

planning a postcolonial university campus

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The University of Ife, Nigeria

THE FOLLOWING IMPRESSIONS, told in retrospect, are those of a Nigerian student arriving in 1979 for the first time on the campus of the University of Ife, which was later renamed Obafemi Awolowo University (plate 5):

What greeted my young mind virtually had me pass out. My eyes were scintillated by the sight of an impressive stretch of well laid lawn garnished with floricultural species carefully arranged . . .

After about a ten minute drive on that beautiful road—the famed Road One, . . . were gigantic architectural masterpieces all linked by lush green lawns, décors, walk ways, elevations and subways. I was later to realize that the intimidating architectural array warehoused the famous Oduduwa Hall, the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi library, the Senate Building cum Administrative building and the Humanities faculty.¹

Had the student continued the drive northeast, he would have seen the elegant agriculture faculty and, further north, its experimental farms.

Scattered between the farms and the agriculture faculty were detached or semidetached one- and two-story faculty houses. To the west of the academic core, which the student described as full of “gigantic architectural masterpieces,” were the students’ dormitories. More modest and orderly, their main attractions were the spacious and strikingly modern study halls. “Was I in Nigeria?” the student recounted his amazement. “No I must be elsewhere.” “Did Nigerians think this place up? . . . Was I indeed in the same country where confusion is a festering norm?” “It must be different Nigerians that planned this Ife,” he concluded. These “different Nigerians” were in fact a team of Israeli architects headed by Arie Shanon, a Bauhaus graduate and one of Israel’s most prominent architects and planners at that time. The team worked closely with the Nigerian university committee from the university’s inception in 1960 through the early 1980s.²

The University of Ife was the most ambitious governmental project of Nigeria’s western region and a crowning symbol of independence. The university’s goal, according to its historians, Olufemi Omosini and Biodun Adediran, was “to produce graduates who will be able to adjust themselves to life in the communities they may be called upon to serve and not reproduce an elite which is divorced from the rest of the community.”³ The site chosen for the campus location—next to the town of Ife, also known as Ile-Ife and the cradle of the Yoruba, the predominant ethnic group of the region—was deemed appropriate to fulfill this goal because of its semirural characteristics and the vast agricultural land Ife’s *ooni*, the Yoruba king, made available for the institution. While the University College Ibadan (UCI), which had been established by the British colonial administration at the outskirts of a great metropolitan area in 1948, followed the Oxbridge model and aimed to cultivate a Nigerian elite, the University of Ife—much like the other two regional universities that were established immediately upon independence—was instead modeled on the American land grant university. In its democratic goals and rural setting, as well as its emphasis on applied research in agriculture and technical fields, the Nigerian university committee found a precedent better fit to address the immediate development needs of the region.

As historian and university administrator Cornelius de Kiewiet, who became involved in higher education in postindependence Africa, wrote in 1971, the university in Africa was the primary tool in decolonization and development, second in importance only to the government itself.⁴ The government of West Nigeria recognized this when it announced the establishment of its own regional university at the same time that Nige-

ria gained independence in October 1960. In doing so, the West Nigerian government disregarded the recommendations of the Ashby Committee, a federal university planning committee, which limited the building of regional universities to the northern and eastern regions alone.⁵ This regional competition over the allocation of higher education resources was intertwined with ethnical rivalry, as each region was associated with one of Nigeria's dominant ethnic groups. Originating from this act of defiance against the Ashby Committee, the University of Ife was the West Nigerian government's most ambitious project. With an estimated capital expenditure of twenty million pounds in the first ten years, the university was to be the western region's showpiece and continued to be a top priority in the following decades, withstanding radical shifts in both local and federal government.⁶

Persistence in planning and constructing the university campus over the next twenty years attests to the determination of West Nigerian politicians and educators and their commitment to building the university despite fickle geopolitical alignments, political crises, and corruption. The decision to establish the university was made under the leadership of chief Obafemi Awolowo of the ruling party, Action Group, but in 1962 a political crisis in the region brought his incarceration and the dissolution of the party.⁷ At that time, the university provincial council requested that the Israeli architects discontinue designing most of the buildings, with the expectation that the regional Ministry of Work would complete the task. However, claiming that this would jeopardize the integrity of the master plan, the Israeli architects insisted on continuing to oversee the design.⁸ Work resumed as soon as the federal military coup of 1966 stabilized the region. Despite the civil war that broke out the following year and continued until the end of the decade, the construction of the university carried on almost without interruption well into the 1970s.⁹ In fact, it did not halt even in 1973, when Nigeria severed formal diplomatic relations with Israel, whose Solel Boneh was in charge of most of the undertaking, initially as Nigersol, a joint company with the government of West Nigeria, and after 1966, as a private local branch of Solel Boneh.

As in the case of the Sierra Leone parliament building, the western region's government, while determined to establish a regional university, had no concrete vision for its physical manifestation. With no prescribed model for a postcolonial African university, the program and master plan unfolded in tandem as Sharon started to search for a site and began preliminary planning while the university committee deliberated on the univer-

sity's character. Although this was the first university to be planned by an all-Nigerian committee, foreign aid nevertheless affected the university's formation.¹⁰ Between 1960 and 1962, Nigeria received loans from the United Kingdom, the United States, the International Bank for Development and Reconstruction, and Israel.¹¹ Nigeria's shift from the model of Oxbridge to that of the American land grant university reflects this development theater: while the influence of the World Bank and the United States was growing, that of the United Kingdom was waning. Although Israel's aid was miniscule compared to that of both the declining British Empire and the rising United States, in practice Sharon and his team played a decisive role in planning and designing the university. Sharon's architects drew on their experience in Israel and negotiated American influence, particularly the recommendations made by a team from the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who served as consultants from 1966 to 1969.

This chapter tracks the planning of the university campus from its early inception; I open by showing how regional rivalries and the politics of foreign aid together led to the awarding of the project to Nigersol, Solel Boneh's partnership with the western region government. The chapter then turns to the choice of site, the reasons for the committee's rejection of the Oxbridge collegiate model, and the search for an alternative model. I delve into the history of UCI's planning in order to show how the Oxbridge model was used in Nigeria and explore why the University of Ife committee rejected it. The chapter concludes with Sharon's turn to kibbutz planning as a way of integrating agricultural facilities with the representative university core. Influenced by the recommendations of the University of Wisconsin consultants, Sharon adapted the collective principles of kibbutzim to American-inspired suburban living. Both the kibbutz and suburban models addressed the university's need to elevate the standard of living in the countryside so that it could attract faculty who preferred the urban environs of Ibadan and Lagos, and discourage students from leaving the rural hinterland following graduation.

The problem of reconfiguring the countryside so it would become a desirable alternative to the city builds on the discussion in chapter 2, where I showed how strengthening Sierra Leone's interior was proposed as a strategy to preempt rural-urban migration to the country's capital, Freetown. However, the plan for the University of Ife's campus diverged greatly from the Sierra Leone national urbanization plan in both the audience it addressed and the image of the countryside it produced. While the plan for

Sierra Leone addressed mainly chiefs and assured them that the customary social structure would not be affected by the modernization of the country's economy, the plan for the University of Ife campus addressed university professors and students, who for the most part associated modernity and education with an urban lifestyle. As we saw in the first chapter, African governments also faced the challenge of mobilizing their workforce. While the first chapter focused on the unskilled labor used to build the Sierra Leone parliament, this chapter addresses how the University of Ife's curriculum was designed to produce the much-needed skilled manpower that was especially lacking in the countryside. In order to do so, the university campus needed to radically break with the backward image of the countryside so that it could present a competing vision of modernity. Unlike in the Sierra Leone plan, therefore, the aim was not to balance the traditional countryside with urbanization but rather to radically transform the countryside both by professionalizing agriculture and by changing the lifestyle associated with it. However, as this chapter demonstrates, this attempt failed to extend beyond the boundaries of the campus, which continued to grow as a self-contained economic and cultural unit.

National Politics, Regional Ambitions, and International Aid

The decision to establish a regional university in Nigeria's western region followed a series of higher education reforms that the British colonial government had initiated in the 1950s, culminating in the Ashby Committee's report on the eve of Nigerian independence. Recommending the establishment of two regional universities in the east and north as well as a federal university in Lagos, the Ashby Committee assumed that the existing University College Ibadan, the first university in the country, which had been established in 1948 in the capital of the western region, would address that region's educational needs. However, the western region government argued that UCI's capacity was too limited to fulfill these needs. In 1960, there were close to three thousand students from West Nigeria, supported by government scholarships, in the United Kingdom alone.¹² Furthermore, due to its status as a federal university, UCI enrolled equal numbers of students from each of the three regions, and therefore even if it grew, it could not assure sufficient space for students from the western region.¹³ Not only UCI but also other federal educational institutions, such as a branch of the Nigerian College for Arts, Science and Technology in Ibadan and the Yaba College in federal Lagos, were located in the western region, but, in effect,

the privilege the region had enjoyed during the late colonial period became a hindrance with the approach of independence. Protesting against these recommendations, Sanya Dojo Onabamiro, the western region's minister of education and its representative on the Ashby Committee, submitted a minority report and withdrew from the committee in protest.¹⁴ From that moment on, the western region's government unilaterally pursued its decision to establish a university in the region that would cater first, if not exclusively, to students who were predominantly of Yoruba origin.¹⁵

In April 1961, when the federal government formally accepted the establishment of the university, its planning was already underway.¹⁶ By that point, the western government had formed the University Planning Committee in October 1960, published a white paper announcing the search for a suitable site in November, and then sent a delegation on a study-tour of campuses overseas.¹⁷

By the time the decision to establish a regional university had been made, Nigersol had already been in operation for almost two years and was waiting for a commission of such magnitude. Although Britain blocked the opening of an Israeli consular office in Lagos until March 1960, Israel had already initiated trade relations and technical assistance programs with Nigeria.¹⁸ In 1957, when the eastern and western regions became self-governing (the northern region postponed it until 1959), initial trade relations were formalized.¹⁹ These trade relations were mediated mainly through the Israeli export company Dizengoff West Africa, which was established the same year and opened branches in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria.²⁰ As early as 1957, Chief C. D. Akran, minister of development for Nigeria's western region, visited Israel to negotiate trade and technical assistance.²¹ Chief Akin Deko, minister of agriculture and natural resources for West Nigeria, visited the following year.²² In the wake of these visits, Solel Boneh personnel and Israeli foreign ministry delegates stationed in Accra frequented West Nigeria to discuss the establishment of a joint company modeled on an Israeli-Ghanaian partnership, the Ghana National Construction Corporation.²³ These negotiations resulted in an agreement, signed on January 14, 1959, between the Western Region Production Development Board and Solel Boneh to establish the Nigersol Construction Company. Solel Boneh held 40 percent of its shares.²⁴ By September 1959, eleven Solel Boneh personnel were stationed in Ibadan, while two more were on their way; Nigersol employed 270 local workers.²⁵ In December 1960, just two months after Nigeria celebrated its independence, there were

sixty-two Solel Boneh personnel stationed in Nigersol branches in Ibadan and Lagos.²⁶

Through the Western Region Production Development Board (later renamed Western Nigeria Development Corporation), the government was involved in the Nigerian construction market. Its involvement was based on what the political scientist Crawford Young has called the “pragmatic socialism” of the late 1950s, in which a nationalist “nurture-capitalism,” whereby the government encouraged the growth of a local entrepreneurial class, was combined with state-capitalist and welfare tendencies.²⁷ The *1955–60 Economic Plan of Western Nigeria* outlined the following priorities for the Development Corporation: “(a) the undertaking of those projects for which individual initiative and private capital are not forthcoming, i.e.[.] to be complementary to, and not competitive with, private enterprise; (b) the undertaking of those types of enterprise for which the minimum economic unit and, so, the capital requirements are large; and (c) the attraction, so far as possible, of outside capital to these enterprises subject to adequate safeguards.”²⁸

In the absence of a strong indigenous private sector, this parastatal sector assumed the role of an entrepreneur, while the government attracted foreign investment with various incentives such as tax relief and protective tariffs.²⁹ This may help to explain why the western region, alongside federal Lagos, attracted most of the country’s foreign investment, despite the fact that its first premier, Obafemi Awolowo, advanced nationalization as part of his opposition to foreign domination of the economy.³⁰ In this context, a continuous influx of foreign investment was not perceived as a new economic subjugation. On the contrary, relationships with non-British investors were welcomed as a means of loosening British companies’ grip on the economy and therefore as steps toward economic independence.

Attracting foreign investment also presented a strategic advantage in domestic rivalries. Against British attempts to thwart the Israeli initiative because it would decrease dependence on British contractors, the western region government was keen to establish the joint company before the impending federal elections of 1960. Awolowo wanted to boost the region’s economy in order to bolster his party’s competitiveness against a potential coalition of the northern and eastern regions.³¹ This regional competition, however, did not deter Solel Boneh from establishing a parallel joint company with the eastern region government, the Eastern Nigeria Construction and Furniture Company, in November 1959.³² The booming state

construction industry, which had opened to private contracting in 1950, offered a particularly lucrative opportunity. From 1950 to 1963, construction costs rose 285 percent while overall prices increased only 36 percent.³³ As the Israel foreign ministry official A. Tzur reported on the eve of 1959, “Just today the newspaper published the figures that English contractor companies’ estimated jobs in Nigeria in 1957 is 157 million pounds.”³⁴ At the time of its inception, Nigersol expected its work over the following five years to yield twenty million British pounds.³⁵ Nigersol’s establishment as a government-owned company was therefore an attempt to return to the western region’s government, now fully Nigerianized, some of the profits from the region’s construction industry, if not control over it.³⁶

Indicating Nigeria’s entrepreneurship, Nigersol’s “Memorandum and Articles of Association,” dated September 29, 1959, nowhere declare that the company was state-owned. The company’s mission statement was grounded purely on a market-based economy, and the scope of its activity was by no means limited to the western region, or even to Nigeria.³⁷ Off the record, however, Awolowo’s government assured the Israeli delegates (“without blushing,” as one of them reported) that Nigersol would be given priority over other contractors in state projects and would sometimes even be able to bypass formal tenders.³⁸ In the negotiations over the establishment of the Eastern Nigeria Construction and Furniture Company, a similar company in the eastern region, the Israeli representative made it clear that securing a few head-start projects was a precondition for any such undertaking.³⁹

The low interest loans that Israel offered to Nigeria’s federal government also played a role in Nigersol’s establishment in this parastatal sector. While the loans were only occasionally directed toward the implementation of specific projects, as in the case of the loan for the Sierra Leone parliament, it was generally understood that the majority of the loans would be used for the projects that Israeli-African joint companies were undertaking. Furthermore, even if African governments did not condition the establishment of joint companies on Israel’s granting of loans, their establishment served as an incentive for such granting, in order to ensure the joint companies’ success in securing and carrying out projects. Israel and the future federal government of Nigeria signed their first loan agreement in Lagos in July 1960.⁴⁰ In a draft dated a month earlier, the three-million-British-pound loan was to be divided equally between the northern region (whose pro-Arab League government Israel had been persistently courting), the eastern region, and the federal government. Eventually, the signed

agreement specified the allocation of one million British pounds to the Eastern Nigeria Construction and Furniture Company to complete construction of two hotels in Enugu and Port Harcourt, and the remaining two million pounds were left to the discretion of the federal government, provided that it would use half for the purchase of Israeli goods and the other half for development projects. It was assumed that Israeli-Nigerian joint companies would carry out at least some of these projects. In later correspondence, the federal minister of finance, chief Festus Samuel Okotie-Eboh, confirmed that he would ensure that 500,000 British pounds would be allocated to the government of West Nigeria and be used “exclusively for paying outstanding Bills to the Nigersol Construction Company and the Nigerian Water Resources Developments Limited,” both Israeli-Nigerian joint companies.⁴¹

The western region’s university project, with a capital expenditure estimated at twenty million pounds for the first ten years, was by far the largest project Nigersol could have hoped for.⁴² With Nigersol readily available, the University Planning Committee did not issue a public tender.⁴³ It was clear that Nigersol would be the contractor for the bush clearing, road paving, and eventually construction of the buildings. Before this commission, Nigersol’s contracts included civil engineering projects such as the construction of roads, industrial sheds, and warehouses.⁴⁴ It was assumed that once major architectural projects arrived, they would boost the company’s experience and prestige, increase the number of its workers, and utilize machinery on which the company had spent over a million British pounds.⁴⁵ The first such job Nigersol undertook was the Premier Hotel in Ibadan, for which Solel Boneh subcontracted the Haifa architect Shmuel Rosoff, known for designing luxury hotels and villas.⁴⁶ Planning and construction were perceived as linked, and there was no institutional separation between the trades: Solel Boneh employed its own architects, who were in charge of planning tasks for the African joint companies. When commissions for more complicated and prestigious projects arrived, Solel Boneh often subcontracted prominent Israeli architects specifically for the job.⁴⁷ As a result, there was no clear, formal division between the designers and the construction contractors, as both were employed by Solel Boneh. Moreover, when design and construction were divorced, that could doom the project: on one occasion, the prominent Israeli architect Alfred (Al) Mansfeld was to design the University of Nigeria in the eastern region, but planning for the university was aborted due to disputes with the local contractors.⁴⁸ As the diplomat reporting on the fiasco argued, Israel had no

interest in designing projects without also handling their construction.⁴⁹ The dependence of the former on the latter reflected the need to show concrete results through the execution of such projects, as well as to ensure that Israeli loans returned to Israel through the construction company's purchase of Israeli products.

Following Solel Boneh's habit of subcontracting external architects for complex and prestigious jobs, Nigersol commissioned prominent architect and town planner Arie Sharon to design the master plan for the University of Ife's campus. Given Sharon's long-established professional connections with the Histadrut and Solel Boneh, and the fact that he had created the winning design proposal for the new campus forum at the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology), this commission is not surprising. However, since the architectural firm Karmi-Meltzer-Karmi, who designed Sierra Leone's parliament, had an equally important commission on the Hebrew University campus in Givat Ram, as did Al Mansfeld, who was commissioned to design the University of Nigeria in the eastern region, it appears that Solel Boneh did not concentrate its projects in the hands of one particular external firm for strategic reasons—so that Solel Boneh itself would remain in control of the receipt of commissions in Africa. Perhaps following the Sierra Leone Public Works Department director's criticism about the lack of checks and balances between design and construction in the operation of the Sierra Leone National Construction Company (see chapter 1), Solel Boneh further divided up the work in Ife. In designing the University of Ife, Sharon collaborated with Solel Boneh architects who were employed by a subcompany under the acronym AMY (architects, engineers, consultants).

Site Selection

Because it was already the seat of University College Ibadan, the western region's capital, Ibadan, was automatically annulled as a site option for the western regional university. With no obvious alternative, the choice of site became a subject of intense competition among Yoruba towns, whose economies—except for that of industrialized Lagos—depended mainly on trade, craft, and agriculture.⁵⁰ While the university was seen as a motor for the development of the region in general, it would benefit its immediate environment most promptly, boosting the economy of the town selected by increasing commerce and providing jobs and services. This had been the case with the opening of UCI; together with the teaching hospital's well-paid employees and the concentration of government ministries, UCI

substantially increased purchasing power in Ibadan and stimulated rapid growth in commerce and employment opportunities.⁵¹ To preempt a political crisis and relieve the tension between rival towns, the planning committee issued a white paper announcing that the choice of site would “be guided by the advice of experts who will conduct a survey of all possible sites in various parts of the Region.”⁵²

Serving as such an impartial expert, Sharon had already arrived in Nigeria shortly before the white paper meeting took place to conduct a preliminary survey of eight towns, based on a list from the minister of education, Dr. Onabamiro.⁵³ The list included Abeokuta, Ado-Ekiti, Akure, Benin City, Ile-Ife, Ijebu-Ode, Ondo, and Owo, to which Sharon added the town of Oyo. Sharon submitted his report on the first day of the white paper meeting, and its criteria were based on his conclusions. Sharon listed five factors that he deemed decisive in the selection of a campus site. First, the town and district selected should be centrally located within the western region and in relation to other regions, and should be easily accessible by road, railway, and a future airport. Second, the site should be adjacent to a medium-sized town of 100,000 people (to be expanded in the future to 150,000 people) that should be “well-developing and if possible, quite attractive.” Third, the size of the site should be about five-by-five or four-by-six miles, and it should be located two to three miles from the boundary of the town. Fourth, in addition to infrastructural amenities such as water supply, electricity, and telecommunications, which had already been constructed or were near completion in most of the towns in the survey, Sharon added soil conditions “and other fertility factors” as equally decisive in the choice of a site for a university where one of the main fields of research and study would be agriculture.⁵⁴ The fifth and final factor pertained to the “microphysical conditions,” by which Sharon referred to the kind of landscape he envisioned as the ideal setting for a university campus. Attached to his report was a comparative table containing data on location, communications (quality of roads, railway station, and airport), geographic factors (altitude and climate), existing services and amenities (water supply and electricity, hospitals, schools, shops), population figures and occupation, and general characteristics relating to the local and physical environment.

The white paper incorporated most of Sharon’s recommendations, but, tellingly, inverted their order when presenting them to the larger public. Sharon’s fifth and most subjective point regarding “the physical setting appropriate to a University environment” moved up to the top of the list of prerequisites, while soil conditions suitable for agricultural experimenta-

tion moved to the prominent second position. The white paper positioned the centrality of the town in relation to the region as the third condition, leaving out Sharon's concern about the centrality of the chosen town in relation to the entire country. These modifications bring to the fore what the western regional government wanted to emphasize: that the university would serve the western region first and foremost, rather than the entire country, and that it would be dedicated to agricultural experimentation as one of its flagship research fields. By moving the least objectively measurable parameter—"the physical settings appropriate to a University environment"—to the forefront, the white paper left the final say on the site to the architect, rendering the decision-making process opaque enough that his professional authority would override any possible grievances.⁵⁵

After returning for another visit and surveying seven more towns—Badagry, Ilaro, Ilesha, Ogbomoso, Oshogbo, Shagamu, and Sapele—Sharon chose the town of Ife (Yoruba: Ifè, also Ilé-Ifè).⁵⁶ More centrally located within the region than the region's capital, Ibadan, Ife was nonetheless connected to Ibadan's "first-class" fifty-one-mile road and could benefit from its proximity. Ife's geographical centrality was further reaffirmed after the midwestern region formed its own government in 1963; its separation from the western region reduced the latter's size by approximately one-third to the east. Ife satisfied other conditions as well, as it was a medium-sized town of 110,000 thousand people and a prominent producer of cocoa, the staple product of the region, as well as palm kernels and timber.⁵⁷ In terms of infrastructure and services, it had electricity and a local water supply, along with a new water scheme that was underway. In addition, it had "many schools, a modern hospital, banks and lively shopping streets."⁵⁸ Sharon found its geographic and climatic settings favorable due to its location in the high-forest belt of the region, eight hundred feet above sea level, with a temperature varying between 60 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit and a mean relative humidity of 70 percent. Portraying the site as "an attractive slightly undulated wooded countryside, rich in agricultural plantations, which form also the economic basis for Ife's economy and future development," Sharon linked the relatively pleasant climate with the aesthetic qualities of the landscape and its economic potential—a subject that I will return to in the next chapter, and which explores the Sharon team's design of the campus core in relation to the area's tropical climate.⁵⁹ Referring specifically to the wooded site, bounded by a series of hills and a river on the northwest edge of town, Sharon qualified his choice by mentioning that despite its economic potential, the area was relatively

unpopulated, and therefore the project would not involve a massive displacement of farmers.⁶⁰

To these favorable factors, Sharon retroactively added the town's cultural and historical significance: Ife is considered the cradle of Yoruba civilization and the seat of the ooni. Sharon added these comments after the site was chosen, suggesting that they served post hoc to rationalize and buttress what was, at bottom, a political decision.⁶¹ Categorized as "third-class" under the colonial administration, Ife had received fewer services than many "second-class" towns (Lagos was the sole "first-class" town).⁶² There were other strong candidates: the towns of Oyo and Ilesha were also singled out by the planning committee.⁶³ However, since ooni Adesoji Aderemi (Oba Sir Titus Martins Adesoji Tadeniawo Aderemi, king of Ife, 1930–80) was a supporter of the Action Group and the town served as a stronghold of the ruling party, Ife's political capital was unmatched by that of its better-served competitors. With such a powerful figure on its side, the university would benefit both from the extensive communal lands the ooni could grant to it as well as Aderemi's assurance that the town would collaborate fully with the university endeavor.⁶⁴

The Search for a Model

Conceiving of their regional university as an alternative to the federal UCI, the University of Ife's founders took both UCI's curriculum and its architecture as negative reference points. As the first university in Nigeria, UCI served as a testing ground for higher education in the country. Many of the founders of the University of Ife drew their conclusions directly from their intimate experience of UCI's formation.⁶⁵ Established in 1948 by the British as part of colonial educational reform, UCI was one of a few new university colleges established in the West Indies, Malaya, Uganda, and the Gold Coast (Ghana).⁶⁶ The two universities in West Africa, UCI and the University College of the Gold Coast, joined the existing Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone, which had been founded in 1827 and, until 1948, was the only university in the entire region to serve the growing demand for higher education. Because of this, Yoruba of Nigeria had been sending their children to British universities since the 1870s. Due to a shortage of places available in Britain after World War I, from the 1920s on Yoruba turned to North American universities and colleges as well; beginning in the 1930s, Nigeria's other ethnic groups followed suit.⁶⁷

University College Ibadan succeeded Yaba Higher College, whose staff,

students, and equipment it inherited when the college closed in December 1947. Officially opened in 1934, though it had been in operation since 1932, Yaba Higher College was established on the outskirts of Lagos municipality mainly to cater to the manpower needs of the colonial governmental departments by training personnel for intermediary civil service posts.⁶⁸ The Nigerian elite criticized it for its vocational emphasis; its very limited enrollment, which was directly tied to anticipated vacancies; and its failure to fulfill any educational qualifications recognizable outside Nigeria. Arguing against what they interpreted as false standards, they accused the colonial administration of deliberately deterring Nigerian youth from pursuing education abroad.⁶⁹ To correct this, the British administration set up UCI as an institute of higher learning and included courses in the arts and sciences as well as professional schools, such as medicine, dentistry, agriculture, forestry, veterinary science, teacher training, and engineering, to respond to Nigeria's specific needs.⁷⁰ To ensure high standards, UCI granted degrees under the authority of the University of London until it gained academic independence in 1962; it subsequently changed its name to the University of Ibadan.⁷¹

Rising standards conflicted with demands to increase enrollment and the anticipated growth of the university. Ibadan was chosen for its advantages over Lagos' lagoon geography and its ability to accommodate and sustain the university's expected expansion. Ibadan's population was estimated at four hundred thousand at that time; it was the fourth-largest city in Africa and the largest in tropical Africa, larger even than neighboring Lagos. The local chiefs contributed more than 2,550 acres of land five miles away from the city for the university's site.⁷² Despite these favorable conditions, however, consultants for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, who had frequented the country since the early 1950s, criticized UCI's slow growth rate: six years after it opened, it had an enrollment of only four hundred students. While this number represented nothing short of a failure for the American advisors, who had envisioned a university capacity of twenty thousand students, for the university's English founders this number optimally reflected the growth rate they had cautiously envisioned—they expected just “more than 600 students” by the end of the 1948–57 period.⁷³

By the time of independence, as Omosini and Adediran argue, it had become clear that UCI was inadequate to meet the needs of “a country moving towards political sovereignty and with an articulate political elite desirous of decolonizing the public service economy.”⁷⁴ In addition to cur-

ricular standards that inhibited UCI's growth, the planning of its campus along the lines of an Oxbridge residential collegiate model presented a major obstacle to expansion. The British Asquith Committee presented its argument for the necessity of a residential university model in the African context in 1945 because of "the unsuitability of off-campus accommodations and the necessity to supervise the health of the students closely." This emphasis on a healthy living environment must have had a particular resonance for Kenneth Mellanby, who, prior to becoming UCI's first principal, was trained as a medical entomologist at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The Asquith Committee's other points included "the widely different backgrounds of the undergraduates and the need to promote unity"—that is, the university would be an elite melting pot where the governing class would be groomed to overcome ethnic divisions—and "the opportunity offered for broadening their outlook through the sharing of experiences and through extra-curricular activities." Thus, the residential college model would allow the university to shape students' entire social lives and habits.⁷⁵ All points expressed the Asquith Committee's conviction that students had to be shielded from realities outside of the university campus.⁷⁶

Following Mellanby's instructions, UCI was modeled on Oxbridge residential colleges. The initial site plan, designed in 1949 by British modernist architects E. Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, comprised two halls of residence that accommodated 150 students each. The halls had their own courtyard and a dining hall, and each student enjoyed a private study-bedroom and a veranda.⁷⁷ UCI maintained exclusive standards suitable for the cultivation of a British-educated Nigerian elite—the designated "heirs of empire."⁷⁸ As a secluded space of privilege, UCI continued Oxbridge's ivory-tower elitism, which had emerged historically from "town-gown" antagonism and the necessity of segregating students for their own protection, especially after the Reformation.⁷⁹

In November 1952, UCI's new halls of residence, laboratory, classroom blocks, and staff houses formally opened and presented a spectacular image of architectural modernism unrivaled in the area.⁸⁰ However, criticisms about the cost and restrictive capacity of the facilities were soon to follow. In 1954, Dr. Nnamdi (Zik) Azikiwe, the renowned Nigerian nationalist who would become Nigeria's first president, argued in the House of Representatives that "what this country sorely needs today is a first-class institution of learning and not a first-class exhibition of streamlined buildings." He went on to propose the use of prefabricated houses for junior

and senior staff and the admission of nonresidential students.⁸¹ Around the same time, International Bank for Development advisors criticized UCI's accommodations as "luxurious" and suggested pairing students in rooms to double capacity, pointing to Indian universities recently built with American guidance as alternatives to the Oxbridge model.⁸² Even the Inter-University Council of England, which had been established in March 1946 to supervise the colonial universities' "special relationship" with universities in England on the Asquith Committee's recommendation, criticized the excessive emphasis on halls. The collegiate model was gradually abandoned, and, in the early 1970s, the University of Ibadan ceased being exclusively residential.⁸³

With the negative example of UCI in mind, Sharon addressed the "town-gown" relationship in Ife, arguing that the town's medium size—with a population of just over one hundred thousand compared to Ibadan's four hundred thousand—would ensure a mutually beneficial relationship between the town and the university and prevent "the danger of social sterility and intellectual superiority."⁸⁴ With a projected figure of three thousand students in the first decade compared to "more than 600" in Ibadan,⁸⁵ the ratio of students and faculty to town residents would ensure interrelationships between the two groups and preclude any elitism. As the projected student population and the desirable size of the campus grew following the university committee's study trip to universities in the United States and Latin America, the distance between the campus and the town was reduced from two to three miles to one to two miles, further emphasizing the campus' potential connectivity with the town, as against the five-mile distance between UCI and Ibadan. Sharon recommended that the university's campus plan be incorporated into Ife's town plan, if such a plan existed, so that their growth could be coordinated.⁸⁶ Finally, Sharon's plan implied that the university's facilities, services, and infrastructure would raise the standard of living in the town.

Starting out with 244 students and about eighty teaching staff in October 1962, by the end of 1978 the University of Ife comprised 9,097 students and 1,346 academic and senior staff.⁸⁷ Given this growth rate, the enrollment goal of twenty thousand students set by the International Bank for Development advisors, which may have been based on their experience in India, was not an overestimate. From 1951, when the United States started the Technical Cooperation Mission, to 1972, the International Bank and other organizations were involved in establishing agricultural universities in India modeled on American land grant universities.⁸⁸ Seen perhaps as

a convenient mechanism for appropriating land under customary tenure, the land grant university also brought, along with its democratic ideals, some of the American settler colonial history that undergirded it.⁸⁹ In 1961, when the US Agency for International Development (USAID) took over, it extended this university development program to Nigeria.⁹⁰

The land grant university model was not a unidirectional imposition. In fact, Nnamdi (Zik) Azikiwe, who served as the premier of the eastern region before he was named general governor in 1960 and, subsequently, president of the country in 1963, first imported it to Nigeria. While Ife was the first Nigerian university to be established on the recommendation of an all-Nigerian committee, the University of Nigeria in Nsukka, East Nigeria, was the first to introduce a model that radically diverged from that of UCI in order to accommodate the postindependence era.⁹¹ Unlike Obafemi Awolowo, the first premier of the western region, who was educated in Nigeria and England and therefore had not experienced the American university system firsthand, Nnamdi Azikiwe had received his degrees from Howard University in Washington, DC; Lincoln University in Pennsylvania; and the University of Pennsylvania. As early as the late 1930s and 1940s, Azikiwe organized sponsorship programs from American institutions for the education of Nigerian students.⁹² Following the eastern region's initiative to establish a regional university, advisors from Exeter University in England and Michigan State University in the United States arrived in East Nigeria as early as 1957; their recommendations set a precedent that the West Nigerians would follow.⁹³ These advisors suggested the establishment of a provisional council and a visit to universities in England and the United States.⁹⁴

Members of the University of Ife Planning Committee, who had already visited Oxford, Yale, Harvard, and MIT, added to their study tour universities in Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, and Caracas—the last of which was eventually dropped.⁹⁵ It is possible that the decision to visit universities in Latin America was made on the recommendation of the Harvard architecture dean José Luis Sert, whom the Nigerian delegation had met on its preliminary tour and who had considerable planning experience in Latin America.⁹⁶ This initiative certainly did not come from Sharon, whose first impulse was to examine contemporary university planning in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany.⁹⁷ Although Sharon cited the Israeli universities—the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Technion in Haifa, both of which he had a hand in designing—as having made a most positive impression on the delegates, these were not part of the official

itinerary and were not visited by the entire delegation.⁹⁸ Two members of the Nigerian delegation arrived in Israel at the end of the tour primarily to discuss the construction and financing arrangements, and Sharon used this opportunity to show them the newly built campuses.⁹⁹ Writing for the entire delegation, Sharon stated that in Latin America, “the greatest lesson was given to us by the Aztecs and the Mayas’ old towns,” although it was the modern university in Mexico City that in fact impressed the West Nigerian delegation.¹⁰⁰ The disparate opinions did not center around form as much as scale. Although the planning of the National Autonomous University of Mexico was inspired by Aztec towns, its scale was more reminiscent of the monumental modernity of Brasília.¹⁰¹ Sharon instead proposed the compact scale of Israeli campuses, neglecting the extreme disparity between the population of Nigeria, which was much closer to that of a large Latin American country, than to that of a country as small as Israel.

In terms of program, the university planners clearly preferred the American university model over the European one. Comparing the two, the unofficial committee of intellectuals set up by premier chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola agreed that the latter produces a “scholar” with “specialized knowledge” and thus caters to only a small section of the population, while the American model aims at “breadth and balance in scholarship . . . makes general education an integral part of University curriculum[,] . . . provides for a much higher percentage of the population[,] . . . [and] have managed to combine quality with quantity.”¹⁰² Envisioning a radical reorientation of UCI’s curriculum to make education relevant to the needs of the region and to rapidly Nigerianize the public service, the university planners had a nonelitist institution in mind, for which the North American land grant university and its Latin American counterpart, the reformed university, could serve as models.¹⁰³ Both of these democratized models emphasized public access to education, applied research, and community enhancement as formulated in the tripartite mission of teaching, research, and off-campus extension.¹⁰⁴ The goal of the new university, according to its historians, was “to produce graduates who will be able to adjust themselves to life in the communities they may be called upon to serve and not reproduce an elite which is divorced from the rest of the community.”¹⁰⁵ In order to facilitate this transformation rapidly, the Akintola committee recommended to supplement university education with evening classes, correspondence courses, and training programs.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, in contrast to British emphasis on training civil servants, the committee aspired for an enrollment ratio of 65 percent in the sciences and 35 percent in the

humanities.¹⁰⁷ At its first meeting, the western region university planning committee decided that the faculties of agriculture, arts, science, engineering, and social science would be set up in the first five years, followed by the faculties of medicine, veterinary science, dental surgery, and law. In addition, the faculty of engineering would later be expanded to include architecture, town planning, quantity surveying, and estate management.¹⁰⁸

Recognizing the opportunity for extensive involvement in the concurrent development of all three regional universities, USAID launched what was then its largest US assistance program in Africa. This assistance involved pairing a major American land grant university with each regional university: Kansas State University partnered with Ahmadu Bello University in the north; Michigan State University with the University of Nigeria at Nsukka in the east; and the University of Wisconsin with the University of Ife in the west.¹⁰⁹ While the American universities differed in the scope of their involvement, the main impetus behind the partnerships was to establish agricultural research institutions in Nigeria. The American land grant university model was especially attractive to Nigerian regional governments since it addressed the needs and concerns of the local community, often by establishing off-campus extension programs.

Since American aid focused on agriculture, it depended on access to land. Through the professionalization of farming, university-level applied research, and extension services for the surrounding population, the university system presented the most viable channel for American intervention in what was the largest production and export sector in Nigeria before the 1970s oil boom. While the western and eastern regional governments did manage to acquire land for rural resettlement projects, the customary land tenure system made it difficult to acquire the large tracts of land necessary for agricultural experimentation.¹¹⁰ Land was traditionally the property of the community and was subdivided among families and individuals for cultivation. It could not be bought or sold, and thus large projects required a special grant of land from a local chief.¹¹¹ Oladele Adebayo Ajose, the first vice-chancellor of the University of Ife, managed to acquire a 13,500-acre site from the ooni of Ife, Adesoji Aderemi, who also served as the governor of the western region from 1960 to 1962. Of that area, three thousand acres were allocated for experimental use by the agriculture faculty, compared to just five hundred acres at University College Ibadan.¹¹² The University of Ife's agricultural facilities included a farm center, a swine research unit, a poultry research unit, a greenhouse, a nursery, cropping systems, and research units for cattle, sheep, dairy goats, and turkeys.¹¹³

Rebranding the Rural

While Nigerian agriculturalists shared American assumptions about the benefits of modernizing agriculture, it was more difficult to recruit the younger generation to this task in a society in which modernization, high standards of living, and social status were associated exclusively with the city.¹¹⁴ In his 1971 address to the university, vice-chancellor Hezekiah Oluwasanmi, himself a professor of agricultural economics, deplored the flight of university graduates, who “loathed the rural areas,” to the city. The problem, he explained, was that the urban migration of educated young people left rural areas in the hands of non-Nigerians who did not understand Nigerian rural culture. This was, Oluwasanmi stressed, “our chance of effecting a rapid but orderly social change.”¹¹⁵ Similarly, Akintola Agboola of the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Ife complained in 1967 that school “graduates from any level regard farmers as those at the bottom of the economic ladder.”¹¹⁶ Due to British colonial prejudices built into the educational system, the sons of farmers did not return to their families’ farms after acquiring an education because they associated farming with backwardness and illiteracy.¹¹⁷ To reform agriculture successfully, Agboola argued, adult education for practicing farmers was not enough. Educated young men, who “will be easier to reach than the old illiterate farmers,” were needed, and therefore incentives had to be created to induce them to return.¹¹⁸

Both the status of the farmer and rural living conditions needed to be elevated to present a desirable alternative to the lure of the city. On top of providing land for experimentation, the regional university campus served as the ideal setting in which to demonstrate modern rural living. Just as the university’s agricultural land functioned as a demonstration farm for nearby farmers, so the residential quarters of its staff, dispersed in the bucolic landscape between the agriculture faculty and the university farm, demonstrated high-quality living in a rural area.¹¹⁹ As in other places, architecture here made visible the benefits of modernized agriculture.¹²⁰ For those who did not frequent the campus, a photograph of a house of the largest type among the university’s 130 units for senior staff appeared in the *Nigerian Daily Sketch*, a western region newspaper published in Ibadan.¹²¹ It looked no less comfortable than the houses of the Bodija Estate, the first planned housing estate in Ibadan, built in the early 1960s and modeled after colonial residential districts specifically reserved for Europeans. The Bodija Estate served as a model for the senior staff housing

of the nearby University College Ibadan and presented a desirable standard for faculty housing.¹²² Like the hierarchy of housing types, corresponding to a modern class system, that the Bodija Estate offered in order to attract both high- and middle-income residents, housing on the University of Ife campus was diversified to serve senior and junior faculty as well as staff (see plates 6–8).¹²³ By filling the campus site with varied housing, the university aimed to preempt the “villagization” of the campus—that is, the informal settlement of workers and displaced villagers on campus grounds.¹²⁴

On top of providing housing for faculty, staff, and students, the university needed to supplement the city’s services in order to maintain high standards of living and working. Sharon’s evaluation of the existing infrastructure in his surveys proved too optimistic, as he could not foresee the internal political crisis that would halt regional development and campus construction from 1962 to 1966, when the new military government stabilized the region. When Hezekiah Oluwasanmi, the second vice-chancellor, arrived to inspect the site before the university’s relocation from its temporary facilities in Ibadan, he found no telecommunications infrastructure in the area.¹²⁵ In addition, the university needed to construct a dam to supplement water supply, install emergency diesel generators for uninterrupted electricity service, and build a sewage treatment and disposal plant.¹²⁶ It also catered to the needs of the faculty and staff by establishing schools for their children. Thus the University of Ife campus in some ways replicated the “reservation,” as residential quarters designed for Europeans came to be called during the colonial period. The small houses for “houseboys,” or servants, that were built adjacent to faculty housing further reinforced this impression. By the beginning of the 1980s, the Israeli team of architects in charge of the updated master plan had already abandoned the language of symbiotic development with the town of Ife, arguing that, “located in a rural area, the University must develop self-sufficiency in terms of services, housing, recreation, schools and shopping and in terms of infrastructural capabilities such as electricity, water, sewage, disposal and treatment, communications and transportation.”¹²⁷

The University of Ife faced an image problem not only because of the status of farming as a profession and the need to improve standards of living in rural areas but also because social mobility, cultural capital, and sophistication were associated strictly with the city. In addition to drawing the sons of farmers back to their family farms, the university had to attract Nigerian and international professors—rare commodities subject to competition from other new universities—to its rural setting.¹²⁸ In the western

region, the University of Ife competed in particular with the federal universities of Ibadan and Lagos, the latter established in 1962. Although Ife was only fifty-one miles away from Ibadan, it was considered so remote that even Ife's own faculty, who initially taught in temporary structures in Ibadan, were reluctant to move to Ife when the campus began its operation.¹²⁹ Among his reasons for choosing Ife, Sharon had mentioned the cultural and historical value of the museum of Ife, established in 1954 to house Ife's antiquities. Although Ife was a center for traditional craftwork, it did not have the vibrant art culture that characterized Ibadan and was developing in its nearer neighbor, the town of Oshogbo.¹³⁰ While Sharon acknowledged that Ibadan was the regional university's closest metropolitan center, he envisioned Ife as a cultural center in its own right, which would be revived by the activities of the university. The university's founders shared this vision. In fact, one of the tasks of the University Town and Gown Committee was to manage Ife's Ori Olokun Cultural Center, which provided space in town for the university's theatre company. However, by the end of the 1970s, most of the cultural activity organized by the university had relocated to campus, as it offered better facilities in the newly built Institute of African Studies, designed by E. Maxwell Fry, Jane Drew, and J. Robin Atkinson, and Oduduwa Hall, designed by Harold Rubin for Sharon.¹³¹ As a result, while students and faculty "went to town" in Ibadan, most likely against the university administration's wishes, at Ife, the town came to campus.¹³²

Campus Plan: Marrying the Rural with the Urban, Kibbutz with Suburbia

Early designs for the campus reflect the equal weight given to culture and agriculture as two distinct components of the university; these designs rely on a basic separation between the academic core and the Faculty of Agriculture, which formed a semienclosure of its own (see plate 9).¹³³ Sharon, who had no experience in designing a university campus that included a large agriculture faculty and its experimental facilities, approached Hebrew University's Faculty of Agriculture to consult on planning. Although also developed on the basis of the American land grant university model, Hebrew University's agriculture faculty did not provide an example of an integrated campus. Originally established as an independent research institute and later incorporated into the university, it is located on a separate campus in Rehovot, away from the main campus in Jerusalem.¹³⁴ Similarly,

the siting of schools of agriculture at American land grant universities was more often the result of historical contingency than deliberate planning. With no comprehensive model for the rational integration of agriculture in campus planning, Sharon struggled with siting the Faculty of Agriculture and its farms in relation to the rest of the faculties, especially the representative academic core. As a series of plans between June 1961 and June 1962 demonstrates, Sharon treated the academic core—which included the faculties of the humanities, the social sciences, and education, as well as the administration building, the central library, and the assembly hall—as one unit, around which other faculties were to be placed to its north, east, and west. The agriculture faculty, however, was part of neither the core nor the periphery. Located northeast of the central core and separated from it by stretches of land, Sharon designed it as a discrete unit that consisted of three orthogonal parallel buildings connected by a shaded pathway and a bridge (see plate 10). As a few of the first buildings to be built on campus grounds, this architectural ensemble is stylistically distinct; later buildings would mostly do away with its rectangular blocks and articulated sun shades, as I discuss in the next chapter. Designed before Sharon's partnership with Benjamin Idelson was severed in 1964, these agricultural facilities are more reminiscent of contemporaneous work in Israel than any of the buildings Sharon would later design for the campus.

In separating the agricultural faculty geographically and programmatically from the university core, Sharon drew on the basics of kibbutz planning with which he was very familiar, first from founding a kibbutz, and later from serving as a planner for the Kibbutz Artzi movement. Kibbutzim, or Jewish collective settlements, began as agricultural settler communities with residences and farms at either end of a rectangular courtyard that served as a common yard.¹³⁵ With the growth of kibbutzim in the 1940s, their basic scheme came to involve a division between a social zone and an agricultural zone, which were separated by a green belt. Social zones housed residential and educational facilities and featured a cultural core, while agricultural zones later came to include industry as well.¹³⁶ Imagining the kibbutz as a city-village hybrid, kibbutz planners rejected both the alienation and pollution of the city and the abjection of rural life as many kibbutz founders had experienced it in Eastern Europe. Conceiving it as a kind of “new village,” kibbutz planners also rejected the idyllic images of rural life linked with early kibbutzim, on the one hand, and the industrialized image of the Soviet *kolkhoz* (collective farm), on the other.¹³⁷ Since ideological commitment was pertinent to the survival of a kibbutz's

collectivist principles, education and the cultivation of intellectual and cultural life were considered of prime importance. Therefore, the core of a kibbutz often features cultural institutions, such as libraries and performance halls, surrounding a central lawn.¹³⁸ Addressing this kernel of kibbutz public life and the challenge of integrating public buildings into a kibbutz's bucolic landscaping, Sharon writes,

The main planning problem in kibbutzim, as in old and new towns, was—and still is—how to create an architecturally attractive, social and cultural centre. How can the building elements of the dining-hall, the club-houses, the lawn and gardens, be combined into one architectural entity? How can a balanced space relationship between the strong cubes of buildings, the tall trees, and the open spaces and lawns be created? . . . I believe, however, in the clear and simple solution of a central lawn-piazza, surrounded by trees and pergolas, leading to the various public buildings, consisting of dining hall, administration, club and reading rooms. From this central area, all the other building zones would radiate centripetally: the residential and children's quarters, the farm buildings and the small, organic children's society.¹³⁹

Substitute students for “children,” a library for “reading rooms,” and Oduduwa Hall for the “club,” and you have a description of Sharon's vision for the Ife campus. Based on pedestrian-vehicular separation and designed for a growing community that would preserve its original close-knit character, Sharon saw in the kibbutz an appropriate model for a university campus that promoted modern rural living and the marriage of culture and education with agriculture.

The kibbutz model, however, did not entail importing the collective ideals that guided kibbutz founders. Although there was some pride in using a Histadrut contractor, as reflected in a 1973 publication on the university, and perhaps in Sharon's kibbutz background, which is mentioned in the retrospective account of professor of architecture Bayo Amole,¹⁴⁰ there is no indication of any collectivist ambitions for the campus in either Sharon's or the university's publications and correspondence. The applicability of the kibbutz model to the university campus derived from the fact that these two city-village hybrids shared common origins in Enlightenment and anarchist planning traditions that emanated from it.¹⁴¹ Developed in North America, the university campus was ideally situated in the countryside; this was supposed to allow for expansion and to separate students from the putatively unhealthy and corrupting effects of the city by instead

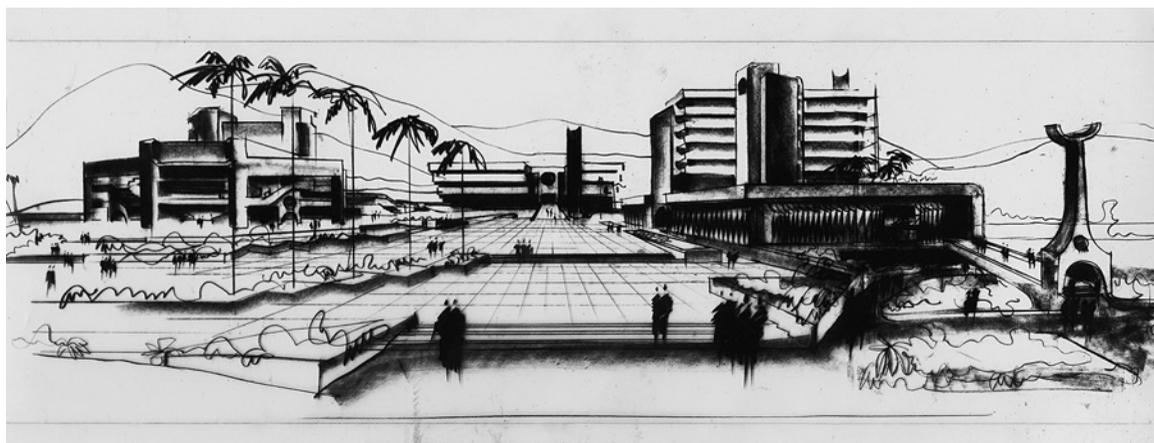


FIGURE 3.1 Arie Shon, University of Ife, academic core, perspective (undated). Courtesy of the Azrieli Architectural Archive; Arie Shon collection, AES-1-217.

immersing their young bodies and minds in a salubrious natural setting.¹⁴² Sharon was well aware of the interchangeability of kibbutz and campus planning models. For example, when he planned the boarding school in kibbutz Beit Alpha, he based it on the American campus tradition, with a three-sided quadrangle from which the school expanded horizontally around symmetrical courtyards. Sharon's plan for Ife was much looser in character and retained the three-sided open courtyard logic only in the central piazza of the academic core (see plate 11 and fig 3.1). Even then, its loose grid seemed rigid to the University of Wisconsin landscape architecture team that arrived in Ife in 1966 as USAID consultants. They were more accustomed to American universities' generously spread, Beaux Arts or Gothic bucolic campuses than to the modernist planning principles to which Sharon had adhered since his education at the Bauhaus in inter-war Germany, under the famed modernist architects Walter Gropius and Hannes Meyer.¹⁴³ The Wisconsin team also criticized the vast open space and the monumental character of the buildings in the plaza, proposing instead the Beaux Arts model of the four-sided quadrangle with a domed structure as its focal point.¹⁴⁴

The group of detached faculty houses, designed in collaboration with the Wisconsin consultants, adhered most closely to the picturesque image they had in mind. Located far from the university core, between the Faculty of Agriculture and its farms, the loose grouping of houses without fences was reminiscent of kibbutz shared property principles, or, alternatively, of American suburbia. Lush vegetation and some screened patios sheltered

the houses from each other slightly, since, as Sharon had learned, even in a kibbutz people need a sense of privacy.¹⁴⁵ Yet the cars parked in front of the houses, and the distance between them, situated them in an individualist, consumerist society rather than in a collective kibbutz, while the adjacent small houses for the “houseboys” disclosed the persistence of a colonial, racialized class structure even in this progressive modern enclave.¹⁴⁶

Postscript

In both appearance and function, the campus presented a complete alternative to life in the town of Ife as well as in other Yoruba towns and villages. In a report on its involvement in the three regional campuses, USAID emphasized the University of Ife’s striking buildings and how they stood out from their surroundings: “The architecture is world-class and spectacular and contrasts starkly with the nearby, typically Yoruba city of Ile-Ife, with its densely clustered earthen buildings topped by rain-rusted tin roofs.”¹⁴⁷ The campus contrasted not only with the town of Ife but with practically anything else familiar to the average Nigerian student as well. The description that opened this chapter, by a graduate who is now an agriculturalist and media consultant in Lagos, demonstrates the dramatic impression that the university made on new students.

A self-sufficient island that simulates suburban living (the university offers its houses for subsidized rent, not for sale), the campus brings to mind contemporary foreign resource-extractive enclaves in Africa. Like these transnational suburban gated communities, the campus serves as a governmental civil servants’ enclave. However, whereas these foreign extractive company towns only pay lip service to the surrounding community through defunct infrastructure and white elephants, the university’s commitment to the larger community was part of its *raison d’être*.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, its ambition to cooperate with the town and serve the regional community eventually turned into the opposite: the university supplanted the town, which, as the campus’s planners implied, has failed to develop in tandem with it.¹⁴⁹

In addition to shifting cultural activities from the town to campus, the 1970s saw the establishment of a commercial farm on campus grounds as an arm of the Faculty of Agriculture in partnership with the private sector. By 1980, however, this commercial farm was run solely by private parties who sold its produce to customers from the university and beyond from a booth west of the student residential areas. In 1979, fifty tons of maize,

vegetables, plantains, and eggs were sold. This, in turn, threatened to strip the Yoruba town of its traditional market role and its main source of income. With its favorable road connections to nearby towns, the university's commercial farm could bypass Ife altogether.¹⁵⁰ The self-sufficiency of the campus had developed into an inverted relationship in which, rather than extending its knowledge to the surrounding community, the university instead left the town to catch up with it. The acquisition of a further 15,459 acres of land by the end of the 1970s continued this trend. The planners reported,

This acquisition is very important to the University and the region . . . For attracting high-quality students, academics and professionals, the University has to create outlets for the application of acquired skills and the means of livelihood for supporting these people in the area. The new lands offer an opportunity for doing this with development in agriculture, science and industry, forestry and paper mills, and archeology. In addition to serving the University, these new developments will supply local manpower and may well serve as a model for other developments in the region. *The university, as a repository of great planning, management, training and research capabilities, will become the centre of regional planned development.*¹⁵¹

Facing a lack of sufficient jobs for its graduates, the university's role was now extended to the creation of such jobs. Vice-Chancellor Oluwasanmi did not hold the students, who preferred to migrate to the city, solely responsible for abandoning the countryside. The problem was the lack of employment opportunities when they left the university: "Out of the 85 Agriculture graduates that this University turned out between 1966 and 1970, 25 could find nothing else but schoolroom jobs in this country." Oluwasanmi directed his appeal to the military government, which "must re-examine their priorities for agricultural development in a bold and imaginative manner . . . it is only through such cooperation that the State and the Nation can receive the maximum benefit from their investment in this University."¹⁵²

The fact that the University of Ife was built on the principles of kibbutz planning allowed it to expand while maintaining a coherent structure and relative autonomy. Ironically, this influence contributed to a historical homology wherein both the kibbutz and the university found themselves in fraught positions vis-à-vis the state for whose development they were meant to serve as primary engines. With the establishment of Israel, the

kibbutz struggled to maintain its prestate status as a pioneering institution. Rather than integrating socially into the state's regional development efforts, which created new towns as regional centers, kibbutzim instead employed the new immigrants who settled there as wage laborers, thus undercutting their socialist foundational principles. As in British universities' town-gown conflict, kibbutzim closed themselves off from and alienated the new towns.¹⁵³ Like the University of Ife, kibbutzim have also continued to maintain a high standard of living compared to neighboring towns and villages, which, by the 1980s, led to severe criticism. One critique specifically targeted a certain kibbutz's lifestyle by comparing it to that of a luxurious American residence.¹⁵⁴ As we saw in this chapter, despite their radical differences, this comparison was not completely far-fetched, as the two models of the kibbutz and the American suburb harmonized in the design of the University of Ife's campus. By this time, and concurrently with parallel developments in the Nigerian university, the disparity between kibbutzim and the rest of Israeli society, coupled with the neoliberalization of the Israeli economy, resulted in their privatization and suburbanization, which only enhanced their image of exclusivity.

Following the 1975 coup that turned the University of Ife into a federal institution—a year also marked by the end of Oluwasanmi's tenure as its vice-chancellor—the university continued to expand territorially, not only to bypass the town but also to overcome the deficiencies of the state. While up until 1966 the Nigerian economy had enjoyed a relatively close alignment between internal revenues and expenditures in each region, with the arrival of the military government in 1966 and the growth in oil revenue, especially after the 1973 oil crisis, this balance was disturbed. The country's division into additional states (from four regions in 1964 to twelve states in 1967 and nineteen in 1976) exacerbated competition over federal resources and resulted in overstaffing in the public sector and the disproportional establishment of state universities.¹⁵⁵ In this climate wherein oil revenue took precedence over production, and administrative jobs took precedence over professional ones, the University of Ife attempted to continue its mission as a privileged site from which to encourage and manage development almost autonomously. The university aimed to become the region's prime producer, marketer, and distributor of agricultural goods, as well as the main human resources developer and employer. In other words, the university used the privileged position that was granted to it by the state, to develop *despite* the state.