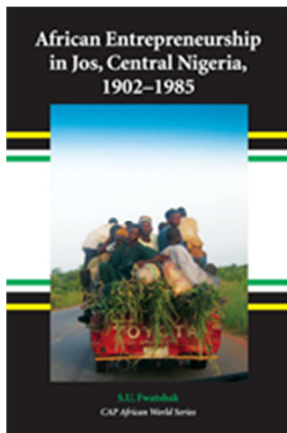


A Review of *African Entrepreneurship in Jos, Central Nigeria, 1902-1985* by S.U. Fwatshak (CAP African World Series. Durham: North Carolina, Carolina Academic Press, 2011. 249 pp., ISBN 987-1594608469) by Jonathan T. Reynolds (reynoljo@nku.edu), Professor of History, Department of History and Geography, Northern Kentucky University.



Within the field of African Economic History, there are few topics more controversial than the legacy of African economic development under colonialism and since independence. In this carefully researched and well-written text, S.U. Fwatshak of the University of Jos Department of History provides us with an interesting insight into entrepreneurship and economic transformation in and around the city of Jos Nigeria. While a number of general studies of African Economic History exist, and various scholars have examined case studies of major urban centers such as Kano and Lagos in Nigeria, Fwatshak helps to address a gap in the literature by examining 20<sup>th</sup> Century economic transformations in Jos – a beautiful city that is nonetheless an otherwise under-researched example of a mid-sized Nigerian urban center. To this end, Fwatshak provides us with a broad chronological survey from roughly 1902 to 1985, divided into a series of smaller eras represented by four chronological chapters (Chs 3-7). Each chapter examines a variety of economic activities, grouped roughly under the headings of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry.

Fwatshak begins *African Entrepreneurship in Jos*, with two chapters providing a brief survey on core works and debates in African economic history and sociology. In particular, these chapters focus on the extremes of proponents of colonialism as a source of economic development and on dependency theorists. While useful to those new to the subject, these chapters may seem a bit simple and familiar to others with more grounding in the field.

This text truly comes into its own when Fwatshak begins to offer insights into the Jos region's economic development. Chapter Four, which surveys the region's pre-colonial economy, establishes a useful baseline against which to compare later material relating to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Particularly interesting in this chapter is the information regarding the history of tin mining in the region. Indeed, Fwatshak's brief survey of the topic suggests that there is considerable research left to be done to help us understand this very important component of West Africa's pre-colonial metallurgy and economy. Fwatshak also helps to establish that the plateau region was integrated into wider systems of regional exchange, by citing examples of trade north to the savannahs and south to the rain forests nearer to the coast. Notably, these connections could also be a hindrance to economic development, and Fwatshak highlights the role of both the Jokun wars and expansion of the Sokoto Caliphate as creating climates of insecurity which undermined trade and production.

Chapter Five, which examines the early colonial period from 1902-1945, provides an excellent case study of the impact of the imposition of (British) colonialism and the incorporation of the region into the global economy – largely as an exporter of tin. Here, Fwatshak's research into primary documents available at the Nigerian National Archives, Kaduna, is especially valuable. In so doing, he is not only able to chart the region's urbanization, but also examine the growth of different sectors of the colonial economy, including banking and the growing influence of "Levantine" (Middle Eastern merchants and businesspeople). Particularly interesting, however, is the information provided about how local and other Nigerian entrepreneurs carved out space for themselves even under the restrictive colonial economic environment. Examples here include Hausa and Igbo lumber traders, transport workers, and women who established food vending and restaurant businesses.

In Chapter Six, the author examines the late colonial period from 1945 -1960. Here he traces the shift away from the more exclusionary economic policies of the early colonial period, and highlights the often energetic economic response of local and Nigerian entrepreneurs to the less restrictive economic environment. Particularly useful here are interviews undertaken by Fwatshak with local businesspeople who were economically active during the time.

Fwatshak concludes his text with a chapter on economic development in the independence period from 1960 to 1985. Here he highlights just how complex and in many ways successful entrepreneurship was in the region, even despite the Nigerian Civil War and the instability of oil prices. Specific topics examined include the controversial "indigenization" measures of the 1970s and the role of state-owned enterprises.

There is much to appreciate in this brief work. Indeed, while Fwatshak gives only brief attention to any one period or topic, he not only highlights the vibrancy of entrepreneurship in the region, but also the amount of work left to be done in writing the economic history of the plateau area. Fwatshak's narrative survey, along with the provision of much useful data in his appendices and bibliography, will help pave the way for other researchers to follow. This reader, in particular, would be interested to see more research undertaken on the region's role in transport entrepreneurship and the growth of Jos as destination for Nigerian domestic tourism. More examples of brief biographical essays of entrepreneurs, like those tantalizingly offered in Chapter Six, would also be welcome.