

**BRITISH COLONIAL LAND POLICIES AND THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT IN
OKIGWE URBAN, 1908-1945**

OJIRIDIKE, IBE STEVE

Department of General Studies

University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Umuagwo, Imo State

&

EJITU N. OTA

Email: ibe.ojiridike@uaes.edu.ng

Department of International Relations,

Faculty of Humanities, Abia State University, Uturu

ABSTRACT

This article interrogates the nature, implementation, and impact of British colonial land policies in Okigwe urban between 1908-1945. In this regard, it studies how colonial land acquisition practices reshaped indigenous systems of land tenure, authority, and production within the broader framework of colonial political economy and agrarian transformation. Drawing on archival records, colonial reports, and oral traditions, and relevant scholarly literature, the paper argues that British land policies during the period under review, resulted in significant socio-economic dislocations in Okigwe area, although such policies were often justified in terms of administrative efficiency and economic development. Among other things, colonial land policies resulted in erosion communal land holdings structure, the reconfiguration of local power relations, the commodification of land, and shift in patterns of agricultural production. Furthermore, this article demonstrates that colonial intervention in land facilitated the integration of Okigwe urban into global capitalist economy, primarily through cash crops production and infrastructural development. However, these transformations were neither uniform nor uncontested as local communities put up resistance against colonial policies, finally, the study concludes that the legacy of colonial land policies has continued to shape contemporary land disputes and development challenges in Okigwe urban.

KEYWORDS: *British, land, colonial. Policies, government, development, agriculture, individual, residence, monetization.*

INTRODUCTION

Pre-colonial land tenure systems in Okigwe urban

Pre-colonial land tenure systems in Okigwe urban dates far back as mankind started to exist on earth. This is because Okigwe urban people believes that they are ancient. Pre-colonial land tenure in Okigwe urban was primarily based on kinship. As it was in most places in Igboland, Okigwe urban is part of Igboland and thus shared the same pre-colonial land tenure system with most other parts of Igboland in this tradition. According to *Nze Chukwuma Oforegbuniwe*, land in Okigwe urban, and most places in Igboland was sacred and had spiritual interpretation.¹ it is an entity held jealously by Okigwe urban people under the care or stewardship of elders. Oforegbuniwe, goes further to asserts thus, "Land was rarely sold, but instead allocated for use to the people of the community who needs it for agricultural purposes."² Land was historically owned by the community or lineage (*Umunna*), and held in trust by elders, with individuals having rights to use land for farming or housing.

Because land is considered sacred it is rarely sold to non-indigenes or persons considered as strangers. The idea is to preserve and ensure that land remains with the people. However, land in Okigwe urban during the pre-colonial period though cannot be sold may be exchanged, or what the people know as, "Land Pledging" (*Igba-ebe*). This practice is held because, since land cannot be sold, it may be exchanged for value, the tradition during the pre-colonial period Okigwe urban was that such land exchange could be redeemed when the debt is repaid or settled. Sometimes it takes years when the two adults who engaged in the exchange may have died, however their descendants always keep to the terms and conditions in future.³

Land in Okigwe urban was usually divided into sections, such as development or residential areas, usually for building homes and communal forest (*ikpa*) or (*ala*) (*ubi*) for farming, there is also land usually mapped out or called evil forest, (*Ajohia*), where people with certain diseases including twins that were regarded as taboo are isolated until they die. *Nze Amaefule Ngawuchi* maintained that land in Okigwe urban area is typically acquired through inheritance (mostly patrilineage).⁴ These are basically the land tenure practices in Okigwe urban area in

the pre-colonial period, and indeed the larger Igboland. Until the invasion of this area in 1908, and in 1909 when the colonial government held a meeting with Okigwe urban Chiefs and convinced them to cede large part of their land to the government.

The Establishment of British colonial rule in Okigwe Urban 1908-1945

The administrative policies of the colonial government in the Okigwe District, of the Owerri province, between 1908-1945, was just like the administration of every other District or Province in Southern Nigeria. It was shaped by British indirect rule and focused on economic exploitation, social control, and cultural assimilation through the chiefs and Native Administration. The colonial administration introduced various taxes, such as the “The Revenue Ordinance” (1908), and “the Poll Tax” (1928)⁵. This imposed levies on individuals, households, and markets. Tax collection was often coercive, leading to resistance and unrest among the local population⁶. The Ordinance established Native Treasuries which were responsible for collecting taxes and revenue from the native population.⁷ The intention for establishing the tax Ordinance was to create a system of native administration with native judges, and treasuries, to collect revenue and dispense it according to native customs and laws in Eastern Nigeria in general and Okigwe urban in particular.

Following the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates in 1914 by the colonial government, the policy of indirect rule with Warrant (Chiefs, which had been the practice in Northern Nigeria, was introduced to the South of what is now known as Nigeria). It was easy for the policy to succeed in the western part of southern Nigeria, because of their pre-existing socio-political structure, which was similar to what existed in the Northern provinces where this policy had achieved remarkable successes. This resemblance made the introduction of warrant chiefs, and indirect taxation into the provinces easy.⁸ However, it was not so in the Eastern provinces and Districts such as Okigwe urban. The implementation of the indirect rule system and the collection of taxes by the colonial government through the Warrant chiefs, triggered crisis and unrest in the Eastern provinces, including in Okigwe urban.

This was because prior to colonialism, Okigwe urban had a different socio-political institution that guided the conduct of the people as an Igbo community. This system known as the Village Assembly or *Umunna*, guaranteed collective responsibility amongst the people, decisions were taken collectively and no single individuals lorded issues over other persons. Therefore, the introduction of warrant chiefs and the imposition of taxes were foreign to the people of Okigwe urban. According to Nwabughuogu “Between 1925 and 1927, three minor riots occurred in Eastern Nigeria, symptoms of the extent to which the people had become disillusioned with colonial policies.”⁹ There were reports that these pockets of revolt started in Okigwe Division known as “Dancing Women’s Movement”¹⁰. Nwabughuogu puts it thus “The Dancing Women’s Movement occurred in November and December, 1925. It started in the village of Atta in Okigwe Division, Owerri Province”¹¹. As earlier stated, this revolt was an expression of the people’s discontent with the implementation of a new order of indirect rule policy through warrant chiefs and native administration by taxation in Okigwe urban, in any form or guise. The point here is that Okigwe urban resisted the introduction of the Warrant Chiefs system, which involved indirect rule and the imposition of taxes on Okigwe urban people of Owerri Province during the period under review. This policy did not succeed mainly because it was at variance with the socio-political belief and practice of the people¹². The fact was that the actions of the Warrant Chief either destroyed the already existing traditional socio-economic patterns of Okigwe urban people, or held them in check before 1929, when the Warrant- Chief system was discontinued¹³.

Colonial land policies and mechanism of acquisition

The process of land acquisition for public use in Okigwe town by the colonial government started in 1909, after a meeting held between the Chiefs of Okigwe urban, and the colonial administration. In the meeting, the colonial administration explained to the local Chiefs that the government needed a vast expanse of land to build offices and houses for their staff, with the understanding that the government will return the land back to the owners, if any part of it was not in use. The land so granted to the government was about 265 acres by the deed of exchange signed by both parties.¹⁴ It should be noted that the Chiefs of Okigwe urban who signed this deed on behalf of the people represented the seven community heads of Okigwe urban, four chiefs from four villages of Ubaha Okigwe urban, and three chiefs from three villages of Amano, representing seven villages that make up Okigwe town. All are Otanchara Communities, traditionally known as *Ama Asaa*. It was from this land known by locals as *IKPA OVU Ubaha*, that the British colonial government in Okigwe took off, and built their administrative offices and residences. Such offices and houses include the Divisional Officer’s (D. O) office, and that of the Assistant Divisional Officer (A. D. O). Others were the Prisons, Police Station, Okigwe Health Station, the Court Clerk’s Residence and the Otanchara Native Court House, and most importantly (for the colonial government), the European Quarters¹⁵.

The type of deed which the colonial government made with Okigwe Chiefs did not support large urban development, “But there was at that time no vision of and an attempt to anticipate or plan for a town that will grow to become what [Okigwe later turned out to become]”¹⁶. Urbanization as a process of population concentration, involves structural changes in the economy that foster population growth and changes in the behavioral pattern of the population following from such concentration. But that was not the case in Okigwe urban, because, there was no adequate plan for the development of Okigwe urban as a modern city by the colonial administration, as was the case in almost all the colonial towns established by the British. This was due to a number of reasons, which included, but not limited, to the indigenous people’s natural attachment to their land. In the words of G. I. Nwaka,

With the exception of Port Harcourt and Enugu which were reasonably well laid in the second decade of this century, the large and sprawling towns of Calabar, Onitsha, and to a less extent Aba, Owerri and Umuahia share with Ibadan, Benin, Kano, and other “traditional” Nigerian towns the dilemma of having large indigenous populations whose natural interest in these towns has always conflicted with the requirements of modernization, and planned growth.¹⁷

The above observation by Nwaka, is a typical example of the situation in Okigwe urban during the period under study. For example, shortly after granting the colonial government some acres of land, the two communities that make the town began the struggle over the ownership of the land. Ubaha Okigwe and Amano Okigwe, both began to claim the right over ownership of the land. This led to a series of litigations, which started at the Otanchara Native Court, and went up to Supreme Court of Nigeria. Ubaha won in all the Courts, including in the Supreme Court¹⁸. Be that as it may, the processes involved in litigation retarded progress. The effects of that long litigation among these two Okigwe urban communities are still there presently, as the two communities are now in Court over who should bear the name Okigwe¹⁹. Perhaps, this logger-head which began shortly after the British came, was not there during the pre-colonial period, this land issues are as a result making land a commodity by the colonial government, and this may have contributed to the perceived economic, and social underdevelopment of Okigwe urban by some commentators.

Having acquired land from the indigenous people, it was expected that real infrastructural development would commence immediately. But that was not to be, because the colonial government never designed a plan for African cities in the real sense of the word. Rather, their interest was to open up the hinterland to access raw materials to feed their home industries, political subjugation, and the imposition of English culture, language, and interests in order to foster and sustain British imperialism. In Eastern Nigeria towns such as Aba, Umuahia, Abakiliki, and Bende, experienced the same treatment by the colonial government in terms of slow urban development. Nwaka puts it thus “Contrary to popular assumption, urbanization had a very low priority in the colonial period... the colonial government adopted a purely instrumental view of urban growth and in so doing stultified local dynamics of urbanization.”²⁰

This study agrees with the observation by Nwaka, because it is, to a large extent, true, because the colonial government, after acquiring the “Crownland” in Okigwe urban, did not push for the physical development of the land so taken from the people. Instead of building permanent structures on the land, the colonial government decided to put up make shift structures for its offices, residents, Police barrack, Prisons, and even the Otanchara Native Court. It was only in 1921, through Memorandum Number 153 from District Officer Okigwi, (No. 1037/7/21), dated, 26th September 1921 and titled “Okigwi Prison Rebuild,”²¹ that the D.O, requested from the Resident at Owerri, for a site to be approved for a new permanent prison to be built in Okigwe urban. According to the memo “The site is that which was selected in 1914, when a new prison was actually started but subsequently abandoned.”²² The point to note here is that it took the colonial government several years to consider building a permanent structure for the Okigwe Prison and other landmark structures for the proper development of the town. That attitude, no doubt affected the early Infrastructural development of Okigwe urban. Studies have shown a lack of interest in the infrastructural development of British colonial towns by the colonial government, especially the prompt erection of permanent office buildings on the crownland²³

For instance, the instruction to build residential houses for Europeans away from the residence of other Africans was ordered by the Resident of Owerri, to the D. O. of Okigwe in 1916, ten years after taking over Okigwe urban, through a letter titled “Instruction for permanent residents for European Officers in Okigwi.”²⁴ However, the

instruction was only executed in 1922. To further show the lack of interest on the part of the colonial government to provide adequate physical development for Okigwe urban, it took another two decades for the Resident of Owerri to instruct the D. O. of Okigwe to build permanent offices such as, “the New Post Office (1946), Permanent Police Barrack (1946), Army Barrack (1948), and African Staff Quarters (1946)”.²⁵

Therefore, there was no sustained effort to utilize the land taken from the people. This fact, to a reasonable extent, delayed the physical development of the town, especially the area referred to as Crownland. The implication was the decision by the indigenous people of Okigwe urban to encroach on the crownland and reclaim it, leading to several litigations amongst them²⁶.

The disputes over land among Okigwe urban communities would have been avoided, had the colonial government utilized the land for development immediately after acquiring it. Rather, the colonial government got involved in the settlement of the disputes arising from the land disputes, even appearing as witness in the various stages in Court, up to Supreme Court, that became the government preoccupation,

This attitude of the colonial government showed no clear policy on land acquisition. Rather, it encouraged the indigenous people to fight over land. As earlier indicated, the colonial government lacked a clear urban policy for African development, for as Okeke also notes. “Before 1917, the government of Nigeria had no urban policy. This means that there were no proclamations or ordinances meant exclusively for the administration of urban areas.”²⁷ To further demonstrate the problem of that lack of a clear policy of urban development, the people of Uturu and the people of Ihube, (which were part of the Okigwe urban) started to quarrel over ownership of land in 1946.²⁸ as has been observed:

The irony of course is that the colonial government, credited with the magic of urban creation, had an even more morbid distaste for urbanization and [the] ‘detrribalization’ process associated with it.²⁹

It is clear that the lack of a defined policy through which land was acquired by the colonial government in Okigwe urban, gave rise to land disputes among the various communities, including to commercialization of land. The colonial government created more confusion over acquisition of land when they informed the people (during the signing of the land agreement with the chiefs of Okigwe urban), that they have not come to take their land, but to ensure peaceful occupation of it³⁰. That was part of the confusion, especially when the senior officers later began to argue that in the circumstances in which Igboland was occupied, no rent was due to the landowners.³¹ The people felt short-changed.

The colonial government started to lease the acquired Crownland in Okigwe urban to business concerns and Christian church, from 1920. However, and to the disappointment of the Resident at Owerri, by 1926, most of the business concerns to whom land was leased had not done developed on the said land. As a result of this, the Resident at Owerri, in a memorandum to the District Officer of Okigwe, tilted, “Penal Rents, Government Land,” warned that:

All firms who have not commenced building as required by the terms of the leases are to be warned that unless they do something shortly towards carrying out the said terms, government will have to take action in the said matter³²

There is no information on any detailed town planning programmes for Okigwe urban. A memorandum from the Surveyor-General, Lagos, to the District Officer of Okigwe dated 1930, and a reply to that, exposed the fact that there was no town plan or survey drawing for Okigwe urban. In the memorandum the Surveyor-General requested for a detailed Map of Okigwe. But the DO informed him thus “I am inundated with requests of a similar nature and to comply with all would be impossible.”³³ In another memorandum No. 387/44, dated 17th June 1936, the Okigwe Town Planning Office, through the District Officer Okigwe, to the Resident at Owerri, made reference to the Resident Officer endorsement of Okigwe town plan with No. OW, 2802/22 dated 14th May, 1936, and declared that:

The Okigwi Township is limited to Crown Land as proposed by Captain Leeming. The Crown land boundary as shown on the attached plan (697)

is a series of straight lines and can
be surveyed without difficulty”³⁴

The DO, also informed the RO, Owerri that he was not sure about how:

The boundary marking the European
Reservation on plan 679 was arrived at.
It has no boundary.
The medical officer for Okigwe informed
me that as long as no more African staff
houses are built nearer
to the European house the Neutral Zone
existing at present is sufficient”³⁵

What appeared to be the so-called neutral zone to the DO and the Medical Officer was the living apartments of the European and African officials, and not to any certified town plan for Okigwe urban. These inadequacies on the part of the colonial government exposed an obvious lack of interest in the physical development of an Okigwe urban. A town can only progress with well-laid out town plan.

Therefore, the issue of inadequate infrastructural development in Okigwe urban could be attributed to two factors during the period under review. The first issue was the indigenous people’s attachment to their land, which gave rise to series of litigations amongst the people of Okigwe urban. Secondly, there was the lack of colonial government clear policy for urban development in colonial Africa in general and Okigwe urban in particular, especially the way through which the colonial administration acquired land. If this argument is accepted, then it becomes obvious that the genesis of the perceived underdevelopment of Okigwe town can be traced to the British colonial administration’s lack of sustained efforts to develop Okigwe town and indeed all of its African colonies during the period of this study.

Socio-economic impact of colonial land acquisition policies up to 1945

The colonial government land policies in Okigwe urban was the same for the entire Eastern Nigeria up till 1945, it was designed fundamentally to enhance economic subjugation and exploitation, based on the extraction of palm produce³⁶. British land policies in Okigwe urban and to larger extent Eastern Nigeria was not the same with their land policies in Northern Nigeria, land was vested in the Governor, in Eastern Nigeria the government adopted a policy of upholding customary land tenure while facilitating acquisitions for colonial infrastructure and foreign trading companies³⁷

In Okigwe area the British government recognized Communal and Customary Tenure, in other words they understands that land ownership was vested in the community, lineage, or family, they did not officially declare all land as Crown Land, partially because the “Native Land Ordinance” (1916) applied primarily to Northern Nigeria, not Southern provinces³⁸. Nwabughuogu observed thus, “Land belongs to the people of eastern Nigeria and in spite of colonial rule the ownership of land was never taken away from them.”³⁸ Unlike in Northern Nigeria where land was *ab initio* transferred to the government and managed by Native Authorities, it was an important part of the policy to protect the land for the “Natives” of Eastern Nigeria and to prevent land alienation to strangers and foreigners.⁴⁰ therefore in Okigwe area, the land on which, British built offices, Houses, Hospital, roads and other infrastructure were provided by the indigenes of Okigwe.

However, these land policies and ordinance of the government such as the native land ordinance of 1916 and public lands acquisition act of 1917 affected and changed the socio-economic landscape of Okigwe area, the acquisition act of 1917 altered the socio-economic landscape in eastern Nigeria “transitioning land from a communal, sacred asset into a commercial, exploitable commodity⁴¹.” These policies meant and encouraged infrastructure development for export and large-scale plantations, and this brought a considerable draw back in subsistence farming and the erosion of traditional authority. It should be noted, that these need for land acquisition was induced by resource extraction such as gold and palm oil, it resulted in significant land dispossession, the reduction of subsistence farming and change in social stratification, created rural and urban areas in Okigwe urban and other places in eastern Nigeria. “This disparity between urban and rural infrastructure played a role in the socio-economic marginalization of many indigenous communities”⁴².

The people of Okigwe urban woke up to the realization that ownership of land was no longer what it used to be. This fact came to light with the British government acquisition or leased some communal lands from Ubaha chiefs, especially the Eleghasim Ugwa family, between 1908 and 1914⁴³. These lands so leased by the government according to I. S. Ojiridike was where they built all their facilities, and also leased part of it to the Catholic Church and built Okigwe Motor park, all they termed “Crown Land”. With the church and other business concerns that sprang up in Okigwe urban during the period under review, there was serious demand for land and though the

people were not willing to sale, some individual gave in to pressure and because of the needs to meet up with some financial obligations, they began to sale their land and that contributed to socio-economic change in Okigwe urban. For instance, Eleghasim Ugwu whose family owns part the vast land acquired by colonial government started selling the other parts of the land that was not part of the acquisition which was in high demand by strangers who needed land space for housing, offices and shops to do their businesses. The proceeds realized from the sale of the land he used to train his sons in school, and those his son later became teachers in Ubaha county school during the period under review, over the years Eleghasim Ugwa took a chieftaincy title from the community as “Ugwumba” of Okigwe, this changed his socio-economic standing in the society.

However, it was not every family that was favorably disposed to sale their land to strangers. This attitude to a larger extent affected the economic development of Okigwe urban, G. I Nwaka observes thus “Having a large indigenous population whose natural interest in the land affairs of the town had conflict with the requirement of modernization and planned growth, the indigenous people were not willing to give out their land to immigrants even if they were willing and had financial resources to invest in the land.”⁴⁵ The above postulation affected the overall economic and even social development of Okigwe urban, because many business concerns that could not get land as they wanted moved out of the town.

Long-time consequences of colonial land acquisition policies up to 1945

The colonial land acquisition policies in Okigwe was the same in the entire Eastern Nigeria, it was mainly applied through the public Acquisition Ordinance from 1917 up to 1945, it fundamentally changed the indigenous land tenure system, and that gave rise to long -term socio-economic consequences. These policies by the colonial government were conceived basically to enhance infrastructural development, such as roads, railways, agricultural plantations, and seaports, all to serve British economic interest. In Okigwe urban, these policies meant change in the ownership of land. The ownership of land which use to be communal tenure system, now turned to individual ownership of land. According to Chief Leo Eke, “this brought about the emergence of individuals who used land to engage in enterprises, and the consequences was that land became a sellable commodity.”⁴⁶ chief Igbnugo Onyekaba was one of the earliest entrepreneurs to acquire land from *Umilabia* community of Okigwe urban with transferable title for Cashew plantation. Pa James Ojiridike also acquired nontransferable land from Umuchima community for palm oil production⁴⁷.

Perhaps, one of greatest long-time consequences of colonial land acquisition policies in Okigwe urban, was that it created rife and disputes amongst the people of Okigwe urban. This is because the new order of agreement, (written), moreover boundaries were not defined over the crownland to show where it started and where it terminated, between the British government and the people of Okigwe urban. This gave rise to disputes and litigations that are even going on presently in Okigwe urban, between Amano people and Ubaha people, in one hand and on the other hand, Uturu people of Abia state and Ihube people of Imo State owing to lack of clear boundaries between these communities and the fact that land has been made a commercial commodity by the British colonial government policies of land during the period under review⁴⁸. The British land policy term ‘crown’s’ power to declare land as “public” or “unoccupied” (land alienation) undermined the traditional authority of lineage heads and community elders⁴⁹. This on its own created problems, this appeared to be one part of the consequences, because that meant devaluation of customary rights of the people to land ownership.

The British land tenure policy also brought about neglect of food production in Okigwe urban. This is because since land has been commercialized and was no longer communal as it used to be, getting land for food production reduced, the policies gave discouraged local food processing of agricultural products, farmers were more interested to produce exporting raw materials to Britain, the consequence was that it deterred establishment industries in Okigwe urban and the whole of Eastern Nigeria. The legislative framework established by 1945, laid the foundation for post-independence Nigeria land polices, including the contentious Land Use Act of 1978, which continued the government central control over land⁵⁰. These policies influenced the post-colonial land law.

Conclusion

This article investigates the nature, implementation, and impact of British colonial land policies in Okigwe between 1908 and 1945. It examines government land policies and their implementation through the Public Land Ordinance of 1876 and its re-enactment in 1917. These developments fundamentally transformed the social and economic landscape, facilitating a shift from subsistence agriculture to a dependency-based economy, while also altering the social structure towards greater individualization of landholding. Before the introduction of these policies, land in Okigwe was collectively owned by the community or lineage (Umunna) and held in trust by elders, while individuals retained usufruct rights for farming and residential purposes. Colonial land policies gradually transformed land from a sacred communal asset into a commodity economic resource. As a result, land sales

became increasingly common, which negatively affected agricultural productivity, as farmers no longer had unrestricted access to land.

The paper argues that British land policies during the period under review resulted in significant socio-economic dislocation in Okigwe Urban. These policies also facilitated the integration of the area into the global capitalist economy. However, in the early phase of colonial occupation, there was limited permanent development on acquired land until the 1920s. Instead, the colonial administration established scattered thatched structures for residential and administrative purposes, including native court institutions dispersed across the landscape. These developments contributed to a series of land disputes and court cases between the Ubaha people and their Amano neighbours, as well as between the Ihube and Uturu communities. These conflicts reflect intensified struggles over land ownership, particularly as land became increasingly commodified under colonial rule. They also underscore the continued attachment of indigenous communities to ancestral land despite its monetization by colonial policies. Although land control policies typically influence Urban planning, this was not effectively implemented by the colonial administration in Okigwe Urban, resulting in uncoordinated land acquisition and weak spatial organization. As Nwaka observe: Since colonial planning neither anticipated nor approved of urban growth, current plans for rapid urban expansion have not only to contend with numerous problems resulting from past neglect but also with the inadequacies of existing policies and institutions for urban development.⁵²

During the colonial period, rather than prioritizing comprehensive urban planning, the administration focused on establishing exclusive residential areas for European officers, largely to separate them from the indigenous population under the justification of protecting Europeans from tropical diseases. This situation persisted until after the second World War in 1945. Subsequently, there was increasing demand from indigenous communities in Okigwe Urban for the restitution of unused or expropriated lands previously controlled by the colonial administration.

ENDNOTES

1. Oral Interview with Nze Chukwuma Offorgbuniwe, 85 years, Umuchima Ubaha, Okigwe, on 27 February 2025.
2. Oral Interview with Nze Chukwuma Offorgbuniwe, 85 years, Umuchima Ubaha, Okigwe, on 27 February 2025.
3. Oral Interview with John Atugbu, 75 years, Umuchima Ubaha, Okigwe, on 31 January 2025.
4. Oral Interview with Nze Amaefule Ngawuchi, 89 years, Umurido, Okigwe, on 12 March 2025.
5. E. O. Okeke, *A Political and Administrative History of Onitsha, 1817–1970* (Trenton, NJ: 2010), 9.
6. E. O. Okeke, *A Political and Administrative History of Onitsha*, 10.
7. National Archives Enugu (NAE), *Colonial Government, 1930 Report of the Commission of Inquiry Appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances in Calabar and Owerri Provinces, December 1929* (Lagos: Government Printers).
8. Adiodun S. Afolabi, "Tax and Women: A Review of the 1929 Owerri Province Insurrections in Colonial Nigeria," *Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin Archives and Documentation Centre (UADC)*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2022).
9. Anthony Nwabugbuogu, *The Dynamics of Change in Eastern Nigeria, 1900–1960: Indigenous Factors in Colonial Development* (Owerri: Thompson Publishing Company, 1993), 89.
10. NAE, OW 822/Vol. 1, Umuprof 5/1/1, "Handing Over Notes, Bende Division, C. J. Please to Captain J. Cook," 7 November 1934, 103.
11. Anthony Nwabugbuogu, *The Dynamics of Change in Eastern Nigeria, 1900–1960*, 90.
12. Anthony Nwabugbuogu, *The Dynamics of Change in Eastern Nigeria, 1900–1960*, 91.
13. Anthony Nwabugbuogu, *The Dynamics of Change in Eastern Nigeria, 1900–1960*, 91.
14. NAE, File No. 345/62/19, "Instruction for Permanent Residents for European Officers in Okigwi," Resident Officer (RO) Owerri to District Officer (DO) Okigwi.
15. NAE, File No. 345/62/19, "Instruction for Permanent Residents for European Officers in Okigwi," RO Owerri to DO Okigwi.
16. G. I. Nwaka, "Land Administration and Urban Development: A Nigerian Case Study," in A. Destiny (ed.), *Civilisation*, Vol. XXX, Nos. 1–2 (1980).
17. G. I. Nwaka, "Land Administration and Urban Development: A Nigerian Case Study," in A. Destiny (ed.), *Civilisation*, Vol. XXX, Nos. 1–2 (1980).
18. See Civil Form 16, *In the Federal Supreme Court of Nigeria*, "Certificate of Service of Notice of Appeal," Order VII, Rule 12(1)(a), 24 January 1961, Exh. OK 1, Suit No. HU/2/61.

19. S. I. Ojiridike, "Okigwe and Her Neighbours, 1908–2000" (Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Department of History and International Relations, Abia State University, Uturu), 40.
20. G. I. Nwaka, "Land Administration and Urban Development: A Nigerian Case Study," in A. Destiny (ed.), *Civilisation*.
21. NAE, Memorandum 153 from DO Okigwe, No. 1037/7/1920, "Okigwi Prisons."
22. NAE, Memorandum 153 from DO Okigwe, No. 1037/7/1920, "Okigwi Prisons."
23. Oral Interview with Nze Green Elehgasim, 70 years, Umurido, Okigwe, on 12 May 2025.
24. NAE, File No. 345/62/19, "Instruction for Permanent Residents for European Officers in Okigwi," RO Owerri to DO Okigwi.
25. NAE, File No. 345/62/19, "Instruction for Permanent Residents for European Officers in Okigwi," RO Owerri to DO Okigwi.
26. Oral Interview with Nze Green Elehgasim, 70 years, Umurido, Okigwe, on 12 May 2018.
27. O. E. Okeke, *A Political and Administrative History of Onitsha*, 24.
28. NAE, File No. 54/24, "Issues and Land Crisis: Ihube vs. Uturu."
29. G. I. Nwaka, "Land Administration and Urban Development: A Nigerian Case Study," in A. Destiny (ed.), *Civilisation*.
30. Oral Interview with Nze Green Elehgasim, 70 years, Umurido, Okigwe, on 12 May 2025.
31. NAE, File No. 633/40/2922, Memorandum, Owerri RO to Okigwi DO, 1926.
32. NAE, File No. 633/40/2922, Memorandum, Owerri RO to Okigwi DO, 1926.
33. NAE, File No. 633/40/2922, Memorandum, Owerri RO to Okigwi DO, 1926.
34. NAE, File No. 633/40/2922, Memorandum, Owerri RO to Okigwi DO, 1926.
35. NAE, File No. 633/40/2922, Memorandum, Owerri RO to Okigwi DO, 1926.
36. Anthony Nwabugbuogu, *The Dynamics of Change in Eastern Nigeria, 1900–1960: Indigenous Factors in Colonial Development*, 260.
37. "Indirect Rule and Native Administration," available at [Cambridge University Press](#), accessed 21 November 2024, 54.
38. Anthony Nwabugbuogu, *The Dynamics of Change in Eastern Nigeria, 1900–1960: Indigenous Factors in Colonial Development*.
39. "Indirect Rule and Native Administration," available at [Cambridge University Press](#), accessed 21 November 2024, 57.
40. T. O. Elias, *Nigerian Land Law and Custom* (2nd ed., London, 1953), 297–299.
41. Uche Judith, Udobi Alexander Nnamdi, and Ndeche Chinenye Blessing, "An Examination of Proprietary Land Structure in Amaigbo, Imo State," *African Journal of Law, Political Research and Administration*, Vol. 7, Issue 2 (2025), 6.
42. Agomuo Kevin Obinna, "British Colonial Administration and Infrastructural Development in Eastern Nigeria," *Journal of Arts, Religion, Philosophy and Cultural Studies (JARPCS)*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2026), 45.
43. NAE, EP14573 Vol. CSE 1/183/7051, "Towns and Village Planning and Reconstruction: Grants from C.D. & W. Policy," See S.E. to Residents, Eastern Nigeria Provinces, 13 November 1945.
44. Oral Interview with Nze Amaefule Ngawuchi, 89 years, Umurido, Okigwe, on 12 March 2025.
45. G. I. Nwaka, "Land Administration and Urban Development: A Nigerian Case Study."
46. Oral Interview with Chief Leo Eke, 72 years, Ope, Okigwe, on 23 February 2025.
47. Oral Interview with Kenneth Uchegbu Ojiridike, 71 years, Amaikpa, Okigwe, on 12 April 2025.
48. Oral Interview with Nze Green Elehgasim, 70 years, Umurido, Okigwe, on 12 May 2025.
49. *Studies in Sociology*, available at [CSCanada](#).
50. Issac Oluwatayo, Omowunmi Timothy, and Ayodeji Ojo, "Land Acquisition and Use in Nigeria: Implication for Sustainable Food and Livelihood Security," available at [IntechOpen](#) (2019).
51. Oral Interview with Nze Green Elehgasim, 70 years, Umurido, Okigwe, on 12 May 2025.
52. G. I. Nwaka, "Land Administration and Urban Development: A Nigerian Case Study," 66.