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The Monopolization of Resources and Export of Raw Minerals by British Firms in the Oguta Area

By Chuka Odike

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FEATURE
IMAGE

A British colonial mineral survey party in the Oguta area. Mineral surveys of the Southern and Northern Nigeria Protectorates were commissioned in 1903 and 1904 by the British Secretary of State for the colonies.

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Through the lens of the current colonial economy of colonial Nigeria, Oguta was economically exploited by the British. After the 1880s, Britain sought to expand its mineral survey, particularly in Southern and Northern Nigeria. These surveys conducted in 1903/1904 as requested by the then British Secretary of State for the Colonies facilitated the systematic exploitation of the natural endowment in this country.

Specifically, their main objective was to seek and evaluate other mineral assets like tin, coal, and oil to control these assets and take them back to Britain to fuel the industrial revolution.

One such place is Oguta which is found in today's Imo State, but what makes Oguta stand out is that it has large deposits of petroleum and other minerals.

The surveys conducted in this part of the world enabled Britain to seize control over the raw materials therefore detaching the indigenous population who had for a long time managed the land. This exploitation strategy deprived local populations of both ownership and the economic benefits derived from their resources.

This way of governing during colonial times focused on taking resources from Nigeria and followed a larger strategy across the country that valued resource extraction more than fair development for the people.



While the British firms reaped huge benefits, most of the local economies remained in a state of stagnation due to the lack of all support structures that are required to support faster and more sustainable economic development. The repercussions of these colonial policies as far as the economy is concerned are that up to now, many of the communities remain underdeveloped.

In addition, the impacts of this resource extraction during colonialism have left severe marks on areas such as Oguta. The effects like deforestation, continuing soil degradation, and pollution resulting from many decades of mismanaged extraction practices are severe.

The landscape, once flourishing with natural resources, now bears witness to a legacy of exploitation that continues to affect the livelihoods and health of residents.

While evaluating the history of British colonization in Oguta it is important to understand the complex interplay between resource exploitation and local communities. The colonial legacy has fostered a sense of economic marginalization that continues today, as communities continue to wrestle with the consequences of past injustices.

While Nigeria now faces these historical challenges, the experience of Oguta discourages colonial resource removal and reveals the effects it has on the economy and the environment.

The history of Oguta reveals the urgent need for a better distribution of resources with Indigenous people as people capable of designing their economic fates. From this viewpoint, it is necessary to continue the process of fighting against historical injustices so as to build up the foundation for sustainable development in Nigeria.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chuka Odiike

I'm a dedicated civil engineer with a passion for infrastructure development and community empowerment. With a strong background in engineering, my work focuses on creating sustainable solutions for urban and rural development projects. Outside of my professional career, I'm deeply interested in Igbo history and culture. I actively explores ways to impact society by using historical lessons to inspire and educate others about the rich cultural heritage of the Igbo people, aiming to bridge tradition and modern development.



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