

Colonial Transport System in Africa: Motives, Challenges and Impact

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Abstract

Transportation during the colonial period has been a topical issue. A lot of literatures exist on the motives and effects of transportation on the socio-economic development of African colonial economy. While some serve as eulogy, others are more critical. Transportation has proven to be a very effective means of bringing socio-economic development to communities and societies alike. The colonial territories served as ready sources of agricultural and mineral produces to feed the industries in Europe. The colonial economy in every colonial territory, was structured to improve the economies of the metropolises. An efficient transportation system was therefore imperative for this economic exploitation. But there were some obstacles that needed to be surmounted. The motives, challenges and complexities encountered by the Europeans while embarking on the task of developing an efficient transportation system in their various colonies in promoting the economic exploitation agenda as well as the impact are discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Africa, Colonial, Economy, Exploitation, Transportation

Introduction

It has been established that the primary motive of colonialism in Africa was purely for economic gains. To achieve these economic gains, basic infrastructure needed to be put in place. The colonial authorities in Africa were aware of the essentiality of infrastructural development towards achieving maximum political, social and economic stronghold in Africa. The basic institutions needed were an effective administrative structure, a modern transport system, portable currency and modern banking. Across colonial Africa, basic transportation infrastructural investment focused on opening up the various regions for political and economic purposes, particularly, agricultural and mineral exploitation. Transportation proved a major instrument in the hands of the colonial government in Africa which enabled them attain their objective of making the colonies an export-based economy. Enormous tons of goods left the colonies through the transport network that connected the produce centres with the coasts. Lawal (1997) summed this up, thus:

“Colonial economic policy sought to modernize local transport system, the distributive system, money and banking, distribution

and use of land and labour with the objective of expanding export production and distribution of European manufactured goods.”

Lugard (1922) also asserts, “The material development of Africa may be summed up in one word – Transport.” The implication of this statement is that it was expedient and germane to develop a modern transport system for the success of the economic exploitation motive. Simply put, mechanical transportation was required to fast track Africa’s exploitation and development. Lugard envisioned a transport system that would facilitate the development and dislocate traditional trade routes and divert such trade routes to new centres of administration, while preventing the French and Germans who were fellow imperialists from having access. At the beginning of colonial administration in various colonial territories, the European powers had envisaged their colonies to play dual roles: source of agricultural raw materials and mineral resources for their industries in Europe as well as assured market for the manufactures from the metropolitan industries. Thus, the provision of modern transport infrastructure was imperative to achieving this economic motive. However, in achieving this herculean task, the Europeans in various African colonies encountered some challenges.

Africa’s Transportation System: Historical Perspectives.

It is pertinent to briefly examine the pre - colonial transport infrastructure in Africa in order to have a better understanding of the motive behind colonial transport development. By the time the first European explorers arrived Africa in the 1400s, Africans had domesticated some animals to help address the growing need of moving people, goods and services over land. At the same time, a number of innovations, such as the construction of rafts and canoes capable of providing water-based transportation services, had been made. Thus, the transport infrastructure in Africa at the time consisted largely, but not exclusively, of tracks and footpaths for pedestrian and animal traffic, and natural navigable waterways.

Before the European’s effective occupation of Africa, the ethnic fragments that made up the continent existed politically independent of each other although, this may not be said of the economic aspect. This is because of the evidence of predominance of economic activities in the pre-colonial intergroup relations. These trade activities were made possible because of a number of infrastructural factors. One was the natural infrastructure which was seen in the geographical setting. For example, the mountains of far eastern Nigeria which entered Cameroon and the Lake Chad, that appeared to be natural barriers on the eastern side, had not prevented human movement across them. Then there is the impressive network of rivers and their tributaries. As Ajayi and Alagoa (1999) succinctly put it, “Nigeria is really the basin of the lower Niger south of the Bussa rapids with the Benue, their tributaries and the enormous delta spreading out into several Creeks and lagoons”. These river networks provided media of contact between peoples, cutting across the north and south axis. Neumark (1977) also lend his voice on the prominence and importance the waterway system in Nigeria. According to him, “The seaboard of Nigeria has the most extensive network of waterways in Africa. The Lower Niger, together with the Benue, is navigable by shallow draught barges for more than 1,000 miles, though the Benue is only navigable for six months in the lower stretches.

The early navigation of these waters contributed immensely to the pre-colonial internal and external trade. Also, ideas and technologies were diffused from one state, empire and kingdom to another through this means. The Niger-Benue area appeared to be a major crossroad in the general

spread of the technology of iron working, and the ideas of state organization, not in one single line of diffusion, but in several interlocking chains. The importance of the Niger and Benue in early history of Nigeria is further reinforced by the fact that three major kingdoms flourished on their banks. The Jukun Empire embraced most of the Benue valley and exercised influence over much of northern Nigeria as far as Kano, and appears to have been known in the south as far as the estuary of the Cross River. The Igala kingdom controlled areas around the confluence of the Niger and Benue, and traded below the confluence as far south as Aboh and Onya at the head of the Niger Delta. The rivers Niger and Kaduna form the axes of the country of Nupe kingdom. These rivers also served as the kingdom's effective and natural system of communication. The strategic location of these three kingdoms on the Niger-Benue meant that the history of traffic on these rivers would have a great deal to do with the history and relations of peoples comprising them. Other trade routes and infrastructure were also developed to enhance internal and external trades.

The Trans Saharan trade route was a trade route that travelled across Sahara Desert. At their height (8th until 17th century) they served as a cultural highway for different people and tribes along the trade routes. The Trans Sahara was the first real example of using camel to cross desert. The merchant would travel in caravans with hundreds, even up to ten thousand of camels in the caravans. Starting from the 700 A.D, camel caravans, brought products from the Arab world, all across the Sahara Desert to Ghana. The camel brought goods such as books, salt, textiles and tools in exchange for gold, ivory and slaves. Head portorage and beasts of burden served extensively in the pre-colonial economy of Africa. Neumark (1977) observed rather harshly that "in Negro Africa man was his own beast of burden." Head portorage was very common in the sub-Saharan Area of Africa. The human transport system is particularly valuable in the area of conveying messages. This underscores the invaluableity of the use of human beings as means of transportation, and especially communication in the age of less technological development.

In Africa pack of animals – oxen, camels and the donkey were favoured means of transport on land. Camel played a very prominent role in the transportation of natron and salt from North Africa to Ghana. Some evidence suggests that a number of the ancient empires and city-states in African region had developed a system of well-aligned roads and streets, as opposed to meandering footpaths. The ancient Ashanti Empire is said to have constructed an extensive series of roads that converged on the capital, Kumasi. Herbst and Griffiths (2000) provide further evidence of the existence of a relatively extensive network of roads and water-based transport systems pre-dating the arrival of Europeans in Africa in the following statement:

"To reach Timbuctoo Gordon Laing followed well-established Caravan Routes across the desert from Tripoli. René Caille obtained passage on a boat, one of many sailing regularly up and down navigable inland Niger to Timbuctoo. Caille returned to Europe via the very old Caravan route through Morocco."

The pre-colonial economic infrastructures were valuable in the long and short distance commercial activities. They were hardly sufficient to handle the increasing traffic brought about by the colonial economic motive of massive exportation of primary products from African coasts. The short-comings of the pre-colonial transport system necessitated the introduction of more efficient system by the colonial powers to ensure adequate movement of goods and personnel in and out of the African colonies. These short-comings were pointed out by Lugard (1922) when he observed "that produce worth £30 a ton at the port of shipment will have cost its full value to

transport over a distance of less than 200miles, leaving nothing for original cost of production and profit to the producer.” The high cost of head portorage not only limited the distance over which bulky produce could be conveyed but also inhibited the development of natural resources.

Regarding the pre-colonial transport system as crude and inefficient, the colonial government moved swiftly to take advantage of the network of waterways in Africa to build ports and harbours which served as terminals for the exportation of raw materials, and importation of manufactured goods. However, it must be clearly stated that the pre-colonial transport system that has been described by the colonialist as cruel and inefficient has been serving the indigenous people of Africa effectively before the coming of the European powers but because the pre-colonial transport systems could not meet the colonialist exploitative desire that was the reason it was considered inefficient and cruel.

The waterways served as the starting point of colonial government action on investment into the development of transport infrastructure in the African colonies. The rivers were the main traffic lines between the coast and the hinterland. Due to obstacles and blockages at the mouths, the government dispatched annually work parties armed with explosives, dynamites and other equipment, to clear the inland waterways of obstruction to traffic. At a point it became clear that the waterways were not enough. Some produce centres were quite far away from the rivers that the construction of the railways became inevitable. The roads for motor transportation subsequently followed. It is pertinent here to reinstate that the transport system was not financed to satisfy the economic needs of the colonial subjects but to facilitate the improvement and expansion of colonial powers and their distributive system.

Motives Behind the Development of Colonial Transport

By 1900 colonial rule had been fully established in Africa through a series of treaties signed by the local people. The aim was to enable the European powers exercise full control over human and material resources of Africa. After the establishment of colonial rule in Africa, two major tasks confronted the colonial authorities. The first was to establish a sound administration over the new acquired areas and secondly was the challenge of putting an appropriate infrastructure in place for the exploitation of the material resources of those areas. It was partly in pursuit of these objectives that the colonial authority took steps to develop the transport systems in Africa. Thus, the development of colonial transport system took place within the context of Europe economic policy in Africa. The colonial economic policy grew out of the belief that a colonial territories existed for the benefit of the metropolitan countries. In European official mind, the economic relationship between European nations and their colonies should be governed by the principle of ‘comparative advantage’ which means that a country should specialize in the production of what she was best suited to produce. In line with this, colonies were supposed to provide raw materials for European industries, and also provide markets for European manufactured goods.

Furthermore, the European economic policy in Africa during the colonial period was governed by the policy of self-sufficiency. This meant that the colonial administration in the country was expected to generate funds internally to meet the basic cost of administration. Each colony was expected to bear the full burden of its development. From the above analysis, it is cleared that colonial economic policy in Africa was particularly aim at exploitation of human and material resources of African territories for the benefit of European nations.

Against this background, the European colonialist realized that if their economic objectives in Africa were to be achieved, the communication and transportation system in colonies had to be improved. To effectively subordinate the colonies to primary producers (and as satellites), the European imperial governments (the metropolises) introduced measures that will enhance cooperation on the part of the indigenes and effect a competent administrative system. These measures are depicted in the type of infrastructural facilities and institutions provided, and their strategic placement. The decision to delve into the expensive investment on colonial transportation in Africa was influenced by numbers of reasons. They include:

Economic

The discovery of the new trade route to Asia by the European colonialist where they hitherto go to for the procurement of species and the availability of those same ingredients in Africa planted the European colonialist's interest in Africa. The availability of raw materials needed in the manufacturing of goods for the European market which was necessitated by The Industrial Revolution of the 19th century further made the Europeans to begin a serious trading activity in Africa. There were large agricultural produces in West Africa such as cotton, palm oil, palm kernel and ground nuts. We had large minerals deposit in places like Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), and Belgian Congo (Congo), Angola (coffee), Kenya (coffee and tea) Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) tobacco and beef just to mention a few. Upon establishing permanent trade posts in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Southern Africa and other territories the need for the movement of raw materials became the next problem to resolve.

Development of colonial transport system was therefore expedient to help the colonial merchants in moving cash crops and extract minerals from where they were produced inland to the harbour for export. Also, the desire to expand trade made the European manufacturers desired the opening up of Africa interior as a new market for their goods. The colonial administration realized that without the development of transport infrastructure it will be difficult for them to evacuate raw materials from the colonies as well as difficult to find market in the interior of Africa for their manufactured goods.

Also under economic motives the pressure for the construction of rail lines came expectedly from the British business community. It was motivated by the fear of prospect of the diversion of trade in British colonies to railway lines in the adjoining French colonies. Colonial officials shared in the merchant's enthusiasm and in due course held consultation with them and commissioned surveys into possible lines of construction. The need to exploit the vast hinterland regions of Africa led the British colonial authorities to embark on the construction of one of the most elaborate railway systems in Africa a decade following the Berlin Conference (1884/5), which sanctioned the partition of the continent. For instance in Nigeria, the project, which began in Lagos in 1895, reached Ibadan in 1900, was extended to Ilorin in 1908 and reached Kano in the northern part of the country in 1912. An eastbound link was added from Port Harcourt in 1913. This link was extended into the coalfields of Enugu in the eastern region in 1916, and in 1926, the

link was connected to the western line at Kaduna. In 1929, the final link from Zaria through the cotton producing areas of Kaura Namoda was completed.

Strategic and Administrative

Strategic and administrative consideration is also one of the motives for the development of colonial transport systems in Africa. The colonial administrations built transport systems because they realized that efficient transport was necessary for political officers to tour their districts in order to bring to the people the dividends of the new political order. In Nigeria for instance, the subjugation of the traditional rulers under the Indirect Rule policy through administrative officers would not have been successful without effective transport due to distance and the nature of some terrains like bush paths, rivers and creeks. Transportation was needed for the co-ordination of working staff, collection of tolls and taxes. Transport systems were therefore, built to enable the colonial administration maintain firm control on the politics and economy of the newly acquired territories.

Military

For effective economic administration and hitch free trading activities the colonial government established regimental forces to quell likely riotous situation and to instill fear into the people so as to reduce opposition to their rule. In Southern Africa the Europeans were constantly mobilizing forces to suppress the revolts in the colonies. The same scenario played out in Kenya and Angola. These troops will need to move from one location to another whenever the need arises. To this end the colonial masters had to develop an effective transport system for easy movement of troops. There are also some examples in Africa to prove that the development of transport system was for also military motives. The colonialists in all their efforts to develop railways and other transportation infrastructure made hardly any attempt to link the colonies. Rather, conscious efforts were made to discourage interaction amongst the colonies. This was particularly true when two colonial territories were under the colonial auspices of different colonial powers. It is noteworthy that the heydays of European colonialism in Africa coincided with a period when there was extreme rivalry, and sometimes, severe animosity amongst European countries (Crowder, 1976). During the two World Wars colonial authorities assigned a lot more weight to cost-saving than to regional integration. There were two known cases of a rare attempt to link territories under different European colonial powers. Both involved German colonial authorities. One case has to do with the German decision in 1916 to link the Tanga rail line in German East Africa (Tanganyika, now Tanzania) to the Mombassa rail line in British-controlled Kenya. The other involved the decision that was made to extend the railway from the Cape (South Africa) into German South-West Africa (Namibia).

However, it is important to note that these projects were propelled by military strategic reasons, and not by reasons related to the socio-economic development of the colonies. In this case, the Germans were interested in averting the impending danger of being pushed out of the region, by especially South African forces under the command of General Smutts. Mabogunje (1981) buttress this assertion by positing that the construction of the Kenya – Uganda railway, which was started in 1896 and reached Lake Victoria in 1902, cannot be considered an effort to establish a veritable interregional linkage because Uganda and Kenya were colonies of one

European power, namely England. Apart from facilitating the evacuation of natural products from land-locked Tanzania to the coast in Kenya, this railway also made it possible for the English to protect their colonial possessions from their rivals, the Germans, who controlled neighbouring Tanganyika (Tanzania).

The French controlled most of the colonial territories of West Africa under the rubric of what was at the time known as French West Africa. This explains the fact that railway lines link Senegal and Mali; and Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso (formerly, Upper Volta). The important role played by these rail lines to link the hinterland territories to the coast cannot be exaggerated. On their part, the Germans constructed two rail lines, one from the agriculture-rich Mount Kilimanjaro to the Port of Tanga, and the other from Dar-es-Salaam to Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika. These railway projects had an important military purpose, namely to facilitate the rapid movement of troops to defend the borders of Tanganyika had the English ever decided to attack from neighbouring Kenya or Uganda. The efforts by the British to build a railway from Kisumu (Port Florence) on Lake Victoria to Uganda were driven by military concerns as well.

Thus, in colonial Africa, the railway was not only an “instrument of occupation” but also a tool of exploitation and military defense. In Cameroon, the Germans also embarked on an ambitious railway construction project that was designed to ultimately link what at the time was known as German Kamerun with German East Africa (Tanganyika). The railway line, known as the Nordbahn, started off at the Port City of Douala in 1906. The main aim was to link the hinterland to the Douala seaport. Accordingly, the Germans proceeded to extend the line inward, reaching Nkongsamba in 1911 and by the outbreak of World War I, the line had reached Windemeng, a few kilometers from the capital city, Yaoundé.

Leisure and pleasure

Although the primary purpose of colonial transportation is to exploit the resources of the colonies. There are instances where it was mainly for the development of the colonies; example is the Dutch in South Africa who made South Africa their home also in Zimbabwe where the white farmers are part of the country's development and have taken permanent residence in the country. With the analysis made above it can be made cleared that the main motive behind colonial transport system was for exploitation of African resources.

Challenges of Developing Colonial Transportation in Africa

Apart from the policy of ‘self-sufficiency’ adopted by the colonial powers in administering their various colonies, which did not give room for budgetary input from the home governments, the development of colonial transportation was also faced by challenges such as inadequate finance, hostility of the African people, issue of land right and acquisition, geography and topography of some of the colonial territories, use of forced labour and lack of preliminary surveys for road construction, among other challenges.

Finance

Lack of adequate funding of the colonial transportation was one of the major challenges that confronted the European powers in the development of colonial transportation system. This constituted a serious bottleneck because the various home governments were not prepared to use their ‘tax payers’ fund to develop infrastructures in colonial Africa. Most of the European powers adopted the policy of ‘self-sufficiency’ in administering their colonial territories. The colonial

authorities therefore, had to devise means of developing the modern transportation system for the successful establishment of control over the material resources of the various colonial territories.

Development of the railway transportation system was the major priority of the colonial powers and the projects were often the single largest expenditure item on colonial budgets in the various colonies. The colonial authorities in cutting construction costs had to exploit shorter routes to avoid huge cost of construction. For example, the Uganda – Kenya railroad built between 1896 and 1901, which was meant to connect the landlocked but relatively rich Uganda to coast at Mombasa was not intended to pass through Kenya but she benefited from the project because it represented a shorter and relatively cheaper route that could be exploited. The Uganda Railway cost the British government £5.3 million (about Shs21 billion) to construct. Of the £5.3m, some £2.3m was spent in Britain on rails and locomotives; under £1m in India on rolling stock and recruiting labour; under £0.2m in the United States on locomotives while British firms got the contracts, naturally, to ship in the materials.

Hostility from Africans

If the imposition of colonial rule by the Europeans could not be achieved on a platter of gold, the introduction of several developmental innovations for the proper economic exploitation, especially, construction of roads and other transportation systems did not go smoothly also. One of the major challenges faced by the Europeans in building transportation was therefore, hostility from the various African territories. The skepticism of the Africans to the European administrators and merchants did not make the construction of roads and railways an easy task. Most motor roads and railways were constructed to cover very long distances, linking producing areas to the coasts through forests and pastoral lands, which must be destroyed before the construction could be done. These farm lands, which hitherto served economic purposes to the indigenous population were destroyed and this brought about some form of resistance from the people. The challenge of how to appease the indigenous people thus arose. A major incident in East Africa was the Kedong Massacre, when the Masai attacked a railway workers' caravan killing about 500 people because two Masai girls had been raped. An Englishman unconnected to the railway, Andrew Dick, led a counter-attack against them, but ran out of ammunition and was speared to death by the Masai. Another instance of resistance by the local populace was the resistance by Nandi people led by Koitalel Arap Samoei. He was killed in 1905 by Richard Meinertzhagen and this finally halted the Nandi resistance.

Issue of Land Rights

Meanwhile, related to the problem discussed above was the issue of land rights and acquisition. In such areas where lands were communally owned, the Europeans encountered serious challenges in acquiring lands for the various railways and roads construction. For instance, in Eastern Nigeria, lands were jointly owned by the communities and no single person or leader can unilaterally give concession for its acquisition. Nwabughuogu (1993) has aptly observed on the issue of land rights in Eastern Nigeria that:

“Unlike Northern Nigeria where land was transferred to the colonial government and managed by Native Authorities, it was an important part of policy to protect the land for the ‘natives’ of eastern Nigeria to prevent land alienation to strangers and foreigners.”

This formed the basis of land rights in Igbo land and when the construction of the Eastern Railway was approved in 1912 by the colonial government, the colonial administrators found it a herculean task in getting the Igbo people to release their ancestral lands. However, this challenge did not last for too long because many communities on whose soil the tracks were to be laid willingly obliged after explanations and persuasions by government officials.

Geography and Topography

Landforms, such as mountains, hills and rocky terrains in many African territories were another major challenge encountered by the various European administrators in constructing roads and railways in the various colonies. The rocky terrains of some colonies made construction works very difficult and quite challenging. This was the experience in North African territories such as Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. This problem called for huge capital investment because in some cases, the routes were made longer while the administrators tried to avoid hills, mountains and even desert and mangrove areas. This also called for special engineering tools, equipment and qualified personnel that were capital intensive. In the Rift Valley region of East Africa, the escarpment posed a serious engineering challenge to railway construction.

Use of forced labour

The use of forced labour in the construction of roads and railways was another very thorny issue in the development of transportation system during the colonial period. It brought untold hardship on the African population. People were forced to abandon their farmlands, especially, during the farming seasons to work on construction sites. For example, between 1914 and 1918 in the Abeokuta Province of western Nigeria, the farmers were denied access to their farm lands because of road constructions and this led to destruction of farm crops and bad harvest. Some of them had to trek for days before reaching construction sites and had to stay away from their farms and families for months. Many of them who had the opportunity of hiding from the colonial masters were left without any choice than to hide. Meanwhile, in some regions like East Africa, the British imported some skilled and unskilled work force from India to work on construction sites when the indigenes were unyielding. These were referred to as the Indian ‘Coolies’. They were of a great relief to the Europeans because they went a long way in assisting the British in the railway construction.

Lack of preliminary survey

Another challenge faced by the European administrators was the problem of lack of preliminary surveys while trying to construct the roads. Most of the colonial roads were developed from foot paths and tracks used by the Africans in connecting villages with farms and markets before the coming of the Europeans. The colonial governments did not engage in any preliminary survey to determine the suitability of these foot paths for road construction. The new roads in most cases were not tarred but were only widened and straightened. It is worthy of note to say here that

surveying could not be effectively done in practically dense rain forest, therefore, these old paths and tracks were utilized by the colonial governments in the construction of modern roads. More important is the fact that preliminary survey required the presence of engineers and professional personnel, which were apparently, grossly inadequate, thus, necessitating the use of foot paths.

The Economic Depression of the 1930s

The economic depression had a devastating effect on the development of road transport system in the African territories. It led to a drastic cut in the budgets for road and rail construction. For example, in Nigeria and Gold Coast (modern Ghana), many construction works had to be abandoned because of the depression, while many of the already constructed roads were poorly maintained. Many of the laterite roads were washed away by rains and could not be reconstructed due to lack of funds. In addition, engineers and other personnel were sacked in order to minimize costs.

Meanwhile, other challenges that confronted the European masters in the development of modern transport system included the scourge of tropical diseases like malaria fever, which claimed the lives of many white expatriates and also, the lives of Indians. Another challenge faced was the scourge of man-eating predators like the Tsavo lions around the Tsavo river (in Coast Province of Kenya near the border of Tanzania) that were responsible for the death of several Africans and Indian coolies in the wild forest of East Africa. It is on record that twenty-eight (28) Indians and more than one hundred and thirty-five (135) Africans were killed by the predators, which greatly slowed down the pace of road and railway construction in that region. The Europeans also encountered shortages of food and other essential supplies especially, in areas across dry waste lands of North Africa.

These challenges among others stared the European masters in the face while trying to develop the modern system of transportation in colonial Africa but they remained very resolute in their determination to make development of transport system a success.

Impacts of Colonial Transportation in Africa

Scholars the world over, have a consensus agreement on the fact that transportation is a pre-requisite for both socio-political and economic growth. This paper would like to highlight the wide ranging impacts of colonial transportation in Africa, specifically on her economy and the people. Though these impacts can be seen from both sides of negative and positive perspectives.

Given whatever dimension one look at those impact, it is intrusive to understand the fact that, those innovations had opened up the continent to far-reaching development and has consequently influenced her economic, socio-political and structural growth to a very large extent in these order:

It opened up the continent for economic exploitation: The colonization process in Africa and its antecedent forces especially, transportation, helped in exposing Africa's economic frontiers from the former primitive stages as agricultural products from the continent were transported to European countries in large quantities through the railways and sea ports means of transportation which thus subsequently facilitates economic progress and commercial development of the continent.

It helped developed her structures and infrastructure: Colonial contacts with Africa was the hall mark of her structural and infrastructural development as the processes allowed the continent to have firsthand development from the traditional means of transportation which hitherto were not obtainable on the continent, example are the foot paths that metamorphosed to road and rail tracks along the primitive canoes and rafts that were upgraded to sailing boat and barges. These innovations also gave rise to emergence of new town and markets at the railway stations and the harbours.

It facilitated easy portability: The modes of colonial transportation introduced to the continent then, helps in large ways in makes possible prompts and easy means of contacts and interaction amongst the traditional communities, all which were not easily possible when transport modes of animal packs and paddled canoes and rafts were been used, as it took several days and weeks to move from one community to the other. Possibility of moving products was also enhanced as it was easier and faster to move farm produce from the hinterland to the railways stations and to the harbour within reasonable time by both train and sailing ships.

It facilitated economies of large scale productions: Unlike before the advents of the colonial masters and subsequent introduction of their transport modes, agricultural production in Africa was at a subsistence level as people merely produced for their household consumption and little extra to be trade by barter, the advent of colonial means of transport drastically changed the situation as the new innovation created a large market for whatever was produced as those products were in very high demands overseas to feed their growing industries. This drove more farmers to the farm; more land to be tilled and more purses were enriched.

It led to lower cost of production: During the pre-colonial period as would further be seen at the tails end of this paper, modes of transportation available then were limited to human portorage, animal packs, paddled canoes and rafts, all which are so slow and had very limited capability to deliver bulky goods en-masse across a far distance and always at an exorbitant cost in term of energy and other resources the introduction of railways system of transportation goes a long way to solved this problem due to its capability to carry bulky goods from the hinterland straight to the ports in lesser time and cost, thus effectively tamed distance barrier along its accompany cost.

It can be deduced from the foregoing that colonial transportation development in Africa enabled man to harness existing and new resources together and thus led to the release of labour and capital previously tied up in less productive enterprise or isolated by distance. Going by the above positive impacts of colonial transport in Africa, this paper cannot but agree with the famous dictum of Sir Lord Fredrick Lugard “The material development of Africa maybe summed up in one word -Transport.”

However, there are always two sides to a coins, which is why this paper would refuse to stop at enumerating only the positive impacts of colonial transportation in Africa, but would also delve into some areas of negative impacts.

It led to drop in per capital income: Among the negative impacts of colonial transportation in Africa was the over-investment on the sector, which subsequently led to a reduction in the potential growth in other direct productive activities, which resulted to absolute decline in per capital

income, this came to be as other scarce resources that should have been better employed in other sectors of the economy were diverted and concentrated on the transport sector alone.

It created uneven development: The entire transport system as introduced by the colonial powers lacked coordination since the system was built in the contest of imperial rivalry, as most of them never crossed colonial boundaries and were designed to serve the interest of a particular imperial power as such, many areas were left untapped while many few places had a dense network that even exceeded local needs, good example of this is the railway system in the French West Africa.

It merely served as an enabling factor: In capital formation, colonial transportation in Africa was never a causal factor in the development of the region, in that, it can only be perceived as having only permissive effects on the region's development as it did not on its own independently produce direct productive activities or subsequent increases in the level of the region's economic growth, as such it would amount to a gross simplification of a very complex problem to single it out as a causal agent in capital formation, same way railway system in America economic growth was highly over-exaggerated whereas, it was built in response to demand. More to this was the fact that colonial transport in Africa was a combination of European capital and African enterprises, while it is possible to compute the former the cost of the latter is incalculable, as it took a heavy toll on lives and forced labour of the Africans.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that colonial transportation in Africa was for the exploitation of the resources of the region and not really for her development. It can also be concluded that the development of the transportation system by the colonizing powers met with a huge success despite the magnanimity of challenges that confronted them. Driven by the desire to establish control on the material resources of the various African territories for the economic benefits of the metropolises, these intimidating challenges were surmounted. Despite the motives of the colonialists in exploiting the resources of Africa through the establishment of transport system it should also be considered that its establishment brought about the revolution of African economy, urbanization as well as employment although, these were all accidental development.

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