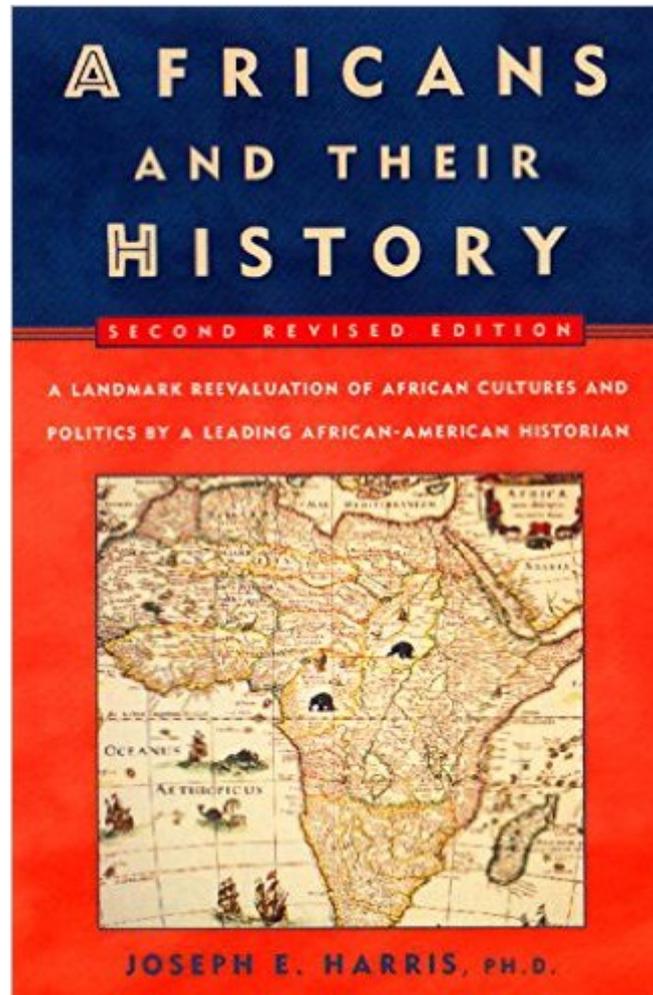


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# Africans And Their History: Second Revised Edition



## Synopsis

Africa has witnessed the birth of many important developments in history. Human evolution, including the use of fire, food production via plant cultivation and animal domestication, as well as the creation of sophisticated tools and hunting weapons from iron took place in Africa. Other historical events such as the slave trade, which played a critical role in Western economic power, the rise of Islam as one of the world's dominant religions, and colonization and struggles for independence occurred on African soil. *Africans and Their History* chronicles in fascinating detail African history from prehistoric times through the present. This concise and authoritative overview of the diverse peoples and societies of Africa now covers recent events, including the emergence of a free South Africa and its landmark enactment of a constitution that recognizes even more rights than the American constitution. The dynamic history and the relationship Africans have with the rest of the world is revealed in *Africans and Their History*, exposing and shattering ugly stereotypes that for too long have dominated Western thought. *Africans and Their History* has been updated to reflect the past decade of African events. Ever growing number of African Studies departments on college campuses insures a constant audience for this book. *Africans and Their History* has a long and steady backlist life--first published in 1972.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Harris' *Africans and Their History* is a bit uneven. The opening chapter on the myths and stereotypes of Africa and Africans is outstanding, as Harris lays out the pejorative way in which Europeans have seen and understood Africans since the days of antiquity - stereotypes and

generalizations that have influenced the way the continent has been seen up to and including today: a continent whose inhabitants have been acted on by history rather than being actors of history, people who are passive players in world civilization. Naming these untruths, pointing to the antecedents of these incorrect perceptions and showing how these have shaped the way much of the world sees Africa perhaps set my expectations a bit high for the rest of the book. I wish he had revisited this thread more often (and more forcefully) throughout his narrative - it is an important point, and one which bears keeping in mind in reading any history of Africa. Harris' discussion of Egypt, Meroe and Aksum were very good, if a bit brief. My disappointment began with his examination of the Islamic west African kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhai. The scope of their political and economic influence in west Africa deserved, in my opinion, more detail than was given here. The economic and especially cultural relationship between the Islamic empires of the Maghrib and those of the Niger river certainly warrants more than 40 pages, especially considering the strong and lasting influence Islam has in this part of Africa. Similarly, I wish more detail was given in the development and growth of independence and nationalist groups in Africa in the early 20th century.

Joseph E. Harris is a Howard University Distinguished Professor of History emeritus, and Director of the South African Research and Archival Project. He is also the author of books such as *Africans and Their History: Second Revised Edition* and *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*. He writes in the Preface to this book (I'm citing the 1987 Revised edition), "That development (of independent African nations) underscored the ignorance of non-Africans about Africans, and among the results of this realization has been the emergence of numerous courses and programs of African studies on various educational levels throughout the world, with an increasing demand for materials to train specialists and to inform the general public. The special implications of these occurrences for black people are obvious: the affirmation of an identity, a source of pride and fulfillment, and the substance and perspectives necessary for a liberating movement. This book attempts to contribute to these several needs." Here are some quotations from the book: "(Herodotus) sowed seeds of racial prejudice that shaped black-white images for centuries to come. He frequently referred to Africans as 'barbarians,' and characterized the people of Libya by saying, 'Their speech resembles the shrieking of a Bat rather than the language of Men.'" (Pg.

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