

## Decolonising Perspectives in Cheikh Anta Diop's Historiography

By

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Even before his death in 1986, Cheikh Anta Diop had been a highly controversial figure in the annals of African scholarship. His now famous theses on the origins of ancient Egyptian civilization have had a tremendous impact on the discursive orientations of anthropological and archaeological studies, and of course, African history, and philosophy. Yet, there has always been some resistance to his work in the academy.

This study sets out to move beyond this resistance in order to re-examine Cheikh Anta Diop's propositions on black African history and evaluate their significance as a project for intellectual decolonization. In particular, his work, *Precolonial Black Africa*, shall form the fulcrum of this analysis. Undoubtedly, Diop's insights and conclusions have made their mark on scholars such as the late Ugandan interdisciplinary intellectual, Dani W. Nabudere and the African-American Molefi Kete Asante, and it would be worthwhile to assess this impact as well.

The immediate conclusions that emerge from Diop's work, is that the relationship between principally West Africa, ancient Egypt, and Nubia cannot be regarded as tenuous given the evidence of numerous linguistic correlations. Diop is able to demonstrate these connections by tracing the etymologies of common words, names, and corresponding surviving evidence of material culture. Rather than instigating doubt and misplaced curiosity, these provide what ought to be satisfying illumination. Ancient Egypt looms as a site of universal civilization, complete and fully formed. But the role of black Africans in this process is never ambiguous, and cannot be said to marginal. Indeed, black Africans cannot be said to be the spectral recipients of relics of culture, who are just about to bear testimony to long lost traditions of a dominant cultural configuration. They were central to the dynamics of cultural development and their processes of dispersal. Indeed, this conclusion is quite prominent in Diop's work.

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