

# My ideas on africa

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Before embarking on my journey through my ideas of Africa, I viewed Africa in a stereotypical way. Tribal communities separated by civil war, but I now know that Africa is much more than my once silly assumptions. Africa was a cultural rich continent with diverse traditions and beliefs. However, many of this changed when the colonization of Africa took place during the early 20th century. I viewed Africa as a barren Savannah with many untamed animals living almost adjacent to these small tribal communities. In fact, it ranges from impressively large deserts to a temperate climate much like New York in the far South of Africa. I also believed Africa had no national government. I once actually believed that only South Africa had a president, but after watching the documentary, " Scramble for Africa" I now know Africa is more modern than what I expected, but at what price? In the early 20th century, many countries from Western Europe began to see Africa as a natural resource gold mine. Many of the great powers in Europe set up colonies and missionaries in Africa in order to modernize these " barbarians" while making a profit. Noam Chomsky states, that the primary reasons for the colonization of Africa were selfish. He stated it's hard to admit, " I'm a son of a [gun] and I'm doing it for my own benefit", " especially when your boot is on their throat. " Yes, schools, hospitals, cities and modern technologies were spread due to the colonization of Africa, but were these changes worth the loss of such an ancient and diverse culture? Before Britain, Germany and the other western mother countries arrived in Africa; Africa had different apparel, traditions and religions. In the novel, Things Fall Apart the narrator describes a celebration called the New Yam Festival. " The Feast of the New Yam Festival" was an " occasion for giving thanks to Ani . . . the goddess of

fertility. " " Ani played a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity" (Achebe page 37) During the New Yam Festival, the tribal people would honor their most important deity and perform various rituals. These rituals include specific tribute dances and singing. In Things Fall Apart there is a week of peace and a wrestling match. In the novel, the week of peace is taken very seriously. When Okonkwo broke the week of peace by hitting his wife, he was required to sacrifice a goat and some other barn animals. The wrestling match isn't any regular wrestling match either; many tribes bring their best wrestlers to Okonkwo's village in search of honor, recognition and respect. I feel it is a shame that many rituals that may have paralleled these disappeared when monasteries were set up by the mother countries. The second book I read, Nervous Conditions gave a good example of how the people may have reacted in real life when the colonists arrived in Africa. In the novel, " Nervous Conditions" the characters' perspective about the colonizing of the African states are different. Some characters, such as Ma'Shingayi and Nyasha, question and object the colonists' behavior. Nyasha states in the beginning of Chapter Seven. " It's bad enough . . . when a country gets colonized, but when the people do as well! That's the end, really, that's the end. " (Dangarembga page 122) Nyasha clearly is disappointed in her friends and family who have been seduced by the Christian ideals and British control, while she, a proud African, is against it. I can see why Nyasha would feel this way and I sympathize with her ideas. With the case of Tambu it is very different. Tambu loves her family and knows that the only hope she has of lifting her family out of poverty lies in education; at the time the only schools established in Africa were Christian

missionaries. However, the missionary schools posed a threat, as well. Western missionaries put a greater emphasis on converting, than teaching at the time. Tambu does not simply fall in line with the colonization of her country, Rhodesia. One of her biggest rejections of the western culture is not attending her parents' Christian wedding, due to the fact that her family wasn't Christians until the Westerners came. The biggest effect due to colonization was the social barriers put into place and was the source of my generalization. In many cases, the mother country would divide the labor of the colonized people into different groups, causing social divisions between the two. In one specific account, Britain split the country of Uganda into two parts. The south consisted of the intellectuals and aristocrats, while the north consisted of the working class and law enforcers. After Britain left Uganda, civil war broke out in 1980 between North and South Uganda. War broke out because each of the two groups of Ugandans thought they were superior to the other and should lead their country. In hindsight, this was all due to the social barriers put into place by the British and other colonizing states, making them responsible for this chaos in Africa. Africa is a unique continent with many of its own traditions and cultural activities, or was until "The Scramble for Africa". Although, new technologies were introduced that heavily benefited Africa, western religions took away from Africa's own culture. I found this effect surprising due to the decrease of faith in Western Europe. I am disappointed to see such a change in Africa's history, but I am happy to say I do not simply view Africa as just an open Savannah with primitive tribes.