

AN AFROCENTRIC ANALYSIS OF W. E. B. DU BOIS'

THE WORLD AND AFRICA

A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by
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August 2021

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to provide an Afrocentric analysis of the ways in which Du Bois approaches African history in his text *The World and Africa*. The study contextualizes the experiences that shaped Du Bois' thinking about Africa. This includes commentary on his college years as well as the experiences that continued to shape his opinions near the end of his life. Highlighted in this study is Du Bois' Eurocentric approaches to history in regard to African people. The significance of focusing on the ideologies of Du Bois through this text is the fact that Du Bois is considered perhaps the most influential African American intellectual of the twentieth century. Thus, my aim is to provide an analysis of *The World and Africa* that is useful in illustrating the Eurocentric entrapments in regard to Africa and African people that have plagued even our most brilliant intellectuals. Secondly, Du Bois' analysis of African history is limited by his concept of race or ethnicity being narrowed to general phenotypes. As such, Du Bois often makes superficial and sometimes erroneous claims about what constitutes African people. African culture, though considerably discussed in the text, becomes however ancillary to the basis of Du Bois' contentions about the past greatness of African people. My analysis centers the Afrocentric approach to African cultural cosmology and ontology as basis of my critique of Du Bois' text. Further, as an example of how Du Bois could have strengthened his arguments for Pan-African unity using culture as a basis, I have created and utilized a methodology entitled African World Antecedent Methodology and provided within this study some minor examples of the overlapping cultural patterns of African Americans within the African cultural-historical matrix.

Dedicated to:

Eric D. Flott

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must first acknowledge my wife, Zoey Adé (née Mallard), for possessing grace, patience, and emotional wherewithal during this lengthy process. She has been my Oşun, as we, just as so many others in this tradition, have sought to create a life and, by extension, a world which facilitates the African renaissance. To my mother, Rhonda Peters (née Flott), thank you for your continued and unconditional love and support, and for your own everyday patience to understand the person your son is growing to be. To my father, William Lipscomb II, thank you for your encouragement, and for always seeing the best in me. I have certainly appreciated our long talks on history and world politics over the years and hope to continue to have them for many more decades. To my grandmother, Leola Flott, who calls every week to ask the weather and fulfill the advising duties of the family matriarch; our daily competitions on the Nintendo as a child formulated within me early the understanding and respect of the adaptiveness, dexterity, ingenuity, and grace of eldership. I thank the entire Flott clan for my amazing childhood.

All of you have supported me in your own way, and I am eternally grateful. I thank also the Lipscomb clan, headed by grandma' Shirley Lipscomb and the late grandpa' William (Bill) Lipscomb Sr., for never allowing our geographical distance to prevent me from understanding how loved I am by you all. To my great aunt, Carolyn Phillips, thank you for placing me in my very first daishiki. You brought me to my very first Pan-African function, and the rich taste and aroma of your peanut-butter and chicken

stew will never be forgotten. Perhaps someday my own kids will visit you and uncle Tony at the Phillips Bootcamp.

I would also like to thank four very influential ancestors: To my great aunt and uncle, Ida and Willie Triplett, thank you for instilling in me the lessons of giving back to one's community and how one should cherish family. To my grandfather, Cleveland Anthony Flott, thank you for setting me on this journey of self-discovery and love for African people. Thank you also for raising us all to be unapologetically Black and to strive for integrity in all circumstances. Finally, to my little brother, Eric D. Flott, whose recent passing has changed my life forever. My academic journey has come at the grave price of not being able to spend enough time with you in our adult years. Therefore, I dedicate this entire work to you. Words cannot express the hollowness we have all felt since your passing.

To the faculty, students, alumni, and colleagues I have come to know in the Department of Africology at Temple University, I thank you immensely for your guidance, acceptance, and friendship. I have cherished our time together and hope that we may all remain in great health and continue to work towards the unified goal of African liberation. To my outstanding committee, I am very grateful for you. Dr. Molefi Kete Asante, you took me in as a mentee, and I have at times felt somewhat like a son. I appreciate you for all your words of wisdom, your reprimand when I fall short of excellence, and your continued affirmation. Dr. Kimani S. K. Nehusi, thank you for strict guidance of my scholarship, for always expecting excellence, and the many inspiring anecdotes you have shared of your time as a scholar activist. Dr. C. Amari Johnson, thank you also for your guidance as well as your many words of advice whenever I am in need.

To my external reader, Dr. Kehbuma Langmia, I thank you for your willingness to be a member of the dissertation committee at such short notice and I graciously appreciate your recommendation that I pass with distinction. In closing, I sincerely appreciate each and every one of you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

In the late 1940's the African world was in utter turmoil. Many factors led up to this condition, and most, if not all, stemmed from the adverse effects of European encroachment. The European Trade of Enslaved Africans brought not only cultural instability and foreign ideological immoralities to the African continent but drained it of both valuable human and natural resources. The Portuguese, specifically, ruined the ancient Indian Ocean trade network, while simultaneously opening up the Kongo Kingdom in modern day Angola to the trade of human bondage that would ensure that over a quarter of Africans taken to the so-called Americas came from its shores.

Further, the ending of the trade by the very same European powers brought even more economic havoc to major kingdoms and territories who had incautiously grown dependent on its resources. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Africa began to be ravaged by colonial forces. Ancient cities like Benin were burned to the ground by the British, the French would subjugate the last of Dahomey's brave warriors, and the mighty Oyo empire under the rule of Adeyemi Alowolodu, came completely under the vassal-ship of Britain's Victoria. The 1884 Berlin Conference carved up the African continent and separated people into colonial territories without regard for cultural and political affiliation.

The twentieth century continued this trend. Masses of African people were affected by two large-scale European wars, usually referred to under the misnomers World War I and World War II, in which millions of Africans across the world found themselves to be little more than cannon fodder. Two decades before the second war a pandemic known as the Spanish Flu infected over a third of the world's population, as well as killing millions of African people on the continent. In the United States African Americans were far more likely to die from the disease than whites.

A decade before the second war there was a world-wide economic crisis retroactively referred to as The Great Depression, which greatly affected African peasant farmers and miners, still under the thumb of European trading companies. It is also reported that during the Great Depression, African Americans, already no strangers to hardship, were under such economic duress that nearly 40 percent of the African American population could not support themselves without government assistance.¹

This is all to say that by the late 1940's many factors had impacted the state of the African world. W. E. B. Du Bois, who by this time is by this time the leading African American intellectual, took all of this into consideration when he decided to write his text, *The World and Africa*. In this study I analyze the scholarship of Du Bois as he attempted to pen within this text an argument for a cultural-historical construction of African people. I argue that his statement, "...here is a history of the world written from the African point of view; or better, a history of the Negro as part of the world which now

¹ To Ask for Equal Chance, African Americans in the Great Depression 21

lies about us in ruins...”,² presents an understanding of himself and all people of African descent within the same cultural-historical matrix. Du Bois’ attempt at presenting this relationship was to begin first by describing the need for such an assessment as his due to the state of the world caused by Europe’s apparent evils.

Statement of the Problem

In 1945 Du Bois decided to take a position with the NAACP that would allow him to do further research on the colonial conditions of African people. He used this opportunity to publish *The World and Africa*, which details historical, social, political, and cultural reasoning for Pan-African struggle, and particularly by African Americans. However, one of the things that I notice is that even though he’s a leading Pan-Africanist, there doesn’t seem in his scholarship to be a robust appreciation for the Pan-African possibility for the world of African people. Further, there are some elitist and Eurocentric attitudes that have not yet been completely worked out in Du Bois’ own mind.

Du Bois’ evolving approach to Pan-African theory and practice is worthy of greater evaluation. Early in Du Bois’ Pan-African advocacy he attempted an audience at the 1918 Peace Conference in Paris. A dispatch from *The Chicago Tribune* would quote him stating, “We can, if we will, inaugurate on the *dark continent* a last great crusade for humanity. With Africa redeemed, Asia would be safe and *Europe indeed triumphant*” (emphasis mine).³ Du Bois was beseeching the European colonial powers to “redeem”

² William E. B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa ; Color and Democracy*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), xxxi

³ Ibid, 8

Africa by allowing the *natives*, as he described them, western education and a chance at involvement in the western systems of government that settlers had brought to Africa.

Du Bois would believe that, “self-determination cannot be applied to the uncivilized people”, and, therefore, those who are “civilized” are those who have adopted the West’s false universal humanism. However, this was in 1918, and this particular thinking of Du Bois certainly evolved to some degree by his writing of *The World and Africa* in 1947. To be clear, by 1947 Du Bois did not see the European world the same as he did at the turn of the 20th century. He describes the West as a domain of decadence and on the brink of collapse. He offers it up as the “pattern of human culture” which has led to the aforementioned disastrous conditions that he had seen in his lifetime.

However, though Du Bois is very clear about the “pattern of human culture” that encompasses the European world, he seems, despite his penning of history of African people, much less clear in his writing about the “pattern of human culture” that is the African world. Perhaps he takes it for granted that to be Black is to be of African descent, or perhaps it missed him on more theoretical levels the understanding that while he was profoundly associated with the ideals, customs, and cultural connectivity of Europeans that made up for Pan-European politics, African people’s pattern of culture needed to be clearly illustrated in order for there to be a deeper connection of Africans in Pan-African struggle.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to answer the problems of Du Bois’ Eurocentric misapplications and lack of an African cultural-historical matrix in his analysis. It seems

to me that the primary issue is that there is some confusion on the part of Du Bois in understanding the deeper possibilities and necessities in framing Pan-African struggle. Further, I seek to further Du Bois' discourse that frames the epistemology of African Americans in regard to our own history and culture. This involves illuminating the cultural-historical matrix missing from Du Bois' historical analysis.

However, much like the sociological aims of Du Bois, what I seek to do in this project is advance the perspectives and agency of African people in the telling of our own history. The deep study of African cultural history being done by Afrocentrists and non-Afrocentrists alike should empower and invigorate both a domestic ethnic unity as African Americans, as well as a general racial unity as African people. However, there is still much work to be done in order to disseminate information among the African people of the Americas, as well as provide proper pedagogy for understanding and relating to the information.

By producing clearer Afrocentric analyses of Pan-African intellectuals like Du Bois, we may further our understanding of African conditions as well as further the discourse on African liberation. Thus, analyzing Du Bois' *The World and Africa* will assist in African empowerment as well as ideological and cultural centering. As aforementioned, Du Bois is considered one of the most important intellectuals of the American 20th century, and specifically as it pertains to African and African diaspora issues. In investigating the reality that Du Bois saw in the African world, it is imperative to highlight Du Bois' limitations. Likewise, it is also important to emphasize his intellectual development during this time period as much of the academy is focused on

his “double consciousness” idealism he penned fifty years before. To deal with this I will ask three research questions.

Research Questions

1. What is Du Bois’ chronological assessment of African history?
 - a. Why did he find it a necessity to write one, particularly as it pertained to African Americans?
2. How did Du Bois advance Pan-Africanism in this book?
 - a. Does he remain elitist in his ideals and continue to deny the “natives” agency outside of Western intervention?
3. How do we trace his methods to see how he illustrates a historical-cultural matrix?
 - a. What are the limitations of his historical-cultural matrix?
 - b. How may it be improved?

Review of Literature

This literature review reveals four main areas of scholarship which encompass the foundation of source material needed for the dissertation. The first is scholarship that centers around the works and life of W. E. B. Du Bois, as well as that of his contemporaries. The second area deals with African history and culture and includes historical, anthropological, archaeological, ethnographic, and linguistic source material. The third area consists of sources relating to African American history and social theory. Importantly, this area is strictly informed by the scholarship of African Americans

themselves. The final area of scholarship mentioned is that which will inform the theories and methods.

There is a great host of literature on the work of Du Bois, and perhaps much too exhaustive to consider them all. Further, Du Bois lived and presented an evolving array of scholarship and theory for such a long period of time that a number of different meanings could be attributed to those who describe themselves as Du Boisian scholars. For the purposes of this project, I focus generally on those who cover the entire scope of Du Bois' life and more particularly on Du Boisian scholarship that centers around the last two decades of his life.

Consequently, aside from the texts written by Du Bois himself, the works of a few scholars make primary mention. *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Life in American History* by Charisse Burden-Stelly and Gerald Horne fits my primary objective. Though the subtitle is *A Life in American History*, this is simply due to a series agreement with the publisher, as this text covers the entire life of Du Bois, including his living in Ghana. Reiland Rabaka's works have proven useful, particularly his *Africana Critical Theory: Reconstructing The Black Radical Tradition, From W. E. B. Du Bois and C. L. R. James to Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral*, which presents useful analyses for Du Boisian thought in the context of his contemporary critical theorists.

Naturally, David Levering Lewis' two volumes *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of A Race* as well as *The Fight for Equality and the American Century* prove indispensable to any assessment on Du Bois. However, Du Bois' very own autobiography, with the assistance of historian Herbert Aptheker, *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century*, provides intimate insight into the mind of

Du Bois during his final years. This last text is particularly important as he critiques his own life and experiences throughout the autobiography.

In addition to *The World and Africa*, I will utilize a number of Du Bois' works, namely *The Negro Church*, as I plan to analyze Du Bois' scholarship on African American religion and how it relates to his sparse discussions on religion in *The World and Africa*. For a more thorough assessment of the evolution of Du Boisian historiography, I will be examining *The World and Africa's* precursors in relation to his assessments on African history and colonialism: *The Negro; Africa, Its Geography, People and Products; Africa: Its Place in Modern History; Black Folk, Then and Now; Color and Democracy; and Africa in Battle Against Colonialism, Racialism, Imperialism*. I also look at his works that are specifically on social and historical realities of African Americans, namely, *The Philadelphia Negro, The Gift of Black Folk*, and *Black Reconstruction* and also later essays such as "American Negroes and Africa" and "*American Negroes and Africa's Rise to Freedom*."⁴

Further, I will examine the ideologies of Du Bois' contemporaries. In addition to the great Pan-Africanist and Black (African) Nationalist Marcus Garvey, with whom an ideological rivalry is well established, I focus on others who were contemporary to Du Bois and exhibit both a Pan-African and African Nationalist ideology. I would be remiss if I did not mention the famous Pan-Africanist and author of *Vindication of the Negro Race*, Edward Willmot Blyden. The Blyden family has been very influential in the Pan-African world. In fact, Blyden's great granddaughter, Nemata Amelia Ibitayo Blyden, has

⁴ Ibid, 215

recently submitted her powerful contribution to the social discourse surrounding identity within the African diaspora, *African Americans and Africans: A New History*. Blyden's ideologies show similarity with other contemporaries.

In particular are James Africanus Horton, author of the significant work, *West African Countries and People, British and Native with the Requirements Necessary for Establishing that Self-Government recommended by the Committee of the House of Commons, 1865; and a Vindication of the African Race*, and J. E. Casley-Hayford, author of the phenomenal text, *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*. Both scholars would use the term African Nationality as a somewhat pan-African-nationalist description of the movement in which they engaged.⁵ Casley-Hayford in particular elaborates on such sentiments:

There is an African nationality, and when the aborigines of the Gold Coast and other parts of West Africa have joined forces with our brethern in America in arriving at a national aim, purpose and aspiration, then indeed will it be possible for our brethern over the sea to bring home metaphorically to their nation and people a great spoil. You have a great influence for good, under God, and I venture to hope that some of the thoughts which are moving West Africa as one body will appeal through you and other leaders of our race to our people on the other side of the Atlantic.⁶

In regard to references on African history, Molefi Kete Asante provides not only the only comprehensive history of Africa written by an African, but also the only such Afrocentric history of African people, *The History of Africa: The Quest for Eternal Harmony*. I personally served as the technical research assistant on the latest edition of

⁵ Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism: a History*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 15, 26

⁶ R. M. Park. 'Tuskegee International Conference on the Negro', *The Journal of Race Development*, 3/1 (July, 1912), 117–120, http://archive.org/stream/jstor-29737946/29737946_djvu.txt

this text, and it is an indispensable resource on African history. Most importantly, Asante covers most of the theorists and the methodologies of whom I use for this analysis such as Maulana Karenga,⁷ Cheikh Anta Diop and Two-Cradle Theory,⁸ as well as Asante and Mazama⁹ and their relation to the writing of African history.

I also utilize Toyin Falola's tremendous five-volume edited series, *Africa*. Falola brought in a series of scholars throughout the African and western world in order to complete this series. In examining this work, one can argue a spectrum of useful scholarship ranging from wholly Eurocentric to near-Afrocentric ideologies. Eurocentric ideology in particular is heavily present within the writings of Joel Tishken in his chapter *Indigenous Religions*.¹⁰ In my view, Tishken shows a misunderstanding of African cosmology as he refers to, or erroneously describes certain phenomena as evil and witchcraft without any proper cultural context.¹¹ Regardless, the volumes provide useful source information on African historical and cultural phenomena.

Two texts from Africanist scholars I rely on are *History of Africa (4th Ed.)* by Kevin Shillington and *African Civilizations: An Archaeological Perspective (3rd Ed.)* by Graham Connah. Shillington provides an interesting introduction to his text, citing Diop as influence for Afrocentric historiography:

One school of African historical writing, particularly prevalent in North America, is known as Afrocentrism or Afrocentricity. To some extent, this is a reaction to the Eurocentric intellectual ideas that drove the Marxist class analysis of African

⁷ Molefi Kete Asante, *The History of Africa: The Quest for Eternal Harmony, 3rd Ed.* (New York: Routledge, 2019.) 48, 164, 341, 424 - 425

⁸ Asante, *History of Africa*, 388 - 391

⁹ *Ibid*, 423-424

¹⁰ Joel Tishken, "Indigenous Religions," In *Africa, Vol. 2, African Cultures and Societies Before 1885*, edited by Toyin Falola (NC: North Carolina Press, 2000), 73

¹¹ *Ibid*, 83-88

history in the 1970s and 80s. The inspiration for Afrocentrism has been the Senegalese historian Cheikh Anta Diop, whose work was originally published in France in 1954 and then republished in English in 1974 as *The African origin or Civilization: Myth or Reality?* Diop argued that Ancient Egypt was a black African civilization... Diop certainly drew attention to the Africanness of the Ancient Egyptians, which subsequent research by others has largely borne out.¹²

In the third edition of this text Shillington would submit:

But Diop went on to argue that all civilizations in Africa stemmed from Ancient Egypt, which implied that Africans elsewhere were not able to develop their own distinctive civilizations. Perhaps this is why modern Afrocentrism has not gained as much credibility as one might expect within Africa itself. As a school of history it is more popular among African-Americans, which is perhaps more of a reflection on their own society in North America.¹³

Clearly, Shillington is not very familiar with the works of Diop or that of Afrocentricity, particularly as he insists on erroneously referring to the latter as Afrocentrism.¹⁴ However, this is common thinking among Africanists. Interestingly, as only eight years had elapsed since the publishing of the third and fourth editions of this text, by the fourth edition he seems to have broadened his understanding as he has now changed that last sentence:

As a school of history, however, in recent decades Afrocentrism has developed beyond the limitations of Diop's interpretations and feeds into current movements for black empowerment, whether that be among African-Americans in North America, or as a reaction to the postcolonial distortions of a nation such as South Africa.¹⁵

While Afrocentrists are not entirely concerned with the pontifications of Africanists, they have, though ideologically Eurocentric themselves, provided some useful critiques of the general canon of Eurocentric historiography. Further, the

¹² Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa*, 4th ed. (London: Red Globe Press, 2019), 3

¹³ Shillington, *History of Africa*, 3rd ed. (London: Palgrave Press, 2012), 3

¹⁴ Asante, *Afrocentric Manifesto*, 17-23

¹⁵ Shillington, *History of Africa*, 4th ed., 3

importance of Connah's text, *African Civilizations*, to this project can't be overstated as Du Bois himself used a host of material culture sources, extrapolating the works of archaeologists and natural scientists of the day such as Flinders Petrie, Randall-MacIver, and Alexander Moret,¹⁶ most of whom Connah mentions in his text, along with contemporary assessments of their research. Other comprehensive treatments of African history to be used include the eight-volume set, *UNESCO General History of Africa*, as well as the equally volumed *The Cambridge History of Africa*.

In regard to analyzing Du Bois' last chapter of *The World and Africa*, the essays that follow, and his general assessments of African American historiography and social theory, I am utilizing a host of materials, but largely only those written by African people themselves. Du Bois does not represent the first African American scholar who has published works on African Americans highlighting the relationship to African cultural, social, and even political history. In fact, from the earliest examples of African Americans writing history about ourselves, we have written ourselves within the greater context of the African world. Most who did so were also activists who engaged themselves in political activities involving both domestic "civil rights" and international "human rights" of Africans abroad.

In the year 1885 one of the earliest African American historiographers, George Washington Williams, published the historic volumes, *History of the Negro Race in America From 1619 to 1800 (vol 1) and 1800–1880 (vol 2): Negroes As Slaves, As Soldiers, and As Citizens*. These volumes serve as the first published general history of

¹⁶ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, xxxii.

African Americans. However, Williams was also the herald that brought international attention to the horrors being perpetrated at the behest of King Leopold II of Belgium towards Africans in the so-called Congo Free State. Williams even visited the Congo personally and, after witnessing the forced enslavement, degradation, murder, and overall physical and psychological abuse towards Congolese men, women, and children conscripted to labor in Leopold's rubber production industry, he wrote to Leopold personally, condemning his cruelty. Williams would continue to write and opine about the plight of Africans in the Congo, as well as that of others across the African diaspora.

Another influential figure in the development of African American historiography within the African context is Carter G. Woodson. The works of Woodson show assessments of the historical and social realities of African Americans. He was also highly concerned with African American epistemology and pedagogy. In Woodson's most well-known text, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, he expresses his frustration at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or "HBCUs", as he posits:

Negro colleges offer courses bearing on the European colonists prior to their coming to America, their settlement on these shores, and their development here toward independence. Why are they not equally generous with the Negroes in treating their status in Africa prior to enslavement, their first transplantation to the West Indies, the Latinization of certain Negroes in contradistinction to the development of others under the influence of the Teuton, and the effort of the race toward self-expression... a further examination of their curricula shows, too, that invariably these Negro colleges offer courses in Greek philosophy and in that of modern European thought, but they direct no attention to the philosophy of the African.¹⁷

¹⁷ Carter Godwin Woodson, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990), 137

Woodson, known in America as the “Father of Black History”, spent the greater portion of his life researching African and African American history, and also exhausted a great deal of his own personal resources disseminating his findings to the African American community. Works by authors such as Du Bois, Woodson, and Williams, are paradigmatic in their attempts at African American historiography in particular, and African-diaspora historiography in general. Through their scholarship they developed a tradition which sought for African American history to be understood as an extension or within the course of African history.

Aside from John Blassingame’s seminal work, *The Slave Community*, and, naturally, the Workers Project Administration (WPA) narratives of formerly enslaved Africans, there is perhaps no better research on the period of enslavement that offers the perspective of Africans themselves than Michael Gomez’s *Exchanging Our Country Marks*. In the comparison of African cosmologies among the Caribbean and the continental U.S., Gomez’s work has been quite indispensable. In Gomez’s analysis of the synthesizing of African ethnic groups from ethnicity to race, he posits:

...Africans and their descendants did not simply forget (or elect not to remember) the African background. Rather, that background played a crucial role in determining the African American identity. Put another way, given the importance of African ethnicity, it is inescapable that ethnicity had a direct impact on African Americans' self-perception. The African American represents an amalgam of the ethnic matrix; that is, the African American identity is in fact a composite of identities. In certain areas and periods of time, the composite approached a uniform whole, as the transition from ethnicity to race was more thoroughgoing.¹⁸

¹⁸ Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 13

Gomez has thus presented the basis that while many ethnic groups existed among the enslaved, they were able to come together under not only the commonality of bondage but that of similar cultural backgrounds. He cites historian Sterling Stuckey in his analysis of the similarities of the spiritual customs of certain west-African groups: “Stuckey, building upon Herskovits's earlier work concerning Yoruba, Fon, and Akan affinities for rivers, makes the point that the aforementioned Bakongo belief concerning their ancestors' habitation of a world below water ‘casts additional light on why water immersion has had such a hold on blacks in America and why counterclockwise dance is often associated with such water rites.’”¹⁹ Such cultural similarities are not to be considered coincidental, and should further illustrate the practicality of African Americans repairing themselves from African paradigms.

His theory on the conversion process of African Americans to Christianity, though rich in detail, is quite interesting and backed by both the record of W.E.B. Du Bois and John Blassingame. Gomez is seemingly correct to hold the position that most Africans did not convert until sometime after reconstruction. Blassingame, in the groundbreaking text *The Slave Community*, makes this same argument, stating that only roughly 1 million slaves were Christian by this time.²⁰ Du Bois, in *The Negro Church*, would contrast this by stating there were only roughly 468, 000.²¹

William D. Wright, author of *Black History and Black Identity: A Call for a New Historiography*, offers some somewhat useful analytics in regard to African American

¹⁹ Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 273

²⁰ John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South Revised, Enlarged Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 97 - 98

²¹ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro Church*, (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903), 29

social identity, however he also accuses Africologists of essentialism and promotes his own social theory involving what he calls a “Blackcentric” perspective. “Black centeredness is away from Africa and has been for centuries, making black Africa peripheral, although yet meaningful to Blacks in America,”²² Wright argues. Wright’s assessment is quite interesting considering, in terms of a perspective, or a “social theory”, African American scholars from various fields such as history, philosophy, and psychology have argued that African Americans must develop our own unique social theory that distinguishes our values, morals, and ethos as a group.

Harold Cruse calls for this in his brilliant monograph, *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, in which he asks, “Whose culture do we develop and uphold an Afro-American culture or an Anglo-American culture?”²³ Cruse perhaps may have agreed with Wright’s assertion of “Blackcentricity”. After all, he didn’t necessarily believe that Black Americans are African people, but he did however believe that Black people constituted a unique “ethnic bloc” or ethnicity, in need of cultural, political, social, and economic unity.²⁴

Nevertheless, this notion of a “social theory” for African Americans that is to be drawn from our historical experiences continued to be advanced across humanities and social science fields. However, assessments of the nature of a “black social theory” did not always exhibit such *afrophobic* assertions. Psychologist Bobby E. Wright, in his text,

²² William D. Wright, *Black History and Black Identity: A Call for a New Historiography*, (Wesport: Praeger, 2002), 21

²³ Harlod Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: a Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership* (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2005), 49

²⁴ Cruse, *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, 49 - 65

The Psychopathic Racial Personality, highlighted, “the creation of an African worldview through the development of a Black Social Theory” as what he considers the solution for African Americans.²⁵ Recently, at the Annual National Conference on African/Black Psychology, Wright’s work was regarded as “seminal” scholarship for their field. Writing this in 1974, he was certainly not alone, as a cadre of Afrocentric scholars in the humanities and social sciences came both before and after him with similar assertions about the nature of a black social theory.

The primary theoretical and methodological paradigm used for this project will be Afrocentricity. Molefi Kete Asante dedicates a whole chapter to the idea of an “Afrocentric Historiography” in his text, *An Afrocentric Manifesto*.²⁶ Asante makes it clear that his theory did not just formulate in his consciousness all on its own. He relates to the reader his journey of formulating this theoretical framework by mentioning the theories of African scholars such as Cheikh Anta Diop, Marcus Garvey and even W.E.B. Du Bois.²⁷

In Victor Okafor’s article, *Toward an Africological Pedagogical Approach to African History*, he refers to African history as “a matrix” under which are embedded the various histories of the African world.²⁸ Both Okafor and Asante acknowledge the utility

²⁵ Bobby Eugene Wright, *The Psychopathic Racial Personality and Other Essays*. (Chicago: Third World Press, 2000.)

²⁶ Molefi Kete Asante, *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008), 55

²⁷ Asante, *Afrocentric Idea*, 138

²⁸ Victor Oguejiofor Okafor, “Toward an Africological Pedagogical Approach To African Civilization.” *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 27, No. 3 (1997): 299–317. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002193479702700301>.

of Cheikh Anta Diop's historiography, or *Diopian Historiography*,²⁹ in presenting a non-chronophobic history of African people. Asante describes *Diopian Historiography* as a corrective view of African history that relocates the ancient Nile Valley as an African cultural center.

Cheikh Anta Diop's seminal work, *The African Origin of Civilization*, relates to the subject from the standpoint that Africans share inherent commonalities and should unify on the bases of a linguistic, cultural, genetic, economic and social imperative, making his work indispensable in this study. As an examination of the people of the African continent, this book provided a foundational basis for the perspective of cultural unity among Africans. The examination of the works of African scholars who wrote of specific ethnicities, such as Jomo Kenyatta, collaborates with the theories and revelations set forth by Diop. Kenyatta, in his monograph, *Facing Mount Kenya*, elaborates on the significance of names and terms specific to the Kikuyu ethnicity of Kenya. Kenyatta's insight into the cultural aspects of the Kikuyu, their ceremonies involving naming, and the epistemologies which inform such activities, provides a wonderful analysis of a variant of African culture that exemplifies several foundational cultural phenomena described by Diop.

Diop and Kenyatta's works can be found to have parallel examples of ritual and meaning within African societies. Other such works focusing on African culture in general, as that of Diop's, and specific ethno-cultural groups in particular, as with Kenyatta's Kikuyu, have enhanced our understanding. Examples include the works of Ifi

²⁹ Asante, *Afrocentric Manifesto*, 118

Amadiume, writer of the influential text *Male daughters, female Husbands*. Amadiume's anthropological study of gender in Africa was useful primarily for cultural context however is indispensable and foundational on gender discourses in Africa. Another such example would be Kimani Nehusi, author of the critically important text, *Libation: An Afrikan Ritual of Heritage in the Circle of Life*, in which he uses the ritual of Libation as a medium to identify known and possible antecedents, similarities, and continuities of the practice of Libation among African people.

Nehusi makes a similar attempt linguistically in his article, "From Medew Netjer to Ebonics", identifying African linguistic continuity from ancient Nile Valley Civilizations to contemporary African languages. Nevertheless, in *Libation* he also addresses the different cultural realities that shaped the practice of Libation amongst African people and that amongst Europeans.³⁰ This is done partly because Nehusi understands the importance of identifying phenomena specific to African ethos, and therefore useful for the purposes of African cultural reconstruction, as emphasized here:

This ritual must be understood and explained in partial fulfilment of the need for Afrikans everywhere to reclaim, reconstruct and fully repossess their own history and cultural heritage. Such processes of repossession will constitute a restoration of identity that is perhaps the most important prerequisite for Afrikans to fulfil, once again, their own vast potential and undertake their own development according to their genuine interests.³¹

Maulana Karenga's *Kawaida Theory: An Introductory Outline* is not only useful as a guiding theoretical perspective but also provides numerous references to African paradigms. As *Kawaida* is among the heaviest influencers of Afrocentricity, this text

³⁰ Kimani S. K. Nehusi. *Libation: an Afrikan Ritual of Heritage in the Circle of Life*. (Lanham : Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 2016.), 156

³¹ Nehusi, *Libation*, 26

helps to grasp a better understanding of the Afrocentric method of analysis. However, Molefi Kete Asante's text, *The Afrocentric Idea*, which sets the tone for discourse over the West's hegemonic worldview and the suppression of culture by, as Asante has asserted, "masquerade[ing] as a universal view".³² *The Afrocentric Idea* was, of course, more than useful as a guide for Afrocentric analysis, however, it also provided context for practices of African continuity among African Americans, such as within his discourse on naming. Asante relates to the reader the shared cultural heritage of nicknaming among the Akan, Yoruba, Ewe, and African Americans:

While the African American does not retain the formalized Akan or Yoruba response to naming, one does find the prevalence of nicknames, which serves as markers of the African presence in the 'sound sense' of black America. Almost all young men and women receive nicknames at an early age, and these names are designatory, referring to one's physical appearance (e.g., Red, Gooseneck, Peanut Head), character (e.g., Bull, Slick, Rap), or relation (e.g., Buddy, Bro' Boy, Big Sister, Cool Baby).³³

The text offers various examples of African cultural continuity among African Americans that exist despite the disruption and damage caused by the era of enslavement. Asante's anthropological surveys on African American social thought concerning agency are of unique importance. His own testimony of acquiring an African name could be used as a guide for those seeking answers in their own journey towards such personal, and, consequently, collective cultural reparation.

Theoretical Foundations/Methodological Approach

³² Molefi Kete Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 1

³³ *Ibid*, 85

This study is an inherently Afrocentric work, being so theoretically guided by the Afrocentric Paradigm. The principal scholars whose theories and methodologies I will use are Ama Mazama, Asante, Maulana Karenga, Cheikh Anta Diop, and Marimba Ani. As Afrocentricity provides the foundational paradigm for this analysis, I focus on two major Afrocentric influences.

The first of which is recognized as “Diopian historiography”.³⁴ The namesake of which, Cheikh Anta Diop, emphasized often and effectively the cultural unity of African people. In his many works, Diop would meticulously lay out the evidence for such a claim. During his years at the Sorbonne, Diop would become proficient in the sciences of History, Egyptology, Physics, Linguistics, Anthropology, Economics and Sociology.³⁵ This would of course aid him in his pursuit to recapture the truth of the African past and assist those who look to his work in re-invoking African agency.

Diop would begin his analysis of African culture with Kemet. He theorized, and later set out to prove, that African cultural expressions share foundational antecedents that can be traced back as far as the ancient Nile Valley civilizations. According to Diop, “The history of Black Africa will remain suspended in air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt.”³⁶ He would further suggest, “The African historian who evades the problem of Egypt is neither modest nor

³⁴ Asante, *Afrocentric Manifesto*, 118-119

³⁵ John G. Jackson, *Introduction To African Civilizations*, (New York: Citadel Press, 2001), 13

³⁶ Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1974), xiv

objective... he is ignorant, cowardly, and neurotic.”³⁷ Du Bois shared the same sentiments:

The Egyptians, however, regarded themselves as African...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. 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.³⁸

In his pivotal work, presented to the English-speaking world as *The African Origin of Civilization* (a synthesis of several theses), Diop asserts that African people have inherent commonalities, and in subsequent works argued Africans should unify on the bases of the linguistic, cultural, genetic, economic and social commonalities we share. Diop understood well that the unifying factors of African cosmology were more fundamental than the externally imposed notions of what makes African people different.³⁹

Contrary to claims of essentialism, or of assuming African culture as monolith, it is important to note that Diop did not deny any African society their own distinctive aspects, cultural variety, or even cultural dynamism, but insisted on foundational and unifying aspects of African culture based on ancient antecedents and contemporary social-cultural reality. Diop’s notion of complementary domains of African matriarchy and patriarchy was his attempt in reconstructing an Afrocentric social history. It is

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 64

³⁹ Cheikh Anta Diop, *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa: The Domains of Patriarchy and Matriarchy* (London: Karnak House, 1989), x.

primarily the scholarship of Diop which influenced my creation of the aforementioned African World Antecedent Methodology.

The second influence on Afrocentricity by which this analysis is framed is Maulana Karenga's Kawaiida theory. Kawaiida finds itself responsive to culture and its seven core elements, being, "history; spirituality and ethics; social organization; political organization; economic organization; creative production (art, music, literature, dance, etc.) and ethos."⁴⁰ The term Sankofa is used in this research within the context of Kawaiida theory, thus being, "*an ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world.*"⁴¹ The need for a paradigm shift in African-American cultural dynamics has been the call of many, but this is perhaps best illuminated by Maulana Karenga when he states that we have a "popular culture" and not a "nationalistic" one.⁴² Mazama explains Karenga's assertion by stating:

What Karenga is speaking to is the reciprocal relationship that exists between a people and its culture. While it is clearly understood that culture determines one's outlook on life, it is also necessary to understand the people are ultimately the makers of culture. It is possible, and often necessary, as Karenga would argue, to consciously and deliberately affect the course of culture to make it reflect the best that is within us, as well as serve as a source of inspiration and guidance while we thrive to become the best that we can be. Thus, to reinforce ourselves as a people, as a nation, Africans must identify ourselves culturally. More specifically, we must rebuild our national culture.⁴³

⁴⁰ Maulauna Karenga, "Philosophy, Principles, and Program," <http://www.us-organization.org>, US Organization, Last Modified: February, 25, 2020, <http://www.us-organization.org/30th/ppp.html>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ama Mazama, *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003), 19

⁴³ Ibid.

Nationalistic cultures have nationalistic histories that are cosmologically centered and politically instrumental. Throughout the ages, the writing of a people's history has proven to be an inherently political project. It cannot be argued that the utility of history for the purposes of distinguishing a group, justifying engagement in war, and/or the continuation of cultural, religious, and political homogeneity has been the primary aims of many an annal. For Du Bois, I argue that he emphatically displayed his understanding of this when he expressed, "...here is a history of the world written from the African point of view; or better, a history of the Negro as part of the world which now lies about us in ruins..."⁴⁴ To be clear, though undoubtedly a Pan-Africanist, Du Bois was not a Black Nationalist, at least not to the degree as that of Garveyism.⁴⁵ However, it is clear that Du Bois' attempt with the *World and Africa* was one in which fell in-line with the objectives of deliberately affecting "the course of culture to make it reflect the best that is within us, as well as serve as a source of inspiration and guidance" for African people.

It is obvious from the last chapter of the main text of *The World and Africa*, as well as the essays added at the end of the text, Du Bois was heavily focused on praxis as he encouraged the involvement of African people in the realization of Pan-Africanism. This aligns well with Afrocentric theory, particularly those of Ama Mazama. In *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, Mazama imparts that, "From an Afrocentric perspective, where knowledge can never be produced for the sake of it but always for the sake of our

⁴⁴ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, xxxi

⁴⁵ Asante, *Afrocentric Idea*, 134

liberation, a paradigm must activate our consciousness to be of any use to us.”⁴⁶ She concludes this thought by astutely submitting, “*The ultimate test will be our praxis*”.⁴⁷

The works of Mazama are indispensable towards any thorough Afrocentric inquiry and/or critique. Her recently published chapter, “Cognitive Hiatus and While Validation Syndrome: An Afrocentric Analysis”, submits the ingenious concept of cognitive hiatus as, “a break in the continuity of logical reasoning, a missing logical step in one’s thinking. Cognitive Hiatus is easily recognizable because it produces discursive and behavioral incoherence.”⁴⁸ This will serve well in differentiating the ideologies which embody either cognitive hiatus or cognitive dissonance, while also highlighting how such could be or is an exercise in white validation.

The last major scholar whose theory I utilize is Marimba Ani and her concept of *asili*.⁴⁹ The theories and critique of Eurocentric ethos presented in her text, *Yurugu*, are essential in order to delineate between the African and European cultural ethos that form the differences in their recording and interpretations of history. Ani’s concept of *asili* is useful in particular as it not only provides the means to historically, philosophically, and empirically establish what is of European ethos, but also, as a parallel with Afrocentricity, provides analysis for making clearer what truly encompasses the ethos of the African.

⁴⁶ Mazama, *Afrocentric Paradigm*, 8

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ama Mazama, “Cognitive Hiatus and the White Validation Syndrome: An Afrocentric Analysis”. In *Black/Africana Communication Theory*, edited by Kehbema Langmia and Ronald L. Jackson. Cham, 25-38. (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 29.

⁴⁹ Marimba Ani, *Yurugu: An African-centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*, (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1994), xxv, 11

Finally, I have developed a methodology based on the antecedent hypothesis presented by Diop. Being Pan-African in scope, I have utilized three African terms in order to develop a methodology in which to use in order to further understand, as Okafor put it, the “matrix ” of African history and culture. This methodology I have tentatively termed African World Antecedent Methodology (AWAM).

African World Antecedent Methodology

Being pan-African in scope, I have utilized three African terms in order to develop a methodology in which to use in order to further understand, as Okafor put it, the *matrix* of African culture. The first aspect or method of approach in AWAM is *Kanna* (sameness). This approach is developed from the Yoruba phrase, “*ti kanna ọrọ*”, or “of the same matter”. It involves the gathering of data garnered from the field of Africology, as well as various other fields of interest, and synthesizing it using Afrocentric methodology in order to show clear antecedent sameness between various African ethnic groups and cultures. Examples could include the use of oral tradition and oral history in order to reconstruct antecedents between regional groups, Afrocentric analysis of written accounts of various ethnic groups, or Afrocentric analysis of the material culture of various African societies (especially if they help to formulate social histories or examples of past lifeways).

The more nuanced concept of *Fáanna* (similarity) derives from the Xhosa/Zulu term “*Kuyafana* ”, or “in the same way; it is just the same”. This method assists with the notions of cultural continuity stemming from ancient precedents argued to be exemplified throughout Africa and the African diaspora. *Fáanna* may somewhat overlap with the

Kanna method as investigations into cultural phenomena such as water rites, circumcision, libation, domains of matriarchy, and a variety of other cosmological similarities become central. However, *Fáanna* recognizes that similar African phenomena may not present ready antecedents. It is simply a bridge in assisting in the possible discovery of antecedents or the acknowledgement of African phenomena that appears inherent throughout multiple groups despite any clear origin.

The concept of *Naani* (uniqueness) derives from the Igbo phrase, “*naani ebe*”, or “only place/source”. The use of the *Naani* method involves the distinguishing of cultural phenomena which shows no clear antecedents or similarity with other groups. This would involve first the identification and investigation of the unique phenomena before also investigating other groups in proximity, and/or regional and diaspora groups, in order to determine if either *Kanna* or *Fáanna* is, indeed, not present. The utility of such may also serve to secure the agency and intellectual autonomy of individual African societies.

Data collected from these three approaches are to then be analyzed in a manner that lists all clear antecedents, suggestable antecedents, and no antecedents while simultaneously distinguishing between foundational cultural aspects as well as unique cultural phenomena among the various groups being compared. In this case, I am doing a comparative analysis between various African civilizations that Du Bois discusses and African Americans. However, I will also look at ancillary groups that we know are immediately related to African Americans (such as the Igbo, Yoruba, Bakongo, etc.). Doing so will yield knowledge on cultural antecedents that African Americans have in vestige but also those that were severely impacted by way of the *Maafa*.

In *The World and Africa*, Du Bois makes a clear political and social case for African Americans to involve themselves in Pan-African struggle. As aforementioned, it is clear that his intention in turning the attention of the reader to the African past is so that connections could be made with the African present. However, I contend that he fails at connecting past and present African cultural ontology. Certainly, Du Bois understands the importance of culture as he makes clear the particular cultural ethos of Europe. But while he places forth a history of African people, he does not illustrate to the reader a cultural-historical matrix that would strengthen his arguments for a Pan-African political imperative.

Therefore, AWAM is especially salient as it provides frame-working for reconstructing the past lifeways of African people transgenerationally and transcontinentally. Doing so would assist in further reconstructing the cosmological rational and utility of various aspects of African vestige among African Americans, enriching the collective comprehension of our own *Africanity*. In chapters three and four I analyze Du Bois' historical construction of African people from an Afrocentric standpoint. I also end the chapters using AWAM to piece together past and present African cultural ontology and cosmology. Doing so, I provide an example illustration of the cultural connectivity between African Americans and the African world.

CHAPTER 2

THE SITUATION

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois explains in his posthumous autobiography that many non-African people in his day thought that all African Americans regarded Africa as their motherland. However, they were mistaken. Due to the effects of enslavement and colonialism, many of the descendants of the millions of kidnapped Africans in the Americas had turned their backs on their heritage. “This was true in the 17th and early 18th centuries, when there actually were, in the United States, Negroes who either remembered Africa or inherited memories from their fathers or grandfathers,”⁵⁰ explained Du Bois. But he would continue that, “Among Negroes of my generation there was not only little direct acquaintance or consciously inherited knowledge of Africa, but much distaste and recoil because of what the white world taught them about the Dark Continent.”⁵¹ Du Bois would also highlight a growing perception of identity among his generation. He explains that resentment arose whenever someone would suggest, “that a group like ours, born and bred in the United States for centuries, should be regarded as Africans at all. They were, as most of them began gradually to assert, Americans.”⁵²

⁵⁰W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. DuBois: a Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* (New York, NY: International Publ., 1968), 343

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

Du Bois would however come to the conclusion that African Americans, or Negroes as described in his day, are indeed African people. In 1945, he would leave Atlanta and return to New York to become the Director of Special Research for the NAACP. He took the post to better concentrate his study towards the history of colonized people, and the history of African people in particular. The result of which produced his 1947 book, *The World and Africa*.⁵³ Within the book, Du Bois begins by critiquing Europe as the “pattern of human culture” which has left the world in ruin.⁵⁴ He then presents an historical account of African people which includes the classical examples of Kemet and Nubia, the history of Bantu migration, the Sudanic Empires, and Western African societies. He ends the text with a chapter dedicated to, “the future of the darker races and their relation to the white peoples.”⁵⁵ Based on the preponderance of assuredly obscure or gate-kept sources that Du Bois employed, for the late 1940’s the book was a magnificent achievement.

I seek to analyze the scholarship of W.E.B. Du Bois as he attempted a type of chronological, cultural-historical construction of African people. I argue that his statement, “...here is a history of the world written from the African point of view; or better, a history of the Negro as part of the world which now lies about us in ruins...”,⁵⁶ presents an understanding of himself and all people of African descent within the same cultural-historical matrix. However, despite Du Bois’ profound intellect and insight, the

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ William E. B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa ; Color and Democracy*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017) 1-51

⁵⁵ Ibid, 143

⁵⁶ Ibid, xxxi

understanding that much of his thinking was predominantly Eurocentric has already been laid bare.⁵⁷ Du Bois' critique shows similarity with, and in many ways perhaps a forerunner to, that of later African and Afrocentric theorists such as Cheikh Anta Diop,⁵⁸ Marimba Ani,⁵⁹ Molefi Kete Asante,⁶⁰ and Ama Mazama.⁶¹ All of whom have critiqued the cultural ethos of Europe so far as to express the differences with African ethos. Like Du Bois, each of these individuals also embraced some pan-African philosophy of resistance and liberation of African people and African cultural agency. Consequently, each has also called for African Americans to reassess our political and cultural-historical ties to Africa.

In this chapter I use a number of texts to reveal the evolutionary links in Eurocentric thought towards Africa. I begin with Du Bois' critique of the European world and their general ambivalence toward their exploitation of African people in his day, and how such ambivalence and exploitation continue to play out in varying ways today. Within discussing this I also frame Du Bois' own Eurocentric ideological entrapments as well as what I perceive as the primary avenues by which Eurocentric ideology becomes embedded in the minds of African people. The two principal culprits I argue are Western education and religion, particularly Christianity, which both largely stem from the same epistemological paradigm that espouses Eurocentric supremacy. I argue that in the

⁵⁷ Asante, *Afrocentric Idea*, 136

⁵⁸ Mario H. Beatty, "W.E.B. Du Bois and Cheikh Anta Diop on the Origins and Race of the Ancient Egyptians : Some Comparative Notes." *African Journal of Rhetoric*, Vol. 8, no. 1, (2016): 45 - 46

⁵⁹ Marimba Ani, *Yurugu*, 448

⁶⁰ Asante, *Afrocentric Idea*, 138

⁶¹ Mazama, *Afrocentric Paradigm*, 10

Western world Education and Christendom, or the politics of Christian Europe, are closely intertwined and that one cannot exist in the Western world, nor its imperial domains, without being also socialized by way of the confluence of education and Christianity.

In the opening chapters of *The World and Africa*, Du Bois weaves together the variances and connections between several European nations such as Germany, France, Russia, Britain, Belgium, and the United States. He makes it clear the major currents that make up the cultural ethos European Civilization, or “the pattern of human culture” that, according to him, is now in collapse. Based on his assessment of Europe, his efforts then to pen a history of African Civilization I feel was necessary in order to expose the existence of a different pattern of human culture. However, to expose this he had to make it clear that Europe has attempted to position itself as not simply a pattern of human culture but the universal standard by which human culture should operate.⁶² I have termed this false universal humanism the *Eurocentric Masquerade*, a term I arrived at after reading the works of Molefi Kete Asante who states in his text, *The Afrocentric Idea*, that his work represents, “a radical critique of the Eurocentric ideology that masquerades as a universal view.”⁶³ Within this context, I contend that Europe has imposed on Africa and the rest of the non-European world a war of cultural dominance. It has been a war of attrition as they quietly assert Eurocentric perspectives as standard through various mediums of propaganda in which they have power over. This has over time wore down the defenses of cultural autonomy which exists among all other world

⁶² Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 78

⁶³ Asante, *Afrocentric Idea*, 1

cultures. Du Bois himself provides anecdotes that sum up how this cultural war operates from the European side of the battlefield.⁶⁴

However, while Du Bois makes clear the particular cultural ethos of Europe, I argue that he fails at connecting past and present African cultural ontology and cosmology. Certainly, he places forth a history of African people, but he does not illustrate to the reader a cultural-historical matrix that would strengthen his arguments for a Pan-African political imperative. Therefore, I have proposed a new methodology. African World Antecedent Methodology (AWAM) seeks to provide the field of Africology an apparatus in which to more easily display the cultural matrix of the African world. Particularly for the purpose of this dissertation, the information to be presented would provide African Americans empirical, analogical, and demonstrative evidence in which to see ourselves and our cultural history within the African cultural matrix. Further, my aim for AWAM is for it to be expanded and used by any African-world ethnic group in need or want of such methodology for the purposes outlined.

The Collapse of Europe

In this modern time, we have come to see that the collapse of the European world during the era of the early Cold War, as related to us by Du Bois, was but among the first of many gasps for air that European civilization has made in order to stay afloat as the masters of the world. Du Bois, who was born just three years after the end of the Civil War and the subsequent emancipation of millions of African Americans, would by the

⁶⁴ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 41-43; 63-78

writing of his *The World and Africa*, had lived to see the rise of Industrial America, two large-scale European wars referred to by the West under the misnomers World War I and World War II, a pandemic that infected over a third of the world's population, a world economic crisis we retroactively refer to as the Great Depression, as well as the beginnings of the aforementioned Cold War.

The Western world certainly appeared to be on the very precipice of collapse. However, the West recovered to some degree. As the Cold War raged on, the Space Race ensued with the launch of Sputnik in 1957. To compete, much finance and focus went towards education in American society, as well as in Western Europe. This was however headed off by the push for Civil Rights by African Americans which saw its height of popularity on August 28, 1963, when over two hundred and fifty thousand men, women, and children marched to the United States Capital in demand of equal social and economic liberties. Interestingly, Du Bois died the day before this historic event, marking the end of a ninety-five-year legacy that saw him as a contemporary of the likes of Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey, as well as a figure of considerable intellectual authority during the rise of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Nevertheless, European Civilization is still very much so in the process of collapse. Further, as such collapse would have a series of implications for nations formerly colonized, and those of which are still under the hegemony of Western imperialism, Du Bois is perhaps right to consider the world to be in the midst of tragedy. He contends that the collapse of Europe is “the greatest tragedy that has ever overtaken

the world.”⁶⁵ However, I would argue that, assuredly, the greatest tragedy to have overtaken the world was the rise of Western powers which set the world into such disarray in the first place. The collapse of Europe may indeed have dreadful repercussions in the immediate future, but the removal of the boot of Western hegemony from the throats of World cultures is something that is to be anticipated with solace.

Du Bois is analyzing the nature of the catastrophe his world has found itself and “to which pattern of human culture does it apply.”⁶⁶ Indeed, the greater contention is that the catastrophe in which Du Bois speaks of, is a result of the war over which culture will prevail. Du Bois could have perhaps also been alluding to such when he quoted Felix von Luschan, “Nations will come and go, but racial and national antagonism will remain.”⁶⁷ Du Bois’ primary reason for quoting von Luschan was to suggest that he may have unintentionally prophesied the coming of war between von Luschan’s native Germany against Britain and other European powers in 1914. However, Du Bois makes it clear that the control over Africa remained a clear objective as he states, “when Germany invaded Belgium...it must be remembered that by that same token Germany was invading the Belgium Congo and laying claim to the ownership of Central Africa.”⁶⁸ Whether ruled by Germany or ruled by Belgium, it was a war to decide whose particular set of Eurocentric cultural subjectivity will prevail in dominating Central Africa.

Du Bois argues that during this war the colonies of Africa were called upon in order to “save Europe.” I argue that in the general process of saving Europe, Africa was

⁶⁵ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 1

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 3

⁶⁸ Ibid, 4

losing themselves as they had to, before the war, indoctrinate themselves in Eurocentric thinking in order to contend with Europe and, because of the war, indoctrinate themselves even further. Du Bois mentions the fervent French nationalism of the Senegalese Blaise Diagne. Diagne had become Commissaire-Général and was in charge of recruiting Africans into the French army.

Diagne perhaps epitomizes the way in which African people were conditioned to value the culture of Europe above that of their own homeland. Du Bois describes him as, “more patriotic in his devotion to France than many of the French.”⁶⁹ Indeed, Diagne often encouraged African people to accommodate themselves to French domination, as well as adopt French customs and culture. In a very early edition of *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Du Bois criticized Diagne as “...a Frenchman who is accidentally black. I suspect Diagne rather despises his own black Wolofs.”⁷⁰ However, despite his issues, it would be Diagne that approved Du Bois’ first Pan-African Congress held in Paris on a cold February day in 1919.

Framing Du Bois’ Eurocentricity

Du Bois, of course, is not without criticism for his own Eurocentric entrapments both in writing and in action.⁷¹ In *The World and Africa*, Du Bois presents an article written by a reporter who interviewed him for *The Chicago Tribune* as he attempted to convince members of the December 1918 Peace Conference held in Versailles of the

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “Worlds of Color,” *Foreign Affairs*, an American Quarterly Review, New York, Vol. III, No. 3.

⁷¹ See: Reiland Rabaka, *Against Epistemic Apartheid: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Disciplinary Decadence of Sociology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010).

need for a Pan-African Congress. His initial hope was to hold a meeting with Woodrow Wilson, but he failed at this endeavor. The dispatch from Paris was dated December 30, 1918, just less than two months prior to the Pan-African Congress. In it relays Du Bois' sentiments that, "the principle of self-determination cannot be applied to uncivilized peoples, yet the educated blacks should have some voice in the disposition of the German colonies [of Africa]."⁷² At the end of the article Du Bois is quoted as stating, "We can, if we will, inaugurate on the *dark continent* a last great crusade for humanity. With Africa redeemed, Asia would be safe and *Europe indeed triumphant*" (emphasis mine).⁷³

There is much to unpack about such sentiments. Perhaps it can be argued that some veil of appeasement to Western egotism is being utilized by Du Bois in order to garner the support he is seeking. However, we know that Du Bois' writings, even in his most passionate critiques of Europe, are sometimes plagued by Eurocentric and elitist ideology. Nevertheless, the very goal of writing such a monumental text as *The World and Africa* presents a contradiction with such sentiments, perhaps as paradoxical as the notion of Double Consciousness he so infamously penned twenty years prior to this interview with the Chicago Tribune. DuBois states herein *The World and Africa* that he is presenting, "a history of the world written from an African point of view."⁷⁴

Whereas he was undoubtedly an African person, and one of the greatest intellectuals of the 20th Century (African or otherwise), his view was both of an African perspective and one that was authoritative. However, some of his arguments present the

⁷² Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 6

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid, xxxi

ailments of what Molefi Kete Asante describes as *lynched texts*. As such, some of the arguments are “strung up with the tropes and figures of the dominating culture.”⁷⁵ His work requires both lexical and ideological refinement in order to tease out more of the agency of African people that Du Bois ultimately seeks to provide.

The most paradoxical ideology that he presents is the insistence that, “self-determination cannot be applied to the uncivilized people”, suggesting those who are *civil* have adopted Western culture, and yet Du Bois is penning a history of African Civilization meant precisely to correct the perpetual lie that Africa and African people have not contributed to humanity. In fact, in sections of the text he becomes rather emphatic that what was to be understood in his day as civilization was quite old among African people before the coming of Europeans. For Du Bois to refer to Africa as the *dark continent* and speak of Europe as being *triumphant* in “redeeming” Africa is a terrible offense to African agency. The resolutions of Du Bois’ first Pan-African Congress evidence this problematic thinking as they are clear about the *need* for the “native” to be educated and “to have the right to participate in the government as fast as their *development* permits” (emphasis mine), yet if such agency was to be afforded, as offensive as this perception of agency may be, then why does the resolution have no language to suggest to inquire upon the “native” their opinion on the matter?⁷⁶

To be sure, there were twelve delegates from nine African countries, but Du Bois is clear that these gentlemen were already in London at the time. We can then surmise

⁷⁵ See: Molefi Kete Asante. (1992). “Locating a Text: Implications of Afrocentric Theory.” In *Language and Literature in the African American Imagination*, edited by Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay. Westport, CT: Greenwood.

⁷⁶ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 7-9

that their mere presence in London during this era already places them among men who were socialized by western standards. With a reliable translator, if the gentlemen had thought to ask the native Yorùbá, Wolof, Bambenga, Bambara, or Akan, particularly those of which who had no western socialization, would perhaps a vastly different array of perspectives had been produced? Or perhaps the Eurocentric paternalism of the *civilized* men would not even have afforded them an audience, much less have consideration of their “native” perspective.

This stands at the very crux of my argument. Du Bois claims to be attempting a history of the world from an African point of view, yet without centering that which is African there is no African perspective. Instead, Du Bois has centered his Eurocentric ideological proclivities towards African people and, ironically, done so with the message of African liberation. He, of course, is not without any critiques of Eurocentricity and general white supremacy. In fact, he made some of the most damning arguments against *Euromodernity*⁷⁷ than many of his ilk in the early to mid-twentieth century.

The Eurocentric Masquerade

In *The World in Africa* Du Bois’ intensity of righteous assault against the systems of white superiority is near palpable. It is clear that by this moment in time he has evolved in his thinking in regard to Western Civilization, and done so to such a degree that one could use this critique to measure his ideas drafted around the phrase *double consciousness* as near sophomoric. Certainly, Du Bois is now of the mind that America,

⁷⁷ See: Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018). 243-247

and the European world in general, does not have “too much to teach the world and Africa”⁷⁸ except for corruption, decadence, and decay. Du Bois is slowly awakening to the fact that a war between cultures and cosmologies has been the crux all along. That perhaps what has made the West capable of dominating others is not any manner of intellectual or cultural superiority, but power, plain and simple. Though he acknowledges that the accumulation of wealth and power is particularly among the leisurely elite, he argues that the European worker idolizes the elite and wishes to emulate such accumulation of wealth for themselves.

Du Bois would state of the mind of European worker, “He did not love humanity and he hated ‘niggers’.” In discussing the opinion revolving around the American Civil War Du Bois suggests that the South’s philosophy of domination over African people was favorable in Europe. Du Bois would argue further still that for even those who might be sensitive to the inhumane treatment of the colonial subjects of African and Asian descent, efforts were made by way of social engineering that would keep many of such minds ignorant to the truth of the circumstances. Du Bois wrote:

This philosophy had sympathizers in Europe. Without doubt, a large majority of influential public opinion in England, and possibly in both France and Germany, favored the South at the outbreak of the Civil War and sternly set its face against allowing any maudlin sympathy with “darkies,” half monkeys and half men, in the stem fight for the extension of European domination of the world. Widespread insensibility to cruelty and suffering spread in the white world, and to guard against too much emotional sympathy with the distressed, every effort was made to keep women and children and the more sensitive men deceived as to what was going on, not only in the slums of white countries, but also all over Asia, Africa, and the islands of the sea. Elaborate writing, disguised as interpretation, and the testimony of so-called “experts,” made it impossible for charming people in

⁷⁸ Du Bois W E B. and Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9.

Europe to realize what their comforts and luxuries cost in sweat, blood, death, and despair, not only in the remoter parts of the world, but even on their own doorsteps.⁷⁹

It has been more than seventy years since this writing, and the truth remains no less the same. Further, social engineering has evolved to desensitize the masses to even the most grotesque of European atrocities. To be sure, many texts a year are printed with grave and gritty detail about the past and contemporary horrors of the domination of African people. One of the most famous of which is Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost*, that spoke of the murderous activities of Belgium's Leopold II in the Congo during the early half of the twentieth century.

Du Bois, naturally, mentions this event in *The World and Africa*. After all, it was during his lifetime and certainly existed as one that helped to mold his ever-evolving opinions of European imperialism. Of the event he states the, "[Congo Free State] became the worst center of African exploitation and started the partition of Africa among European powers."⁸⁰ But the supposed point of a text like Hochschild's is for it to be seen as a call to action. It should be seen as such particularly because of ongoing exploitation of African labor for the purpose of mining raw materials in the Congo such as coltan, which is increasingly used in electronic devices, especially cellular phones. However, the cultural orientation of the work largely besets any power it would have at human empathy towards horrors experienced by the Africans he describes, nor their contemporarily oppressed descendants.

⁷⁹ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 14-15

⁸⁰ Ibid, 22

Texts such as Jason Stearns' *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters* and Tom Burgis' *The Looting Machine* have, since Horchschild's fame, added further depth to the story of the ongoing crises in Africa. Regardless, as with *King Leopold's Ghost*, such texts are already primed to be desensitized by early works such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which places such atrocities in the realm of otherworldliness. This is harmful to the degree that the average European with no direct hand in oppressing African people, though be they witting or unwitting benefactors, could add to such comfort and ignorance a veil of fiction to any overarching sentiment about the Congo.

Further, due to the degree in which Africa, and what it means to be African, has such a monolithic stance in the Western imaginary, such literature contributes to the desensitization of all atrocities on African people. This is done first by centering the story around the white explorer. For Conrad, this was in the personage of the fictional Charles Marlow, who relates his supposed experiences witnessing the atrocities in the "place of darkness," an otherworldly place which the reader is left to assume is the heart of Africa, or, at the time the Belgian terrorized Congo. This fixation of Africa as the imaginary and association with otherworldliness is elaborated by Nigerian scholar Chinua Achebe when he states, "*Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as 'the other world,' the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality."⁸¹

Achebe, a novelist himself, who spent a great deal of his literary career focusing on the agency of the African characters in his novels, argues further that Conrad places,

⁸¹ Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," *The Massachusetts Review* 57, no. 1 (2016): pp. 14-27, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mar.2016.0003>.

“Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril,” and concludes this sentiment with the thought, “can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the breakup of one petty European mind?”⁸² To that end, this use of Africa as “setting and backdrop” occurs too in the nonfictional literary realm.

Think now of the aims of a title such as *King Leopold's Ghost*. Does it place Africans as a “human factor”? Does it center their agency in the midst of the terror brought down upon them? On the contrary, Horchschild begins his narrative by first exploring the efforts of Edmund Morel to galvanize sympathizers in America to the plight of Congo people. Similar to the fictional Marlow, Morel in Horschild's story becomes the “wandering European” who “enters at his peril” both Africa and the political climate of African domination. To be sure, Morel should be considered a man of considerable morality to bring light to the condition of the Congolese. For if it were not for his efforts, perhaps the lie of philanthropy at the expense of human life would have continued on for many more years than it did. Nevertheless, in beginning with such an approach, Africans are yet again reduced to mere props in the narrative of European morality assailing European immorality. Certainly, Horchschild mentions the efforts of African Americans such as Booker T. Washington, William Sheppard, and George Washington Williams, but only as an afterthought to the grand narrative of Morel.

⁸² Ibid.

Hochschild briefly admits that Morel was not the first, indeed it would be Williams and Sheppard who preceded him.⁸³

An orientation to the history that would have afforded a centering of Williams and Sheppard, two men of African descent, and surely partial heritage that stems from the Congo area due to the historical circumstances of the European Trade of Enslaved Africans, as they make their efforts to liberate their distant relatives in what they obviously considered a motherland would have been a less Eurocentric endeavor. Better still, beginning with the narratives of past and present Congolese people about the horrors of that day, would have naturally afforded agency to Congolese people. Nevertheless, this is the paradigm from which African narratives, fiction or nonfiction, are related by the Western world. In Stearns' little book, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*, he makes it clear early on that Congolese are not without grievance of the removal of their humanity in Western narrative as he opens his introduction with this anecdote:

This is how it usually worked: I would call up one of the people whose names I had written down in my notebook, and I'd tell him I was writing a book on the war in the Congo and that I wanted to hear his story... We would typically meet in a public place, as they wouldn't feel comfortable talking about sensitive matters in their offices or homes, and they would size me up: a thirty-year-old white American. Many asked me, "Why are you writing this book?" When I told them that I wanted to understand the roots of the violence that has engulfed the country since 1996, they often replied with a question, "Who are you to understand what I am telling you?" The look of bemusement would frequently appear in the eyes of interviewees. An army commander spent most of our meeting asking me what *I* thought of the Congo, trying to pry my prejudices out

⁸³ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: a Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (London, UK: Pan Books, 2002), 4

of me before he told me his story. “Everybody has an agenda,” he told me. “What’s yours?”⁸⁴

This is what would seem to be an earnest attempt to express the concerns and perspectives of the Congolese that he interviewed. Interestingly, however, in the very next sentence he states, “A local, *illiterate* warlord with an amulet of cowries, colonial-era coins, and monkey skulls around his neck shook his head at me when I took his picture, telling me to erase it: ‘You’re going to take my picture to Europe and show it to other white people. What do they know about my life?’ He was afraid, he told me, that they would laugh at him, think he was a *macaque*, some forest monkey.”⁸⁵

The contradictions in Stearns’ use of words are glaring. Why would Stearns begin his description of this man as an “illiterate warlord” if only to supposedly present the man’s statements for the purposes of the garnering reader’s sympathy towards his words explaining his frustrations with how the Western world often depicts African people? Was it vital to the story that the man was illiterate? Clearly, Stearns had no trouble communicating with him. Was it essential to point out he was a warlord? Does it someone lend some texture to his character, or perhaps to Stearns’, that a supposed African “warlord”, a word that sparks the ideas of aggressiveness and brutality in the popular imagination of the West, sat down to have a conversation with a “thirty-year old white American”?⁸⁶ The description of the Congolese man with cowries, coins, and monkey skulls, also plays into the possible Eurocentric biases of Stearns as such

⁸⁴ Jason K. Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: the Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2012), 1

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

description without any context is often an exercise in sensationalism. He did not mention the manner of dress of the other individuals interviewed. Could this be because they were wearing European-standard attire? Paradoxically, it is interesting that later in the chapter he critiques the caricatures created by Western news reports such as a “brutal African warlord with his savage soldiers.”⁸⁷

To be fair, Stearns’ book does its best to center the narrative around the Congo and its war history. Nevertheless, it is ripe with Eurocentric interpretations while also veiled by the paradoxical innocence of white guilt. This is all the same for Burgis’ *The Looting Machine*. Burgis opens up the text with an author’s note that uses the idea of seeing connecting threads of African oppression and European exploitation as an allegorical prop. He had traveled to Jos, Nigeria and witnessed a horrific scene of violence in which many men, women, and children were murdered. He then states he suffered PTSD as “the ghosts of Jos would haunt him”. He would later come to the realization that his own guilt is what really haunted him. The guilt that he had survived as well as the guilt that such violence is perhaps, as Du Bois would put it, a “frightful paradox” that would see people like Burgis as, “the foundation on which is built the poverty and degradation of the world.”⁸⁸

Burgis states he is seeing, “the thread that connects a massacre in a remote African village with the pleasures and comforts that we in the richer parts of the world enjoy.”⁸⁹ Du Bois would help this statement further as he posits, “This is the modern

⁸⁷ Ibid, 4

⁸⁸ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 26

⁸⁹ Thomas Burgis, *The Looting Machine: Warlords, Tycoons, Smugglers, and the Systematic Theft of Africa's Wealth* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2015), X

paradox of Sin...a group, a nation, or a race commits murder and rape, steals and destroys, yet no individual is guilty, no one is to blame, no one can be punished.”⁹⁰ It can be certain, however, that the surviving people of Jos have for their whole lives seen at least the ends of the threads that Burgis is only just aware even exists. Interestingly, we do not hear the voices of those men and women. In fact, other than that of major political figures, we don’t hear the direct voices of any African person in Burgis’ *Looting Machine*. Only the supposed moral strivings of an individual European plagued by white guilt against the immoral European imperialist machine. The African is once again a prop on the literary stage of European conquest and domination of Africa. Furthermore, there is something to be said about the white gaze implicit in the scholarship of those such as Hochschild, Stearns, and Burgis. Juxtaposed to the scholarship of Afrocentrists, there is no praxis of liberation for African people.⁹¹

To be sure, Burgis mentions major players of African politics such as Robert Mugabe and Joseph Kabila. He even mentions that he personally interviewed President Alpha Condé of Guinea as well a few other African heads of state.⁹² However, even in this day, what Burgis is attempting presents some of the same conceptual issues as Du Bois and the dignified gentlemen of the first Pan-African Congress. How did these men view the “native” and uneducated in their homeland? Would they not by virtue of their European education and, thus, Eurocentric socialization, be problematic as it came to the centering of African culture and perhaps even that of their very own ethnic groups?

⁹⁰ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 26

⁹¹ Mazama, *Afrocentric paradigm*, 31

⁹² Burgis, *Looting Machine*, 145-189

This line of questioning may seem disjointed from the realities of social, political, and economic oppression suffered by African people. But it is actually right at the heart of the issue. Du Bois asked of his readers, “What in reality is the nature of the catastrophe? To what pattern of human culture does it apply?” I argue, just as Du Bois alludes, that the pattern is that of Eurocentric cultural ethos and that white supremacy is nothing more than an invitation to war over cultural domination. Europe is the architect of this war, and it is a war on their terms and by their measurement of what a war should be. Afrocentric theorists have however sought to assail this war effort by demanding and forcing others to acknowledge and act by our own terms and rules of engagement. The Afrocentrist “does not seek hegemony; [we] seek pluralism without hierarchy.”⁹³

However, our positioning of this perspective does not make the facts of war and the power of our opponents any less daunting. As for the texts I have sighted by the white scholars Stearns, Burgis, and Hochschild, I use these to exemplify the nature of this cultural war. *The Looting Machine* was praised by The New York Times and won the top awards by organizations such as *The Financial Times*. *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters* would also receive critical acclaim by *The New York Times*, *Foreign Affairs* magazine, *The Wall Street Journal*, and others. As of latest tallies taken in 2013, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, by far the most popular book, has sold more than 600,000 copies worldwide and printed in over a dozen languages. This has certainly benefited the West’s literary market as well as expanded interest in such investigative journalism on the plights of Africans.

⁹³ Asante, *Afrocentric Manifesto*, 111

Though, again, Africans are simply props in the narrative, and the white perspective on their stories ample commodities for Western consumption.

This type of desensitization to the plight of African people is no different than the ambivalence and ignorance of white beneficiaries of African exploitation and atrocity that Du Bois described in his day. Further still, there are those of mind to be sympathetic to human rights causes and yet at the same time care nothing for the livelihood of African people. Du Bois describes one such figure, Jan Smuts, who had “declared that every white man in South Africa believes in the suppression of the Negro,” and yet stood before the United Nations and “pleaded for an article on ‘human rights’ in the United Nations Charter.”⁹⁴ This too is no different than the followers of U.S. President Donald Trump who lionized him when he declared African countries are “shit holes” and yet prayed alongside his spiritual advisor, Paula White-Cain, that “angels have been dispatched from Africa” in order to bring Trump an election victory.

Thus, we see today the nature of this continuing cultural war. It is a war of attrition. One that sees Eurocentric hegemonic ideals shield itself under a veil of supposed *normal* universal humanism while it continuously, and from a range of avenues, assaults the character of African culture and cosmology by presenting it as the antithesis of *normal* human idealism. This effectively makes it so that any perspective on African phenomena must center Eurocentric needs. As alluded, meeting those needs requires a matrix of cultural apologetics. This is displayed within the most obvious of racist and contradictory Eurocentric opinions, such as that of Smuts, and within the seemingly

⁹⁴ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 27.

solicitous and profoundly influential work of scholars such as Hochschild. With Hochschild in mind, it would seem that his influential perspectives on the plights of African people were never powerful enough to cause the Western world to offer much substantial assistance to those who are suffering in Africa.

To be sure, each year billions of dollars in aid is handed over to African governments. However, such limitless humanitarian aid has done more harm than good, largely benefiting only the leaders of neo-colonial and oligarchy governments. One must question what it benefits a government such as the United States to send unlimited funding to “shit hole” countries if the funding has had no indication to be working to stabilize the countries. Could it be that the goal is not to assist in the independence of African countries but to maintain Africa’s dependence on the West? Zambian economist Dambisa Moyo insists that the West’s aid has only created more corruption and fosters dependency and poor governance. In her widely influential book, *Dead Aid*, Moyo states:

...much of Africa has received aid continually for at least fifty years. Aid has been constant and relentless, and with no time limit to work against. Without the inbuilt threat that aid might be cut, and without the sense that one day it could all be over, African governments view aid as a permanent, reliable, consistent source of income and have no reason to believe that the flows won’t continue into the indefinite future. There is no incentive for long-term financial planning, no reason to seek alternatives to fund development, when all you have to do is sit back and bank the cheques.⁹⁵

It is true that African countries suffer from oligarchic regimes. However, as alluded, it is also true that European world benefits from Africa’s condition. I argue that the European world is able to accomplish this primarily because it has stifled the African

⁹⁵ Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 45

world within a cultural war. It has turned the conscious minds of Africans against their own unconscious cosmologies, and the paradoxes that creates have left African people vulnerable for exploitation. This is true among the poor leadership of African nations as well as among Black leaders in America. Even some of our most fierce and celebrated leaders have been unwitting pawns in maintaining such order in the West.

African people contend with not just opponents on another side of a field but also with witting and unwitting Eurocentrists in our midsts. It is fair to argue that Du Bois, Nkrumah, Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others have even in their most righteous of causes, made mistakes due to the entrapment of Western cultural ethos. Some of them, such as Du Bois, have even critiqued the processes that allow for such cultural betrayal. It is interesting to note that Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, was assassinated just hours after he gave a speech in which he delivered his closest rhetorical stance yet towards economic Black nationalism. Black leaders may not have at all been aware of their betrayal in this cultural war. It is, after all, a muted, invisible war against cultural plurality. The Western World has done well in masking the demarcating lines behind a veil of universal assumptions. But how is this done? I argue that the primary culprit is Western education.

Socialization by Education

In his analysis, Burgis lambasts Robert Mugabe, the recently departed president of Zimbabwe. Mugabe was fortunate (or, unfortunate) enough to be born into a situation where he could receive an education by Jesuit priests. He would remain Catholic his entire life. Mugabe was a brilliant and highly inquisitive scholar and by the time he

became the president of Zimbabwe he used that intelligence at his whim, implementing both beneficial and disastrous policies for the Zimbabwean people. To be sure, Mugabe was an adamant African Nationalist and Pan Africanist who vehemently fought against both imperialism and colonialism.⁹⁶ His rise to power and ideological stances were celebrated by many in the African world.

But Mugabe would receive millions of dollars of foreign aid, and a great deal of it being American dollars.⁹⁷ Not only that, but Mugabe's administration also allowed the continuation of Western forms of education to permeate throughout the country. Surely one could argue that receiving education isn't inherently wrong, and they would be correct. However, we know that education is fundamentally a socializing phenomenon.⁹⁸ Most schools in Zimbabwe teach in English, particularly in urban areas. Even in rural areas where students are taught in their native tongue, English eventually becomes standard.⁹⁹ Though Shona is rightfully spoken throughout the country, the lingua franca is English.

But this is not just in Zimbabwe, of the fifty-four countries in the African continent, twenty-four use English as either an official or de facto language of their country. Furthermore, English isn't the only European language in Africa that is spoken pervasively. French, for example, is also an official or de facto language in yet another

⁹⁶ Asante, *History of Africa*, 367-372

⁹⁷ "History: Zimbabwe," U.S. Agency for International Development, February 5, 2020, <https://www.usaid.gov/zimbabwe/history>.

⁹⁸ Asante, *Afrocentric Manifesto*, 79

⁹⁹ Tyanai Charamba and Davie E. Mutasa, "Challenging the Hegemony of English in African Education and Literature: The Case of Zimbabwe," *South African Journal of African Languages* 34, no. 2 (March 2014): pp. 213-224, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2014.997058>.

twenty or more African countries. These languages are taught to African youth during primary education and are used to relay all forms of education in mathematics, science, literature, and art. If we broaden our scope to the African world, we may include those in the Spanish, English, French, and Portuguese speaking Caribbean, as well as South and North American continents.

The importance of pointing out the imposition of European languages in regard to education is that language is the primary vehicle for culture. Through the dutiful scholarship of Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí we have learned the cultural baggage that language carries with it, and particularly when it is forcefully imposed on others. In *The Invention of Women* Oyèwùmí charges us to consider that, “a people's language reflects their patterns of social interactions, lines of status, interests, and obsessions.”¹⁰⁰ In the text, Oyèwùmí is primarily concerned with exposing the imposition of the western concept of gender into Yorùbá society via the English language. According to Oyèwùmí, prior to European encroachment, the Yorùbá regarded age distinctions as the primary organizing principle instead of gender.¹⁰¹ Being clear about the role of education in this process, Oyèwùmí summarizes this issue effectively by stating:

Yorùbá and English have been in close contact over the last one hundred and fifty years. Because of colonization and the imposition of English as the lingua franca of Nigeria, many Yorùbás are now bilingual. The impact of English on Yorùbá continues to be felt through loanwords, translation of Yorùbá culture into English, and the adoption of Western values. The role of the educational establishment is crucial in this process. Schooling and academic scholarship represent the most systematic ways in which Yoruba society and discourse are being gendered.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Oyèwùmí Oyèrónké, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 158

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid, 158-159

To the Western mind the idea of gender may seem innocuous. But for the Yorùbá it has damaged the character of their unique culture and continues to sow discord in contemporary relationships between men and women in the society who exists within this ever-contradictory bilingual space. The imposition of Euromodernity continues to circumvent progress towards an Afromodernity -one in which African people arrive at their modern humanity via African cultural agency. It should be clear then that European languages and education has done the same for other modes and expressions of people activity such as religion.

Christianity as Tool of Socialization

Europe has utilized Christianity as both a sword and as a shield in their efforts to subdue and acculturate all who they subjugated. Both on the African continent and abroad, education was first administered via missionaries. Through this process, missionaries would socialize generations of African students into accepting white cultural norms while at the same time demonizing their own. Who would Robert Mugabe have been without the imposition of Catholicism? What, perhaps, may have been the character of the nation of Zimbabwe? There is no doubting the psychological affliction suffered by African people by way of Christian missionaries and their duplicitous offerings of the life-improving benefits of education for nothing in exchange but your soul. However, one could only wonder the result if the religious guidance of Mugabe focused more on the Hunhu/Ubuntu philosophy of his native Shona instead of that of Christian doctrine. Would the African nationalist had also been an African culturalist? Would he have sought to instill within his country the pride of the Shona reflected in the building of

thousands of monuments to Mwari instead of the building of Churches dedicated to the God of foreigners? The question is important because, if language is the cultural vehicle, religion and philosophy are often the routes for which this vehicle transports the expression of culture. This includes epistemological and pedagogical expression, or education, which was often passed down orally in precolonial Africa.

This, of course, cannot all be placed on the shoulders of one man. After all, there were plenty Christians in Mugabe's administration. The same can be said for other African heads of states such as Nkrumah and Thomas Sankara. They were born and socialized into this colonial condition. But it is important to remember that the religion of a country makes up its national character and will always have implications for how education is administered. This is much the same for Africans in the Diaspora. Most of the greatest African leaders in the United States were men of Christian faith. Men such as the charismatic preacher who believed in African repatriation, Henry Highland Garnett, the so-called Father of Black Nationalism, Martin R. Delany, the Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey, as well as the Civil Rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. All of them were molded by Christian education in some fashion or form. Because of such, contradictions in their ideologies would arise.

The first of these men, Garnett, had enough agency to suggest to the enslaved Africans, "...hereditary bondsman, if you wish to be free, ye must first strike the blow", but at the same time conditioned enough to be elated to see England colonize Yorubaland under the pretense of *civilizing the natives*.¹⁰³ According to African American historian

¹⁰³ Richard K. MacMaster, "Henry Highland Garnet and the African Civilization Society," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 48, no. 2 (June 1970): pp. 95-112.

John Blassingame, in Garnett's time there were about one million African Americans, or roughly a quarter of the population in the country, attending regular Church service.¹⁰⁴ By the time of King, however, the Black Christian population was significant enough to allow him to lead mass movements and base the purposes around Christian creeds. However, something interesting would occur in 1962 that would create a paradox between education and the de facto national religion.

The decision by the United States Supreme Court to take prayer out of schools in 1962 was filled with irony. One must consider that students were still subjected to taking the pledge of allegiance, in which one proclaimed that the US was "one nation under God." Of course, there are those of Muslim, Buddhist and other cultural faiths and national affiliation who are afforded the option to opt out. But that only makes the point clearer. Whose culture character provides the language that becomes "under God"? Why is it not the nation under Eshu? Or a nation united by Mwari? God is an English term with a very ancient cultural history. It stems from an unknown Germanic origin.

The emotions of the Anglo-Saxon toward the word God, or even the concepts it invoked in their minds, were powerful enough that it survived even the 1066 francophonization period of England. In using the word God, we understand this most powerful being via the unique perspective of Anglo-Saxon cultural ethnocentrism.

¹⁰⁴ John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, Revised. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1979), 97-98. Du Bois also mentions a comparable number for Africans in the South, stating that some 468,000 were Church members; 250,000 were Methodist and 175,000 Baptist. See: W. E.B. Du Bois, *The Negro Church* (Atlanta, GA: Atlanta Univ. Press, 1903). For a more recent analysis of these figures see also: Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks the Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998).

Therefore, it is steeped with thousands of years of cultural conceptual baggage that others must adopt by their very use of the term. Africans in the francophone world suffer similar ethnocentric subjectivities operating under the term Dieu. Religion is embedded into the very heart of cultures and the nations they run are sociologically molded by the epistemologies they embody.

Therefore, the irony in removing prayer or “religion” from schools is that the very character of education in the United States rests upon religion. Weeks begin with Sunday, a day in which schools are closed primarily because of Church services. For the child, the fact that schools are closed on this day and he is in Church is innately an educational experience. Thus, the days considered days of rest are dictated by a religious perspective that has Sunday begin the week as the holiest day and Saturday end the week as arguably the most secular day. Schools are also run, and classes are taught by people who are overwhelmingly Christian. The ways in which teachers impart knowledge from their perspectives onto their students has implications for how students interpret historical, scientific, and sociological data. Then there are the students themselves who come from predominantly Christian homes and carry with them the presupposition of Christian attitudes. This is the character of the nation and such character conditions the development of the nation’s educational system.¹⁰⁵

Du Bois was no stranger to education, and especially by way of Christian conditioning. In fact, Du Bois was an adamant Churchgoer as a child.¹⁰⁶ But events

¹⁰⁵ Asante, *Afrocentric Manifesto*, 83

¹⁰⁶ W. E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*, ed. Henry Louis Gates (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 16-17

would come about in his life that would by his 1940 autobiographical work, *Dusk of Dawn*, make him state that he was, “critical of religion and resentful of its practice.”¹⁰⁷

One of these events occurred while he was a student at Fisk. He had joined the congregational church at Fisk not long before he and several other younger members were “accused before the church for dancing.”¹⁰⁸ Dancing, and dancing in religious celebration, is a natural custom of those of African heritage. But many Black Christians had allowed the Eurocentric view of dancing being a “sin” to prevail over the contradiction of African heritage in dance.

One example of this where the contradiction is quite obvious exists in the writings of Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne. Payne was an educator and devout Christian who helped shape the early African Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1878, ten years before Du Bois would graduate from Fisk, Payne visited Philadelphia to attend what he would later describe as a “bush meeting”. Payne would bemoan, “After the sermon they formed a ring, and with coats off sung, clapped their hands and stamped their feet in a most ridiculous and heathenish way.”¹⁰⁹ Payne was so angered by the Africinity displayed in such a ritual that he immediately forced them to stop before demanding that their leader encourage his congregation to worship “in a rational manner” as this was “a heathenish way to worship and disgraceful to themselves, the race, and the Christian name.”¹¹⁰ Payne’s indictment is an interesting contradiction as he takes prideful membership in a denomination which bears first in its name the recognition that its congregants are

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 17

¹⁰⁸ Du Bois, *Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois*, 110-111

¹⁰⁹ Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 269

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

African, yet he despises and demonizes any display of Africanity. Payne would also eventually become the first president of Wilberforce College.¹¹¹ He exemplifies the paradox created by the interplay of religion and education in the socialization of African people.

Warring Cultures

The Eurocentric indoctrination both in Africa and the diaspora is so damning upon our psychology one would be made to think, like Payne, that to be an African who does not “disgrace” his race one must not behave like an African. This is accomplished primarily by creating a social atmosphere by which the standards of people activity in education, religion, art, science and industry, are presented as universal standards of humanity. But the truth of the matter is that these standards are simply an amalgam of European cultural subjectivity.¹¹² This, of course, can only be maintained as long as Europe remains in power. So long as the United States continues to maintain its status as the master of industry and militarism as well as the contradictory voice of moral democracy Europe shall remain in power. This too counts on the ability of Britain to maintain its regal status as progenitor of Westernity, and it, as well as the other colonial powers, such as France, Spain, Portugal, and Germany continue to hold on to the wealth they plunder from Africa and the rest of the world. Therefore, as alluded, the war over resources and the war of cultures are intricately linked.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹² Asante, *Afrocentric Idea*, 1

But Du Bois predicted that the European world is the midst of collapse. I argue that he was correct and that the collapse is slow, but ongoing. What Du Bois did not live to see but has remained a soothsayer in his arguments of a collapsing Europe, are the events leading up to the present day. As of yet, since his death, there have been several significant events that prove a weakening Europe. This included the continuation of African Independence movements that had begun nearly a decade prior with the independence of modern Sudan and Ghana. But internal issues with European nations have also been ongoing.

The ending of the so-called Cold War was significant. But the escalation of political rivalry between Russia and the United States and the European Union has resulted in a similar so-called Second Cold War. In America, there is an education crisis arguably brought on by the measures set forth during Reagan's administration which limited funding to education. The Brexit ordeal has been interesting, as dissenting views from northern Ireland continue to grow, and an increasing pool of young adult voters oppose the measure. There is also the fact that another global pandemic, exactly one hundred years after the ending of the last, has since March of 2020 caused great discord. Finally, it appears, having already just recently recovered from a recession, the West may well be on the eve of another global economic crisis.

However, perhaps the biggest affront to the superiority of whiteness was the fact that for eight years the most powerful position in the world was held by a man of African heritage named Barack Obama. Naturally, one could make valid arguments about the role of Obama in maintaining white dominance. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that no President and Presidential family before him has received as much vitriol both within the

United States and abroad.¹¹³ I argue that the very image of an African man sitting at the helm of world politics placed fear in the faith of European Civilization and exacerbated the type of xenophobic reactions we have seen, for example, in the Brexit affair or the efforts by the Trump administration to have a wall built along Mexico's border.

Trump also limited or outright restricted immigration from African nations like Nigeria, while supporting the flux of immigrants from European countries, such as his wife and her family. These types of reactions will only continue as the population of ostensibly White Nations continues to see stifled numbers among Whites and increasing birth numbers among other ethnicities. In the United States, we are already seeing that in a majority of states there are fewer births than deaths among white people.¹¹⁴ This is also an increasing trend across most of Europe.¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, as the trend of collapse continues, and Europe eventually falls, they may yet still win the cultural war. Again, it has been a war of attrition. Europe has used its arsenal of psychological warfare to whittle away at the Africanity of African people just as fervently as it has used physical warfare to whittle away at Africa's mineral resources. What if, for example, white people in the United States disappear tomorrow and African Americans magically find themselves controlling every aspect of

¹¹³ See: Molefi Kete Asante, *Lynching Barack Obama: How Whites Tried to String up the President* (Brooklyn, NY: Universal Write Publications, 2016).

¹¹⁴ Sabrina Tavernise, "Fewer Births Than Deaths Among Whites in Majority of U.S. States," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, June 20, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/20/us/white-minority-population.html>.

¹¹⁵ Matt Broomfield, "The Research That Shows Europe Can't Be Getting 'Full'," *The Independent* (Independent Digital News and Media, January 16, 2016), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/more-people-europe-are-dying-being-born-research-finds-a6816651.html>.

governance. Would that nation be any less different than the one Whites controlled? One can argue that Black people would champion “Black issues” such as legalizing reparations or reforming the criminal justice system. Perhaps even the aesthetics of Blackness would be more visible at the federal level by way of art and music.

However, what would be the core ethos in which African Americans will operate? What will be the character of the nation? Will English still be considered the standard language and Ebonics inferior? Would the nation continue to exploit the African world for resources? Will the Englishman’s suit still be considered the sacred attire of business? Will European classical music still be considered the standard of music theory? I argue that to effectively create Black skins in White masks is the lasting legacy of the Eurocentric Masquerade on African people. Its final act would see that the absence of white people will not necessarily mean the absence of whiteness.

Furthermore, when America does fall, who then are African Americans without America? If that title is taken to mean that our ethnic identity is African and our national citizenship is American, then would we not at such a time simply be Africans? What then would it mean to be an African person in a world without the American plantation? I argue that the fundamental answers to these questions lie buried deep within the history of what occurred prior to the formation of the West at the expense of the African world. As alluded, the “rape of Africa”, as Du Bois put it, was not simply the ravishing of Africa’s resources, it also sowed within African people the seeds of Eurosupremacy and African inferiority. Du Bois bemoans this reality when he states:

With all this went the fall and disruption of the family, the deliberate attack upon the ancient African clan by missionaries. The invading investors who wanted cheap labor at the gold mines, the diamond mines, the copper and tin mines, the

oil forests and cocoa fields, followed the missionaries. The authority of the family was broken up; the authority and tradition of the clan disappeared; the power of the chief was transmuted into the rule of the white district commissioner. The old religion was held up to ridicule, the old culture and ethical standards were degraded or disappeared, and gradually all over Africa spread the inferiority complex, the fear of color, the worship of white skin, the imitation of white ways of doing and thinking, whether good, bad, or indifferent. By the end of the nineteenth century the degradation of Africa was as complete as organized human means could make it. Chieftains, representing a thousand years of striving human culture, were decked out in second-hand London top-hats, while Europe snickered.¹¹⁶

Du Bois was heading in the right direction when he thought the best course of action was to “appeal to the past in order to explain the present.”¹¹⁷ But Du Bois is missing something in his analysis. Something that is obvious enough that he mentions it himself yet neglects to fully delve into the implications. He mentions the disruption of the African family by missionaries, the plundering of Africa’s mineral wealth that was so valued by the people, and the demonization of African religion, corporeal, and philosophy. He also gave us an anecdote which exemplifies the Eurocentric Masquerade when he states that the regal African chieftains, who represented thousands of years of African culture, were now wearing second-hand European clothing, “while Europe snickered.” This is the very essence of the cultural war. But what did Du Bois fail to provide? He fails to provide a cultural-historical matrix in which to anchor his Pan-African ideologies. Providing a history of African achievements may provide pride in a bygone past, but it does little to connect to African people’s present ontology and cosmology.

¹¹⁶ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 49

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 50

Du Bois somewhat alludes to understanding this as he laments that African people, “lost in modern thought their history and cultures.”¹¹⁸ He is essentially expressing the loss of African paradigms that would have formed an Afromodernity. I contend that it is the Afrocentric reclamation of that history and culture which will provide the paradigms needed for our Afromodernity. It is through the rediscovery and reforming of African cosmology, being the history, philosophy, religion, motifs, and aesthetics of African people, that we unmask and defeat the Eurocentric Masquerade and truly bring about a world of cultural pluralism. To be clear, it is not as if African culture is destroyed. An Afromodernity does exist in various fashions. However, it is often entrapped in the lowest rung of hierarchical cultural modernisms. Nevertheless, traditions and vestige do remain. It is only a matter of piecing together what Marimba Ani refers to as the *asili*, or “the germinating matrix,” of African culture.¹¹⁹ This is done by looking to the past for, according to Du Bois, “...the past is the present...without what *was*, nothing *is*.”¹²⁰

In connecting past and present cultural ontology, African people today can better identify ourselves in modern speech patterns, art, religiosity, and various other expressions of Africanity. Therefore, in my analysis of the various groups Du Bois covers in his *The World and Africa*, I present a methodology I have tentatively titled African-World Antecedent Methodology (AWAM). In the next two chapters, I will apply this methodology in a way that, while non-extensive, however exemplifies a way in which scholars may build upon how we understand the African cultural-historical matrix.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ani, *Yurugu*, 498

¹²⁰ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 50

CHAPTER 3

AFRICAN HISTORY AND CLASSICAL ANTECEDENTS

Du Bois and Africa

The fields of social science and humanities in the western world developed with inherent biases about the hierarchical nature of civilizations, cultures, languages, and customs. Du Bois, though he was trained by the West, appears to have some appreciation of these facts as he writes *The World and Africa*. However, there are a number of things that Afrocentrists recognize today as a reduction of African agency that Du Bois did not have the theoretical foundation in order to pinpoint as such. Nevertheless, his insight was at times profound. Recall, he once stated of an increasingly colonized Africa, “by the end of the nineteenth century the degradation of Africa was as complete as organized human means could make it.”¹²¹

It is apparent that Du Bois understood that Europe, through power and force, had positioned itself as the superior culture between itself and that of Africa. Du Bois would state, “a system at first conscious and then unconscious of lying about history and distorting it to the disadvantage of the Negroids became so widespread that the history of Africa ceased to be taught,” and that, “every effort was made in archaeology, history, and biography, in biology, psychology, and sociology, to prove the all but universal assumption that the color line had a scientific basis.”¹²² This “color line” would be famously voiced by Du Bois as the primary issue of the twentieth century. Many

¹²¹ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 49

¹²² *Ibid*, 13-14

attributes the notion of the “color line” to arguments for social justice measures intended to bring about equal treatment and socioeconomic conditions among those of African and European descent.

However, Du Bois may have meant something a bit more than social justice. I argue that in this text, *The World and Africa*, Du Bois is also calling for cultural justice. Du Bois argues, and I agree, that the European world has distorted the facts of history in order to misattribute upon itself all notion of human technological advancement and intellectual heritage. As Du Bois put it, “without the winking of an eye, printing, gunpowder, the smelting of iron, the beginnings of social organization, not to mention political life and democracy, were attributed exclusively to the white race and to Nordic Europe.”¹²³

This *eurocentric masquerade* has done its job at standardizing ways of knowing under a type of false universalism. This universalism, a set of Eurocentric subjectivity, always places Europe as hierarchically preeminent. But it is quite simply only by deception and force that such could be the case. Du Bois understood this as well as he would use the British’s disgraceful deeds against Ethiopia, particularly the acts of Herbert Kitchener, to decry, “everywhere is this sordid tale of deception, force, murder, and final subjection.”¹²⁴ This statement is quite poignant as it illuminates a very clear pattern. As shall be discussed in later chapters, European nations came to African shores first with the promise of friendship and mutual partnership. This, we know well today, to have been a bed of lies and deception that they persuaded African monarchs to lie in. As the

¹²³ Ibid, 14

¹²⁴ Ibid, 21

Europeans slowly learned the geopolitics of the various African nations they encountered, they began to plot and implement forceful measures to bring various nations under their control. This would most often result in revolt and retaliation from African nations, leading to the mass murder of African people. I should be clear here that Africa may have been taken by force, but it was not at all easy for Europeans to do so. Du Bois would note that the Asante, for example, fought six wars with the British between 1803 and 1874, and were not defeated until 1894.¹²⁵

In fact, despite early gunpowder weapons Europeans may have thought would give them tactical advantage, many African nations held their own in war against European forces, some even well into the late nineteenth century. The slow loading time of early gunpowder weapons, such as European muskets for example, though quite powerful at killing, many times proved largely ineffective at defeating the well-trained military units of various African nations. However, by the closing of the nineteenth century more advanced weapons such as rapid-fire rifles and machine guns would give Europeans the edge.¹²⁶ Thus, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century subjugation and colonization was well on its way to being the norm in Africa for decades to come.

When discussing African history, Du Bois' statement that the "old [African] religion was held up to ridicule" is one worth noting. It is understood that a society's

¹²⁵ Ibid, 102

¹²⁶ See: Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa: 1830-1914* (London, UK: UCL Press, 1998). Also, a well documented example of this is the massacre of the Herero by German troops. See: Timothy Joseph Stapleton, *A Military History of Africa*, vol. 2 (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2013), 108-111.

religious or spiritual foundations prove essential for the national character of a people. Various epistemologies form around spirituality. Something as simple as the ways in which people develop their historical narratives and the systems in which they use to chronologize them are often dictated by religious foundations. In Kemet, for example, the new year, or *wepet renpet*, which occurred around June or July, was associated with the deity Ausar, as he represented, among other things, cycles of death and rebirth observed in nature. To be more specific, he represented the annual flooding and receding of the Nile which was signaled by the heliacal rising and reappearance of the star, Sepdet, or known today as Sirius.¹²⁷ This is important to consider when placing forth a narrative of African history. It is something that Du Bois himself was seemingly on the precipice of understanding yet failed to execute in his analysis.

Chronology and Christendom

There is much work to be done in order to create a truly Afrocentric historiography. To begin a history on Africa from an Afrocentric perspective several assumptions must be investigated. The first issue that must be examined is the paradigm of chronological dating that is used to write such history. Specifically, this system of dating revolves around the idea of European superiority that is maintained largely by perpetrating their religious values on others. For example, in the West, discussions about ancient civilizations are most often done within the calendrical framework which bifurcates historical events based on the alleged existence of the biblical figure, Jesus. Du

¹²⁷ Asante, *History of Africa*, 36-37

Bois begins his chapter on Kemet by stating that human culture had, “begun more than four thousand years before Christ.”¹²⁸

We must ask the question, historically, who is this Christ to the African world? Why is it that we center this mythological deity as the beginning and ending of an age above or juxtaposed to African deities such as Maat, Het-Heru, Ausar, Shango, Legba, Oshun, and Oya? This is something perhaps Du Bois began to wrestle with near the end of his life. Just one year after the publication of *The World and Africa* a correspondence with a Christian priest revealed that Du Bois did not believe in, “a person of vast power who consciously rules the universe for the good of mankind,” but perhaps rather, “a vague force which, in some uncomprehensible way, dominates all life and change.”¹²⁹ This theory of a “vague force” flies in the face of world chronology as developed by Christendom, which positions the absolute existence of a patriarchal God, Son, and Holy Ghost as the metaphorical hallmarks of Primordial, Classical, and Modern time.

Du Bois would express that, “a nation’s religion is it’s life,” and, “as such, white Christianity is a miserable failure.”¹³⁰ To that end, the father of Afrocentricity, Molefi Kete Asante, expresses that, “Europe spoke of itself as Christendom and when it did, Christendom was seen as being superior to all other religious communities.”¹³¹ This religious superiority complex, coupled with the history of colonialism, emboldened Europe to measure the nature of time for all people as they saw fit. Thus, we have come to accept notions such as “prehistoric” and “pre-civilization” in regard to the history of a

¹²⁸ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 63

¹²⁹ Phil Zuckerman, ed., *Du Bois on Religion* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2000), 8

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 11

¹³¹ Asante, *Afrocentric Manifesto*, 59

people in which no written documents have been discovered. This has perpetuated the lie of racial inferiority. Particularly, as it relates to African people, many African cultures use orature, which is a type of performance with oral narration that serves the purposes of recording and passing down historical events. The issues presented by Christendom as well as the importance of orature will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

However, I bring attention to this now because any history written by someone trained in the Western academy will be rife with these biases, rather they be conscious or unconscious of them. Du Bois was, of course, no exception to this conditioning. However, an Afrocentric historiography must seek to either create or revive a system of chronology that centers African cultural-historical agency. A methodology for this operation is not currently within the scope of our frame of work. But, until one has been developed, it must nonetheless continue to be considered. Nevertheless, I do not in this text use the Western conventions of BC for “before Christ”, or AD, meaning *anno Domini*, Latin for “year of our Lord”, in which to discuss African history. I do, however, with a great deal of caution, use BCE, or “Before Common Era”, and CE for “Common Era” as a measure of dating. This, of course, still in some ways adheres to the conventions of Christendom, but I prefer their secularity in usage juxtaposed to the invocation of a Eurasian deity. I also use the conventions *kya* and *ybp* for “thousands of years ago” and “years before present” respectively.

Du Bois on The Peopling of Africa

Du Bois begins his chapter on the peopling of Africa by referring to “seers”, assuredly scientists of that time, who had measured the earth to be billions of years old

and had discovered that insects, reptiles, and mammals have been roaming the African continent for tens of millions of years.¹³² He sides with Charles Darwin that the cradle of humankind is indeed the African continent, a fact that has in recent decades been proven to be true.¹³³ Du Bois would have been fourteen at the death of Darwin but his book, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, remained a popular as well as sparked the Social Darwinism movement within the social sciences, which arguably influenced some of Du Bois' earlier thinking.¹³⁴

Though dubious, Du Bois accepted racial classification based on the shape and structure of skulls.¹³⁵ He makes several mentions to classifications such as *Negroids*, which he refers to as, “long-headed dark people with more or less crinkled hair.” He also refers to *Mongoloids* as “broad-headed yellow people”, and *Caucasoids* as a possible mixture of Negroids and Mongoloids, being, “possibly formed by their union, with

¹³² Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 52-54

¹³³ See: Asante, *History of Africa*, 1-12

¹³⁴ Unfortunately, Du Bois and Charles Darwin share another ideological link in eugenics. Those who subscribe to eugenics principally believe that one may improve the gene pool of humanity by excluding those thought to have adverse or undesirable genes. While Charles Darwin died before the eugenics movement took form, his works were a major influence on this movement. In fact, Darwin's son, Leonard Darwin, was once chair of the British Eugenics Society, now known as the Galton Institute, which in turn is named after Leonard and Charles' cousin, Francis Galton, the father of eugenics. However, by the writing of *The World and Africa*, Du Bois seems to have abandoned the ideas of eugenics and his own theory on the talented tenth. His 1948 essay, “The Guiding Hundredth”, a deep revision of “The Talented Tenth”, was a treatise on cultural solidarity with other groups and a focus less so on the intellectual prowess of various group leaders, but more so on the moral character of those called to leadership (see: Reiland Rabaka, *Against Epistemic Apartheid: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Disciplinary Decadence of Sociology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010). I would argue that perhaps this evolution in thinking softened his views on the so-called African *natives* and at the same time enriched his Pan-African politics by allowing himself to appreciate the potential in various groups of African and African diaspora people.

¹³⁵ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 56

bleached skins and intermediate hair.”¹³⁶ There is even mention of *Negrillos*, being those of whom are today pejoratively referred to as pygmies. Du Bois describes this group as, “small men with reddish-brown hair or dark skin and brachiocephalic [small] heads.”¹³⁷ These classifications, though, again, dubious, are however indicative of the times in which he lived. Though with a great deal of caution, as he acknowledges that “no scientifically accurate definition of these races could be made which would leave most of mankind outside the limits,” he continues to use these throughout the remainder of the chapters on African history.¹³⁸

As alluded, Du Bois’ inclinations about Africa as the origins of humanity continues to hold truth. For 1947, he was ahead of many social and even natural scientists of his day. Perhaps, however, one could argue that Du Bois’ bias towards African people and humanity could have pointed him towards this truth as much as his attempts at objectiveness. Regardless, he did not give in to the repetitive attacks of his day that would argue that anything the West considers indicative of civilization in Africa must have come from some foreign source. Though he used the classifications of Negroid, Mongoloid, and Caucasoid, he denounced the idea that there was a true “Negro” race that only achieved greatness when mixed with a mythical “Hamitic race.”¹³⁹

Du Bois argues that over five thousand years ago the people of the North African coast were justifiably identical with the early inhabitants of Kemet. He argues further that the people of East Africa offer a mostly tall and slender variety of people of African

¹³⁶ Ibid, 54-55

¹³⁷ Ibid, 61

¹³⁸ Ibid, 74

¹³⁹ Ibid, 58

stock, some perhaps with admixtures of Asian blood. Those in West Africa he states are, again, tall, but darker in skin tone. He is curious about the Fulani, who he states are mixed “perhaps with Asiatic blood.”¹⁴⁰ He states this of the Fulani because of their lighter skin and straighter hair in comparison to other groups in the region. We know today that the Fulani are overwhelmingly African, but they may have however received some Eurasian admixture by way of their contact with the Tuareg and other Amazigh groups during their conversion to Islam in the seventeenth century.¹⁴¹

Nevertheless, he identifies the peoples in the Gulf of Guinea, immediately to the south of the Fulani, as distinguishable by their languages, particularly Twi, Ga, and Ewe. These belong to the, “Ashanti, moderately tall men, long-headed with some broad heads; the Dahomey, tall, long-headed, and black; the Yoruba, including the peoples of Benin and Ibo, dark brown or black, closely curled hair, moderate dolichocephaly [elongated-heads], and broad-nosed. Their lips are thick and sometimes everted, and there is a considerable amount of prognathism [protruding-jaw]. The Kru, hereditary sailors, are typically Negroid with fine physiques. The Hausa of central Sudan are very black and long-headed but not prognathic and with thin noses.”¹⁴² There is a brief discussion of KhoiKhoi, of whom he refers to as the so-called Hottentot, and the San who were known as Bushmen. These terms, Hottentot and Bushmen, are pejoratives that derive from the Dutch Boers.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid,60

¹⁴¹ Shillington, *History of Africa*, 4th ed., 249

¹⁴² Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 60.

Du Bois ends his description of the peoples of Africa with a short note on the Bantu. He identifies four major groups of the Bantu in South Africa: the Shona, the Zulu-Xhosa, the Suto-Chwana [Soto-Tswana], and the Herero-Ovambo. The Bantu, of course, are largely identified by their close linguistic similarities. However, in recent decades we have come to discover that both the Bantu and the Niger-Sudanic languages make up one phylum commonly referred to as Niger-Congo languages.¹⁴³ It is interesting that he begins his description of Bantu languages in the west with Cameroon as we have come to discover that it is from southern Cameroon that the Bantu expansion began as early as 3000 BCE.¹⁴⁴ He would then describe the Bantu of Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo, Angola, Zambia and modern Zimbabwe (which at that time was Rhodesia).

The reasoning behind the effort of Du Bois to list these principal groups in the African continent he makes clear by referring back to the notion of a single “Negro type”. His intention is to show that the people of Africa are just as varied as those in Europe or Asia. This is an ideal goal as it is certainly important to show that the African people are not a monolithic people and what exists among them is a varied and dynamic culture. However, this analysis is also a bit incomplete. I argue that along with allotting these groups the agency of individual identities, Du Bois could have also just as easily stressed the close relationship between many of these groups using the same linguistic and ethnographic data. Some of which may come off as apparent in the general outline he

¹⁴³ Christopher Ehret, *History and the Testimony of Language* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 121-122

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 122, 151

provides, but there is no attentiveness on the part of Du Bois to make sure that this is clear to his readers.

The importance of such here is that Du Bois is, as aforementioned, attempting to pen a history of Africa that not only illustrates the complexity and humanity of African people but also justifies his political motivations for Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism cannot be based simply on African struggles against Western domination, though that is a major reality. However, just as Du Bois in his earlier chapter was clear, though perhaps unwittingly, about the Pan-European cultural connections involving various nations such as Germany, Russia, England, France, and others, his basis for Pan-Africanism, I argue, must illustrate the cultural connections between African people. To be sure, in later chapters Du Bois describes war, peace, alliances, and struggles of various African groups in relation to each other. But he offers no analysis of how these interactions have shaped African civilization and formed the cultural foundations of Pan-Africanism.

Du Bois on Kemet

Like many historians and social scientists of his day, as well as a great majority today, Du Bois refers to Kemet as ancient Egypt. It is important to note that these terms should always be distinguished by two eras of indigenous and then foreign governance. Kemet, or “the Black nation”, as distinguished by the symbols “to darken/Black” and “nation” in the *mdw ntr*, is the land occupied and governed by the indigenous people of that region in north-east Africa. The term Egypt is Greek and should only refer to the time period of foreign Greco-Roman rule and perhaps as a symbol of their occupation

thereafter. For the purposes of this text, I will use the term Kemet where Du Bois often applies the usage of Egypt.

In Du Bois' discussion on the racial identity of the people of Kemet, he insists that the European Trade of Enslaved Africans is the primary justification for the European world to label the people of Kemet as racially "white". In the words of Du Bois, "It was due to the fact that the rise and support of capitalism called for rationalization based upon degrading and discrediting the Negroid peoples."¹⁴⁵ Du Bois finds it of great interest that the field of Egyptology came to prominence at the height of American slavery. However, with evidence of their racialization to the contrary, Du Bois would submit, "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."¹⁴⁶

Du Bois is very clear that the Kemetic people are members of the African race. Of course, we understand the notion of today to be unfitting in describing various members of the human family, it is clear that the cultural foundations of the people of Kemet are indeed African. It is interesting that Du Bois states of the Kemetic people, "probably they came up from Nubia."¹⁴⁷ He describes the modern-day Beja as "the modern representatives of the old predynastic Egyptian stock", and particularly the Hadendoa, who Du Bois explains were mocked as the "Fuzzy Wuzzy" by British Soldiers during the late nineteenth century Mahdist War. They were referred to as such because of their course and curly hair that was often grown out into a hairstyle known as *tiffa*. Du Bois

¹⁴⁵ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 64

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 65

would state that it is Kemet that “set the pace” for the human endeavors of government, defense, family, property, science, art, and religion.

Kemetic religion, Du Bois would argue, “came naturally from the primitive animism of the African forest and progressed to the worship of Ra, the sun god, giver of life and beauty to the Nile valley which was the world.” It is curious that Du Bois interprets what exists in the African forest as “primitive” and “animism”. Certainly, one could argue that much of African culture, even before the formation of Kemet, came from inner Africa which would constitute the forest areas. However, Du Bois is perhaps also projecting his own biases towards the legitimacy of African religion and that of the “primitive” culture stemming from the “native” forests. The use of animism often denotes the belief that what is being practiced is uncivilized and occult; one in which those involved are unable to distinguish between people, animals, and inanimate objects. Afrocentrists should be wary of such Eurocentric characterizations. This line of erroneous thinking helps legitimize in the minds of the West the aforementioned chronology issue; bifurcating what is old and new timelines and old and new realities based on the hierarchical positioning of the religion of the European world.

Du Bois is quick to point out that women in Kemet had from the earliest of times, “singular prominence and power” and refers to the Kemetic Goddess Auset, whom the Greeks refer to as Isis, as “the Black woman”. Again, he is doubling down on the race issue, being clear that in his interpretation of the facts, the people of Kemet were African people and categorically Black people by contemporary racial standards. He makes this even more clear when he states that, “They themselves were brown and black and so

depicted themselves on their monuments.”¹⁴⁸ Though he does also offer that many Asiatic people drifted in from the east and mixed with the populations both in Kemet as well as North Africa in general. Du Bois would contextualize the issue of race in Kemet as such:

It would be interesting to know what the Egyptians, earliest of civilized men, thought of the matter of race and color. Of race in the modern sense, they seemed to have had no conception. On their monuments they depicted peoples by the color of their skin and their hair. The hair was treated in many ways: sometimes it was straight and Mongoloid; perhaps more often it was curled and Negroid. Now and then it was curly and hidden by wigs. The Egyptians painted themselves usually as brown, sometimes dark brown, sometimes reddish-brown. Other folk, both Egyptians and non-Egyptians, were painted as yellow. Often brown Egyptians were coupled with yellow women, either signifying less exposure to the sun or intermarriage with Mongoloids and whites. A few were painted as white, referring to some parts of North Africa and Europe.¹⁴⁹

It is important he notes that the Kemetic people had no conception of race in the modern sense. But Du Bois would go on to explain that if there be any sense of hierarchical separation it would be by cultural status. This is important because while there were cohesive cultural foundations in Kemet, which can be most readily exemplified by the spoken language, *ciKam*,¹⁵⁰ there also existed cultural diversity between regions. Those stemming groups from the south were perhaps the most important to consider in Kemetic history as much of Kemetic culture came from inner Africa. In fact, during times of turmoil it would often be the Upper Kemetic royal families living in or near Waset, or what the Greeks called Thebes, who expelled foreigners and reunited the nation. One of those times, and perhaps more may come to light when the material record allows, we

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 66-67

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 67

¹⁵⁰ Asante, *History of Africa*, 40-42

even saw Kemet reunited and under the vassal-ship of Kush, the Nubian nation which existed outside of the borders of Upper Kemet. Du Bois would continue his description of the Kemet people with this understanding in mind:

The separation of human beings by color seemed to have had less importance among the Egyptians than the separation by cultural status: black Pharaohs and black women; brown and yellow Pharaohs and yellow women. Their attitude toward people, white or black, was based on cultural contact. Black people and yellow people were often depicted as conquered and yielding obeisance to their brown conquerors. Sometimes they appeared as equals, exchanged gifts and courtesies. Sometimes the Mongoloids and Negroids and whites were bound slaves; but in Egyptian monuments slavery was never attributed solely to black folk. We conclude, therefore, that the Egyptians were Negroids, and not only that, but by tradition they believed themselves descended not from the whites or the yellows, but from the black peoples of the south. Thence they traced their origin, and toward the south in earlier days they turned the faces of their buried corpses.¹⁵¹

“For five thousand years,” posits Du Bois, “mankind evolved a *pattern of human culture* which became the goal of the rest of the world and was imitated everywhere.” He would argue that for this span of time Kemet was the one place where the world would look to in order to understand and study science, art, government, and religion. It is interesting that he continues the use of the phrase “pattern of human culture.” Earlier in the text he used this phrase to refer to Europe in which he perceives as the pattern of human culture that has led the world to ruin. I argue that Du Bois, though enamored with the wonders of the European world in his earlier days, was beginning to understand the contemporary cultural war through the juxtaposition of his study of African history with that of European history.

¹⁵¹ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 67-68

Du Bois understood that, naturally, all history is human history but there were differing patterns of human culture that are unique to various groups and should hold no sense of hierarchy over one another. Nevertheless, Du Bois is also perhaps identifying a sense of envy on the part of Europe for the wonders of the African world, and particularly for Kemet with its ancient and masterful structures they described as pyramids, tombs, sphinxes, and temples. This envy would, of course, cause them to attribute the greatness of Kemet and, for that matter, all they perceived great in Africa, to their likeness. However, even the earlier social scientists in Africa could not disregard the facts.

To that end, Du Bois would quote David Randall-MacIver, “The more we learn of Nubia and the Sudan, the more evident does it appear that what was most characteristic in the predynastic culture of Egypt is due to intercourse with the interior of Africa and the immediate influence of that permanent Negro element which has been present in the population of southern Egypt from remotest times to our own day.” Randall-MacIver worked with Flinders Petrie, the famed “Father of Egyptology”, before being called to examine the Great Zimbabwe site. A year before becoming the first professional Egyptian Curator of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, David Randal-MacIver spent a year in Zimbabwe dispelling false notions about ancient Semitic peoples founding Great Zimbabwe and properly attributing it to the ancestors of the Shona. Needless to say, as the Great Zimbabwe site drew in more attention and funding when the Western world believed it to be some product of *Hamitic* people, being “lesser Europeans”, Randall-MacIver was not wanted at the site for long.¹⁵² Nevertheless, his story

¹⁵² Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 88-89

exemplifies the contention that Europeans went to great lengths in order to argue that African people had no history and everything arguably great to be discovered in Africa were created by those coming from the outside of the continent.

No exception to this characterization was the famed “father” of the field of Egyptology, Flinders Petrie. No one can argue that Petrie was a brilliant individual as his development of seriation as an early dating method for material culture is still widely used in the field today over a century later. He added much to Du Bois’ work and they shared a few years of correspondence. However, Petrie’s racist, and perhaps even racial-religious proclivities, would have him invent a theory known today as Dynastic Race Theory.

This theory would suggest that based on the now erroneous notion that certain skulls found in Kemet that were larger and had more cranial capacity must have been foreign and thus these presumably more intelligent invaders from Eurasia formed the first dynasty and ruled over the less intelligent indigenous populations. Contrarily, what we know today is that studies of crania show Kemetite people to be more similar to that of Nubians, particularly the Kushites to the south. Historian Robert Harms points this out in his text, *Africa in Global History*, in which he states:

Studies of crania from southern Egypt dating between 4000 and 3100 BCE show them to be more similar to the crania of ancient Nubians and Kushites (Egypt's African neighbors to the south) than to those of ancient southern Europeans. In a similar way, studies of the limb proportions of skeletons, which vary between tropical and colder climates, show tropical proportions, even though Egypt itself was not in the tropics. The conclusion is that the southern Egyptians, who created

the Egyptian state. were Africans with measurable biological affinities to their African neighbors.¹⁵³

Nevertheless, Du Bois would point out that even Petrie had to admit how remarkable it was that seemingly renewed vitality would come to Kemet always from the South.¹⁵⁴ Du Bois would go one step further to suggest that of all the, at that time, recent data being put out about the ethnicity of the people of Kemet and the percentages of so-called Negroid, Mongoloid, and Caucasoid racial divisions within, “in the United States” Du Bois would note, “all these would be legally Negroes.”¹⁵⁵

Du Bois’ historical survey of Kemet is a standard overview of the various dynasties of Kemet. By this time the conventions of Old, Middle, and New Kingdom in order to describe the great periods or “Golden Ages” of Kemetic history were already well established. Du Bois postulates that, “before the First Dynasty there must have been a long series of rulers who came out of the south, conquered the people, and consolidated their powers. Upper Egypt historically always had precedence over Lower Egypt, and the First Dynasty came from the direction of the heart of Africa.”¹⁵⁶ Clearly Du Bois studied the various analysis of the material record with prophetic intention as much of modern evidence continues to bore this out as truth.¹⁵⁷

Of the Third Dynasty Du Bois notes that this was the period of the building of the great Mir, known to the Greeks as the great Pyramid, “the greatest monument that any

¹⁵³ Robert W. Harms, *Africa in Global History: with Sources* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018), 57-58

¹⁵⁴ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 68

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 69

¹⁵⁷ See: Asante, *History of Africa*, 15-38

man ever had.” He notes the decline during the Seventh Dynasty known as the first intermediate period and subsequent reunification in the Twelfth dynasty under Senusret III, whom Du Bois refers to as Usertesen III.¹⁵⁸ This period of reunification did not last long as the invasion of the western Asiatic hordes known as the Hyksos in the Thirteenth Dynasty, as well as the low inundation of the Nile, brought once again chaos to the nation and fragmented it into several concurrent dynasties.

Naturally, however, it would be Wasetian royals who would set out to restore the nation beginning in the Seventeenth Dynasty, culminating in the complete reunification of Kemet at the start of the Eighteenth Dynasty. With this, Du Bois closes his chapter on Kemet with Ahmose I and his “Black Queen” Nefertari. He contends that the remainder of Kemet history from this point cannot be discussed in earnest without the intertwining of the history of the Kushites, whom the Greeks referred to as Ethiopians.

Du Bois on Kush

Du Bois entitled his chapter on Kush, “Land of the Burnt Faces,” as this was the English translation of the Greek term for this area, Ethiopia. It is important to note that this Ethiopia, much like ancient Ghana, does not coincide with the modern country named Ethiopia. In fact, at various times the Greek use of the word Ethiopia could mean the regions below Kemet (also known as Nubia), African in general, or a region of “burnt-faced” peoples extending from Africa to modern India. Nevertheless, Du Bois is applying the term Ethiopia to those regions below Kemet, and primarily to the territory of

¹⁵⁸ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 72

Kush. However, this is more so a continuation of his earlier discussion on Kemet, perhaps largely because at this time much of Nubian archaeology was geared primarily towards the discovery of Kemetic authority in the area.

This chapter begins with Du Bois reasserting his earlier arguments about the Western world's need to paint those of African descent as inferior beings in justification of the European Trade of Enslaved Africans and the inhumane treatment of those of African descent in his day. He argues that the facts about Kemetic and Kushite history have been well altered in order to corroborate this false notion of African inferiority. "When Asia overwhelmed Egypt, Egypt sought refuge in Ethiopia as a child returns to its mother," Du Bois states, adding that, "Neither Greece, Rome, nor Islam succeeded in conquering Ethiopia." Du Bois would argue that this interpretation of African history would render the theory of a "natural and eternal inferiority" of African people, "which rendered them natural slaves and a cheap labor force for nineteenth-century industry."¹⁵⁹

Du Bois would argue further that, "the mixture of blood among the three races is always referred to as an explanation of the advance among Negroes and the retrogression among whites," yet, "nothing is ever said of the influence of Negro blood in Europe and Asia."¹⁶⁰ This argument by Du Bois is an appeal for readers to understand the contradictions in the claims of the Western world that Africans are inherently inferior for clearly there were many examples in his day and before of profound men and women of Europe and Asia who were mixed with African blood. However, the understanding of the

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 75

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

difference between mild genetic mixing and what is to be considered cultural identity is often applied to Asians and Europeans, but never African people. Du Bois explains:

There was and is wide mingling of the blood of all races in Africa, but this is consistent with the general thesis that Africa is predominantly the land of Negroes and Negroid peoples, just as Europe is a land of Caucasoids and Asia of Mongoloids. We may give up entirely, if we wish, the whole attempt to delimit races, but we cannot, if we are sane, divide the world into whites, yellows, and blacks, and then call blacks white.¹⁶¹

Further, Du Bois continues his argument by reporting that the Greeks viewed African people as equals in their writings such as the *Iliad*. “In the dawn of Greek literature,” he begins, “in the *Iliad*, we hear of the gods feasting among the ‘blameless Ethiopians.’”¹⁶² Du Bois would then go on to note many examples of the Greek’s reverence for Kush either by way of mythology or historical accounts. In so doing, he expands upon an argument that racism towards African people is a modern invention and those whom the European world identifies as their ideological and cultural forefathers, the Greeks, had no racial prejudices against African people that can be indistinguishable from the system of racism which exists today.

Regardless, while this may be a good argument to present in the humanizing of African people by western standards, I find it to be a regressive argument in advancing Pan-African ideals. I would suggest that the Greeks and Romans were colonizing and prejudicial nations just as their presumed cultural and intellectual progenies, the nations of Europe, remain today. I argue that the primary difference that existed between Greco-Roman powers' relationship with Africa and that of today’s Western nations is that

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 76

¹⁶² Ibid, 78.

Greece and Rome were never able to truly conquer inner Africa. Despite any superficial prejudices they may have had, their respect for African nations was due to the African's ability to remain autonomous and fend off European encroachment. Secondly, though undoubtedly many sources to be used in the writing of African history exists in readily accessible Greek texts and translations, and thus becomes useful to Du Bois' penning a narrative on Africa, the emphasis on Greek, and, by extension, Eurocentric standards of what and who is regarded as respectable is agency-reducing.

The better, agency-affirming argument would involve a survey of how pre-colonial African people thought of themselves and others. As this applies to his discussion on Kush, it would be wonderful if the Meroitic script, the official script of Kush while the capital of the nation was centered at Meroë, was fully deciphered. We know that Kemetic writings about the Mediterranean world are abundant and many were certainly available to Du Bois. Perhaps through his relationship with Flinders Petrie, Du Bois may have been able to use some primary sources. However, Ge'ez, the official script of the Kingdom of Aksum, also remains the current liturgical language of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church and is a potential resource for African perspectives during that time. In serious Afrocentric scholarship, we must do away with relying on the opinions of Europeans and their standards of humanity, and particularly how such standards regard African people. Though historical resources from other cultures may be necessary for historical contextualization, it is imperative to position African perspectives as primary in any analysis on African phenomena.

To be sure, Du Bois uses the writings of the Greek, Diodorus Siculus, to suggest, "the Ethiopians looked upon themselves as the source of Egypt and declared...that

Egyptian laws and customs were of Ethiopian origin.” He would continue, “the Egyptians themselves in later days affirmed that their civilization came out of the south, and modern research confirms this in many ways.”¹⁶³ Du Bois would make it clear many times that much of Kemetic society was continuously enriched from culture flowing up the Nile from inner Africa and that one should look towards Kush for the predynastic cultural foundations of Kemet.

However, Du Bois would, seemingly contradictorily, muddle the issue surrounding the supposed “Negroid” phenotypes of both the Kemetic people and the people of Kush. He argued that the people of Kush were “more purely Negroid,” perhaps in continuation of the erroneous notion that the darker the skin color the more the terms *negroid* or African can be attributed. This isn’t true regarding the San people of southern Africa, of whom the great majority are completely genetically African yet range in colors from dark brown to yellow. This is also phenotypically and culturally untrue for the Swahili of the eastern African coast, and the Amazigh of northern Africa. With this type of erroneous description however, Du Bois, though perhaps unintentionally, is perpetuating the lie of a standard Negro type, which, as aforementioned, is something he desperately argued against in earlier chapters.

Nevertheless, Du Bois’ historical survey on Kush would have him revisiting Kemet and their earlier contacts with Kush. He quickly focuses on the 18th Dynasty and their expelling of the Hyksos with the assured assistance of Kushite peoples in Upper Kemet. He posits that noble families intermarrying with the people of Kush formed the

¹⁶³ Ibid, 79

bases of the 18th Dynasty rulers. He notes the Kemetic Queen of Kushite origin, Ahmose-Nefertari and, returning to the racial issue, states that, “naturally the legend of this black queen has caused heart-searching among white Egyptologists; they have called her ‘Libyan’; and Libya was certainly partly Negroid in race; but since the Libyans have usually been counted ‘white,’ why was the Libyan Nofritari black?”¹⁶⁴ The next few passages he continues to set the argument that Kemet is constantly saved and revitalized from those stemming from the South, and in this case Waset and its extended influence beyond the Nubian border.

It is from this Wasetian orientation Du Bois begins his focus on the remainder of the history of Kemetic civilization and particularly as it relates to Kush. He writes of Thutmose I and the short reign of his son Thutmose II. For the reign of Thutmose’ sister, Hatshepsut, he describes her commissioning an expedition to the land of Punt. Undoubtedly relating the words of various Egyptologist on the description of the Queen of Punt as depicted on the walls of the temple of Deir el Bahri, he describes her as representative of, “the modern Hottentot type...with the characteristic steatopygia.”¹⁶⁵ I should note here that steatopygia is a western medical term that refers to someone with large buttocks. This is naturally an offensive remark but is in line with Western history’s oversexualization of Black Women to which Du Bois seems ideologically unequipped to address.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 81.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ A famous example of this is Sarah Bartman, a Khoisan woman who, during the Maafa, or the era of African enslavement by Europeans, was paraded around as an exhibit known as “The Hottentot Venus” because of her so-called abnormally large buttocks. Notably, many African American women also have Khoisan DNA , as upwards of 30% of African American DNA derive

Du Bois mentions Amenhotep III and his association with the Greek mythological character, Memnon. This association is also due to the fact that the Greeks named two extant statues of Amenhotep the Colossi of Memnon, a name that has remained ever since their occupation of Kemet. Du Bois also points out that Amenhotep's wife, Tiye, is very obviously of Nubian ancestry. He would briefly mention their son, Amenhotep IV, more popularly known as Akhenaten, and his introduction of what Du Bois describes as an "imperial monotheism" by way of Aten worship. In fact, after an even briefer mention of Akhenaten's son, the "boy King" Tutankhamen, Du Bois spends a few pages on the Hebrews and their introduction into Kemetic history during this time period. He begins this introduction with Rameses I, arguing that perhaps the Hebrew myth of being enslaved in Kemet occurred under his reign. There have been many arguments over this, and many modern scholars consider this mythological event to have could be a reference to the political circumstances that actually occurred during the reign of his grandson, Ramses II.¹⁶⁷

Du Bois deals with certain biblical passages, and interpretations thereof, that seemingly relate to either race or skin color. One being that "Moses married a Black woman", whose name was Miriam from Ethiopia. Another example comes from the words of Solomon: "I am Black but comely." He even highlights the Hebrew's views of

from Southern Bantu and Khoisan areas. This is not an abnormal feature in African people but is fetishized by the West. Nevertheless, the example of Ati, Queen of Punt, is a prime example of Western scholars' dehumanization of African corporeal. For more detail on Ati of Punt, see: Tristan Samuels, "Undoing the Hottentoting of 'the Queen of Punt' A Jamaican Afronography on the Kemetiu Depiction of Ati of Punt," *Journal of Black Studies* 52, no. 1 (2020): pp. 3-23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934720945360>.

¹⁶⁷ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 83-85.

Kush in passages regarding their hopes Kush would adopt the Jewish faith, their nervousness of Kush, as well as threats that their God would soon subdue them.¹⁶⁸ I should note here that Du Bois' discussion of these passages also represent common ideologies among African Americans surrounding the relationship between Africans and Hebrews.

There is no doubt that relationships existed and continue to exist between east Africa and the levant. However, primarily due to the rise of the Trade of Enslaved Africans, there have been a number of erroneous notions on the identity of African Americans based on anecdotal parallels between enslaved Africans and the biblical Hebrews. One movement in Du Bois' day many retroactively call Ethiopianism as many African intellectuals around the world were moved by the Hebrew story in relation to their own circumstances and developed a myriad of ideologies on identity revolving around the Hebrew and Christian myths.¹⁶⁹

Another ideology that existed around the time of Du Bois but today still boasts small hubs of followers in major cities in the United States (and some abroad) are the Hebrew Israelites. They are divided into many different sects with varying ideologies, but their principle collective belief is that African Americans are the ancestors of the Hebrews of biblical times. Some believe that both the people of Kemet and the Hebrews are within their ancestral line. Others consider it undesirable to be associated with any form of African history or to even be described as Black. A bible, of sorts, for the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 84-85.

¹⁶⁹ John Cullen Gruesser, *Black on Black Twentieth-Century African American Writing about Africa* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 20-49.

propagation of their beliefs has been Rudolph R. Windsor's *From Babylon to Timbuktu*, in which Windsor used incredulous sources and false interpretations in order to paint a picture of Hebrew supremacy and large population dispersal in Africa. This false narrative falls along the lines of the Hamitic myths that would see only Eurasians be credited with the development of civilization in Africa.

Digressing, Du Bois next gives a good deal of consideration to the Kushites who formed the 25th Dynasty of Kemet. The Kushites at this time had both their own unique culture but had also adopted much of Kemetic religious and cultural customs. Perhaps, however, what we will most likely discover is that Kemet absorbed a lot of Kushite culture to the degree the level of influence on one another can at times not appear clear. Regardless, Du Bois was right to point out just how closely associated the people of Kemet and Kush were as he points out that during the time of Hyksos invasion, "Ethiopia became a refuge for the conquered Egyptians both physically and culturally."¹⁷⁰ In fact, Du Bois would once again turn Petrie's words on himself and the theory of a dynastic race when he quotes: "This shows how southern was the center of thought when the whole of Egypt is reckoned as the north. Some writers say that Taharqa led expeditions as far as the Strait of Gibraltar."¹⁷¹

Du Bois begins with the Kushite patriarch, Piye, known at that time as Piankhi, and briefly mentions a line of other rulers before dealing with perhaps the most popular of them all, Taharka. He notes Taharka's reign to be one of "prosperity and cultural advancement." Indeed, Taharka would restore much of the arts as well as reintroduce

¹⁷⁰ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 80.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 87.

customs that had not been seen since the Old Kingdom. But shortly after Taharka's reign the Kemetic empire would fall one final time, never again able to reach the great heights of authority it enjoyed for three millennia.

Du Bois briefly mentions the Kandakes of Kush who ruled from Meroë. He relates to his readers the legend of a Kandake who held at bay the armies of the Greco-Macedonian ruler, Alexander, not permitting them to enter her lands.¹⁷² The veracity of this tale has yet to be confirmed, however one narrative of a Kandake described in Roman literature as “a masculine woman with one eye” is with great certainty the story of Amanirenas. Du Bois does not mention Amanirenas by name but suggests that she ruled sometime near the death of Cleopatra VII, and the historical record of today clearly pins Amanirenas as the one-eyed warrior who ruled over Kush at that time. Du Bois begins the conclusion of this chapter with a small passage about the neighboring Axumite Empire and their political history in the Arabian peninsula and Mediterranean world. He ends with a small note on the rise of Islam and the crumbling of various parts of Christian Nubia.¹⁷³

AWAM

Many of the various African groups Du Bois covers in these chapters have both antecedent and adjacent relationships with African Americans. Even in Du Bois' time he could have capitalized on various similarities in cultural phenomena that, while he may have not known the exact origins, would have allowed him to present a more powerful case for Pan-African unity based on cultural foundations. One may ask, why are cultural

¹⁷² Ibid, 91

¹⁷³ Ibid, 93.

foundations important in building unity among African groups? For that answer, one would only need to look at the type of political organizing Europeans and Asians have been able to achieve by exploiting their own cultural-historical connections. As Aforementioned, as it comes to Europe, Du Bois is very clear about the cultural connections in Europe:

The rebirth of Europe began in the fifteenth century...in Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there began to appear national integration of culture patterns, with no little inspiration from the East and from Africa. There followed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries increased freedom of thought and impatience with dogma; and in the seventeenth, came scientific inquiry and the beginning of a demand for democratic control of government.¹⁷⁴

This all would involve the continuous cultural relationship between European nations. For Du Bois to begin that passage by stating that this era was the “rebirth” of European civilization, it represents a clear acknowledgement of modern Europe’s narrative of an intellectual heritage stemming back to ancient Greece and Rome, or what Europe considers their classical civilizations. In that line of thinking, Du Bois does not shy away from the position that Kemet and Kush represent the classical civilizations of African people. In fact, he is very adamant about their Africanity. However, simply penning a history of these nations isn’t enough to justify political unity based on some notion of *blackness*.

The Western world often seeks to find themselves in and emulate their classical history for the sake of sustaining their cultural and political power. This has come in several forms such as adopting Roman democracy and colonial aspirations, dynamically

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 28.

recreating the Greek Olympic Games, adopting Roman architecture, and naming their sciences and professions after Greco-Roman figures such as Plato, Hippocrates, and Pythagoras. But such is due only to the history and myths surrounding a supposed relationship between the European world and those so-called classical civilizations. Du Bois mentions, for example, the rise and fall of Kemet and Kush, but does not make cultural and, by extension, intellectual heritage connections between those classical African civilizations and the modern African world. Therefore, below I have charted out some cultural phenomena that should be considered using the AWAM method.

Kanna

First, to establish *kanna* between these Classical Civilizations and African Americans, or any direct antecedents, would be difficult because of the expanse of time and the great many complications that have resulted from the Maafa. To be clear, culture is a dynamic phenomenon that changes over time rather than the culture remains in the region in which it originated or has become transregional or even transcontinental. It does not have to remain the exact same to be considered *kanna*. However, for the sake of cautious categorization, direct antecedents to be considered *kanna* would show that certain cultural phenomena were passed down from the presumptive parent culture in either an unbroken or organic chain of historical events. We know that the last of Kemetic religious culture in its original form was snuffed out by the 4th century as the Kush capital at Meroë experienced economic decline and eventually faced defeat at the hands of the burgeoning Axumite empire. There are, of course, a number of aspects we may categorize as *fanna*

that are viewed first among these early civilizations and can be witnessed today among others. These include circumcision rituals, libation, and various spiritual aspects.

Fanna

The presence of similarity in cultural phenomena between Nile Valley cultures and the rest of the African world is quite clear. There are examples in art, music, and even naming that we may draw evidence from. Importantly, we can infer some manner of diffusion from Nile Valley culture to various areas of the African continent though we have no clear way of establishing direct links in most cases. As alluded, circumcision existed in Kemet and possibly even Kush.¹⁷⁵ In fact, some Kemetic writings have suggested that the practice originated in Kush.¹⁷⁶ There is also sufficient evidence for the ritualistic circumcision of both males and females in Kemetic society.¹⁷⁷ Through linguistic analysis and ethnographic observation it has been determined that a common ancestral group brought male circumcision from areas in the Sudan to other major areas in the African continent via Bantu migration.¹⁷⁸ This however leaves us curious as to the possible diffusion of this culture from the Nile Valley into Sudan or perhaps an

¹⁷⁵ Gerry Mackie, "Female Genital Cutting: The Beginning of the End," in *Female Circumcision in Africa: Culture, Controversy, and Change*, ed. Bettina Shell-Duncan and Ylva Hernlund (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), pp. 253-281.

¹⁷⁶ Mary Ann Watson, "Female Circumcision from Africa to the Americas: Slavery to the Present," *The Social Science Journal* 42, no. 3 (January 2005): pp. 421-437, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2005.06.006>.

¹⁷⁷ Mary Knight, "Curing Cut or Ritual Mutilation?: Some Remarks on the Practice of Female and Male Circumcision in Graeco-Roman Egypt," *Isis* 92, no. 2 (2001): pp. 317-338, <https://doi.org/10.1086/385184>.

¹⁷⁸ Jeff Mark, "Aspects of Male Circumcision in Subequatorial African Culture History." *Health Transition Review* 7 (1997): pp. 337-60.

independent development of such amongst Sudanic and West African groups that eventually spread to the more central and southerly modern Bantu areas.

While many ancestors of African Americans were brought from areas in Africa where circumcision was well practiced, it is important to state that there is no evidence to suggest their descendants could however continue this practice.¹⁷⁹ Nevertheless, it is important to mention this practice as it is one that was surely brought over in the minds of the enslaved and perhaps evidence of its usage in some capacity will someday be discovered. Furthermore, as one of the principle ritualistic acts of Bantu-populations, it is sure to relate to other vestiges of African culture among African Americans.

There is also evidence of spiritual similarity that could provide a basis for investigating cultural diffusion from the Nile Valley. For example, in Akan spirituality, there is a distinction between a person's *ntoro* (spirit) and their *kra* (soul) which also bears similarities with the Bambara's position of *ni* (soul) and *dya* (double).¹⁸⁰ These are strikingly similar to the Kemetic cosmological juxtaposition of *Ba* (spiritual person) and *Ka* (interpretable, soul).¹⁸¹ Both Akan and Bambara are groups from which African people were stolen away to the Americas and much of their cosmology still remains in vestige. Africologist Kimani S. K. Nehusi argues in his text, *Libation: An Afrikan Ritual of Heritage in the Circle of Life*, that, "the *ka* of Kemet, the *kra* of the Akan in Ghana and Ivory Coast and most Afrikans in Suriname, [are] also the same as the *asé* (pronounced

¹⁷⁹ Mary Ann Watson, "Female Circumcision from Africa to the Americas"

¹⁸⁰ Gomez. *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 271

¹⁸¹ In some works the *Ka* is related as "double".

ashay) of the Orisas (Orishas) that are propitiated by Afrikans (and sometimes by non-Afrikans) in Yorubaland.”¹⁸²

Another interesting similarity is something that the western world defines as fetishes. Fetishes (sometimes appearing as fetishism) are a range of items that the ancients cherished and usually served some manner of sentimental and mystical application.¹⁸³ These came in the form of wrapped staffs, amulets bearing ankhs, and beetles or possibly even shabtis¹⁸⁴ The term fetish was first coined by a Frenchman named Charles de Brosses who in his seminal work, *Du culte des dieux fétiches ou Parallèle de l'ancienne religion de l'Egypte avec la religion actuelle de Nigritie*, elaborates on his theories linking Kemetic spirituality to west African spiritual systems.¹⁸⁵ As recent as the emergence of the African American we find so-called fetishes in the form of objects from voodoo and or hoodoo spiritual systems.¹⁸⁶

For example, the minkisi of modern-day Angola were among such amulets discussed by de Brosses and others. They are objects that house spirits or spiritual energy and are sometimes represented as humanoid figurines but can also be other various objects. In fact, their derivative, nkondi, which was a series of minkisi often activated by inserting a sharp object such as a nail into the spiritual figures, are widely used among Bakongo of Angola, but also in the Caribbean, southern United States, and South

¹⁸² Kimani S K. Nehusi, *Libation: an Afrikan Ritual of Heritage in the Circle of Life* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc, 2016).

¹⁸³ Rosalie David. *Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt*. (London: England. Penguin Books 2002), 51.

¹⁸⁴ Shabtis are ethereal servants in the form of wooden or stone dolls that are given specific tasks.

¹⁸⁵ Rosalind C. Morris and Daniel H. Leonard, *The Returns of Fetishism: Charles De Brosses and the Afterlives of an Idea* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

¹⁸⁶ Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 283.

America. This is particularly in places like Louisiana, Alabama, Haiti, and Brazil where Bakongo faith evolved into new-African faiths and practices such as Vodou¹⁸⁷, Hoodoo, Santeria, and Candomblé. I should note also that by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and perhaps facilitated by their interpretation of the Haitian revolution and the spirituality that guided the warriors of said revolution, the Western world's imagination and interpretation of minkisi created and perpetuated the idea that they were demonic figures, often referred to as Voodoo dolls. Voodoo dolls, however, are not based in reality, and are a complete construction of Hollywood. I argue that they are based on Eurocentric projection of their own cultural mystics such as British witchcraft and their push-pin dolls used by the British folk magicians in order to ward off witches.

Digressing, what we also find significant is the ease of several African ethnic groups, although supposedly linguistically unintelligible to one another, to bond with each other under apparent universal spiritual activities. Known today as "ring shouts", Africans from west and west-central Africa bonded over this spiritual dance, each bringing to it their own unique cosmological interpretations. [5] Dancing and music was also spiritually significant to the ancient people of Kemet. Often music and dance are described to accompany Kemetite ceremonies accompanied by an array of instruments. Depicted often in Kemetite iconography was the use of the sistrum, described in Kemetite works such as *The Instruction of Amenemope*.¹⁸⁸ The Mande people of West Africa,

¹⁸⁷ I use the spelling Vodou here to exemplify a more correct dialect as pronounced by practitioners as well as to differentiate from the Voodoo of hollywood, which is demonization and misrepresentation of the spiritual system in American popular culture.

¹⁸⁸ Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol.2, (1976) pp. 91,149

known well for the Griot tradition, are known to use *sistrums* and *djabara* (an apparent sistrum relative) as instruments for ritualistic purposes.

Further parallels can be drawn from burials and the placement of personal effects of the deceased, as well as items symbolic with the figure being commemorated, in or around the burial site. Again, we can turn to a west-African custom brought over to America. Michael Gomez, professor of history, and author of *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*, “such as personal effects last handled by the deceased, plates, cups, broken glassware, seashells, white pebbles, trees newly planted to mark the occasion [among other] ... *minkisi*, or sacred medicines, deployed to properly guide the deceased’s spirit to the ancestral realm.” He states further that, “the establishment of such an ethnically specific continuity is a major contribution to our understanding of African American culture and is consistent with the demographic evidence concerning the prominence of immigrants from West Central Africa in South Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana.”¹⁸⁹ However, we also see a very ancient form of this type of commemoration in Kemet and Nubia and is clearly displayed in images from burials of Kemetic royalty, noblemen, and even many commoners.

Finally, I would be remiss to not single out the practice of libation. Libation is a cultural tradition that is well documented in Kemetic iconography but also seen throughout the African world. African American specifically have continued this tradition and it is even displayed in culturally specific media such as movies, television

¹⁸⁹ Gomes, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 275

shows, and music. One famous example comes from the film, *Cooley High* (1975), in which the main character pours out a bottle of liquor and proclaims, “this is for the brothers who ain’t here.” Nehusi has singled out Hip Hop artists such as Nas and Tupac for the perpetuation of the cultural practice of libation in their music.¹⁹⁰

Nanni

The act of presenting Kemetic and Kushite culture that could be categorized as original and static presents some of the same issues as tracing the aspects of *kanna*. I cannot think of one aspect of Nile Valley culture that in some form or vestige has not been displayed in the African world. There are certainly some things that may be discovered to be unique, however there is so much yet to be discovered about the spread of Nile Valley culture, and the protocultures thereof, that any guess at *nanni* at this moment would prove a futile exercise.

¹⁹⁰ Nehusi, *Libation*, 144

CHAPTER 4

DU BOIS AND THE FORMATION OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN HISTORY

Du Bois and the White Conundrum

In the preceding chapters on Africa's classical antecedents, Kemet and Kush, Du Bois was highly critical of the way the Western academy has presented the racial question in regard to the people of the Nile Valley. However, in the chapters in which Du Bois surveys what we may call the generators of contemporary African civilization, his critique is much less about the question of race but instead the ways in which the West has attempted to reduce the agency of African groups based on their race. But before delving back into DuBois' historical survey, I find it proper here to address the issues facing Du Bois on his path towards both writing this history and the shaping of his perspective along the way.

Du Bois borrows significantly from certain European scholars to write his histories on African people. But perhaps this would not be his choice if he had a better choice to make. For example, he leaves a footnote in his chapter on Kush explaining, “For the history of Ethiopia I have leaned heavily on ms. material furnished me by Professor Leo Hansberry of Howard University.”¹⁹¹ In the foreword he expressed, “regret that [Hansberry] has not published more of his work.”¹⁹² He also regrets that he could not use the works of Frank Snowden and that, “classical journals in America have hitherto

¹⁹¹ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 94

¹⁹² *Ibid*, xxxiii

declined to publish his paper because it favored the Negro too much...I tried to get Dr. Snowden to let me see his manuscript, but he refused.”¹⁹³

Both Hansberry and Snowden were African American historians who Du Bois apparently trusted and perhaps wished for their scholarship to make up the bulk of chapters four, five, and six, covering the Peopling of Africa, Kemet, and Kush respectively. Interestingly, Du Bois does not at all mention Carter G. Woodson, whose works at the time could have contributed greatly to a number of chapters in the text. Perhaps this was due to their personal differences which occurred a decade before the book was published. This incident shall soon be covered but first we digress to Du Bois’ conundrum with white scholars. Du Bois chose the name “Atlantis” as the title of the seventh chapter of *The World and Africa*, which he states is, “the story of the West Coast of Africa and its relation to the development of the world from A.D. 500 to 1500.”¹⁹⁴ Du Bois borrows the term *Atlantis* in which to name West Africa from German archaeologist and ethnographer, Leo Frobenius, whom he admittedly relied on in writing chapter seven.

Most know Atlantis to be the mythical city in the works of Plato. It has for centuries held the imagination of the Western world, considered to be a place of technological and aesthetic wonder. In the sixteenth century, European explorers began to consider that perhaps the *natives* of North America were some remnants of the people of Atlantis who were forced to emigrate after its destruction.¹⁹⁵ Frobenius’ use of the term Atlantis to describe west Africa had a similar but perhaps even more racist connotation.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 95

¹⁹⁵ Kenneth L. Feder, *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology*, 10th ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 203-212

Frobenius would surmise that an ancient and highly advanced European civilization, perhaps the remnants of the mythical Atlantis, emigrated to that region and established the beginnings of African civilization and that all that could be suggestable as civilization by European standards can be attributed to those ancient Europeans.¹⁹⁶ Supposedly, according to Frobenius, by the time of modern European colonization any traces of that first white civilization must have vanished long ago and all that is left is a heavily diluted form represented by the Africans he encountered.¹⁹⁷

Du Bois perhaps came across the works of Frobenius during his sojourn in Germany, studying abroad during the early portion of his graduate years at Harvard -from which he was the first African American to receive a PhD. Du Bois relies on Frobenius for a good deal of African ethnography and cultural history and has done so since his very first text on African history, *The Negro*. He and Frobenius also shared many years of correspondence with each other and Du Bois even invited Frobenius to participate in the creation of the *Encyclopedia Africana*.¹⁹⁸ Du Bois would tell American educator and historian, Anson Phelps Stokes, that Frobenius' letter to him expressing interest in the project was one that he "prize[d] very much."¹⁹⁹ Clearly, Du Bois held Frobenius in great

¹⁹⁶ Joseph C. Miller, "History and Africa/Africa and History," *The American Historical Review*, 1999, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/104.1.1>.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, (*William Edward Burghardt*), 1868-1963. *Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to Leo Frobenius, February 9, 1937. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries*

¹⁹⁹ W. E. B. Du Bois, (*William Edward Burghardt*), 1868-1963. *Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to Anson Phelps Stokes, March 10, 1937. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries*

reverence and yet Frobenius' theories on African civilization were no different from the others racists who argued Hamitic origins or that of Petrie's Dynastic Race Theory.

Interestingly, Du Bois also had a long exchange of correspondence with Petrie. Some of which he would publish in *The Crisis* under the banner, "Self-Righteous Europe and the World: Correspondence with W. M. Flinders Petrie."²⁰⁰ In those letters he was generally cordial with Petrie but also highly reproachful on the matter of race and the poor regard in which Petrie viewed the intellectual capability of his Egyptian workers. Nevertheless, Du Bois would also secure Petrie to collaborate as an advisor on the *Encyclopedia Africana*.²⁰¹ It is questionable as to why Du Bois would rely on those with racist theories he finds objectionable in order to complete this project. Naturally, one may consider the issue of needing the backing of well-respected scholars to secure financing for the encyclopedia. It should not be lost on us that the times in which Du Bois lived, and the activities in which he was engaged, was wrought with politics that would force him to at times rely on the favor of whites.

This nonetheless did not prevent Carter G. Woodson, the second African American to receive a PhD from Harvard, from criticizing Du Bois' dependency on white scholars and philanthropists. The first iteration of *Encyclopedia Africana* was instead called *The Encyclopedia of the Negro*. This version, to which Du Bois beseeched Woodson to assist with, was being funded by the Phelps-Stokes fund and under the direction of Anson Phelps Stokes, as aforementioned, a wealthy philanthropist and

²⁰⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Self-Righteous Europe and the World: Correspondence with W. M. Flinders Petrie*, *Crisis*, 4 no. 1:36-37 (May 1912) (New York, NY: Crisis Publishing Co., 1912), 1-6

²⁰¹ Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 161

educator, but also someone whom Woodson despised and held in lowest regard. When Du Bois asked Woodson to join the project he responded, “I have nothing to say, however, that I am not interested. *I never accept the gifts of the Greeks*” (emphasis mine).²⁰² This letter was addressed to Du Bois in the Spring of 1932, but by 1936 Woodson was approaching the topic of the Stokes funded encyclopedia with a bit more hostility. On May 30, 1936 the *Baltimore Afro-American* published an article by Woodson lambasting Du Bois and the project:

Any man who will join a crowd led by Anson Phelps Stokes and Thomas Jesse Jones, (both white) to put in permanent form what they and their co-workers think of the colored man, is a traitor to his race. For three centuries we have had the sort of literature flooding the markets with the thought of the white man who exalts the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin and the Teuton, and despises the colored race as inferior. What the colored man needs is not to aid this misrepresentation of the race by those who view it from without, but to resort to scientific methods to study his race from within and thus enable him to unfold himself to the world. This is a task which only the colored man himself can do. *The white man, even when he is honest and sincere, cannot at his best write the history of colored people and portray their present status, when he does not live and move among them.* (emphasis mine).²⁰³

At the time, Woodson was arguably second to none other than Du Bois as it came to an authority on African and African American history, as well as the social conditions of African Americans in particular. Woodson was also untrusting of white people and their handouts as it came to his scholarship. Perhaps he learned this lesson after working under Methodist funding for several years. Clearly, Du Bois too held some hostility for

²⁰² W. E. B. Du Bois and Herbert Aptheker, *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, vol. 1 (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), 449.

²⁰³ Calls, DuBois a traitor if he accepts post. 1936. *Afro-American (1893-1988)*, May 30. <http://libproxy.temple.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.temple.edu/historical-newspapers/calls-dubois-traitor-if-he-accepts-post/docview/531127178/se-2?accountid=14270>.

having to rely on the sponsorship of whites. He and Woodson both were omitted from the first meeting to organize the *Encyclopedia of the Negro*, and Du Bois and Woodson both seem of mutual mind as to why they were not invited. After accepting the invitation to the second meeting, and eventually being made Editor-in-Chief of the project, he would write his letter to Woodson encouraging his cooperation. And in regard to his supposed mistrust of white scholars and white philanthropy he would state to Woodson:

I do not doubt but what you have made up your mind on this matter and that nothing I can say will change it. However, perhaps I ought to bring to your attention the motives that influenced me. I was omitted from the first call, as you were, and for similar reasons. My first impulse on receiving the invitation to attend the second meeting was to refuse, as you did. Then I learned that this invitation did not come from the Phelps-Stokes fund, but was the unanimous wish of the conferees, and that if I refused to heed it, I would be affronting them, even more than Stokes and Jones. Then, in the second place, I had to remember as both of us from time to time are compelled to, *that the enemy has the money and they are going to use it*. Our choice then is not how that money could be used best from our point of view but how far without great sacrifice of principle, we can keep it from being misused. (emphasis mine).²⁰⁴

Du Bois' thinking here is quite interesting. He expresses that whites are the enemy, but his understanding is that he cannot procure funding without dancing with devils. Du Bois may have in fact prophesied this outcome for himself. In January of 1910 educator and first African American president of Morehouse and Atlanta University, John Hope, wrote Du Bois a letter in which he was concerned about the possible waning nature of their friendship amidst Du Bois and others' critiques and humor at Hope receiving funding for Morehouse from Andrew Carnegie by way of his relationship with Booker T. Washington. "You must not think that I have not known and appreciated your friendship

²⁰⁴ Du Bois, *Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, vol. 1, 448-49.

for me,” Du Bois begins in his reply, “or that I ever have doubted or doubt now your loyalty to the principles which we both so sincerely believe.” He would go on to state however, “Of course I am sorry to see you or anyone in Washington’s net. It’s a dangerous place, old man, and you must keep your eyes open.”²⁰⁵ Du Bois was referring to the net of being indebted to white philanthropists and was apparently viewing Washington as some sort of Negro overseer. His letter continues:

Washington stands for Negro submission and slavery. Representing that, with unlimited funds, he can afford to be broad and generous and most of us must accept the generosity or starve. Having accepted it we are peculiarly placed and in a sense tongue-tied and bound. *I may have to place myself in that position yet, but, by God, I'll fight hard before I do it...* As I have said, so far, you have done what you had to do under the circumstances. I only trust that the pound of flesh demanded in return will not be vital. (emphasis mine).²⁰⁶

Du Bois wrote this response to Hope while in his early forties. But, by the time he comes to work on the encyclopedia in his mid-sixties he must certainly had to have considered the position of his dear friend, Hope, and perhaps even Washington, for, as he mentions in his letter to Woodson, “the enemy has the money and they are going to use it.” Perhaps this too may explain Du Bois’ perplexing position towards Leo Frobenius and a number of white scholars he appears, at least in writing, to hold in high regard. Again, Du Bois had been quoting Frobenius in his works since at least his publication of *The Negro* in 1915.

But If we consider that by 1947, despite Du Bois’ heavy critique of Western civilization as one of decadence and heading for collapse, he still somewhat relied on the

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 165-167

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 167

charity of white scholars and philanthropy. Returning to the issue of the *Encyclopedia Africana*, recall that in 1937 Du Bois had written a letter to Stokes about Frobenius' interest in the project, a letter in which he "prize[d] very much." But it would be nearly another decade before this first iteration of the project was to be completed, as noted in a letter from Du Bois to Anson Stokes on May 10, 1946.²⁰⁷ This would be a year before the publication of *The World and Africa*.

Frobenius died in the fall of 1938, so Du Bois could in no way be attempting to ingratiate himself any further to Frobenius for the sake of this or any future projects. But perhaps we must consider the concerns of Woodson regarding white scholars and the control over how African history is presented. Du Bois explains that no publications would at the time accept the works of Frank Snowden, whose works, in my estimation, represent no radical treatise, but, as Du Bois explained, "favored the Negro too much."

So, if Du Bois wished for his works to be published and considered respectable scholarship by a wide audience, perhaps he felt he must elevate some white scholars. Further, who better for him to elevate than those in which he shared a relationship with, if only on the account of academic interest. Nevertheless, given Frobenius' ideologies, for Du Bois to state that, "he looked upon Africa with unprejudiced eyes and has been more valuable for his interpretation of the Negro than any other man I know,"²⁰⁸ is a bit questionable.

²⁰⁷ W. E. B. Du Bois. (*William Edward Burghardt*), 1868-1963. *Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to Phelps-Stokes Fund, May 10, 1946. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries*

²⁰⁸ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, xxxiii

To be sure, Frobenius had challenged some measure of racist thinking about Africans and colonial intrigue on the African continent, but he himself was still very much an imperialist, and though somewhat pessimistic of what colonialism was doing to distort genuine African culture, he was not at all oppositional to colonialism. Further, though, again, arguably less racist than many of his white contemporaries on the nature of African culture, he still regarded African culture as a degenerate version of the high culture of this mythical ancient Atlantis.²⁰⁹

To utilize the ideology of Petrie, Frobenius saw the mythological Atlantis as the dynastic race of Western Africa. Had it simply escaped Du Bois that Frobenius' theory on the mythological Atlanteans in West Africa was but another racist theory which sought to remove Africans from their historical agency? He had read Frobenius' volumes entitled *Atlantis* and stated clearly that Frobenius regards civilization along the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa, "as possibly a development of the culture of that fabled island in the Atlantic."²¹⁰ But perhaps Du Bois simply decided to ignore or give little regard to the implications of such theory, deciding it to be simply, as he stated, "fanciful."²¹¹ Nevertheless, this represents the world in which Du Bois was surrounded by, and the possible influences on his thinking, as he penned his histories of Africa. Let us now turn to an analysis of his historical survey of African history from ancient West Africa to colonial times.

²⁰⁹ Suzanne Marchand, "Leo Frobenius and the Revolt against the West," *Journal of Contemporary History* 32, no. 2 (1997): pp. 153-170, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200949703200202>.

²¹⁰ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 96

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

Du Bois on West Africa

Du Bois begins his chapter on West Africa, *Atlantis*, with a critique that seems to be almost an affront to the very ideology behind its naming, though he does not mention Frobenius in this regard. He argues, “it has long been the belief of modern man that the history of Europe covers the essential history of civilization.”²¹² He challenges this ideology by stating the fact that the history of Europe is not a long one, and particularly when compared to the histories of Kemet and Kush, Europe is quite young. Du Bois even attacks the notion that history only occurs when there is written record to verify it:

Let us turn to West Africa, where man tried a different way for a thousand years. First we face the query: how do we know what man did in West Africa, since black Africa has no written history? This brings the curious assumption that lack of written record means lack of matter and deed worth recording. The deeds of men that have been clearly and accurately written down are as pinpoints to the oceans of human experience. To recall that experience we must rely on written record, varying from direct narrative to indirect allusion and confirmation; we must rely also on memory—the memory of contemporary on-lookers, of those who heard their word, of those who over a lapse of years interpreted it and handed it on; we must rely on the mute but powerful testimony of habits, customs, and ideals, which echo and reflect vast stretches of past time. Finally, we agree upon as true history and actual fact any interpretation of past action which we today believe and want to believe is true. The relation of this last historical truth to real truth may vary from fact to falsehood.²¹³

Du Bois’ thinking here suggests that a mere written account is insufficient in order to gain a holistic perspective of past events. He regards the memory, customs, habits, and ideals of any group of which history is being recorded to be equally valuable. In this regard, Du Bois may have praised the works of Jan Vansina, an Africanist scholar

²¹² Ibid, 95

²¹³ Ibid, 96.

who wrote extensively on the concept he referred to as “oral tradition” and its use as history. However, Vansina often failed to understand the African cosmological factors that shape *orature*. Oral literature and oral tradition must be more accurately described as *orature*. *Orature* is a term developed in the sixties by Ugandan linguist Pio Zirimu to combat the stagnate condition being placed upon the tradition by limiting it to simply a form of literature.²¹⁴

Unfortunately, due to Zirimu’s murder by agents of Idi Amin in the late seventies, he was never able to fully develop the concept.²¹⁵ However, Zirimu’s contemporary, prolific scholar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, directs us to South African scholar Pitika Ntuli as a legitimate source for a sophisticated contemporary definition, being that orature is “a fusion of all artforms,” or more descriptively, “orature is more than the fusion of all art forms. It is the conception and reality of a total view of life. It is the capsule of feeling, thinking, imagination, taste and hearing. It is the flow of a creative spirit.”²¹⁶

However, Vansina, Zirimu, Thiong’o and others were quite young on the scholarly stage, or not on the stage at all, at a time when Du Bois was quite old and perhaps would have considered some of their scholarship fringe and unscientific due to a lack of a well-established methodology at the time. Perhaps if Du Bois had lived long enough to see the maturation of such scholarship, he would have found it of great use. Nevertheless, I argue that this passage from Du Bois concerning memories, habits,

²¹⁴ Micere G. Mugo, *African Orature and Human Rights* (Roma, Lesotho, South Africa: Inst. of Southern African Studies, National Univ. of Lesotho, 1991), 40

²¹⁵ Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, “Notes towards a Performance Theory of Orature,” *Performance Research* 12, no. 3 (2007): pp. 4-7, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528160701771253>.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

customs, and ideals, was quite close to their line of thinking in regard to orature, and perhaps the text, *The World and Africa*, itself represents the spirit of the political motivations of authors such as Zirimu and Thiong'o.

This is further evidenced by Du Bois' argument that the more arid temperatures in Europe perhaps allowed for the preservation and persistence of writing in those regions whereas, "heat and rain made written record in West Africa almost impossible and forced that land to rely on the memories of men," however, he would state astutely that Africans, "developed over the centuries a marvelous system of folklore and tradition." He would finish this argument with an assertion on the tradition of orature: "back of both methods lay real human history recorded in cultural patterns, industry, religion, and art."²¹⁷

Du Bois mentions the Asante, referring to their art and textiles as something that was of great beauty and required a great deal of skill. He then spends a number of passages on the importance of the arts, tools, and textiles to West African society in general. Moving away from the Asante, he focuses on the bronzes of Benin. He mentions, "when the state was seized by the British in 1897, they found carved elephant tusks, bronzes cast by the *cire-perdue process*, including the well-known bronze head of a Negress, now in the British Museum, a masterpiece of art."²¹⁸ Interestingly, he neglects to mention that Benin was not merely seized but was burned to the ground during a raid and its arts and wares thus looted by British soldiers.

Du Bois mentions that Frobenius was led to discover a bronze statue in Nigeria somewhere between 1910 and 1912. According to Du Bois, Frobenius suggests that the

²¹⁷ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 96

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, 97

bronze statues and terracotta sculptures belonged to an ancient Central African protoculture which existed some 4,000 yBP. Frobenius may have been on to something, but only partially so. While not Central Africa exactly, the terracotta was from the so-called Nok culture of modern Nigeria and date back to at least 500BCE. The bronze castings of Igbo-Ukwu, Nigeria have however only been dated to as early as 900 CE.²¹⁹ But we also know that the earliest signs of iron smelting in Africa have been discovered around Lake Chad as early as 1000 BCE,²²⁰ and, given the nature of archaeology in Africa, it would be unsurprising that in some time in the near future more evidence would yield earlier dates. Interestingly, we also see iron smelting emerge in Kemet, though much later, sometime after 670 BCE.²²¹ Also, the Kush capital of Meroë became an iron-producing industry around 300 BCE.²²²

With that in mind, Du Bois also mentions that Frobenius suggests that there is some link between these protocultures of West and Central African civilizations to those, “which flourished along the banks of the Nile and in the Mediterranean Basin in the Classical and pre-Classical Ages.”²²³ There have been scholars in recent times who have made similar suggestions. Notably, there is the Senegalese scholar Aboubacry Moussa Lam and his text, *De l’origine égyptienne des Peuls*, translatable as *The Egyptian Origin of the Fulani*, in which he uses Egyptological, linguistic, and historical data to provide an

²¹⁹ Shillington, *History of Africa*, 102

²²⁰ Ibid, 51

²²¹ Ibid, 53

²²² Ibid, 59

²²³ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 97

analysis of the migration of certain groups of African people and flow of culture from the Nile Valley region to West Africa.

Works such as Lam's, according to Molefi Kete Asante, "serve to show that the continent was much more interactive than originally thought by the European historians who first encountered African people."²²⁴ However, Lam's scholarship is meant to be a constructive analysis of unifying cultural foundations inherent within African societies. But given Frobenius' inclusion of the Mediterranean into his analysis, this suggestion was possibly a continuation of his Atlantean version of dynastic race theory. Further, given the use of the terms "Classical" and "pre-Classical ages", one can only ponder if the ancient Mediterranean relationship that Frobenius is referring to is one dominated solely by Greco-Roman influence.

Du Bois would continue to quote Frobenius at-length concerning his ethnographic travels throughout West Africa where he witnessed what Frobenius assuredly thought of as oddities, such as, "villages of which the principal streets were bordered on each side, for leagues, with rows of palm trees, and of which the houses, decorated each one in charming fashion, were works of art as well."²²⁵ This area, named for the Sankuru river, is in the southwest of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly known as the Kasai-Oriental region. Frobenius speaks of a seemingly utopian area that when unaffected by European civilization existed as such:

No man who did not carry sumptuous arms of iron or of copper, with inlaid blades and handles covered with serpent skin. Everywhere velvets and silken stuffs. Each cup, each pipe, each spoon was an object of art perfectly worthy to be compared

²²⁴ Asante, *History of Africa*, 103

²²⁵ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 100

to the creations of the Roman European style. But all this was only the particularly tender and iridescent bloom which adorns a ripe and marvellous fruit; the gestures, the manners, the moral code of the entire people, from the little child to the old man, although they remained within absolutely natural limits, were imprinted with dignity and grace, in the families of the princes and the rich as in the vassals and slaves. I know of no northern people who can be compared with these primitives for unity of civilization. Alas these last 'Happy Isles'! They, also, were submerged by the tidal wave of European civilization. And the peaceful beauty was carried away by the floods.²²⁶

This passage perhaps exemplifies the aforementioned words of Carter G.

Woodson when he suggested that “the white man, even when he is honest and sincere, cannot at his best write the history of colored people and portray their present status, when he does not live and move among them.” First, Frobenius cannot help but suggest what is “worthy” of being compared to the “Roman European style.” Why is it that Romanesque stylings must be considered the standard by which to measure the stylings of a central African civilization? Do these African people have the same standards of beauty, functionality, or even durability of product as that of Europe? These are questions that Du Bois should be asking of Frobenius’ descriptions.

After all, Du Bois was the one to suggest that Europeans had forced Africans to view themselves and their culture as inferior. Is that not the meaning of his words, “the old culture and ethical standards were degraded or disappeared, and gradually all over Africa spread the inferiority complex, the fear of color, the worship of white skin, the imitation of white ways of doing and thinking, whether good, bad, or indifferent”?²²⁷ How else would one impose a sense of cultural inferiority on another but by stating that

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid, 49.

the ideology, aesthetics, and products of that culture may or may not be “worthy” of the standards of their own?

It is of great certainty that the people Frobenius describe viewed themselves as standard, and did so with utmost grace and dignity, and, at least until the coming of colonization, unencumbered by the standards and morals of Europe. Frobenius himself seems to allude to this in some crude way, but yet refers to these African people he encountered as “primitives.” The casual application of such language was perhaps something Du Bois at the time elected to ignore, or he himself saw no issue. After all, Du Bois use of the term *native* bared much similarity in condescension and assured superiority.

On religion, Du Bois states, “all this industry in West Africa was developed around the Africans' ideas of religion: the worship of souls of trees and plants of animals; the use of the fetish; the belief in fairies and monsters. Along with this went training for medicine men and chiefs, and careful rules for birth, marriages, and funerals.”²²⁸ If only Du Bois had lived to see another decade of life, he could have perhaps gained much understanding on the nature of African religion from John Mbiti and his text, *African Religion and Philosophy*. Mbiti would state within: “According to African peoples, man lives in a religious universe, so that natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God.” Mbiti would follow this by stating, “many concepts are reported which associate God with natural objects and phenomena. We have already mentioned

²²⁸ Ibid, 100

that African peoples regard this as a religious universe, and this attitude is fully illustrated by the way they 'read' God into various objects and phenomena.”²²⁹

There is much to find at fault and to praise involving the scholarship of Mbiti, but what he challenges here is the notion that African people doltishly worship animals and inanimate objects. Instead, Africans understand that they too are a part of nature and are simply another creation of whatever name they reserve for the creator. They believe that they must respect as well as be in harmony with nature. This would have been a useful analysis for Du Bois to utilize in his discussion of African religion. Alas, Du Bois himself had passed on roughly six years before Mbiti published the first edition of this text.

Also, just as with the likes of Thiong'o and Zirimu, if Du Bois had lived long enough to assess his work, he may have considered Mbiti another youngster just finding his way to the academic stage and not worthy of much attention. Nevertheless, Du Bois would again call upon the opinions of Frobenius in order to discuss Yoruba religion. Again, Frobenius is awe-struck by the tales of Shango, but again is, as Woodson would put it, limited in his capacity to understand African people and their cultural phenomena due most certainly to his foreign disposition:

There is, among the deities possessed by all the other dark-skinned African nations combined, not one who can equal Shango, the [West African] Yoruban God of Thunder, in significance. This country's first royal ruler sprang, as its people believe, from his loins. His posterity still have the right to give the country its kings... Myth relates that Shango was born of the All-Mother, Yemaya. Powerful, warlike, and mighty, he was as great a God as was ever created in the minds of a nation striving for self-expression. (emphasis mine).²³⁰

²²⁹ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: Heinemann, 1990), 62

²³⁰ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 100

In the remaining pages on West Africa Du Bois focuses a bit on the architecture, obviously impressed, he refers to it as being, “strikingly integrated with climate, physiography, and culture.”²³¹ Due to the damp climate in this part of Africa, Du Bois once again stresses the importance of “the art of memory recording, of tradition handed down,” and, again, obviously impressed, he states, “and here it was developed to an astonishing extent.”²³² But he also mentions evidence in his day of systems of writings existing in modern-day Guinea-Coast and Cameroon, and opines that there were “probably others”. Du Bois would find particular interest in the Mossi people. Relying on the work of French ethnographer Maurice Delafosse, Du Bois would posit that “the Mossi state did not make territorial conquests and always constituted a rampart against the extension of Mohammedanism. In its integrity it represented a civilization uniquely and really Negro.”²³³

Du Bois ends the chapter with a brief on the history of The European Trade of Enslaved Africans in West Africa and the beginnings of colonialism, and how such played an affected the various African nations involved. Du Bois, with great certainty, concludes that the level of culture among West Africans in the fifteenth century was beyond that of Europe. He argues that the so-called slave trade is what “stopped and degraded this development”.²³⁴ Du Bois would elaborate:

The character of culture on the slave coasts slowly changed; an element of cruelty crept into states like Benin and Dahomey, although other states, like that of the Yoruba, seem to have resisted to some extent. But the ancient culture of the

²³¹ Ibid, 101

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid, 103

Atlantic coast was ruined by the trade in slaves, by the importation of gin, and by the European trade; European goods drove out native art and artistic industry.²³⁵

Du Bois on the Bantu

The eighth chapter of *The World and Africa* focuses on the Bantu migration. Bantu is a phrase extracted by German philologist, Wilhelm Bleck, from a collection of African languages that represented this migration.²³⁶ It is used both linguistically and historically to describe the collection of peoples to whom the language belongs. The word Bantu however is a mixture of the stem *ntu*, meaning “person”, and the prefix *ba-*, meaning “plural”, to form the term, “people”. However, the term Bantu itself does not refer to any one language or group of people.²³⁷

Du Bois would say of the Bantu, “the migration and formation of the Bantu peoples was a long slow movement beginning a thousand years or more before Christ and extending to the nineteenth century of our era with periods of stoppage and acceleration.”²³⁸ This would place Du Bois’ estimate of Bantu migration at approximately 1000 BCE, or roughly 3000 yBP. Du Bois would also suggest that the earliest Bantu languages formed around the headwaters of the Nile near the so-called Great Lakes region. It is uncertain how Du Bois received this estimation. Perhaps it was from the scholarship of British linguist Harry H. Johnson, of which he cites in his footnotes, but not specifically for this particular bit of information.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, 78

²³⁷ For a detailed treatment on the Bantu language see: Christopher Ehret, *History and the Testimony of Language* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011).

²³⁸ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 107

Recent scholarship has however discovered that the proto-Bantu language actually developed in southwestern Cameroon, either at or before 3000 BCE.²³⁹ This would place the beginnings of the migration at around 5,000 yBP, which aligns with the time of the first dynasty of Kemet. Perhaps the migration of Bantu speakers both east and south was sparked by some of the same motivations that drove Saharan Africans to the Nile Valley. We know that around 6000 yBP, which would date to around 4000 BCE, a rapid event of aridification in the once lush Sahara region must have stood as a primary motivator for the Saharan groups to migrate to the Nile Valley due to waning resources and population pressures.²⁴⁰ Interestingly, very early signs of complex societies in West Africa begin at around the same time, 4000 BCE.²⁴¹ Perhaps we may soon find that to be a valid motivator for the Bantu as well. After all, the Bantu language, though spoken across one-third of Africa, is but a branch of the larger Niger-Congo language family,²⁴² which extends into the Sahara border.

Nevertheless, next Du Bois mentions the “Hamitic race” theory, of which he quickly, and without any other thought to this regard, submits is “an entirely unnecessary hypothesis.” As aforementioned in previous chapters, Du Bois is quite certain the hypothesis of foreign origins for African civilization is racist and an attempt to reduce the agency of African people. Du Bois goes on to categorize the types of Bantu cultures his study has exposed, being agriculturalists, herdsman, and those knowledgeable of iron and

²³⁹ Ehret, *History and the Testimony of Language*, 122

²⁴⁰ Asante, *History of Africa*, 10

²⁴¹ Graham Connah, *African Civilization: an Archaeological Perspective*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Cambridge University, 2016), 157

²⁴² Ehret, *History and the Testimony of Language*, 10

copper metallurgy. He would even state that it is possible that the so-called “invasion” of Bantu speakers was facilitated by their use of iron weapons.²⁴³

The note on iron weapons may hold some weight, but it is important that we reconsider the use of “invasion” to describe their migration. An “invasion” would imply that they were an entirely foreign force to the regions that they came to occupy. Not only that, such language also paradoxically fails to consider that these movements took place over the course of thousands of years which would include much time for cross-cultural exchange such as trade, intermarriage, and other culturally unifying factors that would stymie the argument of a purely invasive force. Certainly, minor historical events that would amount to an invasion between certain groups may have occurred, but this would not account for the whole of Bantu migration history.

Du Bois would argue that the Kingdom of Monomotapa, also known as Mutapa, a kingdom which expanded modern-day Zimbabwe as well as surrounding areas, as well as other minor kingdoms such as Kitwara, perhaps predated the Bantu migration. On this note, he could not have been more wrong as the Bantu populations had already migrated to those regions long before the founding of those Kingdoms. The founders of Great Zimbabwe, for example, were ancestors of the Shona people, who in every form are Bantu in origin. Their language, chiShona, is one of the most widely spoken Bantu languages.²⁴⁴

Du Bois ends his chapter on the Bantu migration with an extensive note on Zimbabwe and the remains there known today as Great Zimbabwe. Of which he states,

²⁴³ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 108

²⁴⁴ Ehret, *History and the Testimony of Language*, 110

“the ruins of Zimbabwe show today an extraordinary cultural past, presenting certain phenomenal remains not to be found anywhere else in Africa south of the Great Lakes.”²⁴⁵ He mentions extensive gold mines, tons of colossal stone buildings, and, interestingly, “forms of ceremonial not common among present Bantu people.” He also suggested that there were “impressions of some Asiatic influence.”²⁴⁶

To be sure, there has been evidence of wares in Great Zimbabwe that were imported from China,²⁴⁷ however this played no significant influence on their civilization. We also know that the rise of inland trade with the Swahili coast (consisting of some Arab and Indian merchants) did not pick up significantly until the 18th century, though with a few small waves of trade activity dating back to before 1500 CE.²⁴⁸ Du Bois attempts to make clear in one of the concluding passages:

That Asiatic and even Chinese influences were present at times in this remarkable cultural development, with its irrigation and fortresses, is not improbable. The trade between Asia and Africa by way of the East Coast dates back to pre-history and was especially rife when Mohammedans took refuge there in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. But just as neither Arabs, Persians, nor Portuguese ever dominated the blacks here in historic times, *so the culture of Zimbabwe was without doubt always dominantly Negro*, with that cultural inspiration that everywhere comes with foreign contacts. (emphasis mine).²⁴⁹

Du Bois on Asia in Africa

²⁴⁵ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 110

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Asante, *History of Africa*, 153

²⁴⁸ Basil Davidson, *A History of East and Central Africa: to the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1969), 191

²⁴⁹ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 111

Du Bois ends his last chapter, “March of the Bantu”, somewhat alluding to the Asian influence in Africa. Once again, he reaches back in ancient history to present what he specifies as, “the story of the outpouring of Asia into Africa from A.D. 500 to 1500, and the effect which the interaction of these two continents had on the world.”²⁵⁰ Du Bois’ initial passages on this history suggest a number of erroneous things. First, though he correctly guessed the origins of humanity to be Africa in earlier chapters, he doubles back here to suggest that it is, “doubtful which continent is the point of origin.”²⁵¹ This is an honest enough position given the information available to him at the time, however, I argue it was an unnecessary addition to the discussion as it leads him to more erroneous conclusions.

It is important to distinguish between phenotype and cultural identity. I state this because this is something Du Bois should have considered given his own unique circumstance as an African in America. While it is true that much of the population of Africa is dark skinned, this is not the case for all Africans. Some, such as the San, are quite light skinned and required no outside genetics for this to be the case. It is simply a matter of geographical and climatic circumstance. For Du Bois to suppose that Melanesians and Dravidians are African or “Negro” simply because of their darker color removes their cultural agency. Indeed, both Dravidians and Melanesians migrated from the African continent tens of thousands of years ago. However, so did the Europeans, who did so at a much later date.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 113

²⁵¹ Ibid.

Du Bois' suggestion of "pre-Dravidian negrillos" and "Dravidian negros" could just as equally apply to Europe in a form that would suggest "pre-European negros". Such a suggestion would, just in the case of Du Bois, form some legitimacy based on purely color basis, but holds no weight as it comes to cultural foundations. To be sure, we know that the Indus-Kush Valley traded with East Africa, particularly Kemet and Kush, for many centuries. There too perhaps were a trade in various cultural aspects as well as goods and wares. For example, the worship of Het-heru, who is represented as a cow and is arguably the most ancient known deity of Kemet, shares many similarities with the Kush civilization's deification of cows which in India exists today even after the cultural disruption and confusion known as Vedic period. However, the Greeks and Romans appropriated and reappropriated a whole pantheon of Kemetic deities, but that in no way makes them African people, or "negroes" for that matter.

However, for what it is worth, recent scholarship indicates Du Bois may have been correct to suggest that Krishna was the indigenous deity of the Dravidian ancestors, that was eventually, yet paradoxically, incorporated into the Vedic pantheon during the Indo-Aryan migration into India.²⁵² Once referred to as the Indo-Aryan invasion, this description is no longer favorable. There is still much debate over the true origins of Hindu culture. Much of the debate stems from political motivations by Indian nationalist who disregard the Indo-Aryan migration analysis in favor of a completely indigenous

²⁵² Scholars during Du Bois' day had already been suggesting a Dravidian origin for Krishna, see: Paul Masson-Oursel, Philippe Stern, and Helena de Willman-Grabowska, *Ancient India and Indian Civilization*, trans. M. R. Dobie (London, UK: Routledge, 2013). For a more updated treatment on this theory see: Andrée F. Sjoberg, *Dravidian Language and Culture: Selected Essays* (Kuppam, India: Dravidian University, 2009).

origin for the peoples of the Indian subcontinent. There is however far too much linguistic and archaeological evidence that suggests otherwise, and that the true origins of indigenous Indian culture and mythology lies with the Indus Valley civilization and their descendants, the Dravidians.

Du Bois spends a great deal of time in this chapter focusing on what he perceives to be the African presence in various parts of Asia such as India, China, and even Japan.²⁵³ He then switches to a discussion of the apparent Blackness of many Arab groups. Naturally, there is some validity to the apparent Africanity of certain Arabic phenotypes by way of miscegenation, such as Tippu Tip, the east-African slave trader. However, while Tippu appeared African in phenotype, as well as partially African in blood, he was culturally and politically an Arab, who had little regard for the African lives he both stole and massacred in the Congo basin.²⁵⁴ Again, Du Bois is reaching for connections that bear no cultural significance. We can argue that this was simply a product of racial attitudes in his time, which regarded color as a symbol of either African or Asian, and the apparent lack of color a measurement of whiteness.

There is little mention of the Bantu populations surrounding Kilwa and other areas of the Swahili coast, of which Du Bois references Portuguese sources who describe the miscegenation of Bantu Africans and Arabs. Next, Du Bois turns our attention to the Ottomans. He first reminds us that the Persians and then the Turks would come to rule Kemet, now known as مصر, or *Maṣr*, in the contemporary local Arabic language. The remainder of the chapter focuses on either Ottoman or general Islamic influences in the

²⁵³ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 113-115

²⁵⁴ Asante, *History of Africa*, 223-224

African interior. Perhaps Du Bois found it significant to acknowledge what was known at the time of Africa's relationship with the Asian world. This chapter is more about the African presence in Asiatic cultural and socio-political history, and particularly if some of that history occurred on the African continent.

I would argue today that any such discussion would be better served with sources that engage with language. We know today that the Semitic language family is but one of the six branches of Afrasian languages that all share their beginnings in the African continent. Of the six, the others being Cushitic, Omotic, Chadic, Tamazight, and Kemetic, the Semitic branch is also the youngest as well as the only to branch outside of Africa into the southwestern extremities of Asia.²⁵⁵ This is significant to mention because it helps bolster Du Bois point that while Asiatic cultures certainly had cultural exchange with Africa, the linguistic data seems to suggest that the bulk of influence has historically stemmed out of Africa into Asia. Digressing, Du Bois closes his chapter with a note on the "mutual fertilization of cultures" between Africa and Asia, before preparing readers for a history on the so-called Black Sudan and how they brought civilization to Europe.

Du Bois on the Sudan

Chapter X, which serves as the penultimate chapter in Du Bois' text on Africa, is titled "The Black Sudan". This chapter begins with a brief of the so-called Moorish conquest of Spain. Once again, Du Bois relies on the works of Frobenius, this time to inform his readers that the eleventh century civilizations south of the Sahara, or "negro

²⁵⁵ Ehret, *History and the Testimony of Language*, 136-137

Africa” as Frobenius refers to it, were in full bloom and, though many Muslim, the beautiful turbans and clothes of the Sudanese were well in use before the birth of Mohammed.²⁵⁶ Du Bois too makes this distinction between “Berbers”, respectfully Amazigh, and “Negroes”. Perhaps this is his reasoning for the erroneous term “Black Sudan”. To be sure, Du Bois acknowledges that the Amazigh are not Arabs, but this distinction between “Black Sudan” and other African groups is a consistent sign of Du Bois’ prioritization of skin color in which to designate the difference between Africans and somewhat Africans.

Du Bois speaks of the Amazigh of the Almoravid dynasty as, “Berbers with Negro blood, and hosts of pure Negro adherents.”²⁵⁷ The Amazigh are culturally African people and have been in the northern regions of Africa for several thousands of years. Furthermore, according to Molefi Kete Asante, “the Amazigh have not been interested in the racial politics of Europeans who claim that the Amazigh, because of skin color, are Europeans.”²⁵⁸ Recall also, their language, Tamazight, is one of the six Afrasian languages, and is not at all the youngest.

Next, Du Bois’ historical survey branches into the empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. He briefly mentions Sundiata and his capture of the old Ghana’s capital, Kumbi Saleh, in 1240. Naturally, Du Bois also gives a bit of attention to the most famous King

²⁵⁶ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 128

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 129

²⁵⁸ Asante further illustrates the issue: “The question of race in Africa is not the same question as in America or in Europe. A person whose ancestors have been in Africa for several thousand years is clearly African in behavior, attitude, and response to environment. Blackness is a color, but it is also an experience: that is, a cultural and historical experience related to social practice, language, and cultural expressions.” See: Molefi Kete Asante, *The History of Africa: the Quest for Eternal Harmony* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 20-21.

of Mali, Mansa Musa and his pilgrimage to Mecca. He seemingly takes delight in reporting what he knows of Mansa Musa's exploits along his journey, bringing with him eighty camel loads of gold dust -which was a huge waste of Malian resources.

Du Bois then brings the readers' attention to the fact that Europe was still suffering their "Dark Ages" during this golden period of empire in the Sudan. During this time Du Bois states, "the Mandingan empire of Melle [sic] occupied nearly the whole of what is now French Africa and part of British West Africa."²⁵⁹ He then quotes at great length the words of Ibn Battuta, who Molefi Kete Asante designates as one of the four historians who wrote in Arabic and are responsible for what we know of, and I venture to say as well as how we may somewhat interpret, the history of the Sudanic empires.²⁶⁰ Du Bois quotes Ibn Battuta as stating, "one has the impression that Mandingo was a real state whose organization and civilization could be compared with those of the Musselman kingdoms or indeed the Christian kingdoms of the same epoch."²⁶¹ We see again in this statement the desire to compare African civilization with that of European, and now Arab. Du Bois, as I mentioned before, is perhaps attempting to help his readers to understand the extent of the greatness of African civilization by providing a reference for which they are familiar. Battuta perhaps the same. However, therein lies the supposition that primitiveness and savagery should exist here, when it doesn't. Take the words of Ibn Battuta for example:

The state of affairs amongst these people is indeed extraordinary. Their men show no signs of jealousy whatever; no one claims descent from his father, but on the

²⁵⁹ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 131

²⁶⁰ Asante, *History of Africa*, 120-121

²⁶¹ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 132

contrary from his mother's brother. A person's heirs are his sister's sons, not his own sons. This is a thing which I have seen nowhere in the world except among the Indians of Malabar. *But those are heathens*; these people are Muslims, punctilious in observing the hours of prayer, studying books of law, and memorizing the Koran.²⁶²

Battuta, struck dumb by the cultural customs of Mali, immediately wants to compare the men and women to the heathenism he perceives in similar cultural structures in India. However, what saves them from the rank of savagery is their adherence to Islam. Just as Du Bois dismisses the agency of the *natives* of his day, it is curious as to how Battuta, and Du Bois in turn, would describe the people of Mali if not for their practice of the Muslim faith. This is important to consider because Du Bois is relying on the idea that those without Abrahamic religion are heathens. As he clearly lacks an agency-affirming cultural analysis such as Afrocentricity, it is imperative to continuously tease out the subtle nuances of cultural hierarchy Du Bois presents.

Digressing, later in the chapter Du Bois recounts the story of *Parsifal*, written by German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach. This is the story of a European knight who meets an African queen and supposedly falls in love with her because, according to Du Bois, “her noble and pure character seems to him quite equal to that of a Christian.”²⁶³ The knight then marries, impregnates, and, not long after, abandons the African woman, being supposedly “disturbed” by their religious differences. Given the circumstances in this brief summary, it should be more appropriate that his religion left him with such weak resolve that the one who should be “disturbed” is the queen. Nevertheless, years later the knight married another woman who bore him a son, Parsifal.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid, 137

Following the knight's death, Parsifal supposedly becomes an even greater knight, and is charged with leading the search for the mythical Holy Grail. Along his journey he meets a man named Feirefiz, or "colored man", who is revealed to be, unbeknownst to Parsifal, his older brother by way of the African Queen his father abandoned. They do battle and, upon breaking his sword, Parsifal thought for sure he had met his end. However, Feirefiz honorably spares his life. After some friendly discourse they discover that the two of them are indeed brothers. The story ends with Feirefiz, after falling in love with a European woman, agrees to be baptized and then "carries Christianity to the East."

Du Bois relays this story as an apparent example of western writers attempting to soften the tensions of race relations. "It points toward the bridging of the gaps between creeds and races", begins Du Bois, "and is of great significance in revealing the thought of enlightened and civilized society in Europe in the thirteenth century."²⁶⁴ This is an irresponsible statement. Tales like these only serve to propagate the Christian faith and the apparent superiority of European culture. This tale is similar to others at the time such as that of *The Adventures of Esplandián*, written by Spanish romance novelist Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo. In which, he relates the story of a mythical Queen, Califia, who supposedly falls in love with a Spanish prince and challenges him to battle for a chance to marry him.

Califia fails in battle and is forced to admit his betrothed, a European woman, is more beautiful than she and that the Christian religion must be the one true religion as

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 138

opposed to her pagan one.²⁶⁵ The name Califia, though in the tale she was “pagan”, was actually a reference to the term caliph, a Muslim term for ruler, as Califia was the Queen of an all-woman nation of warriors. The parallels in von Eschenbach’s tale, *Parsifal*, as reported by Du Bois, and that of Califia, both written during the era of the Crusades, is clear that Europe regarded itself as superior to other cultures and did so with religious justification.

Perhaps here Du Bois suffers a bit from *cognitive hiatus*.²⁶⁶ There is a lapse in his thinking that suggests that fables about African monarchs being smitten by the supposed beauty and righteousness of European culture and religion to the degree in which they turn on their own culture and religion is somehow an example of “bridging of the gap between creed and races”. It is wholesale assimilationist propaganda that forces upon the consciousness of those who imbibe these stories a perpetual hierarchical imposition of Eurocentric norms.

For the great remainder of the chapter, Du Bois, drawing upon the works of J.A. Rodgers and E. Stanley Lane-Poole, tackles the question of race as it involves the so-called Moors. He centers on Shakespeare and his use of African-Moorish characters in plays such as *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. Of which he suggests, “despite this there are critics who have almost had hysterics in seeking to deny that Shakespeare meant to paint a Negro as a noble warrior and successful suitor of a beautiful white woman.”²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ As a side note, Califia was the queen of California, which is how the U.S. state received its name. For a detailed account of this tale see: Edward Everett Hale, *The Queen of California: the Origin of the Name of California*, ed. Eric Jones (Eric M. Jones; Kindle Edition, 2014).

²⁶⁶ Mazama, “Cognitive Hiatus and White Validation Syndrome,” 25-38

²⁶⁷ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 138

One can only question here why should Du Bois want his target audience, if they are principally Black, to care about this circumstance? Perhaps he himself is still at this time affected by his *double consciousness* of forty years before this time, being, “two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body.” For, as aforementioned, Du Bois recognizes in one instance that, “all over Africa spread the inferiority complex, the fear of color, the worship of white skin, the imitation of white ways of doing and thinking, whether good, bad, or indifferent,” and yet he himself is concerned about the ways in which Europeans interpret the intentions of Europeans as they use Africans as literary plot devices and propaganda tools.

AWAM

In chapters nine through ten, Du Bois capitalized on a range of sources that were available to him. As repeatedly aforementioned, Du Bois heavily relied on Leo Frobenius and his accounts of West and West-Central Africa. While the notes of Frobenius that Du Bois employs merely implies some notions of cultural continuity, it is not something that at all becomes a focus. Du Bois quotes the French ethnographer, Maurice Delafosse on the nature of individualism vs. collectivism in West Africa:

West Africans are still today in the period of integral collectivism, known to our ancestors before the Middle Ages, while we have arrived at individualism. The question which presents itself is to know whether indeed we have made definitive progress in this line, since many of our thinkers, of the so called advance guard, demand, as a benefit, the return to collectivism, although of a somewhat different form. This proves that the peoples of Negro Africa have not marched at the same rate of speed as the peoples of Europe, but in nowise proves that the former are

inferior to the latter. Who knows, indeed, whether the latter have not gone too fast?²⁶⁸

Du Bois offers no analysis of this passage, but it is quite a curious one. I argue that perhaps the issue is not that West Africans have not “marched at the same rate of speed” or that Europeans have “gone too fast” but yet different and unique cultural circumstances have yielded different and unique cultural ethos. But the culture of collectivism is not found singularly in West Africa. It can be argued that throughout the whole of the African continent indigenous African cultures primarily see collectivism, rather than individualism, as the norm rather than the exception.

Du Bois’ relatively short chapter on the Bantu leans heavily on the works of the British colonialist and explorer Harry Johnston and somewhat on the scholarship of Ghanaian doctor and historian Raphael Armattoo. Du Bois uses their works to suggest patterns of civilization accountable only because of the Bantu migration as well as cultural influence. However, it is the words of German explorer and ethnologist, Georg Schweinfurth, that bears the most interest. Du Bois quotes him as stating:

Not a custom, not a superstition is found in one part which is not more or less accurately repeated in another; not one contrivance of design, not one weapon of war exists of which it can be declared that it is exclusive property of any one race. From north to south, and from sea to sea, in some form or other, every invention is sure to be repeated; it is ‘the thing that has been.’ If we could at once grasp and set before our minds facts that are known (whether as regards language, race, culture, history, or development) of that vast region of the world which is comprehended in the name of Africa, we should have before us the witness of an intermingling of races which is beyond all precedent. And yet, bewildering as the prospect would appear, it remains a fact not to be gainsaid, that it is impossible for any one to survey the country as a whole without perceiving that high above

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 102

the multitude of individual differences there is throned a principle of unity which embraces well-nigh all the population.²⁶⁹

For Du Bois' survey on the Asiatic presence in Africa, he relies a bit on African American historian, J. A. Rodgers, whom Du Bois himself admits is with faults in his theory and historicism, but he also uses other authors such as Stanley Lane-Pool and Reginald Coupland. Travelogues such as those of the Portuguese explorer Duarte Barbosa and Moroccan scholar and explorer Ibn Battuta were also employed. Both Lane-Pool and Barbosa speak on the apparent cultural unity of Moorish populations while Coupland and Battuta speak on East Africa and their relationship with the middle east and India by either warfare or enslavement. Perhaps some of these groups became the modern-day Sidi people in India who, while having adopted a good portion of Indian culture, in many respects are still very culturally and linguistically Bantu.²⁷⁰

Du Bois' notes on the Sudan are likewise suggestive of cultural cohesiveness and continuity between the various Sudanic empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. He even notes the relationship between these well-known civilizations and that of the less acknowledged kingdoms of Kanem and Bornu. Naturally, Du Bois had to deal with the encroachment of Islam and the effects Asiatic Muslim groups such as the Turks had on African culture. Islam, just as Christianity, had drastic effects on African life and culture. Du Bois seemingly focuses on the aspects of Islam which may have been unifying. However, as aforementioned, he then begins to focus a great deal on parallels he foresees between African culture and European mythology and folklore.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 111

²⁷⁰ Helene Basu, "Music and the Formation of Sidi Identity in Western India," *History Workshop Journal* 65, no. 1 (January 2008): pp. 161-178, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbm069>.

As you read through the brief AWAM analysis, notice that I continuously make a triangular connection between African Americans, the Afro-Caribbean, and Africa. If the reason is not apparent, it is imperative to understand that while various dynamic nouveau-African cultures have developed in the Americas with their own unique and rich histories, those histories have been, and continue to be, constantly intertwined. In fact, African, African American, African Caribbean culture would not at all be what they are today without this history constant exchange.

Obviously, this also includes nouveau-African cultures in South America, however, though I am very general about the areas covered, this current analysis does not include South America for the sake of brevity. This is by no means an attempt at exclusion, as there is much to gain from an analysis which includes the African populations of countries such as Mexico, Guyana, Suriname, Colombia, and, of course, Brazil. Furthermore, this is not an exhaustive or even extensive list of cultural continuity. However, it provides an example of the type of framework that should be considered for anyone willing to develop a comparative analysis of specific African cultural groups.

Kanna

There are a number of direct cultural antecedents that link African Americans to this time period. Cultural phenomena such as food, aesthetics, music, dance, and language extant among African Americans can all be traced back to various groups on the African continent. One very apparent bit of cultural phenomena deals primarily with the Black body and hair. African people from coast to coast tend to wear clothes of bright colors and many patterns. This is something seen quite evident in African American

culture as well and has been documented as a cultural element that derived from the various ethnic groups African Americans were stolen from.

Zora Neale Hurston once stated that, “The will to adorn is the second most notable characteristic in Negro expression.”²⁷¹ Hurston was a famed African American novelist and anthropologist who studied African American and Afro-Caribbean culture with both earnestness and a passion that signifies her personal connection to the history and culture of her people. Art historian Helen Foster, in her text, “*New Raiments of Self*,” has this to say about her words:

[Hurston’s] remarks about twentieth-century African Americans mirror what others had noted about the West Africans whom they had encountered in earlier centuries. The West Africans who were brought to the New World filtered new ideas about bodily raiments through much older ideas about self-presentation.²⁷²

In the text, Foster notes a number of African cultural phenomena as it relates to clothing as aesthetics. She mentions topics ranging from the need during the antebellum era to use bones and wood to make West-African style combs,²⁷³ the need to be fashionable for all religious gatherings,²⁷⁴ as well as contemporary arguments about wearing braids in corporate America.²⁷⁵ Perhaps the most interesting person she quotes in the whole text is Charles Ball. Assuredly, Charles Ball was not his original name as he was captured in West Africa before being transported to the Southern United States. More than likely as a matter of comparison to the phenotypic aesthetics of his own people

²⁷¹ Helen Bradley Foster, *New Raiments of Self: African American Clothing in the Antebellum South* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 1997), 71

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid, 250

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 188-189

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 269

Ball would exclaim, “I had never seen white people before; and they appeared to me the ugliest creatures in the world.”²⁷⁶ With that statement, it is with great certainty Ball had not been afflicted with an inferiority complex. Though such sadly became the fate of many African descendants in the so-called Americas.

In the last chapter I mentioned Akan spirituality, particularly that which addresses the distinction between a person’s *ntoro* (spirit) and their *kra* (soul). I also mention that this bears similarities with the Bambara’s position of *ni* (soul) and *dya* (double). Historian Michael Gomez believes that these elements were merged along with other West and Central African cultures during the formation of what’s known as the *ring shout*. Gomez would note:

The embrace of the shout allowed the Igbo, the Akan, and the Mende to understand just how much they had in common with respect to their veneration of the ancestors and their connection to the land. The Akan distinction between the *ntoro* (spirit) and the *kra* (soul) would have found resonance in the Bambara division of *ni* (soul) and *dya* (double). Lesser deities, such as the *agbara* of the Igbo and the *abosom* of the Akan would have found reciprocity, while these same two groups merged with the Bambara and Sierra Leonians in their belief in reincarnation. The shout brought them together, transcending cultural barriers and hastening the creation of a pan-African cultural matrix with numerous points of intersection.²⁷⁷

Interestingly, not only do we find that the word Vodou (or Voodoo) comes from the West-African Dahomean terms *vodu* or *vodun* for loas (deity or god),²⁷⁸ in Haitian and New Orleans Vodou also exists a duality of spirits known as the *gwobonanj* and the *tibonanj*. This passage from Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama’s, *The Encyclopedia of African Religion*, informs us the difference between these two Vodou terms:

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 23

²⁷⁷ Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 271

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 55-56

The ti-bon-age is responsible for one's personal character, and it is this aspect of the soul that stands in judgment to account for the life one has lived. The ti-bon-age is related to the Egyptians' Ka or one's double, which is responsible for bestowing personality; it possesses an independent existence...The gwobonanj, in contrast, is the primal substance that gives life to a human being. It is the divine essence of an individual, and it derives its force directly from Bondyé, the Supreme Being, whose presence permeates the cosmos. Unlike the tibonanj, the gwobonanj is recycled and given a new life to continue its eternal mission, which is to carry out the will of the Creator.²⁷⁹

In music, we can make arguments for the African influence in the African American creations of jazz, blues, and Hip-Hop (as well as a host of other American music genres), however we know for certain that the Banjo, a stringed instrument that shares a relationship with the West-African *kora*, *xalam*, and *goje* instruments, arrived in the United States by way of the Caribbean.²⁸⁰ In folklore, we know that tales throughout the African American South and Afro-Caribbean such as that of Brer Rabbit, Signifying Monkey, and Anansi share origins in Africa in either fixed, dynamically reincarnated, or otherwise similar forms.²⁸¹ This, of course, is the nature of folklore, as even on the African continent such tales remain increasingly dynamic. This is naturally a general treatment of these aspects of Kanna. Certain antecedents can be traced quite clearly based

²⁷⁹ Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama, eds., *Encyclopedia of African Religion* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009), 196

²⁸⁰ For a detailed analysis on the African antecedents of African American music, dance, and associated art, see: Samuel A. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997). For religion, see: Joel E. Tishken, Tóyìn Fálólá, and Akíntúndé Akínyemí, eds., *Sàngó in Africa and the African Diaspora* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009). For art see two of Robert Farris Thompson's works: Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Random House, 1983) and Robert Farris Thompson, *Aesthetic of the Cool Afro-Atlantic Art and Music* (Pittsburgh, PA: Periscope, 2011).

²⁸¹ Floyd, *Power of Black Music*, 48

on spatial and temporal circumstances, but the brevity of this treatment will not allow for such specificity.

Fanna

There are, of course, many similarities between African and African American culture. Some of which can be gleaned from the aspects discussed above in the *kanna* category. The possibilities are much too vast for an extensive treatment, but I will list one very interesting phenomenon that may be classified as *fanna*. This cultural phenomenon involves the creation of two rice dishes in both Senegal and in southern Louisiana known as Jollof and Jambalaya respectively. Recently, African American journalist Kayla Stewart, after combing through files in the national archives and making several trips to West Africa, has detailed her findings on the origins of Jambalaya. What perhaps many suspected would produce an origin story of Jambalaya from Jollof actually turned out to be a story of how these two dishes developed at the very same time by way of similar colonial circumstances.²⁸²

According to Stewart, West Africans who had been taken to the southern United States from areas such as Senegambia and Akan country were introduced to the tomato by way of the French. This was around the same time that a Senegalese woman, also a victim of French colonial terrorism, was using the tomato to create the first Jollof dish in

²⁸² Kayla Stewart, "Tracing Jambalaya," ART19, 2019, <https://art19.com/shows/proof/episodes/31b81374-a953-47cd-9fba-2bccfdadb2f>.

West Africa.²⁸³ This would be classified as *fanna* because, while one dish may not have developed from the other, they both share heavy similarity in formation.

Nanni

When it comes to African Americans, and, for that matter, any other African diasporic groups *nanni* presents a host of issues. One could attempt to argue, for example, that Jazz, Blues, Soul, and Hip Hop, are solely African American cultural properties as they were created by Africans in America under specific circumstances. However, how then would one explain the African cultural elements present within all of these musical art forms? Perhaps someone could challenge that certain lexical creations such as *fleek* and *twerk* are uniquely African American, but they would then have to contend with the fact that these are dynamic historical recreations of terms such as *cool* and that of dances such as the predecessors to the modern *ndombolo* in the Kongo. Further, even if there were cosmological uniqueness in the lexicon, there is a preponderance of grammatical similarities that exists throughout the African diaspora.²⁸⁴

One further note to consider is that African Americans have developed their versions of American art forms unique to the African American experience. Let us use film for example. African American film directors such as Spike Lee and Robert Townsend have led the genre of Black film which focus solely on the socioeconomic and

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ For a general treatment of the presence of both African grammar and lexicon from ancient times to present diaspora populations see: Kimani S.K. Nehusi, "From Medew Netjer to Ebonics," in *Ebonics and Language Education of African Ancestry Students*, ed. Clinton Crawford (New York, NY: Sankofa World Publishers, 2001), pp. 56-122.

cultural experiences of African Americans. Certainly, African Americans didn't create the art that is cinema, but what they have created is space for African ontology on screen.

I mention this because it is unique in the fact that since the time of the first African American filmmaker, Oscar Micheaux, the African American community has attempted to create images of themselves that would combat the racist caricatures perpetuated by white society. This is important to this analysis because here is a form of art created from the need to contend with a particularly unique experience of racial subjugation of being a minority population in a majority white society. Nevertheless, portrayed in many of these films are a host of diasporic cultural phenomena. Thus, this would need further consideration in order to be considered a truly unique phenomenon.

For African American phenomena to be placed soundly within the category of *nanni* such would have to live up to the scrutiny of overlapping evidences of African cultural influence. While African Americans are certainly a unique, independent, and dynamically varied cultural group in their own right, it is quite difficult to pinpoint an aspect of their culture that does not more soundly exist within the category of *kanna* or *fanna*, and particularly as it pertains to their relationship to the West, Central, and South African cultures covered by Du Bois in the aforementioned chapters. Nevertheless, I do not rule out the possibility that more detailed examinations of could perhaps identify some cultural phenomena that could soundly be categorized as *nanni*.

CHAPTER 5

DU BOIS' CLOSING CHAPTER

Du Bois' Andromeda Complex

The year was 1911; W.E.B. Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk* had apparently found itself on the international scene and drew response from one of coastal Africa's most prominent theorists of Ethiopianism -a social-cultural movement that was partly religious and centered Ethiopia as the redeemer of the African race. J. E. Casley Hayford wrote in his manifesto, *Ethiopia Unbound*, a critical response to Du Bois' theory of *double consciousness*, and regarded the theory as, "one of the most pathetic passages in the history of human thought."²⁸⁵ Du Bois perceived, "a world which wields him no true self-consciousness... this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American and Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body."²⁸⁶ This thinking apparently sat in sharp contrast with Hayford's self-conscious Ethiopianism. Hayford's retort was piercing:

It is apparent that Mr. Du Bois writes from an American standpoint, surrounded by an American atmosphere. And, of course, it is not his fault, for he knows of no other. To be born an African in America, in that great commonwealth of dollars and the merciless aggrandizement of the individual, where the weak must look out for himself, and the cry of the innocent appeals not to whom who rides

²⁸⁵ Casely Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*, ed. Molefi Kete Asante (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic's Press, 2011), 179

²⁸⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois., *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Brent Hayes Edwards (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 2

triumphantly to fortune, is to be entangled in conditions which give no room for the assertion of the highest manhood. *African manhood demands that the Ethiopian should seek not his opportunity, or ask for elbow room, from the white man, but that he should create the one or the other for himself.* (emphasis mine).²⁸⁷

Hayford's critique of Du Bois at this time differs very little from Carter G.

Woodson's indictment decades later in which he proclaimed that he doesn't "accept the gifts of the Greeks" in response to Du Bois' position that he must make use of the money, and, subsequently, the opinions, being offered by whites in order to create the *Encyclopedia of the Negro*. To be fair, Du Bois too was quite critical about the project and viewed the whites who headed it as "the enemy." Nevertheless, he was eventually persuaded to join and then developed a life-long correspondence with the primary investor, Anson Stokes. Could this circumstance simply be, as Hayford would critique, Du Bois' way of "seeking opportunity" or "elbow room" at the table of his oppressors?

It is curious that Du Bois chose "Andromeda" as the title of the very last chapter of *The World and Africa*. He would describe the general contents of this chapter to be about, "the future of the darker races and their relation to the white peoples."²⁸⁸ The chapter largely deals with issues in colonialism and Du Bois' early history of Pan-African struggle. However, before we delve into that survey, there are some points that prove pertinent to make. It is quite interesting that near the very same time Du Bois was writing a very early version of *The World and Africa*, entitled *Africa, Its Geography, People and*

²⁸⁷ Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound*, 182

²⁸⁸ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 143.

Products, Carter G. Woodson published his, *African Myths and Folktales*.²⁸⁹ Always a fierce critic of those who elevate Eurocentric cultural phenomena in the expense of or even in relation to African culture, Woodson appeared to be looking for solutions to counter African American's needs to relate their experiences to Greco-Roman myths. I mention this because although Du Bois himself was a fierce critic of Western world, he was clearly still very much enthralled with European cultural history.

If we consider Du Bois' experiences in education this may help us to understand why he remained so enthralled. To be sure, the educational institutions then, as it is today, as Molefi Kete Asante pointed out, are, "conditioned by the character of the nation."²⁹⁰ Unfortunately, this would mean the same for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Du Bois' alma mater is Fisk University, a private HBCU located in Nashville, Tennessee. At the time it was one of the premier Black educational institutions in the country. However, like all other others, Fisk suffered structural problems in its pedagogy, particularly in regard to its centering Europe as the standard other cultures should aspire. Carter G. Woodson, in his *Miseducation of the Negro*, stated this issue quite plainly:

Negro colleges offer courses bearing on the European colonists prior to their coming to America, their settlement on these shores, and their development here toward independence. Why are they not equally generous with the Negroes in treating their status in Africa prior to enslavement, their first transplantation to the West Indies, the Latinization of certain Negroes in contradistinction to the development of others under the influence of the Teuton, and the effort of the race toward self-expression? A further examination of their curricula shows, too, that invariably these Negro colleges offer courses in Greek philosophy and in that of

²⁸⁹ As a sidenote; this would also be around the time Woodson developed Negro History Week, which is now Black History Month.

²⁹⁰ Asante, *Afrocentric Manifesto*, 83

modern European thought, but they direct no attention to the philosophy of the African. Negroes of Africa have and always have had their own ideas about the nature of the universe, time, and space, about appearance and reality, and about freedom and necessity. The effort of the Negro to interpret man's relation to the universe shows just as much intelligence as we find in the philosophy of the Greeks. There were many Africans who were just as wise as Socrates.²⁹¹

Perhaps Du Bois, try as he might, could not escape such conditioning as all of his professors at Fisk but one was white, and it is also where his love for European music and art was first kindled before his experiences in Germany continued it further.²⁹² Du Bois would also learn the German language while at Fisk. Therefore, Fisk was intermedial in centering European culture in the mind of Du Bois while his stint at the University of Berlin among the Germans, or *Teutons* as Woodson would describe them, cemented his affinity for Europe. But Du Bois suffered a conundrum. Though he was clearly a student of Europe, he too desperately wished to be both a student and champion of Africa. However, this *twoness* oftentimes resulted in Du Bois' life to be filled with much contradiction.

As we covered in the previous chapter, Woodson argued that Du Bois' work on *The Encyclopedia of the Negro* would, in his view, perpetuate a historiography that presents African people from the perspective of Europeans. Not only that, but Woodson perhaps also saw that such an encyclopedia funded by Anson Stokes and his ilk would again center European standards while the so-called Negroes would remain mere props in their own historical settings and backgrounds. After all, many of the gifts of myth and

²⁹¹ Woodson, *Miseducation of the Negro*, 136-137

²⁹² Du Bois, *Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois*, 108; 169

historiography left behind by the actual Greeks have been discovered to be the result of appropriation. Therefore, Auset, Ausar, and Heru become Isis, Osiris, and Horus respectively. Not only did their names change and give way to the formation of new divine identities such as Zeus and Athena, but their phenotype and color would also be altered so that the Greeks may center their own likeness.

This is the issue with Du Bois choosing to identify African people with the Greek mythical figure, Andromeda. Let us consider the facts that Andromeda is the daughter of Cepheus, ruler of Aethiopia. We know that Aethiopia, or Ethiopia (Kush), is how the Greeks referred to the lands and people below Kemet, as the term Ethiopia means, “lands of the burnt faces.” However, though we do know that the Roman poet Ovid emphasized that Andromeda had dark-skin for she was born in Kush,²⁹³ mysteriously, there is no known Greek art which depicts Cepheus nor Andromeda as African. In fact, in various arts, while the attendants of Andromeda were depicted as African, she remained quite white in appearance. If we consider this “gift” the Greeks have left us, one can only ponder as to why Du Bois did not address such contradictions. Perhaps he was not all too familiar with the collection of Greek artworks concerning Andromeda, or he was more familiar with the works of Ovid or other authors who cite him. Du Bois leaves us with no indication of either case as he does not cite where he received his version of the story.

Nevertheless, most versions of the story generally depict Andromeda as the child of Cepheus and his supposedly vain wife, Cassiopeia. The latter, apparently also just as vain about her offspring, gloats about the beauty of Andromeda and suggests that she is

²⁹³ Elizabeth McGrath, "The Black Andromeda", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* Vol. 55 (1992), pp. 1-18

more beautiful than the *nereids*, which are sea nymphs and daughters of the sea god Nereus. Poseidon, being married to one of these sea nymphs, was apparently offended by the suggestion and sent both a deadly wave and a sea monster, Cetus, to destroy their nation. Upon consulting the oracle, Ammon (associated with Amun of Kemet), Andromeda's parents are informed that they must sacrifice Andromeda to the monster in order to bring an end to the catastrophe. Cepheus then chained Andromeda to a cliff by the shoreline, offering her up for sacrifice. Meanwhile, the demi-god Perseus, returning from slaying Medusa, just so happens to fly overhead and witness the helpless Andromeda and the sea monster approaching her. He slayed the monster and afterwards fell in-love and married Andromeda.

Du Bois would find this myth endearing. Throughout the chapter he applies the phrase, “releasing black Andromeda,” in order to address a number of social and racial challenges. First, he states that the recognition of “world democracy” could free Andromeda.²⁹⁴ Next, he insists that the Western world has degraded Africa and the correction of which is likewise allegorical to the releasing of Andromeda.²⁹⁵ Finally, in somewhat reiteration, Du Bois points out many deeds African people have done that are valued by the Western world. He describes those deeds as such:

Few people realize what Africa and her children have done to win the World Wars. In the first, the Senegalese saved France at the first onslaught of the Germans; black soldiers of Africa conquered the German colonies; American Negroes rushed the critical supplies to Europe which turned the tide of victory. In World War II thousands of Africans fought in Europe, Burma, India, and Africa; they formed a large part of Montgomery's Eighth Army in the decisive North African campaign; an American Negro physician contrived the banks of blood

²⁹⁴ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 162

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 163

plasma which saved tens of thousands of lives; Negroes built thousands of miles of strategic road under direct enemy fire; Negroes handled three-fourths of the ammunition in the European Theatre of Operations and fired much of it. Negro fighting troops took part in the invasion of Normandy, in the invasion of Italy, and as flight squadrons and hospital corps. In America eight Negro scientists were engaged in the research on the atomic bomb.²⁹⁶

Apparently satisfied with the impressiveness of this description of African accomplishment, Du Bois then declares, “the stars of dark Andromeda belong up there in the great heaven that hangs above this tortured world.”²⁹⁷ These sentiments from Du Bois once again display his cognitive hiatus. It is interesting that he advances the notion of “world democracy,” particularly given the Athenian origins of such governance. To be sure, there is nothing wrong with a government by which people have equal say in their governing representatives and thereby have choice over the social, political, and economic decisions which will impact their lives. But in these passages Du Bois seems to believe that American democracy is only in need of repair. That if only we can stemmy prejudices, dissolve “the color line,” and evolve capitalism into a more transparent system then the world will know true Democracy. Du Bois would however by the time of his posthumous biography have evolved in his thinking:

First, I would emphasize the fact that today Africa has no choice between private Capitalism and Socialism. The whole world, including Capitalist countries, is moving toward Socialism, inevitably, inexorably. You can choose between blocs of military alliance, you can choose between groups of political union, you cannot choose between Socialism and Private Capitalism, because Private ownership of capital is doomed.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ Ibid, 164

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Du Bois, *Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois*, 402

Alas, though Du Bois had pulled away from the capitalist camp, his embracing of western socialism, from an Afrocentric standpoint, is still problematic. Marxism was in Du Bois' day considered a popular political philosophy -albeit dangerous considering the politics of the "red scare". By the 1950s Du Bois and many other African intellectuals had taken a liking to socialist and Marxist thought. Marx's bases for his economic and social theories were, naturally, the historical events surrounding the European Agrarian Revolution and the subsequent European Industrial Revolution.²⁹⁹ It in no way incorporated African cultural-historical paradigms nor was it of any character to promote Afrocentric unity among African nations. However, as Molefi Kete Asante points out, one of his proteges, Kwame Nkrumah, would eventually develop both a parallel and contesting ideology known as *consciencism*. Using this form of African socialism, or *Nkrumahism*, Asante would note that Nkrumah wished for Africans to make Africa "the center of their ambitions":

Nkrumah wanted to see a new African evolve who would practice the philosophy of consciencism and make Africa the center of their ambitions. But to do this, the African has to revise Marxism, which Nkrumah believed to be the most combative ideology for challenging colonialism, and demonstrate that African communalism could move through its traditions to African socialism.³⁰⁰

Digressing, Du Bois' insistence that the western world, or "this pattern of human culture," has degraded Africa is complicated by his reliance on Western cultural norms in which to save Africa. Du Bois' call to release Andromeda is ultimately metaphorical for freeing a Europeanized Africa, an Africa remade in an image which Europe regards as

²⁹⁹ Ana Monteiro-Ferreira, *The Demise of the Inhuman: Afrocentricity, Modernism, and Postmodernism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015), 55

³⁰⁰ Asante, *Afrocentric Manifesto*, 34

most beautiful and civilized, and saved only from the monstrosities Europe itself has released upon the world. This would presumably place the burden on *civilized* Africans to slay the evils of the color line and free Andromeda. Imagine if in Du Bois' mind Perseus represents the *civilized* intellectuals of the African world, born of the circumstances between Europeans, a self-deified race (represented by Zeus), and their raping Africa of her human resources. Therefore, in the mind of Du Bois, the demi-god-like civilized African world would use the power of their god-half, albeit culturally antithetical, in order to free Andromeda, to free up the image and dignity of Africa and do so by western standards. Du Bois may have recognized that Europe successfully demonized African religion, denigrated the original African culture and distorted their ethical standards,³⁰¹ but he lacked the theoretical framework necessary to not fall prey to perpetuating the Eurocentric Masquerade.

Du Bois' understanding of the war between cultures was largely limited to the historical contributions to world civilization which Europe had deprived African people. Certainly, Du Bois understood that cultures possess unique characters displayed through their religion, philosophy, and art, but he had failed to grasp the very nature of the Eurocentric Masquerade, which isn't simply a hierarchical placement of European norms but an establishment of those norms as universal cultural standards. Thus, the harmonic style of 18th century European musicians, which Du Bois apparently cherished, becomes "Music Theory", and Greco-Roman classical history becomes "Classics". This becomes so normalized in the minds of colonized people that Du Bois, for example, does not

³⁰¹ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 49

consider it an issue to compare Africans to the European caricatures of African people found in *Andromeda*, *Parsifal*, or *Othello*, because he has been socially engineered to understand such as *universal standards*. This is also done so within a historiographical framing of so-called *human history*, despite the fact that the paradigm of such historiography only centers the politics and subjectivities of Europe.

Du Bois on the early 20th Century

Du Bois begins his survey of contemporary African history with a series of inquiries. He questions whether or not the world needs Africa and if, in-turn, does Africa need the world? Du Bois describes a number of Africa products the world is dependent on such as cotton, gold, coffee, cocoa, various oils, and rubber.³⁰² He then speaks on the large reserves of human labor Africa has to offer, as well as the agricultural potential of the continent. Du Bois also hints at the early stages of industrialization on the African continent. He mentions how much of it is unencumbered by many laws to limit labor and that profits are lightly taxed.³⁰³

Next, Du Bois mentions a number of, in his day, contemporary surveys of Africa and African peoples, such as Malcolm Hailey's *African Survey* which, Du Bois argues, "omits consistently the point of view of the native and any body of fact which weighs against European aggression." To that end, Du Bois also mentions W. Walton Claridge's *History of Ashanti*, which he states, "frank criticism of Great Britain creeps in... but the

³⁰² Ibid, 144-145

³⁰³ Ibid, 145.

story is heavily weighted on the side of the imperialists.”³⁰⁴ It is not surprising that Du Bois is able to pinpoint such reductions of African agency, but I argue it is primarily because this is a largely contemporary critique. Du Bois is naturally sympathetic to the plight of so-called *natives* in his lifetime even though, as aforementioned, he too had in his younger days been guilty of not considering the needs and wants of indigenous African people.

Du Bois continues his discussion on the wealth of Africa’s resources and just how much the European world has pillaged those resources with little regard to the negative effects such actions have had on the lives of African people. Further, he charges that writers who favor imperialism have attempted to downplay just how much Europe has benefited from the gross exploitation of African labor as well as the lack of regulation on the exportation of goods. Du Bois accuses Malcolm Hailey, English Baron and president of the Royal Asiatic society, specifically of this as he states:

The actual value of capital goods at the time of their investment in Africa, as compared with the realized value of the labor and material taken from Africa by investors and other claimants, legal and illegal, would if known, without shadow of doubt prove the enormous theft which Europe has perpetrated on peoples deliberately made helpless before greed and aggression. In the face of fact, statements like that of Lord Hailey as to the meager profits of African exploitation must be reinterpreted.³⁰⁵

This downplay of the wealth in material and human resources Europeans have stolen from Africa is a common trend that persists even within the twenty-first century. Sure, recent texts such as Martin Meredith’s *The Fortunes of Africa* and Edward Baptist’s

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 146

The Half Has Never Been Told has elucidated a great deal of the facts to contemporary society, however, such literature has very little of the impact it may have in Du Bois time, especially within a society which reading books is increasingly less of an interest. Instead, many in the Western world turn to television for their understanding of local, national, and international affairs. They want the “facts” interpreted for them by the seasoned reporters available on twenty-four-hour news stations. Undoubtedly, this is one of the results of the social conditioning that Du Bois mentions in the earlier chapters of *The World and Africa* where he states, “every effort was made to keep women and children and the more sensitive men deceived as to what was going on...” and that, “elaborate writing, disguised as interpretation, and the testimony of so-called ‘experts,’ made it impossible for charming people in Europe to realize what their comforts and luxuries cost in sweat, blood, death, and despair.”³⁰⁶

Nevertheless, what Du Bois highlights about the actual value of capital goods and the disguising of the interpretation of how those goods and services are made accessible to Europeans at the expense of African people is a continued reality in the face of Pan-African struggle. In fact, it is perhaps one of the primary motivations of modern Pan-Africanism. To help his readers understand the frustrations of African people which leads to Pan-African struggle, Du Bois would quote the words of J.E. Casley Hayford, the Ghanaian barrister who critiqued his idea of double consciousness some decades prior.

Hayford spoke of a type of African democratic system in which the African chiefs of the Gold Coast were more or less the mere representatives of the people in which they

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 22

governed. However, Britain, during their colonial aspirations in the land which would become modern-day Ghana, would disrupt this system in favor of British industry.

“[Britain] gave Negroes partial elective representation in the ‘Legislative Councils,’” says Du Bois before continuing, “but the councils still ‘advised’ the governor, who retained large power of legislation. British industry sat directly on the Council and in England continued to name West African governors and dictate colonial policies.”³⁰⁷ This, Du Bois contends, brewed early sentiments for modern Pan-African politics.

Du Bois and Pan-Africanism

Having covered much of this in earlier chapters, Du Bois gives a more truncated summary of his experiences within the early history of Pan-Africanism. He argued that the Pan-African movement represented a growing sentiment on the part of continental and diaspora communities to be self-governing and “to unite in mutual exchange of culture and co-operation for social betterment.”³⁰⁸ This push towards self-governance was of course in response to the harsh history of colonial control over Africa which had left the African people largely destitute and their nations underdeveloped, doing so for the purpose of exploiting human and material resources for European benefit.³⁰⁹

However, Du Bois would then single out what he refers to as simply “another movement,

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 149

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ For a proper treatise on this subject consult Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Particular attention should be given to the chapter entitled “Colonialism as a System for Underdeveloping Africa,” in which he briefly outlines the circumstances, both on the African continent and abroad, that leads to the rise of Pan-Africanism.

stemming from the West Indies,” which was the Pan-African and Black Nationalist politics of Marcus Garvey. Du Bois would state of this movement:

It was led by Marcus Garvey and *it represented a poorly conceived but intensely earnest determination to unite the Negroes of the world*, especially in commercial enterprise. It used all of the nationalist and racial paraphernalia of popular agitation, and its strength lay in its backing by the masses of West Indians and by increasing numbers of American Negroes. Its weakness lay in its demagogic leadership, poor finance, intemperate propaganda, and the natural apprehension it aroused among the colonial powers. (emphasis mine).³¹⁰

To consider Garvey’s movement “poorly conceived” yet “intensely earnest” is perhaps a sign of the resentment Du Bois felt towards Garvey himself. After all, the correspondence between the two does not reveal the kindest of words and sentiments for each other. But Garvey was perhaps the quintessential Black Nationalist and Pan-Africanist to arise in the early twentieth century. He was a culmination of the most fervent aspects of the movement. He possessed the theology of African renaissance, the profound love and thirst for knowledge of African people and history, a philosophy of strict independence, and ambitions of Pan-African advancement.

Garvey and first wife Amy Ashwood founded The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Jamaica in 1914 before relocating to the United States. By 1918 membership had extraordinarily flourished as thousands of membership certificates brandishing the greeting, “To the Beloved and Scattered Millions of the Negro Race,” were issued. By June of 1919 Garvey calculated that the UNIA had a membership of over 2 million while the ever watchful Du Bois gave a conservative estimate of just under 300,000 who were paying members. Membership was of course restricted to only those

³¹⁰ Ibid.

of African ancestry and the requirement to donate 25 cents a month (2017 value of \$4.03 monthly, accounting for inflation)³¹¹ of disposable income greatly benefited the organization's treasury.³¹²

What Garvey's movement did reaffirm was that while after three centuries of Africans being displaced in the Americas had brought on an ambivalence of returning to their ancestral home, rather by knowledge of history or nature of condition, they still saw themselves as somehow connected to the African world. However, Garvey's movement began to crumble under the weight of what some perceived to be his heedless arrogance and poor management of certain divisions of UNIA operations such as the Black Star Line. Perhaps, this could be at the heart of the "poorly conceived" sentiments of Du Bois, but the fact of the matter is that Garvey had developed a movement which stood significantly larger and financial backing significantly greater than anything Du Bois would ever accomplish.

Further, the entirety of this movement was built on the sole contributions of Black men and women, something that Du Bois could only dream of accomplishing. In 1920, at arguable the height of the UNIA, Garvey organized the first UNIA Convention preceded by a huge parade beginning at the UNIA offices on 135th street.³¹³ The Jamaican historian Colin Grant, author of the extensive narrative, *Negro with A Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey*, lends his insight into the parade's proceedings:

³¹¹ "CPI Inflation Calculator." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl?cost1=.25&year1=1918&year2=2017>.

³¹² Colin Grant, *Negro With A Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008) 117, 164

³¹³ Ibid, 242

... the UNIA-sponsored event international convention would culminate in the crowning of a provisional president of Africa. His majesty would be elected by the delegates, and would be charged with governing an as yet undelineated African Empire constituting the 400 million Negroes of the world. The system of honours that Garvey proposed and the conferencing of titles on an imagined African government-in-exile was the one aspect of the convention that would receive the most unflattering rebukes from Garvey's critics. He thought his proposal no more absurd than Eamon de Valera's appointment that year as the provisional president of Ireland.³¹⁴

Garvey, however, was no fool. Assuredly, what his first job as print worker, and eventually manager, at a large printing establishment in Jamaica had taught him was the power of propaganda. As most of the African continent was at the time colonized by Europeans, Garvey needed to appeal to his base not only in America but also the grassroots in his organization spread all over the Africa world, especially on the African continent itself. The need for the inclusion of prominent indigenous Africans in the organization he sought at best to meet. Thus, for outstanding appeal, Garvey included at the convention George O. Marke, who he had placed as the official representative of the Freetown division of the UNIA in Sierra Leone. Even more distinguished was the high-profiled Liberian Gabriel Johnson, soon duly installed as Potentate Leader of the Negro Peoples of the World. Johnson's family was among the most powerful Americo-Liberian ruling elite in Liberia. Johnson's father was once elected the Liberian President in 1884 and his niece was married to then president, C.D. King.³¹⁵

All of this W.E.B. Dubois would however be considered to be a bit of a circus. Du Bois, now in his early fifties, had begun showing signs of evolving beyond the "double conscious" prognosis of his youthful thirties. Through much effort in diplomacy, cunning

³¹⁴ Ibid, 243

³¹⁵ Ibid, 244

and plotting Du Bois had begun to establish his own Pan-African front. He had engineered the African conference in Paris and was hoping to capitalize on the accomplishment if he could keep the post-war powers from hindering him with any due resistance. Thus, he grew increasingly concerned with the actions of Garvey and, as Du Bois perceived it, his absurd claims to an African empire.

Garvey had already infuriated him a short while before as he had received a letter from the UNIA leader to inform him that at the convention a leader of the American Negro people would be elected by popular vote and Du Bois was, of course, an obvious candidate. On request that Du Bois submit his name for nomination, Du Bois retorted, "I beg to say that I thank you for the suggestion, but under no circumstances can I allow my name to be presented."³¹⁶ Was the letter some type of joke on the part of Garvey or perhaps some curious way to show some manner of respect towards the highly respected public intellectual? Regardless, Du Bois was well within character to turn down such an invitation given his politics at the time. What would his white pen-pals and philanthropists think of such a promotion or even just the simple association with such a group?

Nevertheless, Marcus Garvey should be considered among the most ambitious and passionate leaders in the struggle for African freedom and autonomy. Many during his day, even those who were once considered close to him, turned away from the leader. In examining the record of witnesses, faults in Garvey's character, particularly his pomposity and obstinacy, hindered his activities and added to the growing number of

³¹⁶ Ibid, 244 - 245

detractors. However, many also failed to see the great possibilities of Garvey's visions and his unfettered dedication to the advancement of African people knew no equal. Even Du Bois had to admit his sincerity as he once wrote, "He has been charged with dishonesty and graft, but he seems to me essentially an honest and sincere man with a tremendous vision, great dynamic force, stubborn determination and unselfish desire to serve."³¹⁷

Early on Du Bois was indeed concerned that his "Pan-African movement" was being confused with what he dubbed "the Garvey agitation." But after the Paris meeting he felt that the western world was beginning to differentiate between the two. It is a shame that Du Bois wished not to be associated with a movement that expressed self-determination and autonomy on the part of African people, but perhaps he prophesied early on that the Western powers were too fearful, envious, and petty to allow such a movement to flourish while they held power. Perhaps the indictments Du Bois has developed of the West in the late 1940s are part of a long-standing perception that he elected to remain mute until he was sure that the Western world was absolutely "heading for collapse." We can only speculate that in the next few decades Du Bois would slowly turn towards Marxist and socialist ideas before relocating to the newly independent nation of Ghana at the twilight of his life.

Interestingly, a primary motivation for Du Bois' move to Ghana was Nkrumah's invitation and support of Du Bois using Ghanaian resources to edit the *Encyclopedia*

³¹⁷ Edmund David Cronon and John Hope Franklin. *Black Moses; The story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 208

Africana. Prolific scholars Charisse Burden-Stelly and Gerald Horne offer their opinion of this event in their phenomenal text, *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Life in American History*.

Though the subtitle may misguide, as this treatment of Du Bois' life is comprehensive and extends into his activities abroad, including his final years living in Ghana. Burden-Stelly and Horne would note:

Thus, becoming a national of an African nation while supervising an encyclopedia important to its future development was like a dream come true for Du Bois...underlining the importance of liberating Africa from colonialism, it was Ghanaian independence that reanimated the idea to bring this laud- able idea to fruition. Du Bois was not sufficiently spindly to be kept from drawing up an ambitious scheme to bring this project to completion. His proposed encyclopedia was focused on Africans because, at this juncture, knowledge of them and their accomplishments were either shrouded or distorted, whereas virtually all European explorers, missionaries, colonial officials, and so on were to be excluded, simply because this information could be found in abundance elsewhere.³¹⁸

This is the interesting thing about Du Bois' long life. Harkening back on his troubles with Booker T. Washington, Carter G. Woodson, and even Marcus Garvey we come to find that his life and experiences would prove many of their contentions to be the most correct. Here is Du Bois, now living in an independent African nation, working on an independent African publication at the exclusion of European experiences and opinions, and also being funded exclusively by African dollars. More interestingly, there appears in his last autobiography no metaphors or parallels to be had between the plight of African people with Greek myths. Du Bois' devotion to Pan-African struggle near the end of his life appeared to take on a more fiercely independent and autonomous attitude.

³¹⁸ Charisse Burden-Stelly and Gerald Horne, *W.E.B. Du Bois: a Life in American History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, An imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2019), 191-192

In fact, on March 11, 1957, just five days after Ghana gained its initial independence, Du Bois had this to say:

Ghana must on the contrary be the representative of Africa, and not only that, but of Black Africa below the Sahara desert. As such, her first duty should be to come into close acquaintanceship and cooperation with her fellow areas of British West Africa and Liberia; with the great areas of black folk in French West and Equatorial Africa; with the Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somaliland; with Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika; with the Belgian Congo and all Portuguese Africa; with the Rhodesias and Bechuanaland; with Southwest Africa, the Union of South Africa and Madagascar; and with all other parts of Africa and with peoples who want to cooperate. All the former barriers of language, culture, religion and political control should bow before the essential unity of race and descent, the common suffering of slavery and the slave trade and the modern color bar.³¹⁹

One could only wonder what another decade of the evolution of Du Boisian thought and practice may have produced. With the looming Black Power and African independence movements on the horizon, Du Bois would have certainly kept tabs on the political circumstances and allowed such to continue to develop him as an intellectual. If the vessel of human flesh weren't so fleeting, would Du Bois' continued growth had developed him into a more revolutionary Pan-African, and perhaps an all the more Afrocentric individual? These are, of course, questions for which an answer will never exist. However, they are important questions for the evolution of Du Boisian thought as well as that for the future Afrocentric scholarship.

Conclusion

What I have offered in this analysis is a clearer lens for examining Du Bois' scholarship, particularly as it pertains to notions of cultural-political centeredness.

³¹⁹ Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 188

As aforementioned, *The World and Africa* is an important text when considering the time in which it was written and the issues that it raises. However, Du Bois' affliction with *double consciousness* and *cognitive hiatus* severely limited many aspects of his scholarship. He was not able to produce within the text a cultural-historical matrix and, without such, his arguments for political unity became somewhat superficial. To base an argument for unity purely off of the circumstances of a common oppressor limits the range of agency for African people.

To be sure, it is certain that unity in the face of shared oppression can occur between even the most antithetical of groups. However, in this text Du Bois, to the best of his ability, penned a history of the African world. This history is the basis of his argument for what it meant historically to be an African person and how African people have contributed to world history. Thus, Du Bois was acknowledging some notion of a composite African ontology comprised of various historical and contemporary African groups. There was some understanding of historical cross-cultural relationships within the African continent, especially as it related to his discussion of the Bantu Migration. Du Bois would attempt in the last chapter, and in several works following this text, to use this historical argument of the achievement and character of the composite African identity in order to argue Pan-African unity.

This argument involves a useful cultural composite illustration that is no different from the historical-cultural connections, and modern socio-political unity, Du Bois mentions about the various European nations in the earlier chapters. Nevertheless, Du Bois failed to capitalize on the cultural argument regarding African people and instead focused more so on arguments which could valorize Africa to the western world. This

effectively weakened his contention that African people should seek to “save” Africa. An Afrocentric approach to saving African is an approach that values restoration of African cultural and social norms. However, instead of Afrocentric norms, and regardless of the fact that Du Bois seemed to be advocating for the right of Africans to govern their own affairs, through his arguments in this text, Du Bois’ approach to saving Africa would see further imposition of Eurocentric norms.

Du Bois would perhaps have better understood his folly if he had delved deeper into pre-colonial African cultural cosmology. Certainly, an examination of African history can lead people to further understand African cultural cosmology but such understanding will only be cursory if one doesn’t delve into the myths, customs, orature, and other such cultural phenomena. Such a deep examination did not seem to be an interest of Du Bois during the writing of this text. Further, examining African cultural phenomena with an Afrocentric lens would produce more agency-affirming scholarship. However, this does not mean that Du Bois, as well as the company he kept, were not moving in this direction. For example, in the last year of Du Bois’ life, Kwame Nkrumah addressed the editorial board of Du Bois’ *Encyclopedia Africana* in 1964, he stated that, “the Project Africana must be frankly Afrocentric in interpretation of African history and the social and cultural institutions of the African and people of African descent everywhere.”³²⁰

³²⁰ Molefi Kete Asante, “The Philosophy of Afrocentricity,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy*, ed. Adeshina Afolayan and Toyin Falola (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 231-244.

From this phrase we see one of the earliest strands of Afrocentric theory and therefore the work of Du Bois, no matter the contradictions and limitations within, was a necessary step in the direction towards Afrocentric scholarship. Such work has provided us with contentions and theoretical ideals that we may today identify and tease-out that which is of use to African agency as well identify ideals that are harmful. If we are to understand that the theories of scholars such as Du Bois permeates not only the academy but society at large then it is only responsible that the continued refinement of such scholarship is done in order for the theories, or rather the sentiments thereof, to better serve the communities they were created for.

As for the case of Du Bois' and his call for Pan-African unity in the face of the continuing cultural war with Europe, I have offered this work as one of many in a growing body of Afrocentric scholarship. Through my analysis of *The World and Africa* I have offered a critique as well as a methodology which centers both African agency as well as the importance of African cultural cosmology. The results of which help us to better understand the work that must be done in advancing Afrocentric awareness in both academic scholarship and among African communities worldwide.

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