

The Changing Nature of Intra-City Transportation in Sokoto Metropolis: A Case Study of Motorcycle (Kabu-Kabu) Hire Purchase¹

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Abstract: Intra-city transportation system is an indispensable means of movement of persons and their goods within the city. In Sokoto metropolis, it has contributed and still contributing to the development of the socio-economic activities of the people. Motorcycle or *Kabu-kabu* is one of the means of intra-city transport within the metropolis. The role of commercial motorcycle (*kabu-kabu*) in Sokoto metropolis is to complement the services of other Para-transit modes of transport such as tricycles and buses, in moving passengers and goods from one point to another. It is noteworthy that despite its limitation, *Kabu-kabu* has come to stay as a viable mode of transport in the metropolis. This became so because it is a means of employment opportunities by a good number of youths who had formal education. The upsurge in the fleet of commercial motorcycles in the metropolis is a clear testimony of the increasing demands for this mode of public transport as well as the employment opportunities it has brought to the teeming youths in the metropolis. The study concluded that the contribution of this mode of intra-city transportation (*kabu-kabu*) to the development of the metropolis social, economically and politically cannot be overemphasized.

I. INTRODUCTION

Intra-city transportation is another means of road transportation which has significantly contributed to the growth and development of the metropolis economically, socially and politically. The earliest means of intra-city movement in Sokoto are taxi cabs that started operating in the early 1980s and this followed by local government mass transit introduced in the early 1990s. Other means of intra-city movement are motorcycles that start featuring in the late 1980s and thereafter tricycles that since the year 2000 start becoming the most predominant in the metropolis. In an attempt to examine intra-city means of commuting, the paper treats the development of each of the means of transportation. And in the final analysis, the paper argues that the economic contribution of these means of transportation i.e., taxicab, mass transit, motorcycles and tricycles cannot be overemphasized, because they alleviated and still alleviating not only the youth unemployment, but also the middle cadre civil servants (who engaged in intra-city transport with their personal vehicles) whose monthly take home pay cannot be able to take care of them and their immediate family.

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II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Motorcycles as a mode of public intra-city transportation provide ease to commuting populace. It also provides incomes to the operators and owners of the vehicles. Initially, Yamaha, Suzuki, and Honda motorcycles were most widely used in the metropolis, but in later years, Kasea, Delon and Bajaj are widely used. As city's population increased year after year, many owners of the motorcycles introduced and embraced hire purchase scheme for their vehicles.¹ Commercial motorcycles (*kabu-kabu*) have become very vital in the city since 1980s and one of its advantages is that it is much cheaper, faster and more capable of penetrating all nook and cranny of the metropolis.²

History of motorcycle (*kabu-kabu*) as means of intra-city transportation system in the metropolis dates back to 1980s, when some servants in the lower cadre and later unemployed youths including even certificate holders and drop-outs started using motorcycles for commercial purposes.³ Before the use of motorcycles, taxicabs were the most predominant means of intra-city movement in Sokoto metropolis. However, from the late 1988 to 1990 the number of taxicabs reduced and became fewer compared to the number of the increasing population in the city. Moreover, the available taxicabs could not provide commuters with enough door to door services especially that of the civil servants, students and businessmen/women.⁴

The role of commercial motorcycle (*kabu-kabu*) in the metropolis was to complement the services of other means of transport especially of taxi cabs and mass transit buses in moving passengers and goods from one destination to another. *Kabu-kabu* has played this role very well for many years

¹ Yusuf Kyautawa, Chairman of The Amalgamated Commercial Tricycle and Motorcycle Repairs and Riders Association of Nigeria (ACOMORAN), Sokoto State Chapter, aged 55 years, interviewed in his office on 19-04-2018. See also... M.A. Kware, *A Study of Motorcycles (Kabu-Kabo) As Means of Transportation in Sokoto Metropolis*, PGD Dissertation, NITT, Zaria, 2012, p.23.

² Ibid

³ Bashir Muhammad Bello, 47 years of age, motorcycle Rider, interviewed in Kwanni Area, Sokoto on 20/04/18

⁴ Ahmad Shehu, motorcycle Rider, 46 years of age, interviewed in Tudunwada Area, Sokoto on 20/04/18

before being over taken by the commercial tricycles. The upsurge in the fleet of commercial motorcycles in the metropolis was a clear testimony of the increasing demands for this mode of public transport.⁵

Madugu (2015) also observed that motorcycles have taken over from the taxicabs as means of public intra-city transportation in Kano metropolis. He indicated that motorcycles in their hundreds now fly all nooks and corners of Kano city even in places where vehicles could not penetrate.⁶ He further opined that, the massive participation of people in the motorcycle transportation business in the state may be due to its economic gains and affordable cost of maintenance. The operation of motorcycles brings more jobs not only to the operators, but also to the motorcycles mechanics, vulcanizers and spare-parts sellers.⁷

Emergence of Vehicles' Hire Purchase "Local Insurance"

One important development which coincides with the introduction of tricycles and had also extended to motorcycle or *kabu-kabu* in the metropolis was hire purchase or local insurance. The local insurance came to be as an alternative to hitherto daily, weekly or monthly remittances to the owner by the operator until such vehicle became old and vice versa. The problem associated with defaulting operators was mostly the breach in contractual agreement particularly relating to payment of vehicles' daily or weekly charges. But, since its commencement (hire purchase/local insurance), the problem of defaults and negligences by the operators became a thing of the past.⁸

As the tricycles' transport business increased year after year, many owners of vehicles have introduced one method or another of collecting money from their operators in order to avoid losses arising from defaults, etc. One method which proves to be the best in terms of payment by the operators was the hire purchase scheme popularly referred to as *inshora* in Hausa language. Under this arrangement (hire purchase scheme), the operator of a particular vehicle will be given a vehicle on a certain fixed amount thereafter the operator becomes the owner of the vehicles after full payment.⁹

The importance of such arrangement to the success of intra-city transport service especially that of tricycles cannot be overemphasized. This is because, it has been arranged in such a way that it will prevent disagreement between the vehicle provider and the operator. Under such arrangement, one hardly

finds any problem, because, the operator knows that whatever harm he does to the vehicle it is to his disadvantage, because when he finishes the payment he will own a mismanaged vehicle.¹⁰ However, before the advent of this local insurance, there were several cases of betrayal especially from the operator who either destroy the vehicle due to lack of maintenance or who hardly settle their daily, weekly or monthly payment.¹¹ With the local insurance scheme however, the frequency of conflicts between the provider and operator became drastically reduced.¹²

One of the persons in the metropolis who gives out vehicles (motorcycles/tricycles) on hire purchase basis is Malam Abubakar Tarbe of Gidan Igwai area. Tarbe was originally from Yabo local government and he still works with the state ministry for Basic and Secondary Education as a Deputy Director. He has been into the motorcycles/tricycles' hire purchase scheme for more than twenty years.¹³ As at the year 2020 he has such arrangement with over 20 operators of either motorcycles or tricycles. According to him prior to the introduction of such scheme many operators who collected his vehicles defaulted in paying their daily or weekly dues or even damaged the vehicle due to negligence. Most operators now take good care of their vehicles to the extent that even some settle their payment before the end of the due period of agreement.¹⁴

Abba Abdullahi Maiakwai is another Sokoto businessman who engages in hire purchase scheme. He owns more than fifteen motorcycles and tricycles and has been in the scheme for over a decade.¹⁵ Another operator of vehicles through hire purchase scheme is Malam Umaru Kanwuri who has been into the transportation business for more than twenty two years now and particularly the hire purchase/ local insurance scheme in both motorcycles and tricycles. Kanwuri who lives in Kanwuri area said that he started the business by collecting a motorcycle from somebody on *taba ka lasa*¹⁶ basis. After saving money through *kabu-kabu* he later ventured into the business and is now doing well in it. He currently has about eleven motorcycles and six tricycles being

¹⁰. Ibid. See also... M.A. Kware, *A Study of Motorcycles (Kabu-Kabo) As Means of Transportation in Sokoto Metropolis*, PGD Dissertation, NITT, Zaria, 2012, p.23.

¹¹. Shamsudeen Aliyu, Secretary of The Amalgamated Commercial Tricycle and Motorcycle Repairs and Riders Association of Nigeria (ACOMORAN), Sokoto State Chapter, aged 51 years, interviewed in his office on 19-04-2018. See also... M. L. Gusau, "The Contribution of Taxis and *Kabo-kabo* (Motorcycles) Toward Efficient Road Passenger Movement in Gusau Town", PGD Dissertation, NITT Zaria, 1996, PP. 1 – 41. Also... R.J. Gabriel, *The Private Provision of Public Services in Developing Countries*, Washington D.C. Press, 1995, p.26.

¹². Ibid

¹³. Malam Abubakar Tarbe, 58 years, interviewed in his house at Gidan Igwai area, 15/07/2019.

¹⁴. Ibid. See also... M.Y. Ilu (Mrs), *The Impact of Tricycles on the Socio-Economic life of women in Kano metropolis C.1986-2013*, M.A. History Dissertation, BUK, 2015, p.4

¹⁵. Abba Abdullahi Maiakwai, 38 years, interviewed in his house at Gidan Igwai area Sokoto, 15/07/2019

¹⁶. *Taba ka lasa* means an operator who gave out his vehicle to a redundant operator mostly after he worked for sometime.

⁵. Abubakar Shehu, 40 years of age, motorcycle Rider, interviewed in Sokoto Old Market, on 20/04/18. See

⁶. Y.U. Madugu, "Commercial Buses and Economic Growth in Kano Metropolis, 1967-2000" in Sa'ad,

B.A., and Ibrahim, K.A., *Resurgent Nigeria: Issues in Intellectual History: A Festschrift in Honour of*

DahiruYahaya, Ibadan, University Press, 2015. P. 98

⁷. Ibid

⁸. Shamsudeen Aliyu, Secretary,...*Op.cit*

⁹. Yusuf Kyautawa, Chairman of The Amalgamated Commercial Tricycle and Motorcycle Repairs and Riders Association of Nigeria (ACOMORAN), Sokoto State Chapter, aged 55 years, interviewed in his office on 19-04-2018

managed by various individuals within the metropolis.¹⁷ According to him, since the beginning of this hire purchase scheme *kabu-kabu* now became one of the safest areas to invest your money. Apart from accidents which sometimes occur in one way or another, there has never been any problem experienced by me from any rider. This is largely because, a rider is aware that immediately after he settles the insurer the vehicle becomes his own. Therefore, he has no choice than to take good care of the vehicle as well as trying as much as possible to finish the payment and becomes the owner.¹⁸

Another person who also ventures into the transportation business from being an ordinary head dresser or *kitso* to becoming a successful motorcycles and tricycles insurer in the metropolis is Amina *Bayarba Maikitso*. She is an indigene of Kwara state and presently lives in Gidan Igwai, and since then the number of vehicles in fleet keeps rising.¹⁹ According to her when she first came to Sokoto her business was hair-weaving *kitso*, a business she has done for more than eight years before venturing into transportation. The saving she made from hair-weaving gave her the opportunity to buy three motorcycles initially and gave them out to some youths in her area at Gidan Igwai area. With these three motorcycles she was saving money and she bought another one from that saving and later also added another one. The number kept rising from five to seven to ten and later became fleet of tricycles. According to Amina, her success story started when the issue of hire purchase scheme started. This is because since then operators neither defaulted on their payment nor damage the vehicles.²⁰

Aminu Gidan Igwai is another motorcycles insurance businessman who made a lot of achievement through the business. He lives in Gidan Igwai area, Sokoto and has been doing the business for almost ten years now. One of the early people in the metropolis to start insurance business of motorcycles/tricycles transportation in the metropolis is Aminu Gidan Igwai. Gidan Igwai played an important role in youth's empowerment activities especially in Gidan Igwai area where he lives. According to him, he currently has more than 25 motorcycles and tricycles all belonging to him through which he gives out to youth in the area on insurance basis.²¹

Recalling when he started, Gidan Igwai started with *kabu-kabu* a business which he has been doing for more than eight years. During the period of his *kabu-kabu* business he

was able to save something and bought a motorcycle which he used to save more money and acquired another one. From one to two, to three and then he was given them out to others for intra-city transportation. He said that even before the introduction of insurance scheme he never experienced much problem with his clients. But also, when insurance scheme was introduced it became much easier for him to save more money and recorded no single case of default. This is possible because insurance scheme gives opportunity for the insurer and insured to be serious and careful particularly to the insured whose intention was to settle the insurer and own the vehicle permanently.²²

Hajiya Yar'nanu *Mai Abinci* is also another woman who ventured into the motorcycles/tricycles' hire purchase business for almost fifteen years. Her initial business was selling food, (*tuwo-tuwo*), through which she saved and invested in transport business. Hajiya *maituwo* combines motorcycles/tricycles insurance business with her food selling business.²³ According to her, she currently has thirty five motorcycles and tricycles on the street within the metropolis. Her children serve as managers of the transport business.²⁴

Table 1: Hire Purchase Providers

S/ N.	Residence	Number of Motorcycles	Number of Tricycles	Number of years in the Scheme
1	Gidan Igwai	16	10	9 years
2	Kanwuri Area	17	13	13 years
3	Kwanni Area	21	15	22 years
4	Aduwa, Gidan Igwai Area, Sokoto	19	3	13 years
5	Kofar Bai, Kanwuri Area, Sokoto	17	9	11 years
6	Tudun Faila Area, Sokoto	22	5	20 years
7	Runjin Sambo Area, Sokoto	18	10	15 years
8	NTA, Runjin Sambo Area, Sokoto	18	3	9 years
9	Tudun Faila Area, Sokoto	20	5	16 years
10	NTA, Runjin Sambo Area, Sokoto	21	5	15 years
11	Tudun Faila Area, Sokoto	19	2	12 years
12	Runjin Sambo Area, Sokoto	15	0	10 years
13	Kanwuri Area, Sokoto	31	11	19 years

Source: Field Work, 2021.

¹⁷. Malam Ummaru Kanwuri, 99 years, interviewed in his house at Kanwuri area Sokoto, 15/07/2019.

¹⁸. Ibid. See also... K. Adeniji, Transport challenges in Nigeria in the Next Two Decades, a key note Address Delivered at the 5th National Council on Transportation, Organized by the Federal Ministry of Transport, at the ECOWAS Secretariat, Abuja, Nigeria, 29-31 August, 2000.

¹⁹. Amina Bayarba Maikitso, 50 years, interviewed in her shop at Gidan Igwai area, Sokoto, 15/07/2019.

²⁰. Ibid

²¹. Aminu Gidan Igwai, 45 years, interviewed in his house at Gidan Igwai area, Sokoto, 18/07/2019.

²². Ibid, See also... A.J. Njoh, *Implications of Africa's transportation system for development in the era of globalization*. Florida University press, 2012 p.89. See also, J.C. Rothenberg, and I.G. Hegie, *Transport policy*, McMillan Publishers, London, 1974; P.R. White, *Planning for public transportation*, Y. Hutchinson & Co. Publishers, London, 1976 and Talley, introduction to transportation and business administration, Virginia University Press, USA, 1967.

²³. Hajiya Maiabinci, 55 years, interviewed in her house at Gidandare, area, Sokoto, 18/07/2019.

²⁴. Ibid. See also... A.O. Adeyemo, and M.O. Ajijo, Investment in the Transportation Sector in Nigeria: A Critical Appraisal, Conference on National Transport Policy, Kano, November, 1986.

Hire Purchasers/Riders

Shamsu Abdullahi is a 25 year old motorcycle operator who lives in Gidan Igwai area and collects motorcycle on hire purchase basis in the metropolis. According to him he collected over four motorcycles from different persons on hire purchase arrangement and he settled all of them and he owns the motorcycles permanently. The motorcycle he is currently using belongs to him and gives out the remaining ones to his younger brothers to manage for him.²⁵ Shamsu said the advent of hire purchase scheme in transportation was a blessing not only to him but also to many operators. This is because; with this arrangement an operator can become the owner of motorcycles or tricycles.²⁶

Ibrahim Musa Kangiwa is also another person operating motorcycle on hire purchase basis. According to him, he collected six different motorcycles from different businessmen and he never had any confrontation or problem with any of them. Kangiwa said that the motorcycle he is now using to conduct the transportation business belongs to him because he has already paid for it.²⁷ Kangiwa, lives in Gidan Igwai area with his uncle, but he came to Sokoto from Kangiwa town in Kebbi state Nigeria. He said that the last motorcycle he collected from Malam Umbaru Kanwuri was arranged to be settled within 9 months period and the motorcycle was purchased at the rate of N195,000. The arrangement is that he should be able to pay the sum N270,000 and own the vehicle permanently. He has already done the payment and the motorcycle now belongs to him. Kangiwa too commended the insurance arrangement because it gives opportunity for the hitherto riders to have their own vehicles. Kangiwa said that, because of the successes he recorded he is now about to get married by saving money to pay the dowry and acquire the bridal clothes *lehe* and other things for the marriage.²⁸

Another person who has been into the business in the metropolis is Yahuza Muhammad. He was from Minna in Niger state, but he lives in Gidan Igwai area, Sokoto with his elder brother. He has been doing the motorcycles/tricycles business within the metropolis for more than eight years now and he had so far collected three motorcycles from different persons on insurance basis. He settled all of them and now owns the motorcycles.²⁹

Yahuza also made a success of the motorcycles' intra-city transportation business. Some of the achievements he recorded were acquiring his three motorcycles through

insurance, acquiring a plot of land at home in Minna and getting married, etc. He is now living with his wife at Gidan Igwai area, Sokoto. According to Yahuza, since his arrival to Sokoto he never ever regretted joining the *kabu-kabu* business because it payed him very well. He said that the only problem they are currently facing is from the security agents such as the Road Safety personnel, Police personnel and most particular the Sokoto Marshal personnel, etc.³⁰

One popular operator who collected and settled about 15 different motorcycles from different owners on insurance or hire purchase basis within the metropolis has been Muhammadu Dauda. Dauda remembered that before the advent of insurance scheme, he never even dreamt of owning a motorcycle, but now he had about fifteen motorcycles being managed by different riders in the metropolis.³¹ Dauda lives in Gidan Igwai area, Sokoto with his family for more than twenty years now. And apart from transportation in motorcycles/tricycles within the metropolis, he has never done any business before. Through it (intra-city) he acquired many things including a house in Gidan Igwai area, fifteen motorcycles/tricycles, marrying his second wife and buying many electronics such as refrigerator, plasma TV, Startime, etc.³²

Musa Muhammad has also been another motorcycles/tricycles rider who also ventures into insurance scheme in the Sokoto metropolis. From the time he started the venture he collected almost five motorcycles from different owners and he settled them all without any rancor or acrimony. Though he sold about four of the vehicles, but the one he is currently using belongs to him.³³

Muhammad who lives in Rumjin Sambo area in Sokoto metropolis with his family is currently planning to shift from motorcycle to tricycles. This is because, people now mostly patronised tricycle more than the motorcycle especially women and the elderly people. It has now become a common practice to find a motorcycle rider roaming about on the street without a passenger. If not because of the insurance arrangement, one will find it difficult to get what to settle the owner's daily or weekly payment. Therefore, since the trend has shifted from motorcycle to tricycle one is left with no choice but to also shift to the tricycle in order to be able to cater for one's daily survival. Even in terms of accident, tricycle is safer than the motorcycle. One hardly finds a tricycles' accident on the street, but whenever one sees accident it is mostly a motorcycle that most probably the operators engaged in rough riding coupled with congestion or traffic jam on the road.³⁴

²⁵. Shamsu Abdullahi, 25 years, interviewed in his family house at Gidan Igwai area, Sokoto, 21/07/2019

²⁶. Ibid. See also...Nigeria: Transport, Aviation and Tourism Information Handbook and Who is Who, Sahel Publishing and Printing Company, Lagos, Nigeria, 1988, p.20

²⁷. Ibrahim Musa Kangiwa, 28 years, interviewed at Gidan Igwai area, Sokoto, 21/07/2019.

²⁸. Ibid

²⁹ Yahuza Muhammad, 30 years, interviewed at Gidan Igwai area Sokoto, 21/07/2019.

³⁰. Ibid

³¹. Muhammadu Dauda, 53 years, interviewed in his house at Gidan Igwai area Sokoto, 21/07/2019.

³². Ibid

³³. Musa Muhammad, 35 years, interviewed in his house at Rumjin Sambo area, Sokoto, 22/07/2019

³⁴. Ibid

Table 2: Hire Purchase Riders

S/ N.	Residence	Number of Motorcycles used	Number of Tricycles used	Number of years in the Scheme
1	Gidan Igwai Area	5	0	5 years
2	Gidan Igwai Area	4	0	5 years
3	Tudun Faila Area	5	0	6 year
4	Gidan Igwai Area	7	1	10 years
5	Gidan Igwai Area	7	0	8 years
6	Girafshi Area, Sokoto	5	0	5 years
7	Gidan Kuka Area, Sokoto	5	1	7 years
8	Layin Yansanda, Gidan Igwai Area, Sokoto	6	0	5 years
9	Tudun Faila Area	3	3	5 years
10	Runjin Sambo Area	5	1	8 years
11	Tudun Faila Area	5	0	5 years
12	Runjin Sambo Area	5	1	5 years
13	Aduwa, Gidan Igwai Area, Sokoto	7	0	9 years
14	Runjin Sambo Area	5	1	5 years

Source: Field Work, 2021.

III. CONCLUSION

Taxicabs or *tasi*, motorcycles or *kabu-kabu* and mass transit service have played and are still playing vital roles in the socio-economic and political development of the metropolis. These means of transportation within the metropolis from the early 1970s up to the early 1990s have contributed to the development of road transportation system. Taxi cabs in particular were the first to feature and had alleviated transport suffering of the teaming commuters in the metropolis. Motorcycles or *Kabu-kabu* later became the most dominant means of commuting system within the metropolis and mass transit service thereafter emerged as an alternative means of intra-city movement before it faced numerous challenges that led to its collapse. On the whole, one could say without fear of contradiction that the intra-city transport services created more jobs not only to the operators, but also to the owners, mechanics, spare parts sellers and vulcanizers, etc.³⁵

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