COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TRADE AND COMMERCE IN COLONIAL EAST AND WEST AFRICA: CASE STUDY OF KENYA AND NIGERIA

LAWRENCE Chichebem Solomon
Department of History and International Studies
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
e-mail: cs.lawrence@unizik.edu.ng or lawrencesolomon2016@gmail.com
&
CHUKWU C. JAMES
Department of History and International Studies,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria
ic.chukwu@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract
As a big driver of international economic relations, commerce obviously occupied a significant place in the colonial space. More importantly, the pattern of commercial development in the various regions of Africa hugely contributed to the exploitation of their resources. This study attempts a comparison of commerce in colonial West and East Africa using Kenya and Nigeria as a case study. The aim is to compare the pattern of commerce in the two regions to ascertain whether they were both exploitative. The study seeks to understand, in essence, the impact of colonial trade and commerce patterns in Africa. The study adopts a historical method of analysis, relying on secondary sources. These sources are interpreted qualitatively using descriptive and discursive approaches. The study finds that the nature of the pattern that commerce assumed in the two regions were essentially the same with minor differences, and that the pattern was exploitative. It recommends that African leaders and economic policy makers must avoid unhealthy trade and commercial arrangements which are unhealthy and detrimental to the economic well-being of the continent.
Keywords: Commerce, East and West Africa, Colonial, Kenya, Nigeria

Introduction

There is obviously a nexus between commerce and colonization. Colonialism was a game changer in the development of commerce in Africa, as well as in the exploitation of the continent. Vestiges of colonial trade patterns have continued to haunt the African continent. Colonization helped to extend the trading relationships that had developed between Africa and Europe for over four hundred years. Slaves, gold, ivory, salt and other commodities were the trade goods exchanged. It was conducted in the atmosphere of peace and fairness as no party tried to deliberately exploit the other. It was the genuine free trade and the European traders were content to restrict themselves to the coastal areas, not going into the hinterland to trade directly with the producers or produce directly on African soil to cut the cost of obtaining the raw materials.

However, the whole trend changed with the dawn of the industrial revolution in Europe. The latter brought with it the serious demand for more raw materials for production. It also brought the need for more market (distribution/evacuation outlets) for European manufactured goods. Thus, it was a revolution that triggered another revolution – trade and commercial expansion revolution. European powers went in search of more territories in Africa, from which raw materials and markets could be obtained. Old trade relationships were bolstered, and great efforts were made by the Europeans traders to get into the hinterland. Iron curtains of tariffs and monopolistic policies were quickly drawn to keep off rival European powers from areas being laid claim to.

This was the situation when the Berlin Conference was called for, and certain agreements on how to conduct the new rat race for colonies in Africa were reached. The most important decisions taken were that there was need for effective occupation of any territory being laid claim to, that slave trade should be suppressed, and that free trade should not be hampered by any European power especially on the Niger-Congo Rivers.[i] The suppression of the slave trade and the introduction of what they called 'legitimate' trade in its place was informed by some economic changes brought by the industrial revolution. The latter changed the formula for the exploitation of Africa. It was no more economically beneficial to trade in slaves, as the latter yielded lesser profit compared to the use of African human resources in their own land for foreign exploitation. What determined legitimacy or otherwise was not essentially moral but economic in nature.

After the conference, efforts were made by European powers to effectively occupy and colonize Africa. East and West Africa both fell under colonial rule. In each region, varying European powers like Britain, France, Germany, Portugal all grabbed colonial territories for themselves. Trade and commerce took on a new dimension different from what it used to be.[ii] The old pattern of trade gave way for the new. Trade became a great instrument of exploitation, and has unfortunately, remained so. Although it is generally believed that colonialism was exploitative, identifying and comparing specific instruments used for the exploitation of various African regions during the colonial era is not very common. Yet it is essential to understand the colonial trade patterns that have shaped current African trade involvement with the wider world and the impact on the continent.

Scholars have written a lot on trade and commerce in Africa. Kenneth Dike (1955) opened the floor for serious discussions by scholars on trade and commerce in Africa. Since then scholars have been contributing to the subject matter. Dike focused on trade and politics in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.[iii] Although this work also uses Nigeria as a case study, but compares commerce in East and West Africa. M.H.Y. Kaniki (1980), "The Colonial Economy**:** the Former British Zone, explores the nature of the colonial economy in the zones colonized by Britain. His focus is not all African regions, but selected countries in all the regions where Britain held sway. The scope is different from that of the current study which focuses on East and West Africa, using Kenya and Nigeria as case study which is more restricted and tends to offer more minute details. M. Lynn (2009) studied the palm oil trade in Africa and the economic changes it brought.[iv] Akyeapong (2015)[v] provides a historical summary of trade in Africa from the pre-colonial to the present time (2015, when the work was published). The focus of the work was to capture the dynamics trade had taken during that period and the role it played in regional integration. The work was much concerned about the negative effect of colonial trade pattern on regional integration. The current work goes beyond regional integration to examine the impact of commerce on the general development of Africa.

Most of the more recent works focus on E-Commerce, a reflection of the increasing influence of digitization and globalization on trade. For instance, C. Igue (2020) and Kyshi (2024)[vi] focused on Issues and Challenges of E-Commerce in Africa and the state of E-Commerce in Africa respectively. Although discussions on e-commerce is growing, whatever the medium used to carry out trade and other commercial transactions, the most important thing for a participant is that the pattern must not be exploitative but favourable. Unlike these works, the current study compares commerce in Colonial East and West Africa to understand the patterns and how it affected African economy and still does. The case study chosen and the period are both unique.

The focus of this paper therefore is to compare the nature that trade and commerce assumed in each of the two regions under study, using Kenya and Nigeria as case study as colonialism took the centre stage in African history. The goal is to show if there are any significant differences in the nature of colonial exploitation in the two regions. Essentially, it aims at revealing the impact of the new (colonial) trade arrangement in the two regions and bring to the fore, trade arrangements with the wider world that should be avoided.

The paper first discusses the nature of the colonial economy in the two regions as a way of laying a good foundation. The paper then examines the nature of trade and commerce in the two regions are essentially similar. One thread running through them is the exploitative nature of the trade arrangement. The first section of the work lays a solid foundation by acquainting us with the structure of the colonial economies in the two regions. The paper therefore examines the similarities of the nature of trade in the two countries used as case study. Next, the few areas of differences are identified. Finally, the paper takes a cursory look at the general impact of the new trade and commercial arrangement in the two regions. Few recommendations are made thereafter.

Kenya and Nigeria are chosen as case study because of the dominant place they occupied in the colonial economy in the two regions. East Africa alone is large and encompasses varying political units colonized by various European powers. The same goes for West Africa. It would therefore be difficult to make a neat comparison of trade and commerce in the two regions given the varying colonial powers and their varying economic and political policies. Hence, this paper is restricted to Kenya and Nigeria, but from time to time, if need be, reference is made to other countries in each of the regions to buttress essential points. We now turn to the first section which deals with the concept and background of trade and commerce in Colonial East and West Africa.

The Concept and Background of Trade and Commerce in Colonial East and West Africa

Trade is basically the exchange of goods either for profit making or merely for subsistence. Commerce on the other hand is the exchange of goods and services through the medium of money for the realization of profit which is convertible to capital.[vii] To understand the pattern of trade and commerce in British East and West Africa and indeed, anywhere, one must consider the history and the structure of the economy there. Any attempt to understand it from any other standpoint will prove deceptive and elusive. For example, Jan Vansina while trying to understand, classify and explain the patterns of trade in pre-colonial Africa used geographical scale or distance and the commodities involved as criteria and came up with local, regional and long distance trade.[viii] This classification does not really reveal the pattern or tell the true nature of trade in Africa, but only reveals the distance covered by trade. His classification has therefore been rejected by many other scholars who prefer using the economic criterion.[ix] The history which is the substructure and the structure of the colonial economy must therefore be understood.

Initially, before the colonial era, regional trade and commerce in Africa was based on the production of unique goods which they had comparative advantage for. The producers of the goods doubled as the sellers. Production was for regional distribution and for subsistence. The goods produced and sold were not just agricultural goods. The sellers had the power to fix the prices for their goods. However, colonialism brought about the production of similar goods which were essentially externally needed goods. From the coast of Zanzibar in East Africa where cloves needed in Europe became the most cultivated crop to other regions, including West Africa, trade and commerce took an outward-looking dimension. And to make things worse, the colonial government monopolized the power to fix price for the goods produced by Africans.

Considering the colonial economic structures put in place in Africa will also help to understand the pattern of colonial trade and commerce. Three types of colonial economic structures have been identified in colonial Africa. These are the first, Peasant-statist structures e.g. West Africa and part of East Africa, the Settler economies e.g. Southern Africa and part of East Africa and the Chartered company economy e.g. Congo. The peasant-statist economies are primary commodity export enclaves. In this type of economy, the colonial government provided the minimum infrastructure to ensure the flow of the raw materials. The state government determined what to be produced for export, the quantity and the price of the manufactured goods returned. There was minimum private participation outside agriculture.

In the settler economies, plantation agriculture was used. European settlers controlled the plantations, seized lands and marginalized the natives. Investment was much more significant as the owners of the capital also lived in those colonies. They exported mainly primary commodities and influenced the prices, as the role of the government was significantly kept at the minimum level. African labour was used in the plantations and was not commensurately rewarded. In the chartered company structures, the economy was organized around chartered companies which are involved majorly in extractive activities like mining. There was little regard for agriculture and associated labour and infrastructure. Only the infrastructure and labour needed for mining and related activities were needed. Attention is turned away from developing domestic economic and government structures. There was no serious investment in human capital development and social amenities.

This may not be a totally perfect classification, but it goes a long way in explaining the economic structures in place in the various colonial lands in Africa. However, it must be noted that no colonial power restricted itself to only one of these models in any one colony. For example, all the regions initially experimented with the chartered company model before transitioning to either the peasant-statist structure, the settlers/plantation structure or a combination of both.

Trade and Commerce in Colonial British East Africa

A thorough study of the colonial British East Africa will reveal that it fits into the first two structures – peasant-statist and settlers economies. The former was practised more in Uganda while the latter found excellent expression in Kenya. But all these came after the era of chartered company in both places. The two major territories in East Africa that Britain colonized were Uganda and Kenya. Although it later took over parts of Morocco and Cameroon, it only held them in trust for the United Nations.

By 1894, the British traders had already destroyed the hegemony of the sultan of Zanzibar who controlled trade around the coast of East Africa, and had gained entrance into the hinterland as the trend of European politics then dictated –

the scramble for African territories being on the topmost gear. Also, by that time, the charter of the British East Africa company had been revoked. That year, Uganda was pronounced a protectorate, and in the following year, same was done for British East Africa (which later came to be called Kenya). European settlement was encouraged and white settlements came to be regarded as the backbone of Kenya's economy and all efforts up to 1952 were directed towards developing the "white highlands" at the expense of the African reserves.[x] In 1902, part of Uganda was taken and merged with British East Africa, a part which came to be known as Western Kenya.[xi] Thus, in effect, Europeans came to settle both in Kenya and Part of Uganda, reducing the quantity of land available for the Africans. They settled down to tap the rich resources of Africa.

It needs to be stated at the outset that trading companies from Europe paved the way for eventual colonization in the two regions, and continued to influence government policies thereafter. From the start, they lobbied for British intervention to destroy the monopolies of indigenous African middle men in the interest of 'free trade'. In West Africa, they later lobbied to reduce the number of European firms allowed in the colonies in order to reduce competition. This is however, more applicable in West Africa. They amalgamated and formed a big company like the National African company (later UAC) and then asked for a charter to be the sole operating firm in the areas. They graduated later to controlling the price of the raw materials produced by the African farmers and of the imported commodities.[xii]

The government couldn't but yield to most of their demands; they were already entrenched in the system. Abroad, there were the chambers of commerce to which the merchants in the colonies belonged. In the colonies they had representatives in the legislative council. Even the chambers had representatives at the House in England. The government could only turn down their demand if it conflicted with the government's interest only, the interest of the 'negroes' was nothing to them.

In the two regions, more buying posts and trading centres were established in the hinterland. Large Europeans firms, having successfully by passed the African traders who once acted as agents between them and the hinterland Africans set up buying posts and even built warehouses to deal directly with the local suppliers.[xiii] They left their company representatives there who ensured that the raw materials were duly supplied and made ready for eventual shipment to Europe. For the first time in African history, the increasing presence of foreign commercial agents were felt in the hinterland rather than in the coast as it used to be. African traders did not have to travel far to sell. Trading centres were scattered throughout the provinces.[xiv]

However, not all areas were that favoured. There were areas that lacked good communication system and traders there had to fall back on porters to transport their goods from the African markets to the railways. Transportation was an issue which impeded commerce both in the East and West African states. New markets were however opened as the roads were opened.

There were also markets at the government trading centres. The peasant farmers preferred to go there because competition there helped them to obtain a better price for their produce than they had received from individual buyers.[xv] The only difference is that in the West exemplified by Nigeria, the European firms used monopoly powers to keep off African traders from such privilege. Both in the East and West, African traders were not allowed to sell directly in large quantity to big buyers.[xvi]

Africans were consigned to the role of raw material production, and their attention was forced to be on cash crops. There was a strong commodification of the African market. African farmers were now producing for exchange value more than for use value. Commercial agriculture took the place of subsistence agriculture. The government dictated the kinds of crops to be planted. While the sale of natural products such as ivory and hides continued, they were eclipsed by the increasing quantity of agriculture produce.[xvii] In both regions, the introduction of imported modern goods drove the Africans to produce for exchange value. In pre-colonial Africa people made sure that their subsistence needs were met first and then thought of giving out surplus for the market if there is any. But the whole trend changed as the "white men" came. The quest to sell more cash crops and have money to buy European goods altered the status-quo.

Commerce, it must not be forgotten, is not only the exchange of goods, but also the exchange of services. The service of African labour was highly exploited in the two regions. In the better colony in East Africa, Africans were majorly depended on for the work in the plantations. The government obviously trying to save its face and not willing to improve labourers condition, only 'enforced' certain minimal standard of treatment, prohibiting compulsion, but left employers to 'get' the workers by themselves. Local officers were told to 'encourage' the Africans to work for wages, but no African was permitted to be idle, he had to work either on his own land or for wages.[xviii] Having been deprived of their lands and land being only the means of production available for the Africans, they had no choice than to work in the plantations. It was an indirect 'forced labour', because they took their lands and said they must not be idle. What they received as reward was not commensurate with their input into the plantations. Some of them even squatted in the plantation, having been rendered landless. In West Africa, children (especially in Ghana), women and men were forced into hard labour to get more cash crops through heavy tax and other clandestine means with little or no pay.

Another area of similarity is the opening of banks by the colonial government to make credit available for their traders. Already, by the opening of the 20th century, European currency was introduced. This was followed by the opening of banks between 1909-10.[xix]National Bank of India, opened an office in Kisunu town. The Standard Bank of South African also opened office in Nairobi within that same period, for the traders in the highland.[xx] In Nigeria, European banks like Bank of British West Africa Limited, the Anglo-African Bank (later called Bank of Nigeria), the Colonial Bank and the Barclay Bank, all started operation to assist the European traders with better credit facilities. This further improved their trading power vis a vis the African traders. It was the unfair treatment of the African traders in the form of credit denial that led to the formation of African banks much later. For example, the starting of the African Continental Bank Ltd in the 1940s was aimed at liberalizing credit for African business men.[xxi] The establishment of the African banks drew the ire of the colonial government.

Another feature of the colonial trade is its unfair nature. The colonial government was umpire and player at the same time in the same game. It regulated trade to suit its interest. One major goal of the formation of African association in 1889 was to fix price for Nigeria agricultural products.[xxii] After processing, they also fixed price for the returned finished products. Their marketing board helped to achieve these. Apart from that, they raised import duty, knowing Africans had no choice than to import. The result was that Africans were paying more into the colonial coffers and earning less. They also had a quota system which prevented Africans from taking advantage of cheaper goods from other parts of the world such as Japan, and determined the quantity and quality of goods to be produced.

The preference system was a protectionist or exclusive measure through which the colony and the mother country gave preferential treatment to each other in trade and commercial relations. Colonial market was characterized by imperfection and monopolistic tendencies, and it is these two characteristics of the colonial trade environment that made colonization and under-development inseperable.[xxiii] Another dimension to the unfairness of the colonial trade is the use of policies by the colonial government to favour their own traders. In 1935 for example, a discriminatory law was enacted in Kenya to the detriment of African traders. The Kenya's Marketing of Native Produce Ordinance forbade Africans from involving in wholesale marketing to Europeans and Asians.[xxiv] This was an indirect way of preventing Africans from growing any cash crops in commercial quantity. In effect, while the Coffee Plantation Registration Ordinance of 1918 prevented Africans from growing coffee, this Marketing of Native Produce Ordinance prevented or at least discouraged Africans from even growing any cash crop in commercial quantity. It was also a way of releasing African labour to go and work for the Europeans in the plantations.

In West Africa, there were also some elements of discrimination. Herbert Macaulay's Nigeria Democratic Party formed in 1923 wanted by all means among other things, "free and fair trade in Nigeria and equal treatment for traders".[xxv] Again, colonial trade and commerce in the two regions were export-import oriented. African raw materials were exported raw (unprocessed) at cheap rate and brought back in form of finished products at exorbitant prices. For example, groundnut bought from African traders for £15 per ton by the West African produce board sold for £110 per ton in Europe.[xxvi]

Another striking feature is the 'enclave' developmental nature of the market. Although trade saw a great boost during the colonial era in the two regions, the markets that developed were focused on the urban centres, giving rise to the popping up of the big cities like Mogadishu, Nairobi, Lusaka, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Jos, etc. In East Africa, as in West Africa, trade unionism was not allowed as such by the colonial administration. Only staff association was allowed provided they took on a welfare character rather than direct union activities. For example, there was the Kenya African Civil Service Association which was founded around 1932.[xxvii]

Trade and Commerce: The Differences Between East Africa and West Africa

The hand of geopolitics helped to facilitate a difference in the pattern of trade in West and East Africa. East Africa's climate and geographical location favoured larger European settlement compared to West Africa. Apart from being located by the lake Victoria from which one could easily have access to Europe, the cool nature of the area and absence of some of the diseases found in West Africa made it enticing to white settlers. The settlement system brought about the plantation system in East Africa and that eventually shaped the pattern trade and commerce assumed there.

No doubt, colonialism was imposed on people with extremely differing cultures and backgrounds, living in different environments. It is therefore expected as M.H.Y Kaniki has noted, that administrators would be left to deal with situations, depending on the local conditions, without compromising, however, the major goals of colonialism.[xxviii] In the next section of this paper, the areas where trade and commerce in East Africa differ from West Africa's situation are highlighted.

In Kenya, and in many East African states, Africans farmers (who were also traders) were not allowed to grow all cash crops. The Coffee Plantation Registration Ordinance of 1918 required that anyone planting coffee which was the most profitable export commodity of the colony had to register with the colonial government.[xxix] The ordinance was used to bar Africans from growing the crop. Africans were denied registration. The cost of registration alone was enough to keep the African farmers and traders who were already by all means limited to small scale business. The contrary was the situation in West Africa. In Nigeria, as in the other West African states, the Africans were not barred from cash crop planting, so the African traders had the opportunity to market all the cash crops. Since there were no European plantations, African planters and traders supplied all the cash crops. There were however some extreme situations like one noted by Onyekpe, where Africans were stopped from growing rubber.[xxx]

Another area of difference is the scale of business allowed. In East Africa, the Kenya Marketing Native Produce Ordinance of 1935, restricted Africans from involving in wholesale marketing. Only Europeans and Asian traders were allowed to do so. Africans were prevented from getting involved in large-scale trading business. They were thus also denied the advantage of economies of scale, as they were limited to small scale trading. In West Africa, the absence or near absence of European plantations made it mandatory for the Europeans to buy cash crops in commercial quantity from the Africans. Africans were therefore allowed to get involved in large scale commerce. Again although expatriate firms dominated commerce in both East and West Africa, East Africa did not give rise to buy vertically and horizontally integrated trading firms such as those found in West Africa; like the UAC (Unilever), John Holt, Companies Franced'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO) etc.[xxxi]

Another difference is that the European settlers in Kenya practised economic nationalism and were too protective, vigorously resisting the open economy unlike in West Africa. This however had one advantage of giving rise to the growth of industries such as the Chandaria manufacturing group, which could not have occurred in a more open economy such as in West Africa. The open economy in West Africa reduced incentives for industrial production.

Another difference lies in the use of the trust system. The trust or credit system was used extensively in West Africa, but not in East Africa. The system was used to make credit in form of cash available by the European colonial traders for the African traders. The credits given were used to track down African produce, to ensure that they were made available by the African traders. The African traders also in turn made cash available for the hinterland producers to ensure the prompt supply of the crops. The large presence of Europeans in East Africa made it unnecessary for European traders to make significant use of the trust system. Unlike in the West, where European traders focused more on the coastal zones and therefore needed assurance about the trade goods in the hinterland, they had no such fear in the East.

Another difference can be seen in the extent of monopoly and discrimination. Although the colonial economy setting anywhere is a monopolistic and discriminating setting, the extent of monopoly and discrimination however differ. Monopoly and discrimination reached its peak in East Africa, especially in Kenya. The segregation between 'white' and 'black' also played out in trade politics. Fertile lands for production of good crops were reserved for the whites in the 'highlands', while the Africans were denied access to good lands. This made Africans, who could have competed favourably in trade with the Europeans to become their workers.

The level of the involvement of government in controlling the trade in the two regions also differs. While the government wielded enormous power in controlling the trade in West Africa, their powers in doing so in East Africa was limited. They were limited to some extent by the white settlers, the expatriates and their representatives in the colonies. The interest of the white settlers and all the European traders and firms in the colony were of high importance in decision making. These more or less controlled the trade, the government only came in once in a while to regulate things when its own interest was at stake. In West Africa, the absence of the white settlers who could have drawn their sympathy made them more callous and careless in taking decisions that affected the colonies. Although there were traders in West Africa who also influenced the government, such was not to be compared in size or strength to the traders in East Africa.

Also, in East Africa, land was commercialized, it became a commodity to be traded with. In West Africa, land ownership remained essentially communal as none wass commercialized. The influx of white settlers into East Africa put a very high pressure on land which was the only means of production. For example, Kenyans that had been deprived of their land by the mass land appropriation policy of the colonial government had no other option than to squat in the white settlers' plantations in exchange for free labour.[xxxii] Thus, land was used to make money from others. Another impact is the monetization of the African economy. The new dimension of trade and commerce during the colonial era had a tremendous impact on African business enterprises, which cannot be ignored. Some of these impacts are examined in the next section of this paper.

Impact of Colonial Trade and Commerce in East and West Africa

A scholar has noted that African economy had always been divided into two major sections. The first is the internal sector which produced both for the subsistence of the producers and for the home market, while the second is the external sector which centered on external trade.[xxxiii] In the pre-colonial era, both sectors were given equal attention, so that there was no need to import food.[xxxiv] There was economic thermostatic or balance. This balance was however disturbed and upturned by the new trend of commerce in the colonial era. Heavy reliance on cash crops to take care of the external trade led to the negligence of the internal sector of the economy of Africa. That negligence has made Africa what Professor Akinyeye in his inaugural lecture, called Acquired Import Dependency Syndrome (AIDS).[xxxv]

Monetization of the economy is another consequence of colonial trade and commerce. Apart from annihilating Africa's primitive currency and the imposition of the European one, money was made to become pervasive in the economy. The encouragement of wage labour and the imposition of tax were all strategies to increase money consciousness.

Another major consequence of colonial trade and commerce in the two regions studied, is that Africa's economy was dragged into or incorporated into the Western economy and by extension into the world economy, having been monetized. The yoking of the economies of the two continents was an unequal one. While one was developed, the other (Africa) was highly undeveloped. Africa's economy, being a very young one has not survived in the world economy where the super powers of the world and their highly developed economies are also players. The world bank has therefore been playing the role of a guide for Africa, rolling out economic policies which only provide cosmetic solution to the economic woes facing the continent. Surreptitiously, the world bank has replaced the colonizers, not with force but with finance. World trade organizations policies have not also helped Africa, and there is no sufficient evidence to suggest that it will in the foreseeable future.

Another consequence which directly follows the one mentioned above is the subjection of African economies to the economic disasters of the world. African economies had to share in the suffering brought by the world economic depression. For example, the Nigerian commodities prices fell as a result of the world economic disaster that came just after the world war I.[xxxvi] During the war boom, European companies used the depression laws to make over gain in the boom time.[xxxvii] Africa was thus conditioned to bear the brunt of world economic maladies.

Another consequence of the colonial trade pattern was the increasing presence of expatriate firms during the colonial era. Today, transnational corporations still litter all over Africa, we can obviously trace their root to the colonial era. These transnational corporations interfere in the politics of Africa, evade taxes and act as spies for their home countries. Their presence in Africa has rendered Africa's economic boundaries porous. The era also saw the interference with inter-African trade. The flow of trade in each colony was "reoriented towards the metropolitan country" and Africa was hindered from having direct trading link with other parts of the world which offered them the prospect of higher profit.[xxxviii] Finally, the focus on cash crop production, and the consequent killing of the industrial and manufacturing sectors,especially in West Africa, reduced the economy of Africa to a mono-cultural economy.

Conclusion

It is abundantly clear from the foregoing that, trade and commerce in both East and West Africa during the colonial era was highly exploitative. The common thread running through the trade policies and patterns in both regions is exploitation, the differences notwithstanding. The role of trade and commerce in the colonization and re-colonization of Africa (by proxy) has been seriously overlooked. More than anyone else, the traders facilitated and helped to maintain, and still maintain (through transnational corporations) colonial order.

The present writers concede to the fact however, that the impact of trade and commerce was not all negative. For example it increased urbanization, currency was introduced as a means of exchange, banking system, roads and railways were built to tap the raw materials. Although these were beneficial to the colonial officers, they now benefit Africans. However, the submission of this writer is that the negatives far outweigh the positives. In conclusion, if Africa will come out of the quagmire into which colonial trade and commerce had thrust her, then African trade and commerce have to be re-oriented and significantly decolonized.

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