

Death and the Textile Industry in Nigeria

Elisha P. Renne

First published in 2021

ISBN: 978-0-367-46552-0 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-05813-7 (ebk)

Chapter 2

New work-time regimes: the rise and fall of Kaduna Textiles Ltd

(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

This OA chapter is funded by Elisha P. Renne.



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

2 New work-time regimes

The rise and fall of Kaduna Textiles Ltd

We want good workers, because Kaduna Textiles is a place where people are expected to work hard. We make no apology for that, in fact we are proud of it, but do see to it that conditions are good and that there is a proper reward for work done. We want that reward to be as high as possible.

Kaduna Textiles Ltd *Employee's Handbook*

The opening of the Kaduna Textiles Ltd (KTL) mill on 22 November 1957 was a significant event as it reflected beginning efforts to industrialize the North and hence was received with much fanfare (Andrae and Beckman 1999; David Whitehead & Sons 1973).¹ This mill represented the combined efforts of northern Nigerian political leaders, including Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, and the Premier of the Northern Region, along with officials from the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Northern Region Development Corporation, as well as the management of the British textile manufacturing firm, David Whitehead & Sons, and British colonial administrators (Maiwada and Renne 2013; Onyeiwu 1997; Waziri et al. 2020).

Yet by December 2002, Kaduna Textile Ltd had closed. There were several reasons for its closure. However, the chapter begins with the optimism displayed at its opening, for the Kaduna Textiles Ltd (KTL) mill served as a model for future industrial development of northern Nigeria. It first describes the establishment and growth of textile manufacturing at KTL—under the administrative leadership of the Northern Region Development Corporation and David Whitehead & Sons officials. It continues with a discussion of labor migration to Kaduna and specifically, how family and ethnic connections as well as the “push” of western education associated with their religious backgrounds led many KTL workers to seek employment at the mill (Andrae and Beckman 1999; Hinchliffe 1973; Medugbon 1976). It then considers the hiring process, training, and incentives of KTL mill workers as described by former KTL workers, who emphasized mill officials’ attention to hard work and punctuality. This attitude toward time and

work is explained in the Kaduna Textile Ltd *Employee’s Handbook*, which those who were hired received:

The Company therefore aims at recruiting, training and retaining a body of employees who are efficient in their work and enabling each employee to make to this joint effort the fullest contribution of which he is capable.

Interviews with former KTL mill workers further clarify management strategies through their experiences of the promotion process and pay levels. Once hired, mill officials were concerned with retaining workers through a range of incentives such as access to the mill clinics and “certificates of long service,” described in the *KTL Employee’s Handbook* and by former mill employees.

The selection of workers with some western education and their retention through various incentives relates to the other part of the worker–management equation, namely that KTL was “a place where people are expected to work hard.” This hard work reflected a shift to industrial production and to a particular equation of time and money, noted by E.P. Thompson (1967: 61):

Those who are employed experience a distinction between their employer’s time and their “own” time. And the employer must *use* the time of his labour, and see it is not wasted: not the task but the value of time when reduced to money is dominant. Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent.

Thus, new workers at KTL were trained for the specific work at the mill—for example, as operators of looms, and of cotton carding and spinning machines—but also in attending to time and to schedules of work. While most workers had been exposed through primary school attendance to a different configuration of time as compared to agricultural work in their villages, which relied on the sun and the seasons to organize labor, mill routines were even more standardized. The presence of clocks, the sounding of sirens, and the use of punch-cards reinforced the textile mill’s particular work–time regime.

However, despite the dedication of many mill workers and their adherence to mill rules, when the KTL mill ended operations in 2002, they were not paid their negotiated gratuities. The final section of the chapter considers the reasons for the Kaduna Textiles Ltd mill’s closing and its effect on workers’ time. Kaduna Textiles Ltd had several problems associated with production, which the KTL management attempted to address through various means of cost reduction. These included cutting back its labor force, union negotiations, and accommodation to workers’ informal resistance, which enabled the mill to continue operations until it could no longer do so. Workers’ experience of time after the mill closed changed as their urban experience of time was no longer equated with money and abundant food, but rather with futility, poverty, and hunger. Yet the mill’s decline and this new regime of time could hardly have been foreseen during the optimistic days of its opening and workers’ pride in their achievement as employees of KTL.

The beginnings of the textile industry in Kaduna

The political context of the mill's opening in the final years of colonial rule in Nigeria reflected a major shift in British manufacturers' and colonial officials' views on manufacturing in the country. Prior to the mill's opening, there were no large modern textile mills set up in Nigeria, reflecting the British colonial policy of extracting raw materials from its colony to be used in manufacturing in the UK, with the subsequent textiles to be sold by agents of British trading firms in Nigeria (Johnson 1974). However, by the 1950s, British textile manufacturers began to see the advantages of manufacturing closer to the source of its raw materials—cotton, and its customers—Nigerian consumers. Also, new shipping and rail services to Kaduna made the transport of equipment and building materials feasible. Thus, in 1954, following Nigerian inquiries, Mr. J. C. Whittaker, the co-director of David Whitehead & Sons, established the David Whitehead & Sons Overseas Liaison Office to accommodate these goals (Hartley 2012; Maiwada and Renne 2013; Onyeiwu 1997).

Yet the earlier anti-manufacturing policy had consequences for the building and running of a large textile mill; Nigerian officials and workers had no experience or training in the operation of such an enterprise.² Thus, on the Nigerian side, Northern Nigerian officials were interested in partnering with a textile manufacturing firm that could provide textile technology and expertise. Sir Ahmadu Bello, who was the Premier of the Northern Region, was a major force behind industrial development in northern Nigeria (Paden 1986: 265). He became interested in the British manufacturing firm, David Whitehead & Sons Ltd, possibly as a consequence of a visit to southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where he had seen the David Whitehead & Sons mill, which the company had built there—its first in Africa (Interview: N. Rutherford, 2 March 2012, Minchinhampton). In March 1955, the Northern Regional Government invited David Whitehead officials to establish a textile mill in Kaduna, in collaboration with the Northern Region Marketing Board and the Northern Region Development Corporation. Officials at David Whitehead & Sons also saw the advantages of citing a mill in Kaduna. In April 1955, Ahmadu Bello, officials from the NRDC, the Northern Region Marketing Board, and David Whitehead & Sons met in Rawtenstall, Lancashire, UK, to discuss the details of becoming partners in a textile manufacturing plant in Northern Nigeria (Maiwada and Renne 2013: 175). An agreement was subsequently negotiated to provide construction plans and equipment, as well as training staff, which was signed in Rawtenstall on 7 September 1955, with Ahmadu Bello and Alhaji Aliyu, Turakin Zazzau (the Minister of Trade and Industry, later Director of the Northern Region Development Corporation), other NRMB and NRDC board members, and officials of David Whitehead & Sons in attendance.

Construction of the steel and concrete mill began in early 1956, under contract with the UK firm, Taylor Woodrow (West Africa) Ltd, with prefabricated steel parts that were shipped from the UK (David Whitehead & Sons 1973).

On 7 March 1956, Ahmadu Bello laid the foundation stone in a ceremony attended by David Whitehead & Sons personnel (Maiwada and Renne 2013). Construction continued while reconditioned spinning equipment (13,608 spinning spindles), new Barber Colman winding and beaming equipment, and 288 new S-type Northrop automatic looms were shipped from the UK, and were later installed (David Whitehead & Sons 1973). By November 1957, the No. 1 Kaduna Textiles Ltd mill was ready to begin production following the mill's official opening.

The mill's opening ceremony

Many dignitaries attended the mill's opening on 22 November 1957. Colonial government officials as well as personnel from David Whitehead & Sons and the Premier's Office spent much time in preparing for this event (Kaduna Textiles Ltd 1957). A special brochure was commissioned from the British public relations firm, H. & B. Rose, in August 1957, which included a forward by Sir Ahmadu Bello and a brief history of David Whitehead & Sons' involvement in the construction of the mill, along with many illustrations (Maiwada and Renne 2013: 176). The opening, which Mary, Princess Royal and Countess of Harewood, was scheduled to attend, was carefully managed by British colonial officials in the Ministry of Trade and Industry. These officials developed scheduling, parking, and lists of invitees, many of whom were from the major foreign mercantile firms (e.g., John Holt, UAC, and Paterson Zochonis) working in Nigeria. Guests were taken around the offices and mill and were given brief explanations of the textile manufacturing processes (Kaduna Textiles Ltd 1957; Figure 2.1).

The mill began operation in November 1957, producing unfinished baft of the sort that had been earlier manufactured in Manchester for the Nigerian market (David Whitehead & Sons 1973). Gordon Hartley, a former employee of David

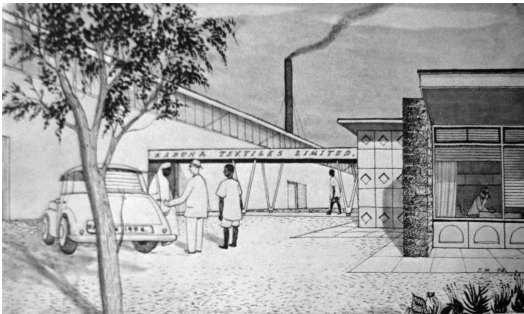


Figure 2.1 Drawing of Kaduna Textile Ltd, the first industrial textile mill in Kaduna, northern Nigeria, which was established in collaboration with the textile manufacturing firm, David Whitehead and Sons, Ltd, Rawtenstall, Lancashire, UK (Courtesy of David Whitehead and Sons, Ltd, Archives, Parbold, Lancashire, UK).

Whitehead & Sons, described the experimental process whereby the right combination of weave and starch led to the desired result (Maiwada and Renne 2013: 176). Mill management and workers successfully produced increasing quantities of quality baft cotton cloth, which was attractive not only to agents from major textile firms operating in Nigeria but especially to Nigerian customers.

The early success of Kaduna Textiles Ltd was highlighted in the Kaduna Exhibition—“Made in Nigeria,” which opened in May 1959. British colonial officials were also anxious to show the positive efforts toward self-governance, modernization, and development which KTL represented, in anticipation of Nigerian Independence in 1960. This approach, which attempted to negate earlier British opposition to industrialization, was reflected in the showcasing of Kaduna Textiles Ltd. Nigerian and British political figures, which included Ahmadu Bello and Harold Macmillan, as well as many Kaduna residents, walked through the exhibit which featured a series of exhibit booths with accompanying explanatory panels that illustrated the textile production process from cotton field to cotton bales and finally to bales of woven baft cloth (Maiwada and Renne 2013: 177).

Another change which occurred at this time was a shift from the distribution of Kaduna Textiles products through trading firm offices in the UK to sales through their Nigerian offices, although the control of distribution remained in European mercantile hands. However, with Nigerian Independence in 1960, Kaduna Textile Ltd officials sought to sell bales to independent Nigerian traders and merchant houses such as the Kano Merchants Trading Company (DanAsabe 2020), which had their own distribution networks (Hartley 2012). Kaduna Textiles’ sales to Nigerian traders grew as increased production of new products, such as bleached starched shirting, were manufactured in the new No. 2 mill which was built in 1960–1961 (Interview: N. Rutherford, 2 March 2012, Minchinhampton).

In 1974, the owner of the Northern Nigerian Textile Mill—which specialized in printed cotton textiles—was leaving the country. Through a special arrangement, control of the company was transferred to Kaduna Textiles Ltd (Maiwada and Renne 2013: 178). Subsequently, two more mills were constructed in order to produce additional bleached cotton cloth that was used in the adjacent Northern Nigerian Textile Mill, with the printed textiles marketed under the KTL name. This increased production of KTL cloth meant that the mill needed additional employees—to work in the spinning, weaving, printing, and finishing departments as well as in clerical services and management. These job openings were filled by men who travelled to Kaduna, having heard through word of mouth and by radio of employment opportunities there.

Looking for employment at the Kaduna textile mills: labor migration from southern Kaduna and the Middle Belt states

In 1962, when the second mill was opened in order to provide bleached cotton shirting material for the market, over 2,600 workers were employed

(nd: 4). These numbers increased so that by 1980, it was estimated that KTL had over 4,000 employees who worked in the mill’s three shifts (Andrae and Beckman 1999: 301). And, as has been mentioned, many—but not all—of the workers who came to work at KTL were from towns and villages to the south of Kaduna whose families had converted to Christianity in early part of the 20th century. Indeed, three former KTL mill employees who subsequently had management positions, Sylvester Gankon, Haruna Joshua, and the late Shaibu Yusuf, all came from different areas and different ethnic groups south of Kaduna. Gankon, a Manchok man, came from a town in Kaura Local Government in southern Kaduna State, and Joshua, an Ngas man, came from Kamke Local Government in Plateau State—are both Christians. Yusuf, an Igala man, who came from Ankpa, a town in Ankpa Local Government in Kogi State, was Muslim. All three came to KTL with some secondary school education.

Having a secondary school education was relatively unusual during the 1950s; approximately one in five of the men who came from the south to work at Kaduna Textiles Ltd had such an education. However, many workers—about 60%—had attended primary school and thus had elementary reading and writing skills (Andrae and Beckman 1999: 302). These men (or their fathers) had acquired basic literacy through the work of evangelist missionaries, particularly those of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) who fostered the building of churches in small villages in southern Kaduna and Plateau states. Initially, SIM evangelists were particularly active in Kogi and Niger states, with the first SIM station established in Pategi (a Nupe-speaking area in Niger state; Ijagbemi 1986). They later continued their proselytizing in villages in areas in southern Kaduna state and Plateau state, where they preached in newly-built churches where reading and writing were also taught. These “Classes for Religious Instruction” were an important part of SIM evangelism as the mission’s education policy made clear:

The education policy of the Mission in the main recognizes no greater responsibility than teaching an illiterate population to read and write so that they can use the Holy Scripture for themselves and teach intensively those Scriptures. Because the greater bulk of the people in the Central Sudan are illiterate, teaching must of necessity go hand-in-hand with evangelism.

(Gaiya 2018: 126)

Nonetheless, this emphasis on literacy’s importance for SIM evangelism did not extend to “subjects such as English, Mathematics, Commercial Arts...and other worldly arts and sciences...[as] they become a source of temptation to the pupil to enter Government service,” as the SIM evangelist, Dr. Andrew Stirrett observed (Gaiya 2018: 126). However, rather than government service, this literacy provided men with preparation for work at the Kaduna Textile Ltd mill and hence many moved to Kaduna, where many have remained. For

these men, the possibility of employment in the textile mills in Kaduna was an attractive option compared with the tedium of farm work.

The junior mill manager, Haruna Joshua, came to Kaduna in 1966 from Plateau State, as he explains:

I met my townsmen to join textile mill work in 1967, when I was very young, I was 15 years old. It was the year which was the beginning of the Nigerian Civil War. I really liked to work in textiles because they were weaving some good cloth and I had interest to see the cloth and wondered how weaving worked. At that time, it was the British who ran Kaduna Textiles.

We had three shifts A, B, and C, 12 midnight to 8 in the morning, 8am to 4pm, then 4pm–12 midnight. I was in the B shift, from 8am–4pm. We had a uniform, each shift was a different color so when you saw a colleague, you knew that this man was from a certain shift. The shift goes together with the uniform. But not completely, for some men were identified by their specific jobs, such as maintenance workers who wore black uniforms. (Most of them were on early morning duty.)

As a weaver, you have to come early, at least ten minutes to the time, i.e., the closing time for the earlier shift so that other men going out will handover whatever they left off. So, you will take over from where they stopped, then you'd carry on. We had clocking cards to keep track of our time and we were wearing wristwatches then, in order to know the time. I bought it when I started the work.

During that time, the machines were very good, they were working very well so that when a thread broke, the loom would stop automatically so that one man could control 20 looms. Then you have a spare workman, in case you wanted to go to the toilet, then the spare man will take over, otherwise the two of you will be together with 20 machines.

(Interview: Haruna Joshua, 10 May 2018, Kaduna)

There are several themes embedded in Haruna Joshua's description of his work at Kaduna Textiles Ltd in 1967 that underscore the particularities of his experience of the transition from agricultural work to industrial capitalism in Kaduna. First of all, he found his way to the KTL mill through his connections with other Ngas men who preceded him at the mill (LaPin 1983).³ Second, he began work in the mill in 1967, the year that marked the beginning of the Nigerian civil war, when many older mill workers left to join the Federal army. This situation, combined with the increasing demand for textiles by the government, enabled him to join the Kaduna Textiles Ltd work force when he was only 15 years old. Third, 1967 was also the year that Ahmadu Bello was assassinated in his home in Kaduna by Igbo military officers, who objected to what they saw as his political-religious agenda. For

not only was Ahmadu Bello an advocate for the industrial and educational development of northern Nigeria, he was also, as the Sardauna of Sokoto, a member of the Sokoto royal family and as such, sought to support the predominance of Islam in northern Nigeria. Indeed, during the early 1960s, he led what has been referred to as “conversion tours,” in which he travelled to villages in southern Kaduna in order to counter the work of Christian missionaries and to support conversion to Islam (Abba 1981). He viewed the establishment of textile mills in northern Nigeria as a way of providing Muslim men with increased economic opportunities, just as his support for the first university in northern Nigeria, Ahmadu Bello University, was meant to strengthen northern Nigerians’ opportunities for higher education (Paden 1986). Thus, while the Kaduna Textiles Ltd *Handbook* explicitly states that, “It is not the Company’s intention to interfere with the individual employee’s religious practices,” various concessions to Muslim workers there were made. For example, “Moslem workers are assured that these [meal] breaks and shift change times have been agreed by both religious and Government Authorities who accept that they are so timed as to permit a Moslem to perform his obligatory prayers” (Kaduna Textiles Ltd nd).

However, the majority of the workers at KTL were Christians, although there were some Muslim mill workers. Alhaji Shaibu Yusuf, a Muslim originally from Kogi State, served as a deputy manager at KTL, having attended Kaduna Polytechnic where he received a Higher National Diploma in Textile Technology and also in Public Administration. But many Muslim young men were more likely to receive Islamic, rather than Western, education.⁴ While this situation changed with the opening of Islamic primary and secondary schools that taught both Islamic and Western education, at that time young men taught to read and write in mission schools to the south had an advantage. For reading and writing were essential prerequisites for employment at the KTL mill. As one man put it, “KTL at that time, it was a nice textile mill, everyone liked to work at KTL,” but not everyone was hired.⁵

Getting a job at Kaduna Textiles Ltd

Men working as farmers in villages throughout southern Kaduna State and the Middle Belt region heard about work opportunities at the textile mills in Kaduna by various means. Some were encouraged to come by family members or fellow villagers already working at one of the mills. Others heard about job openings at the Kaduna textile mills through radio broadcasts. Some, having completed their primary education in the village, came to seek employment in the big city on their own initiative:

I finished my school in 1968 and came to Kaduna. I heard that they were looking for people who can work in Kaduna. Most companies used to advertise that they needed workers. Some of the news we heard on the

radio and some we heard from people who came back to their village. When they came back, they said we could find a job either sweeping or working in an office. That was how I came to Kaduna and I stayed with my brother.

(Interview: Wuyah Adze, 24 July 2019, Kaduna)

Once in Kaduna, they sought out work, often with the assistance of family members already living in the city. The first step in seeking employment at textile mills such as KTL was to apply for work at the government labor office:

At the labor office, we had to make a queue... From there, they selected me to go to KTL. When I got there, they sent me to the Weaving Department, that department was good for me. That was how I was appointed to KTL. When I went to the KTL factory, they interviewed us. We went to their office one by one for the interview. That time the personnel manager was the senior brother of the Governor of Plateau state, J.D. Gowon. He was the one who interviewed me. First of all, he looked at your hands and if they are rough, he will say you cannot work because you will be working with cotton. The man was very intelligent.

(Interview: Haruna Joshua, 16 July 2019, Kaduna)

There was also an effort made to equitably hire workers by ethnicity and by their cultural embeddedness, as Haruna Joshua explained:

The Idoma were the greatest number among the 30 people there, they were 18 out of the 30. The personnel manager told his personal assistant to move the chairs out of the room. Then he said that all the Idoma should come. He told them to dance the way that they danced in their hometowns. One of them was singing their song and the rest answered. They were asked to go one way in a line—those who were not living in their hometowns but were living in Kaduna town [*barriki*], they could not do the dance, so they were knocking into each other. The manager then said, “Those who could not dance among them, they could not do the work in the factory so they should go.”

That was how he selected the Idoma. He then turned to us—those who were not Idoma—and asked us to bring our primary school certificates. He saw where I came from. His father was a tax collector in my own village, AmKyar, we called him Mr. Achi. The personnel manager said he knew my father. I was happy that he knew my father because I knew I would be hired. He asked me a question, he said, “If you are going to Jos and you drop one person at Saminaka, two stop at another place, etc.—I answered correctly... So that is how he employed me. Because he realized that I answered the question correctly and that my hands were clean and soft.

We who were selected, they gave us some forms, the rules and regulations of the factory were written on it. Some things written on the form: “If you fight with each other you will be sacked; if you steal from the company you will be sacked; if you are absent for 3 days, you will also be sacked.” We were asked to sign the form that we agreed with the rules and regulations of the factory and that we will obey them.

(Interview: Haruna Joshua, 16 July 2019, Kaduna)

However, one Idoma man, Godwin Okwoli, had a somewhat different experience:

The employment was conducted by province with your certificate at that time. The procedure was that the KTL personnel manager would look at your school certificate. At the front gate they would call us by province and through that province, they kept some, then after Lokoja Province, then Benue Province, then to Kaduna. So, after that, based on the number of people that they needed they would recruit almost 20. Not all 20 from Benue alone, they selected 3 or 4 from Benue. They selected workers based on your certificate, they then removed you from the major line and put you in another line. There were some who didn’t finish primary 7, they weren’t selected.

(Interview: 24 July 2019, Kaduna)

Once a worker had been approved to work at KTL by the personnel manager, he was sent to the clinic for a health check-up. If he passed muster, he was sent to a particular department to begin work, as Bulus Ayuba explained:

I was employed and sent to the Operations Department. There was a trial period of about 2 months to see if you will be able to do the job. Then they will give you a permanent position and they gave me my name tag—and they would also give you a number. I still remember my number, it was 1068 at that time.

(Interview: Bulus Ayuba, 24 July 2019, Kaduna)

This trial period was varied based on the workers’ abilities and the company’s needs. Depending on the position and type of work, workers were sent for further training at the workshop in the mill itself and others were sent to Kaduna Polytechnic and other schools in the Kaduna area. Depending on the course of training, some workers attended school for a year, others for several years, as Samson Okwoli explained: “Then they sent me to Kaduna Polytechnic where I spent five years, learning textile science and management, I have the certificate.”

As Thompson (1967: 84) has noted, schools contributed to new ways of thinking about time regimes:

One other non-industrial institution lay to hand which might be used to inculcate “time-thrift”: the school. Clayton complained that the streets of

Manchester were full of “idle ragged children; who are not only losing their Time, but learning habits of gaming”, etc. He praised charity schools for teaching Industry, Frugality, Order and Regularity: “the Scholars here are obliged to rise betimes and to observe Hours, with great Punctuality.”

In some ways, discipline in the Methodist schools—both in Nigeria and England—conditioned children, some of whom became textile mill workers, to follow school rules, to be obedient, and to be “on time”: “Once within the school gates, the child entered the new universe of disciplined time... The first rule to be learned by the scholars was: ‘I am to be present at the School... a few minutes before half-past nine o’clock’” (Thompson 1967: 84).⁶

By the early 1900s, these ways of thinking about time were well inculcated in the minds and behavior of British missionaries who came to Nigeria to teach children in SIM and Methodist schools, and were learned by children who attended them. These ways of thinking about time and work—that one must work hard, be punctual, and not waste time—also framed the company requirements and were accepted by those who were hired to work at the Kaduna Textiles Ltd mill.

Kaduna Textiles Ltd: new regimes of work and time

The Company therefore aims at recruiting, training and retaining a body of employees who are efficient in their work and enabling each employee to make to this joint effort the fullest contribution of which he is capable.

Kaduna Textile Ltd Employee’s Handbook

In order to operate the mill equipment efficiently, workers and section heads needed training that was provided through various methods of instruction—at the KTL mill itself, through attendance at local schools, and through on-the-job training. They also needed to be efficient with their use of time for, as Godwin Okwoli observed, “Those days, time was very scarce.”

As with other workers, Okwoli became familiar with the mill’s regimen of time, which included the use of sirens that marked shift changes, the wearing of wristwatches, and the use of clocking cards, as one KTL junior mill manager, Haruna Joshua, explained: “We were given clocking cards—so if you were late, it would show the time you clocked in so it was better that you came to clock in earlier than to be late.” Wuyah Adze described his own beginning work experience of mill time:

You know when you are newly employed, they will put you in the morning section. Sometimes we used to start work at 7 am. I used to know the time when the rooster crowed. Honestly, I would get up because I had to trek from Tudun Nupawa and I would follow long the Kaduna Bridge to come to work. Early in the morning we would trek to come to the mill and go back later. When we were close to the mill, we could hear the siren

but later they introduced clocking cards—so you would clock in and clock out. That was how we knew the time.

(Interview: 24 July 2019, Kaduna)

These comments exemplify what E.P. Thompson has observed about new conceptions of time as money associated with industrial capitalism.

The specifics of time and work requirements were provided in the KTL *Employee’s Handbook* regarding “Hours and Conditions of Work,” for shift and non-shift workers (Figure 2.2). As Haruna Joshua, recalled, there were incentives and alarms to encourage workers to keep to time:

In the olden days, when you resume by 12 noon they will be showing films in the Welfare Centre so you will come early and you won’t be late... We enjoyed the films before lunch–time, then when it was ten minutes to lunch time, they would blow the alarm and the whole of Kakuri will hear the alarm, that it’s now 10 minutes to 12 noon. So even if you are asleep, you will wake up and wash your face and come at that time, ten minutes to twelve to take over for the out-going person.

(Interview: 10 May 2018, Kaduna)

Nonetheless, some workers did come late. They were required to get permission from their supervisor to begin work and unless “permission is given or a good cause shown, disciplinary action may be taken by the employer” (Kaduna Textiles Ltd nd).

Men were proud to keep to time by wall clocks, alarms clocks, and even wristwatches (Figure 2.3). When asked when he first had a wristwatch, Wuzah Adze exclaimed:

I couldn’t afford a watch then [in the village], we were even using salt sacks to make short pants for school. How could I wear a wristwatch at that time?

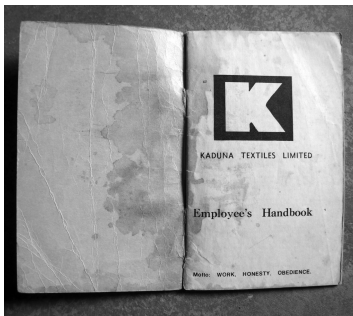


Figure 2.2 Kaduna Textiles Limited *Employee’s Handbook* with motto: “WORK, HONESTY, OBEDIENCE,” undated, Kaduna (Photograph by E.P. Renne, 15 May 2018).



Figure 2.3 Weaving room workers at Kaduna Textile Ltd, note wristwatch worn by worker on the right (Courtesy of David Whitehead and Sons, Ltd, Archives, Parbold, Lancashire, UK).

I started wearing a wristwatch in 1970 when I was working at KTL. Then I would say that I was an “*oga*” when I started wearing that wristwatch.⁷
(Interview: 24 July 2019, Kaduna)

When Godwin Okwoli first started to work at KTL in 1963, wristwatches were not common. However, they became readily available by the 1970s in Kaduna with traders selling them in front of the KTL entry gate, as Reuben Yakubu explained: “Those wristwatches, some fellows, they used to sell them on credit to us. When we got our pay, we would give them their money, N20 or N30, for some of them” (Interview: 24 July 2019, Kaduna).

Some workers also had purchased wall clocks in order to arrive at the mill on time:

We had a wall clock and set the alarm in our house. They—the managers didn’t give them to us, we bought them. We’d set the alarm and come to work. At the time of closing, the company would tell us.
(Interview: Godwin Okwoli, 24 July 2019, Kaduna)

These means of keeping to time differed from village time-keeping, as Samson Okwoli, a former KTL worker, observed:

Initially I started work at KTL at 8pm. Since I knew that I would resume work at 8pm, I would have to get there earlier. My alarm clock would tell me the time and they have an alarm clock here at the mill. I had a wrist-watch then too. But in the village, we used to farm. Everyday we would get up, we would use the sun to know the time, whether it is rising or it is setting—then they would know it was evening, after doing a day of farming.

(Interview: Samson Okwoli, 24 July 2019, Kaduna)

Yet some men who came from villages in southern Kaduna State were quite familiar with clocks from their attendance at school, as Bulus Ayuba said:

In our own village, you know, many people had already gone to school and had an education so they had wall clocks. Because at that time, we had already grown up, education had gone on. But our people in the olden days, they kept local time by the light [sun]. So when they said it was 10 o'clock and you looked at the wall clock, it said 10 o'clock exactly. So early in the morning they would say it was time to go to school. When it is morning time, they would know it's almost 6 o'clock, 7 o'clock and then you will know it's 10–11am as that was the time the Fulani people are selling *fura* and grazing their animals because they know the time.

(Interview: 24 July 2019, Kaduna)

This shift from assessing time based on the sun—daytime—or its absence—nighttime, as well as time based on tasks—selling *fura*—to time based on time-pieces—such as wall clocks, wristwatches, and alarm clocks—was reinforced by KTL managers, who devised a system of incentives to motivate superior workers who kept to time.

KTL work incentives

There were several incentives which encouraged employees to work hard and to stay with the company. Several workers received certificates of long service for 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, and even 40 years of service. While cloth wrappers (six-yard pieces of KTL fabric) and, for some, money, were given along with the certificates, the ten-year long service award was particularly special, as Godwin Okwoli explained:

They sent your name to the Department, after ten years they give you wrappers and a wall clock, 10 year service award, after 15 years and then 20 years award. They didn't give me money—but rather cloth and a wall

clock but the clock only once. The wrapper number depended on your grade, the last one I collected 6 pieces of wrapper cloth for 20 years of service.

(Interview: 24 July 2019, Kaduna)

According to Haruna Joshua, “I was given a certificate after 10 years, after 25 years, and 30 years... They gave us six cloth wrappers and money—we enjoyed ourselves!” Cloth wrappers (six-yard pieces) were also given at special holidays such as Christmas and Ramadan.⁸ There was also a company clinic (as will be discussed in the Chapter 3) which attended to workers’ and their immediate family members’ health problems. If the problem was serious, the worker was transferred to a local hospital with expenses covered by the company. In addition, a canteen located at the mill provided subsidized meals prepared by local women, while films were regularly shown at the Welfare Centre located on the KTL site. KTL also provided housing in the Barnawa [Birnawa] area for junior staff members, some of whose widows continue to live there.

In all these ways—by the division of labour, the supervision of labour; fines; bells and clocks; money incentives; preachings and schooling; the suppression of fairs and sports – new labour habits were formed, and a new time-discipline was imposed.

(Thompson 1967: 90)

For those who were hired, many stayed on despite increasing difficulties for workers, union organizers, and management alike (Andrae and Beckman 1999: 106).

Signs of distress and the mill’s closure

What needs to be said is not that one way of life is better than the other, but that this is a place of the most far-reaching conflict; that the historical record is not a simple one of neutral and inevitable/technological change, but is also one of exploitation and of resistance to exploitation; and that values stand to be lost as well as gained.

(Thompson 1967: 93–94)

The textile mills in Kaduna were still operating in the 1990s although they were operating with obsolete equipment, without the capital to obtain spare parts, and without a regular source of electricity. In 1997, the Kaduna Textiles Ltd mill was “on the verge of collapse” (Onyeiwu 1997: 244). The subsequent closing of Kaduna Textiles Ltd and other textile mills in Kaduna partly reflected the fall in international oil prices in the early 1980s (Andrae and Beckman 1999: 38). This situation contributed to a reduction of government support for textile manufacturing in northern Nigeria. The IMF Structural

Adjustment Program (SAP), signed by former President Ibrahim Babangida in 1986 and implemented in 1987, led to the subsequent currency devaluation which contributed to the process of decline for the Kaduna Textiles Ltd mill. One oft-cited reason for the mills' decline was that outdated textile equipment was neither repaired nor replaced because the foreign exchange needed to purchase spare parts and new equipment was not available. Yet even if spinning machines, winders, and looms had been replaced, they became prohibitively expensive to operate due to the irregular supply of electricity and the need to use "black oil" as a source of power for textile mills in Kaduna. This situation was one of the main reasons for mill closures cited in the literature, in newspaper articles, and by textile workers alike. The economic constraints on textile mill production due to the lack of electricity in Kaduna had a variety of consequences for textile mill workers.

At the Kaduna Textiles Ltd mill, the lack of working equipment led to temporary shut-downs and stoppages (Onyeiwu 1997: 244–245). These shut-downs and production stoppages affected mill managers' ability to pay workers in a timely fashion and led to periods of compulsory leave. In January 1984, KTL workers were given the option of closing the mill altogether or taking a 50% reduction in pay, a situation which led to a labor protest (Andrae and Beckman 1999: 15–17). After a settlement agreement the following month that reinstated all workers with a 25% pay reduction, the mill continued operations although the work force was reduced, not by dismissals but by attrition. After 1984, a new manager was put in place who streamlined production by closing the third and fourth mills, by refurbishing equipment through salvaging spare parts from decommissioned machinery, and by putting fewer workers in charge of more machines (Andrae and Beckman 1999: 104). While these actions improved production and even led to a slight profit in 1986, inefficiencies of production and relatively high prices of KTL products led to their lack of competitiveness, in part reflecting industrial attrition associated with Abacha regime corruption (Andrae and Beckman 1999: 286).⁹

New and different regimes of time

By 2002, the KTL mill had closed. After the closure of this mill and other mills in Kaduna, the equation of "time is money" associated with industrial capitalism collapsed as former KTL workers, dismissed without gratuity payments, had abundant but purposeless time. Several widows mentioned their husbands' frustration with their failure to receive their benefits and their worries about supporting their families. For example, Audu Kuru, who worked in the KTL Spinning Department, was consumed with worries about obtaining his gratuity payment, which his widow believed led to his death:

The problem he faced, he was always thinking—he didn't receive his gratuity. Whenever he was eating, you would see him moving his head and

his eyes would become red. Besides that, he came to discover that he had *ciwo suga* [diabetes] before he died.

(Interview: Asabe Audu, 9 May 2018, Kaduna)

Other former KTL workers became disoriented and, as one widow put it, her husband, Ayuba Dandume, “lost his mind”:

After he lost his job, he started work as a security man... There was a time he spent two days—we didn’t see him, he was just walking around Abuja Road. We found him and brought him back home. He was suffering from that time until the time when he couldn’t speak or move... Even his food, I had to feed him because he could not feed himself—because he could not lift his arms. He suffered for three years. We took him to St. Gerard’s Hospital and [after he died], we buried him in this house.

(Interview: Cecilia Ayuba, 9 May 2018, Kaduna)

For many KTL workers who abided by the company’s rules about being “on time”—coming early, clocking in and out using clocking cards, and promptly resuming work after breaks, time *was* money. And even though pay for most workers was not great, food prices were low in Kaduna in the 1960s and 1970s so that the money they earned was associated with abundant food. “We even threw food away,” as one widow recalled. However, after the KTL mill closed and workers were discharged without their gratuities and could not find other jobs, they not only had “time on their hands,” but many were unable to buy sufficient food for their families. While several former workers (and their wives) resorted to farming, in many cases returning to one’s hometown was not a realistic option. For it was not only workers, and later, their widows, who had come to Kaduna and had become accustomed to urban life, which was the case for many of their children who were born in the city. It was also the fracturing of extended family ties, reinforced by the regimented hours and regular income associated with industrial employment, as opposed to the hours which fluctuated with the seasons; the hard, physical labor associated with farming; and the intimate sociality of village life. This disjunction of family connections was reflected in the experiences of some widows and their children on returning to their hometown after their husbands’ and fathers’ deaths, as one daughter explained:

We didn’t find it easy when my father died... We went back to our hometown, but the way they have been there, it’s not easy because my mother was staying with the wives of my father’s brother—they were gossiping about her and insulting her. So my mother said that she couldn’t stay there and brought us back here to Kaduna. I don’t think that we will go back home in the future although we used to go from time to time. But there has been no help from our relatives, not even N5 up until now.

(Interview: R. Galau, 17 July 2019, Kaduna)

This lack of social or financial support, faced by some but not all KTL widows and their children, underscores their very different experience of post-capitalist industrial time in Kaduna, Nigeria.

Conclusion

Kaduna Textiles Ltd provides a particular example of the growth of industrial capitalism in a specific sociocultural, economic, and political context; the KTL mill was opened as a government initiative, with assistance from a private foreign textile firm. Through the opening of the Kaduna Textiles Ltd mill Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of the Northern Region, was determined to develop the economy of the North and, furthermore, to increase Muslim conversion in southern Kaduna and Middle Belt states. Yet as one Middle Belt mill worker, Pa Afolabi, observed: “we were always saying that [the] late Sardauna was a Northerner by origin but a Nigerian by action because all he did was for the benefit of all irrespective of place of origin” (Mudashir 2010). While the particular history that preceded this situation—particularly the 19th century control of much of northern Nigeria by Muslim rulers associated with the Sokoto Caliphate and the subsequent imposition of British colonial rule in the early 20th century—is beyond the scope of this volume,¹⁰ this history affected the political inclination of those belonging to the many small ethnic groups in southern Kaduna and Middle Belt states. Their distasteful memories of northern emirate rule and the associated practice of slavery contributed to their acceptance of the British and Christian missionaries who taught them to read the Bible, which inadvertently contributed to labor migration to Kaduna and affected who was hired by Kaduna Textiles Ltd managers.

Thus, while the outcome of this industrialization process reflects the particularities of northern Nigerian history and culture, one might also say that the deindustrialization of the textile mills in Kaduna is also specific to the Nigerian context. For example, unlike Nigeria, most of the cotton textile mills in the UK ended production in the late 20th century (BBC National Films 2014; Blackburn 1993; Famie and Jeremy 2004), largely due to insufficient labor. But, as in Nigeria, their demise was also due to reduced production capacity and foreign competition.¹¹ As Blackburn (1993: 256–257) observed regarding the cotton textile industry in the UK:

At the end of 1991, there were a derisory 460,000 spindles in place (compared with 9 million in 1961) and 8,700 looms (as against 168,000 in 1961)...On the evidence of the capacity figures mentioned it is not an exaggeration to say that the UK no longer has a cotton textile industry of any consequence.

This decline in spinning and weaving capacity reflected the closing of many cotton textile mills in Lancashire, Manchester, and Blackburn, as is noted in

the BBC National Film production, “From Boom to Bust: The Decline of the Cotton Industry”:

During the 1960s and 70s, mills were closed across Lancashire at a rate of almost one a week. By the 1980s the textile industry of the North West had all but vanished. Only the empty factories and northern towns which sprung up as a result, were left—a legacy of an industry that was once the pride of Britain.

This situation has been difficult for many former UK textile mill workers. Yet other employment opportunities, particularly for those with higher education, along with government programs that provided unemployment support and health care lessened the impact of this transition in the UK.

While the Kaduna Textiles Ltd mill was built and equipped by a British textile manufacturing firm, David Whitehead & Sons Ltd, Nigerian textile mill workers experienced a different situation after the KTL mill had closed in Kaduna as compared to that of British textile mill workers. With the ownership of KTL continuing to be held in trust by the 19 northern state governments, an agreement on final remittance payments has not been reached despite union, coalition, and worker efforts, nor has health care been provided by KTL or the state government. Thus, despite KTL workers’ acceptance of the new work and time regime, this particular form of industrial state-owned, “public capitalism,” has led to their forced acceptance of either a return to agricultural labor with its time-regimen based on the seasons or of “free time,” during which they are unemployed but hardly at their leisure. For those preferring to remain in the city, the difficulties of living there without regular income and access to affordable health care has contributed to the many health problems experienced by former KTL workers and the subsequent deaths of many. The health problems associated with their work at the KTL mill and their deaths after the mill’s closure are explored in the following chapter.

Notes

- 1 The opening of Kaduna Textiles Ltd was reported in newspapers from three continents: the *Chicago Defender*, *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, the *Manchester Guardian*, *The Times* (London), and the *Washington Afro-American*.
- 2 Following World War II, the Department of Development and Welfare established Textile Training Centres to encourage floor loom handweaving in Nigeria and to provide employment for returning soldiers. However, knowledge of handweaving was hardly preparation for using industrial looms and associated carding, spinning, dyeing, and finishing equipment nor were most veterans interested in handweaving as an occupation (Renne 1997).
- 3 This connection resembles the “sibling chain of assistance,” described by demographers in explaining family strategies that enabled the education of younger children through the work of older, educated children (Caldwell 1977: 20).
- 4 Of the 100 KTL mill workers interviewed by Andrae and Beckman in 1987, only 8% were Muslim, and of these men, 6% had Islamic education alone (Andrae and Beckman 1999: 302).

- 5 This man later went to work at Arewa Textiles, another textile mill in Kaduna (Interview: Johannes Kukah, 28 February 2012, Kaduna).
- 6 Thompson (1967: 86) cites the remark of a Gloucester UK hemp and flax [spinning] thread manufacturer in 1786 regarding the effects of schools on his workers: “They... become more tractable and obedient, and less quarrelsome and revengeful.”
- 7 As Thompson (1967: 69) notes, during the 1800s in England: “The small instrument which regulated the new rhythms of industrial life was at the same time one of the more urgent of the new needs which industrial capitalism called forth to energize its advance. A clock or a watch was not only useful; it conferred prestige upon its owner, and a man might be willing to stretch his resources to get one.”
- 8 One widow mentioned that her husband would sell the KTL cloths and purchase more costly cloths for her with the proceeds (Interview: Saidi Ishaya, 15 May 2018, Kaduna).
- 9 Funds for the textile industry and other government programs were syphoned off by the Abacha family and deposited in overseas accounts. In 2005, \$752 million dollars (US) were recovered from a Swiss bank account, as was \$322.5 million dollars (US) in 2017. An agreement for the release of an additional \$308 million dollars (US) held in an Isle of Jersey account has recently been settled. In the past, recovered funds have been used for infrastructure and cash transfers to the poor (Azu 2019). The \$308 million dollar settlement will be used for road and rail projects (Odeyemi 2020).
- 10 There are several sources that document the history of the Sokoto Caliphate and Emirate rule in northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt states which include: Kani and Gandhi (1990); Last (1967); Lovejoy (1978); and Philips (1992).
- 11 The British wool textile industry also followed a downward trajectory: “Despite the efforts made by the industry, trade unions and government,...by the end of 1978 there were only 54,755 wool textile workers left in Britain. The industry was never to recover” (Price 2014: 44; see also Jenkins 1972).

References

- Abba, Isa Alkali. “Sir Ahmadu Bello: The Sardauna of Sokoto’s Conversion Campaign 1964–1965 in Adamawa Division and Northern Sardauna Province.” *Kano Studies* 2, no. 2 (1981): 53–60.
- Andrae, Gunilla, and Björn Beckman. 1999. *Union Power in the Nigerian Textile Industry*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Azu, John Chuks. “What We’re Doing About Abacha’s \$300m, by FG.” *Daily Trust*, 6 June 2019. Accessed 6 June 2019. <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/what-were-doing-about-abachas-300m-by-fg.html>.
- BBC National Films. *Boom to Bust—The Decline of the Cotton Industry*, 2014. Accessed 15 September 2019. http://www.bbc.co.uk/nationonfilm/topics/textiles/background_decline.shtml.
- Blackburn, John A. “The British Cotton Textile Industry Since World War II: The Search for a Strategy.” *Textile History* 24, no. 2 (1993): 235–238.
- Caldwell, J.C. “The Economic Rationality of High Fertility.” *Population Studies* 31, no. 1 (1977): 5–27.
- DanAsabe, Abdulkadir. “The Kano Textile Trade and Industry During the Independence Era.” In *Textile Ascendancies: Aesthetics, Production, and Trade in Northern Nigeria*, edited by E. Renne, and S. Maiwada, 115–134. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2020.
- David Whitehead & Sons. “Kaduna: The Largest Spinning and Weaving Operation South of the Sahara.” *Textile Month*. Archives. Parbold, Lancashire: David Whitehead & Sons Ltd, June 1973.
- Famie, D.A., and David J. Jeremy. *The Fibre That Changed the World: The Cotton Industry in International Perspective, 1600–1990s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

- Gaiya, Musa A. "SIM's Hausa Mission: Ministering Among People on the Margin ('Yan Babu) Class in Northern Nigeria." In *Transforming Africa's Religious Landscapes: The Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). Past and Present*, edited by B. Cooper, G. Corwin, T. Eshete, M. Gaiya, T. Geysbeek, and S. Shankar, 121–144. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2018.
- Hartley, Gordon W. "Former Commercial Manager, Kaduna Textiles Limited." Unpublished Report, 18 February 2012, in author's possession.
- Hinchliffe, Keith. "The Kaduna Textile Workers: Characteristics of an African Industrial Labour Force." *Savanna* 2 (1973): 27–37.
- Ijagbemi, E. Adeleye. *Christian Missionary Activity in Colonial Nigeria: The Work of the Sudan Interior Mission Among the Yoruba, 1908–1967*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1986.
- Johnson, Marion. "Cotton Imperialism in West Africa." *African Affairs* 73, no. 291 (1974): 178–187.
- Kaduna Textiles Ltd. *KTL Employee's Handbook*. Kaduna: Kaduna Textiles Ltd, nd.
- Kaduna Textiles Ltd. "Opening Ceremony." Kadmin–Tra–Ind 10/1, file no. I.59E 79 A21. 1957.
- Kani, Ahmad M., and Kabir A. Gandi, eds. *State and Society in the Sokoto Caliphate*. Sokoto: Usman Danfodiyo University, 1990.
- Jenkins, J. Geraint, ed. *The Wool Industry in Great Britain*. London, Boston, MA: Routledge and K. Paul, 1972.
- LaPin, Deirdre. *Sons of the Moon: The Ngas of Central Nigeria*. Philadelphia, PA: ISHI, 1983.
- Last, Murray. *The Sokoto Caliphate*. London: Longman, 1967.
- Lovejoy, Paul. "Plantations in the Economy of the Sokoto Caliphate." *Journal of African History* 19, no. 3 (1978): 341–368.
- Maiwada, Salihu, and Elisha Renne. "The Kaduna Textile Industry and the Decline of Textile Manufacturing in Northern Nigeria, 1955–2010." *Textile History* 44, no. 2 (2013): 171–196.
- Medugbon, A.K. "Kaduna, Nigeria: The Vicissitudes of a Capital City, 1917–1975." Unpublished PhD dissertation. Los Angeles, CA: University of California, 1976.
- Mudashir, Ismail. "Heydays of Kaduna Textiles, by Pa Afolabi." *Daily Trust*, 1 October 2010. Accessed 29 November 2010. www.dailytrust.com.ng.
- Odeyemi, Joshua. "US, Nigeria Sign Agreement on Abacha Loot Return." *Daily Trust*, 4 February 2020. Accessed 4 February 2020. <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/us-nigeria-sign-agreement-on-abacha-loot-return.html>.
- Onyeiwu, Steve. "The Modern Textile Industry in Nigeria: History, Structural Change, and Recent Developments." *Textile History* 28, no. 2 (1997): 234–249.
- Paden, John. *Ahmadu Bello: Sardauna of Sokoto*. Zaria: Huda Huda Press, 1986.
- Philips, J.E. "Ribats in the Sokoto Caliphate: Selected Studies 1804–1903." Unpublished PhD dissertation. Los Angeles, CA: University of California, 1992.
- Price, Laura. "Immigrants and Apprentices: Solutions to the Post-War Labour Shortage in the West Yorkshire Wool Textile Industry, 1945–1980." *Textile History* 45, no. 1 (2014): 32–48.
- Renne, Elisha. "'Traditional Modernity' and the Economics of Handwoven Cloth Production in Southwestern Nigeria." *Economic Development & Cultural Change* 45, no. 4 (1997): 773–792.
- Thompson, E.P. "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism." *Past & Present* 36, no. 1 (1967): 56–97.
- Waziri, M., S. Maiwada, and E. Renne. "Kaduna Textile Industry, Trade, and the Coming of Chinese Textiles." In *Textile Ascendancies: Aesthetics, Production, and Trade in Northern Nigeria*, edited by E. Renne, and S. Maiwada, 87–114. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2020.