

LESSON NOTE FOR WEEK FOUR

SUBJECT: HISTORY

CLASS: JSS3

TOPIC: BRITISH SYSTEM OF COLONIALISM(2)

FEATURES OF INDIRECT RULE

Indirect rule had some remarkable attributes. These features are listed below:

1. Indirect rule made use of the traditional political system existing in the North.
2. It acknowledged the importance, position and powers of the Emirs.
3. It allowed for the preservation of many aspects of the culture (customs, traditions and religion) of the people.
4. It brought the Emirs under the direct supervision and authority of the British officials who never tried to impose or exert their influence on them.
5. It was meant to add more power to the existing traditional administration.
6. It was less costly as it made use of few paid British officials to run the entire North.
7. It allowed the British to easily collect the taxes due to the government.
8. Where there were no traditional rulers, chiefs were created or officials appointed to run the system.

Why the British adopted the Indirect rule policy

Indirect rule was adopted in the country due to the following reasons:

1. Lack of administrative officers
2. Inadequate funds
3. It was practiced in other countries.
4. Preservation of the people's tradition
5. To enlist the support of traditional rulers
6. Language barrier
7. It was a suitable way of administering the North which was vast.
8. Poor transport and communication network

Why indirect rule succeeded in the North

Some of the factors that led to the success of indirect rule in the North were:

1. The submissive attitude of the people
2. The autocratic nature of the rulers
3. The Islamic religion which ingrained a culture deep reverence for and obedience to leaders in the people.
4. Low level of education in the North
5. The centralized and organized nature of the emirate
6. The presence of a well-organized tax system
7. Non-interference with the people's religion and customs which made them accommodate the indirect rule of the British.
8. The emirs accepted to work for the British knowing the consequences of doing otherwise.
9. Fewness of white men to help Lord Lugard govern the large area made indirect rule inevitable.

Why indirect rule failed in the South

1. The educated people in the South questioned the objective of indirect rule.
2. Limited powers of traditional rulers
3. Restiveness of the people
4. Absence of highly centralized government
5. Indirect rule was viewed by the Southerners as a violation of some of the treaties signed with the British for quasi-autonomy e.g. the treaty signed in Abeokuta in 1893 with the Alake of Egbaland.
6. Exclusion of the educated elite from leadership
7. The appointment of warrant chiefs

Advantages of Indirect Rule in Nigeria

Despite the criticism usually leveled against indirect rule in Nigeria, it actually had some merits which were:

1. The system proved to be culture-friendly as it accommodated the culture, customs, tradition and feelings of the people.
2. It was a cost-effective administrative system for the British colonial masters.
3. It was an administrative training ground for the emirs in the modern art of governance and communication.
4. It made the colonial government more relatable and less foreign to the natives.
5. It brought about peace and minimal conflict between the British and the colonized people

Disadvantages of Indirect Rule in Nigeria

1. It excluded the educated elite and gave preference to the illiterate traditional rulers who were easier to deceive.
2. It brought conflict between the traditional rulers and their people.
3. It deprived the people of the power to select, elect or appoint their own traditional rulers.
4. It delayed the constitutional development of the country because the 'Government Chiefs' never wanted to hand over power to Nigerian politicians.
5. Many traditional rulers appointed by the government abused their powers, became corrupt, enriched themselves and mismanaged government funds.
6. It caused mutual suspicion between the Nigerian leaders and the masses, between the traditional rulers and the politicians, and between Northern and Southern Nigeria.