

Introduction to cultural anthropology- unit 4, question # 1

[Science](#), [Archaeology](#)



Question What were the effects of colonialism on the politics of African nations? What are some of the characteristics of African nations today that can be traced directly to the colonial experience?

The politics of African nations were profoundly affected by the brief period of colonial rule during the 19th and 20th centuries and some of the effects are visible in current African politics. One of the major effects was the formation of political movements that stressed on independence and nationalist ideas. An example of this is the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya. These movements were intentionally as tools for demanding and attaining political autonomy from the colonial governments. In some countries like south Africa, colonialism led to social and political segregation where the whites and the blacks were entitled to different political and social rights. However, this ended as a result of the powerful effect of political resistance and liberation movements like African National Congress (ANC) (Scupin and DeCorse, 2007).

Political division of the Africa is another major effect of colonization on Africa. European nation divided different areas of Africa into colonies to serve their needs for raw materials and needs of overseas markets. These colonies reflect the present day African countries. A positive aspect of colonialism was the rise of powerful African leaders who could lead the continent towards a brighter economic and political future. Examples of these are President Nelson Mandela of South Africa. Colonialism also opened a door for the poor to participate in politics through revolutions where majority of the members were peasants.

Characteristics of African nations that can be traced directly to the colonial experience

Many aspects of contemporary Africa portray the residual effects of colonialism. An example of this is the boundary disputes and separation of people from similar ethnic background. This came because the political division of Africa into colonies was done arbitrarily without knowledge of its socio-cultural characteristics. These boundaries are now political hotspots. The citizens of different African countries are basically created groups who were left behind fighting for the resources across created boundaries. Factions among communities can also be traced to colonial experience. One of the techniques that colonialists used to dominate a country, and thus prevent uprising, was to split its community into factions then pit them against each other. The creation of the Hutu and the Tutsis in Rwanda is a good example. After a few generations, these divisions intensified and continue to cause division in the nation long after the colonialists left and as a result, Rwanda has experienced the worst attempted genocide in Africa. Multipartism, presence of opposition and political activist groups in Africa can also be traced to colonial experience. Colonialism and all the suffering associated with it increased awareness and sensitivity to political and economic rights among Africans and multipartism or opposition is always a tool for curbing a violation of this. CANC for example was initially formed as a political organization that rallied for unification of all races but it later turned into an armed struggle for fighting against suppressions by the government.

References

Scupin, R. and DeCorse. (2007). *Cultural Anthropology: A Global Perspective*. (6th Edition). New York. Prentice Hall.