

WHY WE STUDY KEMET (Egypt)

By Jacob H. Carruthers

The evidence which supports the Kushitic origins of Kemetic civilization is almost exclusively related to and/or directed toward the birth, nature and development of Kemet rather than explication of life in Kush as such. We know that Pharaonic culture had its origins in Kush and that culture maintained national sovereignty in Kush 1000 years after Kemet lost its independence. At present, however, significant information concerning the history and nature of Kushitic civilizations is sparse. Thus the key to unlock the secrets of Kush seems to reside in Kemet, at least for now. If, however, some great research breakthrough (such as the deciphering of the Kushitic script) occurs, producing a wealth of historical data, then our beginning point will no doubt be shifted southward.

A second methodological reason is what Cheikh Anta Diop refers to as the "Parente genetique de l'Egyptien Pharaonique" and Black African cultures. The cultural unity of indigenous African communities has been undeniable and scientifically demonstrated in the areas of linguistics, governance, social structure and theology. Old theories asserting an Asian origin for Kemetic civilization have become somewhat embarrassing to the younger generation of European historians, archaeologists and Egyptologist. It is clear that the amplification of the intra-African genetic relationship must be a prime focus of our master project. Clearly, Kemetic culture is a model par excellence. The connection of Kemet to "inner Africa" is the research frontier for African historians. The creation of a methodology for the explication of that connection is one of the greatest challenges of this phase of our development.

The third reason for prioritization of Kemet is the quality and relative abundance of historic data. The large number of extant buildings, monuments, artistic creations, artifacts and most importantly, written texts afford unrivalled opportunities for understanding the dynamics of classical civilization. The available written texts include wisdom literature, medical reports, mathematical computations, fiction, annals, and theological treatises, among other material. If we develop the wise course of letting Kemet speak for herself, this literature will reveal many of the so called "mysteries" of the ancient Nile Valley civilization.

The final reason for a Kemetic foundation for our project is the obvious influence Kemet had on the Mediterranean civilizations outside Africa. Certain similarities between the culture of Kemet and that of the ancient Mesopotamian civilization of Sumer demand investigation. While the European archaeologists have tended to argue for a Mesopotamian cradle of civilization, thus challenging the tradition wisdom that bestowed that honor upon Kemet, the case for Kemetic influence on later Mesopotamian cultures and the remainder of the 'fertile crescent' is however hardly questionable. The cultural and military hegemony of the African nation resulted in several centuries of Kemetic preeminence in world affairs. The records of antiquity are replete with references to Kemetic tutelage of the various nations: Canaanites, Israelites, Hittite, Cretans,

Babylonians and Greeks to mention a few. Even after the fall of Kemet, her influence continued to be awesome. The history of the early Christianity and Islam are indelibly marked with lower Nile Valley theological themes. Indeed, when one considers the continuous flow of intellectual self consciousness, one must conclude that history as well as civilization began in the Nile Valley.