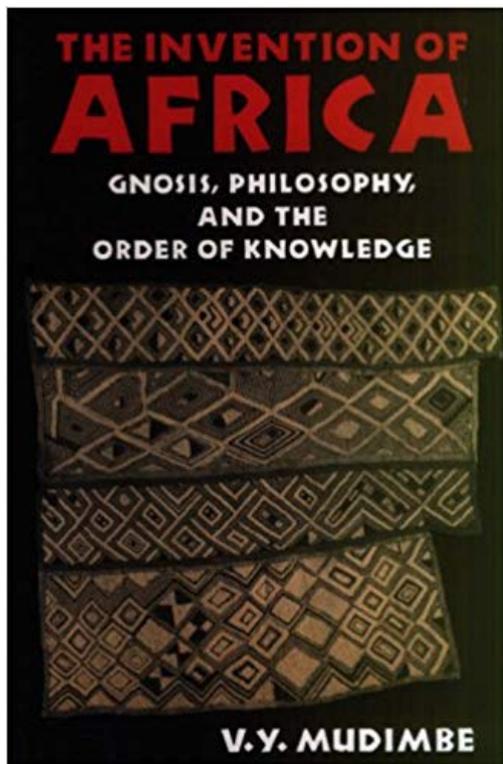


The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge (African Systems of Thought) by V.Y. Mudimbe



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What is the meaning of Africa and of being African? What is and what is not African philosophy? Is philosophy part of Africanism? These are the kind of fundamental questions which this book addresses. North America: Indiana U Press



Reviews of the **The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge (African Systems of Thought)** by V.Y. Mudimbe

Visonima

Academic but very enlightening.

Cae

This book was received just as promised. The condition was good, and the delivery was timely. Thanks for the great product.

Ambirishes

First of all, this book doesn't quite live up to its title - I expected Mudimbe to write about the invention of the concept of Africa, which he chose as a topic for his book 'The Idea of Africa.' It also doesn't really attempt to establish any sort of theory of how African philosophy has developed and exists today. Rather, he draws heavily on Foucault (as to be expected, of course) plus Levi-Strauss and others to critically examine eurocentric approaches to African philosophy and point out how African philosophy emphasizes the 'alterity of the subject' and 'the passion of subject-object that doesn't vanish.'

Yet this method is faulty in several ways. First, as the above quotes reveal, Mudimbe is a big fan of academic jargon. His writing could be a lot clearer when he's trying to get a point across as opposed to merely skewering eurocentrists.

Second, Mudimbe could have spent more time surveying African philosophy rather than just criticizing eurocentric misinterpretations and misreadings. He does devote a chapter to the pan-Africanist Edward Blyden but is unwilling to delve into a systematic history of native African philosophies prior to colonialism. Indeed, part of the problem of this book is an unwillingness on Mudimbe's part to move away from European-educated Africans and their application of Marxim, post-modernism and other European philosophical movements to African philosophy. If he did examine more native philosophies like he does with Alexis Kagame's work on Bantu philosophy, the reader might actually gain some insight into the varieties and diversity of African philosophy. Of course, such a discussion might (and probably would) invalidate any use of the word 'African' to describe one system of thought as Mudimbe continually uses here.

Third, Mudimbe seems to be critical of everyone except his heroes like Levi-Strauss and, especially, Foucault. While very important for anyone writing about contemporary philosophy, Foucault has his faults as well, yet Mudimbe has no interest in critically examining Foucault's use of epistemes to describe the history of knowledge. I as a reader would have enjoyed an African criticism of Foucault, especially one that deals with Foucault's relentless reliance upon French sources with little regard for non-Europeans' own native or original epistemes.

This is all unfortunate because Mudimbe obviously has the skills to write a great book on African philosophy (or philosophies). Too bad this is not that book.

Gogul

Mudimbe does philosophy like a talk-show host or a parliamentary speaker. His benches are packed with hundreds of religious leaders, political thinkers, anthropologists and philosophers who have moved African self-understanding. Their discussions are most eloquent, but unfortunately there is scarcely a woman in the auditorium.

In these pages Carl Sagan undertakes to test Dogon cosmology. Zulu Chief Buthalezi and F. Eboussi-Boulaga debate the directions of African religion. The "Bantu Philosophy" of Belgian priest Placide Temples is chewed over by ethnophilosopher Alexis Kagame. Mudimbe himself continually pulls the lines of thought together and sets the stage for our next adventure.

Kuve

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