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Milestones in archives administration in Nigeria

Abiola Abioye

This paper examines the development of archives administration in Nigeria, beginning with the early efforts of the Colonial Office in London to preserve the official records of the Nigerian Secretariat. It then discusses in detail Dr Kenneth Dike's record survey of the 1950s which laid the foundation for the establishment of the Nigerian Record Office (later known as the National Archives) and traces the development of archives administration at the national and state level as well as in the business sector. Finally, it examines the legislation for archives management in Nigeria, identifying a number of issues that must be addressed.

Introduction

The Arabic collection is reputed to be the oldest class of records in the Nigerian archives: it contains manuscripts dating from 1111 A.D.¹ The bulk of the Arabic manuscripts in Nigeria is, however, still in private hands, though concerted national and international efforts are being made to collect the manuscripts for the nation.² Official and systematic record-keeping in Nigeria did not begin until the coming of the Europeans and the subsequent introduction of colonial rule. Indeed, there was no entity called Nigeria until the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914. Perhaps this is why it has been advocated that the year 1914, rather than 1960, when Nigeria attained political independence, should be celebrated as Nigeria's year of nationhood. According to Adedoyin Lafinhan, then Director of the National Archives of Nigeria,

records in the archives show that we came into being as a modern state on 1st January, 1914, the date the northern and southern protectorates was [sic] finally amalgamated into political unity via an Order-in-Council of 22nd day of November, 1913 which came into effect from 1st January 1914 with Sir Frederick Lugard as the first Governor-General of Nigeria.³

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1 BABALOLA F. O., 'The future of Arabic manuscripts in Nigeria' in *The Nigerian Archives*, 1:4, 1993, pp.9–26.

2 UMAR A. O., 'The origin, development and utilization of Arabic manuscripts in the National Archives, Kaduna', paper presented at the 'Workshop on Exploring Nigeria's Arabic/Ajami Manuscript Resources for the Development of New Knowledge' held at Arewa House, Kaduna, Nigeria, 7–8 May 2009.

3 LAFINHAN A. H., '1st January and the birth of a nation' in *Nigerian Tribune*, 1 January 2008.

The question of nationhood in Nigeria is shrouded in controversy. While some authorities are of the view that there is just one nation, which is the political entity called Nigeria, others have argued forcefully that there are, indeed, many nations in the country, each attaining the status of nationhood at different times. To this school of thought, Nigeria is a mere geographical expression. Be that as it may, a large body of records was produced in Nigeria under the colonial administration before Independence.

Archives administration

Records facilitate the activities of organisations and individuals, and the preservation of records ensures their survival as evidence of those activities. It was with this understanding that several despatches were sent from the Colonial Office in London to the colonial administration in Nigeria, beginning with that of 1914, on the subject of the preservation of the records of the colonial administration.

The 1914 despatch specifically requested 'a brief report as to the existing arrangements for the custody and preservation of the older official records of the government', hoping that 'every care is already taken of those which are more or less recent and therefore required for official reference' and advising that effective steps should be taken towards 'the safe keeping and preservation of the documents in question'.⁴ Sir Frederick Lugard, the Governor-General, in his reply to the despatch, gave the impression that all was well with the records of the colonial administration. He replied:

Supreme Court records and records of the Commissioner of Lands were kept in strong-rooms. The older Southern Nigeria records were preserved in the Secretariat, were well housed, carefully catalogued and readily accessible. In fact, the Southern Nigeria records rooms were only renovated in 1912 at a cost of £100, and all pre-1898 records were found to be in a very fair state of preservation. Correspondence with the Colonial Office was preserved in Government House, where the records were complete and in a fairly satisfactory state of preservation. The records of the Northern Provinces were still recent and were being preserved in Zungeru.⁵

Lugard's conclusion was that the official records of the colonial administration in Nigeria were in 'a fair state of preservation' and that adequate arrangements had been made for their safe keeping.

The despatch of 28 December 1936 was particularly important for the introduction of the principles of records management into public administration in Nigeria. The despatch required the colonial administration to apply retention periods to account and treasury records as well as establishment and service records. The Colonial Office Instructions required the former category of records to be kept for seven years; records in the latter category, which were required for superannuation purposes, were not to be destroyed until after 60 years. Records of historical value were to be carefully preserved, presumably permanently. The implementation of this records retention and disposal instruction was enforced with all seriousness by the Financial Secretary to the Nigerian colonial adminis-

⁴ National Archives of Nigeria, *A memorandum on the organisation and management of Archives in Nigeria*, National Archives Headquarters, Ibadan, 1970.

⁵ *Ibid.*

tration, who directed and authorised officers 'to destroy such books and records after the expiration of the periods quoted, unless any particular records are required to be retained for longer periods, and with the exception of records having a historical value, which should be carefully preserved'.⁶ An earlier despatch, dated 16 October 1936, also had implications for records retention and disposal. It advised that appraisal exercises should be adequately supervised by a responsible authority so as to eliminate the incidence of the destruction of records of actual or potential historical interest. Mr Ormsby Gore, then the Colonial Secretary, made it emphatically clear to his subordinates in the colonies that

the preservation of its records in a satisfactory state must be regarded as one of the first duties of a Colonial Government, a duty which derives greater urgency from the fact that delay in the institution of suitable protective measures may and does lead to the inevitable loss of documents of value.⁷

Recognising the possibility that local facilities might be inadequate, particularly on account of the tropical climate, the metropolitan authorities advocated the transfer of records to the Public Record Office in London in order to prolong their survival.

Action was not taken on this despatch until the intervention of Mr J. A. M. Maybin, the Chief Secretary, on 21 September 1937, when he issued a circular to all government offices in Nigeria requesting information on 'existing official practices with regard to the destruction, and the retention and preservation of records, and inviting suggestions on what official policy should be on these matter [sic]'. The replies received from 12 offices painted varying pictures of the state of records in public offices in Nigeria. The replies showed that there were no uniform policies and procedures for the management and preservation of records in Nigeria's public sector during this period. The immediate action that Maybin's circular required could not be taken due, at first, to the 1938 annual leave of Mr Niven, who was then the Principal Assistant Secretary and who was assigned the responsibility of attending to the matter, and later to the outbreak of the Second World War, during which the matter was 'kept in view' and the file dealing with it 'periodically brought up until May 1946'.

In 1948, another despatch was received from the Colonial Office on the matter of records preservation. It is ironic that the file documenting the preservation of records had, itself, fallen into a state of disrepair. The Assistant Secretary (Political), Mr J. O. Field, is said to have expressed his distress over this development. The 1948 despatch re-emphasised the necessity of preserving records, particularly those of historical interest. It referred to the arrangements being made to establish a Central African Archives at Salisbury, in Southern Rhodesia, to take care of the public records of Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Sir Hilary Jenkinson, the then Deputy Keeper of Public Records in London, emphasised the need for a survey of the situation in all colonial territories, in a memorandum and questionnaire. In his memorandum, Jenkinson referred to the attention that the issue of archives management was enjoying in Europe and America and expressed regret over the dearth of information in England about archives in the colonies. He concluded with the offer of technical assistance. Although Mr J. I. Okwudiafor, the Assistant Secretary who attended to the 1948 despatch, was favourably disposed to the survey proposed by the Public

6 NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF NIGERIA, *A memorandum on the organisation and management of Archives in Nigeria*, National Archives Headquarters, Ibadan, 1970.

7 Ibid.

Record Office, no serious steps were taken to address the issue. The request for funding for the appointment of a Special Officer to attend to colonial records in Nigeria was denied by the Financial Secretary. It is on record that the Financial Secretary, Mr Himsworth, advised the Chief Secretary to reply to the Secretary of State 'that owing to the lack of accommodation and staff it is not proposed to set up archives in this territory at present'.⁸

It is, therefore, evident that the British administration showed keen interest in the preservation of the records of its colonial administration in Nigeria but that in comparison with other British colonies, the British officials in Nigeria seemed to lack the will to salvage and preserve the records in a stable state. The general impression about the attitude of these officials to records can be summarised as follows:

With very few exceptions, among whom one would include [Chief Secretary to the Legislative Council] H.M. Foot himself, it would appear that the mental abilities and the gift of vision of the generations of British officials who served in Nigeria throughout the period of its colonial tutelage would not match those of other British servants of the Empire who worked in other lands like Ceylon, Mauritius and India and who placed the colonial public records of those territories on firm basis without having to be prodded into doing so by the Colonial Secretary.⁹

Despite the calls for action received by these officials, colonial records in Nigeria faced the imminent danger of total loss until the intervention of Dr Kenneth Onwuka Dike in the early 1950s.

Dike's intervention

In June 1950, Dike had a discussion with Foot, during which he expressed serious concern about the state of government records and other archives in Nigeria. In his letter of 7 July, 1950 he reiterated his concern for the records, particularly for the consular records in Calabar, which were almost ruined by insects and damp. Dike then made a proposal intended to ensure the survival and proper preservation of the country's historical records. The proposal was for a rescue mission in two stages. The first stage was a survey 'to locate and save from destruction, all sources of historical importance in the country' and Dike offered to render free service in supervising this preliminary survey. The second stage, which was the preservation of the Nigerian historical records, would, according to Dike, require the appointment of an archivist who, 'aided by the report following this preliminary investigation, could undertake the work of classifying, cataloguing, [and] pooling together all known historical sources in Nigeria'. When he submitted, on request, what he termed his 'final recommendations for the survey of historical records in Nigeria', Dike proposed a role for himself, much expanded from the first stage of his initial proposal. It is, therefore, not a surprise that he became the first head of the Nigerian Record Office, which was established on his recommendation at the end of the preliminary survey. His proposal of a modest expenditure of between £4,000 and £5,000 annually for the running of the office seems to have laid the foundation for the modest funding of archives that was later to be experienced by public archival institutions in Nigeria. However, the amount suggested was not considered a modest expenditure by the

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

Financial Secretary, who advised him to limit his activities in the first year to the preliminary survey. The Finance Committee approved the sum of £850 for the first full year of Dike's assignment.

Dike was appointed the Supervisor of Records on a part-time basis for three years with effect from 1 January 1951. An analysis of his initiatives indicates that most of the woes that later befell the National Archives of Nigeria had their roots in his engagement and, particularly, in his execution of his mandate.¹⁰ Though highly educated and an eminent historian, his lack of expertise in archives administration and records management was a shortcoming that affected the quality of the rescue work undertaken through the preliminary survey. The fact that the assignment was undertaken on a part-time basis (during weekends and vacations) casts serious doubt on the thoroughness of the execution of his project, which was to cover the whole of Nigeria. Equally noteworthy is Dike's underestimation of the enormity of the assignment and what was required to accomplish it, in terms of men, money and material, as well as office accommodation and storage space. His hope for office and storage accommodation in the University College Library was unfulfilled. It required the kindness and goodwill of Professor Hamilton Whyte of the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research (WAISER) to secure the free use of two rooms in the WAISER building.

Whatever his shortcomings, Dike remains a reference point and a pioneer in the establishment of the Nigerian Record Office. His scheme became a face-saving exercise for a colonial administration that had gradually acquired notoriety for the flippancy with which it treated the problem of records preservation. Dike carried out his records survey between 1951 and 1953 with the assistance of undergraduates on vacation and a few appointed staff, particularly Mr Shofu, a first class clerk seconded to the Records Survey Office from the Nigerian Secretariat, and Mr L.N. Askikodi, a permanent archive assistant who joined in April 1952, and who was assigned the responsibility of co-ordinating the activities of the undergraduate workers in the Eastern Provinces. The bulk of the survey was done by these assistants, as Dike himself was said to be available for the assignment only during weekends and Easter and Christmas vacations. His longer vacations were always spent abroad, and in 1952 he overstayed his vacation in England and left Mr P.H. Hair, his colleague at WAISER, to supervise the survey work.

The survey work encountered a host of other problems: there was a lack of professional expertise, particularly on the part of the undergraduate assistants, who were inadequately prepared for the work; difficulty in paying honoraria and travel allowances to *ad hoc* workers in the field; and the suspicion engendered by the removal of old records from the regions to the Records Survey Office at Ibadan. The survey office was soon filled up with records, and accommodation became the most pressing need. Regional offices were established at Enugu, Kaduna and Lagos but those served only as a temporary reprieve. They became inadequate sooner than expected.

Dike submitted the final report of his records survey assignment to the government on 14 September 1953; the later printed version was entitled *Report on the Preservation and Administration of Historical Records and the Establishment of a Public Record Office in Nigeria*. The highlights of the report included a discussion of basic record-keeping requirements, the physical conditions of the records surveyed, and recommendations. Dike reiterated the

¹⁰ Ibid.

importance of legislation 'defining and regulating the administration, destruction, transfer and ownership of national archives.'¹¹ With specific reference to the UK Public Record Office Act, he made a case for legislation that would grant powers over departmental records to the head of the proposed Nigerian Record Office. On the physical conditions of the records, Dike reported that they were mostly in a deplorable state, so, for example he described how 'In one office in the Northern Region, there are birds nesting in an attic where old records are stored, and the effect can be imagined.'¹²

The list of recommendations included the enactment of legislation, which he suggested might be similar to the law establishing the archives in Southern Rhodesia, the appointment of a full-time archivist (presumably in addition to the Chief Archivist) to take care of 'the technical organization of the historical records emerging from the survey' and the incorporation of the records survey work into that of the record office, to be established with temporary accommodation provided 'to house the archives of the nation.'¹³ The other main recommendations related to the constitution of an Archives Committee whose secretary would be the Supervisor of Records and whose function would be to act as 'the Chief Executive in the interim period before the inauguration of the Record Office and the appointment of the Chief Archivist.'¹⁴ Dike recommended that, as soon as the Record Office was established, the committee should play only an advisory role. He further recommended the formulation of rules for the regular transfer of departmental records to the Record Office and the establishment of a binding and repair section in the Record Office.

Dike's report has been criticised as an attempt to achieve his ambition to become head of the Nigerian Public Record Office that was to emerge as a consequence of his survey. His recommendation of the appointment of a full-time archivist who would not be the Chief Archivist was considered to be 'contrary to the established practice in such matters where a qualified full-time head would be first appointed, and ... would be free to plan the establishment and development of the new department.'¹⁵ His failure to address issues of professionalism has since been regarded as placing the new establishment on shaky ground.

Nevertheless, Dike's recommendations relating to the establishment of a record office were accepted and, on 1 April 1954, the Nigerian Record Office was established. Contrary to the popular claim that it came into being through an administrative order of the Governor-General, it has been established that no such order was passed, even though Dike's report was tabled in Parliament on 27 March 1954.¹⁶ Rather, it was a circular prepared in the Nigerian Secretariat that heralded the establishment, with provisions that included the prohibition of records destruction without the Supervisor's consent, the appointment in each department of a qualified person to take responsibility for records weeding, and the empowerment of the Supervisor to examine public archives in any government office and remove those considered to be of national value. These provisions form the reference point for the archival legislation that emerged in Nigeria in later years.

11 DIKE K. O., *Report on the preservation and administration of historical records and the establishment of a public record office in Nigeria*, Government Printer, Lagos, 1954.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF NIGERIA, *Memorandum on the organisation and management of Archives in Nigeria*.

16 Ibid.

Although the Nigerian Record Office (later the National Archives of Nigeria) started in temporary accommodation, it moved to a purpose-built building within the vicinity of the University College campus at Ibadan in 1958. This was followed by the opening of the Kaduna and Enugu records centres, in 1962 and 1963 respectively. Today, the Ibadan, Kaduna and Enugu offices have been upgraded to zonal offices, each having a number of branch offices in the geo-political zones under its supervision. The bulk of the National Archives' holdings is still the records of the colonial administration in Nigeria, even though acquisition exercises were undertaken after Nigeria's independence, particularly in the 1980s.

Public Archives Ordinance 1957

The need for legislation to regulate archives administration and records management in Nigeria was passionately expressed in Dike's report in tandem with the principle that such legislation 'expresses values that a people have associated with recorded memory'.¹⁷ This need was not met until 1957 when the Public Archives Ordinance No. 43 was enacted, with a commencement date of 14 November 1957.¹⁸ The law, which was largely modeled on Ghanaian archives legislation, and the provisions of which became quite inadequate soon after enactment, was the legal instrument upon which archives administration in Nigeria was based for about three and half decades. During this period, the lacuna in the law, unfortunately, provided an excuse for the neglect of archives in the country.

A popular criticism of the Ordinance was that it did not give the Director mandatory power over departmental records as envisaged in Dike's report. Instead, the Ordinance provided the Director with the power to examine public archives and give advice on their care, custody and control, advice which the public office could not be compelled to heed. The Ordinance failed squarely to address the question of the management of current records as well as the records of the then regional governments. Section 2 of the Ordinance (the interpretation section), even defines the term 'archives' so as to exclude the public records of the regional governments relating to the period between 23 January 1952 and 30 September 1954. Section 8 merely stipulates that the functions of the director in relation to regional public archives are to be conferred upon him by the government to which the records belong, with the consent of the Governor-General.

The presentation of the Public Archives Bill, 1957, portended ominous signs for the Record Office. While the bill was presented for the First Reading by the Minister of Works and Survey (Alhaji Muhammadu Inuwa Wada), the Second Reading presentation was made by the Minister of Education (Mr Aja Nwachuku) on 12 September 1957, responsibility for archival matters having changed in the meantime. Even before this, in January 1956, at a meeting of the Archives Committee presided over by the Chief Justice, Sir Stafford Forster Sutton, the issue of the appropriate ministry within which to place the Nigerian Record Office had been a subject of hot debate. Periodic movement from one ministry to another has since characterised the history of the National Archives of Nigeria, with the attendant policy inconsistency and instability that have stunted its growth.¹⁹

17 ICA Committee on Archival Legal Matters. 'Principles for archives and current records legislation' in *Janus*, 1, 1997, pp.110–116.

18 Nigeria, Public Archives Ordinance, Cap 163, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria and Lagos, Vol. 5, 1958.

19 ABIOYE A., 'Fifty years of archives administration in Nigeria: lessons for the future' in *Records Management Journal*, 17:1, 2007, pp.52–62.

Despite its perceived and actual shortcomings and the agitation for massive amendments or, ideally, a repeal and replacement, the Ordinance remained in force until 1992. An amendment of 1967 was insignificant as it failed to address the specific criticisms made against the Ordinance. In 1992, the National Archives Decree, No. 30 was promulgated by the military government of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida with the commencement date of 8 July, 1992. The decree, which by virtue of section 315 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, has now assumed the status of an Act of the National Assembly and was incorporated in the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004,²⁰ was meant to address the shortcomings of the Ordinance. It was, particularly, meant to bring archives administration and records management in Nigeria in line with international good practice.

National Archives Act

The Act, which is in four parts, makes provisions for the management of all categories of records be they public, private, individual or official. It recognises records generated by every organisation (public or private) and individual as forming part of the memory of the nation.²¹

Part 1 of the Act establishes the National Archives of Nigeria as a Federal Department, which 'shall be entrusted with the permanent custody, care and control of all archives of the Federal Government and of such other archives or historical records as may be required, from time to time, pursuant to this Act'. It further makes provision for the establishment of a number of branches of the National Archives as the minister may, from time to time, determine. In acknowledgement of the periodic movement of the National Archives of Nigeria from one federal ministry to another, Section 52 defines the term 'minister' to mean 'the minister charged with responsibility for National Archives'. It also makes provisions for the appointment and functions of the Director and staff of the institution.

Part 2 of the Act deals with the preservation and management of public records. Responsibility for records management in the public sector is assigned to the heads of public offices, departmental records management officers (DRMOs) and the Director of the National Archives. A DRMO, for instance 'shall have as his function or the main part of his functions the planning, development and organization of records management programme' for his office. In addition, he is to afford the Director 'facilities for the examination and inspection of public records'; and is to 'submit, with the assistance and under the guidance and supervision of the Director, retention and disposal schedules applying to all records not covered by the general schedules ... for the approval of the Minister'. He is also to 'apply tested standards, procedures, techniques, materials and equipment in all matters relating to record making and record keeping, record preservation and protection, selective retention of records, records scheduling for disposal and transfer of records to a Records Centre or to the National Archives'.

The Director of the National Archives is to exercise the power to examine public records in the custody of any public office that are not confidential or secret, and take the actions

20 Nigeria, National Archives Act Cap N. 6, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.

21 The full text of the Act is available at <http://www.placng.org/lawsfnigeria/node/214> [accessed 6 Mar. 2013].

necessary for their management and preservation, as set out in the Act. He can also examine confidential or secret records with the permission of the head of the public office that has custody of the records. The Director also has the responsibility for the establishment and operation of a Federal Records Centre for the management of non-current public records, as an integral part of the National Archives. He is to issue, with the approval of the Minister, general schedules regarding the retention and disposal of records common to several or all public offices. Perhaps it is worth mentioning that, in relation to his responsibilities, the Director is under an obligation to prepare an annual report for submission by the Minister to the National Council of Ministers on the records management activities of public offices. He is also to organise training programmes aimed at improving the effectiveness and technical knowledge of records management personnel in public offices.

The Act makes provisions for public access to public archives at the National Archives. Accordingly, 'all public archives of the age of twenty-five years or more shall be open to the inspection of member of the public but where a longer period of closure has been stipulated by the head of the public office which had the custody of the public archives before their transfer to the National Archives, the Director shall comply with the stipulation'. However, public archives which relate to the private life of individuals 'shall not be made available for the inspection of members of the public except with the written permission of the persons concerned, their heirs or their executors, if these are known to the Director'. Other access provisions in the Act aim at liberalising access, protecting privacy and the national interest, and preserving the essential qualities of archives. Whatever access provisions are contained in the Act must, however, now be read together with the provisions of the 2011 Freedom of Information Act.

The National Archives Act recognises the right of every state government to establish its own state archives, collaborate with one or more state governments to establish a joint state archives, or assign the preservation of its archives to the National Archives. Archives so assigned are, however, to be regarded and managed as part of the archives of the Federal Government.

Part 3 of the Act makes provisions for the preservation and management of records of private bodies, individuals and companies. The Director of the National Archives is given the power to inspect, survey and advise on the safe custody, preservation and care of all non-current records and historical documents held by private bodies and individuals in Nigeria. He is to maintain a register of non-current records of value that are not deposited in the National Archives or in a place of deposit. Owners of private archives have certain obligations for the preservation of their records. Private archives are not to be disposed of by their owners, holders or possessors without the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

As for business archives, every business house or company that is not government-owned is required to operate an archives division on reaching its 25th year of operation. Those that had already attained that age at the commencement of the Act were required to meet this requirement not later than three years after commencement. Provision is also made for the compulsory transfer to the National Archives of non-current records of a business house or a company that fails to establish an archives division or a joint archives division by a prescribed date. No compensation is to be paid for the records transferred under these conditions, which are then deemed and managed as public records.

Part 4 of the Act deals with miscellaneous issues, for example the appointment and functions of the National Archives Advisory Council, the power of the Minister to make regulations on matters such as the admission of the public to the National Archives for the purpose of using the archives, the transfer of records to the National Archives and the fees to be paid for services provided by the National Archives. Finally, Part 4 creates offences and stipulates penalties for contravention.

Implementation and enforcement

Although the 1992 Act makes sweeping provisions for archives administration and records management in Nigeria, the National Archives has been grappling with the implementation and enforcement of some of those provisions since its enactment. Furthermore, the archives and records management terrain has witnessed tremendous changes in the two decades since the Act was passed: in particular, information and communication technology has, as observed by Granström, 'chang[ed] public expectations of the ease of accessing, duplicating and delivering official documents and other services.'²² More than ever before, business is now being transacted in the electronic environment and the evidence of these transactions is being recorded in electronic format. Archivists and record managers are facing a new situation regarding archives administration and records management. The enabling legal instrument must respond to and capture the changing circumstances. It is, therefore, not a surprise that a new archives bill is awaiting passage by Nigeria's National Assembly, to address the present day requirements of archives administration and records management in the country.

At this stage, it is important to shine our searchlight onto the development of archives at the regional/state level. In the northern part of Nigeria, the Arewa House in Kaduna emerged as a sort of regional archives for the preservation of records of the old Northern Region. One of the states that emerged from the region was the North-Western State whose government, in 1975, promulgated an edict for the establishment of the History Bureau in Sokoto. In conformity with the tradition, Niger State, which emerged from the old North-Western State following the state creation exercise of 1976, also established its own state archives. Similar attempts were made in some other states in the North but with little success. As far back as 1990, states like Plateau, Gongola and Borno were reported to have shown keen interest in the establishment of their own archives²³ but these states still remain without their own archives.

In the southern part of Nigeria, the former Bendel State (now Edo and Delta states) established its state archives in 1977. The former Imo State took similar steps and became one of the front runners in state archival development in the South. Lagos State seems to have taken up the leadership position in this regard through the establishment of the Lagos State Records and Archives Bureau, a well-equipped modern archival repository. Its establishment was also supported by legal instruments, through the enactment of state legislation on archives. The Lagos State Government was able to achieve this through the support

22 GRANSTRÖM C., 'Legal framework for appraisal' in *Comma* 1/2, 2002, pp.67-71.

23 DARAMOLA J. B., 'States and archival development' in *The Nigerian Archives*, 1:2/3 January/July 1990, pp. 14-25.

of the World Bank and in consultation with experts in the field, particularly those in the Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies of the University of Ibadan and the National Archives of Nigeria. The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Administration has also established its archives unit, called the Archives and History Bureau, to take responsibility for the preservation and management of the archives of the FCT.

Despite persistent proddings and the assurance of technical support from the academic sector, particularly the University of Ibadan (the kind of free service offered by Dike in 1950), some states are yet to find their feet and take the bold steps required to establish their own archives. Political expediency, rather than genuine interest in the survival of their documentary heritage, has always determined their attitude to proposals made for the establishment of state archives. The only occasion when the interest of policy makers in those states is ignited is when there is an unsatisfied need for records for decision-making.

In the business sector, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) is in the forefront in the establishment of business archives. The Corporation has shown keen interest in the development of its archives since the 1970s. The infamous 1979 incident of the missing 2.8 billion naira was a lesson in good record-keeping.²⁴ The corporation took advantage of the abundant technical expertise then available at the National Archives to organise its archives. Other business organisations that have taken steps in developing their archives include Chevron and First Bank of Nigeria Plc. They have deployed sufficient resources towards the preservation of their business archives.

Conclusion

Despite the gains of the past, archives administration in Nigeria is still faced with enormous challenges. These include a lack of appreciation of the importance and value of archives, particularly in the public sector, poor funding for public archival institutions, shortages of requisite personnel for archives administration, and low staff morale. In the National Archives, for example, facilities have decayed over the years, equipment is outdated, repositories are congested and holdings are disintegrating. The funding pattern for archives administration in Nigeria must change. Adequate budgetary provision must be made for the activities of archival institutions in the country. Archives administration must be removed from the low priority list and be given its due attention. In the first three decades of its existence, the National Archives could boast of highly skilled personnel. With the exit of most of the old and experienced archivists and the discontinuance of the culture of training newly-recruited archivists in centres of excellence in archives administration across the world, professionalism has nose-dived and is disappearing. Urgent steps must be taken to remedy the situation. A culture of record-keeping must be promoted in the country.

The National Archives Act of 1992, despite its commendable provisions, still requires some amendments to meet present-day needs, particularly in the areas of electronic records management and autonomy for the National Archives. It is assumed, for instance, that the low level of funding of the National Archives is a result of its status as a department in a

²⁴ In 1979, 2.8 billion naira disappeared from the Midland Bank, London account of the NNPC and was later traced to the private accounts of NNPC employees. A number of similarly substantial frauds were uncovered at NNPC between 1979 and mid-1980s; these included the existence of secret oil contracts that deprived the country of significant oil revenues.

ministry that subsumes the budget allocation. But in any case, at the time of writing, the new archives bill laid before Nigeria's National Assembly had passed through the Second Reading stage. It is hoped that the provisions of the new archives law will, when finally passed, address these critical issues and put archives administration in Nigeria on firmer ground.

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