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CONTRIBUTION TO WAR EFFORTS: A MENACE TO SOCIAL ORDER IN OSUN DIVISION OF WESTERN NIGERIA, 1939-1945

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ABSTRACT

Although no real battle was fought in Nigeria during the Second World War (1939-1945), the burden of the war was much felt by Nigerians. "Contribution to war effort" was therefore the name given to the coping strategy of the Allied powers. It was a method, through which the British shifted burden of the war onto their colonial subjects. This strategy had caught the attentions of many scholars, and various discussions have centered on its origin, purpose and operation at Nigeria wide level. This paper focuses the effects of the strategy on the Yoruba society with Osun Division as a case study. This restriction becomes imperative, in order to make in-depth study a possibility. The study adopts historical approach, which depends on written, oral, and archival sources. However, it is hoped that, impact of the Second World War on African social order would be better ascertained.

KEYWORDS: Second World War, Contribution to War Effort

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's contribution to Britain's war efforts was hardly articulated in various texts on colonial Nigeria. Existing literature have rather emphasized such issues as, the impact of the wars on Nigeria's political development, political integration and so on (Njoku, 1984:165). Although Nigerians have been contributing to British war effort, those of the Second World War era was more pronounced. In fact scholars have paid more attentions to the First World War. Indeed, scholars like Makinde and Njoku have shown how colonies demonstrated that they were capable of boosting the resources of the metropolis by their contribution to their master's war efforts through strenuous and sustained production at the agricultural, technical and bureaucratic levels (Njoku, 1987). For instance, a large number of people carried guns to fight the master's war and some paid the supreme sacrifice for a cause they did not probably understand (Olusanya, 1973).

All these have equally been written about the Second World War by a few scholars who showed interests in them. The trio of, Faluyi (1987), Njoku (1987) and Oyemakinde (2003) have demonstrated that African condition was worse during the Second World War.⁴ Hence it was a period when an average Nigerian was kept on duty for about 77 hours in a week. The worst were those who saw the active battle of which many never returned. However, a point to note was the secrecy with which the exploitation of these subject people was held. Annual reports of the period were very scanty as they did not carry the statistics of African contributions on the argument that, such information might fall into enemy's hand (Oyemakinde, 2003).

Second World War is being singled out for attention here because there is some coherent information in the archives on it. The restriction to Osun Division is to make the focus of the study sharper and more in-depth. As a deviation from the foregoing general norm, this study is therefore intended to be mindful of the effects of the various contributions

that people have made on their various social organizations like, family especially of the men contributed as soldiers, economy and some other value systems of the Yoruba people in Osun Division. It is however hoped that the study will make a great contribution to economic historical study.

Contribution to War Efforts in Osun Division

On 3rd September 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany due to her refusal to give up on her expansionist policy (Njoku, 1987:164). This was the second European war within a generation. This war also became a world war as the first one. Battle field scattered around the world globe thereby making countries from every continent to be involved in the conflict (Snellgrove, 1989:203). It soon became burdensome on Allied powers that strategies have to be mapped out on how to cope its various challenges. An important one in this regard was the shifting of the burden on to the colonial subject. *Ipso facto*, Nigerians were therefore made to contribute men, money and material particularly food and tropical agricultural produce which were in very acute demand by Britain (Oyemakinde, 2003:236). This was done in conformity with the bidding of His Majesty, King George VI who called people of the British empire to "stand calmly" from and united in the time of trial. The importance assumed by Nigeria was not unconnected with the British loss of the far eastern colonies in 1942- 43 (Adesina, 2002:18).

Contribution to war efforts in Nigeria was an initiative of Sir. Bernard Bourdillon, the Governor of Nigeria. It began as a follow up of a meeting of the seventy very powerful and influential figures, summoned on 16th September 1939 in Lagos under the chairmanship of the governor (Njoku, 1987:165). The seventy personalities at the meeting were carefully selected to reflect a cross-section of various communities and organisations across the country. According to Governor Bourdillon, the meeting was to explore ways and means by which the civilian population of Nigeria would assist victims of the war in Britain and other allied territories. Thus, mobilisation of economic and manpower resources was the preoccupation of the British government at the time. This affected the whole range of economic life and had to be reorganised both in Britain and in the colonial territories to meet the war time emergency (Hopkins, 1973:184). All the attendants at the meeting affirmed their loyalty and agreed with the urgency for such assistance as expressed by the governor. The meeting eventually succeeded in establishing the Nigerian War Relief Fund to which Nigerians contributed both in cash and in kind.¹

The contributions were made through the organogram of the British indirect rule system. For instance, local committees were set up at the various levels of the administrative ladder, the provinces, the divisions, and the clans. The residents were to oversee the provincial committees, while the Divisional Officers (DOs) were to supervise the divisional and clan committees. Subscriptions were to be sent to approved authorities and agencies. These included the residents, the commissioners of the colony in the case of Lagos and then districts or such person they may appoint, Local Government Treasuries and the British Bank of West Africa. The local committees had to liaise with the central committee which was the clearing house for the entire organization (Njoku, 1987:166).

Widest publicity was given to the fund, as all available news and propaganda media were exploited to the full by the organisers.² Posters were printed by both central and local committees and posted at strategic spots and popular resorts all over the country. The governor and other influential Nigerian personalities occasionally made radio broadcasts on the matter to all Nigerians inviting them to donate even their widow's mites to the fund.³

All sorts of entertainments such as dances, football matches, funfairs, raffle draws, e.t.c. were organised by private

groups as well as the local communities to raise funds.⁴ meanwhile, a new scheme had been tagged to the fund by the end of the 1940: the Mobile Canteen Scheme. This addition was a brainchild of the Secretary of state for the colonies. The secretary had asked if the government of Nigeria would assign a part of its relief fund for the purpose of mobile canteen to serve hot food and drinks to Londoners bombed out of their houses or compelled by the German air raid to spend long hours in shelters. This aerial bombing of London and other British cities, otherwise known as *Blitzkrieg*, continued sporadically throughout the war and caused heavy civilian casualties (Adesina, 2002:1). British colonial secretary therefore suggested that such canteen could bear the name of the donor's colony or the specific locality in the country from which the donation was made. The rationale was that such inscriptions on canteens would help to forge a close link between the donors and the recipients (Ajayi, 2014:102).

All these happened when the people were recovering from a long period of economic depression that was followed in the World War II era by a high demand for agricultural products in the metropolitan factories. The war witnessed economic recovery which lifted the price level and elevated the confidence of workers and farmers alike (Ajayi, 2014:195). But for the establishment of a system of controlled commodity marketing under the name "Marketing Board", the boom of the World War II era would have earned the farmers a high prosperity. As a matter of fact, Marketing Boards served as an intermediary market between the farmers of export crops and the ultimate purchasers of their products. This was done through the Licensed Buying Agents (LBA), who were commissioned to buy agricultural produce for the boards at the various buying stations at no less than the minimum prices set by the boards for the year. This had adverse effects on agricultural production as it weakened producers' incentives and limited output and employment generation in the sector (Walker, 2003:362).

Worse still, Nigerians were made to produce food crops parts of which they sold to "Pullen Market" in Lagos and donated as a way of contributing to war efforts respectivelly. Though Lagos being the capital was the centre of organised activities, it would be wrong to believe that the demonstrations of loyalty were limited only to Lagos. Traditional rulers, market women, and ordinary civilians in Osun Division also contributed substantially to various war and humanitarian funds such as:

- -Nigerian Ex-Servicemen's Benevolence Fund
- -British Red Cross Society
- -King George's Fund for Sailors
- -Saint Duncan's Fund for the Blind
- -Nigerian Forces Comfort Fund
- -Lord Mayor of London's Air Raid Relief Fund
- -Shipwrecked Mariners Benevolence Fund
- -Secretary of State Mobile Canteen Fund
- -Mrs. Churchill's Red Cross Aid for Russia
- -Royal Air force Benevolence Fund
- -African Troops' Welfare Burma

- -Red Cross Society (Nigeria Branch)
- -Merchant Navy Fund
- -Polish Relief Fund
- -Greek War Relief Fund
- -Help Holland Council
- -Accra Earth quake Relief Fund
- -Finnish Relief Fund
- -Wharf Inn Apapa
- -Nigerian Disabled Soldiers' Fund
- -Windcheater Leather Jacket Fund
- -Yugoslavia Relief Fund
- -Lady Cripp's Relief for China Fund
- -Salvation Army Fund
- -Lord Mayor of London's Air Relief Fund for Malta
- -Silver Thimble Fund
- -Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street
- -Relief of London Victims of Flying bombs
- -Purchase of Spitfire plane (Njoku, 1987:175).

In the enthusiastic support for the war, schoolchildren were not left behind. They assisted in the rubber production drive, cracked kernels and produced essential foodstuffs which they either donated to the military authorities or sold, the proceeds being paid to the war funds. This was in line with the suggestion of Reverend W.F. Mellor, the Methodist Missionary of Shagamu that, school children could produce food crops on their school farms as their own contributions towards the war efforts. Kernel cracking competitions were held in various schools of Osun Division as a result of which substantial amounts of money were contributed to the Winning the War Efforts and the Nigerian Troops Comfort Funds respectively. Such action was not confined to the division alone, throughout the country, schoolchildren contributed their quota to the prosecution of the war. School children in Okuku, Ikirun, Osogbo, Iragbiji, Iba, Oyan, Ejigbo and Ede districts contributed greatly to the War Relief Fund through palm kernel collection and cracking competitions. A vivid description of how this was done has been left to us by the Daily Times. Every morning throughout the palm kernel production weeks, the school children were seen carrying basket and cutlasses on their way to the farm and singing merrily the "victory song" "let us go and pick up kernels to drive away Hitler, come let us all go and pick up kernels to hasten the end of the war".

The loyalty of the people was demonstrated not only in moral and financial terms but also in their willing to enlist in the army. As the horizon of the conflict widened in a geographical sense to embrace regions of the world with differing climate and physical geography such as Abyssinia, Eritrea, Sudan, India and Burma, Britain intensified recruitment of Nigerians into her fighting forces. This was because, British soldiers were considered ill equipped to fight effectively in these areas. Africans were therefore considered the best materials to fight jungle warfare including the areas with very high terrains and climate. The number that came forward exceeded the number required by the government and the Nigerians complained in the early period of the war (when the theatre of the war was limited to Europe) that they had not been called for active service overseas. In 1941, 418 Europeans and 16,000 Nigerians had joined the Nigerian forces and many of them were already serving overseas where the Nigerian Brigade had created a very favourable impression by its fighting ability, orderly bearing, smartness and cheerfulness and earned the commendation of General Sir Archibald Wavell.

People of Osun Division were part of those who participated actively in actual fighting of the war. Countless number of people from various towns and villages fought in Burma. These included Ojerinde Solomon, Akinyemi Adewusi and Alabi Ige from Ede, Samuel Okunade and Samuel Sangodele from Inisa, Jimoh Gomina, Salami Kolawolu and Situ Adeoye from Ikirun just to mention a few. In Ikirun town, there was hardly a house that did not contribute men as soldiers. Many others were drafted into the army where they served as porters, servants, cooks and drivers. Also, many toiled in the mines in the Northern parts of the country and at various military construction works in the country (Keller, 1987).

The Menacing Effects of the Contribution to War Efforts

Contribution to war efforts, considered by the colonial subjects as a way of showing loyalty to their masters constituted a lot of problems to the people. For instance, with the increasing number of Africans serving overseas, family system upon which the economy and social order were rested faced challenges that seriously threatened its survival. This was due largely to lack of information between soldiers on active services and their families at home. Efforts were made to remedy this situation by talking to soldiers relatives. Every month a number of letters from soldiers to their relatives remained undelivered by the post office in the various district headquarters. Although some more postal agencies were established in Oyan in Odo-Otin District, Igbajo and Ire in Ifelodun District and one for the three villages of Ifon, Ilobu and Erin in Osogbo District in 1944 to cater for the need of adequate communication between the soldiers and their relatives at home, the problem persisted. These letters were sent to the native authorities for distribution, but addresses were usually insufficient. People having husbands, sons and other relatives in the army were asked to come forward and register their names and addresses in order that communication between soldiers and their relatives may be simplified, but the calls were ignored. The number of separation allowances paid at Osogbo the divisional headquarter, continued to increase. A number of cards have to be returned because allottees were found to be intended wives of immature years. The services as a way of showing loyalty to their masters are as a way of showing loyalty to their masters.

The prevalent source of complaints emanating from the above was that soldiers' wives were trying to divorce their husbands or other men were trying to alienate their affections. ¹⁴ Those who did not return home on time were usually considered dead by their families, this was the experience of Pa. Awodele of Ologbin's compound, Araromi Ejigbo. His family therefore ordered that his wife who had only one son, Ojeniran Emmanuel, be given to one of his younger brothers who eventually fathered Mr. Akojede Gabriel through the woman. Thus, the duo of Akojede Gabriel and Ojeniran Emmanuel were children of a mother but of different fathers. ¹⁵

Sometimes courts gave judgments in the absence of soldiers on active services and when these were communicated to the soldiers, they were usually unsatisfied. As a result, soldiers spent most of their leaves untangling their matrimonial affairs through the courts and they often had to return to their units with their case unresolved. Their interests

were therefore being watched for them by their different local authorities. Another source of worry to the soldiers was complaints received about the unauthorised persons endeavouring to obtain the control of lands they previously farmed. Many of these cases were examined and chiefs were instructed that it was their duties to watch over the interests of the absentee soldiers.¹⁶

As a matter of fact, it was not all the divorcement and land cases that went to court as soldiers in various towns and villages forcefully retrieved their wives, farmland and other properties that have been taken over by other people in their absence. In places like Ikirun, Iragbiji and other villages were show of power as soldiers recovering their wives and those of other people was a common place. They were highly dreaded because of the belief that they had charms and could kill at will.¹⁷ The duo of Salawu Oyewale of Ikirun and Gabriel Olarewaju of Iragbiji eventually became hired avengers among their kindreds. They helped many of their people to recover their wives and other belongings. These two and others like Jimoh Gomina, Salami Kolawolu, Salami Situ, Adeoye Situ and Tiamiyu Oke had lost their wives to other men in Ikirun before they arrived from Burma.¹⁸

Since material and money contribution cut across all classes of the society, then contribution to war efforts constituted a great cost which eroded the gains which the people would have realised from the commercial dispensation of the colonial era. For example, in 1944 the crown heads of Odo-Otin Federal Council contributed to the Greece Relief Fund as follows:

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The Olokuku of Okuku-£1.0
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Oloyan of Oyan - - 10

Akosin of Ekosin - - 10

Onigbaye of Igbaye- - 10

Onijabe of Ijabe- - 10

Elekusa- - 10

Elekusa- - 10

Olokua- - 10

Oniyeku- - 10

Afaji- - 10

Olopete- - 10

Baale of Ila-odo- - 10

Olore of Ore- - 10

Baale of Inisa- - 10

£6.5

Chiefs and some other important personalities in Osogbo also contributed to War Relief Fund as follows:

Chief Jagun- £7. 10. 0

- "Balogun- 6. 0. 0
- ,, Akogun- 5. 10. 0
- "Otun Jagun- 5. 10. 0
- "Kaa- 4. 0. 0
- "Oloriga- 4. 0. 0
- " Alagba- 4. 0. 0
- "Otun Balogun- 4. 0. 0
- "Ekerin- 2. 10. 0
- "Seriki- 2. 10. 0
- " Areago- 2. 10. 0
- ,, Bale Gbonmi- 2. 0. 0
- "Osi Balogun- 1. 5. 0
- "Otun Oloriga- 1. 5. 0
- "Ikolaba- 1. 5. 0
- "Shobaloju-1.5.0
- " Iyalode- 1. 5. 0
- "Otun Iyalode- 0. 12. 6
- "Otun Ataoja- 0. 12. 6

Individual Donors

Mr. S.A. Adenle- 25. 0. 0

Mrs Sarkie- 1. 1. 0

Mr. Fagbewesa- 0. 10. 0

Various- 13. 11. 6

£97. 12. 6

This money was added to £635 gathered from other villages in the district and used to buy a mobile canteen named after "towns and villages in Osogbo District" (Ajayi, 2014:102). However, it was presented to the people of Birmingham in United Kingdom in June 1944.

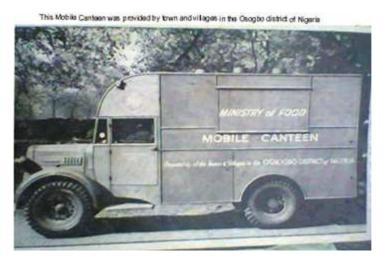


Figure 1

Also, £19. 5. 9. (nineteen pound, five shillings and nine pence), being the value of 29 bags of graded palm kernel donated by the people of Ede through the Timi of Ede was paid into the War Relief Fund on the 13th June 1945. This was replicated from time to time by the people throughout the war period. St. Phillip Personage, Otan Ayegbaju also contributed £50 to the War Efforts through Reverend E.T. Babatunde in January 1946, Iragbiji Baptist Church contributed 15- (shilling) while the school children of the church contributed 5- in October 1947 in addition to the money donated through the Iragbiji Progressive Union through Mr. Salami Pakoyi, their chairman.¹⁹ Other towns and organisations that contributed to various relief funds included: Osogbo National Union of Teachers, Iree Baptist School Children, Igbajo Baptist School Children, Ede Baptist School Children, Ede N.A. School Children, staff and pupils of Ejigbo Baptist Day School, Iresi Baptist Day School, Baptist School Ekosin, St. Peter Personage Inisa, Oro United School Okuku, Osogbo Literary Circle, Ifelodun Federation Ikirun and African Club Osogbo. Annual collections were also made from house to house from individuals (owo ologun onile jile). ²⁰Some form of compulsions were involved here, as every household was expected to contribute to the British success in the ongoing war. Not to do this showed an individual or household as an enemy of the British government that was involved in the war against Germany.

Usually palm kernels were handed over to European trading firms who were buyers of cash crops in Nigeria. After the value of the produce might have been determined, the firm would pay its money to the District Officer who in turn forwarded it to the War Relief Fund. Prominent among the firms were United African Company, Société Commerciale Dé L'Quest Africain, Pertterson and Zochonis, John Holt and G.B Ollivant just to mention a few (Awe & Albert, 1995:11).

Apart from the various financial donations analysed above, the people also donated gift of food and other useful items to the military welfare. For example, Oyan Farmers Association contributed 870 pieces of yam through their secretary, Isaac Adeyemo Noble in August 1943, Oro United School Okuku contributed 360 pieces of yam produced in the school's farm in 1943, Ada youth contributed 30cwts of yam in September 1943, 3 tons of yams were gathered at Akirun's palace in September 1943, 2, 600 yams were gathered at Olokuku's palace in September 1943, Otan Native Courts also donated 1, 588 yams to the army, people of Igbajo and Oyan Farmer's Association donated 1000 pieces of yams each in 1943 and palm kernel were donated by various groups and organisations as well as almost all the schools in the division through the palm kernel campaign they organised.²¹

Nigerians also prayed for the success of the British armed forces. People gathered in mosques, churches and schools to offer prayers for the success of the British and for the downfall of His Majesty's enemies. Christian church leaders charged their adherents to be loyal to Britain. Also, traditional religious worshippers showed their loyalty and supports by offering sacrifices to their oracles and assured commissioner of the colonies of victory for Britain and her allies (Adesina, 2002).

As stated *inter alia* these contributions to War Efforts through the various donations made by the generality of the people of Osun Division constituted losses to the people. This is because; by inducing them to place a large proportion of their reserved funds and making them contribute considerable donations from their private purses to the government winning the war efforts, the people lost the revenues that would have accrued to them from the commercialised economy of the colonial era.²² Thus while the European firms and government were gaining in the unequal bilateralism that characterised the colonial commercial system, the people of Osun Division like other Africans were incurring more losses through the demonstration of their loyalty to their masters under the name, "Contribution to War Efforts".²³ For instance, if as much as 29 bags of graded palm kernel could be donated by the people of Iragbiji, 8 bags by the people of Iba, 17 bags by the pupils of Igbajo Baptist Primary School and 2 tons and 7cwt by Ede people only in June 1945, what then were left for the people to sell in the lucrative produce business of the colonial era?. Several other gifts of kernels were made by the people of Osun Division although people along the railway contributed more compared to the people in the towns that were far away from it.²⁴

Worse still, most of the yams and other perishable items contributed by the people were left to spoil. This emanated from the inability of the military to provide lorries for the conveyance of the items to their camps. For instance, two lorries requested by Revd. M.J. Ade Sijuade of St. Peter's Personage, Inisa to convey two tons of yams contributed by church members were not provided and the yams were left to rot. Also 1, 585 pieces of yam presented by Oba Olagunju, the Olotan of Otan Ayegbaju as a voluntary gift of yams contributed by the people in December 1943 also decayed in the palace square where they were gathered. All these would have fetched people of Osun Division the much needed money to buy European imported items that were being sold to them at high prices even when some of these food items were being sold to the Lagos Pullen Market at abnormally low prices. ²⁶

Special events were also organised to extort money from the people, these included: Palm kernel Campaign which made school children to go into the bush in search of palm kernel, bicycle raffles, football matches, Hit Hitler Competitions, Tennis Matches, Joint Club Night, Magician among others. For example, at the Fun Fair organised at Ejigbo, the people realised £70, this was paid into the War Relief Fund by Oba, Mogbesola II, the Elejigbo of Ejigbo on 30th august 1944. Osogbo Literary Circle also organised a lecture and the gate fees at the hall was donated to the War Relief Fund on 31st July 1944.²⁷ The system also involved deception and lies as people were told to make contributions that would be considered as loan to be repaid at an unspecified later date. This further added to the dissatisfaction of the people as the colonial masters failed to repay the money. Such was a condition in which members of St. Phillip's Personage Otan Ayegbaju found themselves, especially when they heard that Iragbiji Baptist Church had been repaid. This made Reverend E.T. Babatunde to express the dissatisfaction of the personage in his letter of 24th January 1946. All these depict a deplorable condition into which the people were trapped by their selfish colonial masters during the Second World War.²⁸ All these special drive in aids of the War Relief Fund affected investment in War Saving Certificates in Osun Division, thus it was not much patronised as in other parts of Nigeria.²⁹

The magnitude of the Contribution to War Efforts could be seen in the effects of the end of World War II on the people of Osun Division. In the first instance, there were reunions either peacefully or forcefully of couples who had been separated for a long period of time. These reunions also saved children from being victims of broken homes. The returnee soldiers also had access to the much needed care without which they would have remained unstable. The reunion of couples and their children contributed greatly to the peace and tranquility that characterised the post World War II Osun Division.³⁰

Also, following the end of the war, life in the Division quickly became settled. As the military camps in Osogbo and Ede were closed, people whose effort were diverted to meet the many calls for labour resulting from the presence of the camps returned to their normal vocations.³¹ In addition, non-literate members of the returnee soldiers engaged themselves with farming, while the literate and those who joined the army as tradesmen were employed into various sectors of the economy by the colonial government. For instance, Mr. Ojerinde Solomon of Oluobinu's house, Ede learnt engine repairing in the course of the war in Burma. On his return, he was employed as a prison warder by the government. Mr. Adewusi's of Alagbaa's house in Ede also served in the signal section of the army in Burma, this experience earned him employment in the Postal and Telecommunication sector of Nigeria on his arrival.³²

Many of them established their private business enterprises. In this category were, Salami Situ of Kolawolu's house in Ikirun who took to driving, Babarinlo Joseph Ogunwuyi of Olobado's house in Osogbo worked in the musical section of the army in Burma. On his return, he thrived in making drums for schools and churches in Osogbo and other districts of Osun Division that he became known as *baba bembe* (drum set man). He also played organs for churches and schools, trained church organists and repaired organs in churches.³³

All these resulted in the general increase in production of goods and services that characterised the post war period. The returnee soldiers also contributed in no small measure to the maintenance of law and order in their various towns and villages. A number of strangers who had come to towns and found easy ways of living by thieving and blaming the soldiery were rapidly weeded out thereby creating an atmosphere conducive enough for the increase that started towards the end of the war.³⁴

CONCLUSIONS

The contributions which the people of Osun Division made to the success of their coloniser at the Second World War were enormous. The selfless services were indeed rendered by the people as a matter of loyalty. However, these were done at great expenses; people were rid of the relief that followed the long period of economic depression by donating their food and cash crops which would have earned them profits from the colonial economy. Many of those who took part in the war lost their families and their inheritance that would have served as means of livelihood to them after the war. If considered in term of its opportunity cost, people's contributions to the war efforts no doubt had grievous effects on their social order

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 were several cases of inability to trace the relatives of the soldiers. For instance, in the letter of James Alao of the
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