



Research Paper

A Study of the Impact of British Colonial Agriculture on Yola Division of Adamawa Province

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ABSTRACT: This study focuses on the colonial economy by looking at the agriculture of the Yola Division, Adamawa Province. The nature of its land contributed to the development of agricultural production of both plants and animals which stimulated the development of trade and commercial activities among the inhabitants and their European counterpart. The colonial economy of the Yola Division was one of the neglected aspects by scholars and researchers thus, research into it is significant by achieving its objectives that is to examine the geographical nature of the land and the people of the Yola area and to explore the nature of economic activities of the inhabitants of the Yola area. The primary and secondary sources are to be used in this study to provide relevant information concerning the theme.

KEYWORDS: Agriculture, British, colonialism, economy, province, Yola division

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I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

This study examines British colonial agriculture in Adamawa Province and Yola Division in particular. The division is currently located in Adamawa state, northeastern Nigeria. It was created by the British colonial government under the leadership of Lord Frederick Lugard (1858-1945). Yola serves as the headquarters of the traditional emirate of Adamawa and derived its name from the *Yolde* Fulfulde word meaning a flat land or rising ground, the name, therefore, describes the area on which the city was located (Mahmoud, 1979). The area largely consisted of various groups who were speaking different languages and dialects with different customs and traditions. These groups include the Bata, Fulani, Kilba, Laka, and Verre. There were also several other groups in the area such as Chamba, Jukun, Kanuri, Mbula with some other related groups (Hamza, Garba& Amina, 2021; Sa'ad, 1976). The major economic activities of the inhabitants were initially pastoralism/animal husbandry, hunting, fishing, farming and trading, and other handicraft activities which consist of ceramic, ironworks, and sculpture (Chubado, 2019) among others. These activities persuaded frequent movement of people from one place to another in search of livelihood which they found it more convenient to settle down due to the good fertile land and favourable nature of the environment their participation in such activities encouraged the affiliation/relationship with one another (Chubado& Hamza, 2020).

Yola is an area whose main economic activity was agriculture. The people of the area engaged in the cultivation of crops such as guinea corn, beans, groundnut, cotton, tobacco and animal husbandry. They also engaged both in the rainy and dry seasons farming or rearing of livestock and mostly farmers who produced for domestic consumption and long-distance trade in the pre-colonial era (Alkasum, 2003). With the imposition of the area by the British colonialists, the fortune of indigenous agriculture changed for the worse. The mainstay of the Yola Division was agriculture as we know is not only confirmed to crop production, but it also includes rearing of animals such as cattle, sheep, goats and other livestock (Alkasum, 2003). This is carried out by the pastoralists who were mostly Fulani and in the case of the Yola Division, they mostly case to live in this region during the Sokoto jihad of 1804 from the Borno area under the leadership of *Modibbo* Adama (1786-1847) who was the first Emir of *Fombina* (later Adamawa) during the jihad period (Yakubu, 1997).

Yola area was one of the main trading posts of the British colonialists in northern Nigeria because of the presence of a navigable river system (i.e. River Benue that come across the area). Therefore, an examination of British colonial rule in Adamawa and Yola Division in particular shows that it was not a kind political system, looking at the colonial rule in Nigeria shows that it left more negative legacies than positive ones. It left behind a functional bureaucracy, an elementary educational system, although externally oriented. These policies

had implications for Nigeria's economic development and discouraged domestic production or industries, but promoted export crops and natural resources to sustain the British industrial development. The Adamawa province served as British colonial territory and generated cheap agricultural products to feed the British industrial and European nations, the province served as a trading post for the British and other European traders, also supported the importation of finished goods because the colonialists wanted a market place for their manufactured products to exploit their inhabitants and generate profit for the metropolitan state (Chubado& Sani, 2020).

"Agriculture has always been and still is the major employer of labour in Nigeria despite the fact that it is being managed by the peasants under poor conditions. The coming of the British and the importance which they placed in this sector did nothing to change the condition of agriculture and in fact, it was even perpetuated by them" (Amina, 2012).

It is important to note that the colonial economy in most of the Nigerian communities was structured to improve the economies of the British colonialists. For instance, agriculture formed the basic foundation of Nigerians in the pre-colonial period. In this activity, food production featured prominently for most of the Nigerian communities, hence like most traditional African societies, there was self-support in the food supply. However, given the fact that one of the major reasons why the British colonized Adamawa and Nigeria as a whole was to ensure a cheap and steady supply of agricultural products and other raw materials needed for their industries, the colonial administration completely discouraged the cultivation of food crops while encouraging export crops production.

The colonialists had always focused their attention on the agricultural viability of their colony to the extent of even forcing the people to cultivate what they wanted, most commercial crops. They dictated everything, from the crops and even the price of the crops was under the control. The colonialist did not work with anyone or anything that was against their vested economic interest and the policies and ordinances were all beneficial to them alone. Along the line though, some Nigerians who were the middlemen and chiefs also benefited from such activities of the colonialist (Haruna, 2018). The colonialist built roads, elementary schools, healthcare centres, and veterinary clinics among others; these, however, were part of the plan to maximize the exploitation of the inhabitants and their land. It is pertinent to note that the land was exploited to its maximum to the point of depletion. This affected the development of society, the economy, and the land (Chubado, 2019).

Before the British conquest of the Adamawa Emirate (Yola), the sub-emirates enjoyed autonomy led by kindred leaders, *Arden* (NAK/Yola/Prof/Acc.77, 1956) who were directly answerable to the *Modibbo* or *Lamido* at Yola. After Yola was captured by the British forces in September 1901(Alkasum, 2003; Hamid &Alkasum, 2009), Yola Province was created and the sub-emirates were transformed into colonial districts. Consequently, in 1926; the administrative and boundary re-organization of provinces throughout the Northern Protectorate began; the Adamawa Province emerged by the influence of the British colonialist to serve the interest of colonialists (Apata, 1990;Hamza, Garba& Amina, 2021). The Adamawa Province was an amalgam of the former Yola and the mandated Cameroon areas. The new province adopted its name used by the natives, Adamawa, with headquarters at Jimeta-Yola. It was divided into four (4) administrative divisions: Yola, Mubi, Numan and Shelling (NAK/Yolaprof/1-17, 1957). This clearly shows that the area was significant to the colonialist because it was rich in animal grazing, farming, fishing, hunting and commercial activities which could generate cheap economic resources, labour, and revenues purposely to support the colonial government (i.e. Native Authority) deliberately to sustain and prolong their domination (Chubado& Sani, 2020). The colonial government-directed Native Authorities in what they termed 'indirect rule system', laid down policies that had to do with agricultural production, being the mainstay of the indigenous economy and the primary concern of the colonialists. In the end, the goals of the colonialists were achieved through various means ranging from forced labour, and pure exploitation.

The establishment of the British colonial administration brought the introduction of export crops economy to Nigeria as elsewhere in Africa (Tom, 1981). In line with the British colonial policies of providing raw materials for the industries of the British metropolitan, Nigeria witnessed the down-play of the importance of the indigenous economic system which made each family self-sufficient in food and other socio-economic needs. Through deliberate policies of discouraging food crop cultivation, most clans and communities were gradually free of food supplies and thus introduced into acute hunger in favour of the cultivation of export crops needed by British industries. Colonial government in the form of Native Authorities was used as agents of this destruction of the indigenous food crops economy and the vigorous pursuance of the new economic policies (Tom, 1981).

However, the capitalist system has enforced a rigid division of labour which is responsible for the underdevelopment of Adamawa and Nigeria as a whole. The area remained dependent and relies heavily on the export of agricultural products and natural resources for foreign exchange earnings of which Yola Division is a good example. The division supply cheap agricultural products, natural resources, and cheap labour as well as serve as the storage area of surplus capital. These functions orient the economy of Yola Division toward the

British and other European powers: money, goods, and services do flow into the area but the allocations of these resources are determined by the economic interest of the British and not by the interest of Nigeria particularly Adamawa, Yola (Alkasum, 2003).

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

At this juncture, it is important to note that many works have been carrying out on the Adamawa region over time but no one has examined the colonial economy particularly colonial agriculture, because several scholars, researchers, and students forget the fact that the colonialists emphasized agricultural production in their colonies for export. This paper also put forward to fill up this gap in the area study. The available literature on Adamawa and Yola in particular are more socio-political based and ignored economic activities especially agriculture which became the main interest of the British colonialist in the area. Before the advent of colonialism, the majority of the inhabitants practiced agriculture as a means of livelihood, but under peasant conditions. However, the British improved the system of agricultural production and maintained the agricultural sector because their economic interest not in the best interest of the society. On this basis, the British introduced various policies to dominate the production and sale of the agricultural products of their colonies which led to the destruction of the economy of the Yola Division during colonial domination.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of this study, a variety of research techniques are to be used. But to be specific, this study will adopt the historical method for data collection. The data used to construct this study are from two broad categories namely, primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include archival materials and oral information while the secondary sources are mainly published and unpublished works such as books, journals, official documents and seminar/workshop papers as well as internet sources. The assessment of the sources recovered involved corroboration, collaboration, and correlation. These are important procedures in historical studies.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This research should contribute to the body of knowledge by examining history of the British colonial agriculture on Yola Division, 1901-1960. It should serve as guidance to students, researchers, scholars, and individuals to advance or develop their works and societies in the future research. Also, provided more light on the achievement of the socio-economic activities of the people of Yola Division to the establishment and growth of the modern institutions particularly during the colonial period that shapes the lives of the citizens and their neighbours over time. Indeed, it should be relevant to other studies/disciplines and organizations.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

Alkasim (2003) examines the nature of economic and socio-political developments of Yola as metropolitan and capital of Adamawa Emirate during pre-colonial and colonial periods up to 1914. He further examines the organization of production in Agricultural activities and manufacturing industries in Yola before the British conquest. Likewise, he observes the position of the emirate within the framework of Sokoto Caliphate; the economic consequences of the British conquest of Yola in 1901; and the transformation of the indigenous economy into the colonial system of economy which weakened the indigenous economy.

Other relevant pieces of literature that the general history of *Fombina* Emirate in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods, the author surveyed the geographical nature of the region that extends from Chad Basin down to northern Cameroon and Muri Emirate. He also examined the organization of major ethnic groups, political and socio-economic as well as intellectual relations among the inhabitants; the origins and reasons of their migration into the region of Upper Benue Valley. The author further explained that by the end of the 18th century different ethnic groups remained independent and non-centralized communities such as the Chamba, Mbum, Margi, Kilba, Gude, Bata, Higgi, and Verre, etc. But in the 19th century, the political position of the region began to change in a very impressive manner with the arrival of the Fulani immigrants, reaching the desired goal by bringing various ethnic groups (chiefdoms) under their hegemony. With the jihad virtually over, consolidations and expansion continued until the end of the 19th century during the European conquest (Sa'ad, 1971 & 2008).

Chubado (2019) discusses the political, social, economic, and intellectual developments of the Balala District during colonial and post-colonial periods. The author observes the land and the people of the Balala area, the origin and movement of the four ethnic groups into the region of Adamawa; and further argued that the indigenous economies were the backbone of the society of Adamawa Emirate concerning the Balala District with strong industries such as agriculture and handicraft manufacturing played a greater role in promoting politics of the area. He also investigates the relationship between the society of Balala and the British colonialists throughout colonialism.

Yakubu (1997) examines the origin and migrations of different Fulani clans as well as the emergence of jihad (Sokoto jihad of 1804) in the area in the early 19th century which led by *Modibbo* Adama and further observes the society, economy, and political condition of the Yola area during colonial domination. He also illustrates the duty and responsibilities of *Lamido* in the areas of socio-economic and political activities of the emirate and highlighted the contribution and achievements of *Lamido* Aliyu Mustafa to the society at local, national and international levels. He, therefore, describes the structure and functions of the political and administrative offices around the throne or emirate.

Kirk-Greene (1969) examines the creation of Adamawa Province in 1906, largely from the original Yola Province in the hope of giving the officer who was posted to Adamawa a clear background history of the province. The author further examines the geographical nature of the region, population, and administrative divisions of the province: Yola, Mubi, and Numan. He discusses the origin and movements of the following ethnic groups: Jukun, Chamba, Bata, Margi, Kilba, Higi, Mumuye, and Fulani. The author explains the activities of the Royal Niger Company (RNC) in the province, occupation of Yola by the British in 1901.

Another important piece of literature treats important aspects of the economic history of Lower Benue Province. The author has carefully examined the origin and development of commodity production under the British colonial government in the province and discusses the role of the British colonial government in the development of commodity production and the response of the society which far-reaching implications on the socio-economic life of the people and their environment under colonial domination. The work focused on the economic history of the Central Nigeria area and the country as a whole (Mike, 2009).

Haruna (2015) examines the impact of colonial rule on Muri Emirate the agricultural economy and argues that alien influences did not do much to transform the indigenous economy, but rather concentrated on improving export crops that aid the colonialist economy. The people of Muri Emirate practiced agriculture on an extensive scale and they produced both for consumption and commercial purposes in long-distance trade. But unlike the British colonialist, no one sector (cash or food crops) of agriculture was given priority as they produced based on their needs. The establishment of the British colonial administration brought the introduction of export crops economy to the area as elsewhere in the country. This was to have a serious impact on the economic development of the Muri Emirate. The British colonialist took over effective control of the area from 1903 and embarked on the enactment of policies that were to shape agricultural production in their interest.

It is important to note that Gombe Division shares common colonial systems of agriculture and geographical zone with the Yola Division and the work is very influential in the development of this study. It argues that underdevelopment in this area is a consequence of British agricultural practices. There was a concerted effort on the part of the colonialist to weaken, which they eventually did the independent economic development of this area. It has a similar case with an area of our study because the British colonialist used the same policies to weaken the indigenous economy of the Yola Division (Bappah, 1988).

This dissertation examined the activities and impacts of British colonial domination on the economy of the Ikara District of Zaria Province. The work also observes the policies introduced by the British colonialists aimed at the distortion of the indigenous economy to serve British economic interests. It further demonstrated that this was done by imposing colonial policies on land, labour, production, transport and taxation. These policies had the effect of forcing peasants to engage in export crop production to meet the need of the British industries. However, the introduction of these policies and the development of export crop production completely changed the nature of the pre-colonial economy from an independent economy to a dependent economy which subsequently resulted in the total and complete alteration of indigenous industries (Bappah, 1988).

Amina (2012) studies British colonial policies on agriculture in the Jama'are Emirate and such policies were all designed to benefit the colonialist in their bid to obtain raw materials for their industries, the focus of the colonialist had always been the production of export crops with the neglect of food crop because colonialism has to do with the exploitation of not only the people but also the land and what was produced on it as the most important factor of production.

Bahago (2015) focuses on the impact of colonialism on the agricultural production of Galadima District and argue that colonial agricultural policies and practices did not stimulate export crops production to develop Nigerian communities. It did not improve agricultural technology or the peasant's skills in productivity. Rather, it failed to enhance the indigenous crafts and industries, trade, pastoralism, and it did not build the capacity of the society to have control over their socio-economic activities, but it stimulated the production of export crops to the advantage of the colonialist and they used taxation technique, on the colonized to foster smooth colonial administration. Colonial administration also stimulated hunger, poverty, indebtedness, and destitution in Galadima District and Nigeria as a whole.

The reviewed works are all important texts in the economic history of Nigeria concerning Adamawa, Yola and they are relevant to overall examination of the variables that constitute the foundation of the economy of Nigeria which students and researchers in the area of our study can take advantage of. Apart from general

information, the works have provided the public with a broad knowledge of the Nigerian communities and they will be useful for teaching and research as well as other purposes. Policymakers in general and those focusing on the agro-allied related policy will also find that literature very useful. Also, the collections of this literature will be reviewed for this study not so much for their limitations and gaps that exist in them, for this study to develop and build-up, as for assets of the relevant information they make available from which our study can point up extensively. And the literature also held massively in the formation of the research topic.

VI. CONCLUSION

However, given the fact that one major reason why British colonized the area was to ensure a cheap and steady supply of raw materials to British industries, the colonial administration completely discouraged the cultivation of food crops while encouraging cash crops production. Colonialism has played a very significant role in shaping the agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy. This is because it was built on the exploitation of the agricultural produce of the colonized. And this had one of the most profound impact especially on the soil and subsequently on the economy of the inhabitants. The colonial economy in most of Nigeria was structured to improve the economies of the colonizing or metropolitan powers. In the scheme of things, what mattered was how the colonial economy could benefit the colonizers. Very little, if any regard, was paid to the colonized indigenous people. When the people of Yola was taken into consideration, it was mostly employed as a tool in achieving the main reason for colonization: the domination and exploitation of the indigenous people by the colonizing power particularly the British. This scenario was quite visible in the economy Adamawa as far as the production of cash crops and food crops were concerned.

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