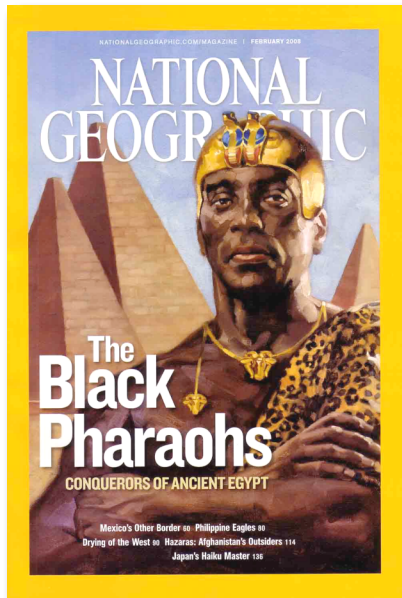


Lies That Won't Go Away

Three Falsehoods in the National Geographic "Black Pharaohs" article

By Anthony T. Browder

Dr. Carter G. Woodson established Negro History Week in 1926 in an effort to tell the history of a people who had consistently been written out of the "respectable commentary of human history" by some of the most revered historians and historical institutions in the United States. Woodson's magnum opus, "The Mis-Education of the Negro" documented the deliberate falsification of black history. It is a book that is more relevant today than when it was first published in 1933.



Were Dr. Woodson alive today, and were he to read the February 2008 cover story of National Geographic, "The Black Pharaohs: Conquerors of Ancient Egypt" Woodson would realize that the history of black people is still being grossly distorted and the process of mis-education continues unabated.

To the average "mis-educated" American who saw the National Geographic magazine on the newsstand, its cover would incline them to believe that the issue was a timely tribute to the national celebration of Black History Month. Were they to read the magazine, they would be amazed to discover that, "For 75 years Nubian kings ruled over ancient Egypt, reunifying the country and building an empire." Many would be shocked upon discovering this "chapter of history lost in the shadows," and wonder how much more Black History there is waiting to be revealed.

But to a formerly "Mis-educated Negro," one who discovered in 1977 that the Egyptians were black, I read the "Black Pharaohs" article and found it to be guilty of deliberate acts of omission and commission. I reached this conclusion not because I am a black radical who believes that white men are devils not to be trusted. On the contrary, my life's experience has taught me that I should believe in someone until I have reason to believe otherwise.

I believed Harry Truman when he stated that, "There is nothing new in the world except the history you do not know." I believed Malcolm X when he said, "History is best qualified to reward all research." I believed my own eyes when I made my first study tour to Egypt in 1980 and saw the physical evidence of what black Africans had accomplished when they ruled Egypt thousands of years before the arrival of European and Arab invaders.

I grew to understand the power of mis-education when I realized that the true history of ancient Egypt had been withheld from me throughout my formal education and only came into my awareness when I sought it. I came to believe in Dr. Woodson's antidote to mis-education when he stated that:

Philosophers have long conceded that every man has two educations: "that which is given to him, and the other that which he gives himself. Of the two kinds the latter is by far the more desirable. Indeed all that is most worthy in man he must work out and conquer for himself. It is that which constitutes our real and best nourishment. What we are merely taught seldom nourishes the mind like that which we teach ourselves."

In 1977, upon discovering that the ancient Egyptians were “black” Africans, I began a process of “re-education” which, since 1980, has resulted in my making 40 trips to Egypt; writing and publishing 5 books on ancient Egyptian history and culture; and lecturing on Egypt on every continent except Australia. As an autodidact, I am qualified to critique the *National Geographic* cover story, written by Robert Draper, and will do so by illuminating three major falsehoods in his article.

Before I begin my critique I must acknowledge that the article is well written and quite informative. It is also filled with wonderful photographs (as one would expect from *National Geographic*) and there are two beautiful paintings that are reminiscent of the “Great Kings and Queens of Africa” posters popularized by Budweiser many decades ago. Unfortunately, the beauty of the article dissipates when one reads it with a deeper understanding of Ancient Egyptian history and an awareness of the countless efforts that have been made to separate Egypt from Africa, and African people from the legacy of their ancestors.

Without an understanding of historiography (the history of researching and writing history) one can be easily misled and conditioned to embrace unreasonable falsehoods as fundamental truths. History has clearly demonstrated that when falsehoods are repeated with conviction by “experts,” and popularized by the media (principally print, TV and film), an unsuspecting public will be incapable of recognizing truth when it is presented to them. When accustomed to being fed a steady diet of falsehoods this mentally malnourished population will become incapable or unwilling to consider opposing viewpoints which they have been conditioned to find palatable.

What Dr. Woodson referred to as mis-education, social scientists now call “cognitive dissonance.” Both states of mind can be summed up in the declaration, “My mind is already made up...don’t confuse me with the facts.” These intellectually stifling states of un-consciousness can be minimized and overcome when one learns to recognize falsehoods and replace them with sound, factual data.

Thus, it is in the spirit of Dr. Woodson (and Black History Month) that I submit my assessment of the falsehoods imbedded within the *National Geographic* “Black History Month” cover story for your consideration.

Falsehood #1

“Piye was the first of the so-called black pharaohs—a series of Nubian kings who ruled over all of Egypt for three-quarters of a century as that country’s 25th dynasty.”

This statement is false, not because Piye wasn’t the first of a series of Nubian kings who ruled Egypt for 75 years but because Piye was not the first black pharaoh. The title of the article, “*The Black Pharaohs: Conquerors of Ancient Egypt*” is deceptive because it implies that “Black Pharaohs” conquered an Egypt which had previously been ruled by “non-black” Pharaohs.

Not all Egyptologists agree with the conventional interpretation of ancient Egyptian history. There is an opposing viewpoint that has long been suppressed by the establishment but is increasingly gaining acceptance within and without the discipline. This viewpoint espouses, with sound factual data, that:

- Ancient Egypt was an indigenous African civilization founded by “black” Africans who migrated northward, down the Nile, from Nubia and Ethiopia.

- The leadership of Egypt always came from the south and that the rulers responsible for founding the culture that would sustain the nation for thousands of years were “black” Africans.
- Egypt was subject to numerous foreign invasions and periods of instability, but stability was always restored by “black leaders” from the south (Upper Egypt and Nubia).
- The ancient Egyptians made no racial distinctions between themselves and the Nubians but they acknowledged and depicted distinct differences between themselves and Libyans, Asiatics, Persians, Greeks and Romans.
- When Egypt was invaded and subsequently conquered by non-Africans, the conquering armies added little of value to the country, and
- After Egypt fell to foreign domination the conquering leaders often rewrote the history of the ancient past. This is consistent with the writing of history in general, which is often written by the victor in any struggle.

It is an unfortunate reality that most of what we know about Egypt and “Black Africa” has been written by whites after centuries of discoveries, conquests and colonization. The general public is unaware that most of the names of Egyptian people, places and things are non-African. *Egypt* is a Greek word, as are the words *pyramid*, *hieroglyphics* and *sphinx*. *Pharaoh* is a word of Asiatic origin. Modern Egyptian cities and towns have Arabic names as a result of the Arab conquest of Egypt in 640 AD.

The indigenous name for Egypt is *Kemet*, a word that is translated from *medu netcher* (hieroglyphics) which literally means, “*the city, town or country of the blacks*” and not the “*black soil*” as traditional Egyptologists maintain. Ancient paintings and carvings of the “*Kemites*” depict them as virtually indistinguishable from Nubians (ancient or modern). Paleontologists have found that the blood groupings and skeletal remains of mummies have more in common with ancient and modern Africans than their European or Asian counterparts.

Some of the strongest evidence documenting the African origins of the Kemites was presented by two African Egyptologists, Drs. Cheikh Anta Diop and Theophile Obenga, at the Cairo Symposium in 1974. This gathering of over 20 international Egyptologists was sponsored by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and was held in Cairo, Egypt. One of the primary topics of discussion was the race of the ancient Egyptians. The presentations by Diop and Obenga provided 11 categories of evidence to support the thesis that the ancient Egyptians were indigenous “black” Africans. Their research showed that the language and cultural patterns of the ancient Kemites was consistent with that found in traditional societies in modern West Africa.

The general consensus reached at the Cairo Symposium was that there was no evidence that the ancient Egyptians were white and that it was peopled by people from “the Great Lakes region in inner-equatorial Africa.” Unfortunately, news of the symposium has been virtually ignored by academia and the media but its findings were chronicled by UNESCO in a 1978 publication entitled, *Ancient Civilizations of Africa, Vol. II*.

What accounts for this deafening silence? A report filed by an observer at the conference holds a clue. The observer wrote:

Although the preparatory working paper sent out by UNESCO gave particulars of what was desired, not all participants had prepared communications comparable with the painstakingly researched contributions of Professors Cheikh Anta Diop and Obenga. There was consequently a real lack of balance.

Dr. Diop was a Senegalese scholar who held degrees in Egyptology, physics, linguistics and anthropology. Relying on his scientific acumen, Diop developed a "melanin dosage test" which allowed him to prove, once and for all, the racial identity of the Ancient Egyptians. This relatively simple test provided the means by which one could determine the phenotype of the royal mummies by examining the melanin content present within their skin. Although Dr. Diop had proven the viability of the Melanin Dosage Test, the Egyptian government has yet to authorize its use and so the issue of the "race" of the ancient Egyptians remains unresolved.

Falsehood #2

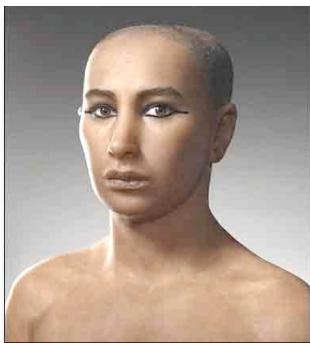
"Only after the European powers colonized Africa in the 19th century did Western scholars pay attention to the color of the Nubians' skin, to uncharitable effect."

Mr. Draper cites several examples of how racism infected the research of Egyptologists. He referenced Richard Lepsius, the Prussian archaeologist who coined the phrase "Book of the Dead" and said that the Kushites "belonged to the Caucasian race;" and Harvard Egyptologist George Reisner who believed that "Nubia's leaders, including Piye, were light-skinned Egypto-Libyans who ruled over the primitive Africans."

Mr. Draper neglected to mention the racist opinions of James Breasted, the founder of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago and regarded as one of America's foremost Egyptologists. In a 1935 publication entitled *Ancient Times* Breasted described the Egyptians as, "...members of a race of white men, who have been well called the Great White Race." Breasted also referred to "The Negro peoples of Africa" as having no "influence on the development of earlier civilization."

While Mr. Draper is "fair-minded" enough to acknowledge the racism of white historians of the past, he does not acknowledge the numerous examples of racist scholarship which exists today, nor does he discuss the impact of racism on generations of teachers, students and the general public. Draper would do well to read *The World and Africa* by W.E.B. Du Bois who wrote:

There can be but one explanation for 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 American Negro slavery.



Were Du Bois alive today he would not be too surprised to see that the science of Egyptology has matured significantly in the twenty first century but is still fundamentally racist. The June 2005 issue of *National Geographic* featured a cover story entitled, "The New Face of King Tut." The cover showed the forensic reconstruction of the skull of "Tut" which depicted him as a white man. Let's forget about the dozens of paintings and carvings of the boy king created by artists who saw him in the flesh and depicted him as a handsome black youth. Modern science has given us a more accurate image of someone who has been dead for over 3,000 years.

This new whitened image of King Tut was to accompany a national tour of his artifacts in the U.S. between 2005 and 2007. But these plans were short lived. When confronted by protesters led by Attorney LeGrand Clegg of Compton, California and members of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization (ASCAC), Zahi Hawass, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, and the organizers of the Tut exhibit were forced to acknowledge the racial inaccuracies of the new face of King Tut and remove it from the exhibit.



As the exhibit made its way from Los Angeles to Florida to Chicago and Philadelphia, it was met with protests from the African American community which demanded that the racial identity of the Ancient Egyptians be accurately portrayed in the exhibit. How much media attention did these protests generate? None!

One would think that as we approach the end of the first decade of the twenty first century the world would be ready to embrace the fact that Egypt is in Africa and ancient Africans were capable of creating a civilization in their own homeland without the influence of foreigners. But history reminds us that five hundred years ago, negroes were not regarded as human beings, and less than two hundred years ago the Supreme Court's *Dread Scott* case declared that negroes had no rights which the U.S. was bound to acknowledge. Negroes, coloreds and blacks have certainly come a long way, but if history is any judge of future events, African Americans still have a long way to go before our history is fully acknowledged and accurately taught.

Falsehood #3

Afrocentric Egyptologists... argue that all ancient Egyptians, from King Tut to Cleopatra, were black Africans...(and that) King Tut's own grandmother, the 18th-dynasty Queen Tiye, is claimed by some to be of Nubian heritage).

What good Mr. Draper might have accomplished in his article was undone in the above comments. It appears that he is equating the racism of white Egyptologists with the so-called "faulty" logic of Afrocentric Egyptologists. History is replete with numerous examples of whites attempting to discredit any African American or African American movement which sought freedom from the clutches of institutional racism. In the 1960's, Dr. Martin Luther King was labeled a communist and called the "most dangerous man in America" by the FBI. Today, African American scholars are labeled "Afrocentric revisionists" and are subjected to ridicule for attempting to tell our history through our own cultural lens.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 50's led to the enactment of Civil Rights legislation which has since benefited all women and minorities in America. The Black Power Movement of the 60's contributed to the rise of the Black Studies Movement which led to the expansion of Negro History Week to Black History Month in 1976.

These rights were not achieved because whites had a change of heart and suddenly decided to do the right thing. These rights were achieved after a long and protracted struggle. As Frederick Douglass said: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and never will."

It is within this context that African Americans must examine the African Centered (or Afrocentric) Movement, independent of European American oversight. The African Centered Movement has one primary objective: to rescue and reconstruct the history, culture, science, philosophy, psychology, religion, literature and economics of African people (worldwide), and to view *our* experiences through *our* own eyes. But we must be fully aware that such acts of self-determination will be met with resistance by those who profit from the perpetuation of historical falsehoods masquerading as academic truths.

Mr. Draper falsely accuses “Afrocentric Egyptologists” of claiming that all Ancient Egyptians, from Tut to Cleopatra were black. Despite the claims of “Eurocentric Egyptologists,” the historical evidence (including that of the Cairo Symposium) strongly suggests that blacks ruled Kemet from Dynasties 1-12 (3150 until 1763 B.C.E.), Dynasties 18-20 (1550 until 1170 B.C.E.), Dynasty 25 (750 until 675 B.C.E), and Dynasty 30 (380 until 343 B.C.E.). Any competent historian would know that Egypt was conquered by the Greeks in 332 B.C.E. and Cleopatra VII (there were eight in total) was a descendent of Kemetic and Greek admixture and would probably have been classified as *colored* in the nineteenth century American south.

With the rise of the African Centered Movement in the late 1980's, scholars such as Drs. Cheikh Anta Diop, Molefi Asante, Yosef ben Jochannan, John Henrik Clarke, John G. Jackson, Asa Hilliard, Theophile Obenga, Jacob Caruthers, Ivan van Sertima, Charles Finch and others forced Eurocentric Egyptologists to acknowledge the racist history of Egyptology. In the last two decades, mainstream Egyptologists have begun discussing the Nubian Dynasties and are slowly acknowledging the possibility that there were other black rulers of ancient Egypt.

I don't expect Eurocentric Egyptologists to give up without a fight and, realistically, I don't see the struggle being won in my lifetime, but the tide has turned and we are gaining ground. In their efforts to disparage African Centered scholars, Eurocentric Egyptologists are proving to enlightened minds just how desperate they are.



The last page of the “Black Pharaohs” article features a profile of the famous wooden bust of Queen Tiye, the wife of King Amenhotep III, mother of Amenhotep IV (aka Akhenaton) and the grandmother of King Tut. The picture is accompanied by a caption that asks if Queen Tiye had Nubian ancestry simply because it was, “made of wood that has *darkened* with age, (which) has inspired claims that she did.”

In a similar attack against the African Centered Movement that appeared in the February 4, 1990 issue of the *New York Times* in an article entitled, “Africa’s Claim to Egypt Grows More Insistent.” The article featured a photograph of a partial bust of Queen Tiye (with her eyes and nose removed) and a caption that read, “Sculpture believed to be the head of Queen Tiye...Revisionist historians argue that she is descendent of Black Africans.”



I find it interesting that *National Geographic* and the *New York Times* both sought to disprove “Africa’s Claim to Egypt” by using an image of Queen Tiye. I will prove them both wrong by using their own evidence to discredit them.

Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye ruled Kemet during the height of its military power during the Eighteenth Dynasty. Their descendents, Akhenaton and Tutankhaton, are two of the most controversial and well-known kings who ever lived. They were all one hundred percent African.



A frontal view of the wooden bust of Queen Tiye depicts a female who sports “60’s Afro” and ear rings with a pair of uraei (cobras) which was a symbol of rulership worn by Nubian Pharaohs during the Twenty Fifth Dynasty some 640 years later. All of the photos and paintings of Nubian kings in the article show them wearing the same symbol of rulership. Regarding Tiye’s appearance, Lestor Brooks, author of *Great Civilizations of Ancient Africa*, stated: “Any Sunday morning you may see her modern counterpart proudly entering America’s Negro churches across the land.”



The problem that Europeans and European Americans have accepting the historical reality that Africans living in the Nile Valley 6000 years ago created one of the most admired civilizations in history is theirs alone to grapple with. The destiny of African Americans will no longer be determined by the descendants of their former owners.

During our first 200 years in America we were forced to fight for our human rights. In the Twentieth Century we fought against the law of the land to attain our civil rights. Now, in the Twenty First Century, we are fighting for the right to determine our own consciousness. In the end, we shall be victorious.

*This article is an excerpt from the forthcoming publication, **Exploding the Myths Vol. II: The Rebirth of Nile Valley Civilization** by Anthony T. Browder. He conducts annual study tours to Egypt and Egypt on the Potomac Field Trips of Washington, D.C. Details on these events, and Mr. Browder’s publications and speaking engagements, can be obtained at www.ikg-info.com.*

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