

BICYCLES IN THE MATERIAL AND TRANSPORT HISTORY OF EASTERN NIGERIA, 1900-1960

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ABSTRACT

A lot has been written on various aspects of Nigerian transport history such as aviation, motor, railway, camels, and human portage but the bicycle in Nigerian historiography exists only as piecemeal scholarly publications. The essence of this paper is to situate a holistic chronological discourse about the role of bicycles as a means of transport for colonial officials, Christian missionaries, and the local people. As available records indicate, the Second World War paved way for the arrival of motor transport and by extension the construction of roads in Eastern Nigeria probably for the logistics of soldiers in the region because of Cameroon borders. With so much dependence of local people on bicycles for moving palm produce to the marketing boards, the arrival of motor transport could not displace bicycle owners. However, the scarcity of bicycle spare parts in the inter-war years exacerbated the problems of the peasant bicycle owners because of its cost implications. The paper relies heavily on primary materials from the Nigerian national archives as well as articles in journals and books.

Keywords: Bicycles, Transport, Peasants, Historiography