

Impact of Colonial Rule on Food Crops Production in Annang, Calabar Province, Nigeria, 1900-1960

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of colonial rule on food crops production in Annang. The study interrogates how British rule subordinated Annang indigenous economy. The study adopts the historical method, relying extensively on secondary sources and primary information obtained from archival sources. The study reveals that Annang economy survived having been overshadowed by the economic policies created by the British. It shows that food crops production was disregarded in favour of cash crops production. The indigenous economy was undermined under the colonial dispensation. The paper concludes that until the emergence of the British rule in Annang, the people who were mainly peasant farmers were able to produce basic food crops to meet their needs. They did not experienced shortage of basic food items. All this changed with imposition of colonial in the area. The paper also examines the factors that caused the shortages of foodstuffs in Annang and the efforts made by the colonial authorities to solve them. It suggests that Nigeria government should learn from the Annang colonial experience.

Keywords: Annang, food crops, production, colonial rule, Nigeria

Introduction

Annang people occupy the northwestern part of Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria, which lies within the Cross River Basin, between latitudes 40.25' and 70 north and longitudes 70.15' and 90.30' east (Messenger, 1959). Pre-colonial Annang was made up of 34 clans (Ekong, 1983). During the colonial period, the Annang were majorly found in Ikot Ekpene and Abak division

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in Calabar province, with some other sub-set occupying 150 square miles in the north of Opobo division in Rivers province with sixty-eight villages (Ekong, 1983). These communities had a common cultural bond and they all looked up to Afaha Obong where the Annang supreme deity is situated as their place of origin and traditional headquarters (Essien, 2013). To the North, Annang is bounded by Ini and Ikono local government areas and to the South, by Ikot Abasi Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom state. To the West, Annang is bounded by Ngwa and Azumini communities of Abia state and Ndoki community of Rivers state and to the East by Uyo and Mkpatenin LGAs. Geographically, Annang lies almost entirely in the rain forest belt of Southern Nigeria. The area has a level landscape, covered by relatively low vegetation and myriad of palms. There is a mean annual rainfall of 2030 - 2540mm. The landscape is generally flat and low-lying with no point rising above 300ft and no part less than 100ft feet above the sea level (Udondata & Ekanem, 2011). At present, Annang, with a population of more than one million people, is the second largest ethnic group in Akwa Ibom state (National Population Commission, 2006). The Annang are found in eight of the present 31 LGAs in the, namely; Abak, Essien Udim, Etim Ekpo, Ika, Ikot Ekpene, Obot Akara, Oruk Anam and Ukanafun, yet, they are culturally homogenous.

British Conquest and Imposition of Colonial Rule in Annang

The imposition of British authority and ultimately British rule on the Annang started at the beginning of the 20th century (1900-1912) when British government sent numerous military expeditions termed “patrols” to subjugate the Annang (Aston-Smith, 1904). The most significance of these patrols was the so-called Ibibio expedition which set out from Ekid in 1901 under R.B. Books, a British political officer (Hawesworth, 1904). The patrol overran a large part of southern Annang and in the process established military/administrative station at Abak (Aston-Smith, 1904). Another patrol that overran the northern parts of Annang was the Aro expedition which was led by Lt. Col. Montamaro that passed close to Ikot Ekpene village while pursuing the Aro westward and in the process established

administrative station at Ikot Ekpene (Johnson, 1936). The outcome of these expeditions was that the Annang could not withstand modern British machine gun and as such was subdued despite their stiff resistance (Abasiattai, 1991). It was basically British intention to allow free flow of trade and exploitation of agricultural and forest resources of the area. Thus, immediately after the conquest and to ensure that anarchy did not arise in the absence of the hitherto indigenous rule, the British officers in Annang began to establish institutions and implement measures aimed at achieving the objectives of the conquest. The measures put in place by the British government to administer their Annang subjects were "Indirect Rule". The whole of Annang was divided into native courts. These Native Courts were vested with executive, legislative and judicial powers.

Under the native court system, Annang kings were appointed Warrant Chiefs and granted powers as members of the native courts (Spence, 1911). Other measures introduced by the British to enforce compliance to colonial rule in the area and to further colonial interest included the establishment of Native Authority Police to exercise such functions as enforcement of law and order in the society which were hitherto performed by the *ekpo* and *ekpe* secret societies and introduction of taxation. According to an archivist, Mr. J.E.N. Nwanguru, the Native Police would help to maintain law and order to ensure free trade and exploitation of resources of the area (Nwanguru, 1935).

Like in Esan, after the conquest and imposition of colonial rule in Annang, British authorities imposed new demands on the people, production of raw materials such as rubber, palm oil and kernels (Osagie, 2014). The production of these raw materials impeded the cultivation of food crops in Annang. As the people embarked on the production of cash crops such as rubber, palm oil and palm kernels to meet the needs of British industries, they were compelled to relegate the cultivation of food crops to the background. The food crisis faced in Annang during the period could, therefore, be traced greatly to the advent of colonialism in Annang which changed the focus and objective of production away from food production to cash crop production.

Food Crops Production in Precolonial Annang

The history of food crops production in Annang dates back to the pre-colonial era. The people were mainly peasant farmers who were able to produce basic food crops in abundance to meet their immediate needs. In precolonial Nigeria, subsisting agriculture was the order of the day which emphasised cultivation and production of food crops by a farmer to feed himself and his family (Ugwukah, 2022). The cultivation and production of food were done mainly via subsistence means and engulfed by low technical know-how and with intensive human resources due to lack of credit and machinery (Osabohien et al, 2020). Major food crops cultivated by the people included yam, cocoyam, cassava, and varieties of vegetable. Yam was regarded as the most important crop in pre-colonial Annang society (Toby, 2014). Other crops were regarded as secondary to yam and were basically planted by women (Messenger, 1959). Prior to colonial rule, the people of Nigeria had comparatively perfected the production of these food crops on which they depended for food (Iwuagwu, 2014).

Food Crop Production in Colonial Annang

Before the establishment of colonial rule in Annang, the people were self-sufficient in food production. But with the conquest and imposition of colonial rule in Annang, all these changed as more emphasis was now on the production of cash crops, particularly palm oil and kernel, at the expense of food crops (Curwen, 1932). In all British control territories, what emerged after imposition of colonial rule was a systematic attempt aimed at discouraging farmers from producing food crops (Iwuagwu, 2014). Production for local consumption suffered great setback due to colonial agricultural policies which were aimed mainly at the development of the British economy (Akubor, 2021).

The consequence of this was such that the people began to experience shortage of some basic food items in their markets as they were now compelled to relegate the cultivation of food crops to the background in favour of cash crops that were needed in European countries. As such, reduction in food production was a major characteristic of colonial

Nigerian economy (Fasoyiro & Taiwo, 2012). The few food crops that were available for sale in most Annang markets became very expensive. This became more evident during the period of the Second World War as there was more push for the people to produce more cash crops, thereby contributing their quota to the funds required to fight the war. The table below shows the market prices of food in Abak Division in 1950

Table 1: Market prices of some food in Abak division, 1950

Description	Unit	Abak market (central)	Urua Ekwong (western)	Utu Etim Ekpo market north/south)	Obo market (northern)	Remakes
<u>Grains</u>	per doz.					Prices so high
Maize	“ “	3d	3d	2/2d	2d	
Rice		£3:19:8d	£3:19:8d	£3:19:8d	£3:19:8d	
<u>Root</u>	Per cwt	£1:4/-	£1:6/-	£1:7:6	£1:5/-	Prices at the highest level
Cross River yam	“ “					
Local yam	“ “	9/6d	12/-	10/-	10/11d	
Cocoyam	“ “	6/9d	4/8-	7/-	7/4d	
Cassava		5/3d	6/6d	5/10d	6/-	
<u>Fruits &nuts</u>	Per doz					So high
Bananas	“ “	2d	3d	2 1/2d	2 1/2d	
Oranges	Each	2d	2 1/2d	2 1/2d	3d	
Pineapples		4d	5d	4d	4 1/2d	
<u>Oil</u>						fair
Palm oil	Per tin	16/6d	17/-	16/16d	16/6d	
<u>Meat</u>						Price at the highest level
Beef chicken	Per 1b	1/3d	1/4d	1/5d	1/4d	
	“ “	4/9d	4/3d	4/3d	4/6d	
<u>Fish</u>						So high
Dried fish	Per 1b	2/6d	2/9d	2/8d	2/10d	

Description	Unit	Abak market (central)	Urua Ekwong (western)	Utu Etim Ekpo market north/south)	Obo market (northern)	Remakes
<u>Vegetables</u>						Very high
Tomatoes	Per 1b	3d	4d	4d	5d	
Okro	“ “	2d	3d	2d	2d	
Onion	“ “	3d	3d	2d	2d	
Pepper	Per cwt	£7:9:4d	£7:9:4d	£7:9:4d	£7:9:4d	
<u>Miscellaneous</u>						Very high
Melon (egusi seed)	Per cwt	£4:3/-	£4:12/-	£4:3/-	£4:3/-	
Garri	Per cwt	11/6d	15/-	13/6d	12/6d	
Eggs	Per doz	1/6d	2/1	1/6d	1/6d	

Source: N.A.E. (A. D.) ABAKDIST1/2/39, 1950, p.804.

Realizing these challenges of shortage of foodstuff in Ikot Ekpene, Abak, Calabar, Uyo Opobo, Itu, Eket, and Arochuku, the Agricultural Officer issued memorandum No 97/15, 12th July, 1940 to the DOs of the above area on food production stated thus:

The Director of agriculture has issued instruction that the main work of Agricultural Department must now be the production of food stuffs and that in consequence other lines of work such as palm planting may have to slow down or discontinued entirely. The main thing is that all local natural resources should be put to the best use possible in helping toward self-sufficiency (Hanitsch, 1941).

Arising from the above instruction, the DOs introduced some measures with the aim of solving the above problem in Annang. Some of these measures were:

1. to regulate the prices of foodstuffs in the markets;
2. to encourage the cultivation of other food crops such as rice and cassava in place of yam that was labour intensive;
3. to introduce new agricultural models such as experimental farms;
4. to introduce fertilizers to agriculture;
5. that Native Authority Agricultural allocations may be spent if necessary on food production project and propaganda instead on oil palm programme as was original intended;
6. that instruction was given that food production was to be the first consideration (Hanitsch, 1941).

Regulation of Prices of Foodstuffs

The problem of food shortages in Annang markets was to be solved by the colonial authorities by introducing food prices control scheme. The aim was to bring down the prices of foodstuffs in the markets. However, this measure did not bring down the prices of foodstuffs in most Annang markets. Rather, it further worsened the food situation as most farmers refused to send their foodstuffs to the markets which gave rise to higher prices of foodstuff. In line with this, the prices of garri in most Annang markets became unstable across town. This is shown in the table below which compares prices of garri in most Annang markets between 1944 and 1945.

Table 2: Garri prices in major towns in Annang (cigarette cups for 3d.)

Months	Ikot Ekpene, 1944	Ikot Ekpene, 1945	Abak, 1944	Abak, 1945	Etim Ekpo, 1944	Etim Ekpo, 1945
Jan	12	12	15	9	12	12
Feb	9	10	8	9	15	9
Mar	7 ½	9	n/a	7	7	6
April	6	7	4	7	6	6
May	6	7	5	6	6	6

Months	Ikot Ekpene, 1944	Ikot Ekpene, 1945	Abak, 1944	Abak, 1945	Etim Ekpo, 1944	Etim Ekpo, 1945
June	7	6	5	6	8	6
July	6	7	6	7	18	7
Aug	9	7½	5	8	12	10
Sept	9	8	6	9	12	12
Oct	9	10	12	9	13	12
Nov	10	13	9	10	13	12
Dec	12	12	9	10	n/a	7

Source: N.A.E. (C. S.) CSE 1/85/5261 Annual Report- Agricultural Department

With the unstable prices in garri, Annang traders in these areas abandoned their once profitable garri trade (Hanitsch, 1945). As the food shortage continued, the colonial authorities initiated cultivation of some food crops that were less labour intensive than yam.

Cultivation of rice and cassava

The colonial authorities encouraged the cultivation of rice and cassava which they hoped would enable the farmers combine the production of raw materials with that of food crops without one disrupting the other. This policy was backed by intensive propaganda by the colonial authorities. Accordingly, the Ikot Ekpene agricultural officer during his visit to Nung Ukim Native Administration school farms and rice plot advised the people to cultivate rice as alternative to yam (Thompson, 1939). He argued that advantages of cultivating rice were that, it was less labour intensive compared to yam. The people were also advised to cultivate rice in order to reduce food shortage in the area. These efforts were clearly reported by the agriculture assistant:

While talking on food production, we have mention the introduction of rice to the Southern parts of the Division and the possibility of rice growing in the district. They were interested and many have enlisted their names as prospective rice planters (Harding, 1940).

It was necessary for the people to embrace rice cultivation because it could be cultivated by women or children, while, allowing the men to focus on cash crops production. Besides, rice took a shorter time than yam, and it could be cultivated along with other crops such as melon.

Against this background, demonstration plots of swamp rice were established at various parts of Annang particularly in Mbiabong, Ikpe Ikot Nkun and Ududu Ikpe (Harding, 1937). To achieve the aim of promoting rice cultivation by the people, agricultural officers were trained and sent to schools in Annang to organise and deliver lectures on best method for rice cultivation. The negative disposition of the people for rice planting was due to the fact that the traditional way of processing which was by pounding with mortar and pestle to remove the husk was too tasking and could not be used to embark on large scale production as expected by the colonial authorities. To overcome the challenges of the traditional method

Source: N.A.E. (A. B.) ABAK/DIST/1/2/3/39, p.808

Table 3: Food prices in Abak, 1949-51

Commodities	1949	1949	1949	1950	1950	1950	1951	1951	1951	1952	1952	1952
	July	Aug.	Sept	July	Aug.	Sept	July	Aug	Sept	July	Aug	Sept
Yam per cwt.	28/-	30/-	26/-	40/6	40/3d	22/-	23/-	24/-	20/-	29/-	25/-	27/-
Gari " "	32/-	28/-	21/-	22/6	21/3	17/6	16/-	15/-	10/9	19/-	17/-	16/-
Cocoyam " "	16/-	14/-	15/-	18/-	19/-	15/3	11/-	8/-	8/-	15/-	12/-	11/-
Plantain per doz	7d	7d	8d	8d	7d	7d	9d	8d	6 1/2d	7d	7d	8d
Palm oil per 4 gallon tin	12/-	12/-	12/6	12/9	12/6	17/-	17/-	17/-	17/-	14/-	14/-	16/-
Maize per doz	4 ½	6d	6d	3d	4d	6d	2d	3d	4d	5d	4d	4d
Meat per lb	1/10	1/11	2/-	¼	1/3	1/-	1/5	1/1	1/-	1/10	2/-	1/11
Rice per cwt.	59/-	60/-	61/-	55/8	55/8	53/-	56/-	79/8	79/8	59/-	60/-	60/-

of processing rice, the colonial officials agreed to buy the rice paddy produced by the rice farmers which they process and sell to the people. The rice so purchased was sent to places where rice processing machines were established. The people were also informed that rice and cassava, two food crops that were promoted by colonial authorities, which could be cultivated on the same plot as cassava could be planted after rice has been harvested. Through these aggressive efforts and propaganda, some rice farmers began to embrace the cultivation of rice along with cash crops. The table below shows some rice farmers in Ikot Ekpene division.

Table 4: Rice Farmers at Ikpe area

Name	Locality	Estimated acreage
C. S. M. School	Uquot	0.25
C. S. M. School	Mbiabet	0.12
Mr Essien Umo	Ikot Otok	0.20
Mr S. U. Ukut	Ekoi	0.40
Mr Edward Akpan	Ikot Effa	0.13
Mr Dvid Udofia	Ikot Effa	0.13
Mr Okpong Uwak	Ikpe Ikot	0.02
Mr Isong Uyo	Edina Ewaro	0.11
Mr Udokang Asuquo	Ikot Udo	0.02
Mr Udo Ekanam	Ikot Udo	0.04
Mr Solomon Akpan	Ikot Udo	0.15
Chief Akpetu Umo	Ikot Effa	0.02
Mr Bassey Akpan Nya	Ikot Effa	0.07
Chief Sampson Esire	Ikpe Ikot	0.02

Source: N.A.E. (I. D.) IKOTDIST 13/1/583

Table 5: Rice Cultivation work in Ududu Ikpe

Name	Locality	Estimated acreage
Ndarake Akpumo	IkotUdo	0.30
Ndarake Ekong	Ikot Udo	0.42
Ukpong Udo	Ikot Udo	0.60
Solomon Akpan	Ikot Udo	0.20
Johnson Ukpabio	Ikot Effa	0.15
E. A. Ekanem	Ikot Effa	0.20
John Essien Ete	Ikot Effa	0.15
U. E. Inyang	Ikpe Ikot Nkon	0.30
S. U. Ekpo	Ikot Effa	0.20
Udofia U. Akpan	Ibam Obot	0.40
S. Ekanem	Ikot Udo	0.10
Mr Efre	Ikot Udo	0.10

Source: N.A.E. (I. D.) IKOTDIST 13/1/583

The cultivation of rice produced poor yield mainly because of unsuitable climatic conditions of Annang for rice production. Climatic factors are the primary important factors affecting agricultural production (Adejuwon, 2005). This failure of rice to do well in this area was reported by the Agricultural Assistant in November 1940 thus:

All the rice plots in the district were visited. The rice seeds are matured but they are not ripe enough for harvest. Owners are instructed to equip themselves with the necessary instruments for harvest early next month. The rice plot at N.A. School Nung Ukim which was first planted was harvested with a very poor result and this this due to poor soil (Harding, 1942).

With this kind of result, the people became sceptical about the prospect of rice production. The attitude of the people did not, however, stop the colonial authorities from encouraging the people to continue with the consumption of rice which they believed would solve the problem of food shortages in the area. According to agricultural officer Ikot Ekpene “Rice as a food is of comparatively good nutritional value and its introduction into the diet of the people on a large scale is most desirable as it would help to end the food shortages” (Curwen, 1942). The resistance of colonial authorities to ensure that the people continue with the cultivation of rice was by showing example. In this regard, the agricultural assistant Ikot Ekpene reported in February 1942 that:

since most of the plots planted in May last year proved a failure I have though it wise to establish a trial plot in February so as to find out whether or not early planting would be a success. For the above reason I have cleared a portion in the Central Nursery Ikot Ekpene where I have cultivated and sown 3 cupful of paddy rice (Curwen, 1942).

With this kind of attitude from the European officials and aggressive propaganda of educating the people that rice enjoyed a short period of less than seven months of cultivation and that it could be carried out simultaneously with cash crops production helped to attract more people to embrace rice cultivation. These successes were reported in Mbiabong, Ikot Ebak, Ikot Ekpene, Ikpe Ikot Nkun and Ududu Ikpe. This necessitated the establishment of experimental mill by the colonial authorities at Ikot Ebak to undertake the milling of rice (Curwen, 1942). The mills were expected to increase the level of rice production in Annang. As a result of the relatively low price of rice and the ease of preparation, the people, especially the urban dwellers, embraced rice consumption. With time, the rural people joined in its consumption as rice became staple food which became popular among different classes of people in Annang society.

Table 6: Prices of Foodstuffs Sold in Abak District Markets, 1912

Foodstuffs	Prices
Yam	From 5 for 5 manilas to 5 for 20 manilas according to size
Plantain	From 5 to 20 manillas for one manilla according to size
Cassava	3 and 4 lumps for one manila (roots, one basket full for 4 manilas)
Garri	From 6 to d cups for one manila
Cocoyam	From 5 to 20 for one manila according to size
Corn	From 6 to 18 for 1 manila according to sizes
Bean	1 bundle for one manila
Banana	1 bundle for 3 or 4 manilas
Rice	1 ½ cigarette tins for one manila

Sources: N.A.E. (C.S.) CSO 25/27/689, *Intelligence Report on Ika Clan Abak District, Calabar Province, 1912, p.82*

From the table, compared to yam, rice was cheaper and easily affordable hence its acceptability by the Annang people. It is competing very well with yam in major occasions such as Christmas, festivals, marriages and burials where the latter, hitherto, constituted the main food served.

Cassava was another crop that the colonial authorities in Annang also encouraged and promoted. Although, its cultivation was known to the people before the imposition of colonial rule in the area, its consumption was not, however, popular among the Nigerian people particularly the elderly and the elite in the society (Osagie, 2014). It was considered by them to be inferior to yam. As a result, cassava was not initially cultivated by men but by the women in separate farms. But with the scarcity of food stuff in most Annang markets during the Second World War period, the colonial officials persuaded not only the women but the men to plant cassava as doing so would help to solve the problem of food shortages that was witnessed in the area during the 1940s. In doing this, various varieties of cassava were tried in experimental farms in various parts of Annang (Hanitsch, 1942). Propaganda was also embarked on by the colonial authorities for the people to grow cassava in the area. For example, this

was seen in the memo of the technical assistant, Ikot Ekpene and Itu District stated in September 1940 that:

during the month satisfactory propaganda work had been done on "Grow More Food" both in the Ikot Ekpene and Itu Divisions by N. A. Assistants and himself. Clan Councils, Native Courts, villages and individual houses were visited and a careful talk on the above subject was dealt with. On the whole the people are very much interested on our advice to them and many have promised to take serious views and prompt action about them planting more cassava (Hawesworth, 1942).

In the same view, the agricultural assistant Ikot Ekpene wrote in his letter of 20 /11/ 1940 to the district officer Ikot Ekpene of his efforts in ensuring that the people cultivate cassava, thus:

During the month many people were visited and instructed to grow more food next planting season. We have taken enough time to explain to them the position palm produce. The people are warned to guard against famine by growing more cassava which is the staple food. We have also pointed to them the increase demand for garri (Hawsworth, 1942).

These efforts of the colonial official to encourage the people to cultivate cassava paid off as they embraced its cultivation. During this period of trials, it was discovered that cassava could do very well in Annang farms. The result encouraged the colonial authorities to embark on distribution of cassava stem free of charge to famers that wanted to cultivate them. With the cassava stem provided free, both men and women in the Annang embraced its cultivation. For the men, it was easy to combine cassava cultivation with that of yam because it was less labour intensive as compared to yam planting. The fact that cassava could be cultivated with other crops including yam on the same plot was an additional incentive for the men to buy into the idea of cultivating cassava. The colonial officials

welcomed this development as it allowed the people to continue with the production of cash crops, which were their major interest in Annang since the men did not necessarily need to abandoned cash crop production for cassava production. Cassava was less labour intensive as such; the people could accommodate the production of cash crops. At present in Annang, cassava has become a major crop in most Annang farms. Its by-product could be processed into garri, *fufu* and cassava chips. The introduction of grater by the colonial authority helped to reduce time wastage that was associated with the traditional method in the process of turning the cassava into garri (Osagie, 2014). During the visits of the agricultural assistant, Ikot Ekpene, to some towns in the Division, he was led to see one garri grater at Nung Ukim where he also was informed on garri making. The introduction of cassava grater by the colonial authorities had greatly reduced the labour which was associated with the cassava processing and as such had helped the women to expend less time and energy on the processing of garri (Toby, 2014).

It is important to note that, all the efforts put up by the people to improve on the cultivation of food crop were affected by a number of challenges such as destruction of their crops by domestic animals and stalling of their crops. According to complaints of the people to the technical assistant, Ikot Ekpene:

Nearly in all the places we have talked to the people on the need to grow food they have pointed to us of great danger done by domestic animals to their farm crops. In Mbiabong and Ududu Ikpe native courts, the chiefs and the people have asked me to point this out to the District Officer that animals damage to farm crops is becoming rampart in their area and there could be no check to it if the owners of this domestic animals are given awards or compensation if their animals are killed in the farms for destroying their farm crops (Johnson, 1940).

On the issue of stalling of farm crops, the technical assistant, Abak reported in 1940 that:

in all the courts and councils that we have visited, the chiefs and the people complain that stalling of farm crops is becoming a problem to the community. This is due to the fact that there is no sufficient punishment given to thieves now days. Before when the courts were not empowered with more judicial powers to sentence thieves above 3 months and when by their native customs thieves were publicly disgrace and flogged as such stalling was not so much (Johnson, 1940).

While the people acknowledged the efforts by the colonial officials to ensure that there was no food shortage in the area through their policies, however, there was no serious effort by the colonial authorities to increased investment and commercialisation of agricultural practices in Annang. Investment in agriculture is defined as additions to stock of capital that are the sources of income streams, while commercialisation is the movement from a subsistence production system to a market-based system (Manyon et al, 2003).

Conclusion

The colonial period witnessed rapid expansion of agricultural activities in Annang. However, unlike the precolonial period where emphasis was on food crops production, emphasis shifted to cash crops production as encouraged by colonial authorities. Thus, the colonial agricultural policy in Annang was geared towards achieving cash crops export to the mother country. The problem of fluctuations and instabilities in prices of goods and services during the colonial period compounded the woes of the local farmers in Annang. For example, the economic depression that accompanied World War I, the vicissitudes of the Second World War and the attendant slump in prices of cash crops added to their problems. This was compounded by the problem of food shortages particularly during the period of Second World War when more energy was invested in the production of cash crops to boost the revenue base to sustain the British war efforts. In addressing the problem of food shortage in Annang,

the colonial authorities adopted some measures among which was the encouragement of new crops such as cassava and rice to augment yam as the staple food crops in Annang. Although the cultivation of some of these crops in Annang, such as rice, did not do well, others like cassava adapted very well in the area. The present government and policy makers in Nigeria can learn some lessons from the colonial economic experience in Annang. Agriculture was the leading sector of the Annang economy during the colonial period. It did not only provide food for the people, it also provided export earnings for the colonial government. The position of the agricultural sector is still important if we, as a country, want to check the current level of shortage of basic foodstuff in the markets for our growing population and high inflation. The decline in the agricultural sector, which has resulted in scarcity of food and has triggered a wave of price increase throughout the country, is not a good development in a country like Nigeria with arable land and labour force. Everything must be done to revitalise agricultural sector so that it can play its vital role in ensuring food security in the country.

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