HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE, 1770-1960: REVISITING OUR PAST

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Abstract
This article brings to the fore the historical process that led to the birth of modern Nigeria. A people without the knowledge of their past have no clear cause for the future. Thus, learning and understanding the basic Nigerian history is fundamental for every Nigerian citizen. However, apart from those interested in studying history, most Nigerians are not exposed to basic Nigerian history; hence, they know little about their past. Though there is quantum literature in the field of historical scholarship, a cursory look shows that topics and lessons on basic Nigerian history are often lacking. Even, when they manage to survive, they appeared grossly inadequate. It is against this backdrop, that this paper becomes timely and important. The paper, therefore, examines the historical evolution of the Nigerian state. It discussed both the internal and external factors to the emergence of modern Nigeria. It, also, highlights the responses of Nigerian peoples in the country's evolution process. The paper concludes that different Nigerian peoples and ethnic groups had consistently conducted robust and important intergroup relations before their amalgamation in 1914. It refutes the claim that Nigeria was a mistake. The paper is qualitative in research method, and uses a simple historical narrative in its analysis.

Introduction
Nigeria came into being as one political entity in 1914 after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by Lord Fredrick Lugard, as the representative of British imperial authority. Nevertheless, the Nigerian peoples, as they were later known, had lived independently in their different political entities centuries or even millennia as separate kingdoms or nations before the amalgamation. They had their different ways of conducting their affairs in their separate and independent territorial domains in the areas of culture, politics, economy, and social values and norms which they were guided by. However, their differences did not imply that they did not engage in certain forms of relations among themselves. Ikime (2008:18-39) posits that the different Nigerian peoples in the pre-colonial period related in the areas of trade, war, marriage, cultural affinities, and human migration and frontier settlements. The physical presence of the navigable rivers in the Niger-Benue confluence aided human movement and transportation of trade goods {mostly local produce} among these different ethnic and cultural groups.[1] The traffic flow on the Niger-Benue Rivers and their estuaries, thus, had permitted different kinds of human and material exchange amongst the different cultural and ethnic groups in what to named Nigeria before their conquest by Britain in the late nineteenth century. In other words, there were some kinds of robust historical relationships between and amongst different Nigerian peoples and groups earlier before their conquest and consequent amalgamation.

The wave of 'industrial revolution' in Britain brought the need to find raw materials wherever she had superior advantage in oversea land to feed her emerging industries and secure markets for her finished products. Ikime (1977:16) argues that the shift to industrial economy in Great Britain made the Atlantic slave trade unprofitably obsolete; thence, the search for oversea markets and raw materials. This change of attitude and production mode led to exploration activities in the Niger area around the middle of the nineteenth century {both in the Upper and Lower Niger} to gain access to inland waterways in the penetration of the interior territories for economic and commercial interests of Britain and other European trading nations. Ayandele (1966) notes that the exploration of the Niger area paved way for European Christian missionaries and traders, and their movement into the interiors. The conduct of legitimate trade by European trade merchants with their co-opting native African middlemen and the spread of missionary evangelism across the West African coastline had its historical change effects on

different Nigerian peoples and their cultural societies. One of the outcomes was the political hold that Britain had on different peoples and nationalities of Nigeria after the Berlin Agreement formalised the partition of African territories as colonies to European imperial powers (Dike, 1956). The aim of this article therefore is to re-examine the emergence of modern Nigeria and the formation of the Nigerian state by Britain. It explains the nature and relations between and amongst pre-colonial Nigerian peoples, the amalgamation of Nigeria and the responses of different Nigerian peoples, and the character of colonial Nigeria under Britain. As matter of organisation and convenience, this article is divided into seven sections. The first section deals with the 'introduction', the second is 'the Nigerian Peoples in the beginning of the nineteenth century', the third is 'exploration of the Niger, the fourth is 'British commercial and missionary penetration of the hinterland', the fifth section is 'British conquest and amalgamation of Nigeria', the sixth is 'British colonisation of Nigeria and the road to independence', and the seventh is the 'conclusion'.

The Nigerian Peoples in the Beginning of Nineteenth Century

Different cultural and ethnic groups in Nigeria by the beginning of the nineteenth century have endured with predictable social, political, and economic system, and have experienced certain remarkable changes in their societies. In Hausa and Nupe lands in the north, the Uthman Dan Fodio led Islamic revolution *Jihad* between 1803 and 1811 sacked the native kings and their territorial domains were carved out as emirates and were given to the enthroned Fulani Islamic elites to rule under the larger and centralised control of the Sokoto Caliphate. In Bornu Kingdom in the northeastern part, the Kanuri established *Mai* institution of *Saifewa* dynasty that had been in existence for more than nine centuries up to the nineteenth century was changed to *Shehu* dynasty as Sheik Mohammed Al-Khanemi usurped the throne of Bornu king in the face of invading Uthman Dan Fodio led Islamic jihadists (Orr, 1965). Among the Yoruba groups in the western parts there was prevalence of internecine wars. The Egba, Ijebu, Ekiti, Oyo, Ijaye, and Ijesha are known for their war exploits before 1820 in Yorubaland. These wars consequently led to the fall of the old Oyo Empire and the conquest of Ilorin by the Fulani Islamic jihadists in 1816. Before the run in of the third decade of the nineteenth century, a new Oyo Kingdom was organised with capital in Ibadan. The Yoruba groups were also known to have participated in the coastal Atlantic trade which involved mainly trade on slaves along the coast of Badagry and Lagos ports (Aderibigbe, 1962).

In the eastern part where the Igbo, Ibibio, and Efik are found, the hegemony of the Aro clan and her 'slave oligarchy' held sway. The Aro established several colonies across Igboland and beyond which facilitated their dominance trade in slaves. The Aro slave activities which were sustained by the oracular powers and fortune soldiers from Igbo warrior groups like Abam, Abariba, Ohafia, Bende, and Nkwerre catalysed a state of warfare in Igboland. Many Igbo villages and communities often were raided to provide slaves for the Aro middlemen who in turn would march them to the coastal ports in the Efik area where the European slave merchants stationed their ships. The Efik, on their own, in the beginning of the century had grown in their trade with the Europeans merchants on the Calabar ports as there was the rise of the Blood Men in the four towns on the coast of Calabar: Duke Town, Old Town, Creek Town, and Henshaw Town (Isichei, 1973).

The Idoma, Tiv and Igala in the central part or the middle belt, also, had their experiences. By the beginning of the century the Tiv had shaken off their control by the Jukun warriors from Wukari and had organised a centralised traditional kingship institution around the Jos plateau. By 1812, the Idoma had successfully survived the several attacks from the Igala in the southwestern flank and the Ogoja in the eastern flank, had strongly established themselves around the Benue River and its valley. The Igala, on their own, had established themselves along the banks of the Niger River, extending from Idah with a central traditional political authority of Atah of Igala. They made permanent settlements from the northern Igbo territories down to the Omambala River area, whereas some of them had infiltrated into communities in the Ika-Igbo area across the Niger up to Bini influence. In the mid-western part lies the Bini Kingdom. Though the kingdom had been reduced to a definite territorial size by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Bini still maintained its influence around her neighbours in the areas of traditional political system, and continued its Christian and trade contacts with the Portuguese and other

Europeans without compromising the several traditional religious rituals and festivities that surrounded the Oba's court. Bini Kingdom was still reveling in traditional artistry and the Oba continued to reign supreme (Anene, 1966).

On the other hand, in the southern part, Tamuno (1972) posits that the Ijaw coastal city-states of the Delta had recorded appreciable rise in their economy through sustained trade relations with the European merchants stationed along the Atlantic coast. Coastal city-states of Nembe, Okirika, Kalabari, Bonny, Abonema, Brass, and Buguma had become prominent in the Delta and had endured a peculiar political system that was sustained by coastal trade. A class of wealthy and powerful kings with definite territorial and trading authority had emerged, the institution of *Amanyanabo*, among the Ijaw city-states by the beginning of the century. Trade disputes and territorial expansion to attract more trading rights and acquire more slave merchandise made wars amongst the Ijaw states of the Delta very common in the late part of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century. Coleman (1960) posits that the trade wars and competition were further fuelled by the European supply of fire arms to preferable coastal kings to achieve their trade interests. In the western Delta, the Urhobo and Itshekiri had, also, carved out a niche for themselves in the participation on the coastal Atlantic trade. Though the two areas were to some extent still culturally influenced by the Bini royal authority, Warri as the capital of Urhobo Kingdom attained its peak and it traditional political institution that revolves around the *Olu* of Warri had become more influential in the Delta. The Itshekiri Kingdom, also, had endured a traditional kingship institution that controlled the trading affairs of the kingdom and its relations with European traders. The soon to be Nana kingdom had its share of trade and wars of expansion in the coastal Delta.

The essence of this highlight is to show that different Nigerian peoples were independently politically, socio-culturally and economically organised, and had perfected some peculiar ways of conducting mutual relations between and amongst themselves before the entry of European economic imperialism and their consequent political conquest. The different Nigerian ethnic nations before the nineteenth century had become advanced mature with stable political systems and robust means of economic livelihood, and they did not come to that stage of advancement in isolation of one another. The point is that the Eurocentric claim that Nigerian peoples were primitive and had no advancement in knowledge before intensive European contacts in the nineteenth century lacks substance. On the other hand, the argument that the different Nigerian societies possessed no unifying features for amalgamation to happen in the first place appears too misleading.

The Exploration of the Niger

The territorial boundary of what is called Nigeria today was part of the Slave Coast until the middle of the nineteenth century. However, the abolition and suppression of slave trade which gave rise to legitimate trade in the West Coast of Africa obviously changed the dynamics in the European activities on the Niger and its inland territories. Ikime (1980) posits that the need for raw materials and search for oversea markets to export finished goods gave rise to the intense European exploration activities on the Niger and its estuaries. There was every need to find linking inland waterways for the conduct of the new trade. There were few expeditions to the Niger before the landmark exploration of the Niger and its tributaries began in the nineteenth century. Apart from the expeditions to the Niger carried out earlier by the African Association in 1778, Major Houghton in 1791, and Mungo Park in his first exploration mission in 1795, major exploration activities that opened up the Niger interior began in 1802 with Mungo Park's second expedition. He sailed as far as Bussa in an effort to find out for himself and the European commercial interests the direction which the Niger River flowed. In 1805, Hugh Clapperton, Oudney, Henry Barth, and Major Denham crossed Tripoli and reached Lake Chad to the north of Nigeria. Their visit to Borno, Sokoto, and Kano came with testimonies of commercial and industrial activities in the areas; and Kano, in particular, as the entrepot in the chain of trans-Saharan trade across Western Sudan. In 1830, Richard and John Lander travelled from Badagry to Bussa and sailed down the Niger through the Benue confluence until they reached Asaba (Obiakor and Onuegbu, 2013:28). These expeditions, thus, were largely important for further British explorations of the Niger waterways to the hinterland.

The knowledge of the mouth of the Niger River proved invaluable to the British commercial interest in the Niger area. In 1832, two British companies under the command of Macgregor Laid financed expedition to the Niger. The expedition explored Niger up to Rabba between 1832 and 1834. In another development, John Beecroft from his base at Fernando Po explored the Benin and Old Calabar Rivers between 1835 and 1836. He further explored the Niger up to Lokoja in 1839 (Ojiakor, 1997:62). However, it should be noted that in as much as these expeditions were significant in themselves they did not record much success. In 1841, the British Royal Government, having considered from the various reports of the explorers that 'trade' and 'Christianity' could be built in the Delta and Niger territories, sent an expedition to the Niger at the instance of the humanitarians, however, the expedition proved too costly and was unsuccessful. In 1854, the Humanitarian Movements backed by the British Government sponsored another expedition which was commanded by William Baikie and had Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a Yoruba ex-slave who later became the first African Bishop. This particular expedition recorded huge and resounding success as it had no casuality. There was Quinine to prevent the scourge of malaria along the West Coast (Crowder, 1978:44). The expedition in many ways marked the turning point in the development of the Niger and its inland waterways as a commercial highway.

The British Commercial and Missionary Penetration of the Niger Hinterland

One major result that came with the exploration activities on the Niger was British commercial and Christian penetration of the Niger hinterland. The expeditions were later followed by signing of treaties with local rulers who actually did not understand the terms of those 'trade' and 'anti-slavery' treaties. The British Anti-Slave Trade Squadron was stationed along the West African Coast to suppress the continuance of slave trade and secure Britain's commercial interests on the Niger coast. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, British trading interests were concentrated in Lagos which was the gateway to the rich forest of Yorubaland and Delta ports which served as the outlets for the trade of the eastern hinterlands (Otoghile, 2012). In 1849, John Beecroft was appointed Consul for the Bight of Benin and Biafra. His mission was to advance British commercial interest in the Niger area, and to use military force to achieve the interest where people could not be persuaded to do British bidding, the British 'gun-boat diplomacy'. Many coastal territories were militarily raided during Beecroft's consulship under the pretext of stopping slave trading merchants and their local collaborators. In 1854, Court of Equity was established in Bonny. The court was to settle trade disputes between European traders on one hand and between European and African traders on the other hand. Other such courts were subsequently established at Calabar, Akassa, Brass, Bini River and Opobo. By 1865, Britain had established trading stations in the hinterland of Delta around Aboh, Ndoni, Onitsha, Asaba, Osomari, and Odekpe that lay behind the trading empire of Brass (Falola et al, 1991:117). It is important to note that the major attraction of British and other European trade merchants into the hinterlands of Delta after the suppression of the coastal slave trade was the 'palm oil' trade.

Some of the European trading firms, having by-passed their Delta middlemen, began to transfer to the hinterland for more trading opportunities due to relatively cheaper price of palm oil in the eastern interior. There was attraction of more European traders in the Niger area, and price competition began among the different European traders. The stage was set for 'commercial war' for the control of the hinterland trade. There were frequent price war between the British traders and other European traders particularly the French traders. In 1868, the four British trading firms were merged by George Taubman Goddie as United Africa Company and, in 1879, secured about one hundred trading stations manned by gun-boats. In 1882, it was incorporated as National Africa Company and by the end of 1884 it had concluded about thirty seven treaties with most territories around the Niger. In 1886, the trading company was granted Royal Charter by the British Royal Majesty to administer territories on the Niger; hence, it was called the Royal Niger Company. In the quest to move further hinterland by British commercial interests, the company's headquarters was later moved from Asaba to Lokojo. By the end of 1880s the Delta city-states had lost the control of the hinterland trade and were increasingly losing their own states to the British (Coleman, 1960). The implication is that the background for British political subjugation was laid.

On the other hand, the navigation of the Niger did not only attract influx of European trading companies but, also, humanitarian and Christian missionaries from Europe. According to Ajayi (1965), 'from the 1860s onwards the Christian missions had become successful in making a foothold in some parts of Southern Nigeria'. In Lagos, Abeokuta, and Ijebu areas, the influence of Samuel Ajayi Crowther was instrumental in establishing missions for the Church Missionary Society in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Baptist Missions and German Lutherian missionaries were also establishing stations in different parts of Yorubaland, from Badagry to Abeokuta around 1880s. In Asaba, Aboh, Akassa, Onitsha, and in some parts of Yorubaland the French and Irish Nuns and Holy Ghost Fathers of the Roman Catholic Mission were tirelessly establishing church stations. Education for the locals was the strategy adopted by the missionaries especially the Roman Catholic in their missionary evangelism and civilising mission around the Niger area. The Wesleyan Methodist missions, also, were attracted into the Niger hinterland, and had found a number of stations before the close of 1890s (Ayandele, 1966). The fact remains that the civilising mission of the European Christian missionaries in the areas they operated cannot be insulated from their commercial and political interests, particularly Britain, in the Niger territories. Thus, Western education as adopted by the missionaries to 'civilise' natives was used to arrest the cultural and mental being of the Nigerian peoples for British colonisation.

The British Conquest and Amalgamation of Nigeria

The British conquest of Nigeria has two phases. It did not occur simultaneously in all parts of the country. The first phase occurred between 1851 and 1899 while the second phase took place between 1900 and 1914 when the charter granted to Royal Niger Company had been withdrawn and the British Government had assumed full political and administrative authority (Tamuno, 1972). The British did not lack pretensions in justifying their conquest of different Nigerian peoples. Many were attacked and conquered on mere accusation of engaging in slave trade; some were sacked on the grounds of rejecting Christian missionaries in their territories; a handful of them were subdued under the obnoxious treaties of protection; while others were conquered simply because they refused to trade with the British and other Europeans. Whatever the reasons were the fact remains that Britain conquered Nigerian peoples for effective political occupation and control of their territories to serve her economic interests.

The British conquest of Nigeria actually began with the attack of Lagos in 1851 where Oba Kosoko was militarily sacked and a more British compliant Akitoye was installed as the Oba of Lagos. A decade later, Oba Dosunmu had to sign a treaty which ceded the island to the British authority. By virtue of annexation of Lagos in 1861, it formally became a British colony and Henry Stanhope Freeman was appointed governor of the colony of Lagos. With the conquest of Lagos, the British conquest of the interior of Yorubaland became inevitable. Bearing in mind the brutal experience of Lagos, many Yoruba kingdoms concluded 'treaties of protection' with the British between 1885 and 1893. In 1891, the Egbado sought British military help against the Egba. The British expedition against Ijebu and Oyo in 1892 and 1893 respectively largely paved way for the final British occupation of Yorubaland. The Rev. Samuel Johnson led peace treaty that ended the protracted Ibadan-Ekiti Parapo War further brought the full political power of Britain in Yorubaland. Governor Sir Gilbert Carter signed series of treaties with Yoruba local rulers, and by 1906, the whole of Yorubaland had come under British Protection (Ikime, 1977). When it came to Benin, the British could not get the Oba to sign the free trade treaty, though his chiefs signed. When Consul Philip and six other Europeans were massacred by Bini soldiers, Britain mounted a major expedition against Benin in 1897. Benin was sacked and Oba Ovonramwen was deported to Calabar. The British then took over the control of Benin.

In the city-states of Delta, the British traders had persuaded their government to declare the entire coastal region as a protectorate because of the intense competition and rivalry from French and German traders. Consul Hewett travelled widely around the Delta and signed treaties of protection with various rulers and peoples. The British harped on these fictitious treaties to subdue the coastal states of the Delta. Opobo was conquered in1887 when King Jaja was kidnapped and exiled to Accra by the acting British Consul in the Oil Rivers Protectorates H.H. Johnston on the grounds that Jaja refused to sign the clause of open trade in the treaty he entered into with the British in 1885. In the western Delta, Nana of Itshekiri was sacked in 1894 on the grounds of obstructing trade and Ebrohimi, his capital was

bombarded. With the fall of Nana, British control of the entire Itshekiri kingdom was fully established. In Brass, the violence that brought down the Royal Niger Company headquarters in Akassa prompted the British to send an expedition against it and, in 1898 Brass fell (Falola, et al, 1991). In Okirika, the eastern gateway to Igbo hinterland, Sir H.E. Moor had to use threat of force enlisting over a hundred soldiers in a gun-boat before it was finally submitted to the British in 1896. By the end of 1898, the whole of Yorubaland, Benin, and the Oil Rivers {coastal states of the Delta} had become the Niger Coast Protectorate (Obiakor and Onuegbu, 2013).

After the fall of Okirika, the British were able to conquer territories around the Igbo hinterland. In the same year Okirika fell the Kingdom of Aboh signed a protection treaty with the Niger Coast Protectorate and formally passed under British rule after it was bombarded. After the Okirika and Aboh incidents, the British established a station at Akwete on the southern periphery of Igboland. In Asaba, area the British encountered severe resistance. Beginning from 1898 the British had to contend with the *Ekumeku* resistance until the militant youthful movement {*Otu Okolobia* or *Ekumeku*} was finally defeated in 1909 when their spirit of resistance was no match for the machine guns of the British. In 1901, the Aro in the Igbo and Ibibio hinterland were attacked and subdued by the British. The British thought that the Aro were rulers of the Igbo territories, and that the conquest of Aro would amount to the fall of the entire Igbo country to the British authority. However, the British discovered that the Aro were not political masters of the Igbo and Ibibio hinterland. In 1902, the British established a station at Afikpo, and from there sought to reach the Ikwo, Ezza, and other Igbo groups. The Ezza was reputed to be Igbo group with strong warriors. They had refused any talk with the British. In 1905, when a British Officer with a military escort were ambushed and killed by the Ezza and their Achara allies, a military expedition was sent against the Ezza. With no chance of success after few months of fighting, the Ezza submitted to the British superior force (Ikime, 1977:51).

The full British political conquest of the Northern Nigeria actually started after 1899, though the Royal Niger Company had earlier concluded treaties with Ilorin, Bida, and Sokoto before its charter was revoked. The appointment of Lord Fredrick Lugard as High Commissioner was instrumental in the conquest of territories in the North. Lugard's first act was the formal declaration of Northern Nigeria a British Protectorate. In the presence of 1,000 troops commanded by three colonels - Willcocks, Morland, and Lowry Cole - Lugard read the proclamation aloud and hoisted of the British flag at Lokoja on 1 January 1900. As Lugard's proclamation was considered a declaration of war by the northern Muslim states and emirates, the British were made to encounter strong resistance in their expeditious conquest of the North (Orr, 1965). In 1901, the British under the Command of Colonel Kemball attacked Bida and Kontagora and subdued them. This was followed by the fall of Adamawa in the same year when it was attacked by Colonel Morland. In 1902, there were the British military expeditions to Bauchi, Gombe, and Zaria. By the end of that year the three emirates had fallen to the British. With the conquest of Zaria, a detachment of British military command was set up there, from where the British expeditions against Kano and Sokoto in 1903 were made facilitated. By 1905, there was no single emirate in the North that had not been conquered. However, the Moslem resistance in a number of territories in the North continued until 1909 (Eluwa, 1988). Thus, before the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, all the territories in the North had fully submitted to formal British administration of Northern Protectorate under Lord Lugard.

With the British conquest of Nigerian territories completed, the stage was set for the fusion of different Nigerian peoples into one administrative political entity. In 1906, the Niger Coast Protectorate which was merged with the Colony of Lagos became the Southern Protectorate with Sir Ralph Moore as High Commissioner while the Northern Nigeria Protectorate, proclaimed in 1900, had Sir Lord Lugard as High Commissioner. Lugard has had the intention of bringing the Northern and Southern Protectorates since 1908 and did not make pretensions about it but, Ralph Moore had shown strong disapproval to the plan. The argument of Lugard was that the rich resources of the South could off-set the financial difficulties and landlocked profile of the North in a marriage that would further satisfy the British economic interests. Lord Lugard being influential in Britain and its colonial affairs was able to push his amalgamation plan through within the concerned authorities in Britain. In October, 1913, Britain's

Secretary for Colonies, Lewis Harcourt, presented Lugard's amalgamation proposal to the House of Commons in London. Notwithstanding Ralph Moore's opposition to the proposal, the British Parliament approved the proposal. On 1 January, 1914, the Southern and Northern Protectorates were formally amalgamated as one political entity under British protection with the name Nigeria, and Sir Lord Lugard was appointed as the Governor-General (Otoghile, 2012).

The British Colonisation of Nigeria and the Road to Independence

After the amalgamation in 1914, the colonial government was confronted with some bureaucratic problems. There were few British officers to man the administration of the vast country. Recruitment for colonial civil service became a big challenge. Another problem that faced the new colonial government was shortage of finance. The combination of these two problems compelled the British colonial authority to introduce the Indirect Rule. The system relied on indigenous traditional authorities but constantly supervised and advised by the British colonial officers. It is important to note that in the Northern and some parts of Western Nigeria, the indirect rule worked favourably well due largely to the traditional centralised political governance structure the new system met on ground. In many parts of the South, the indirect rule did not work well, particularly in the Igbo eastern part where it was a total fiasco that, even, the creation of the Warrant Chiefs even became counter-productive. The local traditional authorities collected taxes, organised public labour, and maintained law and order for the British colonial government within their administrative districts.

In the political structure of the British colonialism, the Governor-General, as the head of the government reporting directly to the British Secretary for Colonies, was the representative of the British Royal Majesty. He was advised by the Executive and Legislative Councils, though he was not often bound by their advice as he has 'reserved' and 'unlimited powers'. There were Resident Officers in charge of Provinces. Each Province was divided into Districts under the charge of District Officers, and each District was further divided into Native Authorities headed by traditional Paramount Chiefs or Warrant Chiefs as the case may be. The Native Authority was further divided into villages administered by Village Heads. Under the British colonial rule, Nigerian peoples became subjugated British subjects. The colonial system was very unpopular amongst the native Nigerian peoples. In the Southern part, the Warrant Chiefs who were entrusted with local administration and collection of taxes became notorious and corrupt. Their exploitative tendencies on the people led to the popular Aba Women Protest of 1929 and waves of riots and disturbances in the Tiv area in 1930, 1938, and 1945 (Ikime, 1977).

The colonial government was exploitative as it was geared towards procurement of raw materials and market for British manufactured goods. The railroads and linking roads were built to facilitate external rather than internal trade. They only managed to link raw material centres of production to coastal ports where onward shipping to Britain took place. Until the 1950s, very little capital was invested in Nigeria. Companies like the UAC, CFAO, and Leventis dominated every aspect of the colonial economy as manufacturing was not promoted (Eluwa, 1988). Nigerian wealth rather than being invested in the country was carted away to Britain. Even, the colonial banks the financial needs of metropolitan Britain than Nigerian peoples. In the field of employment and education, the locals were denied access to good jobs and quality education, and even suffered racial discriminations. Moreover, the colonial policies were technically aimed at preventing the growth of national unity. Rodney (1991) rightly asserts that 'colonialism is a one armed bandit'. The British from the onset of colonial administration saw Nigerians from the prisms of their ethnicity: Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani, Idoma, Bini, and others. This attitude encouraged the British in 1939 under Sir Bernard Burdillon as the Governor-General to administratively divide the country into Northern, Eastern, and Western regions, though it was 1946 under Arthur Richards as the Governor-General that the framework was constitutionally empowered. In as much as it could be said to be the first constitutional practice of federalism in Nigeria, it defined unity in Nigeria along ethnic lines. The British colonial Nigeria, thus, was characterised by racial and cultural domination, economic exploitation, and political subjugation.

The situation as described above created the background that nursed nationalist consciousness amongst the then indigenous educated elite. T.O. Elias (1954:8) avers that before the 1920s, nationalist agitations

had begun. The nationalists were initially agitating for the stop of racial segregation against them in public service. They demanded for equal treatment with their white counterparts in employment and education opportunities, and access to healthcare. The reactions of the African elite against the British colonial system led to the emergence of several nationalist movements. The first of such movement was the People's Union formed to resist the imposition of water rate in Lagos. The Union was led by Dr D.B. Oba and Dr S. Randle. This was followed by the formation of the Lagos Ancillary of the Aborigines Right Protection Society {LAARPS} led by personalities like Bishop James Johnson, Mojola Agbebi, C.A Sapara Williams, and a host of others. After the interlude of the First World War, in 1920, there was the Lagos Branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association where the likes of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe got inspiration from the liberation philosophy of Marcus Garvey who was the founder of the organisation. In the same year, the National Congress of British West Africa {NCBWA} was founded and led by Dr Casely Heyford, African educated elite from the Gold Coast, now Ghana (T.A. Ayua, 1985). Many Nigerian educated elite joined this movement. Nwankwo (2006:28) posits that the Clifford Constituion of 1922 came due largely to the delegation demands made by the NCBWA to the British Government in London. With the introduction of 'elective principle' by Clifford in 1922, the Nigeria National Democratic Party was formed and led by Herbert Macaulay. There was, also, the Lagos Youth Movement which in 1936 became the Nigeria Youth Movement. Some of the leading members were Ernest Ikoli, H.O. Davies, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dr Vaughan, Kofo Abayomi, and Obafemi Awolowo.

The interlude of the Second World War ushered in another stage of nationalist agitation in Nigeria. Between 1943 and the late 1950s, the nationalists channeled their energies to agitations for independence. Nationalist organisations and movements were geared towards political liberation of Nigeria from British colonial bondage. There was the formation of the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons {NCNC} led by Herbert Macaulay as the President and Nnamdi Azikiwe as the Secretary. The political pressure mounted on the British colonial government for constitutional reforms led to the adoption of the Richard Constitution in 1946 with a federal structure. In 1947, there came the radical Zikist Movement led by Mokwugo Okoye. With the promulgation of Macpherson Constitution in1951 which granted some level of local autonomy and political participation, the old NCNC was changed to the National Convention of Nigeria Citizens under the leadership of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe; the Northern Peoples Congress {NPC} was formed under Sir Ahmadu Bello and Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa; and the Action Group {AG} was founded under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Nwankwo, 2006:39). Though these political parties were formed and operated along dominant ethnic lines, arguably, they played a crucial role in achieving political independence for Nigeria.

On the question of how independence would be granted to Nigeria by the British, Nnoli (1980:41) notes that a constitutional conference was convened in London in 1953 and, in the same year, Chief Anthony Enahoro moved the 1956 Independence Motion on the floor of the Federal Legislature. In 1954, the Lyttelton Constitution was promulgated with a number of important reforms. In 1956, the Eastern and Western Regions were granted self-government, while the Northern Region would have to wait for another three years to achieve self-governing autonomy. Okibe (2000:81-83) notes that between 1957 and 1958, constitutional conferences were held in London and Lagos to discuss issues bordering on minorities, allocation of federal revenue, and timetable for the independence. After the 1958 talks, 1960 was set aside the year of Nigeria's independence. On 14 January 1960, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as the Prime Minister moved the 'independence motion' and on 1 October the same year, Nigeria achieved political independence from Britain. Nigeria became one united independent federation with three component autonomous regions: the Northern, Eastern, and Western Regions. Tafawa Balewa being the Prime Minister, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe was made the Head of State ceremonially representing the Royal Majesty of Britain as Nigeria was bequeathed with parliamentary form of government (Okanya, 1995).

Conclusion

The evolution of Nigeria is calibrated with important historical landmarks that actually helped to define the nature of the Nigerian state. From being part of the Slave Coast to a British colonial acquisition,

Nigeria and her peoples passed through important periods in their history. The European explorers opened up many inland waterways to the interior that facilitated the influx of foreigners: traders and Christian missionaries from the coastal areas to the hinterland of the Niger. In the course of these activities, many Nigerian peoples were dealt with while some others got opportunities to economic prosperity. The competition among European trading nations around the Niger and the need to guarantee Britain's economic and commercial interests compelled British authorities to militarily conquer the Nigerian peoples and assume full political control of their territories. The outcome was the amalgamation of different nationalities into one political Nigerian nation. Britain, thenceforth, ruled and decided the fate of Nigeria from 1914 to 1960. No gain saying that the British colonial administration was characterised by divide and rule method, economic exploitation, racial and cultural domination, and brutal repression of indigenous opposition. These evils inherent in the colonial system, no doubt, raised the consciousness of educated Nigerian elite for nationalist agitations that helped to crack-down the foundation of British colonial enterprise in Nigeria. Nigeria, thus, is a product of British imperialism.

Though, it is widely believed and said that Nigeria is a product of British imperialism, the amalgamation of the country cannot be said to be totally out of place. History has shown that there were salient features common with different Nigerian peoples that could have qualified the amalgamation. The Nigerian peoples related in terms of trade, cultural exchanges, tribal wars of expansion, and series of inter-group migrations before their amalgamation. These instances of robust inter-group relations possibly made the issue of amalgamation of the Nigerian peoples in 1914 less illogical. Thus, in as much as we agree that Nigeria is a product of British imperialism, we must be cautious to taunt the amalgamation of Nigeria a mistake. The point is that the problem is not so much about bringing the peoples together under one political authority only that Britain as a colonial power failed the Nigerian peoples by not setting a fair and workable framework devoid of ethnic competition and distrust which turned out to be the bane of Nigeria today.

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