

Exploring the history of colonial towns as centres of national integration: The example of Kafanchan Town, 1926-2011

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ABSTRACT: This paper is a critical inquiry into the process and evolution and urbanization of Kafanchan Town from 1926 to 2011. It is based on the appreciation of the impact of British colonial rule in Nigeria as against the usual dismissive Marxist approach to studying European activities in Africa. The research methodology adopted is an interpretation of both primary (oral/archival) and secondary (published) sources to reconstruct the history of the town. On concluding the work, the analysis of both primary and secondary sources traced the history of the town to the construction of the railway line from the eastern part of Nigeria that culminated into a station located on an uninhabited plot of land. This station is significant because it provided a system of transportation that serves as a link among Nigerians from different backgrounds and also precipitated the process of urbanization in this area. The town has evolved into a centre for national integration. From its beginning, it was cosmopolitan in nature thereby serving as a critical area in enhancing unity in a multicultural society like Nigeria. It started with the sheds erected as quarters for the construction workers and staff of the Nigerian Railways who were composed of diverse ethnic groups; some of the early workers were Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, Tiv, Hausa/Fulani, and the bulk of the natives. The paper therefore posits that colonial infrastructures as part of its economy had a positive impact in knitting the socio-political fabrics of the Nigerian area. This, if properly harnessed, would turn the tide of the much needed national integration in our heterogonous society for a progressive development.

Keywords: Colonial creation, cosmopolitan, Nigerian railway, urbanization.

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the history of Kafanchan town from 1926 to 2011 with particular concentration on its role in building healthy social links among Nigerians from diverse backgrounds. Before looking at the modern phase of the history of Kafanchan town, the research delves into the pre-colonial history of the area to see the nature of inter-group interactions that existed among different groups and how it was transformed with the construction of the railway line, a very important station in the area. With the construction of the Railway line as part of essential infrastructural the region witnessed the implementation of the British government's strategy to make the process of colonization easy, a town emerged from the makeshift

structures of squatters, for traders and the temporary accommodation for engineers and laborers. From this point on, the town has continued to play a central role in the economy, social life, and politics of Nigerians.

The Kafanchan area, before 1926 was central to various indigenous groups interacting through hunting, fishing, exploitation of forest and mineral resources, and farming. At some points in its history, the town became a political base of the Jama'a Emirate in 1933 and later the Headquarters of Jema'a Local Government Area. The scope of the research is for a period of eighty-five years. The study starts from 1926 being the year that the construction of the railway station at the site of Kafanchan

was completed marking the emergence of a cosmopolitan town in the area. Similarly, the study terminates in the year 2011 because of its significance to the history of the town. The post-elections violence in that year, which was witnessed across the country, particularly altered the demography/settlement pattern of Kafanchan town more than any other similar event. This became a setback to the legacy of a town that stood as a mosaic of the country's diversity.

To achieve the objective of this research, the paper is divided into six sections. The introduction is followed by a geographical survey of the area; this is done to find out what made this location a choice destination for its inhabitants long before our modern time. It is reasonably accurate to state that everything about the zone, ranging from adequate rainfall, arable land for agriculture, hills for defensive purposes, forests for food, and many other factors were all attractions for human habitation. The next unit deals with evidence of human life in this area. Cultural, linguistic, and archaeological evidence shows that the people of the area are direct descendants of those who propagated the Nok-Civilisation (Turaki, 2017, p.26; Kazah-Toure, 1999, p.112). Progressively, the fourth section examines the colonial expansion into the area and its subsequent domination within the context of the so-called British Indirect Rule which involved the imposition of a minority over a majority based on a principle of racial segregation. The fifth unit is an assessment of the urbanity of Kafanchan Town and the areas of integration. Finally, the conclusion brings out the pertinent discoveries of the paper.

LAND AND PEOPLES OF THE AREA

Location

The town known today as Kafanchan is situated in the southern part of Kaduna State where the main railway line from Port Harcourt branches to Jos and Kaduna (Buchanan, 1955, p.76). It is located exactly on latitude 9°37'N, 8°21'N and longitude 8°2'E, 8°6'E (Moses, 1985, p.48). By size, it is approximately 3,072 square miles (Bala, 2006, p.1). By road, Kafanchan is about 104 kilometers from Jos and 240 kilometers from Kaduna (Buchanan, 1955, p.76).

Topography

The town is on a low-lying topography that drops gently westward from the Kagoro Hills which form part of the Jos Plateau. The general slope of the land extends from the Plateau to the Kagoma Scarp and the Kwoi-Nok and Chori Plateau which again punctuates this undulating countryside that becomes very rugged. Consequently, several valleys and deep gullies are created by this type of

relief system; they are mostly natural. Generally speaking, the geology of Kafanchan is a basement complex consisting of pre-Cambrian igneous rocks-the resultant effect of weathering which has given rise to the red tropical lateritic soils that become very muddy and sticky in the rainy season and dusty in the dry season (Sankey, 1983, pp. 5-6).

Climate

Because of its location on the windward side of the Kagoro Hills which forms the southern escarpment of the Jos Plateau, the prevailing trade winds are the southwest and northeast trade winds. The former is responsible for the rains (orographic type) averaging about 150-200 cm (1500-2000 mm) within April to October. The northeast trade wind is dry, dusty, and cold, experienced between November to March. All these are responsible for two seasons-wet and dry with an annual mean temperature of about 78°F typical of Savanna areas (Sankey, 1983, pp.5-6).

Hydrology and water resources

The general height of the settlement is between 2,400 and 2,420ft. above sea level (Sankey, 1983, p.5). To the west is River Matsirga popularly referred to as River Wonderful with its fairly broad plains. And to the east of Kafanchan is the River Sarki; together, they provide extensive marshland. This has made available varieties of aquatic animals and seafood. There are in addition to these animals, along the banks of the rivers, trees of utmost importance to the existence of human life such as palm trees. All are useful for economic activities in terms of food and crafts. By and large, the marshlands that result from the action of over flooding are relatively fertile for agriculture which is the mainstay of the people (Sankey, 1983, pp.5-6).

Vegetation

Having the advantage of being situated within the northern Guinea Savanna, the area forms a transition zone between the forest and the savanna belts. It comprises transitional woodland as its climax vegetation. This supports the existence of valuable economic trees like Shea butter, tamarind, locust beans, iroko tree, silk cotton, ebony tree, fig tree, delep palm, rubber climber, mahogany, mango, etc. This area had long served as a viable hunting ground for the communities with several big games such as buffaloes, roan antelopes, leopards, porcupines, apes, and lions. However, due to heavy and increasing human activities such as agriculture, bush burning, deforestation, and mining over the years, the

vegetation has significantly changed consisting of scattered tall trees and grasses. The plains are highly suitable for grazing and cultivation of a wide variety of food and cash crops (Ibrahim, 1997, p.1). The significance of the vegetation to the history of the area is that its diversity meant the abundance of fruit, food and wildlife. This attracted the early settlers to the region because their basic need was assured. In the long run, farming became the one of the major economic activities of these people because of the suitable environment.

Peopling of the area

It is very difficult to figure out exactly (specific dates) when the diverse groups within and around the area of study first settled there. However, many of them have stories regarding migration from areas in Bauchi, Plateau, Taraba, Benue, Kano, and Katsina; this has remained mere folklore with no concrete historical proof. Yusufu Turaki for instance has pointed out that “the Ninkyob (Kaninkon), Gong, Ham (Jaba), Rindem and Nyankpa have no evidence of having migrated from elsewhere” (Turaki, 2017, p.26). Instructively, one of Nigeria’s foremost historians in the person of Obaro Ikime has consistently argued in his writings stating that most of these traditions of origins were usually formulated to gain some status of superiority before new neighbours and/or to claim a connection to places of political power/authority. In essence, they are not to be taken as historical truths, in most instances (Ikime, 2006).

There is also an abundance of archaeological evidence pointing to the fact that the entire zone of Southern Kaduna where Kafanchan Town is situated has been inhabited for many centuries. For instance, Yohanna states that:

In the first place, the vegetation of the area is already man-made. Issues like the seasonal nomadic activities of the Fulani, the vagaries of the weather, the soils cannot be said to be serious enough factors to result in the present state of vegetation. A trip from Kagoro...through Kwoi, Kagoma, Tsakiya, Jaban Kogo, Kachia, Geshere to Saminaka shows clearly the extent to which the vegetation has seriously been altered due perhaps, to centuries or millennia of man’s activities (Yohanna, 1982, p.8).

What this means is that not just has the area been long inhabited by people before the Hausa/Fulani started moving into the region in the late 18th Century (Kazah-Toure, 1999, pp. 109-144), but it has been full of economic activities in pre-colonial times. Moreover, convincing evidence provided by the ancient Nok Civilisation when in 1944, an exceptionally fine head of terracotta was found 25ft. deep during tin mining close to Kafanchan, confirms

the existence of human life in the area for many centuries back. This is true as carbon dating revealed that the work of art was from a period between 900BC-200AD (Fagg, 1957). Again, Kazah-Toure also believes strongly that most of the groups are autochthonous to the area with not much contact from the outside world. This has made them culturally and linguistically unique and exclusive in comparison with many Nigerian groups (Kazah-Toure, 1999, p.112). In line with the language compositions, the various groups have been classified as Benue-Congo or Semi-Bantu groups. This is because their language structures are similar (Turaki, 2017, p.27). The argument above provides sufficient and irrefutable evidence that the inhabitants of the area in the 20th century were direct descendants of the Nok Civilisation.

Colonial incursion in the area

For this zone, the journey to colonial subjugation started back in the year 1900. This was when the flag of the Royal Niger Company gave way to the Union Jack of Great Britain; this was precisely on January 1, 1900 under the leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel F.D. Lugard, the High Commissioner (Turaki, 2017, p.74). However, this declaration by Great Britain did not translate into an immediate loss of independence by the Nigerian people. But it, however, signaled the beginning. For the centralized Hausa States of the Sokoto Caliphate, it took a period of three years (1900-1903) for most of them to fall under the British invading forces (Turaki, 2017, p.74). The story was different for the area of study due to the existence of mini-republics instead of a centralized political structure that would have made the work easier like in the emirates. The other reason for the staggered nature of the British conquest is the factor of geography. Unlike their northern neighbors who were occupying flat and grassland areas, here, the land is punctuated by many hills and mountains with woodland forests that served as hideouts for the communities (NAK: NAS PROF, 1915, pp.12-13).

But since the colonial enterprise was at the centre of British national policy at that time, it became necessary, for economic and strategic reasons for the empire to go out for it leaving no stone unturned. After the formal submission, in March 1903 by the Emirs of Lafia and Jama’a, the British posted an Assistant Resident to Jama’a in October 1904. He was accompanied by a detachment of 25 rank and files under a subaltern (Ames, 1972, p.19). This action brought the area under British administration with further diversification of its population thereby encouraging inter-cultural intercourse.

EVOLUTION AND URBANISATION OF KAFANCHAN TOWN

Before 1926, the surrounding landscape was dotted with clusters of settlements/hamlets. A survey in 1915 carried

out for the purpose of extending the northeast railway from Benue Bridge served as a landmark that set the stage for a permanent change in the society. This route was to run through Doma, Keffi, and Yeskwa Districts then proceeds northwest towards Kaduna. Progressively, in 1919, a route running west from Keffi through Abuja to Minna junction was also surveyed with a line running from Benue Bridge to Lafia and skirting the western slope of the Mada Hills, Jagindi, Bakin-Kogi, and Fadda Kagoro; then finally to Manchok (Moroa), Jos and Bukuru (Kirk-Greene, 1972, p.23).

The actual construction of the eastern line commenced in 1913 from Port Harcourt and reached the coalfields of Enugu in 1916, and Makurdi in 1924 (Mabogunje, 1968, pp.144-145) then finally, Kafanchan Junction was completed in 1926 (Jaekel, 1997, p.190). The choice of the area (Kafanchan) for a railway station was due to certain advantages it enjoys; good flat and open land (Jaekel, 1997, pp. 190 & 205) and abundant economic opportunities which were of strategic interest to the colonial authority. Human labour was available and strategic, in addition to enough food and cash crops (millet, corn, ginger, pepper, and livestock) and mineral deposits such as limestone, tin, and columbite. The last mineral was scarce and global supply depended on Nigeria for the main ore of Niobium used in gas turbines, jet engines, and rockets. The implication of this is that Kafanchan Station became one of the most important stations in Nigeria (Jaekel, 1997, pp. 189-190).

The building of the railway station was done alongside the construction of European quarters for railway staff who would take charge of the various departments at this junction. Because of this, there also emerged temporary shelters by natives, Yoruba traders, contractors, labourers (NAK: PLA PROF NO. 511/1926) etc. who were attracted by the booming economic opportunities provided by this innovation in the transportation sector. Apart from the Igbo, Yoruba, and other ethnic groups that were not indigenous to the Southern Kaduna Zone, some of the natives also left their places to participate in the emerging capitalist economy thereby creating the stage for national integration.

Amid the growing population, the colonial authority had to produce a new layout in 1928 with the survey plan numbered No. A6413 from the previous plan M.287 that was prepared in July 1924 (Rowling, 1949, pp.43-44). This plan made provision for a motorable way from the residential plot, six business plots, and a railway postal agency. There was a provision within this new layout, for main roads of up to 18" wide and subsidiary roads of 12" wide. In all, the layout made provision for social amenities right from the beginning of the new town (Kantiyok, 1975, p.19). This made Kafanchan Town one of the few colonial settlements in Nigeria that were given adequate attention with consideration for safety and future development (NAK: PLA PROF NO.105/28/1, p.7). This desire to have

a clean and safe town was demonstrated by the intention to destroy the grass town that was springing up. Consequently, the authorities introduced the condition of registering plot holders as a strategy to drive away the shanty type of buildings by persons described as "undesirables" who were being attracted to the emerging settlement (NAK: PLA PROF NO.105/28/1, pp.7-8). This was followed by the visit of the Senior Health Officer of the Northern Province in 1931 so to ensure compliance with the outlined standards (Sankey, 1983, pp.5-6).

FORCES FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN KAFANCHAN TOWN

Commerce

The exchange of or buying and selling of commodities has been a major avenue for social intercourse in human societies across different historical times and zones. It is significant for breaking social, economic, religious and political barriers. Therefore, its value in stimulating integration in Kafanchan cannot be overlooked.

Consequently, with the huge economic potentials that abound in this area, the African and Eastern Trading Association applied to have a trading site in 1927; the Niger Company was granted a holding right to a temporary site on the 1st of September while their agent arrived in Kafanchan on the 22nd September 1928 intending to start clearing the site and erecting a building (NAK: PLA PROF NO.105/28/1, p.5). Subsequently, a market was established in 1930, but with an increase in population and commercial activities, it was relocated to a new site in 1950. The Native Authority was augmented by building permanent stores and latrines in 1954 (Kantiyok, 1975, pp.64-75).

These commercial activities started right from the foundation of the town and have continued into the modern era thereby providing avenues for robust national cohesion among Nigerians from different backgrounds. The town had operated a daily market that still serves the needs of the inhabitants and surrounding communities. This is significant because other markets in the southern parts of Kaduna operate on weekly basis. Kafanchan market served as the major point of bulk purchases by retailers whom were made up of natives, southerners and people from the far north. The level of integration has been tremendous resulting into intermarriages and trust to take and give out children for apprenticeship (Job Tagwai, 2024).

Transportation

The location of the railway junction at Kafanchan has been the greatest attraction to people across the country. This

development made Kafanchan a gateway especially when its central position is considered. Furthermore, the station has served as a link for Nigerians from the Eastern states coming to the Northern parts of the country and vice versa. It had played the role of access for both people and goods which in the long-run have strengthened friendship among travellers and workers of the railway system (Akau Dickson, 2024). This same role played by the railway had been played by the road transport system. Travelling out of the Kafanchan area to major towns demanded many people to board their vehicles from this town or even passed through it. In the process, many people from varying cultural backgrounds have initiated relationships that have served as bridges for uniting individuals and families (Abubakar Musa Ibrahim, 2024).

Healthcare and social services

A team of medical officers arrived in 1928 from Jos to inspect Kafanchan and eventually gave approval to a site close to the railway station for the construction of a hospital; this is the cradle of the present General Hospital now christened Sir Patrick Ibrahim Yakowa Memorial General Hospital, Kafanchan. It started as a health facility for railway workers but has since grown into a major medical referral center in the whole of Southern Kaduna. Due to its growing popularity and acceptance among the natives right from the beginning, the facility became inadequate leading to an extension that was completed in 1954 with additional specialized units like the X-Ray Section. This was happening alongside the ante-natal clinic adjudged to be very successful (NAK ZAPROF 13/2/1495, p.2). Several clinics built by private investors have aided the cosmopolitan nature of the town and have further increased the rate of national cohesion in the town.

Efforts aimed at providing clean, safe, and portable drinking water yielded positive results in 1930 when four public wells were constructed at strategic locations. By 1938, six additional public wells were constructed for the immediate surroundings; then the town was provided with pipe-borne water in 1948, especially in public places like hospitals, markets, police barracks, prisons, and the European quarters. It was in 1957 that the streets were finally able to have taps and then the public wells were closed down. The railway corporation started providing electricity in the town albeit, limited to their quarters, offices, and locomotive sheds; some individuals within the mission stations provided private generating plants (Sankey, 1983, p.8; Kantiyok, 1975, pp.61-63).

The hospitality industry played significant role in bringing people together as the town had the largest hotels, restaurants, recreational centers and sports facilities which are usually an attraction to people and also served as the grounds that have enabled people to interact without religious or ethnic barriers (Job Tagwai, 2024). This is also

in addition to the presence of banks that employed people with no ethnic or regional discrimination and also provided services that were necessary for the daily existence of human society.

Colonial policies and government decisions (politics)

For proper coordination of this new political space, the British introduced the machinery of Native Administration within the Indirect Rule system. The Native Administration was composed of three Arms - Native Authority, Native Courts, and Native Treasuries. The bulk of the administrative work revolved around the Emir, District Officer, and Resident Officer in that ascending order (Turaki, 2017, pp.54-92). Jagindi, located not far from Kafanchan Town became the Headquarters of Jema'a Division while Kafanchan Town was made the seat of Jama'a Emirate and also Jama'a Native Authority in 1933 with the transfer of Jama'a Emirate from Jama'a-Sarari (Madakiya) to Kafanchan (Hogben and Kirk-Greene, 1966, p.554). This singular colonial decision gave a boost to the socio-political status of Kafanchan Town and the diversity of its demography thereby encouraging national integration (Job Tagwai, 2021; Akau Dickson, 2024).

Progressively, the town became an attraction to the nationalist movement as it played host to a delegation of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) which arrived town on the 4th of 1946 and held a successful rally at the Church Missionary Society (CMS) school ground. There were over 4,000 people from different backgrounds in attendance at the rally. At the end of the rally, a resolution was reached mandating the leadership of N.C.N.C. to represent the people of Kafanchan. The railway workers on their part organised a special ceremony to honour Pa Michael Imoudu, the President of the Railway Workers Union for his sacrifices (Abba, 2007, p.58). This political gathering afforded different people the opportunity to network across board. This position has not changed as the town has remained critical for politics in Kaduna State.

Religion

Christianity was a major tool used to also increase the pace of modernization and integration in this area, as these churches brought together different people from various ethnic, cultural and regional backgrounds. Since majority of the indigenous ethnic groups within the study area were not Muslims but adherents of African Traditional Religion (A.T.R.), they were available for proselytization by the Christian Missionaries. The Lugardian Administration in principle encouraged the Christian Missions among them but discouraged such activities among the Muslims based on an agreement not to disrupt their existing social

structure. The first Christian Mission Station to be opened in the whole of Southern Kaduna was in 1910 at Kwoi by The Reverend F.E. Hein of the Sudan Interior Mission (S.I.M.). This was followed by the second station at Kurmin Musa by The Reverend T. Allen in 1921 and later, The Reverend T. Archibald opened a station at Kagoro. The consequence of having these Mission Stations around was that by the 1930s, Kafanchan Town had in existence about four Christian Missions operating under the auspices of Sudan Interior Mission, Roman Catholic Mission, Baptist Mission, and Church Missionary Society (Turaki, 2017, p.110).

More so, the presence of the Hausa/Fulani population in the area brought about the institutionalisation of Islam as another religion that is practiced in addition to Christianity and ATR. It was further strengthened with the presence of the Emirate that was established and found useful for British Indirect Rule System. The advantage has been the influx of Muslims from other parts who have found this town as a home away from home (Akau Dickson, 2024; Job Tagwai, 2024). Additionally, these Muslims and Christians have over time found it necessary to learn and accept their differences. For instance, due to the frictions in the Muslim-Christian relationship in the late 1980s, the religious leaders from both sides deemed it necessary to establish an inter-faith union with each side taking turns to host meetings in their mosques (whenever it was the turn for Muslims to host) and churches (whenever it was the turn of Christians to host). This built great trust not only among leaders of the two faiths but also among their followers who saw the unity in action (Alhaji Iliyasu Musa, 2024).

Education

Western education has provided the right atmosphere for engendering national cohesion in this town as enduring relationships across ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds have been struck. A Muslim respondent revealed how he was assisted with food items during the lockdown imposed on the state due to the post-election crisis of 2011. This kind gesture by a Christian family was due to the relationship he established with their son as a result of attending Government Secondary School Kafanchan (Muhammad Abdullahi, 2024). In the administration of western education the colonial government demonstrated lukewarm attitudes toward this. The reason was due to the experience from the southern part of the country where the Christian Missionaries were given a free hand for proselytisation and education; the consequence was that the bulk of the population became educated and a threat to the colonial government. This made the British not give education a priority in their policy formulation and implementation. This position in northern Nigeria implies that education was left for the Christian Missions,

especially among the “pagans” who were thought to require western civilization. Over time, the early sets of teachers were made up of people mostly from the southern parts of Nigeria who interacted with their learners from different cultural backgrounds (Turaki, 2017, pp.76-87).

The first western school was established in 1929 by the S.I.M. at Kagoro, a few kilometers away from Kafanchan. The primary objective was to equip the natives with adequate knowledge of the Word of God so that they could in turn have the capacity to reach out to their communities. In 1930, the Native Elementary School was established in Kafanchan Town officially as a school for Muslim boys. This was the first elementary school that was established in Southern Zaria (Turaki, 2017, pp.113-119). Subsequently, the real efforts toward providing education in this area came from Christian Missionaries: the Roman Catholic Mission set up a school in 1936, the Church Missionary Society in 1937, the Sudan Interior Mission came in 1946 and the Baptist Church opened a school in 1952 (Kantiyok, 1975, pp.54-63). Numerous secondary schools and higher institutions of learning such as the Kaduna State College of Education, Kaduna State College of Nursing and Midwifery, Baptist College of Health Technology, Kaduna State University, Kafanchan Campus have also provided convenient avenues for national integration. In the light of the above discussion, what this paper has done is to highlight the role of various forces that have worked differently but contributed in no less measure to bringing development to the town and provided platforms for integration across varied backgrounds thereby strengthening the bond of national unity.

CONCLUSION

Studying the history of Kafanchan Town gives the opportunity to appreciate its history of cultural diversity and national integration. In pre-colonial times, the area was a whole zone of fruitful intergroup corporation among various indigenous groups. The area further experienced increased human activities with the British colonial expansion and growing European industrialisation that heated international rivalry in search for raw materials and overseas markets. Therefore, there was a significant transformation in the demographic composition leading to greater interaction among Nigerians. Likewise, the improvement in the transportation sector and the expansion of the railway line up north culminated in the completion of a major junction at Kafanchan in 1926. This event steered the process of urbanization and the immediate evolution of a new town around the railway station. From the outset, it was heterogeneous pulling people within the surrounding environment and others from the southern and northern parts of the country. Once more, Kafanchan has remained a symbol of cultural diversity right from colonial and post-colonial periods. By

and large the entire railway transportation system, missionary schools, health institutions and several social amenities became centres for close interactions among Nigerians of different backgrounds. The long term impact of this was the greater knowledge and appreciation of fellow citizens leading to intermarriages, building of political, social and economic relationship thereby engendering unity in diversity.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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INTERVIEWS

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