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KABBA PROVINCE ANNUAL REPORT, 1948.

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ANNUAL REPORT ON KABBA PROVINCE  
FOR THE YEAR 1948.  
BY H. C. GILL, ESQ., RESIDENT.

PART I - PROVINCIAL SUMMARY.

For the second year in succession the Niger rose to a considerable height and rice farms were destroyed by floods in riverain areas. The rains, which were heavy, ceased abruptly in September and corn crops and benniseed in some parts of the Province were adversely affected. In spite of these misfortunes however, farmers may be said to have done well, harvests generally were good and in Igbirra Division the yam crop is said to have been the best for thirty years. Food has again been plentiful, though prices remained high, and in Igala Division a large surplus of foodstuffs was available for export to the Eastern Provinces.

2. Cash crops have also done well and purchases of oil seeds and other produce for export have been satisfactory. In the Western part of the Province there was a notable increase in the tonnage of graded palm kernels and cocoa, incidence of Black Pod disease was less heavy than in previous years and Grade I cocoa amounted to over 60%. Increased prices for palm kernels and favourable weather conditions accounted for the satisfactory production of palm kernels throughout the Province. The cotton crop in Igbirra Division where the market price was higher than that offered by the firms was, as usual, bought locally for the weaving industry. The lowest reading of the river gauge at Lokoja was 3'9" on 16th April and the highest 34'8" on October 2nd. The sudden fall of the Benue, however, caused dislocation to shipping and made the evacuation of produce difficult at the last moment. Inadequate storage at Lokoja resulted in damage to cotton and benniseed and other produce at Idah was damaged by floods.

3. With increased prices for benniseed, palm kernels and other export produce there has been no lack of ready money, but customers now tend to wait for a reduction in price before buying up the costly articles for sale at the canteens. The previous shortage of consumer goods has been relieved to some extent but certain articles remain in short

supply

supply and complaints are still received of what is generally regarded as inequitable distribution and the high retail prices in local markets. Rates of taxation were increased in all areas except Yagba and a considerable increase in Revenue resulted. No difficulty was experienced in the collection of tax but the tightening-up of individual assessment was badly received in Lekoja and in Ogori, where objections were used as a political weapon. Native Treasuries benefitted considerably from the system of Government grants and the financial position is generally satisfactory.

4. As in previous years the Province has been short of staff and although a Provincial Forest Officer has now been appointed it is discouraging to have to record once again that no Agricultural Officer has been available. The position with regard to Administrative Staff remained unsatisfactory throughout the year and it was found impossible to maintain the necessary minimum of three Officers in Igala. Koton Karifi Division and the Bassa Komo clan areas once again suffered from neglect, and touring, which is essential in a Province of bad communications and numerous Native Authority Areas, was inevitably curtailed.

5. The anomaly that has long existed in Igbirra Division, an almost complete lack of educated and well to do persons other than N.A. employees, still persists and informed and intelligent public opinion is almost entirely lacking. So long as the successful and educated, if not employed by the Native Authority, continue to leave the area progress will be difficult. Little progress has resulted from the broadening of the Atta's Council and it is still difficult to obtain free expression of public opinion. Efforts have been made to encourage village councils but the lessons of the past are not easily unlearned and the ordinary man is unused to voicing his opinion, much less to having it listened to or welcomed.

6. The appointment of the village head of Ogori to the Atta's Council, so far from improving relations between Ogori and the Native Authority, served to widen

a breach caused primarily by the clash of personalities. Ogori is a small village unit on the border of Benin Province, the people are more closely akin to their neighbours over the border than to the Igbirras, more progressive and more ready to say what they think. Minor trouble occurred over individual assessment for tax and a number of recalcitrant tax payers refused to obey the Native Authority's summons. The village head was dismissed for his part in the proceedings but subsequently reinstated and a petition on behalf of the people of Ogori was submitted to the Chief Commissioner asking for the transfer of Ogori to the Western Provinces, mainly on the ground of misrule by the Native Authority. Pending a reply to the petition the position remains unsatisfactory. An affray in which Ogoris and Igbirras were involved occurred in Ogori in December and further trouble is expected over an Igbirra 'Kuti' festival which is due to take place in Ogori in January.

7. In Lokoja the administration of the village head and council deteriorated somewhat after a good start made in 1947 but the position was more satisfactory at the end of the year. Lokoja has various factions and a great variety of tribes, and constant intrigues and lack of real public spirit continue to be the main obstacles to progress.

8. In Igala Division the Igala central administration may be said to have worked well and the Council to have gained in confidence and sense of responsibility. District and village administration have on the whole continued to function satisfactorily though lapses have occurred. It was necessary to replace one District Head while irregularities in Etobe District led to the retirement of another (an elderly woman who had filled the post for many years).

9. While it is fair to say that progress has been made in certain directions during the year, the continued lack of Administrative and technical staff has had a depressing effect. For the past four years

It has been necessary to starve other parts of the Province of Administrative Officers in an effort to maintain at least two officers in Igala and the danger that the new administration, through lack of supervision at a critical time of its development, might slip back into the discredited ways of its predecessor has been ever present. The interminable delay in obtaining approval for a layout for the proposed new headquarters at Ataneguma and the impossibility of going ahead with a scheme which depended for its success largely upon striking when the iron was hot, have been not without result. During His Excellency's visit in September the Native Authority and Council announced their unanimous opposition to the move to Ataneguma and their desire that headquarters should remain at Idah. A petition to this effect was submitted to the Chief Commissioner and it was ultimately decided to abandon the project. This decision necessitates the reconsideration of the siting of development works earmarked for Ataneguma.

10. Of Bassa Komo there is little to report. The people continue to do well out of their farming while the Native Treasury continues to amass reserves which, through lack of staff, cannot be spent on development.

11. In Kibba Division the administrative re-organisation of Yagba District, formerly under a Central Council as Native Authority, into two separate Native Authority areas acting in association and sharing one Native Treasury, appears to have worked reasonably well. In West Yagba the administration proceeded smoothly but in East Yagba unity has not been achieved owing to the attitude of the village unit of Mopa, where opposition is not so much to the system as to the appointment of Agbana of Isanlu, instead of Aloko of Mopa, as the Native Authority. In Egbe a faction which had failed to secure by petition the re-instatement of a former village head who was convicted in the Magistrate's Court and dismissed some years ago, is now seeking an injunction in the Supreme Court to restrain the present village head from exercising his administrative functions.

12. Administration in the four districts sharing the Kibba Native Treasury has proceeded smoothly; Bunu and Aworo districts, through force of circumstances,

being

being rarely visited by a touring officer. In Ijumu District the Native Authority is still an unwieldy Council and little more than a debating society; the administration of the three component units being left to the group head concerned. The Ijumu, Kabba and Yagba Districts have a long tradition of missionary activity and the influence of literate and progressive young men, both within the Division and without, is increasingly making itself felt. The Yagba Native Authority Advisory Councils have recently been broadened to include the younger element but as many villages have their own 'Patriotic' Societies, often with branches outside the Province, the problem is how to direct their zeal into progressive channels in the absence of the personal touch of the Administrative Officer and co-operation on the part of the Elders.

13. Although shortage of technical staff has retarded development works there are indications that the stagnation of the immediate post war years has come to an end and projects which for years have been discussed on paper are at last becoming tangible facts, which is encouraging to a people who were beginning to doubt if they would ever become reality. Progress on the Igbe-Isanlu Makatu feeder road has been fitful in the extreme. During the early months of the year some progress was made under the supervision of a Development Officer and from June to September work on the Kampe bridge pressed on rapidly under an Inspector of Works. Existing piers and approaches were built up but owing to the lack of a suitable pump it was not possible to put in the under-water foundations of two more piers before the river rose and after September work virtually closed down pending the posting of another Inspector of Works and the release of further funds. This naturally caused considerable disappointment locally but Government's decision to bear 90% of the cost was warmly welcomed by the impoverished Native Authorities. In Igala Division the decision not to move headquarters to Atanguma has dislocated the development programme but a start has at last been made on the Etobe-Ejule-Akpanya feeder road. Seventeen miles have been cleared

and

and the main culverts inserted, partly by voluntary labour partly from Native Treasury funds.

14. In Kabba the welcome sight of buildings going up has given considerable local satisfaction and the Post Office, new Divisional Office and quarters for the District Officer are virtually completed. In Iokoja the new Government Residential Area has been surveyed but no progress has been made with housing and the expansion of Iokoja Town is accordingly still held up. Considerable progress has been made with the housing scheme for Marine Department employees, 22 houses out of a total of 44 being now complete.

15. Mining activity, which is confined to Kabba Division and part of Kalandia Kupa Eggan, decreased during the year. Labour employed has been in the neighbourhood of 300 many of whom are local people working for a few weeks only in the year. Gold and tin are still mined and the illicit traffic in gold still causes some concern. A beacon inspector is stationed at Egbu but supervision of the mining areas is generally inadequate.

16. There has been little serious crime during the year except in Igala Division where the number of murder cases increased. In two cases brought to trial one murderer was sentenced to death and another acquitted. In Ibaji District two cases are now under investigation, one involving the death of two Ibos and the suicide of a third, the other the alleged murder of a man who interfered with a ritual dance. In Bassa Komo a case of witch beating resulted in the death of a woman and one of the Clan Heads and two other individuals were sent for trial on a charge of homicide. It is probable that these murders in a somewhat remote area would not have occurred if touring staff had been adequate.

17. The work of Native Courts is checked as closely as the staff position permits and continues to be reasonably good. Litigation is not heavy in Koton Kerifi Division and Aworo District, but elsewhere the courts continue to be burdened with divorce suits although Kabba Division and Igbirra both show a marked

decrease in civil cases. Certain courts still leave considerable room for improvement, notably East Yagba, Ijumu, Bassa Komo and Igbirra. In the case of Igbirra, although biased judgments are less numerous than heretofore, there is a tendency for courts to avoid the labour of sorting evidence in difficult cases and applications for review by the District Officer have nearly doubled. It is fair to say that the people are fully aware of their rights of appeal and stand a reasonable chance of obtaining justice in the Native Courts provided the Administrative staff is adequate.

18. The steady demand for educational facilities has continued throughout the Province, with the exception of Bassa Komo, and nine new Native Authority elementary schools were opened during the year. Of these five were in Igala Division. The expansion of Native Authority schools depends upon the supply of trained teachers from the Elementary Training Centre at Okene. As the Elementary Training Centre is under the control of the Provincial Education Officer there is an apparent overall control of Native Authority elementary education within the province, but all Native Authorities not being equally rich, the controlling influence is in fact finance. The new Government Grants-in-aid Regulations will, however, result in a reduction of training fees in 1949 and enable Kabba Division and other areas to obtain a much needed supply of trained men before the Elementary Training Centre passes to Government control in 1950/51.

19. There has been no large scale expansion of mission education and the efforts of the Education Department have been mainly directed to improving the quality of existing schools. An unfortunate incident occurred early in the year when teachers at the Sudan Interior Mission school at Isanlu Makaturu went on strike owing to a clause in their engagement contract prohibiting membership of the Nigerian Union of Teachers. A display of bad manners by the teaching staff led to their dismissal and the school was closed. It was later re-opened with a new staff and an uneasy peace has been restored.



20. The Elementary Training Centre has again had a satisfactory year and there is no doubt that the teachers trained here have made a great difference to the standard of elementary schools. After the dismissals in 1947 the Middle School returned to a normal four class school in 1948 and there was a definite improvement in discipline and general efficiency for which the efforts of an ex-Company Sergeant Major now attached to the staff are doubtless partly responsible. The year will be chiefly remembered for the complete re-organisation of almost every activity of the Education Department, which has resulted in a mass of correspondence on policy, development, syllabuses and grants-in-aid, and in much other work inevitably being left undone.

ANNUAL REPORT OF KABBA PROVINCE, 1948.

PART II - PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS.

21. Areas and Boundaries. There have been no changes in the Provincial boundaries and no boundary incidents. The area of the Province remains at 10,953 square miles.

22. Population. The population figures for 1948 show a total of 565,051 for the Province compared with 550,624 in 1947 and 543,378 and 496,264 in the preceding two years. With the exception of the Yagba Districts which show a decrease of 2%, mainly due to emigration and decreased mining activity, there has been a steady increase in population in all areas, percentages varying from 2.5% to 7%. In Igala the increase of 10,000 is pronounced. Tribal figures indicate that immigration is partly responsible for this, the Idoma and Ibo population having risen by 1,600 and 700 respectively. In Igbirra Division population has increased from 92,803 in 1940 to 144,106 in 1948. In Koton Karifi Division a 3.5% increase is largely accounted for by a considerable increase in children, but these figures are notoriously unreliable. With the exception of Okene (35,000) and Lokoja (13,600) there are no large towns in the Province. Kabba, Egbe and Idah have population of some 6,000 and Koton Karifi and Abugi approximately 2,000.

23. Administrative Staff. Mr. H.C. Gill, Resident, was in charge of the Province throughout the year except for the period 26th May to 24th September when he was on leave and Mr. J.H. Shaw, Senior District Officer, took over. The following Administrative Officers also served in the Province :-

Capt. C.G. McKenzie,	District Officer
Mr. T.F.G. Hopkins,	" "
Mr. J.H. Vesoy,	" "
Mr. J.H. Watt,	Assistant District Officer
Mr. V.L. Cornish,	" "
Major R.B. Owens,	Cadet
Mr. P.G. Rogers,	" "
Mr. R.G. Adams,	" "
Mrs. J. Miles,	" "
Mrs. A.C.F. Ditcham, D.S.O.	" "

The average strength was 7.7, as in 1947; the authorized strength being 11. The average percentage of time spent on tour was 24.64%. A Development Officer under the Public Works Department served in the Province from 1st January to 5th May.

24. Clerical Staff. Mr. J.S.K. Sibogu, Chief clerk, was in charge of the Provincial Office throughout the year except for a period on leave between 12th April and 3rd June when Mr. G.T.O. Broms, 1st Class Clerk, relieved him. Average duty strength was 11.27 compared with 12 last year - the authorized strength being 15. It would be more correct, however, to say that average duty strength was 10.27 as the Provincial staff is still required to provide a 1st Class Clerk for full time duty as Local Treasurer at Lokoja. In spite of the increased volume of work since 1939 there has been no corresponding increase in clerical staff and the latter remain inadequate and over-worked. In Divisional Offices it has been impossible for Divisional clerks who also act as Divisional Treasurers to maintain efficiency in spite of working overtime and the Koton Karifi Divisional Office is now in the charge of a literate messenger as no suitable clerk is available. Health among the staff at Lokoja has not been good.

25. Visits. His Excellency the Governor, Sir John Macpherson, K.C.M.G., and Lady Macpherson visited the Province from 16th to 20th September, arriving by air and leaving by river in the "Valiant". At Lokoja His Excellency met the Chiefs of Koton Karifi, Kupa, Kankanda and Eggen, and the Lokoja village head and council. Later His Excellency visited Okene, Kabba and Idah. Mr. A.B. Cohen, C.M.G. O.S.E., Assistant Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, arrived by air at Lokoja on December 2nd and left early the following day.

26. Repatriation of ex-servicemen. The Registration Centres at Kabba, Okene and Lokoja were closed during the year. As most of the ex-soldiers in the Province are Igala and Igala Division is somewhat remote, the registration centre at Idah has been retained for the time being. Demands for employment are less insistent and the majority of ex-servicemen appear to have settled down remarkably well.

27. Medical. The health of the province has been normal, with spasmodic outbreaks of smallpox in most divisions. Smallpox vaccination teams have again been active throughout the year. Lokoja and Idah hospitals continue to be well patronised and ambulances have now been supplied for Lokoja hospital and the Igbirra Native Administration. The work of Native Authority dispensaries has been handicapped by lack of supplies but attendances have been good. A decrease in attendances at Kabba dispensary is attributed to increased sales of patent medicines in local shops. Mission dispensaries continue to treat a large number of patients and a doctor has joined the staff of the Qua Iboe Mission with a view to starting a mission hospital in Igala Division.

Conditions in the Sudan Interior Mission leper settlement are satisfactory, though some of the housing is not of a high standard. A new hospital and administrative block were completed during the year. The settlement is supervised by a mission doctor and his wife and a nurse and is financially dependent on contributions from the mission and Native Authorities. The settlement was not inspected by a Government Leprosy Officer during the year and no government grant was received. There are approximately 1100 lepers in the settlement, adequate farmland is available and the majority of lepers are able to support themselves. The work of the mission is greatly appreciated locally.

28. Agriculture. The most promising attempt at agricultural development has been the formation of the Yagba Farmers Co-operative Society whose members have subscribed to buy a 5 ton lorry in which to transport their produce to the south. A similar scheme has been started in the Gbedde area of Kabba Division. Native Authority Nurseries continue to supply large numbers of citrus and other seedlings for local distribution and butter and milk production has increased at the Kabba and Okene dairies. Owing to the lack of an Agricultural Officer and the difficulty of obtaining farmers willing to live outside Okene it was decided to abandon the Ossara settlement scheme and, instead, to establish an experimental tractor unit when an agricultural officer becomes available.

29. Forestry. The Province has reverted to the North West Circle after being under the nominal supervision of the Conservator of Forests, Owo, since 1914. A Provincial Forest Officer was appointed in April and new life has been infused into Native Authority Forest Staff. Attention has been mainly confined to inspection of Reserves, demarcation of farming land in swamp forest, constitution of communal forestry areas and the revision of the working plan for the Okene Waterworks Fuel Reserve and other reserves where over-farming in the past has impoverished the soil and made it impossible to carry out the original planting programme.

30. Housing and Social Welfare. The Province contains a variety of Tribes and types of housing. The chief building materials are still mud and thatch. Most progress is to be found west of the Niger in parts of Igbirra Division and in Kabba Division where the outlook of the people is towards the Western Provinces. Here increasing interest is taken in building improved houses affording better ventilation and more rooms for the occupants. Double storied houses built of mud blocks are met with not infrequently and, as in the larger towns in other parts of the Province, carpenter made doors and windows are popular and corrugated iron for roofing is in great demand. Elsewhere types vary from the grass shelters of the Fisher folk and the primitive round huts of the Bassa to dark Yoruba-style houses and the untidy mud huts of the Igalan. Better built houses in the Nupe style are found in Kakanda-Kupe-Migga and the northern type of round hut in Koton Karifi.

31. Native Authority Sanitary and Building Rules apply to the more important towns and villages throughout the Province and advantage is taken of new layouts to encourage improved building. A new layout is in course of preparation for Lokoja Town which will relieve existing congestion and considerable progress has been made with

a housing scheme for Marine Department employees. An orderly housing scheme is proceeding in Kabba Town where a new layout provides sites for applicants whose building plans have been approved by the Native Authority. In villages in other parts of the Province the people have shown initiative in making new layouts and greater interest is being shown in improved building.

32. The relief of the destitute and disabled is still regarded as a matter for the family concerned but provision is made from Native Authority funds for the maintenance of paupers attending hospital. Juvenile delinquency is negligible and such cases as occur are invariably dealt with adequately by parents or guardians. The need for probation services has not yet arisen.

PART IV - GENERAL.

33. From the material point of view the year has been a good one, with more consumer goods available, increased prices for export produce and no lack of ready money. The sense of frustration referred to in previous Annual Reports has been relieved to some extent by the sight of buildings going up in Kabba and progress made on the Kaupé bridge. The demand for social and economic advancement continues unabated in most areas especially those on the Southern border, where "development" is too often regarded as synonymous with the provision of public services at Government expense, and demands are made regardless of where the money is to come from or the urgent necessity to improve the main industry which is Agriculture. There is, however, a very progressive spirit abroad in many areas where self help has been responsible for the opening of new schools and improvement to housing, water supplies and roads.

34. From the Administrative point of view I can only repeat that it says much for the efforts of Native Authorities that administration has proceeded as smoothly as it has. The continued shortage of Administrative Officers has, once again, made it impossible to give adequate attention to the numerous Native Authority areas or to provide the personal touch which is becoming increasingly important. The clerical staff, over worked and consistently under strength, have, through no fault of theirs, been unable to maintain efficiency in the offices. While it is probably fair to say that administration has held its own in 1948, it cannot be ignored that it is unlikely that it will do so in 1949 unless the staff position very definitely improves.