

Hommage à Anténor Firmin (1850-1911), égyptologue haïtien¹/Homage to Anténor Firmin (1850-1911), Haitian Egyptologist

by

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translated from French by

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Anténor Firmin (1850-1911) was a Haitian lawyer, inspector of schools in Cap-Haitien, editor of the newspaper “Le Message du Nord,” political party leader, statesman, diplomat, and member of the Society of Anthropology of Paris. In 1902, in his capacity as party leader, he ran for the Presidency of the Republic of Haiti. He was also an authority on the Egypt of the Pharaohs.

Introduction

Anténor Firmin is part of the Haitian Intelligentsia. He was a lawyer by profession, a pan-Africanist by political choice. He was also, in my opinion, an Egyptologist, one of the first among the Black people of Africa and the Diaspora. This article will focus on Firmin the Egyptologist.

The Influence of Haitian intelligentsia

The name of Anténor Firmin remains attached to a major work of the 19th century, still relevant today, bearing the title: *The Equality of the Human Races (Positive Anthropology)*.² This book is dedicated to Haiti, a historical and political symbol for all Children of the Black race; as Firmin writes, “In dedicating this book to Haiti, I bear them all in mind, both the downtrodden of today and giants of tomorrow” the disinherited of this and the giants of the future.”³ Haiti has indeed given much to the black world and humanity:

- a) Spiritual leaders with Boukman;
- b) Statesmen with Pierre Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture (1743-1803), Jean-Jacques Dessalines (1758 -1806);
- c) Powerful writers, in large number. Among these creators of literary aesthetics include Jean Price-Mars (*Ainsi parla l'Oncle [Thus Spoke the Uncle]*, Port-au-Prince, 1929),⁴ the first president of the Society of African Culture (SAC)-Presence Africaine, founded by the Senegalese Alioune Diop. Price-Mars is considered the “Founding Father of Negritude” His interest in physical anthropology probably had its source (or inspiration) in Anténor Firmin; Jacques Roumain (*Gouverneurs de la Rosée [Masters of the Dew]* Port-au-Prince, Paris, 1944); Jacques Stephen Alexis (*Compere Général Soleil [General Sun, My Brother]*, Paris, 1955), and *Les Arbres musiciens [The Music-Making Trees]* Paris, 1957); and many other talented writers such as Jean-F. Briere, Laleau, Camille Cinéas, Trouillot, Saint-Amand.

Physical Anthropology and Its illusions

Also called “descriptive anthropology,” this scientific discipline studies the anatomical facts and external characteristics of human beings, then classifies them into different “races,” and ultimately makes value judgment on the superiority or inferiority of a particular human race. Having studied the different human races, scholars of the white race could not classify the white race as an inferior race; in the same line of reasoning, anthropologists of the black race could not classify the black race as inferior, primitive, and savage. Thus, the inequality of the human races means strictly nothing. However, Arthur Comte de Gobineau wrote his unfortunate book *Essai sur l'inegalite des races* en 1853 (*An Essay on The Inequality of the Human Races*). The surgeon Paul Broca (1824-1880) founded the Society of Anthropology in Paris in 1859. Europe is fully committed to the idea of the inferiority of the black race: Blacks are inferior human beings, savages, uncivilized, and still on the threshold of the universal history as observed in Hegel's philosophy.

Cephalic, nasal, osteological, and craniological indices as well as the culturally-derived psychological testing were falsely conceived or designed. All of these data were used to classify hierarchically the different varieties of the human species, particular those of African origin. The doctrine of the inferiority of the black race as decreed by Western scientific anthropology is linked to a fundamental issue: the question of the Pharaonic Egypt. Africanists, orientalist, Australians, Americanists (specialists on the native primitive tribes of the American continent), without exception, had placed Egypt in the Middle East, in Asia Minor, or the Eastern Mediterranean, and not on the African continent of the inferior black races. Anténor Firmin had strongly criticized the racist theories of physical anthropology. He had also defended the black Africanity of the Pharaonic Egypt. The issue of the Pharaonic Egypt has an interesting historiography worth to know. We can make now some observations about the most significant dates on the historiography of the “Egyptian-African Dossier”:

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- 1831: Hegel professes in Berlin, explaining to his audience that Egypt—having passed the Spirit of the East to the West—does not belong to the African spirit (*aber es ist nicht dem afrikanischen Geiste zugehörig*); that is to say, Pharaonic Egypt is not part of the black African cultural universe.

- 1885: Anténor Firmin develops and defends his argument that the ancient Egypt is African, Negro, by virtue of its geography, race, culture, spirit, values, sacred and divine kingship, aesthetics, and linguistics; but Anténor Firmin does not explore in detail the linguistic dimension of the file/dossier.

- 1954: Cheikh Anta Diop, in *Nations negres et Culture (Black Nations and Culture)*, established with a rare scientific and intellectual power the historical truth against all Western falsifications. Consequently, the “Egyptian-African dossier” gains momentum. The linguistic link, for the first time, is decisive and impressive. The Pharaonic Egypt is Negroid. It belongs to the collective Egypto- Nubian history. It is the foundation of the cultural unity for all Black Africa. The Pharaonic Egypt is the basis for and sole source of inheritance for all classical African humanities. Contemporary African pedagogies must have for paradigm the ancient Egypt.

- 1956: Jean Leclant, French Egyptologist (Sorbonne, *Collège de France, Institut de France*) gave a conference on February 10, 1956 at the *Société française D’Egyptologie (College de France)* (Society of Anthropology of France) on the topic “Egypt-Africa: A few remarks on the diffusion of Egyptian monuments in Africa (map, illustrations).” He argues that Egypt is first an African land, “the substance of its culture, in its highest phases, appears essentially African.”⁵

- 1974: The International Conference in Cairo under the auspices of UNESCO, with more than 20 Egyptologists among the best in contemporary times (Serge Sauneron, Vercoutter Jean, Jean Leclant, W. Kaiser, L. kakosy, Torgny Säve-Soderbergh Peter L. Shinnie, Cheikh Anta Diop, L. Habashi, G. Mokhtar, F. Debono, Jacqueline Gordon-Jacquet, etc.). That the Pharaonic Egypt was African in culture, character, temperament, thought, meaning, and language. The Cairo conference challenged the racist theories of Hegel and all Eurocentric schools of anthropology based on racist ideology.

Anténor Firmin and Cheikh Anta Diop worked for the triumph of truth. And they were right to do so. The historical truth is on their side. We must emphasize the great insights and impressive arguments of Antenor Firmin in 1885, in turmoil with the erroneous theories of anthropology that were both dominant and ubiquitous.

- Anténor Firmin, Haitian Egyptologist

Anténor Firmin is an Egyptologist, as it were only 63 years when J.-F. Champollion (1790-1832) deciphered the Egyptian hieroglyphs in 1822. What is then an Egyptologist? How does one become an Egyptologist?

Egyptologists may come from almost anywhere or in any field of study. As to the matter of academic discipline, it may include geography, history, Greek and Latin studies, legal studies, archaeological studies, architecture, medicine; and linguistic, religious, philosophical, literary, aesthetic (drawing, engraving, photography) studies, etc. The lawyer Anténor Firmin was also an Egyptologist.

An Egyptologist is a specialist in the history and civilization of ancient Pharaonic Egypt. To make one a researcher or an Egyptologist, it is necessary to have some serious knowledge in and/or acquire some practical experience in the following matters: Philology, Papyrology, hieroglyphic texts, hieratic writings, demotic and Coptic scripts, edition of ancient texts, historical archeology (rarely prehistoric archeology), museum, exhibitions, scientific and popular books, documentary films, visits to tourist sites/attractions, conferences and seminars, scientific journals, conferences, etc.

Few Egyptologists are at once renowned archaeologists, who made sensational discoveries. Specialties and subspecialties are available in the field; but the investing material and the financing can be very expensive. Nowadays, almost everything has been excavated, hence, the immense Egyptian treasures of the museum around the world (stelae, statues, papyrus, various objects, mummies, etc.).

The Egyptologist should be well versed in the scholarship of his time. German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, etc. are necessary tools, as well as ancient Greek and Latin (It is instructive for the Egyptologist to be able to read directly in the Greek, for example, what Aristotle said about Egyptian astronomy). Direct access to the primary source material is a requirement for historical criticism. Finally, the Egyptologist must overcome as much as possible the Africanist and Eurocentric-Orientalist prejudices; for one must be careful not to confine oneself or one's work to the so-called historical truth. Sometimes, there are fanciful Egyptologists who would write in great detail on the murder of Tutankhamun by his successor, Ay.

Anténor Firmin is an Egyptologist. He knows, in their original language, the works of the greatest Egyptologists of his time and the founders of Egyptology: J.-F. Champollion, Rosellini, Richard Lepsius, Emmanuel de Rougé, H. Brugsch, Gaston Maspéro, Victor Virey, Nestor L'Hôte, G. Ebers, Olivier de Beauregard, J.J. Ampère, Caillaud, F. Lenormant, Schweinfurt, etc. The list is quite comprehensive in 1885.

Anténor Firmin knew the posthumous text, *Grammaire égyptienne*⁶ (*Egyptian Grammar*) by Champollion, which he quotes in his book. This first grammar of the Pharaonic Egyptian language has been reprinted recently. It is worth mentioning here a direct and relevant observation from Anténor Firmin on Egyptian archeology: “Every progress in Egyptian archeology brings us inevitably back to the Greek tradition, the only rational tradition.”⁷ It is correct that the “Greek tradition” does not separate dogmatically the “Egypt” of “Nubia.” The Greeks affirmed the unity and solidarity in all Egypto-Nubian collective elements. Ramses II, for example, built more in Nubia than in Egypt itself. Egypt is not in Asia, but certainly in Africa. This was also the correct perception of Champollion.

Anténor Firmin, following the Greek writers, defends the fundamental unity of the Egypto-Nubian collective, and the fact that the Pharaonic Egypt is a “colony,” i.e. an extension of the Black people of Nubia or “Ethiopian,” in the Greek sense of the word. Moreover, Anténor Firmin has extensive and accurate knowledge of the Pharaonic civilization.

Anténor Firmin and his knowledge of Egypt

Correct transcription of names

b) What is striking and surprising is that Anténor Firmin writes authentically the Egyptian proper names, very close to the Egyptian language. For example, let us now observe the following pages in Firmin’s book:

- p. 204: *Khemi*, “Black land of Egypt,” “Black country,” an authentic name for ancient Pharaonic Egypt; *Km.t.* Coptic *Kemi*, *Kami*, “black” (coal);⁸
- p. 207: *Ramses II or Ramesses II (Ri□mīsisu)*, the Pharaoh Ramesses II⁹ of the 19th dynasty in the new Kingdom, who ruled from 1273 to 1212 BC/BCE. The spelling of Anténor Firmin for, *Rā-mes-sou*, is very correct, a name which means “Rā has shaped it,” “Rā put it in the world;” *sw*, *sou* is indeed a dependent personal pronoun, 3rd person, masculine, singular, of an the archaic “him”: “Rā put him in the world” (*Rā - ms - sw*, *Rā-mes-sou*);
- p. 218: “The statue of *Kha-f-Ra*,¹⁰ the King of the fourth Egyptian dynasty”: it is the son of Khufu (“Cheops”) of the fourth dynasty (2558-2532 BCE) of the old Kingdom, builder of the *Second Pyramid* and the *Great Sphinx* on the Plateau of Giza (Giza). Everyone writes Chephren or Khafre, while the exact transcription is given by Anténor Firmin: *Khā-f-Rā*, *Khā-ef-Rā*, “he appears in glory (as) Rā”;

- p. 221: two painted statues, discovered at Meidum in 1871 by a team under the direction of Auguste Mariette, a French Egyptologist, dating from the Third Dynasty, at the time of Pharaoh Huni¹¹ (2637-1613 BCE), whose daughter, Princess Hetepheres (Hetepheres) is the mother of Khufu (Cheops). The husband was named *Rahotepou*, *Nofri-t*¹² was his wife. We still write today *Rahotep* and *Nofret*. The name of the husband is actually a compound name, *Ra-hotep*, *Ra-hotepou*, *Ra-hotepou* (Rc-Htp, transliteration of the hieroglyphics), and the name means “Rā is satisfied” (the idea of fullness and peaceful sublime). Anténor Firmin shows that the - t, marks the grammatical feminine, is not obviously part of the radical: *Nofri-t*, *Nofret*, *Neferet*, etc., “The beautiful;”
- p. 221: “The Queen *Nofri-t-ari*,¹³ a figure who is always represented with painted black body/flesh.” It is true (see works by Prof. A.M. Lam, Egyptologist, University of Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar, Senegal). Usually, it is written as *Nefertari*, *Nefertary*, *Nefert-ary*. And it is wrongly translated as “That which is linked/ connected to the beauty,” as if there were an adjective of relation from the preposition *r* or *ir*, which would have rendered *iry*, where *ary* is translated as “related to,” or “connected with.” Gardiner reassures that the formative *y* (double small oblique or even straight lines or also double flowered reed) is never written in feminine cases.¹⁴ Therefore, the reading *iry* or *ary* is false (and it is not written in hieroglyphs). Anténor Firmin renders the correct transliteration and understanding: *Nfr.i try*, *Neferi-tari*, “I’m beautiful (and) adorable” (*nfr* is here a predicated adjective, preceding the subject, so a verb); the flowering reed *.i* is a suffix, subject pronoun, first person, singular: *nfr.i* “I’m beautiful,” “beautiful I am;” the verb *tr* can be translated as “to respect” and “to worship.”¹⁵ One of the Great Royal Wives of de Ramses II *Mery-Amon Ouser-Maa-Ra* also bears this pretty feminine name: *Nefertari*, *Nefer-tary*, more precisely *Nefer-i tary*. The Egyptian says: “I am beautiful and adorable,”¹⁶ the Song of Songs introduces an oppositional nuance: *Sum nigra sed formosa* “I am black, but beautiful” (as if there were a conflict between the fact of being black and beautiful, as if “dark skin” and physical “beauty” do not go together.) Psychological depths!
- p. 226: “The Princess *Nofri-t-ari*, who was married to Ahmes,”¹⁷ the founding Pharaoh of the Eighteenth dynasty of the new Kingdom, who ruled from 1570 to 1546 BCE. It is written everywhere as *Ahmes*, *Ahmosis*; nonetheless, the good transcription is that of Anténor Firmin: *Iah-ms*, *Iah-mes*, *Ah-mes*, meaning: “Born of the Moon.” An Egyptian Princess is named Iāh, “The Moon,” as in the rest of Black Africa: *Ngon*, *Ngone*, *Ngondo*, etc.

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- p. 227: “Pi-Ankhi-Meri-Amoun, the Ethiopian king of Napata who had conquered the entire territory which extends from Thebes to the mouths of the Nile.”¹⁸ It is *P-ankhy*, *Piankhy*, *Piankhi*, “The living,” also known as *Piyi*, *Piye*, the founder of the XXV Ethiopian dynasty (747-656 BCE, at least two centuries before the birth of Plato, the Greek philosopher of Athens). Why did Antenor Firmin write Pi-Ankhi-Meri-Amoun instead of the shortened version *Pi-Ankhi*? The most common name for the throne of *Piankhy* is *Men-Kheper-Ra*, “Perpetual is the Fate of Ra,” or “Stable is the Manifestation of Ra,” “Eternal Existence is Ra,” that is to say the very essence of the Divine is eternity. Where does Firmin’s *Meri-Amun* come from? One needs to know only the fact in order to answer correctly.

In the first line of the *Stèle de la Victoire de Piankhy* (the story of Barkal, according to Antenor Firmin), found in 1862 in the temple of *Amun of Gebel Barkal* (“Holy mountain”) in Nubia, now in the Cairo Museum, the title *nsw - bit*, “King of upper and lower Egypt,” introduces the royal name as *Mery-Amon-P-ankhy*, or more canonically *P-ankhy Mery- Amon*, *Pi-ankhy*, “The Beloved of Amun”: “The living. Beloved of Amun,” or “The Beloved of Amun, The living.” All is written royally in a cartouche. Through these examples, *Pi-Ankhi-Meri-Amun*, *Nofri-t-ari* (*Nefer.i tary*) *Nofri-t* (*Nofret*, *Neferet*), *Ra-hotpou* (*Ra-hotep*, *Rahotep*, *Ra-hotepou*), *Ah-my* (*IAH-mes*), *Ri□mīsisu* (*Ramses*, *Ramsses*), *Kha-f-Ra* (*Kha-ef-Ra*), *Kemie* (*Km.t*, *Kemet*, *Kamit*, *Kemit*), Antenor Firmin shows that he had an intimate knowledge of Egyptology, which he accumulated in his time.

Relevant Philological Observation

Antenor Firmin’s phonetic observation is that of a competent philologist. As he remarks, “The letters *r* and *l* and the letters *t* and *d* are easily interchangeable in the Egyptian language.”¹⁹ That is quite correct! The permutation *r* and *l* is fairly easy to observe, but not that of *t* and *d*: the Egyptian Pharaonic *di* means “to give,” and the Egyptian Coptic *ti* likewise translates as “to give”; and the Egyptian Pharaonic *rn*, *ren* may translate as “name,” as it is the similar case of the Egyptian Coptic *lan*, *len*, “name.” Gardiner observed this kind of permutation of letters and signs in his grammar.²⁰

a) Visit to the Louvre museum in Paris

Antenor Firmin has direct knowledge of Egyptian artifacts stored and displayed in museums, such as those at the Louvre museum in Paris. He visited the *salle funéraire* (the funerary room/burial chamber) and saw the covers of two mummy cases, whose facial features were remarkably Black African.²¹ In the *salle civile* (the Civil Chamber/Civil room) of the Louvre, Antenor Firmin was marveled at the “Seated Scribe” or “Squatting Scribe.”²²

b) Anténor Firmin has extensive knowledge of Egyptian Fine Arts

Anténor Firmin had studied in detail the Pharaonic antiquities. In a section of his book entitled “An Examination of Egyptian Monuments,”²³ he emphasizes that the colors black, blue, yellow, red ocher were all shades to translate “the black color that was so general and persistent in Egypt.”²⁴ Scholars have extracted and found pyramids, tombs, colossal statues, temples, mummies, textiles, furniture, baskets, jewelry, wood and metal materials, a thousand objects found in the necropolis (hair pins, head rests or bedside tables, mascaras pins), insignia of royalty, the beard of kings, legends, and faces; all of these were correspondingly found in Egypt, Nubia, Abyssinia, in the land of the Mangbetu (spelled *Monbottous* after Schweinfurth as followed by Firmin) and in the rest of Black Africa.

The pyramids exist in Nubia and large buildings in Mwene Mutapa (Monomotapa). Bedside tables are found in the Asante (Ashanti) of Ghana, the ram of Amun in the kingdoms of Edo-Yoruba in Nigeria, and gold jewelry everywhere in West Africa. The sacred, divine kingship is typical everywhere in ancient Ghana to the African Great Lakes.²⁵ Cosmogonies are identical. The Dogon astronomy is a branch of the Pharaonic schools of Thebes, “Houses of life” or academies of Memphis, Heliopolis, Hermopolis. Medicine was also learned in the ancient Ouganda (Uganda, Buganda).

And yet, the West has taken many precautions to destroy this majestic history of Black Africa, since the sixteenth century. Doctrines were invented on the inferiority of the Black African race. Fabrications were also invented in linguistics. Has the work of historical falsification, cultural lies, racial prejudice, and Eurocentric arrogance succeeded? No! As Anténor Firmin declares, “The only way the truth can be suppressed is by smothering the light of scholarship and erasing all traces of ancient literature and history. Such a task is beyond the power of a just a few men. All measures to hide the truth will remain vain therefore...”²⁶ It is all the more in vain, nowadays, with the massive influx of Black African historians, linguists, anthropologists, philosophers and Egyptologists; all of them are erudite scholars who are capable of judging for themselves, without alienating the intellectual tutelage.

Ancient Greek literature affirmed the ethnic and cultural unity of Egypt and Nubia (Ethiopia); in the eyes of Greek scholars such as Herodotus, Aeschylus (Firmin analyses both *Promethius Bound* and *The Suppliants*, which he cites in original Greek), Aristotle, Diodorus of Sicily, Strabo, etc., they (Egypt and Ethiopia) are connected or united around the term “Black.”

Anténor Firmin Discusses the Nature of the Flora and Fauna of Ancient Egypt²⁷

It is rare in the “Egypt-Africa dossier” to evoke the flora (plants, trees) and fauna (animals) of ancient Egypt. We still have to discover Anténor Firmin’s extensive knowledge of Egypt and Egyptology. That still leaves us to discover the enormous knowledge of Egyptology Anténor Firmin. Different species of plants or animals of ancient Egypt are originated from Ethiopia (Nubia - Abyssinia), their primary cradle. The papyrus, now rare in Egypt, is still beautiful and abundant at the edges of lakes or rivers in Nubia, Abyssinia and Sudan. It was used in Egypt to manufacture rolls of papyrus (paper) and for writing; hence, the so-called science papyrology is the study of ancient papyrus (writing, texts, and language). The ancient greyhound, the scarab, the black ibis—objects of worship of ancient Egyptians—are numerous in Nubia. We should add that the Nubians, Egyptians, and the Dogon people maintained a similar cultural perception of Scorpion.

Anténor Firmin and the Place of Linguistics in His Thesis

Why use linguistic peculiarities? It is to be comprehensive and ensure that nothing is missing from the thesis of the ancient Egyptians were real Negroes of Africa; and as Firmin puts it, “in order to demonstrate our investigation lacks nothing of what it takes to implement a strong and sure conviction in each person.”²⁸ Consequently, Firmin opposes outrightly to the theory of Theodor Benfey—whom he quotes in German. In 1884, Benfey would regroup the ancient Egyptian language among the Semitic languages. Firmin in 1885 would oppose the idea and argue that Benfey’s theory was not consistent. Despite the fragility of the “Hamito-Semitic” (as we would say today), scientists had “eagerly adopted it”²⁹ rather than to recognize that a Black people could have built the Pharaonic civilization. For it was necessary to assert the opinion of the Asian origin of ancient Egyptians.

Renan, according to Firmin, soon raised doubts about the putative special relationship between the ancient Egyptian language and the Semitic languages.³⁰ Nonetheless, it is Firmin’s methodology that is extraordinary for its time: “When we study the Egyptian language carefully, inasmuch as we can do with the help of with the Coptic language....”³¹

The linguistic comparison of Egyptian Pharaonic - Coptic - Semitic, even at the lexicological level (Firmin says “glottological”) will not bring a positive conclusion. However, if the linguistic method is not sacrificed or compromised, the comparison of Pharaonic Egyptian, Coptic and other languages spoken by black African peoples will necessarily lead to meaningful results. Firmin insists on the Coptic. He is absolutely right. The Coptic is vocalized, being written in Greek letters: it is therefore a tool of inestimable value. This is why the Hamito-Semitic (Chamito-Semitic) people or the “Afroasians” never solicit the Coptic.

Firmin rather sees the kinship between the Egyptian with the Galla, the Beja and Somali (i.e Oromo), as we would say today, between the Cushitic languages. This is a scientifically correct perspective. What is still dazzling in 1885 is that Anténor Firmin gives closer attention to the, in the light of the literature of his time, Egyptian “Nilotic group”³² (emphasis is mine). The Nilotic group, by certain peculiarities, has close links with the *Kanuri*, which is spoken in the *Bornu* region.³³ With the latter idiom, we are right in the Chadic.

Therefore, for Anténor Firmin, lawyer, anthropologist, and enthusiastic Egyptologist, the ancient Egyptian language belongs to the Cushitic, Nilotic, and Chadic linguistic groups, as he asserts in 1885. I demonstrate the close linguistic bond, at the continental scale, in 1993 [sic], in the light of historical linguistics and after the decisive works of Cheikh Anta Diop on the relationship between the Egyptian language and the language of the West-Atlantic Wolof group in 1954.

Conclusion

Anténor Firmin’s book is very rich in terms of Egyptology, general African linguistics, material culture, studies of Egyptian monuments, analysis of ancient Egyptian flora and fauna, the legends of Osiris, Isis, Seth and Horus (with reasons, Firmin writes *Hor*, the Egyptian *jr*), cultural affiliation, and the racial and linguistic relationships between Pharaonic Egypt with the rest of Black Africa. It is, however, the grand cultural unity of Black Africa which Cheikh Anta Diop championed in the 1960s.

There are references, dates, and times of great importance that are part of the phenomenological description of the African spirit in modern and contemporary times. The route of this phenomenology of the African mind recognizes, as founders of the African Egyptology with various merits, and these African scholars include the following:

- Théophile Obenga, *Origine commune de l’Égyptien ancien, du copte et des langues négro- africaines moderne. Introduction à la linguistique historique africaine*. Paris: L’Harmattan, 1993.
- Martin R. Delany, *Principia of ethnology: The Origin of Races and Color, with an Archeological Compendium, from Year of careful examination and inquiry*. Philadelphia: Harper & Brother, 1879.³⁴
- Cheikh Anta Diop, *Nations nègres et Culture, De l’antiquité nègre égyptienne aux problèmes culturels de l’Afrique Noire d’aujourd’hui*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1954. It is republished in several editions; there exists relatively no studies on “Cheikh Anta Diop, the Egyptologist” because it is necessary to know this area of history.

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- The International Symposium under the auspices of UNESCO at Cairo and Aswan brings nearly twenty Egyptologists, the best in the world, to discuss the black Africanity of ancient Egyptians.
- The creation of the journal *ANKH. Revue d’Egyptologie et des Civilisations africaines (Journal of Egyptology and African Civilizations)* is international in character, welcoming African, German, Italian, French, and American researchers (black and white). The African Egyptology works towards the extension and deepening of the established themes, in a scholarly way, by Cheikh Anta Diop. We will remain faithful to the work of Cheikh Anta Diop.

At different times in history, Martin Delany, Anténor Firmin and Cheikh Anta Diop showed us the way, the only way, and the true history of the peoples of Black Africa. Egyptology is central to these African studies, according to historical truth, and in accordance with the evidence of the facts and various testimonies. That this past speaks to the present, according to the beautiful expression of Wole Soyinka, who received the Nobel Prize for literature, on December 8, 1986.

It is the present that we must organize, improve, teach, nurture, clothe, care for, develop; and we must unite ourselves in solidarity of African destiny, in this terribly armed geopolitical world.

The enthusiasm to read, study, and know Martin Delany, Anténor Firmin and Cheikh Anta Diop is in fact supported from side to side by the urgency of the present moment of the phenomenology of the African spirit and of the Pan-African Black consciousness and solidarity of all the great peoples of Africa in order that African might be built itself, according to the values of dignity and sharing on a continental scale. The chain that unites us, we black Africans, to the Pharaohs of Nubia and Egypt, our ancestors, must lead us to the “most beautiful development of the heart and the mind of man.”³⁵

DE L'ÉGALITÉ
DES
RACES HUMAINES
(ANTHROPOLOGIE POSITIVE)
par
A. FIRMIN

Membre de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris,
Ancien sous-inspecteur des écoles de la circonscription du
Cap-Haïtien,
Ancien commissaire de la République d'Haïti à Caracas, etc.
Avocat.

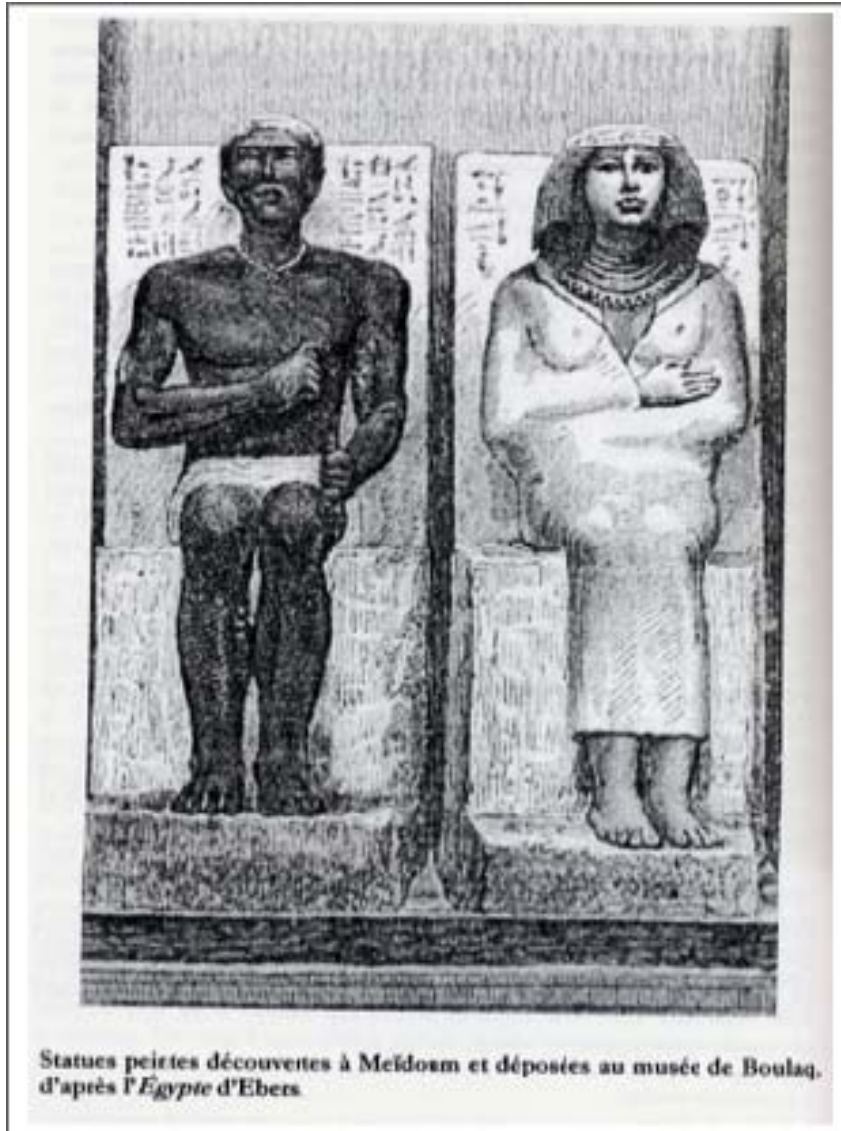
PARIS
LIBRAIRIE COTILLON

F. PICHON, SUCESSEUR, IMPRIMEUR-EDITEUR, Libraire du
Conseil d'État et de la Société de Législation comparée, 24, RUE
SOUFFLOT, 24.

1885
Tous droits réservés

The statues of *Ra-Hotpou*, Prince of Egypt, and his wife *Nofrit* (“The Beautiful”), “Known to the King” (a title of court) were discovered at Meidum in 1871. After being in exhibition at the Boulaq Museum, these statues are now in display at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.³⁶

All popular books regularly publish these two statues, which now appear to have been “reworked” to give the illusion of a non-African black race. Here, these two painted statues are not yet “reworked,” “manipulated.” Forgeries are not lacking in Egyptology (*Teti-sheri*, *Nefer-Titi*, etc.). The authentic statues will always show the Negro and Black character of Black African Pharaonic art.³⁷



Pharaoh Tout-ankh-Amun Heqa-Iounou shemā Neb-kheperou-Rā (“Living image of Amun, Sovereign Ruler of southern Heliopolis. The Lord of Manifestations is Rā”). Southern Heliopolis, Heliopolis of Upper Egypt refers to Thebes, the political capital of the New Kingdom. One of the grand statues of the ruler of Egypt: these statues guard the funerary room (or burial chamber), framing the door leading to it. Pharaoh wears the crown *khat* (the other identical statue bears the *nemes*). Wide collar *ousekh*, pectoral, bracelets, ritual royal kilt/loincloth with knob/inset, sandals, long club of command with knob (*medou*), *hedj*. Majestic, powerful, quiet strength, authoritative, fullness of being.

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There is no example of color symbolism of any king, white emperor or European who is painted in black from head to toe, even in a ritualistic context. On the other hand, Pharaoh here is painted black because he is Black African, an African Negro; one must see the reality in the face, like it or not. It is difficult to cheat” with such facts; they are too obvious, indisputable, and logical to the heart of the critical spirit, without cultural, educational, and ideological prejudice. Valley of the Kings, Thebes, Tomb No. 62. Currently: Cairo Museum.

Anténor Firmin is correct in discussing the colors of Egyptian art and affirming that black is the color of the Gods, of immortality, of the fullness, and of the divine Light (Ra).



Notes

¹ The full information of the translated text, which was published originally in French, is as follows: Théophile Obenga, "Hommage à Anténor Firmin (1850-1911), égyptologue haïtien," *ANKH* 17 (2008): 132-147. Obenga probably quotes directly from Anténor Firmin's 1885 original edition, *De l'Égalité des Races Humaines (Anthropologie Positive)* (Paris: Librairie Cotillon, 1885). As for the translation, I will quote directly from the English translation of Anténor Firmin, *The Equality of the Human Races*. Translated by Charles Asselin (Champaign: The University of Illinois Press, 2002). In the subsequent footnotes and whenever I reference the original French, I will use the abbreviations *Égalité*, and for all the references in the English translation, I will correspondingly use the abbreviation *Equality*. In this present translation, I have attempted to render faithfully in English Obenga's original words. However, there were instances I had to do minor revisions or additions, as reflected in the English translation, with the goal to making the translated text more readable and user friendly to the English audience. Whenever Obenga's words in the original are incomplete or fragmented, I made the correction in English.

² Anténor Firmin, *De l'égalité des races humaines (Anthropologie positive)*. Paris: Librairie Cotillon, 1885; the newly edited version is introduced or presented by Ghislaine Gélain, *De l'égalité des races humaines (Anthropologie positive)* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 2003).

³ Firmin, *Equality*, li.

⁴ I should point out that Price-Mars's *Ainsi parla l'oncle* was rather published in 1928, not 1929 as Théophile Obenga remarks in the text.

⁵ The quote is from Leclant's study, 30.

⁶ Champollion's *Grammaire égyptienne* was published posthumously in 1836, which Firmin quotes in *The Equality of the Human Races*.

⁷ Firmin, *Egalité, Égalité*, 228; Firmin, *Equality*, 251.

⁸ Firmin, *Equality*, 235.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 230-31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 241.

¹¹ It can also be read as *Ni-Suteh*,^{or} *Nisut-Hu* Hu-en-nisut

¹² *Ibid.*, 244.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 79.

¹⁵ Faulkner, *Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 300.

¹⁶ Firmin, *Equality*, 249.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 249.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 250.

¹⁹ Firmin, *Egalité*, 212; Firmin, *Equality*, 235.

²⁰ Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 28.

²¹ Firmin, *Egalité*, 220; Firmin, *Equality*, 243.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Firmin, *Egalité*, 217-223; Firmin, *Equality*, 240-255.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 223; *Ibid.*, 244.

²⁵ The African Great Lake Region is both a geographical and political location. It consists of a series of lakes at the Rift Valley lakes in and around the East African Rift. The name also designates these neighboring countries: Burundi, Rwanda, North-eastern of Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and North-western Kenya and Tanzania.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 223; *Ibid.*, 246.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 215-217; *Ibid.*, 238-240.

²⁸ Firmin, *Egalité*, 217.

²⁹ Firmin, *Equality*, 232.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Firmin, *Egalité*, 210; Firmin, *Equality*, 233.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 210; Ibid., 233.

³⁴ See the study by Mario Beatty in *ANKH*.

³⁵ Firmin, *Egalité*, 404.

³⁶ Firmin, *Equality*, 245.

³⁷ Firmin, *Egalité*, 222.