

ANNUAL REPORT ON KABBA PROVINCE FOR THE YEAR 1950. 10

BY I. G. GUNN ESQ., SENIOR DISTRICT OFFICER.
(ACTING RESIDENT 10/6/50 - 27/12/50).

PART I - PROVINCIAL SUMMARY.

As elsewhere in the Northern Region rainfall in the Kabba Province was much below average in 1950. In Idah the gauges showed a decrease of 12 inches on 1949 and at Ankpa and Dekina a drop of 10 inches. At Lokoja the figures indicated also that the average rainfall for 1950 was much below that of 1949 the respective figures being 40 inches and 52 inches. In August, normally a month of heavy rains, only one inch recorded as against 7 inches in 1949. On the other hand the September and October rainfall was much the same as in normal years and nearly an inch was recorded in November whereas in the previous year that month was wholly dry. Thus the prolongation of the rainy season made up to a certain extent for the scanty rainfall earlier in the year and averted what might well have been a catastrophic year for the farmers.

As it was the yam crop was below average almost everywhere and the rice crop was adversely affected by the inadequate Niger and Benue inundations. In this connection the figures supplied by the Marine Department are illuminating. In May the Niger level stood at 2' 1" and rose to 28' 6" in October. The comparative 1949 figures were 3' 4" and 32' 6". The difference of 4 feet between high water levels can make or mar many rice farms and indeed in Kupa and Eggan Districts it has been estimated that the 1950 yield will amount to but a tenth of the normal crop.

2. Despite the patchy and inadequate rainfall the picture as viewed from the purely Provincial view point was by no means an altogether sombre one and was relieved by vivid patches of light. Practically all the Native Authority areas reaped adequate food supplies for themselves and yet still had surpluses to export (other than rice) though naturally not in such quantities as in a good year. Igala Division for example which normally exports quantities of yams, palm oil etc. to the eastern provinces was still in a position to do so and indeed with produce prices at their present high level the danger was and is that the farmer will sell more than he can spare either from his own point of view

Much the same position obtains in Igbirra where quantities of produce are exported to the Western Provinces. This export trade which includes livestock is on the increase and the Local Authorities are much concerned as to how to ensure that the farmers do not fall too easily for the lure of high spot cash prices. Much good advice has been rendered to the farmers but only time will tell whether this wise and timely propaganda has fallen on stony or fertile soil.

One of the most striking agricultural phenomena of recent years has been the emergence of Igala as a really important palm oil producing area. The figures as supplied by the firms tell the tale. In the first 11 months of 1949 1786 tons were bought and in 1950 the comparative figures rose to 7007 tons; nor does this take into account the very appreciable quantities purchased for the most part by Ibo middlemen and evacuated by road to the Eastern Provinces.

In Kabba Division cocoa remains an important export crop though statistics reveal a drop in the year's outcrop due again to the inadequate early rains. The Kabba castor seed crop is by no means negligible and is on the increase; so far it is mainly confined to the Kabba area. Mention must be made also of the benniseed export crop emanating for the most part from the Igbirra farm lands. The cultivation of this valuable and high grade oil seed is on the increase and provided its production does not have an adverse effect on the food producing crops it is to be welcomed.

3. It will readily be appreciated that this outflow of agricultural wealth from the Province acts as a monetary boomerang/ in the influx of much hard cash the bulk of which flows into the hands of the producers.

/resulting

It can therefore be said with truth that never has the peasant farmer in Kabba been so prosperous as now. Taxes which have been increased slightly, are paid promptly; revenue is buoyant and reserves are being built up which though not large as reserves go are fairly substantial in the case of the bigger Treasuries. The smaller Native Authorities though their farmers are prosperous are not so well off particularly the Kabba and Yagba Native Treasuries and their five year plans have suffered accordingly.

There has been /

There has been talk of possible trade recessions but so long as vegetable oil products are in demand, and world conditions at present would seem to preclude any lessening of that demand, then so long will the farmer be certain of finding a market for his products either within or without Nigeria.

Our task in Kabba is to maintain and stimulate production and with this end in view one project which is now on the verge of being realised viz. the building of three Pioneer Palm Oil Mills in Igala Division must be regarded as outstanding. Complementary to this is the intention to establish palm oil nurseries and plantations in the vicinity of the Mills. These will be owned and run by the Native Administration and will serve to maintain the output of palm kernels necessary to sustain the Mills.

4. In the purely industrial sphere the opening of the Orukram-Ankpa-Dekina coal seam back to the Niger, a task on which the Geological Department is now engaged might well put the Province in the forefront of Nigeria's industrial map.

A navigable waterway which would enable coal to be shipped quickly to Baro, passes the front door of the future coal field and with proved deposits of high grade limestone in the neighbourhood and virtually inexhaustible supplies of ironstone at Lokoja the future would seem bright. It is true that the economists argue that the Lokoja ironstone would be too expensive to work from the export view point but their arguments cannot be held valid if production of iron was to be utilised only to satisfy internal demands.

5. The Provincial Administration Staff position showed further improvement in 1950. There were periods it is true when Divisions had perforce to be run by junior officers but at least two experienced District Officers were posted to the Province during the year and this fact coupled with an increased number of touring officers meant in effect that Divisions were fully manned for at least the last six months of the year. Even with increased Staff however the Acting Resident had to act as District Officer Igbirra Division for some weeks while a Cadet attended to the normal routine business of the Division.

The Clerical Staff included a high percentage of recently appointed officers but in numbers if not in seniority and experience was just up to strength at the end of the year.

6. Igala Division had a good year despite an unsatisfactory rainfall. Economically it is racing ahead a process which will be accelerated by the erection of the three pioneer Oil Mills to which I have already alluded. Markets have remained steady, the Native Administration's work has been good, adequate administrative staff has been available and last but by no means least there has been evident a sense of social responsibility and a spirit of "self-help" and will to progress all of which augur well for the future of the Igala people.

Concrete evidence of this "self-help" attitude is supplied by the fact that in the past few years, including the year under review, 20 Elementary Schools and 300 miles of roads have been constructed by unpaid voluntary labour and entirely on the unprompted initiative of the villagers themselves.

7. The volume of work in the Courts has been as large as in the past and the Appeal Court and District Courts have functioned well and administered justice fairly. Litigants (and the Igala like the Igbirra is a litigious minded individual) are well aware of their rights of appeal and review and have not been backward in using them when they considered they had been harshly treated.

8. Although tax was increased by 6d in 1950 the tax-payers both men and women had no difficulty whatsoever in paying their extra dues. An attempt, and it was long overdue, to assess more closely the incomes of the richer traders and craftsmen met with some success and was done through the medium of an assessment committee. Many appeals were lodged as in the past the more well-to-do citizens had paid the ordinary flat rate which was obviously unfair. This process will continue and will in due course result in increased tax revenue.

The general financial position of the Igala Treasury is satisfactory as is that of the Bassa-Komo which serves the five Bassa Clans.

9. In Bassa-Komo the Central Administration is still in the embryo stage of development but as there has been adequate administrative staff the touring officer Dekina has been able to devote a large amount of time to the area with beneficial results. Political consciousness is becoming apparent and a desire for unity has recently been

evincing by the quest/

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evinced by the request that the five clans, now independent Native Authorities, should unite to form a single Native Authority under the Headship of Soko the Clan Head of Akuba. This movement is being fostered and stimulated by the Administration and investigations are proceeding which should bear fruit shortly.

In the meantime the Clan and Village Administrations have worked smoothly and a welcome desire for education has recently been evident. The Bassas are a decent, hard-working, bear loving people with potentialities for advancement in both the cultural and economic spheres and this relatively recent demand for education though not yet widespread is indicative of the will to progress.

10. Nothing spectacular has occurred in Igbirra during 1950 and in contrast with the outside world has enjoyed a year of peace with some progress.

Much hard thought has been given to two problems which affect in a high degree the welfare of the Igbirra people namely matrimonial customs and the constitution of the Courts. The Igbirra is by no means a paragon of virtue and as the District Officer Igbirra says "as long as one adult male in twelve continues to pass through the divorce courts every year there can be no healthy family life". The first of these two problems is being tackled by revising and re-crafting in a more compendious form the present marriage and divorce rules. It is hoped that by so doing each particular point may be isolated and clarified so that public opinion may be weaned away from such customs as are not in accord with progressive ideas. The revised rules have of course been drawn up only after prolonged discussions with local informed opinion and it is believed that the greater detail given in the rules will facilitate their interpretation by the Courts and by eliminating ambiguities lessen the likelihood of appeals.

The Igbirra is by nature a litigious creature and far too much of his time and energy is squandered in protracted lawsuits mainly matrimonial. Indeed the District Officer Igbirra goes so far as to say that "litigation in matrimonial affairs is probably the greatest retarding factor in the development of the Igbirra people". While not wholly in agreement with this dictum, for there are other "retarding factors" upon which I do not propose to dilate here; I would certainly concede that this preoccupation with litigation is one of the main contributory causes to slow development.

11. The second problem that has been faced that of the reconstitution of the Courts. At present the personnel of all the Courts/

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of all the courts except to carry out both judicial and executive duties much to the detriment of the latter. Judicial work is heavy and the purely administrative side of the Clan Councils-cum-Courts work inevitably suffers. The two exceptions referred to namely the Okengwe and Okene Courts are now staffed by full time salaried men and their duties are now purely judicial. It is hoped to continue this process of divorcing the judiciary from the executive and proposals to that end will soon be submitted. Here again the people have been fully consulted and it is believed that these reforms will be welcome and will do much to ease litigation and moreover enable the conciliar form of local government to be widened.

12. In the all important sphere of Local Government the process of broadening representation on the Central and Clan Councils continued. Two literate Native Authority employees were appointed to the Atta's Council and the five women members who had hitherto sat "as an experiment" were considered to have fully justified their inclusion in the Council and were formally confirmed in their appointments. One of them represented the Igbirras at the Provincial Conference on Local Government probably the only woman member in the North to have done so.

The future of the clan councils is of course bound up with the future of the courts a subject which has already been discussed. None the less every opportunity has been taken to ensure that these bodies become more fully representative. If the proposals to re-organise the Courts are accepted this process of "modernisation" will be accelerated immensely.

13. The usual clash of personalities in Igbirra must be recorded. Relations between the Ogori village Head and the sole Native Authority have been strained almost to breaking point. The Ogoris though small in number supply a high percentage of the Igbirra Native Authority employees and are much more active and progressive than their vastly more numerous but slothful neighbours. The problem is in effect one of reconciling hostile personalities but the necessary spirit of give and take has been notable for its absence and without it a satisfactory solution is unlikely to be found. In the meantime the suggestion that the Ogori enclave should be constituted a subordinate Native Authority has been shelved pending the unlikely day when amicable relations are restored.

Much the same story has to be recorded of Lokoja Town. Momo Hadejia (a ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~) was dismissed from the Council for various misdeeds

as since then has/

percentage of educated and broad minded men. Referring to all the Kabba Native Authorities the District Officer writes "it is refreshing to note that the educated and progressive elements in Native Authority Councils who have only made their debut during the past 3 years display both soundness and zeal and are not afraid to express themselves".

17. Agriculturally the Division produces a great variety of crops. Yams, tobacco, cotton, castor seed, benniseed, beans, cocoa-yams, bananas etc. are all cultivated and exported after local demands have been met. The women play a great part in farming although their men folk are by no means lazy and indeed exhibit a good deal more energy than their Igbirra neighbours. The uneven rainfall in 1950 undoubtedly affected the yam crop but the yield was not greatly below that of previous years and the peoples' internal economy remains sound.

18. The two Treasuries in Kabba one serving the Yagba districts and the other serving Kabba, Bunu and Aworo districts are by no means overburdened with wealth. Reserves are very limited and the Five Year Plans are by no means so comprehensive as would be wished. However to set against the meagreness of funds available is the readiness of the people to undertake communal work in order to supplement that carried out and financed directly by the Native Treasuries.

It is interesting to record that more applications for loans from the Northern Regional (Loans) Board have been received from Kabba individuals than from the rest of the Province combined. It is true that only a very few of these applications have run the gauntlet of the Loans Board successfully but the few applicants who have succeeded should, if they handle their affairs competently, do much to increase the aggregate wealth of the Division.

19. The sole Native Authority of Koton Karifi the Ohimege Igu with the aid of a recently strengthened Council has administered his polyglot district with zeal and impartiality. The Village Administration Councils have however needed considerable galvanising by the Native Authority and the Divisional Officer and it is evident that the present groupings are not altogether satisfactory and that some adjustments are necessary. The whole question of Village Administration in Koton Karifi, which is one of supreme importance, is now being investigated with a view to submitting proposals for a measure of practical reform.

The three tiny riverain/

The three tiny riverain units of Kakanda, Kupa and Eggan have continued the even tenor of their ways though in Kakanda the Native Authority has been unable to eradicate an ingrained tendency to autocracy and there have been the usual minor bickerings in Eggan. A most welcome spark of initiative was displayed by the Kakanda Native Authority and his people who intimated their desire to move their Headquarters from Budon to some more healthy environment. It is hoped to translate this desire into concrete action in the not too distant future.

20. All districts in the Division are prosperous despite the fact that rainfall during the year was insufficient for the farmers' needs. The early guinea-corn suffered accordingly and yams were below average. The unusually low level of flooding reached by the Niger had serious effects on the rice yield which in Kupa and Eggan was estimated to be but a tenth of a normal year's harvest. As rice is however essentially an export crop no food shortage was anticipated in the Division. Although the yam harvest was below average sufficient quantities were lifted to allow an exportable surplus much of which ^{was} marketed in the shape of flour.

21. The two Native Treasuries in the Division serve such small populations that their revenues are low and reserves are very limited. It was suggested in 1949 that the two Treasuries should amalgamate but apart from such practical considerations as distances etc. the proposal was strongly resisted by both Native Authorities who regard their Treasuries as one of the symbols of their independence an attitude with which I have every sympathy though not on economic grounds.

22. The Divisional Officer reports that litigation is on the increase in Koton Karifi District and that requests for new Courts at Abaji and Gerinya have been made. No doubt such requests are made for reasons of prestige but certainly a court at Abaji would serve a fairly numerous population and investigations are proceeding.

The Divisional Officer who scrutinises every month the court records considers that justice is fairly meted out in the Koton Karifi Courts.

23. The outstanding event/

23. The outstanding event of the year in Kabba (apart from the visit in August of His Honour, the Chief Commissioner Sir Eric Thompson K.B.E., C.M.G., M.C. an event which will be fully recorded in Part II) was the Provincial Conference held in November to discuss the problems of Local Government and Electoral procedure of the new constitution. Although the conference was convened at very short notice all sections of the community were fully represented. Interest was keen and sustained and the discussions were by no means unfruitful. In a Province like Kabba composed as it is of heterogeneous peoples such a Conference has an inherent value by reason of bringing people together and helping to eradicate any tendencies towards parochialism. It cannot be gainsaid that Provincial Conferences of Native Authorities should be held annually in addition to the various meetings of Provincial Development Boards etc. and it is likely that the custom now started will be continued to the benefit of the Native Authorities and their peoples.

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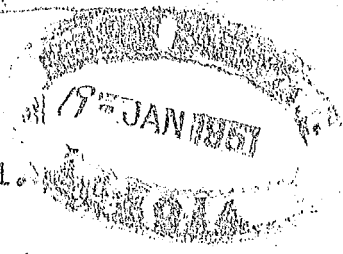
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From: Officer-in-Charge Prison, Lokoja.

To: Resident, Kabba Province, Lokoja.

No. : L.P. 36/322.

Date: 17th January, 1951.



1950 Annual Report; Kabba Province, Part I.

With reference to your letter No. 3254/1 dated 5th January, 1951, the Prison Annual report is made at the end of the financial year but I enclose notes on the Prison for 1950.

R. B. H. S. G. A. T.

Officer-in-Charge of Prison.

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