

Culture: The Soul of Africa and the Coming Gold Rush

Dallas L. Browne

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This well-written and well-researched book presents a thorough overview of the various cultures of Africa.

Dallas L. Browne explains that he was interested in writing a book that would serve as an “*Africa for Dummies*,” and *Culture: The Soul of Africa and the Coming Gold Rush* has certainly accomplished that goal. In *Culture*, Browne provides an overview of Africa that is thorough but not overwhelmed with details. His text will provide students and others who have limited knowledge of the diverse history and cultures of Africa with a good starting place.

In his introduction, Browne presents very clear goals for the book. First, he explains that he is not interested in exploring Africa in great detail; rather, he wants to provide a snapshot of a number of different cultures to underscore the vast diversity of the continent. Browne believes there is a golden age coming for Africa and that, with some help from Western countries, it will happen.

The first section of *Culture* provides an overview of the unique geography of Africa and explores ancient civilizations, including Egypt and Ghana. Browne’s chapter on the transatlantic slave trade is particularly inspired. In a concise way, he demonstrates the loss of life, the inhumane treatment of human beings, and the effect of the drain of human resources on the rest of the continent. Browne shows the connection between the exploitation of Africans and the wealth of Europe and the United States in a way few others have. The section ends with a discussion of the impact of colonialism.

Subsequent chapters explore different ethnic groups—like the Kikuyu, the Wolof, the Ashanti, the Maasai, and the Zulu—providing some historical background and cultural practices. The most valuable aspect of these sections is the extensive bibliography at the end of each chapter. In the final chapter, Browne provides his arguments for foreign investment in Africa. The African “gold rush” involves a growing educated middle class that will increase the demand for foreign products and services.

Culture is an original and creative exploration of Africa for the beginner. Browne is very clear about the premise of his project and he accomplishes his goals. The research is thorough and presented in a way that is easy and fun to read. The chapter organization and table of contents make the book very accessible; an index would have been helpful as well. The pictures in the center of the text are interesting, but more context would have added to their value.

Browne’s writing is straightforward and personable. He writes in the tone of a teacher who is invested in his students. The cover art is well designed and captures what will be found within. The back cover copy is helpful for introducing the author.

Culture: The Soul of Africa and the Coming Gold Rush will appeal to high school or undergraduate students or anyone else who would like to be introduced to African history and culture. With more than six hundred pages, this is a thick volume, but Browne explains that it is meant to be more of a reference text than a book that should be read in its entirety. His hope is that *Culture* will inspire further exploration of the subject matter.

GABRIE'L ATCHISON (March 2, 2015)

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