

Crime, Prison Services and Administration in Colonial Ilorin Emirate, North Central, Nigeria

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Before the emergence of colonial rule in Nigeria, pre-colonial societies had well-organised political and judicial institutions that guided customary laws and orderliness. Among the means employed in implementing order and laws was the ‘prison’ locally referred to as ‘Tubu’. The advent of colonial rule under the British Native Administration also witnessed the use of prisons to maintain law and order in the colonies. The colonial authority put at its disposal the coercive security apparatus of police, court, and prison to enable a conducive environment for society. The prison operated within the basic framework of maintaining peace and order. In Ilorin Province, the Emir, under the indirect rule system, controlled these instruments of power and authority, such as treasuries, prisons, courts, and police. Using a historical research method that relies on archival documents collected from the National Archive Kaduna (NAK), Nigeria and secondary source of data from books and peer-reviewed journals, the article examined crime, prison services and administration in Ilorin Emirate. Under the prison administration, the article seeks to understand how issues of rehabilitation, prisoners’ health, food, genderisation of prisoners, and the condition of service provided by prison wardens were handled under colonial rule. The article contributes to a global perspective on how British colonialists conceptualised and handled issues surrounding punishment and prison during colonial rule.

[Crime; Colonial; Ilorin; Nigeria; Prison]

Introduction

Crime, punishment and the prison system are important aspects of colonial governance and administrative structure. Prison is one of the earliest colonial architectures³ and institutions that embody colonial

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³ K. DAVID, Punishment to Fit the Crime? Penal Policy and Practice in British Colonial Africa, in: F. BERNAULT (ed.), *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa*, Portsmouth, N. H. 2003, p. 100.

power and authority. Punishment of crimes and the prison system before the advent of colonial rule was not alien to pre-colonial Nigerian societies. In the pre-colonial period, penal and confinement in prisons were considered corrective measures to behaviour that was detrimental to societal well-being. Punishment and prison systems were controlled by heads of families (nuclear/extended/lineage) as well as centralised and non-centralised state systems, rulers, administrators, and elites. However, Patricia O'Brien argued and validated by oral interviews with chiefs at the Emir palace in Ilorin that the pre-colonial prisons were not designed for long incarceration but a testing ground for innocence.⁴ This particular feature distinguishes the pre-colonial penal and prison system from the colonial-introduced prison system.

The emergence of colonial rule in Nigeria witnessed the introduction of administrative institutions by the British colonialists, such as Native Courts, Native Police, and Native Treasury, through various ordinances and proclamations. The importance of these institutions cannot be underestimated. The British administrative institutions were considered 'superior' to pre-colonial African societies' law and punishment process, which is often chalked under 'primitive' and 'barbaric'.⁵ The British colonial administrators considered the English legal and penal code as an important agent of effective colonisation based on two major fronts. The English law and prison system protected British economic interests and civilising missions, and the second was to punish natives who were resisting and committing offences against the colonial order.⁶

However, even though crime, punishment and prison were central to the working of colonial authorities, there is a dearth of historical analysis on the workings of prison institutions as regards the nature of services offered and the process of administration in colonial prisons. Hence, this research is an attempt to fill this identified gap. Therefore, this study examines crimes, prison services and administration in Ilorin Emirate, North Central, Nigeria, during the colonial period. The study relied solely on archival records and oral interviews and benefitted from extant works of literature to help understand some specific aspects of services and administration in the colonial prison system in Ilorin.

⁴ P. O'BRIEN, *The Promise of Punishment*, Princeton 1982.

⁵ DAVID, p. 98.

⁶ M. KRISTIN, *Law in Colonial Africa*, London 1991, p. 3.

Prison System and Administration in Pre-colonial Ilorin Emirate

Pre-colonial Nigerian societies value the sanctity of laws and order. For instance, the concept of *omoluabi* is built around individual respect for constituted authorities and respect for societal norms, traditions, and laws which are important parameters for order and administration. Behaviours in the pre-colonial were regulated to strengthen the commitment to shared societal norms and values and discourage misconduct among members. In pre-colonial Ilorin, policing and punishment of offenders took the form of informal socio-political control involving family, religious institutions, age grades, and indigenous government.⁷

Also, before establishing the colonial policing and judicial system, Ilorin operated an organised policing and judicial system. The transformation of Ilorin into an Emirate in the nineteenth century resulted in the establishment of *Dogari* and *Qadi*, also known as *Alkali* (Judge) institutions. The advancement of political institutions and governance systems in Ilorin necessitates the use of a formal model of policing and punishment of offenders, which includes imprisonment.⁸ Abdul Salam (1823–1836), the first Emir of the Ilorin Emirate, laid the groundwork for Islamic-based policing and judicial prosecution. *Sarkin Dogari*, the head of the Dogari institution, was regarded as prime minister, warden, and chief executor. The *Dogari* system was tasked with overseeing the Emirate's security apparatus. Thus, the entire criminal justice system was designed to ensure the Emirate's security, punish offenders through the imprisonment or execution of the offenders accordingly, and ensure people obeyed the will of the Emir of Ilorin during the pre-colonial period.⁹

Prisons in pre-colonial Ilorin were used for the short-term detention of debtors, petty offenders who disobeyed the Emir, *Baloguns*, and *Magaji* (political officials), political prisoners, and minor offenders.¹⁰ *Seriki Dogari* was in charge of the administration and upkeep of the prisons at the Emir's palace. The consistent use of prison by the Dogari's institution to detain debtors resulted in a popular adage which goes thus: "Owo ti o si Dogari kan o le gba" (money that is not available, no *Dogari* can get it).

⁷ A. S. ABDULBAKI, Dogari Institution and Security of Ilorin Emirate in the 19th century, in: I. A. JAWONDO – A. B. AMBALI – A. I. ABDULKABIR (eds.), *Human security and the survival of Ilorin emirate culture*, Ilorin 2019, pp. 107–117.

⁸ L. SANUSI, Age 46 years, Oral interview, Ilorin, November 22, 2021.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ R. MURITALA, Age, 41 years, Oral interview, Ilorin, January 23, 2022.

Debtors are detained for a short time until the family repays the debt. In the pre-colonial Ilorin, prisons were also constructed in a secluded place to hold war captives by war chiefs for a short period before they were either traded in exchange for other commodities, sold or distributed as slaves to the Emir's palace, war chiefs and political elite.¹¹

Before the advent of colonialism, the *Dogari* institution punished offenders in pre-colonial Ilorin through punitive means, not as the correctional or rehabilitation centre. Pre-colonial Ilorin spaces of confinement matched the description of Bernault that pre-colonial prisons “*did not seek to rehabilitate criminals or enforce standardised sentences*”.¹² Instead, they functioned primarily as spaces in which offenders were restrained physically till their cases were tried or decided upon by judicial bodies.¹³ Among the disciplinary process used by the *Dogari* include compelling the offenders to fetch water inside a basket, sweeping open spaces, enslavement, banishment to punish crimes and misdemeanours and capital punishment (ordeal by poison). Other methods prisoners are subjected to in short-term incarceration include beating, mutilation, reparations, and compensatory payments.

Prisons have been used to determine guilt or innocence for centuries. The act of incarcerating prisoners for an extended period violates a fundamental principle of customary law, which calls for reconciliation between the victim and the offender. Hence, indigenous law was concerned with reconciliation rather than harsh retribution. As a result, most pre-colonial Ilorin did not develop institutionalised incarceration or subscribe to the idea of detaining an offender in a place for a long period.¹⁴ On this basis, the colonialist established administrative apparatus in the colonial period in Ilorin hoping to bring law and order in the colonial and post-colonial state.

¹¹ A. A. MUHAMMED, Age 81 years, Oral interview, Ilorin, November 20, 2021.

¹² F. BERNAULT, *The Shadow of Colonial Rule: Colonial Power and Modern Punishment in Africa*, in: F. DIKOTTER – I. BROWN (eds.), *Cultures of Confinement: A History of Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, New York 2007, p. 57.

¹³ F. T ABIODUN, *A Historical Study on Penal Confinement and Institutional Life in Southern Nigeria, 1860–1956*, Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of The University of Texas at Austin, 2013, p. 58.

¹⁴ SANUSI, Age 46 years, Oral interview, Ilorin, November 22, 2021.

Law and Order in Colonial Nigeria

The Nigerian colonial administration colonised the country by effectively maintained law and order in the provinces. James contended that colonial rule was a new source of authority, with new judicial institutions and personnel (such as police officers, judges, and clerks) who were indigenous people or native strangers from other areas for coercive authority in the land.¹⁵ Furthermore, the Killingray study argued that the colonial rule of law was to prevent and punish any wrongful acts committed by one person against another, but an essential feature of colonial law and policing was enforcing colonial rules and punishing those who broke the law. To maintain law and order, the colonial administration had to take firm action against any threat to government rule.¹⁶

Another paper focused on the interface between law and politics in Nigeria during the colonial period, arguing that colonial law was a major pillar on which politics was played. The establishment of sovereignty over a people, particularly by an alien, creates a situation of powerful resentment and agitation on the one hand and domination on the other, leading to enacting a set of laws that transform and govern, or direct, the relationship. Establishing a legal system became unavoidable, resulting in conflict between colonialist and Nigerian interests.¹⁷ Idris, Yemisi and Abdulbaki argued in their study that colonial administrative institutions such as the court, police and prison system were used to subdue criminal activities that harmed British economic interests. Murder, child stealing, armed robbery, burglary and illegal distillation were all common crimes during that period. It was also revealed that many people were prosecuted in court and disciplined.¹⁸ The colonial government law and order in the Nigerian colony were to bring sanity to the system. However, prison service was among the institution used by the colonist for law and order in the province.

¹⁵ H. F. MORIIS – J. READ, *Indirect rule and the search for justice*, Oxford 1972, p. 183.

¹⁶ D. KILLINGRAY, The Maintenance of Law and Order in British Colonial Africa, in: *Oxford University Press on behalf of The Royal African Society*, 85, 340, 1986, p. 413.

¹⁷ A. C. MAURICE, Law and Politics in Nigeria: The Political Functioning of the Judiciary in Colonial Nigeria, 1940–1960, in: *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5, 20, 2014, pp. 2084–2094.

¹⁸ R. T. IDRIS – O. I. OLAWALE – A. S. ABDULBAKI, Crime, Policing and Judicial Prosecution in Colonial Ilorin, North Central Nigeria, in: *Transcultural Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 3, 4, 2022, pp. 75–89.

Crime(s) in Colonial Ilorin

Historians have written extensively on the British conquest of Nigeria.¹⁹ The forces of the Royal Niger Company (RNC) under the leadership of Sir Taubman Goldie bombarded and conquered Ilorin along with other Northern areas such as Bida, Kotongora, Bauchi and Gombe, Zaria, Kano and Sokoto Caliphate between 1900 and 1914.²⁰ The aftermath of the British conquest was the administration of colonies towards protecting and promoting colonial interest and its civilising mission. Basic institutions of administration were set up as part of the British government's administrative measures after amalgamation. Among these institutions include the Native Court, Native Police, Government and Native Prisons for governance, maintenance of law and order, as well as administering justice in the provinces.²¹ The indirect rule system of native administration was used to uphold necessary colonial administrative institutions. However, it is difficult to discuss issues of punishment and the prison system without establishing the prevalence of crimes which necessitates the construction of prisons in the colonial period.

By the 1930s, Ilorin Emirate like other colonial provinces and districts emerged as a cosmopolitan and urban centre. Ilorin was a natural gateway, commercial centre and entrepot between the southern protectorate and Northern protectorate. This geographical position perhaps contributed to the crime perpetrated in the town during the colonial period. Despite the various measures put in place by the colonial authorities, Ilorin was not free of criminal activities among its people during this study scope. Crime statistics available for Ilorin accessed at the National Archive Kaduna reveal that Ilorin witnessed numerous reported crimes. The documentation of these crimes suggests that the colonial administration in Ilorin identified these crimes and addressed them through different measures, among which the prison system was used. Tables 1 and 2 present the crime statistics for 1937–1938, 1951, and 1952 below:

¹⁹ J. S. COLEMAN, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, California 1958; O. IKIME (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan 1980.

²⁰ T. FALOLA – M. HEATON, *History of Nigeria*, New York, Cambridge University Press 2008, pp.105–106.

²¹ H. O. DANMOLE, The Alkali Court in Ilorin Emirate during Colonial Rule, in: *Trans-african Journal of History*, 18, 1989, p. 176.

Table 1: Crime Returns and Statistics (Nigeria Police), 1937–1938²²

Offence against the Person	1937	1938
Murder	–	1
Attempted Murder	1	–
Manslaughter	–	–
Wounding and serious Assault	15	3
Child Stealing	–	–
Other offences against the Person	42	1
Offence against Property		
Armed Robbery	–	–
Burglary	11	6
Housebreaking by night	1	2
Housebreaking by day	1	1
Stealing (general)	59	36
Other offences against Property	10	8
Forgery and Attempt to procure Forgery		
Forgery of the West African Currency Notes	1	–
Coining offences	2	2
Illicit Distillation	–	–
Offences against Arms Ordinances	2	–
Other offences	51	16
Total	203	76

Source: NAK CLO 3743, Annual Report on the Nigeria Police Force, 1938, section 34.

²² NAK CLO 3743, Annual Report on the Nigeria Police Force, 1938, section 34.

**Table 2: Crime Returns and Statistics
(Native Administration Areas)²³**

Offence against the Person	1937	1938
Murder	7	–
Attempted Murder	3	–
Manslaughter	1	–
Wounding and serious Assault	26	6
Child Stealing	–	–
Other offences against the Person	68	3
Offence against Property		
Armed Robbery	2	–
Burglary	38	47
Housebreaking by night	–	4
Housebreaking by day	–	–
Stealing (general)	53	24
Other offences against Property	13	20
Forgery and Attempt to procure Forgery		
Forgery of the West African Currency Notes	–	1
Coining offences	3	1
Illicit Distillation	–	–
Offences against Arms Ordinances	–	–
Other offences	20	5
Total	243	111

Source: NAK CLO 3743, Annual Report on the Nigeria Police Force, 1938, section 34.

²³ NAK CLO 3743, Annual Report on the Nigeria Police Force, 1938, section 34.

Table 3: Crime Returns and Statistics (Nigeria Police), 1950–1951

Offence against the Person	1950–1951
Murder	5
Attempted Murder	1
Manslaughter	3
Wounding and serious Assault	6
Child Stealing	—
Other offences against the Person	8
Offence against Property	
Armed Robbery	—
Burglary	13
Housebreaking by night	1
Housebreaking by day	—
Stealing (general)	65
Other offences against Property	1
Forgery and Attempt to procure Forgery	
Forgery of the West African Currency Notes	2
Coining offences	1
Illicit Distillation	1
Offences against Arms Ordinances	—
Other offences	33
Total	140

Source: ILORPROF/3454, Crime Statistic, Administration Department.

The above tables of 1937 crime statistics by the Native Police and the 1937/1938 Native Administration Areas crime statistics, as well as the crime statistics between 1950 and 1951, reveal that Native Authority police prosecuted several cases, among which were murder, attempted murder, child stealing, armed robbery, burglary, stealing, coining offences,

illegal distillation among several others. The above total number of crimes prosecuted in 1937 was 243 and 111 in 1938 under the Native Administration Areas (NAA), while Native Police between 1937 and 1938 prosecuted 203 and 78 cases. Also, the above tables reveal that ‘stealing (in general)’ was the most prosecuted case. Stealing was more common than indictable offences against persons in Ilorin during colonial rule. Also, there was an increase in burglaries during this period.²⁴ The reason for such an increase could be linked to the strategic location of Ilorin during the colonial period and the post-World War II economic situation caused by taxation, job scarcity, unemployment, and reintegration of veterans. The tables show the crimes committed in the Ilorin province during the colonial period. It can be argued that Ilorin was not free from the crimes perpetrated in the colonial period, which necessitated trial in court and imprisonment, when necessary, in the colonial period.

Prison Services and Administration in Colonial Ilorin

This section examines some of the administrative measures put in place for effective and efficient prison system as well as services offered towards rehabilitating prisoners not directed towards colonial legal codes and processes. Following the amalgamation of Nigerian territories in 1914, the Governor-General, Lord Lugard, appointed by the Colonial Office in London as the first Governor-General, did not merge the Northern and Southern protectorate penal systems. Before he was appointed Governor-General, he was the High Commissioner of the Northern Protectorate created in 1900. New ordinances (Native Court, Native Police and Prison ordinances) established under Lugard’s administration ultimately led to the adoption, legitimisation and institutionalisation of the two-tier prison system (a dual form of prison administration). The two-tier prison system featured Government administration and Native Authority Prison. Under Native Authority, the management of prisons and prisoners was done by judicial bodies constituted by indigenous authority. At the same time, the government administration of ‘Government Prisons’ involved the use of European officials for the management and supervision of prisons owned and built by the colonial government.²⁵ This arrangement allowed Government Prisons to operate alongside Native Authority prisons.

²⁴ Assistant Superintendent of Police to the Resident Ilorin, October 15, 1947, 5 pars 3 (a)-1d. NAK Ilorin Prof/3394.

²⁵ ABIODUN, p. 145.

During the colonial period, the prison was remarkable in several ways. It was an important social and political development. The prison was used to punish and detain criminals for correctional purposes and as a place to rehabilitate criminals from inappropriate behaviours. The prison was charged with the responsibilities of maintaining security, guiding, and counselling the behaviours of inmates and counselling them to improve their lives and living conditions. The prison system is to reform, educate and provide vocational training for the inmates by specially trained professionals in the prison service.

In Northern Protectorate, Native Administrative Prisons functioned on a large scale. Upon his assumption, the High Commissioner, Frederick Lugard, further sustained the existence of native authority systems and institutions alongside the colonial provincial system. At the commencement of administrative affairs in 1900, Abiodun noted that government prisons did not exist. Individuals charged in government courts lived in villages with free members of the society; however, criminals were expected to report every morning to the appropriate authority until the first Government Prison was constructed in Lokoja in 1901, followed by Jebba and Ibi in 1902 and then at Zungeru in 1903.²⁶ In 1908 the prison at Zungeru and Lokoja were designated as convict prisons. On the eve of amalgamation in 1914, there were seventeen Government Prisons in the North²⁷ and twenty-three government prisons in Southern Nigeria.²⁸

However, while Government Prison was largely operational in the Southern Nigerian province, Native Authority Prison was most effective in the Northern Province.²⁹ The Native Courts Ordinance of 1914 made provision for the establishment of Native Prisons, ‘Native-Lock Ups’ and Native Authority Police Force. Before the amalgamation, Northern Nigeria had eighty-two Native Authority Prisons, of which Ilorin was included, while Southern Nigeria, on the other hand, only had seven Native Authority Prisons.³⁰ The reason for such a high number of prisons in the North was mainly because of the earlier indirect rule and Native Authority

²⁶ Ibid., p. 158.

²⁷ Note: Government prison establishment in Northern Nigeria started in 1901 with Lokoja which was subsequently followed by Jebba and Ibi in 1902 and then at Zungeru in 1903. In 1908 the prison at Zungeru and Lokoja were designated as convict prisons.

²⁸ O. OGUNLEYE, *The Nigerian Prison System*, Lagos 2007, p. 80.

²⁹ Using colonial Ilorin restricted the researchers to activities performed in Native administration.

³⁰ ABIODUN, p. 167.

system which had existed in the region before the amalgamation of 1914. However, after the promulgation of the Native Courts Ordinance, Native Authority Prisons increased rapidly in the Southern Province.

The Prison Ordinance of 1916 empowers the Governor to control the affairs of prison throughout the colony and protectorate. Since the colonial administration process was based on the colony and protectorate guided by a direct and indirect rule system, the ordinance empowered the Governor to appoint the Directors of prisons who shall have the general charge and superintendence of the prison system in the protectorates and hinterland. In 1914, Sir Lord Lugard appointed Captain A. E. Johnson, the Inspector General of Police in the North, as the Director of prisons for the whole of the Northern Province. The 1917 Prisons Regulation followed the aftermath of the 1916 prison ordinance. Abiodun argued that the 1917 Prison Regulations aimed at establishing procedures for treating prisoners in colonial prisons. It addressed issues such as admission, custody, classification of prisons and prisoners, clothing, dieting and staff recruitment.³¹

The welfare of the prison provides service care to all inmates in three primary areas. These include controlling the inmates' behaviour, assisting inmates to cope with the impact of imprisonment and planning for inmates' release. Generally, there were five basic administrative units in the prison service; there were general affairs, security and industry, education, medical and gender classification. Each unit of the prison system has a defined and regulated duty to perform within the prison system to improve the social condition of the inmates.

The administration of Ilorin Native administration gaol during colonial rule was built around the fundamental principles contained in the 'Standard Rules', which was distributed to both Government and Native Authority Prisons in Northern and Southern provinces. Under colonial rule, Native Authority Prisons were in operation in Ilorin Division. There are several Native Authority Prisons in Ilorin province, including the Bussa Native Administration Prison, Liafagi Native Administration Prison, Kaima Native Administration Prison, Borgu Native Administration Prison, and Pategi Native Administration Prison. The administration of Native Authority Prisons involves a Warden who is required to live on the prison premises or in its immediate vicinity. The warden is required to speak the prisoner's language and converse without an interpreter. Also,

³¹ Ibid., p. 172.

the administration involves a deputy warden, a minister of faith who is required to have access to prisoners and give the prisoners the opportunity of worship. This medical man is also mandated to live within the premises or vicinity of the prison, a female officer, a clerk, a storekeeper, and a European official. Lugard, the High Commissioner, claimed that “*it was essential that every Native prison should be under the eye of a European Administrative Officer, who will see that the place is kept in a sanitary state, that the sick are properly cared for and prisoners properly fed*”.³²

An important prison administration practice in colonial Ilorin Native Authority Prison was the separation of prisoners. Under colonial rule, the standard rules for prison administration emphasised the separation of prisoners. The Native Authority gaol in Ilorin under the Northern Province operated according to the standard rules by separating criminals based on gender (male and female) and the nature of crimes and offences committed. Also, untried prisoners are to be kept from convicts, while young prisoners are also to be kept from adults. Also, morally uncorrupted prisoners are to be separated from are to be kept from the corrupted ones in other to prevent bad influence.³³ Ilorin Native Authority Prison conformed to these guidelines, and cases where it is difficult to abide by due to financial and infrastructural reasons, were made known to the Resident Officer in Ilorin, who reports to the Secretary of Northern Province. For instance, in a report sent by the Assistant District Officer of Borgu Division, he informed the Resident officer in Ilorin that separation is done based on a gender basis, but other stereotypes laid down in the standard rules are not followed. On August 15, 1936, the Assistant District Officer (ADO) for the Bussa and Kaima Ilorin Native Authority Prison reported that the separation of untried prisoners was not practicable due to the limited confinement at the prison compounds. In other words, there is a lack of adequate infrastructure needed for the proper classification of prisoners according to their sex, age, needs and category of crime in Ilorin Native Authority Prisons.

Another important theme in Ilorin’s Native colonial prison administration is the aspect of women or female convicts. The treatment of women prisoners is more difficult to determine, partly because they were far fewer

³² Lord LUGARD, Political Memoranda. Part VIII, para. 55, p. 290.

³³ NAK, ILORPROF/319/1922, Native Administration Prison Conditions of administration by Director of Medical and Sanitary Service, Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

in number than men. The standard rules emphasised that women convicts should be assigned a separate quarter within the prison compound, walled off from other prison buildings. Also, as part of the gendered rules of prison administration in Northern Provinces and colonial Ilorin, female prisoners must be presented with a female wardress saddled with the responsibility of attending to female prisoners. In colonial Ilorin, these standard rules were adhered to while in some cases where the needed financial and infrastructural are unavailable were adequately stated. In June 1936, the District Officer (DO) of the Pategi-Lafiagi Division reported to the Resident of Ilorin Province that there is a wardress on the prison staff of Lafiagi to supervise female prisoners but not at Pategi because of financial reasons and an extremely small number of females sentenced to imprisonment in the Division. By August, Pategi Native Administrative Prisons recorded a female prisoner leading to the employment of a female Wardress engaged temporarily with a wage.

Prison administrators must supply sufficient food both in quality and quantity to maintain their health and strength. Also, an important aspect of prison services was penal labour and prisoners' diet. Colonial Ilorin prison administration emphasised prisoners' diet, stipulated in the standard minimum rules distributed to all Provinces and Districts in Northern Protectorate. In Ilorin Native Authority Prison, the diet was adequately monitored by the prison medical officer who reports directly to the Prison Administrator. Health-related crises (such as diarrhoea, dysentery, fever, pneumonia) and death in Native Administration prisons were considered outcomes of poor dietary and feeding processes.³⁴ In a report circulated by the Secretary of Northern Provinces in 1925, the remarkable decrease in death rate was attributed to the stricter supervision exercised in terms of Native Authority gaol dietary.

Data available for Ilorin Native Authority Prison shows several reports made to the secretary of Northern Province when issues surrounding prisoners' diet arose. In 1922, diet in the Ilorin Native Administration prison was said to be 'unscientific Phraseology' and inadequate.³⁵ Hence, as regards the complaint by the Resident officer, (Sdg) Wm. S. Clark, Director of Medical and Sanitary System, Lagos visitation and recommendation to Ilorin N/A gaol described the dietary system thus: "*The diet*

³⁴ NAK, ILORPROF, Diet in the Ilorin Native Administration Prison, No. 319/1922/29, November 12, 1922.

³⁵ Ibid., No. 334/D.M. S/22, October 30, 1922.

scale of the Ilorin Native Authority Prison may be classified as a very poor diet, deficient protein, and low-calorie value for prisoners doing moderate or light work and more so if they are serving long sentences. I would suggest that the diet scale of the Government prisons in the northern provinces be adopted, so far as possible, as it permits a range of foods to select.”³⁶

The relationship between prisoners' work and food calories was designed along with Howell's psychology of 1919. According to Howell's psychology, a diet should furnish 2,400 calories daily for an individual weighing 60 kilograms (9 $\frac{1}{2}$) tons and doing no work.³⁷ It was stated during this period that Ilorin Native Authority Prison diet had low protein and low-calorie value was insufficient for even light work. It was further stated that while short-sentence prisoners might survive until discharged, they could not have much resistance to diseases. Apart from the Native Authority Prison administration's focus on the nature of food provided in the prisons, the amount of food provided to the prisoners is also monitored. A report stated that Emir's representatives occasionally and Emirate officials also inspect prisoners' food.³⁸

Another important theme in Native Administration gaol is the training of Native Authority prisoners and the establishment of Earning Scheme for prisoners. Training prisoners is an important service designed towards rehabilitating long-term sentence prisoners. The essence of training inmates was to enable them to acquire basic knowledge and training in different fields to earn a living after their discharge from prison. Among the trades taught include black smiting, carpentry, tailoring, shoemaking, bricklaying, building in general and cane work. Prisoners considered for such services must not have less than four years of the sentence, given that the trades mentioned above require a long-term apprenticeship. However, due to the financial implication of establishing a Native Administration Convict prison training for long-term prisoners, Ilorin Native Authority was required to send long sentences to either Kaduna, Lagos, Enugu, or Port Harcourt Convict prisons. Also, the unavailability of artisan instructors affected the provision of such services in the Ilorin Native Authority gaol. In 1943, Ilorin Native Authority's efforts to employ artisan instructors (3 masons and 2 carpenters) from the Enugu Convict prison proved futile. Given the above challenges, Ilorin Native Authority was responsible

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

for organising the transfer and transportation of long-term prisoners to either Kaduna, Lagos, Enugu, or Port Harcourt Convict prisons.

It is also important to note that corrective educational services were featured in the colonial prison services. The educational service was provided not only by the employed instructors of the prison but also by volunteers from outside the prison. The correctional education unit in the colonial period was classified into three groups, which included orientation for inmates, living guidance and academic education. The intake orientation was conducted as the first step in corrective education when prisoners acquaint themselves with the purpose and practices of correctional treatment to prepare them to live productive life in prison.

Alongside the training of prisoners in a large convict, the prison was an earning scheme for prisoners. A letter from the Nigerian Secretariat, Lagos to Kaduna, Enugu, Ibadan, and Lagos colony outlines the earning scheme's approval for prisoners. According to the scheme, long-term first offenders who have completed two years of their sentences may earn, by good conduct and industry, two shillings a month for work done and fixed tasks. The earning scheme also permitted participant prisoners to spend half of their earnings on small articles of comfort, including purchasing pipes, tobacco, cigarettes, or snuff. Also, the earning scheme designed a saving scheme for prisoners. The report emphasised that one shilling will be collected from the prisoner and placed into a saving box that bears the prisoner's name, which will be given to the prisoner on discharge.

The earning scheme was designed to rehabilitate long-term prisoners further. However, due to the unavailability of necessary resources, Ilorin Native Authority was required to operate alongside Government prisons when there are long terms prisoner sentences.³⁹ For instance, the District Officer of Borgu Division Native Authority prison in Kaima informed the Resident Officer in Ilorin that such a scheme can only apply to long-term offenders, and the situation does not arise in Borgu, where two years is the maximum sentence that can be imposed.⁴⁰ Also, the Resident of Ilorin letter to the Secretary, Northern Province, stated that until the training of Native authority warders for Native Authority gaol is devised and their efficiency greatly increased, the proposal for rehabilitating long-term prisoners and earning scheme under the Native Authority gaol was considered unsuitable.⁴¹

³⁹ NAK, ILORPROF, Earning Scheme for Prisoners, No. 47705/8, August 24, 1946.

⁴⁰ Ibid., No. 712/14, October 1, 1946.

⁴¹ Ibid., No. 3993/25B, October 6, 1946.

The after-care service was another important Native Authority Prison service in colonial Ilorin and Northern Provinces. After-care services were designed to cater to the needs of discharged prisoners, such as finding employment for deserving ex-prisoners. At the establishment of the position, it was restricted to Government prisons in 1947. However, despite the effort of the government to establish an after-care service for Native Authority prisons in Ilorin did not materialise. In reply to a memorandum sent by the Secretary of Northern province, the Ilorin Acting Resident claims that the population of the prison at Ilorin (70–80) does not warrant the appointment of an after-care officer but rather the Native Authority subscribed to the salary of a Yoruba speaking officer saddled with the responsibility to visit prisons, organise and supervise after-care works.⁴²

Before the after-care officer was introduced, the Native Authority and its councils already performed some of the functions prescribed by the Secretary of Northern Province towards the employment of an after-care officer. As stated in a memorandum reply to after-care officer employment, the Resident Officer stated thus: “*So far as Native Authority prisons are concerned, the general opinion is that the time has not come for the appointment of an after-care officer (Ilorin Native Authority is willing to subscribe to the salary of a Yoruba Speaking Government after-care officer who would visit Ilorin from time to time to advise on after-care works but considers that the actual work should be left in the hands of Prison Visiting Committee [...] and many of the functions proposed for the after-care officer are, in the case of Native Authority Prions, more appropriate to the Native Authorities themselves. Almost all Native Authority prisoners belong to the area of the Native Authority concerned and have farms and relatives to return to on release. As mentioned above, the after-care officer cannot follow them there [...] the Native Authority or his District and village head are, by virtue of their local knowledge and position better able to give assistance than an after-care officer. It would, it is considered, do more harm than good to give them an alternative proceeding to their homes.*”⁴³

The above excerpt reveals that colonial prison administration and services focused on rehabilitating prisoners. Even archival records show that the Emir of Ilorin was particularly involved in the after-care activities of released prisoners. The involvement of the Emir was described thus in a letter dated 1944 to the Nigeria Police, Ilorin province thus: “*The Emir*

⁴² Ibid., After-Care Officer, Prison Department Appointment of August 25, 1947.

⁴³ NAK, ILORPROF/42590/7, After-Care Officer.

interviews prisoners for discharge before the actual release. They are asked to remain in the Ilorin district or return to their homes. If electing to return, a small amount of cash is offered either towards fares of subsistence [...] should the prisoner be a habitual criminal, he is escorted from Ilorin by the police, and a letter is sent to his Emir, District Head or Village head, whichever appropriate requesting a watch be kept on him.”⁴⁴

Conclusion

Although prisons are designed to punish offenders, it is guided by various services. The paper examined some important aspects of crimes, the prison system, and the administration of these prisons in the Ilorin Emirate during the colonial period. The paper revealed that colonial prisons were designed with therapeutic ideas that do not capitalise on the punishment as it was in the pre-colonial period, but rather a place where criminals were housed, reformed, and rehabilitated to maintain order in Ilorin Emirate during colonial rule. The administrative system of the prisons and criminals had lasting significance on the criminals, especially after they were freed and released into society, as the prison system and administration established an avenue for the criminals to become useful to themselves through the proper care of their health, dietary, training skill, relatively good hygiene, and after-care services while in prison. The colonial prison also provided vocational training skills and essential tools and equipment needed to empower the newly released inmates to enable them for self-sustenance, integration, and activity. The study concluded that the prison system is one of the colonial institutional architectures introduced to Nigeria to bring law and order to prevent and punish any wrongful acts committed in the colony.

⁴⁴ Ibid.