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Title: The socio-economic impact of the railway in Northern Nigeria : a study in transformation of the rural communities along the rail line between Kano and Zaria, 1908–1970s

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**The Socio-Economic Impact of the Railway in Northern Nigeria:
A Study in Transformation of the Rural Communities
along the Rail Line between Kano and Zaria, 1908–1970s**

Proefschrift

Ter verkrijging van
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus Prof. Mr.C.J.J.M. Stolker,
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties,
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door

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Dedication

For my late father, Malam Yusuf Aliyu,
and my children,
Yusuf, Al-Amin and Aliyu

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	VI
GLOSSARY OF HAUSA AND ARABIC TERMS.....	VIII
ABBREVIATIONS	X
LIST OF MAPS.....	XI
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XI
LIST OF TABLES IN THE TEXT	XII
LIST OF TABLES IN THE APPENDICES	XII
PREFACE	XIV
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 Literature review	3
1.3 Sources and methods.....	9
1.4 Settings.....	12
1.5 Structure of the study	19
Chapter Two: The Politics and Construction of the Baro–Kano Railway	21
2.1 Introduction.....	21
2.2 Diplomatic conflict and controversy.....	21
2.3 Fear, marvel and the construction of the imperial railway	34
2.4 Conclusion	58
CHAPTER THREE: PERCEPTION, APPROPRIATION AND DOMESTICATION OF TRANSPORT INNOVATION	60
3.1 Introduction.....	61
3.2 Fears, wonders, marvels and the locomotive	61
3.3 From appropriation to domestication.....	68
3.4 Conclusion	79
CHAPTER FOUR: TRANSPORT ADVANCE, MARKETING AND REACTIONS OF LOCAL PRODUCERS	82
4.1 Introduction.....	82
4.2 Development of the cotton export trade.....	83
4.3 Development of the groundnut export trade	96
4.4 Hides and skins production and trade	114

4.5 Development of sugar cane production and trade.....	120
4.6 Food production	127
4.7 Conclusion	132
CHAPTER FIVE: THE EMERGENCE OF NEW SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AND THE INTERMINGLING OF CULTURES	134
5.1 Introduction.....	134
5.2 Labour migration	134
5.2 Socio-economic basis of diaspora community	140
Railway work	140
Groundnut trade	143
Livestock trade	146
Textile and cosmetic trade	147
Foodstuffs trade.....	148
Prostitution.....	149
Others	151
5.3 Socio-cultural changes	151
5.5 Conclusion	158
CHAPTER SIX: THE RAILWAY AND CRIMINALITY	160
6.1 Introduction.....	160
6.2 Theft of railway iron	161
6.3 Train banditry.....	175
6.4 Conclusion	182
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION	184
EPILOGUE	190
APPENDICES.....	192
Appendix 1: Freight traffic at stations.....	193
Appendix 2: Keys, sleepers and other iron materials stolen from the railways in Northern Nigeria, 1946–1956.....	205
Appendix 3: Keys and sleepers distribution to blacksmiths across the Northern Provinces, 1954–1955.....	209
SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY	211

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GLOSSARY OF HAUSA AND ARABIC TERMS

Burukutu	Locally brewed beer made from fermented sorghum
Dungurun	Zungeru (Lugard's initial headquarters before its relocation to Kaduna)
Eid al adha	Greater Eid or festival of sacrifice
Fadamomi (sing. Fadama)	Flood plains
Fatake	Long-distance trader
Fulani	Pastoralist
Gandaye (sing. Gandu)	Plantations
Gayya	Collective farm work
Gidan magajiya	Brothel
Hajj	Pilgrimage
Haram	Forbidden
Injin mazarkwaila	Brown sugar crushing machine
Kafir	Non-believer
Karuwai (sing. Karuwa)	Prostitutes
Karuwanci	Prostitution
Kirari	Praise song
Kofofi (sing. Kofa)	Gates
Kulle	Purdah practice
Kulli Kulli	Groundnut cake
Leburori	Labourers
Magajiya	Leader of prostitutes / madam of a brothel
Maguzawa	Non-Muslim Hausa population
Makarantun boko	Western-education schools
Mamaki	Wonder
Man shanu	Cow butter / ghee
Masu unguwanni (sing. Mai unguwa)	Ward heads
Mazarkwaila	Brown sugar / jaggery
Mukuli	Keys

Nasara	Whiteman
Osomalo	Ijesha women traders
Pito	Locally brewed beer made from fermented millet or sorghum
Rumada (sing. Rinji)	Slave farms/villages
Sabon Gari	New town / strangers' quarters
Sabulun sallo	Local soap from Bida
Sarkin kofa	Gate chief
Sikwati	Sleepers
Soro	A rectangular mud house with a flat or round roof
Tasha	Station
Tashi	Forced migration
Tsoro	Fear
Tudun Wada	Strangers' quarters for northerners
Turkudi	Local woven cloth
Wakar diga	Song of <i>diga</i> or railway
Wakar jirgin kasa	Train song
Wakar reluwe	Railway song
Wakilin tasha	Representative of station settlement
Yanbita	Labourers
Yandoka	Native Authority police
Yan mirgine	Train bandits (the phrase <i>yan mirgine</i> was coined from the way they rolled down their loot from trains)
Yan kwadago	Migrant labourers
Yan tauri	Vigilantes or tough people
Yan ture	Train bandits (the phrase <i>yan ture</i> was coined from the way they threw or rolled down their loot from trains)

ABBREVIATIONS

AHAK	Arewa House Archives
BCGA	British Cotton Growing Association
CFAO	Compagnie Française de l’Afrique Occidentale
CMS	Christian Missionary Society
CO	Colonial Office
DO	District Officer
GBO	G. B. Ollivant
GCL	Gimi Community League
HMSO	Her Majesty’s Stationery Office
KSHCB	Kano State History and Culture Bureau
LBA	Licenced Buying Agent
NAK	National Archives, Kaduna
NNDC	Northern Nigerian Development Company
PRO	Public Record Office
PWD	Public Works Department
PWD&R	Public Works Department and Railway
SNP	Secretariat of Northern Provinces
UAC	United African Company
USA	United States of America

LIST OF MAPS

1.1	Map of the study areas.....	13
2.1	Map of Nigeria in 1900.....	24
2.2	Map of Nigerian Railway in the 1960s.....	58

LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	Setting out for earthworks at Patatifi.....	45
2.2	Earthworks in progress at Patatifi Bluff.....	45
2.3	Survey party No. 1, camp type.....	46
2.4	Railway construction in Nupe Province.....	46
2.5	Levelling of rocky landscape in 1908.....	47
2.6	Reclaiming of swamp in 1908.....	47
2.7	Temporary bridge over Bakogi River.....	48
2.8	Testing of the Emir Class engine on a steel bridge.....	48
2.9	Construction work near Kaduna in 1910.....	54
2.10	Construction work near Kano.....	54
3.1	A First Class passenger sleeping car.....	80
3.2	Railway buildings across the study areas.....	81
4.1	Transport of cotton by bullock in Funtua in the 1930s.....	91
4.2	Camel transporting groundnuts to buying stations in the 1930s.....	100
4.3	Remains of commercial firm stores across the study areas.....	107
6.1	Hausa Blacksmiths at work	167
6.2	Open groundnut wagons.....	179
6.3	Lock-up wagons introduced in the 1940s.....	179

LIST OF TABLES IN THE TEXT

2.1	Number of labours recruited on railway, January 1908–March 1911.....	53
2.2	List of stations from Baro to Kano.....	56
3.1	Passenger traffic, 1916–1939.....	71
4.1	Ginned cotton freight, 1923.....	89
4.2	Cotton purchases and exports, 1932–1938.....	93
4.3	Groundnut exports, 1916–1924.....	103
4.4	List of trading firms, 1924–1940s.....	105
4.5	Groundnut exports, 1930–1938.....	109
4.6	List of Licenced Buying Agents at scale points, 1947–1955.....	112
4.7	Groundnut exports, 1945–1961/2.....	113
4.8	Hides and skins exports, 1916–1923.....	116
4.9	Goat hides and skins exports from Gimi Station, 1932–1937.....	119
5.1	Migrant population in Madobi Sabon Gari, 1942–1948.....	140
5.2	Yoruba and Ibo population in Yako and Dangora, 1955.....	140
5.3	List of non-African populations.....	145
5.4	List of churches and schools.....	156

LIST OF TABLES IN THE APPENDICES

Appendix 1

3.2	Beans freight, 1916–1919.....	194
3.3	Guinea corn freight, 1916–1919.....	195
3.4	Locus bean freight, 1916–1923.....	196
3.5	Pepper freight, 1916–1919.....	197
3.6	Shea nut freight, 1913–1917.....	199
3.7	Livestock freight, 1916–1923.....	199
3.8	Tin ore freight, 1916–1923.....	200
3.9	Kola freight, 1916–1919.....	201
3.10	Yam freight, 1917–1919.....	202
3.11	Rice freight, 1918–1919.....	202
3.12	Palm oil freight, 1916–1919.....	203
3.13	Potash freight, 1917.....	203
3.14	Shea butter freight, 1918.....	203
3.15	Yam flour freight, 1917.....	204

Appendix 2

6.1	Keys, sleepers and other iron materials stolen from the railways in Northern Nigeria, 1946–1956.....	205
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Appendix 3

6.2	Keys and sleepers distributed to blacksmiths across the Northern Provinces, 1954–1955.....	209
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PREFACE

Using extant literature, archives, oral interviews, and new tools of historical analysis such as songs, poems, and photographs, this study describes the experience of railway development in the rural communities between Kano and Zaria, from 1908 to the 1970s. Also subsumed in this study is a history of these communities seen through the lens of the railway. Built with the imperialist motive to transport cotton for the metropolitan industries, the railway had enormous effects on the social and cultural landscape of the local communities. The effects not only differed among the communities; some of the outcomes also differed from what the British had anticipated.

The railway was the single most important innovation for change and gave rise to initial encounters marked by mixed reactions of fear and awe, owing to lack of familiarity; but as familiarity increased and people came to understand its benefits, they quickly appropriated the railway in distinctive ways. It transformed the experience of travel and trade in the communities and gave them direct access to markets and the sea, connecting them more closely to the world economy than was previously possible.

Not only did the line affect mobility, it also activated production in traditional agricultural products that previously would not have entered the world market. As the study shows, the anticipation that people would grow cotton did not materialize, as the local producers appropriated the railway to grow other export crops not contemplated during the planning process. Export trade started at the initiative of local merchants who had been contacted by commercial firms. The activities of these firms also had enormous effects on the local economy; but the effects differed among the communities, as the firms concentrated at the main centres, contributing to these centres' expansion and popularity. The railway also had limitations: it stimulated production in distant areas but could not intensively exploit it. This limitation was circumvented by professional donkey transporters, who exploited the new production to their own advantage. The export trade benefited producers, though not everyone prospered.

The railway also influenced the emergence of new settlements and the intermingling of Nigerian cultures along the rail line. These settlements were established by the colonial authority to house migrants attracted by the opportunities presented by the railway and the

export trade. As the study shows, the migrants concentrated at the main centres with high economic opportunities, thereby contributing to those centres' expansion. Despite attempts by the colonial authority to isolate the migrants into rigid compartments, social relations brought them into direct contact with locals, a development which not only eroded official barriers but also led to integration of some of them into the communities. As the study shows, the migrants were agents of change in the localities.

The railway is something of a paradox. It opened new frontiers of opportunities to the locals and at the same time indirectly endangered many, most especially those engaged in the indigenous crafts. It forced some operators into criminality, such as stealing of iron from the rail lines and train robbery. As the study also shows, this criminality was a reaction to the poverty and unemployment engendered by the advent of British colonialism and their transport innovation.

Though there have been many works on the railway, there is no critical and comprehensive work on its social and cultural effects. Despite their importance in highlighting the effects of the railway and the economic history of Kano and Zaria, previous works have totally overlooked most of the studied communities. This study is an attempt to fill in the gap and to indicate the communities' importance.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

This study interrogates the experience of railway development in the rural communities along the rail line between Kano and Zaria in Northern Nigeria, from 1908 to the 1970s. It looks at the ways the local inhabitants perceived, appropriated, and domesticated the rail line and how their lives were transformed by it. The communities in question are eight in number and located in the two most important emirates of Kano and Zaria. These communities are Challawa, Kwankwaso, Madobi, Yako, and Dangora in Kano Emirate, and Auchan, Gimi Dabosa, and Likoro in Zaria Emirate. Although there were 11 railway towns along the line, the focus is on these eight, the most important ones between Kano and Zaria. With the exception of Dangora, the communities were nineteenth-century creations. They became economically significant with the building and operation of the railway. Dangora was a creation of the railway itself; it was established during the construction of the line and became important almost overnight.

Also subsumed in this study is a history of the communities seen through the lens of the railway. The railway, as I argue, was the most important factor for change, transforming the communities from almost nothing to economically significant centres on the rail line. For nearly eighty years or so, the railway played a critical role in their social, economic, and cultural life. It transformed their experience of travel and brought a more radical reduction in travel time and cost than was previously possible. The railway stimulated the production and export of cash and food crops, which in the long run had multiplier effects on the local economy. It also facilitated the penetration of imperialist trading firms and populations, which in turn influenced the communities' expansion and growth. In the 1930s and 1940s, some of the studied communities were among the important passenger and freight centres on the system. Given their present state of neglect, it is difficult to imagine they were once important centres. This study not only situates them within the wider literature and the national economy, it also indicates their importance.

Previous studies, whether on the railway or economic history, focused almost exclusively on cash crops, minerals export, and labour and political aspects, as well as on urbanization and diseases, among other important themes, with a focus on the main centres of

production.¹ The experience of smaller towns, however, and especially the studied communities, is neglected in those analyses. Also missing in the literature is a critical examination of the social and cultural aspects of the railway. It is this void in the literature that this study seeks to fill.

Drawing from old and new data, some of which were not accessible to previous researchers, this study critically reinterprets the history of the Nigerian Railway in relation to the development of railway technology and the transportation, production, consumption, and export of cash and food crops. The focus of the study is on social and cultural changes and on the transformations and ruptures engendered by the railway. An assumption accepted in the study is that the railway was an imperialist-motivated creation, one which brought development as well as underdevelopment.

Three factors motivated my interest in this study. First, there is the need to deepen scholarly understanding of the experience of railway development and its transformative effects. The second is my own interest in the history of transport and its role in the consolidation of the colonial economy. And third, there is the recent upsurge of academic interest in railway studies and railway's critical role in economic development and growth. The study is also topical and pertinent in view of the total neglect of the communities in the

¹ Some examples of the extant literature are as follows: T. N. Tamuno, "Genesis of the Nigerian Railway I", *Nigerian Magazine*, 83, (Dec. 1963): 279-292, and "Genesis of the Nigerian Railway II", *Nigerian Magazine*, 84, (Mar. 1965): 84, 31-43; W. Oyemakinde, "Railway Construction and Operation in Nigeria, 1895-1911: Labour Problems and Socio-Economic Impact", *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, VII/2, (1974): 303-323; M. Mason, "Working on the Railway: Forced Labour in Northern Nigeria, 1907-1912", in: Robin Cohen, Jean Copan and Peter C. W. Gutkind, *African Labour History*, (Beverly Hills, Sage, 1978), 56-79; O. Oshin, "Developing the Infrastructure of Exploitation: The Example of Colonial Transport on the Bauchi Tin Fields, 1902-1914", *Trans African Journal of History*, 17, (1988): 123-138; O. Oshin, "Railways and Urbanization", in: Toyin Falola and Steven J. Salm (eds), *Nigerian Cities*, (Trenton, N, 2004/2003), 101-126; J. S. Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut Export: Origins and Early Development*, (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University, 1978); F. A. Okediji, "An Economic History of Northern Nigeria 1900-1939", (PhD Thesis, Indiana University, 1972); M. O. Ijewere, "The Impact of Nigerian Railways on Agricultural Development", *The Nigerian Geographical Journal*, 2 (Dec. 1973): 137-143; R. N. Oyewuanyi, "Railway Development and the Growth of Export Agriculture in Nigeria the 1900-1950s Period", (Master's Thesis, Ottawa University, 1981); A. O. Anjorin, "Cotton Industry in Northern Nigeria during the Colonial Era", in: I. A. Akinjogbin and Osoba (eds), *Topics on Nigerian Economic and Social History*, (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1980), 115-127; A. O. Anjorin, "The Politics of the Baro-Kano Railway", being a Cyclosted Paper presented at the 16th Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, (Dec. 1970): 1-14; J. M. Carland, *The Colonial Office and Nigeria, 1895-1914*, (Stanford, Calif Hoover Institute Press, 1985), 56-79; I. F. A. Uzoechi, "The Social and Political Impact of the Eastern Nigerian Railway on the Railway on the Udi Division 1913-1945", (Kent University, PhD Dissertation, 1985); T. A. Ayoola, "The Price of 'Modernity'? Western Railroad Technology and the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in Nigeria", in: T. Falola and E. Brownell (eds), *Colonial Environment, Domestication, Medicine and Technology*, (New York: Routledge 2012), 148-169; P. A. Rogers, "Hausa Blacksmiths and the Great Train Robbery: Iron Theft and the Moral Economy of technological Change in Northern Nigeria, 1910-1935", in: Robert W. Harms, Joseph C. Miller, David S. Newbury and Michele D. Wagner (eds), *Paths Towards the Past: Historical Essays in Honor of Jan Vansina*, (African Studies Association Press, 1994), 371-393; S. Abayomi, "The Consequences of the Construction of Railway on the Economy and Society of Zaria Province, 1902-1945", (Master's Thesis, University of Jos, 1991).

literature, and all the more so now that stakeholders (government and the public) are concerned about the Nigerian Railway in view of its decline.

This study is a critical re-examination of the history of the Nigerian Railway in relation to the development of railway technology and the transportation, production, consumption and export trade. It contributes particularly to an understanding of how the Nigerian communities perceived, appropriated, and integrated the railway into daily life, and of how Nigerian initiatives resulted in unexpected uses of the railway. It furthers understanding of how the railway bred criminality and provided a platform for criminals to operate. It also sheds light on how the railway led to the emergence of new settlements and the intermingling of Nigerian cultures—people, goods, and ideas—along the rail line. These aspects are in addition to a re-examination of the cash crop production and trade engendered by the advent of the railway.

The central arguments in this study are as follows: (1) the railway had enormous effects, much more so than was previously recognized; (2) it made a very strong impression on its arrival; (3) some of its consequences unexpectedly differed from what the planners had anticipated; and (4) the effects differed among the communities.

The study set out to answer the following questions: Why was the railway built? How was it built? How was it perceived, appropriated, and domesticated? What socio-economic effects did the railway have? What were its effects on indigenous crafts? To what extent did the railway influence the communities' expansion?

1.2 Literature review

The effects of railways on the economy and society of Nigeria have attracted a fair amount of interest in the literature.² For the most part, the focus is on the main centres of production, with little or nothing devoted to the smaller centres, including the studied communities. Common in the literature is the tendency to present a somewhat one-sided and sometimes misleading impression about the railway and its consequences. There is a tendency to assume the experience of railway development was painless. Also observed is a near absence of

² See for instance Tamuno, "Railway I" and "Railway II"; Oyemakinde, "Railway Construction"; Mason, "Working on the Railway"; Anjorin, "Politics" and "Cotton Industry"; Carland, *Colonial Office*; Oshin, "Developing the Infrastructure"; Oshin, "Railways and Urbanization"; Ijewere, "Impact"; Ayoola, "Price of Modernity"; Rogers, "Hausa Blacksmiths"; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*; Okediji, "Economic History"; Oyewuanyi, "Railway Development"; Uzoechi, "Social and Political Impact"; Abayomi, "Consequences"; A. Ayoola, "The Political Economy of Railway Construction in Nigeria: The Bornu Railway Extension", *Lagos Historical Review*, 6, (2006): 148-171.

serious work on the studied communities, whether in the nineteenth or the twentieth century. In reviewing the extant literature, I focus mainly on problematic issues and those issues not well covered.

There is no way to write a history of the railway without reference to such works as A. O. Anjorin's "The Politics of the Baro–Kano Railway";³ Michael Mason's "Working on the Railway: Forced Labour on the Northern Nigeria Railway, 1907–1912";⁴ J. M. Carland's *The Colonial Office and Nigeria, 1895–1914*;⁵ Wale Oyemakinde's "Railway Construction and Operation in Nigeria, 1895–1911: Labour Problems and Socio-Economic Impact";⁶ and Tekene Tamuno's "Genesis of the Nigeria Railway I & II".⁷ These works, which are considered mainstream, were invaluable sources from which insights into the Nigerian Railway could be garnered, though none focuses on the studied areas. While the literature furthers understanding of the railways, their origin, and their effects, some of the assumptions and findings are somewhat one-sided. This is understandable given the type of sources available to the authors at that time.

Tamuno, Anjorin, and Carland's works are invaluable on the development of the Baro–Kano railway, especially on the rivalry and controversies surrounding its extension to Kano; but their claim that the rivalry was due to the lack of a general transport policy is less convincing, because railway development worldwide is always a contentious matter—due to the initial investment or sunk costs, the expected returns, and the issue of control. This study shows that because it is a political as well as economic endeavour, railway development, as well as the 'idea of a railway', is always controversial. This is so because the decision to build the line under study, the choice of a route, junctions, and terminals, as well as rates and control, were political and economic matters which provoked rivalry and controversy. Even after the line had been completed, the railway required government subsidies. The claim by Anjorin that the Northern government opted for a tramway because its rail proposal was rejected is also misleading. Chapter 2 shows, among other things, that the proposals were mooted almost simultaneously, even though Lugard, the High Commissioner at the time, confused readers of his annual reports and correspondence with what exactly his preferences were.

³ Anjorin, "Politics".

⁴ Mason, "Working on the Railway".

⁵ Carland, *Colonial Office*.

⁶ Oyemakinde, "Railway Construction".

⁷ Tamuno, "Railway I" and "Railway II".

None of the studies from Tamuno, Anjorin, Oyemakinde, Carland, and Mason consider how Nigerians encountered the railway work. In their different analyses, Mason and Anjorin in particular furthered understanding on the use of forced labour on the Baro–Kano line and the opposition it generated. However, they overlooked how Nigerians public encountered the railway work. They also overlooked the fact that the railway work resulted in the establishment of a new town near Kano. Despite the labour shortage encountered when constructing the line, Oyemakinde speculated that labour from the South was not employed on the Baro–Kano railway and that the Northern Authority preferred to delay the work rather than allow southerners to do it. Using a new tool of historical analysis which was not accessible to previous writers, Chapter 2 of this study extends our knowledge by demonstrating that encounters with railway work produced, because of the locals’ unfamiliarity with this new technology, mixed reactions of fear, apprehension, and awe, far more so than scholars have previously recognized. It also suggest that Nigerians perceived the railway as sublime. Contrary to the narratives of a smooth collaboration between railway and locals in previous analyses, the chapter demonstrates that even the local authorities themselves were fearful of the work. Some Hausa poetry (*wakar diga*: poem on *diga*, or song of railway) and the works of Mohammad S. Umar (*Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigerian to British Colonial Rule*), Yusuf Nadabo (*Tarihin Garin Kaduna*), and Brian Larkin (*Signal and Noise: Media Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*) have been invaluable in this respect.⁸ The chapter also shows that southerners were employed on the railway construction and that the work led to the establishment of a new town (Dangora), one of the studied communities.

In the same manner, there is a common assumption among scholars, particularly Tamuno and Oyemakinde, that Nigerians appropriated the railways immediately they were completed. This classical narrative, so accepted and consumed by many writers, is not only misleading but one-sided. This is so because appropriation of the railway was not as sudden as previously assumed; instead, it was something worked out over time. Chapter 3 demonstrates that Nigerians encounters with the locomotives and trains were marked by mixed reactions of fear, apprehension, and awe, because many did not understand what the system or its advantages were, much less to immediately appropriate it. Similarly, none of the

⁸ Northern Nigerian Publishing Company (hereafter NNPC) NNPC, *Wakokin Aliyu Dan Sidi Sarkin Zazzau*, (Zaria: NNPC, 1980); M. S. Umar, *Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigerian to British Colonial Rule*, (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Y. Nadabo, *Tarihin Garin Kaduna: Hedkwataer Arewa*, (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 2010/1998); B. Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

literature has considered the socio-economic disruptions that accompanied the railways. Even Tamuno's *longue durée* analysis overlooked this important topic. Chapter 6 of this study demonstrates that the railway was a double-edged sword, with both positive and negative consequences. The coming of the railway, as the chapter indicates, was marked by disruptions and ruptures which forced many into criminality. It also provided platforms for criminals to operate

Jan Hogendorn's *Nigerian Groundnut Export: Origins and Early Development*⁹ and Florence Okediji's "An Economic History of Hausa-Fulani Emirate of Northern Nigeria 1900–1939"¹⁰ further understanding on how British colonialism and its transport system stimulated cash crop production and trade. Their claim that cotton was immediately grown for export in northern Zaria where some of the studied communities are situated, however, is misleading. This can be understood given the type of sources available to them at the time. Also misleading is Hogendorn's assertion that slave labour did not play an important role in cash cropping, though he modified the claim elsewhere.¹¹ Besides a passing reference to one or two of the studied communities, none of these authors visited the relevant communities. Chapter 4 shows that though cotton was grown in northern Zaria (where some of the studied communities are situated), it was not offered for export, owing partly to the low price and the fact that the crop had always been grown for industrial use in the indigenous textile industry. It did, however, become popular overtime. The chapter also shows that slave labour expanded production.

The focus in some of the literature is on the effects of British colonialism and its transport system on indigenous crafts. Phillips J. Jaggar's ethnography, *The Blacksmiths of Kano City*,¹² and Peter A. Rogers's work, "The Hausa Blacksmiths and the Great Train Robbery: Iron Theft and the Moral Economy of Technological Change in Northern Nigeria, 1910–1935",¹³ further understanding on how colonialism and its transport system accelerated the decline of rural mining and smelting, as well as the accompanying tensions involved. Their claim that iron was abundant in rural Kano, however, is misleading. Jaggar, for instance, claimed that blacksmithing expanded owing to the abundant iron brought by the railways. As far as he was concerned, the shift to imported iron was a painless process for the

⁹ Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*.

¹⁰ Okediji, "Economic History".

¹¹ P. E. Lovejoy and J. S. Hogendorn, *Slow Death For Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria 1897-1936*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹² P. J. Jaggar, *The Blacksmiths of Kano City*, (Cologne: Rodiger Koppe Verlag, 1994).

¹³ Rogers, "Hausa Blacksmiths".

local iron workers. He also overlooked how stolen iron from the rail lines served as raw materials to blacksmiths and the accompanying tensions aroused by this theft. Rogers followed in Jaggar's footsteps, stating that iron was abundant in Kano until the 1920s. According to him, iron workers in the state got their supplies from the traditional sources that had supplied them in the nineteenth century. This study shows that the advent of British colonialism was in fact hostile to the iron-working crafts. Chapter 6 shows that iron was generally scarce in the countryside. The iron brought by the railway did not circulate widely in the countryside, forcing rural blacksmiths to steal from the rail lines to compensate for the shortage. The chapter also contributes to the expansion of knowledge by showing how the railways bred criminality and provided a platform for criminals to operate.

Shoyebi Abayomi's work, "The Consequences of Construction of Railway on the Economy and Society of Zaria Province, 1902–1945",¹⁴ is an interesting analysis of the role of the railways in the underdevelopment of Zaria. The work, however, is one-sided and full of misleading and generalized assumptions. Despite the title's misleading impression that the work is on the emirate as a whole, the focus is mainly on Zaria metropolis. This work (about 225 pages) overlooked the strategic importance of the smaller railway towns across the province. Besides the sweeping references to those in the southern part, only once does the author mention Gimi, despite its importance. The history of the railway, as the author suggested, is the history of poverty, famine, hunger, and disease, as well as exploitation. As far as he was concerned, the railway was not beneficial to the local people. Also common in his analysis are a number of sweeping generalizations which were not substantiated with evidence. This present study takes exception to this one-sided narrative. On the one hand, its focus is on the smaller communities along the rail line between Kano and Zaria. On the other hand, it suggests that irrespective of the exploitative logic of the railroad, it had both positive and negative impacts which cannot be ignored. Contrary to the reductionist narrative, this study shows that Gimi and the others centres on the line were important railway towns in Zaria Province.

In my book, *The Impact of the Railway on Kano Emirate: the Case of Madobi and Kwankwaso Towns, c. 1903–1960s*,¹⁵ I looked at the railway's stimulation of agricultural production and export, the movement of commercial firms and migrants to the communities, and the attendant effects. However, the claim that the stations were established in 1918 and

¹⁴ Abayomi, "Consequences".

¹⁵ S. T. Yusuf, *The Impact of the Railway on Kano Emirate, c. 1903–1960s: The Case of Madobi and Kwankwaso Towns*, (Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010).

1919 was incorrect, and the claim that the Tudun Wada settlement in Madobi was established in the 1950s is misleading. The book contained a passing remark on iron theft, a subject which is well discussed in this current study, and it also differs from the present study in many other respects. On the one hand, this study focuses on eight communities rather than two, all situated along the same rail line. At another level, this study looks at how the Nigerian communities encountered and reacted to railway work and the locomotives, and how they integrated them into daily life. In addition to the cash crop production and trade, it also considers how subsistence food production fared in the face of cash cropping. Unlike the book, this study also looks at how the railways fuelled criminality.

In a similar manner, my essay, “Toward New Approaches To Nigeria’s Railway History: the Rural and Agricultural Alternatives”, looked at how the railway activated cash crop production and trade and how the trade in cash crops in turn attracted commercial firms and migrants to Madobi. It also looked at how the influx of the migrants led to the establishment of Sabon Gari settlement in Madobi.¹⁶ Here, as with the book, the problem is the same. This is understandable given the type of sources at my disposal at the time.

Salihu Umaru’s dissertation, “A History of Tudun Wada Madobi in Kano Emirate from c. 1953–2010”,¹⁷ is an interesting reading of the development of Tudun Wada settlement in Madobi, another product of the railway. As Chapter 5 of this current study shows, the settlement of Tudun Wada was established in the same year as Sabon Gari, but it did not become important until the 1950s, when the whole area was renamed Tudun Wada.

M. B. Dottridge’s essay, “Aspects of Social and Economic Development in Kura District before the Implementation of the Kano River Project Irrigation Scheme”,¹⁸ though focused on Southern Kura, provides some invaluable information on Madobi, one of the studied communities. That work shows that Madobi was the most important centre in Kura District. It also comments on the use of donkey transport in the groundnut trade and how the construction of the Kano–Zaria road shifted attention away from the railway. However, the author’s claim that buying points were not established in Kura District until the 1960s and 1970s is incorrect. Also misleading is the claim that Challawa and Yako were under Kura

¹⁶ S. T. Yusuf, “Toward New Approaches To Nigeria’s Railway History The Rural And Agricultural Alternatives”, in: Saheed Aderinto and Paul Osifodunrin, *The Third Wave of Historical Scholarship on Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ayodeji Olukoju*, (New Castle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 207-223.

¹⁷ S. H. Umaru, “A History of Tudun Wada Madobi in Kano Emirate from c. 1953-2010”, (BA Dissertation, Bayero University, Kano, 2010).

¹⁸ M. B. Dottridge, “Aspects of Social and Economic Development in Kura District Before the Implementation of the Kano River Project Irrigation Scheme”, Series Research Paper No. 7, (Zaria: Centre for Social and Economic Research, 1980).

District. These notions need to be corrected, and Chapter 1 of this current study shows that Challawa and Yako, although at one time under Kura, were transferred to Kumbotso and Kiru districts respectively in the 1920s. Chapter 4 shows that buying points were established at Kura, Kwankwaso, and Daburau as early as the 1950s.

The title of Hamisu Ibrahim's dissertation, "A History of Makarfi District in Zazzau Emirate", gives the impression that it is on the district as a whole, but in fact it focuses mainly on Makarfi town, the district headquarters. That study made only a passing remark on Gimi and Likoro towns.¹⁹ The only work so far that I have come across on Gimi is John Wiseman's work, "Structural and Ideological Tension in a Rural Hausa Village".²⁰ Notwithstanding the focus on post-colonial events, it provides some useful information on the decline of the migrant settlement at Gimi Tasha. The author noted that the decline was partly a result of the Civil War, the decline of the railway, and the development of road transport; but he ignored one other important factor: the decline of the cash crop export, which was the main attraction to the town.

And finally, Folashade Ayodele's work, "A History of Likoro", focused on the history of the town in the nineteenth century.²¹ This present study is on the twentieth century and particularly on how the colonial railroads transformed the countryside between Kano and Zaria, countryside of which Likoro was an integral part.

From the review so far, it is evident that the studied communities have not featured prominently in the literature. Of the eight communities considered, only three or four have attracted some attention; the remaining are essentially understudied. Also, the literature on the railway not only has important gaps, it also has overlooked small communities, including the studied ones. In consequence, many things are still unknown about these communities and about the railway. This study is an attempt to fill in the gaps and to situate the communities within in the wider literature and .in a proper historical context.

1.3 Sources and methods

This study employs a blend of mixed methodologies and evidence from primary and secondary sources, some of which were rarely used in previous studies. The primary sources

¹⁹ H. A. Ibrahim, "A History of Makarfi District in Zazzau Emirate", (BA Dissertation, Bayero University, Kano, 2008).

²⁰ J. A. Wiseman, "Structural and Ideological Tension in a Rural Hausa Village", *African Studies Review*, 22/2, (Sept. 1979): 1-11.

²¹ A. Folashade, "A History of Likoro 1808–1902", (BA Dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, 2008).

include command papers, Blue Books, correspondence among colonial officials, annual reports, district records, travelogues, and periodicals, as well as oral data. The study also creatively uses innovative primary sources such as poems, songs, and photographs, which were rarely used in previous accounts. The secondary sources include books, articles, and theses/dissertations.

The primary records were obtained from several research centres, some of which I have personally visited or obtained through a contact or via online digital archives. The provincial annual reports, district records, and Railway records, as well as the marketing boards' records used in Chapters 1–6 were obtained from the archives of the Kano State History and Culture Bureau (KSHCB), the National Archives Kaduna (NAK), and the Arewa House Archives, Kaduna (AHAK). The bulk of the materials were from the NAK and KSHCB. This is not to suggest that those from the AHAK were not important; they were, but most were not germane to this study. This genre of records, although illuminating official perspectives, also provides insights on the several issues discussed in the various chapters. The period covered in the records is from the early colonial period to the 1950s. The district records, in particular, contained valuable information on the studied communities which is not available in other records.

The Nigerian and Northern Nigerian Annual Reports utilized in Chapters 2–6 were obtained from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Digital Library (known as “Illinois Harvest”). The information contained in the records covers the period 1900–1938. Parliamentary transcripts from the UK/Parliament, Digital Repositories/Hansard were also utilized in Chapter 2. These records contained invaluable information on the development of the railway. And, finally, the Railway Annual Reports used in Chapters 3, 4, and 6 were obtained from the British National Archives/Public Record Office (PRO), London. The records, though few in number, provide vivid information on the railway and the communities. In addition to official records, old periodicals such as newspapers and magazines were used in Chapters 2 and 3. These periodicals were invaluable, for they provided critical perspectives on some of the issues covered, although the period covered is the early colonial period.

It would have been virtually impossible to write this thesis without African-centred sources. Oral interviews formed the bulk of the primary sources used. Interviews were conducted across 25 villages situated along the rail line between Kano and Zaria. Two sets of informants were interviewed. The first set comprised community leaders and elders, some of whom were introduced to me by my contacts, and some of whom I approached directly on

my own initiative. The questions I asked them focused on village histories, the experience of the railway, and its relationship to development. The second set comprised informants who were knowledgeable about the various events discussed in the chapters. This category was of diverse background, comprising farmers and traders, as well as retired and serving railway workers. Some of them were introduced to me by the community leaders. The railway workers also introduced me to their colleagues or asked me to mention their names to them. Unlike the first set, this set of informants were diverse both in status and background.

I am aware that the informants did not form a true representation of the populations, as the southern migrants who were the principal actors and eye witnesses to events described in Chapters 4 and 5 were not interviewed. Many of them had relocated many years before, while some had died. Besides the five interviewed, most of those I met were recent arrivals and so were not interviewed. Also, women were not represented in the populations, as all the informants were men. Nevertheless, this inadequacy does not affect the conclusions of the study, as it was remedied by recourse to other sources.

In addition to the sources described above, the study also made use of innovative sources such as poems, songs, and travellers' narratives. These sources, rarely used in previous studies, have proved invaluable to this study. They not only filled the silence left in other sources; they yielded the rich materials which the archival and oral records could not provide.

Unpublished photographs were also utilized. Some of the photographs are from my own personal collections, while others are from private collections and archives, as well as from periodicals. Some of the photographs on railway construction in Chapter 2 were obtained from the British National Archives photo project, "Africa through a lens," via Flickr/Yahoo websites.²² Permission to use the photographs has been obtained from the image librarian of the archives. Others were copied from old periodicals like the *Engineer Magazine* and the *Graphic Newspaper*, as well as from websites like Live Auctioneers²³ and the Ijaw Nation.²⁴ Those on trains in Chapters 3 and 6 and on produce transport by animals in Chapter 4 were obtained from the Facebook page of the Nigerian Nostalgia, 1960s–1980 Project.²⁵ Permission to use the photographs has been obtained from the owners. The

²² <http://www.flickr.com/photos/31575009@N05/5415949209/in/photolist-9fAa1D-9fAadM-9fDiHb>, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/31575009@N05/5415949913/in/photolist-9fAadM-9fDiHb> [Accessed on 12 November 2012].

²³ <http://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/1985580> [Accessed on 12 February 2013].

²⁴ <http://www.unitedijaw.com/amalgamation.htm#Notes> [Accessed on 3 February 2013].

²⁵ <http://www.facebook.com/NigerianNostalgiaProject?refsrc=>

photographs have generally proved invaluable in illustrating some of the narratives. However, some of them were problematic, as detailed information regarding the author, provenance, motive, and date, which could have assisted in their analysis, was not always available. This does not undermine their importance, however, as the inadequacy was remedied by recourse to archival and secondary records.

Finally, all the sources have been complemented by secondary sources such as books, journal articles, theses, and dissertations. Evidence from these combined sources offered much broader insights and perspectives than one or two sources alone could have offered.

1.4 Settings

Situated in a region referred to as the “close-settled zone”, bordering Kano City from the south-west and Zaria City to the north, this study is set in the rural communities situated along the rail line between Kano and Zaria in Northern Nigeria (see Map 1.1 below). They comprise eight communities, which, with the exception of Dangora, were established in the nineteenth century. The communities are Challowa (Challawa), Kwankwaso, Maidobi (Madobi), Yako, and Dangora, located in Kano Emirate, and Aucheng (Auchan), Gimi Dabosa (Gimi), and Likoro in Zaria Emirate.²⁶ Some of these communities had been founded as fiefs of the ruling class, some as reservoirs of slave labour and military or defensive posts. The communities were representative of the close-settled zone due to their high population density and intensive farming. In his report on the survey of the railway in 1901, Gee noted that he saw large farms between Zaria and Kano and that no unoccupied land was available.²⁷ In the nineteenth century, most of the communities were dispersed, with the population denser around Kano.²⁸ By the late nineteenth century, they lived in walled towns, which

[http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Fsearch%2F_rdr](http://3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Fsearch%2F_rdr) [Accessed on 27 November 2012].

²⁶ National Archives Kaduna (hereafter referred to as NAK) NAK ZarProf 5280 Makarfi District Note Book 1943; NAK ZarProf MLG 22289, Makarfi District Reassessment Report; NAK ZarProf 1712 Ikara Assessment of Representative village Area 1933–4; NAK ZarProf 1706, Makarfi District Assessment of Representative Village Area; Kano State History and Culture Bureau (hereafter referred to as KSHCB) KSHCB MLG 9117/1929, Kura District of Kano Emirate Reassessment; KSHCB Acc. 68, Kura Inspection Notes vol. 1.

²⁷ Nigeria, Correspondence Relating to Railway Construction in Nigeria, (London: HMSO, 1905), 83.

²⁸ In his report on the railway survey in 1901, Mr. Gee estimated the population of the towns as follows: Likoro, 4,000; Anchau, 5,000; Faiki, between 8000 and 10,000; and Bebeji, 25,000. Nigeria, Correspondence, 76 and 83. P. Hill, *Population, Prosperity and Poverty: Rural Kano, 1900-1970*, (London: Cambridge Press, 1977), 55; M. J. Mortimore, “Settlement Evolution and Land Use”, in: M. J. Mortimore, *Zaria and Its Region: A Nigerian Savannah City and Its Environs*, Occasional Paper No. 4, (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University, 1970), 102-122, 103-8; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*.

climate marked by distinct wet and dry seasons. Situated on fertile and tillable land, the environment supports the cultivation of a variety of crops, such as cotton, indigo, groundnuts, and food crops. The soil type varies from the red laterite in northern Zaria to the light sandy loam in south-western Kano, with variations which affect the type of crops grown across the areas. The rainfall regime is also suitable for growing crops and evenly distributed, though it is a little higher near Zaria.³¹

The existence of seasonal rivers (i.e. the Challawa, Kano, and Galma rivers), streams, and flood plains (*fadamomi*; sing. *fadama*) which traverse the area supports agricultural production and settlements (see Map 1.1 above). The flood plains were intensively exploited for dry season crops, such as sugar cane, onion, and various other vegetables, as well as providing grazing land for the pastoralist Fulani.³² Trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) was prevalent across the areas, especially around Gimi, Makarfi, and Ikara, as the flood plains bred tsetse flies, the disease carrier. In the nineteenth century, a whole village at Durum was wiped out or abandoned owing to a tsetse infestation.³³

In this area, as elsewhere in the Sokoto Caliphate, agriculture was the main economic activity, providing both subsistence and exchange requirements—notwithstanding the vent for surplus claims that the African economy was largely subsistence. An interesting feature of agriculture in the area was that everybody, including traders and the industrialists, were involved in it. Land was not scarce and could be accessed individually, and those without land could also access it on demand. In the nineteenth century, land was communal property, held in trust by the Emir and his representatives. In practice, the Emir granted it to members of the aristocracy, royal slaves, the merchant class, craftsmen, and immigrants. Once granted, a piece of land could be inherited, leased, bought, and sold.³⁴

The basic unit of production was household-based, although the aristocrat and merchant classes employed slave labour. Slave farms/villages (*rumada*; sing. *rinji*) and plantations (*gandaye*; sing. *gandu*) belonging to the aristocrat and merchant classes in the

³¹ Mortimore, “Settlement Evolution”, 103; R. K. Udo, *Geographical Regions of Nigeria*, (Berkeley: California Press, 1970), 157; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 40-43; Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*, 20-1; NAK ZarProf 5280 Makarfi.

³² Mortimore, “Settlement Evolution”, 103.

³³ NAK ZarProf 2900 Sleeping Sickness Existence of in Christian Village of Gimi; NAK ZarProf 1712 Ikara; NAK ZarProf MLG 22289 Makarfi; NAK ZarProf 395 Paki District Affairs; NAK ZarProf 1706 Makarfi; NAK ZarProf 5280 Makarfi; Mortimore, “Settlement Evolution”, 103 and 108.

³⁴ Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death*.

cities were scattered across the areas, most especially around Zaria.³⁵ Lovejoy and Hogendorn pointed out that there were two types of slave estates: those attached to political offices or controlled by the aristocrats, and those owned under various relationships.³⁶ For the merchant class, the “plantations were meant to support their industrial activities by maintaining full granaries.”³⁷ Many of the merchants dealt in kola nuts, textiles, and slaves.

Cotton and indigo were the popular items on the plantations, as they were grown for industrial purposes. Unlike other crops, their production required a large amount of labour, which explains the utilization of slaves on plantations. Compared with other crops, the cost of growing cotton was high. It should be noted that not all the areas were suited to large-scale cotton production. Those bordering Zaria were most suited, owing to the soil type and the existence of slave labour. In the nineteenth century, this part of the close-settled zone was the main cotton and textile belt in the caliphate.³⁸

European travellers who passed through the area from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries lauded the flourishing cotton industry.³⁹ It was to this same area that the British partly looked for cotton when they conquered the caliphate at the turn of the century. The existence of fertile land, slave farms, and plantations stimulated production and settlements across the areas. In the late nineteenth century, there was an influx of population, mostly farmers, traders, industrialists, and pastoralists into the areas. This increased population was advantageous to the communities, as it supported sedentarization and production as well as trade.⁴⁰

Industrial activities such as leather-working, iron works, and textile manufacture were popular across the region. These were mostly hereditary occupations, each with its own guild system. The conditions generally supported industrial production, as raw materials and markets for industrial products were available. The most notable industrial activities were weaving and dyeing, with production largely household-based, although the merchants, industrialists, and aristocrats depended on slave labour. Paul Staudinger, who travelled

³⁵ For instance, slave farms and plantations were scattered around Challawa, Madobi, Bebeji, Kudan, Makarfi, Durum, Nassarawa, Likoro, and Dan Damisa, among other locations. See for instance M. G. Smith, *The Economy of Hausa Communities of Zaria*, (London: HMSO, 1955), 80-2; P. E. Lovejoy, “Plantations in the Economy of the Slave Caliphate”, *The Journal of African History*, 19/3, (1978): 341-368, 353-4.

³⁶ Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death*.

³⁷ Lovejoy, “Plantations”, 356.

³⁸ M. Condotti, “Cotton Growing and Textile Production in Northern Nigeria from the Caliphate to Protectorate”, being a preliminary paper presented at the African Economic History Workshop-London School of Economics (May 2009), 4-5

³⁹ See for instance E. D. Morel, *Nigeria: Its People and Its Problems*, (London: Faber, 1912), 239.

⁴⁰ Mortimore, “Settlement Evolution”; Hill, *Population*, 64-5; Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*, 23-4.

through the area in the nineteenth century, wrote that weaving and indigo dyeing were popular industries there.⁴¹ However, Kano Emirate was the textile and indigo centre, while Zaria was the cotton centre. A large proportion of the raw cotton so produced in Zaria was exported to Kano where demand was high. The concept of comparative advantage applies to the textile industry, as it was tightly integrated with the plantations. The industry was always sited near plantations. For instance, weavers depended on plantations for raw cotton, while dyers depended on the plantations for indigo. In the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, centres like Kudan and Fatika were famous cotton markets, while Kura was known for its indigo.⁴²

As with other places, trading was an important economic activity in the area. People engaged in both local and distance trade. In most villages, the farmers and industrialists combined their jobs with trading. The village markets served as avenues for exchange of goods. From the accounts of European travellers, caravans were found at the important markets where traders exchanged their goods.⁴³ Products from the industries and plantations entered the markets through the industrialists, who themselves were long-distance traders (*fatake*).⁴⁴ As was the tradition in the caliphate, products from the plantations were oriented to the regional markets, while those from the indigenous industries were oriented to the international markets. Proceeds from the sales of such products were also reinvested in raw materials and other products that could be sold back at home.⁴⁵ However, this form of trade was constrained by an inefficient transport system, which prevented its full integration into worldwide markets.

As is obvious from the foregoing discussion, transport and communication were not mechanical-based and used methods such as human portage and pack animals. These forms of transport were the oldest. The function of transport in any society is to move goods and services from demand to supply point and *vice versa*. Pre-colonial Nigerian society did not develop wheeled transport. Instead, it relied on human carriers and pack animals, not only for

⁴¹ Staundinger, *In the Heart*, 207.

⁴² Lovejoy, "Plantations", 356-7; Dottridge, "Aspects"; Hill, *Population*, 13.

⁴³ Staundinger, *In the Heart*, 204.

⁴⁴ As the study by Paul E. Lovejoy shows, the *fatake* were of two groups. On the one hand, there were those who journeyed to Yorubaland and invested their proceeds in kola nuts. The other, the most popular, were the kola traders (the Agalawa, Tokarawa, and Kamberin Beriberi) who journeyed as far as Gonja. The first two can be found around the Bebeji, Madobi, and Kwankwaso axis near Kano. They immigrated into the area in the late nineteenth century and still retain their ethnic identity. See P. E. Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola: The Hausa Kola Trade 1700-1900*, (Zaria: ABU Press, 1980); Lovejoy, "Plantations", 346, 356; Hill, *Population*, 64.

⁴⁵ Lovejoy, "Plantations".

transporting goods from farms to the markets, but also for long-distance journeys and trade. The most common pack animal was the donkey. Nearly every household owned a donkey, and those without one hired the services of professional animal transporters.⁴⁶ Camels were also used, but they were most suited to desert or trans-Saharan journeys, because of their ability to do without water for at least two weeks and without food for a week.⁴⁷

Although these forms of transport performed the traditional function of transport in the traditional economy, they were inadequate because their performance, and capabilities were in practice constrained by weight, speed, and distance. Carrier transport is not only costly for long-distance journeys; it is also time-consuming. For instance, a caravan of women traders who tried to attach themselves to Henry Barth's party on the Katsina–Kano route were left behind because they could not keep pace with the party, owing to the weight of their loads.⁴⁸ Pack animals, especially donkeys, are easy to breed, cheap to maintain, and have the patience and endurance which other animals lack (hence the Hausa proverb, *hakurin kaya sai jaki*: “only a donkey shows patience under a load”), but they have a lower carrying capacity and can be stubborn at times.⁴⁹ When the British arrived at the turn of the century, it was on these same traditional transport methods that they depended when they were faced by transport needs during the first ten years of their arrival. For instance, in 1907–1908, approximately 3,000 pack animals were hired to the British administration in Northern Nigeria by professional animal transporters.⁵⁰

The imposition of British rule on the Sokoto Caliphate by Captain (later Sir) Frederick D. Lugard at the turn of the century brought dramatic changes to the existing socio-political arrangements. British imperialism was a response to the problem of industrial revolution in Britain, which required Britain to seek new markets and new sources of raw materials. In the late nineteenth century, Britain's pre-eminence was challenged by the rise of other industrial powers, most notably the United States of America, France, and Germany, who encroached on her markets. Added to this was the raw materials crisis, particularly the raw cotton crisis, which required urgent attention.⁵¹ British industrialists with vested interest in textiles,

⁴⁶ G. O. Ogunremi, *Counting the Camels: The Economics of Transportation in Pre-Industrial Nigeria*, (New York Publishers, 1982).

⁴⁷ Ibid. 99.

⁴⁸ Cited in *ibid.* 79.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 108.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 116.

⁵¹ See A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, (London: Longman, 1973), 160-1; A. Isaacman and R. Robert (eds), *Cotton, Colonialism, and Social History in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1995); B. M. Ratcliffe, “Cotton Imperialism: Merchants and Cotton Cultivation in West Africa in the Mid-

especially the chambers of commerce of Liverpool and Manchester and other imperial-based organizations, lobbied and pressured the home government to open up Africa to British industrialists, capital, and goods.⁵² The imposition of British rule was therefore partly a response to the raw cotton hunger. The conquest was achieved by surrender and war. Zaria surrendered in 1902 without a fight, while Kano was taken the following year, after a major confrontation with the British.⁵³

British colonialism marked a new phase in Northern Nigeria's political and economic history. The colonial authority stripped the traditional rulers of their powers and subordinated them to the British-appointed Residents. The British introduced an indirect rule system which decentralized administration and power to the lowest political units. Hitherto, power was concentrated in the hands of absentee landlords, who resided in the state capitals. In the ensuing scenario, the studied communities were brought firmly under British control. Under the new arrangement, Challawa, Kwankwaso, Madobi, Yako, and Dangora were brought under the newly established Turaki Manya or Kura District, which comprised Kura and Kiru and part of Kumbotso districts, until their separation in the 1920s. In the same manner, Madobi was made a sub-district, but this was abrogated in 1908. Gimi and Likoro were brought under Galadima/Makarfi District, while Auchang/Auchan was made the administrative headquarters of Magajin Gari/Auchan District.⁵⁴

In the course of this development, the British also made transformative alterations to the existing social relations of production, which they considered too primitive and inadequate to satisfy their own imperial agenda, and they introduced policies with the aim of expanding the economy. They abolished slavery and removed all obstacles to free trade. They monetized the economy and enforced payment of taxes in the new currency, which in the long run facilitated cash crop and mineral export. The colonial authority also introduced a land policy which not only dispossessed people of their rights to land and its resources, but

Nineteenth Century", *African Economic History*, 11, (1982): 87-113; K. D. Nworah, "The West African Operations of the British Cotton Growing Association, 1904-1914", *African Historical Studies*, 4/2, (1971): 315-330; C. A. Bristwistle, "Cotton Growing and Nigeria", *Journal of the Royal Colonial Institute, Part II*, vol. XXXIV, (1908): 104-107.

⁵² Hopkins, *An Economic History*, 162.

⁵³ For discussion on the conquest, see T. Falola, *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); M. G. Smith, *Government in Kano: 1350-1950*, (West View Press, 1997); R. H. Dugate, *The Conquest of Northern Nigeria*, (London: Frankcass, 1985); Okediji, "Economic History"; T. Falola and M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); A. M. Fika, *The Kano Civil War and British Over-rule 1882-1940*, (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1978).

⁵⁴ Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*; KSHCB Kura Gazetteer 19/vol. 2 ; NAK ZarProf 5280 Makarfi; E. G. M. Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Zaria Province*, (London: Waterlow, 1920), 17-8.

also forced many into wage labour. As was the British imperial policy everywhere, they introduced a mass import policy to carve out markets for British-manufactured goods.⁵⁵ All these factors not only undermined indigenous crafts; they also rendered the crafts people redundant and forced them to depend on European manufactured substitutes.

However, the colonial policies were full of contradictions. Their anti-slavery law did not abolish slavery outright, as the authority felt it might ruin the aristocrat and merchant classes. The law discouraged wholesale flight of slaves and prescribed procedures through which slaves could gain their freedom. Since the colonial state denied slaves access to land, even if they obtained their freedom most slaves remained with their masters; and so slavery and its institution continued up to the 1930s. As Robert Shenton, Louis Lenninham, Michael Watts, and others have argued, the anti-slavery and land laws technically favoured the aristocrat and merchant classes, with whom the British had forged a new alliance. According to these authors, the initial land law was not popular and so was modified in 1906 and 1910 to provide incentives to smallholders.⁵⁶

1.5 Structure of the study

The narrative movement of the study is structured into seven chapters, which collectively tell a story of how the steam engine transformed the countryside between Kano and Zaria into economically significant and complex settlements along the rail line. The study contributes to social history on how northerners first encountered the railway and how they later appropriated it in distinctive ways to transform their lives. The narrative also helps to explain how Nigerian initiative and agency resulted in different uses of the railway. It offers new insights into and interpretations of the history of the Nigerian Railway in relation to its development.

The study is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 1, this introductory chapter, introduces the study and highlights the general context in which the railways and the studied communities have been discussed and represented in the literature. It also provides a brief overview of the studied communities in the nineteenth century.

⁵⁵ See for examples: Fika, *Kano Civil War*; Falola and Heaton, *History of Nigeria*, 118-25.

⁵⁶ M. Watts, *Silent Violence: Food Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983); R. Shenton, *The Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria*, (London: James Currey: 1986), 22-46; L. Lenninham, "Rights in Men and Rights in Land: Slavery, Wage Labour and Small holder Agriculture in Northern Nigeria", *Slavery and Abolition*, 3/2, (1982): 111-39; Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death*.

Chapter 2, “The Politics and Construction of the Baro–Kano Railway”, examines the controversy and rivalry which surrounded the extension of the railway to the North. It also explores how the northern communities encountered its construction.

Chapter 3, “Perception, Appropriation and Domestication of Transport Innovation”, looks at how the railway was perceived, the reactions it generated, and how it was appropriated and integrated into daily life.

Chapter 4, “Transport Advance, Marketing and Reactions of Local Producers”, looks at how the railroad activated cash crop production and trade and the opportunities it offered. It also looks at how subsistence food production was maintained in the face of cash cropping.

Chapter 5, “The Emergence of New Settlement Patterns and the Intermingling of Cultures”, discusses how the railway influenced population movement, the emergence of new settlement patterns along the rail line, and the effects of this on national integration.

Chapter 6, “The Railway and Criminality”, examines how the railway bred criminality and provided a platform for criminals to operate.

Chapter 7, “Conclusion”, ties together the findings in the various chapters. In this final chapter, the main highlights are the overall impact of the railway on the studied communities.

CHAPTER 2: THE POLITICS AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE BARO–KANO RAILWAY

2.1 Introduction

Following the imposition of British rule, the colonial authority in Northern Nigeria was concerned about the state of the region, which it considered “unexplored” and underdeveloped. In official circles, a modern transport system, particularly a railway, was seen as the mechanism that would not only open up the territory, but also provide the critical link it needed to break away from its dependency on Southern Nigeria. The proposal to construct the rail line provoked a prolonged rivalry and controversy, pitting the Lagos and southern authorities against the Northern Authority.

This chapter does two things. First, it analyses the “great” longing for a railway on the part of the British colonial administration in Northern Nigeria and the rivalry and controversy among the provincial colonial administrators over the extension of the railway to Kano. The chapter argues that railway development is by its very nature a controversial project, because it is both a political and an economic endeavour. Second, it examines the construction of the railway and the reactions it generated. It argues that the local inhabitants along the rail line, because of their lack of familiarity with western technology, encountered the construction work with mixed reactions of fear, apprehension, and awe.

2.2 Diplomatic conflict and controversy

History records that in the early days of railroad building in all countries the pioneers met with considerable opposition. As in other countries, so it was in Nigeria.

Nigerian Railway Jubilee, 1911.

With the formal establishment of British rule, the colonial authority in Northern Nigeria—under Frederick Lugard, the High Commissioner (1900–1906)—focused on improving the existing transport system with the aim of expanding the economy. The subsistence society

over which Lugard superintended had a problem with overland transport.¹ At the time of the conquest, transport and communication were traditionally based, and pre-colonial Northern Nigeria had not developed wheeled transport. The existing transport was based on human and animal transport over narrow footpaths. This traditional transportation was considered inadequate owing to its low speed and low carrying capacity. It may have satisfied the traditional function of transport in pre-colonial days, but under the new dispensation such transport was considered primitive and inadequate to satisfy the main objective of colonialism. Besides their numerous limitations, including low speed and capacity, which Lugard noted, he disliked the carriers' transport services for their tendency to steal and to charge high rates.² Although the region had two main rivers, the Niger and Benue rivers, which could be used to further its development, these were not navigable for large vessels all year round, owing to natural impediments such as sand bars. In view of the existing inadequacies, the opening of the territory to British goods, capital, and trade—to which Lugard's administration was committed—might be jeopardized.

Lugard considered the situation as requiring urgent attention. He believed that a modern transport system was required, not only to open up the region which he considered unexplored to British trade and the civilizing influence of modern commerce, but also to extend his influence, because some enclaves were yet to be brought under effective control. Added to his anxiety was the financial position of his administration. The region over which he ruled was landlocked and insolvent and barely survived on the imperial treasury and annual grants in aid from the more buoyant Lagos and Southern Protectorates, a situation which Lugard resented, in spite of the fact that being landlocked can be an advantage to levy tariffs on cheap imports.³ Modern transport was considered essential, Lugard felt, not only to develop the commercial potentials of the region, but also to enhance its revenue capacity and make it less dependent on grants. The trade routes that could have added to the state coffers also were not safe, due to the high tolls and the activity of robbers, which he considered inimical to free trade and the *Pax Britannica* to which his administration was committed.⁴

¹ F. Shelfdord, "Ten Year's Progress in West Africa", *The Royal African Society*, 6/24, (1907): 341-49, 348.

² Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigeria, Report for 1902, 56-7; Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigeria, Report for 1904, 103.

³ P. Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can be Done About it*, (New York: Oxford Press, 2007), 56/57.

⁴ H. H. Bell, "Recent Progress in Northern Nigeria", *Journal of the African Society*, X/XL, (1911): 377-391, 385.

In order to expedite the opening up of the region and to strengthen his administration's influence, Lugard proposed an improvement to the transport facilities. As he asserted, "the material development of Africa may be summed up in one word—Transport".⁵ That is to say, a modern transport was required to fast track Africa and in this regard Northern Nigeria development. He envisioned a modern transport system that would dislodge the caravan trade routes and divert the trade to the new centres of administration, while also preventing Britain's rivals (the French and Germans) from diverting the trade to their own colonies.⁶ Lugard considered railway the most practical solution and the only means that could serve the major objective of colonialism more satisfactorily and more conveniently than other transport methods. W. W. Rostow has asserted that railways were the single most important cause of industrial take-off in Europe, the Americas, and elsewhere.⁷ Unlike other forms of transport, rail had the advantage of discounting space, and it could do the work of 13,000 carriers at one time.⁸

Lugard could not recommend road transport, for it required good roads, which were lacking in the country. Although a road could be built cheaply and quickly with local materials, it was not a viable option because it could not withstand the large-scale economic activities envisioned by the authorities. While roads could aid the export economy, they could not act independently.⁹ Besides, road transport was still in its infancy at this time even in Europe. It was not until after World War I that American Ford trucks began to make their appearance in the country.¹⁰ Also, Lugard did not propose river transport, for, as mentioned earlier, the existing rivers in the country were not navigable for large vessels all year round.¹¹ In view of the advantages the railway had over other forms of transport, Lugard therefore proposed building a railway, not only because he believed the economic development of the region depended on it, but also because he saw it as the critical link to the sea, a link which Northern Nigeria needed in order to break away from its dependency on Southern Nigeria.¹²

⁵ F. D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 5.

⁶ Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigerian, Report for 1900-1901, 18-20; Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigerian, Report for 1903, 12-3.

⁷ W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, (Cambridge, 1960/1991).

⁸ Hopkins, *Economic History*, 192; Lugard, *Dual Mandate*.

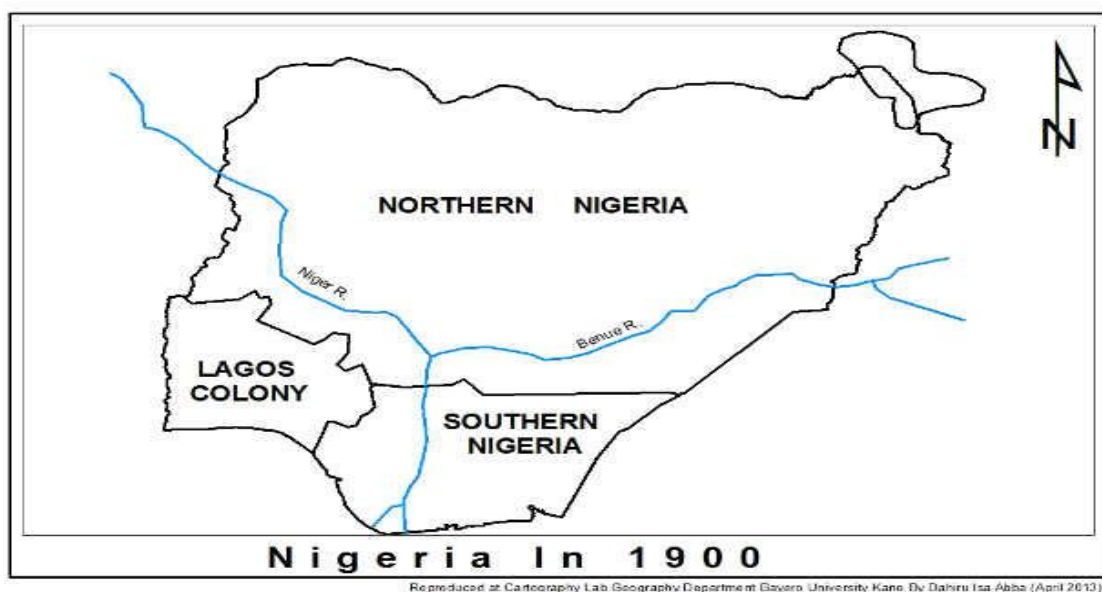
⁹ A. Gutkind, "The Development of African Road Transport in Western Nigeria, 1919-1939", (MA Thesis, McGill University, 1977), 12.

¹⁰ Ibid.; Anjorin, "Politics", 3.

¹¹ Anjorin, "Politics".

¹² Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigerian, Report for 1900, 18.

From the outset, the call for the railway came from the colonial authority and not businessmen or speculators who wanted government guarantees. Although railways were expensive to build—as the permanent ways, rolling stock, and other facilities had to be imported and had to be made strong—this was the best economic option, because railways were always built ahead of demand, unlike roads.¹³ Even before Lugard’s posting to Northern Nigeria, the Niger Committee constituted by the Colonial Office in 1898 had recommended the construction of railways as the most practical mechanism for developing the three British Niger territories.¹⁴ The General Act of the Brussels conference, to which Britain itself was a signatory, had also imposed upon member countries an obligation to construct railroads as evidence of effective control.¹⁵ However, Lugard’s proposal was for a separate railway, one which would be independent of the Lagos Government Railway—or put another way, a rail–river transport system from port Baro on the Niger to Kano, the northern *entrepôt*. He also proposed a tramway (though in a separate proposal from his railway proposal).



Map 2.1 Map of Nigeria in 1900

¹³ Gutkind, “African Road Transport”, 9.

¹⁴ Anjorin, “Politics”.

¹⁵ Ibid., 8, 19-20; Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigerian, Report for 1900-1901, 19; Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigerian, Report for 1901, 4-5; H. J. Pedraza, *Borriboala-Gha: The Story of Lokoja the first British Settlement in Nigeria*, (London: Oxford Press, 1960), 91; Tamuno, “Railway I”, 279.

Although it has been often claimed that Lugard opted for a tramway because his railway proposal was rejected, this common view is somewhat misleading¹⁶ and needs to be corrected. The evidence indicates that he proposed the two systems almost simultaneously—even though he confused readers of his annual reports and correspondence as to what exactly his preferences were, because they give the impression that his interest in a tramway was only secondary. I argue that both the railway and tramway were at the heart of his administration, although he had different motives for the two. The problem with Lugard was that he was somewhat difficult to understand. His first interest and reference to the tramway dated back to 1900, which was when he formally assumed office and began to propagate his “railway idea”, though he did not push the tramway proposal as forcefully as the railway one.¹⁷ The tramway was merely a temporary expedient, meant to obviate the administrative difficulties at his new headquarters at Zungeru *dungurun*, while the railway was for “opening up” the region as a whole.¹⁸

The need for a tramway, as Lugard articulated it, was for administrative purposes. The line, according to him, would obviate the transport difficulty between his new proposed headquarters at Zungeru and Wushishi on the Kaduna River. This line would facilitate river navigation during low water volume while also allowing bulky stores to be brought with little difficulty during the flood season.¹⁹ He argued that connecting the new headquarters with Barijuko by a short tramway would facilitate the complete pacification of the belt between the Niger and the hinterland.²⁰ Lugard was anxious to extend his full control into the hinterland simultaneously with the relocation of his headquarters. As far as he was concerned, the tramway and relocation of his headquarters were inseparable. Lugard’s hatred for Lokoja stemmed from its unhealthy condition, which he considered was unsuitable for European habitation.²¹ The tramway, a short ten-mile run from Zungeru to Barijuko, was approved by the Colonial Office late in 1900 and was completed in 1901.²²

The proposal for the railway, on the other hand, was mooted in the same year as the tramway, though differently. The rail line was conceived as a separate line, independent of the Lagos Government Railway. As studies indicate, the Baro–Kano railway or the rail–river

¹⁶ Anjorin, “Politics”, 6

¹⁷ Nigeria, Correspondence, cd.2787, 31-2.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Nigeria, Correspondence, 31-2; Colonial Report-Annual for 1900, 8.

²⁰ Colonial Report-Annual for 1900, 8 and 19.

²¹ Ibid. 6; Pedraza, *Borrioboala-Gha*, 91.

²² Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigeria Report for 1901, 4-5; Nigeria, Correspondence, 32.25

proposal was not Lugard's original idea; it was the Niger Committee's idea. This committee was set up by the Colonial Office to consider the future development of the British Niger Territories. Lugard was just an army officer then under the Royal Niger Company (RNC), an imperialist company that was mandated to rule over the Northern Territory at that time on behalf of Britain.²³ Having assumed control of the region, he was fascinated by their report. He believed that a vast region such as Northern Nigeria, which occupies approximately two-thirds of the total land mass of the country (see Map 2.1 above), could not be developed except by having its own railway. Lugard asserted that the commercial development of the region was dependent on a separate railway and not on a connection with the Lagos Government Railway. He noted that since Northern Nigeria had waterways of its own, a railway should be developed for the benefit of the region. As far as he was concerned, the Lagos Railway has nothing to offer the North, and he emphasized that every yard of the railway from Niger to Kano would supersede caravan transport and promote trade.²⁴

This view differs from the one he had expressed earlier in 1899 and recapitulated in 1900, when he expressed the need for a general railway policy and the necessity for three separate lines. The first would be a western line from Lagos to Sapele- a good port town. He cautioned that the extension should be determined by a comparative cost advantage and called for its extension to Ilorin, but that its extension to Jebba should be determined by a survey. Should the Lagos Railway extend to Kano, he urged that the point at which it crossed the Niger be decided in view of the cost of bridging the Niger, while he also suggested a survey of alternative routes. Second, he proposed an eastern line from Old Calabar to Lake Chad. In addition to proposing a general railway policy for the country, Lugard proposed

²³ The Committee was composed of six members, two of whom were from the Colonial Office: Lord Selborne, Chairman Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Reginald Antrobus, Assistant Under-Secretary of State in charge of West African Business at the Colonial Office. The others were Sir Clement Hills, from the Foreign Office, and the local administrators at the time: Sir Henry McCallum, Governor of Lagos Colony, and Sir Ralph Moor, the Commissioner and Consul General, Niger Coast Protectorate (Southern Nigeria). The sixth was Sir George Toubman Goldie of the Royal Niger Company (RNC). The committee proposed the amalgamation of the three British territories in Nigeria, but it recommended the postponement of the amalgamation until the transport and communication system in the country had been improved. Among their many recommendations were the construction of a rail-river transport system from Baro to Kano, whereby goods could be conveyed by water to meet ocean-going vessels. The committee also recommended that the outlets for imports and exports of the country should be a southern port which could handle large ocean-going steamers—but definitely not Lagos, which required a huge financial input to improve before it could cope with large traffic. The Lagos port had shallow channels, which made it difficult to accommodate large vessels drawing more than nine feet of water. See: Nigeria, Correspondence, 20; Carland, *Colonial Office*, 140; Tamuno, "Railway I", 284, 285-6; Anjorin, "Politics", 3; Uzoechi, "Social and Political Impact", 75; HC Deb 19 July 1899 vol 74 cc1270-304, Second Reading, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1899/jul/19/second-reading#S4V0074P0_18990719_HOC_41.

²⁴ Colonial Report-Annual for 1900, 19-20.

surveys and road-making to prepare the way for these railways. This would help provincial administrators determine the line of development and progress. Third, Lugard crowned the proposal with his rail–river transport system, which, according to him, should be independent of the Lagos Government Railway.²⁵ This was the controversial Baro–Kano railway, which was to become a source of diplomatic rivalry and controversy with the other two provincial administrators.

In justifying the railway, Lugard based his arguments on political, administrative, commercial, and strategic reasons. He argued that railway construction was essential for the purposes of internal administration and communication, as government officials could move from one post to another with minimum difficulty. From the commercial and economic standpoint, he believed the railway would stimulate agricultural production, commerce, and movement of goods from inland to the coast, all to the benefit of the home country (Britain). The railway, as he further asserted, should be seen as part of the scheme of imperial defence, facilitating rapid concentration of troops and supplies if necessary, in view of the French and German presence on the Nigerian frontiers.²⁶

However, Lugard's proposal did not sail through as one might have expected. It provoked reactions of rivalry and controversy between Lugard and the other local provincial administrators' (i.e. Governor of Lagos Colony Sir William McGregor and High Commissioner of Southern Nigeria Sir Ralph Moor), pitting them against one another. Writers who commented on this rivalry and controversy—T. N. Tamuno, A. O. Anjorin, J. M. Carland, and others—expressed the view that it was fuelled by the lack of a general transport policy to guide the administrators. This popular argument, so consumed and accepted by many, is misleading and needs to be corrected. Although the argument sounds convincing, it is too simplistic to explain why a mere idea of a railway provoked such rivalry and controversy. I argue that regardless of the policy guideline, railway development worldwide is always controversial because it is a political as well as an economic matter. This is so because of the initial sunk costs, expected returns on investment, and the issue of control. The decisions to build a line, the choice of junctions and terminals, and the freight rate, etc. are all controversial matters which are determined by the financiers and not the promoters of a rail line. After completion, a rail line also requires government subsidies.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid. 19-20.

²⁶ Ibid. 19; Nigeria, Correspondence, 40-1.

²⁷ J. Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway: How Chinese Development Project Changed Lives and Livelihoods in Tanzania*, (Bloomington IN, Indiana University Press, 2009), 16-7; R. E. Robinson, "Introduction: Railway

Hence, the rivalry among the administrators was based on their own regional interests, trade, and control, which were at cross purposes.

As Ronald Robinson argues, railroads are the cause of imperial rivalry. The idea or mere rumour of a railway in a sensitive place could generate conflict.²⁸ And, as Jamie Monson states, “[t]o construct a rail line was to command a region and [to] control a region [...] was to keep rivals out.”²⁹ As the evidence indicates, the idea of a railway, even within one political entity, was a matter of political rivalry and controversy.³⁰ And, as G. Pirie pointed out, a poorly managed railroad conflict could even result in armed struggle.³¹

It is against this backdrop that the rivalry and controversy may be seen, and the lack of a policy guideline was merely a contributing factor. As came to be seen, Lugard’s proposal conflicted with the other administrators’ agendas. McGregor, in particular, was against the proposal because he saw the proposed railway as a rival one, which would compete with his own agenda of extending the Lagos Railway to Kano and Lake Tchad. He saw the Northern Nigeria as his own natural hinterland and believed that Lagos should be the sole outlet of the country to the sea. Therefore, to suggest an alternative port, as Lugard did, would undermine Lagos’s pre-eminence.³² This was the same view his predecessor Sir Henry McCallum had expressed while as a member of the Niger Committee. Right from the inaugural ceremony of the railway at Ibadan in 1901, McGregor had proposed its extension northward as far as Kano for strategic reasons, owing partly to the parallel railway development in the French Territory of Dahomey, and for the commercial development of Lagos and Northern Nigeria.³³

Ralph Moor, on the other hand, though somewhat neutral and more objective than the other two, cleverly avoided reference to Lugard’s proposal. Instead, he proposed a general railway policy for the country. He noted that any attempt to develop the country by railroads should be comprehensive from the start so as to determine the number of trunk lines required

Imperialism”, in: Clarence Davies and Kenneth E. Wilburn, Jr (eds), *Railway Imperialism*, (New York: Green word Press, 1991), 1-6, 3; G. H. Pirie, *Aspects of Political-Economy of Railways in Southern Africa*, (Johannesburg: Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Witwatersrand, 1982), 24-25; S. Soeters, “Tamale 1907–1957: Between Colonial Trade and Colonial Chieftainship”, (PhD Thesis, Leiden, 2012), 52-3; K. Tsey, *From Head Loading to the Iron Horse: Railway Building in Colonial Ghana and the Origins of Tropical Development*, (Mankon: Langa Research and Publishing CIG, 2013).

²⁸ Robinson, “Introduction”.

²⁹ Monson, *Africa’s Freedom Railway*, 17.

³⁰ Monson, *Africa’s Freedom Railway*; Pirie, *Aspects of Political-Economy*; Tsey, *From Head Loading*; Soeters, “Tamale 1907–1957”.

³¹ Pirie, *Aspects of Political-Economy*.

³² Nigeria, Correspondence, 69.

³³ Tamuno, “Railway I”, 282.

for the proper opening up and development of the country. This was the same view he had expressed three years earlier as a member of the Niger Committee. Like Lugard, he believed the country required more than one trunk line. However, he proposed two main railways, namely, a western and eastern railway, with the Niger and Benue rivers playing important roles. First, he proposed a western line from Lagos and Sapele to Kano, to be joined by branch lines to Bauchi and Sokoto from Zaria. Second, he proposed another line from Old Calabar to the upper waters of Cross Rivers, and thence to Ibi, Benue, and Bauchi, with a branch line to join up with the mainline and extend as far as Kuka near Lake T Chad.³⁴³⁵ However, he suggested that the financial cost of the project should be borne by the Colonial Office, because the colonial state itself could not afford the project. While indirectly spiting Lugard, he called for the provincial administrations to be self-supporting.³⁶

With regard to the extension of the Lagos Railway northward, Moor suggested that it should be determined by the suitability of the Lagos port and the fitness of Lagos itself. He discouraged the extension of the line beyond Oshogbo, however, until the main depot for the interior had been determined—since, according to him, the extension of the line to Oshogbo would determine the course of the line to the interior.³⁷ On the question of the main port or harbour for the country, Moor recapitulated the views he had expressed in 1897, when he opposed the choice of Lagos as gateway to the country. He pointed out that of the nine coastlines in the country, Lagos was “distinctively the worst” terminus of any railway, as it could not accommodate a large vessel drawing more than nine feet of water, owing to a sand bar. Instead, merchandise had to be taken by branch steamers to Forcados, a deeper port. Unlike Lagos harbour, the other harbours could accommodate large vessels, with Forcados and Warri drawing 20 feet, Sapele 18 feet, Akassa 14 feet, Brass 14 feet, Bonny 21 feet, Opobo 14 feet, and Old Calabar 20 feet. And, he pointed out, “in all of these ports, the steamers lie in still water”. While admitting that the Lagos sand bar could be removed at a great cost, he pointed out that Lagos did not have a suitable depot. The Lagos depot, situated as it was on Lagos Island i1nstead of the mainland, was not a suitable depot for the country. Besides its low-lying, insalubrious conditions and lack of drainage facilities, it lacked a good water supply.³⁸ Based on a comparative assessment of the various harbours, Moor

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Nigeria, Correspondence, 35, 42.

³⁶ Ibid. 43-4.

³⁷ Ibid. 38, 42.

³⁸ Ibid. 35-37.

recommended Old Calabar as the best port on account of its ability to draw 20-foot steamers, ample accommodation for large vessels, ample space for a town or city of any size, good water supply, and sanitary conditions which were lacking in the other ports, including Lagos.³⁹

Looking at the debates, it is obvious that Lugard's proposal was not only controversial, it also pitted the three administrators against one another. Neither McGregor nor Moor supported Lugard; they did not see the Baro port as capable of opening up the northern region. Although they agreed that the Lagos Railway should go to Kano, each of them saw their own region as the best outlets for the opening up of Northern Nigeria. While Moor and Lugard believed that the country required more than one trunk line, they differed in the actual number required; but they were united in opposition to the idea of Lagos being the sole outlet for the country. The three also subscribed to a unified rail network but wanted regional control of the lines. They could neither arrive at a consensus nor come up with an acceptable alternative proposal. The Colonial Office was aware of the rancour and always acted as a bridge between them. It should be noted that this same rancour occurred during the sittings of the Niger Committee, as the provincial administrators on the committee at the time were campaigning for their respective regions. The members could not collectively reach a consensus, though some *en bloc* unanimously proposed the rail–river railway (which was to become the subject of controversy) and also opposed the idea of Lagos as an outlet for the country. As is clear from the above, the rivalry continued even after the end of the Niger Committee's activities.⁴⁰

Despite the several meetings organized to resolve the rivalry, it dragged on for six years. Part of the reason it lasted for so long was the lack of funds. The Colonial Office had reduced its financial commitment to the colony, and the Northern government that wanted the railway was not in a position to finance the project. As mentioned earlier, the administration was poor and barely survived on an imperial treasury and annual grant from the more buoyant Southern Protectorate. Southern Nigeria (already merged with Lagos Colony), which wanted the extension of its own railway northward, could not afford it either. The Colonial Office did not consider it creditworthy enough to warrant a loan for its extension project. The Lagos Railway, already extended as far as Ibadan, had yet to pay its way, as a half-constructed line rarely pays its way until finally completed. It is also clear that from the start

³⁹ Ibid. 36-37.

⁴⁰ Tamuno, "Railway I", 284-5; Carland, *Colonial Office*, 140-1; Anjorin "Politics", 3; Uzoechi, "The Social and Political Impact", 75; HC Deb 19 July 1899, vol 74 cc 1270-304, Second Reading.

the Colonial Office had made up its mind to push the line to Kano but had yet to issue a policy statement on the matter. Another important reason for the delay was the insufficient knowledge about the Northern Provinces at that time and the projected routes through which the railway would pass. Between 1900 and 1905, no less than five surveys had been carried out under Lugard to determine the course of the railway, in addition to the boundary and other forms of surveys.⁴¹ At one such survey, the parties were even driven back at Bebeji, which led to the death of one of their carriers.⁴²

When Lugard realized that the Colonial Office was not ready to commit itself to the project, he allied himself with the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) in 1904. Established by a consortium of British merchants with vested interests in textiles and the British government, the BCGA's aim was to further cotton imperialism in British West Africa.⁴³ As Arthur Hutton, the Chairman of BCGA in Manchester, asserted, any effort to broaden the basis of the supply of cotton was true imperialism. Disappointed by its experience in Southern Nigeria, the BCGA was on the lookout for a new source of cotton in the North. Lugard wanted to use his new-found romance with the BCGA to curry favour for his pet project. He assured the BCGA of the cotton potentials in the region and of his administration's assistance. He pointed out to them the inadequacy of the transport situation; and unless it was improved, Lugard warned, cotton could not be exploited in commercial quantities.⁴⁴ In the same manner, his Forestry Officer, W. R. Elliott, also noted that cotton could be exported in large quantities only if the transport system could be improved.⁴⁵ Kano and Zaria, particularly the close-settled zone between Kano and Zaria (where the studied communities are situated), attracted the attention of the colonial authority owing to its cotton potential.⁴⁶ Impressed by Lugard's support, the BCGA assured him of its readiness to promote cotton and of its support for the railway, with a promise to take the matter up with the home government.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria, Report for 1904, 103; Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria, Report for 1905–1906, 6-7.

⁴² Nigeria, Correspondence, 101.

⁴³ C. A. Bristwistle, "Cotton Growing", 124.

⁴⁴ HC Deb 28 March 1905 vol 143 c1372, German Railway to Lake Tchad—British Railway in Northern Nigeria, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1905/mar/28/german-railway-to-lake-tchad-british#S4V0143P0_19050328_HOC_110 [accessed on 15 November 2011].

⁴⁵ Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigeria Report for 1904, 98.

⁴⁶ C. A. Bristwistle, "Cotton Growing", 102-25, 111-2.

⁴⁷ J. S. Hogendorn, "The Cotton Campaign in Northern Nigeria, 1902-1914: An Example of a Public/Private Planning Failure in Agriculture in Agriculture", in: Allen Isaacman and Richard Roberts (eds), *Cotton*,

In 1906, the BCGA together with the Chamber of Commerce of the United Kingdom sent a powerful deputation to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, concerning the Northern Nigerian Railway and why the government should support it. By 1907, Parliament had approved the construction of a railway, known in official parlance as the “pioneer railway”, from Baro to Kano, bringing to an end six years of rivalry and conflict. The approval was justified on the basis of administrative and military difficulties and for the purpose of opening up trade as well as the development of cotton.⁴⁸

The transfer and construction of this imperial railway technology was to be carried out by the Northern Nigeria’s Public Works Department (PWD), restructured to become the Public Works Department and Railway (PWD&R), under the supervision of Sir Percy Girouard, a Canadian Royal Engineer who had previously built inexpensive railways in the Sudan, South Africa, Central South Africa, and East Africa.⁴⁹ Girouard was specially recruited in 1906 to draw up a general railway policy for the country and to determine the standard gauge, method of construction, and the cost. He was also made a High Commissioner following Lugard’s departure, a departure that bore the mark of Lugard’s frustration over his pet project. Girouard was to be assisted by J. E. Eaglesome, another railway engineer, who himself was Lugard’s Director of PWD. The Zungeru–Barijuko tramway mentioned earlier was built under his supervision.

During this prolonged rivalry, the Southern Provinces lost out, as its Eastern Railway was not approved, although the extension of the Lagos Railway to meet up with the Baro–Kano railway was approved. Funding for the Baro–Kano railway was to be provided by the Southern Protectorate, since the Northern Protectorate could not afford to fund the project. Simon Heap pointed out that the railway was built with liquor money.⁵⁰ It was also recommended that the line, when completed, should be taken over by the Southern Protectorate. Also sanctioned was the improvement of the Lagos harbour, in view of the approved railway. Equally authorized was the amalgamation of the two railways and the administration of the two protectorates in principle when the projects were completed. From the colonial authority’s point of view, amalgamating the two railways and the administration

Colonialism, and Social History in Sub-Saharan Africa, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1995), 5; Anjorin, “Politics”, 8; Carland, *Colonial Office*, 167,

⁴⁸ *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, XXV, 1909, 353; Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria, Report for 1906-7, 6; Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria, Report for 1907-8, 20-21.

⁴⁹ A. A. Sikainga, “City of Steel”, 29.

⁵⁰ S. Heap, “Transport Liquor in Colonial Nigeria”, *The Journal of Transport History*, 21/1, (2002): 28-53; *Scottish Geographical*, 353.

of the two protectorates would provide a pool of revenue for financing the railway and might also rescue the Northern Protectorates from its treasury control.⁵¹

A fact not often recognized in the literature is that the railway was conceived as a “pioneer line”, to be built as cheaply as possible. The principle of a pioneer railway was to build a cheap railway that would be developed to standard when traffic developed. As Girouard himself asserted, a good pioneer line, with a hauling capacity of 20,000 to 30,000 tons a year each way, was adequate for developing the Northern Territories; and, as traffic developed, additional rolling stock and other facilities capable of handling 200,000 tons per annum would be required.⁵² This temporary nature of the system was to create difficulties later for the system when traffic developed. On this type of system, earthworks were of the lightest description, and not many stations were required, except at the more important centres where traffic was anticipated. The stations were to be a single building with simple platforms; otherwise, small iron sheds and rail-level platforms were the required structures befitting a pioneer railway. There would also be small stations at intervals of 12–14 miles and crossing stations every 35 miles.⁵³

Although the line had now been approved, construction had yet to commence because Girouard was yet to submit his report, and little survey and earthworks had been undertaken. By the time he submitted his report, it did not differ much from Lugard’s original plan, though he modified some aspects. Like Lugard, Girouard believed the North could be developed by a rail–river system, with the Baro River to serve as its main outlet to the sea—and not Lagos. The line was to be built at a cost of £3,000 a mile, a total cost of £1,230,000, and an additional £30,000 for a dredger to keep the river open all year round.⁵⁴ Also proposed was the construction of the railway by the PWD&R, to be assisted by government officials in

⁵¹ Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria, Report for 1906-7, 6; Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria, Report for 1907-8, 20-21; HC Deb 12 June 1906 vol 158 c814; Railway Extension in Northern Nigeria, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1906/jun/12/railway-extension-in-northern-nigeria#S4V0158P0_19060612_HOC_34 [accessed on 15 November 2011]; HL Deb 27 August 1907 vol 182 cc364-8, Public Loan Bill, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1907/aug/27/public-works-loans-bill#S4V0182P0_19070827_HOL_324 [accessed on 15 November 2011]; HC Deb 05 August 1907 vol 179 cc1534-6, Railway Extension in Nigeria, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1907/aug/05/railway-extension-in-nigeria#S4V0179P0_19070805_HOC_109 [accessed on 15 November 2011].

⁵² Nigeria, Further Correspondence Relating to Railway Construction in Nigeria, (London: HMSO, 1909), 28.

⁵³ “Baro–Kano Railway, Northern Nigeria”, *The Engineer*, 17 September 1909, 289; *Scottish Geographical*, 353.

⁵⁴ A pound (abbreviated as £) was the unit of British currency in the Britain and its colony in Nigeria. A pound contained 20 shillings (abbreviated as s.), and each shilling contained 12 pence (abbreviated as d.). A pound therefore contained 240 pence. The currency was written, for example, as £2.3s.4d. = two pounds, three shillings, and four pence. Since decimalization in 1971, a British pound contains 100 pence, and shillings are no longer used.

other departments. Integral to this was the use of local or political labour, a method conceived by Lugard. This method supposed that the line should be built by local labour recruited through the local authorities / traditional rulers. The thinking behind building the railway through the PWD&R and the use of local labour itself centred on economics. The best way to build a cheap and inexpensive railway was through the PWD&R.⁵⁵ Girouard also recommended the construction of a 3 ft. 6 in. line, which was the West African standard gauge at the time, as opposed to the 2 ft. 6 in., suggested by Lugard.

The Colonial Office accepted Girouard's report and sanctioned the immediate planning and recruitment of labour and experts for the work.⁵⁶ The Colonial Office also recommended a review of the existing land tenure system so that the region could benefit from any advantage resulting from building the railway. Right from the start, Girouard nationalized the land to prevent land speculators reaping the benefits of increased land values, and the practice of leasing land to European traders or non-indigenous Africans for long periods was prohibited.⁵⁷

2.3 Fear, marvel and the construction of the imperial railway

Now that the railway had been approved for construction, how was it constructed and domesticated? How did the local population perceive it? What reactions did it generate? These are some of the questions this section will answer.

The main construction of the railway was performed by indigenous labourers, comprising peasants, slaves, and prisoners that were recruited through force. This labour recruitment was the first stage in the construction and domestication of the railway. Recruitment was conducted through the combined efforts of the European Political Officers and the local authorities, comprising the traditional rulers. Although the colonial authority referred to the labour as voluntary, in actual fact it was not. When labour was required, the European Political Officers instructed the traditional rulers on the numbers so required from each district. The local authorities in turn forced the labourers to go to the construction sites

⁵⁵ "Baro-Kano Railway", 92.

⁵⁶ Ibid.; Anjorin, "Politics", 11.

⁵⁷ Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death*; HL Deb 27 August 1907 vol 182 cc364-8, Public Loan Bill; Colonial Annual Report-Annual: 1904, 8-9; Colonial Annual Report for 1907-8, 20-21; HC Deb 05 August 1907 vol 179 cc1534-6; HC Deb 17 April 1907 vol 172 cc974-5, Railway Extension in Nigeria; Northern Nigeria-Railway Schemes, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1907/apr/17/northern-nigeria-railway-schemes#S4V0172P0_19070417_HOC_99 [accessed on 14 August 2011]; HL Deb 27 August 1907 vol 182 cc 364-8; Public Works Loans Bill, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1907/aug/27/public-works-loans-bill#S4V0182P0_19070827_HOL_323, [accessed on 14 November 2011].

against their will. Whole villages and farms along the rail line were torn apart to recruit labour. Many were not paid, and many were underpaid. Forced labour was adopted for the Northern Railway partly because of labour shortages (both skilled and unskilled), partly because people were not willing to work for the white man (*nasara*), and partly because it was the best way to build a cheap railway.⁵⁸

In theory, the labourers were supposed to work for a few weeks, supervised and paid directly by the European Political Officers, after which they were to be replaced by another group. This, according to the colonial state, would save them from exploitation; but in practice, they worked longer than required and were paid a paltry sum, in addition to being forced.⁵⁹ This method differed from the one used on the Lagos Railway and its extension northward, namely the contract method, in which private contractors supplied the labour.⁶⁰ Right from the start of the work in the North, the local authorities there acted as the labour contractors. Instead of allowing labour to voluntarily come to the site, the villages along the line were raided to recruit labour for survey, earth, and construction works. This massive labour recruitment, the movement of high-tech construction materials, and the aura which marked the construction of the railway provoked mixed reactions of fear and awe, much more so than has been previously recognized.

The manner in which the construction of the railway has been represented in the literature says nothing about how the Nigerian communities along the rail line encountered or perceived and reacted to the work, or about how they appropriated the work. This inadequacy is understandable given the sources available to the writers at the time. Another reason is that, as Collin Dival and George Revill pointed out, transport historians rarely conceive of the railway as technology. “[I]f they do they conceptualize it as hardware, the development of which was a purely economic phenomenon and ignored its wider semiotic qualities”.⁶¹ This needs to be corrected, because new technologies are always accompanied by mixed reactions. Michael Mason and A. O. Anjorin discussed the reactions to the labour recruitment, and Mason in particular commented on the uprising (discussed later) connected with this

⁵⁸ Mason, “Working on the Railway”, 60; Oyemakinde, “Railway Construction”, 317; Tamuno, “Railway II”, 33; Colonial Annual Report for 1907-8, 21; Anjorin, “Politics”, 11; Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria Report for 1910-11, 39.

⁵⁹ Oyemakinde, “Railway Construction”, 317; Mason, “Working on the Railway”, 60; Tamuno, “Railway II”, 33; Colonial Annual Report for 1907-8, 21; Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria Report for 1910-11, 39.

⁶⁰ Oyemakinde, “Railway Construction”, 315; Mason, “Working on the Railway”, 63.

⁶¹ C. Divall and G. Revill, “Cultures of Transport: Representation, Practice and Technology”, *The Journal of Transport History*, 26/1, (2005): 99-111, 104.

recruitment; however, in their different analyses, the reactions they focused on did not go beyond flight. I will argue that during this period of technology transfer, when northerners first encountered or came into contact with the railway technology, their reactions were rather more mixed and profound.

Using an old Hausa poem entitled *Wakar Diga* (song of *diga*, or railway)—composed by Aliyu Dansidi, the first British-appointed Emir of Zazzau (1902–1924), and dating to 1908/9—a poem translated and analysed by Sani Umar, Yusuf Nadabo, and Brian Larkin,⁶² I argue that the domestication of the railway was perceived as colonial sublime and produced mixed reactions of fear, terror, and awe, as well as anti-colonial feelings. Umar’s work on Muslims’ intellectual responses to colonialism and Larkin’s work on northerners’ reactions to Western technology have been invaluable in this respect. Couched in allegorical form to give force and urgency to the message,⁶³ *Wakar Diga* is a discourse on colonialism, the psychological and economic effects of the domestication of railway technology, and Muslims’ encounter with Western railway technology during the colonial period, “when eyes had not opened”. The poem was composed at the onset of the railway construction.

To understand why the domestication of the railway provoked mixed reactions, it is useful to think of it as colonial sublime. The colonial sublime is a mixed reaction of anxiety, fear, and awe, as well as the struggle the mind experiences when confronted by grand, man-made objects which it cannot comprehend.⁶⁴ Under the British colonial regime, the sublime was produced through infrastructural development. The essence of this was to arouse feelings of the sublime and to demonstrate the power of Western civilization and modernity to the colonized.⁶⁵ In this regard, the massive labour recruitment, the building of the tracks, roads, viaducts, and bridges, the ability to reclaim rivers and streams, and the levelling of rocks and hills, as well as the tearing apart of villages to make way for the railway were some of the ways the sublime was produced as a spectacle of colonialism.⁶⁶ Brian Larkin argued that the colonial sublime sought to create feelings of total submission to colonial rule.⁶⁷

⁶² NNPC, *Wakokin Aliyu*; M. S. Muhammad, *Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British Colonial Rule*, (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Nadabo, *Tarihin Garin Kaduna*; Larkin, *Signal and Noise*.

⁶³ M. Hiskett, *A History of Hausa Islamic Verse*, (London: SOAS, 1975), 86.

⁶⁴ Cited in D. Nye, *The American Technological Sublime*, (USA: MIT, 1999), 3, 6; Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 35.

⁶⁵ Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 15–40.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 36; S. M. Aminu, “The Colonial State and Colonial Economy in Northern Nigeria: A Case Study of the Zaria Native Authority, c. 1902–1945”, (MA Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1991), 109–10.

⁶⁷ Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 36.

Right from the start of the work in Bida Province (the first province on the rail line), it was obvious that the whole work required close political attention, and High Commissioner Percy Girouard personally toured the districts along the line. During the tour, he impressed on the emirs the importance the administration attached to the project and why they must support it. The support of the emirs was necessary because the recruitment and organization of labour rested squarely on their shoulders.⁶⁸ As Michael Mason pointed out, the emirs were remunerated for their services.⁶⁹ The districts on the rail line were reorganized with resident district headmen appointed for the purpose of labour recruitment. A new district of Baro was created for the purpose of labour supplies by merging Baro and Katcha under the Makum of Bida.⁷⁰ Nupe Province itself was renamed Niger Province, and the districts of Kuta and Kwongoma under Zaria Province were transferred to Niger Province in 1908.⁷¹

This massive labour recruitment, administrative reshuffling, and the penetration of construction materials which marked the period were not only novel by local standards; they also provoked deep reactions. For instance, the Assistant Resident of Nupe Province, E. G. Dupigny, reported that the labour recruitment “was not popular, as the Nupe is intensely attached to his house, and does not like leaving it even for two or three months”.⁷² The Director of PWD&R, J. N. O. Eaglesome, recognized the fright and suspicions of the labourers.⁷³ The emirs and their officials were also terrified by the situation, but they could not complain, for to do so would amount to protest which might lead to removal from office. On a broader level, whole towns and farms were torn apart for labour and construction work. The presence of high-tech construction materials and the aura which filled the air combined to produce great reactions of fear (*tsoro*) and awe (*mamaki*).

The *Wakar Diga*—a 70-verse poem composed after Dansidi’s visit to the construction site—captured the fright and terror of the time. Dansidi represented the advent of the railway as sublime. He showed that the domestication of the railway evoked fear and terror. People were pressed to work on the railway against their wills. Contrary to the smooth collaborative narratives in previous analyses, the poem indicates that the local authorities, from the emirs to the village headmen themselves, were terrified by the massive labour recruitment and

⁶⁸ E. G. M. Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Nupe Province*, (London: Waterlow, 1920), 27-8, 131.

⁶⁹ Mason, “Working on the Railway”, 76, fn. 8.

⁷⁰ Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Nupe*; Mason, “Working on the Railway”.

⁷¹ Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Zaria*, 26.

⁷² Ibid. 31,

⁷³ Nigeria, Further Correspondence, 135.

construction work because they were not familiar with Western technology. They had been compelled to produce the labour, whole towns and villages disrupted and farmers compelled to leave their farms for railway work, thereby causing population dislocation. Dansidi's sense of fright can be seen in the following verses:

- 4) *O Allah protect us, we pray morning and evening,
Against the [railway], indeed we were terrified by the advent of the railway.*⁷⁴
- 6) *Indeed we were frightened and terrified*⁷⁵
- 23) *District and village headmen were frightened and
terrified by the railway.*⁷⁶

During this period of transformation by railway technology, people perceived the construction work differently because they did not understand its import. Rumours were generally making the rounds that towns, villages, and farms would be dispersed to make way for the railway, and that Muslims should have nothing to do with it, for it was an alien innovation brought by non-believers (*kafir*). It was also rumoured that working for the white man is forbidden (*haram*) in Islam and that colonialism itself was a sign of the end of time.⁷⁷ These rumours had strong effects on Muslims, for they appealed to their religious sensibilities. Brian Larkin pointed out that the construction site was a climate of anxiety in which rumour flourished.⁷⁸ Michael Adas argued that Africans always resort to superstitious

⁷⁴ *Ga Allah tutur duk nufi ke tafe,
Ina bisa roko maraice da safe,
Shi tsarshe mu sharrin da duk ke tafe,
Da munka ji ance yana nan tafe,
Kwarai mun ji tsoron sa aikin diga.*

⁷⁵ *Da munka ji labara zumai 'yan uwa,
Kwarai munji tsoro muna kaduwa,
Abin ga ashe ba wurin rabakawa,
Ciki na kadawa jiki na rawa,
Mukan ce ba ma iya aikin diga*

⁷⁶ *Ina addua'a Jalla domin fiyayye,
Ka ban sahibi wanda ya zama tsayayye,
Ya taimake ni duniya ko da ya janye,
Dada hakimai har saraki na kauye,
Fa sun firgice bisa aikin diga.*

⁷⁷ Nadabo, *Tarihin Garin Kaduna*, 101-1.

⁷⁸ Larkin, *Signal and Noise*.

and religious belief to explain the situations they cannot comprehend.⁷⁹ It should be noted that British colonial rule was not very popular, and resistance to British rule was widespread and came in different forms. During this period, Muslim intellectuals used Islamic legal discourse to incite people against the colonial authority. The Satiru and Hadejia's revolts were popular examples of Muslims' reactions to colonialism.⁸⁰ As M. S. Umar pointed out, *Wakar Diga* was a discourse against colonialism.⁸¹ Northern Nigeria, Yusuf Nadabo noted, was divided between those who understood and those who did not. Those who understood were the traditional rulers—like Dansidi, who tried to calm everyone despite being frightened himself.⁸²

As the poem also indicates, while some were terrified, others marvelled in wonderment. They perceived the elaborate construction materials, the train, and the tracks with a sense of awe and wonder. Dansidi says that he himself marvelled at the construction materials, the trains, and the rail line. He marvelled at the large amount of iron offloaded from trains; and the sight of long trains and tracks and the ways the iron were cut and processed instilled awe in him, for he had never seen such thing before. Dansidi's sense of wonder and awe can be understood against the following verses:

- 18) *O Brother, what a wonder I saw:*
*Steel cutting steel (...)! [train carrying steel]*⁸³
- 19) *Here trains without limit,*
*More limitless was the cutting of steel for railways.*⁸⁴
- 20) *Steel for constructing bridges,*

⁷⁹ M. Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men, Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989, 3.

⁸⁰ The earliest uprisings against British colonialism in Northern Nigeria.

⁸¹ Umar, *Islam and Colonialism*.

⁸² Nadabo, *Tarihin Garin Kaduna*, 101-1

⁸³ *Dadā ka ga an kama aiki safe,*

Ana bisa yi wansu na nan tafe,

Jiragen kasa ga su dauke da karfe,

Fa ya ajaban dan uwa na ga karfe,

Yana yanke karfe ga aikin diga.

⁸⁴ *Fa ya Rabbi kai ne kayi babu shakka,*

Nufin duk da kai yi garai sai shi dauka,

Fa komi ya so dole ne babu shakka,

Dadā ga jirage daba su iyaka,

Bare yanke karfe ga aikin diga.

*And another steel for striking.*⁸⁵

Dansidi recognized the mixed reactions and commotion, which was why he decided to visit the construction site himself. As for the rumours that were making the rounds concerning the Europeans, colonialism, and their railway, Dansidi enjoined the public to disregard the rumours as baseless and unfounded. Concerning the rumour that the railway would disperse towns, Dansidi himself downplayed the power of the colonial state by assuring the public that the presence of British army cannot move the forest, “much less for the rural areas to be dispersed because of [the railway]” (verses 24–25).⁸⁶ He calmed everyone by assuring them that all was well and appealed to them on why they should participate in the work. He particularly encouraged everyone to participate in the work so as to acquire the colonial coin. In verse 49, he states that everyone desired the coin (*kowa yana sonta matar diga*), including himself. He likened the coin to a woman (*matar diga*) who, according to him, was everyone’s desire, and he said that the only way to acquire it was to participate in the work. In this period of major transformation by cash, the importance of the colonial coin cannot be overestimated. It was the legal tender and the medium for paying tax. Dansidi described the coin as shiny and silver-like and said that people engaged in all sorts of work, such as trade, farming, and hard labour like railway work, just to acquire it. In Dansidi’s account, the railway construction facilitated the circulation of the colonial coin.⁸⁷

However, the reactions to the railway work were temporary, for as David Nye pointed out, a technology that instilled fear and awe at one time soon lost its novelty as it was domesticated.⁸⁸ The people were not passive recipients of transport innovation: after the initial reactions, and having discovered the advantages or benefits of colonial modernity in the form of wages, they quickly participated in the work of their own accord. After all, Dansidi had appealed to them to participate in the work in order to acquire the coin. This did not mean the absence of resistance, for this was part and parcel of construction work,

⁸⁵ *Iri duka sun taru an kewaye su,
Ana nazari su ka aiki da kansu,
Suna ta dibara ana taimakon su,
Karafan da za a kadarko dasu,
Dada ga wadansu da za a buga.*

⁸⁶ NNPC, *Wakokin Aliyu*, 28-29; Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 37-8; Aminu, “The Colonial State”, 109-110; Umar, *Islam and Colonialism*, 133.

⁸⁷ NNPC, *Wakokin Aliyu*, 29.

⁸⁸ Nye, *American Technological Sublime*, 38.

especially where exploitation and exactions were the case. Dansidi and his counterparts in Sokoto, Kano, and elsewhere ensured that the requirements for labourers and food supplies were met without the construction work having to suffer.

Besides the free labour that found employment on the railway, slaves, former slaves, and domestic servants also found employment. As studies by H. J. Pedraza, Paul E. Lovejoy, J. S. Hogendorn, and several others have demonstrated, railway work offered large numbers of slaves an opportunity to earn cash to gain their freedom.⁸⁹ When the British arrived, they abolished the institution of slavery alongside the legal status of slaves. New relations whereby slaves could sell their labour to earn their freedom and raise cash for tax emerged.⁹⁰

A fact not often recognized in the literature is that prisoners also found employment on the railway. Prisoners whose sentences were commuted to hard labour terms were also employed, because earthwork was considered hard labour.⁹¹ Contrary to the popular impression that only men worked on the line, *Wakar Diga* suggests that women and even children also engaged in some types of work on the railway.

The initial survey and earthwork was hampered by the lack of working tools, owing to the financial conditions of the PWD&R and the late arrival of the experts and construction materials. For instance, locally made hoes and tin basins were used for earthworks, as locally made baskets were difficult to obtain.⁹² Some preliminary surveying had already started in 1906, but it was not until late 1907 that the real surveying began. In practice, it was not necessary to undertake a great deal of surveying, as the engineers were able to make use of the report of previous surveys undertaken under Lugard. At the start of the surveys, only one surveyor was on site; but as the work progressed, more surveyors and engineers and auxiliary crew arrived on secondment from Canada, South Africa, Benguela, Chile, the War Office, and the Marine Workshop in London. A reconnaissance survey started from Zungeru to Moya valley with a small quantity of earthwork for a road at Baro.⁹³ The building of Baro, also known as Gidi, some 130 miles below Jebba on the Niger River also began at this time. The village was moved downstream below 0.0 mile for sanitary reasons. This was the proposed outlet of Northern Nigeria to the outside world as proposed by Lugard, and it was

⁸⁹ Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death*, 219-221; Pedraza, *Borrioboola-Gha*, 105.

⁹⁰ Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death*, 201-2.

⁹¹ Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria, Report for 1908-9, 12.

⁹² Nigeria, Further Correspondence, 134; Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigeria for 1907-8, 21.

⁹³ Nigeria, Further Correspondence, 132; Dupingy, *Gazetteer of Nupe*, 27.

the starting point of the rail mileage in the Northern Provinces (i.e. below 00 on the plan, or Bar 0, corrupted to become Baro).⁹⁴

Besides the hot climate and sometimes rain in which the Europeans and the labourers worked, the indigenous labourers also felled trees and cleared forest to make way for the railway. Villages were broken up and dispersed. The earthworks passed through flat, rocky, and mountainous as well as swampy landscapes, all of which had to be reshaped.⁹⁵ In cutting through the rocky landscape, explosives were used, as was the case in Tartabu. The rock flecks were used for ballasting. Rivers were bridged and swamps reclaimed. A forest which might have proved useful for a sleeper industry was discovered and expert lumbermen were brought in from Canada to develop the industry. The labourers were taught how to cut the sleepers, and a railway sawmill was planned at Baro.⁹⁶ The timber sleepers were not used in the end, however, because they were of low quality.⁹⁷

Type camps also were built for the indigenous labourers and the European experts at five-mile intervals up to mile 120. The camps consisted of thatched huts with mud or thatched walls and proved invaluable as a refuge from sun and rain for the survey and construction parties.⁹⁸ The camps not only served as sleeping places; they also served as a place of social interaction and trading points for the communities along the line. Prostitutes, gamblers, and criminals also took refuge in the camps. As Wale Oyemakinde pointed out, the camps were temporary and were abandoned to make new ones as construction work moved inland. The abandoned camps later provided accommodation to track maintenance gangs before quarters were built all over the system.⁹⁹

Construction followed closely on survey and earthwork. The real construction work commenced in 1908, from two opposite directions in Niger Province. South of Baro, the construction of the Lagos extension started from Ilorin, to cross Jebba and link up with the Baro–Kano railway near Minna. This study does not concern this section. From the opposite direction, which is the focus of this study, the work was officially inaugurated at Bedegi on 5 January 1908, with the Emir of Bida, Mallam Muhammadu, laying the first sleeper linking

⁹⁴ Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigeria for 1907/8, 21, 135; Nigeria, Further Correspondence, 73; Pedraza, *Borrioboola-Gha*, 105.

⁹⁵ Nadabo, *Tarihin Garin Kaduna*, 105.

⁹⁶ Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria, 1907-8, 21-22.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Nigeria, Further Correspondence, 136; Colonial Annual Report for 1907-8, 22.

⁹⁹ Oyemakinde, "Railway Construction", 307.

Baro with Badeggi at a colourful ceremony in the presence of the High Commissioner, the Resident, Emir of Zazzau Aliyu Dansidi, political officers, and railway officials. The laying of the first sleepers by Emir Muhammadu carried an important message, which was to reassure the labourers that what they were doing was right after all and for the benefit of all. A bridge was supposed to be built to connect Badegi with Bida but was postponed owing to the necessity of pushing the work further.¹⁰⁰

A fact not often mentioned in previous analyses is that immediately a section of the line was completed, it was declared an open line. The assumption previously was that the line was opened only when completed at Kano. This popular assumption is not correct and need to be corrected. As the evidence shows, a simple passenger freight service of 3d was charged for travelling by construction or work trains over each section of 15 miles. Although the open line was a strategy to familiarize people with trains, it also facilitated the transport of goods, construction materials, government stores, and commercial firms' consignments.¹⁰¹

The first gangs of labourers from Niger Province were organized under the Superintendent of Police. Most of them were of Nupe and Gwari origin.¹⁰² The claim that labourers from Southern Nigeria were not employed on the Northern Nigerian Railway, and that the northern administration preferred to delay the work rather than allowing southerners participate, is misleading.¹⁰³ As the evidence indicates, Yoruba were employed on the railway, even if on a small scale. As Director of the PWD&R J. N. Eaglesome reported, the initial work "originally began with about 1,200 men comprising Yoruba, Hausa and Nupe". There is no indication to suggest they were from within the province.¹⁰⁴ The labourers worked long hours under strenuous conditions, from 6 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. with an hour's rest, and then continued from 9.30 a.m. to 3 p.m.. Another gang worked from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. with an hour's break, and then continued from 8 p.m. to 12 p.m.. The gangs had only one day off a week, and all this work was at the expense of farm work.¹⁰⁵

At the start of the work in January 1908, approximately 2,426 labourers were working on the line, rising to 3,820 in April. By November, about 5,146 labourers were already working on the line (see Table 2.1). The construction work proceeded slowly owing to the

¹⁰⁰ E. G. M. Dupingy, *Gazetteer of Zaria*, 28; Nigeria, Further Correspondence, 135; NNPC, *Wakokin Aliyu*, 27; E. G. M. Dupingy, *Gazetteer of Nupe*, 28; Mason, "Working on the Railway", 63.

¹⁰¹ Colonial Annual Report-Annual, Northern Nigeria, Report for 1908-9, 17.

¹⁰² Mason, "Working on the Railway", 62.

¹⁰³ Oyemakinde, "Railway Construction", 315.

¹⁰⁴ Nigeria, Further Correspondence, 134.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 134, 154.

lack of familiarity with construction work. The training of labour for track laying also proved difficult, with a slow rate of 1/5 mile a day, reaching mile 120 in the middle of the year.¹⁰⁶ The Bako River, one of the many rivers through which the line passed in the first 120 miles, was reached by the middle of the year and cleared of obstruction for at least 60 miles, which proved invaluable in the transport of construction materials by canoe. Owing to the prevalence of tsetse flies, animal transport was not used in transporting construction materials from the river. Most of the materials were carried by head. Even horses belonging to the European staff died of tsetse attacks. One of the areas where the construction party faced enormous challenges was the Bako and Bakogi valleys, owing to the nature of the terrain. The work had to be abandoned for some time, partly owing to the terrain and partly to a delay in the arrival of cement. Temporary and permanent bridges were constructed over the rivers.¹⁰⁷ One of the steamers carrying construction materials even sank, which resulted in the loss of 785 tons of sleepers, foundation bridges, and cement.¹⁰⁸

It should be noted that in constructing the railway, many problems and challenges were encountered at the beginning. Many mistakes were also made; some were technical, while some were due to poor information about the environment and failure to recognize the local requirements of a situation. Most of the work was at first based on trial and error, as the engineers did not understand the terrain and its hazards; but as the work progressed, the knowledge of the terrain and of the local situation improved. After all, it was in making mistakes that good engineers and technicians were made—working out problems based on local requirements and conditions as they went along.

¹⁰⁶ Colonial Report-Annual for 1907-8, 22; Nigeria, Further Correspondence, 154.

¹⁰⁷ Colonial Report-Annual for 1907-8, 22.

¹⁰⁸ Nigeria, Further Correspondence, 151, 136.



Figure 2.1 Setting out for earthworks at Patatifi

Source: *The Engineer*, 17 September 1909.



Figure 2.2 Earthworks in progress at Patatifi Bluff

Source: *The Engineer*, 17 September 1909.



Figure 2.3 Survey party No. 1, camp type

Source: Flickr Photo stream

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/31575009@N05/5415949913/in/photolist-9fAadM-9fDiHb>



Figure 2.4 Railway construction in Nupe Province

1. The Emir of Bida Muhammadu in white robes, standing at the laying of the first sleepers at Badeggi in January 1908.
2. The Sarkin Paiko in white robes, turning the first sod at the start of the Gwari section in Nupe Province in 1909.
3. Labourers at work at the Gwari section in Nupe Province in 1909.

Source: Flickr Photo stream

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/31575009@N05/5415949209/in/photolist-9fAa1D-9fAadM-9fDiHb>



Figure 2.5 Levelling of rocky landscape in 1908

Source: *The Graphic Newspaper*, 25 July 1908



Figure 2.6 Reclaiming of swamp in 1908

Source: <http://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/1985580>



Figure 2.7 Temporary bridge over the Bakogi River

Sources: *The Engineer*, 17 September 1909.



2.8 Testing of the Emir Class engine on a steel bridge

Source: *The Engineer*, 17 September 1909.

As the construction work entered Kuta Division—the last district on the rail line in Nupe Province—in 1909, it encountered major resistance from the Gwari people of Gussoro, owing to labour recruitment and the fact that the work undermined agricultural production. By this time, labour demand has reached its peak, with more labour required to complete the remaining length of the line in the province. Before the line entered Gwari country, the labours employed on the line were mixed, comprising Nupe, Gwari, Koro, Yoruba, and Hausa. As the line entered Gwari land, more and more Gwari labour was required to complete the remaining length of the line in the district. Unlike the Nupe, the Gwari had no well-organized political and coercive structure. They were independent village communities without an established political structure.¹⁰⁹ It was to this village community that the British called for labour. The Gwari people deserted the construction site at the beginning of the rains and refused to return or pay their tributes for the previous year.¹¹⁰ The revolt in Gussoro was one of the popular uprisings against British colonialism, after the Satiru and Hadejia revolts of 1906.¹¹¹

Although the provincial administration gave the impression that the revolt was due to domestic intrigues over chieftaincy, it led to the killing of a European Political Officer, Mr. Venrenen, and 11 indigenous police. The revolt had its origin in what the labourers perceived as their forced conscription, extortion, and failure to release them ahead of the wet season, as well as in allegations that the recruiting officer slept with their wives while on site. Earlier in that year, their kin of Paiko and Fuka districts deserted the construction site at the beginning of the wet season and refused either to show up for work or pay their tributes. The Gwari people plotted to kill their chief, whom they perceived as a collaborator with the white men. Having got wind of the plot to attack him, the embattled chief ran to the Political Officer. The latter and his 11 indigenous police were ambushed and killed on their way to restore the embattled chief. In two massive retaliatory attacks, the whole village was destroyed, with heavy casualties, and the culprits were apprehended.¹¹² Despite the uprising and its disruption, the work progressed rapidly and entered Zaria, the second province on the

¹⁰⁹ Mason, “Working on the Railway”, 67-8.

¹¹⁰ Figures are not available on deserters.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 68; Dupingy, *Gazetteer of Nupe*, 53.

¹¹² B. K. Audu, “The 1909 Gussoro Revolt”, (BA Dissertation, Bayero University, Kano, 2000), 62; Mason, “Working on the Railway”, 68-70; Dupingy, *Gazetteer of Nupe*, 53.

railway, in March 1909. By this time, the Lagos extension had reached Gudu, mile 43 from Jebba.¹¹³

However, as the construction party entered Zaria, more and more labour was required owing to the magnitude of the work in the province. Of the total 400 miles of rail line, 141 miles, “the stiffest portion”, was in Zaria.¹¹⁴ As in Gussoro, the work was not popular in Zaria, due to the magnitude of labour required from the province. Besides the labour required for this particular section of the line, the province was to provide additional labour for building another, narrow-gauge line known as Bauchi Light Railway, from Zaria to the tin mines on the Jos Plateau, later in 1911. This was in addition to the labour required for the tin mines on the Jos Plateau itself. The European Political Officers, the Emir, and his chiefs were fully occupied with labour recruitment and supervision, as well as with supplies of food for the construction work.¹¹⁵ The Emir, Aliyu Dansidi (mentioned earlier for his poem), threw his whole weight behind the work, to the satisfaction of the Resident. His district and village heads also responded energetically, to the delight of the colonial state.¹¹⁶ Earlier in January, Governor Sir Percy Girouard had toured the villages on the line, where he was met by the Resident, the Emir, and his chiefs at Likoro in preparation for the work. The purpose of his tour was to see for himself the level of preparation and to impress on the Emir and his chiefs the importance the state attached to the project.¹¹⁷

Labour was short at the start of the work. In Zaria, as in Nupe, labour recruitment rendered administrative and political work handicapped owing to shortage of staff. The railway work imposed a considerable burden on the Emir and his chiefs, a situation which provided opportunity for abuse, as they diverted some of the labour to their personal farms and trade.¹¹⁸ As Safiyanu Aminu and Shoyebi Abayomi asserted, villages were raided to procure labour for the construction work.¹¹⁹ Besides the organization of labour, which fell on shoulders of the Emir, he also carried out administrative work on behalf of the Resident, who was pre-occupied with the railway work. The work also resulted in an administrative reorganization, leading to the creation of the Western Division specifically to meet the requirements of the situation caused by railway work and the building of Kaduna (the

¹¹³ Dupingy, *Gazetteer of Nupe*, 29.

¹¹⁴ Aminu, “The Colonial State”.

¹¹⁵ Dupingy, *Gazetteer of Zaria*, 31.

¹¹⁶ NAK ZarProf, Zaria Province Report No. 1910.

¹¹⁷ Abayomi, “Consequences”, 31.

¹¹⁸ NAK SNP/10/105P/1921, Zaria Province Annual Report for 15 months, ended 31st March 1921.

¹¹⁹ Abayomi, “Consequences”, 106; Aminu, “The Colonial State”, 108-9,

proposed administrative headquarters). The Southern Division and the Gwari Division, previously administered separately, were also merged for the railway work in August 1909.¹²⁰

The construction work was not popular in Zaria and resistance was both passive and active. At the start of the work, south of the province, desertion among the Gwari was between 300 to 800 labourers due to the Gussoro episode. As the Resident pointed out, an exaggerated account of the Gussoro uprising in Nupe Province had reached them. Those already mobilized on the construction site armed themselves and wanted to make trouble. Before the troops dispatched to quell the rebellion had arrived, the situation was tactfully prevented from escalating, and so construction continued.¹²¹ By March, about 300 men comprising free and unfree labour, were already working on the line. This rose to 3,191 at the end of the year, with 22½ miles of heavy earthworks recorded. North of Kaduna, construction work began at Zaria in July with 470 men, rising to 4,100 men by the end of the year (see Table 2.1 below). A motor road was also constructed from Rigachikum to Naraguta, the location of the tin mines in Jos. The total work for the whole nine months was 50 miles, involving a little over 17,268 labourers, as the table indicates.¹²² As the construction work moved away from Zaria City to Kano in 1910, more and more labourers were required north of Zaria (where some of the studied communities are located). The Emir further tightened his grip to ensure the required labourer quotas were met to complete the extent of the line in the province. Not only did he organize the supply, he also supervised the construction. John Raphael, a British journalist and editor of *African World*, who was on a tour of Nigeria at that time, writes that Dansidi was always in the habit of sitting on the embankment with his officials watching how the tracks were laid.¹²³ As the record indicates, Likoro suffered severely from having to supply huge numbers of labourers for the construction work.¹²⁴ Stations were established at Likoro, Gimi, and Faiki.¹²⁵ The construction work proceeded rapidly, with the earthworks reaching Kano border in May 1910.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Secretary Northern Province (hereafter referred to as SNP) SNP7/950/1911, Zaria Province Report Annual; NAK SNP7/986/1910, Zaria Province Report Annual, 1909; NAK SNP7/975/1912, Zaria Province Report Annual, 1911.

¹²¹ NAK SNP/986/1910; also see Mason, "Working on the Railway", 70-1.

¹²² Dupingy, *Gazetteer of Zaria*, 31.

¹²³ J. R. Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, (London: 1914), 300.

¹²⁴ Auchan (or Auchang) Station was established shortly afterward. Faiki Station was later closed in 1918, and a new station, called Dangora, was established a little further from Faiki. NAK ZarProf 5380 Makarfi District Note Book 1943..

¹²⁵ NAK SNP7/2227/1912 Baro Kano Railway, 13; F. Jaekel, *The History of the Nigerian Railway: Network and Infrastructures*, vol. 2, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1997), 626.

¹²⁶ Jaekel, *Nigerian Railway*, vol. 2, 62.

It needs be pointed out that the massive labour recruitment in Zaria created widespread tension and resistance. For instance, approximately 1,100 labourers deserted the construction site, while 639 families emigrated to Kano, Katsina, and Bauchi for fear of conscription. Those who stayed behind were either conscripted or handed over two-thirds of their income to their headmen as exactions.¹²⁷ Construction work also undermined agricultural work. Although railway work exposed labourers to exploitation and exactions, it had the educative value of facilitating the spread of the colonial coin and bringing the pagan subjects of southern Zaria and the Hausa together for the first time. Previously, they had been hostile to and suspicious of one another.¹²⁸

As the construction work entered Kano, the last province on the line, in 1910, those communities along the rail line likewise supplied the labourers for the work. As with Zaria, the labour requirement in Kano was high, due to building of the rail line and the Challawa bridge (the longest on the system), as well as building of Kaduna, the new administrative headquarters. As the study by Mohammad Gwadabe indicates, many peasants and slaves were forced to work on the railway, which led to population dislocation.¹²⁹ With the Emir and his chiefs ready to supply the labour, there were no complaints of a labour shortage as there had been in Zaria. The work initially started with 500 men, and increased to over 11,000 at the end of June. Before the end of the year, thousands of labourers were toiling on the line.¹³⁰ The speed in track laying was also phenomenal; it proceeded very fast, at a rate of 25 to 40 miles a month, 12 miles a week, and 6½ miles a day. The earthworks finally entered Kano metropolis at mile 356, the great northern terminus, in June 1910.¹³¹

The track itself, however, did not enter Kano until March 1911, owing to the washing away of the temporary bridge over the Challawa River. Kano Station was moved backward to mile 354, owing to the ample space required for trading and residential quarters.¹³² The whole work spanned a period of three years and eight months altogether and was completed earlier than anticipated. It was a great success, being the first such project to be built by any PWD&R in the country. The success was due to the combined efforts of European experts and the indigenous labourers. As Aliyu Dansidi himself rightly acknowledged in verses 27–37 of his poem, the success was due to many people: the labourers, the labour recruiters who watched over them day and night to ensure they remained on site, and the emirs and their

¹²⁷ Mason, “Working on the Railway”, 70-3; Abayomi, “Consequences”, 114-5.

¹²⁸ NAK NP7/950/1911; NAK NP7/986/1910; NAK NP7/975/1912.

¹²⁹ M. M. Gwadabe, “Land, Labour and Taxation in Kano Native Authority: the case of Kumbotso District”, (PhD Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria: 2007), 210-217.

¹³⁰ Mason, “Working on the Railway”, 71.

¹³¹ Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria, Report for 1911, 32-33; Bell, “Recent Progress”, 390.

¹³² Colonial Annual Report for Northern Nigeria, 1911; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 25.

chiefs, who ensured that labour poured onto the site, as well as the women and children who fed them. Dansidi thanked every one of them, including the European Political Officers for their role in ensuring that the work was completed ahead of time.¹³³

Table 2.1 Number of labourers recruited, January 1908–March 1911

Month	Year	Number
January	1908	2,426
February	1908	4,364
March	1908	3,820
April	1908	3,820
May	1908	4,264
June	1908	4,362
October	1908	4,798
November	1908	5,146
December	1908	2,827
January	1909	2,426
February	1909	3,364
March	1909	4,822
April	1909	3,820
May	1909	4,264
June	1909	4,362
Quarter ending 31 March	1910	14,879
Quarter ending 30 June	1910	11,911
Quarter ending 30 September	1910	3,727
Quarter ending 31 December	1910	3,638
Quarter ending 31 March	1911	8,804

Source: These figures are collated from the Northern Nigerian Annual Reports for 1907–1911.

¹³³ NNPC, *Wakokin Aliyu*, 28-9.



Figure 2.9 Construction work near Kaduna in 1910

Source: Ijaw Nation, <http://www.unitedijaw.com/amalgamation.htm#Notes>



Figure 2.10 Construction work near Kano

Source: *The Engineer*, 17 September 1909.

It is important to mention that none of the stations in the studied communities south of Kano were established at this time; they were established after the line was completed. The only station south-west of Kano City at that time was Rafingora. This was closed down with the establishment of Madobi station in 1913.¹³⁴ A fact often ignored in the literature is that the railway construction led to the establishment of Dangora (one of the studied communities), which became an important railway hub south-west of Kano. Oral account has it that Dangora was created out of the necessity to prevent theft of construction materials. According to this popular tradition, when the construction party arrived at the present location of the town, theft of construction materials was prevalent. In order to ensure safety of the materials, the colonial authority ordered the village headman of Kyarana (a hamlet three miles away) to move to Dangora so as to keep an eye on the materials. Since then, Dangora became the seat of a village headman, while Kyarana remained the seat of a ward. When the railway system was being expanded in the post-World War I period, Dangora was made a railway town. Prior to this, it was essentially an unimportant centre.¹³⁵

As mentioned earlier, the Baro–Kano railway had been conceived and built as a temporary line to be upgraded as traffic improved on the system. On the system as a whole, 24 stations, both permanent and temporary, had been established, with a plan to establish more as traffic improved. Of the eight communities considered in this study (see Map 2.2), only two actually had stations at this time. The remaining ones were established during and after World War I (Table 2.2). The station structures were generally temporary, made of wood and iron pending the erection of permanent structures. On the whole, there were no passenger platforms and none of the stations was signalled, partly because of the low speed of the trains and the fact that night journeys were not anticipated at that time.¹³⁶ This temporary nature of the system was to create difficulties after the system began operations.

¹³⁴ Jaekel, *Nigerian Railway*, vol. 2, 626.

¹³⁵ Interviews with Alhaji Adamu (village head or Sarkin Fulanin Kyarana) and Malam Shehu Yusuf, both interviewed on 4 March and 13 March 2011.

¹³⁶ Colonial Annual Report for 1911, 32-3; NAK SNP7/2227/1912; NAK SNP7/2322/1912.

Table 2.2 List of stations from Baro to Kano

Station	Distance from start of line	Distance from preceding station (km)	Date established
Baro	0	0	Open line 1912
Katcha	14.50	14.50	“
Bakogi	26.50	12.00	“
Baddegi	42.50	14.00	“
Ebba	59.00	16.50	“
Katerigi	72.50	13.50	“
Lafiagi (proposed)	91.25	13.50	“
Shappa (temporary)	97.00	5.75	“
Minna	111.25	14.25	“
She	130.00	18.75	“
Guni	147.00	17.00	“
Kogi Serikin Pawa	169.00	22.00	“
Godani	185.50	16.50	“
Bakin kasua	197.00	11.50	“
Kaduna	215.00	18.00	“
Rigachikum	228.50	13.50	“
Birinin Yero	239.50	11.00	“
Dumbi	254.50	15.00	“
Zaria Cantonment	266.00	11.50	“
Likoro	275.00	9.00	Open line 1912
Gimi Dabosa/ Gimi	287.00	12.00	“
Faiki/Paki	310.50	23.50	“ (closed in 1918)
Anchau/ Auchang	306.00	23.50	1913
Rafingora	334.00	23.50	1912 (closed in 1913)
Dangora	n.a.	n.a.	Established 1918
Yako	n.a.	n.a.	Established in 1918
Madobi/Maidobi	322.75	n.a.	Established in 1913
Kwankwaso	322.75	n.a.	Established in 1918
Challawa/Challowa	337.00	n.a.	Established in 1914
Kano	335.00	21.00	Open line

Note: n.a.= not available

Sources: NAK SNP7/2227/1912, 13; NAK SNP7/6/9/1913, Railway Station naming of...; Jaekel, *Nigerian Railway*, vol. 2, 102.

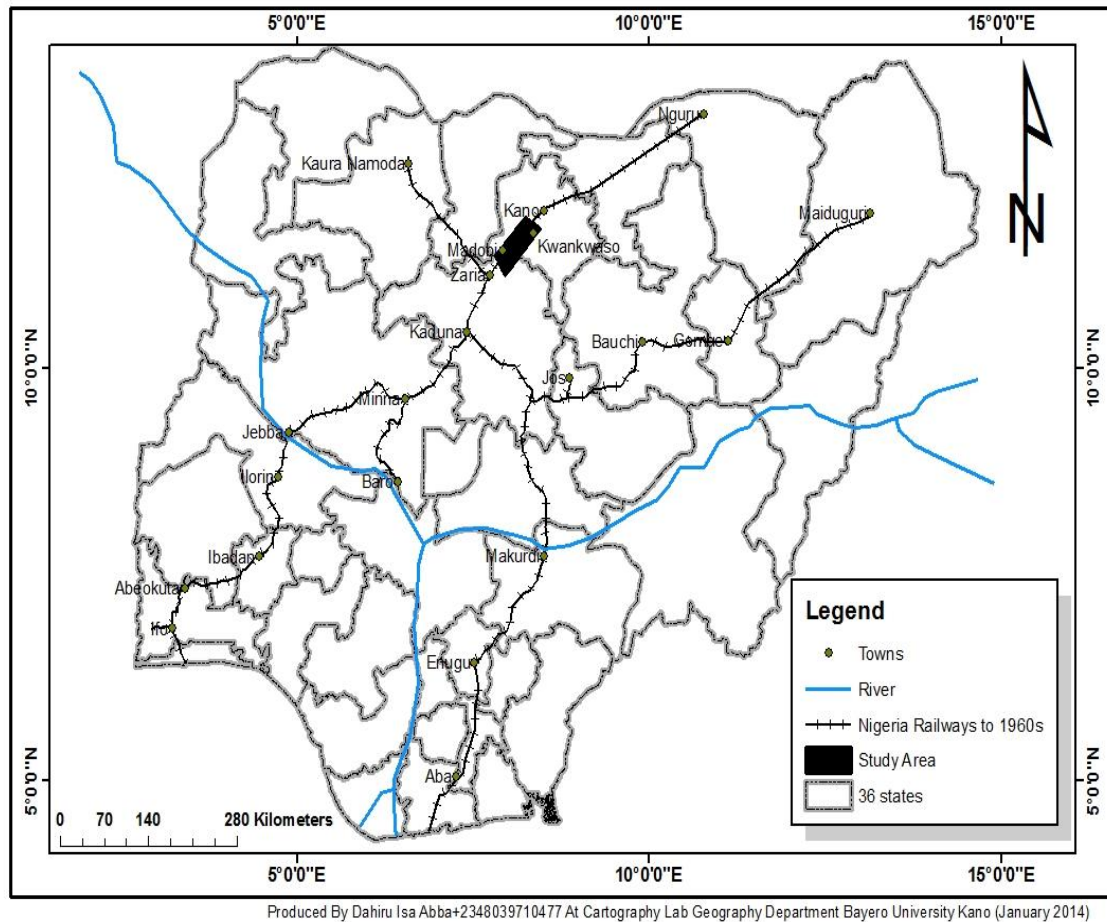
Although the railway had entered Kano metropolis, it was not open to traffic. Contrary to the popular claim that the traffic train entered Kano in 1911, there was no such

train; the first train was a work or construction train. The line was not open to traffic until 1912, owing to washouts and technical problems. The bridge over the River Niger had also not been completed, although the early trains were ferried across the river by a steam ferry named *Fabius*.¹³⁷ This was a temporary arrangement, and the bridging of the north channel of the river was completed in 1910. The south channel, the most difficult part, although started in 1911 was completed only in 1916.¹³⁸ It should be noted that the opening had been deliberately delayed until the amalgamation of the two railways (i.e. the Baro–Kano railway and the Lagos Government Railway) which had been slated for 1 January 1912. As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, the amalgamation was predicated on the need to unify the debt incurred in building the railway. As with the railway, the essence of unifying the administration of the Southern and the Northern provinces was to rescue the North from annual grant-in-aid and treasury control. Unifying the two administrations would provide a pool of resources that would be used in administering the railway and the country, while also doing away with barriers that might hinder national integration.

Now that the railway had been completed, it remained to be seen whether it would achieve the goal for which it was constructed. As the next chapter will show, initial encounters with the locomotive, as with the construction process, were marked by strong, mixed reactions owing to lack of familiarity. As familiarity with the locomotive increased, it was appropriated and domesticated in distinctive ways.

¹³⁷ The *Fabius* had a length of 160 ft and a beam of 33 ft 6 in and accommodated between four and six coaches, depending on their length. Crossing the river involved lowering and raising at both ends, which took a little over an hour to complete, a novel experience by local standards. John R. Raphael writes that the carriages were run to the head of an inclined plane and a wire rope attached to each coach, the other ends encircling a winding drum. Another rope bound to the further end of the carriage drew it onto the slope of the plane, and the winding machine let it down. The plane carried the carriages to a trolley bridge fitted to the steam ferry, which took four carriages, so that the entire train was taken over in two journeys. At Jebba Island, the reverse process was followed, and, a freight engine being coupled up, the train proceeded over the north channel bridge and thus onwards. See NAK 299/S. 3 vol. 1, Railway Publication 1949-1956, 7; Tamuno, "Railway II", 37; Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, 17; Bell, "Recent Progress", 390.

¹³⁸ Jaekel, *Nigerian Railway*, vol. 2, 96; Tamuno, "Railway II", 37.



Map 2.2 Map of Nigerian Railway in the 1960s

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the Baro–Kano railway was a “troubled railway”, from its conception to its construction and completion. It was shown that the idea of the Northern Authority to build the railway provoked a prolonged rivalry and controversy among the other provincial administrators. As the chapter shows, the lack of a countrywide policy guideline, often assumed to be the source of the conflict, was merely a contributing factor rather than the cause. This is because railway development is always controversial, because it is a political as well as an economic matter, due to the initial sunk costs and the expected returns on investment, as well as the issue of control. The decisions to build a line, the choice of junction, terminal, and freight rates, as well as control are issues which bred controversy. After a rivalry which lasted a period of six years, the Northern Authority won and the others lost.

As the chapter also indicates, the building of the line was influenced by an imperialist motive to exploit cotton. Right from its conception, planning, and construction, the line was conceived as an “economy line” to be built as cheaply as possible. The construction method itself was influenced by economic motives to save costs. Despite the challenges and difficulties, the construction work proceeded rapidly and was completed earlier than anticipated. The local authorities also ensured the required labour and food requirements were met. As the chapter also suggests, the construction work facilitated the spread of the colonial currency and undermined agricultural production.

Contrary to the popular claim that flight from forced recruitment was the only reaction to the railway’s construction, the chapter demonstrates that mixed reactions of fear, apprehension, and awe marked local communities’ reactions to the work. This is because this was their first encounter with the domestication of Western technology. The construction work and everything associated with it were novel experiences which provoked mixed reactions.

CHAPTER 3: PERCEPTION, APPROPRIATION AND DOMESTICATION OF TRANSPORT INNOVATION

For the first few months or so that the weekly trains were running to Kano, natives from the city and the surrounding villages displayed curiosity concerning the locomotive to the degree of assembling in a crowd on the track at the railhead [...].

John R. Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*.

Wakar Jirgin kasa (Train Song)

Jirgin kasa sarkin aiki

The train, the indefatigable creature,

Aikinshi yafi Jakkai dubbai

It does more than a thousand donkeys do;

Jirgi mai zuwa Kano daga Kurmi

The train that goes to Kano from Lagos,

Jirgi maje Ilori da Bidda

The train that goes to Ilorin and Bida,

Jirgin Ilori yaje Lakwaja

The train goes to Lokoja from Ilorin,

Jirgin Kaduna yazo Zazzau

The train came to Zazzau (Zaria) from Kaduna.

Jirgin dakon gyada dana kirgi

The train carried groundnuts and hide and skins;

Jirgi yazo Likoro ranar jibi

The train comes to Likoro on market days.

Jirgi dakata Likoro kai mana aiki

Train, stop and carry passengers and load at Likoro.

Jirgi mai kama da dakin sarki

The train that looks like a king's palace;

Sarkin Likoro ya shiga Jirgi

The chief of Likoro entered the train;

Sarkin Kudan yace abin mamaki

The chief of Kudan says it was wonderful;

Da jirgin sarakuna dana soja

There are royal and military trains.

(Collected from Hajiya Aishatu Dede-Likoro)

3.1 Introduction

With the completion and opening of the railway to traffic, expectations were high that it would transform the Northern Territories from their ‘backwardness’. Most importantly, it was envisaged that the railway would activate agricultural production and trade and open up the country to British trade and finance. However, the arrival of the first train that would usher in this development was marked by mixed reactions from the local communities, because they did not understand what the railway and its uses were. As soon as they familiarized themselves with it and understood its benefits, they quickly apprehended and integrated it into daily life.

This chapter analyses how the railway was perceived, appropriated, and domesticated into daily life. The chapter argues that the initial encounter with the locomotive was marked by fear and awe, because people did not comprehend what it was all about; but as familiarity increased, they quickly apprehended and integrated it to transform their lives. Also, it is argued that the railway and its associated technologies were means of representing and signifying the symbolic meaning of British rule and civilization as technological achievements to Nigerians.

3.2 Fears, wonders, marvels and the locomotive

The completion of the railway and its associated effects have attracted a fair amount of attention in the literature. The general consensus is that the railway had enormous effects on the socio-economic and cultural landscapes of Northern Nigeria, especially for those living along the rail line. The railway shortened travel time and facilitated the movement of people, goods, food, and ideas, and it made British control very effective, both administratively and economically. However, despite the sustained attention in the literature to the railway’s effects, it is taken for granted that Nigerians apprehended the new transport system almost immediately. Such analyses also ignore how Nigerians’ initiative resulted in a new concept of travelling that shaped everyday life. This gap in the literature is partly due to the materials

available to writers at the time they wrote. Another reason, as Collin Divall and George Revill suggested, is that transport specialists rarely conceive of a railway as technology, despite its semiotic aspects.¹ Using old and new sources, some of which have not been considered in previous analyses, I will demonstrate that northerners first encountered the railway technology with mixed reactions of fear and wonder, owing to their lack of familiarity with Western technology.

When I asked old men what they remembered or heard about how people encountered the locomotives and trains, their response was that they were perceived with mixed reactions, because they did not understand what they were all about. A. O. Anjorin pointed out that “it took some time before [the northerners] began to make use of the new transport system after their completion [...]. This according to him was due partly to the natural human suspicion against innovations, especially drastic ones.”² Comparative studies elsewhere indicate that Africans encountered Western technologies such as motor cars, airplanes, electricity, cinema, and even telescopes with mixed reactions.³ Michael Adas asserted that no technology unleashed such terror and awe on Africans as the locomotives.⁴ Even in Europe and the United States of America, where the locomotive comes from, its arrival there was marked by a new type of fear and apprehension.⁵

To understand why the new transport unleashed terror and awe on people, it is useful to think of the locomotive and train as the colonial technological sublime. As stated in the previous chapter, the colonial sublime is a mixed reaction the mind experiences when confronted by grand, man-made objects which it cannot comprehend. The colonial sublime works only when compared with other things.⁶ Brian Larkin argued that one of the goals for using infrastructural technologies under the colonial regime was to demonstrate power and instil total submission.⁷ In this regards, the built space of the locomotive and trains, the ability to move over tracks, and the speed and sound were some of the ways the sublime was

¹ C. Divall and G. Revill, “Cultures of Transport”, 104.

² See Anjorin, “Cotton Industry”, 120.

³ See for instance W. G. Nkwi, *Kfaang and Technologies: Towards a Social History of Mobility in Kom, Cameroon, 1928-1998*, (Leiden: ASC, 2011), 79; Adas, *Machines as the Measure*; J. Cary, *Mr Johnson*, (New York: New Directions, 1939); Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 40-43.

⁴ Adas, *Machines as the Measure*, 223.

⁵ W. Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey, the Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*, (The University of California Press, 1986/1977); Nye, *American Technological Sublime*, 54; Adas, *Machines as the Measure*, 223; Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 40.

⁶ See Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 15-40.

⁷ Ibid. 36.

produced as a spectacle of colonial rule- to instil feelings of total submission. As informants generally commented, the trains' movement and speed shook their houses to their very foundations.⁸ The sound and speed were novel experiences which the mind was not accustomed to. Of course, reactions differed from individual to individual, depending on their understanding. As some informants pointed out, some people ran into the bush, and even animals scampered into the bush on the approach of the locomotive.⁹ The psychologist Lisa Fritscher pointed out that when the human body is terrified, it responds in different ways, one of which is "fight or flight".¹⁰ The archival record also suggests that not everybody ran; some stayed but decided not to have anything to do with the locomotive. As one annual report indicates, even the "mighty and the powerful" were terrified of the locomotive. When invited to take a train ride by the Resident, during the opening of the Ilorin section of the railway in 1908, the Emir declined the offer as he was terrified.¹¹ Larkin argued that "the colonial sublime is about Europeans' tactile symbolic efforts to make technology mean".¹² For many rural dwellers, the ambivalence toward the locomotive was both fear and awe. Evidence from elsewhere in Nigeria and Africa also reveals that tension, anxiety, apprehension, and in some cases tragedy, marked responses to the introduction of the locomotive.¹³

While some reacted with a sense of fear and terror, others responded with a sense of wonder and awe. The fantastic tales of how northerners marvelled at the locomotives have been documented in travel accounts of Europeans. John R. Raphael, referred to in the

⁸ Interviews with Malam Hamza Zawachiki, Malam Ali Zubairu, and Malam Ibrahim Alhassan, Zawachiki, 19 May 2012; and with Alhaji Mohammad Abubakar, Leiden, 15 August 2012.

⁹ Interview with Malam Hamza Zawachiki, Malam Ali Zubairu, and Malam Ibrahim Alhassan, Zawachiki, 19 May 2012; and with Alhaji Yakubu Likoro, Likoro, 11 July 2012.

¹⁰ L. Fritscher, "The Psychology of Fear: Understanding the Dynamic of Fear Response", 2011. About.Com Phobia, <http://phobias.about.com/od/introductiontophobias/a/psychologyfear.htm> [accessed on 15 March 2012].

¹¹ Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigeria Report for 1908. Also see Tamuno, "Railway I", 279-292, 292.

¹² Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 42.

¹³ For instance, Innocent Uzoechi reports that during the construction of the Eastern Railway, an Igbo chief protested against the line being constructed through his village for fear that it would take away the women. Since he could not stop the construction work, however, he promised to stop the train.¹³ Mark Uzomba Oyekwere provides a tragic account of what happened afterwards. On the day the locomotive was to pass through his village, the chief stood on the track warning the locomotive to stop. As the locomotive pushed forward, it horned and blared warnings to the chief to get off the track. Despite appeals from his subjects, the chief declined to step aside. The train did not stop, however; it ran over him, and his body was recovered from the track. The chief thought the driver would respect him because he was a chief. But the locomotive is no respecter of persons or status, for it has no destination other than the next station. The chief's apprehension derived from the fear of the unknown which the locomotive was capable of generating. The locomotive, as the narrative suggests, would undermine men's control over women and break down family ties. See Uzoechi, "Social and Political Impact"; M. U. Onyekwere, *Igbo Idioms*, (London, 2011), 256; also see K. P. Vickery, "Railways, Railway Culture, and Industrial Work Discipline in the Rhodesias", in: Robert Ross, Marja Hinfelaar and Iva Pesa (eds), *The Objects of Life in Central Africa: History of Consumption and Social Change 1840-1980*, (London: Brill, 2013).

previous chapter, was in Nigeria in 1911 when the railway was still novel. He wrote that northerners reacted to the locomotive with awe and anxiety. Raphael's account may be accepted as primary evidence, as it is an eye-witness account. The railway, as Raphael represented it, was the epitome of modernity, progress, and development. He writes: "[for] the first few months or so that the weekly train were running to Kano, natives from the city and the surrounding villages" on the railway displayed curiosity at the locomotive. They assembled themselves on the track in large numbers, "to gaze again and again at the engine", examining it from every angle, "quite polite and giving no trouble to the officials [...], some lying on the ground to look [...] beneath the phenomenal thing".¹⁴ This tale about Nigerians' reactions to locomotives suggests, as Louise White pointed out, "popular ideas about the interaction between culture and technology, between bodies and machines".¹⁵

No one displayed as much curiosity about the locomotive as Aliyu Dansidi himself, the British-appointed Emir of Zaria, mentioned in the previous chapter for his role in the railway's construction. Dansidi's reaction was one of wonder and awe. Raphael writes that Dansidi was in the habit of enquiring what quantity of fuel wood the locomotive consumed and what quantity of water it drank. He regarded the locomotive as a living creature. The sound of the locomotive dazzled him, so much so that its whistle and shriek was kept to its loudest for his pleasure for several minutes.¹⁶ Comparative accounts elsewhere in Nigeria also reveal that wonder and awe were some of the reactions to the locomotive. As Toyin Falola writes of his own encounter with the steam engine: "I saw the train for the first time. Coaches upon coaches, moving slowly, [...] I thought it looked like a snake. As it moved away, I marveled. Then [I went] to the rail lines, to touch them, to feel the heat."¹⁷ For some, however, the locomotive was nothing but magic in the hand of the British. As one Colonial Officer, Major A. J. N. Tremearne, writes, the locomotives were the "great juju" in Northern Nigeria.¹⁸ In other words, it was the white man's magic. Michael Adas writes that whenever Africans cannot comprehend something, they resort to superstitious notions.¹⁹ Contrary to the

¹⁴ Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, 301.

¹⁵ L. White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumour and History in Colonial Africa*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 132.

¹⁶ Ibid. 300.

¹⁷ T. Falola, *A Mouth Sweeter than Salt: An African Memoir*, (USA: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 61.

¹⁸ Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*; A. J. N. Tremearne, *The Tailed Head Hunter of Nigeria: An Account of an Official Seven Years Experiences in Northern Nigeria Pagan Belt and a Description of the Manners Habits and Customs of the Native Tribes*, (London: Seelay Services and Co, 1912), 311.

¹⁹ Adas, *Machines as the Measure*, 3.

well-established claim that appropriation of the train was sudden, the decision to appropriate or even touch the train for many was something planned over time.²⁰

The colonial administration was aware of the reactions to their locomotive. They were, as Michael Adas writes, delighted at the terror and awe their technology unleashed.²¹ The railway and its associated technologies were, as Ian Keer argued, “part of the process of representing, and [...] signifying what it was the railways were or hope to be.”²² The railway symbolized the coming of the industrial age and emblemized the material side of colonialism. It was the most effective means of extending the path of civilization. As a way of displaying their technological achievement and to familiarize northerners with the locomotive, the authority organized “rituals” in the form of grand opening ceremonies, where important personalities and some members of the public were treated to a train ride. Although people had grown used to construction or work trains, traffic trains were another matter.²³

The authority also invited as many people as possible to impress them with the transport system. The ceremonies had their own codified genres—military parades, decoration of stations, running of special trains, Durbar,²⁴ firework displays, and speeches—with which the colonial authority encouraged people to use the train.²⁵ Under colonial rule, grand openings of infrastructure were visual spectacles and political rituals, where the aesthetics of colonialism and its technological achievements were displayed.²⁶ The authority was also precise in recording numbers; they invited as many people as possible. At the opening of the arrival of the first passenger train to Kano in 1912, there were no fewer than 2,734 passengers. The Emir and his chiefs, the Emir of Katsina, government officials, and

²⁰ Falola, *Sweeter than Salt*; Vickery, “Railways, Railway Culture”, 26.

²¹ Adas, *Machines as the Measure*, 223.

²² I. J. Kerr, “Representation and Representations of the Railways of Colonial and Post-Colonial South Asia”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 37/2, 2003, 287-326, 291.

²³ NAK SNP7/2227/1912, 21.

²⁴ A durbar is a classical form of entertainment with a colourful procession on horseback, carried out by Emirs and their chiefs and horsemen to show off their eminence and the grandeur of their monarch. The procession is marked by a parade and stud in which the Emir’s chiefs pay homage to the Emir as a public display of loyalty. It is often mistakenly thought that durbar is a festival, but it is not. Durbar is a colonial creation, borrowed from India and integrated into the culture of the Muslim emirates of Northern Nigeria. The procession is also organized to honour a very important visitor or mark an important event, as was the case with the opening of the railway in Kano in 1912 and Lugard’s visit to Kano that same year. Durbar is also organized annually to mark Muslim festivals.

²⁵ “Notes on Railway Construction”, *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 12/47, (1913): 290-95, 291; Nadabo, *Tarihin Garin Kaduna*, 110-1.

²⁶ Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 19; A. Apter, “On Imperial Spectacle: The Dialectics of Seeing in Colonial Nigeria”, *Comparative Studies Society and History*, 44/3, (2002): 564-96, 572-3

important members of the community, as well as students of the Nassarawa School were treated to a free ride to Challawa—a distance of about 12 miles—there and back. A few months earlier, the Emir of Zaria and his chiefs were treated to a similar ride at the opening ceremony of the rail line in Zaria.²⁷

The ceremonies symbolized the triumph of British imperialism and their technological achievements. To the colonial authority, the rides represented a public display that the emirs and their chiefs recognized the importance of technological advancement. Engineered into the locomotive was a sort of authority located in the technology as evidence of progress. The railway became the epitome of modernity and advancement. It represented, as Christiane Reichart-Burikukiye writes, “colonial values and imperial power, the vehicle that transferred those values and power”.²⁸ Not only did the train ride offer the emirs and others aboard the train a new way of travel, it also created new perceptions, thoughts, and expectations. As Schivelbusch notes, train travel was like being shot through the landscape. It created conditions that ‘mechanized’ travellers’ perceptions, while also offering them a new view of the landscape from inside a train. They did not feel the landscape as they did on donkey and horseback.²⁹

I would also argue that the initial ride had its own novel experience, which was an admixture of anxiety, thrill, and sensation. Raphael documents the experience of the chiefs on the train ride: after the initial uneasiness, they were thrilled at being transported at what was then a speed of 20 miles an hour, which was novel by local standards. When the chiefs were asked whether the sensation of riding on a train was not better than travelling in the saddle, they replied: “Certainly not, as the horse did not spit hot sparks at a man on his back or behind him.”³⁰ A Hausa train song, *Wakar Jirgin Kasa*, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, which probably depicts the train ride in Zaria Emirate, illustrates the sheer wonder of the train. As the song indicates, the local chiefs marvelled at the ride: *sarkin Kudan yace abin mamaki*, “the chief of Kudan says the ride was wonderful.”³¹ Train travel was different and faster than travelling in the saddle. Travelling at a speed of 20 miles an hour was indeed a

²⁷ “Notes on Railway Construction”; NAK 975/1912, Zaria Province Report, Annual, 1911; Tamuno, “Railway II”, 31-43, 34.

²⁸ C. Reichart-Burikukiye, “The Railway in Colonial East Africa: Colonial Iconography in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa”, in: Toyin Falola and Emily Brownell (eds), *Landscape, Environment and Technology in Colonial and Post Africa*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 64, 69.

²⁹ Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 53-5.

³⁰ Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, 302.

³¹ Collected from Hajiya Aishatu Abdussalam (Dede), Likoro, 23 August 2012.

novel experience when compared with what had gone before. As the song indicates, the train was also less tiring compared with donkey and horse. Another Hausa railway poem, *Wakar Reluwe*, dated 12 February 1929, composed by a railway worker, Alhaji Bello Yahaya Gidadawa, also depicts the sheer wonders of the locomotive. As the song indicate, “there is wonder in the way the train moves”. “It combined both the train and the track, and works in a straight line, with the track responding to its rhythm.”³²

A pupil of the Nassarawa School on the train, an elderly man from Bornu (who had been persuaded with difficulty to board the train), was asked what he thought of it. After thanking the railway officials “for so much education given in so short a period,” he replied that he could only express himself better by writing a book. When reminded that some of them (the officials) might not live to read his book and so he should mention one thing that impressed him, he answered after a long silence: “the fact that the engine drank more water than a thousand elephants!”³³ The old man’s reaction was an admixture of anxiety and wonder.³⁴ The colonial authority ensured that they impressed the people with their new transport system. Most people found their first train rides quite uncomfortable. Besides the blasts from the train and the spit of hot sparks from the engine, the train movement was jerky. Raphael writes that the early trains were without cover and without seats, and passengers provided their own camp chairs.³⁵

However, the sublime is only temporary; and after the initial incomprehension, people soon discovered the railway’s benefits and quickly apprehended and integrated it into their daily lives. David Nye argued that a technology does not endorse human limitations; it shows a split between those who understand and those who do not. The weakness of technology is that as familiarity to it increases, it loses its novelty and is quickly appropriated and domesticated into daily life.³⁶ Appropriation itself is a process, where users interact with the technology to transform their understanding of it. As Reichart-Burikukiye notes:

³² D. M. Mukoshy et al., *Bargon Hikima; Diwanin Wakokin Alhaji (Dr.) Muhammadu Bello Gidadawa*, (Sakkwato: Usmanu Dan Fodio University Press, 2006), 114-5.

³³ Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, 302-3.

³⁴ A comparative example from western Nigeria also indicates that wonder and awe were generally a reaction to train rides. Nigerian Noble Laureate Wole Soyinka, in his book *Isara*, provides an account of his father’s experience in the 1920s. Soyinka writes that, besides the speed and the contrapuntal sound of the train movement (“*faka fiki faka fiki*”) that dazzled him, his father marvelled at the steel and the fat wooden sleepers of the railway. Everything about it was so excessive, he continued to marvel and marvel: “This was THE WORLD. The railway denizens are different from the rest of humanity.” See W. Soyinka: *A Voyage Around Essay*, (USA: 1986), 12-21; also, L. A. Lindsay, *Working with Gender: Wage Labour and Social Change in Southern Nigeria*, (Portsmouth, 2003), 8.

³⁵ Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, 44-5.

³⁶ Nye, *American Technological Sublime*, 60

“consumption means integration into daily life experience”.³⁷ After all, the success of any technology depends on its penetration and acceptability; hence, consumption justifies the act of producing the railway.

3.3 From appropriation to domestication

The inhabitants of the studied communities were not victims of change or passive receivers of transport advancement; they were involved in its development during construction, and now that it was completed they were also involved in its development by appropriating it. Lee, Smith-Jackson, and Kwon have argued that appropriation is the first stage in domesticating technology. This involves bringing the technology from the public realm into the private realm—to understand it better.³⁸ The French sociologist Michel de Certeau pointed out that to appropriate a product or object is itself production and a mode of exercising power and strategies.³⁹ In the case of Nigeria, it was also about developing initiatives which shaped the use of the railway. This need be emphasized, because the railway was not intended for Nigerians’ benefit; but somehow they appropriated it, while also contributing to its development.

One of the many ways in which people appropriated the railway was by travelling to the city and the interior. The new transport connected them to the interior and beyond more cheaply and faster than was previously possible. As the *Wakar Jirgin Kasa* suggests, people travelled as far as Lagos. The railway allowed them to participate in the worldwide cultural interaction called globalization. The railway brought a radical reduction in travel time and space among and between communities and beyond. A journey from Zaria to Kano (about 90 miles), which previously took between three to four days, was achieved in less than three hours by train at that time.⁴⁰ In a similar manner, a journey from either of the communities to Lagos, which previously took three weeks on foot and by animal transport, was achieved in a little over three days, a time which would have sounded like a romantic tale in pre-colonial times.⁴¹ The train offered people the opportunity to travel at what was then a greater speed of

³⁷ Reichart-Burikukiye, “Colonial Iconography”, 70.

³⁸ Y. S. Lee, T. L. Smith-Jackson and G. H. Kwon, *Domestication of Technology Theory: Conceptual Framework of User Experience*, (2009), 2. Available at: http://goodgestreet.com/CHI09/submissions/YS_Lee.pdf. [accessed on 12 July 2012].

³⁹ Cited in *ibid*.

⁴⁰ A. Mani, *Zuwan Turawa Najeria ta Arewa*, (Zaria: NNPC, 1978).

⁴¹ The Nigerian Pioneer, Friday, 31 December 1915, 9; Bell, “Recent Progress”, 390.

20 miles an hour, at first, and later at 45 miles an hour-without efforts of theirs.⁴² The communities also learned to adjust to living along the line, given the sound and sparks and the danger of accident.

The railway increased the communities' mobility and integrated them more into the national economy than was previously possible. It also made British control of the communities much easier. With a warrant ticket, the European District Officers (DOs) could inspect distant districts and villages more frequently than was previously possible.⁴³ In those days, the DOs usually sent word of mouth to district and village heads of their pending visit through the station masters, but the records do not suggest the communities were regularly assessed.

The train differed from the saddle by virtue of its mechanization of motive power. Compared with what went before, it combined the train, the route, and the station under one single machine ensemble called railway.⁴⁴ The train transformed the experience of travelling, by making it a lot easier and safer, while it also made the possession of money a precondition for travelling. Travel was divided based on status and race. Nigerians travelled third class, while Europeans travelled first and second class. When the train initially began operation, there was no third-class service, evidence that it was not meant for Nigerians' use.⁴⁵ During the planning of the railway, only a once-a-week passenger train from Lagos to Kano was thought to be adequate. Within a short time after its inauguration, there was a high demand for rail service from Nigerians, necessitating the introduction of a third-class service in 1912. By 1914, the once-a-week train was found to be inadequate, necessitating the expansion of passenger services. Contrary to the claim that the fare discouraged the locals from using the train, the fare for third class was just one farthing from the start, while the second class was 7 shillings and 7 pence, reduced to 7 shillings and 3 pence upon the commencement of a third-class service. Raphael noted that the demand for third class exceeded the available spaces. The third class was to become the main income earner for passenger freight.⁴⁶ As the Colonial Annual Report for 1912 indicates, the trains carried 84,819 passengers on all classes of travel in 1912, with 1,672 travelling first class, 421 second class, and 82,726 third class.⁴⁷

⁴² Uzoechi, "Social and Political Impact", 171.

⁴³ NAK ZarProf Railway Warrant Issue of Railway Transport by NB.A. Staff.

⁴⁴ Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 29.

⁴⁵ Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria, Report for 1912, 28.

⁴⁶ Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, 48-9.

⁴⁷ Colonial Annual Report for 1912, 28.

Until 1918, there was no night journey on the system.⁴⁸ The trains were slow and characterized by frequent breakdowns, washouts, derailments, and accidents.⁴⁹ From the end of World War I onwards, the trains were slow and broke down owing to technical problems (this was the beginning of the problems of the Nigerian Railway). R. O. Ekundare and J. R. Raphael wrote that the early trains were slow due to the single track and the fact that most of the engines and coaches were second-hand or cast-offs from British railways.⁵⁰

The train democratized travelling for the communities. As oral and archival sources show, the train made rural–urban and rural–rural movement possible. With two “local” or “unlimited” passenger trains daily both ways from Kano and Zaria, and once-, and later thrice-a-week “express” or “limited” trains from the south, villagers shifted locations very easily. The local trains stopped at all stations without exception, while the limited trains stopped only at the larger stations. The former ran between Kano and Zaria, while the latter went as far as Lagos and Port Harcourt in the South. On the days the passenger trains were departing, the stations were always filled with passengers waiting to board a train either to the city or one of the nearest villages, markets, or some distant location. Passengers boarded the daily train to Zaria or Kano and came back the same day, in the same manner as city dwellers visited non-city communities.⁵¹ The limited trains, on the other hand, stopped only at the important stations such as Madobi, Gimi, and Dangora, owing partly to the southbound passengers’ being mostly local traders and southerners from the locality. The local trains were very important to the communities’ development, because they stopped daily at all the stations without exception. However, centres such as Madobi, Gimi, and Dangora became popular and expanded, partly because of the southbound passenger traffic and the concentration of commercial firms there.

As Table 3.1 on outbound passengers indicates, the communities were among the important passengers stations in terms of generating revenue (note that the table is not exhaustive, as it does not cover the entire period covered in the study). As the table shows, Faiki, which though not part of the studied communities (it was closed at the opening of Dangora station), was the most important station before its closure. Unfortunately, the records do not indicate the motivation and destination of travellers or the traffic volumes for

⁴⁸ F. Jaekel, *The History of Nigerian Railway; Organisation, Structure and Related Matters*, vol. 3, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1997), 148.

⁴⁹ Jaekel, *Nigerian Railway*, vol. 3, 148; NAK SNP7/2227/1912 Baro Kano Report, 7, 16,

⁵⁰ R. O. Ekundare, *An Economic History of Nigeria 1860-1960*, (London: Methuen and Co, 1973), 141; Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, 48.

⁵¹ KSHCBAcc. No. 68, Kura Inspection Notes.

both trains. As the records show, Madobi, Gimi, Dangora, and Challawa were the important stations as far as passenger traffic was concerned. They were the most important stations not only between Kano and Zaria, but also between Kano and Baro (with the exception of Zaria and Kaduna). But Madobi was the most important station between Kano and Zaria, followed by Gimi and Dangora, partly due to the southbound passenger freight.

Table 3.1 Passenger traffic, 1916-1939

Stations	1916				1917		1918		1919		1923		1939	
	Inward		Outward		Outward		Outward		Outward		Outward		Outward	
	No	£	No	£	No	£	No	£	No	£	No	£	No	£
Likoro	593	19	687	43	986	94	1191	182	1678	230	591	133	5873	168
G/Dabosa	2713	1 07	3372	105	3826	261	2987	386	5962	670	2337	359	22851	1101
Anchau	597	21	1018	36	1298	70	1056	127	2183	203	888	120	8162	249
Faiki	7708	559	4814	128	4440	442	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Dangora	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3116	557	5835	869	2018	493	16112	673
Yako	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	516	97	16150	692
Madobi	4470	291	4078	273	3978	343	2498	353	4786	575	1229	238	19149	865
K/kwaso	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	198	25	5976	290
Challawa	822	37	1688	293	2735	866	1619	787	2363	589	737	210	11045	356

Note: n.a. = not available

Source: These figures were collated from records of the Railway Department for the period covered in the table.

The arrival of the passenger train was always the most important event that galvanized the communities along the rail line into action. In those days, the trains were usually greeted or cheered by songs (such as the *Wakar Jirgin Kasa* above) and mimicking, which are evidence of familiarity with the locomotive.⁵² It was common for people to stand by the track to welcome or bid the passengers farewell. These were railway enthusiasts, who

⁵² In those days, it was common for people to gather at the rail track on the arrival and departure of a train, to sing and mimic the sound the locomotive made. In 1931, the Resident of Kano Province, H. O. Lindsell, called such people riff-raff and even threatened to deal with them (KSHCB File Kano Province Annual Report for 1930). Murray Last provides examples of such mimicry: when the train departed from Kaduna, it said *kafanchan, kafanchan*; as it struggled up the incline, it said *Bukuru, Jos, Bukuru, Jos*. However, when it crossed the bridge, both the engine and the bridge said *gadar amana gadar amana* ("truce bridge, truce bridge"). After it had crossed the bridge, it puffed and said loudly, *babu amana, babu amana* ("no truce, no truce"). This was probably the Kaduna–PortHarcourt Express train. See M. Last, *The History of the Nigerian Railway*, by Francis Jaekel, Review of "The History of the Nigerian Railway, vol. 1, 2 and 3" (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1997), *African Journal of International African Institute*, 68/4, 1998, 606-7.

took pleasure in trains. “We were always happy” was one of the common responses to the fascination with trains.⁵³ For as the Hausa poet, Alhaji Gidadawa (mentioned earlier), says in his *Wakar Reluwe*: “Praise be to God [...] for including the Hausa among the users of train.”⁵⁴ The passenger trains gave meaning to their lives. For many farmers, traders, and industrialists, the trains’ arrival was always an opportunity to make some quick sales of items they based their livelihoods on. It became, as Jamie Monson writes, “a resource around which [they] structured their material survival.”⁵⁵ People from the communities and far away always brought their goods to sell at the stations. The station became a sort of market—the point of entry and exit for people, goods, food, and ideas. Informants commented that: “Whenever the train arrived, the stations were always busy like market days.” “You see people rushing to sell their goods.”⁵⁶

People also learned to adjust to passengers’ demands for their products, which in turn made them expand and optimize their markets. The common products on sale at the stations were agricultural products (largely food crops) and products of local crafts, as well as cooked food. Owing to ecological differences, the crops on sale differed between stations. For instance, tuber crops like yam and potatoes were common at Gimi, Likoro, and Auchan stations. An informant from Saulawa recalled that, as a child, he preferred to sell to passengers aboard the limited train because, according to him, he always sold above the normal price. “Whatever profit I made, I pocketed it.” The passenger train itself was, as one Yoruba woman pointed out, a mobile shop for itinerant traders on the train to sell as the train halted.⁵⁷ When they sold their goods, they were paid in cash, which also facilitated the circulation of the colonial currency. However, vendors needed a permit to sell on platforms. It was difficult for the authorities to control illegal hawkers, as the stations were not fenced. Although the local police (*yandoka*) were always on hand to prevent illegal hawking, an informant commented that vendors without a permit always bribed their way to the platform.⁵⁸ Due to the modernizing effects of trade and cash, some of the locals began to

⁵³ Interview with Malam Badamasi na Ahmadu, Auchan, 6 April 2011.

⁵⁴ *Ina gode Allahu mai yau da gobe*

Da yas sanya Hausa cikin Reluwe.

See for examples, O. O. Kane, *Non-Europhone Intellectuals*, (Dakar: Codesria, 2012), 26. Also see Mukoshy et al., *Bargon Hikima*, 114.

⁵⁵ Monson, *African’s Freedom Railway*, 95.

⁵⁶ Interviews with Alhaji Bello Yakubu Daburau, Alhaji Ilyasu Lawan, Mal Rabo Nasidi, Malam Yahaya Dabo, Daburau, 13 March 2011. Interview with Malam Garba Adamu, Bature, Yako, 15 March 2011.

⁵⁷ Interview with Malama Bayarabiya (not his real name), a Yoruba and trader, Yako, 12 March 2011.

⁵⁸ Interview with Malam Yakubu Ismail, Kura, 14 April 2011.

move out of the walled towns to the rail line.⁵⁹ They also had to adjust to living on the rail line, because of the noise and sparks from the engine and the danger of accident.⁶⁰

Entrepreneurs used the train to bolster their economic activities. With the train, they could do more business and expand their businesses more than was possible by caravans. Transporting goods by train was also safer, unlike the caravan. In order to attract traffic from the traders, special rates were introduced on some export crops and local commodities.⁶¹ Having discovered the advantages and comfort of transporting their goods at a low rate, entrepreneurs reoriented their businesses to the railway, which eventually resulted in the phasing out of the traditional transport systems for long-distance trade. The annual report for 1912 mentioned a decline in pack animals and carriers for sending goods.⁶² John Raphael wrote that: “[b]y [...] using the railway they could do much business in one day with less marching [than] they formerly did.”⁶³ The kola traders were the first to re-orient their trade to the rail. A once-a-week kola train with three passenger vehicles was made available for their use.⁶⁴ Unlike the old caravan system, the train carried bulky goods at cheaper rates and was very fast. As the *Wakar Jirgin Kasa* indicates, the train was not only less tiring, it also carried more than a thousand donkeys did. The popular Hausa praise of the locomotive, *kadau mutun kadau kayansa*, better explains the steam engine’s capacity to carry passengers and loads at the same time. In order to intensively use the system to capacity, feeder roads were built across the locality to connect remote areas to the railway, but care was taken to ensure they did not compete with the line.⁶⁵ The feeder roads also created opportunity for donkey transporters, who quickly circumvented it by charging higher for their service, although short-distance traffic was all they could capture.

Although traders travelled along with their goods on the passenger trains, there was a limit to their baggage allowance and what they could carry. When it exceeded the minimum weight, they had to pay higher; otherwise they could cargo or parcel it. And where large quantities were involved, they had to hire a wagon or join together to hire one. The train

⁵⁹ Colonial Annual Report-Annual: Northern Nigeria, Report for 1910–1911, 5.

⁶⁰ NAK ZarProf 950/1911.

⁶¹ Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria Report for 1913, 26; Oyewuanyi, “Railway Development”, 91.

⁶² Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigeria Report for 1912, 22.

⁶³ Raphael, *Through Unknown Nigeria*, 49.

⁶⁴ Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 83, 106.

⁶⁵ NAK SNP 7/2227/1912 Baro Kano Report; Public Record Office [Hereafter referred to as PRO] PRO 657 Annual Report Nigerian Railway Administration Report for the Year Ending 31 March 1923, 17.

carried cargo that previously would have been very difficult to transport.⁶⁶ As Jamie Monson notes, “the parcels were [...] key components of the multi-spatial livelihoods [...] fashioned by [rural dwellers].”⁶⁷ On the days a goods or freight train arrived, it was always filled with goods belonging to commercial firms and local traders. European manufactured goods and agricultural products, especially food crops and fruits from the South, were some of the products brought by the trains. Kola was also one of the conspicuous commodities transported. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the communities housed numerous long-distance traders, many of whom reinvested proceeds from their businesses in kola and other important commodities that could be sold back at home. Over time, the communities became distribution points for kola and other consumable goods across the North. An informant, Alhaji Yakubu Likoro, pointed out that on the days the freight train arrived with kola, the station was always a beehive of activity with labourers offloading goods from the train. It was said that owing to the volume of kola one Alhaji Yakubu Likoro (since deceased) always imported, he requested the railway authority to extend the track to his house.⁶⁸ Informants at Dangora also noted that on the day the kola train was due to arrive, kola traders from the town and neighbouring villages as far as Faiki and Rogo always came on donkeys to collect their consignments or buy from one of the importers.⁶⁹

The railway also fostered trade relations between traders and industrialists in the railway corridor with others elsewhere in the country. The railway facilitated much greater collaboration in their economic activities than was previously possible. With accessible transport, they sent goods to their business associates at some of the main stations or markets along the rail line, where there was always a market for such products. This contact also provided information on changes in price trends and demand. Informants pointed out that as a result of the collaboration, traders from Southern Nigeria, particularly the Yoruba and Igbo, always came to buy local staple foods, such as locust beans, shea nuts, pepper, and sugar cane, as well as livestock and products of the local industries, bringing with them products from the South. The trade in these products expanded and found ready markets across the country, owing to the low freight rate (see the tables in Appendix 1). As Remy Onyewuenyi

⁶⁶ Colonial Report Nigeria 1913, 25-6; NAK SNP 72322/1912, Construction and Open Lines, 23; interviews with Malam Adamu Zaki, Malam Chindo Mohammed, Malam Yusuf Inusa Dan Madaki, Malam Idi Inusa, Malam Hussain Abdu, Yakum Dan Baure, 10 April 2011.

⁶⁷ Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, 106-7.

⁶⁸ Interview with Alhaji Yakubu Likoro, Likoro, 15 April 2011.

⁶⁹ Interviews with Malam Garba Adamu Katsina (a.k.a. *e don don-ta nuna*), Malam Miko Barau, Malam Sule Makam, Dangora, 30 May 2011.

noted, the low freight rate was introduced to make products from the North accessible to markets across the country.⁷⁰ For instance, the popular Makarfi sugar cane and Gimi brown sugar (*mazarkwaila*) reached their widest markets as a result of the railway. In the 1930s and 1950s, the sugar cane was exported as far as Lagos and Port Harcourt, while the brown sugar found ready markets in Kano, Zaria, and far away Sokoto, Maiduguri, and Nguru⁷¹ (see Chapter 4). Cow butter and ghee (*man shanu*) were transported to the United African Company (UAC) ghee factory at Zaria from Gimi.⁷² In a similar manner, the popular Bida soap (*sabulun sallo*) made inroads into the localities through the railway.⁷³ Textiles from Madobi and Gimi were transported to Plateau and faraway Bornu and French Niger.⁷⁴ As the tables in Appendix 1 illustrate, Gimi, Madobi, Dangora, and Challawa were the most important freight stations. Although the tables do not exhaustively cover the entire period covered in the study, it is clear the railway had enormous effects on internal trade as well as foodstuffs trade between the North and South.⁷⁵

It is important to note that prior to the construction of the railway, contact between the North and the South was quite limited. The railway not only made it possible; it facilitated the union of the two parts of the country. As Oshin, F. Umiunu, and A. Onokerhoraye have argued, the railways facilitated inter-regional trade in non-export and domestic products between the North and the South. Each region exchanged its most characteristic products for those of other regions.⁷⁶ Ann O'Hear's study of Ilorin crafts indicates that the Ilorin black soup pots reached their widest markets across the country and beyond owing to the cheap transport facility.⁷⁷ As Simon Heap also pointed out, European liquors from the South made

⁷⁰ R. N. Onyewuenyi, "Railway Development and Growth of Export Agriculture in Nigeria During the 1900–1950s", (Master's Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1981), 91.

⁷¹ NAK ZarProf 3296 vol. Sugar Production 1943-54.

⁷² NAK ZarProf 5280 Makarfi District.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ KSHCB Acc. No. 68 Kura Inspection Note; NAK ZarProf 5280 Makarfi District Note Book 1943. Not only did the railway facilitate inter-regional trade, it also facilitated long-distance trade beyond Nigerian borders in French Niger. Informants note that Tuareg traders from Agadez in French Niger always brought cloth for dyeing at Kura. The Tuareg came by train by way of Gusau (connected by railway in the 1920s) and took the train to Zaria and thence to Kwankwaso, whence they trekked to Kura. After completing their business, they took the train back to Gusau the same way they had come and then rode on camel back to Agades (interviews with Alhaji Yakubu Daburau, Alhaji Ilyasu Lawan, and Malam Yahya Dabi, the village head of Daburau, Daburau-Kwankwaso, 13 March 2011).

⁷⁵ Colonial Report-Annual, Northern Nigeria Report for 1911, 28.

⁷⁶ Oshin, "Railways and Urbanization", 115 and 119; F. G. I. Umiunu and A. G. Onokerhoraye, *Transportation and the Nigerian Space Economy*, Benin, University of Benin, 1995), 175-77; F. G. I. Umiunu, "The Role of Transportation in Nation Building; the case of the Nigerian Railways...", *Nigerian Magazine*, (1981): 3-15.

⁷⁷ A. O'Hear, "Craft Industries in Ilorin: Dependency or Independence?" *African Affairs*, 86/345, (Oct. 1987): 505-522, 517-20.

inroads into the North, despite the prohibition in Islam.⁷⁸ The railway not only transported people and goods but also ideas, culture, and civilization from one region to another. It played an even greater role in the creation of Nigerian national identity and integration. As I have indicated elsewhere in Chapter 2, part of the logic for amalgamating the railways and administration of the two regions, in 1912 and 1914 respectively, was to break down barriers that might undermine national integration.

The stations, with their relatively elaborate structures, became the communities' gateway to the outside world and a central focus of village life. For many villagers, going to the station was synonymous with going to the city, and it was something they planned. The station became something to be appropriated as a marker of modernity. Going to the station or travelling by train became a sign of becoming modern, a marker of "eye opening" which distinguished the men from the boys. As informants generally noted, going to the station and travelling by train in those days were something to boast about. Those who had not been to the station or entered the train were considered backward. Falola writes that: "It was shameful for one to declare that he had been led to the station like a goat."⁷⁹

For many rural dwellers, the stations were places for dissemination of news and information. Most of the stations had a newsstand and postal and limited telephone and telegram facilities. In those days, these facilities were markers of modernity. Villages without them were considered backward. According to Alhaji Usman Abdurrahim Madobi, "in those days, when banking was not popular, we sent and received money and mails through the post office. A village without a postal agency was as good as a person without a cell phone nowadays."⁸⁰ Their counterparts in Kwankwaso without a postal facility lamented the inconvenience of having to trek to send and receive mail from Madobi. Informants pointed that "when the postal facility in the town was closed down, they suffered having to go to Madobi to post and send money orders".⁸¹ The station was also an avenue through which the locals learned of happenings in the country. Informants in Bagardi stated that "in those days, they always trekked the long distance to Likoro station to confirm about the sighting of the moon for the Ramadan fasting."⁸²

⁷⁸ S. Heap, "'We think Prohibition is Farce...': Drinking in the Alcohol Prohibited Zone of Colonial Northern Nigeria", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 31, (1998): 23-51.

⁷⁹ Falola, *Sweeter than Salt*, 62.

⁸⁰ Interview with Alhaji Usman Abdurrahim Madobi, NNDC Quarters Sharada, Kano, 6 January 2006.

⁸¹ Interviews with Alhajis Ilyasu Lawan, Bello Daburau, and Malam Yahaya Dabo (village head of Daburau), Daburau, 13 March 2011.

⁸² Interviews with Malams Haruna Balarabe and Adamu Usman, Bagardi, 7 April 2011.

There was another way the people used the railway, in addition to using it to send and receive goods. The railway offered them employment and the experience of modernity in the form of wage labour. Although opposition to white man's work was popular at the beginning, the need for cash to pay tax pushed many into railway work. Informants generally pointed out that they took railway jobs because of "the steady income and prestige associated with the job". The majority of them worked as permanent way workers or labourers, or as porters and guards. The work provided them a steady income to become independent. Despite their low status in the railway hierarchy, they were harbingers of industrial culture and modernity in the localities. Many who are now retired can still be found in groups around the stations, reminiscing about the good old days. Many of them lament the present state of the railway and how they had been abandoned by the government. "No gratuity, no pension" was their common complaint.

Although the colonial state undermined Islam in Northern Nigeria, its transport infrastructure unexpectedly facilitated and sustained the old contact between Muslims and the Arab world. The study by Alexander Thurston suggested that the railway revolutionized the way *Hajj* pilgrimage was undertaken, as it diverted the pilgrims from the trans-Saharan routes to the rail line, cutting down travel time and cost for those with the means. Thurston pointed out that pilgrims without the means to travel "follow[ed] the tracks which gave them direct route to the Red Sea".⁸³ In a similar manner, the railway facilitated the penetration of Christian missionaries into the communities. The missions all came by the railway, as it helped them spread the Gospel more easily and cheaply. Until the 1930s, not many Christian missionaries were physically established in the North.⁸⁴

Also, for the mobility and opportunities it engendered, the railway unexpectedly spread disease. The public nature of the stations where people mingled and the enclosed nature of the trains provided ideal conditions for the transmission of viruses and diseases. Recent studies indicate that when the worldwide influenza pandemic broke out in 1918, it spread to major centres along the rail lines with consequent heavy mortality rates. Influenza travelled to Nigeria by way of the Lagos coast and then through passengers on trains to the communities along the rail line. Attempts to curtail its spread by examining passengers at

⁸³ A. Thurston, "Interactions Between Northern Nigeria and the Arab World in the Twentieth Century", (MA Thesis, Georgetown University, 2009), 16, 18.

⁸⁴ E. A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, (London: FrankCass, 1979), 159; E. A. Barnes, "Evangelism Where It is not Wanted: Colonial Administrators and Missionaries in Northern Nigeria During the First Third of the Twentieth Century" *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 25/4, (1995): 412-441; E. P. T. Crompton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*, (London: Cassell Ltd, 1975).

stations and on trains and through quarantine failed. When it re-occurred in the 1950s, it again spread through the railways.⁸⁵

The physical appearance of the stations also undermined the cultural importance of the village gates (*kofofi*; sing. *kofa*). In pre-colonial times, gates occupied important positions in Hausa society, as no visitor could come into a community or village without the gate chief's (*sarkin kofa*) knowledge and consent.⁸⁶ When the stations appeared with their elaborate structures, they almost immediately undermined the gates and became the new gateway, where people, goods, and ideas entered and exited under the watchful eyes of the station masters. Not only did the stations undermine the village gates, they also undermined the local architectural forms. With their aesthetically striking designs, which ranged from the fanciful—squat rectangular buildings with arched loggings on four sides and a balustrade at the top—to the simple corrugated iron roofs reinforced with concrete, they were not only the most distinctive architectural sights in the locale; they were also disruptive of indigenous architecture.

In addition, the structures spoke volumes about the importance of a station and a town. They were representations of imperial pride and modernity. As Ian J. Kerr noted, they “represent[ed] a set of attitudes, beliefs and relationships; an attitude of British superiority [...] measured by machines, beliefs in the progressive and civilizing powers of railways, relationships anchored in the fact of colonial rule to which compliance was fostered by grand building.”⁸⁷ Whether built to represent imperialism or not, they were the most imposing structures in the locality, “ready for beholders’ interpretation and reinterpretation; they represented and could be made to re-present. They stood ready for appropriation.”⁸⁸

Finally, with their bustle and elegance, the stations also had their own individual aura. They were a haven for beggars and station loungers. They also had a dark underside and a criminal half-life, which co-existed with their public face. They were magnets for pickpockets, robbers, and prostitutes. This is not to suggest that criminality was colonial in origin—it is much more ancient than that—but the public nature of stations undoubtedly attracted criminals, while the trains provided them with platforms for their activities (as we shall see in Chapter 6).

⁸⁵ Ayoola, “Price of Modernity”; M. Wada, “A History of Modern Health System in Kano”, (PhD Thesis, Bayero University, Kano, 2013), 62-83; KSHCB SNP/12/1924, Kano Province Annual Report File 635.

⁸⁶ B. M. Barkindo, “The Gates of Kano City; A Historical Survey”, in: Bawuro M. Barkindo (ed.) *Studies in the History of Kano*, (Ibadan; Heinemann Books, 1983), 1-30, 12-14.

⁸⁷ Kerr, “Representation and Representations”, 292.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 295.

3.4 Conclusion

As this chapter demonstrates, the railway had enormous effects on the studied communities. The communities encountered and reacted to the locomotive and trains with mixed reactions. Contrary to the established view that the trains were appropriated almost immediately, the chapter demonstrates that appropriation was not as sudden as was previously assumed, because the ambivalence toward the rail line manifested in a mixture of fear and awe. This was the case because many did not understand initially what the rail line was all about, much less its benefits; but as they grew to understand it, they quickly appropriated it in distinctive ways and used it to transform their lives. Part of this process involved the colonial state, which had to educate people how to use the system and what its advantages were.

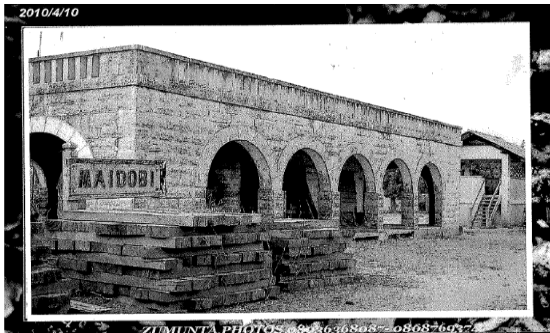
As the chapter also indicates, the communities were not passive recipients of transport advancements: they had been involved in its development during construction, and when it was completed they actively contributed to its development in their capacity as passengers and producers of food and cash crops.

The chapter also shows that the railway and its other structures were means of representing and showing off British technological achievements, superiority, power, and civilization to Nigerians.



Figure 3.1 A First Class passenger sleeping car

Source: The Nigerian Nostalgia 1960–1980 Project



Madobi Station



Gimi Dabosa Station



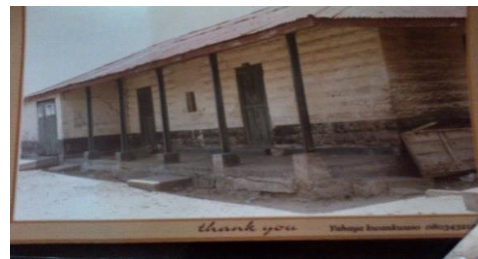
Dangora Station



Railway Guest House, Likoro



Auchan Station



Kwankwaso Station

Figure 3.2 Railway buildings across the study areas

Sources: Personal collections

CHAPTER 4: TRANSPORT ADVANCE, MARKETING AND REACTIONS OF LOCAL PRODUCERS

It is interesting to note that at that time the purpose of the railway was to evacuate the cotton and to carry building materials and trade goods in the opposite direction. There was then no thought of groundnuts, which is now the biggest export crop from Nigeria.

Nigerian Railway Jubilee 1901–1951

4.1 Introduction

It is a shared opinion among scholars that the large-scale agricultural expansion which took place in West Africa during the last century was achieved by bringing underutilized factors of production into optimum use and that labour was too scarce for there to be any market for labour. According to this theory, the construction of the railway infrastructure was the vent that activated agricultural production, and this agricultural expansion was accomplished without reduction in domestic food sufficiency. This is the ‘vent for surplus’ theory, popularized by the Burmese development economist Hla Myint.¹ Scholars who applied the same theory to analyse Northern Nigeria’s agricultural exports have recounted the same old story, although with slight modifications. They asserted that large-scale agricultural expansion was constrained by land and labour. While some of the assumptions of the vent for surplus theory are correct, not all are applicable to the studied areas. Although cotton was a complete failure in Kano, it was a marked success in Zaria and most especially in northern Zaria, where some of the studied communities are located. Throughout this chapter, I shall be testing these popular patterns of general agriculture in Northern Nigeria’s history in the studied communities. The chapter examines the role of the railway in the development and expansion of cash crops production and trade in the communities. It also looks at how food production was maintained in the face of such cash cropping.

¹ Hla Myint, “The Classical Theory of International Trade and the Underdeveloped Countries”, *Economic Journal*, 68, (1958): 317-337.

4.2 Development of the cotton export trade

The railway was completed in 1911 but was not open to traffic immediately owing to the wash-out of tracks and bridges around Challawa. Having entered Kano, the train had to wait until the amalgamation of the two railways, which had been fixed for the following year. While the opening of the line was being awaited, both the colonial authority and the BCGA focused on propaganda to step up cotton production against the coming season.² The BCGA among other things sent out agricultural experts to farmers living along the rail line to explain to them what they stood to gain by growing cotton for export, in addition to distributing seeds to them. The close-settled zone between Kano and Zaria, to which the studied communities were integral, evinced much attention from the BCGA and the colonial authority. As indicated in Chapter 1, the zone was the main cotton and textile belt in the Sokoto Caliphate in the nineteenth century, and hence the BCGA's interest in this area. They also opened a ginnery at Maigana in Zaria in anticipation of a bountiful harvest.³ The colonial authority also engaged in similar propaganda, by way of encouraging farmers to grow cotton for export and of establishing experimental farms.⁴ In 1911, provincial administrations suggested to farmers the improved methods of cultivation that should be adopted. Expectations were high that farmers would grow cotton when they realized there was a ready market for it.⁵ Also, in what appeared as a fine display of indirect rule, the emirs and their headmen were instructed to influence farmers to grow the crop. Such a directive coming from the local authority was likely to influence farmers into growing the desired crop. For instance, in Katsina, the Emir instructed four of his district headmen to ensure every adult male in their districts devoted at least one acre of their land to cotton.⁶ This official propaganda continued well into the

² For elaborate discussion on this, see among others: A. O. Anjorin, "European Attempts to Develop Cotton Cultivation in West Africa, 1850-1910", *ODU*, 3/1 (July, 1966): 3-15, and also "Cotton Industry"; Hogendorn, "Cotton Campaign"; J. S. Hogendorn, "The Origin of Groundnut Trade in Northern Nigeria", in: Carl Eicher and Carl Liedholm (eds), *Growth and Development of the Nigerian Economy* (East Lansing: Michigan University Press, 1970), 31-51; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 16-35; M. Candotti, "Cotton Growing and Textile Production in Northern Nigeria from Caliphate to Protectorate c. 1804-1914: A Preliminary Examination", being a paper presented at the African Economic History Workshop-London School of Economics-May 2009, 1-15; Okediji, "Economic History", chapter 4, 139-179; Bristwistle, "Cotton Growing", 106-7; S. Onyewu, "Deceived by African Cotton: The British Cotton Growing Association and the Demise of the Lancashire Textile Industry", *African Economic History*, 28, (2002): 92; E. de C. Duggan "The Cotton Growing Industry of Nigeria", *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 21/83, (1922): 199-207.

³ Colonial Annual Report for 1910-1911, 8

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Colonial Annual Report for 1911, 28

⁶ Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 25-28; Candotti, "Cotton Growing" 7-8; Anjorin, "Cotton Industry", 122-3; Okediji, "Economic History", 149-50.

farming season, with anticipation that cotton would pile up by the time the line was officially opened to traffic.

Farmers' response to this state-directed cotton promotion was quite the opposite of what the authorities had anticipated. The propaganda made little or no impact. Although they had everything required to expand production, on their own initiative they did what they thought would most benefit their own objectives. I argue that the transition to cash crop expansion was gradual rather than spontaneous, contrary to what has been previously assumed.

Food security is at the heart of every farmer's thinking; they could not afford to import food, for to do so would be too expensive and uneconomical. The farmers were like businessmen, who take into account prices and market trends. When the cash return on a crop was attractive, they increased their acreage; but when prices fell, they decreased their acreage.

Land was definitely not an issue, contrary to the vent for surplus model's contention that land was scarce. In fact, land was available in abundance, but it was difficult to exploit intensively in some cases owing to soil type and the prevalence of trypanosomiasis.⁷

On the eve of the export trade, farmers grew food crops and groundnuts on their own initiative. During E. H. B. Laing's tour of Sarkin Yaki district in 1912, he observed that large amounts of land were devoted to food crops, mainly guinea corn and pepper. He observed that "[c]otton and ground-nuts are not mostly cultivated, as farmers devoted their energies on food crops", while some combined it with cash crops.⁸ Of course, cotton was grown; but, as earlier indicated, it was used in the indigenous textile crafts.

The claim by the vent for surplus proponents that labour was scarce during the transition to cash crop production is misleading, as a recent study indicated that labour was scarce only during the wet season.⁹ At the start of the cash crop production, the labour shortage was remedied by recourse to a combination of family, slave, and forced labour. Although production was largely household-based, the aristocracy and merchant classes relied on slave labour. Contrary to the claim by Hogendorn that slave labour did not

⁷ G. Austin, "Resources, Techniques and Strategies South of the Sahara: Revising the Factor Endowments Perspectives on African Economic Development, 1500-2000", *Economic History Review*, 61/3, (2008): 587-624, 7-9; NAK ZarProf 2900 Sleeping Sickness Existence in Christian village of Gimi 1920-1923; NAK ZarProf C.7/1919 Church Missionary Society of Zaria-Audu of Gimi Question of Inheritance of 1919.

⁸ NAK SNP 10/268P/1913, Zaria Province Annual, Sarkin Yaki District Assessment Report by E. H. B. Laing 1912.

⁹ Austin, "Resources, Techniques and Strategies", 12.

contribute to cash crop expansion, slave labour did expand production.¹⁰ As indicated in Chapter 1, when the British abolished slavery they criminalized wholesale desertion of slaves, as they feared it would ruin the estate owners with whom they had forged alliances. British colonialism actually promoted slavery by enhancing slave owners' ability to use slave labour; therefore, slavery and slave dealings continued clandestinely until the 1930s. Since slaves could not access land even if they had left their masters, many continued to live with their masters, while many others were forced to remain.¹¹ Migrant or hired labour, which was so central in the cocoa expansion in south-western Nigeria, was not popular in the case of groundnuts until the 1930s.

As the new evidence indicates, besides the slave labour, the Emir of Zaria, Aliyu Dansidi, and his district heads also relied on forced labour. Large amounts of labour intended for railway work were diverted to their own private plantations without paying for it.¹² This was at a time the railway work was at its peak, and the Emir and his chiefs were given a free hand to recruit labour.¹³ Bashir Salau and Safiyanu Aminu argued that large amounts of the labour so used on farms of the aristocrats were recruited through communal work (*gayya*). The communal work, according to their different interpretations, was supposed to be voluntary, but in practice during much of the colonial period it involved force. And it was only those in positions of authority that sanctioned such labour.¹⁴ Hence, the transition to cash crop production was achieved by a combination of family, slave, and forced labour.

By the time the railway was officially opened in 1912, its economic consequences diverged dramatically from the official expectations. The colonial authority found that in spite of the efforts they had invested in cotton promotion, not much was realized; instead, farmers appropriated the railway to grow groundnuts, a crop which did not feature during the planning of the railway. It is generally agreed that cotton was a complete failure in Kano and that it was quickly embraced in Zaria Province. Jan Hogendorn and Florence Okediji's claim that the crop was quickly grown for export in northern Zaria, where some of the studied

¹⁰ Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 103.

¹¹ See J. Hogendorn, "The Economics of Slave Use on Two 'Plantations' in the Zaria Emirate of Sokoto Caliphate", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 10/3, (1977): 369-83, 382; Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death*, 145-8, 221; C. N. Ubah, "Suppression of the Slave Trade in the Nigerian Emirates", *Journal of African History*, 32, (1991): 447-470; Watts, *Silent Violence: Food Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Lovejoy, "Plantations", 353-4; NAK ZarProf 5280 Makarfi District Note Book 1943.

¹² NAK SNP7/950/1911, Zaria Province Annual Report for 1910

¹³ SNP/10/105P/1921, Zaria Province Annual Report for 15 months, ended 31st March 1921.

¹⁴ M. B. Salau, "The Role of Slave Labour in Groundnut Production in Early Colonial Kano", *Journal of African History*, 51, (2010): 147-65; Aminu, "The Colonial State", 127-131.

communities are situated, is misleading.¹⁵ Okediji misrepresented the real situation of cotton export from the area. This can be understood given the nature of sources available to them at the time, which did not give the real picture at the district and village levels. The new evidence indicates that although cotton was grown, it was not offered for export. The amount so realized from the area was too low, although it became popular and increased over time. As the record indicates, cotton purchases in the Kano area were the lowest. When the BCGA representative visited Madobi during his tour of the Kano areas in 1913, he was disappointed to find that groundnuts were grown instead of cotton.¹⁶ As the Nigerian Railway annual report indicates, the raw cotton was consumed by the indigenous textile industry.¹⁷ The BCGA lamented that its free distribution of seed could not guarantee it a preferential advantage over the Hausa traders, who secured most of the raw cotton. The BCGA wanted the government to influence farmers to sell the raw cotton to it.¹⁸ Their purchase from the areas up to 1914 was quite disappointing. The crop did not feature prominently on rail-borne export lists from the communities. As the evidence suggests, the bulk of the cotton so produced was exported to Kano for use in the local textile industry.

One reason farmers refused to sell to the BCGA was that cotton from their areas, as elsewhere in Hausaland, was meant for the local textile crafts and not for export. Another reason was the low price the BCGA offered for the produce. It is quite likely that farmers would have sold to the BCGA had the price been higher than that offered by the Hausa traders.¹⁹ In addition, cotton impoverishes the soil, which makes it unsustainable over a long period, whereas groundnuts add nitrogen to the soil.²⁰

A further factor was that the economic specialization, which dated back to the nineteenth century, between Kano and Zaria also worked against BCGA's demand. Zaria had always specialized in growing cotton, while Kano specialized in making cloth. Most of the cotton from Zaria has always been transported to Kano, "where the purchasing power of local weavers was much greater".²¹ Beside traders from Kano who purchased the cotton fibre, there were also many at centres such as Meyere, Kudan, and their environs who purchased

¹⁵ Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 110, 112; Okediji, "Economic History", 151.

¹⁶ Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 112; NAK KanProf 95/1914, Annual Report 1914.

¹⁷ Public Record Office (hereafter referred to as PRO), PRO 657/7, Nigerian Railway and Udi Coal Mines, Administrative Report for the Year Ending 31st March 1918, 64.

¹⁸ NAK KanProf 270/1913, Annual Report for Quarter Ending 1913.

¹⁹ Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Zaria*, 31; NAK KanProf 270/1913.

²⁰ Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 41; Okediji, "Economic History".

²¹ Candotti, "Cotton Growing", 5; Anjorin, "Cotton Industry", 122-3.

cotton and transported it to Kano.²² Hence, when the cotton trade started, these traders used their capital to purchase most of the crop—at a rate a little higher than what the BCGA offered—and transport it to Kano at a low cost by railway.

The outbreak of the war in 1914 affected the cotton trade, but it favoured the indigenous textile crafts. During the war, imports of goods were seriously restricted owing to the wartime restrictions. This condition of scarcity stimulated a corresponding demand for products from the local looms. The raw cotton was diverted to the craft, which was a positive development. From the start of World War I onward, the BCGA was determined to dislocate the local textile mill through the importation of cheap European textiles into the local markets and the revival of the cotton propaganda. The idea was to flood the local markets with cheap cotton goods with a view to reducing local demand for raw cotton. The BCGA also distributed an exotic variety of seed called the Allen Middling American Exotic, which they distributed to farmers free of charge, and they offered to buy the fibre at 1¾d per lb.²³ From the colonial perspective, the local variety was of low quality compared with the Middling American variety, which was of a higher yield.

As if the authority anticipated that the local variety would be grown to the exclusion of the exotic, it prohibited the growing of other varieties in the districts where the exotic was grown. The colonial authority also prohibited touting or sales of cotton outside the established markets, with the aim of improving the quality.²⁴ By the end of the war, the American variety had replaced the local variety, but it did not destroy the local textile craft, as most of the fibre was still directed to local crafts.²⁵

By the end of the war, the old cotton promotion policy was revived, this time around with more vigour, as the government was determined to see the American variety extended to the studied communities. The emirs and their headmen were actively enlisted to influence their subjects to grow the crop, and the seeds were distributed through them. The extension of this variety was gradual; and as the scheme was widely taken up in one district, it was extended to another. Buying stations were established at the main centres, and cotton examiners (*mallams*) were posted to such centres by the Agricultural Department.

²² NAK MLG 22289 Makarfi District Reassessment Report.

²³ Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Zaria*, 37.

²⁴ Ibid. 38-9.

²⁵ PRO 657/7, 100, appendix IV.

Although the Nigerian annual report indicated that the American variety had replaced the local variety by 1916, evidence from the studied areas suggests otherwise.²⁶ From 1919 through 1921, large amounts of the American variety were distributed to farmers across the studied communities. In 1919, all the districts in Zaria Emirate were brought under the Middling American variety, with 1,200 bags distributed at Makarfi, 1,050 bags at Ikara, 842 at Auchan, and 600 bags at Kudan. As the evidence indicates, in all the districts where the seeds were distributed it was the farmers themselves who requested the seeds.²⁷ Gimi, Dabosa, and Auchan were selected as buying stations and rail heads for the American seeds. Kudan, though not a rail head, was also made a buying station.

Despite the free seed distribution, the quantity realized was much lower than the authority anticipated. During the 1919 buying season, only 35 tons were realized by the Niger Company at Gimi. As usual, the Kano traders purchased most of the crop; the local variety was sold at 3d per pound²⁸ as against 2¾d per pound for the American cotton. Again, the annual report suggests that the American variety had replaced the local variety, but the evidence suggests otherwise, as the local variety was still popular. All this goes to confirm that cotton export was not as popular in this part of Zaria as previously assumed, although it became popular over time. In Madobi, south-west of Kano, the result was the same as only a little over a ton was realized in that year.²⁹ ³⁰ As records indicate, large amounts of the cotton produced, including the American variety, were consumed internally by the local textile crafts.³¹

By 1921, the American variety has been extended to the Kano area, with Kura, Karaye, Tudun Wada, and Gwarzo joining the American seed cotton areas. Dangora and Madobi were made buying and seed distribution centres as well as rail heads for cotton from those districts.³² Similarly, cotton examiners were also posted there to inspect and grade the crop to ensure that quality was maintained. At first, there was a misunderstanding, as the cotton examiners thought farmers had to sell to the BCGA. This was remedied by explaining

²⁶ Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria Report for 1930, 2.

²⁷ NAK SNP10/273P/1919, Zaria Province Report no. 74 for half year ending, 30th June 1919.

²⁸ In this case, pound represents a British pound weight and is abbreviated as lb. (2.2 lbs is approximately equal to 1 kg). This is not to be confused with the British currency pound.

²⁹ PRO 657/7, 100, appendix IV.

³⁰ A ton is a unit for measuring weight in Britain and the colonies. A ton contains 2,240 pounds.

³¹ NAK SNP/273P/1919, Zaria Province Report no. 74 for half year ending, 30th June 1919; KSHCB SNP17/2, Kano Province Annual Report 1929.

³² KSHCB 123, Kano Province Annual Report for 1921.

to farmers that it was up to them to decide to whom they wanted to sell.³³ As Table 4.1 indicates, the quantity realized from some of the areas in 1923 was not impressive. The table also indicates that the seed was freighted from Auchan for the first time, evidence of its growing popularity.

Table 4.1 Ginned cotton freight in tons, 1923

Gimi	Anchau	Madobi
220 tons	7 tons	27 tons

Source: PRO 657/7, Nigerian Railway and Udi Mines Administrative report for the year ending March 1923.

A number of developments took place at the end of the war which need highlighting here. As can be seen from the discussion so far, the railway opened new markets in distant locations and also areas far removed from the line; but there was a limitation, as the railway could not intensively tap the new sources. This was circumvented by donkey transporters, who exploited the situation to their advantage by charging higher rates for their services, even though short-distance traffic was all they could capture. During his tour of markets in Zaria Province in 1918, the District Officer II, Mr. Porch, observed that prices in remote areas were lower than those along the line. He suggested linking such areas to the railways. The colonial authority also stimulated production in such far distant areas through road development projects.³⁴ Right from the start, the colonial authority envisaged an integrated road network that would feed the railway with traffic. A couple of cart roads in areas far removed from the line were improved to feed the railway with traffic, but efforts were made to ensure they did not compete with the railway itself. By the 1918/19 season, the railway also operated a motor service which connected centres like Kudan, Giwa, and Tsibiri with the ginnery in Zaria.³⁵ The cotton-producing areas south-west of Kano were improved and linked with the BCGA

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ SNP10/273/1919, Zaria Province Report no. 74 for Half Year Ending 30th June 1919.

³⁵ NAK SNP/273P/1919; NAK SNP 72322/1912, Construction and Open Lines, 18; NAK KanProf 3884A Trunk Road.

station at Challawa. The roads were mere feeders to the railway and were capable of carrying a three-ton lorry to evacuate the crop.³⁶

It is also to be noted that despite the efforts taken to ensure the quality of the Middling American seeds, they were adulterated. Adulteration was prevalent among the firms, which resulted in the introduction of cotton grading. This was carried out by the cotton examiners, who issued certificates to farmers, indicating the grade. Cotton unaccompanied by a certificate was not accepted for ginning.³⁷ The old system whereby farmers sold directly to the BCGA was also abolished, and the BCGA received it from the firms who bought directly from farmers or acted as middlemen.

Another important development was the establishment of a new ginnery at Challawa in 1924. The inadequacy of the one at Zaria necessitated the establishment of a new one to take care of cotton from the Kano area. The Kano ginnery itself was closed down and its equipment was sent to Gusau, because the conditions in Kano were against cotton export, as the local loom continued to compete with British demand.³⁸ By this time also, European textiles had increasingly made inroads into the rural space.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, cotton trade suffered from the fluctuating influence of the global economy. Cotton export was affected by factors such as price falls, droughts, food shortages, and locust and hopper invasions (which occurred intermittently during the crisis). Although prices were lower generally, exports did not decline, as farmers had to sell three times what they had been selling in the pre-Depression era to raise cash for tax. In most of the communities, farmers cut down or stopped cotton production altogether, while many focused on food and groundnuts. Although the groundnut price was also lower at the time, unlike cotton it could still finance tax payments, be eaten as food, or be processed into oil which could also fetch cash.

³⁶ NAK ZarProf 431 Vol. IV, Cotton Market: Erection, gazetting, opening and closing of 1947-51; NAK ZarProf 510, Cotton Market: Control of Cotton Examiner 1946-1956; NAK/MKT/55, Gazetted Cotton Buying Stations.

³⁷ Okediji, "Economic History", 159-60.

³⁸ NAK MLG 9117/1929, Kura District of Kano Emirate Reassessment; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 138.

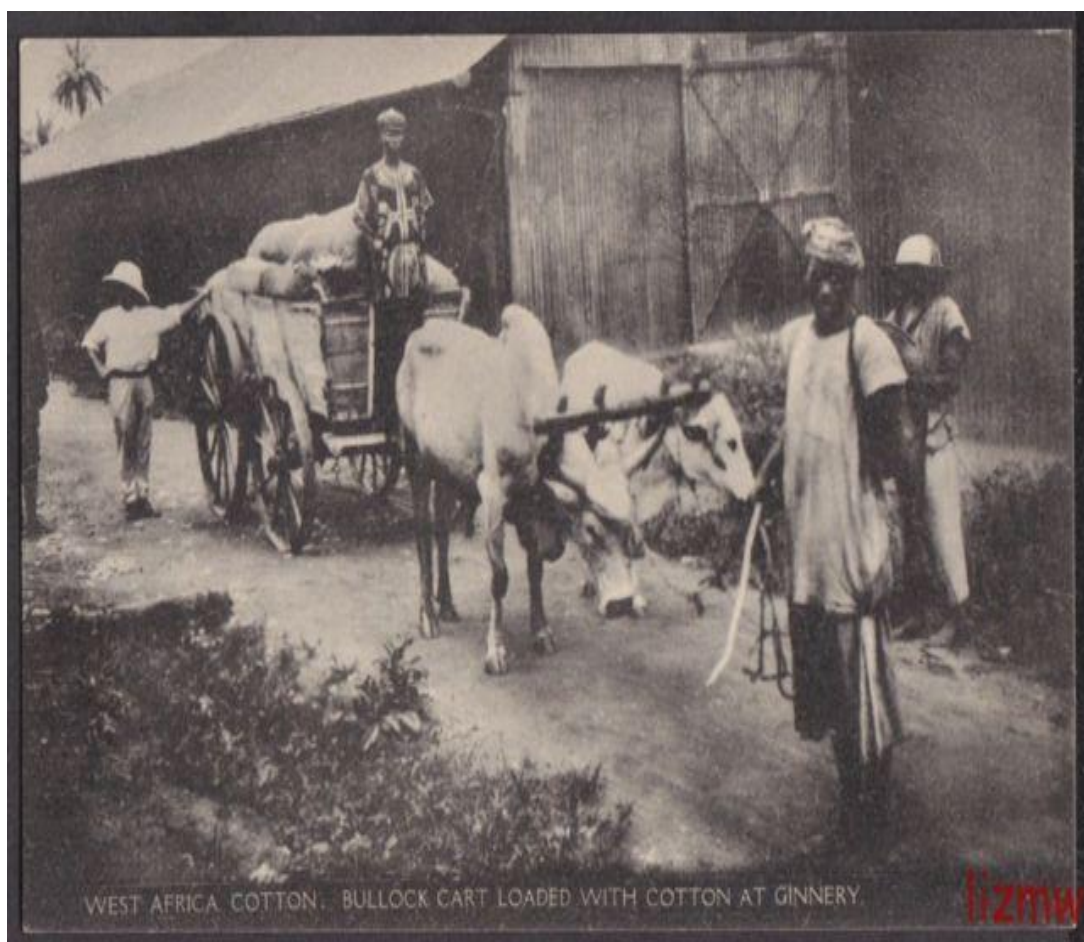


Figure 4. 1 Transport of cotton by bullock in Funtua in the 1930s

Source: The Nigerian Nostalgia 1960–1980 Project

Evidence indicates a general marked reduction in acreage under cotton. For instance, of the 24 representative farms assessed in Ikara District during the 1933–1934 tax seasons, only four were under cotton cultivation; the rest were under food and groundnuts.³⁹ In Paki District also, groundnut expansion had taken over land previously under cotton.⁴⁰ The exception was Kura, where the record suggests a large acreage under cotton.⁴¹ In order to stimulate exports during this time, a special rate was introduced for ginned cotton booked from Zaria and Challawa to Baro.⁴²

Although the British undermined the indigenous textile crafts through import of cheap textile goods and prohibition on sales of cotton outside the official market, the industry benefited from the economic slump, as import was restricted. Evidence indicates that local industries such as weaving (*turkudi*), dyeing, beating, and tailoring (*dinkin turkudi*) flourished during the Great Depression. Farmers continued to weave in the dry season, and their low costs offered them a competitive advantage over the imported cloth. The record also suggests an increase in the indigenous cloth trade with the Beriberi (in Bornu and Jos) and the Tuaregs in what is now the Niger Republic.⁴³

By the end of the economic crisis, cotton trade recovered and serious trade resumed at the buying stations. By this time, Kudan had emerged as a popular cotton market, serving not only farmers from the environs but also from Kano Emirate. Cotton had become popular over time, as evidenced from the data on cotton freight (Table 4.2). As the table shows, cotton purchases from Kudan were higher than those from the rail head at Gimi. The record itself is problematic; for instance, data on cotton purchase does not tally with the quantity freighted. Similarly, some of the purchase by the firms and middlemen which ought to be reflected on the list appears separately, and one is left wondering whether it had been added already or not. For instance, 120 tons purchased by the Niger Company in 1937 and 6 tons in 1938, and another 30 tons by a Hausa merchant—Mallam Kampa from Makarfi—in 1937–1938 are mentioned only in passing.⁴⁴ Two important observations also arise from the records. First, there is the large quantity of cotton seeds that were offloaded annually at Gimi, Madobi, and

³⁹ KSHCB 438C Kano Province Annual Report for 1930; Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria for 1930, 14; NAK ZarProf 1712, Ikara Assessment of Representative of Village Area 1933-4.

⁴⁰ NAK ZarProf 395, Paki District Affairs 1930.

⁴¹ R. N. Onyewuenyi, "Railway Development", 104, 109; KSHCB Acc. No. 68 Kura Inspection Notes vol. 1.

⁴² Colonial Report-Annual, Nigerian Report for 1930, 45.

⁴³ NAK ZarProf 1712; NAK ZarProf 395; NAK ZarProf 5280; KSHCB Acc. No. 68; NAK ZarProf 1706, Makarfi District Assessment of Representative Village Area; NAK Prof MLG 22289, Makarfi District Reassessment Report; KSHCB MLG 16490/1932 Kumbotso District Kano Emirate Reassessment.

⁴⁴ NAK ZarProf 5280.

Dangora for distribution to farmers across the localities, evidence of cotton's increasing popularity. For instance, 367.5 tons of cotton seeds were offloaded at Gimi Station in the 1935/6 season, 346 tons in the 1936/7 season, and 117 tons in the 1937/8 season. Second, European textiles such as grey baft, shirting, and cotton hanks had increasingly made inroads across the communities. As the records highlight, the products were expensive but were nevertheless popular among the locals.⁴⁵

Table 4.2 Cotton purchases and exports in tons, 1932-1938

Year	Gimi	Kudan	Cotton seed freight from Gimi Station (lbs Grade I Cotton)
1932-33	538	n.a.	n.a.
1934	564	n.a.	n.a.
1935	1,451	n.a.	1935–36: 367½ tons
1936	480	538	1936–37: 346 tons
1937	280	505	1937–38: 117 tons
1938	73	284	n.a.

Note: n.a.=not available

Source: NAK ZarProf, 5280 Makarfi District Note Book 1943.

When the Second World War broke out, the cotton trade suffered again owing to the wartime policy. During the war, the colonial authority stepped up production to prosecute the war, and the colony was expected to bail Britain out, but official attention favoured groundnuts and not cotton. For instance, the propaganda for maximum groundnut production was increased in Ikara District in 1944.⁴⁶ In the Kano area, all the cotton markets were closed down from 1940 to 1943 because of the propaganda.⁴⁷ Even the annual cotton seed distribution was suspended to avoid competition with groundnuts. The implications for cotton farmers were enormous; its selling price was lower, while food prices and taxes were higher.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ NAK ZarProf 3930 Zaria Province Annual Report for 1945.

⁴⁷ NAK KanProf 6991/S.5.

At the same time, export of cotton was higher, as in order to raise cash for tax, farmers produced three times what they had produced in the pre-war period.⁴⁸

One important development of the wartime policies in the areas under study, as in most places, was the reorganization of the cotton trade. The marketing and export of the crop previously handled by the firms was taken over by a new statutory monopoly board, known as the Cotton Marketing Board. The reason was that prior to the war, increase in prices were not being passed on to farmers. For instance, when prices were high, local prices did not rise proportionately; and, when prices were low, the effects of low prices were passed on to the farmers. The board was established to stabilize prices, protect farmers from exploitation, and use profits accrued from cotton export for research and developmental purposes. As Peter Bauer pointed out, however, the marketing board weakened rather than strengthened farmers' position. Their statutory power over the intermediaries in the trade, as Bauer noted, destabilized rather than stabilized prices.⁴⁹ Under the new arrangement, the board purchased cotton through the Licenced Buying Agents (LBAs). At first, the LBAs were predominantly the European firms who controlled the trade in the pre-war era. This was reversed in the 1950s to include Nigerian entrepreneurs, most especially politicians with links to the government. The board gave them bank guarantees and capital to become LBAs. The crop was purchased at the same gazette cotton stations which had existed before the war.

From its numerous interventions in the studied communities, the board stimulated production through the establishment of markets where the crop was purchased at a set price. The prices were always announced at the beginning of the season, so farmers knew beforehand how much their product would be worth. The board also intervened in road development to connect distant producing centres with the rail line. The roads were built and maintained by the board through a special allocation to the native authorities.⁵⁰ Although the roads were motorable in the dry season only, they played an important role in stimulating production and in bringing distant farmers closer to the markets. In the 1950s, when road development became high on the government's agenda, they were linked with the old Kano–

⁴⁸ Ibid.; KSHCB Acc. No. 68; NAK ZarProf PLT/4, Makarfi District Affairs; NAK KanProf 5467, Railway Employee Complaints of Short Food Supply; NAK KanProf 6033, Provision of Passes on the Railway; NAK KanProf 6395 Kano Provincial Annual Report for 1946.

⁴⁹ P. T. Bauer, *West African Trade: A Study of Competition, Oligopoly and Monopoly in a Changing Economy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 263-280.

⁵⁰ NAK ZarProf 431 Vol. IV, Cotton Market: Erection, gazetting, opening and closing of 1947-51.

Zaria road which the railway followed and which had been converted to an all-season road.⁵¹ The road did not follow the same route followed by the railway; instead it followed a new route previously isolated from the rail line. These roads generally became important in the 1970s, when road transport became popular.

It would be interesting to know what the effects of the roads were; unfortunately, this is not possible due to lack of data. As the evidence indicates, cotton purchases from the communities were lower than the previous years. For instance, only a little over 187½ tons were realized at Gimi, 448 tons at Kudan, and 1 ton at Challawa in 1951, and 2 tons at Dangora in 1953/4.⁵²

It also appears that the export trade had reached its limits, as production dropped. The records suggest this was as a result of low yields. In the 1950s, an attempt to improve crop yields through the application of fertilizers was introduced. At first, farmers resented the idea; but following the official propaganda, they gradually embraced the practice.⁵³

By the 1970s, cotton export fluctuated owing to the Sahelian famine and the shift in government priority in regard to the agricultural sector. Increased wealth from oil exports shifted government attention from agriculture to the productive sector. The existence of modern textile mills in the North from the 1950s also meant that much of the raw cotton previously exported was consumed internally. Firms continued to buy the crop and resell to the industry. By the end of 1970s, the local loom and its subsidiaries such as weaving, dyeing, and tailoring were in continuing decline.

From the discussion so far, it is clear that the anticipation that the railway would activate cotton export failed owing to the low prices and the fact that the crop was not meant for export. The Hausa traders competed with the firms for the raw cotton by offering higher prices than the firms offered. The Hausa traders continued to dominate the trade until their hold over the trade was undermined in the 1920s. As was shown above, cotton export from the areas was not as significant as writers have previously speculated. Until the 1920s, cotton did not feature prominently on the list of rail-borne exports from the communities. The colonial government also tried to improve the quality of the crop by introducing an improved variety. Although the improved variety was intended for export, much of it was consumed by the indigenous textile industry. As noted above, the railway opened new frontiers, but it could

⁵¹ NAK KanProf 431 vol. V Cotton Markets, erection, Gazetting Opening and Closing of 1947-51; NAK KanProf 2/54 RDS/101 Kiru-Bebeji Zaria; NAK KanProf 2316 vol. I. Road General Policy; NAK ZarProf 5280; KSHCB Acc. No. 68.

⁵² KSHCB KanProf History of Kumbotso, KanProf 1/1/3 Kiru History; NAK ZarProf 31 vol. IV.

⁵³ KSHCB Acc. No 86; NAK ZarProf 4844A Zaria Province Annual Report for 1950.

not intensively exploit them. This was circumvented by donkey transporters who exploited the situation to their advantage by charging higher rates. The colonial authority also stimulated production in such areas by building access roads to connect farmers in far removed areas to the rail line. By the 1950s, much of the cotton previously exported was internally consumed by the emerging textile mills.

4.3 Development of the groundnut export trade

It is clear from the above that cotton export was not the marked success proponents of the railway had anticipated. Instead, groundnuts, which had never featured during the planning of the railway, became an important export crop. The crop had been grown since pre-colonial times, but it did not become an important cash crop until the completion of the line. Some officials had indeed speculated that it might likely form part of the rail-borne traffic when the line was completed. For instance, the Agricultural Commercial Officer of Southern Nigeria, C. A. Bristwistle, speculated that groundnuts would take a second position to cotton as an export crop.⁵⁴ But despite these speculations, it did not attract the attention of the colonial authority.

It is not entirely clear why the British did not accord groundnuts the special attention their counterparts did in Senegal.⁵⁵ Part of the reason groundnuts did not attract attention was that cotton promotion distracted attention from other crops. The absence of groundnut-processing mills in Britain at that time also discouraged official interest. Until the World War I period, when groundnut-crushing and margarine plants were established in Britain, Nigerian groundnuts were processed in the Netherlands, Germany, and France, with Germany and France being the main markets for the nuts. Another reason for lack of interest was that European commercial firms, especially the Niger Company, were not interested in groundnuts because they considered the crop inferior both in yield and price compared with cotton.⁵⁶

This general anticipation that cotton would form the main traffic for the railway was proved wrong, and there was a general shift to groundnut production. Farmers, on their own

⁵⁴ Bristwistle, "Cotton Growing".

⁵⁵ For discussion on peanut expansion and trade in Senegal, see for instance B. Moitt, "From Pack Animals to Railways: Transport and the Expansion of Peanut Production and Trade in Senegal, 1840-1940", *Revue Francaise d'histoire d'outre-mer*, 88/1, (2001): 241-67; B. Moitt, "Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal's Peanut Basin: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 22/1, (1989): 27-50

⁵⁶ Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 48-9; Okediji, "Economic History", 183-4.

initiative, appropriated the railway to grow groundnuts, using the combination of family, slave, and forced labour. As indicated earlier, production was largely conducted by households, but the aristocrat and merchant classes relied on slave and forced labour. Migrant labour was not so popular until very much later.

The price returns on groundnuts were more attractive than cotton. Unlike cotton, groundnut is a food crop and has always been planted alongside food crops. Groundnuts could be eaten as food or cake (*kulli kulli*) or processed as oil which could be sold in the event of a price fall.⁵⁷ Hence, farmers grew groundnuts and food crops instead of cotton, the officially favoured crop.⁵⁸ The conditions in the studied communities were also well suited to groundnut expansion. Rainfall was adequately distributed, and land was fertile and in abundance, though difficult to exploit in some places.⁵⁹

As Hogendorn and Okediji argued, “a new demand” from Europe for fats and oils stimulated a corresponding demand for Nigeria’s groundnuts. Although the vent for surplus theory ignored the role of African entrepreneurship in cash crop expansion, studies by Hogendorn and Okediji indicated that groundnut exports began at the initiative of Hausa traders. As a result of this new demand and the cash returns on the crop, Hausa merchants responded energetically by ensuring that large amounts of the crop were grown for export.⁶⁰ As Paul Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn asserted, the Hausa merchants themselves had been involved in the old caravan kola nut trade to Ashanti for many years. As the railway was nearing completion, the caravan trade was dying, and many of the traders reoriented their trade southward. Some of them reoriented their entrepreneurial skills, networks, and capital to the new groundnut trade. At the start of the trade, many of them were contacted by the European firms to help them reach out to farmers.⁶¹ The firms relied on these traders to buy the nuts, partly because of their knowledge of the local trade and their well-established networks in the kola trade, contacts which were suited to the new export trade. Using their client networks, propaganda, finance, and incentive goods, the merchants sent their agents to communities along the rail line to inform rural dwellers of the profits they stood to gain by

⁵⁷ Arewa House Archives (hereafter referred to as AHAK), AHAK 3/3/16 Report of the Groundnut Trade in Kano Province, 9-10.

⁵⁸ NAK SNP10/268P/1913.

⁵⁹ Austin, “Resources, Techniques and Strategies”, 7-9.

⁶⁰ Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 48-9; Okediji, “Economic History”, 183-4.

⁶¹ Lovejoy, “Plantations”, 358; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 82-6.

growing the nuts. They also enlisted the services of traditional authorities, most especially village headmen, to persuade people to sell the nuts to them.⁶²

By the time the line was opened to traffic during the harvest of 1912, large amounts of groundnuts from the studied communities and their environs were made available for export. Compared with the low price of cotton, the £5 per ton offered for groundnuts was attractive enough to encourage farmers to sell their nuts, even though prices were always lower in the countryside. At the start of the trade, groundnut buying was handled by the agents of the Hausa merchants and the firms. The firms were not physically established in the areas until 1924, but they stationed their middlemen at the more important centres like Madobi, where they purchased the nuts directly through their Yoruba middlemen.⁶³ The combined activities of the firms and the middlemen stimulated production, as farmers from the communities and environs brought the nuts for sale using personal and hired private and hired animal transport.

The railway stimulated production by opening up new distant markets, and caravans of donkeys and bulls and in some cases camels were employed in conveying the nuts to railway stations.⁶⁴ Though figures are not available on groundnut exports before 1916, the impression from records suggests the tonnage was relatively high. Studies by Hogendorn and Okediji demonstrated that the groundnut exports in 1912 generally exceeded the capacity of the railway, requiring the firms to temporarily discontinue buying. The increased price in 1913 saw farmers selling again, which resulted in an accumulation of groundnuts at the stations, causing embarrassment to the railway authority.⁶⁵

It should be pointed out that during the planning of the railway, a once-a-week train was thought to be adequate for developing the region at the time of the opening of the line; but in less than five months after the start of the trade, this was found to be inadequate, necessitating an expansion in rolling stock. The much talked about ‘groundnut pyramid’,⁶⁶ often assumed to be a result of surplus production, was in fact a result of transport difficulties. Had the railway lived up to expectations, there would have been no need for the nuts to pile up at stations.⁶⁷ In any case, the nuts accumulated and continued to accumulate until the 1950s, though not in a such a way that it embarrassed the authorities.

⁶² Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 96-100.

⁶³ Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*, 131, and “New Approaches”, 214.

⁶⁴ NAK MLG 9117/1929, Kura District of Kano Emirate Reassessment.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 97-99; Okediji, “Economic History”, 191-3.

⁶⁶ It is common for writers to use the word “groundnut pyramid” to make reference to the large-scale groundnut export from Northern Nigeria during the colonial period.

⁶⁷ Colonial Annual Report for Northern Nigeria 1912, 28.



Figure 4.2 Camel transporting groundnuts to a buying station in the 1930s
Sources: The Nigerian Nostalgia 1960–1980 Project.

Although men's role in the development of the groundnut trade has been recognized, women's role also was important and should not be overlooked. While women generally did not participate in farm work, they did take part in harvesting of certain crops, such as cotton and groundnuts, as well as food crops. A large amount of women's labour was employed in shelling the nuts, as they had to be shelled before they were exported. Due to transport costs, it was important to shell the nuts to reduce the weight. The shelled nuts also attracted better prices than unshelled ones. Shelling could be done by hand or with a mortar and pestle. The task, although it looked simple, required some degree of patience and skill to ensure the nuts themselves were not crushed. This task was ideally adaptable to women's labour and the practice of *purdah* (*kulle*), as it could be done within the comfort of the home. Hogendorn has argued that shelling nuts promoted the practice of *purdah* and offered women a steady income.⁶⁸ Two women could produce one ton of shelled nuts in less than 27 hours, at a fee which ranged from 8s to 10s.⁶⁹

By the planting season of 1913/14, there was again a general shift to groundnut production. Farmers who had not grown the nuts the previous year decided to do so in the new season. As usual, the Hausa merchants were offering gifts to encourage them to grow the crop.⁷⁰ And, as expected, farmers increased their acreage using a combination of family, slave, and forced labour. A bumper harvest was anticipated that year; this hope was severely dampened, however, by a famine, a drop in rainfall, and, more importantly, by the rumour that groundnuts would attract a special tax and that increased production would force down prices. The result was that farmers uprooted their groundnuts, and there was a consequent shortage of food, as they had neglected food production. Kano area was the hardest hit. An appeal by the Emir that more food be grown was ignored. As Michael Watts pointed out in the case of Kano, the area was not sufficient in foodstuffs even in the nineteenth century. Increased cash cropping had deflected attention from food production, and the bad harvest that year resulted in the necessity of food imports to feed the population.⁷¹ Foodstuffs were sold at famine prices, and mortality was high in the Kano area. The railway played an important role in the distribution of relief supplies, as the rates for grain freight were

⁶⁸ AKAH 3/3/16.19-20; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 103-4.

⁶⁹ AKAH 3/3/16.19-20.

⁷⁰ Okediji, "Economic History", 193; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 99; Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria Report for 1914, 11.

⁷¹ Watts, *Silent Violence*, 163; A. Adamu, "The Food Economy in Colonial Nigeria: A Study of Food Production and Distribution in Zaria Metropolis c. 1902-1960", (PhD Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, 2001); A. Adamu, "Government and Food Distribution in Zaria, 1902-1966", *FAIS Journal of Humanities*, 1/4, (2001): 145-156.

lowered.⁷² Lovejoy and Hogendorn pointed out that the famine also had a significant effect on slavery, as some slave owners let their slaves go free because they could not afford to feed them.⁷³

The outbreak of the war in 1914 further jeopardized the groundnut trade, as prices were falling. Farmers refused to sell because of the price fall, and large quantities of the nuts were consumed internally or used for making oil. The groundnut trade suffered closure for months owing to the war.⁷⁴ The German and Austrian firms that had been the main buyers of Nigerian nuts had been ejected from the country with the onset of the war. The cessation of trade with the Germans strongly affected the trade in nuts, as the Germans were the main buyers and carriers as well as processors of the Nigerian nuts. The shortage of steamers during the war led to congestion of stocks of the nuts at the Iddo terminus.⁷⁵ Prices were low and the prices of imported goods went beyond the reach of the common people. Attempts to attract traffic through rate reductions on the transport of groundnuts, palm kernels, and shea nuts did little to improve the situation.⁷⁶ The railway itself faced a severe coal shortage and irregular services.⁷⁷

After about 15 months of trade cessation, the groundnut trade picked up again in late 1915, with prices rising between £4.10s and £6. The price rose again slightly in 1916, reaching a peak of £40 in the early 1920s, which resulted in increased exports, as Table 4.3 indicates. Although prices were lower in the countryside, they were still better than the cotton price. Groundnut export became steady owing to a new demand from Britain. By this time, Britain had started margarine production; hitherto, margarine was processed at Hamburg, as Britain had neither nut-crushing nor margarine plants. By the end of the war in 1918, the industry had become well established in Britain, resulting in demand for margarine, which in turn stimulated a new demand for Nigerian groundnuts.⁷⁸ The groundnut trade was generally remarkable in 1918, but the tonnage from the studied communities suggests otherwise. The annual report itself is problematic, as the purchased figures do not tally with the exported tonnage. As Table 4.3 reveals, groundnut exports were generally steady, with a slump in 1923. In 1924, the trade exceeded the most sanguine expectations owing to the price rise,

⁷² Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 118-9.

⁷³ Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death*, 225-6

⁷⁴ Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria Report for 1914, 8.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 30, 7; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 126; Okediji, "Economic History", 195-6.

⁷⁶ Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria, Report for 1915, 7, 21, 31.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 21, 31; Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria, Report for 1917, 8, 21.

⁷⁸ Okediji, "Economic History", 196-8; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 126.

which remained high through to the end of the 1920s.⁷⁹ The increased cash from the groundnut trade also stimulated the textile trade, as farmers spent their money on imported cloth, which as the record suggests was purchased at a higher price.⁸⁰ Table 4.3 also indicates that groundnuts were exported from Faiki despite the closure of its station in 1918.

As one of the annual reports indicates, shipment of nuts was constrained by the insufficient capacity of the railway, owing to shortage of locomotives and rolling stock. The railway was stretched and in need of an overhaul.⁸¹ As usual, animals continued to be used in transporting the nuts from remote areas to the stations. The colonial authority also stimulated production by building roads to connect farmers in outlying areas with the rail line. As earlier indicated, the colonial authority had envisaged a coordinated transport system, whereby the roads fed the railway with traffic, but at the same time an effort was made to ensure the roads did not compete with the railway.⁸²

Table 4.3 Groundnut exports in tons, 1916–1924

Year	GimiDabosa	Anchau	Faiki	Dangora	Madobi	Challawa
1916	160	39	420	n.a.	1326	31
1918	126	9	675	626	1236	n.a.
1919	531	n.a.	1500	1508	1626	1
1923	12	3	336	5	1217	14
1924	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3000	n.a.

Note: n.a. = not available

Sources: PRO 657/7, Nigerian Railway Administrative Report for the year 1916; PRO 657/7, Nigerian Railway Administrative Report for the year 1918; PRO 657/4, Nigerian Railway Administrative Report for the year 1919; NAK 273P/1919; PRO 657/7, Nigerian Railway and Udi Coal Mines Administrative Report for the year ending 31 March 1923; AHAK 3/3/16.

⁷⁹ KSHCB SNP/9/12/1924, Kano Province Annual Report File 635; AHAK 3/3/16, Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria, Report for 1928, 12; Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria, Report for 1929, 11, 13; KSHCB 9043 Kano Province Annual Report 1928.

⁸⁰ NAK 273P/1919 SNP 10.

⁸¹ Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria, Report for 1919, 6.

⁸² NAK SNP7 2322/1912; NAK KanProf 3884A.

Two important developments that took place in the groundnut trade industry at the end of the war, with implications for the studied communities, need highlighting here: first, the change in the composition of the buying firms; and second, the physical penetration of these firms into the studied communities. Prior to the war, the firms were not physically established in the studied areas. The post-war period saw the emergence of Lebanese and Syrian migrants who challenged the prominent role previously played by European firms and Hausa merchants. Some of these migrants had worked as middlemen for the European firms prior to the war. Their awareness of the demand for Nigerian groundnuts from Britain and the profits to be made motivated them to join the trade. Unlike the Europeans, who restricted their activities to the townships, the Syrians and Lebanese operated both in the townships and the countryside and so could determine their buying capacity. They operated in much the same way as the Hausa traders; but unlike the Hausa traders, they were willing to take risks by offering higher prices than the European firms. In addition, they had financial backing and were better organized than the Hausa traders. They also employed some of the Hausa as middlemen or agents.⁸³ The emergence of these newcomers coincided with a period of increased penetration of commercial trading firms into the countryside. The firms were motivated by a desire to tap into the groundnut trade directly at the source. The colonial state also established official trading centres at some of the areas where land was leased to the firms in 1924. For instance, in the Kano area in that year, approximately 129 certificates of temporary and permanent occupancy were granted to trading firms in the countryside, which had increased to 172 in 1930.⁸⁴

When the trading centres were opened in 1924, the firms established buying stations at the more important centres. As Table 4.4 indicates, the firms concentrated in Madobi, Gimi, and Dangora, a factor which accelerated their expansion and popularity. The table shows that Madobi was the only centre with a concentration of European, Lebanese, and Syrian firms, with the latter two being the pioneers.⁸⁵ Some of them had been purchasing groundnuts from the communities through the agency of the Hausa and Yoruba middlemen even before the trading outlets were officially established.⁸⁶

⁸³ NAK KanProf 3884A.

⁸⁴ KSHCB 14686, Kano Province Annual Report for 1930, vol. 1; KSHCB 120P, Kano Province Annual Report for 1921; KSHCB Acc. No. 68.

⁸⁵ KSHCB Acc. No. 68; KSHCB SNP/9/12/1924, Kano Province Annual Report File 635.

⁸⁶ AHAK 3/3/16 Report on the Groundnut Trade in Kano Province, 16.

As the firms became physically established, they employed a number of Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo as well as migrant and immigrant traders as middlemen to purchase the groundnuts for them. A number of firms even extended their buying stations to far-removed centres such as Ikara, Makarfi, Rogo, and Bebeji. By the 1940s, Madobi had become the centre with the highest concentration of trading firms, including indigenous Nigerian firms, making it the most popular railway town between Kano and Zaria (although the number of firms decreased over time).⁸⁷ As the table also indicates, a centre like Likoro was entirely without the presence of commercial firms, a factor which accounted for its decline in importance. Centres like Challawa and Kwankwaso which at one time had trading firms, but the firms closed down because business was not good there. For instance, since the establishment of trading outlets at Challawa, only the BCGA established there, even though no certificate of occupancy was granted. The famous Hausa merchant Alhassan Dantata also had his middlemen permanently stationed there, in addition to establishing buying stations at the other centres. The only firm which established at Kwankwaso closed down in 1933.⁸⁸ The physical presence of the firms and the activity of the middlemen stimulated production and also gave farmers more access to the markets.

Table 4.4 List of trading firms, 1924–1940s

Auchan	Challawa	Dangora	G/bosa	K/kwaso	Madobi	Yako
Niger Properties	BCGA	Niger Properties	Niger Properties	UAC	Niger Properties	Niger Properties
A/Dantata		Mc Ivers	Mc Ivers		W. B. Mc Ivers	GBO
		GBO	GBO		UAC	A/Dantata
		John Holt	John Holt		GBO	
		A/Dantata	A/Dantata		John Holt	
					CFAO	
					A/Dantata	
					M. A. Bugren	
					L. A.	

⁸⁷ NAK ZarProf 5280; KSHCB Acc No. 68; NAK ZarProf MKT/4 vol. 1.

⁸⁸ NAK MLG9117/1929, Kura Emirate Reassessment; KSHCB Acc. No. 68.

					Ambrosini	
					Manaise Brothers	
					Abdul Hussain Saleh	
					S. Raccah	
					Miller Brothers	
					Musa Tahir	
					S. J. Maxwell	
					Michael Nwankwo	

Sources: NAK ZarProf 5280; NAK ZarProf MKT/4 vol. 1; Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*, 129; Yusuf, “New Approaches”.



United African Company Stores, Dangora



Alhassan Dantata Stores, Auchan



United African Company Stores, Auchan



Alhassan Dantata Stores, Madobi



John Holt Stores, Madobi



United African Company Stores, Madobi

Figure 4.3 Remains of commercial firm stores across the study areas

Sources: Personal collections

However, when the Great Depression set in in the 1930s, the groundnut trade suffered. Although the Great Depression caused prices to fall at abnormal rates, groundnut exports rose—not because the price was attractive, but because farmers needed to raise cash to pay taxes and to maintain the lifestyle they had become accustomed to in the pre-Depression era. As A. G. Hopkins asserted, the farmers’ strategy involved adjustments to the supply of produce.⁸⁹ Moses Ochonu pointed out that farmers sold their crop at a rate lower than its value, leaving them with no reserves for the difficult months preceding the harvest period.⁹⁰ As the evidence indicates, prices and taxes were high, while living conditions deteriorated. The situation was also compounded by locust and hopper attacks which destroyed food crops. In villages where crops other than groundnuts had been grown, there was a complete or partial extension of groundnuts to the exclusion of those crops because, despite the low price, groundnuts could still finance tax payments. It was also an easier crop to grow without imperilling food production. For instance, during the tax assessment in Paki District in 1931, the assessment officer observed, among other things, that large proportions of the lands were under groundnut and food cultivation. Prior to the economic crash, groundnuts, cotton, and sugar cane were “plentiful”. As the price fell, food, groundnuts, and sugar cane stole land previously used for cotton and tobacco cultivation.⁹¹ Also, during an assessment of crop yields at Ma’alikanchi in Ikara District in 1933, it was observed that groundnuts and food crops were mainly grown, as most of the crops were ruined owing to the early cessation of rain.⁹²

Farmers’ conditions deteriorated, and to be able to maintain an average lifestyle they had to produce three times what they had produced in the pre-Depression era. As Table 4.5 indicates, groundnut exports were high despite the price fall. As a result of this deteriorating condition, rural dwellers migrated in search of better livelihoods. Cases of inter-district, forced migration (*tashi*) were widely reported in the district records. The receiving points of the migrants were the railway towns and the tin mines, where the migrants sold their labour in return for cash. Migrant labourers (*yan kwadago*) were listed on the tax lists, which suggests that migrant labour was not only popular but was employed in cash crop

⁸⁹ Hopkins, *Economic History*.

⁹⁰ M. E. Ochonu, *Colonial Meltdown: Northern Nigeria in the Great Depression*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 56.

⁹¹ NAK ZarProf 395 Paki District Affairs 1930; NAK ZarProf 1712, Ikara Assessment of Representative of Village, Area 1933–34; NAK ZarProf 5280, Makarfi District Note Book 1943.

⁹² NAK ZarProf 1712; NAK ZarProf 395.

production.⁹³ Cases of embezzlements of tax funds by village and district heads were also common during the period.⁹⁴

Table 4.5 Groundnut exports in tons, 1930–1938

Year	Madobi	Yako	Dangora	GimiDabosa
1930	3,048	723	845	n.a.
1931	3,325	947	914	n.a.
1932/33	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,542
1933/4	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2,053
1935-6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,512
1936-7	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3,846
1937-8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,239

Note: n.a.= not available

Sources: KSHCB Kano Province Annual Report for 1930; NAK ZarProf 5280, Makarfi District Note Book 1943, Zaria Province Annual Report, 1939–40.

The commercial trading firms also circumvented the groundnut trade by exporting adulterated groundnuts. Most of the nuts tendered for export during the period were adulterated with stones and sand and included beans. Adulteration was a strategy to overcome the economic crunch. The prevalence of the practice, despite appeals by the authorities, led to enforcement of the Groundnut Inspection Regulations No. 37 in 1936. This policy aimed to ensure that the produce exported was of good quality. As the evidence indicates, the regulation was not effective in the studied communities, most especially at Gimi. The quantity involved was not significant; however, it shows the prevalence of the practice. For instance, approximately 15 bags of adulterated groundnuts and cotton were seized in the 1937–1938 season.⁹⁵ In 1938, a storekeeper of John Holt and an agent of GBO were caught with adulterated bags of the nuts at Gimi. Similarly, several bags of adulterated groundnuts were seized in 1939. Another 158 bags of adulterated groundnuts were seized at the premises

⁹³ NAK ZarProf 1712; NAK ZarProf 395; NAK ZarProf MLG 222289.

⁹⁴ KSHCB Acc. 68; NAK ZarProf 5280.

⁹⁵ NAK ZarProf ML 222289.

of Alhassan Dantata at Ikara, while another 14 were seized at the premises of Messrs W. B. MacIver (UAC) at Rogo and Gimi in the same 1939 year.⁹⁶

With the outbreak of World War II, the economy plummeted further. The unfavourable terms of trade and the price decline had effects on farmers. Groundnut prices fell with the onset of the war, picked up in 1944, and fell again in 1946.⁹⁷ Despite the price fall, groundnut exports were high because farmers needed cash to pay taxes. Food prices and taxes were high, while imported goods were scarce. Official propaganda to step up production was revived during the war. For instance, farmers in Ikara District were instructed to cultivate one acre of groundnuts in 1944. A minimum quota of two bags was also set per taxpayer.⁹⁸ The firms also influenced production by paying in excess of the minimum price. Since the firms bought only on quota, they competed among themselves to meet their quotas. Competition was most common at centres like Madobi where the firms concentrated. As the records show, farmers there got a better deal as the Lebanese, the Syrian, the UAC, and the Dantata firms paid in excess of the minimum price.⁹⁹ As usual, the railway motor service and donkey transporters continued to stimulate production by transporting the nuts from remote areas to the stations.¹⁰⁰ The donkey transporters in particular charged higher rates for their services. During the groundnut buying season at Ikara and Anchau in 1943–1944, the firms complained of the difficulty of hiring donkeys, owing to the charges.¹⁰¹

One development of the inter-war period was the reorganization of the groundnut trade. The marketing and export of groundnuts previously handled by the firms was handled by the Groundnut Marketing Board. As with the cotton board, it was established to stabilize prices, protect farmers from exploitation, and invest in research and development projects. The board also gave Nigerians bank guarantees and capital to become LBAs.¹⁰² At first the LBAs were predominantly the European firms who had controlled the trade in the pre-war era. This was modified to accommodate Nigerian entrepreneurs. As the names in Table 4.6

⁹⁶ NAK ZarProf AGR 7 Adulteration of Produce 1916–56.

⁹⁷ NAK ZarProf 3762 vol. I, Groundnut Production 1944–1945; NAK KanProf 6394, Kano Provincial Annual Report 1946–49.

⁹⁸ NAK ZarProf 3762 vol. I; NAK ZarProf 3930 Zaria Province Annual Report for 1945.

⁹⁹ NAK ZarProf 3762.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Dottridge, “Aspects”, 15.

indicate, a number of locals and migrants from the localities were appointed LBAs in the 1940s and 1950s.¹⁰³

The board also influenced production through the establishment of additional buying stations, fixing and announcing prices at the beginning of the farming season so that farmers knew beforehand what the prices would be.¹⁰⁴ The Native Authority also established smaller buying stations, known as buying or scale points, but without trading firms, though the LBAs had scale points there. The buying points served as bulking points in the groundnut trade. They were established 12 to 15 miles away from the buying station so as to protect the former. In the late 1940s, buying points were established at locations such as Makarfi, Kwankwaso, Daburau, and Kura. These buying points became important with the increased importance of road transport in the 1960s and 1970s. The board also invested in road development, to connect distant groundnut areas with the rail line and also to feed the railway with traffic. As with the roads financed by the cotton board, these roads were built and maintained through a special fund allocation to the Native Authority. Unlike the cotton board's efforts, the effect was widely felt because groundnuts were widely grown. As indicated elsewhere, the roads were linked with the Kano–Zaria road, which was converted to an all-season road in the 1950s.¹⁰⁵ The new all-season road did not follow the same route followed by the old Kano–Zaria road; instead, it followed a route previously isolated from the railway.

However, the railway had its own problems. Its active involvement in the war effort subjected it to enormous strains and the need for repairs. Rolling stock and indents ordered during the war did not arrive until the end of the war. The railway workshops were also unable to manufacture the required spare parts locally, thereby causing technical dislocation to the system and resulting in accumulation of groundnuts around the stations. The timber sleepers manufactured at the railway's workshop at Zaria also was discontinued, as the timber was found to be of low quality.¹⁰⁶ The weekly wagon allotment to groundnut shippers during the war did little to clear the huge groundnut pyramids around the stations. Industrial action embarked upon by railway workers in 1945 also aggravated the condition of the railway, by

¹⁰³ NAK ZarProf MKT/4 vol. I, Groundnut Buying Stations and Points.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ KSHCB Acc. No. 68; NAK ZarProf 5280; KSHCB 19/vol; NAK ZarProf 5240, Annual Report for 1953; NAK KanProf 3884A Trunk Road; NAK KanProf 3884 Kano-Zaria Road; NAK RDS/101, Kiru-Bebeji-Zaria Road Link.

¹⁰⁶ NAK ZarProf 3930.

holding up repairs when locomotives could have been taken out for service.¹⁰⁷ As the war came to an end, the situation deteriorated further and the nuts continued to accumulate, as the railway could not discharge its obligations. Groundnuts were crammed into passenger trains, and passengers were transported like goods.¹⁰⁸ Until the introduction of diesel electric locomotives on the Zaria–Kano route in 1954, the nuts continued to accumulate.¹⁰⁹

Table 4.6 List of Licenced Buying Agents at scale points, 1947–1955

Licence Number	Licencee	Firm	Buying Point
001001	Yakubu	P. Z.	Kudan
001002	P. H. Sawyer	P. Z.	Ikara
001003	Bawandozen	P. Z.	Ikara
001004	Mallam Koshe	P. Z.	Kaya
001006	Sule	Isa Makale	Ikara
001007	Abdu Mailafiya	Isa Makale	Ikara
001008	Alhaji Ibrahim Makarfi	G. B. Ollivant	Ikara
001009	Mr. E. C. Opufou	John Holt	Ikara
n.a.	Mr. S. A. Umoru	n.a.	Anchau
n.a.	Mallam Umoru	n.a.	Ikara
n.a.	Mr. T. E. Opufou	n.a.	n.a.
n.a.	Tanimu	P. Z.	Kaya

Note: n.a. = not available

Source: NAK ZarProf MKT vol. I, Groundnut Buying Stations and Points

The groundnut trade picked up at the end of the war owing to demands from Britain, which stimulated a corresponding demand for Nigerian groundnuts. Prices were high and continued to rise through the 1960s, with a corresponding increased export tonnage. The groundnut exports reached their peak in the 1960s and began to decline in the 1970s. Although the figures are not detailed for the most part, Table 4.7 on groundnut exports indicates that exports from the areas remained steady through 1962, with fluctuations every

¹⁰⁷ NAK KanProf 6179 vol. IV Buying Stations and Points; NAK 299/S.3 vol. I Railway Publication 1949–56.

¹⁰⁸ NAK KanProf 6394, Kano Province Annual Report for 1946.

¹⁰⁹ KSHCB 8655/S.1, Annual Report Kano Province 1954.

now and then.¹¹⁰ It is also clear from the record that the groundnut export had reached its limit, as it was interrupted by the Sahelian drought of the early 1970s. The increased wealth from oil exports also shifted government attention from agriculture to the productive sector. The emergence of crushing mills, which had become well established in the 1970s, also meant the disappearance of groundnut from the export list (the nuts were used in the local mills).¹¹¹ The railway also had its own problems, as it was in a decline condition and its role was challenged by the increased importance of road transport. The roads made new centres on the road more popular. The completion of the Kano-Zaria road in the 1960s had repercussions on the studied communities, as the road diverted traffic from the rail line and opened up new areas previously isolated from the railway.¹¹²

Before concluding the section, it is necessary to state that increased cash returns from groundnut trade put more cash at farmers' disposal, which influenced their upward social mobility. Not all farmers prospered, but many invested their money in their children's education, social networks, and building of elaborate houses with more permanent materials. The more prosperous ones invested in landed properties, especially the *soro* type, a rectangular mud house with a flat or round roof.¹¹³ Many also re-roofed their houses with corrugated iron sheeting, the symbol of modernity and prosperity at that time. A survey of Soba, Jere, Ikara, and Kudan districts by L. C. Giles in the 1930s revealed that farmers and traders invested their money in sewing machines, which they hired out to tailors.¹¹⁴

Table 4.7 Groundnut exports in tons, 1945–1961/2

Year	Anchau	Challawa	Dangora	Gimi	Madobi	Yako
1945	493	24	1,810	1,665	5,041	4,354
1946	765	n.a.	2,220	2,872	4,627	4,657
1947	1,673	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1948	573	580	1,652	1,790	2,533	3,115
1949	1,073	n.a.	n.a.	3,151	n.a.	n.a.
1950/1	402	98	1,240	1,456	1,310	1,149

¹¹⁰ Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 148-9.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 131.

¹¹² NAK ZarProf 4957, Zaria Province Annual Report 1951; NAK KanProf 3884A, Trunk Road; NAK KanProf 3884, Kano–Zaria road.

¹¹³ NAK ZarProf 395 Paki District Affairs; NAK ZarProf 5240, Annual Report for 1953.

¹¹⁴ A treadle sewing machine cost between £9 and £11 in 1937—cited in D. Forde, “The North: the Hausa”, in: M. Perham (ed.), *The Native Economies of Nigeria*, vol. 1, (London: Faber, 1946), 119-79, 136.

1951/52	n.a.	632	2,839	n.a.	10,154	1,889
1952/3	n.a.	738	3,097	n.a.	4,112	2,473
1953/4	n.a.	986	2,500	n.a.	12,712	1,966
1954-5	n.a.	561	2,545	n.a.	2,878	2,100
1955-6	n.a.	n.a.	3,116	n.a.	n.a.	2,963
1961-2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	4,418	n.a.

Note: n.a. = not available

Sources: These figures were compiled from annual reports and the groundnut marketing board records for the period covered in the table.

From the discussion so far, it is evident that the railway was instrumental to the development of the groundnut export trade and that farmers on their own initiative decided to grow groundnuts instead of cotton, the officially favoured crop. The railway influenced groundnut production and trade and also offered farmers better cash returns for their products by guaranteeing them access to the market. As is obvious from the above discussion, the trade started at the initiative of the indigenous traders, who invested their funds, energies, and networks. Unlike cotton, the groundnut trade was popular due to the price and opportunities it offered many people. The railway also opened up access to new sources of groundnuts, but it could not exploit them intensively. This was circumvented by animal transporters. Sustained government investment in access roads also stimulated production, while assuring farmers of better prices. The groundnut trade reached its peak in the 1960s and began to decline in the 1960s.

4.4 Hides and skins production and trade

Hides and skins were another commodity that became important with the completion of the railway. The history of the trade in this commodity is a long one, dating back to pre-colonial times. The popular Moroccan leather, often assumed to have been produced in Morocco, was originally Kano-made. It was called Moroccan leather because it was exported to Europe via Morocco. The trade in this commodity at the time was constrained by weight and distance. Also, not all animals slaughtered were flayed and their skins turned into leather; instead, most were turned into food. At that time, leather was a mere by-product of the more lucrative meat trade. However, the establishment of British rule and the construction of the railway removed

the constraints on the hides and skins trade and provided the vent for moving the commodity over a long distance, while also stimulating production. The conditions in the studied communities supported breeding of livestock, despite the trypanosomiasis endemic in some of the areas.¹¹⁵

The establishment of British rule and the construction of the railway offered the European trading firms an opportunity to capture most of the raw hides previously used locally. As with other trades, the hides and skins trade developed at the initiative of Hausa traders, who ensured the commodity was produced for export. And, as with groundnuts, the commodity did not feature on the government's priority list during the planning of the railway. European firms were not interested in developing the trade, as they thought it was inferior to cotton in terms of cash returns.¹¹⁶ The Hausa traders' awareness of overseas demand for the commodity stimulated its production. Many of them had been involved in the trade since pre-colonial times but lost out to the European firms owing to lack of capital. Their services were indispensable, however, to the firms who relied on them for supplies of the commodity. As A. G. Adebayo pointed out, the trade in hides and skins thrived on cash advances. The practice had the advantage of ensuring the flow of the commodity; however, it also had the tendency to make butchers indebted to the firms.¹¹⁷ Using their own networks and cash or incentive goods provided by the firms, the Hausa traders visited the village markets to purchase raw hides and skins from professional butchers. This is important, because the way and manner in which the hides and skins had been flayed and treated previously, in the traditional way, left marks and blisters on the products, which reduced the quality and value. The colonial authority assisted the trade by improving the quality and value of the product.¹¹⁸

As with groundnuts, the hides and skins did not feature prominently as rail-borne traffic until the World War I period. The wartime demand affected the trade positively, as prices were high throughout the period. Goat skin (the most sought after) prices rose from 8d in 1914 to 20d in 1916 and declined in the 1920s. Prices varied considerably from town to

¹¹⁵ For discussion on the tsetse and trypanosomiasis problem in Northern Nigeria, see for instance T. A. Nash, "The tsetse fly and the trypanosome", *The New Scientist*, (June 1958): 21-34; P. E. Glover, *The Tsetse Problem in Northern Nigeria*, (Nairobi: 1961).

¹¹⁶ A. G. Adebayo, "The Production and Export of Hides and Skins in Colonial Northern Nigeria, 1900-1945", *The Journal of African History*, 33/2, (1992): 273-300; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 48-9.

¹¹⁷ Adebayo, "Production and Export", 281-6.

¹¹⁸ Adebayo, "Production and Export", 277.

town and tended, as usual, to be much lower in areas far removed from the line. Most of the firms suspended buying in 1919, owing to shipping difficulties.¹¹⁹

Competition among the European firms stimulated production. In the 1920s, prices fell as a result of the post-war economic slump and the glut in export trade. The prices did not recover until the 1940s.¹²⁰ As with the trade in cash crops, animal transporters played important roles in feeding the railway with traffic. Donkeys were employed in transporting the products from remote areas to the stations, which indirectly stimulated production. Although data are not available for the whole period covered in this study, Table 4.8 indicates that the quantities of hides and skins exported rose steadily. The peak of the trade was 1919, with the highest quantity originating from Faiki, a very important commercial centre (despite closure of its station), followed by Gimi and Dangora.

Table 4.8 Hides and skins exports in tons, 1916–1923

Station	1916		1917		1918		1919		1923	
	tons	cwt*	tons	cwt	tons	cwt	tons	cwt	tons	cwt
Likoro	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3
Gimi	1	2	1	3	19	6	36	8	1	n.a.
Anchau	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	8	3	17	n.a.	10
Faiki	1	7	10	19	n.a.	n.a.	9,945	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Dangora	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3	10	19	11	14	9
Madobi	2	2	1	11	n.a.	18	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	12
Challawa	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	6	19	19	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Note: n.a. = not available

Sources: PRO 657/4; PRO 6577; NAK SNP 10/273P/1919.

* See footnote¹²¹

¹¹⁹ NAK SNP 10/273P/1919.

¹²⁰ Adebayo, "Production and Export", 281-6.

¹²¹ Cwt is an abbreviation for a hundredweight, a measurement used for weighing agricultural products such as grains and groundnuts. There are 20 hundredweights in one ton.

An important development occurred in the hides and skins industry at the end of the war, as the government began to intervene actively in the production process with the aim of improving its quality and attracting price increases. This intervention led to the introduction of an improvement scheme. The scheme had its origin in the wartime complaints from the buying companies in Britain that hides and skins from Nigeria were poorly flayed and tanned and were adulterated. A large proportion of the hides exported during the war, especially those showing flay marks, were from animals that had died of disease and whose carcass had been allowed to set before flaying. Many of the European firms were implicated in the misconduct. The government was concerned about the situation and wanted to see it improved. The improvement scheme was first introduced in Kano Province in 1928 after several years of campaigning. At a meeting held in Kano to decide the practical methods of achieving the scheme's objectives, the representatives of the Hides and Skins Sub-Committee of the Kano Chambers of Commerce opposed the idea of inspecting the commodity at the point of railing. Concerning the poor flaying techniques and disease, they proposed that butchers should be taught proper methods of flaying and drying and educated in detecting disease lesions. It was also suggested that some means of inspection be put in place to ensure that improper flaying was easily detected.¹²²

The scheme started in Kano City with the training of butchers on the proper methods of flaying and drying. The following year, the butchers taught others in the province and elsewhere. Also, hides flayed under this scheme were marked with letters indicating their point of origin, with an inscription which indicated whether it was properly flayed or not. Provincial administrations from other provinces also sent their officials to Kano to learn the improved methods.¹²³ To ensure compliance with the scheme, an ordinance which prohibited the old style of flaying and drying was enforced, with penalties stipulated for offenders. The ordinance was first implemented in the Kano area, with most of the studied communities falling into line in 1933. Similarly, special markets and drying sheds for flaying and drying of hides and skins were established at Madobi, Gimi, Yako, Likoro, Kura, Makarfi, Kudan, and Hunkuyi in 1934. The scheme prohibited the removal of hides and skins from such markets until they were properly dried. It also empowered veterinary and inspection officials to

¹²² NAK ZarProf AGR7; KSHCB 9043; KSHCB SNP/9/12/1924; KSHCB 123 Kano Province Annual Report for 1921.

¹²³ KSHCB 9043.

inspect the hides and skins at any premises where the buying and packing of the commodity was done.¹²⁴

However, the hides and skins trade was unstable in the 1930s, as prices declined. At the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s, goatskin prices dropped from 23d in January to 14d in December. The price decline involved a substantial drain on producers' incomes. Despite the price fall, exports were stable as the product was forced on buyers, irrespective of demand and the price fall. Unlike groundnuts, skins and hides could not be kept or hoarded until a price rise. Even if they decided to tan and hoard these products, the price might not be worth the effort; hence, selling at the prevailing rate was better than nothing at all. As usual, donkeys continued to be used in transporting the product to the stations from areas far removed from the line. Detailed figures on export from all the studied communities are not available, except for Gimi (Table 4.9). The table includes figures from the buying centres in Ikara and Makarfi.¹²⁵

Adulteration of the hides and skins was also prevalent during the 1930s, which resulted in prosecution of offenders. Adulteration was a standard strategy to overcome the economic crunch of the time. As A. G. Adebayo pointed out, when prices were low, producers paid little attention to the improved method of flaying and drying.¹²⁶ Most of the defective skins rejected were diverted to the indigenous leather industry.¹²⁷ The hides and skins improvement scheme was frustrated by the combined activities of the middlemen and butchers and the African veterinary officers and the firms. The old habits of removing the skins from the shed before drying continued despite the prohibitions. Whenever a middleman was apprehended for flouting the order, the European firms often frustrated court proceedings by offering to pay the fines to get him off the hook. This practice continued well into the 1940s, when a new method of inspecting the commodity at the point of railing was introduced.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Adebayo, "Production and Export", 292; KSHCB Acc. No. 68; NAK ZarProf 5280.

¹²⁵ KSHCB 438, Annual Report Kano Province for 1930; NAK ZarProf 737 Hides and Skins Zaria Province; NAK ZarProf 5280.

¹²⁶ NAK ZarProf 737; Adebayo, "Production and Export", 284.

¹²⁷ NAK ZarProf 5280; NAK ZarProf AGR7.

¹²⁸ Adebayo, "Production and Export", 292-3.

Table 4.9 Goat hides and skins exports from Gimi Station in pounds weight, 1932–1937

Year	Lbs
1932-33	538
1934	554
1936	1,451
1937	280

Source: NAK ZarProf 5280.

In the 1940s, the leather industry received a boost owing to the wartime import restrictions and scarcity. Although the colonial authority intervened in stimulating production for the war effort, prices were lower to absorb the surplus. As the record generally indicates, demand was high while supply was low owing to the price decline. Most of the commodity was diverted to the indigenous leather industry because the wartime restrictions stimulated demand for a local substitute for imported skins.¹²⁹ As the war came to an end in 1945, hides and skins exports did not improve, and it remained poor through to the 1960s as prices declined.¹³⁰

Although the wartime measures did not lead to increased exports, they resulted in the introduction of point-of-export inspection of the commodity in 1941/2. Produce inspectors were posted to stations, with mandates to inspect railway premises and premises where production and tanning of hides and skins were carried out. They were also mandated to inspect vehicles and animals used in transporting hides and skins and to keep their eyes and ears open for signs of animal diseases.¹³¹ The old methods, whereby the veterinary *malams* instructed butchers on the proper method of flaying and drying, were revisited. The *malams* also helped in repairing drying sheds.¹³² Adebayo pointed out that in spite of the measures and stringent penalties against offenders, contravention of the hides and skins ordinances was rampant, as the butchers certified all sorts of hides and skins as good. The *malams* were also alleged to be taking bribes from butchers. The laws targeted only Africans and overlooked Europeans that encouraged the abuse.¹³³

¹²⁹ NAK KanProf/4737/Hides and Skins Marketing Board.

¹³⁰ NAK ZarProf 3930 Zaria Province Annual Report for 1945; KSHCB VET/10, Hides and Skins Report Kano Province, October-November-December 1955.

¹³¹ KSHCB Acc. No. 68.

¹³² NAK KanProf /4737; NAK ZarProf 3602, Hides and Skins Improvement Scheme-Staff for 1942-3.

¹³³ Adebayo, "Production and Export", 292-3.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the colonial authority focused on stimulating production through monthly inspection of hides and skins markets, building of slaughter slabs and drying sheds, and repairs of existing facilities in the countryside. Centres like Madobi became the headquarters for inspecting hides and skins in southern Kano.¹³⁴ It should be noted that although the quality of the products improved owing to periodic inspections, the prices fluctuated. The emergence of the modern tanning industry in the 1960s also meant that a large proportion of the commodity was tanned locally. The first tanning industry in the North was established in 1949, but it did not become well established until the 1960s.¹³⁵ The increased importance of road transport with the decline of the railway in the 1970s meant that large proportions of the commodity were transported to the factory by road.

From the above, it is clear that the railway had marked effects on the hides and skins trade. The trade in the communities was pre-colonial in origin, but development was constrained by weight and distance, owing to transport difficulties. The railway removed the constraints on the trade and provided a vent for moving the commodity. The combination of demand, better prices, and access to transport released for export much of the leather previously consumed locally. The export of the commodity in appreciable quantities began during World War I, declined in the 1930s, picked up again during World War II, and then declined again after the war. The colonial authority assisted the industry to grow by improving the quality of the commodity, with the aim of attracting higher prices. As indicated above, an attempt to improve the quality of the hides was frustrated by the combined activities of the Europeans and their middlemen and government officials appointed to inspect the commodity. Despite the campaign to stimulate production in the 1950s and 1960s, hides and skins exports dropped, while the quality improved. By the 1960s, more of the hides and skins were processed internally in the emerging tanning industry.

4.5 Development of sugar cane production and trade

Sugar cane is another cash crop which became important with the completion of the railway. As with the cash crops already discussed, it had been grown for decades before the advent of

¹³⁴ KSHCB VET/34 Erection and Maintenance of Slaughter Slabs.

¹³⁵ U. Ezenwe et al., *Technological Capability in the Nigerian Leather Industry: A Firm-Level Case Study*, (Kenya: African Technology Policy Studies Network, 2001), 5.

British rule.¹³⁶ Its cultivation on a large scale, however, was partly a result of cheap transport and better prices. The railway removed some of the geographical constraints and allowed the cane to be transported over a long distance. Compared with other crops, sugar cane is a dry season crop cultivated when agricultural work is generally slack. It was grown mainly for internal consumption, essentially for chewing and for making brown sugar (*mazarkwaila*). This was the case because sugar cane was not exported like the other commodities. It was processed the same day it was harvested, as it cannot be preserved or eaten months after harvest. As with groundnuts and hides and skins, the colonial authority was not interested in developing the industry, but it did support its growth. As with the cotton trade, Kano was the main market for the cane and brown sugar trade.

Sugar cane is a grass plant which belongs to the genus *saccharum*. The crop thrives on a variety of soils and in particular environmental conditions. It is grown in light and heavy clay soils, but thrives most in loamy clay or river floodplains (*fadama*). As the evidence indicates, rich *fadama* are not evenly spread, and the Emir of Zaria, Aliyu Dansidi, is recorded as having forcibly appropriated a large area of farmland for sugar cane production in Likoro.¹³⁷ Temperature also plays a role in the growth, ripening, and sucrose accumulation of sugar cane. The plant thrives most under a low night temperature of 7–10°C and a low day temperature of 18–22°C. The cane naturally ripens after 8–10 months, depending on the variety, altitude, and climate.

Sugar cane requires a plentiful amount of rainfall or water, both of which were readily available across the studied areas, most especially in Makarfi District, which was and is the main sugar cane centre between Kano and Zaria.¹³⁸ In this district, just as in Ikara, sugar cane was next in importance to groundnuts owing to its high cash returns. Its immense popularity was such that it often hindered extensive cotton production.¹³⁹ Compared with the other areas, Makarfi has the most fertile swamp land and is most suited to commercial sugar cane production. An average sugar cane farm in the district measured about 0.125 acres, with a yield capacity of 30,000 lbs per annum. In view of its immense sugar cane production, it was

¹³⁶ A. Busari, *Sugar-Cane and Sugar Industry in Nigeria: The Bitter-Sweet Lessons*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2004), 1, 24; N. Davies, *Sugar-Cane: Crop Production and Pest Control*, in: Andrew Speedy (eds) *Developing World Agriculture*, (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1990), 65.

¹³⁷ ZarProf C. 7/1919.

¹³⁸ Busari, *Sugar-Cane*, 35-6, 65-6.

¹³⁹ NAK ZarProf 1712; NAK ZarProf MLG 22289; NAK ZarProf 395; NAK ZarProf 1706; Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, 157.

popularly praised (*kirari*) as *Makarfi garin karkafa, garin kara ba dawa* (“Makarfi the town of strong people, the town with sugar cane, but no sorghum”), indicating its importance.

As with cotton, sugar cane production is highly labour-intensive, but its dry season nature influenced its popularity among farmers. The crop did not feature on the government priority list during the planning of the railway; but when the line was completed, demand for sugar cane for chewing and for brown sugar production dramatically increased. Increased production was achieved largely by household and wage labour, although the aristocrat and merchant classes relied on slave and forced labour. As a matter of policy, the colonial authority made efforts to improve the yields of the crop by introducing improved varieties, as the indigenous variety was of low quality and yield. Between 1914 and 1915, no fewer than five different varieties were introduced. For instance, in 1914, the West Indies varieties B. 208, Ba. 376, B. 3,922, B. 6,308, and Ba 6,032 were distributed to farmers. These varieties were popular at the time on account of their size and yields, but fell out of favour as they were said to be too hard to chew. Another variety from Barbados was introduced in 1915.¹⁴⁰

As mentioned earlier, the crop was grown mainly for chewing and for making brown sugar. As with the other crops, the Hausa middlemen purchased the cane directly from farmers. They had no problem convincing farmers to cultivate the cane, as the cash return was attractive. Unlike the other cash crops, there was no standard market for sugar cane, and it was sold at the local markets such as Fillata and Nassarawa. The bulk, however, was consumed in Kano, where demand for chewing sugar was high. During the annual cane buying season, middlemen from Kano always came to purchase the cane and transported it to Kano by train. In places such as Dan Bami and Gwibi, there were sugar cane middlemen who purchased the cane as it stood on the farm, suggesting the trade was lucrative.¹⁴¹ Although detailed data on sugar cane output and rail tonnage are not available, the records indicate that three wagons of sugar cane were shipped to Kano daily from Gimi station in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.¹⁴² This was in addition to the ones consumed locally and those transported to Kano by donkey by way of its border towns of Fillata and Rogo. As with the groundnut trade, donkeys also played an important role in transporting the cane from farms to markets and stations, from where it was shipped in bulk. It should be noted that besides the bulk of the product sold for chewing, quite a substantial amount was also used for making brown sugar.

¹⁴⁰ Dupigny, *Gazetter of Zaria*, 23, 35, 39; NAK SNP 10/273P.

¹⁴¹ NAK ZarProf 5280; NAK ZarProf MLG 122289.

¹⁴² NAK ZarProf 5280; NAK ZarProf MLG 122289.

The 1920s was good for the sugar cane trade generally, as the cash return was high and the decline in other crop prices saw farmers shifting to its cultivation.¹⁴³

The sugar cane trade also led to the development of the brown sugar industry. This industry developed almost at the same time as the sugar cane trade. The cane was crushed and processed into brown sugar or jaggery (*mazarkwaila*) in a simple mill or machine (*injin mazarkwaila*) powered by horse. The mills were established near sugar cane sources and markets. The technology itself was originally introduced by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) for its Hausa Christian converts in Gimi. Although the archival records date the development to 1916, R. K. Udo suggests it started in 1914, which suggests that the industry profited from a scarcity of white sugar during and immediately after the war. The industry started on a small scale among the Hausa Christian community and became popular over time, as farmers purchased the machines to make sugar for sale.¹⁴⁴ By the 1920s, the industry had become well established and spread to Ikara, Soba, and elsewhere, but Makarfi and Ikara districts were the main sugar centres. In the 1920s, a crushing machine was sold for £10 and for £8 in the 1930s.¹⁴⁵

The 1930s was bad for the sugar cane trade, owing to price and income decline. The general drop in income affected people's purchasing power, and they reduced consumption of the crop—after all, it was a luxury. Farmers reacted by growing food and groundnuts instead of sugar cane. Although many discontinued growing sugar cane, those in Makarfi and Gazara continued because it paid to do so in light of the demand.¹⁴⁶ In 1938, when sugar fetched higher prices, farmers in Makarfi and Gazara did not bother to grow food crops.¹⁴⁷ By this time, the markets for chewing cane and brown sugar had expanded considerably, partly because of expansion in rail services and demand. Sugar cane from Gimi was transported to Hadejia and Nguru in the north-east and as far as Lagos and Port Harcourt in Southern Nigeria by railway.¹⁴⁸

What was a disappointment to sugar cane farmers turned out to be a blessing in disguise to brown sugar makers, as the sugar cane was diverted to the brown sugar industry. Sugar cane cannot be withheld or stored until a price rise, so the cane was processed into

¹⁴³ NAK ZarProf 395; NAK ZarProf MLG 22289; NAK ZarProf 1712.

¹⁴⁴ Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Zaria*, 37; Busari, *Sugar-Cane*, 1; Udo, *Geographical Regions*, 124, 163,

¹⁴⁵ NAK ZarProf 1706; NAK ZarProf MLG 122289.

¹⁴⁶ NAK ZarProf 395; NAK ZarProf MLG 22289; NAK ZarProf 1712.

¹⁴⁷ NAK ZarProf 5280.

¹⁴⁸ NAK ZarProf 3296 vol. II Sugar Production 1943-1954.

brown sugar. Kano continued to be the main market for sugar, as it was for sugar cane. The industry also attracted new entrants, as both farmers and non-farmers invested in the trade, thereby contributing to its expansion. The awareness of the cash returns on sugar attracted many people into the trade. In the 1930s, there were no fewer than 45 sugar mills in Makarfi District alone. As the records indicate, sugar mills had spread to places such as Richifa and Kargi in Soba District and Wusasa. The Niger Company also made profits on importing the machines for sale.

Three important developments occurred in the sugar industry which are worth mentioning here. First, many people (both farmers and non-farmers) entered the brown sugar trade. As noted above, awareness of the cash returns on the trade attracted them. Second, there was the emergence of what may be termed sugar industrialists, with more than one mill. For instance, the Wusasa family in Zaria established mills at centres such as Nassarawa (in Makarfi District) and Kargi and Richifa (both in Soba District). The popular produce trader in Makarfi, Alhaji Ibrahim Makarfi, had two mills. Malam Abdu of Ikara had two, which increased to nine in the 1940s. Third, there was the emergence of larger mills (though few in number) powered by horses, different from the simple technology in use at the start of the trade. In this type of mill, the sugar crushing was done by three heavy rollers drawn by a horse. The juice from the cane was trapped and collected in a receptacle which was let into the ground, with the machine standing on the ground and held in position by long pegs or spikes. When the juice had been collected, it was boiled until a solid mass of brown sugar was formed. Powering the machine by horse enabled the sugar makers to crush cane as simply as possible while saving time.¹⁴⁹

In the 1940s, sugar cane production and trade witnessed an enormous boom, owing to the wartime scarcity. The scarcity of white sugar stimulated a demand for brown sugar. Sugar makers responded to the situation by charging higher prices for their product. The wartime exigency required brown sugar makers to assist Britain in the war effort by supplying sugar to the army. For instance, sugar makers in Makarfi and elsewhere in Zaria Province were compelled to supply 20 tons of sugar fortnightly to the army. Since the price offered by the army was lower, sugar makers flouted the order by selling to Kano traders, who offered better prices. For instance, of the 20 tons of sugar requisitioned from Makarfi District for the first

¹⁴⁹ NAK, ZarProf 1706; NAK ZarProf MLG 22289.

week of February 1944, only 12 tons were supplied. Even the district and village headmen flouted the order. The threat of prosecution against defaulters did not deter them.¹⁵⁰

The colonial state assisted the industry to grow sugar during wartime. Early in 1941, the Zaria Native Authority advanced loans to sugar cane farmers and sugar makers with the aim to expand production.¹⁵¹ The authority also imported crushing machines and distributed them to farmers and non-farmers on loan. Large numbers of the machines ordered during the war were delayed, owing to the wartime restrictions. By 1942, brown sugar began to be produced in southern Kano, as some crushing mills operated there.¹⁵² Owing to increased demand for the product, sugar makers were also given practical lessons on how to make crystal sugar at the Centrifuge Centre in Gimi. While the war lasted, the sugar cane and brown sugar industry expanded and reached its widest markets. Although figures are not available on sugar cane and sugar sales and tonnage, the Agricultural Officer of Zaria Province recorded in 1946 that the annual sugar cane transported to Kano stood at 1,000 tons per annum.¹⁵³ The sugar industry also supplied over 300 tons of sugar to the army in 1943–1944, in addition to the quantities sold to Kano.¹⁵⁴ As usual, Kano and Nguru continued to absorb the products. In 1946, brown sugar was sold at between 4d and 4½d per pound and in 1949 at between 4d and 6d per pound.¹⁵⁵ Brown sugar was also exported as far as the French Territory.¹⁵⁶ As the records suggest, most of the crushing machines that were distributed after the war were provided with the intention of undermining Makarfi's control over the sugar trade.

As the war came to an end, brown sugar was still in great demand, as scarcity of white sugar and high prices continued to stimulate production. In 1946, the Resident of Zaria Province reported that the increased demand for brown sugar imposed upon the industry a demand which could not be met at the lower prices offered by the army. The market for brown sugar in Nigeria meanwhile had continued to expand. As the Resident commented, “sugar is now found in all towns and village markets as far as Maiduguri and Sokoto, and it is

¹⁵⁰ NAK ZarProf 3296 vol. II; NAK ZarProf 3930 Zaria Province Annual Report for 1945; Busari, *Sugar-Cane*, 1.

¹⁵¹ NAK ZarProf 3296 vol. II.

¹⁵² NAK KanProf 6991/S.5.

¹⁵³ NAK ZarProf 3296 vol. vol. II.

¹⁵⁴ NAK ZarProf 3930.

¹⁵⁵ NAK ZarProf 3930; NAK KanProf 6394, Kano Province Annual Report for 1946–49.

¹⁵⁶ NAK ZarProf 3296 vol. II.

unlikely that any can be purchased unless the full local market price is paid”.¹⁵⁷ Between 1 November and 1 August in the 1947/8 season, approximately 5,000 tons of sugar cane were exported from Zaria Province, with 1,925 tons exported to Kano from Gimi, while 1,139 tons of brown sugar was exported to Kano.¹⁵⁸ In a survey of sugar cane farms in Makarfi District in 1948, it was observed that some 5,000 acres of land had been put under sugar cane production. The increased prices of between 4d and 6d per pound stimulated production, and farmers in the district did not bother to grow food crops because the sugar cane price was so high.¹⁵⁹ Expansion in sugar cane production continued to be ploughed into the brown sugar industry. By 1948, there were 54 sugar crushers in Makarfi District, each capable of producing about 1,350 tons of brown sugar. The number of crushers had increased to 90 in 1949.¹⁶⁰

It appears that the sugar industry reached its peak in the late 1940s, with diminishing returns on both sugar cane and brown sugar production. Although demand for sugar cane was still high, the limiting factor was farm fertility, with yield per acre being extremely low. In 1948, it was reported that about 60% farmers’ manure in Makarfi District was used on sugar cane farms. Fertilizers were unknown to farmers until the 1950s, and even then it took time before they began to make use of them. The sugar cane was also plagued by diseases, which reached a disturbing level in the 1950s with fungus and red rot diseases ruining the crops.¹⁶¹ As with sugar cane, demand for brown sugar was high, but the limiting factor was the shortage of fuel wood for boiling jaggery, which led to a decline in production. Colonial policies against wood felling also contributed to the shortage. During the Emir of Zaria’s visit to Gimi and Makarfi in the late 1940s, the complaint he heard from sugar makers was that fuel wood was scarce.¹⁶²

By the 1950s, the sugar industry was in a critical situation, as many of the mills were bankrupt. For instance, of the more than 238 crushers operating in Zaria Province, only 190 were operating in January–February 1953.¹⁶³ As the evidence from Makarfi and Soba District indicates, many of the crushers were in debt to the government and could hardly repay their

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ NAK ZarProf 5280.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.; NAK ZarProf 3296 vol. II.

¹⁶¹ NAK ZarProf 3296 vol. II; NAK ZarProf PLT/4 Makarfi District Affairs; NAK ZarProf 5240, Annual Report for 1953; NAK ZarProf 4708 Zaria Province Annual Report 1949.

¹⁶² NAK ZarProf PLT/4.

¹⁶³ NAK ZarProf 5240, Annual Report for 1953; NAK ZarProf 4708 Zaria Province Annual Report 1949.

loans to the Agricultural Department. The brown sugar industry carried on in that manner up to the period of Nigeria's independence.¹⁶⁴ The emergence of modern sugar mills in the country in the 1960s competed with the brown sugar industry. Although a plan to establish a modern mill in Makarfi was mooted as early as the 1940s, it was dropped as it was thought that the time had not matured for such a development. The thinking in official circles at the time was that the industry might not be able to compete with jaggery makers for sugar cane.¹⁶⁵ Z. A. Bonat has pointed out that the plan was thwarted by the combined efforts of the UAC and John Holt firms because they profited from importing sugar cane crushers.¹⁶⁶

As the discussion above suggests, the railway was instrumental in the development of the sugar cane and brown sugar trade. The development of the trade was a result of the cheap transport provided by the railway, as well as higher demand and better prices. Unlike the other crops, sugar cane was not exported from the colony; it was consumed internally in the form of chewing cane and for making brown sugar. As is obvious from the discussion, the sugar cane and brown sugar trade developed almost at the same time, and the demand for sugar cane boosted the brown sugar industry. Although the brown sugar technology was introduced by outsiders, people quickly appropriated it to transform their lives. Both the sugar cane and brown sugar trade started on a small scale, expanded in the 1920s, and reached their peak in the 1940s, beginning to decline in the 1950s. By the 1970s, refined sugar was competing with brown sugar.

4.6 Food production

This section highlights how subsistence production was sustained and provisioned in the face of increased cash crops production. Contrary to the vent for surplus arguments that cash crops export was achieved without a decline in food production, I attempt to show that cash crops export reduced subsistence food production. And contrary to the claim that the communities between Kano and Zaria were self-sufficient in foodstuffs to the extent of feeding the urban population, I also attempt to show that most of the communities, especially those bordering Kano, were not self-sufficient in foodstuffs. The situation was so bad that whenever famine and drought struck the communities became vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition. Although

¹⁶⁴ NAK ZarProf 3296 vol. II.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Z. A. Bonat, "Colonialism and the Destruction of the Local Industrial System: a case study of Zaria Provinces 1902-1945", *Savannah*, 9/2, (1988): 6-23, 21.

they tried to produce enough to sustain their household requirements, this was never sufficient and they had to rely on traders. The tendency across the studied communities, including those deficient in foodstuffs, was to sell their surplus reserves because of the price.

I argue that British colonialism entailed many disruptions in the prevailing relations of production in the countryside. The colonial economy was founded on cash crops production. The colonial authority introduced taxes and forced cultivation of cash crops, and it allowed European firms to extract the crop. Since the colonial authority abolished slavery, land accumulation, and plantation agriculture, production was largely household-based. Although the aristocrat and merchant classes relied on slave labour, production was generally based on family labour. Production under conditions of household and limited wage labour reduced subsistence production. The existence of fulltime crafts across the studied communities also negatively affected household sufficiency in food. The monetization of the economy made rural producers vulnerable to price fluctuations, unequal terms of trade, and weather fluctuations, and yet the colonial authority did not have an effective relief system.

From 1913 onward, the studied communities' sufficiency in foodstuffs was constrained by cash cropping and weather fluctuations. Increased cash returns from cash crop exports and the need for cash to pay taxes drew rural dwellers into cash cropping, which resulted in contraction of the acreage under food cultivation. Although farmers tried to produce sufficient food for domestic requirements, it was not sufficient. The first food crisis following the start of the export trade occurred within the context of a cooking oil shortage. The high price of groundnuts above other crops in 1913 saw farmers selling their stocks, including the reserves meant for cooking and lighting. The shortage was quickly resolved by resort to shea butter. By the 1913/14 season, food was running short. The rainfall in that year was extremely low, and too much land had been devoted to groundnuts. The result was famine conditions. By the middle of 1914, the food shortage was acute, with prices being at famine levels, and the domestic reserves were not sufficient. Between May and June 1914, corn was sold at 5d per pound as against 2d a pound in the previous years. There was a general condition of hunger, and the government response was ineffective, as the relief materials ordered arrived late. Domestic food requirements were serviced by the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo food traders as well as the European firms, but the consignment arrived late. The existence of non-food producing southern migrants across the localities also meant that they contributed to the food crisis. The groundnut-exporting belt—unlike the cocoa zone of south-western Nigeria—did not have food-producing migrants. Their food requirements were partly serviced by the southern food traders, who also shipped foodstuffs from the

communities (see Appendix 1). In Kano Emirate, the mortality rate was high as a result of this food crisis.¹⁶⁷

The food shortage continued well into wartime, as the wartime staple food requisition sapped domestic food reserves.¹⁶⁸ Food prices were high, and rural dwellers had to provision for food from traders. Attempts to establish district grain reserves during the war were abandoned. Notwithstanding the impression from the records that food was plentiful, the evidence indicates that cereal prices were higher and the demand was higher than supply. Farmers sold their food reserves because of the high price. When the corn harvests failed in 1917 and 1918 owing to drought and “superabundance” of rain, farmers had to buy foodstuffs at an inflated price.¹⁶⁹

When the war ended, food requisition was abolished, but prices were still high. Farmers were encouraged to increase food acreage, but the high price of groundnuts influenced them to grow the nuts at the expense of food crops. They continued to produce for domestic requirements, but it was not enough, as production was household-based.¹⁷⁰ As the record indicates, the foodstuffs trade in Gimi, Makarfi, and Anchau was controlled by the Niger Company. Early in 1919, the company purchased 28 tons of corn in Gimi at ½d per 1b. By the time the price rose to ¾d per pound in the middle of the year, it discontinued buying. As the record also indicates, the Hausa and Yoruba traders were buying foodstuffs and transporting them to the tin mines on the Jos Plateau, using animal transport because transportation by railway was too costly, there being no through connection. It does not appear that producers got value for their produce, as they were underpaid. In order to prevent producers from exploitation, a by-law was enforced to prohibit buying produce outside the official market.¹⁷¹

The tension in domestic food sufficiency assumed disturbing proportions in the 1930s, owing to income decline, food price hikes, and locust and hopper invasions which destroyed farm crops. A *mudu* (bowl) of corn was sold for between 2d and 4d in 1931, as against 1d in 1930/31. The implication is that farmers stepped up production to raise cash for taxes. They

¹⁶⁷ Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 101, 117-9; Okediji, “Economic History”, 193-4; Watts, “Brittle Trade”, 77-79; B. Shenton and M. Watts, “Capitalism and Hunger in Northern Nigeria”, *Review of African Political Economy*, 15/16, (1979): 57-8; Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Zaria*, 34; NAK SNP10/175P/1913.

¹⁶⁸ Adamu, “Food Economy”, 160; Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Zaria*, 38.

¹⁶⁹ NAK ZarProf, 273P/1919, Zaria Province Annual Report no. 74 for half year ending 30th June 1919; NAK ZarProf, 273/1919, Zaria Province Report no. 74 for half year ending 30th June 1919.

¹⁷⁰ PRO 657/7; PRO 657/4.

¹⁷¹ Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Zaria*, 38.

sold not only their cash crops but foodstuffs as well, a situation which made them vulnerable to hunger, forcing many to migrate.¹⁷² The renewed demand for foodstuffs for the tin mines during the Great Depression era complicated the domestic food insufficiency.¹⁷³ Food prices were generally high. L. C. Giles, in his survey of Soba, Jere, Kudan, and Ikara districts in the late 1930s, revealed that a sack of grain was sold for between 8d and 3s.¹⁷⁴

The outbreak of the war in the 1940s further attenuated domestic food sufficiency, as the wartime measures required the colony to assist Britain in the war effort. The application of wartime policy marked a huge withdrawal of labour, food, and cash crops from the countryside for the army and the tin mines. The wartime food requisition placed enormous pressure especially on rural producers, further reducing domestic sufficiency. For instance, in 1943 the colonial authority requisitioned 3,330 tons of corn from Zaria Province. This was in addition to a fortnightly 50 tons of brown sugar, Irish potatoes, and onions requisitions from Makarfi District, where some of the studied communities fall. The locust and hopper invasions and famine that occurred during the war also upset food prices. Sales and movement of foodstuffs across provincial boundaries were also prohibited. As if the authority envisaged a price hike, it enforced a price control at the onset of the war, prohibiting private sales of corn and limiting the number of bags an individual could keep.¹⁷⁵

Faced by food scarcity, the southern railway workers at Challawa, Kwankwaso, Madobi, Yako, and Dangora complained of hunger.¹⁷⁶ These workers left written letters which enable us to locate their voices. Chima Korieh pointed out that complaint letters are tools for understanding interactions within colonial settings.¹⁷⁷ As the letters indicate, staple foods like gari (a local staple food made from cassava), yam, palm oil, fish, and agidi (made from corn starch), as well as imported white sugar and tea were scarce across the areas. Unlike their counterparts in the urban centres, the workers in these areas did not benefit from the wartime permits required to purchase or import their own food.¹⁷⁸ Although the railway authority had permits to import gari for its staff, those in the countryside were not covered by

¹⁷² NAK ZarProf 1712; NAK ZarProf 395; NAK ZarProf 5280; KSHCB MLG 16490/1932, Kumbotso District Kano Emirate Reassessment; NAK KanProf 2469, Kiru District Revision of Assessment 1928-1938.

¹⁷³ Watts, "Brittle Trade", 80-83; Shenton and Watts, "Capitalism and Hunger", 59.

¹⁷⁴ Smith, *Economy*, 136.

¹⁷⁵ Adamu, "Government and Food", 14-50; NAK ZarProf 3296 vol. II; Watts, "Brittle Trade", 83.

¹⁷⁶ NAK KanProf 5467, Railway Employee Complaints of Short Food Supply; NAK KanProf 6033, Provision of Passes on the Railway; KSHCB Acc no. 68.

¹⁷⁷ C. J. Korieh, "'May It Please Your Honor': Letters of Petition As Historical Evidence In An African Colonial Context", *History in Africa*, 37, (2010): 83-106.

¹⁷⁸ NAK KanProf 5467; NAK KanProf 6033.

the permit. The food scarcity offered opportunities to food traders who circumvented the situation by selling at wartime rates.¹⁷⁹ After the war ended, the grain requisition and ban on food movement was abandoned in 1947, but food prices still remained high.¹⁸⁰ Increased demand for Nigerian cash crops in the post-war era continued to compete with domestic requirements for food. When famine reappeared in the late 1940s, the colonial authority renewed its determination to establish grain reserves, but this intention was not implemented until the late 1950s.¹⁸¹

The outbreak of the Civil War in the 1960s further upset domestic food sufficiency, as the inter-regional trade in foodstuffs was affected by transport difficulties. The Sahelian famine and the government's neglect of agriculture in the 1970s complicated the situation. Increased wealth from oil exports in the post-independence era shifted government attention from agriculture to the productive sector. By the end of the 1970s, the food situation in the country had worsened to such a point that the government was importing food to feed the population. For instance, in 1970–1978, food imports into the country increased by 700%, while real food output declined by 1.5% per annum.¹⁸² The transformation of the urban centres by industrial activities also drew many rural dwellers into wage labour in the cities, with serious consequences for agriculture.¹⁸³

As highlighted above, domestic self-sufficiency in staple foodstuffs was constrained by cash crop production and ecological factors. This challenges the vent surplus claim that cash crops export was achieved without a decline in food. Although farmers tried to produce as much as possible, this was not always enough because the basis of production was household- and not plantation-based. Production under a condition of household labour and limited wage labour reduced food production, as the producers tended to reduce food production to avail of every price rise, an action which made them vulnerable to hunger and famine. Also, the colonial authority did not have a strong relief mechanism, although it intervened in food supplies during the two world wars. Contrary to the claim that the communities were self-sufficient in food, it has been shown that they relied mostly on food traders who circumvented the situation to their own advantage. As the discussion suggests, the existence of non-food producing southern migrants across the communities also meant

¹⁷⁹ NAK KanProf 5467; NAK Prof 6033; NAK KanProf 5467.

¹⁸⁰ Adamu, "Government and Food", 149-50; Adamu, "Food Economy", 173-74; NAK ZarProf 3296 vol. II; Watts, "Brittle Trade", 85.

¹⁸¹ Adamu, "Food Economy", 157-8.

¹⁸² Watts, "Brittle Trade", 96-103.

¹⁸³ Ibid.; Dottridge, "Aspects", 34-35.

enormous contraction in the local food sufficiency. As these migrants did not farm, their food requirements were serviced by southern food traders, who also extracted foodstuffs from the communities for sale in the South.

4.7 Conclusion

As the foregoing analyses indicated, the railway was built with the aim of carrying cotton, but, surprisingly, it activated other crops not contemplated during the planning and construction process. The arrival of the railway stimulated production and assured farmers of better prices for their produce. Of the many types of produce exported from the localities, groundnuts were the most popular in term of earning cash and employment generation. Contrary to the well-established claim that cotton was exported from some of the communities immediately upon the completion of the rail line, the chapter demonstrated that exports of cotton from the communities were not as significant as previously assumed, owing to the low price and the fact that the crop had always been grown for use in the indigenous textile industry. While it did become popular as time went by, the crop did not feature on rail-borne traffic lists until the 1920s, and it was not as significant as groundnuts. Increased production was achieved largely by a combination of household, forced, and slave labour.

The railway also stimulated production in distant areas but could not intensively exploit these areas, as it was circumvented by animal transporters who exploited the situation to their own advantage. The colonial authority also stimulated production in such areas by continuously building roads to feed the railway with traffic. This was so because a railway without roads is useless. When the marketing boards were established in the 1940s, they also invested in road development, with the aim of stimulating production. The roads became more important in the 1970s, when road transport became popular. As the analyses have revealed, right from the advent of the export trade the railway could not cope with the volume of traffic, which resulted in accumulation of groundnuts at rail stations. Until the introduction of diesel electric locomotive on the Kano–Zaria route in the 1950s, the nuts continued to accumulate. As the chapter also suggests, the much talked about groundnut pyramid, previously assumed to be a result of surplus production, was in fact a result of transport difficulties.

The chapter also shows that intensive cash cropping reduced domestic self-sufficiency in food. Contrary to the vent for surplus claim that increased production was achieved without reduction in food production, we have seen that cash cropping did indeed lower food

production to such an extent that, on occasion, there were famines. Colonial policies such as taxes and forced production of cash crops also reduced food production, which made producers vulnerable to price falls and weather fluctuations. The claim that the communities were sufficient in foodstuffs to the extent of feeding the urban populations is also misleading, as most of the communities were not sufficient in foodstuffs, much less capable of feeding the urban populace. This was because production was household- and not plantation-based. Although the aristocrat and the merchant classes relied on slave and forced labour, production was otherwise generally household-based. Farmers always tried to produce enough to satisfy domestic requirements, but this was not always sufficient. The government also did not have an effective relief mechanism, which made producers vulnerable to famine and drought and exposed them to the mercy of grain traders who used the situation to their advantage.

As the chapter also indicates, the export trade reached its peak in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s depending on the crop, and it went on to decline into the 1970s. The diversification of the economy following an oil-based wealth in the 1970s shifted priority from produce to oil export. The emergence of modern industries in the post-independence era also meant that most of the produce exported previously was processed internally in the emerging industries.

CHAPTER 5: THE EMERGENCE OF NEW SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AND THE INTERMINGLING OF CULTURES

5.1 Introduction

In addition to the cash crop trade it activated, the completion of the railway opened many other opportunities, both for employment and for commercial ventures, which attracted migrants to the studied communities. The completion of the line meant that labour was required to fill the various positions in the railway and commercial firms, labour which was not available in the communities themselves. These employment and commercial opportunities attracted people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, which in turn led to the establishment of new settlements and the intermingling of Nigerian cultures in the studied communities.

This chapter analyses the influence of the railway on the migration of populations and the emergence of new settlement patterns as melting pots of cultures in the studied communities. The chapter argues that the burgeoning socio-economic opportunities which marked the advent of the railway were the force that attracted migrant populations.

5.2 Labour migration

The previous chapter discussed how the railway activated cash crop exports, commercial opportunities, and the spread of the colonial currency. As this chapter will demonstrate, during this period of increased globalization and mobility, the railway offered migrants from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds—most notably from Southern Nigeria, neighbouring countries, and Asia—opportunities to travel to the studied communities and participate in a worldwide cultural interaction. The burgeoning opportunities in the railway and the commercial firms were the forces that attracted these migrants, who took advantage of the cheap and fast transport to seek better fortunes for themselves. The existence of railway stations and commercial firms meant that skilled and unskilled labourers were required to fill the several positions across the communities. A good Western education and technical

expertise were required to be able to qualify for employment both in the railway and in the commercial trading firms.

There was a real scarcity of labour in the studied communities during the first and second decades of British rule in the North.¹ As the General Manager of Nigeria Railway pointed out, the men from the North lacked the expertise and qualifications to enter even the lowest positions.² Unlike their southern counterparts, the railway and the colonial authority in the North faced a real labour shortage, owing partly to the late contact with missionaries and Western education. The lackadaisical attitude of the British when they arrived also did not help matters, for instead of taking sole responsibility for educational affairs, they handed it to the Native Authority. The first elementary school in the North was not established until 1909.³ In 1914, only 502 pupils were enrolled in school, out of the region's 9 million population.⁴ Unlike Southern Nigeria, where the missions complemented government efforts in education, missionary activity was restricted in the North.⁵ Until the 1930s, they were not permitted to operate there, and hence the labour scarcity. It was against the background of this labour scarcity and the employment and commercial opportunities that the studied communities and others along the rail line became "magnet" which attracted new populations. Prior to this, they were almost exclusively mono-ethnic settlements, largely Hausa/Fulani. The advent of the railway was a turning point in the population influx and in determining a changed ethnic composition.⁶ The newcomers came with "cultural capital", a set of skills, education, and technical knowledge which qualified them for employment in their new homes. Some of them were products of mission schools in the South.

Three patterns of population influx can be observed. The first generations of migrants were those who came to work with the railway. These pioneers were predominantly Yoruba from south-west Nigeria and immigrant workers from Niger, Chad, Dahomey, and the Gold Coast, most of whom had some Western education or technical skills. The second generation came in the 1920s, the post-war boom era, following the physical establishment of

¹ NAK SNP7/2227/1912 Baro-Kano Report; Oyemakinde, "Railway Construction", 315.

² Cited in Oshin, "Railways and Urbanization", 119.

³ A. Adamu, *The Kano Civil War and the British Over-rule 1882–1940*, (Ibadan: Oxford Press, 1978), 236; A. Bako, *Sabon Gari: A History of Immigrants and Inter-Group Relations in the 20th Century*, (Sokoto: Usmanu Danfodio University Press, 2006).

⁴ Bako, *Sabon Gari*, 18-19; Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, 159-60; Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria Report for 1914, 17.

⁵ Bako, *Sabon Gari*; Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*.

⁶ M. C. Magbeafulu, *Migration and the Economy: Igbo Migration and the Nigerian Economy 1900 to 1975*, (New York: iUniverse Inc, 2003); Oshin, "Railways and Urbanization"; Bako, *Sabon Gari*, 20-1.

commercial firms in the communities. This group was mixed, comprising Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa, Beriberi, and other sub-groups within the North, as well as immigrant traders such as Syrians, Lebanese and, later, Asians. These were mostly commercial migrants and artisans who came in response to the post-World War I boom. The completion of the Eastern Railway from Port Harcourt to Kaduna in 1927 and of the Benue Bridge in the 1930s increasingly facilitated movements of Igbo, Tiv, and Idoma migrants to the studied areas and elsewhere along the rail line. Kaduna (the capital of the Northern Provinces from 1917) became a major railway junction and the largest passenger exchange point where migrants from the west and east of Nigeria entered various centres in the North. The economic dislocation of the 1930s, the burden of taxation, and the intensification of the activity of the commercial firms, as well as the scarcity of cultivable land, pushed many southerners to the North, including to the studied communities.⁷ These population movements had significant consequences on the ethnic composition and inter-group relations in the communities.

For many migrants, this was their first sojourn outside their home towns. They were characteristically young men seeking new frontiers in the emerging colonial economy. As Reuben Udo pointed out, labour migration is always selective in terms of age and sex.⁸ Although women also engaged in migration, their proportion was insignificant because of the cultural practice of confining women to the home, because of employers' preferences for male labour, and also because of the Christian notion of women as the weaker sex.⁹ Informants pointed out that most migrants heard about opportunities in the studied areas through relatives and friends who had preceded them and had written back. These constitute what Jaoquin Arango called migration networks. These networks are interpersonal ties or relations that connect migrants with relatives and friends or fellow countrymen at home.¹⁰ Migration networks reduce the cost and uncertainty of migration, by providing prospective

⁷ See for instance R. K. Udo, "Food Deficits Area of Nigeria", *Geographical Review*, 61/3, (1971): 415-430, 417-8; Bako, *Sabon Gari*, 36; U. Hannerz, "Town and Country in Southern Zaria: A View from Kafanchan", in: A. Southall (ed.), *Small Urban Centers in Rural Development in Africa*, (Madison: African Studies Program, 1979), 226-240; Oshin, "Railways and Urbanization", 111-2; Magbeafulu, *Migration and the Economy*, 26-7, 29-37.

⁸ R. K. Udo, "Internal Migrations and Development", in: J. S. OgunToyinbo, O. O. Areola and M. Filani, *A Geography of Nigerian Development*, (Nigeria: Heinemann, Books, 1978), 124-137, 124.

⁹ B. Rogers, *The Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Societies*, (London: Routledge, 1980), 30-40.

¹⁰ A. Arango, "Explaining Migration: A Critical View", *International Social Science Journal*, 52/165, 287-288, 291.

migrants with support and assistance by way of information, financial assistance, and accommodation, and as well as linking them to employers.¹¹

For instance, an informant, Theophillus Adeyinka Shittu, a Yoruba man from Offa, commented that his father, Samuel Shittu, came to Gimi in the 1940s on the advice of a younger brother who himself had been living in Zaria City. Prior to this, the father had lived at Beji, a small railway town in Nupe Province.¹² Another informant, Innocent Opufou, an Ijaw man, related how his father, Wellman Warri Opufou, came to Gimi in 1939. He came to know about Gimi through his elder brother, T. E. Opufou, who was working with the London and Kano Company at Dutsin Wai (another railway town south of Zaria) in 1938. This elder brother relocated to Gimi in 1939, having secured employment with John Holt, after which he invited his two younger brothers, Wellman Warri Opufou and E. C. Opufou. The two younger brothers later secured employment in the groundnut industry through him. The former worked with the UAC, while the latter became an LBA in the 1940s.¹³ As Arango asserted, migration networks can serve as social capital insofar as they “permit access to other goods of economic significance such as employment or higher wages”.¹⁴ Within two decades of the opening of the rail line, the migrant population had grown steadily both through migration and natural increase. As the evidence indicates, the Yoruba were dominant at Madobi, Dangora, Yako, and Auchan, while the Ibo or those from the old Eastern Nigeria were dominant at Gimi, Kwankwaso, and Challawa.¹⁵

This population influx with its attendant problems was accompanied by measures from the colonial state to control the migrants politically, economically, and medically through the establishment of segregated settlements under different terminologies. Based on the 1914 Cantonment Proclamation, the settlement was conceived exclusively for housing “natives” and “non-native Africans” working for the government and for commercial firms. In practice, the policy in the studied communities, as elsewhere, led to the establishment of separate settlements for migrants, most notably for southerners, “non-native Africans”, and Asians, as well as for northerners that were not indigenous to the communities, in areas known as *tasha* (from the word for station or railway settlement), *sabon gari* (new towns or stranger quarters), and *tudun wada* (exclusively for northerners that were not indigenous to

¹¹ Ibid. 9.

¹² E-mail communications with Dr. Theophillus Adeyinka Shittu, 5 and 10 January 2013.

¹³ E-mail communication with Mr. Innocent Opufou, 11 July 2013; NAK ZarProf MKT vol. I, Groundnut Buying Stations and Points.

¹⁴ Arango, “Explaining Migration”, 291.

¹⁵ Wiseman, “Structural and Ideological”, 2; KSHCB no. 68, Inspection Notes vol. 1.

the communities). Previously, it had been assumed that the segregated settlements in the North were established to protect Islam and Hausa people from the influence of southern Christians.¹⁶ Studies by Ahmed Bako indicate that the settlements were established for political, economic, and medical needs—and not for protecting Islam or Muslims as was previously assumed. According to Bako, the settlements were settled both by Christians and Muslims and included Hausa, and they were not settled exclusively by Christians and southerners.¹⁷ However, whether established to protect Islam and Muslims or not, it is common knowledge that the colonial segregation policy was a divide-and-rule strategy to prevent Nigerians from forming a common front against colonialism.

This development resulted in the emergence of two complex settlements on the rail line. On the one hand, there was a settlement for southerners, “non-native” Africans, and Asians and another settlement for northerners that were not indigenous to the host communities. It needs be pointed that, apart from Madobi, all the other communities had only one settlement for migrants (e.g. *unguwar Likoro tasha*, *Gimi tasha*). These settlements were the nucleus and commercial nerve centres of the indigenous communities, and the export economy revolved around them. For instance, the stations, commercial trading firms, and even markets were situated around these settlements. The indigenous settlements, on the other hand, were situated within the walled towns and inhabited exclusively by the host communities. The migrant settlements were administered generally by political designate ward heads (*masu unguwani*; sing. *mai unguwa*), appointed from among the migrants and answerable to the indigenous village heads through their representatives (*wakilan tasha*).¹⁸

However, owing to the concentration of population in some of the settlements, those with particularly high economic prospects were upgraded to *sabon gari*. As the records generally indicate, the migrant settlements in Madobi, Dangora, and Yako were the recognized *sabon gari*. Madobi Sabon Gari, which was the first and the largest settlement, was from the start established as an independent village unit in 1935 with own village head, a development which resulted in a reduction in the indigenous authority’s influence. A Yoruba

¹⁶ G. Olusanya, “The Sabon-Gari System in Northern States of Nigeria”, *Nigerian Magazine*, 94, (1967): 214-248; Oshin, “Railways and Urbanization”; R. Olaniyi, *Diaspora is Not Like Home: A Social and Economic History of Yoruba in Kano, 1912–1999*, (Europa: Lincom), 61.

¹⁷ A. Bako, “Colonial Rule and Residential Segregation: The Sabon Gari Settlements Reconsidered”, in: A. M. Yakubu, I. M. Jumare and A. G. Saeed, *Northern Nigeria: A Century of Transformation, 1903-2003*, (Kaduna: Arewa House, 2005), 469-477; Bako, *Sabon Gari*, 1-9.

¹⁸ Interviews with Malam Ali Tela (ward head of Gimi Tasha), Gimi Tasha, 7 March 2011; Alhaji Mohammadu Abubakar Goga (scribe to the village head of Auchan), Auchan, 8 March 2011; and Malam Haruna Audu (ward head of Tasha Likoro), Likoro Tasha, 24 March 2011.

man, AbdulRahimi Ogunlade, was appointed its village head. Also, a *tudun wada* was established near the *sabon gari* settlement the same year. The *tudun wada* did not become important until the 1950s, when the whole area (including the *sabon gari*) was renamed Tudun Wada, following Ogunlade's death.¹⁹ It is surprising that, despite its importance, Gimi Tasha was not upgraded to a *sabon gari*. Those at Yako and Dangora, which were not as important as the one at Gimi, were upgraded to *sabon gari* in the 1950s, though they were not as important as Madobi Sabon Gari.²⁰ Conversely, centres like Likoro, Kwankwaso, and Challawa had no significant numbers of migrants besides the railway workers there, owing to the low economic opportunities available in these centres. As indicated in the last chapter, the commercial firms did not establish at Likoro, and the only firms that established at Kwankwaso and Challawa closed down owing to the poor economic prospects.²¹

The uneven socio-economic opportunities contributed to the expansion of some of the communities and the decline of others. For instance, centres like Madobi, Gimi, Yako, and even Dangora (an entirely colonial creation) expanded and developed into peri-urban-like centres along the rail line. In pre-colonial times, their strategic locations on trade routes and their defensive character enhanced Madobi and Gimi's position. Their location on the rail line and the activities of the commercial firms and population further accelerated their expansion and popularity. Even Dangora, an entirely colonial creation, transformed into an important centre almost overnight. However, centres like Likoro and Kwankwaso, which had previously both been important, declined in importance owing to the low economic opportunities or absence of commercial firms.

It would be interesting to have detailed comparative data on the migrant populations and the indigenous settlements, but unfortunately such data are not available. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 are the only data we have so far on the migrants in Madobi, Yako, and Dangora. The data itself is misleading and so should be used with caution. It records taxable male adults, exclusive of women, children, the old, and Asian immigrants. The tables also do not provide explanations for the fluctuation in population. The tax lists for the main towns, which could have assisted in this study, were not used because they are not properly arranged. A detailed study of the lists will be required to arrive at a valid conclusion. Despite their shortcomings, these lists cannot be ignored, as they are the only available primary evidence on the migrant population.

¹⁹ Umaru, "Tudun Wada Madobi"; Yusuf, "New Approaches", 219; Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*.

²⁰ KSHCB KanProf 1/11/13, History of Kuru.

²¹ KSHCB Acc. no. 68; NAK 5280; Yusuf, "New Approaches", 207-223; Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*, 129.

Table 5.1 Migrant population in Madobi Sabon Gari, 1939–1949

Town	1939	1942–43	1943	1943–44	1948–49
Madobi Sabon Gari	208	138	142	142	114

Source: KSHCB Acc. no. 68, Kura Inspection Notes vol. 1.

Table 5.2 Yoruba and Ibo population in Yako and Dangora, 1955

Yoruba	47
Ibo	34

Source: KSHCB KanProf 1/11/13, History of Kiru.

5.2 Socio-economic basis of diaspora community

Railway work

The railway was the main industry in which the migrants were employed, being the main employer of labour during the colonial and post-colonial period. Many of the migrants worked as permanent way workers or labourers (*leburori* or *yanbita*), while some worked in the stations as clerks, signal men, and station masters. These were drawn from the first group of migrants in the communities. Many of them came from different parts of the country and from neighbouring countries. The Yoruba and Ibo were the earliest indigenous groups to join the railway because of their early exposure to Western education and wage employment. The Hausa and other northern groups joined afterwards.²² Linda Lindsay and Wale Oyemakinde pointed out that Nigerians joined the railway because of the attraction of a steady income and the prestige associated with the work.²³ Lindsay noted that steady income helped these

²² A. G. Oilfield, “The Native Railway Workers in Nigeria”, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 9/3, (1936): 379-402; Oyemakinde, “Railway Construction”; Oshin, “Railways and Urbanization”.

²³ L. Lindsay, “Money, Marriage and Masculinity on the Colonial Nigerian Railway”, in: L. A. Lindsay and S. F. Mescher (eds), *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, (Portsmouth, NH, 2003), 138-55; L. A. Lindsay, *Working with Gender: Wage Labour and Social Change in South-Western Nigeria*, (Heinemann: 2003).

workers to maintain harmonious relations with, and made them more attractive to, their wives.²⁴

As a rule, all railway workers (station masters and clerks and signal men) lived in the railway quarters situated along the rail line. These were the educated few, often products of mission schools in the South. The labourers constituted the bulk of the railway workforce in the communities, as elsewhere. They were mostly uneducated but possessed certain technical skills which qualified them to be employed in the railway. This group was responsible for maintaining and repairing the line. They worked in gangs under a head ganger, each gang inspecting a certain mileage of the line daily. The labourers lived in camps, or beater camps as the Nigerian Railway called them, which were spread along the line, the largest of which was around Likoro and Dangora. Many of them also lived in the migrant quarters and the indigenous settlements.²⁵ As far as safety and maintenance was concerned, it was this army of labourers who looked after the line. Their career was characterized by mobility here and there along the rail line. As many of the labourers interviewed generally pointed out, many of them had worked in almost all the communities considered in this study.

Their presence had profound consequences on the social and economic landscapes of the communities. On the one hand, their presence helped in the circulation of the colonial currency, as they were the main wage earners in the countryside. Railway workers were, as Wale Oyemakinde pointed out, “harbingers of the currency revolution” at a time when the colonial coin was still novel in Nigeria.²⁶ They attracted markets and populations around themselves. The villagers made the railway camps, quarters, and stations their markets. They sold on credit and expected payment on days when the railway workers received their salaries or wages. In this way, part of the wage income entered the local economy.²⁷ Similarly, service industries such as eateries, bottled beer, and locally brewed alcohol (*burukutu* and *pito*) centres, credit services, brothels, and entertainers developed to cater for these workers. On another level, they constituted an enlightened group, who were anxious to give their children a better education. They were always up to date on social and political happenings in

²⁴ L. Lindsay, “Money, Marriage and Masculinity”, 144.

²⁵ Interview with Alhaji Ahamdu Dan Barno, Kwankwaso, 5 March 2005.

²⁶ W. Oyemakinde, “The Railway Workers and Modernization in Colonial Nigeria”, *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, 10/1, (1979): 113-124, 115-6; Oyemakinde, “Railway Construction”, 317-323.

²⁷ Oyemakinde, “Railway Construction”, 318

the country.²⁸ As informants noted, the locals got their information about happenings in the country through the railway labourers.²⁹

However, the presence of the railway workers, coupled with the expanding cash economy and the influx of foreign ideas, had the consequence of breaking down or undermining the traditional social control over dependent women and girls. For instance, women and young girls who frequented railway camps and stations to trade often asserted their independence and even deserted homes, owing to contact with the railway labourers who enticed them into sexual relations. Informants commented that women and young girls usually ran away from home to the camps. An informant, Alhaji Ahmadu Dan Barno, a retired railway labourer, pointed out that “whenever a woman or girl got missing or ran away from home, the railway camp was always the first place to look for her.”³⁰ The attraction to railway workers was understandable; they had a steady income, which made them attractive lovers. The railway workers stimulated local trade, as their camps and quarters became a sort of market to local women.³¹ Women who attached themselves to them not only stood a chance of getting a permanent space to sell from, they also had a steady allowance or even capital to expand their business.

In a society undergoing major transformations through the introduction of cash, sexual relations with railway labourers were a way of negotiating social and economic ties. As studies by Judith Byfield and N. A. Fadipe revealed, the advent of the railway increased the rate of divorce and prostitution in Yorubaland. Married women and young girls in the course of contact with railway workers defied their husbands, parents, and public opinion, and ran away from home to become mistresses to railway workers.³² As Byfield pointed out, the railway camps provided new relationships and economic opportunities, as well as sanctuary from the traditional authority, in the form of an alternative legal space under the railway’s jurisdiction.³³ As one early annual report also indicates, married women along the

²⁸ Oyemakinde, “Railway Workers”, 116-7.

²⁹ Interviews with Malams Yusuf Inusa Dan Madaki, Hussaini Abdu, Adamu Zaki, Chindo Mohammed, and Idi Inusa, Yakum Dan Baure, 10 April 2011.

³⁰ Interview with Alhaji Ahmadu Dan Barno, Kwankwaso, 5 March 2005.

³¹ Oyemakinde, “Railway Construction”, 323

³² J. Byfield, “Women, Marriage, Divorce and the Emerging Colonial State in Abeokuta (Nigeria) 1892-1904” *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 30/1, (1996): 32-51; N. A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of Yoruba*, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970), 90-1.

³³ J. Byfield, “Women, Marriage, Divorce”, 254.

rail line asserted their independence by refusing to bear children, aborting their pregnancies without their husband's knowledge.³⁴

The Nigerian Railway was one government industry in which southerners, especially the Igbo, were dominant. They constituted the bulk of the engine drivers, technicians, and engineers. In the 1960s, many southern railway workers, most especially the Ibo, fled from the communities during the Civil War. Their departure during the crisis disrupted rail services between the North and South, and the system came to a virtual standstill.³⁵ Although there were no attacks in the studied communities, many of the southern migrants fled owing to fear and rumours of impending attacks. At the end of the war, many of them returned, by which time the railway was in a decline.

Groundnut trade

Many of the migrants were employed in the groundnut trade industry as clerks and middlemen or sub-agents to the commercial firms. A number of the Yoruba and Ibo worked as clerks. Many of them, including the Hausa and the Asian traders, and particularly the Syrians and Arabs, acted as middlemen to the firms or sub-agents to the main middlemen who advanced them credit to purchase produce. Credit advances were a prominent feature of the produce trade.³⁶ The migrants were attracted into the produce trade by their awareness of the possible cash returns. Their ambition was to save money to send their children to school. Some of these migrants were also independent traders, who used their personal capital to purchase produce.

The migrants controlled the produce trade in the communities through kinship networks. They enjoyed what amounted to a monopoly. For instance, J. A. Wiseman pointed out that the Ibo dominated the produce trade in Gimi.³⁷ The Yoruba, on the other hand, controlled the produce trade in Madobi, Yako, and Dangora. As early as 1924, a senior colonial official in Kano Province, H. H. Middleton, reported that the bulk of the groundnuts purchased by the firms in Madobi that year were possibly via Yoruba traders. Many of them had been living in the area before the firms began to operate there.³⁸ A number of them

³⁴ SNP/10 Zaria Province Report (Annual) 1914.

³⁵ For details, see M. E. Zukerman, "Nigerian Crisis: Economic Impact on the North", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 8/1, (1970): 37-54.

³⁶ Adebayo, "Production and Export, 286; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*.

³⁷ Wiseman, "Structural and Ideological", 2.

³⁸ AHAK 3/3/16, Report on the Groundnut Trade in Kano Province by H. H. Middleton, 6, 16.

started out as clerks in the trading firms. Having acquired the expertise and saved enough, they resigned to start trading themselves, and some even established their own firms.³⁹ Their activities generated employment for fellow migrants and the indigenous population. Prominent produce middlemen among the migrants in Gimi were T. E. Opufou, E. C. Opufou, P. H. Sawyer, and Umoru. They became LBAs in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴⁰ In Madobi, Michael Nwankwo was the most prominent produce trader in the 1950s and 1960s; he established his own trading firm, Michael Nwankwo Ltd, in 1947.⁴¹ AbdulRauf Fashola was another prominent middleman at Dangora in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴²

In the 1920s, the dominant position of the southern produce traders in Madobi and Yako was challenged by new arrivals, most notably Syrian and Arab traders who also were attracted by the post-war trade boom and their awareness of the profits to be made.⁴³ As M. A. Bugren, the foremost Arab trader, interviewed by J. S. Hogendorn in Kano in the 1960s, pointed out, he came to Kano because of the money in the groundnut trade.⁴⁴ Many of these traders also started as intermediaries to the European firms before saving money to establish their own firms. As indicated in the previous chapter, when the trading outlet in Madobi was established, the Arabs and Lebanese were the first group to establish their firms there. Although they were not many compared with the indigenous middlemen, as Table 5.3 indicates, they constituted a distinct commercial group, and they had stronger capital than their indigenous counterparts combined. Toyin Falola asserted that the indigenous traders were jealous of the Asian and European traders because of their strong capital and control over the markets and their ability to use their networks and branches to divide the markets.⁴⁵ Their presence did not result in complete withdrawal of the indigenous middlemen, however, as a number of the latter acted as agents for these outsiders.⁴⁶

The newcomers were shrewd businessmen who did not accept bad business. As the records indicate, they were fond of snatching their rivals' agents. When their agents defaulted or decided not to trade with them, they had them arrested and refused to appear in court; they

³⁹ Interview with Malama Laraba Wellman, Gimi Dabosa, 25 May 2011.

⁴⁰ NAK ZarProf MKT vol. 1, Groundnut Buying Stations and Points.

⁴¹ Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*, 129, 148.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Okediji, "Economic History", 141, 199.

⁴⁴ Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*, 141.

⁴⁵ T. Falola, "Money and Informal Credit Institutions in Colonial Western Nigeria", in: J. I. Guyer, *Money Matters, Instability, Values and Social Payments in Modern History of West African Communities*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995), 162-107, 163.

⁴⁶ Okediji, "Economic History", 191; Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut*.

even seized their donkeys. Prominent Syrian and Arab groundnut traders in Madobi and Yako in the 1940s were Saleh Bugren (*mai gashin baki*), Sadiq Tahir, Habib Deik, and Jamil. As Table 5.3 also indicates, there were also some European residents at some of the centres, even though they were not many.⁴⁷

As the archival records indicate, the social life of the migrants was generally characterized by upward social mobility, to the extent that some of their names appeared on the wealthy individuals' tax list. In the 1950s and 1960s, some of them earned as much as £1,700 or as little as £150 annually.⁴⁸ For instance, in the 1950s, Michael Nwankwo was listed as the richest person not only in Madobi but in Kura District as a whole. Also, Abdul Rauf Fashola was reported as the richest person in Kiru District.⁴⁹ As the oral and archival sources suggest, the Yoruba and Ibo migrants invested profits from the produce trade in their children's education and in other trade such as livestock trade, retailing, and real estate (e.g. hotels⁵⁰ and housing to cater for the migrant populations).⁵¹

Table 5.3 List of non-African populations

Year	Nationality	Male Adult	Occupation	Female Adult	Children	Town	Total
1941	Syrian	3	Traders	2	2	Madobi	7
"	"	2	"	n.a.	n.a	Yako	2
1942	British	1	Railway staff	n.a.	n.a.	Dangora	1
"	Syrian	2	Traders	n.a.	n.a.	Yako	2
"	"	2	"	2	5	Madobi	9
1943	Syrian & Arab	2	"	2	8	"	12
"	German	1	Trader	1	2	Madobi	4
"	British	1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Yako	1
1944	"	3	Traders	3	n.a	Madobi	3
1945	"	3	"	3	10	"	16
1946	Arab	1	"	1	4	"	6
"	Syrian	1	Trader	1	3	Madobi	5
1948	Arab	1	"	1	4	Yako	6

⁴⁷ KSHCB Acc. no. 68.

⁴⁸ KSHCB KanProf 1/11/11 History of Kiru District, KHCB KanProf 1/11/13 History of Kura District.

⁴⁹ KSHCB KanProf1/11/13 History of Kura District.

⁵⁰ For example, there was a Provident Hotel at Gimi and an Alheri Hotel at Auchan.

⁵¹ NAK ZarProf 2015, St. James Anglican School at Gimi Dabosa; NAK KanProf 4171, Elementary School at Madobi; NAK KanProf 6476, Methodist Church Mission Application for Church Site at Dangora; NAK KanProf 6575, Applications to Open School at Yako by Methodist Church Mission.

“	Arab (Tripoli)	1	Trader	1	5	Madobi	7
“	Arab-Tuwaiya (Saudi Arabian)	1	“	1	3	Madobi	5

Note: n.a. = not available

Source: KSHCB BMD/36, Statistics of non-indigenous population.

Livestock trade

Besides the produce trade which attracted the migrants, a number of them, particularly the Yoruba and Hausa, were also in the livestock trade. Those of them involved in the produce trade also participated in the livestock trade when the opportunity cost in the trade was low or during festival periods. Florence Okediji pointed out that most of the Hausa middlemen who drove the produce trade were also involved in the livestock trade. Just as they reinvested profits from kola nuts into the groundnut trade, so also did they reinvest in livestock trade.⁵² As with the produce trade, it was oriented southward. The livestock trade between the North and South dated back to the pre-colonial period, but the trade at that time was constrained by transport difficulties and general insecurity.⁵³ The establishment of British rule and the completion of the railway gave a new impetus. Expansion in the trade was a result of the steady demand for meat from Southern Nigeria, owing to the increased wealth from cash crop exports and the new transport system. The bulk of the meat consumed in the South was imported from the North.

Livestock traders purchased their stocks, particularly rams and goats as well as fowl, from the communities and their environs and then transported them to the South. As mentioned in Chapter 3, livestock freight featured prominently in rail-borne traffic from the localities studied (see Appendix 1: Table 3.7). The peak of the trade was during the festival periods, especially the *Eid al adha* (the Greater Eid or festival of sacrifice) and Christmas time, when demand for animals was high. In the 1960s, the livestock trade between the North and South was disrupted by the Civil War, and then again by the drought of the 1970s, the latter causing heavy mortality among cattle herds.⁵⁴ From the 1970s onwards, the livestock trade was transported by road owing to the decline in importance of the railway.

⁵² Okediji, “Economic History”.

⁵³ F. A. Okediji, *The Cattle Industry in Northern Nigeria, 1900–1939*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1973), 2-3; Umiunu, “Role of Transportation”, 3-16, 6.

⁵⁴ Olaniyi, *Diaspora*, 126.

Textile and cosmetic trade

While men dominated the produce and livestock trades, women's involvement in trading was also important and should not be overlooked. Despite the critical role women played in informal trade, they were seen as a group requiring integration into the mainstream economy.⁵⁵ Many Yoruba women migrants engaged in the textile and cosmetic trade. Though men also engaged in this trade, the majority were women. The trade was called *osomalo*, an Ijesha word, coming from the saying: "*Oso ni ma a lo ki mo fi agba omi, or Oso ni ma lo gba' owo mi loni o*" ("I shall remain standing here, squatting or stooping, until I am paid").⁵⁶ The term originated in the fact that the trade itself was based on a credit or hire purchase system. The women always called on customers to buy from them on credit and pay at a later date. Toyin Falola pointed out that the trade was similar to the trust system introduced by the European traders in the coastal trade with Nigerians during the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ Many of the women traders were either wives of railway workers or produce traders, and some were independent traders themselves. As with the male migrants, they were attracted by the profits to be made. Their ambition was to use their profits to educate their children, to invest in houses, and to retire to a large store.⁵⁸ The women purchased their wares from the cities and hawked them in the countryside where the firms could not penetrate.

The *osomalo* women were the most prominent southern traders in the localities, given the practice of seclusion (*kulle*) in Hausaland, which restricts women to the home front.⁵⁹ In Yorubaland, women entrepreneurship has a long history, pre-dating the colonial period. Yoruba women engaged in trade to supplement family incomes, usually starting on a small scale, using capital from personal savings or relatives and then expanding gradually.⁶⁰ Though their influence was constrained by distance and insecurity, the restoration of peace by

⁵⁵ M. L. Swantz, "Women Entrepreneurs in Tanzania: A Path to Sustainable Livelihood", in: Small Global Employment, vol. 1, (1995), *Development: Journal of the Society for International Development*, 55-60.

⁵⁶ P. A. Ogunipe, *Up-Country Girl: A Personal Journey and Truthful Portrayal of African Culture*, (Bloomington, IN: Authors House, 2012), 91; Olaniyi, 138-9; T. Falola, "Money and Informal Credit", 172.

⁵⁷ Falola, "Money and Informal Credit", 172.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ B. J. Callaway, *Muslim Hausa Women in Nigeria: Tradition and Change*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 68-9.

⁶⁰ Falola, "Money and Informal Credit", 173.

colonialism, the development of the export trade, and the construction of the railway offered them enormous opportunities to diversify and extend their trade to the North.⁶¹

One interesting aspect of this trade was connected to persuasion, which was a key component of doing business. The *osomalo* often identified their customers or anybody requiring credit and then tricked them into buying, either through persuasion or peer-group networks. When a customer was not interested in one of their products, they suggested another.⁶² Their hosts nicknamed them *adodoka* or *dauki dauki ba fada*, “pick pick without fight”, owing to the way they advertised or attracted their customers. The price of an article was always doubled. Informants noted that buyers seemed to continue to service their debts endlessly. Buying on credit allowed villagers to live on credit and keep in touch with current trends and tastes, especially where textiles were involved.⁶³ The *osomalo* saved the villagers the trouble of going to the city. But they had better not default in their repayments; otherwise, the *osomalo* could get quite provocative.⁶⁴

The *osomalo* profited from the scarcity of imported textiles during the 1930s and 1940s by selling at higher rates. Their hold over the trade was challenged by the Hausas in the 1970s. The increased involvement of the Hausas in the textile trade and the emergence of modern textile mills eventually undermined the *osomalo* hold over the trade.⁶⁵ Although the *osomalo* are still very much around, they now sell mostly plastic materials.

Foodstuffs trade

The trade in the staple foodstuffs was another economic activity performed by some of the migrants. As with the produce trade, those involved in this trade were of mixed ethnicity, comprising Ibo, Hausa, and Yoruba (including women). They purchased cereal or grains such as beans, maize, and millet, as well as onions and peppers from the communities and transported them to the South and the urban centres in Kano and Zaria, where they were scarce. As mentioned in Chapter 3, foodstuffs featured prominently in rail-borne traffic (see Tables 3.2–3.6, 3.10–3.12, and 3.14–3.15 in Appendix 1) despite the food deficit in some of

⁶¹ O. Akinwumi, “Women Entrepreneurs in Nigeria: Notes on the Yoruba ‘Alajapa’ and ‘Alarobo’”, *Africa Updates News Letter, Nigerian Culture and Society*, (Summer 2000): vol. VII, Issue 3, available at <http://web.ccsu.edu/afstudy/upd7-3.htm> [accessed on 30 August 2012]; Falola, “Money and Informal Credit”, 163.

⁶² Falola, “Money and Informal Credit”.

⁶³ Falola, “Money and Informal Credit”, 173.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Olaniyi, *Diaspora*.

the communities. The foodstuffs trade was also a part of the service industry of the railway, which catered for the railway workers and the southern populations. Since the migrant did not engage in food production, unlike their counterparts in the cocoa belt of south-west Nigeria, they increased the food deficits in some of the communities. The food traders profited from this food deficit. As highlighted in the previous chapter, most of the communities were deficient in foodstuffs and had to rely on such traders. As Oshin and Umiunu asserted, the railways facilitated foodstuffs trade between the North and the South, which resulted in each region specializing in the production of foods for which they were best endowed by nature. This singular factor created inter-dependence among the various Nigerian groups.⁶⁶

In the 1960s, the foodstuffs trade was affected by the Civil War. The war disrupted the inter-regional trade and transportation between the North and the South and created a vacuum which was immediately filled by the Hausa.⁶⁷ The disruption of the transport system during and after the war also meant that the foodstuffs were transported by road transport.⁶⁸

Prostitution

Prostitution (*karuwanci*, a term denoting both sexual and economic independence) was another economic activity performed by some of the single female migrants. Prostitution was one of the service industries of the railway, and it provided single and unattached females some degree of social and economic mobility and independence.⁶⁹ The prostitutes (*karuwai*) were predominantly Hausa from across the North and the localities, with a few other groups such as Tiv, Idoma, and women from southern Zaria. As with other migrants, they came in response to the economic opportunities presented by the railway and the presence of populations of single or unattached males. They concentrated mostly at those centres with high economic opportunities and large populations (such as Madobi, Gimi, Dangora, Yako, and Auchan). The increasing number of unattached railway labourers and other migrants who required sexual relations boosted demand for the prostitutes' services. As one informant commented, "wherever you see labourers, there must be prostitutes".⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Oshin, "Railways and Urbanization", 115; Umiunu, "Role of Transportation", 9-10.

⁶⁷ Watts, "Brittle Trade", 95.

⁶⁸ Zukerman, "Nigerian Crisis", 50.

⁶⁹ S. Aderinto, "Colonialism and Prostitution in Africa", in: Melisa Hope Ditmore (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work*, 1 (UK: Greenwood Press, 2006), 110-112; S. Aderinto, "Sexualized Nationalism: Lagos and the Politics of Illicit Sexuality in Colonial Nigeria, 1918-1958", (PhD Thesis, University of Texas, 2010), 21-22.

⁷⁰ Interview with Malam Mohammadu Nayi, Gidan Radiyo Madobi, 27 September 2005.

Although economic factors were one cause of prostitution, divorce was also a contributing factor. Most women entered prostitution to escape marriage.⁷¹ Kenneth Little asserted that all Hausa prostitutes had previously been married.⁷² Although prostitution is an acceptable way of life, it is disapproved of by society, because a good woman is expected to be married or live with relatives and avoid multiple sexual relations; otherwise, she will be labelled a prostitute.⁷³

Although prostitution is an ancient practice, it became more lucrative with the advent of the railway. The severity of construction and railway work and the fact that the labourers were mostly single boosted demand for sex workers. During the time of the railway's construction, prostitutes were permitted at the construction camps to sell sex to labourers.⁷⁴ As the construction work was completed, brothels (*gidan magajiya*) and hotels sprang up along the rail line, including in the studied communities, to serve the unattached male populations.⁷⁵ The prostitutes did not evoke opposition from the public, as they were seen as doing legal work. Unlike the form of prostitution practised by other Nigerian groups, the Hausa prostitutes lived and solicited in a house called *gidan magajiya*. The houses were situated in the migrant quarters and were mostly owned by a *magajiya* (madam of the prostitutes) and the southern migrants from whom she rented and sublet to her girls. An informant, Alhaji Yakubu Likoro, stated that prostitution was not the only work they did; some also sold food, cigarettes, and kola nuts.⁷⁶ These additional activities, together with the existence of other prostitution-related activities such as hotels and beer parlours, provided avenues for sexual networking and the secrecy required by clients. Although it has been argued that Hausa prostitutes elsewhere were patronized only by the Hausa,⁷⁷ the evidence from the communities suggests that they were patronized by diverse groups, including married men, most of whom were labourers. An informant, Malam Mohammadu Nayi, stated that "most labourers spend their money on prostitutes".⁷⁸ Although it is difficult to determine the profitability of prostitution, some of the prostitutes earned enough to invest in real estate.

⁷¹ Callaway, *Muslim Hausa Women*, 44.

⁷² K. Little, *African Women in Town: Aspect of Africa's Social Revolution*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 90.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Nigeria, Further Correspondence, 135.

⁷⁵ Aderinto, "Colonialism and Prostitution" and "Sexualized Nationalism".

⁷⁶ Interview with Alhaji Yakubu, Likoro, 11 August 2012.

⁷⁷ Aderinto, "Sexualized Nationalism", 22.

⁷⁸ Interview with Malam Mohammadu Nayi.

As mentioned earlier, some of the houses in which they operated were owned by the *magajiyas* themselves, suggesting that prostitution was profitable.⁷⁹ An informant also pointed out that one of the *magajiya* built a mosque at Yako Sabon Gari.⁸⁰

In the 1940s and 1950s, there were efforts to control divorce and prostitution in the country. The prevalence of child prostitution, venereal disease, and consummation of marriage with underage girls during the war led to a plan to tax prostitutes and discourage divorce, with a view to curtailing prostitution.⁸¹ The decline of the railway and the decline of the migrant communities in the 1970s undermined the activities of the prostitutes. Many relocated to the capital cities and the new hubs on the Kano–Zaria road, such as Kwanar Dangora and Tashar Mayere.⁸²

Others

In addition to these activities, there were also artisans such as tailors, bicycle repairers, and goldsmiths. There were also casual labourers who earned their living from the trains, loading and unloading goods.

5.3 Socio-cultural changes

Despite attempts by the colonial authority to isolate the migrants into a rigid compartment (through a segregation policy), social relations brought them into direct contact with their hosts communities, a development which eroded both traditional and official barriers. The fact that no human society is self-sufficient also made interactions between migrants and hosts very necessary. Besides the trade which fostered physical interactions, inter-ethnic relations were fostered through language, religion, and marriage. In their various capacities as traders, middlemen, government workers, and artisans, the migrants interacted with their hosts through the local language (Hausa), even if the spoken Hausa of many of them was not particularly good. This was important because the hosts did not understand the newcomers’

⁷⁹ Interviews with Malams Yahaya Audu, Yau Jibrin, Hussain Inusa, and Yusuf Inusa, Tudun Wada Madobi, 2 October 2005; with Lawan Akawun Kwalli, at Madobi, and Isa Namairo, at Auchan, 14 March 2011; with Ali Tela (village head of Gimi Tasha), Gimi Tasha, 7 March 2011; and with Alhajis Ado Yahuza and Shehu Audu, Yako, 5 March 2011.

⁸⁰ Interview with Malam Ado Yahuza, Yako, 20 May 2012.

⁸¹ NAK ZarProf C1/1944 Child Prostitution (2) Purdah (3) Control of Prostitution under Moslem Law 1944–51; NAK KanProf 5050 Prostitution Tax 1942–3.

⁸² Interviews with Malams Yahaya Dangora, Federal College of Education (FCE) Kano, 30 March 2011; Shehu Yusuf and Alhaji Adamu (Sarkin Fulanin Kyrana), Kyrana, 4 March 2011.

own languages. The migrants also had a further motivation, which was the quest for acceptance.⁸³ Just as they learned the host language, some of the locals in turn learned to communicate with them in pidgin English, which was the *lingua franca* among the migrants. Pidgin English itself is a language of commerce.

Religion also played a critical role in fostering social relations between the two groups. A number of the migrants, especially the Yoruba, Nupe, Igala, Syrians, and Arabs were Muslims and so shared the same faith as their hosts, even if their daily prayers were irregular. They observed their prayers in the midst of the hosts and even contributed funds to charity. Informants noted that the migrants donated to mosque building and some even single-handedly built mosques.⁸⁴ As the record also indicates, one of the prominent Syrian individuals in Madobi, Saleh Bugren, established an Islamic school at Kanwa, near Madobi.⁸⁵

Marriage also assisted in fostering social relations between the Muslim migrants and their hosts. A number of the Yoruba, Nupe, Igala, and Syrian migrants married women from the localities. Muslims are always liberal when it comes to marriage; after all, Islam encourages inter-ethnic marriages among the faithful. As oral and archival sources generally indicate, the migrants married women from the localities to reinforce their economic and political status.⁸⁶ For instance, Saleh Bugren, the prominent Syrian trader mentioned above, married a woman from Madobi to reinforce his economic activities.⁸⁷ Also, Abdul Rahimi Ogunlade, the village head of Madobi Sabon Gari mentioned earlier, secured the village headship because he married Turaki Many, the district head of Kura's daughter, a development which facilitated the integration of his children into mainstream Hausa society.⁸⁸ Informants pointed out that marriages involving railway workers were not very successful, as the migrants in question either abandoned or divorced the local women only to bring in women from their home towns.⁸⁹ Marriage between the female migrants and members of the host communities was not common during the period considered, perhaps

⁸³ This is the agreed opinion among all the informants; Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*, 144.

⁸⁴ Interviews with Malam Hussaini Abdu, Malam Adamu Zaki, Malam Yusuf Inusa Dan Madaki, Malam Chindo Mohammed, Idi Inusa, and Malam Muhammad, Auchan, 6 April 2011.

⁸⁵ KSHCB Acc. no. 68.

⁸⁶ Interviews with Malam Mohammadu Nayi, Madobi, 3 June 2006 and Alhaji Yakubu, Likoro, 11 August 2012; KSHCB Acc. no. 68.

⁸⁷ Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*, 144, 164.

⁸⁸ Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*, and "New Approaches".

⁸⁹ Interviews with Malam Muhammadu Nayi, Malam Mohammadu Sani, and Alhaji Yakubu, Likoro, 11 August 2012; Malam Haruna Audu (ward head of Unguwar Likoro Tasha), 24 March 2011; Malam Haruna Audu (ward head of Tashar Likoro), 24 March 2011; Malam Mohammadu Maraya, Auchan, 30 June 2012.

partly due to what A. F. Usman and A. Bako described as the Hausa's divorce syndrome (*saki-uku*).⁹⁰ Nevertheless, in the 1980s and 1990s, a number of such marriages were recorded in some of the communities

It should be pointed out that despite the networks the migrants had established over years of residence, many of them did not assimilate. This is because they developed a plural identity with regards to the host communities. In other words, they did not see migration as their final objective. Toyin Falola has argued that not every migrant wanted to integrate; some preferred to play the politics of outsider, in which their "outsidedness" was also a source of power. According to this argument, migrants who perceive migration as a final objective find it easier to integrate than those who see it as a temporary situation.⁹¹ Although many of the migrants did not integrate, there were some who did, as did their children. As Malama Laraba, wife of Wellman Warri Opufou mentioned earlier, stated: "we have no other home than Gimi". Laraba, now advanced in years, still lives in Gimi Tasha, even though her husband now lives with their eldest son (Mr Innocent), who teaches at the polytechnic in Zaria.⁹²

Not only did the migrants assimilate; some of them went on to hold important positions in mainstream Hausa society. For example, the late Abdu Abdu Rahim—a chartered accountant-*cum*-politician, who was appointed Commissioner for Finance in Kano State (1979–1983)—and Alhaji Usman Abdurrahim—who served as Registrar of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (1981–1992) and also of Kano State University of Science and Technology (2001–2005)—were the sons of Abdul Rahimi Ogunlade, mentioned above. Also, Dr Habibu Saleh of Physics Department, Bayero University was the son of Saleh Burgren mentioned above. There are also a couple of migrants from the north who despite the decline of the railway still lives within the communities while some maintained contact with the communities having relocated elsewhere.⁹³ If the Rahimis and Salehs and others found it easy to integrate because of their maternal connections, it was less easy for other young migrants with no parental linkage in the localities, due to what an informant described as the

⁹⁰ A. F. Usman and A. Bako, (2006), "Yoruba–Hausa Relations in Gusau During the 20th Century", in: Olayemi Akinwumi, Okpeh Ochayi Okpeh, Jr and Gwamna, D. Je'adayibe (eds), *Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria During the 19th and 20th Centuries*, (Makurdi: Aboki), 671-680.

⁹¹ T. Falola, being a talk at the Black Atlantic Lecture titled "Historicizing Black Atlantic, Comparative, Colonialism, Transnational and Citizenship", at Vanderbilt University, 10 February 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGvu-p1c0j0> [accessed on 12 March 2013].

⁹² Interview with Malama Laraba Wellman Opufou, Gimi Tasha, 5 April 2011.

⁹³ Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*, 145, and "New Approaches", fn. 65, 223.

politicization of citizenship and the notions of rights and opportunities in post-colonial Nigeria.⁹⁴

One prominent development arising from the presence of migrants was the proliferation of community and home town associations in the communities. The most prominent were the community associations, which were established in order to foster understanding and interactions among themselves and between them and their hosts. The associations performed diverse functions, but at their core they had the development and advancement of the migrant quarters. Membership cut across regional ethnic groups.⁹⁵ For instance, the migrants in Gimi established the Gimi Community League (GCL). In 1953, the executive members of the GCL comprised the following: Mr. Opufou as President, and B. Owulah, E. F. Omgbe, Alhaji M. Ilori, and G. O. Adebayo (positions not indicated) as members.⁹⁶ The meetings were used as platforms for addressing issues of common interest and settling disputes, as well as for social interactions. The associations were also instrumental in the establishment of schools, postal agencies, and churches at Madobi, Gimi, Yako, Dangora, and Auchan.⁹⁷

The migrants did not lose touch with home; they also maintained contact through the home town associations. The home associations were established in part as a response to the problem of adjustment to the new environment, and they brought together migrants from the same town. Their core mission was the physical development of the home town and the strengthening of ethnic consciousness.⁹⁸ They also functioned as channels through which monetary remittances were sent home or invested in development projects at home. Although the remittances were rarely seen physically, they were sent through the postal agencies.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ E-mail communication with Dr. Theophilus Adeyinka Shittu, 13 December 2012.

⁹⁵ C. W. Abbott, "Home Towns Associations and the Ethnic Unions in the Twentieth Century Nigeria: A Geographical and Historical Interpretation", (PhD Thesis, University of Iowa, 2006); Olaniyi, *Diaspora*.

⁹⁶ NAK ZarProf 1923/S.1, Postal Agencies 1949-53.

⁹⁷ NAK KanProf 4171, Elementary School at Madobi; NAK ZarProf 2015, St. James Anglican School at Gimi Dabosa; NAK KanProf 6476, Methodist Church Missions Application for Church site at Dangora; NAK KanProf 6575, Application to Open School at Yako by Methodist Church Mission; NAK KanProf 4705, Postal Agency at Kwankwaso; NAK P&T/3 Postal Agency at Madobi.

⁹⁸ Udo, "Internal Migrations", 135; C. W. Abbot, "Home Towns Associations"; Usman and Bako, "Yoruba-Hausa Relations"; Olaniyi, *Diaspora*.

⁹⁹ Madobi postal agency was established in 1928 and upgraded to a departmental postal office in 1953. The postal agency in Gimi was established in the 1930s. Attempts to influence its upgrading, as in Madobi, to a departmental post office by the migrants failed. Kwankwaso and Yako postal agencies were established in the 1940s. NAK P&T/3 Postal Agency at Madobi; NAK KanProf 4705 Postal Agency at Kwankwaso; NAK ZarProf 1923/S.1 Postal Agencies 1949-53; KSHCB R.518 Postal Telegraph Dept. Miscellaneous (complaints) and Postal Agency.

The migrants were also instrumental in the establishment of churches and Western-education schools, as many of them were Christians. Although missionary activity was not the primary motive for their migration, it was one area where their activity was most felt. Churches of different denominations were established in the host communities, as Table 5.4 indicates.¹⁰⁰ These churches were established between the 1930s and 1940s (see first column on year in the table), a period of intense proliferation of missionary activity in the North.¹⁰¹ Contrary to the claim that indigenous African churches did not exist in the North,¹⁰² one was actually established at Madobi Sabon Gari.¹⁰³ European missionaries did not establish missions in the communities, partly because of opposition from the colonial authority and partly because Muslim-populated areas were not attractive to the missions. The churches were pastored by the migrants themselves. As the evidence indicates, membership of the churches in Gimi and Dangora was hierarchized along ethnic lines, with the Yoruba and Ibo establishing separate churches. E. P. Crampton argued that wherever the Anglicans were sufficient in number, they would establish a separate church of their own.¹⁰⁴ Also, contrary to the claim that southerners did not engage in direct evangelism in the North,¹⁰⁵ oral accounts suggest that they were instrumental in the conversion of some non-Muslim Hausa populations (*Maguzawa*) around Dangora, Gimi, Auchan, Likoro, Gubuci, Ikara, and Nassarawan Doya, due to the neglect of these communities by the Hausa Muslim aristocrats.¹⁰⁶ Although the numbers involved were insignificant, the bulk converted in the 1980s through the activity of the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA).¹⁰⁷

The missions also established Western-education schools (*makarantun boko*), most notably elementary schools (see second column on year in Table 5.4). This is understandable, given that Western education arrived with Christianity. The missions always set up schools wherever they were established. The schools were initially accommodated in the churches

¹⁰⁰ NAK ZarProf 2015 St. James Anglican School at Gimi Dabosa; NAK KanProf 4171, Elementary School at Madobi; NAK KanProf 6476, Methodist Church Mission Application for Church site at Dangora; NAK KanProf 6575 Application to open school at Yako by Methodist Church Mission.

¹⁰¹ Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*; C. N. Ubah, 'Christian Missionaries in Muslim Emirates of Nigeria, 1900-1928', *Journal of African Studies*, 3/3, (1976): 351-371; Barnes, 'Evangelism'.

¹⁰² Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*, 142.

¹⁰³ NAK KanProf 4171.

¹⁰⁴ Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*, 139.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 140-1.

¹⁰⁶ Interviews with Reverend Bawa Sanmako, Dangora, 10 April 2011; Malama Laraba Wellman, Gimi Tasha, 5 April 2011; e-mail communication with Innocent Opufou, 13 March 2013.

¹⁰⁷ Interviews with Pastor Yohanna Musa, Pastor of the Dangora Church, 30 April 2011; Reverend Bawa Sanmako, Dr. Theophilus Adeyinka Shittu, and Malam Yahaya Dangora, 30 March 2011.

until permanent structures were constructed. Although the schools were established and administered by the church, they were funded by the migrant populations, irrespective of their religious affiliation. As indicated earlier, many of the migrant workers were not educated but wanted to see their children educated.¹⁰⁸ As late as the 1930s, the colonial authority in the North was still not interested in the education of migrants, although it supported the schools through irregular monetary grants.¹⁰⁹

While the schools were established by migrants and for migrant children, they also benefited the hosts, as some of them enrolled their children. The colonial authority was not opposed to Muslims enrolling in mission schools as long as the parents were informed at the beginning that it was a mission school. Mission schools always signed an undertaking at the time of registration to explain to Muslim parents who wished to enrol their children that it was a Christian school.¹¹⁰ The hosts were at first opposed to their children attending the schools, for fear of conversion to Christianity and of losing control over the children. An informant, Abdullahi Ibrahim, reported that he withdrew from the Anglican School in Gimi because of the Christian Religious Knowledge subject they were being taught. According to him, only children from the ruling family in Gimi (the indigenous settlement) enrolled their children in the school.¹¹¹ The schools existed up until the 1970s, at which point government primary schools were established in some of the communities. The earlier schools were not closed but were taken over by the government.

Table 5.4 List of churches and schools in some of the studied communities, 1930s–1949

Church	Year established	School	Year established	Location
United Native African Church	Early 1930s	United Native African School	1941	Madobi
St. James Anglican Church	1938	St. James Anglican School	1948	Gimi Dabosa
(1) Methodist (2) Anglican	1948 n.a.	Methodist Mission School	1948 n.a.	Dangora

¹⁰⁸ NAK ZarProf 2015; NAK KanProf 4171; NAK KanProf 6476; NAK KanProf 6575.

¹⁰⁹ NAK ZarProf 2015; NAK KanProf 4171; NAK KanProf 6476.

¹¹⁰ Ubah, “Christian Missionaries”, 113.

¹¹¹ Interview with Abdullahi Ibrahim, Sarkin Gimi Tasha, 7 March 2011.

(3) Baptist	n.a.		n.a.	
Methodist	1949	Methodist Mission School	1949	Yako

Note: n.a. = not available

Sources: NAK ZarProf 2015; NAK KanProf 4171; NAK KanProf 6476; NAK KanProf 6575; KSHCB 7094, Annual Report Kano Province, 1949.

The migrants also helped in the diffusion of occupational skills such as tailoring, barbering, photography, and bicycle repairs, and in the cultural diffusion of staple foods such as gari, fufu, palm oil, and fruits. The process of adoption went both ways between migrants and hosts. However, migrants also popularized drinking and gambling cultures, which were copied by some of the hosts, despite the fact that Islam prohibits such acts. As mentioned earlier, the migrants established hotels, beer parlours, and brothels, which provided avenues for promoting drinking, gambling, and prostitution in the localities.

Many of the migrants fled in the 1960s, owing to the pogrom against the Igbo in the North. Although there were no attacks in the studied localities, the passing of fleeing Ibos in trains and the rumours circulating that mobsters were coming to attack migrants forced many to flee.¹¹² Not everyone fled, however; some stayed behind, as the hosts discouraged them from fleeing. Malama Laraba, one of the few that stayed behind in Gimi, reported that “nobody was molested or attacked”. Laraba, whose husband fled during the crisis, recounted that “the village head of Gimi and *Fagacin* Makarfi appealed to her to stay, and assured her of her safety”.¹¹³ The departure of the migrants had negative repercussions on socio-economic activities in the localities, as many things came to a virtual standstill. When they returned at the end of the war in the 1970s, they found that the vacuum their absence had created had been filled by the hosts.

Over time, the export trade, which was the main magnet for migrants to the communities, ran into difficulties owing to the Sahelian drought and the shift in government priority to oil exports. Added to this was the decline of the railway. In consequence, many migrants relocated back to their home towns or moved to the newly developed state capitals,

¹¹² Wiseman, “Structural and Ideological”, 2; Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*; interviews with Malama Laraba, Alhaji Yakubu, Likoro.

¹¹³ Interview with Malam Laraba.

which offered better economic opportunities. The state capitals offered the adventurous migrants opportunities to work either in government or in industry. J. A. Wiseman, who visited Gimi Tasha in the late 1970s, reported that it was “in a state of decay”.¹¹⁴ This also applied to the other settlements.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has underlined the effects of the railway on population movements, the emergence of new settlement patterns along the rail line, and the implications of these migrations for national development. The advent of the railway facilitated the movement into the studied communities of diverse Nigerian cultures—peoples, languages, goods, and ideas—and the intermingling and reciprocal influence of different ways of life. Migrant populations were attracted by employment opportunities in the railway and the commercial firms, as well as by trade. As was noted, the migrants concentrated in those centres with the greatest economic opportunities, which were where the firms concentrated.

Attempts to control the migrant influx led to the establishment of segregated settlements for their exclusive use along the rail line. Of the several migrant settlements, Madobi Sabon Gari was the largest. It was established as an independent village unit, with a Yoruba man appointed its village head. Despite the measures taken by the colonial authority to isolate the migrants, inter-ethnic relations developed between the migrants and their hosts. It was shown that factors such as trade, language, religion, and marriage facilitated interactions between the two communities. In spite of the networks they established over years of residence, many of the newcomers did not assimilate because they saw their new home as temporary. A number of their children, especially those with maternal linkage in the host communities, became physically and culturally assimilated to the extent of holding important positions within mainstream Hausa society.

As the chapter has shown, the migrants were agents of social and cultural changes. They established churches and schools, which though meant for their own use benefited their hosts. They helped in diffusing occupational skills, foods, and culture, while also adopting from the localities. The outbreak of the Civil War in the 1960s had a devastating effect on the migrants, as many of them fled during the crisis. By the time they returned at the end of the war, the export trade, which was the main attraction to the communities, had been taken over by members of the host communities. The Sahelian drought of the 1970s negatively impacted

¹¹⁴ Wiseman, “Structural and Ideological”, 2.

agriculture, and increased revenue from oil exports also shifted government priority away from agricultural exports. By this time the railway was also in decline. The repercussions were that the communities lost their attractions, and many of the migrants relocated elsewhere in search of better livelihoods.

CHAPTER 6: THE RAILWAY AND CRIMINALITY

6.1 Introduction

The advent of British colonialism and its transport innovation was marked by critical disruptions in existing social relations of production in Northern Nigeria. Following the establishment of British rule, the colonial authority focused on expanding the economy, with the aim of promoting trade and extracting raw materials for the metropolitan industries. To achieve these imperial goals, the colonial authority monetized the economy and abolished the taxes under the Sokoto Caliphate, replacing them with new ones. In order to make people produce for British industries, the colonial authority introduced policies which dispossessed them of their right to use land and the resources therein and forced them to produce cash crops and minerals, which in the long run turned them into wage labourers.

Under the Sokoto Caliphate, all land was communally held and kept in trust by the Emir. The British abolished the tradition by taking control of all land and allocated it to European commercial interests. In addition, almost from the start, the new tax regime made the production of raw materials and the necessity for wage labour a precondition for obtaining cash. In the ensuing socio-economic instability, the colonial authority also implemented an import policy which flooded the markets with European manufactured goods, with the aim of dislodging the indigenous industries. The advent of the railway, most especially its role in the penetration and distribution of manufactured goods into the hinterland, indirectly accelerated the decline of indigenous industries, in the long run forcing local craftsmen out of business.

This socio-economic instability eroded the material conditions of many in the countryside. People reacted in different ways, including engaging in criminality. Different types of crime, such as theft, burglary, and highway robbery, sprang up with the establishment of British rule.¹ The advent of the railway, with its attendant opportunities, bred new crimes and provided platforms for criminals to operate.² In this regard, rural

¹ A. Christellow, *Thus Ruled Abbas: Selected Cases from the Records of the Emir of Kano Judicial Council*, (East Lansing: Michigan University Press, 1994), and "Property and Theft in Kano at the Dawn of the Groundnut Boom", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, XX, (1987): 237-243; NAK SNP7/950/1911, Zaria Provincial Report Annual; NAK SNP7/957/1912, Zaria Province Report, Annual, 1911.

² NAK SNP7/950/1911; NAK SNP7/957/1912.

dwellers, particularly blacksmiths, reacted by stealing railway keys and sleepers from the rail lines. Those predisposed to banditry reacted by robbing trains. Frederick Engels asserted that theft is the most primitive form of protest and that it is caused by poverty.³ It is a form of protest and reaction to an established order, as it violates the law.

This chapter looks at how the railway bred criminality such as iron theft from the rail line, provided a platform to banditry and train robbers, and the attempts by the colonial authority to combat these crimes. The chapter argues that the crimes were reactions to the socio-economic disruptions brought by the advent of colonialism and its transport innovation. It also argues that the prevalence of these crimes was due to the existence of large markets for stolen goods.

6.2 Theft of railway iron

Thefts of keys (*makuli*)⁴ and sleepers (*sikwati*)⁵ from the railway lines were some of the crimes which sprang up with the advent of the railway. Many blacksmiths and railway labourers in the studied communities made a dishonest living by stealing the iron. The crime flourished on the rail lines throughout the North and so was not peculiar to the studied communities alone. Sometimes the keys and sleepers were removed from the rail lines in a way that compromised the safety of oncoming trains. At times, the keys came loose from the tracks of their own accord and were ripe for the picking.

The appeal of theft was high, as iron was scarce and the demand for it was high. The material quality of the keys (the fact that they were made from iron and not copper) and sleepers (made from wood or concrete) made them particularly susceptible to theft. Iron was required for household and agricultural implements but was scarce in the countryside. In order to compensate for the scarcity, blacksmiths and their associates resorted to stealing iron from the rail lines. The theft was widespread both on the main and the branch lines in the North, causing loss of revenue to the railway authority. This was an infrastructure that was

³ Cited from D. Crummey, "The Great Beast", in: D. Crummey (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa*, (Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 1986), 1-29, 3-4; W. Freund, "Theft and Social Protest Among the Tin Miners of Northern Nigeria", *Radical History Review*, 26, (1986): 68-86; T. Falola, "Theft in Colonial Southwestern Nigeria", *Africa*, 50/1, (1995): 1-24.

⁴ "Keys" are the metal bolts or rivets that secured the track and the sleepers together. See: P. A. Rogers, "Hausa Blacksmiths"; R. W. Harms et al. (eds), *Path Toward the Past: African Historical Essays in Honor of Jan Vansina*, (Atlanta GA: African Studies Association Press, 1994), 371-393, 391 (endnote no. 4).

⁵ A "sleeper" is the foundation or iron on which the track is laid at a perpendicular angle (i.e. a tie or cross-tie). On the Nigerian railways, these sleepers were made of iron rather than concrete and wood, owing to the effects of the tropical environment on organic material. See: Rogers, "Hausa Blacksmiths", 391.

built for development purposes, but somehow it was appropriated in unexpected ways. Attempts to stem the theft through moral persuasion, policing, and prosecutions energized the perpetrators even more.

Despite the sustained attention the theft elicited throughout the colonial period, it has attracted very little attention in the literature. Of the extant literature, only one so far has concentrated on the theft, though it misinterpreted the real situation in regard to iron in the countryside.⁶ The rest of the literature mentions it only in passing,⁷ and even the mainstream literature on iron-working has ignored the phenomenon.⁸ This theft of iron needs to be understood because, as the literature generally suggests, poverty and unemployment were its causes.⁹

British colonialism dealt a fatal blow to the iron-working crafts. Right from the outset, the colonial authority methodically stripped the indigenous iron workers of their rights to prospect for tin and ore and granted the rights to European mining companies. This development had devastating repercussions for the rurally based mining and smelting crafts. The miners and smelters could neither mine nor smelt, nor even fell wood, as they had previously done. Under the new regime, they required a licence to mine and to fell wood, a licence which many of them could not afford. Many smelting sites closed down as a consequence.¹⁰ The colonial authority also flooded the markets with imported iron and scrap, which “forced” people to depend on them, in the long run dislodging the indigenous smelted iron. These policies had repercussions not only on rural mining and smelting, but also on the smithing craft, which relied on smelted iron.

In the nineteenth century, mining, smelting, and the associated markets for fuel wood were rurally based. Urban smiths did not mine or smelt; they relied on rural markets for raw materials. At the close of the century, smelting was confined to a few centres close to raw materials (i.e. iron ore deposits, fuel wood, water supplies, and clay for building furnaces),

⁶ Rogers, “Hausa Blacksmiths”.

⁷ Fika, *Kano Civil War*, 204-5; M. I. Mukhtar, “The Decline and Collapse of Indigenous Iron Industries in Northern Nigeria C. 1903-1989”, being a Paper Presented at the Workshop on Iron Smelting and Smiting in Northern Nigeria, organized by the Kano State History and Culture Bureau, Kano, at Daula Hotel Banquet Hall: (1990), 1-17; N. Abubakar, “Traditional Iron Industry in Nigeria: Beyond the Glorification of an Indigenous Technology”, being a Paper Presented at Workshop on Iron Smelting and Smiting, organized by the History and Culture Bureau, Kano, at Daula Hotel Banquet Hall: (1990), 1-16; Jaekel, *Nigerian Railway*, vol. 3, 348-49; Ochonu, *Colonial Meltdown*.

⁸ Jaggat, *Blacksmiths of Kano*.

⁹ Rogers, “Hausa Blacksmiths”; Mukhtar, “Decline and Collapse”; Abubakar, “Traditional Iron Industry”.

¹⁰ Rogers, “Hausa Blacksmiths”; Mukhtar, “Decline and Collapse”; R. A. Cline-Cole, “Political Economy, Fuel Wood Relations and Vegetation Conservation: Kasar Kano, Northern Nigeria, 1850-1915”, *Forest and Conservation History*, 38/2, (1994): 67-78.

owing to the declining raw materials which faced the industry at the time. Despite the declining raw materials, the smithing craft carried on in this manner until the arrival of the British.

The advent of British colonial rule undermined rural mining and smelting and reversed the existing arrangements.¹¹ By the 1920s, rural mining and smelting had disappeared in most places, though they continued to flourish in some enclaves in altered forms. The advent of the railway, especially its role in distributing iron and scrap, indirectly accelerated the decline of the indigenous mining and smelting. The iron brought by the railway did not circulate widely in the countryside. Although its arrival was a positive development, it benefited only the urban smiths, whose location on the rail line gave them advantaged access to new sources of iron.

This differential access to new iron and the consequent scarcity in the countryside forced the miners and smelters out of business and led many of them to try out new livelihoods altogether. For many rural blacksmiths, this entailed a critical adjustment to their livelihood, and this included “forced” reliance on imported iron or scrap and stealing from the rail lines to compensate for the scarcity, despite the fact that the iron was not of a high quality as the indigenous smelted iron. As the literature generally suggests, the demand for European iron was as a result of “iron hunger”,¹² which ruined many rural miners and smelters, as well as blacksmiths.

Opinion differs on how far the European manufactured goods delivered by the railways competed with indigenous substitutes. Anthony Hopkins asserted that the penetration of European manufactured goods had different implications for the indigenous crafts.¹³ Studies on the indigenous crafts in Ilorin by Ann O’Hear indicate that the bead craft was obliterated, the male weaving craft declined, and the pottery craft expanded and reached its widest market, despite competition with imported substitutes.¹⁴ Akin Mabogunje and A.

¹¹ Rogers, “Hausa Blacksmiths”; Mukhtar, “Decline and Collapse”.

¹² C. L. Goucher, “Iron is Iron Till It Is Rust: Trade and Ecology in the Decline of West Africa Iron Smelting”, *The Journal of African History*, 22/2, (1981): 179-189; L. M. Pole, “Decline or Survival? Iron Production in West Africa from the Seventeen to the Twentieth Century”, *Journal of African History*, 23/4, (1982): 503-513; E. W. Herbert, *Iron, Gender and Power: Ritual of Transformation in African Societies*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Rogers, “Hausa Blacksmiths”; Mukhtar, “Decline and Collapse”; S. T. Yusuf, “Stealing from the Railways: Blacksmiths, Colonialism and Innovation in Northern Nigeria”, in: Jan-Bart Gewald, Andre Leliveld and Iva Pesa (eds), *Transforming Innovations in Africa: Explorative Studies on Appropriation in African Societies*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 275-296, and “The Incidences of Thefts of Railway Metals in Colonial Northern Nigeria”, *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 2/2.4, (2011): 1-23.

¹³ Hopkins, *Economic History*, 244-253.

¹⁴ O’Hear, “Craft Industries in Ilorin”.

Callaway also reported that the indigenous crafts in Yoruba cities declined owing to competition with European substitutes.¹⁵ Studies by Phillip Shea and Polly Hill indicate that the textile crafts declined owing to competition with European manufactured substitutes.¹⁶ However, in their different interpretations, Peter Rogers and Phillip Jaggat argued that the iron-working craft was not like those other crafts because the imported hoes delivered by the railway could not compete with the indigenous smelted hoes, as the imports were expensive and of lower quality compared with the indigenous smelted ones. According to these authors, it was the “forced” reliance on the cheap iron and scrap which competed with the smelted iron and accelerated the decline of rural mining and smelting. Jaggat pointed out that blacksmithing expanded, but he did not recognize that rural smithing declined and that stolen iron from the rail lines was used as raw materials by blacksmiths.¹⁷

Evidence from administrative, railway, and police reports, spanning the years from 1914 through the 1950s, indicates that rural mining and smelting had declined owing to administrative restrictions and forced dependence on imported iron, which consequently led blacksmiths to steal from the rail lines to compensate for iron shortage—as a result of the previously mentioned differential access to the iron. A mineral survey of the Northern Provinces revealed that iron smelters faced competition from imported iron as early as 1905.¹⁸ By the 1940s, the smithing craft had become marginalized in some places owing to differential access to the iron brought by the railway.¹⁹ The iron brought by the railway did not circulate widely in the countryside and was available at a higher rate. The iron dealers’ preference for areas not fully integrated into the colonial economy also compounded the scarcity. It was in reaction to this ensuing socio-economic instability that blacksmiths stole from the rail lines to compensate for the iron scarcity. In this regard, the theft was a reaction to and a protest against the totalizing conditions prevalent under British colonial rule. Nothing in the records suggests a link to “social banditry” or “populist redistributors” who robbed the railway and redistributed to blacksmiths.

¹⁵ A. Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria*, (London; University of London, 1968), 85; A. Callaway, “From Traditional Craft to Modern Industries”, in: P. C. Lloyd, A. L. Mabogunje and B. Awe (eds), *The City of Ibadan: A Symposium on its Structure and Development*, (London: Cambridge University, 1967), 153-171.

¹⁶ P. J. Shea, “Economics of Scale and the Indigo Dyeing Industry of Pre-Colonial Kano”, *Kano Studies*, 1/2, (1974/1977): 55-61; Hill, *Population*, 96.

¹⁷ Jaggat, *Blacksmiths of Kano*, 35; Rogers, “Hausa Blacksmiths”.

¹⁸ Cited from Rogers, “Hausa Blacksmiths”, 376.

¹⁹ Yusuf, “Stealing from the Railways”, 286; NAK ZarProf RLY/2, Offences on Trains and Railway Stations; E. J. B. Gahan, “Notes on Re-laying and Maintenance, Nigerian Railway”, *Civil Engineering Problems in the Colonies*, 16-20 June 1952, 16-20.

A further clarification also needs to be made concerning the iron theft and blacksmiths preference for stolen or imported iron: working with stolen or imported iron and scrap saves labour time for blacksmiths. Unlike the indigenous smelted iron, the imported and railway iron were soft and easier to work. It was also easier for blacksmiths to determine the material quality of the iron as it was already shaped and only needed to be cut into workable units. It was also easier for them to determine their profits than was possible with the indigenous smelted iron.

Contrary to speculations that the iron theft from the rail lines began in the 1920s and 1930s,²⁰ the evidence indicates that it started much earlier on the Baro–Kano line and the Bauchi Light Railway. It started only later on the Eastern Extension because the line itself was not completed until the late 1920s. The first iron theft occurred around Dumbi (on the Lagos–Kano Line) and Rahama on the Bauchi Light Railway in Zaria Province in 1914. The evidence indicates that large numbers of “the keys were removed from the tracks” by force. At the end of the investigations, six people were convicted in connection with the theft in the Provincial Court and 29 in the Native Court. The theft attracted the attention of the Governor himself, who instructed that there be severe penalties for the culprits, and the Emir was instructed to watch over blacksmiths’ huts along the rail lines.²¹ The theft caught the railway and the colonial authority off guard. While the railway considered the prevention of theft on the railway as part of its primary responsibility of protecting life and property on railway formations, it did not have adequate men to police the rail lines in the North. The Railway Police in the North, whose duty it was to fight the scourge of theft, was, in addition to being in its infancy, poorly organized and inadequate.²² In effect, the railway found itself at the mercy of the provincial authorities, who drafted in its Native Authority Police (*yandoka*) to watch over the line. It does not appear that the development had much effect, as the provincial record for the following year reported a widespread key theft from the rail line and lamented the difficulties in apprehending the thieves. The record mentioned that 27 convictions were made in the Native Court in 1915 and noted blacksmiths as the principal receivers of the iron.²³ As indicated above, iron was scarce, so rural mining and smelting had

²⁰ Ochonu, *Colonial Meltdown*; Jaekel, *Nigerian Railway*, vol. 3, 348.

²¹ Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Zaria*, 34; NAK SNP10/ ZarProf 175P/ 1915, Zaria Province Report Annual 1914; NAK ZarProf 2561/1914, Zaria Province Annual Report for 1914; Yusuf, “Stealing from the Railways” and “Incidences of Thefts”. Also see Rogers, “Hausa Blacksmiths”, 377.

²² NAK SNP 17/15874 Railway Police Formation and Control.

²³ NAK SNP10/138P/1916, ZarProf 138P/1916, Zaria Province-Annual Report 1915; NAK ZarProf 2562/1915, Zaria Province Annual Report 1915.

declined. The wartime scarcity of iron and scrap and the differential terms of access to iron exacerbated the shortage and forced rural smiths to steal from the rail lines to compensate for the scarcity.

One particular strand that runs through the reports is the tendency of the provincial authorities to implicate blacksmiths without mentioning the social background of those convicted. This is not to suggest that blacksmiths were not the ones stealing the iron, for, as the records suggest, the theft occurred during the wet season when farm implements were in demand. Also, where the theft was committed by outsiders, blacksmiths were always mentioned as receivers of the iron. Phillip Jaggar asserted that blacksmiths profited from the wartime scarcity by having to produce substitutes for imported products, as iron imports were curtailed during the war. Increased demand for these products simultaneously fuelled demand for iron, which was met through illicit channels.²⁴

Between 1917 and 1918, large numbers of keys and sleepers were stolen from the rail lines in Zaria Province. The theft was committed in a way that made it difficult to catch the culprits. As the report indicates, while one section of the line was under inspection, another was being robbed. At the end of the investigations, 69 convictions were secured in the Provincial Court.²⁵ As usual, blacksmiths were mentioned as suspects, and the Native Authority Police were called to search their forges and watch over the rail lines. Most of those convicted in 1917 were arrested during a search of blacksmiths' huts. The report did not indicate whether they were blacksmiths but did implicate railway labourers. Theft by railway labourers was "part of a wider livelihood strategy".²⁶ The most talked-about conviction in that year was the case of a European foreman convicted of illegally selling railway property and pocketing the money.²⁷

²⁴ Jaggar, *Blacksmiths of Kano*.

²⁵ NAK ZarProf 2475/1917, Zaria Province Annual Report for 1917; NAK ZarProf 163/1919, Zaria Provincial Annual Report 1918.

²⁶ R. Callebert, "Cleaning the Wharves: Pilferage, Bribery, and Social Connections on the Durban Docks in the 1950s", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 46/1, (2012): 23-38, 32.

²⁷ NAK ZarProf 2475/1917; NAK ZarProf 163/1919.



Figure 6.1 Hausa Blacksmiths at work in Kano

Sources: Personal collections

Earlier in 1916, the authority suspected that railway labourers were accomplices to the thefts, which led to inspection of all railway camps in the province. This, according to the colonial authority, would prevent thieves and criminals settling in there. Though nothing was found to suggest they were stealing the iron, some squatters found in the camps, who had no business being there, were evicted. No cases of iron theft were mentioned in the report for that year, and the authority attributed this positive development to its new policy of “collective punishment or responsibility”. By this policy, labourers of a camp where a theft was discovered had to pay half the cost of the stolen iron. Similarly, village heads under whose jurisdiction a theft occurred had to pay half the cost of the stolen iron in their domain, a policy which the report indicated was effective in Kano Province.²⁸

It should be noted that the demand for iron was high, which was the reason the theft continued. The villagers along the rail lines also were not cooperative, as they did not see the theft as crime. As one senior colonial official pointed out, a village head who knew his village was short of iron would not report the arrival of iron, even when he suspected it to be stolen from the rail lines.²⁹ Even when they did report the arrival of iron, there was also the difficulty of identifying stolen iron and implements made from stolen iron, as some iron dealers sold scrap to blacksmiths—though scrap did not become available in commercial quantities in the rural areas until the 1920s. Even as it became available, there was a differential access to the new iron. The existence of organized ‘fences’ who received the stolen iron also fuelled the prevalence of theft. As the record suggests, the farther the iron travelled, the higher the prices it obtained. For instance, in 1917 iron keys were obtained in Katsina, which had no rail facility at that time, at a rate higher than their original market value in Zaria.³⁰ As mentioned earlier, iron was scarce and the prices were high. There was also an insufficiency of manpower to police the line. The thieves were aware that the police were dispatched only temporarily, and they exploited this to maximum advantage. Some of the thieves also went to steal in districts and provinces other than their own, making it difficult to track them.

²⁸ NAK SNO10/97P/1917, Zaria Province Annual Report No. 69, 1916; NAK ZarProf 750/1916, Zaria Province Annual Report for 1916.

²⁹ NAK SNP17/2, 11959 Railway Ordinance 1920 Order in Council Applying.

³⁰ Yusuf, “Stealing from the Railways”, 287.

The fact that Kano has not been mentioned in connection with iron theft does not suggest the rail line there was theft-free, although it has been speculated that iron theft did not occur in Kano until the 1920s because blacksmiths there continued to receive their supplies from the same traditional sources that had supplied them in the nineteenth century, “at levels adequate to fulfil regional demand”.³¹ The evidence does not support this claim, however, as the rail line there was also plagued as in Zaria, though not on the same scale. Part of the reason the theft was rampant in Zaria was the existence of the two rail lines, which increased to four in the 1920s.³² The combined mileage of the rail lines in Zaria was more than that of Kano, which was one reason for the difficulty in policing the line. Though the mileage in Kano later increased in the 1920s, it was not comparable to that of Zaria.

The first mention of iron theft in Kano appeared in the annual report for 1919.³³ The report suggested the theft was common in the close-settled zone between Kano and Zaria, most especially around Madobi and Dangora, which led to the stationing of 41 uniformed policemen along this short mileage.³⁴ Peter Rogers suggested that the areas may have “provided most of the market demand for any stolen iron” in Zaria.³⁵ Part of the reason such a number of police were stationed along this short section of the rail line was also the occurrence there of train robberies (see next section in this chapter). There was no indication to suggest the theft had occurred for the first time. Contrary to the claim that iron was abundant and at a level adequate to support regional demand, iron was indeed scarce due to the decline of rural mining and smelting.³⁶ Furthermore, the end of the war did not bring succour to blacksmiths, as scrap and iron remained scarce in the countryside and were available only at high prices.

As the authority in Kano was busy policing the line, its counterpart in Zaria was also fighting sporadic theft of keys and sleepers in the same year (1919). This time around the theft was common on the Bauchi Light Railway, especially around the pagan community of Pitti in Lere District. The authority lamented the difficulty in tracking the thieves, as the theft occurred on wet nights when police were not in sight, and also some of the thieves from Bauchi went to steal in Zaria Province, in the same manner those in Zaria went to steal in

³¹ Rogers, “Hausa Blacksmiths”, 378.

³² The rail lines are as follows: Lagos–Kano Line, Bauchi Light Railway, the Eastern Extension, and the Zaria–Kaura Namoda.

³³ KSHCB 318P, Kano Province Report no. 57 for half year ending 30th June 1919.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Rogers, “Hausa Blacksmiths”, 378.

³⁶ Rogers, “Hausa Blacksmiths”, 378.

Bauchi Province. The record did not indicate whether blacksmiths were involved in the theft, but it suggested that railway labourers were implicated.³⁷ The accuracy of the report is also problematic: in one location it indicated there were seven arrests and five convictions in the Provincial and Native Courts. Elsewhere, it mentioned that there were four arrests and four convictions.³⁸

Despite the sustained attention the theft attracted, it did not decrease, as the theft assumed a disturbing proportion in the 1920s. This time around, the rail line in Kano was the scene of theft, as more than 63,050 keys were stolen from the rail line in Kano in just four years. A major report on the theft indicates that in 1921 more than 40,000 keys were removed from the line around Dangora alone, with an additional 15,633 from the remaining mileage of line. The theft was so rampant that the Railway reported it “cannot ascertain [the] daily losses”.³⁹ As usual, blacksmiths were mentioned as receivers of the iron, and their huts were searched by police. At the end of the investigations, eight people—including a railway overseer, John Jengre—were convicted and sentenced to different terms of imprisonment.⁴⁰ The report blamed the theft on the scarcity of iron and the existence of an organized fencing or network for stolen iron. As a measure to curtail the theft, a former Resident of Kano advised the Railway to import iron and subsidize its distribution to blacksmiths.⁴¹

In the same way that keys were stolen from the rail line in Kano, they were also stolen from the Bauchi Light Railway. Sleepers were removed from the rail line in a way that compromised the safety of oncoming trains. Large numbers of scrap sleepers deposited along the rail line were also stolen near Dutchin Wai Station. The piecemeal and uncoordinated manner in which the different sections of the rail lines had been constructed—with respect to the gauges and the type of locomotives and cars that could be moved on the lines—along with the expansion of the lines in the 1920s, created an accumulation of scrap which provided ideal opportunities for thieves. As a solution to the theft problem, the Resident proposed the replacement of iron keys with locked ones, emphasizing that the theft would continue as long as the keys were iron-made.⁴² Since the theft persisted, he pointed out that, it was due to iron shortage; and unless iron was supplied to blacksmiths at a subsidized rate, the theft would

³⁷ NAK SNP10, 273P/1919, Zaria Province Report no. 74 for half year ending 30th June 1919.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ NAK SNP17/2, 11959.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² NAK SNP10/105P Zaria Province Report for 15 months ended 31st March 1921.

continue given the high demand. His solution—that the Railway should sell scrap iron to blacksmiths at reduced cost—was based on the fact that, according to him, the commercial firms did not deal in pig iron.⁴³ Two years later, it was the Resident at Kano that again complained of key theft. In the same way, Gimi and Anchau were scenes of key theft.⁴⁴

The theft generated a long correspondence between the Governor and the administrators of those provinces through which the rail lines passed. The correspondence revealed the tension and anxiety within official circles and the attempts to stem the theft. While the state considered the prevention of iron theft as its primary responsibility, it did not have adequate men to police the lines. The colonial state also amended the penal code to accommodate the theft. Two specific ordinances, namely the “Railway Ordinance of 1920” and the “Collective Punishment Ordinance” (mentioned earlier) were implemented. The former attempted to stem the theft of keys, sleepers, and other railway materials, while the latter attempted to hold labourers’ camps and village headmen responsible for the iron theft which took place in their domain. Native authorities with judicial responsibility were also established in districts where the rail line passed, and the areas where each authority was responsible were specified. Similarly, Native Tribunals were established in pagan-dominated areas for the same purpose of preventing iron theft on the rail lines and at the mines. The correspondence also indicates that many of the keys naturally came loose from the tracks of their own accord and were available to be picked up by anyone who wanted to do so. As the Resident of Bauchi pointed out, the very motion of the train itself was apt to loosen the keys and make them available to passers-by.⁴⁵

The theft was not mentioned in the reports again for some time, until the 1930s. This time also, it assumed a disturbing scale, spreading to areas previously unaffected by the theft. The economic depression and its attendant problems aggravated the situation. One such place where the theft occurred for the first time was Benue Province, owing to the Eastern Railway Extension and the Benue Bridge works. The theft was common at Makurdi, Abinsi, and Ogoja divisions. Attempts to replace the iron keys with copper also failed, as replacement could not keep pace with the theft.⁴⁶ Moses Ochonu asserted that the cut in take-home pay

⁴³ NAK ZarProf 2569/1922, Annual Report Zaria Province for the year 1922, cited in Rogers, “Hausa Blacksmiths”, 380.

⁴⁴ KSHCB SNP/9/12/1924, Kano Province Annual Report File 635.

⁴⁵ NAK SNP17/2, 11959.

⁴⁶ Ochonu, *Colonial Meltdown*, 82.

and the retrenchment exercise of the time aggravated the theft.⁴⁷ Between 1930 and 1932, several railway labourers and retrenched employees were convicted in connection with the theft. Although the record does not indicate whether those convicted were blacksmiths, it mentioned blacksmiths as receivers of the stolen iron. As the Resident of Benue Province pointed out, the theft would continue as long as demand for iron was high.⁴⁸ In an attempt to stem the theft, measures were enforced such as making blacksmiths register and report their iron sources or be liable to six months' imprisonment and a ten-pound fine. The "collective punishment" (already enforced on the Baro–Kano, the Bauchi Light, and the Eastern railways) was also contemplated on the Eastern Extension.⁴⁹

Iron dealers circumvented the scarcity and higher prices by selling iron scrap at a rate which created opportunities for accumulation and strengthening of clientele relationships. L. C. Giles, in his survey of Soba, Jere, Kudan, and Ikara districts in the late 1930s, reported that scrap iron was available in the countryside at a higher price, and blacksmiths were obtaining it on credit. Those who could not afford the price or had been refused credit borrowed from their wives or joined together with others to buy the iron.⁵⁰ A colonial official touring north-eastern Zaria in the mid-1930s found that blacksmiths in remote areas were holding farmers to ransom by extorting corn and loans from them to buy iron. When farmers denied them a loan, they would delay repairs to farming tools.⁵¹ The records generally suggest that much of the blacksmiths' income was derived from repairs and maintenance of farm implements.⁵²

The conditions of scarcity which prevailed in the 1940s also aggravated the scale of thefts. During World War II, iron and hardware imports were restricted, which led to an acute scarcity. Wartime import restrictions benefited blacksmiths, as the colonial authority encouraged local imitation of imported goods, a policy which could have assisted local industries had it been fully pursued. As Phillip Jaggard asserted, blacksmiths profited from the wartime scarcity by manufacturing imitations of imported goods, which led to the emergence of an import-replacing craft within the smiting craft at the end of the war.⁵³ The evidence indicates that the scarcity of iron forced smiths to steal from the rail lines to satisfy internal

⁴⁷ Ibid. 81-2.

⁴⁸ Ibid.; Yusuf, "Stealing from the Railways", 288-9, and "Incidences of Thefts", 16.

⁴⁹ NAK SNP17/2, 11959.

⁵⁰ Cited in D. Forde, "The Rural Economy", in: M. Perham (ed.), *The Native Economies of Nigeria*, vol. 1, (London: Faber), 125-140, 136; and Rogers, "Hausa Blacksmiths", 384.

⁵¹ Rogers, "Hausa Blacksmiths", 383.

⁵² KSHCB MLG 16490/1932 Kumbotso District Kano Emirate Reassessment; NAK MLG 9117/1929 Kura District of Kano Emirate Reassessment

⁵³ Jaggard, *Blacksmiths of Kano*, 58-76.

demand. Iron smelting also enjoyed a temporary revival in some places owing to the wartime scarcity.⁵⁴ Increased demand for iron products simultaneously fuelled the demand for iron, which was satisfied through the illicit channels. The Eastern Railway was most affected by the theft, and keys were stolen from the rail line in large quantities. A special police force was raised at an annual cost of £6,000 to prevent the theft. This was in addition to the huge sums of money the Railway spent in replacing stolen keys.⁵⁵

As the report also suggests, the steel and cast iron keys required for replacement on the tracks could not be procured owing to the wartime restrictions. Attempts to replace the iron sleepers and keys with wooden ones also failed, for reasons of economics and quality. For instance, timber sleepers had a shorter lifespan than iron sleepers. As J. B. Gahan pointed out, timber sleepers have a life span of only seven years on bridges and points, as well as on crossing works, while steel sleepers have a life span of forty years on the main and branch lines, especially in dry climates like that of Northern Nigeria. The timber species that were available in the North—*Khaya grandifoliola* and *Khaya senegalensis* (dry-zone mahoganies)—were unsuitable for the rail line. An added advantage of the steel sleeper was that its scrap could be sold, while the timber could not.⁵⁶

The end of the war did not bring an end to the theft, as imported iron was still scarce and was available only at high prices. Some rural smiths had already gone out of business owing to the scarcity. For instance, in 1945, smiths in southern Zaria complained that they could not work because they had no iron to work with.⁵⁷ A police officer also reported that iron was scarce and was available only at high prices.⁵⁸ In a study on the Hausa communities in Zaria, M. G. Smith reported that the iron dealers made enormous profits at the expense of the blacksmiths. In 1949–1950, for example, iron dealers imported scrap sleepers from Lagos at 10s each, paying 1s each for transporting them by rail and 1s each by donkey, and then sold them at 18s each.⁵⁹ Many blacksmiths could not afford the high price and had to rely on illicit channels. The Resident of Zaria Province reported that hoes and knives were scarce and proposed the distribution of railway scrap to smiths to prevent its being stolen.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Ibid. 27.

⁵⁵ Jaekel, *Nigerian Railway*, vol. 3, 349; Gahan, “Notes on Re-laying”, 107.

⁵⁶ Gahan, “Notes on Relaying”, 104-7.

⁵⁷ Yusuf, “Stealing From the Railways”.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Smith, *Economy*, 135.

⁶⁰ NAK ZarProf 570, Theft of Railway Materials 1947-56; NAK ZarProf RLY/2.

As the record indicates, the theft continued unabated from 1946 through into the 1950s, as keys, sleepers, fish plates, and even spikes (which required skill to remove), in addition to level-crossing boards and scrap were stolen from the rail line between Kano and Zaria and from the branch lines (see Appendix 2: Table 6.1). During this period (1946–1950s), the Kano–Nguru line was a major scene of the thefts, where it occurred almost on a monthly basis. As soon as the keys were replaced on a section of the line, they were stolen again and it was difficult to catch the thieves. The thieves were aware of the lack of sufficient manpower to police the line. Blacksmiths huts along the lines were searched, but it was difficult to make arrests, due to the lack of evidence. However, both blacksmiths and railway labourers were implicated. For instance, a blacksmith was arrested, but was released by the Emir, with a warning to him to desist from the act. It is unclear whether the plan to invite the special police from the Eastern Railway to patrol the Eastern Extension was implemented.⁶¹

In view of the widespread theft, the idea of distributing scrap iron, which the various provincial administrators had proposed, began to gain currency in the 1950s, and the Railway began to distribute its surplus scrap to blacksmiths. Although the scrap iron distribution had started in the 1940s, the largest distributions occurred in 1954–1955 (see Appendix 3: Table 6.2).⁶² Distribution was based on expressed demand and availability. The railway also played an important role in distributing the scrap, while the Native Authority coordinated its distribution. As with the iron imports, the scrap was offloaded mainly at the urban terminals such as Kano and Zaria, whence appointed iron dealers and blacksmiths distributed it to various centres of demand. As the table shows, none of the studied communities are mentioned as recipients of the iron. It would be interesting to know the immediate impact of the scrap distribution; unfortunately, there is no information available on this. It is unclear what direction the theft took in the post-independence era, as detailed evidence is not available for the period. Inferences from the scattered records, however, suggest the theft continued through the 1970s.

From the discussion so far, it is obvious that British colonialism in Northern Nigeria was accompanied by critical disruption for iron workers. The advent of the railway, especially its distributive role in iron and scrap transport, indirectly accelerated the decline of rural mining and smelting. It has been shown that the material quality of the rail lines offered opportunities to blacksmiths and railway labourers to further their livelihoods. Theft by

⁶¹ NAK ZarProf 570; NAK ZarProf RLY/2.

⁶² NAK KanProf RLY/15 Distribution of Scrap Sleepers by Nigerian Railway Corporation, 1954-57; Yusuf, “Stealing from the Railways”, 291.

blacksmiths was a reaction to iron scarcity and the decline in their living standards. The iron delivered by the railway did not circulate widely in the countryside, as it was confined to the urban markets, forcing rural smiths to steal from the line to compensate for the scarcity.

As noted above, both blacksmiths and railway labourers stole from the line. When the iron was stolen by outsiders, it was to the advantage of the blacksmiths. Iron was scarce and the demand for stolen iron was high. The colonial state was taken unawares by the theft and tried then to prevent it; they were unable to do so, however, owing to insufficient manpower to police the line. The thieves were aware of this inadequacy and exploited it to their advantage. Attempts to combat the menace by modifying the penal code also failed, as the Railway was eventually forced to distribute its surplus scrap iron to blacksmiths. The theft continued through the post-colonial period, by which time blacksmithing had become marginalized in most places. Those who maintained the craft had to rely on a variety of scrap, such as motor parts, buckets, and tins, to continue working.

6.3 Train banditry

Train banditry or robbery was another form of criminality which sprang up with the opening of the railway to traffic. These were not heroic bandits who robbed the rich to redistribute to the poor, as in the Western legend of Robin Hood and his Merry Men; rather, they were “professional criminals or men of the underworld”, for whom criminality was a means of livelihood rather than of defiance.⁶³

Scholars have asserted that banditry thrives in societies undergoing transformation by capitalism.⁶⁴ Ralph Austen suggested that it “arises in a situation where [the state] has control over legitimate violence and the rules for market transactions”.⁶⁵ It often flourishes in marginal areas where the state has limited control, just like the illegal oil bunkers in the Niger Delta today. As with iron theft, banditry on the rail line was a reaction to the socio-economic transformations under colonialism. This is not to suggest it was colonial in origin—the practice is much more ancient—but it became common with the advent of the railway

⁶³ R. A. Austen, “Social Bandits and Other Heroic Criminals: Western Models of Resistance and their Relevance for Africa”, in: Crummey, *Banditry*, 89-108, 94; Crummey, “The Great Beast”, 3, 5-6.

⁶⁴ Austen, “Social Bandits”, 89-108.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 94.

because the railway provided bandits with a platform to operate, as the literature generally suggests.⁶⁶

Right from the opening of the railway there were train bandits—*yan mirgine* or *yan ture*, as they were popularly called (from the way they threw or rolled down their loot from the trains). These bandits plagued the railway the same way as the iron thieves. The bandits were from the communities along the rail line, even though the inhabitants claimed they came from elsewhere. These bandits neither stole iron nor robbed passengers; they robbed the freight trains (in spite of Austen's claim that Africans were incapable of attacking railways).⁶⁷ Like highway robbers, they worked both in groups and individually. Toyin Falola asserted that the most organized robbery is always by a gang.⁶⁸ The bandits did not rob using horses as their counterparts did in the Western world; instead, they jumped onto a moving train, offloaded the contents from the freight wagons to their fellow gang members standing by the track near their villages, and then jumped off as quickly as possible when they had finished their exploits.⁶⁹ This form of crime, though common in the Western world, was novel by local Nigerian standards.⁷⁰ The train transported valuable consignments, including cash, which provided opportunities to criminals. The freight, and particularly the groundnuts wagon, was their target. The crime occurred mostly between Kano and Zaria, especially between the Kano Middle School (now Rumfa College) and Dangora. The crime was fuelled by the existence of large markets for the stolen goods. As with the iron theft, banditry took the colonial state and the Railway unawares, and their efforts to stem it proved ineffective. Despite the sustained attention it attracted throughout the colonial period, train banditry has not received attention in the literature. The only work that commented on it did so in passing.⁷¹ This section is an attempt to fill in the gap.

⁶⁶ Oyemakinde, "Railway Construction"; E. L. Piza, "Transit Stops, Robbery, Routine Activities: Examining Street Robbery in the Newark, NJ Subway Environment", (2003). Available at: <http://proceedings.esri.com/library/userconf/proc04/docs/pap1303.pdf> [last accessed 4 November 2014]; M. Aguiar, "Making modernity inside the technological space of the railway", *Cultural Critique*, 68, (winter 2008); J. Richards and J. M. Mackenzie, *The Railway Station: A Social History*, (Oxford: 1986); Kerr, "Representation and Representations"; Jaekel, *Nigerian Railway*, vol. 3, 350.

⁶⁷ Austen, "Social Bandits".

⁶⁸ Falola, "Theft", 7.

⁶⁹ Jaekel, *Nigerian Railway*, vol. 3, 349.

⁷⁰ Novels on train robbery abound in the Western world. See for instance Breda Hugen, *The Great Train Robbery: Making Heist*, (Mankao: Congress Publishing Books, 2011); M. Crichton, *The Great Train Robbery*, (Knopf: Doubleday Publishing Group, 1975).

⁷¹ Jaekel, *Nigerian Railway*, vol. 3, 349.

Contrary to the assertion that banditry on the Nigerian railroads began in the 1940s,⁷² the evidence indicates that it started much earlier than that, especially on the rail line between Kano and Zaria—and particularly between Kano and Dangora. Complaints about theft and loss of goods in transit by Kano traders date back to the very first year the line was opened to traffic.⁷³ Compensation should have been paid, but the Railway rarely did so. As the incidence of robberies increased, the Railway considered the prevention of theft in transit part of its primary goal in maintaining law and order on the rail line. However, as indicated above, its police were numerically inadequate and poorly organized. The Railway therefore found itself at the mercy of the provincial authorities where the line passed, and these authorities drafted their Native Authority Police to crime scenes whenever there was a robbery.⁷⁴ The Native Authority Police were also not fully adequate and so were not always successful in suppressing the crime. The bandits, as usual, were aware of this inadequacy and exploited it to their advantage.

What the Kano authority initially reported as minor crime was to become epidemic on the rail line between Kano and Lagos the following year. About 79 cases involving freight robbery and petty theft in transit were discovered. Of these, seven were discovered in Zaria, and two each at Baro, Minna, and Jebba. A train was also robbed to the tune of £100 at Kaduna. The remaining robberies occurred in transit between Kano and Iddo.⁷⁵ As a result of the huge compensations to be paid, the incidences attracted the attention of the General Manager of the Railway. Although the Railway rarely paid compensation, the General Manager pointed out that compensation was paid where railway employees were implicated. And many railway workers were implicated in connection with the robberies. The report also revealed the existence of organized fencing for the stolen goods, as railway watchmen and their wives were caught with stolen goods at Baro.⁷⁶ This illicit channel, not always recognized by the authority, fuelled the demand for stolen goods. Informants reported that stolen groundnuts from the train were usually sold to the Lebanese firms.⁷⁷

In order to stem the robbery and other forms of theft in transit, it was proposed that railway stations should be fenced on the assumption that their openness provided easy access

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ KSHCB 717, Kano Province Annual Report No. 48 for September 1913.

⁷⁴ KSHCB 717.

⁷⁵ NAK SNP17, 15874, Railway Police Formation and Control.

⁷⁶ NAK SNP17, 15874; PRO 657/4, Nigerian Railway Administrative Report for the Year 1915, 10.

⁷⁷ Interviews with Malams Ibrahim Alhassan (village head of Zawaciki), Hamza Zawaciki, and Ali Zubairu, Zawaciki, 19 March 2011.

to criminals. It was also proposed that locked wagons be introduced in place of the open wagons that were being used. A further idea was to establish a special Railway Police to combat robbery on the rail line in the North, just as there was in the South. The proposals would have gone a long way to curb the crime had they been implemented, but they were not because the Railway was not ready to fund such projects. As usual, it continued to rely on the Native Authority Police. While the authorities in Kano and Zaria wanted to fight the crime, they disagreed on the extent to which they should shoulder the financial responsibility for police posted outside their provinces.⁷⁸ Between 1917 and 1918, no less than 41 uniformed men were stationed on the line between Kano and Zaria, especially around Madobi and Dangora. The police did well in stemming the crime, as robbery and transit-related crimes were henceforth not mentioned in the records for some years. The records attributed this success to the presence of uniformed police.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria, Report for 1916, 23.

⁷⁹ Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria, Report for 1917, 14; Colonial Report-Annual, Nigeria, Report for 1918, 14; KSHCB 318P Kano Province Report no. 57 for half year ending 30th June 1919.



Figure 6.2 Open groundnut wagons

Source: The Nigerian Nostalgia 1960–1980 Project



Figure 6.3 Lock-up wagons introduced in the 1940s

Source: Personal collections

Notwithstanding the impression in the provincial records that the crime had been reduced, evidence from the Railway annual reports suggests it picked up again. Approximately 58 cases of merchandise robbery were tried before the courts in 1923, resulting in 51 convictions and seven acquittals.⁸⁰ Since the Railway did not have sufficient men to watch the line, it continued to rely on the Native Authority Police. As the surveillance on the rail line was tight, the bandits switched the scene of their operations to the stations. Several freight trains were plundered at Madobi Station in 1924.⁸¹ Official response began to focus on the rail line and the stations. The police apparently did well in suppressing the crime, as the records thereafter were silent on robbery for many years.

In 1938, a famous train robbery occurred at Gimi, where a downward or local train from Zaria was robbed at exactly 2 a.m.. Although the DO gave the impression that it was a minor robbery, events of the subsequent months gave the lie to his comments. The report on the robbery suggested that it was organized and committed by a gang comprising criminals from Gimi Tasha, Mayere, Gubuci, and Karaye in Kano Province. Gimi Tasha was raided and searched for criminals, and the unemployed residing there were asked to leave. Although the record did not indicate whether the train was a freight or passenger train and whether the bandits were arrested or not, the measures adopted by the police indicate that the crime was not an insignificant one.

Vigilante or tough people (*yan tauri*) from Kudan and Hunkuyi were invited to police the Tasha, in addition to those stationed on the rail line. Kudan, as the report indicated, had a reputation as a tough town where women arrested thieves and no thief dared to rob the town.⁸² Toyin Falola has argued that thieves were always afraid of vigilantes, because of their magical power and capacity to humiliate their victims.⁸³ Curfew was imposed at Gimi Tasha, and the Native Authority promised a reward for every thief caught.⁸⁴ The other towns were also watched. The report also implicated some traditional rulers for giving assistance to the thieves. The plan to seek the assistance of the District Head of Karaye was suspended, as it was alleged that he had co-operated with the criminals.⁸⁵ The police action seems to have

⁸⁰ PRO 657/7, Nigerian Railway Administrative Report for the Year 1923; NAK SNP17, 15874.

⁸¹ Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*, 136.

⁸² NAK ZarProf 5280 Makarfi District Note Book 1943

⁸³ Falola, "Theft", 17.

⁸⁴ NAK ZarProf 5280.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

succeeded in stemming train robbery, as the records do not mention the crime again for some years.

The resurgence of the crime in the 1950s attracted sustained attention from the Native Authority Police. Two well-known robberies occurred in the studied communities between 1950 and 1951. A major police report on the robbery, compiled by one Yusuf Lafiagi, provided detailed information on the location, the time, and how the robbery occurred. The report indicated that train banditry was prevalent between Kano and Dangora, especially around Sheka Mai Daki and Jaen. It also suggested the existence of organized fencing, along with the connivance of the inhabitants of the communities along the line.

In the first instance, the report indicated that two southbound groundnut trains (numbered 28 Dtg and 86 Dtg) were always robbed at night between Kano and Challawa, despite being escorted by the Railway Police. As the report recorded, the bandits were from the following communities: “starting from Kano—opposite Kano Middle school, Sheka, Jaen, Fanshekara, Yandutse near Challawa, one mile after Challawa, two miles after K[wa]nkw[a]so opposite Gora, Madobi, Yako and Dangora Kashama”. Whenever the trains approached near these areas, the bandits jumped onto the train and unloaded the contents to their members on reaching their villages. As the report specified, between 50 and 70 people always stood by the track to collect the loot from the train. The villagers, it reported, did not see the robbery as a crime. Also, the village heads were aware of the robberies but failed to take any action.⁸⁶ At the end of the investigation, approximately 30 people, including the sons of the village heads of Sheka and Jaen, were prosecuted in 1951.⁸⁷

The second robbery occurred in 1951 around Sheka, where a southbound groundnuts train (numbered 1289) was robbed of more than 45 bags. By the time the train stopped, only five bags were recovered by the Railway Police. There was even a fight between the police and the members of the gang (numbering about 70) before the five bags were recovered. The Chief Commissioner of Police himself was aboard the train when the incident happened. At the end of the investigation, a number of people were prosecuted.⁸⁸

As the report repeatedly indicated, the bandits had become so brazen that the presence of uniformed men did not discourage them. The police too were hampered because, besides their numerical insufficiency, they could not stop a moving train without permission. Before the train could stop, the bandits had jumped off and run to their villages, while the other

⁸⁶ KSHCB R527.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

members moved and stashed the loot. It is clear that the villagers themselves encouraged the robbery, as they did not see it as crime. The report also suggested the existence of large markets for the stolen groundnuts.⁸⁹

Although data are not available on the incidence of train banditry in the post-colonial period, inferences from several records suggest that it continued through the 1970s, until the introduction of public execution for armed robbery helped to suppress it.⁹⁰

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has shown how British colonialism was marked by critical disruptions in the social and economic relations of production in Northern Nigeria. The stealing of iron from the rail line and train robbery were reactions to poverty and the uneven socio-economic transformations engendered by the British. British colonialism and its transport infrastructure, even though indirectly, fuelled socio-economic dislocations and poverty. People reacted to the erosion of their material conditions by stealing keys and sleepers from the rail lines and robbing trains. The penetration of the iron delivered by the railway accelerated the decline of rural mining and smelting. The confinement of the imported iron to the urban markets forced rural blacksmiths to steal from the rail lines to compensate for the iron shortage. The material quality of the rail lines (the fact of their being made from iron) and the valuable consignments transported by the trains provided opportunities to criminals.

As the chapter has also shown, both the iron theft and train robberies took the colonial state unawares. While the Railway and the colonial state tried to stem the crimes, they were unable to do so because of the insufficiency of men to police the rail lines. The criminals were aware of the inadequacy and exploited it to their advantage. Although convictions were secured in many cases, this did not prevent the crimes. Amendments to the penal code in the case of iron theft also did little to stem the crime. The traditional institutions, whose duty it was to assist in fighting the crimes, also looked the other way when the crimes were being perpetrated. The Railway was forced to make concessions in the case of iron theft, by

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Jaekel, *Nigerian Railway*, vol. 3, 349.

distributing its surplus scrap to blacksmiths, but this did not prevent the theft, and both crimes continued through the post-colonial period, though on a reduced scale.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the major findings of the study. The study set out to explore the social and cultural effects of the railway on the rural communities between Kano and Zaria, from 1908 to the 1970s. It began with the following questions: Why was the railway built? How was it built? How did the communities perceive, appropriate, and domesticate the railway? What socio-economic effects did the railway have? What were its effects on indigenous crafts? To what extent did it influence the communities' expansion?

As the study has argued, the railway had huge effects, much more extensive than were previously recognized. The railway made a strong impression on its first arrival, and some of its effects differed markedly from what the planners had anticipated. The effects also differed between the studied communities. Drawing from oral interviews, new tools of historical analysis such as poems, songs, and travelogues, as well as old and new archival records which were rarely accessed previously, the study teased out the lived experience of railway development in the studied communities. Through these tools, we were able to open new vistas on how people encountered and reacted to the experience of railway development and how they used it and the challenges that arose from the development, and on how the colonial state attempted to manage the situation.

As the study indicates in Chapter 2, the proposal for the railway was imperialist-motivated, with the aim to transport cotton from the North. The railway was originally conceived as a separate line to rival the Lagos Government Railway. The very notion of the railway almost from the start provoked controversy and rivalry among other provincial administrators, who perceived it as a rival railway. Contrary to the claim by Tamuno, Anjorin, and Carland that the controversy was a result of the lack of a transport policy to guide the administrators, the chapter argued that the lack of a transport policy was merely a contributing factor. This is so because railway development is always controversial; it is always a political and economic endeavour, due to the initial investment and the expected returns on investment as well as the issue of control. The controversy dragged on for some years, partly because of lack of funds and insufficient knowledge about the region, and partly because the British were not yet ready for a second railway, as the Lagos Railway has not yet paid its way. Furthermore, the Northern Authority, which wanted the railway, could not afford to build the line, being as it was poor and barely surviving on grants in aid. Contrary to

the claim that the Northern Authority opted for a tramway because the railway proposal was rejected, it was shown that the proposal for a tramway was mooted at almost the same time as one for a railway, but for different motives.

By the time the railway was finally approved, it was sanctioned as a branch line of the Lagos Railway—and not as a separate or independent line as the promoter had proposed. As was shown, the line was sanctioned as a pioneer line to open up the Northern Territories to the sea. The principle of the pioneer railway was to build a cheap railway that would be developed to a higher standard when traffic developed. The line was constructed by both free and forced labour, comprising peasants and slaves as well as prisoners. As the chapter argued, the massive labour recruitment and railway construction provoked mixed reactions of fear and awe, contrary to what writers previously assumed, because people did not understand what the railway was all about. The singular efforts of the Emir of Zazzau, Aliyu Dansidi, were important in managing the situation. The reactions were temporary, however, for as people discovered the benefits of steady wages from working on the rail line, they quickly offered their labour. The local authority also played a prominent role in ensuring that labour and food requirements were met without the work having to suffer. Contrary to the claim by Oyamakinde that labourers from the South were not employed on the line and that the Northern Authority preferred to delay the work rather than allow southerners do it, this study found that southerners were employed on the line, even if on a small scale. As the study indicates, the construction of the railway was instrumental in the establishment of Dangora, one of the studied communities.

Chapter 3 recounted how initial encounters with the new transport infrastructure produced mixed reactions of fear and awe owing to people's unfamiliarity with such technology. Contrary to the general impression that Nigerians appropriated the new transport system almost immediately after it was opened, it was demonstrated that many people did not understand what the railway was all about, much less appropriate it. This was so because mixed reactions are common responses to new technology; but these reactions were only temporary, for as familiarity with the steam engine increased and people understood its benefits, they quickly appropriated and integrated it into their daily lives. Nigerian initiatives also played an important role in the domestication of the railway. Although the system was not built for their benefit, Nigerians somehow discovered ways to use it to benefit themselves and transform their lives.

The colonial authority also educated people on how to intensively use the system to advantage. As was shown in the chapter, the railway had dramatic effects on travel time,

distance and population movement, and rural–urban and rural–rural interactions, as well as on local and regional trade, which in the long run contributed new meanings and modes of relationship to people’s lives.

Chapter 4 argued that the railway activated more cash crop exports from the communities than was previously possible. Despite the official belief and hope that the railway would stimulate cotton exports, cotton was largely a failure as far as exports were concerned. Contrary to the claim by Hogendorn and Okediji that cotton was exported from the communities bordering Zaria almost immediately the line was opened, it was shown that cotton export from the communities was anything but a marked success. Instead, groundnuts, which had not attracted official attention, became the most important export crop from the communities immediately after the line was opened. The reason, as was shown, was that groundnuts fetched better prices than cotton. Unlike cotton, groundnuts could be grown without imperilling local food production, and the goal of farmers was to maintain food sufficiency first. Groundnut production and trade also offered employment opportunities to many people, unlike cotton and hides and skins.

The transition to export production was gradual, and it began at the initiative of Hausa traders, a fact overlooked by the vent for surplus theory. Increased expansion was achieved by a combination of household, slave, free, and forced labour. As Chapter 4 demonstrated, the activities of the commercial firms stimulated production. Although the firms were not physically established in the communities until the 1920s, they relied on the Hausa and southerners to purchase cotton, groundnuts, and hides and skins as well as food crops. These firms confined their activities to the more important centres such as Madobi, Gimi, and Dangora, a fact which contributed to the towns’ expansion and popularity. The firms were most concentrated at Madobi, which made it not only the most important railway town southwest of Kano City but also between Kano and Zaria. Centres such as Likoro, Challawa, and Kwankwaso, which did not have trading firms, gradually declined in importance.

In addition to the export products, the railway also stimulated production and trade in sugar cane. Unlike cotton, groundnuts, and hides and skins, it was grown mainly for internal consumption, for chewing and for making brown sugar. The sugar cane trade expanded and reached its widest market owing to the railway. Unlike the other crops, it was grown mainly in Makarfi District because of the favourable conditions there. As the chapter demonstrated, the sugar cane trade unexpectedly stimulated the brown sugar trade. Brown sugar technology was originally introduced by missionaries for their Christian converts; but having discovered its benefits, people quickly embraced it to transform their lives. The sugar cane and brown

sugar trade expanded in the 1920s, reached its peak in the 1940s, and began to decline in the 1950s.

Contrary to the proponents of the vent for surplus theory that the expansion of cash crops was achieved without a decline in subsistence production, Chapter 4 showed that cash cropping did in fact reduce food production, rendering the rural producers vulnerable to hunger. The popular assumption among scholars that the communities were self-sufficient in food to the extent of feeding the urban populations is misleading, as most communities were not sufficient in food, never mind being capable of feeding the cities. Although farmers always produced enough to sustain household requirements, this was insufficient. This was because production was largely household- and not plantation-based—even though the aristocrat and merchant classes made use of slaves and forced labour— production under such conditions inevitably led to a decline in food production. In addition, the tendency across the communities, including those deficient in food, was to sell their surplus at the slightest price increase. The situation was so bad that whenever natural calamities struck, the communities became vulnerable to hunger and starvation.

As the chapter showed, the railway stimulated production in areas far removed from the rail line, but it could not intensively exploit these markets. This was circumvented by professional animal transporters, who used the situation to their advantage. The colonial authority made efforts to stimulate production in such areas by building roads to feed the rail line with traffic; however, they were careful to ensure the roads did not compete with the railway itself. In the 1940s, when the marketing boards were established, they also invested in road development to stimulate production in such far-flung areas. The railway authority also operated a motor service to feed the railway with traffic. The roads become more important in the 1970s, when road transport became popular. The effect of the roads on agriculture and the communities deserves more systematic attention than it has received hitherto.

As Chapter 5 demonstrated, the railway led to the emergence of new settlements and an intermingling of cultures along the rail line. The chapter argued that it was the socio-economic opportunities engendered by the railway and the commercial firms that attracted migrants, which in turn led to the establishment of new settlements as melting pots of cultural interaction. The colonial authority established these settlements to control and segregate migrants politically, economically, and medically. The influx of migrants came via the railway, people having heard about the opportunities in the studied communities through social networks. These migrants came with their own cultural capital, which made them

relevant in their new environment. The migrants concentrated at those centres with the greatest economic opportunities, such as Madobi, Gimi, Yako, Auchan, and Dangora (a colonial creation), thereby contributing to the expansion of these towns. Owing to the concentration of migrants at Madobi, the migrant settlement there was upgraded to a village unit called Sabon Gari (new town) and was administered independently of the indigenous community.

Despite the attempts to isolate the migrants from their hosts, social relations such as trade, language, marriage, and religion brought the two groups together, which facilitated national integration. The migrants, as the study showed, were agents of change, though the relationship between the two groups was symbiotic. When the Civil War broke out in the 1960s, many of these migrants fled. By the time they returned at the end of the war, the former attractions of export trade and the railway were in decline, leading to migrants' relocating elsewhere in search of new opportunities.

Chapter 6 discussed how the railway bred criminality and offered a platform to criminals to operate. The chapter argued that various types of criminality were actually forms of protest and reaction to poverty and the uneven socio-economic transformations engendered by British colonialism. British colonial policies undermined rural mining and smelting, while the railway—and most particularly its distribution of imported iron and scrap—indirectly accelerated the eventual decline of these occupations, forcing many into criminality such as iron theft from the rail line and train robbery. Contrary to the claim by Jaggar and Rogers that iron was abundant and that smithing expanded in the countryside, the chapter demonstrated that mining, smelting, and smithing declined. Iron was scarce in the countryside and was available only at high prices. The iron delivered by the railway also did not circulate widely; it was confined to urban centres, which forced rural smiths to steal from the rail line to compensate for the scarcity.

The chapter also showed that the iron theft and train robbery were fuelled by the existence of a demand for, and an organized fencing of, stolen goods. The rise of the crimes took the Railway and the colonial state unawares. Their attempts to stem the crime rate failed, as neither had enough men to police the line. The thieves were aware of this insufficient manpower and exploited it to their own advantage. Amendments to the penal code in the case of iron theft also did not stem the incidence of the crime. Inhabitants of those communities where the lines passed encouraged the crime, as they did not see it as something bad and often participated in the activity or turned a blind eye to what was occurring. The Railway

authority was eventually forced to placate the smiths by distributing its surplus scrap to them, a policy which, as was pointed out, still did not prevent the incidence of theft.

This study has attempted to write the story of the experience of railway development in the rural communities between Kano and Zaria. It is the first systematic discussion of the interrelationship between these communities and the railway, though some of the communities have previously elicited comments in the literature. It is hoped that the study has provided insights that will stimulate further discussion on some of the issues raised. If this is the case, then the study will have achieved its goal.

EPILOGUE

As from the end of the 1970s, which was the terminal date for the issues covered in this study, the railway was in decline. It emerged from the Civil War in a critical condition and carried on in that manner until its eventual collapse in the 1990s. Despite several attempts to resuscitate the system,¹ its fortunes, freight, passenger traffic, and rolling stock further declined, its position increasingly challenged by road transport. Passenger and freight services did not stop abruptly, however, and they continued at a reduced level until the stations were eventually closed down. These closures were to affect passengers, freight services, local trade, and livelihoods.

The increased importance of the Kano–Zaria road diverted traffic from the rail line to the road. The road did not pass through the studied areas but instead followed a new route previously isolated from the rail line. Unlike the railway, road transport is much more flexible and has entered the remotest areas.² New centres have emerged and expanded along the road, while centres on the rail lines have declined in importance.³ In a similar manner, agricultural production and exports across the communities also declined. The increased wealth from oil exports was marked by neglect of agriculture and the disappearance of cash crops from the export list, leading to the collapse of food production in the 1980s. A condition of near famine developed in Nigeria in the 1980s and 1990s, and the government had to import food to keep the nation alive. Many rural dwellers, in search of better economic opportunities, moved out of rural areas to the cities, thereby compounding the crisis in agriculture.

At present, the communities are mere ghosts of their former selves. At the time of the field work for this study in 2010 and 2011, the stations were locked up and most of their

¹ For instance, between 1978 and 1999, no less than three different reforms of the Nigerian Railway Cooperation have attempted to resuscitate the system. From 1978 to 1982, Indians were contracted to rehabilitate and turn around the system. This was followed by its management under a sole administratorship under Samuel Ogbemudia in 1989–1992. From 1995 to 1999, the Chinese were contracted to resuscitate the system. For details see J. A. Odeleye, “Politics of Rail Transport Development in Developing Countries: Case of Nigeria”, *Journal of Civil Engineering and Architecture*, 6/12, (2012): 1695-1702; J. A. Odeleye, “Public-Private Participation to Rescue Railway Development in Nigeria”, *Japan Railway and Transport Review*, 23 March 2000, 42-49; A. Adesanya, “Bringing the Nigerian Railway Back on Track: Challenges and Options”, being a Paper Presented at Monthly NISER Seminar Series, Held at the NISER Conference Room on 13 November 2010,

² O. O. Oladipo, “The Nigerian Motor Transporters since the 1920s”, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2/12, (2012): 230-237.

³ Dottridge, “Aspects”, 25-6.

workers had been sent on forced retirement, as was the case of workers on the rail system generally. The only visible evidence that suggested the communities had once been bustling centres were the rail tracks, now covered with grass, the rundown stations, the dilapidated stores of the commercial firms, and the migrant quarters which stand independent of the indigenous communities. There is little indication of a government presence in these communities, except in the case of Madobi, which became the headquarters of a local council in the 1990s. It also housed a government radio agency and a private fertilizer company at the beginning of this century. Besides the government educational institutions in the other communities, they have all been neglected by government.

When the Kaduna State Government inaugurated the state's Railway Mass Transit Service in 2008 as part of its urban transport scheme, Likoro, Gimi, and Auchan were served by the railway once again. The scheme was a joint initiative between the state government and the Nigerian Railway Corporation. Despite the many challenges which beset the system, it proved invaluable in re-stimulating activities in the communities, at least as far as transportation of people and goods was concerned. The project was terminated in 2013, following the recommencement of operations by the new Nigerian Railway, funded and built by the Chinese. The project is ongoing and is expected to be completed in 2021. At present, the train stops only at Madobi and Kwankwaso, but there is a renewed optimism that, when finally completed, the railway will kick-start the communities back to life.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Freight traffic at the stations

Sources: The data for the following tables were compiled from the Railway Department Annual Reports for the periods covered in the tables.

Table 3.2 Beans freight, 1916–1919

Station	1916			1917			1918			1919		
	Outward			Outward			Outward			Outward		
	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.
G/Dabosa	1	0	0	11	11	£32.8s.6d.	0	10	3s.	2	7	£7.9s.1d.
Anchau	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1s.4d.	0	0	1s.
Faiki	2	0	£5	0	15	£1.1s.4d.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dangora	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	8s.3d.	2	5	£7.16s.
Madobi	1	0	£2	6	13	£20.4s.5d.	19	3	£40.5s.1d.	14	15	£18.1s.2d.
Challawa	28	0	£99	527	18	£1636.3s.7d.	110	17	£352.8s.5d.	324	14	£1104.1s.8d.

Table 3.3 Guinea corn freight, 1916–1919

Station	1916			1918			1919		
	Outward			Outward			Outward		
	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.
Likoro	0	0	0	0	4	5s.2d.	0	0	0
G/Dabosa	6	1	£4.9s.	3	6	18s.5d.	27	5	£3.42s.5d.
Anchau	4	16	£2.9s.4d.	1	2	£1.6s.	1	2	11s.0d.
Faiki	1	11	£1.16s.9d.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dangora	0	0	0	2	14	£4.2s.2d.	1	2	6s.8d.
Madobi	5	19	£11.7s.2d.	0	3	1s.	27	6	£22.6s.8d.
Challawa	5	19	£11.7s.11d.	0	6	1s.1d.	0	0	0

Table 3.4 Locus bean freight, 1916–1923

Station	1916			1917			1918			1919			1923		
	Outward			Outward			Outward			Outward			Outward		
	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.
Likoro	0	1	1s.	0	1	1s.	0	10	18s.1d.	0	0	0	0	0	0
G/Dabosa	0	0	0	70	19	£109.8s.11d.	43	15	£104.11s.9d.	36	12	£18.11s.7d.	0	0	0
Anchau	0	0	0	3	7	£6.7s.9d.	3	16	£12.7s.7d.	0	10	15s.11d.	0	0	0
Faiki	1	0	£2	23	2	£50.16s.3d.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dangora	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	12	£62.1s.4d.	61	6	£152.12s.9d.	0	0	0
Madobi	1	0	£4	23	17	£64.4s.10d.	29	15	£85.19s.3d.	59	1	£173.7d.	0	0	0
Challawa	0	0	0	547	4	£1,434.1s.4d.	93	0	£248.15s.3d.	50	14	£149.2s.23d.	0	1	1s.

Table 3.5 Pepper freight, 1916–1919

Station	1916			1917			1918			1919		
	Outward			Outward			Outward			Outward		
	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.
G/Dabosa	1	0	£1	1	5	£1.4s.7d.	0	2	4s.7d.	1	0	£1.1s.2d.
Anchau	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	£1.3s.	1	2	£1.1s.2d.
Faiki	0	0	0	0	2	18s.5d.	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dangora	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	19s.9d.	6	12	£12.17s.5d.
Madobi	0	0	0	0	2	3s.6d.	0	1	3s.6d.	2	1	£6.16s.4d.
Challawa	0	0	0	0	9	£2.1d.	5	11	£20.7s.9d.	33	1	£106.12s.5d.

Table 3.6 Shea nut freight, 1913–1917

Station	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917
	Outward	Outward	Outward	Outward	Outward
	ton	ton	ton	Ton	Ton
G/Dabosa	408	10	123	0	740
Anchau	0	0	0	0	75
Faiki	163	0	0	7	99

Table 3.7 Livestock freight, 1916–1923

Station	1916		1917		1918		1919		1923	
	Outward		Outward		Outward		Outward		Outward	
	no	£.s.d.	No	£.s.d.	No	£.s.d.	No	£.s.d.	No	£.s.d.
G/Dabosa	0	0	2	6s.5d.	2	13s.6d.	0	0	1	8d.
Anchau	0	0	0	0	5	£2.16s.3d.	0	0	2	3s.1d.
Faiki	21	£29.5s.	60	£77	1	4s.6d.	0	0	0	0
Dangora	0	0	0	0	0	0	154	£34.1s.6d.	6	£1.1s.10d.
Madobi	5	£1.2s.	0	0	4	10s.9d.	0	0	210	£67.8s.5d.
Challawa	1	5s.	480	£91.2s.6d.	220	£36.8s.3d.	242	£60.16s.6d.	2	16s.
Yako	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	16s.
Kwankwaso	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	£2.15s.5d.

Table 3.8 Tin ore freight, 1916–1923

Station	1916			1917			1918			1919			1923		
	Outward			Outward			Outward			Outward			Outward		
	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	Ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.
Faiki	13	0	£350	61	5	£562.4s.6d.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D/gora	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	3	£221.15s.	10	13	£109.7s.9d.	1	2	0

Table 3.9 Kola freight, 1916–1919

Station	1916			1917			1919		
	Inward			Outward			Outward		
	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.
Likoro	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	£3.3s.7d.
G/Dabosa	1	0	£1	1	0	0	0	0	3
Anchau	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Faiki	9	0	£80	0	12	16s.6d.	0	2	1s.8d.
Challawa	0	0	0	0	18	£1.9s.1d.	0	0	4s.7d.
Madobi	3	0	£16	1	0	0	0	6	7s.2d.

Table 3.10 Yam freight, 1918–1919

Station	1918			1919		
	Outward			Outward		
	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.
Likoro	1	16	£1.12s.9d.			0
G/Dabosa	2	7	£2.15s.17d.	0	0	0
Anchau	0	2	2s.	0	0	0
Dangora	0	0	0	0	2	1s.8d.
Challawa	0	0	0	0	1	1s.

Table 3.11 Rice freight, 1918–1919

Station	1918			1919		
	Outward			Outward		
	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.
Likoro	0	1	1s.	0	0	0
Dangora	8	6	£8.16s.15d.	10	14	£17.5s.

Madobi	2	0	£3.2s.2d.	0	16	£1.5s.6d.
Challawa	0	12	16s.4d.	5	17	£19.14s.2d.

Table 3.12 Palm oil freight, 1916–1919

Station	1916			1919		
	Outward			Outward		
	ton	cwt	£.s.d.	ton	cwt	£.s.d.
Madobi	1	0	£3	0	1	2s.7d.
Challawa	0	0	15d.	0	2	£1.10s.11d.

Table 3.13 Potash freight, 1917

Station	1917		
	Outward		
	ton	cwt	£.s.d.
Madobi	6	0	£16
Faiki	2	0	£16.0s.1d.

Table 3.14 Shea butter freight, 1918

Station	1918		
	Outward		
	ton	Cwt	£.s.d.

Likoro	1	9	£2.10s.2d.
Anchau	0	8	£1.19s.18d.
Gimi	2	4	£3.0s.5d.

Table 3.15 Yam flour freight, 1917

Station	1917		
	Outward		
	ton	cwt	£.s.d.
Faiki	0	2	1s.1d.
Madobi	0	4	1s.

Appendix 2: Keys, sleepers and other iron materials stolen from the railways in Northern Nigeria, 1946–1956

Table 6.1 *Keys, sleepers, and other iron materials stolen from the railways in Northern Nigeria, 1946–1956*

Date	Section	Mileage	Stolen keys	Replaced keys	Sleepers	Others
06/3/1946	Dangora	643	-	-	-	1 level-crossing sign board
27/3/1946	Dangora	643	84	84	-	-
15/3/1946	Kano-Nguru	668¾-669	158	158	-	-
23/3/1946	“	674-674½	127	-	-	-
30/3/1946	“	MG-KN	26	-	-	-
13/4/1946	Dangora	643-643½	84	84	-	-
8/4/1946	-	689-689¾	82	82	-	-
“	“	673½-674½	125	125	-	-
16/4/1946	Dabi	745¾-743	133	133	-	-
9/5/1946	KC	677½-678	92	92	-	-
“	“	680-680½	44	44	-	-
22/5/1946	“	672½-673	92	92	-	-
“	Dabi	732-766	913	107	-	-
2/5/1946	Mallam Madori	824½-824¾	18	18	-	-
25/9/1946	-	483½	-	-	-	1 fish plate

8/10/1946	Likoro	622-622½	150	-	-	-
“	Madobi	677-677½	141	-	-	-
29/4/1946	Dabi	714-717	70	70	-	-
30/4/1946	KC	682¾- 683¼	88	88	-	-
25/10/1946	MC-Kano	677-677½	141	-	-	-
28/10/1946	-	489	-	-	-	2 fish plates & 8 bolts
14/11/1946	-	460½-461	50	-	-	-
5/12/1946	-	479½-482	-	-	-	2 fish plates & 8 bolts
6/12/1946	Zaria-Kano	673½- 673¾	163	-	-	-
12/12/1946	Hadejia	807¾- 811¾	31	-		-
21/1/1947	-	480½- 485½	120	-	-	1 fish plate & bolts
4/02/1947	Zaria-Kano	666½- 674½	899	-	-	-
“	“	669-699½	162	-	-	-
“	“	683½-681	130	-	-	-
“	Kano-Nguru	807¾- 811¾	31	-	-	-
04/12/1948	-	491-492½	90	-	-	-
09/12/1948	-	4½-8½	100	-	-	-
23/12/1948	-	19¼	50	-	-	-
24/12/1948	-	56¾-Jos	253	-	-	-

28/12/1948	-	482¾	-	-	-	1 fish plates & 4 bolts
29/12/1948	-	-	7½	253	-	1 fish plate
22/10/1948	-	604¾- 61¼	200	-	-	-
11/12/1948	-	4½-8½	100	-	-	-
17/1/1949	-	480¾- 484½	56	-	-	-
17/1/1949	-	466¾- 491¼	45	-	-	-
19/1/1949	-	491	36	-	-	2 fish plates & 8 bolts
19/1/1949	-	496½-500	40	-	-	-
2/2/1949	-	12¾-17	40	-	-	-
3/2/1949	-	485¼	-	-	-	1 fish plate & bolts
11/2/1949	-	471¼	36	-	-	1 fish plates & bolts
13/2/1954	Jogana- Zakirai	712-712¾	44	-	-	-
15/2/1954	Dabi- Ringim	736-744	68	-	-	-
18/2/1954	Kano- Jagona	708-712	165	-	-	-
27/6/1954	Challawa	-	-	-	30	Large quantity of fish plates
14/02/1955	Zakirai	-	69	-		-
“	Ringim	-	104	-	-	-
“	Mallam Madori	-	55	-	-	-
6/04/1956	Kajuru	535-538	31	-	-	-

29/10/1956	Challawa	-	-	-	-	Brakes gear of wagons removed several times
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Sources: NAK ZarProf RLY/2, Offences on Trains and railway stations; NAK KanProf RLY/3, Theft of Railway Materials 1946–1956; NAK ZarProf 570, Theft of Railway Materials.

Appendix 3: Keys and sleepers distributed to blacksmiths

across the Northern Provinces, 1954–1955

Table 6.2 Keys and sleepers distribution to blacksmiths across the Northern Provinces, 1954–1955

Province	Native Administration	Quantity
Adamawa	Muri	3,048
	Adamawa	1,000
Bauchi	Katagum	300
	Misau	100
	Bauchi	3000
Borno	Borno	1000
	Fika	Iron worth £100, including freight charges
	Bedde	Iron worth £50, including freight charges
	Biu	Iron worth £40, including freight charges
	Ilorin	1000
Kabba	Pategi	80
	Lafiagi	120
	Kaima	200
	Bussa	250
	Kabba	200
	Yagba	500
	Igala	500
	Bassa Komo	50
	Kwarra	60
	Igbira	2000
Kano	Kano	10,000
	Gumel	350
	Hadejia	180
	Kazaure	200

Katsina	Katsina	1200
	Daura	400
Niger	Bida	400
	Agaie	200
	Kontagora	80
	Zuru	200
	Gwari	100
	Kamuku	40
	Abuja	200
	Lapai	150
Plateau	Jamaa	200
	Pankshin	200
	Kanam	150
	Lowland	150
	Jos	700
	Southern	450
Sokoto	Sokoto	900
	Sokoto	1100
	Gwandu	1700
	Argungu	160
Zaria	Zaria	1100
	Birnin Gwari	100
	Kagoro	200
	Jaba	200
	Moroa	100

Source: National Archives Kaduna (NAK) RLY/15, Distribution of scrap sleepers by Nigerian Railway Corporation, 1954–1957.

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Samenvatting

This thesis examines the social and cultural impact of the railway on the rural communities situated along the rail line between Kano and Zaria in Northern Nigeria, from 1908-1970s. It is a critical re-examination of the history of the railway and its consequences. Using old and new tools of historical analysis, the study argues that the railway was the most important innovation that transformed the communities in to important centers on the rail line. The rail line had many more consequences than previous studies had actually recognized.

The study contributes to our understanding on how the Nigerian communities perceived, appropriated and integrated the railway technology into daily life and how initiatives resulted in the appropriation of the railway. It also contributes to our understanding of how the railway bred criminality and provided platforms for criminals to operate; and also how the railway led to the emergence of new settlements and intermingling of Nigerian cultures along the rail line. These are in addition to re-examining the cash crops production and trade engendered by the railway.

The construction of the railway as the study demonstrates was an imperialist creation to transport cotton from the landlocked Northern region to industrialized Britain. Right from the onset of the British administration in Northern Nigeria, the idea to build the railway came from government and not businessmen or speculators who wanted government guarantees. Chapter two indicates that the idea to build the railway provoked reactions of rivalry and controversy from the Southern Nigerian authorities who perceived the line as a rival railway. The proposal to build the railway conflicted with their agenda of extending the southern railway to landlocked Northern Nigeria. The controversy dragged on for six years, after which the railway was sanctioned for construction in 1908. Contrary to the well established narrative that the reactions to railway construction did not go beyond flight, the chapter demonstrate that fear and awe as well as anti-colonial resistance were the reactions to the railway work, as people were not familiar with the railway technology, including railway construction, but as the familiarity increased and they understood the benefits of working on the railway for wages, they quickly appropriated it to transform their life.

The study also describes how the local inhabitants encountered and perceived the locomotive and train. Contrary to the popular assumption that Nigerians appropriated the railway immediately it was completed, chapter three demonstrate that its appropriation was not immediate, but was something worked out over time. The chapter argues that mixed reactions of fear and awe were the response to the new transport technology, as Nigerians did not understand what it was all about, much less of appropriate it, but as they became familiar

with it and understood its benefits they quickly apprehended it in distinctive ways to transform their life. The colonial authority also educated the people how to intensively use the system. The completion of the railway to traffic almost immediately revolutionized transportation and transformed the experience of travelling. It made the colonial authorities control of the communities much easier administratively and economically. The new transport also increased mobility and connected them to the global economy much more easily than had previously been possible.

As the study also demonstrates, the opening of the railway to traffic almost immediately activated cash crop production and trade. Chapter four argues that the anticipation that the railway would stimulate cotton export failed, because farmers exploited the opportunities provided by the railway to grow crops that were not anticipated during the planning and construction of the line. This was because cotton had always been grown for use in the indigenous textile industry and also because the price offered by the European buyers was much lower than that offered by the Hausa. Nevertheless, cotton export became popular over time. As has been shown, the trade in the cash crops began at the initiatives of the indigenous traders who channeled their money, expertise and network into the trade. Of the many crops that were activated by the steam, groundnut was by far the most popular, because it was easier to grow and could finance tax much more than the others.

The railway also has limitations; it stimulated production in far distant areas, far removed from the line, but it could not intensively exploit the new markets. This was circumvented by professional transporters who exploited it to their own advantage. The colonial authorities also tried to open up such distant areas by bringing them closer to the line of rail through road constructions. Right from the beginning, the colonial authority envisaged a coordinated transport system in which the road would feed the railway of traffic, but efforts were made to ensure it did not compete with the railway. The cash crop trade opened up a lot of opportunities to the locals and outsiders who depended on it for their livelihood.

As the study further demonstrates, the railway led to emergence of new settlements and intermingling of Nigerian cultures along the rail line. It is argued in chapter five that the opportunities to work on the railway and for the commercial firms as well as for trade were the pull which attracted populations to the communities. This in turn made the colonial authorities establish segregated settlements to house the migrants, as a form of control. As the study shows, the migrants concentrated at the main centers with high economic opportunities, thereby contributing to those centres' expansion. Despite the attempts by the colonial authority to control the migrants into rigid compartments, social relations brought them into

direct contact with locals, a development which not only eroded official barriers, but also led to their integration into the communities. The migrants were agents for change in the communities; they were instrumental in the establishment of western education schools and postal facilities as well as the diffusion of southern based foods and technical skills in the localities. However, it was not one-way traffic, as they too also learnt and copied from the hosts. There was a significant decline in the migrant population in the 1970s, due to the civil war, the decline of export trade and the decline of the railway in the 1970s.

The study also further understanding on how the railway engendered criminality and unexpectedly provided a platform for criminals to operate. Chapter six demonstrates that the railway was something of a paradox. It opened new frontiers of opportunities and indirectly endangered many, most especially the indigenous crafts which forced the operators into criminality such as stealing of iron from the rail line and train robbery. The crimes took the colonial authority unaware, despite attempts to combat them they continued unabated, until the decline of the railway in the 1970s. As the chapter argues, the crimes were reactions to the socio-economic disruptions brought by the advent of colonialism and its transport innovation. It also argues that the prevalence of the crimes was due to existence of large markets for stolen goods.

Nederlandse Samenvatting

Inleiding

In dit proefschrift worden de sociale en culture gevolgen onderzocht van de aanleg van het spoor op de plattelands gemeenschappen langs de spoorweg tussen Kano en Zaria in het noorden van Nigeria vanaf 1908 tot de jaren zeventig. Het is een kritisch onderzoek naar de geschiedenis van de spoorwegen en gevolgen van de aanleg hiervan. De studie maakt gebruik van oude en nieuwe methodes van historisch onderzoek en gaat uit van het idee dat de aanleg van het spoor een zeer belangrijke innovatie was die kleine gemeenschappen deed veranderen in belangrijke knooppunten. Het gevolg van de aanleg van de spoorweg had veel meer gevolgen dan eerdere studies aanvankelijk hadden verondersteld.

De studie probeert duidelijk te maken hoe de Nigeriaanse gemeenschappen reageerden op de komst van de technologie van de spoorwegen en hoe deze initiatieven uiteindelijk leidden tot de toe-eigening van de spoorweg. Het proefschrift probeert inzicht te geven in het feit dat de aanleg van de spoorwegen zorgde voor een verhoogde criminaliteit en de criminelen een uitvalsbasis gaven voor hun activiteiten, maar ook dat de aanleg leidde tot de stichting van nieuwe nederzettingen waardoor er langs de spoorlijn een vermenging ontstond van verschillende Nigeriaanse culturen. Daar komt bij de aanleg van het spoor leidde tot een toename van de verbouw van gewassen die op de markt konden worden verkocht.

Zoals de studie aantoont was de aanleg van het spoor een imperialistisch besluit, met als doel het vervoer van katoen vanuit de noordelijke regio naar het geïndustrialiseerde Engeland. Vanaf het begin van het Britse bestuur in Noord Nigeria kwam het idee om de spoorlijn aan te leggen van de regering, en niet van zakenmensen en speculanten, die daarvoor eerst overheidsgaranties eisten.

Hoofdstuk 2 beschrijft hoe het plan om de spoorweg aan te leggen leidde tot rivaliteit en tegenstellingen tussen de autoriteiten in Zuid- en Noord-Nigeria. De eersten beschouwen de spoorlijn als concurrent. Het voorstel om de spoorlijn aan te leggen botste met hun eigen plannen om de zuidelijke spoorweg uit te breiden tot aan het afgelegen noordelijke gedeelte van Nigeria.

Het meningsverschil sleepte zich zes jaar voort tot er in 1908 eindelijk toestemming werd verkregen voor de aanleg. In tegenstelling tot het algemeen geaccepteerde idee dat de

aanleg van de spoorlijn de mensen op de vlucht joeg, toont het hoofdstuk tevens aan dat er reacties waren van vrees en ontzag, maar ook anti-koloniaal verzet, omdat de mensen niet bekend waren met de technologie van de aanleg van spoorwegen. Maar toen de bekendheid en gewenning toenam hadden zij al snel oog voor de positieve kanten van de aanleg. De lonen die aan de arbeiders werden betaald stelden hen al snel in staat om hun levensstijl aan te passen..

De studie besteedt tevens aandacht aan de vraag hoe de lokale inwoners de komst van de trein en de locomotief ervoeren. In tegenstelling tot de gangbare gedachte dat de Nigerianen de komst van de spoorwegen direct na de aanleg accepteerden en waardeerden, toont hoofdstuk drie aan dat deze acceptatie er niet onmiddellijk was. Het hoofdstuk beschrijft hoe de nieuwe transport technologie met gemengde gevoelens van angst en ontzag werd beschouwd omdat de Nigerianen nog geen beeld hadden wat de spoorlijn voor hun betekende maar nadat zij aan de spoorlijn gewend raakten begonnen ze de grote voordelen ervan in te zien.

De koloniale autoriteiten gaven de bevolking ook voorlichting over de wijze waarop ze van de nieuwe vervoersmogelijkheid gebruik konden maken. Door de voltooiing aan het spoor veranderde de wijze van vervoer op spectaculaire wijze. Het stelde de koloniale autoriteiten in staat om op economisch en administratief gebied beter toezicht te houden op de plattelands gemeenschappen. Het nieuwe vervoermiddel verhoogde ook de mobiliteit en zorgde voor betere aansluiting op de wereld economie dan eerder mogelijk was.

De studie toont ook aan dat de verbouw van landbouwgewassen en handel onmiddellijk steeg. Hoofdstuk vier stelt dat de vooronderstelde stijging van de katoenexport uitbleef omdat de boeren onvoorzien bleken te zijn overgegaan op de teelt van andere gewassen. De reden van de achteruitgang van de katoenexport was het feit dat de katoen altijd werd geteeld voor de inheemse textielindustrie maar ook omdat de prijzen die door de Europese kopers werden geboden veel lager waren dan die van de Hausa handelaren. Toch werd de export van katoen langzamerhand belangrijker. Zoals eerder betoogd waren de inheemse handelaren de eersten die met de handel in landbouwgewassen begonnen: zij bundelden daarvoor hun geld, kennis en netwerken. Van de vele gewassen waarvan de verbouw door de komst van de stoommachine werd gestimuleerd waren aardnoten veruit het belangrijkste. Aardnoten waren makkelijk te telen waardoor de boeren sneller in staat waren om belasting te betalen.

De spoorweg had ook beperkingen. De aanleg stimuleerde weliswaar de productie in verafgelegen gebieden maar zorgde er niet voor dat de nieuwe markten intensief ontsloten

werden. Dit werd veeleer gedaan door professionele transporteurs die gebruik maakten van de ontstane mogelijkheden. Het koloniale gezag probeerde de afgelegen gebieden ook te ontsluiten door hen dichterbij de spoorlijn te brengen door middel van de aanleg van nieuwe wegen. Vanaf het begin streefde het gezag naar een gecoördineerd transport systeem waarin de weg weliswaar de toeleverancier was van het spoor maar hiermee verder niet concurreerde. De verbouw van landbouwgewassen opende vele mogelijkheden voor zowel de lokale bevolking als voor niet-lokalen die hiervan voor hun levensonderhoud afhankelijk waren.

Zoals de studie verder betoogt bespoedigde de aanleg van het spoor de stichting van nieuwe nederzettingen en ontstond daardoor een vermenging van Nigeriaanse culturen. In hoofdstuk vijf wordt betoogd dat de mogelijkheden om werk te vinden bij de spoorlijn, de handelsfirma's als in de handel zelf aantrekkelijk waren voor de bewoners van de landelijke gemeenschappen. Op hun beurt zorgden de koloniale autoriteiten voor de bouw van gesegregeerde huisvesting waardoor er toezicht kon worden gehouden op de migranten. De migranten vestigden zich in de belangrijkste centra met de beste economische mogelijkheden. Zij droegen daardoor bij aan de uitbreiding van die centra. Ondanks de pogingen van de autoriteiten om de migranten strikt gescheiden te houden zorgden sociale contacten ervoor dat er toch directe relaties ontstonden met de lokale bevolking. Deze ontwikkeling had tot gevolg dat de strikte scheidingslijnen afbrokkelden en dat de migranten uiteindelijk integreerden in de lokale gemeenschappen. De migranten waren de schakel tot verandering: zij zorgden voor de stichting van westerse scholen, de mogelijkheden van de posterijen, de kennismaking met voedsel uit meer zuidelijke gebieden en de beheersing van nieuwe technische mogelijkheden. Maar het was geen eenrichtingsverkeer want de migranten namen ook kennis over van hun lokale gastheren. Vanwege de burgeroorlog was er in de jaren zeventig een scherpe daling van het aantal migranten. Om diezelfde reden daalde ook de export en werd het spoor veel minder belangrijk.

De studie onderzoekt ook waarom de aanleg van de spoorlijn zorgde voor een verhoging van de criminaliteit en de criminelen een onverwachte uitvalsbasis voor hun activiteiten gaf. Hoofdstuk zes stelt dat de spoorlijn ook een paradoxale kant had: Zij opende weliswaar nieuwe mogelijkheden maar indirect bracht zij ook velen in gevaar, in het bijzonder de inheemse ambachtslieden, die soms gedwongen werden tot criminaliteit zoals het stelen van ijzer en het beroven van treinen. De criminaliteit verraste de koloniale autoriteiten en ze konden die niet tot stilstand brengen, zodat de criminaliteit bleef bestaan tot aan de neergang van de spoorwegen in de jaren zeventig. Het hoofdstuk stelt dat de

criminaliteit het gevolg was van het uiteenvallen van het sociaal economische netwerk door de komst van het kolonialisme en de vernieuwing van het transport systeem. Het hoofdstuk beschrijft ook dat de toename van de criminaliteit te wijten was aan de aanwezigheid van markten voor gestolen goederen.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Shehu Tijjani Yusuf was born in Kano, Nigeria, in 1972. He studied for his Bachelor degree of Arts in History at Bayero University, Kano and graduated with Upper Second Class Honours in 2002. Soon after completing the mandatory National Youth Service in 2003, he worked briefly with the Kano State Teachers Service Board, as Education Officer II, before joining the Department of History, Bayero University as Graduate Assistant in 2004. Between 2004 and 2008, he completed his Masters degree in History also at Bayero University, Kano. He has taught courses at diploma and undergraduate levels. Shehu has a keen interest in socio-economic and transport history. Since completing his doctoral research, he is currently developing a research project on road transport history in Northern Nigeria.