



PRIMARY RESEARCH

# A history of the transformation of water supply in Kano, Nigeria, 1924-1960

Junaidu Danladi \*

Department of History, Bayero University, Kano-Nigeria

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

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## Abstract

This paper examines the introduction of piped water during the colonial period and how people resisted it. Water is an important basic necessity of life that is crucial to any society's socio-economic development. Adequate provision of water serves as a basic prerequisite for industrial development. Some of the major sources of water included wells, dams, rainfall/rainwater, and rivers. In addition to the private wells inside the houses, some popular public wells were located in various parts of the city. This paper is using extant literature and oral information to explore the history of the transformation of water supply in Kano. Findings of the study highlight that water supplied had contributed to the economic and social development of Kano. Some of the major impact of the piped water supply include industrialization and urbanization, reducing the prevalence of water-borne diseases, and provision of employment.

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## INTRODUCTION

Water has been among the major necessity of life. Water is important basic utility that is very crucial to the socio-economic development of any society. In fact, adequate provision of water serves as basic pre-requisite for industrial development. The history of the transformation of water in Kano is an important virgin area of research in contemporary period, but often neglected by many scholars and researchers alike. Kano is one of the states of Nigeria. It is located in the northern part of Nigeria. Kano is the most populous state in Nigeria, with 9,383,682 people according to the 2006 National population census. Kano has been one of the leading commercial and industrial centres in Nigeria and indeed in Africa. Before the introduction of modern electricity and piped water in Kano in the 20th century, people recognized the importance of power and water supply in the execution of their daily activities. Traditionally, the people of Kano used various means to provide power and water for both domestic consumption and use in cottage industries. Some of the major sources of water included wells, dams,

rainfall/rainwater and rivers (Abdullahi, 1988; Mustafa & Sharifov, 2018; Okpala, Omojuwa, Elenwo, & Opoko, 2017). In addition to the private wells inside the houses, some of the major public wells in the city included Shada Koko located at Kofar Wambai, Maidakasha at Sani Mainagge, Yango, Mai Burgame, Kundiske at behind Wazirin Kano residence, Ta'annabi at Durumin Iya, Manani at Gwale near the present Veterinary, Cijaki, Tamarmara at Marmara, Algaita at Mabusa, Tasheshe at Sheshe and Tumbururu (Sufi, 1993). These sources supplied water for consumption and used in the cottage industries. Due to the unsecured nature of these sources that contaminated the water, there were prevalence of waterborne diseases in Kano. Therefore, the introduction of piped water no doubt had a significant impact on the social and economic development of Kano.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts historical approach that involves the use of both primary and secondary data. The primary data include oral information collected through interviews with relevant informants, as well as the archival materials re-

\* corresponding author: Junaidu Danladi

† email: [jdnladi.his@buk.edu.ng](mailto:jdnladi.his@buk.edu.ng)

trieved from the National Archives Kaduna (NAK). While the secondary data comprises published and unpublished literature. Some of the published works include books and journals. The unpublished works comprise PhD theses, masters and bachelor dissertations. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used in analyzing the collected data.

### AN OVERVIEW OF EARLY WATER SUPPLY IN KANO

Electricity and water supply were introduced by British during the colonial period. The provision of electricity in Nigeria first started in Lagos in 1896 when the two 30kw generating plants were installed in order to provide electricity to Lagos. The project was undertaken by the Public Works Department (Manafa, 1979). The process of electricity and water supply in Kano started in 1924, when some various gravitational and pumping tests were carried out in the vicinity of the town. It is important to emphasize that the scheme was initially meant to provide water only, but because of the importance of electricity in the pumping of water it became necessary to include it in the project. Therefore, by 1926, the water scheme was enlarged to include an electricity generating plant. The Water and Electricity Projects were located adjacent to each other at Challawa, about 12 miles from the city. The primary function of the electricity scheme was to supply electric power to the pumps at three intake wells at the Challawa river bed and the high lift pumps at the Panshekara power house from which the water was to be raised to the reservoir on Goron Dutse located in the city. In addition, the scheme was planned to supply electric power and water to European quarters, public institutions, hospitals, railway, township, Fagge and Kano city (NAK/SNP/12004:25).

The project was undertaken by Kano Native Administration (N.A.) under the Public Works Department (P.W.D). It is important to emphasize that Kano Native Administration was then regarded as one of the richest Native Administrations in Nigeria because of the huge revenue collected from the people. By 1929, when the project reached an advance stage, Kano N.A had reserved funds of £349015 that was considered adequate to meet the cost of machinery and equipment from England (Fika, 1978). It was such financial strength that enabled Kano to embark on the two gigantic projects of water and electricity supply ever financed by any Nigerian Native Administration and indeed in the whole of British West Africa. Both projects were executed at the cost of £333,000 including a contribution of £20,000 made by the Colonial Government (NAK/1651: 16). By the end of 1930, both water and electricity were being supplied to a number of private consumers and various public institu-

tions. For example, an approximate amount of 80,000 gallons of water were being supplied to private consumers and public institutions daily. The combined project of electricity and water was officially commissioned in February 1931 (NAK/SNP/628:67).

The commissioning of the project was occasioned by a befitting moment that was well attended by many important dignitaries such as British delegates headed by the Lieutenant Governor of Northern Nigeria, C. W. Alexander; while the emir of Kano, Abdullahi Bayero, who was the head of the Native Authority led a number local notables. The Lieutenant Governor of Northern Nigeria, C. W. Alexander made a speech during the occasion, pointing out that many people had speculated that the project was a waste of time and resources, but now everyone could see the relevance what had been accomplished. The occasion was a remarkable event according to the account of Mallam Dauda, who described it in a newspaper report (Larkin, 2008).

According Larkin (2008), the grand opening of infrastructural projects like the Kano Water and electric light works are both a visual spectacle and political ritual... Rituals like these are moments where the public display of colonial authority was made manifest and were also about the spectacle of technology itself. For British, Water and Electric Light project was evidence of their success in promoting modernizing improvements which they used to legitimize their domination, which was mainly viewed by the colonized as way for exploitation. The project was also public display to the people that the emir of Kano and his administration recognized the importance of progressive infrastructural projects like electricity and piped water (Larkin, 2008).

Despite the quite perceived importance of water to humanity, at early stage of its introduction in Kano, many people particularly in the ancient City were reluctant to patronize it to the extent that a special clerk had to be engaged as propagandist charged with the duty to educate people on the efficacy of electricity. Despite the campaign of the clerk, it seemed that it had very little success in convincing the people in the City to patronize the services in the early years of his campaign. In 1933, the clerk had reported to the authority that although his campaign was unable to convince the people, at least it was making the services more widely known and creating discussion among the populace. The colonial authorities were however hopeful that the campaign would bear fruitful result in the near future. It is pertinent to emphasize it took some time for the Kano people that had a long tradition of modernity to accept modern facilities like piped water easily. Electricity was con-

sidered as novel technology that was hitherto unknown to most of people. That was perhaps why Fika notes that to have piped water and electric light installed in Kano was “virtually amounted to having a new house at a cost prohibitive to the average citizen” (Fika, 1978). However, despite the unenthusiastic attitude and resistance shown by the people of Kano (Kanawa) toward these amenities, by 1935, piped water had gradually become more acceptable perhaps due to the recognition of their significance to the people.

According to the popular narratives, many people were very suspicious of colonial policies and technology that it brought about mainly on religious and economic reasons. In Kano and indeed in most parts of northern Nigeria colonialism and the technology that it brought about faced with severe resistance mostly from the Islam scholars who criticised the material culture of the colonialism. The Europeans during the colonial period were seen as Christians (Nasara) whose main mission was to Christianize people and exploit the local resources. That was why the people were very skeptical about the colonial infrastructure like electricity, piped water and railway and indeed anything associated with the colonialists. Some people in the city even speculated that piped water was a magic and anybody that drank pumped water, would lose his faith; and he would never enter paradise in the hereafter. There was a popular saying that: whoever drinks piped water will certainly lose his faith (in local Hausa language: *kowa yasha ruwan pampo, yayi fam fam da Imani*). Because of these beliefs people remained adamant to the use of such water. In order for the colonial authority to compel people to use the piped water, most of the popular wells that were the major sources of water were destroyed. In addition, as incentive, the colonial authority even installed water to the private consumers free of charge.

It is pertinent to emphasize that majority of the people of Kano and most parts of northern Nigeria were/are Muslims that were fully aware about the activities of European Christian missionaries that had succeeded significantly in converting many people into Christianity in southern Nigeria. Thus, they were fully prepared at least intellectually to resist any attempt aim at converting them to new religion. Islam was introduced into Kano and other areas of northern Nigeria some centuries prior to the 20th century. There was widespread resistance and sustained attacks by the religious scholars on colonialism that focused mainly on its material culture (Umar, 1997). These scholars inveighed against Muslims who consorted with the Europeans through their technologies. Many scholars viewed

the European conquest and domination as a way of converting them to Christianity. In the same vein, these scholars refused to patronize modern infrastructure like electricity which they regarded as suitable means of achieving the target of the missionaries. Therefore, they vehemently resisted colonial infrastructure and condemned any Muslim that patronized them. They expressed their views through the writing of books, sermons, lectures, pamphlets and poets. A good example of this can be found in a poem composed by an Islamic scholar, Umaru Wanda translated by Marvyn Hiskett as “A Warning against Paganism and Innovation (Bid’a). In the poem, he provides a long list of forbidden activities associated with colonialism particularly the technology attached with it: wearing shorts or shirts with collar, using a walking sticks, soap, wearing a watch or using electric lamps or battery torches.... Even if you pray a thousand times, the result will still be perdition for those who refuse to maintain separation” (Larkin, 2008). Perhaps that was why Adas (1989) argues that Africans always resort to superstition and religious belief to explain the situation they cannot easily and readily comprehend (Adas, 1989). According to him, modern technology always provokes terror and awe. He asserts that no technology unleashed such terror and awe on Africans as the locomotives.

According to Larkin (2008), resistance to colonial infrastructure in northern Nigeria was represented by wonders (in Hausa, *mamaki*) and fears (*tsoro*) and was circulated through rumors, published colonial reports and newspaper accounts (Larkin, 2008). Wonder, awe and fear are normally common responses of Africans to the introduction of new technology as it was the same reactions by the Europeans and Americans (Nye, 1994). In Kano, earlier authors have documented the reactions of people to colonial infrastructure and social facilities like railway, health care services, education and modern media facilities. For instance, Yusuf (2015) examines the introduction of railway and how people reacted differently to it. He opines that the introduction of railway was accompanied by fear and awe at early stage before people accepted, domesticated and appropriated it technology. Wada (2012) discusses the introduction of modern health care services during the colonial period. He notes that most of the people refused to patronize modern health services at the initial stage of their introduction and later they patronized them after some while. Larkin (2008) on his part, analyses the advent of modern infrastructure particularly media (radio, television, cinema etc.) in northern Nigeria and how they were accompanied by mixed reactions (Larkin, 2008). Fika (1978) documents the reactions of people of Kano toward modern infrastruc-

ture like health care services, education, education, electricity and piped water. Therefore, resistance to new technologies was not only restricted to electricity as indicated from the above brief review. In fact, even in the contemporary world that is driven by the fastest growing technology, sublime is a common reaction to new technological invention (Bauer, 1995). However, as soon as the technological disappeared or at best reduced significantly, many people be-

gan to patronize both electricity and piped water and they became important services to them. In fact, by 1935 (Fika, 1978) both services had gradually become more acceptable to the people. Perhaps that was why as soon as the sublime unleashed, the people of Kano not only accepted the water but even composed a poem in praise of the Europeans for water supply and urged them to extend electricity to their areas. The poem reads as follows:

Nasara yai abin kirki  
Ya ba mu ruwan pampo  
Saura mu ga lantarki  
Ita dinma an kunna  
Jingino da lantarki  
Sai Ciroma dansarki  
Sai kaninsa Faruku (Sufi, 1993)

The Europeans have done an excellent job  
of providing piped water  
what is absent is electricity  
even that one has already been installed  
to hold the electric poles  
is only Chiroma, the prince  
and his brother, Faruku.

The public patronage of water led to the increase in the demand and number of consumers as revealed in the following Table 1.

**TABLE 1.** Water and electricity consumption in Kano, 1931-1936  
(Source: Fika (1978))

Year	Water Consumption (Gallons)	Electricity Consumption by Metered Consumers
1931	39500,000	402
1932	86548, 000	402
1933	122920, 000	816
1934	134954, 000	Not available
1935	134948760	948
1936	137021038	1048

Another important issue related to the provision of infrastructure like railway, roads, electricity and water was labor recruitment. Although the expatriates constituted the skilled labor, the main construction works were performed by indigenous laborers, comprising peasants, slaves, and prisoners that were recruited through force. The colonial authorities in Kano always claimed that voluntary labor was adequately supplied for the construction works of the provision of social services as indicated in the colonial report as follows:

The nature of labour employed during the year has averaged about 10,000 men, many of whom have worked under the native contractors strictly voluntary labour has been adequately throughout and no serious trouble or discontent has been occurred (SNP/12004: 24).

However, in reality it was not actually a voluntary labour but rather it was more of forced labour. Most of the people were reluctant to work under the colonial imperial-

ists. During the early period there was labor shortages (both skilled and unskilled), partly because people were not willing to work for the colonialists Therefore, forced labour was adopted in order to provide adequate labour the construction of works. Recruitment was conducted through the combined efforts of the European Political Officers and the local authorities, comprising the traditional rulers. When labor 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 laborers to go to the construction sites against their will. Many were not paid, and many were underpaid (Yusuf, 2015).

The period of the 1930s had witnessed the World Wide Great Economic Depression that had enormously affected the British policies on the provision of social services like piped water and electricity in Nigeria and indeed in other colonies Watts, 1979 and (Akpen, 2004; Shenton, 1986). The depression severely affected British economy which resulted in the suspension of some capital projects while others had their expenditures cut down. In addition, as a coping strategy, The British introduced the policy of "Imperial preferences", which greatly affected most of the existing electricity undertakings and even the plan to establish new ones. The implication was that, the British colonies such as Nigeria were force to purchase their required spare parts and high powered generating sets from British manufacturing industries instead of cheaper generating sets from Germany (Siemens Halke), Swiss (Brown Boverly), America (Corliss Valve engine), Sweden (Allmänna Svenska Elektriska) and (Ericsson). Others included industries from France, Japan and Italy all produced and exported steam

engines. The policy made the purchase of generating sets by the various Native Authorities very expensive. The monopoly of import and export trade by the British syndicates and firms adversely affected the development of electricity industry in Nigeria during the 1930s. As result of the depression in some places like Makurdi, the electricity and water projects were curtailed because of the inadequate fund and more importantly less British interest in providing the electricity to the areas concerned (Akpen, 2004). However, despite the effect of depression and the policies introduced as indicated above, the Kano water continued without much interruptions. This was perhaps due to the financial strength of the Kano Native Authority and the reserved capital generated from the taxes and other sources. Consequently, the project was completed in 1930 and commissioned in 1931 as already discussed.

Furthermore, the Second World War (1939-1945) like the depression of the 1930s also affected water supply in Nigeria. During the war normal development of water and electricity projects practically ceased. The government concentrated its efforts more on maintenance of existing stations. During the Second World War, apart from the crisis in electricity supply, most of the existing stations collapse due to the war, which stopped the importation of equipment and spare parts. Equally, the British found it less expedient to establish new stations. In another direction, despite the introduction and popularity of piped water many people in Kano continued to use and in some instances even transformed the traditional sources of water. Wells can be found in residential houses and other public spaces. This development was possibly informed by the fact that adequate water supply has been a lingering problem in Kano that hinders economic development.

### The Impact of Water Supply in Kano

Water has been an important agent of development. This section provides some of the major contributions of water supply to the development of Kano. Water supply had contributed greatly in improving the health of the people especially by eradicating most of the waterborne diseases that became prevalence at the eve of the introduction of the water. It is important reiterate that prior to the introduction of piped water in Kano and indeed most of the other areas in Africa, there were some common waterborne diseases like cholera, malaria, dysentery, typhoid and schistosomiasis that led to the death and maiming of many people. These diseases became a serious threat to the survival of the Europeans in Africa. In particular, malaria was considered as a 'Whiteman's grave'. Two eyewitness accounts suggest the

prevalence of waterborne disease prior to the introduction of piped water. One of the accounts was provided by a European explorer Robinson (1897), who visited Kano in the 19th century. He reports:

According to Dr. Barth, whose testimony was unhappily confirmed by our own experience, Kano is far from being the place recommended as a health resort. It height above the sea, which has according to our calculation, was 1425, out to insure its being free from malaria, which has given so ill a reputation to the low-lying districts along the bed of Niger... Its unhealthiness is probably due to the large quantity of stagnant water to be found within the city. Into one large pool, called Jakera, all the offal and refuse from the market being constantly through, whilst the drinking water from the immediate neighborhood. If it is not taken from the pool itself, it is taken from the wells sunk in suspicious proximity to it... The natives suffer from drinking impure water, though is a less extent than it might naturally have been imagined (Robinson, 1897).

The other account was provided by Malam Mahmudu Koki, who was born in the 19th century and later worked with the Europeans. His account reveals that:

I had guinea-worm one when I was a boy. I've still got the scar on my leg and I notice it sometimes when I am washing... Since we've had the pipe water supply, we don't get it here in the City. It used to be caused especially when the men who were deepening the wells. If one of them had guinea-worm blister on his leg, and went into the water, the head of the worm would emerge at the feel of the water. Then the water would get infected. And then so the Doctor tell us, if you drank that water, you would imbibe the guinea-worm. That is why, in the olden days, if some people were going to drink water, they would cover the mouth of the gourd with a cloth, and drink through it like this (Skinner, 1977).

However, with the introduction of piped water and improving the sanitary condition, the prevalence of most of these diseases during the period of the study were reduced drastically. In fact, some diseases like small pox were eradicated in Kano and other areas that enjoyed piped water supply. Furthermore, water supply have aided industrialization in Kano. Although it can be argued that industrialization in the colonial territories like Kano was not the major preference of colonialists. They preferred the production of local raw materials particularly cotton and groundnut for their own manufacturing industries and encouraged the import of manufactured goods for the expansion of their economy. That was why some scholars conveniently argued that colonialism had led to collapse of local industries in Kano and

other colonised territories in order to facilitate their economic motive of exploitation. It is imperative to note that Kano has been a leading commercial and industrial centre in Africa many centuries prior to the advent of colonialism. However, despite this development, the provision of infrastructure like electricity during the colonial period to some extent contributed to the development of industrialization in Kano particularly toward the end of the colonial period. According to [Bashir \(1983\)](#), modern industrialization in Kano did not effectively start until the early 1950s. Most of the few existing companies were small processing plants ([Bashir, 1983](#)). Some of the early industries established in Kano mostly by Lebanese entrepreneurs included Nigeria Oil Mills, Nigeria Electric Fittings Limited, Aluminium Production Nigeria Limited, Moukarim Metalwood Factory Limited, H. W. Romain and Son Limited and Yassin Confectionary ([Albasu, 1995](#)).

It was in 1952 the first industry owned by indigenous entrepreneurs came into being. This was Kano Citizens Trading Company (KCTC) was established in Kano by some indigenous entrepreneurs especially Alhassan Dantata who contributed £10,200 ([Bashir, 1983](#)). This laid the foundation for the establishment of other textile mills particularly immediately after the attainment of independence in 1960. For instance, Kaduna Textile Mills (KTM) was established in 1958, followed by Nigerian Textile Mills (NTM) in 1962 in Lagos ([Kilby, 1969](#)). The Premier of Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello introduced some policies aimed at industrial development in the region. As a result, United Nigerian Textile Limited (UNTL) and Arewa Textiles Limited were established in Kaduna in 1964. UNTL was a joint venture between some local entrepreneurs and a Chinese Group of Companies (Dye Works) with affiliates in Hong Kong, and many West African countries. Majority of the Chinese investors were British registered company of 'Cha' family of Hong Kong from China ([Kilby, 1969](#)). The Chinese investors owned 49 percent of its capital, while the remaining 41 percent was owned by Nigerian entrepreneurs. UNTL was one of the largest textile companies in Nigeria with employment of 8000 workers in 1979. The early manufacturing industries that were established during the colonial period laid the foundation for the emergence of more industries during the post-colonial period.

Kano during the post-colonial period especially from the 1970s had witnessed rapid growth in the industrialisation especially in manufacturing sector due to the efforts of government of improving the sector by providing necessary infrastructure and incentives. The expansion of industrialisation led to the creation of industrial estates. For example,

in 1977, two hundred and twenty-nine (229) well-serviced industrial plots were designed in Sharada and Challawa industrial zones. Many people from rural areas of Kano and other neighbouring states were attracted in order to work in these industries. Therefore, it was estimated that about 35,000 workers had been employed in the manufacturing alone in 1978 ([Lubeck, 1978](#)). This development led to the rapid growth of residential areas in Kano metropolis and its Closed-Settled Zone especially around the major industrial zones of Bompai, Challawa and Sharada. These areas enjoyed considerable electricity supply and other municipal services.

Development of urbanization is another effect of the provision of water in Kano. It was widely believed that Kano has been for many centuries before the colonial period has developed what can be considered as city or urban structure ([Mabogunje, 1968](#)). Being the emporium of the trade of Central Sudan, Kano developed into a cosmopolitan city attracting immigrant and migrant traders such as Arabs from Tripoli and Ghadames, Nupe, Kanure, Tueregs and Yoruba. Soon therefore, many immigrants and migrants quarters sprang up around this great market. For example, Nupe settled mainly in Tudun Nupawa, Yoruba in Unguwar Ayagi, Kanuri settled at Gabari, Zangon Bare-Bare and Yandoya, while Bakin Zuwo, Alfindiki, Dukurawa and Dandalin Turawa were predominantly settled by the North African Arabs and other migrants ([Naniya, 1983](#); [Perchonock, 1972](#)). [Olaniyi \(2005\)](#) also indicates that the liberal state policy of accommodating the interests of the trading diaspora communities encouraged the influx of traders from diverse parts of West and North Africa and they accommodated into the mainstream of Kano society. The special skills of these immigrants enriched the local technology ([Olaniyi, 2005](#)).

The establishment of British colonial rule in the early 20th century especially with the provision of the infrastructural services contributed to the rapid urbanisation in the Kano metropolis. This led to the wave of migration which consequently made the establishment of new settlements and expansion of many existing ones necessary. For example, the rapid influx of southern Nigerians and foreigners led to the creation of separate settlements for them outside the main city which led to the introduction of Township policy. Township was an administrative area excluded from the jurisdiction of Native Courts and traditional institutions. Township in Kano had its root from 1904, when the British settlement was established in Geiza (later renamed Bompai). Prior to the Geiza settlement, colonial administrators temporarily settled in the Emir's summer res-

idence at Nassarawa, which was later abandoned. Therefore in 1904, colonial officers moved to Geiza which became the first permanent European settlement and served as an administrative centre. In 1911, the arrival of railway led to the incorporation of other areas occupied by the immigrants into the Township. As a result in 1915, the Township was constituted as an administrative enclave under the jurisdiction of a British Magistrate who administered the areas in accordance with the British law (Lugard, 1970). As a result, Sabon Gari settlement that was created earlier in 1913 and incorporated into the Township in 1918 (Bako, 2006). It was dominated mostly by southern Nigerians and other Africans such as Yoruba, Igbo, Nupe, Hausa, Ghanians and Chadians. Syrian Quarters was established in 1915, cheaply dominated by the Lebanese, Syrians, Arabs and Greeks. New European residential quarters was built at Nassarawa in 1925, which led to the relocation of colonial administrative centre from Bompai. From the above narration it is clear that colonial urbanization in Kano was characterized by racial segregation in which people were accommodated according to their ethnic and religious background.

Piped water has been an important utility that symbolized urbanization. In fact, there is no true urbanization without piped water supply. Since the introduction of electricity and other social amenities during colonial period, Kano metropolis continued to witness both population growth and spatial expansion. According to Frishman (1977), three fundamental factors contributed to the rapid population growth in Kano. They are: increase in population through natural reproduction of the population already residing; the second is the massive migration of people from both within and outside Nigeria. People were attracted to Kano because of its position as a leading commercial and industrial centre in Africa. The third factor is the annexation of other neighbouring villages and towns. As the urban areas grow as a result of the natural population growth and migration, they often expanded and swallow up other neighboring villages and towns that were incorporated into the metropolis (Frishman, 1977). The growth in population ultimately resulted to the establishment of new settlements around Kano metropolis to accommodate the people. Some of these areas include Gwammaja, Sharada, Kundila, Gandun Albasa, Sabuwar Gandu, Sabuwar Mandawari, Janbulo, Rijiyar Zaki, Kurna, Rijiyar Lemo, Badawa, Tudun Wada, Tudun Mur-

tala, Kwanar Jaba, Yankaba, Hotoro, Tarauni, Mariri and Naibawa.

Provision of infrastructure also provided employment opportunities to many people. It is imperative to emphasize that construction and maintenance of infrastructure like piped water, electricity and railway were labour intensive that required huge labour force. It is a fact that colonial regime used forced labor in which the local peasants were conscripted to work in the construction of infrastructure. Therefore, many people especially energetic youths were mobilized for that purpose. These youths used that opportunity to learn some skills especially in railway, electricity and water projects. After the completion of these projects, many of the people that participated in the construction were absorbed mostly as unskilled and semi-skilled laborers working under the supervision of expatriate staff. In addition, with the provision of these facilities many people utilised them to establish their businesses. This led to the emergence of local artisans that engaged in the installation and repairs, while other engaged in selling of water installation equipment. In addition, there were many water vendors (yan garuwa) mostly immigrants from Niger that retailed water to households and public places (Ali, Sankiran Sarkin Kano, 2018). They sourced water from the water public standpipes and distributed to their respective customers after paying some amount of money for their services.

## CONCLUSION

This paper explored the transformation of water supply in Kano between 1924 and 1960. Water as a resource is one of the most important commodities without which no human, animal or plant can exist. It has always been an important basic necessity of life that is why its supply always remained part of daily activities. Prior to the introduction of piped water in Kano, people sourced water from various sources like hand dug wells, streams and rainfall. Piped water was introduced in Kano during the colonial period in the 20th century. At the early stage of its introduction, many people especially in the ancient City refused to use it, but later they patronized it as indicated in this study. Water supplied had contributed to the economic and social development of Kano. Some of the major impact of the piped water supply included the development of industrialization and urbanization, reducing the prevalence of water borne diseases and provision of employment.

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