



## Book Review

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**Title:** *What Britain Did to Nigeria: A Short History of Conquest and Rule*

**Author:** Max Siollun

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### Review

*What Britain did to Nigeria* by Max Siollun is not just a historical book; it is a book that provides holistic overview of pre-colonial Nigeria, Nigeria under colonial rule and the upshots of this relationship after the colonial period (post-colonial era). The book has 390 pages, five (5) parts and 22 chapters. The book is structured into eight (8) parts – cover page, fly page, title page, copyright page, contents (list of illustrations, maps of chapters), appendix, notes, bibliography and index. The book was first published in the United Kingdom in 2021 by *C. Hurst and Co. (publishers) Ltd.* The book is printed using paper from registered sustainable and managed source. Max Siollun is a Nigerian historian who specializes in Nigerian history with particular focus on the Nigerian military, pre-colonial and post-colonial Nigeria.

The style of narration is simple, precise and concise. Presentation was sequential and logical. The book draws its subject matter from variety of sources. The material in the book is presented in a logical and coherent manner for ease of comprehension. Chapters are grouped by topics and are arranged in a logical sequence with illustrations and factual examples; so that whilst the subject matter is wider-ranging, sometimes quite complex, it is possible to see some development of the body of knowledge the author has presented. The book aims to excite further reading and thinking about the subject by signposting a wide range of facts and by providing opportunities for discussions and comments on important issues arising from the text. The reading list or guide tagged as references and further reading are founded on the many other texts referred to within the book, and it is hoped that readers will seek out those other texts, old and new alike, in order to see for themselves how key ideas have been developed.

The work started with list of illustrations, maps and introduction. The first structural part of the work is tagged “The Pre-Colonial Era, 1492-1830”. The part has 3 chapters. The first of the chapter provides an overview of trading in the pre-colonial period. The second chapter provides a synopsis of exploration in the pre-colonial period. The third chapter in the first part tried to make an overview of the relationship between kings in the north and south. The second part was tagged “Extraction and Trade, 1832-1886”. It has four chapters. The chapters provide holistic overview on palm oil trading, background of Jaja of Opobo, Goldies and the Royal Niger Company. The third chapter is titled “Invasion and War, 1851-1920”. It has six chapters. The part provides an overview on the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group, the south-west invasion of Benin, the founders of Nigeria, the Northern invasion and the South-East Invasion. The fourth part is tagged “Resistance”. The part has three (3) chapters. The chapters provide an overview on the Northern Resistance, Ekumeku and the women wars. The fourth part is titled “Cultural, Political and Religious Changes”. The part has six (6) chapters. The chapters provide an overview of the problem associated with the problem of colonialism, the impact on the people, indirect rule, the colonial life and the amalgamation of 1914. It was at this part that the author draws a conclusion.

Although several studies have been carried out around these issues, most of their conclusions were too general and many specific salient issues are noticeably buried. This book tried to be objective and tried to fill the gap created by these studies and provide a dialectical relationship between history and how it has impacted on the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. This is the main reason why I believe that this book is brilliant, it rings with truth. The readers may be horrified at the way issues are presented and yet, at the same time, the writer ensures that he never hate the colonialists because the reasons for their actions are crystal clear. What Britain did to Nigeria is not what I would call an easy read. There is dense description and some of the dialogues are written in dialect, which can be difficult to follow. The style of presentation is tainted by profound emotionalism and this may affect its scientific objective.

Nevertheless, we preserved and, all in all, we can highly recommend the book. We challenge you to remain unmoved after reading this exceptional book.

## References

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