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indication of our resolve to encourage the publication of original research from within the continent of Africa and beyond. Let me also use this opportunity to thank our numerous reviewers all for their commitment and to solicit their continued support.

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Ordering Urban Space and Migrants' Protests in Sabongari, Kano, 1911 – 1960*

Rasheed Olaniyi

Abstract:

Urban segregation policy represents one of the dramatic changes fostered by colonialism with far reaching impact on politics of protests and identity consciousness among immigrants. It is argued that despite the considerable body of interdisciplinary studies that the theme of urban segregation generated, urban historiography in Nigeria has been influenced by the paradigms of Universalist ethic of public health and political development to the exclusion of power structures. The paper theorises on politics of protests, search for identity and resistance of the subalterns and migrants in Sabongari Kano against colonial policies to control over-urbanisation processes between 1911 and 1960. Plot Holders' Association, Sabongari resisted attempts by the colonial officials to demolish over-built and over-populated plots without due regards to livelihoods, taxation, family values, and indeed, the Building Ordinance that came into existence almost two decades after such buildings were constructed. In British Africa, urban segregation policies such as Sabongari system were predicated on public health, religious and cultural differences but there were political and economic interests as well. The paper further explores how colonial segregation policy in Sabongari fostered over-urbanisation illustrated by overcrowding, poor sanitation, infectious diseases, unemployment, prostitution, overstressed social infrastructure and crime unequalled in the Kano urban complex.

Introduction

Residential Segregation was a prevalent phenomenon in colonial West Africa. As colonial powers, Britain, France and Germany shared the notion of “sanitary syndrome” and “inherently unhygienic natives” in the planning of cities. Pierre Bourdieu (1972) and Eckert (2006) posited that under colonial rule, relations of power and social stratification were reflected in space.¹ Space was considered as important and contested aspect of colonial daily life. According Eckert (2006) power structures were inscribed in space,

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and space reflects social organisation and defines the people in it. Colonial rule was less interested in the promotion of integration among the different groups. Rather, difference and hierarchy were emphasized. In the West African urban planning, urban space was partitioned into two or more zones: thinly populated "European City" provided with all modern comforts, and the "indigenous city" characterised by overpopulation and inadequate social infrastructure.

As argued by Eckert, the bifurcated nature of colonial urban space in West Africa was planned to 'protect' Europeans from 'disease' thought to be carried exclusively by Africans—the 'Sanitation syndrome.' In West Africa, segregated suburbs were first established in Freetown called Hill Station to shield Europeans from malaria disease. Sanitary segregation was also carried out in Lagos, Bathurst (The Gambia) Accra. The Germans in Douala, Cameroon carried similar segregation between 1910 and 1914. To Eckert, "...by segregating 'races', the European colonizers introduced new element into the African urban order."² Coquery-Vidrovitch (2005) further demonstrates that 'sanitary syndrome' was reinforced by the outbreak of plague epidemics in Cape Town, 1902; Dakar, 1914; and Lagos, 1924 – 25.³ According to Olukoju (2003), the turning point in the adoption of racial segregation in West Africa came in 1910 due to the outbreak of a yellow fever epidemic on the Gold Coast and the high mortality of Europeans.⁴

In 1912, a Conference of Principal Medical Officers and Senior Sanitary Officers held in Lagos agreed that residential quarters of Europeans should be completely separated from the nearest indigenous settlement by at least a quarter of a mile. It was also decided that no African, except domestic servants, would be allowed to reside in the European Reservation. Frederick Lugard, Nigeria's Governor General between 1912 and 1919 enthusiastically supported the racial segregation policy. Olukoju suggests that the Lugardian era featured rigid application of residential segregation, but his successor, Hugh Clifford, was more sceptical and the 1920s witnessed a retreat from Lugardian orthodoxy, though segregation remained a live issue. By the late 1940s, the policy of residential segregation was doomed as a result of growing nationalist movement and advances in medical research.

Meanwhile, in Ilesha, compared to other parts of Nigeria, the battle for sanitation was quite belated. In 1950, Akinyele discusses how the Ilesha Native Authority instructed the quarter chiefs to pull down all filthy tents in their domain.⁵ They were directed to supervise the clearing of weeds while the Native Authority was to consider the fines to be imposed on the "breeders of mosquitoes." By 1955, decisions were made to relocate Hausa traders to a new site in order to control high incidence of theft and sanitation problems.

In the Cameroon, the question of security, socio-economic factors, religions and the relationship between the Hausa immigrant community and

other African ethnic groups, reinforced a sense of Hausa residential exclusionism.⁶ According to Awasom, unlike the Germans, the British in the Cameroon found it impossible to co-exist with the Hausa in the same quarters at Up-Station Bamenda. The British could not tolerate the "noisy" Hausa community within their residential areas. Hausa immigrants were relocated from Up-Station Bamenda to lowland area called Mankon, which was two miles away from European administrative and residential buildings. Mankon was renamed Abakpa, meaning strangers' quarters.

In contrast with other experiences of segregation, Adebayo argues that segregation in colonial Nigeria was not only a racial or sanitary phenomenon.⁷ Among African ethnic groups, there was intra-group segregation, which, in certain cases, could be attended by discrimination, as demonstrated in the case of Ibadan indigenes and Ijebu migrants who settled in Ibadan.

Coquery-Vidrovitch suggests that the city was the European colonizer's seat of power; migrants were uprooted and used as cheap labour reserve for the mines, railroad and road construction.⁸ Africans felt they were 'strangers to the city' because they were strangers in a city that was segregated according to Western political, economic and cultural model that was alien to their worldview. Contrary to the colonizer's expectations that Africans were mere strangers, rural migrants to the city, who were only passing through, Africans, invent their own *city* within the colonial context by innovating new ways of *living in the city*. As Gutkind (1969, p. 349) demonstrates, Africans see city life as desirable, and moving to the city was conceived as the first step towards the goal of modernity.⁹ Beyond the hygiene paradigm and racial factors, the establishment segregated quarters in colonial cities was induced by the political economy of colonialism. Segregated quarters, especially Sabongari in Kano, created labour reservoir needed for construction works and commercial firms. The collection of taxes especially from the migrants was made easier with the establishment of their quarters. In Kano, Southern Nigerians were quarantined in Sabongari to prevent them from spreading radical ideas of egalitarianism and freedom to the indigenous Hausa Muslim population.

Sabongari, Kano was created through the Cantonment Proclamation 10 of 1911 as part of the urban segregation policy to accommodate the "civilized educated Southerners" most of whom were employees of colonial government establishments and European commercial firms. Sabongari was expected to be a model city for the 'civilised natives' with European architecture and planning. The 'civilised natives' were also expected to live European lifestyles in the city with nuclear families and so on. The segregated urban policies served important social, economic and political functions. For the European community, segregated residential settlement was an instrument of control of the native outside their homelands.

Segregation assisted the European community to maintain its self-identity in the performance of its role within the social and political system, and promoted the myth of white superiority. With segregation, it was possible to check and supervise the affairs of the natives, especially educated Southern Nigerians (*Trousered Niggers*) who the colonial officials regarded with contempt and suspicion. In the context of British notion of "civilizing mission," the segregated European settlement served as a model of emulation for the "uncivilized natives." Segregation also implied differential access to social services. It afforded the colonialists the pretext to exclude the native from social amenities that were available in the European Reservation Area. Before Lord Lugard left Nigeria in 1906, basic physical elements of colonial towns had emerged. European and Native Reservations were separated by building free zone (Bfz) with their functional elements such as military fort, constabulary, soldiers' lines, courthouses, offices, hospitals, clubs, churches, cemetery, recreation ground and markets.

In Kano, colonial urban administration produced "dual town": traditional-the walled *Birni* and the modern sector, "Kano Township." The urban dualism that emerged was indispensable to the political administration of the British indirect rule in Kano. The Kano Township was further dualised according to socio-economic, racial and political categories. It included the European Reservation Area (Nassarawa and Bompai) as the seat of colonial power in Kano that was created by the Cantonment Proclamation 28 in 1904; Syrian Quarters established for Syrians, Lebanese, Arabs, and Indians etc. and occupied by middlemen in the colonial commerce; Sabongari for Southern Nigerian non-Natives; and Tundun Wada for Northern Nigerian natives. In 1914, Tundun Wada was created to accommodate native Northern Nigerian migrants (Hausa/Fulani) who were employed in the colonial bureaucracy and trading companies but were living in Sabongari. The British felt they should be brought under the power of the Native Authority. Fagge Quarters was complementary to the *Birni* and was occupied by petty traders, labourers, clerks and messengers in the colonial administration and economy.

Sabongari was originally opened up with a view to offer satisfactory accommodation for educated southerners employed by the colonial service or mercantile firms. It was not meant for profiteering. However, some of the plot holders did not reside in Sabongari and even in Kano. They were merely absentee plotters. Their main interest was to derive a monthly income from the plot holdings. Some of the plot holders were allocated as many nine plots with large majority holding two plots. Therefore, Sabongari was not utilized entirely for the purpose it was intended.

The Sabongari area occupied largely by the non-native Southern Nigerian migrants and other West Africans from Gold Coast (Ghana) and Sierra Leone was excluded from social amenities. Ethnic and religious

institutions established their own schools. Social clubs and recreational centres were set up through social networks. Roads linked European business areas, the railway, the European Reservation and the Syrian Quarters. This was despite the fact that Sabongari had become the hub of commercial activities by groundnuts middlemen, traders in European merchandise and colonial workforce. By 1940, the Township area occupied by non-natives and Syrians had several residential houses and shops against colonial urban plan. The expansion was in response to the growth of colonial economy and massive influx of migrants to Kano during the depression and World War II. When the colonial authorities threatened to demolish "illegal structures," the residents in both areas petitioned the government for "discriminatory colonial urban policy." The rapid economic expansion in Kano had devastating consequences on the urban planning. Sabongari increasingly became a slum and ghetto due to overcrowding and inadequate social services.

This paper explores how colonial segregation policy in Sabongari fostered over-urbanisation exemplified by overcrowding, poor sanitation, infectious diseases, unemployment, prostitution, overstressed social infrastructure and crime unequalled in the Kano urban complex. Over-urbanisation in this paper denotes the disequilibrium between urban population and provision of adequate infrastructure, which often resulted in congestion and sanitation problems. In Guggler and Flanagan (1978: 34), over-urbanisation is defined as urban growth that is inimical both in terms of economic growth in the narrow sense of increased economic production and in terms of economic development in the wide sense that includes an evaluation of the distribution of that production.¹⁰ According to Olaniyi (2005), by 1915, few years after its establishment, cases of serious crimes had been recorded in Sabongari.¹¹ This was because the settlement had attracted considerable influx of criminal elements both males and females. This was allegedly attributed to the freedom they enjoyed from the comparatively liberal British law and moral order as opposed to the restraints under the Emirate system against gambling, alcohol and prostitution.

This paper revisits the historical silences that undergird the resistance of immigrants to urban planning and segregation; how they negotiated their rights to the city and their rights as colonial subjects. The transformative social changes in urban Kano are also discussed. It makes attempt to demonstrate how the legislation of 1925 regulating the buildings on government plots in Sabongari was not brought to the notice of the plot holders until January 1936. The paper addresses the issues of the dialogue between the colonial state and the immigrants in Sabongari. Protests against colonial urban policies created social consciousness, communal identity and

litigations. Migrants formed ethnic and communal associations partly to promote their welfare in the city.

By the end of the World War I, the growing liquor business, hotel and other social activities not only attracted the influx of migrants seeking new social life but also significantly contributed the menace of criminality and overcrowding. In 1934, Chief David Oguntolu Sanyaolu established the Colonial Hotel (renamed Paradise Hotel in 1960). More hotels and relaxation centres rapidly followed, especially during the World War II. This trend continued beyond British-rule, which terminated in 1960.

Great Depression and New Urban Regulations

In the early 1930s, the Medical Officer of Health, Kano warned against the consequences of overcrowding on health and safety of the Sabongari residents. It was suggested that with reference to the proposed measures to be taken in respect of overcrowding in Sabongari, it was observed that affected plottolders would undoubtedly be at a loss by any attempt to bring their plots into conformity with sanitary requirements. The Resident Kano Province reasoned that there could be no equitable excuse for building in excess of the one-third of the area in cases where it was proved that the buildings were erected before 1924 and the plan of enforcing demolition without compensation within three years would not be unduly harsh bearing in mind the damage to health that the dangers of overcrowding.

Advice was to be given to each plot holder individually. Furthermore, record of the advice given was to be kept, both for the protection of plottolders and the officials engaged in the inspection work. By August 1935, it was recommended that Surveyors should find out: exactly the degree of over-crowding on each plot existing when the plan was made; how much the plots had been over built since the Sabongari survey; and form a permanent record of all relevant correspondence about the plottolder.

In January 1936, the attention of all the plottolders in the old plots Sabongari was drawn to the following sections of the Laws of Nigeria:

1. Cap. 57 Rules made under Sections 41 and 43 (2) (a) (b) and 3:
2. In the erection of any new building the following conditions shall be observed:
 - a. In the Southern Provinces not more than half the area and in the Northern Provinces not more than one-third part of the area of any plot shall be covered with buildings
 - b. A clear space shall be left along any boundary of a plot contiguous with another plot; such space shall not be less than five feet in width in the case of buildings not exceeding twenty-five feet in height and ten feet in the case of buildings exceeding twenty-five feet in height. Provided that where any

person holds two or more contiguous plots such plots shall for the purpose of those rules be deemed to be one plot.

3. Any person who, in erecting any new building, fails to comply with the above-mentioned conditions shall be liable to a fine of five pounds and the Local Authority may cause any new building which does not comply with the said conditions to be pulled down, and may recover the expense as a debt from the owner.

III. Cap. 56 Section 7, sub-sections 1, 2, 5, 7, II VOL: I Laws:

7. The following shall be deemed to be nuisance:
 - (1) Any premises in such a condition as to be injurious to health
 - (2) Any premises which so dark or so ill-ventilated or so deep or in such a condition of dilapidation, as to be dangerous or prejudicial to the health of the persons living or employed therein.
 - (11) Any premises certified by the health officer to be so overcrowded as to be injurious or dangerous to the health of the inmates.

These sections of the law were not rigidly enforced until 1936. It was declared in the circular that after 1st May 1938, however, these laws were to be enforced.

The Senior Health Officer, Northern Provinces, Mr. Jos Cauchi in a memo to the Medical Officer of Health, Kano dated 2nd May 1936, argued that

...from my experience in Lagos, I strongly advise against any relaxation of the stipulation at present in force that no more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of a plot should be built upon. In the case of small plots in Lagos where building is allowed up to 50 per cent I have found that open yard thus left is very small indeed: this would be even more marked in areas where the buildings are often round or irregular instead of rectangular.¹²

The Conference of Administrative Officers held in April, 1936 proposed that for administrative purposes, Local Authority should consult Medical Officer of Health whether Government would have any objections to increasing building limit from $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ in respect of Sabongari.

During the Depression years, the Local Authority sent memorandum with regard to the overcrowding of the Sabongari plots warning them against their application for re-plastering and reroofing their buildings, most especially the overbuilt portions. The Local Authority warned plot holders to refrain from enlarging, sub-dividing or repairing buildings on overbuilt areas that were marked for demolition by the colonial authority. However, the plot

holders remained adamant as they enlarged rooms to meet the annual influx of southerners to Kano.¹³

The entire area of Sabongari was excessively overbuilt and overcrowded. Unauthorised extensions were made in order to house southern migrants who came to Kano in search of employment or trade. Plot holders were concerned about how additional rentals could be derived from their plots, which inadvertently increased overcrowding.

On many of the plots, the population ranged from 30 to 40 persons, comprising several families and children. The Local Authority faced challenges in prosecuting offenders for insanitary conditions in the overcrowded plots as plot holders and residents passed the buck against one another.

Residents of Sabongari rebuffed the idea of decongesting the overcrowded conditions. The Colonial Resident in Kano had directed that, "the decision of permitting only one-third of the plots to be built upon was a standard laid down by Government after due consultation with the health authorities which to safeguard the health of the community as a whole they should abide by, and such regulations were not to be altered to suit any particular section or community."

It was argued that Sabongari had always been the prime focus for major infectious diseases and on many occasions, the residents at their mass meetings publicly blamed the health authorities for neglect of their duties. The health authorities however, argued that it was the residents who obstructed the health department in their efforts to prevent epidemics by finding unacceptable every attempt to ameliorate unsatisfactory conditions. Smallpox broke out in Sabongari and affected occupants of the plots in the early 1930s. The spread of communicable diseases became perennial occurrence. Rather than been controlled the spread of epidemics continued due to overcrowding in housing conditions; rooms without adequate light and ventilation. High mortality rates were recorded from pneumonia, tuberculosis and other respiratory infections due to overcrowding and ill-ventilated conditions.

In 1935, it was estimated that there were 570 built-up plots in Sabongari (542 in old Sabongari and 140 in the new section, excluding 112 plots that were by then in the process of allocation). The plots were all about 100x 50 or 500 square feet, which gave every plot holder an area of 1666 square feet to build nine standard size rooms of 120 square feet each and still leave space for kitchen, bathroom and latrine. It was presumed that, if two adults occupy each room, each plot could accommodate 18 persons under satisfactory conditions. It was also estimated that, Sabongari could comfortably accommodate a population of 10,656. In 1935, the Kano Township population for Sabongari was 9,946. Sabongari plots were granted under Regulations 8 of 1918 held under Certificates of Occupancy.

The influx of southern migrants was considered as a factor for the sporadic outbreak of plague and increased the danger of importing rat-attractive merchandise from such infected territories. Eric C. Gilles, the Medical Officer of Health asserted that, "it is by reducing overcrowding and improving existing structures to make them more clean and sanitary and rat proof that we can hope to control major epidemic both in vermin and man, and expect better health from the community in general."¹⁴ In the circumstances of overcrowding and epidemics, health officers envisaged "wholesale demolition" and complete evacuation to control an outbreak. The example of Lagos was cited as enough history to be a lesson to prevent repetition of such a catastrophe. It was decided that in anticipation of such dangers, there must be efforts to eliminate the conditions favourable for the growth of epidemics. It was equally suggested that the safety and welfare of the community as well as uninterrupted to its commercial activities must be vigilantly protected. Colonial Medical Officers in Kano stressed the need for action regarding overcrowding in Sabongari and to prevent the spread of epidemics in the whole of Kano.

However, Sabongari lacked some amenities such as roads and water. On April 12, 1937, 12 Plot Owners of Sabongari led by S. M. Ogunmodede petitioned the Representative Board, Sabongari Kano complaining that the Government had served them notice to the effect that in 1938 houses in Sabongari would be brought to conform to the building Regulations either by demolition or otherwise. They also stated that their applications for repairs were almost invariably turned down, and that if the houses were not repaired, they would not be good for the occupants, and plot holders would incur losses. Plotholders lamented that, "in case the houses not repaired fall on the occupants, we hope the Government will hold itself responsible for the Deaths. We ask respectively that we be allowed to repair our houses before the rains set in."

Rights to the City: Protests by Migrants and Plot Holders

Plot holders and migrants in Sabongari adopted several methods to protest against demolition of their overbuilt houses. These methods included petitions, litigations, delegations to colonial authorities and agitations in the newspapers. The protests gathered more momentum as more plotholders became conscious of the losses that were to experience due to demolition. More plotholders wrote petitions to the colonial authorities to protect their properties from demolition. On 30th September, 1935,

Mr. J.R. Patterson granted interview to the Sabongari Representative Board's Delegation. The delegation was accompanied by the Local Authority and the President of the Sabongari Magistrate Court. It consisted of: Mr. G.E.F. Brown; Reverend S.O. Odutola; Mr. D.O. Sanyaolu; Mr. K.F. Hanid; Mr. T.P. Barlatt-Hughes; and R.D. Agbakoba who were at the time

the political and religious elite as well as successful entrepreneurs. The delegation expressed the general feeling of dissatisfaction and anxiety which pervaded Sabongari due to the Circulars which were published to the residents stating that as from late May 1938, action would be taken against all plot-holders where buildings did not comply with the Building Regulations enacting that only one-third the area of any plot could be built upon; and that action would be taken against all lodging, and no licences would be issued to any plot-holder whose buildings did not comply with the law or were not passed as sanitary by the Health Authorities.

The Delegation expressed that the over-crowding in Sabongari was the fault of the Government for not having taken measures to prevent it; and drew attention to the huge financial loss which would be incurred by the rigid enforcement of the laws mentioned in the Circular. The Delegation stated that saw the necessity for the Building Regulations, but, asked whether the Resident would not willing to allow buildings to cover one-one of the area on plots already over-built and enforce the law as the one-third only in the case of new plots.

Mr. J.R. Patterson, the Resident responded that the reason for the existence of Sabongari was to provide a place for the more "civilized natives" of the Township to live in. That the building and health regulations were made in the interests of these more "civilized people" themselves. The regulations were made so that Sabongari might become a model settlement for these people to live in and without them Sabongari would grow into an over-crowded insanitary settlement such as existed in many parts of Nigeria. He assured the delegation that they should be leaders in any movement for improvement rather than obstructionists. The Resident pointed out that ignorance of the law was no excuse for breaking the law, that it was not up to the government to act as police to see that no one broke the law. He declined to consider an amendment to the Regulations allowing one-half of the plots to be built upon, pointing out that the proportion enacted by law was one, which had been carefully thought out by the Health Authorities and laid down in the interests of health and sanitation.

With regard to the already over-built plots, it was not proposed to execute a wholesale demolition of buildings in excess of one-third the plot, but that each case would be considered on its merit. As to the question of letting of lodgings, the Resident stated that, that was the main cause of overcrowding in Sabongari. He restated that Sabongari was laid out in order to provide homes for stranger natives working in Kano, and not as a place where rich members of the community would rent plots for sub-letting in order to make profits. He pointed out that right from the beginning of the Land and Native Rights Ordinance, it was laid down that all land in the Northern Provinces should be under the control of the Governor and "held and administered for the use and the common benefit of the natives." The

holding of plots for the purpose of making profit by letting lodgings should be controlled as such occupation of plots was inimical to the principle of common use. The Local Authority was instructed to investigate the extent of lodgings and that the issue of each licence would be considered on merit after May 1st, 1938. The Resident assured the Delegation that a new Building Ordinance would be enacted to give a greater degree of control of building.

The Delegation finally submitted that if only one-third of the plot was available for building purposes there would not be sufficient room on the plot for people who had large families and dependents to build on, and requested that any extension of the lay-out might be laid out in plots 100 feet by 100 feet instead of 100 feet by 50 feet as at present. The Resident did not consider that this was necessary as any person could take up two contingent plots and that if a plot of 100 feet by 100 feet had to be taken up by the poorer residents it put them under a great disadvantage as they would not only have to pay double the rent, but, would be put to unnecessary labour or expense in having to keep a large space in a clean and sanitary condition.

On 15th February, 1939, 24 Plot Holders in Sabongari sent a petition to the Resident stating that they were been driven into poverty and severe hardship by the order of the Medical Officer of Health to demolish their buildings in Sabongari from one to six rooms per plot despite the economic difficulties. Plot Holders stated that the buildings were built between 1913 and 1920, before the Building Ordinance was instituted. In the past, they had been advised by the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Turnbull to add more windows to their rooms.

Plot Holders also registered their protests that they were paying regular revenue such as Plot Rents; Conservancy Fees; Rates; Income Taxes and Water Rate to the government every year. They demanded that if the demolition of overbuilt structures were to be forced on them, they should be considered for compensation. Plot Holders agitated that most of them depended on the buildings for their livelihoods to survive the hardships of the Great Depression. They estimated that demolition would be a great loss to their investment of Fifteen or Twenty pounds per room. They pleaded that,

...if this order is to be forced on us, we should be considered for compensation as is done in other places under this same (colonial) Government which we know and admit to be the best Government... We trust and hope that this will receive Your Honour's sympathy as we are loyal British Protected subjects who are placed under your kind charge and we therefore raise up our cries to thee as our Father and we trust you will satisfy our request... We are unmindful of the facts that, the Health of people is the greatest concern of the Medical Officer of Health, yet we

venture to say that with the periodical improvements made to these rooms...their conditions ...are by far healthier than what they were in 1913 and 1920.¹⁵

Apart from the group petition, individuals also registered their protests against demolition of houses during the economic crises. For example, F.K. Albert of Plot No G 13 Sabongari wrote to the colonial resident officer in January 1939 that,

I wish to put this few painful lines before you, in the whole world we consider English government to be the best among all the governments and is the government which troubles nobody...it is of no use to broke (sic) houses but to let people make big corridors for the houses, and one is about to build new houses again must let government surveyor survey for him before building...There is no job and there is no money many people suffering (sic). Where can they get money when there is no job and many people who have no job depend upon their house rent...and you know very well that these poor people used to pay tax for their houses. I remember sometimes ago when they started this things (demolition) three men sold their houses and went away. As you are our head, I put this before you to consider it is of no use breaking houses, many people will suffer and thereby they will start talking bad of our good government.

Within the Local Authority, it was reasoned that if a reduction to exactly one-third of the plot in each case is adhered to, it would cause widespread dissatisfaction and, in some cases real hardship. It was equally observed that many of the buildings were erected years before the new regulations were introduced and plottolders were not likely to receive compensation from the government for any building demolished. In examining each plot on its merit, the following factors were considered:

- a) Financial status of the plottolder;
- b) Type and value of buildings earmarked for demolition;
- c) Whether the occupants are merely tenants who pay rent to the plottolder or the plottolder himself and his dependants; and
- d) Extent of overbuilt area.

Based on all the agitations, colonial administration considered it impossible to enforce the laws strictly. It was considered important that the process of eliminating overcrowding should be slow, since the problem of housing the evicted tenants arose. It was concluded that a three-year plan should be made to allow further extension of Sabongari before all plots could conform to the regulations.

Despite all the assurances, the Sanitary Superintendent, Mr. Garruthers ordered several rooms to be demolished based on the allegation that those rooms did not meet the conditions of granting Pitto Licence. Many of the Pitto Licence Holders were not aware of the regulations and many buildings without Pitto production were demolished. In March 1938, about 50 Plot Holders petitioned the government over their grievances. Consequently, the colonial authority responded that no other demolition of buildings would either be carried out or contemplated except:

- a) In the case of plot owners who have applied for pitto licences and who were required to conform with the pertinent building regulations before any such licences were issued; and/or
- b) Where structural alterations or additions have been carried without the permission of the Local Authority.

In order to mitigate the problems of accommodation that the demolition was to generate, the colonial authority employed the services of a Surveyor to complete the survey of the new Sabongari extension. It was equally decided that no houses or parts of houses should be demolished except with the personal approval of the Local Authority, Medical Officer of Health, President of the Sabongari Mixed Court and the Chairman of the Sabongari Representative Board. Building Inspectors were cautioned against issuing independent orders about demolition that could create a great deal of misunderstanding amongst the plottolders. This factor was considered in order to avoid unnecessary hardship and indiscriminate eviction of tenants and plottolders except new plots were provided to absorb those ejected.

By January 1939, 27 buildings were listed as overbuilt.¹⁶ Each of the plottolders were granted a warning period of 12 months. The plan that buildings erected on a plot should cover only one third of the area of the plot, and also that space of five feet from either side of the plot be left over generated considerable anxiety in Sabongari. Several public meetings were held with the Representatives of the colonial authority and a number of petitions against the proposal were forwarded to the government. In 1935, when the matter of demolishing overbuilt structures was brought before the Legislative Council, the plottolders were assured that no hardship would be created.¹⁷ Out of the applications for repairs received, about 90 per cent were granted while 10 per cent whose houses were earmarked for demolition were withheld for reasons that the owners were carrying out those repairs at their own risks or were intended to cover new or additional buildings contrary to the new policy. The colonial authority also resolved that if the plottolders spent money on repairing their buildings and on subsequent investigation the buildings were found to cause over-building and to have been put up without permission, the plottolders would have no just cause for complaint if they were ordered to demolish them.¹⁸

One of the most successful Yoruba entrepreneurs in colonial Kano, Chief Daniel Oguntolu Sanyaolu at a meeting of the Board of Sabongari enquired why it was necessary for plot holders to ask for permission to repair or plaster their buildings. The Local Authority replied him that the measure as introduced when the question of the demolition of buildings was first raised in order to ensure that only repairs and not additional new buildings or structural alterations were intended by the plot holder. The Medical Officer of Health added that any plot holder who carried out structural alterations or additions without approval were liable to prosecution.

By January 1939, it was decided by the Sabongari Board that no house or part of it should be earmarked for demolition except with the personal approval of the Local Authority, Medical Officer of Health (or his representative), President of the Mixed Court and the Chairman of the Sabongari Representative Board. Building Inspectors were restrained from issuing independent orders about demolition, as such action was apt to create a great deal of misunderstanding among the plotters. In order to avoid any unnecessary hardship indiscriminate eviction of plotters were avoided except in situations where new plots were provided to absorb those ejected.

Madam Ayisatu also petitioned the colonial authority through her Solicitors (Andrew O. Thomas, Solicitor and Counsel) on 4th July, 1939 that her plot marked for demolition having an area of 100x50 sq feet was built in 1920 when no law precluding anybody from building the whole of his/her plot till 1925 when it was passed that only one third of plot should be built. Madam Ayisatu enquired whether if her property was demolished or acquired she would be compensated by the government. The Local Authority responded that, no new building was added since the 1936 Plan but a kitchen was demolished in 1937 and an open latrine removed. The building was also found to have been overbuilt by 547.21 sq. feet. The Medical Officer of Health recommended demolition up to 617 sq. feet and the construction of a new kitchen. No action was taken by the authorities between 1924 (when the Building Regulations were first introduced) and 1936 when the question of demolition was first raised, and there was no proof the 1936 Plan of the plot that any building was subsequently added. It was concluded that the demolition recommended by the Medical Officer of Health would not be enforced unless government was prepared to compensate the plot holder. It was also confirmed that Madam Ayisatu was not served with any notice of her buildings to be demolished or acquired by the government.

The colonial authority, however, responded further that, in order to prevent the creation of a slum conditions in Sabongari, it was essential that the Special Rules No. 3 of 1924 stipulating the demolition of overbuilt

structures be enforced. Considerations were given to the following issues to determine whether buildings were to be demolished or not:

- a) The date of erection of the offending buildings;
- b) The type of building;
- c) Whether the buildings were covered by permits to build from the Local Authority;
- d) The extent to which the plot was over-built;
- e) Whether the plot was occupied by the holder or covered by rooms to let and held by a landlord in many cases resident elsewhere than in Kano.

Cases in which doubt might arise as to the propriety of issuing an order for demolition were referred to office of the Colonial Secretary, Northern Region for the advice of the Crown Counsel.

Following all the controversies and apprehensions, many social clubs and ethno-communal organizations were established to confront the colonial authority on the issue of demolition of over-built structures. An example of this was The Nigerian Youth Movement, Kano branch led by Mr. S.O.A. Solomon-Omage of the Native Authority Works Department, Kano. In July 1939, the movement requested the Local Authority Kano to grant four members an interview on the following issues that agitated the minds of the Plot Owners and Sabongari residents:

- a) The proposed demolition of houses, and conditions under which plots would be reduced to one-third;
- b) The re-assessment of buildings; and
- c) The nearness of the Infectious Diseases Hospital to the new Sabongari.

The movement was advised to approach the Sabongari Representative Board that would represent their interest to the Local Authority.

Threat of Demolition and Community Response, 1940 – 1942

By 1940, several overbuilt plots in the Sabongari lacking satisfactory conveniences were inspected by the Local Authority, the Sarkin Sabongari, and the Medical Officer of Health. Many of the inspected plots were in deplorable conditions, undersized rooms and appalling sanitary conditions. As stated before, the threat of demolishing overbuilt houses received strong condemnation from the plotters. Their attention was further drawn to Public Health Ordinances:

- a) Rules made under Section 43, 44 and 45 of the Public Health Ordinance No. 2 of 1917, rule No. 48, gave the Medical Officer of Health power to prescribe the maximum number of persons who may occupy any room of premises; and

- b) Rules made under Section 41 of the Townships Ordinance No. 3 of 1917 part vii, rule No. 40, provides that no person shall let rooms within a Township without the permission of the Local Authority.

The colonial authorities posited that it would be inequitable to follow a different policy with regard to plot holders at Fagge from that at Sabon Gari, even though the former is a newer development. In Fagge, it was decided that any plot overbuilt by more than one-third (taking into consideration inside dimensions of the buildings) must have its overbuilt structures demolished. On its own merit, in these cases, it was construed to allow a longer period for demolition in circumstances where the plot is excessively over-built, but in no instance was the time limit to be extended beyond a year. Decisions were made according to how the overbuilding was rated, "slightly," "moderately" or "excessively" overbuilt. The Local Authority warned that no reasonable comparison between the conditions in the Native Reservation, European and Syrian Quarters could be made for the reason that even though there was overcrowding in the Syrian Quarter, the congestion caused by the general housing conditions in the Native Reservation, particularly in the old part, rendered the necessity for its relief a much more urgent problem. It was advised that the titles which were issued in the Native Reservation under Regulation 11 of 1928 were not transferable, but that overbuilding would be good grounds for informing a title holder who wished to transfer, by surrendering in order to allow a new title to be issued to someone else (the correct procedure for Certificates of Temporary Occupancy), that a new title would not be issued to the second person on account of the overbuilding. Regulation 4 of Regulation 11 of 1928 states "the sum for the issue of any such certificate and the use to which the land is put or the person to whom certificates are issuable shall be determined by the Resident in charge of the province." Many plotters transferred their overbuilt plots without reference to the Medical Officer of Health as required by law. One of the terms of transfer was that a new owner must agree to demolish any overbuilt insanitary buildings.

On 4th February, 1942, the Plot holders made another plea concerning demolition of overbuilt plots. They were replied by the Local Authority in March 1942 that:

- Rules made under Section 43, 44 and 45 of the Public Health Ordinance. No.2 of 1917, rule No. 48, gives the Medical Officer of Health power to prescribe the maximum number of persons who may occupy any room;
- Rules made under Section 41 of the Townships Ordinance No. 3 of 1917 part vii, rule No. 40 provides

that no person shall let rooms within a Township without the permission of the Local Authority;

- As it is a simple requirement of sanitation to have a properly built latrine and bath room on each plot, and the law provides for such requirements, but some of the plots were so overbuilt that there was no sufficient space to provide them except by having overbuilt portions demolished. Thus, it became necessary to have buildings demolished to provide these essential requirements;
- It was not the policy of the Government to insist on wholesale demolition, each plot been dealt with on its merits. Where partial demolition was considered necessary, it was obvious that there must be some cogent reason, especially urgent health requirements; and
- As soon as the new plots that Government intends to lay out have all been taken up, there should be no further need for congestion in any part of the Sabongari.

During the World War II, it was difficult to obtain building supplies from abroad. It was expected that all repairs to houses should follow strict official routine would be suspended. Nowhere in Nigeria were the building regulations as strict as they were in Lagos. But the difficulties of obtaining supplies became acute during the World War II which necessitated that the regulations, in several cases were relaxed. In Kano, the regulations were pursued with vigour. Plotters could not repair damaged door, window or wall in Sabongari without haven to pull down and rebuild the whole house.

In March 1942, the Medical Officer of Health reiterated that the question overcrowding and its effects on the community as a whole should receive prior consideration, while any inevitable hardships on individual plotters must be regarded as of secondary importance. According to him, disasters involving the loss of thousands of pounds to the colonial state may result from overcrowding (as an outbreak of plague during the groundnut season) and this will be more serious than that of a few "cantankerous individuals" have to spend a little money to improve their buildings or lose a small rental by breaking down overbuilt portions. An outbreak of plague would also result in loss of life and destruction of property as it occurred during the plague outbreak in Lagos. Disasters such as plague outbreak were preventable and effective steps were to be taken to safeguard against them. It was posited that the spread of cerebrospinal meningitis was favoured by overcrowding. Kano had sixty-three cases of cerebrospinal meningitis during the World War II.

Despite many old and new laws; meetings, negotiations and disputes, it seems that a comparatively low number of houses were demolished in Kano. The precise number of number of houses demolished could not be ascertained due to lack of evidence. However, the dialogue between the colonial state and Sabongari plot holders/residents produced three broad-based outcomes. First, before World War II, in order to stem the spread of epidemics in Kano, Infectious Diseases Hospital, (IDH) was established in close proximity with Sabongari. Secondly, Sabongari was further extended to accommodate the new demands and population influx. Finally, the British established the Office of Sarkin Sabongari (Executive Head) with an unelected council made up of representatives from the diverse ethnic groups occupying the settlement.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussed how community leaders, accomplished merchants mobilised and residents against the government plans of demolishing overbuilt structures in Sabongari. They argued that Sabongari, unlike other sectors of the Kano urban complex, lacked the required social amenities to cater for the influx of migrants, especially during the Depression years and World War II. It was equally posited that demolition of overbuilt structures would jeopardize their commercial interests. However, the Sabongari residents buttressed colonial arguments that it was important for health reasons to reduce the overcrowding in the Sabongari area. The possibility of making a local order to grant landlords permission to eject a tenant who was known to have completed his/her new building was considered. It was pointed out that tenants who had completed their new buildings were taken advantage of Rent Assessment Regulations to retain their old quarters at a lower rate and let out their own building for very exorbitant rates. The plotters maintained that demolition of overbuilding of plots in Sabongari could only be enforced to control overcrowding if some compensation could be paid to the owners of the buildings demolished as there was no law at the time they built the houses.

As the case of Sabongari shows, there was inability of Africans to living the city in 'European style' due to economic, cultural and political factors that promoted segregation and hierarchy with the colonial urban space. There was uneven development within the urban space. The social services were principally exclusive to the European Reservation Area and the Syrian Quarters to the exclusion of the congested and overpopulated area of Sabongari.

Only few Africans attained the status and had the luxury required to live in the 'European city' with parks and gardens. Sabongari became urban space that the colonial state could not easily control. By 1940, Sabongari ceased to be exclusively occupied by Southern Nigerians or West African

migrants; they were joined by the natives. During this period, the administration of Sabongari was transferred to the Native Authority. It was impossible for the colonial state to control migration into Sabongari or the new social life that was emerging as well illegal structures that were constructed.

From the 1940s, migrants in Sabongari created new social movements and radical identities in alliance with emerging political parties that intensified opposition against colonial rule. Over-urbanisation became the symbol of colonial underdevelopment, inequalities and made the misery of migrants visible. The protests against the demolition of overbuilt structures illuminate contrasting world of European colonizers and Africans as regards living in the city. African migrants 'invented' their own city against the requirements of the colonial state.

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