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The Socio-Economic Impact of the Railway

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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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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"; Oyewuenyi, "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 other 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

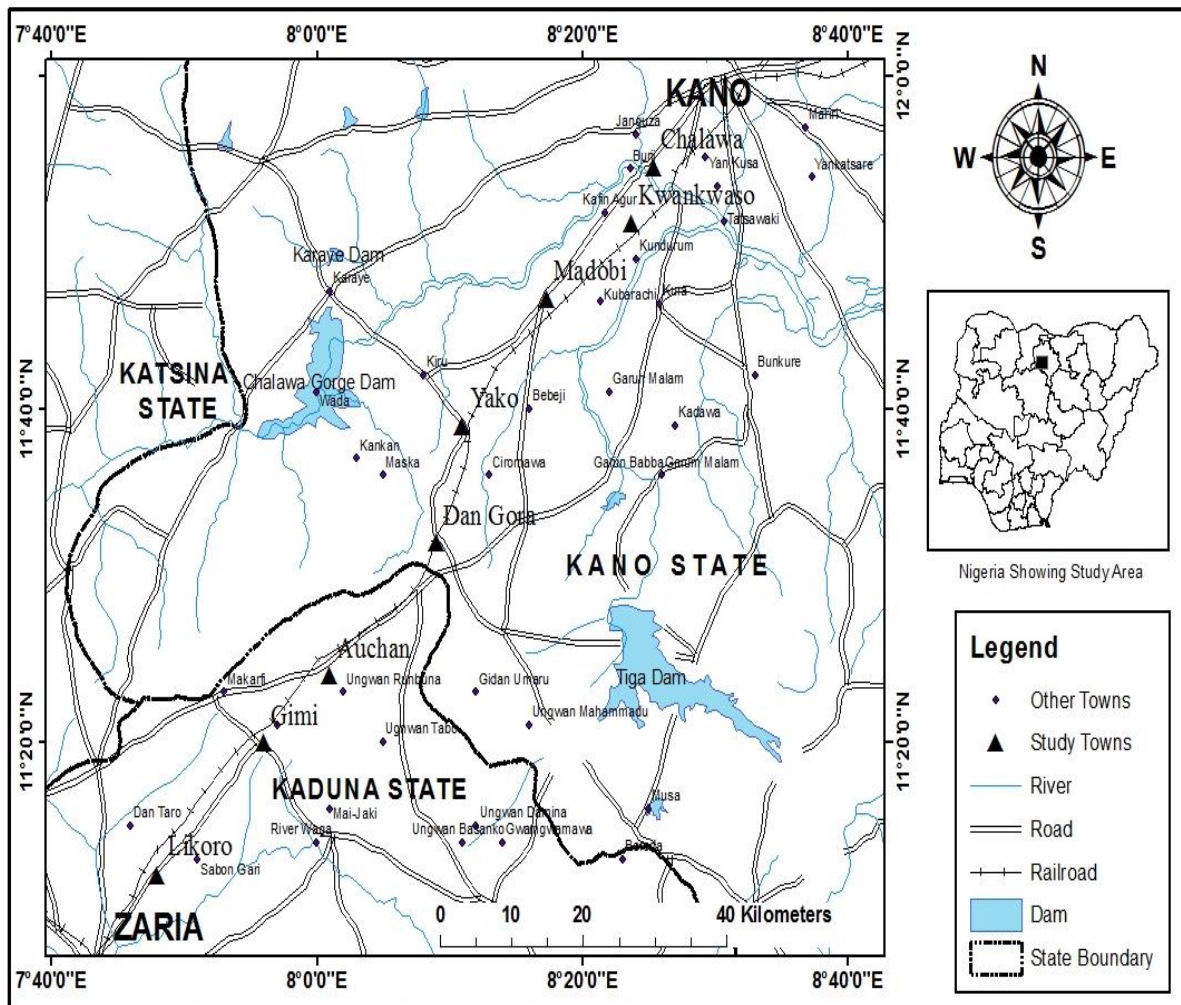
[http%3A%2F2Fwww.google.com%2Fsearch&_rdr](http://3A%2F2Fwww.google.com%2Fsearch%2Fsearch&_rdr) [Accessed on 27 November 2012].

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*.

served as focal points of agricultural settlement and defence against slave raiding.²⁹ Strategically, they were situated on a network of trade routes, the most popular being the Kano–Madobi–Zaria road, which the railway roughly followed. In addition to contributing greatly to the communities’ expansion, their location on the trade routes provided outlets for manufacturing and agricultural production.³⁰



Map 1.1 Map of the study areas

In terms of the natural environment, the communities are situated on an undulating plain, with little variation in the scenery between Zaria and Kano. The region possesses a tropical

²⁹ NAK ZarProf 5280 Makarfi; Yusuf, *Impact of the Railway*; Mortimore, “Settlement Evolution”, 108-10; W. B. Baikie and J. Kirk, “Notes of a Journey From Bida in Nupe, to Kano in Hausa, Performed in 1862”, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 37: 91867), 92-108.

³⁰ NAK ZarProf 5280 Makarfi; KSHCB Acc. 68 Kura; P. Staundinger, *In the Heart of the Hausa States*, (Athens: Ohio, 1990), 302-3.

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 Manyu 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.