

HIST252

Guide to Responding to Units 3 & 4 Reading Questions

1. The British and the French adopted different administrative systems for their respective colonies. What terms are typically used to describe these systems and in what ways do they differ from each other?

Notes on responding:

- The British adopted the system of indirect rule.
 - Indirect rule was a system of governance that incorporated indigenous governance structures into the broader colonial administration.
 - Indigenous chiefs or leaders remained in their positions and ruled on the “advice” of British district officers at the local level; British officials staffed a general colonial administration.
 - This system presupposed that all African peoples were organized into “tribes” with chiefs; in instances where this was not the case, the British invented tribes and introduced warrant chiefs.
 - Indirect rule’s continued use of existing power structures was seen as providing order and stability and allowed for a gradual approach to change.
- The French adopted the system of direct rule.
 - Direct rule was a system of governance that largely ignored indigenous governance structures.
 - The colonies were divided into smaller districts and a French colonial official was put in charge of each district; a centralized colonial administration was headquartered in an urban center.
 - French colonial rule stressed policies of assimilation (at times, association). The French believed in the superiority of their culture (and thereby the rejection of all African cultural norms and practices) and the civilizing mission was to assimilate Africans.
 - Direct rule’s complete rejection of African government institutions was a more antagonistic approach to colonial rule.
- French colonial officials at the district level tended to be closer to the African communities they supervised compared to their British counterparts.

2. Why were Ethiopia and Liberia never colonized by European powers?

Notes on responding:

- Ethiopia
 - Italy attempted to colonize Ethiopia, but Ethiopia became the only African state to successfully defend against European colonization.
 - In 1885, Italy established a presence in East Africa and slowly increased its territory. Eritrea, Tigray, and Agamay were conquered.
 - King Menelik of a southern Ethiopian province called for Ethiopian unity in 1895 and led a massive army against the Italian military in northern Ethiopia. Menelik led a successful campaign that came to an end with the decisive Battle of Adwa; the remaining Italian forces withdrew from Ethiopia.
 - King Menelik became emperor of a unified Ethiopia.
- Liberia
 - Liberia was founded by the American Colonization Society as a place in West Africa for freed slaves to return to Africa from the United States.
 - From 1820 to roughly 1850, thousands of freed slaves made the journey to Liberia as “colonists.”
 - Liberia was not uninhabited land; hence, the introduction of the freed slaves from the United States (later to be known as Americo-Liberians) essentially created a foreign settler population that controlled the political affairs of the land.
 - Americo-Liberians declared independence from the American Colonization Society in 1847; Liberia was soon recognized as an independent state by the international community. Hence, Liberia remained untouched in the scramble for Africa.
 - While Liberia was not colonized by Europe, the indigenous Liberians were disenfranchised by the Americo-Liberian elite who controlled government until 1980.

3. In what ways were African societies transformed during the colonial period? List at least three societal dynamics and briefly elaborate on each.

Notes on responding:

- Population Changes
 - Estimates suggest that Africa’s population doubled between 1850 and 1950.
 - Reasons for the population growth include the end of the slave trade, introduction of new crops with higher nutritional value, famine

- relief, and the availability of Western-style medicine in African communities.
- Colonial economic policies brought about a large movement of people throughout parts of the continent. Such displacements had ramifications for familial and communal norms and practices (e.g., nuclear family replaced extended family in many areas).
 - Urbanization
 - Estimates suggest that urban populations grew at a rate of 3.9% between 1850 and 1950.
 - Many African urban centers formed during the colonial period to facilitate the economic enterprises of the colonial powers.
 - Colonial economic policies tended to encourage migration from rural to urban centers. Many sought employment in urban centers in order to earn money which allowed them to pay taxes.
 - Urbanization had significant ramifications for African economic activities and familial relationships.
 - Education
 - Missionaries and some colonial governments introduced Western-style education to African societies. The emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy was part of the civilizing mission.
 - Africans tended to embrace whatever education they could receive as education was seen as a way to new opportunities.
 - Most Africans did not benefit from education initiatives; the lack of financial resources made available to education meant that only a small minority received any formal education.
 - Most African independence leaders were students in one of the few missionary or colonial schools; their initial education in Africa (and often higher education in Europe or America) was instrumental for African independence movements.
 - Christianity
 - Christianity expanded rapidly in Africa during the colonial period.
 - The association of education and literacy with missionaries led many Africans to join the missionaries' associations.
 - The different versions of Christianity spread by competing missionaries led Africans to advance their own versions of Christianity. Some Africans established independent churches, which became centers of anticolonial protest.

4. What was the relationship between colonial economic policies and political resistance during the colonial period?

Notes on responding:

- Upon the imposition of colonial rule, resistance typically was expressed in response to specific policies. African leaders and groups protested against particular policies (perceived discrimination, maltreatment, taxation, etc.), rather than colonial rule itself. The experiences associated with World War II were a turning point for African resistance; the focal point became the end to colonial rule and not just policy changes.
- During the earlier decades of colonialism, economic policies pursued by colonial administrations gave rise to political resistance.
 - Colonial administrations imposed taxes to generate revenues (European powers wanted the colonies to be self-sufficient) and to drive Africans into the cash economy and labor market.
 - Taxes represented a huge burden for most Africans who did not have the funds to pay them. Many were forced to grow cash crops to raise funds; others were forced to leave their homes in search of employment elsewhere. Taxes had a tremendous impact on family and community structures and altered the food economy as well as gender roles in many societies.
 - Africans responded to taxation and the associated consequences with revolts, disobedience, protests, and so forth.
 - The Aba Women's Revolt of 1929 exemplifies one such act of resistance as Igbo women staged a mass protest against a specific economic policy (tax) that they perceived to limit their economic autonomy.
 - Communities also attempted to counteract the cultural and social implications of economic policies by removing themselves from the colonial spheres of influence.
- Gradually, Africans organized formal political parties and trade unions through which they engaged the colonial state and expressed their grievances.
 - Specific economic policies remained a target for political resistance throughout the colonial period. However, over time, resistance movements' objectives shifted to demand an end to colonialism.
 - Political parties and trade unions were able to negotiate better terms for African workers (especially in urban centers) and, at times, pressure colonial administrations into political concessions to African communities.
 - Africans were cognizant of the inherent link between colonial economic policies and their implications for African norms and practices. Political protest against specific policies, then, were simultaneously attempts to preserve culture.

5. How was infrastructure developed during colonialism and in what ways did it impact independent Africa?

Notes on responding:

- The infrastructure development pursued by colonial governments focused on railroads and seaports. Both were considered essential to the extraction and transportation of natural resources from the African interior to the coastline and onward to Europe.
- Railroads, not roads, were built because rail transportation was seen as more efficient and cheaper compared to road transportation. The construction of railroads also benefitted European enterprise and labor markets.
- Railroads linked the interior with the coastline (more or less on a straight line); there were no links connecting points in the interior. The purpose of such infrastructure development was economic exploitation and not development and regional integration.
- Africa's infrastructure has not changed dramatically since independence; newly independent African states have not had the funds to develop transportation infrastructure.
- Consequently, most of Africa's contemporary infrastructure network dates back to the colonial era. Therefore, there is a clear paucity of interregional transportation links.
- "A region's ability to succeed in the contemporary global economy depends largely on the effectiveness and efficiency of its transport system."¹
- "Africa's marginalized position within the global economic system is due largely to the fact that the continent lacks the quality and quantity of transport infrastructure necessary to connect it to the global arteries of commerce and industry."²

Implications of Africa's Transportation Systems for Development in the Era of Globalization

¹ Ambe J. Njoh, "Implications of Africa's Transportation Systems for Development in the Era of Globalization," accessed April 16, 2012, http://www.trforum.org/forum/downloads/2007_5A_AfricaTrans_paper.pdf.

² Ibid.