NIGERIA

Century AD

1809 – Single Islamic state – Sokoto – is founded in north.

1850s – British establish presence around Lagos

1861 – Treaty with Lagos

1880 – British forces begin to take control of Southern Nigeria

1901 – Nigeria became a British protectorate

1912 – Lord Lugard, governor of Northern Nigeria establishes a system of indirect rule

1914 – Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria are amalgamated to form Nigeria

1960 – Independence from Britain.


Front cover image: Administrator and Nigerians, British Museum
**SHEET 1: HOW DID BRITAIN GAIN CONTROL OF NIGERIA?**

Britain took over Nigeria in stages, and by various different methods. Not all of these methods were approved of by the British Government at the time, though the results seem to have been to its liking.

**Source 1**

For Britain the advantage of the Charter granted to the Royal Niger Company was that it avoided spending government money on ruling territory which she wished to prevent coming under the control of any other European power.

Crowder 1968: 68

**Source 2**

I therefore ask permission to visit Benin City to depose and remove the king of Benin and to establish a native council in his place and take such further steps for the opening up of the country as the occasion may require.

Consul Phillips writing to the governor of Nigeria in 1896 quoted in Igbafe 1970: 395

**Source 4**

Whatever happens, we have got the Maxim gun, and they have not.

Belloc 1898: 41

**Source 6**

The cunning and treacherous manner in which [King] Jaja of Opobo had been arrested and deposed by Consul Johnson [while attending negotiations] was so deceitful that Vice-Consul Gallwey described it as ‘not cricket’ and ‘contrary to our ideas of fair play’.

Igbafe 1970: 397

**Source 7**

In order that the Queen of England may assist, defend, and protect the inhabitants of Lagos, and to put an end to the slave trade, I, Docemo [the king], do transfer unto the Queen of Great Britain, her heirs and successors forever, the port and Island of Lagos, with all the rights, profits, and revenue, freely, fully, entirely and absolutely.

Article 1 of the Treaty of Lagos, 1861, quoted in Nwabueze 1982: 7

**Source 9**

In order to make converts the ordinary missionary procedure is to divide the communities. They do not attempt to support the authority of the elders and chiefs, but to draw the people from it – in other words they seek to pull down the fabric of native society in order to build on the ruins.

Consul Palmer, quoted in Afigbo 1973: 95

**Task**

List the different tactics that Britain used to take over Nigeria.
SHEET 2: WHY DID THE BRITISH ADOPT A POLICY OF INDIRECT RULE?

In Nigeria, the governor, Lord Lugard, used a policy known as ‘indirect rule’. The intention was to rule through, and with the cooperation of, the African rulers, rather than directly through British officials. See if you can work out from these sources why they chose to rule in this way.

Source 1
Scholars have stressed the following factors in explaining the reasons for indirect rule in Nigeria: ‘shortage of staff’, ‘the benefit of cheap administration’; ‘the British policy of a continuity of administration’; and the need to avoid the difficult task of abolishing traditional systems altogether in the ‘teeth of spirited opposition’ by the people.

Nwabughuogu 1981: 65

Source 3
A great chief is a very valuable possession. His authority is an instrument of the greatest public utility which it is most desirable to keep in full force.

Sir William MacGregor, Governor of Lagos, quoted in Nwabughuogu 1981: 76

Source 4
Thus the policy of Indirect Rule was adopted in Nigeria as the cheapest and handiest solution to an otherwise insoluble administrative problem.

Afigbo 2005: 273

Source 5
In 1925 there were only 200 administrators in Nigeria for a population then estimated at twenty million.

Crowder 1968: 198

Source 7
The African rulers... were already experienced in the art of ruling, they knew their people and the terrain, and had the charisma the British needed to further legitimise their rule based on force and conquest. They would also form a buffer between the ordinary people and the foreign governors.

Afigbo 2005: 272

Source 8
Traditional authorities were used in the north, where the spread of Western education by Christian missionaries was strongly resisted by Muslim leaders. In the south the British occasionally created a political organisation where there had been none before; in most cases they ruled through those who were most supportive, whether these people had held traditional positions of authority or not.

Encyclopedia Britannica 2010

Questions
1. What impression of the chief does the photograph in source 2 give?
2. What would be the advantages and disadvantages for the British of keeping this chief in power?
3. Study source 6. What would British officials think of this scene?
4. Why did they allow it?
5. Did the British use indirect rule out of weakness or cleverness?
SHEET 3: HOW SUCCESSFUL WAS THE BRITISH POLICY OF INDIRECT RULE?

The system of indirect rule in Nigeria was held up by the British as a blueprint for the way that colonies should be run. Lord Lugard was later moved to Kenya to try to introduce the system there. See if you agree with this view, and whether you think the British won the affections of Nigerian people.

Source 1
The British administrator kept aloof from the people he was meant to be protecting... The educated [African] elite was ignored under the new British system of colonial rule in favour of the traditional chiefs, who were not encouraged to speak the language of the coloniser, nor adopt western culture.
Crowder 1968: 199

Source 2
In adopting a system of indirect rule [the British] buttressed up the authoritarian aspect of the power of chiefs who frequently abused it in a way they could rarely have done in traditional society without being overthrown.
Crowder 1968: 198

Source 4
Obviously the first task of the new Administration was to stop the organised slave-raids which annually took place.
Lugard 1937: 379

Source 5
The critic of British policy is reminded that where a generation ago human beings were for trivial offences impaled in the market-place, there is now an ordered administration... a piped water-supply and electric light service, besides costly modern hospitals and schools.
Lugard 1937: 381

Source 6
I doubt sometimes whether we have done a great deal to convince the Native Authorities that the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the people is one of the primary duties of the [British] Administration.
Sir David Cameron, Governor of Nigeria, quoted in Crowder 1968: 201

Questions

1. What impression of the British do sources 3, 7 and 8 give?
2. What problems did the British have in ruling Nigeria?
3. What were the advantages of British rule?
SHEET 4: HOW WELL DID THE BRITISH TREAT NIGERIAN PEOPLE?

Like other colonial powers, the British were faced with the problem of how to make money out of their colonies, while also trying to fulfil their declared aim of improving the lives of local people. To do both of these things, the British officials felt they had to make Nigerians work and pay taxes.

Source 1
From the total proceeds of taxation in each area, Lugard took from a quarter to a half – for the services of the Administration. The remainder went to the chief or Emir who used it to pay his own salaries, those of his servants and hangers-on and the cost of such public amenities or services as he provided.
Afigbo 2005: 282

Source 3
In southern Nigeria all able-bodied males between 15 and 50, and females between 15 and 40, were liable for labour for road-making and similar work up to 6 days every 3 months.
Crowder 1968: 208

Source 4
It is rather unfortunate that we were given nothing in return and whenever we asked the collectors about the use of the money, the only answer we heard was that it was for the government. Later on this job was placed in the hands of the chief... It looks as if his powers had been increased. No-one dared to talk to him with their cap on or in a standing position.
Isichei 1983: 387

Source 5
Official reports of the Colonial government noted that ‘no single case of ill-treatment of natives has been reported’ and boasted of having probably beaten the world record in track-laying with 6.5 miles in one day. But the official death rate, perhaps a reflection of the deplorable working conditions, stood at 24 deaths per thousand workers per year.
Kohnert 1986: 262

Source 6
When we were forced to pay tax, most of us learnt how to sell things and get money. Some sold firewood, and some even part of their food to get the money. As a result many families starved. So when we heard that people were working on the tin mines and paid, most of us rushed there to look for employment...
Isichei 1983: 387

Questions
1. Study sources 1 and 4. Who benefitted most from tax collecting?
2. Why do you think the British did it this way?
3. Study sources 2 and 7, and any other source. How hard would this building work have been?
4. Why did Nigerian people do it?
5. What benefits would these things have brought to Nigeria?
SHEET 5: HOW FAR DID NIGERIAN PEOPLE BENEFIT FROM BRITISH RULE?

There appear to have been benefits for the Nigerian economy from British rule, though who exactly got the rewards – British, rich Nigerians or the population as a whole – is less clear.

Source 1
A primary consequence of the arrival of the British was the opening of vastly expanded markets for Nigerian produce. Palm oil and kernels and then tin, cocoa, and groundnuts began to flow overseas from the colony. In return the ships brought the products of foreign manufacturers for those Nigerians who were profiting from improved production and export trade.
Charle 1967: 79

Source 3
Indirect economic benefits also flowed to the colony during the period of English rule. European medicine increased the capabilities of the Nigerians and lengthened their lives. European missionaries, teachers, and merchants improved their general education and demonstrated the variety of consumer goods which they might want.
Charle 1967: 80

Source 4
Agricultural producers – the vast majority of the inhabitants – found unprecedented opportunities for financial gain despite the high degree of competition. Prospects for traders were similarly improved. And as the new wealth trickled down a few individuals were able to secure even greater rewards as professionals or civil servants.
Charle 1967: 80

Source 5
The slave-owners at Sokotoor Yola were quick to recognise the profitability of the switch from slaves to hired labourers, provided they could get them cheap and in sufficient numbers. A free labourer could claim no more than his day’s wage and the employer would neither be forced to support him and his family in sickness or old age, nor would he have to cater for him during the dry season, when there was little work to do.
Kohnert 1986: 260

Source 7
Many changes accompanied British rule: Western education, the English language, and Christianity spread during the period; new forms of money, transport, and communication were developed; and the Nigerian economy became based on the export of cash crops.
Encyclopedia Britannica 2010

Questions
1. What were the main economic benefits for Nigeria of British rule?
2. How do you think Britain benefitted?
3. Would all Nigerian people have been happy with the changes?
SHEET 6: HOW FAR WAS THE BRITISH POLICY OF UNIFYING NIGERIA TO BLAME FOR THE CIVIL WAR?

Shortly after independence, between 1967 and 1970, there was civil war in Nigeria as the federal government tried to prevent the eastern region forming its own country, Biafra. The war dragged on, and the world watched in horror as Biafrans starved. There were many reasons for the war, some of which may have been caused by the period of British colonial rule.

**Source 1**
Of the three major regions with which Nigeria began independence, the West was in bitter opposition, while the East and North ruled together in a basically incompatible alliance until 1964. The basic cause was the claim of the North, after a disputed census, to a numerical advantage which, with the great majority of its people voting for tribal rather than political interests, could have put it in permanent control of the Federation.

Perham 1970: 232

**Source 2**
Nigeria became independent in 1960. Like most ex-colonies in the continent, its boundaries had been drawn quite randomly to indicate where the competing claims of the imperial powers collided. Consequently Nigeria was composed of Muslim states in the desert north, and once-powerful Christian kingdoms in the south and east, which was where the country’s only significant source of income – oil – was found.

Phillips 2000

**Source 3**
The Federation of Nigeria has never really been one unified country, for it has widely differing peoples and tribes. Despite this obvious fact, the former colonial master decided to keep the country one in order to effectively control her vital resources for their economic interests.

Atofarati 1992

**Source 5**
In September 1965, attacks on Igbo in the north were renewed with unprecedented ferocity, stirred up by Muslim fundamentalists with the backing, Eastern Region leaders believed, of northern political leaders. The army was sharply divided along regional lines. Reports circulated that troops from the Northern Region had taken part in the mayhem. The estimated number of deaths ranged as high as 30,000, although the figure was probably closer to 8,000–10,000. More than 1 million Igbo returned to the Eastern Region. In retaliation, some northerners were massacred in Port Harcourt and other eastern cities, and a counter-exodus of non-Igbo was under way.

Metz 1991

**Questions**

1. What causes for the civil war can you identify from these sources?
2. What does the medal say about Nigerian unity?
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