



A Historical Survey of Urbanisation in West Africa

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Abstract

The rapid changes being experienced in the social realm of the world would sometimes distort peoples understanding of real and rightful situations of issues in human socio-cultural operations. Urbanization is one of such issues. The concept has come under staggering controversy especially on the very determinants of it and actual places of its original experience. Such theories as the theories of Hamitic Hypothesis and Diffusionism have sometimes been used to easily explain its manifestation in certain areas of the world without proper evaluation and determination. This scenario is akin to the opinions being held among some people on the place of urbanization in West Africa. This cultural phenomenon is not the prerogative of certain persons alone but a human ideology. It has been experienced in West Africa as is x-rayed in this paper and has continued to evolve against the globalization processes enveloping the world (the region inclusive). The paper shows how and why the urbanisation in West Africa was experienced and the problems facing its clear understanding and the solution to such. It advocates for continuity in this respect using some laudable global programmes such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and Sustainable Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and by looking inwards, in attempting to improve the infrastructure and social amenities and uplift the standard of living of the people.

Introduction

Urbanisation-that is the idea of human settlement, being better transformed from certain rural characteristics to those of an urban settings or standards (towns, cities, etc.), has given birth to a concept of learning today, that has enjoyed very wide discussion. Urbanisation has brought together different scholars from diverse disciplines (anthropologists, historians, sociologists, cultural studies experts, geographers, etc.), who have defined and viewed it in varying ways. For instance, Child (1950), defined it as bearing density of

population, full time specialization, surplus food, monumental architecture, political authority, writing, calendrical and mathematical sciences, art, raw materials and regular foreign trade traits. While Redman (1978), saw it *inter alia* as basically a non-agrarian community. These attempts have not received universal acceptance as we shall see soon in this paper and has infact led to Holl (1985:99), calling them 'waste of time and energy.' Looking into the future experts have got new visions in West African urbanisation with such programmes as 'A vision of West Africa in the year 2020 (WALTPS) and such terms as africapolis, metropolis and e-Geopolis are been interchanged in describing urban centres in the region.

Urbanization agreeably, is a universal concept that acts as indicators in human social development, changes in man's interest, activities and values and tendency of increasing functional specialization. Its aspects and manner of manifestation however, are quite at variance given the environmental and socio-cultural cum political conditions peculiar to different places. Arnaud (2012), observed the intensive urbanisation process occurring in West African countries are captured by some data provided by Africapolis (2009). There have been wrong assumptions on the impetus for development of complex West African societies. Once again, there has been Euroasian and American shallow Hamitic view of total outside stimulation of the indigenous developments especially the urban centres in the region. This, they saw as stemming from the initiation of trans-Saharan trade for gold and slaves and also around the coastal forest areas with the advent of the western explorers, traders, missionaries, and colonialists, from and in the sub-Saharan regions respectively.

This has been met with opposition from critical and objective intellectuals. Andah (1979) and Gugler and Flanaga (1979), for example debunked Redman's non-agrarian urban phenomenon as holding no water. He noted that it was only with increased food production resulting in food surplus and improved distributive network that urban centres such as those in Yorubaland of South-Western Nigeria, began to concentrate on either technological and socio-political activities. Also Child's perception of urbanism, is criticized and thus not accepted because such a view tends to emphasize discrete elements without realizing that any civilization functions by inextricably related variables which constitute a system such that if one is affected the others will necessarily receive equal treatment (Sabcoff and Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1974). This necessitated Subloff and Lamberg-Karlovsky's further call for the adoption of a dynamic view of urbanism, using the systemic approach instead of that of Child.

Infact scholars since the 1950s have called for a move away from the erroneous criteria of understanding the concept of urbanism such as those based on Western Industrialization (See David, 1955 and Schawab, 1954) and redefinition of it. Outside of this, observed Robson (1975), studies in urbanism that is focused on towns, without the society on which they exist being put into consideration, deprives us of possible avenues of the proper understanding. In this way, the African situation will be accommodated in such consideration (Mabogunje 1961). This is because of the realization that there are infact certain distinctive features characterizing the Euro-American city or town which are either not present or not necessary in Africa, or the other way round. For instance Lloyd (1973) pointed out that strict social heterogeneity and industrial economy may not be as important a yardstick in a West African city as in a European city.

Nonetheless African scholars posed with this problem are to solve it authentically by proving that urbanism in Africa stems from antiquity beyond period of contact with Arabs from North Africa or Westerners or having outside impetus only as it were. Attention is paid to the systemic approach suggested above as an area of possible/viable solution to this problem. Since urban phenomenon is subsumed under culture which is holistic in nature, one looks for those operational functions of both the urban concept and other intricacies of existence working in *paripassu* with it. As such attempts at operational definition that will respect those other areas of operation of the same system which might have caused other developments including the urbanism to remain as it was are made. Effah -Gyamfy (1987), passed one of such definitions considered good. For him urban as an operational definition is one he considered a pre-colonial settlement, if the particular settlement is mentioned in written records, oral sources or known through archaeological surveys and excavation, as being large, relatively dense and above all dominating the neighbouring settlements in the areas of its location, in economic, society social, religious and political respects.

The areas of prove lay in evidence from historical information, archaeological works, ethnography, oral traditions/information demographic, economic, religious, political and social considerations.

Historically, that is judging from written history, Ghana is recorded as the easiest kingdom in West African Sahel -Sudan covering today's areas of South-eastern Mauritania and Western Mali. The king of ancient Ghana was said to have acquired his revenue from two main sources. First, control of the trade facilitated by the presence of gold in his territory and secondly taxes levied on products moving in and out of the kingdom. Ghana reached its apogee around the beginning of the 11th century, when it could field a force

of 200,000 warriors on short notice (Gurgler and Flanagan 1979: 8).

Ghana's authority in the south reached the gold bearing region of Bambuk, and the Berber town of Awdaghost in the North was also under its authority until 1054/5 AD. The empire had its capital at Koumbi-Saleh, a town and a city with palace of a negroid king and a multi-religious and social seat of government. The empires began to stagger at some point and finally fell in the hands of her former vassal state which become Soso kingdom. Thus theoretically, it is clear that there were towns in the ancient empire of Ghana which to large extent meet the requirements of urbanism contextually.

The next empire to go even more extensive in the region is Mali. Mali was in control of the termini of the trans-Saharan routes, the upper valley of the Senegal and towards the Gambia. Its authority extended over all internal trade routes towards the North through which gold was carried to meet the trans-Saharan trade. The empire was at its peak between 1312 and 1317 under the celebrated Mansa Musa whose pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324 put in the territory in the world map [thus establishing the empire's fame outside the Sudan. Mali had links with the Muslim world outside the Sudan such as that with the Sultans of Morocco. Mali controlled Takrur and the Gambia in the West, Upper Niger and the Malinke colonies in the south, the foothills of the Bandigara scarp, up to Gao in the east and Tadmakka in the northeast and the nomad Barbers of the Sahel including Walata. The empire then became so vast and heterogeneous and therefore, difficult to manage. Eventually the problems of control and insurgence started, with many of its important provinces breaking away by the 14th C. (see Levtzion 1971).

Gao, one of the break way provinces, became the base of the kingdom of Songhai that succeeded Mali in the Western Sudan. This old kingdom had been active in the trans-Saharan trade since the 8th C. A.D. (see Gurgler and Flanagan 1979). Sunni Ali (1464 - 1492) ruler of Songhai expanded the empire later to encompass such trading centres as Timbuktu and Jenne thereafter. Under Mohammed Askia Toure (1493 - 1528), the empire came to its greatest extent. Mohammed Toure was a warrior who through military expeditions expanded the borders of Songhai empire as far as Tekrur in the West, the border of Taghaza and Agades in the north - east (economic sources of the empire). This empire got to the Hausa states and beyond the Niger basins to the south.

Mohammed Toure's pilgrimage to Mecca rivalled that of Mansa Musa in pageantry and liberty. Being a good tolerant Moslem he established Islamic court of law in the state among other things while still running a secular

government at least at the local level. He was deposed by his sons in 1528 and the empire suffered succession disputes, raids and internal intrigues (Willis 1971) as from then on. It managed some degree of stability however, until their defeat by the Sultan commissioned Moroccan army and subsequently disintegrated just to be a part of another state-Ruma.

Other than Ruma, there were other relatively smaller states that emerged in the Sudan after the fall of Songhai such as Barbara, Segu, Karta, and Massina. Gugler and Flanagan (1979), recorded that the losses in some activities in western Sudan turned to the advantage of the people in the east where the remnants of Sudan's political and economic power shifted. Here such influx of many traders and scholars aided the consolidation of people including Kanem – Bornu Empire and the Hausa states in the present day northern Nigeria. Kanem-Bornu a two phase empire (Kanem and Bornu) founded in the first millennium A.D by Magumi nomads was about the longest lasting empire in the history of Sudan spanning to close to 1,000 years. The first phase of the empire - Kanem - comprising Zagawa and Kanuri peoples living in the northeast of present Lake Chad had its capital in Njimi. It developed and expanded territorially reaching its greatest peak in about 12th C. AD but witnessed dynastic problems and civil war that resulted in abandoning the weakened capital in 14th C.

Mai Idris Aloma's (1571 - 1603), rein however saw the second phase of the empire which has been reconstituted with its fortified capital at Ngazargamu grew to its greatest extent. Idris' expansionist endeavour reduced the capital and province of Kano in the West, occupied the country of Bilma (an important salt centre of the Caravan trade route to North Africa) and overrunning the country of the Mandara in the South. Thereafter, Idris Borun was succeeded by weak leaders leading to the political problem one of which highlights were its invasion and defeat by Mandara in 1781 and the Fulani Jihadists inconsiderate military mission there. Shehu's intervention in the political system of the empire bedevilled by the Mai people tried to sustain it but not as before until the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th C. when it came under the control of Rabeh from 1893 to 1900 and later under European imperialists (see Onwubiko 1972).

Hausa states that existed in the northern area of present Nigeria between about the 7th C and the 18th C. such as Kano, Zamfara, Zaria, Nupe, Kebbi, Katsina and Kwarafa did not reach the status of an empire. These states especially Kano and Zaria however, with the efforts of Rabeh and Queen Amina respectively, almost reached the size of an empire but were short-lived. They were involved in relatively, large political and economic organizations. Kano's 14th C. conquests and expansions brought it the

limelight of empire-hood but for the challenges posed by the other Hausa states for fear of dominance (Adeleye 1971). Rabeh, the state's ruler at the close of 19th C. for instance, has been reported to have reigned over the declining Bornu Empire. The legendary Queen Amina's achievements for Zaria such as conquering many of the Hausa states and building city walls in various areas she conquered was discontinued by her successors.

The other states mentioned above rose and fall instead of themselves in different proportions with time and circumstance until the 19th C. when they were almost all brought together under an emirate by Uthman Dan Fodio and subsequently the British imperialists. Kebbi's authority, for instance, at a time (under Kanta Kotal in the 16th C) was comparable to those of Songhai and Bornu as it extended to as far North as Agades, Zaria and Nupe in the South.

Closer home in the southern area of present day Nigeria were Old Oyo Empire, Benin Empire and the Igala state, not forgetting the relatively smaller states of South-east Nigeria that thrived between 14th C and 19th to the advent of the colonialist government.

Old Oyo Empire was one of the largest and most powerful Yoruba kingdoms with its capital in the historic town of Oyo. The empire enjoyed peace until its capital was sacked by the Fulani Jihadist in 1837 (Willet 1960), causing the people to move to Igboho but returned later to their old capital, improving on their military technique and administrative machinery, thus enabling subsequent successful expansionist programmes. It rose thereafter, to its apogee, its extent covering Nupe, the entire Oyo, Egba, and Egbado, some part of Igbomina, the whole of Ajase kingdom, the whole of Dahomey kingdom and parts of Tapa and Ibariba (Akinjobin and Ayandele 1984: 121 - 143). Oyo was monarchically governed under a good political system.

The Benin kingdom is another area where centralized government beginning in the pre-colonial period was instituted and maintained for a long time. The consolidation of the monarchy of Benin reached its summit in the 15th C. AD during the reign of Oba Ewuare the Great (Egharevba 1960). In his reign the empire expanded to its greatest extent covering such Yoruba areas as Akure and Ondo, some Igbo speaking areas west of the Niger and probably to Onitsha east of the Niger. In the 16th C. Benin rulers such as Oba Ozuolua, Esigie, Orogua and Ekhenghudu were engaged in territorial expansion and traded with Europeans. Political problems which started in the 18th C. with disputes amongst the chiefs and the kings finally led to civil wars and strifes that devastated the kingdom in turn. The rulers were still struggling to keep the kingdom when in 1897 the British unleashed the so-called punitive expedition during which the people were massacred and large tolls taken

from there putting to an end into their lands the kingdom (Egharevba 1960, Henderson 1972, Ryder 1984:109-120).

Igala state is another kingdom that has its history as far back as the 13th C. A.D. (see Boston, 1968). The state by 1517 A.D. was strong enough to engage in a major war with the Benin kingdom. The kingdom was said to have extended from where it was in the north central of the present day Nigeria to across the western area of the Niger, being the suspected main bone of contention between it and Benin kingdom, from where it had to retreat after being vanquished by Benin. Henderson (1972), however, pointed out that despite the people's retreat that Igala may have extended her suzerainty on both sides of the river Niger around its Benue confluence area.

Available Supporting Archaeological Evidence

It has been mostly through archaeological information, derived from evidence from controlled excavations, incorporating radiocarbon dating programmes that we have come to see, that truly complex social stratification, long distance trade, and even urbanism really existed in West Africa by the middle of the first millennium A.D. (McIntosh and McIntosh 1981). This prehistoric scientific quest has in fact debunked the wrong assumption more than any other, ascribed concerning much of the impetus for the development of West African societies ascribed to the Euro-Asia and America as having been induced by outside stimulation on the indigenous economy in the eight century A.D. as the North African Arabs initiated Trans-Saharan trade and about the close of the 15th C. around the coast of the region by western folks for slaves and other items as gold, raw materials etcetera. Our historical information regards Ghana (Gold coast) to be the place of the oldest of the urban centres in West Africa. From Munson's (1971) archaeological investigations in southern Mauretania (Dhar-Tichitt and Walata region) however, he suggested that a complex political system existed in this region before Ghana. Holl (1985:109), seconded this by arguing 'that the Dhar Tichitt archaeological record reflects the development of rank, indicating the beginning of the development of primary state' due to lack of systematic archaeological investigations in the area between Dhar Tichitt and Ghanaian towns such as Koumbi- Saleh and Tegdaoust. (Hall 1985:109), reported that that the diachronic connections of Dha Tichitt with Ghana state formation is not yet clear. One however, can comfortably say now, that the origin of Ghana dates to ancient times (earlier than 800 A.D when it was first recorded in the Arabic texts (Bathily 1975:4).

From the ancient empire of Ghana, the said first port of call, interest on the ancient capital Kounbi-Saleh shown by archaeologists, indicate that there are remains of it comprising of stone built ruins which covered over 800 square

metres and are surrounded by over 1,600 square metres of cemeteries (Mcintosh and McIntosh 1980:16). This as Andah (1976:6), put it points to the town as having been occupied for a very long time. Excavations carried-out here by Bonnel de Mezieres in 1914, Lazartigue in 1939, Thomassey in 1949 and 1950 (Thomassey and Muuny 1951, 1956), and Robert and Cross 1975 and 1976 revealed grand floors of storey buildings with impressive architectural features (Walls made of slabs decorated with geometric designs). These features evidenced Islamic Maghrebian influence on the architecture of Koumbi-Saleh. A pre-Islamic phase was however, revealed by the excavations lower levels. Koumbi-Saleh was stratigraphically divided into three significant periods, with each comprising 2 to 4 levels suggesting that the occupation of the site might have been continuous for at least seven centuries from about the close of the 7th Century to the 15th century. Evin, Marien and Pachiaudi (1979:429 - 431), highlighted that period of levels la/b corresponds to ancient pre-urban to 1st urban occupation from 7th to 9th centuries. Period of levels 111a/b/c/d corresponds to most recent occupation with recently well- preserved walls and houses from 12th to 15th centuries.

Andah (1976:4), judged that the cultural materials recovered in Koumbi-Saleh are pointers to more features other than trading, farming activities by the occupants as indicates hoe and cuncillies, hunting and warfare evidenced by the presence of lances and arrows, smithing inferred from nails buckles and hammers encountered, and most probably tailoring indicated by scissors also found there.

Archaeological field research undertaken at Tegdoust, yielded much materials as well with changes in architectural features in three medieval phases noticed. The town as observed Diop (1976:182); Calvocoressi and David (1979: 24-25) was continuously occupied until the seventeenth century A.D. It has series of c14 dates swarming between A.D. 800-1300 (a period it was a flourishing town and participating intensively in the trans-Saharan trade).

Also in the ancient Ghana, abundant evidence from Begho, with culture classified as predominantly Brong (which has its large mounds and were excavated). Around here, 1430 + 100 and 1710 + 100 C¹⁴ dates were obtained. There equally were good research result from Nkoronga- Takyiman considered to be the core area of the Bono state and Bono Manso both in Ghana with especially Bono Manso dating back to the 5th C.A.D, and evidences of relatively high architectural, societal technological and administrative attainment.

In ancient Mali, its capital where archaeological investigation has been done by Filiopowiak, C¹⁴ dates of between 6th and 10th centuries AD were obtained,

(Filiopowiak 1969; 1977). The findings from a sizable 700²m excavation however, are considered not an adequate representation of such a wealthy medieval Muslim city (see McIntosh and McIntosh 1980:18). Niani's actual location is a problem just as that of the medieval copper mining/smelting town of Takedda. Azelick which is in the same Air region of Niger and highly suspected to be Takedda by some (Brouin 1950) has been excavated, and bear a relatively young C¹⁴ date of 1150±100 AD.

Marandet - the site identified by L'Hole (1972) as Maranda (a trade route town between Gao and Egypt) however, provided enough evidence (40,000 crucibles, moulds, slags, several clay furnaces of copper). Smelting with three dates AD 900 ± 100; 640 ± 0020100 and 500 ± 100 (Posnanaky and McIntosh 1976:183) were obtained from the excavations. McIntosh and McIntosh (1980: 20) see the last two dates from the lowest level of the excavation which pre-dates Arab influence on West African trade as an indication of the indigenous trade system upon which Arab trade was superimposed.

Djoboro or Jenne-Jenno ancient site of the inland Delta with a large mound measuring 8m high was identified through archaeological investigations as the ancestral site of Jenne (McIntosh and McIntosh 1980:1981b). Here, four phases of occupation were identified. The first phase defined by an absence of any evidence for mud architecture with the occurrence of different animal bones, large number of iron slag and pottery. It has occupation phase date of c.250 BC to AD 50. Phase II with a lower boundary yielded dates from C AD 50-400. There were a sample of well- preserved chaff from *orvza-glaberrima* which is the earliest occurrence of African rice in archaeological context, Fauna remains showing continuity with the first phase, two clay figurines of Bos Taurus and a number of pottery materials.

The third phase marked the major period of use for the cemetery area in its JFI level 3-1 and dating from C AD 400-900. Phase IV dating between C AD 900-1400 with such materials as a terracotta Statuette and several associated pots, a skeleton, spindle whorls, opaque glass beads, a possible crucible for gold smelting, iron points and fish hooks. McIntosh and McIntosh (1980b:22) reiterate that Jenne-Jenno may have been a principal participant in the founding of commercial centres on the Saharan contact zone of the bend of the Niger, rather than product of the luxury trade serviced by those centres. Inference drawn from the stone and iron objects recovered from the early levels of its early levels, is that she according to McIntosh and McIntosh imported them from outside the Inland Delta and this was engaged in inter-regional trade for earlier than was formerly known. So also are the copper items, dating 400 AD taken to Luwe from distant Saharan sources and the abundant staple products (e.g rice, fish and fish oil) all marking inter-regional

commerce and the emergence of urbanism in Jenne-Jenno in the First millennium AD.

In the present North-eastern part of Nigeria, the most famous early urban centre was Bimin Ngazargamu (13° O' North and 12° 18' east) Ngazargamu was founded in 1470 AD and abandoned in about 1809 AD after its destruction by the Jihadists (Connah 1981: 220-236). This capital city has good architecture to account for its urban nature. For instance Connah (1981:232), said this about the place. 'The place seems to have consisted of a number of brick-walled enclosures rather than buildings in the strictest sense: the areas enclosed are mostly too large ever to have been roofed and presumably contained buildings of more ephemeral materials.'

Apart from the sponsored early urban centres studies in the Northern states of Nigeria focused on the walls of then cities in Kaduna, Sokoto and Kano states in late 1978 in relation to the extent in both space and time of these urban sites limited to selected area, it was found that conclusions about the evolution of the features and objects studied without detailed studies of the entire areas will be premature incomprehensive and scanty (Effah-Gyanfi post thumous 1986).

Igalaland said to be one viable early urban centre has not yielded much archaeological results to this effect. Steve Daniels carried-out excavation of Ojuwo Ata Ogu mound at Idah in 1980 in the same area. Ojuwo Ata Ogu and Oketekakini (a mound) which were excavated by the two persons above, materials which includes, kanels, beads and bones; and pottery, stones, smoking pipes, cowrie shells lumps of baked earth, iron slags, china wares, bones and pieces of bottle respectively. Okpoko (1984: 21 -39) maintained that the two C¹⁴ dates obtained from Ojunwo Ata Ogu site range between the 13th and the 16th C.A.D; while the smoking pipes evidence suggest that the Oketekakini site dates between the 17th and 19th centuries for the time being. This represents the earliest archaeological dates so far obtained in Igalaland. The point to be deduced here therefore is that by the 13th C.A.D. indigenous process of social stratification and urbanism were present in Igalaland.

Ife and Old Oyo have dominated archaeological research in Yorubaland of South Western Nigeria. Early archaeological works done by Fagg (1953-5) and Willet (1956-61) and continued by Ozane (1969) in Ife was aimed at the walls and earthworks, revealed that a most complex wall system which belong to the medieval time, underlies the 19th C. defences. Ozane (1969: 31), indicates that there have been three distinct main periods in the growth of Ife- (a) the Early Ife- which 'was simply a scattered cluster of hamlets; traditions count

them as thirteen', (b) the medieval Ife- defined as the building of the first wall-most certainly the inner one. Here, according to Ozane the communities had stepped across the autonomous hamlets of early Ife. Charcoals recovered from the medieval layers at Ita Yemoo have produced dates of 960, and 1060 A.D. Also the maize impressions on the potsherds used for making pavements a likely indication of the medieval town continued to flourish in the 17th C. The third phase Ozane reasoned showed the modern town of Ife not being older than 1600/1650; 'The former Ife town must have survived well into the 16th C. and even perhaps into the mid-17th C.' (Ozane, 1969: 33).

Old Oyo which has been another point of archaeological interest due to the historical information already outlined above, has been worked on first by Frank Willet between 1956 and 1957, Soper and Darling between 1973 and 1979 and later by Agbaje-Williams between 1979 and 1983. The works on this site especially with regard to urbanism has dealt on the walls which a map was produced on. The makers of the pottery of Diogun style typology identified by Willet preceded the entire existing wall system. Soper's excavation confirmed this with 1100 ± 100 AD. C^{14} date and the Mejiro style dating to 1300 ± 80 . Agbaje-Williams examined the features 'which were considered to contain useful demographic archaeological data' (Agbaje-Williams 1983:136); estimating conjecturally the population of Old Oyo in the 18th C. to a range of 60,000 to 140,000 persons. Four C^{14} dates were derived from his excavation 1185 ± 90 BP (765 ± 90 AD), 1160 ± 90 BP (790 ± 90 AD); 900 ± 80 BP, (1050 ± 80 AD) 810 ± 80 BP. (1140 ± 80 AD) thereby pushing the culture history of Old Oyo to 8th C AD.

Ancient Benin history attracted enquiry from different disciplines starting from the 1950 excavation by G.H.A Goodwin who was invited by the Nigerian Federal Department of Antiquities. His little success was followed by those of Frank Willet and Liman Ciroma who carried out rescue excavations in Benin in 1959 and 1960 respectively. Graham Connah is however, credited with the first systematic archaeological research programme between 1960 and 1964. Connah's excavation yielded C^{14} date of AD 1305 ± 105 , obtained from charcoal recovered from one of the pits around the said palace area. Here, there were found, five cowries and few skeletal remains, fragments of edge-laid potsherd pavement. Other dates obtained here are C^{14} AD 149 ± 90 , AD 1304 ± 105 , AD 1500 ± 105 (Usama site). The sequence suggested by the excavation according to Okpoko, (1987), suggested, 'extends from ground stone axes in Benin ritual which indicates that the area may well have been inhabited since Late Stone Age time' (Connah 1972:38). The finds recovered include well- preserved bones, bronze objects, glass and agate beads, a

fragment of an oil-palm nut, a fragment of a bronze-melting crucible and the city walls.

Between 1959 and 1964 Shaw excavated three sites at Igbo Ukwu that were christened 'a store-house of regalia' because of the abundance of ritual bronze vessels and regalia. The other excavations yielded bronze objects and many beads together with potsherds. A date of 9th C AD was derived from the sites. Igbo Ukwu finds were associated with the Eze Nri king of the Umueri group of the Igbo (Shaw 1969:45). Although Shaw tried to place the acquisition of the copper and other necessities for bronze casting on the trans-Saharan trade which Igbo Ukwu was linked to, the Onwueji-Ogwu supported by Chikwendu and Umeji (1979), have however, suggested some local sources (Abakaliki, Afikpo and Calabar areas) (Okpoko 1987).

McIntosh and McIntosh (1981), explained the evidence of old settlements above as being in the context of indigenous processes of trade expansion, social stratification and urbanism. These urban centres or states thus possess socio-political organization and stratification, and diversified economy (farming, trading, Arts and crafts) and protective forces and/or sanctions. These factors interacted in different ways and degrees to promote early urbanization or state formation in West Africa (Okpoko 1987). It is thus false, to say that urbanization reached West African region only with the advent of aliens from both the North Africa Arabs via the trans-Saharan trade routes or the western people through the coast at whatever dates they may have arrived.

Ethnographically, language of the people is another indicator of the indigenous origin of these early towns and cities. For example stages of development as recognized in the local concept of (*Ogbe, Obodo* and *Mba* among the Igbo is a case in point). The Yoruba, for instance tend to live in large settlements. Also the Tiv concept of settlement is such that surrounding pocket settlements are encompassed and get better adapted developing at some points, urban and semi-urban centres in their land and regarded as one. The issue of urbanism is such that one cannot use the standard in one place to judge another due to different characteristics, needs and dispositions.

In any case certain criteria such as geographical, economic, political, social religious/ritual and military factors could contribute to the development of urban centres or state formation as we have noticed in the various West African areas considered. Andah (1976:1-5), observed that the margin of the transitional forest (derived Savanna) with fertile agricultural lands in the whole of Sudan accounted for the early towns and states such as the early Hausa towns and those in the Northern modern Ghana. Also such city as

Timbuktu was sited at geographical points where the Niger penetrates the desert. The presence of salt and minerals such as gold at the end of termini and their exploration and exploitation could have influenced the subsistence and settlement patterns in the regions affected and led to the establishment of towns and/or villages geared specifically for the exploitation and selling of these resources and the growth of other towns/villages to cater for the subsistence and social needs of the first category of towns/villages (Andah 1976:16)

Looking at West African towns and cities today, one may wonder why there seem to be a sharp disparity between them and their Asian and western counterparts. The level of physical development in the latter is like comparing a millipede to an elephant. The basic infrastructural provisions are far less developed in these West African urban centres. They also seem not to grow in the same proportion as the other developments around them. For example, the population of these towns are growing continuously whereas the associated infrastructure are not doing so in near, let alone equal capacity. Urban growth in West Africa as in other area of Africa has been put at 3.5% since the first two decades of the new millennium (<http://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/afdb>).

It is said to be on the steady increase with the projection of 85% of urban dwellers in a given society, between 2010 and 2025. It has led to increase in the urban population. This has in turn led to the proliferation of slum in the urban centres. Rakodi (1997) reported that 80% of investment not related to agriculture was spent in urban areas of Nigeria.

Sifiso Ngcamphalala has suggested (17/04/2017) “dealing with first-hand account data of the local situation” that would abolish armchair planning on the issues of urbanisation. Many of the people leaving the rural places to live in the town and cities are mostly without much skill and not formally educated and end-up often times than not struggling over the few jobs opportunities in mainly the informal sector (<http://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/afdb>).

Commenting on the problems of stunted urban development in the region and Africa in general, Nelson Nkwor (02/01/2017) said among other things that “tackle the problem of urbanisation in African countries, the casual driver/ direction in Urban-Income improvement nexus has to be rigorously gauged by researchers”. Some new towns have emerged in the last fifty years such as Abuja in Nigeria and Ouagadougou in Côte d’Ivoire and seem to provide good hope (please see attached appendices). The urban level in West Africa is one of the lowest in the world. There has been a slowdown in

urbanisation rate in most parts of West Africa e.g Nigeria, since 2010.

Some new urban centres emerged in post-colonial West Africa for different reasons from those that were established in the colonial period in West Africa. Some of these new towns were inspired by other reasons instead of the functional justifications. Examples of these are Lilongwe in Malawi, Yamoussoukro in Côte d'Ivoire, and Abuja in Nigeria (Stock 1995).

Arnaud (2011), noted the degree of intensity of urbanisation in West Africa for over fifty years now, saying that the average distance between agglomerations declined from 111km to 33km. the demographic density however, of Imo and Anambra states of Nigeria, the Local Government Areas of Abia, Rivers and Akwa Ibom states according to Moricorni-Ebrard, et al. (2016), reached 1000 inhabitants per km² in 2010.

Conclusion

The Governments of the region should be mindful of this and take the developmental programmes seriously. The adopted strategies of development should be properly addressed. Concentrating most of the basic/modern infrastructure in the main towns of West African countries has among other things, caused what is now known as urban bias as there is hell-bent rural-urban migration in most of the countries in the region. The Governments should adopt new methods of running the countries and societies therein. They should diversify the various sectors such as energy, housing, transportation, and the drainage systems, to very effective and dynamic methods of coping with the situations in modern towns and cities.

They should constructively key into some of the new programmes designed by global bodies and agencies such as New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and Sustainable Millennium Development Goals (SMDGs) as well as look inward why making efforts to improve on the systems in the urban dwellings especially by carefully involving the indigenous experts.

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Appendices



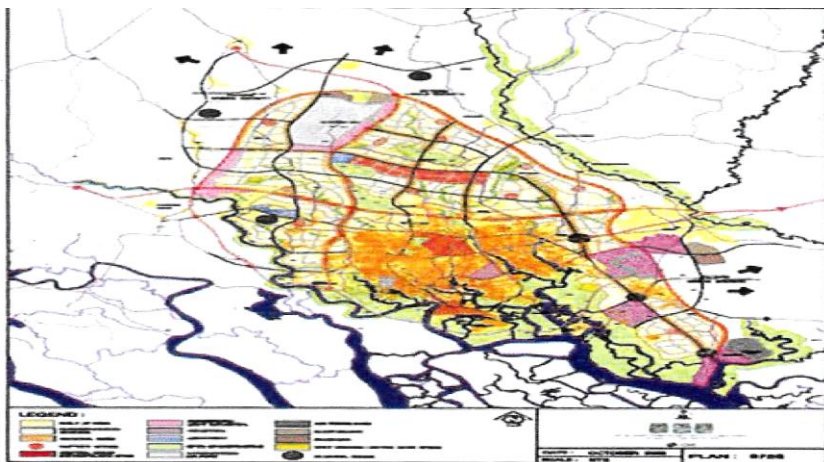
Eko Atlantic: The New Southern Lagos State, City

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Abuja: The New Capital of Nigeria.

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The Greater Port Harcourt City Development Plan

Source: Alagoa & Nwanodi, (2013)

Port Harcourt, the Garden City of River State Nigeria (1913 – 2013)

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