

A History of Class Formation in the Plateau Province of Nigeria, 1902–1960

The Genesis of a Ruling Class

Monday Yakiban Mangwat



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Series Editor's Preface

The *Carolina Academic Press African World Series*, inaugurated in 2010, offers significant new works in the field of African and Black World studies. The series provides scholarly and educational texts that can serve both as reference works and as readers in college classes.

Studies in the series are anchored in the existing humanistic and the social scientific traditions. Their goal, however, is the identification and elaboration of the strategic place of Africa and its Diaspora in a shifting global world. More specifically, the studies will address gaps and larger needs in the developing scholarship on Africa and the Black World.

The series intends to fill gaps in areas such as African politics, history, law, religion, culture, sociology, literature, philosophy, visual arts, art history, geography, language, health, and social welfare. Given the complex nature of Africa and its Diaspora, and the constantly shifting perspectives prompted by globalization, the series also meets a vital need for scholarship connecting knowledge with events and practices. Reflecting the fact that life in Africa continues to change, especially in the political arena, the series explores issues emanating from racial and ethnic identities, particularly those connected with the ongoing mobilization of ethnic minorities for inclusion and representation.

Toyin Falola
University of Texas at Austin

Author's Preface

Nigerian history has grown, but its historiography is still rooted in colonial and neocolonial ideologies. In spite of the apparent advances and achievements of past and current researchers, studies and writings on Nigerian history, there is still room for improvement in the conception of class and in class analysis. The collapse of the former Soviet Union and the triumph of capitalism as a global mode of production, no doubt, caused a set back for Marxist class analysis both as an academic endeavour and a practical strategy for development. However, the capitalist world still faces class and other related problems that characterise class-based societies. Thus, if Nigeria is to make any meaningful progress, an understanding and resolution of the class character of the state is important.

Nigeria is a neocolonial society, and the dominant ideas and explanations offered about its history dialectically reflect its neocolonial status. Admittedly, Nigerian historians and academics, in general have, to their credit, moved away from the preoccupation of proving that Nigeria had a history—a history capable of and one that is worth in-depth scholarly study—to a pre-occupation of studying history for nation building.¹ But the nation which is to be built, however, retains most of the socio-economic structures, institutions and classes which colonial capitalism created. Indeed, the dominant concept of development in Nigeria is one that is dedicated to a consolidation, expansion and advancement of these structures, institutions and classes. Inevitably, this concept of development also retains the contradictions and conflicts of a neocolonial social formation. For no system of justice can justly defend a situation where only 5% of its population enjoy over 90% of its total wealth while 95% of the population share the remaining 10% of the wealth of the nation which their collective labor has created in the first instance.² Karl Marx had predicted that the apparent contradictions pregnant in capitalist societies and the social conflict arising from them would lead to upheavals in which the toiling masses would violently and, with justification, overthrow the oppressive bourgeois ruling classes and usher in a new concept of development and era in history. The current triumph of capitalism seems to diminish the prospects of a socialist revolution of the kind Marx proposed, in the immediate present, but his thesis that

class-infested and unjust societies are conflict-prone remains valid as far the neocolonial experience of Nigeria, and Africa in general, is concerned.

A historical analysis based on the class concept has the potency of exposing these contradictions in favour of the Nigerian working class. Unfortunately, many Nigerian professional historians and scholars, who are petty bourgeois and, therefore, beneficiaries of the neocolonial situation, are caught up in this contradiction. They fear to adapt Marxism and class analysis because the logical consequences of such an approach inevitably lead to committing a class suicide and giving up the *status quo*. In the final analysis, we must emphasise, history is a study of change for change. The historian may either take sides with history or betray it, but there is no middle course.

Therefore, this book, which employs the Marxist concept of history and focuses on class formation and politics on the Jos Plateau region, is a modest attempt to contribute, not only to the study and writing of Nigerian history in general, but also to an exposition of the fundamental and less fundamental contradictions of that society, its contending classes and, through the awareness arising from this exposition, to the making of history.

The concept of class and class struggles is central to the Marxist philosophy of history and the scientific methodology which logically developed from this philosophy. Classes³ are contradictory relations. They are relations of power and appropriation and, therefore, relations of antagonism and conflict. Class relations are therefore relations of material existence and politics. It is for this reason that class struggles have been the motive force of history ever since the emergence of organized society.

Classes are created in the process of social and material production due, principally, to the inevitable interdependence of the factor and forces of production and the division of labor which necessarily accompanies social and material production itself. Men—individuals, groups and communities—must produce the material basis on which they live and reproduce themselves. In the course of doing this, they inevitably enter into definite relationships with nature and with themselves, independent of their will, because no one can produce, by himself alone, everything on which he lives and which he needs.⁴ This is the essential basis for the development of division of labor which carries with it, the role and value of people's inputs to social production and, therefore, the portion of the proceeds of social produce, so created which they get in return. Depending on the level of technology, the specific historical circumstance, and the nature of labor applied, these processes lead to social differentiation of the members of the society and which, in due course, become consolidated into socioeconomic differentiation thereby creating class differences. For those who have been favoured by the long process of social pro-

duction and the inherent division of labor in it, eventually, emerge as the beneficiaries, defenders and perpetrators of such a mode of production. They become its ruling classes.

But these very same long processes and conditions which led to the development and emergence of the beneficiaries and the ruling classes of the mode of production *ipso facto* produced those who have been exploited, oppressed and, therefore, striving to upturn the mode of production in their own favour. They are the ones who yearn for change and, therefore, the movers of history. For it is the contradiction between those who enjoy and perpetrate a given mode of production on the one hand, and those who dislike it and want to change it (because it exploits and oppresses them) on the other, which produces the fundamental social conflict of all precapitalist and capitalist social formations in history.

Of course, the processes involved are complex and, depending on other variables (such as the specific historical conditions, geography, etc.), vary from one society to the other. Nor is the division and antagonism between the rulers and the ruled always so clear and self-evident. For on either side, there exist different strands as well as subclasses which tend to blur the basic class divisions. Hence, we talk of ruling classes and the oppressed classes. History is, thus, a struggle of these oppressed individuals and groups (classes) to better their living conditions against their oppressors who, in turn, struggle strenuously to defend and maintain the *status quo* which benefits them. This is the essence of class struggle whether in a slave society, a feudal or a capitalist one. Politics is the practical form which the struggles of these classes take. Therefore, any study which seeks to discover the fundamental parameters of a given political process must identify and penetrate the competing classes and the interests which they represent at the level of social production and the relations of production of the polity in question.

Bourgeois historians and scholars in Africa acknowledge the importance of the Marxist methodology over empiricism but complain that the former is 'ideological.' Historically, Marxism has proved its case, both, as a mode of inquiry and as a theory of changing society. The histories of the former USSR, China, Cuba, Mozambique and other countries of the world attest to this. The failure of socialism in these countries is not essentially the failure of Marxism but the failure of those implementing it on behalf of society. Bourgeois scholarship is out to defend capitalism from the right. Consequently, bourgeois scholars also study Marxism, but they do so by misinterpreting its key concepts in an attempt to show that Marxism cannot apply in certain places or under certain conditions. Thus, it is often either argued that African societies had no classes and, therefore, no history or, even more subtly, that African

socio-economic formations defy Marxist analysis because Marxism, it is alleged, arose from the study of European societies and conditions, which either differ or do not exist in Africa and, therefore, cannot apply to Africa. Moreover, the collapse of the former USSR and Yugoslavia, and the subsequent adoption of market reforms by China and Eastern Europe, are seen as clear testimonies of the unworkability of Marxist principles. As an idea, however, Marxism is not dead and cannot die.

Thus, neo-empiricist views can only apply to the unimaginative historian who remains at the level of eclectic reproduction of categories and forms without employing the creative Marxist-Leninist approach. For all human societies whether Asian, African, American or European engage in social and material production and reproduction. Thus, while the forms which these take may vary from one area to another due to geographical and other environmental factors, giving rise to specific historical developments for the societies concerned, the existential production links and the institutions and classes which are bound to be created in the process of social and material production still remain the focal point of all Marxist inquiry. Indeed, the discovery of these variations is a pre-requisite for undertaking any meaningful revolutionary struggle for the societies in question.

We must emphasise that the task of the Marxist historian is to painstakingly search for empirical data, scrutinise, penetrate and interpret this data in the light of the production process, the division of labor and the resultant social relations of production, legal and non-legal, of the particular society under examination at any given point in time. It is not a search for the existence or otherwise of preconceived stereotypes and categories which Karl Marx's study discovered and labeled many years ago. For such an exercise is bound to be futile because it is a historic by denying the historical peculiarities of human societies and development and, thus, failing to recognise the historicity of such societies or even to come to grips with the basic fact of unequal development, not only, between and within regions but spheres at the global level. This study of the Plateau Province has therefore been undertaken and conducted from the creative Marxist-Leninist approach.

The book itself is organised into six main chapters. Chapter One discusses the socio-economic formations of the Plateau region on the eve of colonial conquest as an attempt to bring out the class structure of the region against which colonial capitalism grafted its institutions of social control and economic exploitation of the area. Chapter Two deals with the conquest of the Jos Plateau region, the deformation of the pre-colonial class structure which was discussed in Chapter One and the establishment of colonial institution of social control and economic exploitation namely, the Native Authority system, colonial education and the Christian missions and the churches which they founded. It

is further argued that these institutions themselves served as agents of class formation. Chapter Three discusses the colonial economy, the *raison d'être* for the establishment of colonial rule. It identifies and critically examines the key sectors of the colonial economy not only to demonstrate the peculiar nature of economic exploitation in this region, but also to show how the use of African agents in the process of economic exploitation itself was an important agent of class formation.

Chapter Four ties together the existential link between the colonial institutions of social control (examined in Chapter Two) and those of economic exploitation (examined in Chapter Three) and brings out a comprehensive and vivid picture of the colonial state and society by identifying and discussing the major socio-economic classes within it, which formed the basis for its politics. This is followed by Chapter Five which examines class relations in the Plateau Province against the backdrop of the wider colonial setting of the Northern Region of Nigeria in which the Plateau Province formed only a small part. It also examines the subjective forces within this setting all of which cumulatively gave rise to the dominance of a Plateau petty bourgeois class and the petty bourgeois politics peculiar to that province. The last chapter then exposes the class essence of petty bourgeois politics in the Plateau Province, in spite of mystifications to the contrary, and demonstrates the political opportunism of its emergent ruling classes and how they consolidated their position and perpetuated their dominance over the mass of the working peoples of the Plateau Province up to independence.

As it is self-evident in the text, the book draws its main body of data from oral and archival sources as well as field observations of some of the major scenes of the historical activity under examination. The bulk of the fieldwork was conducted between May and December 1979, but subsequent field trips were also undertaken as the work progressed. As for the archival material, the bulk of it comes from the National Archives Kaduna. These are, however, supplemented with documents from the former Native Authority headquarters (specifically those of Jos, Pankshin and Shendam), the Ministry of Local Government in Jos, the Jos National Museum and the Documents Sections of the Kashim Ibrahim Library of A. B. U., which contains an array of documents ranging from the provincial gazetteers, statistical digests to parliamentary mansards and newspapers from the colonial period.

Notes

1. See I. A. Akinjogbin, "History and Nation Building," *Inaugural Lecture* University of Ife, 22nd November 1977; K. O. Dike, "African History Twenty Five Years Ago And Today,"

Keynote Address: Nigerian Historical Society Silver Jubilee, 29th September 1980, Ibadan; A. E. Afigbo, "Some Thoughts on the Teaching of History in Nigeria" (occasion not indicated); C. Ifemesia, "Current Demands of African Historiography: The Igbo Example," Paper Presented at the Silver Jubilee Anniversary of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Ibadan, 26th September–3rd October 1980; E. A. Ayandele, "The Task Before Nigerian Historians Today," Keynote Address: Annual Conference of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Calabar, 5th April 1979; A. J. Temu and B. Swai, "History for Development," Paper presented at the Nigerian Political Science Conference. Kano, 13th–15th April, 1981.

2. This is a hypothetical description which reflects the Nigerian reality.

3. Lenin's definition of the social class remains the most widely accepted and used. According to Lenin classes are: Large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically defined system of production, by their relations (in some cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production; by their role in the social organisation of labor, and, consequently by the dimensions and modes of acquiring the share of social wealth which they dispose. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*. Vol. 29 (Moscow, 1977), p. 421.

4. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* Vol. 1 (Moscow, 1977), pp. 16–80; but see, in particular, K. Marx, "Contribution the Critique of Political Economy" in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Pre-Capitalist Socio-Economic Formations* (Moscow, 1979), pp. 137–138.

Acknowledgments

This book is the outcome of widespread calls from my colleagues in Zaria and Jos who have read my Ph.D. thesis examined in 1984, more than 20 years ago. The title of the thesis, which I have retained without change, was “A History of Class Formation in Plateau Province, 1902–1960: The Genesis of a Ruling Class.” The call for the publication of the thesis has been accentuated, no doubt, by the current spade of ethno-religious violent conflicts in the present Plateau State of Nigeria, which largely corresponds to the Plateau Province of the colonial period. Most colleagues genuinely believe that its publication will help to throw light on the genesis of a number of serious contemporary socio-economic, political, religious, ethnic and administrative challenges that the present Plateau State is facing and will thereby, hopefully, help managers of the state system, at both state and federal levels, handle the challenges in a fair and just manner for the good of all.

Yet, it is important to remark that political actors in history have not always shown respect for history or historical facts. Some have worked hard to vitiate it in pursuit of their own personal group agenda. Sometimes they succeed; most times they fail. History has very few examples, if any, of historical actors who have deliberately battled against the tide of history with success. With this caveat, I join my fellow compatriots in hoping that the publication of this book will, along with others, help to educate the public about how these challenges began. At least, this is my principal area of calling as a professional historian.

The thesis from which the book is derived was conceptualized and prosecuted within the intellectual rubric of the then emergent “A. B. U. School of History” or the “Zaria School” as distinct from the dominant “Ibadan School” prevalent throughout History Departments in Nigerian universities at the time. The acronym, A. B. U., stood for Ahmadu Bello University located in Zaria. The so-called “A. B. U. School” or “Zaria School” was supposed to have an ideological tilt toward Marxist historiography while the “Ibadan School” was supposed to be “Africanist, bourgeois empiricist” in orientation. These were popular

intellectual labels or images of the 1970s and early 1980s that the History Departments of the two universities carried. In reality, however, individual scholars of both schools were found in each. In other words, in Zaria, the home base of the Marxists, there were intellectual giants in the mould of the Ibadan school while at Ibadan, individual Marxists were also found. This was a good intellectual development since the co-existence of contending schools did encourage the battle of ideas. I have raised this issue here because, in revising the thesis for the publication of this book, I have not changed its orientation. It is still firmly located within the Marxian key concept of a social class. Nothing has happened in contemporary global history and scholarship to mortally ruin the efficacy of the concept of class; that is to say, the power of social classes in society in the making of history despite the apparent collapse of socialist state systems. The debate about the role and power of social classes in social dynamics and the historical process will continue to engage scholars for the foreseeable future.

Having made these preliminary remarks, I owe it a duty to express my sincere appreciation to some of the people associated with, first, my Ph.D. thesis and, secondly, its revision for publication into this book. In this regard, I am profoundly grateful to Professor A. J. Temu who supervised the Ph.D. thesis, which led to this book. Professor Temu, a Tanzanian, was more than a research supervisor to me. He and his wife had so much belief in my intellectual ability such that I grew to acquire so much self-confidence, which is an important requirement for academic pursuit at that level. I was free to visit the Professor in his office and at home without laid-down regulations. To this day, I still cherish and use a small transistor radio, which he gave me on his departure from A. B. U. Zaria. That is not all. I left A. B. U. Zaria in 1990 and relocated to the University of Jos, closer to my sources of research. Five years later, in 1995, I innocently responded to a public announcement/advertisement on a vacancy for a Senior Rockefeller Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Historical Research, University of the Western Cape, Bellville. I was pleasantly successful. It turned out that Professor A. J. Temu was the Director of the Institute. My tutelage under him continued. The first question he asked me was about what had happened to my thesis. I could go on and on and exhaust the readers' patience, which I cannot afford to do. It will suffice to simply state that I owe this very experienced teacher, researcher and author so much that I cannot contemplate adequately expressing it here.

Closely related to Professor Temu was another Tanzanian Professor with whom I became closely associated. He was Professor Bonaventure Swai, a younger and more intellectually restless scholar whose Ph.D. thesis was su-

pervised by the same Temu back at the University of Tanzania, Dar es Salam. He had joined the history department at A. B. U. on the encouragement of his teacher who had recommended him to the Head of Department. He was excessively critical and tore apart almost every argument I was putting forward until Temu would calm both of us down. Professor Swai was uniquely well-read and knowledgeable but highly critical and impatient with any scholar who could not keep pace with his thinking. Together with Temu, they authored the famous book, *Historians and Africanist History: A Critique* published by Zed Publishers, London, 1981, while they were still in Zaria. Swai eventually left Zaria for the Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto, and finally left Nigeria for the University of Uganda, Gulu, where he took ill and passed on; may his soul rest in perfect peace. I will never forget him.

Still in Zaria, I must pay my dues to the late academic icon and teacher, the then-Head of the History Department, Dr. Yusufu Bala Usman. The late Dr. Bala Usman, as he was popularly called, was an intellectual colossus. No attempt will be made to describe him here because it will be a disservice. At the Ahmadu Bello University, in the 1970s and 1980s, Dr. Bala Usman towered above his peers in public lectures and debates such that students, staff, journalists and the enlightened members of the community rushed to the venues of lectures and debates involving him for fear of not finding seats. He was a crowd-puller, “a living legend” as he was once described. The emergent “A. B. U. School of History” referred to earlier was championed by him, and he presided over it throughout. It was Dr. Bala Usman who invited me to join the History Department as a Graduate Assistant in 1977, being the best graduating student of the 1976 set. At the postgraduate level, Dr. Bala Usman taught me Contemporary World History while the renowned Professor and Bala’s teacher, Abdullahi Smith (former H. C. F. Smith), handled the course on Advanced Nigerian History. To date, I still refer to my lecture notes on these courses. It was Dr. Usman who helped to sharpen my focus on the theme of my research before the fortuitous arrival of my supervisor from Tanzania. I benefitted enormously from his criticisms and advice. One commendable but unique quality of Dr Bala Usman was that he was always available for all of us in the Department whether he was one’s formal supervisor or not. That is why he had such enduring influence on all of us. May his soul rest in perfect peace.

Professor Abdullahi Smith taught me at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Our set was extremely lucky to have been taught by him. He was, until his death, a living encyclopedia of not just historical knowledge but human affairs in general. He had wanted me to undertake a study of the jihad on the Jos Plateau, but when I declined he left me alone. His two teaching assistants

then, George Kwanashie and Mahmud Tukur, always drove along with Smith from Kaduna to Zaria to teach us also. When they transferred to the History Department from Arewa House, they continued to teach us and, in due course, we graduated to join them as colleagues—all of us, big and small, Professor Smith’s “children.”

The other senior colleagues I must mention from whom I benefitted were Professors J. E. Inikori and Madhi Adamu. Both were economic historians who, by the nature of their specializations, were quantitatively oriented and tended to resist ideological postulations. They were sound scholars in their own rights and were always there for us “for the other side of the story.” The rest, Abdullahi Mahadi, Yaro Gella, Mahmoud Hamman, Sule Bello, and Charles Gonyok, were senior colleagues in training but all of us were working on our higher degrees. Then, of course, my own mates—Ahmed Mohammed Moddibbo and Joseph Ukwedeh along with Joseph Ohiare, Alkassum Abba, Enoch Oyedele and Hannatu Alahira after us. Those of them still in the University system are now very senior academics. It was a wonderful family. I benefitted enormously from their contributions each time I tabled some aspect of my research topic during our Departmental Seminars, which were dutifully held every two weeks. I am grateful to all of them without exception.

At the University of Jos, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Professor S. U. Fwatshak who engaged the services of Prof. M. N. Azuike of the English Department to edit the original thesis ready for publication. Ever since I arrived in Jos, I have worked very closely with Professor Fwatshak whose Ph.D. thesis I was privileged to supervise and co-examine. It was now his turn to supervise his teacher, which he did joyfully. The real revision of the original thesis and the persistent encouragement to publish it owes a lot to Professor Fwatshak to whom I am truly indebted. He understood the pressure of work on me when I was Vice-Chancellor of the University and kept the pressure on me to bring out the book. Thus, at the dawn of his scholarship I supervised him but at the twilight of my own, he is encouraging me.

Finally, I must thank my long-standing colleague and friend Professor Toyin Falola, currently the holder of the Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Chair of African History-At-Large, Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria and a University Distinguished Teaching Professor, University of Texas at Austin. Toyin and myself got attracted to one another in the late 1970s when he was a lecturer of the University of Ife, Ile Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) while I was in Zaria. Indeed, he had wanted the Ife University Press to publish my thesis, but circumstances did not permit it. We have retained contact all through the years to date, and I cannot accurately recollect the countless number of rebukes from

him for not publishing the work. Tired of my excuses and knowing the academic worth of the manuscript, he, in conjunction with Fwatshak, decided to “take over.” But for their direct intervention together with the current urge by other colleagues who have read my original thesis, the publication of this book might have been stalled by years of procrastination on my part. I want to sincerely thank Toyin, Fwatshak and all those colleagues who kept the pressure on me all these years to finally bring this work on to the public shelves. I can only hope that the anticipated interest in the publication of the book by the public would justify their enthusiasm and efforts.

Monday Yakiban Mangyvat

Abbreviations

ARNN	Annual Reports of Northern Nigeria
ABU	Ahmadu Bello University
AG	Action Group
FHR	Federal House of Representatives
KIL	Kashim Ibrahim Library (the Main Library of the Ahmadu Bello University)
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CUMP	Cambridge University Mission Party (a branch of the Church Missionary Party)
MHA	Member, House of Assembly
MZL	Middle Zone League
NAK	National Archives Kaduna
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon
NEPU	Northern Elements Progressive Union
NPC	Northern Peoples' Congress
RCM	Roman Catholic Mission
SIM	Sudan Interior Mission
SUM	Sudan United Mission
UMBC	United Middle Belt Congress