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# City on the Lagoon: Lagos as the Colonial Lettered City

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**Abstract**

Angel Rama's idea of the "lettered city" has traditionally focused on Spanish colonial cities, but historians can also apply his theory to other colonial cities, such as Lagos during its time as a colonial British city. The creation of colonial Lagos differs from their models of the ordered and lettered city due to a more relaxed, indirect style of colonialism, but some of the major characteristics of the ordered and lettered city can be found in colonial Lagos. This may appear to make Lagos less of a lettered or ordered city, but Lagos shows these same characteristics with stronger indigenous African influences because of the differences in colonial control.

Using Rama's "lettered city" and Richard Kagan's "ordered city" as well as being inspired by Nnedi Okorafor's novel *Lagoon* (2016), I examine the role of language, urban planning, and the colonial government in the creation of colonial Lagos. Indigenous languages appeared in the creation of pidgin English, the presence of bilingualism, and the naming of streets in colonial Lagos. As for colonial Lagos's urban planning, the indigenous African influences appear in the ethnic neighborhoods, the physical materials used to build roads and buildings, and the failed British sanitation networks. The power of the colonial government hindered the ability of indigenous Lagosians to influence the city. Though they had a limited right to petition, the unanimous power of the British courts and a limited ability to become official and unofficial councilmembers disproportionately favored the British over the indigenous Lagosians.

**Keywords:** Angel Rama, colonialism, Lagos, *lettered city*, Nigeria, Nnedi Okorafor, *ordered city*, Richard Kagan, United Kingdom

## Introduction

"Welcome to Lagos, Nigeria. The city takes its name from the Portuguese word for 'lagoon.' The Portuguese first landed on Lagos Island in the year 1472."[1] The British government, under Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, annexed the Colony of Lagos in 1862 after first occupying it in 1851, eventually claiming the surrounding land and ruling the city directly.[2] The British later combined Lagos with the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, which they ruled indirectly starting in 1914, and the Protectorate of Nigeria remained British territory until 1960.[3] Lagos served as the indigenous African and British capital until 1991.

Lagos, with its history as part of the British empire, demonstrates many of the characteristics of the "lettered city" as outlined by Angel Rama. The most apparent colonial influences in Lagos are the use and hybridization of Indigenous African languages with English, the city's urban geography and architecture as created by British colonizers, and the creation of a colonial government and legislation. Through these forms of colonial control, the small British population in colonial Lagos shaped the city to match European ideas of the lettered city. Despite colonial control, Africans were able to contribute to the shaping of British colonial Lagos by incorporating and preserving their culture, language, and traditions, possible due to the British *laissez-faire* style of colonial control in the lettered city of colonial Lagos.

## Two Cities: Angel Rama's Lettered City and Richard Kagan's Ordered City

In his chapter "The Ordered City," Angel Rama argues that the Spanish in South America sought to design a rigidly controlled city that meshed with Spanish and European Renaissance ideas of order and control.[4] The Spanish primarily built their lettered cities through a combination of urban geography, colonial government and legislation, and language acquisition. Rama cites the Spanish's city grids and central plazas as a form of ordering the city and creating clear hierarchies of neighborhoods; the Spanish *conquistadores*, who became *vecinos* (citizens) following the conquest, would receive land near the central plaza while the conquered Indigenous populations would involuntarily relocate to neighborhoods (*redúcciones*) outside the city's limits, physically separating the Spanish from the Indigenous majority.[5]

Richard Kagan, in his chapter "Projecting Order," includes primary documents with images of the Spanish *traza* (grid pattern) as a way of demonstrating the mathematical way in which the Spanish sought to construct their cities in Latin America. However, these *traza* patterns proved to be more theoretical than practical; in the Inka city of Cusco, the Spanish were unable to properly implement the *traza* due to the local geography and existing structures. Kagan notes that the *traza* served as a visual representation of the idea of *policía*, or

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[1] Nnedi Okorafor, *Lagoon* (New York: Saga Press, 2016), epigraph.

[2] A. G. Hopkins, "Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-92," *The Economic History Review* 21, no. 3 (December 1968): 584, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0289.1968.tb01677.x; Philip Ostien and Abdul-fatah 'kola Makinde, "Legal Pluralism in Colonial Lagos: The 1894 Petition of the Lagos Muslims to Their British Colonial Masters," *Die Welt Des Islams* 52, no. 1 (2012): 52, https://doi.org/10.1163/157006012X627904.

[3] Liora Bigon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines and Street Naming in French Dakar and British Lagos, c.1850–1930," *Urban History* 36, no. 3 (October 30, 2009): 432, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926809990125; Ostien and Makinde, "Legal Pluralism in Colonial Lagos," 52.

[4] Angel Rama, "The Ordered City," in *The Lettered City* (Duke University Press, 1996), 1.

[5] Rama, "The Ordered City," 5, 8-9.

order, and the Spanish colonizers sought to achieve *policía* through the conversion of conquered peoples to Christianity, the adoption of Spanish language and culture, or through the strict regulation of conquered populations through social hierarchies, legal codes, and segregation in ethnic neighborhoods.[6]

At first, the Spanish appear to have successfully implemented their ideas of European urban geography, Spanish literacy, racialized class hierarchies, and Catholicism onto their colonial cities in Latin America and Asia. However, Rama claims that their success is surface level, and that the enslaved and conquered African, Indigenous, and Asian populations in Spanish colonial cities did not cooperate with the Spanish's enforcement of their culture and ideology and used the colonial hierarchies and policies to change their social standing, challenging the Spanish ideas of order in the colonial city. Rama calls this urban model the lettered city (*la ciudad letrada*) because of the role that literacy and language (particularly through the creation of colonial legislation, documents, and records) played in the establishment of colonial order and *policía* in the colonial city, and this model applies to Lagos under British control, as the British utilized many of these strategies themselves in the nineteenth century.[7]

## Street Names and Multilingualism in Lagos

Rama cites language and literacy as a means of transcribing colonial laws and regulation, claiming that "the written word became the only binding one" in colonial cities and that "writing consolidated the political order by giving it rigorously elaborated cultural expression"; the role of language as a tool of the British and the Royal Niger Company in Lagos clearly used language as a tool of empire.[8] While English did not completely replace Yoruba and other local dialects during colonization, it became one of the legal languages of the colony by meshing with Yoruba to create pidgin English, a hybridized dialect spoken in Lagos. Pidgin English occurs when another language modifies English; West African populations speak pidgin English, which became a *lingua franca* in the late nineteenth century in British colonial port cities.[9] The creation of an intermediary language between English (the language of the colonizers) and Yoruba (a local language) allowed the British to communicate more effectively with the Lagos population, particularly when it came to colonial governance. Pidgin English ensured that Yoruba did not completely disappear from the linguistic geography of colonial Lagos, as it became enshrined in official street names as part of the hybridized, bilingual society of Lagos.

Yoruba, pidgin English, and English served as primary languages in Lagos, and bilingualism was key to Lagos's society. In Lagos, European, African, and creole languages, cultures, and traditions meshed to create a dynamic linguistic environment. Pidgin English developed through Lagos's interactions with European missionaries and merchants, other

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[6] Richard L. Kagan, "Projecting Order," in *Mapping Latin America: A Cartographic Reader*, ed. Jordana Dym and Karl Offen (University of Chicago Press, 2011), 46-48.
[7] Rama, "The Ordered City," 6-7.
[8] Rama, "The Ordered City," 6-7.
[9] Philip Atsu Afeadie, "Language of Power: Pidgin English in the Colonial Governance of Northern Nigeria," *Legon Journal of the Humanities* 26, no. 1 (July 18, 2016): 63-65, https://doi.org/10.4314/ljh.v26i1.2.

African groups, and the Creole languages of formerly enslaved people.[10] The British idea of colonial control was more relaxed, *laissez-faire*, and as such, pidgin English and other African dialects became the daily languages of Lagos.[11] The continued use of indigenous languages in Lagos undermined the efforts for the complete colonization and erasure of indigenous languages, cultures, and traditions by European colonizers.

Lagosians also preserved the Yoruba language by giving Lagos's streets Yoruba names, and the official processes surrounding street naming highlight Yoruba dialects' presence in the legal framework of the city. The visibility of Yoruba words as street names challenges the colonizers' desire to subsume local languages in favor of European languages; this sets British colonialism in Lagos apart, highlighting that *laissez-faire* style of colonization. The creation of named streets orders the colonial city by providing reference points in the city, as well as further clarifying information for cartographic endeavors in the city. This bilingualism in street names reflects the overlapping (and merging) of English and Yoruba, two distinct languages, as part of the colonial process and its effects on socio-political characteristics of the lettered city.[12]

In Lagos, there were "three main categories [of street names]: indigenous names, site-related names and eminent colonial names," and the dominance of Yoruba street names reflects the British disinterest in controlling the use of indigenous languages in Lagos.[13] 65 of the 83 total streets of Lagos, in the nineteenth century, had Yoruba names, far more than the streets named after British and colonial officials, which were five in total.[14] Biogon contrasts the many Yoruba street names in Lagos with the French street names in Dakar, the former French colonial city in west Africa. In Dakar, the majority of the street names were French, unlike colonial Lagos, and the few African street names were "designated to support the French master narrative" and their heavy editing of Dakar's colonial history.[15] The retention of Yoruba as a major language in colonial Lagos, especially in official street names, further reinforces Lagosians' ability to retain their languages despite British colonization, though the British *laissez-faire* colonization strategy makes this more tenable for the Yoruba than for other colonized groups under stricter colonial governments.

### "Ordered" Urban Geography in Colonial Lagos

Before the arrival of the British in the nineteenth century, Lagos served as a major city on the coast of West Africa given its massive goods and slave markets, connections with European merchants and slave traffickers, and its proximity to the African interior.[16] Lagos, as a colonial city, contained built structures that reflected European ideas of architecture and urbanity, while African ideas of cities dominated the early colonial period in Lagos. Ironically, the Indigenous Lagosians believed that the land on which the British chose to construct the

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[10] Emmanuel Adedun and Mojisola Shodipe, "Yoruba-English Bilingualism in Central Lagos -- Nigeria," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 23, no. 2 (December 2011): 12, https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2011.6.
[11] Bigon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines, and Street Naming," 433.
[12] Adedun and Shodipe, "Yoruba-English Bilingualism," 125.
[13] Biogon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines, and Street Naming," 444.
[14] Biogon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines, and Street Naming," 444-445.
[15] Biogon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines, and Street Naming," 441.
[16] Biogon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines, and Street Naming," 436-7; Hopkins, "Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880-92," 584, 588.

Marina, the European neighborhood, was "religiously inferior" to the land occupied by the Isale Eko, the Brazilian Quarter, and the Ologbo neighborhoods.[17] As a result, Lagos appears vaguely European in terms of their actual built structures, but the spatiality and design of the city reflects the original pre-colonial city. The British's relaxed colonial governing style preserved the original pre-colonial layout of Lagos and the street names that are so intrinsic to the city's identity.

Lagos, like other colonial cities, had preestablished neighborhoods and locations, so the British had to build around the existing parameters of the city. The oldest neighborhood, Isale Eko became the unofficial capital for a variety of Indigenous groups, with the outskirts of Isale Eko inhabited by fishermen and farmers.[18] The British would be unable to use a formal plan for the city, since the city's location around a lagoon limited buildable land to islands and artificial built-up areas. With the arrival of the British in the late nineteenth century, they added three more quarters to the city. Isale Eko continued to have the largest population, but its surrounding three minority groups threatened the security of the neighborhood's identity.[19] The Brazilian Quarter became populated by "self-emancipated slaves and captives," and many of them chose to return to Lagos because they were of Yoruba descent.[20] The Olowogbowo, like the Brazilian Quarter, was also a majority-immigrant neighborhood of Sierra Leonians (also called Saros). The name Olowogbowo (or Oba, or Ologbo) came from a variation on a different Yoruba word referencing lagoon currents and trade, which was appropriate as many Saros were merchants and participated in trade.[21] The European quarter, the Marina, was home to only 250 Europeans, many of whom were not British, by 1900; to the colonizer, the Marina was the desirable and prestigious part of the city, as they had begun constructing European-style buildings in their quarter as a reflection of colonizer ideas of architecture, urbanity, and ideal land use.[22] Interestingly, the Yoruba name for the Marina, Ehin Igbeti, means "outside the fence," perhaps suggesting that the Marina area had not been part of pre-colonial Lagos and was a purely European addition to the city.[23]

Colonial Lagos's urban planning impacted the British colonial government's ability to implement sanitation networks as part of the city's infrastructure. Because of the small British population in colonial Lagos, the Lagosians already in the city were able to exert greater influence over the construction of the city and its sanitation systems despite their technically inferior social status.[24] The British colonial officials saw African ideas of street planning as unsanitary and unrefined, yet they did nothing to change Lagos's street plans to meet their European ideas.[25] At this point, many of the geographic landmarks, such as Victoria Island (one of the few parts of the city that conceded to Western colonial naming traditions), did not exist,

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[17] Liora Bigon, "Sanitation and Street Layout in Early Colonial Lagos: British and Indigenous Conceptions, 1851-1900," *Planning Perspectives* 20 (July 2005): 254.
[18] Biogon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines, and Street Naming," 437.
[19] Biogon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines, and Street Naming," 437.
[20] Biogon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines, and Street Naming," 438.
[21] Biogon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines, and Street Naming," 438.
[22] Biogon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines, and Street Naming," 439.
[23] Biogon, "Urban Planning, Colonial Doctrines, and Street Naming," 439.
[24] Liora Bigon, "Sanitation and Street Layout in Early Colonial Lagos," 250.
[25] Biogon, "Sanitation and Street Layout in Early Colonial Lagos," 250.

so Lagos strongly resembled a pre-colonial city with its own unique ideas of urban planning within the African cultural context.[26] The urban growth of Lagos was limited by the buildable land, as the city grew around a lagoon on various islands, and the growth of indigenous flora such as mangrove trees.[27] The land was also swampy and uneven, so they built structures around the natural obstacles in Lagos proper or outside the city limits on more stable ground. Lagos had dirt roads and streets in the city, not paved ones, as was the tradition before the arrival of Europeans, and the one paved road was in the Marina neighborhood.[28] The buildings in Lagos (except in the Marina neighborhood) adhered to African plans and materials such as wood, sun-dried bricks, mud, and bamboo palms, but an 1865 ordinance restricted the types of roofing materials that buildings between the lagoon and Broad Street had to use to limit the spread of fire.[29] However, the majority of the residents between the lagoon and Broad Street were European and could afford the cost of these materials, so access to critical building resources disproportionately benefited the Europeans.[30] This triumph of British urban planning unsurprisingly benefits the Marina, a clear indication of colonial concerns when it came to the survival of the city.

Despite their concerns about sanitation and the spread of tropical diseases in Lagos, the British did not hurry to impose their ideas of Western sanitation and order onto Lagos, another distinction between British and Spanish methods of colonization; the British, unlike the Spanish, were more concerned with domestic issues and domestic sanitation rather than their colonial empire. As such, the British aspired to Western ideas of sanitation but never put them into practice, an inaction that would lead to conflicts with African ideas of urban order and sanitation.[31] The colonial government of Lagos did not impose sanitary segregation until 1907, over 50 years after the British annexed the city, and the sanitary segregation order specifically sought to create a British neighborhood on land confiscated from African professionals and merchants, whose high social status and relative economic wealth threatened racialized ideas such as white superiority and African unsanitariness.[32]

**Diversity in Lagos's Colonial Government**

Despite the *laissez-faire* style of British colonialism in Lagos, the city remained subject to colonial governance, and many political figures in the colonial government of Lagos were white and imposing Western ideas of law, legislation, and order onto the colonial city. Language and literacy were key to the success of British colonial order in Lagos as well as critical to the success of Lagos as both the ordered and the lettered city. Written government documents, memos, and legislation created Lagos's legal presence in the British imperial narrative. The inhabitants of colonial Lagos were able to manipulate these written legal systems to benefit their status within the British lettered city of Lagos.

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[26] Biogon, "Sanitation and Street Layout in Early Colonial Lagos," 250.
[27] Biogon, "Sanitation and Street Layout in Early Colonial Lagos," 253.
[28] Biogon, "Sanitation and Street Layout in Early Colonial Lagos," 254.
[29] Biogon, "Sanitation and Street Layout in Early Colonial Lagos," 255.
[30] Biogon, "Sanitation and Street Layout in Early Colonial Lagos," 255.
[31] Biogon, "Sanitation and Street Layout in Early Colonial Lagos," 253.
[32] Philip D. Curtin, "Medical Knowledge and Urban Planning in Tropical Africa," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (June 1985): 603, 605, https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/90.3.594.

In Lagos, as in other colonial cities, individuals could petition the government for redress in particular circumstances. The petition systems of colonial governments allowed Indigenous populations to use the colonial system to their advantage, often against the European colonizers. In colonial Africa, these systems allowed Africans to challenge racialized ideas of white superiority and African inferiority on a multitude of levels, but most importantly the intellectual and literate levels. Such petitions allow historians to understand the ways through which Africans took control of the lettered government and used such systems to assert their agency.[33] Such petitions are an "integral part of the complex negotiations … between the peasants and the [outsiders]" and critical to understanding how colonized populations used the colonial legal system to expand their social and political rights and freedoms.[34] In 1894, Lagos's Muslim population used this petition system to request the establishment of Sharia courts in Lagos, possibly establishing a multi-legal system of colonized and colonizer judicial systems after decades of establishing mosques and Western schools for the Lagos Muslim community.[35] Multiple legal systems already existed in British Lagos given the pluralist legal system (combining local and British ideas of law) that had been a fundamental part of the British colonial strategy. The assumption that a complex, pluralist colonial legal system only existed upon its appearance in an official legal document (such as this petition) and not in a precolonial multilegal system is shortsighted and flawed.[36]

While the petition by Lagos's Muslim population is particularly interesting given the emphasis on religious pluralism in British colonies, the existence of multiple legal systems in the same space is not new. This petition reflects the challenges of the coexistence of unofficial legal systems; perhaps the existing African courts and informal Sharia courts had run into the issue of not having the official legal standing to back up their verdicts and sought to work with the colonial government to legitimize their legal status in Lagos.[37] Ideas of native law and custom ("customary law") remain part of the Nigerian legal system today, which reflects the long-term importance of diverse legal systems in a multicultural and multireligious urban center such as Lagos.[38] However, the legal system in Lagos (and in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole) has not seen the establishment of a "specifically Muslim court nor any formal application of Islamic law," as proposed by the Lagosian Muslim community in 1894, until 2002 with the creation of the Independent Sharia Panel (ISP) of Lagos State.[39]

In Lagos, the colonial government required political agents to understand the cultures and customs of the regions around Lagos, which involved knowing various languages.[40] Pidgin English became the official language of the government since the inhabitants of Lagos widely

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[33] Chima J. Korieh, "'May It Please Your Honor': Letters of Petition as Historical Evidence in an African Colonial Context," *History in Africa* 37 (2010): 85, https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.2010.0034.
[34] Andrew Verner, "Discursive Strategies in the 1905 Revolution: Peasant Petitions from Vladimir Province," *Russian Review* 54 (1995), 65-9, in Korieh, "'May It Please Your Honor,'" 89.
[35] Ostien and Makinde, "Legal Pluralism in Colonial Lagos," 51, 58-60.
[36] Ostien and Makinde, "Legal Pluralism in Colonial Lagos," 54.
[37] Ostien and Makinde, "Legal Pluralism in Colonial Lagos," 55.
[38] Ostien and Makinde, "Legal Pluralism in Colonial Lagos," 55.
[39] Ostien and Makinde, "Legal Pluralism in Colonial Lagos," 63.
[40] Afeadie, "Language of Power," 67.

spoke it, but this compromise on official language strongly reflects the British *laissez-faire* colonization as well as the cultural and linguistic influence of Africans on the British city.[41] The political agents, also called messenger-interpreters, also had to know other languages to operate independently; if they did not know a language, they often had to work with the Royal Niger Company officials, who would act as translators.[42] Colonial officials in Lagos had to understand English, pidgin English, and Hausa (an indigenous *lingua franca*), though knowing other languages such as Yoruba or Kanuri would enhance their ability to serve the colonial government.[43] The Sharia courts would likely have used Arabic in their court documents and records, a language not encouraged by the British colonial government or the Royal Niger Company, and this exclusion provides another angle to the use of language and the written word as law in the colonial lettered city. The colonial government focused on languages related to their colonial and political interests, as seen by giving the Yoruba language a secondary status and not including Arabic as a key language in Lagos. One agent, Kiari, was fluent in English, Arabic, Kanuri, Fulfude, and Hausa, and J.K. Davies was another agent who spoke English, Arabic, Yoruba, and Nupe, both first-class agents with high language scores. A second-class agent, Momo Lafia, spoke English, Nupe, Yoruba, Hausa, and Kakunda, while Abaji Gidda, another second-class agent, knew English, Arabic, Hausa, Fulfude, and Kanuri.[44] These four agents reflect the linguistic diversity of Lagos and Britain's African colonies; the decision of the Royal Niger Company and the British colonial government to demand such linguistic diversity from their employees is an anomaly when it comes to the enforcement and use of Western languages in colonized states. The use of Indigenous and pidgin languages within the British colonial system reflects their interests in the most expedient forms of communication (i.e. the British learning a language to communicate with local populations) as it benefits the colonial regime.

As for the legislative council of Lagos, it was primarily composed of white British men, but the council had a small number of unofficial members who had some political influence in Lagos.[45] The legislative council had political and economic duties, such as passing ordinances and controlling revenue and expenditure, but the council had limited power in Lagos.[46] European and African individuals that became unofficial council members would have to have an "exceptional ability" to make "effective protests against unfavourable aspects of colonial policy and practice," so the population that could join the council in an unofficial capacity was actually quite small when compared to the entire population of Lagos.[47] The legislative council served four purposes, according to a member of the colonial office; it allowed people to make petitions and air grievances, provided advice, delivered the governor's speeches, and limited official extravagance.[48]

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[41] Afeadie, "Language of Power," 67.
[42] Afeadie, "Language of Power," 66-8.
[43] Afeadie, "Language of Power," 70.
[44] Afeadie, "Language of Power," 72.
[45] Tekena N. Tamuno, "The Role of the Legislative Council in the Administration of Lagos, 1886-1912," *The Historical Society of Nigeria* 4, no. 4 (June 1969): 555, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41856779.
[46] Tamuno, "The Role of the Legislative Council," 555-6.
[47] Tamuno, "The Role of the Legislative Council," 556.
[48] Tamuno, "The Role of the Legislative Council," 557.

The European majority of official members did not make the council popular with the Lagosians, who did not see this council as acceptably sympathetic to their specific needs.[49] While Africans could become unofficial members of the council, Europeans (who were in commercial, banking, and shipping) could also become unofficial members of the council, silencing African voices and limiting their ability to participate in the colonial government.[50] Since the probability of indigenous Lagosians becoming unofficial members of the legislative council became limited, Lagosians continued to advocate for equal representation of Africans and Europeans on the council, especially given the legislative council's power over taxation.[51] Africans increasingly joined the unofficial council between 1886 and 1901, but these individuals were hand-picked rather than elected to the unofficial council.[52] Ideas of exceptionalism permeated the selection of non-European individuals on Lagos's unofficial council; Reverend James Johnson, despite being a clergyman, ended up in an unofficial council position because he was an educated African familiar with the protectorate, and he was able to use his unofficial power to increase the flow of information for individuals seeking to petition the colonial government.[53] Other unofficial African council members were part of the mercantile class, with lawyers, medical doctors, and other professionals only joining the unofficial council after 1901.[54] The increased presence of African unofficial councilmembers encouraged other Lagosians to submit petitions to the colonial government, counting on the political influence of African unofficial councilmembers for the success of their petitions. This gave Lagosian merchants a chance to have greater economic power, since they had a better chance of joining the council and influencing economic decrees.

Ultimately, the restriction of their nominations to unofficial positions severely limited the indigenous Lagosian population's ability to influence the political and economic landscape of Lagos. The limitation of the official and unofficial political power of indigenous Lagosian groups in the British colonial government is one of the few controlling aspects of British colonialism, a direct contrast from their *laissez-faire* style towards language acquisition and urban geography. This discrepancy for their desire for greater political control reflects their desire to manipulate the legal and economic system through their legislative council, as other colonial powers chose to do in their respective territories and cities.

**Conclusion**

In nineteenth-century British Lagos, language was central to the socio-cultural interactions of the city while also appearing in political places such as legal systems, colonial government, and street names. As for the physical geography of the city, Lagos, like the cities described by Rama and Kagan, had specific ethnic neighborhoods, which contained further differences in road quality, sanitation plans, and building materials based on the location of said road, sewer, or building. Lagos's colonial legislative council was most similar to Kagan and Rama's ideas of the ordered and lettered colonial city, as Lagosians had access to a petition

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[49] Tamuno, "The Role of the Legislative Council," 557-8.
[50] Tamuno, "The Role of the Legislative Council," 558.
[51] Tamuno, "The Role of the Legislative Council," 558.
[52] Tamuno, "The Role of the Legislative Council," 558.
[53] Tamuno, "The Role of the Legislative Council," 559.
[54] Tamuno, "The Role of the Legislative Council," 559-560.

system, which the Muslim community of Lagos used to attempt to establish Sharia courts, and official and unofficial council positions through which they could wield economic and political influence. The indigenous Lagosian population had the least power and influence on Lagos through the legislative council, but they had a substantial influence on colonial Lagos's language and urban geography.

While the British's laissez-faire style of colonialism led to a less structured colonial city with indirect colonial control, Lagos, during its tenure as a British colonial city, demonstrated many of the qualities found in Rama's lettered city and Kagan's ordered city. Through their above-average influence on colonial Lagos, "there was no such order" as Europeans would define it; Lagos rejected the trappings of the ordered city and reframed the lettered city to become a great African metropolis in as many ways as possible.

"Nobody own Lagos, na we all get am. Eko o ni baje!"[55]

[55] "Nobody owns Lagos, we all own Lagos. Lagos will never be destroyed!" Nnedi Okorafor, *Lagoon*, epigraph.

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