

## **HISTORY OF GUM ARABIC TRADE IN COLONIAL BORNO PROVINCE OF NIGERIA, 1902-1960**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the history of colonial Nigeria, trade in Gum Arabic was an important relationship that brought about a close economic contact between the colonized people of Borno province and the European colonizers. Obviously, Gum Arabic was one of the economy resources in Colonial Borno province and one of the basic raw materials of trade that was vigorously attracted the attentions of the Colonial Government and European Private Companies into the region, since the early days of colonialism. On this strength, an attempt was made to pre-review the trade in Gum Arabic during the colonial Borno, with particular emphasis to the mode of production and distribution. To portrait this objective, the roles played by the Colonial Government and Native Authority in the field of production and distribution, in addition to the emergence of various European companies and indigenou traders at the market between 1902 and 1960 were discussed. By so doing, intricate explanation of the centers of production, location of the markets within the province, system of marking, that provided pricing pattern, and distribution channels to European nations were sustained. The study argues that, Gum Arabic is one of the most important raw materials, which is today in high demand in the field of technology, medical services and factory produces, but experiencing exponential decay in both the production centers and the distribution channels. This study is necessitates because of the need to document the history of Gum Arabic trade in colonial Borno province, in order to appreciate the roles of the actors in the business and to look inward to revive the past glory in the fields of production and distribution channels. The study largely relied on oral interviews of some of the surviving actors in the business and archival materials that contains colonial records obtained mainly from the National Archive Kaduna (one of the politically based Northern State of Nigeria). Therefore, the content of the discussion was geared towards historical analyses that have to depend much on primary sources than secondary sources.

**Keywords:** Colonial, Government, Borno, Gum Arabic, Production, Trade, Markets, European companies

## **0.1. INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria is one of the former colonies of Great British, which is situated in the western part of the African continent. While Borno province now one of the states of Nigeria is situated within the Lake Chad basin area in the far-north eastern part of the country. Dominate ethnic groups in this area, were the Kanuri, the known prominent cultivators, traders and breeders of livestock in the region. However, the Shuwa Arabs and the Fulbe nomads was the predominant Pastoralist in the region. Other groups found in Borno include Engizim, Kare-kare, Marghi, Babur Bura, and Marga.

The major articles of trade produced in the region were largely agricultural products such as cotton goods, industrial products like leather goods and extractive minerals such as neutron and salt, as well as forest produce like gum Arabic, bees wax, benni seed etc. that were sold through local and long distance trade since before the coming of the Europeans. With the establishment and consolidation of the Sayfawa dynasty in Borno from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the state established trading links with neighboring states to the West, Central Africa, and North African states across the Sahara. Borno's internal and external trade suffered a setback in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially because of the Sokoto jihad of 1804 and the Rabe interlude from 1893 to 1900.

Although, the reign of Shehu Al-Amin Al-Kanemi witnessed some revitalizations in the political and economic affairs of the state, but the revitalizations processes were obstructed with the death of Shehu Al-Kanemi. With the appointment of Shehu Abubakar Garbai in 1902, peace was restored in the state, which paved the way for the emergence of Borno as a province under British colonial rule. Immediately, after the appointment of Shehu Garbai in 1902, the British Government imposed its rule on the people and a new pattern of trade between Borno and the outside world began. The peaceful political and economy developments that were put in place by Shehu Garbai in Borno, coupled with the advent of the colonial government into the region lead to a drastic and sudden changes from the pre-colonial economy to a colonial economy one in the region.

The people involved in this new Colonial economy structure of agricultural products were the foreign European traders, Lebanese and indigenous African traders such as Kanuri, Hausa, Shuwa Arabs, and other ethnic groups. It is important to note that Gum Arabic production and it trade was not alien to the people of Borno region. However, development in the industry sprang up because of it high demands in the world market as one of the major cash crop to the newly developing industries of Europe. This perhaps captured the attention of the major European companies into Borno province at the early phase of colonialism in Africa.

### 1.1 Origin and Early History of Gum Arabic Trade in Borno Province

The trade in Gum Arabic had a long history in the Western Sahel, perhaps far back as the early days of the Christian era. Sudan was one of the earliest sources of supply to the World markets through long distance international trade. Al-Bakri, who was writing in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, revealed that the Spanish were evidently the First Europeans to recognize the Commercial potential of the Gum Arabic produced in the Acacia Senegal forest of the Western Sahel (SNP, 7, ACC. No. 1505/10617. Vol. IV. “Gum Arabic industry (1935 –1936)” UNAK.

Later in 1448, the trade in Gum Arabic passed through a trading centre established by the Portuguese on the Island of Arguin to the South of Cape Blanco. According to Curtin, West African Gum trade started to replace Eastern Gum trade in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with Senegambia becoming the main supplier to Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Salau, A.Y. 1989).

Indeed, during the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Gum Arabic was the major export of Senegal Valley and the Mauritanian Coast. In addition to the Gum Arabic trade via the Atlantic Ocean from the Western Sahel, references were made to the export of Gum Arabic via the Trans Saharan routes. Because of its international demand, various attempts were made by the Colonial Government to stimulate the production and trade of the product in Borno province (Mukhtar Y. 1992).

The trade in Gum Arabic in Borno could be said to have started when Temple, the Colonial Secretary, wrote to Mr. Hewby, the resident in Borno in 1912, to purchase one ton of Kolkol Gum. The Gum, which was in forty cases, was sent to Imperial Institute in July 1913 for sale in London with a view to ascertaining the market value of the selected consignment (Salau A.Y. 1989).

**Table 1: Gum Arabic Production in Northern and Southern Borno Province**

SEASON	NORTHERN BORNO	SOUTHERN BORNO	TOTAL
1934-35	557 Tons Kolkol	30 Tons mixed gum	587 Tons
1935-36	523 ‘ ‘	48 ‘ ‘	571 ‘
1936-37	299 ‘ ‘	76 ‘ ‘	375 ‘
1937-38	218 ‘ ‘	98 ‘ ‘	316 ‘

**SOURCE:** I.M. Waziri, *‘The Colonial Economy of British Borno. A Case study of the impact of The Production, marketing and export of some selected commodities in the Emergence and growth of cash economy 1902- 1945’*. (Ph.D. Thesis) University of Maiduguri 1996.

The Gum Arabic trade began to show steady increase because of the opening up of the Ringim to Nguru section of the railway on October 1, 1930. Thus, all major exports from both North and Western Borno were carried out through Nguru. European companies were actively involved because of the request encouragement from the Colonial Government (SNP. 7, ACC. No. 5417/1912: "Gum industry relative to Borno" NNAK).

## **1.2 The Emergence and Activities of European Companies in Borno**

The history of European companies in Borno began when in 1891 Shehu Umar attempted to establish trade contacts between Borno and the Royal Niger Company. Later contact was when Rabah Ibn Fadle-Allah was faced with hostility from Borno's former trade partners and turned to the Royal Niger Company with the view of acquiring firearms. However, it was the Niger Company that succeeded the Royal Niger Company in 1900, that started to trade with Borno. The stations of this Company were located in Nafada on the Upper Benue. There Borno's traders carried their goods such as groundnuts, cotton, hide and skins on donkeys, horses and camels to the Company's station for sale (Ikime O. (ed) 1984)

Following the extension of railway lines to Nguru in October 1, 1930, the number of European companies grew. The main trading centers of these companies were established at Nguru, Geidam, Damaturu, Potiskum, Dikwa, Maiduguri, and Monguno. For instance, at Nguru alone, United African Company (U.A.C.), John Holt, Rowntree and Company, G.B. Oliviant, and Corpagnnio Francaise de l'Afrigue occidentals (C.F.A.O.) were established. Others were Societe Commercials de l'Guest Africain (SCDA), Patterson Zkochonics (PZ), Ambrossini, London and Kano Trading Company; Anthony Karkar, Abdu J. Jaoudi, Fermo Bonomi, Ahmed Ali El-Baff, Alhasan Dan Tata, Paul Aonad, Alexandre Couri, George Calil; Kalil Maroun, Peter Khoury, Elalif Elmsillati, Mohammed Shour, Severo Bonomi, Antonio Matatab and John Menguissoglou (Maiprof. ACC. No. 2180 "Trading Station – Northern Provinces (1930)" NNAK).

According to Alhaji Usman Jallaba, the major companies in Maiduguri, which traded in Gum Arabic after the Second World War in 1945, were Peterson Zochonis (PZ), Amros In, and John Holt. Another Gum Arabic merchant, Bukar Bakki, further asserted the C.G.B. Ollivant, Leventis, United African Company and John Holt were the major companies, which traded in Gum Arabic before the Independence of Nigeria in 1960. Beside there was Government Co-operative which also traded in Gum Arabic that was run by Gujbawu and Bashir Abba Mustapha. These companies employed indigenous people that served as buying agents, which normally visit rural settlement markets to collect the gum for the European companies. The Companies were responsible for fixing of prices, grading, transportation, and final exportation to Europe. The

buying agents established the link between the farmers of the gum from the production centers and the European companies at the markets (Mukhtar Y. 1992)

### **1.3 The Emergence and Roles of the Indigenous Gum Traders of Borno**

According to one indigenous gum trader, Alkali Bukar Bakki, the emergence of the indigenous gum traders in Borno started in 1945. Prior to this period, the indigenous traders of Borno were engaged in the sales of groundnuts, hides, and skins. When Gum Arabic trade was established and given a boost, some of the indigenous traders switched over to it because of its high demand and maximum profit. Zannah Bukar Dipcharima (A native Authority staff in Maiduguri) and Ibrahim Imam (A staff of John Holt Co.) through their propaganda and enlightenment encouraged the indigenes to show enterprise in Gum Arabic trade.

Sequel to this, Bakki mentioned some names in respect of Gum Arabic trade whom he described as the pioneers. These were; Alhaji Garba Baba Nguru, Yunusa Mai Hajja Nguru, Alhaji Alabishir Nguru, Alhaji Wasili Maiduguri, Shettima Mustapha Kutani Maiduguri, Alhaji Yemani Maiduguri, Bukar Jallaba Damaturu, and Mallam Nuhu Lantaiwa. Others were Alhaji Mallam Gaji Gajiram and Alhaji Shaibu Musa Maiduguri.

The indigenous traders of Gum Arabic of Borno province played several roles in the distribution of the commodity. Acting as agents, the indigenous Gum traders went to various markets and purchased Gum Arabic, which they later sold to various European companies. Some of the markets that they frequently visited were Gubio, Gazaburet, Kanema, Bukarti, Kalala, Jimbam, Gajiram, and Gudumbali markets in Nigeria. While in the Chad Republic were Zuma Kumon, Gune, and Maina Soroa markets. Bakki maintained that, on reaching, the markets, they stayed in Zongo for a number of days, weeks or months within which they would have enough time to make their purchases. At the Zuma Kumon market, which holds every Fridays, Bakki observed that, Gum Arabic was brought into the market in Zuwo, Calabaashg, and Fiai by the peasants. There was a variation of prices between markets because of their differences in distance. According to Bakki, a ton of Gum cost them £30 when purchasing and sold to companies at higher profit that reached £200 per ton, but subject to market condition.

After purchased through haggling's the Gum were then packed into a sack and loaded to camels and donkeys to be transported to Maiduguri where it would be sold to the European Companies. Traders that made their purchase in Kalala, Jimbam, Gune, and Maina Sorroa, which was close to Nguru, transported their goods to companies situated in Nguru and Kano.

### **1.4 The Markets and System of Gum Arabic Trade in Borno Province**

Fulani women brought large quantity of the Gum Arabic to the markets especially in Kanema and Bukarti. According to Bakki, Gum markets were located at Gudumbali, Zumakumon, Maine Soroa, Gubio, Gazabure, Kalala, Jimbam, Gajiram, Guno, and Gudumbali. Other markets were found in the Chad Republic. In all the markets some of which were held weekly, Gum was bought not in weight but by measuring out in metal cash bowls. For instance, in Kanema market, ½d was paid for each bowl of Gum. The weight of this quantity is supposed to be 1.25 liter. (c.568kilos). but it has been proved by experiment that the actual weight may vary from just under 1 liter (C.454 kilos) to 1 lb.9025. (.908 kilos) depending on the size and moisture content of the tears, and on whether the Gum was heaped up or leveled off in bowl (Maiprof, ACC. No. 2776, “Report on the Gum Arabic Industry in Borno Province (1935-1936)” NNAK).

**Table 2: The Prices of Gum Arabic at the Centers of Production**

YEAR	PER TON
1928/1939	£18 to £25 - Naked
1940/1942	£20 to £30 - ‘
1943/1944	£25 to £35 - ‘
1945/1946	£40 to £45 - ‘

**SOURCE:** Managing Director, John Menguiaseglew Limited, Kano (Nigeria) B.W.A. April 26<sup>th</sup> 1948.

In spite of this development, there appeared to be misunderstanding as the pricing policy by the peasant farmers. However, they advocated that henceforth all Gum should be weighed and priced on the scale. In this respect, all companies in the trade quoted their official buying prices as 1½ per lb (C.454 kilos) at Nguru, down to 1d per liter (C. 454 kilos) at the more outlying centers. Some companies even paid more. For instance, Messrs Chattalas in Geidam were reported to have paid to 24 per lb. (C. 454 kilos). Despite the price agreement reached by Messrs Rowntres and company and United African Company Limited (U.A.C.), the agent of the latter paid more than the agreed price. Normally, the prices were based on the railhead figure of 24 per lb. (C.454 kilos) and varied according to the distance from the Gum Arabic markets. Price control was virtually impossible (SNP. 7, ACC. No. 5417, 1912: “Gum industry relative To ...” NNAK).

Notwithstanding, sorting and grading of Gum were normally done by the Principal buyers before exporting and it was usually performed by women. Adulteration was uncommon, and if they did appear, bite of bark and tears of another species of Gum (usually *Acacia Nilotica*), were removed by the buyers before the price of ‘a lot’ was fixed. The price paid for mixed Gum in Maiduguri was 1¼to 1½d per lb (c.454 kilos), which competes more than favorably with the price of 1½d paid for the much superior Kolkol at Nguru. The value of the farmer at Jos (railhead) was somewhere in the region of 2d per lb. The difference in value between the two varieties of Gum

on the London market was approximately 10/. Per cwt (50 kilos) or a fraction over one penny per lb. (c.454 kilos) (Maiprof. ACC. No. 2778, "Report on the Gum industry in Borno Province (1935-1936)" NNAK).

When prices were fixed, buying agents and touts went to various markets and Gum farms to procure the products for their principal buying companies who later on export it to London market for sale.

### **1.5 The Expansion in Export of Gum Arabic from Borno to Europe**

Prior to the rise of legitimate commerce in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the main export from Africa, apart from slaves, were gold, Ivory, Timber, dye- wood, Gum Arabic etc. Gum Arabic was the major export commodity of trade from the Senegal Valley and the Mauritanian Coast in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (SNP.7, ACC. No.5417/1902: "Gum Arabic Industry too." NNAK).

During the early period of colonialism, the exports of Gum Arabic rested solely on the shoulders of the Colonial Governments and later on, various companies took the lead with some Africans acting as mere agents. The export of Gum Arabic in Borno commenced in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when in 1913, 40 sacks of Kolkol Gum were sent to London for sale as to ascertain its market value (SNP.7, ACC. No. 5417/1912: "Gum Arabic Industry to..." NNAK).

After the market value of Borno's Gum in the world market was ascertained, it took the colonial Government some years before they could engaged the indigenous peasant farmers to embrace the collection and sale of Gum Arabic. The first reason was that the ethnic groups were engaged in the cultivation of groundnuts and cotton. Similarly, they were very reluctant in the gathering of the Gum Arabic because of its difficulties with very low price paid and inability of the peasant farmers to have correct methods of Gum tapping. It was because of Mr. Veir complains and request in 1929 that the Colonial Government embarked upon enlightenment campaign and propaganda. In addition, experimental Gum farms were established and Forestry Officers were posted to train the ethnic groups in the act of Gum Arabic gathering. Many were made to practice "*Taungiya*" farming with the view to increase production of Gum in Borno Province (Maiprof. ACC. No. 2161: "Report on Nguru Railway Station" NNAK)

Similarly, colonial Government encouraged private companies to show enterprise in the Gum Arabic of Borno province. The early companies that responded to this call were Messrs. Rowntree and Company, United African Company (U.A.C.), Messrs. Chattalas, Messrs. Paterson Zochonis (PZ) and the French Companies. Most of these companies tended to grade the Gum product before exporting to abroad. Thus, Gum Arabic was exported to Europe after graded, cleaned, sifted, and bleached with its natural state.

Notwithstanding, the companies that dealt in the Gum Arabic export acquired their products not only in Borno, but also in the French territories of Chad and Niger. During the Gum Arabic conference held at Maiduguri on January 26<sup>th</sup> of 1929, it was disclosed that at least 80 percent of the Gum purchased in Borno markets came from French Territories (Maiprof. ACC. No. 1618: “Goods exported into French Territory (1951)” NNAK).

All Gum purchased by the companies were then exported abroad via Nguru railway line to the coast. However, due to lack of wagon to be loaded and many were taken to places other than Nguru.

**Table 3: Statistics of Gum Arabic Transported via Nguru Railway Station From 1931 TO 1950**

YEAR	TONNAGE	YEAR	TONNAGE
1931	274	1932	447+
1933	459+	1934	2343
1935	537	1936	1201
1937	306	1938	238
1939	571	1940	607
1941	584	1942	247
1943	977	1944	900
1945	2,204	1946	1,789
1947	1,091	1948	1,052
1949	690	1950	364

**Source:** 1931-1933 are from S.N.P. 17/21325, NAK; and 1934-1944 are from Mai Prof 2161, NAK; and 1945- 1950 are from Adeyeju, KS. *Forestry and the Nigerian Economy: U.P. Ibadan, 1975.*

From the above table it can be deduced that gum Arabic, which had emerged as a strong export commodity since the early 1920s, was given a boost with the introduction of modern means of transportation. The use of motor vehicle and railway lines rapidly led to an increase in production and efficient means of exportation.

The intensified propaganda campaign by the provincial colonial authorities pressurized the people to popularize the tapping of Gum Arabic in the best possible way for exports. As indicated by the provincial report on the Gum Arabic Industry in the 1935 to 1936 colonial production bases were established in the main area of production such as Nguru, Bosari, Damaturu, Auno, Kaga, and Badde in Northern Borno. To enhance production, a demonstration was conducted with *Lawans* (Village Heads) and their *Talakawa* (subjects) totaling about 6,000



people present and 3,000 trees were tapped under the supervision of the gum staff and the Provincial Officer. Consequently, it was reported that, the next season about 20,000 to 30,000 trees were tapped,” this explains the distinctive record of production for export of Gum Arabic for the year 1936. Again therefore, there was an increase of the number of foreign companies involved in the Gum Arabic trade for export from three to six and an extension in their area of purchase to Southern Borno (Maiprof, ACC. No. 2798, “Report on the Gum Arabic Territory in Borno Province (1935-1936) NNAK).

**Table 4: The Purchasing Capacity of Foreign Companies from Northern Borno for Export**

Companies	1935-1936		1936-1937		Increase		Decrease	
	Tons	Cwt	Tons	Cwt	Cwt		Tons	Cwt
Messrs Rowntrees	188	19	14	1	-	-	47	17
“U.A.C.”	204	-	138	16	-	-	65	4
“P.Z.”	5	-	11	-	6	09	-	-
French Companies	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Table 5: The Purchasing Capacity of Foreign Companies from Southern Borno for Export**

<u>Companies</u>	1935-1936__Tons		1936-1937 Tons		Increase Tons		Decrease__Tons	
	Cwt		Cwt		Cwt		Cwt	
Messrs U.A.C.	43	5	67	4	23	19	5	-
P.Z.	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cressmith	-	-	8	-	8	-	-	-
Provisional Total	525	4	391	14	18	8	371	17

**SOURCE:** *I.M. Waziri, ‘The Colonial Economy of British Borno: A Case Study of the Impact of the Production, marketing and export of some selected commodities in the Emergence and growth of cash economy 1902-1945’, (PhD Thesis) University of Maiduguri 1996.*

In the 1930s, the three companies, Messrs Rowntrees Company Limited, United African Company Limited, and Chattalas Company Limited were the largest buyers of Gum Arabic for export from Borno province. All the gum they bought was exported direct to England, while the French Companies exported their own Gum Arabic to France. Nevertheless, the campaigns on increase in the production of gum Arabic for export were not relented. It is obvious that with the arrival of Mr. Keysey Adams of the Chickle Development Company of New York in the early 1940s developed much interested in export of Gum Arabic. In addition, the Borno Native Authority established the official that were in charged with Gum Arabic production and

marketing in the province. At the onset of office, the pioneer staff was made up of Baba Geidam, Kachalla Tijani, Dogari Bukar (as forest guards), and Alamin Baba Geidam (as a member of the Shehu’s outer council) in 1936. Net decrease was 133 tons 9cwt due to the decision of the French authorities to prevent the overland trade of gum Arabic for export to Borno Province from their territory (Maiprof. ACC. No. 2777: “Forestry policy and work in Borno Province Inspection Notes by Forestry Officer” NNAK).

Their efforts led to rapid production at an appreciable rate not only within the Borno province, but also even from the French territory. This claim was proved when cooperative analysis of the figures of the distinct areas of Gum Arabic production for export from Borno Province from 1934 to 1935 and 1938 to 1939 seasons were presented.

**Table 6: Buying Stations and Quantity of Gum Arabic bought between 1935-1936 and 1936-1937 Seasons**

Buying Station	Buying Seasons				Increase 1936		Decrease 1937	
	1935		1936		Tons	Cwt	Tons	Cwt
	Tons	Cwt	Tons	Cwt	Tons	Cwt	Tons	Cwt
Nguru	140	2	110	8	-	-	29	13
Karasawa	-	13	-	1	-	-	-	1
Bukarti and Kanema	105	19	55	15	-	-	50	4
Ginda & Zari	37	16	30	-	-	-	7	16
Geidam	75	13	19	2	-	-	50	10
Gorounda	18	15	27	-	8	5	-	-
Abadam	8	-	-	-	-	-	8	-
French Territories	90	1	74	2	-	-	15	18
Damaturu	13	6	10	16	-	-	2	10
Maiduguri	13	14	39	9	25	15	-	-
Dikwa	-	18	2	3	1	5	-	-
Pana	20	7	22	16	2	9	-	-
Total	525	4	391	14	37	14	17	3

**SOURCE:** I.M. Waziri, *The Colonial Economy of British Borno. A Case study of the impact of The Production, marketing and export of some selected commodities in the Emergence and growth of cash economy 1902-1945*. (Ph.D. Thesis) University of Maiduguri 1996.

The fact that the French restriction was one reason which explains the net decrease, there were other reasons such as the result of the locust invasion of 1937 to 1938, which resulted,

particularly in the East, in the complete defoliation of Acacia tree. The other factor was the frequent lapses of both the forest service's and the traditional authorities. Notwithstanding, in 1945, the production of gum Arabic for export stood at 2,204 almost doubled that of the 1936, because rise in the price of gum Arabic by Sudan. Beside the high price paid that encouraged increase in Gum Arabic production of in Borno, there were many forestry officers trained and posted to the production centers to reinforce the earlier campaigns mounted (Managing Director, John Kanguisoglou Limited, Kano (Nigeria) B.W.A. April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1948).

Equally, there was increasing interest from companies in the gum business. In addition, to the six foreign companies mentioned earlier, there were indigenes companies such as Dantata, and a host of Lebanese companies that engaged in trade and exportation of the product abroad (SNP.7, ACC. No. 1505/10617 Vol. 1: "Gum Arabic Industry..." NNAK).

Consequently, as this high price paid for Gum affects the production level coupled with increased number of companies taking part, the statistics of gum expected through Nguru railway became unreliable. Because many good Gum Arabic, were taken to other places such as Jos, Kano and Lagos for onward export. However, in spite of the large exports trade of the product, there was no effort to restock the trees in Borno up to the period of Independence in 1960.

### **1.6 The Protection Efforts and Expansion of Gum Issues by Political Institutions in Borno**

Immediately when the existence of Acacia trees in Borno were identified couple with their high demand and markets value, the colonial Government called for their protection from fire and other related problems. The organization of Gum Arabic trade stoned from the very nature of the protecting the Acacia trees and the encouragement and propaganda as well as the involvements of foreign companies. To achieve the protection objectives, representatives from eleven districts received general forestry training and instructions in Gum work in Maiduguri. Likewise, the Forestry Officers together with the Shehu's representative toured districts heads and Gum bearing districts to give instructions on the problems of fire risk, cutting over of Kolkol trees, removal of roots for well lining and grazing by animals. In 1936, Borno Forest Officer was create and post permanently to oversee the overall aspects of Gum Arabic production and marketing.<sup>29</sup>

Notwithstanding, it became apparent that the officer failed devote his whole time to Gum propaganda, but initiated new interest in the resuscitation of the Niger Gutter trade. To overcome the shortcomings and challenges, conference was held at Maiduguri in January 26<sup>th</sup> 1939 and representatives of all Gum buying organizations attended. The object of the conference was to discuss existing difficulties in the Gum Arabic industry, and to suggest possible remedies. During the conference, many issues were deliberated and the following problems were identified.

Poor development of the industry due to animate and/or rainfall, peculiarities of trees, lack of interest on the part of the people of the province due to poor prices, long period between tapping and collection. In addition, danger of Gum removed by other persons, the nature of work was foreign to the peasants, pride of sex where men and women each thought it an occupation only fit for the other etc (Maiprof. ACC. No. 2777: "Forestry policy and work in Borno province. Inspection Notes by Forestry Officer" NNAK).

Nevertheless, the conference proposed the following five (5) steps to tackle some of the challenges. Firstly, plantations of Acacia Verek be established by Native Administrations and interested companies in convenient centre of the Gum areas of Borno. Secondly, the District heads should direct the control of the plantation, so that it would be lesser foreign for the peasantry. Thirdly, forest official, not necessarily a European, be employed from Sudan to inspect the Gum areas of Borno in order to give instructions on its exploitation companies. Fourthly, agents specialized in Gum – buying be sent to the Forestry Headquarters for instructions on tapping. Fifthly, standard prices should be established by the companies throughout the buying areas, so that all collectors would receive the same as was done for groundnut on the railway or on the Benue.

The existing companies dealing in the gum trade were responsible for quoting their official price and the employment of agents whom they gave some amount to purchase gum in the open market for them. They were also responsible for the employing female ethnic groups whose job was picking up barks, sand, leaves, and fire damage. Finally, most of the Gum bought was cleaned graded and bleached before export. Therefore, the effective organization of Gum Arabic trade in Borno was due to the collective efforts of the Colonial government, traditional rulers, European companies and the local gum Merchants.

### **1.7 Economic Importance and Various Uses of Gum Arabic**

These exciting and instructional joint efforts and activities of both the Colonial Government and the Native Authority in the field of Production and Trade of Gum Arabic in Colonial Borno were largely due to its high demand in World markets as basic raw material for various products and produces. The very nature of Gum Arabic, such as high viscosities, solubility in water and adhesive power are responsible for such Global high demand.

In the first place, finest and least colour grades were used in pharmaceutical preparations and in the confectionaries trade for the manufacture of Gums, pastilles etc. Secondly, it was used in the finishing of silk and crape, in the preparation of ink and fine watercolours and its acid content makes it valuable in all lithographical processes. Thirdly, in the stationery trade, it is used in variety of ways, generally, it has glycerine added to prevent cracking when used as an adhesive

on envelopes, postage stamps etc. poorer qualities of Gum are used in Match industry, and for sizing wallpaper. In addition, like most industrially valuable trees, Gum Arabic tree (Acacia) provided firewood for local population.

Largely, the Acacia species have the potential to be utilized for the rehabilitation of desert areas like northern Borno and part of Yobe state of Nigeria bordering Niger Republic. This could enable the establishment of industries based upon these plant materials and this type of agro-industrialization may become, in time, an important element in the development of the arid regions.

### **1.8 Conclusion**

The history of Gum Arabic production and distribution in colonial Borno Province was very much exciting and instrumental. The large number of parties involved in its production and marketing, are generally attributed to its high demand in the World market particular the industrialized nations of Europe. As a result, the colonial governments not only participated fully in its protection, and marketing but engaged the indigenous peasant farmers to ensure sufficient supply to the markets of Borno Province. All the intricate roles of the actors involved were largely due to the Gum Arabic demands because of the industrial importance attaches to it.

Therefore, there is greater need on the part of the Federal, State, and Local Governments to encourage people by empowering them to take part in the resuscitation of the industry as part of its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Since Borno state was historical proved a fertile land for the production of Gum Arabic the Governments of all levels should make sure high financial investments of the agricultural budgets are geared toward its production similar to other farm produce such as millet, corn, beans, groundnuts, as well as cotton.

Similarly, Gum Arabic trees need to be given proper protection through heavy finalities against person that cut or burn them. Special guards should be employed to give much close security for Gum Arabic trees in their habitants.

Finally, Government of all levels should involve themselves in both production and marketing of Gum Arabic by way of encouraging local farmers to sacrifice their services towards its production and marketing.

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