

# Africans Thought of It

AMAZING INNOVATIONS



**Bathseba Opini**  
**Richard B. Lee**

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**For all my family members and friends, and for the children  
of Africa—with love and admiration.**

**—B.O.**

**To my African friends and colleagues Scholastica, Pombili,  
Gakekoshe, and their children; to my children David, Miriam,  
Lucah, and in memory of Alex.**

**—R.L.**



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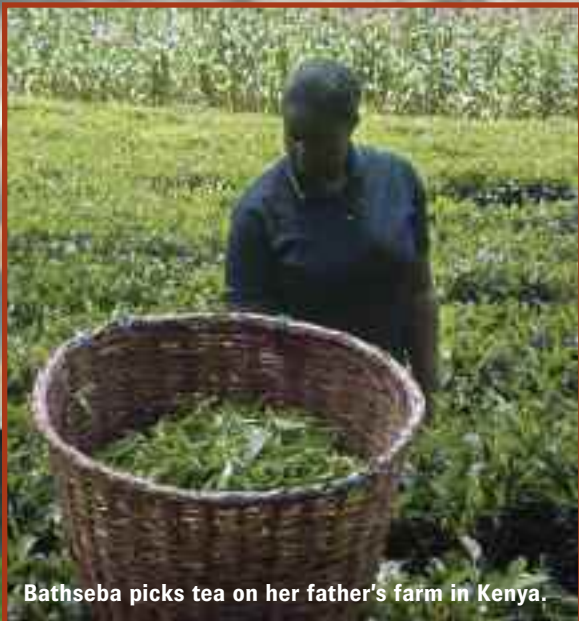
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# Karibu, Soo Dhawow, Kamogelo,



Bathseba picks tea on her father's farm in Kenya.

**M**y name is Bathseba and I grew up near Keroka, a small town in western Kenya. My family belongs to a cultural group called the Abagusii. As a young girl, I spent lots of time with my parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts, who taught me about the Abagusii customs by sharing traditional tales, riddles, proverbs, and other wise sayings.

When I wasn't in school, I helped out with chores on the farm. For example, I helped my mom plant, weed, and harvest millet. She taught me traditional ways of scaring away the birds that came to eat our crops.

I also helped out my dad, who grew tea. I would go with my siblings early in the morning to pick tea. Sometimes we also herded cows, sheep, and goats. This was lots of fun because we would also sing songs and play games while we were out in the field herding animals.

Now that I live in Canada, there are many things I miss from my life in Africa: the beautiful natural landscapes, the night sky filled with bright stars, the way the moon seemed to smile down at me,

A tea plantation in Kenya



# Welcome.

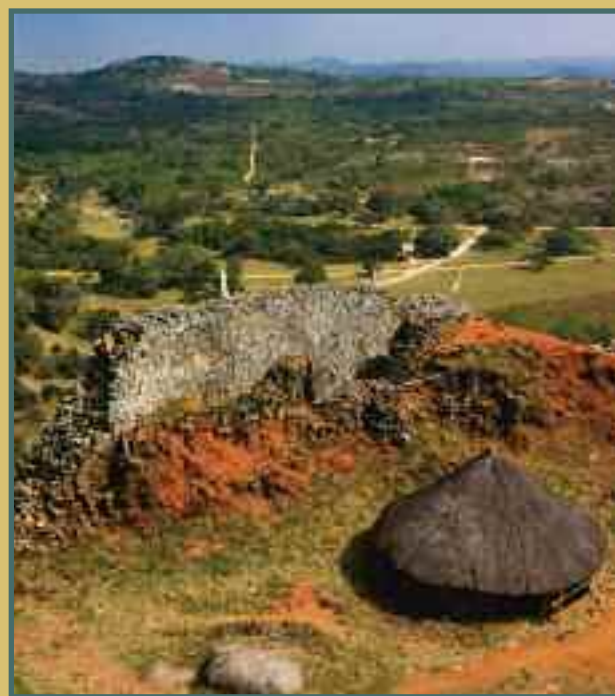
and the wonderful hospitality of African people. But most of all I miss my family and friends, and hearing the stories and proverbs that are part of my cultural heritage. My love for Africa is part of me, and I carry it with me wherever I go. I hope this book will help you understand why I love the people and places of Africa so much.

Africa is the world's second-largest continent and home to almost 1 billion people. Over 800 different ethnic groups live in the 54 countries on the continent. While many Africans live in peaceful rural villages and practice traditional forms of agriculture, Africa has some of the world's largest and busiest cities, such as Cairo (Egypt), Lagos (Nigeria), Johannesburg (South Africa), and Khartoum (Sudan).

Africa's history includes the very beginning of human history. The earliest ancestors of modern humans lived in Africa over 4 million years ago. Farming and herding developed thousands of years ago and, over time, great empires arose in west, central, and southern Africa. Countries such as Ghana, Mali, and Zimbabwe take their names from powerful ancient kingdoms.



**Johannesburg is the largest city in South Africa.**



**Ancient ruins in Zimbabwe**



**Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania is the highest mountain in Africa.**



**Dried calabash gourds are used for storing liquids, just as we use bottles.**

Today, many aspects of African culture have spread around the globe. For example, plants used in traditional African medicine are now used to make modern medicines and cosmetics. Museums in North America and Europe have large collections of traditional African art. Much of the music that

is popular today has been influenced by the sounds and rhythms of African music.

My co-author Richard Lee and I invite you to join us on a fascinating journey to discover some of the amazing innovations of African peoples.



**A traditional wooden pillow from Ethiopia**

