

# **RESOURCE COMPETITION AND AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION IN EASTERN NIGERIA 1954-1975.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The colonial government of Nigeria promoted the growth of peculiar cash crops that were customized to the soil and weather of the various regions in Nigeria. The North was renowned for groundnut and cotton while the East and West were reputed for the production of palm oil and cocoa respectively. These regions were not independent and therefore lack the economic autonomy to exploit the resources at their disposal. In 1954, following intense debate in London and Lagos conferences and Oliver Lyttleton's constitution of 1954 which granted the regions autonomy to harness their agricultural resources and pay rent to the central government based on derivative sharing formula. This provoked competition among the three regions which at the long run sparked the agricultural revolution in Eastern Nigeria when Dr. Michael Okpara became the premier. Eastern Nigeria saw the establishment of farm settlements and plantations which were intended to boost the economy of the region. The revolutionary aspect of Eastern agriculture had been neglected and thus yawns for adequate research to ameliorate the current economic scourge in the region and country as well. This paper examines how regionalism necessitated the agricultural revolution in Eastern Nigeria from 1954-1975 against the recent food insecurity and self-insufficiency in Nigeria. The paper will employ archival materials and secondary sources to establish the role of resource competition to the development of Eastern Nigeria. Quantitative and qualitative methodologies are used in the study.

## INTRODUCTION

Agricultural growth and its development in Nigeria since the 1970s after the discovery of crude oil had been neglected. The idea counts that the understanding of the agricultural sector and its growth had been peculiar to the colonial initiative on cultivation of cash crops which has received little or no attention and contribution of post-independence leaders in reshaping the affected domestic food staples discouraged by the colonial chiefs. The British colonial government encouraged the growth of cash crops (groundnut, cotton, cocoa, palm oil and kernels) in different regions of the country following the Great Depression and the Second World War of the 1930s and 1940s. The rise of these cash crops was specifically accustomed by the topography, ecosystem, soil fertility and weather condition of the environment. From the colonial humble beginnings, the country attained leadership positions in the export of palm oil and palm kernels, cocoa and groundnuts.<sup>i</sup> All was to meet the basic needs of the British authority in fulfilling war purposes and her industries.

Richard's constitution of 1946 and Oliver Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 was most distinguishing with its concept of regionalism and regional autonomy. It was accepted that the constitutions would introduce educated Nigerians into legislative council and central parliament of the colony. But these drafted constitutions were cavalier to both the educated and the local peasants in the country. Under the Richards proposals, three new regional Houses of Assembly would be established at Kaduna, Ibadan and Enugu, they would merely discuss general legislation but would have a right to pass their own regional budgets.<sup>ii</sup> This right for regional autonomy was to some extent strengthened by the latter constitution. The regional constitution instituted Mineral and Public Lands Ordinance which were purposefully tended towards nationalization of the natural resources of Nigeria preparatory to subsequent state development.<sup>iii</sup> The agricultural ministers set up by these constitutions began to customise the regions based on her agricultural output for her economic derivation formula since it was crystal clear that it was impossible for the three regions of Nigeria to work effectively in a federation so clearly knit.<sup>iv</sup> Crops plantation was effective where it had its best soil temperature. According to Njoku, cocoa a native of South America was bought from Fernando Po to Nigeria only in

the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and found its best abode in the Western Nigeria.<sup>v</sup> Palm oil and kernels found its home in the forest belt as groundnut was motivated to be planted in the Northern part of the country. The reason for these accustomed crops plantation was not necessarily for the development of the country's agricultural output but for the exportation of these cash crops to the metropole. These exigencies for the demand of cash crops only limited the peasants in demanding their rights for domestic products which was listened to. This no doubt was signs of poverty towards independent Nigeria as it must be seen as marking the genesis of Nigeria's increasing inability to feed herself; a situation that has assumed frightening dimensions since the 1970s.<sup>vi</sup> This research focuses on Eastern Nigeria's economic growth, development and in a long run agricultural revolution by post-independence leaders with special regard to Dr. M.I. Okpara's administration geared towards ameliorating rural colonial mindset of cash crops plantations for economic purposes and exportation. This government engaged in setting up tree crops plantation and farm settlements with emphasis on rural development.<sup>vii</sup> This agricultural revolution was targeted to curb rural-urban migration, provide jobs for young school leavers and train farmers in the use of sophisticated farm implements. If this 'Back to Land' slogan of Michael Okpara had succeeded the current code of hungry in Nigeria could have witnessed less malnutrition and mortality.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The broad objective of the study is to investigate the defunct Eastern Nigeria agricultural revolution towards gearing self-sufficiency after colonial rule. Specifically, the objectives include:

1. To arouse the interest of economic historians on the economic policies engaged by post-independence leaders in Eastern Nigeria.
2. To investigate the various food staples produced in Eastern Nigeria within the scope of study and its contributions.
3. To discuss Dr. M.I. Okpara's struggle for rural development in Eastern Nigeria.

## **SOURCES, METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study is based on primary sources from archives and where archival materials are found wanting the researchers resort to secondary sources, mostly books, magazines and online materials. With both sources the researcher analyses the colonial exploitation of Eastern Nigeria's resources towards achieving her primary aim and objective in building the Imperial British castle. This no doubt affected the food crop agriculture which has been tackled by successive governments without a positive response. The aspect of this research focuses on Dr. M.I. Okpara baby initiative "Back to Land" to revive the economy with his focus on Eastern Nigeria. Nevertheless, the study adopted qualitative and quantitative methodology.

## **COLONIAL AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION IN EASTERN NIGERIA, 1900-1954**

Colonial authorities in Nigeria were totally dependent on the three major export crops namely cocoa, palm oil and kernels and groundnut and to some extent cotton, rubber and timber. The colonial masters believed that African were immune to changes and would adapt to the demands of the British industries during the period. The official reasoning stood in line with R.R. Madden's observation about a century earlier in respect trade in the Nigerian area. He had observed:

It is a very singular circumstance, and one deserving of serious consideration, that nearly the whole of this trade has sprung up...in a place we have no government agents, forts or settlements.<sup>viii</sup>

These cash crops produce were highly encouraged during the Great Depression and the Second World War. Following the industrial revolution in Europe, the demand for palm oil and later, palm kernels soared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Palm oil and kernel oil were used in the production of soap, margarine, cooking fats, candles and lubricants, and palm kernels chaff, for producing cake for feeding livestock.<sup>ix</sup> The government promulgated different laws for local peasants in Eastern Nigeria to cultivate palm oil and kernels as the crop grew profusely in the East. In 1935 as pointed out by Njoku, the colonial government promulgated the Cultivated Oil Palm

Ordinance under which farmers were encouraged to establish small plantations of not less than 15 acres. <sup>x</sup>The peasant farmers responded immediately to this law as there were sanctions on any farmer who denied cultivating a minimum of a 15-acre oil palm plot or plant food staples. These sanctions range from denial of exportation of food staples such as garri from the East to the Northern part of the country, fall of oil prices and restrictions of motor vehicles for transportation of goods and services.

The Second World War and its aftermath had a great impact in several areas of the country concerning the rural economy. The British authority mounted pressure on the importance of producing palm oil and kernels. The demands of the war also forced the British to restructure the local economy and ensure that Africans produced the necessary commodities to support the British war effort. <sup>xi</sup> In recounting the British struggle to garner support from Eastern Provinces in Nigeria, F.B Carr, the Chief Commissioner in charge of the Eastern Provinces in 1943 averred that “at the outset, raising money for war purposes became a dominant feature of daily life...and even the poorest gave their bit.”<sup>xii</sup> The campaign for palm oil in Eastern Nigeria during the war period sacrificed the domestic food produced for the people till end of the war in 1945. Though, it stampeded the growth of domestic produce, Nigeria had become the largest exporter of palm oil and palm kernels in the world. The value of palm produce exports rose from 1.5 million pounds in 1900 to cover 40 million pounds by 1960.<sup>xiii</sup>

**Table 1: Total Accumulation by the Commodity Marketing Boards, 1947-1954.**

	Cocoa	Palm Oil and Kernels	Groundnut	Cotton	Total
Initial Reserves	8,89.6	11,457.0	4.4878	250.00	25,091.0
Net Trading Surplus	33,797.4	21,061.5	22,061.5	6,968.6	84,310.1
Excess of Income over Experience	3,349.3	2,497.3	3.563.9	1,102.7	10,513.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>46,043.3</b>	<b>35,014.8</b>	<b>30,535.3</b>	<b>8,321.3</b>	<b>119,914.7</b>

Source: O. Iwuagwu, "Colonial and Post-Independence Agricultural Policies in Eastern Nigeria, 1946-1980", 3.

From the Table 1 above, it shows that the peasants' farmers in Eastern Nigeria generated total revenue of 35,014.8 million pounds only in production of palm oil and kernels for British purposes till 1954 when regional autonomy was granted to the different regions in Nigeria. After the war witnessed the establishment of Marketing Boards in Eastern Nigeria commissioned for negotiating prices of cash crops from the peasant farmers, sell and market the finished products to the citizens and in line with the colonial bias against the production of domestic staples, the farmers were forbidden by law to improve the non-export crop sector.<sup>xiv</sup> The sale of finished goods from Britain were at high prices against what the Boards bought at low prices from the producers. Governmental projects engaged by these Marketing Boards were restricted to areas where export crops were produced in Eastern Provinces. Feeder roads were built in Owerri Province, to link the palm oil producing areas of Mbaise and Ngwa, to the rail line at Umuahia.<sup>xv</sup> Nsukka areas in northern part of the Eastern region were linked with roads for the exportation of palm oil and kernels from Aho-Opi market to rail line at Enugu.<sup>xvi</sup>

The regional autonomy of 1954 granted the different region in Nigeria the right to harness her natural resources for the development of rural areas. The need for meeting the demands of the growing population became the basic need of the colonial government. This demand led to the establishment of the Eastern Nigeria Development Corporation (ENDC) to undertake schemes of production in industry, commerce and agriculture.<sup>xvii</sup> The corporation also encourages rural-urban trade. The rural dwellers were encouraged to carry their domestic food staples to the urban areas. This transaction yielded greatly for the rural farmers though the trade was difficult to convey as the means of transporting the produce was by bicycles, motor cycles, lorries, canoes, head portorage, and donkey. This was possible against the earlier background that the colonial administration in Eastern Nigeria only constructed feeder roads on export yielding communities. This regionalization of agricultural sector created colonial response to economic plantations of tree crops such as cashew plantation in North Eastern Nigeria for revenue derivation. This policy of plantation and

subsequent farm settlement scheme was agricultural revolution emphasized by Dr. M.I. Okpara as a means of reviving the economic scourge of the nation.

## **POST-COLONIAL AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION IN EASTERN NIGERIA, 1954-1966**

This part of the research will focus on the economic revolution of Dr. M.I. Okpara in reviving the agricultural sector of the colonial authority in Eastern Nigeria with his “Back to Land” slogan. In reviving the agricultural sector, Dr. M.I. Okpara, in 1961, undertook a tour of Israel and was impressed with the Israel moshav settlements. He returned home with an Israeli team of experts who undertook a two-month economic survey of Eastern Nigeria. The team, in its report, recommended the establishment of farm settlements in the region.<sup>xviii</sup> The administration recognized the fact that the overall health of the country largely depended upon the vigour of the rural sector<sup>xix</sup> and observed the need for rapid economic growth for the region through expansion on colonial tree crops and building farm settlement nucleus in seven provinces of Eastern Nigeria. The objective of the government was to make the farm settlement a model for the masses of the peasant farmers to emulate. Each farm settlement was “meant to be a demonstration school” for the peasant farmers who were expected to visit it as often as possible to learn by direct observation the modern methods of farming.<sup>xx</sup> Government’s interest in the development of rural areas through improvement of the agricultural sector also became manifest in the allocation of 36, 821, 000 million pounds (34% of total) to the sector in the 1962-1968 Development Plan<sup>xxi</sup> which will be shown in table 2 below. Through cultivation of these crops the government envisioned that plantations and farm settlement schemes as a means to increase the live of a traditional rural life and minimize the rural-urban migration in Eastern Nigeria as well as dominate the inherent drawbacks in rural agriculture for an emerging society. An attempt of the administration in application of modern techniques for rural development have shown that Eastern Nigeria has considerable potential for high and sustained yields of a wide range of tropical crops; the opportunities for marked increases in agricultural productivity are therefore unquestionable.<sup>xxii</sup> Hence, Okpara established

seven agricultural settlements scattered over seven provinces in Eastern Nigeria. These include; Uzo-Uwani, Igbariam, Ogoja, Ulonna North, Ulonna South, Abak and Erei. These established settlements were intended to serve some research purposes for future government administrators. In documenting the objective of the farm settlement as a research site J.N. Nwoye, the Director of Research in the Eastern Nigeria Ministry of Agriculture argued that:

....the settlers, already familiar with the traditional methods of cultivating these food crops, would be particularly useful participants in the research, and partly because the type of machinery and inputs required for the research, would be adequately available in the farm settlements. An added advantage is that the government would not have to spend any extra money establishing special research stations for this purpose. <sup>xxiii</sup>

**Table 2: Planned Investments in Agriculture, 1962 - 1968**

	Capital	Recurrent	Total
Tree Crops (primarily for export)	22, 784	-	22, 784
Other Crops (primarily for food)	2, 795	-	2, 795
Animal health and husbandry	721	1,910	2,631
Extension, Research and Training	7, 095	3, 616	10, 711
Fisheries and Forestry	306	97	403
Land Use	175	822	997
Supporting Services	1, 485	15	1, 500
<b>Total</b>	<b>30, 361</b>	<b>6, 460</b>	<b>36, 821</b>

Source: NAE, AR/EN/A217, 'Eastern Nigeria Development Plan 1962 – 1968' in O. Iwuagwu, "Colonial and Post-Independence Agricultural Policies in Eastern Nigeria, 1946-1980."

To achieve this, the first major step for the rural development following the regional autonomy were plantation of cashew tree crops under the supervision of the Eastern Nigeria Development Corporation (ENDC). Cashew tree was and still remains a non-indigenous crop that has risen to prominence in Nigeria. The Portuguese explorers had introduced cashew in Nigeria in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thereafter, it was planted by the defunct Eastern Nigeria for afforestation and erosion control in the 1950s. However, cashew became popular for its nut in 1953 when planted for afforestation and erosion control in the encampments of Udi, Oghe, Oji, and Isuochi by the defunct Eastern Development Corporation.<sup>xxiv</sup> Unlike other cash crops like cocoa, groundnut, rubber, and oil palm, cashew crop was not planted for commercial purposes. Anybody could plug the fruit when it was ripe, eaten and got away with the nut. The early missionaries also planted cashew crops in schools and church compounds majorly for its fruits and canopy. As noted by A.O, Isiani, cashew trees in early 1960s in Nsukka area were used as shade for teaching in schools and colleges.<sup>xxv</sup> The crop was encouraged by the ENDC to be planted by individuals, government and missionaries and exploit its economic gain.

Cashew is an economic tree crop that grows in dry, arid and harsh environment. It finds its stronghold at the northern part of Eastern Nigeria mostly Nsukka and Udi areas. It thrives well in low nutrient soil and has the survival capability more than few tree crops in Nigeria. The crop is dictated by the climatic soil and vegetation factors. The government initiative was to establish farms where it was best situated. In Ezimo, one of the economic strongholds for cashew nut processing in Nsukka recorded that each family was notable for processing of cashew nut. Affluence in post-independence Ezimo was measured by the quantity of cashew nuts a family was able to harness. Men marry many wives in order to strengthen their production of cashew in Ezimo.<sup>xxvi</sup> An estimate of thirty families in recent times recorded by O. K. Eze, amounted 1, 156, 240 bags in processing and shelling of cashew nut as will be shown in the table below.

**Table 3: Quantity of Cashew Shelled in 2013-2014 by a Random of Thirty Families.**

S/N	Number of Workers	Quantity Shelled per week in Kilogram (Kg)	Quantity Shelled per Month in Kilogram (Kg)	Quantity Shelled per Annum in Kilogram (kg)
1	Five	320	1,280	15,360
2	Six	400	1,600	19,200
3	Thirty-Eight	3,200	12,800	153,600
4	Four	240	960	11,520
5	Four	400	1,600	19,200
6	Five	320	1,280	15,360
7	Seven	480	1,920	23,040
8	Twelve	800	3,200	38,400
9	Five	320	1,280	15,360
10	Six	400	1,600	19,200
11	Five	320	1,280	15,360
12	Seven	400	1,600	192,200
13	Eight	560	2,240	26,880
14	Four	240	960	11,520
15	Ten	720	2,880	34,560
16	Three	160	640	7,680
17	Eleven	960	3,840	46,080
18	Four	160	640	7,680
19	Seven	400	1,600	192,200
20	Five	240	960	11,520
21	Seven	640	2,560	30,720
22	Five	160	640	7,680
23	Eight	400	1,600	192,200
24	Six	560	2,240	26,880
25	Three	160	640	7,680
26	Two	240	960	11,520
27	Ten	960	3,840	46,080
28	Ten	800	800	38,400

29	Fifteen	1,360	1,360	65,280
30	Six	560	560	26,880
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>16,880</b>	<b>56,640</b>	<b>1,156,240</b>

Source: O.K Eze, BA Project submitted in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2018, 49- 51.

From the above table, there is indication that cashew crops yielded greatly and would continue to grow if successive governments in Nigeria have taken cognizance of this hidden gold mine. This need for self-sufficiency was one of the main focuses of post-independence leaders of Eastern Nigeria.

The second step taken by Dr. M.I. Okpara’s administration in revolutionizing agricultural sector in Eastern Nigeria was setting up farm settlement schemes. The Eastern regional government under Dr. M.I. Okpara inspired by the Israeli Moshavim Farm Settlement Scheme, pioneered the establishment of farm settlements in Abak, Erei, Boki, Igbariam, Ohaji, Ulonna and Uzo-Uwani areas of the region. These farm settlements were to stem rural-urban migrations, generate revenue, curb social vices and create employment opportunities. The government believed that the unemployed young people would see in modernized agriculture an occupation worthy of pursuit.<sup>xxvii</sup> It was the Government’s most ambitious effort in the agricultural sector to revolutionize traditional farming systems and to teach its people crops for profit through the application of modern agricultural methods.<sup>xxviii</sup> It was a state organized and supervised cooperative farms in which the labour force or settlers, rather than paid workers as on a traditional plantation, instead had secured title on holdings of their own which they operated and from which they could draw an income.<sup>xxix</sup> The farm settlement schemes had schools, mill stations, training laboratory, health care centres, police station, market and offices incorporated. The essence of these developments in the nucleus was to encourage the farmers in production of food crops and retrench the notion of importation of domestic staples in the region. The farmers (settlers) were encouraged to stay at the farm settlement for production of domestic crops. All the social services needed in a farm were provided by the government.

Between 1962-1965, Igbariam farm settlement yielded 5-7 lorries of oranges per day.<sup>xxx</sup>

The different allocated schemes produced unique food crop based on her ecosystem, for instance, the Uzo-Uwani farm settlement was essentially known for production of rice and onions, Ulonna was good in production of oil palm and rubber, Igbariam industriously yielded palm oil and kernels, oranges, cacao, citrus and bananas, Erei and Boki were essential for soya beans and citrus respectively. As will be shown in the table below, the adequacy of these farms settlement schemes elevated the economy of Eastern Nigeria within its period of inspection and could have tripled in current day Nigeria if successive administration had built on its achievement. Nevertheless, the current economic challenge in the country is as a result of total neglect of brainchild of Dr. M.I. Okpara.

**Table 4: The Farm Settlements**

Name	Division	Province	Total	Plantations and home lots	Residential nucleus	Roads	Fuel plantations and "waste land"	Cash-crops	No. of villages	No. of villages constructed (mid-1965)	No. of settlers (mid-1965)
Boki	Ogoja Divison	Ogoja Province	11, 541	9, 060	260	200	2,021	Oil palm/citrus	5	2	240
Erei	Afikpo/Enyong Divisions	Abakaliki/Uyo Provinces	10, 385	9, 060	320	200	805	Oil palm/soya beans	6	2	240
Igbariam	Onitsha Division	Onitsha Province	6,560	5915	324	120	201	Oil palm/citrus	3	3	350
Ohaji	Owerri Division	Owerri Province	14, 929	10, 872	348	600	3, 109	Oil palm/rubber	6	3	360
Ulonna	Bende/Okigwi	Umuahia/Owerri Provinces	7, 798	6, 906	292	400	200	Oil palm/rubber	4	2	240
Uzo-Uwani	Nsukka Division	Enugu Province	10, 562	9, 741 (9, 560 + 181 Canal zone)	340	200	281	Irrigated rice/onions	5	1	95
			<b>61, 775</b>	<b>51, 554</b>	<b>1, 884</b>	<b>1, 720</b>	<b>6, 617</b>		<b>29</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1, 525</b>

Source: B. Floyd and M. Adinde, "Farm Settlements in Eastern Nigeria: A Geographical Appraisal", *JSTOR*, Vol. 43, No. 3. July, 1967, 196.

Farm settlements' resuscitation has always been used as a bait to garner votes during elections but the successive governments never kept their promises of revitalization. As Obi-Ani averred of Uzo-Uwani farm settlement that this is one of the food basket areas that would guarantee food security in the country.<sup>xxx1</sup> Again, as Igbariam farm settlement lacked same government lackluster attitude, its operation has been riddled with the problem of indigenes-settlers crisis while the Anambra state government who is supposed to be an unbiased umpire turns the other way. In documenting the current indigenes-settlers crisis at Igbariam, Micheal Achumi lamented that:

I am from Oraukwu... The Igbariam people as well as other neighbouring communities gave the land (farm settlement) to Dr. Micheal Okpara... we were admitted into the settlement in 1962. Each settler was given 9 hectares of palm plantation, 4 hectares of citrus plantation and 3 hectares for gardening. We signed an agreement with the Premier to retain the house, hectares and other economic output till we die. Upon our death, the deceased belongings are willed to his first son or next of kin. This current Igbariam indigenes tussle and her support from the current administration calls for justice and equality... we are still with our signed documents.

The successive government in Anambra state has neglected the purpose for the establishment of the farm settlements for 'quick' wealth. The settlers live in fear, pay ten thousand naira monthly as tenants to the government, numerous palm oil plantations planted and managed by the settlers are sold to individuals without consultation.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Though the farm settlements faced challenges such as land acquisition, lack of interest of the young school leavers targeted by the programme, inexperienced labourers, expensive structure of the settlements, the Nigeria-Biafran civil war and subsequent reliance on oil, yet its production of crops within its short period of existence was worthwhile. Today, Nigeria is a mono-economy; nothing has been

done by current and past administrations to resuscitate the farm settlements. They have not witnessed serious intervention since the end of the civil war, this has been attributed as part of the “war indemnity” paid by the Easterners after the civil war.

### **Restructuring, Food Insecurity and Self-Insufficiency**

A noticeable flight of population from the rural areas in different parts of Nigeria migrated to the urban areas (Onitsha, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Calabar, Kano and Kaduna) as a result of petroleum oil boom of 1970s. Nigeria which used to be an exporter of agricultural products in the 1950’s and 1960’s turned into an importer of agricultural raw materials and food. The output of major food and cash crops declined.<sup>xxxiii</sup> As a result of total dependence on oil, colonial and post independent companies especially agricultural industries and farm areas suffered stagnation as every citizen moved out to partake in the “national cake.” This has led to increase in infant and maternal mortality rate, high cost of living and poverty devastation on the nation. The resulting effect was total neglect of agriculture for oil. As mentioned above from about 1954, the three regions West, East and North embarked on aggressive economic reforms which promoted Nigeria as the third producer of groundnut and highest producer of palm oil by 1960. As Professor Toyin Falola asserts in his book “Economic Reforms and Modernization in Nigeria: 1945-1965,” ‘economic development was the priority in every region, as Nigerians and their leaders saw their emerging freedom from colonial rule as an avenue for the banishment of poverty.’<sup>xxxiv</sup> In Eastern Nigeria, the need to revive the colonial farm settlement and agricultural food production gave rise to the establishments of farm settlements by Dr. M.I. Okpara. Unfortunately, these establishments were affected by the horrendous Nigeria-Biafran War and successive lackadaisical government in Eastern Nigeria, whose focus switched from economic rivalry and fight for economic development to political rivalry and fight for political dominance.<sup>xxxv</sup> In documenting the effect of the Nigeria-Biafran war on the settlements in Eastern Nigeria, Emmanuel Okoye, a settler at Igbariam lamented that:

The war came to Igbariam in 1969. During this period, the Nigerian soldiers harvested all our crops, looted all the economic seedlings in the nucleus, maimed some houses and stole some farm implements. This also affected the source of water... After the government saw the farm settlement as a huge tax to fix and intentionally abandoned it to die in penury.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Restructuring Nigeria had been the news on air since the wake of 100 years amalgamation of Nigeria. The crises in Nigeria that led to the civil war had many people advocated for a strong federal government. But the military with its uniform command structure that took control of the government from 1966 unwittingly transformed the country into a unitary government. This has resulted in bricking and crises within the Nigerian federation. It is only in Nigeria that an ethnic group with up to 30-40 million populations could be broken into miniature states going cap in hand to the centre for monthly handouts. Some ethnic groups bigger than two or three African countries combined are deprived of initiatives in mining, internal security and revenue generation in a quasi-federation called Nigeria. The panacea at mitigating the trouble in Nigeria is to restore Nigeria to true federalism. Thus, Senator Ike Ekweremadu observed that:

Currently, no state government can run its own power infrastructure or build, own and operate an airport or build and run a railway because they are all contained in the exclusive list. We have power station, poor aviation infrastructure and system and decrepit and seriously underdeveloped railway because the federal government has become a dog in a mange, unable to provide those services it has amassed, yet not allowing the federating units to participate.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Obi-Ani further stated that “the consequences stare us in the face as the states became impoverished, unable to pay worker’s salaries and with high unemployment rate. Strong power at the centre now made it impossible for competition among the federating units and stagnate the economy.<sup>xxxviii</sup> In a normal federation, the constituent units ought to contribute a negligible percentage of their revenue for the running of the centre. But in Nigeria, the “omnipotent federal government” holds the constituent units to ransom. Thus, as Ekweremadu further opined that:

The result is that the federating units have become uncreative and indolent. The federal government has also become a self-appointed Father Christmas, which takes what belongs to the states, takes the lion shares and doles out the remainder to the states, while the federal government, which has the powers to do so does not bother because the entire nation is fixated on oil wealth.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The over concentration of powers at the centre had made the struggle for its control so pernicious, vicious and acrimonious. It became a “do or die affair” as postulated by former president Olusegun Obasanjo. The principle of need as canvassed by the northern and western regions in the 1970s with the influx of petro-dollars has stalled competitive spirit among the constituent units. During cocoa, groundnut pyramid and palm oil productions from colonial times to 1969, regions controlled what is in their domains but this changed since the discovery of oil which became the mainstay of Nigeria’s economy. Nigeria became a mono economy and importer of food to the detriment of other sectors especially agriculture and settlements. As Obi-Ani further averred that “the truth is that the beneficiaries of this lopsided polity are afraid of embracing restructuring. Unfortunately, Nigeria cannot overcome its current economic difficulties by behaving like ostrich burying its head in the sand.”<sup>xl</sup> A well restructured Nigeria will enthrone the competitive spirit, reduce

corruption and empower every ethnic group, region or zone to develop at its own pace. The clarion call is to restructure Nigeria now or remain economically stagnant and politically unstable. For Nigeria's economy to grow, we must abolish this inefficient and uneconomical type of governance. Devolution of powers to the states and geopolitical zones can solve the problem.<sup>xli</sup> A restructured polity would release the required energy needed to develop this country.

## CONCLUSION

To scholars, 'History is in essence, a progressive field. As historians become increasingly specialized in their fields of research, the simplification and misunderstanding of past gurus become apparent.'<sup>xlii</sup> Nigeria is at a crossroad and yawns for peaceful co-existence. For the attainment of adequate self-reliance on food production in Nigeria, there is excessive need to look back on the basic agricultural produce of the different regions in Nigeria. As earlier documented, the colonial masters customized the agricultural production in Nigeria based on the ecological variations of the region. The East was notable for oil palm and kernels as groundnut and cocoa were in abundance at Northern and Western part of the country. The colonial regionalization of economy in 1954 heightened regional development of her economy and granted regional independence to her produce. It should be recalled that derivation from these economy among the region gave rise to the establishment of universities and other developmental projects in Nigeria. The basic question remains, if 1,525 farm settlers in Eastern Nigeria could feed the entire Province between 1961-1966 why is the region characterized with inadequate food and low manpower against over five million inhabitants?

At the dawn of independence and with the need to revive the colonial economy saw farsighted leaders as the premier or governor. In Eastern Nigeria, Dr. M.I. Okpara who was the Second Premier of Eastern Nigeria emphasized on agricultural revolution through construction of farm settlement schemes, plantation of tree crops and setting up agricultural administrative bodies for rural development. Thus, his "Back to Land" ambition was planned to become future Nigerian

communities, having enough attractions to check the increasing labour migration from rural areas to the major urban centres of the Federation.<sup>xliii</sup> This government initiative created job for young school leavers, curbed social vices and teachings on the use of new farm tools. Each plantation and farm settlement location yielded profusely that the economic deprivation of Eastern Nigeria grew. However, following the horrendous Nigeria-Biafra civil war this ambition was affected and subsequently abandoned as a result of rise in the oil boom of 1970s. This reluctant development of rural areas and its neglect led to migration of individuals and group for white collar jobs in order to benefit from the country's national cake. The urban centres which are densely populated with inhabitants depend only on importation of food staples. The country needs to take a U-turn in reviving forgotten and dying treasures in the time of great wants.

The research recommends that the federal government of Nigeria should encourage regional industrialization through allocation of resources and introduction of new farm implements to local farmers. There is an essential need to revive the farm settlements in Eastern Nigeria as the region is gifted with good atmosphere conducive for cultivation of food crops. It is only when the significant roles played by agriculture in the defunct Eastern Nigeria are brought back that self-sufficient, good health; non-violence and constant attacks will be mellowed. Again, failure to follow the example of the defunct Eastern Nigeria under M.I Okpara will not only aggravate the already dismal situation but will jeopardise the hope of future revamp in the agricultural sector.

## End Notes

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- <sup>i</sup> O.N. Njoku, *Economic History of Nigeria, 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries*. Nsukka: Great Ap Express, 2014, p.241.
- <sup>ii</sup> J.S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*. Benin: Broburg and Wistrom, 1958, p.276.
- <sup>iii</sup> Ibid, p.282.
- <sup>iv</sup> G.O Olusanya, “Constitutional Developments in Nigeria, 1861-1960” in *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, ed. O. Ikime, Ibadan: HERN Publishers, 1980, p.536.
- <sup>v</sup> Njoku, *Economic History of Nigeria*, p.226.
- <sup>vi</sup> Ibid, p.242.
- <sup>vii</sup> O. Iwuagwu, “Colonial and Post-Independence Agricultural Policies in Eastern Nigeria, 1946-1980”, accessed 4 September, 2018, <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/272338619>
- <sup>viii</sup> Madden quoted by O.N. Njoku, *Economic History of Nigeria, 19<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> Centuries*, p.219.
- <sup>ix</sup> Njoku, *Economic History of Nigeria*, p. 223.
- <sup>x</sup> Njoku, *Economic History of Nigeria*, p.225.
- <sup>xi</sup> C.J. Korieh, “*Life Not Worth Living*”: *Nigerian Petitions Reflecting an African Society’s Experiences During World War II*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2014, p.27.
- <sup>xii</sup> F. B. Carr papers in C.J. Korieh, *Life Not Worth Living*, p.27.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Ahazuem and Falola, “Production for the Metropolis”, in Njoku, *Economic History of Nigeria*, p. 223-224.
- <sup>xiv</sup> D. Olatunbosun. *Nigeria’s Neglected Rural Majority*, in O. Iwuagwu, “Colonial and Post-Independence Agricultural Policies”, p.3.
- <sup>xv</sup> Iwuagwu. “Colonial and Post-Independence Agricultural Policies”, p.3.
- <sup>xvi</sup> A.O. Isiani. 1953, Personal interview., Ibeku-Opi, 12 July, 2018.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Iwuagwu, “Colonial and Post-Independence Agricultural Policies”, p.4.

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<sup>xviii</sup> C.O. Okoro, “The Uzouwani Farm Settlement and Socio-Economic Development in the Anambra Basin (1961-1971)”, Unpublished Project Report, Department of History, University of Nigeria, p.15.

<sup>xix</sup> Ibid, p.5.

<sup>xx</sup> P.N. Okeke, A mimeographed lecture delivered to Agricultural Assistants during a conference on farm settlements at Enugu, 6 May, 1963, in C.O. Okoro, “The Uzouwani Farm Settlement”, p.16.

<sup>xxi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxii</sup> B. Floyd and M. Adinde. 1967. “Farm Settlements in Eastern Nigeria: A Geographical Appraisal”, *JSTOR*, 43. 3, p.190.

<sup>xxiii</sup> J.N. Nwoye, “Farm Settlement and Action Research in Eastern Nigeria”, in C.O. Okoro, “The Uzouwani Farm Settlement”, p.17.

<sup>xxiv</sup> L.A Hammad, J.C Anikwe, and A.R Adedegi, “Cashew Nuts and Production in Nigeria” in O.K. Eze, “Cashew Economy in Ezimo, Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State, BA Project, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2018, p.36.

<sup>xxv</sup> A.O. Isiani, interview cited.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxvii</sup> C.O. Okoro, “The Uzouwani Farm Settlement”, p.16.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Floyd and Adinde, “Farm Settlements in Eastern Nigeria”, p.190.

<sup>xxix</sup> Iwuagwu, “Colonial and Post-Independence Agricultural Policies”, p.8.

<sup>xxx</sup> E. Okoye. 1933. Personal interview, Igbariam. 5 January, 2019.

<sup>xxxi</sup> N.A Obi-Ani. 2018. “The Nigeria-Biafran War and the Occupation of Nsukka and Enugu Areas of Biafra, 1967-1979.” Ph.D. dissertation., Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, 108.

<sup>xxxii</sup> C.U. Osaekwe, 1953. Personal interview. Igbariam. 5 January, 2019

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<sup>xxxiii</sup> I.R.A. Ozigbo, *A History of Igboland in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Enugu: Snapp Press, 1999, 78-79.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Restructuring the Nigerian economy. 23 February 2019. <http://www.sunnewsonline.com/restructuring-the-nigerian-economy/>

<sup>xxxv</sup> Restructuring the Nigerian economy. 23 February 2019. <http://www.sunnewsonline.com/restructuring-the-nigerian-economy/>

<sup>xxxvi</sup> E. Okoye. Interview cited

<sup>xxxvii</sup> N.A. Obi-Ani. 2018. "Restructuring and its Security implications in Nigeria." Presented at St. Peter's Chaplaincy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> N.A. Obi-Ani. 2018. "Restructuring and its Security implications in Nigeria."

<sup>xxxix</sup> N.A. Obi-Ani. 2018. "Restructuring and its Security implications in Nigeria."

<sup>xl</sup> N.A. Obi-Ani. 2018. "Restructuring and its Security implications in Nigeria."

<sup>xli</sup> Restructuring the Nigerian economy. 23 February 2019. <http://www.sunnewsonline.com/restructuring-the-nigerian-economy/>

<sup>xlii</sup> W. E. Akoda, *ABC of Project Writing for Researchers and Students of the Humanities*, (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2014), pp.18-19.

<sup>xliii</sup> Floyd and Adinde, "Farm Settlements in Eastern Nigeria", p.190.

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