

## Immigrant Population Growth, Trade Opportunities And Inter-Group Relations In Jos Mining Camps 1914-1945

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### Abstract:

*Intergroup Relations is one of the major issues in African states. This is because of the introduction of modern system of government and economy, democracy and capitalism, the former is the game of number where the majority group rules and the latter is a competitive game that embodies a lot of contradiction just for survival sake. In such situation, the minorities in terms of ethnic, religious and regional groups do feel marginalized. This kind of feelings normally affects intergroup relations negatively. In respect to the present day plateau state in Nigeria, the objectives of this paper is to understand, population Growth, trade opportunities and intergroup relations in Jos Division in the colonial period 1914 – 1945. This will enable us to have a grasp of the formative stage of the present day plateau civil unrest.*

**Key Words:** Immigrants, Trade, Intergroup Relations

### INTRODUCTION

One of the rigorous tasks that face the researcher participating in the study of the colonial period of Nigeria history is not lack of sources but the problem of many sources and conceptual outlook and approach. The main part of the problem of conceptual approach is rooted in the facts of colonialism itself. This is because colonialism has its own conceptual outlook which attempts to impose on the colonized. Thus, the researchers have first of all tried to stay away from colonial conceptual enclave before attempting to tackle the historical forces he wishes to explain.

With the fore knowledge of the problem of the conceptual outlook stated, I wish to point out the purpose of this paper is to examine a contemporary historical process. Immigrant Population Growth, Trade opportunity and intergroup Relations in a colonized society. Jos Mining Camps 1914 – 1945.

This research, in terms of space covers the Jos mining camps that were created after the conquest of the area by the British imperial force and the subsequent establishment of colonial administration. On assuming political power, the British set the ball rolling on how to start extracting the coveted tin mineral resources of the

plateau. To do this, the government started granting mineral concession to mining companies who wanted to embark on mining adventure or business on the Jos-Plateau. From 1900-1914, the following companies were recognized and registered – Niger Company Limited, Ray field Nigeria Limited, Ropp Tin Ltd, Forum River Tin Company Ltd, Jantar Niger Company and Kwall Tin Field Ltd among others. The emergence of these companies led to massive labour search and for that migrant labourers were sought to help man the companies' business. For effective labour control, settlements were designed to accommodate the migrant labourers and these settlements turned out to be called mining camps no wonder Jos is nicknamed the Tin City. So this paper is geared towards looking at the nature of intergroup relations that existed among the various groups that were brought to the mines by the European mining enterprise.

By 1914, most if not all of the Plateau people had being conquered and brought under the economic and political power of the British and their mining companies. Most of the Tin companies that came to the Tin fields had already got themselves organized, and were by this time engaged in more tin mining, prospecting and discovery of new land with tin deposits in the area. This development called for labour demand and the situation aggravated with the advent of the Second World War. The circumstances that led to the WWI and the war itself, culminated in the demand of

intensive labour. But shortly after the WWI came the ugly years of depression, which led to dismissal of labour to keep and maintain the capital base of production by the various companies who turned the entire Plateau tin fields to a dining table. This explains why by this period many labour reserves sprang up in this area.

To understand this historical process in Jos mining camps from 1914 – 1945, we should know that as every human being exists, the struggle for survival is not a matter of choice but that of necessity. Life is socially reproduced through a social duty, labour. This cannot be achieved if man should stay alone like an island. Hence all his reasoning and physical effort to sustain his life are tailored towards this in relation to others. (Mc Lellan 1977). In doing this man cuts all boundaries in order to achieve this necessity. Having this in mind, we would be able to appreciate the relationship that existed in the camps.

By 1945, the entire Jos Division was already heavily populated. The people were made up of the local people, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Zabernawa, Baghirim Kanuri, others southerners etc. As we have seen, the development of tin business played the largest role in populating this area. Towns that were non-existent came into being as a result of this development. Ex-Lands or Gindin Akwati which was just a vast hilly, rough terrain outside the Berom settlement of Kpara came into existence as a settlement. It later grew in population when the local people joined in.

Barkin Ladi was also established and developed as the local people of Ropp, Gwol and Kassa left the hills and joined in there; the same with Dorowa, Bisichi, Gana Ropp, Kubba, Tenti, Yelwa, Kuru Jantar, Mai Idon Taro, Dogo Nahawa, Ray field, Dorowa, Sho, Kaffi Abu, Dilimi, Sabon Gidan Foron, Sabon Gidar Kanar West of Mines Bukuru and Gangare.

### **Emergence and Growth of Petty Trade in Mining Camps**

The rate of labour demand and recruitment, from the beginning of the mining enterprise by R H Laws (the first British miner on the Jos tin fields) in 1903, never subsided up to 1945. In addition to this, the role of trade opportunities played a vital role in this development. This was because the growing population needed house hold products, cloth, building material, and the like. As far back as 1915, southerners had started exploiting this trade opportunities. A good case is that of one Erinasho T. A. from Lagos who applied for a trading site to build a shop for his goods to be displayed. (NAK/JOSPROF/359/1915)

This development pulled in the southern Nigerian population who came as traders. These people were later joined by relatives as their trade expanded (Okon T A 1976). The arrival in Jos in 1925 of the eastern rail extension, together with an expanding commercial and administrative function of the town, gave rise to a high concentration of people from the Southern

Provinces and other West African colonies. With the growth of camps outside Jos, some of the fortune seekers moved into Barkin Ladi, Ex-lands, Bisichi, Gana Ropp, Kurra Falls, Sabon Gidan Forum, Mai Idon Toro, Dorowa and Tenti to expand their businesses.

The buying and selling of firewood, frying of bean cake (*kosai*) and corn cake (*Wenna*), kola nut business butchering, grains business etc. came to be Hausa business and thus Hausa traders were drawn to the camps. Tailoring, Transport business, iron and plastic house hold utensils business became Yoruba business and thus many Yorubas were also drawn to the camps. (Alhaji Baba Aliyu 2014)

A relatively smaller number of alien populations (i.e Levantine or Kwaraa of Asian Origin) were found in the trade. Until after 1920s most of the trade was dominated by them, and they were mostly found in Jos. (NAK/JOSPROF/I, 1055/1925).

We should also know that by this time, the Fulani population was also a force to reckon with. As pointed out earlier with the coming of colonial domination, the Fulani, started coming to the main centres of the Tin fields. As the years passed by, the number of pastoralists increased and in 1931 it was estimated that 8,000 cattle-owing Fulani remained there throughout the year. They were taking advantages of the availability of pasture. (Plateau Province Annual Report 1931)

### Groups and Economics Interdependence

To have a comprehensive study on inter-group relations in these camps we should have at the back of our minds that Jos Town was acting as the centre from where information was disseminated to these mining camps. It was the headquarters of government of government in the Plateau Province; it was also a terminus town connecting the Zaria and eastern railway lines. All these contributed in making it to influence the mining camps surrounding it.

The coming of Local people in the mining towns, who were mostly in their hilly settlement but normally came down to the plains for cultivation of land before the coming of the immigrant groups, resulted to interaction between them and the labour community. In the case of Ganna Ropp and Gindin Akwati or Ex – Lands, the local people normally came down to sell firewood to the labourers. As one informant explained, the Hausa Community was always surprised with the way the local people were dressed in animal skins and penis sheath. Each time they came to the town to sell their goods, some people, especially children usually came out to have a look at them. (Field Work notes 2008)

The local people were at first afraid of the Hausa Community because they saw them as slave dealers. Whenever they came to sell, they never wasted time there. This is not to say they hated foreigners but because of the wrong notion they

had of them perhaps because of pre colonial experiences. But the relationship had to continue because of economic interdependence. As far as the local man was concerned, he never saw anything as a loss in the selling of firewood that he got without planting, watering or looking after. With this, he saw the relevance of the camp population as it made him a supplier of what he did not “suffer” much to get. (Mafwal Mbok 2014)

Also the local people were impressed with the new dressing code of the immigrant which covered virtually every part of the body. This they hoped to use someday. (Alhaji Moh,d Dankili 2014). With these kinds of benefits attached to the relationship, the younger generation surreptitiously violated traditional taboos to deal with this new community.

By the late 1920s and 1930s, the era of depression, it became mandatory for mining companies in the tin fields to manipulate labour if it must produce without affecting their capital base after sales. This change led to displacement of labour, a period when a labourer could be sacked on trivial offences. (Bill Freund1981 p.80) The situation became aggravated by the locust invasion of 1930s and the drought of 1942, the labour service to the immigrants by the local people led to stronger relationship between them. The Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and other communities looked for their close associates among the local people to help them get piece of land for farming.

(NAK/JOSPROF/321/1935) This change made someone who never entered the local communities to do so. In the process, new crops like; cassava, sugar cane, fruits grown by these immigrants in their localities, came to be grown by the local people on the Plateau. During this time mining camps were surrounded by pockets of plantations. The local people now benefited as some seeds and seedlings were given to them to cultivate in their farm. (Alhaji Moh,d Dankili 2014). As this menial farming continued, the immigrants employed the services of the local people to help them work their land, in order to grow some of these crops themselves.

Among the women folk also the sale of labour became a source of survival. This became severe with the famine of 1930s due to locust invasion as mentioned earlier. To tackle this problem in the mining camps, the companies, in collaboration with the colonial government, had to organize guinea corn supply from lower Plateau, Bauchi and other provinces that were not affected. In the northern mines, Jos was made the food depot for the mines around it while Barkin Ladi became the place one could get guinea corn and other food stuff for the mines situated in the south western part of Jos. (NAK/JOSPROF/321/1935) During this period the local women who had limited or no *acha* to feed on usually came to the camps to work for the Hausa immigrants in the labour camps in exchange for guinea corn chaff which they used for food.

The interaction among these women influenced each others' cuisine. The popular *Miyan kuka* (Hausa popular traditional soup sourced from Boabab tree leaves -botanical name- *adomsonia degitata*) came to be liked among the local people through one of these interactions. *Miyan Kuka* is today called kilin Awuliyani by the Ron people, i.e. Hausa people's soup. On the other hand the immigrant population came to know and like some of the local people's food or diet most especially *kambar* (cooked dried sweet potatoes). Sweet potatoes were often dried during bumper harvest. This potato was often eaten dry. In fact, *Kambar* became an article the Ron people were always identified with in the mining camps as they were jokingly referred to as *Challa Masu Kambar*. (Field Notes 2006-10)

With the emergence of trade opportunities, markets began to grow in the camps. This also went along with population growth of different ethnic groups some of whose staple was not grown in the area, e.g. Yam, Cassava, Guinea corn, Kola nuts and the like. Saturday was the market day of these camps. This was because it was the payment day. The development of these markets now opened the supply of commodities like kola nuts, palm oil, Guinea corn, beef and dairy products, salt, soap, etc. palm oil and Yam supply was dominated by the Igbos in Gindin Akwati, the first man to establish this business was one Ojo, a man said to be from Owerri. This man, because of his booming palm oil business,

became popular among the Ron who had the tradition of excessive palm oil usage. It was very crucial in making one of their traditional and ceremonial foods (*Bibal*) (*Alhaji Baba Aliyu 2014*)

Transport, tailoring and the sale of plastics household utensils became a business mostly transacted by the Yoruba. The Moslem population in the camp became customers of the Yoruba tailors during the preparation of Eid El Fitri and Eid El-Kabir. These were periods when new cloth or dresses were sown for children and adults most especially women to wear in the days of celebration. In terms of transport, if you must travel by lorry you must board a Yoruba man's lorry. Informants in Ex-Lands said that the first owner of a lorry was a Yoruba man called Aremu and his younger brother whose name they could not remember was the first to own a lorry in Gana Ropp. (Borok A M 2011p.116). The other immigrants and the local people had to establish relationship with the Yoruba's as they became camps tailors. This became clear with the growth of Christianity which introduced Christmas celebration to the local people.

The Hausa and other Moslem population, predominately the Kanuris and Fulani, in the camps were mostly involved in Kola nut trade, butchering, grains and the making of *Wenna* and *tuwo* restaurants. Kola nut chewing is a common culture among the Nigerian Communities, but the local people here seemed to be unfamiliar with it.

However, with the coming of the immigrants, they came to adopt it. Alhaji Garba Maigoro who became one of the main suppliers of this commodity to the mining camps within and around Barkin Ladi was known to be a person whose house always attracted many people in the morning before dispersal to mining points. He was also known as a cattle trader who bought and sold cows to butchers in the town. His compound was said to be a place where labourers and others update their knowledge of what was happening around town as they converged to buy kola nuts. (Borok A M.p.117)

Butchering was dominated by the Hausa people. Butchers had to go to the villages seeking animals from the local people and the Fulani population either settled or on transit to buy cows. This trade was so organized in the camps that a new butcher had to be recognized and approved by the camp Health Officer. This development led to the emergence of trust (giving of an animal on credit). Some of the local people who became friends to the town butchers went into butchering as a trade. A local man must be endorsed by the head butcher before he goes into the trade. Like any other butcher, he will have to take his animal to the Chief Mallam of the town to slaughter. The local butchers normally displayed their meat in area dominated by the local population. The meat sold by the new butchers was cheaper and when this was discovered, all groups now preferred going to



the local butchers for meat. (Alhaji Baba Aliyu 2014)

By the early 1930s 1940s, the trading opportunities in the mining camps now developed that groups who were not part of this economy activities started developing interest to participate in the trade. The immigrant who had been enjoying these trade opportunities began to pitch against one another as each wanted to have a monopoly over trade and commerce in the mining camps. This antagonism first manifested its ugly face in 1932. This development took place during the Great Depression. Due to the collapse of the international demand for tin and columbine, many mines began to close down. The European tin miners were leaving in droves.

These developments helped to create the rumours that British colonialism was coming to an end. One of these rumours was that the muslim Hausa in the town were planning a jihad to take over European's property and "drive all non-Northern Africa out of the town". The second rumour was that in the eventuality of the British leaving, the natives were planning to drive out the Hausa Muslims from the town as they had been doing before the arrival of the colonialist. (Jonathan Ishaku 2012 p.69)

Both rumours underscored the tension between the competing migrants, the Hausa and the Igbos on one hand, and the tension between the local

people and the Hausa Native Authority on the other.

Although the rumours generated so much heat that the markets were emptied of machetes preparatory to the impending war, in the end the Europeans did not leave and the tension fizzled out. Or so it seemed.

By 1940 the population of migrant in Jos had grown exponentially. This led to acute competition among them but especially the Hausa and the Igbos. This competition manifested its ugly face on the eight of October 1945' it was reported that following a quarrel a Hausa man and Igbo man in the potato market near the Dilimi and Gangare mining camps . In that crisis two people were killed many people wounded and properties destroyed. Thereafter, the Igbos moved out of the Native Town to Township. This ended the influx of the Igbos into the Native Town, presently called Sarkin Arab ward. (Jonathan Ishaku p.70)

Before this resident area, as well as the rest of the Native Town, had been occupied by the Hausa migrants who had cultivated the possessive attitude toward it (Nnoli p.234).

By 1935, when the colonial state extended the Native Authority System to the "pagan tribes" a great deal of political stimulation was ushered in among the people. By 1940s the Native Authority political leadership over Jos was transferred from the Hausa Native Authority to Berom Native Authority. (Leonard Platnicov 1967p.61)

This development now made the local people to start challenging the economy monopoly of the immigrant most especially the Hausa traders. In the meat market in the mining camps, some local people started slaughtering their animal instead of taking to the Hausa mallams to do the slaughtering as it was the case before now. This development now posed a serious challenge to the statuesque. The challenge from the local people became more challenging as because the local people called the mines their traditional home and also northerners therefore just as the Hausa saw the Igbos as none northerners, the Hausa too were none plateau and should not exercise any right over markets and governance in the area for all of them were alien to the area. The competition became severe between the locals and Hausa because the Hausa were enjoying the leadership of the emirs in the Northern Region which the Hausa formed the majority while the locals with the creation of the Plateau Province in 1926 and subsequent transfer of local power to the local now made the local people local authorities in their homes thus constituting a threat to the Hausa economic and political class.

### **Conclusion**

The submission of this paper is that the contemporary civil unrest on the jos Plateau is as a result of the competition over economic resources and control.

As mention elsewhere in this paper, the economic opportunities in the mining camps created a merchant class that was none plateau by the time the plateau people started developing interest in some of the economic activities.

A fierce competition was ushered in between the existing class and the emerging one. To contend with this challenge, ethnicity, religious fanaticism, and secularism were employed by the elitist class to garner support from their members. Because the mining camps are the cradle of Jos Township, today they always serve as the flash points of crisis the Jos-Plateau. This is depicted in the 1997 Gero crisis, the Kuru camp killings of 2008, the Sabon Gidan Kanar killings of 2010, the Dogo Nahawa massacre of 2010, Sabon Gidan Foron flee of the Hausa groups and the Barkin Ladi crisis of 2011 among others. So it is the proper study of intergroup relationship in the colonial mining camps that can help give an objective understanding of civil unrest on the plateau.

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