

THE PRE-COLONIAL MODE OF PRODUCTION AND LABOUR ORGANISATION AMONG THE BEROM OF THE JOS PLATEAU IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyzed the pre-colonial economy of the Berom of the Jos Plateau in Northern Nigeria. The study established that the economy was not static but dynamic and complex in which the various sectors were integrated into a stable, viable and self sustained economy that was able to generate surpluses that met the socio-political and economic needs of the society. The Berom economy exhibited gender division of labour that was complementary but not competitive which ensured greater integration of women in agricultural production. However cultural beliefs and practices especially related to land ownership and labour were discriminatory and disadvantageous to Berom women.

KEYWORDS: Berom, Economy, Pre-Colonial, Production, Gender, Labour

INTRODUCTION

The colonialists regarded the pre-colonial economy of the Berom like that of the whole of the Jos Plateau as backward and primitive.¹ The level of development of Berom economy was grossly under estimated by colonial officers who compared their economy with, for example, that of the Hausa and the Europeans on the eve of British conquest of Northern Nigeria. Holmes, the colonial agricultural officer, for example, alleged that Hausa farming was better than that of the Plateau “pagans” who were seen to be unproductive and have retreated to the Hills.² The British dismissed the Plateau economy as backward because no export agricultural crops were produced sufficiently on the Plateau. They did not recognize the self-sufficiency surplus production of both the Hill and plain economies of the Jos Plateau. The Jos Plateau was ideal for economic activities due to abundance of water, relatively good soil and especially security. Even the Hill communities developed effective farming system based on terracing for effective utilization of the hills. Even though most of the Berom settled on the plains some of them settled in isolated hills outcrops such as Vom.

The Nature of Pre- Colonial Economy of the Berom

An objective analysis of the pre-colonial economy of the Berom shows that they developed a complex economy made up of various sectors that were effectively integrated together into a stable, viable self-sufficient economy. The economy only manifested some measure of disequilibrium as a result of wars and natural disasters such as locust invasion. Although the economy can be described as subsistence, it does not mean that it was devoid of surplus production and exchange. Thus the Berom pre-colonial economy was made up of the following sectors:

¹ Goshit Z, The Development of Food Crises on the Jos Plateau Area, 1902- 1990, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Jos, Nigeria, p.57.

² Ibid.

- Agriculture
- Livestock and fishing
- Crafts
- Cottage industry
- Trade (exchange)

This shows that the Berom pre-colonial economy was relatively developed and diversified in which the mode of production and labour organization were also sufficiently complex and developed for surplus production.

The Mode of Production

The concept of mode of production has been used to study “segmentary” societies and the Plateau societies. The use of this concept, which is Marxian in orientation, has been found to be useful in the understanding of all societies cutting across all socio-economic formations.³ But we should not also be unmindful of the problematic of using Marxian concepts blindly especially as it relates to non-European societies. We should not be unaware that Marxism as an ideology was based on Marx understands of British capitalist economy. But his understanding of the logic and essence of capitalism in historical perspectives was incomplete.⁴ Even though subsequent Marxist ideologies like Lenin and Moa Tsetung attempted to fill in the gaps to make Marxism adaptable to different historical conditions, the major short fall of Marxism’s applicability and practicability, which has been demonstrated by the decline of socialism in the Soviet Union should not be underestimated and/or over looked.

Thus, even though we are going to use the concept of mode of production in analyzing the pre-colonial economy of the Berom, it should be borne in mind that there is no single mode of production for African economies but various modes that are being transformed assuming new forms and dimensions. What we find is the articulation of different aspects of the economy as a result of internal and external exchanges which give rise to different socio-economic structures that possess some unique characteristics even though it demonstrated general features of the classical modes of production enumerated by Marx into the following: communal, slave, feudal, capitalist, socialist and communist mode of production. The materialist conception of History which informed Marxist ideology as propounded by Fredrick Engels and Karl Marx has given rise to endless debates within both the capitalist and socialist ideologues about the nature and essence of pre-capitalist, capitalist and post-modern societies with regards to the formation and nature of classes, class struggle, class exploitation, labour etc. Notable among the critiques of Marxism are Kolokowski and Lloyd.⁵ Divergent views and positions have arisen in academic circles as a result of the failure of Classical Marxist theory to explain certain historical processes, for example what constitutes classes and the proletariat in pre-capitalist and Third World societies and why the demise of capitalism has not yet taken place to date and why technology has over taken workers as the leading productive force under imperialism making proletarian revolution very oblique in advanced capitalist societies. Likewise Marxists’

³ See for example, Mangvwat M., “A History of Class Formation in the Plateau Province, 1902-1960: A Genesis of a Ruling Class”, Ph.D Thesis, A.B.U., Zaria, 1984.

⁴ These have resulted in the development of different brand of socialism which ranges from Marxist- Leninism, Maoism, Euro-Marxism and the different kinds of African socialism such as Ujama.

⁵ See Kolokowski, L. *Main Currents of Marxism*, 3 vols, London, 1981, Lloyd P. *A Third World Proletariat*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1982.

prophetic march towards communism seems suddenly to be grounding to a halt. Peter Lloyd concluded that class analysis has universals and diversities that can pose more questions than answers.⁶ Thus, the application of Marxist concepts especially to the study of the pre-capitalist and Third World societies has to be done with much caution. Researchers should not overlook some of the specialties of the different features of the economy in different historical situations within each mode, which is more useful in understanding the complexity of the socio-economic formation of any particular society so that the details and essential differences and uniqueness of the socio-economic formations will not be lost under the umbrella of over generalization. Thus, the Marxist concepts in this study primarily serve as a guide to our understanding of the pre-colonial Berom mode of production and labor organization but not as dogmatic “scientific” concepts that are true at all times and places.

The mode of production of the Plateau societies including that of the Berom have been described variously as lineage based or communal. There is a major distinction between the two concepts. A communal mode pre-supposes that economic production is organized based on local communal labor within the immediate environment i.e. the resources of the immediate members of the community are pooled together and utilized irrespective of biological descent. Thus the idea of a communal mode is based on territory or proximity but not solely on biological descent. If understood in this respect, the mode of production in the Plateau cannot be said to be communal but lineage based because economic production was based on biological descent. It was only slaves that were integrated into the kinship and lineage based economy but the use of slaves in production was the exception rather than the rule.

The mode of production among the Berom was not static. The changes were characterized by increasing differentiation in the composition and status of the members that were engaged in the lineage based economy. Some changes were also characterized by the introduction of new innovations in technology, method of farming, land tenure, exchange, political and social organization etc.

Those who had access to more sources of labor within or outside the lineage or kin groups especially through marriage, slave or *cuvée* labor accumulated more surplus. It should be noted that the changes that occurred in Berom society were not only progressive ones especially in relation to free access to land and labor by heads of households, lineages and clans but there were also retrogressive changes, which affected the different social groups differently such as discriminatory cultural beliefs and taboos against women discussed above. It affected men and women differently. Women did not have free access to family or communal land because the family heads that were always men arranged the use of land. In very rare cases the women could do this but only with the permission of her husband or the head of the family.⁷ Women did not also have free access to hired labour or animal labour except very few women during the colonial period.⁸ They however had free access to animal manure.⁹

The basis of men’s wealth was largely the control they had over women’s labor and communal labor¹⁰ and the heroism they displayed during military and hunting expeditions. The analysis of Berom economy is going to be based on the analysis of these changes and how it affected the society and women in particular. Our main argument, however, is that the ability of men to control women especially through marriage was the key determinant of the progress or otherwise of

⁶ Lloyd, P. *ibid*, p.22.

⁷ Ngo Kumbo Jang, 84 years, DU, 4th December, 1997, Da Chundung Mandung, 75 years. Gyel, 18th November 1997.

⁸ Tabitha Nyam, 79 years, Du, 4th December, 1997.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ Ngo Bang Jang, 84 years, Rayfield, 2nd December, 1997.

Berom society because they served as the most important source of labour and the replenishment of labor through biological reproduction. This explains the practice and acceptance of both official and “unofficial” marriage systems such as the *Njem* relationship in which a wife could marry other husband(s) but with the consent of her husband. The *Njem* lovers paid dowry in cash and kind in form of labor to the husband. Thus, marriage, whether official or through *Njem* was significant as one of the sources of labor because of the absence of indentured and wage labour among the Berom.

Land Tenure

The Berom live on and off the land. It is their source of life. The influence of land and the products on Berom life is vast, far greater perhaps than the average European can hope to understand. Land tenure provides the basis for all economic activities. In classical economic analysis the factors of production consists of land, labor and capital. Among the three, land constitutes the most important factor of production because almost all economic activities is related to the use of land either directly or indirectly.

The concept of land ownership differs from society to society. Thus, the European concept of land ownership differs markedly from that of the Berom. The European concept of land ownership meant the exercise of absolute control over land. Based on this understanding, Ames claimed that land in Berom land belonged to the chief. He said,

“all the land belonged to the chief of the village by right of priority of settlement and the ability to defend his boundaries, and no land was taken up for building or farming except with the consent of the chief.”¹¹

But the Berom people did not have this conception of land ownership because the chief on behalf of the people only held land in trust. Extensive oral interviews have corroborated the view that the chiefs did not own the physical land in practice but it was held in trust on behalf of the people. In actual sense, therefore, the land belonged to the community. The Chiefs’ position as a trustee was because of the special ritual and religious functions he performed in ensuring land fertility for the general good of his community.¹² Thus, land ownership was understood in a political-religious sense rather than in economic sense. The chief exercised political control over the land in the sense of ensuring collective responsibility of safeguarding the land against external attack.¹³ Once land was allocated to families or households, it becomes their joint property to which individuals including women had the right to use it.¹⁴

The chief could not confiscate land or appropriate land for himself or another person for any reason. It was only the virgin lands that he had the mandate to distribute to those in need of land. This did not include the re-distribution of occupied lands, which was left to household and lineage heads. When land was exhausted and redistribution became necessary on a large scale either as a result of natural disaster, population increase or a breakdown in the fallow system, which results in very low land fertility, the people moved in part or as a whole in search of virgin lands. This was done either peacefully through conquest to satisfy land hunger.

According to oral information, when people were looking for new areas to settle, the whole community moved under the leadership of a Chief Priest. When they find an appropriate place, there was no formal distribution of land rather

¹¹ Ames, G.G. (1934), *Gazetteer of Plateau Province*, Jos, p.113.

¹² Jacobs, C.C. *Berom Historical Tradition (BHT)*”, unpublished collected oral traditions.

¹³ Berom Historical Publications, Interview Da Mancha Dung, 78 years, former, Du, 22-27/2/92.

¹⁴ Berom Historical Publication, interview Da Mancha Dung, no years, Farmer, Du, 22-27/2/92.

families or households settled and claimed enough portion of the bush as farmland. But new comers needed to get permission from the original settlers to settle on the land. The new settlers in turn get as much land as they needed.¹⁵ Occupied lands became family lands that can be expanded. The land was communally owned and senior male members of clans and lineages supervised its usage. But production was lineage based. In some places like Borum District, family lands could be expanded by youths in the household who organized themselves to clear the bush for new farms. They could keep small portions of farmland, which they can later inherit.¹⁶ As a patriarchal and patri-local society, the commonest way of acquiring land was through land inheritance. The brothers can either jointly own land inherited if they stayed together or they were shared among them if they have separate households either due to a general or large increase in the number of the households within the lineage. For younger siblings who were boys, their share of land was kept for them in trust by an elder in the household.¹⁷ Regrettably, women did not inherit land in Berom society. She had the right of usage of land as long as she remained married to her husband or a relative of her deceased husband inherited her.

Women's Land Rights in Pre-Colonial Society

We have no detailed information on the extent of the rights of Berom women to land in the pre-colonial period. What is evident from oral sources and the nature of Berom society at the eve of colonial rule is that women, both married and unmarried had free access to the use of land. In the case of the unmarried women this was guaranteed by her family and in the case of married women by their husbands or in-laws. Women were however completely excluded from inheriting land. The portions of land required by women were provided by parents, husbands, in-laws, brothers, uncles etc that was limited only to the male agents of the immediate or extended family. However, women had free access to the use of land whether married, divorced, widow or single. But once a woman marries, she could not have free access to the use of land within her own lineage except she was divorced. Once she was divorced she loses the right to the use of land that belonged to her husband and his family even if she had children with the man. A widow could only retain the right to the use of land after her husband's death or her sons were old enough to inherit their father's land or if the brother of the deceased inherited both the sons and the widow.

Women were excluded from exercising control over land even though land was plentiful in the pre-colonial period. Even at the dawn of the colonial era, land in Berom land was observed to be plentiful¹⁸ which is corroborated by oral evidence mentioned earlier. Yet, women were completely excluded from exercising or contributing to making major decisions over land. In fact the husband determined where the woman farmed except for the compound farm that was kept by the women near the dwellings.

We have no records to confirm whether women were engaged in land pawning, pledge or borrowing which were extremely rare during the pre-colonial period. The exceptional cases that occurred involved giving of small portion of the farm produce annually to the owner of farms. If it was a man in most cases, this was soon forgotten and the borrower assumes the ownership of the land. Thus, the exclusion of women from land ownership was culturally based but not as a result of land shortage. It will be observed that with major cultural changes in the colonial period, and with the

¹⁵ Ibid, also Pam Pwat, Warren Camps, Riyom, 10th-13th and 25th October 1991.

¹⁶ Jacobs, C. C. "The Berom Pre-Colonial Economy". An overview, unpublished manuscript.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Donald Warmear, Agricultural and Dietary Practices p.227.

commercialization of land, some women began to buy land. However, with serious land shortages, which were part of the legacy of colonial administration on the Jos Plateau, land selling, pledging and borrowing became serious source of friction with some resulting into land leasing especially in predominantly mining areas such as Gyel, Du, Zawan etc. Pawning and pledge of land started in the colonial period. A portion of the products of the land was given in this regard. It is not clear whether women could borrow land on their own initiatives or not.

Even though it has been a general belief in the literature that traditional land tenure in most parts of Africa including the communities of the Jos Plateau, provided free access to land for both natives and emigrants, there still remains a silent factor of the discrimination against women when a clear distinction is made between exercising control over land and having access to the use of land. Whether one exercises control over land or merely have the right of land usage, determines to a large extent the kind of improvements one can undertake on the land. Women are given access to the use of land by virtue of marriage, which in itself was insecure as a result of constant divorce.¹⁹ This restricted women from investing in economic trees and make permanent improvements on land that go beyond the production of seasonal crops.

Land Organization

There are three significant factors that are necessary for production; land, capital and labour. In Africa, and the Jos Plateau in particular, land was relatively quite plentiful. Land shortage did not constitute much problem in the pre-colonial period except during periods of massive migrations, which necessitated the settlement of large numbers of people in new settlements in which case they had to conquer the communities in order to take possession of their land.

Capital did not constitute a problem in most African societies because of the low level of technology in agriculture. Farming generally required the use of simple tools such as hoes, cutlass, axe etc. The most crucial factor of production in simple economies therefore is labour, because farm work was generally labour intensive. Labour mobilization and organization in pre- colonial Berom society was based on households and lineages. In rare cases whole villages, which were made up of only several households and lineage-based households could constitute Units of production. Even though the Berom society was lineage based, labour was organised communally at household, family, clan/lineage and even village levels. The labour was communally organized in the sense that almost everybody in the community were related based on either households, clans or lineage so that there was little or no room left for independent labour management especially during the crucial periods of planting, intensive weeding and harvesting. Thereafter, individuals could undertake daily tasks on their own.

The size of households or productive units was much larger in the pre-colonial period than during the colonial period. During the former period, the size of households ranges between 20-50 adults. Knetting regarded the pre-colonial household, as the principal locus of the ecological process.²⁰

Labor Organization

Labour pool was organized on daily basis in the households. Provision of native beer constituted major attraction for cooperate communal labour. If labour is organized at lineage or village levels, it was carried out occasionally and rotated among the lineages. This usually took place during the critical periods of planting, weeding and harvesting.

¹⁹ A General view expressed by informants.

²⁰ NAK: SNP 17/7904, Jos Plateau Province, Assessment Report, para.24.

Communal labour that was organized on a large scale was open to the lineage-based community depending on how rich the farmer was and his willingness to supply the necessary beer for the workers. The type of agricultural tasks involved also determined the number of labourers required. The number of workers that can be used for specific tasks ranges from fifteen to ninety.²¹

Cooperative labour was reciprocated which made people to participate willingly and readily because it will one day be their own turn. Apart from voluntary communal labour, there was also compulsory customary labour demands that was practiced in Berom society. For example, suitors were expected to provide their in-laws or prospective in-laws with free labour services as part of customary obligations demanded of them.

The use of institutionalized slave labour was optional in Berom society. Slaves that were captured in inter-ethnic wars were integrated into the family and consequently into the household labour force and the lineage. The bulk of the slaves were sold off into slavery and very few were integrated into the Berom society. Most of the domestic slaves consisted of women who were married to the chiefs so that the chief usually had larger compound households than any ordinary Berom man. Male slaves were usually sold off or integrated into the society. The whole village organized labour to work on the chief's farm annually. Normally, no peasant cultivated his plot of land in the village until the chiefs' farm was planted after performing the necessary rites for the planting season. Thus, the chief exploited the labour of the whole community but this situation was hardly abused by the chief by turning the peasants into semi-servants or forced labour. The labour was organized occasionally usually at the beginning of planting, weeding and harvesting seasons.

The mobilization of communal labour for farming and other economic activities was also done by women. Even though women could employ communal labour, this was limited to women of the same age grade within the households. Thus, the mobilization of communal labour by women was essentially limited to fellow women. Men mobilized both sexes of different ages for communal labor. This had implications for women's free access to labour. It meant that women could only employ labour for what was regarded as women's tasks such as weeding and harvesting depending on the type of crop. It also meant that they could not have free access to male labour on a large scale to do men's tasks such as clearing and ridging. The only way women could do such male tasks was for them to request the help of sons, brothers, uncles or in-laws. Women could not rely on their husbands alone they had their own farms coupled with the fact that the husbands had to share their labour between many women in a polygamous situation. Limitation of the women to have free access to communal labour involving both men and women outside the orbit of her kith, kin and *Njem* lovers²² must have limited the size of private farms operated by Berom women, which consequently affected the amount of their wealth and status in the society. Large-scale organisation of communal labour involved the use of much grain for beer consumption which many women could not afford since they did not have direct control over the common granary.

The sexual division of labour is usually over simplified in the literature resulting in the low assessment of women's contribution in labour. Women's role, have been simplified into domestic roles and what is regarded as simpler tasks in agricultural production such as weeding and harvesting. There has been no attempt to assess the level of women's involvement based on the objective assessment of the economic and social value of the work done by women and the quality of time spent on such tasks. What is not usually taken into account is also the amount of labour time (both individual and cooperate) was needed to do women's tasks.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ngo Gyang Tok, 80 years, Rayfield, 5th December, 1997.

It is as a result of such lapses that researchers on women have to rely on the interview method to get such information, which is virtually non-existent in the literature on Berom society, especially those relating to pre-colonial and colonial periods. Even though current researchers are more concerned with women's roles within contemporary history, there is need to establish continuity or discontinuity with the past to get a better historical understanding of the changing role of women in historical perspectives.

Another form of labour was client labour/pawning. This was labour derived from people who borrowed in critical periods of lack on agreement that it will be repaid back in form of labour within a specific period of time. This form of labour was usually organized by rich households. This was a more prevalent form of labour compared to the use of slave labour.

Labour was not only regarded as one of the important factors of production but also as a medium of exchange for grains, seedlings, metal, bear etc. Even at their level of development, labour was regarded as a commodity but it was free from absolute control of capital as in capitalist societies.

Appropriation of Surplus

It is generally believed that pre-colonial societies had very simple subsistence economies with little or no surplus as a result of elementary farming technique and technology, simple division of labour (not accompanied with specialization in production, low population, poor communication etc). This erroneous conclusion is based on the fact that Europeans based their assessment of African development on the level of economic development already achieved in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries because of their failure to examine and interpret Africa's development in its own right based on its own logic of development and progress. A careful examination of Berom economy, therefore, shows that the economy has neither been static nor was production made purely for immediate consumption. This assertion can be assessed to be true if we examine the elaborate social life, festivals, ceremonies and other social demands of the Berom that involved the consumption, payment and sacrificial items in the various festivals, ceremonies, rituals and hosts of other social-cultural practices of the Berom. These could only have been sustained as a result of the ability of the Berom to produce over and above what was required for subsistence. The production and appropriation of surplus was controlled by the household heads, council of elders and lineage chiefs who directly or indirectly controlled production, distribution and consumption. Women hardly have any income of their own. In fact the concept of independent personal income was alien to pre-colonial Berom women.²³ Whereas men invested their income on marrying women for extra labour, livestock such as horses, cows etc, women spent the little they possessed or given to them by their husbands or suitors on ornaments and smaller animals such as goats and chickens.²⁴

The surplus produce at the household level was appropriated by the household head who kept custody of the primary produce such as acha, millet and guinea corn. These were stored in the central barn and shared by the household head as the need arose. It was shared according to the number of wives or cooking pots. The number of children was not considered seriously in the sharing of foodstuff. In these way younger women who had fewer children seems to be favoured.²⁵

²³ De Hudung Gyang, 90 years, Gyel, 18th November, 1997.

²⁴ Ngo Garos Kim, 81 years, OU, 4th December 1997.

²⁵ Mangwvat, op.cit, pp.15-18.

The surplus was also used to meet other social obligations such as ceremonies, festivals, burials, payment to medicine men for healing etc.

No sharp class distinction existed between users and producers. Members of the society who got more wealth by their ability or position to get access to communal labour were only at an embryonic development of class relations.²⁶ Wealth differentiation was also based on ability to escape natural hazards or disasters such as fire, locust, flood, epidemics, famine etc. Such disasters can put a whole family or community into permanent penury. Thus, the differentiation of wealth was usually due to initial economic advantages open to a family but not due to direct exploitation of subordinated labour in the Marxian sense. But regardless of this fact, the labour of slaves, women and children were exploited and it forms one of the most important primary advantages for the production of surplus in the society. This explains why Berom society put great importance to marriage and children to the extent that wife kidnapping was very common. This enabled men to escape the burden of paying dowry, which was demanded for contracting formal marriages.

The production of surplus, as will be discussed subsequently depended mainly on the availability and exploitation of labor. At the household level, sufficient labor was provided through polygamy and the use of child labor. The ability of the household to produce surplus at this level helped them to utilize the surplus in engaging communal labor which even though it was regarded as free labor it required the production of large amount of beer as a form of compensation. The more a household was able to make use of communal labor, the more they were in a position to produce excess surplus until a point was reached when low technology put a limit to further production. What is needed at this point is the improvement on existing technology or technique of production on the introduction of a new one to further boost production.

Real investment of wealth was done in livestock, payment of bride wealth (to get more wives and labor), buying of farm implements, such as hoes, cutlasses, knives etc) buying medicine to improve on health, feeding laborers with beer etc. The remaining surplus was consumed on social obligations such as initiation ceremonies, sacrifices, festivals, marriages, naming ceremonies and burial rites etc. One other factor that placed a bottleneck against further production of surplus was the inverse proportion of the surplus utilized in expanding the capital base vis-à-vis those surpluses spent on consumption which adds little or nothing for further production. But it can still be argued that the maintenance of integrated communal life through the series of festivals and ceremonies was one of the important factors that maintained, sustained and perpetuated the communal economic base. Without this, social life would have disintegrated into private individualism that will make it impossible to produce any surplus value as a result of the low technological and economic development of the society. Thus, even what has generally been seen as wasted surplus value on social functions as marriage did directly or indirectly contribute to the sustenance of surplus product in the communal society.

The pattern of distribution and re-distribution of surplus was uneven with regards to status, sex and class – women got relatively little value from the surplus produced in the household because a greater percentage of the surplus went into payment of bride wealth and marriage ceremonies for the men²⁷.

²⁶ Ibid, p.18

Unequal distribution of surplus resulted in a part of the family breaking away to start a new household.²⁷ The chiefs did not expropriate surplus in form of direct taxes from the people. He did by collecting gifts in form of grain, livestock, beer etc from the people during festivals and ceremonies.

The role of chiefs in the production and investment of surplus discouraged the further production of surplus necessitated the development of long distance regional trade. The chiefs did not take active part in the expansion of agricultural production because they did not keep large farm estates, slaves and hired labor – a role which kings under feudal and semi-feudal societies played, for example in Hausaland and other societies.

The development of exchange and trade due to surplus production was limited to the needs of the households and the wider community across the Northern regional of Nigeria but it was not integrated into international market through the Atlantic trade until the British took control of the indigenous tin mining on the Jos Plateau in the 20th century. They concentrated on tin mining to the neglect of agricultural production.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper has shown that the mode of production and labor organization in the pre-colonial Berom society was not simplistic but complex to meet the demands of not only subsistent economy but for surplus production that met the socio-economic needs of the society such as payment of dowry, socio-cultural festivals and local exchange. From its nature it is not easy to describe it as either purely communal or feudal but rather a hybrid that we could describe as lineage based economy in which women played significant role in the process of production but had little control over the appropriation of surplus. The local chiefs were not endowed with power to organize and use labor for surplus production in the form of slave labor, forced labor or indentured labor. However, the dynamics of Berom socio-cultural organization and practices at the households and local levels enabled the chiefs to get voluntary labor that produced surplus which could not expand beyond the use of simple technology in production such as hoes and cutlasses. The economy was not linked to international trade until the colonization of the area by the British.

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²⁷ Goshit, Z., p.70. For a detailed discussion of Berom social organization and marriage, see, Alahira, H. A., The Role of Women in the Colonial Economy of Northern Nigeria; A Case Study of the Berom of the Jos Plateau, 1900-1960, Ph.D dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, 2001, PP. 89-98.

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