragraph 5.

40. *Op.cit*, p.33.

Township Ordinance of 1917 was passed. It substituted the various names given to cosmopolitan settlements with the term "Township" and "urban district". The later being an area adjacent to a township but subject only to such portions of the ordinance and regulations as may be applied to it.[41]

According to the Ordinance, townships were divided into 1st, 2nd and 3rd class depending upon the degree of municipal responsibility and powers vested in the townships governing body. Lagos was the only 1st class township till Port Harcourt was so classisified in 1948[42] with 18 second class townships. These were mainly large centres of trade or colonial administrative centres, located either on the coast or along railway lines. In the Southern parts of Nigeria we had 12 second class townships namely: Aba, Abeokuta, Calabar, Enugu, Forcados, Ibadan, Itu, Onitsha, Opok, Port Harcourt, Sapele and Warri. While in the North we had 6 being: Ilorin, Kaduna, Kano, Lokoja, Minna and Zaria.[43] According to the ordinance, the area included in a township is excluded from the jurisdiction of the Native authority and Native courts in the district. Those permitted to reside in it are those who are in the immediate employ of Europeans or are engaged in trade which either requires the facilities afforded in the township or minister to the

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41.*Politicall Memoranda*, op.cit, p.407, paragraph 5.

42.Urquhart, A.W., *op.cit*, p.29.

43.Mabogunje, A.C., *Urbanisation in Nigeria*, *op.cit*, p.112.

requirements of its inhabitants.[44] The law upheld in the townships was primarily British law. According to Lord Lugard,[45] the ordinance was enacted:

> "...Partly in order to prevent the influx of undesirable elements and partly with the objective of discouraging the withdrawal of natives from the native administration and native tribunals to which they are properly subject, residence in the non European reservation is regulated by permit..."

The rationale behind this clause in the ordinance we believe, was to ensure that those peoples responsible for the production of cash crops through labour intensive methods were restricted to their lands outside the townships.[46]

According to sections 59-61 of the ordinance every 2nd and 3rd class township consists of a European Reservation Area surrounded by a non residential area 440 yards broad, separating it from a non European reservation or Native quarters. No European may reside in the native quarters and only bona fide native domestic servants of Europeans may reside in the E.R.A.[47] Lugard stressed the need for "only aliens, not ordinarily subject to the jurisdiction of the native courts... as a general rule be allowed to live in the actual precints of a township."[48]

44.*Political Memoranda, op.cit,* p.410, para 10.

45. *Ibid.*

46.Nwaka, G.I., *op.cit.*

47.*Political Memoranda, op.cit,* p.416, para 24.

48 .*Ibid*, p.417, para 27.

In the light of the above ordinance as it affected urban administration and development, New Warri was now classified as a second class township. In accordance with the new colonial urban policy, Warri was now to be administered by a local authority (L.A.) Assisted by an advisory board. This board comprised government officers such as the Medical officer, Provincial engineer of the Public Works Department (P.W.D.) And Superintendent of Police.[49] The Resident of Warri Province was also empowered by the ordinance to nominate (to sit on the board) a number of European merchants and Africans resident in Warri, who were interested in its state of affairs. The office of the L.A. and his advisory board was located on the site of the present "New Nigeria Bank" by the main market along the Warri Sapele road.[50]

The L.A. and his board were to see to the construction and naming of roads,, the creation of building laws to ensure that houses constructed by private individuals were not substandard. It was also expected to enact public housing programmes and Town planning policies.[51]

In addition to these the board was expected to see to the construction and maintainance of a market for commercial activities, the organising of refuse and

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49.N.A.I. W.P.235/1 Vol.II, 1948, p.61.

50.Oral Interview with Late Barrister M. Amorighoye, 21/8/96.

51.Omoneukanrin, C.O., *A Reminiscence of the Old Warri province* p.4.

night soil disposal, the control of vermin, the provision public conveniences, burial and recreational grounds, water and electericity supply, clinics and libraries. The board also controlled the leasing and collection of rents for all crown lands[52] within its jurisdiction. It enforced sanitary laws and ensured law and order according to british colonial administration was upheld.

Apart from receiving grants in aid from the colonial government the L.A. was expected to generate revenue to enable the board financne the construction of structural and socio-economic facilities. The board was allowed to keep 50% of all land rents collected. Market stall rents, electricity and water rates were all paid into the treasury of the board. Licence fees for bicycles, hawkers, butchers, liquor sale, motor park fees were all payable to the board.[53]

In view of this new turn in urban administration, we witness direct attempts by the colonial authorities to enact policies which would guide and stimulate the growth of what we have earlier referred to as colonial urban centres. Let us now turn to residential developments in Warri in the light of this new trend in colonial urban policy and the increase in Warri's population.

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52 *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid*, p.5

(c) **Residential Developments**

Warri's spatial growth and town planning was co-ordinated by the provincial engineer. In allienace with a government surveyor the provincial engineer was responsible for the dividing of land in Warri into plots to be rented out to individuals who desired to build residential or commercial houses.

According to the 1917 ordinance Warri comprised an E.R.A., non-European reservation and non-residential areas. The first we have already discussed. In Warri the E.R.A. was the location where Europeans only could reside. It also housed the offices of the colonial administrators resident in Warri. The E.R.A. is separated from the non-European reservation in Warri by a large golf course. It functioned not only as a source of recreation to the Europeans but mainly as a barrier to hinder any form of residential encroachment by the natives into the E.R.A. Lugard argued[54] that these golf courses refered to as building free zones (B.F.Zs or green belts) "prevented the Europeans being exposed to malaria and yellow fever infested mosquitoes infected by preying on the natives. It also removed the inconvenience felt by the Europeans whose rest may be disturbed by the drummings and other noises so dear to the natives." These B.F.Z. were not to be built upon by either the Europeans or Africans. Such building free zones were

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54. Lugard, Political Memoranda, *op.cit.*, p.420.

a characteristic of all British colonial towns. Imbedded in the phenomena of colonialism was a racial superiority complex maintained by the colonisers. These houses in the E.R.A. were by far more beautiful with wider streets and with a water and later an electric power supply supplied on a more regular basis than those in the native quarters.

With the number of natives working in the employ of government and commercial houses as well as those involved in independent commercial and business activity on the increase, the need to house this population became more desirable. The first attempt by the colonial authorities to house them was to build a number of quarters along Robert road about 300 metres to the east of the golf course. It was realised with time that Robert road was inadequate and unable to meet the demands of Warri's growing native population. In addition to this many of the natives expressed their personal desires to build their own houses.[55] To ease the pressing demand for housing Alderstown leased in 1908 was plotted and rented out to natives who desired to build their own homes. Alderstown was planned as an African reservation area, for natives who according to the 1917 Ordinance were permitted to reside within the boarders of Warri.

When Alderstown was plotted out much of it was swamp areas, as it was

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55.Oral Interview ENA Begho and nana, A.I. 15/8/96 and 8/8/96 respectively.

located in a low lying marshy areas. In some cases it was the provincial engineer who supervised the reclaiming of such swamp lands by draining and sand filling. In other cases the town's authorities would leave the reclaimation of such lands to those who would lease any part of such an area. If the provincial engineer was convinced that such a person had done a good job, he would evaluate the cost and deduct it from the rent the tenant would pay to the town's authorities.[56] Compared to other areas outside of the E.R.A. Alderstown received more attention in terms of planning. The plots were larger and better spaced and the streets were wider. This was because the initial need for housing though high, could be adequately catered for by the plots available in Alderstown. Thus care was taken to ensure roads were wide and plots spaced along the lines found in the E.R.A. But as population pressure increased, land plotted out in other parts of Warri like Agbassa, Okere and Odion became smaller, tightly packed with narrower streets.

Prior to its lease by colonial authorities in 1908, Alderstown as it was called was an Itsekiri settlement with rickety houses built haphazardly. But in the light of new building laws brought into play by the 1917 ordinance and enforced by the towns authorities those structures that did not meet up with these laws were pulled

down and rebuilt to the satisfaction of the provincial engineer.[57] All building plans for houses to built by private individuals had to be submitted to the office of the provincial engineer to make sure they complied with the standard building rules. A maximum of 3 years, was given to any who had leased a plot for the purpose of erecting a building to do so. Failure to develope the plot within the stipulated time would mean the seizure of the plot without refund by the authorities.[58] This was a means to stimulate prospective house builders to complete their buildings on time.

In analysing the pattern of residential growth according to Udi E.W. [59] we see residential development first in the E.R.A. and Alderstown. The pattern tends to move eastward along Alderstown and then Northwards towards Agbassa area by 1930. In the early 1920s the medical officer for Warri had this to say about the nature of houses for rent in Alerstown and Ogbe Ijaw areas.[60]

> "... the houses are almost all too low, only a few being 10ft high. Many are 6-7ft high... The width of the rooms vary from 6-10ft and lengths from 8-12ft... a few recently built houses were made to conform to the standard 8 x 6 x 10ft... Such a room can have a minimum of 3 occupants..."

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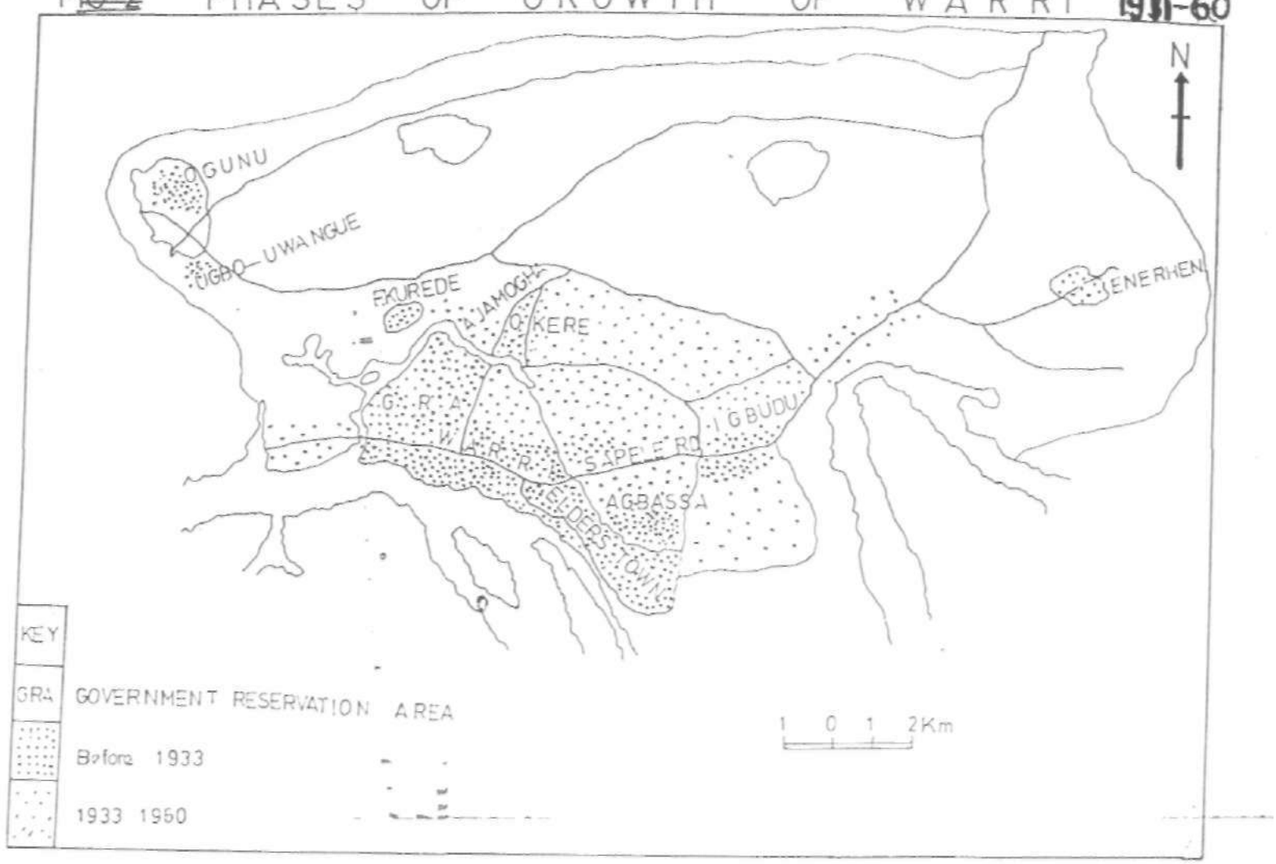
57. Omoneukarin, C.O. *Op.cit*, p.6.

58. Oral interview Nanna, A.I. 8/8/96.

59. Refer to fig.4.

60. N.A.I. M.L.G. (w)4 file 2483/2, p.27.

FIG 2 PHASES OF GROWTH OF WARRI 1931-60



The relevance of this observation is that houses were being compelled to conform to standard building laws. The Resident of Warri Province in 1926, commented in his annual report[61] that Warri was expanding graudally. It had come to his notice that nearly all available plots of government land in the area had been occupied or allocated. He commented also that the area around Ogbe Ijaw market area had become highly congested with residential houses.

In 1927, the Resident noted a 'substantial increase' in the number of houses both in the E.R.A and native reservation area and in the case of the latter the houses were now invariably roofed with "iron corrugated sheets".[62]

By 1929 Warri was a bustling cosmopolitan urban centre. Initial housing facilities for civil servants proved inadequate. Though the towns authorities made attempts at building quarters for them in Alderstown, majority of the civil servants and natives in Warri resided in rented rooms or built their own houses. We will now look into road construction as it relates to residential development and commercial activity in Warri to 1929.

(d) Road Construction

By 1929 the trunk road connecting Warri and Sapele township (to be

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61.N.A.I. C.S.O. 26/2 file 11857 vol.4 1926, p.8.

62 .N.A.I. WP 201/1927, p.6.

henceforth referred to as the Warri Sapele road)[63] was the only principal road in Warri, started in 1897 at the Warri port located at the extreme west of the town. It cut through Warri by 1900 as if slicing it in two. By 1910, the road was completed and it was reported that a light motor car could travel from Warri to Sapele.[64] The major road in Alderstown was market road. Running Parallel to the Warri river, the road was separated from the E.R.A. by the Agbassa creek across which a wooden bridge was built.[65] The cost of road construction was very high. This is due to the fact that the soil found here and its environs was not conducive for road construction. Earth suitable for road construction and gravel had to be transported into Warri by barge from areas as far as Lokoja.[66] Such methods of transportation was quite expensive. Though road development is of priority to urban development, road construction in Warri was restricted and limited to those areas where residential development was taking place. By 1929 the only roads that were tarred outside the E.R.A. were Odion and market roads.

The market area and market road made up the main commercial district of Warri. In view of its commercial significance, market road was tarred by about

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63. Nanna, A.I. and Begho, E.N.A. Oral interviews, 8/8/96 and 15/8/96 respectively.

64. Ikime O., Niger Delta Rivalry, *op.cit*, p.158.

65. Nanna, A.I. Oral interview 8/8/96.

66. *Ibid.*

1915.[67] Because the road led to the market area and the commercial district, it was a heavily used road. Thus, to prevent the road being unpassable during the wet season the road was tarred.

When motor vehicles began to increase in Warri the market road was one of the most motorised in the area.[68]

As the major residential areas were the E.R.A. and Alderstown, road developments were restricted to these areas. Some of the roads already constructed were Dore street, Bowen Avenue, Mc Iver and Skin roads. While in the E.R.A. we find school road, King, Khali and Esisi roads.[69]

Cemetry road was constructed providing Alderston with a direct link to the Warri Sapele main road. This road was constructed when it was realised that the only road linking the native reservation was the market road and Bowen Avenue. The new cemetry road served both Alderstown and Odion a growing urban district (which was later brought under Warri's municipal control) linking them directly to the main Warri Sapele road. By 1929 the local authority realised that beside the Warri Sapele road there was only 15 miles of road in Warri and with the exception of the roads in the G.R.A, market and Odion roads, the others where in a

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67.Chief Okorodudu, oral interview, 17/8/96.

68. Dr. Preston A. Egbe, Oral interview, 12/8/96.

69. On an excursion around the town I was able to find that these roads still exist.

deplorable condition.[70] It was observed that more money was spent on maintaining old roads than on constructing new ones.[71] In the area of street lighting, it was not as we know it today. By 1929 electricity was not yet introduced into Warri. According to my informants kerosine and later gasoline lanterns were attached to poles along the streets at strategic locations. Due to inadequate funding not all streets were to receive this form of lighting. This method of street lighting was expensive and the efficiency of the lamps was questionable.[72]

By the end of 1927 six new kerosine pressure lamps were purchased by the L.A. to extend street lighting in Warri. Commenting on their performance he noted:[73]

> "... The lamps themselves have given satisfaction and are considerably more economical than the large auto-lux lamps formerly in use. It is proposed to purchase 6 additional lambs in 1928..."

Road construction by 1929 in Warri though in progress was restrictded by costs and constructed only where necessary. To save costs these roads were untarred and in some cases quite narrow. We will now examine commercial activities going on

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70. N.A.I, M.L.G. (W)4 file No.2483/5.

71. *Ibid.*

72. N.A.I., M.L.G. (W) file 2483/7

73. N.A.I. W.P.I file 201.

in Warri in an attempt to assess her commercial significance.

2.4 Commercial Activity

As it has been stated earlier Warri as far back as 1891 was acknowledged as an important commercial centre. Due to its strategic location on an assessable part of the Warri river and its proximity to the Urhobo hinterland, Warri acted as an important dispersal point for European goods into the Delta and Urhobo hinterland. It served also as an important centre where Europeans could obtain oil palm for export.

Fom oral interveiws gathered in the field and archival records we have come to the conclusion that the Warri market area and market road was the major commercial and business district in Warri. Therefore it is not surprising that the foreign firms earlier mentioned were located in this area.[74]

My informants agree that the market was divided into two sections. The *Ogbe* or main market dealt mainly with imported goods, while the new market or McIver market as it is known today specialised isn the sale of food stuff.

Mrs. Okorodudu whose mother was a big trader during this period vividly recalls that the market was often refered to as 'S.C.O.A.' but more popularly

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74. On my field trip I discovered that the commercial houses of G.B. Ollivant, John Holt U.A.C, and Parts of C.F.A.O. and S.C.O.A. are still standing in the market area of Warri.

refered to as *Ogbe* or main market. She remembers in the 1920s that the foreign firms did brisk business selling items wholesale like: bags of rice, barrels of biscuits salted pork and cow meat. Cartons of gin and barrels of tobacco were also sold. She also remebers, that these items were purchased from these foreign firms at relatively cheap prices. Also made available by these firms were textile goods like cotton, silk and Agbada materials sold in bales.[75] By the late 1920s some of the larger firms like U.A.C. and John Holt were beginning to sell cars.

Recognising the economic significance of the Warri main market, and appriciating the fact that it was a major source of revenue to the L.A. (In the form of stall rent and trading licences) the towns authorities were prone to spend large amounts of money on its expansion and maintenance. That the market was of immense significance to the L.A. is clearly seen in the fact that while most of the roads in Warri were untarred spaces between market stalls were tarred. This was to prevent the market from becoming a muddy area during the wet season.[76]

The market, located by the banks of the Warri river near the site of the former Ijaw fish market of Ogbe Ijaw, was expanded every year. For instance in 1924 a series of sheds were erected in the meat section of the market and an

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75. Ayomike, J.O.S. Oral interview, 11/8/96.

76. Oral interview Nanna A.I., 8/8/96.

extensive drainage system was carried out by the P.W.D. in the market.[77] Between 1924-29 the energy of the L.A. and his advisory board was concentrated on the expansion and improvement of the main market. It also focused its attention on assess roads to the market area expanding and maintaining them. In 1929 alone, 6,000sq yards of marshy area had been reclaimed to expand the market which was rapidly growing to meet Warri's commercial needs.[78] Fourteen closed market stalls and a concrete slaughter house were also erected in the market during this period.

In the light of the motive of colonialism in Nigeria urban centres like Warri were seen as commercial clearing centres for rurally produced cash crops and mineral resources produced in Nigeria.[79] From the tables below the significance of Warri as a centre for the importation of foreign goods and as a point for the export of cash crops like oil palm will be vividly brought out.

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77. N.A.I. C.S.O. 11857 vol.2 1924, p.24.

78. N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 file 11857 vol.7 p.97.

79. Nwaka, G.I., "The colonial City: Image and Reality". In *The Calabar Historical Journal*, vol.1 No.2, No. 1976, p.33.

Table 1: Tonnage of Oil Palm/Kernal Exported from Warri Port Between 1924-25 and 1927-28[80]

Year	1924	1925	1927	1928
Oil Palm	9,457	9,519	8,629	11667
Palm Kernel	23,639	25,093	20,139	25,951

Source: N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 11857 vol.s p.18 and N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 11857 Vol.4 p.82

Though fluctuations are observable from the table above we can see a steady increase in the export of oil palm through a decline is seen between 1924 and 25 by 890 tones. 1928 witnesses a sudden increase compared to 1927 by 3,040 tons. These figures show that Warri was an important port, exporting a total of 134,096 tons of oil palm produce in 4 years. Thus playing an important role in the capitalist world economy. This fact is again clearly expressed in the number of foreign ships recorded as docking in at Warri port between 1924-1928.[81]

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80. N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 11857 vol.s p.18 and N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 11857 Vol.4 p.82

81. N.A.I. C.S.O. 26/2 file 11857 vol.3 p.18 and N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 file 11857 vol.5, p.162.

Table 2:Number of Ships docking in at Warri Port Between 1924 - 1928

Year	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928
No. In	95	111	122	130	*N.A.

*Not Available.

Source: N.A.I. C.S.O. 26/2 file 11857 vol.3 p.18 and N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 file 11857 vol.5, p.162.

We can see that between 1924 - 1928 a total of 458 ships docked in Warri port for the purpose of loading and off loading goods. This we believe buttresses our point that Warri was an important commercial centre playing a significant role in the world economy. The value of goods imported and exported through warri will again, we believe throw more light on the economic significance of Warri.[82]

Table 3: Value of Goods Imported and Exported Through Warri Port 1924 - 1928

Value £	1924	1925	1927	1928
Imports	453,940	761,173	609,212	732,377
Exports	690,062	711,699	643,966	846,602

Source: N.A.I. C.S.O. 26/2 file 11857 vol.3 p.18 and N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 file 11857 vol.5, p.162.

From the table above we can see that Warri exported a total value of £2,892,329

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82. *Ibid.*

worth of exportable goods between 1924-1928, and imported goods worth £2,556,702 within the same period. In accordance with its economic importance Warri was to attain important political status within the colonial administration in southern Nigeria. This we will look into in the next chapter.

We have delved into the urban development of Warri up to 1929 highliting its growing significance within the colonial administrative and commercial network we will now address an important issue of contemporary relevance to the inhabitants of Warri urban today. This is the issue of, to which ethnic group does Warri town belong or rather on whose land is the town established?

2.5 Who Owns Warri?

(a) Background

Warri town today is a large cosmopolitan urban centres of immense economic value to the nation. Due to the fact that its environs produce a significant percentage of the nations total crude oil, Warri is the centre for the activities of various international oil prospecting and exporting corporations. Such as Cheveron, Shell, Agip, Elf and a host of others.

The dominant ethnic groups laying claim to ownership of Warri are the Itsekiri, Urhobo and the Ijaws. Each ethnic group claim to be the 'sons of the soil'

while the other ethnic groups are 'strangers'.

As a result of these claims Warri has witnessed violent clashes amongst the three dominant ethnic groups resident in the area. Witnessed in 1952,[83] 1983 and 1993 between the Urhobo and the Itsekiri and more recently in 1997 April to May between the Itsekiri and the Ijaws.

The ownership of land is a very sensitive issue and as we discovered an emotional one. It became common to see our informants shouting with rage and hurling abuses at the other ethnic groups who lay claim to Warri. Banging of tables with clenched fists to emphasise a point was also a common sight.

In most societies today, land disputes or cases of land ownership are usually settled or proved by either: (a) occupation of land by an ageless traditional right, meaning an individual or community has occupied a piece of land from time immemorial without being challenged by another for rights to that piece of land; (b) judgement as pronounced by a court of law. In an attempt to come to a conclusion on the matter we have relied upon court judgements which have analysed the arguments of the contesting groups before passing a verdict. We believe that these verdicts were impartial and objective in that not once was a

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83.This particular clalsh will be treated in chapter five as it falls within our period of study.

verdict over ruled when an appeal against it was forwarded.[84]

Warri is located some 5 miles from the Itsekiri traditional capital *Ode* Itsekiri, sited on the northern banks of the Warri river. It is situated on the northern banks of the Niger Delta, some 100 km up the Escravos and 60km from the Forcados.[85] Located at 5° 3' north latitudes and 5° 73', boardered on the south and east by the river Warri. Warri is a generally low lying area subject to severe floodings in the south and western parts during the rainy seasons. Thus the swampy environment and surrounding creeks inhibit urban growth in these areas.[86] According to Professor Ikime,[87]

> "Warri, the name of the modern township is clearly a corruption of the name *Iwere* which the Itsekiri sometimes use to refer to themselves and their capital *Ode* Itsekiri, which is some 5 miles from the township. The name appears for the first time in the records in the 19th century when both the Itsekiri capital and trading station which later developed into Warri township were both called 'Warri'. (Some times Spelt Wari)."

That the name Warri is a clear corruption of the Itsekiri *Iwere* is an argument used by the Itsekiri to lay claim to Warri, arguing that the town bears an Itsekiri name;

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84. Obaro, Ikime (an Urhobo by birth) also agrees with this. *J.H.S.N.* No.2 vol.3 1965, p.331.

85. Ukubenyinje, G., "The Structure and Pattern of Land Use in Warri", (unpublished B.Sc. Thesis, Department of Geography, University of Ibadan 1977), p.3.

86. *Ibid.*

87. Niger Delta Rivalry... *op.cit*, p.254.

therefore the town most definately belongs to them.[88]

But Ijaws also argue that Warri is an adaption of the Ijaw word *Wari* which means 'house'. Thus if we are to go by the factor of identity of language with the town's name the Ijaw have a better claim than the Itsekiri.

The Itsekiri also have the argument that the town falls within the ancient boundaries of the Warri kingdom. Since it falls within 5 miles of the traditional capital it undoubtedly must be on Itsekiri land.[89] But again it is argued by the Urhobo that Warri is located on the boarder between Itsekiri and Urhobo country. Therefore Urhobo settlements like Opodo and Asagba are just as close to Warri as *Ode* Itsekiri if not closer.[90] This means that the geographical location of Warri as a claim to ownership can be used by either the Urhobo or Itsekiri as both can argue that Warri is within their traditional boarders. Before going further, we desire to establish certain facts which may enlighten our understanding of the nature of arguments presented by the various ethnic groups claiming Warri lands.

First of all present day Warri comprises a number of traditional settlements whose names exist even today.

(a) Igbudu and Agbassa: being Urhobo settlement.

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88. *The Guardian Newspaper*, Friday April 25th 1997, p.10.

89. Ayomike, J.O.S., *A History of Warri, op.cit*, p.63.

90. Ikime, O., *Niger Delta Rivalry, op.cit*, p.254.

(b) Ogbe Ijaw: Initially an Ijaw fishing camp where Ijaw fishermen sold their fish. This land was later leased to the British authorities and used as the site for the main market and business district of Warri urban.

(c) Alderstown: This settlement comprised Pessu, Wilkey, Fugbe and Odion communities all being Itsekiri settlements refered collectively as Alderstown.

(d) Okere: This settlement comprised of four Itsekiri wards and one Urhobo ward.

As Warri is made up of diverse ethnic settlements, this gives each of the ethnic groups a ground to claim ownership rights to Warri lands, each claiming to be the initial settlers and landlords.

Secondly, to fully grasp the Itsekiri claims to Warri the role of Chief Dogho Numa an Itsekiri Chief must be fully understood. Circa 1896 Chief Dogho was appointed by the British authorities as a political agent for the Benin river district. By 1896 he was very much in the good books of the British on account of the supportive role he played in the overthrow of Nana of Itsekiri in 1894 and the *Oba* (king) of Benin in 1897.[91] Chief Dogho had provided war canoes to attack Nanas supporters in Sapele area and 400 slaves in 14 war canoes to attack Okotopo a

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91. Both Nana and the *Oba* were obstacles to the progressive and profitable development of British trade and political domination of their respective regions.

place to which Nana had fled after his strong hold Ebrolimi was sacked by British forces.[92] Dogho for this effort received a British commemorative medal. He received a second medal for furnishing canoes to pick up information and survivors of the "Benin massacre" as well as for providing more canoes and carriers for a British punitive expedition against Benin in 1897. This was at a time when other Itsekiri and Urhobo Chiefs were unwilling to do so.

Held in high esteem by the British and the Itsekiri and conferred with the appointment of political agent Dogho was regarded as the defacto native authority in the Warri area and head of the Itsekiri peoples in the absence of an *Olu*.

Bearing this in mind, under the Public Lands Acquisition Ordinance, 1903 Clause 6 which reads:[93]

> "Where lands, required for public purposes are the property of a Native Community, the head chief of such a community may sell and convey the same for an estate in fee simple, notwithstanding any native law and custom to the contrary."

Chief Dogho was the person qualified to lease out land in the Itsekiri region of the Niger Delta on behalf of the Itsekiri. Thus in 1901 Dogho leased out the lands which was to constitute the G.R.A. in Warri to the British. In 1906, 1908 and 1911 Chief Dogho leased out Ogbe Ijaw, Alderstown and Agbassa respectively to

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92. Ikime, O., *Merchant Prince... op.cit*, p.141.

93. C.O. File 588/1 The Public Lands Acquisition Proclaimation, 1903 (No.5 of 1903) cited in Ikime, O., *Niger Delta Rivalry...* p.189.

the British. These areas constitute the bulk of modern day Warri urban.[94]

With the 1903 ordinance strongly in mind, the Itsekiri strongly argue that in the absence of an *Olu* Dogho represented the *Olu* and being fully recognised as such by the British, approached him (Dogho) for the lease of Warri lands. This application for Warri lands was 'granted' by Dogho who in turn leased the land to the British on behalf of the Itsekiri people and their elders because the land belonged to them.[95]

Now the question to ask is 'does the fact that Dogho leased out Warri lands which comprise Urhobo, Itsekiri and Ijaw settlements, meant that the land belongs to the Itsekiri? We will answer this question in the light of an incident involving Chief Dogho and the elders of Sapele in Urhobo land.

In 1908 the British acquired 510 acres of land in Sapele, an Urhobo town far removed from Itsekiri lands. The lease which conveyed the area to the British was signed by Chief Dogho. The land was leased for 99 years at an annual rent of £100.00 of which £60.00 went to the Sapele elders and £40.00 went to Chief Dogho.[96]

Before his death in 1932 Dogho instructed those Itsekiri living in Sapele not

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94 .Moore, W. *Op.cit*, p.111.

95. This argument was a common argument forwarded by Itsekiri informants.

96 .Ikime, O., *Niger Delta Rivalry... op.cit*, p.264.

to pay rents to their Urhobo landlords. This instruction Dogho gave because Sapele belonged to the Itsekiri as it was he who signed the lease handing over Sapele land to the British.[97]

The Urhobo elders of Sapele reacted immediately arguing that Dogho acted only as an intermediary between them and the British as he (Dogho) was the British political agent,[98] with great influence which extended into Urhobo land. The Urhobo elders further argued that the £40 given to Dogho out of the annual rent was given to him in appreciation of the middleman role he played in the transaction of leasing the land to the British. To buttress their claim the elders of Sapele argued that when the early European firms operating in Sapele first came it was with the Sapele elders and not Dogho or any Itsekiri, that they negotiated for the purchase of the land to establish their firms.[99] With the appointment of an *Olu* for the Itsekiri in 1936 and the continued payment of £40 to him the Urhobo argued that the British government was supporting the claim of the Itsekiri that they had a right of ownership to the Sapele lands.

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97. Those leases, signed handing over Sapele lands to the British were signed under the 1903 Lands Acquisition Ordinance.

98. By 1896 not only was Dogho the political agent of the benin River District, he was also the Vice President of the Benin River Native Council. By 1908 he was, in the eyes of Itsekiri and Urhobo the major native authority in the area. This belief was upheld by the high esteem in which the British held him.

99. Ikime, O., *Niger Delta Rivalry*, *op.cit*, p.264.

In 1941 the Urhobo of Sapele decided to finally settle the case in the court of law and won. Despite the argument of the *Olu* of Itsekiri his highness Ginuwa II, that Dogho leased the land as a representative of the *Olu*, the trial judge noted that while the Sapele elders were able to produce historical evidence of dealings with the early Europeans in Sapele, the Itsekiri could not. The judge further added that:

> "No tittle of evidence was advanced to support the bombastic claim to royal privileges and overlordship of the *Olu* over Sapele."[100]

The Itsekiri appealed to the West African Court of Appeal and lost in 1943. The Judges were convinced that Dogho had signed the Sapele leases on behalf of the Sapele elders and not the Itsekiri.

Therefore unless the Itsekiri can prove that Dogho signed the Warri leases on behalf of the Itsekiri, of Warri and not on behalf of the Urhobo and Ijaws settled in our area of study, the argument that Dogho signed the Warri land leases is not a water tight argument for the Itsekiri to claim ownership to Warri land.

Contemporary claims to Warri are rooted and founded upon earlier claims which were made during our period of study. Initial claims to Warri were made by the Agbassa Urhobo, the Ijaw of Ogbe Ijaw and the Okereh Urhobo. We will

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100. Ikime, O., "The Lugardian System in Warri, 1917 - 1932". *J.H.S.N vol.III, No.2 Dec 1965, pp.331-332.*

examine these earlier claims and see what bases they can establish for contemporary claims to Warri.

(b) Agbassa Urhobo Claims

In a paid advertisement[101] members of the Agbassa Urhobo community of Warri wrote:

> "... Warri was initially called *Otowodo Agbarrah* meaning 'Agbarrah (Agbassa) central town' before the Itsekiri and the British changed it to 'Warri'... Doro (Dogho) confessed that neither he or the *Olu* owned the Agbassah land. This confession was written by an Itsekiri letter writer F.G. Ajuyah ... Warri is an Urhobo town."

Another group which called itself "Agbarha (Urhobo) Community in Lagos in a paid advert[102] stated:

> "... Warri is an Urhobo town and no Itsekiri Monarch lived there before 1952.."

With these assertions in mind let us examine earlier Agbassa Urhobo claims to Warri.

In 1926 one 'Ometan' on behalf of the Agbassa Urhobo took Chief Dogho to court on account of rents he collected for the leases of Ogbe Ijaw, Alderstown and Agbassa. These lands (being virtually all of Warri town) Ometan argued belonged to the Agbassa people, based on the assertion that the Agbassa settlement

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101. *Daily Times Newspaper*, November 12, 1983, p.17.

102. *Daily Times Newspaper*, 6th May, 1983.

was in existence before the arrival of Itsekiri into the area. Therefore the land rents paid by the British should go to the Agbassa people.[103] But according to Itsekiri tradition, during the reign of *Olu* Irame whose reign began from about circa 1600, the Agbassa Urhobo migrated into the Itsekiri area on account of civil strife in Agbassa Otor, their home land. It was *Olu* Irame, who granted them land on their request to settle and farm on. It was to the Agbassa Urhobo that *Olu* Irame entrusted the cassava plant to cultivate which the Portuguese had given to Ginuwa in 1516.[104]

In the course of the case an Agbassa leader by name Ikpuri, under oath made the following statement:[105]

> "I live at Ejeba, where I was born. I am Sobo (Urhobo) a native of Agbassa. I succeeded Ogegede... I am Olutu (Head War man) of Agbassa village in Bomali. We came from Agbassa Otor (in Urhobo country)... I and my people have rendered services to the *Olu* at Big Warri (*Ode* Itsekiri). We are servants of the *Olu*. Ogbe Ijaw does not belong to the Agbassa, Alders town and Wilke belong to the Jekri (Itsekiri) Fugbe and Odion belong to the Itsekiri."

In the same case Agbamu, the head Chief of Effurun an Urhobo settlement, made certain testimonies which warranted the presiding Judge T.D. Maxwell to state[106]

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103. Suit No.25 of 1926 cited in Ayomike, J.O.S.*A History of Warri, op.cit,* p.32.

104. Moore, W., *op.cit*, p.26.

105. Ayomike, *A History of Warri,op.cit*, p.32.

106. *Ibid.*

> "The head Chief of Effurun, a Sobo man, says that the only land Agbassa possess is a place called Bomali and that the *Olu* of Jekri gave it to them."

In his judgement Judge Maxwell stated categorically that:[107]

> "... the case before me teems with latches and acts of acquiescence on the part of the plaintiff (Ometan) and the Agbassa people. As for the evidence on which the plaintiff and his people seek a declaration of these lands, there is no evidence of actual occupation by the Agbassa people of any of these lands except Agbassa village which has a Jekri name. (Bomali) and certain farmlands at Odion and Fugbe. There can be no doubt on the evidence.. That the Agbassa migrated from Agbassa Otor and settled at Agbassa village and farmed the vicinity there of."

The trial judge went further to point out particular features in the case which were all in favour of the Itsekiri claim to ownership of Warri land and even the land the Agbassa resided upon.[108]

(a) The Agbassa claimed to own Ogbe Ijaw, wilkey, Pessu and Alders town areas of Warri, but there exists no tradition of the Itsekiri receiving land from the Agbassa.

(b) Agbassa village is known as Bomali an Itsekiri word.

(c) Not a single Urhobo Chief of the surrounding lands supported the Agbassa claim.

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107. "9th Nigerian Law Report", pages 46-50 cited in *Historical Facts about Warri A Representation by Itsekiri Leaders of Thought* p.5.

108. *Ibid.*

In addition to this, Justice Maxwell in noting the statments of the Effurun Chief convinced him to conclude;[109]

> "I am satisfied on the evidence apart from any legal plea of resjudicata, that when the Agbassa came to Warri they were given permission by the *Olu* of Jekri to settle on land which is now known as Bomali or Agbassa village... From earliest times and during recent years the Agbassa rendered services to the defendant (Dogho representing the *Olu*) as over lord... On the contrary the evidence negates the ownership by Agabassa people of the lands known as Ogbe Ijaw, Alders, Pessu and Wilkey towns..."

That two Urhobo Chiefs came out to testify that Agbassa land belongs to the Itsekiri and that the Agbassa had no legal claim to areas outside of Abgassa in Warri town, implies two things: either they were bribed by the Itsekiri to make these statements or they were telling the truth. We are of the view that they were telling the truth. In their argument the Agbassa Urhobo state that when they first arrived at their present settlement the Itsekiri had not yet arrived, neither was there an *Olu*. If this was the case why does their settlement bear on Itsekiri name? and why didn't the Urhobo of the neighbouring settlements give the Agbassa moral support by providing witnesses to back up their case? This we believe was so because the neighbouring Urhobo realised the futility of the Agbassa case. This is clearly seen in the testimony given by the Effurun Chief Agbamu, which clearly contradicts the Agbassa claims.

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109. *Ibid.*

Dissatisfied with this judgement the Agbassa appealed to the Full Court (now Federal Supreme Court). The appeal court judges consisted of: Kingdom, C.J., Berkeley, J. And Butler, Lloyd, J.J. Their judgement was delivered on the 13th March 1931 in Lagos in favour of the Itsekiri[110] part of which reads:

> "In our opinion the Agbassa were given permission by the *Olu* of Jekri to settle on land in Warri. That they have since increased in number, wealth and importancne now feel themselves trongs enough to impugn the title of their over lord. Nor do they limit their claim to land which they themselves occupy, but seek to establish rights of overlordship to land which has always hitherto been recognised as Jekri. In our opinion they have failed to establish their claim. We consider this appeal be dismissed."

Still dissatisfied the Agbassa appealed to the Privy Council, the highest appeal court in London and therefore her colonies. Members of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council were Lord Atkin, Lord Alness and Sir Sidney Watt. In their judgement Lord Atkin stated:[111]

> "... In circumstances, there being concurrent findings of facts and there being additional ample evidence to support them it is quite impossible for us to interfere with the decisions which have been arrived at by both Courts. We will therefore advise his majesty that this appeal be dismissed."

At this juncture we can summarise that the Agbassa lost their battle for Warri twice in the Supreme Court (now High Court) in 1925 and 1926. They appealed to the

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110. *Ibid*, p.50.

111. Listed as Privy Council London appeal number 65 of 1932, cited in *Historical Facts of Warri*,, p *Ibid*.9.

Full Court in 1931 and lost; then they appealed to the Privy Council London in 1932 and lost again. Still not tired the Agbassa went to court again in 1941, 1949, 1957 and 1972 and failed each time.

To end our discussion on the Urhobo claim to Warri, Chief Sam Warri Esi on behalf of the Igbudu Urhobo[112] in Warri in an attempt to make null and void the Itsekiri claim to Agbassa and Igbudu land took the Itsekiri communal land trustees to court[113] in 1971 and 1972 in suits numbered S.C. 67/1971 and S.C. 327/1972. In his final judgement the Supreme Court Judge reported in S.C. No.11 1973 p.183-234[114]

> "... In view of these unimpeachable recurring findings by the Courts of competent jurisdiction[115] there can be no question that the Agbassa including the Igbudu Urhobo are customary tenants to the first claimants (the Itsekiri represented by the Itsekiri land trustees.)... It is fool hardy on the part of the second claimant (Sam Esi) in the face of such overwhelming evidence and the findings of successive courts throughout the years to seek from time to time as soon as there is notice of acquisition and the prospects of a wind fall like manna from heaven to relitigate issues which have been clearly laid to rest and determined against them by persisting in the groundless assertion that the people of Agbassa are the absolute owners of the land in dispute..."

To support the Itsekiri claim, Consul Claude Macdonald of the Oil Rivers

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112. Igbudu is a settlement in Warri founded by some of the early Agbassa settlers.

113. A body established to look into land matters in Warri and protect Itsekiri interests concerning such.

114.Historical facts of Warri, *op.cit*, p.12.

115. Here the Judge is refering to earlier judgments of Judges on this issue of Agbassa/Itsekiri claim to Warri lands.

Protectorate, on a tour of the area under his jurisdiction in 1891, remarked that on his arrival to Warri the prominent Chief and peoples here were Itsekiri [116] and it would be with them that he would conclude a separate treaty of protection.

(c) The Ogbe Ijaw claims

In an open letter to the Head of State,[117] the Ijaws claiming Warri stated:

> "...In the assessment report on Warri division dated 12th June 1928 it was written: 'For the township of Warri, the origional settlement which in due course became the nucleus around which the population settled, is known as Ogbe Ijaw and the name is still retained to define that portion of the town around the present market.'"

The Ijaws went further to state in the same article,

> "... the Ogbe Ijaw clan specifically embraces part of Warri township including the Alderstown, that portion of the land as indicated in the Warri township plan No.1. We also refer his excellency to the instrument establishing the Warri urban district council of 1952 WRLN, 117 of 1955 which clearly states the electoral ward of *Ogbe* Ijaw. All leases granted by the colonial government to corporate bodies and individuals in Warri were granted in the name of Ogbe-Ijaw. The lands were originally leased to the colonial government by the Ogbe-Ijaw people of Warri... It is in no doubt that the Ijaws are the owners of Warri as Warri is a corruption of the Ijaw word *Wari* meaning 'House'..."

First and foremost we will point out that in 1901 a large portion of land behind the Warri vice Consulate was leased to the colonial government for the purpose of

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116. Ikime, O., *Merchant Prince... op,cit*, p.69.

117. *The Guardian Newspaper*, Friday April 25th 1997, p.10.

erecting a barrack, residential quarters and other offices.[118] This area was called "New Warri." Finding that this portion of land was not adequate, an extension of the land was effected in 1906. Thus the Ogbe-Ijaw settlement was leased to the British colonial government.[119]

In the light of this Ogbe-Ijaw cannot have been the centre around which the town of Warri eventually developed as Ogbe Ijaw was annexed to 'New Warri 5 years after its inception; just as the 1928 assessment report pointed out, that the name *Ogbe* Ijaw refers to "that portion of the town around the present market.

Secondly, the claim that the lands of Warri were leased to the British by the peoples of *Ogbe* Ijaw is false. All available sources point out that it was Chief Dogho who leased out Warri lands.

The Ijaws first claim to Warri lands was in 1933.[120] This claim was then restricted only to that section of Warri refered to as *Ogbe* Ijaw.

In a petition to the Resident of Warri, the Ijaws demanded that the lands of *Ogbe* Ijaw be returned to them in that they desired to benefit from the rents

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118. Moore, W., *op.cit*, p.110.

119. *Ibid*, pp.112-113.

120. Ikime, O., *Niger Delta Rivalry..op.cit*, p.254.

accruing from them.[121] To substantiate their claim, the Ijaw enclosed a copy of a notice signed by P.E. Crawford a British colonial Officer in the region dated 21st October 1895. This notice stated that the British had decided to take *Ogbe* Ijaw under its protection since this was the desire of the *Ogbe* Ijaw head men.[122] It is recorded that no official notice was paid to this petition by the Resident.[123]

In a bid to examine the Ijaws claim to Warri town we must first realise that their initial claim was restricted only to a very small portion of Warri refered to as *Ogbe* Ijaw. How this claim has spread to encompase the whole of the town, as stated in the open letter to the Head of State, is beyond our comprehension.

Also *Ogbe* Ijaw is a name given to one of three Ijaw settlements in Itsekiri area; the other two being Gbamaratu to the extreme south and Egbeoma in the extreme north. *Ogbe* Ijaw settlement is made up of five village communities; *Ogbe* Ijaw, Isaba, Diebiri, Ijansa and Jelejele.[124]

We can therefore stipulate that *Ogbe* Ijaw can be discussed at three levels:

(a) as a group name for one of the three Ijaw village settlements in Itsekiri land;

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121. This land was leased to the British in 1906 for 99 years for an annual rent of £100.

122. Ikime, O., *Niger Delta Rivalry... op.cit*, p.255.

123. *Ibid.*

124. Ayomike, J.O.S., *The Ijaw in Warri*, (Mayomi Publishers, Benin 1990), p.16.

(b) as one of the village communities that make up *Ogbe* Ijaw settlement; © *Ogbe* Ijaw also refers to a water front section of Warri town, lying between present day Alderstown and the G.R.A. It has traditionally been the site of the main market and business district of Warri.

Prior to its lease in 1906 *Ogbe* Ijaw in Warri was a fishing market for Ijaw fishermen from *Ogbe* Ijaw settlement 8 miles down the Warri river. According to Obiomah, D.A.,[125] *Ogbe* Ijaw is refered to as an 'Ijaw hamlet'. Now, it does not make sense for the British to sign a treaty of protection with you and then eject you from your land without making provision to realocate you or ensuring that you benefit from the rents accruing from the lands leased from you. Such was the case of the Ijaws of *Ogbe* Ijaw in Warri town. With this in mind we will hazard the view that the treaty of protection signed with the Ijaws of *Ogbe* Ijaw in 1895 was not with the fishing village on the shores of Warri but with the Ijaw settlement 8 miles down the Warri river. This we believe is why the Ijaw fishermen who camped on the shores of Warri at *Ogbe* Ijaw were ejected from the site immediately the land was leased out as they were very likely to have been viewed as squatters.[126] We may also ask why the Ijaw waited till 1933, 38 years after

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125. Obiomah, D.A. *op.cit*, p.13.

126. Moore, W. *Op.cit*, pp.112-113.

'signing' a treaty with the British before advancing a claim of ownership of *Ogbe* Ijaw lands? Particularly in the view of earlier claims to the land by the Agbassa Urhobo in 1925, 1926, 1931 and 1933. With Urhobo Itsekiri court battles raging on for Warri lands including *Ogbe* Ijaw the Ijaws uttered not a word. As some argued what if the Agbassa Urhobo had won the case, would the Ijaws have dragged them to court?

It may even be argued that the Ijaws were goaded into making claims to *Ogbe* Ijaw by the Agbassa Urhobo after they had been defeated in their claims to Warri. In addition to this, since their attempt to claim *Ogbe* Ijaw in 1933 (which failed) the Ijaw have not attempted to take the Itsekiri to court on account of these lands.

We believe that the Ijaw have no strong case to lay claim to ownership of Ogbe-Ijaw or any part of Warri land for that matter. Those Ijaws who settled at *Ogbe* Ijaw in Warri were fishermen from *Ogbe* Ijaw village 8 miles down the Warri river squatting on the banks of Warri plying their trade. This we believe is why the were ejected without compensation after the British acquired the land by lease.

(d) Okere Urhobo Claims

In 1968 the Olodi-Oki-Ighoghadu family popularly known as the Okumagba family (Urhobo) lay claims to ownership to a parcel of land meansuring 600 acres

in the Okere district of Warri town.[127] The plaintiffs representing Itsekiri interests claimed in a declaration that in accordancne with Itsekiri law and custom the parcel of land in dispute belonged to the Ogitisi family of Okere (Itsekiri) who were subject to the overlordship of the *Olu*. On the other hand the Okumagba family claimed that the land was first settled on by their ancestors and have since exercised maximum acts of ownership such as farming, fishing and the setting up of their own ancestral shrines. The presiding Judge passed judgement in favour of the Okumagba family. His judgement was further confirmed by the supreme court[128] which decided entirely in favour of the Okumagba family.[129]

The trial judge was fully convinced that:

(a) Okere Urhobo the name of the disputed settlement was founded by three Urhobo brothers: Idama, Owhotemu and Sowhorvbe;

(b) The *Olus* kingdom did not extend to Okere;

(c) The *Olus* overlordship rights did not extend to Okere.
There is no strong Itsekiri tradition to counter the claim of the Okere Urhobo argument. This may invariably mean that the Okere Urhobo arrived in this

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127.This case was filed as suit No. W/48/1968, cited in the '*Guardian Newspaper*, April 30th 1997 p.10.

128. Suit No. S.C. 309/1974 cited in (1) *The Guardian Newspaper* April 30th 1997, p.10; (2) Ayomike, J.O.S., *History of Warri op.cit*, pp.50-51.

129. This family is the only Urhobo clan in Okere district, the other 4 clans making up this ward are Itsekiri.

part of Warri before the Okere Itsekiri or even if the Okere Itsekiri arrived at Okere before the Okere Urhobo the two communities existed as politically independent entities and the *Olu* of Itsekiri had no political influence over the Okere Urhobo.

The Okere Urhobo emerged victorious in this case based upon the principle of ageless traditional right. It is also upon this principle that the Itsekiri of Gbolokposo in Ethiope local government area of Delta state (Urhobo area) lay claim to the 1,800 acrea of land upon which they have settled and won their case.[130] Their case was again confirmed by the supreme court.

In the light of the court judgements cited above it is clear to see that the Itsekiri own Warri. That the three main parties were willing to invest so much in terms of money and time to obtain a court verdict on the matter implies their faith in the judicial system to produce an unbiased verdict which they would be willing to accept. With the exception of the Okere Urhobo case, all court pronouncements were in favour of the Itsekiri.[131] Although the Itsekiri constitute a minority in Warri today this does not dispute the fact that past judgements in relation to Warri lands have been in their favour. Any case the Urhobo or Ijaw desire to raise today concerning Warri lands cannot be entertained without making reference to the

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130. Suit No. W/28/1963 cited in Ayomike, J.O.S, *History of Warri*, *op,.cit*, p.52.

131. J.H.S.N. No.2 Vol.3, 1965: Ikime, O. an Urhobo by birth and an authority on Itsekiri and urhobo history also admits this.

earlier court ruling of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

We argue that the Urhobo and the Ijaws should stop struggling with a history that has already been made, but should rather accept it. Such an approach will end the feud among the three major groups in Warri and usher in a peace which the Itsekiri of Warri desire to see.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have tried to examine the forces that compelled Britain and other european capitalist powers to reach out side of her political boundaries in search of colonies, which she would exploit economically in order to keep her capitalist economy thriving. In the specific case of Nigeria, we saw how the British gradually penetrated and dominated the Niger Delta area through trade subtly interwoven with political maneuvers backed by gun boat diplomacy. With this gradual takeover taking shape, we see the emergence of Warri as a growing economic and colonial administrative centre in the region.

We also analysed the vexed issue of who owns Warri. In examining Warri's structural growth we discovered it was a gradually but steadily growing urban centre of significant importance by 1929. In the next chapter we shall look at Warri's growing political and economic significance in the Nigerian colonial administration in southern Nigeria as well as further urban growth between 1929 to 1945.

Chapter Three

WARRI'S POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND URBAN ECONOMY WITHIN NIGERIA'S COLONIAL SYSTEM

Introduction

A significant feature of the preceding chapter, was our ability to highlight the motive of European capitalist powers for colonising the African continent. Africa, within the context of the international capitalist economy was to become a supplier of cheap raw materials, a market for mass manufactured European goods, a pool for cheap labour and an area for the investment of surplus European capital.

In the case of Nigeria, Britain's exploitative aim could only be achieved under a stable political system, that would ensure "law and order". Such would create an atmosphere conducive for the systematic and unobstructed plunder of Nigeria's economic potentials.

In this chapter we will attempt to examine the role Warri played in the political machinery established by the British in Nigeria, with special reference to the southern parts. We will further delve into and analyse the impact of the international capitalist economy on the political economy of Warri. This we will do in an attempt to show that the socio-economic life in Warri was influenced to a great extent by forces which emerged as a consequence of her being integrated into an

economic system over which she had no control. Further in the chapter, we will examine major urban developments from 1930-45 in areas such as housing, road construction, education, health and other social infrastructural facilities.

3.1 The Political Significance of Warri in the British Colonial Government of Nigeria.

To meaningfully understand Warri's political significance within the British colonial government, we deem it fit to examine it within the context of changing British colonial administrative policies in the region climaxing with the amalgamation of the Northern and southern Province in 1914.

By so doing we shall bring out the growing relevance of Warri as an important colonial administrative centre in the region.

The hinterland of Nigeria north of Lokoja was on behalf of the British government administered by a chartered company the Royal Niger company (R.N.C.). In 1887 the British declared a protectorate over all the areas claimed by the company. In 1899 the charter of the company was revoked and the British colonial office took over the direct political administration of all areas administered by the R.N.C. This area was now to be refered to as the protectorate of Northern Nigeria with Sir Lugard F. As its first high Commissioner.[1]

In the area south of the Niger Benue similar administrative maneuvers were

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1.Onwubiko, K. *Op.cit* pp.255-256.

taking place, in an attempt to effect an efficient colonial administration, capable of over seeing the systematic exploitation of this part of the Nigerian area. In 1900 January 1st the Niger coast protectorate was renamed the protectorate of Southern Nigeria, under a high Commissioner. On the 1st May 1906 this new protectorate was merged with the colony and protectorate of Lagos. Thus the creation of the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria.[2] This, without doubt was a significant advance in colonial administrative policy in that the Nigerian area was now divided into two administrative units; North and South. These two administrative units under the auspices of Lord Lugard were amalgamated into one administrative entity named the colony and protectorate of Nigeria in 1914 - 1st January.[3]

With this general understanding of administrative policy affecting Nigeria as a whole up to 1914, we shall now concentrate on the southern part of Nigeria and locate Warri within the British colonial governmental policies as they affected the region.

In 1906 the colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria was divided into three large Provinces: Central, Eastern and Western Provinces.[4] Each of these

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2. *Ibid*, p.255.

3.Political memoranda, op.cit, introduction p.vii.

4.Nicolson, I.F. *The Administration of Nigeria 1900-1960*. (London O.U.P. 1969), p.104.

Provinces was to have a provincial headquarters from which its affairs would be co-ordinated. Calabar was selected as the headquarters for the Eastern Province, while Lagos and Warri were chosen as the headquarters for the Western and Central Provinces respectively.[5] It is significant to point out here that these three provincial headquarters prior to this time were already established administrative and commercial centres, serving British needs. In the light of this observation it is not surprising that they were chosen as provincial headquarters.

Warri's administrative importance is fully grasped when we view the areas which fell under her jurisdiction. These included the Western Niger Delta District, as well as Awgu, Awka, Nsukka and Onitsha areas. Udi division, which later fell under the newly created Onitsha Province, was also under Warri's sphere of administrative influence.[6]

In 1914 with the amalgamation of Nigeria the three Southern Provinces were further divided into twelve Provinces for a more effective administration of the region. These were, Warri, Benin, Ondo, Abeokuta, Ijebu, and Oyo Provinces making up the Western Provinces. Onitsha, Owerri, Calabar, Ogoja Rivers and

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5.*Ibid.*

6.Udi, E.W. *op.cit.* P.15.

Cameroon Provinces made up the Eastern Provinces.[7] Warri town was chosen as the Provincial headquarters of Warri Province. According to British policy all the new provinces were named after their headquarters i.e. Calabar, Warri, Ondo Provinces and so on. The administrative set up of each province was quite straightforward. Each province was divided into divisions. Each division was again subdivided into districts and subdistricts.[8] The Chief colonial Officer administering the Province was the Resident. He was responsible for maintaining law and order in the province and ensured the implementation of any decree enacted by the central government in Lagos. The Resident was assisted by a number of district officers (D.Os.). These were responsible for the administration of the districts and subdistricts.

Until major administrative re-organisations in the 1930's Warri province comprised two divisions namely Warri and Kwale divisions. Each division was divided into three districts and one subsidstrict. Warri's political significance here can be appreciated in that diverse ethnic groups and a vast expanse of land fell under her sphere of socio-economic control.[9]

7.Hailey, L. *Native Administration in the British African Territories* Part 4, (His Majesty's Stationary Office London), 1951, p.23ff.

8.Udi, E.w. t, p.15.

9. *Ibid*, p.17.

Warri division was divided into three districts: Warri, Sapele and Forcados. In taking the districts individually: Warri district was made up of all Itsekiri speaking peoples except Itsekiri settlements around Koko as well as all Urhobo speaking clans with the exception of Agbon, Abraka, Orogun and one Ijaw clan.

Sapele district comprised Sapele town and the Itsekiri settlements around Koko. Forcados district was formed out of six western Ijaw clans. Ase, the only sub district in Warri division consisted of all Isoko speaking peoples, a number of Igbo (Aboh speaking clans) and two western Ijaw clans.[10] Kwale division on the other hand consisted of the Igbo elements of the Province and Agbon, Orogun and Abraka Urhobo clans.

With this brief analysis of the large number of ethnic groups under Warri's administrative control it is obvious that Warri was held in high esteem within the colonial political machinery of Nigeria. Her significance was further lifted up with the promulgation of the 1914 Native Courts ordinance.[11] This ordinance, empowered the Resident of each Province to establish native courts any where within the Province. Clause 23 of the ordinance enabled the Resident to create a Native court of appeal within the Provincial headquarters. In accordance with this

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10.*Ibid.*

11.Ikime, O., Niger Delta Rivalry *op.cit*, p.190.

ordinance, a native court of appeal was established in Warri. Thus Warri's status, judicially in the realm of Native administration was lifted up considerably, in that all native courts within the province were subject to the Warri Native Court of Appeal.

In the early 1920's the Urhobo's and Ijaws of Warri Province protested to the colonial authorities. They accused the Itsekiri of manipulating the native court of appeal in their favour. The British, in an attempt to easy the hightening tension established another Native Court of Appeal in Kwale Division in 1923. This led to the removal of Sapele district from the judicial jurisdiction of Warri Native Court of Appeal. The Ase clan formerly under Kwale division as well as Isoko clans were now grouped into a new sub-district of Warri division with headquarters at Ase under an A.D.O.[12] The significance of this administrative and judicial reorganisation is that it led to the establishment of a new native court of appeal. This in turn led to weakening Warri's judicial powers; as a number of areas were removed from under its jurisdiction.

Another development having a profound impact on the political significance of Warri was the anti tax riots in Warri Province between 1927-28 and the economic

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12.Ikime, O. Chief Dogho: "The Lugardian System in Warri," *op.cit.* 313.

depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s.[13] As a result of these, Warri province under went a major administrative shake up and reorganisation. This reorganisation led to the creation of new administrative divisions within the province, coinciding with the major ethnic groups in the area: Thus by 1930 Warri province was divided into four divisions: Jekri Sobo, Western Ijaw, Abo and Sobo division.

The first was made up of the Itsekiri and five Urhobo clans being Urbie, Agbon, Udu, Okpe and Oghara. The second comprised all the Ijaws in the Province, the third was made up of former Kwale and Aboh divisions, while the fourth had the Isoko clans and the rest of the Urhobo clans.[14]

Significant to us here is that although Warri remained the Provincial capital, each of the new divisions was to have their own headquarters. This further reduced the administrative status of Warri. But this was not to affect Warri remaining the Provincial headquarters even when in 1952, as a result of Urhobo agitations, Warri Province was renamed 'Delta Province'.[15]

From what we have seen above, Warri played a very active role in British colonial adminis op.citration. At this juncture we feel it is pertinent to postulate

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13.Ikime, O. "The Anti-tax Riots in the Western Province 1927-1928" *J.H.S.N.* Vol.3 No.3, December 1966, p.621ff.

14.Udi, E.W. *op.cit*, p.27.

15.This development will be further examined in chapter five.

those factors we feel were significant in the choosing of Warri as an administrative stronghold in the Southern Parts of Nigeria.

Here we believe that there were two major factors that informed Warri's choice as a colonial administrative centre. These being geographical location and commercial significance. These two factors cannot be isolated from each other, and we will therefore examine them side by side. Though we have unavoidably touched on the issue we are about to raise in the previous chapters. We will briefly analyse them again in an attempt to answer the above posed question.

As we have earlier pointed out, the Benin river area had developed into an important oil palm trading centre by the early 1850s. As early as 1856 Dr. Henry of then "Harrison and Co" had established a factory at Warri which fed the main establishment at the Benin river with oil palm.[16] Warri had two major advantages over the Benin river area, as an oil palm and trading centrer, due to her geographical location. Firstly the sand bars at the mouth of the Benin river were shallow and very dangerous. Though it is fairly easy to leave the river between September and February one can easily be trapped. A French trader Landolphe, was twice trapped in the Benin river for two whole rainy season due to his inability to time the river

16.P.C. Lloyd, "The Itsekiri in the 19th Century", *op.cit*, p.226.

currents, and avoid the treacherous sand bars.[17]

Secondly, European trading firms on the Benin river were located farther away from the oil producing Urhobo hinterland. Therefore Itsekiri middlemen added the cost of transporting the oil palm from the hinterland to the European oil palm factories on the coast. The implication of this was that European traders needed more capital to enable them engage in the oil trade in this region.

In comparison the sand bars leading up the Forcados river to Warri were much deeper making Warri accessible all year round. Secondly, the oil markets were closer to Warri compared to the Benin river area, due to the fact that Warri was further inland. The commercial significance of this cannot be over looked. Being closer to the oil markets the Urhobo oil palm producers were prone to take their produce directly to the European traders at Warri. Both the Urhobo producers and European traders were to profit from this, in that they were now able to by pass the itsekiri middlemen and deal directly with each other, thus making great profits.[18] Thirdly, due to the proximity to the oil markets less capital was needed as well as organisational skills on the part of the European traders to establish trade relations with the Urhobo hinterland. This point must be grasped to understand why British

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17.*Ibid*, p.212.

18.*Ibid*.

traders moved to the Warri area. By 1860 two small merchants Pinnocks and Louch were already fully established here. Louch discovered that the Forcados river route to Warri was shorter than the Benin river route and by 1869 German merchants were already using this route on a regular basis to Warri.[19] As we have earlier on observed, by 1891 trade in Warri had overshadowed Benin river in terms of commercial significance. Sir Claude Mcdonald, appointed as Commissioner and Consul General for what was to be later called the Niger Coast Protectorate, on a tour of the region observed the undeniable significance of Warri as a centre of trade.

The purpose for establishing a vice consul here was two fold. Firstly to protect British Commercial interests in Warri and its environs. Secondly, to use Warri as an administrative foot hold in the region, to establish her political subjugation of the area and to launch further into the hinterland to expand her political and economic influence. These motives we appreciate more when we locate them within the overall motive for colonial domination of Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

More over in the areas that made up Central and Warri Provinces Warri in addition to its early administrative and commercial significance was geographically more towards the centre of the areas than any other town of administrative and

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19.*Ibid*, p.226.

commercial significane. This is important in that as a Provincial headquarters it is readily accessible to all parts of the Province.

Professor Ikime is also of the view that historical antecedents may also have contributed to Warri being chosen as an administrative Centre by the British.[20] He is of the view that on account of the Itsekiri's location on the coast of the western Niger Delta they were one of the first peoples to come into contact with European traders. By 1900, the British were very familiar with the Itsekiri peoples compared to the Urhobo's further inland. Important also is the fact, Ikime believes, is the British were of the opinion that since the itsekiri were accustomed to a centralised form of government coupled with long trade relations with the European, they would respond more favourably to European colonial administration. In view of this, Ikime is not surprised that Warri, already manifesting administrative and commercial potential as early as 1891, was chosen a Provincial capital for Central, Warri and later Delta Provinces respectively in that it is located in Itsekiri territory.

Though this argument may not be as weighty as its geographical and commercial significance, it is an argument which is appreciated and gives considerable food for thought.

In accordance with its political significance Warri housed all senior British

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20.Ikime, O. Oral Interview, 29/7/96.

administrative, judicial as well as law enforcement officers in the Province. Warri was also the Headquarters of all British and foreign commercial houses in the Province as well as the residential location of their expatriate chief executive officers. Therefore, we cannot but argue that Warri's commercial and political significance was great enough in the eyes of the colonial authorities to quarantee her position as an important administrative centre in the Western Niger-Delta.

We will now examine Warri's urban economy, analysisng her economic significance within the colonial economy of Nigeria. Significant to our study at this point will be to locate Nigeria as a whole within the international capitalist economy, the prevailing and dominant mode of production at this time.

3.2 Warri's Urban Economy

The dominant feature of Warri's urban economy was commerce. Commercial activities in Warri operated at two levels. Firstly we witness the import/export trade, this being the dominant and most dynamic aspect of Warri's economy. Secondly we observe local trade in food stuffs an important pillar in sustaining Warri's urban base.

As has been proved earlier on Warri's initial significance to the british was as a strategically placed entrepot for British goods and a market for vitally needed palm oil. By 1930 Warri was a well developed import export centre. The major British and foreign firms established in Warri and the nature of their business has

been discussed in the previous chapter. Here we will highlight those salient points relevant to this aspect of the urban economty.

The dominant British firms engaged in the import export business were United African Company (U.A.C.), John Holt and G.B. Olivant. While the major French firms were Societe commerciale de L'Ouest Africane (S.C.O.A.) And Campaigne Francaise d'Afrique Occidental (C.F.A.O.). These commercial houses imported European goods such as textiles, stock fish, bicycles and their spare parts, cement and other building materials, tin and China ware, cord and twines, fishing nets etc.

Although these trade houses also engaged in the whole sale business. Other dominant wholesale firms which did business with the major British and French firms were K. Challarams (Indian), R. Khalil (Lebanese) and M. Mowo and sons (Urhobo).[21] These firms sold the imported goods directly to the retailers, who in turn sold their goods to the consumers in the market.

This process in the change of hands of British and other foreign goods was the process through which European manufactured goods were dispersed in colonies like Nigeria. Indigenous industry, unable to compete with these cheap mass produced goods, died out. Thus Warri urban and rural populations were forced to

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21.Oral interview, Ayomike J.O.S. 11/8/96.

rely on certain categories of imported goods. By so doing they provided a steady market for European goods. This phenomenon is in line with Britain's attempt to exploit the market potentials of her colonies.[22]

These firms not only imported manufactured European products but also bought and exported a wide variety of raw materials to be used in European industries. Such materials exported from Warri port were: oil palm and kernels, rubber, timber, cocoa, benni seed, groundnuts, black pepper, hides, shear butter etc.[23] The raw materials were processed in Europe into finished products and exported back to Warri to be bought by its inhabitants and dispersed to other parts of the province. This dichotomous relationship between the import and export trade prevailent in colonial Warri is a microcosm of Britain's exploitation of Nigeria and Africa as a whole, by capitalist Europe via trade relations.

The second level of commercial activity dealing with trade in local food stuffs was crucial to the sustainance of Warri urbans populace. This aspect of Warri's urban economy brings out glaringly the urban centres reliance upon the rural areas for food supply.

Compared to imported food stuffs like salted pork, rice sardines, and the like,

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22.Rodney, W. *How europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Bogle L'Ouverture Publications London 1972, pp.168-179.

23.N.A.I. W.P.I. file 235 Vol.4 p.98.

locally produced food stuffs such as cassava, yams, fish, cray fish, vegetables, palm and groundnut oils were in greater demand among the urban inhabitants of Warri. Imported food stuffs were usually looked upon as delicacies especially among the urban poor. Ijaw and Itsekiri fishermen were the major suppliers of sea foods such as fresh fish and cray fish. The Itsekiri creek dwellers also produced a local salt prefered by the Itsekiri for certain kinds of local dishes.[24] The Itsekiri also farmed were possible vegetables, cassava and yams, though on a scale not sufficient to meet their needs. Their efforts are supplemented mainly by food stuffs produced by the Urhobo peasants. Vegetables like onions were known to come to Warri from the East and Northern parts of Nigeria.[25]

The producers of these food stuff were known to come to Warri to sell their produce, or traders from Warri, went to the areas of production to purchase goods for sale in the town.

The existence of these two levels of commerce operating side by side in Warri urban is graphically reflected in the structural lay out of the Warri main market. This market, the centre of commerce in Warri, was divided into two. Ogbe market specialising in imported goods and Melver market specialising in local food

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24.Ikime, O. *Niger Delta Rivalry op.cit*, p.29.

25.Diden, E.M. Oral interview, 12/12/96.

stuffs.

Though the import export trade was significant in that it integrated Warri into the world economy and generated revenue through import and export duties; the trade in local food stuffs was very important sustaining the urban populace. That this food surplus provided for the urban populace, buttresses the point earlier on made by Mabogunje, A.L. that a primary factor necessary for urbanisation is the production of a food surplus in the rural areas which is diverted to the urban centre to feed its basically non agricultural populace.

A large number of migrants into Warri, unable to secure civil service positions with the colonial administration or work with the commercial houses found self employment in low productivity enterprises. Such were characterised by occupational instability and in most cases low wages. Examples of such jobs were casual labour, shoe shining, bicycle repairing, washermen, tailors, night soil men, truck pushers and the like. These attempted to meet the daily needs of urban dwellers in Warri.[26]

(a) Market Developments 1930 - 45

The significance of Warri's commercial sector can be grasped from an examination of the efforts made by the colonial authority in Warri to maintain and

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26. This class of people will be examined in further detail in chapter five.

expand the Warri main market. These efforts were manifest mainly in stall construction, drainage and reclaiming of swamp land around the market. In describing developments in market construction in 1936, the Resident stated:[27]

> "... In the market 90 new shops and stalls have been erected and 3 blocks of concrete are in the course of construction. Further swamp area has been cleared and handed over to the market, which even yet is not large enough to accomodate the vastly increasing numbers of persons who are desirous to trade there in..."

By 1937, 78 precast concrete stalls were built in McIver market. In an attempt to standardise the market layout and quality of sheds erected, a proposal was approved to pull down all privately erected stalls in the market area in order to build improved stalls of a higher quality to be let out to traders. This would do away with unsightly stalls and offer prospective stall owners better sheds built in orderly lines, and based on a definate market plan.[28]

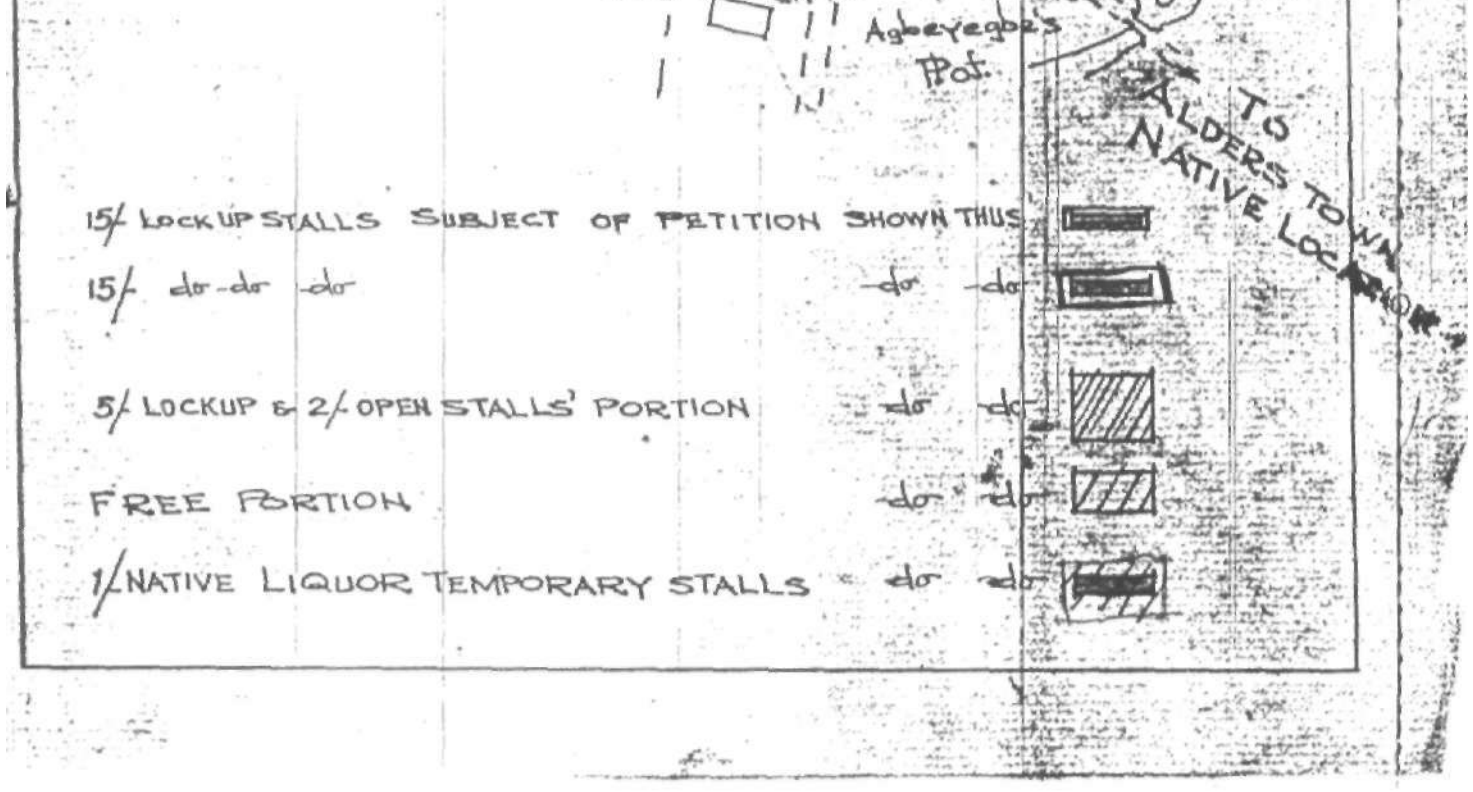
Between 1939-1940 £775 was approved for the construction of new market stalls. Sixty-six open pre-concrete stalls and one 3 unit lock up pre-cast concrete sheds were also constructed. Fourteen temporary native liquor stalls, 10 temporary wood sellers stalls and 10 open stalls were constructed during this period along McIver market road.[29]

27.N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 11857 vol.14 p.447.

28.N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 11857 Vol.18 Annual Report Warri Prov. 1937 p.498.

29.N.A.I. files W.P.I. Annual report Warri Province 1939, p.33.

Warri main Market by 1938 Fig. 5



To meaningfully substantiate this observation, Warri's urban economy will be located within the colonial economy of Nigeria. By so doing we aim to show that Nigeria's colonial economy was influenced by forces outside its control and Warri, being an integral part of this colonial economy, reflected the over all consequences of the depression on Nigeria.

(b) The Economic Depression of the Late 1920s and Early 1930s

With the economic slump of the 1920s prices for West African cash crops fell by 60-70%.[33] For example in 1924 Nigeria palm oil purchased by U.A.C. at 14/- per gallon depreciated to 7/- in 1928 and further still to 1/2d in 1929.[34]

According to one of my informants (Chief Begho) in response to the drastic fall in prices indigenous oil palm deals and peasant farmers boycotted the foreign firms in Warri at a certain stage on account of the low prices they offered for their oil palm.

In an attempt to sustain her home economy, prices for British manufactured goods imported into Nigeria rose considerably doubling and in some cases they even tripled.[35] With a depreciation in the value of the pound and the rise in prices of

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33.Crowder, M. *West Africa Under Colonial Rule.* (Hutchinson of London, London 1968), p.32.

34.Rodney, W. *Op.cit*, p.172.

35.*Ibid*, 173.

imported goods, urban dwellers in Nigeria were particularly hard hit; since most of their every day needs were imported goods and their purchasing power had declined considerably.

My informants remembered quite vividly how basic imported goods during this period, were now regarded as luxuries. Prices of local food stuffs during this period rose at an alarming rate. In Warri, cassava which was considered as part of the staple diet became too expensive. Therefore people turned to starch, a local dish of the Itsekiri, whose cost had also risen considerably.

Unable to pay employees the colonial government laid off thousands of its workers. In Warri those civil servants who were not laid off became significantly important in Warri society, in that they still received a steady income and were looked upon as the relatively well to do at that time.[36]

The price of cash crops during this period could only purchase a ⅓ of what they could before 1929. Increase in the price of local food stuff, the rise in the price of essential imported goods, mass retrenchment and devaluation of the pound, triggered off an urban rural migration within Nigeria. In Warri we were informed that the many Itsekiri and Urhobo workers retrenched from the P.W.D. and

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36.Chief Begho, oral interview, 15/8/96.

commercial houses returned to their villages.[37]

In an attempt to exploit the situation many traders formerly engaged in the sale of imported goods, turned to trade in local food stuffs. Though there was a notabale increase in local food production their prohibitive cost made it difficult for many in places like Warri to eat 2 times a day.[38]

According to one colonial officer in Warri the depression period was described as:

> "The most depressing and trying period of commercial stagnation the town has ever known..."[39]

During this period it is significant to point out that nearly all government departments concerned with the provision of social and economic services came to a virtual stand still. For instance expenditure on economic services such as agriculture, forestry, communications and public works dropped by almost 50%.[40]

This development was reflected in Warri, particularly in the area of public works. Road construction drain and bridge construction were negligible.[41] The

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37.Dr. Esiri Oral interview, 14/8/96.

38.E. Esimaje oral interview, 30/8/96.

39.Udi, E.W. *op.cit*, p.47

40.Crowder, M. *Op.cit*, p.323.

41.Late Amorighoye, M. Oral interview, 24/8/96.

decline in government spending on public works and housing during this period is reflected in the stagnation in the spatial growth of Warri during this period. The colonial administration was unable to provide funds for the creation of houses for its employees. Also due to the contraction in business during this period, business men and traders could not build their own houses. Seeing that residential development was virtually at a stand still the spatial development of the town was minimised. The crime rate also rose in Warri during this period. Unemployed and hungry some turned to burglary, robbing market stalls and residential houses particularly in the native quarters of the town.[42]

Though brief I believe we have clearly shown that the socio-economic crisis witnessed in Warri on account of the depression has been clearly brought out. Drawn into the whirl pool of international capitalism, Nigeria's economic destiny was determined by external market forces. We buttress this view, by showing that with the improvement of the economic situation on the global market things picked up for Nigeria as a whole. From sources available we observed that the depression period began to ease up by the end of 1934. This was witnessed by a slight improvement in trade and general economic condition.

By 1936 with prices for cash crops gradually improving Warri began to

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42. Esimaje, E. Oral interview, 30/8/96.

experience once again the benefits of improved conditions of trade.

According to Mr. B.J.A. Mathews the D.O. for the jekri-Sobo division of Warri Province:[43]

> "... Reports from two leading commercial firms in Warri (town)... show that money paid out for produce during 1936 exceeded the amount dispersed in 1935... The increased amount of cash in circulation has been naturally reflected in the sale of merchandise."

The depression shows to a great extent the level to which the major sectors of Warri's economy was integrated into the world capitalist system. Her integration into the world economic system was inevitable, considering Britain's motive for colonising the region. Thus it was bound to have a profound impact on Warri's socio-political system.

We will now turn to major urban developments that took place in Warri between 1930-45 attempting to highlight significant road, housing and other social infrastructural developments that took place during this period.

3.3 Warri 1930-45: Major Urban Developments

(a) Housing and Town Planning

In 1936, in an attempt to maintain a high standard of house construction in the native reservation (Alderstown) new building laws were introduced and old ones

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43.N.A.I.C.S.O 26/2 file 11857 vol.14 p.37.

updated and modernised.[44]

A scheme was approved in 1937 to clear slums located along Warri Sapele road and Robert road areas. In Alderstown a large plot of land was cleared and set aside for the creation of a recreational ground.[45]

To create more room for housing, the colonial authorities in Warri mapped out 56 new plots in Alderstown and another 32 along Okere Agbassa road.[46] For a meaningful attempt to create in our minds an image of the nature of housing in Warri during this period we will highlight some of the salient housing laws passed in 1936 as they were to affect Warri:[47]

1. A clear free space, free of any erection whatsoever of not less than 10 feet was to be left between one building and any other building on the adjacent plots. In the case of buildings of two or more stories the space was not to be less than 15 feet.
2. All buildings constructed must have, to the satisfaction of the health officer, through and through ventilation.
3. All rooms intended for human habitation must contain at least one window

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44.N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 11857 vol.14 Warri Prof. Annual Report 1936, p.447.

45.*Ibid*, vol.18, p.499.

46.*Ibid*.

47.N.A.I. WP.1 272, p.76.

opening into external air.

4. All rooms must have fan lights or ventilation openings above the doors and windows.

5. Every room or part of the building intended to be used as a store, must be made adequately rat proof to the satisfaction of the health officer.

6. No earthen closet toilet was to be linked directly with any room intended for human habitation.

7. All toilet and bathing facilities were to be adequately paved with cement.

From the above, spacing laws are observed in an attempt to ease housing congestion. The Health factor we can also see is taken into great consideration in house construction.

By 1945, only building plans indicating houses to be built of concrete were approved. With the aim of centralising urban planning in the Western region, town planning was taken out of the hands of local urban authorities and co-ordinated from Lagos. In 1945 the Resident of Warri Province wrote a memorandum to the Secretary of the Western province Ibadan, expressing his dissatisfaction with the new trend in urban planning. Here we feel it is pertinent to quote a part of this letter, which explicitly show his discontent.

> "...The mistakes that arise from attempts to town plan by central rather than local authorities are only too obvious in the case of Warri. The present town plan was made in Lagos. Whether the town

> planning officer ever visited Warri I don't know! It all looks very fine on the map, but plots marked out on the plan (already leased out) have been laid out without any consideration for the drainage of the area on which they lie. The new maple swamp lay out parallel to Robert road is a good example of this..."

The Resident went further to establish that the town Planner in Lagos not conversant with Warri, mapped out areas for residential purposes that cut across natural water drains.

This view upheld by the Resident was supported by the Town Planning Officer P.W.D. Western Region Mr. Huges J.R. in his general report and handing over notes in 1948. After visiting Warri in 1948 he remarked:[48]

> "... A preliminary planning scheme had been prepared some time ago covering a large area of Warri. It was found that the scheme would require considerable amendments... and certain proposals were found impracticable...."

In an attempt to solve the problem of erratic town planning the colonial government was to pass certain town planning policies. These will be examined further in chapter four.

(b) Road Construction

During this speriod a number of roads were constructed by the P.W.D. Road construction and the creation of an organised road net work are essential features of any urban centre. This is in order to facilitate easy movement from one part of the

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48. *Ibid*, p.69.

town to another.

These roads not only facilitate transportation but also open up various parts of the town to human access thus facilitating residential development and urban growth. Bearing these in mind let us examine the nature of urban road development in Warri between 1930-45.

One of the roads constructed in this period was Pessu road in Alderstown. It was to function as a link road, connecting market road and victory avenue.[49] Another road constructed in the same area was Ijaw street, located behind the present day Warri stadium. This road was also to function as a link road joining cemetry road with the Ijaw-victory avenue junction.

With the aim of joining Okere road with ometan street in the Agbassa district of Warri, Ginuwa road was constructed. Another newly constructed street in the Agbassa area was Igbi street which linked Ginuwa road with Ikani street.[50]

Increased road activity in Agbassa during this period, was as a result of housing activity taking place in this part of Warri. With new residential houses springing up, it was necessary for the colonial authorities to provide adequate road facilities to cater for the needs of the inhabitants of Agbassa. This need was

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49.N.A.I.W.P.210 vol.1, p.1.

50.N.A.I. W.P. 235/1 vol.8 p.8.

reflected in the construction of Yoruba road, Igbi and Okandeji streets.[51]

In Igbudu area Ogbe road was constructed. Others were Kwale and Agbamu roads.[52] With vehicle traffic gradually increasing and with the safety of pedestrians and bicycle users in mind the local authorities in Warri had speed limit signs fixed on roads at various parts of the town reminding motorists of the 15 m.p.h speed limit.[53]

Street lighting by 1940 was provided for most of the major roads in Warri to enhance visibility to both motirists and pedestrian's.[54]

Along Okere road, located at the present site of the labour office a motor park was constructed to cater for commercial vehicles. It was later relocated to Agbassa area, located at Lower Erejuwa, Warri Sapele road junction where it still stands today.[55] In this section we have tried to examine road developments in Warri by 1945. We have observed that as a result of the depression of the 1920s and the

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51. *Ibid.*

52. Here I express my profound appreciation to the late Barrister M. Amorighoye whose knowledge on Warri's road net work was quite amazing. I also express my thanks to Master Yemi Iyara who took me about the town showing me those roads I came across in the colonial records.

53. N.A.I. File W.P1 201/1927 P.24.

54. N.A.I. W.P. 367 annual Report War Prov. 1939 p.33.

55. Late Amorighoye, M. Oral interview, 24/8/96.

second World War public works like road construction in Warri were restricted to the barest minimum, only where they were deemed necessary to facilitate urban movement were roads constructed.

(c) Electricity and Water Supply

According to many writers[56] two of the major pull factors that encouraged rural dwellers to migrate into the urban centres was the presence of electricity with its social and economic advantages and pipe borne water. These two facilities are usually associated with civilization and the "benefits" the Africans derived from colonialism.[57] From our analysis of colonial records and discussions with informants we find that the introduction of these facilities were initially concentrated or restricted to the E.R.A. It was only at a later point in time do we witness attempts by the colonial authorities to take these facilities beyond the boundaries of the E.R.A. to other parts of the town.

Before the introduction of electricity into Warri my informants informed me that its inhabitants used kerosin laterns in their homes. It was also brought to my notice that it was mandetory for any person going out after 7p.m to carry a lantern.

56.Hanna, W.J. and Hanna, J.L. *op.cit;* Collin, R. *Urbanisation in Tropical Africa: A Demographic Introduction* (International Urbanisation Survey The Ford foundation 1970); G. Breese, *Urbanisation in Newly Developing countries* (Prentice Hall INC. New Jersey U.S.A. 1966)

57.For a more detailed discussion on the supposed benefits of colonial rule see Rodney, W. *Op.cit*, chapter 6.

If one used a torch light such a person was regarded as a thief. It was common to be accosted by Kwale and Urhobo speaking police officers in Warri in those days with the common phrase "where your ramp"? (lamp) if you went out at night without one.[58]

Prior to the introduction of electricity, as we earlier on observed, in an attempt to light the streets at night colonial authorities saw to it that kerosine lamps attatched to poles were placed at strategic points all over the town.

In the early 1920s an ice plant was built by the foreign firm "African Association".[59] The ice produced was sent to the General Hospital located in the E.R.A.[60] for the preservation of drugs. This ice was also sold to traders and residents to preserve whatever perishable food items they possessed. For example meat, fish, vegetables and the like.

In 1935, Mr. Hall of the electrical branch of the P.W.D. inspected Warri with the intension of weighing the prospects of implementing an electric lighting scheme for the town.[61]

58.Chief Okorodudu and Chief Begho oral interviews, 17/8/96 and 15/8/96 respectively.

59.Nana, A.I. oral interview, 8/8/96.

60.We will now be refering to this as G.R.A. as the term replaced E.R.A. in 1937.

61.N.A.I.C.S.O 26/2 118527 Vol.13, p.25

Before this electricity scheme was implemented some foreign firms provided their own electric power supply. U.A.C. for example with the use of its own generator supplied electricity not only to the quarters of its staff but also to the houses of the Resident and D.O. By 1938 the electric power scheme initiated by the P.W.D. was completed. The cost for laying overhead lines and wiring of buildings was estimated at over £13,000.[62]

With its inception, initial power supply was erratic due to the fact that the power plant located in the P.W.D. yard along the Warri Sapele road, was not powerful enough to supply power to the whole area. Bearing this in mind we find that "load shedding" was a major feature of Warri Power Supply in the early 40s.[63]

In order to improve the standard of power supply, a bigger generating plant was purchased i.e. a 25 k.w. set with a gas producing plant. By the end of the 2nd world War power supply was on a better footing with those who could afford it receiving power supply on a more permenent and stable basis.[64]

In case of water supply, before pipe borne water was introduced, the inhabitants of Warri depended mainly upon well water. This was because the

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62. N.A.I. W.P. 367 Annual report Warri Province 1939, p.32.

63. This is characterised by the rationing of power supply to various areas of the town. Meaning that while some parts of Warri experienced power supply others would not.

64. Mr. E.A. Borke oral interview, 14/8/96.

riverine nature of the environment did not demand much effort for the digging of wells. The colonial authorities in Warri ensured that wells were gug in the market, G.R.A., civil servants quarters and native reserve areas. In fact most houses and compounds had wells.[65] The health officer encouraged those using well water to have it boiled before using it for cooking or drinking purposes. Those in the G.R.A. and well to do Nigerians in the native reserve had overhead storage tanks which collected and stored rain water. This water was diverted into the house through pipes.

The introduction of water pumps was first noticed in the G.R.A. In a later development boreholes with hand pumps were dug in strategic locations in most parts of Warri. Water was usually stored in large containers or pots. To ensure that such containers did not provide an abode for mosquitoe lava health and sanitary inspectors were known to carry out extensive and intensive house to house inspections of such containers. If lava were found in any of such containers one was heavily fined.[66]

The implementation of a pipe borne water scheme in Warri emerged fully only after the second world war. By 1945 the major source of pure drinking water

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65. Dr. Esiri, oral interview, 14/8/96.

66. Information of the pre pipe borne water situation in Warri is absent from colonial records. Neither was it observed in various works on Warri. The information provided here was derived solely from oral interviews.

was by borehole.

What we have attempted to do in this section is to highlight the major features of water supply in Warri before the introduction of pipe borne water. We believe that this will serve as an adequate background for our analysis of pipe borne water supply as it was implemented in Warri after the war. This we will delve into in the next chapter.

(d) **Health and Recreational Developments**

From information gathered particularly from our informants the observation of sanitation and health codes within the town was a very serious issue: we discovered that Warri was divided into sections each being placed under the supervision of a health officer. Attached to each health inspector was a gang of labourers under a head labourer. Under the supervision of the inspector the labour kept their various sectors clean, particularly the gutters, market areas and public buildings. Every day was sanitation day and the inhabitants of Warri were expected to keep their environs clean. Health inspectors went from house to house inspecting sanitary and health conditions particularly for stagnant pools of water being potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes.[67]

Before the introduction of water closets, waste disposal was carried out by

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67.Dr. Esiri and Chief Okorodudu remembered this aspect quite clearly.

means of conservancy. This refers to the system of waste bucket disposal. Before the use of water closets, most houses used bucket latrines or pit latrines. To enable an efficient waste disposal system, the town was divided into sections with contractors employed to engage labour (night soil men) to clear the buckets. According to one of my informants late M. Amorighoye the night soil men were predominantly Igbo.

The arrangement was for residents, (who desired that their buckets be cleared) to call at the contractors office and pay a fee. On their part the town authorities provided a place where the waste was dumped. Such 'dumping trenches' were located on the outskirts of the town.[68]

Once these trenches were filleld they were properly covered to avoid the gathering of flies as well as to prevent any health hazard. Prior to its establishment part of present day Warri stadium in Alderstown was used as a dumping ground for such waste.[69]

There was only one government hospital in the whole of Warri up till 1952. It still stands located in the G.R.A. near the police station. It was under an expatriate doctor who was assisted by some nurses. A section of this hospital was

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68.Dr. Esiri orall interview, 14/8/96.

69.*Ibid.*

reserved for Europeans. This section was called 'Maple annex.[70] In 1952 Dr. Esiri openend the first private clinic in Warri called 'Esiri Infirmary' located along cemetry road in Odion district of Warri. By this time there existed three drug stores being: 'West African drug store' located within the market area; 'continental Chemist' located before G.B. Ollivant and 'Corner Chemist' along the Warri Sapele road. All three were ownend by Nigerians the last one was owned by one Mrs. Nkume.[71]

With the active support of health officers and the enforcement of stiff fines for offenders of sanitary laws Warri urban developed as a clean and well kept town. This fact was observed by the Resident who commented:[72]

> "... a pleasant feature that strikes the visitor to Warri is the number of small houses which have obviously been designed with special attention to out ward attractiveness. In and outside these houses afford ample evidence of a widely growing awareness of the importance of clean and tidy living conditions. In this respect Warri can set an example to other parts of the country."

Another major reason accountable for the rural urban migration acknowledged by most urbanologists is the desire of the rural dweller to experience what they refer to as 'town life' and the excitment of modernity. In a bid to escape

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70.*Ibid.*

71.*Ibid.*

72.N.A.I. W.P.I 235/1 vol.8, p.5.

the life in the rural areas often restricted by traditional obligations and customary law, many (particularly the younger men and women) are attracted by the more liberal and independent atmosphere of the urban centre.

Recreational activity in Warri was taken seriously by both the expatriates and natives alike.

Lord Lugard was very much of the opinion that British colonial Officers and commercial executives in the various British colonies should meet as frequently as their leisure time permitted in social intercourse and interest each other in their respective works. This of course was the nucleus for the club of which Lugard wrote in his work "Dual Mandate". Here we feel it is necessary to quote a paragraph from this work which expresses his opinion for the need of recreation houses for expatriate officers and non officials.[73]

> "It is well worth the while of the government to encourage the formation of recreation clubs in every centre (township) by providing grounds and even financial support to their inception. They should be self supporting under the management of a local committee. Polo, tennis, golf, cricket and even foot ball have each their votaries and government might build a squash racquet court at each large centre... A club room, with a library, newspapers and even a billard table would add much to the amenity of life and promote healthy intercourse between officials and non officials."

It was this contention that led to the creation of the 'European club' in 1924 which

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73.Lugard, F.J.D., *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Frank Cass and co Ltd 1922 first edition) p.145.

was later called 'Warri Club'. It is located where it still stands today opposite the Warri South Local Government Headquarters along the Warri Sapele road. At its inception it was a strictly a 'Europeans only' club. But from the 1950s especially as Nigeria was moving towards independence status, senior Nigerian civil servants, influential traders and business men gained assess to the club.[74]

In the early 1930s, Warri had a number of clubs initiated by the Nigerians resident in Warri. These clubs were mainly dance clubs where traditional dances were learnt. None of these clubs had a building of their own but rented rooms which served as club houses. A few tennis clubs were also founded such as the one located on Okere road, which had a high reputation at the time of its existence.[75]

Foot ball was a major sport in Warri especially following the introduction of the Warri Foot Ball Association (W.A.F.A.). The earlier foot ball clubs were Pessu, Okere and Daudu foot ball clubs.[76]

According to Mr. Ayomike, one Mr. K.B. Forge a European education officer, later, the Principal of Government College Ughelli promoted foot ball and other sports in Warri. This he did by identifying with and encouraging promising young sports men.

74.Chief Begho oral interview, 15/8/96.

75.Chief Begho oral interview, 15/8/96.

76.Ayomike, J.O.S. oral interview, 15/8/96.

The first cinema house opened in Warri was by R. Khalil, a Lebanese transporter in the mid 1930s. It was remembered as a standard cinema.[77] It was located behind present day "First Bank" along Warri Sapele road. There was also "Mallories Cinema" located along Odion road in Alderstown. This cinema was owned by one Mr. Deiana, who also owned another in Okere district of Warri. Anothehr cinema 'Delta scope Cinema' located in Ogbe Ijaw was owned by one Mr. Zidan.[78]

For sailors and crew men docking in at the Warri port the place to go was the 'Welcome Inn" situated behind Union Bank near Okere junction. "The Catering hotel" which is now known as the 'Delta Hotel' located on Esiri road in the G.R.A. was regarded as the most expensive hotel in Warri. This hotel catered particularly for business executives visiting Warri.

In memory of late king George the fifth of England who died in 1935 a town hall was built, located along the Warri Sapele road opposite the main market. By 1939 the Hall was nearing compleltion. The Resident observed in his annual report on the 'King George's Memorial Hall that:[79]

"...It is an impressive looking building and is now near compleltion.

77.*Ibid.*

78.*Ibid.*

79.N.A.I. W.P.I 367, p.30.

> It has been erected by public subscription together with grants from the township and Jekri-Sobo native administration. The absence of a town hall has been much felt in Warri, there being no proper convenience for the staging of dances and other social activities. Its completion will fulfil a much needed want.."

The hall was completed in 1940 and opened officially on the 27th of April 1940.[80] It was used for dances, lectures, debates and other social activities. It was operated and maintained by the township advisory board.

In 1935 it was noted that an area of Alderstown was cleared with the aim of establishing a recreational ground. By 1939 the construction of this ground was completed. This area (being today Warri stadium) consisted of a foot ball ground,, concrete cricket pitch, two cement tennis courts, a small pavillion and childrens play around. The ground was officially opened on the 27th April 1940.[81] The ground was managed by a board appointed by the Resident and chaired by the L.A. of Warri township. These are some of the urban recreational facilities that accompanied Warri's growth, that made life in the town exciting and worthwhile as well as attractive to the rural dwellers.

(e) **Education**

To meaningfully analyse educational developments in Warri it must be done

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80.N.A.I. W.P. 368 Annual Report Warri Division 1940 p.2.

81.*Ibid.*

side by side with missionary activity in the area. This is because along side christian missionary activity was the teaching of rudimentary western education, taught in mission schools established by the missionaries. The first known mission school established in Warri was in 1911, this was St. Andrew's (C.M.S.) School Warri[82] located along Ginuwa road in Agbassa. In 1920 the Baptist Church established its mission school off Okere road in the G.R.A.

By 1924 the Roman Catholic Mission (R.C.M.) Established a mission school also in Warri, with its central parish located near present day Cavegina Primary School.[83]

The Methodists and Jehovah witnesses in the late 1920s also established mission houses and schools in Warri towards the end of the 1920s.[84] One Mr. G.M. Urhobo broke away from the Jehovah witnesses to found Gods Kingdom Society (G.K.S.) And established an elementary primary school within the premises of his new church.[85]

'African Church' located at Odion and Okere roads also operated mission

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82. Uwometan, O.G. "The Growth of Western Education in Itsekiri Land" (Unpublished B.A. thesis History Department, University of Benin 1984), p.49.

83. *Ibid.*

84. *Ibid.*

85. Late Barrister, M. Amorighoye, 21/8/96

schools with their church premises.[86] Other christian bodies that operated mission school were 'Baptist Convention' and New Church Mission.

These mission schools were refered to as voluntary unassisted educational agencies[87] as they recieved no financial aid from the colonial government. But they were very important in providing primary and vocational education not only to the children of the inhabitants of Warri but also to childlren from rural areas round about.[88] Some of these mission schools used their church building as class rooms from Monday to Friday, but those who could afford it, built class rooms within their premises.[89] The major subjects taught in these mission schools were writing, arithmatic, social studies, Bible knowledge and at a later date technical subjects like wood work, brick laying etc.

The first Government school in Warri was Government college Warri founded in 1903[90] located along Mabiaku crescent in the G.R.A. In 1929 the colonial educational authorities established a teachers training college within the premises of Government College Warri. It was to produce qualified teachers to

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86.Chief Okorodudu Oral Interview, 17/8/96.

87.N.A.I. W.P.1 file 235/1 Vol.7 p.14.

88.*Ibid.*

89.Mrs. Okorodudu, oral interview, 17/8/96.

90.Uwometan, O.G. *op.cit.* P.49.

supply government schools all over the province.

Supplimenting the efforts of the mission and government schools were private schools for instance "Ojojo Primary School" established in 1929, 'Dore School' owned by one Mr. Pajiah located in Alders town, "Sido School" owned by Mr. Sido and Omomodia. There also existed 'Niger School'.[91] In order to maintain a high standard of learning and ensure that government, private and missionary schools were up to the required standard, these schools were visited on a regular basis by the Provincial Educational Officer.

In 1920 a public library was built in the G.R.A. called 'The Local Administration Library' today called the 'State Library'. In 1946 a larger one was built situated between Esisi and school road junction. Books for these libraries were provided by the British Council while others were donated.[92]

Conclusion

In this chapter we have tried to analyse the political significance of Warri within the colonial administrative machinery. Concluding that its commercial significance and geographic location were primary factors accounting for its selection as an administrative centre as early as 1891.

91.Ayomike, J.O.S. oral interview, 11/8/96.

92.N.A.I.W.P.1 file 235/1 vol.3

We have also analysed its urban economy. Here we discovered that commerce at both the local and international levels constituted the basis of her economy. We went further to show, by using the great economic depression of the 1920s - 1930s and the Second World War how Warri's economic and social life was intertwined with the global capitalist economy.

Thirdly we examined major urban developments in Warri between 1930-45 concentrating on housing, road construction, the provision of health, water and power supply as well as the provision of recreational and educational facilities and their effects on urban life. We observed generally that the provision of urban facilities during this period was relatively low an account of the depression and the economic stagnation caused by the war. In the next chapter we will examine Warri within the context of the post war era and examine the trend of events which characterised this period and its impact on Warri's urban development.

Chapter Four

WARRI 1945-60: POST WAR URBAN DEVELOPMENTS

Introduction

In the previous chapter, an attempt was made to highlight and examine the political and economic significance of Warri within the British colonial system. In our analysis we came to the conclusion that Warri's geographic location and economic potentials made it an early centre for British commercial and political activity. In an attempt to protect her commercial investments in the area, a vice consulate was established and since then continued to play an important role in Britains political machinery in the region.

Our analysis of Warri's dual role as a political and economic centre showed quite clearly that Britain's colonial government cannot be divorced from her economic exploitation of Nigeria.

In this chapter we will examine urban developments in Warri after the Second world War. In an attempt to meaningfully explain the increased urban developments in the area after the war, compared to the period 1930-45 covered in the previous chapter, we will locate the area understudy within the post war socio-economic situation. In so doing, we will highlight those factors and

conditions brought about by the war and what influence they had on the urban process in Warri during this particular period of study.

4.1 The Nigerian Post War Situation and Its Impact on Major Urban Developments in Warri

Urban expansion in Warri after the war cannot be divorced from the rapid economic growth Nigeria experienced after the war. Its post war urban growth can also be associated with the wind of social and political changes the world war ushered into the global system.

One of the major contributions to increased urban expansion in Warri and other urban centres in Nigeria was the rapid economic development of Nigeria's economy after the war. This provided more money for the colonial government to utilize for the development of urban centres like Warri.

After the war there was an increased demand for Nigeria's major agricultural export crops and minerals. These were to contribute to the reconstruction and development of War torn Europe. Though the quantity and value of the goods exported fluctuated from time to time an over all increase in demand and value for Nigerian exports can be seen. The table below will suffice to prove this point.[1]

1.Helleiner, G.K. *Peasant Agriculture, Government and Economic Growth in Nigeria* (Richard D. Irwin Inc. Illinois 1966) Tables Iv-A-7 and IV-A-8 pp.502-503 and 506-

Table 1: Quantity and Value of Primary Export Crops Exported Between 1945 - 1950

Year	Ground-nut Tons	Value £,000	Oil Palm Tons	£,000 Value	Palm Kernel Tons	£,000 Value	Cocoa Tons	£,000 Value
1945	176,242	2,696	114,199	1,894	292,588	3,496	77,004	2,150
1946	285,668	5,679	100,885	2,052	277,242	4,164	110,186	3,780
1947	255,866	6,397	125,954	5,038	316,376	9,491	110,793	10,650
1948	245,155	9,806	139,204	9,048	327,174	11,451	91,999	17,879
1949	378,321	18,916	170,145	11,910	375,835	16,913	103,637	14,697
1950	311,221	15,237	173,010	12,072	415,906	16,694	99,949	18,984

Source: Helleiner, G.K. *Peasant Agriculture, Government and Economic Growth in Nigeria* (Richard D. Irwin Inc. Illinois 1966) Tables 1v-A-7 and IV-A-8 pp.502-503 and 506-507.

From the table above, it is quite clear that despite slight fluctuations in the quantity of goods exported there is witnessed a general increase of exported goods. What is also observable is that despite the fall in the quantity of exported goods during certain years the value of such goods increased. For example in 1947 110,793 tons of cocoa was exported at an estimated value of £10,650,000 in 1948 the quantity of cocoa exported declined by 19,344 tons, but the total value for the cocoa exported in 1948 exceeded that of 1947 by £7,229,000.

507.

Responsible for this phenomena we believe were the activities of the various marketing boards instituted after the war. The boards saw to the increase in the production of the major export crops produced in Nigeria as well as to the stabilizing of the prices of these crops.[2]

To buttress our argument that the Nigerian economy was rapidly growing we find that the over all value of Nigeria's domestic exports rose from £17,123,000 in 1945 to £88,487,000 in 1950 thus within a period of 5 years Nigeria's export value increased by £71,364,000. Therefore we witness a yearly increase in the value of Nigeria's export value by about £14,272,800.[3] By 1960, though we witnessed increased fluctuations, the value of Nigeria's exports had risen to £165,619,000.[4]

Custom duties collected by the Nigerian government between 1945-1960 rose gradually with slight fluctuations, from £4,319,000 to £66,186,000. Thus we witness an average yearly increase of about £4,412,400.[5]

2.Helleiner, G.K. "The Fiscal Role of the Marketing Boards in Nigerian Economic Development 1947-60" in *An Economic History of Tropical Africa: The Colonial Period vol.II.* Konczacki, Z.a. and Konczacki, J.M. (Eds) (Frank Cass London 1977) p.88.ff.

3.Helleiner, G.K. *Peasant, Agriculture Government... op.cit.* Tabble iv-A-1, p.493.

4.*Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.* Table V-E-4

What we have thus far been able to show is that money was available to the colonial government of Nigeria to put into urban development. The question we may now ask is why was there increased concern for urban development after the war than before it? This question is quite significant, bearing in mind that before the war the British government believed that her colonies should be self supporting. The British government further argued that her colonies should have only those infrastructure necessary for economic development, which she could afford, out of her internally generated revenue.[6] Such enterprises were not to be shouldered by the metropole.

Therefore, why the change of heart after the war? What were the forces responsible for Britains change of attitude towards the development of her dependencies?

The social and economic hardships the Second World War brought about in the English speaking Carrabian Islands sparked off general strikes and workers insurrections between 1935-1938 starting in Saint Kitts. These riots spread quickly through Saint Vincent, Saint Lucia, Barbados, Trinidad Guyana and Jamaica.[7]

6.Ajayi, J.F.A. and Crowder, M. *History of West Africa*, Vol.II, p.596.

7.For greater detail on the conditions that warranted civil disturbance in the Carrabians on account of the colonial domination of the region and the impact of the

In the light of these uphevals in the Carrabians and for fear of these riots spreading through the British empire; the British government introduced the Colonial Development Welfare Act in 1940.[8]

Under this new policy, various welfare programmes for the colonies were to be enacted to ease the burden of the war upon them. Secondly, in view of the socio-political force of socialism and national liberation struggles unleashed by the war the British realised that the operation of colonialism on the old basis of crude coersion was no longer tenable. The war therefore, created an atmosphere within which colonial powers like Britain were forced to concede to reforms capable of improving the social and political well-being of its dependents.

Under this Act, the British government saw to the improvement of urban centres, small communities, the construction of major health, educational and research facilities, road construction etc.

In 1949 Regional Produce Development Boards and Regional Loan Boards[9] financed by the Marketing Boards were established. The loan boards

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war on the region see Lewis Arthur *Labour in the West Indies: The Birth of a Workers Movement*, New Beacon Books Ltd, London 1977.

8. To be refered to forthwith as C.D.W.A.

9.Ekundare, R.O. *An Economic History of Nigeria 1860-1960*, (Africana Publishing company N.York 1973), p.231.

were empowered to provide loans, grants or both to any authority or co-operative society approved of by the government for the execution of schemes such as public works and utilities, town planning, the promotion of village crafts and industries and industrial development. Money to finance these schemes was provided by the British colonial government of Nigeria. She was able to contribute towards these schemes on account of the improved Nigerian economy after the war.

A critical investigation into the C.D.W.A. shows that the finance behind it was Nigerian money, derived from the exploitation of the Nigerian-peasants and resources and not money from Britain. Secondly, the bulk of the money went into those projects that would enhance the exploitation of the region, e.g. large amounts of money went into major roads and rail construction linking economically potential areas with the ports and agricultural research institutions to boost the agricultural production of major export crops.[10]

In the realm of urban development the problems posed by urbanisation were tackled to a larger extent in the major colonial administrative centres like Lagos and Kaduna. Though not on the same scale, Warri received its own share of schemes and programmes to enhance its urban development financed by

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10.Helleiner, G.K. *the Fiscal Role of the Marketing Boards ... op.cit,*

grants-in-aid from the central and regional governments. Under the C.D.W.A. Warri benefited from road development shemes, electricity and pipe borne water programmes, residential development schemes and the like. Other sources of finance for these projects were also generagted by the local authorities.

We will now turn to urban developments in Warri during this particular period of study 1945-60, bearing in mind that the provision of urban facilities increased during this period as a result of the colonial governments attempt to stem the tide of anti colonial sentiment, liberalism and socialism, as well as ease the burdens brought upon the people as a result of the war.

4.2 Transport and Communication Developments

Compared to the period before the war colonial records and informants consulted agree, that there definately was an increase in road construction, and maintainance after the war. Though our informants remember increased road activity, they were not as detailed or informative as the information supplied by colonial records. Thus in this section the information derived was put together chiefly from archival research.

Between 1946 and 1948 New roads were constructed. Others widened and link roads constructed. Drains and culverts were also provided to ensure the provision of an efficient drainage system for the Warri road network.

For instance, a new road was constructed along Bowen Avenue by 1946. This road cut through a swamp and led into Alderstown. A drainage system was also constructed along pond and Maple swamp roads in the G.R.A.[11] By 1948, the Warri Sapele main road which cut through the town was widened. This project we believe was executed in an attempt to ease traffic conjestion.

Access roads to G.B. Ollivant and the agricultural offices were also completed by 1948. The completion of these roads facilitated easy access to the organisations.[12]

Some of our informants made us to believe that the construction and maintenance of roads leading to private commercial enterprises were in some cases carried out by the firms themselves. This one tends to believe since road construction by the P.W.D. was carried out at a slow pace due to a lack of effient road construction equipment.[13]

As a result of such developments, firms that could afford it would engage in 'self help' programmes not waiting for the government. John Holt ventures

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11.N.A.I.W.P.I 235 vol.3, p.7.

12.N.A.I. W.P. 235/1 Vol.2, p.62.

13.*Ibid.*

and C.F.A.O. often engaged in such activities.[14]

By 1949 the following roads had either been completed or partially completed:

a) Ginuwa road: partially completed.

b) Access road to recreation ground: completed.

c) Maple swamp road: completed.

d) Ikomi road: completed.

e) Okere market road: completed.[15]

By 1950 11.5 miles (18.4km) of road was in existence in Warri. This is surprisingly little. But to understand this situation one must take into consideration the geographical setting of Warri. It should be stressed here again that road construction in the Warri area was expensive because of the low level of the ground which therefore requires large amounts of sand filling.

Also due to its marshy nature and the existence of numerous creeks there is the constant need to construct batteries of bridges and culverts to cross and channel off water. Besides, the soil type necessary for proper road construction is not sufficient in this area, therefore it has to be brought in from distant areas.

14.Begho, E.N.A., oral interview, 15/8/96. *A* Quantity Surveyor and one time civil servant during the colonial era.

15.N.A.I, W.P. 235/1 vol.3 p.67.

In 1950 the following roads were completed and motorable, Baptist Mission road, Smart street, Omatsola cresent and Igbi street.[16] A significant point to highlight at this juncture is that the construction of these roads opened up areas leading to the development of private residential areas as these areas are now accessible by road. These developments contributed in no small way to the spatial expansion of our area of study during this period.

Road construction in 1951 to 1953 gave emphasis to tarring and general maintenance of existing roads. Thus the conditions of roads were up graded. The following roads were tarred by 1953:

a) 0.64km of Esisi road

b) 0.368 km of school road

c) 0.24 km of kings road

d) 0.64 km of Bongalo road

e) 100 yrds of Agbassa Greek bridge.

f) 40 yrds of the water front at the yam market.[17]

Esisi, school and Kings roads are located in the G.R.A. This shows that tarring of roads was to a larger extent carried out in the G.R.A. This we believe

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16.N.A.I.W.P. 235/1 vol.4, p.89.

17.N.A.I.W.P. 235/1 vol.5 p.21.

supports the view that the concentration of adequate urban infrastructures and utilities in the G.R.A. in no small way manifests the racist tendencies of the British colonial government. Secondly, in looking at the lengths of roads tarred we can hazard the assumption that the total amount of money needed to tar the whole lengths of the roads was not readily available. From our analysis of the correspondents between the Warri resident and the regional and central governments we find that the money received by the Resident for urban development was received only after running battles and constant pressures. Also money received was often inadequate to meet the needs for which it was desired.

This we believe was so as money for urban development was chanelled mainly to Lagos, Kaduna, Port Harcourt and other major urban centres of greater economic and administrative significance than Warri.

In generally accessing the standard of the road network by 1955 we find that of the 22.4km of road in Warri only 5.15km of it was adequately tarred.[18]

Important roads like cemetery road, which connects the populous areas of Odion and alderstown with the Warri Sapele roads were not wide enough to cater for the traffic that plied its route. Therefore this road functioned as a one way road. Other roads under construction, to function as link roads to the Warri

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18.More than 95% of these tarred roads were located in the G.R.A.

Sapele road were yet to be completed.

In the area of bridges, which constitute an important feature of Warri's urban net work we find that important bridges like the one located across Agbassa creek on market road and another across Okere creek on Esisi roads were too narrow.

Bearing this in mind, traffic along these narrow bridges was therefore characterised by congestion. These and other short comings of the Warri road network were observed in a report submitted by the Resident of Delta Province.[19]

In an attempt to solve these problems, the Resident proposed a road development programme to the Regional government of Western Nigeria.[20] It was to be financed mainly with grants-in-aid from the C.D.W.A. The objective of the programme was to improve the standard of the road network so that it could be able to proved for the needs of urban traffic at that time.[21]

According to the programme the following bridges needed urgent attention:

19.The name Warri Province was changed to 'Delta Province' in 1952 as a result of Ethnic tensions in the Region see chapter five.

20.N.A.I.W.P.2 1700 Road Development Programme, p.11.

21.*Ibid.*

a) **Agbassa Creek Bridge**: this bridge needed a dual carriage way and a cantilever foot path.

b) **Okere Creek Bridge**: this bridge as proposed by the Resident needed a complete over haul.

c) **Bowen Avenue Bridge**: Located in Alderstown needed to be completely reconstructed. Its wooden structure had to be substituted for an iron and concrete one.

On the other hand the following roads needed to be widened: Cemetery road and Victory Avenue. Bowen Avenue and Erejuwa road in Okere area, were to be resealed (pot holes filled). The resident also specified those roads that were to be tarred. These being: Ginuwa, Esisi, Agbassa, Market and Robert roads. The road development programme to be fully implemented was estimated at £20,000 by the Resident.[22]

Backed by a forceful argument for its immediate execution the Regional government of Western Nigeria saw the need for the implementation of the road development programme. It was approved and put into effect in the later part of 1955. Though the programme was not completed by 1960[23] most of its objectives

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22.*Ibid.*

23.Chief Begho, E..A. oral interview, 15/8/96.

had been achieved. Even though the programme was unable to solve all the problems, it was able to ease some of the problems the road system had experienced. Today, Warri's road network is by far better than what was in existence before 1960. Roads are broader more in number and tarred. The bridges are also wider etc. But we should remember that the road network established prior to 1960 provided the bases upon which present day Warri's road system was built.

4.3 Postal and Telecommunications

Postal and other means of communicating with the outside world is an essential feature of any urban centre. Seen as centres for the exchange and dispersal of ideas as well as the location for intense socio-economic activity, urban centres often feature intricate communication systems to facilitate social interaction; an essential characteristic of human activity.

In the case of Warri a new post office was completed, where it still stands today along Okere road as well as a telephone exchange system.[24]

In 1949 a radifussion station was completed at the cost of £2,400.[25] Radifussion refers to a centralised form of radio transmission. \For one to have

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24.N.A.I.W.P. 235/1 vol.8 p.10.

25.*Ibid.*

access to the radio signals, one had to purchase a speaker box to be placed in his house or a compound would have one mounted for its general use. This speaker is wired to the Warri radifussion station, which receives radio signals from Ibadan. The receipiants of the programmes have no control over the selection of the programmes. Programmes aired, were selected from the radiffusion headquarters of the Western region located at Ibadan.[26] The struggle for independence by colonies, a major feature of the post war era was a matter of global interest particularly among the colonies themselves. Radifussion and Newspapers were thus the main avenues for the spread of information concerning this phenomena as they were relatively easy to aquire by the common man.

Residential developments was another feature of post war urban activity in Warri, which in the light of the New Nigerian Town and country planning ordinance took a new dimension. In this regard we shall now examine residential developments in Warri, as they materialised after the war.

4.4 Residential Developments and Town Planning

The building inspector for Warri and his assistant played an important role in the residential development in our area of study. Their main duty was to ensure that all building plans submitted by individuals and companies complied with the

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26.Oral interview with Mr. E.M. Diden, 12/12/96.

building laws of the town. These officers were expected to work hand in hand with the lands department and medical officer.

In an attempt to combat the growing housing congestion caused by increase in population and to improve upon the manner in which towns were planned, the Lieutenant Governor of Nigeria sanctioned the enactment of the "Nigerian Town and Country Planning Ordinance" of 1946.[27]

This ordinance made provision for the replanning, improvement and development of different parts of the country. With its implementation a planning scheme could be made for any area within Warri or any other town whether there were buildings there or not. The main purpose for the replanning of such an area, was to control the usage of land for building and other purposes.

Where ever it was deemed necessary for such a planning scheme to be executed a planning committee was inaugurated, empowered with the authority to execute the replanning programme.[28] In areas that were declared 'replanning zones', residential developments if any ceased. This was to enable the committee time to carry out their duty and make public their final plan. In line with the ordinance, the committee had a 3 year time spann to prepare and submit their

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27.N.A.I. W.P. 1 272 p.20.

28.*Ibid.*

final plan.

In the event that an individual or organisation had an urgent need to erect a building in an area undergoing replanning, the ordinance enabled the committee to allow such individuals to build houses in those areas declared replanning zones. This was possible only if the building plan did not conflict with the new planning scheme being prepared. The ordinance also made provision for the payment of compensation under certain conditions to owners of land affected as a result of the replanning of the area.[29] In the light of this new ordinance town planning and residential development took place in Warri from 1946.

In 1946, the Warri building inspector approved 70 plans for private buildings within the town. A new township office was also completed during the year.[30]

Between 1946-47 the following works were undertaken.

a) A Police barracks in the G.R.A. at the cost of £3,137.

b) A catering rest house at the cost of £4,008.

c) Produce inspection office at the cost of £1,160.

d) Registration office at the cost of £131.

29.*Ibid.*

30.N.A.I.W.P. 235 vol.3, p.7.

e) Cement stores at the cost of £300.[31]

By 1947, the new staff quarters for Warri government College and the Catering house located on Esisi road in the G.R.A. were completed. A number of A3, B and C type civil servant quarters were also completed. Work on the expansion of the education office and police station were also making speedy progress.[32]

In 1949 revised building laws were brought into force to deal with some of the unsatisfactory conditions of some houses built in the past, whose major purpose was for rent. At this juncture one may ask the question that since the building inspectors had to approve every building plan before it could be executed how could houses of an unsatisfactory nature be erected. In answering this question one may believe that many houses built by individuals in Warri were erected without the knowledge of the building inspectors. Such houses were thus not registered with the towns surveyor. A similar feature was also seen in the registration of births and deaths which was made compulsory by the town officials. But our analysis of records show that this law was flouted by the urban dwellers. For instance the number of births recorded for 2 years in 1948 and 49

31.*Ibid*, p.108.

32.N.A.I.W.P. 235 Vol.4, p.7.

was just 12.[33]

Therefore in the light of this observation the records available showing residential development in Warri between 1948-49 record the following.[34]

Table 2: House Construction in Warri: 1948 - 1949

	1948	1949
Number of Housing Plans Approved	73	76
Number of Buildings under Construction	9	23
Number of Buildings Completed and Habitable	16	23

Source: N.A.I. W.P.1 235/1 vol.3 p.66.

Most of our informants agree that there was a relative increase in residential development after the war. Though civil servants were known to build personal houses before their retirement, the number of such houses was relatively small compared to houses built for rent. Large impressive houses were built by big time indigenous merchants, transporters and business men. Houses for rent

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33.N.A.I.W.P.1 235/1 vol.3, p.76.

34.N.A.I. W.P.1 235/1 vol.3 p.66.

were often below the required standard acceptable by the towns building inspector. These landlords exploited the high demand for housing in Warri by charging exhorbitant rents for these houses. It was as a result of the deplorable state of some of such houses and compounds that in 1949 new building laws were enacted to tackle the issue. The post war economic boom was a major source of revenue to those merchants, transporters and businessmen who could afford to build houses for rent.[35]

The major property owners in Warri were the Itsekiri and Urhobo. The Igbos by 1952 also owned a sizeable amount of landed property in Warri. This observation is contrary to the view held by many that the Igbo's are drifters, who leave their home land in search of making money; only to return home after they have acquired enough wealth. Thus it is believed that they see no reason to invest substantially in landed property outside of their homeland.

In accordance with the Nigerian Town Planning ordinance of 1946, a residential layout north of Okere creek and east of the prison was prepared in 1951. It was estimated that a total of 130 houses could be constructed on the site. It was believed that the completion of the lay out would ease the housing problem

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35.Late Micheal, Omorighoye, Chief Okorodudu, Dr. Fredick O. Esiri oral interviews, 21/8/96, 17/8/96 and 14/8/96 respectively..

in Warri.[36] Between 1950 and 53 the Provincial Engineer observed that there was rapid construction of houses in Warri. To support this claim the following statistics were given.[37]

Table 3: House Construction in Warri: 1950 - 1953

	1950	1951	1952	1953
Number of Building Plans Approved	98	126	163	245
Number of Buildings under Construction	31	25	61	43
Number of Building Completed and Habitable	19	25	43	81

Source: N.A.I.W.P. 235/1 vol.4 p.91 and Vol.5, p.23.

From the statistics above we find within the space of 3 years 632 plans were approved and 168 buildings were completed.

By 1953 space available for housing construction was scarce and house congestion was a major feature of the urban land scape. Observing this development and offering a possible solution the Resident commented in his annual report that:[38]

36.N.A.I.w.P. 235/1 vol.5 p.23.

37.N.A.I.W.P. 235/1 vol.4 p.91 and Vol.5, p.23.

38.N.A.I.W.P.1, 235/1 vol.7 p.12.

> "...with only limited building space, available... the solution or part solution to this problem (shortage of building space) is to encourage building upwards. This is possible by means of ensuring minimum high clauses in building plans."

In countries like the United States 'sky scrappers' are one of the major features of American urban centres. Such buildings are constructed as a solution to the scarcity of housing or office space. Though such buildings did not exist in Warri during our period of study, two storey builds and in some cases 3 began to be familiar sights in Warri in the 1950s.[39]

In 1953 approximately 150 buildings were demolished, located along market road near the market. Under a replanning scheme for the area, these houses, located on land reclaimed from a marsh area, were considered unsafe for habitation. The provincial engineer believed that the land was insufficiently consolidated to permit the erection of residential houses at that time.[40] These houses were relocated on firmer land to the north of the market area.

Government , in an attempt to provide adequate housing for its employees in 1953 constructed a total of 27senior service A3 type quarters. A number of judges quarters were also completed in the G.R.A. during the same year.[41] 99

39.Dr. Esiri, oral interview, 14/8/96. These are still observable today.

40.N.A.I. W.P. 235/1 Vol.7 p.12.

41.*Ibid*, p.18

junior service quarters were also constructed.[42] But these quarters particularly those for the junior civil servants were in terms of number inadequate. For instance by the time the new junior quarters had been completed and occupied 125 junior workers were yet to be accommodated in government quarters.[43]

By 1955, the town had expanded rapidly as new residential lay outs under the Nigerian town and Country Planning Ordinance had come into being. These being Erejuwa and Agbassa lay outs. Work on the construction of residential buildings in Erejuwa layout, located to the East of Warri, had to wait pending the construction of access roads to the lay out and the completion of an internal road network. By this time the town was expanding North Eastwards. With the completion of the layout this tendency was much more pronounced.[44] Preparation of this site was characterised particularly by swamp filling especially towards the east and west ends of the layout. The main access road to the layout was also lined with several culverts.[45] The construction of the Agbassa layout also depended on the construction of a number of access roads and the demolition

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42.*Ibid*, p.17.

43.*Ibid*.

44.N.A.I. W.P.1 272, town Planning p.187.

45.*Ibid*.

of a number of old mud and thatch buildings. Compensation was paid to the owners of the demolished houses in accordance with the 1946 Town Planning Ordinance.[46] Both projects were financed by grants-in-aid from the Western regional government under the C.D.W.A. at an estimated cost of £3,940.

Residential construction after the war was facilitated by an increase in economic growth. The government with grants from the C.D.W.A. scheme was able to provide more houses for its employees and finance the creation of residential layouts for prospective house owners. To combat the menace of house conjestion minimum hight laws for houses were implemented in an attempt to save housing space.

Indigenous inhabitants, who benefitted from the economic boom invested in house construction to exploit the increasing urban population that urgently needed accommodation. The creation of new residential layouts outside of the conjested urban centre contributed to the spatial growth of the urban centre during our period of study and eased urban conjestion.

Along side these developments was the complementary activity of the provision of urban utilities such as pipe borne water and electricity. We shall examine these briefly highlighting their contribution to urban development in

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46.*Ibid.*

Warri.

4.5 Water and Electricity

Under the C.D.W.A. an urban pipe borne water scheme was ear marked for Warri at an estimated cost of £15,000.[47] Though by 1947 a reservoir was constructed and pipes were being laid, work was slow as the P.W.D. complained that the finance for the project coming in bits and pieces hindered the speedy progress of the sheme.

However by 1950 most of the material necessary for the completion of the scheme was at hand and the completion of the project was now clearly in sight. One of the major aims of the scheme was to provide a stand pipe in every compound. This was not achieved because of the large amount of capital, required for such a feat. At best stand pipes were connected to the main pipes in key points over the town. By 1951 the project had been completed, but owing to a poor supply of electricity to drive the pumps to distribute the water, constant water supply was limited to the G.R.A., while in the town the water supply was irregular and restricted to 6 hours daily.[48] Most of our informants remember carrying buckets into the G.R.A. to fetch pipe borne water. With the

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47.N.A.I. W.P.1 235 Vol.3 p.94.

48.N.A.I., W.P. 235/1 vol.4 p.95.

improvement of power supply and the purchase of a larger engine to drive the water pumps, the supply of water within the town was on a much more regular bases.[49] Though pipe borne water was a common feature in Warri urban by 1954 it was not available to all. Many still relied upon well water for domestic and drinking purposes.[50]

Though electricity was available in Warri by 1954 only those who could afford it enjoyed its benefits. Outside the G.R.A., foreign commercial houses and their workers quarters, the houses of well to do indigenous merchants and business men, clerks quarters and the residential areas of senior civil servants enjoyed the advantages of power supply. Many who could not afford electricity used gas or kerosine maps, generators or candle light. Street lighting by electricity was another features of Warri's urban land scape by 1960.

The availability of pipe borne water and electricity was a source of attraction to rural dwellers. The urban inhabitants of Warri who travelled to their relations in the rural areas told them wonderful stories about clean pure water pouring out of taps at the turn of a handle. They also graphically described street light which turned the nights into day. Amazing stories of how the world was

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49. *Ibid.*

50. Dr. Esiri, oral interview, 14/8/96.

brought into ones home via the use of the television and gramophones etc intrigued the rural dwellers.[51] Such were some of the pull factors that attracted the rural dwellers to Warri.

Adequate health facilities are essential for the development and growth of any urban centre. A healthy environment capable of promoting economic activity was essential for the development of the exploitative British colonial economic system. It was vital for Warri being an important commercial and administrative centre to have a clean and healthy environment. Let us examine steps taken by the towns authority to promote a healthy urban environment in our area of study after the war.

4.6 Developments in Urban Health

Commenting in his annual medical report for 1949 the medical officer stationed in Warri observed that the general standard of health and sanitation was high.[52]

In an attempt to extend the availability of medical services to the inhabitants of Warri, the construction of a dispensary in Alderstown was underway by the middle of 1949. Placed under the supervision of the T.A.B. a

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51.Esimaje, E. Oral Interview, 30/8/96..

52.N.A.1 W.P.1 235 vol.6, p.23.

dispensary attendant was appointed by the board to run the new medical facility. To ensure the efficient running of the dispensary, the medical officer incharge of Warri supervised the training of the attendant and assisted at the same time in discharging of medical services at the dispensary for a period of 6 months.[53] Construction of the dispensary was finally completed by 1951. During that year alone an estimated 1,673 patiences received medical assistance here.[54] To supplement the activities of the towns refuse truck, the medical officer now received a vote to hire truck pushers to disperse of refuse at dumping sites located on the out skirts of the town. Incinerators were also used as a means of dispersing refuse.[55]

In an effort to ensure that animals slaughtered in the market were healthy and fit for consumption health inspectors inspected 158 cattle, 3 goats, 12 sheep and 24 pigs in 1951 before they were slaughtered.[56] Though these figures do not take into account animals that may have been slaughtered in private homes, the point being made here is that matters concerning health were issues of maximum

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53.N.A.I. W.P. 235/1 Vol.8, p.63.

54.N.A.I.W.P.1 235/1 Vol.5 p.23.

55.Dr. Preston Egbe, Oral interview, 12/8/96..

56.N.A.I.W.P.I 235/1 Vol.5. P.23.

priority. This we believe for reasons earlier highlighted, mainly to ensure the environment was medically condusive for economic activity. Also since the Europeans resident in Warri consumed such food stuffs, purchased in the markets, the health inspectors ensured that such items were properly kept and sold under hygienic circumstances. In line with these observations health inspectors were constantly on the prowl particularly in the market areas making sure that traders and hawkers alike took adequate precautions to protect their food stuffs from pollution.[57]

During the years 1952 and 53 large areas of swamp were drained and reclaimed as part of an anti malaria programme executed in the province. With positive evidence of two cases of yellow fever reported in Burutu to the south east of Warri, an extensive anti amaryl programme was embarked upon in Warri province. As a result of this exercise health inspectors sprayed hundreds of houses in Warri urban with D.D.T[58] (a powerful insecticide).

Also to combat small pox another deadily disease thousands of Warri residents received vaccinations. The Warri general hospital reportedly treated 83 infectious diseases during the course of the year 1953. 30 of these cases were

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57.Dr. Preston Egbe oral interview, 12/8/96.

58.N.A.I.W.P.1 235/1 vol.4 p.97.

chicken poxs, 10 cases of pneumonia, 24 cases of dysentry, 4 cases of measles, 14 cases of turberculosis and 1 case of cerebro spinal meningitis.[59]

In making an observation we believe that with the exceptions of dysentry and pneumonia the other four diseases are known to spread fast and capable of killing large numbers of peoples. That cases of such killer diseases were reported in Warri urban (characterised with a large population) and yet unable to take on epidemic form shows that adequate measures were taken quickly to prevent the spread of these diseases. This entails that the general standards of health and sanitation in our area of study was high.

In the area of conservancy, in a bid to speed up the conditions under which night soil was disposed, the conservancy contractors provided hand trucks for the conservancy labour, who prior to this time used head pans. This method of refuse disposal was slow, in view of the fact that only little amounts of refuse could be transported away to the trenching grounds. Our informants remember seeing night soil men pushing hand trucks loaded with 3-4 drums of night soil in the night. This method supplemented the night soil truck employed by the major night soil contractor of Warri urban Mr. R. Edukugho.[60] Scarcity of labour

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59.*Ibid.*

60.Chief Okorodudu, oral interview 17/8/96 and N.A.I. W.P.235/1 Vol.5 p.23.

willing to engage in this form of employment often presented a serious problem to the system of conservancy in Warri. In an attempt to solve this problem charges for the disposal of bails was increased from 2/- to 2/6 a month in 1947. This increase in conservancy rates was to enable conservancy contractors to pay their labour higher salaries.[61]

On the other hand in order to curb urinating and stooling in open areas, public latrines were installed at various spots in Warri urban particularly around the markets. This scheme began with the erection of pit latrines. However by 1949 the towns medical authorities had decided to do away with the "old odorous earth closets" and introduced water closets instead;[62] as it was believed these were more convenient and hygienic. Between 1951 and 1953 a series of water closet latrines were installed within and around the main McIver market areas.[63] These were complete with catch pits, water installations and porcelaim fittings. Public laterines were also erected in the lorry parts.

These facilities were manned by attendants paid by the T.A.B. These attendants were responsible for the collection of charges for the use of the

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61.N.A.I.W.P. 235/1 Vol.1 p.43.

62.N.A.I.W.P. 235/1 vol.3, p.65.

63.N.A.I.W.P.1 235/1 vol.vii p.10.

facilities and ensuring that these facilities were kept under hygienic conditions.

On turning to the administration of Warri urban after the war, we find significant changes taking place. These changes can only be understood within the context of the socio-politcal changes urshered into the global scene by the developments created by the second world war. Bearing these in mind, we will now turn aside from post war urban developments and examine the impact of post war political developments on the urban administration of Warri.

4.7 Urban Administration

A major feature on the global scene after the war, was a clamour among the various colonies for political independence from their colonial masters. European imperial powers, badly battered after the war, and with the emergence of America and Russia as the dominant global powers, were in hardly any position to stem the tide of liberalism sweeping through her colonies. Such developments could only create an atmosphere in which European powers had to concede to progressive political reforms in their colonies, paving way for their eventual political independence.

In the case of Nigeria we witness a flurry of post war constitutional developments, the gradual growth of parliamentary democracy and the regionalisation of Nigeria's political system. These activities were characterised

by the gradual incorporation of the nations indigenous political elite into the helm of the countries political affairs and the withdrawal of the British colonial authorities. These developments at the national level were reflected at the local level for instance in the administration of Warri urban.

In order to pave the way for the administration of Warri by its indigenous inhabitants the town was divided into seven wards. Each ward was to be represented by 2 representatives sitting on a new type of advisory board. The resident appointed one of the representatives, while the second was appointed by free vote by the inhabitants of each ward.[64] The seven wards were as follows:

1) Ward (A) Alderstown (old)
2) Ward (B) Alderstown (new)
3) Ward (C) Ogbe Ijaw and Robert Road
4) Ward (D) Agbassa area
5) Ward (E) Okere
6) Ward (F) West End
7) Ward (G) Odion.[65]

With the creation of wards a new T.A.B. was established in 1948 with an

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64.N.A.I. W.P.1 235/1 vol.2 p.61.

65.N.A.I.W.P. 235/1 vol.4 p.87

African majority. Thus the T.A.B. of 1948 was made up of the following members:[66]

a)	Chairman:	Local Authority
b)	Medical officer:	Nominated Member
c)	Provincial Engineer:	Nominated Member
d)	Superintendent of Police	Nominated member

Ward representatives as follows:

Ward (A)	Mr. M.O. Ighrakpata (nominated)
	Mr. J.A. Boyo elected
Ward (B)	Mr. J. Eyuwa (nominated)
	Mr. W.E. Mowarin (elected)
Ward (C)	Mr. F.G. Ejaife (nominated)
	Chief J.O. Aghoghovbia (elected)
Ward (D)	Mr. T.E. Nelson williams (nominated)
	Mr. J.A. Eghara (elected)
Ward (E)	Mr. A. Edema (nominated)
	Mr. E.E. Opuogen (elected)
Ward (f)	Mr. J.W. Anderson (nominated)
	Mr. S.N. Thomson (elected)
Ward (G)	Chief J.J. Okene (nominated)
	Mr. D.G. Grage (elected).[67]

66.N.A.I. W.P.1 235/1 Vol.2 p.61.

67.*Ibid.*

Unlike previous T.A.Bs the Provincial Resident made the point quite clear: that the indigenous members of the board were to make all decisions affecting the town. The Chairman of the board was also warned by the Resident not to interfere with, or over rule any decision made by the ward representatives with out first confering with him (Resident). Decisions made by the board could only be over ruled by the L.A. or Resident if they were criminal or not in the interest of the general public.[68]

Commenting on the new board established in 1948, the Resident remarked in his annual report[69] that on the whole the activities of the indigenous members of the board was disappointing. He observed that these members were beginning to manifest ethnic sentiment in the execution of their duties. This observation he made noting the frequently voiced fears of the Itsekiri members of the board, who openly decried any attempt by the Igbos and other ethnic groups to dominate the town. In the opinion of the Itsekiri board members, all administrative powers should rest solely in the hands of the Itsekiri. The Urhobo and other "strangers" they argued should have no say in the administration of Warri. Such assertions coupled with squabbles of an ethnic nature during board meetings caused the

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68.*Ibid.*

69.N.A.I. W.P.235/1 vol.4 p.87

Resident to observe.[70]

> "... such a parochial attitude would not be surprising among the untravelled members of the rural native authorities, but it is disappointing to find such among the more experienced members of the T.A.B..."

One must note that it is quite ironical for the Resident to disapprove of a phenomena (ethnicity) the British colonial system helped to create. Ethnicity popularly refered to as 'tribalism' is a direct product of the British colonial policy of divide and rule and the regionalisation of Nigeria's political and economic systems. These hindered any attempt by the Nigerians to see themselves as one people, but rather as distinct independent ethnic entities. The manifestation of ethnicity at the local level on the Warri T.A.B was a reflection of the ethnic politics at the national level. Suffice it to say at this point, that this may be regarded as the root of the contemporary ethnic contensions in the Delta region between the Ijaw, Urhobo and the Itsekiri. The rising development of ethnicity in Warri and its impact upon urban life will be examined in greater detail in the subsequent chapter.

The board of 1948 was dissolved and a new one constituted in 1951. Made up of indigenous lawyers, educated and well travelled members of the society.

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70. *Ibid.*

The board members represented the upper strata of the indigenous population of Warri. Such were the class of Nigerians in the forefront of the political change and nationalism sweeping across the nation.[71]

With the tempo for self rule in Nigeria rising to its climax, the Resident of Warri Province remarked in 1951 that the last T.A.B. had not participated closely enough with the administration of the town. He therefore commented that:[72]

> "... the time is now ripe for the consideration of the best means for increasing the power and authority of the board and correspondingly decreasing the power and authority of the individual L.A."

In the light of this recommendation, further steps were taken to increase the powers of the indigenous members of the board. This was in line with the general policy of the Africanisation of the political system and civil service in Nigeria at this time.

At this juncture one must appreciate the fact that the board in alliance with the provincial authorities, regional and central governments played an important

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71. *Ibid*, p.86.

72. N.A.I. W.P.1 235/1 vol.8 p.12.

role in co-ordinating urban development in Warri. Apart from receiving grants-in-aids the board was expected to generate revenue of its own. The table below contains the sources of revenue of the board and the amounts generated between 1949 and 1954.[73]

Table 4: Sources of Revenue to the Warri Township Advisory Board Between 1949 - 1954

Sources	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954
Tax	1,787	2,592	3,195	3,806*	4,208	4,191
Rates	345	742	-	-	-	-
Conservancy	745	1,218	1,372	1,355	2,844	2,714
Market Rents	1,544	2,548	3,302	3,582*	5,254	5,510
Slaughter Fees	119	188	271	212	231	205
Vehicle Licences	191	182	288	238	237	411
Water Rates	-	-	640	3,189	2,957	3,125
Miscellanious	96	92	-	-	-	-
Total	4,827	7,562	9,068	12,382	15,730	16,156

Source: N.A.I. W.P1 235/1 vols 4 p.48, Vol.5, p.20, Vol.7, p.4 and Vol.8, p.4.*During the year of 1952 the need to meet the increase in capital tax for regional health and education purposes placed a heavy burden on the board's finances. To meet this demand market stall rents were doubled, and flats rate tax raised to 15/-. Income tax was also raised.

From the information above we can easily deduce that market rents was the major source of revenue followed by tax. These were followed by water and conservancy rates. Amounts generated by the board were relatively small. This implies we believe, a strong inclination by the board to rely on aid from loans or grants from the regional or central government.

73.N.A.I. W.P1 235/1 vols 4 p.48, Vol.5, p.20, Vol.7, p.4 and Vol.8, p.4.

Nigeria's post war economic growth had a positive impact of Warri's economic activity. This can be seen in terms of the rapid spatial expansion of the major markets, and an increase in the import export trade.

We will now examine the implications of post war economic growth on economy of the urban Warri.

4.8 Warri Market and Trade

Between 1947 and 1955 we witnessed an upward trend in the number of market stalls erected in the market by the T.A.B. This was to accommodate the growing number of traders willing to do business in the market area.

For instance in 1947 24 lock up shops and 12 open concrete stalls were erected in McIver market. In the main market (Ogbe market) 78 temporary sheds were erected and 476 were pulled down and rebuilt.[74]

Similar developments were observed in 1948. In this year the board saw to the erection of another 28 lock up stalls. £2,100 was spent during the course of the year on the construction of new market stalls.

In 1949 another 59 new market stalls were erected. Over 1,271 stalls holders by this time had registered with the T.A.B.[75] In 1951 another 24 permanent lock up stalls were erected adjacent to the 'kings way' plot. A number

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74.N.A.I.W.P.1 235 vol4, p.25.

75.N.A.I. W.P.235/1 Vol.4 p.89.

of prefabricated market stalls were constructed along McIver road. These stalls were let out at low rates, only to vegetable and fruit sellers. This attempt, to concentrate the sale of these goods in one place, was aimed at bringing down the prices of these goods in the market.

As earlier stated the T.A.B. relied to a large extent on loans and grants from the regional government or loan boards to facilitate urban developments. For instance in 1948 the Board applied for an received a loan of £12,715 from the Nigerian Development Board, to be spent over a period of 4 years.[76]

A portion of this loan was used to erect 2 large garri stores in the garri market, a restaurant and 25 permanent open stalls. As a result of large scale expenditure on market developments the loan was virtually exausted by the end of 1950. In an attempt to sustain continued market developments an other loan of £4,000 was applied for and approved.[77] Work on the market was also characterised by swamp drainage, land reclaimation and maintainance of old stalls shops and sheds. For instance in 1948 a total marsh area of 2,730sq yards bordering the market was reclaimed, thus providing more land for market expansion. Further land reclaimation continued through 1949 and 1953.

76.N.A.I. WP.1 235/1 vol.2, p.62.

77.N.A.I, WP.235/1 Vol.4 p.89.

However by 1953 the land available for reclaimation was limited. Therefore the Board directed its attention to the maintaining of existing market structures.[78]

In the area of rehabilitation in 1952 452 stalls were renovated in the new markets, with a view to maintaining their utility. Also more wells were dug within the vicinity of the market areas.[79]

The market area as shown was constantly receiving attention by the T.A.B. particularly as it was a major source of revenue. On our analysis of colonial records, we observed that no matter how brief an L.A.'s report may be he would most certainly have things to talk about concerning the market. That the market areas and its development were priorities on the agenda of the colonial authorities, shows the importance it played in the economic system of colonialism; acting as a centre for the dispersal of European imported goods and collection centres for raw materials to be exported.

With the town expanding north east wards the Resident saw it pertinent to establish a new market in this area particularly in view of the fact that the main markets spatial expansion was now restricted due to scarcity of building space. Thus by 1955 construction work had already started in the Igbudu area of Warri,

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78.N.A.I. WP.1 235/1 vol.7 p.25.

79.N.A.I. W.P. 235/1 vol.7 p.25.

with the clearing of the prospective site which was at the time heavily planted with rubber trees.[80] This market today is popularly known as Igbudu market in Agbassa area.

The administration of the markets as it existed in Warri during our period of study is an issue we feel will be of interest to the reader. Thus at this point we will briefly highlight the salient features of the administration of the markets revealing those involved and steps taken to maintain law and order in the market area.

The running of the towns market was initially the sole affair of the T.A.B. But this was to change. In 1937 a market committee was established. This body, comprised a number of traders, who represented various trading groups in the market i.e. textile traders, those who traded in imported goods, food stuff traders, butchers etc. One of the major functions of this committee, was to ensure the control of prices of goods sold in the market as well as suggesting ways of improving conditions of trade to the T.A.B.

The board was responsible for the spatial expansion of the market, construction of stalls and collecting of stall rents. It was also responsible for drawing up of rules and regulations affecting conditions of trade and behaviour

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80.N.A.I. WP1, 272, p.187.

in the market. It also ensured that rules were abided by those using market facilities and those customers willing to buy within the market.

In accordance with the Market Ordinance Chapter 58 the L.A. proposed certain laws which were approved by the Resident of Warri Province - 1948. These laws were as follows:[81]

i) Riding of bicycles in the market was strictly prohibited, punishable with a fine of 40/-

ii) No person was allowed to buy or sell in the old or new markets except in a stall allocated to him by the market master or a person authorised by him.

iii) No trader was allowed to occupy more than one stall. And the subletting of stalls was strictly forbidden.

iv) the erection of illegal stalls attracted a fine of £2 and an extra £2 for every day the illegal structure remained standing after the occupant had been told to take it down.

v) Produce was only to be stored or sold in places within the market specified for such purposes by the L.A.

vi) All sheds, stalls and tables used by traders in the market were to be kept

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81.N.A.I. W.P. 1412 vol.1 pp.127-128.

thoroughly clean at the close of every market day.

These laws and others were enforced by the market master[82] and when necessary by the Police. Being the centre of economic activity it was essential that the atmosphere about the market was condusive and favourable for economic activity, which was the essence of colonial domination.

Warri as an export centre for Nigerian raw materials rose in significance after the war. This can be seen in the gradual rise in exports which passed through Warri port between 1946-1960. The table below will suffice to make our point clear.[83]

82.The market master was the T.A.B's man on the spot with his office in the market he ensured the laws of the market were observed.

83.Ogundana, B., "Sea Port Development *in Colonial Nigeria", in Akinjogbin, A.I. and Soba, S.O. (Eds), Topics on Nigerian Economic and social History.* (UNIFE Press Ltd, Ile Ife 1980), p.180.

Table 5: Exports Passing Through Warri Port Between 1946-1959

Year	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960
Amount in Tons, 000	30.5	35.6	35.8	45.7	44.7	66.33`	-	66.1	88.9	103	86.7	86.0	80.0	110	118
Total = 9,973,000 Tons															

Source: Ogundana, B., "Sea Port Development *in Colonial Nigeria", in Akinjogbin, A.I. and Soba, S.O. (Eds), Topics on Nigerian Economic and social History.* (UNIFE Press Ltd, Ile Ife 1980), p.180.

Despite fluctuations in export quantity the table above shows a gradual increase in exports. Between 1946-1960 9.9 million tons raw materials were exported through Warri port.

4.9 Warri Port

Inland and coastal sea ports played an important role in the programme of exploitation by the colonialists. In the instance of Nigeria all major roads and railways linking up with important agricultural and mineral producing areas, inevitably ended up at one of the following ports (in order of significance) Lagos Port, Port Harcourt, Sapele, Burutu, Warri, Calabar or Degema.[84] It is via these ports that Nigerian raw materials were exported and foreign goods imported. This being the essence of British exploitation of the region; as earlier discussed in chapter two. Also the custom duties received from imports and exports was a vital source of revenue acquired by the Nigerian colonial government used for the execution of projects that would further enhance the exploitation of the region.

With the amalgamation of 1914 efforts were turned towards developing the available port facilities to the exploitation of the newly created colonial state. Based upon the recommendations forwarded by the Imperial Shipping

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84.Ekundare, R.O. *Economic History of Nigeria*, p,256.

Committee, inaugurated by the British government to advice her on colonial shipping matters, the colonial government in Nigeria enacted policies that were to affect the relative significance of Nigerian ports one to another.[85]

In line with recommendations provided by the Committee the colonial government intensified but restricted port activities to Lagos and Port Harcourt. Lagos acted as the principal port while Port Harcourt acted as its subsidiary. In order to avoid the redundancy of other ports these were to be used on a lesser scale. With this policy in mind it was not surprising that between 1907-1938 £4.8 million was invested in Lagos and Port Harcourt port facilities, while a total of £20,000 within the same period, was spent on all other ports all over the country.[86]

This policy was to have adverse consequences on port development in Warri during our period of study. For instance from our study of available records we find that the Resident of Warri Province struggled, mostly in vain, to draw the attention of the government of the Western region's to the falling conditions of Warri port. In a letter addressed to the Secretary of the Regional government, the Resident pointed out that since 1949, when the Warri port

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85.Obafemi Ogundana, *op.cit*, p.168.

86.*Ibid*, p.167

advisory committee was established, no effort had been made to execute any of its suggestions to upgrade and standardize its port facilities.[87]

Describing the port as having been "patched up to the limits of its life", the Resident often appealed to the Director of Marines and the General Manager Ports, to act on the observations made by the Provincial Engineer that the wharf needed immediate infrastractural repairs in order to sustain it as an inland sea port.[88]

In related developments, the Nigerian Ports authority N.P.A. an autonomous public corporation was established to manage all Nigerian Ports. Archival material provide numerous letters written by the Resident to the permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs reminding him of the duty of the N.P.A. to take steps towards improving the facilities at Warri port. In his replies the Secretary continued to state that the energies and resources of the N.P.A. are directed only towards the needs of Lagos port and Port Harcourt.[89] He further mentioned that ports like Warri port remained the responsibility fo the Federal Ministry of Transport. Any work done to maintain it, should be done by

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87.N.A.I. W.P.2 691/3 vol.2 p.244.

88.*Ibid.*

89.*Ibid*, p.286.

the F.M.W. via the Federal Director of the P.W.D.

In 1954 estimates for structural and infrastructural improvements for the Warri port sent to the Provincial P.W.D Head quarters by the Resident were put aside. In response to this the Resident wrote a scathing letter to the Federal P.W.D in which he wrote:[90]

> "... therefore an end must be brought to this continued neglect of Warri port..."

In 1956 measures were at last taken by the Federal P.W.D. in collaboration with the N.P.A. to improve certain facilities at Warri port.

To improve the services renderable at the port the following facilities were provided:[91]

a) A 150ft lighter wharf of concrete with 8ft dept of lower water.

b) A mobile two ton crane with the wharf strengthened accordingly.

c) A pre cast retaining wall.

d) A concrete concource.

e) A security fence and adequate lighting by night.

In the light of structural and infrastructural developments taking place in Lagos and Port Harcourt, which by 1960 were the best equipped ports in Nigeria,

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90.*Ibid*, p.281.

91.*Ibid*, p.341.

the above mentioned measures taken to improve Warri port are relatively insignificant.

One may forward the view at this point that by hthe 1950s the significance of Warri as a commercial centre was gradually giving way to Sapele town to the north. We believe this firstly because Sapele was located closer to the Yoruba region of the Western Province and served as an important export centre particularly for its cocoa, which after the war was in great demand on the world market. Secondly, and also of great significance to Sapele's urban and commercial development is the presence of U.A.C.'s African timber and Plywood Plant (A.T. & P.). It was certainly the largest in Africa and definitely one of the largest in the world. Its location in Sapele was not by accident. The large and extensive timber forests that characterised Sapele's environs and hinterland was definately a major factor in the A.T.& P. Plant being located there. Therefore, Sapele was one of the worlds largest timber and ply wood exporters particularly after the war. Thirdly, Sapele hadmuch more land for spatial expansion unlike Warri and thus was able to cater for a larger urban population.

These factors we believe, may have warranted the neglect of Warri port in favour of Sapele port located in Urhobo division.

Thus Warri port an important feature of Warri's urban land scape was

suffering relative neglect. But today it is quite another story. With the discovery of crude oil in its environs, the location here of a giant an oil refinery and the presence and activities of major oil drilling and exporting multinational companies, Warri today boasts of one of the most ultra modern ports in the country. These have also contributed to her spatial and population growth. This goes to show that economic potential is a major boost to urban growth and development.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have focused our attention on the impact of the Second World War on urban developments in Warri. We have seen that there was a relative increase in urban activity during this period. We have been able to show that the war facilitated the economic growth of colonies like Nigeria and the socio-political conditions fostered by the war created an atmosphere which compelled the British government to spend more on the social welfare of her colonies, in areas for instance like urban development. Therefore we saw an increase in the development of the residential, urban utilities, transport and communications sections of Warri urban society. Also in the light of decolonisation we have seen how the running of the administrative affairs of Warri was gradually handed over to the Nigerians resident in Warri.

In the next and final chapter we will examine Warri's urban society. Here we will focus on the population growth, and class structure of Warri's urban society as well as the impact of ethnic politics on the political and social life of the area.

Chapter Five

THE INHABITANTS OF WARRI: POPULATION GROWTH, CLASS FORMATION AND ETHNIC POLITICS DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Introduction

In the previous chapters, we have traced the development of Warri from a small precolonial trading station to a bustling colonial urban centre.

Locating Warri within the global capitalist economy, our analysis has shown that she was used to play an important role in the British colonial machinery that dominated and exploited the Nigerian region. We have also highlighted the structural and infrastructural development of the town as well as the provision of health, educational and recreational facilities to meet the needs of the growing urban populace.

To cap our discussion this chapter will talk more about the inhabitants of Warri than any thing else. Here we will discuss the changes in the population pattern of our area of study. We will also examine the impact of colonial rule and policy on the class structure and political developments in the area.

Our choice of the political economy as a theoretical framework for our study is preferred in that it sees the various aspects of human endeavour not as entities developing in isolation of each other but as an integrated whole, revolving

around the dominant mode of material production the people are engaged in. Thus the essence of this chapter, with special reference to class formation and political developments, is to show how the colonial economy stratified Warri urban's populace into classes based on their ownership and relations to the means of production and how British colonial economy and policy structured Warri's urban politics along ethnic lines. We will also show that our area of study, being an integral part of colonial Nigeria, reflected at the social and political levels, the socio-political trend of events at the national level.

5.1 Urban Population Growth

The ever increasing growth of urban populations has been a cause of great concern for governments all over the world. Inadequate urban facilities incapable of catering for the teeming inhabitants of the towns and cities have led to social problems characteristic of the modern day urban centre; these being unemployment, underemployment, slum and squatter settlements, high crime rate, poverty, and class conflict.[1]

Urban and demographic experts have attributed the increase in urban population to either:

1.Makinwa, P.K., *Internal Migration and Rural Development in Nigeria: Lessons from Bendel State.* (Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, Ibadan 1981), p.3; Mabogunje, A.L., *The Development Process: A Spatial Perspective*, 2nd Edition (Unwin Hyman Ltd., London 198), p.183ff.

a) Natural growth i.e. when the birth rate exceeds the death rate or

b) Migration that is when migrants moving into the town exceed those who are migrating out.

But more often than not, migration has been identified as the key factor accounting for the increase in urban population.[2]

In an attempt to explain the flow of migrants, (particularly from the rural areas) into the cities and towns scholars have used the 'Push' and 'Pull' theories.[3] The former refers to those forces evident in the rural areas that cause the rural inhabitants to leave for the urban centres for instance, population pressure, impoverished farm land, poor economic opportunities, and the like. While the latter refers to those features of the urban centre that attract the rural dwellers i.e. possibilities of economic advancement, the availability of educational facilities, freedom and individuality etc.

How many residents have to reside in a settlement before it can be classified or termed urban? It has been observed that the number varies from place to place and there seems to be no consensus among urbanologists on the actual number.

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2. Ominde, S. and Ejiogu, N. (eds) *Population Growth and Economic Development in Africa* (Heinemann Books, London 1972). Janet Abu-Lughod and Richard Hay Jr. *Third World Urbanisation* (Maaroufa Press Inc. Chicago 1977) Hanna, W.J. and Hanna, J.L. *op.cit*, p.27.

3. Breese, G. *Urbanisation in Newly Developing Countries* (Englewood Cliff, New Jersey 1966), pp.80-81; Hanna and Hanna, *ibid*, p.47ff.

For example in the United States of America a settlement of 4,000 people qualified as an urban centre. The number of inhabitants was later increased to 8,000 and then reduced to 2,500.[4] In Canada an urban centre is defined as a settlement of 1,000 or more settlers.[5] In 1961 a population of 5,000 was needed to constitute a census town in Ghana.[6] In the Nigerian situation the 1931 census defined an urban centre as a settlement with a population of not less than 2,000 people. But the 1952/53 national Nigerian census defined an urban centre as an area with a population of not less than 5,000.[7]

From the above it is easy to see that the numerical qualification for urban status varies. This is why population cannot be the sole criteria for defining an urban centre.

In our attempt to examine the population growth of Warri during our period of study our major sources of information would be census counts and surveys. But the statistical data provided by these sources have proved inadequate. At the national level the 1931 census was according to one census officer at the time, "a

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4.Nwaka, G.I. "Urban Developments in Eastern Nigeria: Some Problems of Conceptions and Methods in African urban History" in *Africa Urban Notes: African Studies Centre Michigan State University* (Michigan Safe Publications 1975), p.25.

5.*Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7.*Ibid.*

mere compilation of existing data".[8] According to Kuczynski, R.R. the 1931 census figures were mainly based on estimates and guesses.[9] Apart from the 1952/53 census figures; population statistics pertaining to Warri during our period of study leave much to be desired, particularly in the realm of information covering the ethnic composition, age and sex distribution of the residents of Warri. Such information would have provided us with much insight into the nature and composition of Warri as it developed through our period of study. But from the limited information available we find that by 1921 Warri's population was estimated at about 2,300.[10]

Ten years later (1931) this figure had risen to 10,000 i.e. an increase of 7,700 inhabitants.[11] In 1949, based on information supplied by Warri's local authorities, the Resident of Warri Province estimated the towns population at 17,000.[12] Thus between 1931 and 1949 Warri's urban population had risen by 7,000.

8.Nigeria: Department of Statistics, Census of Nigeria 1931 cited in Makinwa, P.K. *op.cit*, p.4.

9.*Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire Vol.I West Africa*, (O.U.P. London 1949).

10.Federal Office of Statistics Warri.

11.*Ibid.*

12.N.A.I. WP.1 235/1, Vol.8, p.14.

From the information above it is obvious to conclude that Warri's urban growth up to 1949 was developing at a relatively slow pace. For instance we can calculate that between 1921-31 Warri's urban populace increased at an annual rate of 770 persons. We further find that between 1931-1949 Warri's annual urban populace increased at 388.8 persons.

This slow rate in the urban growth of Warri may be attributed to Britain's urban policy during the colonial period. As it was pointed out in chapter two British colonial policy restricted Africans resident in the urban centres to those whose occupation needed the facilities provided in the towns and cities or those who were in the direct employ of the colonial government as civil servants or those who worked for expatriates, resident in the towns. This policy was enacted in order to restrict the flow of manpower from the rural areas which was vital for the production of cash crops exported to capitalist Europe. The information provided by the national census of 1952/53 throws much more light on the nature and character of Warri's population by 1952. The tables below will bring this observation out graphically.[13]

13.Federal Office of Statistics Warri, 1952/53 Census Statistics.

Table 1: Breakdown of Warri's Urban Population: Age and Sex Distribution by 1952

Both Sexes	Sex Distribution		Male: Distribution by Age				Female: Distribution by Age			
19,526	Males	Females	0-6	7-14	15-49	50 & Above	0-6	7-14	15-49	50 & Above
	10,864	8,662	2,106	2,222	6,312	224	2,043	1,557	4,912	150

Source: Federal Office of Statistics Warri, 1952/53 Census Statistics.

From the above we find that the ages between 15-49 constitute the largest groups in both the male and female categories. This we may attribute to the fact that this group (ages 15-49) consists of those most fit for economic activity. Exponents of migration theories agreed that those most prone to migrate from the rural to the urban areas are those who fall within the age brackets of 15 and 35 years old.[14] This suggestion may be supported in that we find (from the table above) the ages 50 years and above constitute the lowest number among the male and female group. We believe this is the case since those aged 50 and above may find little opportunity to engage in profitable economic activity and thus retire to the rural areas from which they migrated.

Those aged 50 and over who are still resident in Warri may be those who are engaged in professional occupations, or civil servants or wealthy traders and

14.Ominde, S. and Ejiogu, N. Op.cit; Mabogunje, A.L. The Development Process... op.cit; Hanna and Hanna, *op.cit.*

business men who have amassed enough wealth to reside in relative ease in the town. It has been observed that the rural male is more prone to migrate to the urban centre than his female counterpart.[15] In most cases he leaves his wife and dependants in the village and sends money to them once in a while to support them. This may account for why the males aged 15-49 out number the female of the same age categories by 1,400.

Table 2: Warri 1952: Ethnic Composition[16]

S/No	Ethnic Group	Number	S/No	Ethnic Group	Number
1.	Igbo	6,058	9.	Nupe	110
2.	Urhobo	5,998	10.	Ibibio	90
3.	Itsekiri	3,133	11.	Kanuri	47
4.	Edo	1,529	12.	Tiv	10
5.	Yoruba	1,003	13.	Fulani	10
6.	Ijaw	554	14.	Other Nigerians	5
7.	Itsoko	431	15.	Non Nigerians	-
8.	Hausa	174			
	Total				19,526

Source: Federal Office of Statistics, Warri.

The table above is significant in that it highlights the ethnic composition of Warri by 1952. From the table above it is obvious to conclude that the ethnic groups of the Southern parts of Nigeria constituted the bulk of Warri's population.

15.Little, K. *op.cit*, Janet, Abu-Lughod and Richard Hay Jr. *op.cit*.

16.Federal Office of Statistics, Warri.

It can be deduced that of Warri's 19,526 urban population 18,803 are from the southern parts of Nigeria. Migrants from the northern parts of Nigeria, we believe, take into account the cost of transportation, the presence of relatives and friends and the possibilities of temporary accommodation before migrating to distant areas like Warri. This may account for the relatively few northern elements in Warri by 1952.

We can also observe from the table that the Igbo's comprised the largest ethnic group in our area of study by 1952. It is remembered by some of our informants that the Igbos in Warri were engaged mainly in labour of a manual type.[17] For example the bulk of the Igbo population was engaged in truck pushing, night soil collection, carpentry manual labour on building sites etc.

The Urhobo the second largest ethnic group in Warri by 1952, out numbered the Itsekiri by 2,865. The Itsekiri are of the view that since the Urhobo out number them in Warri, this has always encouraged them the (Urhobo) to lay claims to the Warri lands.[18]

By 1954 Warri's urban populace had risen to 20,700,[19] an increase over

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17.Late Barrister, Amorighoye oral interviews, and E.N.A. Begho, 24/8/96 and 15/8/96 respectively.

18.Ayomike, J.O.S., Late Barrister Amorighoye, S.U. Okotie oral interview.

19.Federal Office of Statistics Warri.

1952's population of 19,526 by 1,174; an annual increase in population of 587 persons.

But with the discovery and exploitation of crude oil in the Niger Delta region and around Warri in the 1970's its economy and urban population grew in leaps and bounds. The table below is significant in that it brings out this fact quite clearly.[20]

Table 3: Warri Population Growth 1970 - 1977

Year	Warri's Estimated Population
1970	90,000
1971	100,000
1972	107,000
1973	115,000
1974	125,000
1975	135,000
1976	148,000
1977	154,000

Source: Emmamere, C. "Migration into Warri Town". (Unpublished B.Sc. Thesis, Department of Geography, University of Ibadan 1985), p.18.

From the table above it is easy to conclude that Warri witnessed a dynamic change in the trend of its population growth; with the discovery of crude oil within its environs. Within the space of seven years its urban population expanded by

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20.Emmamere, C. "Migration into Warri Town". (Unpublished B.Sc. Thesis, Department of Geography, University of Ibadan 1985), p.18.

64,000 inhabitants. Calculated we observe an annual increase in its population by 9,142. The point to be grasped here is that the greater the economic significance of an area, the greater its population as more people will be prone to migrate to that area to exploit its economic potentials. In the case of Warri we witnessed a dramatic change in the rate of migration into Warri after the discovery of petroleum vis-a-vis earlier economic activities based on agricultural production.

At this point we will like to point out that as the population of Warri during our period of study grew, the spatial development of the town expanded in a like wise manner. It is obvious that more land would be required to accommodate the increasing population of Warri. The table below highlights this fact.

Table 4: Spatial Growth of Warri 1921-1963[21]

Year	Size sq Miles	Increase
1921	2.29	0
1931	5.10	2.8
1952	7.35	2.25
1963	10.83	3.48

Source: Udi, W. op.cit, Appendix II.

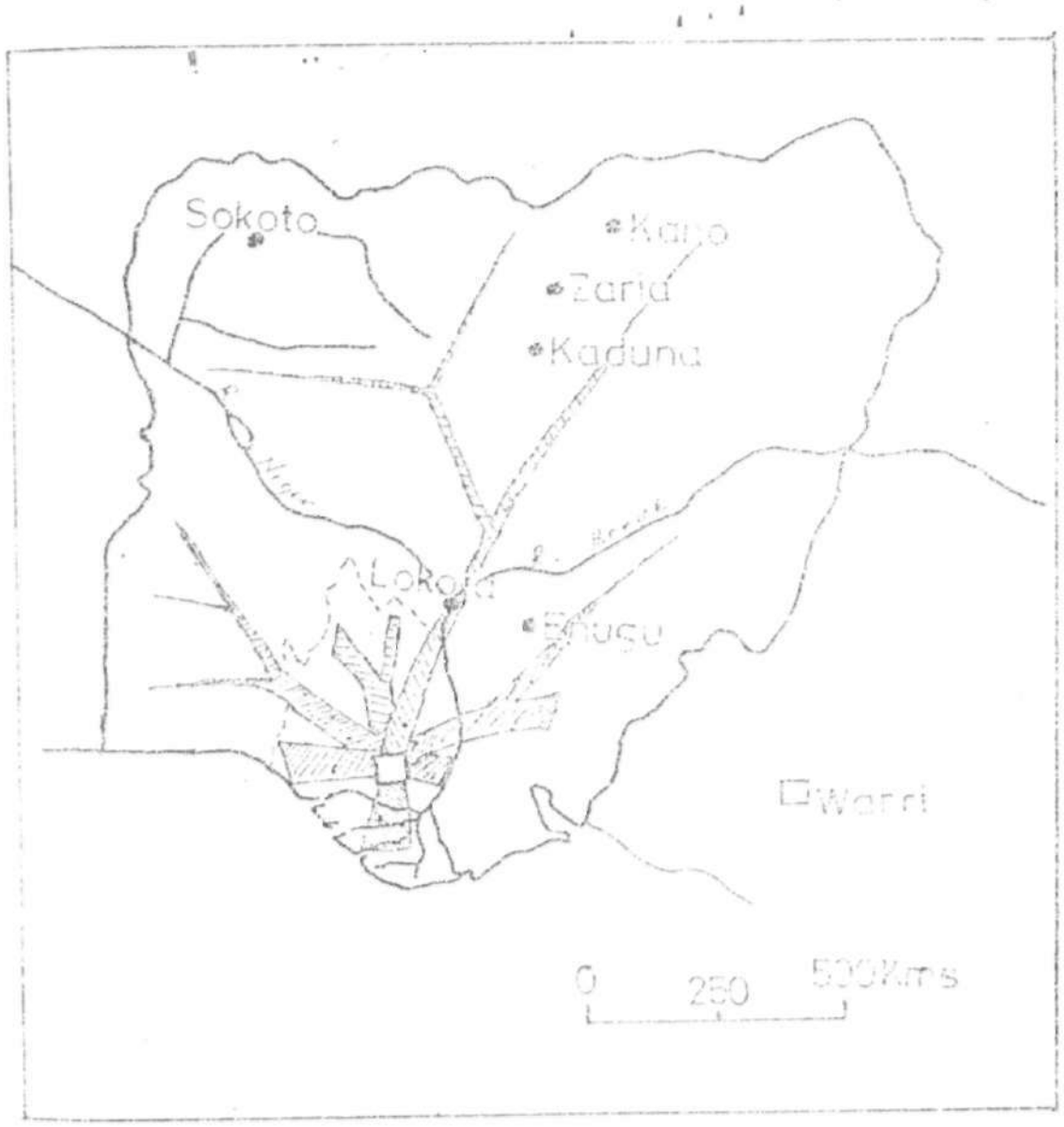
As the population of Warri grew, it developed within a colonial economy, fashioned along capitalist lines. The nature of this economy was to stratify Warri's

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21.Udi, W. op.cit, Appendix II

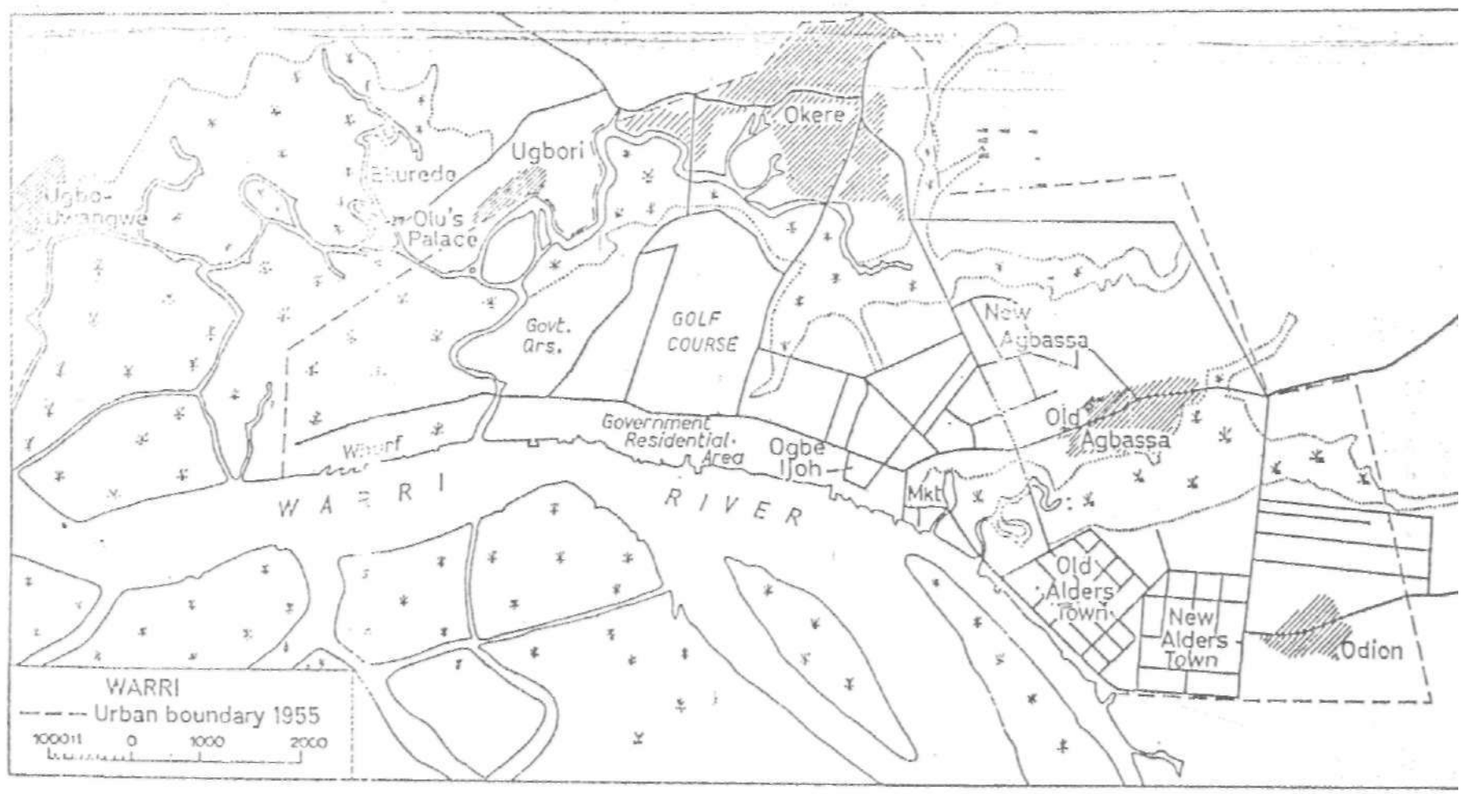
Fig. 6

NIGERIA MAP SHOWING MIGRATION FLOW INTO WARRI



Fig

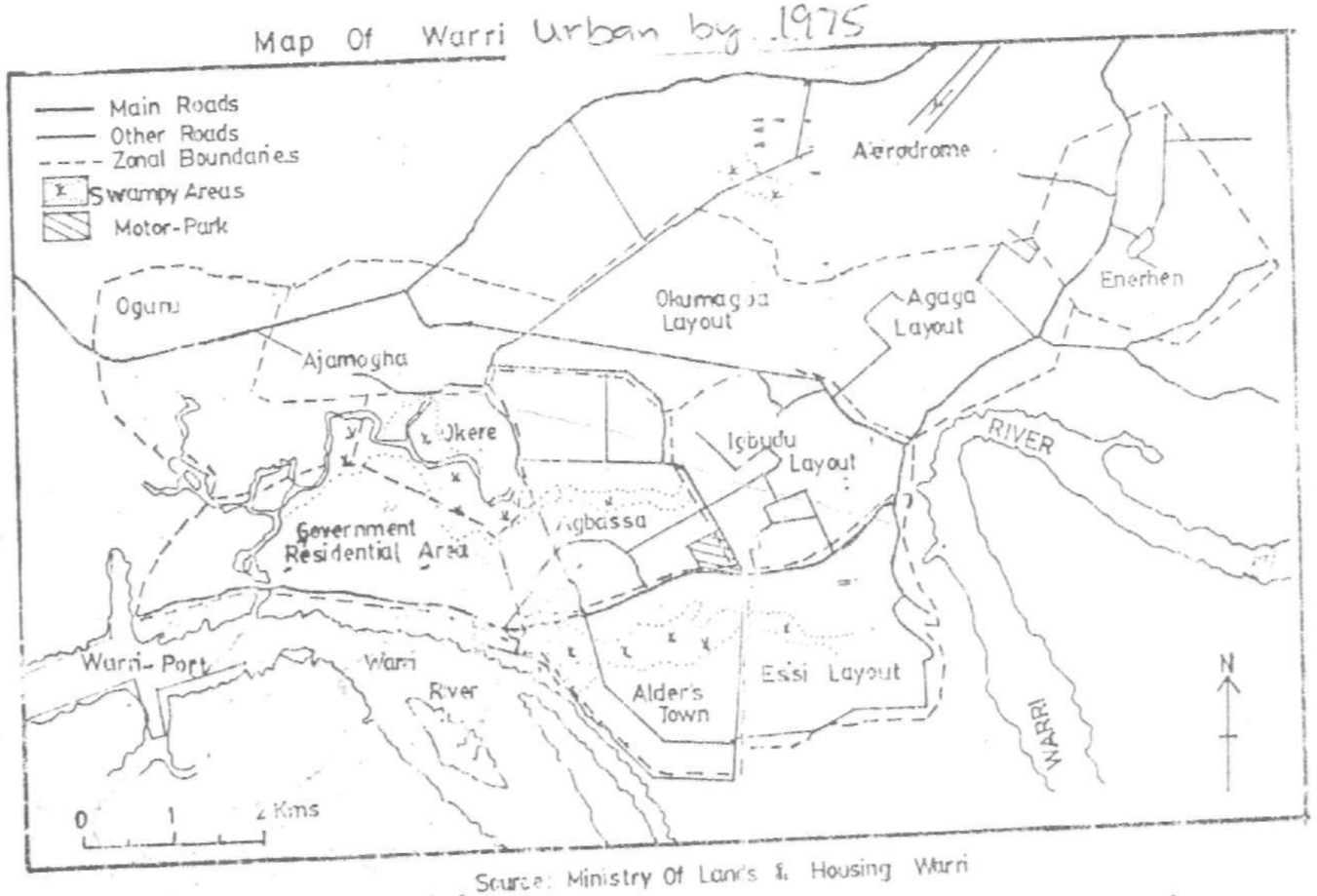
Warri Urban by 1955 ..



Map I *Warri, Southern Nigeria*

Fig.8

Map Of Warri Urban by 1975



Source: Ministry Of Lands & Housing Warri

urban population into classes based on their relation to the means of production, distribution of power; race and income. In the next section we will examine the classes that characterised Warri during our period of study.

5.2 Class Formation

(a) Background

In chapter one it was shown how the pre-colonial society of Warri was divided into 4 major groups: The *Otun Olu* or the descendants of Ginuwa who invariably constituted the royal lineage, secondly we have the *Omajaja* or free born citizens and finally the *eru* (slaves) and *Otun-eru* the descendants of slaves. Here we find birth and circumstance (in the case of the slaves) determining the group into which one belonged. But with the decline of the Itsekiri Monarchy and slave trade and the rise and development of the oil palm trade, we witnessed the emergence of a new class; the wealthy Itsekiri middleman traders who by the early nineteenth century amassed enough wealth and political power to act as a new ruling class, negotiating with the Europeans on behalf of the Itsekiri people in the absence of a ruling monarchy. Thus wealth, via trade came to be, at a later stage in Itsekiri precolonial history, another factor determining to which group one belonged.

With the colonisation of the Nigerian area and the penetration of finance capital we witnessed a distortion of the pre-existing social stratification. With the

integration of colonial Warri in particular and Nigeria in general into a world capitalist system we observe the creation of new classes which differed from each other based on the position they occupied in the historically determined capitalist mode of production. This determined their relationship to the means of production and consequently the share of the social wealth of which they dispose and how they acquired it.[22]

Race, the possession of certain administrative and technical skills as well as the appropriation of central power also determined the class to which one belonged.[23]

Bearing these criteria in mind Warri, during our period of study can be divided into 3 broad categories. At the top of the society was the ruling class, followed by the middle class while the urban poor were at the bottom. To meaningfully reconstruct the process of class formation in Warri it will therefore be necessary, in the light of our theoretical framework, to locate it within the context of the colonial economy.

(b) **Ruling Class**

The capitalist mode of production facilitates the private ownership of the

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22. Lenin, V.I. "A Great Beginning" in Lenin, V.I. *Collected Works Vol.29* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978) p.421.

23.Oyedele, E.O. *op.cit*, p.516.

means of production. This aids the development of an appropriating class, who by virtue of their control of the means of production dominate and separate their own interests from the rest of society. The striving of this dominating or ruling class, to strengthen and extend its domination conflicts with the striving of the dominated classes to throw off the rule of the ruling class.[24]

In Warri the ruling class consisted of the British administrative officers, the controllers of colonial state power and representatives of the 'supposed' owners of the Nigerian means of production (the British government). That the British colonial administrators constituted the ruling class not only in Warri but in Nigeria as a whole is seen in the vast political power they weilded.

For instance it was they who enacted policies that affected all aspects of the socio-political life as well as enforcing those laws to uphold law and order. English was the official language and the legal systems practiced in Warri and colonial Nigeria were patterned after those in Britain. Though the colonial administrators formed the caucus of the ruling class, the directors, managers and other executive officers of the British trading organisations resident in Warri also formed part of this ruling class. This fact is displayed as we find the administrators and business executives in continuous dialogue to ensuring that their

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24.Miliband, R. *Marxism and Politics*, (C.U.P. London 1976) p.17.

individual policies did not contradict each other or the exploitative purpose of the colonial government of Nigeria.

Because colonialism is necessarily racial in context, all Europeans and non-African nationals resident in Warri, (though weilding no political power) were seen as a class high above the Nigerians. They were economically well to do constituting an important commercial element in Warri's economic circle engaged in the transport sector, import and export business, investors in hotel and cinema enterprises and the like.

This tiny oligarchy even enjoyed exclusive social facilities, making them as a class to stand out from the rest of society as a dominating class. For instance "the 1902 Europeans reservations Act" was passed. This 'Act' stipulated that a part of a town in a British colony be set aside as a European residential area.

The houses here were bigger, occupied larger space and were more beautiful than the houses outside this area. The roads found here were tarred, generally wider and better kept than roads in other parts of the town. Facilities like pipe-borne water and electricity, whenever introduced into an urban area started from the European reservation before spreading to other parts of the town. Such was the case in Warri as has been discussed in the previous chapters. The British and other European nationals resident in Warri also enjoyed the excellent recreational facilities available at the "European club" established in 1924

exclusively for Europeans.[25]

Clubs for "Europeans only" were a common feature of colonised Nigeria and only began to admit African members when the independence movement moved towards its climax.

In an attempt to entrench their dominant position the British colonial administrators introduced a colonial type of education which was used to cow the Nigerian people and effect a cultural imperialism. For instance pupils were taught in schools to believe that their traditional culture was inferior to British culture and way of life. Nigerians were encouraged to adopt the western way of life in an attempt to become more "civilized."[26]

Brain washed, into accepting the "British mission of civilization" to Nigeria, Nigerians began to take to the British mode of dress, mannerisms, and even accent.

While the education in the advanced capitalist countries has the objective aim of reproducing highly productive and efficient labour, in colonies like Nigeria its aim and purpose was to produce a small group of semi skilled literate labour

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25.This club was later re-named "The Warri Club" and by the 1950s important Nigerians had become members of this club.

26.Chief E.N.A. Begho and Chief Okorodudu oral interviews, 15/8/96 and 17/8/96 respectively. These informants remember such ideas passed to them in their primary and secondary school days, particularly during 'social studies' classes. Mrs. Okorodudu also remembers this racial mode of education during her primary education in the C.M.C. primary school in Warri.

and administrative functionaries capable of aiding in the sustenance of the exploitative machinery of colonial state government. This education also worked towards the pacification of the recipients of this education. This is why the earlier forms of resistance to established colonial government in Nigeria, cried, not for political independence but the integration of the educated Nigerian elite into the political machinery of colonial government.[27]

But from 1952 when the nationalist struggle was in top gear, the British ruling class began to incorporate reliable indigenes into the colonial bureaucracy. By so doing the British created a small indigenous group of collaborators, who waited patiently to take over political power and protect British economic interests. This indigenous arm occupied top positions in the civil service and in the major expatriate companies in Warri like: U.A.C, G.B. Ollivant, John Holt, and the like. With their gradual integration into the British ruling class these Nigerians resident in Warri were allowed to build houses in the G.R.A. and became members of the elite "Warri club".

With political independence in 1960 the Nigerian nationalist elite became the ruling class. Local government in Warri was by this time firmly in the hands of the indigenous urban elite.

27.Olusanya, "The Nationalist Movement in Nigeria" in Ikime, O. (ed) *Ground Work of Nigerian History* (Heinemann Educational Books 1980), p.558.

In collaboration with this indigenous political elite, we observe the influence of big time business men, traders, and transporters, whose interests, (essentially economic) blended with that of the European firms. Together with the Nigerian executives of expatriate firms they established strong links with government, in a bid to protect and promote their economic interests. Thus at state functions prominent businessmen were invited like wise at functions organised by big expatriate firm and businessmen state functionaries were often present.[28] Thus the integration of the prominent business elite in the indigenous ruling class.

(c) Middle Class

This class consists of the middle cadre of the civil service, self employed professionals, chief clerks, technical assistants, teachers, traders and the like. This class may be described as those who provided services that facilitated the functioning of the capitalist mode of production in colonial Warri and Nigeria as a whole. An important feature of this social class is their ability to expliot their own labour along with that of others, in order to realise capitalist profit.[29]

Since their remuneration was beyond what they needed to maintain a bare existence, the extra revenue generated enabled them to invest in profit making

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28.Chief E.N.A. Begho oral interview, 15/8/96.

29.Jakubowski, F., *Ideology and Superstructure in Historical materialism* (Allison and Busby, London 1978), p.107.

ventures such as real estate, hotel and cinema businesses, trade and the like. The additional income derived from these enterprises enabled the more successful middle class to engage in affluent life styles. Many invested in the education of their children to the post secondary levels. Some even sent their children abroad.[30]

Though their incomes varied, their formal education, occupations and incomes marked them out as a distinctive class with a distinct life style, different from the urban poor.

Members of this class resident in Warri during our period of study were practising barristers and solicitors. These included T.E. Nelson Williams, Chike Idigbe, M.E.R. Okorodudu, F.O.B Blaize, M.A. Agborghovbia, W.G. Egbe and A.G. Irikefe.[31]

Medical doctors also resident and practicing at this time included Dr. Esiri, Dr. Preston Egbe and Dr. O. Thomas. There were also Quantity Surveyors like Chief E.N.A. Begho and Engineers like O. Olaya.[32]

With the reinstatement of the Olu monarchy in 1936 traditional chiefs emerged as another segment of this class. Therefore there existed in Warri

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30.Chief Okorodudu and late Barrister Amorighoye oral interviews, 17/8/96 and 24/8/96 respectively.

31.Ayomike, J.O.S. oral interview, 11/8/96.

32.Chief Begho oral interview, 15/8/96.

traditional title-holders associated with the Olus Council of Chiefs. There also existed prominent individuals resident in Warri upon whom the Olu and his council conferred chieftaincy titles. This group of Chiefs met when it was necessary to discuss traditional issues relating to the Olu. They also assembled. to meet important dignitaries who visited the town. The Warri Chiefs were a highly respected element of the middle class resident in Warri, influential and wealthy.

(d) **The Urban Poor**

The members of this class consisted of petty traders and hawkers, semi skilled and unskilled labour and the unemployed.[33] The members of this class unable to engage in profitable economic enterprise, found out lets for their labour in economic activity characterised by occupational instability and low wages. Such jobs included casual labour, shoe shinning, bicycle repairing, washer men, night soilmen, house boys, truck pushers and the like. Those unable to engage in socially productive job acted as touts, porters, prostitutes and thieves. This unproductive element of the urban poor particularly contributed to the development of urban crime in Warri. Earning barely enough for the essentials of existence the urban poor, encountered social and economic bars which hindered their social

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33.Since Warri was not an industrial but a commercial town therefore it did not develop a large proletariate class.

advancement. This created among them a spirit of resistance, which challenged the capitalist system that held them bondage. Thus the working class, especially those in the P.W.D. began to manifest rudimentary elements of class consciousness and solidarity.

For instance on the 3rd of June 1949 P.W.D. workers embarked on industrial action in Warri demanding increased wages from 1/9d to 3/6d *per diem*. Their appointments were subsequently terminated when the workers refused to heed strong warnings by the colonial officers to return to their work pending the outcome of negotiations.[34]

In the same year conservancy workers went on strike demanding higher wages from their employers. Colonial labour officer attempted to intervene but to no avail.[35] Prisoners had to be employed to carry out conservancy duties between the 3rd and 15th of June 1949 i.e. the period of the trade dispute.

Conservancy labour went on strike again during the first quarter of 1950 demanding a daily wage of 3/6d.[36]

Commenting on the nature of wages earned by casual labour employed by

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34. N.A.I. WP.1 235/1 vol.3, p.66.

35.*Ibid.*

36.*Ibid*, Vol.4 p.52. The eventual outcome of these strike actions are not disclosed in the colonial records and our informants were unable to provide us with information that could fill in this gap.

the colonial authorities in Warri, the local authority in 1950 maintained that:

> "The position with regards to general labour has deteriorated. At 1/5d per day minimum wage the P.W.D. and township council cannot compete with commercial firms (in recruiting labour). Shortage of labour is one of the biggest problems of all major works, especially road development... There is an urgent need to upgrade wages to a minimum of 1/9 per day."[37]

The observation of the colonial officer stationed in Warri is significant in that it highlights the poor wages paid to the labour it hired. It should also be observed that the aim of increasing the daily wage was not with the view of improving the lot of the African labour, but to lure him away from the private companies, which could pay relatively more (though still a meager amount, barely able to sustain the worker on a daily bases).

This exploitation of wage labour is a major feature observable in the social relations of production of the capitalist mode of production.

With the tempo of anti-colonial agitations in Nigeria on the increase, colonial authorities began to make concessions towards its labour in a bid to stem the anti-colonial tide sweeping across the nation. Thus in 1952 colonial government in Warri and Nigeria as a whole increased its labourers daily wage to 2/6d *per diem* and for the small private establishments over time work attracted a

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37.N.A.I. WP.I 235/1 vol.4, p.96.

pay of 4d per hour.[38]

With employers listening more to the complaints of their workers and a general 'rise' in wages the Local Authority in Warri interestingly reported an improvement in industrial relations by 1952.[39] Also, from the first of October 1954 the Western Regional Government raised wages. The minimum wage now became 5/-.[40] Thus we argue that the initiative to improve the lot of the wage labour sector of the urban poor in Warri and Nigeria generally was not initiated by the colonial government, but by the forces of anti-colonialism which by the 1950s had so matured that colonial powers like Britain had no option but to bow to its demands and dictates one of which was the improvement of the lot of the working class.

The middle and urban poor were in some cases able to organise themselves into registered unions in an attempt to protect their interests. For instance we have the Association of Civil Servants of Nigeria, Nigerian Union of Teachers, Nigerian Union of Nurses, Union of Postal and Telecommunications Workers of Nigeria, Technical and General workers Union of Nigeria, Essential Services

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38.N.A.I. W.P.1 235 vol.9, p.53. This particular source also makes it known that the larger firms in Warri also began to pay over time, but the amounts are not available. But we believe that they must have paid a higher rate than the smaller commercial and business enterprises.

39.*Ibid.*

40.*Ibid.*

Workers of Nigeria (i.e. the Union of Night Soil men with their headquarters at Enugu).[41] These unions were represented with branches in Warri, providing a forum for its various members to meet and discuss issues relating to their welfare. Though a large sector of the urban poor were unable to register unions officially with the colonial authorities, they were however able to meet when the need arose at any convenient place to deliberate.

As we earlier observed the inability of a large section of the urban poor to make ends meet drove them into crime. Statistics available show that crime in Warri was gradually on the increase during our period of study. Burglaries, pickpocketing, assault and muggings were the commonest forms of crime.[42] For instance in 1925 395 criminal cases were tried in Warri ranging from theft, battery and assault.[43] In an attempt to curb the rising urban crime rate Warri's police force was increased from 13, N.C.Os. And 46 constables to 3 officers, 15, N.C.Os and 82 constables between 1930-1936.[44]

Because of the high crime rate in Alders town which was notorious for the

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41.Oral Interviews late Barrister Amorighoye and Begho, E.N.A, 21/8/96 and 15/8/96 respectively.

42.Begho, E.N.A., S. Ajafodin oral interviews, 15/8/96 and 31/8/96 respectively.

43.N.A.I. C.S.O. 26/2 11857 vol.4, pp.61 and 77.

44.N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 11857 vol.14, p.432.

burglaries of shops and market stalls a sub Police station was opened in the area. The increased presence of police in the area and the tightening of security arrangements reduced the thefts in the area considerably.[45] By 1946, 344 criminal cases were heard in Warri. This number declined to 296 in 1947.[46] Juvenile case accounted for about 70% of the cases heard between 1946 and 1947.[47]

The oppression, racial discrimination and exploitation experienced by both the middle and urban poor classes by the colonial ruling class made it relatively easy for the nationalist bourgeoisie to mobilise them against the colonial government.

Party politics was another feature of Nigerias urban society on the eve of its independence. In the next section of this chapter we will examine the impact of the colonial economy on the nature of party politics as it manifested in Warri during our period of study.

5.3 The Ethnic Factor and Party Politics

(a) The Theory of Ethnic Conflict

Inter ethnic relations in societies past and present have been characterised by co-operation, friendly competition and accommodation. But more often than

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45.N.A.I. W.P.I 210 vol.I p.26.

46.*Ibid.*

47.*Ibid.*

not these relations are characterised by suspicion, tension and conflict. This negative aspect of intergroup relations is referred to as "ethnicity".[48]

To properly grasp the essence of ethnic rivalry in our present day society, one has to relate it to the struggle for scarce socio-economic resources essential for human existence and social production.

When society was at the communal stages of production the means of production were generally owned. But the gradual emergence of a section of society exercising ownership of the means of production (thus receiving a larger share of the wealth generated from the social relations of production) led to the creation of a sector of society dominated and exploited, struggling with their oppressors to improve their socio economic lot.

We have observed that the units of rivalry determine the groups involved in the struggle to control scarce socio economic resources. For instance, in the extended family the units of struggle are the nuclear family. In the village, struggle for the means of production are between clans. Within the clans conflicting groups are the extended family. For the city more often than not ethnic groups comprise the separate groups struggling for the means of social production.[49]

48.Cohen A. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa* (London, Routledge and Keegan Paul 1969); Sanda, A.O. (ed) *Ethnic Relations in Nigeria* (I.U.P. Ibadan 1976).

49.Sanda, A.O. "The Ethnic Factor in Urban Social Relations" in Sanda, A.O. (ed), *Ethnic Relations in Nigeria* (Ibadan University Press, Ibadan 1976).

Initial contact between ethnic groups in an urban setting tends to be cordial and accommodating but when unhealthy rivalry for scarce resources sets in relations became tense often erupting into open violence.

At this point, we will be quick to make the observation that ethnic rivalry as it has been observed in recent times is really an elite affairs. Playing upon the ethnic and in some cases the religious "unity" of the group the elite manipulate the sentiment and emotions of the masses, thus securing their loyalty, pushing them to violence where necessary to achieve their selfish aims of securing the largest share of the social wealth.

In urban centres where ethnic groups are varied, its inhabitants and migrants often associate with residents with whom they speak the same language. This is due to the fact that those who speak the same language (in an area of diverse cultures and languages) have a greater sense of belonging and unity while other peoples are seen as "out siders". This we believe explains the existence of ethnic associations in urban centres like Warri during our period of study.

For instance we have the "Warri National Union" established in 1945.[50] There was also the "Warri National Congress" founded in 1952,[51] whose major

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50.N.A.I. W.P. 672 pp.1-7.

51.N.A.I. WP. 1444, pp.1-3.

objective was "... to protect and assert Itsekiri rights particularly in Warri."

There also existed "the Urhobo progressive Union" (U.P.U.) established in 1930[52] whose interests among other things was to:

> "... to safeguard the interests of its members in matters pertaining to racial, social and educational matters... in Warri."

The "Yoruba Community League" (L.C.L) and the "Igbo Friendly Society Okere" also existed with aims similar to those of the 'U.P.U.'[53]

For most of the period of its existence, the inhabitants of colonial Warri had lived together in harmony. But it is not surprising (based on our line of argument), that the major incidents of ethnic crisis in the town centred around the claims to ownership of the Warri lands and the struggle for ethnic supremacy within the urban centre between the two major ethnic groups in the area i.e. the Itsekiri and the Urhobos. The elite of each group desired to see the prestigious town as the capital of its ethnic group. Also in an attempt to control the limited economic resources these ethnic groups attempted to dominate the "Warri town Council".

P.C. Lloyd highlights some of the resources at stake for which the various

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52.Orovwehen, E.F.P. "The Urhobo Progressive Union and Developments in Urhobo Land" (Unpublished B.A. thesis History Department, University of Ibadan, 1982).

53.N.A.I. WP.1175, pp.5-6.

ethnic groups sought to control via domination of the town council.[54]

> "Most of Warri's towns trade is conducted in the municipally run market with its over 1,800 stalls. When 10 new stalls were built, there were over a thousand applications (to occupy them). It was generally believed that the members of the town council would allocate the stalls to their friends (being members of their ethnic group)."

Party politics at the national level, within which we will locate political activity in Warri, was also ethnic in nature. Why it had to take this form can only be grasped with an understanding of the nature of Nigeria's colonial economy.

The colonial economy of Nigeria did little to foster the unity of the nationalist bourgeoisie which emerged from the various regions of the country. Nigeria's economy was divided along regional lines, each region specializing in the production of certain crops and natural resources.

Therefore, seeing their regions as exclusive areas of capital accumulation, the indigenous petty bourgeoisie of the various economic regions resisted fiercely other ethnic groups who tried to compete with them for the social wealth derived from their regions thus creating tension and division among the bourgeoisie class of Nigeria.

Since it was from this regionalised bourgeoisie that Nigeria's nationalists emerged, the regionalisation of Nigeria's party politics (which characterised

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54.Lloyd, P.C. "Ethnicity and the Structure of Inequality", *op.cit*, p.225.

already developed with party politics producing new sources of conflict.

At this point we feel it is pertinent to trace the roots of the Itsekiri Urhobo rivalry, which manifested itself at the political level in the 1940s and 50s. By so doing we will be able to conclude that the genesis of this rivalry may very well have started as far back as 1917. A once cordial relationship now manifested suspicion and hatred as a result of British colonial policies.

(b) **Itsekiri Urhobo Rivalry**

Prior to the introduction of the native courts system in the Itsekiri and Urhobo areas, their pre-colonial intergroup relations were cordial; cemented together with intense co-operative economic interaction and intermarriages.[55] Secondly these two groups had never shared the same judicial or political institutions. At these levels each was independent of the other. We will now trace the development of the Native court system in our area of study and show how this brought the Itsekiri and Urhobos under a common socio-political system, which in the view of the Urhobos seemed to subject them to their Itsekiri neighbours thus creating an atmosphere of friction and conflict.

As soon as European traders began to establish their trading posts along the coast of the Niger Delta, there was the strong desire among them for some

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55. See chapter one.

authority sufficiently powerful enough to settle trade disputes between them and the indigenous traders and among the indigenous traders themselves; before such strife led to stoppages in trade.

This desire led to the creation of "courts of Equity" and "Governing Councils". With the establishment of the Oil Rivers Protectorate (later Niger Coast Protectorate) there was the desire for newer and more effective instruments of administration in the area. Therefore the introduction of "Consular Courts", located in areas where Vice Consulates were located.[56]

It is important for us at this point to note that the major characteristic of these forms of judicial administration was that they were presided over solely by British colonial officers. But by 1896 new courts (native courts) existed, with Nigerians sitting as the judges. From sources available there seemed to have been no attempt by the colonial administration to pattern these native courts along the traditional lines of the areas in which they were located. According to Obaro Ikime who has done extensive work on the Native Court system in the Itsekiri and Urhobo areas:[57]

> "The court members were invariably the leading middlemen traders, whose antecedents were not scrutinized by the British authorities...

56.Ikime, O., *Niger Delta Rivalry, op.cit.* P.169.

57.*Ibid*, pp.169-170.

> No special effort was made to discover how the people concerned ordered their political and social life with a view of forming the courts on a similar pattern. The preoccupation was with finding 'some' rather than 'the' authority that could settle disputes."

This had serious implications for the Urhobos, because the Warri Native Council located in Warri had jurisdiction over Itsekiri settlements and a number of Urhobo settlements like Effurun, Tori, Mogba, Effurunfor, Asagba, Agbassa, Adeji and Ogbe-Sobo (Aladja)[58] and yet not a single Urhobo sat on the judicial bench. Of its 16 members in 1896, 15 were Itsekiri and one was Ijaw.[59]

In an attempt to explain the Itsekiri predominance of the Warri court Ikime suggests that the British appointed to the courts those with whom they were most familiar namely the Itsekiri at the coast. The penetration of the Urhobo hinterland by 1896 had hardly begun and it was considered that the Urhobo would probably react unfavourably to British sponsored native courts.[60] But the fact that the Urhobos were attending a court dominated by the Itsekiri became a major source of agitation in the years to come[61] as they now seemed to be subjected to an ethnic

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58. Southern Nigeria government Gazette No.8 March 1905, pp.192-195 shows a full list of early Native Courts.

59. *Ibid.*

60. Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, *op.cit*, p.170.

61. Apart from the Abraka Court not a single Native Court was established in the Urhobo hinterland prior to 1900. Therefore the Urhobo had to take their cases to the Warri Court as no traditional body could administer judicial and executive powers within

group with whom they had always dealt with as equals.

With the amalgamation of 1914 Lord Lugard in an attempt make the Native Courts more 'Native' and effect a general improvement of the system, enacted a new Native Court ordinance which came into effect on the first of October 1914. It allowed the Resident of a Province to establish Native Courts any where in his province with the natives acting as presidents as well as locating a Native Court of appeal in the Provincial capital to serve all judicial councils and native courts in the province. This, with the implementation of the Native Authority Ordinance of 1916 was to have a severe impact on Urhobo Itsekiri relations. In accordance with the 1916 ordinance Chief Dogho (an Itsekiri Chief) was made Paramount Chief and Native authority of Warri Province,[62] which comprised not only the Urhobo and Itsekiri but also the Aboh, Kwala and Western Ijaw ethnic groups. Thus Dogho now had political sway over ethnic groups which traditionally, did not owe him or the Itsekiri any political loyalty.

In accordance with the Native Courts ordinance of 1914 the Resident of Warri Province was to appoint the members of the native courts or judicial councils in consultation with or on the nomination of Chief Dogho. Also Dogho

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jurisdiction of a Native Court.

62. The Nigerian Gazzette Vol.iv No.45, 13 September 1917 (Notice No.104), p.351.

became President of the Warri Court of Appeal. Therefore the appeals of Native Courts within the Province were subject to Dogho's final say.[63]

It cannot be disputed that Chief Dogho used his political influence in the provincial capital to get more Itsekiri Chiefs to sit on Urhobo native courts. After 1914 the number of Itsekiri Chiefs sitting on Urhobo courts suddenly increased. For instance Urhobo Native Courts at Ewu, Uwherun, Ivorogho and Okpare now had Itsekiri Warrant Chiefs sitting in court when before, there was none.[64]

Also seven Itsekiri Chiefs sat on the Agbon native court (Urhobo) in 1930. These Chiefs were representing an estimated Itsekiri population of 180 i.e. one chief for every 26 people. While nine Urhobo chiefs sitting on the same court represented an estimated Urhobo population of 4,652 i.e. one chief for every 517.[65] Though the courts were not houses of representatives, it is peculiar that the stranger elements were more adequately represented than the indigenes. This we believe represented the handy work of Chief Dogho.

Thus by the late 1920s the Urhobos were beginning to agitate for the removal of Itsekiri Chiefs from their courts as their attitudes were becoming

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63. In a province made up of various ethnic groups with various traditional codes of justice, their attendance of a common appeal court dominated by a particular group was bound to lead to conflict.

64. Ikime, O., *Niger Delta Rivalry op.cit.* P.207.

65. *Ibid*, 208.

increasingly overbearing considering the presence of Chief Dogho at Warri.

Dogho himself was not making things any easier for Itsekiri Urhobo relations. In 1920, though legally unable to and totally unauthorised, Dogho instructed the clerk of the Patani Native Court to suspend a Warrant Chief for not carrying out his orders.[66] Chief Dogho was also known to use his influence to intimidate Urhobo villages producing oil palm to sell a puncheon to him at £5 and then retailing it to the British factories at £20.[67]

He was also known to have forced the Chiefs of the Frukama Native Court to supply him with 200 pieces of wood for the erection of his house, using the veiled threat of issuing a summons against them if they failed to comply.[68] In the eyes of the Itsekiri, Dogho (in the absence of the Olu) represented their leaders. This, coupled with his ability to command Urhobo Chiefs, together with the domineering attitude of the Itsekiri, residing in enclaves within the Urhobo hinterland gave them the general impression that they were the 'overlords' of the Urhobo.

This belief later expressed in a newspapers article in 1934, led to the heightened resentment of the Itsekiri by the Urhobos. For instance in the early

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66.N.A.I. Ughelle Papers file 58/19. Memo No.349/1920.

67.N.A.I. Ughelle Papers file 58/19. Memo No.601/1919.

68.*Ibid*, Memo No.15/58/19.

1920s the Urhobo of Kwale division protested vigorously against being forced to attend an appeal court with a permanent Itsekiri president (Dogho).[69]

Initially the presence of Itsekiri Chiefs sitting on Urhobo courts did not cause a conflict as the Urhobo saw the Itsekiri as their friends.

But by the early 1920s they were now agitating for the removal of all Itsekiri Chiefs sitting on their native courts. This desire met with delays from the British which the Urhobo interpreted as an attempt by the British to keep them under Itsekiri subjection.

Another source of conflict between these two groups arose with the Urhobos' efforts to replace the educated Itsekiri court clerks with their own indigenes.

Because of the Itsekiris' geographical position they were able, at an early stage to take advantage of the schools provided by the missionaries and the colonial state. By 1922 of the 17 court clerks in the Itsekiri and Urhobo areas 7 were Itsekiri and 1 was Urhobo.[70] The remaining court clerks were of Yoruba and

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69.N.A.I. Ughelle Papers, file 41/1921, Murphy to Resident Memo of 3 November 1925.

70.It is important to point out here that the court clerks (before the 1930s) were very influential in the native courts system. Because of their educational background and authority, suffice it to say that Mr. Aveling an A.D.O. of Sapele complained in 1922, that in some cases they (the court clerks) were the actual judges. N.A.I. Ughelle papers, file 33/1922.

Benin descent.

Until the late 1930s most of the literate individuals in the Urhobo area were Itsekiri, working in government departments or commercial houses. Thus the Urhobo came to realise the importance of education in their deteriorating relationship with the Itsekiri, whom the British regarded as more enlightened and educated.

Therefore we witness a cry among the Urhobos for the establishment of more schools in their hinterland. In response we find the Church Mission Society C.M.S and the Roman Catholic Mission R.C.M taking up the call. In line with these developments by 1927 we find more schools emerging in the Urhobo hinterland and the Urhobo taking a greater interest in education. In the light of this development, Government College Warri by 1936 had an enrolment of 157 Itsekiri and 155 Urhobo students.[71] With the Urhobo removing one of the imbalances of their relationship with the Itsekiri, they now called for the removal of all Itsekiri clerks employed in Urhobo native courts, to be replaced by their own educated indigenes. There was also the cry for the educated Urhobo elite to now be incorporated into the Native administration (therefore the ejection of all Itsekiri chiefs) in order to effect modern changes and developments needed in Urhobo

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71.Ikime, O. *Niger Delta Rivalry op.cit*, p.243.

society. The British by the late 1920s thus realised the error in allowing Itsekiri Chiefs and court clerks to dominate Urhobo courts. Therefore they replaced more and more Itsekiri chief and court clerks with educated Urhobos.

To the Itsekiri, the British were now conforming to Urhobo demands, moreover with the increased penetration of the Urhobo hinterland, the construction of bridges and more roads, more and more Urhobo villages were now being linked not only with themselves but also with Warri and Sapele; centres of colonial government.

The development of these infrastructure had a far reaching impact on Itsekiri Urhobo relations. For instance the advantages conferred upon the Itsekiri because of their geographical position were now being undermined. With the development of a more efficient communication network the Urhobo oil palm traders now took their produce directly to the European firms thus bypassing and undermining the eminent position of the Itsekiri as a leading middleman trader in the region.

With the 1927 anti-tax riots in the Warri Province[72] and subsequent investigations by colonial authorities into the root causes of the matter it was eventually decided among other things to restructure the province along ethnic

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72.For further details see Ikime, O., "The Anti Tax Riots in Warri Province 1927-28", in *J.H.S.N. Vol.III* No.3 June 1967.

lines. This meant that the new divisions were to coincide with the various ethnic groups making up the Province. Therefore by 1934 when the reorganisation was enacted Warri Province now comprised 4 divisions namely: The Jekrisobo division, Urhobo division, Aboh and the Western Ijaw division.[73]

Of significance to our study of Itsekiri Urhobo relations was the creation of a Jekri Sobo division which was an exception to the general rule of the reorganization of Warri Province along ethnic groupings.

This division comprised all the Itsekiri and five neighbouring Urhobo clans. The Resident argued that the creation of such a division was necessary. He believed that although the two groups would have separate local administrations, bringing them together under one native administration the peoples would learn to co-operate in various activities and through intermarriage eventually develop into a single sub-group.[74]

Events prior to 1934 showed that the Urhobo resented any system which caused them and the Itsekiri to share the same socio-political institutions. And interestingly enough those Urhobo clans in the fore of such protests: the Udu,

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73.N.A.I. C.S.O. 26, file 26767. A broad scheme for the reorganisation of Warri Province along ethnic lines.

74.*Ibid.*

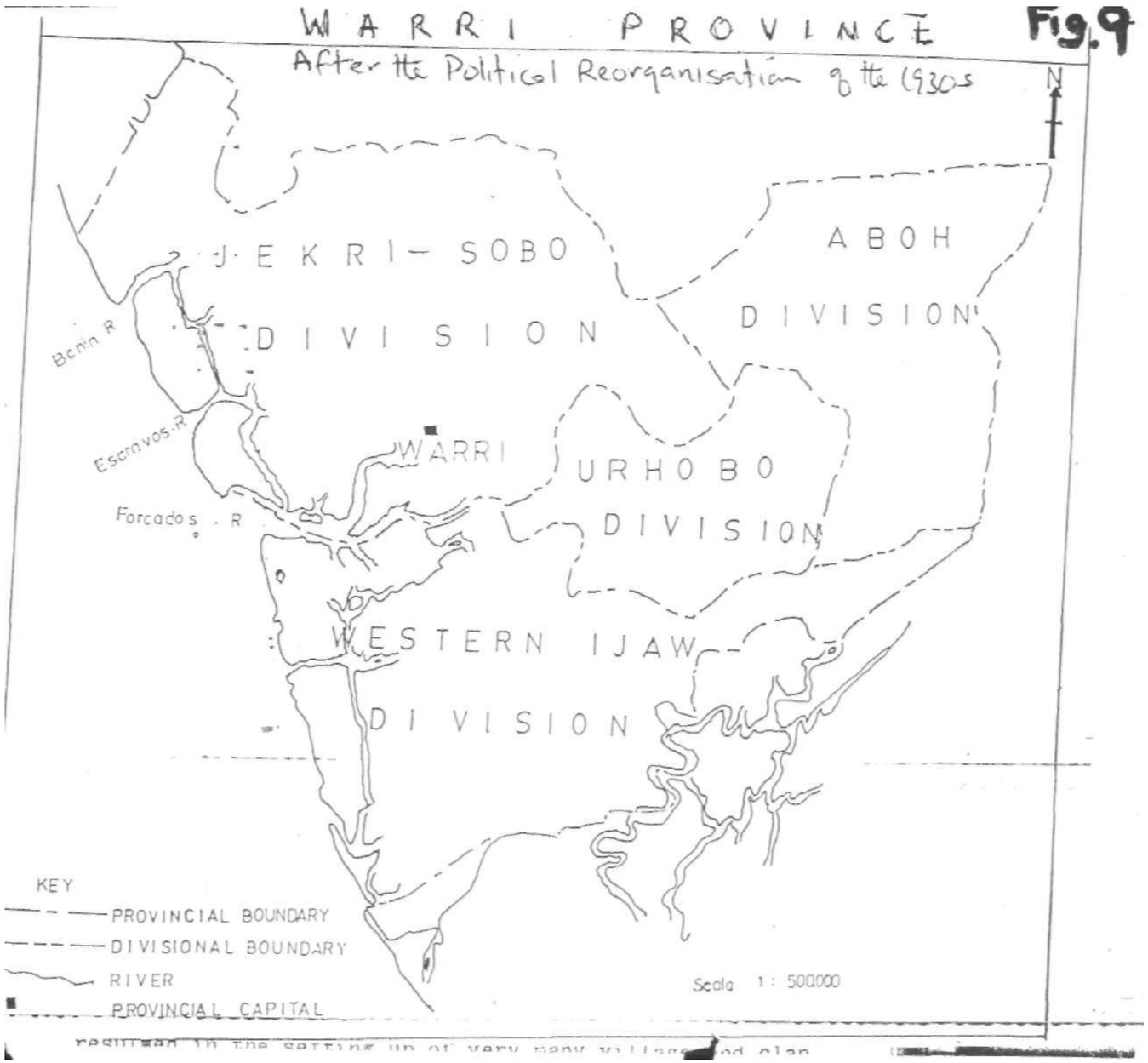


Fig. 9

resulted in the setting up of very many villages and clan

Agbon, Uvbie and Okpe clans, were included in the Jekri-Sobo division.[75] Also the Itsekiri regarded themselves as superior to the Urhobo, therefore so long as this attitude remained with the Urhobo resentment of such, a union of the two groups would hardly be deemed workable. In 1932 there was evidence to show that neither groups attitude had changed; as the Resident himself wrote that "the Jekri desire such a native administration but upon the old basis of Itsekiri predominance. The Sobos at present do not."[76] The administration of the division was characterised by accusation and counter accusation, suspicion and strife. The most common accusation by the Urhobos was that the Itsekiri were attempting to dominate the native administration and that Urhobo tax kept in the divisions treasury was being used to develop Itsekiri areas.[77] Here it can be seen that the creation of the Jekri-Sobo division was a major factor leading to the worsening of relations between the two peoples.

On June the 13th 1934 a newspaper article[78] was published discussing rumours that an *Olu* of Itsekiri land was to be installed. Among other things the author of the article referred to Chief Dogho (who had died in 1932) as the

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75.*Ibid.*

76.*Ibid.*

77.Oral interview Obaro Ikime, 29/7/96.

78.N.A.I. *Nigerian Daily Times* 13th June 1934, p.7.

Overlord of the Ijaws, Urhobos and Itsekiri alike. It also stated that the Urhobo had served as slaves for their Itsekiri and Benin Masters for several years. The nature of the Urhobos response[79] portrayed quite clearly the tense nature of their intergroup relations by the mid 1930s. From the date of the Urhobo response to the Itsekiri write up the five Urhobo clans in the Jekri-Sobo division began to meet on a regular bases at the "Urhobo General Council" which pledged to uphold the rights and pride of the Urhobo people.[80]

In 1936 after a space of nearly eighty-eight years the Itsekiri installed 'Emike', a great grandson of one of the early *Olus* of the Itsekiri. He was installed with the reigning title of Ginuwa the Second.[81] The crowning of an *Olu* after almost a hundred years filled the Itsekiri with an exaggerated conception of the importance of the *Olu*. Thus they claimed that the Olu had full political authority over the Urhobo and the Ijaws.[82]

The Olu himself claimed to recognise no boundaries except those of the

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79.N.A.I. *Nigerian Daily Times* 19th June 1934, p.9.

80.N.A.I.C.S.O. 26 file 51642 III p.3.

81.N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 file 11857 Vol.XIV Warri Province Annual Report 1936.

82.N.A.I. C.S.O. 26 file 54176 Edema Arubi to His Excellency Sir Bernard Bourdillon, No.D248/5 20 of 10th March 1936 p.1. Though there is hardly any history to support this claim, we believe that the position and activities of Chief Dogho and the rivalry between the 2 groups may have spurred the Itsekiri to make these claims.

Oba of Benin, here implying that the Urhobo and Ijaw fell within his traditional domain.[83] The Urhobo naturally resented these claims. The Resident reported that there was "increased bitterness" between the two groups and at one point "the situation looked threatening".[84]

Another source of controversy between the two groups was that the Itsekiri referred to their ruler as "the Olu of Warri." This to the Urhobo was totally unacceptable, in that such a title implied that the Olu ruled over the whole of the Province (also called Warri) and that Warri town also belonged to the Itsekiri, a town over which both groups were battling to claim.[85] The Urhobo argued that the Olu be titled "the Olu of Itsekiri" as this showed that he had jurisdiction only over the Itsekiri people. The issue of the title of the *Olu* contributed to the eruption of violent clashes in Warri in 1952 between the two groups.

Therefore it can be easily seen that by 1940 the two groups stood face to face in two organised blocks competing with each other in the achievement of progress. The Urhobo took advantage of improved communications and transport networks to trade directly with the expatriate firms, this coupled with the natural

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83.N.A.I.C.S.O. 26/2 file 11857 Vol.XIV pp.6-7.

84.*Ibid.*

85.N.A.I. C.S.O. 26 file 09098 vol.x Chief Commissioners Inspection Notes, Warri Province 1936.

resources at his disposal and his greater inclination to work, enabled him to amass wealth via trade and agriculture. This made it possible for the enterprising Urhobos to emerge as big time business men by the 1940s challenging the Itsekiris' initial position of commercial eminence.

Secondly the spread of education into the Urhobo hinterland produced a mass of educated Urhobo civil servants, doctors and lawyers; who were able, during the era of party politics, to rise up to protect the political interests of their ethnic group. Due to the fact that in the province, they out numbered the Itsekiri by far, the Itsekiri saw the Urhobos as a real threat to their political ambitions in the province and Warri town.

It is obvious to see that the Itsekiri, accustomed to viewing themselves as the leading and most privileged group were now being challenged by the Urhobo, who were seen to be robbing them of this 'predominant position.'

In tracing the development of the ethnic rivalry between the Urhobo and the Itsekiri, we find that with the introduction of party politics in the region, these two groups were already formed into opposing camps. Interestingly enough the Urhobos were predominantly members of the N.C.N.C. while the Itsekiri were Action Group (AG) party supporters. These two ethnic groups were to therefore manifest the struggle between their parties at the national level as well as exploit political developments in their bid to secure political supremacy over the other

within both Warri urban and the province.

(c) **Urban Ethnicity**

With the tide of anti colonialism sweeping across the nation more room was being made for Nigerians to occupy higher political positions within the civil service and the commercial sector. Such was the case with Warri's Town Council.

Therefore by 1946 Nigerians in Warri were given a majority of seats on the towns advisory board, with expatriates relinquishing more and more authority and seats.

In 1955, under the Western Regions local government law of 1952, direct elections were to be held for Warri's Urban Council. Each of Warri's wards was to elect a representative to represent it on the towns council.[86] For this election 24 Urhobos stood to contest as ward representatives (15 campaigned under the banner of the N.C.N.C., 6 under the A.G and 3 independent). 14 Itsekiri also contested (8 for the Action Group 3 for the N.C.N.C. and 3 independent). 6 Igbos under the N.C.N.C. also contested.

Eventually elected were 14 Urhobos (all but one being N.C.N.C.), 3 Itsekiri (neither being A.G party supporters and 4 Igbos (all being N.C.N.C.).[87]

86.P.C. Lloyd, *Ethnicity and the Structure of Inequality... op.cit*, p.239.

87.*Ibid.*

The implications of this result is that the Urhobo now comprised the bulk of the towns governing body, thus giving them an upper hand over the Itsekiri in the management of the towns affairs. Secondly this important town was now considered a N.C.N.C. strong hold in the A.G. controlled Western Region of Nigeria.

In an attempt to 'balance the equation' the Western Regional government (viewed as pro-Itsekiri by the Urhobo because of the formers support for the A.G.) made provision by 'Law' that the Olu be made president of the towns council assisted by 6 of his traditional chiefs.[88] It is not surprising to note that the Olu and the 6 chiefs he appointed, were all staunch A.G. supporters.

We believe it is obvious, that the Olu and his chiefs were afraid of losing their claims to Warri town, connived with the Western Regional Government to impose themselves (Itsekiri) on the towns Council.

It is equally clear that the division of the towns council into a predominantly Urhobo N.C.N.C. popularly elected Council and a forcefully imposed Itsekiri A.G. leadership manifests the tussle between the two political parties at the national level and the rivalry between the two ethnic groups at the local level.

The introduction of the Richards constitution in 1946 made provision for

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88.*Ibid.*

result of their population) they had triple the number of Itsekiri representatives in the Western House of Assembly, but they possessed not a single minister at either the regional or national level. Such a position the Urhobos believed, the Itsekiri would exploit to their own advantage. This the Itsekiri seemed to do as in 1952 they reopened the issue of the official title of the Olu.

We have earlier on highlighted how in 1936 the Urhobo strongly resisted and succeeded in stopping the newly elected ruler of the Itsekiri being titled the Olu of Warri. In 1944 the Itsekiri reopened the matter in a petition to the Chief Commissioner Western Provinces. After examining the historical background of the title and the political implications of a change of title at the time, the Commissioner replied that the government would be prepared to change the title to "the Olu of *Iwere* (Iwere being a name sometimes used for the Itsekiri) but definitely not the "Olu of Warri"[92] as the latter title would lead to political upheavals in the province.

The Itsekiri, in 1945 sent a petition to the British Secretary of State for colonies, accusing the British political officers of giving in to the demands of the Urhobos and showing them favour by refusing to have the Olu titled the 'Olu

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92.N.A.I. W.A.R. Prof. File W.P. 86 Vol.I.

Warri'.[93]

The petition was sent to the Governor in Lagos for his comments, who commented that it would be impolitic to agree to Itsekiri demands; considering the history of the tussle for the change of title between the two ethnic groups. Bearing this in mind the Secretary of State in 1946 replied the petition to the effect that the proposed change of title could not be sanctioned[94]. Therefore the Itsekiri shelved their clamour till 1952.

With the A.G. emerging as the ruling government of the Western Region inn 1951 (the Olu being a staunch A.G. supporter) and the emergence of Chief Arthur Prest as Communications Minister in the same year the Itsekiri renewed their efforts in calling for their Olu to be titled the "Olu of Warri."

Chief Obafemi Awolowo the Western Regional Minister of Local Government and also the A.G. leader visited Warri in 1952 after the latest Itsekiri petition was made. Confronting the Minister the Urhobos argued that the renewed demand for the Olu to be titled the "Olu of Warri" was because the Itsekiri felt certain of their influence in the party in power.

Despite the Urhobo protests the Western Regional Government granted the

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93.N.A.I. C.S.O. 26 file 54176 Edema Arubi to Secretary of State for Colonies, No.p.55/32D28, 25 March 194/6.

94.*Ibid.* Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer Administering the Government of Nigeria 4 September 1946.

Itsekiri request in May 1952, therefore the Olu became known as the Olu of Warri.[95]

In the eyes of the Urhobo this pronouncement in favour of the Itsekiri now gave them a stronger claim to the ownership of Warri over which both groups have struggled to claim as their own. The Urhobo had cried out against any political or administrative decision which seemed to confirm Itsekiri claims to Warri urban. Thus the Urhobo and Isoko members of the Western House of Assembly called for a change of name of the Province from "Warri" to 'Delta' in an attempt to pacify the rising tempers of the Urhobos and other members of the Province.[96]

Although this request was eventually granted, by the time it was implemented the Urhobos were goo angry to be pacified by the change of the provinces name. The stage for a show down was now set between the two groups with the proposed visit to Warri by Chief A. Prest on the 8th September, 1952.

As the only Itsekiri A.G. member of the Western House of Assembly the Itsekiri of Warri regarded the Minister as being largely responsible for granting their request. Therefore they were prepared to give the Minister a rousing reception. While the Urhobos of Warri for the very same reasons were determined

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95.N.A.I. C.S.O. 26/2 file 11857/S.I. Annual Report Delta Province 1952.

96.Ikime, O., *Niger Delta Rivalry, op.cit*, p.270. Begho, E.N.A. Chief Oral interview.

to keep him out. The Resident of the Provincne advised the Minister to postpone his visit, which he did. But this did not save the situation, the clash between the two groups was inevitable as the tension generated by their rivalry had reached a head.

The rioting began when Urhobo mobs attacked the Itsekiri procession of welcome. Fighting spread rapidly throughout the whole town spilling over into Sapele. Itsekiri enclaves in the Urhobo hinterland were destroyed thus the loss of vast amounts of property.[97]

Though there was no loss of lives, due to the swift intervension of the Police there was extensive damage to property and cases of severe injuries.[98]

The Urhobo boycotted the Warri market and forbade their people to sell food to the Itsekiri.[99] By the end of the year the police had succeeded in restoring law and order.

The emergence of Chief Festus Okotie Eboh (Itsekiri) as Minister of Finance in 1954 under the N.C.N.C. did little to ease the tension between the two groups. Of great significance in Nigerian national politics, in the eyes of the

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97.Dr. Esiri, oral interview 14/8/96 remembers treating some of the riot victimes in his private clinic for matchet wounds.

98.Ikime,O. *Niger Delta Rivalry op.cit*, p.270.

99.Chief E.N.A. Begho oral interview, 15/8/96.

Urhobo, he was seen as using his influence to fight against the emergence of a responsible leadership among the Urhobos, ensuring only his stouges won provincial elections and protecting Itsekiri interests.[100] Today the relationships between these two groups is still characterised by tension and suspicion, with the leaders of both feeding the fires of ethnic strife with references to real or imagined grievances of past generations.

We may well conclude that the cause of the ethnic conflict between these two groups was colonial policy. Though not intensionally formulated to create tension they brought together various peoples traditionally independent of each other and in this case they seemed to subdue various groups under one particular ethnic group. Therefore the ethnicity that emerged seems an obvious reaction to a new social and political order imposed by the British colonial government.

General Conclusion

In this work we have examined the development and growth of Warri as product of a people adjusting to new economic and political circumstances within a new social environment.

We were able to observe the economic situation in Europe by the early twentieth century and identified the need for finance capital to find new outlets for

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100.Ikime, O., *Niger Delta Rivalry* op.cit, p.272.

profitable investment, raw materials and markets for its finished goods. This desire invariably led to imperialism and the eventual colonization of the African continent.

The penetration of finance capital into the Nigerian region led to the transformation of the traditional socio-political system to meet the needs of the European capitalist economy. As early as 1891, Warri was singled out as an area of significant commercial potential by the British. In an attempt to protect her commercial interests in the Niger Delta region as well as penetrate further inland from the Niger Delta coast in order to extend her political influence, a vice consulate was established at Warri. Therefore Warri functioned not only as a commercial centre but also as an administrative one. These functions she maintained throughout our period of study.

This dual purpose of Warri attracted migrants into the area in search of work with the colonial administration as well as to engage in the commercial activities established here.

In an attempt to meaningfully administer towns like Warri, co-ordinate its spatial growth and ensure the provision of infrastructural and urban facilities the 1917 township ordinance was passed. It was under this ordinance and subsequent urban policies, that Warri grew and developed.

Our study has located the urban process within the colonial economic

system, which influenced its urban development and the role it was to play within the colonial system as a whole. Our thesis has proved that on account of its strategic location and commercial advantages, Warri developed as an important entreport for British goods to be distributed into the Niger Delta and its hinterland. It also functioned as a collection point for raw materials produced in the hinterland, (particularly oil palm) to be exported to Europe.

The import export business and local trade within Warri constituted her economic base. In our effort to show that Warri's urban economy was integrated into the global capitalist system, we showed how its urban economy and society was influenced by the great depression of the 1920s and the second world war. The economic significance of Warri and the British desire to exploit it was also highlighted by showing the vast resources pumped into the development of Warri's main market. By expanding it spatially and providing numerous shops and stalls, the urban authorities provided the facilities and an environment conducive for trade and commerce.

At the administrative level we were able to show Warri's administrative significance with the colonial administrative machinery. We argued that its location and commercial importance were major factors leading to the selection of Warri as an important administrative town in the Western Niger Delta.

In our analysis of residential development and road construction we

observed that these worked hand-in-hand with population expansion towards the spatial growth of the town. We also noted (due to the racial character of colonialism) that municipal spending was in favour of the G.R.A. This contributed to glaring disparities between this area and others in terms of the provision of urban facilities residential development and road construction. The development of educational institutions and recreational facilities to meet the needs of the urban populace was also looked into.

Other salient features of Warri's urban process which we examined were its population growth, class formation and ethnic rivalry.

In the area of its population we were able to use statistics to draw tentative conclusions on the nature of Warri's population growth and ethnic composition during our period of study. In the area of class formation, in our effort to stratify Warri's urban populace we used the following criteria, ownership of the means of production, control of political power, race, occupation and income. With these in mind we classified Warri's population into ruling, middle and urban poor classes. We showed how each group emerged and the major characteristics of each group.

In our bid to fully understand the ethnic strife that manifested itself in Warri, between the Itsekiri and Urhobo ethnic groups during the era of party politics in the 1940s and 50s we were able to trace the historical antecedents of this

rivalry.

We concluded that certain colonial policies were implemented without taking into consideration the traditional relationship between the Urhobo and Itsekiri particularly at the judicial and political levels. These policies especially the Native Court and Native Authorities Ordinances seemed, in the eyes of the Urhobo, to subject them to the Itsekiri.

The Urhobo attempt to free themselves from Itsekiri domination and the Itsekiri efforts to maintain it led to the degeneration of relations between the two groups, which was once characterised by co-operation and mutual friendship. This ethnic strife eventually climaxed into violent clashes in 1952 in Warri between the two groups.

Warri is the product of the penetration of finance capital into the Nigeria and colonial urban policy. In the eyes of the objective, historian, they were the instruments used in the effective exploitation and domination of the Nigerian region.

Bearing in mind that Warri was an integral part of Nigeria's colonial system, we find that it reflected more often than not socio-political developments at the national levels.

We believe the description "colonial urban centre" aptly fits Warri in that it was a product of the colonisation process in Nigeria and it functioned in facilitating the domination and exploitation of the Nigerian region.

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Fig-10

ROAD MAP, WARRI PROVINCE.

SCALE:- 12 MILES TO 1 INCH

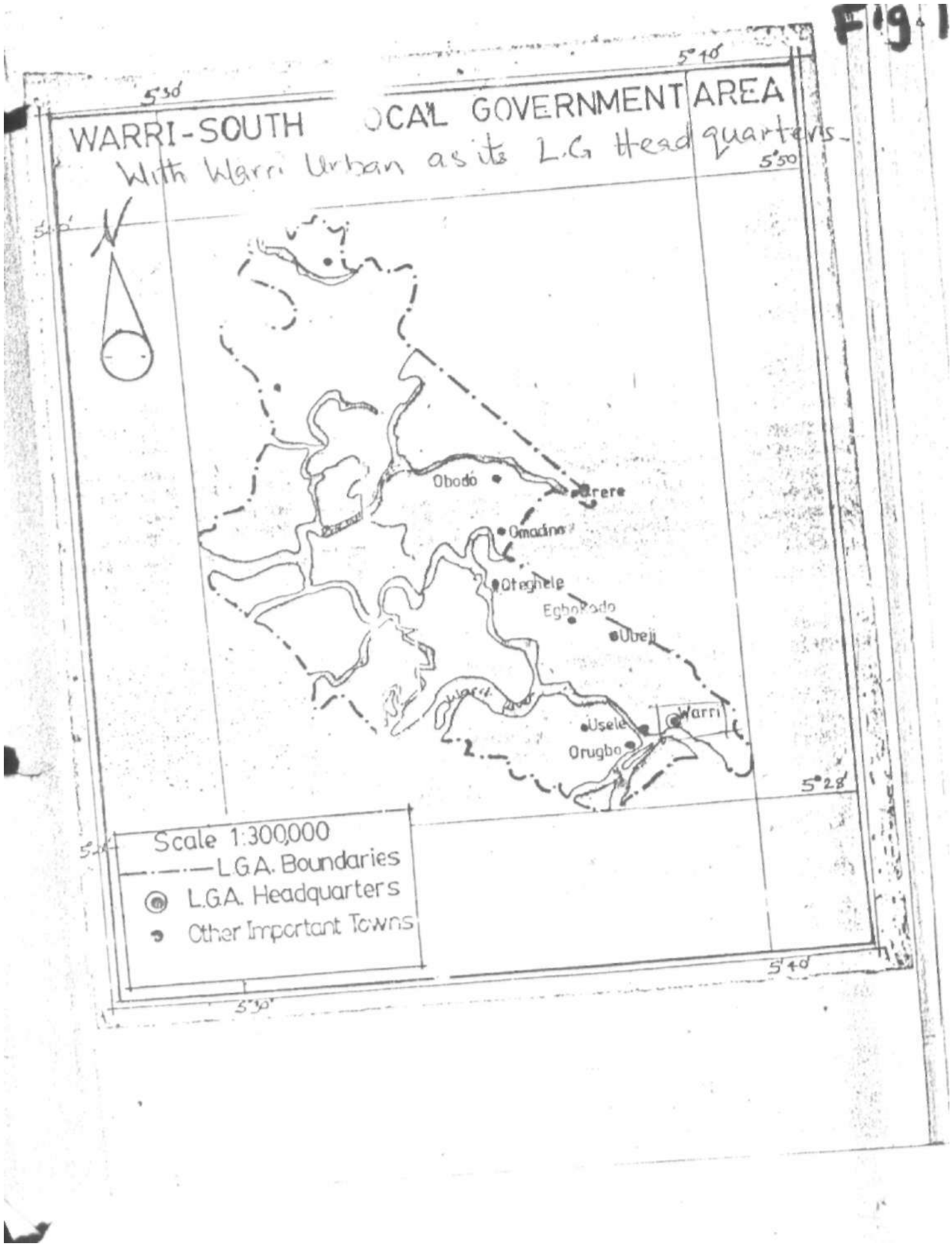


TRACED	D. A. DEDIARE	23.8.44
CHECKED	J. K. INADIAGBO	26/8/44

COPY OF MAP TO ACCOMPANY MEMO. 147/274 OF 9/2/44 P.E. WARRI TO D.P.W.

P.W.D
WARRI
No 107

Fig 1


WARRI-SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA
With Warri Urban as its L.G Head quarters.
5°30
5°10
5°50
5°40
5°30
5°28
Obodo
Ogbe-Ijoh
Omadino
Otegbele
Egbokodo
Ubeji
Iduwini
Usele
Warri
Orugbo
Scale 1:300,000
L.G.A. Boundaries
L.G.A. Headquarters
Other Important Towns

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List of Informants and Dates of Interviews

S/No	Name of Informant	Age	Occupation	Date of Interview	Venue of Interview
1.	Ajafodin, M.	78yrs	Retired Civil Servant	31/8/96	Warri
2.	Amorighoye, F.	67yrs	Civil Servant	21&24/8/96	Warri
3.	Late Amorighoye M	70yrs	Lawyer	21&24/8/96	Warri
4.	Ayomike, J.O.S.	73yrs	Businessman	11/8/96	Warri
5.	Begho,E.N.A (Chief)	83yrs	Businessman	15/8/96	Warri
6.	Borke, E.A.	85yrs	Retired Civil Servant	14/8/96	Warri
7.	Diden, E.M.	56yrs	Contractor	12/12/96	Zaria
8	Esimaje, E.	79yrs	Contractor	30/8/96	Sapele
9.	Esiri, F.O. Dr.	75s	Medical Doctor	14/8/96	Warri
10.	Egbe Preston A. (Ambassador, O.O.N)	80yrs	Retired Civil Servant	12/8/96	Warri
11.	Ikime, O.	N.A.	Historian	29/7/96	Ibadan
12.	Nanna, A.I.	85yrs	Historian	8/8/96	Warri
13.	Okorodudu, A.E.O. (Chief) Mr and Mrs	80yrs and 65yrs	Retired Civil Servant and Business woman respectively	17/8/96	Warri
14.	Ogedegbe, D.O. (Chief)	72yrs	Businessman	18/8/96	
15.	Okotie, S.U.	56yrs	Lecturer	9/1/98	Zaria.