



Review

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However, one point of direct contact between Hurreiz's discussion of Swahili culture and the above-mentioned panafricanist motif merits special attention. Although he sees "marked similarities and potential lines of convergence" between Swahili and other African cultures (p. 120), Hurreiz stresses the uniqueness of an Afro-Asian Islamic Swahili culture. Thus, he begins the essay with the observation that "the culture of a given region of Africa (at a specific stage of evolution and development) may be more akin to similar cultures outside Africa than to other African cultures. . . . We should be cautioned against an absolute outlook on African culture" (p. 103). Driving the point home, he then attributes to Africans and Africanists who, in countering the charge that Africa has no culture, have exaggerated the Africanness of African culture, part of the responsibility for the further spread of this attitude (p. 104).

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BRITAIN AND NIGERIA: EXPLOITATION OR DEVELOPMENT? *By Toyin Falola*. London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1987.

Falola's book provides an incisive analysis of the exploitative impact of the British colonial enterprise in Nigeria and raises crucial theoretical questions about existing theories on development relating to Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. The opening chapter, "Colonialism and Exploitation" written by Julius Ihonvbere and Toyin Falola, discusses the various theoretical strands on the impact of colonialism. While existing mainstream studies have emphasized the beneficial impact of colonialism, exemplified in the construction of roads, hospitals, schools and other infrastructures, Ihonvbere and Falola see the basic impact of British colonialism in Nigeria as the subjugation of traditional patterns of state and class formation, the introduction of alien institutions, and the initiation of programs that facilitated the exploitation and extraction of surpluses from the colonies in order to aid the development of the center.

With unrelenting enthusiasm, they debunk the propositions of exponents of the philanthropic underpinning of the colonial venture. In the same vein, they join issues with Karl Marx on his proposal that colonialism could have a "progressive historical mission" (p. 12). On the contrary, they demonstrate that the overall impact of British colonialism in Nigeria has been destructive and distortive. One may not share their sentiments that Marx was "Eurocentric" or "ethnocentric," but their conclusion that the few positive by-products of British colonialism like schools, hospitals, and bureaucracy "can be described as either unintended or simply to facilitate the penetration of the hinterland, the management of contradictions and the furtherance of exploitations and incorporation" (p. 28), cannot be faulted in the Nigerian context.

In the second chapter, "Patterns of Precolonial Exploitation," L. I. Izuakor sees these patterns in two dimensions, namely the "coastal frontier phase" (1472-1830) and the "hinterland frontier phase" (1830-1900). According to him, the first phase is characterized by the slave trade and the second phase by the introduction of the steamship into Nigerian waters. He agrees with the assertion

"that economic rather than humanitarian factors screwed the nails in the coffin of slavery and the slave trade" (p. 41). He attributes the final abolition of the slave trade to the imperatives of the overproduction of sugar in the West Indies and the recognition that slave labor was antagonistic to Industrial capitalism. He further highlights the pioneering role of missionaries in the later colonial exploitation of Nigeria.

In the third chapter, Izuakor analyzes how Britain, "the workshop of the world," finally imposed its colonial hegemony on Nigeria. He dissects the political, economic, and psychological interpretations of imperialism and concluded that in the case of Nigeria, economic self-interest towers over and above others as the motive of British colonial thrust. The author does not fail to see the various fronts of resistance to British colonialism, thus strengthening the argument of colonialism being a regime of force and naked self-interest. Izuakor's contributions are not only succinct and detailed but highly stimulating.

Chapter Four by S. A. Olanrewaju is indeed a perceptive contribution where the author discusses transport, monetary changes, and banking as the necessary infrastructures of exploitation or handmaidens of British colonialism. It is possible as he posits that the colonial exploitation of Nigeria could have been more problematic or outrightly unattainable without transport, communication, waterways, banks, and most importantly monetization of the economy. In the fifth chapter Ahazuem and Falola expose the subversion of Nigerian peasant production and the impoverishment of the peasantry by British colonialism. This had the negative impact of distorting the economy that had been oriented towards meeting metropolitan needs.

The next chapter written by A. G. Adebayo and Falola pursues the central argument in the book, that in the extractive industries, the watchword of the British colonial overlord was exploitation. Whether one talks of tin, coal or other minerals, the story is the same. What is even worse is that the British colonizers not only put the mining industries in the service of the metropolis but greatly repressed labor as well.

In the discussion of "industrialization as tokenism" in Chapter Seven, A. A. Lawal zeroes in on the neglect of industrialization as a deliberate colonial policy to underdevelop the colony and keep it perpetually tied to the apron strings of the metropolis.

Njoku's essay in the eighth chapter exposes the trade with the metropolis as an unequal exchange, thereby reinforcing the discussion in the previous chapter. Not only were farmers pauperized, but their sustenance and survival remained tied to the dictates of the colonial trading companies and the collaborating Nigerian middle men. In Chapter Nine, Ohadike talks about the exploitation of both forced and waged labor as concomitants of the colonial enterprises in Nigeria. This he rightly tags "new forms of slavery in the 20th century" (p. 159).

Chapter Ten by O. N. Njoku on Nigeria's contributions to British war efforts in the World War II not only confirms the supportive nature of Nigeria's contribution in moral and material terms to Britain's war efforts, but Britain's ingratitude to Nigeria in return. Discussing the "colonial fiscal policy" in Chapter Eleven, A. A. Lawal reveals that Britain tailored these policies mainly to satisfy metropolitan needs; hence the ironical situation that "throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Nigeria's revenues continued to increase and reserves as well as surpluses

were invested abroad" (p. 197). The penultimate chapter on the "Illusion of Economic Development" written by Ihonvbere and Falola complements the introductory chapter in theoretical analysis. It dismisses the various approaches to development, such as the "trickle down," "bottom up," and "spread effects" as theoretical shibboleths irrelevant to the Nigerian situation. In a most uncompromising tone, even the radical dependency school comes under the duo's hammer, for neglecting the sub-structural (internal) dynamics while overplaying the superstructural (external) dynamics of the African situation as a precipitate cause of underdevelopment. The conclusion here is the unequivocal statement that colonialism has ended up making Nigeria occupy a peripheral role in the international division of labor, to have a weak and largely unproductive ruling class, as well as an unstable state with "generally low standards of living."

Chapter 13 on "The Transition to Neo-colonialism" is a fitting conclusion to this seminal book. Written by the well-known Nigerian Marxist historian, Segun Osoba, it traces the origin of the Nigerian power-elites as foster children of British colonialism. With forensic precision Osoba discusses the spiritedly hysterical attempts of the class that captured state power in Nigeria in 1960, to please the British by generous concessions to foreign companies. His revelation of the damaging impact of the misguided approach to national planning initiated by the British in 1946, comes to the fore pungently, if contemporary realities of Nigerian planning strategies are considered. Osoba further reveals that "the paternalistic isolationism with which Nigeria was shielded from the world at large and from the various current of ideas running through it ensured that, even among some of the most politically sophisticated Nigerians, there was abysmal ignorance of the outside World" (p. 244). This would probably explain the timidity that characterized Nigeria's foreign policy in the first republic.

On the whole, Falola's new book by has gone a long way to entrench further his burgeoning status in the circle of Nigerian historians. Aside from some pardonable errors in grammar or clarity, which subsequent editions will surely correct, it is a book that has come to leave a bold imprint on the history of colonialism in Nigeria. It is not only important for the questions it raises but for the answers it offers as well. Anyone interested in the historical antecedents of Nigeria's past and present political economy should make it compulsory reading.

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"A PECULIAR PEOPLE": SLAVE RELIGION AND COMMUNITY-CULTURE AMONG THE GULLAHS. *By Margaret Washington Creel.* New York and London: New York University Press, 1988. Pp. xviii, 416. \$40.00.

In the *Myth of the Negro Past* (1941), Melville Herskovits proposed a rough formula for predicting the survival of what he called "Africanisms," elements of African culture, in the New World. He argued that a greater presence of