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Chapter Summary

After many years of the painful colonial episode, there is so much debate about the impact colonialism has had on developing societies, especially Africa. While Western scholars argue in favour of colonialism and refer to whatever progress and development Africa and the third world has made as a direct or indirect product of colonialism, many African scholars repudiate such claims and mourn the very idea of the colonial enterprise. In this chapter, the authors are not concerned about the moral and ethical dust the subject of colonialism raises each time it is discussed; rather, they are concerned about the nature and character of colonialism in the formation of a new set of social institutions and class relations in Nigeria, nay Africa. This chapter shares the theoretical bias of conflict theory in that the purpose and activities of the colonialists and the colonial project itself stood in contraposition to the existing social structure of the Nigerian and African peoples; hence, the agitation for political freedom. Furthermore, by altering the social and economic relations in place, introducing a colonial brand of education, factory system, a new religion and cultural shift, colonialism and its agents succeeded in creating and perpetuating a new class structure alien to Nigeria

and Africa; a class structure that is still reminiscent of the colonial project in post-colonial Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The colonial enterprise was a pervasive and premeditated invasion of Africa and many of the societies in the third world to create new markets, territories and outposts for European colonial powers to meet their economic needs in their home countries. Just few decades ago, the world was dominated by European empires. In 1921, 84 percent of the surface of the earth had been colonised since the sixteenth century, and following the establishment of the League of Nations mandates over formerly Ottoman and German territories in Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific, there were as many as 168 colonies (Go, 2003: 17). Even though by the mid-1960s, most colonies were, at least formally, independent, the experience of subsequent decades showed how much the ghost of colonisation still loomed over the post-colonial world. This was what Dirk (2004) saw when he remarked that in spite of the differences in formation and practice between the European colonial powers, the phenomenon of colonialism is united to a large extent by its legacies in the colonised territories. Aside, the psychological reminder that many modern states in Africa were once appendages of colonial usurpation of the continent, colonialism left a material legacy in the institutions of the state in Africa.

Even as different Western scholars deny the existence of economic and political development in Africa before the advent of colonialism, many scholars of African descent repudiate these claims describing them as bogus, misleading and ahistorical (Ekeh, 1975; Mamdani, 1976). As Ekeh put it, Western intellectuals in justifying the rape of the continent and the atrocities that were committed by their kinsmen advance "colonial ideologies" of legitimation. Ekeh lists these colonial ideologies or rationalisations as the backwardness of the African past, the lack of contributions to the building of Africa by Africans, the persistent inter-tribal feuds which necessitated the intervention of the colonialists, the benefits of European colonial rule to Africans and the administrative cost of colonisation to Europeans. Thus, the denial of the organisation, stable and unique

cultural stock, and the political and economic institutions in pre-colonial Africa underlies the argument for colonial intervention in Africa, as well as in the Global South. However, history shows that Africa in pre-colonial times was an assemblage of well-organised city-states with unique civilisations that stood the continent out. In this wise, Ira (1988) traced the history of Africa in the pre-colonial times and made several beautiful observations. According to him, Africa possessed perhaps as many as 10,000 different states and polities characterised by many different sorts of political organisations and rule before the advent of colonialism. These included small family groups of hunter-gatherers such as the San people of Southern Africa; larger, more structured groups such as the family clan groupings of the Bantu-speaking people of central and Southern Africa, heavily-structured clan groups in the Horn of Africa, the large Sahelian Kingdoms, and autonomous city-states and kingdoms such as those of the Yoruba and Igbo people (also misspelled as Ibo) in West Africa, and the Swahili coastal trading towns of East Africa.

In fact, by the 9th century AD, a string of dynastic states, including the earliest Hausa states, stretched across the sub-Saharan Savannah from the Western regions to Central Sudan. The most powerful of these states were Ghana, Gao, and the Kanem-Bornu Empire, the Kingdom of Nri and Arochukwu people of the Igbo, the Ife Kingdom under the Ooni of Ife, the Alaafinsof Oyo, who once controlled a large number of other Yoruba and non-Yoruba city states and Kingdoms; the Fon *Kingdom of Dahomey* was one of the non-Yoruba domains under Oyo control. That was how powerful the Oyo kingdom was then. The Almoravids, was a Berber dynasty from the Sahara that spread over a wide area of north-western Africa and the Iberian peninsula during the 11th century (Glick, 2005). This short historical sketch of African societies deconstructs the polemic that favours the colonial enterprise in Africa and accentuates the fact that Africa and its people were en route developing their unique political and economic structures before the interlude created by the colonial episode.

However, the debate about the effect of colonialism in African societies bifurcates into two camps: those who see colonialism as having had a negative impact on the development of Africa and the

psyche of its people, and those, mostly scholars from the Global North, who contend that colonialism engendered development, modernisation, civilisation and social transformation of Africa. While this chapter does not concern itself with the ethics and morality of the colonial enterprise in Africa, nay Nigeria, the authors' focus is to appraise the role colonialism and its agents played in reconstructing class relations and social structures in Nigeria.

Conceptualising Colonialism and Class

According to Fanon (2001), colonialism has been defined as the extension of a nation's sovereignty over territory beyond its borders by the establishment of either settler or exploitation colonies in which indigenous populations are directly ruled, displaced, or exterminated. Colonising nations generally dominate the resources, labour, and markets of the colonial territory, and may also impose socio-cultural, religious, and linguistic structures on the indigenous population. It is essentially a system of direct political, economic, and cultural intervention and hegemony by a powerful country in a weaker one. For Satre (2001), colonialism is a system that comprises an ideology or a set of beliefs used to legitimise or promote European *colonial penetration* of non-European territories. Colonialism was also often based on the ethnocentric belief that the morals, values and social institutions of the coloniser were superior to those of the colonised. Some observers link such beliefs to racism and pseudo-scientific theories dating from the 18th to the 19th centuries (Alliyu & Lawal, 2002). In the Western world, this led to a form of proto-social Darwinism that placed white people at the top of the animal kingdom, "naturally" in charge of dominating non-European aboriginal populations.

According to Olutayo (2002), colonialism is not only about trade but a total subjugation of the indigenous social structures of the colonised territories to that of the colonisers. It involved a re-orientation of the indigenous social institutions to serve the interest of the colonising nations. Olutayo believes it was for the reason of reorientating the African people to ways and attitudes of the Europeans that the colonialists established formal educational institutions. For Edewor (2002), colonialism brought considerable

changes to the traditional economies of Africa. He argues that beyond the impact colonialism brought on the economic system, it also introduced changes that affected the relations in the political, religious, educational and other fields. This means that colonialism in Africa, and by extension Nigeria, had an overwhelming influence on the ways, attitudes, perception and institutions of the people. For instance again, Edewor contends that the indigenous economic systems (and by extension other institutions) were largely destroyed and replaced by the colonial political and economic structures as well as the commercial and market systems.

Consequently, the authors can safely pontificate that colonialism was a multi-faceted project launched by the colonialists to restructure Africa and its peoples to fit the desired picture as conceptualised and painted by the colonialists within a matrix of economic exploitation, and socio-political and religious domination of the African peoples and territories.

Regarding the conceptualisation of class, Wolff (2000) observed that the oldest definition of the concept uses property as its basis as was practised in ancient Greece. In this case, society was divided between the propertied rich and propertyless poor, with a variation of a middle class that is relatively richer and relatively poorer. Wolff contends that understanding class within a property-based paradigm hints at why rich, poor, and middle classes clash or cooperate and thereby shape the structure and history of the society they together comprise. As old as this definition of class is, class has also been delineated in terms of power rather than property (Fraad, Resnick & Wolff, 1994). Thus the latter description contends that class distinctions are made according to the levers of power within the society and not necessarily based on property. For example, politicians, the clergy, teachers, and parents, wield powers that have little necessary connection to any wealth they may own. Meanwhile, some other definitions have combined both property and power in explaining class in society. These definitions examine societies in terms of the distributions of wealth and power within an identifiable class structure and investigate how those distributions are preserved or changed. According to Saunders (1990), class structure in modern Western societies comprises three main layers: upper class,

middle class, and lower class. Saunders argues further that each class is further subdivided into smaller classes related to occupation. This means that class is a social position that has to do with one's position in the economic system. Karl Marx sees that position as being defined by an individual's relations to the means of production, which is ownership or non-ownership of property. However, not only is property ownership usually a source of income and therefore of things that money can buy, but it also carries with it power or control over economic resources, and therefore to a considerable extent, over other persons. Therefore, the ruling class (the bourgeoisie) and the working class (the proletariat) preserve their social positions by maintaining their relationship within the means of production. This maintenance of the status quo is achieved by various methods of social control or what Dirks calls "a cultural project of control" employed by the bourgeoisie in the course of many aspects of social life such as through ideologies of submission promoted through the institution of religion, education and the state repressive apparatuses.

However, Max Weber believes that social stratification and class relations are not based on economic inequalities alone, but are also shaped to a certain degree by status and power differentials (Saunders, 1990). Weber's analysis also identified four social classes, which he called the propertied upper class, the property-less white-collar workers, the petty bourgeoisie, and the working class. For the purpose of this chapter, class is a social group with a position that is defined by its closeness to the means of production within an economic system and other criteria such as power, prestige and wealth that its members have. It also refers to a number of persons sharing a common position in the economic order including the position an individual belongs in society and his relationship with the power centres and the influence and status he commands. There are obviously different people that make up the class structure. They are the owners of capital (upper class), the white-collar workers and managers of capital (middle class) and labour (lower class).

Theoretical Background
This study is analysed against the backdrop of the conflict theory. The conflict theory or social conflict theory derives from the seminal

works of Karl Marx (1818-1883). According to this theory, conflict is a product of a materialist interpretation of history, a dialectical method of analysis, a critical stance toward existing social arrangements, and a political programme of revolution or, at least, reform (Marx, 1971). The materialist view of history starts from the premise that the history of hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle or conflict. In other words, down the ages, society has always been divided along the lines of class interests and the preservation of those interests. In this case, the powerful always seek to dominate the less powerful. Within the conflict perspective is an identification of two different classes within the society, i.e. the dominant class and the dominated classes. The dominant class is the owner of capital, while the dominated classes are dependent on the former. In this regard, the colonialists or settlers as the dominant class, through the policy of divide and conquer, imposed alien culture and social institutions in Africa, nay Nigeria, and by working with native collaborators within African societies subjugated the people (Ekeh, 1975; Satre, 2001). Within the colonial matrix, the conflict of interests is captured in bold relief as the colonialists or settlers after having defeated the colonial states continued the exploitation of the physical and human resources of these societies to feed their economic interests in their home countries, while leaving the "natives" impoverished, traumatised and oppressed as long as they could. These settlers also frantically replaced the norms, cultures and traditions of their hosts with foreign beliefs and social and political systems. As Marx (1971) observes, economic exploitation leads directly to political oppression, as owners of capital make use of their economic power to gain control of the state and turn it into a servant of bourgeois economic interests. This was the situation in colonial Nigeria where the colonialists controlled the political economy of the regions and used repressive apparatuses like the police to enforce property rights and guarantee unfair contracts between them and the people.

Oppression also took more subtle forms: religion served the colonial interests by pacifying the population; while the school system became a veritable vehicle of justifying and rationalising the existing social and economic arrangements imposed by the foreigners and

brainwashing the people. It was the intense conflict that ensued between these two class interests that led to the rise of anti-colonial forces represented by disenchanted Africans, ultimately resulting in the achievement of self-determination and political independence of these territories.

Social Structure, Class Delineation in Nigeria before Colonialism

Nigeria was a communal society before the advent of colonialism to its shores (Aluko, 2002). The family institution was closely knit and was organised on kinship and lineage systems. Marriage was more on the basis of polygyny as most African and Nigerian societies were patriarchal in nature and thus the male gender had the pre-eminence in matters of lineage and authority in the family and political structures. Politically, Nigeria was organised with an absolute monarchy in the North, a constitutional monarchical system in the West and a representative and village democracy in the East. The social class of that period in the three areas looked almost alike with an exception to the political structure in the East. They all had a paramount ruler at the apex of the class structure or chiefs, followed by commoners and then at the lowest rung of the social ladder were the slaves. It was only the Igbo social class structure that had a caste system at the bottom of the social ladder. However, the pre-colonial political structures in place were effective and efficient. Aluko (2002) shares this view when he contended that it was the effective political administration in place in Nigeria that prompted the British colonialists to make use of these political structures through the indirect rule system, where local chieftains were used to administer their territories on behalf of the colonial overlords.

Economically, the Nigerian society, like every other pre-colonial African society, was known for 3 main occupations namely: hunting and gathering, pastoralism and agriculture (including fishing and horticultural activities) (Aluko, 2002). As Ola-Aluko (2002) argues, most goods and services produced at this time were also consumed by the respective families. The family group was a work group and also participated in economic activities fused with its traditional

reproductive activities and regulated by familial values. In the area of religion, the Nigerian society before colonialism was deeply rooted in polytheism. The Nigerian religious institution was a picture of a syncretic belief system that revered different deities and gods (Aluko, 2002). The people believed these deities would protect them from harm or destruction and also give them prosperity. Education was largely informal and was carried out in the family and the community with dire punishments meted out on anti-social behaviours exhibited by children, youths or young adults and citizens. Besides, education was carried out by parents, certain social institutions like age-grade groups, the family, tribal/lineage associations and others. And educational activities were done more or less within the household. There was no separation of the school from home.

Colonialism In Africa, Nay Nigeria

As Olutayo (2002) posited, the need to acquire raw materials for the development of capitalism in Europe led to the enslavement of Africans and their eventual colonisation. Colonisation is not only about trade but a total subjugation of the indigenous social structures of the colonised territories to that of the colonisers. As Olutayo (2002) observed, colonialism involved a reorientation of the indigenous social institutions to serve the interest of the colonising nations. He reasoned that this was why colonialists established formal educational institutions to perpetuate the values and attitudes expected of the people living in her majesty's empire. This view was also shared by Edewor (2002) who argued that colonisation brought considerable changes to the traditional economies of Africa and extended to areas like politics, religion, family or social relations. Nunn (2003) believes that colonialism instigated the erosion of indigenous institutions and left negative legacies such as economic stagnation, corruption and rent-seeking, and the disorientation of the African peoples. Nevertheless, the positive aspects of colonialism include the introduction of the concept and practice of modern bureaucracy into the African society (Alliyu & Lawal, 2002). In addition, aside from elective principles (as against hereditary and ascriptive criteria in governance), the colonial system

brought along with it a system of modern administration and police
as well as the principles of separation of powers (Alliyu & Lawa
2002). However, the above citations show that the coloni
administration in Africa, nay Nigeria, was inclusionary and
pervasive in its application as it penetrated the various spheres and
segments of the African society, exorcising from Africa and Nigeri
its long-held traditions and practices and installing what the system
perceived as best alternatives for the people of the continent even if
Nigeria. As Okonjo (1974) argued, colonialism was a unique form
of capitalist domination and control which had not existed earlie
and was the most complete and the most direct form of Western
domination with the naked manifestation of foreign dictatorship
arbitrariness and control of other peoples, leaving no facet of the
society untouched.

Impact of Colonialism on the Nigerian Social Structure

Colonialism succeeded in changing the face of the Nigerian social
structure, replacing age-long practices, norms and values with the
mores and practices of the colonialists. Since the effect of the coloni
enterprise was sweeping and invasive, it touched on the various
strands of the lives and experiences of Nigerians, and other Africa
societies.

One, the introduction of coins and monetisation of busines
transaction and rewards: Before colonialism, trade and econom
activities were carried out either as barter or with the use of earlie
forms of money like cowries or ivories. Colonialism changed all that
The system, with the introduction of industrial capitalism into the
African economic system, brought in the issue of money or coin
This also was to help the colonialists as they had to buy raw materia
and goods from Africans to be shipped to their home countries to be
used in their factories. Two, introduction of wage employment in
place of communal work relations: Before colonialism, Africa
people encouraged one another in communal social and work
relations where people exchanged goods as well as services. With
the introduction of money, wage employment was introduced into
the economic system and industrialisation of the economic system
commenced. Three, introduction of a factory system: unlike the

pre-colonial days, colonialism helped to introduce a factory system which thus began and deepened the era of wage employment, industrial capitalism, industrial relations and industrialisation. Four, introduction of formal education and school system: Africans had an existing informal educational structure before colonialism but the colonial system required the integration of trained locals to run the British political and bureaucratic structures, thus the introduction of British education which just afforded Nigerians the ability to read, write and solve simple arithmetic. However, this laid a foundation for Nigeria's future educational system which is still mimetical of the British formal educational system. The legacies of the colonial education system include the adoption of English as the official and business language in Nigeria, the modelling of the country's educational system and structures after those of the British primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, among others. Five, introduction of urban centres: It was the colonialists that introduced the concept of Government Reserved Area (GRA) and city into the consciousness of the African people, nay Nigerians. These terms were not used by Nigerians before the advent of colonialism; and the effect of having urban centres led to rural-urban drift. Six, introduction of a new religion: The colonialists taught African people that they were animists and idol worshippers and hence would not go to God's heaven. They therefore encouraged Nigerians, nay Africans to embrace Christianity as religion. While this new religion helped to stop such negative practices as killing of twins, human sacrifices in certain instances and slave trading, Christianity was sadly captured by the colonial hierarchy and Biblical teachings were misshapen to uphold the brain-washing doctrines of white supremacy and to justify the colonial invasion and subjugation of the African peoples. Generally, the impact of colonialism in Nigeria, as well as in other African communities, largely furthered the mercantilist agenda of the colonialists, subjugated and affected the mindset of the people, sowed seeds of confusion, dependency and underdevelopment even after they had gone (Mamdani, 1976).

Colonialism and Class Formation in Nigeria

In this chapter, the authors contend that colonialism engendered class consciousness in Nigerians and helped to create a class structure that favoured the "New Man." By new man, we mean, a reformed, pro-Western and educated Nigerian. By introducing Western education, the colonial administration and system guaranteed that more rewards and social mobility would go to graduates of its educational institutions. Therefore, the products of these institutions who were employed into the colonial administration saw themselves as a special breed as they now spoke the language, ate the food, wore the clothes, lived in the houses and generally learned and lived the ways of the white man. Thus the class structure in Nigeria was restructured and redrawn along occupational and educational lines. This created the upper class, middle class and lower class. The Upper class which included very wealthy Nigerians and employers of labour has a middle class or petit bourgeoisie that worked for the upper class or managed their business and economic interests for them or consisted of white-collar workers. The lower class was made up of blue-collar, artisanal, and crafts-related workers, mostly unskilled and semi-skilled labour. In addition, since the social and work relations had changed from a communal system to a wage-related system, fortunate Nigerians who got employment with the colonialists were treated as a special class just like their counterparts in the French colonies, where Frenchified citizens enjoyed certain privileges from the French colonialists more than their brothers and sisters who either rejected or failed to embrace the culture of assimilation with its new culture and ethos. This of course prompted fellow Africans, nay Nigerians, to desire to get into British employment. Consequently, this led to the abandonment of the hitherto existing work relations of master-journeyman relationship for wage employment. And with education and wage employment came social mobility where people had to leave their villages for towns and cities where they could find employment and improve their status, personal economy and standard of living. This meant that most Nigerian families had to live away from home, especially with most of them moving to newly established urban centres that had electricity and a growing

infrastructural network. With the urban drift and wage employment on the increase, a new class of Nigerians emerged who were educated, middle-class and were exposed to the ways of the white man. Thus there was a move away from a social class that was based on ascription and inheritance to a social class that was built on achievement, competence and skills. It is therefore the submission of the authors that colonialism generated a class system and class relations in Nigeria through the instrumentality of education and the introduction of industrial capitalism in the country. The situation still persists today in Nigerian cities where urban dwellers still see themselves as belonging to a higher social order and having a higher social status than rural dwellers who have the least access to educational and employment opportunities. This also prompts rural dwellers to see nothing good in their rural residences and forces them to drift to urban centres in search of the "golden fleece."

Meanwhile, since the "better life" is effectuated by the acquisition of education, more Nigerians desired (and still desire) to acquire good education so they can get good jobs, experience higher social mobility and move and/or live in the urban centres where they could have access to social amenities and infrastructure absent in the rural areas. Thus a class structure of the upper class, those who own and control the means of production; the middle class, those who work for the upper class and manage their wealth for them; and the lower class, made up of peasants, unskilled and semi-skilled, artisanal workers, has come to be representative of the work and social relations in Nigeria, as well as in many African countries even till today; a product of colonial invasion of Nigeria, nay Africa.

Conclusion

Colonialism was not only a political weapon in the hands of the colonialists, it was also an economic, religious and social weapon used to dominate the colonial peoples. Not only did the colonialists succeed in colonising the African people, they also made them to believe that they were inferior to them. The black man was inferior to the white man. However, since this chapter is not really about the ethical nature of colonialism in Africa, nay Nigeria, the authors'

focus has exactly not been to examine whether colonialism has done its hosts more harm than good. However, this chapter acknowledges that the colonial enterprise in Nigeria (and Africa) was oppressive, domineering and profit-driven for largely the interests of the British and the Crown and was never philanthropic in any guise. The chapter also examined the nature and character of the colonial project in Africa and Nigeria with focus on how it had reconstructed the existing class relations and birthed new class structures. What is clear is that the colonial policy destroyed, weakened, created or restructured African social structures and replaced the existing form of class relations which were communal, kinship and familial in nature with a new class orientations and relations defined by education and wage employment. Consequently, a new class relations that bordered on the upper, middle and lower classes with achievement, competence and skills as the main criteria for social mobility and high social status have emerged guided by the hand by a set of bequeathed colonial social institutions.

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