LAND GRABS AND HUMAN INSECURITY IN COLONIAL JOS PLATEAU, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This article places land grab in its primeval colonial milieu and investigates how colonial tin mining operation induced human insecurity in colonial Jos, Nigeria. It uses the human insecurity approach to address questions of colonial “control grabbing” – grabbing and controlling of land – in Jos Plateau. Although contemporary research addresses the recent rush for African lands, they have allocated minimal attention to historical details and lessons of colonialism as well as its connection to human insecurity. Through the use of interviews and archival sources, the article investigates how tin mining operations stimulated human insecurity and how British land policies and politics empowered the Hausa and Fulani in Jos Plateau, to accumulate much land and how their actions and inactions provided the incentives for bloody and intractable conflicts in the post-colonial era. The article argues that scholarly analysis of land grab is largely associated with food and biofuel production ignoring the connection with tin exploitation and its legacies. To this end, discourses on land grabs need to allocate adequate attention to natural resources as a stimulant for the phenomenon and why it is a threat to environmental peace.

Keywords: Land grabs, human insecurity, land policies and politics, conflicts, Jos Plateau Nigeria.

Introduction

At the core of the current debates on the land question in Africa are the instances where land politics, policy and property rights provide explanations to the growing insecurity. Positions in these debates are registered in contestations of the coherence and plausibility

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of the land question to African conflicts and insecurity. These current debates show how colonial land policies were not only inimical, and disruptive of, the African indigenous society but also facilitated conflicts between governments and landowners on the one hand and between different ethno-religious groups on the other. Emphasis on the land question (land administration and its effects on the society) litter the literature (Hi and Pan, 2020; Xu, 2018; Krieger and Leroch, 2016; Lavers, 2012). However, there is dearth of empirical research on how colonial land policies and attempts to address the land questions it created provided impetus for land grabs and conduced to human insecurity in Jos Plateau, Nigeria. In this article, we draw attention to the asymmetric power relations embedded in colonial land policies. we argue that the focus on large-scale land acquisition and the investment centric discourses on land distribution consigns to insignificance the role of colonial land administration in generating contemporary African conflicts (Nnabuihe, 2016).

Besides, while colonialism is a model and prototype for contemporary investment centric large-scale land acquisition, colonialism in its evolution in some parts of the world was a product of investment centric land grabs (Dalrymple, 2019). For instance, it was not the British state that began seizing chunks of India lands in the eighteenth century but an unregulated private company – the East India Company (EIC). At the time of this occupation, the company had in sight two targets: the lands and the India sub-continent (Dalrymple, 2019). Although the activities of the company were subsequently backed by state power through the parliament, private corporations and individuals began the process of large-scale land acquisition. Similar patterns were replicated in Africa and specifically Nigeria where the Niger Company (later the Royal Niger Company) aggressively acquired large-scale lands and transferred same to Britain in due course (Geary, 1913). Yet, emerging research on land deals in Africa have not adequately interrogated the re-emergence of this trend as well as how colonial land policies set the stage for contemporary conflicts and insecurity in Africa. As such, it becomes crucial to interrogate this missing link.

While literature and intellectual debates on the political economy of land grab tend to suggest that governments of receiving states are accomplices in contemporary large-scale land deals – implying that interests of governments play important roles in facilitating these deals (Xu, 2018; Lavers, 2012), most of these studies have not sufficiently explained how colonialism laid the foundation for contemporary land grab (Onwuzuruigbo, 2019).
In Nigeria, the British colonial administration in 1906 promulgated the Mining Ordinance,\(^4\) which immediately came into effect in Northern region. The essence of the ordinance was to provide legal guidelines under which mining companies could operate. This involved the permission given to the company concerned ‘to conduct geological surveys in specific areas and to explore solid minerals’ (Raji and Abejide, 2014:64). The Mining Ordinance has a direct link to the Native Land Acquisition Ordinance of 1900, which came into effect in Northern Nigeria with the Right and Tenure Ordinance of 1908 of the Laws of Northern Nigeria. The gist of this Ordinance was to “encourage communal ownership of land, forbid the mining of all solid minerals by ‘natives’, guarantee the application of native land tenure principles in land practices and halt the idea of land commercialisation in Northern Nigeria” (Colonial Office, 1910:xii). While it prohibited foreigners from acquiring land without the approval of the governor and empowered colonial officials to prosecute foreigners and non-natives who breached the ordinance, it also proscribed the ‘natives’ from discovering and exploiting minerals. This is best captured in Lugard’s unequivocal statement on mining rights claiming that “mineral can only be discovered and exploited by the science and capital of Europeans, and to them the Government can provide at once more security and more control than native chiefs and can allocate the royalties for good of the country as a whole” (Lugard, 1970:27).

What appeared to have contravened the Mining Ordinance was Hausa interest and exploitation of tin ore in Jos Plateau with the name Lirue-n-Dalma. The Hausa tin miners (Lirue-n-Dalma) from Bauchi (25 kilometres north of Jos) did not only have access to land in Jos Plateau but they also exploited tin ore (Morrison, 1977:207). The indigenous groups of Jos Plateau, namely Afizere, Anaguta and Berom had protested what they termed land alienation and British inconsistency in land administration. The indigenous groups’ protest is instructive. It reinforces the struggle between the Jos indigenous groups and the Hausa over the soul of Jos Plateau. It underscores the indigenous groups’ resistance to attempts of taking their land; and indicate their rejection for the nature and character of land appropriation in Jos Plateau.

The Ordinances, their application in Jos Plateau and the indigenous groups’ registered objections to the application of the ordinances in the area raise striking questions

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\(^4\) File No.: 422/1914, WARPROF National Archives Enugu, NAE/WARPROF/422/1914, Report on Mineral Ordinance and Mining Resources, 1914.
spanning through the conflux of the land questions, land grabs and human insecurity. In what ways did colonial vision of African land tenure practices, and capitalist production structure colonial land policies and native administration in Jos Plateau? What does colonial intervention in land and exploitation of minerals in Jos suggest about the colonial and postcolonial forms of land grab? How did colonial land policies and tin mining operations conduce human insecurity in Jos Plateau? These are the questions this article seeks to address.

Drawing extensively from colonial Archives in Nigeria – National Archives Kaduna and National Archives Enugu, 24 in-depth interviews and secondary sources, this article locates land grabs in its primeval colonial milieu. Focusing on Jos, the article discusses British colonial modalities of land grab; how they restructured indigenous land regulations and transposed indigenous lands for capitalist control, exploitation and production and how the capitalist operations induced human insecurity. It also discusses how British land policies and politics empowered the Hausa and Fulani to accumulate much land and how their actions and inactions provided the incentives for bloody and intractable conflicts in the post-colonial era.

Following the introduction, the remainder of the article presents a short review of previous research on African land grabs in the first section. The second section explored the concepts of land grabs and human insecurity showing how it is applied in the article. Third section examines colonialism and colonial modalities of land grab. The fourth section relates tin mining, colonial land grabs and human insecurity. The section explains how colonial land grabs laid the foundation for the conflicts that have become more complex in the postcolonial era in Jos. In the fifth section, we sum up the discussions, drew the similarities between colonial and contemporary land grabs and conclude that lessons from history of colonial land grabs in Jos Plateau indicates that in the future, nascent land grabs are most likely to generate threats and risks that may deepen human vulnerability and insecurity. As such, land grabbing needs to be placed in a wider framework than food and fuel.

**Previous Research on African Land Grabs**

Scholarly analysis of the current explosion of transnational commercial land transactions – land grabs – in Africa are challenged on two fronts. One, they tend to present land grab as a recent phenomenon that was occasioned by global food, climate and energy crisis which began around 2007. This negates the fact that while the object of the discussions - land grabs - has a much longer history in relation to labour reproduction, capitalist production and revenue generation (Mbajekwe, 2002). It also has “a ‘broader’ history in
the sense that the economic concerns are intimately, and inevitably, bound up with ideas about inequality and social (in)justice and the political struggle informed by such ideas” (Bernstein, 2004:192). As a result, the studies have neglected historical details and lessons of colonialism and colonial large-scale land appropriation. Thus, within the historical context, the nature and character of large-scale land appropriation has not been adequately explored. Although some scholarly writings have mentioned, albeit in passing, that nascent land grabs draw inspiration from colonialism (Onwuzuruigbo, 2019), there is a paucity of empirical literature explaining this historical detail.

Moreover, report of the Oakland Institute published in 2011 warned against unregulated land purchases and cautioned Africa of what it termed “new colonialism” (Oakland Institute, 2011). In fact, Cotula et al contended that “large scale transfers to foreign interests raise the spectre of the bad old days of colonialism and exploitative plantations” (2009:68). Undeniably, colonial Africa witnessed vast ‘grabbing’ of lands by foreign intruders and local agents. This implies that foreign land acquisitions may after all be historically rooted. It is therefore important to engage in a systematic analysis of the historical context and learn from history.

Secondly, scholarly analysis of land grab is largely associated with food and biofuel production (Evers et al, 2013). These scholarly engagements tend to focus on the rush for arable land in response to global crisis for food and biofuel production. This has neglected land grabbing for mineral exploitation. Yet, colonial land alienation in Africa for capitalist production – tin mining – created land and human insecurity questions. While some studies have drawn the resemblance between recent land grabs and colonialism even though as passing comments (Zoomers, 2013), they have not adequately and empirically explained colonialism as heralding current land grab. Much as the emphasis is on land grab for food production and security, little is known on how colonial forceful land acquisition and tin mining operations in Jos Plateau induced insecurity as well as ecological threats. While other studies have identified land grab as a driver of environmental change, arguing that historical precedents from around the world, including various examples of frontier expansion, reflect the kinds of environmental responses that modern land grabbing could induce (Lazarus, 2014), such studies are not detailed on the historical antecedent of colonial exploitative land use and its legacies.

**Land Grabs and Human Insecurity**

To address the questions raised in this article, it is pertinent to clarify two important notions: land grabs and human insecurity. First, on the notion of land grab, there is overbearing disagreement in the literature on what constitutes land grab (Li and Pan,
2020; Xu, 2018; Krieger and Leroch, 2016; Borras et al 2013; Edelman, 2013; Edelman et al, 2013). Scores of reports and scholarly articles have been churned out since 2007 on what should form land grabs. Particularly, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) stipulated conditions for a land deal to be considered a land grab. One of such criteria (considered most important) among others is estimating a minimum of a thousand hectares for a single deal. However, Edelman warns against relying on hectare-centric data in the analysis of land grab (Edelman, 2013). He suggests that such analysis do not reflect the reality on ground, indicating that FAO’s conceptualisation of land grab is narrow and a faulty epistemology. There is need for an analytical approach broader than FAO’s strict and limited definition, which is based on: large scale land acquisition involving foreign governments, agencies and ensuring food security.

Other scholars like Zoomers have argued that “this lack of clarity about how to define land grab stems from the invisibility of land deals” (Zoomers, 2013:58). She therefore jettisoned FAO’s a thousand hectare in a single deal condition contending that it may not essentially be achieved in a single deal, but a handful of land deals could amount to a thousand hectares or more. Instead of joining and prolonging the eternal debate, this article adopts a large and loose working definition which according to Borras et al is the “capturing and control of relatively vast tracts of land and other natural resources through a variety of mechanisms and forms that involve large scale capital that often shifts resource use orientation into extractive character …” (Borras et al 2012). Viewed from the perspective of grabbing the power to control land and other associated resources to derive benefit from such control, land grab partly builds on ‘theory of access’ and it is often linked to a shift in the meaning or use of land and such associated resources, as the new uses are largely determined by the accumulation imperatives that now has the control over a key factor of production – land (Borras et al 2012). Aside the variance on the definition of land grab, there is a plethora of nuanced studies on land grab.

The second notion that needs to be placed in perspective is that of human insecurity. Scholars of peace and conflict research and development studies are consistently engaging in reconceptualising state based security (Ericksen, 2010; Alkire, 2002). This reconceptualization has seen the emergence of the term “human security”, which, was introduced and applied in peace and conflict research as well as development studies by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its annual Human Development Reports of 1994 (UNDP, 1994). The notion is meant to humanise peace and strategic studies, anchor development research in locally experienced realities, and offer a tool to gauge the ways societies function and seen from the perspective of their inhabitants
Although the traditional school of security has remained engrossed with states and weapons, the human security approach turned attention to ecological, environmental and economic security matters as discrete issues. It was framed by the need to deal with the threat posed by growing insecurity associated with human development. These generated scholarly disagreements on the meaning of human security.

Efforts to clarify the meaning of the concept, to operationalise it for use in empirical research, have met with scepticism among some scholars (Alkire, 2002). However, rather than joining the endless debate and seeing the term as fuzzy, this article espouses it as an important tool in ‘reorienting social theory and building bridges between peace and conflict research, strategic studies and development studies’ (Ericksen, 2010:2). On the other hand, human insecurity refers to human vulnerability and internalisation of risks and threats that requires urgent attention.

While the concept of human insecurity, as it is currently used in the fields of development studies and peace and conflict research, was introduced as late as the mid-1990s, ‘it can be used to address questions which are as old as the study of security and other social sciences’ (Ericksen, 2010:3). Writings of classical theorists such as Karl Marx, Ferdinand Tonnies and Emile Durkheim inclined to human security. This is because colonialism as a form of domination and control is characterised by frictions and tensions arising from what Marx referred to as alienation under capitalism. Thus, questions of human insecurity were at the core of colonial land alienation in Africa. This article uses the human insecurity approach to address questions of colonial “control grabbing” – grabbing and controlling of land – in Jos Plateau. Although emerging research addresses the recent rush for African lands, they have allocated minimal attention to historical details and lessons of colonialism as well as its connection to human insecurity.

**Colonialism and Colonial Modalities of Land Grabs**

In 1827, European merchants searched for tin in the North of present day Nigeria and presumed the mineral was domiciled in Bauchi (Bukar, 2013). While Bauchi had tin, even though of lower grade around Ririwe Dalma, the major tin was deposited in an upland with good vegetation called Jos Plateau. The people of Jos Plateau’s total dependency on land defined their interaction with the British from the onset of the conquest of Northern Nigeria that spanned from 1900 to 1903. They resisted and fought the British longer than any group in Northern Nigeria to keep their land (Shenton, 1986).
Initially, Europeans were attracted to the area to exploit the tin ore. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, small quantity of tin of unknown source had reached Europeans trading at West African ports, but it was late 19th century that English traders became aware of the indigenous tin industry available north of Nigeria (Plotnicov, 1967). Through Hausa traders, some metals from the local tin industry reached the Royal Niger Company stationed near the Benue valley (Chads, 2006). Thereafter, sample of tin ore collected from Jos Plateau was submitted to Royal Niger Company in London and the management was impressed with the ore’s richness. Thus, directors of the Royal Niger Company concluded that the pure tin metal, which had permeated the Mediterranean and West African ports, originated on the Plateau (Plotnicov, 1967).

Furthermore, in 1902 an exploratory team was sent on expedition to know the exact location of the deposits and obtain further samples for examination. The team, had a successful expedition led by Mr. George Nicholas, a mining engineer with the Royal Niger Company (Chads, 2006). In 1903, the Niger Company sponsored Col. H.W. Laws for a second expedition accompanied by a full armed force to further explore the tin deposits. The expedition this time experienced a major difficulty. Upon their visit to the Plateau, the team were repelled by the battle ready indigenous warriors of the Jos Plateau (Bukar, 2013). Given the activities of the Emirate forces that characterised the area in the previous century, the memories, and emotions it generated, Jos people’s psychology must have been one shaped by suspicion of strangers around their territory. Thus, the warriors were battle ready to ward off any attempt to take their land.

However, it was only a matter of time that the Jos Plateau warriors were subdued by a superior force of the British aided by Maxim guns (Plotnicov, 1967). The Europeans fought their way and established a permanent mining camp in Naraguta in 1904 and mining operations began (Bingel, 1978). In 1905 an administrative section was opened in Bukuru which led to the mass entry of Europeans to the Jos tin fields. The establishment and development of modern European tin mining led to a rapid decline in the indigenous tin mining industry (Mwadkwon, 2010).

**British Land Acquisition and the Customary Tenure**

British colonial authorities, had upon the occupation of northern Nigeria placed all lands in the area under the control and disposition of the Governor- evoking the Native Land

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6 NAK/JOSPROF/PL.16/1921
Acquisition Ordinance of 1900 (Lugard, 1970). This enabled the colonial authorities to transfer all land rights to the British Crown. In 1908, Northern Nigerian Lands Committee was set up to investigate the land tenure systems in Northern Nigeria and to recommend to the government a suitable policy regarding land.\(^7\) The Committee’s report suggested that all land in Africa is the property of some community no matter how neglected it may appear. Therefore, they concluded that the ultimate ownership of all land in Northern Nigeria, whether occupied or not, was vested in the colonial Government by virtue of British conquest (Geary, 1913). The report indicated that the Governor is to administer this land for the common benefit of the ‘natives’, and with regard to native custom. The Committee argued that “if these fundamental principles are adopted, there is no room for the development of the conception of private property in the land” (Geary, 1913:237).

An interviewee claimed that while land was communally owned in Jos Plateau, families also owned lands and portions were given to individual members of the family for farming purpose but was never sold.\(^8\) Indeed, several portions of land in Northern Nigeria had been leased to European Merchants before the establishment of colonial government. So, “when the British Government took over the Niger Company one of the terms was that the Company assigned to the Government the benefit of their treaties, and their mining rights, and their land” (Geary, 1913:241). Hence, under the Native Right and Tenure Ordinance of 1910 of the Laws of Northern Nigeria, the native cannot be the owner of the land he occupies. Rather, he can be seven years’ lessee for rent revisable every seven years (Geary, 1913). The Government can expropriate him without payment for the land, but only for the improvements.\(^9\) The Ordinance further enacts that all land, whether occupied or unoccupied at the date of the commencement of the ordinance, is to be ‘native land’ (except the Niger Company’s land), and under the control and disposition of the Governor (Lugard, 1970). The British therefore claimed that all land in Northern Nigeria, including Jos Plateau was ceded to them.

Land nationalisation was activated with the claim to ceding of land. The ceding came from the transfer treatise of the Royal Niger Company to the British. Going by the treaties what was ceded to the Niger Company were some communal lands. Yet, in the case of Jos, there were several landowning families.\(^10\) Moreover, Sir William Geary, a British

\(^7\) NAK/JOSPROF/6055/1953- Control of Settlements
\(^8\) Interview with Berom Elder, Rim, Riyom LGA, November 10, 2015.
\(^9\) NAK/JOSPROF/6055/1953
\(^10\) NAK/JOSPROF/4167/1948 “Bi-rom Land Tenure and Rights”
attorney contended that the treaties signed by the different peoples of Northern Nigeria with the Niger Company recognise private property and right of compensation for expropriation. Part of the first treaty with the Niger Company indicates:

...In recognition of this we now cede the whole of our territory to the National African Company (Limited), and their administrators, forever. In consideration whereof, the National African Company (Limited) will not interfere with any of the native laws, and also not encroach on any private property, unless the value is agreed upon by the owner and the said Company (cited in Geary, 1913:243).

What is important in the above citation is that not all lands were ceded to the British. In other words, what should be nationalised are lands belonging to communities that entered into agreement with the Company and not family lands. Nonetheless, British actions altered the customary tenure systems and substituted them with alien policies. In its entirety, British colonial notion of land ownership differed greatly from African family land. To this end, colonial legal system of ownership changed the African system.

Furthermore, to minimise cost of governance and achieve its land goals, colonial authorities introduced indirect rule - a system where traditional authorities and local chiefs were involved in colonial administration (Mamdani, 2002). Colonial Government had appointed chiefs to head Native Administrations and in the case of Jos, they created unwanted hegemony by introducing a chief appointed by the Emir of Bauchi (Mwadkwon, 2010). The chiefs were empowered to administer communal lands for their communities and this created a feeling of disaffection. The indigenous groups of Jos felt that not only have the British altered their traditional political system but have given the emir appointed chief enormous power over their land. Besides, colonial idea of land registration had modified conditions for land ownership and possessory practices. Nevertheless, with the changing political economy of the nineteenth century, the increased potential for trade, which Jos offered and the increasing population to the area, the British, through its policies encouraged land commercialisation.

Ultimately, the control of vast swathes of land by the Europeans was directly linked to mass production schemes and exports initiated by the colonialists. The British had assumed that individual land ownership was desirable for trade, cash crop production and capitalist progress. However, the Europeans needed free labour to achieve their capitalist production and exploitation goals, but individual ownership of land will make land access
available to Africans (Mbajekwe, 2002). It was therefore assumed that a free labour market will be hindered by African access to land. To this effect, the British remained inconsistent with its land policies, giving room at different times, for nationalisation, privatisation and commercialisation of land.

Tin Mining: Colonial Land Grab and Human Insecurity

Since the sixteenth century, tin has been mixed in the Jos area and tin beads were found in the Nok valley that were 2000 years old (Chads, 2006). The people had a thriving tin industry whereby the mineral was collected (particularly around Delimi river) and washed in streams using calabash. Collected tin was melted thereafter and used for barter trade. This form of access and freedom to land use was cut short by the colonial government following the growing urbanisation and expansion of the tin economy in the early 20th century in Jos Plateau. To this end, the people who had been previously working tin around the Delimi River were suddenly stopped by the European concessionaries. After taking over the area, the British promulgated ordinances that proscribed the ‘natives’ from discovering and exploiting tin as all mining rights were exclusively transferred to agents of the crown company or their representatives. This follows Lugard’s 1906 unequivocal statement on mining rights which claimed that “mineral can only be discovered and exploited by the science and capital of Europeans, and to them the Government can provide at once more security and more control than native chiefs and can allocate the royalties for good of the country as a whole” (Lugard, 1970:407). Colonial administrators claimed to have taken the land by a lease for 99 years. As at 1910, colonial authorities had set up a Mines Department to oversee the activities of over one hundred (100) foreign mining companies that were to be established by 1915 in Jos (Bower, 1948). With the enormous land acquisition and environmental threats and risks, the local people were forced to move farther afield. The figure below (figure 1) shows the massive land acquired by colonial agents for tin mining purposes and the large workforce attached to each company.
While colonial land possession in Jos tin fields may not have met the ‘a thousand hectares criteria in a single deal’ to qualify for contemporary land grabs as set by FAO, the multiple acquisitions by well over a hundred European firms, with a minimum of five thousand workforce each as shown in figure 1 fits well into the concept of land grabs.

11 NAK/JOSPROF/M60/1927 ‘Political Map of Jos Division, M60 of 1927’.
According to Bower (1948), colonial tin mining syndicates had acquired about 90% of the land in the area under lease by World War II. In response to this great dispossession and alienation of land, the people of Jos resisted in all dimensions and constructed folklores to remind the British that the land belonged to them. Although the changing land use from food production to mineral – tin ore – exploitation created huge labour – providing employment for several people of African extraction (Freund, 1981), it also generated two obvious threats to human security - food insecurity (Goshit, 1995), and environmental challenges (Mwadkwon, 2010), which have undermined the development of the area. That is, not only did mining ponds devastate the land, large excavations, which grossly depleted farmlands forced the farmers to move into the periphery.

First, the Agricultural system of pre-colonial Jos stood on solid infrastructural foundations - rich land resources and two volcanic periods that enriched their soils. As a matter of fact, Jos Plateau during that period, had a secured agricultural system that guaranteed food security. There was surplus food resulting from natural fertility of the soils, which was further enhanced using animal manure, crop rotation and shifting cultivation. However, food production was drastically cut short with about 90% of land allocated to tin mining. This resulted in the impoverishment not only of the indigenous population who were predominantly farmers but on the residents of Jos Plateau. This is because, mining operation led to the sustained ruination of the agricultural infrastructure through the destruction and use of farmlands (Goshit, 1995). According to a respondent, it made the people vulnerable and compelled them to work in the mines against their wish. In this sense, colonial land grab in Jos can be seen as a human insecurity designing operation through its tin mining induced food insecurity.

Second, local interviewees who participated in colonial mining operation tagged the mining ponds as ‘killing fields’. According to Mwadkwon (2010), tin mining produced ‘over 7000 killer ponds’ in Jos Plateau. This altered the landscapes and produced an environmental challenge that is yet to be fully transformed. Although the colonial government was aware of the ecological implication of tin mining in Jos, the administration was nonetheless beclouded by its capitalist orientation (Freund, 1981). Importantly, because the mining industry was a key source of revenue to the British through royalties, taxations and rents, it paid less attention to the environmental challenges tin mining stimulated. However, in the 1940s, anticipating a fall in the price

12 Interview with Anaguta Chief, Jos, February 17, 2017.
13 NAK/JOSPROF/3169/1921 ‘Administration of Plateau Provinces- Jos Division’.
14 NAK/JOSPROF/6055/1953
15 Interview with an Irigwe Elder, June 14, 2016.
of tin and that the life span of the plateau tin is relatively short, the British initiated reforms to remedy agricultural economy of the area through land reclamation.\textsuperscript{16} Yet, the government was unwilling to impose stringent restorative conditions on the mining industry. This is because such conditions have the tendency to make the industry unprofitable. Nevertheless, reforms were carried to revive agriculture. Subsequently, about 5000 of the ponds have been reclaimed (Mwadkwon, 2010). Moreover, apart from the tin mining induced food insecurity, the environmental devastation and the risk factor concerning the health of the miners and others living in the mining camps - a place that lacked good sanitation- colonial land grab in Jos stirred inter-group conflicts.

\textbf{Tin Mining Labour, Land and Foundations of Modern Intergroup conflicts}

Upon commencing operations in, Jos, one of the British agents, Col. Laws of the Naraguta Tin Mining Company (a subsidiary of the Niger Company), in his attempt to ensure success for their business encountered a major challenge in generating labour. Initially, the Jos indigenous groups had stayed away from the mines to give a close attention to their farms. They however moved in droves to work in the mines during dry seasons but deserted the area immediately the rain drops and move back to their farms.\textsuperscript{17} The indigenous groups’ inconsistency with labour provision in the tin mines compelled the British to engage non-indigenous group- mostly the Hausa to curb what is described as erratic labour force provided by the indigenous groups (Morrison, 1977). This encouraged massive migration of Hausa ethnics into Jos. Mine labourers were provided with accommodation within the camps. Thus, many markets mushroomed around the mining camps operated mainly by the Hausa. Nonetheless, a group of Hausa miners – Lirue-n-Dalma, from Bauchi secured land for mining operation through the government of Bauchi Province.\textsuperscript{18}

Thus, both the Hausa and the British were interested in the tin abounding in the Delimi River. Soon the Hausa mining group, Lirue-n-Dalma was posing enormous threat to the Niger Company and the newly arrived horde of mining companies. The activities of Lirue-n-Dalma were becoming unwelcomed. The British tactfully stripped Lirue-n-Dalma of land rights that they had.\textsuperscript{19} Although Lirue-n-Dalma were later to receive one hundred acres of land from the British as a way of showing concern to the Hausa plight, it was however, clear to the Europeans and Plateau indigenous groups that the area

\textsuperscript{16} NAK/JOSPROF/6450/1946 ‘Jos Division, Plateau Province, Annual Report’.
\textsuperscript{17} NAK/JOSPROF/29/1933, ‘Report No.64 on Jos Division for the Year Ending 31 December’.
\textsuperscript{18} SNP/17/3/29195, Tin Smelting in Lirue-n-Dalma by Natives; Prohibition of,
\textsuperscript{19} SNP/17/3/29195
appropriated to Lirue-n-Dalma was exceedingly poor in tin. Few years later Lirue-n-Dalma collapsed and its tin workers found it profitable to work with the foreign firms as tin smelters in the furnaces.\(^{20}\) This did not last long as the agreement that existed between the Hausa miners and the colonialists was short-lived. In 1914 the government of Bauchi Province cancelled the hundred acres of land leased to Lirue-n-Dalma in Jos.\(^{21}\)

At this point, more Hausa migrant labourers had flooded Jos to reap from the booming tin economy (Fwatshak, 2010). However, the collapse of Lirue-n-Dalma coupled with the influx of new migrants created surplus labourers and the mines could not absorb all of them. Interviewees claimed that the Hausa turned to farming which required them having access to land.\(^{22}\) Hausa interest in farming created land hunger and opened old wounds as the indigenous groups felt the Hausa have come to take over their lands and jobs.\(^{23}\) Consequently, the British had to secure land for the Hausa through its inconsistent policies. Meanwhile, the indigenous groups accused the Hausa and Fulani of taking over lands unasked. This led to a few skirmishes with the indigenous communities.\(^{24}\) In British thinking, Jos Plateau has a greater variety of alien agglomerations than any other in northern Nigeria, hence the need for a successful bridging (land [re]distribution) of the various communities.\(^{25}\) This complicated the existing land question and gave rise to land ownership conflicts in Jos Plateau. As a result, British authorities discussed the need for a review of the colonial system of land tenure. They noted that the changing economic circumstances are outgrowing the status quo and required modification.

To deal with the emerging land conflict in Jos, the Resident of Plateau Province requested for the assistance of fully qualified specialist staff with the necessary technical knowledge behind them to deal with the complicated technical problems which are involved in all land questions in the area.\(^{26}\) As requested, land experts arrived Jos Plateau. Yet, the colonial government were unable to address all land questions as issues proliferated and local population continued to complain against land alienation and allocation to the Hausa.\(^{27}\) To this end, indigenous people of Jos claimed that they were exposed to

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\(^{20}\) SNP/17/3/29195  
\(^{21}\) SNP/17/3/29195  
\(^{22}\) Interview with Hausa two traders and a community leader Jos, April 20, 2016  
\(^{23}\) NAK/JOSPROF/6055/1953  
\(^{24}\) NAK/JOSPROF/4167/1948  
\(^{25}\) NAK/JOSPROF/6055/S.1, Land Tenure Report (1) Plateau Province, 1955  
\(^{26}\) NAK/JOSPROF/6055/1953  
\(^{27}\) NAK/JOSPROF/PL.16/1921
asymmetric land relations with the Hausa and that the British laid the foundation for land inequality in Jos which has become more complex in postcolonial period leading to a bloodletting inter-group conflict.

Thus, following the destruction of the soil by the colonial mining activities and the Hausa and Fulani intrusion into farming lands, the indigenous communities asked that their lands be returned to them in farming condition. Therefore, the British took a decision to put a proportion of sums paid by miners into a fund for soil restoration or other schemes of rehabilitation.\textsuperscript{28} Besides, the locals also requested that they should be compensated for the lands, but no records show any form of compensation for land loss in Jos Plateau.\textsuperscript{29}

**Conclusion**

Exploring land grab in its historical setting indicates that the phenomenon occurs in Africa within the same logic and processes of global capitalist development that underpinned land grabs elsewhere. While the colonial form and character discussed in this article may be different from its more recent manifestation, historically, both share key mechanisms – food, energy/fuel; dissimilarity – rising demands from newer hubs of global capital for natural resources; and considerable similarities – primitive accumulation of capital and generation of insecurity. This indicates that in the future, nascent land grabs are mostly likely to generate threats and risks that are most likely to deepen human vulnerability and insecurity.

In Jos Plateau, throughout its modern history, land politics and policy have revolved around debates over who owns the land and whose rights are to be recognised. This has raised fundamental questions on past land allocations and has created and remained a factor that makes the Jos conflict intractable. The concept of ownership provides legitimacy to political action of the most profound nature. It is evident that while the question of indigenous versus settler’s land rights forms one of the basis for this struggle in Jos, the underlying factor is how colonial land grab induced insecurity in the area. The British had used state power to allocate the same land they grabbed to groups considered alien populations. In other words, colonial manipulation and bias were inherent in land administration and use which defined property relations, created fear and mistrust and deepened human insecurity.

\textsuperscript{28}NAK/JOSPROF/6055/S.1

\textsuperscript{29}NAK/JOSPROF/417/1924
As such, this article argued that land struggles and conflict were intensified in Jos Plateau by colonial land administration. This has continued even with the end of colonialism over fifty years ago. When Nigeria gained independence in 1960 and the tin economy in Jos Plateau collapsed in the 1970s, the article shows, that the workforce in the tin industry mostly the migrant Hausa had to take to farming as a means of livelihood. The new players in the farming industry in Jos Plateau where long seen by the indigenous communities as intruders and the indigenes were not ready to part with their lands. With the departure of the British the indigenous groups had hoped to return to their pre-colonial tenure system where appropriating land to a stranger was a security threat. However, this was not in tune with the changing political and economic climate in Nigeria. Yet, land holds a significant position in the economy of Jos Plateau and the culture of its people.

Land is central in explaining several communal conflicts and the literature on the subject have emphasised its scarce nature (Nnabuie and Onwuzuruigbo, 2020, 2013; Egwu, 1998). Thus, the collapse of the tin economy fanned the embers of the land struggle between the indigenous communities and the Hausa and Fulani. This led to a reinvigorated drive for land acquisition as it became the prime objective of alien population in Jos Plateau. Besides, the Land Use Decree of 1978 was an attempt by Nigeria’s Military Federal Government to ensure easier access to land for the government and, ostensibly for individuals. Since the 1978 Land Use Decree vested the power to appropriate land in the governor of a state, residents of the Jos area who are of Plateau extraction portray a narrative claiming that the idea of having Hausa and Fulani Muslims as Military Administrators in Plateau between the late 1970s and late 1990s was a grand plan to wrest their lands from them. However, there is no sufficient evidence to back this claim. Nevertheless, the Hausa who are enterprising in all dimensions control a significant sphere of the economy in Jos and used their resources to “buy off Jos” (Albert, 2003). Therefore, the contending issue in Jos Plateau is that of massive grabbing of land.

As such, this article concludes that land grab needs to be placed in its pristine colonial context and that food and fuel centred analysis of land grab is not sufficient. It therefore raised the need to allocate attention to natural resources such as solid minerals – tin ore – as a stimulator for land grab. The article raises a major concern on how colonial land grab induced human insecurity in Jos Plateau through laying the foundation for inequality in land relations, generating inter-group conflicts, stimulating food insecurity through tin mining operations and worsening environmental problems. It suggests that contemporary land grab could leave a signature of human insecurity – environmental degradation, food insecurity and conflicts.
References


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