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Topic: Colonialism in Nigeria and its effect

The scramble for and the partitioning of West Africa by the European nations acted as the genesis of the establishment of colonial administration in West Africa. Before the advent of colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. African has been having contact with the European country. The most active engagement of Africans with the European was the period of Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Colonialism can be defined as the establishment, exploitation, maintenance and expansion of colonies in one territory by people of other territories. Many European explorers came to Africa to explore various part of Africa so as to discover various human and natural resources of the continent. The West African coast had earlier had encounter with the white, especially in the period of trans-Atlantic slave trade .the Portuguese were the first to arrive on the shore of West Africa in 15<sup>th</sup> century. However the beginning of the 1800s came along with other adventurers like British Germans and French their intention of taking total control over the territories of West Africa was made clear. The era of colonial rule in West Africa was not totally a period of unmitigated disaster.

As historic discourse colonialism seem to have affected Nigeria economic, political, social and cultural activities as a result of European settlement and political control over the rest of the world including Africa, Asia, Australia and America. The British started colonizing Nigeria with the annexation of Lagos in 1861 as a result Lagos became the crown colony which was directly administered by the white British official. The influence of world war was another common factor in the struggle for independence. The

return of West Africans who fought in the wars was rejuvenated the nationalist struggle for independence. Britain used military threats to silence all oppositions and resentment.

Colonialism imposed foreign cultures on people of West Africa the African cultures was abandoned and neglected. Names were changed, local languages abandoned, traditional cultural ways were relegated and all things foreign deemed were better than the local ones. Foreign languages, religions, names, music, education, sports, dress etc replaced African ones. Colonialism left the economy in shambles. Colonial masters exploited the natural resources by exporting them to their home countries, converting them into finished goods by selling it back to colonial territories at higher price. The colonial masters did not consider the ethnic diversities of the colonial territories. They lump these tribes together for the administrative convenience.

Colonialism promoted the development of common languages among colonial territories; English by those who colonized Britain and French by those who colonized France. The British and French legal systems were also introduced. These legal systems were improvements on African traditional legal systems. It stopped such acts as human sacrifice, torture. Banishment etc. the pre-colonial trade by barter was replaced by the use of cash. The civil services of the colonies were developed and made uniform with those of the colonial masters. Colonialism was a form of exploitation and economic dependence. Colonial era also witnessed the training of more manpower in West Africa. They carried the wealth of West Africa to their home countries. Colonialism promoted the development of common languages among colonial territories.

The greatest damage of colonialism was the introduction of slave trade which reduced the population of able-bodied men in the colonial territories. Colonial rule was also accompanied by humiliation and deportation and even total elimination of certain west African leaders. Oba Overamwen was deported in 1896 after the Benin massacre; later died in exile. West African traditional rulers viewed the coming of the European as a threat to their throne and later on found out that there was no morality in colonialism and therefore demanded for independence. The racial discrimination was practiced by colonial rulers. Western education enabled Africans Nigerians in particular to know how

to read and write the colonialists built schools and colleges in their colonies which enabled most Africans to acquire western education.

The introduction of party politics in Nigeria presented to the platform to fight the ills of colonialism and desire for self determination .during colonial rule the intensification of the production of raw materials took place. Colonial rulers dictated what were produced and exported and imported, where they are exported to or imported from, how much are sold or bought. the need to evacuate raw materials from the remote parts and the Europeans' desire to get in touch with their home countries led them to embark on extensive development of means of transport and communication. Nigeria and West African countries were economically exploited by foreign firms in shamble economic state. The development of agriculture in West Africa resulted in the increased trade both internally and externally with Europe and other parts of the world. The introduction of elections through ballot and the changes from monarchy to republicanism is a result of colonialism. In order to meet the demand for raw materials in European countries, the colonial rulers geared efforts towards the production of agricultural cash crops such as cocoa ,palm oil ,rubber, cotton, etc. for instance ,British opposed the general development of plant oil plantation during their rule there. Nigeria was a very prosperous country with great cultivation and trading.

Colonialism is a consistent theme within the history of Africa. It laces through the formative tapestry of the majority of African states today including Nigeria. The reason why British wanted to take over Nigeria would primarily be for the search of raw materials. The colonization of Nigeria began with the arrival of the Christian missionaries in Badagry in 1842, changing the interaction between people. Colonial rule led to the introduction of new crops that transformed both the landscape and social orders of the subject lands. The Nigeria economy grew into more civilized trade due to European influence; however taxes and European emigrants took a grueling toll on the new system. It can be clearly perceived that the combined effort from all Nigerians and ethnic groups was behind Nigeria's independence. The interaction of oppression and abuse by British towards the Nigerians had united all ethnic groups eventually inspiring them to change the dynamics of power and take authority in their hands. The climb to self governance was made possible by the Nigerians and the independence had vitally affected the distribution of power in the country. British had used authority in an abusive manner which changed the interaction between people in Nigeria. Nigerians were indeed

treated in an unjust and brutal manner under British rule. Sixty years of British imperialism had welcomed both burdens and benefits for the country Nigeria.

British did not take the Nigerian tribes into considerations it caused many colonies to separate friendly ethnic groups or tribes and combine hostile ethnic groups and tribes leading them to violence and wars down the road. The colonial administration established plantation and industries in Nigeria. They scholarships for secondary schools and technical education an introduced the concepts of Government schools .colonial administration brought modern health care facilities. Their efforts resulted to rapid development of commerce in Nigeria. For example, the peak period for railway building came after the First World War with the railway across Niger being built by 1914 welcomed great development to the region. The developments brought by British are basically western norms which were new to the Africans. These eventually benefitted the life-spans and increased the literacy rate in Africa. However, due to the extraction of resources by British Africans never got the opportunity to learn how to their own resources for development. This shows how the British changed the dynamics of power. Africans occupied solely the inferior positions of the colonial administration and never got the opportunity to voice their opinion in the government of their own countries.

The British imperialism helped reduced local warfare and improved sanitation, health care and education systems were introduced as well. It created a pathway for economic stability as railroads, dams, telegraph lines and telephones were built in Africa colonies. However this frontage of development remained the sacrifice, pain and deaths of Nigerians. Nigerians had lost control of their land independence. Hands were amputated if they were not able to meet the certain expectations of extracting resources. Millions either died of disease or were killed due to insubordination. Diffusion of rich African culture took place .traditions was taken away and the ways of life were destroyed. The partition for Africa led to the separation of countless families. This eventually created new boundaries leading to present conflicts and slave trade. The European took away most of their resources especially gold, diamonds, ivory and agricultural primary products. The imperialism had surely affected modern day Nigeria in both positive and negative manner. Imperialism certainly had affected the dynamics of power and interaction between people in Nigeria. The long term effects of imperialism in Nigeria coincide with the consequences of globalization. The Britain adopted the policy of indirect rule whereby they dominated through the native rulers.

