

The Socio-Economic Effects of Colonial Tin Mining on the Jos-Plateau: 1904 – 1960

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Abstract

The Study examines the Socio-Economic Impact of Colonial Tin Mining on the Jos – Plateau. Tin Mining is said to be one of the oldest industry known to mankind. It has been in existence long before the coming into contact with the European. Evidence from the Nok culture suggests that tin had been worked in the Jos area several centuries before the 19th Century. The tin ore was prospected mainly in local streams as in tins pans. Tin was put to different uses by smiths who worked on the metal as on brass and bronze. It was used for the production of luxury items of ornamentation for men and women. However, with the coming of the British rule, we saw the appropriation of the people's land either by direct force or by, craftily influencing their leaders. Overall, mining industry became one good example in which Nigerian resources was exploited.

Keywords: Socio-Economic, Colonial, Tin, Mining, Jos-Plateau

1. Introduction

The thesis examines the activities of colonial tin mining and its socio-economic effects on the Jos-Plateau. The imposition of the British colonial rule on the Jos-Plateau area as from 1902 onwards had serious socio-economic implications for the people of the area. Prior to the coming of colonial rule, there were few foreigners who had established contacts with the people of Jos-Plateau. These were mainly the neighboring ethnic groups such as the Hausa Fulani, Jukun,¹ among others. However, the imposition of colonial rule led to massive influx of immigrants both within and outside Nigeria to the area. These include Europeans, Lebanese, Indians, Chadians, Cameroonians and some Nigerians, such as the Hausa Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, Urhobo ² *et cetera*. According to C.G. Ames, by 1933, the population of Plateau Province was 533, 100 Africans and 308 Europeans.³ This rapid increase in population led to the growth of Jos, which later became both the administrative and commercial capital of Plateau Province.

One of the major factors that attracted immigrants to the Jos-Plateau was tin mining. Colonial tin mining started in 1903 following the forceful suppression of the local miners in places like Ririwan Delma, Tilda Fulani, Narabi and Garbi, all in Bauchi emirate. However, the instrument which facilitates the process of colonial tin mining was the Land Proclamation Acts of 1904 and 1910 and Mineral Acts of 1903 passed by Lord Lugard.⁴ This led to the alienation of huge land from the people for tin mining, which later resulted into land devastation and land crisis in the area.⁵ As a result of these Land Proclamation Acts of 1903, many British prospectors and mining companies rushed for land in the area. The number of these companies increased from 50 in 1911 to 83 in 1982.⁶ The rise in the number of mining firms was followed by rapid increase in the production of tin ore. To discuss these issues, the paper is structured into the following subsections.

- i. Historical background of Jos
- ii. The study Area
- iii. History of Tin – Mining activities on the Jos-Plateau 1904 - 1960.
- iv. Socio-Economic Effects of tin mining on Jos-Plateau.
- v. Conclusion.

2. Historical background of Jos:

The town was not founded until the twentieth century. Different versions of interpretation have been put forward as regard the origin of Jos. But the Afuzare or Jarawa settlement at Guash seems to be the most acceptable version. Between 1800 and 1900 there was an important settlement in the vicinity of the present site of Jos. This settlement was established by a small hill tribe section of the Afuzare Jarawa at the present Ahmadu Bello Way. Colonel Laws who led the European occupation of the plateau in 1903 wrote of what he saw as follows:

...a small hill village called Guash occupied the present location of Jos. Hausa Traders who arrived supposedly mispronounced Guash for Jos, and the name stuck.⁷

According to Gunn, the original native village of Guash was founded by the Afuzare people of the Jarawa tribe who are sometimes called the Afuzare or Jarawa Jos.⁸ This name is still in use today to relate to the later generations of settlers of these Jarawa groups now living across the Delimi River on the eastern part of Jos Town. Mallam Fom Gwong and Ajiji Bok, both elders of the Jarawa tribes interviewed in 1972, confirmed the observation of Col. Laws, and added that the Jarawa people were a peaceful tribe which had connections with

their neighbours, the Birom, Anaguta, the Buji and Rukuba.⁹ The villagers, according to these elders, were farmers and most of them had their farms around their village. Each farmer had his plots surrounded by euphorbia hedges. The most important crops are *Acha* and *Millet*.

The people were also good blacksmiths. Field evidence on the Jenta Hills shows that most of the blacksmiths preferred to use special locations among the hills, especially at the banks of small rivers and in areas where iron stone was abundant. The evidence shows heaps of iron slags and ash-heaps, indicating areas where the blacksmiths' shops were located. Also Mr. Stobart made the following observations as far back as 1914 thus:

*...the men are remarkably good iron workers and smelters and good agriculturists.*¹⁰

There was little trade between Guash Village and the surrounding regions. The natives however have considerable trade with Naraguta where they exchanged their iron implements with Hausa cloth and salt.¹¹ The volume of this trade cannot be estimated, but it was on a very limited scale indeed according to the Hausa elders of Naraguta. Nevertheless, it is now established that there was a rural settlement in the area now occupied by Jos. This community was well established with a system of subsistence agriculture and iron working.

3. The Study Area

Jos Town is the Capital of Plateau State and of the Jos Division of the Local Administration. Jos is located almost in the geographical centre of Nigeria, about 1,000km North-East of Lagos, 400km South of Kano, 900km North of Port Harcourt, 600km South-West of Maiduguri, and 1,000km South-East of Sokoto.¹² It is located at the Northern part of the Plateau which bears its name at an elevation of about 1,200m above sea level.

As a town, it is the most asymmetrically placed State Capital in the whole of Nigeria, located at the extreme Northern end of the State.¹³ Except on its Northern part, the town is almost surrounded by hills. To the east are the Dogon Dutse and share Hills which rise to over 1,300m and 1,400m respectively. On the Western side are the Jenta Hills which also rise to over 1,280m above sea level. To the South are many small and large inselbergs, rocks and crops.¹⁴ In the North, the topography is worsened by many unclaimed old mining paddocks although a few of these have been reclaimed.

Jos lies within the basin of the Delimi River, a tributary of the Shari River system which flows to the North-East and drains into lake-chad. The Delimi and its tributaries of which the most important are the Niger, Curly and Canteen Creeks have been straddled by the built up area of Jos. Because of the seasonality of flow caused by the rainfall regime, these streams contain water during the rainy season (April to October) but dry up in the middle of the dry season (November to March). However, today most of their channels have been widened by mining and other activities such as quarrying of sand for building purposes leaving extensive pools of water in the dry season. On account of its altitude, Jos town experiences cooler temperatures and in some cases higher rainfall than the surrounding towns.

4. History of Tin-Mining activities on the Jos-Plateau 1904 – 1960.

One of the ways by which man impacts on his environment is through mining activities. Tin mining industry is one of the oldest industries in the world and its importance cannot be over emphasized. Mining on the whole is the extraction of valuable mineral resources or other geological minerals from the earth, usually from an ore body, vein or seam. It can also be said to be an act or process of extracting minerals of economic importance from their natural environment and transporting them to points of processing and use.

Mining in Nigeria started as far back as in the eighteenth century. Over 500 occurrences and deposits of different minerals are known far to exist within the country with the exploration of some being on a small scale.¹⁵ One of the major cases of mineral exploration and exploitation that boomed within the nation has been that of Tin ore in Jos-Plateau. Tin is said to be one of the oldest mineral resources known to man as its valuable importance was recognized or noticed as far as some 300 years ago when its hardening effects on copper was discovered.¹⁶ Since then, tin ore have been mined in several parts of Nigeria including Zaria, Kano, Bauchi, Ilesha and Plateau Province, with over 80% of the production coming from the Jos Plateau.¹⁷

The tin mining industry in Jos Plateau started in 1904 during the colonial era. After the survey of the area in 1902, the expatriate mining of tin ore began in 1904 despite the resistance offered by the people. From then onwards, the British extracted large quantities of tin ore from the Jos Plateau such that by 1938 Nigeria's export of tin ore to Britain stood at 10,486 tons which was valued at £1,435,157. It rose to 11,164 tons in 1951-52 and 11,942 tons in 1952-53.¹⁸

Many people got attracted to Jos Plateau as a result of tin mining, while a few to Naraguta and Delimi where mining activities also took place. During this period, only very few people worked in government establishments as labourers and messengers. Those who worked in the mining camps were immigrant Hausa people or Kanuri from Kano, Zaria, Bauchi and as far as the Emirate of Bornu and Chad Region.¹⁹

Very few local people were attracted to the mining settlement at the initial stage. Economic importance and wealth were then recorded not by the amount of cowrie (money) a person had, but on how much crops,

animals, wives *et cetera*, a person had. For this reason the expansion of farmland was more attractive to the hill-farmers at this period than going to work in the mines and to live in mining camps.

Again it can be added that tradition permeated nearly all their lives. It was therefore difficult to bring about any change in their economic activities especially as their customs, religious beliefs and ceremonies were all closely bound up with the land and not mining on a large scale.²⁰ Monetary advantage was thus not necessarily the aim of the hill-tribes, hence the majority of the people of the Naraguta village and mining camp were Hausa. This is the reason why the term *Hausa Town* was applied to their residential quarters up to 1913. Besides the miners and other workers, the settlement attracted itinerant traders from Bauchi, Zaria and Kano.

However, by 1913 the miners came to discover that the richest deposits of tin ore lay not around Naraguta but to the South of it and most of the mining activity was taking place near the upper reaches of Delimi Rivers around Gangare, Ray field and Bukuru. This led to the establishment of Gangare as the largest mining camp along the Delimi River. This further attracted miners from their original settlement to Gangare which in fact is in the east of Jos town today.²¹

Some of the industries involved in mining at that time were British Tin Mining Corporation, Bisichi-Jenta, Gold and Base, Exland and Kaduna Prospectors. The Tin Mining Industry suffered severely during the economic depression of the 1930s and so did Jos and its population. It was recorded that 47 out of 122 mining concerns were closed down by 1933.²² According to Plotnicov, most of the residents of Jos at this period were southerners. He associated this with large number of southerners and non-Nigerians who were traders or skilled workers in the mines and the railways or commercial firms.²³ Their skills according to him were scarce at the time and their employers had to retain them so that the retrenchment which followed the depression of the 1930s, did not affect many of them. This may be true but it is difficult to agree with Plotnicov here because there is no evidence to prove that there were more Southerners than other Northern tribes in Jos at this period. However, a significant proportion of the town's commercial activities at this period was in the hands of Southern Nigerians and oriented towards the needs of the mining industry. By the late 1950s when Tin Mining activity in the Jos Plateau started experiencing a lull, the aforementioned industries metamorphosed into what is now known as consolidated Tin Mining of Nigeria Limited. But unfortunately after the departure of the former, the government failed to finance remediation efforts to the mining industry.

5. The socio-economic effects of Tin Mining activities on the Jos- Plateau.

One of the major consequences of colonial rule in the area was the influx of immigrants. Among them were the Europeans, Lebanese, Indians, Chadians and some Nigerians such as the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo among others.²⁴ According to C.G. Ames, by 1933, the population of Plateau Province was 533, 100 Africans and 308 Europeans.²⁵ This rapid increase in population led to the growth of Jos, which became both the administrative and commercial Capital of Plateau Province.

The Land Proclamation Acts of 1904 and 1910 and the Mineral Acts of 1903 passed by Lord Lugard enable the government to take over most lands which were leased for mining. This led to alienation of huge land from the people for tin mining which later created land crisis in the area.²⁶ Another effect of the tin mining activities on the Jos-Plateau is that the number of mining companies increased from 50 in 1911 to 83 in 1928 after which they began to amalgamate.²⁷ The rise in the number of mining firms was followed by rapid increases in the production of tin ore. For example by 1909 some 1200 tons of black tin had been exported out. By 1929 it had reached its peak with 15, 129 tons produced at 2 million dollars.

Tin production attracted huge influx to the Jos Plateau. Most of them came either as voluntary or forced labourers. There were two categories of labourers: semi-skilled which were to engage in digging, shovel, and head pan. The first group of labourers was the Birom, Afirere, Anaguta, Rukuba and others who had lost their farmlands to the miners. Others were forced by the need to work and earn money to pay taxes. This came from other divisions such as Pankshin, the lowlands, Akwanga and Jema'a. From these areas came the Ngas, Mwaghavul, Goemail, Taroh, Eggoa, Mada etc. The second category of immigrants who provided skilled labour were the Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and other parts of Nigeria. Others came from outside Nigeria such as the colonies of Cameroon Chad, and Sierra Leone, among others.

Tin Mining activities had adverse effects on the plateau people. These resulted in the alienation and destruction of farmlands, diversion of labour from food production, environmental degradation, exploitation of surplus from the peasants and shortage of food. The plateau people did not benefit from tin mining as they occupied low position in the social hierarchy after the Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and other foreigners.²⁸ Another effect of the tin mining activities on the Jos Plateau was the infrastructural development which was linked to the advent of tin mining. This led to the construction of railway lines, Nesco Hydroelectric Power Company and roads. Between 1901 – 1910, the output of tin ore had risen from 50 to nearly 600 tons.

For this important export to achieve its peak, a substantial reduction in transport costs was necessary to the valuable deposits which were now located around Ray field and Bukuru. A rough motor road was built in 1910 from Rahama at the foot of the Plateau to link the mineral fields with the Baro – Kano railway at

Rigachikun, a few kilometers North of Kaduna.²⁹

Tin ore was needed by the British for the production of tanks, airplanes, engines, radio set, armoured cars and other instruments of war. The demand became acute following the collapse of Malaysia to the Axis powers.³⁰ In order to achieve this objective, Britain imposed forced labour on the Plateau and other Northern Provinces of Nigeria. The Native Authorities were allocated quotas and were encouraged to apply a little *pressure* in the conscription process.

Mining activities have not only impacted on the environment of the Jos Plateau by way of depriving the farmers their means of livelihood but has contributed to the growth in population. This increase in population has brought with it the resultant social vices, such as crime rate, prostitution, traffic congestion, stress on facilities and even loss of cultural heritage.

6. Conclusion

This study has attempted to carry an assessment of the socio-economic effects of tin mining activities on the Jos-Plateau from 1904. The paper has shown that mining activities all over the world and Jos Plateau inclusive have contributed to the socio-economic and infrastructural development of the area, with major negative impacts on physical, biological and hydrological environment.

The positive effects are seen in the form of increased in income, job opportunities, migration and population growth as well as the provision and maintenance of social amenities. Alongside the positive contributions are the negative impacts which resulted into land degradation, loss of cultural heritage and farmlands as well as health haggard. The impact of tin mining has greatly affected the natural micro and macro organisms and plants have been stripped off their natural habitat due to tin mining activities. The absence of natural vegetation has greatly increased the menace of gully erosion in mining areas. The importance of the environment to sustainable development in any society is not in doubt. Hence there must be a healthy rich and adequately protected environment in order to have a healthy, prosperous society. The environment therefore provides the foundation for all development efforts in any given society.

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