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The History of “the Dark Continent”

“The European colonists of the 19th and 20th centuries described Africa as “the Dark Continent”. According to them, it was without civilization and without history, it’s life ‘blank, un-interesting, brutal barbarism’, according to Professor Egerton of Oxford University” (Harman, 136). According to the geologists, they firmly state that Zimbabwe wasn’t built by the people that are originally in Africa now. Geologists didn’t believe that Africans had enough of skill and brain to build all the empires and temples that currently stand in Africa. All of this became the Rise of Civilization. Egypt is most obvious for being a civilization whose roots lay in independent developments. This was actually common in Africa.

The Romans were aware of the civilizations occurring in Ethiopia. Ethiopians embraced Christianity, developed their own alphabet and had close contact with Saudi Arabia. Ethiopia would become great traders with Saudi Arabia exchanging goods back and forth. Trade in general, was a colossal way to interact with other countries. India, China, Muslim Empires and East Africa were part of the trading routes. Benin made an impression on the Portuguese and the rest of Africa. There were massive populations specializing in art and trade along with peasants and herders. Developments received a push from the impact of other civilizations. Egypt influenced trade with Nubia, while Saudi Arabia traded with Ethiopia. Lastly, India and the Arabs would impact East Africa. Africans developed many forms of agriculture, later leading to the production of iron. Many techniques between different cultures weren’t the same indicating independent developments. Agriculture and iron transformed Africa. Such contacts allowed civilization in Africa and enabled to make the process of developing their own script shorter. Africans adopted this process from Arabs- and with it the Islamic religion, which fitted the atmosphere of urban life more than the old “pagan” beliefs.

Africans were victims of the emerging world system in major ways. There, civilization was erased from historical reasons, but the reasons lye in the history of geography. This included vast belts of land with the same climate and crops. Few barriers prevented the spread of animal species. On contrast, Africans had different climates, crops and a spread of cattle. Africans had to rely on their own resources; they were isolated and became half the size of Eurasia. This put Africa at a major disadvantage. Popes, Emperors, Princes and Lords all required cash to finance their efforts. “A world in which people were meant to be equally able to agree, or fail to agree was equivalent to buying and selling goods in their position” (Harman, 248). In my opinion, Africa was “a Dark Continent” for a short period of time. Africa would shortly after become a continent with many towns and a lot of ways to make food and a living. This would be the main reason for the colossal population growth, which today doesn’t make Africa “a Dark Continent”.

http://www.scribd.com/doc/39008539/A-People-s-History-of-the-World-From-the-Stone-Age-to-the-New-Millennium (Book)