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SPECIAL ISSUE: SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE 6TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC POLICY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES ICOPS2017)

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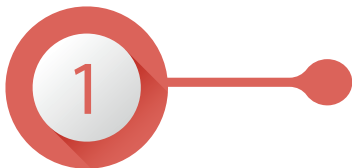
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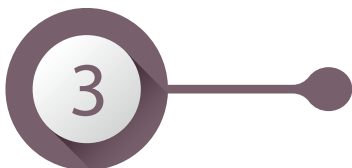
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THE ROLE OF COLONIAL STATE IN THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN MINNA TOWN 1910-1960

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ABSTRACT

Historically some towns owe their emergence to such developments like warfare, trade and commerce while others emerged because of geographical or military factors. Apologist of colonialism and bourgeoisie scholars' emphasized the role of colonial state in the establishment and emergence of town/cities in Africa. This paper adds voice to the existing literature and further argued that it did not just found such settlements but improved on the agglomeration process following its various policies. To successfully conduct this study critical analysis of secondary sources is employed. The research aim at an examination of the growth and development of Minna town in the face of modernization, urbanization and changing socio-economic and political environment, it traced the emergence of the town to colonial era in 1910 following the British conquest of the area and consequent establishment of colonial administrative structures. The significance of the paper lies in its ability to unravel the historicity of the origin of Minna and to point out the colonial state efforts in the historical development of Minna.

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1. Introduction

Towns are usually centers of great social diversity, which makes them place of eloquent human achievement as well as sometimes violent struggle over resources and power. Towns are places that have substantial group of residents and buildings as well as complex social and economic structures (Gale, 2008). The earliest towns are known to have emerged in the Middle East sometimes around 7000BC after the development of agriculture, later towns developed in the regions of Egypt, India, China and Mesoamerica. Throughout human history the emergence, growth and development of towns was a regular aspect of social, economic and political development. It occupies every epoch, mostly as a result of administrative, military, commercial or manufacturing reasons.

A fundamental change in human history is urbanization- that is when larger percentage of a nation's population came to live in the town. This shift western scholars say coincided with the growth of large – scale industry, beginning in eighteen century England (industrial revolution) and spread across Europe and beyond. Many towns grew rapidly as rural migrants arrived in search of work in the

factories or other trades stimulated by urban growth and industrial wealth. Outside of Europe, North America experienced the most dramatic nineteenth century urban growth. The twentieth century, especially in the second half, saw rapid urbanization in other regions of the world in mostly East Asia and Africa.

In the poor countries especially Africa, urban growth has been concentrated in a single city, typically the capital, with floods of grants drawn by rural over population, political turmoil and the collapse of agricultural subsistence economy. This is fundamentally different from the 19th Europe, because it is urbanization without industrialization. The emergence of towns in the Nigeria area antedates industrial revolution and colonial rule. Far back in Nigeria there existed ancient towns and cities that date back to thousands of years some of which are places like Kano, N gazargamu, Katsina, Benin, Ile-ife, Zaria and Kanem-Borno.

These early urban centers were points of great politics that impacted on varied degrees of social, political and economic control over connecting areas and beyond. The foundation and early development of these centers may be ascribed to many factors. These include geographic location, transportation, and security, commerce, military and administrative.

Urban growth and development in our area of study started during the colonial era (Bawa, 2004). The British conquest of Northern Nigeria in 1903 stimulated the emergence of some settlements for either administrative or commercial purposes (Liman and Adamu, 2005). British policy of selective development of transport infrastructure resulted in the rise or expansion of towns at seaport, river port, and railway routes. Thus modern Minna town is one of such settlements that owe its emergence and development to British colonial activities with particular reference to railway transport system.

With reference to the above, although various works exist on urbanization in general and Nigeria in particular, however some of the existing works that deal directly with Minna town are devoid of explanations in respect of the social and economic factors responsible for the growth and development of the town. This research therefore seek to fill the existing gap in the available literature by examining the state propelled socio-economic policies and activities that aid the emergence of Minna town within our period of study.

The general aim of the study is to examine the growth and development of Minna town in the face of modernization, urbanization and changing socio-economic and political environment. In specific terms the study aim to; examine the emergence of modern Minna town, examine the pooling factors that have necessitated its growth and development and examine the various policies of the colonial state that enhanced the urban growth and development of Minna town.

2. Literature Review

A reader on the urbanization of town/city is confronted with fundamental conceptual and methodological problems. One of such is the availability of multitude sources on towns and cities with strange approaches and perspectives most of which are professionally prejudiced while some are ethnocentric, yet others are even ideologically enclosed. Any discussion on this topic is essentially on urban growth and development hence the transformational elements of phenomena are to be found in the process of changes. Thus discussing the role of colonial state in the emergence of Minna Town implies studies in the urbanization process of towns hence; we look at how scholars have conceived or studied urbanization in general and Minna in particular.

In confronting this problem, Percey cited in cautioned that “Do not be too hasty in trying to define the city; it is much too big, and there is every likelihood that you will get it wrong”. Defining a city/town is quiet difficult because of its complications. Despite the confusions that surround urban studies generally it is an agreed fact that towns/cities are now growing rapidly all over the world and that urbanization forcefully in progress than at any other time in human history. Urbanization is completely a complex phenomenon, with many dynamics some of which differ from one another. Several disciplines of varied perspectives attempt an explanation of the phenomena in favor of professional interest. However the complexity of the process of urbanization as well as the scholar’s conceptual and methodological variance seems to be much obvious in the developing countries. Equally of concern is the matter of divisions in academic disciplines among scholars and their reluctance in the same discipline, to accept definitions by their colleagues (Breeze, 1969). On the other hand Miner (1967) posited that what constitute urbanization is that, each study indicates everyone knows what a town or city is, except the expert to whom the city or town is many things among which none is clearly dominant. He added that it is the sociologist who wonder most about the fundamentals of the town or city and have not agreed on conception, approach and analysis.

One prominent and earliest writer on urbanization that must be noted first, but who has been less recognized by most urban researchers was Ibn Khaldun. In his work, *The Muqaddimah*, written as far back as the 14th century, notes that, it is only people who are sedentary that establish towns or cities. A key factor in their growth and expansion which he noted is security. If the city is located in a region and surrounding that enhances its security, then people flock into it and seek refuge (Ibn Khaldun, 1958:258). Ibn Khaldun seems quite mindful about the environment in which towns and cities are located. For he says, they should be located near a river or a spring so as to ease the urgent water problem of the inhabitants. The environment in which the city is located should be ecologically suitable so as to provide timber for firewood and roofing; and the city is located close to the sea to facilitate the importation of foreign foods from other countries. He also mentions royal authorities as another pre-requisite for the emergence and development of towns or cities (Khaldun, 1958).

A major theoretical construct is that which pushed forward the transportation theory, and maintain that the primary reason for location of towns and cities relates to the transportation factors’. The theory upholds that proximity to river, port, and canal informed the sitting of towns or cities for easy accessibility to other parts. This theory was propounded by Charles H. Colley in his work ‘Theory of Transportation’, which Adner Weber in his “Growth of Cities in the 19th Century” expanded by adding other factors like economic revolution, higher incomes and standard of living, literacy and political activities, all combining to influence the growth of any town or urban center (Weber, 2008). This is true of many African urban settlements including Minna whereby the colonial state encouraged the above factors which brought about rapid urbanization.

Scholars have posited a materialist theory which argued that technology, industrialization, scientific and agricultural revolution results into towns and cities. Strong found the evolution of urban centers as a product of essentially capitalist-materialist growth in contrast to moral prosperity. There is also a bourgeois proponent of Adner Weber’s style- The Political Economy theory which arguably advances political causes of town or city growth through legislation that promoted free trade, freedom of migration, centralized administration and free form of land tenure politically defended in the urban area.

Another issue of crucial importance that need to be mentioned is the fact that earlier urban scholars

in particular were most often prone to modernization perspective which is a bourgeois perspective that understood urbanization and its transformation to be the impact of capitalism, industries and infrastructural development brought about by technology and imperialism. Thus they discussed urbanization in the developing countries with the assumption that it was the impact of colonial policies and economy. These studies are emphatic that “urbanization in newly developing countries was affected by forces outside these countries, as was dramatically illustrated by the impact of World War II”. They observed that the colonial administrative centers and infrastructural development were responsible for the gradual increase in the population and migration to towns and cities (Breeze, 1969). To some extent this is true of many town and cities in Nigeria and the entire colonized countries.

Lewis Mumford, in his work *The City in History*, made us to understand that no single definition of the city will apply to all its manifestations and no single description will cover all its transformation (Mumford 1966). To him, the city metamorphosed out of the village, which he sees as a small and simple settlement which has order, stability intimacy and oneness with the forces of nature and characterized by organized government, morality, law and justice and with a rudimentary division of labour determined more by age and strength. He explained that when the city emerges, the village becomes its quarter of neighborhood. Therefore, he says, the origin of the city “was the chief fruit of the union between Neolithic and a more archaic Paleolithic culture”. It seems that Mumford’s universal definition as good as it sounds however, does not seem to imply universally in all cases, for evidence abounds about cities founded on village sites whose inhabitants were removed to another location entirely (Mumford, 1966). In the book *The Pre-industrial City*, he maintained that urban agglomerations are product of feudal or pre-industrial society and industrial- urban society. He defines a city, in contra-distinction to a village, as having a greater size, density and heterogeneity. An indeterminate definition as the one given by Louis Wirth but goes further than Wirth to identify three crucial factors favoring the emergence of cities variously as; a favorable ecological base, a relatively advanced technology in both agricultural and non-agricultural spheres and a complex social organization involving a well-developed power structure (Sjoberg, 1965). His contention that all these conditions had to be fulfilled before the city emerges however seems to be an indication of his shortcoming in failing to see the emergence of the city as a process, a process which goes hand-in-hand with the development of those ingredients vital to the burgeoning of the centre. Abdullahi Smith (1987) seems to have realized this as he has brought out this issue clearly in his study of state formation in Kano.

Akin Mabogunje, (1968) endorses Louis Wirth’s definition of an urban center as a “relatively dense, large and permanent settlement of a socially heterogeneous individuals”. The process that results in the emergence of urban centers according to Mabogunje is one which seeks to, through maximum specialization to increase the output of goods and services in a community. This is a continuing process, which increasingly relate to functional specialization in human society. According to him, the increasing urbanization in Nigeria in the closing decades of the 19th century and that of the early 20th century was due mainly to the application of advanced technology in soil cultivation to produce bountiful harvests (Mabogunje 1968:24). He however, did not indicate his source, neither does the evidence seem to likely exist. Evidence abounds which rather contradict his claim that the British conquest and colonization of Nigeria since the late 19th century, to the early 20th century was accompanied by food shortages and even famine, nor was any form of technology introduced that caused a revolution in food production techniques. It seems most likely that the author’s perspective is not historical and therefore, incapable of perceiving colonialism as a decisive intervention by a capital power to change the social relations of production of the colony

along its desired motive and transforming the colonies' economy, into an import/export enclave one, bereft of any form of independent technology that will lead to industrialization and independent development.

Using the Materialist conception, in a study titled, "A History of Sabon Gari Zaria, 1911 - 1952: A Study in Colonial Urban Administration," discussed the beginning of the British conquest of Zaria in 1900 and the establishment of an administrative structure by 1911 with the resident D.O., the Engineer and Medical Officers, which coincide with the year the railway, also reached Zaria. He says the railway, colonial administrative machinery and the European trading companies resulted in increased in migrants who in order to house them brought about the establishment of Sabon Gari, a product of British colonial design based on separation in space, ethnic, regional, religious as well as racial considerations. He maintained that overcrowding in Sabon Gari led to migration to Tudun Wada. While poor health conditions led to outbreak of cerebrum spinal meningitis ending in some deaths.

Urbanization involves a complex interplay of socio-economic, political, technological, geographical and cultural factors. He posited that colonial urbanization has to be examined within the context of the colonial system. He narrated how Kaduna became a center of British colonialism in Northern Nigeria. According to him after temporarily settling at Lokoja and Zungeru finally choose Kaduna in 1913 as the military and administrative capital of Northern Nigeria for a number of factors like its centrality of location, excellent water supply, and strategic location in the railway networks, cooler climate, freedom from parasites. He related that no sooner was Kaduna founded that the British adopted a segregated urban policy which saw the establishment of Sabon Gari and the Clerks quarters and European reservation areas with rapid development of infrastructures. He clarified that the Kaduna urban economy was based on commerce and administration with majority of the inhabitants of Kaduna being low income wage earners. He illustrated that by 1929, the 10,000 population of Kaduna had begun to acquire a cosmopolitan character. He writes that the Second World War resulted in the growth of Kaduna as a center for troop recruitment. Thus the rapidly growing urban center had to derive its food requirement from surrounding areas

Bawa (2014) in his work saw the role of great men in the development of Towns hence he argued that it was the activities of Ahmadu Bahago the first Emir of Minna that galvanized the Gwari together as one people. The work argued further that other illustrious son of Minna contributed immensely to its development using their office as Head of State. Other works that also directly relate to this are those that see the emergence of the town resulting out of inter group relations and saw the economic and social factors in the relations are major reasons for the growth not emergence of the town.

3. Research Method

The research utilizes both primary and secondary source material to collect data. Archives provided the much needed primary data which is an integral source of acquiring historical information (Gunn and Flaire, 2013). The secondary source materials comprised of Textbooks, Journals and Conference papers some of which are from the internet. From the assemblage these data that document analysis of literature on urbanization in general and Minna town in particular is critically undertaken. Therefore the research is based on literature review of sources which comprise of published and unpublished works found as documents stored in libraries, archives and files (Gunn and Flaire, 2013; Kothari 2004).

4. Findings

On the 1st January 1900, a British imperial officer, Captain Fredrick Lugard at Lokoja hosted the Union Jack that marked the beginning of British administration in Northern Nigeria. In 1901 Lugard launched an offensive on Bida and kontagora both of which were defeated. By piecemeal approach British forces was able to defeat the whole caliphate in 1903 with the fall of Kano and Sokoto. The conquest brought to an end the incessant raids on Minna by Kontagora.

The conquest of Sokoto therefore marked the annexation of the whole of the area within its geo-political jurisdiction including the pagan settlements such as those of the Gwari, Kamuku, Kadara and Koro. Therefore, the conquests of Sokoto caliphate which include the initial defeat of Kontagora transferred allegiance of authority to the British from all the localities and principalities that were formerly under Kontagora. Thus, British defeat of kontagora marked the liberation of Minna Gwari and that paved way for the establishment of colonial rule in Minna as was done in other places.

Following the conquest of Kontagora the colonial administration began to embark on reorganization of political entities of which in 1905, Bosso Minna, Pytha, Shatta, Maikunkele, Gurusu and Paiko were merged together by the British under Minna Division. This incidentally coincided with the construction of Minna – Kano and Baro lines. Subsequently; Minna later gained the status of District headquarter, provincial headquarter and territorial headquarter of the railway cooperation which played a vital role in elevating the status of the town. Colonial rule aided the emergence or as in some cases decline, while in others expansion of some existing settlements in Nigeria and colonized societies in general. The Gwari who are the native group in the area have their ancestral home on Paida hill, which had both political and spiritual significance, but was abandoned for the plain land southeast of present Minna following British conquest. The coming of colonial rule in early 20th century was the major event responsible for the movement of the Gwari to the present area of Minna. This was because colonial rule liberated the Gwari from persistent Fulani and Nupe raids that had forced the people to remain on the hill top (Muazu Sokoto). Colonial rule brought significant developments in such areas as urbanization, economic and social developments; which invariably led to the emergence of some settlements because of the policies, institutions and infrastructures that were established. These include; the railway, mining, police and administrative structures.

5. Discussion

5.1. Origin and Emergence of Modern Minna Town

The word Minna derives from Gbagyi language which connotes different meanings according to the traditions of origin of the town. One of such is that, given the location of the settlement on the hill top from where invaders (slave raiders) can easily be seen the people usually roll heavy rocks on the coming attackers in addition to poisonous arrows (Galadima, 2010:40). Thus it was very difficult to invade the hilly settlement hence the name Minna meaning “they can’t conquer” as invaders usually retreat (Galadima, 2010:4).

* Two son of Minna became Nigerian Head of State they are General Ibrahim Babangida 1985-1992 and General Adbulsalami Abu bakar 1998-1999

A second version of the tradition has it that, in the formative years of the settlement people of Minna and their cousins in neighboring settlements have the traditions of marking a new year by quenching all fire in every house hold. The king makers will then bring fire from the village of Bwogi (from where the people are said to have dispersed) to other principalities. Prayers and celebration for good harvest year and a prospective new year are usually undertaken during the event. To that effect Minna got its name which comes from Gbagyi words; MYI meaning distribute or spread and NNA implies fire. Thus put together we have MYINNA meaning the distributors of fire or spreading of fire.

Another oral tradition regarding the name Minna is that which connect the settlement to a spirit serpent that was said to lived in a cave on the hilltop ancient settlement. The serpent was called Mi-na coined from mi-ona (literally meaning the serpent that swallows goat). This tradition is not accepted by most indigenes of the area although it is generally believed that such a spirit lives in the caves of the hills.

The indigenous dwellers of the hilltop settlement called Minna are the Gbagyi but corruptly pronounced as Gbari by their neighbours the Nupe and Gwari by the Hausa. The Gbagyi as they preferred to be called like most African tribes believed they migrated to their present home from some place in the north. One tradition has it that they came from Borno in the North-east of present-day Nigeria while another holds that they migrated from Zaria to Abuja from where they dispersed. These are hermitic hypothesis as studies have shown that languages such as Gbagyi, Kadara, and koro are indigenous to their present areas of abode (Obayemi, 1977). However, the inhabitants of old Minna (hilltop) claim they came from Borno area in the mid-18th century first they settled at Bwogi, near Lafiyagi from where they moved to the hilltop later called Minna for the purpose of defense which is a common characteristic of most of the stateless societies in that region (Galadima, 2010:41).

The Minna Gwari has before the advent of colonial rule in the area evolved kingship known as Otsu. He was appointed by a council of elders who are the king makers that were seven in number as follows: Madaki Yinkagbin, Galadiman Paida, Galadiman Taayi, Galadiman Pmassi (Shakwata) Shaaba Dogan Birgi Wambai Dayin and Damidami Fadayin. The Otsu was surrounded by men that today form the various District head(s) of: Yinkangbin, Shango, Taayi, Shakwatu (Pmassi), Birgi, Danyin and Fadayin (Galadima, 2010) Although the king did not have established Paraphernalia of kingship such as royal bodyguard and standing army, but trumpets were said to be used for him (Bawa, 2010:2). The first in the list of kings crowned on the hilltop was Otsu Sagbakun c-1750 followed by Otsu Dubadna, Shegbe, Yakwonko, Tuku, Baba, Diko 1, Shango, Diko11, Bwaba, Shegbe 11, Musa Kwatu Bwaba and Gwadeze.

Minna is located within the geo-political area of Sokoto Caliphate which came to form part of Northern Nigeria. In the 19th century, the Fulani who through the Jihad seized political power in the region and established government on hitherto non Fulani emirates that was in existence. Societies outside the Caliphate especially those that have not evolved centralized authority became easy prey for slave raiders, which constituted an integral part of the caliphate's economy. European arrival in the region in 19th century and consequent conquest of the area at the beginning of the 20th century instituted colonial administration on the area

5.2 Colonial State and the Emergence of Modern Minna 1910-1960

The study of the emergence and transformation of Minna is important if one consider the fact that

the middle belt zone, where Minna is geographically located in Nigeria is the least urbanized region in Nigeria. The creation of metropolis and periphery zones in the world system could be part of the reasons for this which clearly indicates the importance of the role of the State in the emergence of Minna as an urban centre.

Minna indeed is one of such towns whose development is attributed to its being a Colonial Provincial headquarters, Native Authority headquarters and at the same time Territorial office of the railway cooperation. Before the end of the first decade of the 20th century, Minna already housed people from various parts of West Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Most of these people were attracted by the political and economic potentialities of the area. It is evidently clear that the town has long been a place (make shift trade center) where people come to buy food items from different parts of the country.

Essentially the railway factor is significant in the development of Minna town. Transportation system of this kind is harbinger of increase population and economic expansion. This is because it provides a meeting point where people from different walks of life meet for various motives most of which are of economic importance. The railway which came to Minna in 1905 attracted workers, traders and adventurers most of who settled in the town (NSGAM: APN 328).

An important element that is of tremendous economic significance is the discovery of gold in Minna. As early as 1908 gold mines attracts people to Minna from different parts of the country (NGSAM, 187). This highly valued metal brought in gold diggers, usurps, buyers and these consequently enhanced the consolidation of the town as these various people settled down.

Colonial economic policies on especially cash crop production and other related commodities also played significant role in attracting people to Minna. Being a railway junction and administrative center products are collected or received by the middlemen and their European partners for easy transportation to the sea. Some of the popular items collected included groundnuts, cotton, Shea-nut and hides. There was also the Minna pig farm which was one large industry that produced huge quantity of poke meat for Lagos market. The industry employed labour and also generated economic activities thus; it attracted population into the town. Similarly, the provision of administrative machineries such as police, prison services, courts and infrastructures like; healthcare centers, schools, portable water and electricity further accelerated its development.

The increase in agglomeration was spurred by the activities and policies of the colonial state. An established fact about this development is the attraction by the administrative and economic potentialities of the town of different people because of its administrative positions namely: District, Provincial and Railway territorial headquarters. Essentially the railway factor is significant in the development of Minna town. Transportation system of this kind is harbinger of increase population and economic expansion (Hopkin, A.G. 1973, PP.62). At the attainment of independence in 1960, Minna have assumed the essential characteristics of urban settlement with a relative population and size that qualifies it to be so.

6. Conclusion

The colonial state in the effort to realize its objectives establish favourable conditions for the emergence of some town while others expanded from the level of a clan. Modern Minna town is said to be a British creation this paper proved its disagreement with that claim but that what happen was

the relocation of the settlement from hilltop to a more wider and plain land. Colonial state provision of basic necessities of life for the sole purpose of achieving its own goals of exploitation brought about increased peopling of the place which at independence in 1960 had fully become one of the urban centers in Nigeria.

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