

Football, Colonialism, and Nationalist Resistance in Anglophone Africa

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Abstract

Football matches are deeply emotional, recreational, cultural and political events for footballers and supporters in Anglophone Africa. Substantial literature demonstrates intricate connections of football fandom, nationalism and political resistance in Africa. This paper is based on a qualitative meta-analysis of extant literature on football fandom, nationalism and political resistance in Anglophone Africa. We argue that literature on football fandom, nationalism and political resistance in Africa is divided into two phases of intellectual production-pre-independence and post-independence. This body of literature largely demonstrates that football fandom is a crucial space where subaltern groups express various forms of nationalism. Moreover, studies also show that football fandom creates a sophisticated system of cultural and political codes which critique and subvert authoritarian political establishments. The paper brings into conversation literature on football, nationalism and resistance literature from seemingly divorced epochs and geographical regions, in order to demonstrate how football was central in fighting for rights of the under-privileged during and after British colonial rule in Africa. We also explore the nuanced arguments that connect this literature, illuminating on how stadium environment allows the downtrodden to freely associate, assemble and associate in authoritarian African contexts. We also examine the extent to which these arguments have metamorphosed over time. Finally, we suggest a possible trajectory future research can focus on especially in this digital age.

Keywords: Anglophone Africa, Football fandom, Resistance, Politics, Nationalism, Resistance