SOFTWARE & TECH

When We Ruled By Robin Walker

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Unveiling Africa's Glorious Past: A Deep Dive into When We Ruled by Robin Walker

For centuries, the narrative of African history has been tragically distorted. All too often, the continent's past is presented through a narrow, colonial lens that begins with European contact and reduces millennia of complex civilizations to a footnote. However, a monumental work has emerged to challenge this skewed perspective and restore a sense of pride and accurate understanding. **When We Ruled by Robin Walker** is not merely a history book; it is a comprehensive, evidence-based reclamation of Africa's pre-colonial heritage. This article explores the profound significance of Walker's work, diving into its unique methodology, its coverage of forgotten empires, and why it remains an essential read for anyone seeking to understand the true depth of human civilization.

What Makes When We Ruled by Robin Walker a Standout Work?

Robin Walker, known in academic circles as "The African History Researcher," spent over a decade meticulously compiling the information found in this book. What sets *When We Ruled* apart from other historical texts is its rigid commitment to sourcing. Walker does not rely on myth or oral tradition alone; instead, he cross-references the works of classical historians, Arab geographers, early European explorers, and modern archaeologists. The result is a painstakingly documented timeline that spans from the ancient Nile Valley civilizations to the powerful kingdoms of the 19th century.

The book's subtitle, "**The Ancient and Medieval History of Black Civilizations**," perfectly encapsulates its mission. It is a direct counter-narrative to the unfounded theory that Africa lacked advanced societies before outside intervention. By presenting irrefutable evidence from architecture, metallurgy, governance, and trade, Walker builds a case that is both academically rigorous and deeply moving.

Rediscovering the Giants of Antiquity

One of the most powerful sections of *When We Ruled* deals with the civilizations of the Nile. While many readers are familiar with Egypt, Walker goes further to show that Kemet (ancient Egypt) was a distinctly black African civilization. He uses the accounts of Greek writers like Herodotus, who described the Colchians and Egyptians as having "black skins and woolly hair," alongside modern DNA evidence to solidify this claim.

Beyond Egypt, the book shines a brilliant light on the Kingdom of Kush, particularly the Meroitic period. Walker details how the Nubian pharaohs of the 25th Dynasty ruled over a unified Nile Valley. He describes the city of Meroe, a center of iron smelting that rivaled any in the ancient world. The book provides specific dates, king lists, and architectural details from the pyramids of Meroe, demonstrating a sophisticated society that thrived for over a thousand years.

The text seamlessly moves to the Horn of Africa, exploring the Empire of Aksum. *When We Ruled* presents Aksum as a global superpower, a contemporary of Persia, Rome, and China. Walker discusses the Aksumite navy, their unique coinage, and their adoption of Christianity long before many European kingdoms. The towering stelae of Aksum, including the great obelisk, are presented as testaments to advanced engineering and complex social organization.

The Medieval Golden Age: Empires of the Sahel and Savannah

The middle chapters of **When We Ruled by Robin Walker** are arguably its most breathtaking. Here, Walker systematically demolishes the myth that sub-Saharan Africa was isolated or primitive before the Atlantic slave trade.

Walker uses the writings of the 11th-century Andalusian scholar Al-Bakri to bring the Empire of Ghana to life. He describes the opulent court of the king, the elaborate gold-working traditions, and the thriving trans-Saharan trade routes that connected West Africa to North Africa and Europe. The book notes that the empire's military power and economic wealth dwarfed that of many contemporary European states.

The section on the Mali Empire is particularly detailed. Walker covers the reign of Mansa Musa, often cited as the richest person in history. But beyond the pilgrimage and gold, the book emphasizes scholarship. The University of Sankore in Timbuktu, with its thousands of manuscripts and students from across the Islamic world, is presented as a vibrant intellectual hub. Walker highlights specific scholars and the subjects taught—from astronomy and mathematics to law and medicine.

- Key Points on Mali:
- Mansa Musa's pilgrimage led to the construction of spectacular mosques like Djinguereber.
- The empire had a standing army of 100,000 men, including a cavalry of 10,000.
- Written contracts and legal systems governed complex trade agreements.

Following the decline of Mali, Walker details the rise of the Songhai Empire, the largest state in West African history. He focuses on Askia Muhammad I, a brilliant administrator and military leader who structured the empire into provinces with a centralized bureaucracy. The book includes information on the agricultural innovations, the bustling river trade on the Niger, and the eventual tragic collapse due to the Moroccan invasion of 1591, which introduced firearms to the region.

Southern and Eastern Africa: The Forgotten Kingdoms

Walker takes care to cover the entire continent, ensuring that Eastern and Southern Africa receive equal treatment.

One of the most controversial topics in African historiography has been the origin of Great Zimbabwe. Colonial historians refused to believe that black Africans could have built such a massive stone complex. *When We Ruled* systematically dismantles these racist theories using archaeological evidence. Walker explains the architectural techniques of the dry-stone walls, the economic foundation based on cattle and gold trade with Kilwa, and the political structure of the Zimbabwe kingdom. The book argues that Great Zimbabwe was the capital of a wealthy and powerful Shona state.

The book also examines the city-states of the Swahili Coast, such as Kilwa, Mombasa, and Zanzibar. Walker presents them not as mere trading posts created by Arabs, but as indigenous African commercial centers that adopted Islam and developed a unique Afro-Arabic culture. He details the stone architecture, the coral-rag buildings, and the extensive trade networks that connected them to India, China, and Persia. The famous voyage of the Chinese admiral Zheng He to East Africa is mentioned, highlighting the global reach of these city-states.

1. Swahili Achievements:
2. A unique written language using Arabic script (Swahili Ajami).
3. Advanced sailing technology with the use of monsoon winds (the mtepe vessel).
4. Minting of local gold and copper coins in Kilwa as early as the 11th century.

Challenging the Hamitic Hypothesis and Racial Bias

A recurring theme throughout **When We Ruled by Robin Walker** is the critique of the "Hamitic hypothesis"—the

pseudoscientific idea that any advanced civilization in Africa must have been created by a non-black "Hamitic" race. Walker uses original source material to show how European historians of the 19th and 20th centuries actively rewrote African history to erase black agency. By bringing forth the original texts from the period, Walker proves that these civilizations were acknowledged as black by outside observers before the rise of modern racism. This makes the book not just a history lesson, but a powerful act of historical justice.

The Legacy of Robin Walker's Masterpiece

Since its publication, *When We Ruled* has become a standard reference for educators, students, and general readers interested in African history. It is a heavy tome—over 700 pages—but its clear prose and logical structure make it accessible. The book features numerous maps, timelines, and illustrations that help the reader visualize the scale of these civilizations.

One of the most valuable aspects of the book is its extensive bibliography. Walker provides a roadmap for further study, encouraging readers to explore the primary sources themselves. For those looking to understand the depth of African history before the transatlantic slave trade, this book is the definitive starting point. It repositions Africa not as a passive recipient of history, but as an active engine of global development.

Why You Should Read When We Ruled Today

In an era where discussions about identity, heritage, and historical accuracy are more important than ever, **When We Ruled by Robin Walker** offers a solid, factual foundation. It instills pride in people of African descent worldwide by providing concrete evidence of their ancestors' achievements. For everyone else, it offers a humbling lesson: that the story of civilization is far more complex and global than we are often taught.

The book is not a work of Afrocentric cheerleading; it is a serious historical study that holds up under scrutiny. Walker cites Roman, Greek, Arab, and Chinese sources alongside modern archaeology. He does not shy away from discussing internal conflicts, the slave trade within Africa, or the decline of these empires. This balanced approach lends the book immense credibility.

Conclusion

When We Ruled by Robin Walker is more than a book—it is a key that unlocks a hidden past. It restores the legacy of African civilizations from the Nile to the Zambezi, from the Atlantic coast to the Indian Ocean. For anyone seeking to understand the true story of humanity, this work is indispensable. It proves that Africa was not a dark continent waiting for light, but rather the very cradle of civilization that shone brightly for millennia. Walker's exhaustive research and compelling narrative ensure that future generations will no longer have to ask if Africa had a history, but instead marvel at the sheer volume and brilliance of it.

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