

## **Rural Settlement Patterns and Rural Development in the Yorubaland of Nigeria.**

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### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on three aspects of rural settlements: the concept of rurality, rural settlement characteristics and development implications. The conception of rurality by the Yoruba people is sociologically defined and thus inconsistent with demographic definition. A settlement of 40 houses may be called a town (*ilu*) and another of 80 houses a village (*abule*) depending on history and the people.

The analysis showed that: (a) the cumulative total of the number of settlements conforms to the S-shaped or sigmoid growth form of biological population; (b) rural settlements do not take the form of a wave diffusion in which areas occupied by earlier settlement lay adjacent to the 'mother' town, and (c) there is no appreciable relationship between topographical factors roads and settlements.

The factors of size and spatially dispersed distribution of settlements emphasize the attendant problems of rural development. It is therefore suggested that a reorganisation of settlements for increased threshold population under the Local Government framework is desirable.

### **Introduction**

The western part of Nigeria is the home of the Yoruba people. The region spans an area which stretches beyond the Niger-Benin international border to the west and extends to the trough of the Niger in the North, and to 'Edo-Land' in the East (Fig. 1). The people of this region are noted as the most urbanized ethnic nation in Nigeria and indeed in the whole of Tropical Africa. Because of the relatively high degree of urbanisation, most scholarly studies on settlements in the area have focussed attention on Yoruba towns. However, despite the relatively high degree of urbanisation, majority of the Yorubas still live in what they would describe as rural areas.

Ojo (1978) described the region succinctly as having considerable physical variety especially of landforms ranging from the coastal creeks and lagoons in the south through dissected margins to the plains and

ranges of the northern half. The fairly open grasslands of the northwest in Kisi and Igboho area contrast sharply with the thick forestlands of the south and south-east. Similarly, the region is characterized by a remarkable diversity of peoples which are however united in a common culture and tradition. As far back as the history of the country goes, it has been brought together under one broad cultural umbrella which imposes some common characteristics of:

the polytheistic religion, the artistic culture, the urbanized farmers and political institutions in which small chiefdoms and large kingdoms alike practise a kind of democratic monarchical democracy (S.O. Biobaku, quoted by Ojo, 1978).

In view of the importance of rural areas to most Yorubas and the neglect of this section of their landscape by scholars, this paper aims to examine the concept of rurality held by the Yorubas and discuss the settlement patterns with a view to highlighting their implications for rural development.

### **Evolution of the rural settlements**

Most rural settlements in the Yoruba country are the products of urban places. The pre-colonial settlements were large ones with very few outstations as operational centres. The period of colonial administration enhanced peace and security over the territory. This encouraged the search for fertile agricultural land which added tremendous impetus to the establishment of settlements near and far from the urban centres.

The establishment of new settlements was not the end of the relationship with the urban centres as people leaving the mother settlements retained their compounds and houses there. For example, Abeokuta or Ibadan is the home place of every indigene of Abeokuta or Ibadan area no matter his residence at a particular time in the area. The mother settlements contain about 50-70 percent of the population of their respective

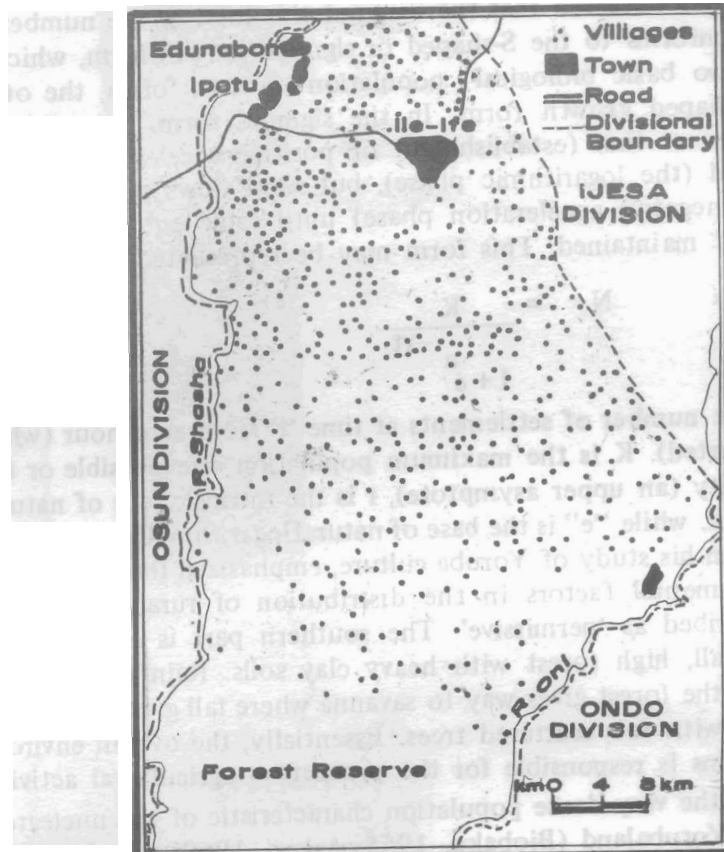
areas and the rest of them in over 3000 small settlements (Akinola, 1963; Mabogunje, 1959; Udo, 1968). About 80 per cent of the people in the scattered settlements engage in farming activities while the others engage in non-farm activities (including petty trading, smithing, tailoring, etc.) to support those primarily in agriculture. However, the proportion varies from place to place reflecting in the main, the size of the communities.

Adejuwon (1971) traced the origin of rural settlements to the first time when a farmer decides to open up a new area for cultivation. According to him, he sets up a shed-like hut in which he cooks, rests when the weather is bad, and sometimes spends the night when there is much pressure of work on the farm. Such temporary structures are still widely used in places where real farm settlement has not been established. There are five main characteristics of the evolution and pattern of settlement worth mentioning. Firstly, it can be easily realised that there is little relationship between the position of the mother settlements and the time of founding of each settlement. In Ife Division, it was found that colonization did not take the form of a wave diffusion in which areas occupied by the earlier settlements lay adjacent to the mother towns, and with time, their frontiers were pushed to greater and greater distances from the centre. Rather, the first settlements appeared widely scattered, and newer ones came later to fill the gaps between them.

Secondly, the environs of the 'home town' settlements are marked by their low density of farm settlements. This is easily explained as resulting from the concentration of farmers using such areas, in the towns. In other words, these areas are near enough to the mother settlements to make the construction of a second home unnecessary. Such areas can be operated by means of non-vehicular commuting from the city or town.

Thirdly, except in the case of roads, there does not appear to be any appreciable locational relationship between topographical elements and settlements. There are a few hilly areas which settlements tend to avoid, but such avoidance appears to be a matter of detail, bearing only a little relationship to the overall pattern. With regards to the relationship between roads and settlements' location, the latter seems to be the cause and the former, the effect. The roads were constructed in most cases by communal efforts to link existing farm settlements, one to the other, and most of them to the mother town or city. There are still many settlements which are not located on any road.

Fourthly, the settlements are not clustered significantly (Fig. 2). However, it is difficult to decide whether the tendency is towards anti-clusteredness or randomness. Therefore, a more rigorous method had to be adopted. Using a method suggested by Hopkins (1954) which employs the "nearest neighbour" concept, the co-efficient of aggregation (A) for the farm settlements was calculated to be 0.6237. The co-efficient is unity for random distribution, less than one for clumped contiguous or clustered distribution. A test for significance based on the parameter  $X = \frac{A}{1 + A}$  gave a probability of 0.02 for the chance that the calculated value



**Fig. 2 Ife Division farm settlements**

of X and therefore that of A is exceeded. Thus conclusively, the general pattern of settlement distribution tends to be anti-clustered. In calculating the value of A, the areas near the mother settlement and the forest reserve were not excluded. Such an exclusion would have further depressed the value of A.

Finally, it was observed that the cumulative total of the number of settlements conforms to the S-shaped or sigmoid growth form, which is one of the two basic biological population growth forms, the other being the J-shaped growth form. In the sigmoid form, "population" growth is slow at first (establishment or positive acceleration phase), becomes rapid (the logarithmic phase), but soon slows down percentage-wise (the negative acceleration phase) until same equilibrium level is reached and maintained. This form may be represented by a simple logistic model:

$$N = \frac{K}{1 + e^{-at}}$$

where N is the number of settlements at time 't' from zero hour (when the process started). K is the maximum population size possible or the carrying capacity (an upper asymptote), r is the intrinsic rate of natural increase, a = r/k, while "e" is the base of natural logarithm (Odum, 1959).

Ojo (1966) in his study of Yoruba culture, emphasized the importance of the environmental factors in the distribution of rural settlements which he described as 'permissive'. The southern part is characterised by heavy rainfall, high forest with heavy clay soils. Rainfall decreases northward and the forest gives way to savanna where tall grass vegetation predominates with few scattered trees. Essentially, the overall environmental conditions is responsible for the prosperous agricultural activity which supports the very dense population characteristic of the nucleated settlements of Yorubaland (Biobaku, 1955; Askari, 1969; Atanda, 1973 and Akorede, 1978). However, the northern area with its open forest and savanna vegetation which allow for easy cultivation and farming, permitted the growth of larger number for settlements than the south.

The landscape of the region presents an interesting scenery which the people used to advantage at the pre-colonial period when insecurity and civil disturbances were rampant. The rugged topography was particularly notable for its defence character leading to the evolution of the hill settlements. Notable among such settlements were Igboho, Ikare-Akoko, Idanre, Ijare, Efon Alaaye, Oka, Okemesi, Oke-Iho and Igbajo. Some of these settlements have moved to the plains adjacent to the hills while some still retain their sites. No doubt those settlements which have

moved to the plains would be more amenable to development process than those still inhabiting the hill tops. The important factor is the need for the people to move to lands suitable for agriculture.

*Rural-urban differentiation by the Yorubas*

The word 'rural' could assume economic, demographic, sociological, ethnic, racial and other dimensions. In conformity with International statistical definition of rural settlements, the censuses of Nigeria have adopted different figures at different times. The 1952 census regarded settlement with population less than 5,000 people as rural. On that basis, only 136 settlements were distinguished as urban centres in the then Western Nigeria (now Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Bendel and Lagos States). The 1963 census adopted 20,000 population figure as the break-off point for rural settlements. On the basis of this, about 80 per cent of the population would be found living in scattered settlements less than 20,000 (almost the same percentage as for 1952 census result).

By the western definition of urban centre as a compact settlement engaged primarily in non-agricultural occupations and characterized by specialized economic activities, division of labour and factory-centred production, there exist very few settlements that conform to these criteria. In spite of these, the views and conception of what is rural or urban among the Yorubas is not a matter of figures but of culture and sociological perception of rurality. The term rural is thought of as dirty and derogative to the personality of the people inhabiting the rural area and every effort would be made to resist such reference. However, there are different terms used to reflect the evolution and size of settlements among the Yorubas.

Very broadly, the Yoruba people usually divide the space known to them into two-*igbo* and *ilu*. *Igbo* is the unutilized and or unexplored territory where there is no human settlement. The main inhabitants of *Igbo* are spirits and animals. The only visitors to *Igbo* are the brave hunters who form the vanguard of explorers of such areas. However, people who do not want the company of their fellowmen are advised to go and live in *Igbo*. In political terms, *igbo* is a territory over which there is no authority, hence there is no law applicable in *igbo*.

*Ilu* is generally used as the opposite of *igbo* by the Yorubas. In this sense, *ilu* denotes the occupied space which is politically organized. *Ilu* is therefore a community with a recognised system of authority, laws and customs. The political head of the *ilu* is the crowned Oba or King. However, the territory of an *ilu* or a community is divided into two main sections: *ile* and *oko*. *Ile* is the home or settlement whereas *oko* is the

farm. All important matters and ceremonies take place in *ile*. Most valuable properties and possessions are stored in *ile*. On the other hand, *oko* is the farmland or working place where no important ceremonies are held. Most people do not store any important property in the *oko*. Important people are not buried at the *oko*, if they die there, the corpses are transported to the *ile*. The *oko* is strictly a working place where one earns the resources for use at home; hence the saying, '*sokoto ti nsise aran, oko ni igbe*' (the pant used for the labour that will yield a velvet dress is always left behind on the farm; i.e. it is not worthy of being taken to the town).

Although the *oko* is a working place, there are settlements where people stay while there. These are described in various ways, the most notable being *ahere*, *oba* or *egure*, *ago* and *abule*. *Ahere* is a resting shed where one eats or rests during the day. It is not meant as a sleeping place. Cutlasses and other working tools may be stored there; otherwise not much is to be found there.

*Aba* is a place where one may stay overnight whilst on the farm. The more valuable working tools are stored there. Also, harvested crops may be stored there. The need for personal safety and security of goods usually make people farming within the same neighbourhood to stay together in one *aba* where each would have his own building. Even then, everyone ensures that the *aba* where he stays and spends the night is not far from his own farm or cultivated plots. For this reason, *abas* are located at almost frequent intervals, the intervening distance being less than about four kilometres. In Ijebu, Ikale and Ekiti areas, this type of settlement is often called *egure*.

*Ago* is now generally used as a synonym for *aba* or *egure*. However, it appears that in the past, *ago* was used to describe settlement of greater importance. Even today, it is more frequently used to describe places with non-personal names. Thus Ago Onipanu, Ago Abo etc. are more common whereas *aba* or *egure* tends to go with personal names such as Aba Titus, or Egure Ayadi. In its original form, *ago* possibly indicates a farm settlement with some formal organization in the sense of a chief or baale appointed by the king of the community or *ilu* which controls the land on which the *ago* is located. This original meaning is now lost because there is no major difference between an *aba* or *egure* and an *ago*. A large *aba* may now have its own chief while a small *ago* may not have one.

*Abule* is quite distinct from both *aba* and *ago*. It is a small settlement whose origin is much older than either of the two. It is not a farm settlement but it is regarded as home by some people who may be living in *abas* or *agos*. Important ceremonies are held there, and it serves as the only home for some people. It has a head chief and a set of minor chiefs

appointed by the head chief. In historical context, the majority of *abules* had been established before the colonization of the rural areas in the 20th century. Most of them owed political allegiance to the major kingdoms. Even where the head chief possessed a beaded crown, he might still owe allegiance to some others. This was particularly the case in the Osun and Ijesa areas.

Every *abule* had its own market, hence the head chiefs are called *oloja* in Ijesa area. Each also has important traditional festivals. One of the major differences between an *abule* and an *ilu* is the periodicity of the *abule* market as against the daily holding of the town market. This can hardly be generalised. Today any small settlement of some importance is called an *abule*. People do not regard it as undignifying to describe their settlements as *abule* whereas they would object to any other term except *ilu*.

Another word used is *ileto*. It is possible that *ileto* is a regional variation of *abule*. One important thing is that *ileto* carries a connotation of political dependence. In this context, it is synonymous with *ereko* used in some areas to describe settlements and regions dependent on a main one. It is also possible that *ileto* like *ereko* is used for describing a group of settlements. Whatever the case, one does not often hear people refer to their own settlements as *ileto* or *ereko* even though other people may describe those settlements by the term.

*Ilu* is the term used to describe the town. Originally it was used to describe politically independent settlements and others having regular daily markets. It would have a number of dependent settlements which may be *abule* or *aba*. Markets are held daily there, and it would have fairly sophisticated political organization in the form of division into wards headed by their own chiefs who in turn are responsible to the king. Internally therefore, the *ilu* was, and still is a system of government and a service centre. Mabogunje (1961) rightly defined Yoruba towns as settlements having three characteristics:

- (i) a sizeable proportion of the population earning livelihood from non-agricultural employment notably administration, trading and craft;
- (ii) greater intensity of trading activities shown by the presence of a periodic market and also daily morning and night markets, and
- (iii) an elaborate system of administration based on kings ruling through a hierarchy of chiefs.



### *Characteristics of Rural Settlements*

The characteristics of the rural settlements will be discussed under the following sub-headings:

- (i) size and distribution
- (ii) political organisation
- (iii) services and facilities
- (iv) the rural population

(i) **Size and Distribution:** Rural settlements in the Yoruba country are usually nucleated in that they comprise a number of buildings clustered together at one place, each building being used by a family.

In the case of *aba* and *ago*, the buildings range from a minimum of two to about fifty. In a study of this type of settlements in the Origbo area of Oranmiyan Local Government area in 1970, the distribution of buildings in 76 settlements enumerated was as in Table 1

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF BUILDINGS IN 76 ABAS  
IN ORIGBO AREA OF ORANMIYAN LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT IN 1970.

<i>No. of Buildings</i>	<i>No. of Abas</i>
1-10	37
11-20	22
21-30	8
31-40	6
41-50	3

Source: Adejuyigbe and Arowolo, 1970.

Building in rural areas tend to have an average of about four rooms arranged in such a way that there are two on either side of a large space commonly used as sitting room by both men and women. However, in the case of the larger settlements, the open space is used by only the women whilst the landlord adopts one of the rooms as a bed-sitting. In *abules*, the buildings have changed over time from the originally thatched roofed mud walls to more stable brick or cement block walls and corrugated iron roofs. Here, the sitting rooms are distinct from the other rooms.

The buildings in rural settlements are generally arranged on either side of the road to it, but where the buildings are few they may be on only one side of the road. Where the number of buildings is greater than about ten, they may be arranged in two or more rows of which only one faces

the approach road or footpath. In the case of large rural settlements (*abules*), the order of buildings is not easy to identify because they are built rather haphazardly to ensure that none is too far away from the others. One of the main distinguishing characteristics of rural settlements from towns is the lack of order in the arrangement of buildings. This lack of order makes it difficult to have vehicular access to many buildings. This same feature is of course found in the central part of the towns but in many cases attempts have been made to construct roads through such places. In the rural areas where access roads to settlements exist at all, they are few and are usually not properly maintained.

The distance between rural settlements in Yorubaland ranges from less than one kilometre in the densely populated parts to about ten kilometres in sparsely inhabited regions. In the cocoa-growing areas of Ibadan, Osun, Ife, Ijesa, Ondo, Akure and Owo, the distance between rural settlements ranges from less than one to about three kilometres. In the open forest areas of the northern Yoruba country in Akoko Kabba, Ekiti, Yagba, Oyo and Ibarapa, the settlements are old and may be as much as ten kilometres apart without any *aba* in the intervening areas.

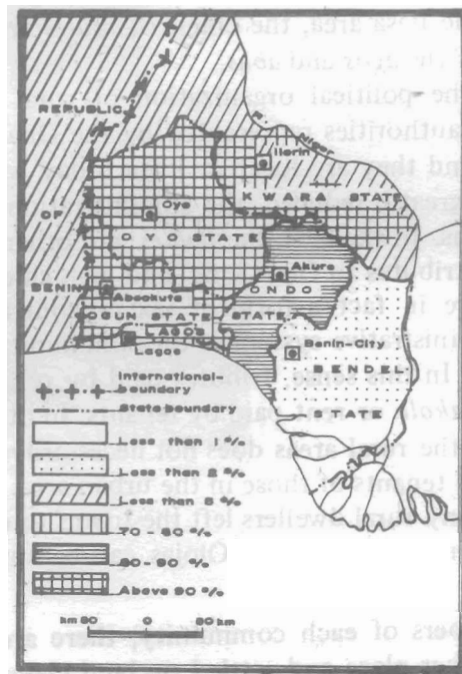


Fig. 1 – Yoruba Population West of the Niger (1963 Census)

(ii) **Political Organisation:** In the smallest settlements there is no chief, although the people acknowledge somebody as leader and call him *baale* (landlord). The *baale* has to be consulted before information about the settlement or any aspect of the life in the settlement is supplied to outsiders. He has jurisdiction within only one settlement.

The larger settlements have recognised chiefs appointed by the Oba of the community which owns the land on which the settlement is located. Every community guards jealously its rights to appoint such chiefs in its territory. For this reason, there may be two chiefs in settlements lying in disputed areas because each of the communities would appoint a chief in order to assert its claims to the territory. The chief appointed for the larger rural settlement is strictly to maintain order in only one settlement but in a few cases, the oba may mandate him to exercise overall supervision over settlements in a wide area. For example, the chiefs of Aponmo and Igbatoro in Akure District have authority over more than one settlement. Chiefs appointed for the large *abas* and *agos* are generally called *Baale* of the particular settlement, or area. They have no traditional title or name. In the case of the *abules* the chiefs may have general titles like *Olu* or *Baale*, or in some cases, specific titles like *Alajawa*, *Alara* etc. In the Ijesa area, the chiefs of *abules* are called *Olojas* as distinct from *baales* of the *agos* and *abas*.

A main feature of the political organization of rural areas is their dependence on outside authorities represented by the Oba (King) of the community on whose land they are located. Even today when the power of the obas have been greatly reduced, the administration of rural areas is still based in the towns. In the past, the *Baales* and other leaders of the rural areas used to pay tributes to Oba (King) and high chiefs of the main town. The tributes were in fact a form of tax or contribution to the maintenance of the administrative system of the community of which the rural areas were a part. In this sense, tributes paid by rural areas should be distinguished from *isakole* or rent paid by tenants. In other words, the political dependence of the rural areas does not necessarily mean that the people resident there are tenants of those in the urban area. In many cases they are not. Indeed many rural dwellers left the towns to establish farms in the rural areas and among the Ijesas, *Olojas* can be appointed as the *Owa* of Ilesa.

Apart from the members of each community, there are also tenants who migrated from another place and settled on land claimed by a community after seeking necessary permission. Such migrants usually establish separate settlements and have their own set of customs different from

those of the community. Modakeke was founded near Ile-Ife by refugees from the northern Yoruba country during the 19th century. Although they are largely absorbed into the Ife community, they are still regarded as tenants in the rural areas. Another example is Igbara-Oke near Akure. It was founded by migrants from Igbara-Odo, ten kilometres from it on the land claimed by the Akure community. One recent development is that such old tenant settlements tend to claim that they are independent of their host communities. Such claims are of interest for both the political administration and the socio-economic development of the rural areas. For example, such claims may lead the tenant communities to object to being grouped in the same Local Government Unit as the host community. This is the case with Igbara-Oke. Also such claims may create problems in the acquisition of land for agricultural development as there may be dispute as to the authority to grant the land.

The second type of tenants in rural areas arrived there during the present century. They are farmers from different communities although it is not uncommon for those from a particular community to be found and be the dominant element in one or more settlements. Even where there is concentration, this group of tenants do not claim the land. They accept their tenant status and the political authority of the community which owns the land. These tenants usually go back to their own communities for important matters and festivals. To them, home or *ile* is not the main town of the landowners but another place which may be an *abule* or an *ilu* at some distance from them. Such tenants may grow crops like yam and maize, and they may engage in producing palm wine or exploiting timber. Most of the tenants growing yams in the rural areas of Yorubaland are Igbiras; whilst those engaged in palm oil production are mainly Urhobos (local called Usobo or Isobo). In the eastern parts of Yorubaland, tenants producing palm wine are Ibos. Cocoa-growing tenants are predominantly Yorubas. The main source of such people is the open forest and densely peopled areas of northern Yorubaland whilst the destinations where they farm are in the cocoa regions of Ife, Ondo, Akure and Owo areas.

(iii) **Services and Facilities:** One of the main effects of the population sizes and distribution of rural settlement is that many areas are not large enough to have their own separate services. Consequently, facilities have to be provided for a number of settlements. Thus markets, schools, religious centres, medical centres and police posts or courts in rural areas are expected to serve a number of settlements. In each case, the facility is located at a place easily accessible to the group of settlements. In the majority of cases, the most accessible place is near one of the settlements,

usually the oldest and largest amongst them. However, in some others, none of the settlements is acceptable and the facility may be located on neutral ground away from any of the settlements it serves but it is more usual for market places to be located just at the edge of one of the settlements. Markets in the larger settlements tend to be in central positions and in front of the headchief's official residence. Except in the larger settlements, rural markets have no important structures; they consist of open spaces where the sheds are supported by poles. In the larger settlements, the local Government Councils may erect walled sheds comparable in quality to some of those found in the towns.

One of the main features of rural settlements is the absence of identifiable motor park apart from the place where lorries stop on market days. Many of the larger settlements may designate a place as motor park and fence it round but the people may not use it intensively. The possible reason for this is that motor traffic is restricted to the market days.

Many services are not available in rural areas. Thus there are no petrol distribution stations in the majority of rural settlements. Vehicle repair services are also non-existent. Thus, if a motorist has a flat tyre in a rural area, he may have to travel many kilometres and pass many rural settlements before finding someone to repair it. Services for motor bicycles are even scarce. As already stated, many of those who provide these services are also engaged in other primary occupations. The rural settlements are invariably linked by footpaths, which may be widened to take lorries. Maintenance of these footpaths is done by communal labour once a year, hence they are usually overgrown with weeds and may be impassable to any form of vehicular transport whether they be lorries or bicycles. The result is that in most rural areas, the only means of movement is by foot. Ogundana (1972) in a study of transport factor in rural development at Ile-Ife and Ado-Ekiti areas, concluded that the poor internal transport system adversely affects the movement of rural products, causes marketing inefficiencies and reduces rural income.

(iv) The rural population: As already stated, rural dwellers depend directly or indirectly on the exploitation of land and such other primary occupations as lumbering, harvesting forest products and hunting. In the smaller rural settlements, every adult (male and female) is engaged in these primary occupations but in the larger *abas* and the *abules* there may be people engaged in providing services. These include teachers, nurses and petty traders. A survey of occupational activities at Ipetu-Ijesa (Osunade, 1978) showed that 93% of the people are engaged directly or indirectly in agriculture as primary occupation whilst only 4%

are engaged in providing services.

Another feature of the rural areas is the movement of population. There are mainly two types: the daily movement and the periodic movement. The daily movement involves journeys to the farms or the nearby markets. The farm workers move to the farms from about 6.30 a.m. and work there until about mid-day when they may return to the settlement for lunch and break. The traders (usually women) go to the markets almost at the same time in the morning and come back later in the afternoon. While farm workers may go back to the settlement during their break, marketing is only at a single stretch.

Periodic movement involves occasional visits to the town or main settlements of the communities to which the rural dwellers belong. In some areas, a general movement of the rural population to the main town occurs weekly, fortnightly or monthly. In Efon Alaaye area, the movement takes place every week whilst in Idanre area, it occurs fortnightly. In both Ibadan and Ife areas it occurs monthly (Ojo, 1970). In some other cases, periodic movement of the rural population to the main towns is associated with the main religious festivals such as Egungun, Ogun, Sango, Id-El-Fitri or Id-El-Kabir, Christmas and the New Year. Where the movement is on a monthly or fortnightly basis, the stay in the town is only for a few days. In Idanre area, the return to the rural areas takes place on the Monday and Tuesday following the weekend when the movement to the town occurs. However, where the movement is associated with a main festival or off season period, the stay in the town may be fairly long. This is because such visits are also usually regarded as annual holidays. Hence, the rural settlements are no more than temporary places of residence set up to facilitate farm operations (Adejuwon, 1971). The result is the rural-urban communiting at regular or irregular basis. Thus, there arises the problems of dual settlement, periodic migration and non-commitment to the physical development of the farm settlements, which have obvious implications for rural developments.

#### *Implication for rural development*

The development of rural economy is tantamount to the development of agriculture. This fact has long been recognized and strategies were planned to effect rural development through the transformation of agriculture. At the government level, strategies adopted included the establishments of farm settlements, facilities for research, extension programmes and demonstration farms, distribution of subsidies in form of finance, technical advice, agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers etc. to individuals, communities and co-operatives who satisfy the stipulated

conditions. The government has also helped to provide basic infrastructure, tools and agro-industrial bases aimed at stimulating the development of rural economy. Efforts are being intensified at both the community and individual levels to complement the provisions by the governments. A few innovators and leaders have emerged concerned mainly with the process of rural transformation. They have helped to initiate development projects in many sectors of the economy. However, all the efforts have not been coordinated and thus, there is an uneven development in the rural areas of Yorubaland. Many aspects of the rural landscapes have changed within the last 20–25 years.

The aspects that are significantly affected are the agricultural sector, the infrastructure (transport, markets, and marketing organisations or co-operatives), and provision of social services. The development of housing and sanitation seem however to have been largely neglected. Rural development planning should build these into the development packages for an overall development of the rural areas. The present sizes and distribution pattern of settlements also call for a planned reorganisation to avoid snail-speed development. Apart from the size and distribution pattern, the settlements are so numerous that any attempt to supply all the settlements the basic needs will not generate the desired development results. In fact, the population base cannot justify such a proposition. From the above recognition, there is the need for development efforts aimed at increasing the size of settlements or their reorganisation to achieve spatially efficient locations of basic amenities and sources of information, innovation, incentive, influence and agents of change. Conscious programme is required to effect an increase in settlement size. This will require rural education to animate the ruralities on the need for voluntarily accepting to move to central locations. In some cases, it may require force tempered with persuasion to get the people moved. Alongside the re-organisation of settlements into central locations, the programming of other development elements should be done to avoid making the resettlement scheme a white elephant.

A less costly approach to achieve optimum development of the rural areas is the location of amenities at central location for a group of settlements to enjoy. The recognition of local government council as the third tier of government in Nigeria is a step in this direction. However, the council areas are still very large and were created mainly on historical association and political considerations rather than neighbourhood affinity community of interests and development considerations. The boundaries of existing or future council areas should satisfy development expediency in order to be truly committed to rural transformation.

In summarising the facts of the spatial pattern of rural development in Yorubaland of Nigeria, Ajaegbu (1976) identified four broad categories. The four categories reflect the marked spatial imbalances between the rural areas and the urban centres as well as between one rural area and another. The general picture of the rural development landscape is largely that of little enclave or spots of development within a few favoured locations juxtaposed and markedly contrasting with vast poor and undeveloped areas. The spatial pattern has been very much determined by the sites of markets and the attempts to encourage commercialisation. Spatial variations are thus caused by distance, accessibility and impact of the markets especially the urban ones which are the origins of innovation, particularly socio-economic change from a traditional subsistence to a modernised commercial economy. The four categories are:

- (a) active areas with a flourishing economy and relatively high development situated at the doorsteps of the major urban centres. These areas are the most accessible to the growth generating urban centres (e.g. Ojoo near Ibadan, Agege and Otta near Lagos).
- (b) active areas with a flourishing economy and relatively high development corresponding to the core areas of the major non-staple crops such as cocoa or tobacco. They are generally strung along the major roads. They have active rural central places and innovation centres very close to them (e.g. Ifetedo near Ile-Ife);
- (c) passive areas of a poor or low rural economy and development far away from the last two areas and from the major roads. They are long distances from markets or innovation centres and so their inaccessibility precludes most innovations and other development elements getting to them (e.g. Tonkere in Irewole Local Council of Oyo State).
- (d) transitional areas of low to medium rural economic development located between the active and passive areas. They constitute the critical limits of spatial diffusion of innovation (e.g. Fiditi between Oyo and Ibadan).

The creation of local government areas in 1976 has served as impetus to the growth of more centres in the fourth category. By virtue of their population and administrative heads conferred on them, they have been able to attract some factors of transformation. Examples are Ikire and Ijebu-jesa which are changing fast by the provision of basic needs and infrastructures for further development. However, the third group of settlements which constitute the bulk of the settlements are not easily amenable to development. Their small sizes pose constraints to provision



of such amenities as electricity and water which may be expensive to supply to the individual settlements. More importantly, these settlements are so spatially dispersed that many of them may be difficult to combine to enjoy a common service. The same problem goes for road links. Hence, a greater percentage of the settlements still depend on footpaths or roads poorly maintained by the communities. The attendant problem is the difficulty of transporting their produce at the peak of harvest which incidentally may coincide with the peak period of the rains. At the moment, the consideration is the linking of towns with good roads without much consideration for the rural settlements. The third group of settlements mentioned above would remain poor and undeveloped, until the rural landscape is integrated into the overall planning process. A settlement re-organisation which requires a strong heart to implement by the government could be a faster approach at making more settlements viable for development purposes.

## **Conclusion**

Man is the primary biological element operating in any settlement environment as described for the Yoruba country previously. The interactions between the Yorubas and the landscape available to them have led to the evolution of a hierarchy of settlements varying in sizes, population and amenities. These settlements have attracted names which are highly sociological.

Agriculture is the dominant occupation of the rural Yorubas and through time they have evolved an efficiently located settlement pattern for the satisfaction of their needs. It is therefore justifiable to associate the logarithmic growth in the number of settlements with increase in population. However, it can be easily shown that between increase in human population and the emergence of the rural settlements, there is a major factor represented by the change from the purely subsistence economy to a commercial, export crop production oriented economy. Pertinent to this conclusion is the fact that innovation spread and rural development are brought largely by enterprising farmers, who within the limits imposed by their resources and knowledge, have been willing to grow new crops, invest in new inputs, and work harder to secure future benefits. The local authority through the village and district chiefs and leaders, has also been an important agent of development. It has not only created the major infrastructural needs of the rural areas, such as roads and village markets, for the farmers and traders, it has brought in its train, the provision of basic needs.

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