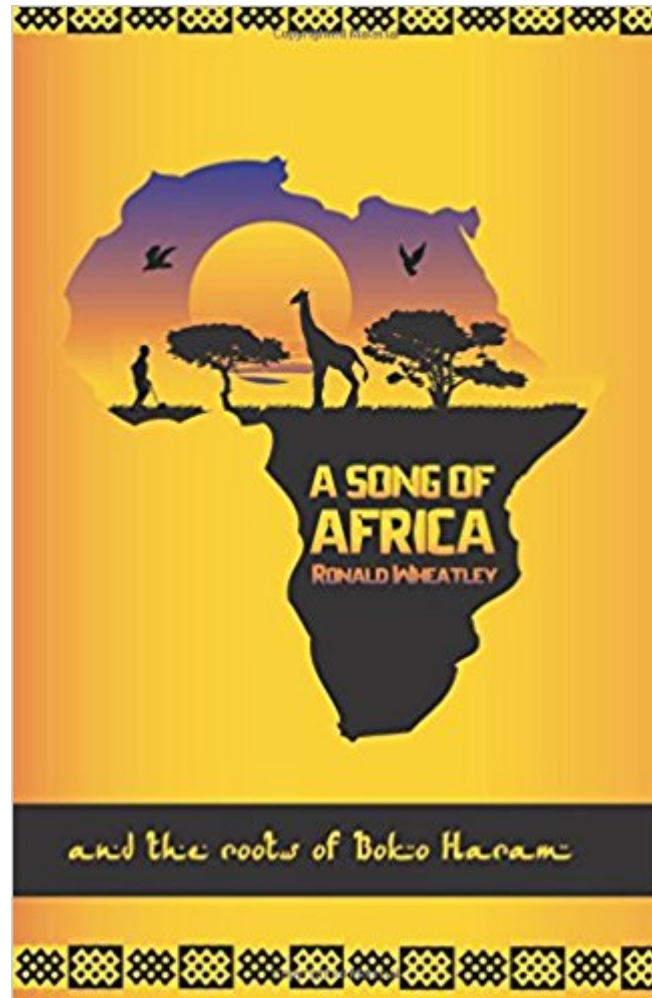




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A Song Of Africa



Synopsis

A SONG OF AFRICA: and the Roots of Boko Haram Thrill and Learn Fortune seeking engineer, Paul Jeffries, out to make millions on a state of the art telecommunications project in Nigeria reluctantly agrees to reach out to the idealistic American ambassador's daughter who has fled into the besieged rebel enclave of Biafra to help refugees there in the mid 1960's. The journey will take them both to the darkest and most dangerous corner of one of Africa's bloodiest civil wars. It will test the limits of their commitment to the people of Africa and to the discovery of their commitment to each other. + + + + + To understand how the terrorist group Boko Haram has risen in Nigeria in recent years, one must be familiar with the history of that troubled nation, home to every fourth person on the African Continent. "A Song of Africa" provides the background for the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria. For example, it is intriguing how in an article in the Wall Street Journal, Ayaan Hirsi Ali's mini bio of Abubakar Shekau, leader of the terrorist group Boko Haram, resembles the strategy of Uthman dan Fodio who led the first Jihad in Nigeria at the beginning of the nineteenth century. At that time the Hausa-Fulani states were controlled by pagan rulers. The minority of devout Moslems in the north suffered under this leadership which they considered both politically oppressive and morally decadent. In the early 1800's an itinerate devout Islamic scholar, Uthman dan Fodio, through his door to door, village to village, proselytizing and his religious zeal began to unify a suffering minority that grew to the point that Uthman declared himself the Amin al-Muminin, the commander of the faithful. He proclaimed a jihad that spread the new religion throughout the north uniting the Hausa states in a secular and religious structure that is the dominate political force in the country today. Shekau is using the same strategy only now the jihad is aimed at Christians and those who support modernization through education. Schools have become the prime target for Abubakar Shekau, for example, the recent atrocity of Boko Haram kidnapping 300 school girls. "Boko Haram" in Hausa means "Western education is forbidden!"

I know a song of Africa, - I thought of the Giraffe, and the African new moon lying on her back, of the poughs in the fields, and the sweaty faces of the coffee pickers, does Africa know a song of me? Would the air over the plain quiver with a colour that I had on, or the children invent a new game in which my name was, or the full moon cast a shadow over the gravel of the drive that was like me, or would the eagles of Ngong look out for me? • Isak Dinneson • "Out of Africa" • "This country is filled with foreign spies." His eyes on the American, the officer took a small black book from his shirt pocket. "What is your name?" he demanded. "A SONG OF AFRICA vividly portrays three distinct personalities playing out their private battles of conscience, pride and passion within the context of an elemental fight for power. Their reactions to

the events around them are exquisitely rendered and reveal strengths and qualities they never knew they possessed. For each Nigeria is a revelation. For each Nigeria is a spiritual journey. Ronald Brian Wheatley depicts his setting as forcefully as his characters, from the idyllic plateau region Paul (Jeffries) calls home to the perilous mangrove infested tributaries in the South. Through these characters and others, a traumatic episode of recent history is clarified and presented in all its poignancy and drama." Ashley Books. Selected as Best Historical Fiction book published in 2011 by Books and Authors.

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Customer Reviews

Congratulations to Ron Wheatley for his independent presentation of a missionary perspective, affirming in advance that to which Benedict exhorts us - The message, the mystery, the value of human life, and the conditions in which it is lived."

"Set in Nigeria in 1966 during the Biafran War, this vivid description of three Americans playing out their battles of conscience, pride and passion draws on the author's experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in that country." Publishers Weekly, January 2012 Ronald Wheatley served in Northern Nigeria as a Peace Corps Volunteer teacher. The author was born in East L.A., raised in southern California, escaped to Seattle where he learned to love the rain, and now lives with his wife, Ethel, and "Frankie" an eight year old tailless cat in Scituate (by the Sea) Massachusetts. His play "The Trial of Phillis Wheatley" was produced at Bridgewater State College in 2003.

A Song of Africa, written in the wake of Wheatley's experience with the Peace Corps in Africa, is exceptionally well-written. It is, as the author says, based upon real-life observation and experience. The characters--among them a bright and somewhat cynical engineer and a stunning young woman, among many others--are deftly drawn, as is both the landscape and the turmoil of Nigeria (which continues to this day). The book covers four years--1966-70--and neither pulls any punches or moralizes. The plot manages to be both simple and complex, with no pat answers. The author's respect for the Nigerians coexists with a realistic, often tragic view of human nature, and is buttressed by his own experiences. The book is rich in imagery, and filled with details about life in Nigeria at that time. It is not, in the traditional sense, a page-turner. It is instead a book to be read with concentration and sympathy. Highly recommended.

My family and I lived in Nigeria from 1961-1963, just after independence and just before the terrible war. Nigeria has never been the same. Now Boko Haram has brought a new chapter of violence and hatred to an old and sad story. Reading this book will give you an understanding of Nigeria and her people as if you had been there. Whatever friends are still alive...we remember you always in our prayers. Larry A. McKee

Wheatley can sing The Song of Africa. He knows every note. He has been there not as tourist, but as a Peace Corps volunteer for many years. The Song of Africa is that of Nigeria, a developing country where tribal huts and luxurious embassies share the same arresting natural surroundings. The Song of Africa is the Heart of all Africa, for the reader cannot stop his own heart from pounding as he learns of a journey that is not limited to the visible. Wheatley chose to write The Song of Africa in the style of a novel. There are dialogues, conflicts, colorful descriptions... The interactions between characters are the many tunes of The Song of Africa. We learn of the poor Nigerians (some of them with leprosy) and of expatriates who like the Fitzgeralds, Hemingways and Gertrude Stein in Paris in the 1920's, have it better. We discover that Christian missionaries are a problem in an oil-rich nation still unstable from the cultural and political points of view. We meet two foreigners--Paul and Maureen who look at Nigeria conditioned by their respective reasons for being there, despite the mutual attraction. As we familiarize with their relationship, we learn first-hand about the many-sided aspects of a country still having tribal feuds that echo those between the Sunnis and Shiites. We are exposed to a new nation still subjected to the reminders of a colonialism. And we learn why Nigeria is a culture still restive politically and socially because of persisting ethnic divisions that all new independent countries in Africa share painfully. But we also read of young, liberal thinkers dreaming

of pan-africanism in the light of the many natural resources that would guarantee a new, enviable Nigeria. And why not. Since it acquired independence from British rule in 1960, oil-rich Nigeria is currently experiencing the longest period of civilian rule. Do read it. Ubaldo DiBenedetto, Ph.D. Author: Polar Day 9 (New York: Berkley, 1993).

Wheatley does a splendid job of telling an intriguing story set in Nigeria during the mid-sixties and civil war there. I very much enjoyed this novel which reminded me of reading the late author Graham Greene, one of my favorite writers. The book includes maps and a glossary of local African words and phrases that add to the reader's understanding of the story. The cover art by Elizabeth Herron Wheatley is beautiful.

Here is an engaging quasi-historic/romantic novel by Ronald Wheatley, a former Peace Corps volunteer in Nigeria during the sixties. While the Biafran civil war broils, an American communications consultant is torn between business and a precarious relationship with the idealistic U.S. ambassador's daughter. The couple's engaging cat and mouse romance is woven through Nigeria's Ibo rebellion and eventual defeat by government forces in 1970. The author's skill in homogenizing wholesale slaughter of the Ibos with compelling romantic emotion is captivating. Wheatley's geographical and cultural portraits came from someone who has been there.

This novel was an easy read about a section of the world of which many of us know little. It incorporated romance and action in a politically stressed setting. Good character development although there were a couple of underdeveloped or implausible situations. Overall however, reading this novel was time well spent!

Deepens understanding of Nigeria's history. Was a captivating book that was hard to put down. It has a frightening look at the hardships of survival during a civil war, but also the deepest friendships and highest accomplishments in life. It also showed the development of true inner peace.

In his book *A Song of Africa*, Ronald Wheatley creates a love story set in Nigeria during the Biafran War in 1966. While an historical novel, the theme of internal ethnic rivalries, religious differences and the fight for oil, depicted could have been torn from today's headlines on so many countries in Africa and the Middle East.

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