

POLICING THE LOWLAND AXIS OF THE PLATEAU PROVINCE IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD, 1926-1960

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Abstract

Contemporary Nigeria has been battling insecurity since the end of the civil war of 1967 to 1970. The need to reform and reposition the Nigeria Police Force remains topical and occupies the front burner in national discourse. Several committees have been set up and dozens of reports churned out on this subject. However, history has shown that these efforts have yet to deliver the desired results. The objective of this paper is not to plunge into the various debates for or against decentralization of the current police structure in Nigeria, but to demonstrate how effective the plural policing in colonial Nigeria using the Plateau Lowland Division experience to combat insecurity. Using both primary and secondary sources and statistical data of crimes gleaned from the Native Authority Courts, the paper demonstrates how the Native Authority Police was able to police crime in the defunct Lowland Division from 1926 to 1960.

Keywords: Policing, Lowland Division, Plateau Province, Colonial Period

Introduction

Of the five divisions that made up the Plateau Province (Jos, Pankshin, Lowland (Shendam), Southern, and Jema'a), none was less viable to the colonial economy of the area. However, the cosmopolitan nature of the Jos Division made it the beehive of colonial activities and presented more social problems compared to others, in addition to the fact that the Jos Division was the headquarters of the provincial administration. The importance of the Lowland areas to the colonial government was underscored by its centrality to the various colonial trading routes linking the European merchants to their trading interests in Wase to Ibi through Yelwa to the defunct Muri Province, where they traded on commodities like silk, gum Arabic, pepper among others.¹ Oral sources had it that it was the desire to protect these trading routes and European commercial traders

¹ Interview with Dannis Kwaptong, 60 years, retired Civil Servant, Shendam, 14/12/2004

therein, that informed the various military campaigns and the subsequent conquest and subjugation of this area.²

The Lowland Division refers to the territory situated on the right bank of the River Benue, south of the Central Nigerian highlands. It is the low-lying continuation of the Lower Benue Plains or the Great Muri Plains. The area has, over the years, witnessed some drastic political transformation that has altered its political organisation. During colonialism, the area at different times came under the Muri Province, Bauchi, and then Plateau Province.³ The plain land area under the Plateau Province was referred to as the Lowland Division. This division was one among the five divisions that constituted the Plateau Province when it was created in 1926. With the creation of the present-day Plateau State, the Lowland area now consists of five Local Government Areas; Langtang North, Langtang South, Mikang, Shendam, and Quanpa'an administrative units. The area is home to many ethnic groups such as the Goemai, Taroh, Montol, Piapung, and Kofyer confederation (Kwalla, Kwa, Latok, Bwal, Mirniang, etc.) and Youm.⁴

The impact of colonialism did not however affect some aspects of the geographical and climatic condition of the area. In terms of location, the area is found between latitude 900⁰ and longitude 850⁰. It is bounded in the North by Pankshin Local Government Area and in the South by Benue State.⁵ The area consists of plains and hills with climatic conditions varying between 36^{0c} and 40^{0c}. The weather on the plains is generally hot compared to the Upper Plateau while the soil on the Lowland is richer and fertile than on Plateau Massif. This makes the Lowlands more suitable for the cultivation of beniseed, millet, sorghum, bean, rice, yam, and groundnut. The rich nature of the soil encouraged the cultivation of groundnut in large commercial quantities among the *Taroh* of present-day Langtang and yam among the *Mirniang*, and *Kwalla* of Quanpa'an LGA.⁶

² C.E Jonah, "A Review of Pre-Colonial Administration of Justice in Lowland Division of Plateau Province..." pp.11-12

³ See B.F Bawa, "The Economy and Society in the Lowland Division, 1900-1960: A Study of the Impact of Colonialism" Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Chapter 2 and C.E Jonah "A Review of Pre-colonial Administration of Justice...P.12

⁴ C.E. Jonah, "The Role of Native Authority Police in Crime Management in the Lowland Division of Plateau Province, 1926-1960" *Journal of Research and Contemporary Issues*. Volume 1 and 2. 2009. p.166

⁵ See B.F Bawa, "The Economy and Society in the Lowland Division, 1900-p. 54

⁶ C.E. Jonah, "A Review of Pre-Colonial Administration of Justice in Lowland Division...P.12

The area is drained by River *Shimankar* which outflows its bank and cuts off contacts between communities on either side of the banks for several days and weeks. The tributaries of River *Shimankar* are *Konghess*, *Kalung*, and several others. The flood plains provide rich agricultural land where the people engaged in both upland and swamp cultivation of rice, sugarcane, and yam. The characteristic vegetation of the area is savannah grassland punctuated intermittently by trees and a few hills among are the *Jaalbang*.⁷

The Police in the Colonial Period

One of the many functions of a government is the maintenance of law and order. In the colonial era, the colonial authority found it necessary and indeed compulsory to make provisions for agencies for the maintenance of law and order. In this sense, colonialism was a means of putting in place some form of social order for effective economic exploitation. Thus, the maintenance of law and order was of paramount importance.⁸ The colonial authority maintained two police forces throughout their administration of Nigeria. In the Plateau Province, they were the Government Police and the Native Authority Police as was the case all over the country. The former did essentially a political job of ensuring the acceptance of colonial order and thus, armed and the latter checked crime of a nature that required skills indigenous to the area.⁹

The Government Police or the Nigerian Police was saddled with the responsibility of urban policing after it completed its pacification duties while the Native Authority Police controlled rural policing. Both police forces played a central role in defining and creating exclusive territorial rights for the British settlers.¹⁰ The forces in Nigeria were perceived as residing with the British Crown and were alienated from the daily needs and struggles of the Nigerian population. The present police force followed this orientation in safeguarding the Nigerian state by preying on the people.

⁷ C.E Jonah, "The Police and Crime Management in Jos Division, 1915-1960: Towards an Alternative Approach to Crime Management in Contemporary Nigeria" *Jalingo Journal of African Studies*, Vol 1, No.1 April, 2011 p.177

⁸ A.Onoja, "Policing the Wukari Axis of the Benue Province in the Colonial Period" *Jalingo Historical Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, April, 2011. p.182

⁹ A.Onoja, "Policing the Wukari Axis of the Benue Province in the Colonial Period, p.183

¹⁰ C.S.A.2631816, Secretary of the Northern Provinces to the Chief Secretary in Lagos, 7th December, 1936.p.1

The politics of whether to decentralise the police force hinges on the benefit or otherwise, that will be offered to those who control the force.

The policing philosophy adopted by the Colonial Authority in the province informed what prevailed in all the divisions including the Lowland. This philosophy determined the type of individuals recruited and the quality of training and equipment provided. Up to the 1930s, it was generally felt that,

The primary need was for the force capable of ensuring public safety, not against the criminal in the ordinary sense, but against disturbance and unrest among primitive tribes [sic], not amounting to open rebellion, and of political rather than criminal character.¹¹

This philosophy informed and influenced the calibre of persons recruited and the content of the training programmes for the rank and file.¹² The Hausa, as far as the colonial government was concerned, became the preferred group for the force because they possessed the aggressive warlike disposition the colonial government wanted for accomplishing the task. They constituted the pioneer of the Lagos Police and were not only preferred as recruits in the police and the army but were also wanted throughout West Africa, as the word "Hausa" became synonymous with "Soldiering". Therefore, the utilization of non-local recruits in the colonial police forces emphasizes that the role of the police was not to protect the community but to alienate it and execute the will of the colonial state.¹³

The Native Authority Police in the Lowland Division

The establishment of the Native Authority Force in Western as well as Northern Nigeria was an essential part of the imposition of British colonial rule in Nigeria.¹⁴ The force came into existence either through the adaptation of the pre-colonial police organisation of the centralised emirate system of the north and those of the Yoruba and Edo kingdoms of the west or through

¹¹ P.T. Ahire, "Policing Colonization...P.118 also "The Emergence and Role of Police in Colonial Nigeria" Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1985, p. 118

¹² A.Onoja, "Policing the Wukari Axis of the Benue Province in the Colonial Period...p 180

¹³ A.Onoja, "Policing the Wukari Axis of the Benue Province in the Colonial Period ... p 181

¹⁴ P.T. Ahire, "Policing Colonization...p.118

creation in areas, especially in the more acephalous communities of the north, where they had existed before.¹⁵ But, whichever way they emerged, the British colonial administrations aimed to achieve the following set objectives. Firstly, they hoped to secure the loyalty of the native administration and secondly, to keep down the cost of administration. Third, they intended to build up the native administration.¹⁶ In permitting the establishment of the Native Authority Police Force, the British were guarded by the policy of the home-rule government of policing dependencies. While some wars of conquest lasted in British African dependencies, some kind of armed constabulary was required for the protection of British traders, missionaries, and officials, for the support of friendly non-hostile groups, and for coercion of those people who resisted colonial rule.¹⁷

With the establishment of a settled government which was largely accomplished in the early phases of the 20th Century, it becomes necessary to make conventional policing arrangements embracing the whole of the territory under British administration. Different methods were employed in different places and at different times in a bid to meet this need.¹⁸ Except for the Wase Sub-Emirate, other parts of the Lowland Division were not absorbed into the Northern Emirate system.¹⁹ The absence of such Emirate-typed pre-colonial policing structures in those areas compelled the British Colonial Government to establish one in the Lowland division (which?) to enable her to police this area and to facilitate administrative expediency.²⁰ To actualize this objective, this area saw the recruitment of indigenous people under the supervision of the District Officer.²¹ The recruitment in this division was done at the divisional headquarters where the detachment of the Native Authority Police Force was domiciled and mostly done among them

¹⁵ T.N Tamuno, *The Police in Modern Nigeria: Origin, Development and Role 1861-1965*, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1980), p.188.

¹⁶ T.N Tamuno, *The Police in Modern Nigeria: Origin, Development and Role 1861-1965*... p. 188.

¹⁷ T.N Tamuno, *The Police in Modern Nigeria: Origin, Development and Role 1861-1965*... p. 188.

¹⁸ J.G Nengel who wrote extensively on the Jihad in this area attested to this. Although not conquered by the invading Fulani forces, a kind of mutual relationship existed between these people with the Caliphate known as the "Amana System"

¹⁹ Interview with Dannis Kwaptong, 60 years, retired Civil Servant, Shendam, 14/12/2004

²⁰ NAK/JOSPROF/42/1927: Native Authority Police Force, Recruitment and Training

²¹ T.N. Tamuno, *The Police in Modern Nigeria: Origin, Development and Role 1861-1965*... p. 188.

which includes: the Montol, Yergam, Ankwai, Piapung, and Hausa, and ethnic tribal communities in Wase.

The procedure for recruitment took two forms. Firstly, the Native Authority could recommend a candidate to the Assistant District Officer (ADO) who was in charge of the Native Authority Police Force. The A.D.O would, in turn, recommend to the District Officer whether to be recruited or not. The decision of the District Officer would be communicated to the Native Authority and the Resident. Secondly, the Assistant District Officers could initiate the enlistment process and the recruitment of eligible candidates was referred to the Native Authority and Resident for ratification.²² A logical expectation from the foregoing is that raw men engaged as police should be given the necessary training to fit them in their new callings. Most of those recruited were able-bodied men who had spent some years in the West African Frontier Force.²³The recruitment exercise here was done based on the three districts that made up the Division. These Districts include the Ankwai, Hill, and Plain Yergam Districts.²⁴The statistics as regards the recruitment into the Native Authority Police force in 1927 are shown below:

Table 1: Showing numbers of recruits into NAPF for the Division in 1927

Districts	Number of Recruits
Ankwai	8
Hill Yergam	5
Plain Yergam	6
Wase	8
Total	27

Source: NAK/Plateau Prof /367/1927

²² NAK/JOSPROF/468 Vol II: Native Authority Police Force

²³ NAK/JOSPROF/28/1928: Shendam Division Annual Report

²⁴ NAK/JOSPROF/451/1929: Annual Report Plateau Province with Divisional Aspect

Table 1 above shows a total of twenty-seven persons who were recruited into the Native Authority Police Force (NAPF) in 1927 with Ankwai and Wase areas having eight each, the Plain Yergam with six, while the Hill Yergam had five.

. The figures of recruitments enunciated above were maintained in the various districts alongside the Government Police force in the division to police crime until such development was altered by the economic hardship that enveloped the division in particular and the world in general in 1929.²⁵ The development brought about economic hardship in the division and increased the level of crime, hence the need for more hands to police the area. The number of the NAPFs increased compared to what was obtainable in 1927. The 1929 figures are shown in Table II below:

Table 2: Showing Numbers of Recruited Personnel in 1929

District	Number of Recruits
Ankwai	20
Hill Yergam	9
Plain Yergam	7
Wase	14
Total	50

Source NAK/Plateau Prof/456/1929

Table 2 above shows an increment in recruited personnel in the division with the Ankwei District with twenty; Hill and Plain Yergam with Nine and Seven respectively; while Wase had fourteen. This increase in the strength of the Native Authority Police coupled with the re-organization exercise of the Yan Doka forces that was still on during this period enabled them to police this division during this period of economic recession.²⁶

²⁵ NAK/JOSPROF/451/1929: Annual Report Plateau Province with Divisional Aspect

²⁶ NAK/JOSPROF468/ Vol II: Native Authority Police, Improvement and efficiency

In terms of training, the recruits were drilled by the senior non-commissioned officers in the unit, in most cases, ex-soldiers. Occasionally, the Assistant District officer in charge of the NAF gave lectures on the duties of policemen and how to keep station records, make arrests, and handle criminals.²⁷ In the divisional headquarters, the NAPF were drilled and trained by the Government Police Force put differently, they were trained in the same pattern as the Government Police. This was possible as a result of the interaction among them. The idea of this became necessary at the meeting between the Resident and the Commissioner of Police in 1928. Thus: "...the head of the NAPF and the sergeant-major of the Government Police should meet weekly for exchange of news and possible cooperation."²⁸

The said cooperation through training and exchange of useful intelligent information not only brought about a harmonious relationship between the Government Police and NAPF, but it also brought about effective policing and thus reduction in crimes as the annual reports of 1935 aptly captured thus:

... once again, I can record with satisfaction the very close cooperation between the government Police and NAPF and it is owing to their combined and mutual efforts that so many criminals have been brought to justice... not only is all useful information shared between the two forces, but personal contact also maintained and conference official and unofficial, are held in Jos at frequent interval.²⁹

From 1925 up to around 1960, the NAPF in the division witnessed improvement in both training and equipment.³⁰ The 1925 reform or the re-organization of the Yan-doka force set a new stage for the N. A Police Force training. Through these reforms, they were given special training at the police training college in Kaduna. The native police force in the lowlands benefited tremendously, especially as regards attending training at Kaduna.³¹ For example, between 1927 and 1930, twenty persons from the various districts that made up the division benefited from the

²⁷ NAK/JOSPROF468/ Vol II: Native Authority Police, Improvement and efficiency of N.A Police Force,1930-1937

²⁸ NAK/JOSPROF/47/1935 Provincial Reports Departmental

²⁹ NAK/JOSPROF/486/1928: Annual Report, Plateau Province

³⁰ NAK/JOSPROF468/ Vol II: Native Authority Police, Improvement and efficiency of N.A Police Force,1930-1937

³¹ NAK/JOSPROF/387/1940: Shendam Annual Report

training which took place in Kaduna. The trend continued to increase until 1940 when those sent for training for that year were not admitted because they were infected with gonorrhoea.³²

In terms of equipment, the Native Police Force in the Lowland Division from the onset was armed with batons to carry out their various functions of arresting criminals and protecting the rights and property of citizens.³³ In 1929, the N. A Police was equipped with a Waist Belt. This was to enable them to effect arrest where the suspect proves stubborn and unbending to arrest. The equipping of the Police with a waist belt was one of the improvements towards equipping the N. A Police which coincided with the Provincial demand by the division for arming the N.A Police Force with Greene Guns.³⁴ The demand became increasingly pronounced as a result of the increase in the number of crimes which was necessitated by the economic hardship that engulfed this area between 1929 and 1930 and also the execution of the Second World War in the 1930s by the Colonial Government. This was contained in the memorandum submitted by the District Officer to the Resident of the Plateau Province: Thus,

... the native administration is also on the track of several well-known criminals who have sworn that they will not be taken alive and who will not hesitate to resist arrest. I am afraid that as unemployment increases in this division so will such crimes of violence. A number of the unemployed are ex-soldiers who have become detribalized and are not amendable to anything but strict discipline and I consider that it would have a wholesome effect throughout the Division (and Province) if it were known that the N. A Police was armed with Firearms.³⁵

Although, the demand for arming the NAPF with green guns was rejected by the Residents of the Province because he thought the NAPF were not yet trained both physically and mentally,

³² NAK/JOSPROF/4849: Arming the Yan-Doka Force

³³ NAK/JOSPROF/486: Native Authority Police Force, Arms and Equipment

³⁴ NAK/JOSPROF/486: Native Authority Police Force, Arms and Equipment

³⁵ NAK/JOSPROF/486: Native Authority Police Force, Arms and Equipment

to carry weapons, in the interim, an effective body of men was recruited to combat the rising waves of criminal activities in the Lowland in particular and the Plateau Province as a whole.³⁶

The Nature of Crime in the Lowland Division

Criminal activities in this division were both internal and external. The internal nature of crime could be seen in the activities of the natives especially the Montol ethnic group of the Shendam District who were accused and conquered by the British colonial power because of their alleged involvement in "Highway robbery" (is internal crime an interpretation of colonial administration?). Thus, they continued to resist colonial rule through crime such as the assassination of British colonial officers especially those sent to administer the area, and through stealing of livestock from herders. The external nature of crime in the division could be seen in the raiding activities of the Pai people of the Pankshin Division, who, times without number, intrude into this Lowland division to carry out their mischievous acts. The nature of crime, during the period under review, varied. They ranged from criminal acts such as manslaughter, stealing with violence of both livestock and farm produce, burglary, and rape, to civil acts such as fighting, adultery, and tax evasion.

Both the colonial Administration and the indigenes have different perceptions as to what constituted crimes. The people of this division, in the first decade of colonial rule, resisted the erosion of their sovereignty through the commission of crimes. Instances of these abound among the Montol and the Dimmuk people. The former resisted colonial rule by conducting offensive attacks on the colonial post in their area killing some of the colonial officers in the process. They also attacked British official on the highways, shut them with poisonous arrows, and robbed them of their valuables. Dimmuk also resisted the imposition of taxation on them by the colonial power. Their resistance became so severe that in the 1930s, an attempt to capture their leaders led to the death of Captain C. M. Barlow, a British colonial officer. A Colonial document pointed that:

³⁶ AR4/1/19/1/AR: Annual Reports on the Northern Provinces of Nigeria for the year 1933, p.52.

...on the whole, the year has passed peacefully and quietly unmarred by any serious disturbance except for a night attack on the Divisional Officers Camp by a handful of *Dimmuk* outlaws in the hills last May. Ten raffle shots from the Police Escort sufficed to make the tribesmen change their minds before the infliction of casualty to either side, but the incident brought to light the fact that there remained in the hills some eighty abled-bodied men, with their families, who had hitherto evaded all forms of authority and whose names had never even appeared in Census Register [sic].³⁷

On the *Montol* group of the division, the same document opined that:

... another incident that might have had serious consequences occurred in the same division during February when two *Montols*, having wounded the tribal Chief on his demanding the payment of their taxes, raised the war cry and endeavoured to persuade the villagers to revolt. Fortunately, however, the Maltby disaster of 1913 and the subsequent events are still fresh in the minds of these people and so unanimous was the lack of response to the would-be anarchist's appeal that the latter were arrested without difficulty by the *Kurrum*'s entourage.³⁸

Gleaning from the above, it is evidence that the people of the division resist colonial domination through the commission of crime.

Crime and criminality in the division changed in concord with international development. The increase in crime level from 1929 up to 1932 was a response to the economic hardship occasioned by the economic depression of the 1920s and 1930s. Similarly, the decrease in crime recorded between 1939 was due to the forceful involvement of people of the division in the Second World War. The Division was involved in the decolonization process. From the early 1940s through 1960, crime and criminality changed to revolts, riots, and demonstrations occasioned by the introduction of party politics during this period.

³⁷ AR4/1/19/1/AR: Annual Reports on the Northern Provinces of Nigeria for the year 1933, p.52

³⁸ NAK/JOSPROF/431/1940: Shendam Division Annual Report

Policing Crime, 1929-1939

As stated in the foregoing, crime was used in the early phase of colonial rule as an instrument of resistance to colonial rule by the people of the division. Although the rate of crime was high in 1926, it was low when compared to the crime rate in 1929. Thus, an evaluation of cases gleaned from the various Native Courts will further buttress the point.

Table 1: Crime Statistics as gleaned from Native Courts Records

	1926		1927		1928		1929	
Courts	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal
Shendam	9	4	8	2	140	83	92	110
Kwande	4	9	6	5	140	29	97	17
Kwolla	5	5	-	-	74	46	73	38
Kwong	9	5	4	7	-	-	54	4
Dimmuk	4	9	9	4	-	-	-	-
Yargam	9	9	10	6	46	63	68	73
Alkali	5	4	-	-	-	-	253	39
Insher	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

NAK/Jos Prof/41/1926; NAK/Jos Prof/387/1927; NAK/Jos Prof/28/1928; NAK/Jos Prof/465/1929

As noted in the above statistical data, it is clear that the rate of crime in the division increased tremendously in 1929 (and even continued into the 1930s) compared to what was obtainable in 1926. The comparative table below will further buttress the trends of development.

Table 2: Comparative Statistics of Crime in the Lowland, 1926 and 1929

Year	Civil	Criminal	Total
1926	54	54	108
1929	637	286	923

NAK/Jos Prof/41/1926; NAK/Jos Prof/456/1929

From the table above, 108 civil and criminal cases were recorded in 1926, while 923 civil and criminal cases were recorded in 1929. The sudden increase in crime both civil and criminal cases as indicated in the table above is adduced to the economic hardship that swept the world economy vis-a-vis that of the division during the period.³⁹ The economic depression brought about massive retrenchment by the colonial authorities, unemployment, and economic hardship, prices of food skyrocketed while wages and salaries fell to the barest minimum. The effect of this was that the mass reserve of unemployed in the division became engaged in crime to improve their standard of living.⁴⁰ Another far-reaching effect of the economic depression on crime was an increase in immoral acts among the natives. Women became more promiscuous as their husbands could not meet up with their numerous materialistic demands. While their male counterparts indulged in stealing. A typical example could be seen in the court case of Rex vs. Magaji Kalong in 1929. The latter was accused of stealing from the Niger Company store at Tunga and was sentenced to twelve months. These criminal activities carried out by the natives lead to an increase in crimes as shown in the comparative table above. The trend of development continued right into the 1930s.

A notable landmark in policing during this period was the arrest and the complete subjugation of the Dimmuk resistance through Police action. Those who participated in the tour with Mr. Barlow were later given the honour by the colonial government as a way of motivating them. For instance, Corporal Ahmadu Panda was awarded the King's Police Medal for taking the

³⁹ Focus group discussion with Leonard Shaiyen, 78 years; J.S Madugu 72 years; Daniel Magwen Nyelong 76 years and Sabo Lumi, 69years.Shendam 21st April, 2009.

⁴⁰ NAK/JOSPROF/42/1930: Shendam Divisional Report for the year ending 1929. pp. 6-7

unconscious Mr Barlow to 'safety', while the ten police constables under his command were awarded, the African Police Medal for Meritorious Service.⁴¹ Following the Barlow's incident, a police Patrol consisting of 55 rank and file and under the command of Captain J.R Anderson, commissioner of Police was deployed to the area and was able to gain the surrender of all the hill villages, confiscated all arms and weapons and arrested the ring leaders.⁴²

One of the major operations was the escort which patrolled the *Dimmuk* hills between 15th March and 15th June and consisted of 50 Ranks and Files drawn from Jos, Kano, Zaria, Kaduna, and Minna detachments under the command of Mr. Marley and accompanied by Mr. H.C Gill as political officers. Through this patrol conducted by the Police, the remnant of resistance of the *Dimmuk* was overcome and the police activities in that operation were commendable as noted by the then Resident of the Province Thus:

... in submitting the final report on these operations, I was able to express my appreciation for the splendid conduct and discipline of the police who kept up the best tradition of service under arduous and trying conditions ... the NAPF has continued to do useful work with an all-round improvement in discipline and efficiency.⁴³

Most of those who formed the core of the NAPF were ex-police officers and ex-soldiers of exemplary character. Worthy of note was the commanding officer Bako, ex-Sergeant Major, mounted infantry whose tactics, discipline, and selfless services he rendered to the government Police of Captain Spender during the *Dimmuk* patrols caught the attention of the then Resident, Plateau Province who noted. Thus:

.. His loyalty, outstanding ability, and energy in all matters connected to police work are deserving of high praise. He has a noticeable command over his men who regard him with great respect.⁴⁴

From 1930 to 1939, the Division witnessed an increase in the rate of crimes. This increase which was caused by the poor economic situation was seen as the continuation of the economic

⁴¹ NAK/JOSPROF/42/1930: Shendam Divisional Report for the year ending 1929. pp. 6-7

⁴² NAK/JOSPROF/42/1930: Shendam Divisional Report for the year ending 1929. pp 6-7

⁴³ NAK/JOSPROF/42/1930: Shendam Divisional Report for the year ending 1929. P 6-7

⁴⁴ C.E Jonah, "Policing the Lowland Division in the Colonial Period: A Study of the Native Authority Police Force, 1926-1960" B.A Project, Department of History, Nasarawa State University Keffi. August 2005

hardship technically known as the economic depression that enveloped the whole division in late 1929 up to 1933 when it was overcome in the leading capitalist countries. Although the situation had started taking shape, the impact was still felt in most countries that during this period were still dependent and peripheral to Western capitalist economics.⁴⁵ The manifestation of this in the Lowland was the increase in the level of crime from the 1930s which reached its peak in 1938 and then declined in 1939 as shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Crime Statistics, 1930-1939

	1930		1933		1936		1938		1939	
Courts	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal
Shendam	91	67	174	96	176	80	184	99	180	90
Kwande	102	33	90	18	100	19	100	20	90	10
Kwolla	74	21	50	24	40	60	54	28	50	24
Kwong	50	14	51	10	54	11	50	11	51	8
Dimbuk	28	8	40	15	50	16	50	15	15	20
Yargam	88	69	100	60	104	70	102	65	102	10
Alkali	337	375	300	40	304	60	310	40	208	20
Montol	-	-	7	10	10	19	60	15	10	16
H/Yergam	-	-	4	20	9	24	8	22	22	8

**NAK/JOSPROF/468/1930, NAK/JOSPROF/36/1933, NAK/JOSPROF/426/1936,
NAK/JOSPROF/627/1938, NAK/JOSPROF/643/1939**

Apart from the pause in 1930, the cases of crimes in the division increased steadily from 1931 reached its peak in 1938, and began to decline in 1939. The figure for 1940 shows a slight increase again but was still below the maximum reached in 1938. The position will be better seen in the following key figures

⁴⁵ C.E Jonah, “ Policing the Lowland Division in the Colonial Period...p.57

Table 4: Comparison of Crime Figures, 1933-1940

Years	Criminal	Civil	Total
1933, before the increase started	161	512	673
1938, when the maximum was attained	412	1050	1462
1939, when the first setback was noticed	354	943	1297
1940	389	996	1385

NAK/JOSPROF/36/1933, NAK/JOSPROF/627/1938, NAK/JOSPROF/643/1939, NAK/JOSPROF/3874/1940

The increase in civil cases as shown in the table above, especially in the period predating 1939 was a continuation of the effect of the economic hardship of the late 1920s and the early 1930s on the division. Ideally, the Shendam district which surpassed others in population is expected to carry a large number of crimes compared to others, but this was not the case as the Alkali court carried the highest numbers of civil cases. The explanation given to this trend was that the Alkali court, which was predominantly a Moslem court, saw the inflow of cases because of the Moslem determination to settle their differences in the court of law, while more often than not, other natives always settled their cases in the traditional ways, hence, did not find their way into the colonial records.⁴⁶

The reduction witnessed in the rate of crime in the lowland division as shown in the table above was associated with the mass involvement and recruitment of most African population in general and Nigerians in particular to participate in the Second World War.⁴⁷ The area witnessed the forceful conscription of manpower from Africa to participate in the war on the side of their colonial masters. The number of Africans who participated in both British and French West Africa cannot be overestimated. In British West Africa for instance, youth were forcefully conscripted en

⁴⁶ C.E Jonah, “ Policing the Lowland Division in the Colonial Period...p.57-58

⁴⁷ C.E Jonah, “ Policing the Lowland Division in the Colonial Period...p.58

mass to contend with the German forces in German Togoland, Somaliland, and Tanganyika.⁴⁸ Such involvement kept most of the population of this division busy throughout the warring period. More so, such mass participation did not only reduce the rate of crime in the division in particular and the province in general, but it also changed the division. The nature of crime in the division especially after the Second World War changed from stealing livestock, tax evasion, adultery, and highway robbery to rioting, demonstration, and revolt as means of resisting colonial domination.⁴⁹

Besides the statistics of both criminal and civil cases heard at the various native courts, the Provincial Court, in 1935 also dealt with sixteen criminal cases resulting in fifteen convictions one acquittal, and two civil actions. In addition, no assizes were held by the Supreme Court in 1934 while the station Magistrate heard 48 criminal cases and 29 civil cases from January 1st to March 31st, 1934.⁵⁰

To deal with the rising numbers of crimes and to effectively police the division, in particular, and the province in general, the Government Police Detachment was established under the command of Capt. J.T Spender. This includes one Commissioner, one Assistant Commissioner, and 216 Rank and Files of whom 44 were employed in Bauchi and Borno, and the remainder were distributed within the Plateau Province with 79 posted to the Headquarters, 16 posted to the railway comprising Jos, Bukuru, and Kafancha; 25 posted to Lowland and 20 and 17 to Wamba and Kafanchan respectively.⁵¹

Policing Crime, 1940-1960

The decade was eventful for both the colonial authority and the colonized. They were saddled with fighting the war and at the same time, keeping a hold of the colonial possession amidst mounting problems of administration and internal resistance from the people. There was the enlistment of considerable numbers of young men into the army⁵² and a reduction in the

⁴⁸ C.E Jonah, "Policing the Lowland Division in the Colonial Period...p.58

⁴⁹ NAK/JOSPROF/47/1935 Provincial Reports Departmental

⁵⁰ NAK/JOSPROF/47/1935: Provincial Reports Departmental

⁵¹ NAK/JOSPROF/47/1935: Provincial Reports Departmental

⁵² NAK/JOSPROF/49/1940: Provincial Annual Report

strength of the administrative officers and other support staff. The people have had to be sacrificed in the provision of men and materials for the war effort. Such efforts resulted in the reduction of the Nigeria Police detachment and Native Administrative Police whose ranks were decimated by the call-up of so many of its trusted members. The overall effect of these was the reduction of crimes in the province. With many people moving out to enlist in the war against the Nazist, too few idle hands remained to cause mischief.⁵³

The province continued with its efforts to improve the NAPF by sending members to Jos for courses of instruction that were considered valuable in training N.A Police in Government police methods. The native administrative police were encouraged to call in the aid of Government police to assist them in the detection of serious crimes and the presentation of criminal cases in the court. *Dogarai*, where they existed were being absorbed into the police forces or converted to messenger's status, as the NA was still finding it difficult to recruit literate persons.⁵⁴

The early phase of the 1940s witnessed a decline in the level of crime in the division. The decline was a result of the participation of Africans in general and Nigerians and the people of the division in particular in the Second World War. The rate of crimes only rose towards the close of the decade in 1946 as shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Crime Statistics, 1940-1946

	1940		1941		1942		1945		1946	
Court	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal
Shendam	107	20	104	19	107	25	109	50	250	79
Kwande	90	11	60	15	100	10	102	30	40	15
Kwolla	40	17	50	14	50	10	94	25	90	40
Kwong	49	12	60	10	60	6	17	4	70	40
Dimmuk	60	8	60	5	70	2	16	4	100	60

⁵³ NAK/JOSPROF/49/1940: Provincial Annual Report

⁵⁴ SNP/19/2/AR.14: Provincial Annual Report, 1956

Yergam	70	10	40	6	65	4	90	20	69	30
Alkali	30	4	40	10	60	3	40	3	300	40
Insher	-	-	-	-	4	9	10	8	18	10
Total	446	82	414	79	516	69	418	144	937	314

Source: *Culled from the Provincial Reports of 1940, 1941, 1942, 1945, 1946*

The Plateau Province became a centre for political activism during the decolonization process. The first direct election was held in the Jos urban area on the 15th of November 1956, when the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) candidate with the solid support of the NCNC in the township won the seat by a large margin. Bitrus Rwang, the son of the Chief won the Jos Division for the Jos tribal area an ally of the United Middle Belt Congress (Lot Wing). Both Pankshin seats and Jama'a went to the same party. Lowland division and Akwanga supported the Northern People's Congress.⁵⁵ The province during this period witnessed serious forms of demonstration, and in some cases, strikes thus presenting a serious challenge to security provision in the province in general. In handling this rising wave of crimes by the police, the Provincial annual report of 1955 succinctly captured the way and manner in which the police handled it. Thus:

The Federal and Native Authority Police Force dealt with small disturbances in the lowland in July between two political parties. The police were also exceptionally successful in dealing with violence and intimation in the strike and in piloting into and out of Jos a demonstration march of over 2000 strikers without incident.⁵⁶

As pointed out in the foregone, the period 1950s witnessed a change in criminal activities in the Lowland division. This was made possible by the development witnessed in the political terrain of the country as a whole. These changes which became pronounced in 1951 and 1952 were caused by the formation of political parties in the preceding years and the introduction of party politics in the area. The new development made crime activities such as stealing of livestock, farm

⁵⁵ 19/2/AR.13: Provincial Annual Report, 1955 , P .120

⁵⁶ NAK/JOSPROF/4674/1955: Intelligent Report on Police

produce, adultery, and highway robbery, less overt and replaced them with rioting, revolt, and demonstrations as indicated in the intelligent report of 1952:

The rise in crime activities such as demonstrations, and revolt by the people in the last few months are not only associated with their military knowledge but also the introduction of party politics in this area in the preceding years.⁵⁷

In the years 1953 and 1954, the British Colonial Government in the Lowland division together with the N. A Police force has to contain the rising level and new waves of crime of demonstration against colonial rule became more overt. The report of the native courts to the Resident, Plateau Province in 1954 shows that:

... twenty-four persons from the Lowland Division in the previous two years have been jailed into various sentences in the Native Authority prisons for demonstrating against the colonial Government.⁵⁸

Conclusion

The preceding analysis presents a picture of the crime situation in the Lowland division of the defunct Plateau Province in the colonial period. While the work will not claim to be exhaustive due to the paucity of material in both the archive and people's recollection of events in the period, it nevertheless offers a platform for understanding and appreciating the context of crime in the area from a historical perspective. The police who took charge of the situation were recruited locally and in line with colonial policy. They were trained and provisioned by the divisional authority and in the course of the discharge of their responsibility, sought cooperation with the Government police in investigating serious crime and in application of modern techniques. To the extent that they were able to work together and overcome all obstacles rendered self-serving the arguments of those against dual policing.

Much of the crime and policing work in the division was minimal when compared with other divisions in the province, especially the Jos Division. But this did not make the division less

⁵⁷ NAK/JOSPROF/4674/1955: Intelligent Report on Police

⁵⁸ NAK/JOSPROF/4674/1955: Intelligent Report on Police

viable to the colonial government as it also provided its peculiarity in crime commission during the period under review. The native authority police also provided security for the division in the course of the decolonization and emergence of party politics.