

EGYPT

CHILD of AFRICA



Edited by
Ivan Van Sertima

So when I say that the African and African Diasporan challenge to a “White KMT” is not new, we can prove it by reference to scholarly works of Dr. Carter G. Woodson. The early work of this Harvard educated historian led him to the conclusion that the ancient Kemites were mainly native, black, Africans.

Perhaps that was one of the reasons why this genius had so much trouble with the philanthropists. They were not eager to support his search for truth.^{38, 39, 40} I might add, the same is often true today.

Woodson understood the African heritage and the continuing relationship of it to Africans in all the diaspora. He also understood the relationship of KMT to the rest of Africa.

Woodson was not alone among his contemporaries. In 1917, his newly established *Journal of Negro History* contains an article by George Wells Parker. It was entitled the “African Origin of Grecian Civilization.”⁴¹ It is interesting to note that this article should have stimulated a broader search by African and African diasporan historians for the truth about KMT. Why did so many of them ignore this challenge over the past 70 years?

Pre-Woodson African and African American Scholars on KMT

Carter G. Woodson was not the first African American Historian to assert the fact that KMT was African. Serious historians, both African and European, had done the research and had announced their findings.

"Speaking at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians, Leon Litwack, Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley, and outgoing president of the organization, indicted past historians for perpetuating racism. He called on his present-day colleagues to heal that wound . . .

"No group of scholars was more deeply implicated in the mis-education of American youth and did more to shape the thinking of generations of Americans about race and blacks than historians . . . whether by neglect or distortion, the scholarly monographs and texts they authored, perpetuated racial stereotypes and myths."³⁴

This was a broad indictment by a courageous historian. But the historian can bring either MAAT or ISFET, and Litwack was firmly committed to MAAT. We cannot simply ignore the implications of this for the study of all human history.

Woodson on KMT

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1. He dealt directly with invalid history deriving from *neglect* of African people. He demonstrated that there was a massive amount of materials that were available to provide a valid picture of the experiences of African people.
2. He confronted directly the hidden seamy side of scholarship in a society that had slavery, colonization and racism as central forces, resulting in *distortion, fraud, and fabrication* of information through invalid scholarship about people of African descent. Carter Woodson's books, *The Education of the Negro prior to 1861*³⁵ and *The Miseducation of the Negro*³⁶ were direct challenges to and documentation of the *deliberate and strategic* attempts by white supremacists, including some scholars, not only to falsify records, but to use the falsification of information to control independent thought by people of African descent, with the intent to create mental slavery among Africans.

We will see that these same two themes are present in the work of most African and African Diasporan scholars who studied ancient KMT and their "race" and ethnicity.

Carter G. Woodson was clear about the African racial and cultural origin of the Kemetic people. He was also clear about European Chauvinistic mythology that passed for scholarship.

" . . . The Aryan theory of the evolution of culture from the preeminent Asiatics who in migrating covered both Europe and Africa with new

ideas has been generally rejected by thinkers of our day. The thought that the long-headed Nordics came southward to civilize the rest of the world has also been abandoned as unscientific . . .

. . . The civilization of the Nile started among the blacks of Ethiopia and passed on to influence the mixed breeds of Egypt, which later came under Asiatic influences. In Book III of Diodorus Siculus it is said, "The Ethiopians conceive themselves to be of greater antiquity than any other nation; and it is probable that born under the sun's path its warmth may have ripened them earlier than other men. They suppose themselves also to be the inventors of divine worship, of festivals of solemn assemblies, of sacrifices, and every religious practice. they affirm that the Egyptians are one of their colonies." The Egyptians, too, asserted that their civilization came from the black tribes to the south, and "at the earliest period in which human remains have been recovered Egypt and Lower Nubia appear to have formed culturally and racially one land."

Among the later Egyptians developed octoroons, quadroons, samboes and blacks, the same types which developed as a result of race admixture in America. Berbers, Semites, and Negroes went into this melting pot to make up what we call the Egyptians who led the world in government, industry, science, architecture, literature, and art. In the early period, the predynastic epoch, however, Egypt was mainly Negroid.³⁷

As early as 1830, the fiery David Walker, born in North Carolina, and a Boston businessman, after years of research, in his famous *Appeal* confronted the question of the race of the ancient Kemetic people directly.

... Some of my brethren do not know who Pharaoh and the Egyptians were—I know it to be a fact, that some of them take the Egyptians to have been a gang of *devils*, not knowing any better, and that they (Egyptians) having got possession of the Lord's people, treated them *nearly* as cruel as *Christian Americans* do us, at the present day. For the information of such I would only mention that the Egyptians were Africans or coloured people, such as we are—some of them yellow and others dark—a mixture of Ethiopians and the natives of Egypt—about the same as you see the coloured people of the United States at the present day."⁴²

In 1879 Harvard educated physician Martin Delaney wrote explicitly about the race of the ancient Egyptians.

"To determine the race representatives of the Egyptian gods, will go far toward deciding the disputed questions as to who were the first inhabitants of Egypt and builders of the pyramids, catacombs and sphinxes . . .

And yet we are told by his Lordship, that "the Negro knows no higher position even to this day, than to kneel at the feet of Sethos, in utter servitude." Would the priesthood, who among them in those days were always of the royal stock and nobility, be chosen from the Negro race, if that race had only been subordinate and thus degraded? Would the whole group of people represented on those pillars at Beyt-el-Welee, in Nubia, have been of the race of any other people than those who designed and placed them there? No such thing. And the fact is, that the Negro race comprised the whole native population and ruling people of the upper and lower region of the Nile—Ethiopia and Egypt—excepting those who came by foreign invasion; and the entirety of the Negro group in this important historical representation, can be readily accounted for from the fact of the columns being found in Ethiopia, a part of this country—Africa—where foreigners did not so frequently reach, and therefore did not deface and erase, as was common in regard to those for centuries found in Egypt."⁴³

In 1883, the great historian George Washington Williams wrote a book with a chapter that was entitled, "The Negro in light of philology, ethnology, and Egyptology," and another chapter entitled "Primitive Negro Civilization." In the latter he wrote the following:

Before Romulus founded Rome, before Homer sang, when Greece was in its infancy, and the world quite young, "hoary Meroe" was the chief city of the Negroes along the Nile. Its private and public buildings, its markets and public squares, its colossal walls and stupendous gates, its

gorgeous chariots and alert footmen, its inventive genius and ripe scholarship, made it the cradle of civilization, and the mother of all. It was the queenly city of Ethiopia,—for it was founded by colonies of Negroes. Through its open gates long and ceaseless caravans, laden with gold, silver, ivory, frankincense, and palm oil, poured the riches of Africa into the capacious lap of the city. The learning of this people, embalmed in the immortal hieroglyphic, flowed down the Nile, and, like spray, spread over the delta of that time-honored stream, on by the beautiful and venerable city of Thebes,—the city of a hundred gates, another monument to Negro genius and civilization, and more ancient than the ancient glory of Ethiopia! Homeric mythology borrowed its very essence from Negro hieroglyphics; Egypt borrowed her light from the venerable Negroes up the Nile. Greece went to school to the Egyptians, and Rome turned to Greece for law and the science of warfare. England dug down into Rome twenty centuries to learn to build and plant, to establish a government, and maintain it. Thus the flow of civilization has been from the East—the place of light—to the West; from the Orient to the Occidental.”⁴⁴

In 1884 Frederick Douglass asserted that the Ancient Kemites were black in a commencement speech before the literary societies of Western Reserve College in Rochester. The speech was titled, “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered.” In it Douglass said the following:

“The fact that Egypt was one of the earliest abodes of learning and civilization, is as firmly established as are the everlasting hills, defying, with a calm front the boasted mechanical and architectural skill of the nineteenth century . . . Greece and Rome—and through them Europe and America have received their civilization from the ancient Egyptians. This fact is not denied by anybody. But Egypt is in Africa. Pity that it had not been in Europe, or in Asia, or better still in America! Another unhappy circumstance is, that the ancient Egyptians were not white people; but were undoubtedly, just about as dark in complexion as many in this country who are considered genuine Negroes; and that is not all, their hair was far from being of that graceful lankness which adorns the fair Anglo Saxon head.”⁴⁵

Many other African scholar/leaders preceded Carter G. Woodson in asserting the Africaness and the blackness of the ancient Kemites.⁴⁶

Contemporary and Post Woodson African and African American Scholars on KMT

Many African American, African Caribbean, and African scholars followed Woodson. Professor William Leo Hansberry, graduate of Harvard, professor at Howard University, and the “Father of African Studies,” did extensive work on this topic, traveling to Egypt for a first hand view of the primary evidence in museums and on the monuments. However, only a few

The great W.E.B. Du Bois made his views explicit, not only about the race and ethnicity of the Ancient Kemites. Like Carter G. Woodson, he wrote as well about the falsification problem tying it directly to the need to rationalize the slave trade and colonization.

"The Egyptians, however, regarded themselves as African. The Greeks looked upon Egypt as part of Africa not only geographically but culturally, and every fact of history and anthropology proves that the Egyptians were an African people varying no more from other African peoples than groups like the Scandinavians vary from other Europeans, or groups like the Japanese from other Asiatics. There can be but one adequate explanation of this vagary of nineteenth-century science: it was due to the slave trade and Negro slavery. It was due to the fact that the rise and support of capitalism called for rationalization based upon degrading and discrediting the Negroid peoples. It is especially significant that the science of Egyptology arose and flourished at the very time that the cotton kingdom reached its greatest power on the foundation of the American Negro slavery. We may then without further ado ignore this verdict of history, widespread as it is, and treat Egyptian history as an integral part of African history."

Du Bois continues:

"We conclude, therefore, that the Egyptians were Negroids, and not only that, but that by tradition they believed themselves descended not

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from the whites or the yellow, but from the black people of the south. Thence they traced their origin, and *toward the south in earlier days they turned the faces of their buried corpses . . .*".⁵¹

St. Clair Drake, distinguished anthropologist, studied the question of world racism and the race of the Ancient Kemites. Like Du Bois, he found racism to be a major influence on opinions about the race of the natives of KMT. He expressed the following opinion:

"Racism has put such blinders on people of the contemporary Western world that most tourists visiting Cairo today can take their camel rides around the Sphinx without ever noticing what struck Volney and Denon so forcefully, namely, that an ancient pharaoh was the same type of man who today walks the streets of Kingston, Harlem, Birmingham, and the South Side of Chicago. Likewise, most of the Arab population of Egypt is probably unaware that millennia before their ancestors arrived on the scene after A.D. 700, most of the Egyptians resembled the Sphinx, and that Blacks not Arabs, were once the dominant type in Egypt. Today Aswan, far up the Nile, or even Khartoum in the Sudan, presents a more accurate picture of Early Egypt's population than does Cairo."⁵²

of his extensive notes have been published.⁴⁷ Significantly, Hansberry followed the pattern of other African diasporan scholars by his appeal to ancient texts. He mastered the Greek record and describes Africa through their eyes.

In 1926, Drusilla Dunjee Houston, struggling virtually alone at her home in Oklahoma, wrote a comprehensive story of African people in the world, including histories of Ethiopia and Kemet. She called all of the people of north east Africa by their ancient name, "Cushites."⁴⁸

In 1954, the African scholar Dr. J.C. deGraft-Johnson wrote to set the record straight. His work which situated KMT properly is now a classic.⁴⁹ That was the same year that African American Professor George G.M. James, of Guyanese descent, published his now famous classic *Stolen Legacy*, a book that was to inspire Martin Bernal's writing of *Black Athena*, and which has now been complemented and extended by the work of Egyptologist Theophile Obenga.⁵⁰ Obenga brought his fluent knowledge of the MDW NTR (hieroglyphic writing and primary texts), and his extensive first hand knowledge of African cultures generally, to the comparative study of Greece and KMT. James did not have a background in the Kemetic language. These authors had no doubt about the African race and ethnicity of the Kemites.

The years of research by Professors John G. Jackson, Chancellor Williams, John H. Clarke and Yosef ben-Jochannan paved the way for a whole new generation of scholars.^{53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58} Dr. Yosef ben-Jochannan has spent virtually his entire scholarly life on a study of the documentation of the race of Kemites and on the problem of falsification of data, apart from being one of the greatest teachers of the subject.

We must not fail to note that several scholars of African descent were prepared as Egyptologists in the traditional formal way. Dr. Cheikh Anta Diop and Dr. Theophile Obenga were formally trained in traditional Egyptology. Their works have been voluminous and multidisciplinary. Diop's masterpiece, *Civilization or Barbarism*⁵⁹ has no competitor in the research on the race of the ancient Kemites. Moreover, his multidisciplinary training in Egyptology, physics, chemistry, mathematics, cultural anthropology, history, linguistics is unlike that of any other Egyptologist. He integrated all of these disciplines and applied them to the study of KMT. A sample of his works will convince the reader that this is true.⁶⁰ Similarly, Dr. Obenga's masterpiece of history, anthropology, mathematics, and linguistics, *African Philosophy of the Pharaonic Period*,⁶¹ stands as a unique contribution to our understanding of KMT as an African culture.

We cannot fail to mention that Drs. Diop and Obenga faced 18 of their peers in world Egyptology, in Cairo, in 1974 under the sponsorship of the United Nations.

2. All *unmixed Africans* are not jet black. For while the great majority are black skinned, countless numbers who have lived for long periods in cool areas have lighter complexions and no "Caucasian blood" at all.
3. African people were among the earliest builders of monumental civilizations, including the development of scripts, sciences, engineering, medicine, architecture, religion, and the fine arts.
4. How such an advanced civilization was lost is one of the greatest and most tragic issues in human annals, and should be the primary thrust of research studies in African history.
5. Asian imperialism, though seldom acknowledged, has been even more devastating for African people than European imperialism; and the Arabs' white superiority complex is not one whit less than that of Europeans, although their strategy of 'brotherhood' deceives naive Blacks.¹⁰
6. The forces behind the continuous splintering of already small groups and even the breaking up of kingdoms and empires, followed by the equally endless migrations, included the steadily increasing death of the soil and the advance of the deserts; the drying up of lakes and rivers, along with the attending climatic changes and internal strife—combined with foreign invasions and famine to become a way of life.
7. The strength and greatness of African people can be measured by how, in the face of what at times seemed to be all the forces of Hell, they fought through to survive it all and reconstructed kingdoms and empires—some of which endured for centuries.
8. Within the framework of even the smallest surviving states African people maintained the basic principles of the traditional African constitution, and held on through all the passing centuries to the fundamental elements of its ancient democratic, social, political, and economic systems all over the African continent.
9. Africa was the birthplace and cradle of a religious civilization based on the conception of one supreme god, creator of the universe.
10. Irrespective of the remarkable civilizations Africans developed, African people fell far behind in the forward march of the rest of humankind because, in addition to the destructive forces of nature on the continent and the hostile forces from without, African people further enshackled themselves with their own hands through certain aspects of their social institutions and beliefs that stood as roadblocks to progress even where conditions were favorable.

Katanda finds, to the Nile Valley. At Khartoum near the Upper Nile and also at Es Shaheinab, near Khartoum, there are neolithic sites that contain harpoon points bearing the clear imprint of Ishango ancestry. Following another branch, the technology seems to move northward from Khartoum along the Nile Valley to Nagada in Egypt. But it is not just the tools and techniques that connect these places. Markings on a bone at Ishango reveal a familiarity with prime numbers, decimals and addition by duplication. This latter method of addition by duplication appears in the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus from Egypt, dating back 4,000 years ago. It is the oldest mathematical treatise on record. Ishango artifacts date back a lot earlier than that, of course, but the linkages are not nebulous at all. Finch's forging of links between the sites in Inner Africa and those in pre-dynastic Egypt are made with such density and delicacy of detail that I can only pinpoint a few of the conclusions here.

More evidence of significant and hitherto unsuspected connections between Egypt and the Great Lakes region of Africa come to light in Anthony Richards review in this issue of Egypt and the Mountains of the Moon by F.D.P. Whicker (1990). The very early contact between the two regions has been traced by a variety of minerals and parts of at least twenty two plants, all of which are found together in the wild within a small area of the Great Lakes region, at the foot of the Rwenzoris. There is a growing body of evidence, therefore, that makes good scientific sense of Finch's statement that "a well-defined culture, like humanity itself, flowed out of the lacustrine African womb into the rest of the continent" and that "the Nile served as a veritable umbilical cord, connecting the northern tier of the continent to its East African 'placenta-land'."

* * *

The misreading and misinterpretation of the skeletal evidence has been the greatest stumbling block to an acceptance of the African origins of the ancient Egyptian but, even more seriously, to an appreciation of the persistence and predominance of the African type during the critical formative dynasties of Egypt. It is difficult for many to understand how the so-called "true Negro" does not even represent the majority of African types on the continent. The African presents a variety of faces or phenotypes. There are at least six variants of the indigenous African whereas most skeletal studies have focussed on the form or fiction of ONE.

Keith Crawford writes on the variants of the Africoid type with the freshness of a wind blowing away the must of millennia from the mummies. He and his former teacher, Shomarka Keita, have helped to bring about a significant shift of thinking on this matter. What really constitutes the Africoid type? What environmental modifications occurred during the movements of this type across the length and breadth of the ancient Nile Valley, modifica-

This stands in contrast to the classical Negro type but are indigenous, unmixed Africans. They were living in Africa long before Egypt was born. The Elongated type includes the Fulani, the Tutsi and the Hima (Rwanda) the Masai (Kenya) the Galla (Ethiopia) the Somalis (Somalia) and the Beja (Northern Sudan).

Then there is the Nilotic variant who is taller than the elongated type with a narrower head, a lower and wider nose, a very slender body, with extremely long legs and little fat. These Nilotic types include the Nuer, the Dinka, the Shilluk and the Anuak, all of whom occupy the Nile River basins in the Southern Sudan.

Most popular of all, of course, is that classical variant which innocents and experts alike fondly and foolishly refer to as the "true Negro". This variant is said to have skin color varying from dark brown to black, to be relatively long-armed and long-legged, of tall stature, broad shoulders, narrow hips, black and kinky hair, short, broad face, a considerable degree of prognathism (that is, with a jutting jaw or jutting lower face) flat nose, very depressed at the root, thick and often everted lips. There are also the pygmies, whose skin is reddish-yellow to light-brown, broad-headed with very wide nose. One should also make mention of the so-called "Bushman" variant, which is hard to box and bind into a single phenotype. This variant shows a remarkable degree of heterogeneity or diversity. Their types range

tions removed from the myth of Mediterranean migrations or Mesopotamian mixings? What light do these cast upon the validity of previous studies done on the skeletal remains in ancient Egypt?

Crawford shows us in his essay "Racial Identity of Egyptian Populations based on Analysis of Physical Remains" that the placing of the African into a facile single-type classification to determine the race of the Nile Valley inhabitants has led to the grossest falsifications imaginable. No single myth in this whole field of study has done more damage than the monotypic classification of the African or Africoid.

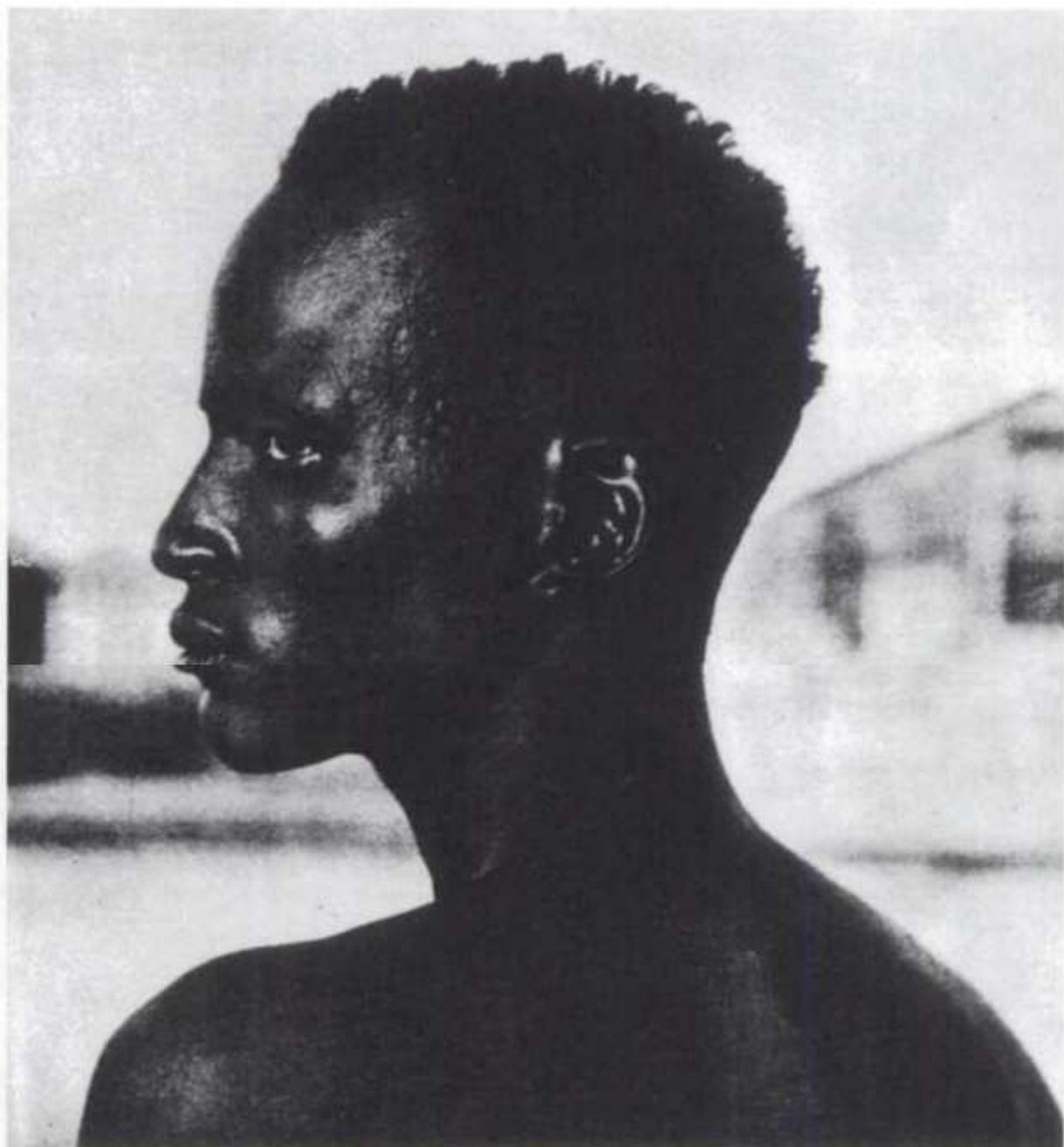
Native African populations are phenotypically "polytypic", that is, there exists in Africa a variety of phenotypes (faces and/or body shapes) that may differ from the stereotypical "Negro", falsely formed and firmly fixed within the rigid imagination and classification of Eurocentric observers. Crawford outlines six of these variants or types. I shall, lest they be lost to students, highlight the main features of these types. There is the Elongated variant, to which General Aidid, who fought our troops to a standoff in Somalia, belongs. This variant is distinguished by an elongated body build, narrow head, face and nose, dark skin and spiralled hair, thick but not everted lips. They range from long to moderately long-headed, with a narrow nasal opening, long narrow face and mild to absent prognathism (that is, with either slightly protruding or non-protruding upper jaw/lower face).

from dark to light complexions, long to moderately long heads, pronounced to absent lower face protrusion. There are one or two more but they are fairly localised, hence the above mentioned will suffice.

The point to all these details about heads and noses and jaws and lips and skin color, is simply this. Some of these African variants have elements of their facial appearance that is characteristic of other races. As Crawford puts it "This must be the case since all races evolved from an African prototype and it was necessary that this type possess the potential to express multiple traits which could then be modified by the environment".

But, without the illumination of these scientifically precise classifications and their subtle modifications, and with only the distorting beams from the torch of racism to guide them, the Egyptologists of the 19th and 20th centuries could not see these remarkable ancient Egyptians as related to the peoples who had become Europe's despised colonials and vassals. They could not conceive that in a much earlier time, they had flowed into the Nile Valley from that devastated land which Europe's greed and Africa's despair were later to transform into "the dark continent". Thus the shock of Kemet's glory, shining through the ruins of its ancient graveyards, its monumental pyramids and sphinxes, statues and stelae, could not be seen as connected in any way with a brutalized, depopulated, fragmented and flattened Africa. The contrast between a great ancient empire, practically mummified in stone, with medieval centers in tropical Africa, beaten down and beaten back into the bush by the Holocaust of all Holocausts, was too brutal and blinding for one to see, without multi-dimensional lenses, any racial or cultural relationship. Thus did the peoples of inner Africa come to be excluded from all serious consideration as central players on the stage of ancient Egyptian civilization.

Thus it was, that whenever certain cranial traits characteristically found in Caucasoids were detected in African crania, this was used to show that the African had made spectacular strides only and because he was no longer a true African but a dark-skinned European, a brown Mediterranean, an Afro-European, an Afro-Asiatic, or a new fictitious concoction with a biblical derivation, the mythical "Hamite". Thus could one discount all his claims to unique and spectacular architecture, original discoveries in astronomy, complex and profound philosophical probings into the mystery of Matter and Being, revolutionary breakthroughs in the fields of medicine and mathematics. Such achievement was deemed impossible without generous infusions of the blood and brains of other races. If a single Caucasoid trait, therefore, occurred (such as a narrow nose, which is the product not only of ice but of dry heat) it meant that he had been heavily blended and blessed with imported first-class blood. Thus his *later* invaders could credit themselves with his *earlier* accomplishments.



123. A Somali.

Figure 1. An Africoid of the “Elongated” variety. Africans with these facial features were labelled “Hamitic” and were thought to have Caucasoid admixture or even to belong to the Caucasoid race. Genetic analysis and ancestral relationships show many populations with these features to cluster with other African populations and emerge distinct from European or Asiatic races (From Coon, C., 1965).

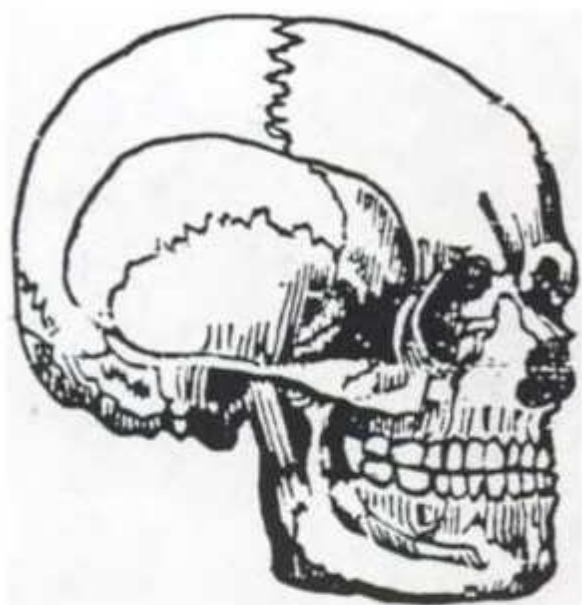
Black civilization alone—what the Blacks themselves achieved independently of either Europe or Asia”. This is what made it, considering both the time of its publication and its bold and novel approach to Black history, a groundbreaking work. Rashidi outlines the key elements in this work and highlights its main objectives.

I myself was influenced by Williams and I do not regret it. But I must point out that I followed one of his errors of judgment too uncritically and have paid for it. Rashidi, himself, is critical of this error. He speaks of Williams’ questionable assertions about the predominance of the mulatto elements of the north. This mixing on a major scale was to occur a lot later than Williams thought. But it is quite understandable within the context of the time and does not seriously detract from the value of his work in the main. Shomarka Keita and Keith Crawford, Chatterjee and Kumar, A.C. Berry and R.J. Berry, just to mention a few, had not yet made their skeletal evidence available to us. This evidence in its definitive form was to come much later. But, even with the lack of it, Rashidi clearly shows that Chan-

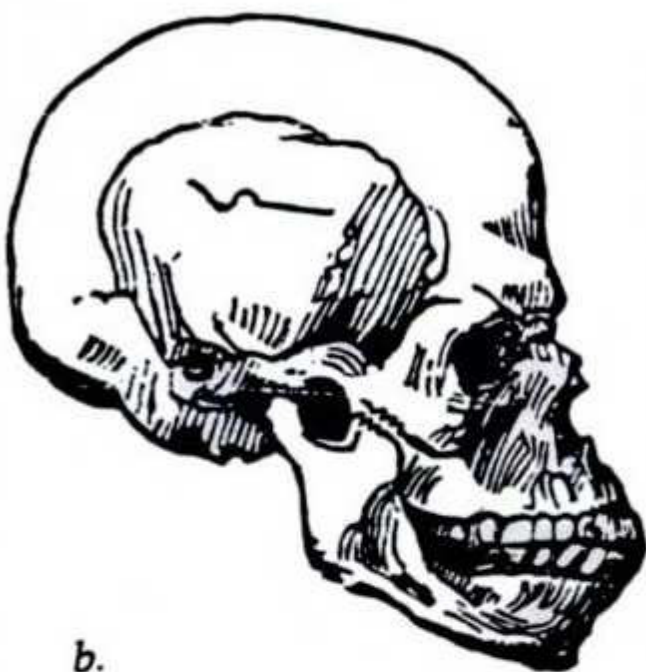
It is the best of biographers who record not only the strengths and weaknesses of important leaders or thinkers but see them through critical lenses ground and tinted by the context of their place and time. Runoko Rashidi has done this for the late John G. Jackson, and, in this issue, for Chancellor James Williams and William Leo Hansberry.

I remember speaking from the same pulpit, along with Chancellor Williams, in the church of St. Augustine in Washington D.C. It was February, 1980, fourteen years ago. It was a strange and moving encounter. Chancellor was so gracious and gentle, almost avuncular. In spite of his age and infirmity, he stood on the platform like a great tree, swaying a little, slightly gnarled and bent by the winds of time. He spoke for at least an hour. His voice was tremulous but firm, his delivery sometimes slow but flawless, his speech melodiously phrased, the words bubbling effortlessly from his lips, trickles from a decanter of vintage wine. But the great pressures of the mission kept us sequestered thereafter in our separate spaces and studies. We were not to meet again in life.

Rashidi's comment on Chancellor's masterpiece "The Destruction of Black Civilization: Great Issues of a Race from 4500 BC to 2000 AD" is worth quoting: "Totalling uncompromising, highly controversial, broadly sweeping in its range and immensely powerful in its scope, there have been few books published during the past quarter-century focusing on the African presence in antiquity (particularly the Nile Valley) that have so profoundly affected the consciousness of an entire generation of African-Americans in search of their past." What made it so different from previous histories of Black people, Rashidi points out, is that it was specifically concerned "with Black civilization alone—what the Blacks themselves achieved independently of either Europe or Asia". This is what made it, considering both the time of its publication and its bold and novel approach to Black history, a groundbreaking work. Rashidi outlines the key elements in this work and highlights its main objectives.



a.



b.

FIGURE 1. ALVEOLAR PROGNATHISM IN TWO SKULLS. Reprinted from Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind* (1855).

a. GREEK SPECIMEN

b. WEST AFRICAN SPECIMEN

Figure 2. Prognathism (lower facial protrusion) is evident in the skull from West Africa. The European skull, which lacks this feature, is termed orthognathous. Prognathism is generally not found in Caucasoid populations, but there are also numerous Africoid variants that lack prognathism. This led some early researchers to postulate Caucasoid influence in these African populations (From Drake, 1987).

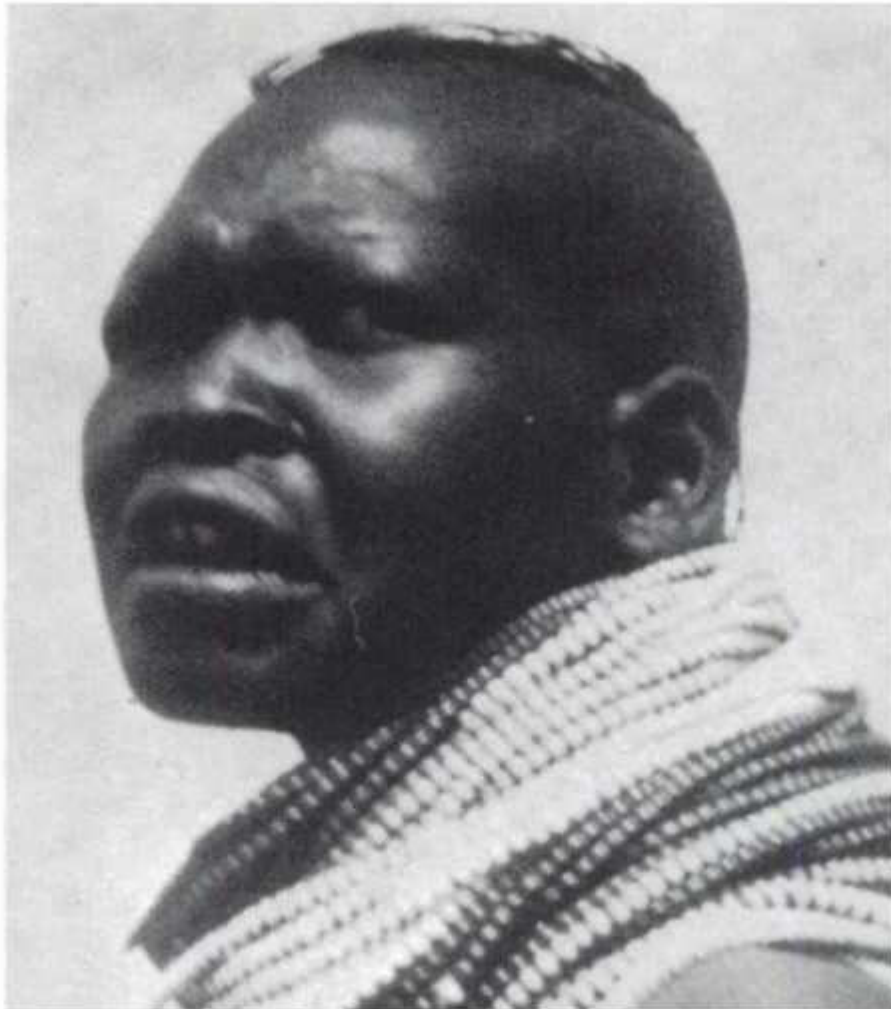


Figure 3. An Africoid of the “Broad” variety (A Nuba chief from Kenya). Africans with these features were termed “Negroes” and populations with these characteristics were often assumed to represent the only “pure” unmixed members of the race. In actuality, this is only one of many “true” Africoid variants. Africoids display a tremendous degree of variability but are more closely related to each other than to any populations outside of Africa (From Van Sertima, 1979).

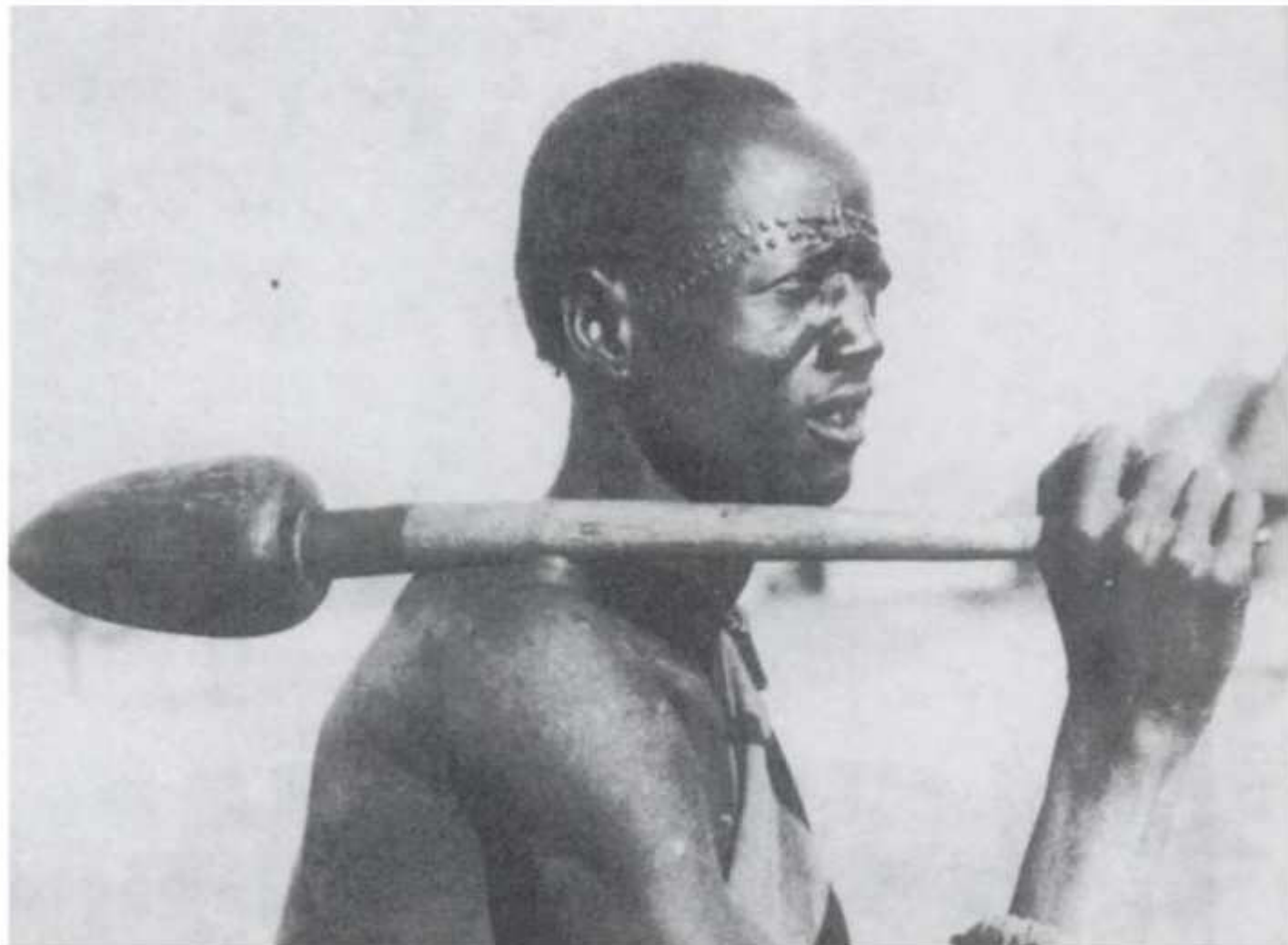


Figure 4. An Aricoid of the Nilotic variety. Models on racial differentiation that are scientifically invalid attribute certain facial features to Caucasoid influence, yet these modern populations show no blood group characteristics or any other genetic features that would relate them to Caucasoid populations (From Coon, C., 1965)

X-GROUP - IBRIM



Fig. 1. Typical negro hair. ♂ 193:33 K



Fig. 2. Face of same; not typically negro.

Figure 5. This figure illustrates a major problem in the racial analysis of ancient Nile Valley skeletal remains. The Nubian skull has hair attached that is clearly characteristic of Africoid variants. Yet, in the absence of the hair, this skull would probably have been classified as Caucasian, based on typological models (From Batrawi, A., 1945).

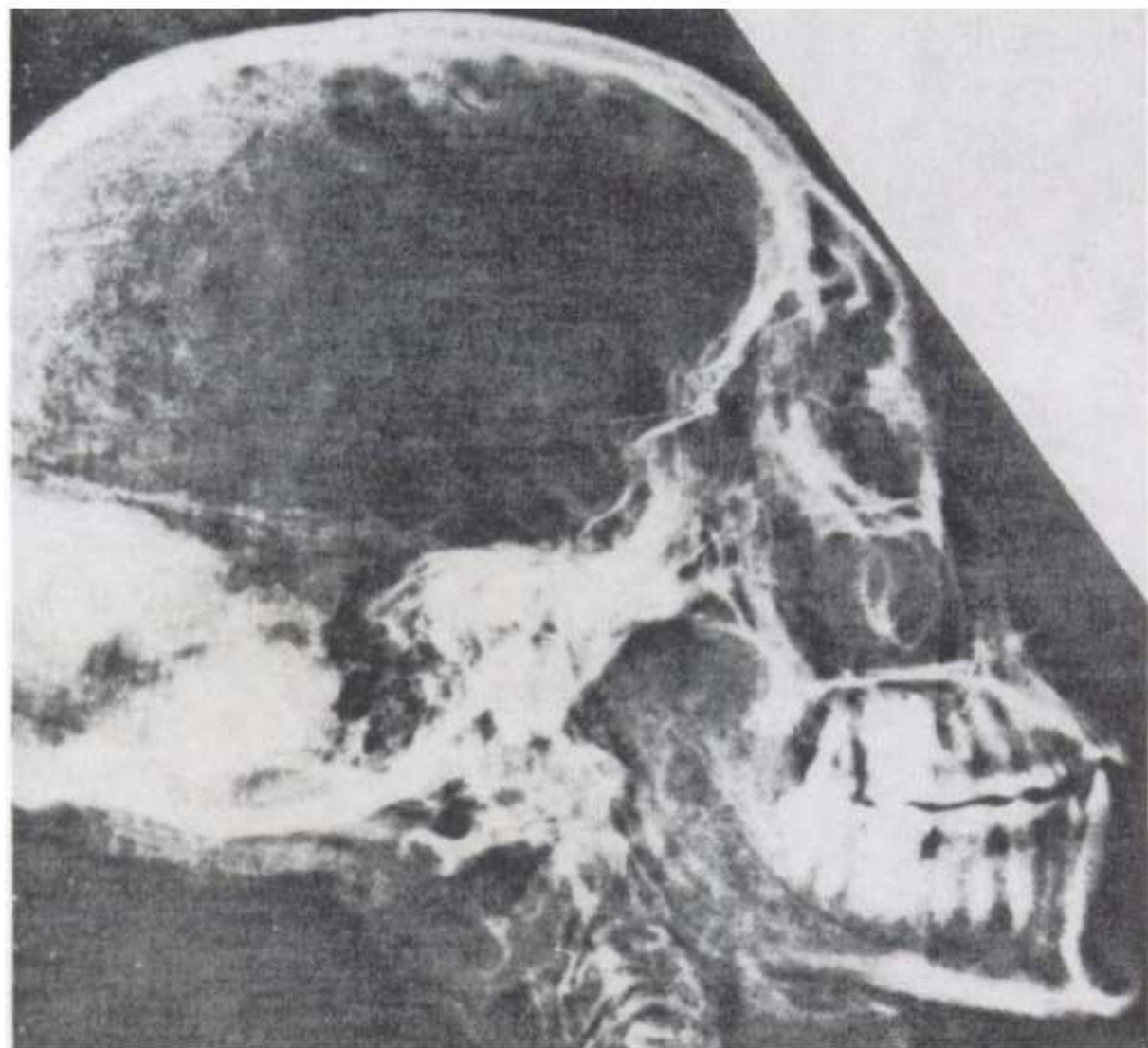


Figure 6. Facial prognathism is clearly visible in this X-ray profile of the mummy of Pharaoh Thutmose IV (18th Dynasty, from Harris and Weeks, 1973).

EGYPT IS IN AFRICA

BUT WAS ANCIENT EGYPT AFRICAN?

Ivan Van Sertima

I would like to begin by redefining the question. I think it is very important from the outset that we understand clearly what it is that I seek to establish here today. The question as presented to me: *Were the Ancient Egyptians Black or White?* is not the ideal way in which such an issue should be posed, for, unintentional though it may be, it is a trap. It enables those who seek to undermine the contribution of early Africans to civilization, to appear in this debate as fair and balanced, blessed with a sweet reasonableness, while I, who only seek to set the historical record straight, am, by the very wording of the proposition, encouraged to take stands which, if not racist, are, at the least, simplistic and facile.

What I set out to do here is quite different. I seek to bring to heel the racists of the early nineteenth century and their reasonable-seeming apologists of the twentieth. To do this, it is necessary, as I say, to redefine the question. The question before us is this and it is in this way that it should hereafter be posed:

First, whether the ancient Egyptians were *predominantly* African or Africoid in a physical sense during the major native dynasties *before* the late invasions of the Persian, Greek, Roman and Arab foreigners.

Second, whether—and this is even more important—their language, their writing, their vision of god and the universe, their concept of the divine kingship, their ritual ceremonies and practices, their administrative and architectural symbols and structures, their techno-complex, were quintessentially African (that is, based essentially upon models and patterns developed in the continental heartland of Africa) and *not* (I repeat *not*) in any major particular, projected from those in Europe or Asia in that or any previous time.

Now, let me say one thing further before we proceed with an examination of this question. There was probably no great civilization in the world, be it

Excerpt from an address to the Brooklyn Museum on July 13 in a symposium entitled "Were the Ancient Egyptians Black or White?"

African, European, or Asian, that was entirely pure and homogeneous. The great Roman historian Pliny, who first saw the Britons in the second century A.D., describes *some of them* as having complexions as dark as the Ethiopian. Claudian, reporting the victory of the Roman general, Theodosius, over the English, mentions a good number of "nimble blackamoors" among them. The Chinese themselves recorded that there were men of black skin among the rulers of the Shang dynasty (1766–1100 B.C.). They actually speak of them as Na-Khi (*Na* in Chinese means black and *khi* means man). Schliemann and Evans, who excavated Minoan Crete, also tell us of the black skins of many of these Cretans who entered Greece in great numbers at an early time. Yet nobody would dare to pose questions such as: Were the ancient Chinese Black or Yellow? Were the ancient Greeks or the ancient Britons White or Mixed? No. No. No. No. No.

Everyone would immediately dismiss that for the nonsense that it is. The Blackamoors in second-century Britain, the black-skinned Cretans in ancient Greece, the *Na-Khi* or Black rulers and noblemen in the Shang Dynasty would be dismissed immediately as minor elements, as being of little or no consequence in the development of the indigenous civilization. But let there be a handful of Europeans or Asians in a vast body of Africans and immediately the question arises. Egypt is in Africa but was Egypt really African? Is the Egyptian Black or White? Why, I ask you, is it not an issue at all in the European or Asian case but becomes the Number One Issue in the African? The reasons for this are twofold. First of all, the Egyptian as we see him today is as different in his racial composition from the Egyptian of dynastic times, as we modern Americans in this room at this moment are from the early peoples who created native American civilization. Second, because we have been fed upon the achievements of European and Asian civilization. We would never dare to question the indigenous basis of their civilization. For we have not come upon them as we have come upon the poor African, his world looted and shattered, his empires in splinters, his peripheral elements focussed upon obsessively as though they were the very center and climax of his cultural development. All through our lived lives we have seen the European and to some extent the Asian, in the flower of their ascendancy. But we have been trained to see and to imagine only one kind of African—the primitive, the slave, the colonial, the tragic outcast and misfit on the edge of the modern world. If, therefore, we find him at the Center of a Civilization, the matter of its origin and its inspiration becomes highly suspect. The question immediately arises: Are we really dealing with a *true* African? Let us dig up his graves. Let us check out his crania. Let us rip off his mummy wraps. Is the nose of the ancient Egyptian broad enough to be Negro? Are his lips thick enough? Does his jaw jut out far enough? Is his skin Black enough? Is he not just a tanned European? A brown Mediterranean? A Eurafrican? A Hamite? An Afro-asian?



Figure 6. Queen Tiye of Dynasty XVIII.



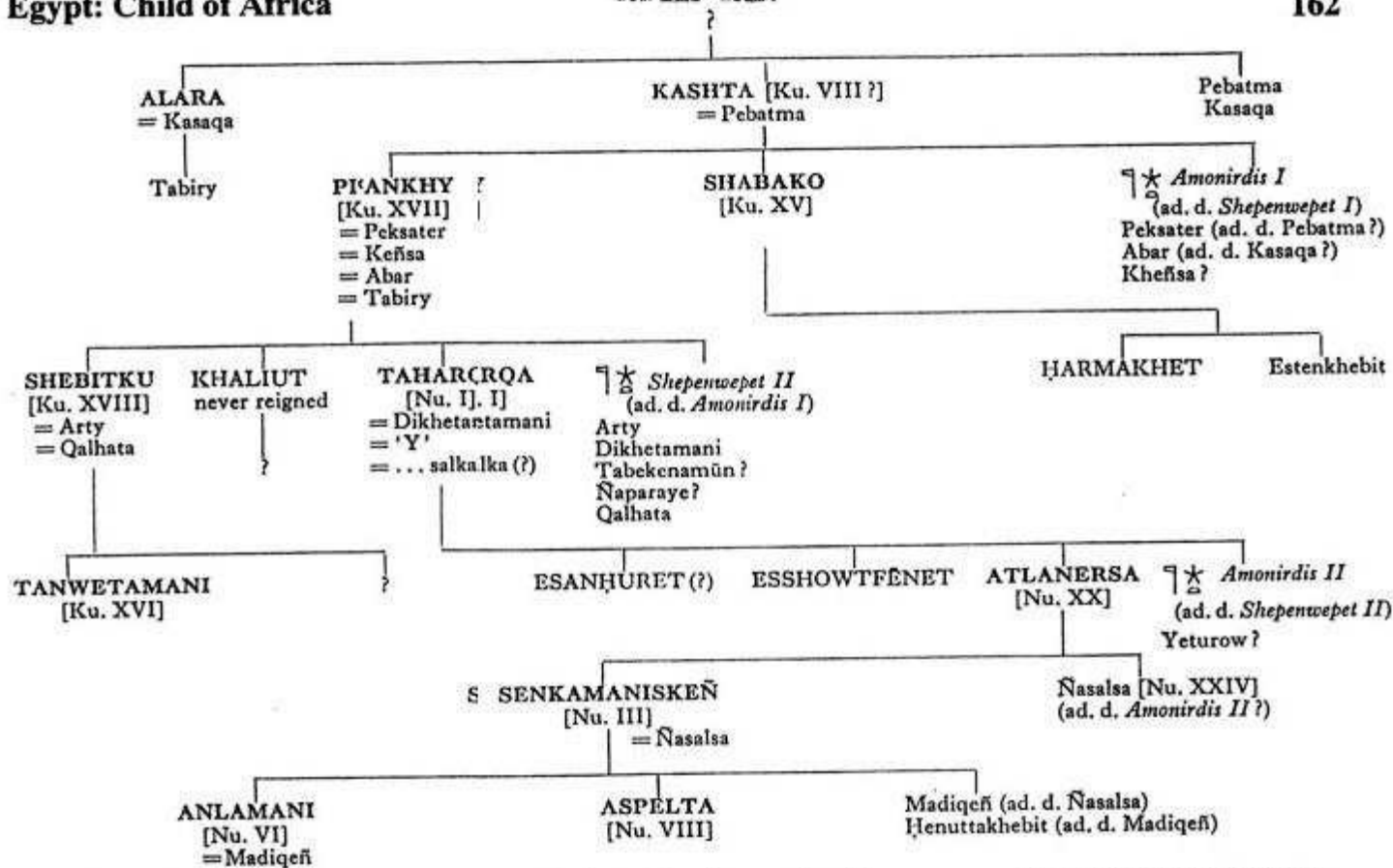
Figure 7. King Usermare Ramses II of Dynasty XIX.

The defeat, and later death, of Taharka was in effect the end of Napatan rule in Egypt and although Taharka's successor, Tanwetamani, promptly invaded the northern Kingdom, guided by a dream to reunite Upper and Lower Egypt, he enjoyed only a brief triumph (Arkell). He too was defeated by the Assyrians. But this time the city of Thebes (Waset) the home of the Amon priesthood, was sacked and resulted in the loss of 14 centuries of treasures, including two solid gold electrum obelisks (Leclant). Depleted of manpower and resources, Tanwetamani retired to the South. Despite the disastrous defeat, the gold mines and the trade routes of that country remained capable of making Kush prosperous again. He was succeeded by a series of strong rulers who maintained their capital at Napata and continued to be

But Taharka had a score to even with the Assyrian giant. In 667 B.C. Essarhaddon returned to Egypt because the resilient Taharka, responding to pleas from cities in the Delta, had reestablished Napatan rule in Upper Egypt by recapturing Memphis in what Brunton terms "*three murderous battles resulting in a massacre which left the entire Assyrian garrison dead.*" (Brunton) Essarhaddon was furious when he heard this news and rushed off to Egypt but died en route (Arkell).

Assurbanipal, son of Essarhaddon, picked up the gauntlet and set out in 667–666 to reestablish Assyrian overlordship of the Delta Kinglets. "*The Assyrians were bearing oversized shields covered by complete panoplies. Some were equipped with targe and dart, they had an iron-clad cavalry.*" (Brooks-Bertram). In this third battle, Taharka's forces were defeated and he managed to escape first to Thebes and later to Napata. The Assyrians reestablished overlordship of the Delta chiefs, who, because of their conspiracy with Taharka, were later executed for their attempted revolt (Arkell).

The ultimate defeat of Taharka is attributed in part to the widespread use of iron by the Assyrians and the greater discipline of their armies (Arkell). However, most scholars of this era overlook or minimize the fact that the Delta kings often cowered in the face of Assyrian attacks thereby not providing Taharka with needed support and that the Assyrians had secured enormous support from outside sources (Redford). In 664 B.C., having "*fought the father, the son and then the son of the son*" (Brooks-Bertram, 1988), Taharka died and was buried with the splendor befitting the ruler of two lands. Even his selection of Nuri, in the most well placed pyramid in the field, has to be considered as a contribution to further understanding of the individual personalities of the Napatan kings (Dunham). His choice of Nuri signalled a major break with burial tradition of earlier Napatan Kings and established a tradition of burial at Nuri which ran for more than 300 years, thereby making it possible to discover artifacts which could further establish an historical chronology of these kings as well as establish evidence of the cultural continuity of the Napatan dynasties.



ad. d. = adoptive daughter of.

Tomb-numbers in square brackets.

Names of votaresses in italics.

Males in capitals, fs, females in small letters.

Names of kings in heavy type.

adding to the relentless trek of historians and archaeologists alike, toward denial of the incalculable contribution of this African dynasty to Egyptian and indeed world civilization. Of that same Senjirli stele, Shinnie, scholar of ancient Mero says "*this is probably not a portrait, but more likely merely the Assyrian artists conventional representation of a man from the far south*" (Shinnie). My question is: Why a "conventional representation" when you have the real thing before you? In 1946, Smith describes Taharka again from that same stele. "*Taharka is shown mistakenly as negro by Assyrian sculptors*" (Smith). Now the *ancients* have made a mistake! The Assyrians have been accused of many things but never of not recognizing and accurately describing their enemies!

In 1975, eminent French scholar Jean Leclant dismisses Brunton summarily with these words, "*The fact is that Taharka was not a negro but a Kushite. In any case, we cannot accept the reconstruction of the negroid Taharka proposed by Brunton.*" (Leclant) Clearly, Leclant gets roasted on his own pitard here because in his own article he displays a picture of those precious little ivory carvings from the inlaid ivory carvings of the Tomb of Shebitku. He reports that in these carvings, "*Shabataka had allowed himself the satisfaction of putting the characteristic image of a Negro in contrast to those of peoples of the North.*"

Clearly, Leclant is imposing upon Shabataka (Shebitku) his very own racist biases which were not operable in ancient times. Additionally, it is impossible to decide that the two figures that are shown are from different racial stock. Both are obviously negro. Further, the figure that is identified as a negro (I categorize them both as negro) has exactly the same features of Ushanahuru, Taharka's son. From another carving, Leclant describes a royal lion-cub getting ready to devour a Kushite with Negroid features and kinky hair. (Leclant). If we match the head of this "Kushite with Negroid features" to that of Ushanahuru, we get the same image. This is the same image from the so-called negro head in the Shabaka ivories. Smith, in describing these ivories said: "... little figures brandishing weapons probably come from a hunting scene which is more clearly native Ethiopian, bearing even on its tiny scale a close relationship to the reliefs of Taharka. . . . Those (other figures, sic.) represent figures of foreign prisoners in the same attitude and with the same careful details of costume as in the faience tiles of Ramsees III. Only Libyans and Negroes are represented." (Smith) Isn't it possible to assume that the same careful detail shown the costumes was evident in the facial images as well? The head of the negro of which Smith spoke (from the Sinjirli stele) is the same type of image that we find on fragments from the Barkal Temples (Dunham). One can only become more confused at Leclant's assignment of differences between a Kushite and a Negro. Differences he never bothers to explain. And worse yet, that he should impose upon the ancients his own biases about racist distinctions.



Plate 6A. Kushite on Shakaba ivories.



Plate 6B. Libyan on Shakaba ivories.



Plate 7. Brunton's Portrait of Taharka (repeated for comparative purposes).



Plate 8. Ushanaru on Sinjirli stele (repeated for comparative purposes).



Plate 9. Relief of Taharka from Kawa Temples.

In 1977, Adams, another eminent Nubian scholar, describes his overall approach to Nubian history thus: "If I deplore the earlier tendency of Egyptologists to see the Nubians as nothing more than second-class Egyptians, I am equally resentful of efforts to place them in another historical pigeonhole as "Africans" or "blacks" (Adams). Why pray tell is being what one is a "historical pigeonhole"? The fact is, we need only to view side by side those images which support the Africanness of King Taharka, images created by the ancients themselves. These would include the Sinjirli stele, (Plate 1) the Shabaka ivories where a Kushite (which represents Taharka's background) is clearly described (Plate 6A), a relief of Taharka from Kawa, (Plate 9) as well as Brunton's drawing of Taharka. (Plates 5 and 7)

Even scholars like Kitchen, who have added significantly to Napatan chronology ignores the issue of race and even worse, in his well-researched work, portrays these kings as transitory and incompetent interlopers in Egyptian affairs and suggests that they would have done well to have stayed at home.

Perhaps the most troubling of the racial identification of the Napatan kings is scholars' efforts to present through imagery a "Europeanized" version of the Napatans by depicting, emphasizing and opening for study only those artifacts which minimize an "Africoid" appearance. This is the remaking of history through "disrepresentation." By disrepresentation I mean the selective use of archaeological artifacts, which tell only part of a story if not indeed a different story. This is certainly what has happened with the physical image (particularly facial images) of King Taharka. The "disrepresentation" is centered around the lips, nose and head shape of these kings. In other words, those facial features which designate them as African people no matter where one would find them on the globe. This type of treatment suggests the need for a family photo or a photo gallery of these kings if for no other reason than to depict family likenesses, and to compare likenesses around the world.

In all that has been written about this dynasty, Leclant comes closest to creating such a photo gallery (without trying) but this effort is mired first in his non-acceptance of their race and second in his distaste and dislike of those images which emphasize their indigenous central African origins. One cannot understand how such a scholar can square such inconsistencies with himself. Nonetheless, it is possible to construct a royal family photo gallery from stele, temple reliefs, building fragments, frescoes and statues beginning with Alara and ending with Tanutamon. First, is Alara. (I am informed by personal discussion with the Assistant Curator of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts that the stele of "Ary" in the Temples of Kashta is really to be attributed to Alara.) The second in this gallery is a fragment stela depicting Kashta. While the image is unclear he is identified by inscription and one can make out the characteristic insignia of the diadem and the double uraeus