Samori is celebrated as a resistance hero against French oppression, and his Maninka empire is pictured as a predecessor of such African republics as Guinea and Mali. In particular, under Sekou Touré, Guinea’s first president, Samori gained a foothold in popular historical imagination: Touré himself even claimed to be a descendant of Samori, which he actually only is in a symbolic sense. Nowadays, extended epic narratives on Samori are recorded in Guinea and Southern Mali; these popular narratives mix data from the schoolbooks with local or regional models for heroic behavior. In some regions the traditions do not focus on Samori, but on his brothers who functioned as army leaders, which demonstrates how his empire was organized.

See also: Mali (Republic of): Economy and Society, Nineteenth Century.

Further Reading
Monde Studies, no. 3 (2001), Special issue on Samori.

Tourism
In 1889, the German Hans Meyer was the first European to reach the top of Mount Kilimanjaro. Today, 15,000 tourists, assisted by some 35,000 guides and porters, attempt to climb the mountain each year. Approximately 40 to 50 per cent do reach the summit. It is one of Tanzania’s major tourist attractions and exemplifies one of today’s types of tourism in Africa: trekking. Others are culture, beach (in both summer and winter), and safari (photography and hunting) tourism.

In 1869, the year the Suez Canal was opened, Cook organized the first tour to Egypt (Gamble 1889, pp.26). The Cook family was also responsible for laying out Tanzania’s major tourist attractions and exemplifies one of today’s types of tourism in Africa: trekking. Others are culture, beach (in both summer and winter), and safari (photography and hunting) tourism.

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In Eastern Africa the share of total arrivals rose from 18 to 23 per cent. In 1992, Kenya lost its position as main destination in favor of Zimbabwe. However, tourism in Kenya is much more profitable in terms of receipts, which reflects the predominance of European tourism there. For the whole of eastern Africa, non-African tourists accounted for over 60 per cent of tourism in 1997. This part of Africa is richly endowed with a wide variety of spectacular views such as the wildebeest trek in Serengeti National Park (Tanzania), Victoria Falls on the Zambezi (Zimbabwe/Zambia), the source of the White Nile (Rwanda/Uganda), the Ruwenzori and Virunga Mountain gorillas (Uganda/Rwanda), the ruins of Great Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia’s St. George Church in Lalibella.

The western African share has remained stable from 9.4 to 9.5 per cent between 1989 and 1998, and tourists of non-African origin had a share of 47 per cent. The region’s attractions are long sandy beaches in Gambia, castles and forts in Ghana, the tomb of Ahmadu Bamba in Touba (Senegal), the “Our Lady of Peace” basilica in Yamoussoukro (Côte d’Ivoire), the Bandiagara Plateau of the Dogon and the mosque in Djenné (Mali), among others.

Finally, central Africa (Angola, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Congo, DR Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé, and Príncipe) market share is the weakest of all subregions. Tourist arrivals have remained practically unchanged, with an average annual growth rate of only 3.8 per cent, whereas receipts show a decrease of 4.5 per cent per annum.

Tourism is the fastest growing industry in the world (4.5 per cent annually in the last decade). Moreover, it now holds the number one position in world trade, ahead of the automobile and oil industries. In 1997 the tourism sector had a share of over 8 per cent of total world exports of goods consumed and almost 34 per cent of the total world exports of services. For Africa these figures stood at 8 and 45 per cent, respectively. However, there are huge regional differences.

Looking at Africa’s place in international tourism receipts (excluding transport), only Egypt (27th, US$ 3,838 million) is in the Top 40 earners in 1998 (WTO 1999a). South Africa (US$ 2,366 million) might soon enter this category as its annual growth was in the order of 15.5 per cent in the 1989–1998 period (WTO 1999b, 18). Other major African earners are Morocco (US$ 1,600 million) and Tunisia (US$ 1,550 million). Tourism’s share in receipts of services increased from 35.1 to 45.4 per cent from 1989 to 1997, illustrating the importance of tourism for Africa. By investing in the tourist sector, African countries hope to create jobs and earn hard currencies. It is forecasted that total tourist arrivals in Africa will triple and reach 75 million by the year 2020 (Cleverdon 1998).

Besides positive effects, however, negative aspects in the social, cultural, environmental, and economic spheres should be mentioned. Wildlife is Africa’s greatest natural asset, though, according to Western conservation organizations, it is in constant danger of extinction.

Pollution is another negative environmental effect. Trekking routes, including some of Mount Kilimanjaro’s, are increasingly littered. Even the smallest hotels generate daily waste and sewage while making demands on land, water, and energy.

The problem of leakage of foreign exchange to international companies and airlines also deserves attention. For example, foreign companies, sometimes in collaboration with the local elite, reap most of the economic benefits of beach tourism at the expense of the local population’s commercial activity (e.g., fishing). Investments in roads and hotels are directed to tourist areas. Yet, the tourist sector operates in a risky market. The preferences of tourists fluctuate constantly, and an economic decline affects travel abroad. The outbreak of a disease or local conflicts may also affect the tourism sector. These often unexpected and uncontrollable events could weaken the local tourist sector and force a large number of (small) entrepreneurs into bankruptcy virtually overnight.

Further Reading


