THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Overview of British Colonial Policies on Agriculture in Muri Emirate, 1903-1960

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Abstract:
The British colonialists decided to conquer the Muri Emirate area due to the economic potentials of the area, especially in the agricultural sector. The British colonialist were after raw materials for their industries in form of agricultural products available in the Muri Emirate area. For us to understand the effect of British colonial agricultural policies on Muri Emirate what is most important to us is the extent to which pre-colonial agriculture in the Nigerian area met the societal requirements of the people, this is mainly in four areas, provision of food for the population, provision of raw materials for the industries, provision of employment and its contribution to commerce or trade generally. By and large agriculture in pre-colonial Nigeria area could be said to be fully serving the needs of the most important sources for the acquisition of wealth, power and prestige. The closing decades of the 19th century saw the violent military conquest of the Nigerian area and its incorporation into the world capitalist system of Britain. This was the period of the great completion and rivalry among European governments and multinational companies for a share of the world market for their manufactured goods and raw materials for their industries. As such the British conquered Nigeria in order to serve its imperial purpose. The British realised from the start that the economy of the Nigerian area cannot be made subordinate to and serve the British economy unless some policy measures were introduced. This was because in the beginning British products especially textiles faced stiff competition from the local textile products and the local traders or buyers of raw materials especially cotton offered better prices than those offered by British firms. The policies introduced therefore were aimed at subverting and subjugating all the sectors of the Nigerian economy from serving internal requirements to serve the British imperial designs. Hence policies on land, labour, agricultural production and taxation were imposed. The British realised that agriculture was the bedrock of the economy, once agriculture was subjugated to serve British needs, other local industries competing with British ones would simply crumble one way or the other. The most effective of the British colonial policies was colonial taxation, which forced the peasantry all over the country to embark on cultivation of export cash crops in order to pay the colonial taxes. The colonial government also introduced products marketing regulations. This involved the establishment of buying centres for the various cash crops and later the establishment of the Marketing Boards. A transport policy of opening up the interior and linking it to the coast was vigorously presented. This led to the construction of railway so that cash crops produced in the interior could easily be transported to the ports for onward shipment to Britain. In the same line, numerous roads and waterways were opened for the movement of raw materials to the sea ports.

Keywords: *British Colonialism, agricultural policies, taxation, Muri Emirate, Nigeria*

1. Introduction

In 1900, when the British colonial rule was formally declared in Northern Nigeria, various steps were taken by the colonial government, to encourage export production. Agricultural expansion during this period was achieved by a combination of political and economic regulations and can be distinguished by different phases in policy and the responses of the peasant farmers in each period.

By the period 1900-1921, there was the establishment of the department of agriculture in the Northern and Southern Provinces. During this period, the government began to encourage agricultural production. It was due to this encouragement that farmers were able to sell large quantities of agricultural products to the British trading companies. In 1914, when the protectorates of both Southern and Northern Nigeria were amalgamated, the ‘Modern’ agriculture was also entrenched. In 1921, the department of agriculture in the Northern and Southern provinces were merged to form a single department of Agriculture. By 1929, the value and volume of export witnessed a tremendous increase over what was obtainable in 1921.

The establishment of colonial authority was borne out of the need for cheap source of raw materials and the search for lucrative markets for European manufactured goods.[i] A critical look at the nature of the relationship that existed between the European colonialists and the colonised territories bring to fore some fundamental assumptions which seem to have acted as guideline for both the framers and the implementers of colonial economic policies. The colonies were expected to provide raw materials to feed the machines of the imperial power. Secondly, the colonies had to import manufactured goods from the metropolis. These two assumptions divided the Empire into two distinct economic camps, - the colonies and the metropolis. The foundation of this lopsided relationship had been laid during the long period of the Atlantic slave trade which span over a period of almost four Centuries.

2. British Colonialism and Agricultural Production

The colonial government saw to it that agriculture emerged as the most important economic activity. This was due to several factors, of which the most prominent were: the growing demand for raw materials like cotton, rubber, groundnuts, palm oil and palm kernel by British industries; the need to make Britain independent of America for its raw cotton; and the need to generate revenue for the administration of the protectorate/colony.[ii] Given that colonial economic activities were mainly directed towards satisfying these needs, it is not surprising that the focus of agricultural production was on cash crop cultivation.[iii] The state and European firms provided seeds and employed other strategies to encourage owners of small farms to produce mainly groundnuts and cotton.[iv] Slave labour on plantations was instrumental to the expansion of groundnut production in Muri Emirate.

However, there were three main interests involved in the production and supply of cash crops. These were the Metropolitan interest which served as the main consumer of the export crops; the large trading companies which organised the collection and purchase and the export of the cash crops through their accredited agents; and the colonial State whose interest was to increase its revenue from taxation in order to meet the cost of administration and contribute to imperial investment fund. The colonial authority was motivated by the need to generate revenue from within to meet British industrial raw material needs and expand the market for British manufacturers.[v] Throughout the colonial period therefore, the industrial interests, the trading companies, and the colonial State combined to regulate the quality and quantity of the agricultural cash crops through the establishment of pricing and marketing arrangements.[vi] Most of the encouragements given to farmers were however centred on the development of cash crops at the expense of food crops. O.T Faulkner, the Director of the department of Agriculture admitted this fact when he said "……in reviewing the appearance of work on which the department has embarked, it may appear that it deals too largely with products which are or might be exported… but it must be remembered that it is much easier for us to help the farmer to take advantage of the changed conditions resulting from opening to him of the world's market, than to teach him how to improve his method of growing his food".[vii]

Although the immediate production of export crops remained in the hands of the peasant farmers, it was highly influenced by state policy. There were series of by-laws and agricultural regulations and ordinances, credit and extension schemes which tied the producers more closely to particular kinds of production.[viii] The colonial authority created conditions that made it inevitable for the peasant farmers to produce for the market, especially when prices were high. The colonial government also implemented structural reforms and gave material assistance such as improved seedlings, extension services and loan facilities to farmers. The structural reform was more noticeable in their promoting the cultivation of a number of exportable crops to meet the raw material needs of the British government.

With the intervention of the colonial government, the agricultural sector in Northern Nigeria occurred in response to changing political, social and economic conditions. A common interpretation of the change was that state intervention became the strongest factor in inducing agricultural development.[ix] Although the colonial state did not adopt a radical transformation of the prevailing conditions of production, it began to employ a series of political and economic instruments to induce producers to expand their output of agricultural commodities. Those strategies employed by the colonial state included forced cultivation, imposition of taxation and expanded operations by European Merchant firms. Also, Marketing Boards with their controlled commodity marketing orientation later became the major tools for harmonising agrarian economic pattern.[x] The colonial government in the bid to improve upon the efficiency of the farmer's production and its capacity to meet market demands adopted various interventionist programs that would enhance increased production. These among others include: Nursery and seedling distribution; Agricultural Education; Cooperative farming society; Establishment of Provincial farm centres; and the provision of credit facilities. The colonial government, having realised the potentialities of agriculture to generating income earning, made frantic effort at inducing agricultural production. This was not only due to the importance of agriculture towards economic development of the colonial state, but the fact that the industrial sustainability of the Metropolis depended largely on the cash crop exported from the colony made it imperative on their part to embark on massive production drive.

British colonial administration ordinance of 1910 prohibited foreign investment in agriculture and mining and this made Nigeria and other parts of West Africa escape much of the agony of Tanzania, and other parts of Southern, Eastern and Central Africa whose cash agriculture was almost monopolized by the White settlers.[xi] According to Olaniyan, although in West Africa "efforts were made to commercialize agriculture",[xii] however, "no wide-spread encouragement was given to plantation agriculture and thus, no mechanization"[xiii]

The point must however be emphasized, that the colonialists' policy self-restraint in terms of going into direct mechanized farming did not mean that they completely shied away from it. They did not. The Colonial Development Acts of 1929 and 1940 provided for the stimulation of agricultural activities in the colonies. This led to the establishment of regional research centers by the British governments in their colonies. These centers established plantations for the purpose of demonstrating modern system of agriculture to the colonized peasantry, similar to the ones talked about by the theorists of the "enclave model". Most of these demonstration farms were mechanized, such as the Shendam, Jemaa, Borno and Kontagora schemes of Northern Nigeria, as well as the Upper Ogun Project in the South West of Nigeria. There were also cases where in spite of the 1910 Ordinance, the colonialists went into full-scale mechanized agriculture. Perhaps, the most outstanding instance was the Niger Agricultural Project. The dream of the designers was that "by introducing mechanical ploughing, the farmers would increase productivity and export would expand".[xiv] However, this scheme failed just like the Tanzanian groundnut scheme.[xv]

3. Overview of the Crops Cultivated in the Muri Emirate

The colonial state was found to be fattening cattle as early as 1911 who were being shipped to Lagos and other parts of Southern Nigeria. This was however, on experimental purposes as most of the cattle sold in the Southern part of Nigeria were from the Fulani nomads. The experiment however was later expanded. The colonialist also embarked of the planting of fodder grass to feed the cattle within the Muri Emirate which was dotted with many marshland (fadama). The colonialists recognized the importance of cattle in this area saying that "cattle are our one undoubtedly promising asset and many marshland grazing grounds are reported to be available".[xvi]

Fattening of slaughter cattle for the Lokoja and other down-river markets would prove profitable on a scale limited only by the facilities of River transport.[xvii]

Tobacco is limited to the alluvial deposits on the River banks, refuse heaps, and the sites of former cattle pans. The average natural soil is fertile enough to sustain it.[xviii]

Fibre in form of Rama or jute was one of the important plant in the Muri Emirate area. Reports by the colonial state on the local cultivation and preparation of Rama and the local light sandy soil is suited for the plant.[xix]

The output of sheanuts is very considerable, and the trade brisk; according to a colonial report on Muri Emirate.

The report given by the colonial state on the production of gum reads thus: Gum hardly repays collection at present prices. Increased taxation may stimulate the output. The supply is not as yet limited.[xx]

Writing on rice production the colonialist has this to say: Rice has some future within West Africa. The cultivation is increasing. Large areas remain for exploitation. The husking process is of the crudest, and has been improved upon in such countries as Egypt and India. The grain of the dark variety is very bulky.[xxi]

The cultivation and improvement of indigenous products for export such as: rubber, shea nuts, gum, rice, onions, maize, yams, peppers, kolas, fibres, tobacco, timber, etc.[xxii]

Tons of gum, shea nuts are growing wild and are being exploited by the people of Muri Emirate to a small extent. The reason for a larger collection not being made is the low price offered by the only trading firm represented. Rice, onions, yams, pepper, tobacco are grown for the local markets in insufficient quantities: any improvement on the local varieties would be very greatly received.[xxiii]

The Mumuye people have wide variety of occupation and crafts. These occupations and crafts were greatly determined by the vegetation and climate of their environments.[xxiv] Under farming the Mumuye farm the following crops: yams, guinea corn (gauri), maize, sweet potatoes, millet, beans, pumpkin, groundnuts, Bambara nuts, animal rearing and poultry, rice, okro and roselle and tobacco.

Under crafts you have pottery, cloths weaving baskets ropes, blacksmith: Hoes, Axes, knives, sickles, spears, arrows bar money spinning, hunting.[xxv]

Farming is an important occupation of the people of Muri Emirate especially the Mumuye who cultivate the following crops:

Yam is one of the major crops grown by the Mumuye and it now stands as the symbol of Mumuye in agriculture. It is mainly grown by men. The crop is planted in November through February. It can also be planted in April or May and heaps of earth must be raised in form of ridges about three to four feet high. The harvest time starts in July through December.[xxvi]

Guinea corn (sorghum) is a highly valued cereal crop for its multi-purpose use and is grown by both men and women. The cultivation and planting which starts in April through July, depends on the nature of soil fertility. The grains are planted on the cultivated land and are mixed with millet before planting takes place. All the work done on the guinea corn farm is through communal labour.

Maize is planted in the month of May. The crop is planted on flat land as well as ridges. The crop is ready for harvest after seventy to ninety days from the time of planting. The crop is grown throughout the Muri Emirate.

Groundnut is grown for local consumption and for commercial purposes. The suitable time for planting the crop is May through June. The crop produces more if planted on ridges rather than on the flat ground. The will be ready for harvest after four or five months. The people of Muri organized themselves in communities, so that the farm activities can be done through communal labour.[xxvii] Groundnut is a leguminous crop ground in Muri Emirate for export to Europe as a source of oil for the machine lubrication.

Beans is also a leguminous crop cultivated in the Muri Emirate. The crop has no farm of its own and is always planted on guinea corn, groundnuts and yam farms. Only women plant them though men have taken interest in growing the crop recently.[xxviii] Beans are usually planted in July through August, but some farmers plant the crop as early as May, and the leaves of those planted in May are used for family meals. Harvest commences in November through December to avoid insect damage.[xxix]

Sweet potatoes are widely grown in the Muri Emirate. Sweet potatoes are produced by men only. The cuttings are transplanted in July and August on ridges and do not take long to mature. Harvest starts in September. Raising of the ridges is done through communal labour.

Bambara nuts is grown by women only. In the past, the crop was grown in small quantity, but from the nineteen seventies the crop has gained tremendous market. Men have taken to the production of the crop. The crop is easy to grow, the nuts are planted on ridges, and takes two to three months to mature. Planting is done late June through July and the farm is weeded only once. Harvest time starts late September through November.[xxx]

Rice is another important crop grown within the Muri Emirate area. Men have taken the lead in growing rice in large quantity for commercial purpose. The crop can only be planted in swampy areas which are many in the Muri Emirate. Growing rice is where modern technique is practiced. People use tractors to plough the land and also harrow the land before planting the seeds. Modern fertilizer is also used on the rice farm. The period of planting depends on the variety of the rice. Some are planted in June; some varieties mature in three months while some mature in four or five months. The improved, imported varieties mature in three months from the time of planting and give high yield.[xxxi] The labour is tedious and the farm needs constant weeding. Harvest starts in September with women doing most of the work on the rice farm during the harvesting time.

Tobacco farming is also practiced in the Muri Emirate. Tobacco is grown for both local consumption and commercial purpose.
Blacksmith is an industry where things like hoes, axes, knives, spears, arrows, bar money are manufactured. In the olden days, the iron ore was washed down from the hills and the sand is collected and smelted in a long clay pipe into which charcoal was thrown alternately. When the metal is collected from the furnace, it is again heated and then taken to the furnace.[xxxii]
Weaving and spinning had been in practice for a long time among the people of Muri Emirate. Even today, you find people in some communities in Muri Emirate spinning and weaving clothes.[xxxiii] Among the Mumuye the weaving (laka or laki) is used for burial, marriage and clothes. Cotton grown locally is used to spin threads for weaving materials. The weaved materials are dyed locally in different colours: yellow, black and brown.[xxxiv] To spin cotton into thread, people use a long stick of about 2ft. with mud attached to the stick at the lower end of it.[xxxv]

4. British Colonial Policy on Land

In 1900, Northern Nigeria was proclaimed as a British colony. Land was classified as crown land held in trust by the colonial governor for the Queen of England. In 1900, the Land Proclamation Ordinance was enacted by Lord Lugard. The legislation disregarded the principles of native law and custom and provided that title to land can only be acquired through the High Commissioner. The Land Proclamation Ordinance was enacted to kill the institution of family and communal land ownership by facilitating the acquisition of title to land through the High Commissioner.[xxxvi]
In 1908, the British promulgated the Land and Native Rights Proclamation which vested ownership of land in the government. However, on public lands, there was little disturbance of indigenous land tenure practices. By 1916, the Land and Native Rights Ordinance imposed stricter government control over crown land such that certificates of land occupation required the consent of the relevant state governor.[xxxvii]
A unique array of customary land tenure practices had evolved in Nigeria which to some extent can be defined according to region and historical influences. The experience of Nigerians living in the arid savannah terrain of the north is different from that of the south. The spread of Islam in the Sahel reinforced individual land rights, altering more communal patterns of land tenure in the northern region. Colonialism’s stronghold in the north and evolution of the market economy further contributed to more individualized customary tenure regimes.[xxxviii] Community-based tenure regimes in Nigeria traditionally discouraged land alienation and land sales were not practiced. European colonialism, however, made land sales and leasehold more familiar transactions.
Ninety percent of Nigeria’s agricultural output is produced by smallholders. However, factors such as fragile tenure security, low producer prices, and declining soil fertility threaten agricultural production. With agricultural policy focused on cash-crop production, food-crop production has lagged far behind, often experiencing negative growth rates. Thus, Nigeria has had to import a growing share of its domestic food supply. As well, the expansion of the market economy into rural areas and cash rents for land have forced farmers to sell an increasing share of their crops to the market to meet cash demands. Having to contend with a decline in subsistence production, a growing number of cash demands, and inflation, farmers’ food security is jeopardized.[xxxix]
The potential of agriculture for propelling Nigeria’s economic development was recognized by the colonial government when policies were put in place to encourage output growth and to extract the surpluses there from.[xl] The predominant theme of development in this period was the surplus extraction philosophy or policy whereby immense products were generated from the rural areas to satisfy the demand for raw materials in the metropolitan Britain.[xli] This early interest of the extraction policy was on forest resources and agricultural exports like cocoa, coffee, rubber, groundnut, oil palm etc.
Nigerian agricultural policy was part of the so called Nigerian Land Policy of the nineteenth century in which the British wanted agriculture carried on in the traditional forms of African land tenure without mechanization or plantations.[xlii] Sir Hugh Clifford, the British consul in Southern Nigeria at the time, asserted that the reason for this was the economic and social upheavals connected with plantation agriculture that had occurred in East Africa.[xliii]
In Clifford’s view African peasant agriculture was incomparably cheaper than European in terms of suitability to natural conditions and the system of labour input.[xliv] His stand on land acquisition was buttressed by the experience of Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast where land alienation was opposed.[xlv] The governor clarified the colonial policy in 1926: “Great Britain is a manufacturing country which depends very largely for its raw products upon other countries and largely upon tropical countries. It is important that the tropical countries within the British Empire should produce these production ever-increasing quantities of the highest quality. It is important that Nigeria should be able to produce, and not Nigeria (only) but other colonies, the maximum of raw materials.”[xlvi]
British policy was therefore the creation of a money economy in which commercial agricultural export was the key factor. Its prosecution and expansion would rest on the shoulders of the native peasantry. To achieve this, the people would be educated in scientific and economic methods of agriculture, and in the importation and distribution of agricultural implements of a superior type to those locally manufactured.[xlvii]
The British administration evolved a clean division of functions from the start. While African peasants grew agricultural products, European trading companies processed and marketed them, and the administration would “prepare and maintain the conditions-political, moral and material-upon which the success or failure of such enterprises in a very large measure depends.”[xlviii]
Although the colonial administration in Nigeria had reserved the country’s trade and commerce British private companies, the latter were not allowed to enjoy their monopoly uncontested. Germany proved to be a stiff competitor. The effect of this competition is seen in fluctuations in agricultural exports. For example, Britain's share of palm products in the international trade fell from 65 percent in 1922 to 31 percent in 1937. Cocoa rose from 5 percent in 1921 to 19 percent in 1937, and groundnuts from 4 percent in 1923 to 24 percent in 1933. Great Britain's share in Nigerian exports amounted to 67 percent in 1921-1923, but declined in 1923-1938. It was 55

percent in 1926, and 44.2 percent in 1929; 37 percent in l931 and 51 percent in 1938. On the other hand, German trade showed a rising trend: 7.6 percent in 192l; 8.5 percent in l922; 12 percent in 1923; 19.4 percent in 1929, and 17.4 percent in 1938.[xlix]

Land is essential for every human activity on earth as it is the source of all material wealth. In order to regulate the ownership, use and development of land and land resources, nations the world over have instituted land ownership systems aimed at consistent balancing of the interests of the government, the land-owning class and the landless class.[l] The land system of a given society is the manner in which land is owned and possessed. It is an institutional framework within which decisions are taken about the use of land, embodying that legal or customary arrangement whereby individuals or groups or organizations gain access to economic and social opportunities through land.[li] The land system is also constituted by the rules and procedures which govern the right and responsibilities of both individuals and groups in the acquisition, use and control of land.[lii]

The predominant land tenure system in Nigeria during the pre-colonial period was the customary land tenancy where land holdings were owned by villages, towns, communities and families. Land was deemed not owned by individuals but by communities and families in trust for all the family members.[liii] The legal estate under customary land tenancy is vested in the family or community as a unit. During this period, land belonged to the community or a vast family of which many are dead, few are living and countless members yet unborn. Thus, individuals had no such interest as the fee simple absolute in possession as the actual ownership of land or absolute interest was vested in the community itself. Interests or rights of individuals in community land were derivative interests.

The land ownership structure in Nigeria under colonial rule was designed to suit the motives of the British imperialists. As a major factor of production, land was inevitably required by the colonial authorities to achieve their economic, social, and political objectives. The British merchants who came to the country purely on economic motive required land to establish their merchandise. The National African Company and its successor, the Royal Niger Company required land to expand its business in Nigeria. The colonial governors also required land for public purposes. Because land ownership in pre-colonial Nigeria was communal, the colonial authorities initiated laws and regulations governing land ownership, land use and development among others to enable them acquire and convey titles to land for the purposes of commerce and governance. Principal among these legislations were the Treaty of Cession (1861), Land Proclamation Ordinance (1900), Land and Native Rights Act (1916), Niger Lands Transfer Act (1916), Public lands Acquisition Act (1917), Native lands Acquisition Act (1917), State Lands Act (1918) and Town and Country planning Act (1947). The Treaty of Cession of 1861 became the principal of all the treaties signed by the colonialists with traditional chiefs in Nigeria. The legal effect of the cession of 1861 was that the root title of the land comprised in the Treaty was passed to the British crown.

The Land and Native Rights Act was enacted in 1916 to vest in the colonial Governor all rights over all native lands in Northern Nigeria. Sections 3 and 4 of the Act provided as follows: -

“(3) All native lands and right over the same are hereby declared to be under the control and subject to the disposition of the Governor, and shall be held and administered for the use and common benefit of the natives of Northern Nigeria and no title to the occupation and use of any such lands shall be valid without the consent of the Governor.

(4) The Governor, in exercise of the powers conferred upon him by his Proclamation with respect to any land, shall have regard to the native laws and customs existing in the district’ in which such land is situated”.

Also in 1916, the Niger Lands Transfer Act was enacted. This law transferred the rights of the then Royal Niger Company in lands acquired by it and vested such rights in the British crown. The major legal effect of the Act was that lands held by the company based on treaties and agreements made with the people of Nigeria were transferred to the colonial government, thereby creating some landownership problems for the people.

In 1917, the Public Lands Acquisition Act was enacted to empower the colonial Governor to acquire lands when required for public purposes. This law covered the then colony and protectorate of Nigeria. It empowered the colonial government to compulsorily acquire land whether occupied or unoccupied and provided for non-payment of compensation if unoccupied lands were acquired.

Also in 1917, the Native Lands Acquisition Act was enacted to regulate the acquisition of land by aliens from the people of the southern provinces of Nigeria. It provided in section 3 as follows: -

“3(a) No alien shall acquire any interest or right in or over any lands within the protectorate from a native, except under an instrument which has received the approval in writing of the Governor,

(b) Any instrument which has not received the approval of the Governor as required by this section shall be null and void.” Also, section 3A provided as follows: -

“3A Where any interest or right in or over any land has been acquired by an alien from a native with the approval in writing of the Governor as provided for in Section 3, such interest or right shall not: -

(a) Be transferred to any other alien without the approval in writing of the Governor. Section 4 of the Act provided that it shall be unlawful for any alien or for any person claiming to be an alien to occupy any land belonging to a “native” unless the right of the alien to occupy or authorize the occupation of the land is evidenced by an instrument which has received the approval of the Governor (or his delegate) in writing. Any default is punishable by fine or imprisonment or both. An alien was defined in section 2 of the Act as “any person who is not a native of Nigeria”. The Native Land Acquisition Act 1917 had, since the advent of the federal system of government in Nigeria, been replaced by the Native Land Acquisition Law of 1952 in the Western and Mid- Western states and by the Acquisition of Land by Aliens Law of 1956 in the Eastern states.[liv]

In addition, the State Lands Act was promulgated in 1918 to regulate the use, occupation and development of crown (state) lands in which the whole public have an interest. Under section 2 of the Act, “State land’ means all public lands in the Federation which are for the time being vested in the Governor – General (at that time) on behalf or for the benefit of the state as the case may be, and all lands heretofore held or hereafter acquired by any authority of the federation for any public purpose or otherwise for such benefit, as well as land so acquired under any Act of parliament, but does not include lands which although acquired and so held are subject to the Lands and Native Rights Act. The Act restricted the sub-lease of occupiers of state lands in the country.

In 1946, the Town and Country Planning Act was enacted as a law of general application. The law came into force on 28th March, 1946. It was a law enacted to make provision for the re-planning, improvement and development of the different parts of Nigeria. The law provided for the establishment of planning Authorities to regulate land use, planning schemes and development control. However, while these laws were enacted to make lands available for use by the colonial government, they were implemented to eliminate the pre-colonial land tenural system in the country and facilitate private ownership of land, particularly in Southern Nigeria. Thus, with the advent of colonial rule, commerce and commercialization, it had become possible for individuals to own private land and deal with such land liberally[lv] and subsequently, land began to be sold, leased or mortgaged to individuals or groups.[lvi] Elias summarized the land ownership system in Nigeria during the colonial rule and reported that: -

"in the result, therefore, the Government (the colonial government) has pursued a policy of restricting alienation of land in the former Southern provinces only to dealings among the people themselves, while frowning upon any out- and- out transfer to aliens. No claim to absolute ownership has been made, nor has any rigid distinction been drawn between crown and other lands except, perhaps that whereas in the case of certain lands taken over from the Royal Niger Company no compensation to any occupier will be paid for their appropriation to public purposes, compensation is as a rule paid in the case of all other lands within the former Southern provinces. This contrast markedly with the Northern policy of paying only for unexhausted improvement by native occupiers and not for the acquisition of the land itself. A corollary of this has been that while in the North the Government has formally laid down the policy that no freehold title can exist in land but only a right of occupancy, there has been a benevolent neutrality on the part of the Government with respect to the form which titles to land in the former southern provinces should take".[lvii]

As an agrarian society, the primary occupation of the people of Northern Nigeria is farming in which land played a vital role, hence the need to examine the tenure system as it was being practised in the pre-colonial period. Land tenure system regulates the duration of ownership and utilisation of land.[lviii] It is also the customary system by which people can own, use, and dispose of land in any given society. Perhaps, the most important feature of agriculture in the region during the pre- colonial period was the land tenure system. This law embodied those legal and contractual or customary arrangements whereby people engaged in farming gain access to productive opportunities on land.[lix] It constitutes the rules and procedures governing the rights, duties, liberties and exposure of individual and groups in the use and control over the basic resources of land and water.[lx] While the laws varied from one state to the other, they however had some common features. Firstly, land was jointly owned though it was being administered by the community leaders or rulers. Secondly, all descent groups in a community had right to land and such right remained inviolate except in cases of external conquest. Therefore, an individual possessed right to land for any legitimate economic activity only through membership of a descent group.

5. Colonial Labour Policy and Agricultural Development

There were essentially four forms of labour in the area before the jihad and these continued to be the dominant forms even thereafter. These were the labour provided by the individual producer and his primary family; free community or cooperative labour; the servile labour provided by slaves; and the semi-hired type of labour found in the antimony and salt mines. In terms of regular daily production, the labour of the individual producer and that of the primary family were the dominant forms of labour. Next to them was the free communal or cooperative labour.[lxi]

The expansion of larger scale commercial agriculture was marked in some areas by the advent of, or an increase in, wage labour. In addition to the minority who engaged in wage labour, large farm owners depended mainly on the labour of slaves and pawns. The use of pawn and slave labour was widespread in most polities where class differentiation had occurred. Some fulltime traders, without time to engage in farming, purchased slaves to work on their farms. However, it was predominantly political office holders, members of titled associations, or military warlords, who were able to exploit their offices to acquire slaves as both tribute and booty, who held large numbers of agricultural slaves.[lxii] These political office holders had the additional advantage of having access to the unpaid labour of their subjects and clients to work on their farms in the form of rumde (Fulfulde), gayya (Hausa), and so on. This enabled them to acquire wealth that could be used to acquire the land and labour necessary to further increase production.[lxiii]

Because no European plantation agriculture developed in Nigeria, wage policy evolved very differently. The existence of a surplus of unskilled labour acted as a deterrent to labour turnover among those who held unskilled jobs; so, the official concern with 'labour stability' was largely absent. From the outset, wage policy restricted itself to enforcing wage restraint. Throughout both colonial rule and self-government, the Government played almost exclusively a passive role; except for a few inoperative wage councils, no minimum wage legislation has ever been extended to the private sector.[lxiv]

The Hunt report of 1934 marked the first systematic formulation of official wage policy for government labourers. The committee's terms of reference stated that wages should be sufficient 'to maintain a reasonable standard of living for a labourer'.

In the first place, Nigeria was divided into zones, wages in each being based on local costs of living. Secondly, the committee declared unambiguously, 'no account is taken of the cost of maintaining a labourer's wife and children'.[lxv] A wage award for unskilled government workers in 1937 reiterated this policy, basing wage rises on increases in local living costs.[lxvi] With subtle changes, this policy of regionally based wage rates, adjusted according to changes in the cost of living, has endured to the present.

Wartime prices led to the commissioning of the Bridges Committee to make a special review of wages, and to base its recommendations on 'any increase in the cost of living which may have occurred since the outbreak of war'.[lxvii] Meanwhile, two interim wage increases were granted to government workers, in I941 and I942, which together raised by 50 per cent the starting rates of pay for unskilled workers in Lagos. These officially resulted in no increase in real wages, but merely made up for a rise in living costs.[lxviii]

The Report of the Cost of Living Committee in I942 is particularly interesting because it made an abortive attempt to change the basis of wage policy. While the Hunt report had set the precedent of measuring how much workers actually paid for food, Bridges posited a 'model' diet and sought to estimate its costs. The colonial Government accepted the Bridges wage of 2s per day for unskilled labour in Lagos, but simply on the grounds of rises in the cost of living at the former standard. The proposed basis of calculation was not accepted.[lxix] The Government also maintained its passive role vis-a-vis the private sector by endorsing, but providing no enforcement machinery for, the recommendation that the new wage rate be made the statutory minimum.

Immediately after the war, the Tudor-Davies Inquiry into the Cost of Living in Nigeria once more used increases in the existing cost of living as the basis for its wage recommendations.[lxx] In its criticism of the 'model' diet, the I946 Tudor-Davies report warned that undue emphasis on social considerations in wage policy might generate gross inequities in the rural-urban wage structure.

They summed up well the difficulties of achieving an equitable balance of policy:

It is...incumbent upon the commission to strike the mean, i.e. to close the gap between the too progressive and the too primitive, and in so doing, to effect as little harm, but as much good, as possible to either section, and at the same time to contribute to the well-being of the whole.[lxxi]

This view, repeated in many subsequent Nigerian wage awards, is diametrically opposed to the policy of the I950s and early I960s. The I947 Miller Report on Unestablished and Daily Rated Government Servants carried this policy of narrowing rural-urban differentials further by changing the regional basis of Nigeria's wage structure. Instead of using local living costs, geographical differentials were interpreted in terms of the local markets for labour. The report sought to set local wage rates for government unskilled labourers at the approximate level of non-wage incomes.[lxxii] As one might suspect, this policy resulted in little increase in wages (and wage cuts in two urban areas).

The colonial regime adhered to this local-income/cost-of-living policy in the wage adjustments for government workers in I950-1 and I952. During these years, Nigeria briefly experimented with joint employer worker wage committees, known as Whitley Councils. The Government's dual role as mediator and employer created a conflict of interest that rendered the experiment a failure.[lxxiii]

Regionalisation and the approach to African rule under the federal constitution of 1954 complicated the development of wage policy, since labour matters became 'concurrent' subjects- meaning that they fell under the authority of the new Regional Governments as well as the Federal Government in Lagos.

While the Western and Eastern Regional Governments in I954 adopted uniform regional rates for their employees, the Federal Government continued its previous policy. The Hanbury arbitration award of I955 rejected government workers' arguments that wages should be based on 'minimum living standards' and reiterated that the basis of regional rates remained local income levels. It reminded them that the Miller committee of 1947 had not based its regional rates on any cost of living measure, and explicitly rejected the policy of 'high wages', warning the Government against policies which might lead to the creation of 'a privileged class of federal wage earners'.[lxxiv]

The I959 Mbanefo Review of Salaries and Wages again applied the local-income/cost-of-living principles.[lxxv] The Western Region of Nigeria disassociated itself from the report, commissioning its own review body, which recommended wage rates for regional employees considerably above the Mbanefo levels. Nevertheless, it maintained the basic federal policy arguments:

The Government, dependent as it is on such sources of finance [agricultural taxation], cannot afford to pay its public servants salaries and wages unrelated to the standard of living of the public at large who are the real producers of its revenue.[lxxvi]

To sum up, the Nigerian situation was one of labour surplus, which made labour turnover a minor problem; and, in the absence of a white settler population to press for coercive labour controls, wage policy restricted itself to the public sector. The Government played primarily a passive role vis-a-vis the private sector, and sought to enforce wage restraint on its own employees. From I934 onwards, wage policy was based on actual regional costs of living, and from I945 an additional policy objective was to avoid widening rural-urban income differentials.

When two wage commissions - Bridges in 1942, and Morgan in 1964- sought to inject 'minimum living standard' considerations into wage policy, these were unambiguously rejected by the Government. Even these suggestions were based on different arguments from those put forward in East Africa: the aim was not to aid in developing a stable labour force, but to achieve social equity.

The bulk of the population do not work for wages, being cultivators farming their own ground, traders or craftsmen working for themselves and their own profit. Even the craftsmen, except in the larger cities, have their own farms which provide them with their main foodstuffs, the sums which they earn from their occupations being largely devoted to the purchase of utensils, clothes, a few additional foodstuffs which they cannot as a rule grow themselves, and to the payment of their taxes. In the North, the chief articles are millets, guinea-corn, cassava, beans, groundnut oil, and pepper; the quantity of meat consumed is greater while that of fish is less.[lxxvii]

Unskilled labour may be divided roughly into three classes: —

(a) Agricultural labour employed by local farmers in the villages.

(6) Casual labour hired by the day for porterage, etc.

(c) Regular labour paid at daily or monthly rates for work on roads, plantations, trading beaches, etc.

Class (a) is distinguished by the fact that the wage is usually paid partly in kind, food for the midday meal being supplied by the employer. With the continued improvement in trade, and the resulting increase in the cost of living, a general increase in the wages of this class of labour has taken place in all districts. The wage varies from 2d. a day with, a midday meal in the Cameroons to 6d. a day in the Abeokuta Province. This class does not, of course, consist of professional labourers except in so far as the people of Nigeria are by nature professional farmers. All such labourers may be assumed to have homes and farms of their own and to offer themselves for employment in their neighbours' farms only in their spare time. The same applies to labourers employed locally for building and thatching houses and for harvesting palm produce. The general level of wages for labour of this class has shown little change during the year.

Class (b) is to be found both in the towns and in outlying villages and the wages vary between 5d. and 1s. for ordinary casual labour. Carriers are engaged at rates varying from fd to l^d. a mile.

The daily wages paid to Class (a) vary considerably according to the nature of the work. The labour wage rate for Government employ varies between 5 (1. and Is. 3d., whilst plantation labour varies between 3d. plus rations and Is. 3d. In the Northern Provinces wages paid to unskilled labour vary as a rule from four pence to nine pence a day. In some places labour is readily obtainable at three pence a day or even less. Mines labour on the goldfields is usually paid on the tribute system, and, owing to competition among the various mines, the rates have been generally on the increase.

In colonial Northern Nigeria, as in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, the Public Works Department (PWD) was responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads and railroads. Since its inception, this department was also charged with "the maintenance of public buildings and roads and the extension of electric lighting, telegraphs, piers, public transport, among other things".[lxxviii] To carry out its diverse responsibilities, the PWD relied partly on wage labour. Because of labour shortages and the desire to lower the cost of work, the Department was also compelled to resort to the forced labour of slaves and convicts.[lxxix]

Colonial administrators recorded an example of the use of convict labourers by the PWD in Yola Province in 1906.[lxxx] In that year, a foreman in charge of related government projects could not find local labour to hire. Moreover, he was unable to check the flight of non-convicts who were conscripted into forced labour. To address these challenges, the foreman suggested they import fresh batches of labour. It was in part this foreman's request for more labourers and in part the recognition that convicts were a cost-effective labour pool, while imported labour "would add greatly to the cost of work", that caused convict labourers to be employed in the execution of the PWD project in Yola Province.[lxxxi] It is equally important to stress that, according to one telegraph, once convict labourers were placed at the disposal of the PWD, the "necessity to import labour" no longer existed.[lxxxii]

Britain's main interest in Northern Nigeria during the colonial era was to make the region an economic appendage of Britain and Europe. To secure this interest, the British initiated infrastructure projects and encouraged agricultural production using cheap convict labour. The availability of such low-cost labour, and the resulting decrease of the cost of infrastructure and agricultural projects, made it possible for the colonial administration to increase the scale of such undertakings. Consequently, the availability of convict labour strengthened European hegemony.[lxxxiii]

6. Colonial Transport Policy and Agricultural Development

The colonial administrators saw an effective transport system as an indispensable accessory to the task of subordinating the economy of Northern Nigeria and making it serve the needs of Europe. Soon after gaining control, the British began the construction of roads and railroads not only to connect various parts of Northern Nigeria to each other, but also to connect Northern Nigeria in general to Southern Nigeria and its Atlantic ports.[lxxxiv] This infrastructure made it possible to move cash crops easily and relatively inexpensively to the various ports located along the Nigerian Atlantic coast. It also enabled the colonial government to move troops and other resources easily to various parts of Northern Nigeria in order to reinforce its control over the peoples of this region. Finally, a good transport system meant that imports from Europe, such as European fruits, vegetables and manufactured goods, could be distributed within Northern Nigeria at a relatively fast pace and at relatively low prices.[lxxxv]

Transport infrastructure is a critical factor at every sector and stage of development. An efficient transport system provides economic and social opportunities and benefits, results in positive multiplier effects such as better accessibility to markets, employment and additional investments. It also reduces costs in many aspects of the economy of a country. This is especially so in the agricultural sector, which relies mostly on transport for its survival and growth. Efficient agricultural production requires an equally efficient mode of transport. It was in the light of this that the British colonial authorities in Nigeria established and nurtured a network of modern transport systems. Notable among these new forms of transport infrastructure was a road and rail networks, which had a considerable impact on the development, movement and export of agricultural products. The basic transport infrastructure investment by the colonial state opened up the regions and interiors of Nigeria for the growth of commercial agriculture. It also ensured effective exploitation and efficient movement of the products. It resulted in relative development in the various rural regions, although this was only a by-product of the main motive of the investment by the colonial state – its own interest.

With the formal establishment of British rule, the colonial authority in Northern Nigeria—under Frederick Lugard, the High Commissioner (1900–1906)—focused on improving the existing transport system with the aim of expanding the economy. The subsistence society over which Lugard superintended had a problem with overland transport.[lxxxvi] At the time of the conquest, transport and communication were traditionally based, and pre-colonial Northern Nigeria had not developed wheeled transport. The existing transport was based on human and animal transport over narrow footpaths. This traditional transportation was considered inadequate owing to its low speed and low carrying capacity. It may have satisfied the traditional function of transport in pre-colonial days, but under the new dispensation such transport was considered primitive and inadequate to satisfy the main objective of colonialism. Besides their numerous limitations, including low speed and capacity, which Lugard noted, he disliked the carriers' transport services for their tendency to steal and to charge high rates.[lxxxvii] Although the region had two main rivers, the Niger and Benue rivers, which could be used to further its development, these were not navigable for large vessels all year round, owing to natural impediments such as sand bars. In view of the existing inadequacies, the opening of the territory to British goods, capital, and trade—to which Lugard's administration was committed—might be jeopardized.[lxxxviii]

Between 1900 and 1924, the British colonial administration embarked upon a massive road-building programme throughout the colony. The rapid expansion of road development was accompanied by the introduction of motor vehicles. Motor transport industry was dominated by expatriates in the 1920s. From the early 1930s, however, a number of indigenous transporters became involved in the road transport enterprise.

To ensure the successful execution of the road project, Sir Ralph Moor, issued the Roads and Creeks Proclamation of 1903. The Proclamation provided the legal framework which empowered the District and Provincial Commissioners to direct warrant chiefs in their areas of jurisdiction to recruit able-bodied men and women between the ages of 15 and 50 to build, repair and maintain roads, bridges, paths and public thoroughfares as well as clear rivers and creeks of snags without pay.[lxxxix] Roads were essential to the opening up of the interior for quick and profitable British commercial operations in the hinterland communities. Specifically, the colonial government active policy of road development was not designed to serve the material interests or development needs of the people but to facilitate the movement of British troops and administrative officers in the various districts and divisions. Roads were also necessary to open up and link many hinterland communities, stimulate internal and export trade and complement the railway in the grand economic exploitation of the colony. The importance the colonial government attached to roads resulted in the construction of 2,596 miles of motorable roads between 1924 and 1925. The government roads jumped to 3,595 miles in 1934/35 fiscal year, 24,920 in 1945, 33,696 in 1955 and 46,173 in 1960.[xc]

At the outset, the motor transport enterprise held out little and daunting prospects of success for a number of reasons. First, motor vehicles were a new invention and the problems of securing spare parts, experienced drivers and skilled technicians to operate and maintain the vehicles became critical factors. Second, the roads were all seasonal, impassable during the rains and had sharp bends and steep gradients. Third, the bridges were built with wood and were often washed away by floods or destroyed by termites. These problems combined together to make road transport an enterprise that would appear to be expensive to run, unprofitable and without any bright future in a colonized and underdeveloped territory. As a matter of fact, Mr. Hulton, the Chairman of the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) painted a gloomy picture of roads and motor transport industry when he stated that ―metal roads and motor transport are, as far one can judge, a mistake.[xci] The expatriate firms which dominated the motor transport industry in its early years confined their services to government establishments and failed to meet the transport needs of the Igbo who were and still remain a predominantly commercial and highly peripatetic society. The indigenous transport entrepreneurs emerged to fill the gap. In the words of Esse:

The expatriate transport companies played an insignificant role in the development of the industry in southeast Nigeria in terms of the services rendered to the general public and in terms of their spatial spread. They failed to satisfy the needs of Igbo traders and producers of agricultural produce, especially those cut off from the railways. They acted mainly as government contractors, providing services to the Nigerian railway and the military… It was left to indigenous transporters to fill this gap.[xcii]

The agricultural sector largely relies on transport for its survival and growth. Ensuring efficient agricultural production requires an equally efficient mode of transport. Recognizing this, and to suit its interest of maximum exploitation, the British colonial government in Nigeria made the development of transport infrastructure an area of priority. The British thus established and nurtured a network of transport infrastructure, of course with the intent to facilitate the massive development, movement and export of agricultural products. Since the main motive of the colonial state was the maximum exploitation of agricultural raw materials, investing in, and developing the transport infrastructure opened up the regions and the interiors of Nigeria for the growth of commercial agriculture. This ensured the intended effective exploitation as well as efficient movement and export of agricultural products. The investment in transport infrastructure resulted in a relative development of the agricultural sector and provided growth opportunities for a number of rural communities. The resultant development recorded however was only a by-product of the main objective of the colonial state, which was to ensure maximum exploitation.[xciii]

It was clear the colonial state properly appreciated the significance of transport infrastructure in the achievement of the objective of colonization, in this context in the maximum exploitation of agricultural raw materials. This appreciation by the British was in accordance with how different scholars have theoretically and empirically expounded this significance. Mallon for instance has argued that transport plays an important role in the productive sectors such as agriculture.[xciv] Scholars such as Rostow,[xcv] Savage[xcvi] and Stabler[xcvii] have also emphasized that transport occupies a central position at every stage of development. Oganwu has also explained, especially as is more relevant in this context, that transport facilities also enable a region to exploit its resources, as well as develop and serve both import and export sectors.[xcviii]

Camemark has indeed in the same vein identified the provision of a high quality transport system as a pre-condition for the full participation of remote communities in the benefit of national development.[xcix] This significance was aptly understood by one of the main architects of British colonial enterprise in Nigeria, Lord Lugard, when he said that the material development of Africa could be summed up in one word – transportation.[c] Material development in the context of British colonial domination, and at that material time, of course referred to developing the infrastructure and the resources for maximum exploitation. This was the premise on which the British colonial state built its transport infrastructure policy. It was a policy of relative investment in the sector to that extent that it would effectively serve the British interest of efficiently lifting, moving and exporting materials, especially agricultural raw materials. To achieve the singular objective of maximizing the exploitation of resources, especially the abundant agricultural resources, the colonial state developed the transport systems, notably waterways, roads and railways.

6.1. Waterways

The Niger and Benue rivers, navigable throughout the year for various classes of craft, form a great system of natural communication traversing the Protectorate from north to south for 500 miles, and from west to east from Lokoja to Yola.[ci]

As the already existing highways before British colonization and the cheapest, the waterways were the first to be improved upon by the British before venturing into the railways and roads. The main waterways of Nigeria are the Niger and Benue rivers. Canoes in the coastal and riverine areas had plied other water routes tributary to these two. British interest and effort in improving the water transport system culminated into the growth of markets as well as the concentration of British firms along the river banks. Goods from producing areas further in the interior were brought to these firms operating on the Niger.[cii] These goods included palm produce, ground nuts, cotton, maize and millet.[ciii] Through water transport systems, the British firms penetrated further inland to get raw materials. This followed the further development in water transportation, which allowed them to bring in ships of various sizes and capacities for their purpose.[civ] The development of water transportation by the British involved dredging, surveys and clearing of snags and rocks to ensure a clear passage, especially on the river Niger, from the coast to Idah. It also included regular maintenance on the routes.[cv] A number of other tributary waterways were also cleared for the same purpose. Some of the important distributaries included Brass, Sombriero, Bonny, Orashi, Andoni, Benin, Imo, Escravo, Nun and Forcados rivers.[cvi] The policy of the colonial state of supporting British companies to improve water transport helped further in achieving its objective. These companies included the Niger River Transport Company (NRT), a subsidiary of the United African Company (U.A.C) based at Burutu, the Warri Transport (later Holts Transport [HT]), a subsidiary of the John Holt, and the Niger Benue Transport Company (NBTC), both based in Warri. These companies provided infrastructures like cargo handling equipments, goods sheds, warehouses, dockyards and quays, and also built basic port facilities at major ports located in Idah and Lokoja.[cvii] From 1900 onward, the improvement of water transportation allowed local middlemen to improve on their river transport skills and to collect more goods from the interior along tributary rivers to sell to the British. This development allowed river transportation to take a major share in transporting agricultural raw materials from central Nigeria to the seaports. This also helped in the relative improvement in the production of agricultural materials.
The following steamers have reached Ibi from Lokoja during the period July 1st to September 30th as follows: -
Valiant ……………………………………. once
Sultan or Kampala ………………………… four times
Tugs ………………………………………… twice
Steel barges ………………………………… five times
Total 7 steamers and 5 barges.
These steamers have brought up fortnightly or three weekly mails. In addition to the above, the Corona went up to Katsena-Alla with military reliefs and the Raven came up as far as Abinsi with the Director of Railways. On the return journey, the steamers have been loaded with Tin Areas and B.C.G.A. cargo.[cviii]

6.2. Roads
In the regions of Nigeria that had no waterways, footpaths and narrow roads had been used for economic activities through the use of men carriers and animal driven carts. Some of the roads had also served as trade routes as well as feeder routes for the waterways. For the obvious objective for which the waterways were improved upon, the colonial state embarked on the upgrading of the old paths and the construction of new ones. The road system began in the early 1900s essentially as a feeder network for the new railroads. This was why the emphasis on roads construction was on accessing major export materials producing areas. The effects of World War I of 1914 to 1918 in Nigeria, which culminated into the slowing down of water transportation as well as the production and supply of raw materials, further underscored the attention on the construction of roads. The need for raw materials by the colonial state however translated into increasing demand for the materials while putting pressure on the producers to boost their production in order to meet their tax obligations.
It was in order to meet the demand that both the colonial authorities and the companies shifted attention to the development of road and rail transport systems.[cix] To this end, the colonial government in the 1920s established a basic grid of two north-south trunk roads from Lagos and Port Harcourt to Kano as well as several east-west roads. In later decades, it expanded the system to provide access to most major headquarters and large towns through paved road.[cx]
The colonial government embarked on this aggressive programme of road development in the mid1920s having realized that road transportation held the key to the exploitation of the material resources of the interior of Nigeria.[cxi] The roads, also referred to as railway motor service, served to transport goods to the railway stations at different points. For instance, such roads in the Kano region transported hides and skins, cotton and groundnuts from the districts lying to the north and west of the Zaria-Kano rail line to the railway stations.[cxii] These roads augmented the role played by the waterways to provide the lifeline for the colonial economic policy of effective exploitation of agricultural materials. The roads constructed on the existing footpaths and trade routes are those that have today metamorphosed into trunk roads of Nigeria.[cxiii] The same roads have continued to serve many purposes and have especially provided the infrastructural backbone of the Nigerian economy today. In order to further facilitate export of raw materials, the colonial state collaborated with European companies, especially the Royal Niger Company (RNC), to improve on the existing roads and to build new ones.[cxiv] Many of such roads were constructed for the purpose in the northern and southern parts of the country.[cxv]
The total length of roads maintained by the Public Department is 3,829 miles of which some 210 are bituminous surfaced, 2,500 are gravelled and the remainder are of earth only. Improvements to soil grading and drainage continued with relative reduction in maintenance costs. Heavy increase in traffic notably in the south-west of Nigeria has shown the desirability of bituminous surfacing, and an extensive programme covering some 235 miles of road were completed before the end of 1939. In addition, the department maintains 187 miles of township roads, of which forty-two were bituminous surfaced.
Several major construction works have been undertaken or continued in 1937, including seven big bridges and a great number of small ones and a road to connect Bamenda in the Cameroons Province with Mamfe.

There are two classes of road in the Northern Provinces: the "all season" road which except for a few short lengths has a gravel surface and permanent bridges; and the "dry season" road which is for the most part a cross country track with earth surface and temporary drifts or causeways at river and stream crossings which can only be used between December and May. The Native Administrations maintain 10,375 miles of road, of which some 4,000 were all season with varying limits for the weight of motor vehicles, and the remainder dry season.

The road network not only changed the economic landscape of Nigeria, it opened up new areas for economic activities and ensured increased agricultural production for the benefit of the colonial state. The network would not on its own have any meaning or serve the intended purpose unless it complimented the overall plan of the movement of raw materials for export. Therefore, the major role of the network was to serve as feeder to the rail network, the main means of mass movement of goods to the ports for export.

Dry season roads radiate from Karim Lamido to: -

a) Lau, over the swamps 10 miles. Ferry at Lau, whence all season roads to Jalingo and Yola.
b) Zailani (Daro Foi), c. 20 miles. Road continues to Muri.
c) Bashama. c. 30 miles (25 miles by foot). Over Senge Pass. Road continues to Gombe and Jos. Is to be improved from N.R.P.D.B. funds as a cotton evacuation route.
d) Jen via Bambuka c. 30 miles (20 miles by foot).

There is also a dry season road maintained by the Sudan United Mission from Bambur to Gidan Usumanu.[cxvi]

With reference to roads, improvements by the Native Administration Mr. Haughton writes:

"During July (1913), attention was given to the improvement of the Mutum Biu to Shaaba road by erecting bridges and a causeway, the latter in accordance with instructions contained in your letter No. 2145/7/11 of 24.2.13. The work was performed by Mtum Biu people and a contingent from Muri under the direction of the Serikin Taferki. The causeway has withstood the rains excellently and this proved a great boon, especially to the officials who have visited this Division during the last month. The District Engineer expressed surprise at its low cost of £13. Additional bridges have been erected over the Yerima Lahinde River near Mutum Biu and along the Ibi-Bakundi road. The four bridges which have been erected along the latter road have been valued at £9."[cxvii]

6.3. Rail Network

The realization of the central role rail could play in the accomplishment of the objective of the colonial state informed the effort to develop rail network on a massive scale. Even before the conquest of the whole of Nigeria was accomplished, the British had started the construction of a rail network that would effectively serve to move raw materials. The construction of the first rail line started in 1896 from Iddo in Lagos, southern Nigeria. The line was extended to Abeokuta and Ibadan in 1901, to Osogbo and Ilorin in 1907 and to Jebba on the Niger River in 1909. This line was known as the Lagos Railway. Another network for Northern Nigeria started in 1907 from Baro, a town on the lower point of the Niger. This second line passed through Bida, Zungeru, Kaduna and Zaria and reached Kano in 1911. The Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria were finally amalgamated in 1914 to form a single colonial administration. With this amalgamation, the Lagos Railway and the Baro-Kano line were merged in 1915 to become the Nigerian Railway stretching from Lagos to Kano.[cxviii] This network was tagged Western Railway (WR), as another network was soon to be constructed on the eastern flank.

The Nigerian Railway has a total single-track route mileage of 1,900. Including sidings, the total mileage amounts to 2,184 miles. The main line gauge is 3' 6". The Railway is divided for administrative purposes into three Districts, the Western, the Northern and the Eastern. The Western District extends from the Port of Lagos northwards to Jebba, a distance of 305 miles, and contains a branch from Ifo to Idogo (26 miles). The Northern District extends from Jebba to Nguru, a distance of 540J miles, and includes branch lines from Zaria to Kaura Namoda and to Jos via a 2' 6" gauge light railway: there is also a branch from Minna Junction to the Niger River port of Baro. The Eastern District runs from Kaduna Junction down to the port of Port Harcourt, a distance of 569 miles, and includes a branch line from Kafanchan to Jos. During the year, 191 stations and twenty-five halts were open to traffic.[cxix]

In the spirit of furthering the interest of the colonial state to maximally exploit raw materials therefore, it embarked on the construction of another rail line on the eastern flank of the vast territory of Nigeria. This was because of the realization that Nigeria was too large for one rail line and a single major port if the colonial state must achieve its objective.[cxx] Thus was the construction of the Port-Harcourt to Kaduna/Jos/Kano railway line (or the Eastern Railway (ER) started in 1913, as the other most important link between Southern and Northern Nigeria. Starting off from Port-Harcourt, the line passed through Aba and Umuahia and reached the Udi hills (Enugu) coal fields by 1916, before World War I forced the work to a halt.[cxxi] The plan was to construct the line to Kaduna, which would reach Kano by extension, since Kaduna was a major junction of the Western Railway from Lagos to Kano. The plan also included a route branching off at a point, precisely at Jama'a (Kafanchan) Junction, to another direction to reach Bukuru and Jos.[cxxii]After the war, construction on the line resumed in 1921from Udi, the Enugu end of the route and reached Makurdi on the Benue River in 1923. About the same time, work also began at Kakuri, the Kaduna end of the route.[cxxiii] At completion of the Eastern Railway, which reached Jos in 1927, the two networks, the WR and the ER, connected Kano and Jos in the north to the major towns and stations on the south eastern as well as south western halves of Nigeria, and to the two main ports of Apapa (Lagos) and Port-Harcourt.[cxxiv] The connection of Kano and Jos through other important stations and collection centres to the two ports facilitated the transport of goods on both routes for export. For instance, there were cargo coaches for the haulage of goods on a large scale between both cities and the seaport towns of Lagos and Port-Harcourt.[cxxv]

Beyond Kano and Jos, while the WR was later extended to reach Kauran Namoda through Gusau on the north-western corner as well as Nguru on the north-eastern corner, the ER was extended to reach Maiduguri through Bauchi on the north-eastern corner. The picture of the extensions at completion was: The first line branched off from Zaria to Kaura Namoda through Funtua and Gusau, an important agricultural area in the northwest, completed in 1929. The second was the extension from Kano to Nguru, a cattle-raising region in the northeast, completed in 1930. And the third was the extension to Maiduguri through Bauchi and Gombe.[cxxvi] This effectively linked the north-east and north-west extremes of Nigeria to coastal ports of Port-Harcourt and Lagos in the south-east and south-west extremes of Nigeria respectively. More than just linking the extremes of Nigeria, the colonial authorities determined the routes of the rail networks taking cognizance of the main areas producing major raw materials needed by the British as well as areas that served as major collection and commercial centres.[cxxvii] The transport systems and networks ultimately served to sustain a booming agricultural sector and guarantee an effective as well as maximum evacuation of materials from most remote areas of the country by the colonial state.

The perspective given above underscores the extent to which the colonial state's transport policy had impacted on the expansion of the agricultural sector. The access provided by the different transport networks put in place during the colonial era, especially between 1900 and 1950, helped the growth of commercial agriculture in Nigeria. For instance, from 1900 to 1950, the volume of produced and exported raw materials such as palm produce, cocoa, cotton, and groundnuts grew considerably.[cxxviii] Indeed, Hogendorn noted that in the early 1900, the railway system had daily ready haulage of groundnut of up to 100 tons from Kano Station alone.[cxxix] On the whole, the expansion of the railway and other transport networks was instrumental to the surge and growth of agricultural production.

7. Conclusion

The potential of agriculture for propelling Nigeria's economic development was recognized by the colonial government when policies were put in place to encourage output growth and to extract the surpluses there from. The predominant theme of development in this period was the surplus extraction philosophy or policy whereby immense products were generated from the rural areas to satisfy the demands for raw materials in metropolitan Britain. This early interest of the extraction policy was on forest resources and agricultural exports like cocoa, coffee, rubber, groundnut, oil palm etc.

As can be seen, more than half of the policies in the era focused on forest matters while less emphasis was placed on food and animal production. Most of these policies were made without proper institutional arrangement, programmes, specific projects, strategies, goals or targets and specific objectives geared towards realization of the dreams of the policies. This can be proved by the fact that there was only one documented agricultural scheme that evolved towards the end of the era (early 1960s) termed Farm Settlement Scheme.[cxxx]

The mainstay of the economy of the peoples of Muri is agriculture. Due to the fertility of the land and its abundance many crops where cultivated in the area. The land support various crops as a result of the climatic condition of the area. Crops such as sorghum/guinea corn, millet, groundnut, rice, cotton etc. were cultivated in the area. The people also engage in commercial agriculture for export to other parts of the world. The British colonialist enacted ordinances or policies to control land and what was produced on it. The land tenure was changed from communal ownership to the property of the colonialist in most part of Nigeria.

Labour policies were also enacted to control agricultural production in Muri Emirate. These labour policies also see to it that the people have no choice but to engage in it. They tied the labour to tax to the extent that one will have to engage in one form of labour or the other to get money to pay tax. Even production of cash crops was forced on the people through imposition of tax. As a result, food crop production suffered a setback. This resulted to famine in many parts of Nigeria, Muri emirate inclusive. The famine was so bad in the Muri Emirate that people resorted to selling their children into slavery in order to buy food to eat.

In terms of transportation, the colonialist paid close attention to it. In the Muri area, the availability of massive river system proved to be of advantage to them. Rivers such as the Benue, the Taraba, the Donga, the Suntai and so on played a significant role in providing means of communication before, during and after colonialism. Roads were also constructed in line with the trans-Saharan trade routes. New ones were also constructed by the British colonialist. Railways were also constructed to help the colonialist in the repatriation of the resources of this area to the coast for onward ferrying to Europe.

With the coming of the British they had to introduce their own currency. The introduction of new currency was done to facilitate tax collection from the people. Before this period, the people traded through barter system. In the Muri area, however, there was the presence of iron money and cowries as the means of exchange in the area. The monetary policies of the British also were enacted to make the people engage in some trade that would fetch cash with which to pay tax to the British colonialists.

The people of Muri were expert farmers and they have been practicing mixed farming a long time ago. The Fulani were pastoralist but due to political stability that was present in the Muri area with the establishment of the Emirate some of the Fulani combined animal husbandry with farming. While the Fulani rear cattle other ethnic groups within the Emirate rear goats, sheep and other domestic animals. They are also farmers and cultivate many crops for local consumption and for export.

After production of agricultural products comes marketing. The marketing of these products was not always left in the hands of the people. The British determined the price of these products and the people must comply. The people were not allowed the freedom to even sometimes deal with the companies. Middlemen were introduced to get the products form the people of Muri and travel to the various trading stations or markets to sell to the Europeans. With the establishment of colonialism, the British colonialist were always after the people to produce in surplus what they require for their factories back home. The British were always pushing for more production of cash crops. This affected food crop production in the Muri Emirate.

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