COLONIALISM AND FAMINES IN NIGER PROVINCE, 1900 - 1945: A STUDY OF AN ASPECT OF COLONIAL UNDER-DEVELOPMENT

BY

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A Thesis submitted to the Postgraduate School, Ahmadu Bello University, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, in History*

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that it is a record of my own research work. It has not been presented for any higher degree elsewhere. All quotations have been acknowledged and distinguished by footnotes and quotation marks.

A. IYELA.

CERTIFICATION

This Thesis entitled COLONIALISM AND FAMINES IN NIGER PROVINCE, 1900 - 1945: A STUDY OF AN ASPECT OF COLONIAL UNDER-DEVELOPMENT by Ajayi Iyela meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Master of Arts in History of Ahmadu Bello University, and is approved for its contribution to Knowledge and literary presentation.

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ABSTRACT

Basically, this study seeks to explain the relationship between British Colonialism and the incessant famines which Niger Province experienced in the period 1900 - 1945 It also attempts to grapple with how the phenomenon of famines at this period, became a fundamental factor for the poverty, impoverishment and disease which completely engulfed the area.

Thus, in pursuance of the above, the Thesis was organised into six chapters. In Chapter one, we examined the various interpretations that have been given by the developmentalists, under-development and dependency schools to the general issue of under-development and the specific issue of famines in the third world countries, drawing attention to their respective areas of difficulty,. We consequently came to the conclusion that the mode of production framework is more useful for our analysis of the relationship between imperialism and famines in former Niger province in the period 1900 - 1945. Thus, the impact of colonialism in creating famines could only be scientifically explained by the extent to which the modes of productio: production of the area transformed to cause the dislocation of the forces of production of their under development., On this, it was argued that although Niger province was incorporated into the World Capitalist System, roughly from 1900, yet this only led to a highly restricted transformation of the pre-capitalist modes of production of the area. For only the sectors of the

pre-capitalist society that helped the extraction of suplus remained unchanged as far as its moans of production were concerned. This imply that famines in Niger province in the period 1900 to l9*+5 must be linked to the specific social system in which they occur and the differential abilities of the systems to cope with the effects.

Thus, in chapter two, we examined the social formation of Niger province on the eve of British conquest with a partticular focus on the meniems that wer evolved by the poole to cushion the impact of famines, we arrived at the conclusion that collectively, the pre—colonial indegines muchanisms mitigated the impact . of famines in our area of study.

However, in chapters three and four, we argued that the conquest of [Tiger province, roughly from 1900, and the subsequent imposition of the colonial economy led to the erosion of the indigenous social response mechanisms, which, in turn, led to the famines. These were the conquest, itself with its negative consequences on food production, the introduction and encouragement of the production of cash crops the monetigation of the economy, introduction of taxation and the transformation of the indigenous land tenure system. Others included the British colonial policies of abolishing slavery, the introduction of forced labour and the deliberate destruction of suplimentary economic activities in the area.

Moreover in chapter five, it was argued that the lutbreak of the great economic depression (1929 • 1933)

As for the archival material, the bulk of it comes from the National Archive in Kaduna. These were supplemented with information derived from published and unpublished works. Those are available in the K.I.L ABU) Zaria.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ARNN	=	Annual Reports of Northern Nigeria.
A.B.U.	=	Ahmadu Bello University.
B.C.G.A	=	British Cotton Growers Association.
J.A.H	=	Journal of African History.
J.H.S.N	=	Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria.
K.I.L	=	Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello Univers, Zaria.
MINPROF	=	Files of the Minna Provincial office now in Kaduna Archives.
N.A.K	=	National Archives, Kaduna.
N.H.R.S	=	Northern History Research Scheme.
S.N.P	=	Secretariat of the Northern Provinces.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial, the problem of food has been one of the most serious challenges facing mankind. As a result of this, all through the ages, every country of the world has always striven to ensure adequate provision of food which has also been pushed to paramount position in the scheme of things. The importance and implications of this cannot be over-emphasized. Research has shown that a substantial reduction in calorie intake below the level necessary to sustain man's ability to work and build up resistance against disease, would lead to drastic rise in the rate of mortality, vulnerability to disease, deterioration in work capacity and above all, the problems of social discontent with resultant social disorder.[1] The great famine that Rome experienced in 436 B.C; the great European famine of 1315 - 1317; the Irish famine of 1844 - 49, and the Russian famine of 1932 - 37, all had such disastrous effects.[2]

However, inspite of the realization of the severe consequences that has accompanied a famine and, hence, the need for urgent solutions, arguments among various schools of thought rages on about what the phenomenon of famine is all about and what interpretations are to be given to it, particularly, in post-colonial countries. Central to the arguments is the issue relating to what the true nature of famine is and the extent to which colonialism

actually paved the way for it on the African scene and to the general question of under-development in all aspects of life of third world countries. On these, various views, explanations and theories have been advanced.

In this chapter then, our objectives are three fold:-

(a) To examine some of the various definitions of famine that have been given with intent of clarifying what it is all about.

(b) To attempt a critique of the major explanations and theories that have been specifically given by the various schools on famine and on the general issue of under-development in third world countries. Thus, an evaluation of the relevance of the various theories to our understanding of the problem shall equally be attempted. This would necessarily involve our taking a world-wide perspective in examining the available works that have appeared on the former colonized areas of the world like Africa, Asia and Latin America, since they are the primary targets against which the debates are directed.

(c) Finally, our evaluation of the relevance of the theories of explaining the problems of under-development and famines in the third-world in general forms the basis on which we propose a theoretical framework for examining the phenomenon of famines in Niger province in the period 1900 - 1945.

1.2 WHAT IS FAMINE?

The word famine has been subjected to several definitions. To some people, there is no dividing line

between hunger and famine. To some others, malnutrition and famine are basically synonymous. Many questions can be asked, all of which indicate that the exact definition of the word 'famine' is problematic. For instance, is there any relationship between the scarcity of food and famine? When should a period of severe hardship in obtaining food be called famine? Is it when a country experiences mere shortages or just the mere threats of it? What criterion (or criteria) can be used to measure the degree of, for instance, emaciation, elevation of death rate or hunger to differentiate famine from food shortage? Again, should starvation on a small-scale among a small hamlet, groups, be characterised as famine? Still more intriguing, is whether the scarcity of food for a few weeks or months should be regarded as famine. The questions are un-ending. However, the importance of providing a generally acceptable definition cannot be over-emphasized if a scholarly study of the topic is to deepen our understanding of famine and to equip policy makers with the necessary information with which to tackle the problem more effectively.

One of the definitions given to famine, is to equate it with malnutrition.[3] Malnutrition could take different forms. It could be caused by dietary inadequacies, as a result of insufficient intake of nutrients for normal body requirements because of food shortages, faulty selection of

food or lack of ability to purchase adequate quality food.[4] However, it is not all forms of malnutritions that are caused by dietary inadequacies. Malnutrition is equally said to occur when the calories taken per person per day in a country is below the level recommended by the food and Agriculture Organisation (F.A.O).[5] It is these forms of malnutritions, that some authors have equated with famine. For instance, William H. Foege, in a paper delivered at a symposium dealing with nutrition and relief operations in times of disaster, began by declaring that "first, it must be understood that famine is itself an epidemic, an epidemic of malnutrition".[6] Again, Don Brothwell and Patricia Brothwell in their book referred to famine as severe malnutrition.[7] From the above, it is thus clear that Foege, Don and Patricia, all equate malnutrition with famine. However, the major weakness of this definition is that it is based on only one element (Malnutrition). In order words, it has failed to incorporate other elements, which taken together, should have constituted a universal definition of famine. Thus, a universal definition of famine, should have included such other elements like duration, place and intensity of the famine. This is important, if we must go beyond the single-element definition of famine and achieve a universal one.

However, it must be emphasized that the short-comings identified with the definitions of famine provided by

Foegc, Don and Patricia, also applies to the definitions provided in other works. For instance, both Josue de Castro and Donal Hughes, in their separate books respectively,[8] see the phenomenon of famine from a single element perspective. As far as they are concerned, the crucial element is not malnutrition, but hunger. Thus, Castro defined famine as "epidemic of hunger affecting great human masses"[9] a definition supported by Donald Hughes, when he states that the phenomenon of famine is a vicious cycle of hunger and disease, which is brought about by disease.[10] There is no doubt that both Castro and Hughes are correct in their observation of the negative consequences that follows hunger. But hunger cannot be equated with famine, since there could be degrees of hunger which do not justify the use of the word famine. Moreover the definition of famine provided by these authors also failed to go beyond the single element definitions, which we earlier on rejected. Thus, the attempt by Castro and Hughes to dine famine as hunger, has failed to provide us with a universal applicable definition. On the other hand F. Dertherage, G. Masefield and some standard dictionaries[11] see famine as nothing but periods of food shortages; a definition supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (F.A.O).[12] But, as we have already pointed out above, it should be emphasized that periods of food shortages cannot be equated with famine. This is because,

there are degrees of food shortages which do not justify the use of the word famine.

But the attempt to link famine with hunger is not the end of the story. For, other authors have attempted to link the phenomenon with population. This attempt began towards the end of the eighteenth century when Thomas Malthus hypothesized that the population of the world was increasing in geometrical progression while the increase on food supply moved in arithmetical progression.[13] Thus, the import of Malthus's hypothesis was that population was increasing at a rate far faster than the increase in food resources, with which to feed this population. Other population theorists, like Paul Ehrlich, H. Brown and Joseph Tydings have all, subscribed to the position of Malthus.[14] Joseph Tydings, specifically argued, among others, that nature uses famines as a check on population growth. Thus, he warned that:

> Man's day of reckoning with this problem cannot be put off six hundred years, or even fifty years. Whether we wish it or not, the present imbalance between birth and death, will be redressed within our lifetimes. Either the nations of the world will act in time to defuse the population bomb with humane programs to sharply reduce birth rates, or Nature will ruthlessly restore the balance with her traditional culling tools of war, famine and disease - the feared Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Either a birth rate solution or a death rate solution: the choice is still ours, though not for very long.[15]

It is thus clear from the above that the phenomenon of famine is linked with population. However, as we shall demonstrate in detail later, the attempt to link famine with population lacks adequate scientific basis. For instance, the growth of population is not an independent variable isolated from other social phenomenon, the increase is dependent on political and economic factors, especially as a result of the concentration of efforts on controlling human and animal diseases.

However, some other authors went beyond the attempt to link famine with population by including place, time and the intensity of famine in their definitions.[16] As far as these authors are concerned, famine occurs in a definable area and has a finite duration; as long as food is available somewhere, relief agencies can undertake to deal with the crisis. Thus, it is along this line that Brian Ferrin and Peter Toyne claimed that a temporary, but severe local shortage of food is called a famine.[17]

It is to be stated that there is a distinction between Crop failure and Famine. A nation can suffer one or even a series of bad harvests without necessarily experiencing famine. On the other hand, famine may occur in a time of relatively good harvest when, for one reason or the other, human decisions could deprive areas of a country of needed food supplies. Moreover, as we have repeatedly pointed out above, the attempt to link famines

with only one element (in this case, crop failure) has failed to provide us with a comprehensive and universal definition of famine. It is in an attempt to avoid the shortcomings inherent in this definition and others, which we have earlier examined, in that we shall do two things below: Firstly, we shall propose a comprehensive and workable definition of famine generally as well as for the present study. Secondly we shall examine how the phenomenon of famine is an aspect of the under-development process in third world countries today.

Famine is a social problem, a man-made problem, which involves the starvation of a substantial proportion of the population (mostly of the poor class), as a result of extreme food shortages affecting some sizeable area and characterised by a fairly long period of time enough to warrant the massive emaciation and deaths of those affected. The phenomenon of famine is undoubtedky an aspect of under-development, in third world countries. Famine- striken third world countries are faced with the problem of under-nutrition and malnutrition. For instance, each individual needs a certain quantity of food per day measured in calories in order to function at generally accepted standards. This is about 3000 calories per day.[18] But no third world country comes near to this figure. For example, Algerians consume, on average, about 1,870 calories per day,[19] in Ivory Coast, it is 2,290 calories[20]

and in Nigeria in 1968, it was 2,083 calories.[21] (mainly starch) on the average. The result is that some 20 percent of the people of the third world are under nourished, with 60 percent, suffering from malnutrition.[22]

The immediate result of the above has been the loss of normal body weight or reduction in physical activity in adults, whereas, for children, the consequences of low caloric intake are poor growth and physical development. Moreover, malnourished third world peoples show clinical signs of specific deficiency diseases and general health. Thus, the diseases common to the famine stricken areas of third world in the past like Ethiopia and India included Kwashiorkor and Marasmus.[23] These resulted in high infant mortality and death rates.

The above situation, invariably affected the socio-economic development of such areas. For instance, there was the massive loss of the labour force, not only because of high mortality and death rates, but because those who survived the famines became relatively useless either to themselves or to the society. It is argued that an emphasis on population loss is relevent to the loss of socio-economic development of any area. Thus, population growth was important in the development of Europe and Japan, especially in the area of providing labour, markets and the pressures which led to further advance.

But in famine stricken third world countries, there is agricultural stagnation. Here, there is inadequate labour

through massive population loss, because a part of their population was being lost through high mortality and death rates; and those that survive do not have enough calories to produce for themselves. The result is that Third World countries continue to witness further agricultural stagnation and, hence, further famines.

Moreover, apart from agricultural stagnation brought about by famine, it is also important to state that famine has affected the technological development of third world countries. As we have earlier pointed out, famine in third world countries have always led to high mortality and death rates. The result is these countries are deprived of millions of youth and young adults, who are the human agents from whom inventiveness springs. In addition, those who survive death from famine are rendered relatively useless because they are often afflicted by serious mental defects, due to low calories intake. The result is that the mental capabilities of such people, necessary for scientific and technological innovation, is being retarded.

Finally, because of the socio-economic backwardness of famine-stricken third world countries, most of them have invariably embarked on the massive importation of food and the so-called "borrowing" of technology from the advanced capitalist countries. These has ensured their continued under-development and dependence on the imperialist countries of Europe, America and Japan.

1.3 WHAT CAUSES FAMINE?

Having examined and proposed a definition of famine for the present study, we may now consider the issue of the various interpretations that have been given to the general issue of under-development and the specific issue of famines in the third world countries. On this, we can identify three trends of argument. The first one interprets famine in religious terms.[24] The second trend interprets the problem of under-development in the third world countries as an original state of affairs, and that for these countries to develop, they would have to adopt Western attitudes and Organisation.[25] This body of argument further deny that colonialism in anyway under-developed third world countries. On the specific issue of what causes famines, the argument, again, is that famines were the result of natural factors. This line of argument is represented in the publications of some international organizations, articles and books by Bourgeois Scholars of the development and modernisation schools. The third trend of argument is, infact, the direct opposite and a reaction to the arguments put forward by the development schools on the issue of under-development in the third world countries. This trend argues that under-development in the third world was not an original state of affairs, but that it was caused by capitalism in it's imperialist and colonialist forms.[26] On the specific cause of famine, the argument is that it cannot be reduced to natural factors, but must be

located within the context of the socio-economic system of any society. Those, who hold this view generally belong to the under-development and dependency school, and, even within this view, we have some variants, which would be highlighted in due course. We shall howeverbegin by examining the religious interpretations of famines.

1.5.1 Religious Interpretations of Famines

Some centuries ago, famine was regarded, almost throughout the world, as inevitably a manifestation of Divine (or God's) wrath meted out upon His sinful people. Thus, according to one author, God was seen as the ultimate arbiter of rainfall, for if God sends the rain, then lack of rain is a result of man's sin.[27] This kind of interpretation, was also applied to the incessant famines which Ethiopia experienced in the old days. For instance, it was reported that a famine occured in Ethiopia in the 9th century, because of the wickedness of the people.[28] Because of this, God prevented the heavens from sending forth rain with the result that many people died of the plague.[29] Again in the 12th century, there was reference to a curse that fell upon Ethiopia, as a result of which famine and Plague broke out in the land and the rain would not fall on the fields and great tribulation came upon the people.[30] Similarly, a major famine that occured during the time of Emperor Gelawdewos (1540-1559) was referred to by the latter's Chronicler as "a punishment sent on the country by the Glorious God".[31]

Thus, because famines in the old days was interpreted in religious terms, it was no surprise to find that whenever a famine broke out, the people were enjoined by their rulers to pray for divine intervention rather than to take practical steps. Menelik for instance, declared that "the people should go to the Church, and implore God for his help".[32]

Even here in contemporary Nigeria, some Governors in the Northern states, asked both Christians and Moslems to pr y when the rains of the 1986 season appeared to have delayed. Moreover, it is instructive to note that during the course of my field work, some of my informants attributed some of the famines in Niger province during the period of colonial rule to the wish or act of God.[33] It is thus clear from all that we have said above that there is a school of thought which interprets famine as an act of God -- the supernatural.

It is however our contention that this line of interpretation should be rejected, because it has enthroned idealism over and above matter. Explanations of any social phenomenon, should be related to the material conditions of things. We now possess enough scientific knowledge to know that famines are caused by phenomena that have nothing to do with God. Above all, it is methodologically impossible, even if it was desirable, to subject God or, His supernatural

equipment, to scientific analysis. Evidently, therefore, the religious interpretation of famine must be discarded.

1.F.2 The Developmentalist School's Interpretation of Under-development and Famines:

We will now examine the arguments of bourgeois scholars of the development school, seeking to explain why third world countries are under-developed, and why there is incessant problem of famines in those areas.

Most bourgeois scholars, writing on the problem of under-development in the third world countries have always viewed it as an original state of affairs in those areas with the concomitant characteristics of "backwardness" or "traditionalism" and that these countries can only become developed when they begin to accept and implement western forms of political and economic organizations with the masses internalising 'modern' attitudes. Bourgeois scholars, therefore, have treated Africa or the third world societies as self-contained units whose political, social or economic system can be analysed in themselves. The result of this, is that there is the denial of the existence of a global economic system as a large unit in which Africa and the rest of the third world form only a part; a global system, which is overtly dominated by the rich and powerful countries of Western Europe and North America. Having ignored this relationship, therefore, the development theorists have come up only with some

contention psychological theories to explain why countries of Western Europe and North America developed, and why third world countries are under-developed. On these, there are five major strands of bourgeois hypotheses which purport to explain Africa backwardness.

One of these theories is David McClelland's theory of achievement motivation. David McClelland in his book[34] claims to have discovered what he refers to as the need for achievement (n-Achievement). He argues further that only a generally high level of n-Achievement will produce more energetic entrepreneurs who in turn would produce rapid economic development.[35] McClelland's theory is built on the foundation which implies that it is value, not motives or psychological forces that determine ultimately the rate of economic and social development.[36] Thus, as in different individuals, achievements in response to their level of motivation, as well as anxiety, McClelland propounds that the n-Achievement of the society will decide their level of development. McClelland arrived at his theory by carrying out some stereo-typed experiments in the classroom with a few children from the upper as well as the middle classes in the United States. The result of his experiment was that the children from the middle class performed better, because they have a higher n-Achievement, since they are those fed with certain beliefs and child bearing practices within the family.

Thus, directly or indirectly, the need to achieve has been reduced by McClelland to a mere personality variable which is independent of a given social structure. Again, he has assumed that the under-developed societies especially in Africa are suffering from lack of n-Achievement. However, a critical analysis of the pre-colonial situation in Africa would reveal that McClelland's assumption is wrong, for a high n-Achievement value existed among Africans, long before any form of contact with the Europeans.[37]

Again, McClelland concluded that 'traditionalism' is a major obstacle to the development of Africa countries. This assertion is false. For all the ethnic groups in Nigeria, and infact in Africa as a whole were not and are still not traditional. Africans were "Pragmatic frontiersmen" with a persistent history of migration, settlement and resettlement of new lands and of responding to the slave trade.[37A]

Inspite of the falsehood which we have exposed above, McClelland arrived at another conclusion that African societies are closed to innovation and this, he argues accounts for the backwardness in the continent. [38] researches have shown that the thesis is wrong, because even as late as 1961, some societies in the former Ondo province (present Ondo State) were still coming together to form bigger towns for the benefit of all.[39] A typical

> Industrialized societies exhibit the characteristics of Universalism, achievement, specificity, effective neutrality and self-orientation, while the non-industrialized ones exhibit their opposites particularism, ascription, diffuseness, effectivity, and collective orientation."[41]

Thus, Hoselitz claims that the criteria for achievement in Africa is particularistic, in the sense that in any consideration for appointments, promotions, success and failure, people are selected not so much because of merit, but on the basis of personal individual connections.[42] This he further argues is not the case with the Western societies, where emphasis is on individual merits.

However, a critical examination of the above would reveal the absurdity of Hoselitz thesis. This is because empirical evidence both from the under-developed and developing countries debunks Hoselitz's assertions. In the first place, it has been observed that industrialization in Japan was aided by particularistic principles. Thus, Japanese factories prefer to employ a whole family with Kinship ties rather than individuals, regardless of merit.[43]

Secondly, the calculated attempts by white American trade unions to exclude blacks and other American minorities from participating in the apprenticesl training and programmes for skilled work is particularistic.[44]

Furthermore, researches have shown that responsible leaders ever produced in the world were always assisted and aided by their age-long class mates and close associates.

With this background, one could say with positive affirmation that America as a country and the West in particular, have a friendship bond which not only characterises their socio-political system, but also their racial prejudices which does not derive from the so-called merit criterion.

Apart from Hoselitz, the last but one of the best known development theorists, we shall consider in the present study is W. W. Rostow's major work. The stages of economic Growth, which he subtitled A non-communist Manifesto.[45] Rostow, in his book attempted to identify five stages of economic development in all societies.

According to him, the first one is:-

> The traditional society. A traditional society is one whose structure is developed within limited production functions, based on pre-Newtonian science and technology and pre-Newtonian attitudes towards the physical world...[46]

The second stage is the period when the preconditions for take-off are developed and significant economic changes begin to occur. The period witnessed the appearance of a modernising elite, who were willing to carry our modernising ventures.[47] It was similarly a period when the rate of capital accumulation began to rise above the rate of population growth, taking maximum advantage of the opportunities for innovation that were created by the modernising elite.[48] Again, labour at this stage began to be trained for purposes of specialized large scale production.[49]

The third stage of economic growth is that of take-off. According to Rostow:-

> The take-off is the interval when the old blocks and resistances to steady growth are finally overcome. The forces making for economic progress, which yielded limited bursts and enclaves of modern activity, expand and come to dominate the society. Growth becomes it's normal condition. Compound interest becomes built as it were, into it's habits and institutional structure...50

Rostow, concluded that the take-off stage lasted for twenty years, to be succeeded by the fourth stage i.e. "The drive to maturity, which similarly lasted for twenty years.[51] According to Rostow, it was at this fourth stage that "an economy demonstrates that it has the technological and entrepreneural will to produce not every thing, but anything it chooses to produce."[52]

After the stage of the "drive to maturity" came the last stage, i.e. "the age of high mass consumption". This was a stage of increased emphasis on the production of durable consumer's goods and services. Similarly, resources began to be allocated to social welfare and security.[53]

Rostow's theory of Economic Growth has been criticised on the basis that it is difficult to find historical experience that supports the various sequential stages.[54] His concepts are said to be more impressionistic interpretation of a number of historical experiences rather than based on a rigorous scientific analysis.[55]

Andre Gunder Frank, in criticising Rostow, argued that the latter's stages are incorrect, because they do not correspond to the past and present conditions of the under-developed third world countries. Similarly, frank argued that Rostow's first two stages are "Fictional", while the last two are "Utopian".[56] It is thus clear that the explanations put forward by Rostow, Hoselitz and McClelland to explain the under-development of the third world are wrong. Therefore, the explanation must be sought from some where else. The next question, we should address our minds to is, what are the views of the development theorist on the general issue of the relationship between colonialism and under-development in the third world.?

The development theorists deny that colonialism played any significant role in under-developing third world countries. They have generally argued that the colonial era was an Age of improvement, which increased the volume of the colony's international trade and established the infrastructure for economic growth. For instance, in enumerating the supposed benefits of colonialism to Africa, L.H. Gann and P. Duignan claim that the period of colonial rule in Africa involved, "a vast transfer of human and physical capital to Africa... a host of new economic, medical, social and administrative techniques".[57]

Similarly, in 1926, Allen Mcphee wrote of what he described as the Economic revolution in British West Africa in eulogistic terms. For according to him:

> English capital has come in and built the railways and constructed the harbours and cleared the channels. It has also introduced new cultures and improved old ones; it has built roads and towns and established markets; it has introduced Banks and a convenient currency; it has exploited minerals. More than this, English government has brought peace and security and abolished slavery. The result is an enormous expansion of trade in which the natives performed their part and reaped their rewards."58

It is thus clear from the above that Gann, Duignan and Mcphee are of the view that the colonial era represented the "Golden Age" of Africa, since it brought about "Socio-economic development". But several studies.[59] have been conducted on the issue of the general impact of colonialism on African societies, and the conclusions were that in the final analysis, the colonial period represented a dark period in the history of Africa, which brought about the under-development of the continent. A critical examination of the supposed socio-economic benefits of colonialism would reveal that it was the imperialist powers who actually benefitted. For instance, the roads and railways which Mcphee claims that colonialism brought were not constructed for the benefit of the Africans, but for the evacuation of agricultural and mineral resources from areas that were rich in them to the coast for onward shipment to Britain and Europe. Thus, areas that were not rich in natural resources were not linked by roads and railways. Secondly, Mcphee claims that colonialism

abolished slavery and introduced a "convinient" currency. Again, it should be stated that the imperialist powers abolished slavery not so much for "humanitarian" reasons, but for their own interests. This was aimed at releasing labour from its pre-colonial role to take up wage employment in the mines, railway constructions, and in other public works. Moreover the so-called introduction of "convenient" currency was to ensure that Africans completely switch over to the production of cash-crops and also to take up wage employment in the mines and in other public works. This was because Africans could only pay their taxes with the European currencies which was obtained by producing cash crop and taking up wage employment in the mines and in other public works. It is thus clear that the colonial era did not bring about socio-economic benefits to Africa. The next question, we should now address our minds to is, what are the views of the development theorists on the specific issue of the relationship between colonialism and famines in the third world countries.?

The development theorists deny that colonialism played any significant role in creating famines in the third world in general. They have consequently proceeded to advance some naturalistic theories to explain why famines have preistently occured in the third world countries.

One of the naturalistic theories advanced by bourgeois scholars to explain why famines occur in the third world, is to put the blame on nature for provoking it, by endowing man with too much powers of reproduction and thus, paving the way for high population growth. The theory itself was proposed by Thomas Malthus at the end of the 18th century, who, as we quoted earlier, hypothesized that the world population was increasing in geometrical progression, while the increase in food supply moved in arithmetical progression.[60] Thus, the import of Malthus observation was that population was increasing at a rate faster than the increase in food resources with which to feed this population.

However, of recent, many followers of Malthus, the so-called neo-Malthus have emerged by subscribing to his ideas. For instance, S.A. Marie in his book, which was essentially an attempt to account for the world food crisis, gave figures to buttress his argument that the world food situation was threatened by high population growth. His reason was that the world population was increasing at about seventy million annually, nearly twice the rate for 1950. He then concluded by saying that "The population variable is the most important factor in the food crisis"[69]

Here in Nigeria, P.N. Udo, whose work was basically concerned with examining, among others, why some areas of Nigeria are food deficit also subscribes to the above view.

After examining some of the reasons why some areas of Nigeria like Niger Delta, Southern Tivland, Jos-Plateau, Okene areas e.t.c. do not produce enough food, Udo concluded by saying that "high population has placed considerable pressure on cultivation."[62]

However, it is to be stated that the arguments put forward by Malthus, Marie and Udo lack adequate scientific basis. The first error by them, was to consider the growth of population as an independent variable, isolated from other social phenomena, whereas, it can be demonstrated that population increase in dependent on political and economic factors. The increase in population for instance, was a result of the concentration of efforts on controlling human and animal diseases.

Secondly, these population theorists assume that people are primarily mouths and stomachs to be fed. Although, these same people are also hands to work, minds to think and create, but this is seldomly mentioned by the population theorists. For example, it has been argued that the people of the Sahel were not simply producing more people to be cared for during the years preceeding the famines, but were similarly producing more from the land and for outside markets as well as for themselves. For instance, when the drought in the Sahel came, larger and more dense populations would have had more human resources to put to work in both relief efforts and

efforts to salvage the environment and begin the process of reconstruction.[63] The mere fact that people were not put to work at these tasks was not because of their numbers per se. The explanation should be located in the organization of these efforts.[64]

What can be concluded from the discussion above is that, the problem of famine cannot be understood by a retreat into Malthusian political economy.

But the attempt to link famine to population is not the end of the story. For bourgeois scholars have similarly claimed that desertification, which is the process of the expansion of deserts, is again to blame for famines. For instance, one Dr. Erik Eckholm of the Worldwatch Institute in Washington Claimed that "man-made" deserts represent about 6.7 percent of the surface of the earth, an area, which he claims is larger than the whole of Brazil, and that in Africa, not less than 250,000 square miles of desert have been added to the south of the Sahara alone.[65] Eckholm, consequently, proceeded to predict a doomsday, with many people dying, if the trend was not checked.

Another bourgeois scholar, by named Lester Brown, Presented a paper to the world population conference at Bucharest, Roumania, in 1973, in which he claimed that because of: "denudation and deforestation, the sahara desert has begun to move southward at an accelerated rate

all along the 3,500 miles Southern fringe, stretching from Senegal to Northern Ethiopia".[66]

However, it is to be cated that an Anglo-French forestry commission published a report in 1973, in Nigeria, and concluded that "no instance of sand movement on a large scale" was taking place. Also, that there appears to be no imminent and general danger of dessication.[67]

Moreover, in 1973, a conference was held at the school of Oreintal and African studied in London on the issue of the Sahel drought. At the end, it was concluded that an advancing Sahara could not be confirmed by the evidence presented.[68] Although the conclusion of the latter Conference is highly suspect, the two conferences nevertheless draw attention to the fact that the theory of desertification and advancement of the Sahara Southwards particularly as the sole cause or even the dominant cause for famine in the area has been exaggerated.

However, these scholars have gone beyond the desertification myth, to argue that the famines being experienced is as a result of a climatic change. It was argued that inspite of the advances made in technology in the 20th century, the success or otherwise of agriculture still lied, in the final analysis, on weather.[69] It was further argued that some areas of the world have climates that are less conducive for the production of food than others.[70] For instance, the staple grains of the world are produced in those areas that have both wet and dry seasons. Equally, the major wheat producing areas of the world are to be found in the grasslands of North America, South America, Eastern Europe, Asia and Austrialia.[71]

According to Bougeois scholars, if the earth were to experience a slight climatic change, the possibility for precipitation andtemperatu·e deviation would compound the already precarious nature of available food for the ever expending population of the world. They proceed to sa:' that, indeed the world has experienced some weather changes and that this invariably, has led to major environmental changes for food production, which, consequently has reduced man's ability to produce enough.[72].

On, what induced this period of climatic change, sone argument has been advanced. First of all, that the climatic change is brought about by atmospheric pollution "by trapping long-wave earth rediation and magnifying the earth's atmospheric heating proces.s from below."[73] It was therefore concluded that man-made dust and carbondioxide are contributing to a process that would eventually result in the North and South poles becoming as hot as the equatorial tropics.[74]

Another argument, advanced to explain the weather changes is that the earth's arctic regions are expanding for unknown reasons.[75] It was further argued that the cooling of the atmosphere in the temperate zones is bringing about a "Push" of the tropical monsoons down, toward the equator.[76] Because of this, it was reasoned that, in West Africa in particular, the rains are moving south, toward the forest areas, which already have enough moisture, and the result is

that the desert fringe regions of West Africa are drying up.[77] They claim that there has been a weather change in the world which again led these scholars to conclude that this weather change is directly responsible for the phenomenon of drought that is being experienced in some parts of the world, particularly, in the sahel region of Africa (which borders our area of study) and have concluded that this invariably has led to famines.[78]

Focussing on Nigeria, Hans - otto Sano's work has, among it's main objectives, sought to analyse the evolution of the Nigerian food crisis, which emerged during the first half of the 1970s. He laments the fact that the food crisis of recent, have assumed serious dimension, in the form of food shortages, rising imports and rising prices. He enumerated a factor like inadequate rainfall as being mainly responsible for it and concluded by asserting that the problem was caused by "the sahel drought of 1972-74 which affected large areas of the Sudan and Guinea Savanna, which include former Niger province.[79]

But these attempts to reduce the problem of famine to drought should be rejected. Firstly, although drought was a contributory cause of famine, it cannot be seen as the sole cause. Secondly, if drought was the explanation for famine, why has it not affected export crops as much as food crops? Thirdly, why are food shortages almost as acute in countries,where rainfall has not been a major difficulty?

Fourthly, the argument that there is a causal linkage between drought and famine ignores the intervening variables that determine what consequences a drought will produce. It must be noted that most societies of the world has adequate adaptive mechanisms that determined their survival capability in the face of hostile natural forces. Thus, human actions always intervene between drought and it's consequences. Therefore it was because of the failure or ineffectiveness of human action to intervene between drought and it's consequences that famines occurred in some parts of the world.

Apart from drought some bourgeois cultural authropologists, cultural geographers and social scientists have attempted to grapple with the problem of famine from the perspectives of the available food resources, which a group eats and will not eat. According to them major barriers are being placed to the use of available life sustaining food resources, and thus the neglect of highly nutritious foods found locally (that can raise the nutritional level and eliminate famine) because of cultural food preferences and food prejudices certain groups.[80]

For instance, it is argued that there is the emphasis on cattle to the detriment of crop cultivation by the elite of East Africa. Again that the sacred nature of beef-cattle in india and the almost complete absence of vineyards in Islamic cultural areas are said to be examples of cultural biases.[81]

Similarly it is alleged that individuals and groups avoid food such as beef, chicken, eggs, dogmeat, horse, camel which are important sources of protein as a result of these dietary habits. Vegetarians equally claim that food of animal origin is not essential for proper maintenance of the body.[82] Biases also exist for eating wheat, rice, rye, barly, sorghum and other life-sustaining plant foods.

These scholars, therefore, contend that all these create a qualitative and quantitative variance in diets, institutional obstacles to innovations in agriculture, incentives, land tenure, fears and marketing produce, all of which have negative effects on the expansion of agriculture, the introduction of new crops and agro-techniques.[83] They have therefore argued that there is adequate food on earth for everyone, if only attitudes and customs restricting the use of nutritional foods are changing. But that, "cultural bias limit improving the nutrition of many cultural groups, for people are slow to change "dietary habits.[84]

It is thus clear from our discussion, so far, that bourgeois scholars have generally interpreted famines in the third world in terms of cultural biases and in terms of natural factors. It is this latter interpretation, that led bourgeois scholars to conclude that in order to solve the problem of the natural factors that cause food shortages and famines, third world countries, must modernize their agriculture, along western lines. It was as a result of

this that they recommended that third world countries should adopt what has come to be known as the New Technology and the green revolution strategy, Griffin, in his book, has thrown light on the notion behind the green revolution strategy. According to him, the green revolution suggests that:

"there has been a major break - through in agricultural production, that this has been done in a peaceful context without the need for institutional reform and indeed that technical change is an alternative to political change."[85]

In a recent paper however, Yahaya Abdullahi has correctly asserted that the New Technology and the green revolution strategy is essentially;

> A development strategy which is designed to arrest socio-economic stagnation and political unrest in the under-developed countries. It is introduced with the aim of off-setting the production crisis inherent in simple commodity production whether organized through the employment of an independent peasantry or on a peasantry united to the land through feudal relationships.86

The green revolution strategy, itself, has its origin in the works by western development economists who argue that under-development in the third world is the result of low productivity, which is in turn, brought about by their primitive and backward technology. Thus, in order for the developing countries to become developed it is firstly, necessary for them to import technology; secondly develop a capacity to reproduce this technology; and finally, have their nationals sent overseas to be trained on how to

operate and manage the imported and implanted technology.[87]

Some of the proponents of the green revolution strategy included Hayami, Ruttan and T.W Schultz, who in their separate books imply that the problem of low agricultural productivity in the third world which makes them vulnerable to famines can only be solved by importing Western technology and adopting the green revolution strategy.[88] But the question, we shall now address ourselves to, it what constitutes the New Technology?

According to Biplab Dasgupta, [89] the New Technology consist of the introduction of "New High - Yielding seed varieties, Pesticides, controlled water supply, mechanical equipment from seed drills to tractors and that "the core of this package is the 'miracle seed' which has been developed through selective breeding to be highly responsive to fertilizer inputs"[90]

Thus, the new seeds, being introduced, have shorter maturing period, which made it possible for the cultivation of two or more crops during a particular year.[91] Moreover emphasis is placed on institutional arrangements for the production, import and distribution of inputs. Credit Institutions and state subsidies are established to aid large scale farmers.[92]

Some studies have been conducted on the success of the New Technology and the green revolution strategy in some third world countries. Yahaya Abdullahi, asserted that in the case of Nigeria, millions of Naira have been sunk in

attempts to bring the strategy to fruition.[93] Moreover, the various military and civilian Governments implemented policies, aimed at promoting the green revolution strategy like the massive importation of bio-chemical inputs, labour saving devices, the creation of fertilizer plants, irrigation schemes, the integrated rural development projects, fiscal measures and agricultural credit Guarantee schemes. Again, there was the Operation Feed the Nation Scheme (O.F.N). The National Accelerated Food Production Scheme and the National and State Seed Multiplication Project.[94]

However, inspite of these attempts at promoting the green revolution strategy in Nigeria the strategy was a failure. For as Abdullahi has aptly observed, these scheme were implemented in favour of the large - scale farmers. It led to the emergence of large-scale farmers who are absentee capitalists,retired top army officers, company chairman, directors and top Government burreaucrats.[95] For the peasant small - scale farmers, the real victims of the large-scale famines, they cannot affort to adopt the new technology and green revolution strategy, it only provides them with the opportunity to rent or sell their land to those who can; alternately, they must borrow money on onerous terms or provide cheap labour for the newly created large-scale capitalist farmers.

It is thus clear from our discussion so far that even the green revolution strategy advocated by the bourgeois

scholars in order to increase agricultural production in the third world has failed. Instead, the entire strategy has created more problems. Therefore, its absence or presence can neither explain nor combat famine in Nigeria and other third world countries.

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated in this section that the bourgeois interpretation of under-development in the third world as an original state of affairs and it's relationship to famine is wrong. Consequently, their attempts to offer psychological explanations for the backwardness and persistent famines in these parts of the world is similarly faulty.

Moreover, it has been shown that the supposed benefits of colonialism to the former colonised areas in the form of roads, railways, ports, education etc is also false because these were not developed with European capital, but through direct taxation, wage labour and forced labour in the colonies. This is besides the point that the supposed benefits were not primarilydesigned for the benefit of the peoples of the colonized areas, but to serve the needs of the imperialist powers.

On the specific question of famine, we have shown that the bourgeois interpretations of this phenomenon in terms of natural factors and psychological attitudes are conclusively faulty. Thus, bougeois interpretations of the general issue of under-development and the specific issue of famine in third world countries is fallacious.

It was, therefore, an attempt to provide an alternative approach to explaining the general issue of under-development in the third world, that the under-development and dependency theories emerged. These form the subject matter of the next section.

1.3.3 Under-Development and Dependency School:

The under-development and dependency theory arose as a reaction to the development school by seeking to explain why many third world countries have remained under-developed. This school starts with the correct observation that under-development was not an original state of affair, but that it was caused by capitalism in it's colonialist and imperialist form. In so doing, this approach knocked down the major pillar on which the developmentalists had anchored their various theories of backwardness as highlighted in the previous section. Associated with the under-development and dependency school are scholars like Theotonio Dos Santos, Paul Baran, Andre Gunder Frank, Samir, Cockcroft and Rodney.[96] We shall now address ourselves to the main components of the theories advanced by these people.

According to the dependency writers, the social, economic and political conditions prevailing in the third world are not due to an original state of affairs; but that these conditions arose primarily as a result of a world historical process which led to the development of the first world (advanced capitalist countries.) This development of the first world, in turn, led to a process

of under-development in the third world countries.

This historical process had it's genesis in the period during which the countries of the third world began to be incorporated into the world capitalist system. This relationship was initially based on trade (including the slave trade). The profit realised by the capitalist countries led to primitive accumulation of capital in Europe which deprived the third world countries of some by that precise proportion.[97]

Later on, having accumulated this capital the advanced capitalist countries of Europe, began to invest (in gold, mining and plantations) which necessited direct control or colonialism, in order to ensure protection of title property and to guarantee among others, forced labour. The establishment of direct control was to result in the extraction of the surplus of the 'periphery' countries, and also to the emergence of new relations of production i.e. new social strata or social classes, created in order to facilitate the exploitation of the peripheral areas.[98]

In the course of time, these social strata and classes became powerful to render direct rule by the metropolitan powers unnecessary. Added to this was that as primitive accumulative gave way to capitalist accumulation, it was no longer necessary to use force to back up the process of accumulation. This led to the end of colonialism and the granting of independence to the third world countries. But because of their historical origin, the dominant

social strata and classes created by the former colonial masters were bent on sustaining the dependent economic relationships even after 'independence'.[99]

Whereas the bourgeoise in the metropole countries invested their profit and consequently generated additional demand and investment, it was not the same situation in the periphery countries of the third world. In the periphery areas, local demand was satisfied by imports and this did not stimulate secondary investment. This led to a growth confined to sectors producing primary products for export.[100]

Also, whereas industrial capital at the metropole expanded rapidly and became the dominant mode of production, it was not the case in the periphery. In the periphery, surplus generated locally, did not lead to internal demand and domestic investment in producer goods to any reasonable scale. This was because of the presence of monopoly elements in the relationship between the countries of the metropole and those of periphery i.e. exclusive control over resources or markets and the prevention of free competition.[101] First of all, they monopolised force. But in the course of time, the colonial powers created legal monopolies which, among others, included such areas like purchase and distribution. However, some of these monopolies came to an end with the termination of colonialism, but were replaced by new forms of monopoly i.e. monopoly in international commodity markets and monopoly in industrial technology.[102]

There now exist a large body of material on the under-development theory. Various aspects have been subjected to highly critical discourse among scholars both outside and within those schools of thought which we cannot go into here. It will suffice to say only the main positions of the variants within the school will be highlighted as a basis for appreciating why this author adopted the mode of production framework.

One of the most important points of disagreement relate to whether capitalism can lead or does lead to

industrialization in the peripheral third world countries. Andre Gunder Frank denies the possibility of an independent autonomous industrialization.[103] He also denies that any such process would have an effect on the worsening poverty of the great mass of the population, since the process of under-development sinks the majority of it's people into even greater poverty.[104]

But Fernando Cardoso disagrees with Frank, by arguing that it is possible for capitalism to lead to industrialization in the peripheral countries. He thus speaks of dependent capitalist development in the third world countries. According to him: "There occurs a kind of dependent capitalist development in the sectors of the third world integrated into new forms of monopolistic expansion".[10]

Another area of disagreement among members of the under-development and dependency school is that between Gunder Frank and Dos Santos. It relates to what method to adopt in explaining the process of under-development in the Latin American Countries. Whereas Gunder Frank explained the process of under-development, from the point of view of satellization, T. Dos Santos argues, that this should not be the method to be adopted. For although T. Santos agrees with Gunder that drainage of surplus is an important element for the under-development of the Latin American countries, yet, for him, it is not the most important factor. To him, the over time development of internal structures, arising from a particular type of

international relationship of dependency is by far the most important element of under-development. Hence, he states that "The process under consideration... is a case of the formation of a certain type of internal structure conditioned by international relationships of dependence."[106]

One other important area of disagreement, among the dependency theorists, which should be high-lighted relates to the debate between Ernesto Laclau, Raul Fernandez, Jose F. Ocampo on the one hand, and Gunder Frank on the other over the latter's definition of capitalism and thus his characterisation of Latin American societies and economies as capitalist in nature since the sixteenth century or Colonial period.[107]

Frank's argument is that Latin American societies and economics have been capitalist since the colonial period.[108] In order to demonstrate this, he defined capitalism as a system of production for the market, for a profit which does not go to the direct producer, but rather to some other persons. His conception of feudalism is that it is a close system of production without market exchange i.e. an economy that is not penetrated by the market, not linked to the international market and therefore, basically subsistence.[109]

But R.A. Fernandez, Jose Ocampo and Ernesto Laclau, argue on the contrary. Ernesto Laclau argues that Frank is confusing commodity production with capitalist production.[110] Fernandez and Ocampo argue that the

characterisation of Latin American societies and economics as capitalist in nature from the colonial period is wrong.[111] That on the contrary, the Latin American economics and societies have remained feudal since the colonial period and that it is this failure to develop capitalism that can best explain their under-development.[112] They moved on to argue that Latin America has not succeeded in developing capitalism because during the colonial period, the Latin American countries dominated politically and economically by Spain and Portugal, and because of this, Spain succeeded in thwarting most attempts at capitalist development.[113] Moreover, at the end of the colonial period, when these countries became politically independent, these countries did have some opportunities for capitalist development, but they could not avail themselves of the new opportunities because of the structures already built in these societies by the colonial period.[114]

It is thus, clear from our discussion so far that scholars of the under-development and dependency school maintain that capitalism in it's colonialist and imperialist form is to blame for the backwardness of Latin America, Africa and even Asia. But the next question, we should now address ourselves to, is how have scholars of the under-development and dependency school interpreted the specific issue of famine, which is the subject of the present study?.

Franke and Chasin, applied the model under discussion to locate what they call the "seeds of famine", which occurred in the period 1968 - 74 in the Sahel region of Africa.[115] They described and analyzed the social and ecological destruction of the 1968 - 74 sahel drought and famine, during which about 100,000 West Africans died of starvation and hunger, a problem that was compounded by the critical reduction of agricultural production. However, in the end, they traced the history of the famine to the impact of French colonial government policy on the fragile ecology of the region and the effects of food and export regulations on agriculture and on the social structure.[116]

Here in Nigeria, an attempt was made to apply the dependency theory in analysing the issue of famines. For instance, Apeldoorn, Shenton and Watts[117] have all conducted studies on famines in Northern Nigeria using the under-development and dependency theory.

Using various case studies, the authors argued that hunger is not a natural phenomenon, for it is a social problem.[118] They further contend that crises in the third world can only be fully grasped, when situated within the social formation of peripheral capitalism i.e. in terms of the extent to which pre -capitalist modes of production were either maintained or transformed and by the manner of their incorporation into the world capitalist system.[119]

In an attempt to test the theoretical Framework being proposed, Shenton and Watts began by demonstrating that,

though pre-colonial Northern Nigeria experienced isolated food shortages, yet there existed elaborate systems of precaution and combative response to the possibility of food crisis to cope with the problem.[120] These, they argued, included the selection of drought resistant strains, the use of crop combinations, which varied with yearly environmental fluctuations, the efficient system of inter-cropping and traditional techniques of storage which enabled grain to be stored for long periods. Others included the constitution of the farming family units e.t.c.[121]

However, the authors argued that as a result of the incorporation of Northern Nigeria into the world capitalist system, beginning roughly from the end of the nineteenth century, most of the indigenous social response mechanisms to famines were eroded.[122] This was done by several means. First of all, there was the act of conquest itself, with it's consequent negative effects on food production. Secondly, there was the introduction of British taxes and the monetization of the economy. Thirdly and most importantly, was the transformation of indigenous land tenure system in Northern Nigeria. Fourthly, was the abolition of slavery and the introduction of forced labour to work in the mines, on roads and on railway constructions.[123] Shenton and Watts argued that the net result of these consciously pursued colonial policies in Northern Nigeria was to lead to famines.

It is again clear from our discussions above, that imperialist exploitation is being blamed for the famines in the third world by scholars of the under-development and dependency school.

However, inspite of the contributions of the under-development and dependency theory towards our understanding of the general issue of famines in the third world, some conceptual and methodological weaknesses have been identified with it.

Firstly, in an article published in 1971, Laclau accused Gunder Frank of adopting an 'unmarxist' conception of capitalism.[124] He criticised Frank for equating capitalism with commodity exchange and this, by logical corollary, locating the cause of satellite exploitation in the sphere of exchange rather then in the sphere of production.[125]

According to Laclau, capitalism in marxist theory, is a mode of production and not a mode of exchange. Under the capitalist mode, the forces of production are combined and re-organised by means of commodity exchange i.e labour, land and capital become commodities which are freely exchanged in the market and whose relative value (i.e. price) is determined by the forces of supply and demand. Thus, free wage labour and freely transferable property rights are peculiar to the capitalist mode of production.[126]

Another weakness which has been associated with the under-development and dependency model, is that since it

conceptualizes dependency in terms of exchange relations instead of as a social formation which has been subjected to the dominant capitalist mode of production in the metropolitan countries, the result is that there is no serious class analysis.

It was in an attempt to overcome the above conceptual and methodological weaknesses, associated with the under-development and dependency theory that in the 1970s, there began to be a shift of emphasis to the modes of production analysis in an attempt to reinforce the basic framework of the dependency school in grappling with the problems of under-development in the third world countries.

1.3.4 Modes of Production Analysis:

The modes of production approach is represented by the works by Laclau, Terray, Dupre' and Rey.[127] These authors attempted to understand poverty and exploitation in the under-developed third world countries as a result of the articulation of capitalist modes of production within pre-capitalist socio-economic formations.

For instance, Dupre and Rey who have examined the impact of the capitalist mode of production on the pre-capitalist modes of production of third world economies came to the important conclusion that, in most cases a capitalist mode of production does contribute to the persistence or perpetuation of pre-capitalist modes of production.[128] During the period of early trading contacts, the capitalist mode supplied goods and injected money into

the subsistence system. However, although these items were absorbed into the system, they did not seriously undermine the traditional process of production.[129]

The establishment of colonial control, during which the capitalist mode of production had dominant influence over the pre-capitalist mode led to the development of small-scale commercial agriculture, plantation systems, mining and limited industrialization. However, inspite of these developments, the traditional modes of production remained intact in some rural areas.

Moreover, Laclau has attempted to apply the mode of production analysis to the study of under-development in Latin America. According to Laclau, the main point to note about imperialist exploitation here is that metropolitan capitalism did not lead to the establishment of capitalist relations of production even when the Satellites countries of the Latin America were incorporated into the world capitalist market.[130]

On the contrary, metropolitan capitalism brough about an alliance between the beneficieries of the capitalist relation of production and those of the pre-capitalist relations of production. In other words, it articulated capitalist modes of surplus appropriation (e.g commodity exchange) in alliance with pre-capitalist modes of surplus appropriation (e.g tribute collection, servile exactions, use of slave labour).[131] Through this, according to Laclau, metropolitan capitalism had maximum benefits.

Commodity exchange was introduced world wide, arranging n international division of labour which could best serve its needs. Finally it was able to get the products of the satellit countries at prices determined through extra-economic means.[132]

The exploitation that is being carried on by extra-economic means led to low wage costs and low ground rents in t under-developed countries which when enconsulated in final commodities for international exchange, results in the low price paid for these commodities as opposed to those from the advanced capitalist countries for which they were traded.[133]

The mode of production framework has some major advantages Firstly, it enables us to analyse and understand the differenti experiences of different peripheral areas. Secondly, by locati the cause of exploitation in the sphere of production rather than exchange, we are able to comprehend fully, how colonialism brought about famines in former Niger province.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Our main focus in this study is to examine the relationshi between imperialism and famines in former Niger province. We began by exposing the limitations of the definitions of famine provided by Foeze, Don, Patricia, Castro and others, on the basis that they are based on only one element of famine and, therefore devoid of a comprehensive and universal applicability and acceptance. We thus proceeded to gave a universal definitic of famine as a social problem which involves the starvation of substantial proportion of the population (mostly of the poor class) as a result of extreme food shortage affecting some sizeable area and characterised by a fairly long duration. Furthermore, we drew attention to the fact that the immediate result of famine is malnutrition and under nutrition, which has

always resulted in high infant mortality and death rate. We also made the point that famine is largely a third world problem and that those who "survive" it are often relatively useless to themselves as well as to the society. These negatively affect the socio-economic development of third world countries. Those who "survive" suffer from mental defects, which means that the mental capabilities for scientific and technological innovation are adversely affected. Faced with this situation of socio-economic under-development which perpetuates famine, third world societies and economic have no choice but to import food and "borrow" technology; a process which has furthered their state of dependence and socio-economic backwardness.

Studies on former Niger province in the colonial[1] period generally fall into the following categories. Firstly, there are the works by Nadel, Mason, Shuaibu Naibu and Hassan. Their emphasis have been on the anthropological, political and administrative accounts of the area, to the almost complete neglect of it's agricultural history.[134]

Secondly, there are studies by Hopkins, Hogendorn and Helliener.[135] Although these works have dealt with agricultural history, yet they have been invariably concerned with the export cash crops like groundnuts, cotton, benniseed e.t.c. with little or no detailed study of the internal subsistence food crops like guinea-corn, millet, Sorghum, rice and yams. Moreover, these works have applied the theoretical framework of the developmentalist school

with the serious loopholes that have been identified with it.

Thirdly, there are those works that not only applied the dependency framework in examining famines, but also have to some extent concentrated on analysing the internal subsistence food crops. These works include those by Appeldorn, Shenton and Watts.[136] However, as good as these works are, they generally have two serious shortcomings which should not be overlooked and which, therefore, deserve some mention. The first shortcoming is their lack of empirical concreteness. In other words, much of their works are based on mere generalizations. Thus, no attempt was made by these authors in their researches to carry out any detailed study or studies of specific cases of famines in some specific areas of Northern Nigeria. The second weakness in their studies is that, they lack a serious examination of production relations with the result that no rigorous class analysis have been made.

Therefore, in an attempt to transcend these problems, we shall apply the mode of production framework in analysing the relationship between imperialism and famines in former Niger province. This framework allows for analysing the differential experiences of different peripheral regions and areas, as well as the differential experiences in different historical periods.

The implication of adopting the above framework is that famines or peasant impoverishment in former Niger

provance would be explained in terms of the mode of production analysis. In viewing the whole problem from this perspective, we shall examine the social formation of Kigezi province before the colonial rule, in terms of the modes of production and class relations. Firstly, this would enable us to grasp the dominant mode of production in Kigezi province before the colonial period. Secondly, it is through our knowledge of the pre-capitalist mode that we will be able to appreciate the magnitude of the changes that were engendered during the period of colonial rule in the area. In this vein, therefore, we shall examine the specific nature of the incorporation of the peasantry into the world capitalist system. This necessarily implies an examination of the policies and practices of the colonial state in relation to slavery, labour, taxation, landuse and tenure, and other related matters.

This approach is superior to other approaches for a number of reasons. First of all, the marxist approach enables us to treat social phenomena in the context of their historical development. This is opposed to the approach of mainstream Western social science which encourages the view of social phenomena, as something "given" or as thing which happen to be there, fully formed and with set characteristics. On the contrary, marxist methodology encourages the perception of social phenomena as elements of a continuum or as moments of an unfolding process[137] with the result we are able to have a more profound understanding of how

social phenomena came to be what they are and to "make some conjectures about what they would become".[138]

Secondly, by laying emphasis on the interaction of the different elements of social life (especially the economic structure, social structure, political structure, and belief system) the Marxist approach enables us to take a more holistic view of society, the consequence of which is that, it leads us to an in-depth analysis and understanding of the dynamics of society such as the historian or any social scientist seeks to unravel.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE SOCIAL FORMATION OF NIGER PROVINCE AND THE INDIGENOUS MECHANISMS OF COMBATING FAMINE ON THE EVE OF BRITISH COLONIAL CONQUEST.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one, we examined the various interpretations that have been given to the general issue of underdevelopment and the specific issue of famines in the third world countries. The point was made that famines in the third world countries cannot be separated from their specific socio-economic systems and the organisation of production and distribution. What this means is that the phenomenon must be linked to the specific social systems in which they occur and the differential abilities of the systems to cope with the effcts.

Hence, in pursuance of our attempt to document and to explain the re-occurrence of famines in our area of study from 1900-1945, we shall, in this chapter, examine the social formation of Niger province on the eve of British conquest with a particular focus on the indigenous mechanisms that were evolved by the peoples of the area to mitigate or cushion the impact of famines before the inception of British colonial rule. This exercise would enable us grasp the later magnitude of the transformation of the pre-existing indigenous set-up, brought about by British colonialism which actually paved way for the incessant famines in Niger province in the period 1900-1954.

2.2 THE SOCIAL FORMATION OF NIGER PROVINCE

Before the British conquest of Niger province, beginning roughly from 1900, the dominant modes of production found in the area, were the tributary and communal types. The tributary mode of production was found among the Nupe in the emirates of Agaie, Lapai, Bida and Kontagora. Here, societies were characterised by two main classes - the Peasantry and the landed aristocracy who formed the ruling class. The ruling class monopolised the political functions of the societies and exacted tributes.

But the communal type was found mainly among the Gwari. Here, there was the absence of clear separation of direct producers from the means of production. However, in both the communal and tributary modes of production which prevailed in our area of study, agriculture formed the most important sector of production supplemented by fishing, hunting and craft manufactures. Thus, a proper understanding of the societies of Niger province should begin by an examination of the ownership and control of land. This is because, not only was land the most important means of production, but other forms of social relations, other than biological, sprang from it.

2.2.1 Land: Its types and the nature of ownership

Geographically speaking, before 1900, most of the area under study fell in the Savanna region of Nigeria where little or no forest land was available. The land in Niger

provance fell into five main classifications. These were the virgin forest land, marshy land, open grassland, fallow land and the sacred and taboo land.[1]

Virgin forest land was rich in palm trees and not used for farming. Economically, the significance of this land laid in the fact that the palm trees, provided wine, broom, oil, kernel and the palm branches for thatching and fencing.

Marshy land was the most valuable land obtained in Niger province and suitable mainly for the growing of rice. This type of land could be found along the Niger and Kaduna river Valleys and along the banks of small streams which formed the tributaries of these rivers. The alluvium washed down by the streams, ensured the fertility of the marshy lands.

Equally important in the area of study, was the open grassland, which was the largest patch of land available for the cultivation of a variety of grains other than rice. There was also fallow land, most of which was found in the open grassland area, but in the high density population areas around Zaria-Kaduna , fallow land was not very common.

Finally, there was sacred and taboo land in the sense that such lands were reserved for the worship of gods and therefore out of bounds to unauthorised persons. Among the Hausa and Gwari communities, these lands were not worked for agricultural purposes.

did not necessarily involve the village head, for it was simply an arrangement entered between the contracting family heads but sealed by witnesses.

Nadel claims that among the Nupe, a man who obtained land by borrowing was expected to pay a yearly fixed rent in kind, which generally was one bundle of millet or sorghum.[8] However, among the Kwari, especially in the Minna - Bosso area, a person who borrowed land showed his gratefulness by sending a bundle of guinea-corn (or a load of yam) to the lender after harvest, or he organised a labour to help the lender on his farm.[9]

Apart from the borrowing of land, an individual who owned little land among the Nupe, could obtain more land through leasing. The land was leased not only for a long period, but also for an indefinite duration. However, before the land could be leased out to the individual, he was supposed to agree to one major condition, namely, the payment of a yearly fixed rent in kind. But when the individual to whom land was leased defaulted, on this condition, the entire arrangement was immediately cancelled.[10]

Not only was land leased to an individual who had little land, there was another method by which he could secure land in the period before the British conquest from 1900. Nadel states that among the Nupe, this was by submitting himself into the service of a landlord who owned large territory of land as a result of the fief which he was given by the Etsu.[11] The landlord in turn gave the

individual who had little land, more of the land and extended to him political protection. However the individual who submitted himself fulfilled conditions like an initial gift in kind, occasionally presents and other expressions of homage. But when these conditions were not adhered to the arrangement was usually revoked.[12]

Having considered the various method through which individuals without enough land, obtained some, the next question, we should address our minds to is, What was the position of strangers in relation to village lands before the British conquest from 1900?

Traditionally, all the groups in our area received strangers on equal terms, whether they came from nearby communities or from afar. Generally speaking, a new arrival or stranger could obtain land by several methods. Most of my informants[13] claimed that all a stranger did was to report to the chief of the particular village concerned, who in turn gave him land from the pull of the village land. Again, according to the informants, the other method was for a new arrival or stranger to stop at the house of any of the family heads, willing to take him in as a temporary member of the family.

During this period, it was not the duty of the stranger to take care of his food and accommodation.[14] This was completely the responsibility of the host. Among the Kupe, the only compensation paid by the stranger being a small present of kolanuts. After staying for sometime in

the household, the stranger could now put forward his request for land from the family head. The latter in turn, passed his request to the chief of the particular village community concerned.[15]

However, before the chief of the village community, finally gave out land to the stranger, there were certain procedures which must be followed. Among all the groups in our area, the family head who passed the request of his guest (stranger) to the chief of the village would have to testify for the character and reputation of the applicant - stranger. Thus, a bad testimony automatically led to the rejection of the application. Among the Nupe, the applicant stranger was again expected to give gift of kolanuts and fowl to the village head, when the formal request for land was being made. At a later stage, he again gave gift of kolanuts to the representative of the chief, who went with the applicant - stranger to stake out the farm - plot.[16]

It should be stated that among most Gwari communities, especially those of Kuta, the main criteria used for deciding whether a stranger was given land or not was the character or behaviour of the recipient with gifts playing only a secondary role. Thus, if the character of a stranger become bad after he was given land, the village elders would put pressure on the village head to withdraw the land and even expel the stranger.[17]

When a stranger among the Nupe was declared to be of good behaviour and given the land, he was exempted from

the payment of the village annual land tax or Dzonka' for the first two to three years, thereafter, he was expected to pay his first Dzonka'. However, this payment was to the family head, who in turn gave half of it to the chief of the village concerned. Nadel, states that the next Dzonka' and succeeding ones, were paid to the village head or chief directly.[18]

Having considered how individual members of the village communities in Niger province and strangers acquired land, it must be stated that there were certain lands which were not accessible to every individual. These fell into two broad categories; the sacred taboo lands and those lands of economic value, the latter associated more with exclusive land rights.

Before 1900, land considered as taboo were usually part of the village virgin land. No one was allowed to cultivate it. In most cases, the guardians of religious rites were in charge of such lands. Only they were allowed to enter it, either to cut firewood or to take sylvan produce. Any other individual who intruded was fined. In the case of the Gwari, the fine was a ram or a he - goat with which to appease the gods. According to one of my informants,[19] the Gwari believed that taboo land was the recreation ground of spirits and farming on such land amounted to forcing the spirits to abandon it. It was further claimed by my informant that, it was the belief that as a mark of their annoyance with the interference, the spirits would bring

bad luck to the farmer; for either, his children parents or he himself died.[22]

The second category of inaccessible lands, but which we consider to be more of exclusive land rights were those lands of economic value, that is, those that contained palm trees, and kolanuts. These were restricted to few individuals in the communities, usually, the chiefs. For instance, the forest ground Lubhozi, in the Bida Emirate where kolanut was grown, all lands that contained kolanut belonged to the chief and only he, had the right to give part of it to his selected subordinates at his pleasure.[23]

All, we have been examining constituted the main features of the system of land ownership and acquisition as obtained in the area of study prior to the beginning of British colonial conquest in 1900. However, although land was an important means of production in Niger province, yet, in itself, it did not lead to production. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the production process itself, that is to say, the social organisation of economic activities on the land such as agriculture, fishing, hunting and crafts. Here, only simple tools like knives, spears, and hoes were available for the pursuance of the various economic activities. This meant that the way people were socially organised in order to realise maximum benefits from their economic pursuits (given the low level technology) is important and therefore worth our consideration.

surplus of the efako was used to fulfil the social obligations of it's members, like housing, clothing, feeding, dowry for a wife, medical treatment and naming ceremonies. Although the surplus obtained from the efako was used for providing it's members with agricultural implements and the fulfilment of their social obligations, the other and remaining part was not only exchanged for other commodities, but was used for the payment of the taxes of it's members to the state.[25]

As far as the organisation of production at the efako was concerned, there was a system of mutual assistance and large-scale collective labour among the villages. These types of collective labour among the Nupe were known as egbe and dzolo.[26]

The egbe which was the equivalent of gayya labour in Hausa societies, involved the coming together of many household to form a single work force on a project, which was sought for, when the labour to work on the efako farms became insufficient because of the smallness of the efako or as a result of the illness of it's members, irregular rains or during the period of harvesting of crops.[27]

The procedure for enlisting the help of the egbe took this form: First of all, some few days before an egbe took place, the youngmen of the households contacted and organised their friends or even neighbours for egbe work. Next, the head of the host household, sent out invitation to drummers and musicians to play at the egbe.

Finally, it was the duty of the same household head to supply the food and drinks which it's members consumed.[28]

However, it must be emphasized that the youngmen of the efako households could not solicit for the help of the egbe. The egbe could only be used on the household farm i.e. on the farms that belonged to the heads of the efako or those of old men. This, according to Nadel, had some advantages:

> It provides a two fold balance in favour of the old men who cannot work as efficiently as the youngmen and in favour of the sociological head of the family group who though, perhaps no longer able to command the services of a large body of co-workers can still command the assistance of collective farm work.29

This then, were some of the advantages of the egbe and which was confirmed by all my informants.

However, among the Nupe, egbe work was supplemented by another type of collective labour, known as the dzolo.[30] The dzolo was practised only during the period of the harvesting of such crops that demanded larger work groups, like groundnuts, cotton and beans. The standard practice for arranging a dzolo was for farmers to consult their friends for mutual help when the need arose. Unlike the egbe, the dzolo type of collective labour was organised on a smaller scale, the head of the household was not bound to arrange for drummers, musicians and dancers. However, he was expected to provide food after the work.[31]

It is apparent from our discussion, so far, that the societies of Niger province, before the beginning of British colonial rule were organised, at the house hold level in their attempts to ensure adequate production of agricultural produce. However, this was further realised, at the level of the state, through the establishment of royal estates or official farms.

The royal estates were owned by the chief of the villages, and heads of the royal houses. They were mainly acquired through inheritance. What this implied, was that when the head of a royal house died, his sons automatically inherited his farm and in no way could it be sold or given away by them.

Most of the royal farms were worked by peasants, but more importantly, by slaves. This meant that slave labour was utilised. We have indication of this from various reports. For instance, Barth claimed that most of the slaves from Kano were carried by small caravans to Bornu and Nupe and that "the best of slaves now go to Niffee (Nupe.)"[32]

Similarly, Lander reported seeing about 200 slaves who were put on sale in the market of Rabah, the then capital of Nupe.[33] Thus on the royal estates, were to be found small hamlets, known as ogozi where the royal slaves lived. They looked after the royal property and worked the land. However, the first cultivation in the year, that is, clearing the first hoeing on the royal

farms was carried out by Corvee' labour of the entire village and even of peasants slaves of the neighbourhood. The work lasted for days that ranged from one to three depending on the size of the farm.[34]

On the question of the ownership of the instruments of production on the royal farms only the slaves were provided with farming tools. The peasants invited to work on the royal farms had to come with their own tools and were not paid for their labour. As the work progressed, drummers and musicians summoned by the royal lord were at hand to give encouragement to the workers. After the work, a lot of beer and water was supplied to them.[35]

All the yields of the royal estates or farms went to the chief of the villages and to the heads of the royal houses. However, in return for the help rendered by the slaves on the royal farms, the royal lords took care of their welfare. They provided them with food, clothing and their other needs. The married slaves were given large individual plots to farm from which they could produce food for their families and even some for sale.[36]

On the question of the relative importance of slave labour in the Nupe economy in general, Nadel was of the opinion that the massive use of slave labour did not mean that one can talk of a distinctive slave mode of production in Nupe land before 1900. He argued that slavery was only a form of production, and that there was no distinctive, fundamental relationship between slaves

and slave owners, and between the lord and the peasants who paid the former tribute.[37]

Both slaves and peasants paid tribute, otherwise the slaves kept their own products. This opinion by Nadel, was corroborated by W.B. Baikie who visited Nupe in the early years of Etsu Ndeliki's reign, for according to him,

> Three-quarters of the labouring population, whether free or slave, are at liberty to have their own farms, and to sell the bulk of their own crops. Thus, though a small farmer may himself be a slave, the larger his crops the larger his profits, and in working hard he is not labouring..., for the benefit of his master, but for his own immediate behoof; and thus, though a large part of the population of... Nupe are slaves, the labour on the small farms is not strictly "Slave labour".[38]

Thus, it is clear that slavery in Nupe land before 1900 was only a form of labour and not strictly, an entire mode of production. It was the slaves and peasants who worked the royal farms that ensured adequate production of agricultural produce, which was enormous. This was again supplemented by the agricultural production of the private estates or farms.[39]

The private estates were owned by members of the ruling classes - which included the intelligentsia, wealthy merchants, and military leaders. These private estates (fiefs) gained prominence in the nineteenth century, after the revolutionary movement which led to the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate had been completed. The new aristocracy that emerged out of this revolution arrogated to themselves the ownership of all lands which was

hitherto owned by the various communities communally. This action of the aristocracy was however in conformity with the Maliki law of Islam, which stipulates that: "Lands which come into the possession of the faithful, through conquest, except waste and unclaimed lands become wakf, that is are tied up immediately after the conquest".[40] Thus, the lands which was so conquered, that belonged to conquered people were regarded as Kharaj or tribute lands and it's people were allowed to remain in possession on the condition that they paid regular tributes to the Emirs in perpetuity. However, it was in an attempt to ensure efficient administration and the collection of the tributes, that the new aristocracy divided the lands of each emirate into estates and gave them out as fiefs to personal friends, military leaders, members of the royal households and the intelligentsia. These fief-owning members of the ruling classes could neither sell, nor were they permitted to give them away. After their death, the estates were inherited by their sons.[41] Most of the private estates like the royal farms, were worked by corvee' and slave labour. The contribution of the private estates toward producing enough food in Niger province, was equally said to be great, although, no figures were provided by my informants to back this up.

It is thus clear from our discussion, so far, that agricultural production in Niger Province before the beginning of British colonial conquest, was organised at the level of the household, and estates in order to

ensure adequate production of food.

Most of the farming activities carried out between April and November of the year, during which time, the clearing of land, burning, cultivation, tilling, sowing, weeding, harvesting and storing were done.[42] However, between the months of December and March, most of the peoples in Niger province generally engaged in other supplementary economic pursuits, like hunting, fishing and crafts manufacture.

Hunting, played an important part in the occupational lives of the communities of Niger province before British colonial conquest. This was particularly true of the Gwari as indicated by stories of the founding of some of their principal settlements. For instance, according to one informant, the first Gwari to enter the Kuta district were two Brothers, who were hunters from Abuja. They subsequently built a hunting camp at Zumbu, which gradually developed into a village.[43]

Again, another informant claimed that Paiko was founded by a hunter named Koro, popularly known as Sarkin Beka. Koro, it is further claimed, came from Abuja and was a reknown hunter. In the course of one of his hunting trips, he founded a camp called Wale. This settlement soon attracted a large number of people, because of the meat, they could buy, which they in turn sold to traders from the north. However after the death of Sarkin Beka, Wale was renamed Paiko after the name of his village of origin in Abuja Emirate.[44]

Among the Guari, there was a head hunter known as Fezo Tukodo: and for the Nupe, he was referred to as "Ndeeeko", meaning the father of the hunters. Both the Fezo Tukodo and the "Ndeeeko" were appointed on the basis of the skills, which they possessed in hunting.[45]

Hunting was organised at two levels: There was the hunting, that was carried out by individuals and groups of friends and secondly, the hunting organised by the community at large, which ended with a yearly hunting festival.[46]

In the case of the hunting by individuals and groups this could be done on an individual basis, or arranged by friends and brothers, who fixed a date on which to go into the bush to hunt. It was not very common for them to leave in the mornings. On the contrary, they left, mainly, at nights because of the general belief that this particular time was more rewardable in terms of killing many animals. This was so because the animals would be asleep and therefore oblivious of when their enemy - hunter struck.[47] Small animals that were killed in this way included duck, grass-cutter and boar. However, when the occasion demanded for the hunting of dangerous and bigger animals, like lions and elephants, more elaborate preparations were made. The village head consulted a diviner in order to ensure the complete success of members of the hunting expedition. Then, a large animal was killed, the Ndeeeko (father of hunting)

was given part of the meat although it was not very compulsory to do so. Moreover, any part of the animal, usually, the right shoulder and the heart were given to the village head which, again, was a privilege and not a right.[48]

As stated earlier on, apart from hunting on individual basis, there was equally the yearly hunting festival which was organised by the village head. When a large game was killed, it was slaughtered roasted and kept in a corn barn where foods are kept, for seven days. On the seventh day, a ceremony was organised, during which all members of the village took part. The meat kept in the corn barn was brought out, there was plentiful of beer to consume, and there were native drummers, singers to provide music, while all the hunters danced to the tune. Although, the hunting festival was a yearly event, it could be carried out when the head of the hunters i.e. Ndgeeko died.[49]

Fishing, like hunting was equally one of the supplementary economic activities carried out in Niger province, mainly during the dry season, whey they were not directly engaged in agricultural work. Among the communities of Niger province anybody - a native or stranger was free to fish in the Niger since the Waters of the Niger were regarded as belonging to all.[50] However, the ponds were guarded against non-villagers and strangers. Ownership of of the ponds was either by virtue of first settlement or through inheritance; and they belonged to individuals although some had no specific owners.[51] It was therefore

not uncommon to find most of the ponds being controlled and administered by their individual owners. And it was within their competence to let out some of their ponds to other people who, in turn, paid tribute to them.[52]

Fishing was organised at two levels; at the individual or group level, and secondly, at the level of the yearly fishing festival. The individual and group fishing was organised by either individuals or by friends. They simply decided on the day to fish and made the necessary preparations towards it. Those whose primary occupation was not fishing, but agriculture, had to borrow nets, and chemicals from fishermen, whose primary occupation was fishing. After this was done, they set out anytime of the day. At the end of the fishing, the catches were divided equally among the friends. The fishermen who borrowed them the net and chemicals were given part of the catch as a sign of appreciation. Although it was not the right of any village head to receive part of the catch, yet the fishermen also took some of their best catch to him out of sheer respect.

Apart from fishing by individuals and groups, there was equally the fishing festival, which was organised yearly by the village head.[53] Days were set aside for communal fishing by the village head and every male member, of the village community participated in the fishing festival. Drummers and musicians were at hand to entertain and there were drinks for people to consume. These were provided by the village head. At the end of the fishing festival, the

big catch was reserved for the village head, who in turn selected some for the Emir, who was regarded as the owner of the land.[54]

Crafts manufacture, like hunting and fishing were similarly carried out, mainly during the resting season. The people of Niger province were practising such crafts like glass-work, black-smithing, brass and silver-smithing, and weaving in which they were experts. This could be seen from one or two stories of how some of the arts came into our area of study. For instance, according to one of my informants,[55] the knowledge of glass working was introduced into the Nupe area by a group of glass workers, known as Nesaga. They migrated from Egypt, bringing the art with them. It is further claimed that when they left Egypt, they passed through the lands occupied by the Arabs, and then through such countries and towns like Borno, Kano and Zaria. However, the tradition proceeded to say that members of the group refused to stop in either of these areas, because they did not possess the kind of earth that was needed for the craftwork. The place, where the group finally settled was called Gbara, an event which again was said to have occured during the time of Tsoede, the legendary founder of the Nupe kingdom. However, the glass-workers later moved to such areas like Jima, Lado, Raba and finally settled at Bida, following the movements of Nupe Kings.[56]

Generally speaking, the organisation of labour in the crafts works was reminiscent of what obtained in agricultur production. The labour unit in craft work was known as the *efako* although there was the wider co-operation in craft-work within the framework of the large occupational unit known as the guild.[57] However, we must point out that ther were certain differences in the way some of the crafts were organised at both the *efako* and the guild levels. This, we shall point out as our discussion proceed.

As far as the organization of *efako* labour in craft-work was concerned, it consisted of a father, some brothers or other related kinsmen and headed by the most senior member. He directed it's activities and supplied the tools required by the group. He also had the task of disposing off the products of the group. He utilised some of the proceeds to fulfil the social obligations of the members. It should however be pointed out that when the head of the *efako* craftwork became incapacitated or too old to work, he continued to be supported by the labour unit.[58]

We must emphasise that *efako* work was very important in only those crafts which did not require a large labour force. These included weaving works and brass and silver smithings. Weavers among the Nupe were called *eduluci*, and were well - known in the art of weaving. For instance, Barth commented that "The Nupe have excelled in industry from very remote times and rival the inhabitants of Kano in the arts of weaving and dyeing".[59] In addition, Clapperton claimed that the early part of the nineteenth

century, slaves taken from Nupe to Hausaland were highly valued for their skills as weavers.[60] It is thus clear that the Nupe were reknown weavers.

Weaving was one of the most individualistic crafts that was practiced as it did not necessarily involved the working together of many individuals. This was exemplified by the composition of the efako group that was involved in the weaving craft which, in most cases, was made up of a man and his un-married sons. The head of the group supplied the raw materials needed and provided for the needs of members. However, when any of the sons became married, he was expected to set up his own weaving business although he continued to depend on raw materials from the efako head, until such a time when he was fully equipped to carry on independently.[61]

Another craft which depended much on a smaller labour force like the efako was brass and silver smithing. Brass - smiths among the Nupe were to be found mainly in Bida and Kacha reas. My informants,[62] claimed that this was the case because the demand for the products of the brass - smiths was highest in these areas. Unlike the labour-unit among the black-smiths, the labour unit associated with the brass-smiths was much smaller. Sons or brothers, who were married or grown up were expected to carry on their own work, with the result that it was not uncommon to find the working unit among the brasssmiths, consisting of, as a rule, a man and a boy or only of one man. What explanation can we offer for th

smallness of the labour unit found among the brass-smiths.

According to Nadel, it had to do with the nature of the work carried on by the brass - smiths.[63] It required much less co - operation than the work carried on by blacksmiths. First of all, the individual brass - smiths blew their bellows themselves. Secondly, brass-smith work was highly specialized. It was therefore not uncommon to find different workshop groups specialising in the production of different products in order to ensure high quality. Since this was the case, individual skill and inventiveness was encouraged rather than collective enterprise.[64]

It must be emphasised that other crafts like black - smithing and glass - work were equally organised at the level of the efako except that these were not very prominent like the above. Blacksmith and glass works were mainly organised within the framework of the larger occupational unit known as guilds. The glass - worker guild was one of the best organised of the craft guilds that was found among the Nupe. Because of the complications and the long process involved in the making of glass, which take about five days, emphasis was placed on a high degree of specialization and co-operation of the many glass - workers shops organised under the guild. Some for instance, specialised in the making of bikini glass while others specialised in black beads.[65]

The glass - workers, had a guild head, who assigned different duties to the many workshops under his control, and was equally responsible for planning their production. This was in addition to advising them on the market conditions of the glass business as well as ensuring the quality of the production of its members. Thus, in pursuance of these, standard glass works were displayed in his own shop from which other members of the guild were expected to take a cue. The other duties performed by the head of the glass workers guild included offering loans to members for the purchase of tools and settling quarrels among them. He also acted as their representative in the king's court.[66]

The black - smith workers also had a guild - head who was known as Dokodza. He was appointed by the Etsu of the Nupe people. All the blacksmith groups owed him allegiance and as an expression of this, they sent a gift of Crude iron ore to the guild - head, during the occassion of the yearly sallah celebration. In return for this, he settled disputes among the blacksmith groups and served as the intermediary between them and the king's court. When, for instance, the court placed orders, he distributed the work among the craftmen of the guild according to their capacity and skill.

What was more, apprenticeship in the blacksmith works ranged between two and four years. However, before

a person who successfully went through the years of apprenticeship was finally qualified to practise, a graduation ceremony was arranged for him and presided over by the head of the particular guild section. As usual, on such occasions, there were musicians to entertain and drinks to consume. Towards the end of the ceremony graduates was declared qualified to practise the black smith trade. He was offered all sorts of advice, especially on how to operate his chosen profession. Finally, he took the oath to abide by the rules of the black smith, works guild.[67]

2.2.3 The Issue of Surplus Appropriation:

Having examined, how production was socially organised in agricultural production and in other supplementary activities like hunting, fishing and crafts manufacture, we may now direct our attention to the question of the control of surplus in the process of production. This is important because it is an acknowledged fact that "the control and appropriation of surplus is crucial in identifying the ruling classes of any social formation".[68] Thus, an examination of the issue of the use and control of surplus is important to the point of enabling us to identify the ruling classes of Niger Province, before the inception of British Colonial rule.

Surplus extraction in Niger Province, took two major forms. These were in the form of labour rent and rent in

kind.[69] However, we will begin by examining labour rent in the process of production, at the different sectors of the economy, like agriculture and the crafts works.

As has been stated earlier on, the fundamental unit of agricultural production and consumption in Niger Province was the household known as efako, which was headed by a senior man and made up of many families. At harvest time, the agricultural produce of the house hold was handed over en toto to the head who stored it in a central granary, under his complete control. Some of the produce was taken from time to time and shared out among the families that made up the household, by the head. The criteria for this, was the sizes of the families. As a result, the amount of the produce which the household head gave to smaller families was minimal compared to the larger ones.

However, as we pointed out earlier, the agricultural surplus realised was also committed to other uses. The head of the house hold bought agricultural implements for members and used part of the surplus to fulfil their social obligations, like housing, clothing, feeding, dowry for a wife, medical treatment and naming ceremonies. The household head exchanged the remaining part of the surplus for other commodities and the payment of taxes of members to the state.

Surplus was equally extracted through labour rent at the level of individuals and the state in the process of agricultural production. We had stated earlier that individual members of the ruling classes like the intelligentia

Thus, the dzamka was not a fixed tax but rather, a "gift" meant to express the blessing that laid on the land, which the family received from the chief.[70]

Another form of surplus extraction took the form of the cattle tax or Jangali, which was charged on heads of cattle. Moreover, there was the title of Zakka, which was levied on the staple grain dawa (Sorghum) and C_ro (Millet). The Zakka was ten percent of the grain output after harvest. Other taxes were those on the specialised trades and crafts in the Urban centres, which were collected by the Emir's representatives. These taxes taken collectively, amounted to the exploitation of the people although there were provisions that governed the exemption of individuals from them in addition to the amount and mode of collection being governed by the rules prescribed in the Sharia.[71]

In summary, however, we can say that the dominant mode of surplus appropriation in Niger province before the inception of British Colonial rule was tribute. This could be found in those areas like Bida, Agaie, Lapai and Kontagora, which were carved into Emirates and incorporated into the Sokoto caliphate. Here, the societies were characterised by two main classes - the peasantry and the ruling class, with the latter monopolising the functions of the societie's political organisation and exacted a tribute.

But, we must emphasis that in that part of Gwariland, bordering the Emirates of Kontagora, Zazzau and Nupe, the mode of production was communal. This area remained largely

independent and was never conquered and, thus, never incorporated into the Sokoto Caliphate. What this meant was that their communal mode of production, remained largely untouched, the main feature of which was the absence of a clear separation of the direct producers from the means of production. The direct producers owned the means of production and the proceeds of production. Thus, the distinctions, associated with feudal and capitalist modes of production were absent. Because of this, the appropriation of surplus by a non-productive class and the resultant class contradictions was almost absent.

2.4.4 Superstructure

As, we have earlier mentioned there were two basic socio-economic formations co-existing in Niger province before the beginning of British colonial rule. First of all, there was the tributary socio-economic formation represented by the Emirates like Agaie, Lapai, Bida, and Kontagora. In these Emirates, societies were characterised by two social classes in addition to slaves. These were the peasant classes and the caliphate aristocracy who formed the ruling classes and who exacted tributes. The second type of socio-economic formation was the communal type which, as we have already pointed out, existed in parts of Gwari land which were never conquered by the Jihadists throughout the 19th century.

What the above meant, was that both the tributary and communal socio-economic formations, in pre-colonial times

had their specific superstructures in terms of evolving their political, legal, philosophical, moral, artistic and religious forms. The economic substructures we have already discussed, were dialectically related to the superstructures evolved in Niger province. Thus, it is important to examine the superstructure since, this would enable us have a more comprehensive view of these societies within which our analysis of famine is located. We will first begin by examining the nature of the superstructure of the tributary socio-economic formations represented by the Emirates of Agaie, Lapai, Bida and Kontagora.

2.4.1 Nature of the Superstructure of the Tributary Socio-economic Formation in Agaie, Lapai, and Bida and Kontagora:

As a result of the success of the Sokoto Jihad, some areas were carved into Emirates in Niger province among which were Bida, Agaie, Lapai and Kontagora. But the Jihad did not fundamentally change the socio-economic structure of the various pre-existing societies that were incorporated into the Sokoto Caliphate. Moreover, the Sokoto Caliphate was divided into Eastern and Western sections for the purpose of effective administration under the Jurisdiction of Sokoto and Gwandu, in which the Emirates in Niger province were brought under the administration of Gwandu. Thus, in return for their appointments as Emirs, they gave tribute, paid allegience and contributed military contingents to Gwandu.

In all the emirate formations in our area of study, the Emir was the head of the individual Emirates, but assisted by title holders, who were expected to stay in the capital. The title holders were given fiefs, which were administered on their behalf by their own subordinate chiefs or agents. But, in return for the fiefs given to them, the fief - beneficiaries were expected to collect taxes, supply military contigents and labour from their fiefs.[72]

The administration of Justice in the Emirates, was fundamentally based on the Sharia and administered by the Emirs and muslim Judges known as Alkalai (singular: Alkali). The Alkalai were appointed by the Emirs. However, for cases which were beyond the powers of the Alkalai to adjudicate, they were usually referred to the Emirs courts which were the highest in the Emirates.

The bureaucracies of the different areas was manned by the Ulama (learned scholars) in the moslem area. The majority of them served as teachers, religious leaders, (Imams) Judges, or scribes all of who were appointed by the Emirs. They were paid in salaries from the surplus products extracted from the peasantry. In addition, members of this class had private estates on which they employed the labour of the peasants, slaves, and those of their students. It must be emphasised that some members of the lower classes such as slaves were also recruited to serve the state as messengers, courtiers and body guards. The Emirates had

their police force which was generally known as Dogarai, made up of either the slaves or clients, and charged not only with the maintenance of law and order, but also acted as watchmen and the personal guards of the rulers. Prisons were also maintained by the various Emirates.

In terms of it's organisation, the Nupe army was loosely organised. It possessed only a small nucleus of regular troops, which was represented in the Emir's body guard. The rest of the army consisted of the slaves, volunteers and mercenary soldiers who were raised by the houses of the feudal nobility as the need arose. This army was not only made up of the infantry, but also had an efficeint cavalry arm. Barth, who visited the area observed that "the army especially cavalry was well known in the Hausa state".[73] In the area of equipment, the army depended mainly on bows and arrows, swords, spears, lances and Shields. Guns were later introduced.

2.4.2 Nature of the Superstructure of the Communal Socio-economic Formation of the Gwari:

As we mentioned earlier, most of the areas occupied by the Gwari were largely independent of the caliphate up to the beginning of British colonial rule in these areas. Thus, their communal socio-economic structure remained relatively unaffected by the changes occasioned by the Sokoto Jihad.

In a recent article, J.A. Shekwo threw some light on the political organization of the Gwari before the beginning

of British conquest in 1900.[74] According to him, the Gwari lived in both small and large settlements under the Osu (King, ruler or leaders) who was regarded as the highest organ of authority and power, in the settlements. Each of the settlements or villages had a properly installed leader known as Sa who was assisted by a cabinet, made up of titled elders known as the council of elders (asagba). J.A. Shekwo, claims that the Gwari political culture was very egalitarian and democratic and that if a family or a group did not like any leadership, it would just move somewhere else where it would be subjected to a different leadership [75] not unlike the institution of "sit alone" among the Tiv.[76] Moreover, because of the corporate nature of the society, any wrong-doing was interpreted as affecting the whole community. The Gwari communities therefore devised several ways of dealing with culprits of taboos and other offences.[77].

The Sa leader and his council of elders who constituted the supreme council of the society acted as the custodians of their community's morality. They executed punishments foe legal and moral offences. Offences, within a family were handled by the partriarchal head of the extended family involved who was assisted by the nuclear families.[78] However, in cases considered to be serious, like adultery, witch craft, farm disputes, it was usually handled by the Osu and his council of elders; the court of which was known as Osuboknu (the leader's court).

2.5 INDIGENOUS MECHANISMS AGAINST FAMINES

We now turn to a discussion of the indigenous mechanisms that existed within the tributary and communal modes of production of the communities of Niger province before colonial rule with a view to assessing the extent to which they cushioned or mitigated the impact of the problem of famines. It is necessary to do this because, as we stated in the introduction of this chapter, such an exercise would provide us with the background against which we can grasp the extent to which the imposition of the British colonial economy destroyed these indigenous mechanisms to the point of actually paving the way for famines in Niger province between 1900 - 1945. Before the beginning of colonial rule in our area of study, there were generally two basic levels for combating famine namely, those organised at the domestic and community level and those organised at the level of the state. We shall begin by examining the domestic and community mechanisms.

We observed earlier that the fundamental unit of production among the peoples of Niger province prior to colonial rule was the efako household which was made up of many families. In the process of agricultural production, some mechanisms were evolved by the various households in order to ensure the sufficient production of food. One of these was basically agronomic in nature. These agronomic mechanisms, included their farm techniques of inter-cropping,

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crop rotation and the selection of species and seeds both were conducive to the different micro conditions of each farm.

Inter-cropping in the context of this study, refers to the practice of growing two or more crops together at the same time. In pre-colonial Niger province, two distinct types of inter cropping were practised. The first was that, crops were either grown in alternative rows or in random mixture. Secondly, in areas that were devoted completely to agriculture, two types of millet and sorghum were planted together on the same mound with sorghum on the top and bulrush millet and late millet were planted on the flanks of the mound. However, on other occasions, the farmers inter planted maize and sorghum with groundnuts.[79]

The importance of inter-cropping as practised by the house holds the communities of Niger province cannot be over - emphasized. For it acted as a kind of insurance or security since growing two or more crops together at the same time, cushioned the impact of the possible failure of one crop which might be caused by bad weather, variations, diseases and insect attacks. This was because, in any one year, different crops were not likely to have been equally affected and this is what Lipton has branded "Minimax type of strategy or minimising maximum losses".[80] Thus through intercropping, farmers were assured of some return to their effort on a given piece of land. This implied that the possibility of a complete failure of all the crops sown any

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particular year was ruled out. This in turn meant that cases of food shortage and famines in any particular year, were neutralised.

Added to the above was the fact that, from an economic point of view, it was possible for the peoples of Niger province, through their system of intercropping, to maximise the return from factors of production like land and labour. For instance, the complete cover provided by a mixture shaded weeds and checked growth thereby reducing the labour of weeding. The system also allowed for some labour operations to be combined e.g. first weeding of millet and planting of groundnuts. As a result of this, labour was saved. This ensured that there was always adequate production of food crops, which in turn, implied that the problems of food shortages and famines were absent or, at worst, manageable if they occurred.

Apart from the farm-techniques of inter-cropping another agronomic mechanism which the peoples deviced was an efficiently organised system of crop rotation. Most of the farms were cultivated for years, that ranged from between four to seven, till the land was over-worked and consequently left to fallow. A new farm land was put under cultivation. The duration of the fallowing ranged from about four to fifteen years.[81]

In order to ensure the provision of manure to maintain and ensure the fertility of the fallow land, a certain degree of co-operation existed between the various

households and the nomadic fulani herdsmen who came regularly in the dry season to look for pastures for their herds.

As for the system of crop rotation, some of the general practice by the households were that crops like yam, groundnuts, and cotton which took one year to produce, and therefore being the first crops to be harvested, were not planted the second time on the same farmland. Moreover, it was realised from years of practice that crops like millets and Sorghum grew well on farmlands earlier used for crops like yam, groundnut and cotton. Thus, where the rotation began with such crops like cocoyam, groundnuts and cotton, this was followed by millet and Sorghum on the same farmland.[82] The importance of the system of crop rotation by all the groups in Niger province is pre-colonial times was that it helped to maintain soil fertility. Thus, when a crop was planted on a piece of land, the elements not required in large quantities by that crop accumulated for a following crop which required them. Those crops that had deep root systems fed on nutrients deep down in the soil leaving those at the upper layer for crops with shallow root systems. Moreover, the leguminous crops fixed the nitrogen of the air in their root nodules and thus added more introgen to the soil when the roots decayed. Generally, these increased and maintained the fertility of the soil which therefore guarantteed good harvests with surpluses for storage to be used during periods of famines.

Apart from the efficient system of crop rotation, there were other agronomic mechanisms like the selection of special varieties of crops which the various households in Niger province also practised. For instance, among the Nupe, Sorghum (Iyi) was of a number of varieties, which included Kuyi and Dindirogi in addition to Shenshere which, once planted, it produced year after year without the need for replanting. The households also had Eagi (Guirrel) which was a type of vegetable, specially grown and which took only three months to produce. The special varieties of crops grown by the households were all aimed at ensuring adequate food production within a short time since most of the special crop varieties, did not take long time to produce.[83] Thus, these special varieties of crops produced many times over the normal crops in any particular year. This ensured that there was always adequate surplus production of such crops to be stored and used during periods of hunger.

The agronomic mechanisms were not the only types evolved by the various households, in order to ensure the sufficient production of food. The manner in which agricultural production was organised, equally ensured this. This was provided by the constitution of the co-operative labour units (Efako) and of the communal work groups (Egbe).

As we have stated before the efako was the corporate labour unit which was designed for agricultural production. It consisted of several families, all working together. All the produce of the efako was handed out e toto to the

Thus, the heads of the efako households relied on the help provided by the egbe in the cultivation or any aspect of farmwork when faced with the problem of inadequate labour. This implied that the interruption of agricultural production, which could have led to food shortages and famines in these households was rare.

Moreover, after the harvesting of crops there were, again, efficient storage techniques that were devised by the various households which, again, must be seen as an insurance against famines. As we have noted earlier, at the level of the efako household, there was the division of the products after the harvest into priority allocations for planting for the suceeding year; for that needed for subsistence in the coming growing season; and then, for the consumption needs of the family. Thereafter, the surpluses were stored in efako granaries, which ranged from ten to twelve in number and which were, as a rule placed close to the centre of the house. During periods of agricultural failure, the grains, so stored, was used to remedy the situation.[86]

Although the storage of grains by the efako head was one of the ways by which the impact of agricultural failure was minimised, this could not have been successful without efficient storage systems which were devised by the Nupe and Gwari in pre-colonial times.

The peoples of Niger province, evolved many techniques for storing grains for long periods. These included,

Dried-earth granaries, which had egg-like shape, and built of clay, with strong thick walls. These granaries were characterised by a dome top on which a grass roof was placed as protection from the sun and rain. The granaries were further raised above the ground with the aid of stones or solid blocks of clays to protect them from termites. A rectangular opening was then made a little above the middle which could, when necessary, be shut completely with a lid made of clay. A variety of these types of dried-earth granaries existed throughout Niger province. The average estimated life of the dried-earth granaries was eighteen years which certainly indicates that the pre colonial agricultural system of Niger province could command reserves for several years which could certainly neutralise the negative effects of crops failures, wars, droughts, epidemics and hence famines.[87]

Another type of granary technique, that was evolved for storing grains for long periods by the peoples of Niger province was that made of plant materials. This consisted of a platform that was raised on stones which supported a container often covered with a grass roof. The container was made up of various plant materials like grass maltings, and cereal stems. A variety of this type of granary existed especially around areas of Maradi where the roof of the granary was larger, more permanent and had a side opening. The life span of the plant materials granaries ranged from five to ten years,[88] which would, again, imply that

large quantities of grains could be stored to be used during period of hunger and famine.

The question to be addressed is how the peoples of Niger province guarded against the problem of insect infections, fungi and rodents, which would have caused damage to the grains and hence prevent their being stored for long periods.

In this regard, it is interesting to note that there were varieties of devises developed to protect stored products from insect infectations. In some of the areas, the earth granaries were swept clean, replastered and fire lit inside to remove insects before storing the new crop. In the alternative, varieties of plant materials were used to prevent insect damages to stored products, by mixing them with the stored food plants. These plant materials included Anonna senegalensis (a strong heavy wood which is known to be resistant to the attack of termites) used by the Dakkawa. Others were Afromosia laetans (contain alkaloids and poisonous to mice); Tacca pinnatifida; and Erythrophleum all used by the Gwari.[89] Through these methods agricultural surpluses were stored for long periods without being damaged from insect infestations and, thus, in consumable form for use during periods of famine.

In addition, various other methods were also devised for protecting different crops, against insect infestations. A good example of this was cowpea whose pots were initially wetted by spraying ordinary water on them as they were packed

in the granaries. The essence of this, was to force out any insect, that could be present in the pots. According to some informants, the granaries were left open under the sun in order to allow insects to escape as well as to enable excess water to evaporate. But on other occasions, the techniques was to spray a suspension of provided pepper (Capsicum) in water on the pods. Again, according to my informants, the essence of this was to drive out the insects and kill those that remained trapped in the granaries. However, the most important method was the use of the leaves or stems of some plants, which had insecticidal properties. These included the leaves of a shrub called Shiwaka (bitterleaf) which grew ubiquitously along the banks of streams. The result of this practice was that the cowpea was stored for long periods, without being damaged from insect infestations, and thus was used during period of hunger.

In the case of Sorghum and millet, the bulk of it was stored unthreshed in the granaries except in the Zuru area of Niger province. The process, was that the bundles of Sorghum or millet were simply thrown into the granaries and arranged in layers or dismantled as they were put into the granaries and packed in layers. After this, the leaves of Annona senegalensis (Gwandar daji) were then spread at the bottom of the granaries and on top of each layer of bundles, until the granaries were full. It is important to point out that because of the efficient techniques for

storing grains, as devised by the peoples of Niger province, it was possible to store grains for a period of up to fifteen years without damage to the crops.[10] Thus, such grains like Sorghum and millet were accumulated for many years, free from insect infestations and, thus, used during periods of famines.

It is important at this juncture to point out that the huge surpluses which were accumulated over the years and preserved in these granaries were made possible by the ability of the people to engage in supplementary economic pursuits which lessened the demand on their main harvests and thus, allowed for the accumulation of surpluses over a number of years. For, at the risk of repetition, we have already shown that many people in Niger province were not agriculturalist, but also engaged in other supplementary occupations like hunting, trading, fishing and manufactures which were carried out mainly during the dry seasons. It is here argued that because they were engaged in these occupations, they increased their means for obtaining food and other needs from these supplementary activities and therefore allowing for lesser use of the main harvests of the season and, thus, ensured the creation and maintenance of reasonable surpluses which were drawn upon in times of crises.

The pursuit of these supplementary economic activities enabled the peoples of Niger province not only to engage in internal trade with one another, but also with outside

areas which, no doubt, increased and improved their means of livehood. An indication of the extent of trade was demonstrated by the number of trade routes that connected the province with other areas. For instance, Nupe was connected by many trade routes. One came from Sokoto and Birin Kebbi, this went through Kontagora and reached Nupe North of Bokwa. From here it crossed the Niger at Jebba into the Yoruba country or East through Ilebhozi.[91] Through this trade, the peoples of Niger province were able to acquire the means, with which they bought more food from outside areas that had a surplus during periods of shortages.

However, trade was not the only supplementary activity, carried out by the peoples of Niger province, which acted as a mechanism against period of agricultural failure. There was the institution of dashi, which was another supplementary insurance mechanism against famines. The dashi, as defined, was a free association of individuals, who paid into a mutual fund on a regular basis, with each member, being entitled to draw on the principal, when needed. On the question of how it was organized, each member of the dashi undertook to pay regularly, (it could be every week, month or five days) a certain amount of money into a common fund as many times as the number of members in a group. Each time, when the contributions were collected, a different member was entitled to draw the total fund, until every member had his or her own turn

whence the circle can be repeated.

However, it must be stated that the rule that governed the allotment of funds to individual members was flexible. Thus, a member of a dashi association, who faced some money problem, could make a request to it's head to be considered out of his turn. On the request, he was given the money needed which, under normal circumstance, would have had to wait for weeks, or even months for his turn. This allowed such a member to clear his financial problem on time with subsidiary ones which would have developed in the event of a delayed solution. As keen observer of the dashi association has aptly noted that it

> enabled the needy participant individual to gain access to a large source of wealth normally beyond his means in order to deal with some extraordinary expense - illness, a costly funeral or food supplied to see his family through the time of hunger".92

Such then was the importance of dashi associations as an insurance mechanism against famines, as devised by the peoples of Niger province.

It must however be realised that although the Institution of the dashi had some benefits it's impact on society in general was limited because it was mostly practised by those who were engaged in professional occupations like traders, Canoemen, craftsmen e.t.c. This was hardly surprising since the success of the dashi associations and the professional business, depended, to a large extent, not only on regular earnings of money, but also on the investment of such monies.

Apart from the institution of dashi, there was another indigenous institution whose operations helped to prevent the occurance of famines or to neutralise their effects if they occurred. This was the system of patronage and clientship which was tied up with the tributary mode of production found in parts of Niger province. The system of patronage and clientship among the Nupe was known as Bantatsa and it entailed the sacrifice of one's freedom for the sake of political and material protection.

According to Nadel,[93] before a person could become a Client, he had to enter into some agreement with his would-be patron. This usually included his agreeing to give gifts, services and payment of a regular tithe from the produce of his farm. On the other hand, the patron was expected to extend to him all material assistance and also safeguarded his legal or constitutional rights.

Clientage, as practiced before colonial rule, had several meanings and therefore took a variety of forms. First of all, it took the form of a man surrendering completely (by loosing his independence) to his wealthy patron. People who belonged to this category were poor and, therefore, needed the material support of the wealthy patrons. For instance, it was not uncommon to find individual craftsmen and members of the professions contracting the patronage of well-to-do people (who can use their services) by sacrificing not only part of their freedom, but also their earnings. Equally important in

this category were poor men who became servants in the houses of well-to-do people; they were also messengers and soldiers in the private armies of their individual patrons. In return, the well-to-do people (Patrons) took care of their needs, providing such things like food, clothes, e.t.c.[94]

According to Nadel,[95] Clientage, also expressed itself in another form, namely, at securing social promotion. Some men attached themselves to men to influence and high position since this was seen as a stepping stone for securing social promotion or upliftment to a higher status. The patron-client relationship was of mutual benefit to the parties involved. For the bara received material support (i.e protection from hunger or famine) while the patrons gained servants and soldiers for the contigents which he was to muster for the kings army as well as followers and henchmen to add to his prestige. Thus, for the poor, the system of patronage and clientship acted as an insurance against the unpredictable future, especially during periods of food shortages when, the bara was assured of some food from the well-to-do patron.

At this juncture, we must emphasise that when the system of patronage and Clienship and all the other mechanisms and institutions we have discussed above failed to check the occurence of famine or minimise its effects when it occured, then, it became the social responsibility of the

feudal state which had huge surpluses extracted through tributes. These were distributed to areas of dire need as the feudal ruling classes saw fit.[96]

All that we have been discussing, so far, constituted the indigenous mechanisms that were deviced by the peoples of Niger Province prior to colonial times. These mechanisms should be seen a collectively rather than isolated devices each with a sufficient capacity to help cushion the impact of agricultural failure on its' own. This, we shall elaborate a little more on in the next section by a very brief appraisal of the capacity of these indigenous mechanisms to prevent or to cushion the impact of famines in pre-colonial Niger province.

2.5.1 A Comment on the Capacity of the Indigenous Mechanism to Cushion the Impact of Famines Pre-colonial Niger Province:

The information available about famines in former Niger province and the response of the communities that were involved is fragmentary, particularly in the pre-colonial period. Nevertheless, inspite of this handicap, it is possible to bring these pieces of information together in an attempt to throw some light on how famine was combated.

Again, we must state, at the on set, that our research points to the hard fact that famine was not a regular feature of life in Niger province prior to colonial rule. There are two explanations for the absence of widespread severe famines. The first is that, we do not have evidence of a massive drought, or locust invasion, which lasted for

long periods in the area. Secondly, the existence of the security mechanisms outlined in the preceeding section helped to cushion or lessen the impact of agricultural failure during the occasional periods when the area experienced drought or locust invasion. For instance, during the reign of Abu Kwaka (1851 - 1857), the 2nd Emir of Abuja, Abuja was said to have been invaded by locusts.[97] There is however, no indication of the extent of damage caused, but it may well be assumed that the security mechanisms within the social formation of the area, were able to cope with the impact.

Again, it was claimed that locust came in great numbers to Abuja during the reign of Ibrahim Iyala, the 3rd Emir, whilst he was away fighting at Ija.[98] Although the locusts did much damage to the guinea-corn crops, there is, again, no indication that it led to famine.

Similarly, it was reported that in the 1880's, Bida Division experienced locust invasion which caused the biggest devastion of crops and, as a result, many were inconvenienced.[99] But the same report noted that "this calamity can hardly be described as famine", and that even during the Nupe wars, "periods of want were known, but no deaths are recorded".[100]

It is thus clear that although evidence of so-called natural disasters abound in pre-colonial Niger province, these did not lead to famine. The socio-economic formations in pre-colonial Niger province, had collective in-built

devices and mechanisms which successfully coped with the problem of famine. Thus, these mechanisms which should be seen as a collectivity rather than in isolation successfully cushioned the impact of famine. However, as we shall see from chapter III, these in-built devices and mechanisms were gradually eroded by British colonialism and thus paving the way for famines and peasant impoverishment in the area.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that the indigenous mechanisms, devices and institutions which we have discussed above collectively had the capacity to absorb and, indeed, did absorb, any untoward impact of natural disasters, such as, droughts, locusts, epidemics on the overall population of former Niger province in pre-colonial times. To be sure, we are able to document instances of locust invasions, droughts e.t.c. in pre-colonial times but there is, as at now, no evidence that these led to wides-spread and large-scale sufferings and deaths such wides-spread as is often associated with the phenomenon of famine.

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CHAPTER THREE

BRITISH CONQUEST AND THE FOUNDATION OF A COLONIAL ECONOMY IN NIGER PROVINCE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter, we arrived at two important conclusions. The first was that the socio-economic formations in pre-colonial Niger province had inbuilt devices and indigenous mechanisms for coping with the problem of famine. The second was that although evidence of so-called natural disasters abound in pre-colonial Niger province, these did not, in any serious way, lead to famine because the indigenous coping mechanisms successfully cushioned their impact.

Alas, in this chapter, we shall demonstrate how the conquest of Niger Province and the subsequent imposition of the colonial economy led to the erosion of these indigenous social response mechanisms without a replacement which therefore led to the crisis of famine. First, was the act of conquest itself with it's negative effects on food production. Secondly, there was the introduction of cash crop production and the monetization of the economy, the introduction of taxation and the transformation of the indigeous land tenure system. These, collectively, laid the foundation for peasant impoverishment and famines in Niger province in the period 1900 - 1945. We begin by an examination of the British conquest of Niger Province at the beginning of the 20th century and it's consequences for food production.

3.2 A BRIEF SURVEY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN NIGER PROVINCE AND THE BRITISH BEFORE CONQUEST:

Before the first half of the nineteeth century, contacts between the peoples of Niger province and the Europeans were few. The little contact that existed centred mainly on commercial activities by European traders and travellers most of whom were British. British Commercial interest was, at this early period, spear-headed by the Inland Commercial Company, with the Nupe Emirate becoming the main base of the over-all British activities in the Niger - Benue area.[1]

However, the second half of the nineteenth century, saw the beginning and an intensification of European Commercial activities in the entire area of our study. This period began with the expedition by Baikie in 1857,[5] an event which eventually led to the establishment of Lokoja as the base of British commercial activities in the area leading to the establishment of a British consulate there. With the success of the Baikie's expedition, some British trading firms followed up in their various attempts to enter into trading relations with the peoples of our area of study. Some of the British firms included West African Company Ltd; The Company of the Merchants; Holland Jacques and Company; and The Miller Brothers.[3] However, by the 1870s, as a result of cut throat competition among these expatriate firms which was resulting in relatively low profits, they were amalgamated into the United African Company in 1879.[4]

In 1881, as a result of the increasing threat posed by the German and French Commercial groups, the British United African Company was reconstituted into the National African Company, with more resources at it's disposal.[5] Other measures were soon to be adopted to confront the threat posed by the German and French trading Companies and to force the latter to withdraw from the Niger completely. One of these measures was, under-selling and paying higher prices for African products.[6] Another was opening up of new trading stations and seeking favours from the rulers in the area by giving them European goods and ammunition in exchange for permission to establish trade monopoly. It is necessary at this state to ask a question. Why did the second half of the nineteenth century in Niger province, witness such Cut-throat trading competition between European Commercial interests, in their quest to establish trading monopolies and ultimately, political control? A clarification of this is important for two reasons. First of all, it would enable us to situate within a proper historical perspective, why British imperalism in Africa and Asia became a must towards the end of the nineteenth century and which ultimately led to the conquest of Niger province. Secondly, it would enable us to clearly comprehend the underlying reasons behind the formulation British policies in the area of study, particularly, in relation to food production which

ultimately gave birth to famines. But in answering this basic question, it is necessary to start by highlighting some of the claims of the British as to why they had to conquer parts of Africa at this time; claims whose falsehood we expose shortly after.

In justifying their occupation of Niger Province, it became fashionable for the British to advance the charge of "slave-raiding" by the Nupe and other communities in order to conceal their imperial ambitions with a cloak of humanitarianism. For instance, Goldie, the chairman and Director of the Royal Niger Company, wrote the preface to Vandeleur's book in which he made claims to:

> appalling destruction of life resulting from slave raiding" which he claimed was worrying because under reasonable conditions of security, the existing population might soon be trebled... Bida armies held down vast regions treating the less warlike inhabitants as cattle to be raided when wanted .7

Similarly, Sir Charles Orr, a distinguished colonial officer, in his own book, sought to justify the British occupation of our area of study in particular and the entire Sokoto Caliphate in general, when he said:

> As regards the ethical question as to the right of the British Government to assume the administration of the Sokoto Caliphate, it must be remembered that the Fulanis themselves were an alien race, who had usurped power less than a hundred years before and that they had devasted the country by constant war and slave-raiding and that under their present rule neither life nor property was safe.8

It is thus clear that the abolition of "Slavery" was used as a justification for British occupation of our area of study. But this alleged justification for British occupation of Bida and surrounding areas have already been effectively debunked by both Fage and Mason in their separate works[9] and therefore, need not delay us here.

In reality, however, it must be understood that British imperialist domination of Niger and other provinces and territories in Nigeria and Africa, from the end of the nineteenth century, was a manifestation of a stage in the process of the international development of capitalism - the highest stage - and the basic goal was nothing other than to have monopoly access to the exploitation of raw materials and markets of the non European and pre-capitalist peoples and Social formations of the world.[10]

V.I Lenin,[11] has scientifically explained why it became inevitable for the British and the other European powers to seek oversea extension, for raw materials, overseas markets, the investment of surplus capital and employment of surplus labour when he siad:

> the more capitalism was developed, the more strongly, the shortage of raw materials was felt, the more intense the competition and hunt for sources of raw materials, throughout the whole world and the more desperate the struggle for the acquisition of colonies became.12

Thus, as a result of the division of the world into spheres of influence and colonies by the European countries, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the colonised areas (Niger province for instance) provided markets for the manufactured goods of Britain, supplied her raw materials, became reservoirs of cheap labour and an outlet for the export of surplus capital. The systematic British penetration and occupation of Niger province, should therefore be seen as part of the grand design by Britain to dominate the productive forces and resources of our area; to reduce our area to a mere appendage of British home market for manufactured goods; to supply raw materials for British industries and to become an outlet for the export of surplus capital. Thus, the British conquest should be seen as an attempt at realising and guaranteeing these goals. It is only when we fully grasp these developments that we can begin to situate the motive forces behind the British conquest of Niger Province from the tail end of the nineteenth century in concrete terms. It is also, within this framework that we can appreciate the objective goals which underlay later policies formulated by the British colonial authorities in the administration of the province under study which led to famines.

Having situated the British conquest of the Niger area within the overall framework of British imperialism, we

can proceed to an examination of the actual conquest itself to which we now turn attention presently.

3.2.2 The Conquest of Bida and Kontagora:

The immediate cause of the military confrontation between Bida and the Royal Niger Company, had it's origin in the Anglo-French rivalry in Borgu and, especially, in the North Western part of the Emir's domain. In the attempt to secure favours from the Emir of Bida and Borgu, the Royal Niger Company, had opposed the establishment of a French military post at Bajibo. This forced the French to withdraw, in September 1895. However, no sooner did the French withdraw than the Royal Niger Company, in 1896, established her own military garrisons at Leaba, Jebba and Bajibo, all situated on the periphery of the Nupe Kingdom.[13]

This action by the Royal Niger Company, clearly revealed her hypocrisy and also became clear to Abubakar (the Emir of Bida) that the Company was after-all aiming at taking over Nupe territory and, therefore, a war was inevitable. This was even more so because the Company simultaneously began to interfere in the Emir of Bida's rule in the area of north-eastern Yorubaland and went beyond this by establishing a base at Ikerran (in Akoko), an area which had since the 1850s been under Bida authority.

Meanwhile, Emir Abubakar of Bida, in a last minute attempt to force the company to evacuate the areas they had occupied ordered Nupe Canoemen not to take provisions to Leaba and Bajibo. But, because of the threat issued by the Company, Emir Abubakar withdrew the order and, subsequently, proceeded to enter into a military alliance with Bussa and Ilorin in order to defeat the infidels. Unfortunately, the proposed alliance did not materialise. It was at this juncture that Emir Abubakar went it alone and began to order Nupe Canoe pilots to leave the Company's services. This was followed by the seizure of the Company's forces and some ammunitions. With this action by the Emir, the Royal Niger Company began to plan for military attacks against Bida in order to teach it's Emir some lessons.[14]

The Royal Niger Company's plan of Campaign has been vividly described by R.A. Adeleye.[15] Suffice it to say that it's initial military plan and push was successful having dislogded the Nupe army from Kabba (formerly under Bida's authority) and urged a blockade to prevent the remnants of the Mahum's (who himself had fled back to Bida) army crossing to Bida to assist Emir Abubakar.

The Royal Niger Company's force that eventually took Bida consisted of thirty-two(32) Europeans; five hundred and seven (507) rank and file; one pounder and one 9 - pounder whiteworth guns; twelve 9 - pounder guns; five 7 - pounder mountain guns; five .45 maxim automatic

machine guns; Suider rifles; plus other ammunitions.

On the contrary the Bida army was made up of a horde of about forty-thousand (40,000), some on foot and others, mounted. They were armed with spears, swords, suider and Remington rifles and flint locks. Open battle actually started on 26th January 1897,[16] and the Royal Niger Company's troops would have been defeated but for three reasons. First of all, the strategy of the Bida army was poor, because it devoted much of the time to harassing their enemies, instead of moving quickly to capure the enemies' came with it's ammunitions. Secondly, the demoralization of the Bida army, caused by the fact that their Emir and one other high ranking State official were wounded; and thirdly, the Lapai and Agaye military contingent who came to the assistance of the Bida army at the decisive stage of the battle eventually withdrew.

Thus, with the deteriorating situation into which the Bida army found itself, the Royal Niger Company's forces advanced and entered Bida on the 28th of January 1897.[17] However, by the time they got there, the Emir Abubakar, had already fled to Kontagora. The Royal Niger Company's casualties amounted to 17 - eight killed and nine wounded; whereas Bida's losses, said to have been enormous, amounted to about 600 killed.

Even with the success recorded by the Royal Niger Company against Bida, it was not long before it became clear to the former that the only option was to re-install

the deposed Emir of Bida. Apart from this, an agreement was even signed in 1899,[16] with one Mr. Wallace a top British official in which the British promised to respect Bida's territorial boundaries. However, inspite of this, it was not long before ruptures again began to occur in the Shaky truce between the British and Bida and this, again, increased the hostility of the latter towards the former. Similarly, it is important to note that Kontagora was also developing hostility towards the Royal Niger Company.

The Bida and Kontagora hostility had it's remote origin in the attacks carried out by the non-moslem populations, especially the Gwari, against Kontagora and Bida territories. It would seem that these non-moslem populations were encouraged by the military set back of 1897, suffered by Bida. However, Bida and Kontagora, did not take kindly to this, as they too, carried out reprisal raids against the Gwari. But not surprisingly, Lord Lugard would not buy the explanation for the reprisal attacks, for he branded these retaliatory attacks as "Slave-raiding" exercises, and followed this up, by issuing threats to the two emirates to stop the raids or face the consequences.[17]

However, this did not stop the hostility of Bida and Kontagora towards the Royal Niger Company which represented the interests of the British Government in the area. But the situation, soon became clear to the British Government that the Royal Niger Company was not in total control of the areas, that came under her administrative jurisdiction, a situation

that was worsened by it's ill-organised and poorly led armed constabulary. Moreover, even after the conquest of Bida, the activities of the French in Borgu and the German threats to the Gold Coast became another source of worry for the British Government. The result was that Lord Lugard, then a major in the British army, was commissioned to organise the Royal West Africa Frontier Force to check French and German activities.[20] Thus, as it became clear that the Royal Niger Company was not in a position to protect British interests in the areas of the Niger the British Government revoked it's charter in December 1899 and on 18 January 1900, took over direct control of the entire area.[21]

Even, with the revocation of the Royal Niger Company charter, the hostility of Bida and Kontagora continued and the British Government began to make her own plans for the effective occupation of not only Bida and Kontagora, but, other areas in Niger province.

However, the immediate reason for the increased hostility of Kontagora and Bida towards the British especially from the 1900, was as a result of the activities of the West African Frontier Force (W.A.F.F) survey party which was sent out by the latter to explore the area between the Kaduna river and the Bauchi highlands.[22] This definitely ammounted to a provocation since it was a breach of their earlier pledge made by the British, in 1899, to respect the territorial integrity of Nupe. Inspite of reminders and

protests to the British to respect earlier promises, the British simply turned deaf ears. This naturally increased the hostility of the two emirates towards the British.

Meanwhile, both parties prepared for a military showdown although the British could not go into the offensive because most of their troops were away in Ashanti. But before a full-scale war was declared, Lugard decided to send some troops, led by one Major O'Neill's to the West African Frontier Force Station at Wushishi not only as a "precaution" but also, to mildly harass the areas against possible attack by the two emirates. In the course of the fighting which followed, part of Wushishi and surrounding villages were burnt by Major O'Neill's troops and the Chief of the former was exiled. Moreover, by December, 1900, inspite of the alliance between Kontagora, Bida and the exiled chief of Wushishi, the British troops began to record some successes. Bida forces, in particular, suffered severe reverses; for on the night of 17th December alone, O'Neill reported, certainly with some exaggeration, that Bida had lost about 500 horses, 1000 soldiers on foot, and about 200 wounded.

Inspite of these successes, as soon as Lugard's West African Frontier Forces returned from their Ashanti campaign, the British decided to launch a full-scale attack against Bida and Kontagora, early in 1901.[23] The British force, was led by one Lt-Col Kemball, and consisted of 10 officers; 3 N.C.O's; 325 rank and file, supported by three maxim guns and two 75mm guns. Before this force left Jebba, an advance party of British Soldiers was sent

on 31st January 1901 to Udaca, 4 miles north of Kontagora. In this particular encounter, however, the Kontagora forces were equal to the task as it was said that their heavy fire power held up the advance party of British soldiers for seven good hours.[24] But on the 1st of February, the combined British force (i.e the main force and the advance party of Soldiers) began to move against Kontagora. The Kontagora force, which numbered about 5,000, fought mainly with arrows and some guns but were no match to the British army which was superior in terms of fire-power, training, and military strategy. As a result, it is claimed that the issue was settled in two minutes, with the British troops recording only one casualty and the Kontagora troops, about 50. With this success, British troops entered Kontagora, but met the town empty. This did not however stop them from burning parts of it.

No sooner had Lt. Col Kemball captured and occupied Kontagora than he sent a British force in pursuit of the Emir who had escaped and headed towards Keria before the arrival of the British troops. When the British force failed to catch up with him, it return to Kontagora after four days of marauding the villages through which it passed.

Meanwhile, Lugard, now based at Wuya, was alleged to have invited the Emir of Bida for discussion on three occasions,. but the latter had turned down the invitations.[25] On the 19th February, therefore, Lugard, who was now joined

by Lt. Col. Kemball (after leaving a garrison at Kontagora) led a British force totalling about 500 against Bida.[26] By the time the British force got there, the Emir Abubakar had fled, but his forces continued to confront the British soldiers fiercely. It would seem that the stiff opposition dissolved only when the Makum agreed to submit to Lugard.[27] Thus, British troops marched into Bida and, as usual, a flying patrol was sent after the Emir Abubakar to try and capture him.

It must, however, be stated that one of the main reasons for the military victory of British forces over those of Bida was the division of the Nupe population into three opposing parties, a situation which the British wasted no time in exploiting by making sure that one party led by the Makum was neutral in their conflict with the Bida Emir. It was, therefore, no surprise that just after their occupation, it was the Makum, whom they proclaimed as the new Emir of Bida.[28] With the conquest of Bida and Kontagora completed, the British colonial forces moved swiftly to conquer other areas of Niger province.

3.2.3 <u>The Conquest Of Agaye And Lapai:</u>[29]

The field operations carried out against the emirates of Agaye and Lapai, in June 1898, was commanded by one Lt-Col T.D. Piptcher. The British force that effected the conquest consisted of 31 European officers and N.C.O.'s; 410 mercenaries and 450 carriers. Their fire power was made up of rifles for the soldiers;[30] three 7 - pounder guns

each consisting of 20 rounds per gun; 4 maxim guns with each capable of delivering 1000 rounds per gun. Lt-Col T.D Pigtcher and his force marched from Lokoja on 8th June 1898, arriving Barro on the 14th of the same month.[31]

Meanwhile, it seemed that the Agaye-Lapai and Bida armies had entered into an alliance and were therefore waiting for the British force at Galoo. Unfortunately, Lt-Col Pigtcher got wind of this alliance and, consequently, he left some of his forces and ammunitions at Barro to check the threat posed by the Agaye-Lapai and Bida armies.[32]

From Barro, Lt-Col Pigtcher marched on with about 22 European officers and N.C.O's; 291 mercenaries; two 7 - ponder guns, each containing 20 rounds; 12 rockets; 3 maxims, each with 1000 rounds.[33] When, the British force was approaching Galoo, they formed a square and continued the march in that formation. With only a few yards to the camp formed by the Agaye-Lapai soldiers at Galoo, the British forces opened fire. Because of their superior fire power, they were able to subdue the Agaye-Lapai forces just after some few minutes of fighting. From here, the British force moved on to Sanfada, just five miles from Lapai, after destroying Galoo itself.[34]

At Sanfada, the force rested for a week, after which it got itself together again, prepared to attack Lapai. As usual, in a square formation, the British army advanced towards the town of Lapai. But with a force of only 60

horsemen, the Lapai army defenders were simply no match to the superiority of the British fire power and, as a consequence, they fled.[35] The British forces, therefore, occupied the town and, as usual, burnt down several villages around Lapai.[36]

After the occupation of Lapai, the British force then moved on to Badeggi with the clear objective of getting hold of the Emir of Lapai who was believed to be hiding there.[37] Towards the fulfilment of this aim, an advance party under Lt. Carrol was sent from Lapai. But before this force could reach Badeggi, it's people got wind of their coming and, as a precaution, they evacuated the town. Thus, when the British force eventually got there, they met the town empty. However, it must be stated that, although the British force met no opposition and found the town empty, yet, they insisted on burning down the town and other surrounding Villages.[38]

Finally, from Badeggi, the British force proceeded to Agaye. This time, the inhabitants had not evacuated the town and, on reaching there, the officer commanding the British force ordered the Emir to come and negotiate which, of course, was unacceptable to the latter.[39] The British force, as expected, replied by firing some rounds into the town which was eventually entered towards the end of June, 1898, but which nevertheless found the Emir's palace empty.[40]

With his mission of subduing the emirates of Agaye and Lapai achieved, Lt. Col Piptcher withdrew with the main body of his force to Lokoja, their army base, leaving behind 50 men and one maxim under one Lt. Skinner to garrison the town on the request of, a certain Mr. Drew, the political officer that accompanied the force.[41]

Thus, with the conquest of Agaye and Lapai and the other areas which we have earlier discussed, the entire area that later became known as Niger province came under complete British control. But the question to which we should now turn our attention is what was the reaction of the peoples of Niger province, to the British conquest?

3.2.4 Reactions To The Conquest:

Although, by 1903, most of the entire area that later became known as Niger province had more or less come under British control, yet the physical occupation was not an easy task, as it would seem. For example, it became fashionable for British colonial officials and some European historians of Africa to give the misleading impression that there was little or no resistance posed by the inhabitants. This, they argued, was because their armies were little better than slave-hungry rabbles and easy prey for the disciplined and well equipped European armies. It is further claimed that the rulers of the areas hardly enjoyed the support of their people in their wars with the British. Thus, because of this misconception, the British saw themselves as "liberators" of the oppressed masses from their

tyrannical rulers, For instance Lord Lugard, in support of this erroneous assumption, added to the misconception, when he claimed in 1903 that "the misrule of the Fulani had rendered them so hateful to the bulk of the population who would welcome their overthrow".[42]

But, as Afigbo has already pointed out, these explanations have some shortcomings and, on the whole, were offered to rationalise and justify British conquest. Thus, according to Afigbo:

> It was to the interest of local Commanders to represent the small, but costly wars in West Africa as wars of liberation, crusades for humanitarianism and civilisation in order to justify military measures before home governments and to parry criticisms by humanitarian Societies in Europe.[43]

In the same vein, it should be noted that most of the British colonial officials and, infact, European historians were ignorant of the political organization and tradition of most peoples of Niger province. Thus, in keeping with imperialist justification of the colonial wars of conquest, the rulers of the various communities in the area were presented as "despots".

We must point out that the seemingly feeble and ineffective resistance put up by the inhabitants of Niger province was not due to the explanations earlier proffered by the British colonial officials and European historians of Africa, but the military superiority of the colonial armies who were equipped with modern weapons and training

against the native armies who lacked both.[44] It was this decisive factor, more than anything, that facilitated the British conquest of Niger province. Indeed, even with these modern weapons, it was not an easy task for the British colonial authorities tosafeguard their conquest hence they continued to face stiff opposition from the communities in the area, especially, at the early stages of their rule. According to our informants, the opposition to British rule took the form of passive and active resistance. This has been corroborated by information from the colonial sources.

For instance, on the 5th April 1902, in the Bida Division, one Mallam Maizanna was said to have proclaimed himself a Mahdi.[45] He consequently called on, and, succeeded in prevailing on the people of Bida, to drive out British officials and the Emir of Bida, who was accused of being a traitor, since he was a nominee of the British Government. Because of the popularity of Mallam Maizanna and the appeal which his message had, he was able to mobilize many people from, not only Bida town, but also from surrounding villages. Alarmed, at the contagious effect which his message was having and the increasing number of his supporters, the British colonial authorities decided to deal with him militarily even though Mallam Maizanna was not prepared for a military confrontation, having realised the superiority of British forces. Thus, Mallam Maizanna and other ring leaders "were surprised

and quietly arrested by the Emir's dogarai. Mallam Maizamna, the self proclaimed "Mahdi" was tried and sentenced by the Native court to six months imprisonment in the town dungeon and his followers were fined 25 bags of cowries each.

Again, in October 1902, a small military force was sent to punish the inhabitants of the town of Lefu in Lapai.[46] Their crime was that they had not only refused to pay tribute, but also did not recognise any instructions emanating from Lapai or Bida. It was further claimed that when court messengers and agents of the Colonial administration were sent to Lefu, "they were fired at and driven out of the town".

Again, in 1911,[47] a British patrol was sent against the inhabitants of Sakka District of Agaye-Lapai Division for charges of poisoning, Seduction, and robbery which, it was claimed, were rampant in the entire District, a situation which the District Head was unable to control, talk less of bringing the culprits to book. As a result, a British officer, one Mr. Yates, made a tour of the District, but he was attacked at Abugi-Zankara, in March 1911, when several friendlies were killed and wounded and most of Mr. Yates kit were looted.[48]

In reaction to this attack, a British patrol of 50 soldiers was put together under the command of Lt. Waters. The patrol left the town of Mue on the Niger to the troubled District. It was claimed that when the patrol arrived, the

people offered no resistance, as most of them were either hiding in the swamps or had crossed the Gurara river into Nassarawa province. The British patrol withdrew, on 17th April, after arresting the ring leaders and eleven other men, who were subsequently tried and sentenced to imprisonment for various terms that ranged from two to five years. Their bows and arrows were seized and destroyed.[49]

Again, political unrests were reported and continued to be widespread in the Gwari districts and military patrols were maintained as a regular feature of colonial Administration. For instance, as late as March 1911, the Gwari village of Taberma was burnt to the ground and five of it's leaders were executed for alledgedly killing a government agent.

As we pointed out earlier, examples of continuing resistance to British conquest and rule in the Nupe-Gwari Country abound, but the few cases which we have highlighted above are adequate. At this juncture therefore, we shall proceed to examine the consequences of the British conquest of Niger province on the food production which paved the way for subsequent famines in the area.

3.2.5 <u>The Consequences Of The Conquest on Food Production</u>:

According to some informants,[50] the conquest of the area led to serious disturbances and the breakdown of law and order. This resulted in hardship and famines, especially, in the early years of British colonial

occupation. Moreover, the informants claimed that the standard practice after the conquest of an area by British troops was to burn down the villages and its food crops; destruction of available crops; and that of any other material objects that could be found including, of course, granaries. For instance, after the conquest of Agaye and Lapai in 1898, British troops "systematically burnt all villages in the vicinity of Galoo as well as the town itself".[51] Again, although British troops found Kontagora completely deserted town yet, they burnt sections of it. By this time, the garrison sent against Bida had already burnt all the villages around Kushishi, occupied a farm that belonged to the Emir of Bida and reduced the whole population between Kushishi and Bida to living in great fear.[52]

Still, after the defeats of the inhabitants of Doronge and Ungwan-sami in June 1906 by a British punitive expedition, their towns were burnt and all the farms in the area were ordered to be destroyed.[53] As if to confirm the general state of insecurity in Niger province following the British conquest of the area, even the colonial sources document that when Major Burdon took charge of (Nupe Province in 1901?).

> The whole province was in a state of the greatest disorder and disintegration. The Pagan... West of the Kaduna have all thrown off their allegience and acknowledge no authority of either Emir or Resident. In Agaie-Lapai, things were just as bad. Farms were being deserted by slaves and such was the state of unrest that cultivation suffered...54

Again, it was reported that after the occupation of Kontagora, followed by the subsequent capture and exile of its Emir in chains to Lokoja, in March 1902, the inhabitants were said to have been dismayed by the flagrant show of British power. This got to a critical point such that Resident Burdon confessed that "a distinct air of insecurity and distrust almost amounting to sulkiness prevailed".[55] This observation by a top British colonial officer, is important as far as the theme of this study is concerned. For as would be shown later, the general insecurity in Niger province led many people to abandon their farms with negative consequences on available food in the area.

From the above examples, therefore, it can be seen that the disruptive impact of British colonial conquest and consolidation of its rule in Niger province led many farmers to abandon their farms. This was mainly because of the general insecurity and lawlessness which, as we earlier demonstrated, prevailed in the entire area following frequent British expeditions on the various peoples of the area. To make matters worse, an informant[56] reports that a standard practice associated with British military campaings was the commandeering of food that belonged to the people for their own troops in addition to the destruction of all available crops.

In response, the people did one or two things. They began to bury or destroy all available food before the

arrival of British soldiers. Furthermore, many of them began to grow crops only sufficient to feed their households for fear that the surplus would be commandeered by the invading army.[57] Either way, this affected food production and perservation.

As a consequence, large areas of farmland remained uncultivated for a long time to come. In this regard, therefore, it is instructive to note that the first famines which Bida and Kontagora experienced in 1904, occurred during the period of British conquest of these areas.[58] The famines which Bida and Kontagora experienced were said to have been specifically caused by the disturbance brought about by British military activities.[59] It was so serious that the local inhabitants of the area sold their children in large numbers to secure food for themselves at prices which reportedly varied from as low as 6d to 2s.[60] Herein lies the first instance of famine in our area of study from time immemorial. As a result of the famine, most of the peasants suffered from under-nutrition and malnutrition, with the vast majority of them being infected by such deficiency diseases like Kwashiorkor, marasmus, boils, dysentry etc. Many did not survive these diseases for they died.

However, in most cases, the colonial sources would only confirm that these diseases actually occurred, but would not state the actual number of people who either suffered from them or died. This is hardly surprising in

view of the fact that it was the practice of British colonial officials (including health officials) to suppress any information that would reveal the extreme exploitation into which colonialism subjected the peasantry of Niger province in particular and Nigeria in general. Thus, to reveal the actual death rates from these diseases at this period would have exposed the motive force of British colonialism, which was nothing other than the maximum exploitation of the peasantry of our area. Thus, it was in the interest of British colonialism that figures for death rates from malnutrition and under-nutrition induced diseases had to be suppressed. Inspite of this, all our informants confirmed that thousands of people died. Those of them who were lucky to "survive" lost considerable normal body weight and reduction in physical activity. This meant that they became relatively useless to themselves and even to the society because they simply did not have the minimum required calorie to perform anything, not even to farm. Moreover, the already deplorable condition of the peasants who "survived" was further worsened because they also began to suffer from epidemic disease like small-pox and cerebro-spinal meningitis, especially in such areas like Lapai, Bungeri, Bida and Kontagora.[62] furthermore, many died from these diseases.[63]

Although it became apparent that the general insecurity, lawlessness and the destructive activities of British colonial troops were having negative effects on food

production, yet, no concrete measure was taken to solve the problem. As would be demonstrated below, the British colonial authorities were more concerned with enforcing their policy of forcing the peasantry to produce cash crops and other resources which the British needed. These they ensured mainly through the introduction of British taxes and the pounds sterling.

3.3 THE FOUNDATION OF THE COLONIAL ECONOMY

3.3.1 Introduction Of Cash Crop Production

As we mentioned earlier, one of the major reasons for the British conquest of Niger province was to secure raw materials for British industries at home. However, Niger province was mainly a food producing area and not rich in mineral resources. The few mineral resources available, namely, tin, tantalite and gold were only mined in small quantities in the Abuja Emirate, Minna and Zungeru respectively. It was therefore within this context, that the British colonial authorities sought to introduce and encourage the production of cash crops, especially, cotton and groundnuts after the establishment of their rule.

In 1912, the activities of the N.C.G.A was being supplemented with the establishment of the Government Department of Agriculture in 1910 and in 1912, by the newly formed Northern Nigeria Department of Agriculture.[64] In order to encourage the growing of cash crops in Niger province, the N.C.G.A and the Department of Agriculture induced people by consistent propaganda and the supply of

special groundnut and cotton seeds (especially the Allan Strain of cotton and the American variety) which was declared more suitable to Niger province as a result of which the whole province was declared an American cotton Area.

In 1913, about 500 bags of American cotton seeds was supplied by the B.C.G.A and distributed in Dakaron, Egbako and Sakpe Districts of Bida Division, Galadima Kogo, fuka and Wushishi District in the Kuta Division, and equally in the Kwongoma Division.[65] It is to be noted that the new cotton strains were supplied free ot charge to the farmers. In 1922, about 198 tons of cotton seed was distributed, and about 200 tons earmarked for 1923.[66]

Apart from the introduction and distribution of the special cotton strains the colonial authorities also made sure that the cultivation of any other type of cotton was prevented in order to prevent natural cross-fertilization and consequent degeneration. Secondly, the people were ordered to dig up and burn all the old roots and it was forbidden to mix foreign and native cotton for purposes of trade. For instance, in 1913, in an attempt to ensure that the local strain was eliminated, the Director of Agriculture ordered the destruction of all old cotton trees.[67] Similarly, in March 1921, the Resident of Niger province visited the B.C.G.A buying station at Wuya and found that practically the

whole cotton being purchased there was mixed cotton. He therefore ordered the B.C.G.A to destroy all the seed which amounted to about eleven tons.

The British colonial authorities were not only propagating the adoption of the foreign cotton strains, but they also gave instructions on when it was to the planted. Thus, for example, in 1924, the Senior Superintendent of Agriculture in Nupe province issued instructions regarding times of planting cotton. The dates, he recommended for planting in Kwomgoma and Kuta Divisions was 1st - 15th August; and in Bida and Agaye-Lapai Divisions, it was from 15th August - 1st September.[68] Towards the end of September, the Divisional Officers reported that, on the whole, the instructions had been carried out and that, as far as could be seen, the cotton crop promised well.[69]

It was not only the cultivation of cotton, which the colonial authourities encouraged and supervised, but they also encouraged the cultivation of Kolas, (used as a colouring material in their industries) especially in the Labozhti District.

In this regard therefore, in 1912,[70] it was decided to establish a system of bonuses payable by the Beit-el-mal. It was proposed to give a grant of two pence per tree from the first to the sixth year and one penny from the seventh to the twelfth year to kola cultivators after which the grant would cease and the land Rent of 6d per

tree would become payable by the cultivators. For example, if a farmer planted out 100 seedling he would receive 16s 8d per annum for six years of £5, plus 8s 4d for the next six years of £2. 10s, making a total of £7.10s. Therefore the farmer would pay £2.10s per annum tax and the Beit-el-mal would recover it's outlay in bonuses of about six years consecutively. In this way, the farmer would receive a small "appreciable" reward for his work of cultivation and clearing during the long years of waiting for a crop return.[71]

There is no doubt that the various measures embarked upon by the colonial authorities to encourage the production of cash crops in Niger province were, to a large extent, successful as indicated by most of my informants[72] and corroborated by the various colonial Annual reports. Thus, for example, the Annual report of Niger province for 1913, reported that "There has been an increase in the acreage under cotton cultivation owing to the operations of the B.C.G.A at several new stations, notably, Wuya, Kede and Etsu Gaie."[73] Again, the Nupe annual Report for year ending 1921 had this to say:

> The areas restricted to the cultivation of American cotton were increased during 1920. It is now grown throughout the whole of the Northern part of Kwongoma Division and in the Eastern part of Kuta Division74 while that of 1924 claimed that:

> Cotton may now be sa.. to have become a staple crop. The 1922-2. seasor produced 450 bales, the next season 671, and the present season bids fair to increase again by 50% and reach the 1000 bales hoped for.75

It is thus clear from the few examples, we have given above, that the steps taken by the British colonial authorities to ensure the production of cash crops in Niger province was actually producing the desired results and hence increases production. However, inspite of this fact, it is surprising that J.S. Hogendorn and others[76] would deny the central role of the colonial state in encouraging cash crop production and to advance the vent-for-surplus theory to explain why there was an increase in cash crop production by the peasantry. The vent-for-surplus theory and the criticisms which it attracted from other scholars is an interesting issue but is only marginal to, our main focus and therefore need not delay us here.[77]

However, what we need to emphasise is that the direct intervention of the colonial state ensured a steady increase in the production of cash crops. At the same time, inspite of the fact that the peoples of Niger province responded positively to the colonial authorities for increased cash crop production, the prices offered by the trading companies for these products, in relation to the prices offered in other areas in Nigeria, was low. For instance, the Annual Report of 1923, reported that, whereas, the Kano rate

for groundnut was £15, it was only between £7 and £9 respectively in the Baro-Badeggi area of Niger province.[78]

Similarly, it was reported that the price for groundnuts paid by the United African Company in Niger province was 5s.6d per ton, as against 11s for an inferior quality in Zaria and Kano. This discrepancy in price was said to be due, mainly to the monopoly position of two large trading companies in Niger province, while in the North several companies had to compete with one another."[79] Whether this was true or not, the peasantry in Niger earned lower prices from cash crops than obtained in certain other parts of the northern province.

Thus, according to some informants,[80] it was because of the relatively high exploitation of the peasants by the trading companies in Niger province that some peasants were not very enthusiastic in responding to the British calls for increased cash crop production. For this reason, although general success was recorded in the direction of increased cash crop production in Niger province, it would seem that the colonial authorities were still faced with the problems of continuously persuading the inhabitants of the area to cultivate the cash crops. Thus, for example, commenting about the Gwari attitude to cotton production, it was reported, in 1926, that

> In view of the entire lack of interest shown by the Gwari farmers in the cultivation of cotton... such cotton as the Gwari produces utilised mainly for it's own domestic

> purposes, very little placed on the market, none of it being sold to B.C.G.A, who infact gave up purchases in this Division some years ago, the amount of cotton obtained not justifying the retention of a purchasing agent in the Division. This lack of interest is not due to lack of effort on the part of political officers, in inducing the Gwari to grow more cotton, for every effort has been made to interest him in it, but without avail.81

It was thus, because of the lack of total devotion to the cultivation of the cash crops by the Gwari and Nupe that, as we shall see later, the British colonial authorities introduced measures like taxation, to be paid in British currency, in order to compell them to produce these crops. It did not matter to the colonial authorities that, in 1922, the Emir of Bida was talking about shortages of corn in his Division owing to many farmers having "reduced the area under corn and planted cotton instead".[82]

Again, the colonial authorities, were not disturbed when the Emir of Wushishi stated that "In Wushishi District, the shortage of corn was also due to the fact that many farmers planted a large area than usual with cotton and reduced their guinea corn farms".[83]

Thus, inspite of these reported cases of food shortages and famines caused by decreasing farmlands being cultivated for the production of food, the colonial authorities did nothing to revert the trend. All that they were interested in was the maximum production of cash

crops. As we shall se below, the colonial state sought to achieve this by such measures like the introduction of taxation and the pound sterling.

3.3.2 The Introduction of Colonial Taxation:

After the conquest of Northern Nigeria in general and Niger province, in particular, it is claimed that the British colonial authorities were faced with the problem of providing adequate finance to run the large areas brought under their control effectively. Before this time, the financial costs for running the entire Northern Nigeria were met from some sources among which included the local receipts and "the fixed contributions made from the revenues of the coast protectorates which represented the supposed approximate value of the customs dues on goods imported in Northern Nigeria".[84] However, the contributions from these sources over the years were diminishing despite the fact that more areas were being brought under the control of the British colonial government. It was as a result of these reasons that in 1903, Lugard wrote to the secretary of state requesting for his permission to devise new means to generate more taxes.[85]

Lugards, also gave other reasons why taxation was introduced. Firstly, he claimed that it was justified to impose taxation as a right of conquest. His argument was that most of the rulers especially, the Emirs, were aliens

who had acquired the right to collect tributes by conquest. It was also this right which they had now lost, by defeat, to the British Goevernment.[86] Secondly, it was further argued that taxation supported the ruling classes and "protected" the peasantry; for the latter, in particular, would be "emancipated" from oppression since the contributions would be fixed and limited. Thirdly, that taxation was the corollary of the abolition of forced labour and domestic slavery. Fourthly, it was argued that taxation ensured the selection of the most capable and most influential men as the chiefs and advisers.[87] In addition to all the above, Lugard claimed that the payment of taxes was traditional to the society and, therefore, not an alien innovation. However, as would be shown later, these reasons given by Lugard for the introduction of taxation were a mere smokescreen designed to hide the underlying intensions of colonial exploitation. Thus, in 1904, Lugard imposed taxes on traders, crafts, special industries, tithes on the staple crops and market dues. However the Land Revenue Ordinance of 1904 made some changes in the existing system of taxation. For, according to its provisions, all taxes on land and agricultural output were replaced by a single levy which required 10 percent of the value annual production "derived or derivable" according to the average standard of cultivated land use in the neighbourhood".[88] In addition, the British authorities

were to receive one fourth of the amount received in respect of any tribute or tax.[8] In the case of nomadic cattlemen, they had their cattle tax (Jangali) fixed at 5 percent, instead of the former 10 percent. Other taxes included caravan tax, liquor tax and several others.

The colonial authorities began to carry out the assessment of the towns almost immediately after conquest. Bida town was assessed for the first time, in 1904, at 300 bags of cowries.[9] By the first quarter of 1910, one Mr. Langworthy along with Mr. Monk and Captain Kempthorne were all busily employed in the registration of Bida City.[10] The result of their work was a monumental compilation, which recorded all the compounds and inhabitants of the city.[11] In 1911, the British had introduced an organised taxation in the area, with census books being printed and the populations of every village taken, with careful records of farmlands, Sylvan produce and other details which were recorded. This was to ensure that nobody escaped the payment. However, with the introduction of British taxes, there was the simultaneous introduction of the British sterling as well.

3.3.3 The Introduction Of British Pound Sterling:

In order to compell the peasants of Niger Province as their counterparts elsewhere in colonial Nigeria to produce cash crops and work for the commercial and mining firms, the British colonial authorities did not only

introduce colonial taxation, but also insisted that this tax must be paid in British currency - the pound sterling. Before the establishment of British colonial control in Niger Province, barter and such currency, like cowries, were the medium of exchange.[92]

With the establishment of British rule, the transitional currency like cowries, began to create problems for the expanding production and trade relations of the colonial economy.[93] As a result of this, in 1904, the colonial authorities banned the use of cowries; its importation was also banned and state officials were empowered to enforce the use of the British sterling currency as the main medium of exchange.[94] This was immediately followed by the setting up of stalls in the markets, for the exchange of coins and cowries.[95] Similarly, the payment of the salaries of railway and mine-workers, troops, Police, Native Authority officials and other workers of the colonial government was made in British sterling.[96] However, this did not go unchallenged by the inhabitants of the area, for as we shall see immediately below, they vigorously opposed British attempts to introduce taxation and the pound sterling.

3.3.4 Reactions To The Introduction of Taxation And British Sterling:

Although, Lord Lugard gave the impression that the introduction of colonial taxation and British currency was welcomed by the people in preference to the unequal incidence and the "arbitrary" and "tyrannical" levies of the past,[97]

yet abundant evidence at our disposal clearly contradicts Lugard's assertion. For our evidence shows that the peoples of Niger Province reacted violently and sometimes passively to the introduction of colonial taxation and the pound sterling from the very beginning of Lugard's rule.

Thus, for instance in 1914,[98] there was widespread unrest in the Bassa Districts of Abuja Division. This was as a result of the refusal of the Bassas to be assessed and consequently to pay the taxes. In reaction, a British patrol force, was put together to deal with the recalcitrant Districts. However, before the Patrol Force left, the Resident warned that "every effort must be made to avoid conflict with the Bassa"[99] since, according to him, "there is such a strong feeling at home and the Secretary of State is so worried by questions in the House, when anything of the kind occurs'.[100] He proceeded to reveal that the Government here finds itself equally harassed by cables demanding explanations, why so many natives were being killed.[101]

Because of the above, the Resident recommended that violent conflict should be "avoided" as much as possible and, as if to betray his apprehension about the proposed conflict, he ordered that if the use of force was unavoidable, then enemy losses should be undercounted. He further instructed that it was only the officer commanding the patrol and the political officer, who would decide together, the number of people killed or wounded.

However, inspite of these "warnings", it is clear that the British patrol encountered opposition from the Bassas, since, it was kept busy in the latter's Districts for six weeks at the end of which the three villages of Kakkari, Chinaboji and Abogu were burnt.[102]

Again, in early 1912,[103] revolt broke out at Killankwa in Pai District of Abuja Emirate against the payment of taxes. Even before 1912, the same area had witnessed serious troubles because of their determined refusal to pay taxes. During this particular period, the alledged ring-leaders, who were named as Tukurua, Shaba and Gana Madaiki were arrested, for inciting others as well as for refusing to pay tribute to the British.[104]

The same village (i.e Killankwa), together with other villages in the Pai district, namely, Chikuka and Kabbi, revolted again, in November 1912, against the payment of taxes. As a result of this new revolt, one Mr. W. Morgan, the District Officer of Abuja, sent to the Sarki of Pai urging him to go to Killankwa to inform the Headman that they should meet him at Pai, which he intended to visit.[105] But the Headmen of the revolting villages rebuffed the District Officer's invitation. However, Mr. Morgan proceeded with the visit to the town and, as he approached it, he was welcomed by two arrows which were fired from within the town, and men suddenly appeared from all sides eager to fight. Morgan succeeded in persuading his attackers that he was for peace and that, they should not

fire at him. Nevertheless before he left, Morgan demanded that all bows and arrows be surrendered and brought in to Pai. More seriously, he demanded that the towns should "produce evidence within 30 days that they had repented of their refusal to pay tribute", threatening that if these conditions were not met he would return.[106]

It would seem that the conditions and ultimatum issued went unheeded by the inhabitants of Pai district; for a British patrol was put together to punish these so-called recalcitrant villages. It got to Killankwa and, after a stiff opposition put up by its inhabitants, the town was finally occupied. In the brief encounter, which lasted for about fifteen minutes, about forty villagers were killed while the rest fled never to return to pay these taxes.[107] in response, the British troops burnt down the town. From here, the force proceeded to occupy Chikuka, on 24th November, and took away every available food including livestock after which they finally burnt down the village.[108] The force then moved on to Kabbi, but found the village deserted and, in response, the patrol, as usual, burnt it.[109]

Other examples of the opposition to the introduction of colonial taxation encountered in our area took the form of what Mahmud Tukur calls "passive resistance",[110] which means, resistance that took the form of not obeying orders, but without active measures of opposition.

For instance, migration, was adopted as a form of passive resistance against the payment of British taxes. Thus, in

October 1906, the inhabitants of Waamu deserted their town in order to avoid taxation and proceeded to settle in Wushishi territory.[111] The Resident informed the Assistant Resident at Wushishi of their presence, in order to include the deserters, among those to be assessed. When it became clear to the deserting settlers that there was no way they could avoid paying the taxes, they returned to Kontagora after which the Resident, one Sharpe, warned them on the consequences of their refusal to pay their taxes in future.

One other form of passive resistance by the inhabitants of Niger Province, especially the Gwaris, was by refusing to come down from their hill-top settlements to the plains. The reasons were to avoid being compelled to cultivate cash crops and also to avoid being assessed for purposes of taxation. To get them to come down, the British colonial authorities had initially attempted to use "peaceful" persuasion but, when this failed, threats were issued. When the threats were ignored, British troops occasionally fired at the Gwari settlements on the hills in order to scare its inhabitants to leave the hill-tops.[112]

Several studies have been conducted on the hill settlements in Africa[113] and their reaction to colonial conquest and rule into which we cannot enter discussion now. From these studies, however, it is clear that the colonial officials and scholars erroneously assumed that

hills settlements in Africa were devices for avoiding slave raids from stronger neighbours in the plains. However, the issue of the withdrawal from the hill-tops by the Gwari of Niger Province, cannot be reduced to explanations of slave-raids, as advanced by M.B. Gleave and others.[114] Most of the Gwari people were forced to come down the hills to the plains by the British Colonial authorities, in order to compell the former to cultivate cash crop and to pay the taxes. The point, however, is that the refusal to the Gwari to descend the hill-tops was a form of passive resistance.

Another instance of passive resistance by the peoples of Niger Province, to the introduction of colonial taxation and currency, was their practice of buying the old type of currency. For in 1932, it was being reported [115] that cowries were re-appearing in the Bida and Agaye markets and that they were being traded in Abuja markets at 500 to the penny and in Bida at 250. The report went on to admit that the "dirty look of the cowries lent support to the suspicion that the Nupe had buried thousands of these shells; when they had been declared void as money." Furthermore, according to the same report, this theory is confirmed by the fact that the neighbouring Gwari "pagans" had earlier asked whether they might make their trading transactions half in money and half in their hidden supply of Cowries.[116]

This last form of passive resistance brings us to a consideration of the impact of the introduction of colonial taxation and currency.

3.3.5 <u>The Impact Of The Introduction Of Colonial Taxation And Currency On Food Production</u>:

The introduction of colonial taxation and currency transformed the pre-existing taxation sytem paid largely in kind into an oppressive and exploitative taxation system paid in cash (pound sterling). This contributed to preparing the ground for famines in Niger province. It did this in a number of ways which we discussed below.

Firstly, in our discussion of the social formation of Niger Province before the establishment of British colonial control, we pointed out that the traditional productive unit among the peasants was embodied in the fako with the head of such household being responsible for, among others, paying the taxes of it's members.

But with the beginning of colonial rule in Niger province, Colonial taxation began to take into account only the individuals. To this effect, tax receipts were no longer issued for the whole household or even family to be paid by the respective heads but by individuals. Thus, colonial taxation ignored and destroyed the existence of the household as a productive unit in Niger province - the implications of which we shall discuss later on with regards to famine.

Moreover, as we have earlier mentioned, before the introduction of colonial taxation, there was a land tax

which, among the Nupe was know as dzanka and paid to the chief annually. The amount paid, varied with the conditions of the crops. The dzanka' was thus very flexible to the extent that a household head, who experienced crop failure was exempted from its payment. The dzanka' paid by the family head was thus used to create central grain reserves from which the needy were assisted during periods of food scarcity.

In contrast, colonial taxation presented an increasing burden upon the peasantry in Niger Province. For instance, over a period of eight years, that is, from 1905 - 1913, the Land Revenue and Jangali tax in Bida Division increased drastically. Thus, whereas the Land Revenue in 1905 was about £2,185, by 1913, it had jumped to £16,663, an increase of about 700 percent.[117] Again, although the jangali tax was 60 in 1906, this again jumped to £1215 in 1913,[116] an increase of 1,925 percent without any relative increase in sources of income of the people.

Another example of oppression and exploitation by colonial taxation is provided by the Zuru Native Administration Tax Assessment for a period of ten years, 1940 - 1950. Thereon, the tax assessment for Zuru Native Administration was about £4,417 in 1940, this had by 1949, climbed to £12,728,[119] an increase of 188 percent over a period of nine years without any noticeable increase in sources of income given the extremely low prices paid

for the new cash crops as we pointed out earlier.

Even, if we compare the tax assessment for Niger Province, with those of other provinces, the picture of extreme exploitation of the peasantry of Niger Province by colonial taxation is revealed. Thus, Table III below is a comparative Table showing Taxes paid in other Principal towns of Northern Provinces between 1916 and 1918.

As table 3.1 clearly shows, out of some of the most important towns in the Northern provinces indicated, Bida town was recording the highest tax assessment for the period 1916 - 1918. This was insoite of the fact that Bida town was not as populated as Kano city. In an attempt to offer explanation for this obvious discrepancy, the secretary of the Northern provinces claimed that "a town does not pay according to its population, but according to its wealth". Even if that was the case, it is very difficult to sustain the argument that Bida town was richer than Kano city. Moreover, if we further examine another table 3.1 dealing, again, with comparative tax figures for Bida Emirate, Ilorin and Ibadan respectively, then, the argument advanced by the secretary of the Northern provinces was extreamly tenuos if not fraudulent.

TABLE 3.1

TOWNS	TOTAL ASSESSMENT			TOTAL POPULATION		
	1916	1917	1918	1916	1917	1918
BIDA	£3,652.18.6	£4,764.11.6	£3,982.16.0	24,068	24,056	24,056
KANO	£3,589.4.9	£3,950.11.11	£3,574.0.3	59.672	59.672	35.786
ZARIA	£1,627.5.4	£1,714.19.7	£2,059.11.4	13,691	13,691	12,570
MAIDUGURI	£848.3.0	£1,236.12.1	£1,609.5.9	12,274	15,237	15,018
BAUCHI	£768.7.6	£706.6.6	£812.0.10	9.850	11,166	10.051
SOKOTO	£642.9.10	£861.9.10	£982.6.8	21,624	21,624	19,349
KAT INA	£400.16.9	£396.1.9	£395.14.0	13,927	13,927	16,513

SOURCE:-

NAK SNP 10/203/1919, Taxes paid by Kano, Sokoto, Maiduguri, Bauchi, Zaria, Bida, Katsina and Ilorin.

(TABLE 3.6)

	TAX FIGURES 1934 - 1935
BIDA TOWN	Between 9 - 10.6d
BIDA EMIRATE (DISTRICT)	" 9s.6d - 15s
ILORIN TOWN	9s
IBADAN TOWN	7s
ILORIN EMIRATE (DISTRICT)	Between 10s - 11s

SOURCE:- Nadel OP.CIT, Pages 10 and 11.

The above table (3.2) shows that Bida Emirate was paying higher taxes than Ilorin and Ibadan, inspite of the fact that it was not as rich as either the Ilorin Emirate or Ibadan Town. One reason that has been advanced for the high taxation in Bida Emirate was said to have been associated with the high cost of the Native Administration. For instance in Ilorin with a total revenue of £28.385 the salary of the Emir was given as £2,250 and the salaries of his 17 District Heads amounted to a total of only £2,538 (an average of £149 per head). In Bida, with a revenue of £1,8,161 the Emir's salary was £2,000 and the salaries of his 7 District Heads amounted to 1,110 (an average of £159 per head).[140] Thus, although Bida Emirate was not as rich as Ilorin Emirate, yet its expenditure on the Emir's Court and the salaries of the higher native Administration officials were almost the same with those of Ilorin, inspite of the fact that latter maintained a far number of officials than Bida Emirate.

However, the above explanations given for the higher taxes paid in the Bida Emirate than in Ilorin and Ibadan towns respectively are untenable. This is because any explanation that pins the higher taxes in Bida Emirate to "high cost of the "Native Administration" was fraudulent. For the higher taxes paid were indicative of the extreme form of oppression and exploitation into which the peoples of Bida Emirate, in particular, and Niger province, in general, were subjected since they bored the brunt of the higher taxes.

Such was the extent of the burden placed upon the peasantry in Niger province by colonial taxation. As if to confirm the peculiarly exploitative nature of colonial taxation on the peoples of Niger province, the Resident, in his Annual report ending 31st March 1921, inadvertently observed as follows:-

> The present burden of taxation.... must be considered to be fairly heavy. In addition to the direct contribution, there is the enormous increase to the tax payer in indirect taxation. This must be felt by a peasantry who now depend more and more on imported wares. He is further handicapped by the very large increase in railway rates... This increase in addition to making travel by rail almost prohibitive except to the most wealthy is reflected in increased price he has to pay for his imported requirements, and is reflected in inverse ratio in the price, he receives for his produce for export, as the firms, in fixing the purchase price of produce allow for the increased railway freight charges to the port of embarkation which the producer therefore has to pay.121

Such was the burden to which colonial taxation subjected the peasantry of Niger province. In addition, their plight was further worsened by the increasing cases of extortion by the Native Authority officials evidently, with the blessing of some District Heads and Emirs. For instance, it was reported in 1919 that the Emir of Lapai's accredited messenger with the political officer were sentenced to two years imprisonment, on two charges of extortion. Although, the Emir himself was fully aware of what was going on, he did nothing to bring an end to the practice and, infact, he usually shared in the spoils.[122]

Again, on 10th May, 1920, the Fonu of Lapai, District Head of Gulu District was convicted by the provincial court for extortion and sentenced to two years imprisonment.[123] Moreover, in the same year, it was reported that parties of Messugirro visited the Districts of Lebozhi, Egbako, Sakpe and Jimi Doko extorting large sums of money from the inhabitants of every village in the District. When lists of the amount of livestock and goods extorted, and of the actual cash received by them were compiled, it amounted to a total sum of £471, for the District of Egbako, and £368.3s10d for Lebozhi District.[124]

As if to emphasise the widespread extortion of the peasantry that was going on, it was reported in 1904 to the

> The crime of extortion and personation is very prevalent. A man wearing a fez and a pair of trousers comes to a village and announces that he has been sent by the whitemen. He may remain there for months levying blackmail from the ignorant natives. He will often not content himself with demanding horses, cattle, fowls and grain (sometimes in large quantities) by the threats that he will bring against the people some serious charge, which (he informs them) will result in their extermination by the forces of the protectorate...125

Such was the extent of colonial exploitation and oppression that pervaded all nooks and corners of Niger province to a point which caused even Lugard to openly admit that "much injustice and oppression has been unwittingly done by our force" and advised that patient and unwavering investigation by properly trained political officers, with good interpreters was the only way of checking "these forms of oppression".[126]

It must be emphasised that apart from the fact that colonial taxation constituted a drain on the peasantry of Niger province, the monetisation of taxes also had disastrous consequences. For instead of paying their *dzanka* or land tax in food stuffs which they could easily procure, the Nupe and other peoples of the area now did this with cash which they could hardly get. This effectively dissolved the central grain reserves which, in turn, made it almost impossible for the feudal lords or the feudal state to fulfill their obligations of providing food for the peasants in times of needs, from the central grain reserves.

To make matters worst, colonial taxation, unlike the pre-colonial taxation (the Izwabe), did not in any way take into account the conditions of the crops in the assessment of the people. For the most part it was fixed and the rates progressively increased regardless of whether there was drought or destruction of crops by locusts. The result was that the grains stored in the Efako granaries at the house hold level also disappeared. For instance, we had earlier noted that after the harvest of crops, it was the duty of the head of the Efako household to divide the products of the harvest into priority allocations such as for the following years planting, for that needed for subsistence in the new growing season, and then, for the consumption needs of the family which left surplus grains stored in efako granaries to be used during periods of agriculture failure.

However, the exploitative nature of colonial taxation, made it impossible for the family head to fulfil the above obligations. This was because, most of the energies of the house hold groups were now diverted towards the cultivation of cash crops rather than food crops in order to be able to pay the colonial taxes. And because, the colonial taxation was always increasing, it meant that each efako household group responded by cultivating more cash crops and thus, reducing drastically, the farm area under food cultivation. The result was that there was no longer surplus grain produced to be set aside for the succeeding year's planting

or what needed for subsistence in the following growing season and, in some cases, even for the consumption needs of members of the ~~the~~ household groups. Moreover, because there was no surplus grain produces, the household heads did not have enough grains to store in the household granaries to be used during periods of agricultural failure. The net result of all these, was that the inhabitants of Niger province, were further exposed to the threat of famine, a situation, which as we shall see below, was worsened by the transformation of the pre-existing land tenure system by British colonialism.

3.3.6 The Transformation Of The Pre-existing Land Tenure System:

Apart from colonial taxation which transformed the pre-colonial system of taxation thereby laying the foundation for famines in Niger province, the colonial land policies also transformed the largely communal indigenous land tenure system into a more precarious type based on private ownership. As we observed earlier, the issue of land in any society plays a crucial role, since every economic activity was related to land. Thus, the result is that the ownership or non-ownership of land in any society, could mean a lot in terms of production, especially in the area of food.

As we have earlier shown in chapter II, land among the communities of Niger province in precolonial times was largely communally owned, but held in trust by the chief.

Similarly, we also pointed out that two categories of land existed; these were the village land and family land.

The family land, we will recall, was taken care of and shared among the members of a family by the head. Thus, any adult member of the family could request for land from the head. But if this could not be satisfied, he was obliged to approach the chief of the village; who would provide him with extra land from the pool of the unused village lands. Such was the extent of easy access to land by every member of a village, that even a new arrival or settler, could simply get land on request from the village chief.

However, British colonialism transformed this pre-existing system of land tenure. For although British imperialism did not expropriate the land that belonged to the peasantry of Niger province, yet, it nevertheless declared all land as Crown property which in effect became a pretext for the alienation of land. Thus, with the beginning of British colonial rule, the demand for land for such public works, like railways, roads and mining activities increased. For instance, the Baro-Kano railway, which passed through the area was constructed by taking over the land that belonged to the peasantry.[127] Similarly, in areas of extensive mining, especially that of gold in Abuja the story was the same.[128] The consequences of all these was that the colonial authorities took over the land that belonged to the peasantry of the area.

According to an informant,[129] as a result of British land policies, it became the case that the colonial government frequently demanded for land, for railway, road construction, conservation of natural resources, and for mining activities. For the latter, mining leases were granted to the foreign firms to carry out mining. Moreover, since all land was declared Crown Land, it meant that the village no longer exercised absolute control over any land and, thus, the village chiefs were, for all intense and purposes, stripped of their roles as the trustees of the village lands. An informant recalled that under the colonial dispensation, any member of the village who needed land to farm was expected to apply for it from the colonial authorities, after which he was given certificate of occupancy.[130] B. Cohen effectively summarised the implications of colonial land alienation when he observed that:

> it erased the religious overtones of land ownership, destroying the age old conception of the land as divine property... the old communal system of land ownership was rapidly broken down and the alienation, sale and mortgage of plots commenced.[131]

My informants[132] similarly told me that another result of the British land policies which gave birth to the mortgage of plots, was that the sizes of the lands which the villagers hitherto owned diminished because of the persistence demands and seizures of their lands by the colonial Government for railway, roads construction,

conservation of natural resources, and for mining activities. For instance, Table 3.3 below shows the amount of land covered by mining leases, railway and forest reserves in Niger province in the period 1900 - 1945.

Table 3.3

	Amount of land covered (in sq.km).	Total land(area of Niger Province (in sq.km)	Percentage of land devoted to mining, forest, reserves, railway, in relation to total land of Niger Province
Mining leases	613		
Railway	1,437		
Forest reserves	2.3,037		
Total	29,087	65.211.02	44.60 percent

Source: NAK, Minprof 616 Forestry Development and Reserves; N.K, minprof, simple list of papers removed from provincial office Minna, Vol. I, II and III, dealing with mining leases; N/K, Minprof, M.1863, vol. III, Provincial Annual Report, 1941.

As Table 3.3 clearly shows, the amount of land covered by mining leases in the period between 1900 and 1945, was 613 square kilometres. It was 1,437 square kilometres devoted to railway construction and 23,037 square kilometres to forest reserves. These amounted to a total of about 29,087 square kilometres of land, of the 65,211.02 square kilometres of land covered by the entire Niger province. Thus, the percentage of the land devoted to mining leases railway and forest reserves in relation to the total land area of Niger Province, amounted to 44.60 percent. This meant that 44.60 percent of the entire land of Niger province was devoted to activities that had nothing to do with agriculture. This figure fails to take account of lands diverted to other public works like road construction, European rest houses e.t.c. This implied that the amount of land diverted to non agricultural activities was definitely higher than 44.60 percent. Thus, with the amount of agricultural land at their disposal having dwindled, and also having been left to farm on poor quality lands, the size of land holdings brought into agriculture invariably decreased. So also was the fact the crop yields drastically began to drop.[133] Therefore, it was not surprising that with inadequate food, the peoples of Niger province became Vulnerable to food shortages and famines during which period, the foundation of the colonial economy was laid. This, as we have already shown, gave rise to food shortages and

famines in the years 1903, 1909 and 1921 respectively. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, the British policies with regards to slavery and the introduction of forced labour, further exposed the people of Niger Province to famines and impoverishment.

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CHAPTER FOUR -

THE DESTRUCTION OF TRADITIONAL MECHANISMS AGAINST FAMINE: THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, THE INTRODUCTION OF FORCED LABOUR AND PEASANT IMPOVERISHMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter three, we demonstrated, amongst others, that the conquest of Niger province by British had negative consequences on the food situation in the area. For besides the destructive wars of colonial conquest itself, policies were immediately initiated which radically weakened some of the pre-colonial mechanisms for combating famines. Together with the introduction of pound sterling, taxation and the alienation of the land that belonged to the peasants as we demonstrated in the last chapter, other policies were pursued by the British which collectively laid foundation for subsequent famines and peasant impoverishment in Niger province.

In this chapter, therefore, we shall examine the further dislocation of the pre-colonial indigenous mechanisms against famines in Niger province by British Colonialism. This, as would be shown, were done through such colonial policies and practices like the abolition of slavery, the introduction of forced labour and the deliberate destruction of supplementary economic pursuits which had acted as traditional mechanisms against famines in the area. The total of effect of these new policies and practices, in addition to the earlier policies discussed, resulted in

peasant impoverishment and mass poverty in the province.

4.2 THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY AND INTRODUCTION OF FORCED LABOUR

4.2.1 The Abolition Of Slavery

As we pointed out before, British colonial policies in relation to the introduction of pound sterling, taxation, and the alienation of peasant lands ensured the diversion of labour away from food production to the production of cash crops and to the mines fields. However, when these policies failed to create enough of the cash crops needed and the labour required in minesfields, the general tendency was to resort to forced labour. It was in pursuit of this that the British colonial Government instituted a policy "abolishing" slavery for the so-called "humanitarian" reason but to reintroduce it through the back-door as forced labour.

The first attempt to abolish slavery was after the Nupe-Ilorin Campaign of 1897, when the Royal Niger Company issued a decree against the legal status of slavery and provided a Home called the Victoria settlement near Lokoja for some "Liberated" Slaves,[1] However, neither the decree, nor the so-called philanthropic motive behind the action was effective. This was because, the decree itself upset the prevailing socio-economic system by freeing slaves, who were important to agricultural production and who had no land of their own to work on. This resulted in famine to be followed by uprisings in Lapai and Agaie, in 1898, which

were suppressed by the newly formed West Africa Frontier Force.[2]

However, after the occupation of Niger province, the British colonial authorities, made a fresh attempt to abolish slavery since it was a major excuse put forward by Lugard and others for the British conquest of Northern Nigeria in general and Niger province in particular. Therefore, on the 1st of April 1901, Lugard issued a proclamation on slavery which abolished the legal status of slavery. It was further made a criminal offence under native law and custom for a run-away slave to return to his master. Similarly, the acquisition and disposal of slaves became criminal offences. This proclamation also stated that all children after 1st January 1900 were free.[3]

But no sooner was this made, than it was subjected to all sorts of criticisms.[4] It was, for instance, feared that complete abolition could lead to a disruption of the entire social system which would, invariably, lead to rebellion. This, it was argued, was because most of the communities existed on a subsistence economy with huge surplus land, but with limited labour, and, therefore, the members of the ruling classes obtained labour mainly by "compulsion". As a result of that, the institution of slavery was part and parcel of the economies of the communities and to bring it to an end abruptly, would mean a disruption of the entire social and economic system.

It was further argued that most of the slaves had lost their kith and kin and that, without land of their own, these ex-slaves would starve to death. Moreover, it was further alleged that the slaves were generally well treated by their masters, to the extent that some of them actually occupied some important positions in their respective communities. Thus, such slaves, the argument went, would not want to be free.[5]

It was because of these criticisms and observations, that a new proclamation was enacted, in 1904.[6] Unlike the proclamation of 1901, the proclamation of 1904, declared that the institution of slavery was not abolished and that the ownership of slaves was not prohibited. Thus, there would be no interference with domestic slavery. Moreover, native courts were expected to continue settling disputes between the slaves and their masters as was the practice before British occupation. In this connection, the 1904 proclamation, unlike the previous one, empowered the Native Courts to summon a runaway slave to show cause why he or she ran away without paying his or her redemption fees. The Native Courts, were also given powers to enforce the authority of the masters over those slaves who refuse to work.

Thus, with these new developments, every effort was made by the British colonial authorities and their African agents to put the new proclamation into effect. For instance, on the 10th March 1903, the Emir of Bida issued an Edict against the sale of slaves.[7] In other districts

of Niger province, District Heads began to initiate measures also in support of the proclamation. To crown it all, a freed slaves Home was opened in Zungeru on the 1st of January, 1904 to look after the Welfare of "Liberated" slave.[8]

The result of all these was that many slaves actually regained their freedom through the native and provincial courts. This is confirmed by both the colonial sources[9] and by my informants.[10] For instance, between 1905 and 1914, there was a progressive increase in the number of slaves that regained their freedom through both the native and provincial courts. In 1905, this was only 37 but by 1911, it rose to 160 and then to 176 in 1913. Towards the end of 1914, the figure had reached 343.[12] It must, however, be emphasised that these figures did not in any way take care of those slaves who simply deserted their masters without going to the native or provincial courts.[13] No accurate figures exist for these deserters but there is indication that they were quite substantial and numbered in thousands.[14] This trend, they further claimed, continued into the 1904s.

But the full implications of the slavery legislation and it's consequences can only be fully grasped when it is realised that to the people of this area, their religion and custom sanctioned the ownership and acquisition of slaves. Even more, as we have earlier demonstrated, a significant part of the labour for the agricultural productio

was provided by slaves. Thus, the farms owned by members of the ruling classes, both at the level of the state and the individual, were worked by slaves. For instance, on the royal estates in the Nupe area, were to be found small hamlets, called ESOZI, where royal slaves were settled. They were expected to provide the labour for working the land and generally were in charge of the crops. Similarly, there were the Tungas, located within a radius of six to seven miles of the large towns and founded mainly by the big land lords who settled their slaves on the land for purposes of agriculture. The importance of the tungas worked mainly by slave labour in agriculture production in our area is vividly brought out by one author who observed that:

> The Tungazi (plural) provided the food and the fodder which sustained the large and often up-productive population of the capital - It's rulers, courtiers, their servants and slaves, the middlemen and the long distance traders as well as the sizeable private armies of noble...15

Thus, it is quite clear that for the tungazi to continue their traditional role of producing enough food for the people, slave labour was important and therefore maintained. There, when the British colonial authorities abolished slavery and set slaves free, this had the immediate effect of upsetting the pre-existing socio-economic system. By setting the slaves free, the farms that belonged to the ruling classes and the state were also denied their labour. Without slave labour, a greater proportion of their farms remained uncultivated and the yields from such

farms were drastically low.[16] Since there were no more slaves, the importance of the Usozi and Tungazi for providing the food needed by the peasant and poor class, was now drastically diminished. As a matter of fact, they began to decline and ultimately disappeared altogether.

The cumulative consequence of all these was that the peoples of the poor class of Niger province were exposed even more to the threats of famines. For as we pointed out earlier, when the Royal Niger Company, in 1897, issued a decree against the legal status of slavery, a contemporary observer noted that "driven to desperation by the threat of famine due to the exodus of the labouring classes, a rising (of the poor class) took place in Lapai and Agaie", which was only suppressed when the newly formed West Africa Frontier Force intervened.[17] Similarly, with the slavery proclamation of 1904, members of the slave labouring classes absconded from their masters which resulted in reported famines in Bida and Kontagora respectively.[18] During the famine period, many people of the poor class were said to have died and were forced to sell their children while others simply migrated.

Our informants told us that as the years progressed increasing number of slaves were absconding from their masters. This was followed by incessant cases of famines covering the entire Niger province, especially, areas like Lapai, Agaye, Bida, Kontagora, Paiko and Abuja where slave labour was very important. These areas experienced serious

shortfall in food production and famines in 1908.[20] A similar situation occurred in 1913 and even in 1922[21] which marked the beginning of the third decade of British colonial rule in our area of study. According to our informants, the reactions of most of the people to the famines took the form of migration, sale of children and people were forced to eat all sorts of leaves and roots which were previously not eaten in order to survive. Yet many of them nevertheless died.

However, inspite of the fact that it was obvious that the British colonial policy of abolishing slavery created a negative impact in the form of serious food shortages and famines, which led to many deaths, the colonial authorities continued to pursue the policy even more vigorously and worsened it by the introduction of forced labour to which we now turn attention.

4.2.2 The Introduction Of Forced Labour

As alluded to above, the motive force behind the abolition of the illegal status of slavery was nothing other than the desire by the British Colonial Government to release labour from its pre-colonial role and function, so as to augment colonial demand for labour in the mines, road constructions, railways, and hundreds of other colonial projects. However, the main colonial project for which forced labour was massively recruited and which had a profound impact, even at the early stages of British rule in Niger province, was the railway construction of the Lagos Extension;

Ibaro-Kano and the Eastern Railway. A secondary colonial activity for which forced labour was recruited was the tin winning industry of the Jos Plateau.

The Construction of the Lagos-Extention, Ibaro-Kano and Eastern Railways: 1907 - 1927

Before 1895, the British were already [illegible] about the [illegible] Nigeria. It is clear that economic, administrative and "humanitarian" arguments were advanced for the British construction of railways in colonial Nigeria. But these reasons have been effectively exposed in several studies on the impact of British colonialism on various Nigerian communities to merit repetition here. But suffice to say that the motive force behind the British construction of railways in Nigeria during the colonial period was for economic exploitation. For the building of railways was dictated by the collection of export commodities. Thus, in Nigeria, the Kano-Lagos railway line was built to facilitate the collection of cotton, groundnuts and cocoa for export and the Enugu - Port Harcourt line was built to serve the oil - palm trade. Areas that had no cash crops were not linked by railway. Therefore, the real reason for the British construction of railways in colonial Nigeria was to facilitate economic exploitation. It was because of this that the British began the construction of railways in Nigeria, in March 1896, which, by 1900 had reached Ibadan and later Ilorin in the North.[3] However, although Lagos was now linked by railway with

the North, Lord Lugard, in his annual report of 1900, began to argue for the immediate necessity for a railway line from the Niger banks to Kano rather for connection with Lagos. On the advantages to be derived from it, Lugard claimed that it would greatly promote the development of trade; ease the conveyance of the produce from the interior down to the coast; and facilitate communication and rapid transportation of troops and supplies.

In his annual report of 1902, therefore, Lugard drew the attention of the British colonial office to the immediate need for a railway to replace the human porterage as a means of communication into the interior which was not only costly, but unsatisfactory. After some investigation,[24] the British Government ordered the construction of a line from Baro on the Niger to Kano and secondly, the Lagos Extension to link the former.[25] The construction of both covered the period 1907 to 1912. However, this was immediately followed by the construction of the Eastern railway from 1913 to 1927.[26]

Having discussed the motives behind the construction of the railways, in which the peoples of Niger province were actively involved, it becomes necessary for us to examine how labour was organised and how it ultimately affected food production. In this regard, it must be stated from the on set that the dominant form of labour was what has come to be known as forced labour, which the colonialists disguised with the term "political labour", and which, nevertheless, contradicted Lord Lugard's assertion that the use of forced

labour was foreign to British colonialism. In this regard, as would be demonstrated later, thousands of people from Niger province were recruited as forced labourers not only on the roads, mines, but, more importantly, on the Lagos-Extension; Baro-Kano and on the Eastern Railways. In the case of the Eastern railways, Niger province was specifically requested to supply labour to build it's headquarter at Kaduna.

Most of the labour required for carrying out the railway projects was organised by the village Heads.[27] One of my informants[28] still recalls, with vividness, how some of the Village Heads in Niger province, organised forced labour. According to him, whenever the District Officers needed labour, they informed the Village Heads in the area concerned. The Village Heads, in turn, ordered their "subjects" to assemble for a meeting. It was during such meetings that a full explanation of the demands of the colonial District Officers were transmitted as well as making concrete arrangements to commence work.

Moreover, in an attempt to ensure the full participation of all and sundry, the Village Head usually instilled fears into the minds of their subjects by threatening that if their village refused to supply the labour demand, the whitemen would come to take away their land and farms, burn their villages or even increased their taxes. Because of these threats, it was not unusual to find meetings summoned for forced labour in full

attendance although a few of them who realised the bogusness of such threats declined to turn up for the meetings.

All those who were forcibly selected by their Village Heads to work on the projects must arrive at the base camp not later than the date and time specified by the District Officer.[29] At the base camp itself, workers were not given the opportunity of having even a little rest even after the long journeys from their respective villages. Instead, they were ordered, immediately on arrival, to construct their huts. On their first mornings in the camps, these villagers were ordered out of their beds as early as 6.00am to be shown the work which they were expected to carry out.[30] Thence forward, it became the responsibility of each Village Head to organise the workers in their group to perform the work already assigned which, regardless of the degree of the heat of the sun or the rains, they had to work on. Moreover, in order to ensure that the workers carried out the work assigned to them with dispatch, the colonialist over-seers went round every project site carrying whip to compell the labourers work harder. In addition to this form of oppression into which the workers were subjected, they were not allowed any break from work.

The types of tools which were given to the workers included diggers, shovels and head-pans, whereas,

workmen also brought their own implements like cutlasses, hoes, vessels e.t.c. Usually, the duration of work days expected of every village work group was specified by the District Officer. After this was met, the groups were released to be replaced by other groups. Before they were released, they were paid their wages which, according to an informant,[31] was very meagre. In contrast, the Headmen or supervisors were paid twice the amount which the workers received. Such were the terrible conditions of work in the railway construction sites, a situation which was not dissimilar from what obtained at the tin mining industry of the Jos Plateau where forced labour was also massively recruited.

Forced Labour On The Plateau Tin Mines

A secondary colonial activity for which forced labour was recruited was tin mining industry of the Jos Plateau. The method of recruiting labour for the plateau tin mines was basically similar to what obtained during the period of the mobilisation of forced labour for the construction of the railways in Niger province. Here, the Emirs, Chiefs and Village Heads played the usual coercive roles to ensure the adequate supply of and retention of labour on the Plateau tin mines.[32] Again, like what obtained at the railway construction sites, labour on the tin mines was grossly exploited with the majority of labourers until the depression (1929-31) receiving weekly wages as low as 6s6d

per adult labourer.[33] This was a situation worsened by the appalling conditions of the mines, with the result that many of them suffered from such deadly diseases like small-pox, jaundice, guinea worm and pneumonia.[34] Such were the terrible conditions of labour on the mines and railway construction sites in Nigeria, in general, and Niger province in particular.

Indeed so terrible were the conditions of work and life of forced labour that some Christian missionaries in Niger province found it necessary to cry out against these extremely torturous and oppressive treatment of forced labourers.

First of all, in 1900,[35] one Reverend J.D. Aitken, who was the Superintendent of the Bokwa District Northern Nigeria Mission wrote many letters to the Resident based at Bida. In these letters, he condemned the European supervisors and the African labour recruiters for extortion and exploitation of the labourers on the Lagos Extension which passed through the District in which he was stationed. Other revealing charges made by Reverend Aitken against the European supervisors included requests for virgins to be supplied to them, that fowls had been requisitioned and not paid for, and that harsh and unjust treatment was being meted out to the chiefs in connection with the provision of labour for the railways.[36]

However, at a meeting of the Local Executive Committee of the Church Missionary Society at Lokoja, the Reverend

To further confirm the allegation of extortion of workers made by Reverend Aitken, one Mallam Isagi, an agent of the Nakorji who was in charge of recruiting labour in the village of Nagbe, "took six pounds from one gang of labourers as they returned home".[40] Another agent of the Nakorji (title holder of the town of Etsu Gaie) owned to having taken various presents and gowns from several Yeti villages".[41] Again another recruiting agent of the Benu, one Mallam Ibrahim, confessed that he extorted 12 shillings from a Bete village.[42]

All the above allegations of extortion, oppression and fortune by the European political officers and their African agents were also confirmed by all my informants, in the course of my field work.[43] They claimed that these practices were widespread and very common throughout most of the colonial period.

Apart from the documented protest by the Reverend Aitken, which no doubt throws some light on the oppression of African labour on the railway projects, there was another instance of documentary protest by the well - known Bishop Tugwell, [44] the Representative of the Church Missionary Society in Nigeria. Tugwell's protest was over the conditions of the employment and treatment of labour gangs at Naro. Bishop Tugwell, who visited Baro in 1909, complained to Mr. Wallace, the acting Governor of the protectorate of Northern Nigeria, about the ill-treatment

of African workers by their European overseers and African foremen. He specifically documented four serious allegations.[45]

Firstly, that from investigations which he had carried out, he discovered that most of the labourers did not volunteer their services on the railway, but were forced by the local Chiefs to render their services. Secondly, that although the labourers wer normally paid six pence a day,, they did not actually receive the amount since, a large part of their earning went to the men, who forcibly recruited them to work on the railway.

Thirdly, Bishop Tugwell alledged that the labourers were expected to work on the railway for eight or nine hours at a stretch under condition which were positively revolting. Furthermore, he alleged that after rain, the labourers were called to carry rails weighing one third of a ton through mud and slush over the men's ancles. Many of the labourers were therefore injured and some very seriously and that, to the best of his knowledged, none of those who were injured received any compensations. Moreover he made the startling revelation that labourers worked in gangs from 6a.m till 3p.m with one hour's rest and from 3p.m. till midnight without any rest!

Fourthly, Tugwell, alledged that although workers who sustained injuries were not paid compensation, it was also true that "while carrying.... heavy loads, if a man slacks

or slips, he is most cruelly beaten by those who are his overseers..." whilst if a man escapes from Baro and runs to his village, he is sent back by his overlord possibly after further beating." Tugwell concluded his protest by saying that it was difficult to distinguish such a system (i.e the condition to which the labourers were subjected) from slavery and that, as one looked on the scene, one questioned whether any slaves in the days which are passed endured harder conditions and that the natives speak of those men as the "White man's slave".

Bishop Tugwell, claimed that he was not accusing anyone of the malpractices, but, that all he wanted Governor Wallace to do was to investigate his allegations and to improve the conditions of the labourers working on the railway. Although Governor Wallace initially denie the allegations, he nevertheless ordered an enquiry to be held at Baro. Some of the witnesses were Mr. Eaglesome, the Director of Railways, Northern Nigeria; Mr. Higgins, surveyor of works; Mr. Graham, the Paymaster; Lr. Taylor, the Assistant Accountant; Dr. Chartres; the senior medical officer; and Captain Osborne, the District Superintendent of police. Some Africans, including the son of the Emir of Lapai; Cousin of the Emir of Agaye; and the son of the Yerima of Bida, also testified.

As a result of the inquiry, Mr. Eaglesome confirmed some of the allegations of Bishop Tugwell against the

Protectorate Administration. For example, Mr. Eaglesome admitted that, sometime in 1908, some European Foremen from south Africa and even some of Africans were found guilty of illtreating the labourers. Mr. Eaglesome also admitted that he did dismiss a South African foreman for alledgedly beating labourers under him.

Moreover, the report of Resident Goldsmith of Niger Province also went a long way to confirm many of Bishop Tugwell's allegations. For he admitted that the labourers that were recruited by the political staff were not voluntary and that it was sometimes necessary to use force in order to keep work going. He further confirmed that Village Heads usually threatened or pressurised the villagers to meet the demands of the political officers and that a certain amount of ill-treatment of the labourers was bound to occur at times since, foremen from various parts of the world were employed to control large number of labourers.

Again Bishop Tugwell's allegation of workers not receiving their full weekly pay was confirmed by Mr. Gordon Graham, whose testimony showed that, there had been instances when some of the Village Heads had demanded some portion of the wages of the labourers. Also, Tugwell's allegations that if a man escaped from Laro and ran to his village, he was sent back by his overlord, possibly, after further beating, was indirectly confirmed

by the Nakorji of the town of Otsu Geic, who admitted that "I have only known one or two cases of men, who actually ran away from the work. They were always sent back".[46]

Finally, as if to support the allegations of Bishop Tugwell, the Annual Report of Niger province, for the final quarter of 1909, had this to say:-

> The supply of labour for the railway has given opportunities to native staff subordinates to practice a system of extortion on willing recruits. Native agents would go to villages and give an order in the name of the District Chief for so much labour to be supplied, but it would appear, from certain cases tried in the provincial court, that these agents were quite prepared to accept cash equivalent as a substitute for an unwilling recruit.[47]

It is not only the colonial sources that confirmed Tugwell's allegations. They were also confirmed by most of my informants[48] who recalled that the conditions of labourers who were forced to work on the railway construction sites was simply terrible. The informants further revealed that labourers, were paid meagre wages, and forced to work for almost the entire day with a break of only one hour. This, they did regardless of whether there was rain or heavy sun. Such was the terrible and tortious condition of labourers on the railway construction sites that there began to be spontaneous and widespread reactions from the people of Niger province against the system of forced labour. This forms the subject of the next section.

4.2.) Reactions To Forced Labour:

It would be mistaken to assume that there were no opposition by the peoples of Niger province to forced labour. For as the method of the recruitment of forced labour and the condition of the labourers became more and more harsh and oppressive, the people had no alternative than to react against the system of forced labour. According to my informants,[49] the reaction took the form of open revolt or passive resistance. People were refusing to turn out for forced labour and, when the colonial authorities insisted, this usually led to violent clashes between both parties. This information is confirmed by some episodes which we came across in the colonial sources.

For instance, in 1909, the Gwaris of both Paiko and Fuka Districts of Kuta Division deserted their work site *en masse* to their homes and refused to turn out for work.[50] The British colonial authorities could not compell them to return because of the shortage of European staff.

Again, in 1909,[51] the Gwaris of Gussoro revolted against forced labour. One of the reasons which they gave was that their Seriki had taken from them more tax than was fixed by the Resident. In an attempt to force back the *Seriki*, who had earlier been driven out of the village, Mr. Vanrenen the local political officer, took along with him a party of 35 policemen. This, the villagers

would not allow. Armed with bows and arrows, the villagers who numbered about a 100 strong confronted Mr. Vanreneen and his party in an attempt to prevent the return of their unpopular Seriki who, at this stage, was with the political officer. In the encounter, 40 of the villagers were killed but Mr. Vancereneen himself and 11 African policemen were also killed.[52] In retaliation, a punitive expedition was ordered against Gussoro. In the encounter, it was estimated that between 75 and 200 villagers were either killed or wounded.[53] The remaining people fled and the town was destroyed. Subsequently the seven alledged ring leaders of the revolt were captured and "tried". They were, of course, found "guilty" and sentenced to be hanged by Resident Orr.[54] However, their sentences were later commuted to life imprisonment by the Acting Chief Justice of the Northern Province, insoite of protests from Resident Orr. It is important to remark that Mr. Orr. noticeably consoled himself with reflections that the site of Gussoro town had become inhabited solely by monkeys. This implied the total collapse of a human settlement and economy which has further implications for our study.

My Nupe speaking informants[55] claimed that the opposition to forced labour did not involve the Gwari speaking people alone. They affirmed that the Nupe people also did all they could to oppose the oppressive system of forced labour. Again, this claim is confirmed by the colonial

archival sources, for as far back as 1912, it was reported that "The work was not popular as the Nupe is intensely attached to his house ans does not like leaving it even for two or three months".[56]

As the opposition to forced labour by the peoples of Niger province mounted, the administrator of the Northern provinces inquired into the possibility of an alternative means of labour on the railways line.[57] Simultaneously, he wrote another letter to the acting chief Director of Railways on the issue and warned that "the natives who entered enthusiastically into the scheme cannot fail to be disgusted if their services are continually being requested at prices, which are not those prevailing in the labour markets. This disgust will inevitably burn to unrest".[58]

Such was the nature of opposition to forced labour which, nevertheless, did not deter the colonial authorities from continuing with the oppressive and exploitative system. According to my informants, the continuation of forced labour had negative impact in the area of food production in Niger province. It is to this important issue that we now turn next.

4.2.4 The Impact Of Forced Labour:

The introduction of forced labour led to the exodus of many villagers in Niger province to work on the railway projects. For instance in 1909 alone, the labour supplied by Niger province for the railway construction amounted to

a total of 78,300.[59] Moreover table II below shows the total number of the labourers that were working on the Baro-Kano railway for some months in 1908.

TABLE 4.1

LABOUR FIGURES ON THE BARO-KANO RAILWAYS 1901

JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DE
2426	4364	4822	3820	4264	4362	-	-	-	4798	5146	27

SOURCE:- Mason, "Working on the Railways" Op.cit, page 62

The table clearly reveals that from the early part of 1908, labour demands rose and remained constantly high well into the arricultural season.

By the time, the work on the Baro-Kano railway ended, in 1912, about 251, 443 labourers had been recruited from Niger province,[60] in an area whose total population was 253,261 by 1910.[61] This figure represented 99.3 percent of its adult working population. Moreover, thousands more were also simultaneously working on the Lagos Extension railway. For by the beginning of 1909, about 2750 labourers from Niger province were working on the Lagos project. Still, further thousands were involved in the construction of the Eastern railway, and the demand continued unabated, reaching an alarming proportions in 1926. This prompted the Resident of Niger province to express surprise

that more labourers were still expected from his province.[62]

The forcible removal of all adult villagers (99.3 percent) from Niger province to work on the railway projects had grave negative effects on food production. For the British colonial policy of forced labour completely raptured the social organisation of the peoples of Niger province and rendered them easily vulunerable to famines. As we demonstrated earlier, before the beginning of British colonial domination, the fundamental unit of production was the Efako, labour was generally provided by it's family members and when the labour required by the Efako went beyond what could be provided, the general practice was to seek for assistance from other groups and this, as we earlier explained, were of two kinds: the agbe and duolo. Apart from this, in the farms that belonged to members of the ruling class and the state, labour was provided by the peasants, slaves e.t.c. All these ensured that adequate food was always produced to meet the needs of the entire population to the extent that surpluses were stored in the granaries for consumption during the dry season.

However, British colonialism deformed this system of the social organisation of production in agriculture, by diverting labour to the mines, railways and roads construction. The result of this, was that the labour

on the Bfako farms became practically impossible to seek and secure the assistance of other groups when there was a labour shortage on the Bfako. Thus, the principle of mutual assistance as represented by the egbe and dzolo began to die away. What is more, it became increasingly difficult for the ruling classes and the state to mobilise labour to work on their farms, particularly, with the abolition of slavery.

The net impact of the diversion of labour from agriculture to other areas of activity was that several areas began to find it difficult to produce enough food for the people.[63] Thus, food shortages and famines became very rampant. Although my informants could not accurately remember the specific years during which the various areas of Niger province experienced food shortages and famines, yet, they were unanimous in their affirmation that famines occurred too frequently throughout the colonial period. Even the colonial sources, were able to point out some of the specific dates during which famines occurred in Niger province.

Thus, for instance, the Annual Report of 1909, the heyday of railway construction, stated that the harvest for the previous year was not good, and that area under cultivation was limited owing to so much labour, being employed on earth-work construction.[64] It was further stated that the prices for local food-stuffs were advancing

in the province: "Due to the limited area under cultivation, e.g. yams at Paiko sold at 2 for 1½d. While 15 miles away at Minna, the price was 4 small yams for 6s"[65] Again, in the Niger province Report for the June quarter of 1909, the Resident reported that, "food along the line of rail (i.e. Baro-Kano) was scarce and prices high... and estimated that food could cost 4d to 6d per day".[66]

In 1922, the beginning of the third decade of colonial rule, the reports continued to mention food shortages. For it was reported that Ghero Bulrush millet was a total failure and for a time there was considerable privation".[67]

My informants correctly claimed that the apparent diversion of labour from agriculture to other activities was a cause of the famines.[68] Yet, with all the evidence before them, the colonial authorities did not take any measures to stem the tide or, at least, to take care of the farms of those people who were forcibly recruited to work on the railway construction sites and in the mines. Thus, when it was reported that some uneasiness were expressed by labourers sent for work on the railway and the minesfield, as to the fate of their crops, which they had been compelled to abandon, they were usually assured that arrangements had been made to safeguard their interests. In reality, however, no such arrangement had been made.

Again, even though labourers from Ilorin and Kwale, who were working on the Zaria-Kano railway complained about their farms at home, they were told that they would be released home in time for the planting season of 1909. But it is significant to note that, when the time came, they were prevented from going.[69]

The demands for labour in the railways and, as we shall see later, on the minefield continued unabated to the point that the District Officer of Ilorin and Division had to complain to the Resident of the province in 1911 that "it is an extreme hardship to call upon these men in the height of the farming season, however well they may be paid".[70]

Earlier on, the Resident of Niger province had called for the abolition of forced labour. One of his reasons was that it undermined agricultural production. He proceeded to give examples of farms in Kuta which had become uncleared and unmanned and where only very little boys were seen sowing crops.[71]

Thus, although the food shortages and famines experienced during this period were evidently caused by the diversion of labour to other areas of activity, particularly, railway construction, there was no concrete provision by the colonial authorities to combat this food shortages and famines. Instead, the colonial government, incapable of giving evidence of famine and food shortages

before this even and some of which we have quoted above, allowedly he owned that:-

> to make ready for prevention for such an eventuality in the particularly favourable circumstances in which the province is placed would be costly and possible useless.[7]

The above position of the colonial Government meant that food shortages and famines, and other hardships continued unabated throughout the colonial period with the result that many people died of hunger; a situation which was worsened by the forced migration of the active sections of the population, who could have been engaged in agricultural production.[8] It is this last issue that we shall consider next.

6.1.5 THE EXODUS OF YOUTH FROM AGRICULTURE

As a result of their harsh, dispossessed of their land, exploited and over burdened by colonial taxation and the incessant demands for their labour, a large portion of the peasantry was forced to migrate either to areas of low taxation rates, to the minesfield and cocoa fields of Western Nigeria, to work as wage - labourers. Migration consequently became a recurring theme in the history of Niger province during the entire colonial period and this resulted in a definite depopulation of the area. This, as we shall see later, contributed to acute food shortages and hence famine.

An examination of the relationship between depopulation and migration in our area of study therefore becomes important not only because of the food crisis which it generated, but also because of the wrong interpretations that were given by the British colonial authorities on the issue, namely, the pre-colonial slave raids. As would be demonstrated later on, the population of Niger province began to decrease, steadily, immediately after the imposition of British colonial domination over the area. This, we contend, was as a result of migration which was forced on the people. The situation got to such an alarming proportion that, in 1936,[74] an enquiry was ordered by the Resident of Niger province into Nupe to find out the exact causes of the decline of Nupe population.

In an apparent attempt to cover-up the real causes of depopulation, one Mr. P.A. Tegetmeier, a District Officer, who was also a member of the enquiring team, fraudulently gave the reason for the dwindling population of Nupe as "the practice of abortion among the Nupe women". This fraudulent claim was supported by a senior Resident of the Province, Mr. J.C Sciortino, who claimed that:-

> The native court Records.... show that the procuring of abortion is practiced to an alarming extent, especially in this city.... Other contributory causes, especially accounting for the fall in population are that of promiscuity which is generally and consequently so is venereal disease.[76]

From the above reports, we can conclude that the
depopulation given by the writing colonial officers on the
issue of the decreasing population of Niger Province,
particularly, those of the Nupe here, the high rate of
abortion, promiscuity and venereal diseases. We however,
contend that all these accounts to deliberate misinter-
pretation of the true causes of the decline of population
in our area. It will be wise of leaving the problem and
chasing the shadow, in avoiding the phenomenon of depopu-
lation in our area of study. This is because, the infor-
mation from my informants on the issue completely negate
the explanation given by the colonial officers.

Thus, for instance, most of the informants[77] were of
the view that the depopulation of Niger Province in general
and the Nupe speaking area in particular was not as the
result of high rate of abortion, promiscuity and venereal
diseases, but that it had it's origin in the migrations
that were forced on the people of the area by British
colonialism. My informants, emphasised that, when British
colonialism dispossessed the people of their fertile lands,
over-burdened them with high taxation, and forced them to
surrender their labour, the people had no choice than to
migrate.[78] The areas to which they migrated were areas
of low taxation rate such as the plateau areas and
cocoa belt of Western Nigeria to take up wage employment.
It is to be noted that even in these areas to which they

migrated, conditions were also harsh, but were only more tolerable in comparison with the extreme conditions in Nupe province.[79] For this reason the migrations to these areas continued, unabated, a situation which was similarly confirmed even by the colonial sources.

Thus, for instance, as early as 1913,[80] it was reported that the population of Ogaye and Lopai was slightly decreasing, owing to emigration to the Treasury province "due to the high taxation of Ogaye and Lopai". Again, in 1917, the Annual Report for Nupe province reported some emigrations from Bosso District of Kuta Division, the reasons, proferred being the call for labour at Minna which fell heavily on the Bosso people.[81]

Moreover, the census of Fiddi Emirate, in 1923, revealed that the population of Fiddi decreased from 19,860, in 1921, to 17,583, in 1923, and that, whereas the total population of the Nupe was given as 349,008 in the same census of 1921, this had fallen to 326,017, which implied a fall of over 20,000 in a period of ten years.[82] It is instructive to note that the reason given for this development was that many Nupes were forced to emigrate Southwards down river, "encouraged by better markets, lighter taxation and less work under the road ordinance".[83] This implied the existence of harsher conditions in Nupe Land. The colonial sources have therefore confirmed the claims by my informants that

harsher conditions in Niger province, forced the people to migrate to areas which were less harsh.

It must be pointed out that as the general conditions of the people of Niger province became increasingly intolerable, the phenomenon of migration also increased throughout the colonial period.[84] This claim is, again, supported by the colonial sources. For instance, at the beginning of the fourth decade of colonial rule in the area, the Annual Report of 1933, for Bungeru Division, reported that there was a decrease of about 1000 in the total population of the area and blamed it on the economic depression and general stagnation of trade, from which the Division had suffered.[85]

Similarly, in 1935, it was being reported that the population of Abuja Emirate had been decreasing for a number of years, a decrease which was accelerated owing to the incidence of lower taxation that pertained in the neighbouring district.[86] The same report further claimed that Lida Emirate experienced a population decrease of 2,364, of which, 706 were adult males, and that the remaining decrease were confined to the districts of Gbongbo and Dadeggi, both of which adjoined Kuta Division.[87] And, again, the reason given for this was emigration to the gold mining areas.

Also in the Annual Report of Niger province of 1936, Resident T.S. Harris, reported that the population of

Bida Division decreased from 192,206, in 1935, to 190,[illegible] in 1936, and that the decrease in population consisted almost entirely of Nupe people, a development which, he acknowledged, was causing some concern. He, however, attributed this to migration, to the mining areas.[88]

Even up to the end of our period of study, the phenomenon of emigration was still continuing. For it was reported, in 1945, that Abuja Emirate experienced a decrease of 3,161 people, especially, in Kuje district from where migration to the neighbouring Emirates of Keffi and Nassarawa were reported and also where taxation was relatively low.[89]

Finally, to confirm our assertion that British colonial policies forced migration on the people which resulted into the de-population of Niger province, a colonial document inadvertently reported that the Emir of Abuja was doing his utmost to get the emigrants to return. The Resident confessed that his propaganda would be greatly strengthened, were the Emir able to announce that I require no further drafts for railway constructions".[90]

From the above, it is thus clear that the colonial sources have confirmed our assertion that the phenomenon of migration in Niger province was caused by the harsh and intolerable colonial conditions in that area, and that it continued deep into the colonial period.

The full impact of the phenomenon of migration that

was forced on the peoples of Niger province by British colonialism can only be fully comprehended when it is realised that this area had a predominantly peasant - based agricultural economy which, given the low-level of technology involved, required a great amount of labour. According to Ayi Fomarts,[91] the members of the population that migrated were made up of the active sections of the total population (between the ages of 17 and 30), which meant a lot in terms of food production, distribution and further reproduction. Thus, the loss of the active part of the population had very adverse impact on the economy of Niger province, an impact which, as we shall show later, manifested itself in the recurrence of famines during our period. The situation would have been ameliorated, but for the fact that British colonialism, actively destroyed the supplementary indigenous mechanism against which famine could have been cushioned by the peoples of Niger province which meant that their ability to obtain food from other areas during periods of famines decreased. We therefore conclude this chapter with an examination of how some of these pre-colonial mechanisms of combating famine were destroyed.

4.3 THE DESTRUCTION OF SUPPLEMENTARY ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND INDIGENOUS MECHANISM AGAINST FAMINES

As, we have pointed out above, the recurrence of famines would have been ameliorated, but for the destruction

of supplementary indigenous activities and mechanisms which combated famines in Niger province by British colonialism. Those supplementary traditional mechanisms included the institution of the Dashi and the independent local industries. However, we shall begin by examining the former.

4.3.1 The Decline Of The Dashi:

As we have earlier mentioned, the dashi was a free association of individuals, who paid into a mutual fund on a regular basis, with each member being entitled to draw on the principal when needed. The importance of the dashi associations laid in the fact that they enabled the needy participants to gain access to a large source of wealth, normally beyond their means,, in order to deal with some extraordinary expense and for the provision of food supplies during periods of famines.

But according to my informants,[92] with the beginning of British colonialism in Niger province, many of the dashi associations began to decline and ultimately disappeared altogether. For instance, they claimed that the labourers at the Kids workshops and the beadworkers, who had practiced the dashi formerly, had, by the 1930s abandoned it.[93] Still further it was reported that "the dancemen in Jebba who were used to organizing their dashi at irregular times had not had a dashi for several years".[94]

Even among the d.shi associations that survived, their membership was greatly diminished. For instance, it was reported that a d.shi association among bicycle barbers which, was formerly organized on a much larger scale, had, by the 1930s, only ten members.[95] The same story applied to those of the butchers, carpenters and others.[96]

But the question to be asked is, why did the decline and ultimate disappearance of the Institution of the d.shi occur at the time it did? It is clear that the answer to this question has to do with the general economic decline being experienced by the various professional craftsmen. And this economic decline, as we demonstrated above, was brought about by British colonialism. For as we pointed out earlier, the success of the d.shi associations depended on regular earnings of money by members. But during our period, most of the craftsmen could not effectively practice their crafts let alone realize regular earnings from their products. This was because, most of them had been forced out of business, through the deliberate policies of the British colonial government in it's excessive taxations and in the importation of cheap European goods, which depressed their own locally made items. Thus, without enough money, most of the members began to opt out of the d.shi associations, which according to my informants,[97] ultimately led to their disappearance altogether.

4.3. The estruction Of Independent Local Industries:

As indic t d e rlier, the institution of the Iregw. was not the only su plementary Afri. nomic mechanism, ag inst f mines, which w s destroy d by B itish colonialism. The independent local cr ft industries, similarly, met the same f te, thereby removing the means av ilable to the people of Niger rovinc to tr de with other reas, with which they could have s tch ed food, during periods of its shorta e. Our an lysis of the destruction of the local cr ft industries, by British colonialism, st rts from the point of the br k up of the co-operative units in the local cr ft industries.

As e pointed in a previous ch pter, some of the cr ft works, practiced in th reas before the be inning of British colonial rule, were le ther-works, brass and silver-smiths, gla s making, wood carving, berdm king and several others. Moreover, as we h d indicated, the org nisation of l bour in these cr ft works was reminiscent of that which w s obtained in agricultural production. The l bour unit in cr ftwork, a ong the Hausa, was the Afako, which consisted of the members of individual f mily grou s.

What was a result of the British colonial policy of forced l bour, many able bodied men were forced to work in other areas of activities, like ro d, railway construction and the mines. The Afako l bour for the

craftworks thus became seriously dislocated.[98] The problem of labour shortages in the craftworks was further compounded by the British colonial policy of taxation, which was to be paid in pound sterling.[99] In order to get the currency and to pay their taxes, many able bodied men who, previously provided the bulk of the labour for the efako crafts works, simply left to work in the mines while some began to cultivate the cash crops that were needed by the colonialists. The cumulative result of all the above was that, without adequate labour to carry on with the craftsworks, the efako labour unit in the various craftsworks, began to break up, leading to their ultimate disappearance.

Apart from the fact that British colonialism led to the break up of the efako labour unit in craftsworks, it must be pointed out that the larger co-operative labour units as represented by the guilds also met similar fate. As we had pointed out earlier there was a wider co-operation in craftwork practised within the framework of the occupational unit which approximated to guilds. One of the chief advantages of these guilds, was that the heads were responsible for the maintenance of the labour of their members and provided them with financial support, during hard times.[100]

But, with the beginning of British colonial rule, certain forces, began to operate, which ultimately led to

disappearance of the guild - system in craftwork. One of these was the competition by cheap European imported goods. A good illustration of this can be seen by the destruction of headworkers. Before British colonial rule, it was the guild heads wh played the roles of the contractor and financier for their respective groups. They also maintained the labour of their groups and provided the working capital, credit facilities and distributed the work among other members. The guild head of the beadworkers was known among the Nupe, as the Maji or master, and he was the agent of the Etsu in all matters that involved the trade in beads in the entire emirate.[101] When foreign traders arrived in Bida to trade, they were not expected to take their products directly to the market, but instead, to the guild head, who selected those he considered suitable for the king and his court. He then advised the king on the purchase and the king followed this up by giving the guild head the contract of refining the imported beads. The work was then distributed among the members of the guild, by the head, who also paid some amount of money and kept the rest as commission for himself. Thus, as a result of the constant demands from the court in this way, the head workers of Bida were always kept busy. With this, the guild heads, were able to finance the ordinary work of their groups and to offer their members, credit for the purchase of their raw materials.

However, with the imposition of British colonial domination, and the importation of cheaper European beads, the above situation began to change, European beads began to replace the indigenous ones and the court no longer bought the latter. The result was that, it led to the decline in the financial position of the guild head, which made it impossible for him to advance credit facilities to members of his group. Thus, in the words of one author:

> The guild head no longer able to act as financier and contractor lost his position of authority, as his contribution to the productive organization of the group was concerned exclusively with these financier and credit operations, the very raison d'etre of a guild head has disappeared. 102

Thus, as a result of the inability of the guild head to fulfil his responsibilities to members, because of the decline in his financial position, the craft guilds, which earlier entailed a large measure of mutual assistance, began to decline and to be replaced by individualistic craftworks.

An indication of the final blow dealt to the local craft industries is given when we examine a surviving description of the annual muslim festival in the Sallah celebration, in Nupeland in 1935. Before the intrusion of British colonialism, the Sallah used to be an occasion for large-scale orders of different locally made craft works from the courts of the rulers who were also

the main customers. The regular demands from the courts, helped to keep the craft workshops in Bida very busy for weeks.

But, by the 1930s, local crafts were no longer ordered by the courts and, instead, the muslim festival became an occasion for the indiscriminate purchase of European goods. One author, has graphically described this situation when he reported that, at the Sallah celebrations of 1935,

> The traditional royal gifts of Kolanuts were sent out not in ornamental brass bowls of native make, but in newly bought enamelled teapots, the King's body guard, newly equipped, wore not Bida gowns and turbans or native made straw hats, but red blankets and trilby hats; and many notables, who would have appeared formerly on horses with costly trappings and gorgeous Saddle-cloths, rode in on new shinning bicycles. 103

This was the extent to which European imported wares displaced the indigeous crafts. The ultimate result was the destruction of the indigenous local industries since the craftsmen were forced out of business as a consequent of competition from cheaper European made.

The net result of the above was that an important supplementary economic activity and mechanism against famines was destroyed which thus desprived the peoples of Niger province of an important means of revenue by trading neighbouring peoples. This meant that their ability to obtain the means for purchasing food from other areas

during period of famines decreased.

When the above is taken together with the British colonial policies of diverting labour from agriculture to the mines, railway and roads construction, it is not surprising that the peoples of Niger province were exposed to the problems of food shortages and famines in the early years of British colonial rule. This, as we stated in chapter three occurred in the years 1904, 1909. 1921 and 1922. The result was the further impoverishment which, as we shall document in the next chapters was again worsened by the outbreak of the economic depression between the years 1929 - 1933.

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CHAPTER FIVE

COLONIAL RULE AND FAMINE IN NIGER PROVINCE: THE ECONOMIC DEPRESSION AND LOCUST INVASIONS, 1929-1933

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last two chapters, we demonstrated how British Colonialism destroyed the Pre-colonial indigenous mechanisms that were devised by the peoples of Niger province to combat famines. In this chapter, we aim at documenting and discussing actual instances of famines in Niger province, caused by colonial under-development. Thus, we shall examine how the great economic depression between 1929 and 1933 led to food shortages and famines in the area, a problem which was worsened by the locust invasion of the same period. We posit two basic positions in the chapter as follows:

(a) That the Great economic depression between 1929 and 1933 was the real "locust" which caused the food shortages and famines at this period, in Niger Province. The locust invasions, during the same period, merely escalated the problem already there.

(b) That for most parts of Nigeria, the economic depression was practically over by 1934, but it actually continued to the end of the 1930s in Niger Province.

We thus, begin by examing how the great economic depression led to food shortages and famines in Niger Province.

5.2 THE GREAT ECONOMIC DEPRESSION OF 1929 - 1933:

The great economic depression that occurred all over the world between 1929 and 1933, produced negative results in Niger Province, especially, in the area of ensuring adequate food. The depression itself was nothing other than a manifestation of the usual capitalist crisis of over - production, in this case, of massive agricultural production in the Americas, Europe and in the Colonies. This situation, led to intensified competition and the fall in agricultural prices[1].

The immediate result of the fall in agricultural prices was that the export revenue which accrued to the colonial government, also began to decline[2]. Thus, one of the measures embarked upon by the colonial authorities, in order to raise the declining revenue was, as usual, a massive propaganda to ensure that the peasants doubled their production to export cash crops. Again, as usual, the traditional rulers - Emirs, Village and District Heads proved useful as they went from one place to the other exhorting their "subjects" to increase the production of cash crops.[3] Moreover, the distribution of special seeds to the peasants was again stepped up. The result of these, was that the peasants actually increased their output of cash crops and the purchases by companies increased. For instance, the Table 5.1 below, is a comparative figure o produce purchases by the United Africa Company for the years 1931 and 1932.

TABLE 5.1

	SHEANUTS		PALM KERNELS		GROUNDNUTS	
	1931	1932	1931	1932	1931	1932
Bida	2	107	-	48	119	338
Badeggi	137	155	-	60	216	312
Charati	35	126	1	69	5	20
Rabba	125	27	20	55	1	3
Total	295	415	21	232	341	673

SOURCE: NAK, Minprof M 314. Annual Report, Bida Division, 1932.

The above table shows that the purchases of Sheanuts, Palm Kernels and groundnuts by the United Africa Company increased at the height of the depression which is, no doubt a confirmation of our contention that the peasants increased their production of cash crops in the absence of evidence of smuggling. For instance, in 1931 the United Africa Company purchased about 295 tons of sheanuts in Bida, Badeggi, Charati and Rabba, but by 1932, the company increased the purchase of Sheanuts to 415 tons. Similarly in 1931, the company purchased 21 tons of Palm Kernels in these areas, but this rose to 232 tons in 1932. Again, although 341 tons of groundnuts were purchased in 1931, this rose to 673 in 1932.

But in spite of the fact that the peasants in Niger Province increased their output of cash crops, in order to meet the demand by the companies, yet the reward they

received for their efforts was minimal. This was because the prices paid by the trading companies for the cash crops declined steadily, year by year. Thus, while the peasants were forced to increase their output of cash crops they were, at the same, being forced to take less of and less in payment for the crops. For instance, in 1931, a flat rate of six pounds (£6) a ton, was paid for groundnuts;[4] but this decline to about £4.12s6d per ton which compared unfavourably with the Kano price of £5 per ton.[5] So low was the extent of the decline in the price paid for groundnuts that even by 1937, "after the depression' it was reported that about 70/- (£3-10s) was being offerred for a ton of groundnuts,[6] which was a marked decline even from the already poor price of £4 - 12 - 6d per ton cited above.

The same story applied to other cash crops. In 1932, Palm Kernels were bought at an average price of £4.15s0d.[7] But by 1934,[8] this had gone down to as low as £1-15s. This was a year after 1933 when it was claimed that the "economic depression was over". Moreover, in 1932 sheanut sold for £4:1s:8d[9] per ton, but by 1934, it dropped to £2:10s:0d[10] "after the depression".

Thus, the prices of the cash crops paid by the foreign firms mainly the United Africa Company, decline over the years and this continued even after the years when the depression was said to be over. Thus, it was

therefore not surprising that even at late as 1937, it was being reported that the economic slump persisted. For, instance in 1938, it was reported that""Cotton prices are discouraging and a fall of 30 - 40 percent in the amount offerred for sale is probable.... As a result the local cultivator has been badly discouraged"[11].

Again, in the case of groundnuts, it was reported as late as 1938 that:

> ...Unfortunately the prices offerred for these... are so low that it is hardly worth while for farmers to bring them in for sale. At Rijau, where having regard to world market prices, the very fair price of seven tenths of the penny per pound is offerred, the farmers would prefer to sell their cotton crop at Yelwa market (Sokoto Province), where the price is about twice that amount. 12

It is thus clear from the above discussion that although the economic depression was considered to be formerly over by 1933, yet it persisted in Niger province even to as late as 1938 when low prices for agricultural prices produced by the peasants, continued to be the rule.

In the face of these declining prices, paid for the cash crops produced by the peasants, the latter were subjected to an increasing impoverishment as a result of increases in colonial taxation. For instance, the general tax assessment in Abuja Division in 1928 was £10,923[13] but, in 1929, it rose to £11,299. 2s. 9d; then to £12,667.14s.6d in 1930; and, by 1931, it had climbed to about £12,963[14] reaching a record of £17,875.6.8d in 1932.[15]

Moreover, although in 1931, the Jangali tax in Bida Division amounted to about 1,378, yet by 1932, it climbed to about 1478.[16] Also, in 1931, the tax assessment of Zungeru Division amounted to 2,218, but by 1932, it rose to 2,328.[17] Thus, in addition to the low prices offerred for peasant produce during the depression years, the period also witnessed steady increase in peasant taxes; at a time when the peasants earned the lowest incomes from their produce and wages.

Because of the fall in the prices of their produce and since, they had to 'search' for more cash in order to be able to pay the ever increasing taxes, the peasants responded by increasing the area of farmland under cash crop cultivation.[18] Thus, the more the incidence of taxation, the more the area of farmland brought under cash crop production with the consequent neglect of the internal food crop production. This situation, as would be demonstrated presently, led to food shortages and famines in our area of study.

5.3 Famines In Kontagora Division

In April 1931, the District officer of Kontagora Division, reported to the Resident of Niger rovince, about food shortages and famines which his Division was going through.[19] The food shortages and famines was reported to be severe, especially, in the Northern Provinces of the

emirate where he estimated that 300 tons of grain would be required to carry the people of those districts over the crisis. The District Officer further reported that he expected to obtain between 150 and 200 tons of grains from Auna District of the Division, and that he was moving up supplies to deal with the threatened food shortages in the Konkoro, Kumbasho and Rijau Districts. The Zuru area of the Province was similarly affected.[20]

It should be remembered that the impact of the depression was being felt in varying degrees in other provinces of Northern Nigeria. For it was reported that all the provinces intimated that, as far as possible, food relief should come from inside the provinces. Thus, relief food was not to be sought for from external sources.[21]

Because of the above directive by the Secretary of the Northern Provinces, the District Officer of Kontagora Division, made attempts to secure the assistance of Bida, Agaye - Lapai and Abuja Native Administrations in the supply of grains in order to ameliorate the worsening food situation in the entire Kontagora Division. However, most of the replies to the request made by the District Officer were negative. This was because the other areas to which the requests were directed were facing the problem of famines themselves. Thus, according to the District Officer of Agaye and Lapai Division:

> I am afraid little help will be forthcoming from this Division. Agaie Emirate is already feeling the pinch and although Lapai is a little better off, I think their "surplus" will be required by Xmas.[22]

Similarly, the District Officer of Abuja Division reported that:

> It is regretted that Abuja Native Administration is unable to help. The Emir States that our food supplies will only just last until the Federal harvest...23

Thus, with no help, coming from external sources, the famines in the Kontagora Division continued unabated. And although figures of victims were not provided in the colonial sources, one informant[24] claimed that hundreds of people died as the direct result of the famine in Kontagora Division during the year 1931. He stated that the shortage of food was so severe that those people who remained alive began to dig out the roots of untested plants which they ate in order to survive. However, others simply migrated. The famines that was experienced in Kontagora Division in 1931, was only one example of the famines, experienced all over Niger Province, as a direct result of the impact of the depression. Other examples of famines are discussed below.

5.4 Famines In Zungeru, Bida, Kuta And Agaye - Lapai Divisions:

Like the Kontagora Division, the Zungeru, Bida, Kuta and Agaye - Lapai Divisions also experienced famines as a direct result of the economic depression. For instance, in Zungeru Division, the famine was so serious, particularly, in the Northern Districts that some quantities of yams and gero had to be imported. For according to the Annual Report

of Zungeru Division for the year 1932:

> The severe food shortage which was felt in the Northern Districts last year resulted in difficulties in obtaining seed for this year's planting. Quantities of seed yams and gero were therefore imported by the Native Administration...25

Similarly, in the Kuta Division, it was the same story of food shortages and famines. For according to the Kuta Annual Report for 1932:

> There was a considerable shortage of food in Kurmin Gurmana District during the first half of the year, so that famine relief measures had to be adopted.26

Even other Divisions, like Bida, Agaye - Lapai and Abuja did not escape the problem of famines, as the direct result of the economic depression. This was so serious that the Agaye - Lapai and Abuja Divisions were unable to render any form of assistance to the District officer of Kontagora Division when the latter enquired about the possibility of obtaining relief food in order to ameliorate the critical food shortages and famines in his area.

As a result of the famines that hit these areas the people did one or two things in response as their counterparts in Kontagora did. Firstly, they began to eat all kinds of grasses tubers and leaves in order to survive. Secondly, some people reported to selling their children to those who had enough food. These measures, according to an informant, was designed to ensure that the children would get food and at least survive the crisis.[27] Another measure that was

taken as a direct response to the famines was that many people migrated. Thus, the Annual Report for Zungeru Division, in 1932, was to report a decrease of about 1000 people in total population of the area, and blamed it on the economic depression and general stagnation of trade from which the Division suffered.[28] The same story applied to other areas. However, it must be pointed out that inspite of these measures, many people didd, as they did not survive the food crisis.[29] However, as we stated earlier, although the colonial sources reported directly or indirectly about the severity of the famines, yet, the same colonial sources supressed information relating to deaths. The colonial sources would only confirm "the alarming number of deaths from diseases and starvation"[30] at this period, but suppressed information of the number of those who died. As we stated earlier, the reason for this was to conceal the massive exploitation which British Colonialism subjected the peasantry of Niger Province. However, our informants confirmed that thousands of peasants died.[31] Those of them who were lucky to "survive" lost considerable normal body weight, and became relatively useless to themselves because they did not have the minimum required calorie to perform anything, not even to farm.

Moreover, the already deplorable condition of the peasants who "survive" was further worsened by the usual epidemic diseases, like Yellow Fever, Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis, dysentary and Small-pox. Thus, more of the

peasants who "survive", died from these diseases. For instance, according to a report in 1938, about 550 deaths occurred at Kontagora as a result of Cerebro spinal meningitis.[32] Moreover, in another report, it was stated that about 81 peasants died from Small pox in Abuja Emirate between November 1938 and March 31st 1939.[33] As if to finally confirm the completely bad state of the health of the peasants of Niger province, a colonial report inadvertently commented that "the health of the African population has not been so good"[34]. No concrete steps were taken by the colonial Government to ameliorate the famines and diseases and which, as we shall see below, was further worsened by an invasion of the entire Niger province by millions of locusts.

5.5 LOCUST INVASIONS:

In our appraisal of the capacity of indigenous mechanisms to cope against the problem of famines in pre-colonial times, we pointed out that before the inception of British colonial rule, Niger province experienced some locust invasions. For instance, locusts invaded Abuja, during the reign of Abu Kwaka, between 1851-1857[35]. It occurred again during the reign of Ibrahim Iyalo, the 3rd Emir of Abuja[36]. Even Aida Division, was not spared, for the area similarly experienced locust invasions in the 1880s.[37]

However, as we have pointed out before, these locust invasions of Niger Province before the inception of British Colonial rule did not lead to famines in the area.

This was not because they were small scale invasions but because the [illegible] mechanisms, some of which we have discussed, were able to cushion their impact.[38]

But the series of locust invasions during the period of British rule in Niger Province, especially, those of the period 1929 - 33, helped to worsen the already critical situation of food shortages and famines in the area which was caused by the economic depression.

The outbreak of the locusts invasion itself began towards the end of 1928, when swarms of them invaded Nigeria. By December 1929, it was further reported that the migratory locust had entered the South West corner of Nigeria from Dahomey and between the months of April and July of 1930, they began to breed in Oyo and Abeokuta Provinces. Other Provinces affected were Ilorin, Kabba, Benue, Plateau, Niger and Sokoto.[39]

Of all the Provinces of Nigeria affected, Niger Province was the most seriously hit by the locusts.[40] For instance, below are Table 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 which show the number of swarms of flying locusts recorded in each month between the years 1930 and 1936 in Niger, Kabba and Benue Provinces.

TABLE 5.2: FLYING SWARMS: NO. REPORTED EACH MONTH (NIGER PROVINCE)

YEARS	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC
1930	2	20	5	21	43	69	34	17	14	45	24	15
1931	10	4	10	38	18	3	32	4	8	9	14	49
1932	20	18	46	33	17	5	24	10	4	1	4	26
1933	8	23	16	16	10	2	5	0	0	8	3	19
1934	1	1	1	20	8	24	19	6	26	5	48	11
1935	3	7	16	43	14	7	21	3	2	0	14	5
1936	7	19	14	20	12	17	9	3	2	6	0	9
1937	12	3	1	19	15	44	49	11	0	0	52	33
1938	8	3	0	18	20	19	34	34	5	2	5	16
TOTAL	179	98	109	218	157	190	227	88	47	76	164	183

GRAND TOTAL NUMBER OF SWARMS REPORTED EACH MONTH = 1,336

SOURCE: NAK, Minprof 1,349, Volume VI, Locust destruction.

N.B: A Swarm of Locusts = Millions of Locusts.

TABLE 5.3: FLYING SWARMS: NUMBER REPORTED EACH MONTH (KABSA PROVINCE)

YEAR	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.
1930	4	1	3	5	8	5	8	[illegible]	3	27	17	5
1931	16	25	6	4	1	11	5	11	2	[illegible]	0	15
1932	20	27	13	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
1933	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	[illegible]	[illegible]	0	0	2
1934	8	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	2
1935	3	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
1936	4	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1937	1	3	3	0	1	4	4	0	0	0	1	17
1938	12	7	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	77	85	29	9	13	20	17	11	5	27	28	53

GRAND TOTAL NOS. OF SWARMS REPORTED EACH MONTH = 374

SOURCE: NAK MINPROF 1,349 VOLUME VI. LOCUST DESTRUCTION

N.B: A Swarm of Locusts = Millions of Locusts.

TABLE 5.4 FLYING SWARMS: NO. REPORTED EACH MONTH (BENUE PROVINCE)

YEAR	JAN	FEB.	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.
1930	7	27	10	20	12	47	3	4	1	19	22	27
1931	21	14	6	2	26	6	11	1	2	0	5	24
1932	17	23	35	7	20	82	23	0	0	0	0	4
1933	12	23	15	32	5	19	1	0	0	0	0	4
193[illegible]	0	6	3	0	0	0	[illegible]	0	0	0	10	4
1935	11	7	3	14	29	70	9	1	0	0	1	0
1936	3	11	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
1937	1	0	3	0	0	3	2	0	0	1	5	4
1938	12	8	5	4	0	30	1	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	87	119	81	79	92	257	50	6	3	20	46	67

GRAND TOTAL NOS. OF SWARMS REPORTED EACH MONTH = 907

SOURCE: NAK, MINPROF 1,349 VOLUME VI. LOCUST DESTRUCTION.

N.B: A Swarm of Locusts = Millions of Locusts.

Tables 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 above, clearly reveal that Niger Province was visited on several occasions by swarms of locusts, not only during the depression years, but even after. Moreover, when the Province is compared with the Kabba and Benue Provinces, it would be revealed that Niger Province experienced more visits by locusts than either to the former provinces. For instance, between 1930 and 1938, Niger Province was visited by a total of 1,336 swarms of locusts, whereas, in Benue Province, it was 907 and in Kabba Province, about 374 swarms of locust. Again, the Tables clearly shows that whereas both Benue and Kabba Provinces had many months free from the visits by swarms of locusts, in Niger Province, the story was different. For the swarms of locusts visited the area during almost all the months between 1930 and 1938. Thus, was the extent of the invasions of locusts to Niger Province.[41]

Several measures[42] were adopted to control the locusts. Most of these proved either uneconomical or ineffective due mainly to the lukewarm attitude of the British Colonial officials who were detailed to lead the battles against the locusts. One of the measures was the application of insecticides but when this was unavailable, gangs of villagers were organised to encircle a hopper band and beat it with branches moving inwards.[43] In this way, a hopper band was either destroyed or reduced. Again, in order to prevent flying swarms from settling in an area, the practice was to create a great noise by beating tins

or by shouting and to produce smoke from fires.[44] Another common method for killing the locusts was by laying poison bait composed of an insecticide, mixed with bait material. The bait material used was bran, a variable commodity that contained small particles and some flour which, it was claimed, was designed for maximum attraction. When bran was unavailable, the practice was that, the bait was made by milling any cereal such as maize, guinea corn, and millet with agrocide, added during milling. It became the case that many farmers were required to divert part of their food produce to the task of making bait for destroying the locusts, a practice which contributed in worsening the already critical food shortages in Niger Province and which the fight against locusts was intended to remove.[45]

Inspite of the measures, however, both oral and colonial sources aver that thousands of farms were damaged by the locusts. For instance, in July 1933, alone, about 162 farms were damaged in Kontagora Division. In Abuja, especially, in Zuba District, 87 farms were damaged; in Diko district, 38 farms were affected; Abuja District, 39 farms; and Gerki District, 29 farms.[46]

In Bida Division, it was being reported that 50 percent of the guinea corn were destroyed in the Villages of Tagbi and Barkunji in Lebozhi District and in the Village of Chereti in Egbako District.[47] In 1930, in Kuta Division, a considerable amount of damage by the locusts was reported. This, it was claimed, reduced the output of the guinea corn

crop for that year to the extent that it was anticipated that there would be a shortage of food before next harvest.

The Locust invasions and the damages done to farms in Niger Province did not subside, for it persisted up to the end of the 1930s. For instance, on a summary of locust swarms for the week that ended 23rd July, 1938, it was reported that flying swarms were observed in Kontagora Division as follows: at Ibolu, Kontagora, Kotonkoro and Rijau Districts; at Abuja Division it was as follows: at Wako, Jiwa and Dogon Kurmi units; in Lapai Division, it was as follows: at Vulegbo and Gulu units; in Bida Division, it was as follows: at Nuvon Kota and Mentafen units in Gbangba District.[48]

The damages caused by these invading locusts to farms, again continued and it was in the millions. For instance, one Mr. R.W. Wright reported, in 1928, that in the Kontagora Division, 25 farms were destroyed, 20 in Rijau and 32 at Kumbashi. In Abuja Division, it was 265 farms, including 95 farms of guinea corn, 79 farms of maize and 7 farms of gero.[49] So persistent was the invasions by the locusts and very devasting was their activities that, as late as 1939, the Resident of Niger province reported having seen several swarms of locusts in the marshes at Bafiafu, Likpeta and Pabogi. He also saw sexually mature swarms at Muregi and a copulating swarm at Nokwa, all of which caused extensive damages to thousands of farms.[50]

Thus, so devesting were the damages done to farms that the already precarious food situation caused by the economic depression became very critical. According to an informant, because of the menacing of the locusts to the few farms still under food crop cultivation, many farmers were simply reluctant to grow food crops for fear that they would be destroyed by the locusts. The result of the damages to farms by locusts and the rather helpless attitude of the farmers towards cultivation of food crops, there was a phenomenal reduction in the output of food that was produced. The net result was that the food shortages and famines which were experienced in Kontagora, Zungeru, Kuta, Bida and Agaye - Lapai Divisions continued helplessly. The victims continued to be the peasants, who had no food to eat and many of who either died or were alive but swimming in the ocean of impoverishment and pauperisation. At this juncture, the question we should address ourselves to is what were the measures taken by the British Colonial Authorities to ameliorate the situation? As we will see below the major measure that was taken by the colonial authorities was the introduction of mixed farming, a period when many peasants were feeding on grass.

5.6 Colonial Government's Reaction: The Introduction Of Mixed Farming:

One of the immediate development strategies designed to ameliorate the impact of the depression by cheapening production and thus exports was mixed farming. It was

a system of animal husbandry of which the chief feature is the substitution of ploughing with bullocks for the more usual land cultivation with a hoe".[51]

According to the British Colonial authorities, the traditional farming system of the people of Northern Nigeria was based on shifting cultivation, whereby, the land being farmed was cultivated for many years untill such a time when it became exhausted after which it was allowed some years to lie fallow in order to regain it's fertility.[52] It was further observed that the problem with shifting cultivation was that it was based on low technology, namely, the hand hoe. Secondly, it was observed that the system was wasteful because it required a considerable amount of land.[53] What this meant was that it could not be practised in an area where there was land shortage. Thus, the system would have to be replaced by a more intensive permanent method of cultivation.[54]

The argument was further made that most countries of the world followed the system of permanent cultivation the fundamental principle, it was alleged, being the maintenance of soil fertility by the use of manure. In the Southern parts of Nigeria, for example, (apart from leaching), there was no problem with ensuring the fertility of the soil. Here was an area of high tropical forest and rainfall where the decomposition of vegetable matter helps to maintain soil fertility.[55] On the contrary, in the Northern part of Nigeria located in the Savanna grassland, there was low rainfall and green manuring was

uncommon for the manure to be found in this area was provided from the Fulani cattle. Here the problem was being worsened by the almost continuous cropping, in a situation of increasing population. The fertility of the soil was being seriously affected which led to poor crop returns.[56] It was further argued that "the competition of economic crops such as cotton and groundnuts with the requirements of food crops was becoming marked" and that "a more balanced form of agriculture had to be evolved, if a satisfactory social advancement was to be secured."[57] Thus, for permanent improvement to take place in the traditional system of cultivation, some form of animal husbandry must be introduced and that the plough was similarly to be introduced as an invaluable adjunct to animal husbandry.

As a follow-up, experimental stations were established at Samaru, Kano and Ilorin in order to carry out experiments on various methods of cultivation of food and cash crops, the rotation of crops, different systems of manuring, livestock problems.[58] Other studies were carried out on the feeding of animals under the conditions of native farms, different breeds of stock for milk and on the farm implements and the manufacture of farmyard manure. Moreover, factories for the manufacture of wooden ploughs and small iron[59] were established and selected herds of cattle established at Samaru and Kano with special livestock farms being similarly located at Shika and Ilorin.

After adequate information had been gathered from these experiments, it was then decided to acquire farms in order to practicalise the results. The result of all these was the evolution of a system of mixed farming at Kumaru.[60] It was only from the 1930s, that attempts were made to extend the mixed farming system to other parts of Northern Nigeria.

In Niger province itself, the attempt to introduce mixed farming in the area was initially not welcomed by Resident Bockwell. For according to him, "the general opinion of the Native Authorities of this province with which I am in agreement is that the present is not the time for the introduction of mixed farming".[61] Resident Bockwell gave two main reasons for his opposition to mixed farming.

In the first place, he made it known that none of the Native Administrations in Niger province were in the position to guarantee the necessary expenditure.[62] He further stated that he was made to understand that the contributions from the Northern Colonial Government to the provinces would not be regular annual payments, but contributions to assist the province to tide over a difficult period. He continued by claiming that the proposal of the Director of Agriculture of the Northern Province appeared to be of a far more permanent nature and feared that Native Administrations would not be able to continue their

contributions without seriously affecting their resources. Resident Backwell, then concluded by saying that it is considered highly undersirable to undertake new committments, which in all probability would in a short time, be beyond the resources of the Native Administrations to continue.[63]

The second reason given by Resident Backwell, against the initial introduction of mixed farming was in his words, "the result would be of doubtful benefit".[64] According to him, the main crops grown in the province were "food crops" and that the prices of these over the years had fallen far below economic values due to "over-productions". He concluded by saying that an increased production of these crops which would be the natural outcome of mixed farming would tend to accentuate the lowness of the prices.[65]

However, inspite of the initial opposition to the introduction of mixed farming in Niger province, the project was initiated and every effort was made to ensure that people adopted it. Thus, in 1932, it was started in Tontagora, with the Emir taking the lead by buying a plough and a yoke of oxen.[66] The system was similarly extended to Nupe where it's Emir was reported to have started mixed farm with plough and cattle.[67]

In order to further encourage more people to take to mixed farming, the Colonial authorities began a mixed farming Advance Account Scheme in 1938.[68] Thus, farmers who could not purchase the equipments needed, were given an advance on future profits of £1 to £1.10s[69] and they

were to repay the advance in four yearly instalments, which included a hiring charge of 5 percent.[70]

When the mixed farming Advance Account Scheme was started in 1930, there were about seventeen applicants, and the initial amount deposited under the scheme by the colonial authorities in Bida Division amounted to £100.[71] This amount was grossly inadequate for seventeen (17) applicants to start mixed farming with talk less of solving the critical problem of famines. However, over the years, the number of applications increased and by 1940, about £4000 was being earmarked, under the scheme, in the Bida Division alone.

Inspite of these measures, an examination of the operation of the mixed farming system in Niger Province, showed that it was a failure.

First of all the cost of starting mixed farms was too high for the peasantry to afford.[72] For example it was estimated that about £10 in cash or credit was required for a peasant to buy the bullocks and the plough needed. This, according to a report, was equivalent to the total cash earnings which the peasant obtained between a period of two to three years.[73] The problem, was further compounded by the fact that the animals had to be kept in fodder during the dry season at a high cost, which was, again, beyond the means of the peasants. Moreover, it was reported that even among those people who were considered to be credit worthy, there was a high failure

rate which, in some cases was estimated to have exceeded 30 percent.[74]

Thus, because of the high costs involved in starting and maintaining a mixed farm, it was not surprising that only few people took to it. For instance, although the system of mixed farming began in Kontagora Emirate in 1931, yet, by 1946 there were only 6 mixed farmers[75] a figure which further reduced to 4, by 1948.[75] In Minna Emirate, the story was the same. For, as late as 1946, there were only 9 mixed farmers.[77]

What is more, an examination of the class composition of those who actually took to mixed farming is interesting. For instance, of the 4 mixed farms in Kontagora Emirate by 1948, only 2 were owned by commoners, while the remaining were owned by the Emir and a Village head.[78] Again, in Minna Emirate of the 9 mixed farms in the area by 1946, only 5 were owned by commoners while the remaining 4 were owned by the Emir, Native Authorities Officials and a village Head.[79] This was the class composition of those who actually took to mixed farming which prompted one author to make the valid observation that the mixed farming system was elitist in practice and in theory.[80]

According to an informant,[81] even among those who increased their production of crops through the mixed farming system, they received increasingly lower prices for their efforts, which prompted one colonial officer to make the lengthy criticism that:

> We are told that mixed farming is the only hope of developing the agricultural wealth of the province. What does this wealth consist of? The wretched farmer has seen the introduction of cotton and groundnuts as his agricultural wealth, has profited by it and has seen the value of this wealth gradually decline with increased production, until neither crop is worth the labour of cultivation. The question arises therefore whether we are introducting mixed farming in order to have ton groundnuts grow where one grew before and increase the area under cotton... More production of groundnuts and cotton will only help to lower the already low price of these crops... What then are we attempting?. It would appear that our aim is to introduce a foreign system of farming which if uncontrolled, will result in large areas being cultivated and large crops being reaped for which there are no markets. What then?82.

It was therefore not surprising that in the 1940s, most of the existing mixed farms still in operation were being closed down. For instance, in 1941, the demonstration farm at Ngaie was ordered to be closed as "It is most unlikely that mixed farming will ever taken on there"[83] and that the funds required to run it could be used for better purpose elsewhere. In Kontagora Division, it was the same story, for as one report observed,

> Support for mixed farming has been lukewarm only. There remains only one farmer making a genuine attempt. The remainder have been far more interested in fattening their cattle for sale than in looking after their farms. All except one farm have therefore been closed down.[84]

Thus, the only major concrete effort by the Colonial authorities for stimulating agricultural production failed.

This meant that the poverty and impoverishment of the peasants continued helplessly and hopelessly, a situation which, as we shall see in the next chapter, further deteriorated as a direct consequence of the second imperial war which was fought between 1939 and 1945.

FOOT NOTES ON CHAPTER V

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CHAPTER SIX

COLONIAL RULE AND FAMINES IN NIGER PROVINCE: THE SECOND WORLD WAR. 1939 - 1945.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

We demonstrated in earlier chapters that there were certain indigenous mechanisms within the pre-Colonial modes of production of Niger Province which cushioned the impact of famines in the period before colonial rule. But colonialism, selectively deformed them via the monetization of the economy, introduction of taxation, encouragement of Cash crop production, transformation of the pre-colonial land tenure system and the destruction of the Local craft industry. The net result of these was incessant famines and peasant impoverishment. But this situation was worsened by the out break of the world economic depression between 1929 and 1933. Moreover, the period, coincidentally, witnessed the invasion of the area by swarms of locusts which critically escalated the famines ~~faminas~~ already started by the depression. We therefore argued that contrary to being caused by locusts as it is often traditionally explained, the world economic depression was the real "locust", which caused and acutely worsened the famine. It was the ability of the colonial authorities to recognise this, that led them to device certain measures in an apparent, though unsuccessful, attempt to arrest the large scale hunger which had completely consumed Niger Province. Without food, thousands of people began to suffer from under-nutrition and

malnutrition.[1] The result of this was that diseases like Kwashiorkor and Maramum took over, with the vast majority of the people (children) and adult dying.[2] This meant the massive loss of the labour force, which was not only because of the high mortality and death rates, but because those who "Survived" became useless either to themselves or to the society. The result of this was that the farms continued to remain uncultivated, worsening the famine problem that had engulfed the entire province. Thus, in the end, the picture we get is that towards the close of the 1930s, the peasantry of Niger province, sank deeper into the ocean of impoverishment, poverty and disease.

In this chapter, we seek to demonstrate that the impoverishment of the peasantry in Niger province continued and became more severe up to the end of our period of study in 1945. This last dimension of it was brought about by the impact of the second imperial war which was fought between 1939 and 1945; and resulted in the total mobilisation of the labour, human and material resources of the area. These worsened the precarious state of a peasantry that was already impoverished and diseased.

6.2 Mobilisation of Labour Forced Labour on the Plateau Tin Mines.

The period of the great European war between 1939 and 1945 witnessed another occassion for massive mobilisation of labour in Niger province on a scale greater than during the railway construction. This led to

the re-introduction of forced labour in the tin mines on the Jos Plateau after it's "Partial abolition" in 1933 which, again, clearly revealed the hypocrisy of the colonial government. This is because in 1931, a colonial conference was convened to deliberate on the issue of forced labour in reaction to the general convention on forced labour. The outcome of the conference was the enactment, in 1933, of the Forced Labour Ordinance.[3]

An examination of the provisions of this ordinance, revealed the double standard of the colonial government on the issue of the abolition of forced labour. For instance, section 3 of the ordinance empowered Native Authorities in the protectorate of Northern Nigeria to exact labour for the maintenance of native buildings, used for communal purposes, sanitary measures, cleaning of local road paths, repairing town or village fences, digging ang construction of wells and such other minor communal services in the direct interest of the inhabitants of the town or villages as may be prescribed by regulation made by the Governor in Council.[4]

But section 4, on the other hand stipulated the punishment to be meted out to those who exacted forced labour. Thus, according to it:

> any person who exacts forced labour or causes forced labour to be exacted for his benefit, shall be liable to imprisonment for two years or to a fine of five hundred pounds or both of these penalities.5

Thus, an increase of 25 percent in the production of tin was aimed at in order to meet the various requirements for which tin was to be used during the war.[7] It was within this context that forced labour was vigorously pursued during the second world war, especially, in the Jos Plateau tin mines. This became inevitable in order to solve the problem of the great demand for labour as a result of the difficulty of bringing in imported machinery during the war, and also to ensure that the targetted figure of tin production was met.

It was in the pursuit of the above, that each of the northern provinces was required to send a specific number of labour recruits and some quantity of food to the tin mines. This new demands for labour was greater than what occurred during the earlier period of railway construction. As usual, the Emirs, district and village heads, all played decisive roles in the recruitment of and holding of labour on the mines field by recruiting and sending their representatives to the mines to check deserters and t ensure that their subjects worked hard. The method of recruiting labour for the tin mines by the Emirs, District and Village heads was basically similar to what obtained during the period of the mobilisation of forced labour for the construction of the railways and for the Plateau tin mines in the earlier period.

First of all, they were informed of the labour quota demanded and alloted to their areas. They, in turn,

informed their people of the labour required. In order to ensure the participation of the people, the Emirs, district and village heads started by explaining to their subjects why the latter's labour was required which included out right lies. For example, the Chiefs, Emirs and District Heads were told without their subjects going to work in the tin fields, Germany would win the war and they, all would be killed. Secondly, that failure to supply the labour demanded by the colonialists would compell the latter to grossly increase the rate of taxes and lower prices for peasant produce. Moreover, those who "voluntarily" agreed to be recruited were usually promised that their farms, back home, would be well "taken care of" and that their wives and children would be considered for "exemption" from taxation. However, the people were not convinced about these. It was for this reason that the emirs, district and village heads had to recruit them by force to work in the tin mines. Thus, many people were forcibly rounded up and taken to the mines field, without other members of their families knowing their whereabout.[8]

In reaction to the forcible enlistment of labour, the peoples of Niger province, did one or two things. First of all, those of them who wanted to escape service and had money, bribed some Native Authority Officials which, in most cases, amounted to about £5.[9] On receiving these bribes, the local officials declared their clients as physically unfit or too old and,

therefore, exempted from conscription. At any rate, they had to meet the provincial quota. Consequently, it began to be noticed that some officials were sending old and deformed workers to the minefield in place of those who had bribed the former. For in November 1942, Mr. J.J. Emberton, in a letter to the Resident of Niger Province, revealed interalia that..." Complaints have been made to me by employers that some batches of conscripted labour, sent to the Plateau have contained men, who had to be sent to Hospital soon after their arrival and were probably unfit".[10]

The second form of reaction to the recruitment of forced labour on the tin mines was, as usual, emigration from the province by some people. This, as we have shown earlier, was a recuring phenemenon started with the inception of British colonialism which dispossessed the people of their fertile lands, over-burdened them with high taxation, and forced them to surrender their labour. The period of the second world war witnessed increased and incessant migrations as a result of the deplorable situation in Niger province. The areas to which they migrated were the Plateau minesfield and the cocoa fields to take up full wage employment. We must emphasise that even in these areas to which they migrated, conditions were also harsh, but were only more tolerable in comparison with the extreme conditions in Niger province. For instance, the Annual Report of Bida Division for 1944, reported that the population of Bida Division decreased

from 196,705 in 1943 to 192,176 in 1944, which was attributed to emigration due to the demands for labour". Again, in 1945, it was reported that Abuja Emirate experienced a decrease of 5% in population, especially in Kuje district from where migration was reported to the Keffi and Nassarawa Emirates, which were areas of low taxation rates.[12]

However, it must be emphasised that inspite of the above, thousands of people were mobilised from Niger province to work, not only in the few mines fields within the Niger province, but, more importantly, on the Jos Plateau. The majority of the conscript labourers from Niger province who were largely illitrate and who spoke no English belonged to the category of wage labourers who were classified as unskilled and they were mainly engaged in digging (Pick), shovelling and head-pan work.[13]

On the minesfields, the labourers usually worked in gangs under a headman who was paid a basic wage plus a small commission for the number of labourers under his charge.[14] However, for the majority of workers engaged in digging, shovelling and head pan work, the situation was one of exploitation of their labour. For instance, commenting about the exploitative nature of the payments on the Plateau tin fields, especially, with regards to the contract system, Mangvwat, had this to say:

> In this system the labourers were paid so much per cubic yards of escavated earth carried away to a dump or an embarkment forming a dam. The payment was made to the headmen of the particular group, who in turn shared it out to the labourers, those digging

> received the highest pay, followed by shovel workers, while the headpan workers, mostly women and adolescent, received the least pay.15

Mangvwat further argued that the wages paid to these category of wage labourers were the lowest, a situation made worst by the fact that it kept changing according to market conditions and also to the rake-off which must be paid to labour brokers, often, so as to retain employment. However, the wages were paid weekly, especially, on Saturdays. Before the depression of 1929-31, these amounted to about 6s.6d weekly per adult labourer.[16]

In February 1943, the British Ministry of Supply approved a proposal to pay a bonus of 1s for each month of supply satisfactory service to conscript labourers working on the minesfield, that is, 4s at the end of the normal period of 4 months.[17] But there is no indication that this was actually paid. The appalling conditions of the miners on the Jos tinfields have been graphically brought out by Bill Freund, when he said that:

> The health facilities of the minesfield were grossly inadequate... so few were the hospital beds that the Plateau, unlike other mining zones in British West Africa could not be designated as a target labour health area...18

In the camps, it proved impossible to honour the regulation which limited the occupation of huts to two men each. Overcrowding, coupled withsevere strain on the limited sanitory facilities and exposure, was also a serious cause of,illness and death. Men, frequently had to work steadily from 7.00 a.m to 4 p.m in water and mud, through rains. So appalling were the conditions that in 1943,

the Emir of Kontagora received three letters[19] from his representative on the minesfield in Jos, by name, Mallam Audu, in which the labourers from Kontagora complained about the hard work being alloted to them. They also alleged that wood was not always available and that they had, at times, to go without cooked food for two days for lack of it. Similarly, they complained that although they were told that the value of their food would be at the rate of 2s.6d per week, yet, 6d a day was being deducted from their wages. Finally, they complained that although the government had under taken to provide a blanket for each labourer because of the cold climate of the Jos Plateau, yet, the cost of the blankets were being deducted from their wages.

According to Bill Freund, the major problem was that of inadequate rations.[20] The labourers were provided with eight pounds of grain per week which was raised to twelve pounds in 1943. Although in 1943, attempts were made to improve on the diet of the workers by providing them with two pounds of meat per week, including fruits, vegetables an salt, yet, "the food was always in short supply and especially lacking in salt and protein".[21]

The net impact of the appalling conditions of the labourers was that many of them suffered from diseases like small pox, celebrospinal meningitis and others like Guinea-worm, Pneumonia, bronchitis, jaundice, dysentary, diarrhoea and veneral disease. The result was that hundreds and, possibly, thousands of them died. For instance, between

October 1942 and December 1943, Niger province recorded 59 deaths among it's labourers on the Plateau tin mines.[22] This figure was far from accurate and could have been higher, since it took no account of feaths or permanent illness after the return of the conscripts to their homes and those that must have died working on the minesfield located within Niger Province itself.

Late, in 1943, it was decided by the Ministry of Supply to issue the workmen's compensation ordinance.[23] In it, it was observed that the compensations were necessary in view of the fact that conscript labourers were compelled to leave their homes to work on the mines, in a climate to which they were not accustomed, and where they were exposed to a far greater risk of sickness than in their own surrounding.[24] It was therefore decided that where a conscripted labourer died, and his death was certified by a medical officer to be due to sickness or disease attributable to or aggravated by the compulsory service of the deceased, a compensation of £10, shall be payable to his dependents by the deceased employers.[2] However, the same workers compensations ordinance stated that "deaths due to natural and not accidental causes are not covered by the provisions of the work men's ordinance".[26] In other words, if a labourer died, it was only the colonial employers, who determined whether his survivors were to be paid the £10 compensation since it was they who certified whether he died of natural or accidental causes. In this regard, it should be noted that from the accounts of some

of my informants,[27] the colonial employers refused to pay the £10 compensation to the survivors of dead labourers, on the convenient excuse that th died of natural causes. These then, were some of the harsh, brutal, and exploitative conditions under which labourers from Niger and other provinces were subjected to in the tin fields on the Jos Plateau during the second world war. But apart from the forced recruitment of labourers for the Plateau tin mines, the peoples of Niger province were also forcibly conscripted to serve in the colonial army as soldiers, carriers e.t.c. We examine this briefly immediately.

6.3 Mobilisation of Human Resources: The Military

Apart from the mobilisation of labour for the minesfield during the war, the colonial authorities also enlisted the services of the peoples of Niger province into the army on a grand scale. This was not the first time that the peoples of the areas had taken part in a war that was essentially between the European countries. For during the first imperial war of 1914 - 1918, many Nigerians, including those from Niger province, took part in military campaigns in such areas like Togoland and East Africa. But the second world war witnessed a greater mobilisation of the peoples of Niger province at a period when the vast majority of them were already swimming in the ocean of impoverishment, poverty and disease.

When the second imperial war began in 1939, the colonial army, that is, the British West African Frontier force (B.W.A.F.F) was re-organised and Nigeria provided one of

it's brigades. It was, however, not long before two new battalions were formed and the majority of the troops were from the Northern part of Nigeria (i.e. from the so-called martial communities of the Benue and the Niger provinces.[28]) Nigerians fought in different parts of the world. For instance, some of them fought in Egypt, Palestine, Libya, Morocco, Sicily and Naples from November 1943 to late 1947. Again, about 60,000 of them in the 81st and 82nd West African Divisions were in active service in Burma From July 1943 to the end of the war. Moreover, Nigerians in the 1st West African Brigade fought in Italian East Africa, from July 1940 August 1914.[29]

The mode of recruitment in Niger province was as follows: The colonial officers first decided on the number of recruits they needed. This was passed on to their local agents i.e. the District Heads. The latter subsequently summoned their people out for a meeting during which they informed their people of the need for them to become fully involved in the war against the "enemy" by offering themselves for military service. The District Heads used different tactics to ensure that people came forward for enlistment. They announced to the people the attractive conditions which they would enjoy in the service. These included, free uniforms, fat remunerations, free feeding, hitch free and comfortable to Europe, leave with pay, free health and medical treatment.[30] Other supposed "benefits" were that the soldiers' farms would

be taken care of, while their families, back home, would be given allotment, pay less tax and even be exempted from political labour. Again, the District Heads especially in the areas occupied by the Gwari, invoked the fear of impending "domination" of one group by the other in order to get support. For instance, the Gwari people were deceived into fighting by their chiefs when they were informed that the Hausas were coming to re-establish their hegemony over them. Their chiefs then, passionately, appealed to them to follow the whites to fight against the Hausas in order to protect the land of their forefathers. However, the Gwaris, rather than being led to fight the Hausas were led to Europe to fight a purely European war.[31]

Still, in order to supplement the efforts of the District Heads in the enlistment drive, a recruiting party accompanied by a full regimental band and a mobile cinema, toured parts of the province.[32] It was explained to the people that if they refused to fight along with the British against the Germans, Hitler would conquer the lands of the peoples of Niger province, take their wives, and the rest of them, lead them into slavery.

What must be emphasised at this point is that, although in some instances, the colonial authorities assisted by their local agents, forcibly recruited people, yet the promise of improved conditions of life attracted many young men to voluntarily submit themselves for enlistment into the colonial army during the war,

and recruits turned up from all the Divisions in the province. Although we do not, as yet, have a complete list of the numbers recruited between 1939-45, figures for those that were enlisted for some of the years can be given. For instance, in 1944, Kontagora Division, alone contributed about 2000.[33] Our investigation also revealed that thousands were recruited from every other Division in the province yearly. But the Zuru area appeared to have been the most fertile recruitment ground in Niger province. For according to a report, the Zuru area, continued to supply a constant flow of good men into the army and that the total number of the Dakkarkari and kindred "tribesmen" represented some 20 percent of the male population of recruitable age - a record which the report also claimed had no match except, possibly, in the Numan area of Adamawa province.[34] The report, proceeded to say that the Zuru area, was contributing about 4,000 annually, so that, at any given period, this area provided move than four - fifths of the total soldiers enlisted from Niger province.

However, we must point out that inspite of the apparent enthusiasm shown by the peeples of Niger province, in general, and the Zuru people, in particular, in enlisting into the colonial army, during the second imperial war, the excercise itself, received some opposition. This has been confirmed both by the oral and the colonial sources.

For instance, in the course of our research, we were informed that some people were wise enough to have realised that the promises of improved conditions or benefits, made to them, were bogus and they,consequently devised some methods in order to escape or desert it when the actual fighting started. Firstly, the colonial recruiting officers were more interested in recruiting young men of between the ages of 17 and 25 - a group which, they believed, constituted a better fighting group. When people realised this, they began to declare false ages, claiming to be either less than the recruiting age or older, in order to escape enlistment. According to my informant, this method was very successful since the recruiting officers had no way of detrming people's ages. Another method devised to escape enlistment was by hiding in the bushes permanently. Thus, according to my informants,[35] many people stayed in the bushes throughout the duration of the war. Even then, those, who were eventually enlisted had their own tricks too. Some of them began to use false names. The use of false names made it difficult for the colonial authorities to trace them back to their villages after desertion.

As we pointed out above, the colonial sources also documented the peoples opposition to military conscription. Thus, for example, the Annual Report of 1943 claimed that recruitment, especially, in the Bida Division was "as usual spasmodic and poor and the army continued to

remain unpopular with the Nupe who did not respond favourably to the frequent appeals.[35] Another report, claimed that "elsewhere in the province and particularly among the Nupes and Gwaris the military instinct is less pronounced".[37] Finally the Annual Report of 1940, had this to say on the question of the negative response and, thus, opposition to enlistment into the colonial army, especially by the Nupe and Gwari:

> The number recruited should not alone be taken as an indication of the loyalty of its people. The tribes of this central province of which the Nupe and Gwari tribes with their sub-divisions comprise more than half the population have never on their own admission been fighters.38
>
> The same report went further to state that they did not come of fighting stock and that they very much regretted their inability to make good soldiers. Furthermore, the report alleged that the Nupes and Gwaris claimed that they were not trained in the use of arms and the brutal severity of modern warfare, which they hear, is beyond their comprehension and power of endurance.[39]

However, inspite of the general opposition to military conscription, thousands of youngmen turned up for enlistment into the colonial army to fight the second imperial war between 1939 and 1945. Those who were found suitable by the colonial recruiting officers were taken away for training at centres where they spent between three and six months, after which they were taken abroad to fight

the war. There, they served in various capacities as carriers, cooks, combat n s, watchmen, carpenters, bakers, tailors, drivers, electricians, clerks, signalsmen e.t.c.

However the mobilisation of the human resources of Niger province towards prosecuting the second world war went hand in hand with themmobilisation of the material resources of the area, especially, money and on which we now offer a few remarks.

6.4 Mobilisation of Material Resources: Money

We have already observed that in order to prosecute the European war of 1939 - 1945 the British colonial government embarked on the total mobilisation of the human resources of Niger province to engage in the actual fighting in Europe and to work in the tin fields on the plateau respectively. However, those inhabitants of Niger province who were left behind either because they were too young or old to perform the tasks expected to them, were required to make major sacrifices towards the prosecution of the war. They were to make monetary contributions.

Before this time, monetary exactions from the peoples of Niger province only took the form of heavy and arbitrary taxation which, as we demonstated earlier, was oppressive and exploitative; and which contributed to the already deplorable state of the peasantry. However, during this period, a new dimension of monetary exactions in the form of contributions to the war effort only served the purpose of

contributions to the war effort only served the purpose of finally milking the already impoverished and poverty-stricken peasantry of whatever "little" they had left, after paying the usually heavy taxes.

In order to raise the monies needed for the prosecution of the war, various war funds were initiated and launched not only in Niger province, but in the entire colonial Nigeria during the war. Thus, there was the Fulani war Fund, the Pin the War Fund, Niger province Fighter Fund, Nigerian Troops Comforts Fund and the Nigeria War Relief Fund.

The Fulani War Fund, was initiated in 1942[40] and was made up of contributions by the nomadic Fulanis. The contributions of the nomadic Fulanis to this fund was at the rate of one penny per head of cattle which was paid annually when the Jangali census was complete in July of each year.

In 1940, the Niger province fighter fund was formed. According to it's organisers, it was aimed at raising further money to assist the war effort of the British Empire on the basis that the "time had come to raise a fund for the active prosecution of the war.[41]

The Niger War Relief Fund was opened in September 1939, noticeably, at the very beginning of the war. According to the colonial officials, this Fund was being raised in order to "relieve" the sufferings of the people caused by the war. However, this amounted to sheer

hypocrisy since it was the same monetary exactions that contributed to the sufferings in the first instance.

Again the Nigerian Troops Comforts Fund, was initiated to provide 'Comforts' for the fighting troops and each adult male paid one shilling per head yearly throughout the province into this fund. Finally, there was the 'Win the War Fund, for which every adult male paid one penny per head, in the case of the peasants.[42]

The amount of success that was recorded by the various funds can be demonstrated by the huge amounts realised. For instance, the Nigerian War Relief Fund which was established in September 1939, realised a total of £40,253 -4d-5d for the entire Nigeria at the end of the first year, that is, 30th September 1940.[43] By the end of the second year (September, 30th 1941), the total had reached the sum of £68,609-10s-3d.[45] Towards the end of the third year (3rd September, 1942), the total amount collected for the year rose to £87,724 reaching a peak of £90,475 three months later, in December of the same year, for the entire Nigeria.[46]

Moreover, by the time the Niger Province Fighter Fund wound up on the 8th January, 1941, the total contribution in Niger Province was £1,422.[47] In the case of the 'Win the War Fund, the total amount collected for the province by the second half of May 1942 amounted to about £3,000 made up as follows: Kontagora Division, £1851-11s-9d, Bida Division £117-12s-3d; Agaie £96-15s-5d;

Minna Division, £ 558-6s-4d and Abuja Division £299-8s-3d. By 1944, the Lido Division alone had made a monetary contributions totalling £4,673; Kontagora and Bushishi, £1,090-4s-0d and Zuru's total contributions amounted to £525.12.6d.[48]

In order to ensure the success of the drive for monetary contributions towards the war effort, various committees were formed for the various funds. Most of them had their branches at the Divisional level down to the village levels. They engaged the services of cinema vans for carrying out their propaganda and, like the method adopted for ensuring the increased production of cash crops, they also tried to invoke the 'Hitler fear' in order to get people to donate generously to the various funds. In addition to these funds, padlocked boxes labelled, "Sadakka Yaki",[49] were procured by the committees and put in such public places like the market, motor parks, railway stations, into which individuals could also put further contributions.

In order to ensure total support for their campaign for monetary contributions, the district heads were relied upon and in this they proved helpful. The district heads, from time to time toured their areas, explaining to their people, why they should sacrifice part of their money for the war effort. Moreover, in an attempt for the Emirs to be seen by their people as being serious and in full

support of the funds, they began to place 5 percent of their own monthly salaried at the Governors disposal, for the prosecution of the war and therefore gave a strong lead to their subjects who were expected to emulate them.

However, the district Heads and Emirs did not always appeal for voluntarily donations, but on some occasions, they compelled the people to pay into them. This was contrary to the assurance that was given by the Governor, to the effect that "Collection should be preceded by very careful dissemination of the fact that there "is no compulsion" to pay and that "Contributions are entirely voluntary".[50]

In reaction to the element of compulsion that was introduced, into the collection of monetary contributions, a general movement that was opposed to it developed in Kontagora Division, in 1944, during which some "representatives" of the people met and complained to the Emir about the increasing levies being demanded towards the war efforts. Although the Emir promised to do something about their complain, in reality, nothing was done and therefore these so-called donations continued side by side with the increased exactions in the form of formal taxations. Meanwhile, the forced conscription of labour for the minesfield and the colonial army went on hand in hand with these monetary exactions and an increased tempo of cash crop production. The latter is explored a little further.

6.5 STEPPED-UP PROPAGANDA FOR INCREASED CASH CROP PRODUCTION: GROUNDNUT:

As, we have already observed in chapter three, the British colonial authorities, mounted serious propaganda to ensure the maximum production of cash crops in Niger province. The sustained emphasis on cash crop production to the detriment of food crop production was a major contributory factor in the impoverishment of the peasantry. Inspite of this, the propaganda for increased production was drastically stepped up during the second world war and the maximum production which worsened the already deplorable condition of the peasantry.

6.5.1 GROUNDNUT

According to a report, the peoples of Niger province were being asked to step up their production of groundnuts because oils and fats were being rationed in the United Kingdom, since the beginning of the war, and thus, it was up to the people of Nigeria to help maintain this ration. With this, Emirs, District and village Heads were again called upon to conduct an intensive drive for increased groundnut production. Again, special groundnut seeds were provided and distributed. It was further decided to instruct mallams in charge of elementary schools to increase plots by 2 or 3 times, and cash prizes were to be given to the best schools with the highest production of groundnuts. Similarly, every native authority worker was encouraged to start a compound groundnut patch as an

economic and a bonus fund of 1s per ton for the encouragement of groundnut growing was approved.

Sometimes, the colonial administrative officers, engaged the services of local drummers and singers to attract the attention of the peasants, in order to drive home their propaganda for the increased production of groundnuts. This was how the scheme was effected as stated in one of the report.[51]

(a) Before meeting and whilst trekking.

i. To attract attention, to give rise to comment and to cause crowds to form.

ii. To coin 'hot numbers' on the me:

Hitler ye che Bekin Nutum da biri duk daya ne,
no fi son biri da bekin nutum. Mu shuka gyada,
mu ka da Hitler (and other similar themes).

(b) After meetings.

i. Roam about town, pressing home the point by means of such songs and in the hope that they will catch on and be immitated by Village drummers.

ii. Leave behind them a subject of discussion:
What is it all about?
Answers: Gyada..... Gyada..... Gyada....[52]

It would seem that this method had some success; for according to one of the colonial administrative officers, who was involved in the propaganda drive, "the terms were proving to be of considerable value" and he proceeded to account for this:

> Firstly, news of the Tunic campaign excites interest, secondly the prices to be paid for groundnuts rivets attention and thirdly, the Hitler - killer of religions tune elicits exclamations of disgust and some surprise.. the argument which arouses comprehension and gives most to think is the Huns can beat us English if hunger saps our strength - if we are destroyed, then so will you be. If we are destroyed, we all, English and Teuse alike, have nothing in front of us but death and slavery.[53]

Thus, apart from the fact that the colonial authorities directly engaged the services of local drummers and singers in their propaganda drive for increased production of groundnut, they also ensured this, by introducing a system of cash crop quotas, whereby, each village was required to turn in some fixed tons of groundnut to the authorities, and this must be produced by every means. This was how it was organised.[54]

First of all, the Etsu and council, with the advice of the District Heads assessed the quotas for each of the village units. The Divisional officers, in consultation with the agricultural officers, would then approve the quotas and referred them back for consideration. Secondly, the quotas were finally approved and Demand Notes for each District and Village Area (see Figure 1) were issued to each District and Village Head. Thirdly, the village Head, in council with the hamlet heads and elders, allotted specific quantities of produce to all the house holders in their units. Each house holder was

then given a piece of paper, showing the quantity of produce to be brought in (see Figure 2). One piece of paper was then given for each kind of produce, namely, groundnut and other commodities. The village scribe then made a list on which the allocations would be entered and this was checked by the District Head. After checking, the corrected lists was made in duplicate; one copy was kept by the village Head and the other one, was sent to the control office, through the village Head.

The District Head, would then arrange with the Clerks at the buying centres, what days were convenient for village units to take their produce for sale there. All the people of one village unit would go to the alloted buying centre on the appointed day. The produce was then brought in, with each house holders piece of paper attached and the village scribe would mark off. If the scales figures read below the alloted figure, then the villager was presumed not to have correctly stated, what he had brought in. The scales figures would consequently be converted into measures, and the peasant was told how much he had, in fact, brought in and this was entered on his slip of paper.

Lastly, when each householder, had brought in the required amount of produce, their slips of papers were signed by the village scribe as an indication that the quantity required from them was completed.

FIGURE 1: ILLUSTRATION OF A VILLAGE DEMAND NOTE

VILLAGE DEMAND NOTE

CHOYAMI VILLAGE 900 SACKS

SACKS

DISTRICT COUNCIL'S SEAL

SIGNATURE OF
DISTRICT SCRIBE

FIGURE 2: SPECIMEN OF INDIVIDUAL DEMAND NOTE

INDIVIDUAL DEMAND NOTE

Receipt No.....

Name:.....

Hamlet:.....

Village:.....

No of Sacks on measures:.....

Signature of Village Mallam

Source: M.K Sinorof 5367. Rubber, Vegetable oil produces and other productive drive 1944-45 policy and instructions.

Because of the system of cash crop quota and the propaganda, mounted by the colonial Government, the peoples of Niger province responded by producing more cash crops, especially groundnuts. For instance, in 1942, the Department of Agriculture reported that about 15880 heaps of cotton twine valued at 1000 was produced in ten weeks in Tashishi of Montagora Division!!![55] Similar increases in the production of groundnuts and other cash crops occurred in other areas. As if to sum rise the people's massive and committed response to the appeals and exhortations for increased war production in 1943, the Emir of Bida declared: "Never in all my life have I witnessed such extensive cultivation of every kind of crops as I have this year".[56] Nothing could capture the degree of mobilisation and commitment of the people of Niger province to the British war efforts any more dramatic than this revealing confession of one of it's leading emirs.

So far, we have been at pains to demonstrate the extent to which the British mobilised the colonial population of Niger province, like those of the other provinces, towards suicidal sacrifices to contribute to British war efforts. We have shown the nature and scale of this mobilisation in all directions - forced labour for the plateau minesfields, forced military conscriptions, forced increase in the production of cash crops and forced raising of specialised war funds - all in addition to

discharging their other normal duties as colonial subjects about which we have said much in this thesis. It now remains to assess the impact of all these on the colonial subjects of Niger province - a province which, as we have abundantly demonstrated, was already suffering from an acute shortages of food and famines before the outbreak of the second imperial war.

6.6 The Impact of the Mobilisation of the Human Labour, Monetary and Food Resources.

Expectedly, the mobilisation of the human, labour monetary and food resources of Niger province, towards the prosecution of the second imperial war, had a negative impact on the already terrible food situation in the area. This, as would be demonstrated later in this section worsened an already ugly food situation and resulted in a prolonged period of famines in the province.

First of all, take the mobilisation of human and labour resources of Niger province during the war. This was not the first time that labour was being mobilised, for, as we demonstrated in chapter four, the massive mobilisation of labour for the railways, and tin mines began right from the date of the incention of British colonial domination over the area. This continued to the beginning of the second world war. We showed that the massive diversion of labour in the period before the war had negative impact on agricultural production, since the category of labour diverted (age-range of 15-30) was the

main stay of agricultural labour and provided the bulk of the food produced in the area. Without adequate labour to cultivate the *shiko*, royal and private farms, agricultural production drastically declined. This became a major factor for the incessant famines, impoverishment and complete poverty of the peasantry of Niger province up to the beginning of the second imperial war in 1939.

However, inspite of the above, the colonial authorities proceeded, during the second world war, to embark on greater mobilisation of labour (age-range 15-30),[57] which was conscripted into the colonial army to fight in Europe and work on the tin mines on the Plateau. This meant that whatever agricultural labour remained in Niger province after the massive diversions to the railways, public works before the war, was now completely diverted to the army and the mines. With the total diversion of agricultural labour completed, greater number of farms continued to remain uncultivated and thus drastically reduced the already diminished agricultural production. This worsened the already ugly food situation and resulted in another more serious and prolonged period of famine that engulfed the entire province.

For instance, in 1941, it was reported that the price of food staffs went up during the past six months, both in Zungeru and Kontagora. Surprisingly, inspite of the fact that this was caused by British colonial blunder, the report fraudulently blamed it on the influx of labour and troops that took place over various periods since the month of April of that year.[58]

Again, the Annual Report for Minna Division, in 1934, reported that in the Division generally, all crops planted were poor, and although increased acreages of most crops had been planted, this did not make up for the reduction in yield. In order to relieve the shortage, the Gwari native Administration bought some corn and rice and were put on the market.[59] However, the acute food shortages being experienced in Minna Division in 1934 continued to 1946 (after the war).

In an apparent attempt to ease the situation, the Gwari Native Administration responded by buying some corn and rice which were being put on the market for resell at lower prices to the people. But, inspite of this measure, it was being reported that "generally staple foods have remained scarce and expensive" and that the blackmarket was rampant and all efforts to prevent it met with failure.[60] Obviously, a situation where staple foods are mainly obtainable in a black market is a hallmark of famine.

Kontagora, Zungeru and Wushishi towns had their already ugly food situation worsened during the second world war as the direct consequence of the massive mobilisation of conscripts for the war and labour for the mines; for in 1944, these areas suffered from acute food shortages and prolonged famine.[61]

The gross result of the worsening food situation and famines during the war was that Niger province began to witness greater number of malnourished people than was obtained before the war began, with drastic increases in

the number of children and adults suffering from such calorie deficiency diseases like Kwashiorkor and marasmus.[63] This, again, resulted in sharper increases in mortality and death rates in the area. Amidst of this, those peasants who were lucky to survived were again over-burdened and milk-dried by monetary demands in addition to the progressive increase in taxation that was being imposed on the same peasantry.

For instance, both the General tax Assessment of the Zuru native Administration during and immediately after the war vividly reveals the heartless and inhuman exploitation of colonial taxation. In 1939, when war began, the general tax assessment of the Zuru native Administration was £4,152. However, by 1941, it rose to £4,784. By 1943, it was £5,461; by 1945, when the war ended, it again rose to £7,797.[63] The burden of increases in colonial taxation was mainly on the already impoverished peasantry of the Zuru Native Administration, a large adult population of which had been conscripted into the colonial army as we have already shown above. But, they were not alone in this brutal exploitation by colonial taxation because the poverty-stricken peasantry of other areas in Niger province, also suffered from these burdens.

Thus, for instance, in 1943, the tax assessment for Kontagora Division was £11,943, but by 1944, this rose to £11,943. Moreover, the Jengebi tax in 1943 was £2,570, but by 1944, it rose to £3,784.[64]

Again, in 1942, the General tax Assessment of the Gweri in Minna Division amounted to £8,974 which rose to £9,500 by 1943, then to £10,200 in 1944. Among the Kamuku of the same Division, the story was the same. In 1942, the general tax was £1,525. But by 1943, it was £1,660 and again rose to £1,800 in 1944.[65]

Similarly, the peasantry in Kabba Division witnessed an increase in their taxes. In 1944, the tax assessment was £8,986, but by 1945, it rose to £9,256.[66]

In Bida Division, the incidence of taxation in the Agaie Emirate, was 10/4d in 1942, but, by 1943, it rose to 10/10.1d. In Bida Emirate, it was 10/8.5d in 1942, but by 1943, it rose to 11/0.4d.[67]

Even, when we consider the general tax assessment of the entire Niger province, the story of extortion by colonial taxation during the second world war still holds true. For instance in 1939, the general tax assessment was £63,055, but by 1942, it rose to £68,347. Again, whereas, the Jangali tax in 1939 amounted to £9,225, it rose to £9,812 in 1942.[68] These widespread increases, it must be emphasised, were taking place against decreasing incomes of whatever time as documented in various parts of this thesis.

This was the extent of the oppression and exploitation of the already depressed and poverty stricken peasantry in Niger province by colonial taxation during the second world war in a situation where the peasantry was expected from his increasingly diminished resources to pay higher taxes

and to contribute the rest towards the prosecution of the war by the forced donation to specialised funds for that purpose. These worsened the already deplorable condition of those persants who were still lucky to breathe and "stay alive".

But, from the beginning of the war in 1939, to the end in 1945, the increasingly oppressive and progressive increases in taxation meant that the peasants had to devote whatever little farmlands they still had under food crop cultivation to the production of cash crops, in order to be able to pay the increasingly exploitative taxes. When this is added to the imposed donations against the background widespread and massive food shortages and feminos, it is safe to conclude that by 1945 famine had become the order of the day in Niger province,

Even then, the colonial authorities were not contented with this. For during the war, they forcefully took away whatever little food was still left. They did this through the system of grain requisition, which had it's origin in the proposal made in 1939, by the Food Control Commission.[69] This commission, proposed the establishment of grain reserves, either through requisition or a village storage scheme. This was to be used during periods of food scarcity and to supply food for the mines and the military. Although the Resident of Niger Province, like other Residents from other provinces rejected the idea because "Native administration Central granaries were impractical and conducive to peasant complacency", yet, the colonial government went ahead with the plan.[70]

Thus, from the 1940's, requisition of grains began and about 2100 tons of rice were requisitioned in Bida Division; Kontagora Division, 200 tons; and Abuja Division, 300 tons; bringing the total to 2,500 tons.[71] Again, about 600 tons of guinea corn were requisitioned in Abuja Division; Bida Division, 600; Kontagora Division, 650; and Minna Division, 550 tons; bringing the total to 2,400 tons all in 1940. The system of requisition of grains during the war, meant that whatever meagre food that still remained or, was produced by the already impoverished peasants, was forcefully taken away leaving them to starve.

When the above is tied up with the impact of previous colonial Policies like the introduction of cash crop production, taxation, pound sterling, the abolition of slavery, introduction of forced labour., transformation of indigenous land tenure system, then it becomes safe to arrive at the conclusion that colonialism exploited the peasants of Niger province to the point of killing. For instance, without any available food, increasing numbers of the peasants began to suffer from malnutration and under-nutrition. The result of this was that diseases like Kwashiorkor, beriberi, boils, ulcers, Bilharzia, leprosy and insanity became widespread.[72] The result of this was that an increasing number of the peasants died. Those of them who were lucky to "Survive" lost considerable normal body weight and reduction in physical activity. This meant that they became relatively useless to themselves and even to the society because they

simply did not have the minimum required calories to perform anything, not even to farm. At another level, this situation retarded, considerably, the technological development of Niger Province; for those who "Survived" were afflicted by serious mental and physical defects, due to low calorie intake which cumulatively impaired their activities in these spheres. Thus, the development of their mental capabilities for science and technological innovation was seriously affected, On the whole, the picture one gets was a peasantry, which by 1945, was completely starved, pauperised and helplessly and hopelessly diseased. Even for the doubting Thomases, there can hardly be a better concrete situation to pass for the application of the term famine. And indeed, in this particular case, prolonged and agonising one.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We began by examining the various interpretations that have been given to the general issue of under-development and the specific issue of famines in the third world countries. We examined the interpretations given by the developmentalists, under-development and dependency schools respectively drawing attention to their respective areas of difficulty. We consequently proceeded to propose a more wholistic theoretical framework to explain the problem, without which we can neither understand the trends in the occurrence of famines nor propose adequate precautionary measures. On clear grounds which we discussed, we adopted the mode of production framework for our analysis of the relationship between imperialism and famines in former Niger province in the period 1900 to 1945. This framework, as we pointed out, is important in explaining the differential experiences of different peripheral regions and areas, as well as the differential experiences of different historical periods.

The implication of adopting the above framework was that famines or the sort impoverishment in former Niger province could only be explained in terms of the mode of production analysis. Thus, the full impact of imperialism in creating famines could only by scientifically explained by the extent to which the modes of production of the area transformed to cause the dislocation of the forces of production or their under-development. Our stand on this

is th t, although Niger province was incorporated into the world capitalist system, roughly from 1900, yet this only led highly restricted transformation of the pre-capitalist modes of production of the areas. For only the sectors of the pre-capitalist society in the area that helped the extraction of surplus were transformed while the subsistence economy remained unchaged as far as it's means of production were concerned. Thus, famines in Niger province in the period 1900 to 1945, cannot be separated from the specific socio-economic system and the organisation of production and distribution within which they occured. This implied that the phenomenon must be linked to the specific social systems in which they occur and the differential abilities of the systems to cope with the effects.

Hence, in pursuance of our attempt to explain the re-occurence of famines in our area of study between 1900 to 1945, we examined the social formation of Niger province on the eve of British conquest with a particular focus on the traditional mechanisms that were evolved by the people of the area to mitigate or cushion the impact of famines before the inception of British colonial rule. This exercise enabled us to grasp the later magnitude of the transformation of these pre-existing traditional mechanisms, brought about by British colonialism which actually paved way for the incessant famines in Niger province in the period 1900-1945.

In our examination of the pre-existing modes of production in Niger province before the beginning of British

colonial conquest, we st . at the on-set th t the dominantmodes of production, were the tributary and communal types. The tributary mode of production was found among the Nupe in the Emirates of Agaie, Lapai, Kontagora and Bida. Here, societies were characterised by two main classes, namely, the peasantry and a landed ruling class. The ruling classes of the tributary formation monopolised the political functions of the societies and exacted tribute. But the communal type was found mainly among the Gwari, who were relatively unaffected by the changes brought in as a result of the Sokoto Jihad, since they were not conquered and incorporated into the Sokoto caliphate. Here, there was the absence of a clear separation of direct producers from the means of produ tion.

However, the conquest of Niger province, roughly from 1900, and the subsequent imposition of the colonial economy led to the erosion of the indigenous social response mechanisms which, in turn, led to the crests of famine. These were the conquest itself with it's negative effects of food production, the introduction of cash crop production, the monetization of the economy, the introduction, of taxation and the transformation of the indigenous land tenure system. Others were the abolition of slavery, the introduction of forced labour and the deliberate destruction of supplementary economic activities in the areas. These colonial policies collectively with the outbreak of the great economic depression, between 1929 and 1935, led to famines and the impoverishment of the

peasants, a situation worsened by the locust invasions during the same period.

But as we have shown, the great economic depression, between 1929 and 1935, was the real "locusts" which caused the food shortages and famines of this period in Niger province; being that the locust invasions during the same period, merely escalated the problem already there. Moreover, although the economic depression was practically over by 1934, but it actually continued to the end of the 1930s in Niger province. This meant that the famines that consumed Niger province during the period actually continued to the end of the 1930s. The result of this was that many of the peasants suffered from under nutrition and malnutrition, with the vast majority of them being infected by such deficiency diseases like Kwashiorkor, Nevamus, boils, ulcers e.t.c. Many did not survive these diseases, for they died. Those peasants who "survived" became useless to themselves and to the society. This is because they had nothing close to even the minimum required calorie necessary for work. Thus, it is clear that by the trial end to the 1930s, large scale hunger had completely consumed Niger province, leaving behind a peasantry that was completely impoverished, poverty-striken and diseased.

However, the impoverishment of the peasantry in the area continued and became more severe up to the end of our period of study in 1945. This last dimension of it was brought about by the impact of the second imperial war which was fought between 1939 and 1945. During the war, the British colonial authorities massively mobilised the human,

labour, material, monetary and food resources of Niger province towards the war effort. There was an exodus never experienced before in the area. This invariably worsened the food situation which prolonged famines. The result was that by the end of 1945, the peasantry in Niger province had completely sunk into the ocean of impoverishment, poverty and disease.

However, we must emphasise that the completely deplorable state of peasantry in Niger province did not come to an end in 1945, for it continued up to the present period. Thus, the present state of poverty in Niger state has it's origin in the extreme exploitation of former Niger province by British colonialism. For instance, the exploitation of the peasantry has continued, especially by the marketing board agents who refuse to pay adequate prices for produce purchased. Even after independence, farmers who grew export crops were still being subjected to higher rates of taxation by the local authorities. This situation applied to centres of export crop production such as Nokwa, Kutigi, Tegina, Agaie, Paiko, Lemu, Suya, and others.

Apart from the high taxation rates, peasant farmers were also subjected to all sorts of levies, which they paid to the State government. This included market levies for those bringing their food crops for sale, educational levies and others. These constituted an unbearable burden on the peasantry. This situation is being worsened, in contemporary times, by the government's land-use act which

conferred ownership of all lands on the government. For this act has led to peasan lands being increasingly taken over by absentee capitalists, retired top army officers, company chairmen, cases of dispossession of peasants of their lands and exploitative taxes, many young adults between the ages of (15-30), who constitute the agricultural labour in the rural area are migrating to the urban centres to take up sometimes unavailable, wage employment in order to be able to pay the taxes and oppressive levies. The result is that peasant agriculture in the rural area has completely broken down without adequate replacement or an expansion of the industrial sector to reabsorb the labour of the dispossessed peasantry who now fold up their arms and watch the tractors of the bourgeoisie roam over their lands under state protection.

We cannot speculate here on the subsequent response of the mass of dispossessed and pauperised peasantry but, from the experiences of history, they are not likely to commit massive suicide.

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