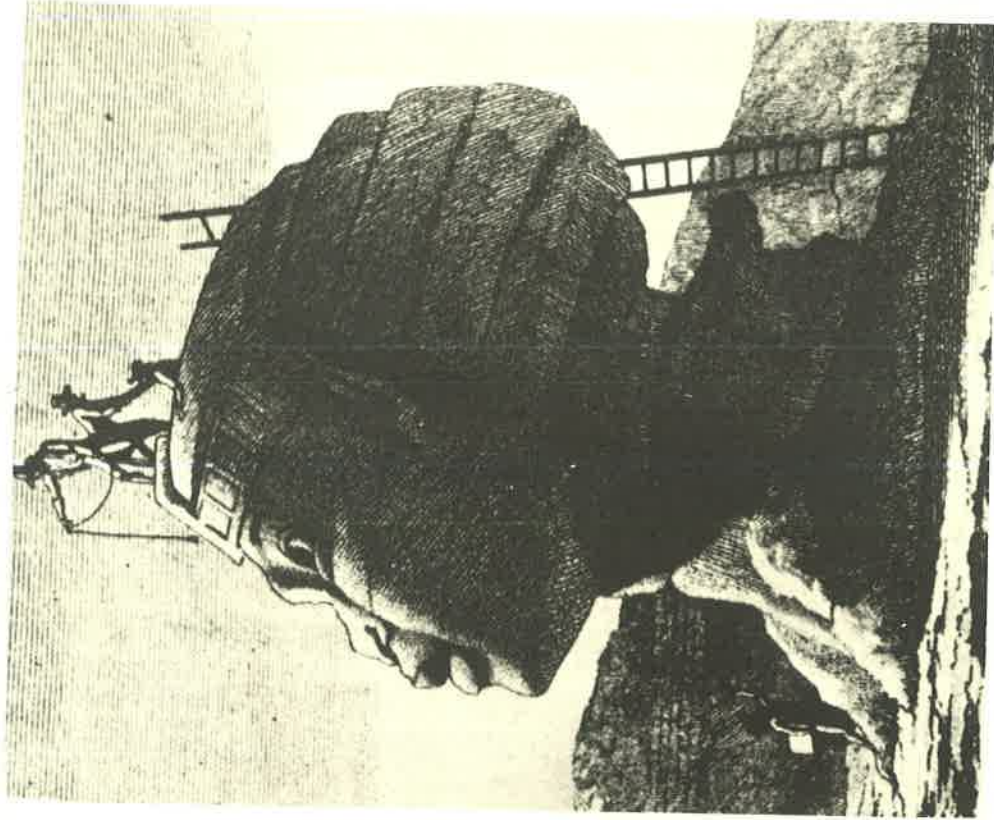




1. The Sphinx, as the first French scientific mission found it in the nineteenth century. This profile is neither Greek nor Semitic: it is Bantu. Its model is said to have been Pharaoh Chephren (circa 2600 B.C., Fourth Dynasty), who built the second Giza pyramid.

Cheikh Anta Diop

THE
AFRICAN
ORIGIN
OF
CIVILIZATION
Myth or Reality

Translated from the French by
MERCER COOK

Lawrence Hill Books

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Reply to a Critic

I propose here to answer the critical review by Mr. Raymond Mauny, which appeared in the *Bulletin de l'IFAN* (Bulletin of the Fundamental Institute of Black Africa) in the July-October 1960 issue, relative to *Nations nègres et culture*. . . . We apologize for returning to notions of race, cultural heritage, linguistic relationship, historical connections between peoples, and so on. I attach no more importance to these questions than they actually deserve in modern twentieth-century societies. Only my concern about scientific objectivity compels me to direct attention to these themes so long as certain of their aspects are challenged.

As will be seen, our account is devoid of any passion and we ask nothing better than to yield to factual evidence. What we shall try to combat in the name of scientific truth, and what forces us to utilize a notion as delicate as that of race, is a group of arguments that have become so habitual as to pass for scientific truths, which they definitely are not. It is the whole body of hypotheses, distorted into factual experiences, that are likely to lead to error and are still more dangerous than outright dogmatism. . . .

* * *

Mr. Mauny's criticisms begin near the end of his introduction:

What was permissible for the student or the young lycée teacher is no longer allowed the Doctor of Letters, whose title could authorize him tomorrow to teach at the University. And so, despite all my sympathy for the author, whose acquaintance I have made, I consider it my duty, no matter how much it may pain me and him, to say aloud what others are keeping silent out of politeness or for some other motive.

Obviously, Mr. Mauny intends to pull no punches in his attempt to demolish the adverse thesis. If, in spite of that, his arguments should happen to reveal an unexpected fragility, it would be entirely invol-

untary on his part. As for me, I shall try to reply as objectively as possible, with equal serenity, to all the criticisms formulated here. The reader will be the judge.

According to C. A. Diop, the examination of the bone remains and mummies shows that we are dealing with Negroes: "I affirm that the skulls from the most ancient epochs and the mummies from the dynastic epoch differ in no respect from the anthropological characteristics of the two Negro races existing on earth: the straight-haired Dravidian and the woolly-haired Negro." And later: "When we scientifically cleanse the skin of the mummies, the epidermis appears pigmented exactly like that of all other African Blacks . . . I add that at the present time there are infallible scientific procedures (ultraviolet rays, for example) to determine the amount of melanin in pigmentation. Now, the difference between a White and a Black in this respect is the fact that the white organism secretes enzymes which absorb the melanin. The Negro organism does not secrete any enzymes. The same is true of the ancient Egyptians. That is why invariably, from prehistory to the Ptolemaic epoch, the Egyptian mummy has remained Negro. In other words, throughout Egyptian history, the skin as well as the bone structure of all Egyptians of all social classes (from Pharaoh to Fellah) has remained that of authentic Negroes."

Let us separate the two ideas contained in the preceding passage quoted by Mauny: A. "According to C. A. Diop . . . African Blacks." This is exact; in August 1961 I brought back from Paris samples of mummies that I have indeed cleansed and kept in glass jars at the IFAN. They are at the disposal of all scholars who might be interested and Mr. Mauny, especially, may examine them at his leisure, whenever he so desires.¹

B. "Now the difference between a White and a Black . . . The Negro organism does not secrete any enzymes." Mauny thinks he is quoting me. Nevertheless, scientific precision requires a clear distinction to be made . . . between ideas expressed by me in *Nations nègres et culture* and those collected [from me] by a journalist unfamiliar with the subject at a mere interview in the Latin Quarter [which M. Mauny interweaves with them]. On reading Mauny's critique, we get the distinct impression that the quoted passage occurs in *Nations nègres et culture*; this is not so. He could easily have avoided the con-

fusion since both documents are available. It is to be regretted that throughout the critique he combines two texts that cannot be placed on the same plane. . . .

All animal and plant organisms contain enzymes; this is a classic question of biochemistry. It is the condition of activation of the enzymes that can differ; sometimes it depends on hereditary factors. Thus, a preponderant racial factor intervenes in the oxidation of tyrosine and its transformation into melanin (in the human epidermis), according to a chemical reaction catalyzed by tyrosinase.

It is also correct that one could trace back, so to speak, to that racial factor and determine its importance, starting from the "dosage of the amount of melanin" contained in the epidermis, especially in the epidermis of an Egyptian mummy. It is also certain that such a study would classify Egyptians among Negroes, according to the samples available to me and that I have selected entirely at random.

I am not an anthropologist, nor is the author, but I refer the reader to one of the best books on the subject of ancient Egypt: Carleton S. Coon, *The Races of Europe* (New York: Macmillan, 1939, pp. 91-98 & 458-462). In it the racial components of Ancient Egypt are analyzed (Mediterraneans in the Preneolithic, Whites; Tasians on the Abyssinian plateau, Browns with Negroid tendency, Nacada, related but less Negroid; Mediterraneans of Lower Egypt, Whites; and from 3000 B.C. to the Ptolemaic epoch, the history of Egypt shows "the gradual replacement of the Upper Egyptian type by that of Lower Egypt" (p. 96). The later invaders (Hyksos, peoples of the sea, Semites, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks), all belong to white races, with the exception of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, of Nubian ancestry, as is known.

Coon's work contributes nothing new. If all the specimens of races and sub-races described by him lived in New York today, they would reside in Harlem, including those whose heads and faces "are those of a smoothly contoured fine Mediterranean form"; no anthropologist will dispute me on this. Even Coon would agree with me. But, since the ancient Egyptian is dead, discussion seems possible.

So, let us discuss. Coon's volume is dated 1939. Surprisingly enough, the facts in it with which Mauny challenges me conform basically to my own conclusions. It is merely a question of variants of Negroes and Negroids. Insofar as we adhere strictly to the facts,

Egyptian archeology excludes the idea of an early occupancy of Lower Egypt by a White race. This idea seemed so natural to the first Egyptologists that they stated it almost spontaneously, without trying to base it on the slightest scientific or archeological certainty. A study of Namer's Tablet would not allow us to affirm it since, in the final analysis, the indecisive nature of the persons depicted and the thinness of documentation would be disproportionate to the importance of the conclusion. All Moret's theories on the anteriority of Lower over Upper Egypt are taken from Egyptian legends of the Greek epoch and freely interpreted.²

In Lower Egypt, archeological diggings dating back to the predynastic have failed to uncover the existence of a White type. The Whites of Lower Egypt were transplanted there at a well-known, precise historical epoch; it was during the Nineteenth Dynasty, under Merneptah (1300 B.C.), that the coalition of Indo-Europeans (peoples of the sea) was conquered; the survivors were taken prisoner and scattered over the Pharaoh's various construction sites. Between 1300 and 500 B.C., these populations had time to spread from the Western Delta to the outskirts of Carthage. In Book II of his *History*, Herodotus explains how they were distributed along the coast. Consequently, when Coon speaks of Whites inhabiting Lower Egypt, his statement is not based on any document. It would even remain to be proved that Lower Egypt existed as inhabitable *terra firma* in remote times.

As for the white invaders: Hyksos, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, etc., the Egyptians always represented them as races apart and were never influenced by them, for the simple reason that the invaders' civilization was less advanced than their own. No one has ever thought seriously of proposing scientifically the influence of any one of these peoples on Egyptian civilization.

Still according to Coon, the conventional representations reveal a slim body, narrow hips, small hands and feet. The head and face "are those of a smoothly contoured fine Mediterranean form"; numerous upper-class types represented by these portraits "looked strikingly like modern Europeans" (p. 96). On the contrary, the type of certain Pharaohs, like Ramses II, appears related to the Abyssinian type.

. . . If the reader, after carefully examining all the reproductions [of Pharaohs and other dignitaries] and noting the social signif-

cance of some and the insignificance of others in Egyptian society of that day, then rereads the above passage . . . he will have cause to meditate on the scientific validity of the conventional texts.

The pigmentation of the Egyptian "was usually a brunet white; in the conventional figures the men are represented as red, the women often as lighter, and even white" and the daughter of Cheops, builder of the Great Pyramid, was "a definite blond." Toward the south, near Aswan, the population was evidently darker (brownish-red, brown).

In their paintings and sculptures, the Egyptians depicted foreigners with their racial characteristics: "Besides the Libyans, who have Nordic features as well as coloring, Asiatics, with prominent noses and curly hair, sea peoples from the Mediterranean, with lighter skins and a more pronounced facial relief than the Egyptians are also shown, as well as Negroes," and later . . . "The Mediterranean pigmentation of the Egyptians has probably not changed during the last 5,000 years" (p. 98).

That is the opinion of an anthropologist; I leave it up to you to draw a conclusion. But I cannot help finding it difficult to maintain that a people whose principal components were Mediterranean could be Negro, especially after all the details provided by Coon who, incidentally, nevertheless recognizes Negro contributions.

Singling out Cheops' daughter as "a definite blond" would prove that this was rare, if accurate. The Egyptians were so little white, that when they encountered a white person with red hair, they killed him immediately as a sick person unable to adapt to life. This was certainly a regrettable but comprehensible prejudice between two different races during those remote epochs of history. However, we have an opportunity to scrutinize the profile of Chephren (Cheops' son or brother), which is identified with that of the Giza Sphinx. As we look, we are easily convinced that the hypothetical daughter of Cheops did not owe the color of her blond hair to her father.

As early as the Sixth Dynasty, under Pepi I and his chancellor Uni, Egypt began to import white women from Asia . . . Moreover, Cheops is supposed to have gone so far as to prostitute his daughters to finish building his pyramid: the Great Pyramid that would become his grave. Was it not perhaps rather a question of importing foreign girls for purposes of prostitution?

Concerning Mauny's conclusion, need I recall that, according to the most recent anthropological studies, a plurality, 36 percent, of the Egyptian population was "Negroid" in the protodynastic epoch? Mauny is mistaken about the term "Mediterranean"; it is a euphemism for "Negroid," when used by the anthropologists. In any case, it means "non-white," as is evident from what precedes. What is involved here is the "brown race" (in the melanodermic sense) of Sergi and Elliot Smith. This conclusion is not even a faithful reflection of the forecited facts from Coon's volume, for we cannot see how the principal components are "Mediterranean" in the Cro-Magnon sense of the word, since they are only brown Whites, brown reds, browns of the Abyssinian type, browns with Negroid tendency, the less Negroid Naqada type, and so on.³

According to C. A. Diop, ancient authors have also stated that the Egyptians were Negroes. Herodotus, the "Father of History," who wrote about 450 B.C., is quite rightly called upon, for he visited Egypt. But are C.A. Diop's examples as convincing as he thinks? For example, it is not to Egypt that Herodotus is referring (II, 22) when he says, "they are black from the heat," but to the inhabitants of the southern lands, the Ethiopians . . .

"By calling the dove black, they indicated that the woman was an Egyptian" (II, 57). Were not the Greeks (the Hebrews had the same reaction) inclined to call the Egyptians "Blacks" because the latter were darker than they, which is true? Do we not use the same expression in France (whence the family names: Morel, Moreau, Lenoir, Nègre, etc.) to designate persons darker than the average? A Nordic is clearly aware of having lighter skin than a Spaniard or Southern Italian; he will speak of dark skin, brown skin, even black skin, just as we do, moreover, with regard to bathers who acquire suntans on the beaches in summer. Neither of these is a Negro.

Is the example of the Colchians any better? The author quotes a passage from Herodotus: "The Egyptians said that they believed the Colchians to be descended from Sesostris' army. My own conjectures were founded, first, on the fact that they are black-skinned and have woolly hair." But why did Mr. Diop fail to include the rest of the passage: "This amounts to but little, since several other nations are so too"? And the adjective *melanochroes* used by Herodotus does not necessarily mean "black." In 1948 Legrand

translated it: "having brown skin." On this subject, cf. also F. M. Snowden, *The Negro in Ancient Greece*, 1948, p. 34.

In the next example, concerning the Indians of the south, I see nowhere mentioned the fact that the Egyptians were Blacks. It is solely a question of Ethiopians.

What precisely is remarkable is that in a digression on the sources of the Nile, Herodotus happens to apply the same ethnic adjective (*melanochroes*) to the Ethiopians reputed to be black and to the Egyptians that one would like to whiten and consider as leucoderms. To translate *melanochroes* as "having brown skin," is to take a liberty justified only by *a priori* ideas on the skin color of the Egyptians. This is the strongest term existing in Greek to denote blackness; strictly speaking, it should be translated as Negro (*niger-gra-grum*).

The attitude which consists of resorting to an insane misinterpretation of texts instead of accepting the evidence, is typical of modern scholarship. It reflects the special state of mind that prompts one to seek secondary meanings for words rather than give them their usual significance, for that is how deeply embedded *a priori* ideas have become. It is necessary to reread Herodotus' passages in context to know that no scholar whatsoever is entitled to give words a meaning differing from their real connotation. Herodotus was aware that he was describing a Negro race, in the proper sense of the term, a race whose morphological qualities are diametrically opposed to his own (in the sense of opposites: black-white, frizzy-straight, etc.). For him it was not a question of tonalities or nuances within a single race, as Mauney would understand it, for instance, as a distinction between Nordic and Spaniard.

The fact that Egyptians had black skin was for Herodotus an evident truth that he posits, like a mathematician, as an axiom to lead subsequently to the demonstration of more complex facts. Thus the doves in question are only symbols of two women whom the Phoenician traders allegedly took from Thebes to sell them, one in Libya (Oracle of Amon), the other in Dodona, in Greece. . . .

Herodotus wished to show the profound influence of Egypt on Greece, especially in religion. In this particular case, he wanted to prove that the Oracle of Amon and that of Dodona are of Egyptian origin and were founded by women kidnapped from the capital of Upper Egypt, Thebes. He draws this conclusion from the fact that the women were black. To attribute any other meaning to the text does

not reflect scientific scholarship; it merely indicates an imperious determination to skirt around the facts, to hold on to what one wants to believe. All the passages from Herodotus are equally explicit from this point of view.

I shortened the second quotation because the rest added nothing to my demonstration. I needed to prove that the Egyptians were black; it mattered little to me to know (I already knew it) that they had this blackness in common with other peoples. Herodotus made that observation solely because he wanted to add a supplementary proof corresponding to this description of the Egyptians. If we continue to the end of the paragraph, we shall see that for Herodotus, the Egyptian had black skin, woolly hair, and was circumcized. Specifically because the Colchians possessed those three characteristics, he considered them Egyptians.

Coming back to the case of the Nordic who judges the populations of Southern Europe as rather dark "without being Negroes," I can only refer to a passage at the end of Chapter I of my *Antériorité des civilisations nègres*,* where we discuss the difference in attitude of European and African researchers. In reality, it is evident that, when discussing one's own society, one analyzes without fragmenting it, one grasps traditions almost instinctively, one treats them objectively; nowhere does one dig deep ditches or set up impassable barriers; one does not clutter the investigated terrain with watertight partitions; one is inclined to seek the coherence of facts and usually finds it. When dealing with any other reality, the trend is to pulverize, for in all objectivity there is no more difference between Mauney's Nordic and a Spaniard than between the Ethiopian and the Egyptian on the one hand and the other West African Blacks on the other. To be sure, without ceasing to belong to the same ethnic universe, they are all well aware of the nuances that distinguish them.

Can Mauney state positively that in the Middle Ages, in the days of Barbary, when proper names were being formed in modern Europe, particularly in France, the Morels, Moreaus, Lenoirs, and Nègres did not indeed have some ancestor who justified that appellation? Names were not created gratuitously; one was called "de Vallon" when he came from the valley, "Dupont" if he lived near the bridge, and so on. Why should names implying ethnic origin be applied without any reason? Persons interested in kitchen gossip can easily show that au-

*Chapter XIII of the present volume.

thentic Negro elements were found in various European families during that epoch in France, Germany, and Italy, even if we discount the Arab influence.

The third quotation criticized by Mauny involves the Padaean Indians who were never subjugated by Darius. Herodotus describes their skin color with the same ethnic adjective that he uses for Egyptians and Ethiopians; they are all Blacks (*melanochroes*) and this is what Mauny fails to see. Such is the logical justification for that quotation.

The passage from Diodorus of Sicily concerning the Ethiopians' claim that their civilization preceded that of the Egyptians, is interesting historically for the opinion that the Egyptians probably descended from the Ethiopians. It therefore poses the problem of the Negro's contribution to the formation of ancient Egypt. So, I consider this text more important than those from Herodotus, Strabo, or the authors of Genesis in this connection. But I insist on saying at once that archeology proves superabundantly that Egypt was the civilizing factor on Ethiopia, and not the reverse. I believe it impossible to prove that architectural constructions in Nubia, to cite but one example, are earlier than those of Upper or Lower Egypt in the epoch of the pyramids. This does not mean that the Ethiopians had no part in forming Egyptian civilization; I am even convinced of the contrary. It is for the ethnologists, sociologists, and others to spell out the importance of that contribution.

This passage from Diodorus was quoted to show that the first Egyptians who filtered farther north in the Nile Valley, were only a fragment, a "colony," detached from an early trunk: the Ethiopian community located farther south. Diodorus reports this as a general opinion in his day. Rightly or wrongly, the Ethiopians always thought themselves to be the biological ancestors of the Egyptians. They also claimed, as Diodorus reports, the paternity of the early cultural creations from which Egypt later benefited. Cailliaud, one of the first moderns to study the Nubian civilization in depth, shared that opinion. In his view, the earliest attempts were made in Ethiopia and then perfected in Egypt. Having thus become masterpieces, the rough sketches probably went back up the valley, like the reflux of the tide. Consequently, it was never our intention to dispute the belated influence of Egypt on Nubia. As we reread the text of *Nations nègres et*

culture, we readily perceive that there is no need to confuse this issue.

From Mauny's critique, one gets the impression that I was the one who wrote somewhere: "the architectural constructions in Nubia, to cite but one example, are earlier than those of Upper or Lower Egypt." Since I never wrote any such thing, why does he make that insinuation? The best way to criticize objectively, in my opinion, is not to ascribe to authors ideas that they have not expounded, in order the better to attack them.

In the following quotation from Strabo: "Egyptians settled in Ethiopia and Colchis," I fail to see anything to prove that the Egyptians were black; they colonized parts of those two countries, and that is all there is to it.

Perhaps the logical connection (that escapes Mauny, he says) is too implicit? Yet, the passage just quoted from Herodotus could have helped him to grasp the meaning of that sentence.

During Antiquity, scholars considered Ethiopians, Egyptians, and Colchians as Negroes belonging to the same race. Nobody can cite a denial of this in the ancient texts. But the chapter from Strabo's *Geography*, which reports these facts, deals with migrations of peoples. The author simply wanted to describe the dispersion of populations; for him, the point of departure was Egypt, rather than Ethiopia. He thought that it started from an early Egyptian nucleus, from which Ethiopians probably separated in the form of colonies. These Ethiopians supposedly migrated up the Nile Valley and the Colchians settled on the shores of the Black Sea. For that reason he says: "Egyptians settled in Colchis and Ethiopia." As the blackness of Ethiopians and Colchians could be accepted *a priori* as indisputable (and remains so even today), one could deduce from Strabo's remark that the Egyptians were consequently also black.

The same observation on the passage from Genesis IX, 18-X, 20, where, as a matter of fact, the Egyptians (Mesraim) are classed among Ham's descendants. But the latter is a legendary personage like Noah, Shem, and Japhet, and the division worked out in the Bible only concerns the various races then known by the author or authors of Genesis: Indo-Europeans (Japhet), Semites (Hebrews, Arabs, some of the Mesopotamians, etc.), and Hamites (or the

group of peoples who, to their knowledge, were darker than the Semites: Kush, Egyptians, Put, Canaan).

Moreover, Genesis, which is not an anthropological treatise but a collection of Hebraic, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian legends, referring *inter alia* to the origin of the human races as the Hebrews of the second millennium imagined them, nowhere mentions the black color of the descendants of Ham (Cham) or Canaan; the Israelites were conscious of being lighter than they, and that is all.

A great step forward has been taken: the Egyptians are no longer deliberately confused with Indo-Europeans or Semites, but ranked in the great family of Ham and Canaan, in conformity with the Biblical text. Naturally, no scholar would be so bold as to take the Biblical quotes literally. But, alas! That has been done only too often. If we assembled end to end all the Biblical quotations in Western works referring to the curse on Ham's progeny, they would without exaggeration be numerous enough to fill a library. In contrast, rare are the quotations pointing out the fact that the Egyptians belong among Ham's descendants. Thus, the Bible is complacently quoted when it is a matter of confirming opinions acquired from tender infancy on the inequality of human races. But it does not do to press the consequences to the limit. One is careful not to uncover the mine buried, so to speak, in the very text cited.

Nevertheless, the "Biblical legends" of which Mauny speaks are often surprisingly true: for example, the antediluvian civilization of El Obeid [in Central Sudan] discovered by modern archeology. It proves that the story of the flood is not unfounded, and that the overflowing of the Tigris and Euphrates, even if it failed to submerge the whole earth about 4000 B.C., must have given the riparian populations that impression. Napoleon, in turn, barely missed learning, at his expense, the truth of the passage about the crossing of the Red Sea. This does not diminish the fact that it is a compilation of texts from different sources: the role of Egyptian traditions in the formation of the Biblical text has begun to be stressed. Certain passages are almost copies of the Egyptian texts.

Returning to the question of whether the Bible designated Ham's descendants and the Egyptians by a term indicating their skin color, we can answer affirmatively. The very name "Ham" (Cham) is an ethnic term:

In Hebrew, Kham: son of Noah

Khum: chestnut

Khom: heat

Khama: heat, the sun

In ancient Egyptian, Khem: black, burned

Ham: hot, black

In Wolof, Khem: black, burned.

Thus, the ethnic designation of Ham and his progeny is implied in the etymology of the word used in Genesis.

Mauny's reservation is quite prudent, because it concerns Genesis alone. The inattentive reader could believe that nowhere in the Bible are Canaanites or Egyptians referred to as Blacks, which would obviously be incorrect. Genesis is not the whole Bible. In The Song of Songs, the poem ascribed to Solomon, there is no doubt that the alleged daughter of the Pharaoh is black. The Bible abounds in similar examples. Why should it be important then, to observe that in one of its books the ethnic term for the Canaanites is not explicitly stated?

From an examination of the ancient texts cited by the author, not much is left to persuade us that the ancient Egyptians were Negroes. Archeology leads us to believe the contrary, supported precisely by a text from Herodotus. It was only after the Egyptian deserters settled in Ethiopia that "the Ethiopians adopting Egyptian manners, became more civilized" (II, 30).

Furthermore, hypotheses on the origin of the Egyptians are not in short supply. C. A. Diop did not innovate in this field. Here is the passage in which Gabriel Hanotaux (*Histoire de la nation égyptienne*, 1931, I, 14) discusses it: "What were these early people (of the Nile Valley)? Celts, replied Poinsett de Sivry—Negroes, said Volney—Chinese, thought Winckelmann—Indo-Polynesians, claimed Moreau de Jonnes—Africans from Ethiopia and Libya, declared Petrie, supported by the naturalists Hott, Morton, Perrier, Hamy—Asiatics from Babylonia, with an advanced civilization, affirm archeologists and orientalist Brugsch, Ebers, Hommel, de Rougé, de Morgan. For this variety of opinions there is doubtless a cause: it is that in Egypt there was a melange of various races."

Egypt, land of a mixture of races and of civilizations at the cross-

roads of three continents, such is indeed the logical vocation of that country. Any attempt to monopolize the whole for the benefit of a single component distorts the truth. It is for us, historians of Black Africa, to detect the part played in the formation of ancient Egypt by the Negro and the Brown (Africans from Ethiopia and Libya, as Petrie says), a truth widely admitted already, as we have seen.

The reader can appreciate how much "is left from an examination of the texts" involved. It is up to him to see whether or not our argument is strengthened by this critique, and whether the criticism has not made him more aware of the soundness of our position.

Mauny seems to confuse civilization and race. The passage from Herodotus, also cited in *Nations nègres et culture*, is absolutely silent on race. At most, it informs us that, at a given moment, dissatisfied Egyptian soldiers defected to the service of the king of Nubia, and that the result produced a civilizing (Egyptian) influence on Nubia. It is absolutely impossible to extract, despite what Mauny says, the slightest conclusion about races. Nothing justifies it. On the other hand, it can rightly be noted that these Egyptian soldiers, during that period of disarray and anarchy, turned toward Upper Egypt and Nubia; this was a constant of Egyptian Pharaonic policy. In troubled periods, princes of the blood and Egyptian tradition always took refuge in Upper Egypt, not the Delta. Ethiopia was the land of the gods, of the ancestors, the land of Punt, of legitimacy, the early habitat of the race, according to the most authentic Egyptian traditions. . . . In the ritual, Upper Egypt always took precedence over Lower Egypt; Egyptian society was legitimist until its decline. We recall that only a Nubian princess could be attached to the sanctuary of the god Amon at Thebes. The reaction of the Egyptian troops was a legitimist reaction. What it involved was a deliberate choice between Egyptian-Nubian tradition and adventurous usurpers who had seized the throne of Egypt. There can be no doubt on this score; it suffices to refer to that part of Egyptian history to be convinced.⁴

Psammetichus I, Twenty-sixth Dynasty, was considered by the people as a usurper who delivered Egypt "to the dregs of the nations," to foreigners, by facilitating their installation. In particular, he surrounded himself by Greek mercenaries and conferred upon them the highest civil and military posts in the court. That was when the garrisons of the National Egyptian army, out of frustration and as legitimists (this was a part of the army composed of loyal citizens), went

to place themselves at the disposal of the king of Nubia (Khartoum, Sudan). They numbered 200,000 and were assigned to the region between Bahr-el-Azrek and Bahr-el-Abyad. They multiplied and became the *autochtones* mentioned by Herodotus.⁵

Egypt was no more a melting pot of races than Europe was, and the long quotation from Hanotaux can be applied word for word to that part of the world as well. There we find Celts, Ligurians, Pelasgians, Italiotes, Etruscans, Germans, Angles and Saxons, Slavs, Huns, Iberians, Arabs, Lapps, Cro-Magnon men and Grimaldi Negroids, Chancelade men, to cite only a few, of all races: white, black, yellow, "brownish-yellow," "brunettes" (?) gradually mixed in that relatively narrow area of Western Europe. Everyone knows this, but it did not prevent the different European nationalities known today—Italian, German, French, etc.—from aspiring to a certain racial homogeneity. Nevertheless, each of these nations claims and protects what it considers to be its cultural heritage.

No school of history has so far attempted seriously to deride those attitudes and to pulverize those crystallizations of historical errors. The permanence of somatic characteristics despite thousands of years of crossbreeding in a primitive people settled on a terrain is one of the most extraordinary facts noted by modern anthropology. The three great ethnic sectors of Europe (Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean of prehistory) still subsist, notwithstanding the incalculable number of peoples who have come to alter the original substratum.

All the anthropologists (Vallois, Haddon, Elliot Smith) who have studied Egypt reach the same conclusions. Similarly, in the passage quoted by Mauny, Coon reports that the pigmentation of the Egyptians has probably not changed appreciably during the last five millennia. To be sure, Egyptian crossbreeding spread out like a fan in the course of history, as no one denies, but it has never succeeded in overturning the racial constants of the early population, that of Upper Egypt in particular. The color of the Egyptians has become lighter down through the years, like that of West Indian Negroes, but the Egyptians have never stopped being Negroes. While all Egyptian civilization is directly linked to the cultural forms of Black Africa, a specialist would have great difficulty in demonstrating any cultural identity of Egypt with Europe or with Semitic or Chinese Asia.

For all these reasons, the Black Africans can and must exclusively lay claim to the cultural heritage of the old Egyptian civilization. They are the only ones today whose sensitivity is able to blend easily

with the essence and spirit of that civilization which the Western Egyptologist finds so hard to understand. The intellectual and affective dispositions of present-day Blacks are the same as those of the people who edited the hieroglyphic texts of the pyramids and other monuments and sculptured the bas-reliefs of the temples. Starting from Black Africa, from its conception of the universe, from its cultural forms, its linguistic realities, and its types of politico-social organization, we can gradually bring back to life all those forms of Egyptian civilization that today are dead to European consciousness.

Mauny's repeated contention that the Black's role in Egyptian civilization is already recognized, could apply only to the time elapsed since we exhumed certain documents in *Nations nègres et culture*. The whole effort of modern science, until the past few years, has consisted in denying, despite the facts, this role of the Negro in the acquisition of civilization. The method was simply to silence the facts, as Breasted and so many others did. A second attitude, more cautious and shrewder, consisted of citing a few facts, so as not to be caught at fault, and then demonstrate their minor, negligible significance. Africans, especially those of my generation who have been the greatest victims of that cultural alienation, are in a good position to know whether the Negro's contribution to civilization has been recognized and integrated in the teaching programs, whether an attempt of that nature was even thinkable before the publication of *Nations nègres et culture*.

The cultural unity of Egypt and Black Africa, an essential fact for the history of humanity and the peoples of Black Africa today, has just been recognized officially by Egyptology. It must also be admitted that, as we said earlier, this was the only way for Egyptology to cure its sclerosis, to escape from the impasse and set forth toward a fruitful perspective.

As for the rest of Black Africa, the harvest of archeology is admittedly meager at present. How can C. A. Diop explain that the Egyptians whom he claims as Negroes and Nubians, spiritual sons of Egypt, were the only ones to be civilized before the first millennium B.C., the first to be civilized in all Africa? We cannot see why the inhabitants of the Nile Valley could have been in the vanguard of humanity while the Negroes remained in a "primitive" state, just like their European contemporaries. And if West African Blacks are descendants of the Egyptians, why have they become

"decivilized" between 500 B.C., when Diop says they left Egypt, and 900 A.D., after which we have texts depicting them as being rather "retarded"? Where did they go? How is it that no ancient author has spoken of that migration, undertaken, according to the author, during the historical epoch? And how is it that they left no trace of their passage?

I am astounded that Mauny asks those three questions. Since these queries and their answers were discussed in my text, I am tempted to assume that perhaps Mauny has not read the whole of the book he is criticizing.

Why were the Nubians and Egyptians already civilized while the rest of the world, especially all Europe, was plunged in barbarism? That is a fact which has been observed, not the fruit of imagination. Nor is it a miraculous, inexplicable fact. Accordingly, the historian need not be astonished by it; his role ought to be that of seeking out and presenting plausible explanations for such phenomena.

The same question could be asked about the Greeks as compared with the rest of Europe. After their early contact with the world to the south and the cultural exchanges with Egypt and Crete, they escaped from barbarism in the twelfth century and became civilized between the twelfth and fifth centuries B.C. With the Etruscans, they remained the only civilized people in all Europe. The other European peoples, farther away from the southern cultural centers, remained steeped in barbarism until the Middle Ages, with the exception of the Latins, who also became civilized by contact with the Etruscans and Greeks.

Obviously, instead of regarding Greek civilization as an unusual and more or less miraculous phenomenon, we can easily explain it by placing it in historical and geographical context. A similar explanation can also be given for Egypto-Nubian civilization.

Concluding the first part of *Nations nègres et culture*, I emphasized that Egyptian civilization did not indicate any racial superiority, but was almost the result of a geographical accident. It was the special character of the Nile Valley that conditioned the politico-social evolution of the peoples who migrated there. The extensiveness of the floods of the Nile forced all the inhabitants of the valley to face the annual event collectively, to regulate their whole life in its smallest details on the inundation. To survive, each clan had to rid itself early of its selfishness. When the flooding began, no clan was able to meet

the situation alone; each needed the others' assistance, the solidarity of all clans for the survival of the community. These were the working conditions that soon led the clans to unite and favored the rise of a central authority to coordinate all social, political, and national activity. Until the invention of geometry, none of the material and intellectual activity of the Egyptians was done for its own sake. In its beginnings geometry was an invention enabling them to locate scientifically the exact boundaries of each inhabitant's property after the floods. Nowhere was dependence on the geographical setting and the way of life so close. This imperative necessity seems to explain, at least in the essentials, the anteriority of the Egyptians and Nubians on the road to civilization.

All other peoples, Blacks or Whites, who were subjected to less stringent living conditions requiring a less formal collective action, attained civilization later than the Egyptians. Accordingly, why should it be surprising that certain Blacks and certain Whites became civilized while others were in barbarism? Peoples placed in more favorable conditions are civilized earlier than others, whatever their color, independently of their ethnic identity, and that is all.

We have never invoked any peculiar genius or special aptitudes of the Black race to explain why it was the first to attain civilization. That erroneous conception of the causes of man's evolution led European specialists to the theory of the Greek miracle. However erroneous, it is nevertheless so deeply rooted in the minds of its partisans that, even today, they consider any claim that Africans may legitimately be entitled to the moral advantage of Egyptian civilization as a claim of racial superiority, whether one admits it or not. But such is not the case; those who think so are interpreting it through their own intellectual and moral inclinations.

Why were the Africans "decivilized" en route? asks Mauny. Regression is also an historico-sociological phenomenon that the specialist has a duty to explain, whenever it is objectively detected. This is indeed pertinent here. Let us remain in the valley of the Nile, where the phenomenon is even more apparent. The current populations of that valley are rightly considered the authentic descendants of the ancient Egyptian. Yet, those populations, who never left their homeland, have been "decivilized" on their own soil, losing all the ancient Egyptian wisdom and no longer able to read hieroglyphics, an invention of their ancestors. Why, then, is it astonishing that a population of emigrants should be in a similar situation?

How many times have we heard it said: "If the Blacks are descendants of the Egyptians, why haven't they preserved writing?" On referring to my *Nations nègres et culture* and *L'Afrique Noire précoloniale*, one will see that the usage of writing never disappeared from Black Africa.

What layman or Martian descending on earth could have guessed that Greece is the distant mother of modern American technique and of Western civilization in its most refined and profound aspects? Western Europe has experienced the same regression. During the Middle Ages, all the knowledge of Antiquity took refuge in a few monasteries where it vegetated until the Carolingian Renaissance with Alcuin (735-804). Techniques were lost, architectural knowledge in particular. Not only had they forgotten everything about ancient science; they could not even erect the least complicated building. We can get an idea of this regression by comparing the Ptolemaic map showing the geographical knowledge of Antiquity with that of the Middle Ages for the same Mediterranean area.

According to the satirical Latin poet, Juvenal, who wrote during the second century A.D., the Egyptians themselves had retrogressed immeasurably. Even if we take into account the fact that Juvenal hated Orientals, especially Egyptians, it must be noted that in his review of events dating from circa 127 A.D., Egyptian society was already bending under the weight of totemic deities and retribalization. As a consequence of uninterrupted colonization by Persians, Greeks, and Romans, the country which had civilized the world was reverting to "barbarism," if we are to believe Juvenal. Egypt, which under Queen Hatshepsut (Eighteenth Dynasty) had plowed the seas in high-decked ships, "no longer knew how to sail anything but clay boats with tiny sails and to crouch over short oars . . ." (Satire XV). Juvenal describes the bloody, fratricidal conflicts between two clans or tribes (the cities of Denderah and Hombos) with inimical totems; these conflicts allegedly ended in a cannibalistic scene that could only be described as a ritual orgy.

Where did the Black populations go? When we expounded, in *Nations nègres et culture*, the thesis of a Negro Sahara, we encountered considerable hostility from those who considered themselves experts on the subject. Today, with the recent discoveries of Henri Lhote, refutation is no longer possible. In the section of *Nations nègres et culture* on the peopling of Africa from the Nile Valley, the route from Egypt to the southwest now assumed special significance. In

fact, it passes just south of Tassili N'Ajjer, where Lhote made the most important find of cave paintings of the century, after that of the Lascaux cave. This find enables us to affirm that, contrary to the ideas imposed on the world by scholars for 150 years, Egyptian cultural influences spread for thousands of kilometers in the direction of Black Africa. Tassili N'Ajjer was probably only one stop, located 3,000 kilometers (some 1,875 miles) from the Nile Valley. Those paintings establish an evident link between Egypt, the Sahara, and the rest of Black Africa. It is certain that Nubia also was a great center for the diffusion of cultural influence from the Nile Valley, a kind of hinge between Egypt and other parts of Black Africa. . . .

Let us point out that there are artificial mounds in the region of the Niger Delta, not pyramids, as the author thinks. [We report this] not because of any desire "to disparage African values," but because a pyramid is a mass of well-defined form, while the mounds are on a round or oval base and in a roughly hemispheric shape. The former are found especially in Egypt, Nubia, and Central America; the latter, in Black Africa and Europe.

I know, from experience, that the Serer tombs, called *m'banâr*, were originally perfect cones; with time the construction materials settle and the tomb takes the shape of a mound. . . . The tombs of the ancient emperors of Ghana, as described by Arab authors, have become mounds. No one disputes that. The tombs of the Askia are veritable pyramids. But this question is really of secondary importance, for one cannot see how the essence of a pyramid, to speak in the Platonic sense, could be more noble than the essence of a cone.

As for calling the signs engraved on the baobabs in Diourbel hieroglyphics, the author is now back home and is familiar enough with the question, I suppose, to judge for himself whether writing is really involved (and the oldest inhabitants can inform him) or whether, as seems likely, these are simply graffiti engraved on the soft bark.

I went back to the foot of the baobab last year. I was quite disappointed because I hardly recognized the signs that I easily identified during my childhood; the bark of the baobab had developed since

then. A little boy and girl passed by and enlightened me. They helped me to locate the signs which, as a matter of fact, are riddles, ideograms: a kettle, a sword, a goatskin, a camel's foot, a string of prayer beads, and so on, memorializing the visit of a great religious leader of yesteryear, presumably the Prophet. If Mauny returns to the site one day, he will find no problem in being informed as I was about those signs; their meaning is not yet lost.

It is not writing in the phonetic sense of the word, but a series of drawings. The fact that this practice dates from the post-Islamic epoch tends to suggest that it reflects ancient habits about to disappear. On the baobab, along with the prayer beads, sword, and camel's foot, there was an inkstand and even a pen; so Arabic writing was known, but is absent from the bark of the baobab. This is similar to the attitude of Njoya, the sultan of Cameroon who, although a Moslem, utilized hieroglyphic writing, perhaps because of ancestral tradition, excluding Arabic characters, to take a census of the population of his kingdom, to transcribe all the literature, the oral tradition, and the history of his country.

What is rather remarkable is that Mauny also visited the same Diourbel area, after the publication of *Nations nègres et culture*, and found there both the mounds and the same baobab tree with its "mysterious signs." But he failed to remind the reader that the baobab of his article is the same one indicated in *Nations nègres et culture*; he could not have suspected its existence but for data provided in that volume. Strangely enough, Mauny was able to criticize that passage of our book without mentioning the assistance he drew from it for his personal research. Thus, the uninformed reader, picking up both texts separately, would be compelled to think that two absolutely distinct baobabs were involved. Moreover, Mauny entitled his article: "Discovery of . . ." What a strange "scientific" method for working on and elaborating documents intended to educate posterity! The layman must surely be taken in by it.⁶

Another problem understandably preoccupies Mr. Diop: the skin color of the Egyptians, as represented on the tomb paintings and other documents. In his view, "the so-called dark red color of the Egyptians is none other than the color of the Negro." To support this, he cites Champollion the Younger. But Champollion distinguishes clearly between Egyptians (dark red), Negroes (Nahasi),

Semites (Namou) who are flesh color verging on yellow, Medes and Assyrians with tanned complexion, and Indo-Europeans (Tamhou) with white skin.

Before me lie two volumes with numerous illustrations: A. Lhote's *Les Chefs-d'oeuvre de la peinture égyptienne* (Paris: Hachette, 1954), and Arpag Mekhitarian's *La Peinture égyptienne* (Geneva: Skira, 1954). In my view they support the statements of Champollion the Younger and of many others as well concerning the extreme variety of races represented. I shall note but one thing: when the artist wished to paint Negroes, he simply gave them a black or gray color. And the dark red personages, to mention them alone, are, with some exceptions, not Negroes, but tanned, brown, as is easily detected by the simple fact that the black color is found everywhere on the paintings to depict the hair, not the skin. The Egyptians were absolutely conscious of the difference in skin color between themselves, Blacks, and Asiatics.

We have seen earlier that an anthropologist, C. S. Coon (1939, p. 98), described the usual color of Pharaonic Egyptians as "brunet white." This is also true of the average modern Egyptian of the Delta; the Southerner is darker (reddish-brown to medium brown).

Nahasi, Namou, and Tamhou are not terms designating color in the Egyptian language, as Mauny's exposé could lead us to believe. The Egyptians never distinguished themselves from other African Negroes by such terms as white, black, tan, etc., since they all belonged to the same race. There is no need to open the Lhote volume at which Mauny was looking. The illustration on the cover, representing Osiris, god and ancestor of the Egyptian people (as Orpheus was for the Greeks) and painted coal black, could be an excellent subject for the critic to think about.

Is it necessary to remind Mauny of the conclusion reached by Champollion on the modest origins of the white race: "... a veritable savage tattooed on various parts of his body"?

Finally, what is the value of all these assumptions on the so-called conventional color of the Egyptians, as compared with the clinical examination of samples taken from the epidermis of mummies? That examination enables us to classify them unquestionably among the most authentic Blacks. At present Mauny is living in Senegal. Let him look around; if one painted all the shades observable on different Senegalese individuals, it would also be possible to distinguish in the

same way a black Senegalese type, a dark brunet Senegalese type, etc. We can detect the artificial nature of such an approach because we are living in the midst of the people involved and reality imposes limitations on the excesses of our intellectual freedom. It is not the same when we are dealing with dead Egyptians.

Despite these risky hypotheses presented as accepted, irrefutable proofs, and his lack of information on recent studies concerning West Africa, Mr. Diop's work marks an important date. This is the first general work on African history by a French-speaking Black and, in addition to an impressive documentation, it includes some excellent pages. It has the great merit of not following beaten paths and of compelling Egyptologists and others to take a stand and to be precise about certain of their opinions. But, written in Paris before 1955, it is necessarily a militant book, impregnated with the spirit of those years of struggle, during which Africans, especially students exiled in Paris in the midst of the colonizing people, were frustrated about their national history, and were preparing the paths to independence by exalting Negritude;* sometimes—and this is normal—at the price of perhaps unconsciously twisting impartiality, and scientific truth. They recognized only that which provided arguments for their thesis, their cause. All this was considered "cricket" and, indeed, the results of that general struggle of the various strata of those African peoples can speak for themselves.

Today, in 1960, the situation is different. This is the year of Independence for numerous Black African countries, Mali† among others. The African historian, without disavowing in the least his political opinions during the years of opposition to colonialism, owes it to himself, to science, and to his country, to place himself, if not already there, on a plane of strict objectivity, which excludes neither political commitment nor the utilization of hypotheses to be

*Negritude has been defined by its theoretician, Léopold Sédar Senghor, as "the sum total of the values of the Negro-African world." The word was first used by Aimé Césaire, poet, essayist, and dramatist. As a literary and cultural movement, it is perhaps best illustrated by the works of its three founders: Senghor of Senegal, Césaire of Martinique, and Damas of Guiana. Essentially it stresses the Black man's past, present, and future potential contribution to the world.

†A reference to the short-lived Federation of Mali (1959–1960), which included Senegal and the "French" Sudan.

verified. Without that objectivity, one cannot speak of history, research or scientific knowledge of history. Otherwise, one risks bringing discredit on the whole new school of African history and publicizing a group of errors, exaggerations which would do harm to the Africans themselves. For now, with good reason, the curriculum of African history is going to be revised so that Black youngsters may learn their own history rather than that of the colonizer. It is no longer a matter of convincing audiences of Parisians or African students in Paris—the former, almost totally incompetent on the subject, and the latter, obviously predisposed by anti-colonialist reaction preceding the rapid acquisition of independence, to applaud this veritable Negro Gobinism. It is now a question of the author's submitting his ideas to examination by scholars who alone are qualified to say what should be retained. Or else let him return to the arduous task of historical research to verify many of his own hypotheses.

When we read under the signature of modern Egyptologists that C. A. Diop is right and that ancient Egypt was "Negro," only then must textbooks be revised in that sense. The cultural unity of Africa, from the Egyptian to the Bushman, Wolof, Moroccan, Tuareg, Teda, Pygmy, Zulu, Somali, and Abyssinian? Why not? On condition that ethnologists, sociologists, and others affirm it.

Linguistic connections between ancient Egyptian and Wolof? Specialists in African languages will be able to tell us someday whether this hypothesis is valid. However, only on condition that they specialize in them and be so certified.

The reader who has followed us this far will be able to verify whether or not the special conditions under which we labored in Paris or the requirements of the political and social struggle forced us at any time to twist scientific truth or prevented us from holding to a course of strict objectivity. It will also be for the reader to decide whether our attitude and its results cast discredit or honor on the "new school of African history"; whether it "publicizes a group of errors," or destroys once and for all a body of myths that scholars had imposed on the world throughout 150 years of erudition; whether it is a case of "Black Gobinism" or a rectification of human history.

If we had to wait for "specialists" to make all the rectifications contained in *Nations nègres et culture*, there would perhaps be time enough to see whole nations disappear under the weight of aliena-

tion. The reverse procedure is the real solution; each day these possessors of knowledge, supporting the new ideas, become more numerous. Has not Egyptology just recognized the cultural unity of Black Africa and ancient Egypt? This was not the case six years ago. As Professor Jean Leclant [a noted French Egyptologist] himself has observed, this fact is perhaps more important than somatic relationship. Consequently, if battle there was, it has been won, the cause has been heard. One can find the facts distasteful, but no specialist will now risk a rebuttal of the cultural and linguistic relationship between ancient Egypt and Black Africa. By the same token, the assertion that the ancient inhabitants of the Sahara were Negroes and that they played a preponderant role in peopling Black Africa and Egypt no longer arouses an impassioned outcry, for the facts are there.

But all those truths had to be stated before those who call themselves specialists would even consider them. The history of these recent years fully demonstrates this. We have never spoken of any cultural unity other than that of Egypt and Black Africa; consequently, Mr. Mauny's list of disparate peoples reflects displeasure over the facts, a feeling of resignation in the presence of what one is unable to destroy, more so than it reflects the serene, convincing arguments that we would have expected. Henceforth, the textbooks can be revised in line with Mauny's criteria, at least in the direction of Egypto-African cultural unity. The condition has been met. Will it simply be ignored?

To criticize *Nations nègres et culture*, a very imperfect work, one should not attack its structure, for that approach will be unproductive. Its structure is solid, its perspectives valid. Instead, the target should be the small details, for then it will be possible to detect numerous shortcomings. . . .