

Market Systems and Domestic Trade Activities in Ekiti of Western Nigeria between 1900 And 1960

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Abstract: The colonial Ekiti had well structured commercial activities through efficient market and trade experiences that were indigenous to Ekiti. A market was more than a venue for commercial transactions, because other social, political and religious activities, among others, were integral to market functions. Market days among the colonial Ekiti were periodic and there were many types of market which can be grouped generally under major and subsidiary. The Ekiti colonial market can also be broken down into shop market, premises market and farm market or roadside market; all of which positively affected the Ekiti economy. What made the market very commercially vibrant was also its organizational structure. Domestic trade by the market traders, shop keepers and off-market traders as well as long distance traders, all trading in foodstuffs, textiles, various domestic materials and kolanuts, among others, combined to bring economic stability to colonial Ekiti.

Keywords: Market Systems, Domestic Trade Activities, Commercial transactions.

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1851, Lagos was annexed as a British colony, and this made the British officials extend their political interests to the hinterland. The Ekiti Parapo Wars also provided reasons for the British to penetrate the Ekiti territory, according to them, in order to put an end to the wars. In addition, the British, also in their struggle to stop slave trade, had an uninhibited opportunity to have total control over Yorubaland, including Ekiti. Thus, by 1893, it was easy for the British to bring to an end the various wars which affected the economic, political and social lives of the people. The First World War of 1914 to 1918, no doubt, threatened the British interest in Yorubaland, generally, at the time, and seriously affected external trade. It did not however really affect the domestic or internal trade activities. In fact, very unbelievably, the domestic trade flourished as usual, and it helped the Ekiti “to give moral and financial support for the War” (EK. St. Govt, 1999: 5). During the First World War, the British successfully brought an end to local wars in order to further promote local trade, particularly through local markets that were the backbone of local economy.

II. MARKET SYSTEMS

In the colonial Ekiti, and in other Nigeria’s ethnic groups, market was the engine of commerce and the soul of people’s economic activities and growth. This role of market has not changed till today. A market is regular convocation of people with different social, political, religious and economic background whose main mission or objective in the market is to either buy or sell products; that is, commerce. A colonial Ekiti market was made up of people with different age levels and populated mainly by people in its immediate environment and by those from neighbouring towns. However, in the context of this discussion, market should be seen as a specially designated site where selling and buying, or exchange of goods, take place between traders and the consumers (Ogunremi & Faluyi, 1996: 64). It can also be any location where buying and selling usually take place. With these in mind, it is important to discuss the market systems as well as trade activities in Ekiti in the colonial period, starting with the functions of a market.

Market Functions

As already mentioned above, the main function of a market is commercial, but according to B.W. Hodder and U.I. Ukwu, the Ekiti markets, like other markets in Yorubaland, are more than economic gatherings or establishments, because they were “associated with several non-economic aspects of Yoruba culture” (Ukwu, 1969: 64). That is, a market serves other functions. For example, it was an information centre where people, particularly from neighbouring towns, gathered information, consciously or unconsciously, about various social, religious and political events in Ekiti generally.

A market could also be an entertaining arena where local musicians, singers and jesters perform for gifts. And of course, it was generally believed that a market could be a therapeutic place for those who needed healing or spiritual ablution. For example, according to Chief Bola Ojo, women looking for the fruits of the womb could be directed by traditional doctors to secretly sweep any area of the market as part of spiritual cleansing (Ojo, 2006). The leaves that dropped from any market tree as well as market pebbles or sand were of medicinal significance to the traditional doctors. This is why Hodder and Ukwu believe that “most Yoruba markets are associated with some fetish” (Hodder & Ukwu, 1969: 52), since spirits were “believed to meet and even to live in trees in or around the market places” and sacrifices were also made to “these market spirits for the peace and tranquility of the town” (Hodder & Ukwu, 1969: 52).

A market, in Ekiti, was used for unusual town meetings that required large or community attendance; particularly meetings on child kidnapping, controversial death or incursion of another town on the community’s land. In addition, “offenders were punished or executed” in the market (Oguntuyi, n.d.: 10). It was “believed that a madman could be cured if he had not wandered through the market” (Oguntuyi: 10). Markets were also used by Christians and Muslims for preaching, while festivals or masquerade activities equally took place inside the market or market premises.

Periodic Markets

All over Ekiti, in the colonial period, periodic markets predominated. In fact, it was not until the early 1940s that the only daily market in Ekiti began. This was the Oja Oba (Kings Market) in Ado-Ekiti. The Ekiti, unlike other language or ethnic groups, operated a 5-5-day (*Ojo marun marun*) market; making about six or seven market days a month. In every town, market days were rigidly fixed. That is, a market day that fell on a particular day, like Tuesday for example, could not be changed to any other day for any reason. Market periodicity was so structured that markets in the neighbouring areas would not clash with one another. This was due to what Hodder and Ukwu describes as “a ring system... composed of a complete and integrated sequence of markets taking place over... periods” (Hodder & Ukwu: 66) Each town had its periodic markets on the days that were different from those of other towns so as to avoid clashes, and in order to allow traders to participate fully in the neighbouring periodic markets. Occasionally, periodic markets could clash, but this situation occurred only between periodic markets or towns that were not close to, therefore distant from, one and other. Depending on the commodities that the sellers and the consumers wanted to sell and buy, respectively, where there was this overlap, the alternative was to attend markets that were closest to them and where their trade interests could be best satisfied. What the above discussion shows is that, like in some other Nigerian groups, “within a market ring, the markets nearest to each other would not hold on the same or consecutive days” (Njoku, 2001: 84), so as to facilitate commerce.

Types of Market

In the colonial Ekiti, there were four types of market: open air, premises, shop and road side markets. The open air market also had two types: the major and minor or support market. The major markets were usually big in size and found near kings’ palaces. Early in the colonial Ekiti, many churches and mosques were located near major markets to allow easier propagation of their doctrines. Major markets were those that attracted the neighbouring and distant towns to them because of their rich or greater varieties of consumer goods. Mainly made up of women, the population of major markets, depending also on the population of the towns, ranged from about two thousand to about ten thousand; and about one-third of each market population coming from other towns. The major markets, also known in many Ekiti towns as king’s markets, were the ones most attractive to both local and distant trade. They were the main arenas for commerce.

In fact, it was in the major market that unlimited varieties of local foodstuffs were sold. These were in addition to all products of local industries. Women, particularly, travelled to various Ekiti major weekly markets to purchase these products. For example, mat traders travelled to the mat weaving centres like Ipoti, Ogotun and Are to buy, in large quantity, mats which they sold in other Ekiti markets. Some mat weavers sometimes sold their products in other towns by themselves. Pottery wares which were very common trade commodities in the colonial Ekiti were also sold the same way. Pottery wares produced mainly in Ara and few other Ekiti towns, were also sold in Ekiti markets. These pottery products were bought at the production locations and then carried by headcarriers to other locations for sale. Since the pottery products were very indispensable to domestic and other needs, trade in them prospered greatly in the colonial Ekiti, particularly when foreign and competing products, like aluminum pots, plates, bowls and buckets were not yet common.

Also, woven textiles, which were very easy to carry and transport and which were commonly produced in every Ekiti town, were very important articles of internal trade in the colonial Ekiti. These were cloths produced with both narrow and broad looms. Those produced with narrow looms were usually sold by men, while those woven on the broad looms were sold by women. These woven textiles were carried on market days to various Ekiti towns for sale.

Apart from major markets, there were also minor or support markets. Unlike the major markets, minor markets could be sited at any area but, usually on streets within a town. However, there were two types of minor or support markets in many towns. One was used occasionally and the other was also weekly like the major market. The occasional one was made functional only when a king died, and this would be for a specified duration. It could also be used as a result of sectional or collective rebellion or protest against a king. That is, it was an abomination to make such market functional, unless the above reasons incited it. The minor weekly market was always functional, like the major market, but with far less “marketing capacity in terms of size, population, popularity and commodities” (Zaraki, 2000: 21).

But there was another type of market; premises market, a very popular form of market in colonial Ekiti. This type, found in some house premises on major streets, was in use from the evening till night, particularly by women who were occupied with other businesses from morning till noon or evening. The items sold in the premises market were common items like salt, matches, palm oil, pepper, dry fish or crayfish as well as soap and other domestic items. Another type of market emerged in the colonial period. This was the “shop market” where several goods, including stationeries, were sold. This innovation began around the 1920s when several imported European goods, and when educational materials, were becoming part of the people’s essential needs. With this type of shop market, particularly in big towns, many landlords converted some rooms, directly facing major streets, in their buildings into shops, particularly for rent or commercial reasons.

The least popular type of market in colonial Ekiti was the roadside market which usually took place on the roads, also farm roads, that linked one town to the other. On these roads, goods could be spread on the ground for sale. They could also be bought directly on the roads from the sellers who were yet to get to their designated market compartments. Such buyers used to resell in the main markets the products bought this way; since the products were generally cheaper in price when bought on the road. However, in colonial Ekiti, a town could have up to ten markets, both major and minor, depending on the largeness of the town. The more strategically located a town was, the more commercially viable it was and therefore, the more markets it was likely to have. Such towns included Ado, Igede, Ikere, Ilawe, Ikole, Igbara-Odo and Ifaki. Each of these towns, including Igede, had not less than three neighbouring towns bordering it. Towards the end of colonization, and with increase in population, many weekly markets became daily, especially in the highly urban towns.

Market Organization

The colonial Ekiti markets, as regards physical layout, were demarcated and allocated according to commercial commodities. Commodities had separate locations which allowed easy location by the consumers. These commodities could be sold on bare ground without shade, but traditionally, market goods were sold under shades of either trees, thatched roofs, tents or stalls supported with stakes, bamboo trees or other wooden materials. Each stall or allotted space for a particular product was known as *iso*. There were, therefore, different *iso* for yam, cassava, palm oil, vegetables, meat, goat, fowls and cloths, for instance. In the early colonial period, the Ekiti markets had no tradition of modern stall system, “apart from some thatched and easily collapsible or fragile sheds” (N.A.I., 1947: 7).

The modern stall system was introduced to Ado-Ekiti in 1940, and in 1941, it had spread to other towns like Ikere, Emure Ise, Ijero, Igede, Iyin, Aramoko, Ilawe, Ifaki, Igbemo, Igbaro-Odo and Omuo. The Ekiti District Officer (DO) conceived the idea of building modern stalls in 1931, but after a prolonged debate, the idea was dropped for lack of fund. For this reason, stalls were not built in most Ekiti towns by government until the late 1940s. This was when it was agreed, at a meeting chaired by the DO, R.E. Brown, in Ado-Ekiti in 1947, that stalls should be built, particularly for economic reasons. That is:

It was agreed that if the suggested sum of £25,000 (#50,000) is for the erection of market-stalls, then as far as possible this should be a revenue earning project, reasonable rent being charged for each stall....(N.A.I., 1947: 2).

From 1948, therefore, because government realized that a lot of money could be generated from stall rentage, many stalls were built by government in many towns, particularly those with large population.

Though not all Ekiti towns enjoyed this modern market system, the stalls suddenly became a productive and well cherished market culture for domestic trade. For example, goods, particularly perishable ones, that were earlier spread on the ground were more appropriately shaded by or accommodated in stalls, thereby making the goods retain their freshness for a longer period. Also, traders who used to vacate the market early because of the blazing sun during the dry season and the soaking rain during the rainy season could stay longer in the market to sell their goods.

This was very promising, because those who would not have been able to go to market, for one reason or the other to purchase their needs, could easily take advantage of the longer time made possible by the stall system. Very, importantly, the stall system saved many Ekiti traders the burden of carrying their goods home at the close of each market, or, in the case of daily market, everyday. Such goods were left in the stalls guarded by market security guards or night watchmen.

However, since markets were predominantly populated by women, the leadership of every market was under a woman Chief known as *Iyaloja* or *Iya Oloja* (the Mother or leader of the Market) (Ojo, 2006). In some towns, she was called *Iya Alaje*. She supervised over the affairs of the market which included price control, settling of dispute, security and sanitation. Under the *Iyaloja*, there were supposed to be peace, material prosperity, order and market security through the services of night watchmen known as *olode*. She must also see to the keeping of market's sanitary law which made it mandatory for all sellers to clean up their sheds or stalls before vacating market (Anibaba, 2006). Her position was so powerful that all trade associations that generally made up each market respected and obeyed her instructions which were also supported by the king who conferred on her the chieftaincy title of *Iyaloja*. However, having examined the Ekiti markets in the colonial period, it is now necessary to discuss local or domestic trade in Ekiti during this period.

III. DOMESTIC TRADE

In the context of this study, domestic, also internal or local, trade should be understood as trade within Ekiti and between Ekiti and its immediate neighbours as well as other groups in Nigeria. Five types of traders were responsible for the domestic trade of Ekiti between 1900 and 1960, and each category contributed to the economic activities of this period. These were the petty or small scale traders, market traders, shop keepers, off-market traders and long distance traders.

Petty Traders

Petty traders were those who carried out their businesses at home, usually in the premises of, or near, their houses where passers-by could easily notice their trade products. Goods sold by these traders needed no advertisement as such, because some people in the neighbourhood were already aware of them. There was no time restriction for sale, and even children could be sent, late at night, to purchase needed items from these traders. Petty trading needed very little capital to operate. Some kiosks could be constructed for the goods, while many preferred displaying their products on metal or basket trays placed on elevated objects like tables or unused kerosene tins. The common items sold by the petty traders were dry fish or meat, powder, needle and thread, mirror, comb, pencil, salt, sugar, pepper, palm oil and chewing stick. Others included melon, sweets, matches, sponge, soap and onion as well as body lotion. Occasionally, petty traders made their products mobile by using their children to hawk them in the evening on the nearby streets. Such advertised products were "mainly kerosene and matches that were usually loudly advertised in beautiful, tonal sing-song version" (N.A.I., 1943: 5). It is important to note that petty traders were mainly women.

Market Traders

Market traders were those who regularly brought their consumer goods for sale in the market. They had their permanent *iso*, sheds, which were clearly compartmentalized to show individual allotted spaces and separate locations for different market commodities. Market traders, particularly women, who also formed about two-third of a market population, were mostly housewives who usually brought either products from their husbands' farms, or those bought by them, to the market for sale. Unlike the petty traders, market traders had more capital to engage in their trade businesses. Though the market traders were generally retailers, many were wholesalers or both. The Ekiti market women, according to Johnson Wald, the DO, were great psychologists who knew how to attract or lure customers to themselves (N.A.I., 1932: 15) Johnson continued:

Even a well known nagging woman changes her nature when it comes to market trade. With utmost facial expressiveness, she very politely attracts a customer with sharp and polite statement, with a smile... "ekaa bo o, ejoo, ebawa wobi" (welcome, please kindly take a look at my shed or products). Customers generally became victims... (N.A.I., 1932).

By the late 1930s, more men had become market traders, and many of these came from neighbouring towns to sell items like cutlasses, axes, guns, hunting traps and carved or decorated calabashes. From distant areas were also Hausa and Fulani men who began to sell sugar cane, beads, Arabian perfumes, leather bags, goats, cattles and various medicinal concoctions. In the late 1940s, the number of Igbo market traders increased, and with bicycles, they sold their products in

various weekly markets in Ekiti. By the early 1950s, more men had become market traders, though the population of market women also began to increase. Many of these market men came from distant areas like Ibadan, Oyo, Ilesha, Osogbo, Abeokuta and Ilorin. They traded in woven cloths, embroidered caps, velvet cloths, salt and various craft works. However, there seemed to be no limit to the number of goods sold by market traders in colonial Ekiti. The goods for sale included a variety of cooked foods by the indigenous traders who also traded in almost all available farm, local and foreign industrial products.

Traditionally and customarily, in the late 1930s, goods meant for sale were carried by family members from home or farm to the central or major markets on their heads. However, with the introduction of motor and other forms of transportation systems in the 1940s, market traders had a faster and easier mode of transporting their goods. Very dominant in the trade were farm products as well as utilitarian domestic goods. Most notable among these were rice, vegetables, yam (*Dioscorea cayenensis*), kolanut, palm oil, cassava (*Manihot utilissima*), groundnuts (*Arachis hypogaea*), Okra (*Hibiscus esculentus*), maize (*Zea mays*) and melon (*cucumis melo*). Others were plantain (*Musearadiscaca*), banana (*Musa sapientum*), pawpaw (*carica papaya*), tomato (*Lycopersicum esculentum*) and pineapple (*Ananas sativus*), among others (Ojo, 1966: 53). Other trade products were cloths as well as various textile materials, art and craft works, educational materials, farm tools, hunting tools, domestic utilitarian objects, decorative objects, assorted herbs, baskets, mats, pottery wares, calabashes and gourds. These were in addition to numerous imported products which were sold in the market in the 1950s particularly by the Igbo traders.

The commercial activities of the market traders were controlled by some taboos. For example, to dose away in the market was believed to be a sign of impending bad luck in business (Ijaodola, 2006). It was also taken to be against the law of *orisa oja*, the god of the market. To quarrel with anyone before leaving home or on the way to market was considered a bad omen to business. It was also unacceptable for a customer to give money to a market trader with a left hand. This was not only seen as a pollution of business, it was also considered a sign of witchcraft.

Shop Keepers

Unlike shop market which began in Ekiti in the 1920s, shop keeping became part of Ekiti domestic trade in the 1940s, particularly with the influence of big time shop keepers like the United African Company (U.A.C.) and John Holt company. Shop market was different from shop keeping in that while shop market, like a stall, contained goods which were ordinarily found in the open market and in small quantity, shop keeping had a great quantity of goods in stock. Unlike shop market traders, shop keepers needed a large capital which made them wholesale buyers (Itsueli, 1982: 256). The shop keepers were usually middlemen who were also credit worthy. Many of these shop keepers, particularly in Ado-Ekiti, Ikere, Ifaki, Omuo, Igede, Ilawe, Aramoko, Ise, Ikole and Iyin, for example, acquired their stock of goods, especially from the U.A.C. and John Holt.

The goods were mainly imported materials like cloths, building, cooking, farming and educational materials and other manufactured goods. It must be stated that some shop markets transformed into shop keeping in the 1940s when there was enough capital for the owners of the shop market to make this possible. By the 1950s, shop keeping had become a very popular part of Ekiti domestic trade. Rather than stocking and selling mainly industrial products, shop keeping extended its acquisition to cover provisions and foodstuffs like rice, beans, flour, which were being sold in bags. There were also provisional shops. Various shops also opened for cash crops like cocoa and palm kernels. The shop keepers usually sold their goods to small scale traders, retailers and other consumers.

Off-Market Traders

There was another dimension to Ekiti trade in some agricultural products, particularly between 1930 and 1960. This, according to Yoloye of Ado-Ekiti, was known as “off market trade system” where the products for trading were not, or never, brought to market but left unharvested in the farm for buyers’ own assessment and price negotiation. The farm products that were involved in this type of trade were usually or mainly cocoyam and cassava. Those involved in this type of trade were usually big time women traders “who had secured enough capital that could make them take any trade risk” (Yoloye, 2006). What happened was that some cocoyam or cassava farmers would, on request, take some dealers in these products to their farms which could be some kilometers away from town. The cocoyam or cassava plantation could occupy acres of land or several plots of land. The trade arrangement was unwritten but was based on trust. Yet,

commercial default in this trade pact business was very rare. According to Chief Oluwatoba Olusawe of Igede-Ekiti, this practice appeared unique to, or practised by, the Ekiti farmers (Olusawe, 2008).

Ekiti farmers planted more of cocoyam which was easier to “farm” than yam. Naturally, therefore, trade activities centred on cocoyam which also sold faster in Ekiti than yam. Traders used to go to neighbouring towns to buy off cocoyam plantations even before maturity. With this, both weeding and harvesting became the duty of the buyers. Cocoyam trade in Ekiti could not be underestimated when considering the economy of Ekiti before independence. This was because in the colonial period, it was cocoyam of Ekiti, not yam, that made the Ekiti people a “pounded yam” society. As stated above, cassava was another farm product that was sold off-market, like cocoyam, in an unharvested stage. Because the Ekiti people ate little of cassava products, most of the cassava yields were sold to traders, both within and outside each town. The traders would transport them to Ondo and Ijebu regions where cassava products were more heavily patronized and accepted as a main staple food.

Long Distance Trade

Long distance trade (LDT) was the transaction of trade businesses far beyond the trader’s local environment. Such trade took the trader several kilometers outside his home base (Njoku, 2001: 84-87). It was, therefore, a commercial venture that made the distance, or itinerant, trader transact trade business in “diverse communities and territories with varying cultures and political systems” (Njoku: 85). LDT can also be seen as trade which required long distances between towns (Hodder & Ukwu: 27). According to Onwuka Njoku, LDT has its unique characteristics. For example, it has to contend with problems of “transportation, security, living accommodation and storage facilities; it is a male dominated trade, unlike the local trade that is dominated by women; LDT is for a full-time professional trader and very essentially, it requires a lot of capital to embark on” (Njoku: 85).

In Ekiti, the history of LDT can be traced to the late 19th century after the Kiriji war. Between 1890 and 1900, many Ekiti men were labourers in Agbabu, Ijebu, Abeokuta and Ibadan. While in Ibadan, Abeokuta and Ijebu, these labourers were mainly farm workers, in Agbabu, they were log carriers or pullers. The Ekiti labourers used to be given occasional casual leave to visit their wives and other relations in Ekiti. In the process of visiting, the labourers realized that more money could be made by trading in commodities that were needed both in Ekiti and their new stations. This was how the labourers began to use the money realized in their stations to buy goods, including the much needed “cutlasses and salt which they sold at home (Oguntuyi, 21). On their way back to their stations, the labourers would also buy items like traditional black soap, woven cloths, large quantity of maize paste called *egute* or *aadun* as well as different types of dried bush meat. Hides of animals like leopard, deer, antelope and alligator were also taken out of Ekiti for sale. This was how “some of them developed a taste for trade” and eventually they became itinerant traders rather than labourers (Oguntuyi: 21).

By 1908, many Ekiti men working on the new rail road in Osogbo attracted some Ekiti men to the lucrativeness of palm kernel in Osogbo. For this reason, the Ekiti farmers “began to carry palm kernel to Oshogbo and as usual returned with cutlasses and salt” (Oguntuyi: 21). From Osogbo, the farmers would also buy clothing materials like trousers and singlets as well as hand bags and trinklets which were also sold in Ekiti. LDT in palm kernel and other goods between Ekiti, Osogbo and Ibadan, between 1910 and the late 1920s, was usually carried out on foot; and this required three to four days journey with resting allowance on the trade route. The farthest LDT in Ekiti took place in the early 1930s when many Ekitis, particularly from Okemesi and Ido Ajinare in Ekiti North-West, travelled to Gold Coast (Ghana) to work in the gold mine. One of these was Oladokun, from Okemesi, who, apart from learning tailoring and photography, came back with a variety of jewelries which the Ekiti women were rushing to buy. Eventually, some Ekiti traders, seeing the commercial success of selling jewelries, began to travel to Gold Coast, which, at that time, was known as *Oke Okun* or Overseas, to trade in gold.

In the 1930s, LDT was already a prominent aspect of Ekiti trade. Particularly with the emergence of bicycles, trade in woven cloths, especially those woven on narrow loom, became more popular and lucrative, and trade in them boomed between Ekiti, Oyo and Ibadan people. With bicycles, many male traders were also able to transport their materials, particularly between 1932 and 1940, to other very far away communities in Ilesha and Osogbo for sale. Because of the mobility the bicycles provided, these long distance cloth sellers started the tradition of selling on credit; since they had the easy means of going back to their customers to collect their money.

There were other items which were also indispensable to, and in fact an integral part of, LDT in the colonial Ekiti in the 1950s. These were items that were “a must for sale and buying”, according to the present Iyaloja of Igede Ekiti, Chief (Mrs.) Ifeloro Ijaodola (Ijaodola, 2006). For example, salt was usually bought by Ekiti rich traders in large quantities from the present Oyo State. Distributors from some Ekiti towns would go to dealers in Ado to collect the salt and sell to their customers who would also sell this in the markets. Egute (maize paste from corn) was another trade product that was heavily patronized by Ibadan and Oyo children and adults. It could be in a powder or flour form or mixed with palm oil and salt to have a very delicious taste. In those days, egute (usually wrapped in fresh plantain leaves) were very common food items sent by parents or friends to their people in Lagos and Ibadan (among other cities) in Western Region. Many Ekiti women took advantage of this and regularly transported the food item to Ibadan and Lagos.

Another Ekiti product that attracted LDT was the traditional soap called *osedudu* (black soap) which was always produced by women. Many Ekiti towns were known for the production of this traditional soap, and each town could have not less than four to five producers. It is, however, important to know that even these few soap makers could produce enough soap for the needs of the neighbouring towns. This is to say that the few but highly professional Ekiti soap makers were able to mass produce sufficient soap to meet the needs of Ekiti and the neighbouring as well as distant peoples. One must also recognize that soap was used for purposes other than bathing and laundry. It was used for spiritual or herbological purposes, which was why it was always bought in large quantities by the traditional doctors or herbalists, particularly in Ijebu, Abeokuta and Ilesha. For this reason, both male and female Ekiti traders were transporting the soap to the above cities for sale. According to Iya Olose (soap maker) of Iyin Ekiti, customers used to come periodically from Ilorin (in the present Kwara State) and Benin (in Edo State) to collect large quantities of her soap.

Perhaps plantain was the most popular agricultural product sought after by the long distance traders, and it appeared that the lorry or motor transport favoured plantain trade more in the colonial Ekiti or in the 1950s. This was because numerous plantain traders who were earlier employing the services of head carriers for long distance trade began to hire these vehicles, though by booking well in advance. Plantain traders who could not negotiate with farmers on farm locations would go from one market to the other within the week and buy plantain in heaps. The piles of plantain would be loaded in a lorry for transportation to, particularly Lagos, Ibadan and other big cities in the old Western Region. Some of the lorries usually used for plantain transportation carried the inscriptions “*Babu Iri Allah*”, “No King as God”, “Allah De”, “Why Worry”, “*Ai Ma Siko*”, “*Ola Oluwa*” and “*Anu Oluwa*”. These lorries were popularly known and identified by the inscriptions written very boldly on them, usually with very attractive bright yellow, white and red and blue colours.

The trade in plantain boomed because plantain was heavily bought in the cities by women who fried or roasted the ripe ones for sale on road sides. The fried ones were known as *dodo* while the roasted ones were called *boli*. Various professionals and government workers saw these as cheap and quicker substitute for lunch. Kolanut was another important commodity for LDT in Ekiti. Between 1920 and 1940 particularly, Ekiti Division, according to Administrative Report on agriculture, was filled with countless Hausa traders hungrily looking for kolanuts to buy. According to the report:

These generally slim tall elegant Hausa traders, usually known as goro-gbanja (words used by them to advertise their intension to buy kolanuts), with sacks and well sheathed sharp knives hidden in their upper arms, and at times with short native guns move from house to house, buying all available kolanuts (preferably gbanja). With little scattered Ekiti words or language, these Hausa traders have made themselves very familiar to people, even children who are always the first to announce their presence with “goro-gbanja has come”. Their trade routes outside the Ekiti Division are not easily known but they usually come through either Ilorin, Kabba, Lokoja from the North or Shagamu, Ife, Ilesha on the Lagos axis..... (N.A.I.,1940: 6).

The above is corroborated by Chief Oluwafemi Ojo of Igede-Ekiti who gave detailed and important information on the operations of these Hausa kolanut buyers before 1960. Ojo, whose father was a big-time kolanut farmer, narrated how these Hausas usually had what can be called Area Mallam, or Hausa Head, whose house was made, but not always, the “depot” for these kolanuts that awaited evacuation to other centres. From these centres, they were carried by head to where they would be transported to the North for sale. According to Ojo, the kolanuts bought in Igede and other areas were packed either in baskets or bags and taken to Oshogbo through Aramoko, Ilesha and Ile-Ife. From Oshogbo, these kolanuts were transported to Ibadan from where they were taken to the North by train. However, by the 1950s, kolanuts

were being transported to either Oshogbo, Ibadan or Lagos by lorries. At the same period, the kolanuts bought by the Hausa traders in Ikole, Ifaki, Omuo and other towns in the same geographical locations were transported to Lokoja by road through Kabba. From Lokoja the kolanuts were transported to Baro where they were transported by train to various locations in the North (Ojo, 2009).

However, depending on where the Hausa kolanut traders had their depots, kolanuts were generally transported by train from Lagos, Abeokuta, Ibadan and Ilorin to Zungeru. From Zungeru, they would be taken by train to Kano through Minna, Kaduna and Zaria. But shortly before independence, motor vehicles were used to support train in the transportation of kolanuts to the North. It is very interesting to know that nearly all the names of the Hausa kolanut traders of the 1950s in Ekiti are still vividly remembered by Alhaji Musa, an eighty-two-year old cattle dealer from Kano whose father, Mallam Momodu (Muhammed) was the Head of the Hausa community and Area Mallam in Igede in the 1950s (see Table 1). According to Musa, "I know all these people since the same Hausa traders who bought kola in Ikere, Ise, Ikole, Iworoko and Ado, for example, also came to Igede for the same business" (Musa, 2009).

Table 1: Names of some Hausa Kolanut Buyers in Ekiti 1945-1960

Name	Place/Area of Origin	Age
Mallam Aminu	Sokoto	Around 65
Soudu	Unknown	Around 67
Mallam Bidida	Kano	Around 40
Yinusa	Kaduna	Around 40
Rasaki (Rasak)	Unknown	Around 65
Musa	Zaria	Around 70
Monmodu (Mohammed)	Kano	Around 70
Umaru	Kano	Around 30
Abu	Kafanchan	Around 40
Ahmadu (Ahmed)	Kano	Around 30
Sanusi	Unkown	Around 70
Sule	Sokoto	Around 30
Goto (Goggo)	Nasarawa	Around 50
Aliyu	Zaia	Around 40
Mallam Sokoto	Sokoto	Around 60
Adamu	Sokoto	Around 50
Li	Kafanchan	Around 60
Goro Biu	Kano	Around 65
Saliu	Kaduna	Around 40
Tofa	Kano	Around 40
Sanni (Sani)	Unknown	Around 60
Bello	Unknown	Around 50
Yaya	Zaria	Around 40
Yakubu	Unknown	Around 40
Seriki	Katsina	Around 70
Hassan	Sokoto	Around 60
Daladi (Danladi)	Unknown	Around 30
Mamunu (Mamman)	Kano	Around 50
Shehu	Katsina	Around 60
Salisu	Unknown	Around 30
Gambari	Sokoto	Around 60

Source: Records of Alhaji Musa's family in Igede-Ekiti as kept by Musa's father Mallam Monmodu (Muhammed) in the 1950s

IV. CONCLUSION

Before 1900, the Ekiti people already had well organized market systems that, even, surprised the early colonial administrators, particularly A. W. Butterworth, District Commissioner, who in 1910 remarked that the “the Ekiti country is richly blessed with many marketing methods that makes its commercial life very progressive and prosperous” (N.A.I., 1914: 4). Throughout the colonial period, the Ekiti economy was strongly dependent on agriculture and commerce. Man predominated in farming while woman largely dominated commerce. Since farming and some other occupational activities could hardly survive without commercial experiences, market systems and trade activities naturally became part of Ekiti’s economic survival. What became very notable in the commercial ventures of the people were market innovations and uniqueness of some trading experiences; as particularly seen in market organization and off-trading method. The colonial administration had no alternative than to respect the Ekiti people, especially for their highly independent, indigenous market systems and lucrative trade experiences. The following reaction of G. G. Harris, the District Officer for Ekiti in 1930, affirms this assertion:

If we (the British) think we have something new to introduce to these natives with respect to well organized economy, we must direct attention mainly to a conducive environment as well as some modern physical infrastructure which can definitely bring improvement to their existing workable traditions. As regards organizational structures, these people are fanatically capable and rigidly obedient to leadership orders ... They are endowed with a disarming sense of economic transactions that are carried out with human touch or spirit of understanding. This is where, I think, we even have something to borrow (N.A.I., 1933: 31).

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