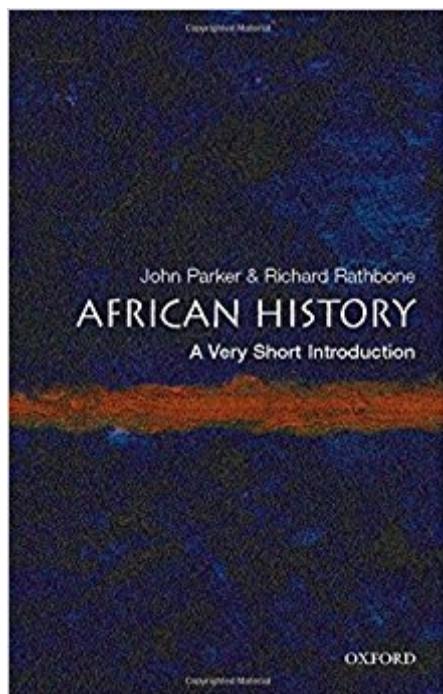


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African History: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

This Very Short Introduction looks at Africa's past and reflects on the changing ways it has been imagined and represented, both in Africa and beyond. The author illustrates important aspects of Africa's history with a range of fascinating historical examples, drawn from over 5 millennia across this vast continent. The multitude of topics that the reader will learn about in this succinct work include the unity and diversity of African cultures, slavery, religion, colonial conquest, the diaspora, and the importance of history in understanding contemporary Africa. The book examines questions such as: Who invented the idea of "Africa"? How is African history pieced together, given such a lack of documentary evidence? How did Africa interact with the world 1,000 years ago? Africa has been known as 'the cradle of mankind', and its recoverable history stretches back to the Pharaohs. But the idea of studying African history is itself new, and the authors show why it is still contested and controversial. This VSI, the first concise work of its kind, will prove essential reading for anyone interested in the African continent and the diversity of human history.

Book Information

Paperback: 144 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (May 1, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0192802488

ISBN-13: 978-0192802484

Product Dimensions: 6.8 x 0.5 x 4.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars 24 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #47,238 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in Books > History > Africa > Central Africa #22 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Africa

Customer Reviews

This small book is a smart and stimulating essay exploring issues of history, sources and methods, Africa in the world, colonialism and postcolonialism, and the past in the present as a means of introducing students and others to academic thinking about African history. * Tom Spear, *Journal of African History* * You will finish this book better informed, with a better understanding of Africa and a clearer idea of the questions. * Robert Giddings, *Tribune* * A very well informed and sharply stated historiography... should be in every historiography student's kitbag. A tour de force... it made me think a great deal. * Terence Ranger, *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* *

John Parker teaches African history at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He specializes in the history of Ghana and is the author of *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* and (with Jean Allman) *Tongnaab: The History of a West African God*. He is currently researching a book on the history of death and burial in Ghana. Richard Rathbone is Honorary Professor of History in the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, and Emeritus Professor in History at the School of Oriental and African Studies. Other books include *Murder and Politics in Colonial Ghana* and *Nkrumah and the Chiefs*.

Appearance: True to its name, this is a small pocket sized book from Oxford with a good and sturdy thick cover.

Content: If you want a standard, linear progression of the African continent, you must walk away. This book is an small academic companion to african historical studies. Not intending to ACTUALLY speak on African history, the authors rather discuss the many problems, theories and experiences of scholars studying African history. It is an AMAZING read and it lifted the proverbial veil from my eyes. I have since gone on to deepen my knowledge of the academic study of history and its many quandries. A good read for any budding academic, geek, African Studies minor, major, student or interested persons.

Categories: African Studies, History. I fully recommend this.

Buy this book because it accomplishes the two prime goals of the state of African history at present anyway: information and agency. The “what” and the “who says” of the discipline which has emerged in our life time (as in “Who high jacked our Africa?”). For example, chapter one is titled “The idea of Africa” and has several subheadings such as “The invention of Africa” before going into more traditional headings such as “The lie of the land.” The last chapter is “Memory and Forgetting.” The usual information is related, and the bibliography is fantastic. All in 160 pages. Remembering how hard it is to write a good 500-word paper, the brevity of the book puts premium on content and deft phrasing. This volume is one of over 200 titles in the series, <http://www.veryshortintroductions.com/>. Did I say “Buy this book”?

Eternal blessings, good customer service, not what I expected

Africa is large and complex and African history is that multiplied many times. There was nothing easy or obvious in the topics covered by author, it all involved great scholarship and mastery of the subject. History and historiography were discussed with just enough background so the person with a casual background could understand but also with enough depth that provided serious learning for the reader. The book dealt with a variety of topics some which I had little background or interest in, but I found them all well worth reading about.

Again a handy reference

This slim volume presents an extremely broad brush of the major points of African history, Details pop up to illustrate a point, but the main thrust is the overall influence (if any) of climate, geography, tribal custom, colonialization, religion, and mineral wealth on history, and how we got to modern Africa. If you are interested in a particular region, people, or event, you'll need to check other works, but this is the big picture well presented and well written.

As the title suggests, this is not an in depth study of the entire continent's history, but an interesting look at how historians and others have thought about and used the history of African nations and peoples for a variety of purposes over time.

I agree with previous reviewers. It helped me teach my Advanced Placement World History students about the themes and opportunities of African History.

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