



ISSN 2336-3274 (Print) ISSN 2570-7558 (Online)

<https://edu.uhk.cz/africa>

Lukáš Zorád, Peter Farárik. 2015. Afrika – Mýty a skutečnosti. Clovek v ohrožení, o. z

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Recommended citation:

Bihariová, E. (2015). Lukáš Zorád, Peter Farárik. 2015. Afrika – Mýty a skutečnosti. Clovek v ohrožení, o. z. *Modern Africa: Politics, History and Society*, 3(1), 157–158. Retrieved from <https://edu.uhk.cz/africa/index.php/ModAfr/article/view/118>



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REVIEWS

Lukáš Zorád, Peter Farárik. 2015. *Afrika – Mýty a skutočnosti*. Bratislava: Človek v ohrození, o. z., 71 p. ISBN 978-80-971607-2-2

Africa - myths and facts is an interesting publication published this spring by the Slovak civic association Človek v ohrození. It highlights the increasingly distressing stereotypes about Africa and its people, and draws attention to the wide range of facts, which induce the reader to reconsider the deep-seated misconceptions on the African continent. The media promote a picture of poverty, hunger or violence. Simplified, sporadic and distorted information is a breeding ground for the misleading stereotypes in people's minds.

Lukáš Zorád, a field worker in development projects in East Africa and a geography teacher Peter Farárik chose to bring a contrast to this, respectively, illustrating a view of Africa to clichés. Africa is presented as a modern developing continent that also bears its rich history. Refusing the generalisation in the spirit of the words of the Polish reporter Ryszard Kapuściński, under which there is no such thing as 'African culture' or 'African religions' because the essence of Africa is in its infinite diversity.

Although the book is primarily intended for teachers in primary and secondary schools, its content attracts a wider general public, thanks to attention to the main stereotypes and misconceptions about the 'dark' continent.

The first part of the book presents a brief look from the other side, that is what myths about people from the Western world are being spread around Africa. Subsequently, Zorád and Farárik discuss customary myths about Africa, dividing them into fifteen main chapters. In the discussed myths such as: Africa has no history (except Egypt) authors agree that ideas about Africa are associated with primitive tribes. But simultaneously Africa is a continent where in Ethiopia Christianity became the state religion in the first century A.D.; Timbuktu was a famous cultural centre and a seat of a university in 15th-16th century;

the Ashanti Empire, the kingdom of Mali or a stone structure of the Mapungubwe civilization is the other evidence to the contrary.

Most people are poor and are starving – is another typical view of African people. It is a fact that from 2010 to 2012 about a quarter of the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa suffered from malnutrition, but surprisingly this region has nowadays the fastest increase in the prevalence of obesity in the world together with Latin America.

African countries are economically backward is one of many other myths. Africa is the continent with the fastest growing economy in the world. The economy grows by 6 percent per annum. It is certainly interesting that the population of the economically vexed Portugal are searching for better employment in their former colonies.

In each chapter, when representing facts, the authors give examples from different countries. They seek not to negate the myths, but point to the facts, which customary notions put into a broader context and offer a broader range of information. There is no system and a slight preponderance of the data from Kenya, where Zorád operates, which is not distracting. The texts are accompanied by maps, charts, references to the Internet, comments or other text blocks that visually and contextually complete the publication.

The second part consists of practical activities with advice for teachers that support the learning process through creativity and encourages students to look for the other realities of Africa.

What I appreciate most is the availability of the book in electronic form on the Internet, it is thus accessible to each reader.

Authors of the publication certainly fulfil their desire, which is presented at the beginning of the book that is to change people's attitude in the perception of the African continent. I would argue that the book is a rich source of useful information for teachers and fills a kind of vacuum in the area of schoolbooks on History, Geography and Social studies. It is also a good source of knowledge for anyone who likes to work on eliminating prejudices and misconceptions about Africa.

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