



EXPLORING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF PRE-COLONIAL NON-MECHANISED TRANSPORT SYSTEMS IN ILORIN EMIRATE

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Abstract

Transport and transportation systems in pre-colonial Africa were important aspects of Nigeria's pre-colonial socio-economic history. Prior to the period of colonial rule and the introduction of mechanised transport systems, the movement of goods and services across domestic and national borders was not alien to Nigerian pre-colonial societies. As against the colonial historiography which described pre-colonial transport and transportation systems as primitive, backward, and incapable of supporting economic growth and development, the article demonstrates, through a thorough examination of pre-colonial transport and transportation systems in the Ilorin Emirate, that such arguments are untrue. Ilorin Emirate, like other pre-colonial towns, has a record of different pre-colonial transportation systems in operation to support its economic growth, trade and market systems, and inter-economic relations. Among the pre-colonial transportation systems widely used in the Ilorin Emirate were the Porterage system and the use of animal packs (camel, horses, and donkeys). These identified pre-colonial non-mechanised transport systems contributed significantly to the growth and development of the Ilorin Emirate. Through these transportation systems, revenues were generated through tolls and taxes, and the expansion of trade and markets, among others, were experienced. The paper relies on primary and secondary sources of data to interrogate the contributions of pre-colonial non-mechanised transport systems.

Keywords: Ilorin Emirate, Non-mechanised, Pre-colonial, Socio-economic, Transportation

Introduction

Transport and transportation systems studies in West Africa are not the exclusive domain of any discipline but are shared by many fields of inquiry, each with its own set of perspectives. For instance, economists are particularly concerned with assessing the demand for transportation and the cost of overcoming distance, whereas geographers regard transportation systems as one of the

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primary factors influencing the location and distribution of economic and social activities. Transport systems are examined from the perspective of human mobility by migration and social scientists. In other words, they are most interested in how transportation systems have aided human migration across space and time. While these fields of study have emphasised the importance of transportation systems, the field of history also provides significant insight into transportation and transportation discourse. A “transport historian’s” primary focus is on the origins, changes, and continuities of transportation systems in human activities.

Transportation plays an important role in human endeavours. As Hillings & Hoyle (1970) observed, that “the transport sector may, with some justification, be regarded as an epitome of relationships between terrain, economic history, social and political systems, and levels and patterns of development”. Omokala contended that transportation is a critical factor in all economic activity. Transportation is the act of moving people, goods, information, and services through time and space (Omokala, 2015). Given the importance of transportation, man has constantly devised modes of transportation, which are influenced by the peculiarities of their environment. For example, among the Nupes and Ijaws, transportation has been severely limited to the use of canoes (Udo, 1980). In this area, navigable waters formed the major routes for migration and trade.

However, colonial historiography has described pre-colonial transportation and transportation systems as primitive, backward, and incapable of supporting economic growth and development. Hopkins (2014), provided three frameworks for analysing and measuring the efficiency of a transportation system against backwardness or primitiveness in support of these arguments. First, the physical availability of transportation determines the geographical size of the market. Pre-colonial transport certainly provided extensive coverage, connecting caravans to periodic markets and providing what was essentially a door-to-door service via head-loading. Second, the volume carried out is determined by the system’s freight capacity. At first glance, West African transport may appear to be deficient in this regard. Fortunately, this hypothesis can be tested against the example of the nineteenth century, when there was a massive increase in the volume of goods carried while established modes of transportation remained unchanged. Third, the cost of transportation defines the social depth of the market. There is no doubt that African modes of transportation were inadequate in this case. It is difficult to assess transportation costs, but it is clear that the value added to long-distance trade was significant (Udo, 1980:188). Head-loading

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was particularly expensive, and goods could only be transported a short distance before the cost of transportation exceeded the profit on sales. Hence, the article examines the socioeconomic dynamics of pre-colonial transportation and transportation systems in Ilorin Emirate under this premise.

The article is divided into three sections, apart from the introduction and conclusion. The first section highlighted methodology used for the study. Second section examined the various non-mechanical transport systems in pre-colonial Ilorin, while the last section examined the socio-economic and political roles of these transport systems in the transformation of Ilorin and its environs before colonial rule.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative method, relied on both primary and secondary data sources. In-depth interviews were gathered from community elders that had experience and knowledge on the subject matter and the archival material was also gotten from National Archive Kaduna. Interviews were conducted in Yoruba language in order to allow the respondents to express their understanding on pre-colonial transportation system in Ilorin Emirate. The interview was recorded in a tape recorder. The information gathered from the interview was ere analysed using content analysis. This entails thoroughly transcribed of all of the audio-recorded interviews from Yoruba to English and reading the transcripts systematically to make analyse the data, corroborate information gathered and reflected methodically the opinions of the respondents. By identifying themes elicited from the respondents, a thorough analysis of the information from the interview information was presented thematically in juxtaposition with secondary data gotten from books and peer-reviewed journals.

Pre-colonial Non-Mechanised Transport Systems in Ilorin

Ilorin is located between the North and South of the river Niger. It is situated on latitude 8030 North and Longitude 4035 East. It is a transitional Zone between the open savannah belt, of which Ilorin is an integral part, and the forest area some distance to the south of Ilorin. It has a multi-ethnic composition, comprising the Yorubas, Hausas, Gobirawas, Fulanis, Baribas, Gwaris and Nupes (Jawondo & Salihu, 2006). Given the multicultural ethnic identity, the town is often described as a “cultural melting pot”. The geographical location of Ilorin in pre-colonial Nigeria positions it as an important centre of trade and trading activities, Hence, it is appropriate research

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setting for understanding pre-colonial transport systems. The environment and climatic conditions are suitable for farming, hunting, animal husbandry and trade. This perhaps explains why the area was attractive to various groups of people and occupational activities that migrated to the area. Added to this was that the location is as good as a Centerport of the trade from both the northern and southern parts of the river Niger, particularly from Hausaland to its north and Yoruba land to its south. Therefore, the city commanded a strategic position right from the beginning. These advantages, taken together, have featured transport and transportation systems which aided the socioeconomic growth and development of the town before colonial rule.

The majority of pre-colonial transportation in Ilorin was by land. Unlike the Nupe emirates of Bida and Lafiagi, which had a combination of water and road transport systems, the Ilorin relied on and survived primarily on land, resulting in the use of human portorage and animal packs, which describes the Ilorin transportation features. Human portorage and animal pack systems are used in the pre-colonial transportation system in Ilorin. These two modes of transportation served as the foundation for indigenous modes of transportation (O’Hear, 1984). The systems were used until the early twentieth century when the British colonialists introduced modern modes of transportation.

Human Portorage as Pre-colonial Transport System in Ilorin

Human portorage was the most common and oldest traditional mode of transportation in Ilorin. It was a mode of transportation used by people of various social classes, including rulers and subjects. Human portorage was the primary and most widely used mode of transportation among the peoples of the hinterland. In terms of distance travelled, porters covered fewer kilometres per hour or even daily than other modes of transportation during the period (Ogunremi, 1975). The number of kilometres travelled differed between short and long-distance trips. In terms of speed, porters typically walked at three to three and a half miles per hour. Her valuables were transported from one location to another on her head. It was a form of transportation that was not seasonal; rather, it was available all year (Raji et al., 2013: 48). The system was not unique to Ilorin but was common in pre-colonial Nigerian societies. Human portorage was the most widely used mode of transportation (Ogunremi, 1975). In pre-colonial Nigeria, the portorage system was not only popular but also affordable and widely available as a mode of transportation. Ogunremi observed the pre-colonial human portorage system as follows: “*Human porters used local roads or bush*





paths to connect neighbouring villages, city-states, and even kingdoms and empires throughout pre-colonial Nigeria” (Ogunremi, 1975).

Porter hire, in which people, particularly women, hired themselves as carriers, was common in the nineteenth century. When Clapperton visited the Hausaland in 1826, he noted that women hired themselves as porters to travel as far as Kiama in Borguland (Clapperton, 2013: 68). Porters, on the other hand, had a limited carrying capacity when compared to canoes, donkeys, horses, or even camels. For example, where a porter carried 60-70 lbs, a donkey carried 100-120 lbs (Ogunremi, 1975). In terms of distance travelled, porters covered fewer kilometres per hour or even daily than other modes of transportation during the period. The number of kilometres travelled varied between short and long-distance trips. In terms of speed, porters typically walked at three to three and a half miles per hour (Ogunremi, 1975: 217). However, factors such as heavy rain, ferry or toll gate delays, the weight of the load, or even the state of the road could all affect the speed. It is worth noting that the porter could travel at least 20 miles per day. It should be noted that porters were capable of covering at least 20 miles per day (Ogunremi, 1975). Statistics from Ogunremi’s work revealed that the porters covered the 300-mile Iwo-Ogbomoso-Ilorin-Shonga route in fifteen days (Ogunremi, 1975, p.216). Porters’ wages in pre-colonial Ilorin were based on a barter system. Cowries were used to pay the porters before the advent of new forms of exchange. However, when the white man arrived in the century, each porter received 18 pence per day. In the pre-colonial period, this was equivalent to 3 to 4 bags of cowries (Ogunremi, 1975: 217-221).

Furthermore, human portage was used for subsistence portage in Ilorin. It is commonly used for personal and immediate needs, such as transporting farm produce from the farm to homes, nearby markets, or friends and relatives in the neighbourhood. In this system, the head of a family, clan, or village typically used his children, mostly males, as pawns or slaves (Banwo, 1999). In most cases, lineage heads used extended family members to transport goods to markets. Aside from farmers, other classes of occupants in Ilorin who used subsistence portage for private purposes included traders, blacksmiths, tanners, native doctors, and indigenous industry workers (O’Hear, 1983). During the pre-colonial period, the people of Ilorin travelled from one community to another for economic transactions, such as buying and selling of goods, or for other reasons. Farmers transported their farm produce to markets, either within the emirate or to neighbouring markets. According to one respondent, Ilorin women participated in the human portage system

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as well. Women in pre-colonial Ilorin walked from the Ogbondoroko community to Gambari or Alanamu markets in Ilorin (Onkepe, 2019, Personal interview).

Aside from economic reasons for employing human porters, the inhabitants of Ilorin in the pre-colonial period used human porters for social activities. With loads on their backs, the residents trekked to villages such as Alapa, Bakkasse, and even Igbeti (now in Oyo state). Through this medium, spirituality was used to mitigate the effects and length of the journey. Among the people of Ilorin, a spiritual charm known as “Kanako” was used (Sanusi, 2018, Personal Interview). Human portage also includes the use of able-bodied people, particularly middle-aged men. Men were hired based on the number of goods to be transported by caravans from Ilorin to neighbouring towns. The markets were usually the starting point most of the time (O’Hear, 1997). There were people whose livelihood depended on carrying people’s goods as a service. The majority of people in this class were not slaves or pawns. Rather, they were freeborn members of the society who assisted those in need (O’Hear, 1983). It is also documented that traders from surrounding communities stopped in Ilorin to hire porters for portage services. Porters in Ilorin were versatile because they could communicate in two languages, Hausa and Yoruba. Lander in the work of Ogunremi stated that:

If a stranger from a remote part of the Empire wishes to visit Katunga (Old Oyo) to pay his respect to his sovereign, the chief or the governor of every town through which he may happen to pass is obliged to furnish him with any number of carriers; and in this manner, his goods are conveyed from village to village, until he arrives at the capital (Ogunremi, 1973).

Professional porters frequently moved in large numbers on long-distance journeys (Ogunremi, 1973). Bush paths were used to connect villages, cities, kingdoms, and regions. Long-distance porters were usually accompanied by armed guards who ensured their safety. Polly Hill discovered, for example, that the tobacco producers of Batagarawa in northern Katsina traded their stored-up tobacco as far south as Ilorin, employing a large number of porters to supplement the limited number of donkeys available (Richard & Ignatius, 2014).

Portage is also important in the spread of Islam in Ilorin. The Ilorin Malams were instrumental in spreading Islam to neighbouring Ilorin. It is documented that the introduction or revival of Islamic activities in the majority of Yoruba land was accomplished through the missionary efforts of the Ilorin scholars (Ajeunmobi, 2006). The movement of Alfa Alimi from one Yoruba town to

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another, for example, was a good example. In addition, the activities of Alfa Muhammad Jumu'a bin Abdulkadir, also known as Tajuladab, in cities such as Oyo, Iseyin, Ibadan, and Abeokuta, among others were well known (Ajeunmobi, 2006). It is important to note that, like the traders, preachers and teachers travelled with their disciples and students, who carried their provisions, Islamic texts, and sometimes gifts they were given or intended to give on their heads.

Ogunremi describes human portage as a time-wasting system. This was attributed to the porters' slow movement. Porters typically walked three to three and a half miles per hour. Some nineteenth-century travellers were unaware of the effect weight had on speed, and they frequently overburdened their porters. As a result, they had to stop and rest more frequently than he could stand. To avoid frequent rest stops, the porters protected their heads from pain by placing specially-made pads on their heads before strapping the load to them. This pad was made of folded cotton and was held together by various scraps of string, grass, and leather strips (Ogunremi, 1973).

Animal packs as Pre-colonial Transport System in Ilorin

Other modes of transportation, aside from portage, involved the use of animal packs. Horses, donkeys, and camels served many economic, military, and social functions. In the meantime, unlike the portage system, animal packs were not widely used by all social classes. Rather, it was based on class, nature, and distance. In other words, in addition to the common use, each of the animals had its unique use and purpose. Horses, for example, were mostly used by royalty and powerful wealthy individuals due to their sensitivity and security. Horses, like human portage, had widespread use among the African peoples, particularly among the ruling class and warriors. The horse's universality as a mode of transportation in a large portion of Western Sudan, which includes modern-day Nigeria, Horses' universality served as a mode of transportation for the ruling class and made a significant contribution to warfare (Abdulraheem, 2008).

In Ilorin, horses were used by the ruling class, particularly the Emir, who had to travel from the capital to the surrounding communities that comprised the Emirate. The palace's horse-care culture endures to this day. Ka'a esin (Horse-stall) is a place within the palace where horses are kept and maintained (Sa'ad, 2019, Personal Interview). Aside from the Emir, another class of people who used horses were the warriors. In the nineteenth century, the Emirate was involved in several wars. The various Baloguns (war chiefs) rode horses to battle. Apart from the Balogun's, some prominent Magajis and senior warriors under the Balogun had horses (Abdulkadri, 2018, Personal Interview).

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Horses, by nature, have excellent visibility regardless of the intensity of the darkness. The rider does not require any artificial light to make it move. The horse uses its instincts to detect any obstacle in front of it with ease. According to the interview, if there is a snake in the road and the rider is unaware of it, the horse will not proceed, even if whipped. It will only raise its forelegs and make a noise. If forced to move, it can throw off the rider and become barmy (Akesinrin, 2021; Personal interview). The horse's energy reserve was determined primarily by the amount of nutritious grass, water, potash, and salt it consumed, as well as its overall health. These features go into greater detail about the role horses played in the various wars fought by the Ilorin warriors, as well as the victories they achieved.

Horses continue to be a symbol of royalty. "Horses were limited in number, restricted in use, and not very common in circulation", according to the interviewee. Horses were so unique that it was easy to identify the owner of a specific horse (Abdulkadir, 2018). When there was an occasion or they needed to travel outside their domains, the rulers rode horses. As a show of class, the rulers' children would ride horses around the neighbourhood on occasion. The traditional ruler went on to say that a ruler's wealth was determined by the number of horses in his stable. He went on to say that the chiefs always made a show of wealth by the number of horses they had at any given time (Jonhson, 1976). Furthermore, an informant stated that when the Ilorin armies went to war, warlords- "Balogun" and some prominent warriors of lower ranks rode horses. Horses are featured as a class-based mode of transportation in Ilorin because of this premise (Akesinrin, 2021, Personal Interview).



Figure 1: Horse for Transportation



Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

Johnson described the best transportation system available even to royalty in his account of Prince Mama’s journey from the war front to Ilorin following his appointment as Emir following the death of Emir Aliyu in 1981. “Approximately 20,000 horsemen and 20,000 footmen escorted him (Mama) home from the camp to take possession of his father’s throne”, he reported (Jonhson, 1976). Aside from the emir’s palace, which had a horse stall (ka’aesin), each warlord had a section of his compound called “Fada” where horses were kept and maintained. There are also a few compounds named after horses. Ile Elesinla, Ile Onimago, Ile Akesinrin, Ile Agesin, and Ile Elesin meji are a few instances (Akesinrin, 2021).

O’Hear observed that merchants from Hausaland were the main horse dealers who supplied horses to the people of Ilorin. Some of these merchants were North African Arabs. Lander, for example, mentioned an Arab merchant named Ali who was a well-known horse merchant along the Ilorin, Bida, and Rabbah axis (O’Hear, 1983). Horses, on the other hand, were usually on display in the markets where people came to sell them. On the other hand, it was also made available upon

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request. Aside from that, horses were given as gifts between rulers as a form of tribute to a higher authority, such as Ilorin to Gwandu, or as friendly gifts, such as Bida and Ilorin. Another instance of an individual purchasing horses for the rulers was that of a certain Karimu of Agesin compound, who was said to be a close friend of Balogun Ajikobi and made the horse a gift for him at his installation (Agba, 2018, Personal Interview).

Camels were another mode of animal transportation. Camels are very strong, enduring, and ruminant animals that can withstand the stress of long-distance travel. They were primarily employed by the merchant class. Camels were loaded with heavy loads and set off on a long journey. Historians believe that camel was invented around the year 300 to address the difficulties of transporting goods through difficult routes such as the desert (Ogunremi, 1973). Camels, more than any other animal, can withstand arid and abnormal (hot) conditions. Camel herds are naturally attached, which explains why they travel in groups known as caravans. Camel can survive on thorny plant leaves for ten (10) days without water and consume 180 litres of water within 24 hours if water becomes available. Camels can transport up to 300 kg of cargo and travel 20 to 25 kilometres per day (Richard & Ignatius, 2014).

Figure 2: Camel used for Long Distance Transportation



Source: Fieldwork, 2021

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Camels are important means of transport in the pre-colonial era. The era and success of the trans-Saharan trade. It was said that the domestication of camels was the need to advance the trade across the Sahara Desert. Meanwhile, as noted previously, Ilorin was among the several routes that later became a settlement. Thus, the transformation of Ilorin from trans-Sahara trade routes to the settlement was made possible by the transportation system made possible through the effective use of camels (Ogunremi, 1973). There are records of the mass movement of caravans (of camels) from Hausaland to Yorubaland through Ilorin. Ann O’Hear opined that south caravans of between 1000 and 3000 people were leaving Ogbomoso for Ilorin in 1855. Also, caravans did arrive from Lagos in Ilorin and headed for Hausaland, virtually on daily basis (O’Hear, 1983).

Figure 3: Camel for Private Transportation



Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

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In Ilorin, the donkey was the third mode of animal transportation. Donkeys are used as pack animals, with pannier bags strapped to their backs. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that donkeys were the sole mode of transportation among the people of the Ilorin emirate. Unlike horses and camels, which were used in wars and for meat, respectively, donkeys were neither used in war nor used for meat. Donkeys served a dual purpose for the people of the Ilorin Emirate. Initially, they were primarily used by farmers and local traders to transport farm produce from farms to homes, homes to markets, capital to nearby communities, and vice versa. Interview revealed that settlers in the Erubu quarters with family in Agbayangi, Oke-Oyi used donkeys as a mode of transportation (Akesinrin, 2021, Personal Interview).

Merchants used donkeys for long-distance trade as well. According to Magudu, Kano traders used donkeys to transport their goods down to Yorubaland, passing through Ilorin (Madugu, 2010). Again, in describing the nature of northern Nigeria's transportation system, Ogunremi mentioned how Arab and Hausa traders used donkeys, among other animals, to embark on long-distance journeys (Ogunremi, 1973). Gold, salt, kola nuts, ivory, cloths, and even slaves were among the items transported. Ilorin played a significant role, benefited greatly, and had an impact on all of these inter-regional relations between the north and the south. Polly Hill specifically observed that the tobacco producers of Batagarawa in northern Katsina traded their stored-up tobacco as far south as Ilorin, using a large number of donkeys (Ogunremi, 1973, p.231). Because of the foregoing, the people of Ilorin did purchase donkeys from Hausa traders, in most cases through barter.

Socio-Economic Impacts of Pre-colonial Transport Systems on Ilorin Emirate

The geographical location of Ilorin poses a link between the north and south. Over time, scholars have continued to describe Ilorin based on its location. Gavin described Ilorin as an "entrepot". while Ann O'Hear described it as a "long-distance trade route" (O'Hear, 1983). Ilorin played a central and unifying role in the economic and inter-group relations between the people of the southern and northern regions. The southern and northern trades were channelled largely through the routes provided by Ilorin. Goods flowed between the two regions through the passage of Ilorin. Pre-colonial transport systems in Ilorin had a significant impact on the socio-economic space of the town.

The Ilorin market system was also boosted by pre-colonial transportation. People came from the south to trade in Ogbomoso, for instance, from Lagos, Abeokuta, Ibadan, Ijaye, Iseyin, Igbeti,

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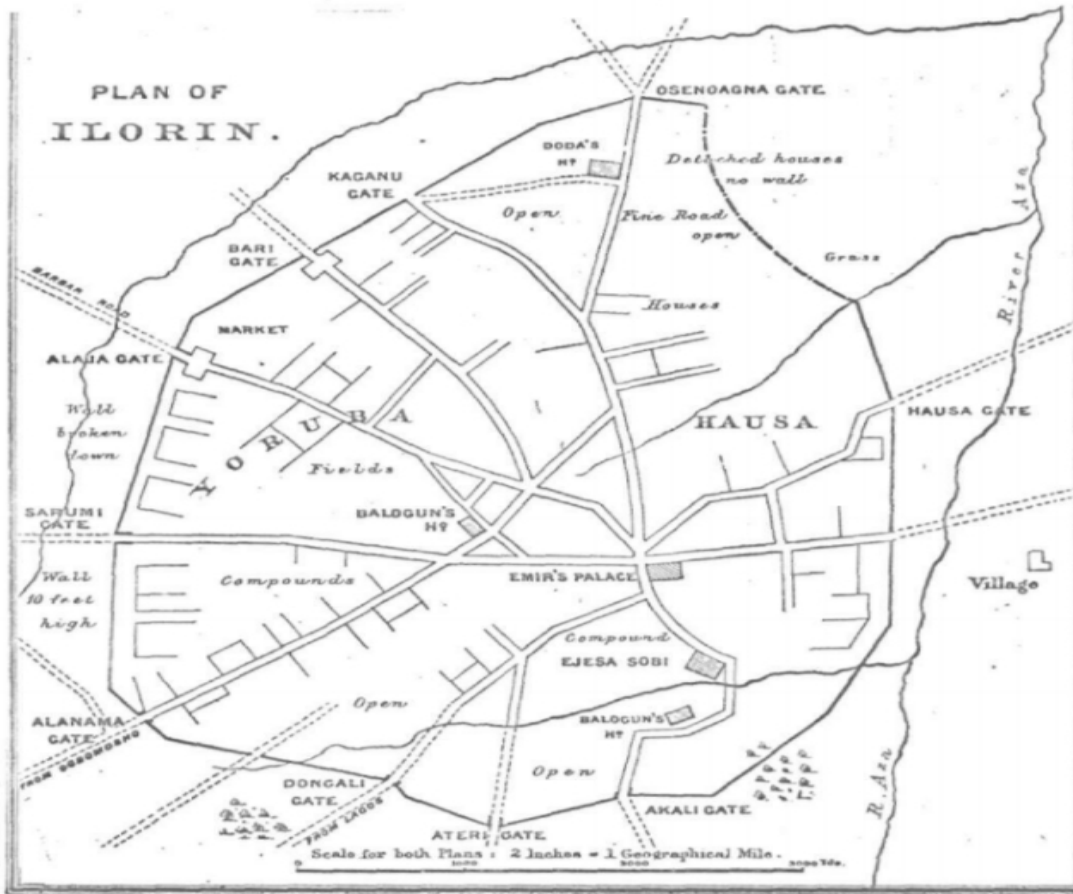


Shaki, and other towns. This was made easier by the availability of non-mechanical animals such as camels and horses. The road from Ilorin to Ogbomoso was said to be heavily travelled by camels and horses in 1859. Horses were sold in the Gambari market in the 1890s for whatever the sellers thought they were worth. People came from far and wide to trade in Ilorin because of the availability of transportation such as camels and donkeys, among others. This is why, in the 1850s, European visitors to Ilorin described it as “one of the greatest entrepots of Central Africa, and the commercial emporium of all southern Sudan and this part of the western coast” (O’Hear, 1983). “On the Lagos side of the Niger, the most important trade centre in Northern Nigerian territory is located”. “The biggest market in the interior” O’Hear (1983: 132). As a result of the preceding descriptions, it was clear that the significance of Ilorin extended beyond the emirate’s immediate surroundings. This, in some ways, explains the emirate’s multi-ethnic composition.

Transportation increased revenue generation as well. Ilorin was surrounded by walls and the town’s entrance, which served as toll collection gates. Anyone entering or leaving town must pass through the gate, which was guarded by Emir representatives. These guards were to ensure that visitors entering and leaving the town were safe. The tolls were controlled by the town’s various major chiefs. For example, Sariki Gobir’s ancestor was said to have control of gates such as the Ero Gate. The Emir also appointed his own Emir representative, who was stationed at each gate, or at least at the most important, to collect the dues, which they submitted daily to the Sarkin Dogari, who then submitted them to the Emir (O’Hear, 1983: 31).



Figure 4: Ilorin Plan Showing the Wall and Gate of the Town



Source: Culled from Ogunremi, (1973:178).

The toll-collection centres were so prominent on the trade routes using any form of transportation in the pre-colonial period. For instance, the toll duties imposed by the authorities on C-transit traders with their merchandise while passing through the town. In 1893, the exact amount collected from the total varied. Tolls on each package of foreign goods ranged from 20 to 100 cowries (O’Hear, 1983: 32). Calculating the revenue generated by tolls was difficult in some places because the charges were arbitrary. Clapperton, for example, observed that no fixed duty was levied at

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Kaima. “While there is no fixed duty for the merchants to pay, the chief takes whatever he can get from them” (Clapperton, 2013: 73). In Ilorin, the two tolls levied on traders travelling from the north were goods and traders were taxed at the entry and exit points. Extra payments were almost certainly levied in addition to the basic toll; the British Resident reported in 1902 that the emir was said to be entitled to a tax of 2/6 on each donkey. Tolls were collected on the northern outskirts of the town of Bode Sadu. While tolls were collected on the route from Ogbomoso to Ilorin at Obanisuwa and Ilorin gates (O’Hear, 1983: 579). Ilorin’s revenue increased as a result of the toll collection.

The town’s population grew as a result of pre-colonial transportation. It is discovered that the size and frequency of caravans approaching the town from the north and south are related. According to archival evidence, approximately 3000 people and up to 1000 head of livestock such as cattle, horses, and others were being transported across toward Ilorin in early 1858 (NAK SNP 7/8 146/1907). Because of the town’s favourable environment, some of these people decided to return and continue their business transactions. Furthermore, caravans of between 1000 and 3000 people were seen leaving Ogbomoso for Ilorin in 1855. Their size was explained as a result of the need for easier transportation of their trade to the north as well as protection from marauders. This made Ilorin to become a multi-ethnic town dominated by the Yorubas, Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, and Kanuri among others,, with the warlord representing these various ethnic groups in the Ilorin population, which is known as Balogun (i.e., Balogun Fulani, Balogun Gambari (Hausa), Balogun Ajikobi (Yoruba), and Balogun Alanamu (Yoruba).The increased in migration to the town reflected in the town population growth in Ilorin. The table below shows the growth of the urban centre in northern Nigeria during the colonial period.





Table 1: Population of the Urban Centres, Northern Nigeria

| Northern Region Towns | 1911 | 1921 | 1931 |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Kano | — | 49,938 | 97,031 |
| Zaria | — | 25,000 | 28,000 |
| Sokoto | — | 19,335 | 20,084 |
| Jos | — | 2,000 | 2,467 |
| Yerwa (Maiduguri) | — | 16,274 | 24,359 |
| Ilorin | 36,342 | 38,668 | 47,412 |
| Gusau | — | 10,412 | 14,878 |
| Minna | — | 2,000 | 5,143 |
| Katsina | — | 17,489 | 22,349 |
| Kaduna | — | 5,428 | 10,628 |

Source: Coleman, (1958:74).

The table above shows that the population growth can be attributed to the town ecological, economic and more importantly available different kind of non-mechanised transportation system, right from the pre-colonial period., it is evident in population census conducted by the colonial government in 1911, 1921, and 1931 from the table, that Ilorin was the second urban centre in northern Nigeria with the highest population. Hadi (2015) contends that the position of Ilorin as a gateway settlement between her neighbours especially the Hausa states and Yoruba kingdoms played a very important role in the population growth of the town since the pre-colonial period. This led to the eventual growth and development of the town as a melting point of various peoples and cultures (Hadi, 2015).

The pre-colonial transportation system in Ilorin had a social impact on the town as well. With adequate knowledge of the use of horses, both in riding and care, it served the Ilorin armies' advantage during the wars of survival and expansion, resulting in successes during the wars, such as the Osogbo war, which was on the plain where Ilorin had a better advantage during the day (Banwo, 1999). Since the colonial period until the present, animal packages used for transportation, such as horses, have been maintained in some of Ilorin cultural activities, such as Bareke and Durbar, where horses were beautifully decorated and dignitaries would ride them during the cultural celebrations of Durbar and Bareke in Ilorin.

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The emergence of Ilorin as a gateway between the north and the south since the pre-colonial period, as well as the existence of transportation routes, hastened the emergence of a railway system in the town, which was extended from Lagos to Ilorin and onward to Jebba in 1907, due to its importance to the Europeans' marchants and the colonial exploitation of raw materials from the north to the south during colonial rule. The advent of the railway (Colonial Annual Reports, 1908: 24). The availability of routes since the pre-colonial period facilitated colonial development. in the face of development.

Conclusion

The article examined the pre-colonial transport and transportation system in Ilorin Emirate before colonial rule. In Ilorin Emirate, the available pre-colonial transportation systems include the use of human Porterage system and the use of animal packs (camel, donkey and horses). The two pre-colonial means of transport system contributed significantly to the growth and development of the Ilorin Emirate. As a major centre pot between Yoruba land and the Hausa States, the transportation systems contributed to the expansion of trade and market, contributed to the increase of revenues through taxes and tolls used in administering the towns, and increased socio-cultural relations through inter-group relations. Hence, as against colonial historiography on pre-colonial transport systems, the article has demonstrated that pre-colonial transport systems were effective and provided the needed support to drive pre-colonial trade, market and economic growth.

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