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Introduction

This encyclopedia explores the history of Africa in the twentieth century, during which the continent not only experienced profound transformations, but African history as a field of scholarly inquiry came into its own. Although the writing of African history goes back to the origins of the discipline of history itself, at the beginning of the twentieth century Africa was dismissed as a historical wasteland in the narratives of imperialist and Eurocentric historiography, which emphasized instead the civilizing impact of European activities on the continent, now reduced to a sub-Saharan contrap- tion from which North Africa was severed. Critiques of imperialist historiography, combined with nationalist struggles against colonialism that led to decolonization and the emergence of new independent nations, culminated in the rise of a nationalist historiography that emphasized African activities. Later other historiographical traditions emerged, influenced by a motley array of intellectual, ideological, and social movements, especially Marxism, feminism, poststructuralism, development studies, cultural studies, and environmental studies, which emphasized the role of class, gender, identity, dependency, culture, and ecology, among many other things, in the historical evolution of African societies. By the end of the twentieth century, therefore, African history was truly a house of many mansions, a vast scholarly enterprise with its own specialized journals, presses, and discourses, a subject taught in schools and universities across the continent and in many other parts of the world. This encyclopedia seeks to capture this intellectual ferment in African historical studies by offering entries, especially the longer ones, that present critical interpretation which is placed in the context of the pertinent historiographical debates.

The twentieth century was one of the most tumultuous centuries in world history. Whether in culture and the arts, economy and society, science, medicine and technology, politics and ideology, relations of race, class and gender, demographic and spatial structures, environmental and epidemiological conditions, epistemological, theoretical and representational–expressive systems, the century was characterized by massive, complex, and contradictory transformations in all domains of human experience. It was a century of Janus-faced extremes. Globally the century saw the apogee of mass production and mass marketing, and their consummation in mass consumption and mass leisure; it inaugurated the age of mass communication and mass education; it ushered in the era of mass nationalisms and mass revolts driven by utopian ideals. But it was also a century of mass hysteria and mass murder, mass oppression and mass poverty, mass ignorance and mass disease. The century of unparalleled technological and scientific achievement, economic prosperity and population growth, progressive modernization and globalization, was also one marked by unprecedented global warfare and genocide, seemingly irreconcilable social and geopolitical divisions, major population dislocations, national and ethnic conflicts, racial, factional and religious chauvinisms, and various manifestations of colonialism, authoritarianism, and totalitarianism. For all the epic victories won by the movements for national liberation, for class and gender equality, and for civil and human rights, the twentieth century nevertheless closed with the gaps between rich and
poor, both within and between nations, growing ever wider.

What was the nature of Africa’s encounter with this most global of centuries – with its triumphs and tragedies, its accomplishments and failures, its passionate pronouncements and painful reversals, its uneven developments and complex demands? In what ways were the peoples and polities, the societies and states, the psychologies and cultures, the economies and ecologies, of the continent affected by – on the one hand – and themselves influenced – on the other – the changes and events that occurred during the century? This encyclopedia seeks to survey the constellation of global and local forces that interacted to shape political, economic, social, cultural, artistic, and environmental developments and relationships within Africa and between Africa and the rest of the world. Within this framework the entries examine patterns across the continent and within particular regions and countries. A major emphasis of the encyclopedia is on examining and capturing how ordinary people’s lives changed as a result of the ways in which they responded to, mediated, and initiated the forces of change.

Coverage and contributors

In drawing up our list of entries we tried to balance breadth and depth of coverage with a number of other considerations. It was key to our conception of the encyclopedia that the entries should, unless clearly marked by temporal or spatial referents, cover the entire twentieth century; authors were therefore encouraged to trace the historical development of the process, phenomenon, or place being discussed from the beginning to the end of the century. Also, in the same vein, we wanted the encyclopedia to cover the entire continent, including North Africa, so authors were expected to draw examples from across the continent and make the pertinent interregional comparisons.

To help us arrive at a list of entries that was both comprehensive and manageable, we divided the entries into three broad groups of different lengths. The first group consisted of long (4,000-word) entries that would explore key topics and, as broad interpretive essays, would present the discussion of the phenomenon or process in question in its relevant historiographical context. Collectively these entries seek to examine the strengths and limitations of the epistemological and discursive frameworks that have informed analysis and debate about Africa’s twentieth-century experience, and identify analytical challenges and visions for Africa, African history, and African studies more generally as we turn towards the twenty-first century. The second group, also covering specific topics, themes, or events, consist of shorter entries of 2,000 words each. In selecting the topics, we were guided by three considerations: first, that major events that had a profound impact on African societies were covered; second, that key thematic areas were covered (these included economic, political, social, cultural, demographic, and environmental transformations); and, third, that conventional and novel areas of African historical research and writing were covered. The third group of entries consisted of “area surveys” organized by region (geographical, environmental, and linguistic regions, and regional integration schemes), country, and major city, ranging from 3,000 words for some of the regional entries, through 1,000–1,500-word entries for the countries, to 600-word entries for the cities. These entries were designed to examine, respectively, the various ways in which regions and regional identities in Africa were formed and developed over the course of the twentieth century; the salient economic, political, social, and cultural histories of each of the continent’s countries; and, finally, the histories of Africa’s major cities.

Each entry also has a “Further reading” list, which varies according to the length of the entry. Entries are also internally cross-referenced (cross-references are marked with small capitals), and the longer ones sometimes list related entries under the heading “See also.” All the entries aim to combine essential factual description with evaluation and analysis. The longer entries seek to outline and interrogate the theoretical frameworks and paradigms that have been used to analyze the topic in question. Overall the entries combine to make this an exceptionally rich collection of interdisciplinary analyses, firmly rooted in historical perspectives, of the major economic, political,
social, cultural, demographic, and environmental changes that Africa underwent in the twentieth century.

The strengths of the encyclopedia lie in the team of editorial advisers and authors assembled. We were advised by a team of twenty distinguished historians and social scientists from Africa, Europe, and North America. The final list of entries was drawn up after extensive consultations with them. The advisers also suggested names of possible authors, and several volunteered to write some of the entries themselves. To ensure access to the widest possible pool of potential authors, we drew up extensive lists based on our personal contacts and suggestions from the editorial advisers, as well as advertising through many of the leading African history and African studies email discussion groups, such as H-Africa, and contacting several research networks, including the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the US Association of African Studies Programs (AASP). In selecting authors we wanted to balance considerations of gender, nationality, career status (senior and junior scholars), location, and expertise. We believe we succeeded in assembling a team of authors whose vast knowledge is amply demonstrated in the text that lies before you. We acknowledge our indebtedness to them.

Paul Tiyambe Zeleza and Dickson Eyoh
Acknowledgments

Producing an encyclopedia requires the collaborative efforts of hundreds of people and many institutions. We would first like to thank Fiona Cairns at Routledge who suggested the project itself, and Dominic Shryane, also at Routledge, who oversaw its progress. Fiona and Dominic have the kind of cheerful qualities of skill, patience, and ability to offer good advice that authors only find occasionally among publishers. We are profoundly grateful to the friends and colleagues, too numerous to mention, who gave us advice, support, and sometimes contributions, often taking time from extremely busy schedules because they believed in this project. Above all we are deeply indebted to all the authors for being so generous with their time and expertise, and sometimes for being patient with our occasionally anxious deadline reminders. We would like to thank Fallou Ngom for translating four of the entries from French.

Each of us has more specific personal debts to acknowledge. Zeleza would like to thank the staff and colleagues at the Center for African Studies at the University of Illinois for all their assistance throughout the project, and to the university itself for granting him leave in the fall semester of the 2000–1 academic year and sabbatical during the 2001–2 academic year, during which he was able to concentrate on the encyclopedia. Also invaluable was the professional and personal support from Cassandra Rachel Veney. The amused inquiries from his daughter, Natasha Thandile, as to why the encyclopedia was taking so long, provided a reminder better than the official deadline from the publisher that the encyclopedia should not linger forever.

Eyoh would like to thank Cheryl Hendricks for intellectual and personal support over the time it has taken to complete the encyclopedia. Our daughter, Malaika, was but a few weeks old when we began working on it, and has grown to associate the word “encyclopedia” with things that too often kept daddy on the phone or computer at inconvenient times. Her impatience with such distractions was sufficient motivation to complete the project as soon was possible.

It is to our daughters, Natasha and Malaika, that we dedicate this encyclopedia, whose narratives of the past century will shape their future in the new century.

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Dickson Eyoh
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28 January 2002
How to use this encyclopedia

This encyclopedia is intended to offer a relatively comprehensive outline and survey of African history in the twentieth century. Written by experts in their fields, the entries seek to offer brief but authoritative analyses of the main themes in twentieth-century African history. They have been structured and organized to facilitate easy reference and cross-reference. All the entries are accompanied by a “Further reading” section, which can be used for additional reading on the topic or area. Cross-references are provided both in the text (where they appear in bold) and in the “See also” sections that sometimes appear at the end of entries. The thematic entry list and comprehensive index also enable the reader to quickly locate other relevant entries in the encyclopedia.

There are five entry sizes:

- **600 word entries**: These are short entries offering basic information and trends in the twentieth-century history of some fifty-eight major cities.
- **1,000 word entries**: These offer historical overviews of the continent’s fifty-three countries (the largest countries – such as Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, and South Africa – are covered in 1,500 word entries), regional and international organizations (such as the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations), major languages and linguistic communities (such as anglophone Africa and Arabic), and major ecological zones (such as the Niger Delta and tropical rain forest).
- **2,000 word entries**: These offer more in-depth overviews and analysis of particular events (such as First World War), processes (such as migrant labor or international trade), topics (such as genocides or sports), and issues (such as human rights or sex and sexuality).
- **3,000 word entries**: These offer comprehensive overviews and in-depth analysis of the continent’s five regions (North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa), and a variety of important topics and themes (from the Great Depression and law to race and ethnicity and telecommunications).
- **4,000 word entries**: These article-length entries cover major topics and themes in twentieth-century African history, and offer original and extensive analysis of the topic, theme, process, or phenomenon concerned. These range from African diasporas and agrarian change to visual arts and youth. As interpretive essays these entries seek to interrogate the pertinent historiographical and theoretical debates and offer the reader fresh analytical insights.
Thematic entry list

Africa and global history

African diasporas
Cold War
First World War
globalization
Great Depression
non-African diasporas
Pan-Africanism
Second World War
Third World

Africa and world organizations

Commonwealth
European Union
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United Nations

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Angola
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Cape Verde
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Congo
Côte d'Ivoire
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Bujumbura, Burundi
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Mombasa, Kenya
Monrovia, Liberia
Nairobi, Kenya
N'Djamena, Chad
Niamey, Niger
Nouakchott, Mauritania
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Major ecological zones
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tropical rain forest

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Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire

Abidjan is the principal city and economic capital of Côte d’Ivoire, with an estimated population of 3.5 million. The city is situated in the homeland of the Ebrie people. The birth and growth of Abidjan are closely related to the colonial history of Côte d’Ivoire. Grand Bassam was the first capital of the new colony (from 1895 to 1900), then Bingerville became the capital from 1900 to 1934. After that it moved once again, this time to Abidjan, which was chosen because the colonial authorities needed a location that was economically viable. With the construction in Abidjan of a port, a railway terminus that connected the coast with interior of the country and the Vridi Canal, major economic activity gradually came to an end in Grand Bassam. Abidjan was now economically and politically equipped to be the capital of modern Côte d’Ivoire. Another key factor in the choice of Abidjan as the capital was the yellow fever epidemic that killed a third of the white population of Grand Bassam in 1899. The survivors fled both from there and from Bingerville. From that time on, Abidjan attracted all types of people from Africa and other continents.

When the Crosson-Duplessis mission started railway construction in 1903, only six Europeans and 378 skilled African workers lived in what is now Abidjan. In 1912 the population increased to 1,400 and the workers moved farther north. There were 15,400 inhabitants by 1921, 17,000 when Abidjan became the capital in 1934, 45,000 by the end of the Second World War, 127,000 in 1955, 500,000 by the mid-1970s, and 2,000,000 in 1985. In 1970, that is ten years after independence, the port of Abidjan was one of the most dynamic in Africa. It contributed significantly to the growth of the city by attracting many migrant workers and their families. After the war Abidjan became the center of political activity in the colony, which was part of French West Africa.

By the late 1970s Abidjan was one of the most cosmopolitan cities in West Africa, famous for its shopping, for skyscrapers housing offices of national companies and international organizations, and burgeoning import substitution industries. It attracted migrants from rural areas and neighboring countries, not all of whom could find jobs, so the city faced increasing criminal activity, transportation problems, and unemployment. These reasons, the desire to diversify development, and the fact that Abidjan was the center of political discontent, especially among students and faculty at the University of Abidjan, led to the decision by President Houphouët-Boigny in 1983 to make Yamoussoukro, his native town, the country’s new political capital. The transfer of political institutions and infrastructure from Abidjan to Yamoussoukro was still going on by 2000. Despite this, Abidjan remained the premier commercial and cultural center, and the preferred place of residence for most Ivoiriens, including government officials. In fact, Abidjan concentrated even more on its commercial role, notwithstanding the economic crisis and political instability that followed a military coup in the 1990s. Abidjan was home to the National University of Côte d’Ivoire where
many of the first West African intellectuals were trained. A city noted for its vibrant cultural institutions and entertainment, Abidjan is full of contrasts, with ultra-modern residential areas (Cocody, Riviera, Les-Deux-Plateaux), overcrowded sections (Adjame, Trechville), and suburbs (Abobo-gare).

Further reading

LAMISSA BANGALI

Accra, Ghana

Accra is the capital city of Ghana with an estimated population of 2,000,000 people, located in the southeastern region of Ghana bordering the Atlantic Ocean. Although Accra today is a multi-ethnic and international city, it is also the home of the Ga peoples. The name Accra is believed to be a European corruption of *Nkran* (meaning “driver ants”), a name given to the Ga by their Fante neighbors to the west in remembrance of the Ga migration to their present home.

In the sixteenth century, Europeans changed the settlement pattern of the region forever. They built forts and castles from which they conducted their trade. By the end of the nineteenth century, the British had bought out the other Europeans and become the sole masters of the Gold Coast. In an effort to effectively extend their control over the protectorate, the British decided to move the seat of the colonial administration in 1877 from Cape Coast to Accra. From then on, Accra became the new seat of government and Ghana’s leading commercial city.

As the center and symbol of colonial rule and oppression, any anti-British activities that were formerly aimed at Cape Coast were now redirected towards Accra. For the smooth running of the colony, the British took certain steps to spruce up the infrastructure of Accra by building roads, railways, an airstrip, utility services, hospitals, schools, and residential areas for British functionaries. Some of these institutions – such as the University College of Ghana (Legon), Achimota College and Korle Bu Hospital – are still famous landmarks in Accra today. Successive post-independence governments expanded the colonial infrastructure but, like most African capitals, Accra’s exponential growth (from 388,000 people in 1960 to 1,000,000 in 1980 and 2,000,000 in 2000) was not matched by a corresponding improvement of the infrastructure. In the absence of planned development, home construction boomed without adequate road networks and utilities, leading to traffic jams and lack of efficient water, electricity, and telephone distribution.

Although Accra’s economy was traditionally based on fishing and subsistence farming, the retail and small-scale manufacturing industries are now pre-eminent. The famous Makola market dominates the retail sector and the industrial base is made up of textile mills, salt production, chemical industries, wood and furniture industries, handicrafts, and so on. However, the government remains the single most important employer in the city, despite the fact that in accordance with the World Bank’s structural adjustment program it has privatized several government industries leading to layoffs. Despite this setback, Accra is relatively better off than some of the other cities in West Africa and therefore attracts migrants from other regions of Ghana and neighboring countries.

Furthermore, after Ghana was declared independent on 6 March 1957, Accra became a major center of Pan-Africanism, an ideology fervently espoused by Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s first president. Famous Pan-Africanists like George Padmore and W.E.B. DuBois spent their final days in Accra and were buried there. Nkrumah had vowed at independence that Ghana’s independence would be meaningless unless all of Africa was liberated. Subsequently, Accra hosted in 1958 the All Africa People’s Conference to support anti-colonial struggles. Nkrumah Mausoleum and the DuBois Center are major tourist attractions.

Besides its political significance, Accra is also famous for its cultural activities. While there are diverse modern forms of entertainment, the traditional annual Homowo (harvest festival) of the Ga people with its attendant rituals is a
reminder of the pre-eminence of African customs over new cultural forms.

Further reading


AGBENYEGA ADEDZE

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Addis Ababa ("New Flower" in Amharic) was founded in Ethiopia in 1886 by Empress Taytu, wife of Emperor Menilek II (reigned 1889–1913). The prime attraction of the site was its hot springs, which formed the nucleus for the urban settlement that soon developed. What assured its permanence was the influx and settlement of foreigners after the Ethiopian victory at Adwa (1896) and the importation of eucalyptus trees from Australia, which solved the country’s perennial problem of providing enough wood and thereby averted the otherwise inevitable shift to another center.

In the early twentieth century, the city had two nodal points: the Imperial Palace (or Gebbi) and the religious-cum-commercial center Arada. Residences of members of the nobility served as smaller centers around which the settlements of their dependents and retainers sprouted. With the arrival of the Djibouti–Addis Ababa railway in 1917, another center was created in the southern outskirts of the town. This ultimately had the effect of pulling the town southwards. Before 1935 the dominant architectural tradition was Indian. The coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1930 gave the city international prominence, as representatives of foreign powers and the Western press flocked to attend the colorful event.

The short-lived Italian occupation of the country (1936–41) left its impact on the city. The Italians introduced their own distinctive architectural style, specimens of which survived to the end of the century. Following the colonial tradition, they also tried to set up a separate quarter for Ethiopians in the western part of the city. While this attempt was aborted by their expulsion in 1941, the westward extension endured and gave the city its major commercial center, Mercato, reputed to be the largest open-air market in Africa.

In the period after 1941, the southward expansion of the city continued. Two airports (the first built in the southwestern part of the city, the second in the southeast) became major residential centers for the affluent and for the growing expatriate community. The selection of Addis Ababa as headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa in 1958 and the Organization of African Unity in 1963 elevated this hitherto largely insular city into an African metropolis. A construction boom in the 1960s gave it some of its major architectural landmarks – Africa Hall, the City Center, the Hilton, and, appropriately enough, its point of origin: the Hot Springs (*Fel Weha*).

Addis Ababa was also the seat of the national university, Haile Selassie I University, founded in 1961. Student agitation, spurred by growing social and economic ills, formed the background to the eruption of the Ethiopian Revolution in 1974. The major events of that revolution, leading to the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie I in September 1974, unfolded in the city. Following the nationalization of urban land and houses in July 1975, a new administrative structure was put in place. The city was divided into neighborhood associations (*Qabale*), which became the basic unit of administration for the rest of the century.

With the change of regime in 1991 and the ethos of decentralization that then prevailed, the national importance of Addis Ababa declined somewhat. The neglect or breakdown of services gave it a rather drab character. The expansion of its population, estimated to be about 3,000,000 in 2000, compounded the problem. The only positive notes were struck by the first-class Sheraton Hotel that graced downtown Addis and a ring road that was under construction but expected to revolutionize motorized traffic.

Further reading

The African Development Bank (AfDB) was founded in August 1963 in the first wave of independence and began operations from its headquarters in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, in July 1966. Its creation is deeply rooted in the ambition of the founding African states to have at their disposal the financial and political means for their own development, independently from former colonial powers and developed countries. Its very African character was and remains the main characteristic of this regional institution. The first president, Mamoun Beheiry, was Sudanese. Since then, the presidency has tended to reflect various linguistic affiliations and geographical equilibria, thereby avoiding potential divisions stemming from the considerable diversity of the continent. As the main guarantee of its independence, the African Development Bank asserted its pan-African intentions by denying membership and voting rights to countries outside the region, unlike its institutional peers that were founded at roughly the same period (the InterAmerican and the Asian Development Banks). Due to its apartheid policies, South Africa was the only African state to be excluded; this required a special resolution from the membership. It was only reintegrated in 1995, becoming the fifty-third regional member of the Bank. The Bank, as stated by the Article 1 of its charter, was dedicated “to contribut[ing] to the economic development and social progress of its members individually and jointly.” Unlike the World Bank, the African Development Bank was controlled by its borrowers. Its capital basis was collectively and equally shared by its regional members, and its main target was the allocation of loans enabling the emerging nation-states to develop.

The African status of the Bank was, however, endangered and reduced by successive economic, financial and debt crises crippling the continent. Since its inception, several adjustments have been made to the original structure to tackle the scarcity of financial resources. Two facilities for concessionary loans were added: the African Development Fund in 1973 and the Nigeria Trust Fund in 1976. The African Development Fund admitted, for the first time in the AfDB Group’s young history, non-regional participants. The Development Fund started to operate in 1974 with thirteen non-African states and the Bank. The Nigeria Trust Fund is a specific partnership between the Bank and the Nigerian government. The regional sovereignty of the Bank was most notably diminished by the adhesion of non-regional members in 1982, in spite of the strong opposition of Algeria, Libya, and Nigeria. Faced with unbearable macro-economic pressure (oil shocks, falling commodity prices, drought), a rising number of countries were in arrears with their debt payments, threatening the financial stability and international stature of the Bank. The opening of capital and voting rights to non-regional members was the only solution if the Bank was to continue its activities, enabling it to raise extra funding from the international capital markets. This measure was accepted under strict conditions: The president of the Bank would have to be African and the headquarters would remain on the continent. In addition, non-regional participants were limited to only a third of the Bank’s voting power. The Bank’s authorized capital amounted to US$23.29 billion at the end of 1996. By 2000 the Bank’s membership comprised fifty-three African countries and twenty-four non-African countries from the Americas, Asia, and Europe.

Despite these substantial modifications to the original spirit of the Bank, it has largely fulfilled its mandate. Since its creation, its staff have become increasingly professional. Trying to attract and train the best and brightest Africans, by December 2000 only 101 out of a total of 1,051 members of staff were from member countries outside Africa. The Bank has also tremendously strengthened its methods for appraising the financial and economic viability of projects financed and monitored loans. Through the implementation of internationally standard procedures, its legitimacy among multilateral organizations has been enhanced and this regional institution has been able to attract external resources from international capital mar-
kets, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and foreign governments. Since 1967 five general capital increases have been carried out. The international rating agencies granted the Bank their highest rating.

The Bank’s operations cover the major sectors, with particular emphasis on agriculture, public utilities, transport, industry, health and education, as well as cross-sectoral concerns such as poverty reduction, environmental management, gender mainstreaming, and population activities. Between 1967 and 2000, 19.3 percent of the Bank’s lending was devoted to the strategic agricultural sector. Most Bank financing is designed to support specific projects. However, the Bank also provides program-, sector-, and policy-based loans to enhance national economic management. The Bank also finances non-publicly guaranteed private-sector operations. The AfDB has granted an outstanding and increasing amount of credit, almost equally distributed over the continent but with a noticeable advantage given to northern Africa due to its advanced level of industrialization.

The AfDB has also coordinated its African capacity-building activities with regional organizations (including the Organization of African Unity), non-governmental organizations and other international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank). Although AfDB subscribes to the Structural Adjustment Programs’ liberal orientation, AfDB’s relationship with the World Bank is multi-faceted, being both collaborative through co-financed loans and competitive in lending activities. The World Bank is an extremely powerful and influential organization, gaining a large share of the lending market on the continent – sometimes to the detriment of the AfDB. However the symbolic African status of the Bank is an invaluable political asset, making it an intermediary between the African states and the developed countries. The AfDB Group is still voicing the social, economic, and financial concerns of the continent. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it remains the continent’s premier financial institution.

See also: Pan-Africanism

Further reading


JEAN-PHILIPPE DEDIEU

African diasporas

African diasporas are communities of Africans and African-descended peoples who were dispersed outside the continent through forced and voluntary migrations. These communities are found around the globe – in Europe, the Americas and Asia. The formation of these communities began in ancient times but those found in modern times are the result of three historical forces:

1 forced migration and the slave trade, which scattered African peoples into Europe, across the Atlantic to the Americas, and through the Indian Ocean into Asia;
2 “voluntary” migrations, generally resulting from movements associated with European colonialism and world wars; and
3 labor migrations related to both colonialism and decolonization.

A conceptual difficulty in mapping the history of African diasporas is the very meaning and definition of the term “diaspora.” Many definitions do not explain diasporas formed through voluntary migration with no thought of return, nor the development of a diasporic consciousness and identity that is sustained over many generations, even after the loss of a relationship with a homeland. The concept of “diaspora” originated in other historical and cultural contexts – namely Jewish and Greek history. “Diaspora” is the Greek word for “dispersal,” though its most common usage has been in reference to the scattering of Jews throughout the West. For African-Americans, however, the Biblical roots of the concept of diaspora have particular meaning. Early activists,
historians, and clergy frequently cited Psalm 68:31, which says “Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God,” as a way of describing the black (world) condition and the source of liberation. Ethiopia has been a metaphor for a black world-wide movement against injustice, racism, and colonialism.

The modern usage of the term “African diaspora” is a product of the scholarship and political movements of the 1950s and 1960s. It served in the scholarly debates as both a political term with which to emphasize unifying experiences of African peoples dispersed by the slave trade and an analytical term that enabled scholars to talk about black communities across national boundaries. Much of this scholarship examined the dispersal of people of African descent, their role in the transformation and creation of new cultures, institutions, and ideas outside of Africa, and the problems of building Pan-African movements across the globe. Obviously, specific historical contexts determine the relative importance of each of these elements. A real or symbolic homeland is not necessary to articulate a relationship between diasporas. A shared history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as a teleology of origin/return.

There are distinct differences between nations and diasporas. Diasporas are both of and beyond the nation. Diaspora is both a process and a condition. As a process it is constantly being re-made through movement, migration, and travel, as well as imagined through thought, cultural production, and political struggle. Yet, as a condition, it is directly tied to the process by which it is being made and re-made. In other words, the African diaspora itself exists within the context of global race and gender hierarchies that are formulated and reconstituted across national boundaries and along several lines. These include legal lines that curtail citizenship in polities that claim to be democratic and economic lines through the planned persistence of plantation/colonial economies and a world market that makes those economies untenable. It also includes cultural and social lines which ascribe negative cultural value to indigenous forms, while simultaneously appropriating these expressive cultures for political and commercial purposes and through systems that define and limit access based on race and gender. This occurs in both open and segregated societies. Finally, diaspora moves along imperial lines through the international development of “Jim Crowed” modes of industrial production. We must also pay attention to the ways in which differences in empire – the French, English and Spanish, or US for that matter – defined colonial/subordinate subjects and structured definitions of race/gender, citizenship, and national identity. In other words, the arrangements that this hierarchy assumes may vary from place to place but it remains a gendered racial hierarchy.

Overview of African diasporas

African diasporas in Europe date back to at least the eighth century, when Moors from North Africa entered Spain. They ruled there until the Reconquista in 1492. The role of Moorish Spain in launching the Renaissance in Europe has not been studied to a significant degree. Yet it was medieval universities, academies of music, and translation centers in Moorish Spain that facilitated cultural input to medieval Italy and Spain from Asia, the Middle East, and North and West Africa. Africans entered other European countries before the slave trade as well. But it was Europe’s involvement in the slave trade that brought large numbers of Africans across to Europe. As Europe cemented its colonial rule over Africa at the end of the nineteenth century, more Africans were displaced for use as labor or in the military, to acquire a colonial education, and often to live in political exile.

The transatlantic trade scattered more than fifteen million Africans throughout the Americas from the end of the fifteenth to the middle of the nineteenth centuries. Slavery and freedom shaped the formation of the African diasporas in every country in North and South America. Though these societies were distinguished by language, national heritage, and cultural articulations, they were linked by the development of a new world Africanicity, plantation economies, racial identities, and cultural forms that transcended national formations.
As in Europe, the African presence in Asia dates back to the East African slave trade which began as early as AD 100, although its volume was then relatively small. Slaves were used in the pearl-diving industry, on date plantations, as soldiers throughout Arabia, Persia and India, and as dock workers on the Indian Ocean. They were also used as concubines and domestic servants in Muslim communities. The history of these communities is fragmentary – although new research is uncovering more information – and it is unclear to what extent these communities can be identified as diasporas.

By the end of the nineteenth century, African diasporas – communities with distinct African identities – were located around the globe. Colonialism, empire building, world wars, wars of liberation, and decolonization expanded these communities worldwide. By the beginning of the twentieth century, African diasporas were global.

Africans in Europe

At the beginning of the twentieth century, cities like London, Paris, and Lisbon had substantial pockets of African people. Though most were not citizens but members of the colonial world from Africa, the Caribbean, and even North America, they constituted part of the workforce and were becoming an integral part of the culture, despite the discrimination they faced, which created a common cause and consciousness among them. Algerians and Africans from French West Africa worked in port cities on the docks, in restaurants as waiters and janitors, and as servants in the homes of the elite in France. Racial bias and cultural difference set them apart from the larger society and they tended to cluster in separate neighborhoods. There were sources of division even within the diaspora communities. Class, religion, and national origin sometimes presented barriers to communication. Algerians, who were Islamic and North African, tended to cluster in their own communities within the larger diaspora community. Another source of division was generational. New arrivals often had to make a place for themselves among those that had been in Europe for several generations. Yet their identity as Africans was safeguarded by a European racism that never allowed complete assimilation, although distinctions were made by Europeans between North Africans and West Africans – in France, for example, North Africans were still characterized as “dirty Arabs.” The Arabic identity at times trumped the African identity of North Africans but colonial realities reminded Algerians in France and the Sudanese in London that they were also African.

Africans, West Indians, and African-Americans established their own institutional structures in European cities which also became sites of cultural and political activity that had important implications for the homeland. Of particular significance in this period is the political activity in these communities. Though colonial rule was just becoming institutionalized in Africa, anti-colonial activity had already begun both on the continent, in the colonies in the Caribbean, and within Europe itself. The development of the Pan-African movement is one example of this activity. It began in Europe and was led by Africans from the Americas. The first Pan-African Congress was convened in London by Henry Sylvester Williams, a Trinidadian barrister. He was aided, and the conference was attended, by several prominent African-Americans, including W.E.B. DuBois, later known as the “father of Pan-Africanism,” and representatives from the Caribbean and Africa.

This meeting was the first of seven such meetings through the 1920s, four of which took place in Europe. The next four meetings were convened by DuBois between 1919 and 1927 in Paris, London and Brussels, London and Lisbon, and New York. Within diaspora communities the fate of the race was always the foundation for political activity. What is significant about African diasporas is that national identities often become submerged within racial identities. The end of the First World War created many new problems in both the French and British empires. For African people in France the problem of assimilation and the representation of the colonies in the metropolitan parliament was elevated to serious debate. While most Africans in both Paris and London worked in menial jobs, for black French intellectuals the end of the war brought disillusionment and dissatisfaction. Political representation in the
French parliament by Blaise Diagne and Gratien Candace, which was accepted before the war, was not accepted any longer. Indeed, many who had fought in the war on the side of the French felt betrayed by these black deputies. These and many other issues spoke to feelings of alienation of Africans in European society.

By 1929 these issues of African identity, culture, and political representation expressed themselves in the literary protests of the Negritude movement. Students from the Caribbean and French colonies in Africa were led by Léopold Senghor from Senegal, Aimé Césaire from Martinique, and Léon Damas from French Guiana. At the heart of the debate for these “black Frenchmen” was the question of whether one was African or French.

But Africans from the Caribbean and West Africa were not the only ones to look to France for freedom from colonialism and racism. Many African-Americans had fought in France and returned there after the war, believing that they could escape the harsh racism of the United States in a country where they had been treated differently. Ironically, these Americans saw a racial paradise where many African workers from French West Africa and Algeria lived a hell. On the margins of European society, the Africans nonetheless created communities that were vibrant in their culture. The Americans too found a place in Europe, particularly in France where they built communities and businesses. They also became important producers of music, especially jazz, just as those from West Africa became artists and writers.

African communities in Europe expanded after the Second World War. Britain, like all other European countries, was desperate for labor. In 1948 the Nationality Act granted citizenship to citizens of Britain’s colonies and former colonies. With citizenship and a British passport came the right of lifelong residence in Britain. Initially Africans from the Caribbean were slow in taking Britain up on its offer. Migration from West Africa was equally slow. But as unemployment skyrocketed on the islands, Caribbean migrants began to arrive to take jobs, especially in transport, hotels and restaurants, and nursing. They were young and took English citizenship.

In short order, they encountered considerable prejudice. Most Englishmen held negative views of African people from Africa and the Caribbean, and a fringe group were openly hostile. By 1962 racism had entered politics. In 1959 there was a move to set immigration controls by Tory MPs. In 1962 the first Commonwealth Immigrants Bill became law. Two years later, Peter Griffiths, a Tory candidate, defeated a Labour minister with the slogan, “If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour.”

By the mid-1970s two out of every five black people in Britain were born in the country. In the key areas of employment, housing and education, they still faced substantial discrimination, and the issue of police racism became a major subject of debate. In response, a black resistance movement emerged. In 1981 the conflict between the police and black youth exploded in Brixton in south London and spread to other cities. These racial tensions were to shape the fabric of relations in England into the twenty-first century.

By the end of the century, the migration of Africans into European countries had exploded. Significant numbers of Senegalese and Somalis were migrating to Italy, Moroccans were flocking to Germany and the Netherlands, Algerians to France, Ethiopians to Sweden, Congolese to Belgium, and Nigerians and Ghanaians to Britain and all across Europe. In short, African migration in Europe spread from the United Kingdom, France, and Portugal, formerly dominant imperial powers in Africa, to the northern European countries, principally Germany and the Netherlands, as well as southern ones, including Italy and Spain, which had until the 1970s themselves been countries of emigration. This intense migration is the result of economic displacement in African countries and the desire of Africans from the continent and diasporas to carve out a better life for themselves. These Africans are forming new communities in hostile terrain. They foreshadow the continuing development of the globalization of African people and the economic and social tensions that these diasporas will generate. Their identity as Africans is becoming one that is transnational and global, as many must communicate with family scattered around the globe and all the while confront racial forms of discrimination.
Africans in the Americas

African diasporas in the Americas were originally a direct outgrowth of the transatlantic slave trade. Slave societies peppered the landscape bordering the North and South Atlantic and, when slavery ended, African peoples in the Americas shared the legacy of slavery as they entered the twentieth century. Labor exploitation, racial discrimination, struggle over citizenship rights, and the creation of vibrant cultural forms that defined and were rejected by the nation are the characteristics shared by African people in the Americas. The specific nature of these characteristics varied from society to society.

Labor exploitation continued to define African life experiences in the Americas long after slavery ended, and migration was one the major responses to this labor problem. In the United States, former slaves were relegated to the plantations or became menial labor in urban locales. After the turn of the century, racial violence and economic motives drove many to migrate to the urban south, then the western United States, and finally to northern industrial cities, such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, and New York, where African-Americans worked as domestics, maintenance workers, or in hotels and other service industries, or sought employment in industries such as steel and automobile manufacturing, or on the railroads.

In the Caribbean, well into the twentieth century, African peoples remained in rural agriculture and on sugar plantations. As industry spread, such as bauxite mining, many sought employment away from the agricultural sector. Economic depression forced thousands to migrate to other islands, seeking work in agriculture and creating new diasporas within older diasporas. For example, in the early twenty-first century, workers from the British West Indies began migrating to Cuba to work on sugar plantations, to Costa Rica to work the coffee plantations, and finally to the Panama Canal zone to work for Americans. In the canal zone they encountered American forms of racial discrimination. From there many migrated to the cities on the Eastern seaboard of the United States, particularly New York City. Cubans migrated to Miami but many, particularly Afro-Cubans, migrated to Ybor City and Tampa to work in the tobacco industry. Few Afro-Cubans had been allowed to benefit from the lucrative employment in tobacco in Cuba, hence their desire to migrate. Most were relegated to the sugar plantations and rural agriculture or menial employment in the cities.

The United States had acquired Puerto Rico from Spain after the end of the Spanish–American–Cuban–Filipino War in 1898 and, as a result, Puerto Ricans began migrating to New York City in large numbers. Many of these Puerto Ricans were of African descent. By mid-century then, there was an African Caribbean diaspora in the United States.

Those in the French Antilles, particularly Martinique and Guadeloupe, and French Guiana were part of France’s départements et territoires d’outre-mer and, therefore, French territory. Their economic situation was little different from the other islands but most did not migrate; when they did, they migrated to France or other French-speaking countries. Haitians, on the other hand, migrated to other islands, particularly the Dominican Republic, to work the sugar plantations, as well as to Jamaica and Cuba. They also began migrating to the United States in the early twentieth century, a migration that has continued into the twenty-first century. With growing nativism in the United States, many Haitians and other black migrants are encountering increased discrimination.

Though Brazil has been touted as a “racial paradise,” the lived experience of Afro-Brazilians does not support this representation. After the end of slavery, Afro-Brazilians were well represented in the agricultural sectors where they continued to work on sugar and coffee plantations. But they were also firmly rooted in the urban sector. In Salvador, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro, despite official claims to the contrary, Afro-Brazilians – like their counterparts in other societies in the Americas – suffered from racial discrimination, albeit with a twist. Most Afro-Brazilians in these cities live in the favelas or slums which ring these cities and they are the targets of police violence and economic exploitation. This profile of Africans in Latin America is repeated in Colombia, Honduras, Peru, Chile, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.
Thus Africans in the Americas have continued to face racial discrimination. In the United States, until the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, African-Americans lived in conditions similar to those created by apartheid. Though *de jure* and technically *de facto* segregation has disappeared, racial violence has continued into the twenty-first century. Many organizations were formed at the beginning of the century to fight this discrimination, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League. The Jamaican migrant Marcus Garvey formed the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), a black nationalist organization which spread throughout the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe. The African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), a Marxist-nationalist organization, was founded in the early twentieth century by radical West Indians. After its demise, many of its members joined the Communist Party in the United States. Also, as students from the continent learned of racism in the United States, they became active in the Pan-African movement. The most prominent of these was Kwame Nkrumah.

In Cuba, the struggle to end racial discrimination also took a political form. Africans in Cuba were not homogeneous, being divided by free ancestry, cultural, educational, class, sexual, and regional differences. Yet African cultural traditions were widespread and nurtured in the *cabildos de nación*, religious and mutual aid societies in urban areas. In urban centers, such as Havana and Matanzas, secret societies like the all-male Abakua flourished. Though not all black Cubans remained close to their African heritage, the number who did was nevertheless significant. But these identities were refined and redefined in the 1868 and 1898 wars for national liberation. Afro-Cuban participation was widespread in both, and the military leaders became leaders of the fight for political equality after the wars ended. Further, the military experience created networks that proved useful in organizing the black population for political struggle. Afro-Cubans fought for the right to be both Cuban and black, and this struggle led to the first black political organization in the Americas: the Partido de Independiente de Color. The determination to maintain their cultural and racial identity, coupled with an equal determination to be fully participating citizens of the nation, led to the so-called “race war” of 1912 in which thousands of the Partido members were massacred by the Cuban army. The outcome of this struggle limited the ability of Afro-Cubans to organize nationally along racial lines and curtailed their efforts to define their citizenship in such terms. But this struggle did not destroy the formation of an Afro-Cuban identity. That identity moved to cultural forms in music and religion.

Notions of race in Brazil were complicated and shaped by changing demographic and regional variation. Social convention established a distinction between mulattos and blacks, a distinction found in certain official records like the census. In the minds of all Brazilians, blackness was incompatible with social and economic advancement, so success was itself a source of whitening. In Salvador, social protest was couched in the fight for cultural autonomy for African-based cultural expressions like *candomblé* and *capoeira*. In São Paulo, a strong black press flourished in conjunction with political organizations such as the Frente Negra Brasileira. In each instance, Afro-Brazilians responded to the material and political reality that confronted them and found ways to struggle for equality in those locales.

As a protest against discrimination and a process of cultural creativity, Africans in the Americas have produced a rich cultural heritage that is now claimed by the nations that continue to marginalize African people. In the 1920s the Harlem Renaissance, in conjunction with the Negritude and Latin American Negrismo movements, produced literature and art that captured the colonial imagination. Writers such as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Zora Neale Hurston, and the Jamaican writer Claude McKay were in contact with writers of the Negritude movement such as Senghor, Césaire, and Damas, as well as Jean Price-Mars and Jacques Roumain of Haiti, and Nicolás Guillén of Cuba.

At the end of the twentieth century, Africans from all over the continent were migrating to the United States for education and jobs. Many who came as students remained as workers in the transportation industry as cab drivers or at airports in major American cities such as New York, Los
Angeles, and Chicago. They also worked in hotels, in restaurants, and in construction. Many have become peddlers selling goods from Africa on city streets or in flea-markets in the southwest. North Africans find communities of Muslims in cities like Atlanta and Chicago, and establish businesses and mosques. Many also worked in American universities as professors, in the medical professions, and as engineers. Many encountered an American form of racism that for some was bewildering and for others part of the development of a diasporic identity.

As African people from all over the Americas continue to migrate back and forth across national boundaries, the discovery of a self-identity as a raced population is increasing. At the same time, African-Americans are succeeding economically in the United States. But this success is double-edged. A growing number of African-Americans are rejecting identification with other oppressed people and have become completely “Americanized.” They are now helping to make the imperialistic policy that restricts the lives of many African peoples. Furthermore, the political realities in Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America are such that many African rulers and leaders assist willingly in maintaining global racial hierarchies. It is even profitable for them to do so. The outcome of these experiences in a global world increasingly dominated by the United States and its imperialistic policies promises new formations that are just becoming apparent.

See also: non-African diasporas; Pan-Africanism

Further reading


TIFFANY RUBY PATTERSON

African religions

Religious pluralism in Africa

There are a variety of religions in Africa. Indigenous religion, the focus of this entry, is practiced in different forms, although these practices may not always be called “religion.” Religion is a way of life and an expression of what Paul Tillich has described as “ultimate concerns.” Religious traditions have been documented all over Africa and it has become customary to refer to Yoruba religion, Zulu religion, Dinka religion, Nupe religion, Akan religion, and so on. These religions are distinctive, and have developed differently. However, there are common features that allow us to discuss them together. Scholars do not agree on what to call these religions. They are variously described as “traditional,” “local,” “indigenous,” or even “classical” religions – or simply as “African” religions (the term used in this encyclopedia). This latter designation is not meant to imply that Christianity and Islam are any less African for their adherents, some of whose societies have been following these religions for many centuries, some even going back to the period immediately after the two religions were founded.

Thus Africa is home to many religious traditions, including the so-called “monotheistic religions.” Christianity entered Africa in antiquity and colonial missionary expansion brought a European version of it to Africa. Modern Christianity arrived in Africa in a violent and divisive manner because it came in the form of denominations. Islam also has
a long history in Africa, having entered North Africa not many years after the birth of the religion. Today nearly half of the people in Africa practice Islam. Judaism exists in Africa; it used to have a lot of followers in North Africa and has a large following in South Africa where a lot of Jews have settled. In addition to these three, Africa is also home to religions like Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, Baha’i, and Parsee and Chinese religions.

**African indigenous religions in history**

African indigenous religions have a long but often neglected history. Their genesis is rooted in the emergence of human settlements in Africa. African indigenous religions are historical religions because each society has developed with its sense of ultimacy, and we can have access to the symbols that make up their sense of ultimacy by studying their myths, rituals and moral ethos. The history of these religions is different because, in reconstructing one, scholars do not look for a towering founding figure but rather at the evolution of a historical community, its spirituality, and engagement with the symbols that provide access to extra-human power that can be used to organize and concretize life on earth. Participants at the 1971 Dar es Salaam conference on African religions were convinced that interrogating oral traditions and archival material would enable scholars to reconstruct histories of religion in Africa. One of the participants at the Dar es Salaam conference, Dr. Matthew Schoffeleers, later published his ground-breaking work *River of Blood: The Genesis of a Martyr Cult in Southern Malawi, c. AD 1600*. Schoffeleers’ success in mapping out the development of the M’Bona cult in the Lower Shire Valley, and M.L. Danel’s study *The God of the Matopo Hills: An Essay on the Mwari Cult in Rhodesia* (1970), demonstrate that by studying the religious institutions of the community, language, and oral tradition, as well as the degree to which religious life is interwoven with political, symbolic, and ritual authority, one can reconstruct the history of these religions.

Colonial domination of Africa was violent in all forms and African religions became direct targets for attack by colonial authorities and by modern versions of Christianity and Islam. Ali Mazrui’s (1986) notion of “triple heritage” involved in many ways a violent confrontation, because the proselytizing Christian and Islamic traditions uncompromisingly demanded the rejection of other religions by people who had converted to the new versions of Christianity and Islam, and in some cases even the forced resettlement of those people. Both religions brought social services and stronger evangelical marketing techniques – African religions could not compete with these innovations. Missionaries derided African gods as pagan, and preached against African traditions and belief in spiritual forces, magic, sorcery, sacrifices, and ancestor veneration. They made fun of African rituals and competed with local rainmakers in order to humiliate and discredit them. Missionaries’ impatient desire for change led to assaults on rites, such as female circumcision among the Kikuyu in Kenya, and brought social upheaval. Even those sympathetic to African religiosity often considered it merely to be *preparatio evangelica*. The verbal and institutional violence thus perpetrated against African religion has been described by Bolaji Idowu in his classic work *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (1973) and fictionalized by several African writers, including Chinua Achebe and Mongo Beti.

Colonial authorities on their part frequently engaged in the destruction of African religiosity. They passed judgment on witchcraft controversies when evidence – even from anthropologists with colonial ties – demonstrated that it was a complex system for dealing with misfortune. They destroyed shrines and executed priests. British colonial authorities suppressed the Cult of Katawere on the Gold Coast (Ghana), the Mau Mau uprising, and the Bamucapi regional cult in southeastern Africa.

The introduction of Western education and social services created ambiguity and confusion among many Africans about their religions. This opened up a new type of class distinction based on a capitalist economy and bureaucratic system. The so-called “modern” elites who benefited from colonial modernity and its new religions experienced what DuBois called “double consciousness.” They tried to recover what was lost through the Negritude movement, a search for authenticity, and other forms of Africanization, but these did not necessarily include thoroughgoing at-
tempts to recover suppressed religious values. Double consciousness at times was manifested in urban areas with people who had forgotten the rudiments of indigenous religions depending on others who claimed to practice traditional healing, but perverted traditional medical systems. However, it must be pointed out that, despite these assaults, indigenous religions survived.

**African response to colonial violence**

First, there were passive responses. Many Africans continued to practice their religion, rejecting conversion to new religions. Others practiced *bricolage*, becoming Christians without abandoning indigenous faith. For such people, Islam and Christianity were merely additional schemes by which to explain the human condition. Robin Horton (1993) argues that for these people new religions were merely a catalyst for change that would have come to African societies with time. For them, it was not merely the ability to manipulate symbolic practices, but an intellectual question dealing with how one could be Christian or Muslim and yet remain true to cherished African traditions.

Second, Africans used their religion to fight against colonial violence. The Nyabingi cult, which started in the late nineteenth century in East Africa, was a resistance cult that used medicines to protect itself from European weapons. The colonial authorities defeated them in 1928. Similarly, the Maji Maji movement of Kinjikitile organized resistance against the Germans in East Africa, believing that sacred water would protect them against European bullets. Elsewhere, the Mambo cult in Kenya, Mwari cult in Zimbabwe, and Poro cult in Sierra Leone were all used to fight against colonial power. The Kikuyu established independent schools and churches. Prophetic leaders emerged in different parts of the continent, rejecting colonial society and seeking ways of including African traditions in the search for a new social order.

**Basic ideas about African religions**

Indigenous religious life is locally specific, although different religions share common characteristics in their attempts to deal with the spiritual, social, cultural, and material dimensions of life, and the interaction between humanity and divinity. The components of these religions include mythology, divinity, spirits, rituals, spirit possession, human agency, morality, and a world beyond.

**Mythology and cosmology**

In each community, religious views draw from narratives that we generally call “myths” but, following Paul Ricoeur (1976), may call “primary language.” Myths legitimize authority, space, social organization, a moral universe, and the practices that ensure its continued existence. These charter stories recall the past, engage the present, and shape the future. Myths inform people of the creation of the world and the separation between the abodes of divinity and human beings, assigning responsibility for this separation to human disobedience. For example, Susanne Blier (1987) has recorded myths from the Batammaliba elders, which indicate the Kuiye, the Batammaliba deity, created the world and humanity, and provided everything the first humans needed. However, humanity complained because Kuiye did everything for them and this forced divinity to withdraw into the sky. This resulted in the coming of death, and difficulties, but divinity also provided rain, and the materials and tools needed to survive under their new circumstances. Myths also present the beginning of social conflicts, marriage, the idea of a human family, and ways for humanity to remain in touch with divinity and seek wisdom for difficult decisions. According to Dogon myths, Amma, the supreme deity, created the world beginning with a primordial egg, which was divided into two placentas. Each placenta had a male and female twin. Ogo, the male twin, decided that he was going to create his own world and forced himself out of the egg. What he created was not pure. He later returned to recover his female pair, but she was no longer there. He returned to earth and started to populate it, but with beings who were imperfect because he had created them through incest. The result was chaos. Amma restored creation by killing the female twin and using her
blood to cleanse the chaos created by her twin brother Ogo.

Divinity and spirits

African communities believe in divinity, lesser divinities, and spirits. Divinity created the world, is transcendent, provides for humanity, and knows everything. African gods have been erroneously described as deus otiosus and deus remotus, because it was believed they were removed from the people. African theologians John Mbiti from Kenya, E. Bolaji Idowu from Nigeria, and Gabriel Setiloane of South Africa have been critical of colonial officials and missionaries for belittling the African understanding of god. But they, in turn, have been accused by some scholars of Christianizing African gods or reducing the complexity of African religions to a monotheistic system. Beyond the controversy, the reality of God in African society cannot be denied. God’s name is Olorun or Olodumare for the Yoruba, Inkosi Yezulu (Chief of the Sky) for the Zulu, Chukwu for the Igbo, Amma for the Dogon, and Kwoth for the Nuer.

The lesser divinities and spirits derive their authority from God, and people worship and offer sacrifices to them. African divinities represent, serve, and carry out the will of divinity. In the Dogon religious tradition, some of the spirits give and restore life. The 401 Yoruba divinities are called Orishas; these are people who had lived good lives and were deified on their deaths. The first two Orishas, Obatala and Oduduwa, were sent to earth by God to create people. Other divinities include Shango, the divinity of thunder, who is believed to have been the fourth King of Oyo. Shango is connected with healing and people always keep a pot of water in his sacred area from which people can drink and with which they can wash themselves. Esu is an important divinity because he opens the way. He is also an ambiguous character, rewarding people or punishing those who forget their duty to divinity and to Esu himself. Orunmila is the Orisha of wisdom who provides counsel and divination. He is associated with law, order, and harmony. Ogun is the Orisha of iron and war. There are also female divinities in the Yoruba pantheon, including Oshun, the goddess of living water, who is revered as the great mother. In the town of Oshogbo she is worshiped and petitioned with particular fervor, as it is believed that the town was blessed by her and this has made the townspeople wealthy. The Oshun festival in Oshogbo has become an important cultural as well as religious event for the entire community.

Other spirits include spirits of the dead who may come back to bother people who have ignored their responsibilities to them. People often offer sacrifices to ward off such spirits. Ancestral spirits come back and help people to conduct personal and communal business, and understand and follow moral precepts. Elders often consult them by pouring libations of food and wine. It is also believed that the ancestors and their spirits will punish members of the community who neglect them or forget to offer them a share of food and drink.

Religious authorities

Many indigenous religions have a simple structure in which heads of households provide vital services such as consultation with ancestors. Such a role is filled by many elders in Lugbara society in northern Uganda. Religious specialists include diviners, who serve as consultants and counselors. They help people make decisions in life and also determine the cause of misfortunes through divination. Divination sessions can be elaborate activities during which the diviner, in the case of Yoruba religion for example, uses a special divining tray and other instruments. The diviner, who is called babalawo (literally “father of secrets”), uses a tray and dice to produce a combination of numbers out of a possible 256 that speaks to one’s problem. The resulting combination is then linked to verses, called odù, which can be interpreted to give guidance to a seeker. Other religious specialists include spirit mediums that receive messages and communicate to people.

Priests in African religions have specific functions to perform for the community. Evans-Pritchard (1956) indicates that the Nuer priest is a respected religious authority who has powers to assist people but can also inflict punishment through curses. The priest is expected to be an
honest person, a peacemaker who provides sanctuary for fugitives and negotiates on behalf of criminals. He also assists people in time of sickness, performs rituals, controls rainmaking, and helps people succeed in hunting and in war.

Prophets call on their communities to act justly, speak on behalf of divinity, and inspire religious changes in society. Nuer prophets responded to social and economic dislocations in colonial society by performing rituals aimed at empowering people, healing diseases, and carrying out protests against the colonial government. These prophets sometimes even separated themselves from their communities as a means of empowering themselves in the service of those communities. Some well-known prophets were Ngundeng, a Nuer prophet who fought against British colonialism, and Kinjikitile, who led the Maji Maji revolt in Tanzania.

Sacred spaces

Africans worship God in different spaces, which include shrines that may be located in individual homes, at palaces, or in other specifically designated places. Sacred places may also be by water, or in forests, ancient ancestral settlements or sacred groves, or the burial places of kings as with the sacred shrines of Buganda. The Oshun festival takes place in the courtyard of the Oba and the sacred grove of Oshun. Liturgical life in Africa thus takes place in what Zahan called “elementary cathedrals,” the elements being water, earth, air, and fire. Sacred places associated with water include streams, rivers, lakes, and springs; the ones associated with earth include the ground itself, rocks, crossroads, hollows, hills, and mountains; those associated with air include trees and groves; and those Zahan associates with fire include the hearth where food is prepared, the blacksmith’s forge, and the fires of a volcano.

Rituals

Rituals and ceremonies can be defined as repetitive symbolic action used to communicate and institutionalize community values with the aim of effecting change in the life of the individual or society. Jean Comaroff (1985) demonstrates that rituals continue to reenact the historical and social practices of a community. Life-crisis rituals include birth rituals and development rituals, such as initiation, that are supposed to transform boys and girls into men and women. During these rituals, the adult members of the community pass on to the neophytes those values of importance to the community. Life-cycle rituals include funeral ceremonies to honor the dead. Among the Wimbum of Northwest Province in Cameroon, the funeral ceremonies of a chief last three weeks and there is generally no work in the village during these ceremonies.

Rituals of affliction are performed to rebuff a spirit that has come to afflict someone. Certain spirits often return to afflict those who have ignored them. Such affliction may include illness, failure in business, barrenness, and so on. The afflicted individual gets help from a ritual specialist, who performs healing rituals. It is not always the case, however, that affliction is negative. Sometimes afflictions are a sign that one has been called to become a healer or join a cult; the rituals performed in such as case would be initiation into a healing cult.

Spirit possession

Religious life involves the experience of possession, which affects individuals and members of a cult, and takes place among practitioners of indigenous religions, Christians and Muslims, and is not limited to one gender. Earlier literature suggested that spirit possession among women of the Sar cult in Somalia was a form of protest against their marginalization in society. However, Janice Boddy (1989) argues that possession in the Zar cult in Sudan demonstrates a multi-layered phenomenon and is not limited to life on the periphery. In general, someone who is possessed experiences the presence of a spirit that controls and influences their behavior. Possession can be sudden, and the one who is possessed speaks for the spirit. The relationship of the possessed to the spirit is described as a marriage. Some mediums induce possession by going to a sacred place to smoke the sacred pipe and wait till the spirit possesses them. Illness may also be an indication that someone is
possessed. Possessed people seek treatment from those who have experienced possession themselves. Women who manage the crises of possession are referred to as Zar doctors. Spirit possession can also reflect discontent with the political situation or express nationalist ideologies, as was the case in Zimbabwe during the lead-up to revolution when political activity among the African population was still restricted by the white-minority regime.

It is difficult to map out all of the subtleties of spirit possession, but one important lesson that can be drawn from the phenomenon is that spirit possession offers an opportunity for understanding individuality, relations with the body, and how affected individuals continually reconceptualize the self. Islam and Christianity have not eliminated spirit possession, as the existence of the Nya cult of Mali demonstrates. In some other parts of Africa, adherents to Christianity have tried to adapt aspects of spirit possession into Christianity. In the literature, both men and women may be involved in spirit possession.

Personhood and morality

African religions recognize individual personhood as well as community identity, even though the idea of community has often been advanced at the expense of individuality. Yoruba religious ideas portray the creation of individual persons with distinct destinies. Individuals are also responsible for making sure that they fulfill their destinies or ask divinity to bless them and help them attain their destiny. Morality is not necessarily a set of rules, but rather the living of life in such a way as to fulfill one’s destiny and contribute to the general good of the community. Evil is that which distorts personal relationships and causes social dis-ease. Evildoers can use evil magic and negative occult powers to bring misfortune to others and the community. Diviners help members of the community find out the causes of misfortune and the sacrifices they need to offer to restore healthy relationships and wholeness to the community.

Religion and art

Cameroonian theologian and historian Engelbert Mveng (1964) once described African art as “a cosmic liturgy and religious language.” In affirming these spiritual dimensions in African art, we must insist that first and foremost African art reflects the creative and aesthetic endeavor of individual artists to reflect on their world. Rosalind Hackett (1996) demonstrates that African art focuses on and shapes understanding of humanity, destiny, death, procreation, secrecy, power, divinity, spirits, and healing. Susanne Blier (1987) has argued that art brings together the worldview of people and its use in architecture is very important in human settlements. William Bascom (1993) suggests that there is a close association between African sculpture and religion. Religious ideas were also brought out in votive figures, the design of initiation stools, divination materials, staffs used for various performances, and musical instruments. To that list can be added the masquerade figures of different associations, like the Gelede of the Yoruba or the Kwifon of the Kwifon Society of the northwest province of Cameroon, which claim spiritual as well as political power.

African religion in the post-colonial world

Indigenous religions remain alive in African communities, despite the attacks by people who have converted to other religions and see indigenous religion as a form of “paganism.” Hackett (1996) argues that indigenous religions are being revitalized today precisely because of universalization, modernization, politicization, commercialization, and individualization. Their survival and appeal lies in the fact that they continue to inform and provide the basis for morality, culture, and authority at the local level. Royal authority, coronations, rituals, and community festivals are often linked to these religions. Moreover, healing and local knowledge of medicinal plants remains an important part of health care in many parts of Africa.

Political domination, economic crises, and the decline of the state have posed new questions for many Africans, who argue that the people are suffering because the ways of the ancestors have been ignored in the wake of modernity. There is a desire among some to recover the values that had
yielded to other explanatory schemes. In addition, there are two things that hold out hope for indigenous religions. First, these religious ideas thrive in the African diaspora in a variety of forms of religious expression that scholars call “African-derived religions.” As these religious traditions explore their African roots, they are likely to build new fires and rekindle dying flames back in Africa. Second, the academic study of African religions has developed and matured as a field of inquiry at leading universities in Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Institutional validation has come from the creation of the African Religions Group at the American Academy of Religion (AAR), the International Association of the History of Religions (IAHR) and regional associations for the study of religion in Africa. African religions have survived being disparaged by travelers, missionaries, and colonial anthropologists to become a critical discipline. While such study is not an evangelical activity, the respectability African religions are beginning to enjoy will certainly contribute to the growth of those religions.

Modernity, colonialism, post-colonialism, and postmodernism have radically altered certain religious practices. However, the magic and occult powers generally called “witchcraft” or “sorcery” continue to offer rival explanations and means of control of social reality. Although colonial authorities, the Christian tradition, and even leaders of indigenous religions have attacked occult practices, they remain an important part of the worldview of many people in Africa today. Scholars have begun to recognise the fluidity and complexity of this system of knowledge; others appreciate this, but raise ethical questions about its discourse and alleged practices, calling for the development of an ethical perspective that will enable people to deal with indigenous religions in more productive ways than excommunicating or executing people who are suspected of misusing occult power. The indigenous religious authorities who have to deal with such issues are faced with a difficulty, not least because these powers have now invaded the state and authority structures of many African countries.

See also: Christianity; Christian reform movements; Islam; Islamic reform movements

References and further reading


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Agrarian change

Agrarian change is a social and historical concept based on the changing relations between land, labor, markets, states, and ideologies in the process of agricultural production. These attributes take particular forms and appear in distinct combinations in various places at different times, giving rise to different agrarian structures and agrarian systems of production.

Agrarian change also connotes a number of distinct elements. First, it contains notions of systemic change, from one type of agrarian production to the other – for example, from subsistence to export production or from peasant to capitalist production. This may sometimes involve a change in the scale of operation. A systemic change at this level will affect the agrarian structure, changing the relative mix of small, medium and large farms within agriculture. Second, there may be changes in the agricultural produce, as in the shift from groundnuts to cereals in some parts of the Sahel in the 1970s. Third, there may be changes in the organization of the production process itself. Land is crucial to agriculture, and access to it is determined by social, ideological, and political factors. Land is necessary, but not sufficient, for agricultural production. People must use their tools to work the land. Access to, and command over, labor is therefore equally central to any system of agricultural production. Labor may be recruited through a variety of means, and the relative importance of the control of land, labor, and capital may change over time, giving rise to changes in labor regimes which then have systemic consequences. Different types of tenancy may ebb and flow, while the work and social conditions, and the political outlook, of different classes in the production process may change. Fourth, agrarian change may be driven by changes in the technologies and techniques of production. An example is the introduction of irrigation projects in many parts of Africa. Fifth, change may be driven by changing market conditions which may be tied to improved access, the emergence of new demands or the disappearance of previous markets. Sixth, changes may be driven by demographic and environmental pressures. Finally, change is often dictated by the colonial, settler, and post-colonial states; by their actions and inaction, their ambitions and prejudices. Access to land, to labor, and to markets depend on the actions of political authorities. States not only seek to control access to land, they also authorize, regulate, enforce, and tolerate the rights of husbands, fathers, employers, chiefs, and the state itself over the labor of others. They also define the rights of workers and their organizations. Landowners have often found it impossible to recruit, direct, and maintain a labor force through wage payments alone. They have used their access to national governments, and commonly their control over local government, to secure various measures to restrict the mobility of labor and to deny farm workers access to better jobs or to independent incomes. It is the totality of these structural, sociopolitical, and historical processes which amounts to agrarian change in any particular society. It is neither unilinear nor irreversible, but its effects are often long-lasting.

Agrarian change in twentieth-century Africa was a long and complex process. A key theme in this process is the role of the colonial state. In Africa, the colonial states facilitated the expansion of commodity production. They subjugated other political authorities – African, Arab, and Afrikaner – and brought economic transactions under the jurisdiction of the colonial courts and administration. They established common currencies, and invested in railways and, belatedly, roads. They defined the territorial boundaries within which, and the transport routes along which, trade would expand. They also secured supplies of labor for themselves, for settler farmers, and for mining companies, appropriated and allocated land, and defined people’s different rights to land. Colonial governments not only promoted and constrained economic activities, but also directed their benefits to favored groups – indigenous, settler, and metropolitan. Pre-colonial Africa was characterized by a great variety of forms of political
organization, agricultural production, allocation of livestock, religious practices, access to land, kinship, and inheritance systems. Rulers and other officeholders claimed a variety of payments in recognition of their authority and of the services they rendered. Colonial rule and the expansion of commerce and of capitalist production did not eliminate diversities, but it did lead to a restructuring and, in important respects, a certain homogenization of social arrangements. Where precolonial forms of political authority or land tenure were retained, they acquired new substance under changed circumstances.

A second theme in the process of agrarian change is the commercialization of agriculture which, even early in the century, undermined the all-embracing myth of subsistence production. This commercialization of not only the products of agriculture but also of land, labor, and the implements of agriculture intensified as the century wore on. A third theme is the intensified integration into the capitalist world economy leading, in many instances, to monocrop economies that can be characterized as “dessert and beverage economies.” A fourth theme is developmentalism and its modernist pretensions. At the start of the twentieth century, colonial societies appeared to offer great opportunities for social engineering. Various colonial proconsuls sought to remake African societies in accordance with their own peculiar visions. Colonial “development” had an explicitly moral dimension. It would extend the benefits of “civilization” to Africa by promoting commerce, agriculture, and, with reservations, wage labor and Christianity. At the same time, the colonial state would protect the native “community” and the soil from the disruption attendant on the spread of commercial relations. Thus the colonial state gave rise to developmentalism and the emphasis on soil conservation, “betterment” planning, large irrigation schemes. More recently it has also given rise to the post-colonial state’s emphasis on the green revolution and biotechnology.

A fifth theme, particularly in the final decades of the twentieth century, is the share of non-farm incomes in the total income of African farmers. Rural households usually combine farming with other ways of earning incomes, both craft production and, especially in the twentieth century, wage employment. Farm and non-farm, wage and non-wage incomes complement one another; most rural households increasingly depend on both to meet their needs and obligations. The twentieth century saw the increasing importance of the non-farm sector and Deborah Bryceson’s theory of “de-agrarianization” (Bryceson and Jamal 1997) even suggests that non-farm incomes may have become dominant. Finally, diversity is an important theme of agrarian change in Africa. The colonial period saw the development of peasant and proletarian households, as well as many households that combined both statuses. The expansion of commodity production took different forms in different colonies, and within each colony. State policies varied in response both to different combinations of class interests and to states’ own needs to secure the revenues to fund their activities. Hancock (1942) distinguished between the “trader’s frontier” and the “setter’s frontier” in Africa. In the former, colonial governments promoted peasant agriculture; colonial companies sought to profit from, and colonial governments to tax, trade in peasant produce. In the latter the requirements of settler farmers and mining companies for labor took precedence. In the “setter’s frontier” of South Africa, for example, the “alliance” of gold and maize led to the development of an elaborate and extensive labor migrancy system, while in the “trader’s frontier” of Nigeria, continued African control of land and the dominance of agriculture by peasant smallholders led to a peasant-based trajectory; the expansion of agricultural production has not always required, or followed from, the concentration of holdings into large-scale enterprises. This distinction can, however, be too heavily drawn. Several colonies accommodated both settler farmers and African peasant producers in an uneasy relationship. Colonial ideologies and policies concerning rural societies often transgressed territorial boundaries; they were freely imported into African colonies from other parts of Africa, from India, and from the metropolitan worlds of Britain and the United States. The diversity of processes and outcomes, for both the colonial and post-colonial periods, is best illustrated on a country-by-country basis. In the second part
of this article, we explore the divergent trajectories of some of Africa’s largest countries and economies: South Africa, Egypt, and Nigeria.

Agrarian change in South Africa, Egypt, and Nigeria

In South Africa, capitalism came to predominate in agricultural production, as in mining and manufacturing. White settlers appropriated most of the country’s land. They used the military, administrative, and fiscal powers of the state to establish, subsidize, and sustain variants of capitalist agriculture, employing black farm workers and, in the later decades of the twentieth century, adopting advanced mechanical and chemical technologies. Mining wealth provided the revenues that allowed the state to subsidize the costs of capitalist farming in the twentieth century. Commodity production by African peasant farmers was marginalized. Capitalist agriculture in South Africa had its origins in many forms of recruitment and control of labor, including initially slave and indentured labor, and later tenant, forced, migrant, and wage labor. Restrictions on access to land and obligations on all adult males to pay taxes were used to get Africans to work for wages. Workers’ freedom was constrained by passes and by vagrancy laws to restrict their mobility. Production was expanded to meet South African, African, and overseas markets. For maize, wheat, wine, sugar, milk, and vegetables – indeed most crops other than wool and some fruits – the most important markets were the mines and the expanding towns and cities of South Africa itself. White farmers were served by railway branch lines and low tariffs on crops, and by the Land Bank. Poorer farmers sought state intervention to secure their access to cheap land, cheap credit, cheap labor, and high prices. Agricultural marketing was dominated by state, cooperative, and corporate interests.

Rural blacks engaged in a long and bitter struggle to maintain their control of land, and some form of access to land where whites had excluded them from it, and to recover, retain, and build up their herds of cattle. Indigenous peoples sought to defend their polities from white conquest. Some migrated beyond the frontiers of white settlement. Others migrated to work in the mines and towns, initially to acquire money to buy guns or cattle, and later to secure their own subsistence needs and to contribute to the needs of their families and to the costs of farming in the reserves. Before 1913 some purchased land and others became squatters on white-owned land. Urbanization created opportunities for Africans with access to land and to markets to increase the production of maize, sorghum, wheat, wool, and meat for sale. Peasant commodity production developed particularly in areas where black farmers acquired title to their land, or on mission lands. Production also rose in the native reserves and black tenants extended peasant commodity production on to the land designated for white farming.

Black farmers competed with whites for the use of land, for labor, and in the markets for commodities. White farmers in turn competed for labor with mineowners and with commercial and industrial firms. “Native” policy, that is labor policy, was the outcome of a series of uneasy and unstable compromises between mining, agrarian, commercial, and industrial interests. Africans were to be confined to the native reserves, which provided a reservoir of migrant labor. Whereas mineowners looked to the reserves, and to neighboring territories, to supply their labor, farmers were generally more concerned to restrict blacks’ access to land and the ability of black farm laborers to seek work elsewhere. Africans were neither to own nor to rent land in white areas. These principles were embodied in numerous laws, notably the Native Land Act of 1913, which reserved 7 percent of the country’s land area as “native reserves,” and the Natives’ Trust and Land Act of 1936, which increased the land to be available to Africans to 13.6 percent. The acts laid the legal foundations, combined with successive pass laws, for the separation of the supplies of labor for mining, agriculture and manufacturing, though without bringing an end to competition for labor and the political battles this brought about. Implementation of these laws would be a slow process, extending over many decades. Similarly, many of the consequences for agricultural producers in the reserves of these and other acts only became fully manifest over subsequent decades.
Farmers in the native reserves were increasingly constrained by insufficient land for cultivation and grazing, poor access to transport and markets, and the loss of males to migrant labor. Government sought to protect the soil and to raise agricultural productivity by “betterment” planning, by which land would be allocated to woodland, arable, grazing, and residential areas, and people relocated into concentrated villages. But “betterment” disrupted people’s lives and reduced the land available to them for farming. It was used as part of a strategy of resettling even more people into the Bantustans (African reservations). It became a source and focus of local resistance to the chiefs through whom it was imposed. While peasant producers had been able to increase agricultural production and maintain livestock numbers in at least some of the native reserves during the first half of the century, over the last three decades of the twentieth century stagnating or even declining production was accompanied by rapidly increasing population and the massive movement of people into the impoverished Bantustans.

From the 1960s, the state carried out a concerted and continuing assault against African freehold rights, renting of land, and labor tenancy on white farms; this was a significant part of the massive relocation of black people in accordance with the plans of the apartheid state. Labor tenancy was formally abolished in 1980, though some farmers continued to employ people under tenancy agreements. The prohibition of tenancy ended in 1985. The prosperity of white farms depended on state pricing and support policies, and was vulnerable to an ever-rising weight of debts. In the 1980s capitalist farmers were squeezed between rising interest rates and costs of inputs and stagnant prices for their produce. The number of white farmers declined: in 1950 there were 117,000 farms, in 1980 there were about 69,000 farms and fewer farmers – some 59,000 in 1985, of whom 17,700 produced three-quarters the total gross farm income. The contribution of agriculture to South Africa’s export earnings also declined sharply from the 1960s. In 1991 the legal reservation of land to whites was finally ended.

Agrarian change in South Africa appears as a story of the development of capitalist white farming and the elimination or marginalization of peasant African farming. When they were not left destitute, rural Africans were steadily transformed into proletarians, working for wages on farms, mines, and in towns. By the end of the century, peasant production appeared to have a past, but neither much of a present nor any sort of future. With the end of apartheid in 1994, land reform and land restitution were put on the political agenda, but this market-driven process has yet to deliver substantial changes.

The history of agrarian change in Egypt took a different trajectory. Boasting one of the oldest agricultural systems in the world, Egyptian agriculture underwent important changes from the nineteenth century, as the country embarked on modernization. New crops and irrigation systems were introduced, all of which transformed cultivation practices and land-ownership patterns. In the nineteenth century, Mohammed Ali and his successors built canals and dams that facilitated perennial irrigation, and they encouraged the cultivation of long-staple cotton for export as a way of earning foreign exchange. Over time, such policies led to the development of a land-owning rural oligarchy and an impoverished peasantry. Since time immemorial, Egypt depended on the waters of the Nile, so efficient water management was crucial. During the twentieth century more dams were built, culminating in the giant Aswan Dam built after the 1952 revolution. Improvements in the water and irrigation systems made it possible to expand the land under cultivation and increase the number of crops grown. For example, while one annual crop was grown after the Nile floods at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by the 1970s up to six different crops could be grown. But agricultural intensification required changes in fertilization, since it engendered declining soil fertility and mud from the Nile floods was no longer available as a result of the improvements in water distribution. Because of costs it took many decades for peasants to adopt the use of mineral fertilizer widely. Instead, they began to rely on dung from livestock, so that the close link between agriculture and livestock production, forged in the nineteenth century with the spread of saqqiyas for agrarian change agrarian change
irrigation which required animals to operate, became even closer. The growing importance of livestock among peasants has also been associated with the spread of Alexandrian clover (*bersim*) production, and livestock’s growing food and economic value. By the end of the century *bersim* production had eclipsed cotton, wheat, and even maize, which had become the main peasant staple earlier in the century.

If water availability and management set the physical parameters of agricultural production, peasant indebtedness and state policy set the social contexts. The debt problem became so severe that in 1913 the government passed a law forbidding the expropriation of peasants’ land for debt non-payment. Under the law peasants could also not access agricultural credit without collateral, which did little to improve their conditions. The rural agrarian crisis deepened as population growth accelerated, and as extended family units gradually dissolved and land was subdivided into ever smaller individual family parcels. During the first half of the twentieth century the differentiation and inequities between the big landowners and the peasants became ever wider and more evident as a source of political conflict, despite the attainment of independence in 1922. The 1952 revolution sought to change that. In effect, however, it continued the long tradition of state intervention in agriculture. Nasser’s radical government enacted a series of land-reform laws that broke the power of the landowning oligarchy. These reforms fixed maximum sizes for holdings of land, thus allowing the state to confiscate large estates. The rents paid by peasants were capped and evictions were made more difficult. Compulsory state cooperatives were set up. But the reforms were not targeted at all landowners, rather they mostly affected those associated with the previous regime. In any case, large estates constituted only 13 percent of the arable land, so that expropriation was not, in itself, a solution to the country’s deepening land crisis. Indeed, whether intended or not, such measures and the state’s subsequent interventions in the agrarian sector tended to benefit not tenant farmers but the so-called “rich peasantry” or “rural middle class” who were subsequently described as a key constituency of the post-1952 political order.

The reforms produced little food security. In fact, Egypt’s dependence on food imports actually grew to one of the highest levels in the world, by 1980 it had risen to 70 percent of local consumption for wheat alone. Despite various efforts to liberalize the agrarian sector through the early 1990s, it remained heavily regulated, with peasant cultivators frequently required to grow cotton which was purchased by the state at below-market rates. Not surprisingly, this led to large-scale evasion of cropping requirements by the peasantry, resulting in some easing of state controls. In 1992 the state enacted a land-reform law that was aimed at reversing many of the protections given to peasants in the 1950s, and allowing landowners both to evict their tenants and to substantially increase rents. The impact of this law, implementation of which was delayed until 1997, is debatable. One the one hand, some observers see it as a further indication of the market-driven transformation of post-*infitah* Egyptian society and the abandonment of the “socialism” of the Nasser era. On the other hand, it is not entirely clear to what extent the law actually came into force. Rural violence in the lead-up to its implementation, and the involvement of radical urban activists on behalf of the peasantry, seems to have led the state to refrain from sanctioning any large-scale dispossession of peasant cultivators.

Of all the British colonies in Africa, Nigeria most clearly exemplified Hancock’s “trader’s frontier.” Few plantations were set up, and they had little success. Nigerian agriculture thus remained more exclusively in peasant hands. The building of railways by the colonial government created conditions for the expansion of commercial production of bulky arable and tree crops, and of the trade in livestock. By the end of the colonial period, Nigeria was the world’s largest exporter of palm produce, groundnuts, and, after Ghana, of cocoa. Nigeria also exported quantities of cotton, rubber, shea nut, and sesame seed. An oligopoly of foreign merchant companies dominated imports and exports. African and Levantine traders distributed and bulked these commodities to and from numerous local markets. The twentieth century also saw a sustained expansion of agricultural production for the Nigerian market, and the
development of a complex and extensive network of trade in grains, roots, pulses, livestock, kola nut, and other crops, conducted by African traders. In Nigeria peasants demonstrated their ability to produce exports and secured the government’s revenue base. The colonial government therefore resisted demands from some British businesses that they provide land, labor, and trading monopolies for plantations in southern Nigeria. The government itself assumed ownership of land in the north, and vested control of land in the chiefs to protect peasant land from alienation. In practice, Nigerians bought and sold land, though in most rural areas the availability of farmland kept prices relatively low. In southern Nigeria, “native strangers” gained access to land and crops through rent- and share-tenancy agreements.

Southern cocoa and palm produce generated more exports and revenues than northern groundnuts, cotton, and beniseed. Official policy was generally cautious about interfering with existing farming practices. Attempts were made in northern Nigeria to develop irrigation and to introduce ox-ploughing and manuring. Some communities from areas infected by tsetse fly, and others from densely populated districts, were resettled in villages. None of these policies made much impact on production. In the 1940s cocoa farmers opposed the compulsory cutting out of trees infected by swollen shoot. Office-holders and merchants used various institutions to try to secure labor from their subjects, clients or debtors, and to obtain irrigated land and contracts from the state. But they lacked the control of land necessary to subordinate producers to wage labor on their own terms. Throughout Nigeria, peasant households emerged as the predominant form of rural producers. In many communities, the management of different crops was divided between men and women. Among both Yoruba and Hausa farmers, men managed crop production and claimed the labor of their sons and of their wives. Economic opportunities outside the household enabled sons to contest these demands and to modify their terms and gave rise to conflicts, often covert, over men’s capacity to command their wives’ labor-time. Seasonal migrant workers were recruited from diverse areas to harvest crops. Nevertheless, family labor predominated and most wage labor was recruited from local farming families. In the absence of a landless class in the rural areas, agricultural wages remained relatively high.

The colonial government tried to regulate cotton markets and promoted cooperative marketing of cocoa. During the Second World War, the state took over the export and pricing, first of cocoa and then of palm produce, groundnuts, and cotton, using the merchant firms as its agents. After the war, the state marketing boards justified their licensing of produce traders by the need to regulate competition and thereby protect the producers from exploitation by “middlemen.” From the Second World War until 1986, the state marketing boards used their monopoly over exports to impose very heavy taxation on rural producers. However, agricultural exports only began to decline sharply (in the cases of groundnuts and palm nuts to zero) after the Nigerian civil war and the rise of mineral oil exports. Imports of wheat, rice, maize, meat, milk, day-old chicks, and even vegetable oils then rose precipitately, accentuated by the overvaluation of the naira. The experience of the 1972–4 Sahel drought combined with the rise in food imports to justify enormous investments in gravity irrigation projects to produce wheat and rice in northern Nigeria. Increased demand for food encouraged farmers, particularly in the northern states, to shift production to, and expand production of, grain for urban and for rural markets in Nigeria and Niger. In 1986 the marketing boards were abolished, the naira was devalued, and the import of a wide range of agricultural commodities banned. This raised the prices of export and locally consumed crops. Rising producer prices encouraged an expansion of cocoa and cotton production, though not to the levels of 1970. Government initially welcomed rising food exports, but banned them when prices rose sharply after a poor harvest in 1987, thus raising the costs of cross-border food trade. Devaluation, combined with the ban of wheat imports, sharply increased the price of wheat bread, encouraged the illegal import of wheat flour, and justified massive subsidies for wheat production, now under tubewell irrigation.

State “modernization” of peasant agriculture is a recurring theme in agrarian change in Nigeria.
From the 1950s, Nigerian governments initiated various projects, some funded by international agencies, to modernize peasant agriculture and to promote large-scale farming, capitalist and state-run. They financed settlement schemes, established plantations for cultivated oil palms, rubber, and sugar, and set up state farms and ranches. Governments also subsidized and distributed credit, fertilizers, and tractors, promoted high-yielding cocoa trees and yellow maize, as well as spending enormous sums on grandiose irrigation projects. The 1979 Land Use Decree gave governments the capacity to control the disposition of land, but they faced political limits to their capacity to appropriate land for irrigation schemes, ranches and large-scale farming schemes. Governments’ efforts to promote agricultural production were marked by an ignorance of the conditions under which peasants cultivated and of the demand for their crops, and by high costs and poor, generally negative, net returns. Irrigation project managers failed to make farmers conform with their choice of crops. The major contribution of governments in Nigeria to increasing agricultural production was in building and maintaining roads. The Nigerian state subsidized the entry of urban-based capitalist farmers into potentially lucrative but import-dependent niches. After the adoption of structural adjustment in 1986, the state gradually withdrew from involvement in agricultural production, leading to the collapse of many parastatals and state farms.

See also: capitalism and capitalists; economy: colonial; economy: post-independence; pastoralism; peasants; plantation agriculture; structural adjustment programs

References and further reading


ABDUL RAUFU MUSTAPHA
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alcohol and drugs

Alcohol has played a lengthy role in the history of Africa as a ritual artifact, an economic good, and a social marker. Indigenous beers were brewed from sorghum and millet in West Africa (dolo or pito) and in South Africa (utshwala), and banana beer was made in East Africa. Palm wine from the oil and raffia palms was an important ritual and social drink in West Africa, similar to the use of coconut wine in East Africa. The entry of European liquor dates from the opening of Atlantic trade from the fifteenth century, and reinforced the pre-existing ritual and social uses of alcohol. Significantly, European distilled liquor had a long shelf life, and this quality enhanced its value as an economic commodity, even facilitating the use of cases of European gin as currency in southern Nigeria in the nineteenth century. The introduction of Islam to North Africa from the seventh century AD, and its spread to the Western Sudan and the East African coast, lessened the importance of alcohol in these areas because of the Islamic prohibition of alcohol, although consumption of drugs such as khat persisted. In fact Muslims in northern Nigeria apparently use drugs much more than southern Nigerians.

Indigenous drugs also existed and cannabis appears to have grown wild in Ethiopia and Southern Africa for centuries. It was also incorporated into ritual, aiding monastic contemplation in Ethiopia, and healing therapy in Zimbabwe. The
use of foreign hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin has been on the increase since the mid-1980s as a spillover effect of the utilization of West, East, and Southern Africa as transit points in the smuggling of heroin and cocaine to the European and North American markets. Today, while distilleries and breweries form an important component of formal industrialization projects in Africa, the clandestine market for and trafficking in hard drugs have become a crucial aspect of informal economies. Henry Bernstein (1998) describes the trafficking in marijuana, cocaine, and heroin as among the most dynamic and valuable of Africa’s “non-traditional” exports and re-exports.

Pre-colonial Africa

In many pre-colonial societies, liquor played an important role in many aspects of life, from spirit possession, festivals, court protocol and judicial processes to rites of passage. Among the Akan of Ghana, the powerful sought to monopolize the ritual and social use of alcohol, and chiefs and elders systematically denied young men and women access to it. Alcohol marked social hierarchy and lubricated social relations, with young men and women involved in the production of alcoholic drinks, but not in the consumption of them. Drink, wealth, and power were intimately connected, and the advent of European liquor fed into this earlier demand and use. The ritual and social uses of alcohol provide an important entry into the religion, philosophy, and culture of several African societies. For the Kofyar of Nigeria, the beer-brewing cycle even determined the structure of the week, and the meaning and importance of beer were central to the Iteso of Uganda and Kenya.

An important irony in the social history of alcohol in Africa was that this most valuable fluid was one of the cheapest products manufactured in Europe. While African chiefs and elders sought to restrict access to alcohol, it was in the financial interest of European merchants to maximize their sales of liquor. And for commoners who sought to subvert the control of the traditional establishment, European liquor was an important symbol of protest and self-assertion. Indigenous temperance movements emerged in a bid to codify the elder's temperate and regulated use of alcohol. Chiefs and European missionaries would form an important alliance in their struggle against liquor use by commoners.

Indigenous drugs such as cannabis, khat, and iboga were in use in pre-colonial Africa in Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, and Cameroon. But the absence of studies prevents a thorough examination of the use of these substances in the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Indeed, even in independent Africa, material on drug use remains scarce, with seizure statistics representing one of the key sources of evidence. The social use of khat in the Horn of Africa and East Africa is not of recent origin, and the use of the iboga plant by Mbwiti healing cults in Cameroon and Gabon certainly dates from before the colonial period. In the Binga area of Zimbabwe, consumption of cannabis has been described as traditional.

Colonial Africa

Financial self-sufficiency was a prime concern of all colonial governments. The demand for liquor, especially in West Africa with its long immersion in Atlantic trade, provided European governments with a tax base. Liquor policy and liquor revenues came to constitute major pillars in colonial rule. The absence of large groups of white settlers in West Africa minimized concerns about drink, social disorder, and the threat to colonial rule. Between 1892 and 1903 import duties on liquor provided over 55 percent of the total revenue of the colony of Lagos and 38 percent of the Gold Coast’s revenue. Colonial concerns were different in East and Southern Africa, with their settler communities, and liquor legislation was only relaxed as colonial control became firmly established.

Threats to colonial dependence on liquor revenues were often external. European missionaries were disappointed that the rhetoric about ending the slave, gun, and liquor trade to Africa had proved empty when it came to liquor traffic. They agitated for temperance and prohibition in colonies such as the Gold Coast and southern Nigeria. International conventions on liquor were another important check on colonial liquor policy.
The Brussels Convention of 1890 banned European liquor across a wide belt of the African interior between latitudes 20° North and 22° South. The predominantly Muslim communities of northern Nigeria and the northern territories of the Gold Coast fell under this proscription. The St. Germain-en-Laye (France) conference of September 1919 banned “trade spirits” from the African market, defined as spirits manufactured specifically for trade to Africans and not normally consumed by Europeans. But the concession that each colonial government could define what was meant by “trade spirits” enabled many to circumvent the purpose of the convention.

However, it was internal pressure that led to the revision of colonial liquor policy in British West Africa from the late 1920s. The emergence of a popular culture revolving around European-style drinking bars, dance bands, popular music (like highlife), and comic opera (“concert”) – and massively patronized by young men and women in towns and peri-urban villages – gave chiefs and the educated African elite cause for concern. The imposition of huge tariffs on imported liquor, and the plan to gradually ban the importation of Dutch geneva or gin into the Gold Coast, coincided with the economic depression of the 1930s. Colonial liquor revenues plummeted with the drop in liquor imports, and frustrated commoners switched to the patronage of illicitly distilled gin (akpeteshie). Colonial governments were forced to reduce duties on imported liquor to make them more competitive, though this was without much success. As nationalist forces gathered strength after the Second World War, akpeteshie entered the nationalist agenda, and politicians promised the legalization of this distinctly African drink on the assumption of independence. The situation was not very different in Southern Africa, where the denial of European liquor to Africans in Zambia and Zimbabwe made its acquisition a major demand for educated Africans as a sign of political parity. Thus the traditional symbolism of alcohol and its ties to power came to inform the nationalist struggle and discourse.

Independent Africa

The importance of the alcohol industry to government revenue has persisted into the post-colonial era, with breweries and distilleries playing a central role in industrialization and economic development. Indeed, with limited markets for manufactured goods, the alcohol industry was often the only profitable industry in the early years of independence. This continued the political, social, and economic importance of alcohol.

From the 1940s the use of cannabis extended to West Africa, and returning servicemen from Asia are credited with its introduction. The common use of the terms “Indian hemp” and bhanga (of Hindi derivation) are cited as evidence of this Asian provenance. Initially used by servicemen, and certain occupational groups associated with arduous and dangerous work, cannabis use fed into a class- and counter-culture that rationalized what were criminal activities.

Further continuities are suggested in the ties between cocoa farmers and akpeteshie distillation in the colonial period, and cocoa farmers and cannabis cultivation in the independent era. The intercropping of cocoa and oil palm made the distillation of akpeteshie from oil palm an important provider of cash in the period before the cocoa trees began to bear fruit. Since cocoa grows in deep forest areas, it was easy to conceal illicit distillation from the authorities. Likewise, high-quality cannabis grows in deep forests, again providing cash for cocoa farmers in the period between harvests. With the decline in the world market price for cocoa after 1958, cocoa farmers may have been encouraged to diversify into cannabis cultivation, especially as the market expanded to incorporate students, musicians, and others engaged in the elaboration of youth culture. A 2001 police report indicates that many farmers in the region now find the cultivation of Indian hemp or marijuana more lucrative than maize. Another report makes a similar observation for the cocoa- and coffee-growing areas of Cameroon.

Economic decline in Africa in the 1970s, together with increasing demand, may have reinforced the cultivation of cannabis as a cash crop. In Ethiopia and Kenya, khat cultivation is a legal enterprise with considerable economic benefits. Southern and western Africa now account for the bulk of Africa’s supply of cannabis with South
Africa, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Ghana being the major sites of production. Reports by the United Nations Drug Control Program, though admittedly not comprehensive, provide increasing evidence about drug production, trafficking, and consumption in Africa. According to its 1996 report, African countries are responsible for a quarter of herbal cannabis and a tenth of cannabis resin seized worldwide.

Cannabis production, distribution, and consumption provided pathways for the incorporation of cocaine and heroin from the 1980s. The tightening of controls at European and North American airports encouraged heroin traffickers from Thailand and cocaine traffickers from Brazil and other Latin American countries to use Africa as a staging point in their activities, and Africans as couriers or “mules.” For Africans involved, the financial rewards were highly enticing, irrespective of the risks. Today Africans are serving lengthy prison terms in Thailand, Europe, and North America. There is also growing evidence that consumption of heroin and cocaine in Africa is on the rise. Initially pioneered by “jet-setters” and those who had lived abroad, dealers who sell small quantities of cannabis in Ghanaian cities are also dealing in heroin and cocaine, indicating that cocaine (especially crack cocaine) and heroin are ceasing to be high-end drugs. Similar to cannabis use, cocaine and heroin are smoked instead of injected, and the injection of hard drugs is viewed by many as a habit not indulged in by Africans. The use of these hard drugs among street children in urban Ghana has been reported. A Ghanaian newspaper has warned that young people in general are switching from cannabis to cocaine and heroin. Further specific research will flesh out these sketched outlines, but it suffices to conclude – in line with the 1999 UN report on the drug nexus in Africa – that a drug crisis may lie in Africa’s future if strong measures to deter current trends are not implemented.

See also: leisure; youth

References and further reading


EMMANUEL AKYEAMPONG

Alexandria, Egypt

Alexandria, Egypt is the major port and second largest city in Egypt. It is home to 40 percent of the country’s industry, with a population of four million that increases to six million in the summer because of tourism. The city stretches over seventy kilometers along the coast, with urban areas extending over 100 square kilometers. During the first half of the twentieth century, Alexandria’s socioeconomic situation enabled it to develop into an international metropolis that attracted people from various parts of the world. While Europe was suffering from economic depression, Alexandria bustled with business activity and was thus able to reduce taxes. At the same time, foreigners were made welcome, and tolerance of different cultures and beliefs was prevalent. Foreigners were allowed to own businesses, trade in the bourse, and were exempt from Egyptian law.

The result was continuous waves of European and Middle Eastern immigrants, some attracted by economic prosperity and some fleeing persecution or political unrest in their home countries. In 1917 the number of foreigners was 70,000 out of a population of 435,000, and by 1927 it reached 99,605. These numbers sky-rocketed in the wake of the Second World War, when thousands of Jews emigrated to Alexandria where the Jewish community was considered the world’s most organized...
and the most prosperous. By 1952 a quarter of the population was Greek and, according to some estimates, only 30 percent of the residents were Egyptian.

The presence of such diversity encouraged the development of the cultural and intellectual life of the city, which Lawrence Durrell (author of *The Alexandria Quartet*) called “a melting pot.” Among these foreigners were E.M. Forster, who moved to Alexandria where East and West meet, to write *A Passage to India*, and the Greek poet C.P. Cavafy. Other foreigners helped establish the cinema industry in Egypt, such as the Greek-born Omar Sharif and the Hungarian Stephan Rosti. Middle Eastern royalty and other members of the elite were attracted by the high standards of education provided at Alexandrian schools such as St. Mark’s College and Victory College, which Jordan’s late King Hussein attended.

Readers of Forster’s guide to Alexandria or Lawrence’s novels would be surprised to see it today. The end of the Second World War was the beginning of a series of dramatic socioeconomic changes. In 1947 the Egyptian government mandated that 90 percent of all workers and more than 50 percent of joint stock holders be Egyptians. The result was the lay-off of 60,000 foreign workers. The 1956 Suez War, in which Israel attacked Egypt with the backing of Britain and France, resulted in the expulsion of all British and French residents. The 1967 war precipitated the migration of Jews to Israel, resulting in the shrinking of the Jewish population of Alexandria from 14,860 in 1947 to less than 200 by the early 1980s.

These changes encouraged the migration to Alexandria of thousands from the rural lower classes, who within a couple of decades developed into an educated middle class. The 1970s brought an economic boom, with the shift from socialism to a capitalist free-market policy of unrestricted imports and exports. Soon Alexandria regained its popularity as a business center and beautiful summer resort, and its size doubled from the 1950s. International intellectual interest in the city has also been growing since the early 1980s with the establishment of Sangour University and an international francophone university, the discovery of parts of the ancient lighthouse, and the building of the Alexandria Library, second only to the US Library of Congress.

**Further reading**


MUSTAFA A. MUGHAZY

**Algeria**

Algeria is located in northern Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Western Sahara, and has a total area of 2,381,741 square kilometers. Its population was estimated at 31.2 million in 2000, constituted primarily of Arabs and Amazighs. Algeria’s name originates in the Arabic word *al-Djazair*, a plural noun for “island.” The country was a colony of France from 1830 until 1962.

In order to understand the nature of the French colonial regime in Algeria, it is necessary to look at colonial laws, especially the *senatus-consultes* of 1863 and 1865, and their underlying ideological function. The 1863 *senatus-consulte* expropriated the land of the colonized on a massive scale and paved the way for colonial settlements. The Warnier Laws of 1873 “Frenchified” what remained of the land of the *fellahs* by handing it over to unscrupulous speculators. Settlers then established an economy that satisfied the needs of mainland France, transplanting vineyards and citrus groves onto lands that used to produce grain. The 1865 *senatus-consulte* stipulated that Arabs and Amazighs were French subjects; it allowed them to apply for French citizenship, with the proviso that they follow the French code and renounce their “personal status,” namely their Muslim identity. In reality, the offer of citizenship amounted to nothing: the Muslims would not relinquish their cultural identity; moreover, the applications for citizenship met with an unfriendly reception from the colonial administrators. Thus the 1865 *senatus-
consulte created a fracture at the core of the concept of French citizenship: it subjected the colonized to French laws, but denied them most of the civil rights pertaining to political citizenship. The senatus-consultes of 1863 and 1865 therefore worked in tandem to expropriate the colonized and deny them subject status. Subsequently the Jonnart Laws, passed in 1919, aimed to enfranchise the elite, but did nothing for the predominantly uneducated mass of colonized people. Furthermore, these reforms were couched in terms of segregation: the Jonnart Laws grouped the enfranchised elite in a separate electoral college that offered no rights to parliamentary representation. This very restricted program of reform baffled supporters of integration but, from the outset, settlers reacted against them. In May 1920 the Congress of Algerian Mayors urged the French government to return to its former policy of securing the interests and colonial future of the settlers. The government was not only compelled to respond with a law, passed August 1920, that repelled the Jonnart Laws, but also had to reinstate the previous code algérien de l’indigénat. This established an apartheid regime that was in complete contradiction with the practices of French civil institutions and common law which had been introduced into Kabylia after the Mokrani Rebellion in 1874 and extended to the rest of the country by further legislation in 1881.

From 1920 to 1945 political relations in Algeria took the shape of a pyramid, with the colonial administration at the top and three opposing political tendencies at the bottom: Jeunes Algériens, the Ulemas and the Parti Populaire Algérien (PPA). Jeunes Algériens (or the “lay” reformists) were in favor of assimilation. The Ulemas’ “religious” reformism advocated a return to those very traditions that the colonizers had tried to obliterate. The PPA was radical in its political demands, having emerged from the Etoile Nord-Africaine – a shadow organization to the French Communist Party. In 1934 the French socialists and communists formed a coalition government under the premiership of Léon Blum. In his government, Minister of State Maurice Viollette, the former Governor-General of Algeria, drafted a bill for political reform which reintroduced the assimilationist proposals of the Jonnart Laws as the Blum–Viollette Bill of 1935. All the European mayors and deputies in Algeria boycotted it. The failure of the bill precipitated a political impasse in colonial Algeria. On 8 May 1945 the indigenous people in Séif were allowed to parade and lay a wreath to commemorate those Algerians who fell serving under the French flag in the Second World War. Thousands appeared on that day carrying nationalistic and anti-colonialist banners. The demonstrations culminated in a clash between the French police and the nationalists. Over 45,000 civilians were massacred by French police in Guelma, Karata, and Séif. The importance of the 1945 crisis as a landmark in the political history of Algeria cannot be overemphasized: not only did the crisis express the failure of the rhetoric of assimilation, but it announced the beginning of the end of French Algeria.

Almost a decade after this crisis, the Algerian War ignited. On 1 November 1954 the FLN (National Liberation Front) took arms to liberate Algeria from the shackles of colonialism. Its struggle would continue until 1962. In the summer of 1956 Algerians witnessed a brutal cycle of terrorism and counter-terrorism. In January 1957 Governor-General Lacoste put Algiers under the military control of General Massu. The latter instigated a campaign of torture and state terrorism, commonly known as the Battle of Algiers. In 1958 General Challe extended the state terrorism developed by Massu to the whole of Algeria. To restrict the movement of the FLN and cut the military supplies coming to it from Tunisia, the French army constructed the Morice Line along the Algerian–Tunisian border. On 8 February 1958 French planes bombed Sakhet Sidi Youssef, a Tunisian village near the Algerian border. The hostilities claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians – eventually hostilities were to claim a million lives.

Fearful of a political settlement to the Algerian War, the generals in Algiers encouraged demonstrations led by the ultras (extremists among the French settlers). On 13 May 1958, under the threat of a putsch, General de Gaulle returned to power. The Algerian War had an impact on the political institutions of mainland France. It undermined the
premises upon which French democracy was built, leading to the collapse of the Fourth Republic. General de Gaulle wrote the French constitution, set up the Fifth Republic, and presided over the decolonization of Algeria, a significant event for the liberationist movement that was sweeping Africa at the time. After the 1961 referendum, de Gaulle started to negotiate with the FLN. Two issues complicated negotiations: the discovery of vast reserves of natural gas and oil in the Sahara, and, more importantly, the prospect of having to repatriate almost a million French settlers (pieds noirs). Initially France proposed to keep the Sahara under its political control and only grant independence to part of Algeria, but the Algerians rejected this proposal. An agreement on independence was finally reached on 18 March 1962. Most of the settlers were repatriated.

Ben Bella set up the first government in 1963, staying in power until 1965 when he was removed in a coup staged by Colonel Haouri Boumediene. Boumediene’s presidency lasted until 1978. The economy, health care, housing, education, and rapid population growth were immediate problems for Algeria in the aftermath of decolonization. Until 1962 the economy was primarily agricultural, complementing that of mainland France. In addition to wine, citrus fruits, and other agricultural products, Algeria provided the raw materials for French industry. The exploitation of natural gas and oil by French companies generated income for the newly independent state. In 1971 Boumediene nationalized this vital resource, enabling Algeria to take giant strides toward industrialization. Under his leadership, Algeria’s foreign policy was characterized by non-alignment and anti-imperialism. Boumediene sought to Arabize the administration and attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to bring about an agrarian revolution. However, clientelism weakened the socialist ideals of the Algerian revolution: a military dictatorship replaced the colonial state, and power was concentrated in the hands of the single-party FLN government. After Boumediene’s death in December 1978, Colonel Chadli Ben Jaddid was elected president. He carried out the same policies as his predecessor. During his presidency, the gap between the military ruling class and the rest of the populace became obvious.

In the 1980s the drastic fall in the price of crude oil threatened the Algerian economy. The looming economic crisis precipitated uprisings in 1988, but Chadli had already introduced a program of economic and political reforms. In 1987 the Ministry of Planning was abolished and the Chamber of Commerce revived, with a view to encouraging private-sector development and opening the Algerian economy to foreign investment. In 1989 Chadli ratified a new constitution that put an end to one-party government. It is ironic that the democratization of Algeria’s political system opened the floodgates of political turmoil. Disenchanted with the FLN, a disgruntled population rallied behind their opponents – namely, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) – in order to effect change. It was no surprise when the FIS secured a landslide victory in the first round of the 1990 election, but the decision by the military to suspend the election was to spark a civil war that raged throughout the 1990s.

Further reading

AZZEDINE HADDOUR

Algiers, Algeria

In Arabic the word al-Djazair refers both to the country Algeria and to its capital city, Algiers. Situated in the north, Algiers is both the largest seaport city and wilaya (province) in Algeria. The Spanish held the city for a short period in the sixteenth century, before the Turks annexed it to their empire. Prior to the colonization of Algeria by the French in 1830, Algiers was one of the major cities of the Ottoman Empire. It was, in fact, the capital of the Barbary Coast, whose fleet dominated the Mediterranean. Then, during the colonial period, Algiers was the administrative center for Algeria as a French département. During the Second World War, after the Allies landed in
North Africa in 1942, Algiers became the seat of the provisional government of Free France. In the 1950s, during the Algerian War, Algiers was a battlefield. In 1956 it witnessed a brutal cycle of terrorism and counter-terrorism, with Governor-General Lacoste putting Algiers under military control in January 1957 and instigating the campaign of torture and state terrorism that is commonly known as the Battle of Algiers. On 13 May 1958 the generals in Algiers encouraged demonstrations led by the ultra that precipitated the collapse of the beleaguered Fourth Republic: under the threat of a coup, General de Gaulle returned to power to preside over the decolonization of Algeria.

Algiers is made up of two parts: the old city, the Casbah, with its narrow and winding streets overlooking the bay of Algiers, was chiefly built by the Turks as a fortress in the sixteenth century; the modern section of the city, on the other hand, was built by the French to accommodate European settlers. After Algeria won its independence in 1962, most of those settlers left the city and returned to Europe. Independence had a major impact on the population of the city. The departure of the pieds noirs (French settlers) encouraged a rural exodus that brought masses of hitherto dispossessed fellahs into the city, hoping to improve their standard of living, as well as internal migration from other parts of the country. This galloping population growth meant that the city had expanded to accommodate over a million people by 1970; by 2000 to 4.4 million. Overcrowding became one of the major problems for the city, whose main districts include Birmandreis, Bologhine, Bouzaréa, el-Biar, el-Harrach, Hussein Dey and Koubou.

The port of Algiers was of great strategic importance to France’s colonization of Algeria and its neighbors Tunisia and Morocco, particularly for France’s trade with its colony. Wine, citrus fruits, and raw materials for French industry such as iron ore and phosphates were exported from Algiers to mainland France. By the end of the century, the port was still a very important refueling station in the Mediterranean, and vital to the economic life of post-colonial Algeria. In addition, trade relies on the Dar-el-Beida airport, situated approximately eighteen kilometers from the city center, and on the rail network that connects Algiers to the rest of the country.

Culturally, the city has given its name to two major literary movements: Algérianisme, founded by Louis Bertrand, Robert Randau, Jean Pomier, and Louis Lecoq in 1921, and the Ecole d’Alger (Algerian School), founded by Audisio and Albert Camus in 1935. Camus himself achieved international acclaim for fiction and philosophical writings on the absurd, winning the 1957 Nobel Prize for Literature. Algeria’s main cultural institutions include the University of Algiers (one of the major universities in Algeria), the National Library, and the mosques of Sidi Abel-Rahman and Ketchaoua.

Further reading

AZZEDINE HADDOUR

anglophone Africa

Anglophone Africa refers to those countries that were part of the British colonial empire and have continued to use the English language locally and internationally for official and popular communication. In the main, the African elites who took over from the colonists after independence maintained their commitment to English as an official language.

By the end of the First World War, Britain was in control of two territories in northern Africa (Egypt and Sudan), four in Eastern Africa (Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, and Tanzania), four in West Africa (Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, and Sierra Leone), and six in Southern Africa (Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland). Some were administered as colonies, others as protectorates, and yet others by chartered companies. Despite the differences, the colonial mission was to control the colonies for the benefit of the imperial metropole using local administrative functionaries, whether traditional rulers or the new Western-educated elite. The role of the latter
became important as they grew in numbers and political influence through the activities of the nationalist movements.

The interwar period witnessed more determined efforts by the colonial governments to expand education in the British colonies. Previously education had largely been left to the Christian missionaries. This was also a period that saw the growth of African nationalism, buoyed up by the ravages of the Great Depression and the Second World War. Britain emerged from the war much weaker than before and, soon after, the demise of its empire in Asia began with the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947. In the British African colonies, frustrated ex-servicemen played an important role in the gathering storms of anti-colonial struggle. They had shed much of their high regard for whiteness and European superiority during the war, and had expected to be generously compensated, as a group and for their colonies, economically and politically. The language of “self-determination” or the right to self-governance, fostered by the United Nations, gave the nationalists an international platform to air their demands. Decolonization began eleven years after the war, with the independence of Sudan in 1956, followed by Ghana a year later. The majority of British African colonies gained their independence in the early 1960s, except for the remaining settler colonies in Southern Africa which gained their independence later.

After independence, the shared colonial experiences of British Africa created a unique anglophone identity, despite the fact that many nations dissolved the Westminster parliamentary model in favor of one-party governments. Initially the new African governments maintained strong economic links with Britain, which remained a major market for their exports and source of imports, and whose companies dominated agricultural and industrial investment and production. Indeed, for many years the currencies of many British ex-colonies were linked to the British pound, although these monetary ties were severed much quicker than was the case in francophone Africa. An important institution in the maintenance of linkages between Britain and many of its former African colonies was the Commonwealth. Also, the educational systems in most of the newly independent countries retained their British character. Above all, English was retained as the official language, which gave these countries a sense of collective identity and distinguished them from francophone and lusophone Africa.

English, although the official language of fewer countries than French, became the most widely spoken language in Africa. It was the language spoken in some of Africa’s largest countries, both those that had been British colonies – Nigeria, Sudan, Egypt, and South Africa – and those that had not – Ethiopia. English also spread to other countries that had not been part of the British empire: for example, lusophone Mozambique, which is surrounded by anglophone countries, or francophone Rwanda, which is tied to anglophone Uganda. The spread of English was linked to its international supremacy, enhanced by the processes of globalization, including structural adjustment programs, whose liberalization and privatization of education reinforced the exclusion of the poor and the empowerment of cosmopolitan middle-class elites. Despite its rapid spread, English encountered several obstacles. There were the indigenization efforts in countries like Tanzania, where emphasis was put on Swahili, and in Egypt and Sudan, which opted for Arabic. There was also the increased legitimization of pidgin and creole, especially in West Africa, which reduced the domains of standard English.

Ali Mazrui and Alamin Mazrui (1998) distinguish four categories of countries in relation to the use of English. In the first group, English is the language of both society and the state, as in the anglophone Caribbean countries. There were no such countries in Africa. The majority of anglophone African countries belonged to the second group, in which English was the language of the state but not of society. The third category is where English was neither the language of the state nor of society, but was used only for specialized purposes, as in Mozambique, or had been jettisoned in favor of local languages, such as in Sudan and Somalia. The final category consists of those countries that rely mainly on other world languages, such as French. The spread of English both enriched and undermined many indigenous languages, enriching them through loan words and undermining them.
by restricting the domains of their use, especially marginalizing them in public life and educational systems. In so far as English was restricted to the elite, the majority of the population were shut out from national discourse, which had grave consequences for democracy and development.

Besides English and the Commonwealth, anglophone countries also shared concerns about the nature of relations with the European Union, and, more importantly, the international financial institutions and the developmental challenges of debt crises, promoting regional integration and effective systems of governance. These problems were of course not confined to the anglophone countries, but there were institutions and discourses concerning them that had an anglophone accent.

References and further reading


PETER P. JONES

Angola

Angola, named after the ancient Mbundu state of Ngola, is the seventh largest country in Africa, with a total area of 1,246,700 square kilometers. It is bordered by Namibia, Zambia, Congo, and Democratic Republic of Congo. By 2000 it had an estimated population of 13.1 million, divided into several ethnic groups, the most populous being the Ovimbundu (37 percent), Kimbundu (25 percent), and Bakongo (13 percent). Afro-Portuguese and Europeans respectively constituted roughly 2 and 1 percent of the population. The main livelihood for 85 percent of the population was still agriculture, which accounted for only 12 percent of the gross domestic product. The principal exports were petroleum and diamonds, while other exports included fish, timber, sugarcane, coffee, cotton, and sisal. Although rich in natural resources, Angola’s economy was in disarray due the continuous warfare that has plagued the country from 1961.

Angola’s history in the first half of the twentieth century was marked by the imposition of ever-increasing Portuguese military and economic control of the colony. In order to maintain its claims over the entire area, Portugal spent the first two decades conducting campaigns of military conquest and promoting white settlement in the interior. The Benguela Railway and some new towns followed in the wake of military colonization, but the Portuguese were never able sustain Angola with an adequate settler population or capital to develop its economy. In 1932 Portugal became a fascist dictatorship under António Salazar, who sought to integrate Angola into the Portuguese economy. Despite new financial policies, substantial economic growth in Angola did not occur until after the Second World War when higher coffee prices brought wealth to the colony’s plantations. Salazar’s racial politics legally divided the vast majority of indigenous Angolans (called indíginas) from assimilados (Africans or mixed-race Afro-Portuguese who spoke Portuguese and adopted Portuguese customs). Harsh laws forced indíginas to carry identification cards and subjected them to forced labor, while similar laws limited the economic advancement of assimilados in the colonial system.

Resentment of these policies became endemic and the period from 1961 to 1975 was marked by the liberation struggles of three competing nationalist movements. The first two movements were formed when a number of incipient liberation groups led by urban assimilados merged together to form the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) in 1956 and the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) in 1962. The MPLA had its support base in the Kimbundu region near the capital of Luanda, but moved its headquarters to Conakry in Guinea after the arrest of many of its leaders in 1959. The FNLA drew its support from the Bakongo populations of both Angola and neighboring Zaire, where the organization based its operations. The first large-scale uprisings of the liberation struggle began in 1961 with localized attacks on Portuguese establishments. Despite the heavy-handed military response
by Salazar and attempts to stave off future uprisings through an infrastructure development program, violence continued to escalate in the colony and to draw worldwide attention. The MPLA mounted guerrilla incursions from the Congo into the enclave of Cabinda and from Zambia into eastern Angola. In 1966 the former foreign minister of the FNLA, Jonas Savimbi, formed a third nationalist movement called UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) based on the support of Angola’s largest ethnic group, the Ovimbundu of the central highlands.

The Portuguese increased their army in Angola to 60,000 and resettled more than a million rural Africans into military-controlled villages in an attempt to prevent the spread of insurgency. Yet these resettlement villages caused a significant breakdown in the previously important agricultural sector, which never fully recovered. Military expenditure forced Portugal to open Angola to foreign investment by corporations such as the US-based Gulf Oil. The colonial wars also took a toll on Portugal itself where a military coup in 1974 instituted a new government that met with the nationalist movements and agreed to Angolan independence from 11 November 1975 under a transitional government with representatives from all three liberation movements.

Rather than bringing an end to the conflict, however, this transitional period ushered in a new stage of conflict pressured by Cold War politics. Fighting began even before independence and power was never handed over to the transitional government nor to any of the three movements. The United States first funded the pro-West FNLA and then UNITA after the Soviet Union supported MPLA. Realizing their tenuous position relative to the powerful MPLA, the FNLA and UNITA formed an alliance. Later, although the alliance had discredited UNITA in the eyes of many of its supporters, a joint UNITA and South African military force drove north from the South African colony of Namibia and advanced to within 100 kilometers of Luanda. The United States suspended support for UNITA, and 10,000–12,000 Cuban troops helped push them and the South African troops back, establishing the MPLA as the victor of the succession struggle.

Angola was admitted into the United Nations in December 1976, but its development plans were hampered by internal factional disputes and continued warfare against UNITA and South Africa. The MPLA, under its president Agostinho Neto, formally adopted Marxism–Leninism in 1976, which strengthened its ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union, but also undermined its attempts to revive the agricultural sector of the economy. Angola’s communist stance, along with its support of the Namibian independence movement, caused South Africa to launch an undeclared war on Angola that would make conflict a constant part of life in Angola through to the end of the 1980s. South African military aggression began with attacks on a Namibian refugee camp in Angola in 1978 and the bombing of a provincial capital in 1979. Equally as threatening for Angola’s hopes of peace, UNITA – with South African training and support – was transformed into a serious military threat and infiltrated the countryside, further disrupting the agricultural sector. President José Eduardo dos Santos, who succeeded Neto in 1979, sought to end the conflict with South Africa through international diplomacy. The United States, troubled by the Soviet and Cuban presence in Angola, entered into negotiations with Angola, Cuba, and South Africa. After a long series of talks, agreements were reached in 1988 that called for Namibian independence from South Africa in 1990, the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, and a UNITA and MPLA peace accord.

Yet the process of national unification, essential for any real development in Angola, would not be achieved in the twentieth century. The government instituted a number of reforms and joined the International Monetary Fund in 1989, but this did not improve the situation of the average citizen. The MPLA voted in its Third Party Congress in December 1990 to institute economic liberalization and a multi-party system, opening the way for negotiations with UNITA. By the end of 1991, dos Santos and Savimbi had signed a peace agreement in Bicesse, Portugal, that was backed by the United States and the Soviet Union. In August 1992, a multi-party democracy was instituted, ushering in the Republic of Angola. Hopes for peace ran high, but after the multi-party elections resulted in a
narrow victory for dos Santos in September of that year, Savimbi dismissed the election as a fraud and returned to war. By the following year, UNITA had expanded their territory significantly, although a major military loss at Kuito and sanctions against arms and fuel trade with UNITA by the United Nations would later put UNITA back on the defensive. The ongoing conflict, with its widespread use of land mines, continued to contribute to the deterioration of agricultural production. Moreover, the United Nations estimated that 1,000 people were dying each day, often from starvation and disease.

A second attempt at peace was initiated in 1994 with the signing of the Lusaka Protocol, which agreed to a ceasefire, the inclusion of UNITA in the national government, the demobilization of UNITA troops, and the establishment of UN peacekeeping forces. The implementation was far behind schedule in 1996, when Angola’s oil reserves were expanded with the discovery of new offshore oilfields. In 1997 UNITA had joined a Government of Unity and National Reconciliation, but Savimbi avoided the capital and small-scale skirmishes continued. By 1998 the war had resumed, with both sides playing an active role in conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The MPLA suspended the coalition government, while a splinter group, UNITA Renovada, split off from Savimbi. Yet Savimbi’s UNITA retained control over substantial production of diamonds and was able to reassert control of over much of the countryside. In 1999 the government made significant military advances, taking back Andulo and Bailundu, the main cities under UNITA control. The United Nations pulled out its mission in the same year and the twentieth century closed with warfare continuing to disrupt the hopes of prosperity for this potentially wealthy country. But following the death of Jonas Savimbi, the UNITA leader who was killed by government soldiers in February 2002, Angola appears to be heading for a new era of peace.

Further reading


T.J. DESCH-OBI

Antananarivo, Madagascar

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar and its largest city, was occupied by the French. Its population was 75,000, which had increased to 95,000 by 1911. The city was built on a dozen steep slopes. The former residence of the Merina royal family (the Merina were the largest ethnic group in the capital) was located at the top of the slopes, below which were the administrative, financial, and commercial districts. During colonial rule, the dominance of the capital was evident in the concentration there of economic, educational, and administrative bureaucracies, as well as the country’s transportation system. Railroads connected Antananarivo with the country’s chief port, Toamasina. Antananarivo’s economy, controlled by French firms and closely integrated with France’s economy, concentrated on the export of agricultural products – vanilla, coffee, sugarcane, cloves, and cocoa.

The city’s social and cultural institutions during the colonial period illustrated the influence of the French and the Catholic Church, and the emergence of new social classes. Those who had converted to Christianity, learned to speak French, attended Western missionary schools, and adopted French cultural habits were members of the elite, while those who had not were considered members of the urban lower class. However, the Malayo-Indonesian culture of the majority population was evident throughout the city in the forms of language and cultural tradition. Most Malagasy maintain close ties between the living and the dead, and ancestral tombs were integral to their daily lives.

During the struggle for independence following the Second World War, Antananarivo served as a base for the nationalist movement led by the Independence Congress Party of Madagascar whose members were largely recruited from the burgeoning middle class.

Following Madagascar’s independence in 1960, the French presence remained glaringly obvious. In
the 1960s and 1970s Antananarivo experienced rapid population growth as landless people fled the depressed rural areas and flocked to the capital in search of employment and other amenities. Since the city did not have the economic, social, and educational capacity to accommodate new arrivals, many of them were forced, along with the working poor, into slum areas where conditions were rough and difficult.

Antananarivo continued to be the center of political developments in the 1970s. Intellectuals and students intensified their criticism of the country's structure of government, economic disparities, and neo-colonial relationship with France, which was evident at the University of Madagascar itself where the bulk of the faculty was French, instruction was in French, and the students were awarded French, not Malagasy, degrees. Antananarivo and its educational institutions played a very influential role in the uprisings that resulted in President Tsiranana being ousted in 1972. The uprisings started as student strikes, but were supported by protests from workers, the unemployed, the churches, and even by some members of the ruling party.

During the 1970s and 1980s Antananarivo was the center of political activity under President Didier Ratsiraka who practiced his own version of Marxist socialism. Political and social unrest continued in the capital into the 1990s as multi-party democratic reforms were introduced and a structural adjustment program, demanded by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, was instituted. Although Antananarivo was still suffering from many economic ills by the end of the twentieth century, it was the country's main industrial center: meat, beverages, textiles, and sugar were the main commodities produced there, along with petroleum refining. It also remained the country's main urban center, with a population of 1.5 million at the end of the century.

Further reading:


CASSANDRA RACHEL VENEY

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**Arab Maghreb Union**

*Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco,* and *Tunisia* established the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in 1989, bringing into existence the long-held dream of Maghreb integration. These North African countries extend over 4,800 kilometers from the Atlantic Ocean to Egypt, with a population over sixty million people. In 1989 their collective gross domestic product exceeded US$100 billion, not to mention US$40 billion in foreign trade. Although these states vary in terms of size, population, natural resources, and political regimes, they share a common heritage in terms of culture, language, religion, and history. They are all former colonies, predominantly Arabic-speaking and Muslim, and their populations are a mixture of Arab majority and Amazigh minority.

Several economic and political factors gave birth to the AMU. Economically, the five Maghreb states faced tremendous economic crises in the 1980s due to drought and sharp drops in prices for their prime export minerals. The results were skyrocketing levels of unemployment and external debt in all of these states. Furthermore, they had to face the repercussions of the enlargement of the European Economic Community southwards to include Spain and Portugal, the two most important European trade partners of the Maghreb states. Politically, the AMU was meant to provide a framework to settle several inter-Maghreb conflicts, the foremost of which was over the Western Sahara. This particular dispute exploded in an open war in 1975–6 that engulfed three Maghreb states and had since become a determining factor in their bilateral relations. Indeed, the establishment of the AMU was a result of both Algeria's and Morocco's acceptance of the United Nations peace plan in the Western Sahara. Moreover, the AMU provided a counterbalance to *Egypt* returning to the Arab fold in the late 1980s and becoming involved in another Arab supraregional organization, the Arab Cooperation Council. Equally important was the rise of several Islamic movements in the Maghreb countries which posed a real political challenge to their regimes. The AMU was implicitly meant to facilitate security cooperation between these regimes.
Therefore, the heads of the Maghreb states formed the AMU by signing the Marrakesh Treaty. Its aims were to foster economic development and increase trade among their countries by allowing the free movement of goods, services, labor, and capital. The declared Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic was excluded, thanks to King Hassan’s efforts. The AMU permanent apparatuses were established at the fourth summit meeting in September 1991. They included the presidential council, which was to meet annually; the parliament or consultative council, which comprised twenty representatives of each state; the judicial organ, which was to interpret the treaty; the investment and foreign trade bank; the Maghreb University and Academy of Science; and the general secretariat, based in Rabat. By 2000 there had been only one secretary-general, the Tunisian Muhammad Amamou, who was charged with supervising the follow-up and specialized committees.

However, through the 1990s the AMU achieved few of its political and none of its economic goals. From a political perspective, each Maghreb state maintained its own foreign policy on the basis of national interest. Consequently, the five Maghreb states had five different positions during the 1990 Arab Summit that addressed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and American deployment of troops in Saudi Arabia. The 1992 UN sanctions imposed on Libya were another severe test of the AMU during its formative years. The four other AMU members supported Libya vocally, but preferred to abide by the Security Council resolution. Furthermore, the Western Sahara issue persisted as a stumbling block for inter-Maghreb cooperation, especially since Morocco delayed the UN-proposed referendum and Algeria renewed its support of the independent Sahrawi movement, POLISARIO. Perhaps the only political achievement of the AMU were the security arrangements to crack down on politically active Islamic movements. For instance, Algeria deported the leader of the major Tunisian Islamic movement and Morocco handed Algeria many of its militants. While the presidential council did not meet after 1994, the interior ministers met frequently and concluded several agreements. The result was a suppression of the Tunisian and, to lesser extent, Moroccan Islamic movements, and total collaboration with the military-backed Algerian regime that brought the 1991 democratic elections to a violent halt after the Islamic Salvation Front had won a decisive victory. However, when Algeria’s internal political violence crossed the Moroccan border in 1994, relations between the two countries became very strained and the border was closed.

From an economic perspective, the AMU did very little to achieve the goal of economic integration. Although the 1990 Maghreb summit decided to implement a customs union by 1995, the union did not materialize due to the many political disagreements between the Maghreb states. Moreover, the AMU failed to provide a framework for foreign-policy coordination that ideally might have resulted in fair trans-Mediterranean relations. Instead, after a few European–Maghreb meetings, individual Maghreb states negotiated separately with their giant European counterpart, the European Union, thereafter concluding separate, arguably unfair, Mediterranean partnership agreements with Tunisia and Morocco in 1995. Libya had been excluded from the very start, but negotiations between the European Union and Algeria were still ongoing by 2000.

Thus the AMU was dormant from the mid-1990s and its members turned away from it, preferring other regional organizations or bilateral relations. Mauritania, Algeria, and Tunisia strengthened their relations for a while, but failed to implement the Treaty of Fraternity and Concord they had signed in 1983, with the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Mauritania and Israel in 1999 finally sinking these efforts. By contrast, Libya turned southwards, establishing the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (COMESSA) in 1998, which Tunisia and Morocco joined a year later. Ironically, it was Egypt that arranged a Maghreb summit in April 2000, during the first European–African summit, but the attempt to revive the AMU failed.

See also: Islamic reform movements; League of Arab States; regional integration
Further reading


RIHAM A. KHAFAKY

Arabic

The spread of Arabic in East and West Africa

After the Arab conquest of Egypt in AD 642, subsequent waves of Arab migrants, such as the Banu Hilal tribes in the eleventh century, moved from Egypt to North Africa under the pressure of the Fatimid rulers. From there, Arabic spread southward along the Atlantic coast from Morocco into Mauritania and Mali. As a result, the variety of Arabic spoken in Mali is the same as the Hassaniyya Arabic spoken in Mauritania. In areas where Arabs conducted trade, yet never settled in significant numbers, their language did not replace indigenous languages; instead Arabic-based pidgins and creoles evolved. For example, under the reign of Mohammed Ali in Egypt (at the turn of the nineteenth century) trade and military endeavors that involved recruiting indigenous people resulted in the emergence of Ki-Nubi, an Arabic-based pidgin that was later creolized. Ki-Nubi is now spoken in the Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda, and it was also spoken in Tanzania and Somalia. Under similar circumstances Juba Arabic emerged as a pidgin in the south of Sudan to become the lingua franca of the region. However, Juba Arabic was not only creolized, but also “normalized” as a dialect of Arabic because of its continuous contact with local dialects of Arabic in northern Sudan.

The strong commercial ties between eastern Arabia and East Africa, the establishment of the Omani Dynasty in Zanzibar, and the wide spread of the Islamic tradition enhanced the development of cultural and trade centers along the African coast between Somalia and Mozambique. As a result, Arabic spread widely in this region and its influence on indigenous languages, especially Swahili, was quite pronounced. In fact, a literary tradition of Swahili was developed using the Arabic script.

The spread of Arabic was not restricted to eastern Africa. It also moved westward across the continent along the savanna belt into Chad, Cameroon, Senegal, Niger, and Nigeria. For example, Turku was an Arabic-based pidgin that evolved in Chad and was later replaced by another variety of Arabic that is now spoken by 300,000 people. In fact, Arabic has become the lingua franca of today’s Chad. Today, Africa is home to the largest Arabic-speaking population — far surpassing the Arabian Peninsula, the place where the language originated.

Diglossia

In the Arab countries of North Africa, where Arabs migrated and settled in significant numbers, there are two varieties of Arabic: standard or classical Arabic and colloquial or vernacular Arabic. The two varieties differ in their phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic systems. The former is written and is used in formal contexts such as education, religious services, and administration, as well as for official, legal, and business documents. It is learnt through formal education in schools. The latter, which varies from one country to another and from one locality to another within a single country, is the spoken variety. It is learnt at home and is considered the native language. While there is a codified script for writing standard Arabic, there is no standardized writing system for the spoken dialects. Music and literature can be in either variety, though the colloquial predominates in popular music and the standard in written literary works.

When Arabic was introduced into North Africa, there were two major languages in the area: Amazigh in the Maghreb (as well as parts of Egypt) and Coptic in Egypt, in addition to numerous languages in the Sudan. All these languages came under pressure as Arabic spread. Coptic eventually gave way to Arabic, and by the fourteenth century it had become a liturgical language for the Coptic community in Egypt. Amazigh, however, still survives, particularly in Morocco and Algeria.
However, it is rare now to find a monolingual Amazigh speaker: most Amazigh speakers also speak the local colloquial variety and have some proficiency in standard Arabic. The status of Amazigh, in particular, has been a source of tension in Algeria and Morocco. By 2000 Amazigh was not considered an official language and was not taught in schools, though there were plans to do so in both countries due to protests from the Amazigh-speaking communities. Amazigh speakers have long aspired to a more prominent role for Amazigh, but this aspiration has been frustrated by opposition from the Arabic nationalist camp, which views it as a threat to the Arab identity of the Maghreb, and also from the religious camp, which views it as a way to question the supremacy of the Arabic language – the language of Islam. Of course the proponents of Amazigh respond by saying that several other Muslim countries have other official languages (Iran, Senegal, Indonesia, Pakistan, and so on).

Arabic has also been in confrontation with the European languages brought by colonial powers such as French (in the Maghreb), Spanish (northern Morocco), and English (Egypt and Sudan). English did not diminish the status of Arabic in Egypt, mainly because education was limited to a bourgeois elite and because of the active role in maintaining Arabic that was played by al-Azhar religious university in Cairo and by religious schools (kuttaab) in most villages. On the other hand, the situation is acute in the Maghreb. France introduced new education and administrative systems entirely in French. Arabic was relegated to the religious and Islamic legal spheres. As the countries gained independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Arabization became one of the national goals. This has been a difficult process. While it has proved relatively easy to Arabize the administration, it has proven difficult to do so in the education system, particularly in the sciences where French still dominates. This situation has also been the source of tension between those who see the continuing presence of French as a challenge to Arab identity and a sign of dependence on the old colonial powers and those who see it as a necessary means for development and communication with the rest of the world, particularly the West.

### Architecture

The subject of African architecture has received very little scholarly attention in comparison with other forms of African art, such as sculpture, music, and dance. However, the design and construction of public buildings, homes, places of worship, towns, and cities play an important role in determining how people live and interact within their environment. More than simply providing shelter, architecture is a means of political, social, economic, and spiritual communication. African architecture eludes generalization, owing to the variety of climates, landscapes, settlement patterns, religions, and cultures that dictate how, where, and why structures are built in different parts of the continent. However complex the nature of twentieth-century African architecture, the resulting character of modern buildings and urban areas in Africa may be attributed to what Ali Mazrui (1986) calls the “triple heritage” of mixed techniques, motifs, and values influenced by Islamic, Western, and indigenous cultures.

At the start of the twentieth century, colonial urban planning policy set the course for architectural projects in Africa. Building styles and their arrangements, as well as the commitment to putting infrastructure into place, derived from the attitudes and objectives of the European colonial power in question. Though the colonial architecture first created by Europeans in Africa may have superficially taken into account the local climate, cultural practices, and indigenous building techniques in developing a practical style, most primarily sought to recreate the colonial cities in their own image.

From the fifteenth century, the Portuguese were active in the construction of forts and military outposts along the western coast from Ghana to

### Further Reading


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Angola, thereby facilitating their trade in gold and slaves, but they executed little in the way of urban planning and construction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Though a few urban areas, such as Lobito in Angola (founded in 1913), were the focus of Portuguese industrialization and commercial activity, the resulting prosperous downtown areas were occupied primarily by Portuguese until independence in 1975. The outlying hill regions that surround Lobito and other cities were home to squatter camps and shantytowns that reflect the lack of provision made for residential housing and urban planning. The Portuguese were, however, active in the construction of churches in association with Christian, especially Jesuit, missions. These churches are marked by plain, unelaborated surfaces influenced by seventeenth-century Italian designs, which may be found in nearly every city along the Angolan coast. In the old port city of Luanda, the presence of towering historic churches constructed of masonry, such as the Jesuit Cathedral of Luanda (1628), stand in marked contrast to the traditional rectangular family dwellings of Angolan fishermen. These structures line the banks of the rivers and are constructed of palm-frond mats netted together, frequently with the roof reinforced by a sheet of aluminum, demonstrating the coexistence of both European and indigenous building traditions.

In contrast to the Portuguese, the English initially set up temporary residences, schools, and public buildings to serve their commercial ventures in colonies in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Ghana. These temporary structures recreated the Victorian houses and country villages with formal gardens that were familiar to the British. Concentrated efforts at infrastructural planning and urbanization by the British were focused on strategic regions, such as Accra. The British colonial government built public structures, such as the Post Office and the Parliament building, that used Classical influences and Renaissance styles based on English models. These buildings were constructed to assert the authority of the British colonial power, both to the indigenous population and to other colonial powers.

Unlike the planning that took place at Accra, the sprawling city of Lagos, one of the largest cities in all of Africa with an estimated population of 13.5 million in 2000, urbanized without formal British planning. The landscape of Lagos, which is surrounded by lagoons and marshes, made it difficult to develop; in addition the colonial administrators focused infrastructural projects on areas occupied by Europeans, making difficult the coordination of roads and drainage systems between various areas of the city at different stages of development. British building projects in Lagos during the early part of the twentieth century included gothic churches and Renaissance- and Elizabethan-style government structures. But during the oil boom of the 1970s, Lagos experienced rapid urbanization. Among the numerous building projects initiated by the independent Nigerian government were a national theater and high-rise office buildings for the newly created federal bureaucracy, mostly in the global modernist style. With little formal urban plan, the districts of Lagos are extremely disjointed and the swelling population has created severe traffic congestion, housing shortages, and the development of some of the worst slums on the continent.

In their more permanent settlements in South Africa, the English invested more resources and materials in the construction of commercial buildings, religious buildings, and parks. These Classical and Gothic designs remain architectural landmarks to this day. Dutch settlers also had a significant impact on South African architecture. The architecture of South Africa is thus particularly Western in style, albeit with that syncretism found in other areas of the continent. For example, the so-called “Cape Dutch” style of house that has become part of the South African architectural vernacular, originated in Europe. There it had been designed to fit European social and meteorological conditions, but it was slowly adapted to the different social and climatic conditions of South Africa. The thick walls and whitewashed plaster exterior were adapted over time to serve as protection against the heat, but the steeply pitched roof, originally designed to shed snow, was somewhat unnecessarily retained. The decorative gables, sometimes excessively exaggerated, became a method of expressing wealth and prosperity among Dutch settlers.
Despite the Cape Dutch and other vernacular styles, the unique architecture of South Africa in the twentieth century is defined by apartheid. During the course of the twentieth century, land was divided and distributed unevenly on the basis of race, and Africans were relegated and relocated to barren rural homelands based on traditional ethnic affiliations, as well as being subjected to urban housing relocation programs based on racial segregation. The racial zoning of urban spaces and residential communities had an enormous impact on urban growth, people’s access to space, health and sanitation, social interaction, and the prevalence of crime and violence, demonstrating the depth to which the architectural use of space can shape political, economic, and social relationships.

The French policy of assimilation toward their colonies was manifest in their architecture and the urban development of cities such as Dakar and Casablanca. In an effort to make the colonies an extension of France, urban centers constructed by French architects and planners were fashioned in the image of Paris. Plans for the new African cities were even considered to be experimental testing grounds for strategies to address urban and social problems, such as overcrowding and pollution, that were being experienced in France. Many buildings constructed by the French in colonial cities retain essentially European plans and concepts, but employ motifs and stylistic elements derived from Islamic architecture. The application of such decorative elements and Islamic symbols, seen particularly on public buildings and most frequently in North Africa, is referred to as “Arabism.” French and Swiss architects were particularly active in North Africa. Among them was le Corbusier, who concentrated a number of his architectural activities in Algeria in an attempt to solve urban housing problems. A leader in architectural thinking, le Corbusier’s ideas of the house as a machine and of a city for three million people were very influential in the growth and planning of twentieth-century cities in Africa, though he gave little thought to the regional traditions or cultural background of the people that he designed for.

The twentieth-century trend toward urbanism in Africa, initiated by colonialism and driven by industrialization, has vast implications for the division of space and for the style of buildings, as well as associated political, sociocultural, and economic effects. While the problematic relationship between architecture and industrialization may be considered universal, dominating trends in architectural thinking in both the West and the developing world, it has caused particular difficulties in Africa. Up until the Second World War, urban and infrastructure planning in the colonies had been managed by foreign architects and builders using primarily imported resources and materials from the industrialized colonial powers. In the postwar period of independence, leaders of many new African countries were confronted with the task of building new capitals, schools, and hospitals, sometimes with no skilled builders or architects to do the work. Some students from colonized countries who studied architecture in England or France returned to their countries after independence to help with the effort of nation building. However, they were schooled in a Western vocabulary and had difficulty stylistically connecting with their own traditions in such a way as to give architectural identity to the emerging nations. Moreover, they faced the additional obstacle of being unable to realize intended designs for modern building projects because of the lack of an industrial base that could produce the required manufactured building components.

Despite the financial and developmental challenges confronting African nations with regard to building projects, some of the most impressive and largest-scale feats of architecture in the world were accomplished in Africa in the latter part of the twentieth century. The King Hassan Mosque in Casablanca, Morocco, and Our Lady of Peace Basílica in Yamoussoukro, Côte d’Ivoire, are good examples. The King Hassan Mosque was completed in 1993 at a cost of US$1 billion. It occupies 22.5 acres of land, and accommodates 25,000 worshipers inside and a further 80,000 on the platform outside. Using 300,000 square meters of concrete, 40,000 tons of steel, 250,000 tons of Moroccan marble, and 30,000 square meters of plaster, the gigantic structure boasts the tallest minaret in the world, reaching 200 meters. Our Lady of Peace Basílica was built over three years
and completed in 1990. It is the second largest church building in the world, after the Vatican. Though the official government cost for the basilica is US$200 million, unofficial estimates range from US$500–900 million. Planned by President Houphouët-Boigny as a gift to the Vatican, Our Lady of Peace measures 149 meters in height and can hold 7,000 seated people with enough room for 14,000 to stand. It contains 7,432 square meters of glass, the most ever used in a church, and the entire cathedral is air-conditioned, costing nearly US$10 million annually to maintain. The church has been seen as a symbol of excess and political mismanagement, as only 11 percent of Ivoirians are Catholic; in fact, the majority are Muslim.

Though the skylines of international cities such as Nairobi, Lagos, Abidjan, Johannesburg, Accra, and Cairo are dominated by Western-style architecture, in the last three decades of the twentieth century attention has shifted to consider more traditional forms of African construction when undertaking building projects. Architects practicing in Africa have given more serious thought to so-called “tropical architecture,” using materials and building techniques that allow for greater temperature control and better ventilation; many of these have been in use by Africans for centuries. These techniques include using an east–west layout for buildings, with the long side of the building facing south; creating transverse ventilation of rooms that are accessible from an outside space; using a double layer for roofs; and using light exterior colors to reduce heat absorption. Another successful trend in recent African building projects concerns the application of community planning initiatives. An example of such a project is the Yaama Mosque in Tahoua, Niger. Built over a twenty-year period from 1962, the mosque was a project undertaken by the whole village to which everyone made a contribution, from the landowner to the people who carried water, gathered wood, and made sun-dried mud bricks. Using traditional and adapted methods, the mosque was renovated and expanded so that it remained the architectural and spiritual center of the village.

The Yaama Mosque received the 1986 Aga Khan award for community building projects. Whereas many African architects have been trained in predominantly Western traditions, international recognition of architects and communities collaborating on buildings in regional vernacular style, sensitive to cultural and community needs, will ensure the preservation and application of valuable knowledge in both urban and rural environments.

References and further reading


NICOLE HAWKES

Asmara, Eritrea

Since 1993 Asmara has been the capital of independent Eritrea, with a population estimated at about 400,000 in 2000. It is located at the center of the Eritrean plateau, at an elevation of 2,325 meters. The name “Asmara” indicates the joining of four villages, an event that is supposed to have happened around 1500; the united village was then known as arba’ete asmera, meaning “four that united.”

Asmara was a village with only a few thousand residents until the Italians, who had arrived in 1890, made it the capital of their new colony in 1900. Over the 1930s the population of the town grew by 30 percent per year, reaching 98,000 by the end of the decade; more than half of these inhabitants – 53,000 people – were Italian. When the Italians established their East Africa Empire, Asmara rapidly became the leading city in Italian East Africa. Several parts of Asmara were established as residential areas for different Italian military units, bearing the names of either the battalions who lived there or their commanders. Gradually, however, they became residences for the growing civilian and professional Italian population. Separate localities were also built for black soldiers, again with names that described their populations. When apartheid was introduced in the city in 1936, a strict separation was established.
between white and black residential areas, known respectively as *nazionali* and *indigeni*. The local population was prohibited from entering Campo Cintato, the part of the city where most Italians lived, and sexual relations between blacks and whites were declared illegal.

With the defeat of Italy in East Africa, the Italian population decreased considerably, but under British rule (1941–51) Asmara witnessed another phase of expansion. For the first couple of years the city’s role as a point of departure for the Allied forces in their campaign against Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy led to hectic economic activity and thereby to further growth for the city. When Ethiopia annexed Eritrea in 1952, however, the growth of the city was reversed. Many firms, businesses, and industries were ordered to move to central Ethiopia. Investment slowly died down, no new infrastructure was built, and the existing infrastructure was no longer maintained. As the liberation struggle gained pace, Asmara suffered no actual physical damage, but it was further isolated and neglected. This not only held back development, but also meant that basic facilities were left to degenerate. From 1974 to 1991, when the city was ruled by the Dergue, the population of the city was halved.

By 2000 the city still contained some industries, most of which were from the Italian colonial period and in poor condition. These included food processing, dairy products, alcoholic beverages, textiles and clothing, matches, cement, and leather goods. Despite forty years of neglect, the city has kept an Italian flavor. The city’s main buildings include the Roman Catholic cathedral (1922), the Grand Mosque (1937), St. Mary’s (the main Orthodox Church), the former palace (now the seat of government), the legislative assembly, the municipal building, and Asmara University (founded in 1958, but only gaining university status in 1968). Now a clean and peaceful city, Asmara’s beautiful buildings, coffee shops and palm trees still draw visitors.

**Further reading**


REDIE BEREKETEAB
Bamako, Mali

Bamako was a major city during the time of the Mali empire. It underwent a transformation in the twentieth century from a walled town on a bank of the Niger River to a major administrative, commercial, and cultural center with a population of more than one million. Trans-Saharan trade gave impetus to the town’s early development on the banks of the Niger River, where Moorish traders transferred goods brought by camel from the north to Soninke and Jula merchants who moved them south. In 1883 the French encountered a walled town with 6,000–8,000 inhabitants governed, along with thirty other villages, by the Niare clan. The names of Bamako’s central neighborhoods reflect this history: Niarela (the founding Bambara-speaking clan), Touatila (later Tourela or Bagadadjii), Dravela (Moorish clans) and Bozola (fisherpeople). By 2000 Bamako was contributing to the global economy, exporting agricultural (cotton and cattle) and cultural (music and film) products to the world at large.

After completion in 1905 of the railroad linking it to Saint-Louis (Senegal) and steamships on the Niger River at Koulikoro to the east, Bamako grew rapidly. The French chose Bamako as capital of the French Sudan in 1908, building an administrative complex. The city’s earliest industry was a brickworks. Wolof laborers settled in Ouolofobougou and soldiers in Le Campement. Residents had access to a movie theater, running water and electricity before the First World War. An area settled by unskilled workers was called Kolikotogou (“the hoodlum’s place”), yet Bamako remained safe, peaceful, and renowned for its hospitality. Muslim merchants lived in Dar Salam and Medina-Coura. After the First World War, the French added commercial establishments and administrative buildings, a central market, and tree-lined avenues. Innovations dating from the 1920s include Bamako’s first radio station, highways linking Bamako to Guinea and Segou, a leprosy hospital, and a training center for crafts.

Conditions for Africans deteriorated during the Second World War, but Bamako’s citizens benefited from development projects in the postwar era. The central mosque dates from the 1950s and the first bridge across the Niger, completed in 1957, led to the growth of Badalabougou on the Niger’s right bank. The return of migrant workers from Senegal after the break-up of the Mali Federation swelled Bamako’s population from 78,000 (1958) to 130,000 (1961). Annual population growth peaked at 10 percent in 1974 during the drought, stabilizing at 4.5 percent in the 1980s and 1990s.

Population growth coincided with degradation of economic conditions and increasing numbers of people living in poverty. Consumers experienced a 50 percent decline in buying power between 1962 and 1982. Imposition of structural adjustment programs contributed to the dominance of the informal sector, which absorbed 78 percent of all workers in 1989. Despite a new textile factory, Bamako’s modern sector remained small with the government as the principal employer. Since unemployed young people had little alternative but to live at home and put off marriage, economic
problems were bringing about changes in family and political life. Youth played a central role in the popular uprising which took place in Bamako in 1991, leading to the establishment of a democratically elected government. Urban amenities built in the 1990s included public monuments, the University of Mali, and a second bridge that eased access to the newer suburbs of Sogoninko, Daoudabougou, Faladie, Nameko, and Senou (the airport). The influx of newcomers fleeing to Mali from war-torn West African countries contributed to the challenge of providing Bamako's burgeoning population with adequate housing and basic services, such as running water and electricity.

**Further reading**


JANE TURRITTIN

**Bangui, Central African Republic**

Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, is located on the northern bank of the Oubangui River, one of Africa’s longest rivers and the largest tributary of the great Congo River. The city was founded in 1889 as a French military post and named Bangui after the local name for “rapids.” Early resistance from the local population was eventually overcome and in 1894 the French declared Oubangui-Chari, the future Central African Republic, a French colony and part of French Equatorial Africa. A dozen years later, the picturesque but impoverished post became the administrative center of the new colony. As in much of French Equatorial Africa, the French relied on concession companies, which subjected the population to forced labor and provoked periodic rebellions. This economy of plunder was reflected in Bangui, which remained an urban backwater for much of the colonial period.

It was not until the Second World War that Bangui began to grow rapidly, buoyed up by economic growth fueled by the rise in the prices of the country’s main exports – rubber, cotton, coffee, and diamonds – and postwar reforms that extended more rights to Africans and encouraged the colonial government to undertake infrastructural “development” projects to facilitate trade and quell growing African nationalism, dominated by the Union Oubanguienne and the Movement for the Social Evolution of Black Africa.

After independence in 1960, the growth of Bangui accelerated as rural-urban migration increased, the public sector expanded, and light manufacturing industries were established. By 1975 the city’s population had increased to 279,800, and it more than doubled to 652,900 in 2001. The manufacturing industry included textiles, food products, beer, shoes, and soap. Perhaps even more vibrant was Bangui’s role as a trading and transportation center. Its port handled most of the country’s international trade, and the road network that connects the Central African Republic with Cameroon, Chad, and Sudan emanates from the city. Bangui’s importance as a social and cultural center also increased, as new national institutions were established and located there, including the University of Bangui.

Despite its growth, Bangui suffered from the political turbulence that afflicted the country and from recurrent recessions hitting the economy from the 1970s due to declining commodity prices and corruption, exacerbated from the 1980s by structural adjustment programs. Symbolic of the deepening misfortunes of the country and city was the extravagant coronation in 1977 of Colonel Jean Bedel-Bokassa, who had come to power in a coup in December 1965, as emperor of the renamed Central African Empire. Yet, by the following year, the bankrupt government was unable to pay its civil servants. This and the reduction of school loans, combined with growing discontent against the venal Bokassa dictatorship in general, led to violent protests in the streets of Bangui, culminating in Bokassa being ousted. However, there was little relief either for the country as a whole or for Bangui itself. The city continued to be the site of political conflict and strife, whether in the form of recurrent coups d’etat, or violent protests by the increasingly impoverished residents of the city. For
example, in 1996 and 1997 alone there were three army mutinies that ravaged the city. By 2000 much of Bangui’s physical infrastructure was in a state of decay and its economy ravaged by unemployment, unpaid wages to civil servants, strikes, and an influx of refugees fleeing conflicts in neighboring countries.

Further reading


CASSANDRA RACHEL VENEY

Banjul, Gambia

Banjul, the capital of the Gambia, had an estimated population of 150,000 in 2000. The population of Banjul Island is composed of a majority of Wolof- and Aku-speaking peoples, although the island got its name from the Mande, who used to fetch a certain type of fiber used to manufacture ropes on the island (banjul is the Mande word for “fiber”). The Mande also form the majority of the inhabitants of the Greater Banjul Area.

Together with Serrekunda, Bakau, Fajara, and other parts of what is now known as the Greater Banjul Area, the city gradually absorbed the surrounding villages. By 2000, however, the authority of the Mayor of Banjul was restricted to the part of the city located on Banjul Island, whose population declined from 44,000 in 1983 to 42,000 in 1993 as people moved away from the original city to settle in the Greater Banjul Area. The island, once the seat of the colonial administration, remained the seat of the post-independence government, and boasted the only seaport and main commercial and banking centers in the country.

During the colonial period the city was called Bathurst, after an English lord of the same name. It was changed to Banjul in 1973. Because of its strategic location at the mouth of the River Gambia, European traders and colonial administrators found the city important for both trade and security purposes, especially for the control of traffic in and out of the River Gambia. Banjul Island was linked to the Greater Banjul Area and the western parts of the country by a bridge, and to the north bank of the river and the northern part of Senegal by a regular ferry service. The River Gambia runs through the entire length of the country, itself driving a wedge between the northern and southern parts of Senegal.

From colonial times the economy of Gambia was based on the cultivation of groundnuts for export, and rice and local cereals, as well as fishing and livestock production, for local consumption. After independence, trade and tourism also became important sources of foreign exchange for Gambia, with Banjul dominating both sectors. Most hotels, for example, were located in Banjul. By the 1990s up to 100,000 visitors arrived in good seasons, more than half of whom were from the United Kingdom. The tourist sector employed some 10,000 people, and provided an outlet for locally caught fish, locally grown fruit and vegetables, and local handicrafts. The liberal trade and foreign-exchange regimes of Gambia in the 1960s and 1970s, at a time when neighboring countries were quite protectionist, led to the existence of vibrant cross-border trade between Gambia and her neighbors, much of it departing from Banjul. As border controls were tightened and trade tariffs liberalized in the other countries in the late 1980s and 1990s, this trade lost some of its vigor.

Despite its relatively small size, Banjul remained a very lively city and the center of Gambian cultural life. It boasted one of the first private radio stations in West Africa, Radio Syd, started by a Swedish woman in the late 1960s, and by 2000 it had four other private radio stations broadcasting on the frequency modulation band, as well as government radio and TV stations. The city also had an international airport that handles several charter-flight routes during the tourist season (October to May), and maintained good connections with the cities of Dakar, Freetown, Accra, Lagos and London.