



From Local Community to Modern Conurbation: The Development of Lekki Peninsula of Lagos, 1950 – 1981

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ABSTRACT

It is incontestable that the modern Lekki Peninsula morphed from a purely agrarian, rural and traditional society. In contemporary Lagos State (the commercial nerve of Nigeria), communities within the Lekki Peninsula remain a combination of rapidly growing built-up urban areas. As a part of a transformation process, there is a large form of residential, commercial, and industrial activities currently going on within the area. Acquisition of lands and accommodation within the area has become one of the most expensive in Lagos State. On the basis of the foregoing assertions, this paper examines the historical origin of the developments that have been witnessed in modern Lekki Peninsula. It specifically traces the factors that promoted the transformation of the Peninsula from a traditional society to an urban centre. It further examines the consequences of these transformations on the indigenous people and the pre-existing traditional communities. Using the historical approach to data collation and interpretations, the study adopts the qualitative research methodology. The paper argues that the Lekki Peninsula has overtime enjoyed a rapid spate of transformation, urbanisation and development, which were promoted by such factors as colonial experience, proximity to the city of Lagos, and some deliberate policies of the government among others.

KEYWORDS

Lekki Peninsula, Conurbation, Development, Lagos State

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INTRODUCTION

Until very recently, most of the communities in the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos could be strictly considered as traditional societies. They were societies with hereditary hierarchical rule, living within the ambit of customs and traditions rather than codified set of formal rules, regulations and laws. Except for some areas under the Oniru, most parts of the area remained rural communities throughout the colonial period. The Oniru controls the modern Victoria Island, which had begun to witness a rapid process of urbanisation since the colonial period. It must, however, be noted that the Oniru was one of the *Idejo* land-owning second class chiefs of the Lagos kingdom until the 1990s. By the 1990s, the Oniru had attained the status of a king and therefore became the paramount monarch of the Iru kingdom. The other parts of the Lekki Peninsula remained purely rural and traditional communities until the 1980s. This was when the Lateef Jakande civilian administration embarked on the construction of the Lagos-Ibeju-Epe Expressway. This road construction opened up the area from its hitherto rural and traditional characteristics, marking the beginning of a rapid rural development within the area. As time went by, the corridor became transformed into a rapidly urbanising and most expensive part of Lagos State. It is based on the foregoing propositions that this study examines the historical origin of the socio-economic and political transformations within the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos State, particularly between 1950 and 1981.

This introductory section of the paper briefly summarises the fulcrum of the discussions and other objectives of the paper. In order to situate the changes and developments in the area of study within the broader perspectives of development studies, the second section of the paper discusses the major strands of the concept of development. Further to this, the third section examines the features and characteristics of the Lekki Peninsula as a traditional society, particularly prior to the establishment of colonial rule. The fourth section considers the factors aiding the transformation of the Lekki Peninsula from when Lagos State was created in 1967 to when the first civilian administration was installed in the State in 1979. The fifth section examines the peak of the foundation for the transformation of the Lekki Peninsula into a conurbation, starting from the tenure of Lateef Jakande administration. The sixth section is the conclusion which summarises the basic arguments and discussions of the paper.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS AND LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Over the years, development has become a popular theme that has generated debates among scholars, governments, and international agencies. As a result, many schools of thought have

emerged to join the fray on what constitute development. According to the materialist school, the term development is hinged on economic power. The school considers increases in levels of per capital income as a means of defining and measuring development. It is conceived as representing an increase in the volume of productivity of investment in a society which could lead to a sustained increase in per capital income. Basically, the school assumes that if the economy keeps expanding, economic growth and, hence, welfare will eventually reach all people (Dahl & Hjort, 1984; Rostow, 1967). The materialist school has been criticized by other scholars who believed that development in the sense of societal improvement should not be equated with economic growth and its social concomitants, which can best be considered as modernization (Gasper, 2004; Seers, 1969). This postulation is further debunked by Crocker (1998:39), a development ethicist, who posits that “what is often called ‘development’ – economic growth, for instance, may be bad for people, communities and the environments”. In view of this opinion, he suggests that the process of development be reconceived as beneficial change, specified as alleviating human misery and environmental degradation in poor countries. Another perception to developmental thought considered it purely as a normative concept. For instance, Sachs (1993:2) posits that, “it is a perception which models reality, a myth which comforts societies and a fantasy which unleashes passions”. In his own contribution to the debate on development, D. J. Hobbs (1980:7) posits that the idea derives purely from comparison – a rate differential between those regions and nations that are 'developed' and those that are 'undeveloped'. According to him, development is an ideology that involves economic expansion occasioned by the exploitation of natural resources and is produced by certain forms of organization. The multi-lateral agencies such as the World Bank and the United Nations also shared their opinions on what should be considered as indices of development. The United Nations in its International Development strategy for the Second Development decades posits that:

The ultimate objective of development must be to bring about sustained improvement in the well-being of the individual and bestow benefit on all. If undue privileges, extremes of wealth and social injustice persist, then development fails in its essential purpose...qualitative and structural changes in the society must go hand in hand with rapid economic growth and existing disparities – regional, sectoral and social should be substantially reduced (United Nations, 1979:2).

In its subsequent perception of what constitutes development, the United Nations Human Development index advocates three major indices such as life expectancy at birth, educational

attainment (which comprised adult literacy, enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions), and income (UNDP, 1995:18). In spite of this seeming systemic approach to the concept of development, the United Nations Development Programmes Human Development Index is also fraught with its own limitations. This could be seen from the problem of determining the accuracy of the Human Development Index (H.D.I), especially in the developing countries where there is inadequate resources for computing adequate Human Development Index. In view of the seeming divergence of opinions about what constitutes development, it may be apt to adopt the postulation of Wily Brandt's Report which posits that:

Development never will be, and never can be, defined to universal satisfaction. It refers, broadly speaking, to desirable social and economic progress and people, about what is desirable. Certainly, development must mean improvement in living conditions, for which economic growth and industrialization are essential. But, if there is no attention to the quality of growth and to social change, one cannot speak of development. It is now widely recognized that development involves a profound transformation of the entire economic and social structure. This embraces changes in production and demand as well as improvements in income distribution and employment (The Independent Commission on International Development Issues, 1980).

A sociological approach to the concept of development could be gleaned from the seminal essay of Peel, who in his *Olaju*, explored the concept of development of the Yoruba of South-West of Nigeria. According to him, *Olaju* is associated with education, the world religions, external trade and travel. The concept's domestication within the Yoruba socio-historical milieu has gained prominence both with individuals and communities, and this could be traced through several historical phases from the late nineteenth century till date (Peel, 1978:139-165). Peel's perception seems to have taken a cue from an earlier Western perception which examines traditional societies' transition to modernity through contact with more advanced societies of the West as a cogent factor of development. Based on this perception, traditional societies are viewed to possess basic features which include hereditary hierarchical rule, living within the ambit of customs rather than law. The economies of such societies were static, with limited technology and low income from one generation to another (Millikan and Blackmier, 1961:3-17). It is imperative at this point to highlight some of the basic features of traditional societies as postulated by these western opinions and examine critically how the societies in the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos fits into this at the period under consideration. For instance, limited technology is seen as a factor that restricts men's economic activity in traditional societies towards the acquisition of food, therefore making

agriculture the occupation of a preponderance of its citizens (Millikan and Blackmier, 1961:3). Some of these societies were relatively primitive tribes living within a narrow region, on a self-sufficient base, with tribal rather than territorial political and economic organization, and tenuously connected, if at all with other tribes and regions (Millikan and Blackmier, 1961:4). The dependence of a larger percentage of traditional societies on agriculture made ownership and control of land an important and decisive factor in social prestige as well as in political influence. In Africa, land was owned communally, with no concept of individual tenure, and thus little incentive for systematic investment in improvements (Millikan and Blackmier, 1961:5). Relationship in traditional societies (to which pre-European contact Africa could be categorized) was considered on face-to-face type and was extremely important like the ties to family and clan. Secondly, to this western perception, men tended to be bound together and to be valued by one another in terms of such intimate connections rather than because of their ability to perform specific functional tasks.

Human intercourse in traditional societies were based more on code of friendship, family and tribal loyalty and hierarchical status, unlike in modern societies which were guided by functional considerations of economic benefits, political advantage and technical exchange etc. While most of the western perceptions highlighted above may be valid especially when viewed from developments in the Lekki peninsula of Lagos, it is imperative to say that some of the observations may not fit properly into all African societies of the pre-Western (pre-colonial) contact. For instance, the perception that all traditional societies' economic activities were geared towards the acquisition of food may be taken with a pinch of salt, as Empires and Kingdoms in pre-colonial African societies were noted for economic activities based on long distance trade, which linked them with far distance communities. A few veritable examples may be necessary at this point. In Nigeria, Hausaland, Borno and Old Oyo Empire in Yorubaland were noted for their involvement in the famous trans-Saharan trade, which brought many of their citizens in contact not only with the people of different ethnic backgrounds, but also with different far-flung regions in the trans-Saharan trade route. This equally enhanced trading activities which were not in any way limited to exchange of agricultural products, but such other articles as clothes, precious metals, hides and skins, etc. In fact, these various African societies devised their modes of transportation. Their dependence on horses, donkeys and camels, though may be considered to have hindered quick access to the trading centres; it sufficed for a very long time prior to their contact with the West.

On the view that some traditional societies were relatively primitive tribes living within a

narrow region, on self-sufficient base, it could be said that this was true of some societies. But it should also be noted that many African societies of the period could be said to have broken the barrier of living within a 'narrow region' by embarking on wars of conquest that led to the expansion of their borders beyond their immediate frontiers. The expansion of the Kingdom of Benin into modern Delta, Ondo, Lagos and Ogun States in the pre-colonial era such that it established many vassal states serves as a veritable example of traditional society expanding beyond its immediate frontiers. Furthermore, the expansion of frontiers helped some of these Kingdoms to break the barrier of living in a vacuum, thereby solving the problem of being self-sufficient by establishing symbiotic economic relations with some of the conquered territories.

This also helped to ensure strict control of the territories until such a time when the conquered territories could muster enough courage to declare its independence, due to the emergence of a stronger culture here, or as a result of the seeming weakness of the suzerain. Thus, the idea of tenuous relation could result from subordinate traditional society's freedom from its suzerain. In spite of the above observations, it could be said that some of the postulations regarding traditional societies are valid even when the societies have established contact with colonial authority with sophisticated development. In fact, the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos would seem to have retained a semblance of traditional societies as discussed from the foregoing, even after establishing contact with the British since the mid-19th century. This shall be the fulcrum of our next discussion.

LEKKI PENINSULA OF LAGOS AS TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

Since 1863 when Kosoko ceded the Lekki Peninsula to the British, it could be seen that colonial rule had little or no impact on the transformation of the societies from their hitherto traditional outlook. This could be gleaned from an official war office record which points to the traditional outlook of most of the settlements in the area (London, 1885). Furthermore, a similar report on the Eti-Osa part of the District published in 1951 contained a detail of the footpaths in the area such that movement during rainy and dry seasons are extremely difficult in view of lack of appurtenance of infrastructures in the peninsula (National Archives Ibadan, *Reports of the Lands of the Colony Districts*, 1961).

If the foregoing depicts the situation in the Eti-Osa part of the Lekki peninsula of Lagos, the same picture could be seen in the Ibeju-Lekki area, which seems to be far flung and of more distance from its Eti-Osa neighbours. In fact, the entire Lekki peninsula of Lagos depicts a purely traditional society setting not only in terms of physical outlook as indicated in the above report,

but also in terms of social setting. Although the society seemed to have been exposed to Western education since the establishment of colonial rule in the area in the second half of the 19th century, it continued to maintain its traditional society outlook even beyond the period under consideration. While Western education brought about the idea of reading and writing, the average young boys and girls in this part of Lagos, like their counterparts in traditional Yoruba societies were exposed to traditional method of education right from their infancy (Interview with Barrister Mukandasi Ogidan, aged 60, Chairman Lekki Local Council Development Authority, at Epe, 12 April, 2014). This exposes them to different methods of character learning that include greetings for different situations such as daily greetings, birthdays, and marriages, burial as well as on occasions for different kinds of festivals (Fafunwa, 1974:13).

In fact, the people placed special emphasis on character – training to the extent that they were willing to tolerate lack of any other forms of traditional education as long as good character prevails (Interview with Alhaji Yahaya Dosumu, aged 72 years, Politician and Community leader, at Ado, Eti-Osa, 8 January 2012). This entails respect for the elders, conforming to the traditions and norms of the society, and playing significant role in the cooperative community efforts (Interview with Alhaji Yahaya Dosumu). In this case, the initiation of a growing child into adulthood served as a transition through which he learnt a lot of the community's traditions, moral and norms. The age-grade serves as an important catalyst through which transition from childhood to adulthood was achieved. In the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos, just like in other Yoruba societies, the age-grade system served as a veritable means through which a child's behavioural patterns and skills needed to become useful to his community were learnt. Known among the Ijebu people of the area as *Regbe-regbe*, the age-grade usually consist of children born within a specified age bracket of three/four years interval, who performs specific functions, which includes collective clearing of farmland prior to planting, building of houses, paving the roads and any other forms of community development that may be of immense benefit to their society.

Within the traditional political set-up, they were represented by Youth leader, known as *Agbon*, who served as a liaison between the aristocracy and the Youth. In fact, seniority plays significant role in this society as it confers social and economic privileges on those who are considered to be elderly (Interview with Alhaji Titilayo Ismail, aged 60 years, Business Man, at Papa, Ehindi, Epe, 12 April, 2014). As members of the same age group grows; they were gradually incorporated into the larger society to play significant roles in the affairs of the community.

Like many pre-literate societies, the people of Lekki Peninsula of Lagos had been exposed

to traditional method of agricultural education. This enabled them to learn the different methods of cultivation of various crops planted in the area. Since agriculture remains the mainstay of the society, even after contact with the Europeans, children were exposed to learning various methods of producing crops. They learnt different techniques of identifying fertile soil as distinct from the non-fertile soil. They were also exposed to different methods of planting crops. In this case, parents were the harbingers of agricultural education. The father played significant role in exposing the children to practice various methods of preparing the seedlings for planting. He was also responsible for giving instructions on methods of weeding the farms where there had been planting of seeds (Interview with Pa Tasiru Balogun, aged 62 years, retired civil servant, at Ajegbemiwa Village, Ibeju, 19 April 2014). The father also exposed his children to the rudiments of distinguishing different periods of planting and harvesting. For instance, planting of cassava and corn were undertaken towards the commencement of the rainy season, while harvesting depends largely on the period when these crops would be ripe enough to be harvested usually during the dry season.

In an environment where topography determines the nature of the people's occupation, the people of the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos seems to have benefited immensely from the geographical location of their settlement. Being largely a peninsula settlement, traditional education was not limited to agriculture. The young boys of the community were also exposed to learn fishing in the various rivers, creeks, lagoons and the sea that surrounds their settlement. The parents (especially the father), plays significant role in this type of traditional education. They were responsible for exposing the children to different methods and techniques of fishing, which usually commence by teaching the apprentice to seek the various types of fishes caught (Interview with Alhaji Waheed Agbomabini, aged 77 years, retired Fisherman and Community leader, Langbasa, Eti-Osa, 15 January 2012). Later on, the apprentice could be exposed to learn swimming, first in the shallow parts of the creeks or lagoon and after this, they were allowed to accompany their parents on fishing expedition, during which they learn the various methods of fishing.

The apprentice was also exposed to various methods of catching fish through the use of traps (known in local parlance as *Igere*), the use of hooks and fishing line, as well as the fishing nets (Interview with Alhaji Waheed Agbomabini). It is important to point out that traditional education was not limited to the male children. The females were also taught the technique of weaving mats and making baskets from the available reeds which could be sourced from the mangrove forest in the creeks. Apart from the preparation of garri from cassava, weaving of mats

and baskets were major occupation of the women folks. The products could then be sold at nearby markets in Ejinrin and Epe or brought to Lagos during periodic market days. The abundance of agricultural and other farm products sourced from the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos at this period seemed to have made the area the food basket of Lagos, even at the time when the area was part of the Western Region.

CREATION OF LAGOS STATE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEKKI PENINSULA

Lagos State was created on 27th May, 1967 as one of the twelve states established by the Yakubu Gowon's administration in his bid to "put down the imminent rebellion of Ojukwu" (Letter from Adebayo to Gowon, 3 June 1967, Awo Papers, File no 1314), (the then military governor of Western Region). General Yakubu Gowon's explanation on the issue of creation of states was that it was part of the strategy of his administration to deal with the secession problem. Prior to its creation, there had been agitation for a separate state of Lagos since the decolonization years. Contrary to the views of Dele Olowu (1990:44) that the agitation dates back to the Willink Commission of 1958, the agitation for a separate Lagos State dates back to the London Conference of 1953, when the issue of the status of Lagos became a major subject of discussion for the politicians that attended the conference, which eventually led to the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954. The outcome of that constitutional debate which appeared unfavourable to the Action Group that had canvassed for the merger of Lagos with the west, elicited series of comments both in favour of the merger and separation of Lagos as a distinct region. The Lagos Regional Party was formed specifically to contest elections, (both local and general) in order to use every means at its disposal to ensure the separation of Lagos from the West permanently and irrevocably (*West African Pilot*, 14 September, 1953). The view of the sponsor of that party was shared by Chief Ogunmade Davies, who demanded for the creation of a Lagos Region with its own House of Assembly and House of Chiefs. He regarded this as the best compromise available on the Lagos issue (Lawal, 2004:95, and *Daily Times*, 14 January 1954). Even when the Lyttleton Constitution had been enacted, Lagos indigenes' demand for a concept of 'Lagos for the Lagosians' continued unabated. The reaction of the United Muslim Party in 1955 to the London conference of 1953 indicated the disdain of Lagos indigenous elements for non-Lagosians taking decision on their behalf. The party's reaction was conveyed through a letter written in 1955 thus:

With the past misguided followership of the NCNC and the AG, it has dawned on a very growing number of our people that unless we are back on our own, Lagos and Lagosians shall continue to be pawns on the chessboard of politicians... Those who sat in judgment over the fate of Lagos at the London Constitutional Conference were

no Lagosians. (National Archive Ibadan, CSO 26/54704, and Lawal, 2004:96)

Thus, it could be said that the Willink Commission of 1958 provided the indigenous Lagosian a platform to present before it, an agitation which began since 1953. Although their demands were rejected, the call for a separate Lagos State was rekindled in 1962, when Lateef Jakande, a former proponent of 'Lagos belonged to the West', published his famous pamphlet titled, 'The Case for Lagos State' (Jakande, 1962). Lateef Jakande highlighted in the pamphlet reasons why Lagos deserved a separate state, citing that Lagos was quite remote to the federal government, administrative clashes between the federal government and the Ministry of Lagos Affairs, and the Federal Government policy of denying the Lagos citizens of genuine participation of running their affairs despite the huge revenue contribution to federal revenue. The issues raised by Jakande's pamphlet seemed to be a major factor that propelled the Lieutenant Colonel Mobolaji Johnson's administration to set up a conference of Young Indigenous Lagosians under the presidency of Lateef Jakande to deliberate on the future of Lagos. The conference supported the idea of a Lagos State far removed from the west in the future federation of Nigeria (Awo Papers, File No 1314). When Lagos State was eventually created, the state inherited the colony districts of Ikeja, Badagry and Epe (where the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos belonged). It should, however, be noted that the inclusion of these three districts into the then emergent Lagos State should not be seen as an accident, but rather historical. The colony districts as the name implied were governed as part of Lagos Colony since their annexations by the British officials in Lagos since the 1860s. Furthermore, the colony districts shared socio-political and economic relations with the kingdom of Lagos prior to the 19th century (Interview with Professor Olakunle Lawal, aged 54, Visiting Professor of History, University of Ibadan, 19 July 2013).

It is also very important to note that when the agitation for the creation of a separate Lagos State got to its apogee, during the Willink Commission of 1958, two of the three organizations that requested for a full regional status for Lagos apart from the United Muslim Party were the Lagos and Colony State Movement, and the Aborigines of Lagos and Colony Province (Awa, 1964:55-56). These two had some indigenous elements from the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos as sponsors. Thus, the creation of Lagos State in 1967 further created the elixir through which pre-1967 existing relations was accentuated. By 1 April 1968, when Lagos State administration fully became operational, the state was divided into five administrative divisions of Ikorodu, Badagry, Ikeja, Lagos and Epe, from which the state later derived its acronym- *IBILE*. *IBILE* is an acronym for the five divisions/local

governments created in 1968, it later transformed into an investment organisation *IBILE* holdings, through which the government invested in blue chip companies and other commercial ventures to generate revenue for the state. The other four administrative divisions (Ikorodu, Badagry, Ikeja and Epe) were parts of the Western State local government, which were transferred to the then emergent Lagos State.

While the state government was grappling with the problem of developing the emergent state, some individuals in the Peninsula who were apparently dissatisfied with lack of development in their area, came together to chart a path towards bringing development into the area. In the Eti-Osa section of the Peninsula, some of these individuals who had lived in Lagos Island where they witnessed the tremendous changes in that vast conurbation, and wished to replicate such in their own area formed a non-political organization to spearhead the struggle for economic and social development of Eti-Osa (15 Glorious Anniversary Brochure of the Coronation of Oba Yekini Elegushi of Ikateland. 4 February, 2006, p. 3). These like-minded indigenes of Eti-Osa formally launched a club known as Association of Society of Eti-Osa Development Council (ASEDEC) in 1968 to generate opinions and ideas leading to the development of their area.

The association had as its first president, late Mr. Eshinrogunjo, an indigene of Okun-Mopo, while late Mr. Lamidi Akinloye of Ajiran was one time secretary of the Association (Interview with Alhaji Yahaya Dosumu). One of the major achievements of ASEDEC was its presentation of the request to excise the Eti-Osa area from the Ikorodu Division Council as a subordinate Native Authority through the Ogunnaike Commission of Inquiry set up by the Lagos State government to reorganize local government administration in the state.

The significance of Ogunnaike Commission of Inquiry to the development of this area of Lagos was that it brought about a better local administration, first with the removal of the Eti-Osa District Council from Ikorodu Divisional Council and its merger with the Lagos City Council where the people of Eti-Osa rightly belonged. This was in view of their affinity with their Awori brethren of the kingdom of Lagos which had been their suzerain. Secondly, the merger of Eti-Osa with Lagos City Council gradually opened up the area as part of the municipality of Lagos, though the area still had to grapple with slow level of development. In spite of this seeming significance, the Peninsula which seemed to have caught Lagos State government's attention since 1967, remained the neglected back water of the state until the 1980s. The seeming lack of development could be attributed to its location as a community almost caught off by the series of lagoon, creeks and the Atlantic coast which constituted a major barrier to accessing the communities and therefore

its development until 1980 when the Lateef Kayode Jakande's civilian administration initiated the Lagos-Lekki-Epe Road. Thus like the Niger Delta communities of Nigeria which were caught off in terms of development due largely to its location, the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos remained a neglected back-water of Lagos State until the emergence of that civilian administration.

LATEEF JAKANDE ADMINISTRATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEKKI PENINSULA

A discourse of any meaningful development of the area under consideration seems incomplete without discussing the role of the first civilian administration in Lagos State. This is due to the fact that prior to 1979, when political activities returned to civilian administration, the major part of the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos retained its purely rural outlook, without any noticeable appurtenances of urbanization. The only exception to this is Victoria Island, which had over the years developed as government reserved area (G.R.A) since the beginning of the twentieth century, when the colonial government took interest in the area. As indicated earlier in this chapter, most part of the Eastern District of Lagos were made up of communities surrounded by either the popular Lagos lagoon to its West, or the Atlantic Ocean to its East, a condition which made the sprawling settlements in the district rely mainly on water transportation as a veritable means of linking up with their neighbours prior to the creation of Lagos State in 1967 (Interview with Alhaji H. A. B. Fasinro aged 96, Lawyer/ local historian, Victoria Island, Lagos, 1 November, 2015).

By 1979, however, when the first civilian administration in Lagos State was inaugurated the area gradually benefitted from a well thought out party manifesto, which made integrated rural development one of its cardinal programmes. By 1981, the administration of Lateef Kayode Jakande published a regional plan for the State in a period of ten years which indicates that 89.4% of the total population of the State resides in the metropolitan areas, while the remaining population lived in the non-metropolitan parts of the State (Lagos State Regional Plan, 1980-2000, 1981:1-3).

As part of the party's plan to redistribute the State population and reduce pressure on the metropolitan area, the administration embarked on integrated rural development programmes aimed at creating more metropolitan centres from some of these State's rural centres. It was from this programme that the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos benefitted and it later opened up the area years after the administration had left office. One major achievement of the integrated rural development programme of the State was the creation of a New Towns Development Authority, which aimed at identifying some areas within the existing communities and creating from them new towns with

all the appurtenances of urbanization and development.

In fact, the Lateef Kayode Jakande administration realized that Lagos was confronted with acute shortage of land, especially in the metropolitan areas, yet there were low patronage along the lagoon fringes of the Victoria Island, Eti-Osa, Lekki Peninsula and other parts of the State, especially in Epe, Ikorodu and Badagry Divisions. In view of the abundant land resources existing in these areas, the government created the New Towns Development Authority to pave way for urban development of several hitherto rural settlements (Interview with Alhaji Yahaya Dosumu). In the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos; such rural communities that were targeted were Mayegun, Ajiran, Ilasan and Ajah etc. At Ilasan, the administration embarked on the construction of a low cost Housing Scheme following the success of the first set of low income houses that provided 12,000 housing units for the low income group in Lagos within two years of the administration (Lagos State Government, 1981:7).

Although the Ilasan housing scheme was neglected by the allottees in view of its lack of basic amenities especially electricity then, it later attracted many squatters, when the military administration of Raji Rasaki demolished Maroko (now Oniru Estate) in 1989. The Ilasan housing scheme was the fore-runner of Lagos State Government's and privately owned several housing schemes in the Eti-Osa area of the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos. These include the Lekki phases one and two, the Oniru Estate, the Elegushi Estate, Ajiran Estate, the Victoria Garden City, and Crown Estate etc. (Interview with Alhaji Yahaya Dosumu).

Perhaps, the most important step taken towards the development of the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos by the Lateef Jakande's administration was the construction of the Lagos Eti-Osa Road. The idea to construct the road was initiated by the Military administration of Mobolaji Johnson in 1972, when a firm of consultants – Messrs Obi Obembe and Associates were commissioned to draw up the designs for a road project that would run from Victoria Island to Epe town (Address by Commissioner for Works and Transport on the occasion of the commissioning of Lagos Eti- Osa Road, 4 February 1985). In fact, the need to provide a major highway between Lagos and Ibeju-Lekki axis was the federal government initiative, and one of the major programmes of the Gowon's administration's fourth development plan to provide some defense interests in the Islands of Lekki (Olowu, 1990:61-63). However, the agreement for the construction of phase 1 of the project was signed in November, 1981, when the administration of Lateef Jakande awarded the project to Messrs Julius Berger, a major construction firm at a cost of N42 million (Address by Commissioner for Works and Transport on the occasion of the commissioning of Lagos Eti- Osa

Road, 4 February 1985). The first phase of the Lagos-Eti-Osa Road was 27.5km long, dual carriage-way. It was provided with bus-laybys, turn-offs and hard-shoulders which are helpful during emergencies. The road was also designed with five bridges on the route.

Although the Lateef Jakande's administration could not complete the construction of the Lagos – Eti-Osa Road prior to the termination of its regime by the military junta on 31 December, 1983, the regime had envisaged the importance of such road to the development of Lekki Peninsula of Lagos in particular and Lagos State in general. The road not only opened up this hitherto neglected backwater of Lagos State's vast areas of arable land for both industrial and residential areas, it has created a lot of tourist and recreational facilities which since the commissioning of the road in 1985, made it one of the most important destinations for human habitation and numerous developmental programmes.

The initiative of Lateef Jakande's administration that began in 1981 was followed up by the Ilasan Housing Scheme, and a National Electricity Power Authority (NEPA) sub-station aimed at electrifying this hitherto complete rural area. It could therefore be seen that the administration takes more credit for the opening up of this area of Lagos more than any regime in view of the construction of the Lagos Eti-Osa Road, the creation of New Towns Development Authority, and the construction of Ilasan Housing Scheme. Successive administrations in the State are still grappling with the foundation laid down by this administration more than 36 years later.

CONCLUSION

The paper examined the development in the Lekki Peninsula of Lagos from a rural community to modern conurbation. In spite of more than a century of contact with colonial rule, the communities within the Lekki Peninsula remained purely traditional. This was caused by many factors, the most important being the topography which was a major barrier because the creeks and lagoon that dotted the landscape prevented easy penetration and settlement of non-indigenous people within far flung communities of the area. It also became a difficult task for successive administrations of Lagos State to explore the economic potentials of the peninsula because of the difficult topographical terrain. However, the role of the indigenous elements in attracting government attention into the area cannot be underestimated. This eventually became the elixir that transformed the communities in the area from being the hitherto neglected backwater of the colony district of Lagos into a modern conurbation and the destination of the growing legion of Nigerian middle-class population.

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