

HistGeogUni

A Global Research Network on the Historical Geographies of the University



HistGeogUni Lecture 2021

Thursday, 27 May 2021, 4.00 to 5.30 pm (BST/UTC+1)

Dr Tim Livsey

Northumbria University

Universities and Twentieth Century Globalisation: The View from Nigeria

Online via Microsoft Teams

School of Social Sciences and Humanities
Loughborough University

Please register online via this [link](#) from April 2021 onwards.

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HistGeogUni Lecture 2020-21

Universities and Twentieth Century Globalisation: The View from Nigeria



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The twentieth century saw the globalisation of the western university. This lecture considers what the Nigerian experience tells us about this process.

In 1900, Nigeria was part of the British empire. Living within this racialised polity profoundly limited Nigerians' options, but opened the possibility of campaigning for a local university using imperial networks. These efforts triumphed with the foundation in 1948 of University College Ibadan, Nigeria's first university, but it was recognisably the product of imperial connections. Ibadan was modelled on British universities, and most of the lecturers were British.

In an era of African nationalism, the question became how best to indigenise the university. Campaigners won the appointment of more African lecturers, and students sought to rethink the relationship between Africa and other parts of the world. When a Nigerian principal, Kenneth Dike, was appointed with independence in 1960, he sought to balance British influence through developing links with the United States. The university was expected to play a crucial role in national development, but Nigerian economic growth struggled, and the university's cosmopolitan community was badly shaken by the outbreak of civil war in 1967. More universities were founded in the 1960s and 1970s, widening access, but since then the question has become how to rebuild Nigerian universities' cross-border links after sustained underinvestment.

A focus on Nigerian universities highlights the partial nature of twentieth century globalisation. European empires helped to globalise western institutions, but linked colonies more strongly to metropolises than to neighbouring territories. The story of twentieth century globalisation should be as much about the places that were not connected – the opportunities that were closed off – as the places that were.