

COURSE CODE: GNS 102  
COURSE TITLE: Introduction to Nigerian History  
NUMBER OF UNITS: 1 Unit  
COURSE DURATION: One hour per week

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The Course provides an overview of Nigeria's contribution to World history and her relationship with other part of the world. It focuses on the following: Sources of Nigerian history, Methodology of history Major landmark in early Nigerian History (Nok, Igbo-Ukwu, Ife, Benin etc). Emphasis is on the scientific and technological development of these early Nigerian societies. Students will also be exposed to Pre-colonial history of Sudanese/

Nigerian States; the Slave trade and its effects; Colonial and Post-colonial history of Nigeria. Attempts are made to relate the discussion to Agriculture, With Special reference to the Introduction of Cash Crops, Industrialization and Urbanization Processes. This is a compulsory course for all students in the University. In view of this, students are expected to participate in all the course activities and have a minimum of 75% attendance to be able to write the final examination.

### **Further Readings**

Alan Ryder (1977) *Benin and the European 1485 – 1897* Longman.  
Michael Omolewa (1985) *Certificate History of Nigeria*, University of Ibadan, Ibadan  
Plaude Ake (1981) *A Political Economy of Africa*, Longman  
Obaro, Ikime (1977) *The Fall of Nigeria. The British Conquest*, Heinemann  
Obaro, Ikime ed. (1999) *Groundwork of Nigerian History* HBEN Publisher  
Tony Ashaolu, Olawumi Falodun, Olubayode Daramola , Omotayo  
Onibonoje (1966) *History of West the AD 1000 – Present Day*, Onibonoje Press  
Toyin Falola, Abdullahi Mahadi, Martin Uhomoibhi & Ukachukwu Anyanahun (1989) *History of Nigeria book 1-3 Nigeria before 1800 AD*

## **Course Synopsis**

What is History?

Sources of Nigerian History.

The Scientific and Technological Development of Early Nigerian Societies.

The Importance of the Centers of Ancient Civilization for the History of Nigeria.

Pre – Colonial Societies in Nigeria

Factors Responsible for the emergence of Oyo Empire.

The Trans- Saharan Trade & effects on Nigeria

The Atlantic Slave Trade & effects on Nigeria

The Scramble for and Partition of Africa – Reasons for the British interest in Nigeria.

The British Conquest of Nigeria

Colonial Rule and its Impacts on Nigeria:-

The Indirect Rule System

The Colonial Economy and its Impact on Nigeria.

Social Development and intergroup Relations in Nigeria during the Colonial Period.

The Decolonization Process in Nigeria: –

Origin of Nationalism

Factors that Assisted the Nationalists in the Struggle for Independence in Nigeria.

Post Independence Nigeria

The First Republic

The Coup and Counter Coups

The Nigerian Civil War

Military Rule in Nigeria

The Return to Democracy: The Second Republic

The Third Republic and the June 12 Election

The Forth Republic

## **WHAT IS HISTORY?**

The word 'history' was derived from the Greek word historia – which means inquiry. History is an important branch of knowledge (discipline) in the study of man and society. The definition could be looked at from two dimensions - namely, history as a process and history as a study/ discipline.

### **Definition**

History, at the first level, is a process defined by Karl Marx as the relationship between man and his environment and the influence of his environment on man. History at this level refers to the events, episodes and the totality of the changes, experiences or happenings which humanity has undergone ever since the emergence of human society.

History at the second level as an academic discipline is the reconstruction, study and explanation of these changes which humanity has undergone. It is an organised critical study of past activities of human beings that had produced significant effects on subsequent course of events. It is the study of past human activities at a particular place over a given period of time so as to record changes over time. It is the systematic study of the process, events or motion of events through the aid of records or sources. Thus, history refers to both the events of the past as well as the study of these events. The subject matter of history in both is MAN, not as a biological unit but man in society (social man) who is susceptible to change. It is the changing activities of man over time that constitutes the transformation of societies. However, the central issue in both is **CHANGE**. There would be no history if there was no change.

## **SOURCES OF NIGERIAN HISTORY**

Sources refer to the records from which information about the process and studies of past events (history) were obtained. Without these sources, the historian would not be able to get facts with which to write. Historians depend on sources in order to understand historical events. There are three types of sources – primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary sources contain materials or information which is the direct experience or original thought of the writer or the person giving the writer the information he is recording. Examples of primary sources include oral tradition and oral testimonies.

Secondary sources are materials or works based on primary sources. Examples are written sources like books, journals, diaries, newspapers, e.t.c. Tertiary sources are auxiliary sources that cover a wide range of relevant information from other disciplines like linguistics, Archaeology, Biology, Anthropology, e.t.c.

### **Oral Tradition**

This means orally preserved information. They are any piece of historical information transmitted by word of mouth or verbally and passed from generation to generation. It includes folklores, songs, proverbs, legends, king lists, and oral narratives e.t.c. Oral testimonies - are more recent accounts of the past transmitted by word of mouth. Rumour - are oral sources transmitted from person to person. Its special function is to give the latest information about the present

### **Importance Oral Tradition**

Oral traditions and oral sources are basic in the reconstruction of Nigerian history. They are the most abundant sources and they exist in every part of the country. In the absence of other sources,

oral traditions are valuable as they become the only source of information for the history of that particular area. They are important, in varying degree, for all aspects of the periods of Nigerian history - political, economic and social. They also constitute the main body of Nigeria historical data especially before the colonial period. In addition, some of the stories or legends may help an archaeologist to confirm a find or discovery and thus throw some light on the history of the area.

### **Shortcomings**

One of the major limitations of oral tradition is the tendency to forget important facts. The more distant the occurrence of events in the past the more difficult they are to recall. Moreover, oral traditions are easily open to exaggeration and distortions. Political or some other consideration may lead a narrator to distort the fact of an event.

### **Written Sources**

Written sources, like oral sources, may be primary or secondary. They are derived from all official and legal documents, diaries, letters, newspapers, industrial and commercial records, maps e.t.c.

### **Merits of written sources**

They have a relatively high preservative value when compared with oral sources. When kept safe, they last for a long time without being destroyed. They also have the ability to communicate the same type and quality of information to readers at different periods/times without depreciation or distortion of the content as is usually the case with oral tradition. There is no problem of loss of memory in written sources unlike oral sources. Materials are easy to get unlike the tertiary source.

### **Limitations of written sources**

They are not evenly distributed in time and space. They are usually not relevant to Nigerian history before the coming of the Europeans. Some of the written accounts of Nigerian history by Europeans are sometimes biased. Some are written to suit political or racial interest and this error may be taken up by later generations as authentic truth. Written sources can sometimes be corrupted in the process of preservation if proper care is not taken. It can also be easily lost through destruction by fire, rain or insects if not properly preserved. Some people, like government officials, sometimes deliberately destroy documents.

### **Archaeology**

Archaeology can be defined as the study of dug up materials. It is a method of studying the past through the relics dug up from the ground. This consists of materials remains of human beings in the past such as building, tools for domestic use, skeletal remains, fossils and bones of animals.

These are all important sources for social history.

### **Merits**

Archaeology can extend our knowledge about Nigerian past deeper than written or oral sources. For instance, objects made of stone can survive over a long period of time. It provides powerful concrete evidence of human achievements and activities dating back to thousands of years. Buried artifacts are significant points of reference in measuring civilization especially where oral and written sources are not available. It has the ability to provide data out of which absolute dates may be calculated through analytical tools and techniques from other disciplines.

## **Limitations**

Many materials do not survive. Only materials which cannot perish lend themselves to study. As a result there may be scarcity of materials to study. The centre of civilization may shift from one place to another, thereby making the availability of archaeological materials a derivation of chance. In other words, archaeological materials are not found everywhere. Some places are rich in them while others are remarkably poor. Moreover, archaeology cannot furnish as much detailed information as written sources. For instance, the chronology derived from archaeology is not often precise. Furthermore, archaeologists tend to study communities rather than individuals.

## **THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY NIGERIAN SOCIETIES MAJOR LANDMARK IN EARLY NIGERIAN HISTORY**

Information on the major land marks in early Nigerian history was made possible through the work of archaeologists. Through archaeologists, we have been able to know some of the places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past. Some of the places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past included: Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin among others. They are usually referred to as centres of ancient civilization. The history of these centres of ancient civilization presents us with the scientific and technological developments of early Nigerian societies.

### **Nok Culture/Civilization**

The discovery of a terra cotta (burnt clay) head of a monkey by tin miners in Nok in 1936 prompted more discoveries in other places such as Wamba, Katsina-Ala and Jema. The area where these terra cotta figurines were found is called the Nok culture or civilization area. The Nok culture is believed to be a transitional civilization between the Stone Age and the Iron Age in Nigeria because of the presence of a combination of stone and iron objects. Through the use of carbon dating, it was discovered that the Nok culture existed between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.

### **Benin Civilization**

Benin was important for its art-work. The craftsmen of Benin carved in wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass. Art historians claim that bronze casting was introduced into Benin by an Ife artist. They cast wooden doors and ivory masks, one of which was the ivory mask used as FESTAC symbol in 1977.

### **Ife Civilization**

Ife is important because of its terra cotta and bronze heads. Objects such as stools and figures were carved on hard stone called quartz while animal and human figures were carved from granite and decorated with iron nails. An example is Opa Oranmiyan in Ile – Ife. Most of the bronze and terra cotta heads were said to be life – size decorated with facial marks and natural hair. Some of the bronze heads were said to be portraits of some of the rulers- Ooni. Art historians believe that Ife art originated from the Nok culture because of similarities in the two especially beaded neck, wrist and ankles. They also believed that it was from Ife that Benin probably learnt bronze sculpture.

### **Igbo Ukwu Civilization**

Some bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while one Isaiah Alozie was digging a toilet pit at Igbo Ukwu in 1939. This eventually led to the excavation of three sites in the area by an archaeologist called Thurstan Shaw. The three sites included a burial chamber, a pit and under a compound wall. Many objects made of bronze were discovered in the various sites

including the remains of decayed skeleton which have been suggested to be those of a king and five slaves who were buried with him. The sites excavated at Igbo Ukwu have been dated to the middle of the ninth century A.D.

### **The Significance of Nok, Ife, Benin and Igbo Ukwu for Nigerian History.**

The history of the centres of ancient civilization has revealed that Nigerians, like people in other parts of the world, passed through various stages in their developments, from the food-gathering stage to live a settled life to develop their cultures. Nigerians were able to produce tools and weapons to enable them control and adapt themselves to their environment. Indeed, many of them were hard working and skilful artists. Furthermore, the study revealed that they had more meaningful economic and social relationships and did not interact only through wars.

### **Factors Responsible for the Emergence of Oyo Empire**

Oyo Empire was founded by Oranmiyan, who was also believed to be the founder of the present Benin monarchy. He was the last born of Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yoruba. The following were the factors that contributed to the Empire's rise to greatness. First was the geographical location of the Empire. The land was fertile for extensive agriculture. She also had an advantage of middleman position in the commercial activities between the people of the forest states and those in the Nupe, Bariba, Hausa, Kano, (Savannah areas). Products e.g Kolanut of the forest states – were exchanged with salt, leather good and glass. Furthermore, her location gave her the opportunity to participate in the trans-Atlantic trade with the Portuguese through which she acquired a lot of wealth. Another factor for Oyo Empire's rise was the distinctive system of Government with built in constitutional sanctions and safeguard usually referred to as "checks and balances".

The institution of the Oyo Mesi – an aristocratic council of state with seven members prevented over-ambitious people from ruling over the empire. There was also the ogboni cult, with powerful influence on the Alafin and the society. Oyo Empire benefited financially from the sale of her agricultural products and also from the tribute paid by vassal states (conquered territories). This enabled her to have enough revenue to take care of the state affairs including getting horses and other weapons for the military operations. Oyo maintained a good system of administration. There were officers in charge of political, religious, judicial and other affairs Oyo had a strong and well equipped standing army with which she was able to expand her territory. The army which was headed by the Are-Ona-Kakanfo, consisted of footmen or (infantry) men armed with bows, arrows and spears and those who fought on horses (cavalry). The horses were procured from the North and gave the Oyo army an advantage over her neighbours since none of them had a cavalry.

In addition, Oyo Empire was blessed with energetic rulers who were committed to her greatness. For instance Oranmiyan the founder of the empire was said to be very brave, war-like and very courageous. Sango, the fourth king, was said to be of a very wild disposition, fiery temper and had the habit of emitting fire and smoke out of his mouth by which he greatly increased the dread his subjects had for him. The people of Oyo Empire shared a common language and believed in a common ancestor – Oduduwa. This provided a unifying force for them as it fostered unity among them.

## **THE TRANS - SAHARAN TRADE**

This refers to the trade between North Africa and Western Sudan across the Sahara Desert. It became more important with the introduction of camel in the Third century. It took three months for the caravans to cross the extremely dangerous journey. The capital was provided by wealthy North African traders – Berbers. Articles of trade included kola nut and slaves

### **Importance of Trans Saharan Trade**

The Trans Saharan Trade provided an important link between West and North Africa and facilitated exchange of political, social, religious, economic and cultural ideas. It brought about wealth to rulers and traders. Furthermore, it brought about the introduction of Islam and its civilization Sharia system of law was also introduced. It made possible a regular supply of horses for cavalry; for instance, Oyo Empire.

## **THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE**

Also known as the Triangular Trade, the Atlantic Slave Trade was the trade carried on across the Atlantic Ocean between the Europeans and Africans. It became more important in the Fifteenth century with the arrival of the Portuguese. Demand for slaves could be traced to the introduction of plantation system of agriculture in places like Brazil, Jamaica, and Haiti among others.

In 1441, a Portuguese voyager, Antam Gonzalves presented 10 African slaves to Prince Henry the Navigator as gifts. By 1460, about 700 to 800 slaves were exported annually to Portugal from West Africa Sources of slaves included, condemned criminals, political prisoners, victims of kidnapping and relatives sold to redeem debts.

### **EFFECTS**

One of the major effects of the Atlantic Slave Trade was depopulation. About 10 million slaves were taken away from West Africa up to 1860. Another effect was manpower drain. The most energetic people who could have contributed to economic development of Nigeria were carried away. New crops were introduced including cassava and rice, both of which have become staple food in the country. It aggravated human suffering and degradation of African people.

## **THE SCRAMBLE FOR AND PARTITION OF AFRICA**

The sudden and rapid conquest of the whole of Africa (with the exception of Liberia and Ethiopia) by the European powers between 1880 and 1905 is usually referred to as the scramble for and partition of Africa

### **REASONS FOR BRITISH INTEREST IN NIGERIA**

One of the reasons for the British interest in Nigeria in the second half of the Nineteenth century was the desire to secure sources of raw materials for the industries in Britain. There was also the desire to secure overseas market for their manufactured goods. Another reason was the desire to invest their surplus capital outside Europe – hence the saying ‘Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism’. There was also the Desire for National prestige. Desire of the Christian missionaries to spread Christianity was also one of the reasons for British Conquest. The Humanitarians wanted to stop the slave trade and other inhuman practices Racialist feelings of white man's supremacy. The immediate reason was the problem over the Congo area especially between Belgium and France.

In order to prevent the European powers from going into war over colonies in Africa. Bismarck, the German Chancellor, called for a conference of all the Powers in Berlin from Nov. 1884 to Feb. 1885 where they formally shared the African continent among themselves on paper. Thereafter Britain, like other European nations, started the move to have an effective occupation over the Nigerian area through both war of conquest (force) and signing of treaties (peaceful means).

## **THE BRITISH CONQUEST OF NIGERIA**

### **LAGOS**

Lagos was the first place to be conquered in Nigeria. The British used the succession dispute in the royal family to their advantage by supporting Akitoye against Kosoko in 1851. In 1861, Lagos was declared a colony of Britain

### **Yorubaland**

Lagos was used as a strategic place to get into Yorubaland. During the Yoruba civil war, Egba and Ijebu blocked the road that linked Ibadan with Lagos to prevent her from getting access to fire arms. The British were not happy about this as they wanted to trade with the people in the hinterland. They sent a military expedition against Ijebu and conquered it.

### **Benin**

The British sent a military expedition against Benin in 1896 to retaliate the killing of Consul Phillip and his men who went to Benin during a native ceremony contrary to advice. Benin was destroyed; many of their artifacts were looted while Oba Ovonramwen was sent on exile to Calabar where he died in 1914.

### **Niger Delta**

The presence of the British warships sent to patrol the coastline of West Africa in order to seize any ship found carrying slaves, marked the presence of the British military might and political force in the Niger Delta. The British intervened in the politics of the Delta area. For instance, in Bonny, they dethroned Alali and replaced him with William Dappa Pepple. They also removed Jaja of Opobo for not allowing them to trade directly with the people in the hinterland. He was sent on exile to West Indies.

### **Northern Nigeria**

The British granted the Royal Niger Company (RNC) the Charter to rule over the Niger area. In order to prevent France and Germany from occupying the area (i.e. Northern Nigeria), it must effectively become a British Protectorate. Hence, the Charter given to the RNC was revoked on 31 Dec 1899. On 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1900, Lugard formally declared the Northern Protectorate at a ceremony in Lokoja. The proclamation was seen by the rulers and people of Northern Nigeria as a challenge to war and they were not going to give up their sovereignty without a resistance. The rulers and people of the North decided to resist this imposition. Lugard defeated all of them one after the other with the superior weapons and also using the advantage of lack of unity among the emirates.

## **COLONIAL RULE AND ITS IMPACTS ON NIGERIA:- THE INDIRECT RULE SYSTEM**

This is the system by which the British ruled Nigeria through the traditional institutions, like the Sultan, Emirs, Obas etc. Parts of the reasons for the adoption of the system were shortage of funds and personnel – Britain lacked adequate financial resources and qualified personnel to run overseas colonies. Others included language barrier, preservation of the traditional system and its success in India and Uganda. The system was successful in the North, partially successful in the West but a total failure in the East.

It was successful in the north because there were fief-holders who could help the new system. There also existed a revenue system, which provided adequate revenue to run the indirect rule system while there was a firm judicial system based on the Sharia.

In the western part, the institution of Obas and Chiefs provided a favorable background for the introduction of Indirect rule system and accounted for its partial success on the area. The system failed in the east because Lugard failed to understand the traditional political system there. In place of the council of elders, he created warrant chiefs and the people were against this. This in addition to the issue on taxation led to the Aba Women's Riots of 1929.

## **THE COLONIAL ECONOMY**

We shall be examining the characteristics of the type of economy that existed during the colonial era. The colonial masters encouraged the production of cash crops. They dictated prices of the products of Nigerians in their favour. They also encouraged mass importation of manufactured goods and discouraged the growth of industries. They replaced indigenous traders with their Lebanese agents. The Banks that were established did not give credit facilities to Nigerian traders. The railway system was geared towards the maximum exploitation of the resources.

## **DECOLONIZATION PROCESS IN NIGERIA**

### **Nationalism**

This refers to patriotic feeling and the love for one's country to be independent. Early nationalists included Jaja of Opobo, Ovonramen and all those who resisted the incursions of the British into their various territories. Nationalists of the Twentieth century in Nigeria included Herbert Macauley, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and Ahmadu Bello.

### **Factors that Assisted the Nationalists in their Struggle for Independence**

#### **Internal Factors**

The following were the internal factors that assisted the Nationalists in their struggle for independence of Nigeria. Colonial constitutional development like Clifford constitution, 1922, Richard constitution, 1946, Establishment of political parties like the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC), Growth of trade unions and labor organizations Political rallies. The role of newspaper like the West African Pilot which was established by Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1937 and Discriminating Colonial policies were some of the impetus for the struggle. For instance the educated elites were not allowed to participate in administration while farmers' products were priced very low.

## **External factors**

Effects of the Second World War

The Atlantic Charter signed between President Roosevelt of USA and Winston Churchill of Britain

The independence of India

The Labour party in Britain was opposed to colonisation.

Associations like the West Africa Students Union (W.A.S.U) and National Congress of British Colonies in West Africa (NCBWA) put a lot of pressure on the colonial government. Furthermore, international pressure came from UNO, USA and Soviet Union who were opposed to colonisation. All these factors combined made Britain to grant independence to Nigeria on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1960.

## **Assessments**

Students must ensure they attain 75 percent of the total attendance.

Term Paper----20%

Test -----10%

Exam -----70%

Total -----100%

Any Term Paper with detected to have failed the Plagiarism Software will be cancelled. And all members in the group will have a score of Zero.

