

A HISTORY OF TIN MINING AND COERCED PROLETARIANIZATION IN BEROM LAND, NORTHERN NIGERIA, 1902-1960

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Abstract

Tin was an indispensable commodity in manufacturing during the industrial revolution in Europe. Tin was a major consideration for the British conquest of Berom Land which is located in Northern Nigeria. The British colonial government opened up the area for intensive and expansive tin mining activities. The people were indifferent and refused to supply the much-needed labour-force on the tin fields. The colonial government implemented some policies which forced the people to become proletariats by the supply of their labour-force to the owners of the tin fields. The primary thrust of this article is to investigate and reveal the various strategies that the British colonial government adopted to coerce the Berom people to become proletariats, who would exchange their labour for wages. It was discovered that the strategies employed by the British colonial government succeeded in compelling the people to work on the tin fields. This pioneering study in-term of an in-depth research and analysis on how the Berom people became unskilled labour-force adopted a qualitative approach to the collection and interpretation of data.

Keywords: Coerced labour, proletarianization, Berom people, tin fields, Berom land

Introduction

Cassiterite, popularly referred to as 'tin' was an important resource in the early industrial revolution of Europe in general and Britain in particular. It played a pivotal role in the manufacturing of packaging materials for consumable goods and non-consumable goods. Britain had natural deposits of tin at Cornwall. But the deposit was not in large quantity as to sustain the supply of tin for local industries and also to meet the very high demand for tin in the international market especially from the United States of America, which was the largest importer of tin in the world.

Britain depended on its colonies for the supply of tin to enable it to meet the high demand for tin at the international market. Berom Land is situated in the northern region of Nigeria and is blessed with an extensive array of natural resources including tin, columbite and wolfram among others. In fact, it is the only tin field in the world where tin and columbite were simultaneously mined together (Freund, 1981a:206). Therefore, tin ore was the major reason why Britain used its military force to conquer and subjugate the Berom people and their land. This gave them unfettered access to the huge deposit of tin and other mineral resources. It was also the beginning of British colonial rule in Berom Land in Northern Nigeria. The colonial rule came along with both political and economic domination. Stephanie Decker aptly stated that apartheid and colonial rule are twin-evils of both economic and political

hegemony. They both flourished on racial superiority and power which tilted in-favour of white minorities against a larger population of black people (Decker, 2010:792).

Tin mining in Berom land in the early 19th century was labour intensive and required a large number of people to work on the tin fields. This was due to the lack of mechanisation of the mining activities. The colonial government and the mining companies relied on the Berom people for the supply of the labour-force. But the Berom people were apathetic and indifferent. They refused to supply the much-needed labour-force to the tin fields.

The British colonial government initiated and implemented various strategies that would coerce the Berom people to supply their labour-force that was in high demand at the tin fields. It is pertinent to state here that these strategies were a success. The British colonial government succeeded in pulling the Berom people to work on the tin fields as unskilled proletariats, where they were paid a paltry amount of money in the form of wages.

Banaji (2018) referred to Karl Marx, the famous German philosopher, economist, sociologist and historian who identified transition in the modes of production to include primitive communal, slave owning, feudal, capitalist and socialist or communist in his explanation of the mode of production in a materialist conception of history. It can be argued that colonial tin mining activities moved the Berom people from the primitive communal mode straight to the capitalist mode of production. Karl Marx is also credited to have made popular the principles of proletarianization. However, the major essence of this article is to investigate and reveal the various strategies that were initiated and implemented by the colonial government, which succeeded in compelling the Berom people to supply their labour-force to the tin fields. It is imperative to state here that this article uses the literal meaning of the word proletarianization as made popular by Karl Marx.

There are two major sources of data that were carefully scrutinised, selected and consulted for the writing of this article. One of the sources was the National Archives Kaduna, Nigeria (NAK). This is because the records and documents on tin mining activities in Berom land have been kept and preserved in the archives. The second source of data was from reputedly published journal articles and books.

Conceptual Framework

This article hinges on the word proletarianization. The word was brought to the limelight by the great philosopher Karl Marx, whose works steered up many controversies. It is necessary to point out here that this article does not intend to delve into the 'pros and cons' or the arguments and counter-arguments about the works of Karl Marx. The article would adopt the literal meaning of the word proletarianization to investigate and reveal the historical experience of the Berom people under the British colonial government.

Proletarianization is the commencement and benchmark for the accumulation of wealth and production by the capitalists. It is the traditional way of divorcing people who produce goods from their legitimate source of production (Langton, 2000:32). This development produces a class of people who enrich themselves through the accumulation of profits from the resources which they possess. This class of people are called the bourgeoisie. While another class of people, who are the proletariats have no resources, work to produce the profits and are paid pittance in the form of wages. The only resource possessed by the proletariats is their labour-power, which must be sold as the only means of livelihood and survival (Langton, 2000:30-32).

Deborah Bryceson refers to proletarianization as the situation whereby producers of goods are entirely separated from all their property. This property if properly utilised, would provide the sustenance and solution for their social and material reproduction (Bryceson, 1980:4). This complete separation and dispossession of the means of production on the producers, forces them to exchange their labour-force for money or wages as the case may be. Thus, the energies or the labour of the people could be likened to a commodity. The owners of capital then control and manipulate the labour-power of the dispossessed people for the extraction and generation of surplus profits (Bryceson, 1980:3-5).

Furthermore, Hagan Koo defines proletarianization as an increase in the number of people who have been dispossessed and lack any form of control on the means of production. Therefore, the only means for survival is to sell their labour-force and collect wages in return (Koo, 1990:669).

In the same vein, Ricardo Salvatore defines proletarianization as the gradual process of separating people who independently produced their means of livelihood from the conditions and means of their existence. He stated that the word proletarianization is synonymously associated with words like deprivation, loss of autonomy and expropriation. These leads to the artisans, peasants and 'petit' bourgeoisie to become wage earners (Salvatore, 1994:197).

The essence of citing the definition of proletarianization by various authors is to set the basis and give an insight into the study of how the Berom people were coercively mobilised to become proletariats on the tin fields.

The use of the nomenclature 'Berom land' is simply as a roadmap to signify at a glance the fact that the area and its people are the focal point of this article. Numerous authors and researchers have written about tin mining activities in Nigeria and have referred to this area as 'Berom land.' For example, Monday Mangyvat (2013: 75, 96, 99, 101 &171) in his book 'A History of Class Formation in the Plateau Province of Nigeria, 1902-1960' referred to this area as 'Berom land'.

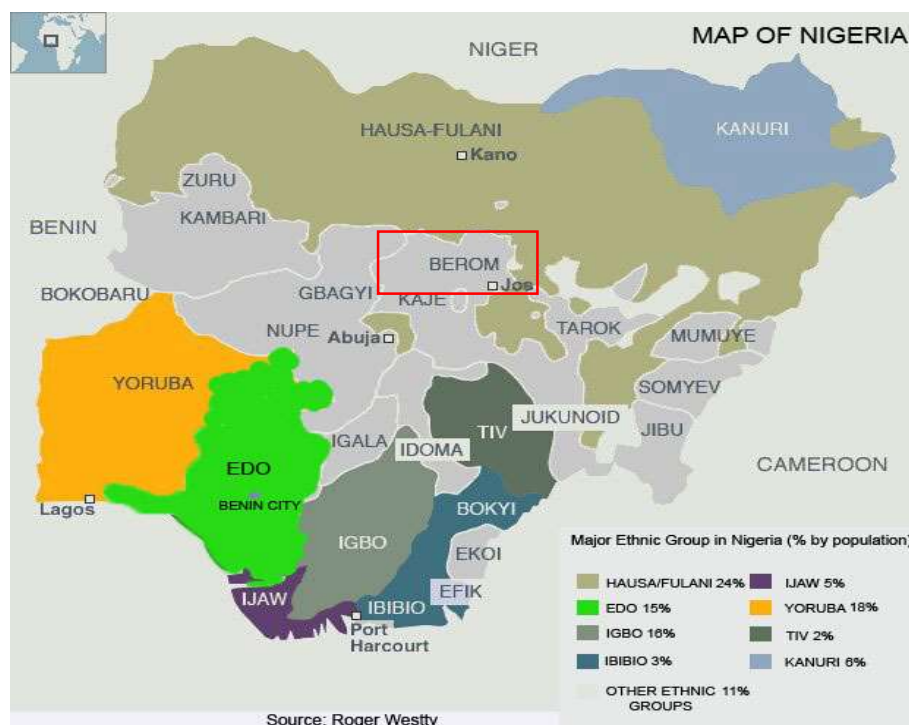


Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the location of Berom land.
 (Source: <https://www.google.com/map+of+nigeria+showing+beromland> Accessed on 3rd January, 2017)

Bill Freund (1981a: 159, 160 &165) in his book 'Capital and Labour in the Jos Tin Mines' referred to this area as 'Berom land' too. Charles K. Gonyok (1986) too in his PhD Thesis 'A History of Labour in the Tin Mining Industry on the Jos Plateau, 1903-1960' also referred to this area as 'Berom land'. Furthermore, Samuel D. Nyam (2000) and Simon D. Mwadkwon (2008) in their PhD theses also referred to this area as Berom Land. While Alahira Hanatu (2003) in her PhD Thesis 'The Role of Women in the Colonial Economy of Northern Nigeria: A Case Study of the Berom of the Jos Plateau, 1900-1960' described the case study of this article as 'Berom land'. Figure 1 is a map of Nigeria showing the position of Berom land, which is in the North Central Geo-Political Zone of the larger Northern region of Nigeria.

The History of British Conquest of the Berom People

It would be inconsequential for us to discuss the proletarianization of the Berom people, without a brief description of their pre-colonial history, conquest and subjugation by the British forces.

There is no particular meaning to the name 'Berom.' It is suggested to be the plural meaning of the name 'Worom', which is the singular name of the ancestral myth and founder of the Berom people (Gunn, 1953:75). The Berom people are situated in the area popularly called Jos. The pre-colonial name for Jos was 'Jot' meaning spring water in Berom language. The colonial officials and mostly Hausa speaking people mispronounced the name as Jos. It is the present state capital of Plateau State, Nigeria (Madugu, 1994:29).

Jos is located in the northern region of Nigeria. It is imperative to state here that these areas were administered under the Bauchi province of northern Nigeria during the advent of colonial rule in Northern Nigeria in the 1900s. These areas were carved out of the Bauchi province in 1926 with the formation of the Plateau province by the colonial administration in Nigeria (Middleturn, 1934:337). It has two seasons, the dry and wet seasons. Though located in the tropical zone, it has a near temperate climate. This attribute has made it a habitable and conducive environment for the Europeans and others (Plotnicov, 1967:30).

The major pre-colonial occupation of the Berom people was agriculture. The food they cultivated was mainly for subsistence. The land was therefore of immense importance to them. They were also involved in animal husbandry and reared animals including dwarf cattle, goats, horses and chicken. The people were also engaged in hunting festivals during the dry season after they had harvested their crops from the farm. The hunting festival was also used to differentiate the brave and the faint-hearted among the Berom male adults. They were also proficient in the act of iron and tin smelting before the advent of colonialism.

The family unit of the pre-colonial Berom people was based on genealogy. The parents, children, grandchildren, sisters, brothers, uncles, cousins and other relations made up the extended family unit. 'Dalo' is the name of the oldest male head of the extended family unit. He took control of the family land, and farming activities including the farm produce. He also took control of the religious, social and cultural activities at the family level (Alahira, 2003:93).

Berom land is blessed with an array of natural minerals including tin, columbite, zircon, quartz, glass sand, kaolin, Wolframite, mica and gemstones (Mineral Potential, 2002:4-7). Therefore, the major reason for the conquest and subjugation of the Berom people and their land was to make it accessible and safe for the exploration and exploitation of tin, columbite and the other mineral resources. The British forces used the superior fire-power of the Maxim gun to defeat and subdue the people who had inferior weapons of spears, bows and arrows (NAK: SNP 6,147/1907). The defeat of the people ushered in an era of expansive and intensive tin mining activities and it was during this period that the Berom people were coerced to become proletariats on the tin fields.

Early Tin Mining Activities in Northern Nigeria

Ririwain Kano had a strong pre-colonial tin mining and smelting activities. Ririwain Kano was a walled Muslim Hausa speaking town at the foot of hills where streams yielded tin ore (Freund, 1981a:12). The tin deposit at Ririwain Kano were exhausted by the nineteenth Century. The tin miners and smelters then migrated south east of Ririwain Kano to a place called Ungwar Kaya, situated within the Bauchi emirate. They settled down and renamed the place as Ririwain Dalma after Ririwain Kano their initial place of origin (Gonyok, 1986:60). Their migration was estimated to have taken place between the 1850s to the 1860s. The Ririwain Dalma became a fully established centre of tin mining and smelting that supplied the whole of Northern Nigeria, other parts of Nigeria and beyond the shores of Nigeria (Gonyok, 1986:60).

The tin miners and smelters continued to search for suitable places to expand and carry out their trade; they established mining centres at Tilden Fulani, Narabi and Gimpi among others (Gonyok, 1986:61). The tin miners and smelters at Ririwain Dalma were highly organised with clear cut division of labour which ensured efficiency and professionalism (Gonyok, 1986:62). However, with the advent of colonial rule, the colonial officials who could not favourably compete with the Hausa tin miners and smelters at Ririwain Dalma, took steps to eliminate the local competition. Colonel Henry Williams Laws who set up his smelter in 1906, liaised with Mr F. B. Gall, the Resident of the Bauchi province to ban the traditional smelters at Ririwain Dalma despite pleas and protests from the Sarkin (King) Ririwain Dalma (Mangyvat, 2013:109).

In another development, the conquest of the Berom people opened up the land for the commencement of colonial tin mining activities as earlier stated. The first multinational expatriate tin mining company to establish its presence and initiate tin mining activities on the Jos Plateau was the Royal Niger Company (RNC) (Freund, 1981b:76). The RNC enjoyed monopoly and accessed quite a large number of exclusive prospecting rights over the richest tin ground.

By the year 1910, some multinational mining companies entered the tin mining business. Some of these mining companies were Bisichi Tin Company (Nigeria) Limited, Ribon Valley (Nigeria) Tin fields Limited, Champion Tin Fields, Jos Tin Area (Nigeria) Limited, Excellent Lands and Kaduna Syndicate (Fell, 1939:248). In the same year, the presence of speculative and productive capital on the tin minefields encouraged the construction of a light railway

(Freund, 1981b:76). The railway became known as the Bauchi Light Railway because of its 30 inches gauge and also because the area was still known as the Bauchi Plateau province (Federal, 1965:11).

However, during the First World War there was a high demand and a great need for tin ore. Hence, the colonial authorities decided to smelt tin locally. The hasty construction of a modern furnace was impossible and so in 1918, the Chief Inspector of Mines organised the construction of a furnace based on traditional design, which could smelt 69 ingots of three tons of tin ore on an annual basis, the essence was to meet up with the approximate requirement of the colonial government (Grace, 1982:185). When the demand for tin fell at the end of the war, the furnace was closed down and no more tin was smelted legally in Nigeria until after independence in 1960 with the establishment of the Makeri smelting company (Grace, 1982:185).

Tin Mining Activities during the Second World War

There was the influx of numerous multinational tin mining companies in the mid-1920s to the 1930s. Some of these companies included Naraguta, Rayfield, Northern Nigeria (Bauchi), Jos Tin Areas, Ropp Tin, Kaduna Syndicate and Amalgamated Tin Mines of Nigeria (ATMN) (Freund, 1981a:38). The ATMN was the biggest and strongest among all the multinational tin mining companies that explored and exploited tin, columbite and sundry natural minerals. It was an off-shoot company of the Anglo-continental group of companies. The ATMN of Nigeria benefitted from the tin boom of the 1930s. The company eventually became the single largest company that mined tin in the world between 1930s to the 1950s when it successfully amalgamated some companies i.e. Keffi Consolidated companies, Kaleri Tin Mines Limited, Karre Tin Company Limited and East Ropp Tin Company (Freund, 1982:12). Some of the machines used in the extraction of tin included the dragline, dredge, bulldozers, hydraulic monitors and scrapers.

Table 1: Tin production from 1915-1960 in tonnes

Year	Tin (tons)	Year	Tin (tons)	Year	Tin (tons)
1915	6,910	1931	9,800	1947	12,597
1916	8,187	1932	6,000	1948	12,740
1917	8,314	1933	4,956	1949	12,171
1918	8,434	1934	6,897	1950	11,333
1919	8,169	1935	9,045	1951	11,596
1920	7,382	1936	13,432	1952	11,758
1921	7,239	1937	14,872	1953	10,910
1922	7,319	1938	12,382	1954	11,026
1923	8,372	1939	13,003	1955	11,681
1924	8,857	1940	16,568	1956	12,722
1925	8,937	1941	16,638	1957	12,242
1926	10,595	1942	17,107	1958	7,414
1927	11,509	1943	17,463	1959	8,310
1928	13,041	1944	17,258	1960	10,596
1929	15,335	1945	15,482	-	-
1930	11,902	1946	14,252	--	-

Source: Freund, Bill. 1981a. *Capital and Labour in Nigerian Tin Mines*. London: Longman. pp. 120-2, 207.

The great depression affected the output of tin. Table 1 shows a reduction of output from 15,335 tonnes in 1929 to 4,956 tonnes in 1933 when the depression was at its peak. The Second World War period led to an increase in the production of tin from 13,003 tonnes in 1939 to 17,258 tonnes in 1944. The highest annual tonnage of 17,463 was mined in 1943 at the peak of the war. This was achieved because the British colonial government shifted their attention to the Nigerian tin fields as a major source of tin supply after they lost the world richest tin field colony of Malaya to the rampaging Japanese forces (Nyam, 2000:79). The Nigerian tin ore became more important to the British war efforts where tin mining activities and production were completely stepped up to augment for the loss of

Malaya (Mangyvat, 2013:124). Tin was essential for the production of tanks and aeroplane engines, radio sets, anti-aircraft devices, armoured cars and as packaging materials for oversea food to troops (Ekoko, 1983:67).

The Japanese forces invaded Malaya on the 8th December, 1941, and by 15th February 1942 had conquered the entire Malay peninsula and secured the surrender of British forces in Singapore (Kratoska, 1997:241). Nicholas Tarling stated that the Japanese had showed long-term interest and ambition in South-east Asia (Tarling, 2017:2). The conquest of Malay Peninsula was completed within a period of seventy days (Kratoska, 1997).

The rise in tin mining activities during the Second World War led to a high demand for labour-force. The colonial government instituted forced labour or conscription of labour policy in February 1942 and ended in February 1944 (Ekoko, 1983:73). Table 2 shows the number of conscript labourers from the various province and their percentages. Kano had the lowest number of conscripts because the people were held back to work on the groundnut farms, a cash crop and packaging it into jute bags and arranging them to form pyramids.

Table 2: Forced labourers by province from 1942-1944

Province	Forced labourers 1942-1944	Percentage (%)
Bauchi	14, 669	15.8
Benue	11, 987	12.9
Bornu	10, 585	11.4
Kano	1, 952	2.1
Katsina	8, 903	9.6
Niger	7, 689	8.3
Plateau	4, 481	4.8
Sokoto	14, 808	16.1
Zaria	17, 629	19.0
Total	92, 703	

Source: Freund, Bill.1981a. *Capital and Labour in Nigerian Mines*. London: Longman. p.143

The mining camps were beehive of social and economic activities with the arrival of more conscripts and other mine workers. They were able-bodied young men who were not accompanied by their wives. Hence they relied on *Uwayen tuwo*, food sellers in the Hausa language, for the supply of their food needs (Gonyok, 1986:235-238). Some of the conscripts were engaged in vices like drunkenness (alcoholism). So there were the *Magajiyoyi*, a plural name in the Hausa language for the women who brewed and sold local beer. A fairly larger percentage of the *Magajiyoyi* were brought from the Bauchi province i.e. Ningi while others came from the Zaria province and other parts of Hausa land (Gonyok, 1986:239-240). Prostitution was also rampant on the mining camps. Some of the *Magajiyoyi* engaged the services of single ladies to assist them in their businesses. It was some of these ladies that practiced prostitution with the labourers known in the Hausa language as *Karuwanci*. The mining camps were kept alive and entertained especially during the weekends by professional Hausa musicians who played their local musical instruments i.e. *goge*, *molo*, *kwarya* and *gamba*. Gambling known as *cha-cha* was also a common practice (Gonyok, 1986:241-258).

In another development, the increased tempo of tin mining activities led to land devastation, degradation and environmental pollution. The tin mining companies and private miners indiscriminately excavated the soil without reclamation and restoration. Hence the preponderance of abandoned mining ponds and sand dumps (soil overburden), which possess as a threat to both human and animal lives. For example, there are presently 800 abandoned tin mining ponds in Berom land (Mwadkwon, 2008:11). These resulted into immiserisation because land was the major source of livelihood and food production for the agrarian Berom people.

The Coerced Proletarianization of the Berom People

Proletarianization as earlier stated is an economic strategy where the people are dis-linked or separated from their legitimate means of livelihood and sustenance. The only resource they would be left with is their labour-force, which they would have to trade for wages to eke a living with their respective families. Proletarianization exposes the people to exploitation and manipulation. This is to the extent that employers of the wage earners pay them

stipend in the form of wages. The wages are barely enough to sustain them for the next day's work. This was the scenario that played out in Berom land when the British colonial forces conquered the people, commenced tin mining activities on the people's land and ensured that the people supplied their labour-force to the tin fields.

It is pertinent to state here that the above scenario is not peculiar to the Berom people alone. It was a common occurrence in the British colonies. For example, in Sierra Leone the agrarian people had their land confiscated. The land was their major source of production, and they were cut off from it. Also, the British imposed burdensome and heavy taxation called 'hut-tax,' whose collection was aggressively enforced. To earn money needed for the compulsory payment of their tax, the Sierra Leonean people had to become wage earners who traded their labour-force to the Europeans in exchange for wages (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012:49-50).

However, the intensive and expansive tin mining activities which had commenced in Berom land after the conquest and subjugation of the people were in dire need of a huge and robust labour-force supply. But the Berom people who had experienced the use of brute force in the hands of the British forces became indifferent and apathetic. They vehemently refused to supply the indispensable labour-force to the multinational tin mining companies. The colonial government had initiated and subsequently implemented some other policies which succeeded in coercing the Berom people to become proletariats on the tin fields. The next section discusses the various British colonial government's strategies and policies which led to the coerced proletarianization of the Berom people.

Declaration of Berom Land as Crown Land and Land Estrangement

The concept of Crown land was not restricted to only Berom land. It was a common policy among the countries of the Commonwealth. The British colonial government adopted the Crown land policy in her colonies with the sole aim of taking total control of both the human and natural resources of the colonies. The policy also made the colonies susceptible to exploration and exploitation by the British government, multinational companies and wealthy individual capitalists.

Land is one of the factors of production that is of in-estimable value and indispensable. Businesses and other human endeavours can only progress and be achieved on the land. The pre-colonial Berom people had agriculture as the mainstay of their economy. Therefore, the importance of land to them could not be over-emphasised. But the land was suddenly declared as crown land after the British invasion. This meant that the land suddenly belonged to the royalty or King/Queen of England (Adeleye, 1971:8-10).

There was the promulgation of an act known as the public lands proclamation in the year 1902. The essence of the public lands proclamation was to give legitimacy to the people's land that was confiscated and declared as crown land. The major thrust of the proclamation was the recognition of all lands belonging to the conquered people as public lands (Nwabueze, 1990:7). And land not occupied by tenants, servants or agents of the people who possess the derivative or original title was also classified as public land by the land proclamation act of 1902 (Nwabueze, 1990:236). It is pertinent to state here that the crown land policy and public land proclamation had earlier been declared and enforced on the people of the far northern province of Nigeria before it was enforced on the other segment of the Northern Province i.e. Berom land. The people of Kano, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe and Sokoto among others were coerced to supply their labour-force for the cultivation and processing of cash crops including groundnuts, hide and skin, cotton and sesame which were collected through the network of roads and railway provided by the British for onward transportation to the Nigerian ports and then to Britain.

The policy of the declaration of the people's land as the Crown land was not confined to Berom land but was occurring in other the British colonies too. A succinct example apart from the experience of the Berom people was in the British colony of Kenya in East Africa, where the process of land alienation began with the promulgation of the land regulations in the year 1897. The land regulations encouraged and paved the way for a large number of Europeans to settle in Kenya. Subsequently, the land regulations were substituted by the Crown land ordinance in the year 1902 (Morgan, 1963:140). The Crown land ordinance made it feasible for land to be released to the Europeans for a 99 years period. And it also empowered the Commissioner of Lands to lease out or outrightly sell any land that belonged to the native Kenyans without prior notice or consultation (Morgan, 1963:140).

The problem of oppression, exploitation and land alienation of the native Kenyans by the White settlers continued into the 1950s. But the native Kenyans violently revolted against European domination and exploitation in what popularly became known as the 'Mau Mau insurrection' (Morgan, 1963:149). At this juncture, it is imperative to point out that the Berom natives and the Kenyan natives had similar experiences under the Crown

land and land alienation policies of the British colonial government. However, the Kenyan natives resorted to violent revolts while the Berom natives did not. The Berom natives used diplomacy, pressure and negotiation to resist oppressive and suppressive policies of the colonial government, i.e. resettlement scheme which wanted to dislodge the people from their land, through the formation of Berom Progressive Union (BPU) in 1945. The BPU also fought for the welfare and wellbeing of the Berom people.

In another development, the colonial government became responsible for the expropriation and appropriation of the confiscated Berom land. They issued Rights of Occupancy (R of O), Certificate of Occupancy (C of O), Prospecting licenses and mining leases to interested multinational companies and rich individual capitalists. This heralded the commencement of the intensive and expansive tin mining activities in Berom land. The corroboration of the colonial government for the multinational companies succeeded in estranging the fertile and richest farmlands in Berom land.

This was basically because the richest tin deposits were found within the richest and fertile farmlands within the vicinity of rivers (Davies, 1944:6). These rich farmlands were destroyed during the open cast system of tin mining in Berom land. It is imperative to state that 86% of the arable and fertile farmlands were held under one mining title or another (NAK: SNP B 6028/14). Mangywat succinctly captured the scenario when he wrote that:

Having been dispossessed of their land without any form of compensation, these peasants, mainly Berom, were turned into an army of 'unskilled' labourers for the tin industry, as peoples of the highland Plateau became labour reserves for the system, while the remaining communities of the province were encouraged to produce only food crops, the surplus of which helped to feed the huge populations of the mines (Mangywat, 2013:96-97).

The problem of land estrangement against the Berom people became so severe by the 1940s which prompted the charge to a colonial cadet officer in the person of Mr J.G. Davies to survey the Berom villages of Gyel, Zawan and Shen to ascertain the quantum of land alienation and degradation. He made the following statement after the survey:

The opening up of the Plateau brought with it the tin mining activities which attracted people from all over the Northern provinces and beyond. Strangers flocked to the Plateau until they numbered as many as the indigenous Berom population. Plural communities grew and expanded; land was thus alienated from the Berom whose population was growing very fast (Davies, 1944:8).

The above statement by Mr J.G. Davies was a confirmation of the fact that tin mining activities caused severe land crisis and alienation to the Berom people. The situation was made worse by the uncontrolled influx of people who had come to participate in the tin mining activities. An assistant district officer, Mr J.G Davies was authorised to conduct a survey in some parts of Berom land in the 1940s to ascertain the magnitude of land alienation and destruction due to tin mining activities, wrote of the importance of land to the Berom people. He also wrote that an outsider would find it difficult and a 'herculean' task to comprehend that reality. Here is a quote from the report of Davies:

The Berom people live and survive on the land. It was their source of livelihood and life. The influence and importance of land and its products on the Berom people was very vast. Perhaps it was far greater than the white man or an average European could easily comprehend (Davies, 1944:8-10).

Land was so abundant in the pre-colonial Berom society that the early accounts of in-coming Europeans observed that large pieces of land in the Berom areas for example, were completely and relatively un-touched and allowed to fallow because of the sufficiency of land (Davies, 1944:5-6). It was aptly stated by Donald Veneer in his thesis that:

Land was in those days sufficient for the people who probably numbered half as many as they are in the 1940s, and villages would wholly relocate to better land if they found out

that their present land and yields were decreasing in nutrients and output (Veneer, 1964:227).

Land estrangement succeeded in divorcing the Berom people from the major source of their food production and livelihood. Therefore, they had to become proletariats who exchanged their labour-force for wages on the tin fields. Mangvwat aptly discussed the land problem and alienation in the following terms:

The number of European tin companies rose to 70 in 1912, 72 in 1926 and 83 in 1928. Thereafter, these companies began to amalgamate, a process in which individual miners as well as corporate bodies were involved. Land, therefore, began to be parcelled out with the 'natives' being ejected from these lands and their crops destroyed without compensation even though government had ruled that compensations were to be paid at a rate of £2 per acre. Indeed, it was not until 1941, when Berom resistance on the land issue became more hostile, widespread and organised, that compensation began to be paid. Yet, the Berom and other indigenes had by then been deprived of their lands for over 40 years while the mining companies, on the other hand, had made away with huge profits (Mangvwat, 2013:99).

The successful proletarianization of the Berom people was succinctly encapsulated in the year 1944 in a statement by the Colonial Divisional Officer of Jos called Mr K. Wreford that agriculture was the major occupation of the Berom people, and their customs and traditions relate to their livelihood as farmers. However, the economy of the Berom people was later intimately bound up with their supply of labour-force on the tin fields (NAK: SNP C 228/56).

Destruction of Indigenous Furnaces

The pre-colonial Berom people practised agriculture as the mainstay of their economy; they were also engaged in tin mining and smelting activities at a subsistence level. The tin mining activities were usually at the river banks because the tin deposits are alluvial. They used crude methods and materials for the mining activities.

The clear attestation of pre-colonial tin mining activities in Berom land was encapsulated in the year 1890 in a statement by Major M. MacDonald when he stated that:

There is considerable trade done here in tin, which is collected by the natives in the streams which come down from the hills, they melt it down and bring it for barter in the shape of wire about half the thickness of one's little finger. The tin is of very good quality (cited in Grace, 1982:179).

The pre-colonial tin mining activities were highly organised. The colonial tin miners found it very difficult to penetrate or break into their ranks. Therefore, an administrative committee headed by Colonel E.C. Duff the Resident of Bauchi Province recommended the destruction of the tin smelting furnaces of the indigenous people and prohibited their engagement in tin mining activities (NAK: SNP 17/29195). The colonial government accepted and implemented the recommendations of the committee. A garrison of military force was sent to destroy the furnaces of the people. They were issued with a stern admonition not to re-engage or reconstruct the destroyed furnaces (NAK: SNP 17/29195). The essence of this action was simply to knock out any perceived form of competition. This gave the British colonial government and the multinational company's total control and domination of tin mining activities in Berom land. It also ensured that the people were divorced from their legitimate source of production and livelihood.

The peasants had no other means of production and sustenance. This scenario was succinctly captured by Stephanie Decker when she stated that when the European countries succeeded in scrambling for territories in Africa, the British colonial government suppressed the autonomous and centralised African polities. Hence the local African businesses were completely displaced and relegated (Decker, 2010:793). The destruction of their furnaces

coerced the people to become proletariats on the tin fields, where they had to exchange their labour-force for wage to survive.

Introduction of Exclusive Prospecting Licenses (EPL)

The EPL as the name implies is an authorisation and the sole right given to the holder to search or prospect for natural minerals within a specified measurement of land within a specified area (Stone, 1920:262). These licenses were instituted to control tin mining activities on the one hand and to scheme-out the indigenous Berom people from the tin mining activities on the other. Section 4(1) of the 1900 mineral proclamation ordinance states that it is a crime for anybody to engage in prospecting tin and other minerals without first securing permission from the authorising agency (NAK: SNP 15). The authorising agency was saddled with the responsibility of issuing exclusive prospecting licenses (EPL) and Mining Leases (ML) (NAK: SNP 9, 488/1923).

Furthermore, some of these proclamations and ordinances had the sole aim of coveting Berom farmlands and the natural resources there-in. A good example is section 7 of the minerals ordinance which states that EPL automatically authorises the holder to encroach and conduct his prospecting on the land allocated to him. And that any of the indigenous (Berom) people who stop or attempts to hinder the EPL holder from conducting his prospecting shall be pronounced guilty. And fined the sum of £25 or sentenced to prison for three months or less (NAK: SNP 9, 488/1923). These empowered the multinational companies and European capitalists to take over Berom land with impunity. The people were helpless and defenceless against the colonial government.

The enactment of the EPL gave rise to an influx of prospectors to the tin field who were interested in the exploration and exploitation of the tin deposits. However, some of the prospectors worked as agents on behalf of several independent capitalists and corporate companies (Freund, 1981a:37). To avert haphazard rush, disorganisation and conflict, the colonial government promulgated several mineral ordinances and proclamations (NAK: SNP 20290). The mining companies were offered two kinds of use right on the land. These were exclusive prospecting license (EPL) and mining lease (ML). The lease holder had the exclusive right to export tin and other minerals from Nigeria (NAK: SNP 9, 488/1923). A 3 year limit on EPLs and 21 years limit on leases was imposed, though they were both subject to a process of renewal. However, no boundary was set pertaining to the size of EPLs while the boundary set for MLs was a maximum of 16 square miles (NAK: SNP 9, 500/1923).

Table 3: Company holders of Exclusive Prospecting Licenses (1912)

Name of Company	Number of Exclusive Prospecting Licenses as at 1912	Number of Mining Leases as at 1912	Number of Pending Applications as at 1912
Niger Company	21	3	4
Champions Tin Fields	8	4	-
Kano Nigeria Tin Areas	13	1	-
N.N. Bauchi Tin Mines	13	17	3
Anglo-Continental	15	3	8
Rayfield Syndicate	7	7	2
West African Mines	15	1	-
N.N. Trust	8	7	-
Tin Areas of Nigeria	16	10	5
Benue N.N. Tin Mines	13	1	-
Naraguta Tin Mines	21	6	-
Nigerian Tin Corporation	9	7	1
Naraguta Extended	-	8	-
Sybu Syndicate	10	-	1
Kaduna Syndicate	6	1	6
Lucky Chance	2	7	-
Nigerian Plateau	2	-	12

Source: Gavin Bridge, and Tomas Frederickson. 2012. "Order out of Chaos': Resources, Hazards and the Production of a Tin Mining Economy in Northern Nigeria in the early Twentieth Century," *Environment and History*, August. pp. 7-8.

Table 3 is a further attestation to the fact that a large number of multinational companies and other rich individual capitalists rushed to the newly opened tin fields in Berom land. It is important to state here that while these companies were securing EPLs to prospect and mine tin on one hand, the people were barred and schemed out from participating in the prospecting and tin mining on the other hand. The companies listed on Table 3 were not indigenous.

The conditions necessary for the acquisition of EPL and ML were stringent. One of which categorically stated that the company or capitalist applying for EPL and ML must possess a solid nominal capital base, must possess the expertise and capacity to prospect and must have acquired western education and be knowledgeable (NAK: SNP 9, 488/1923). The Berom people were alienated from these processes because they had just come into contact with the British Colonialists. And did not have the nominal capital base, knowledge or the expertise to compete. Table 4 shows some of the multinational tin mining companies and their nominal capital base.

Table 4: Nominal Capital Base of some Tin Mining Companies for the year 1919

Company	Nominal Capital (£)
Niger Company Ltd	3,000,000
Nigerian Tin Corporations Ltd	100,000
Nigerian Tin Company Ltd	100,000
Offin River Gold Estates Ltd	3,000,000
Rafinpa Tin Company Ltd	125,000
Rayfield Tin Fields	400,000
Ropp Tin Ltd	55,000
Rukuba Nigerian Tin Company Ltd	100,000
South Bukuru Tin Ltd	50,000
Sybu Syndicate Ltd	15,000
Tin and Trading Company of Nigeria	200,000
Tin Areas of Nigeria Ltd	100,000
Tin Fields of Northern Nigeria	50,000
Toro Tin Company Ltd	987,373
Zuma Tin Areas Ltd	60,000

Source: Alahira, Hanatu. 2003. "The Role of Women in the Colonial Economy of Northern Nigeria: A Case Study of the Berom Women of the Jos Plateau, 1900-1960" (PhD Thesis, Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. p. 175.

The Niger Company Ltd and Offing River Gold Estates Ltd both had the strongest nominal capital base of £3,000,000 each while Sybu Syndicate had the lowest capital base of £15,000 as shown on Table 4. However, the Berom people did not possess the nominal capital base, technical experience and the western education needed to acquire EPLs and MLs. This was mainly because they had just come into contact with the Europeans and had not learnt the European lifestyle and education; neither had they acquired the European currency. The EPL was an exclusive preserve of the rich British multinational companies and rich European capitalists.

The people had no alternative means of livelihood but to become unskilled proletariats who would trade their labour-force in exchange for wages on the tin fields. This was certified in the year 1942 where it was documented that no less than 20% of the adult Berom population were engaged as proletariats on the tin fields (NAK: JOSPROF 111/1942). In fact, it became apparently clear that in some instances, whole villages of men, women and their children were hired as proletariats and worked for wages on the tin fields (NAK: JOSPROF 1).

Introduction of the British Currency

The Lord Chalmer is quoted as stating during the 1825 order-in-council in Great Britain that the British shilling should and must be supplied and circulated to anywhere in the World where the sound of the British drum could be heard (Kirk-Green, 1960:132). The statement by Lord Chalmer left a lasting impression and served as a guiding principle to the British colonialists. They ensured that the British currency was circulated and used in their colonies and spread to various continents of the World.

In the year 1911, the British colonial Secretary, Lord Lewis Harcourt, set up the Emmot Committee which widely became known as West African Currency Committee. In June 1912, the Emmot Committee gave the recommendation for the establishment of a board to handle currency matters in West Africa. Therefore, the West African Currency Board (WACB) was formed in November 1912. Currency notes in West Africa owed their introduction and circulation to WACB. The WACB was saddled with the responsibility of handling all currency matters relating to British protectorates and colonies in West Africa i.e. Gambia, Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria and Sierra Leone (Chukwu, 2010:93).

There were two reasons for the introduction of the British currency to their colonies. Firstly, it was aimed at reducing the cost of intra-empire transactions to both the public and private businesses. And secondly, it was also aimed at encouraging private sector businesses to participate by establishing their presence in the colonies (Helleiner, 2002:7). The presence and circulation of the British currency in their colonies ameliorated the difficulties of the exchange rate, currency conversion and accessibility. However, the introduction and circulation of the British currency in Berom land became a contributory factor in coercing the Berom people to become proletariats or wage earners on the tin fields.

The next development that caused the proletarianization of the Berom people was the introduction of the British currency, i.e. pound sterling, shilling and pence. The pre-colonial economy was based on 'trade-by-barter' system. That was an exchange of goods and services on a voluntary basis by two or more individuals who had a coincidence of wants that each can satisfy the other without the use of money.

The conquest and subjugation of the people and the immediate commencement of tin mining activities abruptly connected the agrarian and 'trade-by-barter' based economy of the Berom people to the world and international capitalist system. This invariably meant a sudden monetisation and commoditisation of the Berom economy.

The newly introduced British legal tender which monetised the Berom economy could only be earned or accessed on the tin fields by the peasants. This pulled the Berom peasants to become proletariats on the tin fields. The British currency had to be earned by the Berom people because they had to pay their taxes using the British currency. And they also needed the British currency for the purchase of their socio-economic necessities of livelihood, i.e. food and clothing.

The Imposition of Taxation

The imposition and payment of heavy taxation were not restricted to Berom land only. It was a major thrust of the British colonial government policy on its colonies and invariably among the members of the Commonwealth. Wambui Mwangi sees taxation as implying a constant political and economic relationship of subjugation and domination (Mwangi, 2001:781).

Barbara Bush and Josephine Maltby noted that taxation afforded the colonial economy with two important purposes which are the indigenous African people paid and took responsibility for the benefit of having a 'white' administration and the need to work and pay their taxes. This pushed Africans to work in the mining sector and cash crop production (Bush & Maltby, 2004:21). They also quoted Beer Louis George, the United States expert at the 1919 Peace Conference at Versailles who stated that the major purpose of colonial presence and intervention in Africa was to control and manage the labour-force which was the 'Chief Asset' of Africa (Bush & Maltby, 2004:21).

The colonial government imposed heavy taxation in the Berom area with the sole aim of coercing the Berom people to seek employment on the tin fields to enable them to earn the British currency for the payment of their taxes. And to generate the money that the colonial government needed for the operation and upkeep of the government. The payment of tax was made mandatory on all the male children upon the attainment of the age of 16 (NAK: SNP 10, 251P) while the age of 18 was the acceptable standard in Europe.

There is archival evidence which showed that the colonial government imposed heavy taxation as a veritable tool of compulsion on the Berom people to supply the labour-force needed on the tin fields. For example, in a letter addressed to a mining company in 1907 by a colonial officer simply called Gowers stated as follows:

I cannot assure you that I would force the Berom people to supply the labour-force you need on the tin field. This is because forced labour is out-lawed which we are aware. But there is compulsion in the payment of tax by this people. Therefore, I urge the Assistant Resident working among this people to use the payment of taxes to manoeuvre, induce, convince and influence the people on the easiest and most accessible means of obtaining the money for the payment of their taxes, which is by the supply of their labour-force to the tin field and also by working as the human porters that would carry tin from one point to another (Museum, 895/1907).

The statement by Gowers encapsulates the major purpose for the introduction of taxation in Berom land. It was manipulated and used to coerce the Berom people to become proletariats on the tin fields. These taxes were arbitrarily increased by the colonial government to have the desired results. In a letter written in the year 1919 by the Secretary of the local council of Nigerian chamber of mines to the Secretary of the Northern Province, it was vividly stated that:

It is our desire and believes that an upward increment of 50% on the amount of tax to be paid by the Berom people would cajole and persuade a larger percentage of them to migrate to the tin fields in search of the available employment opportunities. And the higher amount of taxes would also ensure that they are retained on the tin fields for longer periods of time to earn or raise the required amount for the payment of their taxes (NAK: SNP 205P/1919).

This statement is a further confirmation of the position of this article that the imposition of heavy taxation on the Berom people was another strategy that was implored to coerce the proletarianization of the Berom people. It is imperative to state here that the colonial government ensured that the payment of taxes was fully complied to by the Berom people. This they did by the use of the instrument of state coercion, i.e. the police and law courts to arrest and sentence defaulters. Therefore, a large percentage of the Berom people were coerced into proletarianization on the tin fields where they were exploited. This view has also been shared by Mangvwat when he unambiguously wrote the following statement:

In addition to these terrible conditions under which the Berom people and others were subjected, as capitation tax rate was introduced in 1912, which required the Berom tin-bearing villages to pay 2s 3d per adult while those villages in the outlying areas of the mines paid only 6d thereby coercing all taxable Berom people to flock the tin mines in search for tax money. And even as labourers on the tin mines the Berom people were invariably classified as the unskilled type and earned the lowest wages in the mines. In this way the Berom of the tin fields were constituted not only as the lowest class of people, but also the most desperate group in the colonial society of Jos Division and, indeed, the whole province. More than any group in the Plateau province, the Berom people of the tin-fields experienced the direct harshness and exploitation typical of colonialism in Plateau province (Mangvwat, 2013:101-102).

However, there were some positive developments that accompanied the expansive and intensive tin mining activities in Berom land. It opened up the area through economic growth and western civilisation. They provided socio-economic facilities to the area. For example, they were known to have been the first to have constructed and provided feeder roads, railways, electricity, schools, hospitals and portable water. More so, the success story of the tin-based multinational companies was an impetus that encouraged the influx of service-based multinational companies i.e. Paterson Zochonis (PZ), Leventis Motors, John Holt, Barclays bank, British bank for West Africa (BBWA) and British American Insurance Company among others.

Conclusion

This article was aimed at revealing the various strategies and policies that were adopted by the British colonial government which ensured the coerced proletarianization of the Berom people. The article shows that the Berom people and their natural resources were exploited without any commensurate benefit to the people. It is imperative to point out that there is a preponderance of abandoned tin mining ponds and sand dumps spread all over Berom land. The people live in penury amidst these dangerous ponds. These abandoned mining ponds have claimed and is still claiming the lives of the people and that of their animals.

The article also disclosed that the commencement of capitalist accumulation and production had been the act of cutting off the producer from his legitimate means and source of production. The major essence is to cause them to remain poor. Once perpetually poor, the people would then have to depend on the sale of their labour to the capitalists in exchange for the stipends needed for survival. The colonial government orchestrated and implemented various strategies that ensured that the Berom people were divorced from their legitimate source of production as we have revealed in this article. The Berom people were successfully coerced into proletarianization where they had to exchange their energies for the wages they needed to pay their taxes and to survive. The colonial government used the coercive instruments of the state to enforce and sustain their actions and in-actions in Berom land.

It is pertinent to point out that the Berom people were pushed into a precarious condition and penury due to their coerced proletarianization. The Berom people who had agriculture as the mainstay of their economy and produced sufficient food for their consumption and sustenance had their land encroached and taken over for tin mining activities and suddenly became landless peasants.

Coerced proletarianization disrupted the traditional ways of life, where the Berom people were self-sufficient and lived peaceful and communally fulfilled lives. Therefore, their forceful transformation to become proletariats and wage earners succeeded in hampering their progress and development.

Endnotes

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