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INTRODUCTION (3RD EDITION) BY
VINCENT B. KHAPOYA**



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This text provides an interdisciplinary introduction to Africa -- covering its physical attributes, history, social structure, and culture.

From the Back Cover

This book provides an introduction to Africa -- covering its physical attributes, history, social structure, and culture. It emphasizes norms, values, and historical experience as the key variables that define who the people are, rather than labeling them as "tribes." Describes the main traditional cultural forms and institutions found in Africa. Explores the geography and demography of the African continent. Takes a critical look at how the Africans have done since they inherited or recovered political power from the European colonial masters -- the problems they have encountered, the forces that have influenced leaders in their choice of strategies in nation-building or economic development, political and economic reforms.

About the Author

Vincent B. Khapoya is Professor of Political Science at Oakland University.

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The African Experience is the only interdisciplinary survey to examine this region of the world from geographic, linguistic, social, historical, and political perspectives. Drawing on research from all of the social sciences, this text captures Africa in its complex totality. The African Experience helps students develop a comprehensive and critical understanding of Africa, one that allows them to grasp the region's internal dynamics and its evolving place in the world.

- Sales Rank: #495177 in Books
- Published on: 2009-07-24
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.90" h x .80" w x 5.90" l, .76 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 320 pages

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Vincent B. Khapoya is Professor of Political Science at Oakland University.

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18 of 20 people found the following review helpful.

An overview of African history

By A Customer

This is a review of the 1994 edition of the book, of which the 1998 edition is an update:

"The African Experience" is an overview of African history. The backdrop is African political history, but it talks a lot about cultural, social and economic history as well. The first third of the book is about pre-colonial Africa; the middle third is about colonialism to modern times; and the last third is about South Africa and about modern Africa's international affairs.

This book is well organized and is written in a clear, coherent and interesting style. It gives a broad overview, serving as an excellent introduction to the history of Africa as a continent. Although its scope is general, the book does not overlook to explain the details of many significant historical developments. It is generally pan-African in its geographic range of coverage, with an emphasis on sub-Saharan Africa, and a deliberately detailed chapter narrowing in on the history of modern South! Africa.

The tone of the book is that of one who is proud of the African heritage, yet scrupulously avoids distorting historical facts. The author is defiant towards scholars, politicians and other leaders who try to deprecate the worth and significance of Africa and Africans, yet he stays clear of the exaggeration and reverse racism of certain Afro-centric writers and historians. All in all, "The African Experience" is an excellent general resource and definitely worth acquiring.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Very good, but needed some editing

By Christopher Carlson

I'll keep this short and sweet. If you want an introduction into African history, this book is pretty amazing. Content-wise, it's really top-notch, and it explicates both the history of the African experience (with particular attention, of course, to the history of the African people's interaction with European colonial powers) and the modern-day travails of its people. However, the reason it doesn't get five stars is because it was pretty horribly edited (as noted above, and punished too harshly for). Most of the time the grammar isn't too bad, but there are quite a number of glaring exceptions, and they really distract from the reading experience sometimes (and I am not a grammar Nazi of any kind). However, if you focus on the content of the material, it's easy to see why this text is used so widely. Simply put, it's that good.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Five Stars: A brilliant introduction on the History of Africa!

By BlackJack21

My opinion is that Vincent B. Khapoya's "The African Experience" is one of the best sources for ascertaining African history and politics, and it should be read by everyone, particularly White Americans since most of them are uninformed about the many issues that concern a plethora of countries encapsulated in its borders, but according to Khapoya that's starting to change. "People writing about Africa customarily begin with a brief reference to how little Africa is known among Americans. Unlike European powers, the United States never had colonies in Africa, although Liberia (in West Africa) was founded in 1847 by freed African slaves from the United States." Also, the U.S. has maintained relations since then.

In addition, more African immigrants are settling in America today. Also, news events and information are being promulgated in the mainstream media more so then ever before, and even though this is the case "The African Experience" is a pertinent read.

Issues such as the recent Somali Pirates attacking American ships to genocide in Darfur are indeed hot button issues that have made the nightly news. However, I still believe Americans desperately need to try to ascertain what Africa's role on the global main-stage is all about, and how does it factor in our everyday lives. So, I must reiterate that Khapoya's book will lead you in the right direction.

I'll give two examples of just how important Africa really is to American trade and its socioeconomic wellbeing:

The U.S. receives 15% of its oil supply from Nigeria, and 70% of its coco beans from the Ivory Coast for the production of chocolate, and just those two examples alone demonstrates just how important Africa is to our economy. Of course, these products have been acquired by child slave labor, which is iniquitously avarice. However, if these so-called ventures ever collapsed then millions of Americans would lose their jobs. So, if you think we are in a state of economic entropy just because of the central banking institutions; then think

again. What's transpiring now is small potatoes compared to what could really happen if a continent like Africa fell.

Pedagogically, Khapoya demonstrates how this enigmatic "Dark Continent" went from just being inhabited by eclectic tribes to a cultural phenomenon whose vast influences have driven the world's political, economic, and sociological spectrum to such an extent that without Africa as a driving force the world would virtually shut down. This is why during the 15th through the 19th centuries European countries such as Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium and England engaged in exploitation, which I consider it the "African Dark Ages of Slavery and Colonization." This was known in some circles as "Profiteering," which is a euphemism for "Piracy." So, with this thought in mind, you'll quickly fathom that it is impossible to properly teach world history without the Black perspective being included because as stated before, African people were and still are a driving force.

And later, along with the Profiteers the Vatican in the auspices of Europe would propagate their version of Christendom throughout the Dark Continent.

(For the British Empire side of the story I suggest reading, "The Queen's Slave Trader" by Nick Hazelwood.)

It is interesting to note that there are more than 800 languages spoken across Africa. For example some of the primary languages in Nigeria are Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Ibo, Tiv, Kanuri, and English, while the country of Rwanda is primarily French, Kinyarwanda, and Swahili. And as for the country of Somalia, while fluent in Italian, and English their primary language is Somali, plus Arabic and Swahili are two other dialects widely used. And insofar as South Africa is concerned this country's populace is articulate in eleven official languages, which in itself is astounding.

Khapoya also, writes about Ancient Africa, which this includes Ancient Egypt. He alludes to the fact that subsequent to Akhenaten's death the Egyptian Empire was diametrically opposed to his ideas of monotheism, and realistic forms of art and expression.

Of course you can see the sheer impact that monotheism has on the religious dynamic today.

Also, he briefly touches upon Pharaoh Ramses II successful 67-year rule, as well as Ramese XII reign in 1100 B.C.E., plus, Alexander the Great conquering Lower Egypt, which later was ruled by his general Ptolemy whose descendant Cleopatra VII reign was usurped by Octavian aka Augustus Caesar. (For more on this subject I suggest reading Michael Grant's "The Twelve Caesars.")

Medieval Africa is discussed, for example: Khapoya states that, "About 1150 A.D. in Ethiopia, some four centuries after the fragmentation of ancient Axum (a city in Northern Ethiopia,) the first of a new line of emperors (known as the Zagwe dynasty) began to reunite various local kings and Christian monasteries under a single ruler [known as the] "King of kings." In 1270, the Zagwe empire was taken over by a new dynasty of Christian Abyssinian rulers, who claimed royal authority by virtue of being direct descendants of the ancient Israeli King Solomon and Sheba's Queen Makeda."

Furthermore, "they (the Abyssinian rulers) claimed to be of the Davidic lineage, like Christ. The new Solomonic kings were confirmed in office by Christian monks, some of whom also compiled an extensive genealogical document called the Kebra Nagast (Glory of Kings) that served as both a written constitution and historical chronicle for the Abyssinian's Solomonic dynasty," which leads us to the belief that this group of Africans possessed strong ties to Israel.

So, according to Khapoya, Israel has a strong African heritage, considering the fact that the ancient Israelites' origins do stem from Egypt.

The truth is Christianity, Judaism, and Islam were all born out of the chasms of Africa and the Middle East, and if what Khapoya said is true then considering Noah's son Ham allegedly populated Africa demonstrates that the monotheistic beliefs that the majority of the world shares are deeply rooted in the origins of African

culture and history. And all the while, these views seem Afrocentric in nature, however, they are axiomatic conclusions.

Also, Khapoya brings to light that Cecil Rhodes (founder of the Rhodes Scholars and the De Beers corporation) exploited South Africa for its diamond mines, and momentarily, De Beers controls approximately 40% of the diamond industry, while the indigenous South Africans are disenfranchised. This was a result of the Anglo Boer Wars and the defeat of the Zulu nation.

Furthermore, in the 1980's President Reagan showed support for the South African apartheid, which was at variance to what Jimmy Carter attitudes were toward this totalitarian regime prior to Reagan's presidency. Khapoya brings forth both Reagan and Carters positions, but as that debate raged on through the 70's, 80's and early 90's eventually the Boer controlled Apartheid regime collapsed, but what's really interesting is that Khapoya cites that, "Henry Kissinger, the secretary of state, believed that the white minority government was absolutely secure in the long term and in firm control, and that American interest were best served by closer U.S. relations with the South African government. A number of concrete measures were implemented to draw the two countries closer: sales of military equipment to South Africa were increased; the U.S. Export-Import Bank began to guarantee export sales to South Africa."

The U.S. claimed that its main purpose in South Africa was to eradicate Communism and to thwart the so-called terrorist network led by Mandela, and "The African National Congress."

Furthermore Khapoya says, they were "permitting the importation of Rhodesian (Zimbabwe) chrome." Subsequently there were sanctions put in place to root out the white minority government in Zimbabwe, which later led to the aposematic ascension of Robert Mugabe in the 1980's.

The book only briefly touches upon South Africa, Zimbabwe, Libya, Chad, Sudan, and many others. And with its vast history and politics I have to admit it was very difficult to keep up with all of this information. And I'll have to admit I need to explore this subject more closely, and that's why I've purchased "A History of South Africa" by Leonard Thompson, which I haven't read yet, but as soon as I do I'll review it.

Nonetheless, Khapoya talks about the South African elections, Nelson Mandela's ascension to power, and his African National Congress, which Washington D.C. referred to as "One of the more notorious terrorist groups" according to Noam Chomsky in his book "Hegemony or Survival."

And if you want to read about the medical experimentation on South Africans and the bio terrorism that they suffered from then I highly recommend reading "Medical Apartheid" by Harriet A. Washington.

"The African Experience" is pedagogically extreme, while vast in scope. It's full of information, history and antiquity that I find difficult to convey in such a short forum such as Amazon.com. So, scratching the surface is all I can achieve at this juncture.

In conclusion, Khapoya discusses Africa's fight for independence and the many wars that were fought and still are being fought to this very day. And even though this book only covers up to the early 90's it's still current because the entropy and turmoil in modern day Africa is still transpiring. And I'll reiterate; there's an array of history, political science, and sociology that this book encompasses upon.

A must have in your library.

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