

## Introduction

In 1953, a group of British education experts met in Accra in the then Gold Coast, now Ghana, to establish the West African Examination Council(WAEC) to serve as the common examinations board for the five English speaking countries in British Colonial West Africa. The WAEC replaced the Cambridge and London Examination Boards which pupils in Ghana, Gambia, Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone sat to at the tail end of their secondary school careers.

WAEC was at the time just one of several such transboundary institutions created by the departing British colonial rulers to bring the colonies closer; the other institutions were the West African Currency Board, the West African Airways, and the West African Frontier Force. It is an intriguing paradox that of these only WAEC has survived to this day and remains relevant 65 years after its creation. WAEC remains the sole examination body in the five Anglophone countries in West Africa and is serving its purpose very well so far.

Yet, pupils who sit its exams yearly have in the past several decades faced severe shortage of reference materials to prepare them for the exams which will enable them to enter tertiary institutions. This is particularly true of subjects like history. In the 1960s and 1970s, governments in the WAEC member states promoted the study of history and encouraged historical research in the universities like Ibadan in Nigeria and Legon in Ghana which produced well known historians like Adu Boahen and Jacob Ajayi. They wrote reliable history textbooks books for secondary school pupils such as Boahen's celebrated *Topics in West African History* (1966).

Sadly, in the past two decades, as governments feel obliged to cut on education budgets in the name of structural adjustment, they have removed subjects like history from the list of priority areas of study in the schools (from 2009 to 2016, history was in fact removed from the curriculum in Nigeria!). History teachers find it difficult to get scholarships at teacher training colleges or under graduate levels. Local and international publishers like Longman or Afram no longer publish history text books. This has negatively affected the availability of trained history teachers and resource materials.

Accordingly, secondary schools in WAEC countries no longer have access to dependable reference materials on either of the two components of the WAEC history syllabus- National Histories and West Africa and the Wider World. This has created a situation where teachers have become pamphleteers, photocopying or stitching together material which purports to cover the syllabus to sell to the pupils. These pamphlets are not only known for their crudity in terms of production but are of low standards; profuse with factual and grammatical errors. History pupils in some schools in The Gambia have to refer to up to five pamphlets as each history teachers has his own pamphlets which the pupils must buy. It this sad state of affairs which has dented students' performance in this very important subject, which has encouraged us to embark on this project to produce reference materials on history for WAEC candidates in our schools.

This basically is how the idea for this e-book started. Our aim is therefore to produce a dependable resource book covering the main aspect of the WAEC history syllabus for Senior Secondary Schools, namely, West Africa and the Wider World, and put it at the disposal of students and e. The students will find the material here presented absolutely useful as it is well researched and also written by people who are experts in the subject matter, and most of whom are prize winning history teachers, so to speak. This why every effort has been done to make the text student friendly with questions and fact boxes inserted to further assist the users. History teachers, who like their students, also suffer from chronic lack of useable reference material will also get a lot from this material while they await a teacher's handbook which will surely accompany his book. Its online availability will assist students with any form of internet connection to access the material at no cost.

We wish to thank all those whose participation has blessed this effort and made it possible, and all the many institutions without which it could not have happened: the University of Sierra Leone at Fourah Bay, where the initial meeting was hosted in May 2016; Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology at Kumasi through the support of its History Department; the Ghana History Teachers' Association; the University of The Gambia; and the funding which was provided by the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the United Kingdom, the African Studies Association of the UK, and King's College London's Department of History and Faculty of Arts and Humanities, all of which has made this possible.

Work started on the project in late 2015 when the chapters were identified and assigned to the writers. Through a flurry of emails between the co-ordinators Hassoum Ceesay in the Gambia and Dr. Toby Green in UK, preparations for the first writers meeting were completed and held in Freetown, Sierra Leone in May 2017. There the parameters for the e-book such as house style, and final content were agreed upon and deadlines set for the chapters. It was also agreed in Freetown that the e-book will be launched at Banjul, Gambia in the margins of the WAEC General Meeting in March 2018 – we wish also to than our brothers and sisters at WAEC for facilitating this presentation so that it has come to pass today.

We wish to recommend this book to all our brothers, sisters studying history in our schools. In this effort by a handful of experts from across the region, they should get heart and courage that history, as a subject, still matters to all the national development efforts of the countries in WAEC. In other words, history is also a developmental subject which can help our economies grow through job creation in sectors like museums, heritage, tourism, hospitality amongst others. Historians can be the best public administrators also, and the most enlightened politicians. Above all, a study of history helps to give the teeming youth in our new nations a sense of identity and purpose which we know they need in order not to risk their lives across the Mediterranean Sea or end up being auctioned crudely in Libyan slave marts!

*Benjamin Kye Ampadu, Hassoum Ceesay and Toby Green (January 2018)*