

Colonialism and Agriculture in Gusau District During the Great Depression, 1929 – 1938

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ABSTRACT

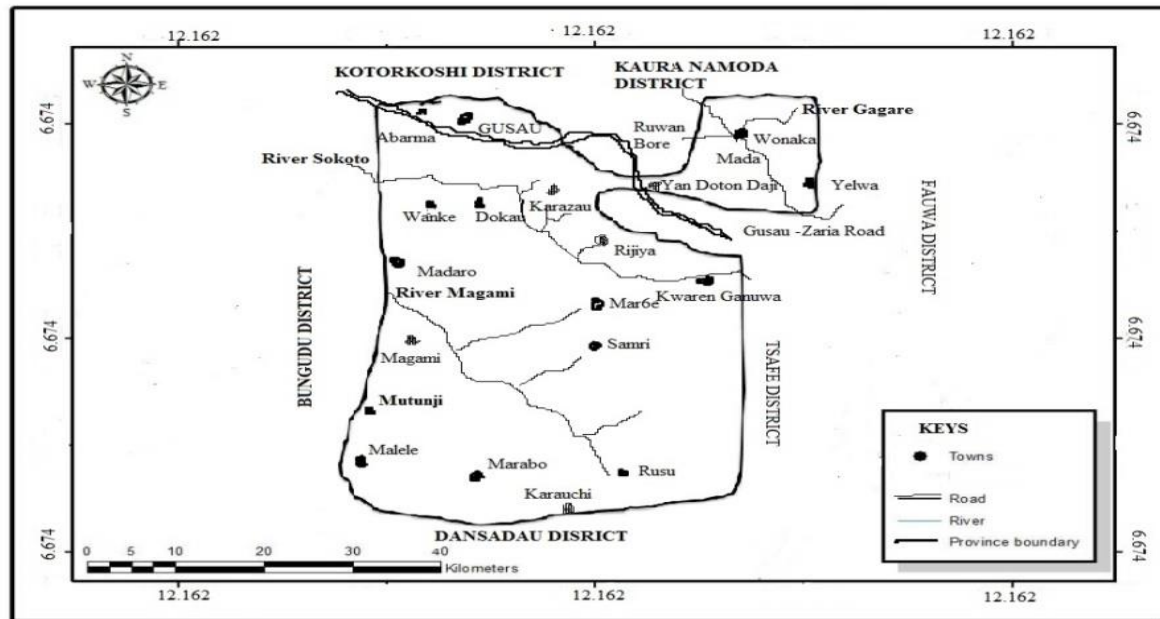
The Great Depression was when the capitalist and imperialist economies of the Western World collapsed. The depression spread to other parts of the world, including the Gusau District under British rule. However, the slump led to a drastic fall in cash commodity prices. The colonial state adopted many economic changes, adversely affecting the Nigerian people. Against this, this paper investigated the impact of British policies on food crop production in the Gusau District during the period. The paper used primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included archival records and interviews, while the secondary sources comprised published and unpublished materials. The study discovered that the depression forced the British to adopt many changes to agriculture in the Gusau District, primarily to achieve their imperial objectives during the period. One of the most notable changes in agriculture was supporting the food crops so that the farmers would have a surplus and be able to cultivate cash crops for export in the District. For the first time, the colonial state extended the Agricultural Department to Gusau, established an experimental farm, established the cropping scheme, introduced mixed farming, improved farming implements and methods, and trained the extension workers in the Gusau District. Consequently, the British successfully achieved the aims of the agricultural reform policies. The policy led to increased food production, stabilising staple crop prices and increasing the export crops in Gusau District.

Keywords: *Food crops, export crops, colonial policies, Great Depression, Gusau District.*

INTRODUCTION

Gusau District was located on fertile land southeast of Sokoto Emirate in the Sokoto Province.¹ In the 1930s, the District became the headquarters of the fourteen (14) districts of the Eastern Sokoto Emirate. In 1929, Gusau town, the headquarters of the District, became a railhead and the centre of cash crop marketing and exports in Sokoto Province.² The District, under the period of study, was made up of Gusau town and eleven (11) villages, namely, Wonaka, Mada, Keta, Wanke, Kwaran Ganuwa, Magami, Rijiya, Yandoto, Ruwan Bore, and Mutunji.³ Figure 1.1 below shows a map of the District during the period of study:

Figure 1.1: Map of Gusau District, 1930



Source: Gusau M. B. and Gusau M. S., *Gusau ta Malam Sambo*, Benchmark Publisher, Kano, 2012.

¹ NAK/Sokprof/4535, Vol. II/1936/Gusau and Southern Sokoto Administration of Zamfara. P. 3.

² Annual Colonial Report, File No. 1495, Nigeria, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1929. P. 14.

³ NAK/Sokprof/Gusau District Reassessment of 1934 – 1935 and U. Chubado, A.A. Umar and U., Umar, "The Role of Public Relations in Private and Public Sectors in North-western Nigeria: An Assessment": *International Journal of Innovative Development and Policy Studies (IJIDPS)*, Volume 10, Issue 2, 2022. P.2 Available at <https://seahipaj.org/index.php/journals/education-social-sciences-and-arts/ijidps/vol-10-issue-2/>

The Great Depression

The Great Depression is described as the period when the capitalist and imperialist economies of the Western world collapsed.⁴ The British shifted the burden of the Depression to peasant farmers in the colonies, who were exploited not only through the low price paid to cash crops they produced but also through the increased taxation and overpricing of the second-rate imported manufactured goods.⁵ The falling prices of the export cash crops such as groundnut and cotton declined to 80% or more.⁶ Equally, the food price was very low during the depressed economy.⁷ This led to a drastic fall in income for Gusau people, who were mainly an agrarian population that relied on agriculture as the major source of the economy.

The Depression was also accompanied by acute shortages of coins that adversely affected the lives of farmers in Northern Nigeria, particularly in Gusau District.⁸ The dearth of coins came as a strategy that the metropolitan British adopted to survive the Depression at the expense of the people in the colonies. The British colonial government collected as much silver coinage as possible in Nigeria and shipped it back to Britain in 1930. The coins were melted down to help the British settle their international obligations.⁹

The increased taxation forced the farmers to produce cash crops at the expense of food crops to survive the Depression by voiding incarceration, forced labour, and embarrassments.¹⁰ Hence, farmers neglected the growing of food crops, which led to a depletion of the gains reserves.¹¹ The farmers in Gusau District, among other Districts in Northern Nigeria, were left to suffer. This made the Depression one of the most challenging periods faced by the farmers in Gusau District and Northern Nigeria in general. On the other hand, it was during this period that the British initiated a series of agricultural reforms, including food crop production in Gusau District.¹²

This paper examines the impacts of British colonial agricultural policies on food crop production in Gusau District during the Great Depression, 1929–1938, based on primary sources such as archival records and interviews and secondary sources such as published and unpublished

⁴ M. S. Abdulkadir, “Structuring, Struggling, and Surviving Economic Depression in Northern Nigeria: The 1930s as Review of the Present”, Inaugural Lectures Series, Bayero University, Kano, 2004. P. 1.

⁵ P. J. Shea, “Making Money in Northern Nigeria: The Colonial Currency Regime, 1899-1963”, A.M. Yakubu, I. M. Jumare, and A.G. Saeed (ed.), *Northern Nigeria: A Century of Transformation, 1903-2003*, Baraka Press and Publishers, Kaduna, 2005. p. 287

⁶ P. J. Shea, “Making Money in Northern Nigeria ... 2005. p. 287

⁷ M. S. Abdulkadir, *Structuring, Struggling, and Surviving Economic...* 2004. Pp. 2-3

⁸ P. J. Shea, “Making Money in Northern Nigeria... 2005. p. 289

⁹ P. J. Shea, “Making Money in Northern Nigeria... 2005. p. 289

¹⁰ Interviewed with Mallam Ibrahim Tanimu, Retired Civil Servant, aged 81 at Kanwuri, Gusau, 14th September/2023.

¹¹ A. M. Mohammed, *European Trade, Imperialism and underdevelopment in Nigeria: 19th and 20th century*, Ahmadu Bello University Press Limited, Zaria, 2016. P. 19.

¹² NAK/MOA/8044/T/Monthly Report -Gusau NA Farm Centre, 1933

materials. The paper discusses the colonial agricultural policies the British colonial government introduced to stimulate food crop production. The paper then assesses the impacts of British policies during the Depression.

BRITISH COLONIAL AGRICULTURAL POLICIES DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Factors led to agricultural reforms in Gusau in the early 1930s. Among other reasons for the agricultural reform in Gusau during the Great Depression was an attack on the grasshoppers in 1930 and 1931 that afflicted considerable damage to crops and led to increased prices of foodstuffs.¹³ Hence, the colonial state was determined to fight against the impending hunger and the unnecessary rise of food prices that could worsen the local economy.¹⁴ Secondly, scholars such as Tibendarana discussed economic policies in Gusau, among other districts associated with Sir Donald Cameron (1931–1935), who was a dogged supporter of social and economic reforms in Northern Nigeria.¹⁵ From 1930 to 1932, the price of cash crops dropped woefully, and the colonial economy deteriorated. The only alternative for local economic survival was the sufficiency of foodstuffs.¹⁶ In addition, during the 1930s, the British systematically transferred the economic burden caused by the depression to wealthy districts like Gusau by creating surplus and profit for expatriation to the metropolitan state. Therefore, the availability of food crops would enable farmers to produce and sell export crops at lower prices to pay taxes and buy imported European goods to support the British economic doldrums.¹⁷ Finally, the colonial government actively stimulated food crops and cash crop production in the Gusau district in 1932. A colonial file in 1932 reported the aim of the British in the period:

The Agricultural Department is working to increase the crop grown area and the yield per acre in the Northern Provinces of all crops, including foodstuffs, cotton, and groundnuts.¹⁸

¹³ Annual Colonial Report, File No. 1569, Nigeria, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1931, P.14 and P.39.

¹⁴ Annual Colonial Report, File No. 1569, Nigeria ... 1931. Pp. 26 27.

¹⁵ P. K. Tibendarana, "Some Aspects of Social and Economic Changes, 1919- 1939", *Sokoto Province under Colonial Rule, 1903- 1939*, Ahmadu Bello University Press, Zaria, (Pp. 233 – 247), 1988. P. 235

¹⁶ P. K. Tibendarana, "Some Aspects of Social and Economic Changes, 1919- 1939", *Sokoto Province under Colonial Rule, 1903- 1939 ... 1988.*, p. 12. And U. Chubado and A. A., Umar, "A Study of the Impact of British Colonial Agriculture on Yola Division of Adamawa Province": *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science (Quest Journals)*, Volume 9, Issue 12, 2021. P.9. Available at. www.questjournals.org,

¹⁷ U. Chubado and J.O. Juliet, "Social and Economic Activities of the People of Gusau and their Neighbours in the Nineteenth Century: (A Survey on Trade and Commerce)", *International Journal of Recent Research in Social Sciences and Humanities (IJRSSH) Volume 9, Issue 3*, (Pp.34-39), 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6867002> p. 35.

¹⁸ Annual Colonial Report (1932), No. 1625, Nigeria, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office

Agricultural Department

The most important policy that stimulated food crop production in Gusau District during the Great Depression was the establishment of the Agricultural Department in Gusau District in 1932.¹⁹ The Department was attached to an experiment farm (*gidan gona*) situated at Mareri, two miles away from Gusau town, along the Gusau-Zaria road.²⁰ The Sokoto Native Authority funded the Department.²¹ *Wakilin Gona* (Senior Agricultural Supervisor) from the Sokoto Native Authority was the head of the Department. He was posted to Gusau by *Sarkin Musulmi* (the Sultan) to head the Department, which was stationed in Gusau.²² The colonial officials in charge of the Department and its Experimental Farm Centre were a Senior Agricultural Officer, an Agricultural Development Officer, and a Food Cultivation Officer. The other officials included the Agricultural Superintendent, Senior Agricultural Assistants, Field Overseers, and clerks.²³

The Agricultural Department aimed to improve crop production in the District, among other districts in the Eastern District of the Sokoto Emirate. The most crucial role of the Department was implementing colonial agricultural policies known as agricultural schemes.²⁴ The Department worked with Gusau District to stimulate crop cultivation during the Depression.²⁵ The first and most important targeted farmers in Gusau District were the members of the Gusau Native Authority, who included village heads, large-holding farmers, and royal titleholders, among others. They were role models and responsible for extending modern farming skills and techniques introduced by the Department to the farmers under their control.²⁶ However, the Department submitted monthly reports to the Sokoto Resident Officer, the Agricultural Department at Samaru Zaria, and other colonial agricultural institutions. The reports included the results of experimental work, rainfall, and the situation of crops in Gusau District. The results were used for administrative, political, and agricultural purposes.²⁷

¹⁹ P. K. Tibendarana, "Some Aspects of Social and Economic Changes, 1919- 1939", *Sokoto Province under Colonial Rule, 1903- 1939 ...* 1988. p. 245

²⁰ M. B. Gusau and M. S. Gusau, (2012), *Gusau ta Malam Sambo*, Benchmark Publisher, Kano, 2012. P. 66.

²¹ P. K. Tibendarana, "Some Aspects of Social and Economic Changes, 1919- 1939", *Sokoto Province under Colonial Rule, 1903- 1939 ...* 1988. p. 245

²² M. B. Gusau and M. S. Gusau, *Gusau ta Malam Sambo ...* 2012. p. 65

²³ NAK/Ministry of Agriculture (hereafter refer to as MOA /8044/T/Monthly Report -Gusau NA Farm Centre, 1933. P. 2.

²⁴ Interviewed with Alhaji Sule Garba, afFarmers, 69 years old Samaru at Gusau on 17th August 2023.

²⁵ Interviewed with Ibrahim Tanimu, retired Civil Servant, 81 years old at Kanwuri, Gusau 14th September 2023.

²⁶ Interviewed with Ibrahim Tanimu, retired Civil Servant, 81 years old at Kanwuri, Gusau 14th September 2023.

²⁷ NAK/MOA/8044/T/Monthly Report -Gusau NA Farm Centre, 1933, p. 2

Cropping Scheme

Another policy the British introduced to stimulate food crop' production in Gusau District was the Cropping Scheme. The cropping scheme was introduced in 1932 and aimed at improving the production of major crops cultivated in Gusau District, including guinea corn, millet, cowpea, groundnut, and cotton.²⁸ The scheme also included maize, soya beans, pepper, cassava, sweet potatoes, and fruits.²⁹ Under the cropping scheme, the Farm Centre in Gusau conducted experiments on the major groups regarding cultivation methods, such as identifying varieties of local crops, ridges, planting, spacing, harvesting, and storage. For instance, a 1933 report from Gusau Farm Centre indicated that the standard spacing of guinea corn was 3 inches. However, the result from the experiment showed that the 3 inches were ideal on the poor land but insufficient on the good land.³⁰ The Farm Centre also conducted experimental work on seed multiplication of varieties on crops in the District. The scheme also involved experiments on crops' diseases, pests, weed controls, types, and behaviours of different local weeds, such as *Kuduji* (Serophalaineae).³¹ Extension Workers' Scheme.

Another critical policy that stimulated food crop production in Gusau District was the introduction of the extension workers scheme. The extension service scheme was introduced in 1932 with the advent of the Agricultural Department in Gusau District. The major function of the Department was to train *Malaman Gona* (extension workers).³² The Sokoto and Gusau Native Authorities supplied the Department with capable personnel who worked as extension workers.³³ The workers were the field actors in cultivating food crops in Gusau District. They were under the Food Cultivation Officers, who are responsible for cultivating food crops in Gusau District.³⁴ The workers were trained in various farming methods and techniques, such as measuring and recording farm activities.³⁵ They assisted the agricultural officers in experimental work on food crops, such as millets, guinea corn, and cowpea, in the Gusau farm centre. *Mallams* extended their knowledge and skills to the farmlands of large holders and individual farmers in Gusau District.³⁶

²⁸ Interviewed with Abubakar Danbaba, retired Civil Servant, 74 years old Tudun Wada, Gusau 2nd October 2023.

²⁹ NAK/MOA/8044/T/Monthly Report –Gusau ... p. 32.

³⁰ NAK /MOA/8044/T/Monthly Report -Gusau ... p. 39.

³¹ NAK/ /MOA/8044/T/Monthly Report -Gusau ... p. 32.

³² NAK/Ministry of Agriculture (MOA)/8044/T/Monthly Report -Gusau NA Farm Centre, 1933, p. 39

³³ Interviewed with Mallam Ibrahim Abubakar Danbaba retired Civil Servant, 74 years old at Tudun Wada, Gusau in 2nd October 2023.

³⁴ Interviewed with Mallam Ibrahim Abubakar Danbaba retired Civil Servant, 74 years old at Tudun Wada, Gusau in 2nd October 2023.

³⁵ NAK/MOA/8044/T/Monthly Report -Gusau NA Farm Centre, 1933. P. 39.

³⁶ Interviewed with Abubakar Danbaba, retired Civil Servant, 74 years old Tudun Wada, Gusau 2nd October 2023

Mixed Farming Scheme

The mixed farming scheme was one of the most critical policies introduced by the British in Gusau District during the Great Depression. The mixed farming scheme was a loan scheme introduced in Gusau District in 1932. The loan includes two bulls and an iron ox plough. The main objective was to stimulate crop production, including food and cash crops by using cattle for ploughing.³⁷ The 1932 colonial file stated:

The Agricultural Department is working to increase the crop grown area and the yield per acre in the Northern Provinces of all crops, including foodstuffs, cotton, and groundnut, by introducing ploughing with cattle and making farmyard manure. A family with a pair of cattle and a plough can cultivate three times the crop area they can cultivate by hand. At the same time, because very little manure has a remarkably significant effect on the yield of crops in that part of the country, the man who uses farmyard manure gets much heavier yields per acre than the man who digs hidden soil by hand and, keeping no cattle, has no manure. The following figures show the progress of this work.³⁸

The scheme included the possession of two bulls and a cattle plough. Before the introduction of the mixed farming scheme in Gusau District, cattle ploughs were foreign in the District. Under the scheme, the Agricultural Officers at Gusau Farm Centre trained farmers to use the bull for ploughing, preparing farmyard manure, and using the animal dung from the cattle.³⁹ The British colonial government believed that under the mixed farming scheme, a family with a pair of cattle and a plough could cultivate four or five times the land they cultivated by hand.⁴⁰ The colonial authority used the local oxen for the scheme. *Sarkin Gona* was responsible for purchasing the bulls from the local cattle markets. A colonial report in 1933 indicated that *Sarkin Gona* from Gusau went beyond Kaura Namoda to buy the bulls for the scheme at the average cost.⁴¹ The mixed farming scheme was among the most successful schemes in Gusau District, among other districts in the Eastern Sokoto Emirate. K. Swindel pointed out that:

³⁷ P. K. Tibendarana, "Some Aspects of Social and Economic Changes, 1919- 1939", *Sokoto Province under Colonial Rule, 1903- 1939 ...* 1988. Pp. 245-246

³⁸ Annual Colonial Report, No. 1625, Nigeria, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1932. P. 35.

³⁹ Interviewed with Alhaji Saidu Musa, retired Civil Servant, 83 Years Old at Samaru. Gusau 11th September, 2023.

⁴⁰ Annual Colonial Report, No. 1625, Nigeria ... 1932. p. 35. and Annual Colonial Report, No. 1904, Nigeria London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1938. p. 33

⁴¹ MOA/8044/T/Monthly Report –Gusau ... p. 40.

Many farmers established themselves as mixed farmers by buying ploughs from traders, especially in Gusau. In general, ox-plough has been most successful.⁴²

The 1933 Agricultural Department report from Gusau indicated twenty (20) new individual farmers in the District, including six (6) district heads, wanted to start mixed farming by 1934. Seven (7) of the farmers were from Gusau District. The cost of the two bulls and the plough was £3 8 shillings in 1933 and increased to £8 2 shillings in 1934 due to the price of bulls.⁴³ The report also indicated that in 1933, the district heads of Kaura Namoda, Zurmi, Moriki, and Chafe sent their servants to Gusau to be trained to handle the cattle plough correctly, among other farming techniques.⁴⁴

By 1935, the Sokoto Provincial report showed that the number of farmers who embraced this farming scheme was ninety-one (91), and the majority of them were from Gusau District, with twenty-five (25) mixed farmers at the cost of £9 5 shillings.⁴⁵ The mixed farming scheme received overwhelming support from Gusau's neighbouring Kaura Namoda Tsafe and Moriki districts. As a result, the British colonial government established one-man demonstration farms in their District, each under the Agricultural Department in Gusau. The demonstration farms aimed to influence farmers to adopt mixed farming schemes in the districts.⁴⁶ Moreover, the Sokoto Provincial report in 1935 pointed out that in the year, one hundred and thirty-five (135) farmers applied for the scheme, and thirty-four (34) were from Gusau District. The report indicated that ox-plough became widespread in the districts because the condition of the area was particularly suitable for this kind of farming.⁴⁷

Improving Simple Farm Tools

Another measure the colonial state used to improve food production during the Great Depression in Gusau was the introduction of a scheme aimed at improving the efficiency of the local farm tools in the District. Despite the popularity of mixed farming in Gusau District, numerous farmers, particularly small-holding farmers, could not be enrolled in the programme. Therefore, during the

⁴² K. Swindell, "Population and Agriculture in the Sokoto Rima basin of North- West Nigeria: A Study of Political Intervention, Adaptation and Change, 1800 – 1980", *Cahier d'etudes Africaines*, Volume 26 (Pp. 75 – 111), 1986. P. 98

⁴³ NAK/MOA/8044/Gusau Monthly Report ... p. 40

⁴⁴ NAK/MOA/8044/Gusau Monthly Report ... pp. 41- 42.

⁴⁵ NAK/SNP.17/25757/1935/Sokprof/ Annual Report/1935 by J. H. Carrow, P. 5.

⁴⁶ NAK/SNP.17/25757/1935/Sokprof/ Annual Report/1935 by J. H. Carrow, p. 5.

⁴⁷ NAK/SNP.17/25757/1935/Sokprof/ Annual Report/1935 by J. H. Carrow, P. 6.

Great Depression, the colonial government decided to improve the local farm tools to stimulate food crop farming in the District.⁴⁸

Much attention was focused on developing *Galmar Hannu* (local wooden ploughs), among other local farm tools. The hand plough has a large bladed, curved blade with a short handle. The hand plough was used where weeding with a *fartanya* (hoe) was done.⁴⁹ In 1933, some samples of hand plough specimens designed at Samaru Zaria were brought to Gusau Farm Centre for trial and assessment by the Agricultural Superintendent before the tools were extended to farmers in the District.⁵⁰ The colonial superintendent reported that the farmers in Gusau District and its environs may not readily accept the plough, so he urged for its improvement.⁵¹

Other Agricultural Schemes

Other policies that stimulated food crops and improved agricultural practices during the Depression in Gusau District were the introduction of irrigation schemes, dry-season farming of non-irrigated crops, erosion control techniques, and social reclamation. In the 1930s, Gusau District became attractive to irrigation farming schemes as a result of the success of the Gusau Farm Centre.⁵² Most of the irrigated crops that received the attention of the Agricultural Department in Gusau were rice, onions, and pepper, among other food crops.⁵³

In addition, during the Depression, the colonial state stimulated a dry-season farming scheme of non-irrigated crops, mainly the *Dankali* (sweet potatoes), known as *Dan wuri* (short-term maturity).⁵⁴ The colonial government in Gusau District distributed the *dankali* seeds to farmers.⁵⁵ The potatoes were planted immediately after harvesting the early and middle rainy season crops such as millet and groundnut.⁵⁶ Another policy introduced was the soil conservation scheme. The Agricultural Officers advised the rural farmers on the methods. The farmers were advised to plant *Gamba Andropogon gayanus* and jeme grass *vetivera Nigritana* in the contour lands through their farms.⁵⁷

⁴⁸ NAK/MOA/8044/T/Monthly Report –Gusau ... pp. 41 – 42.

⁴⁹ K. Swindell, “Population and Agriculture ... 1986. P. 98.

⁵⁰ NAK/MOA/8044/Gusau Monthly Report, Pp. 41- 42

⁵¹ NAK/MOA/8044/Gusau Monthly Report, Pp. 41- 42

⁵² NAK/SNP.17/25757/1935/Sokprof/ Annual Report/1935 by J. H. Carrow, p. 63

⁵³ Interviewed with Alhaji Saidu Musa, Retired Civil Servant, 83 Years Old at Samaru, Gusau on 11th September 2023

⁵⁴ U. Chubado and A. A. Umar, “The British Colonial Agricultural Policies and its Impact on Yola Adamawa”: *International Journal of Innovative Social Sciences & Humanities Research (IJISSHR)*, Volume 9, Issue 4, 2021. P.154. Available at <https://seahipaj.org/index.php/journals/education-social-sciences-and-arts/ijisshr/current-issue/>

⁵⁵ WJHB/ Chafe District Notebook, ... p. 15

⁵⁶ Interviewed with Alhaji Sule Garba, Farmers 69 Years Old, Samaru, Gusau on 17th August, 2023

⁵⁷ A. U Alkamawa, ‘Impact of Colonialism ... 2009. P. 148.

IMPACT OF THE BRITISH COLONIAL POLICIES DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

One of the significant impacts of the Depression that negatively influenced food crop production was the increased taxation in Gusau District. During the period, the colonial government consolidated taxation in the District.⁵⁸ As pointed out by Shea, the tax was based on the potential income, but it was principally designed to force farmers to produce as much as possible.⁵⁹ Frequently, the tax remains the same for many years. Many taxes in the early 1930s were still calculated based on data from 1924, when the prices had been relatively reasonable.⁶⁰ Gusau District was one of the Districts that experienced high tax rates during the Depression.⁶¹

Table 1: The Tax of Gusau District 1934

S/N	Tax-paying Unit (Village)	Total Assessed Tax	10% of assessed tax	Tax Incidence for Adult Male
1.	Gusau	£1819	£182	7 s. 8 d.
2.	Wanke	£4468	£447	9 s
3.	Karazau	£2998	£300	9 s.
4.	Wonaka	£3484	£348	8 s. 4 d.
5.	Ruwan Bore	£2847	£285	8 s. 6d.
6.	Yandoton Daji	£2023	£202	8 s. 6 d.
7.	Mada	£5097	£510	8 s. 6 d.
8.	Samri	£1950	£195	8 s.
9.	Kwaren Ganuwa	£1365	£136	8 s.
10.	Magami	£649	£65	7 s.
11.	Marabu	£1300	£130	7 s.
12.	Mutumji	£967	£97	7 s.

Source: NAK/SNP.21/375/86/Sokprof/Gusau District Reassessment of 1934 - 1935

As a result of the tax, cash crop exports increased despite the low price. The average price of cotton in Gusau district was 1d per 1lb from 1934 to 1937. However, the export of cotton increased from the District. For instance, 16,000 bales of ginned cotton were exported in 1934/1935, which increased to 20,000 bales in 1935/36.⁶² As a result of the unprecedented cotton export from the District in the 1936/37 season, about 9000 tonnes of cotton valued at £100,000 were exported from

⁵⁸See NAK/SNP.21/375/86/Sokprof/Gusau District Reassessment of 1934 – 1935; NAK/Sokprof/3225/1934/ Gusau District Administration Report by J. A. C. Cruikshank and NAK/Sokprof/4535 vol. II/1936/Gusau and Southern Sokoto Administration of Zamfara.

⁵⁹ P. J. Shea, “Making Money in Northern Nigeria... 2005. P. 287.

⁶⁰ P. J. Shea, “Making Money in Northern Nigeria... 2005. P. 287.

⁶¹ NAK/SNP.21/375/86/Sokprof/Gusau District Reassessment of 1934 - 1935

⁶² NAK/SNP.17/25757/1935/Sokprof ... p. 60

Gusau, compared to £8.55.0 in 1936, railed from Gusau.⁶³ In 1937, the BCGA installed another ginnery at Mai-Inchi (Mayanci), 39 miles away from Gusau, to complement only one ginnery at Gusau.⁶⁴ Similarly, there was increased groundnut production for export in 1934/35 and 1935/36 in the District.⁶⁵ By the 1936/37 season, groundnut production had increased to 30,000 tonnes, valued at £ 1,000,000. During the year, the groundnut price was £4 per ton.⁶⁶

Secondly, the Depression led to the decline of the Gusau people's standard of living, which led them to use old currencies and trade by barter. Nevertheless, they had to get the British coins required for taxes.⁶⁷ A great deal of suffering led people in Gusau to engage in counterfeiting. Gusau became the centre of the distribution of counterfeit coins as peasants began paying their taxes with the coins, reducing the suffering of the farmers and distrusting the British aim of forced taxation.⁶⁸ The British colonial government arrested a gang of counterfeiters in Gusau and discovered the counterfeit industry in Ijebu Ode.⁶⁹

Another impact of British agricultural policies on the cultivation of food and cash crops was the monetization of labour and land. The Depression led many farmers to leave their villages for wage agricultural labour. During the period, Gusau District experienced increased crime and debt and new waves of migration to avoid taxation and family burden.⁷⁰ Alkammawa asserted that the commercialization of labour occurred in the area due to the breakdown of the *Gandu system* (family estate) caused by the Depression. The members of the family need additional cash for taxes and other expenses.⁷¹

Lastly, due to the Depression, the value of labour became higher. Family members worked for money rather than food, which affected the food crop production in the District. The average daily wage was approximately between 6d and 9d.⁷² Many joined wage labour to raise money to survive the Depression. The agricultural wage labour was paid in cash or kind, depending on the nature of the contractual agreement between the farmers and the labourers, primarily based on a lump payment (*jinga*).⁷³

⁶³ NAK/SNP.17/25757/1935/Sokprof ... p. 74

⁶⁴ NAK/SNP.17/27766/1936/Sokprof/ Annual Report/1936 by J. H. Carrow, ... p. 71

⁶⁵ NAK/SNP.17/25757/1935/Sokprof ... p. 72

⁶⁶ NAK/SNP.17/25757/1935/Sokprof ... p. 74

⁶⁷ P. J. Shea, "Making Money in Northern Nigeria ... 2005. P. 289.

⁶⁸ M. E. Ochonu, *Colonial Meltdown: Northern Nigeria during the Great Depression*, Ohio University Press, Ohio, 2009. p. 95

⁶⁹ M. E. Ochonu, titled 'Colonial Meltdown ... 2009. P. 95

⁷⁰ P. J. Shea, "Making Money in Northern Nigeria ... 2005. P. 287

⁷¹ A. U. Alkamawa, "Impact of Colonialism ... 2009. P. 42.

⁷² Annual Colonial Report (1931), No. 1569, Nigeria, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1931. P. 39.

⁷³ A. U. Alkamawa, "Impact of Colonialism ... 2009. P.45

CONCLUSION

This paper discussed the colonial agricultural policies implemented by the British in Gusau District during the Great Depression, 1928–1938. The policies were known as agricultural schemes, including cropping, mixed farming, irrigation, and soil reclamation schemes. The policies led to the foundation of modern agricultural practices in Gusau District, which have remained up to the present. Moreover, the paper concluded that the growth of food crops was undermined by the increased taxes that led to the growth of cash crops to the extent that the British Cotton Growers' Association (BCGA) established a new ginnery in Mai-inch.

Bibliography

List of Informants

Name	Occupation	Age	Place of Interview	Date
Alhaji Mustapha Tukur	Farmer	79 years old	Samaru, Gusau	25/09/2023
Alhaji Saidu Musa	Civil Servant	83 years old	Samaru. Gusau	11/09/2023
Alhaji Sule Garba	Farmers	69 years old	Samaru, Gusau	17/08/2023
Malam Abubakar Danbaba	Civil Servant	74 years old	Tudun Wada, Gusau	02/10/2023
Mallam Ibrahim Tanimu	Civil Servant	81 years old	Kanwuri, Gusau	14/09/2023
Mallam Muhammadu	Civil Servant	75 years old	Tudun Wada, Gusau	05/10/2023

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