

**NTARE SCHOOL  
HISTORY FOR WEST AFRICA  
S4 A, C and D**

**TOPIC: THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF COASTAL  
STATES IN WEST AFRICA  
FOUNDATION OF SEIRRA LEONE**

*Why was Sierra Leone Established?*

Sierra Leone was founded in 1787 following the discussion to abolish slave trade activities. It was founded as a home for the freed slaves in order to settle the liberated African slaves

The reasons for the establishment of Sierra Leone were many and diverse. They were social, political, humanitarian and economic in nature

It was founded as a colony for settling the liberated African slaves from British controlled territories such as England, Novascotia and Jamaica

It was inspired by the humanitarians who opposed slave trade like Granville sharp, Thomas Clerkson and William Wilberforce

Life had become so hard to the blacks who fled to England and NovaScotia after the American war of independence and therefore they had to be settled in Sierra Leone

The White population had been unwilling to grant land to the blacks in their society and had refused to recognize the practices of freedom and equality granted to the slaves by British law which led to the establishment of Sierra Leone

The humanitarians in Britain wanted to get rid of prostitutes and wanted them to get married to the librated slaves away from Europe

Sierra Leone was chosen and surveyed by Ebenezer because it was well known in England as a centre for the British slave traders before its abolition and as it was strategically located

Sierra Leone had good natural habours and this provided an advantage to the sailing ships to well anchor at the Coast eg Freetown

Fresh waters provided by the streams and rivers in Sierra Leone made the area suitable for human settlement and farming as well as establishing a calling station

The climate of Sierra Leone was conducive for human settlement and agriculture characterized by tropical conditions throughout the year which favours growth of both food and cash crops

In some parts, the soils were fertile and suitable for Agriculture and therefore Sierra Leone was to produce raw materials for the British industries eg palm oil, cotton and cocoa

In collaboration with the British government, Granville Sharp undertook the task of settling the unwanted blacks in England to West Africa

Sierra Leone was chosen as a colony for the liberated slaves in order to enable them have a permanent settlement since most of the slaves had lost traces of their origin

When slaves acquired freedom, many of them became unemployed and unfit in the society and therefore the British had to settle them in Sierra Leone

The British wanted Freetown to be an administrative headquarter in the abolition struggle and this would ensure effective patrol of the West African Coastal line in a bid to abolish slave trade

Sierra Leone was founded for exploitative motive and therefore the British wanted to exploit the land of Africa, labour and other resources

It provided market for the European goods that were manufactured during the era of industrial revolution and these included cloths and glassware

The British determination to stop slave trade in West Africa led to the establishment of Sierra Leone

There was a need to reduce crime in some European cities and therefore most of the ex slaves had to be settled outside Europe

### ***How was it established?***

In support of the humanitarians, the British government provided transport and other necessary needs as well as equipments for the settlers. The first batch of settlers arrived at the coast on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1787

The first group consisted of 450 Negroes and 60 White prostitutes the under the leadership of Captain Thompson of St. Georges Bay Company

It was this company that organized and executed the project with the support of the British government

The arrival of the first group marked the beginning of the present day Sierra Leone

About 20square miles of land were purchased from King Tom, the Temne Sub-Chief and settlers founded Granville town named after Granville sharp which later became Free Town

The second set of settlers arrived in 1792 and consisted of 1000 loyalists from NovasScotia and these had fought on the English side during American war of independence and therefore giving them land to settle was a sign of reward

The third group of 500 were the Maroons from Jamaica in 1800 and after reaching Grandville Town, they renamed it Free Town due to the Freedom they had acquired until the present day Freetown

Lt. John Clerkson became the first Governor of Sierra Leone and in 1808, the British took over the administration of the crown colony

### ***Why the British took over the colony?***

Reasons why the British took over the colony were also social, economic, humanitarian and political in nature

The act of 1807 made slave trade illegal for the British and in Sierra Leone, the British wanted to be in full control of the colony and counteract any slave trade activities in the area

Sierra Leone became a base for the British anti slave navy campaigns and also a centre for the court of mixed commission jury and therefore it was important to the British

The British wished to cater for the big number of ex slaves following the act of 1807 and therefore, they had to take control of Sierra Leone

The Sierra Leone company had numerous problems including the bad relations between the NovaScotians and the company officials where by the Novascotians had refused to pay rent for the land allocated to them. They also demanded a say in the administration of the colony

The company also faced French navy attacks during Napoleonic wars of 1780 which rendered it more weak

High administrative costs forced the company to seek for help from the British and their take over of the Sierra Leone was the option

The company also faced constant attacks from the local Temne people between 1801-1802 who were against the colony expansion into their territory and this made the settlers unable to practice large scale agriculture

On 1<sup>st</sup> jan 1808, the British government took over Sierra Leone which became a crown economy

The British government then used governors who administered on behalf of the British monarch and were to take direct orders from the British government there by and regularly submitting administrative reports

### ***Problems faced by the settlers***

The problems were diverse, were political, social, religious, cultural and economic

Problems were both internal and external

The expedition was ill-timed for the settlers who arrived during the rainy season where conditions were unfavourable and many of them fell sick and died

Malaria and influenza tropical diseases affected them by greatly affecting their health conditions

There was a problem of language barrier, cultural and religious differences which made them and they could not easily get in touch and unite with the locals

The problem of famine where the food crops they grew could not mature in the short time yet they were not used to the local African foods

Napoleonic wars made them experience food shortage because they interrupted supplies of food which the ex-slaves were used to but not African local foods

They face hostile relations with the Temne who were the indigenous people and not willing to lose or completely sell their land compared to the settlers who wanted to permanently settle in the land eg in 1790, the Temne under King Jimmy attacked and burnt Grandville Town

The Novascotians revolted against the administration of the colony and they had become discontented with the Sierra Leone company due to the company charging of rent for plots of land allocated to them

The NovaScotians also revolted against their lack of participation in decision making and governance and therefore they wanted to have a say in government of their colony since most of them were educated with democratic knowledge

The French naval force attacked and burnt down the colony in 1799 during the period of Napoleonic wars in Europe

Most of the settlers were poor and could not manage all the basic needs and also carry out the necessary developments which rendered the colony to keep suffering

Settlers also found it difficult to adopt to the African hostile environment and Africans ways of life

Settlers did not know how to farm in Africa and the food crops they knew could not grow well in Africa

There was racial discrimination, for example the British officials mainly favoured the Maroons but other settlers' relationship with the company administration was not good

There was limited supplies of medicine amidst various tropical diseases like malaria

They faced a problem of wild animals and other vectors which claimed their lives, for example reptiles

The problem of poor transport and communication network which affected their movements

## **The Creoles**

The Creoles were the people who originated from racial mixing mainly between Africans as well as some other people born in colonies such as American Indians and Europeans. In west Africa and particularly sierra Leone, creoles were mainly the offspring of the liberated slaves and their children

In the history of West Africa, creoles played a very important role in the development Sierra Leone

### **The role played by the Creoles in the development of west Africa(Sierra leone)/Achievements**

The achievements of Creoles were many and diverse

They were numerous and economic, social, political, and cultural in nature

The Creoles emerged as very hardworking and enterprising people with a unique dialect in their unique language called Krio

They played a big role in education by sacrificing and sending their children to schools in Sierra Leone and elsewhere around the world and by 1862, they had become influential in Sierra Leone and the whole of English speaking west Africa

The Creoles promoted western education by establishing various schools, colleges and Institutes. For example Fourah Bay College in 1827 and by 1845, many secondary schools had already been set up by the creoles

By 1876, the Fourah Bay College which was established to train African clergy had attained a status of university college and a centre for students from all over the English speaking west Africa.

The Fourah bay university college produced teachers, lawyers and medical doctors and all these provided various services in Free town and the whole of west Africa

Education attained by many Creoles produced many intellectuals eg John Thorpe became the first African medical doctor in 1859, Samuel Ajayi Crowther was the first African Bishop in 1864 and Samuel Lewis was the first writer in 1846 who started his own paper

Religious literature was translated in various local languages eg the New Testament was translated into Yoruba language by Bishop Ajayi Crowther

They wrote books on west Africa eg “The History of Yoruba” by Samuel Johnson, “The Ibo” by J.C Tailor and the “Medical Topography” of west Africa by Dr Hurton

Creoles promoted press industry by publishing newspapers including the Sierra Leone weekly news

Churches were built in Sierra Leone and in other parts of west Africa and Bishop Ajayi Crowther led missionary activities in the provinces of Niger delta and Abeokuta

The Creole missionaries and teachers were equally dispatched and sent to other areas with the aim of assisting the captives in settling and improving their wellbeing eg in Abeokuta, roads were constructed as part of social services

Economically, the creoles were commercially very productive and they had various bases in the interior and operated successfully in areas like Liberia, gold coast and Nigeria where they owned large water vessels and marine companies

Other Creoles indirectly participated in trade along the coast and Niger river delta as captains of trading ships, pilots and engineers

By 1840, many Creole merchants had migrated to other areas of west Africa and began big enterprises eg R.B Blaise from Freetown proved to be the richest man in Gambia as many Creoles shifted to Accra and Lagos owning houses and plots of land as landlords

They opened a new era of relations between Europe and Africa by making a change from a period of slave trade and commercial exploitation to humanitarian activities

The Creoles were instrumental in ending slave trade in west Africa especially after they had set up a mixed commission court in order to apprehend slave trading in Sierra Leone

They were also active in politics of the land eg in 1863, they formulated and promulgated a new constitution

The creoles also promoted a spirit of nationalism in the whole of west Africa through publishing of various articles in the newspapers eg the articles of Elilliam Grant and Rev. Joseph Cloudious and James B.Cotton

By 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Creoles held almost half of the senior civil positions in Sierra Leone and Free town had been made a municipality by 1893 whose Mayor was also a Creole

In Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria, the Creoles also held strategic and important posts such as the head of police and registrar of Supreme Court

The British used Creoles to colonize other parts of west Africa using Sierra Leone as their base and by 1840s, their influence had spread further most parts of west Africa

The Creoles very much promoted legitimate trade which completely replaced slave trade

Those who were abroad sent money to their relatives in Sierra Leone and this increased the wealth of Sierra Leone and also raised the general standards of life in Sierra Leone

However, the Creoles were not successful in the field of agriculture and this was mainly because of poor soils in most areas of their settlement which made them concentrate on trade and other activities

The second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century was referred to as the golden age of Creole culture

### **Why did the Creole influence decline after 1900?**

By the start of 20<sup>th</sup>, Creole influence in West Africa had started declining and reason for this were social, economic and political

Other were gradual and immediate, internal and external

Racial discrimination led to the decline of Creole influence eg Townsend opposed the Episcopal nomination of Ajayi Crowther

The British government adopted the anti Creole policy whereby it excluded the Creoles from serving in the protectorate government and replaced many Creole officers with Englishmen especially after the Temne-Mende wars of 1898

The British government cut off Creole contact and influence from the protectorate on the pretext of preserving traditional cultural practices of the land

The Creoles were gradually eliminated in the Sierra Leone public service being replaced by Englishmen

By 1917, the number of Creole holding senior public offices had dropped drastically from 50% in 1898 to 10%

The Creole clergymen were replaced with Europeans and in some areas, they were dismissed out rightly

In the field of commerce, they faced similar problems and after 1898, they were not allowed to own land

They were cut off from inland trade in the Free town and other British west African towns and out competed by large European enterprises who squeezed out Creoles' retail and wholesale businesses

By 1898, they were not allowed to own property or a capital good, gold or ivory which rendered them very poor

The systematic anti Creole business campaign was accelerated with the coming of Lebanese and Syrian merchants in large numbers and they displaced creoles in small trading businesses

The Creoles were most hated by the indigenous people especially the Mende and the two groups never associated well in all aspects of life and they were also hated by the British

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