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History

Paper 1J (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 03 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

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## Specimen Answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

### Paper 1J (AS): Specimen question paper

**03** 'Missionary activity was the main reason for the growth of British interest in Africa in the late nineteenth century.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

[25 marks]

### Student response

Britain had many different reasons for gaining and expanding her interests within Africa during the years between 1875 and 1914, including strategic factors, economic factors, European rivalries and missionary activity. This essay will argue that economic factors were the major reason for British expansion not missionary activity.

A key reason as to why Britain expanded her interests in Africa was due to the actions of missionaries. Missionaries were extremely active in Africa during this period with Anglicans, Roman Catholics and other groups all seeking to spread Christianity among the indigenous African population. Missionaries helped to expand British influence in Africa as they opened up new territories to British rule by penetrating beyond colonial frontiers where they established links with the indigenous peoples e.g. in the Congo in the 1880's. They also pressure the British government for imperial protection which led to British expansion. For example the missionary John Mackenzie put pressure on the British government to establish a protectorate over Bechuanaland which the government then did. Missionary groups usually established compounds, set up churches and converted many Africans to Christianity. This helped expand British interests in Africa as it staked a claim to territory in Africa it also helped expand British commercial interests in Africa. However the role that missionaries played in the expansion of British interests in Africa can be limited by the fact that missionaries often delayed annexation and colonisation by challenging imperial authority. Christian missions sometimes provided a focus for local resistance and opposition to British rule.

A main reason as to why Britain expanded her interests in Africa was due to economic factors. This expansion was driven by trade or more accurately the prospect of new markets for trade. Africa was one of the last areas of the globe with an untouched market. At the time Britain was suffering from the long depression and with more and more European countries introducing more protectionist economies Britain had to find a new market for her goods. So Britain sold manufactured goods like weapons and textiles to African countries. Coal, iron, timber and other resources were sought in Africa to feed the demands of British industry. For example palm oil was needed as an industrial lubricant and so through diplomatic means at the Berlin conference Britain gained control of the Niger delta and a monopoly on the palm oil trade which expanded British interests in the region. Another example is that when gold and diamonds were discovered in South Africa Britain began to expand her interests in order to protect them e.g. capturing northern and southern Rhodesia and making Nyasaland a British protectorate. In order access this relatively untouched African markets Britain used chartered companies to expand her trade and control at no cost to the government. The royal

Niger company was set up in 1886, the imperial British East Africa company was set up in 1888 and the British South Africa company in 1889. These companies expanded British interests by setting up trade with locals, plantations and trading stations. For example the royal Niger Company set up 40 trading stations in the Nigerian delta region. Trade with African countries led to informal empire being established in many African countries. When these commercial interests were threatened by other factors e.g. European rivalries then Britain took control over the country formally but economic factors was the main reason as it this was what was at risk.

A further reason as to why Britain expanded her interests in Africa is that it was down to the rivalry between European powers. This view is supported by the historian D.K. Fieldhouse said that the scramble was an extension of the political struggle in Europe and that because no major change in the status or territory of countries in Europe was possible. The colonies became a means out of the impasse. In relation to the expansion of British interests in Africa the cause was concern over German ambitions. For example fear that Germany intended to link up with the Boer Transvaal republic thus threatening both Natal and the cape colony. This prompted a British occupation of the unclaimed coastal territory in order to prevent Germany becoming too powerful in South Africa. And maintaining Britain's power within Europe. This reason can however be limited as West Africa was divided up at the Berlin conference in December 1884. This shows that there was agreement between Britain and Germany and shows there was little competition for territory.

Another reason as to why British expanded her interests in Africa was due to strategic reasons, protecting the Cape and Suez trade routes to India and Britain's empire in the east. This reason is supported by Robinson and Gallagher's strategic argument which states that it was instability at the northern and southern tips of Africa that drew Britain into actions designed to secure the Suez Canal and Cape route. An example is when Britain occupied Egypt in 1882 as they viewed Colonel Arabi's nationalist revolt as a threat to the canal. And then in the 1890's Britain needed to strengthen her hold on Egypt to protect the Suez so expanded her interests by annexing Uganda and conquering Sudan. This reason focus on India being central to British policy making is well founded. By the 1880's India accounted for almost one fifth of Britain's total overseas investment. It was the lynchpin of Britain's trade with Asia a vital generator of revenue and a vast reservoir of military strength. In the words of Lord Salisbury India was 'an English barracks in oriental seas' and communication with India constituted 'the spine of prosperity and security' for the empire. This shows the importance maintaining communication and trade routes to India. And explains why Britain would expand her interests in Africa to protect them. This argument can be limited by the fact it does not explain why Britain expanded her interests into central Africa annexing countries like Uganda or expanded in west Africa taking control of countries like Sierra Leone as they hold no strategic importance in terms of the security of India.

Overall missionary activity was not the main reason for the expansion of British interests in Africa as converting the indigenous population to Christianity never played a major role in British decision making about expansion in Africa. Economic factors played a much larger role in colonial acquisition with Britain being the world's largest trading nation it is understandable that they would expand interest to gain natural resources and new markets rather than because of Christianity.

#### **Commentary – Level 4**

This is a clear answer with range and has a balanced assessment. There are weaknesses in the assessment of the importance of missionaries in that a number of valid points are made without clear supporting evidence and this section is the least convincing for this reason. Thereafter, the other

reasons for the growth of interest in Africa are fully explored and generally well supported. It is a Level 4 answer.