

# EXTERNAL TRADE IN COCOA AND PALM PRODUCE IN COLONIAL EKITI OF WESTERN NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** The colonial Ekiti was very rich in exportable commodities that enriched the colonial government through what was known as external trade; between the Ekiti people, the local businessmen, the middlemen, government and foreign nations, particularly Britain and the U.S.A. Two of the most lucrative export commodities were cocoa and palm produce like palm oil and palm kernel. Before colonization, cocoa had little economic value because of low external demand, mainly by few explorers in Nigeria who laboured to find foreign market for it. Palm produce was also mainly for local consumption, without the people really knowing its industrial and high economic value. However, during the colonial period, these products were aggressively sought after by foreign firms like John Holt, United African Company (UAC), G. B. Oliphant, A. G. Leventis and Perteson and Zochonis, among others. Trade in these commodities was controlled by agencies like the Nigeria Cocoa Marketing Board (NCMB) and the Nigeria Oil Palm Produce Marketing Board (NOPPMB). Cocoa and palm produce, in spite of the exploitative actions of the colonial government, made the economy of Ekiti very healthy and progressive.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In the colonial period, 1900 to 1960, Ekiti contributed in no small measure to Nigeria's external trade through cocoa and palm produce. External trade as should be understood in this study means any trade transaction between the Nigeria and foreign countries; between the Ekiti people and those outside the Nigerian shores like the Europeans and the Americans. In fact, according to Onwuka Njoku it is a trade that "flowed from Nigeria to the wider world, and *vice versa*".<sup>1</sup> However, before examining the Ekiti external trade commodities, it is important to briefly discuss the imperialist nature of external trade in colonial Ekiti.

Walter I. Ofonagoro's book, *Trade and Imperialism in Southern Nigeria, 1881 to 1929*, has clearly exposed British hypocrisy about her infrastructural development in Southern Nigeria. It has sufficiently explained how the colonial occupation or administration, economic reorganization, demonetization of traditional currencies and prosecution of various infrastructural projects, among others, were to serve the exploitative interest of the colonial, and therefore the British, government. The Ekiti colonial economy was an extension of this colonial, imperialist exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

As regards external trade, scholars, among others, have revealed how the colonial administration totally dominated or controlled all trade activities, giving the Nigerian producers no alternative than to be subservient to the British economic dictation. Not only that, according to O. Njoku, external trade seriously brought unequal exchange between the Nigerian producers and the European traders.<sup>3</sup> For example, among other things, Ekiti traders were side-lined by foreign exporters who made sure that the economic intricacies of trade were not made open to local traders. While the expatriate traders had more than enough capital to operate big businesses, the Ekiti traders, like other local traders in Nigeria, could only operate small scale businesses because of insufficient capital.<sup>4</sup>

It was the European affair all the way, particularly when the imperialist administration had the total power to fix prices of commodities and plan the economic strategies that eventually disadvantaged the Ekiti people. However, cocoa, the most

valuable and the main cash crop of Ekiti, was the main export and economy generating crop of the people in the colonial period. According to a government report of 1943:

Cocoa is a plantation crop (that) has no outlet except market; when a cocoa farmer reaps his harvest, he will... sell his output either directly or through a middleman to an exporting firm; it seems a matter of little importance to the farmer which firm buys his particular cocoa since all firms pay the same price but he will certainly sell it.<sup>5</sup>

Palm oil was another external trade commodity of Ekiti. Between 1900 and 1930, trade in palm oil was mostly local since palm oil was mainly used for local consumption. But from the 1930s, the rush to buy it for export made the Ekiti people focus more attention on this commodity. Palm oil production was not restricted to particular towns, since nearly all the Ekiti towns specialized in its production. Palm oil production had no particular season, because it was produced throughout the year, depending on when palm fruits matured.

Palm kernel production in Ekiti was already a very popular and important agricultural preoccupation before colonization. This was so because a large population of the people depended on it for various domestic, cosmetic and therapeutic reasons. Colonialism, therefore, came only to aid its popularity and incited more production of this crop with its aggressive demand as an exportable cash crop. According to Madam Tinuola Ojo of Iyin-Ekiti whose mother was popularly known as *Iya elekuro* (kernel's seller) in the 1930s, people could not just understand why some "strangers" would be going from house to house, begging people for kernels to buy no matter how small these were.<sup>6</sup> "They said the white people needed these for many things and would pay 4 pence per cup of kernels", she said.<sup>7</sup> The above reaction is confirmed by what will be discussed later about the situation in the 1940s. No doubt, cocoa, palm oil and palm kernels were notable products for external trade in the colonial Ekiti. It is necessary to discuss these accordingly.

## II. COCOA

1920 marked the beginning of serious trade in cocoa in the colonial Ekiti. By 1922, there had emerged private buying stations and more middlemen at Ikere, Ikoro, Igede, Ise, Ilawe, Igbara Odo, Efon Alaye, Ilu Omoba in addition to the existing one in Ado Ekiti. A few of these stations, however, did not have the required equipment and therefore had to engage the services of other buyers by transferring their cocoa to their bigger stations.<sup>8</sup> 1923 experienced the biggest and unprecedented boost in cocoa price. Cocoa "price was very good, averaging about £26 (twenty six pounds) per ton".<sup>9</sup> By 1930, there was hardly a farmer in Ekiti without cocoa plantation; big or small.

Between 1930 and 1945, the cocoa produced in Ekiti, or Ondo Division which included Ekiti, was the most sought after for its quality which, according to government report, as released by Mr. Cocks, the Inspector of Produce, was most suitable for export. Also according to Mr. Cocks:

The quality of cocoa produced in Ondo Division (including Ekiti) is very high, and reports show it to be easily the best in Nigeria. There are however... a large quantity of last year's Main and Light Crop Cocoa stored in the district, evacuation being held up owing to shortage of transport.<sup>10</sup>

The golden age of cocoa trade in Ekiti began in the late 1940s with the institution of the Nigerian Cocoa Marketing Board (NCMB), after the government had already seen cocoa as the most lucrative for external trade. The Board brought trade control, thereby regulating the activities of the produce buyers, among other things. For example, no cocoa buying agent could operate without getting clearance from the Nigerian Cocoa Marketing Board through issuance of license. In fact, all buying agents by 1952 were to obtain application forms as the first step towards obtaining license (see Table 1).

Before the Marketing Board took control of trade, foreign firms like UAC, John Holt, Flionis Brothers, G.B. Oliphant Ltd, A.G. Leventist Company Ltd, Paterson and Zochonis Company Ltd., among others, had the monopoly of cocoa trade. They also, to a large extent, dictated the price of cocoa for the whole of Western Region. Though there were very few indigenous buying agents before 1950, their activities were easily influenced by the foreign buying agents. With the Nigerian Cocoa Marketing Board taking control, more indigenous buying agents emerged. Though they were not more than one-quarter of the number of licensed buyers, the foreign companies were still dominating. Of all the licensed buying agents, Lagos had 16; Ibadan, 8; Ondo (including Ekiti) had 2; Abeokuta, 1; Ijebu Ode, 1; Benin City, 1; Ife, 1 and Ilesha 1; all totalling 31 for the entire Western Region.<sup>11</sup> With respect to buying of cocoa, the functions of the licensed buying agents were to:

- a) Purchase at buying stations at not less than the minimum prices.

- b) Arrange for inspection in accordance with the regulations and to bag to the standard weight as required by paragraph 16.
- c) Finance purchases and provide suitable storage until time of shipment.
- d) Make returns of graded purchases and graded stocks as the Board or its duly authorized executive may require.
- e) Arrange for conveyance to port by approved routes without delay.
- f) Comply with regulations and instructions regarding check weighing and inspection at ports.
- g) Arrange for delivery of cocoa to ocean vessel in accordance with shipping instructions given by the Board or its duly authorized executive.
- h) Hand without delay shipping documents as required to the Board or its duly authorized executive.
- i) Insure against all risks, except certain risks specifically excepted up to the time of shipment on board ocean-going vessel or delivery into Board stores in accordance with Board instructions.

**Table 1:** Nigerian Cocoa Marketing Board Application Form for Admission as Buying Agent under the Cocoa Marketing Scheme

		<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
1.		<b>PARTICULARS OF APPLICANT</b>	
	a.	Name in full..... Nationality .....	
	b.	If firm, state whether (i) individual trading as firm (ii) partnership (iii) private company (iv) limited company	
	c.	Has the company been registered under Registration of Business Names Ordinance?	
	d.	If individual trading as firm state how long established	
	e.	If partnership (i) give full details of all partners, including nationality in each case (ii) state how long established	
	f.	If private company state (i) when and where incorporated (ii) names and nationality of all directors (iii) registered office	
	g.	If limited company, state (i) when and where incorporated (ii) names and nationality of all directors (iii) registered office	
2.		<b>ADDRESS</b>	
		(a) address of main office in Nigeria (b) addresses of Branch offices (if any). If none state none	
3.		<b>KNOWLEDGE OF COCOA TRADE</b>	
		Applicant's previous experience in handling cocoa should be detailed fully here:	
4.		<b>PURCHASES</b>	
		(a) what tonnage of cocoa you purchase in 1949/50 1950/51 1951/52? (b) to whom did you sell the cocoa you purchased in 1951/52? (c) what quantity of cocoa do you estimate you will buy in the 1952/53	

		season?	
5.		<b>CONTAINERS</b>	
		(a) What is your present stock of NEW bags? (b) What is your stock of twine?	
6.		<b>CAPITAL</b>	
		(a) If individual or partnership state available resources for due in cocoa trade (b) If private or limited company state (i) authorized capital (ii) paid up capital (iii) available resources for use in cocoa trade (c) Give the name of your bankers	
7.		<b>STORAGE</b>	
		(a) What stores do you own (i) in gazetted inspection stations? (ii) in other stations? (Give location & capacity in each case) (b) What stores do you rent (i) In gazetted inspection stations? (ii) In other stations? (Give locations, capacity & from whom rented in each case)	
8.		<b>EVALUATION OF PRODUCE</b>	
		What arrangements can you make to arrange for evacuation of cocoa? (a) by rail? (b) by road? (c) by water?	
9.		<b>SHIPPING DOCUMENTS</b>	
		How will you ensure the accurate and prompt submission of shipping documents?	
10.		<b>GENERAL</b>	
		(a) What is your buying staff? (b) What is your clerical staff? (c) How many labourers to handle produce do you employ? (Give details for each store declared under 7) (d) Do you engage in any other commercial activities – if so, what? (e) Are you applying for admission to any other marketing scheme, if so, which?	

I/we declare that the answers given by me/us to the above mentioned are, to the best of my/our knowledge and belief, true. I/we understand that the making of any false statement in this connection will automatically mean that my/our application will not be considered: or if any authority to act as a buying agent under the cocoa Marketing Scheme has been granted on the basis of such false statement, then that authority will automatically be revoked.

Signed this ..... day of .....

at .....

**Source:** N.A.I., EKITI DIV. 1/1, File No. S38, 19/4/1952, pp. 243-246.

The two licensed agents for Ekiti, within Ondo Province, were the Flionis Brothers and Samuel Akinbolaji Oladapo Company. However, the Cocoa Board did not place any restriction on areas of operation for the buying agents. Various laws guiding cocoa sale had already been fully known to all the Ekiti farmers by 1950 for the production of good quality cocoa, and even before the laws, as already explained, the Ekiti people were producing very good quality cocoa. During this period, nearly all the major Ekiti towns had local produce buyers, buying directly from farmers who could not afford to take their products to the approved buying stations. However, the farmers who had the necessary transportation, or who

happened to be near one of the buying stations, usually sold directly to these stations. The approved stations for Ekiti were in Ado, Ara, Ijero, Ikere, Ikole, Ikoro and Ikole.<sup>12</sup>

To protect the quality of cocoa, the Cocoa Marketing Board made it compulsory for all buying agents to use new bags issued by the Board for cocoa packing after grading. According to A.H. Young, Director of Marketing and Export, it was mandatory for the licensed agents to use the new bags because, "bags that have been previously used for service purposes cannot be regarded as new bags as required by paragraph 16 of the Memoranda".<sup>13</sup> The bags must be marked accordingly.

Cocoa trade in colonial Ekiti was between the farmers, his local produce (cocoa) buyer, the buying agent, the exporting firms and the government. About one quarter of the buying agents, who were also the cocoa exporters, were Nigerians, while others were foreigners. In Ekiti, the exportation journey of cocoa began from the government approved stations through the various evacuation routes to Lagos, and from Lagos to various countries outside Nigeria. For example, the cocoa from Ado Ekiti station was transported to Lagos by road and creek through Okitipupa. Transportation of cocoa from Efon-Alaiye Ekiti was by road and railway through Oshogbo. Ijero Ekiti station got its cocoa to Lagos by road and creek through Okitipupa. Ikoro Ekiti had the same route with Ijero. Cocoa from Ikere station took the same Ijero route while that of Ikole station also followed the same route.<sup>14</sup> The above evacuation routes show that the Ekiti cocoa meant for export was transported to Lagos through either Lorries, railways or river (see Table 2).

**Table 2:** Evacuation of Ekiti Cocoa from Station to Lagos

Station	Evacuation Route	Destination
Ado-Ekiti	Road and Creek via Okitipupa	Lagos
Efon-Alaiye	Road and Railway via Oshogbo	Lagos
Ijere	Road and Creek via Okitipupa	Lagos
Ikere	Road and Creek via Okitipupa	Lagos
Ikole	Road and Creek via Okitipupa	Lagos
Ikoro	Road and Creek via Okitipupa	Lagos

*Source:* N.A.I., Ekiti Div. 1/1/, File No. S38, 19/4/1950, pp. 192-249.

From Lagos, the cocoa transported from all the Ekiti stations were shipped to various countries that needed the raw materials for further processing. Specifically, the cocoa was shipped to the United Kingdom which at that time enjoyed special trade relation with Nigeria; with the Nigeria Cocoa Marketing Board (NCMB) as the consignor and the Nigerian Produce Marketing Company Ltd. as the consignee. Other countries where the Ekiti cocoa was shipped to included the United States of America: the NCMB consignor and the Standard Bank of South Africa, and New York as consignees; Canada, with the NCMB consignor and the Royal Bank of Canada as consignee; Australia and New Zealand with the NCMB consignor and the Nigerian Produce Marketing Company Ltd. as consignee and South Africa with the NCBM as consignor and Standard Bank of South Africa (in Cape town, Durbar, Port Elizabeth and East London) as consignee.<sup>15</sup>

In the countries mentioned above, cocoa was processed into various food items and beverages like cake, chocolate, ice cream, sweets and cocoa drinks. These processed cocoa food and beverages were in turn exported from these countries back to Nigeria where they were marketed and consumed by both Nigerians and Europeans.

From the late 1940s, cocoa price was always fixed by the Cocoa Marketing Board, and a variety of factors determined the price: the quality of the product, the external demand, evacuation delay, storage hazard and, at times, exploitative attitude of both government and licensed agents. In addition, the general economic situation in the country also determined the price of cocoa. This was why the price in the 1920s was different from that of the 1950s. Other factors included the state of cocoa market overseas, "the unsettled state of international affairs and notably the war in Korea",<sup>16</sup> price fluctuations in the world market, particularly during post-war years, and inflation or rising cost of foods.<sup>17</sup>

The above reasons show that, like any trade item, it was impossible to have a permanent fixed price for cocoa during the colonial period. Before the institution of the NCMB, the colonial government used only the economic situation overseas to fix prices without really considering the negative effects this could have on the local farmers. Thanks to the Yoruba elite who criticised this action of the colonial government in Western Region. The Acting District Officer (ADO) of Ekiti, Mr. R.C. Golding, identified with this criticism which he described as "this justifiable cry on behalf of the peasant farmers".<sup>18</sup> Between 1950 and 1960, prices of cocoa per ton ranged from £120 to £130 (Table 3). There was no doubt that

the cocoa farmers, despite the fact that they were able to build reasonable capital through cocoa farming, were still underpaid for their products; considering the amount this product sold for in Europe. Also, this was inspite of the marked increase in cocoa price over the price in the early 1950s (see Table 4).

**Table 3:** Cocoa Price per Ton before 1960 at Point of Exportation

Country	1948-1949	1949-1950	1950-1951	1955-1958
Nigeria	£120	£100	£120	High, Low High Price. As low as £121 and high as £130

**Source:** N.A.I. Ekiti Div. 1/1 File No. S.38, 1951, p. 97; N.A.I., Ondo Prof. 4/12 (i), 1958, p. 212.

**Table 4:** Cocoa Price Per Ton for Standard Weight in the Approved Ekiti Division and Ondo Province Buying Stations in the Early 1950s in Pounds and Shillings

Buying Station	Grade I	Grade II	Other Grades
Ado-Ekiti	116 4 0	106 4 0	Not indicated but low
Agbabu	118 2 0	108 2 0	Not indicated but low
Akure	116 17 0	106 17 0	Not indicated but low
Alade	117 0 0	107 0 0	Not indicated but low
Ara	115 16 0	105 15 0	Not indicated but low
Efon-Alaiye-Ekiti	115 18 0	105 18 0	Not indicated but low
Ikere	116 16 0	106 16 0	Not indicated but low
Okitipupa	118 13 0	108 13 0	Not indicated but low

**Source:** N.A.I., Ekiti Div. 1/1, File No. S38, 1951, p. 94.

### III. PALM OIL

Trade in palm oil as an export commodity did not begin until 1923. Before this period, or from 1900 to the early 1920s, trade in palm oil was mostly local, since palm oil was mainly used for local consumption. Palm oil was bought by the Nigerian middlemen in Ekiti and other areas of Ondo Province like Ondo and Okitipupa town. Some middlemen also came from the Benin Province. These middlemen bought palm oil in “kerosene tin, which is the largest measure sold, as there is nothing but carrier transport” to transport this in bigger containers.<sup>19</sup> The price for each kerosene tin varied from 5 shillings to 7 shillings, or “from £11 to £15 per ton”.<sup>20</sup> In the early 1930s, when the Ekiti farmers turned more attention to palm oil production, there were also increase in the number of middlemen who also made kerosene tins, as buying containers, very popular.

Many Ekiti farmers also acquired these kerosene tins in quantity to store palm oil which had earlier been stored traditionally in their clay pots (*ikoko* or *usa*).<sup>21</sup> The farmers’ wives and children used to transport, on their heads, tins of palm oil from the farm to the town. The tins of palm oil were sold to the middlemen who usually stored them in their shops before being transported by motor vehicles to the evacuation centres in Ado, Ikoro, Omuo and Ikere where they were sold to the some European firms like Messrs Mac Neil Scot Ltd and Messrs Mac Liver.<sup>22</sup> In the early 1940s, however, the colonial government noted the activities of, particularly, the foreign firms in connection with the unstable prices of palm oil in Nigeria. In 1942, therefore, and as a control measure, the government instituted The Nigeria Defence (Control of Export Produce) Regulations which, among other things, fixed the minimum price, including commission, which should be paid at each buying station... for each ton of Palm Oil.<sup>23</sup> To this end, the colonial government recognized 121 stations all over Nigeria with two stations in Ondo province located in Ondo and Okitipupa which also served the Ekiti middlemen. All stations were to mandatorily accept the new prices ordered by The Nigeria Defence Regulations (see Table 5).



**Table 5:** Price Schedule for Palm Oil in Ondo Province in 1943.

Station	Grade I	Grade II	Grade III	Grade IV	Grade V	Grade VI
Okitipupa	11 18 6	10 18 6	9 18 6	8 18 6	7 18 6	6 18 6
Ondo	10 11 6	9 11 6	8 11 6	7 11 6	6 11 6	5 11 6

*Source:* N.A., Ondo Prof. ¼ OC29, No. 1965/180, 1943, p. 41.

In the late 1940s, the Nigeria Oil Palm Produce Marketing Board (NOPPMB) was also formed as a controlling marketing scheme for palm oil in Nigeria. The Board officially recognized most of the existing licensed buying agents which included the UAC, Union Trading Company Ltd. (U.T.C.), Perteson Zochonis & Co. Ltd (PZ), G.B. Oliphant Ltd., John Holt & Co. Ltd., Ibibio Farmers Association and Mandilas and Kararaberis. Seventeen Licensed buying agents were recognized in all and only one of these was an indigenous firm; but there was room for more licensed agents. The NOPPMB brought more trade control on palm oil. Part of its functions included the supervision and control of the licensed buying agents whose functions, as prescribed by the Board, included:

- Purchasing palm oil at the buying stations at the minimum price.
- Arranging for palm oil inspection for good quality grade as demanded by Produce Inspection regulations.
- Provision of necessary containers and storage.
- Testing and grading oil on purchase.
- Making returns of purchase and stocks as required by the Board.
- Arranging for conveyance to bulk oil installation in Nigeria, etc.<sup>24</sup>

By 1949, “the minimum naked ex-scale Bulk Oil prices” were:<sup>25</sup>

£	\$	d			
Grade I -	-	-	42	15	0
Grade II -	-	-	37	2	6
Grade III	-	-	-	33	0 0
Grade IV	-	-	-	29	12 6
Grade V -	-	-	26	5	0

Grade I oil was defined as “first quality palm oil... containing less than two per centum of water and/or extraneous substance”.<sup>26</sup>

What happened in Ekiti between 1949 and 1955 was that the middlemen made sure that enough palm oil was bought from the local markets. This oil was sold to the Buying Agents who would sell to the big firms that would eventually transport this to Lagos either by creek through Agbabu in Ondo Province or by road through Ilesha and Ibadan to Lagos. From Lagos, the Ekiti palm oil along with those from the major palm oil producers in the East and Mid-Western Nigeria, was shipped to the UK, the USA, France and other European countries. From these countries, palm oil was converted to various industrial products like soap, body cream, lubricants and margarine, among others. These were in turn exported back to Nigeria for sale. Between 1955 and 1960, cocoa had become so much economically more lucrative and integral to Ekiti agriculture and so dominated the external trade of the people that “attention shifted almost entirely to cocoa production; thereby weakening palm oil trade”.<sup>27</sup>

#### IV. KERNEL

Between 1900 and 1920, kernels were used mainly for domestic purposes. This was because the crop had not really attracted external buyers. Unlike palm oil which was very complex and laborious to produce, kernels were cheaper to produce though with some physical effort. Besides, it was an agricultural activity that involved, or were opened to, both the young and the old. What the production needed were patience, painstaking search for kernel nuts in the bush

underneath wild palm trees; in the case where kernel nuts were not obtained from palm oil local factories. The production also needed painstaking cracking of the nuts one by one to extract the kernels. These were the production activities which nearly all the Ekiti children grew up with. By 1938, however, it was clear that, because of the continued high demand, kernels had become a steady source of economic satisfaction, particularly to the poor farmers. Chief Anibaba has also made this situation more explicit:

Could you believe that because of only 2 pence, demanded for handwork in school some children were forced to permanently stop their primary education? This was in the 1920s and even during our time, the same thing happened. Because some parents could not afford this additional 2 pence to the annual fees (about 5 shillings) already paid for each child. But kernels saved the situation for many children and parents. All the parents did was to tell the children to go and pick kernel nuts for two days in the farm and crack for sale at the nearest produce stores. For these two days' job, a child could make up to 6 pence or more. There was always this ready market for kernels....<sup>28</sup>

However, in the late 1920s, the interest in kernel production increased in many Ekiti towns. Kernel shops or produce stores where weighting and buying kernels took place also increased, along with agents of some European firms in Ondo Province. By 1923, the drive for Ekiti kernels as exportable crop had seriously begun. And by 1925, the European firm, Messrs MacNeil Scott Ltd., with the help of their Ekiti and Okitipupa "native middlemen", had started taking their purchases to Lagos through Koko Port "by canoe or launch".<sup>29</sup>

The palm kernel drive became more aggressive in the 1940s with many European firms involved in purchasing this commodity. These included the UAC, Flionis Brothers, John Holt & Company, G.B. Ollivant, Royal Brothers, S.M. Bleasby, N.K. Zard and W.E. Griffiths & Co. Ltd. Others were Kajola Stores, Ijesha United trading and Transport Company Ltd., Odotola Brothers, Peterson Zochonis and Co. Ltd., Ibibio Farmers Association and Ibadan Traders Association Ltd., among others who were also licensed buying agents for the already discussed palm produce trade. In 1943, prices of kernels became discouraging to producers because according to the Deputy Controller of Palm Kernels Office, Ibadan, in his letter to the Resident, Ondo Province, "there is not the smallest chance of another increase in palm kernel prices this year (1943) in the western provinces.... I would point out that the Sobos in the Warri Provinces have greatly increased production for a lower price than that being paid at Okitipupa...."<sup>30</sup>

However, shortly after this decision, the demand for kernels in the United Kingdom, particularly, became so great that Great Britain notified all her colonies about the need to export more kernels into the United Kingdom. The Acting Secretary, Western Provinces, H.F. Marshald, contacted all Residents to this affect with the following directive from "His Excellency":

All Residents, District Officers (DO) and native Authorities must regard as of paramount importance production of Palm Kernels. It must be realized that it is not a matter of being content with a specified target figure but of securing by all practicable means the absolute maximum export.<sup>31</sup>

Mr. Marshald therefore also gave his own directive to all the Residents in Western Nigeria, including that of Ondo Province which covered Ekiti Division. He ordered that,

All Officers should give kernel production first priority and suggestions should be invited among likely quarter as practicable methods of stepping up production and promising suggestions should be given a trial immediately. Close co-operation is essential with the farms, buyers, motor unions and the Transport Control Department, and Administrative and Departmental Officers should cover with a view to coordinating plans of campaign. His Honour wishes Residents to report progress monthly to this office, the first report to be sent at the end of March.... Application is being made to Government for funds to cover expenditure incurred on propaganda measures designed to increase kernels production.<sup>32</sup>

It must, however, be understood that World War II, according to Onwuka Njoku, was responsible for the chronic shortage of kernels, and other palm produce, that led to the above serious demand for kernels by Britain.<sup>33</sup> That is, during World War II, Britain lost her colonies in the Far East, the major source of raw materials, to Japan. Britain was greatly affected, because she could no more import palm produce, particularly kernels from "Singapore, Sumatra and Java".<sup>34</sup> Britain had no alternative than to turn to Southern Nigeria where there was serious propagandist drive for the production of palm oil and palm kernels for export.<sup>35</sup>

The above strong demand for kernels made Ekiti sellers increase their prices. According to Mr. Murphy, the DO for Ekiti, there was increase in the price of kernels because "in the Northern part of the Ekiti Division, Ilorin traders are offering



higher prices for palm kernels than the traders buying for export can afford to pay and the result is that kernels are going North to make Adin (Native Pomade)".<sup>36</sup> Competition among many of the already mentioned licensing agents also made the situation more promising to the Ekiti people who could, to a small extent, now dictate the prices of their kernels. By 1944, however, many buying stations were approved with categories of minimum prices for kernels as shown by the situation in Ekiti (Table 6):

**Table 6** Kernels Buying Stations and Prices Per Bag in Ekiti in 1944.

Buying Station	Minimum Price graded, bagged, sealed to A/B Shipper by Middleman/ Producer	Minimum price, unbagged ungraded to A/B Shipper by Middleman/ Producer	Minimum Price, unbagged, ungraded to Shippers commission buying agent
Ado-Ekiti	6 3 6	6 0 0	5 15 0
Efon-Alaiye	6 13 3	6 9 9	6 4 9
Ijero	6 3 6	6 0 0	5 15 0
Ikere	6 7 9	6 4 3	5 19 3
Ikole	6 3 6	6 0 0	5 15 0

**Source:** N.A.I., Ondo Prof. 1/4, File No., OC 29, p. 102.

At the end of the 1940s, palm kernels trade was more firmly controlled by the NOPPMB and Palm Kernels Marketing Scheme. The Board was solely responsible for the marketing of "all palm kernels produced for export in accordance with the terms of the Nigeria Oil Palm Produce Marketing Ordinance, 1949".<sup>37</sup> It was also responsible for fixing the price of kernels. In January 1949, the DO for Ekiti Division wrote all the Ekiti Obas (kings) about the good news of a new price for palm kernels in Ekiti. The letter is reproduced as follows:<sup>38</sup>

Ado-Ekiti

31 January, 1949

My Good Friend,

**Palm Kernels**

The price of palm kernels has been increased as follows with effect from the 28<sup>th</sup> of January:

Buying Station	Price in Pounds, etc.
Ado-Ekiti	21 8 3 per ton
Ara	20 19 0 per ton
Efon Alaiye	20 9 0 per ton
Ijero	20 15 6 per ton
Ikere	21 12 0 per ton
Ikole	20 10 9 per ton
Ikoro	20 14 0 per ton

Your Good Friend,

*sgd.*

District Officer

Ekiti Division

The transportation of the kernels bought in Ekiti by the buying agents for different firms were via road and creek to Lagos; the same way palm oil was transported as already discussed. From Lagos, these kernels were exported to the United Kingdom, USA and various European countries that eventually used these for soap-making, pomade, particularly hair-pomade, candles and margarine. Palm kernels were also processed in Europe and other countries for dairy and fattening of pigs, cattle and horses. By 1960, Nigeria was already rated as one of the greatest producers and exporters of palm kernels in Africa. During this period, Ekiti farmers still continued daily to produce kernels for sale along with cocoa.

## V. CONCLUSION

In the colonial period, the Ekiti people of Southwestern Nigeria contributed very notably to the economy of colonial Nigeria generally through crops, palm oil and palm kernel. Nearly all the Ekiti towns and villages were involved in the production of these export commodities that found ready markets in Europe and the United States of America. These were commodities that earlier lacked external patronage which eventually came via colonization. What made external trade very lucrative and actively prosperous for farmers and to government was how this trade was carried out on three structures; that is the local farmers or the producers, the buyers or the agents and the European exporters. Though some scholars considered the external trade in cocoa and palm produce as imperialistic, and therefore exploitative, the trade formed a major backbone of the colonial economy in Ekiti.

External trade in cocoa and palm produce also naturally, or in return, brought aggressive importation of various products produced with the exported commodities. These were varieties of cocoa drinks, chocolate cake, paste and sweets as well as items produced with palm produce like candles, soap, pomade and margarine, among others. Definitely, the colonial Ekiti helped create healthy economy both for the Ekiti people and the colonial government through dynamic external trade.

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