

## From Truck to Motor Vehicle: Wheeled Transportation in Ekiti of Southwestern Nigeria Before 1960

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### ABSTRACT

In the pre-colonial Ekiti, portage was the main mode of transportation, since goods or other valuable items had to be carried, on heads, from one place to another. At the early stage of colonization, some colonial “masters” were also carried on heads through difficult terrains. Portage, however, changed to truck transportation as a better means of transportation, particularly from the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Truck transportation also gave way to bicycle transportation which by the 1940s had become very popular in Ekiti, particularly with the Igbo traders who epitomized this transportation culture till the late 1950s. Motor transportation eventually became the most enduring and comfortable transportation system whose history among the Ekiti goes back to the late 1920s, as instrumentalized by the colonial government, the expatriate firms and, later, the indigenous motor companies. Before independence, the Ekiti people, with improved road infrastructure, had acquired a reliable transportation system that promoted people’s social and economic activities.

### Introduction

Before colonization, the only means of transportation in Ekiti of Southwestern of Nigeria was by portage; a highly organic method that required human beings to carry goods, or even people, particularly children, from one place to another. Through this method, commercial and other activities were transacted. However, colonization recognized the indispensable role of transportation to development and therefore made possible new methods of transportation that eventually, accordingly to A. Olukoju, “played an enabling, though sometimes crucial, role in the process of ... development...” (Olukoju, 1980). No doubt, without efficient transportation, there would have been perennial frustrations in the economic activities of a people and there can be little meaningful development. This was why, according to Onwuka Njoku, the improvement and modernization of transportation in the British colony was the main focus of the colonial administration (Njoku, 2001). However, since Ekiti had no railway and waterway transportation systems, wheeled transportation automatically became the main means of transport in the colonial period.

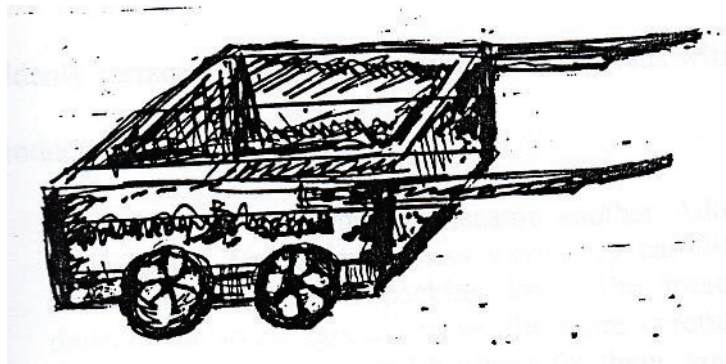
There were many types of wheeled transportation: truck transportation, bicycle transportation, motorcycle transportation and motor transportation. Motorcycle transportation was extremely unpopular and motorcycles were few, and not common, because they were used mainly by two or three Post and Telegraphs mail carriers as well as those known as Sanitary Inspectors and Travelling Teachers who were usually not more than two in each category. However, the main means of transportation in colonial Ekiti were trucks, bicycles, and motor vehicles popularly used for transporting both human beings and articles of trade.

### Truck Transportation

Though truck, according to David Olabode, had been in use in most Yoruba big cities since the 1920s, it was not until the late 1930s and more especially in the early 1950s, that truck became a popular means of transport in Ekiti. But the first mention of truck with regard to Ekiti was in 1914 when the Acting District Officer for Ekiti, A.R.W. Livingstone, recommended to, and sought approval from, the Provincial Officer, for “2 mahogany built trucks with mounted umbrellas and 4 tyres to be built by the Public Works Department (P.W.D.) to help move materials from our temporary warehouse to some construction sites within Ado and its environs. By mounting an umbrella on each truck, however, means that they will have the dual function of also carrying officers, during an extremely bad weather, to and from inspection locations” (N.A.I., 1920). According to Livingstone, this would not only reduce human labour but would also drastically reduce the cost of labour; by not employing many labourers as head porters. One is not certain whether or not these trucks were eventually built, but in the early 1940s, the Flionis Brothers and the United African Company (U.A.C.) used trucks similar in description to the one requested by the A.R.W. Livingstone (Fig. 1) to transport, particularly kerosene tins of palm oil from the local middlemen to the evacuation centres in Ado-Ekiti.

It is good, however, to briefly discuss the types of trucks used for transport during the colonial period. There were three types: trucks with four car tyres; those with two car tyres and those with two wooden tyres. As earlier discussed, the design of the truck with four tyres was conceived by the Acting District Officer for Ekiti in

the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for carrying government products or materials, and possibly, as also intended, to carry the Resident of Ondo Province, the District Officers and Acting District Officers during their official duties in Ekiti. The type was later used by the foreign companies in Ekiti. Trucks with four tyres, therefore, were used for transportation by the colonial government and by the expatriate companies in Lagos. The elitist nature of this truck type and the high production cost naturally made it too expensive for business. The second type, trucks with two car tyres, were more expensive than those with wooden tyres.

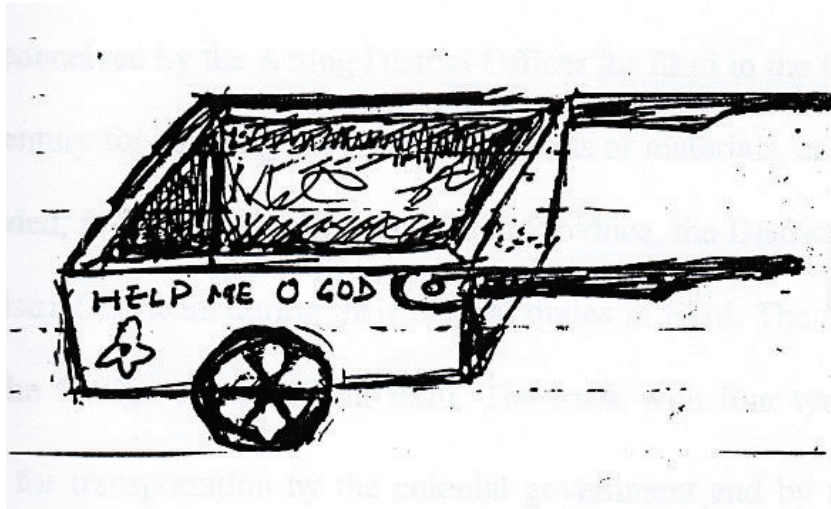


**Fig. 1:** Replica of Truck with 4 car tyres used by foreign companies to carry goods in Ado-Ekiti in the 1940s.  
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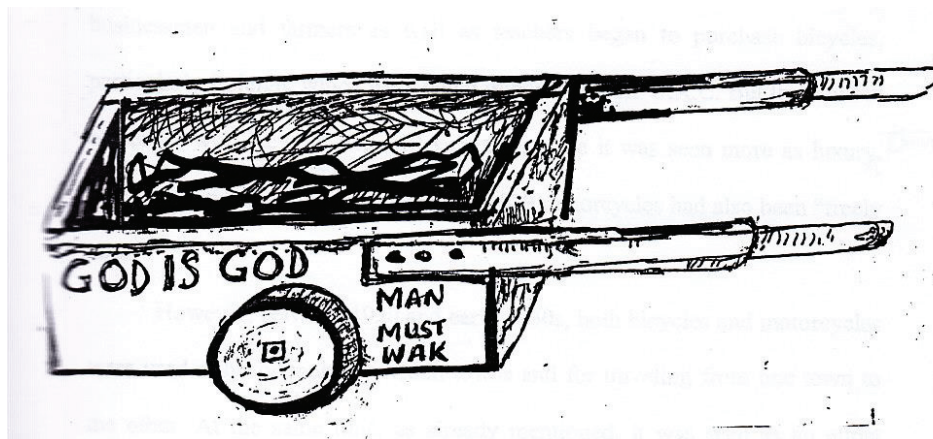
The cost of production was high, and this type could go through rugged terrains with ease. Thus, as regards long distances, this type (Fig. 2) had an advantage over the type with wooden tyres. There were many of this type in Ekiti. But the most popular, and the cheapest type, was the truck with wooden “tyres” or wheels.

Naturally, this was the type used by most truck pushers in Ekiti and the type individual truck pushers could acquire on their own (Fig. 3). Occasionally, the wooden tyres would fall off; however, the pushers also had the professional dexterity to easily fix them back. But what made all these trucks very attractive and unique were their identification marks. That is, on many of these trucks were inscribed catchy expressions like *Ose Jesu* (Thank You Jesus), *Irawo Owuro* (Morning Star), *Ogo Oluwa* (Glory of Jesus), *Die Die* (Softy, Softly), *Ranmi Lowo Olorun* (Help Me O God), God is God and Man Must Wak (Eat). The truck pushers were usually identified by these labels (Figs. 2 and 3).

Truck transportation first took place in urban Ado-Ekiti in the late 1930s, but during this period, it was not popular among the people. The reason for this, among other things, according to Chief Michael Olajiga of Ise Ekiti, was that “people found it very unnecessary, because they had children, wives and other relations who could carry home on head whatever they produced from the farm and were also very available to help carry to the market goods or products for sale” (Olajiga, 2007). People could not just understand why, even despite the heavy weight of some loads, they should waste the amount that would have been part of their market gains on paying the truck pushers. In addition, truck transportation before 1940 was not seriously patronized because many roads or paths were impassable to trucks. Trucks had to take longer routes to their destinations because of some settlement patterns. In such a situation, people preferred shorter roads by carrying their products on their heads.



**Fig. 2:** Truck (Omolanke) with 2 Car Tyres used for transport by the rich Truck Pushers in Ado-Ekiti Township in the 1950s. © Oloidi, O.



**Fig. 3:** Truck (Omolanke) with 2 Wood Tyres used in Ekiti for transport by the Truck Pushers who could not afford a truck with car types. © Oloidi, O.

However, by the late 1940s, truck pushing had attracted more patronage, particularly from the market women and those farmers whose farmlands were very close to the city, Ado-Ekiti. By 1950, according to Clement Ojo, popularly known as Abajo of Okekere in Ikere-Ekiti, “truck pushers suddenly surfaced in Ikere, criss-crossing many roads with both market and farm products” (Ojo, 2006). Ojo continued:

This place (Ikere) suddenly became another Ado-Ekiti (the Capital). The truck pushers were very careful and in fact adepts in packing load. The more delicate the loads (goods) were, the more careful they became. This was real business for them, you know? They had no time to waste, which was why they used to move very fast, usually with the expression: “mama ese kia (mama please, I beg be fast in following me). The already tired woman would also immediately and even aggressively snap back: kilode? Ofe pami ni? (what is your problem? Do you want to kill me?). Since it was a matter of business, such reactions usually ended in laughter or peacefully (Ojo, 2006).

At the time the truck pushers were in Ikere-Ekiti, they were also already in big towns like Ilawe, Iglaro-Odo, Ikole ad Ise. Truck, popularly called *Omolanke*, and Truck Pushers, called *Olomolanke*, thus began to make the commercial activities of Ekiti more dynamic and enterprising.

The increasing popularity of truck business was, to a large extent, due to the influence of those Ekiti young men who had earlier left Ekiti for other Yoruba cities like Ibadan and Lagos to engage in this business with great economic success. Before they left Ekiti for urban centres, some of them had snobbed truck pushing as shameful occupation. They took to this job in urban centres where they were unknown and where they made a lot of money from it. They came home in large number, in the middle 1950s, to Ado-Ekiti to continue with the same job, thereby giving impetus to the economic life of Ekiti. The truck pushing tradition later spread to other Ekiti major towns like Igede, Iyin, Iworoko, Emure, Igbemo, Efon, Ikoro and Aramoko, among others. By then, it had become very clear, particularly in commercial towns, that traders needed the truck pushers to transfer their heavy bags of beans, rice, gari, kernel and other commercial items, to various markets.

These truck pushers were mainly found inside markets, motor parks and popular road junctions in various towns. When business seemed not to be forthcoming, some of them would take to the streets, hoping to secure business. By 1958, truck pushing had become so lucrative an economic venture that truck pushers, contrary to their earlier shy attitude to this business, formed an Association of Truck Pushers, or *Egbe Olomolanke*, in Ado-Ekiti. According to Daramola Olowokere of Ijigbo quarters in Ado-Ekiti, the association was to be shortlived. This resulted from an operation dispute which resulted in physical combats in 1959. M.A. Aluko of Ise-Ekiti whose uncle was at the centre of the whole problem provided the details of the problem. His uncle, while working at the Ureje cocoa farm settlement, Ado, discovered that hiring trucks out to pushers would be economically lucrative. He commissioned a carpenter, Ojo Rabi, a muslim, of Okelawe, Ado-Ekiti, to construct 10 Trucks which he rented out to truck pushers in Ado-Ekiti. Since, according to him, the colonial government had “changed many Ekiti ways of life and Awolowo’s regime had also opened up Ekiti, particularly Ado, to various economic activities, truck pushing for those who would not look at faces (that is, shy) was a good economic venture” (Gbolahan, 1990).

As time went on, some business elite also began to rent out trucks, eventually leading to a clash of economic interests among these truck owners. It was “decreed” by some of these people that truck pushers should not operate in certain districts considered the sphere of interest of these businessmen. Since this was not an official decision of the Association of Truck Pushers, this order was not obeyed by many pushers. The desire or determination to enforce this “order” eventually led to a free-for-all fight at the area known as Oja Oba (King’s Market) in Ado-Ekiti. The “order” failed to achieve its objective while the association also collapsed (Gbolahan, 1990). The above incident clearly shows how economically viable truck pushing was in colonial Ekiti, and how truck pushing became one of the economic ventures of the people.

### **Bicycle Transportation**

Bicycle was another novel means of transportation in colonial Ekiti. It is still difficult to know the exact date that bicycles were first brought to Ekiti. However, record shows that in 1901 “preparations are on the way to teach some native officials who are also travelling guides how to mount (or ride) some of the newly acquired bicycles in readiness for the visit to Ado of Captain W.G. Ambrose, the Travelling Commissioner stationed in Ilesha” (N.A.I., Prof. 3/1, 1920). Part of the preparation included dispatching an advance party to all areas to be visited as well as “getting ready hefty carriers who will be needed for the areas/roads that are too snaky, rough or rugged for bicycles to pass” (N.A.I., 3/1 1920). With the foregoing, it can be assumed that bicycles appeared in Ekiti, particularly Ado, before 1900 or between 1898 and 1900. However, these bicycles were exclusively used for the mobility of the colonial officials. By the 1920s, many Ekitis and other Yoruba serving as Vaccinators and Dispensers in Ekiti were given bicycles for transportation. It was not until the late 1920s, however, that some businessmen and farmers as well as teachers began to purchase bicycles, particularly “Releigh”, which were being imported by the U.A.C. The number of people who owned bicycles was, however, still very few, since it was seen as luxury. The situation began to change when by 1929 motorcycles had also been “freely used” (Oguntuyi, n.d).

However, between 1920 and early 1930s, bicycles were used only for mobility within towns and for traveling for one town to the other. At the same time, it was seen as an elitist possession; a prestigious property. Young men usually decorated their bicycles with additional ornamentations like one or two vertical front mirrors, bladder horns and slim, coloured rubber tubes. Bicycle “bags” were also usually painted, to taste, with floral patterns. On the bags were artistically written, in very bright colours, various philosophical statements. They were never used to transport goods or materials but used mostly for pleasurable rides. However, by the



middle 1930s, some Ekiti young men had begun to use their bicycles for commercial purposes, such as transporting textile materials to areas as far as Ilesha for sale.

Such people were rebuked, usually by their relations, for using expensive commodities like bicycles for trading. People began to refer to them as “*Ota aje*”, that is, people who had no regard for treasure or enemy of precious things. Some farmers who, from their distant farms, occasionally used their bicycles to bring home little foodstuffs were also rebuked. Many people could not just understand why a bicycle, a luxury and an expensive commodity, should be overburdened with loads and placed on a distant journey that could easily wear out its tyres. But Igbo traders in Ekiti changed this concept in the middle 1940s with their unconscious introduction of bicycle trade culture to the commercial or transport system of Ekiti.

To the Igbos, bicycles were not status symbols but for trading; for inter-city and inter-town transportation. Bicycles owned by the Igbo, unlike those of the Ekitis, were easily recognized because they were devoid of decoration or attractive ornamentations (Oloidi, 2011). Rather, these bicycles were taken to blacksmiths for additional metal or iron support or fortification which could equip these bicycles to carry heavier loads. Very interestingly, these blacksmiths were also mostly Igbo whose population strength in Ekiti was substantial. During this period, the Igbo blacksmiths were found everywhere in Ekiti; particularly in Ado, Igede, Iyin, Ikere, Ikole, Aramoko and Ilawe, among many other towns (Oloidi, 2011). The Igbo traders began to use their bicycles to transport very heavy loads from one town to another, particularly on market days. Coincidentally, bicycle trading by the Igbo came at a period when European goods began to flood Ekiti; from cooking utensils or various domestic materials to educational, instructional and building materials which the Igbo traders were selling.

Many Ekiti people began to wonder how a single bicycle could carry the loads which even five people could not carry. The load, which was usually high up, making the rider diminutive under it, was strongly tied together, very dexterously with rubber bands, ropes or strings for stability and easy carriage to and from a town every five market days. These well loaded bicycles were never ridden, but pushed, up hill. They were ridden only on level and sloppy areas of the road. For the bicycle rider to rest or ease himself, while on a journey there was also a special method of making the well loaded bicycle stand on its own. A strong, long stick or iron rod, with a V-shape on top and about one foot short of the bicycle height, would be placed on one side, where the bicycle could gently rest on.

Papa James Okafor, an Akwa blacksmith in Igede-Ekiti, in my interview with him, narrated how the Igbo traders, particularly those based in Ado-Ekiti, brought dynamism to the commercial activities of Ekiti with their bicycles which, according to him, “appeared old, colourless or rickety but very strong to carry heavy load with ease” (Okafor, 2008 & Oloidi, 2011). “Remember”, he continued, “we blacksmiths helped them support the spokes (bars) and other parts of the bicycles with the type of iron we were using for making guns and animal traps in those days” (Oloidi, 2011).

No doubt, bicycle transport accelerated the sale of Igbo products which were usually not quickly disposed off through the sedentary nature of shop systems of the Yoruba traders. As already explained, before the emergence of Igbo traders in Ekiti, many Ekiti traders and farmers were carrying loads on their heads for commercial and domestic reasons, respectively, while their bicycles were reserved only for social mobility. However, many Ekiti people later followed the example of Igbo traders and began to use their bicycles to transport trade goods. Some Ekiti farmers in particular who had been trekking to and from their distant farms began to use their bicycles to their farms and also for carrying foodstuffs. Thus, bicycles, among the colonial Ekiti, began to serve social, elitist, commercial and other occupational functions. And very evidently, bicycle transportation brought improvement to Ekiti commercial and agricultural activities of the people. This was the situation until the early 1950s when motor vehicles replaced bicycle transportation and forced the Igbo traders to adopt the Yoruba tradition of shop keeping or trading.

### **Motor Transportation**

The history of motor transportation in Ekiti Division dates back to 1918 when B.M. Carkeek, the Acting District Officer (ADO), suggested that motor vehicles should be purchased for Ekiti Division. But the suggestion was not accepted because Ekiti trade routes were not considered very motorable. It was not until 1920, when the Ekiti’s main roads had been reconstructed, that G.H. Findlay, the ADO, made another proposal, this time in writing to the Resident, giving economic and administrative reasons (N.A.I. Ondo Prof. 4/1, 1923):

... lack of wagon transport is seriously affecting smooth, quick and easier trade transactions in the Division. Not only the administration but the traders as well as the farmers are the worse for this... Head carriers, though capable, are now proving unreliable for some reasons. For example, age is

telling on many though they will not accept. Some are no more ready to invest their energy on what they now see as strenuous and laborious exercise which has led to occasional disappointment. Many now fear occasional ambush despite guide, by diehard thieves while on the way back to station. Some cases of women collapsing on the road have also been reported, while many precious goods or materials have been found damaged between point of departure and destination. All these, and other reasons, have negatively affected the take-off of some projects because of delay unduely caused... by the Division's inability to secure a good van...

Following the above letter, a Ford van was purchased in 1920 by Ekiti Division at the cost of £239 (Two hundred and thirty nine pounds). This was the first motor vehicle to be bought in Ekiti. In 1922, other motor vehicles, including cars, were bought but mainly for official purposes. The Olojido, the king of Ido, also bought a car in 1922.

Without doubt, from the beginning, and as already understood above, economic factors necessitated the importation of motor vehicles as an indispensable aid to rapid development in the colonial Ekiti. It was against this backdrop, as stated above, that the colonial administration in Ekiti bought additional Ford vans to aid official transportation (Makinde, 2001). As the ADO, H.De B. Bewley, stated (N.A.I., Ondo Prof. 4/1, 1923):

The Van has been of the greatest use to the Native Administration for the transport of timber, tools, building materials, etc. It has also been very convenient for Government purposes at different times. It will therefore be seen that the purchase and maintenance by Native Administration of these lorries is fully justified.

One of the Ford vans bought for official transport cost £520, but the government did not consider the high cost of the vehicles because it believed that it would still save money which private transporters would have taken by hiring their vehicles. What happened was that, beginning from 1921, private transporters, with government patronage, were already aware of the chronic need for motor vehicles, particularly Ford Lorries, to transport various government and private goods locally and between Ekiti and some major cities in Western Nigeria: like Lagos, Ibadan, Oshogbo, Abeokuta and Ijebu-Ode.

In fact, it was the role of private transporters that motivated, or forced, the colonial administration to start acquiring its own vehicles, particularly in 1923. This was how Ekiti, mainly through communal efforts, could boast of many motorable roads across the Division and beyond. Some of these private transporters were W.A. Dawodu, one of the indigenous pioneer motor importers, Howells and Longe (Ogunremi & Faluyi, eds, 1996). There was no doubt that the economic objectives of the colonial administration were being threatened, and to arrest this situation, in the interest of the Division, motor vehicles had to be bought. For instance, according to the report of the Native Administration Public Works in 1923 (N.A.I, Ondo, Prof. 4/1, 1923):

Transport service was entirely the monopoly of Messrs Dawodu (Dawodu). Howells and Longe, native traders at Ilesha and Oshogbo who charged prohibitive prices for hire of motor transport as much as £17.17 being charged for a journey of 85 miles.

In fact, the colonial government of Ekiti was in a dilemma. It did not want to continue to patronize the private transporters because it considered their charges very high. Government, at the same time, was also finding it difficult to get human carriers; while many goods or materials needed by the administration had to be brought to the Division by all means. The concern of the colonial administration could be felt in the following report on Ondo Province generally (N.A.I., Ondo, Prof. 1923):

... a REO Motor lorry was purchased by the Native Administration at a cost of £450 and has rendered possible the carrying out of works which were formerly out of the question. The Ondo (including Ekiti) men have always refused to act as carriers, and to transport goods from AGBABU in the South has been a matter of extreme difficulty. Cement is, of course, a necessary adjunct to any road-making schemes involving the construction of bridges. To bring a single barrel of cement from AGBABU to ONDO necessitated the splitting up of the barrel into about seven or eight loads which were often exposed to the weather for three days en route with great depreciation in the quality of the cement, especially in the wet season. Corrugated iron carried

from the waterside is invariably damaged by being folded. To obtain carriers, all strangers, in any number was generally speaking impossible.

Between 1923 and 1930, the motor transport situation in Ekiti was dominated by the Native Administrations and some powerful motor transporters outside the Ekiti Division, including W.A. Dawodu, based in Lagos, the Levantines and J.N. Zarpas, also in Lagos (Ogunremi & Faluyi, eds, 1996). While during this period, the Native Administration purchased a number of lorries and Vans, many of which were in the service of the Public Works Department, these big transporters also extended their transporting services to the local people by “putting more lorries on the road, particularly on the main transport (trade) routes like those from Akure to Ikere through Ado to Igede, through Aramoko to Ilesha and from Ilesha to Ibadan and Lagos” (Oke, 1997).

According to Karimu Olawale, “in the late 1920s, I was still very young then, my father used to book, like others, for the lorry of Daodu (Dawodu) who was very popular in those days, while travelling to Lagos”. He continued: “He had to wait on the road with his bag as early as 6 a.m or 7 a.m in order not to miss the lorry... you know, the driver used to pick other passengers in every town on his route. The lorry used to travel to Lagos or Ibadan once every week, and if you missed it you will have to wait for another week or break your journey into three or four routes, which could make you get to Lagos in three days instead of one day” (Oke, 1997).

No doubt, Dawodu was a great factor on the transport system of Ekiti in the 1930s, because, as mentioned above, the Native Administration, private businesses and the local communities benefited from his transport services. It was not surprising, therefore, that when Dawodu died in 1930, G.G. Haris, the District Officer for Ekiti Division instructed the Director of Public Works to extend the Division’s sympathy of Dawodu’s family and the Dawodu Motor Transport Service. Part of the letter which was signed for the Director by one L. Eaglefield reads (N.A.I., Prof. ½, 234, 1930):

While the Division will continue to appreciate and acknowledge the pioneering effort of Mr. Dawodu (Dawodu), particularly in the area of aggressive and profitable motor business... which has aided our administrative duties and made life more comfortable for the people, even beyond Ekiti, it will also pray for the repose of the deceased while wishing God’s protection for the family, he had left behind. It is the wish of the Honour and the entire people of this Division that the good work he has left behind, which should also be a source of consolation to you, his family, will continue...

However, up to 1930s, Ekiti commercial motor transportation had experienced no significant change since the 1920s. Because apart from the already known motor transporters, no new transporters seemed to be emerging. An exception was the Ado based Adewale Motors that surfaced in 1935 but “packed up within few months because its acquired two second-hand lorries, for many technical and professional reasons, could not compete with the well established existing ones outside Ekiti” (Makinde, 2001). But the situation in the late 1930s was not all that bad, because it was a period of drastic change or increase in the number of heavy duty motor trucks brought solely for transporting heavy timbers from the forest to timber sheds or sawmills, or from the timber depot to the riverside in Agbabu, Ondo Province, for exportation.

The Native Administration was joined by the expatriate companies like the U.A.C. British Nigeria Company, John Holts as well as indigenous timber companies, especially in Ondo, Akure, Okitipupa and Ado, in the lucrative timber business (Olaitan & Idowu, 2002). They all began to acquire motor trucks. The truck, also known as *Agbegilodo* and considered the king of the road at the period, for its mechanical strength and capability to carry an unbelievable number of timber logs at a time, became an indispensable vehicle in the development of Ekiti economy of the colonial period. It was a new era in the transportation system of Ekiti, and this position did not change in the 1940s and 1950s with the accelerated growth in timber trade and therefore greater acquisition of fleets of motor trucks (Olaitan & Idowu, 2002).

One must not, however, forget the service of jeeps in the private transportation of the colonial Ekiti. The Jeeps, which were “open, strong and rather skeletal but with solid big iron rods covered with tarpaulin, were used mainly by the District Officer or Native Administration high official, Directors of the expatriate companies and few European and American Missionaries” (Oloidi, 2011). These jeeps were used to penetrate the Ekiti interior for evangelical and administrative purposes. The tradition of jeep transportation, according to the retired Driver of Leventis in Lagos, Rufus Fadipe, “started in the late 1930s when both the Christian Missionaries and government discovered that it was the most suitable for penetrating the very rough interior areas for evangelical and administrative reasons, respectively” (Oloidi, 2011).

But apart from lorries or vans, jeeps and motor trucks, another means of motor transportation, that emerged in the 1940s, was the motor car, usually known as saloon or pleasure car. Saloon cars were not used for commercial purposes by those who owned them. Though this type of motor vehicle had been in Ekiti since the early 1920s, the number of people who owned it was so small that most Ekiti people had not seen it in their towns; or those who saw it, for the first time always made it a visual celebration.

In the 1940s, however, more of these vehicles were in Ekiti. Some reasons made this possible. Many First Class Ekiti Kings bought cars as a status symbol; some communities through communal contributions presented cars to their kings. The increase in the missionary efforts via evangelization and increasing number of missionaries required that these missionaries should enjoy a relative transportation comfort by providing them with pleasurable cars (Fadipe, 2006). Among the emerging Ekiti educated elite, the possession of saloon cars had become fashionable, in line with the social expectation of the period. There were also some Ekiti business elite, farmers and traders, who also found it very necessary to dignify their positions by owning cars and therefore made themselves more commercially prominent and attractive. Furthermore, many nationalists, who were usually critics of colonial administration, had also emerged in Ekiti. To some of them, acquiring cars was also a way of asserting their social and political relevance in Ekiti.

These developments in the motor transportation sector in the 1940s “was consolidated and speedily improved upon in the 1950s; when motor transportation was trying to make itself part of Ekiti’s economic venture” (Oloidi, 2011). In fact, at the beginning of the 1950s, “many Ekiti educated and business elite began to challenge this situation and decided to venture into either small scale or large scale motor transportation” (Makinde, 2001). Among them were Chief Omosio Fakunle of Igede-Ekiti, a very successful produce buyer and trader who was the first to buy a lorry in Igede-Ekiti; business tycoon, Ogbende of Iyin-Ekiti, a big-time trader and shop-owner based in northern Nigeria and the richest man in Iyin-Ekiti; Moses Famakinwa of Ado-Ekiti, a successful farmer and land owner; J.A. Ani, a senior executive officer at the S.C.O.A. company and a lorry and a car owner; Chief Solomon Olajiga from Ise-Ekiti, whose Motor Transport Service began operation in the late 1940, and J.A. Anisulowo, among others. Thanks to effort of these people who gave the Ekiti Division greater access to smoother transportation. The struggle, however, was just beginning, because lack of fund handicapped various transportation ventures.

And for this reason, in the early 1950s, a group of enterprising Ekiti business and educated elite, all based in Ado-Ekiti, decided to apply for a loan to enable them start a transport service to be known as Ekiti Youth Transport Service with their office at 32, King’s Market Square, Ado-Ekiti. The loan application was directed to the Secretary, Western Regional Development Board, Ibadan through the Ekiti District Officer. Part of the application which was the main reason for organizing the Transport Service read (N.A.I., EK. Div. 1/7, 1952):

In view of the fact that we in Ekiti are far removed from the rails, and in view of the fact of the heavy traffic between Ado and the afore-mentioned places, and in view of the fact that the travelers from Ibadan coming to Ekiti are more often than not stranded at Ilesha; and in view of the fact that we in Ekiti are just learning how to begin to ask for a share out of the Development funds; and in view of the fact that we hope to receive every encouragement from our Government towards business development, and for the sake of instituting a non-stop bus service from Lagos to Ado-Ekiti and on to Lokoja, we crave that we be given serious and kind attention.

The application form signed by J.O. Oshutokun showed the members of the Ekiti Youth Transport Service to be as follows (N.A.I., EK. 1952):

1. J.A. Ani: A Senior Executive with the S.C.O.A. Company and Lorry and Car owner.
2. B.A. Ajayi: A graduate of University of Durham and Senior Master, Christ Secondary School, Ado-Ekiti.
3. J.A. Osuntokun: A graduate of University of Durham and an Assembly Man in Ibadan.
4. E.A. Adeleye: Business Magnate with the S.C.O.A.
5. I.O. Adamolekun: Managing Director of Tiwantiwa Company.
6. G.O. Fadipe: Senior Master, Christ Secondary School, Ado-Ekiti.
7. A.A. Fayinminu: Barrack’s Road, Ado-Ekiti.
8. James Adu: Okesha Street, Ado-Ekiti.



9. Mathew Adewale: Okesha Street, Ado-Ekiti.
10. J. Afolabi: Okesha Street, Ado-Ekiti.

This group proposed to buy seven buses and one kit-car. The buses were to work five days a week, running every day from Ado to Ilesha, Ikare and from Ikare to Lokoja; Ado to Akure to Ikare and from Ikare to Lokoja. The record of approval of the above loan was not available, but it is on record that when the approval of the loan was not forthcoming from the Western Regional Loan Development Board, members began to raise money from other sources to make the transport service take off. The amount needed for their transport project was £32,000 (thirty two thousand Pounds). The transport service eventually took off in 1953, but limiting its operation to Ado-Lagos route.

However, the sudden increase in cocoa price in the early 1950s, particularly when Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group had won election in the West, helped the transport situation in Ekiti. This was because, according to Clement Ojo, "some motor transporters were able to raise money more easily to put one or more saloon cars on the road as taxis" (Ojo, 2006). In fact, by 1956, when self-government had been granted to the Regions in Nigeria, cocoa boom had already created a very enabling environment, particularly for small scale motor transport in Ekiti. There was enough money to spend and people had many reasons to travel, particularly students and traders. Increase in the number of secondary schools and colleges also generally impelled the need for more travels. For the first time in Ekiti, by 1957, cars had become the main means of transport within Ekiti, while lorries could travel daily, instead of weekly, to distant areas like Lagos and Ibadan.

Also, instead of people using the market areas or road sides as their parks, the emergence of the Motor Transport Union led to the creation of motor parks in all Ekiti towns; "though the Nigerian Motor Transport Union had existed in Ibadan and few other cities in the Western Region since 1932 with Chief Obafemi Awolowo, also the founder and as Secretary" (Daramola, 1998).

## Conclusion

By 1960, the year of Nigeria's independence, Ekiti, through the efforts of Ekiti indigenes and non-indigenes, had acquired dynamic motor transportation systems that made it possible for all the Ekiti towns, to be linked, through direct transportation or through many motor routes, when necessary, to other towns outside Ekiti. The mode of transportation had grown from mere truck system through bicycle to motorized vehicular system that marked the beginning of realistic transportation, therefore social development in the colonial Ekiti. Without doubt, the novel transportation system further accelerated development at all levels of development: social, religious, economic, administrative and educational. It became a major colonial infrastructure that however, also, according to some critics, made exploitation very real and unchallenged.

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### **INTERVIEWS**

Aluko, M.A., 78 years, Retired Security, Odua Textile Industry, Ado-Ekiti; May 13, 2005.

Fadipe, Rufus, 80 years, Former Driver, Leventis, Lagos, Ado-Ekiti; July 11, 2006.

Ojo, Clement, 80 years, Cocoa Farmer, Ikere-Ekiti; July 16, 2006.

Okafor, James, 86 years, Retired Blacksmith, Igede-Ekiti; June 14, 2008.

Olawale, Karimu, 79 years, Retired Driver, Meteorological Services, Lagos, Lagos; July 11, 2006.

Olajiga, M., 70 years, Traditional Chief, Ise-Ekiti; May 30, 2007.

Interview on the place of bicycles, particularly in the commercial experiences of Ekiti in the colonial period, were conducted with many young and elderly people in Igede-Ekiti, Ado-Ekiti, Ise-Ekiti, Iyin-Ekiti; Emure-Ekiti, especially James Okafor (alias Awka or Aginagbode) of Igede, Raphael Okoli from Ado-Ekiti (a trader), Chief (late) Elejoka of Ise-Ekiti, Chief (late) Bade Adeyeye of Iyin-Ekiti, Femi Stephen Oloidi of Igede-Ekiti and Deacon Ogundele Ogunkua of Igede-Ekiti. Interviews conducted between 2006 and 2009.

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