

Effects of colonialism on contemporary africa history essay



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When Columbus discovered the New World little did Africa know this would have a profound impact on its millennia old culture(s). When America was colonized by what we call the pilgrims it opened up vast areas of arable land, but without machinery how was this land to be utilized? The solution came with the advent of slavery. European traders who already traded in Africa now had a ready cargo they could load on their once empty for the return voyage to the Americas sadly this cargo was slaves from sub Saharan Africa, this slave trade was to decimate total tribal populations and severely disrupt cultures that had inhabited for thousands of years.

With the advent of the European industrial revolution the trade in slavery increased, not only did slaves get sold to American farmers, but now they would be sent in chains to the four corners of the globe as a source of free labor for the mother country of the colonies.

The Berlin conference of 1884 gave the European nations carte blanche over the natural rights of the population Africa.

All this had a profound impact on Africa. Africa before the invasion of the imperialistic Europeans was a vast continent without borders, but after colonization by the Europeans Africa was who divided up into the countries we can see today, each country with its own colonial power who instilled its laws and language onto the native Africans. Without regard for tribal traditions and cultural, and language differences the Europeans all but created open prisons for the tribes of Africa.

African for millennia had freedom of movement all over the continent of Africa, but after the partition of Africa by the colonists these tribes were

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confined by borders. For an instance the tribe of the Ewes had no natural boundary but after partition they are divided up into Ghana and Togo, while the Senufo now are split and live in Mali, Ivory Coast and, Burkina Faso. So now without the freedom of movement these tribes live in contention with each other, this lack of freedom of movement leads to tribal conflict as seen recently between Burkina Faso and Mali, and the 1994 genocide in Rwanda between the Hutu's, and the Tutsi's this conflict was the direct result of the bad management of its former colonial power. If all this was not bad enough the Colonists demeaned the native African they took away the tribes pride, their culture, they made every Sub Saharan African feel sub human.

Colonization happened and that is a fact, now what white Europeans must acknowledge is the fact the people who they made slaves were their very own direct descendants as we all originated from what we now call the cradle of civilization, aka Africa.

The lasting legacy from colonization came from the integration of colonies into the international capitalistic economies. This integration enabled the African elites to utilize the products of western economies without having to go through the time consuming process of building the productive base of their own individual countries.

One important economic benefit that came from colonization was the provision of infrastructure such as roads, railways, harbors and ports, plus the technological advances such as the telegraph and telephone systems. The basic infrastructure of the present modern African state was completed during its period of colonization. Some states have not improved upon the

colonial infrastructures even after gaining their independence. It was during the colonial period that the primary sector of Africa's economy occurred, during this period the mineral deposits of many African states were discovered, which led to mining of these natural resources using technology from its former colonists.

It was during the colonial period that seen the introduction of what are now African staples such as cotton, peanuts, palm, cocoa etc.. These cash crops are a main feature of the political economy of many African states today. The Colonists implemented a mono-crop system into most of their colonies, while no attempt was made to diversify the agricultural economy. This drastic monoculture system is still ingrained today in the agriculture methods of many African farmers today.

The colonists made the farmers grow for export, the African farmers were encouraged to produce what they didn't consume, and to consume what they don't produce, hence they had to import food. We can still see the effects of this legacy today as Africa is a big importer of maize, edible oil, rice etc. All this is the legacy of bad agricultural practice instilled in the African farmer by the colonists.

If we look at the elites of some of the West African states we can see today how colonization has smiled upon the chosen few, while millions of ordinary Africans go hungry on a daily basis. The elites of these countries were given a ladder by its former colonists to aid their climb to the upper echelons into the world of global power; Nigeria is a prime example of this, where its rulers rape the natural resources at the expense of its citizens.

Without the opportunities created by colonialism that fast tracked the economies of Africa to the western world, it is unlikely that the indigenous ruling elitist classes would have been propelled in such a short period of time from their modest pre-colonial status to what they now enjoy in the modern bourgeoisie affluent societies of the world. So the answer to the often posed question, what were the effects of colonialism on contemporary Africa? My answer is the elites definitely gained, while the ordinary African did not.