

SOCIAL MOBILISATION & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

VOLUME TWO

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Published by

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES OF THE
ALVAN IKOKU COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, OWERRI.

OWERRI- JAN. 1990

RURAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH TRANSPORTATION
IN THE EZEAGU L.G.A. OF ANAMBRA STATE:
A HISTORICAL VIEW OF EXPERIENCE, 1908 - 1988

BY

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Societal change is not identical with development. Development, the transformation effected essentially by internal forces, is only one form of societal change. Equally important is diversive change, the transformation effected essentially by external forces.

- Karl A. Wittfogel¹.

INTRODUCTION

Current scholarship says how vital transportation has become for national development. Ukwu emphasizes that as well as communication² whereas Bell, Bowen and Fawcett see its business as, at bottom, decisive because without it no one would go anywhere and the economy would grind to a halt.³ Kuhn writes as an expert also, that it involves every life-sustaining activity⁴ and remains the best tool while Alao, in discussing the Nigerian Railways role, identifies transportation as an engine-room for growth.⁵ In another study, Uzoечи has connected transport power to increased government and expanding Federal or national imperialism⁶. Admittedly, official policies have highlighted the importance of movement.⁷ Yet to ensure conceptual clarity in this exploration, the following terms namely, rural, transformation, transportation, and Ezeaguland can be defined. Rural refers to the countryside where men and women live close to nature. To all neighbours, life in it is an open book so that privacy, urbanization, cash-cropping and social-velocity do not stand out. But groupism, tradition, and continuity do so. Villages rather than cities, paths more than tarred roads - these dominate the scene amidst low technology and much agriculture. Rural society is, of course, slow-going in general so that it advances at an uneven rate and speed thus, its culture has lags. Usually transformation represents not only rapid change as Isichei's opinion⁸ suggests but also something

so much deeper that it affects as well as dominates the given society enough to change its character, form, or style. Put simply, to transform is to change society or nature away from its old self, thus creating something different and dynamic⁹. In this sense, Wittfogel's interpretation, as a historian of antiquity, links it to internal forces in any community meeting additive forces which, in fact, induce binary development.¹⁰ Transportation, as always, is moving persons, goods, and ideas from one trip origin to a journey's end. It shows time and place utilities and denotes service, process as well as way.¹¹ Wayne Talley, an authority on transportation, sees it as essential and impactful¹² but Pyndina and others, specialising on political economy, view it as an instrument of labour that is also a product.¹³ Finally, Ezeagu-land is the Local Government Area created in 1976 by the Anambra State Government who reduced colonial Udi (Enugu) Division.¹⁴ It had 110,184 people in 1963 but this number was projected to 194,432 for 1986.¹⁵ Ezeaguland, which is 3.55 percent of Anambra State covers 626.59 square kilometers¹⁶ between latitudes 7°17'04" north and longitudes 6°22'59" east. Still it has twenty-two autonomous communities¹⁷ lying southwest from Enugu Capital Territory but sharing boundaries with counterparts in Udi, Oji River, Uzo Uwani and Awka.

Purpose

The task for this paper is, accordingly, to maintain that transportation is necessary and urgent but needs other supports to transform rural Ezeaguland very fast. It will be useful, indeed, to consider rural radical change in three sequences. The first is over a half-century of Anglo-Nigeria dating from 1908 to 1963, which was marked by shielding Ezeagu from urbanization while the second covers from 1963 to 1979. The authorities then continued ruralization but intensified satellization from Enugu township. For the third, there is the post civil war era, 1979 - 1988, known for its onitiri-gap.¹⁸, rural poverty,¹⁹ government aid through new transportation, and rural improvement. Altogether, a critique to be followed by stating the findings will be presented but only after justifying this inquiry.

At any rate, this study deserves attention for its importance in a context of existing problems. It seeks to create ideas that are usable by decision-makers and implementers. Even more is the urgency for re-thinking rural development since doing so will cure the mistakes which had weakened past attempts. There was parasitic miserliness under the British overlords²⁰ while Dr. Okpara's regime was escapist in its ideology that countered youth migration to the increasingly turbulent cities with rural agrarianism.²¹ Apparently, others saw reconstruction after the Civil War without rural re-habilitation. All these flaws preceded the welfarist and human rightist policy of the nineteen eighties. Seen historically, this research illustrates how the colonial order distorted the economy through its transport policy and why, from many angles, its bias has not been successfully remedied in Ezeaguland. Or, admittedly, this territory has become, ipse facto both a transport corridor and an economic pond - corridor because this L.G.A. lies between richer and more-developed economic zones in UzoUwani and the Nike-Abakaliki sector; and pond because it apparently falls behind in overall growth though the government-owned cashew industry had gulped vast funds, for instance, £141,000 on expenditure; £50,000 as revenue; and £91,000 on net expenditure between 1962 and 1965,²² This outlay neither enabled the trees to halt erosion nor to substitute cashew nuts for the poor soil.²³ All these problems require immediate solution. Yet, besides, there exists much transport decay whereas many A, B, and C - grade roads carry traffics, transport density and goods volume need improvement or overhaul in an almost static environment.

Though transport is, however, every community's lifeblood, its paltriness now, or absence in earlier years, supports what Onitiri has painfully noted, namely, that the nation had growth without social development.²⁴ This second fact and also stability within Ezeagu depend on intensive transportation - a type that ties in with other modes, new industries, specialised markets, and attitude changes. For, on all hands, Nigeria's creeping Industrial Revolution would be chugging²⁵ ahead under a fresh rural policy which, for an example, aims to halt city decay among other things by improving transport,

housing, water-supply, electricity, and industry, as in Oji River, Ukpata in UzoUwani, and in Abakaliki. Some settle also at Alla in the Ika Igbo territory within Bendel State.²⁷ Transportation, if it is reasonable, if practical conserve this rural population; employ its able ones or else create status and job opportunities for a better life. Country travels as well as fieldwork observations have magnified the urgency for providing improved living conditions to stop rural disorganization often manifested in alcoholism, crime, nondevelopment, and unemployment. Much country-side poverty, at all events is reduced or ended when citizens change occupations, acquire new skills, work in non-governmental places; accept innovations; undertake long migrations, or expand farming opportunities. However they may be seen, these problems demand public-spirited, timely researches which are indispensable to success in social mobilization and community progress.

Under British Rule

Granted its rhetoric, importance and justification, this project advances to explain those epochs which periodize rural transformation or the evolutionary attempts at it.

The 1908 to 1963 time scale covers Anglo-Nigeria. It is noted for human portage, self-locomotion, hammocking, and narrow road-making. Writing on British policy in Nigeria, Lord Lugard, the first governor-general, noted in 1937 that after the "Aro Campaign" and the disarming of southeastern communities there was a "gradual penetration by cutting earth-roads through the dense bush infested with every kind of noxious insect and malaria."²⁸ There lived then pioneers like Okuonu Ede from Ukana, Ojinnaka of Asaba and Court Messenger Ibada, an Awka indigene, who with lash or authority made villagers construct roads.²⁹ They were known as Uzo mgbada or Ezi kwulu oto solely for their width, straightness and labor cost. In Ezeagu, British roadways began as community gestures, for accepting the white man's occupation, often masked by the colonizers as a friendly visit. Under the military commanders such as District Commander William S. Boyle who was a political officer, transportation was a triple burden. For compulsorily, villagers headloaded their overlord's goods to the next station or built roads for business or

or trekkers". Often these subjects paid tribute with produce and other equivalents. Ezeagualanders under, among others, paramount Chiefs OzoNechi and later on Ozo Obu or Ozo Ejike practised group or contractual feeding on the Colliery or at the Eastern Railway where their quota labourers whether forced or paid, worked on their forty-mile long piece-work.³¹

Not only was this transportation system humiliating, for an example, by including hoisting, the warrant Chiefs.³² It was galling too for hammocking the white mah who while he smoked a pipe or read his travelogue yelled orders. Ezeagu carriers marched on and on without doing so much as coughing.³³ Yet in their eyes, to baby men along like him was to breach the tradition. All this time, of course, transport policy was exploitative, river-bound, and international.³⁴ The key artery was the Eastern Nigeria Railway. Since, however, Ezeagu happened to lie within the railway territory, hers was a feeder's role.³⁵ Taxation was there paid first in kind.³⁶ Communities, therefore, turned in foods, yams, goats and other livestock as public fines - usually erratic - for disobeying white-nominated chiefs over roadworks; for coming late though these subjects, as tradition went, reckoned time by the sun, body clock, or energy ratem without wearing mechanical watches or keeping clocks. Sometimes road service ended in frightfulness when white officer acting as itinerant judges raided as well as fined entire communities.³⁷ By 1916, a military road³⁸ reached Ihuonyie, the Oghe Native Court, from the Udi - Nsukka road that had been cut between 1913 - 1914. Upon these, Ezeagu captives or offenders carried punishment luggage, the one never lowered for a rest, but whose duration might never be known in advance.

From after Europe's World War I, colonial reconstruction forced the British to take roads further to southwestern Udi Division. Officials propogandized it that chiefs had to prove their loyalty or power, indeed, by building their own³⁹ roads to their homes or else to their neighbours, hence the epithet Uzo Agana, or Uzo OzoNechi (for Ozo Nechi's way): Afigbo has noted the Roads and Creeks (Rivers) Proclamation, premised, as it was, on pre-colonial free public works.⁴⁰ By it, public men kept streams, paths, markets, or playgrounds clean after mobilizing the masses according to need. Till the nineteen-fifties, arterial roads, and trade routes had reached the densest communities in Owa Imezi, Oghe, Olo, Aguoba Owa,

