

The Economics of Coffee Commercialization in Tubah, 1934-1961: A Critique of British Exploitation in Colonialism

Canute Ambe Ngwa (PhD)

Associate Professor, Higher Teacher Training College, Bambili, Faculty of Arts, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon

Divine Achenui Nwenfor

PhD Research Fellow, University of Yaounde I, Cameroon

Abstract: *Virtually everything that has gone wrong in Africa since the advent of independence has been blamed on the legacies of colonialism. Is that fair? After the British colonial powers had acquired the Southern Cameroons for themselves, they adopted political, economic and social policies aimed at ensuring the maximum exploitation of the resources of the colonies for the development of British overseas. What were their commercial policies in Africa and why were there apparently such a disaster on coffee commercialization in Tubah? Colonial rule was not a benevolent political system. The lucrative nature of coffee business gave the latitude for the creation of the West Cameroon Marketing Board and the Tubah Cooperative Produce Marketing Societies which became a channel to export coffee from the peripheries of Tubah. The article illustrates that the coffee industry in Tubah served, not only as a ready source of cheap raw materials to feed the declining foreign markets, but also as a trading post for the British and European traders and merchants, and at the same time supported the importation of end-products because the British wanted an outlet for her own manufactured products in order to stave off declining domestic consumption, and falling rate of profit at home. The paper portrays cooperatives as monopolies in the colonial crusade of economic exploitation through the appropriation of coffee farmer surpluses and argues that the terms of trade that tele-guided coffee business in this former British sphere by the first half of the 20th century ultimately benefited the European buyers of the raw material and not so much the subjugated African producers.*

Keywords: *Economics, exploitation, commercialization, colonialism, monopoly, Middle Man, Licensed Buying Agents and Tubah*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, a substantial volume of social science literature has dwelled on the subject of colonization and economic performance of former colonies around the world. Economists became interested in colonial legacies in their search for the reasons why European countries acquired colonies in Africa and were developed faster while their African equivalents remained relatively underdeveloped meanwhile its untapped natural resources were brutally exploited for capitalist agriculture. Notably, recent cross country empirical evidence suggests that the identity of the colonizing power (or colonial origin) might help explain the observed growth differential between the West and the African colonies that took to capitalist agriculture in the first place. The colonial economy in most of Africa was structured to improve the economies of the colonizing or metropolitan powers.

For purposes of clarity, a distinction must be made between commercial agriculture per se and capitalist (or large-scale) agriculture. As capitalist production is defined generally by the employment of legally free wage laborers,¹ capitalist agriculture exists when wage labor is the numerically dominant form of labor employed in agriculture. Of course, capitalist agriculture is commercial agriculture. But commercial agriculture can exist without capitalist agriculture. For agricultural production to be commercial, all that is needed is the predominance of production for market exchange, as opposed to the predominance of self-sufficient or subsistence production (production for

¹ J. E. Inikori, *Slavery and the Rise of Capitalism: The 1993 Elsa Goveia Memorial Lecture*, Mona, Jamaica, The Department of History, The University of the West Indies, 1993, pp. 2-9; Iliffe, J., *The Emergence of African Capitalism*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1983, pp. 3-4.

the immediate consumption of the producers without market exchange). Thus, family farms employing no wage labor but producing largely for market exchange are commercial farms. This is consistent with the notion of commercial agriculture employed in the World Bank study of competitive commercial agriculture in Africa.²

The foregoing theoretical outline of the commercializing process is remarkably consistent with the real historical process in Tubah³ and across the globe. A few examples should suffice. Reading history backwards, as it were, is imperative. In the Americas inter-continental trade was the prime mover for agricultural commercialization. The expansion of production in these highly specialized large-scale export-producing zones over the period 1501-1850 gave rise to large domestic markets which encouraged intra-American trade and pulled producers over time from subsistence to production for the market.⁴

In Western Europe, production of raw wool (a major land-intensive activity) for export to the continent contributed considerably to the commercializing process in agricultural production from the Middle Ages to the early modern period.⁵ When the population of England grew from about 2 million in 1086 to 6 million in 1300, and population density increased from 40 to 120 per square mile, internal colonization filled up the vast wilderness that had separated manors and added fuel to the commercializing process.⁶

As a follow up to agricultural commercialization in the colonial system, British rule (policies) established the coffee industry in Africa. The British policies were termed “indirect rule,” and they required British district officers to be supported by local chiefs and puppet administrators drawn from local circles to organize the trans-Sahara trade in coffee. The Africans considered the impact of colonization on them to be perhaps the most important factor in understanding the terms of trade that defined coffee commercialization and the present condition of the African continent and of the African people. The purpose of the colonial trading system, regardless of the territory, was exploitative, seeking to harness the resources of the land and people for the benefit of the metropole (the European capitals). Perham maintains that, profits from the unequal and often brutally enforced economic relations were returned to Europe while African markets were created to consume European manufactured coffee.⁷

In addition, Rodney widens the colonial debate when he aptly contends that commerce deriving from Africa helped a great deal to strengthen trans-national links within the Western Economy, bearing in mind that American produce was the consequence of African labour.⁸ He further argues that apologist

² World Bank, *Awakening Africa's Sleeping Giant: Prospects for Commercial Agriculture in the Guinea Savannah Zone and Beyond* Washington, DC, FAO and the World Bank, 2009.

³ Our focus in understanding the global coffee phenomenon is Tubah Sub-division which is a Sub-Sahara African sphere situated in the West African territory of Cameroon. The Sub-division is found in Mezam Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. Placed in the Central African sub region within Cameroon, it is situated between several sub divisions; Belo in Boyo division, Bafut, Santa and in Mezam Division, Balikumbat and Ndop Centre in Ngoketunja Division. Hemmed in between so many subdivisions, means having so many boundaries a likely source of conflict. See Archives of the North West Regional Plan for Development, North West Region Plan for Sustainable Development, File No. 3/023, 1998, Report 1.

⁴ B. A. Mark, and L. J. Lyman, *Colonial Latin America* 5th ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 171; C. N. Douglass, *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1966; First Published by Prentice Hall, 1961; F. J. Shepherd, and G. M. Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972; J. J. McCusker, and, R. M. Russell, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789*, Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

⁵ C. N. Douglass, and P. T. Robert, *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History*, New York and London, Cambridge University Press, 1973; R. H. Britnell, and M. S. Campbell, (eds.), *A Commercializing Economy, England 1086 to c. 1300*, Manchester and New York, University of Manchester Press, 1995; R. Britnell, *Markets, Trade and Economic Development in England and Europe, 1050-1550*, Farnham, Surrey, Ashgate, 2009; V. N. Bateman, *Markets and Growth in Early Modern Europe*, London, Pickering & Chatto, 2012.

⁶J. Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy, 1348-1530*, London, Macmillan, 1977, 12 p.

⁷ M. Perham, *The Colonial Reckoning*, New York, Alfred A. Knop, 1962.

⁸ W. Rodney, *How European Undeveloped Africa*, Lagos, Panaf Publishing, 2009.

for colonialism hold that it was a positive benefit for such farmers to have been given the opportunity to create surplus by growing or collecting produce such as cocoa, coffee and palm oil.⁹ In view of the perspective, Rodney went further to say that a peasant growing a cash crop or collecting produce had his labour exploited by a long chain of individuals, starting with local businessmen. He concludes by stating aptly that, very rarely were they Africans, and more usually they were minority groups brought in from outside and serving as intermediaries between the white colonialists and the exploited African.¹⁰

As has been seen from above, the colonization of Africa was a monumental milestone in the development of commercial agriculture in mainland Tubah and the former British West Africa. In following up Rodney's rhetoric, we must needs argue that coffee commercialization under the British colonial administration was a dark side of African modernism with colonialism which cannot be understood except in reference to a balance sheet of who benefited most from the transaction. Whether during or at the end of this colonial relationship, British investors generated wealth between the 1930s to 1960s from the agricultural theatres of Tubah like else where only ultimately to repatriate it, so that the dependent African communities were never given the means to control their own resources and benefit from them. Taking a critique of economic exploitation in colonialism¹¹ is imperative but this must be understood within the basis of coffee economy that produced an independent class of African coffee producers who failed to receive the full reward of their labour given the 'terms of trade'. But the question must nevertheless be asked as to how long such a state of affairs can be sustained at the detriment of the African producers? Our understanding of the background in view of which this unequal trade in coffee was generated will set the pace for a response.

2. BACKGROUND

The history of the cultivation of coffee is perhaps richer than the beverage itself, from the time of its initial discovery in the 14th century to the time it eventually began to be grown.¹² The issue of economic exploitation exemplified in the commercialization of coffee in pre-independent Cameroon, where Tubah surfaced as a county, is best depicted in time and space. Reading history backwards as it were is necessary. At the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, European powers and the United States met to protect their "spheres of influence" (areas of special economic and political interests) and to establish mechanisms for making new territorial claims. The scramble for African territories was underway. An earlier catalyst for the scramble for territories came from Britain (1915-1961) in the Southern Cameroons. Motivated by greed and ambition to expand the wealth and territory of the British colonial empire, Britain undertook what was called a crusade to establish coffee business in the hinterland of Tubah.

Before then, the trans-Atlantic slave trade had been central to capitalist development in British West Africa. The trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic slave trade that involved the transportation of African and Tubah slaves across the Sahara desert and Atlantic Ocean respectively by slave dealers from maritime Europe and Arab North Africa began translating itself from a mere social institution to a commercial one.¹³ This international system of exchange that involved the use of human beings as commodities, commonly referred to as the slave trade, was a rich source of revenue to the European colonial masters in Africa and Cameroon. Given the fact that the slave trade constituted the major commodity

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Our focus in understanding the global coffee phenomenon is Tubah Sub-division situated in the West African territory of Cameroon. The Sub-division is found in Mezam Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. Placed in the Central African sub region within Cameroon, it is situated between several sub divisions; Belo in Boyo division, Bafut, Santa and in Mezam Division, Balikumbat and Ndop Centre in Ngoketunjia Division. Hemmed in between so many subdivisions, means having so many boundaries a likely source of conflict.¹¹ Being a predominantly agricultural economy this subsistence economy in the first half of the 20th century entered the international monetary chain through the cultivation and commercialization of arabica coffee. Archives of the North West Regional Plan for Development, North West Region Plan for Sustainable Development, File No. 3/o23, 1998, Report 1.

¹² E. R. Schmid, "*History of Coffee, a Real Eye-opener*" Southeast Missourian, The Associate Press, 2011, 7.

needed by Europeans in Cameroon at the time, the importance of cash crops which was unknown by the Africans and the Tubah indigenes were relegated to the sidelines.

Then, the abolition of the slave trade in the 1870s gave the horizon for the development of “legitimate commerce” a period during which African-European enterprises were forced to find other products to replace illegal human cargoes. The evidence shows, unambiguously, that efforts to develop coffee business over the said people during the British colonial era was largely to supplement the declining trade in captives. It was squarely in this context that there was a swift imposition of coffee business stemming from 1934 with the rise of a merchant class, and the penetration of merchant capital to mitigate the multifarious demands of European firms. Therefore, a close scrutiny of the phenomenon of colonialism and the coffee industry in Tubah is necessary to appreciate the degree to which this cross-border transaction watered down not only the economic and political development of Africa but also the African people’s perception of themselves. This international trade was strictly informed by British commercial policies.

3. BRITISH COMMERCIAL POLICIES AND THE COFFEE INDUSTRY IN TUBAH

The establishment of a coffee market in mainland Tubah by 1934 was in fact a shrewd extension of British commercial interests in the vicinity. Therefore, it is impossible to understand British colonial policies in the subjugated area without pegging it to the colonial economy of British West Africa. The British colonial empire in Africa was programmed to improve the economies of the colonizing or metropolitan power. In the scheme of things, what mattered was how the colonial government could benefit from the colonizers.¹⁴ In reality, the economic sovereignty of the colonized African territory remained under the political and economic control of the British. Economic exploitation presupposed and required a consistent production of surpluses and profits that could be appropriated without harming the production capacity on which the regime of exploitation itself depended. As Fadeiye argues, imperial conquerors, as producers and exploiters of surplus value, were not interested in eroding the productive capacity or disrupting the social organization of their subjects, since these elements were crucial to colonial capitalist accumulation.¹⁵

What is more, the commercial intentions and calculations of the British colonialists over the colonized Tubah area as was the case in the former British West Africa did not escape the politics of exploitation as the community was deeply sunk in the shackles of coffee export for the purpose of getting maximum economic benefits that helped the British colonial administration. In this enterprise, these benefits were derived on mutual cooperation, although not on the same pedestals, between the indigenous African farmers and British trading concerns. The British commercial policy ensured that it recognized the growing rights of the African farmers and encouraged the development of an indigenous class of independent export producers in the locale.

In a similar manner, given the fact that one major reason why Britain made her foot prints in the interior of Africa was to ensure a cheap and steady supply of raw materials for British industries, the colonial administration completely discouraged the cultivation of food crops while encouraging tropical cash crop production like coffee and cocoa to meet up with British industrial demands.¹⁶ In this regard, they (colonial administration) got many Tubah indigenes into the cultivation of these perennial cash crops in the early 1930s which led to the commercialization of coffee with the occupying colonial administration. In order to sustain their domination over the colonized Africans, they sort economic policies that seized the lands of the people, settled there and imposed various forms of taxes especially targeted to crush the peasant economy of the assimilated people. In another way, to promulgate their economics of commercializing, the alien power created a monopolistic business class called “Licensed Buying Agents” to utilize the colony as a source of wealth through the purchase of coffee produce after harvest.

However, such “exploitative” practices in mainland Tubah alongside other former British African possessions were part of missions that were authorized by the political doctrines of the British. That is, such commercial policies had their roots in the greed which the British colonial government

¹⁴ S. A. Shokpeka, and O. A. Nwaokocha, “British Colonial Economic Policy in Nigeria, the Example of Benin Province 1914 – 1954”, *Journal of Human Ecology*, Vol.28, No. 1, 2009, 57.

¹⁵ J.O Fadeiye, *A Social Studies Textbook for Colleges and Universities, Vol 2*, Ibadan, Akin- Johnson Press and Publishers, 2005, 161.

¹⁶ E.J Usoro “Colonial Economic Development Planning in Nigeria, 1919-1939: An Appraisal”, *The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, Vol.19. No 1, 1997, 44.

exhibited towards the area's untapped natural resources.¹⁷ Based on this epistemology, coffee economy in Tubah under the auspices of these colonial impostors became envisaged as economic in aim, monopolistic in orientation and exploitative in justification so as to wind up resources for the British colonial administration. The relationship between the colonizing power and the indigenous African farmers became asymmetrical. It was squarely on these pedestals that coffee commercialization became enunciated into the agricultural theatres of Tubah and their African equivalence where Britain was in control. To the idea of the rise of the legitimate trade in the first half of the 20th century in this former British African possession, whether for economic interests in the coffee bargain or markets, it is important to see the basis for exercising economic domination over the indigenous Tubah coffee traders in the first place.

4. BASIS OF COFFEE COMMERCIALIZATION IN TUBAH

As scholars, we need to understand what the European colonizers meant when they engaged African coffee farmers in the global marketplace. First and foremost, commercial agriculture presupposes the existence of markets for the products of agriculture.¹⁸ Given the fact that Tubah with long ancient roots was dominated by subsistence agricultural production early in their history, the question for economic and historical analysis was how the market for coffee products came into being and expanded in this former British sphere of influence between the 1930s and 1960s.

A sub-division that naturally occurred as part of the savanna belt, 2000m above sea level and rich in soils, offered a good environment for vegetation such as bush grass to grow.¹⁹ Since the vicinity constitutes part of the Cameroon Western highlands evidenced by a series of hills and valleys that were indicative of the experience of volcanic activities in the past, presents the region with a rich and captivating geomorphologic scenery where four main villages that all hailed from the Tikar²⁰ and the Fulani (Mbororos) ethnic origins made their foot prints.²¹ It was probably the occurrence of these geomorphologic sceneries and their ethnic ties that led to constant migrations orchestrated by the search for ample and fertile land that brought the occupants of the area in two different migratory groups. These endogenous activities and the current exogenous processes explain the origin of the numerous geomorphologic features that nursed roots for the European imperialists to brutally exploit the untapped natural/environmental potentials of mainland Tubah for commercial agriculture.²² Since the area naturally occurred as a predominantly subsistence agricultural economy, this served as a catalyst for these indigenous farmers in the first half of the 20th century to enter the international monetary chain through the cultivation and commercialization of arabica coffee.

Smithian economics would lead us to believe that the coffee market in Tubah emerged from specialization among producers of goods and services. Logically speaking, it would seem what is being dispelled for the coffee market in Tubah was the extreme position of the substantivist social anthropologists, as subsequent elaboration shows: "the allocation of some portion of farm production to goods that could be exchanged for cash or traded".²³ Therefore, if production solely for subsistence was never the dominant characteristic of mainland Tubah, the onset of the legitimate commerce in the first half of the twentieth century in this British sphere of influence put an end to it with the establishment of coffee business. Baran has aptly articulated that this was based on the dependency epistemology that resources flow from a "periphery" of poor and underdeveloped states to a "core" of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former. Positing further, he maintains that it

¹⁷ J. Mapuva, and F. Chari, "Colonialism no longer an excuse for Africa's Failure", *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Vol. 12, No.5, 2010.

¹⁸ J. E. Inikori, "Slavery and the Rise of Capitalism: The 1993 Elsa Goveia Memorial Lecture", Mona, Jamaica, The Department of History, The University of the West Indies, 1993, 2-9; J. Iliffe, "The Emergence of African Capitalism Minneapolis", University of Minnesota Press, 1983, 3-4.

¹⁹ J.A. Ngwa, *A New Geography for Cameroon*, UK, Longman Group Ltd, 1986, 22.

²⁰ Tikari refers to a group of migrants who left northern Nigeria and settled at Ngaoundere. These people later split

²¹ Archives of Tubah Council, "Monographic study...", p. 7.

²² Ibid.

²³ O. W. Jones, "Agricultural Trade within Tropical Africa: Historical Background," in Bates and Lofchie (eds.), *Agricultural Development in Africa*, 1995, 10-45.

was a central contention of dependency theory that poor states are impoverished and rich ones enriched by the way poor states are integrated into the "world system".²⁴

Emphatically in Tubah and the global colonial contexts following the aforementioned orthodoxy, the target of the white colonizers was to intervene much more directly in the economics of the people than had been the case. ²⁵ The leitmotif was how to induce the African indigenes to become labourers or cash-crop farmers. In some areas which were under Britain's spheres of influence, as in mainland Tubah, in understanding what probably motivated the Africans to engage in the cash crop economy, Rodney maintains that, their participation in the commercial cash agriculture was because the Africans had become so attached to European manufactures during the early period of trade that on their own initiative, they were prepared to go to great lengths to participate in the colonial money economy. The favourite technique was taxation.²⁶

As a follow up to this tax cove system, male subjects in mainland Tubah together with other former British African spheres of influence were obliged to pay taxes without representation and not so much in their economic interest. With Gardinier's critique in mind, these taxes had to be paid in European currencies. In fact, he further extrapolates that colonial taxation compelled every adult man to obtain cash (shillings) in order to pay his taxes. The fact that the adult male had to find what was called "cash money" had a greater influence than any other measures.²⁷ In this line, Suifon rightly pointed out that the switch to the production of coffee was a target objective that most traders desired to gain.²⁸ Takor Nixon crowns the colonial debate when he evoked that production was re-orientated to target the market rather than to meet up with subsistence exigencies.²⁹ This preferential choice for the market was ultimately aimed to raise cash mainly to settle the colonial tax burden on the producing Tubah communities.

In another dimension, guided by the need to erect an "economically solvent colonial state" and to get money involved in the coffee market, the colonial administration established indirect rule as a powerful apparatus whereby Tubah chiefs served as "intermediaries" between the European and Native populations. While it may be argued that the successful propagation of coffee business was bestowed heavily upon the Tubah chiefs in this British controlled possession, we are poised to put to question the state of the fledgling authority of the African chiefs if they still commanded the same respect over their African subjects as before seeing that they had become more of servants to the colonial masters in the coffee commercial chain which was a tabor to the African customs. Moreover, the undeniable involvement of these African rulers in this colonial transaction begs the question as to whether it was the "African (chiefs) exploiting the Africans" in the exchange of coffee and not just the "Europeans exploiting the Africans" as these African (Tubah) chiefs, like their counterparts elsewhere in Africa, were actively used as powerful apparatus in trading off coffee and extorting from their subjects in what was termed indirect rule, and not only the so-much-talked "Europeans underdeveloping the Africans", but also "Africans exploiting the Africans" in this colonial transaction.

Either way, whether it was the African or European that was involved in the control of affairs over the coffee industry in mainland Tubah, the target objective was that the indigenous African producers were to be casualties in the commercialization process. This was evidenced in the low prices they received historically, mainly as a result of coffee commercialization. Although the cash earnings were low, when combined with the other activities on the farm, allowed them to survive. Yet, socio-economically, these small coffee growers still represented some of the poorest of the poor in their communities even after taking up the crop culture for trade where their chiefs became utilized as functional persuasive weaponry in the enunciation of coffee business in this polity. With the low cash payments and a great majority of these coffee traders remaining in the vicious cycle of poverty, we are

²⁴ P. A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*, New York, The Monthly Review Press, 1957, p. 299.

²⁵ L. Akin and B. Famiran, *A Regional Planning and Development*, Ibadan, IUP, 1977, 26.

²⁶ W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Washington D.C, Howard University Press, 2005.

²⁷ D. Gardinier, *The British in the Cameroons, 1919-1939* in P. Gifford and W.R. Louis, (ed) *Britain and Germany in Africa*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967, 542.

²⁸ Suifon, "Cash Crops...", 28.

²⁹ N. K. Takor, "The Bamenda Grasslands in Long Distance Trade C. 1850 - 1961: Evolutionary Dynamics, Socio-Economic and Political Transmutations", Phd Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, February 2011, 224.

poised to question if coffee business was a mechanism imposed by the colonial coffee vendors to deepen poverty in the different African communities that traded in the perennial crop. In contrast, Newbury has argued that in exchange for overseeing the growing of cash crops and the building of infrastructure, chiefs received weapons and military support helping to solidify their political control.³⁰ As a result, many chiefs and sub chiefs in Tubah like elsewhere in Africa profited substantially from the colonial administration's efforts to integrate the Africans into the world economy via coffee business. It was against this backdrop that coffee commercialization gained the rubric of Tubah in 1934. This was tele-guided by a network of cooperative societies.

5. EVOLUTION AND FUNCTION OF COOPERATIVE PRODUCE MARKETING SOCIETIES IN TUBAH

According to Rapley, commerce was viewed as the nerve center of any monetary economy.³¹ He asserts that healthy commercial trend sets the economy into a top gear motion. Nevertheless, coffee commercialization in Tubah experienced latent improvement with a wave of cooperatives. Already noted, in British West Africa, the 1930s had marked an era of cooperatives and a Cooperative Registrar was appointed to the Southern Cameroons (administered by the British through Nigeria) to promote and control the funding of cooperatives.³² Thus the cooperative movement which had been established in Nigeria since 1920, was further encouraged in the Southern Cameroons in the 1930s.³³ This urge grew stronger when some of the coffee growers became aware that mutual self-help arabica coffee organizations were already existing in Dschang and Bafoussam.³⁴ In 1947, the first coffee cooperative was founded at Bafreng in today's Ghana Street in Bamenda. Some of the founders were John Ngu Foncha, A. A. Goh, John Ako and G.S. Anthony.³⁵ Soon after, it was discovered that this single society did not have the capacity to handle the region's produce alone. The outcome was the decision to create more societies, which jointly formed the Bamenda Provincial Cooperative Produce Marketing Union (BPCPMU) on 21 August 1953.³⁶

On the contrary, the District Officer of Bamenda opposed the formation of a coffee growers' cooperative society. He cautioned that the formation of such a society might result in increased coffee planting in spite of advice to the contrary. The society that the British wanted was one which could improve only the quality of coffee. Increased smuggling of coffee out of the Southern Cameroons compelled the British authorities to intervene in the coffee trade by gathering coffee growers in a cooperative scheme. This change of decision marked the beginning of the creation of institutions to effectively control the production and marketing of arabica coffee, which became very lucrative over the years.

Thereafter, the production of coffee in the region increased further and outstripped the capacity of the existing cooperatives to handle the produce and thus created the need for more cooperatives.³⁷ As a result, the Bambui Cooperative Society being the earliest in Tubah was formed in 1955. The commercialization of coffee through the cooperative societies in Tubah received a boost in 1958

³⁰ C. Newbury, Colonialism, Ethnicity and Rural Political Protest: Rwanda and Zanzibar in Comparative Perspectives," *Comparative Politics*, 15 (3), 253-280, 1983.

³¹ R. L. Rapley, "Coping with the Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial State in Kenya." *Journal of African History*, 20 1979, 487-506.

³² S. K. Hans-Christoph, Institution and Technical Change in the Development of *Small Holder Agriculture, Farming Systems and Resource Economics in the Tropics vol. 2*, Berlin, Wissenschaftsverlag Vauk Kiel, 1988, 144.

³³ P. Nkwi, *Traditional Government and Social Change: A study of the political institutions among the Kom of the Cameroon Grassfields*, Fribourg, University Press Fribourg, 1976, 208.

³⁴ D. Mahon, *A Short History of Cooperatives*, London, Longman, 1977, 415-416.

³⁵ Santa Area Cooperative Union Archives (SACUA), The North West Marketing Cooperative in the New Deal Era, 53.

³⁶ B. Cham-Langhee and V.G. Fanso, *Nso and Its Neighbours, Readings in the Social History of the Western Grassfields of Cameroon*, Mankon-Bamenda, Langaa Research and Publishing CIG, 2011, 410-415.

³⁷ I. N. Tamanjong, *Brief Notes on Nso Area Cooperative Union Limited from Inception to Date (type written)*, report prepared for the ministry of Agriculture, 18 December 1986, p.1. Mahon and Tita give 7 October as the date of the registration. See Dean Maron and SPD Tita, *The Nso' Area Cooperative Case Studies*, ed. Dean Mahon USAID, 1979, 36.

following remarks from the Jervis report to the Agricultural Department Bambui penned in these words:

I submit the following proposals for the improvement of the Bamenda coffee crop. That the co-operative organization be given exclusive buying right to market the coffee at source: and that all other interests operating in the field be eliminated.³⁸

The following remarks from S. T. Jervis on coffee growing in the Bamenda area led to the initiative for more coffee cooperatives in Tubah which became a flood gate for capital outflows. Marxist scholars argued that since 1940, African economy had been encountered with a stop page in the inflow of private capital and a sizable over all capital outflows. Hence, the emergence of coffee marketing cooperatives in Tubah in 1934, marked the dawn of an era of business monopoly in a new wave of economic exploitation.

6. COFFEE MARKETING BOARDS AS AGENTS OF ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION IN TUBAH

Tracing the indiscriminate export of commodity coffee from Tubah in the 1930s is to give power to a phenomenon that is historically located. Colonial arrangements established the marketing cooperatives in Tubah which in turn was drawing a large amount of foreign exchange for imperial development. Through their agents the Tubah cooperatives, farmers were plunged into a brutal exploitation of their coffee without any reduction in the productive resources of the British colonial masters. In view of this perspective, Colin Legum has argued that this had affected the growth rate of African Economy.³⁹ Perhaps, the indigenous coffee growers of Tubah were “growing” but not developing in infrastructure. They were producing and selling more to their cooperatives but earning less for their coffee. They were putting more labour and increasing their volumes of trade while getting more and more dependent on the British colonial master. The question such an observation leaves is whether it was enough to name the Cooperative Marketing Boards in Tubah and other parts of Africa during this era as the dark side of the farmer’s profit margins and economic development.

It is obvious, the reality of the coffee market was that it contained myriad, isolated economic farm units where the village groups if not each individual family actually produced all it could not consume for ships and freights to European markets. The myth survived partly because this former British sphere lacked the technical know-how for coffee processing and thus exchange went beyond the household. This accordingly ensured the stagnation, or even degeneration, of peasant agriculture in this African mainland at the time. While the marketing cooperatives were eroding the food crop regime and stifled hunger, the exporting colonizers were becoming more food sufficient. Bonguh illustrates coffee's pervasiveness in driving out other crops when he evoked that with the success of coffee production, large coffee plantations displaced these crops and pushed small holders from their land, creating major food scarcity problems for the rural peasants.⁴⁰ An eyewitness account from the late-1940s paints a grim picture of the situation:

The conquest of territory by the coffee industry is alarming. It has already occupied all the high ground and is now descending to the valleys, displacing maize, rice, and beans. It goes in the manner of land conquests, spreading hunger and misery, reducing the former landlords to the worst conditions— woe to those who sell out.⁴¹

The aforementioned rhetoric depicted how coffee economy plundered indigenous agriculture in this polity and other British African spheres. The foregoing scenario vehemently and abruptly altered the sex pattern of agriculture in the locale that witnessed its male subjects blasting the subsistence food crop sector a retrogressive dive to the gutters in favor of arabica coffee which was more cash promising. This capitalistic class war for “cash money” meant that the preferential food crop economy of the Tubah indigenes was eroded by their aggressive appetite for “cash” offered by the marketing cooperatives.

Since the cash benefits offered by these marketing cooperatives were gaining grounds, these cooperatives surfaced as monopolies in the coffee marketing chain and appropriated farmer bonuses at

³⁸ NAB, File No. QC/g (1958)4, Coffee Production in Southern Cameroons, 2.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ G. C. Bonguh, "The Socio-Economic Impact of the Introduction of Coffee in Santa, 1930-1987", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2006.

⁴¹ Jeremiah Johnson, age 90 About, Farmer, Interview at Babangki Tungaw, 20/06/2014.

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the expense of sustained efforts to revive and develop transport infrastructure which was key to the growth of the microcosmic community especially in agriculture where cash losses could be curbed on transportation of farm products. This in turn ruined the planter and coffee industry. The planters became pawns in the hands of the profit-hungry Marketing Boards. It is undeniable that the Tubah farmers benefited financially from the coffee trade but the fact remains that the cash payments received by these farmers was never fully paid to them. Such payments were held as surpluses and later passed on for the economic development of the British empire. According to Helleiner,⁴² 32% of potential income of producers had been withheld by the marketing boards. The importance attached by the colonial government to the role of marketing boards as a source of finance for development need not be overemphasized.⁴³ Through these cooperatives, the British colonial government found a surplus which was tapped for economic development. Obayan stressed that few will seriously argue against the responsibility of the government to locate and tap such surplus for investment which would benefit not only the farmers but the entire community.⁴⁴

Lewis evokes that, from commodities handled exclusively by more public institutions (cooperatives) in the Bamenda grassfields particularly coffee, much surplus was kept for re-investment by the institutions rather than being passed back to the farmer.⁴⁵ This escaped the calculations of Tubah farmers as there was an interplay with their bonuses which in reality was an unpaid fraction of the farmers' labour impressed by the buying cooperatives to maintain their status quo as monopolists in this export business. This was considered a "good will" gesture by the poor farmers in the tactical gain plan of the marketing cooperatives but as a paradox was a brutal mechanism that exploited the farmers from the fruits of their labour. The coffee marketing scheme typified by a stop page of coffee farmer bonuses witnessed a scenario where such funds were never reinvested in the local farmers by their marketing cooperatives. This partly explained why the marketing cooperative structures remained outdated or lagged in development. In view of the foregoing, the unanswered question on this colonial enterprise is the reason why these indigenous African coffee growers kept on cultivating a crop for which they never fully received the full reward of their labour.

While these peasant coffee growers had their resources plundered with an adverse poor infrastructural development, in contrast, the evolution of the coffee marketization from mainland Tubah on the importing British firms showed a completely different and in fact very positive pattern during the colonial era. Their industry flourished, new products were developed, the value of their retail market more than doubled, and profits sky-rocketed. This was something to celebrate, but the question must nevertheless be asked as to how long such a state of affairs can be sustained at the detriment of the African producers. The coffee farmers showed enormous resilience and in one way or another managed to survive and continued to produce. But not all and not at any cost. It now seems likely that, if ways are not found to improve trading conditions in the producing polity, this precious commodity, and what is worse, the human beings who grew it, will progressively decline to the point that, in a not too distant future, there may be insufficient coffee and certainly an insufficient quality range of coffee, to trade and to drink.

Strengthening the colonial debate over this mainland, it can be argued that the British set a stage where the perception of the coffee market was that which if no coffee mill existed, (a situation prevalent in cooperatives with a low marketing tonnage), the farmer had the choice of selling his coffee in cherry form paid directly or continued waiting until his coffee was transported to a section with a coffee mill and hulled there. After hulling and cleaning, the coffee was transported to the stores of the marketing Board. When the West Cameroon Marketing Board (WCMB) received coffee from these cooperatives for export to the world markets, it warehoused the produce, arranged for shipments, invested and applied all possible measures for the improvement of quality and increase of the yields, regularized the price paid to farmers, and organized and controlled marketing of the

⁴² G. K. Helleiner, *Peasant Agriculture, Government and Economic Growth in Nigeria*, Ibadan, OUP, 1989, 163.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ E. O. Obayan, *The Marketing Board and Economic Development, International Conference on Marketing Board*, Ibadan, OUP, 1978, 3-22.

⁴⁵ J. V. Lewis, *Purpose and Implications of North West Marketing*, Bamenda, Unique Printers, 1979, 11-33.

products inside the country⁴⁶ while ensuring the flow of coffee was from the primary society through the cooperative to the world market often looking for a suitable buyer. To support this view, Colin Legum, a liberal scholar asserts that the result of colonial rule on African agriculture was the creation of a mono-crop economy merely dependent on a single principal exportable crop channel.⁴⁷

After selling, there was revenue from the WCMB to the coffee farmer through the cooperative societies and primary societies. The outcome of this long business chain was that these poor farmers were alienated from the market frontier and could not bargain the price for their own coffee except by their cooperatives that served as arbiters in the marketing process on their behalf. This scheme grossly relegated mainland African and Tubah coffee producers to second class marketers who never received the maximum reward for their sales which was appropriated as bonuses. This depicts that this new wave of agriculture in Tubah was remarkably commercial centered on the out flow of funds rather than improving the growers' welfare. What is next, we must argue that the illicit exploitation of these coffee producers was occasioned by their aggressive appetite for cash whatsoever it took to earn it and not so much the exploitative tactics of the Tubah Produce Marketing Cooperatives that stood tall as monopolists in the long trade of coffee from 1934-1961.

In another dimension, the presence of imperialist elements invariably facilitated coffee export at a low cost. The sustained low prices paid to these indigenous African growers begs the question of why consumers felt no relief in their cappuccinos and double lattes during this epoch. The answer, according to industry experts, laid in marketing decisions by coffee outlets not to upset the customer with prices that constantly fluctuated at the time. Whatever the case, while paying low prices to the African cultivators of the crop, the key question further lay as to why the colonial officials ensured that processed consumable coffee was not produced by the indigenous African farmers and more specifically those of mainland Tubah that left the African farmers with the lone alternative to liquidate for export. In fact, as the growers were suffering as a result of the British dogma that sidelined them from the know-how on processing the large international firms that dealt in "industrial" (canned or instant) coffee like the United African Company (UAC) were reaping record profits taking advantage of low purchase prices of the raw material from their African suppliers. It is worth recognizing that while the African growers were paid less for their labour in producing coffee and unable to manufacture processed consumable coffee, paradoxically, in the West the coffee industry did not develop monolithically. It included two very different sectors: industrial coffee like Nestle and Chibo (a German firm and specialty or gourmet coffee) that prevailed in this era.

Positing further, Gromyko has aptly extrapolated that colonialism in Africa had introduced alien variables to agriculture apparently the introduction and expansion of tree plantation instead of crop cultivation and cash crop agriculture was the dominant feature. This scenario ushered food crops that featured prominently in the rural scenes of the community went to its lowest ebb when coffee became identified as a cash fetcher crop. This intensely weakened the area's developmental initiative which had set off prior to the mirage of the colonial coffee trade. The reasons for this were clear; people resorted to the opening of small coffee farm plantations to settle tax burdens levied on them. This was because people resorted to the opening of small coffee farm plantations. At this point, food crops especially cassava in Kedjom Keku and Babanki Tungaw gave way to the cultivation of arabica coffee. Chunkang Tanteh crowned it that:

Colonial innovations also included the introduction of cash crops such as coffee, which changed the pattern of production from food crops to cash crop production. The immediate impact of this collision on the traditional economic food crop farming and colonial commercial interest on farmers is that the latter eclipsed the former.⁴⁸

The following rhetoric clearly illustrates that coffee commercialization mechanizations in Tubah and Africa tele-guided by the Cooperative Marketing Boards ultimately undermined that which was all

⁴⁶ C. N. Tanue, *An Evaluation of Sales Methods and Policy of Marketing Arabica Coffee in the North West Province of the Republic of Cameroon and their Psychological Impact Upon the farmers*, Columbia Pacific, Columbia Pacific University Press, 1988, .68.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ G. C. Tanteh, "Trends and Impacts of Economic Activities on the Ndop Plain, 1840-2005", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2005, 33.

African, evidenced in the tactical destruction of the pre-existing subsistence agriculture, time and labour. All this, arguably, was to satisfy the greed of the British colonial masters in their transactions through the propagation of what they termed “capitalist export agriculture”. George C. Kisob, the Senior District Officer for Bamenda noted in 1935 that “the main export crop of the Bamenda Division was arabica coffee”.⁴⁹ Sardonicly, they deployed factors of production but derived very little benefits. This perspective is articulated by Walter Rodney in the following words:

Africans suffered most from exclusive trade with the ‘mother country’ in case where the ‘mother country’ was backward. African peasants in Portuguese colonies got lower prices for their crops and paid more for imported items... This meant that Africans had to pay higher prices for a staple import, since British sloth was more expensive. From the viewpoint of the African peasant, that amounted to further alienation of the fruits of his labour.⁵⁰

A scathing critique of the above rhetoric by Scot evokes that enlightenment obscured the way colonialism imposed not just its exploitative power but its ability to determine the terms of the economy.⁵¹ In view of this orthodoxy, it was the device or craft of the British colonial administration to sideline indigenous technology in the locale through the marketing cooperatives who bought the raw materials at first hand; and for decades these farmers were made to be content with the disposition of their raw materials without any tenacity to go beyond just selling the raw material to understanding the industrial transformation of their coffee harvest. In view of the foregoing, these peasant farmers became skillfully alienated from industrial processing know-how by these deceitful buying cooperatives who were “wolves in sheep clothing”, cheating them by quickly buying the immediate harvest of their coffee produce so that they never got a second chance of thinking to transform the produce of their labour and the outcome was that which processed consumable coffee was never produced by the indigenous African producers. The reason behind this was clear; since these farmers could not transform what they were producing, they had only one option which was to sell to the marketing cooperatives; a tactical exploitative scheme deliberately targeted to get the Cooperative Marketing Boards richer than the farmers who were owners of the crop. The fallout was export agriculture with the end product imported at higher prices by these poor farmers who had been kept in the shackles of technological blackout with regards coffee industrial transformation mechanisms.

Sardonicly, to deepen an already-existing-crack, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in 1945 provided a powerful forum for developed countries to erode the economic sovereignty of Third World countries including the British Southern Cameroons and its accompanying hinterland-Tubah. As nature would have it, this new initiative in Africa forced opened its market for multinationals, particularly holders of monopoly rights like the West Cameroon Marketing Board and the Tubah Cooperative Produce Marketing Societies (CPMS) who intensified the purchase of coffee at optimal in this agricultural theatre. This greed was exhibited in eking out existence in the self-employed sector notably the food crop sector in favour of coffee. It would be adequate to blame the open market of the FAO that endowed the marketing cooperatives with the power to fix coffee prices while eroding the economic sovereignty of the trading communities. However, it should not be by-passed that the rural economy of Tubah was highly neglected and agricultural development remained rudimentary despite the wanton exploitation of its agricultural potentials and or factors of production (land, labour and capital) to export coffee through the marketing cooperatives with the aid of Licensed Buying Agents. We are forced to argue that, self-interest was the propaganda economics of these Marketing Boards and not so much the betterment of the Africans who grew and sold them.

A perfect illustration of this economics of interests between the British colonial government and their bourgeois citizens was provided by the conduct of the Produce Marketing Boards in this polity. It was the intention of the Cooperative Societies to bargain at the least cost possible so as to supply the

⁴⁹ RAB, File No. B1470 NW/CA/1937/1, Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of 1 Nigeria 2 Bamenda Division.

⁵⁰ W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London, Bogle L’Ouverture, 1972, Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, 3 Vols, New York, Academic Press, 1974, 1980, 1989. 231-258.

⁵¹ D. L. Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999, 156, emphasis in original.

required raw material for the international market. Frank has aptly argued that the colonial economy of Africa was highly characterized by the presence of an “African Middle Man”. That was why Rodney extrapolated that in practice, the Boards paid peasants a low fixed rate during many years when world prices were rising. None of the benefits went to Africans, but rather to the British government itself and to the private companies, which were used as intermediaries in the buying and selling of the produce. In this perspective, David Hap, a Marxist writer further evokes that, colonialism and colonial rulers, after all, prevented industrialization in Africa to preserve their industries from competition.⁵² This was probably realized with the appropriation of surpluses through the use of an “African Middle Man” in the process that tapped cash proceeds for the cooperatives which was later reserved for European industrial growth and to save them from competition.

Another aspect utilized by the British that robbed these indigenous coffee traders of the direct benefits of their labour was the closure of all private sales channels in the vicinity and the institution of a single marketing channel, based on European cooperative principles. It was perhaps this term of trade (commercial policy) that gave the exploitative Marketing Cooperatives the driving seat as monopolists in the coffee transaction mechanism in the different trading African localities. To summarize this ugly scenario over the said people, Chunkang maintained that, “colonial innovations also included the introduction of cash crops such as coffee. These changes broadly characterized the passage from a fairly laissez-faire to a heavily protected economy.”⁵³ Through this epistemology, coffee bonuses were kept as surpluses by the Tubah Cooperative Produce Marketing Societies (CPMS) after sales from this heavily controlled single marketing channel. Though the financial proceeds ameliorated lifestyle, many would agree that a lion’s share of their surpluses was held back by the monopolistic agents, the Tubah Cooperative Societies and the West Cameroon Marketing Board that controlled all coffee trade in the former West Cameroon. At the same time, while these farms were suffering from exhaustion, nothing was done by the profit vendors to ensure that land acre for coffee cultivation continued yielding at optimal in the long run.

What is more, the daunting task to gain clientele into the Tubah cooperatives once more dashed the hopes of the peasant farmers. Such clientele was quantified in the volume of coffee production measured in bags. A bag of coffee contained six (6) tins. These coffee bags were referred to as ‘Jude Bags’.⁵⁴ A bag of coffee could be 13 or 15 pounds sterling. Members of the cooperatives were obliged to supply at least three bags of coffee beans at the end of each harvesting season. This automatically controlled entry into these cooperatives because farmers who could not produce the required numbers of bags were bound to sell their produce to the agents from the cooperatives. This selective approach that was imposed by the cooperatives on all coffee farmers in the commercialization chain scared many from these societies. Those who were never privileged to sell their produce directly to these societies, adopted other illegal sales channels outside the cooperatives for the disposal of their coffee. The preceding situation poses the nagging question of; why the financial delinquencies of these marketing cooperatives were not curbed by guaranteeing even small scale farmers’ entry into the cooperatives which no doubt could boost production and income levels for these societies. Unfortunately, this was never the case and the poor African traders suffered the most from this unequal transaction in arabica coffee within the former British colonial empire.

Positing further, economic development in this mainland was limited in scope with the advent of coffee business. This contradicted the much alarming change in British colonial policy after the Second World War towards economic development in the British Southern Cameroons and its subset Tubah was not exempted.⁵⁵ Blasting this perspective where British occupied spheres were lagging behind in development, Bijorn Backman had it when he bluntly opined that colonial settlers sought to block the development of commercial agriculture, not just by ousting indigenous settlers from the land

⁵² D. H. Good, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918–1964*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993.

⁵³ Chunkang, T. G., “Trends and Impacts of Economic Activities on the Ndop Plain, 1840-2005”, Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2005, 33 p.

⁵⁴ Jude bags were from abroad with imports. The import was certain specie of rice called Jude. The bags were then called Jude bags.

⁵⁵ D. Achenui Nwenfor, “Coffee Economy in Tubah Sub-Division, 1934-2005: Evolution and Socio-Economic Implications”, M.A. in History, University of Yaoundé 1, 2014.

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but by forbidding the cultivation of certain commercial crops.⁵⁶ A case in point was the Kola nut, the main cash crop for Tubah and most Bamenda grassfield area farmers which was marketed as far as Yola in Nigeria that was eroded with the coming of coffee business in the early 1930s.

Again, during the British Trusteeship period (1922-1946), the brutal economics of coffee commercialization was given an open window over this former British sphere with the arrival of the United African Company (UAC) in 1949 in the agricultural theatres of Bamenda. It bought and exported coffee from the hinterlands of Tubah. Accompanying the UAC was the subsequent arrival of the John Holt Company that was opened in the same region around 1955. Like the UAC, it also bought and exported farmer's produce in this area and the entire the region into European markets. After export, these companies gave farmers what was known as an after sales commission. The companies bought a pound weight of coffee for one shilling six pence (about 104 FCFA) and a cigarette cup of coffee for one shilling (about 95 FCFA).⁵⁷

It is worth mentioning that, the involvement of the United African Company and John Holt in the coffee market marked the beginning of competition in the buying and selling of coffee in the region in general and Tubah sub-division in particular. This benefited the farmers most as each company strove to pay a higher price per pound weight of coffee. During this period, coffee prices were codified in a book, which the farmers called the "recorder".⁵⁸ In this scheme, the UAC assisted farmers by providing vehicles for the transportation of coffee if the processed coffee was the direct supply of the company (UAC) situated at Nkwen and at the time managed by Fomenky.⁵⁹ Coffee for export was poured in a funnel-like structure. This economics of export, manifest in mainland Tubah during the colonial period was best explained by the "vent-for-surplus"⁶⁰ epistemology whose basic tenets affirm that:

A previously isolated country about to enter into international trade possesses a surplus productive capacity of some sort or another. The function of trade here is not so much to reallocate the given resources as to provide the new effective demand for the output of the surplus resources, which would have remained unused in the absence of trade. It follows that export production can be increased without necessarily reducing domestic production.⁶¹

The basic tenets of the aforementioned theory held true for coffee business in Tubah and other former British African colonies during the spasmodic era of colonialism where the "indirect effects" of the coffee trade from the continent led to the long-term economic growth of the British economy than its local equivalents, (the African producer communities) without a reduction of the colonizer's domestic productive resources, even after the direct gains from trade were realized. Table 1 shows the statistics of coffee exported by UAC and John Holt and Company Ltd from 1934 to 1960.

Table1. *Export of Coffee Tonnes in Tubah and Value in Pounds from 1934 to 1960*

Year	Tonnage	Price/Bonus Per Kg(£)
1934/1939	90	127
1939/1945	125	127
1945/1950	165	135
1950/1955	275	135
1955/1960	270	145

Source: *Compiled from reports of the Tubah Produce Marketing Societies, 1961.*

⁵⁶ B. Bijorn, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000.

⁵⁷ Ibid.,3.

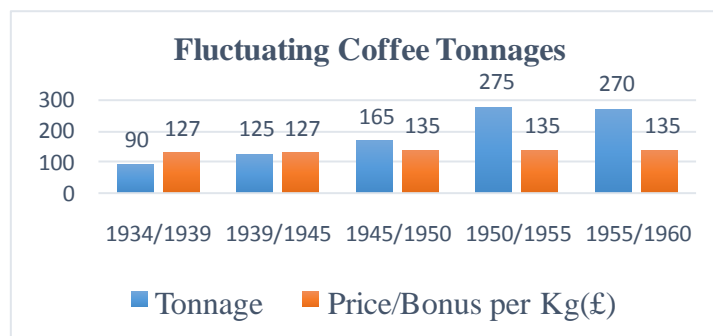
⁵⁸ Jeremiah Bangha, Oral Interview at Kedjom Keku, March 27, 2014.

⁵⁹ Ibid.,3.

⁶⁰ H. Myint, "Classical Theory of International Trade and the Underdeveloped Countries", *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 68, 1958, 27.

⁶¹ Ibid.,321.

This fluctuating situation statistically expressed on table 1 gives quick iconic meaning when expressed graphically.



Graph1. *Exportable Commodity Coffee, 1934-1960*

Graph 1 shows that the quantity of coffee exported from mainland Tubah had a tidal nature, that is, it was high between 1934-1939, dropped abysmally from 1939-1945, then rose again in 1945 but nose-dived in 1950. In 1950, exports more than doubled increasing appreciably indicating an unprecedented increase in demand. Exports declined in 1955, sharply due to frost, sky-rocketed in 1955 and nose-dived once more in 1960 caused by borers disease. This siege of coffee export denoted by Kamarack and Gromyko gives more concrete evidence of the calculative economics of the colonial system as they maintained that African economy before independence was highly characterized by external influences emerging from various sources.⁶² Needless to mention that coffee business was the main cash crop of Tubah and most African territories prior to independence. This domineering trade in coffee over these indigenous African farmers begs us to argue that the export figures on table 1 above shows glaringly that this African coffee based community like their counterparts, despite the booms and slumps in the commercialization process managed to stay in the coffee trade since they depended a lot on it for their socio-economic and material wellbeing.

Cognizant of their much dependence on the crop culture for livelihood, Licensed Buying Agents as weaponry in the buying process, eliminated private sales channels to safeguard maximum returns for the Cooperative Marketing Boards whose importance was illustrated by Olankanpo and Teriba, who considered Marketing Boards as government established monopolies entrusted with agricultural export and fixing of producer prices, exercising considerable fiscal and monetary policy.⁶³ Their operating results were of importance from the point of view of government finance, farm income, money supply, and indeed, the overall growth rate of the economy. This often led to its accumulation of huge surplus for the development of British overseas colonies at the expense of the African initiative.⁶⁴ Profits from the unequal and often brutally enforced economic relations were returned to Europe while African markets were created to consume European manufactured goods (coffee). By 1961, the colonial game was over and the competition for global power dwindled. As Memmi puts it, colonization was a “disease of the European,” and those among the colonized who worked with Europeans could only be seen in pathological terms.⁶⁵ Even until the end of the colonial era, the interior of Tubah had not been able to break from the colonial lesson. Its whole attention was given to the coffee market.

7. CONCLUSION

The polarization of coffee economy which tele-guided the British crusade on development after world war II battered the economic potentials of the producing communities and simultaneously stalled development. The myopic developments recorded in the assimilated mainland was the initiative of the indigenous farmers from their meagre cash payments after sales. Even what was quantified as development in the locale when measured with the British economy at the time could still be labelled

⁶² S. A. Kamarack and O. A. Gromyko, “British Colonial Economic Policy in Nigeria, the Example of Benin Province 1914 – 1954”, *Journal of Human Ecology*, Vol.28, No. 1, 2009.

⁶³ O. Olankanpo and O. Teriba, *The Fiscal Monetary and Investment Implications of the Marketing Boards, International Conference on Marketing Boards*, Ibadan , African Book Publishing Centre, 1971.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ A. Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Boston, Howard Greenfield,1965, 153.

as rudimentary. The paper has also examined the Tubah Cooperative Produce Marketing Societies occupied an intermediate space that gave them the latitude to plunge the wealth of the indigenous farmers as they were never fully compensated. A trading contract that was premised on greed and unequal balance, begs us to affirm that it was never the decision of these African farmers to trade in coffee. Although they finally did so, it was based on servitude occasioned by the quest for survival which caught many in the colonial mess. It is important to understand that there were severe constraints in many coffee-growing areas, but to ensure that the African producers benefit wholly from the coffee sector, an independent class of African coffee technicians must be trained in what is termed the “technification” of coffee to ensure that the cultivators of coffee are able to transform the crop into a finished product. This will narrow the cash losses by these coffee growers by foreign buyers who purchased raw material at lower prices and in return tagged sky-rocketing prices on the coffee end-product.

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AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY



Canute Ambe Ngwa, is holder of a PhD degree in Economic History and hails from Cameroon. He is an Associate Professor/Researcher at the Department of History, Higher Teacher Training College and Faculty of Arts of the University of Bamenda, Cameroon. He is currently serving as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Bamenda, after having served as the Head of the Department of History at the Higher Teacher Training College, Bambili. Besides, he was formerly the Head of Archives and Museums (Library) at the University of Bamenda and is the editor-in-chief of the African and Humanities Review Journal, having published on areas of gender, cooperation, agriculture and development in local and international journals.



Divine Achenui Nwenfor, is a holder of a Master of Arts Degree in History and hails from Cameroon. He is currently a PhD research fellow in History in the Department of History of the University of Yaoundé 1.