

## British Imperialism in Nigeria

The British empire began in 16th century and lasted until around 1997. During this time Great Britain controlled a lot of the World's land and population. Britain had immense power and used it for their own dominance. They wanted to spread their ideology and culture to other societies. Britain was imperializing many parts of the World. "Imperialism occurs when a strong nation takes over a weaker nation or region and dominates its economic, political, and cultural life". For Britain, this process was strengthening their nation as a whole so they began to really expand their outreach. After WWI Britain really started a long period of ruling. "During this period, Europe's powers added nearly nine million square miles (23,000,000 square kilometers) to their overseas colonial possessions. As it was mostly unoccupied by the Western powers as late as the 1880s, Africa became the primary target of the "new" imperialist expansion, although conquest took place also in other areas—notably Southeast Asia and the East Asian seaboard, where Japan joined the European powers' scramble for territory"(New World 1). They were many countries involved in British imperialism however, one of the most prominent and well known country was Nigeria. Nigeria was a huge gain for Britain because Nigeria had access to an abundance of natural resources and also was a post for the slave trade that Britain was heavily apart of at the time. There were many ways that British imperialism affected Nigeria, some being positive and some being negative, the country dealt with them and learned from every aspect of the situations trying to become a better and stronger country for their own sake.

### Direct and Indirect Rule

1. Direct rule: This was a system of colonialism were British directly administered the people without having to use an intermediary to reach the people they were ruling over. Lagos colony and its environment was administered using direct rule system. Some of the towns or pre-colonial states that resisted British dominance before they were conquered also were administered using direct rule system. These places include Benin and Delta provinces.

2. Indirect rule: Indirect rule was first introduced by Fredrick Lord Lugard in the Northern Protectorate before he tried introducing indirect rule system to the Southern part of Nigeria. It was a system of administration where traditional rulers were used by the colonial administrator to rule the people while acting on the instruction of the colonial administrator regarding certain matters. The indirect rule system was adopted by Lord Lugard because there was no enough money and facilities to directly rule the vast Northern territory and there was shortage of manpower. Fortunately Sokoto Caliphate had an established or a well developed system of governance across the North where Emirs were in- charge of various emirates which were under Sokoto Caliphate. Fredrick Lord Lugard decided to use this existing structure with a few modifications.

He divided the entire Northern Protectorate into provinces and positioned a resident to administer each province. Each province was divided into divisions and each division was under a district officer who supervises the Emirs in ensuring that the Emir properly carryout their duties of collecting taxes on behalf of

the British colonial administration. The district officer was answerable to the resident and the resident is responsible to the high commissioner who was Frederick Lord Lugard. The high commissioner was in charge of the entire Northern Protectorate. Using the indirect rule system of government in Northern part of Nigeria; some of the following changes were effected on the existing caliphate structure that Frederick Lord Lugard met on ground:

1. The power and position of the caliph of Sokoto caliphate to appoint and dispose Emirs was taken over by the British high commissioner.
2. The name Caliph of Sokoto was replaced by Sultan of Sokoto and the authority of the Sultan of Sokoto was now limited to Sokoto and its environment.
3. The Emirs remain the native authority within their emirate. They still had executive power to rule their emirate which was now division supervised by a district officer. The district officer only intervene in local administration where and when it is necessary.
4. The district heads who initially stayed in the emirate capital under the watchful eye of the Emir now had to reside or live in the village or district they administered. The district heads were answerable to the Emir.
5. Taxes collected by the Emir were now consolidated as against the multiple taxes collected by the Emir before that time. Taxes collected by the Emir were shared between the colonial government and the Emir or the emirate based on a sharing ratio determined by the colonial government.

### **Merits and Demerits of the system of colonization: The Association System**

Colonialism had many merits. At first, it aimed at enriching the mother country. The wealth that came from the colonies made the mother country prosperous.

Secondly, Colonialism contributed for the industrial growth of the mother country. Raw materials were brought to the mother country from her colonies. The factories ran quite well and produced more and more which were sent again to colonies for sale.

Thirdly, the surplus population of the country was sent to different colonies. This lessened the burden of the mother country and bade good, by to poverty.

Fourthly, the mother country sent many powerful and genius people to different colonies. They became the head of administration or army. They received their salary from the colonies. Thus, the mother country could very well govern her colonies.

Fifthly, Colonialism increased the prestige of the mother country. The more colonies a country possessed the more prestige it had before others. It also considered herself more powerful.

Sixthly, Colonialism taught the people about 'Nationalism', 'Democracy' and 'Constitutionalism'. In later times, these ideas helped the people of the colonies to achieve independence.

Lastly, this helped a lot to the Missionaries. They taught English to the people at different colonies. This educated people who knew many new ideas and spread them among the native people.

#### Demerits

Colonialism had many demerits. At first, it exploited the people of the colonies. Then economic condition of the people of the colonies became precarious when raw-materials were taken away from their countries to the mother country.

Secondly, the mother country had to fight with the native rulers. Due to constant wars, peace in different colonies was lost.

Thirdly, Colonialism gave birth to an ugly tradition like slavery. The mother country sold many people of her colony at different places of the world. At Lisbon, there was a slave market. Slaves were sold there as chattels.

Fourthly, Colonialism created a wall between the ruler and the ruled. The ruler-race hated the colonial people and oppressed them. At last, the people of different colonies revolted against the foreign people and carried protracted struggle against them.

At last, it prompted the rulers to adopt the Policy of 'Divide and Rule' in Colony. The result of this policy was disastrous. This Colonialism created dissension between the Hindus and Muslims in India. At last it divided the country into India and Pakistan. Thus, Colonialism had many bad effects.