

A short reading list on African history, colonialism, post-colonialism, Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism

A few landmarks and great achievements in African history:

- Egyptian thousand year civilisation – [Engineering an Empire on Youtube](#)
- Imhotep – Egyptian architect and medic - c. 2650–2600 BC ([BBC](#))
- Early Christianity and development of Christian theology – the Ethiopian Eunuch, Apostle Mark, Tertullian, Perpetua & Felicity, Clement of Alexandria, Origen of Alexandria, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyprian, Athanasius and Augustine of Hippo ([brief video summary of Christianity in Africa](#))
- Great Walls of Benin – dating back at least until 1180 AD but possibly started in 850 AD ([Fred Pearce, African Queen, New Scientist, 1999](#))
- Timbuktu – a [UNESCO World Heritage site](#) – especially Sankore University of Timbuktu – established as a centre of Islamic learning at least as far back as 1100 AD and possibly as far back as 989 AD.¹

Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978 – seminal work arguing that the West defined itself over and against a mythical construction called the ‘East’ or the ‘Orient’ (the Arabic Middle East) – [Wikipedia overview](#).

Joanne P Sharp, *Geographies of Postcolonialism*, SAGE, 2009 – a very helpful reader including the seminal essay by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Can the subaltern speak?’ looking at representations of the Indian practice of [Sati](#).

Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, 1982 – looks at the world from 800 to 1400 including the African kingdoms and the interconnectedness of the world even then and asks why it was that Europe ended up dominating. The book is helpfully reviewed and contrasted with other perspectives by [Jason Antrosio on Living Anthropologically](#).

David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* and Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* – [both reviewed by Richard Dowden](#) in the UK newspaper *The Guardian* – British imperialism at its worst.

[Robert Woodberry, The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy](#), American Political Science Review, Vol. 106, No. 2 May 2012, pp. 244-274 – the positive social legacy of Western protestant missionary movement.

[P. F. De Moraes Farias, Afrocentrism: Between crosscultural grand narrative and cultural relativism](#), in *The Journal of African History* - a review article reviewing four books on Afrocentrism.

[Irwyn Ince, Afrocentricity and the Church, part 2](#) on [Reformed African American Network](#) (a very helpful site) and [Mawusi, The Truth about Afrocentricity](#), on Truth for Africa Lovers blog – both pointing beyond Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism to Christocentrism.

[David Murray on 20 Cognitive Biases](#) and [Michael Ramsden on Logic and Fallacies](#) – not specifically about colonialism but connects with ethnocentrism and useful in connection to debate and research on Africa (which often falls into one or other of these fallacies).

Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994) 145-174; Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places* (London: Routledge, 1996) 65-78 – these postcolonial writers show that colonialism and imperialism do not simply lead to the spread of the

¹ Cf. establishment of Universities of Bologna (1088), Oxford (1096), Salamanca (1134).

'Master' culture. The cultures of colonised states are complex amalgams of re-imagined imports, redefined survivals, hybrid and creolised elements.²

Bill Bryson, *Mother Tongue: The Story of the English Language* & [History of English \(Open University on Youtube\)](#) – good fun and good reminders that the English language and the English people are an extremely mixed, 'mongrel', hybrid creation of multiple invasions, migrations and movements.

[Change the Rules](#) – [Youtube video](#) – on global inequality and how to change it. See also:

- Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa* and [Lawrence Solomon, Fair-trade coffee producers often end up poorer, Financial Post, 2011](#)
- [International Justice Mission](#) and [End It Movement](#) – seeking an end to ongoing global slavery

"There is no one righteous, not even one;

¹¹ there is no one who understands;
there is no one who seeks God.

¹²All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one."

¹³"Their throats are open graves;
their tongues practice deceit."

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."

¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

¹⁵"Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways,

¹⁷and the way of peace they do not know."

¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes.

² E.g. a hot tea leaf drink imported from India to the UK, adapted and indigenised with the addition of milk and sugar, exported to British colonies where it was again modified, contextualised and incorporated into different cultures in a wide variety of ways.