

Book Review on: “African History: A Very Short Introduction” and “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa”

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Introduction

A book entitled by “African history: A very short introduction” which was written by John Park and Richard Rathbone generally highlights about the physical place and people; and about the past history of African. The authors in their book tried to argue that Africa is full of diverse and the site of early mankind. The history of Africa considered by some as insignificant, an ideological weapon by some other and lack precise definition. The true history of Africa was much debatable among historians. It was considered for a long period of time by European as no history, primitive, Barbaric and illiterate. However, this kind of nomenclature of African history seems flaw and intentionally done to hide and to justify and give legal ground the 19th century colonialism. There were however, evidences that shown Africa has had ancient history.

It was inescapable fact that Africa had their own history and culture. A few African states (Ethiopia, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Burundi, Rwanda, Madagascar, Swaziland, Lesotho, and Botswana) have a meaningful pre-colonial identity and history. For example, today nobody can question the fact that the great walls of Zimbabwe were erected by African hands; old age Axum obelisk, a wonderful rock hewn church of Lalibela, Fasiledes castle etc were made by the African themselves in general and the Ethiopian in particular (Asfaw, 2008; Davidson, 1994).

The authors also tried to explain the environmental history of Africa and they argued that Africa's ecological zones are too diverse and they have also changed and continue to change over time. One of the notable examples of environmental change in Africa is the draying and an increment of drought and desertification in Sahara areas. Consequently the volume of rain fall began to decline and hence it in turn push people who resides around it to move to other places down in to the fertile Nile valley, which creates concentration of population.

Again, John Park took middle Niger as a central place to the perception and understanding of African history. His historical interpretation seems flaw as he took merely Ghana, Mali and Songhay to determine the continents past history. We disagree his assumption of such interpretation because he misses other ancient civilized African countries like Ethiopia, Egypt, which has more than three million years of civilization. In this regard, historians like Alex Thomson and Asfaw Teferra argued in a detailed manner about the history and culture of Africa. In contrast to John Park, they stated that prior to Ghana, Mali and Songhay civilization, there were few African countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Morocco, Tunisia, Burundi, Rwanda and Swaziland etc have their own pre-colonial identity history and state name prior the coming of European power to Africa (Alex, 2004; Asfaw, 2008).

Surprisingly, as Asfaw in his book Africa, past, present and future development briefly explained, the civilization of Africa has been a significant impact in Europe especially in Greek and Spain, and even in for American civilization. For example, Martin Bernard as cited in Asfaw (2008) has demonstrated well that the Greek and Spain civilization had African origin. In addition, Francis Bacon, the founder of modern European science, had to go to Morocco to learn Mathematics. Asfaw tried to justify his argument by stating two way or journeys of African civilization move to Europe. The first was by way of the Nile valley to Palestine and Persia and then to Greece and Italy. The second was by way of North Africa to Spain and Portugal. In spite of this fact, European used colonialism to deny the history of Africa to establish White domination (Asfaw, 2008).

Another book written by the author Walter Rodney (1982) entitled “*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*” concluded that Africa had their own indigenous identity, culture, religion and civilization prior to the coming of Europe in Africa land. In fact there are African countries which have got their name and existence after the coming of Europe. Unlike John Park, Walter Rodney interperate African history in such a way that even few ancient African countries for instance, Egypt, Ethiopia and Nubian's etc history was highly influenced and ruled by foreigners.

Rodney in his sub title of his book rightly investigated the right era of European colonialism over Africa since the late 19th and early 20th century which was later than Latine America. It was true as Diedre L. in his book “Global organization: African union” tried to explained that Africa were not fully colonized by European until 1875. Both authors have similar interpretation about the pretext of European power to colonize Africa, that is, to civilize, to preach Bible and to expand infrastructure and other communication facilities on Africa since Africa considered by them as a dark continent. Moreover, European imperialists invade Africa on the pretext that Africans were incapable of properly governing themselves, they unable to govern without the

active engagement of Africa alliance and the intermediaries' one. However, the pre-colonial African history told us that African states prior to the coming of Europe were stable, harmonious, strong institutional arrangement and had kinship attachment that helps them to administer themselves effectively (Asfaw, 2008; Betts, 1986).

Conclusion

As historical evidences and historians told to us, African states have their own history and ways of civilization earlier to the colonial period. However, after European come to African land, they made African underdeveloped through employing different techniques and their historical heritages were destroyed and vanished by colonizers. For example, exploiting natural resources such as (cocoa, Gold), and paying of miserable wage for African workers. Moreover, African farmers were compelled to produced certain cash crops such as Cocoa in Gold coast, ground nuts in Senegal and Gambia, cotton in Sudan; cotton and coffee in Uganda etc but the production of food for local consumption was retarded. This made African to consume what they did not produce and to produce what they did not consume. Food crops were to be imported. As a result, the economies of African countries are mainly dominated by one or two commodities of such kind and their indigenous cultures were dominated by overseas culture.

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