

# **DAWN Commission**

## **13<sup>th</sup> Yoruba Historical Conversations**

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### **Lagos in Yoruba History: Overcoming the Politics of Alienation**

**Prof. Rasheed Olaniyi  
Department of History, University of Ibadan**

#### **Being the Paper delivered by Prof. Richard Olaniyi at the 13<sup>th</sup> Edition of the DAWN Yoruba Historical Conversations**

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I sincerely appreciate The Director General of DAWN and all the stakeholders of the Commission for the honour done me by inviting me to deliver the 13<sup>th</sup> Yoruba Historical Conversations. I must commend you for this great initiative to promote understanding of our history, especially in an era dominated by propaganda, misinformation and misrepresentation.

Lagos had multicultural and trans-continental composition, different from Yoruba urbanism. Even though there is a tremendous amount of interdependence between Lagos and other Yoruba communities, it developed a distinct political culture and worldview. Lagos has a peculiar way of selecting its leaders and taking a stand on any local or national issue.<sup>1</sup> As discussed in this paper, politics of alienation is tied to historically-specific events and political struggle. It is historically-defined political differentiation driven by freedom from political domination. This has led to the making and remaking of political community and boundaries in the trajectory of the city. In its relationship with other Yoruba entities, Lagos objectifies its powers, political identity, and characteristics. This manifested in the series of agitations, debates and controversies for Lagos

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<sup>1</sup> Ayodeji Olukoju, 2018. "Which Lagos, Whose (Hi)story?" <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340512213> p. 156

autonomy. Lagos and other Yoruba communities are in constant dialogue and exchange but separated from one another only by alienated forms of self-preservation under history-specific conditions and nature of elite politics. The city is in a class of its own compounded and confronted many of its problems.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper, I discuss politics of alienation in terms of the contradictions that shaped political convergence and divergence between Lagos and other Yoruba states. I discuss the cascade of responses from the political class and historical actors to traditional rulers and indigenous people in order to underscore social construction of identity, territoriality and political community. Lagos was regarded as a source of political and economic strength for Western Region. Its alienation from the region was vehemently resisted with the threat of secession. On the other hand, both northern and eastern Nigerian power elite wanted Lagos to be neutralized. The Lagos question led to irreconcilable ethno-regional rivalries, political permutations and shifting alliances that threatened decolonization process in the 1950s. I examine the processes of overcoming the challenges of alienation as witnessed in the increasing collaboration between Lagos and other Yoruba states for political, economic and socio-cultural development.

Lagos, the thriving cosmopolitan Yoruba city, remains the most pre-eminent centre of commerce and social movement for political rights in Nigeria. The invention of Yoruba modernity effectively developed in Lagos in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As the cradle of Yoruba educated elite and political modernity, architecture and aesthetics, Lagos political consciousness developed from its trans-Atlantic heritage, colonialism, the politics of decolonization and post-colonial political reforms. It produced and reproduced a cosmopolitan conception of citizenship, encompassing an array of complex connections, liberal idea of political rights with a strong sense of ethnic identity as Yoruba (Eko) Nigerians. The traditional and cultural ties between the Yoruba in Lagos and those outside the city were highly historical and vibrant. It should be noted that Lagos is one of the ‘ancient’ Yoruba kingdoms. As Danmole noted, “In 1982, five hundred years of the founding

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<sup>2</sup> A.L. Mobogunje, 1968. *Urbanization in Nigeria*. London: University of London Press.  
S.T. Barnes, 1986. *Patrons and Power: Creating a Political Community in Metropolitan Lagos*. London: Manchester University Press.  
P.H. Baker, P. H., 1974. *Urbanization and Political Change: The Politics of Lagos, 1917-1967*. London: University of California Press.

of the city, Eko (Lagos), was celebrated. The celebration also coincided with three hundred and fifty years of the institution of obaship in the city...Lagos is far older than most of the towns in Yorubaland, if developments in nineteenth century Yorubaland are anything to go by.”<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the direct impact of European civilization on the inhabitants of Lagos, Yoruba customary practices had persisted. Yoruba language was widely spoken and Yoruba culture was predominant. The respect and almost sacred prestige, which Yoruba attached to the institution of Oba and chiefs were upheld unimpaired and undiminished by highly modernized Yoruba in the city. Lagos prides itself as a Yoruba city but centripetal and centrifugal forces made it rise above provincialism. I therefore discuss the tensions between cosmopolitanism and provincialism as well as the politics of autochthony that shaped the historical trajectory of Lagos alienation from Western Region in 1954. Lagos was the pride of the Yoruba and the Western Region but also the envy of the other regions. Indeed, Lagos has been the cynosure of all eyes due to its peculiar harbours and coastal location, even before the imposition of British colonial rule and it has remained so in the contemporary time despite her changing status over the years.<sup>4</sup> All the regional leaders competed for Lagos as a ‘sphere of influence’ for business, power and politics.

Lagos not only served as the major seaport, it was economic centre of the nation. Most of the headquarters of European commercial enterprises were located in the city. In 1921, 43 per cent of the Europeans in Nigeria lived there and thirty years later, it had 60 per cent of the Europeans of the southern regions.<sup>5</sup> Lagos had about 70 per cent of all modern manufacturing companies in Nigeria. The contribution of Lagos manufacturing sector to the national industrial sector was 61.2 per cent between 1951 and 1957. The figure soared marginally to 63 per cent in 1960 but declined to 51 per cent by 1966.<sup>6</sup> Lagos consistently contributed to Nigeria’s GDP in great

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<sup>3</sup> H.O. Danmole, 2007. *Lagos: Its Metamorphosis From A Settlement to a Megacity*. 14<sup>th</sup> Convocation Lecture. Lagos State University, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> H.O. Danmole, 2020. LKJ @90: A Phenom of Administration in Lagos State. Lagos: Faculty of Arts, Lagos State University, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> J.S. Coleman, 1958. *Nigeria Background to Nationalism*. California: University of California Press, p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> M.C. Ugbogu, 2012. *Management of Public Enterprises in the Western Region of Nigeria, 1946-1966*. PhD Thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan, p. 1

measures. In 2021, it contributed approximately 25 per cent of the total GDP. It also accounts for 90 per cent of the nation's foreign trade and 70 per cent of all industrial investments.

Lagos has been shaped both by its national history. According to Fourchard, "Lagos has effectively been the seat of two major rival powers. On the one hand, it has been the seat of the colonial and federal government (1914–1991), which was dominated by a coalition of eastern and northern political parties during different civilian and military regimes. On the other hand, the dominant party in the Western Region, the Action Group and its leader, Obafemi Awolowo, were regularly in opposition to the federal government – during the late colonial period and the First Republic (1954–1966), during the Second Republic under a new political banner, the Unity Party of Nigeria (1979–1983), and during the Fourth Republic (from 1999), with the Alliance for Democracy, an offshoot of the Action Group and the Unity Party of Nigeria...conflict between the federal government and the major political force in the Western Region was routine, and Lagos was often the site of violent confrontation between the two."<sup>7</sup>

Its plural traditions of origin, global ties and local connections as well as political economy made Lagos distinct from other Yoruba towns. Lagos became the first slavery port in West Africa towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and subsequently launched the Yoruba people into the Atlantic world. The persistence of the slave trade in Lagos Island was the formal explanation of the bombardment in 1851.<sup>8</sup> Ade-Ajayi and Ikime, however, discussed various political rivalries in Lagos and its neighboring territories, each trying to take advantage of the circumstances and acting in self-interest, with the British getting increasingly involved.<sup>9</sup> Lagos remained a key beneficiary of political and economic developments in the Yoruba hinterland in the context of the imposition of British colonial rule.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Laurent Fourchard, 2011. "Lagos." In *Capital Cities in Africa: Power and powerlessness*. Edited by Simon Bekker & Göran Therborn. Dakar, Cape Town, CODESRIA, HSRC

<sup>8</sup> Liora Bigon, 2011. "The Former Names of Lagos (Nigeria) in Historical Perspective."...p. 235.

<sup>9</sup> J.F. Ade-Ajayi, 1976. "West Africa in the Anti-Slave Trade Era." *The Cambridge History of Africa*. Ed. John D.

Fage and Roland Oliver. Vol. 5 (8 vols). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 200–222 and Ikime, Obaro. 1977. *The Fall of Nigeria: the British Conquest*. London: Heinemann.

<sup>10</sup> Ayodeji Olukoju, 2018. "Which Lagos, Whose (Hi)story?"

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340512213> p. 141

News about the December 1851 bombardment and the Oba's restoration attracted to Lagos new groups of immigrants, repatriates, and expatriates.<sup>11</sup> The heterogeneous influx of groups reflected Lagos's physical and strategic situation as a crossroad, "a point where highways from the interior, by rivers, lagoons and through the forest, meet the highways of the ocean."<sup>12</sup> The Lagos Treaty of Cession of August 6, 1861 marked the formal initiation of the British rule in Lagos Island and the name Lagos acquired official prominence, whereas the indigenous Yoruba population and the African repatriate resident groups have continued to refer to Lagos Island as *Eko*.<sup>13</sup> By 1893, all the major Yoruba kingdoms allegedly signed treaties pledging allegiance to the British.

Lagos became a British colony at its annexation in 1861, with its own administration consisting of a governor, a legislative council and an executive council. This marked the birth of a new political community. It is noted that the constitutional status and administration of Lagos changed much between 1861 and 1952.<sup>14</sup> The conquest of Lagos and its eventual emergence as a British colony led to the introduction of colonial rule. It must be pointed out that unlike other settlements that became protectorates from the 1890s and were administered indirectly through existing traditional political institutions, Lagos was administered directly by British officials from 1862. The Crown Colony system in which Britain exercised authority through the Secretary of State for the Colonies was introduced as the administrative system with which to govern Lagos.<sup>15</sup> But this had its drawbacks and future conflicts as noted by Barnes:

From 1863, the British introduced direct administration to Lagos urban area while its immediate interior although organised into districts suffered gross administrative neglect. The 1952 constitution merged the Lagos region with the Western Nigeria although Lagos urban area was excised again in 1957 from western Nigeria, as capital of Nigeria. Thus from 1952 to 1967, the immediate

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<sup>11</sup> Liora Bigon, 2011. "The Former Names of Lagos (Nigeria) in Historical Perspective."...p. 236.

<sup>12</sup> R.S. Smith, 1978. *The Lagos Consulate 1851-1861*. London: Macmillan Press.

<sup>13</sup> Liora Bigon, 2011. "The Former Names of Lagos (Nigeria) in Historical Perspective."...p. 236.

<sup>14</sup> B.A. Williams, 1975. *The Federal Capital: Changing Constitutional Status and Intergovernmental Relations*. Aderibigbe, A.B. 1975. *Lagos. The development of an African City*. Lagos : Longman Nigeria.p.61

<sup>15</sup> K. Lawal and K. Tijani, 2004. *The Search for a Viable System of Urban Administration: The Era of Mayoralty in Colonial Lagos, 1950-1953*. Lawal, Kunle, 2004. *Urban Transition in Africa: Aspects of Urbanisation & Change in Lagos*. Lagos: Longman p.80.

hinterland of Lagos remained an integral part of Western Nigeria.<sup>16</sup>

It would be recalled that by the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lagos had developed cosmopolitan features making it a desired destination for migrants from the hinterland and model for emerging urban centres across the country. In the meantime, Britain was creating public structures it felt would serve its purposes but these bodies existed in a situation that was not ideal as the instruments that set them up did not take their operational constraints into consideration. From the General Sanitary Board that was created in 1899 to advise the Colonial authorities on environmental matters, the Native Authority Ordinance of 1901 that created the Central Native Authority without neither legislative nor executive powers, many of these bodies were intended to address one problem or the other as the urbanisation process was becoming enhanced.

### **Territoriality and Politics of Space**

The Lagos of 1750 was limited to the lagoon port and the adjoining fishing settlements. Together with Badagry, “Lagos” of the late eighteenth century had a very modest population of fewer than 20,000 inhabitants.<sup>17</sup> The Lagos-Badagry lagoon ports complex survived into the nineteenth century, shaped by the slave trade and the anti-slavery efforts of the British. From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, human population of the Lagos Colony was cosmopolitan and multiracial due to the steady influx of returnees from the African Slave Diaspora in Brazil, Sierra Leone and Liberia. The extended area of Lagos included, by the late nineteenth century, the adjunct Ikoyi and Victoria Islands, the offshore Iddo Island and another part of Ebute-Metta on the mainland.<sup>18</sup> British rule expanded the territory of Lagos to the eastern corridor towards Epe but this gain was reversed in the west by the “loss” of Badagry, which ended up in the Western Provinces (later, Western Region) of Nigeria up to 1967. By 1911, the boundary of Lagos was set at Igbobi, in the heart of Lagos Mainland. The Colony was limited to the Island and Mainland areas of Yaba, Ebute Metta, Surulere and Apapa.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> S.T. Barnes, 1986. *Patrons and Power: Creating a Political Community in Metropolitan Lagos*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp.98-112.

<sup>17</sup> Ayodeji Olukoju, 2018. “Which Lagos, Whose (Hi)story?” <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340512213> p. 142

<sup>18</sup> Adejuyigbe, O. 1969. “Evolution of the Boundaries of Lagos.” *Nigeria Magazine* July/Sep: 480–484.

<sup>19</sup> Ayodeji Olukoju, 2018. “Which Lagos, Whose (Hi)story?” <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340512213> p. 141

Lagos experienced political fragmentation from the rest of the Yoruba territories. It was administered under a variety of different territorial schemes.<sup>20</sup> After it was ceded to Britain in 1861, the city was administered as a city-state with its own separate administration, and operated as a separate colony until its merger with the former Western Nigeria in 1951.

Lagos became the headquarters of the Federation of Nigeria in 1914, following the merging of three former colonial administrative entities: the colony of Lagos, the protectorate of Northern Nigeria and the protectorate of Southern Nigeria. It was declared as the most privileged status of First Class Township in 1917. In the following years, further mainland areas were constantly annexed to the Lagos administrative jurisdiction.<sup>21</sup>

### **Lagos for Lagosians: Gedegbe l'Eko wa, danfo gedegbe**

Before the commencement of colonialism, Lagos had constant contacts with the other Yoruba peoples and by the time the British came, despite its Yoruba character had developed the features of a cosmopolitan town. At this period, too, Lagos was growing in its importance as the hotbed of nationalism as well as the political and commercial capital of Nigeria. In the trenchant words of Coleman, “It was the educated Nigerians who organised mass meetings in Lagos, provoked disturbances in the provinces, published vituperative articles in the local press, and made life miserable and insecure for British administrators.”<sup>22</sup> As early as 1908, two leading African medical doctors, Dr. Orisadipe Obasa and Dr. J. K. Randle formed the People’s Union with the objective of defending native rights in general and of opposing expropriation, changes in land tenure and specifically, the water rate.<sup>23</sup> Political associations continued to defend “the natural rights of Africans” and their acquired rights as British subjects, against the policies of colonial government. Urban power spoke the language of civil society and civil rights, rural power of

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<sup>20</sup> Abiodun 1997

<sup>21</sup> Liora Bigon, 2011. “The Former Names of Lagos (Nigeria) in Historical Perspective.”...p. 237.

<sup>22</sup> J.S. Coleman, 1958. *Nigeria Background to Nationalism*. California: University of California Press, p. 150.

<sup>23</sup> J.S. Coleman, 1958. *Nigeria Background to Nationalism*. California: University of California Press, p. 180.

community and culture. Civil power claimed to protect rights, customary power pledged to enforce tradition.<sup>24</sup>

Colonialism thrived on ethnic fragmentation and alienation, which is sometimes described as divide and rule. Lagos had a different political culture based on civil rights as opposed to traditional rights under the native authority system in other parts of Yorubaland. Lagos was ahead in party politics and civil rights movement. From its early history of colonial rule, educated elite in Lagos abhorred the merger of the city with other territories or any administrative reform that would diminish its status as a Crown Colony. In 1874, Lagos was placed under the Governor of the Gold Coast Colony in order to reduce the cost of governance.

The educated elite in Lagos opposed this administrative reform. They wrote petitions, memoranda and held public debates on the issue. By 1881, some African educated elite were already clamouring for self-government. Following several protests, the British reversed the decision. Lagos was separated from the Gold Coast Colony in 1886. This increased the representation of Africans in the Legislative Council and created great political awareness. Indeed, C.L. Temple who was Lieutenant Governor of the Northern Protectorate in 1914 had suggested after the amalgamation that Nigeria should be divided into seven regions, the Lagos Colony being one of the regions. The suggestion was rejected by the Governor-General of Nigeria, Sir F.D. Lugard.<sup>25</sup>

The Clifford Constitution in 1922 granted Lagos the lion share of elective representation. Unsurprisingly, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) dominated Lagos politics between 1923 and 1928. There had been apprehensions that the British wanted to make Lagos a settler colony. During the Herbert Macaulay's political leadership and the Eshugbayi Eleko's chieftaincy drama, it was strongly rumoured that the British government in Nigeria wanted the "Key of Lagos" in order to "unlock" the seaboard to flood Lagos and empty the township of

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<sup>24</sup> Mahmood Mamdani. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. London: James Currey, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> H.O. Danmole, 2017. *Lagos: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Lagos @50 Lecture*. Lagos: Connel Publications, p. 18.

black people, making it safe for white settlement.<sup>26</sup> In the late 1940s, there was a project to re-plan the township of Lagos and Ebute-Metta. The plan was vigorously opposed by all the political parties who feared that it was a subtle scheme of riding Lagos of African population. Thus, there was always been a suspicion that the imperialists had their eyes on the township of Lagos.

As Coleman observed, “The attitudes of educated Nigerians in prewar Lagos, the most sophisticated and enlightened urban centre, provide a few clues. The older and more conservative pro-government members of the Lagos intelligentsia gave unquestioning support to the system of native administration in the provinces, but strongly objected to extending the system to Lagos or the colony area. Were they not “British subjects”? Lagos barristers, who comprised about half of the total African representation in the pre-1946 Legislative Council, opposed one aspect of the system of indirect rule on personal and professional grounds. They protested their exclusion as counsel from the native court system.”<sup>27</sup> For them, indirect rule was “petty autocracy” and mode of domination, which gave British administrators and local chiefs power over taxation. They were proponents of Christianity and Western civilization. Between 1860s and 1880s, educated Christian elites enjoyed both financial and social rewards of British rule in Lagos.<sup>28</sup> In Lagos as in the Gold Coast, Africans sat in the legislature and held senior colonial offices. In some ways, they dominated commerce in the coastal and hinterland areas.<sup>29</sup>

Conversely, they advocated cultural nationalism alongside Christianity and the local Nigerian press became a powerful force in the 1890s, reflecting the growing independence of the Yoruba elite from their mission origins.<sup>30</sup> They created the idea of cultural nationalism in form of pan-

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<sup>26</sup> *Nigeria Tribune*, October 16, 1953.

<sup>27</sup> J.S. Coleman, p. 165.

<sup>28</sup> Kristin Mann, 1985. *Marrying Well: Marriage, Status, and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

<sup>29</sup> Mahmood Mamdani. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. London: James Currey, p. 74

<sup>30</sup> Regan Buck Bardeen, 2013. *Utilitarian Pleasures: Print Culture and the Development of a Reading Public in Southwestern Nigeria*. A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in History  
By University Of California Los Angeles, p. 44.

Yoruba ethnic identity, which was later turned into a political project in the post-colonial era by Yoruba colonial political elites”<sup>31</sup>

Formed in 1923 by Herbert Macaulay, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) was the major force in Lagos political life until 1938. The first segment of its objectives shows clearly how Lagos organised and formalized the process of alienation and expression of political identity. It states that: In regard to Lagos:

- a) the nomination and election of the Lagos members of the Legislative Council; and
- b) the achievement of municipal status and complete local self-government for Lagos.

These objectives fostered political consciousness on Lagosians as been exceptional from other Nigerians.

The controversy surrounding the status and autonomy of Lagos as an emerging metropolis was dominant in the 1949 review of the Richard’s Constitution so much that two groups of different thoughts emerged among the nationalists with one calling for the excision of Lagos from the West because of its cosmopolitan nature and the need to effectively carry out its functions of local administration. On the contrary was another group that believed that the Lagos colony should continue to be part of the West in view of the geographic closeness and cultural affinity of the Lagos populace with the Yoruba of the Western region.<sup>32</sup>

At the time of the review of the constitution, there were two forms of government in Nigeria: the Nigerian Government and the Native Administrations, which like two horses running abreast down a footpath. Representatives wanted to halt both and take another horse to continue the race. They recommended a federal government formed on ethnic and/or linguistic basis: there shall be 3 states, namely, Western, Eastern and Northern. Earlier, the Oyo Provincial had had petitions

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<sup>31</sup> Aderemi Suleiman Ajala. 2009.

Yoruba Nationalist Movements, Ethnic Politics and Violence: A Creation from Historical Consciousness and Socio-political Space in South-western Nigeria. Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien Arbeitspapiere / Working Papers Nr. 105

<sup>32</sup> K. Lawal and K. Tijani, 2004. The Search for a Viable System of Urban Administration: The Era of Mayoralty in Colonial Lagos, 1950-1953. Lawal, Kunle, 2004. *Urban Transition in Africa: Aspects of Urbanisation & Change in Lagos*. Lagos: Longman .p.81.

from the people of Offa, Kabba and Igbomina, wishing to join Western Region. A member of the review committee suggested Provincial boundary adjustment in such a way that Lagos and the colony areas as well as Ijebu should be part of Abeokuta Province. Finally, it was recommended that the whole of Colony should be grouped with the Western Region as a separate province.<sup>33</sup>

The Northern Regional Conference on Constitutional Review concluded that Lagos and the colony should be merged with the Western Region for legislative and administrative purposes. However, the Eastern Regional Conference gave a dissentient response that the rural parts of the Colony should be added to the Western Region but Lagos urban area; as the capital city of the country should be separated from the Regions, with its Town Council and direct representation to the House of Representatives. Nevertheless, majority of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council recommended that Lagos should form part of the Western Region for Legislative and Administrative purposes.

In the early 1950s, the struggle for the control of Lagos continued to be influenced by parties of different political allegiance in power in the central and regional governments. At the joint conference of Lagos and colony, S. L. Edu collaborated with Lagos delegates for the presentation of a proposal for “Lagos Province” that was expected to incorporate Epe area.<sup>34</sup> The proposed “Lagos Province” was to include the municipality of Lagos and the outlying districts of Badagry and Ikorodu. However, the leadership of Ijebu-Epe wrote a protest letter in the form of a memorandum to the Ibadan general conference in which the Ijebu-Epe opposed their inclusion in the proposed “Lagos Province.” They expressed their interest to remain in Ijebu division in the Western Province. There was a strong desire of Awori communities on Lagos Mainland to be in the Colony rather than Western Region.<sup>35</sup> In the end, neither was “Lagos Province” created nor Epe transferred to the Ijebu Division.

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<sup>33</sup> NAI: NC/ B4: Minutes of the Proceedings of the Western Regional Conference on the Revision of the Constitution, September, 1949. Printed by the Egba Native Authority Printer.

<sup>34</sup> Siyan Oyeweso, *Journey from Epe: Biography of S.L. Edu*, p.100

<sup>35</sup> Ayodeji Olukojun, 2018. “Which Lagos, Whose (Hi)story?”  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340512213> p. 143

The debate on the status of Lagos expectedly dominated the 1950 Ibadan General Conference where the Draft committee of the House of Representatives approved the proposal that Lagos be merged with the West in view of its cultural and geographical proximity to the region. But there was disunity among the Lagos populace while two representatives of Lagos, Ibiyinka Olorunnimbe and Adeleke Adedoyin disagreed on the merger with the West. The General Conference by votes agreed that Lagos should be merged with the West. Lagos depended on the West for the execution of its programmes. There were discontents among many Lagosians over the merger.

The promulgation of Ordinance No.17 of 1950 created the Mayoral office for the Lagos Town Council as an administrative move to deal with the urban problems of Lagos. But rather than stem the politicisation and fractionalisations in the city's status, the Mayoralty created more divisions as the Area Council that had developed into the Action Group in Lagos proposed the traditional ruler of Lagos for the office of Mayor, while the NNDP/NCNC which controlled the Lagos Town Council wanted the office to be filled through election. The NNDP/NPC ended up using its majority in the Council to install Ibiyinka Olorunnimbe, a Lagosian Yoruba as the first Lord Mayor of Lagos while Mazi Mbonu Ojike, an Igbo was made his deputy. The Mayoralty period in Lagos was made ineffective by political chauvinism and unhealthy rivalry between the Action Group which was a minority party in Lagos Town Council and the NCNC/NPC made urban governance unattainable. It was a rivalry that would affect future inter-governmental relations. The office of Major was abolished in 1953.

The year 1953 marked a restless history for the Lagos question and threatened the future of Nigeria's self-government by 1956. The era marked manifestation of regionalism of nationalism and its cultural components. The cascade of responses to the alienation of Lagos from West Region followed this pattern.

On the eve of introducing a federal self-government constitution, the British government was committed to decision of restoring Lagos to its original owners, who in turn surrendered their

political rights to the region of the country to which they belong. In the early 1950s, the annual revenue of Lagos was about £3,000,000, which compared quite favourably with the revenue of the Eastern and Western Regions of Nigeria. By this, any region controlling Lagos, would surely be at an advantageous financial position.

The perspective of NCNC on the Lagos question was quite important. Lagos had five members in the Western House of Assembly. Two of them must be elected to the House of Representatives. The five of them including Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who were members of the NCNC offered themselves for election. The House of Assembly elected two but rejected Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. Following this event, NCNC members renewed their demand that Lagos should be separated from the Western Region. Their contention was that if Lagos had not formed part of the Western Region, it would not have been possible for any group of people to prevent Dr. Azikiwe from reaching the House of Representatives.

In March 1952, when the House of Representatives met for the first time to do business, Mr. K. O. Mbadiwe tabled a motion demanding the separation of Lagos from the Western Region. The president of the House, Mr. Fellowes ruled the motion out of order. But the Chief Secretary made a statement to the effect that an expert would be appointed to investigate financial and administrative arrangements for Lagos as a town in the Western Region and as the capital of Nigeria. This proposal was unanimously accepted by the House of Representatives. Subsequently, Mr. J. H. Perry, the Director of Research of the Canadian Tax Foundation, Toronto Canada was appointed to examine the history, administrative and financial arrangements of three well-known federal capitals: Washington, DC in USA; Canberra in Australia; and Ottawa in Canada.

As Mr. Mbadiwe's motion was pending before the House of Representatives, members from the Northern Region demonstrated no interest one way or the other. Many of them regarded it as an issue between politicians in the Western and Eastern Regions. Some leaders in the north thought it was spiteful to demand that Lagos, indisputably a Yoruba town, should be separated from the Western Region. In fact, Hon. Mallam Mohammed Ribadu stated that if an attempt was made to

excise Kano from the Northern Region, Northerners would resist it to their last breath. This was the attitude of the Northern people to the Lagos issue up to March 31, 1953.

On that day, the four members of the Council of Ministers from the Western Region resigned. These ministers were: The Ooni of Ife, Sir Adesoji Aderemi; Chief Bode Thomas, Chief Arthur Prest and Chief S. L. Akintola. Two of them made statements in the House of Representatives to which the members of the Council of Ministers from Northern Region took strong exception. They informed the government of Nigeria that if the two Ministers from the Western Region were again returned to the Council of Ministers, they would resign, as they could never again work with them as colleagues.

This further led to bitter controversies between the leaders of the Action Group on the one hand, and the leaders of NPC together with the members of the newly formed National Independence Party on the other hand. In the midst of this controversy, the NPC declared its Eight Point Programme, in which among other things, it demanded for the first time, that Lagos should be made a neutral territory in the Confederation of Nigerian nations, which they then proposed. They maintained that their demand was not political but on economic grounds. They argued that Lagos was their “principal commercial lifeline.” The Secretary of State, Mr. Oliver Lyttleton supported this position. Northern Region legislators who voted for incorporation of Lagos in the Western Region at Enugu in 1951 changed their minds and asked for its neutralization.

The Lagos question was a Nigerian question that could have been settled by consensus among Nigerians. But this was impossible due to the raging political ethnicity and rivalries. The NCNC deserted their erstwhile allies in the struggle for decolonization and joined hands with Lyttleton and NPC. The NCNC-AG alliance that had been formed in March 1953 to enable the two parties work together on the issue of self-government for Nigeria in 1956 broke down. Lagos was the bone of contention that deepened rivalries among Nigerian nationalists to the advantage of the British.

In this case, Her Majesty's Government had to intervene. The Secretary of State, Mr. Oliver Lyttleton was of the view that the question of Lagos should be settled by Nigerians themselves. For the British officials, Nigerian political elite demonstrated their political immaturity through the Lagos question by fighting each other and demonstrated incapability of governing themselves.

However, the Nigerian political class had contrasting perspectives on the Lagos question. Chief Awolowo suggested a new capital for Nigeria. Other politicians from Northern and Eastern Nigeria argued that Lagos was the commercial and political capital of Nigeria and that to move the seat of the government from there was a serious concern to the lifeline of the northerners and easterners. The colonial secretary remarked that it was for this reason that Lagos should be a federal territory directly under the federal government. For the Colonial Office, the building of a new capital city was too costly for a new nation and it was eventually decided to keep Lagos as the capital, but administered by the federal government.<sup>36</sup>

The Secretary of State, Mr. Oliver Lyttleton announced the decision of Her Majesty's Government, whereby Lagos should cease to be part of the Western Region for Legislative and Administrative purposes. Mr. Oliver Lyttleton believed that his arbitration was the only way to promote a united Nigeria. According to him:

Lagos is not only the political capital of Nigeria but also the commercial capital. Above all, it is the biggest port of Nigeria and the port which handles a great part of the traffic with the Northern Region- for when Lagos is being considered in this connection, Apapa which is part of the municipality of Lagos, must be included. That being so, I do not feel that a move of the political capital would solve the problem with which we are faced or serve to set at rest the anxieties which the inclusion of Lagos within the Western Region under the present constitution has caused to those who see in it not only the federal capital of Nigeria but also their principal commercial life-line to the outside world...Therefore,

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<sup>36</sup> Laurent Fourchard, 2011. "Lagos." In *Capital Cities in Africa: Power and powerlessness*. Edited by Simon Bekker & Göran Therborn. Dakar, Cape Town, CODESRIA, HSRC  
U.G. Benna, 1989. *The federal capital: The debate and the planning*. In T. Tamuno & J.A. Atanda (Eds) *Nigeria since independence: The first 25 years* (Vol. 4). Ibadan: Heinemann

while Her Majesty's Government understand very well the feelings of the Action Group delegate, they have nevertheless felt bound to decide that in the wider interests of Nigeria as a whole Lagos should remain the federal capital of Nigeria and that municipal area of Lagos should become federal territory and should be directly under the Federal Government.<sup>37</sup>

The implication was that Lagos declared as the capital of Nigeria became a neutral "Fourth Region" of Nigeria with two members elected directly to the central House of Representatives. The decision evoked bitter resentment and generated intense political heat. It was considered as political ruse. The Action Group delegation immediately informed him that they could not accept the decision on their responsibility alone. Oliver Lyttleton decided to neutralise Lagos, and made it a federal capital without the consent and at the expense of the Western Region. The decision to alienate Lagos and make it a federal capital was not supported by any contemporary history of other federal countries in the world. This marked a renewed opportunity for the Western Region to demand for merger with Lagos.

The influence of party allegiance made some Yoruba and other residents of Lagos rejoiced over the separation of Lagos from the Western Region. The Radio announcement on the night of August 19, 1953 that Lagos would be separated from Western Region, whereupon some Lagosians were said to be offering free drinks in hotels, clubs and making merry was described as "jubilant in chain." Cablegrams of congratulations were sent to both the NCNC and NPC delegates in London by many people in Lagos that night. Some people in Lagos cabled Mr. Oliver Lyttleton and rejoiced over the separation of Lagos. Jubilant comprised of Yoruba, non-Yoruba and non-African members of the Lagos community. They argued that from 1861 to 1951, Lagos had enjoyed the honour of being independent and free from provincial and regional encumbrances. Mr. T.O.S. Benson, Deputy Leader of the NCNC Opposition in the Western House of Assembly remarked: "These changes will be for the good government of the municipality of Lagos and the general prosperity of our great country, Nigeria."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Report of the London Conference, p. 21. *Daily Times*, September 3, 1953.

<sup>38</sup> "West Loses Lagos: Capital to be Fourth Region" *Daily Times*, August 20, 1953.

The NCNC members rejoiced and held a Victory Rally at Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos on August 25, 1953. The rally was joined by the Acting President of the NNDP, the party that claimed to represent 80 per cent of the population of Lagos. Some politicians alleged that an exodus of a large portion of the central government staff from Lagos would greatly reduce the ratio of non-Yoruba in Lagos and correspondingly increase that of the Yoruba.

Indeed, from its 19<sup>th</sup> century origin, Lagos educated elite were never politically homogeneous. Lagos elite were sharply divided on the status of Lagos. For example, Henry Carr, Dr. J.K. Randle, Sir Kitoyi Ajasa, Sir Adeyemo Alakija were on the opposing side of Herbert Macaulay.<sup>39</sup>

They were highly partisan, especially at a time when there was chieftaincy dispute. There were Yoruba in Lagos who favoured alienation. While His Royal Highness Oba Adeniji Adele II supported the Action Group and opposed the severance of Lagos, Prince Adeyinka Oyekan supported the NCNC and the decision of the colonial state. He was one of the candidates considered for nomination by the NCNC for the Lagos bye-election into the Western House of Assembly following the resignation of Dr. Azikiwe in July 1953. Lagos suffered from the factions created by the chieftaincy dispute and partisan politics. It was Prince Adeyinka Oyekan who popularized the slogan of “Gedegbe L’Eko Wa, danfo gedegbe” Lagos is separate and autonomous.<sup>40</sup> Local agitations for political autonomy were also expressed in a different context in the peculiarly Lagos expression: “Aguda o je l’abe Geesi,” meaning the Catholics (Portuguese) are not subject to the English/British (Protestants).<sup>41</sup> The African Brazilians on the island of Lagos are also known as *Aguda*.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> H.O. Danmole, 2007. *Lagos: Its Metamorphosis From A Settlement to a Megacity*. 14<sup>th</sup> Convocation Lecture. Lagos State University, p. 19.

<sup>40</sup> Siyan Oyeweso, *Journey from Epe: Biography of S.L. Edu*, p. 112.

<sup>41</sup> Ayodeji Olukoju, 2018. “Which Lagos, Whose (Hi)story?”  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340512213> p. 160

<sup>42</sup> Alaba Simpson. 2008. “Some Reflections on Relics of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the Historic Town of Badagry, Nigeria.” *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter* Vol.

The politicians in Lagos, most especially those in the NCNC who wanted the alienation of Lagos did so for reasons quite different from those of Sir Ahmadu Bello, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Hon. K.O. Mbadiwe. While these Regional leaders wanted the separation of Lagos from the point of view of their Regions, certain Lagos politicians wanted the separation from selfish motives because they felt they would have the freehand in the Town Council and possibly assert political freedom.

Separatist group in Lagos further reaffirmed that by virtue of the Treaty of Cession of 1861, whereby Lagos was ceded by King Dosumu and Chiefs of Lagos to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, Lagos had since then enjoyed a Crown Colony status as distinct from the Protectorate status of the rest of the Western Region. This conferred upon Lagos peculiar prestige and it would be derogatory from that status and prestige to merge it with a Protectorate territory.

Indeed, the Lagos Chamber of Commerce, an organised body in the private sector, mobilised for the alienation of Lagos from the Western Region. The Chamber of Commerce, largely dominated by British merchants and few Nigerians, felt threatened by the pro-active measures of the Action Group led government in the Western Region moving industries from Lagos and relocating them at Ikeja. The Western Region had established industries and gained commercial foothold in Ikeja, Apapa, Epe, Ikorodu, Badagry and so on. The Lagos Chamber of Commerce was not comfortable with the swift economic competition.

Many politicians from Eastern and Northern Regions argued that Lagos was developed with funds of Nigeria. Since Nigerian money had been spent on Lagos, therefore, it belonged to the whole of Nigeria. Lagos was the capital of Nigeria, it should be deregionalised so that no region can lay claim on her. The NCNC in alliance with the NPC made clarion call to unity that: “Federal Lagos” and “Nigerian unity” are inseparable. They argued that in neutralizing Lagos as federal capital history of the people should not count. The northern leaders posited that Lagos port was the only link, which bounded them to united Nigeria and that since more money had been spent on Lagos, it would be unfair to leave it for one region.

During the London Conference, Mr. Ojukwu the NCNC Economic Adviser advanced the argument in support of Lagos separation. He argued that his personal property up to the value of £500,000 in Lagos made him to harbor the fear that except Lagos was alienated from the West, his property could be nationalized by the Western Region government at Ibadan.

In the same line of argument, those who supported the alienation of Lagos from the Western Region from an economic standpoint advanced two factors to support their claim:

1. The major ports in Nigeria are situated in Lagos. It is therefore not safe that a town of that importance should be included in the Western Region for three reasons.
  - a. Under the Amended Constitution the Regions will enjoy greater autonomy. Only a number of specified subjects were vested in the federal government whilst all residual functions were assigned to the Region.
  - b. Chief Awolowo had threatened that the people of Western Region would not allow the groundnuts and cotton from the North to pass through their territory to the ports.
  - c. If the Western Region were to secede at any time from the rest of the Nigeria, she would take Lagos with her and so deny the Northern Region an outlet to the outside world.
2. Lagos is a big commercial centre. All the big foreign merchants have their headquarter there. The bulk of the trade of the country is done there. Therefore, if Lagos was included in the Western Region, the latter would benefit at the expense of the other Regions in the allocation of revenue.

In essence, following the increased measure of self-government, it was feared that the Western Region might use her regional autonomy to prevent the Northern Region from making use of the Lagos and Apapa ports. Northern leaders declared that, if Lagos was made a federal territory, there will be no compulsion on the part of the north to work towards a united Nigeria. It was argued that the neutralization of Lagos would curb the behavior of the hooligan element in the Lagos mob, which had caused resentment in the North during the 1951 molestation.

On his part, Oba Akenzua II of Benin reaffirmed that Lagos belonged to him, that is, Benin Kingdom. He argued that Lagos had been nurtured by the entire people of Nigeria and therefore should be alienated from the Western Region.

Conversely, the “unity myth” was rejected by the Action Group and many Yoruba people. Alienation of Lagos was too big a price to pay for a federation. It was declared that the people of Western Region would rather have no federation, if having one meant the cutting off of Lagos from the Western Region. According to the Action Group, Lagos could not be separated from the Western Region and made a federal capital if the West refused to agree. If Lagos was separated from the West, it would have to be responsible to the House of Representatives where it had only two out of 184 Representatives. The Action Group said the arrangement was fraught with danger. The contention of the Action Group was that it would be dangerous to entrust the affairs of the people of Lagos into the hands of those who in custom, culture and tradition had little in common with them and who were most likely to attempt to solve the problems of Lagos not necessarily in the interest of Lagos people but in the interest of their own Regions.

It was claimed that as long as Lagos, the gateway to Nigeria, laid securely in the Western Region, where an anti-imperialist party like the Action Group was dominant, there was no future for imperialism in Nigeria. The obvious remedy was to take Lagos out of the dangerous hand of Western Region by neutralizing it. For the Action Group, the alienation of Lagos was dangerous for the unity of Nigeria. The British merely wanted an “outlet to the sea” for the Northern Region.

Opponents of alienation of Lagos argued that Enugu and Port Harcourt in the East, Jos and Kaduna in the North were developed by government resources. From strategic point of view, it was argued that Lagos was unsuitable as capital. Money was spent on Lagos in consideration of what they could get from Lagos. Money was spent on Lagos Island, Apapa, MacGregor Island (Ikoyi) where European buildings, hospital and other facilities were located. Indeed, Lagos port produced the money by which she had been developed and she continued to be an asset to all and sundry. Indeed, the roads in Lagos (apart from the trunk road running through the municipality had been built and maintained by the Lagos Town Council.

The Action Group felt the blows of Lyttleton’s decision. It was argued that the alienation of Lagos was a conspiracy between the NCNC and the NPC to reduce the political community and

electoral demography of Western Region and impoverish the people. For the Action Group, it was an attempt to depopulate and dismember Western Region in order to appease the North. Unity should be sought by all the three regions equally and should not be at the expense of the West. Lagos had been the sacrificial lamb of Nigerian unity and the London conference was historic as it declared Lagos a land without owner.

Lagos been historically and geographically situated in the West and therefore part and parcel of the Western Region. It was predominantly occupied by the Yoruba. The 1950 census was cited as an eye opener to those who were sentimentally and blindly describing Lagos as “no man’s land.” The total population of Lagos was 230,000 out of which 163,000 were Yoruba (about 71%) of the total population; Igbo were 26,000 (11%), Edo were 10,000 (4%), Hausa were 4,000 (2%), other groups were 11,000 (5%) and non-Nigerians were 13,000 (6%). Over 80 per cent of Nigerian owned houses and Nigerian owned businesses in Lagos belonged to Yoruba.

The Lagos Aborigines Society protested to Her Majesty’s Government against the ruling of the Secretary of State for the colonies. They dispatched a Cablegram to Mr. Lyttleton describing the decision as “inconsistent with what obtains in other federal countries.”<sup>43</sup> They were backed by Chiefs of Lagos.

In the decolonization process, Lagos was expected to cease from being a colony and was expected to be merged with all her sister towns situated in the same region. The Lagos issue was not an issue for Lagos alone. The decision to alienate Lagos not only affected the interests of the people of Lagos but the interests of the whole Western Region of Nigeria.

The alienation of Lagos was considered stripping Western Region naked and cutting its head. Before their departure to the London Conference, Action Group delegates were mandated by the people of Western Region that while they might concede to any agreements, which might be

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<sup>43</sup> “Lagos Natives Cable Protest to London: Lagos must remain in West” Daily Times, August 25, 1953.

made to safeguard the interests of the Federal government in Lagos, on no account should they agree to its severance from Western Region.

After his return from the London Conference, Chief Awolowo told a crowd of over 30,000 people at Balogun Square that "...Lagos remains in the Western Region and not one inch of Lagos land should be taken away from the West. If Lagos was separated from the Western Region, the West would secede from Nigeria and the people of the Region would not be bound by any law enacted by the Nigerian Parliament. If any law is passed, we will defy it."<sup>44</sup> They further argued that, "If membership of the Nigerian community would mean the cutting off of that head, they (Yoruba) would prefer to keep out of Nigeria, and remain an independent member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, in the same way as Ceylon and New Zealand are."<sup>45</sup>

The Action Group organised mass meeting at Mapo Hall, Ibadan where the Leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo reviewed the victories of the Action Group at the London Conference on the Nigerian constitution. On the question of Lagos, Chief Awolowo asserted that there would be no question of compromise and unless the Secretary of State, Mr. Oliver Lyttleton decision was reversed, Lagos would have to be separated "on our dead bodies."<sup>46</sup> Among other things, Ibadan people bitterly resented a sinister plot to alienate Lagos, a Yoruba town. They resolved to support the cessation of the Western Region from Nigeria if Lagos was separated.

Subsequently, the Action Group released a 31 page pamphlet on the party's position for the inclusion of Lagos in the Western Region. The pamphlet titled: "Lagos belongs to the West" was divided into 88 paragraphs under ten heads. It offered three alternatives to Mr. Oliver Lyttleton's decision on Lagos.

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<sup>44</sup> "Awolowo Declares: We are Hopeful Decision on Lagos will be Reversed" Nigeria Tribune, September 8, 1953

<sup>45</sup> "Lagos is West" Nigeria Tribune, September 14, 1953.

<sup>46</sup> Nigeria Tribune, September 9, 1953.

There were four main ports in Nigeria by the 1950s: Lagos, Apapa, Burutu and Port Harcourt. Goods intended for the regions were consigned through separate ports. All goods (including petrol and tobacco) intended for the North went through Port Harcourt, Burutu and Apapa harbours. The Lagos Port was used exclusively for goods intended for the West. It was not Lagos per se that constituted the principal commercial “lifeline” through which the North had outlet to the outside world. Lagos being part of Nigeria had always been and was accessible to all Nigerians irrespective of their regional derivations. From the inception of Nigerian government in 1914, harbour had always been a central subject and under the amended constitution, it was one of the subjects, which were in the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. The NPC was assured by the Western Region not to entertain any anxieties regarding the inclusion of Lagos in the Western Region.

A fundamental concern was that the exclusion of Lagos from the West would affect her economically and not the North or East. The West was mainly served by three ports: Lagos, Sapele and Warri. The last two served Benin and Delta provinces while Lagos port served Lagos and Colony as well as the five Yoruba provinces of Abeokuta, Ijebu, Ibadan, Oyo and Ondo. Majority of the population of the Western Region bought the bulk of their imported goods from Lagos in normal circumstances. If Lagos were separated from the Western Region, the revenue accruing from the trade, which many Yoruba did in Lagos would be credited to Lagos and hence to the federal government. In that event, the other two regions would derive unfair benefits from the revenue justly due to the Western Region. It was clear that the severance of Lagos would only lead to economic decline of Western Region by the federal government and therefore, by the other two regions, which amounted to the imposition of extremely harsh trade restrictions on Yoruba traders with consequent frustration and unprecedented reactions on the part of such traders.

In addition, not all the big foreign companies had their headquarters located in Lagos. Foreign merchants exclusively in groundnuts, cotton and mining had their headquarters in Northern Region.

Action Group offered the following alternatives:

1. The federal government should acquire a new vacant site on which federal capital would be built. Lagos is not a suitable place for a capital; strategically it is highly vulnerable, geographically it is not properly situated to serve as the headquarter of the central government.
2. If it is the wish of the people of that Lagos should remain the capital, then they must agree to its inclusion within the Western Region with certain safeguards for protection of federal interests.
3. Two enclaves should be carved out of the municipality of Lagos and declared federal territories. These are Apapa and Ikoyi.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo suggested that any clash of interests in the future might be avoided if a new capital was built for the Nigerian federation elsewhere. He promised on behalf of Western Region an offer of financial assistance for the building of a new federal capital. The Western House of Chiefs passed a motion, praying the Secretary of State to reverse his decision to alienate Lagos from the Western Region. The motion was supported by Oba Adele II of Lagos. The Oba feared that the alienation of Lagos could lead to the disenfranchisement of the people.<sup>47</sup> The Obas and Chiefs of Western Region threatened secession as well.<sup>48</sup>

This era also witnessed significant political re-alignments on the question of Lagos. Hon. Adeleke Adedoyin, who was a leader of Lagos separatist movement abandoned his political calculations on the Lagos issue. Earlier, his movement was dreaming and scheming for a Unitary Government, where Lagos would be autonomous region. He was Secretary to the NCNC Pan-Nigeria Delegation to London in 1947. Hon. Adedoyin offered immediate and remote consequences of Lagos being severed from the Western Region.

1. The Western Region will be mutilated. She will suffer from financial paralysis as she will be affected very detrimentally in the allocation of revenue amongst the Regions.
2. Lagos on the other hand, through no fault of its own will be ostracized from her kith and kin-the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria.

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<sup>47</sup> "House of Chiefs Opposes Separation of Lagos" Nigeria Tribune, October 21, 1953.

<sup>48</sup> "Western Chiefs Protest: Threaten Secession" Daily Times, September 12, 1953.

3. Alienation will mean the automatic elimination of the five members representing Lagos in the House of Representatives
4. It will also mean the end of the two chiefs representing Lagos in the Western House of Chiefs.
5. Lagos could never become independent at any time nor join any of independent Region of Nigeria. It was recommended that any of the three Regions could be self-governing in or after 1956.
6. Lagos has been disenfranchised and can never participate in the government of the country. It will only send two representatives to the House of Representatives and those two could never be considered for Ministries. They can only ask questions from and be answered by the Chief Secretary who sits tightly on the Lagos Portfolio.

There were widespread assumptions that the decision to alienate Lagos was an imperialist agenda “to have and to hold” Lagos port in perpetuity like Gibraltar in Spain, the Greek Island of Malta, the coaling station of Aden, Singapore of Malaya and Hong Kong of China. In his contribution to the debate, J.O. Oshuntokun declared that, “Lagos is not a hanging garden of Babylon” and therefore could not be regarded as “a no man’s land.”<sup>49</sup>

In the 1953 Lagos City Council election, the Action Group Area Council Alliance won the election by an overwhelming majority of 26 against 15 of the NCNC-NNDP Alliance. The eight traditional members already elected were supporters of the Action Group Area Council, which brought the Council majority to 34 in a Council of 49 members. This victory of the Action Group Area Council Alliance was regarded as a decisive declaration of Lagos of opposition to the separation of Lagos from the Western Region and a mandate to the Alliance to carry out its declared aim in its resolution to press for the inclusion of Lagos in the West Region under the proposed constitutional changes.

The severance of Lagos from the Western Region was an election issue. In the bye-election to the Western House of Assembly in less than two weeks, Action Group the dominant party in Lagos defeated by the NCNC-NNDP alliance. The Lagos Town Council election was based on Universal Adult Suffrage, in which anyone above 21 years of age was eligible to vote. However,

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<sup>49</sup> J.O. Oshuntokun, “If Lagos, Why not Kano, Kano...” Nigeria Tribune, October 13, 1953.

in November 1953, the Lagos bye-election to the Western House of Assembly was based on taxation suffrage, which deprived women, unemployed and aged people the right to vote. The election was considered undemocratic as it was not expressive of the will of the people. An election based on “taxation suffrage” cannot represent the voice of Lagos. In December 1953, the Lagos Town Council elected in November decided at its first meeting to send a petition to the Secretary of State for the colonies appealing to him to reconsider his decision to alienate Lagos from the Western Region. The motion seconded by Councilor Ayo Ogunbiyi was moved by Councilor A.O. Lawson. Action Group issued bulletins on the position of Lagos in a federal Nigeria titled: “Lagos belongs to the West.”<sup>50</sup>

Between 1953 and 1954, Lagos had a dual constitutional status. While it remained a unit of the Western region, with its local government under the control of the region, it was also the capital city of Nigeria implying that two higher-level governments and a local government were involved in its administration. While its general administration was undertaken by the Lagos Town Council as an agency of the government of Western Nigeria, many of its functions were undertaken by many agencies while public order was maintained by the Nigeria Police, a Federal organ.<sup>51</sup>

The Lagos Party was formed to contest elections in 1953 by Chief Odofin Akinyele. This was aimed at ensuring the alienation of Lagos from the Western Region irrevocably. The party demanded for the creation of a Lagos Region with its own House of Assembly and House of Chiefs.<sup>52</sup> The party was supported by the United Muslim Party. While other regions would ask for their self-government in 1956, Lagos would still remain a subject territory.

Lagos became a Federal Territory in 1954 under the Lyttleton Constitution. As the federal capital territory and Nigeria’s capital, Lagos had its Town Council. It was placed under the supervision

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<sup>50</sup> Nigeria Tribune, December 3, 1953.

<sup>51</sup> Williams, B.A, 1975. *The Federal Capital: Changing Constitutional Status and Intergovernmental Relations*. Aderibigbe, A.B. 1975. *Lagos. The development of an African City*. Lagos: Longman Nigeria. p.62.

<sup>52</sup> O. Lawal, 2004. *The Question of the Status of Lagos: 1953-1967*. *Urban Transition in Africa: Aspects of Urbanisation and Change in Lagos*. O. Lawal, ed. Lagos: Longman, p. 95.

of Minister of Lagos Affairs, who was always a non-indigene. As a corollary of this development, Lagos indigenes demanded for a concept of Lagos for the Lagosians continued. The response of the United Muslim Party in 1955 to the London Conference of 1953 illustrated the discontent of Lagos indigenous elements from non-Lagosians taking decision on their behalf. There was growing sense of alienation and neglect in the political affairs among Lagos indigenes. They further developed the notion of “Gedegbe L’eko Wa” - a sense of urban “communal nationalism” to express perceived injustices in the appointments to federal political appointments.<sup>53</sup>

Lagos was reconstituted into a federal territory under the Lagos Local Government Act of 1959 bringing it under the control of the Federal Government and a Ministry of Lagos Affairs was established to supervise the Lagos Town Council in place of the Western Nigeria Ministry of Local Government. The Ministry was, however, seen by the populace as an instrument of alien domination in Lagos in view of the overbearing presence of the NPC leadership.

Lagos indigenes used the opportunity of the Willink Commission of 1957/1958 to revisit their demand for a separate Lagos State in 1962. During this period, the United Muslim Party was supported by Lagos and Colony State Movement and the Aborigines of Lagos and Colony Province that requested for a full regional status for Lagos.<sup>54</sup>

Lateef Jakande, a former proponent of “Lagos belonged to the West” published his famous pamphlet titled: *The Case for Lagos State*.<sup>55</sup> Jakande claimed that Lagos was quite remote to the federal government. There were administrative clashes between the federal government and the Ministry of Lagos Affairs. Also, the federal government policy of denying Lagos citizens of genuine participation of running their own affairs despite the huge revenue contribution to federal treasury was a critical factor. Consequently, Lieutenant Colonel Mobolaji Johnson set up

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<sup>53</sup> H.O. Danmole, 2017. *Lagos: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Lagos @50 Lecture*. Lagos: Connel Publications, p. 19

<sup>54</sup> Habeeb Abiodun Sanni, 2016. *Origin and Development of Eastern District of Lagos, from c. 1850-1981*. Ph.D Thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan. P. 116

<sup>55</sup> Habeeb Abiodun Sanni, 2016. *Origin and Development of Eastern District of Lagos, from c. 1850-1981*. Ph.D Thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan. P. 115

a conference of Young Indigenous Lagosians under the leadership of Lateef Jakande to discuss on the future of Lagos. The conference supported the idea of creating Lagos State alienated from the West in the future federation of Nigeria.

There were several agitations in many rural parts of Lagos with lack of infrastructural development. Even though the Western Region had established Plywood Factory and Boat Yard at Epe, there were complains of neglect in the Eastern District of Lagos. For example, in the Eti-Osa section of the District, the indigenous elements who were predominantly Awori-Yoruba felt alienated from their Awori brothers in Lagos. They were agitated for been merged with Ikorodu Divisional Council. Therefore, they initiated a movement that was aimed at returning them to Lagos, where they rightly belonged.<sup>56</sup> The military government created 12 states on 27 May, 1967. As a result, the Eastern District of Lagos was separated from the Western Region along with the colony provinces of Ikeja, Ikorodu, Badagry and Epe to form modern Lagos State.

The separation of Lagos from the Western Region did not however satisfied the indigenous elements who wanted a ‘Lagos for Lagosians’ particularly with the emergence of a non-Lagosian Minister of Lagos Affairs. This increased the agitation for the creation of a Lagos State. It must be made clear however that the controversial issue of the status of Lagos in the last decade of colonialism was not the same as the clamour for a Lagos State. It only lacked the partisan colouration with which the call for the separation of Lagos was pursued.

The acrimony that attended the campaign for the separation of Lagos from the West was to prevail beyond the political crises that eventually led to the military intervention in Nigeria’s politics in January 1966 and the subsequent counter-coup of July,1966. The campaign gained momentum in the midst of the crises that even those who opposed the idea in the 1950s began to share in the agitation. Chief Obafemi Awolowo and top-notch members of the Action Group made a volte face in their support for the creation of the State:

..we strongly urged that the claim by the Yorubas for a merger of Lagos with Western Nigeria, and that non-Yoruba Nigerians

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<sup>56</sup> Habeeb Abiodun Sanni, 2016. Origin and Development of Eastern District of Lagos, from c. 1850-1981. Ph.D Thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan. P. 114

for Lagos to continue as a federal territory should both be abandoned .  
And we propose that Lagos should be converted into a separate constituent  
State instead...<sup>57</sup>

Awolowo's support for the creation of Lagos State was an aftermath of the efforts of Major Mobolaji Johnson who was appointed as the administrator of the Lagos Federal territory. He had aggregated the support for the cause with the organisation of a conference of Young indigenous Lagosians presided by Lateef Jakande which discussed the future of Lagos in a future federation of Nigeria and resolved that a Lagos State far removed from the West was expedient.

The agitation for the creation of Lagos State was answered on May 27,1967 with the promulgation of Decree No,14 State creation and Transitional Provisions creating Lagos and eleven other States from the then four regions. The State had its territory defined to include the municipality of Lagos and the Badagry, Ikeja ,Ikorodu and Epe divisions of the former Western Region of Nigeria.

While the State took off with the appointment of the Military Governor on 31 May, 1967, the framework of government was not announced until April 1, 1968. The nine-month transitional period was used to address major items namely including negotiation with the Federal and Western State governments for the transfer of functions, institutions and property, design of the functions, structure and process of government and the procurement of personnel as well as the acquisition of office accommodation.<sup>58</sup>

While the negotiation with the Federal Government was reportedly smooth, negotiation with the government of the Western State was said to be tough and taxing on the account of the financial and material losses which the Western State would suffer by the transfer of its investments in Badagry, Ikeja, Ikorodu and Epe divisions.<sup>59</sup> This was not unexpected in the backdrop of the old bitter campaign for the inclusion and, at another time, excision of Lagos from the old Western

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<sup>57</sup> Chief Obafemi Awolowo.Nigerian Tribune 18 May,1967 p.2.

<sup>58</sup> Olugbemi,S.O. 1987. *The Administration of Lagos State 1967-1979*. Adefuye, A. Agiri,B, & Osuntokun, J. (eds) 1987.History of the People of Lagos State. Ikeja: Lantern Books. P.311.

<sup>59</sup> Olugbemi,S.O. 1987. *The Administration of Lagos State 1967-1979*. P.311

Region. It can be deduced that this would shape future intergovernmental relations between the two States.

In the immediate post-Civil War era, petitions poured in from virtually every part of Nigeria with demands varying from boundary adjustments to outright state creation. By 1973, agitation for the creation of states had reached a critical dimension that the Military Government was forced to express a commitment to the creation of more states in Nigeria in October 1974. This commitment only served to encourage more new demands for further fragmentation. The Military government therefore set up in August 1975 the Panel on Creation of States under the Chairmanship of Mr. Justice Ayo Irikefe.<sup>60</sup>

At Ijebu-Ode, the Panel was presented with a demand for the creation of Ijebu State on the grounds that since nobody wanted Ijebu people they should be allowed to form a state of their own. According to the Panel, on grounds of equity and political stability in the country, it was unnecessary to create an Ijebu State. Such a state would necessarily have to include the other Ijebu people in Lagos State, thus shrinking further the size of Lagos State. The Panel was, therefore, determined not to recommend the creation of mini-states which would not be able to perform the functions of a state.

The fear expressed by most people in rejecting the Ijebu in any political association seems to be that they were dynamic and progressive people. It seemed to the Panel that it would be injurious and unjustifiable that people admittedly progressive should suffer because of their commercial shrewdness. The Panel therefore considered that the inclusion of the Egba people, an equally progressive people, within the extended boundaries of Lagos State would be possible for political stability and economic progress. The capital of the proposed expanded Lagos State was to be sited in either Lagos, Ikeja, Sagamu, Abeokuta or Ijebu-Ode. The panel came to the conclusion that Ikeja or a settlement just outside Ikeja be chosen as the Capital. It suggested that many of the government offices were already in Ikeja, which was also Nigeria's fastest developing industrial centre. Ikeja, it was noted, happened to be the nearest point to the Centre of Population Influence

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<sup>60</sup> Federal Military Government Views on the Report of the Panel on Creation of States. 1976. Federal Ministry of Information. Lagos p. 5.

(C.P. I.) for the following towns: Badagry, Abeokuta, Ilaro, Epe, Ikeja, Lagos, Ijebu-Ode and Sagamu.

In all these, Lagosians rejected the inclusion of the Ijebu and or Egba in their state. Advocates in Lagos State requested among other things that their state should remain intact. They further submitted that the demand for a separate Lagos State was not of recent vintage and that it dated as far back as the request for the creation of any state in the country. This demand according to the advocates had been propelled by the disabilities which Lagosians have suffered as result of Lagos being the Federal Capital. They were convinced that these disadvantages were promoted through the lack of any consciousness of Statehood among the inhabitants. Their position was that, “whereas everybody else in the country had a home state: Lagosians had none and they resented their homeland being referred to as “no man’s land.”<sup>61</sup>

For the first time since 1861, Lagosians were once more in 1967 masters of their own destiny. The creation of Lagos State was considered a vindication of the justice of the cause they had fought for so long and also a reward for having nurtured the leaders of Nigerian Federalism.

In addition, there were agitations for extensive boundary adjustments between Lagos State and the Western State. The demands were primarily emanated from the Awori people who requested that all Awori should be grouped together in Lagos State, the Egbado who aspired to be excised from Western States and to be joined to the Lagos State, and the Ijebu of Ikorodu who asked for an extension of Ikorodu land to include their northern parts. There were also requests for boundary adjustments in Omu and Ketu.

The strongest representations made to the Panel came from the elites of Lagos who demanded the following:

- i. That Lagos should no longer play a dual role of capital of Lagos State and Federal Capital;
- ii. That the Federal Capital should move to a place near Lokoja in Kwara State or near Otta in the Western State;

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<sup>61</sup> Federal Military Government Views on the Report of the Panel on Creation of States. 1976. Federal Ministry of Information. Lagos p. 20.

- iii. That a new Federal Capital should not be sited in an area against the wishes of the indigenes of such area;
- iv. That the setting up of a Federal capital should not threaten the existence of any state;
- v. That Lagos State should remain intact with Lagos as its capital;
- vi. That there was inalienable right of every Nigerian to belong to a State, there should therefore not be a stateless Nigerian;
- vii. That the terms of reference of the Panel did not permit for the wiping out of a state already in existence.
- viii. The proponents of the above views declared themselves satisfied with the social and economic progress which Lagos was making but were bitterly opposed to any suggestion to increase the boundaries of Lagos State beyond the incorporation of the Awori and Egbado.<sup>62</sup>

Lagosians further argued that it was “unfair, unjust, inhuman inequitable, wicked and callous to take advantage of the generosity and good neighbourliness of the people of Lagos to exterminate or enslave the people of Lagos”, by suggesting that Lagos State should either disappear or a substantial part of it be constituted as a Federal Capital. They equally argued that if the Ijebu and Egba were incorporated into Lagos State there would definitely arise the perennial problem of minority fears since 60 per cent in the new political unit would be Ijebu. The old historical enmity between Egba and Ijebu would produce political instability within the state.

The Panel was of the view that the size of Lagos State was itself a powerful source of agitation for creation of more states in Nigeria. It was argued that if a state as small as Lagos could survive, there was no reason why their own particular proposed state should not survive. Lagos was the smallest state in Nigeria but has the highest population.<sup>63</sup> However, the Panel was not satisfied by the argument that size and population were themselves basically irrelevant in the consideration for the creation of more states. In its wisdom, the Panel recommended that the

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<sup>62</sup> Federal Military Government Views on the Report of the Panel on Creation of States. 1976. Federal Ministry of Information. Lagos p. 20

<sup>63</sup> R.O. Adagun, 2021. *Urban Migration and Infrastructural Development in the Lagos Metropolis, 1899-1999*, Doctoral Thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan. p. 70

present boundary of Lagos State should be expanded substantially and that the Capital of the State should move as a consequence of the increased area of the present Lagos State.

The Panel based its decision on the following considerations:

- i. There was a substantial number of Ijebu and Egba already within Lagos State;
- ii. There was a long association between Egba and Ijebu and Lagos through trade and early contact with the Europeans;
- iii. The new political units of Egba, Ijebu and Lagos would have a comparable level of education and development and this unit with its high level of manpower would be resourceful enough to exploit the potentials of such a state;
- iv. The land area and the population of the proposed state would come close to the optimal desirable of any state in Nigeria;
- v. On grounds of stability, it was considered essential to have such a unit instead of having either an Ijebu State or an Ogun-Yewa state;
- vi. While the Panel was sympathetic to the view that the new state might well create minority problems where they did not exist previously it felt that the other suggestions included in its report which dealt with minority problems would minimize the strength of such fears nor did it consider the “historical enmity” between Egba and Ijebu as sufficient justification either for the separation of these two peoples nor the retention of Lagos State as it is. Both groups are sufficiently dynamic and with the admixture of the Lagosians there would arise a healthy spirit of competition which would guarantee progress. It further believed that the so called “historical enmity” between Egba and Ijebu was grossly exaggerated.
- vii. The extensive boundary adjustments desired by the Awori, Egba and Ijebu who inhabit different parts of the present Lagos and Western States would be internalized by the creation of proposed state thereby bringing together all the above groups within one political unit.
- viii. The Panel did not consider the issue of moving the Federal Capital out of Lagos as demanded by Lagosians because the matter was the subject of another Panel and it was also outside its own terms of reference.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, the Panel recommended the creation of an Ogun State comprising the present Lagos State and Egba and Ijebu divisions of the former Western State with capital at Ikeja or just

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<sup>64</sup> Federal Military Government Views on the Report of the Panel on Creation of States. 1976. Federal Ministry of Information. Lagos pp. 20-21.

outside of it. Of course, the recommendation did not see the light of the day. Lagos State remained intact, while Ogun State was created as well.

On May 27, 1967 General Yakubu Gowon announced the creation of new states which included A Lagos State comprising the Colony Province and the Federal territory of Lagos and A Western State, comprising the present Western Region but excluding the Colony Province.<sup>65</sup>

With a further creation of States in 1976, Yoruba States of the old Western state decided to float an investment conglomerate, the Oodua Group. Odu'a Investment Company Limited also known as OICL is a strategic investment and asset management firm founded in 1976 to hold and manage the industrial and commercial assets of companies owned by the government of the Western State. Its creation was brought about after new states were carved out of the Western State in 1976 and it began operations with inherited assets of the Western Nigeria Development Company. Lagos State in a Yoruba territory was precluded in the organisation. It might have stemmed from the fact that Lagos had received its share of assets of the Western State with the asset-sharing at the creation of Lagos State in 1967.

During the Second Republic between 1979 and 1983, the states in Yoruba land and the old Bendel State were controlled by the same political group, Unity Party of Nigeria. The states floated a regional grouping to cater for issues of mutual interests. This was the only body that Lagos and Bendel states belonged. It might be safe to conclude that this has remained a disincentive to the Lagos State participation in regional matters of Yoruba land.

The boundaries set in 1911 remained in place till Lagos State was created in 1967, comprising Ikeja, Badagry and Epe Divisions from the Western Region. The spatial expansion of Lagos can be better understood by adopting the contemporary five-division structure of Lagos State: Ikeja, Badagry, Ikorodu, Lagos, and Epe (known by the acronym IBILE, which in Yoruba language denotes indigeneity).<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> "Gowon's Broadcast to the People of Nigeria" *New Nigeria*, May 29, 1967, p. 6.

<sup>66</sup> Ayodeji Olukoju, 2018. "Which Lagos, Whose (Hi)story?" <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340512213> p. 143

## **Conclusion: Overcoming the Politics of Alienation**

The controversies and politicking on the status of Lagos has enriched and deepened understanding of Nigerian politics and nature of political ethnicity. It almost precipitated disintegration of Nigeria due to threats of secession. These are important for historians to examine because it was critical to the larger history of inter/intra-group relations in Nigeria. In 1923, the editor of the Nigerian Advocate lamented that the “fault in us in Nigeria is that we cannot exercise tolerance with one another, and we quarrel over things that do not count.”<sup>67</sup> This important factor continued to affect Nigerian politics till date. The clamour for political right was inevitable given the large concentration of highly educated professionals. Lagos has consistently committed to struggle for political freedom against domination of all kinds. This factor promoted political alignment between progressive politicians in Lagos and other parts of Western Nigeria. During the Second Republic, the emergence of Alhaji Lateef Jakande (Baba Kereke) as he was fondly called by his political associates and staunch supporters of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, there was increasing political collaboration. This trend continued from the mid-1980s, when Lagos provided the civil space for struggle against military dictatorship. The annulment of June 12, 1993 popularly won by Chief MKO Abiola marked a turning point. Lagos and other Yoruba politicians united to reclaim the mandate from the military. They formed NADECO, Afenifere and other socio-political platforms. In most of the southwest states, June 12 became a rallying point. From year 2000, June 12 was commemorated as “Abiola Day” and later “Democracy Day.” It is important to put on record that from 2019, June 12 was adopted by President Muhammadu Buhari as Democracy Day to replace May 29.

Between 1999 and 2007, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tibunu as Governor of Lagos State promoted closer economic and political relations with other Southwest states. Political party rivalries affected this development. Tinubu clashed with the Federal Government led by President Olusegun Obasanjo over separation powers and developmental projects. Additionally, Tinubu of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) resisted President Obasanjo’s attempt to capture the six states of Southwest geopolitical zone for the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in 2003.

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<sup>67</sup> J.S. Coleman, 1958. Nigeria Background to Nationalism. California: University of California Press, p. 182.

Indeed, many of the Tinubu's lieutenants in Lagos who gained elective positions or political appointments returned to their various states of origin in the southwest or elsewhere to continue their political career. Such lieutenants, as Yoruba, planted their feet in the two communities of origin and residence, thereby retaining a dual identity as "Lagosians" and non-Lagosians. This blurred the dichotomy between citizenship and indigeneity.

A section of Lagos political class opposed this growing trend. A group of distinguished Lagosians led by Chief Olabode George under the aegis of the Omo Eko Pataki Forum, has frowned at alleged marginalisation, abuse, disfigurement of Lagosians.<sup>68</sup> According to Chief Olabode George, "the essence of state creation, which was to rectify the ills of marginalisation and offer the natives a sense of belonging and ancestral attachment has not been reflected in Lagos State. While Lagosians were not averse to non-indigenes holding positions, the native Lagosians should have a natural pride of place in their state of origin. In 2014, Chief Olabode George had petitioned President Goodluck Jonathan on the inappropriateness of the appointment of Chief Olusegun Aganga, an indigene of Edo State raised in Lagos as Minister of Trade and Investment Minister, to represent Lagos State in the Federal Executive Council. According to Chief Olabode George, "Lagos welcomes all. Lagos exudes in the unique attribute of instinctive cultivation of strangers without the slightest prejudice. The Lagosian legendary accommodating openness is turning into a curse. Lagosians are now taken for granted, ill-used, trampled upon, shoved aside, increasingly alienated in determining their own collective destinies on their own soil...Lagosians are now reduced to almost second class citizens on their native soil. Their inalienable right of self-determination which is guaranteed by our constitution has been largely voided, dismantled...We as indigenous natives of Lagos State feel endangered."<sup>69</sup>

In economic terms, there is increasing partnership between Lagos and other states in the Southwest. Odu'a Investment Company Limited, the successor of Western Nigeria Development

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<sup>68</sup> Forum alleges marginalisation of Lagos indigenes. The Sun. 21 May, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/forum-alleges-marginalisation-of-lagos-indigenes/>

<sup>69</sup> <https://punchng.com/from-sanwo-olu-to-hos-none-is-a-lagosian-bode-george-others-allege/>

Corporation(1959 -1973), and Western States Industrial Investment and Credit Corporation (1973-1976) was incorporated in 1976. It took over business interests of the defunct Western State of Nigeria (now Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Ekiti States). At the end of a quarterly meeting of Odu'a Investment Company Limited in March, 2018 Lagos was officially admitted into the group with the acquisition of 115 million shares thereby growing the share equity of the company to ₦690 million. The meeting witnessed the signing of the document allowing Lagos to acquire land in the Southwest states for rice cultivation and production. There were plans to embark on a Rice Accelerated Programme for Integrated Development (Western RAPID) to consolidate actions on food security and job creation in the region. Even though, LAKE Rice (partnership between Lagos and Kebbi States) was in the market for a brief period, Western Rapid Rice is yet to be seen at all.

It remains to be seen how Yoruba states in the hinterland would reinvent their economic potentials to benefit from abundant opportunities that exist in the Lagos economy. Oyo State has not demonstrated keen interest in this direction. Many of the business initiatives crafted in Ibadan, ended up blossoming in Lagos.

Lagos State is spilling rapidly into Ogun State. As a result, Lagos-Ogun Joint Development Commission was formalised in May 2021 primarily to manage the overflow of development from Lagos State to Ogun State in the area of skills, infrastructure and agriculture. Earlier in 2005, the defunct Lagos-Ogun Mega City project conceived could not take off due to lack of political will in the two states.

Lagos has grown to become a Mega City with artificial boundaries bustling with inevitable growth and overflowing into former colony rural areas which were once included in the Western Region. Lagos is no longer isolated from the rural areas, with which she has been so closely associated and connected. The old local areas have intermingled with the emerging city into one and they have all lost their individual identity to form what has been described as the Greater

Lagos.<sup>70</sup> Greater Lagos in its phenomenal expansion extends to Ogun State, with Abeokuta as its northern boundary. Despite this expansion, Lagos continued to be indifferent to the security network (Amotekun) established by other Southwestern states to confront insecurity in the region.

Finally, Lagos is leading in the cultural renaissance of Yoruba language despite its cosmopolitan status as a Megacity. The Yoruba Language Preservation and Promotion Law represent a cognizant reflection of the position which Lagos State prides Yoruba language as the cultural vehicle for articulate communication.<sup>71</sup>

**Indeed, Yoruba unity is work in progress!!!**

**Thank you for your attention.**

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<sup>70</sup> Baker, P. H., 1974. *Urbanization and Political Change: The Politics of Lagos, 1917-1967*, London: University of California Press.

Emordi, E. C., 2005. Emergency of the 'Area Boys' Phenomenon in Lagos, Nigeria, *The Constitution, A Journal of Constitutional Development*, Lagos, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 61-88.

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<sup>71</sup> Fola Adeyemi, "Lagos and the preservation of Yoruba language"  
<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/02/lagos-preservation-yoruba-language/>  
February 25, 2018