

Kenyan precolonialism essay sample

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The first people who settled in Kenya in the pre-colonial time were indigenous African communities who migrated from around the world. During the pre-colonial era, Kenya's social mobility depended very much on pastoral and agrarian groups, the agrarians depended very much on crops and plowing lands and on the other hand, the pastoral groups believed that the livestock was given to them by God. According to Peter O Ndege's research, a professor of History and Political Science from the Moi University, " The kinship system in pre-colonial Kenya was the basis of ownership of factors of production, which included land, livestock and labour [...]Classes, if they existed, were largely incipient. Reciprocity and the egalitarian ideal ensured that individuals never slid into abject poverty." (1) In addition, ethnicity found in pre-colonial Kenyans was very fluent.

" Trade, intermarriages and limited and intermittent warfare characterized inter-ethnic interactions. The histories of migrations and settlement were about continuous waning and waxing of the various ethnicities. Society was anything but static. Colonialism only gave new shape, meaning and direction to the communities' inherent dynamism." (O Ndege 2). Therefore, it is hard to speak of a " pure" ethnic group in Kenya. Furthermore, there was not an established political structure back in that time, mainly, they had governments represented by a council of elders but no centralized government.

When the Europeans began to settle in the African territories, they began to create barriers amongst other African lands. They also began controlling most of the trades and the economy of what is now Kenya, because of this, Africans controlled hardly any money. The British established a colony in

Kenya primarily because they had raw materials such as ivory, and they saw this as an economical potential. In the book *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, we see how a man, Okwonko, struggles with the arrival of the Europeans in his village, when things started to change for him once the Europeans began to settle in, and changing their culture. His sense of confidence is reliant upon the traditional standards by which society judges him. This system of evaluating the self inspires many of the clan's outcasts to embrace Christianity. If we compare it with Kenya, we see how in this book, some people were struggling with the fact that times were changing as well as social statuses, political structures and their own Ibo culture.

Yet we see how the political structure of the time was the same as it was in pre-colonial Kenya, with the elderly and wealthy men being on the top of the political structure. We also see how the Ibo people's social mobility was also farming in the pre-colonial era. Moreover, when the Europeans came, Africans, both in the book and on pre-colonial Kenya, had to start changing the way they lived. Conversion began on both sides; starting to learn English, and other languages, they also started to receive a western education and introducing new things in their cultures. It is evident that both Kenya and the Ibo village shared similar characteristics in their cultures, as well as other African clusters in the pre-colonial era. It is fair to say that most of the tribes or villages had similar features in matters of culture, social mobility, political structure and religion and we cannot deny the fact that colonization brought tremendous, innovative changes to Africa and specifically in Kenya.

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