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Transformation of Dekina Prison, 1916-1952

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Abstract

This paper explores the historical trajectory of Dekina Prison, transformed as a colonial facility in 1916, and its subsequent transformations up to 1960. It highlights key developments in the realms of inmate health, nutrition, and welfare, while addressing broader themes related to the prison's role as an instrument of colonial power. This paper adopts both primary and secondary sources of history. The primary source includes archival documents gotten from the Kaduna National Archive and Oral interviews with retired prison warder, prison staffs, community leaders and historians, while the secondary sources includes books, journals and articles, unpublished materials among others. The research traces the origins of the Dekina prison system, arguing that colonial prisons were utilized to suppress opposition to colonial rule, exploit cheap labor, and eliminate marginalized populations. Challenging prevalent Western theories that depict African prisons as passive entities, this study reveals the complex realities faced by Dekina Prison under the Igala Native Authorities. It uncovers significant issues such as overcrowding, inadequate staffing, poor healthcare, and insufficient infrastructure, all of which took root during the colonial era. Rather than functioning as rehabilitative spaces, Dekina Prison operated primarily as custodial institutions, perpetuating a legacy that persists in Nigeria's current legal and prison systems. The research further critiques the postcolonial leadership's failure to meaningfully reform the prison system, which continues to serve a repressive role, often marked by human rights abuses. By examining colonial records, the study illustrates how Nigerian authorities adopted colonial strategies to suppress dissent and silence opposition, thus perpetuating a cycle of oppression within the criminal justice framework. This analysis not only sheds light on the historical context of Dekina Prison but also calls for a reevaluation of the ongoing impacts of colonialism on contemporary penal practices in Nigeria.

Keywords: Prison, Dekina, prison

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Introduction

Prisons are often referred to as correctional and reformative centres.[2] They are places, facilities where offenders are either kept for punishment or until their trial at the court of law.[3] To be in prison entails putting someone in confinement or curtailing certain rights they would normally have by confining or restraining them within a particular place.[4]It is interesting to note that prison system before the advent of colonial rule was not alien to the pre-colonial Nigerian societies. In the pre-colonial period, prisons were considered corrective measures to behaviours that were inimical to society. Prison systems were controlled by heads of families (nuclear/extended/lineage) in non-centralised states and by chiefs and rulers in centralised states like Igalaland.[5]

Prior to the era of colonial prisons, the prison services in Nigeria just like many African societies had their own unique conception of law and justice. African laws were not formulated in rigid rules, but consisted of a number of flexible principles or norms which directed the administration of justice. These norms derived directly from the culture of the people, and therefore, enjoyed their respect and support.[6]Enforcement of the law varied from place to place, but was usually carried out communally. Adjudication usually took account of the entire social setting, with a view to removing the cause of conflict and reconciling, the litigants and the community as a whole. The object of pre-colonial adjudication was therefore, reconciliation, and the common sanctions imposed involved compensation and resolution. The use of imprisonment was rare, especially in societies with decentralized authority-structures.[7]

Prison services in Nigeria can be traced back to the year 1861;[8] that was the year when western type of prison was established in Nigeria. The declaration of Lagos as a colony in 1861 marked the beginning of the institutionalisation of formal machinery of governance. At this stage the preoccupation of colonial government was to protect legitimate trade, guarantee the profit of British merchants as well as guarantee the activities of the missionaries. In 1863 four courts established in Lagos were to resolve petty disputes, tryserious cases, determining the abolition of slave trade and resolving disputes among merchants and traders. The functioning of these courts and the police in that

[2]Taslim O. Elias, *The Prison System in Nigeria*. (Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 1968), p.5
[3]Philip Afeadie, "Brokering Colonial Rule: Political Agents in Northern Nigeria, 1886-1914" (Saabracken, Germany: Verlag Press, 2008), p.9.
[4]Taslim O. Elias, *The Prison System in Nigeria*. (Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 1968), p.5
[5]Vivian Saleh & C. Ume, "An Evaluation of the Penal System: Criminal Justice in Nigeria," 2008, p.57
[6]Abdullahi, Musa Yusufu, "Colonial Administration and the Re-Organization of Igala Pre-Colonial Political System", *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* Vol. 18, No.3, 2016, Pp. 118 – 126
[7]Z.O. Apata, "Lugard and the Creation of Provitial Administration in Northern Nigeria, 1900 – 1918" cited in *African Study Monographs* (1990), 11(3): 143-152
[8]B. Awe, "The History of the Prison System in Nigeria". In Elias T. O. (ed) The Prison System in Nigeria. Lagos: University Press. 1968, p.11

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colonial setting necessarily means that prison was needed to complete the system.[9]

In 1872 the Broad Street prison was established with an initial inmate capacity of 300 in Lagos by the British colonial administration. However, the progressive incursion of the British into the hinterland and the establishment of British Protectorate towards the end of the 19th century necessitated the establishment of the prisons as the last link in the Criminal Justice System. The declaration of protectorate over the East, West and North by 1906 effectively brought the entire Nigerian area under British rule. However, that did not mark the beginning of a unified Nigerian Prisons. Thus by 1910 they were already prisons in places like Degema, Calabar, Onitsha, Benin, Ibadan, Sapele, Jebba and Lokoja.[10]

Annual Prison Report on the Treatment of Offenders in the Kabba Province Native Authority Prison, reveals that Kabba Province had seven Native Prisons which includes the Igbirra Native Authority Prison, Kabba Native Authority Prison, Koton Karifi Native Authority Prisons, Idah Native Authority Prison, Ankpa Native Authority Prison, Dekina Native Authority Prison and Abugi Native Authority Prison and had a population of about 565, 000.[11]

Meanwhile, the existence of prison service in Dekina as well as the whole of Igalaland was not a new system rather was a modified system. Igalaland before the coming of colonial government was not lawless rather it was a well-structured society with well-organized laws and orders. In the Igala Division, prison existed also "Atta's prison" before the colonial prison were established. There were three different prisons in Igalaland before the intrusion of the British colonialist namely the Idah prison, Dekina Prison and the Ankpa prison. This three prison were known as the Atta's prison but over the years the prisons were transformed into colonial prisons.[12]

In the Igala Division, Idah Prison was the first prison in Igalaland and was built by the government of the Southern Nigeria when it was part of Onitsha province.[13] While Ankpa prison was built in 1912,[14] Dekina prison was built in 1916[15] the former Igala Native Authority Administration in order to reduce congestions in Idah prison.[16]In 1916,[17] within the context of the establishment and consolidation of colonial authority, the development and transformation of

[9]P. T. Ahir, "The Origin, Development and Role of the Nigerian Prison System", Nigerian Journal of Policy and Strategy, 1989, Pp.75-90.
[10]W. Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. London: Bogle L'Ouverture. 1972, p.71
[11]NAK/Lokoprof/Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders in the Kabba Province Native Authority Prisons 1948. 2.
[12]Oral Interview with Abdul Musa Attah, Retired Dekina Prison Warder, 60+, Dekina on 02/28/2024
[13]Oral Interview with Mr. Ocholi David, 68years, Retiree Police, Ankpa on 05/06/2024
[14]Oral Interview with Mr. Ocholi David, 68years, Retiree Police, Ankpa on 05/06/2024
[15]Oral Interview with Onah Andrew, Second In Command Dekina Prison (2IC), 40+, Dekina on 10/04/2024
[16]Oral Interview with Onah Andrew, Second In Command Dekina Prison (2IC), 40+, Dekina on 10/04/2024
[17]Oral Interview with Onah Andrew, Second In Command Dekina Prison (2IC), 40+, Dekina on 10/04/2024

Dekina prison represented a significant milestone in the infrastructure of the colonial authorities.

Several works have been done on the colonial Prison system in Northern Nigeria but no one has explained the transformation of Dekina prison. Also, detailed and systematic account of prison services in the area during the colonial period has not received much scholarly attention. This lack of attention has resulted in a substantial gap in our understanding of Prison services in colonial administration in the area. Importantly, the period under review was noted for high rate of colonial crime in Igalaland including Dekina due to the effect of the world economic depression and the Second World War on the area and Nigeria in general. And as well the period of transformational change from being Atta's Prison to a colonial government prison. The trust of this paper aside looking at the transformational part of Dekina prison, it also stands on the validation of Patricia O'Brien[18]argument and validations of oral interviews with some elderly historians that the pre-colonial prisons were not designed for long incarceration but a testing ground for innocence. Based on this assertion, this study aim to address and reduce these gaps by examining the transformation of Dekina Prison from 1916 to 1952.

Establishment of Dekina Prison

Dekina is one out of the twenty one (21) Local Government Areas in Kogi State, Nigeria.[19] Its headquarters are in the town of Dekina on the A233 highway in the north of the area at7°41′41″N7°01′20″E.[20] It has an area of 2,461 km^2 (950 sq mi) and a population of 260,312 at the 2006 census.[21] The postal code of the area is 272.[22] Dekina Local Government shares boundaries Bassa, Omala, Ankpa, Ofu and Ajaokuta.[23] The local Government is located in the middle belt region of Nigeria, hence, has an advantage of the climate of the drier Savannah vegetation to the north and the wet forest regions to the south. The area lies within the warm humid climatic zone of Kogi.[24]Over three years, agriculture has remained the mainstay of the economy of Dekina people. The people are known for their high production of agricultural produce such as palm oil, cassava, cashew, beans, yam among others.[25] The area is also domiciled to different religion like the African Traditional Religion, Islam and

[18]O'Brien, Patricia. *The Promise of Punishment*. Princeton 1982.
[19]Oguche O. Samuel, *The Indigenous People of Udaba*, *Dekina,* Thesis submitted to the Department of History & International Studies, Kogi State University, Unpublished, 2003, Pp 14-15
[20]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dekina Accessed on 03/20/2024
[21]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dekina Accessed on 03/20/2024
[22]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dekina Accessed on 03/20/2024
[23]Oguche O. Samuel, *The Indigenous People of Udaba*, *Dekina,* Thesis submitted to the Department of History & International Studies, Kogi State University, Unpublished, 2003, Pp 14-15.
[24]Oguche O. Samuel, *The Indigenous People of Udaba*, *Dekina,* Thesis submitted to the Department of History & International Studies, Kogi State University, Unpublished, 2003, p.17
[25]Oral Interview with Prof. Z.O. Apata, 70+, Lecturer, Anyigba on 02/17/2024

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Christianity.[26] These geographical features of Dekina appears to be one of the reason for the establishment of the Dekina prison.[27]

The first prison constructed in Igalaland was in Idah around 1908 when it was part of the Onitsha Province under the government of Southern Nigeria. The Ankpa and Dekina prisons according to Boston were later built in the late 1930s by the former Igala Native Authority to alleviate overcrowding in Idah.[28] The period saw the existence of three main prisons in Igalaland: Idah, Ankpa, and Dekina.[29]Prior to this study, there has been much argument regarding the true establishment date of the Dekina prison. Different informants engaged during fieldwork offered differing opinions on when the Dekina prison was founded. A claim reveals that the Dekina prison was established in1896 by the Native Authority at that time.[30] the Informant recounted that although he was not born as at when the prison was founded but his paternal grandfather, who was an Edibo Attah (a follower of the Attah), shared the story of the prison's establishment with him.

In another engagement with some other informants it was noted that the prison has been in operational since the early reign of the Attah of Igala.[31] They recalled that during their youthful days, the prison facilities were relatively small, and they had limited knowledge about prisons at the time of its establishment. However, based on the information passed down from their parents, they indicated that the prison was originally under the ownership of the Attah of Igala. It served as a facility where individuals who disrupted the peace of Dekina in the Attah's absence were detained.[32] According to their accounts, when the Attah visit the community, all cases of disturbances were presented to him, and those deemed to have committed serious offenses were sentenced to the Attah's Prison, which was constructed behind his residence. This practice marked the beginning of formalized prison services in Dekina, as offenders were held accountable for their actions and punished accordingly under the jurisdiction of the Attah of Igala.[33]

Similarly, another informant in Dekina town corroborated and supported the narrative presented by previous informants on the establishment of the Dekina Prison. He emphasized that while the Idah Prison preceded the Dekina Prison as the first prison in Igalaland, the origins of the Dekina facility were rooted in a different context. He explained that the current prison location was originally a "lock-room" used by the Attah and was not referred to as a prison, as the

[26]Oral Interview with Prof. Z.O. Apata, 70+, Lecturer, Anyigba on 02/17/2024
[27]Oral Interview with Prof. Z.O. Apata, 70+, Lecturer, Anyigba on 02/17/2024
[28]P.E. Okwoli *A Short History of Igala*,Ilorin: Matanmi and Sons Printing works, 1973
[29]P.E. Okwoli *A Short History of Igala*,Ilorin: Matanmi and Sons Printing works, 1973
[30]Oral Interview with Abdullahi Ibrahim, 50+, Dekina Prison Staff, Dekina on 02/27/2024
[31]Oral Interview with Salisu Shuaibu Ikagbo, P.T.A Chairman of Dekina Prison School, 65years, Dekina on 02/27/2024 and Oral Interview with Salamatu Salifu, Trader, 50+, Dekina on 02/07/2024
[32]Oral Interview with Salisu Shuaibu Ikagbo, P.T.A Chairman of Dekina Prison School, 65years, Dekina on 02/27/2024 and Oral Interview with Salamatu Salifu, Trader, 50+, Dekina on 02/07/2024
[33]Oral Interview with Salisu Shuaibu Ikagbo, P.T.A Chairman of Dekina Prison School, 65years, Dekina on 02/27/2024 and Oral Interview with Salamatu Salifu, Trader, 50+, Dekina on 02/07/2024

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concept of a "prison" was associated with colonial institutions rather than traditional African practices.[34] He highlighted that although the operational functions might appear similar, the historical context differed significantly.[35]

According to his account, the area where the present prison stands served as a temporary residence for the Attah of Igala during his visits to various locations within Igalaland or when conducting surveillance in neighboring kingdoms. If the Attah's travel plans were delayed, he would stay in Dekina until he could resume his journey. During these stays, the Attah would address various cases brought to his attention, particularly those involving serious accusations or offenses. Individuals found guilty of such offenses were confined behind the Attah's residence, marking the early evolution of the prison system in Dekina. Another informant insights shed light on the historical development of the Dekina Prison, illustrating how traditional practices and administrative structures gradually transitioned into formalized correctional facilities within the region.[36]

Upon examining the various accounts, testimonies, and narratives collected during the interviews about the origins and evolution of Dekina Prison, it becomes evident that the Dekina Prison was established prior to the colonial administration's governance in Nigeria. The prevailing truth regarding the establishment of the prison points to its creation by the Attah of Igala. This assertion is supported by numerous sources and historical records indicating that the prison system was not a novel concept in the Niger Area region before colonial rule. Historical literature reveals that prisons existed in different forms across various indigenous kingdoms, such as the Yoruba's "Tubu" system and similar institutions among the Hausa, Benin, and other highly centralized kingdoms.[37] These findings suggest that the concept of confinement as a means of maintaining order and enforcing laws was prevalent in traditional African societies before colonial influence.

Considering this historical context, it is plausible to conclude that the Dekina prison was established by the Attah of Igala as an institution to regulate and govern the populace, ensuring compliance with societal norms and preserving order within the region under study. This interpretation aligns with the broader historical landscape of indigenous governance structures and practices in pre-colonial Nigeria, highlighting the continuity of certain administrative mechanisms across different cultural contexts.

There was additional evidence, accounts, and testimonies supporting the assertion of the prison's ownership by the former Attah of Igala, as indicated by the presence of certain buildings adjacent to the prison that appeared to hold sacred significance, discouraging people from approaching them. Through previous testimonies and further investigations, it became apparent that the

[34]Oral Interview with Abdul Musa Attah, Retired Dekina Prison Warder, 60+, Dekina on 02/28/2024
[35]Oral Interview with Abdul Musa Attah, Retired Dekina Prison Warder, 60+, Dekina on 02/28/2024
[36]Oral Interview with Abdul Musa Attah, Retired Dekina Prison Warder, 60+, Dekina on 02/28/2024
[37]B. Awe, "The History of the Prison System in Nigeria". In Elias T. O. (ed) The Prison System in Nigeria. Lagos: University Press. 1968, p.56

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structures near the prison belonged to the Attah of Igala and the Edibo Attah, individuals who typically accompanied the Attah during his travels, including drummers, singers, dancers, guides, and others who supported his activities.

To bolster the claim that the prison was indeed established by the Attah of Igala, several accounts recounted a tragic incident involving one of the former Attah Ameh Oboni I who took his own life in one of the rooms upon returning to Dekina from a meeting of kings where he had refused to bow down to the queen of England. The Attah had foreseen his imminent dethronement and the potential extinction of his clan's claim to the Attahship title. Fearing the repercussions for his clan's future standing, he chose to relocate to Dekina and tragically ended his life by hanging himself in one of the rooms, a room that has remained untouched since that fateful day.[38] Abdul Musa Attah corroborated this narrative, emphasizing the sanctity of the rooms following the tragic event, with a prevailing belief that the area held spiritual significance, deterring people from approaching or disturbing the rooms. He mentioned that it was one of the Attah's sons who eventually visited the site to retrieve some of his father's belongings, underscoring the solemnity and reverence associated with the space in the aftermath of the tragic incident.[39]

Going forward, the 1916 prison ordinance effectively marked the official establishment of the Dekina Prison, as attested by multiple sources confirming the transition of the prison from the Attah's prison to a colonial institution in 1916.[40]Despite the formal change in nomenclature, little alteration was made to the existing infrastructure inherited from the Attah Prison, with the prison continuing to operate within the original buildings constructed by the Attahs.[41] The Dekina "Lock-Up" prison underwent a transformation into the "Nigerian Prison Service Dekina," while still operating under the jurisdiction of the native authority. Over time, the colonial government initiated efforts to enhance and improve the facilities, laying the groundwork for the modern prison complex that exists today.[42]

Transformation of the prison

The transformation of Dekina prison underscored the growing influence of colonial governance and the need for facilities to enforce law and order within the Igala society particularly in the Dekina Division. The prison served as a symbol of the increasing reach of colonial authority and the establishment of formal institutions of justice and incarceration within the region. The development and transformation of the prison since 1916 showed broader trends in colonial Nigeria, reflecting the expansion of infrastructure and institutions to support colonial governance and control. The prison's

[38]Oral Interview with Salisu Shuaibu Ikagbo, P.T.A Chairman of Dekina Prison School, 65years, Dekina on 02/27/2024
[39]Oral Interview with Abdul Musa Attah, Retired Dekina Prison Warder, 60+, Dekina on 02/28/2024
[40]Oral Interview with Onah Andrew, Second In Command Dekina Prison (2IC), 40+, Dekina on 10/04/2024
[41]Oral Interview with Abdul Musa Attah, Retired Dekina Prison Warder, 60+, Dekina on 10/04/2024
[42]Oral Interview with Isah Jibrin Muhammed, Assistant Controller of Correction, 50+, Dekina on 10/04/2024

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establishment marked a shift in the nature of authority and justice within the Igala society, as traditional methods of conflict resolution and punishment gave way to formalized colonial legal systems. The construction and operation of Dekina prison within the framework of the Igala Native Authority exemplify the complex interplay between traditional governance, colonial administration, and the evolving socio-political landscape of Nigeria during the early 20thcentury. This historical development serves as a testament to the enduring impact of colonialism on the institutions and infrastructure of the Igala people and the broader Nigerian society.

In terms of the development and transformation of the prison, the prison commenced operations with just two mud-buildings where the Attah would detain individuals found guilty of serious offenses such as murder, sacrilege, robbery, and other grave crimes.[43] It is noteworthy that not all offenders were confined within the Attah's palace; those guilty of abominable cases like assaults, or accusations of witchcraft faced alternative forms of punishment. Offenders accused of witchcraft were subject to severe consequences, ranging from public floggings in the market square to immediate death or exile to the foreboding forests of Ochadamu, where they were left to the mercy of wild animals. This multifaceted approach to justice and punishment reflected the societal norms and practices prevalent during that historical period.[44]

When the prison was formally established as Dekina Prison Service in 1916, its original capacity was designed to house a mere twenty-four (24) inmates.[45] However, it appears the crime rate in the area surged, prompting the need for additional cells, the prison underwent expansion in 1932 to accommodate more prisoners.[46] Despite these efforts to increase capacity, the facility appears grappled with the challenge of overcrowding.

As a result of the overcrowding issues, the prison was said to often struggle to maintain adequate hygiene standards, leading to increased risks of disease outbreaks and poor health conditions among inmates. Besides, living conditions constantly escalated tensions among inmates, resulting in conflicts, violence, and security challenges for both inmates and prison staff. It was also said that high levels of overcrowding in the prison placed additional stress on prison staff, leading to burnout, decreased morale, and compromised safety for both staff and inmates.[47]

[43]Oral interview with Isah Danjuma and Idrisu Alikali, Dekina Prison Staff, 40+, Dekina on 02/28/2024
[44]Oral Interview with Isah Jibrin Muhammed, Assistant Controller of Correction, 50+, Dekina on 10/04/2024
[45]Oral Interview with Abah Danladi, Lecturer, 40+, Anyigba on 23/03/2024
[46]Oral Interview with Mallam Kashim Suleiman, 50+, Clergy, Dekina on 10/04/2024
[47]Oral Interview with Onah Andrew, Second In Command Dekina Prison (2IC), 40+, Dekina on 10/04/2024

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Table 1: Showing the Dekina Native Authority Prison Statistics from 1939 – 1952

Year	Awaiting Trail	Sentenced	Admitted	Total No of Prisoners	Sentenced Expired	Discharged by order
1939	-	16	155	171	127	16
1940	-	28	187	215	142	21
1941	-	-	117	117	106	-
1942	-	11	86	97	59	7
1943	-	31	97	128	102	3
1944	-	9	111	120	64	4
1945	11	15	185	211	164	17
1946	8	22	195	225	193	11
1947	1	20	117	138	135	-
1948	-	14	85	98	84	2
1952	5	12	71	88	68	12

Source: NAK/LOKOPROF/24, "Prison Statistics, Igala Division".[48]

The table above displays the statistics of Dekina N.A Prison from 1939 to 1952. Regrettably, the statistics for the years 1949, 1950, and 1951 are missing as all efforts to retrieve the files by the researchers proved abortive. Such items considered in the table above include the number of prisoners awaiting trial, sentenced prisoners, the total number of prisoners admitted for each year, the number of prisoners whose sentences expired, those discharged by order, and those to be executed.[49]

In 1939 a total number of 16 prisoners were sentenced, 155 were admitted which formed a total of 171 prisoners in the Dekina N.A. Prison.[50] 1940, 28 were sentenced and 187 were admitted which formed a total number of 215.[51] In 1942, the prison had a total number 117 prisoners. In 1942, 11 prisoners were sentenced, 86 were admitted which formed a total of 97 prisoners in total.[52] In 1943, 31 prisoners were sentenced, 97 were admitted which formed the total of 128 prisoners for that year.[53] Also, in 1944, 9 prisoners were sentenced while 111 were admitted to form the total of 120 prisoners for that

[48]NAK/LOKOPROF/24. "Prison Statistics, Igala Division.
[49]NAK/LOKOPROF/24. "Prison Statistics, Igala Division.
[50]NAK/LOKOPROF/24. "Prison Statistics, Igala Division.
[51]NAK/LOKOPROF/24. "Prison Statistics, Igala Division.
[52]NAK/LOKOPROF/24. "Prison Statistics, Igala Division.
[53]NAK/LOKOPROF/24. "Prison Statistics, Igala Division.

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year.[54] In 1945, 11 prisoners were on awaiting trial while 15 prisoners were sentenced, 185 prisoners were admitted which led to the total of 211 prisoners in Dekina prison in that year.[55] In 1946, 8 prisoners were on awaiting trail while 22 prisoners were sentenced, 195 were admitted which formed the total of 225 prisoners for that year.[56] In 1947, 1 prisoners was on awaiting trial while 20 prisoners were sentenced, 117 were admitted which formed the total 138 prisoners for that year.[57] In 1948, 14 prisoners were sentenced, 84 were admitted which formed the total of 98 prisoners for that year.[58] And finally, in 1952, 5 prisoners were on awaiting trial, 12 prisoners were sentenced and 71 prisoners were admitted which formed the total of 88 prisoners for that year.[59]

The analysis of the above table showed a massive rate of overcrowding in the Dekina Native Authority Prison. From the research carried out on the prison it was shown that the prison was built at inception to accommodate just about twenty four (24)[60] inmates per year if not until now the capacity was increased to accommodate only 60 prisoners.[61]

Furthermore, the shortcomings of the prison infrastructure extended beyond the lack of adequate cell space to include deficiencies in the sanitation facilities. In addition, prior to now, the prison utilized a bucket latrine system, which was later upgraded to pit latrines. Despite these improvements, the facility continued to face challenges in maintaining hygienic conditions.[62]A colonial report further explains the issue of poor sanitation and hygiene in Igalaland with direct example to Dekina prison. The report states that:

> Ankpa prison is always full and accommodations is far from satisfactory. Efforts are now being made to remedy this. Dekina prison is a disgrace to all and it is hoped to build a new latrine in the dry season.[63]

The report clearly stated that the living conditions of prisoners in Igalaland particularly in Dekina is worse as the prison. The prison condition is said to be obviously bad with the fact that the prison don't have a durable latrine system as well as other infrastructures for easy comfortability of prisoners. Furthermore, the rising rate of escape attempts by inmates prompted authorities to take action by constructing a perimeter fence around the prison grounds. However, it was noted that even this security measure proved insufficient in deterring escapes due to the perceived harsh and ineffective design of the fence. This persistent issue of escapes highlighted the ongoing

[54]NAK/LOKOPROF/24. "Prison Statistics, Igala Division.
[55]NAK/LOKOPROF/24. "Prison Statistics, Igala Division.
[56]NAK/LOKOPROF/24. "Prison Statistics, Igala Division.
[57]NAK/LOKOPROF/24. "Prison Statistics, Igala Division.
[58]NAK/LOKOPROF/24. "Prison Statistics, Igala Division.
[59]NAK/LOKOPROF/24. "Prison Statistics, Igala Division.
[60]Oral Interview with Onah Andrew, Second In Command Dekina Prison (2IC), 40+, Dekina on 10/04/2024.
[61]Oral Interview with Onah Andrew, Second In Command Dekina Prison (2IC), 40+, Dekina on 10/04/2024
[62]Oral Interview with Abdul Musa Attah, Retired Dekina Prison Warder, 60+, Dekina on 10/04/2024
[63]NAK/LOKOPROF/1945 Igala Division Yearly and Annual Reports 1945

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need for improvements in security measures and infrastructure within the prison to ensure the safety of both inmates and the surrounding community.[64]

The prison's development and transformation continued under the governance of the colonial administration. During this period, colonial government implemented improvements to the prison infrastructure, such as providing access to water by utilizing wells sourced from the "Aji Itemie" (Itemie River).[65] The *Itemie* River held significant importance as one of the primary rivers in Dekina, serving as a crucial water supply for the region. The river's course extended from Abocho to Dekina and further channeled on to Bassa.[66] The advancements in the development and modernization of the prison, which commenced during the precolonial and colonial eras, continued to thrive even after the attainment of independence. This ongoing progress underscored a commitment to enhancing the prison's facilities and operations to meet evolving standards and requirements, ensuring the effective management and rehabilitation of inmates within the institution.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the Dekina prison established fully in 1916 as a full colonial prison over the years have experienced certain developments and transformation. Several changes have occurred in the prison ranging from health, feeding, and welfare of inmates among many others. This study has brought to the fore several themes related to the development and transformation of Dekina Prison from 1916 to 1952. It traces the origin of the Dekina prison system and argues that colonial prisons served as instruments of power used by Europeans for repressing opposition to colonial rule, harnessing cheap labour and ridding the society of unwanted populations. More importantly, the study challenges dominant Western theories and colonial ideologies that represent African prisons as docile bodies.

The Dekina prison system under the administration of the colonial Authorities system was plagued by serious problems such as overcrowding, inadequate staff, poor health care system, and lack of infrastructural facilities among others. These problems, as the study shows, developed during the colonial era. Dekina prisons served as custodial institutions. It was not envisioned as a therapeutic spaces where prisoners could be reformed into respectable and hardworking citizens. This implies that, transformation of Dekina prison during the colonial administration only transformed the available infrastructures as there were little or no transformation of those in the prison.

[64]Oral Interview with Mallam Kashim Suleiman, 50+, Clergy, Dekina on 10/04/2024
[65]Oral Interview with Abdul Musa Attah, Retired Dekina Prison Warder, 60+, Dekina on 10/04/2024
[66]Oral Interview with Abdul Musa Attah, Retired Dekina Prison Warder, 60+, Dekina on 10/04/2024

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