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## Accumulation and Dispossession: Cocoa Production, Rural Development and the Structural Adjustment Programme in Southwest Nigeria, 1986 – 1996

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### Abstract

*The production and sales of cocoa were critical factors in rural development in colonial southwest Nigeria. Although abundant literature exists on the contributions of cocoa to economic development in southwest Nigeria, the impact of cocoa production on rural social relations, and community development in southwest Nigeria during the period of the structural adjustment programme is yet to be fully explored. This paper, therefore, examined the relationship between cocoa production and rural development in southwest Nigeria with a view to mapping out the transformation that occurred in the postcolonial rural social formations. The data comes from Idanre, the largest cocoa producing town in southwest, Nigeria. Primary and secondary sources were used. These included oral interviews, which were conducted with informants purposively selected due to their knowledge of cocoa production and community development in Idanre. Following economic liberalization and abolition of the Cocoa Marketing Board in 1986, Idanre witnessed urban-rural migration, as many indigenes and migrants outside the community returned to cocoa farming. These returnees competed for scarce resources with the local population and at the same time, facilitated the introduction of innovation, both capital investments, technological and modern socio-cultural traits. SAP also encouraged many non-cocoa producing families to invest in the cocoa business and they made a fortune through which they contributed to the transformation of both their livelihoods and the community.*

**Keywords:** Cocoa Production, Rural Development, Social Relations, Farm Settlement, Idanre, Southwest Nigeria.

### Introduction

This study is an investigation of the impact of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) on the Idanre people of Ondo State between 1986 and 1996. SAP is basically an economic policy that was once instituted by the Nigerian government to stabilize major sectors of the Nigerian economy and assuage the sufferings of Nigerians. Cocoa cultivation brought social and economic changes to Idanre during the colonial period, though colonial economic policies had exploitative effects on the cocoa farmers and the environment. The narratives, however, changed in the 1950s and 1960, as many self-help projects were intensified with the construction of schools, community centres, roads, health centres and other social amenities by members of the Idanre community. Therefore, the 1960s were a remarkable decade for the Idanre cocoa farmers.

At independence, the town had emerged as the leading cocoa-producing town in southwestern Nigeria. Government's agricultural policies, including several political crises in the 1960s had great impact on the Idanre cocoa farmers and community. Cocoa producers in the community experienced significant socio-economic mobility. This was, partly due to the development and expansion of new plantations by many young indigenes and migrants in the town. Table 1.0 shows the effects of this development on the output of Idanre cocoa farms between 1960 and 1968. Through a number of agencies such as the local and corporate banking institutions, rural money lenders, local buying agents and the cooperative societies, many farmers in the town were able to expand their farms by employing several migrant caretakers, sharecroppers and labourers. This increased the people's earnings,<sup>1</sup> caused remarkable changes in livelihoods, which transcended to local markets and aided community development.<sup>2</sup> From the 1970s to 1986, the effects of the Nigerian civil war, inefficient policies of the Cocoa Marketing Board, the oil boom, and macroeconomic problems in Nigeria altered labour relations and rural income in Idanre.

**Table 1.0:** Cocoa Grading from some Areas in the Present-Day Ondo State (1960-1988) '000 tonnes

Towns	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968

Akure	4,732	6,762	7,671	7,276	5,498	5,964	5,078	5,729	6,040
Idanre	9,298	15,192	15,096	17,435	14,754	11,690	10,114	13,666	11,320
Ekiti south	5,599	8,772	7,837	6,744	6,058	6,618	5,798	5,018	6,203
Ekiti S.W	3,480	2,308	2,412	1,785	2,394	1,588	1,628	2,162	2,340
Owo	7,192	12,88	14,093	8,900	9,759	10,528	6,218	6,177	5,202
Akoko N	2,193	3,459	3,341	2,257	2,568	1,841	1,985	1,522	2,302
Akoko S	602	937	1,122	740	753	628	628	482	980
Ekiti C	1,022	2,086	1,999	1,749	2,000	1,789	1,743	1,865	1,023
Ekiti W	926	1,349	1,331	892	1,441	927	1,133	855	-----
Ijero	1,195	2,062	1,891	1,129	1,760	1,164	1,329	1,145	1,204
Ero	133	287	198	88	167	69	30	60	80
Ekiti N	1,245	2,089	1,297	1,485	1,554	957	985	1,004	1,034
Ekiti E	1,897	3,524	3,331	3,222	3,391	3,436	3,928	3,305	2,230
Ondo	10,179	16,353	14,836	11,343	15,756	10,682	6,834	10,224	-----
Ifesowapo	9,050	18,021	15,691	11,641	21,247	12,165	9,602	7,320	-----
Ikale	47	96	70	33	126	62	22	120	-----
Ilafe Ede Odo	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

**Source:** calculated from: i). *CBN*, Research Department Annual Records, 19. MANR, Akure; ii). *Cocoa Statistics by Gill and Dufflis Market Report* Jan. 1977; Bola Akanji, "Cocoa Production under Nigeria's Structural Adjustment Programme," *NISER Monograph Series* No 1, 1992, p. 49.

The macroeconomic crisis in the 1980s in Nigeria reinforced the need to adopt the Structural Adjustment Programme.<sup>3</sup> The IMF's indicator of dollar prices of basic commodities, which dropped by 32% owing to recession and appreciation of the dollar, awful rise in interest rates of accumulated debt, coupled with a fall in petroleum prices, made liberalization inevitable.<sup>4</sup> With regard to the agricultural sector, the effects of the neglect of farm labour due to 'white-collar jobs' during the oil boom, especially in the cocoa belt, increased expenditures on food imports. The neoliberal institutions therefore, conceived that liberalizing the cocoa market would:

- (a) Increase producer's share of the FOB (Free on Board) price received in the export of cocoa, through a diminution of export taxes levied on cocoa farmers
- (b) Align producers' cost of production and marketing with world prices, in order to mend rural earnings.
- (c) Promote the development of modern agribusiness industries, through increased private sector involvement and local entrepreneurship.<sup>5</sup>

With the policy of economic liberalization and abolition of the Cocoa Marketing Board in 1986, the community began to witness unbridled accumulation, social mobility and uneven development. A new form of dispossession and exploitation began to rear its head in Idanre society. The individualism inherent in the economic structures gave rise to greed. In this regard, the burgeoning peasant class often brought complaints of exploitation against the merchant producers. Rich produce farmers and buyers usurped farms belonging to their poorer neighbours, which made quarrels and litigations over land ownership and cocoa farms quite frequent. This type of exploitation increased the number of peasant farmers who steadily lost their livelihoods in the 1990s. But the general prosperity of the capitalist farmers and merchant, besides taking undue advantage of the peasants may be partly traced to favourable conditions thus created by the liberalization of the commodity produce trade in 1986.

Nevertheless, cocoa production and sales continued to shape social relations, and community development. Associated with the flourishing of the general rural economy in the town was the proliferation of local markets and the establishment of market days at intervals. There was a network of roads which linked the major towns such as Atoshin, Alade and Odode to adjoining farmsteads and villages, and thus promoted trade

in consumable goods. Many of these amenities were constructed through local self-helps, mostly collective efforts of the rich cocoa merchants and buyers.

This aspect of the history of the cocoa economy in southwest Nigeria as it relates to rural development in Idanre is yet to be fully explored. To be sure, existing scholarship on cocoa farming in Nigeria has overlooked Idanre within the context of cocoa production and rural development. There has been an avalanche of studies on world cocoa economy as well as West African cocoa industry, with the palpable omission of the changes and development that occurred in different social formations. These existing works attach much importance to the effect of cocoa exports to national macro-economic performance, and global cocoa supply chain.

Foundational works beginning from the 1950s and 1960s have indeed engaged the contribution of the cash crop to colonial economy and development of capitalism and entrepreneurship in Nigeria. For example, J.A. Ayorinde, Poly Hill and Sara Berry focused on the relationship between cocoa and capital formation in cocoa producing villages in Nigeria; and in Ghana, Ezekiel Walker, Famoriyo and P.C. Lloyd examined land tenure and labour relations. Gavin Williams and Gavin Kitchen, and Gareth Austin dealt with rural social structure and relations of production while Akin Olurunfemi, O.C. Adesina, Ayodeji Olukoju, H.A. Oluwasanmi, E.K. Faluyi and A. Ahazuen look at the nature of agricultural exploitation under colonial capitalism and post-colonial era with an eye on national capital and international flow of capital. Most recent works, like Saheed Aderinto focus on conflict, while O. G. Muojama deals with the international economy during the period of the great depression.<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly, Sara Berry, the foremost authority on cocoa cultivation, related the economies of cocoa within the wider economy and pegged her data against micro theories of peasant economies penetrated by capitalism. She tells the story of the spread of cocoa production as a process of capital formation involving the creation of a novel rural export sector through migration, risk and investment in land.<sup>7</sup> In a recent study, "Nigeria Cocoa Industry and the International Economy in the 1930s: A World-Systems Approach", Olisa Moujama uses the Nigerian cocoa commodity export trade to identify the nexus between the Global Great Depression and the third world economies during the 1930s and how the colonial states in Africa were affected, through their integration into the orbit of global capitalism. Using a wide range of primary sources, including archival materials and oral interviews, Muojama maps out contentions, resistance, and adaptation to the global politics of trade across multiple strata of the society.<sup>8</sup> He examines the ways in which the Great Depression of the 1930s fuelled fluctuations in producers' incomes and fall in their purchasing power, rise in prices of imported goods, wages, and cost of living, increase in tax regime both on the cocoa trees and on cocoa export duties and in the end, how the cocoa pool between 1937 and 1938 shaped the course of cocoa export in post-Great Depression era in Nigeria.<sup>9</sup>

However, Moujama did not examine specifically, the socio-economic experiences or reactions, such resistance or adaptation of any particular cocoa farming community and the ways in which the Great Depression affected their livelihoods, consumption pattern, and status and community development. Realistically, societies, may have a homogenous socio-economic characteristic, in terms of mode of production, occupational structure, social organization, culture etc., but historical experiences that underlie the appropriation of economic surplus differ from one society to another. Olisa Moujama, Sara Berry and other experts on cocoa omitted a significant episode, which is the post structural adjustment period, especially, the extent to which agricultural development and opportunities in cocoa farming reconfigured rural economies, reinforced socio-economic changes and affected the livelihoods of producers and societal development in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Truly, if cocoa politics fractured the pattern of relations between Nigerian cocoa farmers and the British, exposing the vulnerability of imperial economy in the first half of the twentieth century,<sup>10</sup> the production and sales of the export commodity crop, also changed the pattern of accumulation and aided farmers in southwest Nigeria to re-establish new patterns of communal interactions and productive capacities in the 1980s and 1990s. Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between the commodity produce trade and rural development in Nigeria, it is imperative to focus on the experiences of the Idanre, the largest cocoa-producing social formation in Nigeria. The study examines the impact of cocoa production on livelihood, consumption, social relations and economic development in Idanre society. The paper is segmented into six sections, namely, the introduction, rural development, SAP in

Nigeria's economic space, social relations and development in Idanre under SAP modernity, dispossessions and development in Idanre, and the conclusion.

### **Conceptualising Rural Development**

Rural development is a nebulous concept, given that there are a large variety of rural development approaches and parameters used globally. The concept of rural development has undergone a drastic change since the 1950s,<sup>11</sup> because of the changes in global production, environment, migration, industrialization and increased urbanization. These have consciously changed the ontological character of rural development and rural areas.<sup>12</sup> Rural development now means a lot of things to different people, depending on their discipline or area of specialization.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, there is need for conceptual clarifications on rural development. The word "rural", according to C.I. Imhabekhai, is used to refer to a society characterized by a dense population size, subsistence economy, deplorable habitation pattern, poverty situation, archaic physical features, poor infrastructure or amenities and low social control measures.<sup>14</sup>

Globally, rural agriculture has been a most useful tool in explaining rural development; especially in terms of the changes and transformation taking place in different societies. U.M. Igbozurike theorized rural development as a normative concept, which implies positive growth or change that touches on both the rural and urban sectors.<sup>15</sup> The World Bank described the concept as a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people—the rural poor.<sup>16</sup> Jacob Voh defined it as a process of extending the benefits of development to those whose future lies in the pursuit of a livelihood in rural areas. These rural dwellers, to him, include small scale farmers, tenants, landless persons and women. The crux of Voh's exposition is about freeing the rural man from poverty, encouraging participation in community progress and developing self-reliance as the expression of man's faith in his own abilities.<sup>17</sup>

To Raymond Penn, rural development is the improvement of the situation of low-income families to secure agriculture—non-farm employment opportunities, high level income stability and purchasing power.<sup>18</sup> Using illustrations from Botswana, P.V. Rensberg explains rural development as an essential complement to modernized development---through provision of food and raw materials, marginal increase in rural employment, which will create demand for industrial products to stimulate economic growth. Categorically, rural development is also about sustaining rural livelihood.<sup>19</sup> Usually, at a community level, asserted E.M. Kulp, the basic development of agriculture to high value diversification, is the central meaning of rural development. As far as he was concerned, this includes the availability of various kinds of facilities such as roads and market and cooperative network essential to support the state of agriculture.<sup>20</sup> The provision of public facilities--healthcare, education, food and nutrition, good working conditions and a chance to share in the distribution of all aspects of well-being-- in F.C. Okafor's discourse, is the major indicator of rural development.<sup>21</sup>

F.S. Idachaba ardently believes that rural income distribution, and increasing farm productivity of the rural poor, are significant indices of rural development. Idachaba divided the components of rural development into three categories. These include: physical infrastructure, social infrastructure and institutional infrastructure. The real evidence of rural development, according to him, are transportation facilities, rail, roads, bridges, ferry services, carnal, ports, footpath, storage facilities, processing facilities such as machinery, equipment, buildings, irrigation, flood control, water resources development facilities, soil conservation and rural roads.

Rural roads to Idachaba constitute the most important infrastructure in the structural transformation of Nigerian agriculture. This will ultimately ease the delivery of farm products, reduce transportation costs, enhance spatial agricultural production efficiency, and public investment in agricultural production. Moreover, rural development from Idachaba's position could also be said to have occurred when there are: cooperative societies, farmers' union, and community development projects made possible through rural self-help institutions, financial institutions (credit societies and institutional banks, post office, savings, banks among others).

The concept, according to A. Raza, A.J. Adejo, A.J. Okafor and J.O. Oyebanji, means changes in quality of rural life, stable livelihood and upward social mobility. The major evidence are community town halls, electricity, housing, markets, motorable roads, places of worship, postal and telecommunication services, public toilets, public transportation, recreational facilities, water supply, cooperative service centres, medical and health centres, police stations, social welfare centres, administrative institutions, family planning, financial/credit institutions, and public libraries.<sup>22</sup>

What more, rural development could also be a process of transforming the environment to improve socio-economic conditions of low income rural dwellers through the mobilization and rational utilization of their resources in order to enhance their capabilities to cope with the daily task and demands of modern life.<sup>23</sup> These, consequently, will improve the quality of life, the state of the environment and sustain rural livelihood.<sup>24</sup> According to the 1993 “United Nations and World Bank Development Report”, rural development encapsulates measures of per capita income and consumption, purchasing power parity, life expectancy, low crime rate, cultural values, availability of living quarters and housing and existence of useable infrastructure.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that its measures must go beyond traditional indices of gross domestic product, capital formation and others to vital indices such as basic needs of the rural farming communities, which include potable water, housing, medical facilities and so on.<sup>26</sup> Rural development, according to Carney, is when people build upon their own strength to realise their potential while, at the same time, acknowledging the effects of policies and institution on rural life.<sup>27</sup>

Given the complexity of rural development as depicted in the above exploration, the study situates the concept to explain the changing pattern of consumption, accumulation and socioeconomic wellbeing of cocoa producers, and community development in Idanre in the age of flux. It shows how the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources shaped livelihoods of people, entrepreneurship, physical infrastructure, and social infrastructure.

### **The Structural Adjustment Programme in Nigeria’s Economic Space**

The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was a ‘remedial product’ of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. It was an economic idea sold to several developing countries as a major solution to the complex economic crises faced by them in the 1970s. The programme came in form of a bailout to developing countries whose economies appeared to be shaky. To be sure, the bailout was a relief effort given by Bretton wood institutions, and aimed at rescuing the economies of poor states from chronic macro-economic crises. In the 1980s, Nigeria, like most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, saw major external shocks caused mainly by fall in oil prices in the international market, not to say anything of the global increase in interest rate and acute shortage in capital flow among most economies of the world.

This problem was mainly caused by the absence of major internal and external macroeconomic indices. At the end of the 1970s, Nigeria was confronted with the challenge of how to achieve robust and sustainable economic growth, because of economic somersault and poor handling of the crisis by government during the period of oil boom. Likewise, perennial oil price increase in 1979-1980, global recessions by 1982 and the syndrome of debt trap resulted in an unavoidable decline in trade to 12% in most countries in Africa. This situation increased Nigeria’s debt burden in the mid-1980s.

It is significant to note that Nigeria had attained enormous growth and improvement in its international trade and balance of payment which led to increase in government’s current and capital spending and eventually huge external borrowing.<sup>28</sup> To this extent, the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F) and World Bank introduced a structural adjustment programme to enable developing countries to come out of macroeconomic crisis and achieve sustainable economic growth.<sup>29</sup> The increased interest in the structural adjustment programme in Nigeria was driven by recognition of the need to tackle deep-rooted structural problems and financial instabilities and reduce the adverse effect of low foreign exchange in a complex global economic environment.<sup>30</sup>

SAP, which was adopted in Nigeria in 1986, became a child of necessity, based on the World Bank and the I.M.F.’s recommendations that structural measures would increase productivity and contribute efficiently to capital formation by reducing strains and fiscal constrictions, through the alignment of the gross savings with available resources, and provide safety nets to meet the basic needs of the ‘neglected rural people’ in addition to achieving inclusive development.<sup>31</sup> Thus, extraneous payment imbalances caused by low private market financing and debt crises lured the government, like most developing countries, to adopt the neoliberal economic adjustments and reforms.<sup>32</sup> The SAP, within the ambit of economic restructuring among other things, intended to lay a base for sustainable non-inflationary growth by achieving fiscal balance of payment viability over the short and medium term through the deregulation of export commodity price, liberalization of trade and coating of tax and other revenue to open up agricultural production, introduce effective tariff system with foreign exchange market and abolish the statutory commodity marketing boards.<sup>33</sup> In the agricultural sector, there was

strong optimism that it would promote non-oil exports such as cocoa, coffee, groundnuts, palm produce among others which were neglected during the oil boom of 1968-1977.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, the macroeconomic crisis in the 1980s in Nigeria reinforced the need to adopt the SAP.<sup>35</sup> The IMF's indicator of dollar prices of basic commodities, which dropped by 32 percent owing to recession and appreciation of the dollar, unfavourable rise in interest rate of accumulating debt, coupled with a fall in petroleum prices, made liberalization inevitable.<sup>36</sup> With regard to the agricultural sector, the effect of neglect of farm labour, due to 'white-collar jobs' during the oil boom, especially in the cocoa belt, increased expenditures on food imports. The neoliberal institutions, therefore, conceived that liberalizing the cocoa market would: (a) Increase producer's share of the FOB (Free on Board) price received in the export of cocoa, through a diminution of export taxes levied on cocoa farmers (b) Align producers' cost of production and marketing with world prices, in order to mend rural earnings (d) Promote the development of modern agribusiness industries, through increased private sector involvement and local entrepreneurship.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, the negligence of commodity board to assist farmers amid vagaries in commodity markets, justified the need for the SAPs.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, the IMF and the World Bank enforced the Washington Consensus—"One Size Fits All" on all developing countries.<sup>39</sup> Neoliberal policies were implemented between 1986 and the early 1990s to revive and promote commodity produce for export and enhance economic growth and rural development in the agrarian societies.<sup>40</sup> SAP was expected to resuscitate Nigerian agricultural productivity, achieve internal and external balances by fixing production and consumption pattern of the economy, remove producer's price tortures, and help farmers to boost profit and contribute to rural development.<sup>41</sup> Thus, mounting pressure from the World Bank and the EU in addition to the general economic hardship and labour unrest signalled the beginning of the end for the Nigerian Cocoa Marketing Board.<sup>42</sup>

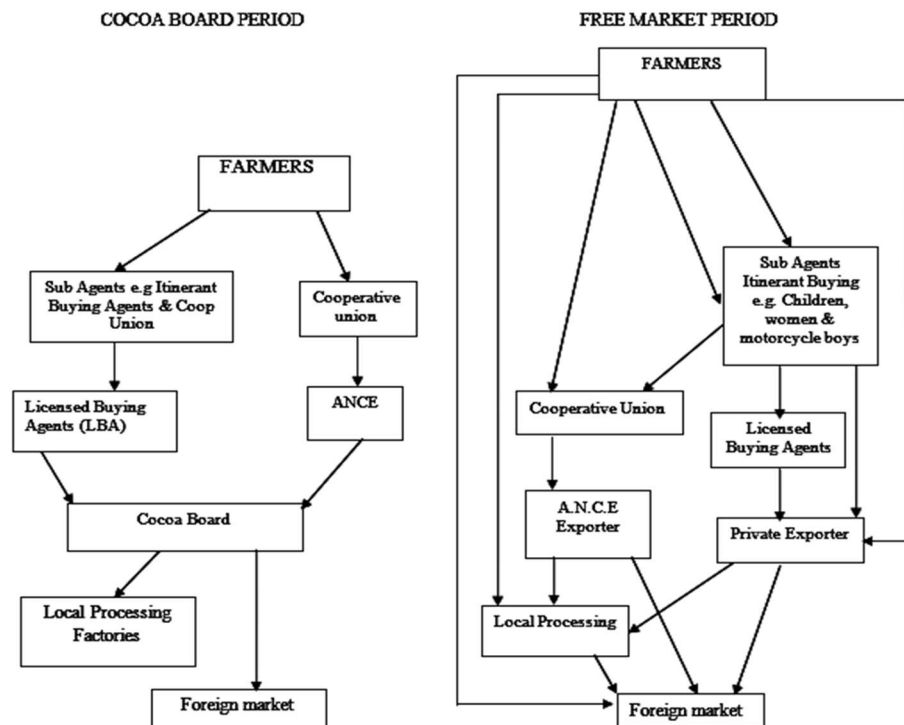
### **Social Relations and Development in Idanre under SAP, 1986-1996**

The reorganization of the cocoa commodity market, following the implementation of the liberalization policies on Africa's agriculture markets had a paradoxical impact<sup>43</sup> on rural development in Idanre society. The abolition of the Cocoa Marketing Board in 1986 created an avenue for a new cocoa marketing regime, operators and links, which led to increase in rural employment.<sup>44</sup> The licensing of private buying companies, paved the way for the farmers to market their produce independently and get paid without much delay. It should be noted that prior to 1986, all cocoa produced and exported from Nigeria were subjected to stringent inspection and grading systems through several government's agencies. This made it difficult for the cocoa farmers to make reasonable returns from the produce trade.<sup>45</sup> However, the repealing of the Cocoa Marketing Board through SAP in 1986, opened up the cocoa trade and allowed for flexible pricing system.

It was during this period that the Cocoa Association of Nigeria (CAN) was created to replace the statutory Cocoa Marketing Board.<sup>46</sup> These changes aided free entry of private merchants up to exportation level. Participants in the market included private exporters, Licensed Buying Agents, sub agents of LBAs, itinerant buyers (including youths, women and motorcycle boys), brokers and farmers. Some farmers were also marketers (either as itinerant Buyer, IBA or Exporter). Figure 1 shows cocoa marketing structure during the regulated and deregulated periods.<sup>47</sup>

The world price of beans, powder and butter was expressed in dollar per ton. The figures, both in current and real terms increased tremendously between 300 percent and 500 per cent from 1970-75 period to 1976-1980 period respectively. The world cocoa prices reduced drastically between 1996 and 1998 period.<sup>48</sup> A critical look at the pre and post-liberalisation trend revealed that the cocoa prices declined in the post-adjustment period. For example, the global prices of cocoa beans, cocoa powder and cocoa butter, which were \$6,076, \$5378 and \$13,783 in real term per ton respectively in the pre-liberalisation period reduced to \$552, \$1437 and \$1376 respectively in the post-liberalisation period. The diagram below explains the features of the produce trade during the marketing board and free trade seasons.

**Figure 1.0:** Marketing Channels of Cocoa Beans during the Cocoa Board Era and Free Market Regime



**Source:** Biney A.K., 2017, Cocoa Production Trends in Selected States in South-West, Nigeria, Seminar Paper presented at the Academic Planning Committee, of the University of Lagos.

Following structural adjustment programmes and general economic decline, significant numbers of retrenched urban workers engaged in urban-rural migration and returned to home areas where the cost of living was lower.<sup>49</sup> In Idanre, these returnees invested enormously in the cocoa produce trade, which in turn aided several developments.<sup>50</sup> With the abolition of the Cocoa Marketing Board, many cocoa farmers in Idanre became exporters themselves, while some took mainly to buying and selling the cocoa beans. The cocoa prices during this era, were determined by market forces. The competitive nature of the market, thus, encouraged many farmers and buyers to take the risk in investing more, and derived reasonable returns. Liberalization helped many people to profit effortlessly from the business. In effect, the emerging capitalist class in Idanre was able to diversify into several other businesses, such as saw mill factories, petrol/filling stations, and the building of beer supply depots.

This contributed to the growth of rural economic activities, shaped social relations and broadly, rural development in the town. As enunciated in the introduction, the economic situation during the period of the oil boom and the economic crises in the 1970s and early 1980s, which aided inter alia, the ‘Cocoa Transfer Agreement Phenomenon’ had caused several poor cocoa farmers to pledge, or in most cases, sell their cocoa farms to their respective creditors. These were mostly, the licensed buying agents, money lenders, produce merchants, and unscrupulous officials of cocoa cooperative societies.

The pledging of cocoa farms to cooperative societies and the produce merchant led to the dispossession and exploitation of many poor farmers. It made accumulation of wealth easier for the newly rich merchants in the community. As their debts and financial obligations grew larger, many peasant farmers’ incomes were devastated, as they forfeited their lands and cocoa investments. By the mid-1990, the capitalist farmers had acquired and assumed ownership of several cocoa plantations from their debtors who could not repay their debts. Notable among the well-to do people who made fortune from the Cocoa Transfer Agreement phenomenon, included, but not limited to, Akinduro Orosundafosi, Issac Akingboye and Alhaji Atenidegbe among others.



Idanre society produced many merchant farmers between the mid-1980s and the 1990s. This explains the rapid social transformation that occurred, particularly why people began to define accomplishments partly, in terms of the largeness of individual's plantations, cars procured in a particular cocoa season, houses built within and outside the town, investments made in other sectors of the economy, such as saw mills factories, fuel/filling stations, hotels, warehouses, in addition to the number of wives and children of the capitalist or farmer. These were the defining characteristics of status, class and mobility in Idanre. By the early 1990s, many rich farmers had built several 'storey' and bungalow houses with aluminium roofs, establishing petrol/filling stations and cocoa firms. Others bought more cocoa farms, employed caretakers, sharecroppers and made huge profits.<sup>51</sup> There were great changes in the social and economic status of the people under SAPs. An informant noted that:

What we earned every cocoa season in the 1990s as cocoa farmers was greater than what a professor, doctor, banker, engineer, lawyer and a prudent accountant earned per annum. Not many Nigerian civil servants could compete with cocoa farmers, at the end of cocoa season during the period of SAP.<sup>52</sup>

Another informant recounted his experience and noted that:

My fortune was huge in the early 1990s that I could afford to buy Nissan or Daewoo Car each for my four wives from the proceeds of my cocoa at the end of the cocoa season in November 1992.<sup>53</sup>

He asserted that while many people in neighbouring communities struggled hard to survive as a result of inflation and changes in prices of food and consumable items, Idanre society produced many wealthy people who lived above the normal social standard of the period.<sup>54</sup> Cocoa production did not only sustain the livelihood of the people; it influenced their pattern of living. Although timber business and plantain cultivation also sustained rural livelihood of the Idanre people, it was the earnings realized from cocoa that transcended to timber businesses and affected local markets such as Ojota, Odale and Alade markets.<sup>55</sup> Opinions differ, however, in the way some people define the transformation that occurred during the liberalization era.

Liberalization impoverished many small-scale cocoa producers in the community. Though, many farm laborers, caretakers and sharecroppers also experienced increased remunerations due to competitive wages paid to farm workers by the capitalist farmers as a result of scarce labour, the migrants were able to feed themselves and family, contribute to community projects in Idanre and travel to their villages at the end of cocoa seasons to spend their earnings. In the process of cultivating cocoa either as labourers, caretakers, or sharecroppers, most of the labourers planted vegetables, plantain, yam, cocoyam, and cassava, which they sold in local markets in Idanre in order to sustain themselves in the pre-cocoa harvest periods.<sup>56</sup>

During this period, many indigenes of the town that had left to the urban areas in the 1970s and 1980s returned to Idanre to plant cocoa. A notable example was Patrick Olatunji, who emerged as one of the richest cocoa buyers in the town in the mid-1990s.<sup>57</sup> It is important to note that between the mid-1960s and 1970s, his father, Julius Olatunji had collected several loans from the cooperative society to finance his Higher National Diploma in Civil Engineering at the Yaba College of Technology. After his tertiary education, Patrick Olatunji decided to reside in Lagos where he practised as a Civil Engineer. Consequent upon the deregulation in 1986, which led to the retrenchment of many government employees, Patrick returned to Idanre to acquire land for cocoa cultivation, in addition to the land he inherited from his father. By 1989 when he arrived Idanre, his cumulative cocoa was only two hundred and twenty-thousand-naira (N220,000) worth. By 1995 Patrick had become very influential in the Idanre cocoa business.<sup>58</sup>

The current Lisa of Idanre, High Chief Christopher Oluwole Akindolire is another example of the indigenes that returned to Idanre from Lagos to invest in the cocoa business in the 1990s. It is also important to mention Bola Ogunbolu. Bola, relocated to Idanre in 1990, owing to his retrenchment from the First Bank of Nigeria PLC, where he had worked as an accountant for almost two decades. Like Patrick Olatunji, Bola Ogunbolu sold some of his assets in Lagos to start up a cocoa firm. In 1991, Bola Ogunbolu bought fifty acres of land from the families of two migrant farmers Mr. Jola Aboyade and Josiah Makinju at Ofosu Idanre. He employed twenty farm labourers who nurtured the cocoa plantation and taught him the systems of farm

management. From that period, Bola Ogunbolu continued to buy more farms and land and expanded his investment by establishing a Cocoa Produce Firm at Broad Street, in Odode Idanre.<sup>59</sup> By the mid-1990s Ogunbolu had become an important personality in the history of Idanre. He built a number of hotels, around the hills at Odode, Alade and Atoshin, to facilitate his revenue generation and boost the economy of the town through tourism. He also invested in sawmill and timber businesses in Idanre. Bola Ogunbolu bought many cars and buses and committed them to the hands of Idanre youths to operate cabs.<sup>60</sup>

### **Modernity, Dispossessions and Development in Idanre under SAP**

Modernity in Idanre during the 1990s was defined in terms of consumption, flamboyance and purchasing power. Individuals were revered based on their ability to purchase a particular brand of car, for instance, Mercedes Benz, Peugeot Evolution, Mitsubishi, Daewoo Razer and the *J.5 buses*. Young people were also recognized in the society on the basis of houses built, or ability to finance family or community social activities. In the 1990s, Peugeot Evolution car became the choice car of many cocoa farmers. Most expensive cars used in the town in the early 1990s, belonged to the newly rich cocoa farmers and buyers.<sup>61</sup> One of the major cocoa buyers in the 1990s, Arosile Bonne, stated that “SAP made me a rich farmer and expanded my investments in the community.” He noted that by the end of the cocoa season in December 1993, “I was able to acquire more cocoa farms from families that lacked the means to continue in the trade.”<sup>62</sup>

From his personal diary, it is clear that: “Arosile Bonne made over eight hundred thousand (N800,000), every cocoa season in the 1990s. From his cocoa earnings, he was able to replace his cars, including those of his wives biennially throughout the late 1990s.”<sup>63</sup> This explains how material acquisition became the defining characteristics of class and social status in Idanre. Competition for social inclusion and recognition became rampant among the Idanre people.<sup>64</sup> This was more intense among the young men. Idanre youths that were engaged in cocoa production and sales in the 1990s, competed among themselves with all manner of cars and it affected work ethics and productivity in Idanre.<sup>65</sup> Young men and women deliberately worked hard, to be able to save money to meet the social standards in the town.<sup>66</sup>

Many peasant families who could not afford buying a car, however, used their earnings to renovate their family houses and acquired electrical appliances such as modern televisions, video players, motorcycles and home use generators. Several low farm workers bought the Suzuki and Yamaha motorcycles prevalent in the 1990s. Above all, the acquisition of cars was a symbol of high social status which the cocoa farmers sustained.

What more, cocoa redefined social hierarchy based on individuals’ ability to display wealth in an ostentatious manner. In social gatherings, Idanre people began to flip money recklessly, especially at parties for image and identity branding.<sup>67</sup> Accomplished people were recognized specially in social functions based on their consumerist character and purchasing power. Cocoa farmers invited popular musicians such as King Sunny Ade (KSA), Ebenezer Obey, Sir Shina Peters, and Orlando Owo, among others, to entertain guests in their social ceremonies, and annual town festivals.<sup>68</sup> It is significant to note that this class of Nigerian musicians was expensive in the 1980s and 1990s. Only the elite, such as politicians, influential civil servants and other well to do middle class people in the Nigerian society could effortlessly afford their financial charges in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>69</sup>

Women also played significant roles, especially, as entrepreneurs in the buying and selling of cocoa in the 1990s. At Odode, Opasorun, Ojota and Alade, a number of women built large cocoa stores where they processed cocoa beans bought from the farmers.<sup>70</sup> With regards to cultivation, however, impact of women was not felt owing to a number of factors, including, but not limited to the nature of land conflicts, ownership, and stress involved in cocoa cultivation. Only a few women such as Mrs., Orosunfeyi Bernice, Omolade Akinfelure, Feyisetan, Bamisaye, Abidoeye Akingboye managed to acquire land for the cultivation of the crop. It is important to note that majority of women who had access to land or cocoa plantations, particularly through inheritance, sold the farmlands or plantations to the capitalists and invested their money in other businesses.<sup>71</sup> Many of them, were not able to sustain the farms.<sup>72</sup> A large number of women in the farm villages, also engaged in the produce trade as itinerant buyers. In pre-cocoa seasons, they gave credit, such as food stuffs and financial aid to the peasant farmers who, based on agreement, supplied them cocoa beans at the end of the cocoa season. Through this, many women became prominent in Idanre society in the mid-1990s. Like the men, they also contributed

enormously to the development of the town's social infrastructures, such as, establishing non-agrarian businesses, especially sales of clothing materials, food items, beer depots, and building materials.<sup>73</sup>

This development affected social relations in the town. In the larger picture, disputes evolved among low income families, as some wives of peasant farmers began to desire the social transformation and privileges which the influential women cocoa dealers enjoyed. The effects, in many families, were distrust, disloyalty, betrayal, disappointments, duplicity and fraud. For example, many women had to divorce their old husbands to marry the newly rich cocoa farmers. A notable example was Ojumu Akingboye who had twelve wives and forty children, in addition to concubines. He stated that "in the 1990s, it was common for women to leave their husbands and force themselves on we rich farmers."<sup>74</sup>

In the 1990s, some women even colluded with their concubines "outside lovers" to install *Maagin* (thunderbolt) on them in order to eliminate their poor husbands and marry them. An Octogenarian, Mr. Adewoye Adetuyi interviewed at Gbalegi, revealed that his brother was a victim of this phenomenon in the 1990s. In fact, he asserted that his former wives, Oluyemisi and Florence also left him with no cause to marry his friends who suddenly became wealthy after the cocoa season in November 1992.<sup>75</sup>

In the same way, another informant, said:

My father was a civil servant (Forest Conservation Officer) and a timber producer. He suddenly became a wealthy cocoa farmer in the late 1980s. His money increased unexpectedly that he became very popular in Idanre. He had bought many cocoa farms from many disinterested farmers in the 1970s. He became very wealthy in the late 1980s and took the wife of a notable High Chief. The woman, who was very fair in complexion, was almost the most beautiful woman in Idanre at that time. All attempts by family and friends, including traditional authorities to restore the woman back to her husband failed. It was under this controversy that my father, who was never sick, suddenly developed an undiagnosed illness and died.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, children of cocoa farmers began to swindle and kill their fathers in order to inherit cocoa trees. Some wives of peasant farmers divorced their husbands in local courts to marry rich men.<sup>77</sup> A notable example was the incidence that occurred at Odode, where a relatively young woman named Abike Omojuwa, abandoned her poor husband, Adewamide Boluwaji, to marry her husband's kinsman, Fidelis Makinde in November 1991.<sup>78</sup> Oral Interviews conducted with both parties living within the same neighborhood suggested that Abike apparently left her 'wretched husband', Adewamide due to the financial pressure as well as peer influences on her by her parents and friends to remarry to a wealthy cocoa farmer.<sup>79</sup>

At Oniserere, Abule Lisa, and several distant villages in Idanre, women abandoned their poor husbands and relocated to the main town, notably Odode where they were able to relate easily with the wealthy cocoa farmers. At Oniserere, a popular farmer, Babajide Akintogun (a migrant produce-merchant from Ondo) was beheaded by his caretaker, Irebamide Taiwo, (an Idanre farm-caretaker) because the former had camped and eventually married the latter's absconded wife in his new house at Oposorun. The incidence, which occurred during Babajide's general survey of his farms, was carried out by the perpetrator to revenge the injustice done to him by his employer.<sup>80</sup> This event created deep crises between the migrants and the indigenes. The conflict, which was eventually quelled through the effort of the Military Governor of Ondo State, claimed many lives within the cocoa farms in the town.<sup>81</sup>

At Itanorunwa, Gbalegi, Opa, and Atoshin, women poisoned their husbands in order to inherit cocoa plantations. These villages, including Odode, witnessed these occurrences between 1991 and 1994. Some of the farmers, who became victims of these atrocities, are presented in table 1.1.

**Table 1.1:** Cocoa Farmers Murdered during the SAP era

Year	Places	Names of Victims	Names of Perpetrators
1990	Itanorunwa,	Akinbade	Foluke Akinbade
1991	Odode, Jingbe,	Olajide Festus	Omolola Abisaiye
1992	Atoshin	Ibikunle Akintunji	Florence Akintunji
1993	Opa, Atoshin	Issac Olarotimi	Yetunde Omojola

1994	Odode	Philip Akinfelure	Faseke Babajide
1995	Gbalegi	Ademola Bamidele	Olayemi Faturoti
1996	Ofosu	Olatunji Akinwande	Olukemi Falaiye

**Source:** Fieldwork in Idanre, 2018.

Between March and September 1995, the *Ugha* (Traditional Council) headed by the *Owa* of Idanre held several meetings with quarter heads, cocoa farmers, cocoa buyers, District Police Officers and members of Idanre Youth movement. This was to discuss the growing incidences of murder of cocoa farmers by their children and wives in different quarters in Idanre.<sup>82</sup> For example, at Gbalegi and several areas in Abababubu, some cocoa farmers were reported missing in the community, only to be found dead and buried in their farms by their wives and children who schemed to inherit their cocoa plantations.<sup>83</sup>

In February 1994, Mr. Ademuyi Gabriel, an indigene of Idanre from Idale quarters living in Ojota Idanre, who had some cocoa farmlands, which he had cultivated for eight years at Ajobamidele in Idanre, was swindled by his children. He died after his cocoa had been harvested by his two sons, Omololu (twenty-five years) and Olaseinde (thirty-two years). Mr. Ademuyi who had already developed some health issues after his last wife abandoned him to marry his cousin (Chief Michael Aseye),<sup>84</sup> died when he heard that his sons, Omololu and Olaseinde had harvested and sold tons of his cocoa and used the proceeds to travel out of the country.<sup>85</sup> *The Sunrise*, a popular legal magazine in Ondo State in the 1990s, captured in July 1995 a case of an Idanre woman named Mrs. Folashade Makinde. She was sentenced to death by a court ruling in Akure on the ground that she conspired with someone to murder her husband, Mr. Olympas Makinde, and his last wife and son in order to collect the proceeds of fifteen tons of cocoa sold to an itinerant buyer at Ofosu Idanre. Mrs. Folashade was sentenced to death with her accomplice, Mr. Femi Olajuwon, a caretaker (Alagbase) to Mr. Makinde.<sup>86</sup>

These crises occurred in different places in Idanre during the 1990s.<sup>87</sup> At Jingbe and many other farms and camps within Oniserere and Abababubu in the Idanre “Forest Reserve”, many children of cocoa farmers arranged with local buyers, collected credits and advances and harvested cocoa trees without their fathers’ approval, while others sold their fathers’ entire cocoa farms outrightly. This led to the death of many cocoa farmers in Idanre in the 1990s. Some wealthy individuals were involved in buying harvested cocoa seeds from mischievous children of cocoa farmers, wives as well as relatives of cocoa owners between 1980s and 1990s.

In September 19, 1992, the *Daily Times* featured the growing incidences whereby some itinerant buyers or middlemen moved from village to village to buy cocoa dried or fresh from individuals who were desperately in need of money in Ondo State.<sup>88</sup> These buyers were many in Idanre. It was reported that these buyers paraded villages and hamlets in Idanre, scouting for cocoa farmers or their children and relatives who had cocoa and needed money urgently and took advantage of them. In fact, the *Owa* of Idanre added during an interview with him, that farm vigilantes were employed by the local administration and cocoa producers’ associations to arrest and hand over such buyers to the police in the 1990s.<sup>89</sup> However, these buyers were able to lure several mischievous people to defraud their families because they paid money on the spot.<sup>90</sup> At Oniserere hamlets, this was particularly rampant among illiterate farmers, whereby their children colluded with these buyers for the sales or decide against paying appropriate prices to their fathers and go back to collect the proceeds of the fraud. In the 1990s, many children of illiterate farmers clandestinely harvested and sold their father’s cocoa without their fathers’ knowledge.<sup>91</sup> In several houses in Atoshin Idanre, some children, eliminated their fathers and brothers to be able to take possession of the entire cocoa plantation belonging to the family.<sup>92</sup>

In all, *Owo cocoa* (wealth from cocoa) as it was popularly used in the 1990s, led to a reclassification in Idanre society. Highly rich farmers saw themselves as occupying a class, while those who were not as rich were seen as belonging to another class.<sup>93</sup> Even sales and buying of commodities reflected this distinction. The sales of beer in social gathering were classified according to class. In Idanre society, Beer like Gulder and Guinness for example, belonged to a group of rich cocoa farmers, 33 Beer to sharecroppers and ‘Star Beer’ to others who were middle ranked individuals in the community. ‘33’ beer was popularly, described as *oti ala gba se* caretakers’ beer, indicating the low social status of the caretakers. It was not cocoa farmers’ beer.<sup>94</sup>

There was also the group of the sharecroppers which belonged to another class. There were disputes between cocoa farmers, their children, and wives, as well as uprisings within families and groups over cocoa

plantations and land. Besides, there were several incidences whereby sharecroppers and labourers impregnated wives of their landlords. The structural adjustment brought about social mobility as well as dispossession of small-scale cocoa producers in Idanre. This development however coloured and affected relationships.

The fact that wealthy farmers married man wives under SAP led to the death of some of them. Many cocoa farmers, who had only one wife before 1986, later became obsessed with women and spent their earnings to marry more wives in the 1990s. Consequently, polygamy dovetailed into the social history of Idanre.<sup>95</sup> Apart from the cases of betrayal in families, dispossession of the poor farmers by the rich occurred through the Cocoa Transfer Agreement. In the larger picture, many farmers used their earnings from cocoa for the up keep of their families, especially on their education.<sup>96</sup>

The roles played by the rich farmers and merchants through advance credits and lending of monies to the poor farmers during unforeseen situations or pre-harvest periods caused many of them to exploit and dispossess many peasants of their lands and cocoa farms under the period of the neoliberal reform. They seized every opportunity to buy cocoa farmland from bereaved and indebted farmers in the community. There were several instances where children of cocoa farmers were lured to sell their fathers' cocoa farms to the produce merchants without their parents' consents. Many indebted peasants forfeited their cocoa plantations to the produce merchants, while, several people sold theirs to the rich desperately owing to inability to cope with the changing nature of cocoa production and sales.

## Conclusion

The liberalization of the Nigerian cocoa produce trade, though vehemently criticized by several Marxist scholars, had tremendous effects on rural income, livelihood, accumulation, and development in Idanre cocoa producing community between 1980 and the late 1990s. With the abolition of the cocoa marketing board, removal of stringent grading policies and liberalization of producer's prices, many Idanre cocoa farmers became exporters themselves, while some took mainly to buying and selling. As demonstrated, SAP provided ample opportunity for cocoa growers and buyers to use their relatively scarce economic resources to improve their existence and contribute to kinship and their community in a competitive economy.

The liberalization of commodity produce trade allowed for socio-economic transformation in particular and rural development in general in Idanre. It also brought about a new motivation and desire to create wealth. The change in the economic fortunes of the people also came with its peculiar lifestyle and social disposition. In a number of remarkable ways, the effect was evident in community development and social relations. Cocoa production bolstered rural social mobility and capital formation. As a consequence, the consumption pattern of rural people changed. Moreover, SAP brought with it a new form of social relations of production and market structure. This necessitated a redefinition of human perception of class in Idanre. In fact, income derived from cocoa changed prevailing views of what constituted personhood in Idanre. "Owo Cocoa" (wealth from cocoa) became associated with consciousness, civility, political belonging, and stock share of sociality. The role played by the agrarian class in the appropriation of agricultural surplus in community development and the socio-economic transformation of people, indeed facilitated rural development during the period of neoliberal reforms. The desire of many farmers to change consumption pattern, to become influential and gain new social status transformed the ways people lived and influenced Idanre society.

The paper shows how these became the index of power and civility as people who could not compete with the new agrarian capitalist class were pushed to a considerably marginal position. It demonstrates also how a number of people in the community, during the SAP era, began to see investment in children, kinship and communal relations as important. The neoliberal reform of the produce trade in Idanre was seen as a time of growth and development on the one hand, and dispossession and exploitation on the other. As more cocoa was produced in Idanre, social relations became transformed and extensive community development was recorded.

However, economic liberalization created two classes of people in Idanre community. Not only did several previously peasant households in the town suddenly had their social status changed due to their new consumption patterns, their new economic status also transformed identities and their contribution to the development of their children, family and community projects. They redefined the idea of modernity and civility in the town. Wealth and material accomplishments made through cocoa production and sales became the criteria for political recognition and a stock share of sociality in the town. With this, relations changed as people

discarded pre-existing principles of communality. Individually influenced forms of accumulation replaced the indigenous reciprocal economic system of savings. Consequently, social mistrust dovetailed into the fabric of Idanre society, as the desires and desperations of many young men and women to change consumption patterns and at the same time carve a new identity for themselves, propelled children of cocoa farmers to embark on the murdering or defrauding of their fathers. As explained in the paper, many women divorced their peasant husbands in local courts in Idanre to marry the newly rich cocoa farmers. Perhaps, it was “the desire to survive financially” in the face of “the insensitiveness of cocoa farmers” that drove their children to “defraud” their fathers rather than “the quest for a new identity.” For instance, cocoa production is labour intensive, involving family members and labourers. Yet, many fathers refused to believe that their wives and children were entitled to parts of the proceeds of the farms. In response, many wives and children simply “assisted” themselves by “defrauding” their fathers. Crime, increased greatly in Idanre in the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, social vices accompanied the capital formation and social mobility made possible by the liberalization of the cocoa produce trade in Idanre in the 1980s and 1990s.

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- 92 Interview with HRM the Oba of Atoshin Idanre, 27/08/2017.
- 93 Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with High Chief Samuel Agboola Akintan, (Ojomu of Idanre) 92 Years 25/ 08/2017.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with HRH Aladelokun (Oba of Alade Idanre) at his Royal Palace, Alade Idanre, 20/10/2017.