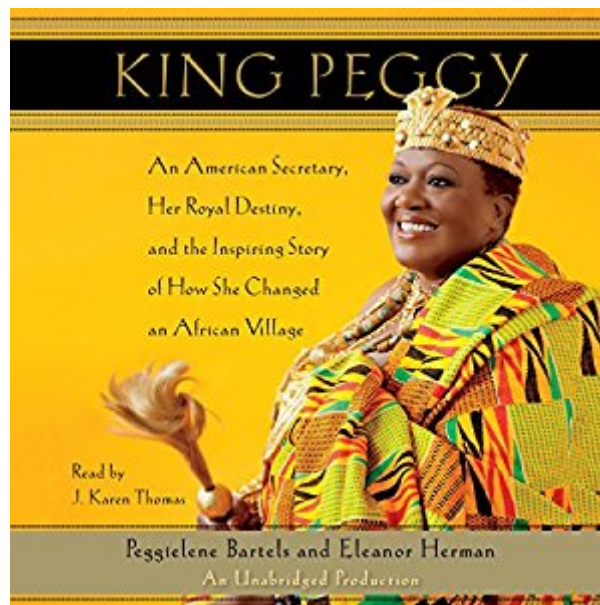


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King Peggy: An American Secretary, Her Royal Destiny, And The Inspiring Story Of How She Changed An African Village



Synopsis

The charming real-life fairy tale of an American secretary who discovers she has been chosen king of an impoverished fishing village on the west coast of Africa. King Peggy has the sweetness and quirkiness of The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series and the hopeful sense of possibility of Half the Sky. King Peggy chronicles the astonishing journey of an American secretary who suddenly finds herself king to a town of 7,000 souls on Ghana's central coast, half a world away. Upon arriving for her crowning ceremony in beautiful Otuam, she discovers the dire reality: there's no running water, no doctor, and no high school, and many of the village elders are stealing the town's funds. To make matters worse, her uncle (the late king) sits in a morgue awaiting a proper funeral in the royal palace, which is in ruins. The longer she waits to bury him, the more she risks incurring the wrath of her ancestors. Peggy's first two years as king of Otuam unfold in a way that is stranger than fiction. In the end, a deeply traditional African town has been uplifted by the ambitions of its headstrong, decidedly modern female king. And in changing Otuam, Peggy is herself transformed, from an ordinary secretary to the heart and hope of her community.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What a cool story. I enjoyed it all the way through, and it was a nice lift. Peggy is inspiring and funny. She's everywoman, yet stronger and more determined than many of us, so it was fun to see her work through the many problems she had to deal with as the new king of a village in Ghana. There were so many wonderful subplots, intrigues, and drama. I enjoyed the great descriptions of the village and environment. Laughed out loud as Peggy dealt with the sexist old men who'd been

running things before she arrived. Here's one of the passages I enjoyed, from Peggy sitting on her porch one morning as the village awoke:"All around her were the voices of birds...a fisherman came out (of his house and) stretched a fishing net over a vertical frame, took a needle and thread, and started repairing...A man walked by Peggy's porch with a heap of long sticks of firewood on his head...Peggy heard the slap of dishwater hitting the dirt...young children ran out of the next-door neighbor's house, chasing one another and laughing...Women from the nearby houses came out holding long dried palm fronds and, bending at the waist, energetically swept the dirt in front of their houses...any sprout of grass would be considered unsightly and immediately plucked."And this:"Many Africans saw America as a promised land because it was rich in conveniences and gadgets...but many of (the Americans) couldn't loosen their grip on their remote controls enough to sit on a breezy porch with friends and family, talking about nothing in particular, or sitting in contented silence listening to the birds..."There was so much drama in this book that I couldn't almost believe it was a true story, but it was! Very much recommend it.

From Peggien Bartels' surprising rise from a regular citizen working at the Ghanaian Embassy in Washington, DC, to her becoming the first woman king of the Ghanaian region of Otuam, she weaves the fascinating and often comical story of her struggles as a Ghanaian and American woman to overcome the entrenched corruption in her homeland and bring improvement to the region and people of Otuam. She introduces readers to the history and many of the customs of Ghana, along with the colorful characters in her extended family. Most fascinating of all was her eventual discovery of why she was chosen as King and how she overcame many of the roadblocks placed in her path by the corrupt members of her royal council. I connected to this book on two levels. First, as a member of the Jamaican diaspora, I was reminded through her book of the African influences that I saw as child growing up in Jamaica during the '40s and early '50s--the head wraps that some women wore, the heavy baskets balanced on their heads, the night-time drumming in sections of the city or villages throughout the island, the people's patois words and phrases with African roots, the calypso and mento music with their African rhythms, obeah men (witch doctors), the blending of African and Christian beliefs and practices, and the many folk stories, especially those of 'Brer Anansi, the cunning spider. Second, I connected with her memoir because of the similarities that I saw in her description of life in Otuam and my 2015 visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo--the poverty, political corruption, colonial history, failing infrastructure, roadside business ventures, rain-gutted dirt roads, and more. Her description of Otuam, blended with my fresh memory of the Congolese city of Bunia and its surrounding countryside, brought King

Peggy to life for me, so much so that I found it difficult to put the book down.

This was a selection for my book club. Although it would not have been a personal choice, I am happy I read this book. It proves that one person can make a difference. Peggy, through personal sacrifice, tireless determination and strong faith transformed her community. The book clearly illustrates the problem of poverty that comes when those in authority are corrupt, dishonest, selfish and uncaring of anyone but themselves. Peggy bravely stands strong and firm against those that have been oppressing their own community and puts in place accountability and upright leadership. Her dreams of a better life for her people come true because she is willing to do what it takes to make a difference. This book also gives detailed insight into a culture vastly different than American culture. A fine read with a lot of humor.

I loved this book. I loved King Peggy. I remember seeing an interview with King Peggy a few years ago and thinking that I should track down this book, and I know now that my instinct was correct. Throughout the book, I was impressed by Peggy's spirit, her resolve, and her ass-kicking attitude. The way she faced down the corruption in her village was remarkable. She was determined to make positive changes and she did! I would recommend this book to anyone looking for a great story about an incredible woman.

Wonderful true story, beautifully told. Pure joy to read. Bonus: Delivers a sense that you've lived in semi-rural Ghana and have an insider's view of some of its realities. I appreciate the insights and happy I got them from the air conditioned comfort of my armchair. The author did a great job of getting inside King Peggy's head and heart and sharing them with us. The result is we get to know how a great "everyday" hero thinks and acts. Plus we have the delight of being "present" as great improvements in everyday life are being brought to an area woefully deficient in what Americans regard as life's "basics." I'm glad I read this and grateful that BookBub brought it to my attention.

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