

LESSON NOTE FOR WEEK TWO (FAMVAR INTERNATIONAL SEC. SCHOOL)

SUBJECT: HISTORY

CLASS: JSS3

TOPIC: BRITISH CONTACT WITH NIGERIA

It is an undeniable fact that the advent of Europeans to the region known today as Nigeria changed its entire political and socio-cultural landscape. Among the major European nations to visit the pre-colonial Nigerian territory, the British were one of the last. Prior to the British, various Europeans had visited the region, starting with the Portuguese, who were followed by the Germans and then by the French explorers. At first, the Europeans ventured into West Africa during their explorations out of curiosity and the need to carry out their missionary activities. Then the discovery of America, which needed slaves to cultivate its plantations, resulted in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The trans-Atlantic slave trade attracted Britain and other European powers to West Africa and many of the slaves were gotten from Nigeria. The British joined the slave trade in 1650 and quickly built slave ports to help facilitate the movement of slaves across the Atlantic Ocean to America, and Europe. They also discovered other economic ventures and started missionary activities in the pre-colonial Nigerian territory. The British also tried to colonize the people in order to control the vast economic resources necessary to sustain the industries in Britain.

In the aspect of trade, the British first concentrated on slave trade and later combined it with trade in palm produce. When the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was abolished in 1806, palm produce became the main trade commodity.

British contact with Nigeria can be mainly grouped into three categories. These categories are:

- A. British contact with Nigeria as explorers
- B. British contact with Nigeria as missionaries
- C. British contact with Nigeria as traders and merchants

A. British contact with Nigeria as explorers: The British came to West Africa as explorers to discover more about Africa which was considered the 'Dark Continent', with West Africa in particular regarded as the "White Man's Grave". The British government sent several explorers to the African interior to discover the course and source of the Niger, beginning with Mungo Park's two expeditions in 1795 and 1805. Other notable British explorers who came to Nigeria were Hugh Clapperton and the Lander brothers.

B. British contact with Nigeria as missionaries: The British also explored the Nigerian coasts for missionary activities. Some notable British missionaries who came to Nigeria were Mary Slessor, Thomas Birch Freeman, Henry Townsend, Hope Wadell and Sarah Townsend. The great Nigerian-born missionary, Samuel Ajayi Crowther also returned to Nigeria for missionary activities during this period and later became the first African bishop of the Anglican Church.

C. British contact with Nigeria as traders: With the abolition of slave trade across the British Empire in 1833, the British shifted their focus to agricultural products such as palm produce and cotton which were needed in their industries back at home. The British controlled this trade through the establishment of powerful companies by its merchants. Notable among these merchants were Mac Gregor Laird, John Holt and George Taubman Goldie, who established the Royal Niger Company in 1886. The Royal Niger Company, in particular, was so influential that it played a key role in securing Nigeria as a colony for the British empire.

HOMEWORK

Discuss British contact with Nigeria under the following headings:

- A. British contact with Nigeria as explorers
- B. British contact with Nigeria as missionaries
- C. British contact with Nigeria as traders and merchants