

UNDERSTANDING COLONIAL NIGERIA

In this landmark new history, Toyin Falola analyzes the impact of Britain's colonization of Nigeria from the late nineteenth century to 1960, when the country regained independence. Falola covers major events in depth, from the initial conquest and denial of Indigenous sovereignty to the emergence and functioning of the colonial state and later nationalist movements, offering fascinating insights into labor and trade relations, regionalism and nationalism, and Nigeria's role during World Wars I and II. *Understanding Colonial Nigeria* assesses the economic, political, social, and cultural changes that culminated in the emergence of a coalition of diverse groups agitating for the end of colonial rule from the 1940s – from labor coalitions and politicians to youth groups and market women. From the country's borders and state structure to the present conflicts, Falola powerfully reflects on the lasting consequences of British intervention in the affairs of Nigerian states and communities.

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British Rule and Its Impact

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For Professors Yemi Akinwumi, Sati Fwatshak, and Zack Gundu
Change agents of Central Nigeria

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PREFACE

This is the second volume of three interrelated books, each on a distinctive era of Nigeria's history: the first is on precolonial Nigeria; this one is about the colonial era; and the third discusses the postcolonial and contemporary life of the nation. The annals of history contain narratives that greatly influence how people understand their world. The story of British colonial rule in Nigeria is a captivating and intricate narrative of conquest, colonization, social transformation, and the fight for independence. Within the pages of this comprehensive and meticulously researched book, I embarked on a journey to unravel the intricacies of a pivotal period in Nigerian history. Although no one can fully master the complicated history of Nigeria in all its various historical eras, events, and thematic dimensions, I aim to shed light on the multifaceted layers that make up the history of a complex nation.

Part I of the journey starts with Chapter 1, "The Colonial Archives and Alternative Voices," which explores the archives and spaces where alternative voices that affirm and challenge the prevailing narratives are discovered. By carefully studying all relevant published materials, I attempt to create a nuanced understanding of the events from the mid-nineteenth century to the early 1960s. In the opening of Chapter 2, "Narrating Colonial Nigeria," I explain my sources and approaches. Presenting these from a critical perspective, I aim to provide readers with a deeper understanding of the intricate nature of the colonial experience.

Continuing the exploration in Part II, I delve into the intricacies of the nineteenth century, a time when numerous peoples and states coexisted, each possessing distinct identities, cultures, and political systems. Chapter 3, "Peoples and States in the Nineteenth Century," invites readers to understand the rich and varied history of precolonial Nigeria by providing a backdrop for significant encounters that defined the nation's colonial history. The discussion on colonization was dominated by trade and missions, establishing the basis for European regional interests. In Chapter 4, "Prelude to Colonization: Trade and Missions," I explore the complex networks of trade and religious impact before the arrival of colonial powers. In Chapter 5, "Lagos and the Niger Area," the attention turns to Lagos and the Niger area, which were

historical crossroads that came together, influencing the future path of the region.

The conquest of Nigeria and the subsequent reactions are an important chapter in the nation's history. In Chapter 6, "Conquest and Reactions," I analyze the intricate dynamics of power, resistance, and adaptation that unfolded when colonial forces met various Indigenous populations. Chapter 7, "Administrative Experimentation, Boundary Formation, and Colonial Consolidation, 1900–1914," focuses on the period from 1900 to 1914, which involved administrative experimentation, boundary formation, and colonial consolidation, and sheds light on the mechanisms utilized to strengthen colonial control.

Part III of the book provides an overview of the changes and continuities in Nigerian society during colonial rule. Chapter 8, "World War I and Its Aftermath," explores the consequences of World War I and its aftermath, examining the significant changes that followed this worldwide conflict. Chapter 9, "The Interwar Years," delves into the social, political, and economic changes that influenced Nigerian society between the two World Wars. As explained in Chapter 10, "Indirect Rule and the Native Administration," indirect rule and native administration played crucial roles in colonial governance. The chapter explores how the colonial authorities maintained control while respecting and incorporating existing Indigenous governance systems.

Chapter 11, "The Legal System and Law Enforcement," examines this era's legal system and law enforcement mechanisms, providing insight into the complex relationship between justice and power. Chapter 12, "Colonial Economy," analyzes the colonial economy, which is crucial in facilitating imperial exploitation. It reveals the intricate dynamics of trade, labor, agriculture, and resource extraction, seeking to unravel the complex relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Chapter 13, "Western Education," examines the introduction of Western education and its profound impact on the nation. It sheds light on how knowledge can bring about transformation, as well as its far-reaching implications on individuals and communities.

Chapter 14, "Social Changes," discusses various changes, such as shifts in gender roles, family structures, and social hierarchies. In Chapter 15, "Women," the focus is on the voices and experiences of women, who have often been marginalized in historical narratives. This chapter highlights their resilience, agency, and significant contributions to Nigerian society. Chapter 16, "Religions," delves into the complex relationship between various religions, including Indigenous religions, Islam, and Christianity. It sheds light on how these religions significantly shaped belief systems, cultural practices, and social cohesion. Chapter 17, "Health and Medicine," explores these vital components of societal well-being, including the intricate dynamics of health care in colonial Nigeria, ranging from traditional healing practices to the introduction of Western medical systems.

Chapter 18, “Cultures,” celebrates Nigeria’s rich and diverse heritage, exploring the various cultural expressions and artistic traditions that thrived during this period. Chapter 19, “Urbanization,” examines the process of urbanization and its significant effects on social structures, demographics, and economic activities. Chapter 20, “Creativity and Aesthetics,” invites readers to delve into the realms of literature, music, visual arts, and performance. It shines a spotlight on the remarkable creative expressions that emerged despite the limitations imposed by colonial rule.

Part IV is on the emergence of nationalism and the arduous fight for independence. Chapter 21, “Reform Movements Before 1940,” analyzes the reform movements that emerged before 1940 and the crucial role they played in setting the stage for the ensuing transformative events. Chapter 22, “World War II and Its Aftermath,” explores the impact of World War II and its repercussion on the trajectory of Nigerian nationalism.

Trade unions and politics have played a crucial role in shaping the aspirations of the Nigerian people. Accordingly, Chapter 23, “Trade Unions and Politics,” explores the origins of labor movements and how they interacted with the wider political environment. In Chapter 24, “Party Politics and Personalities,” consideration turns to the influential political figures and their ideologies, shedding light on the convoluted dynamics of the nationalist struggle.

The emergence of constitutions and the evolution of federalism, the themes in Chapter 25, “Constitutions and Emerging Federalism,” are integral to Nigeria’s path toward independence. The chapter explores the legal and political structures that established the groundwork for a nation capable of governing itself. Chapter 26, “Regionalism and Ethnic Politics in the 1950s,” considers regionalism and politics during that era and insights into the complex dynamics that influenced the journey toward independence. The concluding chapter, “Colonial Legacies,” makes up Part V of the book and assesses the lasting effects of colonial rule on present-day Nigerian society, politics, and institutions. This is significant because comprehending the present requires confronting and coming to terms with the lingering effects of the past.

Notably, the book is set out in a way that allows you to read it in its entirety; however, you can also focus on a specific chapter of choice, presented as integral, which explains a few instances of repetition. As we embark on this intellectual journey through the pages of *Understanding Colonial Nigeria*, our knowledge may deepen, our empathy may expand, and our commitment to justice and equality will be strengthened. By understanding our collective history, we can uncover valuable insights into the intricacies of our current situation and shed light on how we can create a fair and inclusive future for all.

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Writing a book cannot be done alone; it requires collaboration and the support of many people who contribute to its creation. As I contemplate the conclusion of *Understanding Colonial Nigeria*, I am overwhelmed with profound gratitude for the numerous individuals who have played a crucial part in making this project a reality.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my family. Their unwavering love and encouragement have always been tremendous sources of inspiration for me. I am incredibly grateful for their firm belief in me, especially for their understanding throughout the extensive hours of research and writing. Their support has been truly invaluable.

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I am grateful for the support and assistance provided by the archival staff at Ibadan, various libraries in different parts of the world, and the University of Texas at Austin. I am truly impressed by their tireless dedication to preserving historical documents and their willingness to assist me in navigating the extensive collection of resources. Their efforts are truly commendable. I also appreciate the scholars and researchers whose pioneering works provided the basis for my study. Their meticulous research and insightful analyses have greatly contributed to our understanding of colonial Nigeria. I owe a debt of gratitude to the interviewees who graciously shared their stories and personal experiences. Their willingness to do so helped me to gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the historical events discussed in this book. Your contributions have greatly enhanced the richness and depth of the narrative.

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In conclusion, this book is a testament to the collaborative efforts of individuals, each of whom has played a significant role in its production. I appreciate your efforts and constant support throughout this journey. Thank you for coming along with me.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Event
1861	Britain establishes a colony at the port of Lagos.
1877	Englishman George Goldie makes his first exploration of the Nigerian interior.
1884–5	European leaders discuss their interests in specific African territories at the West Africa Conference, held in Berlin. Some historians contend that the great European powers, in effect, “partitioned” Africa at the conference.
1885	The establishment of the Oil Rivers Protectorate in Southeastern Nigeria; renamed the Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893.
1886	Formation of the Royal Niger Company (RNC), which monopolizes trade in the Niger basin until the revocation of its charter in 1900. In the same year, a peace treaty is signed, ending the prolonged war among the Yoruba-speaking people of the southwest.
1887	King Jaja of Opobo is exiled to the West Indies for the abrogation of the Treaty of Protection.
1893	Establishment of a British protectorate over Yoruba territories in the southwest.
1894	Revolt of Brassmen against the RNC. In the same year, Nana Olomu, an Itsekiri leader, “Governor of the River,” is deposed and deported for hindering British access to interior markets.
1898–1909	The Ekumeku underground resistance movement fights against the RNC and British colonial rule.
1899	Frederick Lugard is appointed High Commissioner of Britain’s Nigerian territory. He sometimes uses force to bring natives under English dominion.
1900	Creation of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. The extension of the Northern Protectorate ends in 1903 when British forces conquer the Sokoto Caliphate and kill the sultan.
1902–3	The Aro Expedition was part of Britain’s effort to “pacify” the hinterlands of Eastern Nigeria.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS xix

1908	Protests in Lagos against the water rate were fueled by the reporting of Nigerian journalists such as Herbert Macaulay, who used newspapers to report on and critique the performance of the colonial government.
1912	The establishment of the Southern Nigeria Civil Service Union, which is later renamed the Nigerian Civil Servants' Union.
1914	Great Britain unifies its Lagos Colony and its Northern and Southern "Protectorates" in the Nigerian basin. Lagos is named the colony's capital city.
1914–18	Nigerian troops aid the British cause in World War I.
1920s	A growing spirit of nationalism begins to take root in Nigeria. The National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) is founded.
1923	The establishment of the Clifford Constitution allows for elected representation in the governance of Nigeria for the first time.
1925	The British government initiates improvements in the mission schools of the Niger basin. The West African Students' Union (WASU) is founded.
1929	The "Women's War," or Aba Riots, was a major protest against British indirect rule in Southeastern Nigeria.
1931	The Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) is established.
1936	The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), a political organization of young nationalists in the Lagos area, is founded.
1944	Nnamdi Azikiwe establishes the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (later Nigerian Citizens) (NCNC), which quickly becomes an influential political party pushing for Nigerian independence from British colonial rule. Mrs. Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti founds the Abeokuta Ladies' Club, later renamed the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU), to lobby against the injustices of indirect colonial rule.
1945	The Nigerian Labour Union organizes a general strike, bringing work and business to a standstill. The strike precipitates important economic changes in the form of the first Ten Year Plan, which is adopted later the same year.
1946	The Richards Constitution is enacted, providing a central legislature and dividing Nigeria into three regions: the North, West, and East.
1948	The first university in Nigeria is established in Ibadan, the University of Ibadan.
1949	Northern People's Congress (NPC) is founded under the leadership of Tafawa Balewa, Aminu Kano, and Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto.
1951	The MacPherson Constitution amends the Richards Constitution, moving Nigeria closer to independence. The Action Group (AG), a Yoruba-dominated political party in the southwest, is founded under the leadership of Obafemi Awolowo.

xx	TIMELINE OF EVENTS
1953	Anthony Enahoro, for the first time, moves a motion for Nigeria’s independence. It suffers a setback in the parliament.
1954	The Lyttleton Constitution establishes a federal system of government for Nigeria.
1956	American and British oil companies discover vast oil reserves in Nigeria.
1957	Regional self-government is attained in the East and West. The Willink Minorities Commission is instituted to look into the fears of the ethnic minority in Nigeria. Samuel L. Akintola, for the second time, moves a motion for Nigeria’s independence, which is passed by parliament but rejected by the British colonial government.
1958	The Willink Minorities Commission submits its report. Remi Fani-Kayode revisits the independence motion successfully passed in parliament and to be granted on April 2, 1960, but it is rejected again by the colonial government.
1959	Regional self-government is attained in the North. Sir Tafawa Balewa proposes a motion on independence to the parliament. It is passed but had to wait until 1960.
1960	Nigeria becomes independent on October 1, after a three-year transition period.