

British Colonial Economic System and Foreign Trade in Nigeria, 1900 - 1960

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Abstract: Foreign trade has been part of the British Colonial economic system since the establishment of relationships between the colonialist and the Nigerian people which started around the 12th century. The essence of this work is to appraise the British colonial economic system which runs through the period of the late 18th century and lasted up to the 20th century. The dynamics of the foreign trade in Nigeria was skewed to benefit the British colonial administration as they possessed the political and economic power which made it easy to manipulate the colonial economic system. The work also examined the patterns of foreign trade in colonial Nigeria which started from trade in slaves and later to the trade in agricultural commodities and raw materials for the service of the British economy. Also it highlights the role of transport infrastructure in the facilitation of the colonial economic system as it was developed to integrate the economic system and facilitate foreign trade between 1900 - 1960. The methodology of this work is anchored on primary and secondary sources of information. This work therefore gives a historical perspective to the colonial economic system in Nigeria and the foreign trade patterns that existed within the period.

Keywords: Foreign trade, colonial economy, economic system, Nigerian economy, economy commodity.

INTRODUCTION

The colonial economic system in Nigeria was capitalist in nature which was marked by exploitation which became the basis for the uneven means of trade that was beneficial to the British colonialist as they regulated the production and distribution of goods to the detriment of the Nigerian economy.

Economic systems are necessary in ensuring the sustenance and functionality of the economy of a state. Ironically, the colonial economy in Nigeria worked for the promotion of the British economy against the Nigerian state that was hinged on capitalism. The capitalist mode of production and capitalist economic system was invented in Europe, which during the advent of industrial revolution provided her as the workshop of the world.¹

The British colonial economic system at first was characterized with trade in slaves provided for by the Nigerian merchants who were led by the traditional rulers. The patterns involved the conscription of slaves in exchange for commodities like spices, mirrors and weapons that were demanded by the Nigerian trading actors.

The staggered abolition of slave trade around the 19th century birthed a new colonial economic system and foreign trade patterns that were seemingly beneficial to the generality of the Nigeria population unlike the trade in slaves that

benefitted just a few especially the traditional rulers. However, the trading patterns benefitted the erstwhile colonialist as they still manipulated and controlled the commodity market.

The abolitionists and their supporters, however, appear to have ignored the realities of the Trans-Atlantic economic system in predicting that the introduction of legitimate commerce would end the slave trade. As many historians have argued, the shift from the slave trade to legitimate commerce did not immediately end both the external and internal slave trades.²

Despite this initial resistance to the abolishment of slave trade by the British colonial merchants and their Nigerian counterparts who are the biggest beneficiaries, foreign trade in slave that characterized the Nigerian economic system soon gave way to a trade in agricultural commodities. However, it was not until independence in 1960 that the country was able to gain control of her economy that was hitherto dominated by the British colonial system of administration. This subsequently influenced the nature and aspect of foreign trade as the country had control of her commodities and the volume used in the advancement of foreign trade.

² Oriji, J.N. "Abolition of the Slave Trade and the Geneses of Legitimate Commerce, Christianity, and the New Imperialism." *Political Organization in Nigeria since the Late Stone Age*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York (2011): 140.

¹ Chikendu, P.N. "Imperialism and Nationalism." *Enugu: Academic Publishing Company* (2004): 42

British Colonial Economic System in Nigeria

Before the country was colonized by Britain during the second half of the 19th century, the various nationality groups that currently make up Nigeria were largely an agricultural people. They were food self-sufficient and produced a variety of commodities that were exported overseas, and a few commodities were also imported. British colonial administrators amalgamated (joined together) the nationality groups in 1914 into a larger colonial economic system for exploitation for the benefit of British industrial classes who controlled the patterns of foreign trade.

A primary consequence of the arrival of the British was the opening of vastly expanded markets for Nigerian produce. Palm oil and kernels and then tin, cocoa and groundnuts began to flow overseas from the colony. The cargoes were carried on European ships and were financed by European capital.³

Also it is important to point out that the informal period of British interest in Nigeria was characterized by exploitation of Nigeria's economic resources by British trading companies in an era characterized more by mercantilism than free market.⁴ Hence, the British colonial economic system in Nigeria was uneven.

During this period, the crops that were produced became useful to the British economy which was the basis for British interest in foreign trade soon after the abolition of the trade in slaves. Hence the establishment of large plantations for the growing of cash crops like cocoa, coffee, tea, rubber and cotton which were needed for the industries in Britain which became the basis for foreign trade. The colonial government believed in achieving the development of cash crops not by radically destroying and/or altering the people's existing indigenous production techniques, but "through the gradual modification of such"⁵

Colonialism in itself is a product of British capitalist expansion and competition which is concerned about wealth creation and accumulation. Opinions differ concerning the

performance of foreign trade in colonial Nigeria. However, it has to be admitted that the economic policies and measures adopted at that time have affected the nature and character of Nigeria's economic system.

Colonizers generally dominate the resources, labor, and markets of the colonial territory and may also impose socio-cultural, religious and linguistic structures on the conquered population the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically: for the first three decades of colonialism, hardly anything was done that could remotely be termed a service to the African people.⁶

In the colonial period, Britain maintained a firm control over and dominated the Nigerian market principally due to the effect of the favourable policies of the colonial government in Nigeria. It has been demonstrated that the policy of Britain and the colonial government in Nigeria hardened in favour of protectionism.⁷ This was the hallmark of the British colonial economic system and foreign trade in Nigeria, and the reason for the dominance of the British in the country's economic system even after independence in 1960 in a neo colonial economic system.

The Nexus between British Colonial Economic System and Foreign Trade in Nigeria, 1900 - 1960

The concept of foreign trade has always been part of the Nigerian economic system. The British colonial economic system however defined the pattern of this trade which became the basis of the foreign trade that existed between Nigeria and Britain from the late 18th century to the early 20th century.

Agriculture is a primordial economic activity in Nigeria which formed the means of livelihood of the people, and also it is a strong factor for the rise of states and empires just as the case everywhere in the world. The form of agriculture practiced and the crops planted were determined by the nature of soil and the terrain of the region. Shifting

³ Charle, E. G. "English Colonial Policy and the Economy of Nigeria." *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 26(1(1967): 79.

⁴ Kalu, K. "Political Economy in Nigeria: The Military, Ethnic Politics and Development." *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 10 (1996): 231.

⁵ Usoro, E. J. "The Nigerian Oil Palm Industry." *Ibadan: University Press* (1974): 35.

⁶ Rodney, W. "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa." (*Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House* (1976): 224.

⁷ Adejuwon, K.D. and Adeniri, O. "The Implications of British Colonial Economic Policies on Nigeria's Development." *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences (IJARMSS)* 1.2 (2012): 8.

cultivation and crop rotation characterized agricultural practices in colonial Nigeria.

The British colonial authorities approach to the 'management' of Nigeria's foreign trade was characterized by two main orientations. The first was informed by the major factor which initially informed British presence in the territory that eventually became Nigeria and eventually British colonial rule, and the second being the search for cheap supplies of resources, human and material, to contribute to the sustenance of the British Empire.

Just as the colonial economic policies created economic imbalance among and between the various regions; so also it created differences between individuals. It is important to note that rapid social differentiation emerged in areas that had developed market economy based on export production; cocoa in the west, cotton and groundnut in the north and palm produce in the East and South – Eastern Nigeria.⁸ Thus there is no region in colonial Nigeria that did not contribute to foreign trade.

Foreign trade in colonial Nigeria was dictated by the Europeans, particularly the British who controlled the system of governance and by extension the economy to their own benefit. This is the reason why the principal sector of British exploitation of Nigeria's resources was agriculture, which later became the basis for the country's foreign trade during the colonial period. However, there were also other trading partners that were interested in other forms of trade relationship with the Nigerian state.

This system of foreign trade that was contrived on agriculture was undisputedly very strategic to the British, and impeded the productivity of the Nigerian state. This is because the agricultural produce served the colonialist in so many aspects especially in the growth of the British economy and also foreign firms. Also, this trade in agriculture was the main source of raw materials to major industries that was in turn converted into goods that served the needs of the British population.

These raw materials were secured from the various communities controlled by the native authorities. To achieve these goals, the British colonial

administration adopted several economic and extra economic measures such as the introduction of British coins and currencies; the imposition of taxes and levies; the imposition of forced labour for various projects; the colonial land laws; the introduction export crops production etc.⁹

Oil palms, rubber were produced majorly in the southern part of Nigeria of mainly Benin and Asaba because of its swampy soil, the northern part of the country was known for the large groundnut pyramids while the cocoa farms were common in the south western belt. Below are the oil palm plantations in acreage that was farmed and monitored by the native authorities between 1938 to 1947 in Benin, Esan and Asaba.

⁸ Goshit, Z.D. "Agricultural Labour in Colonial Nigeria." *Y Mangvwat Ed; A History of Labour In Nigeria.* (Jos: Jos University Press Ltd (1988): 66.

⁹ Goshit, Z.D. "Agricultural Labour in Colonial Nigeria." *Y Mangvwat Ed; A History of Labour In Nigeria.* (Jos: Jos University Press Ltd (1988):59.

Table 1: Oil palm plantations by native administrations, selected years 1938 - 1947

Division	Year	Plantation Owners	Acreage
Benin	1939	79	3,771
	1947	Not known	Total 30
Esan	1938	195 old farmers 197 new extensions	361.8 for the year Total 1,295.5
	1941	147 new farmers 65 extensions	Not known
Asaba	1938	Not known	48.5
	1939	23 new ones 11 extensions Total now 100	Total acreage stood at 155

Source: S.A Shokpeka and O.A Nwaokocha “British Colonial Economic Policy in Nigeria, the example of Benin Province” In *J Hum Ecol*, 28(1), 2009. P.61

The table shows that between 1938 – 1941 Esan division had the more numbers of farmers that worked in the plantation totaling about 604, followed by Benin that had 79 farmers in 1937 and Asaba.

There were measures put in place in the production of these agricultural commodities, which is reflected in the value of the total exports of Nigerian produce in colonial Nigeria as seen in the table below.

Table 2: Value of the total exports of Nigerian Produce in colonial Nigeria

VALUES AND VOLUME 05 CHIEF KX. POK3 CASH CROPS IN SELECTS YEARS									
Selected years	Value of total exports of Nigerian Produce (£000)	PALM OIL & KERNELS		GROUNDNUTS	COCOA			COTTON LITE	
		£000			‘000 tons	£100	‘000 cwt	£000	000 cwt
1900	1,858	1465	132	4	0.6	.9	K	0.5	0.2
1902	2,416	2233	197	2		11	6	0.2	0.1
1908	3,102	2580	207	15	2	51	27	53	20
1913	6,779	4994	258	175	19	158	72	159	57
1915	4,874	3155	225	72	9	314	182	56	21
1920	16,717	10,395		1,120	45	1,238	1,343	717	65
1925	16,906	9103		2,394	127	1,1484	1,894	797	133
1929	17,581	8032	3814	2,466	147	2,306	1,105	543	117
1931	8,553	3671	373	1,511	160	1,093	1,056	153	70
1932	9,560	4210	425	1,874	188	1,461	1,421	52	24
1933	19,242	3283	389	2,064	205	1,144	1,215	193	88
1937		6017		4058	326	3,657	2064	497	192
1946		8320	378	5675	286		100	3779	
1947		14,429	442	6404	256		111	10,650	

1948		20,499	466	9833	245		91	17,879	
1949		28,833	546	18,953	378		104	17,697	
1950		28,766	583	15,504	321		100	18,984	
1951		33,008	497	9764	145		211	31,381	
1952		39,855	541	23,682	270		115	28,666	
1953		35,205	604	27,285	346		105	214,858	
1954		36,522	672	33,657	459		98	39,261	
1955		32,347	615	26,286	429		86	26,187	
1956		35,306	636	31,859	484		117	23,985	
1957		31,760	572	24,739	341		135	26,036	
1958		33,113	612	30,795	553		87	26,668	
1959		39,779	614	32,098	525		143	38,289	
1960		40,044	601	28,198	379		154	36,772	

Source: M.Y Mangwat “The Colonial Economy and Society of Nigeria” In *Seminar on Nigerian Economy and Society since the Berlin Conference*. (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press Limited, 2012) P.523 – 524

The table shows that the foreign trade in cash crop grew steadily from the 1900 up to the 1960. This was enabled through the introduction of marketing boards. This board was established statutorily for handling Nigeria’s major export cash crops. They had their origins in war – time arrangements for the orderly marketing of West African produce and the protection of United Kingdom supplies of raw materials after the war they assumed the responsibility for the stabilization of producer prices and the development of the producing industries.¹⁰ It was therefore not in doubt that the marketing boards manipulated the country’s foreign trade to the favor of the British government.

First, the colonial government tried to make available to the local farmers the kinds of seedlings known to increase the yield. Secondly, the colonial government sought to also improve the quality of the cash crops produced by the people.¹¹ This was in order to dominate the trade in agriculture to avoid competition, while ensuring that that the patterns of agriculture in colonial Nigeria remained the same.

Unlike colonial agriculture that was effectively coordinated by the colonial government with the proper infrastructure that aided agriculture, the exploitation of Nigeria’s natural resources was not so coordinated, as such foreign trade in colonial

Nigeria did not emphasize on the need to exploit the country’s natural resources.

During the period of the British colonial economic system in Nigeria, natural resources like gold, columbite and lead were mined locally by the British industrialists because of its economic importance, while coal was directly mined by the government which was used for foreign trade. However, the British economy was predominantly sustained with the cash crop that came from agriculture. The country’s natural resources sometimes were mined illegally by British capitalist firms that operated solely for profits, having little or no recourse for best practices in the exploitation processes. This posed serious threat to the life of the inhabitants that lived where these minerals were exploited.

After government discovered large quantities of coal in Enugu, production started in 1915 and in 1916, output was 25,000 tons. This rose to 292,053 tons in 1936. By 1938, the coal industry on the donga ride of hills had a proven reserve of 113,000,000 tons. Mines labour was procured through conscription in which chiefs and rich men who were corrupt were the main agents.¹²

Though exports of agricultural commodities dominated colonial foreign trade, this period also saw the importation of some goods into the country. The goods that were imported into the country were not as strategic towards the development of the Nigerian economy compared to the relevance of exports to the development of

¹⁰ Helleiner, G.K. “The Fiscal Role of the Marketing Boards in Nigerian Economic Development, 1947-61.” *The Economic Journal*, 74.295 (1964). 582.

¹¹ Aghalino, S.O. “British Colonial Policies and the Oil Palm Industry in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, 1900-1960.” *African Study Monographs* 21.2 (2000): 10.

¹² Fwatshak, S.U. “Labor Migrations in 20th Century.” *Y Mangwat Ed; A History of Labour In Nigeria*. (Jos: Jos University Press Ltd (1988): 33.

the economies of Nigerian trading partners that controlled and determined foreign trade. The

following table shows the data of some selected imports, and the trading partners in 1900.

Table 3: Principal imports into the protectorate and the countries where imported

Article	Total Value £ 1900	United Kingdom £ 1900	Germany £ 1900	Holland £ 1900
Aerated waters	-	-	-	-
Ale, beer, porter, cider & co	4,176	2,076	2,079	17
Beef and pork	8,752	8,963	2,308	-
Bread and biscuits	5,739	5,736	-	-
Chemicals and Drugs	-	-	-	-
Provisions	32,210	28,530	2,438	44
Rice	18,856	17,122	1,689	-
Salt	34,115	34,115	-	-
Brandy	720	631	79	1
Gin and Geneva	99,118	1,523	30,342	67,250
Liqueurs	915	116	798	-
Bum	13,438	2,502	10,083	18
Whiskey	5,135	5,064	46	-
Sugar	-	-	-	-
Wines	6,001	5,432	264	1
Bags and Sacks	11,810	10,908	894	-
Cotton goods	274,249	271,477	2,037	475
Silk goods	20,924	17,219	3,600	-
Umbrellas	6,157	5,747	394	-
Wearing apparel	28,950	27,616	1,115	88
Wollen goods	-	-	-	-
Guns – Dane	8,853	4,187	641	4,010
Hardware and cutlery	54,157	36,848	10,305	4,943
Beads	52,157	36,848	10,305	4,943
Boats and Canoes	5,715	5,336	143	-
Building materials	45,653	42,337	2,809	419
Coopers stores	65,696	61,581	414	3,700
Earthen ware	9,932	8,858	1,066	-
Furniture	7,210	5,678	1,375	3
Gunpowder	7,358	7,029	329	-
Haberdasbery	4,472	4,389	31	-
Kerosene and lamp oil	7,919	167	40	-
Perfumery	2,619	529	2,062	25
Pipes	2,020	1,872	34	110
Soap	9,443	9,251	181	-
Tobacco, unmanufactured	67,638	67,588	49	-
Specie	135,309	130,850	-	-
Total	1,014,841	840,240	80,097	81,115

Source: Colonial Reports - Annual No.381 Southern Nigeria. Report for 1901

The table illustrates that the United Kingdom was Nigeria's major importer as a result of the advantage of colonialism, and the country's export goes in same direction. Out of the total imports of 1,014,841 for 1900 in the southern protectorate that came to the region from United Kingdom, Germany and Holland, the total British import

trade into Nigeria amounted to about 840,240 which were over 80% of the total import trade.

A study of the imported items shows that most of the commodities that were imported into the country were ostentatious that served the cravings of the chiefs and middlemen that facilitated foreign

trade. These commodities that were imported did not contribute much towards the advancement of the Nigerian economy except a few when

compared to the usefulness of Nigerian exports to her foreign trade partners. The same pattern existed in the export trade as seen below.

Table 4: Principal, Exports and Countries to which exported

Article	Total Value £ 1900	United Kingdom £ 1900	Germany £ 1900	France £ 1900
Cocoa	2,709	2,489	220	-
Coffee	725	709	16	-
Ebony	1,665	1,558	106	-
Fibre	2,922	2,922	-	-
Gum copal	1,513	1,512	1	-
Ivory	13,794	12,872	992	-
Native timber lumber	7,013	6,792	221	-
Miscellaneous products	37,091	33,716	66	3,276
Palm Kernels	430,016	83,019	346,997	-
Palm Kernel shells	637	637	-	-
Palm oil	491,131	392,156	28,094	70,880
Rubber	137,287	128,440	8,848	-
Specie	135,309	130,850	-	-
Totals	1,261,814	797,672	385,491	74,156

Source: Colonial Reports - Annual No.381 Southern Nigeria. Report for 1901

From this table, it was clear that the British colonial economic system was in control of the export commodities in Nigeria. This is because these trading partners identified their needs, which informed the commodities that they exploited and same was used in the transformation of their economies. This created unevenness in foreign trade. Consequent upon the above, Nigerian trading partners facilitated the development of key transport infrastructure to ensure quick access to areas where these commodities were produced for export.¹³

As such, from the total export of 1,261,814 in 1900, the United Kingdom had the highest export from Nigeria of 797,672 totaling about 70% of Nigeria's foreign trade in 1900. This exploitative pattern of foreign trade between Nigeria and the Britain continued as it was accentuated by political control of the regions in Nigeria.

To examine the unevenness in the foreign trade in colonial Nigeria, table 1.5 further examines the

patterns in the prices of the Nigerian domestic products from 1946 – 1963.

¹³ Okeke, U.A. "A study of transport infrastructure and its impact on Nigeria's foreign trade. 1960 – 2015." A dissertation submitted to the post graduate school, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of masters of Arts (M.A) degree in diplomatic studies, in the department of history and diplomatic studies, faculty of arts, university of Abuja, Abuja. P.50

Table 5: Nigerian Domestic Exports and Imports, 1948 – 1963 Price, Volume, and Terms of Trade Indexes

	Export Prices	Export Volumes	Import Prices	Import Volume	Net Barter Terms of Trade	Income Terms of Trade
1946	29	69	64	27	43	29
1947	54	75	77	35	68	45
1948	70	72	82	46	85	62
1949	73	87	84	63	87	79
1950	81	88	86	66	94	85
1951	111	85	107	73	104	91
1952	115	88	112	94	103	92
1953	100	100	100	100	100	100
1954	111	104	93	118	119	129
1955	98	104	92	146	106	117
1956	92	115	93	163	99	117
1957	94	111	95	158	99	108
1958	94	109	93	178	101	119
1959	99	132	91	193	109	146
1960	100	129	95	226	105	144
1961	94	153	95	230	99	148
1962	89	162	98	215	91	139
1963	93	168	100	209	93	153

Source: G.K Helleiner, *Peasant Agriculture, Government, And Economic Growth In Nigeria*. (Illinois: Richard D. Irwin INC, 1966) P.29

The table illustrates that the export volume is directly proportional to the income terms of trade. As export increased from 69 in 1946 to 168 by 1963, the income terms of trade also increased alongside with it. By 1946, the income term of trade was 29, but as at 1963 same has grown to 153.

Cocoa, palm kernel and Groundnuts played a huge role in foreign trade in colonial Nigeria, and were the major items that were exported, as they were strategic to the development of the British economy as illustrated in the table below.

Table 6: Percentage Composition of Nigerian Exports, by Value, Selected years, 1946 - 1964

	1946	1954	1964
Cocoa	15.9	26.8	19.1
Palm Kernels	17.5	15.6	10.0
Palm Oil	8.6	9.2	5.1
Groundnuts	23.9	20.4	16.5
Groundnut Oil	0.5	2.6	3.5
Tin Ore and Metal	12.0	3.5	6.0
Timber, Logs and Sawn	1.6	2.4	3.8
Cotton	2.3	5.0	2.9
Rubber	5.9	2.0	5.2
Petroleum	-	-	15.2
Others	11.8	12.5	12.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: G,K Helleiner, *Peasant Agriculture, Government, And Economic Growth In Nigeria*. (Illinois: Richard D. Irwin INC, 1966) P.30

The table also illustrates that a few natural resources like the tin ore and metal were not only mined by the British capitalist investments in Nigeria but also constituted a part of the foreign trade though the quantity it contributed was little

compared to the cash crops that served the colonial economic system.

Cocoa, palm kernels and groundnuts constituted the bulk of Nigerian export by value. Despite the discovery of crude oil by the Organization of the

Petroleum Export Countries (OPEC) in Bayelsa State, the colonial administration never saw the need to invest in crude oil exploration. This is because as at the time of the discovery of crude oil in Nigeria, the importance of oil in the global economy was minimal, as such it was left untapped.

In spite of the possession of natural resources in large quantities, at independence agriculture was still the country's major source of revenue before the shift to oil which created its own peculiar problem. According to some scholars, the discovery of oil and its later exploitation for commercial purpose has been a curse rather than a blessing to the country's foreign trade and economy by extension. Though the discovery of oil predates independence, it was years after colonial rule that the product became a commodity that was used by the government in international trade. Hence it was not part of the tradable items in the foreign trade in colonial Nigeria.

Because of the industrial revolution in Europe that led to a shift from manpower to a factory system of production, it led to the production of goods in excess of the local demand in Britain. These surpluses were then pushed to the Nigerian market in form of finished goods in exchange for valuable agricultural produce without recourse to the needs of the Nigerian people and their potentials to grow and develop the economy.

This led to the impoverishment of the farmers who received little wages for their activities, as colonial agriculture promoted solely the exportation of cash crops to the neglect of the farmers. They were also controlled by the British through the marketing boards and other measures put in place to restrict production of these crops in order to regulate prices.

The refusal of the colonial government to boost internally exchanged crops, though understandable, was unjustified and exploitative. For both the colonial government and the expatriate firms correctly feared that to boost the production of the export cash crops and, at the same time, boost the internally exchange crops would create competition between the two and thus allowing the peasant to cultivate the one which paid him better.¹⁴

¹⁴ Mangvwat, M.Y. "The Colonial Economy and Society of Nigeria 1900 – 1960." *Seminar on Nigerian Economy and Society since the Berlin Conference*.

Asides the uneven nature of foreign trade in colonial Nigeria, the concentration on colonial agriculture caused little emphasis to be made in the development of other parts of the economy especially in the exploitation of key natural resources that the country is endowed with.

It must be emphasized that the basic interest of the British colonial rule in Nigeria was economic exploitation. In this endeavor the production of agricultural raw materials for the British industries, the generation of revenue to pay colonial taxes and income to buy the manufactured goods from Britain occupied a central place in the British colonial economic policy.¹⁵

To make this trade efficient and beneficial to the British economy, the British had to develop some transport infrastructure especially the railways and roads which were important in the carriage of large agricultural crops. Hence, the development of transport infrastructure in colonial Nigeria was not for the interest of the Nigerian state, but for colonial convenience in the continued exploitation of the colonial economic system.

This is so because prior to the development of the first railway track in Nigeria by the late 18th century, the British had been involved in the economic and political development in the nation without assisting in the transformation of transport infrastructure. Hence, the development of transport infrastructure was in the pursuit of British colonial economic interests. During this period, the colonial government used rail and road transportation as a means of advancing her trade with the people in the hinterlands who were predominantly peasant agriculturalist.

Though colonial powers built railroads which featured dominantly as the colonial transportation system in Nigeria, it was also developed to ensure military domination. Furthermore, it boosted foreign trade because of its cheapness for freight movement and the linkages of major colonial cities that served the purposes of colonial economic systems. The building of rail infrastructures also created employment and served as an alternative and safe means of transportation.

Kaduna: Ahmadu Bello University Press Limited (2012): 523 – 522.

¹⁵ Goshit, Z.D. "Agricultural Labour in Colonial Nigeria." *Y Mangvwat Ed; A History of Labour In Nigeria. (Jos: Jos University Press Ltd (1988): 59.*

The trajectory in the nation's transport infrastructure flipped after the granting of independence in 1960. This is because compared to the colonial era when transport infrastructures were used to further colonial interests, the indigenous government began to take concrete steps to transform the economy of the region and uplift the living conditions of the people, and advance the course of foreign trade.

CONCLUSIONS

Foreign trade in colonial Nigeria shaped the future of Nigeria's economy after independence, particularly in marketing, labor supply, and investment. The process of colonial rule and formal economic exploitation ended in 1960 after political independence but its effect on Nigeria's foreign trade is still noticeable.

While the historical dynamics of foreign trade even after political independence has remained unchanged, the country has since assumed ownership of all inherited transport infrastructure which is supposed to be a key driver in the transforming of country's economic system into a more viable system.

Consequently, transport infrastructure in colonial Nigeria were mainly developed to stimulate the production of industrial raw materials and cash crops which includes palm oil and kernels, cocoa, cotton, groundnut, ginger, rubber and coal in order to support export trade in these commodities which were the real essence of colonial economic system.

Therefore, the British colonial economic system and the patterns of foreign trade in Nigeria was geared towards the colonial economic policy that supported the importation of finished product by the British colonial economy who wanted an outlet for her own manufactured product in order to stave off declining domestic consumption, and falling rate of profit at home. This was done in exchange of commodities that were in need for the development and sustenance of the British economic system at the disadvantage of the Nigerian economy.

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