

**AFRICAN NATIONALISM FROM THE COLONIAL PERIOD TO THE POST
COLONIAL PERIOD**

AFRİKA'DAKİ MİLLİYETÇİLİK KOLONYAL DÖNEMİNDEN POSTKOLONYAL DÖNEM

Jean-Philippe GUNN

Süleyman Demirel University, History department, filgunn@gmail.com, Isparta/Turkey

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to develop the process of African nationalism from the colonial to the postcolonial period. The nationalism as a movement started in Africa during the colonization and was against this form of domination. The beginning of this movement has started indirectly at the first step of the colonization by the resistance of some Kings who wanted freedom of their lands and people. The political and social movements that brought nationalism movement in the continent appeared after the Second World War and permitted the African colonies to achieve independence. During the decolonization period, the desire to be a nation was a reality and the process of national identity was on the way. The postcolonial period was not the same as the former period and nationalism's aspect have changed in the African countries. Instead of being a common spirit to be cherished, nationalism became source of conflict based on ethnic problems. The African leaders were not able to make the dream a reality because they brought new political system which stopped the evolution of the people. The fall of the former Soviet Union and the rise democracy system in political affairs opened the gate to a new nationalism in Africa since 1990.

Keywords: Nationalism, National identity, Colonialism, Postcolonial, Single party.

ÖZ

Bu araştırmanın amacı, Afrika milliyetçiliği sürecini sömürgeci ve sonrası dönemi geliştirmektir. Milliyetçilik bir hareket olarak Afrika'da sömürgecilik zamanda başlamıştır. Bu hareketin başlangıcı, topraklarının ve halklarının özgürlüğünü isteyen bazı kralların direnişiyle kolonizasyonun ilk adımında başladı. Afrika'da milliyetçilik hareketini getiren siyasal ve toplumsal hareketler, İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra ortaya çıkmıştır. Afrika sömürgelerinin bağımsızlığa kavuşmasına izin verdi. Dekolonizasyon döneminde, ulus fikri güçlü olmuş ve ulusal kimlik inşa etmeye başlamıştır.. Postkolonyal dönem, önceki dönemle aynı değildi ve milliyetçilik konusu Afrika ülkelerinde değişti. Milliyetçilik etnik sorunlara dayalı bir çatışma kaynağı oldu. Afrikalı liderler hayali gerçeğe dönüştüremediler çünkü halkın evrimini durduran yeni bir politik sistem getirdiler. Eski Sovyetler Birliği'nin çöküşü ve siyasi ilişkilerde yükselen demokrasi sistemi, 1990'dan beri Afrika'da yeni bir milliyetçiliğin kapısını açtı.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Milliyetçilik, Ulusal Kimlik, Sömürgecilik, Postkolonyalizm, tek parti

1. INTRODUCTION

During the second part of the XIXth century the African continent has faced the beginning of a new kingdoms territories have been shared and changed to colonies at the Berlin Conference in 1884 and all of them have been administrated under European rules and laws. Since that date, the type of domination from European countries such as Great Britain, France, Germany, Spain, and Portugal. All these powerful countries have brought a new system and new concept of domination called colonization. Most of the African people who were living free in their own territories before that period were forced to accept this new domination and all his avatars. The former African colonization started and Africans have been forced to obey and all the local social structures have been transformed and also destroyed. From the beginning of the domination, most of African people show some resistances and faced the invaders through battles and wars and this kind of reactions against colonization was the introduction to the nationalism in Africa. The coming of the colonization through domination permits the Africans to resist and to refuse this domination during the first

periods of the colonization. After the conquest of the territories and the fixing of the borders between every colony at approximately at 1900, the European's administration started and gave legal status to the Africans. So the Africans were called people from Gold Coast Colony, Togo colony, Belgian Congo colony, Nigeria colony. When the colonial system has arrived to its domination aspects, the nationalism spirit has started in the African societies and has provoked the process of decolonization and after the independence of most of African colonies in 1960. After the independence, new states were created and another form of nationalism has been established in the perspective of the creation of nations. The principal argument of this research is to develop the process that permitted the rise of nationalism and its evolution during the colonial and post colonial periods. To understand this argument, two fundamental questions need to be asked. How nationalism has been established in Africa during the colonization? What are the different processes that permit Africans to claim nationalism during colonization and after?

The main goal of this work is to show the causes of the birth of nationalism in Africa and how it has been done up to the independencies but also to identify the other form of nationalisms that appeared in the postcolonial African states. In other words, this work has the objective to study through a long period the process of sentiment to belong to a nation.

The methodology of this research is based on a specific literature about the question. Documentation about concepts of nation, nationalism, resistance, has been consulted and specific documents related to different processes of African nationalism throughout the colonization and the post independent constituted the foundation of the research. The review of the literature and the methodology outlined four stages of this work. Firstly, the definition of some concepts related to this topic will be explained, secondly, the different African resistances against colonization which will be pointing out. The third part will focus on the process of nationalism in Africa under domination and finally the nationalism spirit in the new African states.

2. DEFINITION OF SOME CONCEPTS

“Nationalism”, according to Benedict Anderson “is the expression of national feeling; the expression of a radically changed form of consciousness” (Anderson, 1991:142) and it is also “the awakening of a nation to self-consciousness: it invents nation where they do not exist” (Gellner, 1999). The definition of the concept of nationalism brings out the term nation which can be identified like a geographical or economical entity in which live several people who have the willing to live together and to share cultural and historical values. A nation is consent, a desire of communities to live together, the share of good or bad sacrifices as Renan¹ has stated in his conference in Sorbonne in 1882. In other words, nationalism means a willing of a community to create a State-nation and to develop it like it wants. The feeling of nationalism implies also solidarity among people of a nation and permits them to defense the city but also the culture and commons traditions (Oyeleran, 1981:268-273).

The concept of nationalism appeared in Europe especially in Western Europe during the 19th century where sovereign states have developed a strongly feelings. Between the 15th and 18th century, a national patriotism developed within the political nation of the ruling elites as an important coagulation element in the construction of the early-modern states (Woolf, 1996:8). In the construction of theses states, a movement was born which name is nationalism. Nationalism can be defined as an ideological movement, for the achievement of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, and in the perspective to become a nation (Smith, 1971). A part of being a movement, nationalism is a result of some modern process like capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, secularism and also from the emergence of the modern bureaucracy state (Özkırıklı, 2010:72). The economic aspect is not the only factor in the definition of nationalism. It is also a certain form of political attitude in the context of the modern state and the modern state system and can be considered as a « *state of mind as the expression of national consciousness, as a political doctrine elaborated by intellectuals* ». The conclusion of this political movement is the search of an identity (Breuille, 1993:1). In this matter, power as a factor is the main argument in the nationalism movement in the perspective to control the state. For this reason John Breuille defines nationalism as a « *political movement seeking of exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments* » (Breuille, 1993:2) which are the existence of a nation, the importance or priority of the interest of this nation, or the nation must be independent with the attainment of political sovereignty. Conscription, domination and other political changes can bring people to nationalism and to take a political interest in the world.

¹ Ernest, Renan, 1882, *What is a nation?*

The process of nationalism should be sought in the general process of historical development since the end of the 18th century. Nationalism derives from some political, economical and social transformations in Europe in the last 19th century. According to Umut Ozkirimli, nationalism is a political movement which is seeking an exercising state power through the justification of nationalists' arguments and actions such as coordination, mobilization and legitimacy (Özkirimli, 2010:88).

The economical transformation in the coming of nationalism was the role of the elites or the intelligentsia to persuade the mass to take the short way. This short way is the contestation of the form assumed by progress as they were setting out the progress themselves. The middle class or the intelligentsia has to invite the masses into history and it has to be written in the language they understood (Kedourie, 1971; Smith, 1971). The economic factor breaks down the local system and put out the control of local and traditional in the society. The formation of new working class especially in town and also a working migration from rural places to town have a great mobilization effect on rural populations which permits a mobilization of the mass, the public in the process of nationalism (Breuilly, 1993:19-20). The urban working class is composed by a group of persons in the society known as intellectuals or elites but also the «*petite bourgeoisie*». The members are liberal professionals like clerical workers, teachers, lower level managers, supervisors and they are educated and have some skills like literacy, administrative and legal training, journalist and speakers. Those skills are the basic in their political leadership in the nationalist movement. The urban working class has been an important political factor because they are hostile to the growth of large unregulated market, large scale units of production commerce. In fact they are preserving their interests against the negative aspect of the economic system and their concentration in town and level of education permit them to play a major role in popular and political movement. Nationalism is a political movement which has its roots in the contestation of economical systems under the leadership of the middle working class in the perspective of a new system of governance.

The defense of the nation through nationalism's feeling brings some resistances if the community is in front of strangers and is about to be under domination. In some cases the nationalism has been showed throughout conflicts.

When the Europeans came with the spirit of colonization, they faced some resistances from Africans who just want to save their territories and communities.

3. THE AFRICAN RESISTANCES AGAINST EUROPEAN COLONIZATION, THE BEGINNINGS OF NATIONALISM 1884-1900

The resistance movement against the European presence was general in Africa and every geographical territory of the continent has been embedded into this form of resistance. The resistance toward colonialism has its origin at the beginning of the imperialism in Africa. The colonialism has brought deeply negative changes into the African societies. For so many centuries, the relations between Africans and Europeans were based on trades as we have foretold and every party has taken benefit from these activities. But with the industrial revolution in Europe in the XIXth century, the win-to-win economic system has been changed into a new capitalist system based on imperialism and domination. This new system brought colonialism at a large scale in Africa. The new techniques brought by the Industrial Revolution such as the railway, the telegraph and steamboat have helped the Europeans to take advantages of the situation (Ranger, 1987:67). They used these new techniques to go inside the countryside and to take benefit of everything. The African states and kingdoms which existed at that time were found in front of foreign adversaries. The political sovereignty of the African and also the cultural values have been seriously affected. This position has been stated by Ferhat Abbas saying that the colonialism was «*a veritable revolution which has changed an old system of thoughts and beliefs, a secular mode of existence. It places people in front of a sudden change. The populations, without any preparation, were obliged to cope with or to perish*». (Boahen, 1987:21-38).

The ideology of the resistance was based on two fundamental factors. The first factor was political and related to the preservation and safeguard of the sovereignty of kings and people. The colonization has reduced and destroyed the sovereignty of African people and once the lost of it has been done and the people is subject to a foreign culture then «*he lost the right to administrate himself, the freedom to choose what he can change in his culture, do adopt or to reject from another culture*» (Ranger, 1987:70). During the colonization, especially at the beginning in the XIXth century, the political African States have lost their power, their independence and their identity was in danger. This political factor was one of the origins of the resistances against colonialism in Africa.

The second factor about the ideology of African resistances was the religion. The religious thoughts whether it is an African religion or Christianity or Islam have permitted to Africans to legalize their opponent to colonialism. The legitimacy of African rulers was held by religious rituals. To defend the sovereignty, the Africans, usually, relied on religious symbols and concepts. In fact, the religious symbols and rituals were linked to the question of sovereignty and legitimacy (Ranger, 1987:73-74). The introduction of a new political system by the colonization is a provocation of the local religious and cultural values in Africa. To save the religion and the culture, the Africans entered into opposition with the colonialism. The resistances are not against the White man but against the system which is on the way to destroy the cohesion in African communities. Some African rulers used Islamic religion to organize resistance against the colonialism. They saw the colonialism as a form of destruction of the social and economic autonomy. Rulers like Cheikh Ahmadu Bamba or Samory Toure have shown resistance in the way to protect « *Islam for the corruptive forces of European rule* ». They fought colonialism, not against French colonizers, but against European culture and colonial politics².

In the second period of the 19th century, European countries with the spirit of imperialism came to Africa in order to conquer and to bring to Africans the 'Civilization'. In the search of territories in the way to create colonies in Africa, most of the European imperialist countries faced resistances from African people who were living in their own territories. Most of the resistances have been active because all the Africans have the desire to maintain their own cultural, social and political values independent of foreign domination. They saw the European culture as a danger against their social order. The people in West Africa like the Ashanti in Ghana, the Kabye and Tchokossi in Togo, the people of Danhomey in Benin, the Hehe of Tanzania, the Zulus in South Africa showed a strong determination to preserve their identity and culture and their lands against invaders who were the Europeans.

In 1890, the Yeo people in Tanzania have showed an active resistance to German forces and their King said this words:

I have listened to your words but can find no reason why I should obey you—I would rather die first. . . . If it should be friendship that you desire, then I am ready for it, today and always; but to be your subject, that I cannot be. . . . If it should be war you desire, then I am ready, but never to be your subject. . . . I do not fall at your feet, for you are God's creature just as I am . . . I am Sultan here in my land. You are Sultan there in yours. Yet listen, I do not say to you that you should obey me; for I know that you are a free man. . . . As for me, I will not come to you, and if you are strong enough, then come and fetch me³.

As we have said it, the African people under the rule of their King fight against the introduction of the colonization and the example of Prempeh I the king of Ashanti who refused to accept the protection of the English. He has been deported to India but the Ashanti people continued to resist about 90 years in front of the British. The Mogho Naaba, the King of the Mossi people in Burkina Faso said to the French Captain:

I know the whites wish to kill me in order to take my country, and yet you claim that they will help me to organize my country. But I find my country good just as it is. I have no need of them. I know what is necessary for me and what I want. I have my own merchants. . . . Also consider yourself fortunate that I do not order your head to be cut off. Go away now, and above all, never come back⁴.

All those statements from different African Kings reveal that the people want to be independent in their own land and they saw a danger against their culture that is why they entered into resistance. The resistances are in fact an expression of national sentiment against foreign occupation and this nationalism has been demonstrated for several years. But unfortunately the Europeans didn't leave Africa but they stayed and finally colonized the continent.

4. AFRICAN NATIONALISM UNDER DOMINATION: ORIGINS AND PROCESSES 1900-1960

After the so called 'pacification' of the African continent in the beginning of the 20th century, colonies appeared and different ethnic peoples and cultures were forced to live in territories with borders. So from the

² Benjamin, Talton, "African resistance to colonial rule", *Africana Age*. URL:<http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-resistance.html>.

³ See *African nationalism and the struggle for freedom*,

[http://www.africanafican.com/folder15/alot%20more%20of%20african%20&%20african%20american%20history16/misc/0130918431\(1\).pdf](http://www.africanafican.com/folder15/alot%20more%20of%20african%20&%20african%20american%20history16/misc/0130918431(1).pdf).

⁴ See *African nationalism and the struggle for freedom*.

year 1900, the colonization has started effectively in Africa and Africans were under different European political administration.

The origin of African nationalism also started at that period because Africans faced lot of problems under the oppression. The colonial policies led to the growth of African unhappiness through force labor, high taxation, land alienation for example in Togo and Namibia under German colonization, racial discrimination, slashing etc. All those bad attitudes made African hate the colonial masters and the colonial system and nationalism feeling has started growing in their heart.

In the African context, the nationalism as a movement has been under the control of the African elites. It is a natural response to foreign oppression and exploitation through imperialism and colonialism (Kedourie, 1971:1) but also the creation of a new type of political and social entity which are adapted to the local environment. Nationalism in Africa can be seen as the means by which colonialism was brought to an end (Breuilly, 1993:156). It has been stated that colonialism brought to Africa modernization but also has destroyed the traditional structure and rose up a new type of social class constituted by the intelligentsia, a bourgeoisie and a small urban working class who are an interest group and the members have in common a finance and economic system in the colonial period (Smith, 1971: 74). This group of African intellectuals, who were well educated, spread the spirit of nationalism to the other group by using the mass media, especially newspapers and literacy to reach the masses.

Nationalism in Africa was the result of the colonial economic status in Africa because the traditional economic system has been affected seriously due to the European capitalist method which brought African into the world economy (Smith, 1971: 71). This new system is no more suitable to the Africans who have started having reaction against colonialism and from these reactions appeared nationalism as a movement in reaction to the wealth of the imperial rules (Kedourie, 1971: 19-23).

Nationalism in Africa has been established through western education who led to the rise and growth of African nationalism. Few African who went to school acquired colonial language like French or English, and communication became very easy between different tribes. The educated African was a product of the social 'revolution' (Ajayi, 1972: 513-527) initiated by the Christian missions in the 19th century. The missionaries introduced european ideas of nation-building and they also educated the Africans who imbibed these ideas. The Africans became a "Christian-cum-middle-class citizens". The impact of the missionaries' education in Africa since the 19th century has been explained by Toyin Falola in the following words:

Missionary education produced new elite, different in its mode of thinking and skills from the indigenous and Islamic intelligentsia. Bookbinding, printing, carpentry, and smithing were some of the new skills associated with this elite. To some extent, a new "industrial class" was also being created (Falola, 2001:23).

Some of educated Africans became agent of the administration but the majority of the student became teachers, translators, doctors, agent of the private sectors in the european companies or other became self-employers like lawyers for example.

As we have seen it, the education system was not only the fabric of the colonial administration. It has been also the product of the African who really knew the importance of this system in the construction of an identity. For sure, education has created local elite who became a group of person in the dynamism of the society according to their social level. They became the example for the uneducated people and the reference at that time. The students who finished their education in the colonial schools will become the political force that will contest the colonial order in the perspective of the independence of the african colonies.

These educated African like Kwame N'krumah in Ghana, Nmandi Azikiwe in Nigeria, Milton Margai in Sierra Leone, Dawda Jawara in Gambia, Sylvanus Olympio in Togo, Julius Nyerere in Tanzania⁵etc., constituted later the elite and they used political, economical and social skills to generate new generation of Africans into political agitation and actions. The colonization through education brought his own destruction and Benedict Anderson stated that «*the 19th century colonial States engendered the nationalisms that eventually arose to combat it*»(Anderson, 1991). The result was the emergence of nationalist movements through political parties (Ademola, 2012: 66-72) in Africa like Tanu⁶ party in Tanzania, Cut⁷ in Togo.

⁵For more informations, consult, Elie Mambou, 'L'origine et l'expansion du nationalisme en Afrique occidentale anglophone dans *Imagined Communities* de Benedict Anderson', pp. 6-8, www.revue-sociologie.org.

⁶Tanganika African National Union created in 1954 in Tanzania.

⁷Comité de l'Unité Togolaise, founded in 1946 in Togo.

The Second World War was another factor which encourages African nationalism. Lot of Africans were enrolled in French and British armies, as soldiers and they knew the use of guns, the military weakness of white people, and also they were influenced by American soldiers about democracy and freedom (Ibhawoh, 2007: 221-243). War propaganda provided an opportunity for Britain to rally her West African subjects against Nazi system but this war also permitted the African elites to articulate their nationalist demands about freedom and self-determination that underline British war propaganda.

The 1940s was an era of growing anti-colonial nationalism and colonial regimes across Africa were under intense pressure from organized nationalist movements for independence led by an emergent class of educated African elites who saw the war as an opportunity to put pressure and to obtain the independence of colonies (Ibhawoh, 2007:224). The war and his effects directed the minds of Africans more on liberation and independence and it has strengthened the sense of nationalism and hastened the emergence of African political voices in several ways (Ibhawoh, 2007:238).

Another factor involved in African nationalism was the position of the American President Franklin Roosevelt and the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in Atlantic Charter in 1941. The two leaders declared that they respected the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they want to live. The statement of the two leaders gives hopes to African nationalists to affirm their right to self-determination and independence (Ibhawoh, 2007:239).

African nationalism has been also spread in the opinion through newspaper in urban and commercial centers like Lagos and Calabar in Nigeria, Accra in Gold Coast⁸, Lome in Togo, Freetown in Sierra Leone, Banjul in Gambia. The contributions in the newspapers were the products of teachers and civil servants who used local newspapers as platforms for the expression of nationalism.

From the end of the Second World War in 1945, the colonial system has changed and nationalist leaders in Africa took the opportunity to demonstrate their willing for freedom. The process of the decolonization has started and it will continue to the independence of many former colonies into new states in 1960.

5. THE POSTCOLONIAL NATIONALISM IN AFRICA

After the independence of the African colonies in the 1960s, the nationalism has been showed in different ways. The leaders of the new African states have approved the colonial borders and the colonial identity orders. In fact, the new leaders wanted to change the 'colonial State' into a 'national State'. At the beginning of the independence, the African states were ruled under the regime of multi-party system because the situation at this period was exceptional and marked by a political and social effervescence. But the nationalism movement that has conducted to the independence has been changed into another type of political movement under the direction of the new leaders. For them, the reasons of these political changes were based on difficulties of the construction of a national State because the African states were composed by multiple ethnic groups and cultures and development projects were impossible to realize with multi-party system (M'bokolo, 1985:335-336). The African countries of the years 1960-1989/90 have been under the rules of the one-party system. The idea of this political system was to build a strong State and to get together all the citizens with a unique project in the construction of a national identity (Kalala, 1999-2000) and also a Nation-state. The aims of the African leaders at this time were to cancel the ethnicity spirit in the mind of Africans by changing their mentality in the construction of the nation-state. For doing so, the citizens supposed to look at the same direction and believe in their leaders by accepting to live under the single party system. The post-colonial period has seen the emergence of this political system in many African countries especially during the 1970s. These became "Mass party" and had the mission to teach the mass, animate the political and social life and magnify the leader of the party as the "Supreme Guide" of the population (M'bokolo, 1985:336-337). The "mass nationalism" has been settled in some African countries like Togo, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and also in central Africa like ex Zaire of Mobutu actual Democratic Republic of Congo.

The ideology of the post-colonial nationalism in Africa was based largely on the Marxism and socialism. To develop their new states, the African leaders tried to reverse the imperialism's economic. For this purpose, they accepted the communist ideologies under the control of the Soviet Union which the leaders considered as an anticolonial state. But it has been established that the single party system as a foundation of a new nationalism has failed. After 50 years of independence, most of African countries didn't achieve a strong national identity and the construction of a Nation-state. During the independence period in 1960s, the new

⁸ Actual Republic of Ghana.

African states were created with different ethnic communities. Local culture and behaviors are multiple in one artificial state with borders. Africans are more close to their ethnic identity than a national identity. In fact the spirit of nationalism as a basis of a construction of a Nation-state is weak or doesn't exist. This situation was the result of some factors like nepotism, favoritism, clientelism (Kalala, 1999-2000). The spirit who led the nationalism in Africa during the colonization was not the same after the independence periods. The leaders and the population, because of the single party system didn't put the national interest first. They promoted ethnicity, regionalism and religious factors. The African leaders relied on their own ethnic groups rather than the national ones and this behavior broke the national sentiment among the population. The use of the ethnic group as a bond for nationalism provoked ethnic divisions and rivalries but also civil wars, genocide, military coups in some countries like Nigeria, Burundi, Rwanda etc. The fail of the African nationalism was the result of military coups, one-party system, corruption and tyrannical autocrats system.

From the 1980s, however, neo-liberal market doctrine and Structural Adjustment Programs, were established in african politics by eliminating state 'interference' and corruption from economic growth. These programs produced uneven and segmentary globalization with widespread economic decline, social decay and disorder, a weakness of states. They increased corruption and conflicts framed in terms of moral ethnicity and political tribalism. Nationalism became powerfully intertwined with mobilized ethnicity in struggles, not to destroy but control post-colonial states. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, African states were both shadows and portents of the developing global crisis of social diversity and cohesion.

The end of the cold war and the new process of democratization have permitted the emergence of other nationalism in Africa. Ethnic communities in African states were seeking to self-determination in order to take in charge their own destinies. Secessionist nationalist movements have been stronger and are fighting for the control of the state. The collapse of the Soviet Union into fifteen independent republics has been the example of the African secessionist movements to achieve their goal. After the 'mass nationalism' under the single party's rule, nationalism in Africa is actually held under multi-party system where ethnic identity is more used by political leaders to control the state.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can affirm that African nationalism was a product of many factors like primary resistances against colonization but also a product of the colonization itself which permits to Africans to use the system to their profit and to obtain their independence. African nationalism has been a matter of long period and gives to Africans a sentiment of being people of a nation and a State. It is this feeling of consciousness of different ethnic groups which permits the creation of modern State and the birth of new nations in Africa in 1960. After the independence of the African colonies, new states were created and the leaders of the nationalist movements have in charge the administration of the new states. Most of them have been overthrown by military coup and another political system known as one-party system has been instituted. The nationalism spirit has changed into business and ethnic group nationalism. During the colonial period, nationalism spirit was the foundation of the creation of a nation because all Africans wanted to establish self-government which will promote national identity. The fifty seven years of independence of most of African countries showed that nationalism, nation, national identity and Nation-stated are still under construction in the continent.

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