

**COVENANT UNIVERSITY
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*TUTORIAL KIT
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PROGRAMME: SOCIOLOGY

COURSE: SOC 122

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SOC 122: INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN SOCIETIES AND CULTURE

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1. Define culture and identify the role it plays in Africa.
2. What is religion? Identify the functions of religion in Africa?
3. What are social institutions? Identify the various social institutions in Africa and explain one.
4. Why do we study culture?
5. Identify the derogatory remarks used to describe Africans and debunk them?
6. Explain political institution and its contributions to the African society.
7. What are the positive and negative contributions of colonialism in Africa?
8. Do you consider polygyny and polyandry the same in the Africa setting?
9. Differentiate between endogamy and exogamy as systems of marriage.
10. Write short notes on the following:
 - Exogamy
 - Widow Inheritance
 - Avunculocal
 - Levirate

ANSWERS

QUESTION 1: DEFINE CULTURE AND IDENTIFY THE ROLE IT PLAYS IN AFRICA.

Answer

Culture has been defined as an integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon the capacity for symbolic thought and social learning. According to Giddens (2001), culture is the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterises an institution, organisation, group or society.

The Role of Culture in Africa

1. Culture sets standards of behaviour for a group or a given society.
2. Culture defines the structure of relationships.
3. It sets out what society holds as norms and values.
4. It defines our beliefs, who we are and what we hold to be true.
5. Culture determines how people behave and live.
6. It differentiates one society from another.
7. It ensures and guarantees the continuity of society.
8. It aids uniformity among certain groups of people in the society.

QUESTION 2: WHAT IS RELIGION? IDENTIFY THE FUNCTIONS OF RELIGION IN AFRICA?

Answer

According to Brown, religion is everywhere an expression in one form or another of a sense of dependence on power outside ourselves, a power of which we may speak as a spiritual or moral power. Kegley (1981) holds religion as “The attitude or active relationship and actions growing out of that attitude or relationship, towards whatever or whomever an individual and or group of persons take to be of greater value and reality.” This includes belief in God or gods, which differ from one religion to another, and feeling and action (worship). Religion upholds moral values such as patience, honesty, responsibility, loyalty, love, truthfulness, accountability, mercy, kindness, tolerance, and so on.

Functions of religion in Africa

- It introduces a new moral lifestyle that induces sanity in society.
- It provides a moral compass that guides worshippers and adherents.
- It provides emotional stability and instills confidence in devotees.
- It awakens the spiritual consciousness of the African people.
- It helps the people to interact with fellow worshippers/believers.
- It forced political leaders to govern the people in the right way or to work in the interests of the people.
- It brings relative peace among worshippers or people that share the same faith.
- It provides economic livelihood for many as people produce images, religious articles and items that are sold to devotees.

- It aids the introduction of new institutions such as hospitals, schools, a new legal system, a new form of marriage (monogamy), and so on.
- Religion enhances the establishment and maintenance of new social groups among various communities.
- It disseminates ideas and information to the people.
- It transforms society by changing people's cultural beliefs and practices in different ways.

QUESTION 3: WHAT ARE SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS? IDENTIFY THE VARIOUS SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA AND EXPLAIN ONE.

Answer

Social institutions or social structures comprise patterns of social interaction through which culture is transmitted. It is more or less the pattern of relationships within which behaviour is carried out. Social structure, just as social institution, has several components which include social norms, statuses, roles, interactions, groups, among others.

Five basic institutions common virtually to all African societies are:

- Marriage and Family
- Religion
- Education
- Economy
- Politics

QUESTION 7: WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF COLONIALISM IN AFRICA?

Answer

Colonialism is the extension of a nation's sovereignty over territory beyond its borders by the establishment of either settler or exploitation colonies in which indigenous populations are directly ruled, displaced, or exterminated. Colonising nations generally dominate the resources, labour, and markets of the colonial territory, and may also impose socio-cultural, religious, and linguistic structures on the indigenous population.

Negative Contributions of Colonialism in Africa

1. It exploited the resources of the African peoples.
2. Colonialists dehumanised African subjects, turned many to slaves and then ruled the others roughshod according to the dictates of their governments.
3. It was a total subjugation of African institutions to those of the colonisers.

4. Africa was turned into a raw material economy producing economy feeding the industrial production needs of Europe.
5. It weakened the cultural values and ties that African societies had.
6. Many young Africans who could have developed their individual societies were either killed, sold into slavery, converted to the ways of the white man or dehumanised.
7. It lasted for many years in different parts of Africa after which many Africans began to suffer the identity crisis vacillating between thoughts to be African and thoughts to be European.

Positive Contribution of Colonialism

1. It helped in stopping some barbaric customs such as the killing of twins and human sacrifice.
2. It helped to facilitate western mode of modernisation in Africa
3. Africa was integrated into the global financial and economic systems which helped to grow African economies and businesses
4. The introduction of Western education also helped to increase the literacy and numeracy levels of many Africans.
5. Introduction of orthodox medicine and hospitals also improved the health consciousness and wellness of Africans and reduced maternal and infant deaths and diseases.
6. Introduction of technology into such areas as farming in Africa increased food production for the people.
7. The introduction of such concepts as democracy and rule of law improved the governance mechanisms in Africa.

QUESTION 9: DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN ENDOGAMY AND EXOGAMY AS SYSTEMS OF MARRIAGE.

Answer

Endogamy: This means that marriage is allowed within a certain kin-group. In other words, members of a social group are allowed to marry one another, but not one's sister or brother or close kinsmen e.g. members of the Osu Caste system in Eastern Nigeria.

Exogamy: In this marriage, individuals marry outside one's kinsmen. This group is defined in most societies as the clan or lineage. While endogamous practices seek to maintain the purity of the group, conserve the groups properly and keep their solidarity, exogamous practices help to bind various groups together through relationship, first of marriage, and subsequently of blood when children are born. Marriage can also be differentiated on the basis of number and kinds of women or men involved. Two concepts that come to mind are Monogamy and Polygamy.