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The Colonial Conquest of Misau Emirate and the Introduction of Colonial Structures, 1903–1960

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Abstract
The Subject matter of this paper deals with the Colonial Transformation of Misau Emirate on social, political and economic structures. It covers the period from 1903-1960 A.D. This was the period in which a colonial society with dependent structures was established to serve the interests of British capitalism. The establishment of this colonial relationship entailed the re-orientation of the system of production in the Emirate and the transformation of its pre-existing institutions along capitalist lines. The Aristocracy, the power that controlled and regulated the Emirate system of production, was subjected and transformed to allow for the re-orientation. The re-orientation of the system of production was carried out through the implementation of colonial land, labour and fiscal policies. Out of process of the establishment of colonial system of production new class relations, with capitalist values, began to develop. The result was the emergence of a new type of polarisation within the society, made up of cash-croppers and labourers on the one hand and a ruling class on the other. The ruling class that was emerging was made up of top bureaucrats that included Emir, Hakimai, Dagatai, their advisers and trading agents. This division was sustained and sharpened by new forms of accumulation and appropriation of wealth. Through these new forms of appropriation and accumulation of proceeds of labour, the colonizers and their agents benefited immensely. The data used for this research were drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Therefore, the period between 1903 and 1960, therefore, was one in which the Emirate social, political and economic structures underwent profound changes under colonial domination in the interest of British capitalism.

Keywords: Misau Emirate; British conquest; colonial administration; indirect rule; Native Authority; taxation; Northern Nigeria.

Introduction

Colonialism is a wide phenomenon in Nigeria, and the northern Nigeria in general. Therefore, most of the works written on the area were not written to study colonial transformation in Misau Emirate thereby a great quest for analysing them is necessary, it is in the light of these developments that this research investigates the phenomenon of colonial transformation in Misau Emirate. This research is therefore, driven by the following questions.

a. What was the nature of political system of Misau prior to the British conquest of the area?
b. How was the area conquered and occupied by colonialist?
c. What were the impacts of the conquest with special focus on the political, economic and socio-cultural transformation of the Emirate?
d. How the colonialist did integrate the economy into the world capitalist economy thereby paying much emphasis on cash crop agricultural production?
e. How did the trade and other economic activities were turned and reflect colonial structures?
f. The transformation of taxation and its nature as altered by the colonialist would also be glanced.

This paper investigates the effects of British colonial domination on the political and administrative structures of Misau Emirate between 1903 and 1960. British colonialism in Northern Nigeria was fundamentally shaped by the desire to control and exploit the resources of conquered territories. This objective required not only military conquest but also the restructuring of local political institutions that regulated the lives of the people. Thus, British occupation in Misau led to the overthrow of existing authority and the gradual creation of dependent administrative structures (Crowder & Ikimi, 1970; Ikimi, 1978; Rodney, 1972).

Colonial expansion in Africa was intensified by European rivalry over raw materials and markets. The Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 institutionalized the principle of effective occupation, compelling European powers to consolidate control over claimed territories. In Nigeria, British influence expanded from Lagos and gradually extended inland. Following the declaration of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1900, the British embarked on systematic conquest of the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate (Hogben & Kirk-Greene, 1966; Last, 1967; Tukur, 1979). This process marked the consummation of colonial domination over Northern Nigeria. British engagement with the region began in the nineteenth century through exploration and trade, but culminated in military conquest. The conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate and its emirates, including Misau, was dictated by both political and economic imperatives of imperial expansion (Adeleye, 1975; Ikimi, 1980; Tukur, 1979).

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopts a qualitative historical method based on the critical use of both primary and secondary sources. The research draws from archival materials, provincial and district annual reports, gazetteers and Native Authority records held at the National Archives Kaduna (NAK). Secondary

materials include books, journal works and conference papers relevant to colonial administration and Northern Nigerian emirates. The study relies on documentary interpretation to analyze the conquest of Misau Emirate and the institutional changes introduced under colonial rule.

THE COLONIAL CONQUEST OF MISAU EMIRATE

In 1900, Emir Ahmadu II ascended the throne of Misau Emirate. By 1903, British forces arrived in the region. Emir Ahmadu II was unwilling to accommodate British authority. When he heard of their arrival at Yayu, about fifty miles from Misau, he withdrew with his officials to a nearby village. His junior brother, Alhaji Tafida, who was pro-British, deserted him and went to the British station at Yayu to pay homage. The British subsequently installed Tafida as Emir of Misau (NAK, Misau N.A. 109, Vol. II).

Following Tafida's installation, Emir Ahmadu II returned to Misau and a civil conflict broke out between the brothers. The conflict reportedly lasted about six months. Eventually, Emir Ahmadu II left Misau, describing the emirate as unfit to live in because it had been occupied by European "infidels" and their collaborators. He embarked on pilgrimage to Mecca and joined Caliph Attahiru I and Emir Basiru of Malle. On their journey, they stopped at Burmi where they fought the British in 1903. The encounter resulted in the death of Caliph Attahiru I and Emir Basiru, along with hundreds of Muslims. Emir Ahmadu II survived, completed his pilgrimage and later settled in present-day Sudan, founding a town also called Misau (NAK, Annual Report Northern Nigeria, 1904; Tukur, 1979). In the same year, Misau Emirate—previously in Bauchi Province—was transferred to Kano Province. This reflected colonial administrative reorganization designed for imperial convenience (NAK, Kano Province Misau Emirate, Katagum Division, P7 109 4896/1912).

Resistance in Misau was not as fierce as expected. By 1903, the British had demonstrated military superiority in Ilorin, Kontagora, Bida, Yola and other areas. Although British forces were sometimes smaller and operated in unfamiliar territory, their superiority in firepower, mobility and strategy—particularly the Maxim gun—proved decisive (Ikimi, 1978; Fika, 1978). Additionally, emirate resistance was largely uncoordinated; each emirate fought independently and fell alone. After major emirates such as Bauchi, Kano and Yola were defeated, smaller emirates tended to submit without sustained warfare (Last, 1967; Hogben & Kirk-Greene, 1966).

REORGANIZATION OF BRITISH POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION: INDIRECT RULE

The administrative system established in Northern Nigeria is widely described as indirect rule. It was defined as a system that retained existing indigenous political institutions—emirs, chiefs, native councils and courts—while subordinating them to British supervision. The policy is commonly associated with Frederick Lugard, who served as High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria (1900–1906) and later Governor of unified Nigeria (1914–1919). Lugard articulated the principles of this policy in *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Lugard, 1965).

Colonial historiography often claims that indirect rule reflected British desire to preserve indigenous institutions. In practice, however, indirect rule was a pragmatic solution for governing a vast territory with limited European manpower and minimal expenditure. The British "grafted" colonial administration onto existing political structures, converting the conquered aristocracy into a loyal colonial bureaucracy that legitimized foreign domination (Crowder & Ikimi, 1970; Temple, 1968).

In Misau Emirate, this system was institutionalized through three key structures: Native Authority, Native Treasury and Native Courts. These institutions formed the foundation of colonial governance and facilitated taxation, law enforcement and economic integration (NAK, Bauchi Prof 690, Vol. I; Perham, 1946).

The Misau Native Authority consisted of the Emir (Grade II), Waziri, Alkali, Ma'aji, Sarkin Dogarai and district heads. Although presented as "traditional," this structure functioned as an administrative extension of colonial rule (NAK, Misau N.A. 109, Vol. II).

ESTABLISHMENT OF COLONIAL BUREAUCRACY

Under colonial rule, the Emir was no longer the supreme authority. Instead, he became the head of a colonial bureaucracy, subject to British political officers. He could not appoint or dismiss officials without British approval. His authority was defined by an appointment letter and he received a salary. Like other officials, he could be deposed. These measures weakened the Emir's council and rendered village councils less significant (Crowder & Ikimi, 1970; Temple, 1968).

The British abolished Misau's extra-territorial control over Fulata Borno, drastically reducing its size. However, in compensation and to strengthen Tafida's rule, the colonial administration expanded Misau's territory. In April 1913, Akuyam and Sarma (formerly under Bauchi) were annexed. In June 1914, Hardawa and Zadawa (formerly in Katagum) were added. Dambam—an autonomous emirate—was abolished and merged into Misau, as was Jalam, a Kare-Kare stronghold, in 1915. These changes produced Misau's present territorial configuration (NAK, Bauchi Prof 690, Vol. I; NAK, Misau N.A. 335, Vol. I). Unlike many emirates where district heads resided in the emirate capital and ruled through *jekadi*, Misau district heads traditionally lived in their districts. The British retained this system because it facilitated direct supervision. District heads collected intelligence, conducted censuses, collected taxes and maintained law and order (NAK, Misau N.A. 335, Vol. II).

British colonial staff typically consisted of a District Officer, an Assistant District Officer and a few clerks. In the early years, touring was conducted on horseback, later aided by limited motor transport. A garrison of troops stationed in Misau town frequently paraded to display colonial power and deter resistance. Many officers were posted from other regions, consistent with divide-and-rule strategies (Rodney, 1972; Temple, 1968).

Native Treasury

The Misau Native Treasury was established in 1910. Before then, the Emir retained 50% of collected taxes, treated as personal income. The creation of the treasury transformed this share

into public funds requiring accountability. Expenditure from the treasury required British approval. By 1929, the treasury was classified as fully organized and 70% of taxes accrued to the Native Authority (NAK, Bauchi Prof 690, Vol. I).

Besides taxation, revenue sources included court fees, fines, market fees and customs tolls. The Ma'aji served as treasurer and record-keeper. Native Authority funds paid salaries and supported limited infrastructure, but the majority was consumed by salaries and law enforcement, leaving social services inadequate. Nevertheless, the treasury accumulated large fixed deposits and during World War II, the Native Authority donated between £2,000 and £3,000 to British war funds (Misau District Annual Reports, 1924–1933, NAK).

Table 1: Financial Position of Misau Native Treasury (1924–1933)

S/N	Year	Cash in Treasury	Cash in Bank	Fixed Deposit in Bank	Invested with Crown Agents	Total
1	1924	6116:2:6	475:19:7	10300	182:5:6	21224:7:7
2	1925	3339:19:0	383:14:11	9000	7582:5:6	20305:19:6
3	1926	3433:6:3	433:10:0	10000	7885:8:11	27752:16:0
4	1927	3408:8:6	398:6:4	9000	7885:18:11	20692:13:9
5	1928	9336:12:5	253:12:4	7500	9885:18:11	2716:3:8
6	1929	6985:7:8	460:8:6	9000	9885:7:0	26331:13:2
7	1930	3909:12:9	744:2:0	9900	9885:7:0	24436:11:0
8	1931	5318:0:0	—	12900	9883:0:0	28101:0:0
9	1932	7420:0:0	310:0:0	1090	10883:0:0	30513:0:0
10	1933	6560:0:0	608:0:0	1290	10883:0:0	31951:0:0

Source: Misau District Annual Reports (1924–1933), National Archives Kaduna (NAK).

Native Courts

Judicial administration existed before colonial conquest, grounded in Islamic law (*Sharia*). Usman dan Fodio emphasized the establishment of an *Alkali* in each domain to support justice administration. In pre-colonial governance, the Emir combined executive and judicial authority and could sanction capital punishment for grievous offences (Balogun, 1975; Last, 1967).

The British considered aspects of Islamic law "repugnant" and introduced graded Native Courts. In Misau, courts were mainly Grade "A" and "B." Grade "B" courts handled civil cases up to £100 and criminal cases punishable by two years' imprisonment, 24 lashes, or £50 fines. Grade "A" courts served as appellate courts and could pass death sentences subject to British endorsement (NAK, Misau N.A. 109, Vol. II).

The first courts were established in Misau and Dambam by 1907. By 1914, courts existed in Hardawa, Akuyam, Zadawa, Dagauda and Yerima. Locations sometimes changed because colonial officials complained that some courts could not generate enough revenue to pay salaries (NAK, Misau N.A. 109, Vol. II).

By 1938, the courts in existence included: Misau (A Court), Dambam (B), Dagauda (B), Hardawa (B), Zadawa (B) and Akuyam (B). A Judicial Council comprising the Emir, Waziri

and three learned advisers handled murder cases and disputes involving district heads. In 1942, the council's status was reduced to that of an A-grade court during tensions between Emir Abdulkadir and British officers (NAK, Misau N.A. 109, Vol. II).

Table 2: Misau Native Courts Record (1924–1931)

S/N	Year	Criminal Cases	Civil Cases	Fees	Fines	Total
1	1924	655	3171	1069	23	1093
2	1925	618	4439	2029	14	2044
3	1926	1008	2629	1001	67	1069
4	1927	1069	2549	796	102	899
5	1928	2892	1362	681	81	763
6	1929	1193	2831	711	89	800
7	1930	1099	2628	556	34	590
8	1931	1755	4849	673	37	710

Source: Misau District Annual Reports (1924–1931), National Archives Kaduna (NAK).

From 1934, persons sentenced by Native Courts were required to appear before British divisional officers for scrutiny. Although framed as preventing injustice, this was largely meant to ensure that judgments did not conflict with colonial interests (Ibinola, 2009; Temple, 1968). The courts also functioned as instruments of colonial policy. For example, when forced labour drafting to Jos tin mines ended in 1945, court cases declined sharply, suggesting that many prosecutions were linked to labour resistance and desertion (Ibinola, 2009).

Court sittings were often timed to coincide with harvest periods, enabling convicted persons to pay fines and fees. This reveals the revenue-generating function of Native Courts under colonial rule (Perham, 1946).

Native Police

The Misau Native Authority police was established around 1907. After disarming emirate forces, colonial authorities required an alternative structure for enforcing order. Recruitment began with palace guards (*dogarai*), who were converted into uniformed police. The police force generally ranged between 55 and 65 men (NAK, Misau N.A. 693).

IMPOSITION OF COLONIAL TAXES

Taxation was central to colonial administration. Lugard argued that taxation stimulated industry and was morally beneficial by discouraging war and promoting labour (Lugard, 1965). In practice, colonial taxation served primarily to generate revenue and force peasants into the cash economy (Rodney, 1972; Watts, 1983).

Taxation was not entirely new in Misau, as pre-colonial systems collected levies and tributes. However, colonial taxation differed in incidence and payment modality. The main taxes were General Tax and *Jangali* (cattle tax). General Tax initially functioned as a capitation tax imposed collectively on villages, with village heads responsible for raising and remitting the

required amount. A resident assessment exercise in 1907 attempted to base taxation on *kudin kasa* (ground rent), but in practice the system remained largely indiscriminate (NAK, Misau N.A. 109, Vol. II).

Tax rates rose throughout the colonial period. Initially four shillings per adult male, rates rose to as high as twelve shillings in later years. Taxes increased after good harvests, including in 1919, 1921, 1928 and 1946 (Ibinola, 2009). Taxes were payable in cash rather than in kind, compelling peasants to sell produce. Some families sold food before harvest to raise cash for tax payments (NAK, Bauchi Prof 1231).

The *Jangali* tax was imposed at two shillings per head of cattle. Reports suggest herders sometimes sold up to 25% of their cattle to pay tax on the remainder. For Fulani, cattle carried deep cultural and emotional value beyond economic worth (NAK, Misau N.A. 693).

Other taxes included industrial levies such as *ushuran ruwa* and *ushuran tama*, imposed on fishermen and smelters at 10% of profit (Ibinola, 2009).

Table 3: Record of Taxes Collected in Misau Emirate (1915–1945)

S/N	Year	General Tax	Jangali
1	1915	7,112	6,084
2	1916	7,287	7,102
3	1917	7,919	9,494
4	1918	9,822	9,281
5	1919	10,623	5,230
6	1920	10,919	5,215
7	1921	14,347	Not Available
8	1922	Not Available	Not Available
9	1923	11,657	Not Available
10	1924	17,715	4,251
11	1925	16,276	4,145
12	1926	16,572	8,751
13	1927	16,643	8,310
14	1928	Not Available	8,539
15	1929	19,887	8,047
16	1930	19,784	7,919
17	1931	Not Available	Not Available
18	1932	19,904	Not Available
19	1933	Not Available	Not Available
20	1934	Not Available	Not Available
21	1935	Not Available	Not Available
22	1936	Not Available	Not Available
23	1937	Not Available	Not Available
24	1938	Not Available	Not Available
25	1939	Not Available	Not Available
26	1940	19,230	8,633
27	1941	20,048	8,655

S/N	Year	General Tax	Jangali
28	1942	21,109	8,981
29	1943	22,644	14,542
30	1944	31,792	13,232
31	1945	38,758	12,656

Source: Misau District Annual Reports (1915–1945), National Archives Kaduna (NAK).

COLONIAL ECONOMY

The colonial economy of Misau Emirate was shaped by export-oriented agriculture. Major commodities included groundnut, hides and skins. British authorities initially envisaged cotton as the major crop for Northern Nigeria. The British Cotton Growers Association (BCGA) was formed in 1902 due to difficulties faced by British textile manufacturers in securing adequate cotton supplies. The association lobbied for railway construction to stimulate cotton cultivation (Hogendorn, 1978).

However, peasants largely preferred groundnut cultivation. Although cotton was produced in some regions, Misau did not become a major cotton-exporting area. Campaigns continued into the 1930s with large-scale seed distribution, but much cotton was sold locally rather than exported. The BCGA offered low prices, leading to farmer resistance and occasional coercion by colonial authorities (NAK, Azare District Annual Report, 1929).

Groundnut production expanded after the opening of the railway in 1912. Large-scale cultivation in Misau began around 1915–1918. Although production fluctuated after World War I and during the Great Depression, it expanded again during World War II (Hogendorn, 1978; Watts, 1983). Taxation pressures forced peasants to cultivate cash crops for market sale. European firms advanced loans repayable in groundnut, locking peasants into debt and increasing production. Groundnuts were purchased by agents of the United Africa Company and transported to Kano, then by rail to Lagos for export.

Table 4: Cotton and Groundnut Estimates in Misau Emirate

S/N	Years	Cotton (Tons)	Groundnut (Tons)
1	1911–1918	14	19
2	1920–1928	Not Available	57
3	1930–1939	114	20
4	1939–1945	200	50

Source: Azare District Annual Report (1929) and Annual Report (1945), National Archives Kaduna (NAK).

CONSTRUCTION OF PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Colonial infrastructure development primarily served economic extraction. Forced labour was widely used in road and railway construction, causing hardship as farmers abandoned farms during peak seasons. Such practices were common across colonial Africa and contributed to rural impoverishment (Rodney, 1972; Watts, 1983).

No railway passed directly through Misau town, but the emirate was connected through regional roads. The Kano–Borno road passed through Azare in Katagum Emirate. The Katagum section (about 105 km) was constructed in 1915. Without a bridge over the Jama'are River, the road was mainly seasonal. Vehicle usage remained low in early years. Within Misau, feeder roads such as Misau–Azare, Misau–Kano, Misau–Bauchi and Misau–Borno were constructed. By the 1930s, colonial authorities described the emirate as "opened up" (NAK, Bauchi Prof 690, Vol. II).

Colonial services included a dispensary and a Native Elementary School established in 1919. However, investment in education and health remained low. A District Officer in 1938 acknowledged that only 2½% of the Native Authority budget went to education and about 3% to other services, while salaries consumed the majority. He further noted that Misau ranked among the top dozen Native Authorities in revenue generation, yet this was not reflected in local development—an admission of colonial neglect (NAK, Bauchi Prof 690, Vol. III).

CONCLUSION

The British conquest of Misau Emirate in 1903 and the subsequent introduction of colonial administrative structures transformed the emirate politically and economically. British colonial policy, driven primarily by economic motives, introduced Misau into the colonial capitalist system. Through indirect rule, institutions such as Native Authority, Native Treasury and Native Courts were established, converting the traditional aristocracy into a colonial bureaucracy for policy implementation (Crowder & Ikimi, 1970; Lugard, 1965).

Colonial policies focused on taxation, judicial restructuring and infrastructure development aimed at integrating Misau into the world economy as a supplier of raw materials, especially groundnut and cotton. The main beneficiaries were European commercial firms, alongside some foreign and indigenous intermediaries. For the majority of the people, colonialism brought heavier taxation, forced labour practices, limited social services and the subordination of indigenous governance to foreign domination (Rodney, 1972; Perham, 1946).

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