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**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND DIPLOMATIC STUDIES**

**COURSE CODE: HDS 111**

**COURSE TITLE: EARLY AFRICAN HISTORY UP TO 1800**

**LECTRER: M.A. ADEROJU**

**TOPIC: THE EUROPEANS IN WEST AFRICA**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Portuguese were the first set of Europeans to come to West Africa. Indeed, they began their activities in the second decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (T. Falola and A. Adebayo, p. 41). From 1540s onwards, they were followed by the Spaniards; The English and the French also joined towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Dutch, Danes, and the Swedish joined and began to enter the West Africa. But it was dominated by the Portuguese, the French and the British. These three powers dominated the whole of West Africa.

Indeed, the Portuguese led other European powers. The Portuguese took the lead for three reasons:

- (i.) **Technological reason:** Europe before that time had no knowledge of ship building which could undertake long distance voyages on the oceans. The breakthrough in navigation took place in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. This helped them in sailing to West Africa.
- (ii.) **Economic reason:** Before the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, Europe relied heavily on Malayan, Italian, Indian and Egyptian middlemen “for the supply of goods and spices that they needed”. The prices of these goods went up, hence the Europeans were looking for routes to the market of the East without the middlemen with a view to reducing the cost and scarcity of these goods (gold and spices). In fact, the search for gold brought about the exploration of the Coast of Africa.
- (iii.) **Political reason:** European countries had political problems in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. These were in form of wars and rebellions. Portugal became the first country to provide solutions to most of the technological and political problems in Europe.

**Conclusion:**

The arrival of the Europeans at the Coast of West Africa by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, thus exposed the region to slavery and slave trade, and later colonisation, which had severe consequences on the whole of African continent.

## Reading list

- (1.) T. Falola and A. Adebayo, *A Summary of West African History (1000 A.D – Present)*. Chapter 7
- (2.) J. B. Webster et al., *The Growth of African Civilisation: The Revolutionary Years, West Africa Since 1800*. Chapter 6.
- (3.) T. A. Osae and S. N. Nwabara, *A Short History of West Africa, A.D. 1000 – 1800*.