

BOOK REVIEW

Touring Africa

A History of Tourism in Africa: Exoticization, Exploitation, and Enrichment

By Todd Cleveland. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2021. Pp. 216. \$29.95, paperback (ISBN: 9780821447253); e-book (ISBN: 9780821447253).

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In *A History of Tourism in Africa*, Todd Cleveland chronicles how tourism has shaped global perceptions of the African continent and propelled its development since the nineteenth century. The book traces how European colonists depended on Africans' labor and knowledge to build tourism industries, which in turn contributed to Westerners' mythic ideas of Africa. Cleveland also discusses Africans' continued reliance on tourism for economic opportunities and the proliferation of new tourism sectors in the twenty-first century. Throughout, he presents arguments in support of and against tourism in relation to its economic and social impacts. He is explicit that the book should not dissuade readers from visiting the continent. Instead, he invites a deepened assessment of outsiders' engagement with the continent and the social impacts of tourism.

The first three chapters focus on the colonial encounter and early tourism in Africa. European men who imagined themselves as fearless explorers portrayed the continent as an exotic wilderness through publications and lectures for Western audiences. Missionaries, administrators, and anthropologists subsequently traveled to Africa and contributed to its reputation as a timeless stretch of abundant wildlife and subhuman 'natives', which justified colonial settlement. It was during this same period that colonial regimes popularized extended excursions and hunting safaris. Cleveland argues that such marketing furthered colonial expansion by representing Africa as a place where one could escape the impurities of 'modernity' while enjoying the comforts of 'civilization' by staying at lavish hotels and resorts. Europeans depended on Africans as guides and laborers to advance tourism as a part of the colonial project. Cleveland points out that the growing industry provided some Africans opportunities for acquiring status and capital, but it was largely invisible and exploitative work. This chapter highlights South Africa, but attention to Morocco, Mozambique, and the Congo suggest generalizability across the continent.

The next two chapters discuss how African states grew tourism after independence. Chapter Four addresses continuities and departures between colonial and postcolonial eras. Its case-based organization reveals how African governments differentially managed tourism but shared an investment in it as a vehicle of economic development. Cleveland emphasizes how states often relied upon colonial notions of primitiveness in order to promote tourism industries. He also points out that the 'leftist regimes' of decolonized nations embraced tourism as a motor of national growth and job creation, but much of this work was exploitative and produced neocolonial relationships. Chapter Five focuses on how camera safaris, evolved from the hunting safari, exemplified this process by inviting Westerners to experience vast, seemingly unpopulated savannahs. In fact, officials removed

indigenous groups to create game reserves while promising that the parks would provide employment. Some locals certainly took these jobs, but their communities generally received only a fraction of the safari industry's profits. Cleveland reports that African tourism infrastructure and tourist traffic expanded during this period but recreated colonial relationships and distributed benefits unevenly among citizenries.

Chapters Six and Seven explore emergent forms of African tourism. In a chapter on 'roots' tourism, Cleveland draws upon blog entries and his own experiences as a tourist to examine slave castles as tourism sites in Ghana, where Black Americans seeking reconnection with their heritage largely comprise the consumer market. The tours portray Africa as an ancestral homeland for the Black diaspora in order to contribute to Ghanaian plans for economic growth. Slave castles thus highlight contemporary efforts to mythologize place for developmental goals, albeit in a very different context. Cleveland appreciates the intense emotions stirred by these traumatic sites, but also cites Saidiya Hartman's critique of similar Senegalese castle tours as sensationalist.¹ Cleveland subsequently considers more recent forms of tourism, including ecotourism, cultural tourism, poverty tourism, voluntourism, and sex tourism. He discusses how these controversial markets enable Africans to exercise agency and achieve material benefits through the tourism industry, while simultaneously reproducing colonial dynamics in new ways.

Cleveland concludes that tourism in Africa has propagated romanticized notions of the continent's premodern geography and culture, which sit alongside negative stereotypes of its dangers and impoverishment. While Europeans established tourism routes as part of their colonial missions, Africans played central roles that facilitated foreign travel into the continent and continue to do so as a means of national development. Cleveland's coverage of a broad topic, unencumbered language, and an appended study guide make this book ideal for undergraduate courses as well as a general readership. Though the book does not develop new archives or original arguments, it synthesizes scholarship to provide a helpful overview of African development and tourism.

Throughout, Cleveland allows readers to develop their own conclusions about tourism in Africa by offering different perspectives regarding the potential for enrichment and the perpetuation of social inequalities. Some readers will applaud the author's refusal to take a hard stance, but others may wish that he did so. The voice of apparent neutrality makes itself clear in the Introduction under a section titled, 'So, Good or Bad?', where it suggests, 'Well, most objective observers would agree that the tourism industry in Africa has produced mixed results' (14). Critical readers may find the gesture toward objectivity, well, objectionable. As scholars read and teach this well-written and informative book, asking questions that pierce through the 'both sides' framework will deepen how we grapple with the consequences of tourism as development. Some discussion questions are included in the study guide, but the book's subtitle is also a good place to start: who exoticizes, who exploits, and who becomes enriched?

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¹S. V. Hartman, 'The Time of Slavery', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101/4 (2002).