



COLONIAL CONQUEST AND THE COLLAPSE OF GAMBARI MARKET IN ILORIN EMIRATE, 1850-1960

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Abstract

Since 1850s Ilorin was described as one of the greatest entrepots of central Africa and the commercial emporium of all southern Sudan.¹ The town has also been acknowledged for ubiquitous markets located in different parts of the town especially in front of traditional ruler's houses which served as the commercial centres where goods change hands. This fact is substantiated by Jimoh as cited in 1921 Gazetteer of Ilorin province that: "the most striking feature to a stranger, visiting Ilorin for the first time is the size of its markets"². The Gambari market was one of the international markets in the pre-colonial Ilorin Emirate, which European explorers and missionaries like Bower, Campbell, Crowder and others have acknowledged. The reason was that foreign and local goods as well as slaves were traded in the Market. The traders from the north and south of the Niger converged in the Market for the exchange of goods and services. Food items from the southern areas of Abeokuta, Ibadan, Osogbo, and Ekiti were traded in exchange for goods like: imported clothes, lanterns, pieces of jewelry, ornaments, horse girdle, and animals such as horse, cow and so on. However, the Gambari market began to decline after the heavy bombardment of Ilorin town by the forces of the Royal Niger Company in 1897, coupled with subsequent integration of the economy of the town into the metropolitan economy. This change in the economic system spelt doom for the Gambari market traders as they found it difficult to adapt to the changing business pattern. In view of the foregoing, the paper intends to examine the effects of colonial conquest on the collapse of the Gambari market. It will be study within the context of economic damages which the bombardment had done to the traders, revenue loss on the part of the aristocrats and economic disempowerment of the middlemen. The qualitative research method was adopted for the study, which included oral interviews and secondary sources.

Keywords: Colonial Conquest, Collapse, Gambari Market, Ilorin Emirate.

¹ Clarke W., *Travels and Exploration in Yorubaland 1854-1858*, Edt. J.A. Atanda Ibadan, Ibadan university press, 1972, p. 185

² Jimoh LAK, *Ilorin Emirate Economy in Historical Perspective, Revamping the Economy of the Ilorin Emirate*, Ed. Hassan A.S. A publication of Ilorin Emirate Descendants Union IEDPU, 2012, P.8-39



Introduction

Ilorin is presently the capital of Kwara state. It was also the capital of the Ilorin Emirate a frontier Emirate of the Sokoto Caliphate under the suzerainty of the *Gwandu* Emirate³. Ilorin occupies a unique position as the only Emirate located within the metropolitan province (Ekun-Osi) of the old Oyo Empires in Nigeria with a larger Yoruba speaking population. There were settlements of Muslim emigrants from different ethnic groups such as, *Kanuri, Nupe, Hausa, Fulani, Gambari, Gwari*, and others in Ilorin and among the Yoruba. There was a great degree of socialization and integration among these heterogeneous groups which helped the city transform into a Muslim Yoruba-speaking community and a sort of Islamic light house, a local *Mecca* to which Yoruba Muslims turned for study and guidance.⁴

Economically, Ilorin has been described to be the biggest market town in the interior famous among the Negroes.⁵ Its rise to prominence as an entrepot was greatly assisted by its position immediately to the South of the Niger crossing places.⁶ Also, due to the heterogeneity of the town, Ilorin provided a wealthy interplay and mediatory skills among the merchants of different ethnic nationalities. For example, Hausa-speaking traders could find in *Gambari* quarters, the lodging house keepers, the brokers, the dealers and *Mallams* who could see to their wants, direct them to buyers, provide finance as required, help to find return cargoes and advice about the local environment⁷. Similarly, the Yoruba traders were comfortable lodging with their kinsmen in Ilorin who served as their middlemen in buying and selling goods. It is believed that a village called *Budo-Egba* along the old *Ilorin-Ogbomoso* road was a camp of traders from Abeokuta. *Gambari* and *Oja-oba* markets served as points of equilibrium where the forces of demand and supply were determined among these long-distance traders from the North and South of Niger.

Also, the location of Ilorin as the capital of the frontier emirate on a very important trading axis facilitated the promotion of trading relations from which the Emirate derived considerable profit and produced wealthy middlemen. This fact was supported by the account of the travellers passing through Ilorin around the 1850s who acknowledged that, a large volume of trade was taking place at the *Gambari* international market⁸. Ilorin had trade connections with *Ogbomoso, New Oyo, Ikirun, Osogbo, Ibadan, Ijebu-ode, Abeokuta, and Lagos*. It also maintained a profitable long-distance trade

³Balogun S.A., Historical Significance of Ilorin: A preliminary survey. In Jimoh S.A. (ed.), *Confluence: an Academic Journal of Kwara State council of Arts and Culture*. Vol 1, No.1, June 1998, pp 17-23

⁴Gbadamosi T.G.O., *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*. London, Longman, 1978, p. 10

⁵ Ann O Hear, *The Economic History of Ilorin in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Rise and decline of a Middleman Society*, an unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to the center of West African Studies, University of Birmignham, 1983, P.13

⁶ Gavin R. J., *The Impact of Colonial Rule on the Ilorin Economy 1897-1930*. In *a Quarterly Journal of Religious, Scientific and Cultural Society*. University of Ilorin Publication, 1977 Vol.1, No.1, P. 17

⁷ Gavin R. J. *The Impact of Colonial Rule on the Ilorin Economy 1897-1930*. In *a Quarterly Journal of Religious, Scientific and Cultural Society*. University of Ilorin Publication, 1977 Pp19-20

⁸ Ann O Hear cited Campbell in *The Economic History of Ilorin in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Rise and decline of a Middleman society*, an unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to the center of West African Studies, University of Birmignham, 1983. P.46



with Kano, Sokoto and Bornu. This trading network had implications for Market at home which facilitated the growth of the markets with specialization in goods demanded by the buyers.⁹

In view of the position of the *Gambari* market as the center of entrepot trade and its booming economic system which provides sources of revenue for the aristocrats and produce wealthy merchants, it is pertinent to examine the factors that led to its decline since 1897. This is because it affected the means of livelihood of the people in the chain of business transactions, revenue generation of the traditional rulers, petty traders were disempowered, and the *Gambari* market with incursion of the colonial masters ceased to be a principal market in the Ilorin metropolis. However, the period 1850-1960 is chosen as the scope of this study because most of the secondary sources that provided information on the boom of the *Gambari* market dated from 1850 upward and 1960 is chosen because it is a terminal period for colonialism in Nigeria.

This study intends to examine; the effect of colonial conquest on the entrepot economy of Ilorin using the *Gambari* market as a case study. This establishes and demonstrates that damages were done to socio-economy of the African societies which Ilorin Emirate is not an exemption. Other societies that experienced forceful colonial occupation through bombardment include: *Bida* in 1897, *Benin* Kingdom in 1897, *Asante* invasion in 1896, *New Oyo* in 1894, *Ijebu* in 1892 and so on. Although there is no statistical record of the damages done to people of the study area (*Gambari*) as of now but one can imagine the damages of two days' bombardment of Ilorin town especially when the market under study was preparing for a trade fair got burnt down, no doubt the damages will be colossal. However, this position is subject to further research, at least to have statistical data on the level of the damages done to the traders in the *Gambari* market and Ilorin Emirate entirely. In fact, *Danmole* laments that *Talif*, the earliest historical account of the Ilorin Emirate written by *Ahmad Ikokoro* in 1912 should have provided a detailed internal account of the colonial conquest of the Ilorin Emirate but the work centred on the history of successive Emirs of Ilorin¹⁰. Although it is a general belief that victor usually writes the account of war while the vanquish may not have the courage to write their own account of defeat due to moral and Psychological reasons. This and others may be the reasons for the non-existence of statistical data concerning the loss involved in the bombardment of the *Gambari* market.

Literature Review

The author is aware of scholarly works that have been done on the economic history of Ilorin in the pre-colonial and colonial period but the *Gambari* market as a centre of entrepot trade in the Ilorin Emirate has not received much attention especially since its decline after the colonial conquest of Ilorin. It has been observed that the earlier Ilorin Emirate historical studies centered more on social, political and religious history. This is probably because of its attractiveness to historians. The attraction may not be unconnected with traditions surrounding the origin of Ilorin emirate which is

⁹Danmole H. O., Religion, Politics and the Economy in the Nineteenth Century Ilorin: some reflections. Being the 1st in the Lecture series of the center for Ilorin Studies. University of Ilorin, 2012, P.33

¹⁰Danmole H.O., The Tal'if Akhbar al-Qurtin min Umara' biladilurin: A critique. in *History of Africa, Vol. 11, 1984, A Journal of African Studies Association, P.58*



hinged on two theories of Ilorin *Afonja* and Ilorin *Geri-Alimi*¹¹. The Yoruba on the one hand, claimed that Ilorin is a territory of *Alafin* and believed that the *Fulani* aristocracy is usurpation: this group is the protagonist of Ilorin *Afonja* that is Ilorin the town of *Afonja*.¹² On the other hand the Ilorin *Ulama* are of the opinion that Ilorin is *Gari-Alimi* due to the enthronement of the Emir as the ruler of the Ilorin Emirate which has conferred legitimacy to its authority over the land and people of Ilorin. Hence, Ilorin is the town of *Alimi*. It is worthy of note that the entrance to Ilorin from the Lagos axis is named *Geri-Alimi*.

The work of *Balogun* examines the historical significance of Ilorin with a focus on the establishment of the Ilorin emirate, the relationship between Ilorin Emirate and *Gwandu* Emirate was consulted. The work briefly discussed the economic activities of the Ilorin people especially long-distance trade and its network. However, the focus was on the pre-colonial economy of Ilorin but gave no account of the markets including *Gambari* Market where commercial activities were carried out.¹³ The work of *Banwo* centred on the economic history of Ilorin with a concentration on the indigenous industry, and trading activities in the Hausa settlement of *Ojagboro* and *Gambari* market. It provides an insight into the era of the economic boom of the *Gambari* market and its position as an economic centre. However, the study terminates in the 19th century; therefore it does not cover the period of colonial conquest and decline of the *Gambari* market. The work of Ibrahim B.O. is found to be relevant to this study because it discusses the history and roles of traditional markets in Ilorin emirate as centers of commerce, information dissemination, and venue for social activities. However, the work covers only the 19th century and does not look at the aftermath of the colonial conquest of these markets. The work of *Gavin R.J.* examines the impact of colonial rule on the Ilorin economy. It was an extensive study of the general impact of colonial rule on the Ilorin economy but did not show the effects of the colonial conquest on the *Gambari* market.¹⁴ The author is aware of Ann O' Hear's study on economic History of Ilorin; it is a comprehensive economic history of the Ilorin Emirate in the pre-colonial and early colonial period. It examines the indigenous economy of Ilorin including trading and provides information on entrepot trade. However, it does not examine the collapse of the entrepot trade and the decline of the *Gambari* market.¹⁵

Given the above literatures and others known to this author, no study examines the effect of colonial conquest on the *Gambari* market. Hence, this study intends to cover this gap.

¹¹Omo-iyá S.Y. challenges of the scholars in locating historical origin of frontier settlement: The Ilorin example in Ilorin Journal of History and International Studies. Eyinla B.M. (Edt), 2011, Vol.2 No.1, Ilorin, Department of History and International Studies p.131

¹²Omo-iyá S. Y., challenges of the scholars in locating the Ilorin Emirate. op.cit p.125

¹³Balogun S.A., Historical Significance of Ilorin: A preliminary survey. In Jimoh S.A. (ed.), Confluence, an Academic of Kwara State council of Arts and Culture. Vol 1, No.1, June 1998, pp 17-23

¹⁴Gavin R. J., The Impact of Colonial Rule on the Ilorin Economy 1897-1930. A quarterly Journal of Religious, Scientific and Cultural Society. University of Ilorin Publication, 1977 Vol.1, No.1, pp.13-41

¹⁵Ann O Hear, The Economic History of Ilorin in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Rise and decline of a Middleman society, an unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to the center of West African Studies, University of Birmingham, 1983



The map of Ilorin city c.1900 indicating the locations of the markets

The location of Gambari Market is indicated with the arrow Gambari Market in the 19th century

Conceptual Clarification

The word *Gambari*

Gambari is a word that has come to be synonymous with “Hausa”. To an average Yoruba individual, a Gambari is a Hausa person or any Hausa person is a Gambari. Therefore, the term is believed to be “the Yoruba word for the Hausa people”¹⁶. *Gambari* according to Onikoko was a mixed grill settlement or a quarter of Ilorin city comprises of *Gobir, Hausa, Nupe, Kembari, Kannike, Arewa*, under *Serikin Gambari*¹⁷ whom his ancestors migrated from Zamfara but was later placed under the control of Balogun *Gambari* whom his ancestors also migrated from Katsina. This shows that *Gambari* is populated with tribes from Northern Nigeria although with some Yoruba in the sub-

¹⁶ Salihu I, Towards a Historical Exploration of the Etymology of a Term, an article published in Annual Journal of Ilorin History, November, 2006 p.1

¹⁷ Onikoko S.A.T., A History of Ilorin Emirate. Ilorin, Atoto Press, 1992, p.2



ward of *Gambari* called *Ibagun*. Also, *Gambari* as a name of an individual is found to be popular among the Ilorin Fulani aristocrats especially the 9th Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Zulukarnaini *Gambari*, his children and relations that bears *Gambari* as their surname. However, *Gambari* in the context of this work is an area in the Ilorin metropolis where the Northern Nigerian traders were inhabited since the pre-jihadist period of the 1800s.

Market

Market is one of the words that can be defined in many ways and these definitions will still appear correct. Market has many usages in economic theory and in business operation or marketing in particular, a market may be defined as a geographical location where buyer and seller transact business¹⁸. It can be deduced from this definition that a market is a designated place (geographical location) with the availability of commodities, the presence of buyers and sellers who will facilitate trade. In the contemporary world Market goes beyond physical contact between buyers and sellers. People can buy and sell in a variety of ways through on-line and off-line without meeting at a designated place.

Gambari Market

Gambari market is one of the several traditional markets in the Ilorin Emirate. Ilorin has been described as a market town due to its location as an entrepot zone of the North and South of river Niger in the Nineteenth century. Ilorin markets according to Onikoko were essentially the economic nerve centres of the great city. They were located at strategic places in the town so no one needed to trek a far distance before making a purchase¹⁹. There were evidences that virtually in every ward and sub-wards of Ilorin Emirate, there will be one or more markets. These markets were located in front of the residences of the traditional rulers who oversaw the affairs of the markets and collected revenue from the traders.

¹⁸Aremu M.A., Marketing segmentation as a survival and Promotion Strategies in Nigerian Manufacturing Industry. In *Ilorin Journal of Sociology* vol.3, No.2, University of Ilorin, 2011, p.285

¹⁹ Onikoko S.A.T, A History of Ilorin Emirate. Ilorin, Sat Adis press, p.27



The table below shows some Traditional markets in Ilorin Emirate

S/N	Wards	Market	Year of Establishment	Reigning Emir	Remark
1	Ajikobi	Oloje Omoda Ojuekun	1869-1891 1869-1891 1881-1885	Aliyu Aliyu Moma	Functional Functional (Partial) Extinction
2	Alanamu	Adeta Bode Pakata	1869-1869 1869-1891 1823-1936	Aliyu Aliyu Abdulsalami	Functional (Partial) Extinction Functional (Partial)
3	Fulani	Asunara	1869-1891	Aliyu	Extinction
4	<i>Gambari</i>	Idi-Ape Ojagoro Ondoko <i>Gambari</i> Pake/Sango now Ipata Kankatu	1800-1823 1823-1836 1869-1891 1823-1836 1891-1895 1823-1836	Pasin(Afonja's Grandfather) Abdulsalami Aliyu Abdulsalam Moma Abdulsalami	Functional Functional (Partial) Extinction Extinction Functional Functional (Partial)
5	MagajinGari	Gada/Oja- iya Oja-Oba Eruda Ita-Kure	1895-1915 1823-1836 1891-1895 1823-1896	Suleiman Abdulsalami Moma Abdulsalami	Functional (Partial) Functional Extinction Extinction

²⁰ Source: Ibrahim B.O.

The table above revealed that the *Gambari* market was established during the reign of the first Emir of Ilorin Sheu Abdulsalami Maituta ibn Alimi. However, the date may not be correct because the settlement of the Hausa speakers in the *Gambari* quarter predated the evolution of the Ilorin emirate. Also for the fact that the Market was famous for slave trading and that Ilorin during the era of *Alaafin Ojigi* in the sixteenth century as narrated by *Omo-iya* was a slave reservoir²¹ shows that *Gambari* market predated the establishment of the Ilorin emirate. Therefore, the exact date for establishing the Market is unknown. The area (*Gambari*) named after the Hausa settlers encouraged the Hausa immigrant traders from the North of the River Niger who first stopped in the area before they embarked on any business deal.²² It later became an international market with foreign traders (Moors and Berbers) that dealt in a variety of imported goods such as clothes, Lanterns, horse girdles, slaves

²⁰Bashir B. O., Ilorin Traditional Markets in the 19th Century. In Ilorin Journal of History, 2006, Vol.1, No. 2, pp.129-130

²¹Omo-lya S.Y., challenges of the scholars in locating historical origin of frontier settlement: The Ilorin example in Ilorin Journal of History and International Studies. Eyinla B.M. (Edt), 2011, Vol.2 No.1, Ilorin, Department of History and International Studies, p.126

²²Omoiya S. Y. The location of economic potentials of a frontier community in Nigeria: An exploit on Ilorin in the 20th Century. In International journal of Humanities and Social Sciences invention. www.ijhssi.org, retrieved on 16/5/2013, p.36



and so on. An observer saw more items in the *Gambari* market around the 1850s including: “fine horses, donkeys, mules, horse-trappings, swords, leather works, silk clothing, tobe, antimony, salt, Kolanuts, stationary and other articles for sale”.²³

It is worthy of note that, all caravan traders coming to Ilorin especially the Hausa traders usually lodge with accommodation, food and recreation facilities with a *Maigida* in the *Gambari* quarter²⁴. Crowder and Christopher observes that at *Rabba* where traders crossed the Niger on their way to Ilorin, caravan of about 3000 people and upward of 1000 heads livestock were being taken across towards Ilorin in 1858.²⁵ Similarly, Bowen recorded that about two or three thousand Yoruba traders constantly visited the *Gambari* markets by the 1850s bringing about sixty to seventy pounds’ worth of goods. He also calculated that it will require about one hundred (100) Yoke of oxen to convey all the traders’ merchandise to Ilorin. Bowen further spoke about merchandise from central Africa, Tripoli, and some other North Africa countries at the *Gambari* market. The international status of the market was also acknowledged because Northern caravans discharge their goods either for sale or onward journey to the South; and some traders stayed permanently in Ilorin may be due to the warm reception accorded them by the Ilorin people or because of the buoyant sales made at the market.²⁶

In addition, Banwo explains that the high level of trade transaction in Ilorin made some of the traders to increase their investments within the capital while also setting up second homes in the city. There was a case of a merchant named Abubakar, who had houses in both Ilorin and Kano. He was said to have invested about 4,400 pounds in Ilorin and about 2,200 pounds in Kano respectively.²⁷ There were also some *Ijesha* who brought clothes for sale and constructed stalls. Campbell asserts that by 1912 *Gambari* quarter was still regarded as the commercial centre of the Ilorin town.²⁸ The size of the market was estimated to have covered almost ten acres.²⁹ Its coverage would probably be around *Awodi, Ode-Gobir and Ode Serikin-Gambari*.

However, it has been argued that, *Gambari* was not a big market as reported by the European visitors; it may be mistaken for *Oja-gboro*³⁰ which by its name *Oja* “market” *gboro* “long”. This market as it stands today is a complex occupied by Tailors and traders that specialize in selling of sewing machines, accessories and other tailoring materials at the Junction of *Sani Mai* tea along *Balogun Fulani Road, Ilorin*³¹. This position is an isolated opinion although with some element of facts but

²³ Stone R.H. in *African’s forest and jungle*. Edinburgh & London, 1900, p.30

²⁴ Ibrahim B. O., Ilorin Traditional Markets in the 19th Century. In *Ilorin Journal of History, 2006, Vol.1, No. 2 p.130*

²⁵ Samuel Crowther and Christopher Taylor, *The Gospel on the Banks of the Niger: Journals and Notices of the Notices of Native Missionaries Accompanying the Niger Expedition of 1857-1859* (London: Church Missionary House, 1859), Dawsons, pp. 148-149

²⁶ Hassan. H. O., *The transformation of Pakata Market to Anifowoshe Market*. An Un published B.A. project submitted to the Department of History, University of Ilorin, 2004

²⁷ Banwo, A.O., *The Ilorin Economy in the 19th Century*. The Journal of Economic History, NJEH No.1, 1998, Ibadan, Hope Publications, p.136

²⁸ Ann O Hear, *The Economic History of Ilorin in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Rise and decline of a Middleman society*, an unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to the center of West African Studies, University of Birmingham, 1983.p. 46

²⁹ Oral interview with Alhaji LAK Jimoh, a politician, Historian at Mazankore area of Ilorin. Dated:18/05/2013

³⁰ Oral interview with Alhaji LAK Jimoh, a politician, Historian at Mazankore area of Ilorin. Dated:18/05/2013

³¹ Oral interview with Alhaji LAK Jimoh, a politician, Historian at Mazankore area of Ilorin. Dated:18/05/2013



the majority opinion is that *Gambari* was an international market where entrepot trade was carried out on a large scale until the bombardment of Ilorin in 1897³² by the forces of Royal Niger Company (RNC).

The Conquest of Ilorin in 1897

Ilorin Emirate became a conquered territory and was brought under the control of British government's control in 1897. The conquest of Ilorin took a war encounter between the forces of the Royal Niger Company led by Sir George Goldie³³ and Ilorin forces at *Apata Yakuba* on the outskirts of Ilorin town on the bank of Oyun river along Jebba road³⁴. Vanderleur and Obaro narrate the military actions on the town that two companies of forces arrived in Ilorin on 15th February 1897. Enemy forces (British) were outside the city gate but the Emir refused to surrender. Fighting broke out on the 15th and lasted till the 16th when the company's forces, very much better armed than Ilorin's, seized the Emir's palace and forced both the *Emir* and *Baloguns* to flee to the safety of outlying villages.³⁵ Jimoh asserts that the Emir fled to Ogidi³⁶, and the place he sought refuge is today called *Ajibesin* (seeing the presence of the horse at dawn). Although; the Ilorin forces fought bravely in the sense that many advancing as 100 yards to the guns of the company's forces which mowed them down. With the defeat of Ilorin in 1897, the company was in a position to dictate terms.³⁷

Effects of Colonial Conquest on *Gambari* Market

The colonial conquest of 1897 has economic effects on *Gambari* markets. The effects are: physical bombardment, destruction of goods and properties, the introduction of colonial economic policy, decline of middleman business and loss of revenue by the Ilorin aristocrats.

Physical Bombardment: The area (Ilorin town), according to Vanderleur, was bombarded with two 7-pounders. The first shell was fired at an extreme range of about 300 yards in a Westerly direction, and the next one at 2500 yards and so on. The range was reduced after each discharge until it came down to 1000 yards where the high thatched roof of the Emir's palace formed a good target. Detachments went forward to the wall (*Gambari* city wall) to fire incendiary rockets, a few shots being fired at them by the defenders, and soon the ill-fated capital was in flames in several places. The fire fanned by the strong harmattan wind that was blowing, spread rapidly, little pieces of lighted thatch, being carried from roof to roof.³⁸ However, it was reported that, around February 1897 there was preparation for a trade fair at *Gambari* market. The stalls and houses of the *Maigida* and stoke brokers were loaded with trade items both foreign and local. The incendiary rockets fired around the area may have been responsible for the fire incidents that set the markets on fire and goods meant for the trade fair was burnt. This forceful occupation of the town by the British resulted

³²Obaro I., *The fall of Nigeria: The British Conquest*. Ibadan, Heinemann, 1977

³³Vandeleur S., *Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger*. London, Methuen & co. P.271

³⁴Jimoh L.A.K, *Ilorin the journey so far*. Ilorin, Atoto, Press, p.181

³⁵Obaro I., *The fall of Nigeria: The British Conquest*. Ibadan, Heinemann, 1977

³⁶Jimoh L.A.K, *Ilorin the journey so far*. Ilorin, Atoto, Press, p.186

³⁷Obaro I., *The fall of Nigeria: The British Conquest*. Ibadan, Heinemann, 1977

³⁸Vandeleur S., *Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger*. London, Methuen & co, p.283



in the destruction of property which must have probably involved loss of life but as there is no internal account of the war, it may difficult to determine the magnitude of the destruction for now.

The wanton loss of goods and properties

The loss of goods and properties to the inferno caused by the bombardment is closely related to the above. Although the magnitude of damage cannot be determined as there was no record on it. However going by the description of the magnitude of trading activities in the Market as explained above, there is no doubt that the traders must have lost substantial amount of goods. The loss may have probably been responsible for the gradual decline of the trade in the market even after the fire must have been extinguished.

Crippling of the indigenous trading system

Another effect was the unfavourable colonial economic policies. The colonial economic policy was designed to cripple the indigenous economy of the colonies. This is to allow for maximum exploitation of the colonies' human and material resources and prevent trade competition in terms of trade. One of the features of the colonial economic policy states that the "direction of the trade of the colonies in the interest of the imperial power not the colonies."³⁹This lends credence to the exploitative tendency of the colonial government in Africa. In the course of implementing this policy, there was a diversion of trade routes from the North to the South; subsequently, the entrepot trade of the Ilorin emirate began to decline. Gavin affirmed that the entrepot trade was the first aspect of Ilorin's economy to suffer from colonial administration.⁴⁰ The integration of the colonial economy into the metropolitan economy which manifested in the diversion of the trade route from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic route, resulted in the decline of trade in the *Gambari* market. Traders who patronized the market hitherto had shifted from the North to the South (Lagos) route. This new form of trade had affected *Gambari* market a major centre of the entrepot trade where goods were un-bucked and re-bucked for onward haulage to the new destination. Also the construction of the railway as a means of transportation which reached Ilorin in 1911,⁴¹ resulted in the decline of the caravan trade system, which the Ilorin economy relied on. Goods and traders were passing through Ilorin to the North from Lagos without the involvement of Ilorin middlemen and stock brokers especially in the *Gambari* market, who make their living as commission agents.

Decline of the middlemen business

The effect of the conquest is also observed in the decline of *Dilalai*, *Maigida* or *Babakekere* system. The institution of *Dilalai*⁴² that is stock broker and others in the chain of marketing and distribution of goods were disempowered economically due to the diversion of the trading system from the Mediterranean route to the Atlantic coast. People in this category became jobless and impoverished.

³⁹ Webster J.B. and Boahen A.A., *The Revolutionary Years West Africa since 1800*. London, Longman, 1980, p. 223

⁴⁰ Gavin R.J., The Impact of Colonial Rule on the Ilorin Economy 1897-1930. In a *Quarterly Journal of Religious, Scientific and Cultural Society*. University of Ilorin Publication, 1977, p.29

⁴¹Ann O' Hear, The Economic History of Ilorin in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Rise and decline of a Middleman society, an unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to the center of West African Studies, University of Birmingham, 1983. P.77

⁴²Ann O' Hear, Political and Commercial Clientage in Nineteenth Century Ilorin. *Africa Economic History*. No.15, Pp. 69-83. www.jstor.org. retrieved on 14/07/2011



Unfortunately, these traders/ middlemen were unable to diversify into the new form of trade (colonial economy) due to the fact that, Ilorin aristocrats had created enemies for themselves among the Yoruba as a result of persistent warfare and raids by the Ilorin forces on Yoruba towns before the conquest. The primordial suspicion among the Yoruba and Ilorin forces may have probably been responsible for the withdrawal of these middlemen from colonial economy as it is found in Yoruba saying describing Ilorin as “*meisujamba*” (traitor). It was further observed that; the major players in the colonial economy were Yoruba traders who travelled into the Hausaland to sell food stuff to the cash crop-producing towns. Therefore, the loss suffered as a result of the bombardment wrecked many of these stock brokers and traders who could not raise enough capital to invest in the colonial form of trade.⁴³

Loss of revenue to the Ilorin aristocrats/ traditional rulers

Loss of source of revenue is another effect of the conquest especially on the Ilorin aristocrats who controlled the *Gambari* market. The market was the source of revenue for the three prominent traditional rulers of the Ilorin emirate. They were; *Balogun Gambari*, *Serikin Gambari* and *Serikingobir*.⁴⁴ The collapse of the market significantly affected their revenue. This is because the toll fees, taxes, lodging and other charges in the market have been seized due to the diversion of the trade away from the North to the South. Therefore, one can posit from the foregoing that the absence of traders and goods resulted in the serious decline of the *Gambari* market.

Conclusion

Ilorin entrepot economy suffered greatly from the colonial conquest due to the heavy bombardment of the city by the forces of the Royal Niger Company in 1897. Ilorin being an entrepot trade centre in the Nineteenth century, has been acknowledged as the biggest market town in the interior famous among the Negroes. It has been established in the paper that, the city was characterized by ubiquitous markets established in different quarters. Those rated to be of the international standard were *Gambari* and *Oja-oba* markets owing to the trading in import and export commodities. *Gambari* was famous as one of the five main wards in the Ilorin emirate populated by different ethnic groups especially from the Hausaland due to its hospitality to the traders who were majorly from the north of the river Niger. Hence, the *Gambari* market became a popular and highly patronized market in the city. Unfortunately, the forces of the Royal Niger Company bombarded Ilorin city and many markets including *Gambari* caught fire especially when the market was loaded with goods, including some combustible items preparing for a trade fair in 1897. This inferno coupled with the introduction of colonial economic policy that brought a setback to the indigenous trade, crippled the economic activities in the *Gambari* market. Today the Market has become a shadow of itself.

⁴³ Ann O Hear, The Economic History of Ilorin in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Rise and decline of a Middleman society, an unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to the center of West African Studies, University of Birmingham, 1983, pp. 35 & 75

⁴⁴ Ann O Hear, The Economic History of Ilorin in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Rise and decline of a Middleman society, an unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to the center of West African Studies, University of Birmingham, 1983, p.66

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