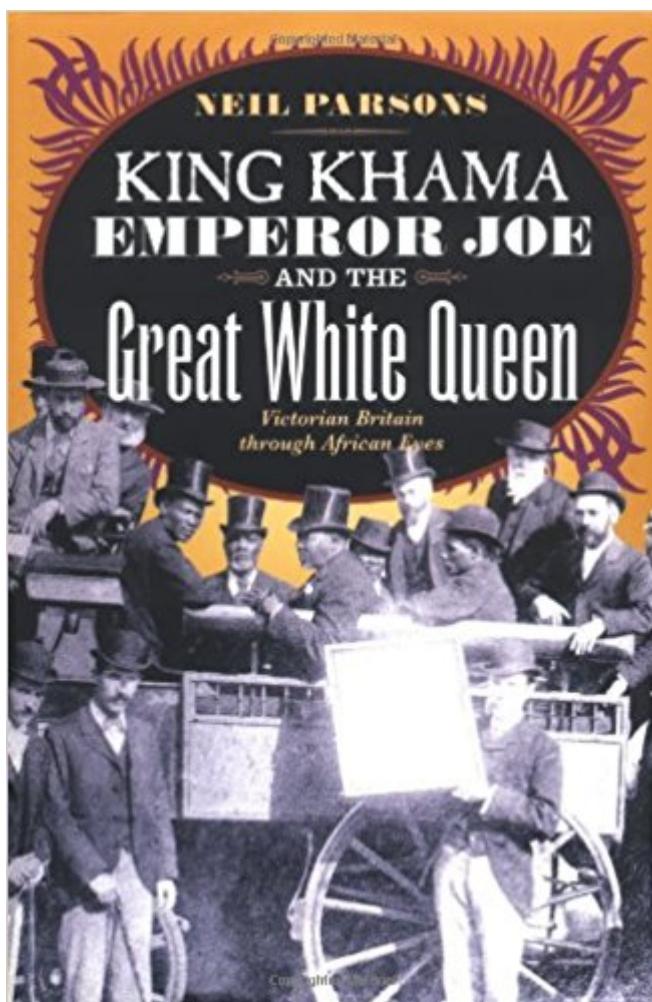


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King Khama, Emperor Joe, And The Great White Queen: Victorian Britain Through African Eyes



Synopsis

In 1895 three African chiefs, dressed in the finest British clothing available, began a tour of the British Isles. That tour foiled Cecil Rhodes' grand plan for Africa and culminated in the Chamberlain Settlement, the document that indirectly led to the independence of present-day Botswana. King Khama, Emperor Joe, and the Great White Queen is the story of this bizarre journey, one of the most neglected events in British Victorian history, here revealed for the first time in its full detail and cultural complexity. The chiefs initially went to England to persuade Queen Victoria not to give their lands to ruthless Rhodes and his British South Africa Company. Abandoned by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, and denied an audience with the queen, the three rulers decided to tour the British Isles to plead their case to the populace. Appealing to the middle-class morality of Victorian society, the chiefs were remarkably successful in gaining support, eventually swaying Chamberlain into drafting the agreement that secured their territories against the encroachment of Rhodesia. Historian Neil Parsons has reconstructed this journey with the help of African archival materials and news clippings from British papers, garnered from the clippings service the chiefs had the foresight to employ. In equal parts narrative of pilgrimage, voyage of discovery, and colonial resistance, King Khama, Emperor Joe, and the Great White Queen provides a view from the other side of colonialism and imperialism. It demonstrates the nuances of cultural and religious interaction between Africans and Europeans, and it does so with the richness and depth of a fully realized novel.

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Customer Reviews

In 1895 three Bechuana chiefs from southern Africa traveled to London to implore Queen Victoria not to turn their territories over to the empire builder Cecil Rhodes. King Khama and his associates won a few concessions, but they were ultimately unsuccessful. In their travels, however, they helped sway British public opinion to a more sympathetic view of indigenous issues in Africa, especially by favorably impressing the liberal clergy. Basing his account of the Bechuana leaders' tour of Great Britain on contemporary newspaper reports, Neil Parsons carefully reconstructs their itinerary, which included a strange stop at Madame Tussaud's famous wax museum. King Khama, Emperor Joe, and the Great White Queen is more than a narrative of events: in its pages, Parsons does a fine job of discussing the contradictions of imperial rule and of competing ideas of power and justice.

In 1895, three African chiefs, dressed in the finest British clothing available, began a tour of the British Isles. That tour foiled empire-builder Cecil Rhodes's grand plan for Africa and culminated in the Chamberlain Settlement—the document that indirectly led to the independence of the present-day state of Botswana. Parsons (history, Univ. of Botswana; *A New History of Southern Africa*, Africana, 1993) writes this complicated and oblique story of Victorian England's relations with three of southern Africa's tribal rulers of the late 19th century. The author uses clippings from British newspapers, saved by each of the three African kings, and African archival material to reconstruct this account. Purportedly told through "African eyes," the story never clearly detaches from the London Missionary Society. Appropriate for academic libraries.?Harry Willems, Southeast Kansas Lib. System, IolaCopyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

If you have any interest in African history, this book is a must! This superb piece of non-fiction recounts, (in great but gripping detail) the extraordinary achievement of the greatest African king ever; Khama, the founding father of Botswana. In the Autumn of 1895 Khama, threatened with having his people enslaved and his lands stolen, made a whirlwind tour of Great Britain, trying to gather enough support from the general British public, in a desperate attempt to prevent 'The Bechuanaland Protectorate' from being turned into a colony by the British Government. Neil Parsons, with the aid of a vast amount of original material and photographs, lays out in detail where Khama went, who he met, what he saw, even what he ate, and brings to life Khama's amazing journey around 44 cities and towns, culminating with his historical audience with Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle and eventual victory. Khama, a handsome, tall and hugely charismatic man, was greeted, on his journey, more like a rock star than a noble chief and won praise from everyone.

Even his arch enemy, Cecil Rhodes, remarked; "Khama is the greatest chief in Africa, probably in the World" A humble and religious man, Khama felt equal to all. Surrounded by the press after his triumphal visit to Windsor, one condescending journalist shouted; " And was the Queen good to you?" Khama replied in his usual calm manner;"Yes, the Queen was very good to me... And I was very good to the Queen."

This book examines the 1895 trip of Batswana Chiefs Khama, Sebele and Bathoen to London to negotiate a deal with Minister of Colonial Affairs Joe Chamberlain that would secure their land against seizure attempts by Cecil Rhodes. It relies primarily on archival sources including correspondence, diaries, papers and newspaper clippings and, to a lesser degree, on oral histories. Once the chiefs arrive in London, the book is organized by day and the author provides copious information about that day whether it is significant or simply a matter of who stayed in bed or who purchased souvenirs. At times, it seems that the main narrative will be overwhelmed by minutiae. Yet, Parsons does a brilliant job of showing how the chiefs and London Missionary Society administrator Willoughby used the temperance issue and the Non-Conformist sensibility in general to build a more sympathetic case for their position. He also demonstrates well how the journalism of the times seemed to drive much of the context and sometimes the actual negotiations. This book will be a fascinating read for anyone interested in turn-of-the-century Southern Africa or for that matter Britain due to the many excerpts from archival sources. Parson's style is quite accessible to the lay-reader with little previous background in the subject though I would recommend he or she read the last chapter first for a framework. It is particularly important for scholars of the region and of Botswana. It addresses one of the central controversies of Botswana history, i.e., whether Botswana's non-absorption into Rhodesia was the result of the chiefs' visit or the failed Jameson raid. (Parson's comes down in favor of the former.) More generally, it is a revealing look at the agency of African colonial elites.

This book does an excellent job of telling the tale of the visit of three great African kings to England in the late 1890s. Provides an accurate portrayal of King Khama and his interaction with Joe Chamberlain and Cecil Rhodes. An excellent, factual, entertaining story of successful African resistance.

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