STRUCTURING, STRUGGLING AND SURVIVING ECONOMIC DEPRESSION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: THE 1930s AS PREVIEW OF THE PRESENT

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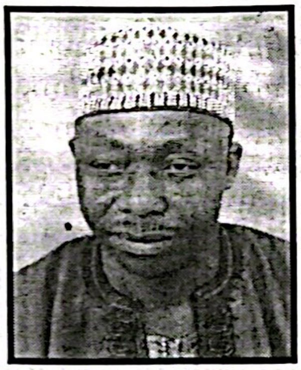

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Professor Mohammed Sanni Abdulkadir has been recognized in academic circles both at home and abroad. Right from his undergraduate days, he won the Micheal Crowder prize as the best graduating student in Modern African History in 1980. Abroad, he was elected life member of the Clare Hall Cambridge University, UK, as well as a Foundation Fellow of the Hall 2000. He was a Smuts Visiting Fellow of Commonwealth Studies.

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Professor M. S. Abdulkadir's main academic interests in research, teaching and publications are in African Economic History, the History of Industrialization, Methodology-Historiography, and Development studies, all of which have prompted the thrust of this inaugural lecture.

Professor Mohammed Sanni Abdulkadir is married and bless with Children.

STRUCTURING, STRUGGLING AND SURVIVING ECONOMIC DEPRESSION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: THE 1930s AS PREVIEW OF THE PRESENT

1. Introduction

The focus of this lecture is Northern Nigeria in the 1930s. The 1930s was a period characterized, world wide, by the Great Economic Depression. By June 1929, America's misjudgments and the general breakdown of the world monetary system, deflation, secular stagnation, structural disequilibria and the collapse of stock prices at the New York Stock Exchange triggered the world wide financial crisis known as the Great Depression. The causes of the depression are extraneous to the main issues of Northern Nigerian history. Depression itself had a tremendous and devastating impact on Northern Nigeria and the people of the area. The 1930s was a disastrous time for rural Africa witnessing a high degree of economic insensitivity and exploitation as well as establishing a crisis of colonial rule. Lasting almost through the 1930s, the depression virtually crippled the world economically, while the multiplier effects of the crisis were rooted in the social, economic and political travails of the period. 1933 and 1934 marked the nadir of the depression. Although the depression was an economic phenomenon, its impacts were not solely economic nor were the responses to them. Those events of the 1930s have had profound long-term economic, social, political and cultural consequences for the Nigerian economy and the living standards of the people up till the present time. Thus, the structuring, struggling and other strategies employed to survive the economic depression of the 1930s constitute a preview of the contemporary survival tactics.

2. Structuring the 1930s Economic Depression

Available sources on Northern Nigeria during the 1930s have shown certain facets that, if not properly analyzed, are easily overlooked. Such issues include policy decisions like fall in government revenues, decreased government expenditure, declined agricultural prices, devaluation of the currency, reduction in money supply, export of capital, increased taxation, reduction in salaries of Native Authority (NA) officials and unemployment. Other non-policy issues include natural disasters, emigration, food shortages, famine, increased crime, increased malnutrition, starvation and even death in several places.

The depression was indeed a period in which government revenues fell, expenditure was curtailed, capital projects were halted and in general thrift became the watch ward. For example, Nigeria's gross income from all sources in 1928 was 196% higher than that of 1929, dropping from £74 million to £25 million (Shenton, 1986: 101). By 1932-33, gross expenditure by the central government declined by 38%, from £6.9 million to £5 million (Helleiner, 1976: 20). Between 1929 and 1939 Nigeria received only £249,333.33 under the

Colonial Development Act for her population of 22 million inhabitants. This was just 0.011d per person.

Similarly, capital projects suffered. Indeed, structural developments, especially road construction, railway extension, bridges and so on were either drastically cut down or stopped completely. All labour on roads was stopped and no further expenditure was incurred on road construction (NAK/LOKOPROF, 1934: 366, 69). Generally, for the whole of Nigeria, the government drastically cut down expenditure. For example, in August 1932, Nigeria's surplus funds were estimated at £3,736,807, still the government proposed a cut in expenditure in order "to balance the Budget of Revenue and Recurrent Expenditure" (The Nigerian Gazette, 1932: 71). While this was consistent with the colonial goals and the economic orthodoxy of the time, it was disastrous in purely economic terms because it was deflationary.

The fiscal crises were further compounded by the action of 'lending' and 'exporting' money from the already depressed economy to foreign countries. For example, in the Financial Years 1930-34, out of the Northern Nigeria Native Administrations' surplus of £5,589,270.5s.2d, about 44.87% amounting to £2,508,354.1s.9d was invested in Crown Colonies, Ceylon, the Strait Settlements (Singapore), Trinidad, New Zealand and Australia. Equally, between 1933 and 1934, Northern Nigerian Treasuries had investments worth £1,688,068.9s.8d (30.2%) in fixed deposit accounts in Nigerian banks (Ikime, 1975: 680, 690-2). Ironically, many of these investments earned interests at rates considerably below those paid by the Nigerian government. The investments in Nigeria yielded interests of between 4-5%, whilst those invested abroad yielded only 3-3.5% (NAK/LOKOPROF, 1934: 603). Collectively, the decline in structural development, saving and outside investments further reduced the velocity of money and increased the level of social misery. There would be no impetus to expansion and thus the paradox of poverty amidst plenty and the anomaly of unemployed citizens.

Between 1929 and 1934 a dramatic deterioration of agricultural prices took place. The Lagos price of palm kernels dropped from £21 per ton in 1929 to £14 in 1930 – a fall of 33.33%, and by 66.66% to £7 in 1934 (Ekundare, 1973: 118). Cotton prices declined by 66.66% from 2.25d per lb in 1928/29 buying season to 0.75d in 1930/31 (Ingawa, 1984: 270). The FOB price of palm oil in 1929 was 492.5% higher than that of 1934, falling from £23.7 to £4 (Usoro, 1974: 270). The average price of groundnuts fell by 62.4% from £12.18s per ton in 1927/1928 buying season to £4.17s in 1930/31, and by 1933/34 it was only 54.63% of the 1927/28 price declining to £2.13s (Albasu, 1995: 109). Equally, the prices for a matured bull were £3 and £6 at the opening and closing of the 1929 buying season, but these fell by 61.66% and 66.66% respectively in 1932, opening with £1.15s and closing at £2 (Okedeji, 1972: 127).

The structural decline in the prices of export produce led to a direct fall in the prices of foodstuffs. By 1934, yam prices in Igala Division dropped by

86.66% and 90% from the pre-depression levels, declining from 3d a tuber in 1921 to 0.4d in 1941 and 0.3d in 1934; a bag of rice by 50% from 15s in 1928 to 7s.6d in 1934 (NAK/LOKOPROF, 1921:322; NAK/SNP17, 1928: 564p; NAK/LOKOPROF, 1934: 366; NAK/SNP17, 1933-34: 19276). A comparative statement of prices of foodstuffs in Kano market in March 1929 and March 1933 indicates a drastic fall in prices.

Table 1: Prices of Foodstuffs in Kano Market: 1929 and 1933

Foodstuffs	March, 1929	March, 1933	% Fall in Prices
Sorghum	0.6d per lb	0.25d per lb	58.33
Millet	0.7d per lb	0.31d per lb	55.71
Beans	0.6d per lb	0.25d per lb	58.33
Rice	0.6d per lb	0.4d per lb	33.33
Wheat	2s.0d per lb	1s.0d per lb	50

Source: Kano Annual Provincial Report, 1933.

Most reports of the 1930s painted a gloomy picture of the economy and the need for drastic economies to be adopted. One of such economies was the reduction of salaries or retrenchment of Native Authority and company staff and agents. In Northern Nigeria, the salaries of N.A. officials were reduced by 10%. But it should be noted that whatever their difficulties might have been they did not equate with those of the peasants who, unlike them, lacked a stable income. Wages for unskilled labour fell during 1932 from an average of 8d-9d to 4-6d a day (Annual Colonial Report, 1932:49). On the Jos tin mine the wage rate sank by 56.52%, from 5s.9d in 1929 to 2s.6d in 1933-34. Similarly, the number of companies operating on the tin fields dropped by about 37.35%, from 83 in 1928 to 52 in 1931. The labour force thus declined by about 60.52% from 38,000 in 1929 to less than 15,000 in 1933 (Nigerian Blue Book, 1933:34). Owing to unemployment unskilled labourers could be obtained without difficulty (Annual Report, 1932:183). In the Kano area, the newly formed out-stations of the United African Company were reduced by 68.75% from 80 in 1929 to 25 in the 1930s (Hopkins, 1973:259). This meant declining trading activities and a reduction in African employees of the company. The reduction in staff salaries considerably reduced the expenditure of the government on personal emoluments in Nigeria by (13.19%) £315,917 from £2,394,599 to £2,078,682 in 1933-34 Financial Years.

The vulnerability of producers to variations in incomes and environmental stress was brought sharply into focus by the yam beetle, locust plague and flooding in the 1930s. In 1933, a yam beetle attack caused considerable damages to yam crops, while in 1932-33, exceptionally heavy rains accompanied by severe flooding resulted in a loss of 50% of sorghum and millet in Igala Division. In 1928, a huge swarm of locusts invaded Nigeria. Some of the Provinces seriously affected in Northern Nigeria were Ilorin, Kabba. Benue. Bauchi. Plateau. Niger and Sokoto. For example. in Niger Province. 1366 flying hoppers were recorded each month between 1930 and 1938 (NAK/MINPROF. 1938: 1349; Crocker, 1936: 115). In Abuja Division. 265 farms including 95 farms of sorghum. 79 of maize and 7 of millet were destroyed. In July 1933. about 162 and 193 farms were destroyed in Kontagora and Abuja Divisions respectively. In Bida Division. 50% of sorghum was destroyed in three villages. In Niger Province, 25 farms were destroyed in Kontagora. 20 in Rijau and 32 in Kumbashi Divisions (NAK/MINPROF. 1933: 1349). In 1933. the Ham people in Kachia District suffered from locust invasion that severely damaged food crops as well as a drought (Abubakar. 1989: 163). Commenting on the severity of the damages done. the Governor of Nigeria. Cameron sated "locust infestations and swarms of grasshoppers led to serious food shortages in the Northern Provinces" (The Nigerian Gazette. 1932: 90).

The general grain dearth experienced was not ameliorated by the actions of Provincial Administrations. Food relief from external sources was forbidden, while food assistance between the various Provinces was not forthcoming. Also Provincial Administrations were forbidden to liquidate their surplus funds invested abroad or in fixed deposits in Nigeria to remedy the situation (NAK/MINPROF, 1933: M68). Since the administration failed to support the people, they were thrown back on domestic and community resources that were themselves incapable of supporting them. The results were food shortages, famine, starvation and even death as well as out-migration. In 1932, there were an alarming number of deaths from disease and starvation in Zungeru Division of Niger Province (Iyela, 1987: 246). In Kano Province in 1934, there were real food shortages. In Sokoto and Zaria Provinces, there were cases of famine caused by the locust plague and over cultivation of cash crops to pay increased colonial taxes (Shenton, 1986: 103). Equally, many places in Adamawa Province were affected by drought with a number of farms and their crops ruined (Fariku, 1974: 42). The realities of the situation in the 1930s meant that the ability of the people to control the immediate disaster was less and the government did very little to ameliorate their sufferings. The colonial state had undermined the traditional welfare functions, but instead made new appropriations of peasant production particularly through a rigid and badly timed colonial tax.

Taxation was a major instrument used by the British to maintain existing revenue levels, but tax rates were not adjusted to suit depression incomes. The tax was collected as a capitation levy and not as a true income tax, and so the demands were not "within the paying capacity of the people" (NAK/LOKOPROF, 1934: 366). The tax imposed was based on the revised 1928 rates, a year of unusually high prices for export crops. In most cases the District Officers computed the incomes and taxes, which were "sadly out of proportion with the income" (Nadel, 1942/1965: 164). This theoretical and hypothetical structure of tax assessment meant that the unfortunate, the sick, the burdened, the old, and in fact many others, often had to pay what to them were large sums of money for tax, and frequently found this impossible. Crime, debt, loss of property, absconding, emigration and embezzlement were often the fruits of this policy in the 1930s. Also while taxes in the Southern Provinces were approximately 2.5% of the average annual gross income and in Lagos a graduating income tax starting as low as 1%, in the Northern Provinces the stated tax was between 5% and 8%, and sometimes this varied according to Divisions or Districts or the occupation or the sex of the tax payer. Also, the direct taxes estimated for Northern Nigeria in the 1933-34 tax year was £1,337 million. This was £765,000 more than that of the South (Colonial Annual Report, 1932:37, 75: NAK/LOKOPROF, 1934: 366).

While money incomes were drastically reduced, the taxes demanded remained exactly the same (in money terms) as they had been in 1928, but much more (in real terms) in the 1930s. For example, in Igala Division, while a man and a wife needed 103 lbs of palm kernels to pay their 7s tax in 1929, they would have had to process and sell approximately 233.5% more (442 lbs) of the same item to pay their 7s tax in 1934. Also in 1934, agricultural producers in Soba District of Zaria province paid 41% of their total income in taxes, and some as high as 70% of their cash income (Shenton, 1986: 102). Similarly, for a Kazaure farmer to pay his 7s tax, "he must obtain a good crop [groundnuts] and be able to sell it all and devote the entire proceed to tax" (Watts, 1982: 318). Equally, a study of the income of a labour unit consisting of a family of five in a village near Bida shows that, of their total income of £1.1s.5d money expenditure on tax alone was £1.1s (98.05%). Nupe farmers, who worked desperately at mat making and other crafts during the dry season for cash-earning pittance, had all practically snatched away in tax (Nadel, 1942/1965: 313, 341). On Biriwai District, an eyewitness wrote,

> *"throughout the District I am convinced of the reality of their absolute poverty; they have nothing but a few fowls, a hand full of old ragged clothes and just enough corn to keep them going until the next harvest. For the majority of the people, I should say 90%, there is no other way of obtaining currency needed for their tax this year [1934] than selling some of their corn, and to do that will mean selling a large amount of it... it will mean short rations for most and most cases hunger" (Crocker, 1936: 115).*

It is clear that the rate and burden of taxation were very high and so incongruent with depression realities. These draw flak from a senior colonial officer, S. M. Jacob, who earmarked in 1934 that,

> *"taxation is a dangerous drug for the polity. Taxation of non-existing profits is rank poison... the direct taxes imposed for the Northern Provinces for 1933-34 were £1.337 million or nearly 35% too much"* (Shenton, 1986: 102).

On Ankpa District in Igala Division, Miles Clifford, Divisional Officer, wrote in 1932 that,

> *"the Ankpa drive has continued without a pause since 1931. The chiefs are becoming disheartened. There is a feeling we are asking the impossible... certain sullenness is becoming noticeable which would be unwise to ignore... Doubtless there would be a little [sic] heart-burning..." (NAK/LOKOPROF, 1934: 366).*

Despite these admissions, the British intentionally structured the depression in a way that absolved them of all blame, and so most colonial officials blamed the difficulties of ordinary Northern Nigerians during these terrible times on the people themselves. For example, in 1932, Miles Clifford opposed a reduction in taxes in Ankpa District because "the increased demand would tend to combat the natural laziness of the Igala Ankpa and force them to cultivate an area larger than that which barely sufficed for their physical needs".

Captain Mercer, who had been a touring officer in Igala Division for three years reported in 1933 that,

> *"Ankpa has always been a thorn in the Igala Administration. The people are more backward and have less culture than those in other parts of the Division. In addition they are lazy, obstinate and inclined to be truculent".*

In 1934 Clifford commented on the Igala thus, "The Igala have been quick to regard tax remission as the reward of obstinacy" (NAK/LOKOPROF, 1934: 366). So, colonial officials believed that the poverty of the people, their inability to pay taxes and their general low standard of living were their own fault. This is consistent with the general belief held by the colonial state at that time that Nigerians were not responsive to price incentives and that their poverty was the result of their own laziness.

3. Struggling During the 1930s Economic Depression

The foregoing discussions of the structure of the Nigerian economy and of the depression-era economic realities have important implications on adjustment and struggling mechanism, general communal survival and cohesion.

The difficulties of the 1930s led to a demographic crisis and serious population drift. Increased and sustained colonial taxes, unemployment, poor trade and shortage of cash compelled many peasants, unemployed youths and herdsmen to go further afield in search of work or avoid paying higher taxes. In 1933, in Kabba and Koton-karifi Divisions of Kabba Province, the economic difficulties drove a number of people to seek their means of livelihood elsewhere (NAK/SNP17, 1933: 21349). In Zungeru Division of Niger Province, the total population decreased by about 1,000 in 1932 as a result of the economic depression and the general stagnation in trade. In Igala Division in 1934, increased unemployment and economic difficulties resulted in the migration of adult male across the boundary to Idoma and Nsukka Divisions (the later in Southern Nigeria) where taxes were less (NAK/LOKOPROF, 1943: 21). The severe food scarcity, high prices of imported goods and shortage of money had resulted in a southerly migration from Bida to Ilorin, Lokoja, Ibadan, Ogbomosho and Lagos, areas with prospects of work, which were wealthier and less heavily taxed (Nadel, 1942/1965: 10). From west Yagba area, many young men went to urban areas like Lagos. The 1930s constituted an annual migration system to the cocoa belt in Yorubaland. Migrants went to Ilaro, Ikare, Ilesha, Ife, Akure, Ondo, Owo and especially Ibadan where more money could be realized. Indeed, during the 1930s, the cocoa growing belt was experiencing labour scarcity (Berry, 1974: 91). In Northern Nigeria, these migrants who were young school leavers, unmarried and some uneducated came mainly from the Idoma, Igala, Igedde, Bassa Komo, Bassa Nge and Ebirra areas. It has been estimated that between 1930 and 1940 some 30,000 migrants went to the cocoa belt form Ebirraland (Ohiare, 34). They worked in seasonal clearing of cocoa farms under a crew-boss system (Guyer, 1997: 62, 102). Wives of migrants were involved in jobs such as carrying crops from farms, breaking cocoa pods or fetching water for diluting insecticides. In these cities, some married men who could not make both ends meet as a result of retrenchment sent their wives and children home.

In 1932, in various Emirates in Northern Nigeria, the cattle tax rate of £2 per head represented 12.5% to 20% of the gross income of most of the cattle owners. As a result of low prices and high cattle tax, cattle owners were left with three basic choices: to sell more cattle to pay taxes, to conceal or to migrate. In 1932, in Adamawa Province, the number of cattle decreased by about 18,000 during the tax season because a large number of herdsmen went into the French territory with lower cattle tax (NAK/LOKOPROF, 1932: 18282). A Superintendent of Education, Mr. East, who had accompanied the Emir of Katsina, Dikko, on a tour of Khartoum in 1933, saw a large number of Fulani cattle owners from Kano, Katsina, Sokoto and Zaria who had migrated to Mandara in Cameroon Republic as a result of high cattle tax and shortage of money (Okedeji, 1972: 129-30). After what appeared to be a better price in Kano in 1932, there were suggestions to increase taxes and as such people started migrating to Kebbi and Zaria (Northern Nigeria Annual Report, 1936: 41). Many Fulani nomads migrated from Wamdeo, Vuv and Hidi Districts and settled in Askira where the ruler, mai Maina Na-Jega was collecting low cattle taxes. Others went to the neighboring Kilba area where cattle taxes were less (Fariku, 1974: 39-40). Some Ham people went to Northern Zaria where they worked in the dry season cultivation. In Katsina emirate, a large number of people migrated from Makama District to Funtua where they paid 44% less tax (7s.6d.) instead of 9s demanded in Makama (Abubakar, 1989: 176).

The economic downturn of the 1930s witnessed increased pawning, mortgaging and slavery. In the pre-depression era, beads, costly gowns, swords and silver or gold materials were frequently pawned as security, but in the 1930s, people were also pawned. When pawning of human beings was finally 'suppressed' in 1933-34, 3,000 pawned persons were released in Bida Emirate alone (Nadel, 1942/1965: 313-315). In southern Katsina and in Zaria, the system of cotton mortgaging became very prominent in the 1930s (Watts, 1982: 317). In Igala Division, 20 heaps of yam stands were mortgaged for just 6d (Abawa, 1987; Odoma, 1988). The implication of this was that in 1934 a man with one wife would have had to mortgage 280 heaps of yam stands to pay their 7s tax. Despite increased indebtedness, the Northern Provinces Advisory Council concluded that it was impossible to legislate against mortgaging of crops (Watts 1982: 317). Thus as the tax burden increased, the expansion of the advance crop mortgaging further absorbed an even greater part of peasants' incomes to pay taxes.

The shortage of currency gave rise to short-term advances given to producers and traders. By 1934 the advance system had increased tremendously when people began to sell in advance to meet their tax and other monetary obligations. Cash advances took the form of middlemen, tax collectors and even District and Village headmen paying the producer's tax and holding receipts as security until delivery of the crops. A colonial report indicates that bags of salt were sold to the people at 12s.6d each, for which the market price was 5s.6d (NAK/KATPROF, 1943: 11/28). In the 1930s, a conservative estimate shows that middlemen "absorbed at least 20% of the total FOB price of export commodities excluding usurious appropriation" (Watts, 1982: 317). Even wealthy traders became bankrupt during this period. For example, in Idah town in Igala Division, a notable and wealthy trader, Amichi Ayikoye, who could neither deliver the palm oil nor the cash advanced to her, had her property auctioned by the agents of the UAC (Abawa: 1987). In Kano, Adamu Jakada, a wealthy and famous trader and political agent of the British became bankrupt as a result of the advances he had made to the groundnut middlemen, who received his money at the beginning of the buying season, but failed to supply any [or sufficient] groundnuts due to the depression (Dan Asabe, 1996: 132-133). In fact, in Northern Nigeria, there were as many as 2,000 cases in 1932 involving indebtedness, and more of course never reached the courts (Abdulkadir, 1996: 350). Even in Oyo Province, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, then a produce buyer, became indebted to several firms and as result his house at Ikenne was auctioned for £40, his car sold for £20, and he also lost his personal effects.

Food shortages in many places resulted in famine and starvation. In Kontagora Division food shortages was very severe and some people dug out and ate roots of certain wild plants to survive. In Zungeru, Bida, Kuta and Agaie Districts, people ate all kind of grasses, tubers and leaves to survive the famine in the areas (Iyala, 1987: 245-246). In Igala Division, some people resorted to cooking cassava leaves in soup to produce taste, as a result of the limited availability and high cost of imported salt (Abawa, 1985).

A further development was 'slavery' and child labour, pawning or trafficking. For example, in Kontagora, in order for some children to get enough food and to survive the harsh economic climate, their parents sold them to those who had enough food (Iyala, 1987: 246). In Olai-Ochogabale village in Oturkpo Division, young women were sold into slavery by their husbands and parents (Crocker, 1936: 88). In 1930, in Plateau Province, child labourers were forcefully captured by desperate, unemployed young men who sold them to Fulani herders who utilized them to look after their flocks. In 1932, 92 persons were convicted for trafficking in children in two Districts in Plateau Province (Goshit, 2001: 84). In 1932, the Native Authority Police in Idoma Division of Benue Province intercepted three truckloads of children destined for the cocoa producing areas of western Nigeria to work on cocoa plantations or serve as domestic servants. In Igala Division, because of the lack of money and food shortages people without marks were sold as slaves. Prospective buyers were wealthy women who had no children of their own.

In the 1930s, many people became involved in looting and theft. In Adamawa Emirate, rest houses were looted as a way of getting food after their crops had been auctioned by tax collectors. In Kilba, organized robbery gangs frequently attacked and robbed caravans with goods passing through Uba from Zaria, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto (Fariku, 1974: 42). In Kano Province in 1930, there were 5,710 criminal cases including 821 cases of theft (Dan Asabe, 1996: 133). Throughout Plateau Province, retrenched young men from the tin mine invaded farms and stole seed yams and seed cassava after they had been planted. In 1930, in Benue, Plateau and Niger Provinces, railway keys made from copper were being stolen and sold to local blacksmiths who melted them and made jewelry out of them. In July 1931, members of a group of railway key thieves in the Lafia area were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. In 1932, when theft of keys intensified, copper keys were replaced with steel keys. In the Minna-Baro section of the railways, targeting railway station safes became very rampant (Ochonu, 2000: 40). In late September 1932, there was an increase in the number of thefts of foodstuffs and farm produce in Jos and Pankshin Divisions of Plateau Province. In Kano, the daily total figure of the people jailed for petty thefts more than tripled from 300 in 1929 to 956 in 1930 (Mahmoud, 200: 73).

The drastic decline in export prices meant a fall in the money supply and the currency available in Nigeria. In the 1930s, the British also withdrew most of the silver coins from circulation in Nigeria and exported them to Britain to be melted down. A tight monetary policy was generally followed in this period, and in fact the period from 1927 to 1932 recorded that exports of species (currency) exceeded imports by over £14.5 million. The standard of living declined even further, and many Nigerians tried to use old currencies such as cowry shells dug out of old caches for petty local exchange, for they still had to scrounge to get the coins still required to pay taxes (Shea, 2003: 15-16). In 1932, there was a sudden re-emergence of cowries and brass-rods in

Bida, Abuja, Gwari and Ankpa markets. In Bida cowries were traded at 250 the British penny, in Abuja 500 cowries equaled a penny and in Gwari trading was conducted half in cowries and half in the British currency (Kirk-Greene, 1960: 140). In 1932, in Igala Division, brass-rods were widely used. The value of a rod dropped by 80% from 1 rod to 5d in 1929 to 1 rod to 1d in 1934 (Abdulkadir, 1990: 421; 1995: 181). Since a brass-rod was a commodity with a use value, a drop of 80% of an earlier price was almost an exact reproduction of the general loss of value of export crop and even foodstuffs. The re-emergence of pre-colonial currencies marked the emergence of a parallel monetary domain engineered by those whose access to colonial currency fizzled out during the depression.

4. Surviving the 1930s Economic Depression

The Native Authority officials who were able to retain their jobs were better off than the farmers during the depression. Granted their salaries were cut reduced by 10%, but at time when the incomes of producers were reduced by 80-85% and even more, and food prices as well were reduced by the same percentage, a nominal reduction of 10% in money income meant a considerable increase in real incomes over 1928 levels.

Migrants who went to urban areas like Lagos and the cocoa belt in the south survived the crisis. Most migrants in Lagos remitted money to their relatives, thereby increasing cash flow to them and potentially making tax payment easier. Typical examples were in Yagba West, Igala, Idoma, Igedde, Tiv, Bassa Nge and Bassa Komo of Kabba Province where migrants sent money to their families. Although wages were low in Lagos, they were paid regularly. Also there were ways of avoiding paying tax and the lowest wage earners were exempted by law from paying taxes (Gavin and Oyemakinde, 1980/2000: 511). Equally, migrant workers who went to the cocoa belt in March, returned home at the beginning of the dry season with enough money to pay off their debts, help their relatives and families and enjoy the Christmas and the New Year at home.

During the depression, most District headmen and tax scribes adopted embezzlement of tax money partly as a surviving strategy. Indeed, embezzlement became a depression-era reality because District and Village headmen seeking to maintain the pre-depression life styles in the face of reduced incomes occasioned by the pay cuts of 1930, made a choice between extorting from subjects and/or embezzling tax money. For example, in 1931, a District head in Dikwa Division of Borno Province was deposed for malpractices and shortages in tax money. In the same year, forty-four (44) Village heads in Zaria Province were sacked for their inability to meet colonial tax obligations. In 1932, two District heads, Ajia of Owode and Jima Oloru in Ilorin Province, were removed from office for embezzlement. Official records in Igala Division indicated that in 1935, Sharubutu, tax scribe for Oguma, was imprisoned for five months for theft of tax money; Yahaya, assessment tax scribe at Ojokwu, was dismissed for accounting procedure in tax collection; Omale, market chief in Ankpa, was dismissed for unsatisfactory performance of duty and attempted embezzlement of 6d market stall fee, and Odaudu, tax scribe at Dekina, was imprisoned for one year for tax embezzlement (NAK/LOKOPROF: 363A/264; NAK/LOKOPROF: 366; NAK/LOKOPROF: 1286).

The economic crisis forced many young men into the exploitation of certain minerals, especially gold. For example, in 1930, more than 3,000 semi-skilled Hausa labourers on the Plateau tin mines migrated to Sokoto and Ilorin gold mines after they had been laid off from the tin mines (Goshit, 2001: 80). In Yagba district, the depression difficulties lured young men and women into the exploitation for and development of gold mining activities. With about 600 labourers working at the mining camps, mining activities evidently revamped the Yagba 'economy' and provided the cash needs of the people. In 1932, the high price for gold appeared to have attracted miners and prospectors to the east of Sokoto Province and Rimi in Kano Province. In 1934, gold prospecting was undertaken in the Abuja area of Niger Province (Ochonu, 2000: 36-39). Local salt production also revived to meet the short fall in the supply of expensive salt.

The depression encouraged the textile/weaving industry to grow, due to the collapse of prices and massive shift from imported manufactured textiles to cheaper local ones as incomes dwindled in response to falling prices. For example, the Igbirra (Ebirra) and Igala weaving industries expanded and emerged from the depression as vibrant cloth industries. The early 1930s recorded the development of two key production centres in Ogaminana and Okene in Igbirra Division. The centres that had survived the depression were then fairly modernized and have been transformed into training centres. By 1940, the Ebirra weaving industry supplied local cloth for prisoners' clothing and blankets (Ochonu, 2000: 39-40). In Igala Division, the collapse of the prices for cotton, in addition to depressed prices offered by John Holt and United African Company gave impetus to the local weaving industry. While these firms were paying one penny (1d) per lb of cotton, it was selling for 3d in the local markets. Thus up till 1937, these firms found it difficult to buy cotton, thereby reviving the textile industry (NAK/LOKOPROF, 1938: 1286). Indeed, the depression proved beneficial to a hitherto small-scale industry, transforming it into a strong, market-oriented one, supplying cloth to those with insufficient cash to purchase expensive textiles.

The local transport system once again emerged and became important. Donkeys, camels and other pack animals came back onto the roads in the middle of the 1930s, offering rates the new motor lorries could not match. Pawning during the depression can be considered as having some educational value. This is because it enabled children of the poor to study farm work and husbandry in the houses of prosperous and enterprising men (Nadel, 1942/1965: 313).

An anti-government innovation during the 1930s depression was the illegal minting of coins. This was undertaken by coining gangs who used their 'ingenuity' to fashion illegal means of surviving a difficult colonial period. Indeed, during the depression, counterfeiting created new opportunities for participants. As Northern Nigeria was gasping for lack of means of payment in the 1930s, the rash enterprising counterfeiters, mostly from Ijebu area of the south appeared (Gavin and Oyemakinde, 1980/2000: 510). They minted a considerable amount of counterfeit coins, which were circulated in many places in the north. For example, a gang of counterfeits operated in Gusau, Zuru and Yauri in Sokoto Province, Bida and Baro in Niger Province, Kano City, Igbirra in Kabba Province and Borgu in Ilorin Province.

5. The Present as a Continuation of the Past

Since the theme of this lecture is the differences between the 1930s and recent times, certain issues need to be highlighted. Unlike the 1930s, the recent period has witnessed increasing industrialized production (and thus unemployment), more urbanization and new global outlets for frustrated Nigerians (criminals). Also, the depth and severity of poverty as well as income in-equality worsened during the period 1980 to 2004, bringing into sharper focus the locality and gender dimension of poverty in Nigeria. Economic growth and development have continued to cause inequality, poverty and unemployment, thereby increasing the level of poverty instead of reducing it. Thus whilst poverty can be considered to be transient (transitory/temporary) in the 1930s, in recent times it has become structural (chronic) because it has continued to persist.

The Nigerian economy in the early 1970s was structurally affected by the drought. During the period 1973-74, many farmers in Northern Nigeria lost more than 50% of their farm produce and a similar percentage of their livestock. For almost every crop produced, 1973 was a worse year than 1972 and the worst since 1913. By 1973, only 4% of the farmers in Kano were eating grain from their own reserves, 59% were dependent on the market and 36% were not eating at all or only ate occasionally (Mortimore, 1989). Adverse terms of trade, falling prices, rising food prices and food crisis were further exacerbated by the scarcity of money and ineffective demand for foodstuffs. In Kano, the main market crop, groundnuts, was almost written off thereby diminishing the flow of funds and reducing trading activities.

The pressures on agricultural livelihood were exacerbated by the intensification of cycles of drought which increased the importance of non-farm incomes and daily paid jobs like handling earth for builders, barbing, weaving, as well as circulatory migration in bad years. Some farmers responded to the crisis by selling their assets, especially animals, at very depressed prices and generating little income. Among most families in the north, their granaries were empty, and although they received gifts from wealthy relatives and were involved in wage labour, their children were still hungry. In some remote villages, begging in public, previously un-known, became rampant. Even when villagers opted for loans, they were unable to acquire them, and scarcity of money and lack of security acted as constraints. The collapse of agricultural production meant that most household stores were empty. This type of situation, very often, consolidated inequality in time of stress. The economic hardship led to a population drift and out-migrations. Some Fulani cattle owners left for Ibadan and other areas as result of the drought. They eventually settled there permanently. Some Hausa men from urban areas individually went to the cocoa belt and worked on a daily paid basis (Guyer, 1997: 61-63, 98-99, 102). Some professionals from the Niger-Benue confluence region went to cities like Kaduna and Lagos to partake in 'good' paying job as result of the oil 'boom', while others went to the cocoa belt. Despite the oil 'boom' during this terrible time, the government refused to ameliorate the suffering of the people as a result of abdication of responsibilities due to bad policies.

In 1981, the global oil industry witnessed a glut as a result of the increased supplies from new oil fields in non-OPEC countries and the success of oil conservation campaigns in the west. The result was a substantial fall in both Nigeria's production and revenue. Between January and August 1981, production fell by two-thirds, from 2.1 mb/d to 700,000 mb/d. The average price per barrel declined by 26% from $40 in 1981 to $29.6 1983 (Umoden, 1992: 68). Nigeria's foreign reserves depleted by some 80% from N5.1 billion in 1981 to N1.0 million in 1983 (Shagari, 2001: 393). The results were shortages, urban job losses, cutbacks in government expenditure and inflation at an alarming rate. In response to the worsening economic situation, the government altered some of the basic structures of the economy. In April 1982, the Economic Stabilization Act meant to 'revamp' the economy was introduced. This was done through the imposition of austerity measures and measures to control smuggling.

In 1984, the government introduced more drastic measures to prune expenditures, including a wage freeze and banning certain imports and changing the colors of the various denominations of the Naira. The currency issue was, in deed, an attempt to demonetize notes smuggled out of the country and used in the black market. The results were deteriorating living conditions and retrenchment of workers. The severity of the economic crisis in the mid-1980s led to the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) that began in 1986. SAP components included devaluing the Naira, removing domestic fuel subsidies, liberalizing trade, prioritizing investments in the agricultural sector, privatizing and commercializing inefficient public enterprises and liberalizing rules governing foreign participation and private investment in industrial and manufacturing activities (Khan, 1994: 190; Umoden, 1992: 29-65). In the end, SAP became negative in real terms with disastrous consequences on the general well being of most Nigerians, unemployment and inflation. Typical examples would suffice. Between 1980 and 1989, the number of Nigerians employed by the UAC declined by more than 60% from 20,000 in 1980 to 7,500 in 1989 (Abdullahi and Suleiman, 2002: 139). The period between 1985 and 1990 recorded an upward movement of prices of consumer items as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Increases in Consumer Prices between 1985 and 1990

Items	1985 Prices	1990 Prices	% Increase
A gal of g/nut oil	15	51	240.0
A gal of palm oil	12	42	250.0
A measure of beans	1.3	6	361.5
A measure of rice	1.3	9	592.3
A tin of peak milk	0.4	3	650.0
A packet of sugar	0.8	3	275.0
A loaf of bread	0.6	6	900.0

Source: Abdullahi and Suleiman, 2002: 140.

Equally, prices for the various brands of Peugeot cars rose by between 200% and 194.11%, from the pre-SAP price of ₦10,000 to ₦17,000, or ₦30,000 to ₦50,000 in 1986 (Abdullahi and Suleiman, 2002: 193). One of the attractions of Privatization and Commercialization is the creation of more jobs for Nigerians. However, empirical evidence for the banking sectors, at least so far, is the opposite – job losses – as Table 3 indicates.

Table 3: Job Losses in the Banking Sector – Examples of three Leading Banks

Name of Enterprise	Year	Employment at Privatization	Employment after Privatization	Job losses	% Job losses
Union Bank Plc	1993	12,006	8,911	3,095	25.79
UBA Plc	1993	8,258	4,305	3,953	47.87
First Bank Plc	1993	10,653	8,785	1,778	16.83

***Source*:** Annual Reports and Statement of Accounts of, Union Bank of Nigeria PLC, United Bank for Africa PLC and First Bank of Nigeria PLC: 1993.

The instruments deployed through adjustment affected different groups in different ways and in political terms became the subject of intense power struggle. A potential and sought-after strategy for copping with the economic crisis was migration. Some of the desperate measures included stowing away in ships or taking hazardous and circuitous routes.

Between 1986 and 1990, both government and firms shed 'excess' labour. The decline in the rate of employment, the gloomy economic situation and high competition in the urban labour market led to employment growth in informal enterprises such as motor, shoe and bicycle repairing, tailoring, metal working, hairdressing and furniture making. In the countryside, the rising cost and scarcity of labour occasioned by the out-migration contributed to the increased utilization of female labour, particularly in harvesting and threshing. Most female labour was drawn from women beyond childbearing age and pastoral Fulani women. The poorer farmers relied on communal work parties. Koranic scholars and local schoolteachers used their students on farms. Rich farmers who provided hostels for migrant labourers utilized their services to mobilize labour for their own farms. Some parents sent their children to relatives or for Koranic training as coping strategies. This process, no doubt, relieved the household of the number of people to be fed and it gave children access to the urban-earned remittances generated in the urban informal sector through hawking and petty load carrying.

From the late 1970s through to 2004, advocates of a neo-liberal economy promoted first economic stabilization (austerity) plans and then SAP, Counter-Trade, Privatization and Commercialization and lately deregulation of the downstream sector of the petroleum industry. The problem of structural adjustment in Nigeria is that it has continued to address the economic systems of the urban bias arising from urban-centered contracts with less regard for agriculture. Thus the political corollary of economic reform is simply to dismantle urban entitlements and not to really restructure the economy. As a result, petroleum has remained the main stay of the economy without structural changes. The only changes that have occurred over the years are the frequent and arbitrary increases in the prices of petroleum products with severe economic consequences including skyrocketing inflation and unemployment. Between 1974 and 2003, the prices of petrol have increased by 44,444.4% from 9 kobo per litre to ₦40.00, kerosene by 47,500% from 8 kobo to ₦38.00 and diesel by 47,500% from 8 kobo to ₦38.00. Despite the increases in prices, the refined petroleum product sectors have remained unreliable and unproductive thereby making users pay for the inefficiency of the sector.

As a result of lack structural planning and meaningful adjustments and development strategies, Nigeria has continued to witness widespread poverty. For example, the incidence of poverty increased from 47% in 1986 to 65% in 1993, 67% in 1999 and 70% in 2002 (Jega, 2003: 5). Equally, between 1980 and 1996, the population in poverty increased by 48.8% from 18.3 million in 1980 to 67.1% in 1996 (Ajakaiye, 2002: 10). In fact, poverty in the northern states increased sharply between 1985 and 1990. For instance, in 1985, 41.27% of the states had half of their population in poverty, but by 1990 all the 19 states had over 50% poverty incidences among their population (Aliyu, 2001: 1). In terms of Human Development Index (HDI) of the UNDP, Nigeria's position has declined from 142nd out of 174 countries in 1998 to 151st in 2002. Today more than 80% of Nigeria's population lives below the poverty line, 90% has no access to good roads; more than 70% lacks access to good health care, over 80% has no access no good water, while over 80% of

Nigeria children under the age of five are stunted due to malnutrition. Real incomes have fallen by more than 50% between 1984 and 1999 due to inflation. Per capita income has drastically declined by over 75% from over $1,000 in 1980 to $240 in 1997 (Abdullahi and Suleiman, 2002: 138). Also, inflation rate increased from 5.5% in 1985 to 56.1% in 1988, 57.2% in 1993, over 60% in 1994 and 72.8% in 1995. Since 1990, the growth of the real GDP started to fall drastically, declining from 8.2% in 1990 to 2.9% in 1992 and 1.3% in 1994. This shows that the economy needed restructuring, but the various governments were incompetent in handling it.

The pressure to meet the rising cost of traded goods and to provide education, medical care and other essential needs of the households has constituted a major source of severe economic and social dislocations. The responses to this situation are varied, dubious and complex. For some, the response took the form of expanding production of goods and the lineage system as a cushion mechanism. For others, it was to turn to violence, communal and 'religious' clashes, street begging, armed and highway robbery, prostitution/human trafficking, money laundering, armed sales, child abuse/labour, embezzlement, official corruption, extra-judicial killings, famine crimes, collection of interest on government deposits, internet fraud, banking scams and so on.

A worsening economic situation is certain to cause regional and religious tensions. Riots have been frequent forms of protest against fuel shortages, price increases and so on. Indeed, a deep sense of frustration has often accompanied the crisis and economic reform policies and given rise to different tendencies and negative ideologies. Ethnic and religious fundamentalism occasioned by severe economic disequilibria has become the commonest expression of frustration. Since the 1970s Nigeria has continued to witness the neglect of rural grass roots welfare. Indeed, the '*Yan-tatsine*' incident was one of symptoms and manifestations of the early 1980s crises in the economic system at the level of the common man and the incredibly unequal distribution of wealth as well as a proof of the decline in the surveillance of dissidence.

The downturn of the economy since the 1930s (although there were economic booms in the period 1954 to 1966 and in the 1970s) has given rises to ethnic mobilization and conflicts, crimes and so on. Most ethnic and communal conflicts are the by-product of consistent agrarian crises and economic burdens as well as inter-ethnic competition for land and resources. In 1932, in Idoma District, anti-settler hostilities were directed mainly at the Igbo and Tiv and became rife and antagonistic. 'Settlers' were suspected to be selling below the prevailing and depressed market prices. Although the 'stranger'/'settler' factor was an attempt at seeking local explanations for an Empire-wide problem. Thus, in 1932 farms belonging to 'strangers' (Igbo and Tiv) were destroyed in Oturkpo, Egumale and Akpa Districts (Ochonu, 2000: 24-25). In Bida Emirate, the depression introduced new conflicts and forms of antagonism. During 1934-35, there were resentments by peasants against Bida people on whom they depended for the marketing of their produce and whom they held responsible for the falling prices (Nadel, 1942/1965: 137).

The same feeling persisted in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, in Lere and Kafanchan (Kaduna State), the 'indigenes' repeatedly fought Hausa 'settlers', an example being the Zango-Kataf crisis. In 1987, there was the Bachama-Hausa conflict in Tingno-Waduku. There was also the Mwaghavul-Ron protracted conflict in Plateau State that started in 1987 (Egwu, 1998: 83-93). Indeed, between November 9th, 1999 and February 2nd, 2002, there were over 44 conflicts between different ethnic and interest groups in Nigeria. Between 2001 and 2004 there had been protracted and devastating clashes in Shedam-Yelwa that led the devastating conflict in Kano in May 2004. These conflicts frequently led to social dislocations and displacement, social tensions, crises over the question of indigenes, disruptions of family and communal life, child abuse, mistrust, relocations, fear, famine crimes and above all a deepening of hunger and poverty.

A development arising from abject and increasing level of poverty, unemployment and family and communal dislocations over the years has been prostitution and human trafficking. In the 1930s, prostitution was localized operating mostly in villages and towns. In the 1970s and 80s, it took a national/regional dimension to urban-economic nerve centres like Kaduna and Lagos. In the modern period, the sex industry has been internationalized and is mostly focused towards Saudi Arabia, Italy, South Africa, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, New York, Rome, France and Belgium. In Italy, some 20,000 Nigerian girls are engaged in commercial sex work, including over 3,000 in Turin alone (Olaniyi, 2003: 23). On the night of November 11th, 2002, the police arrested 110 prostitutes in Ikeja, Ikoyi and Victoria Island (Thisday, 2002: 12). The trafficking industry has created a variety of veritable enterprises including fraudsters, forgers, phony lawyers, corrupt government officials (Police, Customs, Immigration and Aviation staff), even parents who sell their children and fake orthodox and ritual priests. In fact, in some parts of Nigeria, the struggle to send family members abroad has itself become organized around individuals (mostly women) who brokerage the migration process and the prospective migrants. The contract is usually underwritten in the form of some traditional oath involving rituals. The involvement of oath rituals in the migration process reflects a wider development that has in recent times thrust the genuine traditional healers as well as 'fetish' priests into the limelight.

6. Conclusion

The 1930s witnessed a worldwide economic depression that virtually crippled Northern Nigeria economically. The fiscal and deflationary policies of the colonial government, the decline in the prices of primary commodities, natural disasters and increased taxes substantially contributed to the decline in the standard of living among the majority of Northern Nigerian citizens, with famine, starvation and deaths in many areas. Besides the drought of the 1970s (a natural event) that contributed to the declining living standards, starvation and deaths as a result of food shortages and lack of cash, contemporary government activities and inactivity have reenacted the scenario of the 1930s. Wealth that accrued from the oil, during the boom diverted the attention of government and wealthy individuals and groups from agriculture, thereby leading to out-migrations to urban centres for jobs. In the 1980s, the liberalization of goods and foreign exchange prices and other fiscal measures shifted the terms of trade in favour of agriculture for those with access to capital, state patronage and high-value urban and border markets. Poor households were forced to diversify into a variety of marginal non-farm activities and an intensification of seasonal patterns of rural-urban migration in order to make both ends meet.

The most noticeable result of this state of affairs was that the majority of Northern Nigerian citizens found themselves without jobs and with declining living standards but increased state demands. They were consigned to unpredictable living and compelled to indulge in different vocations and antics, legal or illegal, to survive. The cumulative outcome of the economic crises in major sectors of government and important economic nerve centres of Northern Nigeria was that the unemployed became engaged in criminal and semi-criminal activities. Crimes were heinous, but they appeared to be motivated by necessity. Over the years, colonial and post-colonial governments in Nigeria have only been concerned with brutal security measures without the removal or reduction of the prevailing hardships. The fight against hardship and crime has continued to be characterized by knee-jerk reactions, and so it is not surprising that instead of abating, the crime situation has taken a more disruptive nature. Indeed, the emergence of human trafficking marked an escalation of the economic crisis. Instead of accepting failures of bad policies and bad officials, the various governments tried to exonerate themselves, claiming that they did not create the economic problem and it was a 'world wide phenomenon'.

On the whole, despite decreased standards of living, increased hunger, malnutrition, crime, social vices and even death, and the economic burden assumed by the people, colonial and independent governments in Nigeria took steps that worsened the economic crises, while simultaneously trying to blame the resultant sufferings on the people ('lazy, backward, obstinate, incompetent, not planning' and so on). Perhaps the "Mixed Farming" of the colonial government, the "Operation Feed the Nation", the "Green Revolution" of the 1970s and 1980s, and even the "National Poverty Eradication Program" and "NEEDS" of the present government were/are really attempts to blame the ordinary Nigerian for his/her problems (not enough food/work) rather than governments and their bad economic and even political policies. This concept of a "backward sloping supply of labour curve" is not acceptable because ordinary Northern Nigerians have made great efforts to meet increased state demands, but the opportunities for the people to earn money and to subsist during these terrible times just were not there. All the various governments ever did was to put a smoke screen and tried to blame someone else (anyone else) for the difficulties experienced during their time on watch.

In order to minimize (if not completely avoid) these type of crises in the feature the following measures are proffered: (a) Since the difference between the oil and non-oil economies has become so apparent and government is incompetent and has failed to provide the link between the core and the hinterland and the oil industry is incapable of providing employment and employment growth, government revenue must be diversified to provide the much-needed linkages to other potentially productive sectors of the economy (agriculture and manufacturing); (b) government should be more transparent and allow open debates on structural economic issues; (c) government should sincerely fight corruption and do away with nepotism, over-centralization in economic planning and implementation as well as mismanagement of public funds; d) wide-spread qualitative education must be vigorously pursued to minimize ignorance; (e) a sustained human-centered development strategy capable of achieving a structural transformation of the economy should be vigorously pursued; (f) government should allow and also accept genuine criticisms of policies and policy decisions on the economy; g) parallel measures should be developed in order to improve living conditions and standards and curtail rural-urban exodus and brain drain; (i) government should tackle the structural causes of poverty through concrete, positive and sincere political and economic initiatives; and (j) government should emphasize increased spending on social services and focus more on genuine and real job-creation strategies.

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