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The Evolution of British Colonialism and the 1906 Amalgamation of Nigeria

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Abstract

British colonization project in Nigeria went through different phases: the bombardment and annexation of Lagos, the amalgamation of trading companies in the lower Niger, and issuance of a charter to the Royal Niger Company, and the revocation of the charter. This paper historicizes the processes leading to British colonial rule in Nigeria. It examines the activities of George Taubman Goldie, who amalgamated the trading companies in the region and signed treaties with the different ethnic groups, making it possible for Britain to colonize a vast territory that is now part of Nigeria. The paper argues that the 1906 amalgamation of Southern Nigeria and the Lagos colony was the most significant step in creating modern colonial Nigeria, not the 1914 amalgamation often celebrated in Nigeria's history.

Key Words: *Amalgamation, Nigeria, Niger, Lagos, Royal Niger Company, Annexation, Frederick Lugard, George Taubman Goldie,*

Introduction

Before 1906, the British colonial administration governed three territories in today's Nigeria: Northern Nigeria, Southern Nigeria, and the crown colony of Lagos. The first union occurred in 1906 when the Lagos colony and the Southern protectorate were amalgamated under the auspices of Walter Egerton, creating one colonial government with its capital in Lagos. At the time of the 'southern amalgamation,' there were discussions in the colonial office and the Nigerian colonial administration about the future amalgamation of Nigeria's northern and southern protectorates.¹ These plans moved toward actualization when in 1912, Frederick Lugard was appointed the governor of both protectorates. On January 1, 1914, Lugard made the amalgamation proclamation, setting in motion a long and arduous process of Nigeria becoming a single entity. Lugard's amalgamation scheme was designed to create "as little dislocation of existing conditions as possible" while

¹ Crowder Michael, 'Lugard and Colonial Nigeria: Toward an Identity?', *History Today* 36, no 2 (1986): 25.

leaving room for future changes as might be necessary.² Governing Nigeria as a nation-state has been a struggle since the amalgamation and continues to be so in the post-political independence period, raising the question if amalgamation was the best course. Why did the British proceed with this marriage between the north and south if not? This author disagrees with the standard argument that amalgamation was an "unholy marriage" between two regions of the country that are religiously and socio-culturally different from each other. Both territories are religious and culturally diverse. The southern part of the country, most especially in the Yoruba states, is home to millions of Muslims. The northern parts of the country, such as south Kaduna and Plateau state, also host millions of Christians. There are millions of ethnic nationalities in the north of Nigeria that are neither Fulani, Hausa, nor Kanuri.

In recent years, different ethno-nationalities within Nigeria have been dissatisfied with this nation-building experiment and are agitating for the disintegration of the Nigerian entity.³ Some notable groups are the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), Itana Omo Odua, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and the religious group Boko Haram. As different ethno-nationalities agitate for the balkanization of Nigeria, I decided to write this essay to remind Nigerians of their origin story as a nation state and to reflect on the processes that led to this union. If Nigerians are going to let this union unravel, they must reflect on how it emerged in the first place. In this essay, I historicize the processes leading to the British colonial administration of Nigeria and the 1906 amalgamation. This essay looks at the British colonization of the three territories from the end of the Atlantic slave trade to 1906. Of particular interest is the work of Sir George Taubman Goldie who founded the Royal Niger Company (RNC) and received a charter from the British government in 1886 to administer the territory it claimed in the lower Niger. The essay also shows that contrary to the credit given to Frederick Lugard as the great empire builder in Nigeria, the credit belongs to George Taubman Goldie, who amalgamated the trading companies in the region and signed treaties with the different ethnic groups, making it possible for the British to colonize the region.

² Lugard F. D., *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 100.

³ There are several nationalist separatist groups that have emerged in the last two decades. Some of these are the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Coalition of O'odua Self-Determination Groups (COSEG).

The Annexation of Lagos

Following the death of Oba Oluwole of Lagos in 1841, his son, Prince Kosoko, attempted to take the throne but was defeated by his uncle, Prince Akitoye, and exiled to Porto Novo. In 1845, Kosoko planned a coup and took over the Obaship of Lagos, and Akitoye was exiled to Badagry. Kosoko's collaboration with the Brazilian slave merchants and his continuous support of the commodification of human markets gave impetus to the British officials to align themselves with Akitoye and make plans to remove him from power. In 1851, John Beecroft, the consul of the Bights of Benin and Biafra, pledged Britain's support to return Akitoye to power if he committed to ending slavery.

In November of 1851, a naval expedition engaged Oba Kosoko in a war, and after a period of intense fighting, Kosoko was defeated and exiled while his uncle, Akitoye, was restored to power. Akitoye was more cooperative with the British and signed a treaty with Britain on January 1, 1852. The treaty abolished the export of enslaved people and prohibited any European or any person from residing in Lagos to engage in the slave trade. Europeans involved in the slave trade were to be expelled from the country. The treaty also called for the liberation of all the enslaved and the destruction of slave barracoons or buildings used exclusively for enslavement. The treaty offered protection to Christian missionaries, and they were not to be "hindered or molested" in their missionary activities.⁴

In 1853, Lagos became a consulship, setting in motion a progression that led to the British colonization of Lagos.⁵ Following the treaty between Britain and Lagos, there was an increase in trade and European missionaries and merchants in Lagos. Akitoye's son and successor, Oba Dosunmu faced difficulties enforcing the treaty, and the wars in Yorubaland continued led to the enslavement of many people and markets for them to be sold. Furthermore, French interests in Dosunmu and Lagos necessitated the British to annex Lagos and make it a Crown colony. In August 1861, Great Britain and Lagos signed the Treaty of Cession and the basis for this was that the Queen of England will "assist, defend, and protect the inhabitants of Lagos, and to put an end to the Slave Trade in this and the neighboring countries, and to prevent the destructive wars so frequently undertaken by Dahomey and

⁴ Smith Robert, *The Lagos Consulate 1851-1861* (Macmillan, 1979), 135-37.

⁵ Perham Margery, *Native Administration in Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 11-12.

others for the capture of the slaves, ...”⁶ With the cession, Dosunmo was now a king who did not have control over the area in which he was king and the British compensated him by giving him a pension that was equal to his current income.⁷ Dosunmo's chiefs were strongly opposed to the treaty, and he later petitioned London stating that his consent was not given freely. Nevertheless, Britain refused to rescind or change the treaty's terms but continued to expand, capturing more important markets and expanding its influence beyond Lagos.

Following the annexation of Lagos, Britain was saddled with the responsibility of creating an administrative machinery and thus a consul was appointed in 1862. To reduce the cost of governance, in February of 1866, Lagos, the Gold Coast and the Gambia were united with Sierra Leone to form the West African Settlements. The administrative headquarters was in Freetown, Sierra Leone.⁸ Activities in Lagos remained uninterrupted with only a few colonial officials aware that any changes took place.⁹ Eight years later, Lagos and the Gold Coast were separated from the West African Settlements and placed under one administrative territory. In 1886, Lagos and the Gold Coast were separated and governed separately.¹⁰

Prior to 1888, the colonial administration in Lagos had no formal authority over the Yoruba chiefs of the interior, and thus the administration could not control their activities. When Lagos administrators sent letters to the chiefs asking them to cease the hostilities, they were ignored. The activities of the French attempting to enter into treaties with the Yoruba chiefs of the interior propelled the British colonial administration to take necessary steps to secure its position by entering into formal treaties with the Yoruba chiefs. The British feared that French treaties with Yoruba chiefs would have a catastrophic effect of diverting the trade meant for Lagos to Dahomey, an area firmly under the control of France. In 1888, Britain signed a treaty with the Alaafin of Oyo preventing him from ceding any territory to the French without obtaining the consent of the Governor of Lagos.¹¹ In a treaty signed between France and Britain in 1890, the border issues between Dahomey and the

⁶ Smith Robert, *The Lagos Consulate*, 140.

⁷ Perham Margery, *Native Administration in Nigeria*, 12.

⁸ Bening R. B., ‘Integration and Disintegration in British Colonial West Africa: The Case of the Gold Coast and Lagos 1874-1886’ *Ghana Journal of Geography*, 2. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/gjg/article/view/110718/100474> Accessed October 22, 2022.

⁹ Niven Rex, *Nigeria* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 29-30.

¹⁰ Bening R.B., “Integration and Disintegration,” 2.

¹¹ Niven Rex, *Nigeria*, 32.

areas governed by Lagos administration were mapped out. The Governor of Lagos, Gilbert Carter, went on an unofficial tour of Yorubalands in 1893. In this tour, he signed a treaty with the Egba people, a group most resistant to accepting British rule. The treaty guaranteed them independence while the rest of the Yorubaland came under the control of the Lagos colony. Furthermore, Carter used the tour to generate support for the railway he planned to build from Lagos to the interior. He secured the cooperation of the people for this project, and work started on the Lagos to Ibadan railway in 1896.¹² With these treaties and communication channels, the Lagos colonial administration consolidated power in the western part of today's Nigeria.

Sir George Taubman Goldie and the Royal Niger Company

In the lower Niger and Benue, George Taubman Goldie's initiatives and tireless work were responsible for Britain's consolidation of power following the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. Goldie was born in 1846 on the Isle of Man, and there is little information about his early childhood. The two years he trained at the Royal Military Academy in the 1860s portray an image of a troubled youth. Goldie says in his reflection on this time, "I was like a gunpowder magazine. I was blind drunk when I passed my final examination for the engineers, two years later a relation died, leaving me his fortune. I was so elated by the freedom that this gave me that I bolted without sending in my papers, and leaving all my belongings behind. I went straight to Egypt."¹³ In Egypt, he encountered Hausa pilgrims and scholars traveling to Mecca; he learned about the western Sudanic Belt through them. He ordered and read Barth's *Travels*,¹⁴ a five-volume historical and geographical account of Western Sudan. After three years in Egypt, he returned to England and married Mathilda Elliot in 1871.¹⁵ At the time of his marriage, he was almost thirty years old and did not have stable employment. An opportunity for a more stable job arose through his brother's father-in-law, Captain Joseph Grove-Ross, secretary of a small firm, Holland Jacques and Company. The Company, which had been trading in the

¹² Niven Rex, 33.

¹³ Wellesley Dorothy. *Sir George Goldie: Founder of Nigeria*. (London: Macmillan, 1934), p.94.

¹⁴ Heinrich Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa: Being a Journal of an Expedition undertaken under the Auspices of H.B.M.'s Government, in the Years 1849-1855* (London: Longman, 1857).

¹⁵ Flint John E., *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp.5-6

Niger since 1869, was losing money and having financial problems. Grove-Ross appealed to his son-in-law for assistance, and Goldie resolved to go to Africa and take over the Company.¹⁶ Three major British companies were trading at the Niger at this time, and the competition between them drove up the prices of export commodities and drove down the costs of imports. Goldie's solution to this problem was to create a monopoly to reduce the competition between the firms. Given that Holland Jaques was the most negatively impacted by the competition, the key to success was to persuade the other companies to form a partnership with him.

In 1876, Goldie founded the Central African Trading Company Ltd to form trading unions with other companies trading on the Niger. This Company bought up the assets of Holland Jacques and started negotiating with other companies and traders such as John Edgar of the West African Company.¹⁷ Other notable Englishmen that joined him in these efforts were Captain Croft, Mr. David Macintosh, and Messrs. Miller Brothers. With these, he founded the National African Company.¹⁸ In 1881, Goldie sought a charter from the British government to enable his company to wade off the competition posed by the French enterprises on the Niger that were receiving financial support from the French government.¹⁹ The British government raised several objections and denied his request. To meet these objections, the National African Company increased its capital from £125,000 to £1,000,000 and founded plenty of trading stations on the Niger. Goldie made over 400 treaties with the lower Niger chiefs and Hausa states. In July 1886, Goldie's Company received the charter with Lord Aberdare appointed the first Governor and Goldie as the Vice Governor. After Lord Aberdare died in 1895, Goldie became the governor of the Company.²⁰

Goldie's activities on the Niger and Benue rivers were vital as he secured vast territories for Britain when the British government failed to ensure its commercial interests there. At a time that Germany was securing its interests in the Cameroons, expanding the protectorate into the Niger Delta, thereby having control of the Niger and Benue rivers, it was Goldie who made a case for Britain's control of these territories and argued successfully at the infamous Berlin conference that "no flag

¹⁶ Flint John E., *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, 8.

¹⁷ Flint John E., *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, 8.

¹⁸ Wellesley Dorothy, *Sir George Goldie*, 18-19.

¹⁹ Wellesley Dorothy, *Sir George Goldie*, 20.

²⁰ Muffett D.J.M., *Empire Builder Extraordinary, Sir George Goldie: His Philosophy of Government and Empire* (Isle of Man: Shearwater Press, 1978), 25-26.

but the British flew in the Lower Niger.”²¹ In 1885, after an agreement with Germany, the British government established a protectorate that extended from Lagos through most of the southern part of the country to Lokoka and Benue.²² The protectorate was inaugurated as the Oil Rivers Protectorate and then later renamed as the Niger Coast Protectorate. It was prosperous, and its primary export commodity was palm oil, which it exported over twenty-five thousand tons annually. Goldie was the first to grasp the potential of this region and argued that Britain only needed to make a little investment to reap rewards.²³ Goldie's entrepreneurial vision, insights, and persuasive negotiation skills during the Berlin conference made it possible for Britain to claim this territory and declare a protectorate over it.

The charter Goldie's Company received authorized and empowered it "to hold and retain the full benefit of the several Cessions aforesaid, or any of them, and all rights, interests, authorities, and powers for the purposes of government, preservation of public order, protection of the said territories,..."²⁴ This charter made the Company the colonizing authority in Nigeria, placing it in the same position as other British charter companies, such as the East India Company, founded almost three centuries earlier. Goldie's National African Company was renamed the Royal Niger Company. The Company went on to monopolize trade and introduce measures that prohibited any form of competition with its business activities.²⁵ It issued tariff regulations that called for purchasing trade licenses, and foreigners interested in retail trade were required to pay a £100 license fee. By foreigners, the Company did not refer primarily to Europeans doing business in the territory it controlled, but anyone who was not born in that territory was considered a foreigner. This posed a significant obstacle for African traders from places like Lagos or Oil Rivers that were considered "non-native natives" and were unable to purchase the trade licenses sold by the Company.²⁶ As a result of these non-

²¹ Wellesley Dorothy, *Sir George Goldie*, 27.

²² Mockler-Ferryman A.F., 'British Nigeria', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 1, no.2 (1902):161.

²³ Mockler-Ferryman A.F., 'British Nigeria', 162.

²⁴ Harlow Barbara, *Archives of Empire Volume II: The Scramble for Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 373.

²⁵ Galway Henry, 'The Rising of the Brassmen', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 34, no.2 (1935): 146

²⁶ Galway Henry, 'The Rising of the Brassmen', 149.

competitive policies, in 1895, the Brassmen, a traditional African group that transported goods from the interior to the coast, launched an attack against the Company's headquarters in Akassa and kidnapped some of the European traders. On February 21, 1895, Britain's Royal Navy anchored their ships and boats off Nimbe Creek, and at daybreak the next day, they attacked Nimbe and burned the town entirely, and the houses of King Koko and other chiefs were destroyed. The Brassmen fought back, killing some British troops, including Lieutenant George I. J. Taylor and the leading seaman, Charles Chambers.²⁷ Following this war, Sir. John Kirk led an imperial inquiry in June of that year. Assessing the duties imposed on the Brass people by the Company, he said in his report that "...the rules in force are practically prohibitory to native trade, and the Brass men are right in saying that this is so....for how could they possibly pay such a heavy license tax and sell at a profit good on which duty had previously been paid to the Protectorate, thus placing them at a disadvantage..."²⁸ The report of Sir. John Kirk's inquiry was instrumental in exposing the non-competitive and monopolistic activities of the Company. When the Company received the charter, the imperial government did not envision that it would so blatantly violate the charter, prohibiting it from acquiring a monopoly and creating conflicts and tensions in the territory under its control. Nevertheless, the colonial government was reluctant to publicly condemn it for violating its charter. The Brass conflict also exposed the Company's weaknesses and limitations in governing the area under its control. In the face of threats from the French and the Fulani, it was visible that the Company did not possess the resources and the military strength to ward off attacks or effectively govern the area.²⁹ London took the concerns about the Company seriously and took steps to revoke the charter, bringing the territory into the administration of the imperial government. Given that the Company made "investments" in the region, parliament fiercely debated the question of compensation for the Company. Both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Colonial secretary argued for robust and generous compensation to the Company because the Royal Niger Company invested its capital and would be handing to Britain a great ready-made empire. John Dillon, an MP from Ireland, argued against providing such a generous offer to the Company. Drawing from the experiences of the East Africa Company bought by Britain, he argued that Nigeria might become a financial and moral liability for Britain, given the difficulty of

²⁷ The Weekly Mail, 'Fighting on the Niger: Fierce Battle at Brass', 2 March 1895.

²⁸ HMSO, *Report by Sir John Kirk on the Disturbances at Brass* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1896), 21.

²⁹Perham Margery, *Native Administration in Nigeria*, 36.

assessing its value in the immediate period.³⁰ The Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced a resolution to pay the Company £300,000 for its debt, £300,000 for the development of the territory, £150,000 for its property, and £115,000 for the stockholders.³¹ This resolution passed with 181 votes to 81.³² The resolution's passage also partitioned Nigeria into three administrative colonial territories: the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, with Sir Ralph Moor as its High Commissioner; the Colony of Lagos, with Sir William MacGregor remaining as its High Commissioner; and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, with Colonel Frederick John Lugard as its High Commissioner.

The Administration of Nigeria under the Imperial Government

In Northern Nigeria, Frederick Lugard introduced the principle of administration known as Indirect Rule. During his years working for the Imperial British Company in East Africa, Lugard realized that for kingdoms such as Uganda, using the traditional administration system was the most effective way of providing governance. This form of administration is similar to the Residential System successfully used by the British in the Princely states of India. His new position in Northern Nigeria as High commissioner presented an opportunity to adapt this form of governance to the traditional systems in Northern Nigeria.³³ Having traditional governing systems mediate colonial administration was a pragmatic policy as it helped Britain run an empire on the cheap, given its limited human and financial resources. For example, Lugard governed twenty million people in his territory with a staff of only 104 British officers. Commenting on this, Perham writes, "The High Commissioner was not in a position to take over the direction administration of this immense area. He had neither the money, the staff, the communications, nor that knowledge of the character and customs of the people without which an effective administrative grasp is impossible."³⁴ For Lugard, a system that was already in place was the Islamic emirate system with emirs. Instead of attempting to replace the emirs with a new system, Lugard outlined a policy in which these emirs continue to govern the people with minimal modifications. In a proposal to the colonial secretary, he wrote, "Government utilizes and works through the native

³⁰ 75 *House of Commons Debates*, 4S 26 July 1899, Col. 370

³¹ 73 *House of Commons Debates*, 4S 3 July 1899, Col. 1293

³² 75 *House of Commons Debates*, 4S 26 July 1899, Col. 378

³³ Okonjo I.M, *British Administration in Nigeria, 1900-1950: A Nigerian View* (New York: Nok Publishers, 1974), 25.

³⁴ Perham Margery, *Native Administration in Nigeria*, 43.

chiefs, and avails itself of the intelligence and powers of governing of the Fulani caste in particular, but insists upon their observance of the fundamental laws of humanity and justice.”³⁵ One of Lugard’s Residents, Charles Temple was a great advocate of this policy and wrote a book entitled, *Native Races and the Rulers* advancing it. Temple describes this form of administration as “the government of natives through their institutions, possibly modified to some extent in order to avoid practices which rightly or wrongly we consider repugnant to reason and humanity.”³⁶ Temple acknowledges that some of the practices permitted within such a rule might be things that the British might find objectionable, but one may have to shut their eyes to these practices or be patient.³⁷

In the implementation of this system of government in Northern Nigeria, Lugard appointed his officials as Residents to the emirs. Giving his officials the title of Resident was to show that their roles were those of advisors and not executives, as the emir, as the ruler of his people, has the executive authority. The traditional system collected revenues and tried judicial cases involving citizens. For example, whenever there was a native case, it went through the traditional Islamic court system unless when it involved someone who was a foreigner. This principle of judicial ‘non-interference’ was never practiced. Islamic judicial institutions did not have the autonomy promised as the judicial decisions made by the alkalis were subject to the scrutiny of the Resident and the District Officers. The Shariah courts also had judicial restrictions. For instance, the Shariah courts could not execute a death sentence without the Resident’s consent.³⁸ In terms of taxation, the emir collected them and remitted to the colonial officials. Given the vast landscape of Lugard’s territory, some territories did not have in place Islamic institutions that Lugard exploited successfully for his administration. In those jurisdictions, Lugard deployed direct rule. In these places, his officials were more directly involved in administrative purposes such as revenue collection. Given the resources needed now to govern these districts without strong local political institutions, it was clear to the British administrators in Nigeria that indirect rule was the most efficient way. Given the perceived success of indirect rule, it was later extended to the southern part of the country.

³⁵ Okonjo I.M, *British Administration in Nigeria*, 37.

³⁶ Temple C.L., *Native Races and their Rulers: Sketches and Studies of Official Life and Administrative Problems in Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1968), 49.

³⁷ Temple C.L., *Native Races and their Rulers*, 49-50.

³⁸ Salman Daud, ‘Joseph Schacht’s Role in Changing the Status of Islamic Law in Nigeria’, *Journal of Mediterranean Basin and African Civilizations* 4, no.1 (2022):93.

In the Southern Protectorate, Ralph Moor, the new High Commissioner, was given the authority to provide for the “administration of justice, raising of revenue, and generally for peace, order and government of the territory and of the inhabitants therein.”³⁹ British administration in the southern Protectorate was a challenge for the colonial officials for mainly two reasons: Unlike in the northern and western parts of the country, except for the kingdom of Benin, most states in this region were decentralized or were what historians refer to as acephalous societies. The other challenge faced by British colonial officials was the people’s resistance to foreign occupation. These made the British penetration of the interior of the southern region extremely difficult. In his observations after arriving in the region as the Governor in 1904, Walter Egerton wrote, “The history of the Protectorate is, I believe, unique both for Africa and for other portions of the British Empire. Throughout the whole of the territory now under our control, settled government has only been established by a show of military force, and yet the whole cost of introducing and maintaining law and order – involving the maintenance of a large military establishment - has been defrayed from the local revenues without incurring any debt.”⁴⁰ Despite the resistance to colonial rule, the revenues generated in this region made the fight to hold the territory worthwhile for the colonial administration. This protectorate was attractive because it was financially self-sufficient and did not rely on any grants in aid for governance or to maintain the force necessary to secure the area.

Like in the Northern Protectorate, the British colonial officials had limited direct involvement. The colonial authorities were involved in collecting excise taxes (customs duties), trialing severe crimes, and litigating cases involving non-natives. They were native courts and councils in the different villages, and the administrative officer of these places acted as an ex-official president. These native councils had powers to maintain law and order and legislate. As High commissioner, Moor laid down three principles that guided his assenting or withholding his consent to the native councils: “first, no unnecessary interferences with customs and habits; second, no creation of class privileges; third, . . . provisions which experience in other countries had proved to be beneficial.”⁴¹ With the second

³⁹ Government Gazette, No.1 of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, 1900. In Anene J. C., *Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1884-1906: Theory and Practice in a Colonial Protectorate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 213.

⁴⁰ 1904 Annual Report, Colonial Reports, No. 459, 16 July 1905.

⁴¹ Nicholson I.F., *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960: Men, Methods, and Myths* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 91.

principle, Moor wanted to avoid the creation of a privileged class of native rulers. This is in direct opposition to what Lugard was doing in Northern Nigeria, where he was strengthening the class structure and insulating the region from Christian missionaries whose message emphasized equality for all.⁴² While Lugard limited the influence of Christian missionary activities in his territory, in the Southern Protectorate, Christian missionary activities were encouraged. The different Christian denominations competed with each other to establish schools and to missionize the people. The colonial administration also supported the mission to educate the colonial subjects and thus started building and managing government schools. It is important to note that while the primary objective of Christian mission schools was to evangelize, for the colonial government, the schools were to help build capacity for the lower cadre of the colonial state and to make good citizens.

With its more extended history of British colonial authority, the Lagos colony practiced primarily direct rule. The colony administrator, William MacGregor, used the local chiefs to make sure that “punitive expeditions or plots against the government are unknown.”⁴³ In the Lagos colony, educated Africans exercised some roles in the administration. Given the status of Lagos as a crown colony, they were efforts to create institutions modeled on British lines. Also, the economy of Lagos and the Southern Protectorate were integrated with Britain’s economy. The economic and political evolutions of Lagos and the Southern Protectorate were moving toward a union. So it was not surprising that in 1904, Walter Egerton was named the Governor of both territories, and two years later, in 1906, the two were amalgamated.

The 1906 Amalgamation

In 1898, a six-member Niger committee decided that Britain's colonial Administration's long-term goal in Nigeria should be to amalgamate the three territories into one. The committee members were the Earl of Selbourne and Mr. Reginald Antrobus, who represented the Colonial Office; Sir Clement Hill represented the Foreign Office; Sir Henry McCallum, the Governor of Lagos, Sir Henry Ralph Moor, who was the Consul-General of the Niger Coast Protectorate, and Sir George Goldie, who was the head of the Royal Niger Company, represented the Niger territories.⁴⁴ The committee argued that amalgamation would forestall

⁴² Nicholson I.F., *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960*, 91.

⁴³ Nwabughuogu Anthony I., ‘The Role of Propaganda in the Development of Indirect Rule in Nigeria, 1890-1929’, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 14, No.1 (1981): 76.

⁴⁴ Crowder Michael, ‘Lugard and Colonial Nigeria’, 25.

unnecessary competition between the three British territories and will also unify policy in the region given that some of the territories were the responsibilities of the Colonial Office. In contrast, others reported to the Foreign Office. While the goal was to amalgamate the territories in the future, they agreed that it was impossible to amalgamate immediately because of communication and climatic challenges.

Britain's territory in Nigeria was vast, and most areas were in the interior without any communications facilities. It would be challenging to place the burden of governing the whole country without the infrastructure available to the administrator to communicate effectively with his subordinates. The climatic conditions were also a hurdle to overcome because it “dictated the appointment of younger men as senior administrators and would make it difficult to find a man with sufficient seniority to oversee all three territories.”⁴⁵ Moor was a fervent advocate for the immediate amalgamation and continued to make a case for it even after the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, decided that both colonies should remain separate for the time being. Thus, on January 14, 1901, Moor submitted a scheme of amalgamation to Chamberlain.

In 1904, the Secretary of State for the Colonies decided that the amalgamation of Lagos and the Southern Protectorate should proceed. The newly appointed High Commissioner, Walter Egerton, was tasked with providing a scheme for the union of the territories. On January 20, 1905, Egerton submitted his report to Alfred Lyttleton, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. He recommended that the new Protectorate be called "Southern Nigeria" and its capital should be in Lagos. In making a case for the new name of the Protectorate, he wrote, “Southern Nigeria is as good a name for the entire territory as can be found both geographically and ethnologically, and the territory of the present Southern Nigeria Administration is larger and far more important, commercially and otherwise, than that of Lagos, although the trade of the former is as yet undeveloped, and a large portion of the Protectorate is still unexplored and unsettled.”⁴⁶ With this proposal, the capital of the Southern Protectorate was to move from Calabar to Lagos. While he acknowledged that the sanitary conditions in Calabar were healthier for Europeans than for Lagos, he preferred Lagos because of the concentration of colonial trade

⁴⁵ Crowder Michael, ‘Lugard and Colonial Nigeria’, 25.

⁴⁶ The National Archives, Colonial Office: 879/72/684. In Newbury C.W., *British Policy Towards West Africa: Select Documents 1875-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 351-354.

there. Other reasons for the selection of Lagos were the newly constructed railway that connected Lagos with the interior and the better communications infrastructure between Lagos and Europe. Nevertheless, Egerton envisions the relocation of the capital at a later time from Lagos to a more southern city in Nigeria. He wrote, “I cannot but recommend that Lagos should be the headquarters of the Administration, but it may be possible, and even advisable, some 10 or 20 years hence, to move the center of the Administration to Calabar, or even to Onitsha or Lokoja, on the Niger, if Northern Nigeria is joined to the Southern Administration, the interior opened up by roads and railways and communication between the coast and the hinterland made easy.”⁴⁷ His plan anticipated the future amalgamation of the North and South, and he believed it would be easier than the current plan to amalgamate Lagos and the Southern Protectorate. Like Moor, Egerton also wanted the amalgamation of Nigeria into one territory. He wrote, “There could, and should, be a complete fusion between Northern and Southern Nigeria, and one system of law could be adopted for both. Further, the Heads of Departments proposed for the present Lagos-Southern Nigeria amalgamation should be capable of directing the larger departments if Northern Nigeria were added to the Administration. The chief alteration that would then be required would be that the Governor’s deputy would have to reside in Lagos, and that the Governor would have to be freed from all petty details of administration.”⁴⁸ Egerton’s simplistic view of the North and South did not consider the socio-cultural differences between both regions.

The proposal that Egerton submitted for the amalgamation of Lagos and the Southern Protectorate was a partial amalgamation as both the revenues of the two territories were to be kept separately, and different laws would govern both. If one of the territories was in financial need, the other could borrow money and vice versa. He did not think that the Lagos legislative council should, for instance, make laws for southern Nigeria.⁴⁹ The amalgamation’s central focus was having one administrator for both territories. Each department will only have one head that controls the whole staff. His proposal called for the division of the amalgamated territory into three provinces: Lagos, Central, and Eastern.⁵⁰ Six months after Egerton submitted his proposal to the Colonial Office, Lugard sent a report objecting to it. He wrote, “It is obvious that such a scheme misses the

⁴⁷ The National Archives, Colonial Office: 879/72/684

⁴⁸ The National Archives, Colonial Office: 879/72/684.

⁴⁹ The National Archives, Colonial Office: 879/72/684.

⁵⁰ The National Archives, Colonial Office: 879/72/684.

governing factor of the problem, viz, the necessity of a single Budget (II), and thereby excludes the possibility of a similar amalgamation (or federation) with Northern Nigeria. It will thus provide no solution to the existing financial difficulties but will tend to perpetuate them. In my view, as I have said, the revenue raised in all parts of Nigeria must be at the disposal of the Governor-General, who in framing his annual budget will have due regard to the requirements of each part, and the savings which it may be possible to effect by the abolition of redundant offices.”⁵¹ Lugard's pressing issue was Egerton's decision to keep the finances of the different territories separate. He did not want a precedent with the amalgamation of Lagos and the Southern Protectorate, as this would have a negative impact when the North and South were amalgamated. Given that the North was cash-strapped and relied on grants-in-aid from the metropole for Administration, he wanted Nigeria to have a single account so that the revenues derived from the cash-rich south would be used to develop the North. The Colonial Office accepted much of the proposal that Egerton submitted. His proposal to create three provinces was accepted, and these were named Western, Central, and Eastern provinces.⁵²

In 1906, Egerton was appointed the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. He was the head of the government, while the Provincial Commissioners were in charge of each province. There was a shared staff of seven senior District Commissioners, thirty-three District Commissioners, and fifty-five assistances. There was also a new office of the Financial Commissioner and the Commercial Intelligence Officer.⁵³ Some of the elites and educated class were not favorable toward the amalgamation. Some of the Yoruba youth opposed the amalgamation on the basis that it is a violation of the Yoruba ethnic identity.⁵⁴ In Southern Nigeria, there were no petitions or any recorded public objections to the amalgamation of Lagos and the South.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have surveyed the process by which Nigeria became a British colony. I have shown that contrary to the narrative in Nigeria's public history where Frederic Lugard is credited with making modern Nigeria through the 1914

⁵¹ The National Archives, Colonial Office: 879/88/12, Administration of Tropical Colonies, 18 July 1905.

⁵² Nicholson I.F., *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960*, 103.

⁵³ Nicholson I.F., *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960*, 104.

⁵⁴ A petition was sent to Egerton objecting to the amalgamation. The National Archives, Colonial Office: 520/36.

amalgamation, it is actually George Taubman Goldie who deserves most of the credit. As I. F. Nicolson has aptly argued, there is a myth surrounding the heroic achievements of Lugard in Nigeria, which is a product of propaganda by both Lugard and his wife, who used her “web of charm and persuasion” to spin British officials.⁵⁵ Lugard is not the hero made to be in Nigeria’s historiography and Goldie took issues with the stories that Lugard told.⁵⁶ Goldie’s decision to destroy all of his private papers has left a significant lacuna in our understanding of the history of this period in Nigeria’s history. I have shown in the chapter that in telling the story of modern Nigeria and the amalgamation, it must start with the amalgamations of trading companies by Goldie on the Niger River. I have argued that the 1906 amalgamation was a step in the process of amalgamating the three British territories in Nigeria.

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⁵⁵ Nicholson I.F., *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960*, 157.

⁵⁶ Nicholson I.F., *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960*, 156.

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