NORTHERN NIGERIA COTTON FOR LANCASHIRE, 1902-1913

E.O. Egboh
University of Nigeria

Introduction

Cotton growing had been an indigenous industry in Northern Nigeria before the colonial period. The inhabitants had used locally grown cotton in the manufacture of cloths of very high quality.[1] When Britain took over control of Northern Nigeria, British colonial functionaries in the territory appreciated this. Consequently, when towards the end of the 19th century, Britain was finding it increasingly difficult to import sufficient raw cotton from the United States and other sources to keep her Lancashire cotton mills going, Northern Nigeria was one of the territories to which attention was turned.[2] The purpose of this paper is to examine the efforts made by British cotton interests to foster cotton growing in Northern Nigeria for export to Lancashire.

Preliminary British Efforts to grow cotton in Nigeria

The Oldham Chamber of Commerce in 1901 showed keen interest in cotton growing in Northern Nigeria,[3]. After the formation in 1902 of the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) for the specific purpose of promoting cotton growing in the British Empire, it became the Association's responsibility to encourage cotton growing in Northern Nigeria.[4] However, before the Oldham Chamber of Commerce and the BCGA bestirred themselves, the Elder Dempster Shipping Company had sent some quantity of American cotton seed to Northern Nigeria to be planted by the farmers. The Company stated that if cotton growing for export was encouraged in the territory it would be prepared to reduce the freight for cotton carried in its ships to 1/4 p per lb.[5]

The Governor, Sir Frederick Lugard, sent to the Residents of Zaria, Ilorin and Kabba Provinces, the cotton seed received from the Elder Dempster Company, instructing them to distribute it to farmers through the Emirs and chiefs and to ensure it was grown in good soil. The Governor urged the Residents to persuade the Emirs and chiefs to take special interest

in growing cotton, and pointed out that the farmers would have a ready market for their cotton if properly grown.[6]

The report on the exotic cotton was encouraging. According to the Ilorin Resident:

> The [Ilorin] Emir is taking the keenest interest in the cotton seed which is making good progress ... and the chiefs are most anxious to get a supply of good seed and have promised to do all in their power to make the venture a success.[7]

Commenting on the prospects of raising cotton in Northern Nigeria and on the future of exotic cotton in the territory, Lugard said:

> I entertain the hopes that the industry will form one of the sources of wealth and revenue in this Protectorate in the not distant future. The imported seed appears to do well and the natives are much delighted with it and are clamouring for more of it.[8]

Thus, it appears there were bright prospects for cotton growing in Northern Nigeria. As a result of this, Lugard was disposed to accept a proposal earlier made by the BCGA for the promotion of cotton growing in Northern Nigeria. According to the proposal, a cotton expert should be appointed for Northern Nigeria, and cotton gins and seed provided. Commenting on the proposal, Colonial Office officials were of the view that a cotton expert for Northern Nigeria could be appointed at a salary of £400 per annum, provided the BCGA was willing to shoulder the responsibility for the provision of seed, machines and other implements for the promotion of the industry.[9] In a letter to the BCGA, the Secretary of State for the Colonies stated that if the BCGA was desirous that a cotton expert for Northern Nigeria should be appointed, the Colonial Office would be willing to approve such an appointment. He also made it clear to the BCGA that cotton gins and seed were necessary and that these should be sent to Northern Nigeria, adding that the cotton gins should be sent out at the same time as the expert so that the gins could be properly installed and looked after.10 In reply, the BCGA stated that it had shipped eight bags of cotton seed for distribution to farmers in Northern Nigeria and promised to supply gins and agricultural implements. In 1904, the BCGA promised that it would be prepared to buy at 1d per lb, for a period of three years starting

from April 1904 to April 1907, all the seed cotton produced in the territory. An American Shelly Neely, was appointed as the cotton expert for Northern Nigeria. In 1904, he arrived in Zungeru, the then capital of Northern Nigeria. He was described by the BCGA as "thoroughly competent and exceedingly shrewd and practical". Unfortunately however, Neely's stay in Northern Nigeria was brief. He was there for a few days before being reassigned to Southern Nigeria to assess the prospects of the Urhobo Plains for cotton growing. During his brief stay in Northern Nigeria, he visited Nupe and saw a bit of the area around Lokoja and Zungeru and expressed the view that Lancashire could obtain more cotton with little difficulty from Northern Nigeria than from any other colony in West Africa. He noted that the soil was well adapted to the American cotton and that the samples of the cotton already grown were good. He further observed that he did not see why Northern Nigeria, whose area was greater than Texas would not become another Texas, exporting annually £30,000,000 worth of cotton with only three to four per cent of the land under cotton. Neely based his conclusion on a number of factors. Firstly, Northern Nigeria had a great advantage over the coast colonies in that its rainfall was moderate and therefore most suited for cotton growing. Secondly, it was not covered with heavy forest as in the colonies nearer the coast. Thirdly, it had water-ways which would facilitate transportation. Fourthly, it was blessed with animals of burden such as oxen, mules, horses and assess which could be used for agricultural purposes and for transportation.

On the face of it it would appear that Neely's opinion was sound. However, one's immediate reaction is that his stay in the territory was not long enough to enable him to tour the Protectorate extensively before forming his opinion. Judging from his little experience of the territory and its peoples, his conclusion appeared over-optimistic. The Colonial Office recognised it too:

> Mr. Shelly Neely is hardly in a position to speak of the Prospects of Northern Nigeria becoming a second Texas and exporting £30,000,000 worth of cotton annually, after spending a few days in a corner of it.[12]

As Neely could not be spared for a thorough work in the territory, another

expert, J.W. Chandler, was appointed. He was instructed to enquire into the possibilities of cotton growing in the Protectorate, with particular reference to the districts near navigable rivers where transportation could be possible.[13]

Chandler was unable to visit many parts of Northern Nigeria. However, he toured Bassa, Nassarawa, Kabba, Nupe and Ilorin provinces in the Southern part of Northern Nigeria. These areas, particularly Bassa, were reported as suitable for cotton growing:

> I consider Bassa one of the most important provinces for cotton growing owing to the agricultural inclinations of the natives and proximity of a great part of the province to the main waterways, the Benue and the Niger rivers affording transport facilities for the cotton down to Lokoja.[14]

Acting for the Northern Nigeria Government, W. Wallace, maintained that cotton was growing all over Northern Nigeria, and agreed with Chandler that waterways were essential for the evacuation of the produce. He stated that for practical purposes, it was necessary to confine any development in cotton growing for export to the riverine provinces where the waterways could easily be used to evacuate the produce. He suggested that the areas to be cultivated should be limited to about thirty miles from the banks of the rivers. This would help to reduce to a minimum the transport difficulties which the development of the industry would involve. Obviously, the Government of the Protectorate was not in the mood in 1904 to embark on costly new transportation projects for the evacuation of the cotton.

It is relevant to comment on the efforts made by certain adventurers to exploit the growing of cotton in Northern Nigeria. Aware of the attempts being made to develop cotton growing in Northern Nigeria for export, one Charles Lord, an Englishman, who had emigrated to the United States in search of fortune, claimed he could help Britain solve her cotton shortage by growing cotton on a large scale in Northern Nigeria by means of Negro labour imported from America:

> I have conceived the remedy of having Britain grow her own cotton upon her own soil in Nigeria, Africa, through the importation of negroes from the cotton belt of the southern States of the U.S.A.

> These are the labourers who successfully raise cotton here and if imported to Africa, will revolutionise the cotton industry of the world and contribute immeasurably to [Britain's] industrial supremacy. What concession of lands in Nigeria, as selected by me and my associates, would the Government be willing to make to me and my agents, would much bonus per capita will the Government be willing to give in furtherance of such enterprise? What facilities would the British Government give toward the transportation of such negroes to Africa from American ports?[15]

Charles Lord's enquiries and proposal reveal certain interesting points. They have brought out clearly the imperial concept of colonies, according to which a colony for practical purposes was regarded as a private property of the colonial master which had to be disposed of in the master's interest. Nigeria was Britain's "soil" which Britain had to husband to suit her own economic interests. Mr. Lord also highlighted his adventurist endeavour. Having failed to make both ends meet in England, he had emigrated to America the land of opportunity to make the fortune which had eluded him in England. Having again failed to make his mark in America, he apparently saw his opportunity in importing negro slaves from America to Nigeria to work as labourers on European-owned plantations, to produce cotton for Britain's cotton mills. That would be the old Trans-Atlantic slave trade in reverse.

Mr. Lord obviously failed to see that West Africa was unsuited, for a number of reasons, for successful operation of European-plantation agriculture. Firstly, there were no "vacant lands" in West Africa that could easily be taken up by Europeans for plantation agriculture. The needs of the native population would not have allowed that. Secondly, the cost of the maintenance of Europeans in West Africa was very high on account of the climate which necessitated frequent holidays in Europe to ensure staff efficiency.[16] The colonial officers turned down Charles Lord's application. In the light of this the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Lyttelton, informed the BCGA that he was not prepared to sanction any scheme for the importation of labourers into Nigeria, and therefore was unable to avail himself of Charles Lord's offer.

The Colonial Officer in a letter to Governor Frederick Lugard, asked him to state clearly what he could do to foster the efforts of the BCGA in the development of the cotton industry. In reply, Lugard stated that all civil administrative officers would be (and indeed had been) instructed to do their utmost to promote the industry by every possible means. He further stated that his administration would be prepared to carry cotton free in its ships for the BCGA.[17] In view of this, the Colonial Office directed the Northern Nigeria Government to provide, as far as possible, free transport for baled cotton and cotton seed or other by-products, which were to be brought down by river from Lokoja.

As part of the aid to the BCGA, the Colonial Office provided free passage for some of the Association's personnel. The Association's manager was allowed to travel free of charge between Lokoja, Ilushi and Onitsha, when there was room for him on the government steamers. In the case of other persons, including the manager when travelling between other places than those mentioned, free passage was given up to the sum of £50 per annum.18 Earlier, the Colonial Office had provided that District Commissioners and other government officials should be instructed to assist, as far as possible, in the distribution of cotton seed among the farmers, and to encourage them to take up cotton cultivation. It further provided that experimental cotton plantations should, if possible, be established by some commissioners for purposes of experiments on different cotton species.

The free transport arrangement was made for only three years, beginning from 1st January 1906. The Colonial Office had to specify the period because the Colonial Secretary of State, Mr. Lyttelton, had made it clear that it would be inadvisable to make an indefinite promise of free transport:

> Mr. Lyttelton does not think it desirable to give indefinite promises of free transport which tend ... to impose an undue burden upon the Government, for which it receives no credit, and are liable sometimes to be abused.[19]

The BCGA requested the Colonial Officer for an annual grant of £1,000 for

a period of three years, from the Northern Nigeria Government revenue, for purposes of experimental and educational work on cotton in the territory. The Association stated that if the request was granted, it would be prepared to vote an equal sum of money annually to give a total of £2,000 a year to be spent on experimental work. It stated that the various kinds of cotton grown were mixed together, and that the quality of the cotton was low and the staple short, rough and badly coloured, with the result that it was not easily saleable in Lancashire. It therefore argued that it was essential that every effort should be made through proper seed selection to improve the staple and the quality of the cotton. Moreover, such improvement would result in a higher price which would be of advantage to the Nigerian farmers.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Elgin, was optimistic about the prospects of cotton growing in Northern Nigeria. He therefore recommended the Association's request to the Treasury for approval. In making the recommendation, an official of the Colonial Office, on behalf of Lord Elgin, referred to the bright prospects of cotton growing in Northern Nigeria and fully spelt out the objectives for the grant:

> There appears to be a reasonable assurance that the cotton growing industry is capable of assuming large proportions in Northern Nigeria, and of providing a considerable part of the population of that Protectorate with a remunerative staple industry productive of trade and public revenue. The best means of fostering the industry is in Lord Elgin's opinion to conduct experiments with a view to ascertaining what methods of cultivation yield the best results, and to endeavour by instruction and example, to induce the natives to undertake the cultivation of cotton on the lines that are found to be most suitable. He is therefore of opinion that the request made by the Association is a reasonable one and that it is in the interest of the Government to co-operate with the Association in the experimental work which they are proposing to undertake.[20]

The Treasury approved the grant for three years, beginning from 1st April 1907. However, the Colonial Office laid down certain conditions to be satisfied before giving the grant. Firstly, the Association had to honour its

undertakings to spend an equal amount of money from its own funds on the project. Secondly, the term "experimental work" was not to be limited to experiments on plantations, but should include the supply of seed to the farmers, and instruction to them on the proper methods for growing the seed. Thirdly, the Protectorate Government was at liberty to terminate the grant before the end of the three years, if the Government saw any reason to be dissatisfied with the method of its application. Fourthly, reports should be made at regular intervals to the Government on the progress made and the result obtained. The conditions were acceptable to the BCGA.

BCGA - Niger-Company's Struggle to Control Northern Nigeria Cotton

Long before the emergence of the BCGA in Northern Nigeria, the British Niger Company had existed in the territory with a monopoly in the purchase of local produce for export. Consequently, both the BCGA and the Niger Company had to struggle for the control of the commercial side of the cotton enterprise.

As the principal actor in the Northern Nigeria cotton industry, the BCGA had wanted to manage the enterprise in close co-operation with the Northern Nigeria Government. Consequently, it put forward a proposal for co-operating with that Government in the enterprise. According to the proposal, the Association was prepared to vote the sum of £1,000 for a year for the payment of the salary of a cotton expert and that of an engineer to take charge of ginning operations in the territory. The Association also was willing to provide a suitable ginning plant at a cost of about £500, to be installed at Lokoja. As part of the proposal, the Northern Nigeria Government would buy seed cotton on the Association's behalf and bear all expenses in connection with the buying and transportation of the cotton to the ginnery, and from thence to the steamer. All the Association had to do would be to pay the Government at 1/4 d per lb. for the cotton; 5/8 d going to the farmer for his crop and 1/8 d being retained by the Government, the agreement would be for a year or two, after which the BCGA would take over the management from the Government.[21]

The Colonial Office found the proposal acceptable as it promised a

good start for the Northern Nigerian cotton venture. It however, doubted whether the farmers would willingly grow cotton at the price of 5/8 d per lb., and was equally doubtful whether 1/8 d was sufficient for the Government to cover its transport costs. Nevertheless, it accepted the proposal on the ground that if insufficient, the Administration should not grudge to spend a little for the promotion of the industry.

Sir Frederick Lugard, the High Commissioner, accepted the Association's proposal but stated that the cost of handling, ginning, baling, transport to Burutu, and shipment of cotton to Liverpool, should be a charge on the profit made after the cotton was sold in Liverpool. Lugard made this point because he feared that the 1/8 d per lb. left to the government would be insufficient to cover all the transport costs which he felt should be charged on the profit of the enterprise. He maintained too that the Association should undertake to render to his Government returns showing the profits realised on each shipment in order that the Government might be able to gauge the prospects of the industry. If the industry showed a profit, the profit, should be ploughed back into the industry for a period of five years for the promotion of the enterprise. If after five years the industry had developed into a profitable business, the Association and the Government could decide to hand the management of the business to a third party since both the Association and the Government would have achieved their objective which was to secure a sizable output of cotton for export from Northern Nigeria, thereby establishing an industry that would help in the development of the territory.

In reply, the Association accepted Lugard's proposal, and to further win the confidence of the Government, it stated that the Association would be willing to share the profit, if any, with the government. However, the Association was of the view that the business should not be handed over to a third party if it was felt that such management might jeopardise the development of the business. The business could then continue to be run jointly by Government and the Association or with the help of a third party if desirable.

The Government had accepted to operate the cotton enterprise on a partnership basis with the Association, and had agreed to do the buying and

collection of cotton. However, it was discovered that owing to its political and administrative commitments, the Government would be unable to perform the functions effectively. As there was no machinery for the performance of these functions vital to the success of the cotton enterprise, and as the Government was desirous to ensure that positive action was taken in the matter, Lugard called on the Association to accept to do so or allow his government to bring in the Niger company.

He spelt out for the Association what his Government could do: distribute seed, encourage production by means of the administrative staff and offer limited transport facility. At a meeting of the officers of the BCGA and the Colonial Office officials, at the Colonial Office, Lugard again harped on what his Government could do and what it could not. In view of this, it was agreed at the meeting that the Northern Nigeria Government was unable to carry out the proposed scheme in its entirety.[22]

While the Association was busy negotiating with the Government, the Government's rival, the Niger Company, was also negotiating with the Government, to exclude the Association from any co-operation with the Government. To secure the co-operation of the Government, the Niger Company had requested the Government to join it in the purchase of a ginning plant costing about £500, for establishment in Northern Nigeria to facilitate the processing of cotton in the territory. The company promised that if the proposal was accepted, it would be prepared to buy seed cotton at 1/4 d per lb. for about five years. The Company stated that if the Government agreed to co-operate in buying the ginning machine, the money advanced to the Company by the Government for buying the plant would be regarded as a loan payable within the period of five years, during which the Company undertook to buy cotton at 1/4 d per lb. The Colonial Office which favoured co-operation with the BCGA, informed the Company that it was the policy of the Administration that the Niger Company should not compete with the BCGA in cotton buying in Northern Nigeria.[23] Thus, instead of discouraging monopolistic practices indulged in by the Niger Company, and urging that free competition should exist in the territory, the Colonial Office was inclined to perpetuate monopolistic practices by conferring on the Association monopoly power over the

purchase of cotton in Northern Nigeria.

The attitude of the Colonial Office did not seem to have discouraged the Niger Company which renewed its efforts to get the government to co-operate with it in the venture. In a memo to the colonial office in August 1905, the Company which had now acquired a ginning plant, wished to co-operate with the government during an experimental period of three years. It undertook to establish its ginnery at a station between Lokoja and Jebba, probably at Egga, and to buy all the seed cotton available at 1/2 d per lb. It promised to press and bale the cotton for export, and to afford the government all information regarding the progress and development of the industry, the profit and loss accruing to the enterprise during the experimental period, which would commence from 1st January 1906. The company proposed that the Northern Nigeria Government should give the company a hearty co-operation by assisting it in every way possible, such as instructing the farmers on the best methods for growing cotton. During the three years' experiment, the Government would be expected to provide free transport for 100 tons of lint per annum from the ginnery to Burutu in Southern Nigeria.

The Company undertook to share with the Government any profit realised during the period, and the Government would be at liberty to withdraw the free transport facility if the Company failed to share the profit with the Government. The Company also stated that the government should be prepared, without giving any definite pledge, to favourably consider any application from the Company for free transport in government vessel of seed cotton from ports between Lokoja and Jebba, to its ginnery, provided circumstances permitted. The Company further stated that should the venture be a failure during the period of three years, or should the 3/4 d per lb. of seed cotton, be considered insufficient, the Company should be at liberty to terminate the arrangement forthwith, but that the Company would be prepared to negotiate with the government, the desirability of increasing the price.[24]

The BCGA rejected the idea of letting the Niger Company manage cotton ginning in Northern Nigeria, and stated that the Association was determined to commence operations in the territory without reference to the

Company.

While each of the concerns, the BCGA and the Niger Company was engaged in winning the co-operation of the government to the exclusion of the other, both of them were engaged in negotiating terms on which they could co-operate to manage the enterprise, should the attempt to win over the government fail. The Niger Company had established a strong monopoly over the buying of produce in Northern Nigeria. It had set up in the territory a number of stations where it bought local produce for export and in turn sold imported goods to the local population. It was felt that with its established machinery and experience in the territory, the Company could handle the local buying of cotton more effectively and economically. Hence, the Association eventually thought it necessary in the interest of its Northern Nigeria cotton venture, to enlist the Company's co-operation. To achieve this, it requested the Company to accept the responsibility for buying, ware-housing, packing and transporting of cotton to the Association's ginneries. It was also proposed that the company should share with the Association, any profit or loss arising from the transactions. Under the proposal, the Association would retain the monopoly of ginning the cotton, and therefore of establishing ginneries in the territory. The Association recognised that it was of paramount importance that it should control the ginning operations so as to be able to control effectively the seed supply for cultivation. If accepted, the arrangement would last for a period of three years, after which it could be renewed or terminated. Willing to co-operate with the Association, the Niger Company accepted the proposal.[25]

One important question remained to be settled before the partnership could be operational. The question was related to the price which the Association should pay to the Company per lb. of seed cotton to cover the Company's commission and the price per lb. payable to the cotton producers. The price question was exhaustively discussed, but no agreement could be reached on the matter. The BCGA appeared to be the stumbling block. According to Lugard, the Association could not offer a price at which the Company could buy cotton without a loss to itself. The price of 1d per lb regarded as acceptable, and which the Company had

guaranteed to the producers for a period of three years, was rejected by the Association. To break the deadlock, the Company proposed that it should take over the whole of the work - buying, ginning and shipment - while the Association would deal with the cotton only on arrival in Liverpool, and share with the Company the profit or loss arising from the business. Sir Ralph Moor, former High Commissioner of Southern Nigeria, and now retained by the company as a consultant, supported the Company's proposal, arguing that the ginning could be more cheaply done by the company than by the Association, since the former had staff on the spot and had the command of labour and material for the erection of buildings.[26]

The matter, at last, seemed satisfactorily settled, when all of a sudden, the Association wrote declining to proceed further unless it did the ginning. The Niger Company maintained that it would not bear part of the loss if the Association insisted on doing the ginning. The Association refused to budge and so the whole negotiation fell through.[27]

However, owing to the inability of the government to co-operate with the BCGA, the Association was compelled to renew negotiations with the Niger Company and removed the offending clause. With that, the Niger Company accepted the proposal. The period during which the Niger Company would co-operate with the BCGA in buying cotton for the Association was three years, commencing from January first, 1906. The price to be charged the Association was the actual price of the cotton plus five per cent of the price to cover contingencies.[28] The actual price approved to be paid to the cotton producers was 3/4 d per lb. The Association took over, at cost price, the ginning plant which the Niger Company had already purchased. There was no insistence by the Niger Company on the profit sharing arrangement. The BCGA was satisfied with its monopolistic control over cotton in Northern Nigeria.

Inducing Northern Nigerians to Produce Cotton

For the promotion of cotton growing in Northern Nigeria, the government, as we have seen, made use of political officers - Residents and Commissioners, who worked through the chiefs and headmen to induce the peasants to embark on cotton cultivation on a considerable scale.

Commenting in 1908 on the role of the chiefs and headmen regarding the extension of cotton growing in the territory, the BCGA's Northern Nigeria Agent, J. Percival wrote:

> An important factor to rapidly increasing the area under cotton in Zaria and Kano Emirates is the fact that in all villages and towns, there is a headman or chief who exclusively devotes his time and energies to cotton growing, marketing, etc. These men have a considerable influence with farmers and traders and probably through them we shall be able to obtain more rapid progress.[29]

In promoting the production of cotton in the territory, both the BCGA and the Colonial Administration had encouraged the distribution of the seed of the best American cotton varieties to farmers. It was believed that by growing the best American cotton varieties in the territory, Lancashire would be in a position to secure the long staple species from Northern Nigeria. However, the results obtained from the cultivation of American cotton seed in the territory were discouraging. Commenting on this, G.C. Dudgeon, an experienced tropical agriculturist, stated that the American varieties, unlike the indigenous ones, were unsuited to the climate and were susceptible to various fungoid diseases. Consequently, their yield was low. Moreover, the local farmers mixed the long staple lint from the species with the short staple lint of the local variety, thus producing a low grade lint not wanted in Lancashire. He pointed out that the local variety, particularly the species from Bassa area of Northern Nigeria, produced good quality lint much better than the short staple American variety, the Middling American, used in the Lancashire cotton industry. Dudgeon's opinion was confirmed by the Northern Nigerian Government which blamed the American cotton experts imported to Northern Nigeria for encouraging the growing of exotic cotton to the exclusion of the indigenous variety. Dudgeon was of the view that the growing of the Bassa variety should be encouraged:

> If it be the object of the Association to increase cotton growing as a native industry, their operations, I am convinced, should be directed towards the improvement by selection of the best native varieties and the exclusion of the exotic ones.[30]

According to European market valuation, the Bassa cotton fetched higher prices in Lancashire than the Middling American. The BCGA accepted Dudgeon's suggestion to propagate the seed of the indigenous cotton variety. Consequently, the seed of this variety was distributed to farmers.[31]

To ensure the quality and quantity of cotton produced, J. Percival suggested to the Association to expand cotton growing in the territory by establishing large cotton plantations to be managed by the Association. The Colonial Office rejected the suggestion on the ground that the best means to produce cotton in West Africa for export to Britain was to encourage the local farmers to grow cotton as an indigenous industry.

Instead of establishing large plantations managed by Europeans, the earlier policy of establishing small experimental plantations, was re-emphasised. It is interesting to note that such a plantation was established at Lokoja. Others were established in Zaria, Zungeru, Minna, Bida, Ilorin, Pategi, Kabba, Koffi and Ibi. The experimental plantations proved useful in providing information that helped to improve the quality of cotton. Moreover, the labourers trained at the plantations helped to promote cotton growing in the territory. Many of them who were trained in the plantations returned to their villages in the surrounding provinces to settle as cotton farmers, and to recommend cotton growing to their neighbours.

When railways were built, farmers were encouraged to make their farms near rail-roads. The ginneries for processing the cotton seed were also erected at convenient communication centres. By 1909, such ginneries was established in Zaria which was regarded as the centre of the BCGA's cotton enterprise in Northern Nigeria.

It is interesting to note that in order to expand the cotton enterprise in Northern Nigeria, efforts were made to induce the Colonial Office to take positive steps to ensure that railway construction in the territory was speedily executed. To achieve this objective, a powerful delegation representing various opinions in Lancashire, lobbied Lord Elgin's Government in 1906, emphasising the urgent need to tap the cotton resources of Northern Nigeria by means of the railway. The Government

warmly received the delegation and gave an undertaking to speed up railway construction in Northern Nigeria to facilitate the growing of cotton for export. Thus, the desire to increase cotton production for export, was a strong factor in the opening up of Northern Nigeria.

More Government Participation in the Cotton Enterprise

So far the Colonial Administration had tried to promote the work of the BCGA in Northern Nigeria by such means as free freight, communication development and minor grants. Although the BCGA appreciated the various forms of assistance given, it felt that the Administration could do more to promote its cotton venture in the territory. Consequently, the BCGA in a memorandum put forward in 1909, solicited more assistance from the Administration. It called upon the Colonial Office to authorise the Northern Nigeria Government to take over and maintain, all the BCGA's scientific, agricultural and investigation work on cotton in the territory. The work included experiments with different varieties of cotton, experiments in hybridization, crop rotation, experiments with fertilisers, seed raising and selection, and distribution to farmers, travelling round the territory to ascertain the best areas for cotton growing, and the giving of advice and suggestions to farmers on the best methods of growing cotton. For its part the BCGA agreed to maintain the Association's buying and ginning centres in the territory, and requested the Colonial Office to grant it a sum of £10,000 a year from the Imperial Funds for five years to enable it perform this function. The Association had in effect, requested the government to take over completely, the responsibility of managing and supervising cotton production, and to allow it to concentrate on the commercial side of the cotton enterprise in the territory.

The Colonial Office sanctioned the BCGA's proposal and the Imperial Treasure approved the £10,000 grant on condition that the BCGA should not receive any financial assistance from any Exchequer-aided Colony or Protectorate. The Treasury, however, reduced the period of the grant to three years and stipulated that, under the terms of the grant, the Association should provide cotton seed free of charge to the farmers.

Cotton Export Statistics From Northern Nigeria, 1902-1913

We may now have a look at the statistics of cotton exported from Northern Nigeria during the period covered by this study.33 A bale of cotton weighed 400 lbs:

Year	Bales
1902	50
1903	10
1904	500
1905	1,000
1906	1,500
1907	500
1908	500
1909	400
1910	400
1911	600
1912	2,600
1913	2,000

The statistics shows that cotton export from Nigeria was disappointing, and that contrary to "expert" opinion, Northern Nigeria failed to become a second Texas. It is necessary to consider the various factors responsible for the poor cotton export from Northern Nigeria. One important factor was competition. As already noted, Northern Nigeria was skilled in the manufacture of cotton cloths of very high quality. The locally manufactured cloths were superior to and much more durable than those imported from Lancashire. According to E.D. Morel, the local population preferred the locally manufactured cloths to the imported materials from Lancashire which were said to be "too thin and so heavily starched that on the first washing, they became threadbare and useless".34 Consequently, most of the raw cotton produced in the territory was consumed by the local cloth industry to meet the high demand. Furthermore, the local manufacturers who bought up the raw cotton, paid higher prices to the producers than the agents of the BCGA. They paid from 1d to 3d per lb of raw cotton, whereas the BCGA's agents paid only 1/4 d per lb. Thus the BCGA was unable to compete with the local industry, which owing to the superiority of its products, had the patronage of the local population.

Another factor responsible for the low export was the fact that the Niger Company which enjoyed the monopoly of buying cotton for the BCGA in Northern Nigeria, paid for the cotton it bought, not in cash but in kind, i.e., by barter, contrary to an undertaking it made to the BCGA that it should pay cash for the cotton it purchased.[35] In many cases, the farmers wanted neither the salt nor the cotton goods they were compelled to accept by the Niger Company. Moreover, the prices at which the trade goods were valued for barter purposes, were ridiculously low. Owing to the low prices offered for cotton, the people were not too eager to embark on the growing

of cotton for export. To encourage the farmers to grow cotton for export, and to enable the BCGA's agents to compete favourably with the local cloth manufacturers, the Colonial Administration strongly recommended to the BCGA to ensure that the price offered for cotton by its agent was raised to one penny per lb., and that this should always be paid in cash, not in kind.

It is interesting to note that Frederick Lugard, as Governor of Northern Nigeria, was worried over the inability of the Lancashire cotton industry to compete effectively against the local industry. To make the Lancashire materials more competitive and to depress the local industry, Lugard imposed caravan tolls on locally manufactured cloths. The objective was to make the locally manufactured cloths more expensive than the imported ones. If the price of the local products was too high, there would be little or no market for them, and the manufacturers would give up the industry.36 As the statistics shows, Lugard's policy did not seem to have produced the desired result before it was reversed in 1907 by Acting Governor Wallace who favoured a free trade policy advocated by the British Government.

Conclusion

It may be said that the cotton export statistics clearly shows that during the period under review, the BCGA's efforts in Northern Nigeria to encourage the export of cotton from the territory, were utterly disappointing. The disappointment was largely the result of the superiority of the products of the indigenous cotton manufacturing industry over the Lancashire cotton manufactures which were unable to compete successfully against the locally manufactured cotton products. This shows that in Nigeria during the early colonial period, the Nigerian cotton manufacturing industry more than hold its own against the Lancashire textile industry despite its advantage of more advanced technology.

Notes

1. W. Wallace to CO (Colonial Office), 20 July 1905, CO446/45/29920. N.M. Penzer, Cotton in British West Africa (London, 1911), p.8.

2. E.D. Morel, "The Empire Cotton Supply", West African Mail, 3 April 1903. Ibid., 10 April, 1903.

3. Encl. in Lugard to CO, 30 December 1902. CO446/26/4419.

4. Encl. in Lugard to CO, 30 December 1902. CO446/26/4419.

5. Elder Dempster to Lugard, Encl. in Lugard to CO, 30 December 1902, CO446/26/4419. It was reported by the Director of Kew Gardens that the seed of long staple cotton from Egypt was distributed in 1890 to various British West African Colonies including Gambia, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast (now Ghana) and Lagos Colony and Protectorate. Kew Gardens to CO, 24 May 1901. Encl. in Lugard to CO, 30 December 1902, CO446/2/4419.

6. Encl. in Lugard to CO, 30 December 1902. CO446/26/4419.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. CO minutes, 9 February 1902, Ibid. The Salary of the expert was paid by the Northern Nigeria Government. BCGA to CO, 24 February 1903, CO446/35/7423.

10. CO to BCGA, 16 February 1903, CO446/26/4419.

11. CO to Lugard, 11 October 1904, CO446/42/33914.

12. CO minutes, 6 October 1904, CO446/39/26557.

13. BCGA to CO, 3 January 1905, CO446/49/313.

14. Encl. in Wallace to CO, 20 July 1905, CO446/45/29920.

15. Charles Lord to CO, 23 October 1903, CO446/40817.

16. Allan McPhee, The Economic Revolution in West Africa (Frank Cass, 1971) 2nd ed. p. 46.

17. Lugard to CO, 3 January 1905, Ibid.

18. CO to BCGA, 29 October 1905, CO879/84/745/127.

19. CO to Lugard, 1 November 1905, CO879/84/745/123.

20. CO to Treasury, 15 November 1906, CO879/92/835/30.
150 E.O. Egboh

21. BCGA to CO, 13 March 1905, CO446/49/8303.

22. CO Minutes, 9 September 1905, CO446/49/32728.

23. Co to Wallace, 19 May 1905, Ibid.

24. Niger Company to CO, 25 August 1905, Encl. in Lugard to CO, 29 August 1905, CO446/50/31396.

25. Lugard to CO, 22 August 1905, CO446/49/32738.

26. Cited in Lugard to BCGA, 22 August 1905, Ibid.

27. Lugard to BCGA, 22 August 1905, Encl. in Niger Company to CO, 11 September 1905, CO446/49/32728.

28. Niger Company to BCGA, 9/9.05, Encl. in Niger Company to CO, 11 September 1905, CO446/49/32728.

29. Percival's Report, Encl. in BCGA to CO, 23 April 1908. CO446/79/14356.

30. G.C. Dudgeon to CO. 20 September 1906, CO446/59/34948.

31. M. Penxer, Cotton in British West Africa, p. 11.

32. Memo on the Northern Nigeria Railway Construction, 12 July 1907, CO446/69/29405. See also Donald Hyam, Elgin and Churchill at the Colonial Office, 1905-1908 (London, 1968), pp. 451-453.

33. P.H. Lamb, "Past, Present and Future of Cotton Growing in Nigeria". Empire Cotton Review, Vol.11 (1925), p. 185.

34. E.D. Morrel, "West African Cotton, IV. Northern Nigeria". Manchester Guardian, 11 August 1911.

35. H. Bell to CO, 28 September 1910, CO446/92/35585.

36. Marian Johnson, "Cotton Imperialism in West Africa", African Affairs (London), vol. 73, No. 291 (1974), pp. 182-184.
NSUKKA JOURNAL OF HISTORY, NO. 1, DEC. 1989