

CHAPTER 6 IMPERIALISM AND COLONISATION OF AFRICA

Objectives

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

- examine the nature of occupation of Africans by European powers;
- examine the response of Africans to the conquest;
- compare and contrast patterns of colonial rule in Africa;
- describe the pattern of colonial rule on Africans.

Introduction

This chapter sets to study European imperialistic activities in terms of exploitation of resources and the extension of colonial domination in Africa, backed up by force. This is followed by the introduction of different types of colonial administration in the colonies conquered.

6.1 Imperialism and Conquest of Africa

European powers such as Britain, France, Portugal and Belgium conquered Africa and made it their sphere of influence. Africa was conquered in the 19th and 20th centuries in order to make it source of raw materials for their colonies and markets for their finished goods. In order to establish their control in Africa, they adopted some methods.

6.2 Nature of Occupation of Africa by European

The European adopted two methods in order to subjugate and conquer African states.

- i. ***Signing of Treaties:*** African chiefs and rulers were made to sign treaties, which eventually made them to lose their independence. Some of the rulers could not understand the content of the treaty because of their inability to read or write. The Europeans were trickish because they used trade treaties to mean political control of an area. In Nigeria, chiefs were made to sign such treaties, while some were conquered militarily. Tunisia was also conquered through this method.
- ii. ***Military Conquest:*** States and societies that resisted colonial domination were conquered militarily. This means that such societies faced the Europeans in a battle which was disadvantageous to the African societies, because European military technology was by far more sophisticated than that used by Africans. Thus, a lot of Africans were killed in such military confrontations. In Nigeria, Lagos was bombarded by the British in 1861, Benin in 1897; Caliph Attahiru of Sokoto caliphate was killed along large number of followers in 1903. This point to the fact that people who resisted European infiltration were killed.

6.3 African Response to Colonial Conquest

Africans responded to colonial conquest in two different ways:

- i. **Peaceful Response:** This was when some African states resisted colonial domination in a peaceful manner. This resistance could be seen in refusal of the people not to pay tax, supply free labour or refusal to cultivate cash crops needed by the Europeans. Anytime the people resisted colonial policies peacefully, the colonialist always took up arms against them. In Sierra Leone, the people peacefully led to the arrest of their leaders and shooting of the crowd that gathered by captain sharps's troops.
- ii. **Military Confrontation:** In Africa, some states resisted colonial domination in a military confrontation. Resistance of this nature was in the form of armed revolts and rebellion. However, these kinds of revolts were subdued with the superior weapons of the colonialists which usually resulted in massacre of people as well as burning of villages. Indeed, people who resisted the colonialists face their wrath. Examples of this uprising were the Mende uprising in Sierra Leone where by the people took up arms against the British and in 1898, they killed the Europeans. The army was sent to put down the revolt and 97 people were killed by hanging for the murder of the Europeans. Also, Nana of Itsekiri put up resistance against colonial domination by building a defensive frontier in his town and mobilized his soldiers. By the weapons of the British, he was conquered in 1894 and exiled to Gold Coast. Also, in Sokoto a group of people called Mandist took up arms against the British and were subdued and killed by the superior weapons of the British. Thus, military confrontation was disadvantageous to the Africans who fought with arrows and spears in the face of sophisticated and superior weapons of the Europeans.

6.4 Pattern of Colonial Rule in Africa

The colonialists introduced different type of methods in the administration of their conquered territories. These include:

- i. **Indirect Rule System:** Indirect rule means ruling African societies through their rulers. The traditional rulers governed their territories on behalf of the colonialists. Under this system, policies and laws were made by the colonialists and the duty of the traditional ruler was to obey them and ensure their followers too obey. This method is believed to be the best for Africans because it enables Africans to develop a system of government by themselves. Indirect rule was less expensive to operate and it was the most suitable to operate in a colony facing shortage of colonial staff.

This kind of policy was implemented in Uganda and Northern Nigeria. The principles of indirect rule are: native authority, native treasury and native courts. Indirect rule is

- established in a place where there is the existence of well established political system as in Northern Nigeria and Uganda.
- ii. **French Assimilation on Policy:** This is a policy that was operative in French colonies such as Senegal, Niger and Algeria. This policy was based on turning citizens of French colonies to French citizens. Thus, the colonies were seen as extension of France. The people were made to copy French culture, attitude and behaviour. They were to emulate and copy the lifestyle of the French –the way they dress, eat and walk. Also, people were given French citizenship and were governed under French laws which showed that the people were indeed French citizens. The assimilation policy was introduced based on the belief of superiority of French culture and institution. The French introduced the association policy under which the people did not enjoy rights as French citizens. This system was based on administering the French colonies through the indigenous institutions of the people, similar to indirect rule in Northern Nigeria. Also, under association policy, Africans were regarded as subjects to the French colonial government.
 - iii. **Portuguese Assimilation Policy:** This is a policy introduced in the Portuguese colonies of Africa such as Angola. The Portuguese tried to introduce a system similar to the French assimilation, but they did not succeed because Portugal was poor in comparison with other colonial powers. The Portuguese regarded their colonies as part of their country. But despite the declaration of the assimilation policy, the Portuguese exploited all their citizens irrespective of those under the assimilation policy. The Portuguese were known to have exploited their colonies through forced labour, excessive taxes and refused to provide education to the people except a few. In fact, the Portuguese refused to acknowledge the indigenous system of the Africans.
 - iv. **Belgium Paternalism:** This policy was implemented by Belgium in its Congo colony. The policy was developed based on the belief that they were in Africa to criticize barbaric, savage and backward people. However, the policies of Belgium were exploitative as they exploited the people in order to develop their country.
 - v. **German Paternalism:** This is developed based on the principle of salvaging backward and savage people by putting them on the path of civilization. The German made it an obligation to force Africans to copy their lifestyle. The adoption of this policy was based on the belief that Africans were backward and could not participate on the path of development.

Comparison of Patterns of Colonial Rule in Africa

Indirect rule which operated in Northern Nigeria and Uganda recognized and made use of traditional institutions in the administration of the areas. This is similar to the French Association Policy which also made use of the traditional institutions in the administration of these areas. However, indirect rule and association policy were also exploitative because they were the forums through which African resources were exploited by the colonialists.

Also, the assimilation policy of the French and that of the Portuguese were similar. They were meant to introduce the people of their colonies to their attitudes, behaviours and values. At the same time, these policies did not make the citizens any better.

However, German paternalism and Belgium paternalism are similar in their operation and exploitation of the peasants. This is due to the fact that, despite the claim of the colonial powers to groom Africans who they saw as their children, they still exploited the colonies for their survival.

The patterns of the colonial rule in Africa have the similarity of showing the superiority of European culture and traditions. As such, Africans were always seen as backward and barbarians without any form of civilization.

On the other hand, the contrast between these patterns lies in the fact that only indirect rule and association policy, recognized indigenous institution of the Africans while assimilation and paternalism does not have such recognition.

Summary

- European countries conquered Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries and made it their sphere of influence.
- Africa was conquered in order to serve as a source of raw material for European industries and markets for their finished goods in order to promote capitalism.
- Occupation of Africa was carried out through signing of treaties and military conquest.
- Africans responded to colonial occupation through peaceful response and military confrontation.
- Pattern of colonial domination in Africa include: French Assimilation Policy, Indirect Rule, Portuguese Assimilation Policy, German Paternalism and Belgium Paternalism.

Objective Questions

1. African countries were conquered by Europe in the _____.
 - A. 10th and 14th centuries
 - B. 14th and 15th centuries
 - C. 8th and 9th centuries
 - D. 19th and 20th centuries
2. Africa was conquered to provide raw materials and _____ for European industries.
 - A. ideas
 - B. values
 - C. markets
 - D. capital
3. Conquest of African was carried out through signing of treaties and _____ occupation.

- A. peaceful
 - B. silent
 - C. simple
 - D. military
4. Africans responded to colonial conquest through _____ and military confrontation.
- A. violent
 - B. war
 - C. peaceful
 - D. indifferent
5. The colonialists controlled revolts with their superior _____.
- A. weapons
 - B. instruments
 - C. ideas
 - D. behaviour
6. The following are patterns of colonial administration in Africa except _____.
- A. indirect rule
 - B. assimilation policy
 - C. paternalism
 - D. segregation
7. Indirect rule is a British policy implemented in Uganda and _____.
- A. Senegal
 - B. Angola
 - C. Congo
 - D. Northern Nigeria
8. Indirect rule involves ruling people through their _____.
- A. subjects
 - B. rulers
 - C. elders
 - D. villages
9. Assimilation policy was introduced in _____ colonies.
- A. French
 - B. British
 - C. German
 - D. Belgium
10. Paternalism was a policy introduced in German and _____ colonies.
- A. Portuguese
 - B. British
 - C. Belgium

D. French

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the method used by the Europeans in the conquest of Africa.
2. Examine the response of Africans to imposition of colonial administration.
3. Examine the nature of assimilation policy introduced in Africa.
4. Discuss the policy of paternalism introduced in Africa.
5. Compare and contrast patterns of colonial domination introduced in Africa.