

HUTUS & TUTSIS

The History of the Rwanda The African Divide



The colonization of Africa had a severely negative impact on both the continent and its people. By the mid 1800s, the western powers had established colonies all along the African coast.

Africa provided a source of cheap labor, raw materials and new markets for these countries. These colonizing powers, however, began to compete with each other over control.

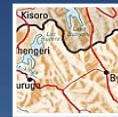
They decided to hold a conference to set up ground rules for colonizing Africa. In 1884, leaders from 14 colonial powers held the Berlin Conference where they divided the continent of Africa and claimed them for themselves. These divisions were made without any consideration of the common culture, history and language shared by different groups of African people. As a result, people of common ethnic groups were

separated by national borders and warring ethnic groups were brought under the same government.

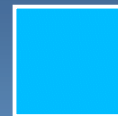
The region that became the country of Rwanda was given to Germany. German colonists arrived in Rwanda in the 1890s and found a centrally governed and efficiently run country made up of people who shared a common culture, language and religious beliefs.

MAIN IDEAS

Rwanda History



Rwandans shared a common culture and had an organized government.



Belgian colonists divided the people of Rwanda into 3 different racial classifications.



The Belgians thought that the Tutsis were a superior people because they were more "white."



The Hutus gained power and oppressed the Tutsis, using racial classification that was used against them.

RACIAL CLASSIFICATION AND COLONIALISM

After World War I, Belgium gained control of Rwanda. In order to strengthen their control, the Belgian colonists divided Rwanda's unified population into three distinct groups: Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa.

The colonists created a strict system of racial classification. The Belgians thought that the Tutsi were a superior group because they were more "white" looking. The colonists believed that the Tutsi were natural rulers, so they put only Tutsis into positions of authority and discriminated against Hutus and Twa.

The Hutus, who make up about 85% of Rwanda's population, were denied

higher education, land ownership and positions in government. By the 1950s, their resentment had grown. Tutsis, who were in power, also began to feel resentment. They resented the colonial rule of the Belgians and wanted to be even more independent. After World War II, Tutsi elites grew impatient and became more aggressive in their pursuit of independence.

The Belgians feared that their colonial rule was coming to an end. Some colonial rulers felt that by favoring the Hutu and trying to take back some power from the Tutsi, they could remain in power longer.



The Belgians thought that the Tutsis were a superior people because they were more "white."

The History of Rwanda Questions:



- 1) Why did the Belgians create a rigid system of racial classification?
- 2) Which group of people did the Belgians think were a superior group? Why did they think they were a superior group?
- 3) Predict how a divided Rwanda could lead to tension among the Hutus and Tutsis?