

# Urhobo Migrants and Tin Mining in Jos, 1940-1970

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## Introduction – Urhobo Migration and Settlement in Jos

The distribution of Urhobo groups along socio-economic backgrounds is couched in Ali Modarres submission: ‘traditionally, academic theories have focused on issues regarding chain migration, port of entry, the assimilation process, ethnic economy, and labour market participation to explain the geographic distribution of various ethnic groups and their shifts overtime, (Modarres, 1998: 31).


The Urhobo groups, from Modarres’ submission, were equally affected by issues of rate of integration and diffused settlement pattern. As he has noted concerning the Iranian groups in the United States of America; especially within the context of the academic theories he referred to above, he shares his frustration: ‘since a significant number of Iranians arrived in the US after 1975 and that higher education was a major instigator of their initial distribution and settlement in the US, a faster rate of integration into American society and a diffused settlement pattern should have been the result’ (Modarres, 1998: 31).

Modarres’ frustration is not shared by this study in the sense that the Urhobo groups in an attempt to insert themselves into their host communities, though met with some forms of resistance, were able to integrate into the host communities and also had a diffused settlement pattern.

During the 1910s, the movement was to a large extent linked with the activities/policy initiations of the colonial administration. As shown in their migration patterns, the groups mostly settled along the routes where their major preoccupation was practiced. It is not a coincidence to find Urhobo groups along paths/routes, which were predominantly agrarian economies. Also, the travelling entrepreneurs and artisans inserted themselves in areas where their trade was of immense value to their host communities.

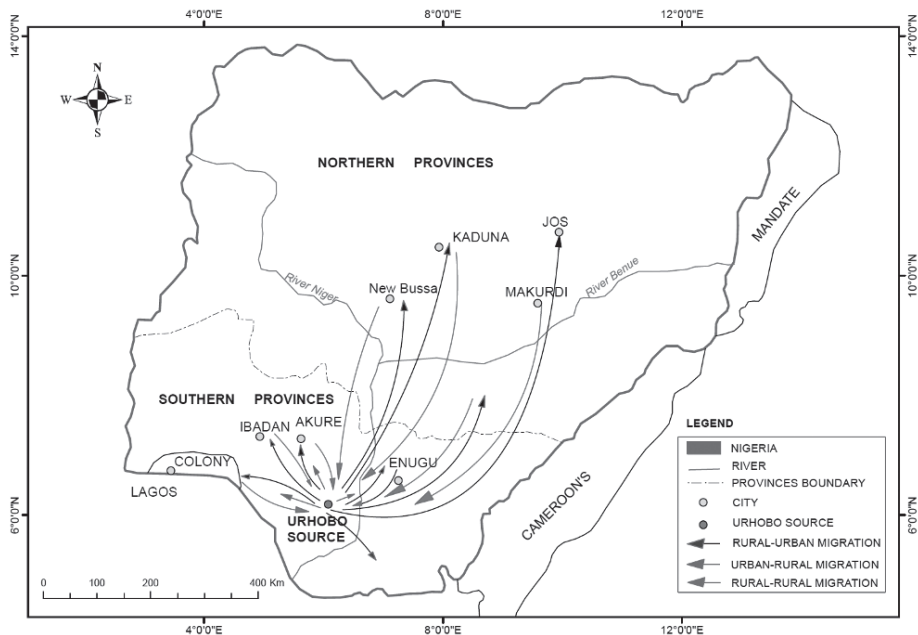
Therefore, as Ilustração 01 below shows, the Urhobo groups are found in most parts of Nigeria.

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### Ilustração 01 – Migration of Urhobo migrant groups since 1912



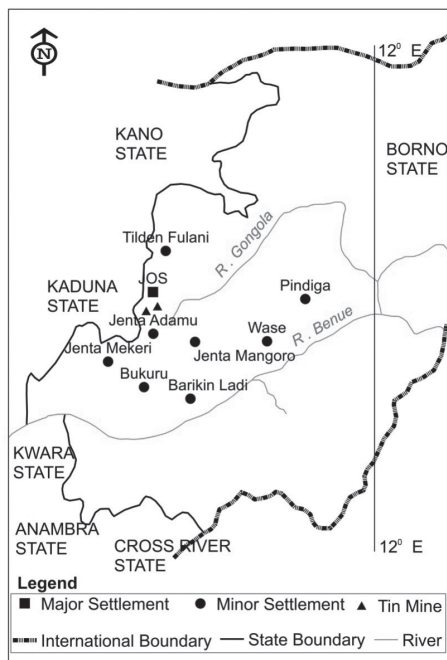
Source: Generated from the topographical map of Nigeria.

Their distribution shows a dispersed settlement pattern. While some of the groups settled in rural towns or cities such as Okitipupa in the old Ondo Division, Ilutitun in the Ijebu/Benin Axis, Enugu, Onitsha, Oturkpo, there were those that settled in the riverside suburbs of Lagos such as Epetedo, Ebute-Ero, Ajegunle and Lafaji.

Those that migrated to the far northern part of Nigeria were predominantly travelling entrepreneurs. As indicated on the map, they settled in places such as Kaduna, Lafia, New-Bussa, Oturkpo, Makurdi, Nasarawa and Jos, and the surrounding areas of Abuja. These travelling entrepreneurs consisted of businessmen and women who were engaged in buying and selling of goods such as hides and skin, dried meat (*Tinko*), dried fish (*Kano fish*), local gin (*ogogoro*) and onions. By the time they had settled in these towns and cities, there began the process of family reunification.

Reunification brought about the creation of Homeland communities. Consequently, the interactions between the Homeland communities and the host stimulated internal developments. Trade between and across the host and migrant communities metamorphosed into a dominant construct, which has been used to analyse the various strands of settlement patterns in Nigeria since 1912.

## Ilustração 02 – Settlement patterns of Urhobo migrants in Jos since 1912



Source: Generated from topographical map of Nigeria.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the settlement patterns of Urhobo groups began to show a different trend. During the Second World War, the colonial economy became subjected to tighter control by the British due to its war policy (Adesina and Olorunfemi, 1998: 130-31). These policies of the colonial administration/activities had a strangulating effect on the people of the colony; especially the major export crops' farmers. In fact, by the 1960s and the attainment of political independence, 'the new administration in the region in particular and Nigeria in general, inherited an economy already ossified by a half-century colonial capitalist manipulation (Adesina and Olorunfemi, 1998a: 132).

In fact, by the 1970s, particularly since the end of the Nigerian Civil War, Nigerian cities, especially those of the urban stature began to witness an influx of migrants from the rural areas and semi-urban centers. The implication of this on settlement pattern of Urhobo groups is seen in the way the cities and towns are structured as a consequence of these migrant groups. For example, those that could not afford the exorbitant rents charged by landlords in the high brow areas of the cities, found alternatives in low shanty houses in the suburbs. As Olu Sule has argued, the lack of capacity of receiving cities in terms of absorbing in-migrants has led to the predominance of shacks and squatter shelters in Nigerian large cities (Olu-Sule, 1985: 404). The Urhobo groups are found in some of these shacks and squatters in some Nigerian cities. The example of Ajegunle and Lagos Island, the Epe and Ikorodu areas of Lagos suffice.

## Migrants and Tin Mining in Jos

Virtually all of the city of Jos and its environs was affected by labour migration in the first decade of the twentieth century as a result of the discovery of tin and other mineral resources, availability of arable farm land and refuge for fleeing persecuted Hausa groups and a viable conducive atmosphere for trade—the pull factors. Consequently, colonialism and white settlement have led to the establishment of migrant labour systems for plantations and mines. The gradual integration of Nigeria's 'infant' economy into the global capitalist's orbit shows that colonialism and capitalism are historically connected in their economic and political content. Their connectedness has its roots in what Lenin and other scholars have referred to as stages of capitalist development.

According to these scholars, at a certain stage of capitalist development, colonial possession becomes a necessary factor for its sustenance (Lenin, 1977: 67-68). Consequently, the period from the 1870s onwards saw the rapid expansion of colonial possessions by capitalist countries all over the world. By this measure, the local economies began to respond to the dynamics of foreign economic policies and began to tailor their growth and development to the dictates of foreign capital. The justification for this dependence is seen in the way some scholars have categorized theories of European colonialism (Pedler, 1974: 22-23). The two views or approaches canvassed by these scholars are Eurocentric and Peripheral.

The Eurocentric view or approach posits that colonial expansion into the periphery was due to new developments in Europe. From this view has emanated two divergent views. One view takes a look at colonial expansion as not necessarily economic. The other view, however, emphasizes the changing character of European economies and particularly of expanding industrialization. Colonies became necessary as sources of raw materials for the growing industries. A major aspect of the economic policy of the colonial government was to encourage the production of primary goods in the colonies and to export such goods directly to the metropole (Falola and Adebayo, 1996: 42). In spite of this economic objective of the colonial government, however, the growing tendency in that period was for them to comprehensively promote the exploitation of those minerals that were already exploited by the indigenous people of Nigeria. Lenin identified this period as the period of finance capital, which is the highest stage in the development of capitalism.

The peripheral view or approach simply ties its analysis to the changing material conditions that were prevalent in the colonies as a consequence of the contacts with the colonialists. This is reinforced by the changes in civilizations which occurred and became prevalent because of the intercourse between the Europeans and the Africans. Inevitably though, there is the need to reiterate the point about the primacy of the economic factor as the main motive for acquiring colonies by the capitalist countries beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century. As consummating a factor as the economic factor, the political factor began to play a decisive role from the 1850s and well into the first decade of the twentieth century. The rivalries that began to mount in Northern Nigeria as a result of the discovery of potentials for not only mineral resources but agricultural production, triggered the 'unhealthiest' of rivalries among the major European capitalist powers.

The discovery of the potential for cotton production in the hinterlands stimulated Britain's exploration of the Niger by people like Richard and John Lander, Mungo Park and John Clapperton. These men could be regarded as forerunners to Lugard who

formally had the mandate of the British government to superintend over the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria as High Commissioner<sup>1</sup>. For pacification to be achieved, Lugard realized that peaceful administration could only be established by war, for he soon realized that the Emirs were implacably hostile to alien rule (Crowder, 1968: 132). In this regard, Lord Lugard took an assessment of the Empire and concluded that full-scale war was not an option. He was incapacitated by the activities of the British in Ashanti land and other of its territories. Moreover, Lugard within the Protectorate had to contend with the activities of Rabeh who ruled over Bornu, and the peoples of the Plateau who had not come under the rule of Bornu or Sokoto and fiercely resisted the Fulani invaders. This resistance was extended to foreigners.

In spite of this initial resistance to foreign rule, the Northern protectorate came under effective British rule. Once this was established, there was proliferation of trading firms which culminated in fierce competition for the total control of the region. To minimize competition among these companies, George Taubman Goldie suggested their amalgamation (Pedler, 1974: 117). With their amalgamation effectively achieved, Goldie further strengthened British occupation of Northern Nigeria through the instrumentalities of first, staving off French interest; second, taking measures to keep in check the two hostile Emirates of Ilorin and Nupe; and third, Ilorin's menace to the peace in Yorubaland (Crowder, 1968: 130). Consequent upon this, the Royal Niger Company's trading activities on the rivers Niger and Benue became structured to the direction of trading with some of the indigenous people of the North. The British merchants bought smelted tin known as straw tin from the Hausa traders along the rivers Niger and Benue (Gonyok, 1983: 83). This exchange and the need for further penetration of the region by the British officials in order to ascertain the source of the ore necessitated the engagement of migrants in the tin mining industry in the Jos-Plateau.

Historically, the engagement of migrants in tin mining had begun even before the British had interest in seeking for the source of the ore. Various accounts have it that the area around Riliwan Dalimi was arguably the starting point for tin mining activities on the Plateau in the mid-nineteenth century<sup>2</sup>. It must be included, however, that the areas around Kuba, Tenti and Barkin Ladi have been associated with the advent of the tin mines in Jos<sup>3</sup>. Migrants, especially those involved in the tin mines were of various backgrounds. During the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries, 'mining was principally the work of slaves, who washed the tin sands with water in calabashes.' (Grace, 1982: 180). With the passage of time, however, other categories of migrants became involved in the tin mines.

While some were of humble backgrounds, others were of less fancied backgrounds. There was also a category of the elitist class. At this juncture, attention must be given to the composition of migrants and their role in tin mining in Jos.

1 The activity of the British and other Western colonizing countries in the Northern part of Nigeria was informed by the changing pattern of their geographical spread. That is, with the declaration of American Independence in 1776, the supply of cotton and other raw materials to feed the industries in Europe declined; particularly Britain's ever expanding cotton industry. Thus there was a need to expand its search for raw materials and markets for its finished products. With Lugard's appointment therefore, the British Colonial office sought to establish a 'territory' quite distinct from other parts of the colonial enclave. This was achieved with the dissolution of the administrative authority of the Royal Niger Company in 1899. For more see Crowder, C. 1968. *West Africa under Colonial Rule* 132.

2 Activities along the Riliwan Dalimi corridor increased due to a surge in trading among the inhabitants of the Benue River. The context of river presupposes the presence of migrants who have travelled along the river routes. These migrants are categorized into various groups in accordance with their ethnic origin. For more see, Freund, B. 1980. Capital and labour in Nigerian tin mines. London: Unwin & Allen. 11-13. In corroborating this point, one of the researcher's sources in Jos emphasized the importance of Riliwan Dalima as a source for the discovery of lead and steel through the process of smelting. Interview held with Chief Williams Monedo, 68, Retired Tin Miner, Monedo street, Jos. 29-04-2018. This point was further corroborated by Mr. Dung Pam, 84, Retired Miner, Airport Road Junction, Jos. 28-04-2018.

3 Interview held with Mr. Von Chuwang 68, Retired Tin Miner, Bukuru road, Jos, 27-04-2018.

The involvement of slaves in tin mining in the early period did not preclude the locals who were also involved in other economic activities such as subsistence and commercial farming, pottery, blacksmithing, hunting and masonry. There was, therefore, the Berom people who were considered as the “original” owners of the land and formed part of the migrant group, owing to dispersal activities. That is, from the period when the Niger Company, based on Nicholas’ report, appointed Mr. Henry Laws to establish the quality and quantity of the tin resources in Jos, the locals suffered significant displacement. For instance, with his 25-man armed escort, he undertook some military campaigns to subjugate some of the Berom communities of Gyel, Rukuba and Kuru<sup>4</sup>. As a result, some forms of dispersal took place.

Available archival and secondary sources in the study of Jos do not reveal substantially the presence, contribution and role of Urhobo people in Jos. What exist in oral form, however, point to the fact that Urhobo people dominated the tin mining industry in Jos from about the early twentieth century to the middle of the twentieth century<sup>5</sup>. From the 1940s to the 1960s; particularly to the end of Nigeria’s Civil War, there was the influx of other ethnic groups to the tin mines. Notable among these were the Yoruba, Igbo and people from other nationalities such as Cameroon, India, Pakistan, Syria and Lebanon. The economic interest generated by the tin mines could be explained by the principles of the push-pull theoretical framework. Put precisely, the various migrant groups that were involved in the tin mines in Jos from the early to the mid-twentieth century were of diverse ethnic backgrounds and were mostly laborers, carriers, overseers, security guards, mine managers and mine owners. Meanwhile, a fraction of the Indians, Lebanese and Syrians were also involved in trade and commerce. They were the textile dealers. The Ghanaians were involved in confectionary<sup>6</sup>.

### Contribution of Urhobo Migrants to Tin Mining in Jos

It must be stated that the platform which enabled Urhobo participation in the tin mines was the Minerals’ Ordinance of 1902<sup>7</sup>. Thus, tracing their contribution to tin mining in Jos would be gleaned from the flurry of activities that took place around the tin mines after the Ordinance of 1902. Between 1902 and 1914, 200 mining companies had invested \$10 million, while the value of tin was only \$672,000<sup>8</sup>. This was as a result of the heavy investment that flowed into the tin mines from speculators and financiers-local and international.

The Urhobo people, like some other ethnic groups, played a significant role in tin mining activities in Jos. According to Chief Akporido “tin mining was the basic/

4 Laws, H.W. (1954), “Some Reminiscences of Col. H.W. Laws of his arrival on the Plateau in 1903”. N.F. XIX, N.º 3.

5 The various interview sessions the author had with a cross section of the Urhobo community and other non-Urhobo groups in Jos, lays credence to this assertion. Interview session held with Mr. Solomon Ugege, 65, Tin Miner, Zaria Road, Jos, 29-04-2018; Mr. Evugbemu Godwin, 65, Businessman, Zaria Road Jos, 29-04-2018; Mr Chris Owhie, 65, Retired Civil Servant, Zaria Road Jos, 29-04-2018; Mr Johnson Iroroefe Usieta, 67, Retired Teacher, Zaria Road, Jos, 29-04-2018. Interview held with Nyazi Dareng, 68, Business man, Nasarawa, Jos, 30-04-2018; Mr. Davou Zang, 55, Trader, Bukuru Market, Jos, 30-04-2018; Mr. Chungdung Dabot, 45, Trader, Bukuru Market, Jos, 30-04-2018. Interview held with Mr. Dung Pam, 84, Retired Tin Miner/Owner, Zaria Road, Jos, 29-04-2018; Chief Joseph Ponle, 78, Baker, Zaria Road, Jos, 28-04-2018; Chief Festus Nzeh, 68, Businessman, Terminus Market, Jos, 30-05-2019.

6 Interview held with Hon (Chief) J.K. Akporido 85, Retired Miner and former Member, Plateau State House of Assembly, Warri, Delta State, 22-04-2018.

7 The Ordinance was consequent upon the need to regulate the facilities for prospecting of Minerals’ in Northern Nigeria. See NAK: Mines Department of Northern Nigeria Annual Report, GR6 General Minerals’ Ordinance 1902.

8 NAK Jos PROF, 1369 Tin Estimated Output of 1917.

significant preoccupation of the Urhobo people in Jos<sup>9</sup>.” Trading in textile, local gin (ogogoro) and butchery also formed part of the occupation where Urhobo people played a dominant role. This was corroborated by Mr. Solomon Ugege<sup>10</sup> who gave further insight into how Urhobo people came to play such prominent role in tin mining in Jos. According to him, in about 1916 or thereabout a certain Mr. K.D. Menta happened to have been the first indigenous black miner that interacted with the British on the subject of mine ownership. Mr. Menta married a Fulani woman from the Ningi Bauchi region and had three sons; Mr. T.H. Menta, Mr. C.A. Menta and Mr. George Menta (of the *Cock Crow at Dawn* fame). Messrs T.H. and C.A. Menta were involved in the mining industry like their father. Mr. George Menta did not take interest in the mines. Rather, he went into the entertainment industry. Having established himself in the tin mining industry in the early 1920s, Chief K.D. Menta travelled back to the Western region to bring his ‘close’ relatives to Jos in order to empower them. The first wave of migrants that came to Jos after K.D. Menta’s arrival was Pa Niemogha, Mr. D.K. Ejikorlem, Mr. Stephen Oluta Igho, and Chief J.K. Azigbo. They came in the mid-1930s, precisely around 1936-1937<sup>11</sup>. The second wave of migrants came in the late 1930s and early 1940s when Chief Menta felt the urge and need to introduce more people into the mining business. Among those he brought were Mr. M.K. Borlokor, Pa O. Agbatutu, Pa F.C. Chunu, Chief Thomas Ugege, and Pa Clark Shanokpe Menta. Others were Mr. R.E. Dogun, Mr. Tom Nikoro, Chief Ajueshi Asieba, Chief J.E. Akporido (Hon (Chief) J.K. Akporido’s elder brother), Mr. Thompson Ojigbo, Pa Monedo, Mr. D. Eferemo, Mr. Magnus Ikpe, Mr. Moses Ighendo, Mr. Godwin Dafieta, Mr. D. Jemidafe, and others too numerous to mention. When they got to Jos, they ventured into the mines in various capacities. Chief K.D. Menta introduced them to European miners who trained them before sending them to their mining camps and areas as overseers and inspectors.

Available oral evidence has it that they were first settled in the Naraguta area in dotted settlement patterns, before further sojourning to Bukuru. In Bukuru, the Urhobo people began to adopt a settlement pattern akin to farmsteads; just like their Berom neighbours. They gradually began to evolve a settlement pattern which was similar to the village setting within the Bukuru setting. In this setting, there existed many families with advanced infrastructures<sup>12</sup>.

This first wave of Urhobo migrants in Jos became involved in the mines; first as miners, and subsequently as a result of the pioneering role of Chief K.D. Menta, the Urhobo migrant group became instrumental in the setting up some of the mines. For instance, Chief J.K. Azigbo bought a quarter of Bukuru area as his personal estate and was also instrumental in the migration of his Okpe kin to Jos<sup>13</sup>.

9 Interview held with Hon (Chief) J.K. Akporido 85, Retired Tin Miner and former Lawmaker, Warri, Delta State, 22-04-2018. Chief J.K. Akporido was a member of the Plateau State House of Assembly representing Jenta Constituency in the botched Third Republic under the Social Democratic Party (SDP). He has relocated back to Warri, Delta state. His elder brother was one of the earliest migrants to Jos and a prominent mine owner in the 1950s.

10 Interview held with Mr. Solomon Ugege 65, Tin Miner, Zaria Road, Jos, 29-04-2018 Mr. Solomon Ugege’s father; Late Chief Thomas Ugege was a cousin of Chief K.D. Menta. Chief Menta was instrumental to the Ugege’s migration to Jos in the late 1920s. Interview held with Mr. Gyang Dalyop, 80, Retired Miner, Old Airport road Junction, Jos, 28-04-2018, explained the role played by the Menta family in securing a place for his training and employment in the mines in Jos in the late 1960s. He claimed to have worked with the ‘best hands’ in the mines; in apparent reference to the Menta family.

11 Interview held with Chief Moses Igho, 80, Retired Miner, 29-04-2018.

12 There is evidence that the presence of these mining companies- Amalgamated Tin Mines of Nigeria (ATMN), Ropp Tin Limited, Nigerian Tin Corporation Limited and Jantar Nigeria Company Limited in the Bukuru area, engendered its urbanization. Interview held with Mr. Chung Mang, 65, Retired Civil Servant, Nasarawa, Jos, 29-04-2018. Also see, NAK SNP 11 433M, 1919, which contains the application made by the Ropp Tin Company for a site near Bukuru to the Registrar, Land Registry Department, Kaduna.

13 Interview with Hon (Chief) J.K. Akporido, 85, Warri, Delta state, 22-03-2018.

They also became involved in the administration of the mines in their capacities as; first, Mine Police, Section Managers and Overseers. To this end, some of them graduated to become Section 36 Manager (which was a certification that could be acquired in training from the Mining School. It was the peak of a career in tin mining<sup>14</sup>.) Others, who did not take the opportunity to acquire such certification, remained as Site Managers, Overseers, and Petty Cash Officers. With the indigenization policy of the 1970s, however, many European miners sold off their mining companies to Nigerians. Some of the mines managers that were Urhobo bought some of these companies. Notable among them were Mr. D.E. Akpomie, Mr. D.O. Okugbene, Mr. G. Emurhotu, Chief John Agbatutu and Chief Ajueshi Asieba<sup>15</sup>.

Meanwhile, it should be established that as early as 1902 when the colonial government attempted to bring all mining activities under its control, indigenous mining activities had taken off, even on a commercial scale. By mid-1940s, however, the British government formally entered into tin exploration and mining on the Jos Plateau. Thus it became the number one foreign export from Nigeria. With their formal entry, further regulations were put in place in order to effectively bring all mining activities under their control. In so doing, deliberate and conscious efforts were made by the British to effectively destroy local tin mining activities of the local investors. For instance, in 1910, Duff, the Resident of Central Province reported that the richest pieces of tin producing grounds in the district of Ririwan Bauchi were being worked by natives to obtain for smelting; therefore, the interests of the European mining industries were being considerably damaged<sup>16</sup>.

In his reaction, however, the Secretary of State suggested that they should be allowed to extract tin within very small limits and the number of their furnaces should be reduced from seven to three<sup>17</sup>. The governor of Central Province agreed with the suggestion made by the Secretary of State. He added that the lease to be granted to the people should not be given to them on a permanent basis, so that the government would reserve the right to abolish it if they abused it<sup>18</sup>. Based on the restrictions presented above, an area of 100 acres was given to the people of Ririwai for extracting tin. The people expressed discontent with the size of land allocated to them for the purpose of tin mining. Their discontent was because the field allocated to them was unproductive and required heavy machinery, which was beyond their reach. Moreover, the quality and quantity of tin derived from the field was low<sup>19</sup>. It was, however, established that in spite of this deliberate restriction, the natives competed favourably with the Europeans. How this was achieved is traced to the activities of some of the early Urhobo migrants such as Mr. K.D. Menta, Chief J.K. Azigbo, and Mr. M.K. Borlokor who were in a position to work in various categories with the British miners, and also had their own capital<sup>20</sup>.

Succinctly put, the period between 1900 and 1914 witnessed the gradual destruction of indigenous mining processes on the Plateau by the British and the gradual incor-

14 Hon (Chief) Akporido was one of the Urhobo migrant to rise to such positions in the tin mines.

15 Interview held with Dr. Francis Asieba, 65, Retired Academic, Terminus Market, Jos, 28-05-2019. Dr. Asieba in his recollection stated that his father bought and owned mine companies such as Egba Mining Company, Goldcoast Consolidated Lands Limited and Elland Company Limited.

16 NAK: 191M/1910: Tin Smelting (Liruei) cost of...

17 NAK: 191M/1910: Tin Smelting (Liruei) cost of...

18 NAK: 191M/1910: Tin Smelting (Liruei) cost of ...

19 NAK Jos PROF, 726, Prosecutions for Mining Offences.

20 Interview held with Hon (Chief) J.K. Akporido 85, Warri, Delta state, 22-03-2018.

poration of the tin mining industry into the world capitalist orbit<sup>21</sup>. The consequences of this incorporation can be explained within the context of the stages it took for the process of incorporation to be completed. First, there was the conquest of Jos to prevent its indigenes from exercising any form of control over tin production and the trade routes. Secondly, there was the gradual foreign control of the tin mining process that resulted in the forceful elimination of the indigenous people from participation in mining. This resulted in the deluge of unemployed “natives”<sup>22</sup> who were ready to sell their labour for meager sums of money in order to eke a living. Thirdly, foreign mining companies with the active support of the machinery of colonial government took over complete control of the tin mining industry in Jos. In spite of this take-over and control, some Urhobo merchants in collaboration with some of their British principals began the process of forming syndicates to protect indigenous tin mining and miners.

For instance, with the formal take-over of the mining process by the British in the mid-1940s, there emerged clusters of mining companies owned by British interest. These companies were referred to as ‘Masters’. For example, the Amalgamated Tin Mining of Nigeria (ATMN), Ropper Tin Limited, Ex-land and Gold and Base were British companies that were in Mines. These companies were all based in Bukuru and they helped in the urbanisation of the town. By the late 1940s and mid-1950s, however, the ownership structure of some of these companies had started to change. This was due to factors such as disinvestment, death, business apathy and reinvestment in other sectors of the economy. From the early 1940s onward, some Urhobo merchants of the second wave of migration started investing in the mines. They formed syndicates<sup>23</sup>. The first syndicates were Bako Mining Syndicate comprising Ugege, Igbo, Okugbene, Oyibo and Akpomie, Tom Nikoro and Dogun. The second syndicate comprised Ojigbo and Bros, Warri Mining Syndicate and Delta Mining Syndicate. These companies were involved in tin mining using human labour. The categories of labour employed in the minefields were determined by levels of skills learnt or acquired.

In this manner, some of the Urhobo migrants, particularly those that came in the mid-1940s, were taken to the School of Mines to acquire skills in Construction, Mine Policing, Engineering, and Prospecting. While some were successfully integrated

21 With this incorporation came a change in the economic and social structure of the Jos Plateau. There was an influx of foreign companies in the Jos Plateau that were principally committed to the tin mines. Side-by-side these companies was the introduction of ancillary industries that sprang up to service the mines. Such entities were predominantly owned and controlled by natives. The British mine owners introduced social activities such as clubbing, winery and recreational sports such as basketball, soccer, rugby, polo and cricket. Nonetheless, the Great Depression of 1929 and events during the Second World War culminated in a series of economic and social backlashes that impaired the buying power of Nigeria's export and aggravated the scarcity of imports. See Isichei, E. 1983. *A History of Nigeria*, 416.

22 “Natives”, as used here, encompass the whole fabric of people of non-European descent who were engaged in the mines. Consideration is given to the presence of Ghanaians, Cameroonians, and other people from the African West Coast that were present in Jos. The basis for the use of the term finds expression in the various roles played by each of them in the tin mining industry. For example, the Berom people were not at first keen on working the mines because of their perception of it as a job for ‘slaves’. Interview held with Mr. Nyansi Dareng, 68, Businessman, Nassarawa, Jos, 30-04-2018. Also, in an interview held with Mr. Bot Mang 78, Retired Mine Engineer, Old Airport Junction, 29-04-2018, stated that, even though some of them were not interested in the mines, the quest for advancement of their skills and setting a pace for kin to follow lured them to take up positions in the mines.

23 The idea behind the formation of syndicates was to promote cohesion in the activities of the mining companies. Also, there was the need to present a common front on issues that relate to the welfare of the miners and their companies. In other words, as local entities whose business fortune was tied to the aprons of the capitalist countries, there was the need to present a strong bargaining power especially on the vexed issue of pricing of their final product. Interview held with Mr. Solomon Ugege, 65, Tin Miner Zaria Road, Jos, 29-04-2018; Mr. Bot Mang, 78, Retired Mine Engineer, West of Mines, Jos, 29-05-2019.

into the minefields, others were particularly not too keen on working in the mines<sup>24</sup>. Rather, they became involved in other trades that they found more lucrative than working in the mines. This group of Urhobo migrants formed ancillary industries outside the mines that serviced the needs of miners. It must be noted also that the immediate post-World War II years witnessed a boom in export commodities of countries of the Third World structural configuration. In the minefields, however, the colonial government's take-over led to the creation of an unequal relation of production. As Isichei posits, mineral wealth was extracted by unskilled labourers, often coerced by the need to find money for taxes, using for many years no equipment more exotic than baskets and hoes (Isichei, 1983: 426) From the above, the study will examine some of the specific contributions of Urhobo people to tin mining in Jos from 1912 to about 1950.

The modest contribution of Urhobo people to tin mining in the Jos Plateau from about 1912 can be attributed to the role played by Mr. K.D. Menta, as seen above. Having discovered the enormous potential in the tin mines, Mr. Menta travelled back to the Mid-West region at about 1916 and 1917<sup>25</sup> to bring his kin to work in the mines. This first wave of migrants was mostly males who had some technical skills in blacksmithing and foundry. For instance, Mr. Menta was versed in blacksmithing and had had artisanship training in metallurgy back home in Ughelli and Sapele. By the time he got to Jos in mid-1910s, therefore, he applied his trade and artisanship skill to effective use by involving in the smelting trade as practiced in the Jos-Bauchi region. It was from here that he married a Fulani woman who bore him three sons. Based on his marital relationship with the Fulani, Mr. Menta gained some advantages in settling down in the Jos-Bauchi region. From here, he began a modest mining business that spread to other parts of the Jos Plateau.

The second wave of migrants comprised both males and females who had heard about the allure offered by Jos. This second wave occurred at about 1920 and 1924. Among the womenfolk were Mrs. Deborah Agana, Mrs. Peace Ighotete and Mrs. Sweet Akpovuemu<sup>26</sup>. These women were mostly traders in clothing, local gin (*ogogoro*), dried fish and *garri* (cassava flakes). By the end of the First World War and the onset of the Great Depression of the 1920s, Urhobo migrants in Jos had begun to settle in properly in their host community. By this measure, they continued in the process of encouraging more of their folks back home to migrate to Jos. Meanwhile, means of transportation had been improved. The need to travel by trekking the long distance was no longer necessary. Most prominent in the infrastructural provision of the colonialists was the railway. The railway was arguably the most popular means of transportation beginning from about 1914 when the rail line from Ibadan to Kano was opened. From this period other waves of migrations took place between Urhoboland and Jos. With the increase in population, the Urhobo people began to disperse to other locations from their place of earlier settlements to other places such as Akpata, Busa Buji, Jenta, Miango, Jos-Zaria Road and Tafawa Balewa area. Even though these new settlements were not part of the mining areas, it served as residential areas for the Urhobo who were engaged in the mines. As a consequence of their movements to and from the mining areas, it contributed to the development of the local transportation system of the area.

24 According to Mr. Solomon Ugege, his father, outside being a pioneer miner was directly involved in the recruitment of interested Urhobo indigenes in artisanship such as masonry, cobbler, tailoring and metallurgy in the Bukuru area in the mid-1940s.

25 Interview held with Mr. Solomon Ugege 65, Miner, Zaria Road, Jos, 29-04-2018.

26 Interview held with Chief Moses Igbo, 80, Retired Miner, Zaria Road, Jos, 29-04-2018.

## Conclusion

With their congregation in the notable mine areas of Bukuru, Barkin Ladi, Tenti, Mister Ali and Kuba, Urhobo people contributed modestly to the growth and development of tin mining in Jos in many ways. For instance, with their ownership of some of the mines they helped in the employment of some locals in the mine sites. This was notable with the Mentas who were pioneer mine owners in Jos. As Chief Akporido puts it, initially the Urhobo people came with the Europeans as cooks and stewards. But with the demise of their principals, some of them took over the mines and assumed ownership/managers<sup>27</sup>. This was corroborated by Chief Johnson Oro-roefe Usieta<sup>28</sup> when he specifically mentioned that Mr. K.D. Menta; who arguably was the pioneer Urhobo miner/mine owner in Jos, was the first indigenous black miner that interacted with the British on the basis of tin prospecting and mine ownership.

Mr. T.H. Menta and Mr. C.A. Menta continued in the tradition of their father and soon acquired other smaller and dying mines that belonged to the British, who were the core master miners and other mining interest. Alongside the Mentas were notable Urhobo mine owners such as Chief .J.K. Azigbo, Chief Eshaese, Chief Ejikonemu, Chief D.O. Akpomien, Chief Gabriel Ajuesi Asieba, Chief Oyibo, Chief Okugbene, Chief J.T. Owhe, Chief Moses Ighedo, Chief Thomas Ugege and Chief William Nieghoha<sup>29</sup>. Some of these men; notable among them, Chief Azigbo and Chief M.K. Borlokor, ventured into mining with their own companies. Therefore, not only were they employers of labour, they also contributed to infrastructural development of the areas where their tin mines were located. They also empowered some members of their host communities who could not afford the cost of training at the School of Mines in Jos.

Tin mining in Jos from the earliest times up to the 1950s was dominated by foreign capital. That is, most of the key participants in this period were foreigners and their companies. By extension most of what was indigenous before their coming was systematically destroyed and replaced with their foreigners' technology. The region of Jos was integrated into the capitalist orbit and consequently attracted capital from all parts of the world. Succinctly put, the contribution of Urhobo<sup>30</sup> people to the tin mining in Jos has not gone unnoticed by the indigenes of Jos and other indigenous groups and foreign nationals alike. The sentiments expressed by these groups about the Urhobo people perhaps explain the ease of their integration and insertion in Jos.

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27 Interview held with Hon. (Chief) J.K. Akporido, Warri, Delta state, 22-03-2018.

28 Chief Usieta 67, School Proprietor, is the President-General of the Urhobo Progress Union (UPU) in Jos in the current dispensation. Interview held with Chief Usieta at the Gordon House Hotel, Zaria Road, Jos, 28-04-2018.

29 Interview held with Mr. Godwin Evugbemu 57, Businessman (Otota UPU Jos), Zaria Road, Jos, 28-04-2018.

30 According to the Otota of the UPU in Jos, the honour done these Urhobo sons was a testimony to the efforts made in the mining sector of the Jos Plateau by Urhobo people since the earliest period. He opines that 'no other ethnic group in Nigeria has contributed to the mining sector in Plateau as the Urhobo'. Interview held with Mr. Godwin Evugbemu, 57, Businessman, Zaria Road, Jos, 28-04-2018. In apparent support of the position of Mr. Evugbemu, Mr. Mang Zi, 80, Retired Miner, Old Airport Road Junction, Jos, 29-04-2018, also reiterated the role played by Urhobo migrants in the tin mining industry in Jos; most especially, during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

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