

THE STATE AND RURAL ZARIA FROM AFFLUENCE TO POVERTY: HISTORICAL BANK

Isah M. Abbas

*Department of Political Science
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria
E-mail: isaabbas@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT

Given the abundant human and natural resources located at rural areas, it is expected that rural dwellers will be awashed with continuous affluence. On the contrary, rural areas are deprived of the benefits of resources located within the area. Rural areas have continued to be subjected to all forms of deprivation and thus live in abject and excruciating poverty at the expense of the urban areas. This work attempted to examine the increasing or widening gulf of inequality and trace, over time, how the state has continued to roll out policies and strategies that have deprived rural areas of the basic needs of life at the expense of urban growth and consolidation. Thus, within the framework of the emergence and consolidation of the State of Zazzau, rural Zaria and its economy became subsumed into the survival operations of the city. This was facilitated through intense extraction of surplus and other forms of appropriations along with economic and political subordination leading to the further urban-rural gap. Lack of access to politically participate in and exert influence on decision making, quality education, health care services and other forms of deprivations that subjected rural communities of Zaria to intense poverty provoke them, more than anything else, to politically unite against their city counterparts and overlords. The point of departure of the study suggests that for prosperity to override on poverty, rural folks must be strategically strengthened, organized and turned out be politically proactive with enhanced services.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a direct manifestation of inequality resulting from exploitation and unequal distribution of wealth amongst people and within the entire geographical location. Over time and space, there has been intense exploitation with increased inequality in income and resource distribution between urban and rural areas. All these have, of course, continued to promote socio-economic and political tension, crises and other issues like ethnic and religious conflicts and protests that the state has not been able to effectively manage or resolve (Oyovbaire, 2008). Rural poverty is not a new phenomenon. It has persisted over a long period at different historical conjunctures or epochs and thus manifested in different forms and magnitude. The nature of rural poverty may be in food shortages, caused probably by infertile land or soils leading to low productivity or by natural disasters like drought, pests, diseases and other forms of ecological crises (Weitz, 1973; Mortimore, 1989). However, rural poverty may also be due to shortages in labour force due largely to state policies, which provoke rural-urban migrations. Furthermore, there is a plethora of other rural constraints or issues bordering on poverty, which may largely be due to some technical

setbacks in the society ranging from input scarcity or the nature of farming patterns and management sequel to ageing population where the younger segment pays less attention or gives low status to farming. State agricultural policies and strategies constitute the fundamental causal factors in this development (Martinussen, 1997). Rural people have been deprived of the basic modes of life continuously at the expense of the urban growth. This therefore put rural communities at the lowest bottom of class hierarchy. The state and those acting on its behalf have played decisive roles in transforming rural life into that of "stagnation and decay, apathy and despair" (Abbass, 1997). Even though public policy statements were made and several strategies adopted since 1960 to transform rural condition of life but the state has continued to neglect and bully the countryside despite the roles rural areas play in sustaining the entire national economy.

The Process of State Formation in Zazzau (Zaria) Region

Before the late fifteenth century, very scanty knowledge had existed on the process of state formation in Zazzau region (Smith, 1960). The scanty knowledge about Zazzau had been widely acknowledged due to uncertainties on facts as well as the chronology of events. Many factors were responsible for such developments. It is suggested that the shift of the political power from at least three major areas perhaps accounted for such dearth of information (Smith, 1964). Since the seat of Zazzau state government continued to change from one place to another, over time, traces of such settlements were discovered at Turunku and Dutsen Kufena (Smith, 1977). However, the sites of the seats of government of Zazzau continued to move from one place to another essentially for defence and refugee reasons. More importantly, the seats of government were moved because of economic reasons. Smith shows that the locations of these birni-like settlements were at Kargi, Wuciciri, Turunku, Kufena and the present site (Smith, 1964).

Since religious factors were also fundamental in the growth and development of urban settlements in Hausa states (Smith, 1970), it is acknowledged that large inselberges like the Madarkaci, Tukur-Tukur, Kufena etc became the dwelling places of great spirits (iskoki) which attracted worshippers in great numbers (Mortimore, 1970). Great Walls were therefore constructed near such inselberges that gave rise to large settlements. All these great walls have remained unverified and uninvestigated. Hence, there has not been any historical documentation or archaeological investigations on when or who built the Madarkaci and many other Walls. Only speculation showed that the walls might have been built before the reign of Habe Sarki Bakwa moved away from Turunku to Kufena in about 1536 (Hogben and Kirk-Green, 1966).

While Bakwa Turunku had overwhelming political and economic control and domination, he nonetheless possessed the ability to build larger walls which his influence incorporated Kufena, Madarkaci and Turunku walls. His daughter Amina, the famous legendary wall builder and mighty warrior is said to have constructed other traces of the walls (Hodgkin, 1975).

The distinctive features in the process of state formation throughout Hausaland were identical particularly in areas where rulers possessed absolute powers and therefore acted arbitrarily by imposing discretionary taxes, dues etc. The rulers however made use of forced peasant labour drawn from the villages and hamlets in order to meet the increasing requirement of the Sarauta system in the city with slaves farming the bulk of the labour supply.

State Consolidation and Rural Integration

The process of state formation took a very long historical period. For example, two or three centuries prior to 1900, the State of Zazzau was deeply engaged in a series of country-side integration through conquests of large tract of territories comprising of villages, towns and cities which were brought under its control and thus consolidated the city of Zaria with large vassal states (Abbass, 1997).

With the consolidation of power in the city by the ruling aristocracy, taxes, tributes and other forms of levies were appropriated and sent to the city. Further, the oligarchy deployed its representatives to the areas conquered in order to oversee and implement policy. This strengthened political control and subordination as well as strong economic supervision and extraction of surplus.

Since the emergent state was firmly represented in the countryside, it eventually moved to incorporate the entire rural economy under its control largely due to the dwindling state revenues. Subsequently, the rural economy was increasingly penetrated by the coercive power of the state. As the state intervened in rural affairs, political and economic relationships of subordination and extraction of surplus emerged. The consequences of these relationships were further widening with intensification of urban-rural gulf or differences. In other words, the rural areas became victims of their own prosperity at the expense of the city oligarchy through intense surplus extraction and other forms of appropriation that formed part of the pre-colonial capital accumulation (Abbass, 1997).

The pre 1900 urbanization process in Hausaland was also associated with refugee or immigrant influxes of different family occupational groups. Thus, the growth of Zaria urban centre was therefore due to its protective capacities to accommodate refugee influxes possessing a variety of vocational and other occupational skills. The original impetus in the growth of the city of Zaria was by means of its protective powers over a vast land through wars of conquests with tributes paid to the rulers (Ajaegbu, 1976), the centrality of the location of Zaria, among other factors, attracted people of different origin from far and near with different crafts, knowledge and trading know-how. Hence, there exists an influence of Kanuri, Nupe, Yoruba, and Arabs among others in the transformation of the city of Zaria. In other words, the cosmopolitan nature of the birni community was one of the basic features in the process of state formation in Hausaland. The city settlements thus emerged not due to natural increases of a single community but as a centre of immigrants (Smith, 1970).

Socio-Economic Conditions Preceding the Jihad in Zaria

The social, economic and political situation in the entire Hausaland provoked the rise of Muslim Fulani intelligentsia to mount serious condemnation to the Habe unjust rule. These groups of revolutionaries mobilized people within and threatened the Habe unjust rule through waging a Holy War (Jihad). Majority of Hausa peasantry embraced the new religion in order to cut off with the Habe oppressive and exploitative bondage.

In 1807, Mallam Musa, a disciple of Danfodio, along with Yamusa's forces sparked off the collapse of Zazzau kingdom. The overthrow of the decadent Habe government did not mean the initial objectives of the Jihad were achieved. On the other hand, the objectives of the Jihad were strategically reversed in order to maintain the status quo. By 1837 for example, "emirs had gone far in their lust for expansionist adventure while corrupt practices; tantamount to reversing the objectives of the Jihad, were in top gears" (Abbass, 1997).

The overthrow of the Zazzau Habe rule by the Jihadist forces instituted or maintained a system of government that was characteristically Habe in nature but with some modifications. The establishment of the emirate did not fundamentally change or alter the system of taxation and other form of revenue and system of extraction of surplus. By 1827, abuses by emirate officials reached a significant height with the incidences of the sale of political office, widespread bribery, sharing of booty and other forms of the extortion of the Habe (Smith, 1964).

The changed political set up based on Islamic ideology was reverted to the old Habe system and the entire community became, once again, subjected to tyrannical rule. However, the countryside was further brought closer to the oppressive rule using religious manipulations (Smith, 1981). The rural economy became gradually integrated through the penetration of the state power and its apparatuses that consequently fragmented the rural societies into fief holding officials mostly managed by absentee chiefs.

The leaders, in the performance of their functions, recruited certain individuals who ensured that rural-urban links were maintained with regular collection of tributes, taxes and dues as well as other forms of compliance, submission etc to the constituted authority (Abbass, 1997). With the economy of urban Zaria rurally based, the largest proportion of the population was agriculturally inclined. Thus, the political and ritual leaders facilitated the surplus provided and extracted from the rural areas.

Colonialism and Development of Urban Zaria

As the capital of Zazzau kingdom, the location of Zaria continued to attract further growth due to its topography, central location and climatic conditions among other factors. Zaria played the role of connecting principal socio-economic and political centres during the trans-Saharan and Trans Atlantic trades. In February 1900, the city of Zaria was overrun by the colonial forces, and the surrender of the city was accepted at the Kofar Gayan open space (Abbass, 1997).

A detachment of the West African Frontier Forces (WAFF) was immediately stationed and by March 1901, the Province of Zaria was established with a colonial government station added to the WAFF camp. In 1904, a newly built cart road linked Zaria with Zungeru. In the same year, a telephone wire passed through Zaria to link Kano and Bauchi and a barrack for the mounted troops was established (Abbass, 1997). Again, in 1906, Lugard designated Zaria as a provincial headquarters (Arnett, 1970). However, further provision of infrastructure and the additional urbanization of Zaria town continued, with the modification of the government station as the Government Reservation Area (GRA) in order to serve the needs of the European settlers (Urquhart, 1977). Thus, racecourse or polo grounds were constructed accompanied with other important houses, offices and facilities of the European settlers (Lugard, 1906). It should be noted that not only urban-rural gulf had been enlarged but also at the same time, social class differentiations and the continuing polarization within Zaria urban set up had been effected with the separate and segregated African and European settlements. Lugard expressed this very clearly:

The first object of non-residential area is to separate Europeans, so that they should not be exposed to the attacks of mosquitoes which have become infected with germs of malaria and yellow fever, by preying on natives and especially native children, whose blood so often contains those germs. It is also valuable as to safeguard against bush fires and those that are so common in the native quarters, especially in the dry season in the Northern provinces. Finally, it removes the inconveniences felt by Europeans, whose rest is disturbed by drumming and other noises dear to the natives (Lugard, 1918:420).

Rail line reached Zaria in 1911 sequel to the 1905 survey showing Zaria region as an important cotton producing area. In 1913, another rail line connected Zaria to Jos. The colonial regime further issued another report stating that the Northern Nigeria was the best cotton-providing region in West Africa. The report provoked the interests of a number of European commercial firms that began to arrive in Zaria from 1908, with the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) becoming the first to arrive.

Because of this development, the colonial administration established an experimental cotton farm at Maigana. The BCGA also established cotton-buying stations at neighbouring villages around Soba while other firms established theirs at Fatika, Gimi and the environs. In 1911, BCGA built cotton processing in Zaria (Urquhart, 1977). Thus, the Niger Company built its Warehouse near BCGA with John Halt and Company having established its own grips in the commercial area. According to the Zaria Province Annual Report of 1914, the Niger Company, as an export firm, exported 315tons of hides, 243 tons of sheanuts, 112tons of groundnuts, 14cwt of gutta percha, 118lbs of beeswax, 10cwt of skins and 8cwt of cotton.

More and more European firms besieged Zaria. By 1918, twenty-one commercial firms, in addition to the ones already on ground were established. Another important firm in the area was the Nigerian Tobacco Company (NTC). Hence, the establishment of the railway, trading firms and the cotton processing firms etc along

with the establishment of complementary facilities became necessary to enable all the institutions discharge their roles. All these establishments attracted and drained labourers from far and near, particularly from the rural areas.

The urban designs, growth and development of Zaria made Governor Hesketh Bell, since 1910, to have a vision of Zaria as the capital of Northern Nigeria. With the facilities and other infrastructures provided, Governor Bell put up a strong recommendation to the colonial and imperial government in London to transform Zaria as the capital of Northern Nigeria (Perham, 1960). Zaria continuously became strategically important as a centre in Northern Nigeria with the establishment of more infrastructures.

For example, in 1915, Zaria became the Headquarters of Agriculture Development. In 1916, Zaria was also designated as Headquarters of Northern Section of Public Works Department. In 1917, it became a Centre for the Veterinary Department while in 1918 Zaria was a major camp of WAFF. Since urban areas are vastly surrounded by rural areas where extraction of surplus is as given, the emergence of satellite rural areas on the fringes of urban areas is an endemic feature of all urban settlements.

Poverty, Rural Zaria and the Colonial Regime

The British imperialist forces, through the activities of Royal Niger Company, overran the emirates and other kingdoms of the Northern protectorate. By 1904, the final subjugation of the caliphate was unleashed and the entire emirates occupied by the British forces, notwithstanding the vehement and fierce resistance and rejection of the British colonialism.

The British exploited the decadence of the leadership and other political expediencies to consolidate its authority through the imposition of "indirect rule" system. The existing structures in the emirate provided the congenial grounds for the sustenance and survival of the indirect rule. The system of indirect rule was established based on the long existence of the local system of administration that thus suited the political expediency of the time and therefore served the purpose of colonial legitimization. J.A., Burdon, an early British colonial resident stated that;

...to rule through the existing chiefs, to raise them in the administrative scale, to enlist them on our side in the work of progress and good government. We cannot do without them. To rule directly would require an army of British magistrates..., which both the general unhealthiness of the country and the present poverty forbid (Burdon, 1956).

There were tremendous influences and impacts of colonial administration on the growth and development of Zaria urban area as well as the shrinkage and decline of Zaria rural areas since 1900 (Abbass, 1997). These were accentuated by the introduction of a number of alien and non-traditional infrastructures (roads and railways) as well as other economic and political activities.

The establishment of the colonial state and administration was designed to penetrate capitalism into the rural economy and thus integrate the entire economy

within the international capitalist economy with a view to repatriation of surplus from the toil of peasantry in the rural areas (Wells, 1995). Since the organisation of colonial and imperial domination and exploitation of the rural areas was facilitated through the emirs or chiefs, the emirs' or chiefs' councils, courts and security forces were effectively used.

During the colonial era, emirs and chiefs performed functions detrimental to their communities, especially in the collection of general tax, cattle tax and other forms of tributes and extortions (Abbass, 1990). With the British resident in the emirate or province, the entire system of administration therefore radiated around and thus came under his direct supervision, advise, guidance and forceful compliance to colonial preferences. With a chain of Divisional Officers (DOs), at various levels and locations, it fostered absolute loyalty under the Native Authority (NA) structure.

Majority of the population still live in rural areas and suffer from abject poverty. With the Zaria rural economy continuously integrated into the urban framework, it invariably became subsumed within the Zaria urban description and thus lost its relevance except under the urban scheme of things. During the colonial era, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, Zaria province was divided into three Touring Areas. The northern districts, comprising Anchau, Giwa, Ikara, Kubau, Makarfi and Soba, were supervised by the colonial office in Zaria. The western district of Birnin Gwari, Chikun, Igabi etc were supervised by the colonial office in Kaduna. The southern part of the province had its base at Lere with a sub-station at Kagoro (NAK, Zaria Touring Dairy, 1937). The respective district heads that worsened the degree of rural poverty systematically pauperized rural peasants. As celebrated embezzlers, district heads, more often than not, converted taxes and other dues collected in the name of the districts into their personal uses. They however robbed the rural peasants of their livelihood and placed their paid agents at strategic location in the looting of the rural economy. The strategy therefore was to organize systematic cheating on groundnut, cotton and other commodity payments and assessments (Abbass, 1997).

The extortions exhibited by the district head of Paki, for example, showed that he paid wages to road workers far below the figures indicated on the NA Accounts in 1936. He also squandered a quarter of the labourers' wages and added fictitious names of labourers completely unknown to have done any work. It was further discovered that apart from the ghost labourers the Paki district head put down and claimed their payments, other labourers who genuinely worked were never paid at all (Heussler, 1968). The role played by traditional rulers in the extortion of the peasantry without remittance to the colonial office was therefore very prevalent. There occurred instances of peasant resentments due to the degree of extortion that became rather unbearable and many rural areas or residents flagrantly refused to pay taxes due to the extortionist character of the district heads. Paki was such a rural area where the district head was investigated, reprimanded and who later fled and escaped to Kano for fear of being imprisoned. He was dismissed while his other accomplices were imprisoned (Heussler, 1968).

During the colonial period, rural environments were seen as potential areas where abundant resources could be effectively exploited and thus, greater emphasis was elaborately designed for that purpose. It should be recalled that during the Habe era, rural life was characterized with insecurity sequel to the constant slave raiding and inter state wars. However, the caliphal period was characteristically corrupt as fief holders exhibited intense extortion of the peasantry. The British colonial regime, in league with the local chiefs, was marked by unprecedented exploitation, repression and extortion of the peasantry that exacerbated the existing rural problems of poverty and impoverishment (Cole, 1951).

In the 1950s and early 1960, agricultural exports provided the main pedestal and dynamic growth in the Nigerian state and economy and therefore the development of urban areas. This invariably meant further underdevelopment and impoverishment of the rural areas. Between 1950 and 1960 for example, the volume of agricultural exports jumped to more than five percent per annum while local food production rose to more than two percent (Forrest, 1995). It should however be stressed that during those years, agricultural exports were the predominant sources of foreign exchange. This was because revenues accruing to government coffers were principally dependent on trade taxes (import duties and export taxes) which accounted for 78 percent of the total tax revenue during that period. Tom Forrest further succinctly shows that:

The growth of GDP averaged 4.3 percent per annum in real terms from 1950 to 1964. It then fell to 2.6 percent in 1966, the year when political disruption began seriously to affect the economy. In that year, there was a surge of food price inflation to 2.9 percent. Prior to that time, food-price inflation had been steady at relatively low levels. At this point, oil began to make an important contribution to the government revenue and export earnings (Forrest, 1995:33).

1950s and 1960s seem to be years of prosperity for the agricultural rural economy in Zaria region. The fortunes of cotton, groundnuts, tobacco, grains etc provide good indicators for rural affluence. Rains during those years were steady. There were production boom with less incidence of ecological disaster. Established colonial industries located within and around Zaria, had reached conspicuous upward trends in the purchases of agricultural products, especially for exports with enhanced local industrial consumption.

The Marketing Board purchases of commodities had reached a pick buying season. That perhaps explained why groundnuts during the period had hit about 20 percent of the value of Nigerian exports. Landless young and agile rural residents have continued to flood urban areas and created rates of urbanisation far higher than its absorptive capacities. They are thus socially, economically and politically vulnerable with social, economic and political time bomb exploding sporadically. In the early 1970s, the Nigerian economy still depended almost entirely on the rural agricultural production and exports for the foreign exchange earnings. This brought some affluence in rural household welfare, particularly to the rural agricultural

producers. It also enhanced intra-household transactions and overall dynamic activities in the rural areas. However, with the appearance of oil as the dominant foreign exchange earner, the situation in rural areas began to change drastically (Watts, 1987). Ironically, the structural change in the economy and productivity as well as export earnings sector changed the socio-economic fabric of the rural resident in all ramifications.

This consequently led to massive rural-urban migration, dwindled food production, famine, hunger and poverty amongst the rural residents. By mid 1970, food began to become problematic to even the rural residents. Rural hunger and poverty are therefore not a consequence of population explosion but an outcome of state policies on production and distribution. The Nigerian state with huge oil revenues desperately began to introduce and lure farmers with new World Bank schemes and strategies in agricultural programmes due to increasing unemployment and under-employment of Nigerians and thus a new face of poverty.

Rural areas as centres of production and affluence have gradually been transformed and plagued with poverty, degradation and neglect (Abbass, 1997). Almost all the state conceived and sponsored rural development programmes and strategies collapsed due largely to lack of grassroots support and relevance. Nigerian rural policies, as conceived by the World Bank indicate the prevalence of rural poverty. A great number of rural dwellers has continued to live below poverty line and thus cannot afford the basic needs of life.

The political economy of rural poverty is not taken as given. It is thus a clear and direct manifestation of the failure of the state and its actors. That is why the flowery designed rural development strategies have not and cannot improve rural life given the nature and role of the state. Contrary to the conceived philosophy of rural development strategies, rural communities have remained plagued with ever more serious and catastrophic problems than ever before.

Crisis in rural Zaria is therefore a direct manifestation of the entire crises in rural Nigeria and thus a reflection of the form and context of the Nigerian state. Since rural poverty is not a new phenomenon in the lexicon of the Nigerian state and economy, it has persisted through centuries. Neither the state strategies nor international organs have succeeded in alleviating or eradicating it through all strategies adopted so far. Solutions to rural poverty have remained a mystery, a mirage and seem to be as elusive as ever.

Perspectives of Poverty in Rural Zaria

The socio-economic setting of rural Zaria has continued to offer peace and naturalness with less environmental pollution like all other rural areas. The predominant activity of rural life, which is revered, is no other than the production of sufficient foodstuff with labour largely from the family. The unplanned nature of the rural Zaria has given it the status of natural environment unlike the frivolousness of urban life in Zaria. Agriculture is the major, if not the only, rural occupation. Both cash and food crops are grown. These include tobacco, cotton, groundnuts, cassava,

maize, guinea corn, millet, rice, yams, beans and a variety of vegetables. In some areas, fadama and dry season farming, through irrigation canals are undertaken. Other agricultural activities, like livestock, fishing and mixed farming activities are also practised. It is important to note that the establishment of the Maigana Farm Centre in 1910 boosted such activities over a long time, particularly the production of cash crops (Abbass, 1997:236).

Distinct socio-economic and physical rural structures are clearly and easily observable which usually depict dilapidation. In many instances, approaching rural areas brings into focus the phenomenon of isolated and deserted setting. The unfolding naturalness of rural environment and life is, of course, as given. The nature of rural houses and the predominant roof style depict nothing but a state of poverty. The rooms in the households are narrow with no provision and consideration for ventilation. Since the houses are poorly built due to the poor status of the residents, there exist no plan and standard practised in modern times. It is exemplified thus:

In most cases, the houses are fenced with the famous aduruku tress and stalks traditionally called gidan dannu. The dannu surrounding the rural households are the prevalent features of any typical rural area around. The dannu, made up of long stalks/grasses, is attached to the growing aduruku trees to provide cover to the households. This empirically exhibits a feature of rural poverty (Abbass, 1997:229).

The rural settlement patterns are chaotic, unplanned with very limited provision for facilities and amenities. The environment has very little regard for drainage and comfort. Footpaths, more often than not, separate dwelling houses that are narrow, motorably inaccessible with no regard for ventilation. All these made the rural community highly vulnerable to health related diseases and other epidemics.

Apart from the period of the rainy season, most people in the rural areas are idle. It is very common to capture scenes of shabby looking people, with young and old passing away time in their own ways. Dirty looking, barefooted children, naked or half-naked with torn away and dirty clothes wander about or play with no regard to schooling. All these depict prevalence of poverty.

In Maigana and other adjoining rural communities, the residents consider themselves and thus define or confine their social status as talakawa (commoners) in contrast to sarakuna (the nobility-those holding political offices and deriving wealth therein) who mostly reside within the urban settings. Apart from agriculture as the major rural occupation, there have existed widespread inter rural grain trade that brought affluence to rural traders, especially those who combined trading with farming. This is because the grain rural traders bought and sold grains throughout the year in distant and near markets. Thus, there existed exchange of a variety of commodities at least within the local rural market especially during the designated rural market days.

This brought about the expansion of trade and commerce leading to further expansion of the rural markets for grain and other commodities. The Giwa rural market is a case in point where traders and customers from far Northern and Southern

parts of Nigeria come down weekly for business transactions. These therefore expanded rural activities and wellbeing of the residents in general. This expansion invariably facilitated the emergence and consolidation of rural entrepreneurial activities relatively independent of urban commercial activities. Thus, as they combined trading with farming and with the predominant use of family labour, self-sufficiency in the rural areas was the general order in all households, without exception. State intervention in the rural sector has been in line with its urban bias policy. This brings the rural economy and rural communities highly vulnerable through a variety of projects or activities where rural residents become victims rather than beneficiaries (Fayemi & Igbuzor, 2005).

The crisis in rural Zaria with regard to poverty centres, overtime, not only on various local economic, social and political factors but also at the same time on natural environment as well as international factors. That is why solutions to this problem have become as elusive as ever, notwithstanding all strategies and policies adopted. Hence, the state policies and attitude of state actors from pre-colonial to post-colonial times have been particularly assaulting on the rural poor and the nature or dimension of change required to bring about a shift seems a herculean or impossible task to achieve (Schraeder, 2004).

The place accorded to rural ecology within the purview of rural system and socio-economic analysis is inadequate especially in terms of water and soil condition as well as the entirety of what the rural peasants depend on their survival. This, no doubt, brings about serious impoverishment of the peasantry that is sequel to the penetration and distortion of the countryside by the capitalist forces or institutions (Saliu, Jimoh and Arosanyi, 2006).

The place given to political factors in understanding rural poverty is almost perfunctory and almost to the exclusion of social and economic conditions of the rural communities. This is primary in the emergence of the endemic crisis of the Nigerian State and the marginalization of the rural communities (Voughan, Wright, and Small, 2005). Since hunger and famine hit the rural poor first and hardest (Hill, 1972, 1977, 1982), it is crucial to consider these issues and perhaps resolve them. Social differentiation within the rural communities of village household welfare issues bordering on women, children, young and aged and their basic needs of life like education, health care, roads, food security, sanitation, drainage, transportation etc need to be seen and addressed in their symbiotic or complementary relationship and relevance. The dichotomy between birni (urban/city) over kauye/karkara (rural) in Zaria has emerged a fierce political struggle the elites in rural against their counterparts in urban Zaria. The karkara force has gone beyond partisan politics but penetrated into the public service of Kaduna state. These have been succinctly expressed thus:

The politics of karkara in rural Zaria has a very far reaching dimension as elites in rural Zaria have continued to struggle against their urban counterparts. Thus, the seeming fear of the hitherto predominance and furtherance of the interests of the elites of urban Zaria brought into being

avalanches of resistance from the elites of rural areas. This resistance is based on the long history of urban elite extortions and denials of the rural areas' basic necessities and opportunities. The emergence, therefore, of the karkara elite-based political force in rural Zaria was a clear demonstration of the struggle for access to opportunities and necessities (Abbass, 1997:449).

Poverty Indicators and Distribution in Rural Zaria

Poverty is widespread and severe in rural areas. Poverty indicators have exhibited greater prevalence in rural areas with regard to illiteracy, access to safe water, access to health care delivery, increasing income disparity or inequality, etc. In other words, non accessibility to education, health, water, housing with high mortality rate, severe child malnutrition, declining purchasing power indicate preponderantly how most poor people live in rural areas. The displacement of human settlements in rural areas is akin to the condition of refugees (UNHIR, 2006). It is essential to note that oil boom era in Nigeria devastated agriculture, the main activity of the rural dwellers. Thus, with oil, agriculture fell from 60% of the GDP in the 1960s to 30% in the early 1980s, and the trend has continued to worsen (World Bank, 1997). With the decline in production due to construction, the demand for labour led to rural-urban migration thereby depriving rural areas of virile labour force. As the hitherto agricultural exporter and self-sufficiency in food production in the 1960s, rural areas and indeed the Nigerian nation, became transformed as an unprecedented agricultural and food importer in the 1980s.

This situation made poverty more intense and pervasive when the phenomenon of the "Dutch disease"- the oil burst-infected Nigeria. Hence, the state welfare system collapsed and poverty increased astronomically. Within a period of four years (1980-1984), for example, both average per capita income and private consumption per capita dropped simultaneously with increased poverty due largely to the fallen prices of oil. In the mid 1980s a study had shown that 43% of the Nigerian population was living below poverty line with not more than N395 per annum whereas house survey in 1992 indicated that the number of people who fell below the poverty line declined from 43% in 1985 to 34% in 1992 (World Bank, 1997; Chossudovsky, 1996). It should be realized that during the same period, income inequality deteriorated or worsened with unprecedented increase in the number of people suffering from poverty and with poor people becoming poorer as Table 1 clearly exhibits.

Table 1: Incidence of Poverty in Nigeria, 1985-92(Percentage, unless otherwise indicated)

	National		Urban		Rural	
	1985	1992	1985	1992	1985	1992
Extreme poor (N198)						
Number of poor (millions)	10.1	13.9	1.5	4.3	8.6	9.6
Poverty incidence	12.0	13.6	4.9	10.9	16.1	15.4
Poverty depth	4.2	8.5	0.9	6.1	4.2	8.0
All poor (N395)						
Number of poor (millions)	36.1	34.7	9.7	11.9	26.4	22.8
Poverty incidence	43.0	34.1	31.7	30.4	49.5	36.4
Poverty depth	15.7	14.7	9.1	12.0	18.9	16.1

Source: World Bank 1995, Evolution of Poverty and Welfare in Nigeria, 1985-92

The study further shows that living standards have continued to sharply deteriorate with increased and intense hardship as "one in five Nigerians living on less than N164 per capita a year, which barely provides half the nutritional requirements for healthy living (World Bank, 1997). Hence, two thirds of household expenditures, in both urban and rural areas, were on food alone whereas the poorest households spend over 90% of their income on food, which, of course, could not provide basic healthy living standard.

It is an indisputable fact that the number of rural people is more than twice than that of the urban (Nigeria, 2006 population census). Therefore, the distribution of poverty is uneven. Poverty is highest and more intense in rural areas. The depth of poverty in rural areas and in all regards is total and absolute. With regard to education, there is a very low educational attainment due to the rural character of chronic poverty. The geographical areas under focus, which are substantially rural, have less exposure to western education. Over 75% of the Maigana rural residents could not attend formal education. There is therefore an overwhelming low level of educational attainment both Western and Islamic education. From the findings, it was observed that even the few ones who claimed to have attended primary schools could not properly identify basic letters and figures and thus not able to read and write.

State policy currently states that primary school is universal, free and compulsory (Nigeria, UBE Act, 2004). Hence, primary school is obligatory and guaranteed for all school age going children. In reality, especially in Zaria rural areas, the so-called public policy pronouncement or statement is far removed from the apparent official declarations. The number of school-age population in the Zaria rural areas is daily on the increase while the number of children without school is rapidly enlarging.

Schools in rural Zaria are entirely public institutions, if or when such institutions actually exist. Most, if not all, of the rural teachers are lay teachers without qualifications. Rural teachers are only there to justify being there because they are employed for ridiculous wages. Thus, only the un-graded teachers, with no qualifications and cannot be improved to proceed further, are employed in rural schools. The higher or better the teachers' qualifications, the less likely they would be posted to rural schools. Social and economic gap or inequality among community members is only manifested in education. Therefore, there is no problem of greater magnitude today than the poverty emanating from lack of or deficiency in education. This is what has shackled majority of people in the rural areas (Abbass, 1997).

During the colonial era and early periods of postcolonial administration, rural education in Zaria was barely felt. The roes of deepening educational crisis in rural areas since colonial era became heightened in the 1970s after the launching of the Universal Primary Education (UPE). Rural educational crisis deepened with no adequate preparations coupled with mismanagement of resources, among others. An appraisal report states the educational situation in rural areas thus:

Schools in the rural areas are at a greater disadvantage when it comes to recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. This is because most teachers

would rather resign their jobs than accept posting in rural areas where there is no pipe-borne water, electricity or even motorable access roads. (ABU Zaria, 1981:106).

The victims of educational woes are the rural residents. Even the Universal Basic Education (UBE) has failed to address rural educational issues. Educational resources are allocated with bias and repugnance to rural areas. Again, where the schools were to be located, how teaching was conducted as well as other conditions conducive for teaching and learning turn out to be severest in rural areas, particularly in Maigana and other localities. The poverty of rural learning environment in Maigana produces apathy and despair amongst rural residents.

The growing apathy and despair amongst the communities in the rural areas came because of the fact that schools in rural Zaria are benefiting far fewer rural children or even non-in most cases, than the official educational figures or statistics usually indicate and imply (Abbass, 1997). In many instances, schools officially mentioned do not exist so also, the teachers and pupils but expenditures for all other things were made and appropriated. The number of children continuously withdrawn-and-never-to-return in the only primary school in Maigana has been on the increase. Whereas in the other nine rural localities, there were no schools to even withdraw their children.

Like education, health care delivery services are lopsided. To live in rural areas is an automatic denial of health care services. Added to the growing poverty in education is the serious non-accessibility to the health care system in the rural areas (Saliu, Jimoh and Arosanyin, 2006). With more than 80% of hospital beds (both public and private) concentrated in the Southern Nigerian states (World Bank 1997) it is expected that poverty emanating from health care greatly shackles over 80% of those living in the Northern states. The greatest victims are the rural communities whose health needs are never met. Childhood malnutrition is very common in Maigana and neighbouring rural communities. Most of the households are unable to provide adequate nutrition for the family, with increasing incidence of wasted, taunted, stunted and underweight children.

Women in the rural areas receive no delivery care whatsoever. With high maternal, high infant and child mortality rates, the situation in the rural communities is severe added to the very limited access to safe drinking water. The communities in rural Zaria have continued to be under-malnourished. Their housing conditions are miserable with bad hygienic and sanitary conditions. All these make them highly vulnerable to infectious diseases. This is further accentuated to the lack of elementary education. Coupled with bad health and inadequate education, the rural communities have invariably turned out to be less productive with growing apathy leading to increased degree of poverty (Zenith Economic Quarterly, September, 2007). In terms of labour, the rural communities are poorly paid and therefore exploited. They therefore continue to have little income and their infrastructures remain highly inadequate. The rural residents are therefore constantly trapped and screwed down

in poverty and deprivation through intense exploitation by the state and urban aristocrats. Again, during periods of recession or depression, the rural poor are the ones constantly hit first and hardest.

Every household surveyed in the entire Maigana rural communities contain impoverished and malnourished children, hunger stricken adults and struck by a variety of diseases or health related problems like hypertension, heart diseases, anaemia, diabetes etc. It is not in dispute that such ailments that endanger healthy condition in rural areas could be prevented or alleviated if there is proper education, potable water supply, all weather roads and sanitized environment, among others.

Sources of water supply in the rural communities are numerous. They include ponds, rivers, shallow wells, springs and streams that are shared by domestic and wild animals. All these sources are polluted and therefore intrinsic with all sorts of diseases. This makes the entire Maigana rural population and its constituencies predominantly plagued with inadequate access to safe drinking water that exacerbates the degree of poverty. Even the politics of the construction of dams and boreholes has created more and new problems to the rural residents than solved the old ones. Dam construction therefore had altered the quantity of water flowing the rivers, streams or tributaries and therefore worsened the search for water in the rural areas particularly during dry periods and thus made the communities affected to travel further distances in search for water. Furthermore, earmarked boreholes to be constructed in Gaya, Giwa, Paki, Gimba, Turawa, Maigana, Dambo, and Yakawada in 1985 were mostly uncompleted while the few claimed to have been completed were not functional while others left with outstanding connection of delivery pipes etc (Abbass, 1997).

Rural areas are in darkness even as the national grid passes through their localities. Prior to 1960, the colonial government never contemplated rural electrification. In 1976, the Kaduna State Government established Rural Electricity Board (REB) because the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) established Rural Electrification Department but by 1983 the programme collapsed and rural communities could not benefit from the project except hooking the headquarters of local government Areas with NEPA. The nature of the current but corrupt democratic practice in Nigeria has provided for an efficient way of siphoning of public funds through the so-called solar energy to transmit electricity to rural areas. All these have serious implications for the national and rural development.

With regard to the provision of agricultural facilities, the situation has continued to hit the rural residents hardest. Since the predominant activity in the rural communities is agriculture, Zaria rural residents are expected to be provided with agricultural facilities and inputs in order to endow or empower them overcome poverty and thus produce enough food for themselves and those in the urban centres. The diabolical situation shows that peasant farmers in the rural areas have little or no access to agricultural facilities.

In rural Zaria, particularly around Maigana, there exists a number of

supporting agricultural institutions created since colonial era, to ostensibly enhance productivity and improve rural life. These institutions are essentially urban based and designed only to benefit certain individuals, international capital and the state or its actors. The skyrocketing prices of commodities including that of agricultural inputs and the overwhelming poverty in the entire society have rendered such institutions meaningless to the plight of the rural communities.

Hence, the establishment of seed multiplication farms for maize, sorghum, millet, rice, groundnuts etc turned out to mean further multiplication of farmers' problems. Furthermore, the tactical withdrawal of local variety seeds that were compatible with the local environment or conditions was the greatest tragedy the peasantry is paying dearly. The expectations of an overall food sufficiency and an enhanced condition of living toward alleviation of poverty have further become as elusive as ever and indeed a mirage (Abbass, 1997).

CONCLUSION

The State, over time, has not been able to effectively respond to the basic needs of the rural population in terms of their individuals and their families' needs for food, shelter and other necessities of life. The failure of the state in not providing the rural population with accessibility to public services like drinking water, road and transportation, sanitation, health care services, education etc has made poverty hit the rural folks hardest. Even in the current democratic politics, rural communities are greatly denied access to participate in and exert some influence on, decision making both in their local communities, or in national politics (Saliu, Jimoh, Yusuf and Ojo, 2008).

Hence, the affluence of the rural communities in Zaria, acknowledged for centuries, has gradually been turned into a range of poverty complex spanning in social differentiations with poor housing, health and educational standards, low incomes, low productivity, little purchasing power and plagued with malnutrition. These considerable social differentiations pose difficulties for the rural folks to organize themselves. The state thus deliberately excludes the rural people from any form of influencing or exerting decision making process. This exclusion is to prevent or avoid meeting rural demands. Meeting such demands will ultimately imply serious threats to the powerful elites who control the state power.

Rural residents have strategically been turned to be politically passive, unorganized with no access to decision making. Rural communities have thus been turned poorer and resource weak groups due to inequality in wealth distribution, particularly with regard to land holding. Again, rural agricultural households have been systematically and gradually transformed either as landless or near landless (galla) status. This is largely due to state policies which bring about increased displacement of poor farmers by the rich elites' encroachment of rural lands. The extent of rural poverty added to the urban miseries has changed the rural-urban equation of complementarities (Weitz, 1973). Rural society is therefore a time bomb

for the inevitability of crisis in all ramifications. The nature and dimension of rural crises manifest in the fall of rural productivity and income, chronic rural poverty, persistent and increasing rural unemployment and under-employment with inadequate rural infrastructures, rural-urban migration resulting in labour shortages as well as increases in the wave of urban crimes, incessant outbreak of epidemics and other ecological and socio-economic problems.

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