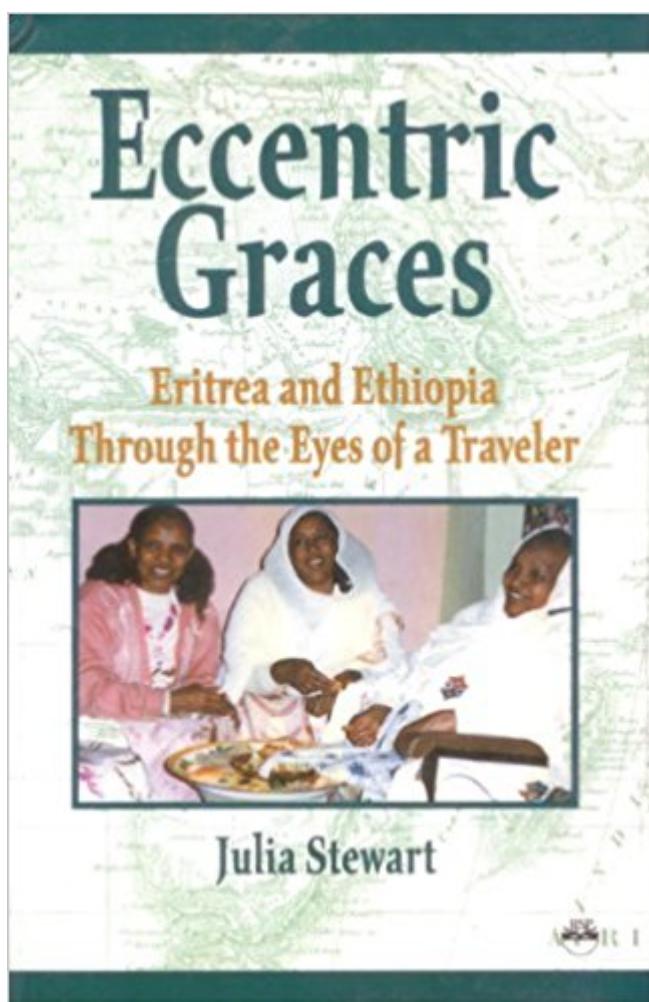


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Eccentric Graces: Eritrea And Ethiopia Through The Eyes Of A Traveler



Synopsis

Prologue: This is a travel narrative about Eritrea, a tiny sun-drenched country along the Red Sea, and Ethiopia, its giant southern neighbor and former colonial overlord. Among the oldest civilizations on earth, these two African countries can boast over 2,000 years of recorded history. Eritrean and Ethiopian histories interlock, yet still maintain distinctive features. Eritrea's past revolves around foreign incursions and occupation, as well as ongoing trade and cultural mingling with Mediterranean and Arabian worlds. Ethiopian history speaks of imperial glory and dominance, and for great swaths of time isolation, as its Christian kingdoms held out in highland strongholds while Islamic and pagan militaries swirled around them. Today, both countries, having just emerged from a thirty-year war, are dirt poor. Many citizens live on less than one dollar a day and both nations receive millions of dollars annually in food and development aid. But, with many well-trained professionals among local and exiled populations, rebounding economies, the rule of law, and rich histories and cultures to draw upon, Eritrea and Ethiopia represent the brightest hope for democracy and growth in Africa in the new millennium. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

"This long-awaited travelogue gently brings the pulse of Eritrea and Ethiopia to life. No one eager who is to know them should miss it." -Frank Smyth, journalist There are some places that hound the imagination of a traveler years before they actually have the opportunity to visit. This is how the ancient lands of Eritrea and Ethiopia beckoned to author Julia Stewart. Breathtaking landscapes, attractive citizens, intricately spiced foods, a gently culture and rich history-it was all waiting for her.

all of these things, Stewart came to experience and appreciate with abundance. What she did not predict were several mysterious happenings: harassment at the hands of "union buster," an impromptu running of the bulls, coming face to face with abject poverty, and her own reactions to these unpredictable events. Stewart's travels to Eritrea and Ethiopia are of a current vintage, unlike those of famous explorers of an earlier period such as Richard Burton and James Bruce. Her travels took place during a post-war era when tremendous changes were occurring in the political and social lives of the people. Stewart found many surprises, good and bad, and she shares them all with her readers. Despite a sometimes arduous adventure, Stewart's fascination for Eritrea and Ethiopia has not ceased. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Julia Stewart lived in Nairobi, Kenya, for six years where she worked for Interaid International and the United Nations' World Food Program. Over the past decade she has traveled and worked in 14 African countries. She is the author of four books and currently resides in Westerville, Ohio. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

It is not a surprise to me that there are such mixed reviews of this book. It is obvious by reading the reviews that you either loved it or hated it. That said, I read it and thought it was fantastic! If you have an opened mind, and a sense of wonder - as does the author of this book - than it will be apparent that most of these negative reviews have an anterior motive. Why is that? Africa is a continent that is as diverse as these reviews! Coincidence? Please read this book with the intent that it was written: as a travel narrative. How often are we lucky enough to read the accounts of a woman travelling through these two contrasting countries? It is a perspective; and like any work of art it brings something different in everyone who views it. I'm happy to say that this book gave me an excellent insight into these countries in an easy to read and understand manner. Ms. Stewart's experiences seem wonderful, scary, mysterious...all description given to the countries as well as the continent. Bravo! It's a rare treasure and wonderful addition to my library!

Surprised that a reader/reviewer writes off this fascinating book as a travel guide, which means he entirely misunderstands the book's genre (and misreads the subtitle of the book "through the eyes of a traveller"); it is a travel narrative not a travel guide, which in travel narrative style does not pretend to offer the reader with prices of hotels and lists of good restaurants, but rather gives the armchair and actual traveller a glimpse of the atmosphere of a country and its people as a snapshot in time. Stewart has accomplished this task well. The Ethiopia and Eritrea she visited several years

ago, have already changed, and it is valuable that some of their pre-border-war character - albeit from one person's experiences - was captured. Yes, you should buy Bragg if you want a good travel GUIDE, but read this for insight and entertainment.

Guides on Eritrea and Ethiopia are not abundant but the two countries would be better off with NO guides at all in case the only alternative would be the hair-raising gibberish presented under this pretentious title. Everything this woman "knows" is based on the small bibliography she managed to consult and a number of utterly superficial conversations with the occasional passer-by. Beyond that, there is absolutely nothing eccentric and graceful about this book which would probably have looked exactly the same in case she would have travelled Ghana or Egypt or China or what ever. Read this book in case you need warning about bringing toilet paper when visiting public toilets or in case you find a child leaving a turt on a busseat interesting reading ...Otherwise: Forget about this irritating rubbish and Get Philip Braggs's excellent "Guide to Ethiopia" for practical information and e.g. Kevin Rushby's highly acclaimed "Eating the flowers of paradise" ... and DO go and visit Ethiopia !

I read this book with disgust, specially Julia Stewart's stereotyping of Ethiopians. As an Ethiopian I was offended by her writing that "Ethiopians are very arrogant people" after her 'Eritrean buddy' told her some story. This book is rather a political book against Ethiopians reflecting an Eritrean's (with hatred toward Ethiopia) point of view. Her Eritrean buddy also mentions in the book, "the only thing he likes about Ethiopia is the money". I wish the book focus more on her travel experience than trying to generalize things. Any one who really wants to find the truth about Ethiopia, may I suggest you read this book, A GUIDE TO ETHIOPIA by Philip Briggs which has a very balanced view about Ethiopia. Perhaps Julia may check this book as well. One other thing I wish the author had a warning for her use of obscenity in her writing. May I generalize now about Americans? I won't lower myself to that standard.

Don't waste your money on this book. The author of this book was unable to grasp anything beyond the trivial and superfluous thus completely missed the essence of the two countries. The author obviously doesn't bother to check facts as she repeats artificial histories created by liberation fronts as historic facts. Her rush to generalize is very troubling. Both countries are extremely diverse (Eritrea has more than 8 languages while Ethiopia has over than 30 languages.) The number of ethnic groups is much higher close to a total of 100, some living in both countries. Simple

generalizations like "Eritreans" or "Ethiopians" for the most part are not valid. The author simply was unable to recognize the diversity of the cultures within in the two countries and the complex historical relationship that exists between the two countries. For the most part the book is packed with ignorant babble and definitely a waste of time and money. I give it one star only because that is the lowest rating that I can give. This book deserves a rating of zero!

Poor Julia, Wined in Asmara and then left to her and friends devices in Ethiopia! Everything in Eritrea was wonderful but not so in Ethiopia. Julia struggled during her stay in Ethiopia and denigrated almost all of her travel sites - too many people, watery tankwa, mud hut church, too much money, etc. Strangely, of all the Amharic proverbs she puts to print, she denigrates one tribe. One wonders how she managed to learn enough Amharic to transliterate! Lastly, one should tell Julia that Eritrea was never a colony of Ethiopia. A waste of her time to visit Ethiopia and a waste of her time writing about her travels in Ethiopia while at the same time waxing poetic about the "African experience".

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