

# World Wars and the Africa Continent: Interrogating Nigeria's Contributions During The 1914 World War

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**Abstract:** It is a well known fact that the First World War was fought between the world major colonial powers, basically over territorial possession, however, a large chunk of the resources both human and material used in executing the war were sourced from the Third World Countries of Africa. In this way, although most Africans did not get to the battle front, but they fought with their sweat and blood, toiling day and night to satisfy the requirements of the various colonial powers. Thus while they contributed to a course that was meant to enslave them, Africans continued to die of hunger, starvation and poverty. The qualitative method is used for this particular research. Data obtained from primary and secondary sources were deployed to carry out the study with an analytical and narrative historical approach. This includes historical, descriptive and analytical approaches based on gathered evidence.

**Keywords:** First World War, Food Requirement, Subsistence, Farming, Famine.

**Sumario:** 1. Introduction. 2. Background to the European War and the Africa Experience. 3. Methodology. 4. Result and discussion. 4.1. European Powers and the Partitioning of Africa: Prelude to the War. 4.2. Forced Conscription and the Fighting the Unknown Battle. 4.3. Nigeria: Space and Resources on the eve of the First World War. 4.4. Nigeria and Her Neighbours: Our Land, their War Ground. 4.5. Nigeria's Resource and the War. 4.6. Monetization, Taxation and Labour. 4.7. Military and Related Resources Contribution to the First World War. 5. Conclusion. 6. Bibliography. 6.1. Archival Sources.

## 1. Introduction

Extant evidence has shown that before the advent of European power on the African soil the people had been undergoing some form of socio-political and

economic transformations which most often would entail some wars of expansion. In the case of Nigeria, the resultant effect of the establishment of various kingdoms and empires which would incorporate other territories and would provide some sort of economic and political respite for the people. This was the case of the old Benin Empire extending as far as present day Republic of Benin, The Oyo Alafinante controlling areas as far as present day Ghana and the Sokoto Caliphate bringing together areas as far as Niger, Chad, some parts of Cameroun and Ghana<sup>1</sup>. It is therefore correct to argue that the people knew the act of war and as such had been able to before the developed various implements, attained some level of technological and scientific development. This was specifically in the area of level of technological and industrial development achieved by a number of Nigerian communities as reflected mainly in the manufacture of tools and implements used for different purposes as well as the production of artistic material<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, in contemporary times, the relevance of aspects of traditional technology to modern living has been emphasized<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. Background to the European War and the Africa Experience

Scholars have argued that a thorough understanding of the First World War and the subsequent Second World War was the European Pride of owning territories outside their immediate shores. In his analysis, Mensah (E.T, 2015:1), summaries this pride thus

Politically, in Europe of the nineteenth century, a country was considered powerful and great when that country has a lot of territories both in Europe and outside Europe. This motivated the European powers to scramble for territories in Africa because of the prestige that come with it. Acquiring more territories also served as a form of national pride and

<sup>1</sup> Shehu Sabo, An Assessment of Sakkwato Jihad Flag Bearers of Katagum, Misau and Jama'are Local Government of Bauchi State and their contributions to Islamic Education, M.Ed thesis, Department Of Arts And Social Science Education Islamic Studies Section, Faculty Of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. August, 2011; Ifamose, Folashade, The Sokoto Jihad and inter-group relation in Yorubaland in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Bobboyi H. & Yakubu A.M. (eds), *The Sokoto Caliphate: History and Legacies, 1804-2004*, Vol. I, Kaduna: Arewa House, Ahmadu Bello University, 2006, p 201.

<sup>2</sup> FALOLA, T. and Heaton M. (2008). A History of Nigeria, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 18-20; OSUNTOKUN, A. (2000). "Some Thoughts on Traditional African Idea of Management". Journal of Cultural Studies, Vol. 3, No1, 99-107.

<sup>3</sup> Akubor, E. Osewe (2016), Human, Environment and Sustainable Development in Nigeria in the 21st century : Historicizing the Glorious Past, Interrogating the Future Path. IFE Social Science Review, Journal of the Faculty of Social Sciences (Special Issue), Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, June, 2016, Pp. 258-274.

superiority over others. In the Gold Coast for instance where the British had already establish their “control” over the Southern States, they (The British) felt threatened when the French annexed the territory of Lome in 1883. The British therefore quickly moved to annexed Asante and the northern territories of the Gold Coast as British colonies. Such were the tensions between the various European countries over territories in Africa and called for the Berlin Conference<sup>4</sup>.

It was therefore not surprising that despite the fact that Nigeria (and indeed the African Continent) was far away from Europe, Nigeria men and resources had to be conscripted to support the war. Jowit D (2019) opined thus:

Ironically, Britain’s reason for entering the War was to defend the independence of Belgium, which Germany had violated; yet it was just recently, during the previous thirty years, that Britain, like other European powers, had used largely forceful means to acquire various parts of hitherto independent Africa. When the War began in 1914 it was only eleven years since British troops had entered Kano. Nevertheless, although they had other reasons for challenging the colonial government, Nigeria’s newly developing educated elite, based mainly in Lagos and composed of journalists, lawyers and other professionals, did not oppose Nigeria’s participation in the War, and expressed loyalty to Britain. They hardly had any choice, because there was censorship – as there was in Britain itself<sup>5</sup>.

The article is thus an attempt from the point of view of Economic history at discussing the effect of Nigeria’s involvement in the World War and its implication for her as a developing nation.

### 3. Methodology

The qualitative method is used for this particular research. Data obtained from primary and secondary sources were deployed to carry out the study with an analytical and narrative historical approach. This includes historical, descriptive and analytical approaches based on gathered evidence. The primary source for this research is based on field investigations conducted in the area and surrounding territories. Among other things, the data collection process includes semi-structured interviews with individuals (farmers and others whose livelihood largely

<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Twum Mensah 2015, *The Partition of Africa and its Effects on the Continent*, Munich, GRIN Verlag, <https://www.grin.com/document/307404>.

<sup>5</sup> Jowit David (2019) *First World War: A Nigerian perspective*, *The Guardian Newspaper*, 02 January 2019 | 3:31.

depends on agriculture). The research also uses historical documents from the national archives, relying on previous research conducted on issues of war, diplomacy, policy and exchange among the various peoples in addition to documentary data taken from newspaper accounts, diaries, letters and verbal reports.

#### **4. Result and discussion**

##### *4.1. European Powers and the Partitioning of Africa: Prelude to the War.*

Scholars have argued that even before the world war, there were already deliberate efforts among the European powers to share African territories among themselves for various reasons. The climax of this was the Berlin Conference of the 1880's where without the knowledge and permission of Africans, the areas were parceled out among the world powers. In term of Economic benefits, it has been argued that as a result of the industrial revolution in Europe, (particularly in England), the Europeans were seeking outlets to serve as a market for their manufactured goods. The major idea behind this move was that it would boost the economy of the European nations and the surplus goods also would have a ready market in Africa. To achieve this there was therefore the need for the Europeans to acquire territories outside Europe to serve as a market for their surplus goods and Africa was their answer since it was a newly found continent by the Europeans.

In Nigeria for example, the Europeans supplied manufactured products such as gin, tobacco, hardware, gun, gun powder, iron, cutlasses, glassware, European blankets, seeds and cotton and silk products. This was also the case in the Gold Coast, Ivory Coast and other surrounding territories. These goods found a ready market since they were new and comfortable for the large African population. The British with Gold Coast as their occupied territory benefited from this trade as they also obtained products such as gold, ivory, animal skin etc. This new economic enterprise therefore boosted the economy of Britain and they were therefore ready to do whatever is possible to prevent any other European country from benefiting from this trade in the Gold Coast.

Secondly, the Europeans saw in African territories to potentials in terms of tropical raw materials could be easily obtained at relatively low prices to feed European manufacturing industries. These raw materials and related products were in high demand in Europe to feed the hunger of the rising industries where they would be converted into finished goods and were sold to Europeans in much cheaper rates, while at exorbitant rates in Africa to Africans. This helped in the

accumulation of more capital to establish other industries in Europe. So to the Europeans, Africa was very valuable at that time and no European country would allow another European country to establish trade links in the “occupied” territories for trade.

Closely related to the above, is that fact that the various European countries particularly Britain expanded and as more capital was accumulated as a result of the profit from trade with the Africans, there was the need for the investment of surplus capital. Africa served as the suitable place to invest in the exploitation of natural resources of the continent. In the Gold Coast for example, European mining companies and timber firms were established by the Europeans to exploit the natural resources of the area to serve European interest.

To have a total grab of the continent, her people and resources, the colonial power partitioned the continent into territories to be administered by them either directly or indirectly.

s/no	Imperial Powers	Sq. km
1	Britain	9,000,000
2	France	8,000,000
3	Belgium	2,410,000
4	Portugal	2,100,000
5	Italy	1,590,000
6	Spain	310,000
7	USA	100,000

Table I: Territorial shares of Africa by the Imperialist Powers<sup>6</sup>

The large expanse of land also afforded the colonial powers the opportunity of handling the issue of overpopulation in certain parts of Europe and the resettlement “surplus” citizens. The Europeans therefore wanted a place to resettle “surplus” citizens. This is evident when the British occupied South Africa and some parts of Kenya in what has been described in history as Direct Colonization and Settlement. The establishment of Colonial Settlements in these area was due to favorable weather and climatic conditions which was very favorable for European settlement.

<sup>6</sup> Nzala, A.T et al, Forced Labour in Colonial Africa, London: Zed Press. 1977.

#### 4.2. *Forced Conscription and the Fighting the Unknown Battle*

Although warfare was certainly nothing new among Nigerians and their African neighbours, as the continent and her people have well experienced protracted and intense violence throughout the twentieth century with very few areas remaining unaffected. However, what was strange in the case of the First World War was that African were never part of the plan they were conscripted to go and defend. In the case of Nigeria she had hardly recovered from the struggle against colonial conquest starting from the conquest of Lagos, through the bombardment and destruction of the various Niger Delta kingdoms of Itsekiri, Opobo and Benin upto 1897 and the various devastating havoc meted on the various towns and cities in Hausaland, northern Nigeria. While the people were trying to grapple with this, they were further conscripted to fight on the side of Britain in the international scene (in fact When the War began in 1914 it was only eleven years since British troops had entered Kano).

The immediate impact of the above was that (apart from the new task of helping the British to win the First world war) while the first four decades of the century, the 1900s to 1930s, were characterized by continued wars of colonial conquest, the people were suffocated with colonial taxation, exploitation of the resources and suppression of any attempt at resisting the new economic burden placed on their shoulder in a bid to finance the wars. In this way, the resistance by Africans were tagged African rebellions against civilization. It was therefore not surprising that within this period, the German reaction to African uprisings in South West Africa (now Namibia) can be understood as the first genocide of the twentieth century. Both world wars (1914–18 and 1939–45) dominated the colonial era, involving military campaigns fought throughout parts of Africa by rival European powers, and more broadly the mobilization of African military manpower and the extraction of African resources that supported the global struggles of the combatants.

#### 4.3. *Nigeria: Space and Resources on the eve of the First World War*

Geographically, Nigeria area up to the eve of the First World War comprised over 330,000 square miles – more than five times the size of England and Scotland, and one-third the size of British India. The European population is scattered over this area. The largest community is probably at the Minefields in the Bauchi Province, the next largest at Lagos nearly 1,000 miles distant. There are other centres widely

separated from each other at Calabar and other Coast towns, at Zungeru and at Kano, while the Niger Company which has the largest capital of any single firms, has its headquarters at Burutu<sup>7</sup>.

On the economy, Lugard had argued thus:

...Already the benefits of the partial Amalgamation, which has been in operation for the past years, have resulted in increased prosperity. The estimated Revenue of 1914 is almost a million sterling greater than the estimated Revenue for 1912. When my predecessors from this chair in 1906 announced the Amalgamation of Southern Nigeria and Lagos he stated that the Revenue of Southern Nigeria was just over a million. The estimated revenue of Nigeria this year stands at 31 millions, and Trade has increased from 5 millions to nearly 15 millions in this period of under 8 years<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.4. *Nigeria and Her Neighbours: Our Land, their War Ground.*

It is important to note that although the war began in 1914, there was already tension in every part of Africa as the Europeans were already counting on the contributions of their colonized territories to win the war. In some other cases, the war presented the European forces the opportunity to lay final claim to some of the territories under contention. This was specifically the case of Nigeria and her immediate neighbours Cameroon, Chad and Benin. Discussing the role the territory played in the First World War as well as the intention of the various powers, Jowitz (2019) wrote in the case of Nigeria thus:

The colonies participated in the War chiefly because men enlisted in – or were conscripted into – the respective colonial armies and went to fight in lands distant from their homes. As is well known, Nigerian soldiers were formed into a Nigeria Regiment as part of the British Army which fought the Germans, first in Cameroon and later in Tanganyika. There is some controversy going on at present as to whether the services of these soldiers have ever been adequately rewarded. One of their officers, Brigadier-General Cunliffe, is quoted by Crowder as saying of

<sup>7</sup> The Nigeria Gazette Extra Ordinary published by Authority No. 2, Lagos Thursday, January 1, 1914, Vol.1, see also The Constitutional: A Journal of Constitutional Development, Centre for Constitutionalism and Demilitarisation (CENCOD), Lagos, Vol.13, No.4, December 2013.109-114.

<sup>8</sup> The Constitutional: A Journal of Constitutional Development, Centre for Constitutionalism and Demilitarisation (CENCOD), Lagos, Vol.13, No.4, December 2013.109-114.

Nigerian soldiers: 'Their rations have been scanty, their barefoot marches long and trying, and their fighting at times extremely arduous, yet they have not been found wanting either in discipline, devotion to their officers, or personal courage'. Governor-General Lugard, however, was alarmed at the possible consequences of Nigerian soldiers learning to use modern weapons<sup>9</sup>.

In a more general term, Stapleton, T (2018:36) wrote:

With French Equatorial Africa to the east and south, and British Nigeria to the west, the German territory of Cameroon was encircled by enemies, except the small Spanish possessions of Equatorial Guinea in the south and the island of Fernando Po off the Atlantic coast. While the Germans in Cameroon, led by General Karl Zimmerman, knew that they faced over-whelming enemy forces, their aim was to retain a physical presence in Africa until the end of the war. They planned to abandon the unfortified coast, let the swamps and tropical disease of the south hamper invaders and defend the northern grassland plateau. German forces in Cameroon numbered 205 European officers and 1650 African soldiers in 1914, which increased to a height of 1460 Europeans and 6550 Africans, but they lacked ammunition<sup>10</sup>.

On the agenda of the power, the scholar continued thus:

The Allied forces that invaded Cameroon in August 1914 had different agendas. Interested in territorial expansion, the French quickly seized German posts on the Ubangi and Congo rivers which had been under French control until ceded to Germany in 1911. Subsequently, and without orders from Paris, four French columns pressed into southeastern Cameroon. Although the Belgians had initially intended to remain neutral in Africa, events in Europe prompted them to facilitate the French invasion and 600 Belgian colonial troops joined a French column. British operations focused on denying the port of Douala to German cruisers. In late August, five columns of the Nigeria Regiment crossed into Cameroon at different points. When the northern columns inadvertently stumbled into the main German defenses around Mora, this revealed that the coast was undefended, which

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<sup>9</sup> Jowit David (2019) First World War: A Nigerian perspective, The Guardian Newspaper, 02 January 2019 | 3:31.

<sup>10</sup> Stapleton, Timothy J (2018), Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century. New York: Routledge.

prompted the Royal Navy to land an Anglo-French expedition that seized Douala in late September<sup>11</sup>.

It was clear that in all these, the colonial government had begun to sow the seed of disintegration within the various African peoples and their land as they used their spaces to launch attack on each other. This it was not surprising that up to early 1915, the Germans imported ammunition and supplies through Equatorial Guinea, while at the same time mounted counter-offensives against the British and French and raided into Nigeria and Gabon. In May and June, Anglo-French forces from Douala undertook a tortuously slow advance toward the trading center of Jaunde (today's Yaounde). In June, French forces in the east regrouped and captured several centers, and British forces from Nigeria and French forces from Chad took Garua and other parts of the north. This incited a German shift toward the south. In November, after a pause in fighting caused by the rains, the Anglo-French force resumed their advance on Jaunde which was captured on January 1, 1916. By mid-February, despite the efforts of a French column from Gabon to block the border, 1,000 Germans, 6,000 African soldiers and 7,000 family members and followers had crossed into Spanish territory. The last German force in Cameroon, the garrison of Mora in the north, surrendered on February 18. The German forces in Equatorial Guinea moved to Fernando Po to vainly await a return to Cameroon.

#### 4.5. Nigeria's Resource and the War

Although wars are meant to be fought in the battle fields with guns and other weapons of destruction, but the European powers noticed that to be able to sustain the war for long, there was the need to have a sure source of food and other economic supplies. In this way, Africa was considered a fertile ground and Nigeria became a major target. As a way of achieving the above, the European powers through their Chartered Company and agents (In most parts of Africa, with the establishment of alien rule), cajole the chiefs into this treaty either through tricks or threat. The first stage was to claim the indigenous lands and resources of the people for the colonial government, after which the Kings and Chiefs were to act as agents of Colonial economic supplies. To achieve this, the colonial state vested control over non-crown land in the title holders, who constituted bulk of the paramount and warrant chiefs. On the one hand, this enabled the colonial state to have effective control over the use of land especially in the production of goods needed by the colonial state, while on the other, it bestowed on the chiefs the right to receive ground rent either farm produce in the form of lease, rent, and forest

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<sup>11</sup> Stapleton, *Africa: War and Conflict...* Ibid.

produce, collection of permit fees, residence permit fee and farming permit fee from aliens and strangers and share of forestry royalties. This will be appreciated more when seen in the light of the fact that a large chunk of the territory was seized by the colonial power shortly before the war.

In addition, the colonial state either established agricultural raw material crop plantations for them or encouraged them with free seedlings, seeds, extension services and marketing services, to establish plantations. It was not unusual for the colonial state to stop payment of royalties to Paramount and Warrant Chiefs who failed to maintain their plantations as well as failing to tap or weed their rubber plantations<sup>12</sup>. Although the Slave Trade and ownership of slave had been abolished but in the Southern Protectorate, the corvee labour laws placed the slaves, bonded artisans and peasants at the disposal of the chiefs, and these became instruments for production during the period of the First World War and beyond. For instance each paramount chief was entitled to at least a hundred standing labourers monthly from the villages under his administrative control,<sup>13</sup> in addition to the fact that he can still call on the labour to any quantity from these villages. Colonial companies, colonial state, missionary agencies /employees and independent traders were also encouraged by the colonial state to engage in plantation agriculture with the same incentives (though without the rents, royalties and free labour) like the title holders. They were also to depend on the Corvee Labour Laws and title holders for the recruitment of cheap contract labour for their plantations.

This Corvee landlord economy while it lasted enabled the colonial state to undermine the pre-colonial independent cottage based system of simple commodity production at the expense of the colonial agricultural raw material commodity production which was being expanded through colonial state policies. This was achieved through the diversion of the labour supply of the simple commodity economy to the colonial agricultural raw material commodity production economy. This was the case as observed in 1914, when chiefs (who were agents of the colonialists) make labour contracts (to plantations and timber concessionaires) and take the villagers away for weeks to work in government owned plantations<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> N.A.I., I.D. 744 Press Notice "Issued by Colby G.F.F. Secretary Nigeria Supply Board. p. 56. See also Adeniyi A.D. (Rubber Inspector) to D.O. Ishan Division 18 Aug; 1942 p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> N.A.I. EP 240/1914, D.O. (B.D.) to Commissioner (B.P.) 30/3/1914.

<sup>14</sup> N.A.I. 564/1914, Conservator of forest, Benin Province, 3/4/1914.

In some instance, this labour policy which left many villages empty of the male labour force, rarely took into consideration the artisans and peasants' personal production needs in practice, especially as the labour force of the communities were often taken away from their personal production units for labour elsewhere, yet they were expected to also pay tributes in food stuff and livestock. Moreover, the artisans and peasants in most cases went unpaid because the Paramount and Warrant chiefs have either confiscated the money meant for their food allowances and wages<sup>15</sup> or in many cases have never turned up for their pay as they are afraid of being forced into service to work in other districts<sup>16</sup>. For instance some two hundred peasants were forced to march a distance of thirty two miles in some parts of Nigeria, without food in one day and this resulted in deaths and desertion.<sup>17</sup>

In other parts of the continent, there was emphasis on massive production for export at the expense of food production. In term of food /cash crop production, evidence from other parts of the continent indicates that there was a shift from production for internal consumption to the production of Primary Products for export. This is illustrated in the tables below.

s/no	Products	1910	1917	1917 as % of 1910
1	Groundnut	39,000 tons	74,000 tons	190.0%
2	Rubber	43,000 lbs	1,753 lbs	3.8
3	Wax	45,000 lbs	3,962 lbs	8.7
4	Palm Kernel	255 tons	532 lbs	200.0

Table II : Production of Primary Products in the Gambia<sup>18</sup>

While the table above describe the situation of groundnut, rubber, wax and palm kernel production in the Gambia, the tables below (Table III and Table IV) , shows the production and exports of Palm Kernel in Belgian Congo specifically in 1910, 1915 and 1920.

<sup>15</sup> N.A.I. BP 240/1914 A.D.O. (Agbor district) to Commissioner (B.P.) 31/3/1914.

<sup>16</sup> N.A.I. BD 13/2, Quarterly Report of Benin City District for January — March 1906.

<sup>17</sup> N.A.I. BP854/1914 Commissioner (B.P.) to .Ag. Lieutenant Governor, Southern Provinces 13/11/1914.

<sup>18</sup> Nzala, A.T et al, Forced Labour in Colonial Africa, London: Zed Press. 1977:46.

Year	Tons	Value (Fr. 1,000)
1910	5,436	1,958
1915	7,778	3,683
1920	39,457	58,990

Table III: Export of Palm Kernel Belgian Congo 1910-1920<sup>19</sup>

Year	Tons	Value (Fr.1,000)
1910	2,005	1,341
1915	2,428	1,556
1920	7,624	18,511

Table IV: Export of Palm oil, Belgian Congo 1910-1920<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, Table V, is an account of Cocoa Production in the Gold Coast as well as the volume of Export for a period of seven years.

s/no	Year	Export of Cocoa
1	1891	80 tons
2	1900	536 tons
3	1905	5,093 tins
4	1910	22,631 tons
5	1915	77,278 tons
6	1921	133,195 tons
7	1926	231,000 tons

Table V: Cocoa Production in the Gold Coast<sup>21</sup>

Over a period of nine years, from 1910 to 1919 export of copra rose by only 27% from 775 to 984 tons, export of palm oil over the same period fell by 54% from 2,044,868 gallons to 938,593 gallons, exports of palm kernels fell by 31% from 14,182 to 9,892 tons, and that of rubber fell by 60%<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Nzala...Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Freund B, *The Making of Contemporary Africa: The Development of African Society since 1800*. London: Macmillan, 1984. 132ff.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

The effect of the above was that while it encouraged the production of food and other necessary materials needed to implement the war, the people began to starve to death. Apart from the production for the war the people had to contend with the harsh environment/climatic condition of the period. This was contained in the testimony of Mr. Hasting, the Resident of Kano, in the northern part of Nigeria who gave an account of the food/nutrition situation of the locals in 1914 thus

This year the effect of food shortage showed itself in all its ghastliness. The grunty ghost of famine stalked abroad through Kano and every other part...Mother could not feed their babies at their breasts and the cows milk lacked for the pasture had dried up and the cattle were just skin and bones. The great city of Kano drew the starving thousands from the country in the faint hope of scouring in the streets and markets to pick up what they might or beg the charity of the towns folks. Not only the Nigerians but the thousands from French country drifted down across our borders, passing through villages enroute all bare of food to offer them. They died like flies on every roads<sup>23</sup>.

In the case of the Katsina area, it was observed that during the same period several persons fell exhausted on the road unable to pick themselves up; mature men horribly emaciated, unable to walk without the aid of walking sticks. The report also shows that in the field, children were seen eating herbs and the soil, to stay alive<sup>24</sup>. All these were due to both diversion of labour for production for export and recruitment for war. Thus the situation of lack of food was such that the locals had to generate name to describe the severity. In the area around the Chad area, the situation was nicknamed Kangale Kori (short stalks) or Kuna Kura (big famine), it was called Gyallare in Kano, Malali in Katsina and Suda-mu-gaisa in Sokoto. The situation created so much havoc that the colonial resident reported that people died while trying to unearth roots, while looking for the tubers of water lilies<sup>25</sup>.

Generally, the famine took its toll not only among the farmers, but the nomads as well. For instance, the Wodaabe Fulani of western Borno whose

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<sup>23</sup> Watt, Michael; *Silent violence: Food, Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria*. Berkley 1983; Shenton R.W, *The Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria*. Ph.d Toronto 1983; Adamu A, *The Food Economy in colonial Nigeria : A study of food production and distribution in Zaira Metropolis c. 1902 – 1960* Ph.d, Zaria; Lennihan, L.D, "Critical Historical conjectures in the emergence of Wage Labour in Northern Nigeria" in *Human Ecology* vol 12, no 4, 1984.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

population in 1913 was 10,000, by 1914 had been reduced to 5,500 and their herd of 88,000 head of cattle had been decimated to 26,000 as a consequence of the famine on the whole the Colonial authorities estimated that the famine in 1914 took the lives of 14,205 people in Kano and Kazaure; 6000 in Katsina; 10930 in Katagum; 6,747 in Daura; and 7,769 in Hadejia<sup>26</sup>.

#### 4.6. Monetization, Taxation and Labour

It has also been argued that the introduction of taxation into the local economy was a way of make sure the colonized contributed monetarily in executing the war. It was therefore not surprising that by 1916, the colonial state had introduced lump-sum tax in cash on village basis in some parts of Africa. Available statistics from the Western part, shows that assessment on individual basis was fixed at two shillings per adult male and female and one shilling per male youth of sixteen years and above. Due to protest and resistance, female payment was abolished in 1927, and that of adult males was increased to seven shillings. This tax which was discriminatory in assessment and heavier than precolonial tax imposed further cash needs on the colonized population.

This pressure compelled the colonized population into seeking ways of earning British colonial cash currency (the legal tender) which could only be obtained, through producing or working for the colonial state and colonial companies. This resulted in the massive development and expansion of colonial agricultural raw, material commodity production and trade. This development did not put an end to colonial state's intervention in the economy, because of the inherent contradictions engendered by the colonial capitalist economy. It was the need to resolve these contradictions in favour of the British faction of metropolitan capitalists and to an increasingly lesser extent the colonial and local Africa middlemen, that made the colonial state to continue to maintain its interventionist role in the economy.

Through the taxation policy, the colonizing powers made it clear that colonial taxation was a mark of individual responsibility to the state for the security of life and property provided. In fact one of the main essences of imposition of colonial taxation was to force peasants to produce cash crops to meet their tax obligation<sup>27</sup>. In view of the role the colonial state expected taxation to play, i.e.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Henry Bernstein, "Notes on Capital and Peasants" *Review of African Political Economy*. London 1974, P.63.

stimulate raw material production. In this way, the colonial administration insisted that its share of tax should only be paid in cash and therefore instructed the Native Administration on payment in British currency alone. This was part of the process of “fostering” the habit of cash transactions among the peasantry. The impression was that it was one of the basic pre-requisite for the establishment of an efficient commercial transaction which would enable sales to merchants for exports. The colonial authorities insisted further that if at all goods could be accepted in Lieu of cash, they must be of the type most “easily convertible into cash such as cotton, livestock, produce which can be sold for export or possibly food which can be issued to soldiers or police<sup>28</sup>. Labour was also accepted in a number of cases in Lieu of cash<sup>29</sup>. But every effort was made to induce payment in cash and the Native Authority accordingly “advised” the peasantry to insist in their turn on cash payment from traders coming to buy produce, and through a series of campaign and demonstrations informed the peasant producers of prospective buyers guaranteed to pay in cash<sup>30</sup>. To encourage the use of cash in even petty transactions, the colonial government went the length of introducing one penny and one-tenth penny coins, where previously the lowest amount had been the three penny piece.

One aspect of the introduction of the sterling, which really tied the economy to that of Britain, was that the cash in question being inevitably British currency, created an almost situation of monopoly in trade for the British companies. This was because, the hitherto independent local merchants became intermediaries between the producers of raw materials who are now in dire need of British currency for transaction (especially to pay taxes) and the British companies who could purchase the produce in this currency. In the West Africa area among the Benin and their neighbours, the colonial authorities went on to insist that payment of taxes and other levies be done using the British currency only. The following were the taxes imposed by the British which they claimed were already in existence before their advent: tax on yam- the number of yam farms.

Each town was counted out of which a representative number like ten or twenty were selected for actual measurement and counting of heaps. A rough allowance of two yam tubers per heap was made in order to determine the number of yams in each farm. The rough price of twenty yams for sterling was used

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<sup>28</sup> Lugard, F; Political Memoranda, 1913 – 1918 London 1918: 206.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Igbafe, P.A...opcit 258

to determine the values of yams in each farm. This amount was multiplied by the total number of yam farms in a District as estimated. The tax on maize thus was calculated based on the number of maize bundles in each maize farmland measured to get a rough yield per acre. The value was estimated by calculating with local price of maize. In the case of livestock, it was based on the assumption by the British authority that the average goat produced twice a year, and assuming a uniform productive rate, and making no allowance for barren stock, it was estimated that a kid of six months is sold for 2s 6d and at 12 months, for 7s 6d.<sup>31</sup> The yearly profit per goat was thus worked out at 10s. For sheep it was estimated that the average productivity was three in two years estimated at 5s each and 15s in two years or 7s 6d per-annum. Only the female were counted and the total value of sheep in the village, and hence in the division could roughly be worked out. Cows were assumed to produce once a year and the value of a three year old cow was taken as £5 which worked out at 30s per annum. This was used to determine the rough total value of all the cows in a village and division. The average hen was taken as producing six chickens per annum which at 6d each gave 3s per annum. It was thus possible to calculate the approximate value of all the livestock in a village and in the division.<sup>32</sup>

Minor industries like pot making, mat making, cloth weaving were assessed by agents of the Colonial Authority by interviewing a few representatives from each to get a rough estimate of the weekly earnings and determine if the occupation was seasonal or carried on the whole year round. In this way, the income from such an occupation per individual in the village under the division was calculated<sup>33</sup>. Also palm trees in the forest were assessed at 1s per palm tree, the possibility of tapping each palm tree twice a year for palm oil and kernels was taken into account. By the above method the divisional officer made an approximate estimate of the total wealth of each village in the division. And the total wealth of the division was determined.

Apart from the above taxes were levied directly on incomes. For instance on income not less than £50, but less than £100, a tax was levied. On income not less than £200, it was £1. On income not less than V200 but less than £300, £2 was levied<sup>34</sup>. The table below represents the exploitative Occupational taxes levied on males over the age of 16 years in the Benin area engaged in trades and business.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Igbafe...Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> See Appendix V; N.A.I., CSO, 26: 18417.

<sup>34</sup> N.A.I, BP 143/1920; Assessment Report by C.M. Dunn, See also Igbafe, P.A, 408.

s/no	Occupation/Profession	Taxes	Purpose
1	Artisans	10s	Colonial Tax
2	Bicycle	10s	Colonial Tax
3	Butchers	15s	Colonial Tax
4	Carpenters	10s	Colonial Tax
5	Dealers in Wine and beer	£1	Colonial Tax
6	Goldsmith	15s	Colonial Tax
7	Letter Writing	£1	Colonial Tax
8	Lorry and car drivers	10s	Colonial Tax
9	Shoe makers	10s	Colonial Tax
10	Mechanics	10s	Colonial Tax
11	Shopkeepers	10s	Colonial Tax
12	Tailors	10s	Colonial Tax

Table VI: Exploitative Occupational taxes levied on males over the age of 16<sup>36</sup>

Although, the collection of these taxes remained in the hands of the traditional chiefs, they were however supervised by the European officers. Tax collection usually commenced from July to October at a period when the major cash crops were not ripe for harvest. As such the peasants had to sell their crops to pay the tax. The argument for early commencement of tax was for the traditional rulers to be able to collect all taxes and submit to the treasury. The method of tax collection varied depending on the tax collector and tax payers. The dominant pattern was that after assessment village heads assembled their subjects' i.e. taxable members of their communities to inform them on what each individual was to pay.<sup>37</sup> Those who had the means of paying, paid the whole tax at once (only a few did), while majority paid by instalment until they complete the payment. In the case of those who were not able to pay their tax, the tax collectors or some other money lender may loan them the required amount with interest to be paid in cash crop at great profit to the money lender.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> N.A.I; CSO, 26 : 18417; See also Appendix V.

<sup>36</sup> Igbafe, P.A....Opcit 274 – 275.

<sup>37</sup> Igbafe, P.A....Opcit 274 – 275.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

In some instances, those who were not able to pay were threatened and intimidated or even imprisoned until a wife or relations paid on their behalf. In some other cases, persons were forced to pay the tax of a neighbour as a loan to the neighbour<sup>39</sup>. Sometimes the sheep, goats or chicken of the tax defaulters or that of his wife were seized in lieu of the tax he was unable to pay. Generally colonial tax collection was brutal and unsympathetic, tax defaulters were captured, imprisoned and subjected to all sorts of indignities, which made many families to live constant fear, and in some instances moved to other areas.

#### *4.7. Military and Related Resources Contribution to the First World War*

It is important to note that Nigeria did not participate in the war only from the angle of food production but were directly or indirectly involved in military engagements. For instance it is on record that during the War over 100,000 Nigerians were recruited into the West African Frontier Force for military service against the Italian, German and Japanese armies in East Africa, North Africa and in the jungles of Burma<sup>40</sup>. Thus within six years about 200,000 Nigerians largely from among the peasantry were brought together in a highly concentrated and direct fashion, face-to-face with the white man<sup>41</sup>. It is important to note that this was not limited to only Nigeria within the African continent as neighbouring countries were also recruited. For instance, the Congolese army was 14,319 black soldiers under the command of 313 officers and their drilling and training made them best of the colonial armies. Although volunteers are taken into the army, they account for a negligible part of it, due to exceedingly hard conditions of service. Most soldiers are taken into the army by force, there being no formal recruiting system<sup>42</sup>. It is documented that there were about 800 (South) Africa workers bound for the battle fields of France as shown in the Mendi (a British Steamer) in the English Channel on 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1917<sup>43</sup>. It is also on record that some 40,000 natives served in South West and East Africa. They were unarmed and very often found themselves under the fire of the enemy. Many lost their lives in Germany East Africa in 1917, when the whole force had to make its way through many miles of

<sup>39</sup> E.A, M.O, 1/1918, Igbanke District; Disturbance Report of Watts Report of Feb. 6, 1918.

<sup>40</sup> Usman, Y.B, Nigeria: Independence on a Gold Platter, The Analyst, Vol III, No.3, May-June, 1988.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Nzala, A.T et al, Forced Labour in Colonial Africa, London: Zed Press. 1977.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

mud and water to Kilwa and the sea coast. They were often told that they were engage in a war for democracy and to end all wars. During the war period, the Bumba sub district (Belgian Congo), constituting of 100 households, had to supply 5 sheep or pigs, 50 chickens, 60 kg of rubber, 125 buckets of manioc, 15 kg of maize and 15 kg of sweet potatoes every month. In addition, one man in ten had to perform various types of work on the orders of the authorities, and each year one man left the village to join the colonial army. Moreover, the entire tribe had to labour on public works every four days<sup>44</sup>.

## 5. Conclusion

From the discourse, it is clear that while Africa with specific reference to the Nigerian area was on the part of development, she was dragged into world international politics to fight for a course which was purely European in nature. Apart from the fact that her human persons were forcefully conscripted into the Allied Force, her natural resources as well as hard earned money was used to sponsor and/or execute the war. In this way, resources which would have been used for internal development was spent on supporting European power which at that time was subjecting her to colonialism, which scholars have described as a one armed banditry. This is because at the end of the day, Africans (with specific reference to Nigeria) never really benefited from such relationship.

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<sup>44</sup> Buell R.L , *The Native Problem in Africa*, Vol 2, New York, 1928.

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