

AFRICA AND THE WEST

From time immemorial, Africa has had the reputation of being a 'dark' continent. This is illustrated by the fact that it was not until well/far into the 19th century that Africa had been/was properly mapped. Western merchants usually did not go any further than/past beyond the coastal areas, and when they did venture further inland, most of them died of malaria in next to no time/in no time (at all)very soon. Therefore, it was for good reason that West Africa was known as 'The white man's grave'.

The spine-chilling/bloodcurdling adventures of the famous explorers in the latter/second half of the nineteenth century generated/yielded/did [Usually, 'weliswaar' had better be translated as 'Admittedly,' / 'True,' / 'To be sure,' in initial position, or as 'Even though ...'] provide some information about the inland/interior of Africa, but in the end it just/only added to the mystery surrounding the continent. Not only did this colourful/varied crew/crowd/company/group of adventurers, missionaries and scientists pave the way for the colonial oppressors/rulers, but along with these/together with the latter, they also they were also responsible for the image/perception of Africa (that was) held by the average European until recently. As is true for many things: the more one-sided sources are, the more persistent/stubborn misconceptions become(s).

Met opmaak: Dik gestippeld onderstrepen

Met opmaak: Doorhalen

Met opmaak: Dik gestippeld onderstrepen

How many generations have not been permanently influenced by the impressions, romanticized missionary stories and popular comics in which blacks were depicted as somewhat childlike/childish [same difference as between 'kinderlijk' and 'kinderachtig'] and superstitious people, who desperately needed to receive the blessings of Western civilization? Initially, for whites the absence of written literature was even more/just another proof that Africans were underdeveloped. Whites did not realize that the novel is a genre (which is) typical of for the bourgeois individualized Western society and, consequently/therefore, wholly/essentially/as such fundamentally alien to traditional, community-oriented types of society. They also had little appreciation for the age-old oral tradition which offers a wealth of mythological tales, religious rites and songs, and gives an good impression of the richness of the African culture.

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In the 1950s, the forced confrontation with Western culture and the development of mass media created the conditions for the establishment of a written literary tradition in Africa. By using the former colonizer's language/the language of the former colonizer(s), African authors are now in a position to/ now has had the possibility of rectifying to rectify the distorted image/view that others/one have/has people's distorted image/view of their continent. This development eventually resulted in the Nobel Prize for Literature 1986 being awarded to the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka, who thus became the first African in history to win this prize.

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