

INTRODUCTION

This volume deals with a period of about thirty-five years, from about 1870 till about 1905. This was, of course, the period which saw, first, the scramble by European powers and interests to stake out territorial claims in Africa, next, the paper partition of the continent by those powers, and finally the colonial conquest and occupation. In 1870, the only large areas to have suffered such inroads lay either to the north of the Sahara or else to the south of the Limpopo. By 1905, Ethiopia and Morocco were the only truly independent African states, and the innumerable petty polities of pre-colonial Africa, as well as a few larger ones, had been consolidated into the forty-odd colonies and protectorates which were destined to become, with only a few subsequent changes, the sovereign states of modern, post-colonial Africa.

Yet, to characterise the period wholly in this way, is to see it too much through European eyes. As the succeeding chapters show, African history throughout this period pursued paths still largely separate from those of the European colonisers. The treaty-making expeditions of a Binger or a Brazza, of a Johnston or a Lugard, of a Cardoso or a Serpa Pinto, were scarcely to be distinguished by any African observer from the trading caravans of the Dyula or the Hausa, of the Sudanese *jallāba* or the Swahili-Arabs, of the Mozambican Chikunda or the Angolan pombeiros. The diplomatic partition of the continent passed almost unnoticed by the Africans whose territory was at issue. The colonial conquest and occupation was experienced by them as a piecemeal phenomenon, which affected some of those living near the coasts as early as the 1870s and 1880s, but which reached most of the interior peoples only during the 1890s and the 1900s. Even by the end of the period, only a small minority of Africans had seen a white face or had any idea that their countries were subject to foreign rule.

Seen from the African end, the European infiltration and

INTRODUCTION

conquest was, as Dr Lonsdale makes clear in the concluding chapter, a process and not an event. Within the confines of any particular colonial territory, it lasted a full generation, in the course of which African power progressively diminished while European power correspondingly increased. At the start of the process, European agents travelled singly or in pairs, accompanied by two or three score of lightly armed caravan porters, very much in the style of the explorers and missionaries who had preceded them. The porters carried the usual trade goods, which were used to buy food and protection, and also to aid the negotiation of what were probably understood by the Africans as vague alliances, somewhat akin to blood brotherhood, which involved the gift of flags and the signing of crosses on pieces of paper. It was normal for several years to elapse between the execution of such treaties and the appearance of any colonial official appointed to carry things a stage further. Meanwhile the political and economic life of the African peoples continued on its accustomed way.

But this did not mean that nothing happened. The opening chapter by Mr Atmore, while in a sense only recapitulating the lessons of earlier volumes, does provide a massive summary of the extent to which the commercial opening up of Africa had already been carried out by Africans before the beginning of the colonial period. He concludes that by 1870 there was hardly a corner of the continent which was unfamiliar with some of the manufactured goods of Europe and Asia. Manchester cottons crossed the Sahara on camelback. The small arms of Birmingham and Liège were paddled up the Niger and the Congo in dug-out canoes. Portuguese brandy and Brazilian tobacco were carried on human heads from Luanda and Benguela to the Luba and Lunda states situated at the very centre of the sub-continent. The calicos of Gujerat and New England travelled up the East African caravan routes from Zanzibar. The cowries of the Maldives, which in medieval times had reached West Africa via the Red Sea and Cairo, were now carried round the Cape in European shipping, and moved inland on a scale which caused serious inflation all the way from Kano to Timbuktu. The main limitation on this kind of commerce was the cost of transport. The imports were expensive, and the exports which paid for them had likewise to be luxury items, valuable enough to justify human or animal portage – gold and copper, ivory, palm-oil, coffee, copra, ostrich

INTRODUCTION

feathers and rare skins, and of course the continuing traffic in slaves, no longer significant in the intercontinental trade, but still a vital lubricant of most of the internal long-distance commerce of Africa. In the long run, a breakthrough into bulk trading of primary produce against cheap manufactured goods could only come through the development of mechanical transport. In the short term, the indigenous caravan trade continued to grow through most of the period dealt with here. The early years of colonial rule merely added somewhat to the volume of goods that had to be carried long distances by men and beasts.

Besides the economic opening up of Africa by the extension of the traditional caravan trade, there was also detectable a parallel growth of political paramountcies, which continued through most of the period under review, and which constituted an important part of the context in which European colonisation took place. The most obvious examples are the conquests of Menelik, undertaken first as king of Shoa and later as emperor, which more than doubled the territory of Christian Ethiopia. In this case, the systematic rearmament of the Ethiopian forces with western weapons was effective enough to bring about the defeat of the Italians in 1896 and to secure the freedom of the country from further European aggression until 1935. Other instances of African imperialism were shorter lived, but at least as significant while they lasted. There was Khedive Ismā'īl's attempt to found a North-East African empire extending to the Great Lakes and the Indian Ocean, and the simultaneous attempt of Sultan Bargash to extend the dominions of Zanzibar from the Indian Ocean coast into the East African interior. More typical, however, were the loose, military overlords created by the magnates of the caravan trade to safeguard the sources of their wealth. Especially where traditional polities were small and weak, traders defended themselves by travelling with armed escorts and establishing fortified depots for their goods. From there, it was a short step to taking hostages or seizing cattle in order to assure the supply of ivory, slaves or rubber at attractive prices, and this in turn often led on to the trader settling down as ruler, taking tribute from the indigenous population by military means. Such were the origins, to name but a few, of Msiri's empire in Katanga, of Tippu Tip's between the Lualaba and the Lomami, of al-Zubayr's on the Bahr al-Ghazal, of Rabah's in Kanem, of Samory's on the upper

INTRODUCTION

Niger. All these hegemonies reached the peak of their power within our period, and together they probably affected the lives of more people than the nascent colonial states which were eventually to supersede them. Some of these hegemonies were, like the Mahdist state in the Sudan and the movement of Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh Hasan in Somalia, the direct result of militant Islamic protest against alien and infidel encroachment. Such hegemonies could ultimately be destroyed by European armed force; but not the ideas and attitudes that had generated them. Mahdism and other militant manifestations of Islam often survived colonial conquest as a major influence upon the political behaviour of Muslim populations. The fear that this survival might once more generate major resistance, perhaps on a scale uncontrollable by local power-resources, was often a real constraint upon the policy of early colonial administrations, whose ‘internal security’ was almost always precarious.

Militantly Islamic hegemonies were by no means the only forces emanating from the world of Islam which took part in the ‘alternative’, internal, scramble for Africa. Moreover, there can be no doubt that in the period treated in this volume Islamic religious propaganda, and Islamic knowledge of the wider world, were vastly more significant than the incipient Christian rivalry. In the northern third of Africa the cultural predominance of Islam of course survived without difficulty. Here Islamic preponderance had long been established, sometimes for many centuries; and political prudence often constrained colonial governments to discourage or even prohibit the deployment of the full panoply of missionary education even in the later colonial period. In the middle third of Africa, however, the situation was very different, and had the forces of the alternative scramble been allowed even a little more time to establish themselves, the cultural predominance of Islam might today extend to the Zambezi and the Cunene rather than to the Bahr al-Ghazal and the Niger. It was not only where Muslims seized political power that Islamic influences spread. Where indigenous political systems were strong and centralised enough to afford effective protection to strangers, as in Yorubaland, or Buganda, or among the Yao principalities of the upper Rovuma, Muslim traders and clerics could re-enact the processes of infiltration from above familiar in the Sudanic belt of Africa since medieval times. Where societies were small and weak, like

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

those of eastern Zaïre, the porters and camp followers of the long-distance traders, recruited often from the dregs of society, became the nucleus of a Muslim community which would long outlast the temporal overthrow of the Swahili-Arab masters by a Dhanis or a Chaltin.

Christianity, though still far out-distanced by Islam, was nevertheless another factor in the history of the period, which needs to be distinguished from the secular outreach of the competing European nations. In several key areas of tropical Africa, to the west, the east and the south, Christian missionary propaganda had anything from twenty to fifty years' start of the forces of imperial expansion. Pioneering outposts apart, however, most of the early penetration of the interior regions occurred during the 1870s and the 1880s, and at this stage missionaries from overseas were almost invariably accompanied, if not indeed preceded, by African converts, auxiliaries or independent evangelists from the neighbourhood of the earliest outposts. The spread of the formal cult, inevitably, was slow, depending as it did on long years of language study, on the translation of scripture and liturgy, and on the confrontation of radically different moral and social traditions. Within our period baptised Christians remained few, but what Livingstone called 'the wide sowing of the good seed' was in itself a revolutionary event, particularly in areas little affected by Islam. Even the first, superficial talk of Christianity turned minds and imaginations outward, beyond the immediate circle of small communities, and created an attitude of expectancy and questioning which prepared the way for later change. When colonial governments began to appear on the scene, societies with even the faintest degree of Christian contact were better able to pursue the politics of survival than those which had none. A later generation of colonial Africans would be brought up on the French revolution or the constitutional history of the Tudors and Stuarts. For the last generation of politically independent African tribal societies, it was perhaps more apposite to have heard the story of Jesus, with its background of imperial relationships between the Romans and the Jews.

At the time of its colonisation by Europe, therefore, Africa was, to a greater extent than ever before in its history, opening itself to the outside world as well as being forced open by that world. Its myriad societies were also taking some steps, however

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

inadequate, to improve their own defences. Firearms, long familiar on the Guinea coast and along the sub-Saharan savanna fringe, were now to be found almost everywhere. In most of the larger polities at least the royal bodyguards were so armed. Of course, the weapons traded to Africa were usually out-of-date ones that had been replaced in European armies – usually, but by no means always. From about 1890 Menelik was able to refuse all but the latest models; and from about 1900 Ethiopia became a centre for the distribution of up-to-date firearms through much of north-eastern Africa. Again, there were no machine-guns in any African armoury. But until about 1890, when the Maxim gun came on to the market, there was no effective automatic weapon in any European armoury either. Of course, in any conflict, forces with modern equipment had the advantage of African armies many times their number. But the fact is that the military resources of colonial governments during the first twenty years of their existence were almost ridiculously inadequate also. Johnston was sent to ‘rule’ Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia in 1891 with a force of seventy Sikh soldiers seconded from a Punjab regiment and commanded by a single British subaltern. Lugard, as the first British high commissioner for Northern Nigeria in 1898, had two thousand African troops of the West Africa Frontier Force, led by less than a score of British officers and NCOs, with which to establish his authority over the Fulani empires of Sokoto and Gwandu, as well as over a host of independent ethnic societies. Clearly, in circumstances like these, no conceivable degree of superiority in weapons and training could enable a so-called ‘government’ to lay down the law to its subjects. With skilful management, it might just be able to protect its headquarters and its main line of communications with the outside world. But any wider operations to meet the inevitable challenges to its authority could only be undertaken on the basis of alliances formed with some of its ‘subjects’ against some others. Levies drawn from ‘friendly tribes’ were a regular feature of early colonial warfare, and they were rewarded with booty seized under the eyes of the colonial authority. In any balanced view of the period, therefore, an embryo colonial government was but one of many forces jostling for power in a given region. During their early years several of them came to the very brink of disaster and had to be rescued by special expeditionary forces, like those sent to Madagascar in 1894, to Asante in 1896 and 1900, to Uganda in

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

1897, to German East Africa in 1888 and 1905, to German South West Africa in 1904. In the end, after twenty years of training and experience, and following the development of rapid communications by road and rail, colonial forces became more adequate to their task; but that situation was not reached in many parts of tropical Africa during the period treated here. And meanwhile the military potential of the African subjects, whether friendly or hostile, remained of great importance.

Essentially, then, early colonial governments in Africa were *weak* governments, and they were so because the European powers which controlled them were not sufficiently interested in their new possessions to subsidise stronger governments. During the period under review, the colonial powers were mainly concerned in reserving tropical African territories for possible development in the future. Meanwhile, all that mattered was that they should be as nearly as possible financially self-supporting, while maintaining enough internal security to command the respect of neighbours and rivals. The functions of colonial governments were thus seen as very limited. Ideally, the process involved the creation of a viable nucleus, either on the coast or, in the case of an inland territory, in some strategically central area. The populations of the nuclear area were seen as allies. They paid tax at an earlier stage than others, but they enjoyed the privileges of the trusted intermediary. All innovations, like roads and schools, reached them first, and the colonial government by taking its tithe of their prosperity, was gradually able to extend the administered area outwards until it reached the frontiers. In practice, things seldom worked out quite so conveniently. Those living beyond the pale did not always sit down quietly to await their incorporation. They raided caravans, or they cut down telegraph wires to turn them into bangles and necklaces, or they crossed the borders and threatened neighbouring colonial governments, and so they had to be 'dealt with' forcibly and out of due turn, sometimes by the despatch of a special, and very expensive, expeditionary force which put the colonial revenues quite out of kilter. Nevertheless, large areas in most African colonies did continue to administer themselves throughout our period with little more than an occasional glimpse of the new masters. Early colonial governments divided, but it can hardly be said that they ruled.

It was only, in fact, at the northern and southern extremities

INTRODUCTION

of the continent that a different kind of colonialism, initiated much earlier, and centring around the perceived interests of substantial bodies of European migrants, had, at least by the end of our period, established full governmental control over the lives of the indigenous Africans. In the case of Algeria, the decisive transition from military rule of most of the native population to civil administration conducted in the interests of the French settlers, occurred with the transfer of soldiers to the metropolis during the Franco-Prussian war. It continued with the great land seizures following the suppression of the al-Muqrānī rebellion. In southern Africa, although the history of white settlement was so much longer, the vital transition from a situation of wary coexistence between various European and African polities to one of comprehensive conquest, incorporation and the authoritarian rule of black societies by whites, was almost contemporary with that in Algeria. The precipitating factor in this case was mineral development, which led to a rapid reinforcement of the white population, to a surging demand for black labour in the industrial areas, to a rapid extension of the railway system and to an agricultural revolution stimulated by the food requirements of the new towns. All this made for the formation of a southern African colonial system which, as we now know, was to prove uniquely resilient by comparison with the rest of the continent. But that uniqueness was by no means so apparent to contemporaries, for whom developments in southern Africa could just as well have been a portent of what was to happen elsewhere. The mineral resources of southern Africa were, after all, not unique: a comparable situation existed round the Copperbelt. And, minerals apart, the southern African pattern of colonialism was widely assumed to be reproducible wherever Europeans were prepared to commit themselves to migration and settlement. The great nineteenth-century migrations to North America and Australasia were still fresh in the European memory. If, as Cecil Rhodes and so many others imagined, that trend were to continue into the twentieth century, then all Africa, and particularly all Africa south of the equator, might prove to be the next major destination. That it did not in the event prove to be so, was in large measure due to the response of the tropical African peoples to the alternative, much weaker style of colonialism established in their midst.

Enough has been said to show that much of the significance

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

of the period 1870–1905 in African history arises from local situations. Hence, most of the volume is composed of regionally rather than thematically oriented chapters. It should perhaps be explained that the volume was planned, and the contributors chosen, by Professor Sanderson, who was the original volume editor. It is well known that collaborative works are subject to the hazard that the speed of production cannot be faster than that of the slowest contributor. When contributors are chosen from the leading figures in the field, it is almost inevitable that death, promotion or competing literary obligations will remove or delay some of them at an embarrassingly late stage in the programme. Often, it is the volume editor who has to step into the breach. On this occasion, however, it was the volume editor himself who found himself too burdened by other duties both to maintain the momentum of production among his colleagues and to write the two important chapters which stood against his name. It was in these circumstances that one of the general editors, Professor Oliver, was asked in 1982 to take over the remaining editorial responsibilities. He did so in the knowledge that progress on the volume had already been overtaken by that on volumes 7 and 8 which had been intended to follow it, and that, in the interests of completing the series within a reasonable time, some unevenness of presentation and coverage would have to be accepted. Professor Deschamps, for example, had shortly before his death written a chapter on Madagascar which was rather more concerned with the history of colonial administration than most other chapters. Professor Person likewise became ill and died before his contribution was quite complete. It will be noticed that the French contributors have proved much readier than their English colleagues to observe the editorial request to keep footnote references to a minimum. Ideally, of course, a volume editor should have all the draft contributions on his desk together, and in time for co-ordinating changes to be made: in practice, it is doubtful whether any editor of a collaborative work has ever enjoyed such a privilege. The production line of a great university press may be more accommodating than some others, but in the end there comes a moment when it, too, must be served.

CHAPTER 1

AFRICA ON THE EVE OF PARTITION

A. NORTH OF THE EQUATOR

It has become a truism of historical writing to conceive of Africa in the course of the nineteenth century as becoming increasingly a part of, and a product of, the expansion of Europe, which, beginning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, had integrated ever larger areas of the world into a single economic system. In attempting an overview of the state of the continent on the eve of partition – roughly over the decade of the 1870s – a large number of questions arise from a consideration of this truism. To what extent was Africa already an adjunct of an economic system dominated by Europe? What was the relationship between Africa and this European system – was it one of an equal or an unequal exchange of commodities? To what extent was Africa dependent economically, if not yet politically? What social and ideological changes were beginning to follow from this dependency? Was Africa a fruit ripe for plucking in the 1870s, was there a certain inevitability about the forthcoming imperialist carve-up, or was partition an extraneous historical occurrence forced upon a continent which had within it other options for coping with the future?

There are no answers to these questions that are at the same time simple and sensible. Certainly the answers to all such queries will differ, according to the region of Africa which is under scrutiny. Even within particular regions, the situation of individual states, societies or groups of people, their relations with each other and with the outside world (especially with the European capitalist economies) varied greatly. To avoid empty generalisations, an overview of the African 1870s is bound not only to break down the continent regionally, but also to explore themes such as independence or dependence of action among the diverse and changing societies who lived within these regions.