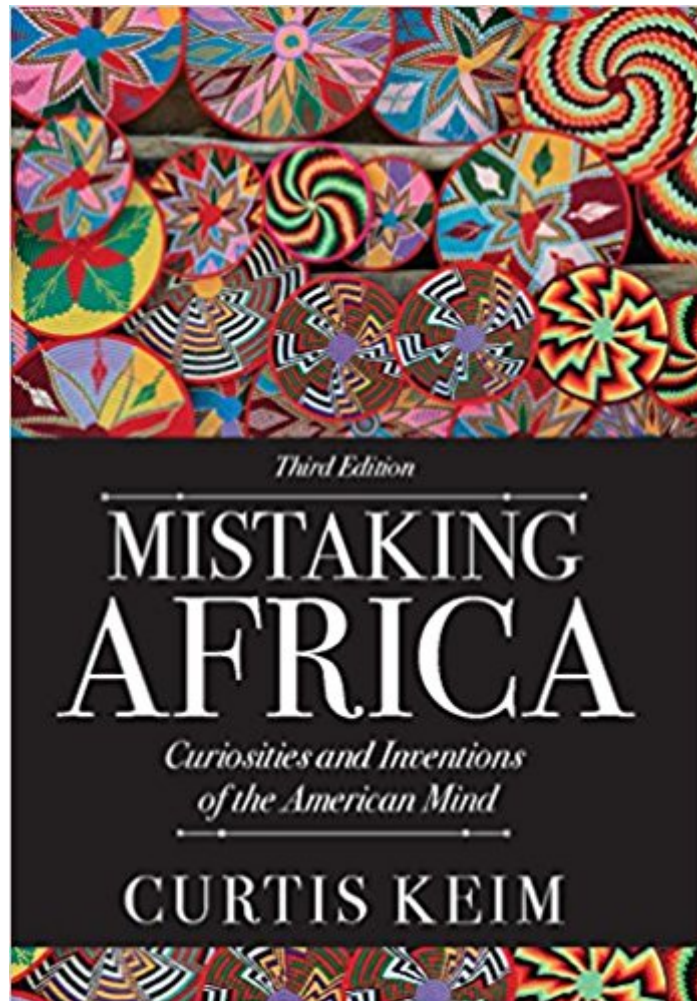


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Mistaking Africa: Curiosities And Inventions Of The American Mind



Synopsis

For many Americans the mention of Africa immediately conjures up images of safaris, ferocious animals, strangely dressed tribesmen, and impenetrable jungles. Although the occasional newspaper headline mentions genocide, AIDS, malaria, or civil war in Africa, the collective American consciousness still carries strong mental images of Africa that are reflected in advertising, movies, amusement parks, cartoons, and many other corners of society. Few think to question these perceptions or how they came to be so deeply lodged in American minds. Curtis Keim's *Mistaking Africa* looks at the historical evolution of this mind-set and examines the role that popular media plays in its creation. Keim addresses the most prevalent myths and preconceptions and demonstrates how these prevent a true understanding of the enormously diverse peoples and cultures of Africa. Updated throughout, the third edition includes a new chapter, "Where Is the Real Africa," discussing the multifaceted nature of the question and the importance of not grasping onto stereotypes of Africa's mythical past. Keim also includes new examples and new images to expand the visual narrative of western views about Africa. *Mistaking Africa* is an important book for African studies courses and for anyone interested in unraveling American misperceptions about the continent.

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Customer Reviews

Africa is a continent of great contrasts and poignant ironies; a place and its people simultaneously idealized and vilified in America's popular imagination. On one hand, Americans' views of Africa are characterized by media-driven images of a debased Hobbesian existence. Images of the fleeting post-colonial optimism and promise once surrounding Africa have been replaced with news bites depicting famine, corruption, and seemingly intractable patterns of violence. Neo-Malthusians believe that uncontrolled population growth, rapid environmental degradation, and increasing resource scarcity consign Africa to this miserable fate. On the other hand, Americans envision Africa as a land of idyllic beauty, replete with images of exotic animals, the mythology of the big game safari, and Disney-inspired images. For Westerners, the lack of dissonance from these inconsistent stereotypes underscores our collective ignorance. Ironically, Africa occupies a large part of the American subconscious, though we know little about the continent and are indelibly connected. In *Mistaking Africa*, renowned Africanist Dr. Curtis Keim attempts to elucidate the deeply rooted stereotypes that refract and distort our understanding of Africa. In this relatively short monograph, Keim examines both the evolution of a hegemonic racist Western ideology used to justify centuries of colonial and post-colonial exploitive behavior and the way contemporary media images perpetuate and refract this fundamental misunderstanding of Africa and its myriad cultures. Currently the dean of faculty at Moravian College, Dr. Keim is a professor of history and political science who specializes in African art.

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