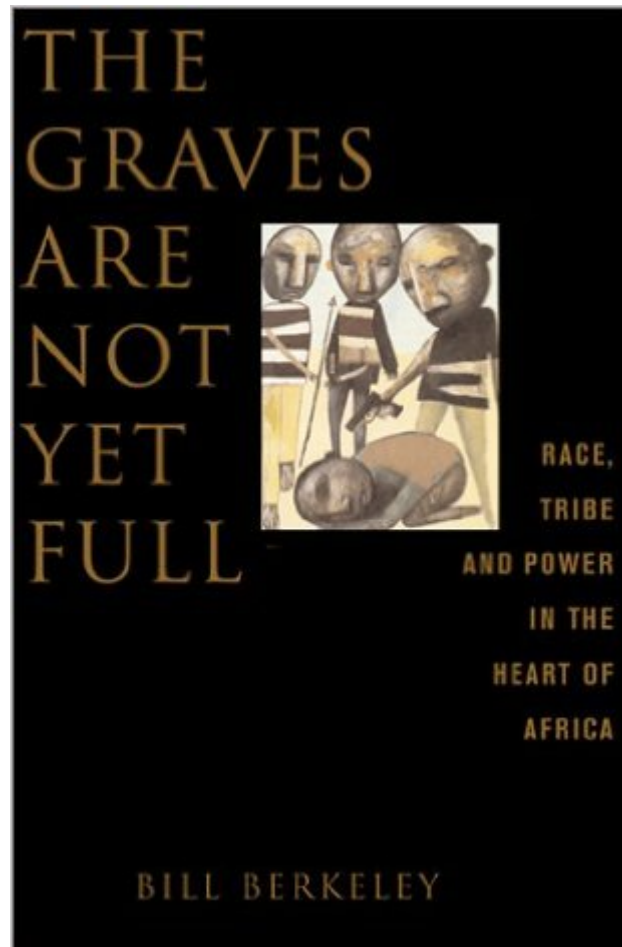


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The Graves Are Not Yet Full Race, Tribe And Power In The Heart Of Africa



Synopsis

Since 1983 journalist Bill Berkeley has traveled through Africa's most troubled lands to seek out the tyrants and military leaders who orchestrate these nations' seemingly intractable wars. Shattering once and for all the myth that ancient tribal hatreds lay at the heart of the continent's troubles, Berkeley instead holds accountable the "Big Men" who came to power during this period, describing the very rational methods behind their apparent madness. Weaving together insightful historical analysis and his own keen observations of ordinary men, women, and children struggling in the midst of terrible violence, Berkeley insists that what the world often sees as uniquely "African" interethnic troubles are in fact rooted in the international politics of colonialism and the Cold War. *The Graves Are Not Yet Full* provides a convincing explanation for the last half-century's cycle of revolution and genocide in Africa, detailing the stirring history of these nations' quests for peace and independence over the last seventeen years. Berkeley's incisive analysis does much to bring recent African history into sharp focus while at the same time illuminating just what it is that allows societies-wherever they may be-to accept, and sometimes embrace, violence.

Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Basic Books; First Edition edition (March 1, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0465006418

ISBN-13: 978-0465006410

Product Dimensions: 9.6 x 6.5 x 1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (33 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,761,171 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #129 in [Books > History > Africa > Sudan](#) #842 in [Books > History > Africa > South Africa](#) #996 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Africa](#)

Customer Reviews

Bill Berkeley begins with an interesting idea social scientists have mined deeply: that politics--most frequently of the exploitative tyrannical stripe--and "ethnic competition" provide a far more compelling explanation of ethnic violence than threadbare notions of "primordial conflict"--"that's just the way those people have always been"--which constitute the conventional wisdom underlying most accounts of ethnic strife in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and the Balkans. Berkeley

expressly criticizes popular writers like Robert Kaplan for keeping the conventional--and easily controvertible--wisdom in circulation. In doing so, and in writing to correct the record, Berkeley deserves a pat on the back. After these introductory passages, the book heads for mostly well worked territory in accounts of African ethnic conflicts Berkeley has, at some point, covered as a reporter (for Atlantic Monthly and other publications). He does this through the lens of six "types"--"the rebel," "the collaborator," "the assistant secretary"--each with its own chapter, some of which work better than others (such as the ones on Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African for the entire Reagan Administration and errant practitioner of Kissingerian realpolitik, and Gatsho Buthelezi, the Zulu leader who collaborated with South Africa's White Apartheid regime against the Mandela's African National Congress). In other chapters, however, Berkeley is hard-pressed to maintain this focus, especially since he seems determined to cut or stretch his material to give roughly equal attention to each conflict.

This oft quoted remark the president made last year is the epitome of what Berkeley calls the "conventional American conception of Africa as a unitary landscape of unremitting despair." The president and his conventional...wisdom? is not the target of Berkeley's book though. The author says that part of the purpose of THE GRAVES ARE NOT YET FULL is a "pointed rebuttal" to Afro-pessimists, the prime example being Robert D Kaplan and his book THE ENDS OF THE EARTH. Similarly to Michela Wrong and her book - IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MR KURTZ, Berkeley sees a lot of the problems in Africa as having foreign origins. Much moreso than Wrong though, he develops on the theme that violence and ethnic warfare are not the results of some "ancient tribal hatreds" in the words of Kaplan, but are in fact organized, manipulated, or orchestrated devices used by various African leaders as a means of exerting control and maintaining power. Ethnic conflicts in Africa he plainly says "are all provoked from on high." He illustrates this point by developing a series of profiles on the manipulative leaders and tales about the victims of their crimes. Berkeley is pretty blunt in his reporting and with his words. He starts off by saying that "this is a book about evil". It should be no surprise then that he is willing to put names to these "creatures of evil". Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire is here, but again, this book is broader than Wongs', - hers stopped there, but Berkeley looks at South Africa, Liberia, Angola, Sudan and Rwanda. He names Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Samuel Doe, Charles Taylor, Jonas Savimbi, Hasan Turabi and John Garang.

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