

The Mwaghavul Pre-colonial Economy and Subsistence: An Archaeological Perspective

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Abstract

This article centers on the pre-colonial economy of the Mwaghavul people of Plateau State, Central Nigeria. The aim of this research is to bring to limelight the indigenous knowledge of the Mwaghavul people and thereby, contribute to the body of the African Traditional Knowledge amongst the Jos Plateau people. Thus, the research x-rays the major aspects of the people's lives that gave birth to their economy, how the process contributed to the emergence of other forms of living. The paper also discuss how this economy contributed to intergroup relations between the Mwaghavul people and their neighbours from different directions particularly the Montol, Ngoemai, Merniyang, Gwandara, koro and Alago on the lowlands. Others include Ngas, Ntal, Chip, Mupun, Ron, Mushere, Pyem, Berom and Afizere, and the Bauchi area. The paper concludes that the pre-colonial economy of the Mwaghavul people laid the foundation for the colonial and post-colonial/present economy of the area. The paper is realized through an exploratory research design. Oral interviews and participant observations of the production processes of the selected crafts were carried out, while other data were acquired from secondary sources.

Keywords: *Pre-colonial economy, Craft and industries, Trade/Exchange, Mwaghavul Land, Jos Plateau.*

Introduction

The history of origin of the Mwaghavul people has shown that they migrated from long distant places to their present place of settlement. This is contained in their oral traditions, works of historians on Mwaghavul origin as well as colonial records (See Gowon, 2011; Gubam, 2014; Milaham, 2011). Traditions of the people trace their origin to the Lake Chad area particularly Borno (Abubakar, 1999; Ames, 1934; Gubam, 1995, 2014; Lohor, 2005; Morrison, 1976; Mangvwat, 1986; and Mangvwat, et al. 2014).

The reasons for the migration neither have the memories of their routes of migration nor their experiences along the way. Information from some elders however attributes their movement out of Borno to search for wild animals and berries (in the course of hunting and gathering of wild animals and fruits). Scholars like Abubakar (1999), Ames (1934) and

Smith (1973) attributed their migration to the Jos Plateau to conflicts within the Lake Chad area between 1100 and 1350.

It is generally belief that their ancestors were great warriors and horse riders (Nengel, 2015; Blench, 1995). According to their tradition, they migrated along with other Chadic groups such as Goemai, Pan, Ngas, Tal, Fier, Montol, Mupun, Miship, Ron, Kulere and others to the Jos Plateau hills. While their kinsmen Ngas and Jukun stopped over at Yam for a long time, the Mwaghavul proceeded to Ngung hill and Diffiri (at the foot of the hill) where they established themselves for a long time (Lohor, 2004).

A lot of circular stone foundations can still be found in these places. From Ngung and Diffiri, the Mwaghavul people later migrated to present day Mwaghavul land where they established the present Mwaghavul settlements. Some members of Diffiri moved to Nyollom and later again moved to Fwam and Mwanwo from where they migrated again and established the ruling houses of Ampang West, Kerang and Mangun. Dikko family (which is another clan of the Mwaghavul around Gung/Diffiri) eventually established the ruling houses of Panyam and Pushit (Lohor, 2004).

The Mwahavul people have through secondary migrations established Mwaghavul settlements in Bokokos, Barkin Ladi, Pankshin, Shendam, Quanpan, Langtang South and Wase Local Government Areas of Plateau State; Saminaka, Kудару, Pambegwa, Dutsen Wai, Soba, Maigana, Zaria as well as Fadan Karshi in Kaduna State; Keffi, Lafia and Asakio in Nassarawa State; Kwali in Abuja and Kabba in Kogi State.

Other secondary Mwaghavul settlement can also be found in different places in Taraba State as well (Gowon, 2011; Gubam, 2014; and Miliham, 2011). They however pay yearly homage to their paramount ruler as sign of loyalty. Despite their distances away from their primary settlements the Mwaghavul in diaspora are expected to attend the annual cultural festival of the Mwaghavul people call Pus Kat people usually hold at Mangu.

A few streams most of which are seasonal took their origin from the various hills in Mwaghavul land. Some of these streams are the Kwahaplar and Bwonpe (in Ampang West), Punguk (in Kerang), Shwe and Sushum (in Mangun), Jiman (Pushit) and Mangu stream.

Research Objectives

The major focus of this research is to bring to limelight the indigenous knowledge of the Mwaghavul people and thus, contribute to the body of the African Traditional Knowledge amongst the Jos Plateau people. Revelations from the oral traditions of the Mwaghavul people indicates that, their ancestors developed ancient technologies that helped them to realize an unprecedented economic stability and sustainability through craftsmanship. Therefore, the contemporary Mwaghavul population holds in high esteem the history regarding this past economic achievement which have continue to support them to the present.

Therefore, this research discusses the ways through which the pre-colonial economy was sustained and how it was beneficial to the people. The research seeks details about how this economy contributed to progress and development as well as the overall wellbeing of the members of Mwaghavul community. It investigated how the economy ensured good intergroup relations between the people and their neighbours from different directions particularly the Montol, Ngoemai, Merniyang, Gwandara, koro and Alago on the lowlands. Others include Ngas, Ntal, Chip, Mupun, Ron, Mushere, Pyem, Berom and Afizere, and the Bauchi area.

The pre-colonial economy of the Mwaghavul people laid the foundation for the colonial and post-colonial/present economy of the area. Therefore, this research also seek to reveal ways through which the processes that were employed in carrying out everything that sustain this economy, so as to integrate it into the present system in Plateau State for better output.

Research Methodology

This study employed Key Informant Interview as the method used to collect data. Data were collected between the months of August and October 2020. A total of 22 informants; elders, village heads and other cultural/historical custodians were selected and interviewed based on their knowledge of the pre-colonial economy of the Mwaghavul people.

The respondents were asked questions about the specific craft work or indigenous knowledge system amongst the Mwaghavul people that they know. The respondents were also asked questions about the raw materials involve in the craft work, how they are processed, instruments required and the kind of objects produced through the process. Most of the respondents were practitioners of one or more of the crafts practice in Mwaghavul land, and so, revealed that they acquired knowledge of such craft work mainly through heredity.

Locating the Study

Mwaghavul people occupy the northern, eastern and southern parts of Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State North-Central Nigeria. Mwaghavul land is situated between $8^{\circ} 30'N$ and $10^{\circ} 10'N$ and $8^{\circ} 30'E$ and $10^{\circ} 00'E$. Mwaghavul land (Gowon, 2011) and is bounded to the west by the Ron and Mushere, to the East by the Pyem and Ngas, to the North by the Berom and to the south by the Pan and Mupun. The area occupies an area of about 1890 square kilometers (Gowon 2011; Milaham, 2005).

The people occupy the following districts; Mangu, Kombun, Panyam, Pushit (Vodni), Kerang (Nkrang), Ampang West (Mpang), Mangun, Chakfem (Shakfem) and Jipal (zhipal). A small population of Mupun has established secondary settlement in Tokbet, Samben and Seleke of Katul village of Jipal (Gowon, 2011). Meek (1971, 1972) and Milaham (2005) however classified these districts into Northern and Southern Mwaghavul land.

The Northern part comprises of Mangu, Kombun, Panyam, Pushit, while the Northern part is made up of Kerang, Ampang west, Mangun, Chakfem and Jipal. The relief of Mwaghavul land is characterized by two types namely the granite rocks which are the dominant and the volcanic mountains found mostly in Kerang (which is the source of the SWAN spring water bottling company plant) and Ampang West (where the famous Ampidong crater lake is situated) (Milaham, 2005).

Places around Pushit, Southern parts of Panyam, Southern parts of Mangun, Chakfem and Jipal are rockier with high concentration of rocks where most of the abandoned settlements represented by circular foundations are also found. A few hills in the northern parts of Mwaghavul land contain recent settlements except for Nyollom around Dikibin which have long history of human habitation in the past and where a number of stone arrangements said to be those of ancient settlements are also found.

The plains in other parts are usually punctuated with inselbergs. Low-lying areas in Mwaghavul land includes Niyes, Bwonpe, northern parts of Mangun, Southern parts of Ampang West, northern parts of Panyam and most parts of Mangu district. Mangu dyke also stretches over a wide area. These streams have over the years provided drinking water for the people as well as providing the people with water for dry season farming.

Mwaghavul land is located in the guinea savannah (Gubam, 2014; Milaham, 2005) and experience two major seasons namely the dry season and wet season. The dry season is from November to March. During this period the area witnessed harmattan which is usually dry wind which blows across the Sahara. The rainy or wet season which occurs between the months of April to October is under the influence of the south-west trade winds and it blows across the Atlantic Ocean and it usually brings rainfall to the area.

Pre-colonial Economy of the Mwaghavul People

The Mwaghavul people of Plateau State were able to build an economy that was strong enough to have survived different societal pressures. It was an economy that by its nature was able to establish good relationship between the Mwaghavul people and their neighbours. Pre-colonial or indigenous economy was the major source of sustenance and livelihood of the various groups in Nigeria before colonialism (Sani, 2017), and even during the colonial era (for some communities). The raw materials and tools required for this technology to thrive and be sustained were locally sourced.

Even though at a small scale, the economy involved long distance trade. Most aspects of the economy were completely tied to lineage. Relating to inheritance, as most of the trade and crafts works were passed on from fathers to the male children, while other skills like pottery making were passed on from mothers to the female children. At that particular time and era, apprenticeship was less recognized in the Jos Plateau society. Those who possessed these skills usually manipulated them for their individual, family and society's benefit (Mangvwat, 1984).

Different tools were used for different purposes, though in some cases a tool could be used for different purposes. The labour required for production was provided by the family,

communal (cooperative) labour was also used in some cases. In rare cases, pawn labour was sourced by privileged individuals. Family, cooperative and pawnship were the most important sources of labour to the Jos Plateau people. There were instances where cooperative labour was provided by the entire community to assist those with overwhelming labour needs. This was particularly witnessed in agriculture.

The labour requirements for agricultural production were mostly met by the family unit (nuclear and extended), and this was most of the time restricted to the patrilineal. Thus, the head of each family unit ensured that the family labour was exploited for the equal benefit of all the members. This is because, all the farm proceeds were control by the family head who provided the sharing formula and also monitor to ensure that no member was cheated. More so, there were communal taboos that bounded all members of the society cohesively. These taboos ensured that all members of the community were treated equally. Sanctions were also clearly spelt out and imposed on any member of family who went contrary to the established norms and values.

The indigenous economy of the Mwaghavul people depended on a number of variables. These include; agriculture (crop farming and rearing of animals), mining, local crafts and cottage industries, trade and hunting, *inter alia*.

Agriculture

The major economic activity of the *Mwaghavul* people was agriculture. The old, young and children were all involved in farming activities (in one way or the other). The people produced food for the immediate consumption of their families, while the excesses were given out in exchange for other needs. Shifting cultivation was majorly practiced by the *Mwaghavul* people. Though farm fields were in some cases located far from the residence, the people were not moving with their settlement whenever there was need to shift from one field to another. However, farm settlements were adopted following increased population and the advent of new agricultural practices.

Certain religious rites were performed (at various stages of the farming season) to appease the ancestors. According to oral information, this helped to regulate the farming activities and bust harvest (Dachit and Chakmut, Pers. Comm. 2010, 2021). Diviners called *ngu/nyem pa* were always handy to find out the cause(s) of bad harvest which could result to famine or calamities (Dachit and Chakmut, Pers. Comm. 2010, 2021; Dazyam, 2009; Gubam, 2014). The people believe that their ancestors possess powers to “bestow fertility on the soil and even men” (Lere, 1996, p. 12).

Thus, before the arrival of a farming season, blessings of the ancestors were sought, and same was also done before marriages were contracted. Sacrifices were made at the beginning of each farming season for the ancestors to provide enough rains and protection. Same was also done during harvest as thanksgiving to the ancestors. The “chief priest therefore determines when crops should be sown and when they are ripe for harvest” (Isichei, 1977, p. 183, 1982).

The common crops grown by the people were *acha* (*Digitaria exilis*), millet (*Pennisetum glaucum*), cocoyam (*Colocasia esculenta*), cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata*), water yam

(*Discorea alata*), rizga (*Plectrantsus esculentus*), pumpkin (*Cucurbita maxima*), jute (*Corchorus olitorius*), sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*), maize (*Zea mays*) and many varieties of vegetables. Animals dung was used to bust soil fertility and also maintain its nutrients.

Land as the main resource for agricultural activities was communally owned by the families. Farming implements such as hoes (big/small), cutlasses, knives etc., were obtained from indigenous blacksmiths. As noted earlier, during the pre-colonial era, the family was the basic labour force (nuclear and extended). A man and his children cultivated his farm fields, while larger farm fields belonging to the family head were cultivated by the entire family. The proceeds from the farm were utilized for feeding and marriage requirements (Dakur, 2009). Cereal crops were stored in granary called *diyar*.



Plate 1: A replica of a Pre-colonial Granary used for storing grains by Mwaghavul people

The people also kept various domestic animals which were not only used for meat or rituals but also for the production of dung used on the farm. Domestic animals such as goats, sheep, horses, and hump-less shorthorn cattle (*muturu*) were reared. Children played the role of feeding the animals, either by taking them to the bush in the day time and bringing them back in the evening, or by bringing feeds to the animals stationed in the settlement. Such animals were also symbols of wealth for various families and individuals. Goats were especially important for sacrifices and payment of bride prize.

Labour roles were divided amongst family members based on age, sex, economic diversification and specialization. The difficult tasks of farming, smelting, hunting, wars and religious rites were reserved for men. Women on the other hand, participated through activities such as gathering of firewood, planting, harvesting, cooking, pottery making, and cloth weaving, amongst others. Traditionally, women were excluded from participating in some activities such as iron smelting and blacksmithing. Generally, it was compulsory that every member of the community be engaged in one form of activity or the other. Laziness was therefore largely discouraged by the Mwaghavul people.

Therefore, three types of labour were exploited for agricultural production Mwaghavul community. The first is that in which within the household, members of the family worked as a group on the farm. The second form of labour was the co-operative one. This was in some cases used to supplement the family labour. The co-operative labour was of two types – the first comprised of small group of people consisting of about four to ten persons or even more (usually neighbours or friends) who worked together for each other on rotational basis. It was called *wuk* or *bitlan*. The second form of co-operative labour involved a large number of people, numbering about twenty to forty workers or above who voluntarily assemble on invitation to help a particular member of the community execute a farming job that required a large force. This type of cooperative labour was usually free and the participants were rewarded with enough food/meat and local drinks called *Moos*.

The third form of co-operative labour was called *wushat*, usually organized whenever a member of the family (especially a male) is to get married. The family members were to work on the prospective father-in-law's farm for about seven years before the marriage was conducted. After the marriage, the whole family would still set aside a day to go and work for their father-in-law. To the Mwaghavul people, marriage meant a relationship between the two families and not just the couples. The tie between the two families was further strengthened by dividing the heart of the first goat slaughtered for the new in-laws and giving each half to the head of the each of the families. In some cases, the labour meant for the prospective in-law is substituted by a hoe. In this instance, one hoe represented a full year, and so seven hoes could be presented to the prospective in-law in place of seven years of farm work.

Co-operative labour was organized through an open invitation of members of the community to perform various tasks such as farming, weeding, harvesting, and threshing of grains and transportation of crops from the farm to the house (so as to be stored in the granaries). In situations where a disaster or poor harvest occurred and affected some people, they were compared to take grains on loan from their neighbours. These loans were paid back with an agreed measure of grains or by providing a commensurate labour on the lender's farm (Murdock, 1957). The labour provided by a debtor was called pawn labour. This implies that despite the low level of technology, the people could undertake large scale production (Bulus, et al., 2001).

Crude and simple tools such as axe, small hoe, big hoe and knife were used for agricultural production. Crops such as cocoyam, melon, maize, beans and vegetables were grown around the homestead, while *Acha*, millet and *rizga* (grown on farms far from homes) were cultivated around April/May, and May to August respectively.

Amongst all the crops, millet was of great importance to the people because of its multiple uses. It was used for brewing of local beer called *Moos* which was used for special occasions. *Moos* was also a special drink served during religious rites. It was also used in making non-alcoholic drink called *war*. *Acha* (referred to by the people as hungry rice) on the other hand was used for the preparation of a sacrificial meal, and used for libation. According to Lere (1996), libation is necessary because of the people's belief that food

prepared for this purpose is consumed first by the ancestors. This is therefore an act of honour, respect and recognition to the ancestors.

Agricultural practices of the people were also reflected in their social life and kinship relations. Agricultural products were used for important rituals such as *pun pun*, *chan* and *pun nji*. *Pun pun* is the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood and it was usually preceded by *chan* (rite of circumcision). *Pun nji* was a rite in which their ancestors visit their living relations. The two goes together, as *chan* is what qualifies a person to be initiated into adulthood (*pun nji*). Nobody was accepted to be initiated into adulthood without first being circumcised.

A family's prosperity was measured by the number of sacks of millet and acha (*chiip kas/kusuk*) (Milaham, 2005), high number of hornless dwarf cattle (*muturu*) and iron hoes (*chan*) (Gubam, 2014). *Acha* was popular for its ability to expand when cooked. It was used for the preparation of food for rituals and traditional festivals such as *pun pun* and *pun nji*.

Food and gruel prepared from it was regarded as special. Powder from acha was usually mixed with water and drink by farmers before food was made ready at the farm. It was from the surplus of the farm produce that family needs such as payment of bride price, medication, and purchase of new farm implements were met (Mangwat, 1984). The family head could also use part of the surplus to prepare food and drinks whenever he organizes labour on his farm. Part of the appropriated surplus was also used to offer sacrifices to the gods to induce bumper harvest in the following season.

At less busy periods, members of the family were permitted to cultivate extra pieces of land called *la'am*. Women were especially encouraged to cultivate and reserve proceeds from their *la'am*. Such proceeds were significant in providing supplement to the main ration obtained from the central barn (Bulus, et al, 2001). All these practices have been sustained to the present day.

In time the family population increased, allowing it to split into several units, and largely expand the family's settlement. In some cases, conflicts within the family could also force some members to separate and settle in other locations. However, this was not a guarantee for anyone to forget about the main family issues as their relationship with other members of the entire family was still maintained through attendance of meetings and co-operative labour.

Land and other personal property of a man except his wife were inherited by his male children or any other person that was a responsible man in the family (in cases where the deceased had no male child, or the child is too young). And in situations where the children left by a deceased member of the family were too young, the family head provided for the deceased family. Otherwise, a grown male child of the deceased person who is considered as the heir to the family was made to provide for the family. This responsibility was sometimes handed to an uncle who continued to provide for the children until they became of age.

To this end, inheritance marriage was encouraged amongst the entire *Mwaghavul* communities, with the exception of only *Mangun* who from time immemorial perceived the practice as taboo for certain reasons. Inheritance marriage was done in order to protect the inheritance right of the children of a deceased, particularly when they were still young. Thus, any younger brother of the deceased who was willing was allowed to marry the deceased wife if she so accepted. This practice is still common amongst the *Mwaghavul* people.



Plate 2: A container used in carrying local drinks known as (*kunu*) to the farm

Mining

This involved the excavation in the earth for extraction of minerals. The deposits are usually mineralized deposits that are of economic value to the miner. The *Mwaghavul* were involved in the mining of iron ore called *kurti* from where iron was extracted through the process of smelting. The process of removing the ore from the ground by the *Mwaghavul* iron smelters was open cast method. This was a simple and easy method of mining. In this method, the ore was removed from relatively near the surface through an open pit.

The miners dug up the ores by using crude tools such as hoes. It was mined and transported to smelting site through family-cooperative labour depending on the need and status of an individual. The scientific method used for prospecting for the mineral by the ancient iron smelters remain an issue for another research.

The miners in *Mwaghavul* land were not different from the smelters as the same people mined and smelted iron. They were often farmers, who resume farming work during the rainy season and practice the craft of ore mining and iron smelting in the dry season. Although chronological dates for iron smelting on the Jos Plateau is not yet known, the site of iron smelting in the neighbourhood of Nok has produced a date of 500BC-200AD.

Craft and Cottage Industries

Mwaghavul people practiced some crafts and industries which supplemented agriculture. Amongst the crafts and industries was iron smelting and blacksmithing. They were very important crafts in Mwaghavul community. Blacksmithing was a highly honoured profession in Mwaghavul land (Mangvwat, 1986).

Temple (1965, p. 345) asserts that Mwaghavul people supplied the whole of their neighbouring tribes with iron implements. Iron implements produced in Mwaghavul community were exported to the Northern part such as Chakfem, Jipal, Ampang, Kerang, and other southern places like Kombun, Panyam, Pushit and Mangu town (around Der Dep, Cha and Angwan mata). Iron implements and sometimes bloom, salt and palm oil were exported to Ron land and other places to the North like Berom and Afizere by Mwaghavul intermediaries.

Since no community was self-sufficient, the Mwaghavul could also import iron implements from Ron, Pyem, Berom and Mushere.

Their knowledge of iron smelting and blacksmithing can be traced to the presence of sophisticated smelting materials remains such furnaces, slag, pounding hollows and potsherds. Iron ore (usually Haematite) called *kurti* (in Mwaghavul language) was common all over the Mwaghavul land. It was mined either close or some distances away from the smelting sites and transported by foot to the smelting ground. The Mwaghavul iron smelting sites were usually situated close to source of water which was either a stream or water pound (Gubam, 1995, 2014).

The smelted Iron was used for the production of different objects such as farming implements, hunting tools and weapons for the protection of the community against enemies (Stride, 1978). Iron smelting was not centralized here and so, individual smelters freely mobilized their labour to obtain the mining of the ore and its smelting. However, the smelted usually ensure that the necessary rituals were carried out before any process leading to iron smelting was done.

The development of iron industry is a clear manifestation of the technological achievement of the ancient Mwaghavul people. Blacksmiths were able to acquire a lot of wealth because people depended mostly on their products. As a result of such benefits the blacksmiths kept the technique secret from other members of the community. Materials such as livestock and grains were offered especially to the blacksmiths in exchange for iron implements.

Other industries and crafts that existed were pottery and potash making, weaving of local handbags, ancient raincoat; and wood carvings amongst others. These crafts served as means of supplementing the agricultural sector of the economy, and were usually carried out during the dry season when the people were less busy with farming activities. Iron smelting, blacksmithing, wood carving and weaving amongst other crafts which required hard labour were exclusive preserved for the men. More so, crafts which demanded less amount of labour such as weaving, pottery production and potash production were left for the women.

Gender consideration in production was clearly manifested here. It presented women as weaker sex not allowed to participate in certain productive ventures perceived to be highly labour intensive.



Plate 3: Ancient Raincoat & Handbag



Plate 4: Local pots for cooking and fetching of water

Trade

The people were however said to have been involved in one form of trade or the other. They had trade relations with their immediate and distant neighbours such as the Kofyar, Jipal and Chakfem to the South, Mban to the East and the Ron and Musheru to the West, as well as the Berom, Jarawa (Afizere) and the Hausas to the North. They also traded with the Pyem (their immediate neighbours) to the East.

Trade was one of the means through which inter-group relations were established and sustained amongst the Mwaghavul people, and their neighbours. Agricultural produce and products of the other cottage industries provided the major articles of trade. They were either exchanged internally or exported to other places outside Mwaghavul land. The basic form of trade was the barter.

A traditional and/or religious ceremony called *pun nji* provided an opportunity for the Mwaghavul people to trade with other groups from far and near. *Pun nji* was usually celebrated by every member of the Mwaghavul lineage to offer prayers and thanksgiving to the gods for protecting those of them who were alive and plead against future calamities in the land. During the celebration of *pun nji*, Mwaghavul children who were not residing within the land usually went back to their land for the celebration. This ceremony was to mark the beginning of the new harvest.

During the celebration each member of Mwaghavul community was expected to invite friends and associates as guests. Some of the guests usually attended as traders while others attended just to watch the events. It was celebrated initially at the religious/ceremonial headquarters of the various independent entities. This practice was washed away with the coming of Europeans and the accelerated spread of Christianity.

This led to the emergence of the first ever organized center of exchange in Mwaghavul land at Kinten called *Lutuk nji*. The center attracted traders from far places like Jipal, Chakfem, Krang, Mpang, Mban, Ron and Mushere amongst others (Isichie; 1981, p. 201). The people from Chakfem and Jipal traded in palm oil and salt which was primarily produced from Azare along the Benue River Basin. It was brought to Mangun through middlemen from Chakfem and Jipal who obtained it from Marniyang, Doemak, and Kwalla (Milaham, 2005).

Other items obtained from Chakfem and Jipal were groundnuts and palm nuts. Items like iron implements (such as hoes and knives), pottery wares and horses were exported by Mangun to their neighbours to the south from where they reached lowland areas like Azare and Awe in present Nasarawa State. Horses used for long distance trade were thus, imported into Mwaghavul land from Ron through middlemen (Isichie, 1981).

At a certain periods of the year, individuals traveled from Mwaghavul to long distances in order to exchange certain goods for desired ones. This long distance trade was carried out for many days on foot and horses. Ancient trade routes from lowland areas to upper Plateau used during this period include Mernyang-Jipal or Chip-Mupun-Mwaghavul (Eastern route) and Mernyang-Jipal or Chakfem-Mangun (Western route). The trade routes from upper Plateau to the lowlands are Mangun-Chakfem/Jipal-Mernyang (Western route) and Kerang/Ampang - west-Mupun-Chip-Mernyang routes.

Hunting

Though a part-time activity, hunting was a special occupation in Mwaghavul land. It was usually embarked upon by groups and individuals using spears, knives, bows and arrows, along with traps and dogs. Animals hunted included rabbit (*dafwan*), squirrels (*a'ak*), antelopes (*pa'ap*), leopards (*lushim*), buffaloes (*kibin*), rock bagger (*shom*), and mice

(*wu'p*) *inter alia*. This was in addition to the hunting of reptiles like cobra, lizards; birds, rats and so on, by the young children.

The ability of a man to kill any dangerous animal such as lion, elephant, leopards or buffalo was welcomed with joy and songs of praises. The individual was also celebrated as a hero or a man who could lead other men to war. This also made the people to thank their gods for giving the hunter such as brave tactics and preserving him from been hurt. This is because certain religious rites were observed before embarking on hunting. Therefore, the meat brought home by the hunter was shared amongst all the members of the family.

The skulls of the animals killed by members of the family were hanged on a stick and put on the granary at the main entrance of the compound as a mark of bravery or victory by the entire family. The skins of these animals were worn as a champion cloth and used as dance costume called *Na'ar*.

Thus, Sacrifices to the gods were given with animals such as fowls, goats, sheep, dogs (in rare cases), and humpless dwarf cattle (*muturu*), amongst others.

Discussion and Conclusion

Like other indigenous or pre-colonial economies in Africa, the Mwaghavul economy was not advanced and mainly involved local techniques. Following the fact that most people used crude farming implements, agriculture operated at a level that was only enough to take care of the immediate needs of the family. This is not to say that some families could not produce beyond their consumption levels. Indeed much food was produced by people who had the means to acquire enough farming implements from the blacksmiths and also mobilized sufficient labour force on their farmlands. Therefore, excess agricultural produce were exchanged for other goods needed by the family.

As explained hitherto, agriculture was supplemented by other activities like smelting, blacksmithing, pottery and potash making, weaving, wood carving, trade and hunting. These activities were usually carried out during the dry season. These crafts were carried by men and women as explained above. Agricultural produce, as well as those of crafts and cottage industries form the bulk of pre-colonial economy of the Mwaghavul people.

By engaging in barter system of exchange, the people had relations with other people within and without the territory. Trade articles ranged from iron implements, pottery and weaved objects, as well as agricultural produce. With the advent of colonialism, most of these practices were frustrated by the colonial authority and subsequently abandoned. And because of the influence of the colonial masters, production and distribution of many goods was controlled. Barter was replaced with currency trade, while iron smelting was replaced with the importation of factory iron metals from Europe.

Nigeria was dragged into the Western capitalist economy where emphasis was laid on profit making at all cost as well as forceful elimination of local economies in favour of those of European origin. Despite the low level in the operation of the economy of the pre-colonial Mwaghavul society, the effective management of resources at that level provided

a good background for future development. Although contact with the Europeans have watered down most of these traditional practices, quite a number of them are still common amongst the Mwaghavul people.

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