

## The Influence of Geography on the Economy and Society of Yola Metropolis in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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### Abstract

The paper is a study of the influence of geography on the economy and society of Yola metropolis in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, *Fombina* emirate. It examines the various fundamental changes witnessed in the spheres of societal development at the grassroots level. It discusses the major geographical features such as soil taxonomy, climate, rainfall, vegetation as well as the mountains and topography of Yola. The paper also studies some indigenous traditional economic activities of the people (i.e., Bata, Fulbe, Laka and Verre, etc.) of Yola metropolis, including agriculture and non-agricultural occupations such as farming, fishing, hunting, iron works, wood carving, leather works, pottery and weaving, as well as the development of trade and commercial activities. Qualitative data collection and analysis were used in line with historical methods. The interviews, surveys and fieldwork observation were the main sources of the data collection. In the analysis, historical techniques of assessment, critical evaluation, constructive analysis and narration were used in addressing the subject. Using a variety of sources, such as written documents, archival sources and oral interviews. The findings of this paper shows that the pre-colonial economy of Yola metropolis and its environs (towns and villages) was similar in nature. This is because of the related nature of the whole environment of the Upper Benue Valley. The study reveals that the nature of the geography and its impact on the land influences the development of Yola metropolis vis-a-vis, which fosters more socio-economic and political developments for the communities that constitute *Fombina* emirate, both at local, regional and international levels.

**Keywords:** Geography, Economy, Society, 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Yola Metropolis.

### Introduction

This paper analyses the geographical influence on the economy and society of Yola metropolis during pre-colonial period. It discusses major geographical features such as soil taxonomy, climate, rainfall, vegetation as well as mountains and topography of Yola. The study also examines some indigenous traditional economic activities including agriculture and non-agricultural occupations such as iron works, wood carving, leather works, pottery and weaving activities. Geographically, Yola is located within latitudes 9° 11'N to 9° 20' North and longitudes 12° 23'E to 12° 33' East and covers an approximate area of 305 square

kilometres (Ishaku, 201: 220). In addition, Yola metropolitan lies at a distance of 69 kilometres from Numan and 140 kilometres from Garoua in the Cameroon Republic. The area covers the southern bank of the River Benue and its tributaries (Allison, 1975: 11). It shares an eastern boundary with Gurin District and bordered to the north by Girei District. To the west, it also bordered by Bata District, while to the south it shares boundaries with the Alantika Mountains of Verre, Wafago and Mayo Balwa Districts (Kirk-Greene, 1969: 1). Moreover, Yola metropolis serves as the headquarters of the traditional Emirate of Adamawa and derives its name from *Yolde*, a Fulfulde word meaning flat land or rising ground which therefore, describes the area on which the capital city is located. The interplay of these geographical features has impact in the determining the nature of economy and society of the area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yola is a cultural homeland with diverse social groups who speak different languages, dialects, customs and traditions. These groups include Bata, Fulbe, Hausa, Laka and Verre. There are numerous other cultural groups in the area such as Chamba, Kilba, Margi, Mbula, among others. Significantly, the evolution of agricultural economy and crafts industry as source of livelihood among these groups also inspired population movements and rapid growth of the study area (Chubado, 2019: 29; Sa'ad, 2008: 1). This development fostered social interaction, which enhanced social cohesion along the tenet of inter-group relation (Chubado and Hamza, 2020: 72). There is no reasonably comprehensive account of the geography, economy and society of Yola metropolis in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Existing studies in Yola area, though valuable and based on early scholars in the past, concentrated on documentation of the socio-political development of Adamawa Emirate. This has inevitable gaps in the knowledge of geography and economic development of Yola metropolis especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Undoubtedly, the current paper attempts to narrow the gaps and consequently reverse the trend whereby socio-political history gained importance which for quite a long time remained the focus of historical studies in the region. This has resulted in the present difficulty of underdevelopment and hardship in the area of study. Again, studying the geographical influence of the society of Yola metropolis during 19<sup>th</sup> century would be an interesting focus of this paper. This is because Yola still suffers from the problem of neglect been it an area that has contributed enormously to the socio-economic and political growth of Nigeria as a whole. Therefore, this study arises as a result of the desire to bring to the public knowledge and understanding of the society of Yola metropolis and its environ in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Also, there are plenitudes of works the present study came across that dwelled on and discussed the phenomenon under investigation. It also pierced through the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories of Yola-Adamawa and the Emirate as a whole. Though few among them reflected on the subject, they also provided relevant information for the study. The major challenge or problem of these works was that only generalisations were made and only a few were mentioned, or mere passing references to the socio-economic history of Yola metropolis, especially the period under study (Kirk-Greene, 1969 Njeuma, 1974; Sa'ad, 1976; Sa'ad, 2008; Alkasum, 2003, Catherine, 1993, Yakubu, 1997, etc.). The works, therefore, directly or indirectly contained relevant information about the history of

Yola metropolis with distinct periodization, different from what the current study attempted to investigate. Though there is a need to consult and appraise the available and existing literature on Yola metropolis and other socio-economic literature, this is highly fundamental. Finally, this paper serves as a base record of information that has the potential value and capability to enhance knowledge as well as influence other researchers, scholars and students who may want or engage in similar phenomena in Yola region and elsewhere in both research and teaching works. It is also important as it bridges the missing gaps in the existing literature as well as manifests the economy of the region for further opportunity and advantages.

### **Research Methodology**

There are many sources of gathering and elicitation of information on a place or event of the past in historical writings. To achieve the aim of this paper, various of historical research techniques used to reconstruct this paper and it from two broad categories, namely, primary and secondary sources. The primary sources for the study include oral information and archival materials while the secondary sources consisted mainly of published and unpublished works such as books, journals, articles, theses, dissertations and internet sources. The paper utilised archival records from the National Archives at Kaduna (NAK), which contain important reports mostly written by the British colonial officers in provincial files, district notebooks, minutes of meetings, memos, financial records, official letters, correspondences, administrative policies and practices among others. Similarly, oral information was also collected by conducting unstructured interviews (individually and/or collectively) in different periods and places. For instance, interviews were conducted in Yola metropolis and its neighbouring communities to discover the geography, economy and society of Yola metropolis in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, all the information collected for this paper (from both primary and secondary sources) were carefully analysed, validated and corroborated. These sources have the potential capacity and values to contribute tremendously in shaping this paper.

### **Conceptual Understanding: Economic and Geographical Reality**

It is important to understand this section of the study as it conceptualises the key variables which are fundamental to the analysis of the phenomenon under study. These variables played a spectacular role in determining their influence on Yola during pre-colonial period. Economics and geography are broad areas that encompasses the study of how economic activities such as production, distribution and consumption are organised and spatially distributed on earth. It entails examining factors such as resource availability, and trade patterns, etc. through the geographical features of the area. This field is essential for understanding the spatial dimensions of economic processes and their impact on the society and the environment (Trewartha, 1977: 9). Albeit, geography and economics dwell extensively on the study of man and his economic activities under varying sets of conditions which embody the spatial distribution of man's economic activities in relation to his

environment. However, the influence exerted on the economic activity of man by his physical environment forms the structure of the surface of the land and the climatic conditions such as location, distribution and spatial organisation of economic activities on earth (Strahler, 1967: 3-4). Lastly, economics and the geography world are multifaceted fields that examine the spatial of economic activities, their underlying factors and their impact on regions, nations and the world at large.

### **Geographical Description of Yola Metropolis**

The obvious determinant of the spatial distribution of economic activity is geography (Chubado and Hamza, 2020: 72). The major hydrological and drainage system that supplies water are network of rivers and streams that flows in the area. The most prominent river that characterises geographical features of Yola metropolis are the Benue River and its tributaries. These tributaries include the Tiel, Faro, Kilenge, Beti, Ine, Balwa and Gongola. Other important lakes found in the area are Lake Njuwa which is only a kilometre away from the Benue and there is also lake Geriyo near Jimeta. Most of the run-off systems originated in the surrounding mountain where vegetation covers (Njeuma, 1969: 15). The most important reason for identifying these waters is that they provide a means of water transportation and communication; a source of employment (fishing, farming and other agricultural activities); and a source of water for domestic uses both for the people and animals. Therefore, the availability of rivers, lakes and streams flows in all directions of the area, provide good grazing grass for cattle and other livestock enjoy this area all year round. It is believed that the vegetation and grasses in the area have nutrients and healthier for cattle and other animals for both fattening and reproduction (Chubado and Musa, 2020: 11). In the area, hills are the other striking geographical features of Yola metropolis that have influence on people's lives and settlements. They are found both in the northern and southern parts of the Benue River. From the north, they are situated in all directions to the advantage of the inhabitants. Those found particularly in the north and east are known as the Furo, Song, Zumo and Bagale hills (NAK/Yolaprof/G2Y,, 1917). The most notable hills lying north of the Benue are the Mandara Mountains, running north-south. Other hills found in the south of the River Benue are Verre and Ngurore hills, and they spread from west to east across the study area. These hills are responsible for the flood plains in the areas down below. The remaining places in the study area, apart from the hills, are open land for settlements and cultivation. This description of the physical site of the area indicates Yola and its environs and how geography has influenced the people's economy in Yola and its environs. These in turn, with a further account of soils, vegetation and climate, reflect the features of the area that determine the socio-political and economic development in the historical context of the study area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kirk-Greene, 1969: 9).

### **Soils Taxonomy**

Yola metropolis is naturally endowed with three distinct soil taxonomies located in the area are the soil of the valleys, the soil of the flood plain and the soil of the forest. Each of these

soil types played a significant role in determining the types of crops produced in the area as well as the settlement pattern (Gailyson and David, 2013: 4; Bohannan and Pugh, 1955: 13). It as well determines the nature of livestock reared and plant types in the area. The soil of the valley is characterised by ferruginous tropical soil which includes iron and other available natural resources. These are finely transported soils that have been deposited in the valleys along the rivers especially the River Benue. The soil is most suitable for agriculture but care is usually taken to prevent the occurrence of floods during the rainy season. This is because rainfall is usually heavy in this vegetarian area due to its hilly nature and moderating effect of the rivers. Consequently, the soil is fertile, making it easier for people to engage in both rainy and dry season farming. Farming, also known as irrigation system which is commonly practiced among people. The pattern of this farming has boosted agricultural products in the study area (Ikusemoran and Hajjatu, 2009: 49).

The soil of the flood plain is mostly accumulated with clay and is liable to frequent flooding. Some of the higher-laying areas are cultivated and water supplies are abundant. These soils are located within the water log and river bank areas and are also used as raw materials for construction purposes. It also provides raw materials for pottery activity among the people of Yola and beyond. The soil has the nutrients to produce almost everything needed or required as food crops and raw materials, ranging from cereals such as sorghum to tuber crops such as cassava, cocoyam, potatoes, etc. The soil of the forest is small and isolated and is generally found in the low-laying plains area of Yola metropolis and are easily accessible by hunters and wood carvers (Gailyson and David, 2013: 3).

The soils fertility in the area determines the quality and quantity of forage available in the area for animal husbandry. In addition, cattle rearing is common and remains one of the major preoccupations of the people, while villages and communities living on the banks of the River Benue and its tributaries utilises their advantages for other economic activities. It should be stressed that the availability of livestock such as cattle, sheep and goats as well as donkeys influences the growth of agriculture in the area. The dominant system of livestock management is nomadic herding (Gailyson and David, 2013: 5), it also has the potential for pottery making, particularly from Verre pots, largely because of the availability of quality clay. By and large, the soil typology in the area has been a propelling force for the development of agriculture and livestock farming as well as other craft activities which in turn influence the movement of people in to the area hence the increase in population (Alkasum, 2003: 18-19).

### **Climate**

The climatic condition of any society remains the major catalyst and determinant factor in the types of agricultural produce, human well-being and overall societal growth over a given period. One of the most important determinants of the geography of any area is its climatic condition which in turn affects the vegetation and indeed, the people's way of living as well as their economic activities (Fatimah, 2012: 23). Therefore, the geographical reality of Yola metropolis is diverse with a climate ranging from high levels of temperature, humidity,

sunshine and meagre rainfall. Most importantly, two wind types and systems have an impact on the climate; the dry north-east trade winds blowing from the Sahara Desert and the rain-bearing south-west monsoon-laden winds blowing from the Atlantic Ocean.

There is also a well-defined dry season and this occurs during the winter months specifically between November and April. These months are extremely hot and inundated with scorching sun. Relief from the heat in the form of a local wind system occurs from late November until February, and somewhat lower temperatures are recorded during this period. The coolest nights of the year are observed in the months, and during such periods, the air is often dry (the period of the harmattan) and the wind-borne dust of the dry north-east trade wind of the Sahara Desert was usually thick enough to spread several diseases. However, with the dissipation of harmattan in late February, the months of March and June tend to be exceedingly hot on all days and nights. Again, in this period, the inhabitants of the area prefer to sleep outside particularly in the night hours (Interviewed with Abubakar Yaji Liman, 2022).

When the rain starts however, the temperature still changes due to the effect of the cloud. The rainy period lasts from May to September, with April and October being considered marginal periods with isolated shower activity. Heavy rainfall occurs from May to September, yielding approximately 40° C of precipitation, while the minimum temperature can be as low as 18° C between December and January. This higher temperature is equally possible concerning the area located in the Benue trough. It is worthy of note that the River Benue and its tributaries are responsible for the high humidity that has resulted in this high temperature. The period from January to April has a harsh monthly sunshine of 220 hours. There is a decline in sunshine hours between May and September due to an increase in cloudiness in the area. The harsh monthly sunshine during this period is about 207 hours which increases again to 255 hours for the period between October and December (Adebayo and Tukur, 1999: 20-21).

### **Rainfall**

The rainy season is the most significant period in Yola metropolis because of its advantages. In general, the rain begins around the month of May and ends in September almost every year. In some years however, rains are recorded from early April and last up to October. The total average rainfall in Yola metropolis is 42 inches, while sometimes the metropolis's rainfall is less than 40 inches (Kirk-Greene, 1969: 4). The months of August and September recorded the heaviest rains and the highest number of rainy days, referred to as rainfall maxima. The rainfall is characterised by short, sharp showers that continuous rain and last for two to three hours are even more. Nevertheless, August and September are the wettest months and an incidence of flooding and erosion is experienced in the study area during this period (Adebayo and Tukur, 1999: 23; Kirk-Greene, 1969: 4). The significance of the level of rainfall is that like the other geographical conditions, it determines the nature of vegetation and the general ecology of the area. The rainy season is used for the cultivation of crops, plants and other purposes. There is hardly any rainfall between November and February,

and during this period, the whole of Adamawa vis-à-vis Yola metropolis is under the influence of dry and harmattan winds (north-east trade wind that originate from the Sahara region and blow across the Sahel region). The harmattan are very dry and as a result, humidity may be as low as 10–20% during the dry season; hence, it determines the nature and types of vegetation inherent in the study area (Tukur, Bashir and Mubi, 2004: 28).

### **Vegetation**

The general pattern of natural vegetation consists of low-growing bush and grasslands, intermitted by fertile valleys and abrupt hill systems. The area is distinguishing by a convolution of the Sudan and Guinea Savanna belts. Though it is affected in its physical appearance by farming and seasonal firing and thus characterised by a continuous grass cover, scattered with tree growth, mostly of small tree size, xerophytic in nature and rarely providing continuous tree cover. Much of the area is covered with trees growth, with the principal types being shea nut and locust bean. It has periodic concentrations of debep palm and scattered baobob, borassus (*dubbe*), tamarind, desert date trees (*tanne*), mahogany (*daleje*), and gum Arabic trees, etc. (Adebayo and Tukur, 1999: 33; Kirk-Greene, 1969:7). Many of these trees and grasses had either edible fruits or leaves that were used for food or medicinal purposes. Some were also edible, in which the leaves were cooked and eaten with groundnut cake or used for soup and some were used for medicinal purposes (Allison, 1975: 20).

It should be noted that these trees, grasses and plants are very important sources of income and are equally used as for firewood, building houses, carving canoes, mortars and pestles, charcoal, materials for livestock fencing, and for making handles of traditional tools like hoes, knives, and axe handles, among others. The fertility of the land permits agricultural activities such as farming, animal grazing (herding), fishing, hunting, trading and handcraft works. The land is also free from tsetse flies and the advantages of this favours comfortable human and animal habitation in the study area. As in other parts of Nigeria, the area's vegetation has undergone extensive human modifications, with the most obvious changes occurring in the densely populated areas surrounding the larger town. This is where a variety of grains and root crops are relatively easy to cultivate for subsistence use. The natural vegetation, as is evident, readily supports the grazing economy of Yola and hence the development in agriculture (Chubado, 2019: 32).

### **Agricultural Development**

Since the creation of man, agriculture has been a major part of the occupation of many people. Man has survived as a hunter and as a gatherer of fruits as well as depended on the elements of nature such as vegetation, rivers and lakes, just as all other living animals do. In the course of searching for food, clothing and shelter, man adopted agricultural practices as his technical skills and material resources grew within his social environment. It is worthy of note that agriculture is a necessary condition for economic development in any community (Jamilu and Nura, 2015: 7-8). In the context of larger Sokoto Caliphate, the

economies base was agriculture which was complemented by other branches of the economy such as animal husbandry, fishing, hunting and iron works as well as other crafts (Fatimah, 2012: 90). It is pertinent to note that the major occupation of the people of Yola was agriculture and has been a determining factor in the progress and advancement of the study area (Omeje, 2021: 1).

In addition, cattle, sheep and goats were reared in large numbers along the River Benue and its tributaries. Similarly, people undertook other livestock production activities like poultry production, on a fairly large scale. Communities living in the valleys of the River Benue and its tributaries engage in fishing all year round. Other occupational activities such as pottery, weaving, hunting, dyeing, mat-making, wood carving and blacksmithing were also carried out in various parts of the area. The system of the economy without any doubt, played a significant role in bringing the various communities of Yola into proximity with one another. This system of integration was a unique method for all Sokoto caliphate which to obtain external economic advantages (Lovely, 1978: 48). It is important to note that the economy of any society serves as a resource and basis for the daily means of survival of people as well as the settlement pattern.

The society of Yola metropolis is almost rural in composition and those living in semi-urban areas own farms outside the town boundaries, largely due to the availability of arable land. For the most part, agriculture in the region is mostly shifting cultivation (Frances, 2021: 3177). More specifically, a northern grain economy predominates in the area, with millet and guinea corn being the main crops. Again, maize, sweet potatoes and groundnuts are also widely grown for consumption, while surpluses are exchanged through barter system. These crops are for the most part grown in the plains of Yola metropolis. The area is one of the main areas for dry season grazing of the *Gudali* breed of Fulbe cattle. In addition, the Benue River provides a more than adequate fish economy which is mostly noted for the region of Upper Benue Valley (Blench, 1997: 11). The fishing industry has been a well-developed commercial enterprise prior to the creation of the Emirate system in the study area. In Yola metropolis, large rivers like the Benue and its tributaries pierce through the metropolis and have paved way for obtaining different types of fish. (in the available lakes and streams). The variants of fish were produced both for consumption and for sale in neighbouring and far-distant communities for sustaining their livelihood (Ajayi and Alagoa, 1980: 73).

Another important economic activity in Yola metropolis was hunting and this seems to have been assisted by gathering among the earliest occupation of the people. It was one of the oldest forms of pre-occupation among the people of Yola metropolis since antiquity. This was a part-time economic activity that was exclusively male-orientated and carried out majorly during the dry season to complement agricultural (farming) activities of the people. Hunting was a more specialised activity than gathering because it required a greater degree of skill, hunters hunt for both local consumption and commerce (Philomina, 2012: 77).



### Trade and Trade Routes

Trade was an important segment of the area's economy as it necessitates reciprocity exchange among the people. From the early period, three levels of exchange were prominent, these were local, regional and long-distance trades. The Hausa traders have gone throughout the area as they are known to have crossed the West Africa with cotton clothes and leather goods. While some of the products of the area like salt and fish, found profitable markets at the different levels of exchange especially agricultural stuffs, were marketable only at the local and to a small extent, regional level (Hamman, 2007: 22). The Kanuri are known to have traded potash which are often resold exchanged for other products. Cattle owners employed the services of skilled nomads who were organised in family units. Cattle traders also served as agents for owners and move along the east-to-west trade routes following the various markets. The cattle trade was a very productive occupation which supported a large number of the population living in the area. Yola was the meeting point of several trade routes which linked Adamawa with other international market centres from Chad and Cameroon. Hence, Yola metropolis was favourably situated at the focal point of the trade routes between Garua and Hausaland and the commercial centres of Borno, Jukun and North Africa. There was a trade route—from Yola to Garua that passes through Fufore and another from Yola to Gurin and Ngaundere just crossed the southwest corner (Chubado, 2019: 124).

### Crafts and Industrial Development

In addition to agriculture, there were also craftsmen, principally basket weavers, mat weavers, cloth weavers, potters, wood carvers and blacksmiths (Irivwieri, 2009: 1). Crafts complemented agriculture rather than serving as an alternative profession, as goods and services were exchanged for food, clothes and labour (Omeje, 2021: 2). It is good to note that the direct contribution of the artisans remains the most substantial component of the finished product. Using raw materials from sustainable resources, the special nature of artisanal products derives from their distinctive features which were to be useful, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant. Handicraft products are synonyms for artisanal products which are a component part of creative industries. Manufacturing industries derive their origins from individual creativity, skill and talent that have the potential and strong value for job creation and wealth creation through the generation of the individual's intellectual property. These activities equipped people especially women and youths with a wide range of practical skills that enable them to be self-reliance. The indigenous crafts vary and are produced from diverse locally obtained materials available within the area of study (Alkasum, 2003: 75-84).

### Iron Works

This is an important handicraft industry for the people of Yola and such activity goes side-by-side with farming activities. The Bata *people* were exposed to blacksmithing, a professional occupation that involved the art of manufacturing farm tools and implements

as well as weapons such as hoes, axes and cutlasses, etc. (Chubado, 2019: 76). Besides, another important role played by blacksmiths was the production of fishing implements for fishermen and traps for hunters were most male activity. By and large, Yola was one of the few areas where iron was smelted until the industry was forced to close down by the importation of cheap iron from Europe (Haruna, 2018: 75).

### Wood Carving

In Yola metropolis, wood carving was another important handicraft activity because it produced many tools and domestic implements. Like blacksmithing, carving was a highly specialised profession involving few people in the area (Alkasum, 2003: 18). Canoes were manufactured in large numbers, as fishing was one of the major important economic activities of the people residing along the banks of the River Benue and its tributaries. Wood carving was integrated with other industries particularly blacksmithing, yet, each remained a distinct occupation, even though they complement each other. In the study area, wood carvers produced implements like handles for hoes, axes, knives, arrows and swords, on which blacksmiths fixed the necessary heads. In collaboration with leather workers, wood carvers manufactured cases for knives and they also manufactured canoes for livestock feeding particularly cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, etc. (Chubado, 2019: 79-80.) Likewise, wood carving and decoration were carried out in Yola especially among the Bata, Verre and Laka groups. For instance, the Bata carved calabashes and decorated into different shapes and size and these varied from ordinary drinking cups to eating dishes, etc. They also carved mortars and pestles and many others which supported by the vegetation trees from the forest (Alkasum, 2003: 83). This, to a large extent, extensively improved the lives of many people as they enjoy external economic advantages of other indigenous industries around the area.

### Leather Works

This refers to working with leather as a raw material which is mainly derived from hides and skins. Hide is derived mainly from cows and camels, while skin is obtained from sheep and goats, etc. The activity is mostly available to northern parts of Nigeria, largely because of the availability of raw materials and readily available market for the finished goods (Irivwieri, 2009: 8). It is important to know that the high demand for hides and skins did not guarantee the supply because livestock are not reared and slaughtered for hides and skins but for meat (Shedrach, Adesiyun, Embu, Joseph and Gimba, 2021: 1-2; Anagbogu, 2005: 3). Consequently, the industry was made attractive in Yola due to the abundance of domestic livestock especially goats, sheep and cattle. **Many beautiful and useful objects were fashioned from the industry using cutting, shaping and joining techniques** (Irivwieri, 2009: 8). The industry engaged different classes of people, who received hides and skins from butchers for processing into usable leather products. The products are then utilised by skilled workers or artisans (*baduku'en*) who produced items such as bags, shoes, amour shields, casing swords and knife cases, pillows, and various decorative items of

ornament. These are either sold by the artisans or by intermediaries who purchased these items and sold them in various markets (Alkasum, 2003: 84). Since marketers are only shipping unprocessed hides and skins out of the area, the occupation provides significant opportunities for commercial relations and exchanges. To this end, they stimulated the growth of markets as avenues for transactions (Hogben and Kirk Green, 1966: 89).

### **Pottery Activity**

A pottery activity from the pre-colonial period was practiced in almost all the regions of Nigeria. This was possible because the raw materials were readily found in most areas of the country. Pottery is the ceramic ware made from clay by potters and the site or place that such are made is called a pottery site. The material (clay) used to make the pottery ware is also collected from the pottery site, and it is one of the oldest human technologies and art forms in the study area. The practice is still a major industry in most parts of Nigerian communities particularly in Yola metropolis. A great number of good examples of Verre pottery can be seen at the Adamawa Emirate Museum in Yola, signifying the historical artistic monuments of varied pots (Jamilu and Nura., 2015: 6-7). As a matter of fact, the pots were not only used for the storage of water or for cooking, rather, they were also used in preserving foodstuffs like grains and sometimes even perishable goods like onions, peppers and tomatoes as well as other essential food items. Thus, pottery was a prominent activity in Yola later reported to have been an old occupation which women are mostly engaged in. The production varies according to the season and was mostly manufactured during the dry season, when there was no farm work. The clay is moulded over an old vessel turned upside down to half its height and then built up by hand and baked as well as burned by firewood to make it waterproof (Alkasum, 2003: 19). The Verre women are well known for their skills in pot-making around the area and that has been significant. A great variety of domestic utensils pots in different type and dishes were produced. Apart from making pots of various sizes for cooking and storage, potters also make smoking pipes and taken them to the markets for exchange and it provides job opportunities for the people (Interviewed with Aishatu, 2022).

### **Weaving**

Weaving was another important industry that was widespread prior to the British colonial conquest. The system was a lively and creative form of indigenous industry that has developed for many years. The weaving technology of the horizontal and vertical hand looms involved the production of various hand-made designs that involved spinning, weaving and tailoring, carried out separately in the process of production (Chubado, 2019: 49). It is interesting to note that both men and women in Yola metropolis undertook this activity and it has become a household business among some families. However, weaving was a common activity associated more with the Bata, Verre and Hausa groups in the area. The clothes of varied types and sizes were produced and dyed by the Hausa and Kanuri people; pieces of clothes were also used as dresses, burial attire and for other purposes.

These cultural groups had equally practiced and engaged in such activities before the 19<sup>th</sup> century reformist jihad, but their growth was further stimulated by the urbanisation that the jihad gave rise (Alkasum, 2003: 17; Chubado, 2019: 7).

Though the 19<sup>th</sup> century reformist jihad did not introduce these activities into Yola, but the success of the phenomenon played a significant role in expanding and popularising the activity. It became the most common industry in Yola because almost every individual household was in one way or another engaged in it. Yola women including the wives of the aristocrats largely dominated the spinning activity. Indeed, spinning became one of the major pre-occupations of the womenfolk as they derived substantial parts of their income from the activity. Unlike spinning, weaving was not done in all houses, as the weavers normally purchase yarn from market. Weavers were grouped into two broad categories; the first was made up of those who specialised in weaving to sell clothes in the open market, and the second group mainly constituted those who hired their services out to other weavers to secure income. They used their looms to weave in return for payment or in compensation for work rendered. It should be noted that tailoring activity was not dominated by everyone but was practiced by professional individuals who earned the skill. The tailors purchased finer clothes called *leppi* from markets to make cloth materials for sale and other purposes (Alkasum, 2003: 78-79).

Equally important to the weaving industry in the study area were basketry and mat-making, among others. It is a common activity among the inhabitants and almost practiced by all households. In Yola metropolis, the abundant variety of plants especially *deleb palm leaves* and Dup-palm leaves (*golloge*), provide a wide range of materials for mat-making. The craft is practiced alongside basket weaving especially in the rural areas. For instance, many people or professionals who weaved long grass into mats used it in fencing and enclosing compounds. Alongside, brooms were mostly collected by women and children from the available plants and grasses. These activities contributed massively to the economic development of the people of Yola metropolis because it offers employment opportunities to them (Iriwieri, 2009: 8).

### Conclusion

From the foregoing, this study provides background knowledge of the geographical features of the study area which constitute climatic conditions and the availability of fertile land for the cultivation of crops and grazing of livestock that attracted many people to settle in the area. It is important to note that because of the diverse nature of the cultural groups in Yola metropolis, the people engaged in good relationships as a form of social interaction that improves their standard of living. The study also discusses the economic activities of the people and how they have assisted in the growing state of the society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, the indigenous economy such as agriculture, trading, weaving, fishing, hunting and other handicraft activities like pottery and weaving among others formed the backbone of as the people's economic activities. This seemed to have attracted the various people in to

the area including the European colonialists whose major motive was economic exploitation.

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S/N	Name	Age	Occupation	Place of Interview	Date
1	Abubakar Liman Yaji	63	Hunter	Girei L.G.A	10/2/2022
2	Yunusa Sani	83	Sarkin Pawa Yola	Damare Yola Town	4/2/2024
3	Ahmed Abubakar	55	Civil Servant	Yola South L.G. Headquarters	17/8/2022
4	Ahmad Dahiru	45	Civil Servant	Jimeta L.G.A.	17/2/2024
5	Aishatu Dahiru Mahmudu	89	Potter	Karallahi	29/8/2022
6	Aminu Jauro	52	Mixed-farmer	Yola Metropolis	12/8/2022
7	Ardo Babba Hayatu	98	Farmer	Wuro Modibbo Yola	30/8/2022
8	Dija Yaji	81	Salt Maker	Namtari Yola	20/2/2024
9	Hannatu Jeremy	53	Brewer	Lakare Yola Town	2/3/2022
10	Mamman, Modibbo Liman	71	Farmer/Fisher	Yola Town	3/2/2022
11	Muhammadu Bamanga Pariya	73	Farmer	No. 15 Polo Road, Yola Town	7/2/2022

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**MAP I: YOLA METROPOLIS SHOWING PHYSICAL FEATURES**

