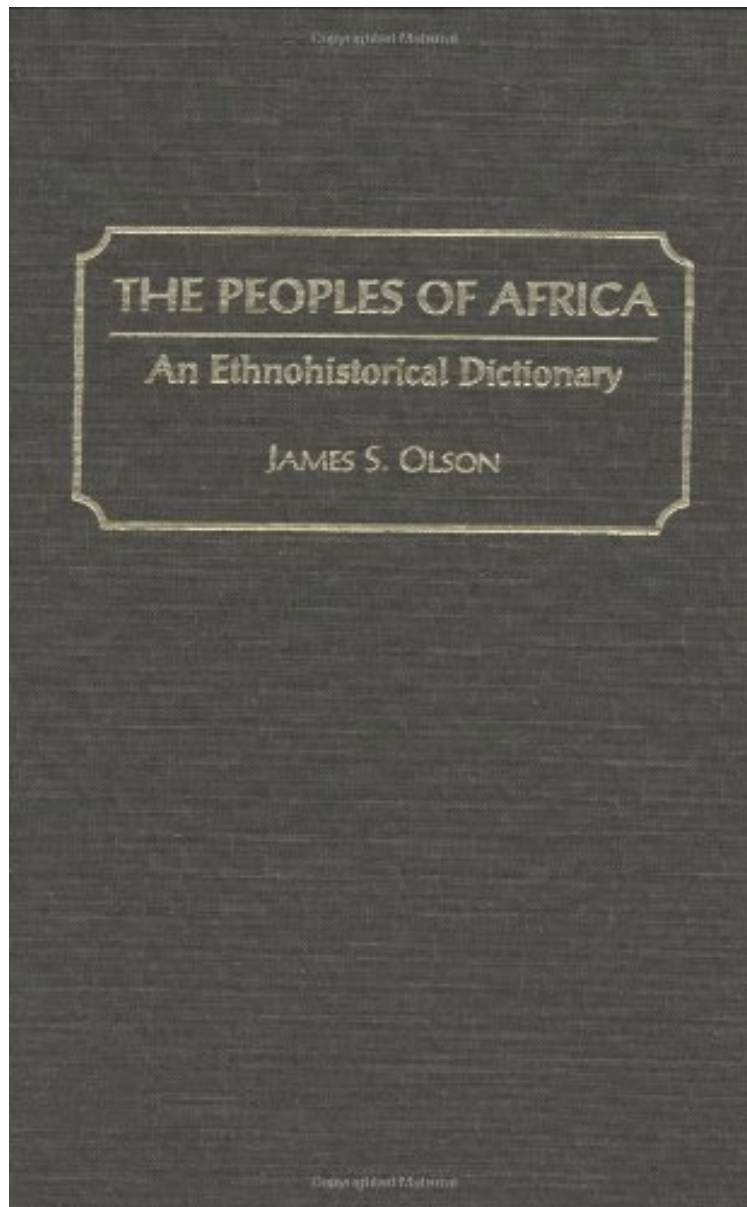


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# The Peoples of Africa: An Ethnohistorical Dictionary

*James Stuart Olson*

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**James Stuart Olson : The Peoples of Africa: An Ethnohistorical Dictionary** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Peoples of Africa: An Ethnohistorical Dictionary:

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Recent historical events have made it quite clear that the world is in for a long-term continuation of ethnic rivalries that have been going on for centuries. The short-term hegemony of the European empires, the Soviet Union, and the United States may have temporarily subdued some of those conflicts, but older identities are now reasserting themselves. The most complicated, diverse ethnic setting is in Africa, where several thousand languages still provide powerful identities to as many ethnic groups. The Peoples of Africa provides a brief description of the more than 1,800 individual African ethnic groups living today in Africa. Where possible, the individual ethnic groups are discussed in terms of their geographical settings, religion, population, and local economy. Reference librarians, African area specialists, and students of African history and culture will find the book an invaluable guide.

From Booklist Olson, a history professor at Sam Houston State University, has written many books, including Historical Dictionary of European Imperialism (1991). Here he has brought together a massive amount of information on 1,800 distinct ethnic groups in Africa today. They range from large groups such as the Yoruba to relatively unknown subgroups and to the Europeans and Asians who settled in the continent of 700,000,000 people. The alphabetically arranged, clearly written, concise descriptions are frequently a paragraph in length but sometimes just a few sentences. The longer entries include the group's location, historical background, culture, economy, language, population estimate, and religion, even the specific Islamic tradition followed. Cross-references are extensive, from variant spellings of the groups' names and from subgroups to larger ethnic or language groups. Without editorializing, the work shows the impact of European conquests and recent tragedies resulting from ethnic warfare. References at the end of each entry lead the user to pertinent articles or books. A helpful chronology of African history through 1995 and a selected bibliography complete the work. While a map showing the groups' locations by country would be unwieldy, an index listing the groups by country would have been useful. This comprehensive reference source will be valuable in academic and large public libraries. In addition to its value for students and specialists, the work shows the continent's rich diversity of people. School libraries will want to use From Afar to Zulu [RBB Mr 1 95], which describes the 32 largest cultures in Africa. "Olson...has brought together a massive amount of information on 1,800 distinct ethnic groups in Africa today...This comprehensive reference source will be valuable in academic and large public libraries. In addition to its value for students and specialists, the work shows the continent's rich diversity of people."-Booklist/Reference Books Bulletin "It is hard to imagine a more complete dictionary than this one, which includes more than 1,800 ethnic groups. Some previous lists, particularly lists of languages, are often coincident with ethnic groups, but none have approached the utility of Olson's. Most importantly, he includes peoples that are not well known and have small populations, and he avoids the offensive and colonial-sounding "tribe...". Recommended for libraries serving African studies or anthropology programs."-Choice "Olson...has brought together a massive amount of information on 1,800 distinct ethnic groups in Africa today...This comprehensive reference source will be valuable in academic and large public libraries. In addition to its value for students and specialists, the work shows the continent's rich diversity of people."-Booklist/Reference Books Bulletin "[I]t is hard to imagine a more complete dictionary than this one, which includes more than 1,800 ethnic groups. Some previous lists, particularly lists of languages, are often coincident with ethnic groups, but none have approached the utility of Olson's. Most importantly, he includes peoples that are not well known and have small populations, and he avoids the offensive and colonial-sounding "tribe...". Recommended for libraries serving African studies or anthropology programs."-Choice "[I]t is hard to imagine a more complete dictionary than this one, which includes more than 1,800 ethnic groups. Some previous lists, particularly lists of languages, are often coincident with ethnic groups, but none have approached the utility of Olson's. Most importantly, he includes peoples that are not well known and have small populations, and he avoids the offensive and colonial-sounding "tribe...". Recommended for libraries serving African studies or anthropology programs."-Choice About the Author JAMES S. OLSON is Distinguished Professor of History at Sam Houston State University, where he has taught since 1972. He is the author of more than 20 books on U.S. and world history. With Robert Shadle, he edited Historical Dictionary of the British Empire (Greenwood, 1996).