AFRICA

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AFRICA

VOLUME 4

THE END OF COLONIAL RULE: NATIONALISM AND DECOLONIZATION

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Carolina Academic Press
Durham, North Carolina

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Africa / edited by Toyin Falola.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-89089-768-9 (v. 1)—ISBN 0-89089-769-7 (v. 2)—
ISBN 0-89089-770-0 (v. 3)—ISBN 0-89089-202-4 (v. 4)—
1. Africa—History—To 1884. I. Falola, Toyin.

DT20 .A61785 2000
960—dc21

00-035789

Carolina Academic Press
700 Kent Street
Durham, North Carolina 27701
Telephone (919) 489-7486
Fax (919) 493-5668
E-mail: cap@cap-press.com
www.cap-press.com

Printed in the United States of America

For Dr. Kassahun Checole and the Africa World Press

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments

This text is intended to introduce Africa to college students and the general public. Volumes 3 and 4 both cover the entire period of colonial rule in Africa during the twentieth century. These two interrelated volumes meet the requirements of history and culture-related courses in most schools. Moreover, they address major issues of interest to the general public. The choice of topics is dictated both by relevance and the need to satisfy classroom requirements.

Volume 3 examines the colonial period from its initial foundation in the 1880s up until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. Among the issues examined in Volume 3 are those relating to the colonial imposition, the changes introduced by Europeans, the reactions of Africans to these changes, and the main historical events within each African region during this period.

Volume 4 continues with the discussion of the colonial period, focusing on the themes of change and freedom. The volume presents, in a simplified manner, various aspects of African history and culture from the period of World War II to the time that African countries became free of European rule. Important themes are identified in the first part, all revolving around issues of reforms and colonial disengagement. The aim in this section is to present the broad picture of Africa in the last decades of colonial rule. As to be expected, the theme of nationalism is dominant. Four chapters are devoted to the analysis of nationalism, including the contributions by women, which have generally been ignored. These were also the years of reforms, when Africa actually began to see significant changes. Various chapters are devoted to the reforms and other social aspects that received major attention at the time, notably health, business, and education. The authors pay attention to the role of Africans in initiating some of these changes. In the second part, the themes are analyzed chronologically, focusing on each region in turn. The final part reflects on what colonialism meant for Africa, both during European rule period and since independence. The concluding chapters prepare the reader to understand contemporary Africa, which is covered in Volume 5, the last in the series.

The choice of the various authors was primarily based on their competence as teachers in the explanation of history to college students and beginners, as well as their skill in synthesizing a large body of data and ideas. Among the notable pedagogical features of this volume are chapter abstracts to orient readers to the objectives and ideas of each chapter, ideas organized into various themes, review questions to help students test their knowledge of the main ideas of the chapter, and suggestions for additional reading materials to facilitate advanced research.

I am grateful to all the contributors, students, and readers who have helped in various ways to make the book readable for a diverse audience. Dr. Ann O'Hear and Ms. Jennifer Spain made many suggestions regarding style and intelligibility. Sam Saverance prepared the final maps and illustrations. Friends, associates, and students gave me access to their photo albums to make selections that have improved the overall presentation of the book. Two artists, Professor Dele Jegede and Chris Adejumo, as well as Jeff Rowe of Austin Prints and Tim Colton of Carolina Academic Press, were helpful with comments on cover illustrations.

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Introduction

Toyin Falola

This volume examines the last years of colonial rule in Africa from 1930 until the various African countries obtained their independence. A number of major developments characterized this period. First, changes continued as before as the colonial governments initiated a number of reforms after World War II. For instance, in the British colonies, the idea of economic planning was introduced in order to improve education and social services. One notable outcome of this was the creation of the first set of universities in sub-Saharan Africa. In the French colonies, the use of forced labor was abolished in 1946 and there was an increase in opportunities to demand reforms. Africans, too, continued to be innovative and to retain various aspects of their past that they found useful to their survival. Chapters 5 to 16 of this volume examine the leading issues and changes of the post-1939 era.

The second development was decolonization—the transfer of power to Africans. Colonialism crumbled as nationalism intensified. African elites found themselves acting as the representatives of their people and holding meetings with European officers who had previously ignored them. Where the colonial powers indicated that they were not ready to leave Africa, the African freedom fighters used violence as a strategy. Whereas the anticolonial protests of the early years had involved only a small number of Africans, after 1939, various social classes and segments of the population became involved. Chapters 1 to 4 capture the phases of decolonization after 1939.

The regional chapters (17–22) provide details on the struggles to regain freedom. Whereas many countries became free by the 1960s, the process was long and difficult in Namibia, South Africa, and the Portuguese-speaking countries of Mozambique and Angola. Apartheid crumbled in the 1990s, bringing the decolonization era to a close.

Background to 1939

In volume three of this series, the major events of the colonial period were discussed in detail. As shown in the previous volume, Euro-African relations changed after 1885. In contrast to the long-established relations based on trade, Europe conquered Africa and used its people as labor to produce materials for export. Within a period of twenty years, the continent was divided and shared by invading European powers. By 1901, a new map of Africa had been created, with

only Ethiopia and Liberia able to escape control by Europeans. Africa then entered a period of colonial rule in the first half of the twentieth century. Thus, the history of Africa prior to 1939 was comprised of the following major issues:

The Partition

A handful of European countries, including Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Belgium, divided Africa among themselves. At the Berlin Conference in 1884–1885, they made arrangements to determine "spheres of interests" and minimize conflicts in the process of taking over the continent. With modern rifles and machine guns, the aggressive European powers were able to defeat many African nations.

Colonial Rule and Changes

In the early part of the twentieth century, seven colonial empires and systems were created. When Germany lost World War I, it lost its African colonies, thereby reducing the number of empires and systems to six. Some systems involved a direct form of government with European officials in power who were aided by a large number of African subordinates. Where traditional kings and chiefs were co-opted, a system of "indirect rule" operated. Irrespective of the political systems of the colonies, the objective was the same: Africa would serve the economic interests of Europe. Colonial rule was exploitative and racist.

This period witnessed a number of changes, both positive and negative. African nations were reduced to about fifty colonies with new boundaries that did not necessarily respect the interests of Africans. Previous rulers lost their powers. European officers were able to finance the various colonial administrations with money from taxation and dues on trade. Western education, thanks to the missionaries, spread in many areas. African land and labor were used to produce export crops, minerals were exploited by foreign companies, big foreign firms controlled trade, and low prices were paid for African products. Everywhere, the goal was to transfer wealth from Africa to Europe. Although Europe had passed through an industrial revolution, Africa did not see many gains in terms of the transfer of technology or industries.

African Responses

Africans responded in various ways to the partition and colonial rule. They did not want to be colonized by Europeans, and they struggled in vain to avoid this. When conquest became a reality, early forms of cooperation or nationalism sought the means to humanize the colonial systems. A number of kings and chiefs who derived benefits from the colonial systems pursued a strategy of accommodation with the colonial officers. For those, such as traders, who sought gains from the new export economy, creating retail stores was a way of making money. Those with education could serve in subordinate positions and make small salaries.

Revolt was the choice of those who had little to gain from the system or who wanted improved opportunities. The experience of colonial domination and ex-

ploitation united many Africans, as many citizens of the same country began to talk as if they had a common destiny. Nationalism became a source of identity—to unite colonized peoples against colonial rule and to build a set of cultural and political values to create a common future.

However, protest was not organized on any continental level. The Europeans had already divided Africa into many colonies, and nationalist expression tended to be confined to each country. Even within each country, as colonial policies divided the people, anticolonial nationalism was also expressed along ethnic lines. It acquired a racial divide as well: whites (European colonizers) against blacks (Africans). Thus, it was common for European officers to dismiss African freedom fighters as anti-white or as representatives of ethnic, rather than national or continental, interests. This can be seen in the Europeans' attitude toward the Mau Mau protesters in Kenya and the freedom fighters in Algeria.

The End of Colonial Rule

The events that brought European rule in Africa to an end are discussed in this volume. By 1951, it was clear that European rule would soon be over. In the 1960s, many African countries obtained their independence. However, a few countries where Africans endured long periods of struggles, deprivations, and warfare had to wait for much longer. Namibia became independent only in 1990. The apartheid policy in South Africa did not end until the early 1990s. With the end of apartheid in South Africa, the struggles for independence came to an end. The leading issues in the decolonization process include the following:

Demands for Reforms

The expression of nationalism up to 1939 focused on various demands for reforms and changes to improve people's lives, provide more social and educational services, and create jobs. In the 1940s, the elite and the masses began to come together to create mass movements that took radical positions. Trade unions and political parties became combative. Underlining the various demands was the strong belief that colonial rule was oppressive and that Africans would never make progress as long as they were under European rule. In the nationalists' view, colonial rule had brought disaster and ruin. They complained that Africans had been humiliated, had lost their land, and were denied social amenities and economic opportunities.

Before 1939, anticolonial protests took the form of defending rights to land, seeking the inclusion of Africans in legislative councils, and creating a role for the African educated elites who were excluded from local government. Christianity, too, became involved in nationalist struggles. Mission schools edified many Africans in the hope of converting them to Christianity. As Africans sought more education, including higher education, their demand was expressed in nationalist terms. Educated Africans became the leaders of ethnic associations and political parties, mastered and used Western skills against the colonizers, and provided the leadership for social movements. As the Christian elites became acculturated to

Western ways of life, they acquired ideas and values with which to criticize colonial regimes. The church also preached the doctrines of equality before God and the need for social justice. Although the church fell far short of putting into these doctrines into practice, Africans were able to use the ideas and the language in anticolonial arguments. Africans even established their own separatist churches as a form of protest to assert African identity, gain leadership, and redefine Christianity to accept a number of traditional practices condemned by foreign missions.

Impact of World War II

About two million Africans were recruited as soldiers to fight on the Allied side during World War II. These soldiers imbibed the anti-Hitlerian propaganda of the war years, especially as it stressed the need to fight for freedom, justice, and equality. In addition, the soldiers expected gratitude for their military duties. Disappointed by the colonial government's failure to reward them, many turned against the colonial governments. The experience of the war led African soldiers to reject ideas about white superiority and to question colonial domination. The political parties of the postwar years were able to recruit large numbers of ex-soldiers.

The deteriorating economic conditions of the war years instigated rural-urban migrations and competition for scarce resources in the cities. Many young people lived in crowded areas and had no jobs. The peasants were called upon to produce more materials to meet war needs. The worsening conditions fueled anger and anticolonial resentment.

World War II ended with Britain and France in weakened positions. The United States became a superpower with an interest in expanding its influence in Africa; it was, therefore, unwilling to see the continuation of European rule. Africans, too, formed radical opinions during the war. It became more and more difficult for the European powers to use force to suppress radicalism.

Another outcome of the war was the establishment of the United Nations (UN) to replace the League of Nations. Although the UN was controlled by Western powers, African nationalists quoted some of its anticolonial statements and hoped to obtain support from the organization. Anticolonial statements were made by UN representatives from countries such as the Soviet Union, which had no colonies in Africa, and African leaders saw the UN as a forum in which to criticize the European powers. Articles 62 and 73 of the UN Charter appealed to African leaders because they involved freedom and human rights. Article 62 sought recommendations on how to promote fundamental freedom and human rights, while Article 73 entreated member nations to support the development of self-government in all parts of the world.

Pan-Africanism

Help came from outside as well. Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. DuBois, and Henry Sylvester-Williams were the leading names in the Pan-Africanist movement which sought to unite all blacks in Africa and the African diaspora and to end colonial domination and all forms of racial injustice. Sylvester-Williams convened the first meeting of Pan-Africanists in London in 1900 in order to free Africans from the encroaching power of Europe. W.E.B. DuBois took up the challenge thereafter

and was active in organizing Pan-Africanist meetings and calling attention to the plight of Africans under colonial rule. His message spread in the United States, Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. He and others organized a series of political campaigns against colonial rule and wrote many essays and books to highlight the achievements of Africans in their long history in order to build pride among black people and show that Africans were capable of governing themselves. Marcus Garvey, too, was famous, although he was more practically oriented in calling for the return of black people to Africa and the creation of conditions conducive to developing economic power. In 1936, when Italy invaded Ethiopia, the event energized Pan-Africanists all over the world and intensified anticolonial sentiments.

In 1945, emerging African leaders and representatives of trade unions, students' associations, and youth leagues joined others at a Pan-Africanist congress in Manchester. This was the largest Pan-Africanist gathering in history. Members demanded independence for Africa and passed resolutions to fight for it. Various statements made during and after the meeting revealed the goals of Pan-Africanism—to serve as an instrument of black unity and provide a platform to criticize all forms of colonial and racial domination of black peoples. In 1963, shortly after many African countries had become independent, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established to continue fighting for some of the goals of Pan-Africanism.

Transfer of Power

The transfer of power from Europeans to Africans began to occur mainly after 1945. School teachers, market women, civil servants, students, and others, each with different interests but with the common goal of attaining independence, came together in various associations to fight for independence. Radical religious organizations, trade unions, and political parties became assertive in their calls for an end to European rule. A new generation of leaders emerged with greater determination to fight the colonial officers.

After 1945, in areas where they did not have large numbers of European settlers, France and Britain began a gradual process of withdrawal. Reforms were made in various aspects of society, and a series of constitutional changes transferred power to Africans. If the European powers thought that the reforms would serve as concessions to pacify Africans, they were mistaken. The nationalists kept asking for more and would be satisfied only by independence.

In countries such as Algeria, Kenya, South Africa, and others with large numbers of white settlers, the struggle for independence took a violent turn. As white settlers refused to yield to the demands for independence, both Africans and settlers took to violence. In South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), power was actually given to the white settlers. In the Portuguese colonies, the struggle was bitter, as the Portuguese simply refused to accept the right of Africans to govern themselves. Guerrilla wars became common, and the freedom fighters succeeded after bitter and prolonged encounters.

Independence was not won by all African countries at the same time. Before 1950, Egypt, Liberia, and Ethiopia were already free. During the 1950s, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, the Sudan, Morocco, Ghana, and Guinea attained their freedom. In the 1960s, thirty-one countries gained their independence. In the 1970s,

the five Portuguese-speaking colonies became free. Zimbabwe ended its struggles in 1980 and Namibia became free in 1990.

Beyond Colonial Rule

The relationship between Africa and Europe did not end with the independence of African nations. As power was being transferred to Africans, the European powers were putting in place a series of policies to protect themselves and to secure a transition from the exercise of power based on direct control to the indirect exercise of power known as neocolonialism. Colonial legacies became a feature of the contemporary era. Independence enabled Africans to take partial control of their countries, but the new leaders had to cope with the challenges of underdevelopment, political instability, and dependence on the former colonial masters.

As Volume 5 shows, postcolonial Africa has witnessed profound changes and great calamities. A history of contradictions has begun to unfold: the colonial powers left, but their legacies remain; Africans are now in power, but many leaders abuse their power; development occupies an important place in government policies, but the continent gets poorer; and while the state continues to function, political institutions decay. Until African countries solve their economic and political problems, many of their citizens will continue to regard the struggle for independence as incomplete.