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The Second Colonial Occupation: Development Planning, Agriculture, and the Legacies of British Rule in Nigeria,
by Bekeh Utietiang Ukelina

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The issue of development in Africa is an extremely lively discourse, not only among academics but also among development experts and politicians. Using extensive archival data both in Nigeria and the United Kingdom, Bekeh Ukelina puts development in historical perspective by arguing that the problems of development in contemporary Africa cannot be understood without understanding its antecedents in the late colonial period. The book focuses on colonial development planning in Nigeria, and discusses how ideological bias and structural imbalances within the colonial system explain the failure of development planning, and the subsequent trajectory of development processes in Nigeria. Tracing the late colonial development approach to Joseph Chamberlain's ideology of "constructive imperialism," Ukelina explores colonial development shifts from the 1890s to the 1940s and suggests that Chamberlain's idea of constructive imperialism called for increased investment in the colonies in the 1890s. This idea, according to Ukelina, was rejected by the imperial government and the first phase of the colonial occupation continued to be characterised by imperial exploitation of colonies without any substantial resource investment.

Unlike the first phase of colonialism, the second phase, which begins with the passage of the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act, ushered in a new kind of economic intervention in colonies by the metropolitan government in the 1940s and 1950s, which found its most definitive expression in the implementation of agricultural development schemes. Ukelina argues that this development agenda during the second colonial occupation was a rediscovery of Chamberlain's ideology which had been ignored in



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the earlier period. The imperial government then committed a substantial amount of public funds to the development of colonies and called for development planning. Unfortunately, the Second World War obstructed the full implementation of the 1940 Act. Once the war ended, the development plans of 1940 were implemented. The pre-war development approach was different from the post-war approach but “while the practice had changed, the goal remained the same” (p. 150). The aim of development projects in Africa after the War was to strengthen the economic position of Britain and guarantee her continuous occupation of these colonies. However, despite increased financing, renewed commitment to colonial development, and increased involvement of experts and state bureaucracy, the new development projects of the late colonial period failed woefully.

In the book, Ukelina addresses the question of why colonial development planning and projects in Africa failed during this period, and the legacies thereof. Using the Mokwa project in Nigeria as a case study, the book outlines the many problems that plagued large-scale agricultural projects initiated by the colonial government after the War. The book is excellent in demonstrating how racial prejudice, colonial objectives of quick returns, and eliminating Africans from decision-making and from project implementation all combined to bring about the failure of colonial projects in Nigeria. The analysis challenges the conventional view of colonialism as a monolithic entity. Far from being a coherent system with a single objective and interest, Ukelina reveals the “tensions of empire” by showing how different interests within the colonial state ignited bureaucratic struggles and conflicts, which led to the failure of development plans and schemes. The conflict was not only between metropolitan ministries and local administrators but also within the local colonial state in Nigeria itself, creating a serious disconnect between career civil servants, politicians, experts, and the colonial government. As Ukelina puts it, “[a]t a closer range one sees a disjointed colonial system that had different competing interests” (p. 140). These competing interests, particularly between colonial departmental experts and District Commissioners, resulted in an intense power struggle that was detrimental to development planning and project implementation in Nigeria. During the struggle, the political administrators managed to wrest control over development planning and implementation from experts. With the triumph of the political officials who were imbued with imperial ideologies and racial prejudice against Africans, the latter were completely eliminated from the development planning of their own societies. For Ukelina this was one of the key reasons for the abysmal failure of colonial development in Africa.

The ideological and structural problems implicit in the colonial development initiatives of the 1940s and 1950s were passed on to the post-colonial African governments after the formal transfer of colonial power. Despite the failure of grand agricultural schemes in the late colonial period, international organisations and African leaders continued to insist that agricultural development was the pathway to Africa’s development. This

section of the book builds on Joseph Hodge's important work on colonial development and the legacies of British colonialism by linking current development failures to colonial antecedents.¹ Ukelina identified three key colonial legacies that are responsible for development failures in postcolonial Africa: multiyear planning, agrarian bias and international experts. Ukelina detests the agrarian bias in African development initiatives inherited from the colonial regime and insists that alternative pathways should be found.

The book is slightly skewed towards imperial policy decision-making and focuses less on how those policies and programmes were actually received and understood by the local people. The book is solely based on archival sources and, as a result, although attempts have been made to emphasise the local African situation, the African voices are muted. Also, in analysing the colonial intervention in the large development schemes, another layer of analysis could have been added to unpack how the colonial state sought to strengthen and expand its power over the lives of African peoples by these development projects. Although the book demonstrates how colonial prejudice against western-educated Africans in development planning and implementation alienated them and fuelled nationalism, it does not pay attention to how the development schemes diminished or enhanced local traditional authority. Such a layer of analysis could have provided a strong link between the late colonial development projects and decolonisation or the second colonial occupation in Nigeria, as the book sought to demonstrate. Ukelina's generalised assumption that long-term development planning in Africa began after the passage of the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act requires qualification. The Gold Coast experience actually contradicts the Nigerian case. The period of Gordon Guggisberg (1919–1927) is regarded as the high point of colonial development planning in the Gold Coast.

Overall, the book is a useful addition to colonial historiography in Africa. It is well researched and provides a rich narrative with analytical depth. The colonial legacies Ukelina identifies as a challenge to development in contemporary Africa are difficult to contest. With the exception of a few avoidable repetitions in Chapter 3, the book is well written. It demonstrates the extent to which economic development in Africa was in general geared towards imperial economic needs, and how this has been germane to contemporary development problems of the continent.

1 J. M. Hodge, "Colonial Experts, Developmental and Environmental Doctrines, and the Legacies of Late British Colonialism," in *Cultivating the Colonies: Colonial States and Their Environmental Legacies*, ed. C. F. Ax et al. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), 300–325.

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