INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE HUMANITY & MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

ISSN (print) 2833-2172, ISSN (online) 2833-2180

Volume 04 Issue 10 October 2025

DOI: 10.58806/ijsshmr.2025v4i10n20, Impact Factor: 6.79

Page No. 2017-2025

The Impact of Colonial Domination on the Economy of Gusau District, 1945 – 1960

Hadiza Garba Ameh [1], JULIET JENEBU OBAJOBI[2]

[1]Federal University Gusau

[2]LCCA, Global University Systems

ABSTRACT: This study contributes to a broader understanding of the long-term economic implications of colonial governance in Nigeria, shedding light on how these historical factors continue to influence contemporary economic development in the region. Colonialism and colonial economy in Gusau were a systematic imposition of political control by the British for the purpose of advancing its agricultural interest while providing space for the exploitation of the resources of the predominantly agrarian community of North-western Nigeria. This failed to move the economy of the area from its underdeveloped stage to a path of development. While few factories and machineries were provided, the agricultural policies discouraged advanced processing of primary products in the area and thus discouraged the development of indigenous industries, such as iron working, craft and textile, leading to the dislocation of the economy. Rather than improving on their enterprise through the development of local farm technology, peasants continued to use local tools to cultivate small farm plots under colonial export economy. This narrowed production in the area reducing it to a mono-culture economy where surpluses were largely usurped by the Colonial Government and its collaborators leaving the peasants to continually wallow in poverty and squalor. The exploitative nature of colonial agricultural economy and its commercial aspects secured for the Colonial State and their imperial partners their industrial objectives, but failed to create linkages for the indigenous economy.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Colonialism was a system of domination facilitated by violence and not merely a matter of "rule" as some people regarded it (Mamdani, 1976). Hence, it was sustained by violence and continued exploitation. This article is an exposition of those processes of exploitation of the economy of the area of study and how the economy became disarticulated through policies designed and implemented by the Colonial Government through the Native Administration. To capture these processes, it looks at the entire Northern Nigeria to provide general information, while details of the processes are discussed by using sources specific to Gusau District. Furthermore, the processes which gave force to exploitation of the economy of Gusau District began with lands being confiscated and loss of sovereignty as well as control over the economy that resulted in the collapsed of a forward and backward linkage which previously existed in the indigenous economy. This article therefore discussed how these among other factors created a situation which led to hunger, famine and widespread poverty within a once self-sufficient economy.

1.2 Disarticulation of the Indigenous Economy

Having set the stage that provided for greater linkage effects in the economic arena of the area under study via political control, the processes for exploitation of the resources of the area became more opened and provided for the successful implementation of various colonial policies, which led to the disarticulation of the indigenous economy. The claim by Nadama that 1917 could be regarded as the landmark in the commercial development of Gusau town is debatably unacceptable because the nature of such commercial development failed to translate to concrete realities in terms of economic development of the area but rather revealed high volume of activities narrowed down to production for export trapped within the technology of the hoes. The once evolving enterprising economy lost the opportunity to develop from such rudimentary mode of cultivation into a modern productive sector. Rather than creating a clear path in the economic destiny of the area by enhancing the diversified nature of precolonial economy, colonial economic policies disconnected the interdependent nature of the local subsectors which resulted in the collapse of local industries and strangulated the whole economy of the area. The narration below states that:

"The Colonial Administration was only interested in cultivating export crops and used all means including the use of force to ensure that the objective was achieved; that the British government never really cared for the people but were more interested in what they could get out of the land" (Nakwada, 2019).

A careful examination of the above statement revealed why the only way to fully actualize such interest was to seize political control. This was firmly orchestrated when the British imperial forces subdued the Caliphate and broke up all the emirates within it, with all administrative powers vested in the British Resident. Such administrative control by the British can therefore not be said to be invisible – the indirect system notwithstanding. Although the claim of the enormous impact of British commercial activity on the area may be correct, the nature of such impact continued to be questioned. (Nadama, 1972). This paper x-rays such impact. This is important because after colonialism had finished its work and rolled away through political independence of various African States, the aftermath of colonial economic policies was the establishment of a dependent economy heavily relying on foreign products to service most of its economic needs. Bonat describes the commercial structure under the exploitative nature of the Colonial State generally in Northern Nigeria as one in which peasant farmers could not acquire surpluses required to develop their farming enterprises that would have laid the foundation for a solid indigenous economy (Bonat, 2013). Although the high volume of commercial activities under the Colonial State was not obtainable in pre-colonial Gusau, the economy of the area nevertheless developed through an elaborate agricultural system and handicraft production geared towards consumption and export. This was made possible through the production of cotton, animal skin and other staple food crops. To appreciate the impact of colonial economy on the economy of the area of study, we laid bare the shape of pre-colonial economy of Hausa land in general with specific examples appertaining to Gusau area.

The economy of Hausa land was largely based on agriculture, which was practiced by a larger population of the area. This sector along with indigenous craft production (textile, leather and metal work), as well as commerce, combined to provide a strong economic foundation for its population (Adamu, 2006). But all these processes were halted because of colonialism, which disrupted the normal patterns of evolution and growth of the indigenous economy (Bello, 2017). Nevertheless, even at its primitive stage it held for the imperialist as the most attractive investment potentials, which allowed the British colonial government assumed direct domination, control and exploitation This was because the highly needed raw material was cultivated largely in the eastern Districts of Sokoto, where heavy soils and abundant rainfall contributed to varieties of activities around cotton production; the districts included Tsafe, Gusau, Bungudu, Kwatarkwashi and Maru.

Cotton production, among other crops had a multiplier effects on the economy of Gusau, which went beyond just the production and export of the produce to as far as North Africa via Katsina, in the 18th century; for instance, the extensive network of foot paths and routes created the urban and rural intercourse, such as the Banga- Magami route linking Daura was one of the distinctive patterns of inter- regional trade in the first half of the 18thc (Danhausa, 2017). Hence, commerce was long entrenched in Gusau area, with Katsina serving as the main distribution centre of most of the produce, such as cotton, leather works and dyed clothes. Others included weaved clothes and iron working technology (Mahdi, 1978). This growing economic activity was captured by Isichei thus: "Almost as far as the Nile and certainly in Southern Morocco, the blue haiques and burnouse of semi – Arabs and Moorish tribe are the products of craftsmen in Kano and Sokoto and this "country's cloth", as it is called, is worth much more than any turned out in Manchester" (Isichei, 1983). Mahdi further corroborates this when he notes that "the elaborated network of trade into and out of the Hausa Kingdoms in the 18th century was controlled by merchants based in Hausa cities, particularly Katsina, Kano and Yandoto in Gusau district" (Mahdi, 1978). This reveals a great argument here which is that prior to the advent of colonial rule, the high volume of activities in commerce of the area had led to the prosperity of most of the people whose large scale trade and manufacturing undertakings were totally in the hands of the indigenous people. The growing manufacturing meant that there was constant demand for raw materials, such as cotton, groundnut, benniseed and animal skin, while production was sustained by farmers to meet that demand. The growing level of agricultural production also had linkage effect on iron working, because many of the farm implements were locally produced by the blacksmiths whose resources for production were also locally sourced (Mahdi, 2015).

Furthermore, a major factor that strengthened the link between the farmers and blacksmiths was the fact that even up till this century farming continued to be largely manual, hence farmers continued to engage the services of these blacksmiths for the maintenance of their implements (Mahdi, 2015). This interplay among the various sectors provided a robust market for mutual benefits. For instance, in the manufacturing sector, processing of primary products, such as spinning, weaving, tanning and iron smelting, at the early stage was done mostly in the villages, while that of finished product such as tailoring, embroidery and ornaments was done in the urban areas and exported (Mahdi, 2015).This meant that jobs were widely distributed and not concentrated in one area. Furthermore, the extensive market for textiles enjoyed great patronage and generated income for the producers in that sector. They, in turn, were serviced by cotton farmers. There was evidence that economic prosperity was enjoyed by merchants and farmers as it was a common practice in Hausa land for producers to sale their products either to consumers or to wholesalers and retailers. Farmers for instance, sold out their crops (export or food crops) themselves in the markets and thus enjoyed added value on their products (Danhausa, 2017). Furthermore, a major contributory factor for farmer's surpluses was the variety of activities around cultivation. Among the four categories of farms in Hausa land, the Kurga (an individual's private farm) for instance, was often used to cultivate export crops. Although this was not a tradition but an indication of the enterprising nature of the farming activities before colonial incursion, there was large cultivation of all types of crops both for food and the market, hence in the traditional Hausa economy there was no distinction or inflexible mode of cultivating export or food crops because a farmer was free to cultivate varieties of crops (Danhausa, 2017). What the variety of crop cultivation in the Hausa economy meant was that, along with activity in the other sectors, such as manufacturing, processing and iron work, the indigenous people were able to lift their economy beyond a monoculture one. Another factor that contributed to a non-monoculture pre-Jihad economy was its integrated nature. This distinctive feature of the economy was possible because the economy of West Africa was largely dependent on others, and this was attributed to how nature had dispersed the resources within the region (Mahdi, 2015).

This interdependence allowed for large scale commerce involving people of various backgrounds within the region and which further encouraged specialization in commerce in pre-Jihad Hausa land. What this further meant was that the indigenous people were able to determine the progression of their economic activities. An indication of a strong economy in Gusau can therefore be said to have gone beyond variety of activities with specialization and professionalism, firmly controlled and executed not just by few indigenous people but a significant number. Although it has been identified that the failure to mechanize the pre-Jihad Hausa economy constituted as a principal weakness, it was however the case of all the pre-20th century economies in West Africa (Mahdi, 2015). Overall, the indigenous economy showed a forward and backward linkage in production. Therefore, as noted earlier, the conquered territories became areas of colonial plunder, which provided space for European imperial firms to be well entrenched and vividly positioned in the business of buying, storing, transporting and exporting industrial raw materials and thus monopolized the dominant sectors of the economy of the area. These companies had established their presence in Gusau District for that purpose, which was made possible through colonial policies, especially on agricultural production, which favoured externally oriented economic activities largely controlled by them, because colonial tax policy had the greater impact, especially on agricultural production, it altered completely the direction of that economy. For instance, the first tax under the Land Revenue Proclamation of June, No.4, of 1904, targeted agriculture, with a demand of one tenth (1/10) of the value of all farm produce from farmers (Gall, 1972).

In Gusau, the Native Authority Proclamation of 1906, introduced two additional tax; cattle (Jangali) and General Tax, which covered annual value of profits or gain from any trade, manufacturing, office or occupation, engaged in by members of the community. Furthermore, as part of the reasons why the Colonial State forcefully modified the traditional tax and the traditional tribute system obtained in pre-colonial era, into its own source of revenue, was to achieve for the commercial aspect of colonialism its goal, at a minimum cost through the cheapest way to maintain law and order. Additionally, colonial taxation as a triple-edged weapon and in its virulent operation ensured that peasant farmers became the core factor and promoter of colonial economic ideology which was based on export economy. In Gusau for instance, with the establishment of a sub-treasury, taxes collected in British currency boosted export commodity production as farmers were made to produce surplus to enable them pay tax. The Colonial Government changed tax rates at different times to ensure concentration on export crop production. Taxes were not fixed, but changed with changing times, which were largely tied to the boom in commodity production. Taxes were increased periodically, which forced farmers to increase production in order to pay the high rate. For instance, from 1914 to the 1920s, there were general increases in general tax from1/6d to 2/6 shillings, while in 1940, the rate of Jangali stood slightly over 10%. Considerable increases were also witnessed in 1942/43 and 1943/44-45 in Sokoto Province (SOK/PROF/Memo/1318, 1940).

Thus, colonial tax became a tool of compulsion and a strategy which exploited peasant farmers and ensured constant servicing of Europe’s industries with raw materials. The capacity, therefore, to produce these export crops became the primary responsibilities of the colonized; hence while the economy of the area under study became gradually incorporated in the mainstream of the World capitalist market economy, it became disintegrated and cut off from its traditional enterprising nature. The previous nature of operation of the economy was that it had links with other neighbouring economies whose products in both agricultural and indigenous crafts were found as far as West and North Africa. On the contrary, colonial economy operating within the indigenous economy became regionalized and oriented towards exports. Those traditional economic routes became starved because export of cotton, groundnut and animal skin was concentrated in the capitalist society and dominated by these European firms (Danhausa, 2017) While the monetization of colonial tax became the stimulus to maintain such externally oriented economy. It furthered the process which integrated the pre-capitalist economy into the international capitalist system. Although, Gusau area was vigorously entrenched in the production of cotton and groundnut, as it was the case of a specialized role for the entire northern Nigeria, the area could not develop its forces of production and in spite of the increased productivity, the dominant feature of the economy of the area of study, like any other part of the country, remained at its rudimentary stage. The use of simple implements, such as hoes, cutlasses and others (for weeding and ploughing), remained predominant. Nevertheless, some form of modern techniques and a few processing firms, such as Gusau ginnery and oil mill were established, the indifference of the Colonial Government over the development of the forces of production was an indication of its unwillingness to industrialize the local economy. Large scale industrialization was not encouraged by the colonial powers in their African colonies because industrialization of the colonies could lead to competition with European industries for markets and raw materials (Usman, 2015). Most of the processing firms were colonial imperialist enterprises vital for the advancement of colonial economic activities. The need, for instance, to transport raw materials, animal skins and vegetable oil processed in Gusau in the most convenient manner, led to the establishment of these processing firms. What this meant was that while these firms operated with strong capital base, the peasant farmers and local craftsmen who were already burdened by tax could hardly compete with the foreign firms. The peasants were unable to compete in terms of improving their enterprise, notwithstanding the increased volume of production. It meant that the surplus which was required to enhance local production was taken away through tax and poor pricing of produce. Rodney has observed this correctly when he points out thus:

'Cash crop peasants never had any capital of their own. They existed from one crop to another, depending on good harvest and good prices. Any bad harvest or fall of prices caused the peasant to borrow in order to find money to pay taxes and buy certain necessities. As security, they mortgaged their future crop to money lenders in the middlemen category. Non-payment of debt could and did lead to their farm being taken away by the money lenders. The rate of interest on the loan were always fantastically high amounting to what is known as usury' (Rodney, 1972).

Furthermore, there were various economic activities within Gusau area prior to colonial intervention. These economic activities, however, became narrowed and concentrated in one area of the economy and restricted within the rural areas. As observe thus: The Nigerian economy was therefore trapped to serve these purposes initially and specifically within agricultural sector production with jobs only located in the rural areas. (Abbass, 2014). The implication of this was the destruction of local manufacturing in order to amass labour into agricultural production. As far back in 1914, Colonial Administration tried to discourage trading in favour of labour for export crop production. The one-week trade census conducted by the District Officer, Mr. Gerahty, in 1914, was to encourage 'able-bodied' traders to take up cultivation alongside trading (Gusau District Report, 1914). The attempt to co-opt every able-bodied man into cultivation by the officer failed, as he was informed by the Sarki that a lot of the people were also involved in trading just as they were in farming. This was correct because a one-week trade census conducted, in 1914, under the supervision of Gerahty, revealed that one hundred and seventy traders dealing in various produce such as black cloth (dyed cloth), skins, cotton, livestock and English cloth, among others., traded within the town and also went as far as Bida (Gusau District Report, 1914). This, however, became a departure under colonial domination, as the economy of the area became trapped within the agricultural sector production (especially export crop), while other sectors thriving became either moribund or highly restricted through a deliberate pursuit of colonial tax system, which was fully implemented by the Native Administrative system. To ensure that production along this line was sustained, peasants had to cultivate the preferred export crops, as this was the only pre-condition to access the British currency for the payment of several taxes. Hence, farmers who failed to meet this demand were forced either to work on colonial farms or moved entirely to other occupations, such as construction work, or carriers for colonial officials (Danhausa, 2017). This was the reason why indigenous manufacturing was discouraged by the Colonial Government to concentrate efforts on export crops. Activities around these crops production were, therefore, largely for sale to and, export by foreign imperialist firms. These destroyed local initiatives in cloth production, as the local producers could not compete with the firms, which had the financial muscle to mop up large volume of these crops. The local manufacturers were left with little or no raw materials for production. The railway as one of the major colonial infrastructures also facilitated the process that led to the disarticulation of the economy of the area, as it doubled the momentum for export crop economy and pushed further the abandonment of local initiatives directly linked to the production of these crops. For instance, the rail line passing through Gusau to Kaura Namoda was strategically positioned to serve the three gazette markets, under Gusau District, namely Kwatarkwashi, Chafe and Maru. While it facilitated the evacuation of cotton from these markets to Gusau ginnery, it also on the other hand facilitated its evacuation from the ginnery to Lagos through Zaria for export (Danhausa, 2017). With railway, the capacity to lift larger tonnage was increased. For instance, the Talata Mafara ginnery processed an estimated 1600 bales of cotton in 1928, while the BCGA alone also processed about sixteen thousand (16000) bales from one ginnery in the same year (NAK/SOK/PROF/770, 1913). The rail also afforded European merchants the capacity to flood local markets with foreign goods, which fostered a dependent economy. For instance, there is no record to show the inter-connection between farmers produce and local manufacturing. On the contrary, local manufacturing was starved to service foreign industries. Another way the railway came to impact on the economy was that some markets died naturally due to the absence of a major factor of production – labour, in that sector. This was not unconnected to the high demand of labour in the railway enterprise, which had the highest concentration of workforce in the Northern Provinces, with over seven thousand labourers. One can therefore reasonably align with the argument that the development of transport and communications provided the vent or avenues for producers in colonial Northern Nigeria to establish and expand export crop production (Bonat, 2013). There was no forward and backward linkage that the colonial transport system provided internally in the economy of Gusau. This, accordingly, led to the consolidation of colonial policies, which altered the production pattern and led to the loss of the economic base of the indigenous peasants and co-opted them into the new colonial economic scheme. Another way colonial economy failed to show any consistent pattern was the different policies it put forward just to meet certain exigencies of a particular time. For instance, during the World Wars I and II, effort shifted from the policy around export crop production to food production, whereby peasants, during the war time, cultivated all food produce, required by the Colonial State. But after the war the British discontinued State pressure to produce war time exigencies. Emphasis shifted from production of war time needs to production of exportable crops (Bonat, 2013). For instance, the compulsory grain and groundnut levies in Sokoto Province was one of such major food policies, which forced farmers to produce to meet the food needs of the British army. An example was from 1914 to 1918, when a compulsory groundnut levy popularly called 'Gujjiyar Dole' was imposed on farmers in Sokoto Province (Sifawa, 2015).

It is reported that this policy on groundnut was to ensure adequate supply because its nutritional value was highly beneficial to the British force, (the West African Frontier Forces). The policy was pursued through the Native Administrative system, which ensured that the required quantities of grain levied were delivered at a designated assemblage point. In Gusau District an airfield, filing jirigi was constructed, which gave vent to the policy on food production, where large volume of war efforts was lifted from the grain reserve for the consumption of troops and workers at the mines. Hence, under this new policy, for instance, 3000 tons of millet and sorghum were lifted, during the World War from Gusau District alone (Nadama, 1972). During the Second World War, 1113 tons of beans, 646 tons of millet, 2730 tons of onions and 75 tons of dried fish, representing a total figure of foodstuffs from the entire Province, were railed through Gusau to Zaria (NAK/SOK/PROF Annual Report, 1939).

This development had far reached impact on the economy of Gusau, which was largely driven by agriculture, as farmers were always left confused and with no clear direction on the next line of policy direction. Farmers, thus, lost control over their own spheres of occupational and economic lives. By the end of the Wars, the Colonial Government reverted from its policy, which aided the British army in the war time emergencies and pursued export crop policy. Thus, apart from the fact that colonial agricultural policies failed to enhance indigenous farmers' enterprise, they also failed to lift the economy beyond the immediate interest of the Colonial State. These deliberate policies ensured that advanced processing of raw materials was discouraged, which invariably discouraged the development of local farm technology, hence farmers could neither develop their enterprise beyond their small farm plots nor expand their resources. Such inability to develop the local initiatives is traceable to the failure to develop a harmonious system of agriculture that would have enhanced the establishment of an overlapping economy (Bonat, 2013) This have accounted for the entrenchment of a primary based economy that is highly dependent on financing imports and development programmes in Nigeria.

1.3 Hunger, Famine and Poverty in Gusau District: 1939-45

As observed earlier, both export and food crops – as part of the overall economic policies of the Colonial Government failed to empower peasants, either in terms of having enough food to feed to enhance their well-being or in ensuring accrued surpluses for farmers who would have improved the development of their enterprise as demonstrated below. The paradox in the colonial agricultural economy is visible in the fact that despite millions of tonnages of crops cultivated in the district, experiences of shortages and scarcity abound at different times, all through the period the area was subjugated. The contradiction was that staple food and other crops that were constant features of local initiative became a major challenge that led to food shortages, widespread hunger and poverty in Gusau District. Again, as observed earlier, the way colonial tax policies, among other policies on export crop as well as its compulsory grain levy, especially during the war time periods, were entrenched, became a major factor that crippled the ability of the peasantry to meet food demand. Even though the traditional tax system had existed long before colonization, the way it was forcefully introduced or modified appeared as if no taxation had been in existence previously (Abbas, 2014).

This reveals the enormous effect of the colonial tax system, on not just the agricultural sector, but the entire activities of the peasantry, through which the effective production of the materials needed to support the economy of the capitalist States became further intensified, while that of the colonized people became narrowed. These taxes – jangali, kudin kasa and General tax, were means whereby peasants were squeezed and the rural areas became further entrenched in the colonial scheme of things. As against what was obtained in Britain, the tax system narrowed the ability of peasantry to either raise enough capital to expand their enterprise or to make profit that would have enhanced quality of life. On the contrary the situation in Britain and Europe was not the same. This was while in Europe such system made room for provision for investment, its operation in Nigeria deliberately discouraged investment for the development of the productive forces (Bonat, 2013). For instance, the change in farmers mode of production was largely connected to this tax system, which impinged on the once enterprising nature of cultivation of all manners of crops including household foods required for their daily nourishment. There were several ways this was done. Firstly, as a condition to access tax paid in the preferred currency, farmers were either made to cultivate export crop or surrendered these crops in form of tax, hence the need to increase cultivation of the crops at the expense of food crops, which though cultivated side by side with export crops failed to meet the demand of a growing population and led to food shortages, which resulted in hunger, famine and poverty in Gusau. For instance, food production in 1954 failed to meet consumption rate not because they were not in supply but rather a drop in production affected the volume of supply. Hence the District Head was reported to have lamented to the District Officer, upon his visit to Gusau between 7 and 8 November, 1954, thus:

'Food is short in Gusau market not because of failure of supply, but on account of increase numbers of travellers and parasites (inhabitants from other town) who buy large quantities to take with them' (Gusau District Notebook, 1954).

The situation was that with the population rising almost on a geometric level, stable food production became inadequate because of increasing demand for the cultivation of export crops, as a result of colonial tax policies, which further decimated the cultivation of these staple foods. Furthermore, in spite of the steady increase in the value of exportable crops, lower amount of money to spend per farmer continued to be witnessed between 1900 and 1960 (Nakwada, 2019). The cultivation of large volume of export crops was continually sustained by the people, but the inflow of revenue for them remained very low, notwithstanding the volume of production yearly. The real money was in the hands of the firms and their agents. The imperialist firms dominated exports as agents of the Colonial State, hence all revenue generated through export directly benefited the Colonial State, while farmers suffered impoverishment. Furthermore, notwithstanding these huge funds, the deliberate impoverishment of the Northern Region was revealed in the disparity in wage. For instance, in 1952 labourers, in the cocoa farms in western Nigeria earned higher wages, pegged at seven (7) shillings per day, daily wage in the Niger Agricultural Project in Mokwa was pegged at 1/ 6d (Nakwada, 2019). This led to a clear gap in the purchasing power between these two regions, hence the low standard of living. It is necessary to note that though crisis resulting in food shortages through natural causes was a common feature in Gusau area, as in many areas within the North, an elaborate structure of precaution and response did exist (Watts and Shenton, 2012). It was reported that Gusau town suffered an inferno that destroyed livelihood during the harmattan of 1911, known by various names, such as Wutar Mai Dutsi, Wutar Yardango and Wutar Gusau or Sharau (sweeper), and the subsequent famine which followed 1913 popularly called gellere, left a lot of disasters in the area. However, records shows that the town recovered its prosperity within a short period due to a bumper harvest that immediately followed (Gusau District Report, 1914). This was not unconnected to the development of systems which were adapted to address the perilous conditions, for necessity became the mother of invention. Famines, however, became more pronounced in Northern Nigeria at the early stage of colonial rule, specifically in 1904 and 1905, which claimed thousands of lives in most Provinces, including Sokoto (Bonat, 2013). It was reported that a major factor of the famine was the destruction of farmlands across the entire Northern Province by the invading British force in their bid to achieve conquest and established sovereignty (Nakwada, 2019). This may not be unconnected to the seizure of large volume of food crops seized by the British to feed large numbers of labour taken away from the production sector to work in the public works, transport (carriers), among other labour force in the early part of the 1903 - 1904. A colonial official, Mr. C.W. Orr, was quoted to have observed the following, as early as 1905: The scarcity of food in April, May and June caused me much anxiety, and it was with the utmost difficulty that the garrison and the native staff at Zaria could purchase sufficient food during those months for their wants. The situation was even worst along the main Zungeru to Kano Road, where shortage of food made it extremely difficult for the constant convoys to obtain supplies (SAO Gusau Memo, 1951).

As shortages lingered, so also the famine situation continued unabated and stretched from 1907 to 1920, as contained in the Annual Report of Zaria Province of 1910 to 1920. This perhaps might have led the Senior Agricultural Officer, Gusau to have ordered the District and Village Heads to compel farmers to produce more food than they required in one season in order to have excess from one season to the other – a situation that was difficult to achieve (SAO Gusau Memo, 1951). The challenge was that farmers were pushed to produce cash crops whose prices were on the rise, in order to have more money to meet tax demand, as well as improved their purchasing power, which dwindled over time. The Senior Agricultural Officer had earlier observed the situation and noted the following: The growing tendency on the part of farmers to grow increased acreages of both cotton and groundnuts due to the present high prices paid for these crops, at the expense of food crops created shortfall of the immediate. I think a condition have been created and I rather suspect it has, in which a farmer growing more cotton and groundnuts and too little grain hopes to make up his deficiency by purchasing from some other farmer; the other farmer doing exactly the same. The net result is that everyone is a little short" (SAO Gusau Memo, 1951).

The institution of colonial taxation imposed new restrictions on the ability of the affected societies to cope with food shortages. This was because Colonial Government had little or no interest for large supplies of tax in food stuffs, hence the monetization of tax further necessitated increased production of commodities by the peasantry. Large numbers of peasantry were relocated from cultivating food crop to export crop which resulted in increased cotton and groundnut production (Watt and Shenton, 2012). The resultant effect of this was that when the fall in cash crops from a peak of 23 per ton in 1920 to as low as 2 per ton in 1934 occurred, the ability to pay the high rates became more difficult, which also affected the purchasing power of the peasantry in household needs (Nakwada, 2019). This contrasted with the considerable tonnage of the export crops lifted to Britain in the early 1920s, with the value of cotton purchased by the British Cotton Growers Association amounted to an annual income of £3,367,673 in Sokoto Province, while the tonnage of groundnut stood at 30,000, at £3 per ton and rose to 39,000, between 1936 and 1938 seasons. The contradiction here was that during these periods, it was on record that in the late 1920s epidemic associated with low level or poor nutrition broke out in several areas of the Northern Province, as recorded by Dr. E. Mcculloch of the Department of medical services, in the late 1930s (NAK/SOK/PROF War Time Foodstuff Supply, 1943/44). The point here is that the reorientation of production affected food production that would have met the nutritional demand for its growing population. The condition of shortages persisted into the Second World War of 1939 – 45 and led to widespread hunger, because farmers were further compelled, during the world wars to produce to feed the British army, horses, railway workers and human carriers (Nakwada, 2019). The scaling down on export crop production amidst increased food production was in fulfilment of an order by the British Government, as contained in Gazette No.34 of 1940, was aimed at achieving self-sufficiency in staple food production (NAK/SOK/PROF War Time Foodstuff Supply, 1943/44). As part of such order, villages in each District were demanded to produce and contribute 40lbs of grain each to the central silo. Gusau served as the collection centre for all the entire Eastern District, being its headquarters. However, notwithstanding the effort to maintain reserves, incessant food shortages defied local reserve initiative. According to Bonat the failure to build reserve, was not unconnected to the fact that there was no food to take away as the situation of shortages became annual incidences (Bonat, 2013). One of the situations that exacerbated hunger, and deepened poverty was the 1940 poor harvest, whereby peasants, under the direction of the Chief Commissioner, Northern Provinces, were forced to over store their produce because the Colonial Government was unwilling to release funds for imports of food as a relief from the famine (Bonat, 2013). The fact was that while farmers could not have access to the amount of food required for daily consumption, their produce was under-priced, hence the inability to meet daily obligation. Even in the wake of poor harvest the colonialist continued to demand food for the military, which further took away staple food from the farmers and the local market. Take for instance, the 1941 food production estimate, as captured in a colonial quarterly report, which despite a recorded drop in production, requisition for the military alone, aside other workers, went up, as shown on the table below:

Table 1: Food Production Estimates in Bauchi, Borno, Katsina, Sokoto and Zaria Provinces, 1941

Province	Guinea Corn (Tons)	Millet (Tons)
Sokoto (Gusau)	45,000	122,000
Sokoto (Western)	70,000	24,000
Zaria	104,000	-
Katsina Emirate	58,000	-
Daura Emirate	9,000	15,000
Bauchi	180,000	-
Borno	85,000	95,000

Source: NAK Minagric, 1/13701, Vol.11, Quarterly Report, 1942.

It is important to note that upon requisition of grain by the colonialists, none of the indigenous firms was enlisted to make supply. Delivery was dominated by European commercial firms, in Sokoto Province. UAC and John Halt were appointed and delivered a total of 101 tons of sorghum and 27 tons of millet at four pounds (£4) per ton, in 1941. Furthermore, following a decision taken in 1942 to map out special places, as "requisition areas," based on the recommendation of a colonial official, Mr Sabiston, in charge of food supplies in Zaria, to the Assistant Director of Agriculture in Northern Provinces, food continued to be taken away from the region to meet British interests, (Bonat, 2013). Hence, the implementation of Mr Sabiston's recommendation led to increase in the volume of grain requisition, between May and July 1942, as shown on the table below:

Table 2: Grains Requisition in Northern Nigeria, May – September 1942 (Tons)

Province	Total Requisition	Military Requisitions	Mines Requisitions
Adamawa	314	-	32
Bauchi	187	-	108
Benue	128	-	197
Borno	197	197	-
Kabba	144	-	-
Katsina	881	570	40
Niger	835	709	-
Sokoto	1,208	784	374
Zaria	401	9	388
Totals	**4,295**	**2,269**	**1,139**

Source: NAK Minagric, 1/13701, Vol.11, Quarterly Report, 1942**.**

Prior to this requisition, about 5000 tons of grain were supplied in 1941 with further mop up recorded in adjacent Provinces, such as Katsina and Zaria, where about 914 tons and 404 tons were delivered, respectively. It is important to note that it was these excessive requisitions on food supply that created artificial scarcity in Katsina Province and resulted in the migration of people from Katsina to Gusau. Consequently, upon this migration, serious pressure on food supply in Gusau became severe and aggravated the already dire situation. In June 1942, the Colonial Government took it upon itself to build grain reserves in order to guarantee adequate supplies of three important grains – rice, maize and sorghum, to its mines field which was a major area of interest for the colonialist (Bonat, 2013). Hence, this led to an upward review of quotas to be contributed by each Province. Although farmers put up some resistance due to excessive demand for grain, as noted by Bonat, the policy of requisition continued because, in 1943, the target for the supply of millet alone by Sokoto Province was 2,150 tons, aside the requisition for rice and maize, excluding that of sorghum (Bonat, 2013). The implication of this was that as more food were taken away by the colonialists through intensification of the requisition, shortages on the other hand were being experienced in the markets. The Government failed to consider the fast-growing population of the area, which was growing almost at a geometric level, rising from 14,878 in 1931 to 86,601 in 1952, in Gusau town alone (Adamu, 2001). Consequently, Gusau had to look to other surrounding and neighbouring towns for more foodstuffs. The challenge was that even towns like Zaria, which had traded with Gusau, especially in grain as far back as 1905, were equally faced with shortages (Adamu, 2001). Along with the growing population, requisition continued annually on an upward trajectory. For instance, in the 1944 / 45 season, the quantity of corn alone stored in the rented BCGA store, in Gusau, was 400tons, while requisitions for rice, millet and sorghum were 270, 1,375 and 1,150 respectively (Bonat,2013). This was boosted by the planned construction of one thousand capacity tons of granaries in core grain areas of Zaria, Katsina and Gusau at the cost of £15,000.00 (Bonat, 2013).

One of the major reasons for self-sufficiency in Gusau area, like other places in the Northern Region, was the household system which largely produced food crops, but were later deceived into the production of export crops to make money through the sale of these crops. But the response to the purchase of the crops revealed that it was more of propaganda. This was because the British and the capitalist firms were more interested in profit maximization as they deliberately down priced these industrial crops. This short-changed the farmers in terms of profits that would have been put back into their farming enterprises in order to enhance their business. While the Colonial Government gave space for foreign ginneries to thrive, they on the other hand, banned local initiatives at processing some of the primary produce, such as cotton, groundnut, among others. etc. Food shortages became regular in Northern Nigeria, with most farmers unable to produce enough food to last them throughout the year. The resultant effect of this was malnutrition, which led to outbreak of epidemics in the late 1920s in several areas of the Northern Provinces. The Second World War lasted for six years and in these years, requisition of grain was required. Grain constituted the dominant food of most people in the Northern Region. These were taken forcefully to feed large group of armies, mine workers and other British West African countries.

1.4 CONCLUSION

Colonialism brought with it widespread (as opposed to localized) famines in Northern Nigeria, on account of basically three factors; firstly, the State taxed the people based on their gross output and potential product and not on the net or surplus product after consumption and provision for investment in the subsequent season for farming operations. This took away the availability of foodstuffs needed for the daily upkeep of the population. Secondly, the colonialist policies were inconsistent. Sometimes labour was taken from the agricultural sector and given to the construction sites, other times, they supplemented the labour of convicts with paid labour in the cultivation of export crops especially on experimental farms and prison farms. Thirdly, while the colonialists intensified export crop production through mobilization of labour, food crop production suffered starvation of labour. This was one of the reasons why poverty became widespread as larger number, of farmers were pushed into export crop production. They could not make money because the products were severely undermined by naturally the capitalist nature of profit maximization. Farmers could not expand their businesses due to low prices. The result was widespread poverty and squalor, leading to epidemics in the late 1920s. Food requisition during the Second World War contributed to shortages and famine, as more production was utilized by the Europeans, bureaucracy, mine workers and military. According to Bonat, as referred to earlier, the resultant effects of these widespread shortages were the prevalence of nutrition-based diseases, stunted growth and lowering of mental capacity owing to malnutrition. Colonialism, therefore, was highly expensive and destructive.

REFERENCES

1) Abbass, I.M. ‘The Political Economy of Rural Development in Nigeria: A Study of Rural Zaria, 1960-1995’. ABU Press, 2014
2) Adamu, A. “The Food Economy in Colonial Nigeria: Study of Production and Distribution in Zaria, Metropolis C. 1902 – 1960.” PhD Thesis, Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2001.
3) Bonat, Z.K.A, “Agricultural Development Policy Implementation and Relations Exploitation in Zaria and Katsina Provinces of Northern Nigeria, 1926-1966”, Vol. 2, PhD, History, ABU Zaria.
4) Gusau District Touring Notebook, 1954,
5) Gusau District Notebook, 1954
6) Gusau District Report, 1914
7) Isichei Elizabeth, A History of Nigeria. London, Longman, 1983
8) Mahadi, .A. “The Demography and Standards of Living of Colonial Nigeria”, Seminar Paper: Nigerian Economy and Society since the Berlin Conference, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences & Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research, NISER, Vol.1, 2012.
9) Mahdi, A. “Some Essential Feattures of the Economy of Hausaland”, c. 1500 – 1804, in M.T. Usman and M.A. Rufa’i (eds), Social and Economic History of Northern Nigeria, since 1500 AD, Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2015
10) Mahmmood Mamdani, Class Struggles in Uganda, London, Heinemann, 1976
11) Nadama, A.G, “The Origin and Development of Gusau Town.” Unpublished B.A. Project, Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1972.
12) NAK, SNP17, 685 / 1917, Sokoto Province Annual Report, 1916

13) NAK/ SOK PROF/ 56/ Annual Report, 1935, Gusau Area
14) NAK/ SOK/ PROF/ 15/S. 15/111, 1935 Northern Region
15) Rodney, W. How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Tanzanian Publishing House, Dar es Salaam, 1972.
16) Shenton, R.W. "The Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria", James Currey, London, 1986
17) Shoyebi, A. The Railway as a Factor for British Colonial Domination and Exploitation of Zaria Province 1902 – 1945, MA Dissertation, Department of History University of Jos, 1992.
18) Sifawa, A. A, Contribution of Sokoto Peasant Farmers to British War Efforts, in M.T. Uaman and M.A. Rufai'I, Social and Economic History of Northern Nigeria since 1500AD, Aboki Publisher, Makurdi, 2015.
19) Watts, M and R. Shenton, "Capitalism and Hunger in Northern Nigeria, Vol.2, Seminar Series, Department of History, ABU, Zaria, 2012