



"Life Not Worth Living:" Nigerian Petitions Reflecting an African Society's Experiences During World War II (African World Series)

Chima J. Korieh

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Studies of the Second World War have not particularly focused on the contribution of African societies or the impact of the war on their lives. The biggest problem faced by the colonial administration was the rising cost of living that became pronounced during the war. The war forced the British to restructure the local economy in order to ensure that the Nigerian population produced the necessary commodities needed to support the British war effort. The government initiated an unprecedented level of mobilization and introduced new regulations and laws to effectively control local production. The African population was visibly distressed with the food crisis, the British management of the local production system, and the insecurity that these engendered.

This book presents unusual but critically important primary sources left by ordinary Nigerians in the form of petitions and supplications to British officials during the war. Written by individuals living in rural and urban areas in Nigeria, these unique documentary sources reflect local reactions and responses to imperial war policies. They provide unparalleled perspective on the war and what happened to ordinary people as a result of British war-time policies in Nigeria. For expert and general audiences alike, the book will be an instructive experience. The "intellectual" path of colonial history is tortured: most is written from a European perspective, but African sources remind us—perhaps surprisingly—about the darker sides of colonial policy and African experiences during the war. This work contributes to all areas of colonial studies, indigenous literary traditions, and discourses on African colonial experience. Moreover, the project serves as a poignant and timely reminder that Africans were central to the Allied war effort and challenges the dominant Western-centered narrative of the war that places less emphasis on the contributions of the African population and the impact of the war on their society.

This book is part of the *African World Series*, edited by Toyin Falola, Jacob and Frances Sanger Mossiker Chair in the Humanities, University of Texas at Austin.

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