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Essays
Space and Colonial Alterity: Interrogating British Residential Segregation in Nigeria, 1899-1919

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Abstract

The policy of segregation is undoubtedly a resented feature of colonial rule in Africa. However, discussions of the residential racial segregation policy of the British colonial administration in Africa invariably focus on “settler colonies” of South, Central, and East Africa. British colonial West Africa hardly features in such discussions since it is widely believed that these areas, which had no large-scale European settler populations, had no experience relevant to any meaningful discussion of multi-racial colonial relationships. Some studies even deny the existence of racially segregated areas in places other than the settler colonies. Despite evidence that residential racial segregation formed one of the principles that facilitated the implementation of British colonial policy in Nigeria, the Nigerian experience has not been given a fully coherent treatment. This paper examines Nigeria’s experience of officially directed residential segregation. It argues that while residential segregation policies were justified along policies related to health, sanitation, and disease prevention, the motive also derived from the demonstration of racial supremacy and civilization, which was the ideological justification for empires in Africa. It also argues that Lugard may have been impacted by the execution of this policy in India, where he left to become Governor of Nigeria in 1913. While the settler colonies had important dimensions in this inter-racial relationship, colonial Nigeria was not spared the experience of such racially motivated segregation, as the indigenes took to petitions and other means to protest this racial policy. Although Nigeria cannot claim the same intensity of deprivation as was associated with this policy in many British colonies, the pattern that emerged endured throughout the colonial and postcolonial periods.

Keywords: Nigeria, British, colonialism, racial, residential segregation, Lugard
The politics of space was at the core of European rule in Africa, while racial segregation has often been the basis of division between European colonizers and Africans. Such segregation was evident in South, Central and East Africa, which had settler colonies. In these settler colonies, European (as well as Asian and Arab) officials separated themselves from the rest of the African population. Colonial spaces were carved along color lines and this created a lesser “other” in Africa. No doubt, the study of segregation and the creation of colonial “otherness” have greatly enriched academic discourses. However, such studies have focused on the settler colonies or territories. Generally, the case of British or French West Africa has not been given enough attention. Despite ample evidence that residential racial segregation formed one of the basic principles that facilitated the implementation of British colonial policy, the Nigerian experience in this regard has only received minimal consideration. Part of the reason for this neglect might derive from the fact that colonial policy in Nigeria is usually seen through an atomistic lens that sees the various administrative policies as isolated programs subject to the whims of individual territorial governors rather than as part of an imperial plan on a worldwide scale. However, colonial Nigeria was not spared the experience of officially directed racial segregation. The argument is that even though Nigeria cannot claim the same intensity of deprivation as was associated with the policy in many British colonies in eastern and southern Africa, the pattern that emerged showed residential segregation along racial lines along with health, administrative, financial, and security factors. Hence, the racial factor cannot be entirely ignored. Even so, this colonial policy created residential racial segregation, the remnants of which endured beyond the colonial period and is still seen in the contemporary social landscape.

Postcolonial theory has undoubtedly influenced historical inquiry and, in its wake, has demonstrated a concern with the several contradictory forms of power, alterity, and separateness that colonization has come to represent. The impact of these colonial processes resonates as issues of identity, spatial divisions, social, political, and cultural formations continue to haunt contemporary postcolonial societies. As a result, postcolonial criticism could be regarded as part of concerted efforts to trace the epistemological categories and social understandings used to analyze specific
actions within colonial societies. The objective of this approach is “to undo the totalizing narrative of European colonialism [...] and to show that colonial power and subjects were contested in the space of insurmountable contradictions and conflicts produced by colonialism.” One such contradiction is seen in the alterity heightened by the European powers’ decision to pursue policies of racial segregation in their tropical colonies. These spaces of contradiction interest scholars of African colonial history especially when one considers that the marking of colonial difference was dependent on the particular definition, creation, and control of particular types of spaces. Noyes argues that a “critique of the colony must also be a critique of colonial space, and ultimately a critique of those totalizing projects of knowledge which spatialize and visualize difference.” This alterity is the focus of this paper. It is important to focus on Nigeria because colonial studies on difference have been unfairly regionalized to eastern and southern African colonies. Whichever colonial region one considers, the visualization of difference was a means of defining and controlling specific spaces. It was also a means of managing the interpellations and laws of such spaces. In fact, “colonial cultures were never direct translations of European society planted in the colonies [... Rather,] colonial projects and the European populations to which they gave rise were based on new constructions of Europeanness — demographically, occupationally, and politically distinct.” Thus, alterity emerged out of challenges and interactions within the dynamics of local political, social, and economic colonial exigencies. In some cases, this was a means of maintaining the subjectivities of the colonies as empires sought legitimacy of their colonial territories. As for the day-to-day implementation of policies, there was a large measure of pragmatism, and it varied based on local conditions. Nonetheless, the requirement that long-term policies be referred to the Foreign Office and, in the latter period, to the colonial office, ensured a large degree of coordination for the optimal functioning of the colonial system. This was important in relation to the asymmetrical relationship between the rulers and the indigenous peoples. Peace in the territories depended very much on the prudent management of this type of inter-group relations.

Discourses specified alterity and guaranteed that by means of social spacing in the colonies, a significant “other,” quite different from the Europeans, would gradually emerge. Race would,
in turn, become an identifiable marker of difference. It was the
medium through which alterity could be sufficiently regulated
regardless of the region. In colonial Nigeria, attempts at social
spacing were not as overt and concerted as in East and south-
ern Africa. This paper maintains that while other factors were
involved, race also played a crucial role in creating difference as
reflected in the policy of residential segregation, particularly in
colonial Lagos.

On the basic pattern of thought that formed the back-
ground to the segregation principles noted in the British colonies,
Perham observed that “the British immigrants . . . drew a rigid line
between themselves and the natives. They meant to retain both
the political control and also the purity of their blood.” Although
there were variations in the intensity of implementing this politi-
cal and biological supremacy in several British colonies in Africa,
there is little to argue about its execution in East, Central and
Southern Africa. Writing specifically on the British administra-
during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Welsh
noted that “the segregationist policies of post union South African
government owed much to the system of African administration
which was created in Natal (by the British).” It can therefore be
argued that the residential racial segregationist practices in Brit-
ish colonies were reflections of the general system in both Africa
and Asia. Constructions of race were constitutive of what may be
called white socio-spatial epistemology.

In line with the above, racial segregationist practices were
also reflected in colonial Nigeria as can be seen from some colo-
nial reports examined in this study. This study thus urges scholars
to look beyond the colonial medical theory used to justify resi-
dential segregation in West Africa and, rather, to investigate the
hidden rationale on which such policies were based, especially
during Lugard’s administration. It also outlines the significance
and legacy of this aspect of colonial practice for inter-racial rela-
tionships and contemporary social landscaping. The time frame
is significant because it was coeval with Lugard’s tenure of office
in Northern and Southern Nigeria. It also covers the periods
before and after the official amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914.
Although officials elsewhere in the colony had ideas of how
to implement this policy, Lugard was the chief formulator and
implementer of residential segregation — at first in the North,
but later in amalgamated Nigeria. By interrogating his real intentions, readers will arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the imperial mindset.

**Colonial Spacing and Alterity: The Problematic**

Long before British colonial rule was established in Africa, the intellectual climate in the anthropological discipline during the mid-nineteenth century conditioned the relationship between the British personnel and the indigenous peoples. This period was suffused in radical deterministic theories widely anchored on the belief that the non-white peoples were bio-culturally inferior to Caucasians. Such ideas were intricately intertwined with the very existence of anthropology in its formative years. The racialism peddled by this intellectual stance in Britain was given an official stamp by men like James Hunt, who made strong impressions on the merchants, missionaries and colonial administrators that came into Africa in the 1860s and after. It must be noted that Britain did not hold a monopoly on such views, as they found their equivalent in Germany and France and other parts of mainland Europe at that time. Also, under the commanding influence of Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin, history was steadily “biologized,” thereby furnishing the basis for this raciology. The contribution of these racial doctrines to the rise of African separatist churches in Nigeria is one legacy discussed elsewhere by academics. In the administrative sector, one major area that the doctrine found visible expression was in residential segregation. Residential segregation in Nigeria thus created the type of alterity reminiscent of the divisions and “otherness” in East, Central and South African colonies.

Under various colonial administrations in Lagos, attempts were made quite early and in a variety of ways to answer the question of where Europeans, mostly government officials, should live. This problem arose in the first instance because, given the crowded settlement pattern already in existence on the island even before the cession of the territory to Britain in 1861, Europeans in Lagos had to live near Africans. Although the non-separation of African and European residences was not in tune with the general policy of residential segregation that the colonial administrations sought to introduce in the territory, there was no available land on which they could develop separate European residential areas.
This was a nagging problem that caused concerns in official circles. Lugard later described the situation in which European and African habitations were intermixed as “an obviously undesirable arrangement.”

Even though the official implementation of racial segregation policy by Lugard was new, the idea of the practice was not; previous administrators before Lugard tried to officially implement it but failed. The climate that nurtured the policy was one in which British missionaries, officials and merchants of the period had been well steeped. For instance, as early as 1879, European traders in Brass had insisted on segregating themselves from the indigenous peoples. Thus, the twelfth article of the Revised Code of Commercial Regulations had stipulated that “no native has a right to come or make use of any place within a mile-equaling 18 fathoms of any European Beach.” This stipulation, then strongly contested by the indigenous traders, had repercussions not only in the commercial sphere but also in the general area of social relationships, which were by these measures of exclusiveness imposed by the foreigners on the indigenous peoples. The attendant resentment contributed to violent reactions that culminated in what has now been known as the “Akassa Raid.”

These commercial regulations in Brass were early evidence of a policy of segregation that was applied generally and in a more sustained manner as Nigeria was colonized.

The first resolute plan to cope with the problems of appropriating areas suitable for European residences in Lagos was devised by Governor McCallum. It is not exactly clear how long McCallum’s plan was incubated, but by 1899, separating the European officials from the rest of Lagos’s population had become so necessary that “he was prepared to ferry them [his officers] backwards and forwards morning and evening” since at that time, there was no bridge spanning the lagoon. His plan was to remove his officers from the island and relocate their residences in Yaba on the mainland. McCallum’s transfer to Newfoundland, an event unconnected with his Yaba project, put an end to this early proposal. It did not, however, affect the general policy on segregation that Governor McGregor, McCallum’s successor, still subscribed to, even though he abandoned the proposed cumbersome solution of ferrying officials back and forth across the lagoon. Again, under the new governor, Harley Moseley, the colonial secretary in Lagos, thought of an entirely new segregation plan in which the
administration was to be moved from Lagos to allow for the erection of residences for Europeans at Oloko Meji Hills about ninety miles from Lagos. Dr. Strachan, the Chief Medical Officer for the colony, gave his approval of the site chosen by Moseley since this area possessed such desirable qualities as high altitude and an agreeable temperature. Moreover, it had “a delightful pure air and a rich vegetable soil.” Although the proposal for Oloko Meji Hills was elaborate and apparently had the support of various other arms of government, like the McCallum “Yaba Plan” before it, it also could not be implemented. One major obstacle to implementation was a shortage of money. The movement from Lagos Island would have entailed a large expenditure since the proposed site did not have the basic infrastructure to cater the European population and the African personnel as would be required in the general locality. In addition, given the situation where European officials were ministered to by the indigenous people, the practicality of a total break in contact has always been in doubt. There was a realization that as European officials were being planned for, arrangements should also be made to provide for the appropriate level of African staff no matter how rudimentarily. This consideration multiplied the financial and logistic demands posed by the proposed relocation. In these circumstances, it was clear that an administration that could not afford to take the census of districts of the colony during the 1901 Lagos census would most likely not be able to fund the massive movement of European officials that the Oloko Meji plan entailed.

Although the second attempt also fizzled out, the general policy stipulating segregation was not abandoned. On the contrary, the influx of both European and African officials into Lagos around 1906 due to administrative reorganizations required by the amalgamation of the colony of Lagos and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, lent greater urgency to the issue of residential racial segregation. This issue was considered so important that in spite of other competing problems, Governor Egerton gave detailed coverage in his letter to Lyttleton, the Colonial Secretary, during the amalgamation of the Colony of Lagos and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1906. The guidelines for Southern Nigeria were provided by the European Reservation Proclamation of 1902 and the Order No. 4 of 1906. Despite these guidelines, it
was still difficult to appropriate land in Lagos on which European reservation areas could be set up.

Granted, the scarcity of land restrained the administrations to predicate the establishment of new projects on the reclamation of land from the surrounding swamps.24 However, there were other considerations. What might have looked like a solution to the problem of population density — which made the creation of European reservation area in Lagos Island impossible — was the displacement of the indigenous populations and the expropriation of their land. That line of action was hardly conceivable. The various administrations had realized quite early that to acquire any inhabited area of Lagos, which then was virtually the whole island, the administrators had to contend with a vocal and articulate African elite.25 In addition, there was what an official described as “a perturbation among the natives [of Lagos] over the acquisition of land required for administrative purposes.”26 These problems arose because, as Moseley observed in 1900, even though “there is a growing demand for land among the natives . . . they will not go afield.”27

Given the administration’s resolve to implement the European reservations policy in Lagos and the determination of the African population to oppose the alienation of land on which their residences were already built, a plan was made to reclaim uninhabited swamp areas. One of the areas to be reclaimed was the Kokomaiko swamps, south of Lagos. The reclamation of this site in 1905 made available some land for European reservation in areas previously unoccupied by the African population, but it eased the pressure only a little.28 Nevertheless, the Ordinance No. 16 of 1908 made further contributions to the implementation of the European reservation schemes by opening up the Ikoyi Lands, which later became synonymous with the European reservation zone in Lagos.29

The Lugard Era, 1912–1919

The general situation regarding European reservation or residential areas in Lagos was still unsettled when Lugard succeeded Egerton as Governor of Southern Nigeria in 1912. He later became the governor of amalgamated Nigeria in 1914. Of all the governors of colonial Nigeria, Lugard developed the clearest framework for residential segregation along racial lines. He not only worked
out the operational guidelines for implementation but also formulated the rationale for the policy as it spread throughout the colony. Working independently of the South, and specifically in a Lagos-centered context, Lugard had earlier drawn up an elaborate policy in connection with Northern Nigeria. From the start of his tenure in the South, he perceived the efforts of his predecessors with respect to the reservation of areas for Europeans as puny. For him, the then-situation on the Lagos Island was intolerable. In the first place, the island was congested in terms of its physical layout. Also, the population was densely packed. The general overcrowding led Lugard to appreciate fully that “segregation is impossible in so densely populated an area where [...] the Europeans and natives are already so hopelessly intermixed.” Although both the Kokomaiko and Ikoyi areas had been opened, they did not provide Lugard the scope to effect changes of the magnitude he wished on the island. However, Lugard hoped to bring about a situation conforming to the specific rules “as leases fall in, or as merchants (non-Africans) in the interests of their employees (who face risks on their behalf) are content to utilize their existing leasehold solely on non-residential premises.” The Liverpool and Manchester Chambers of Commerce were contacted on this issue as it concerned their European employees, and they pledged their cooperation toward the speedy implementation of this general plan to facilitate residential segregation in Lagos.

The “risks” which Lugard mentioned in his memorandum as being faced by European employees fell under two major headings. Together these “risks” constituted the rationale that underlay the policy in Nigeria and reinforced the idea of separateness. The first of these headings were sanitary conditions. Sanitary and health conditions were the foundations of arguments for the spatializing of the colonies in West Africa. From the very first contact with Europe, West Africa had been known as a tropical zone that posed serious threat to European lives because of mosquitoes. However, West Africans living along the coastal areas had since the fifteenth century mingled with the British in relative ease despite the mosquitoes. The policy of residential segregation was apparently informed by the 1897 discovery that the female anopheles mosquito was the carrier, or vector, of malaria. This malarious nature of tropical West Africa was evident in Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and Nigeria. In fact, Sierra
Leone was reputedly the most malarious region in the British Empire. In 1898, Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain wrote to the Royal Society to seek its advice on how to control and prevent this disease in West Africa. Upon the aegis of the Malaria Investigating Committee of the Royal Society, it was recommended that European segregation from the indigenous peoples should be adopted as a preventive measure. In Sierra Leone, Dr. William Prout bluntly stated in 1900 that “we advocated segregation from the native.” On Lagos specifically, the Official Sanitary Report of 1887 had called attention to the alluvial nature of this tropical island that “could not be otherwise than malarious.” The argument held that Africans (especially children) were primary “hosts” for malaria parasites and sometimes yellow fever. In such a situation, it was argued, proximity of European to African residential areas meant undue exposure of Europeans to certain dangers, whereas it was believed that Africans could live with the malarial parasites, which were said to be lethal to Europeans. It was also argued, albeit erroneously, that the “native”, particularly children, were the main carriers of malaria and that since the resources to tackle the ailment was minimal, the only remedy was to segregate Europeans from the natives. Even though heavily parasitized African children and asymptomatic adults — rather than mosquitoes — represented the greatest danger to Europeans, many governors realized the dangers of such segregationist policies and warned against the move. Governor William MacGregor of Lagos opposed the policy of segregation on health grounds and argued that it would lead to a social divide in the colony and attendant racial problems. As a medical doctor and British health administrator, he believed that separation of the colony along racial lines would not necessarily eradicate the source of the contamination. Reacting to the policy, McGregor reports:

It is strongly recommended in certain competent quarters that to get away from infected mosquitos (sic), Europeans should live at places apart from the natives. This may be called the academic view. From the administrative point of view it is an unacceptable doctrine. The academic view is ungenerous, and would afford no radical remedy were it practicable, which it is not. The policy followed in Lagos in this as in other matters is to take the native along with the European on the way leading to improvement. Here they cannot live apart nor should work apart and they not
try to do so. Separation would mean that little, or at least less, would be done for the native, and the admitted source of infection would remain perennial. To simply protect the European from fever here would make Lagos the great commercial port that it should become. What we can do in this matter for the uneducated part of the Lagos population will be effected chiefly by reclaiming the swamps and administering quinine.\textsuperscript{38}

While highlighting the administrative dangers of segregation, MacGregor also advocated a health program that would ensure the containment of the threat of malaria in the colony through the introduction of sanitation courses, hygiene culture and free distribution of quinine. Despite his efforts at improving the sanitary conditions in Lagos, his humanitarian appeal would not fully materialize, as succeeding governors jettisoned his initiatives.

In his pursuit of “sanitary segregation scheme”, McGregor’s immediate successor Governor Egerton authorized the displacement of about 350 Africans from their substantive homes in the Race Course to accommodate European officials. As predicted, this led to significant discontent and harmful resentment by the indigenous peoples who felt that they were being forced out of the desirable areas of Lagos. They widely expressed their dissatisfaction with this policy through petitions and the press and in some cases, social protests. According to Udiagwu, such refusal amounted to a denial of the traditional rights of the people and he petitioned the Acting Resident Commissioner to ensure that their rights as “both subjects of the Crown and citizens of their land be protected.”\textsuperscript{39} Petitions were a means to assert rights by the local petitioners who in their petitions emphasized communal or family rather than individual rights even though they did not fully grasp the concepts of English common law and liberties. It was also a strategy to elicit a more favorable response from the authorities. However, these reactions barely worried the British, who continued to advance and reinforce the housing segregation scheme. By 1909, the blueprint for the scheme was laid down in a joint conference of the Principal Medical Officers of the British West African colonies in which all Europeans were required to live in special reservations separated from the nearest African dwelling by at least 400 yards.\textsuperscript{40} Despite the administrative efforts, this blueprint was not fully adopted or implemented by governors on humanitarian grounds.
It was Lugard who would later advance the cause of racial segregation by relying on the medical theory of diseases and their threat to European lives. This was the perfect smokescreen for him to implement his highly celebrated segregation policy. It was claimed that the isolation of the European sick was futile if Europeans and Africans continued to live near each other. The infections would continue to be transmitted.” \(^{41}\) In spite of this claim, the available figures on mortality rates of Europeans on the island fail to show that the Europeans as a racial group suffered more in the pre-segregation days than after.\(^ {42}\) With his emergence as Governor of Nigeria in 1914, Lugard initiated several segregation schemes in Nigeria, starting with Lagos. He created the “Reservations” through the Town Council Ordinance of 1915, and he also attempted to make segregation compulsory in Nigeria through the Second Town Council Ordinance in 1917. According to 59(b) of the Ordinance, a European was liable to pay a fine or imprisonment if he lived in a non-European sector.\(^ {43}\) Although Lugard anchored his argument for segregation on the protection of the health of Europeans from diseases, he saw nothing fundamentally wrong with racial segregation in Nigeria. Even if such a comparison favored the post-segregation period, it would be hard to attribute the difference to segregation since the later period also witnessed other measures as the introduction of more effective medication, better houses and extensive use of wire gauze in European residences. These health benefits were extended only to British officers and not to the general populace, thus highlighting the culture of social spacing and racially motivated alterity. Even so, the notoriety of Lagos town made strict adherence of this scheme extremely difficult, if not nearly impossible. Lagos was a melting pot of Europeans and Africans and had been an established contact point long before colonial rule. So, any attempt at residential segregation along any lines whatsoever would hardly be successful. With the unpopularity of this scheme in Lagos, Lugard had to look to new towns to actualize his policy. This led to the establishment of Zungeru in northern Nigeria as the capital of the colony.

Again, Lugard restated the medical theory and other considerations when he was weighing the factors associated with the sites of new towns. In choosing Zungeru, he was impressed by the ample and excellent water supply and its potential for hydroelectric power, which would thereby enhance the sanitary qualities
of the town. It was further recommended that the setting would enable Europeans to live in a specific locality since “long distance in the sun are apt to try Europeans.” Also, for sanitary reasons, the site chosen should not be windward of any swamp area. In northern Nigeria, separate quarters were developed for the Europeans with no social contacts between them and the local Muslim population. The Muslim inhabitants themselves were quite comfortable with the arrangement since they feared that proximity to Europeans would jeopardize their religion. In relation to this segregation, a close reading of sources demonstrates that Lugard’s actions were not purely for health or medical reasons. Rather, they were largely informed by the pervasive racial thinking that dominated the period. Hence, much to the pleasure of Lugard, the medical theory was taken by Colonial Office medical authorities and reinterpreted in a racial context in order to promote and justify residential segregation.

Security and protection provided the second major heading for the rationale articulated by Lugard in the implementation of residential racial segregation. In addition to posing some dangers to the health of Europeans, rambling settings were difficult to defend in cases of emergency. They were not economical, nor were they conducive to efficient management. This precarious situation represents what Anne Philips refers to as “the enigma of colonialism” for the British in West Africa. Above all, bent on avoiding the complications of local African politics, Lugard would not allow any large indigenous population within the European areas, as this did not secure “civil repose.” Indeed, the health of the Europeans impacted administrative efficiency. It can be argued that an economic rationale entailed assigning monetary value to the lives and health of British officials in the colony. This enigma was heightened by the fact that West Africa was too expensive for the British, and its general “unhealthiness” threatened to eliminate the few resources and personnel on the ground. In relation to this point, an English judge visiting West Africa reflecting on the cost impact of the malarial disease writes: “The Fever Demon has compelled us to double, aye, often to treble, our executive staff in our West African possessions. It has caused civilization and trade alike to stagnate over wide areas; it has retarded the opening up of vast tracts of rich and fertile country; and has cost the Empire many millions of pounds sterling to hold in even partial check.” Thus,
it was thought that an exclusive improvement in European health and living conditions would entail fewer replacement workers or even fewer unscheduled passages to England for invalid persons who frequently traveled for medical treatments.

Along these lines came the issue of fire outbreaks among the African population discussed under the heading of protection. This was probably a constant feature in Lagos Island long before Lugard arrived in what became Nigeria. This type of disaster was the subject of the Ordinance published on April 9, 1863, almost over 20 years before the formal colonization of Africa and half a century before Lugard assumed the top position in Lagos. Some measures were taken to contain the danger even before the onset of the twentieth century, yet it persisted. However, Lugard’s measures showed no desperation toward the elimination of these outbreaks for the entire island populated by both Africans and Europeans. Rather, his solution was to ensure that by judicious planning, any further outbreaks in African areas did not reach the European reservations. Although Lugard had been aware of several of these fires, the one that he clinched his argument on was the outbreak that consumed the Royal Niger Company’s property in Burutu, southern Nigeria. Lugard attributed the cause of that disaster to the propensity of the Africans to cook in open fire. In further consideration of the security and protection of European lives in a situation where they were hopelessly outnumbered, the official guidelines devised by Lugard ensured that police and soldier barracks were built between the native towns and the Europeans’ quarters. This militarized buffer zone was an additional guarantee that any uprising by Africans would first break through the armed cordon to reach European reservations. This zone also freed much vegetation, as Lugard stipulated, and served as a break retarding the spread of fire. Even though neither Lugard nor the other officials stated this openly, residential racial segregation was the underlying subtle force that enabled the administration to shield the European population against the prying eyes and attendant comments of the locals. Given the asymmetrical relationship inherent in the colonial structure, the colonial officials could ill afford such closeness to the local people.

The creation of special “European Quarters” as they were widely known all over Nigeria followed the rules carefully laid down by Lugard. These rules effectively eliminated objections that
had been raised against earlier schemes. According to Lugard’s plan marshaled out in the *Amalgamation Report* and later in the *Dual Mandate in Tropical Africa*:

All townships (should be) divided into a European and a native quarter, separated by non-residential area of a quarter of a mile in breadth, which extends around the former. This belt is kept clear of undergrowth, and may be used for recreation and parade grounds, and even for garden allotments in which high growing crops are not allowed. Non-residential buildings may be erected upon it such as churches, court house, stores, etc.; provided they do not impair its utility as a fire break, on the side of the native quarter. Europeans may not reside in the close vicinity of a township (African) but must live in the European reservation, where the amenities of pure water supply and public protection are as far as possible available.\(^{51}\)

The idea of a dividing belt of definite specification separating the native quarters from the European reservations was further underlined in a subsequent proposal by Lugard to move the capital of Southern Nigeria from Lagos to Yaba.\(^{52}\) One of the advantages of the choice of Yaba as a new capital was the possibility of allowing the administration to build “the native reservation of the new township between the European reservation and Lagos.”\(^{53}\) When completed, the native reservation was to provide quarters for the police and military, thus ensuring the security of the Europeans and protecting them against the other hazards that Lugard associated with proximity to native residence.\(^{54}\)

Since Lagos was an old town whose character had been set even before the establishment of colonial administration, it was difficult to implement residential segregation on the island. With newer areas opened and swamps reclaimed, the plans were more easily executable. This was especially true in the case of newer towns, which presented fewer problems than Lagos. Thus, in places like Port-Harcourt, European reservation areas were clearly carved out according to Lugard’s plan. As far as Lugard was concerned, the formation and development of these new towns satisfied him. The new developments fitted into his grand scheme, which, according to him, was “practically a *tabula rasa* to work upon and the task of laying out a new town, in most cases, an easy and interesting one.”\(^{55}\)
Apart from Lagos, another old town, Lokoja, which Lugard had inherited from the Royal Niger Company as an administrative center, featured prominently in the implementation of residential segregation policy in Nigeria. As already noted, despite the “growing necessity for some practical scheme of segregation of Europeans,” Lugard neither was able to implement his plans in Lagos as he had them on paper nor could he abandon Lagos entirely, since it had some redeeming grace. Lokoja, the Northern capital at the beginning of the twentieth century, was in a totally different position. There was the issue of frequent violent storms that the Europeans could not live with. Compounding this disadvantage that Lokoja had was the actual state of the European settlement inherited from the Royal Niger Company. Lugard complained bitterly about these problems, as they affected administrative efficiency. In tackling them, he not only moved the quarters of the civilian officials from the native township, but he also proposed to gradually move the whole “native town” to a site 6 to 7 miles downstream. The European settlement emerging from this reorganization would be built “further from the river on higher ground, and with as aspect to catch the prevailing breeze.” These measures, however, became unnecessary since by the time they were embarked upon it was decided to abandon Lokoja and move the capital of Northern Nigeria to Zungeru. However, by 1912, Zungeru had reached the limits of its possibility and had to be abandoned in that same year. Nonetheless, Zungeru still had a more elaborate European residential layout.

In his amplification of the reply to the Dispatch No. 172 of June 23, 1913, from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lugard reiterated the general layout for the segregation scheme. Referring in this instance to the proposed site at Birinawa that should replace Zungeru, not only as the capital of Northern Nigeria but also to be considered on account of its centrality as the capital of Nigeria. Lugard mapped out the locations thus: “There will be a European town situated on the high ground on the left bank of the river, a native town situated on the right bank, and a town for native officials situated on the same side of the river adjoining the native town. Local laborers, whether employed in the capital itself or in the railway shops and yards, will live in the native town.” On why he proposed to place the native town and the native officials’ town on the opposite site of the river, Lugard stated clearly that it
was “in order to segregate the natives from any contact with the Europeans.” Herein lies the core of alterity, as Lugard created a colonial sphere that marked the indigenous peoples as the “other” separate from the officials. Lugard never really wanted any physical contact with the natives in the first place. His dispatch letter offered no clear reason whatsoever for this segregation scheme except that he wanted to separate the local people from the Europeans. The medical or security reasons were not even emphasized in his letter, and an analysis of that letter shows that he was keen to separate the people from the colonial officials for reasons based on biological racial superiority.

After Lugard, successive colonial administrations in Nigeria were better equipped with plans and specifications to implement residential segregation all over the country. Subsequent implementation varied in details according to geographical settings, for all areas were not exactly like Birinawa, which had “illimitable space of unoccupied land.” There emerged categories of towns comprising European cantonments for British officials exclusive of any Africans — alien towns developed for non-indigenes or “non-natives” who accommodated the missionaries, traders and other immigrants — and the regular towns and villages of the indigenous peoples, which were cut off from the earlier mentioned towns. These exclusive towns of the British officials became the Government Reservation Areas, while the towns reserved for “non-natives” developed into what will be later known as the sabon gari and tudun wada (new towns) in Northern Nigeria. The exclusive European quarters were modeled after Victorian living and became the start of a legacy of segregating residential settlements in Nigeria. The existence of the old European reservation areas of European Quarters in all the major towns attests to the ubiquity of the policy and the extent to which it was implemented. What was created by the colonial administration for the comfort and protection of the Europeans was turned into the Government Reservation Areas in the postcolonial period. There also emerged a new elite class of residents who maintained and exacerbated the economic and infrastructural disparity between their residential areas and the places where the bulk of the other “common” populations lived.
Impact of Colonial Spacing and Residential Segregation

Residential segregation as implemented by the various colonial administrations was significant. Firstly, it represented the first instance of widespread legislated rules guiding residential living in colonial Nigeria. This form of residential segregation as official policy is different from the conscious and voluntary clustering of individuals and groups, which, as Wirth observed, is based solely on the desire to maximize the advantages inherent in shared value system and norms, a common cultural identity and religious beliefs. All these can be reinforced by spatial proximity. This latter type of residential segregation based on voluntarism is observable in most cities, traditional and modern, but different from the type of residential segregation practiced by the colonial administration in Nigeria. The racial segregation implemented during the period under consideration was similar to what was attainable in east-central and southern Africa.

Secondly, as elsewhere in Africa, legislated residential segregation along racial lines was part of the general strategy for subordinating the more populous indigenous populations of the colonies to the ruling colonial and commercial class of administrative and settler Europeans. It was, therefore, a judicious application of proxemics toward the maintenance of the super-ordinate/subordinate relationship between the rulers and the ruled. In this sense, it constituted a vital mechanism of control that shielded the ruling group and reinforced the position of the indigenous peoples as subordinates. Consequently, the ruling group had to be separate from the subordinate group since the former was also biologically and racially superior to the latter. Such separateness could only be attained through residential segregation.

Thirdly, legislated residential segregation constituted a major, though subtle, form of racial discrimination. This interpretation is significant especially when one considers the fact that the terrains reserved for Europeans were the choicest areas both in terms of location and natural endowments. This was a pattern that characterized the British settlements in East and Central Africa. Moreover, these areas commanded significant superior amenities through the planned allocation of resources to “priority” areas. For Nigeria, the special attention paid to the European reservation areas led to conspicuous variations in the development of
urban centers, since development programs and the locations of facilities were quite often aimed at satisfying the European residential areas first, and sometimes exclusively. An example of this strategy was seen in the attempt by the administration to solve the persistent problems of sewage disposal in Lagos. In that regard, the Egerton administration felt satisfied when the “dry earth and pans” system was inaugurated only in the European quarters in 1907, while the rest of Lagos continued with the old system of emptying the pans into the sea or near the mouths of large rivers. This type of restricted and ad hoc attitude to the solution of problems later complicated the situation in most urban areas in Nigeria right into the postcolonial period. For Lagos especially, it led to such frustration that only the relocation of the Federal Capital could ease pressure on the inadequate facilities.

During the colonial regime, race and social class always interacted. Legislated residential segregation based on race was a measure that combined with class factors to perform what Wallman identified as “the aggregating function which allows individuals to be lumped together in objectively differentiated groups.” Thus, the two main segments of the population were integrated vertically as well as horizontally within their respective residential areas. By this scheme, Europeans and Africans formed two monolithic groups, each identified by its area of residence determined by the color of the population. This type of legislated segregation, therefore, constituted the European and African populations into two closed groups between whose residential areas hardly any spatial mobility was allowed. Once fully developed, the European reservation areas, with better infrastructural arrangements and amenities, such as special European hospitals, water supply, fresh air, security, drainage, and sewage facilities, became the residential zones coveted by emergent African elite who perceived themselves as successors to the colonial ruling group. Even though policies and procedures for residential segregation coincided with the dominant racialist sentiments of the Victorian era, it would be quite unfair to claim that such tendencies alone were directly responsible for the emergence of these new segregated towns in Nigeria. The tensions occasioned by intense imperial rivalries in Africa were also becoming a threat to the British Empire and Nigeria, which was Britain’s most important West African colony. With the British Empire in Africa lacking enough
The urgency to protect the few officials on the ground, especially against disasters and potential protests, was heightened by a sense of anxiety that underlined British colonial practices. This anxiety was rooted in the precariousness of the British position as a small ruling elite in colonial Nigeria. This ruling elite was outnumbered and had to contend with perceived and actual threats to their existence in the colony. As a result, keeping separate from the local population became a means to contain the situation and maintain difference. At the same time, it is too narrow-minded to claim that these anxieties were solely responsible for the formulation and implementation of residential segregation in Nigeria. While these anxieties appeared real, what seemed to be the driving force behind this policy was the racial superiority of the Europeans over the Africans. Therefore, any threat to their existence was a threat to their superiority. This was heightened by Lugard's resolve not to have "any contact with the native population" despite the fact that such resolve was impracticable. What could be concluded here is that the attention paid to residential segregation underlined the imperial intentions to steer the ships in a more efficient, protective style. It mattered less if steering this colonial ship resulted in racial and spatial divisions or if it even offended the sensibilities of the colonized indigenous peoples.

In connection with residential segregation in the city, Wirth noted the tendency of segregated areas created by edicts and legislations to persist as exclusive areas even when the formal legislation that brought these residential areas into being is annulled. This was the case with the European reservation areas in Nigeria. In this situation, however, there is the modification that race, which formed the main basis for residential segregation during the colonial period, has receded into the background, leaving economic and class criteria as bases for the perpetuation of residential segregation. Even so, the rigid nature of the residential racial segregation pattern was not attenuated by Lugard's argument that "the policy does not impose any restriction on one race which is not applicable to the other" or that "a European is as strictly prohibited from living in European quarter." It has been suggested by Thompson and Butler, in relation to residential racial segregation in South Africa, that minimized contact between the races produces the "psychological rewards of prescribed and
formalized interaction: and that in so far as the rules removed ambiguity, the likelihood of Blacks experiencing capricious treatment at the hands of the whites is diminished and inter-ethnic contact is stabilized.” Stated in another way, Thomson and Butler’s viewpoints suggests that this type of legislated residential segregation eliminated the dangers inherent in the competition between the races so segregated. Such views would have the semblance of validity if the resources of the state were evenly distributed between the areas designated for the various groups kept apart. Since this was never the case in states where legislated residential segregation existed, the central objection remains that invariably legislated residential segregation perpetuated racial, economic, social, and political inequalities, which exacerbates the inter-racial antagonism, mutual fear and resentment which Thomas and Butler suggest that it curbs.

Conclusion

After Lugard’s detailed guidelines with respect to residential segregation, and especially those instituting the European reservation areas, all that was left for his success was the application of the general principle wherever Europeans lived in Nigeria. Lagos, Lokoja and a few old towns where these principles had to be introduced gradually presented some problems to the implementation of this policy. Newer towns were easier to handle. In general, as the layout of the reservation — the location of the police station and army barracks in relation to these reservations — indicates, the European residential reservation areas were designed with a view to provide protection against the subordinate Africans. The architects of residential segregation intended the layout to provide protection not only against such groups of people but also against diseases that they associated with Africans. Hence, it was the medical reason behind segregation that was most articulately publicized as the leading cause of housing segregation. However, as Lugard would demonstrate, the race factor must be considered in an analysis of this nature.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the West African region was labeled totally malarious, and the preventive measure was segregation of housing, which Lugard actively advocated. Even so, the methods of controlling the disease — sanitation
measures, hygiene courses, introduction of quinine, drainage of swamps, insect elimination — had the possibility of benefitting both Africans and their European populations. Unfortunately, these recommendations were rejected by the Colonial Office. Lugard even blamed the sanitary condition of the Lagos colony on race, assuming that Africans were too lazy to look after their own comfort and thus unable to keep a city clean. So, rather than adopting the above-stated measures, housing segregation became the ultimate choice, which only benefitted the Europeans. With lush Victorian-style living in these newly segregated quarters, it was easily imagined that health was synonymous with comfort, and even as the latter was always pitted against the former, it was comfort that eventually won. This demonstrates the uneasy constructions of social spacing and alterity.

As a coordinated policy, residential racial segregation in Nigeria was one of the offshoots of the racialist anthropological conditioning that colonial officials were subjected to in preparation for their task in Africa, especially from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. This is a plausible conclusion, even though the British Empire was also fighting tighter control of its empire in Africa and protection of its officials amidst the increased imperial rivalries and tensions that existed at the time. Under this intellectual and tense atmosphere, the need to base the policy on proof was hardly felt. One can only wonder about the outcome had general sanitary measure been adopted or improvements initiated in the housing conditions of Africans and Europeans alike. The scientific medical intellectualism provided the lever for launching residential segregation based on race. The time and place were just ripe for such segregation to occur. Although the African populations were not consulted, their leaders eventually turned the policy to their advantage following the end of colonial rule. After all, these layouts were equipped with amenities that are irresistible to any powerful elite social class, new or old. In all the places where the policy was implemented, the residential segregation pattern formed the nucleus of most Government Reservation Areas popularly known as G.R.A., which were later appropriated by the Nigerian elite as part of the prerequisites securing them as successors of the European colonial regime. As a consequence, residential segregation in Nigeria produced undesirable fruits that affected the prospects and quality of life among residents. Even more alarming was the fact that the
seeds of crises in postcolonial Nigeria were sown by this sort of precedent set by British officials. The coincidence of this alterity reached its height in the politics of residential racial segregation in colonial Nigeria. Colonial alterity represented a difference whose maintenance depended much upon new constructions of social and spatial demarcations reflecting the predominant “white socio-spatial” epistemology of the period. The production, reconstruction and representation of space in colonial Nigeria became the principal reference points for the spatial imaginary of the postcolonial urban landscape. Hence, the spatial topography of the post-colonial Nigerian city embodied the colonial imagery of difference where the new indigenous ruling class found themselves inheriting these choicest living areas and the rest of the citizens in the less-than-ideal living areas. Armed with the colonial legacy of exploitation and difference, most of the colonial policies that favored the new ruling class were either retained or slightly modified to give them the privilege they would enjoy for years to come. It is in the light of this interrogation that the colonial administration throws renewed insights into the racial constructions of space, belonging, and difference. These constructions became part of Nigeria’s historical and contemporary geopolitical imaginations.

Notes


2 Evidence of this fact is rife in the *Colonial Reports* covering areas that later became part of the amalgamated Nigeria. For evidence of such reports in Northern Nigeria, see, for instance, *Colonial Annual Report for Northern Nigeria* (CARNN), no. 346 (1900-01), 6; also *Colonial Annual Report for Northern Nigeria* (CARNN) no. 704 (1910-11), 23. For Southern Nigeria, see the *Colonial Annual Report for Southern Nigeria* (CARSN) 1905, 134; *Colonial Annual Report, Southern Nigeria*, no. 554 (1904), 44. Also, *Colonial Annual Report for Nigeria*
(CARN) no. 878 (1910), 37; and The Report on the Amalgamation 1912-19, Sec. 57 (b). Colonial Reports for this paper were collected from the National Archives, Enugu, and the National Archives, Kaduna, both in Nigeria.


5 Noyes, Colonial Space, 86.


7 The term “alterity” can be defined as “the quality or state of being other.” This term is preferred to similar concepts, such as “difference” or “otherness,” because its recent use in social and cultural theory connotes the ways in which differences are socially and historically produced. However, for purposes of clarity, references may be made to the “other.”


12 James Hunt was the President of the Anthropological Society of London, founded in 1863. A major proponent of scientific racism, Hunt believed that discoveries in science were not purely of scientific importance but also, had significant political and social ramifications. He was instrumental in making Victorian racism and the idea of racial inequality “common knowledge.” Ronald

One of the pioneers who examined this legacy is E.A. Ayandele. In his book, titled The Missionary Impact on Northern Nigeria, 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis (London: Longman, 1966), he traces the effect of this racialized conditioning on the early Nigerian missionary setting.

Colonial Annual Report for Lagos. No. 348 (1900-1901), HMSO, 12 and 15.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Colonial Annual Report for Southern Nigeria. No. 554 (1906), 44.

Colonial Annual Report for Lagos. No. 400 (1902), 15

Such newspapers as The Anglo-African, The Eagle and Lagos Critic and The Lagos Observer reflected early waves of the alertness of the African elite in Lagos. This was continued in succeeding period by The Lagos Times and The Lagos Weekly Record from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries.


Ibid. 18.


Ibid.

Lugard, Report on Amalgamation . . ., Section 56.

Ibid, Section 55.


Sanitary Report for Lagos, No. 20 (1887) C-5249-17, 5.


42 From the annual reports, the following were derived as death rate (per thousand) for the European group during the period, 1905-1912, inclusive: 29.23; 23; 16.50; 20.04; 23.89; 20.41; 20.28; and 31.29 respectively.
44 C. O. 583/4 para. 4. Dispatch to Right Honorable Lewis Harcourt, M. P., Secretary of State for the Colonies, July 14, 1913.
46 Dispatch to Right Honorable Lewis Harcourt.
48 The issue of fire outbreaks has been extensively discussed in Onyeka Nwanunobu’s essay entitled “Incendiary and Other Fires in Nineteenth Century Lagos (1863-1888),” Africa No. 60. 1 (1990): 11-120.
49 Lugard, The Dual Mandate, 148.
51 Lugard, The Dual Mandate, 148.
54 Lugard, The Dual Mandate, 148.
55 Lugard, Report on Amalgamation, Section 57(b).
58 Colonial Annual Report for Northern Nigeria. (1900-1901), No. 346.
59 Ibid.
60 C. O. 583/4. Despatch to Hon. Lewis Harcourt, M. P. Secretary of States for the Colonies, July 14, 1913.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 L. Wirth, “Racial Segregation in the City,” American Journal of Sociology XXXIV (July 1927): 204-212.
64 Colonial Annual Report for Southern Nigeria. No. 583 (1907), 27.
66 Wirth, “Racial Segregation in the City.”
67 Lugard, The Dual Mandate, 149.