

THE DEVELOPMENT OF URBANIZATION IN WEST AFRICA:

A LOOK AT LAGOS, NIGERIA

A Thesis

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by

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## DEDICATION

To my African family in the United States and many others who migrated to the cities from the rural areas, and African people who are undergoing similar processes of change at home, Africa. May we one day be liberated and unified, physically and spiritually.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The most important decisions of my academic career, besides coming to Ohio State University, were whether or not to do this thesis, and what to do it on. Once those decisions were made, the author solicited the assistance of all those who were willing to help him in any way to accomplish this task.

The author anticipated the difficult and time-consuming chore of constructing this work, however he could not foresee the amount of discipline and consistency such a study would require. Without the encouragement of my family and friends, and the supervision of my advisors, this thesis would not have been possible.

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## INTRODUCTION

As Africa and its people become more urbanized, it becomes necessary to know and understand the historical development of urbanization on the continent.

The process of urbanization has traditionally been a part of the African experience. Before the slave trade, urban development in West Africa was under the direction and control of African people. African people no longer control the process, they just participate in it.

Since the imposition of colonial rule, urbanization in West Africa has been directly or indirectly controlled by European colonialists or international capitalist interests. This pattern has continued even after political independence when Africans gained political power. This study addresses how and why urbanization developed in this way, and what influences that development had on Africa and African people. It was not possible to measure the social effects of urbanization on African people because the author used only secondary sources of information.

It is important to analyze urbanization in Africa from the viewpoint of its contribution to African society. However, the process has not traditionally been viewed in this light. Some have viewed it as an end in itself. For example, according to the dominant Euro-centric perspec-

tive urbanization was a necessary step to transform Africa from a primitive, feudalistic state into a modern one.<sup>1</sup>

This viewpoint totally negated the fact that Africa was becoming more urbanized anyway. The author contends that urbanization, since colonialism, has created problems for the majority of African people, and it must be transformed to address their needs.

This thesis addresses the following issues:

1. That colonialism introduced new social, political, economic institutions to Africa and changed the old ways of doing things. The process of urbanization was greatly influenced by these institutional changes. These changes made it easy for the colonial government to establish itself in the urban areas and exploit the economic potential of rural areas.
2. That because of colonialism urban areas are playing a more important role in the national development of African countries than rural areas despite the fact Africa and its people are predominantly rural. This disproportionate concentration of goods and services in the urban areas has

created overwhelming social, political and economic problems for African people.

3. That urbanization in contemporary Africa continues to serve colonial interest instead of African interests. The development of nationalism after the independence movement minimized the colonial influence in the political arena, however the economic arena is still foreign owned and controlled.
4. That the impact of the economic development process on urbanization is limited. African people, for the most part, implement the plans and policies in the development process. However, the decisions which determine the level and pace of urbanization are made by powerful corporate or international interests. These interests continue to promote the model of dependent capitalist development.

The author has divided the main theme of the paper into three stages. They are:

1. Urbanization before colonialism- Urban centers at this time developed around traditional empires and were characterized by extensive trading activities, urban conveniences and centralized social and political organization.



2. Urbanization after colonialism- Important urban centers at this time developed around coastal regions and consisted of externally oriented trade, increased rail transportation, and extensive migration from the rural areas.
3. Urbanization after independence (including the first three development plans of Nigeria)- Urban centers at this time were characterized by export-oriented economic development, neo-colonial political development, and the over concentration of resources in the port cities.

Urbanization after independence hasn't altered the exploitative conditions of economic development. Consequently, African people must change these conditions in order to break their dependence on foreign capital, expertise, goods and services.

The author concludes that nationalism is the only weapon that African countries can use in order to change their situation. Nationalism is the attitude or act of national pride or dignity which makes people seek to control their land and their own destiny. Nationalism means that Africans would control their development process. Without nationalist development Africa will remain dependent on the outside world.

## PRE-COLONIAL URBANIZATION

The urban experience has always been an integral part of the dynamic historical development of Africa and African people. In the great civilizations of ancient Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe several large cities emerged. Cairo is a living example of such cities. Since traditional times, there have been large cities in many parts of the continent.

In West Africa, the author's main area of interest, urban areas and populations formed around several great traditional empires. These pre-colonial empires were known for their centers, urban conveniences, and social and political organization. For example, the empires of Ghana, Mali, Songhai are characteristic of these urban areas before Christianity or Islam.<sup>2</sup>

People from all over the continent were attracted to the cities of Timbuktoo, Gao, Kano and Ibadan. For several centuries "until the 17th century urbanization was more advanced in West Africa than in North African Arab countries and European countries."<sup>3</sup> The eventual decline of these pre-colonial cities coincided with the increasing Arab-Islamic influence in Africa, the Atlantic slave trade, and the Euro-Christian colonial influence.

During the transition from pre-colonial to colonial society, urbanization in many West African centers declined

significantly. The slave trade, along with internal ethnic and regional conflict, exacerbated social tensions and brought instability to African society. Migration from big cities back to the rural areas was very common at that time, because there were few other places one could go for protection.

Although the slave trade had appeared to devastate the whole of West Africa. It is impossible to measure, quantitatively or qualitatively, the affect these events had on people in West Africa. However, the unstable socio-economic conditions in Africa at that time made her more susceptible to foreign influences.

The Arabs were the first pre-colonial foreigners to establish trade with Africa, but the Portuguese were the earliest Europeans to set up business in West Africa in the 14th century. European colonial occupation then began in coastal areas, especially the port cities, facilitated rapid urban development because they were the centers of commerce and administration. As the cities grew in size and population density, they grew in importance. Europeans were not able to penetrate the interior of West Africa until the late 19th century so their initial political maneuvering was done from the coast.<sup>4</sup> By the imposition of colonial rule, when a network of trading posts, mission stations, military bases and administrative headquarters were established in the interior,

dramatic changes had taken place in the African ways of life.

Colonialism introduced the Bible and the gun to Africa, altering existing political, economic, and social relationships. African political, economic, and religious institutions were not destroyed by the external influence and paternalistic control of the Europeans, but had to adapt to these changing conditions. By adapting, many of the traditional African ways were preserved or left alone. However, adapting to colonialism had its negative effects too.

Nkrumah states that "the social effects of colonialism are more insidious than the political and economic. This is because they go deep into the minds of the people and therefore take longer to eradicate. The Europeans relegated us to the positions of inferiors in every aspect of our everyday life. Many of our people came to accept the view that we were an inferior people."<sup>5</sup>

The political and economic consequences of colonialism in West Africa were the establishment of institutional structures in the urban areas to administer the national territory and the creation of concession companies and manufacturing enterprises to exploit the potential of rural areas. The colonial government and the most efficient colonial administrations were those of the Britain and France, then the world's two most industrialized countries. In this paper, we will concentrate on British rule in Nigeria.

## THE BRITISH COLONIAL INFLUENCE

The British system of indirect colonial rule undermined traditional political institutions because it usurped the power of traditional chiefs without appearing to do so, and the extended family and village state systems were disrupted. "A central concept of Indirect Rule was that all communities possessed indigenous leaders who wielded authority, who could demand a certain degree of obedience and respect, and who could be coopted into the Native Authority system. Northern Nigeria corresponded to this preconception clearly, but the situation in the East was far more complex and hence the condition of control much more elusive. In their frustration at not being able to "find" the traditional authorities, the British created chiefs by warrant and armed them with powers which from a traditional perspective were arbitrary and in direct conflict with accepted custom...Indirect Rule had a profound impact on subsequent developments within the country. Rather than act as a force for national integration, the object of Indirect Rule was to preserve traditional divisions and keep the country divided into small, distinct units. The most conservative elements within the traditional power structure gained most by Indirect Rule and hence developed an interest in preserving the status quo."<sup>6</sup>

Economic institutions in West Africa, for example land,

also lost some of their traditional worth under colonialism. Traditionally, Africans viewed land as community owned property but Europeans thought land was private property available to the highest bidder or first speculator. This became evident because "from 1900 to 1940 the Colonial Government owned all of Nigeria's mineral rights and possessed the authority to regulate and administer almost all of Nigeria's land..."<sup>7</sup>

Agriculture was the basis of economic activity before colonialism, as trade in agricultural products prospered in West Africa. We see that "the first three decades of the twentieth century, the development of the Nigerian economy was shaped by Nigerian farmers and traders' response to international markets. Agriculture and trading were the major economic activities; apart from handicrafts and mining..."<sup>8</sup>

When the cash crop export economy was instituted by Europeans prior to World War II, it altered the existing mode of economic production. Since then "the wealth of many of the West African countries has been based on various cash crops: palm-oil, cocoa, or ground nuts."<sup>9</sup> Subsistence economic production and trade relationships were transformed to satisfy the expansion of markets and the international capitalist system. This was one of the most important changes produced by colonialism. (See Figure 1)

These institutional changes were forced upon the people of West Africa by the European colonial powers. Resistance against the British was minimized because of their policy of indirect rule and because they periodically provide goods and services to the people. To extend their rule they initiated projects "to build roads and railways from the coastal area to the inlands. In order to minimize the cost of construction, each village was obliged to supply a given number of adults between 20 and 30 years old. Some of these people were sent far from their villages, some for railway and road building, some for the plantations and some others for the colonial army."<sup>10</sup> (See Figure 2)

The imposition of colonial rule and the demise of the feudalistic economy led to increased urbanization. Urbanization became entrenched in West Africa after the roads and railways were developed enough to facilitate the transportation of goods, services and people to and from urban and rural areas. The concentration of political and economic power in urban areas led to extensive migration from the rural areas. (See Figure 3)

Since the pre-World War II period, roads and railways became more important because "the production and distribution of agricultural products for domestic consumption and for export continued to dominate Nigerian economic activity, but the 1950's witnessed the beginnings of in-

dustrial development and increasing government participation in nearly all sectors of the economy."<sup>11</sup>(See Figure 4)

#### Urbanization and Independence

Around the same time, people in rural and urban areas began to agitate against the colonial government and its exploitative programs and policies. Trade unions and labor organizations were the main voices of this agitation. Since, they were non-violent the "Colonial government frequently believed that by providing a wide range of social services they could overcome the frustrations and tensions generated by the urbanization process..."<sup>12</sup> However, the deplorable living conditions of the people gave rise to political opposition to colonialism. This opposition was forged into a nationalistic, broad-based anti-colonial movement for political independence. It was initially a civil rights movement.

The independence movement was based in the urban areas, but the impetus for it came from the rural areas. The trade unions and rural labor organizations were the organizational thrust behind the movement. In fact, the urban areas were the strongholds of Christianity and Western education, and they produced the leadership of the independence movement. In Nigeria, this regionalism exacerbated religious, ethnic, and class conflicts between the numerically superior,



illiterate Islamic Africans in the rural North (Hausa, Fulani) and the people the urban South (Igbo, Yoruba) who were educated by the Europeans. The formation of political parties to negotiate with the colonial government began in the urban areas after World War II.<sup>13</sup>

The granting of political independence to many African countries did little to change the process of urbanization. Urbanization in Africa still served colonial interests, but the instruments of political power were in a few African hands. However, foreign expertise and capital were still needed in order to run the government. Note: "The city that was inherited at independence was a center of commercial exchange and government bureaucracy located on the territorial periphery of the new state. Import-substituting industries established in the 1950's and 1960's were drawn to the established major cities because they offered a local market, supportive services, a pool of experienced labor, and a culturally familiar and congenial setting for expatriate staff...the political, administrative, and commercial functions of the colonial powers were transferred to the new nations."<sup>14</sup>

Independence did little to change the existing socio-economic system, in fact many sectors of West African economies are still owned and controlled by European or other foreign interests. It did give African countries the oppor-

tunity to participate in the business of government, but the model they followed was European. They continued to use the same exploitative economic structures as the Europeans, consequently colonial problems and patterns developed in West Africa even after independence.

Some of the main reasons why most West African countries did not want to change the existing socio-economic system was because most of them still maintained a close relationship with their former colonizer, and they thought that they would be in a more stable position if they kept what was already there. However, "for many of these countries this brief acquaintance with sovereignty has been marked by acute political crisis and instability...the turbulent political climate since independence in most African countries has scarcely been favorable--even had practical experience of government existed--for the formulation and implementation of orderly and systematic strategies of national development."<sup>15</sup>

Guinea, one of the only countries in West Africa which chose to break away from its former colonizer, found that the best way to offset the colonial influence was to follow the path of nationalism. "Nationalism is the ideological channel of the anti-colonialist struggle and represents the demand for national independence of colonised peoples..."<sup>16</sup>  
The independence movement appealed to the majority of urban

Africans because of its emphasis on nationalism. Nationalism was particularly evident in the urban areas, where African people of various ethnic groups met to forge a national identity. Thus Hodgkin, a political scientist, has commented that "it is above all in these new urban societies that the characteristic institutions and ideas of African nationalism are born and grow to maturity."<sup>17</sup> Nationalism is one of the main reasons why the political climate is so explosive in West Africa urban areas.

Rural urban migration is another reason why the political climate is so explosive. Urban unemployment and urban underemployment in marginal sectors, in the face of rapid urban growth, produced poverty, starvation, crime-ridden slums and numerous other economic and political problems. The victims of urbanization, mostly uneducated migrant laborers from the rural areas and small towns, migrated into these conditions. Unfortunately jobs were hard to find, and "the experience of Asia and Latin America is there to demonstrate that rural-urban migration into urban unemployment and underemployment does not contribute to economic development, but signifies a drain on economic resources, a life of misery and despair for this segment of the population, and a promise of violence in the political process."<sup>18</sup>

Migration from the rural areas to the urban areas increased consistently over time because the objective and

subjective conditions of urbanization improved. A variety of factors determined the scale and pace of urbanization.

Note: "Among the socio-cultural factors are the attraction of urban life, the desire to escape from familial constraints, the desire to prove one's maturity, the search for better education and health facilities, and the prestige attached to town life.

Among the economic factors, one may mention the need for cash in the rural areas for purchase of clothing, bicycle, and other household articles or for providing for bride price and tax. Other economic reasons are the poverty and low wages in the rural areas, lack of employment opportunities, especially for unskilled labour and absence of the means of getting loans from banks.

Among the political factors, the important ones are the concentration of all powers in the capital, arbitrary exercise of authority by the officials of government, the need for influence in the administration and insecurity of life and property in remote places."<sup>19</sup>

These factors made it difficult for rural areas to compete with urban areas for their potential labor force. When young and middle-aged Africans (mostly males) left the countryside their absence created a vacuum and diluted agrarian productivity. Without them it was very difficult to establish an agricultural base.

Furthermore, African countries did not have the industrial machinery to mechanize agriculture. Some scholars argue that "without a technical revolution in agriculture, the prospects for the production of surplus needed to support generative urbanization based on a growing rural market for consumer goods, and for balanced and integrated national development, seems grim..."<sup>20</sup> Even if there was a technical revolution in agriculture, the same problems would exist unless there are changes in the economic structure of West African countries.

The prospects for agricultural productivity are not very good anyway because of all the factors mentioned above. If there was an agrarian revolution "an ever increasing number of Africans will seek employment in nonagricultural activities. Then for a large number of urban Africans the break with the land and rural traditions is likely..."<sup>21</sup>

There is a necessity for changes in the existing economic and political institutions of West Africa. Some of these institutions were imposed upon Africa by European colonialism and they still remain. A result of colonialism is the almost exclusive foreign ownership and control of the industrial, financial, and commercial sectors of West African countries.<sup>22</sup> Another carryover from colonialism can be seen in the urbanization process. Urbanization with the advent of colonialism, was superimposed upon indigenous urban

areas in West Africa. Since that time it has served international capitalist interests instead of African interests. It has been difficult to change this situation without changing the structure of political and economic institutions.

Changes that take place inside the urban areas are made by the people who live in or migrate to the urban areas. Government officials exercise the most influence because of their involvement in the political process, but trade unions, workers, and students exert their influence directly on the government by lobbying for changes in exploitative conditions and government practices.

These changes are difficult to implement when the indigenous political and economic elite in West Africa are constantly protecting and promoting foreign capitalist interests. They have evolved into a post-independence elite still favorable to the colonial power and they maintain a stake in the status quo. The privileged few who benefit from neo-colonial development will not change the structure of institutions to benefit the workers and particularly the peasantry.

It is even harder to develop effective plans and policies to change the social conditions within the urban and rural areas without exercising political and economic control. Most changes in the economic and social conditions

of West African countries are the result of the national development process. This process is a complex method of solving political problems. It includes public policy, programs, and development plans for all sectors of the economy and all areas of the country. The urban areas are so important that "virtually every development policy of any government, without regard to ideological bases, will have an implication for the rate and pattern of urbanization."<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to analyze urbanization independent of development policy and goals, thus "the system of cities or rates of urbanization should be evaluated according to the extent to which they are consistent with the pursuit of implicit or explicit development goals..."<sup>24</sup>

Development plans and policy are supposedly designed to alter or maintain the composition of economic production and the conditions of economic production in the urban and rural areas.<sup>25</sup> However, development policy as it exists does not reallocate scarce resources to the various areas of the country or change the composition of production or the exploitative conditions of production.

For example, in the industrial sector and the services sector, the composition of production is highly labor intensive and capital intensive. The conditions of production, for example the locations and working conditions, are determined by foreign or domestic employers. Both of these economic forces are largely independent of the development

Note: "The demand for labor services in the present at any location and, hence, the availability of economic opportunities at that location for the majority of the population that earns its livelihood from the sale of labor services depend upon both the magnitude and composition of present output. To the extent that capital goods are required for the production of most goods and services and to the extent that capital goods accumulate over time and are relatively immobile, the demand for labor services will also depend on the location and composition of past production."<sup>26</sup>

Development policy also serves a political function. Policymakers attempt to secure more goods and services, including jobs from foreign and domestic employers, for their respective populations or interest groups. Governmental responses to the political problems through the development process call for two types of activities. There are first of all the problems related to public administration and the need to provide social services for crowded populations. There is secondly the inherently political problem of providing such populations with a sense of participation in the larger polity.<sup>27</sup> However, policymakers have not been able to provide the economic and political needs of the workers, peasants and the ethnic groups.

Only the political and economic integration of the peasants and the workers in national development plans of



African countries can produce changes in the process of urbanization. Without their participation as actors and not spectators in the process, the policymakers can expect internal problems from this segment of the population.

Since colonialism, the greatest influence on the urbanization process has been external. The changes in the external structure of urbanization are produced by changes in the international capitalist system, which urbanization has been structured to serve. External influences on the urbanization process determined, to a large degree, the means, modes and relations of production in spite of internal influences. The policymakers or the masses had to adapt or react to the external change, instead of directing it.

When Africa became fully penetrated by the international capitalist system, with the introduction of cash crops and manufacturing activities, a dependent relationship was established between Africa and this system. This relationship "involves the notion that powerful corporate and national interests, representing capitalist society at its most advanced, establish outposts in the principal cities of Third World countries essentially for three related purposes: to extract a sizeable surplus from the dependent economy, chiefly in the form of primary products, through a process of "unequal exchange"; to expand the market for goods and services produced in the home countries

of advanced monopoly capitalism; and ensure stability of an indigenous political system that will resist encroachment by ideologies and social movements that threaten to undermine the basic institutions of the capitalism."<sup>28</sup>

The development of external dependency determined the composition of production, the distribution of wealth, the location of production and employment opportunities. Since it created social and political problems in the rural and urban areas, not to mention "spatial distortions, and an inappropriate system of cities, then the remedy would appear to reside at the roots in the need to alter the conditions of development, not in the attempted alteration of patterns and processes of spatial distribution of the population consistent with those conditions."<sup>29</sup> In other words, unless the material and immaterial conditions of dependency are changed the problems will remain the same, no matter where people are located.

The only other way to affect external changes in the political and economic structure of urbanization is by radical political change. This change cannot be made without the support and the participation of the masses of the people. By breaking away from the totally dependent relationship that Africa has with the international capitalist system, many structural changes will occur. In the long run, it enables the people to exercise a greater influence on institutional and social structures. However, in the short

term, more instability and economic problems are the results of a departure from the existing socio-economic system.

Theoretically, once these internal and external changes are made in the political and economic institutions of West African countries, the urbanization process can be transformed into an instrument that serves African interests. However, as Africa becomes increasingly important as a source of raw materials and a market for foreign goods it becomes more difficult to create the conditions for more balanced national development. This is because foreign capitalist interests will seek to maintain their internal and external influence over African economic life. These influences must be minimized or negated in order for political and economic integration to take place on a national scale.

Since African people have more control over their internal conditions than external conditions, the main focus of attention should be on internal problems. These internal problems stem from ethnic, class, and regional conflicts exacerbated and utilized for political purposes by European colonialists and African neo-colonialists. Basically, they lead to an inadequate distribution of limited national resources in the urban areas as opposed to the entire country, and misguided priorities and policies for agricultural and industrial production in the national economy.

In West African countries, the capital cities have historically been where most national resources were concen-

trated. After decolonization, the demand for the Africanization of the civil service (low level), armed forces, government corporations and universities necessitated greater investment of foreign capital and expertise in the capital cities.<sup>30</sup> Other areas and the people in these areas were not receiving the goods and services available in capital cities, so many migrated to the cities. This extensive migration out of the rural areas meant a departure from traditional ways of life, beliefs and institutions.

The problems caused by this overconcentration and migration to capital cities poses obstacles to national development. In attempting to solve these internal problems, it is necessary to analyze a particular instance of this type of urbanization in Africa.

In the next chapter this will be illustrated by a look at Lagos, Nigeria. Lagos is representative of large cities in Africa based on the model of externally dependent development. It is also beset with all of the internal and external problems we talked about in the preceding paragraphs. Lagos is the port city in which:

1. political and economic institutions that are the direct result of colonialism remain.
2. indigenous political-economic elite promotes foreign interests.
3. there is a dependence on foreign capital, expertise, business, goods, services, ideas and beliefs.

## THE CASE OF LAGOS, NIGERIA

The largest, most populous and most expensive (cost of living) city in Africa today is Lagos, Nigeria. The name 'Lagos' was given to the island by the Portuguese.<sup>31</sup> It has been selected for this study because it is very characteristic of large seaport cities in West Africa. It is not a traditional city like the larger inland Yoruba town of Ibadan but a Yoruba town which primarily developed as a result of the European colonialism. However there are more reasons why "Lagos is the most spectacular of that class of Nigerian cities which owe their growth and development largely to European influence."<sup>32</sup>

The historical origins of Lagos Island date back to the seventeenth century when it was first settled by the Aworis, a subgroup of the Yoruba. They came to the island for protection from other hostile groups, and to utilize its farmland. In 1800 its population was estimated to be around 5,000. Because of its location, Lagos prospered as a slave market and port during the eighteenth century although "it was not until after 1821 that it became an important slaving port on the West African coast."<sup>33</sup> Its population increased markedly in the first half of the nineteenth century due to the immigration of slaves, many who returned after being exported to Brazil and Sierra Leone, and slavers who sought

to escape the wrath of the British navy.

Although the British outlawed the international slave trade in 1807, the trade continued to prosper because "Lagos in 1851 was still the most important slave port on the West African coast. The trade in slaves was vigorously encouraged and actively participated in by Kosoko, the Oba, who had the support of most of the interior chiefs."<sup>34</sup> The British intervened militarily to end slave-trading in Lagos in 1851, and destroyed much of the town. After Lagos declined as a slave market and port, so did its population. However, as legitimate commerce, for example in palm oil, increased and European merchants and missionaries came, the population increased. The lack of civil authority in the administration of legitimate trade led the British to cession of Lagos as a colony in 1861.

The early years of the British colonial regime were largely influenced by political instability in the interior which disrupted trade. Trade routes were closed by indigenous ethnic groups (ex. Egba) opposed to the actions of the Lagos government.<sup>35</sup> The British overpowered these groups and established a free road policy to insure the free flow of trade. As trade increased and Lagos became known as a free colony, its population increased. By the time of the partition in 1885, Lagos was the most important port for legitimate trade on the West African coast. Still it was just an outlet for the larger towns in Yorubaland, like Ibadan and Abeokuta.

Trade was expanded into the interior when the government constructed a railroad in 1895 which reached Abeokuta in 1898. This was important because it enabled the government to get large stones to construct breakwaters in the Lagos harbour and open up the ports for safe passage. After this handicap to trade was removed, Lagos experienced phenomenal growth in population. "The railway encouraged the creation of the first suburb, Ebute Metta, which has remained functionally very mixed, while the racial segregation policy introduced by Lord Lugard in 1914 resulted in the creation of a white reserve at Ikoyi, in the east of Old Lagos."<sup>36</sup>

In 1906 Lagos was merged with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria to become the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. When "the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated in 1914, the administration of the two territories was kept separate. The South was ruled directly by the British, in contrast to the "indirect policy" in the North, where day-to-day administrative responsibility was delegated to compliant indigenous emirs. Indirect rule was mutually advantageous; the British economized on officers and utilized a well-developed tax collection system, while the traditional rulers with British protection eliminated important sources of both internal and external opposition, and secured hegemony."<sup>37</sup>

Lagos, already the capital of the state, was made the capital of the country, also. Consequently, it became the main political, administrative, and commercial center in the country. These developments led to extensive immigration to Lagos at the turn of the century, however, "it was retarded during the next decade by a combination of disastrous circumstances. These included the 1914-18 War, the influenza epidemic which broke out soon after the war, and the post-war slump in trade. This trend continued after 1925 owing to more deaths from bubonic plague as well as to the general world economic depression. The latter resulted in the fall in prices of Nigerian exports and a general decline in the activity of the port of Lagos, which is reflected in the lower rate of population growth between 1921-31."<sup>38</sup>

Population growth in the first half of the twentieth century was stimulated by improved health conditions and increased employment opportunities in Lagos, as compared with the rest of the country. Note: "This gap became more pronounced with the Second World War when, owing to shortage of supplies, many employers in the country had to dismiss most of their staff. So great was the influx into Lagos of unemployed people at this time that, in order to ensure that many of those normally resident in Lagos had a chance of securing employment, the registration of workers



in Lagos--both currently employed and unemployed-- was closed to people from the provinces by a series of Orders..."<sup>39</sup> After World War II, the return of Nigerian soldiers resulted in even more population growth.

The post World War II period saw a relaxation of restrictions imposed upon Africans by the colonial government and increased participation of Africans in political and economic life. Nafziger states that "After 1948 the British were more prepared to meet what they considered the reasonable demands of the Nigerian nationalist movement, thus easing the colonial burden and helping to shape a post-Independence elite favorable to British interests. In return for their cooperation, aspiring Nigerians, primarily in the South, obtained access to the power, privileges, and patronage handed over by the British in the terminal colonial period--especially in the civil service and government agencies. In the North the traditional ruling aristocracy continued to enjoy the support of the colonial regime...The heightening of Yoruba nationalism in the West after 1948 was partly in response to the leadership of the Nigerian national movement in the 1940's by the Ibos, an overpopulated Eastern community involved in a countrywide diaspora. Hausa-Fulani nationalism was aroused later in response to rival leadership in the drive for independence, and the threat of southern economic supremacy..."<sup>40</sup>

In 1952 Nigeria was divided into three regions--Eastern, North, and Western--and the Federal Territory of Lagos comprised of Lagos, Ikoyi and Victoria Islands, Apapa, Ebute Metta, Yaba, and Surulere (See Figure 5). The three largest ethnic communities, Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo, dominated the politics of their respective areas and were the major rivals in the struggle for power in the central government after decolonization.<sup>41</sup> These divisions by the British led to intense regional, ethnic and class struggle between Africans in the areas for the economic benefits of self-government and modernization. Lagos got most of the economic benefits before any other area because of its pre-eminence as the political and economic center of the country.

The territorial expansion and rapid population increase of Greater Lagos only started in 1950's. "The rapid industrial development which took place in Lagos after 1950 resulted not only in an unprecedented rate of growth but also in the spectacular spatial expansion of the continuous built-up area beyond the legal confines of the municipality. Within the municipal boundary itself the population rose from 230,256 in 1950 to over 650,000 in 1963. This gave an enormous rate of annual growth of over 9 per cent per annum (compound interest). This remarkable growth in the population of Lagos was the combined result of an increased rate both of natural increase and of immigration. The former

was due to a sharp decline in death rate especially among infants as well as to an increase in birth rate. All of these reflected the tremendous improvement in social amenities in the period after 1950 best typified in the provision of medical facilities."<sup>42</sup> Also, there was rapid population increase in small communities outside of Lagos where the unskilled and low-skilled workers lived.

The main attraction of Lagos was its industrial and commercial enterprise, and its importance "in Nigeria's economy can be gauged from such figures as 38% of new car licenses, 27% of renewals, 56% of telephone calls, 7 hotels out of 19, 4 daily newspapers out of 20, 18 periodicals out of 19 etc..."<sup>43</sup> Most indigenous Nigerian economic and political elites "preferred to invest their money in commerce and building rather than to follow the Government's exhortations to invest in industrialization."<sup>44</sup>

The public services provided by the Government were inefficient for the masses of the population at the time of independence, though they were available to Europeans and political and economic elites. Here is a brief description of the conditions at that time by Milestone and Green:

"chaotic traffic conditions have become endemic; demands on the water supply system have begun to outstrip its maximum capacity; power cuts have become chronic as industrial and domestic requirements have both escalated...the congestion of

housing and land uses has visibly worsened and living conditions have degenerated over extensive areas within and beyond the city's limits...and city government has threatened to seize up amidst charges of corruption, mis-management and financial incompetence."<sup>45</sup>

The regional dominance of Lagos met with opposition from the Northern region, Eastern region, and part of the Western region. The North gained a large degree of influence in the civilian government after independence with the aid of the British. The Northern elites were very pro-British and wanted to keep Nigeria open to foreign investment and trade. They were able to keep the Federation open to foreign trade and intensify their dependence on capitalism. "Northern Nigeria has been frequently characterized as feudal. But while the authoritarian patron-client system was reminiscent of interpersonal relations under feudalism, the region's overseas economic links demonstrated a high degree of integration within the international capitalist network...There is evidence that the North was as dependent upon the capitalist world for trade and investment as Nigeria as a whole."<sup>46</sup>

The Northern elites really wanted to reduce the influence of the South in the economy. However, Lagos gradually increased in importance after independence. When the power of the Northern rulers was broken through the two military coups and the creation of twelve states, the state of Lagos benefitted directly because it annexed industrial estates

of the Western region. By the time of the Civil War of 1967-70 industrial development was disrupted and many industries "in Eastern Nigeria were destroyed or closed down although many were subsequently rehabilitated. Local bitterness arising from events just before and during the Civil War has continued to inhibit the full growth of Port Harcourt as an industrial center. Lagos, on the other hand, as well as Kaduna and Kano profited immensely from the war by attracting more industries."<sup>47</sup>

Lagos served more functions after independence, and consequently regional tensions increased. Note: "The location of the largest and busiest port in Nigeria in Lagos and the siting of many industrial establishments there make Lagos a distribution centre for manufactured goods as well as a collection centre for exports. Consequently, Lagos is the largest wholesale centre in the country and the headquarters of Nigeria's largest commercial and industrial establishment are located in the city. With the headquarters of the Central Bank of Nigeria and of most other banks operating in the country and the only stock exchange market in the country. Thus Lagos is not just the most important administrative centre, it is also the base of the country's economic power...In addition to being a political and economic centre, Lagos is also an educational centre training the labourer required in the economy. With a university, a college of technology, a teaching hospital, the nation's

law school, and several high schools located in Lagos, much of the nation's high-level manpower is produced in Lagos. When they graduate most of these people work in the city or for enterprises that have their headquarters in Lagos. Part of the reason for this is that incomes are higher in Lagos than in other parts of the country."<sup>48</sup>

Although Lagos has witnessed unparalleled urban growth, there are certain problems which beset it. Its internal structure is based on a model of externally dependent capitalist development. It is dependent on foreign machinery, expertise, to continue to function as a modern city. There is a great demand for infrastructure and social amenities like water, electricity, and good roads, but it is difficult to provide these goods and services. A brief analysis of Nigeria's development plans will show why the national government has encouraged the industrial development of other urban centers in an effort to reduce the concentration of development in Lagos.

### Nigeria's First Three National Development Plans

Nigeria's neo-colonial development was clearly reflected in the development process. Nigeria's initial development plans, like the other West African countries, were not her creation. "The earliest national plans, during 1946-55 and 1955-60 (later extended to 1962), were framed by colonial administrators. Even the First National Development Plan, 1962-68, after Independence, was drawn up primarily by foreign economists."<sup>49</sup>

The goals of these plans were not defined, except that country would remain open to political and economic penetration by the international capitalist system. "Arthur Lewis suggests that the main weaknesses of the 1962-68 plan were as follows: incomplete feasibility studies and inadequate evaluation of projects, meager public participation followed by excessive political intervention in the making of economic decisions, insufficient attention to the small indigenous sector, and unsatisfactory machinery for implementing developments in the public sector. The author claims that if a strong central program had been threatened--especially in the North. A dispersion of economic power to the multiplicity of petty traders, craftsmen, and small industrialists, without a quid quo pro, would have threatened the economic interests of the political leaders."<sup>50</sup> The political leaders,

who were operating a vast patron-client network, were not interested in the masses or changing the pattern of dependent capitalist development.

By the Nigerian government's First National Development Plan, Lagos's primacy was very evident. The first plan was supposed to address this balance. "The First National Development Plan 1962-1968 noted that each regional government was anxious to improve rural conditions, 'to show that farming can be both a profitable and attractive way of life,' and to counteract the drift to youths and other agricultural workers from the land. The program for achieving these ends comprised the farm settlement and the farm institute schemes. In no region were these schemes seen as part of an integrated attack on rural-urban migration and urbanization...On the other hand, the Second National Development Plan 1970-74 stated that one of its policy objectives is 'to promote even development and fair distribution of industrial location, the same document asserts that 'industries sponsored by the Federal and State Government will, as a matter of location policy, be sited purely on economic consideration."<sup>51</sup>

The Third Plan proposed a policy "of integrated urban-rural development designed to optimize the role of both the rural and urban areas in the national economic system."<sup>52</sup> However, much of the federal government's resources were



going to Lagos. Note: "During the Third National Development Plan, the federal government planned to spend N4,355.96 million on road development throughout the Federation. Of this, N477.99 million or 11.0 percent of the total outlay, will be spent on Lagos' roads. Similarly, N89.66 million out of a total of N323.43 million voted for commerce and finance in the country, will be spent in Lagos. This represents 27.72 percent of the federal government's expenditure on commerce and finance. The supply and growth of amenities have in turn encouraged the siting of more industries in the city. Thus, increasing job opportunities make the city a gravitational centre pulling people from all over the federation."<sup>53</sup> Despite all this expenditure being concentrated in Lagos the problems remained. In fact, they are getting worse. It is questionable if Lagos can continue to serve as a Federal and State capital.

There have been many suggestions as to how to deal with this problem. One states that "the creation of an increasing number of state capitals and the intended shift of the national capital from Lagos to the interior have generated political pressures for the allocation of resources to secondary urban centres for infrastructure development and industrial movement. Lagos itself will experience a relative deconcentration of economic activity and some transfer of jobs to its immediate hinterland..."<sup>54</sup>

The shifting of the location of the capital to Abuja is already in the planning stages. The main problem with this is that much of the money "is to go into the provision of infrastructure, a habitual source of urban disruption in Nigeria's present cities."<sup>55</sup>

Another suggestion is to reduce the concentration on Lagos and concentrate more on increasing production and employment in the rural areas. This will not necessarily reduce the overconcentration of power in Lagos. Conroy states that "it must be asked whether analysis of the urban systems associated with dependent capitalist development produces an insight into the urban systems that would be more appropriate under a continuation of that form of development or an indication of the nature of urban systems under nondependent development. It appears not. It is not clear, for example, that policies directed at the reduction of dependency, such as an increase in local processing of foodstuffs or mineral exports or a decrease in the significance of external capital flows, will produce less urbanization rather than more. It is similarly unclear whether the optimal internally-oriented development strategy requires more intermediate-size cities than contemporary external dependency. Will internally-oriented, domestically-controlled development necessarily reduce the concentration of power in current national and provincial administrative

centers?"<sup>56</sup>

This question gets to the heart of the matter. The change from dependent to autonomous development is what this author is proposing. The author agrees that this would not necessarily reduce the concentration of power in current urban centers like Lagos. However, the author is convinced that nationalist development in the political and economic spheres would restore a indigenous system of urbanization.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Urbanization has always been part of the history of Africa, however since colonialism, urbanization in West Africa has been characterized by export-oriented economic development and African operated but European-controlled neo-colonial political development. Urbanization has not addressed the needs of African people; it has become a barrier to effective national development for the countries in Africa.

The development of large capital cities on the West African coast as growth centers' is the result of colonialism. The prime example of this phenomenon in Africa is Lagos, Nigeria which is discussed briefly in this study.

However, the development of African nationalism in capital cities in the 1960's made it necessary for those in control to address some of the people's needs. This was one of the positive influences on urbanization. It caused people from all parts of the country, and West Africa, to migrate to Lagos and other capital cities, where regional, ethnic and class differences were minimized by the new national identity. The Nigerian civil war (1966-70), despite its catastrophic results, reinforced the national identity.

The further development of African nationalism is

the best way to offset the negative influences of colonialism and urbanization. Ownership or control of vital export sectors in the economic of African countries (agricultural, industrial) must be transferred to Africans. For example, in the oil industry where most of the top-ranking officials in the oil industry are European. African nationalism can solve this problem, and nationalism is most prevalent in the urban areas.

There are no easy solutions to the problems posed by urbanization. An internally-oriented, domestically controlled development strategy based on African nationalism would undoubtedly have its problems too. But it would be far better than following the colonial model. Evidently, "we must begin with the basic proposition that we really know too little about the processes of urbanization to be able to make very reliable policies."<sup>57</sup> It is difficult to determine how various policies will be implemented or interpreted and what, if anything, will disrupt the process.

It is not so much the lack of experience that Africans have had with urban planning as the unpredictability of variables in the urbanization process. "First, policies gone away generally reflect an incomplete understanding of the process by which the subnational economies of these countries are being shaped. The consequences can be either unrealistic policy objectives whose social costs are extrav-

agant or the choice of means inappropriate to the objectives...Second, institutional parameters surrounding urban and regional development policies in developing countries generally ensure that the best-laid plans of dedicated men miscarry. Existing organizational structures, patterns of political behavior, and the decision processes embedded in public bureaucracies and private institutions are as much dimensions of the problem of planning as are the lack of resources and the imperfections of development mechanisms. These circumstances have not been ignored by planners and policy makers, but, too frequently, they have been merely labeled as obstacles and blamed for the failure of programs. The lesson to be drawn from them is that institutional changes are the first order of business for urban and regional development, not in the sense of eliminating the roadblocks in front of clever plans, but in the sense of the directed evolution of institutions with a capability to make sensible and appropriate decisions to guide wisely unfolding subnational development. Without this, the best plans and the wisest men will be wasted."<sup>58</sup>

Basic changes in the structure of African political and economic institutions are needed if Africa is to live up to its potential. This is especially true for Lagos, Nigeria where the institutions of European colonialism are more intense but less visible. Now institutions and/or

a new developmental process should be established to promote the new urbanization in Africa.

The new institutions and development process should be based on the positive aspects of traditional and contemporary African experiences. By combining the positive aspects of the traditional urban experience with the positive aspects of the European colonial urban experience, the result would be positive for Africa. Particularly, if the new urbanization is directed and controlled by Africans whose thoughts and actions are based on the African worldview. These new institutions must be nationalist and socialist-oriented in order to serve the needs of the masses of African people.

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TABLES AND GRAPHS

51  
 FIGURE 1

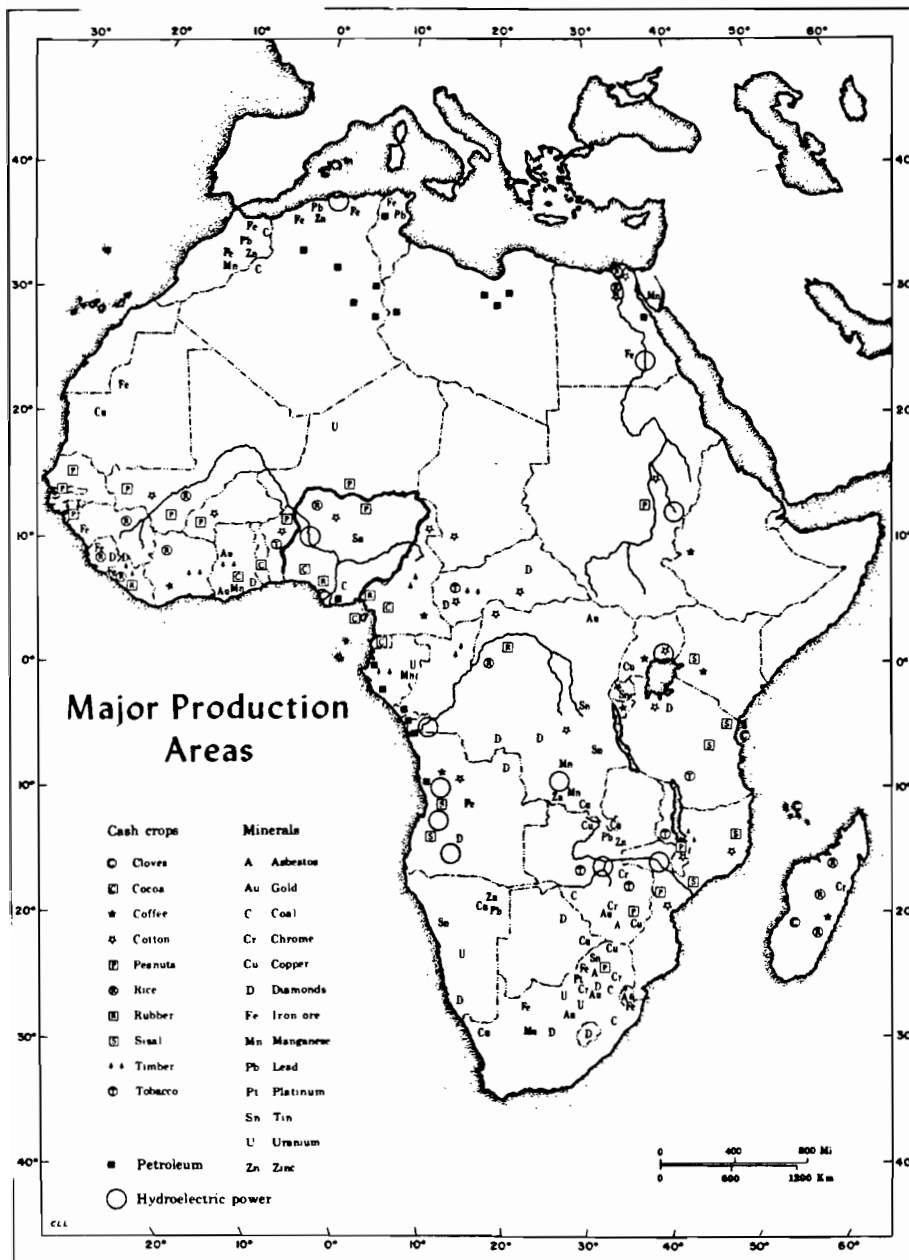




FIGURE 2

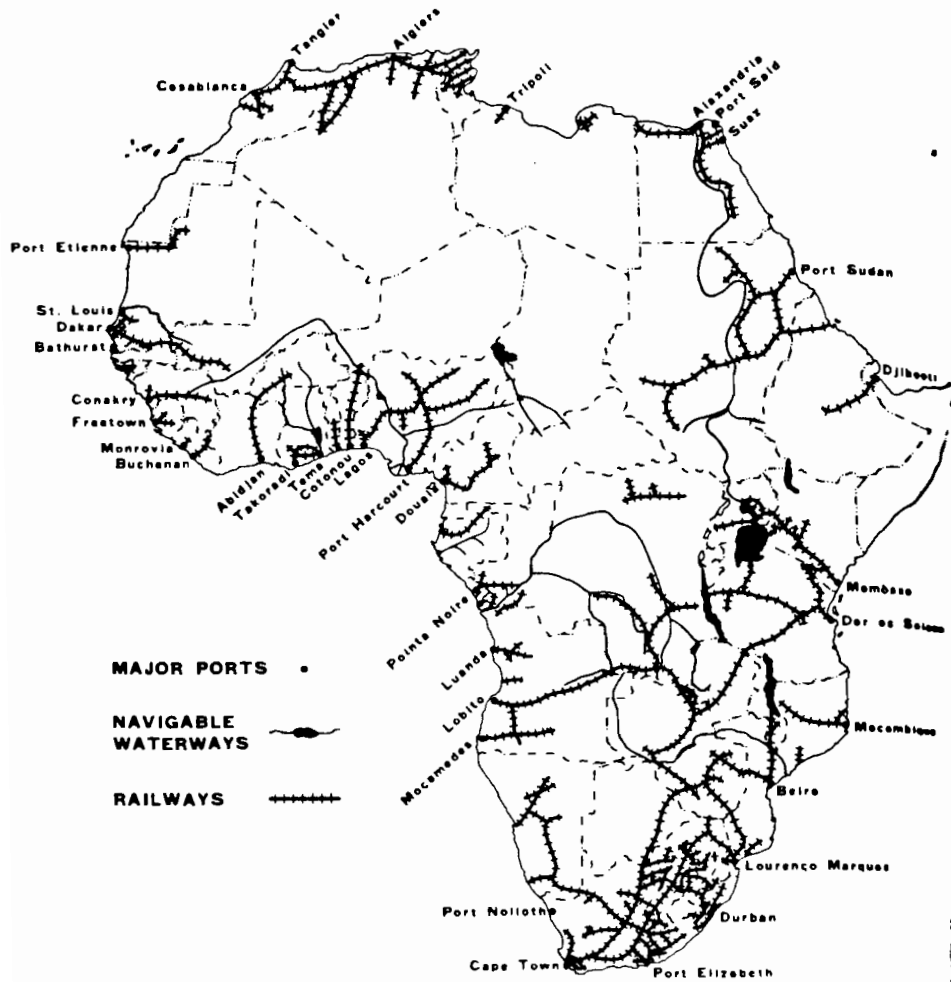
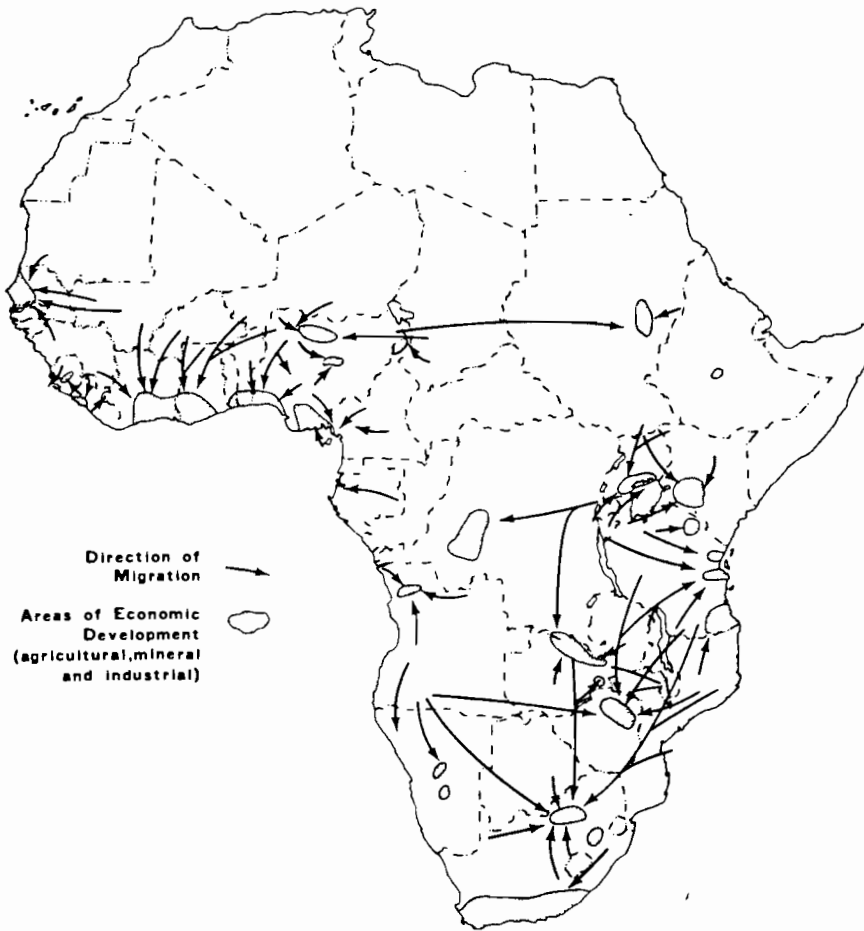


Figure 22.1 Transportation

Source: Compiled by the author. Maps of basic transportation features can be found in such sources as the *Oxford Regional Economic Atlas of Africa* (1967), Hance (1975), and the Michelin maps of Africa (no. 153, 154, 155).

FIGURE 3



**Figure 18.1** Migration in Africa.

*Source:* Adapted from Prothero, 1965. Reproduced with permission of Longman Group Ltd.

FIGURE 4

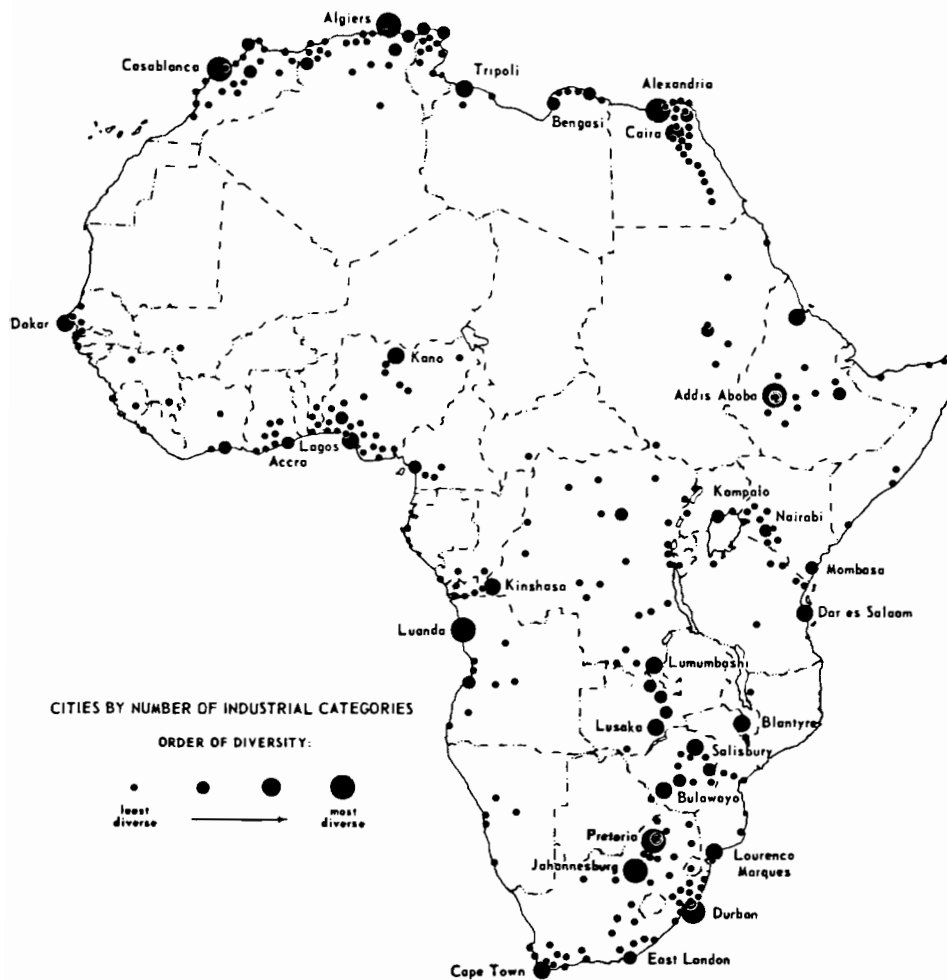


Figure 19.2 Urban Industrial Development.

