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FEDERATION OF NIGERIA

ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
NIGERIAN RECORD OFFICE  
FOR THE YEAR 1954-55

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## ***FOREWORD***

It will be evident from the report which follows, that an energetic programme for the administration of Nigeria archives is now well launched. These historical records form part of the country's heritage, and the importance of ensuring their preservation for posterity cannot be over-estimated. I am indeed happy, therefore, to be able to record my appreciation of the progress which has already been achieved in this field, under the capable direction of an eminent Nigerian historian.

M. INUWA WADA,  
*Federal Minister of Works*

Lagos, 18th October, 1956.

# Annual Report of the Nigerian Record Office, 1954-55

## INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL

1. In 1953, Dr K. O. Dike prepared a "Report on the Preservation and Administration of Historical Records and the Establishment of a Public Record Office in Nigeria." The report, after describing in some detail the nature of the historical records available in Nigeria, where they were to be found and how best they could be preserved in a tropical climate, went on to emphasize the need for greater efforts to preserve, classify and house these records. In the interests of promoting the orderly and systematic administration of Nigerian archives, the report recommended the creation of a Government Department charged with responsibility for this, and also the promulgation of an Ordinance which would define and regulate archive administration. The Nigerian Government gave approval in principle to Dr Dike's report, and in consequence the Nigerian Record Office was established by an Administrative Order of the Governor-General on the 1st April, 1954.

### STAFF

2. The establishment during 1954-55 was as follows :—

	<i>Provided for in the Esti- mates</i>	<i>Actual Strength at 1st April, 1955</i>
Supervisor of Public Records .. .. .	1	1
Temporary Archive Instructor .. .. .	1	1
Archivist-in-training .. .. .	1	1
Chief Archive Clerk .. .. .	2	1
First Class Archive Clerks .. .. .	8	8
Second and Third Class Archive Clerks .. .. .	1	Nil
Stenographer, Grade I or II .. .. .	1	1
Typist, Grade I or II .. .. .	2	2
Bookbinding Assistants, Grades I and II .. .. .	1	1
Driver/Mechanic .. .. .	1	1

### ORGANISATION OF THE OFFICE

3. In order to promote maximum efficiency and to ensure co-ordination of the work of the Department, the Record Office is sectionalised under the following heads :—

- |                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| (a) Liaison        | (d) Photography Section |
| (b) Repository     | (e) Administration      |
| (c) Repair Section | (f) Branch Office.      |

#### (a) LIAISON SECTION

4. This section establishes contact with all the Federal and Regional Government Departments, Corporate bodies such as Missionary Societies or private persons who possess important historical material. Their work includes transfer of documents to the Record Office, and all other matters concerning historical manuscripts in general. The Liaison Section undertakes the care, cleaning and inspection of documents in the field before these are transferred to the Record Office. The section also undertakes the inspection and care of documents which cannot as yet be transferred to one of the repositories.

#### TOURING

5. A regular feature of the work of the Liaison section is the heavy touring programme which it undertakes in order to ensure that Departmental and other records scattered over the various Provincial and District Offices in the country are safe-guarded. During the period under survey over ten tours were undertaken, twenty-four offices visited, and their non-current files examined, listed and scheduled.

## LISTING AND SCHEDULING

6. In the main the work in the field during the past year was confined to the listing and scheduling of records found in various parts of the country. A number of documents have been scheduled in the following places.

	<i>Vols.</i>
Aba District Office .. .. .	1,500
Itu District Office .. .. .	1,000
Lands and Survey Department, Lagos .. .. .	37
Labour Department, Ibadan .. .. .	704
Onitsha Provincial Office .. .. .	2,000
Owerri District Office .. .. .	1,000
Port Harcourt .. .. .	5,000
Secretariat, Lagos .. .. .	3,000
C.M.S. (Yoruba Mission) .. .. .	350
C.M.S. (Niger Mission) .. .. .	200

## TRANSFER OF RECORDS

7. Documents are received in the Repository after the terms of their transfer have been agreed to between the Nigerian Record Office and the owners of the documents. In the case of Government Offices a signed list of the documents removed is deposited with the officer in charge of the administrative unit. Sometimes those in charge of some of the offices visited are reluctant to part with their documents; others readily make over their papers for better preservation in our repositories. About 18,000 volumes of documents have been transferred to repositories at Enugu and Ibadan. From time to time it has been necessary to leave large accumulations of records in the unsatisfactory condition they were found in because there is no room for them in the repositories. The greatest single problem is the lack of accommodation for the archives of the nation.

## WORK ON PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

8. Although it is true that the bulk of the historical papers in our repositories are derived from Government Departments, it is important to remember that some of the most valuable documents preserved in the Record Office belong to missionary bodies such as the C.M.S. Niger Mission, the C.M.S. Yoruba Mission, and the Methodist Missionary Society. Commercial firms also helped, notably John Holt, one of whose Directors, Mr Cecil Holt, has made microfilm copies of almost all the letters of Mary Kingsley, at the expense of his firm, and presented them to the Nigerian Record Office. The Government is most grateful to Mr C. Holt, and to his firm for their continued support of the work on Nigerian archives. Mention must be made of the valuable private collection of King Jaja of Opobo which has been loaned to the Record Office by his family.

### (b) REPOSITORY

9. The Repository section is responsible for the physical care and preservation of documents brought in by the Liaison group. The following work has been done on the documents during the year :

- Cleaning, fumigation, and ventilation of the Repository and the documents therein ;
- Checking, sorting and accessioning of documents ;
- Compilation and revision of slip lists and schedules ;
- Boxing, labelling and shelving of documents after accessioning ;
- Maintenance of location lists ;
- Production duties and maintenance of the temporary search room ;
- Maintenance of the register of searchers and other duties in connection with enquiries from the Nigerian public and from abroad.

## ACCESSION

10. Accession Registers record collection of documents actually transferred to the Office and the entries therein are made by classes of records transferred. Such a register is of a great advantage where more than one repository is in operation. During the period under review about 7,000 documents have been accessioned.

## CLASSIFICATION

11. Through the system of classification, shorthand numbers are allotted to documents. These are easy to remember and quote when documents are required. The broad principles of this system are being worked out. Since we are dependent on the type of administration that created the records for their proper classification, research is being conducted on the administrative history of Nigeria. When this is completed, it is hoped that the origin of every class of documents in the repository will be discovered. Until this is done, the archives will never be satisfactorily classified.

## (c)-(d) OTHER SECTIONS

12. Other Sections such as the Repair, Photographic and Search Sections cannot function until the permanent building is completed.

## (e) ADMINISTRATION

13. The administrative duties affecting the work of the whole office are dealt with and co-ordinated by this section. It handles not only routine administration but correspondence between the Record Office and archive organisations abroad. It deals with the ordering of stores and equipment and is linked with the work of other sections.

## (f) BRANCH OFFICES

14. In a country the size of Nigeria, it is essential that branch offices of the Record Office be established in the three Regions. The work of the branch offices are broadly two :—

(a) To house and preserve historical documents that are of particular interest to the Region and which may be needed for current administration.

(b) To provide a nucleus for archive work in the Region as a whole.

## ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

15. As pointed out in Dr Dike's report on the Preservation of Historical Records, the precursor of an ordered archival service is legislation. In the absence of any legislation, the powers of the Supervisor of Public Records can only be persuasive and he has no means of saving important state papers which some officers might be unwilling to release nor able to preserve. Without legislation the Department cannot on its own responsibility admit searchers into its repositories or allow them to inspect public documents of any description. It is for this and other reasons that Dr Dike recommended the setting up of an Archives Committee to guide the policy of the Department in the preparation of an Archive Ordinance.

16. The following people were appointed to the membership of the Committee during the year (Government Notice No. 1933 of 1st November, 1954 ; page 1328 of *Official Gazette* No. 61 of 11th November, 1954) :

The Chief Justice of Nigeria (Chairman).  
Dr J. T. Saunders, Principal, University College, Ibadan.  
Mr J. O. Field, Chief Secretary's Office.  
Mr S. O. Adebo, Financial Secretary's Office.  
The Surveyor of Antiquities.  
Alhaji Bello Kagara, Wali of Katsina.  
Alhaji Smith of Ilesha.  
Archdeacon Lucas of Lagos.

The Secretary of the Christian Council of Nigeria.  
Dr S. O. Biobaku, Registrar, University College, Ibadan.  
The Reverend Father Sheppard, S.M.A.  
Mallam Ladan, Senior Broadcasting Officer, Kaduna.  
The Librarian, University College, Ibadan.  
Mr H. F. Beavis.  
Mr H. Mackenzie-Thomas.  
Mr O. Ukolonu.  
Mr E. D. Wolseley.  
Dr K. O. Dike, Supervisor of Public Records (Secretary).

Owing to constitutional changes this Committee has not been able to meet during the period under survey.

#### MR D. CHARMAN'S REPORT

17. Mr Derek Charman, an English Archivist, seconded to the Nigerian Record Office for six months, arrived in December 1954. He was appointed to undertake the technical training of the staff and to advise on the proper organisation of the Record Office. He submitted a report which is being considered by the Federal Government. This report deals with the problems of building, staffing and other routine matters that confront a new archive organisation.

#### TRAINING OF STAFF

18. An important problem facing this organisation is the training of its staff. It is now quite clear that almost all the technical staff will have to be trained in Britain, Europe, or America where facilities for training archivists and technicians are available.

In January 1955, Mr T. C. M. Eneli was appointed archivist-in-training to work under Mr Charman. Mr Eneli has now been appointed archivist. An Arabist/Archivist is shortly to be appointed to take over the Arabic manuscripts in the Northern Region. Arrangements are in progress for training more technical staff for the expanding work of the Office.

#### VISIT TO EUROPEAN ARCHIVES

19. In order to establish the Nigerian Record Office on a sound footing the former Archive Instructor, Mr D. Charman and Dr Dike undertook a fact-finding visit to the Record Offices in Britain and Europe in August 1955. One of the objects of the tour was to ascertain whether Record Offices abroad would be willing to accept Nigerian archive workers for training in archive science and administration. As a result of the contacts made archivists and technicians will now be accepted for training in British, European and American archival organisations.

20. A Committee has recently been formed in London to locate West African materials in British and European archives and to make microfilms and photostat copies of these documents for preservation in Record Offices. Of the eleven members of this Committee eight are Professors of History in Britain.

#### QUARTERS AND OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

21. Since its inception in 1950 the Record Office has relied almost entirely on the University College, Ibadan, for its accommodation. During the period of the survey the Government was able to secure from the University authorities the use of two rooms in the building of the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research. These rooms were used as office and repository until June 1955. With the rapidly growing accumulation of historical records, however, the two rooms soon proved inadequate. Once again the University College came to the rescue and the Library Committee allowed the use of the spacious 4th floor of the University Library as a repository. Regional Governments have also loaned temporary accommodation at Enugu and Kaduna.

22. The Council of Ministers have now approved in principle the building of permanent repositories and offices in Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna and Buea in the period 1955-60. The first of these will be built at Ibadan, in 1956-57, at a cost of about £60,000.

#### SENIOR STAFF QUARTERS

23. One Senior Staff bungalow has been purchased from the University College, Ibadan, and two chalets of the College type will be built in 1956-57 at a cost of £2,500 each.

#### CONCLUSIONS

24. In the foregoing paragraphs an attempt has been made to describe the origins of the Nigerian Record Office, how it became a Department of State in 1954, its activities during the period under survey and the difficulties that have yet to be overcome. Most of these difficulties will disappear when a permanent repository is built and more staff trained in archival administration. The attention of the Department is at present focussed on the building of its first permanent repository at Ibadan.

24th March, 1956.

K. O. DIKE, M.A. PH.D.

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