

URBANIZATION AND INFRASTRUCTURAL EXPANSION SINCE NIGERIA'S AMALGAMATION IN 1914: THE CASE OF IGBO LAND

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the history of urbanization and infrastructural expansion in Igbo land since the Nigeria's amalgamation in 1914. It essentially pinpoints the fact that Igbo-land, which presently comprises Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo states, in addition to parts of Delta and Rivers states had no history of urbanization prior to the advent of British colonial conquest and domination in the early 20th century. In pre-colonial times, the people had lived in autonomous village-groups and evolved a traditional political system popularly known as village democracy. Farming and trading were the major occupations of the people in pre-colonial era. With the advent of the British, there was a revolutionary trend towards developing urban cities across Igbo land. As a result, some communities where the British established administrative headquarters, mining and notable commercial centres were increasingly transformed into urban centres with modern infrastructural facilities such as good road network, railway, schools, hospitals, potable water supply and modern markets etc. Besides, modern houses were constructed not only to accommodate the British political officers, but the African staff as well. With time, the Igbo citizens who had migrated to the urban cities in search of economic opportunities or colonial government jobs began to emulate the British overlords by providing modern houses for themselves and their families. The enterprising spirit of the people coupled with their propensity for acquisition of modern skills contributed immensely in the phenomenal infrastructural expansion in such urban cities as Enugu, Onitsha, Aba, Owerri, Umuahia and Port Harcourt etc in colonial era. After Nigeria's independence in 1960, successive regional and states governments, as a matter of policies and commitments, tried to improve on, and expand the urban infrastructural facilities. States creation and democratic governance have added greater impetus to urbanization and infrastructural expansion in Igbo land.