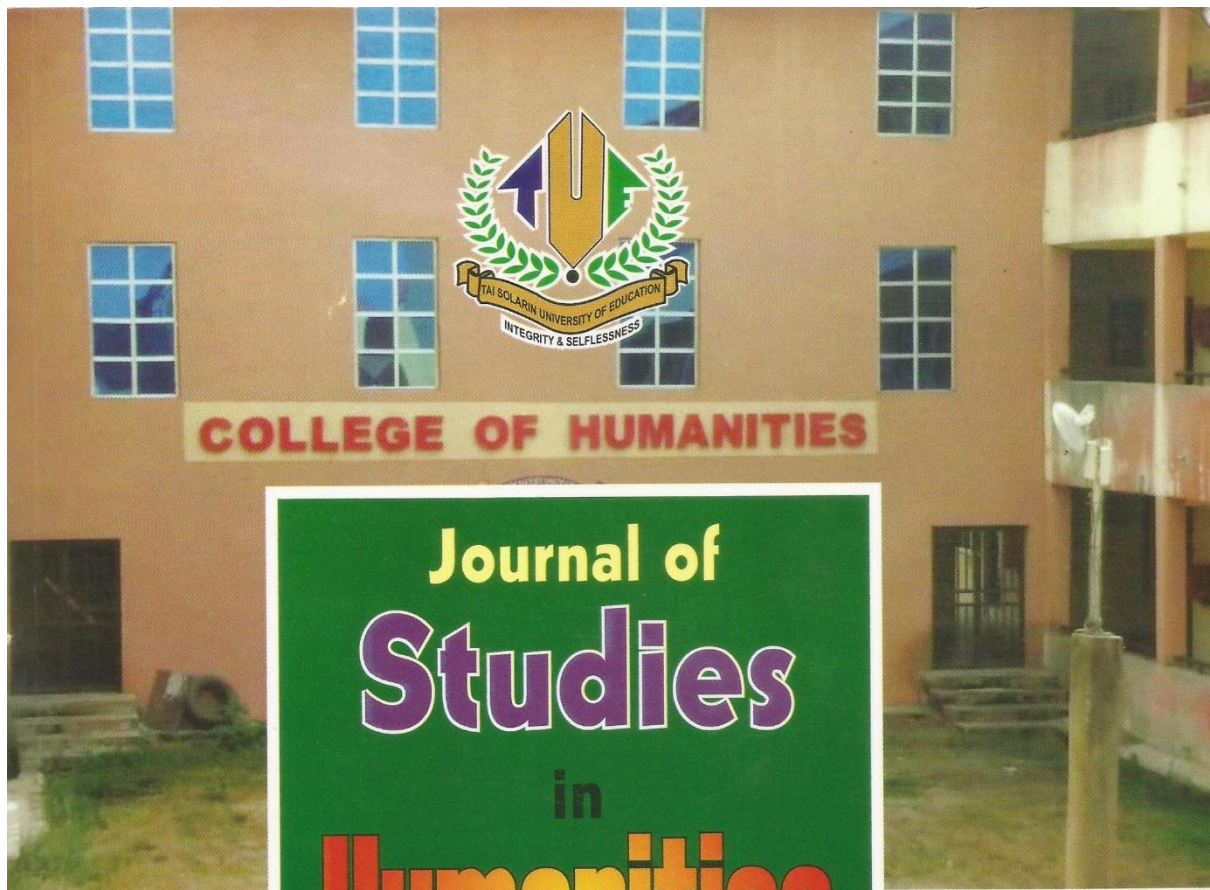




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Editorial Comment

This edition of the Journal of Studies in Humanities (JOSIH) has gone a long way to confirm the commitment of the College of Humanities of the Premier and Preferred University of Education to academic excellence and to solving the problems of human society.

This edition covers a wide range of areas in vocational and entrepreneurship education from the perspective of their historical significance and social relevance. Of particular interest in the edition is Yoruba society and social problems in Nigeria.

The edition has drawn articles from different tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is our hope that the readers would find the various articles written by scholars across various disciplines very illuminating and educative.

I also wish to express our gratitude to our numerous contributors, for without their articles the edition would not have been what it is.

We also appreciate our Editorial Consultants for their professional partnership.

Prof. Rasheed Owoyele Ajetunmobi

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A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF ROAD ACCIDENTS IN KWARA STATE UP TO 2010

Rasheed ONAGUN

and

Lukman ADESHINA

Abstract

This paper shows that effective management of rail/road transport systems in the colonial period reduced cases of road accidents. Post-Colonial economic development diminished as well as shrunked rail services; as the burden of freight and passengers fell heavily on road transport system. As from the late 1960s, therefore, Kwara and other States across the federation began to witness higher occurrence of road accidents; as Nigeria was rated second to Ethiopia in 1979. This paper analyses some salient trend in road accidents in Kwara State of Nigeria. In doing this, it highlights that, the changing phases in road crashes are direct implications of the historical changes in Nigerian transport system. Excessive road usage and neglecting attitudes of Kwara State government toward routine maintenance did not only turn Kwara roads to death traps, but also criminals' hideout. The study concludes with recent changes in road crashes that were influenced and perpetuated by the effect of economic hardship; which reduced the standard of living and many poor Nigerian adopted commercial motorcycle business as an alternative means of income.

Keywords: Road accidents, Transportation, Death trap, Vehicles, Kwara, Okada.

Introduction

Kwara State is situated between parallel 8° and 10° north latitudes and 3° and 6° East longitudes. It has an elongated shape running from West to East and covering an area about 32,500 sq. km. The State has River Niger as its natural boundary along its northern and eastern margins and shares a common internal boundary with Niger State in the North and Kogi State in the East, Oyo, Ekiti and Osun States in South and an international boundary with the Republic of Benin in the West. It is therefore appropriate to say that the State is indeed a Middle-Belt State serving as a gateway between the North and South.¹ The question of road accidents is a crucial challenge in the history of transportation not only in Kwara State, but nation-wide. Changes in the economy and transportation had contributed greatly to the rapid expansion and increasing rates of road accidents. This trend has been a recurrent phenomenon in Nigeria. No doubt, the ratio and magnitude of road accidents is determined by the vicissitudes in Nigerian transport system since the colonial period. In this sense, road accidents that were very rare, insignificant, as well as occasional during the colonial period rose to 53,897 cases and 7,717 deaths in 1976, 8,244 deaths in 1990 and 9,707 deaths in 1993.² In Kwara State, it moved from 220 in 2005, rose to 776 in 2006, and 1563 in 2008.³ Causes of road accidents need to be studied not just from a narrow scope of human error alone, but also as a problem strongly influenced by the changing trend in Nigerian transport system. The paper therefore examines the changing nature of road

accidents in Kwara State from 1967-2010. It also examines the nature of transport system in the colonial period, and how the new transport system contributed to the increasing rate of road accidents in Kwara State.

Road Accidents in the Colonial Period

Colonial policy of effective occupation paved the way for invention of modern transport system in Nigeria. Studies such as Oladele Olashore's 'Challenges of Nigeria Economic Reform'⁴, Innocent Ogwude's 'Freight Transport Studies in Nigeria-A Review Article'⁵, and M.O. Lawal's 'Railway Development in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects',⁶ have shown that rail transport activities in Nigeria did not only boosted the economy, but also reduced possibilities of road accidents. Few reports on road accidents emerged during the 1930s when colonial road development kicked-off in Nigerian regions. The first case of road accident in Ilorin Province was recorded in 1935 involving 15 casualties out of which four prominent traditional rulers like *Olukosi of Osi* and *Eleruku of Eruku* and others lost their lives.⁷ A.D. Dodnachy a witness, attributed the cause of the accident to road roughness; which he described as steep hill about 150x in length with sharp ugly end.⁸ Another witness expressed that poorness in road design along the steep hill made the lorry which belonged to Kolawole from Awtun Ekiti (with lorry No. 7278) to descend slowly from the hill and had collusion with another vehicle.⁹ Similarly, in July 1935 the police reported another case of a ghastly motor accident that killed one Joseph Omolabi and three others, which occurred at mile 46 along the Ilorin-Egbe road. After enquiries, the Commissioner of Police attributed fatalities to 'road roughness and not careless or negligent driving'.¹⁰ Rugged and rough road were made common during this period due to shortages of resources and revenue that were prevalent in other Provinces of the Northern and Southern region. Inadequate foreign earnings like cash crops and minerals demanded Colonial Government slow response to road development in Ilorin province. In this wise throughout the colonial period, most important roads were graded as trunk B and Administrative roads, putting most important roads in Divisions under the maintenance and care of the Native Authority Office in Ilorin and at Kaduna.¹¹ This policy was drafted to help the incapacitated Divisions which generated little from internal revenue. Most Divisions such as Borgu, Kaiama, and Ekiti made little revenue from taxes and agriculture which made road transport development a difficult task for them.¹² Sluggish development of the sector promoted the old human portorage system and lower vehicular movement. Conditions were however different in some other parts of the Northern and Southern regions that had produced the needed European cash crops. During the colonial period for instance, Western Nigeria had the highest proportion of tarred roads, as they were commonly called 'cocoa roads'.¹³ Colonial economic policies ensured a standard balance between road and rail transport in Nigeria. In this way, the colonial government was not only able to sustain the road and rail transport competition, but also reduced the volume of road crashes; as rail transport was predominantly used for long distance freights. The colonial government made an intensive use of the rail transport system to evacuate passengers, agricultural and mineral resources with little records of road carnage. Most roads constructed during this period served as trunk or feeder roads linking the interior farming districts to the rail terminals. Most long distance freight movement fell

on the rail transport, thereby reducing the possibilities of road accidents on the highways. In Ilorin Province for instance, 44km Alapa – Bode Saadu road served the six Districts and connected the rich food areas with Ilorin rail line and markets. In the same vein, the 13km Iponrin – Yaru linked Jebba rail station and Lafiaji road, and 19km Share – Shonga.¹⁴ Similarly, in Abeokuta province, kola-nut was transported by road from neighbouring villages and towns such as Shagamu to Abeokuta rail station for further movement to the Northern Province.¹⁵ By this, both railway and road transport system played a complementary role in the colonial period.

The Deplorable Road Condition in Kwara State

A few years after independence, the rail transport declined and Nigerians relied heavily on road transport system to evacuate freight and passengers. Poor road infrastructure and poor maintenance culture created an impediment to safety, and a striking factor of road accidents in Kwara. Despite the increasing trend of road transport development in Nigeria during the post-colonial period especially in the first and second development plans (1968/69 & 1971/72), the pace of development was however slower in Kwara,¹⁶ due to negligence of its development plans, most especially in the transport sector by its ruling elites. The State as a plain land was described as one having a good potential for effective road transport, but lacked development for the sector when compared with other States. For instance, it had a total of only 217kms of all seasoned roads, representing 4.3% of the total length of tarred roads in Nigeria even though it occupied 8% of Nigeria's land area.¹⁷ In contrast, Kano State another member of the northern States occupied about 1,648kms of all season motorable roads.¹⁸ The State after independence battled with the stigma of shortage of funds and revenue, because as being part of the extensive middle belt zone, produced very little quantities of revenue yielding export crops and low mineral potentials.¹⁹ For instance, the Marketing Board estimated purchases of key commodities i.e. cotton, groundnut and hide and skin from six Northern States in 1967/1968 shows that, North-Central produced 62%, Kano 79%, North-East 86%, North-West 52%, Benue-Plateau 14% and Kwara with the least 7%.²⁰ The State of all the successor six Northern States was ranked the poorest.²¹ As such, Kwara did not attract much transportation development and was therefore more prone to road crashes on single lane roads, potholes, death-trap bridges, manually graded bush paths, rough edges, and unsecured road environment. A critical appraisal of Kwara road network shows that the categories (Federal, State and Local Government) of roads were characterized with the above vices. For instance, Erin-Ile-Osogbo (Osun State Border), Ilorin, Bode-Saadu, Jebba road (Niger State Border); Ilorin, Share road; Ilorin-Omuaran-Ayedun-Ado-Okoko-Ekiti Kwara Border road, Ilorin Igbetti road; Ilorin Ogbomosho; Eiyenkorin-Olooru Express way, Ajase-Ipo, Offa, Osogbo road; Sala, Ilesha Baruba, Chikanda (a border town between Nigeria and Benin Republic) road; Omuaran-Eruku-Egbe (Kogi State border) Share, Lafiaji, Pategi road; Kosubosu, Kaiama road; and Kishi, Kaiama road were dangerous and had served as death traps. In a study on the constraints to developments in the newly created State of Kwara within her first twelve years (1967-1976), C.O. Agboola described Kwara as taking-off as a State with virtual absence of socio-economic and infrastructural facilities.²² Even the little allocations she got from the Federal

government were unequally and unsoundly planned and spent. During the Second and Third Development Plans for instance, there was an unfair allocation of 90% of the available funds for the provision of infrastructure only to urban areas (Kwara Central, Ilorin) where only 20% lived and where less accidents occur; neglecting the rural areas (Kwara South and North highways) where most road crashes occurred. These dangerous highways, and unimproved road conditions limits speeds and time not exceeding 100kms per-hour. It also made roads further unsafe to reckless drivers who violated the limit.

Moreover in Kwara, the problem of shortage of fund was obvious in 1979 as some Local Governments like Edu, Asa and others had no tarred roads.²³ Similarly, the civilian administration that assumed office in 1979 inherited 1,400kms of State roads, 59kms of which were tarred; even those 59kms tarred were then in deplorable state.²⁴ For instance, the Ogaminana Bridge at that period was in a state of disrepair which made it dangerous and accident prone as it was referred to by the State Works Ministry as the Number one "killer bridge" in the State.²⁵ In the same vein, nothing was done on other road crashes prone bridges like River Orere Bridge, collapsed Isapa Bridge and Oyi Bridge that had killed many motorists and their passengers.²⁶ The dilapidated bridge between Budo-Isale and Alufa Oterere village along Oke-Oyi-Lanwa road was also a death trap to Kwarans. Oko (Ekiti State)-Kwara Border Bridge that was nicknamed "Dead River" have claimed several lives and properties most especially the death of four students in 2004. Similarly, habitual complaints of shortage of funds to maintain Federal deadly roads like Eiyekorin-Olooru road had since turned it to a death trap and robbers' den which has claimed numerous lives including the commoner and notables.²⁷ For instance in 2004, fatal accidents that claimed the lives of two prominent Nigerians' wives i.e. Mrs Fausiyat Ola Olu Ali a legal luminary and Mrs Moses Oni the wife of Mr. Moses Oni, former Deputy Speaker of Kwara State House Assembly were recorded on that road.²⁸ Moreover, the Ilorin to Jebba road most significantly was terribly bad. This was a road that is about 50km long, and should not take more than 30minutes' drive, but took between two to three hours to ply because of its bad state.²⁹ According to former Kwara State Police Commissioner Chinwike Asadu, 'many lives had been lost on this road'. He stated that, crashes occurred on daily basis, which usually led to deaths of least two or more people, while properties were being destroyed.³⁰ Similarly, the Sultan of Sokoto Alh. Sa'ad Abubakar in a visit to the State during a Nigeria Inter-Religious Council Conference in 2010 also decried the gory state of the Ilorin-Mokwa-Jebba road for decades.³¹ He encouraged President Goodluck Jonathan, who was also present at the occasion, to rehabilitate the road. According to him;

'it is important to make Ilorin-Jebba-Mokwa road motorable.

If you had driven on the road to come here, I am sure that you will at least use two hours to rest before coming to this event.

*Thousands of travelers have suffered on the road. I learnt that a contract was given during the last administration for the reconstruction of the road, till now nothing has happened. But President, you should please work on the road very soon.*³²

In the same vein the member representing Ilorin East and South Federal Constituency, Dr. Ali Ahmad in an interview, analysed deeply on the deplorable condition of the road and

called on the Federal Government to reconstruct the Mokwa Jebba Ilorin road. He said:

*The state of the roads in Nigeria had sentenced Nigerians to death; adding that Kwara State which is the gateway to the North and South, had been adversely affected by the bad federal roads. Lives have been lost. People talked about the death penalty status of the roads. I think Nigerians have been sentenced to death penalty because of the bad roads, only God is saving us. People die every day on that Mokwa-Jebba-Ilorin road.*³³

Higher volume of the articulated vehicles served as one of the factors responsible for not only constant loss of lives and properties, but also of failure of road pavements. For instance in 1968, south from Kotangora traversing Kwara to Ibadan was observed to have lost about 200, 000pounds worth of fairly fresh truck wrecks along with terrible crashes on the road, some of them involving almost new, expensive tractor-trailer combination.³⁴ Since then till recent times, articulated vehicles (trailers) have wasted and wrecked lives and properties worth millions of Naira on Kwara Federal and State roads. Furthermore, most Kwara and Nigeria road pavements failed due to lack of adherence to standards. The dense network of both Federal and State roads in the State were poorly constructed and maintained. Engineers had attested to the fact that on paper, most roads were well designed in accordance with the latest engineering theories or specifications. However, it is very bad that the so called "Nigerian factor" crept into the plan at execution and construction stage.³⁵ Experts had attributed defective road design and failure to adhere to road construction standards, as some of the problem affecting roads not only in Kwara, but generally in Nigeria.³⁶ Most roads failed because, the design were defective. The world's standard requirement for asphalt thickness was 100mm. In Kwara, most roads asphalt thickness were usually thin between 30-50mm, and that was why when this thin asphalt was placed on laterite, the combination could not stay together.³⁷

Road Accidents in Kwara State

Moreover, motorcycle *Okada* accident constitutes the major challenge and problem in the late 1980s when the SAP program fell the masses standard of living. People resorted alternatively to *Okada* riding due to four reasons.³⁸ The first was cheaper. For instance, the brand new of motorcycle was about US\$500 compared to second hand cars of about US\$3000.³⁹ Secondly, it was the only means of transportation to many villages that were denied road infrastructural attention by the State Government, which was common to many towns and villages in the Central, South and Northern Senatorial Districts of the State. Thirdly, as a result of the traffic jams all over the Ilorin city, the unemployed youths took this advantage and used motorcycles to beat the hold-ups. Fourthly, poverty in the age long indigenous industry like cloth weaving; as many people sought alternative in getting their daily bread through motorcycle business.

These factors made motorcycle mode of transportation the most popular both in the rural and urban centers of the State. According to Prince Oyinloye, a Deputy Director in the State Licensing Office, atleast four *Okada* were bought daily in the State, and there are up to

10,000 *Okada* riders in Kwara State.⁴⁰ According to Odera, Ngim and Udosen, overspeeding, bad road, dangerous over-taking, use of alcohol, poor knowledge of traffic code and income generation are factors responsible for accidents among commercial motorcyclist.⁴¹ As from the late 1980s when SAP was implemented, Motorcycle continued to be the most accident prone mode of transportation in Kwara State; as the Accident and Emergency section of University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital complained of receiving atleast six victims daily.⁴² This was because, the riders often ignored safety measures, especially the use of helmet, and most studies showed that it reduced mortality from head injuries. In the state in 2005, a mandatory helmet law was enacted, and yet there was non-compliance by the motorist and reluctant enforcement by the authority.⁴³ It was even obvious that, the government itself discouraged enforcement for political reasons; as most of them (the riders) were party supporters, while some of them also give excuses regarding the cost of helmets and the tropical heat.⁴⁴ To this end, road carnages had killed members of the upper and middle class, to hewers of woods and drawers of water in our society. The former Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria, Alhaji Aliyu Mohammed, and the Umorens, Senator Augie, Gen. AbdulKareem Adisa, as well as that of Dr. Jubril Bala Usman.⁴⁵ When we turn to the fate of ordinary Nigerians on the roads, gory statistics stare us right in the face. According to media reports, atleast 107 persons perished on Onitsha-Benin road in 2003 alone, over 169 on Ibadan-Lagos Expressway, 200 on Jos-Bauchi-Maiduguri road, 116 on Eiyenkorin-Olooru-Bode Saadu-Jebba road, 93 people died on the Third Mainland Bridge in Lagos while uncontrollable others fell into the thirsty ocean.⁴⁶ Thousands of accidents on these roads were caused by overtaking along the tiny roads with numerous sharp edges and potholes.

Kwara State former Police Commissioner Late Mr. Chinwike Asadu blamed the bad state of these roads to the lackadaisical attitudes of the democratic administrations to road infrastructural development and road safety which was not the case in the military era.⁴⁷ Consequently, death tolls from road accidents rose-up consistently during the democratic dispensation since the fourth republic. For instance in 2001, the State recorded 281 deaths and 277 of those fatally injured in 2001, and 224 deaths and 369 got fatally injured in 2002. Similarly, report from the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital (UITH) data bank corroborated the claim; as there was an increase in road accident patients as from 1999. For instance, the patients' figure that was 387 in 1999, rose to 420 in 2000, 428 in 2001, 536 in 2002, 537 in 2003, 713 in 2005 and 738 in 2006.⁴⁸ The Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) Command comprising of Ekiti, Kogi and Kwara had in the past blamed the State Governments for lack of assistance on road safety equipment and logistics like ambulance vehicles, road side clinics, and first aids equipments. Instead, these State governments only preferred to buy vehicles and weapons for the Police who usually rigged elections for them. Consequently according to the FRSC data, road accident cases that was 220 in 2005, rose to 776 in 2006, and 1563 in 2008.⁴⁹ In a response to this call, the Kwara State Government established four Ambulance points in 2009 located at Ilorin-Jebba road, Ajasse-Ipo-Offa road, Ilorin-Omuaran road and Eiyenkorin-Ogbomosho road.⁵⁰ However, the projects have amounted to waste, because of absence of logistics, staffs and safety equipment at the sites.

The most recent change in road crashes was attributed to road crime and criminality,

which was common in Kwara. Presence of numerous road dents and Pote-holes, and inadequate security on the highways was another major challenge that turned Kwara roads to be unsafe. This menace, since longtime ago had been vulnerable to the highways connecting the Northern and Southern parts of the country which transverse Kwara, Kogi and Ekiti States. The vehicular volume on the highway was very high. These vehicles which were mostly transit were usually suspected by criminals to be carrying passengers with huge sum of money and valuables, thereby exposing the State to the criminals.⁵¹ The magnitude of road crime were so high to the extent another former Kwara State Police Commissioner Alh. M.D. Abubakar was attacked on Ilorin/Offa highway in November 2004.⁵² Similarly, the situation was so terrible to the extent that commercial motorists in the State threatened to boycott their services in November 2004, when hundreds of lives were lost as a result of constant road criminalities.⁵³ Investigations revealed that mounting of several road blocks by Nigerian security and safety agencies did not maintain sanity but led to the extortion of the motorists by the security men and orchestrated different sorts of criminal activities and road accidents.⁵⁴ For instance, according to a survey conducted in the last decade of the 20th century, the incidence of high rate of crime and crashes in Kwara, Kogi and Ekiti States were directly linked to the presence of road blocks mounted by men of the Nigeria Police.⁵⁵ For instance, Ilorin-Lokoja-Abaji road consisted of 19 road blocks,⁵⁶ while Ilorin-Ogbomosh-Lagos road consisted of 22 road block, with 60.7% of police check points at night.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it has been discussed how an effective transport system have sustained the economy, ensured and maintained balance between road/rail competitions, and reduced the possibilities of road crashes. However, changes in the post-colonial economy and its implications on transport system made road transport system more dominant. The dominance of road transport system did not only increases the volume of automobiles (especially freight truck loaders and Petrol tankers), but also gave birth to continuous rise to the volume of road crashes not only in Kwara, but nation-wide. The falling living standard from the evil of Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) forced Nigerians to adopt motorcycle transport business. Since the 1990s, commercial motorcycling had not only become a common and alternative means of livelihood, but also a death trap to riders, passengers and pedestrians.

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