

EFFECTS OF CHANGE FROM COMMUNAL TO INDIVIDUAL LAND TENURE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN OKAKA TOWN, OYO STATE

OGUNJIMI Moses Oluwole

*School of Agricultural and Bio-Environmental Engineering,
Oyo State College of Agriculture and Technology, Igbo-Ora, Oyo State*

Abstract

The study examined the effects of changes from communal to individual land tenure for development in Okaka town of Oyo State. Primary and secondary data were utilized for the study. The paper examined the types of land tenure practices and methods of land allocation before the development of private ownership of land. Similarly, the individual's right to land, accessibility to land, mode of sales of land, offering of land as gift and distribution of land to different age groups and gender were all examined. The impact of acquisition on the farmers that were displaced from their original farmland, the reactions of the community members and the extent to which the acquisition has affected agriculture were investigated. It was established that there was no significant difference between the farm sizes of farmers prior and after the acquisition of land by private ownership. There was also no significant difference between the output of farmers before and after the acquisition. It was concluded that accessibility to land is basic to any developmental project and that the role of land in any development cannot be over emphasized.

Introduction

In Nigeria, the role of agriculture in national development cannot be overemphasized. However, of great importance to agriculture is the major factor of land availability particularly in developing economy. Land has become a scarce commodity with the transition from communal ownership of land to individual which now promote fragmentation of land to the farmers. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, 2012) defines land tenure as the relationship, whether legally or customarily defined, among people, as individuals or groups with respect to land. In simple terms, land tenure systems determine who can use what resources, for how long and under what condition. It also defines rights to use, control and transfer land as well as associated responsibilities and restraints.

Amiasatu(2010) observes that land tenure system is extremely complex and therefore, there exist different types of rights exercised over land. These are residual rights, symbolic rights, grazing rights, freehold and lease hold rights. However, it must be recognized and stressed that the duality of the Nigeria legal system (that is, the administration of both the customary laws and the received English laws) with respect to land has resulted in the existence of customary and non-customary land tenure systems in Nigeria.

The diversities of Nigeria ethnic groups have resulted in the fragmentation and differential tenure practices. However, two major types of land tenure systems feature prominently in Nigeria; these are communal and individual land tenures. According to the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences

(2008), communal lands (mostly rural) are in possession of a community rather than an individual or company. The communal system is mostly practiced in the western part of Nigeria where the study area is located. In this type of land ownership, the rights to allocate and transfer land are exercised by the community as a whole. The village heads and family heads serve as the trustees and custodians of the community lands.

Today, individual title to land which is the second widely tenure practice in Nigeria has become a common place in the increasingly money-conscious and acquisitive society. One can now find hectares of land being purchased outright, leased, given out as gifts and so on. The Land Use Decree of 1978 gave individual tenure systems a stronger hold on land acquisition. The decree is one of the series of legislations which have been enacted in the country primarily to give government a controlling power over the acquisition of land. This is because the land tenure systems that was in practice all over the country has culminated in fragmentation of agricultural lands, thereby making absolutely impossible for the adoption of modern farm inputs, large scale and mechanized agricultural practices.

Individual ownership of land has taken over the communal ownership of land which forms the system of land allocation and distribution of rural land. This form of land ownership (individual ownership) has being in operation in Okaka ever before the popular land use decree of 1978 that has entrusted all lands in Nigeria in the hand of government. Acquisition of land in Okaka could be traced to about four or five decades ago when an indigenous company named Pioneer Farms Limited was established. Some other private companies in turn

appeared and purchased large expanse of land for farming.

Statement of the Problem

One of the basic problems facing agriculture particularly its productivity, is land to cultivate. In those days when land was under communal control one could have access to large expanse of land to cultivate from the community heads. However, the transitions and eventual change in land acquisition has brought about a change to individual ownership of land. It is thus pertinent to investigate ways of allotting land for development purpose and the impact it has on agricultural production.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to analyse the effects of change in land tenure practice for development in Okaka. The following objectives are structured to guide the study.

- I. Examining the type of land tenure practiced by the community before the acquisition by Pioneer Farms Limited.
- ii. Highlight effects of the acquisition of land by Pioneer Farms Limited on the farmers before the acquisition vis-à-vis the effects after the acquisition.
- iii. Identify the benefits derived by the people of Okaka community from the acquisition of land by the Pioneer Farms Limited.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated for verification in this study are stated as null hypotheses thus:

- i. There is no significant difference between the farm sizes of farmers prior and after the acquisition of land by Pioneer Farms Limited.

Effects of change from communal to individual land tenure for development in Okaka Town...

- ii. There is no significant difference between the maize yields of farmers before and after the acquisition the of land by Pioneer Farms Limited

Significance of Study

The product of this study will be of great benefit to the planners and the government at both Local and State levels. It will be imperative and of necessity to seriously look into planning of city and rural areas in such a way to designate different land uses. If this is not done the development may occur anywhere at the detriment of farmers.

Again, there is urgent need to control land uses through legal measures to facilitate the reserve of some areas for agriculture. It will further aid the researchers in this field of study because this will be a foundation for further studies.

The Study Area

Okaka is located at Itesiwaju Local Government, Oyo State of Nigeria, where The Pioneer Farms limited acquired about 9,037 hectares of land for farming. Okaka is located at an elevation of 304 meters above sea level with population of 71,657 as at (2006 Population Census). Its coordinate are 8° 13' 0"N and 3° 28' 0"E. It is situated in Oke-Ogun, in the Northern part of Oyo state, Nigeria. It is bounded by Ipapo to the South, Otuto the West, Abidogun to the North and an expanse of land punctuated by hamlets to the East.

The annual rainfall is about 100 and 150cm and the region has up to five months of dry season which extends from November to March. It also has short dry season called August break which last from late July to early September. Average daily temperature ranges between 25°C (77.0°F)

and 35°C(95.0°F) almost throughout the year.

Under the prevailing climatic condition, the region has the guinea savannah type of vegetation. During the dry season, the whole area looks bare and hungry with tall skeletons of charred trees sticking up their siphoned outlines above the ground surface blackened by the ashes of burnt grasses. In the wet season it is green again with fresh leaves and grasses swaying from side to side in response to the prevailing wind. The trees are interspersed with elephant grasses.

Methodology

The population of study is the entire farmers in Okaka including all the workers of Pioneer Farms Limited. The study employed the primary data (research designed questionnaire) collected from the study area in February, 2015. Secondary data were employed. Buildings in the community were divided into 17 compound groups using stratified random sampling technique. The groups are Bada, Osi Ago, Agoro, Ekerin, Jagun, Ooto, Agoro, Abese, Alapo, Osa and Babakaa. The rest compound groups are Abore, Odofin, Ikolaba, Ekarun, Babakaa extension and Garage area. A total of one hundred and twenty(120)copies of questionnaire items were administered in all. Seven questionnaires were allotted to each compound group except Babakaa that got eight questionnaires. Simple random sampling was employed on each compound group for adequate representation of the entire population. The data collected were representations of the various parts of the study area. Statistical tools of mean, percentage and t-test were used for the analysis.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Land Tenure System and Methods of Land Allocation in Okaka

What obtains in Okaka bears significant relationship to other parts of Yoruba land. Communal ownership of land is practiced. Land in Okaka is regarded as property of the community as a whole. People by the virtue of their membership of the town have customary rights over land. The word communal was however described by Fadipe, (1970) in the sense that the community as a whole exercise control over the land within the limit of its territory. This is to confine the occupation and use of land to individuals who are members of the land community.

In Okaka, authority on land matters is vested in the head chief (Oba). Whenever new land is to be opened up anywhere or a stranger seeks land on which to farm or settle, the head chief has to be consulted. His traditional control over his land can be seen in attempt to give him parts of government's compensation from the use of piece of land for project like farm settlement even when his family land might not be affected.

In order to make the land administrative machinery simple to supervise and control efficiently, Okaka is divided into 17 compound groups. Each compound comprises extended family headed by compound head. Some of these compound heads are Bada, Osi Ago, Agoro, Ekerin, Jagun, Ooto, Agoro, Abese, Alapo, Osa, Babakaa and so on. The head chiefs are vested with power to hold land as trustees and under him are these compound heads. Each compound head assumes position after the death of a compound head. The village land was in segments of which each segments was controlled by a compound head that forms the head of the land wining

family. The compound heads are responsible to the head chief and they (compound heads) have to be consulted if any of the family land is to be offered for use by the head chief.

Individual's Right to Land and Source of Accessibility to Land

As regards the use of land in the study area, every native of the town by the virtue of his citizenship of the town possesses the right to use land. However, land is not individually owned. Before this time, when communal land ownership was practiced, one could cultivate any piece of land and such land when left fallow returned and could be used by any other person. No one bothered to claim ownership over any piece of land since anyone wishing to cultivate more land could always get it. But as time went on, people being on the same piece of land for several years now claim sole ownership to certain portion of land.

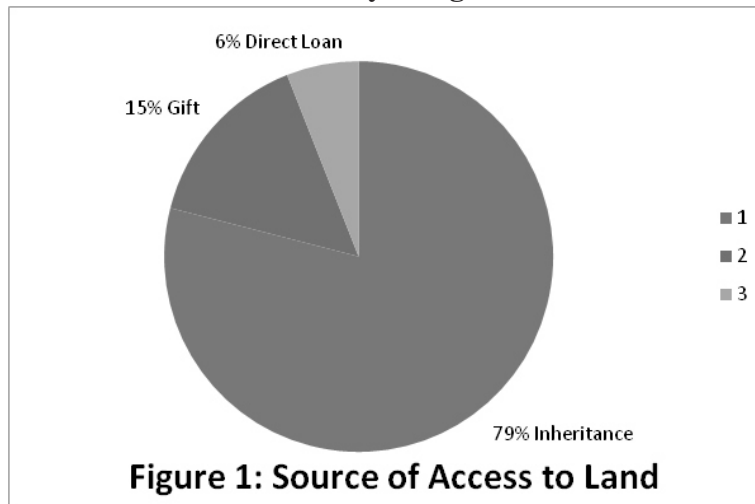
Land Distribution According to Gender

The distribution of land between male and female in Okaka is a reflection of the tradition in Yoruba land. 91.7% of land owner farmers interviewed are males while just 8.3% are females. This attests to the tradition of Yoruba before the acquisition of land by individual that land should be allocated to males as against the female.

Land Distribution and Literacy Level

From the study conducted, 65% of the sampled population is illiterate. Since educational level has a positive correlation with the adoption of agricultural innovation such as improved seedling, availability of fertilizer and new farming technique subsistence farming is extensively practiced.

Source of access to Land by Indigenes

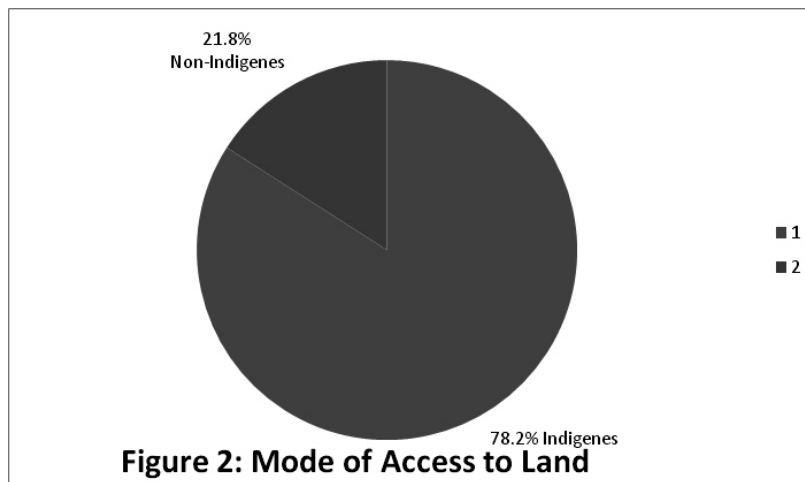


The Figure 1 reveals that there are three main sources of accessibility to land acquisition by the indigenes. 79% of the respondents inherited the land, 15% respondents had it as gift while 6% respondents had it as direct loan. The inference that can be drawn from this is that the major mode of land transfer in Okakais through succession. The process of succession to rights in land enables the living to enter into a possession to dead person's properties, showing the duties and distributing assets of the dead.

Early in the history of Okaka when communal land ownership was practiced,

there was nothing like the sales of land. What used to be the case was that when a member of a community or a family required a parcel of land for farming or building a shelter, he requested for land from the compound head. Stranger had to abide by certain agreement and accept to pay tribute called "ISAKOLE" before a parcel of land was allotted to him. Furthermore, nobody had the right to sell land or alienate without the approval of the family head that might be designated to do so by the village head.

Mode of Access to Land



It is inferred from Figure 2 that 78.2% respondents are indigenes while 21.8 are non-indigenes. This shows that indigenes have more access to land than non-indigenes who acquired their own land either through purchase or through gift. Today in Okaka, the sales of land has tended to increase phenomenally. The fact that people realize the implications of giving out

land for building residences is one of the reasons that has resulted in the sales of land. Nowadays, strangers who have wished to stay permanently in Okaka pay certain amount of money to the rightful head in the town for the building of their houses.

Table 1
Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15-30	1	0.8
31-45	17	14.2
46-60	50	41.7
60 and above	52	43.3
Total	120	100

The survey in table 1 reveals that 43.3% of the respondents are above 60 years of age. This points to the fact that much land possession still remain in the hand of aged people in the study area. The reason for this is probably due to the culture of Yoruba that allows family head to be in custody of landed property for the benefit of his wards (Famoriyo, 1971).

People's Reactions to the Land Acquisition

There has been both positive and negative reaction to the land acquisition especially that of pioneer farms limited. In spite of the ease at which land could be gotten in Okaka, it was discovered that bitterness and quarrels erupted immediately after the acquisition. The eruption of this misunderstanding could be traced to certain reasons.

Firstly, some members of the land owing families complained that they had no adequate representation in the negotiation with the company hence they lack

information in issue concerning the financial agreement between the companies especially the pioneer farms limited. Secondly, the token of the amount that are to be shared annually among the land owing families does not get to them. Thus, the people lamented that the development was contrary to the former agreement being documented. It was found out that there was an instance when one of the land owing families wanted to institute a court action against the head chief the person in question was later pacified.

Also, from the survey carried out, it was discovered that as time went on people started complaining that the money being paid over an hectare of land is too small and that it should be reviewed. From the interview conducted, 67 respondents which is 55% of the total sample said the cash paid by the company is not satisfactory.

Despite the negative reaction, the research had it that the contribution of the pioneer Farms Limited to the community development cannot be over emphasized.

Effects of change from communal to individual land tenure for development in Okaka Town...

Of outmost importance and of which people have immensely benefited was the creation of employment opportunities for people. 82% of the respondents attested to the fact that emergence of pioneer farms brought gainful employment to the community. Though, the companies are no more working in full capacity due to the downward trend in the global economy but the community still talks about the positive effects on their community..

Apart from the above contribution, the companies especially pioneer farms limited did well in the area of education. According to the survey, 72% of the respondents agreed that Pioneer Farms Limited contributed immensely in the area of education. The company particularly gave cash donation to some of the school building projects in the community.

Among the women interviewed 92% said they benefited immensely. The pioneer farms limited in its magnanimous way of doing things dug several boreholes in the community. This has greatly reduced the stress of travelling to a far distance by the women before getting portable water

Testing of Hypotheses

Maize Yield of Farmers before and after the Acquisition

Formerly some farmers had their farmlands where today are occupied by the Pioneer Farms Limited. What obtained in most cases when rural land was acquired was a reduction in output of farmers involved. What obtained in Okaka is a unique case which will be discussed with various reasons. This is presented in the table below.

Table 2

Maize yield of farmers before and after land acquisition.

Variables	Mean	N	Std Dev.	T	Df	Sig
Before	10.75	8	10.46	-1.197	7	0.27
After	12.25	8	10.57			

In testing the set hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the farm size of farmers prior and after acquisition, t-test statistics was employed. From Table 2. The calculated t-test value at 0.05 level of significance is -1.197 and the table value is 0.27. Therefore it is accepted, the hypothesis is interpreted that there was no significant difference between the maize yield before and after the

acquisition of land by Pioneer Farms Limited

The reason for this is not so far-fetched. Okaka has undulating and extensive land area. Farmers that were displaced had to move to other suitable areas for farming. Also larger percentage of the people that were displaced were subsistence farmers who only farm for consumption.

Table 3

Average farm size before and after land acquisition

	Mean	N	Standard dev.	T	D f	Sig(2 tailed)
Before	4570	10	3992.78	-0.302	9	0.770
After	4990	10	3926.39			

Table 3 indicates the relationship between the farm sizes before and after the acquisition. The Table 3 is used to explain whether or not the land acquisition has any effect on the hectares of land cultivated by the farmers after the acquisition. The calculated t-test result after analysis is -0.302 while the table value is 0.770 at 0.05 level of significance. The t-test value is less than the table value. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. The inference from this observation is that there is no marked difference between the hectares of land cultivated by the farmers before and after the land acquisition. The acquisition of land has therefore not affected the farm sizes of farmers and has not reduced hectares cultivated by the farmers. Farmers that were displaced got enough land to cultivate after land acquisition

Conclusion

Land forms the basis on which any meaningful development can take off. The role of land in any development therefore, cannot be over emphasized. The various ways in which land tenure has affected development especially agriculture and industrial development have been enumerated in a number of studies carried out by intellectuals and commission. The

study has examined the way in which land was managed and how it affected development, the spatial pattern of land acquisition, the individual ownership of land, the reaction of the customary land owners and the benefits derived from the acquisition were analyzed. The land tenure system existing in the study area was that of communal type initially, but due to method of land alienation through leasing, individual or private acquisition of land took over. In conclusion, the land acquired by Pioneer Farms Limited did not have any appreciable impact on the agricultural land use and practices in the study area because land could be acquired in a very simple way in the study area.

Recommendations

For the development of rural areas, government should find means of adopting proper spatial planning in such a way that every land use will be given specific space to exist. In spite of loosening land as a result of change in ownership by the farmers, they still maintain same level of production though with additional cost incurred resulting from moving into distant land for their production. Also, farmers could be encouraged by preserving large expanse of land for them to be able to improve and

Effects of change from communal to individual land tenure for development in Okaka Town...

engage in mechanized commercial farming because if this is not put in place, they may remain at subsistence level of production or being forced to migrate into cities. Enlightenment campaign should be	organized regularly to sensitize the farmers on the need to preserve the community land and not to sell outright as this will help incoming generations to access land whenever there is need for that.
--	---

References

- Adegboye, R.O. (1981). *Land and livelihood*. Inaugural Lecture, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Adeniyi, P.O. (1979). Some fundamental issues in land planning. *The Nigeria Geographical Journal*, 22, 57-76.
- Allot, A.N. (1978). Nigeria land use decree, *Journal of African Law*, 2(2), 136-160.
- Amasiatu, O.G. (2010). Land right characteristics and access to land: Implications on food and security in Nigeria. *Journal on Environmental Issues and Agriculture in Developing Countries*, 2(2), 11-24.
- Fadipe, N.A (1970). *The sociology of Yoruba*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Famoriyo, S. (1979). *Land tenure and agricultural development in Nigeria*. Nigeria Institute Social and Economic Research, Ibadan.
- Udoh, R.K. (1981). *Land policy for effective implementation of the national economy*. Inaugural Lecture Series. Ibadan University Press.