

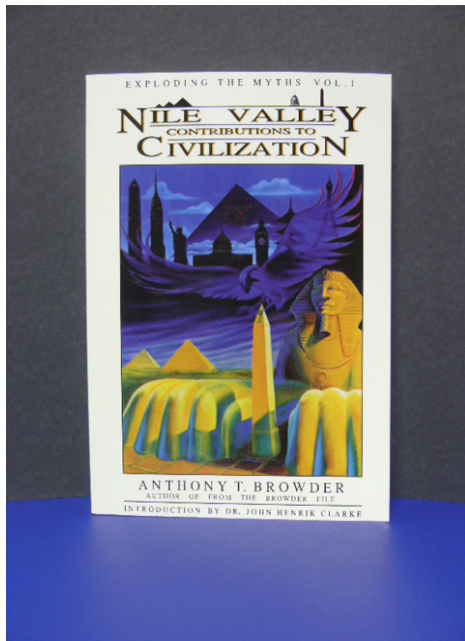


Standing on the Shoulders of Giants Curriculum

Excerpts from *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization*

Chapters 1 and 2

Reading Time: Approximately 15-20 Minutes



Chapter One—The Nile Valley (4 minutes)

The emergence of civilization in ancient Egypt was nothing more than the outgrowth of the culture that developed along the Nile Valley. It is in the Nile Valley where one can find the greatest primary evidence of the earliest beginnings of agriculture, architecture, engineering, language, writing, philosophy, science and religion. In short, all of the essential components that would lead to the development of a great civilization. (45)

The Nile Valley extends over 4,000 miles, from the highlands on the east coast of central Africa to the delta region in the extreme north. The origins of the mighty waterway, which courses through the Nile Valley, have been traced to the twin sources of the Nile River, which are called the Blue Nile and the White Nile. (45)

The Blue Nile begins at Lake Tana, which is located in the mountainous region of northern Ethiopia, near the city of Gonder and the Choke Mountains. This river contains, within its flow, extremely rich mineral deposits (called [silt](#)), which played a major role in the physical evolution of the lands to the north and the development of agriculture in Egypt. The Nile [Valley](#) and the Nile [Delta](#) are among the most fertile farming areas in the world because of the silt, which was deposited upon their shores during the annual flood season. An estimated 70 percent of the Nile's water comes from the Blue Nile. (45)

The second major [tributary](#) to the Nile Valley River system is the White Nile, which has its beginnings in the Great Lakes region of central Africa along the equator. Approximately half of the water which flows from the White Nile evaporates as it courses through the Sudd, a vast swamp in southern Sudan. The primary source for the White Nile is the body of water originally called "Nyanza" or "Lake" by the indigenous population thousand of years ago. (45)

Nyanza is surrounded by the countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. It is the largest lake in Africa, and the second largest in the world, exceeded in size only by Lake Superior in the United States. Nyanza was renamed "Lake Victoria" by the English explorer John Speke, who "discovered" it in 1858 and named it in honor of Queen Victoria, the British [monarch](#). (45)

There are numerous lakes and rivers feeding into the White Nile. They are primarily the result of the water runoff from Mount Kilimanjaro, which borders Tanzania and Kenya. Kilimanjaro, the

tallest mountain in Africa, rises to a height of 19,340 feet. The second major contributor to the waters of the White Nile is the Ruwenzori Mountains, which border the countries of Uganda and Zaire. (45-46)

For centuries this area of [equatorial Africa](#) has been called “The Mountain of the Moon” by the native inhabitants. As a matter of fact, in the language of Ki-Swahili, *Kilimanjaro* means “Mountain of the Moon,” as does the Buganda word *Rwenzori*. (46)

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The Nile Valley River system is the world’s longest waterway (4,160 miles), and it irrigates approximately 2,8000,000 acres of land in Sudan and 7,600,000 acres in Egypt. An interesting fact about the Nile is that it and the Amazon, which is the world’s second longest river, are the only major rivers which flow from south to north. The migratory pattern of the people who navigated the Nile, from “up south” to “down north,” was to later play a major role in the development of civilization in ancient Egypt... (46)

The country of Egypt, which lies in the lowlands of the Nile Valley, is nothing more than the extension of the lands that expanded northward from the south. It is generally believed that the delta region of northern Egypt was created by the accumulation of silt from the Blue Nile, which deposited upon the shore over the course of thousands of years during the annual flood season. The 600-mile narrow strip of fertile land that lies within the boundaries of Egypt (from what is now referred to as the First [Cataract](#) of the Mediterranean) exists only because of the waters from the south which led to its development. (46)

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Ancient Egypt has often been referred to as the “Gift of the Nile” and it is believed by many scholars, both ancient and modern, that Egypt was nothing more than the extension of the civilization which had its origins in Ethiopia. (49)

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Many of the words currently used to describe ancient Egypt, its cities, artifacts and historical personalities, are not [indigenous](#) and were derived from Greek, Arabic, French and British interpretations. For example, the word Egypt is of Greek origin and was originally used to describe the ancient capital city of Menes or Memphis. Today, the word Egypt refers to the entire nation... (50)

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The kings of Egypt were later given the title “[Pharoah](#)” by a foreign ruler. It is a word which means “great house,” and is derived from the term Pr-ah. (51)
Incidentally, the word “Pharaoh” is also of foreign origin. The term was first used in the New Kingdom by an Asian, to describe the king of Egypt. (51)

Chapter Two—The Peopling of Kemet and Egypt (5 minutes)

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Recently analyzed artifacts suggests that the first Nubian civilization developed around 3800 B.C.E., and lasted until approximately 652 A.C.E. Although the civilizations of Nubia and Kemet emerged about the same time, the Nubian civilization actually lasted longer. (53-54)

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During the third century B.C.E., the heartland of Nubian civilization was located further south in the city of Meroe. The Meroitic civilization (ca. 200 B.C.E. – 300 A.C.E.) is well known for its temples at Musawwarat es Sufra, Naga and Meroe and for its many royal pyramid tombs. A 2,000 year-old sandstone tablet, which was discovered in 1963, may hold the key to deciphering the Meroitic writing system, which is closely related to the [Medu Netcher](#) (hieroglyphics). The last known great Nubian culture was the Ballana, (ca. 250-550 A.C.E.). The tombs of this civilization were found in Lower Nubia and excavated in the 1930s. (54)

Of the numerous items discovered in Nubia, the most significant were found in a gravesite from the earliest period from 3800-3100 B.C.E., called Cemetery L, which yielded artifacts that were created six to seven generations (approximately 200 years) before the start of the First Dynasty in Kemet (3150 B.C.E.). The most impressive discovery unearthed was a stone incense burner, which was found in the city of Qustul, the ancient capital of the Nubian kingdom, called Ta-Seti. Engravings on the side of the incense burner are scenes depicting the following:

- A *serekh* or paneled palace façade
- The Falcon God Horus which substantiates the southern (Nubian) origins of the Holy Royal Trinity, which consisted of Osiris, Isis, and their son Horus
- A representation of a king or pharaoh, wearing the traditional beard and crown of Upper Kemet, while sailing in a boat toward the royal palace
- Elements of iconography, which were later to become an integral part of Kemetic writing and art.

The discovery of the artifact has led Dr. Williams to remark:

The idea of a pharaoh may have come down the Nile from Nubia to Egypt [and] that would make Nubian civilization the ancestor of Egypt's at least in one critical aspect. (55)

As a result of the reexamination of data concerning Ancient Nubia, many scholars have concluded that the Nubians were an extremely sophisticated people who built cities, roads and temples comparable to those of the people of Kemet in the north. It has been suggested by one researcher that there were more pyramids constructed in Nubia than in Kemet. Unfortunately, the likelihood of further archaeological study at Qustul, or any other site in Nubia, is all but impossible because many of the primary areas of investigation now lie under 250 feet of water, at the bottom of Lake Nasser. (55)

This man-made lake covers an area of approximately 1,550 square miles, and it is the second largest man-made lake in the world. Since 1981, the Nubian Lake, as it is sometimes called, has covered an area, which extends from the Sixth Cataract to beyond the Fifth Cataract. It has an average width of six miles and it is 50 miles wide in some areas. One-third of the waters of this lake cover northern Sudan and the remaining two thirds blanket southern Egypt. (55-56) During the construction of the Aswan High Dam (1960-1968) and the subsequent creation of Lake Nasser, 40 Nubian villages were relocated further inland. Thousands of Nubians were resettled in and around the city of Aswan and in villages further north; however, an untold number drowned when they refused to leave the lands that their ancestors had occupied for more than 5,000 years. (56)

In addition to the displacement of human beings, a total of 18 ancient temples were dismantled and relocated. Of the 18 temples that were moved, 12 are still in Egypt, and the remaining four can be found in museums in Madrid, Spain; Rome, Italy; Leiden, Holland; and New York City in the United States. These temples were presented as gifts to those nations that assisted in the construction of the Aswan High Dam. (56)

There is no way to estimate the total number of temples and tombs which now lie at the bottom of Lake Nasser, nor is there any way of knowing the many secrets that these structures currently hold. One thing is certain, because of the creation of the Aswan Dam, the world will never have an opportunity to study the full impact Africans from the southern Nile Valley had on the development of ancient Kemet and subsequent civilizations. (56)

The Nubians

The Egyptians of today are not the same people as the Ancient Kemites of 5,000 years ago, just as the Americans of today are not the same as the Native Americans of 500 years ago. The Egypt of today is an Islamic nation, which is currently inhabited by peoples from Assyria, Syria, Persia, Europe and other areas of the world, who have, through a process of miscegenation over a period of thousands of years, evolved into the Egyptian of today. (56)

In order to correctly address the issue of race in modern Egypt, one must have a clear understanding of the racial makeup of the peoples who originally occupied that land, where they came from and where their descendants currently live. They certainly haven't all disappeared into the modern Egyptian melting pot. These indigenous people are still called Nubians today. (56)

The area called Nubia was divided into two regions, Lower Nubia (in southern Egypt) and Upper Nubia (in northern Sudan). The word Nubia derived from the Kemetic word *nub* which meant gold. Thus *Nubia* was referred to as the land of gold and its people were called *Nubians*, or people from the land of gold. In addition to gold, ebony, incense, spices, ivory, feathers and animal skins were also exported to Kemet from Nubia. (56-57)

Nubia was much more than a source for the vital mineral resources which were required for architectural, artistic and personal use in Kemet. Nubia was the lifeline of ancient Kemet, and the source of its language, philosophy and religion. (57)

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A Historical Overview of Kemet and Ancient Egypt

No one knows for certain when civilization in Kemet first began, though oral records indicated that a considerable amount of activity was taking place as early as 20,000 B.C.E. According to Sir Gaston Maspero in his publication *The Dawn of Civilization*:

...the Egyptians made their first appearance on the stage of history about 8,000 to 10,000 B.C.E.

It is generally agreed that a number of pre-dynastic kingdoms (Ta-Seti and others) existed hundreds of years before the consolidation of power, which led to the unification of the country that is now geographically referred to as Egypt. The term *dynasty* refers to a family or period of rulership during a specific era. (62)

The practice of dividing the many kingdoms of Kemet into dynastic periods was first established by a Greco-Egyptian priest named Manetho during the third century B.C.E. Manetho was commissioned by Ptolemy Philadelphus to write the definitive history of the country, which he subsequently chronicled in a book entitled *History of Egypt*. Regrettably, much of this history was lost when the library of Alexandria was destroyed; however, the remaining fragments of Manetho's chronology provides us with some clues as to the names of the early rulers. (62) There is general disagreement among modern Egyptologists and other historians regarding the exact dates of the dynastic periods. Some historians have recorded the establishment of the First Dynasty as early as the fifth millennium B.C.E., and others document it as beginning in the third millennium B.C.E. While most historians have adopted the conservative date of 3150 B.C.E. as the beginning of the First Dynasty, new data is continuing to surface which tends to support earlier dates for the establishment of the First Dynasty in Kemet. (62)

Even though the early history of Kemet remains shrouded in mystery, there is general agreement upon the division of Kemet into 30 dynastic periods, which lasted until the Greek conquest in 332 B.C.E. the Greco-Roman rulership of Egypt extends from 332 B.C.E. to 395 B.C.E., after which all traces of Egyptian culture were suppressed. The dynasties of Kemet have been divided into four kingdoms of stable rulership and three intermediate periods that were either wracked with internal disorder or periods of foreign occupation. (62)

All historical dates prior to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty are approximations and vary considerably from source to source. The following timeline is a very conservative and greatly abbreviated chronology of ancient Kemetic and Egyptian history: (63 – 65)

Pre-Dynastic Kemet (4236 – 3150 B.C.E.)

4236	Kemetic people using 1,460-year-old astronomical calendar.
3800	Emergence of earliest Nubian civilization.
3400	Nubian Kingdom of Ta-Seti.

Dynasties 1-2 (3150 – 2649 B.C.E.)

Old Kingdom

3150	King Narmer (Menes) unifies Upper and Lower Kemet and establishes Memphis as the state capital.
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Dynasties 3-6 (2649 – 2150 B.C.E.)

Old Kingdom: Pyramid Age

- 2630 Zoser builds step pyramid and Saqqara complex.
- 2575-2465 All the great pyramids at Dahshur and Giza built.
- 2465-2323 Great sun temples and mortuary complexes built.
Pyramid Texts inscribed in tomb of King Unas.

First Intermediate Period (2150-2040 B.C.E.)

Kemet experiences widespread political upheaval

Dynasties 11-12 (2040 – 1763 B.C.E.)

Middle Kingdom: Literary Age

- 2040 Mentuhotep II unifies Kemet and relocates the capital to Waset (Thebes/Luxor)
Art, literature and religion all flourish during this era as prosperity and stability are restored to the land.
- 1897 Senwosret establishes a colony in Greece and founded the city of Athens.
Construction of the great Kemetic Labyrinth by Amenemhet.

Dynasties 13-17 Second Intermediate Period (1783-1550 B.C.E.)

First Asian invasion of Kemet by Hykso “rulers of foreign lands.” Invasion begins period of widespread destruction.

Dynasties 18-20 (1550 – 1170 B.C.E.)

New Kingdom: Temple and Imperial Age

- 1550 King Ahmose defeats the Hyksos and reunifies Kemet.
- 1504 Thutmose I expands the imperial rulership from the Upper Nile to the Upper Euphrates (Persia/Iraq).
- 1473 Hatshepsut rules Kemet as first female pharaoh.
- 1391 Amenhotep III rules Kemet at the height of its military power. Queen Tiye rules by his side.
- 1353 Amenhotep IV (Akhenaton) introduces concept of the Aton as the sole god to be worshipped in Kemet. Queen Nefertiti rules by his side.
- 1333 Tutankhamen ascends the throne of Kemet.
- 1306 Seti I, the father of Rameses II builds magnificent tomb in the Valley of the Kings.
- 1290 Rameses II (Rameses the Great) rules Kemet for 67 years.
Nefertari the Nubian Queen reigns as Rameses II chief wife.
During this period, Kemet experiences enormous prosperity and a phenomenal resurgence in temple construction, literature and art.

Dynasties 21-24 Third Intermediate Period (1070 – 750 B.C.E.)

Deterioration of political authority and a general period of social, political and religious decline.

Dynasty 25 (750 – 675 B.C.E.)

Late Kingdom

- 750 Piye (Piankhi), Nubia king conquers Upper and Lower Kemet and reestablishes central authority in Kush.
- 712 Shabaka reunifies all of Kemet and rules from Waset (thebes/Luxor).
- 690 Taharqa leads military invasion of Spain and Palestine.
- 667 Assyrians conquer Lower Kemet.
- 664 Assyrians conquer Upper Kemet.
Nubian kings reestablished central government in Upper Kemet until they are conquered by Assyrian forces.

Dynasty 27 (525 – 404 B.C.E.)

First Persian Invasion

- 525 Kemet invaded by Cambyses and becomes a part of the Persian Empire; capital is moved to Babylon.

Dynasty 28 (404 – 399 B.C.E.)

- 404 – 399 Persians are expelled from Kemet; capital is moved to Sais in the Western Delta.

Dynasty 30 (380 – 343 B.C.E.)

Last period of rulership by native-born Kemetic kings.

Second Persian Invasion (343 – 332 B.C.E.)

Greek Period (332 – 30 B.C.E.)

- 332 Alexander of Macedonia (Alexander the Great) defeats the Persian army and conquers Kemet.
- 323 Ptolemy I establishes the Ptolemaic Dynasty of Egypt.
- 285 Ptolemy II commissions Manetho to write History of Egypt, hereby establishing the only surviving record of Dynastic rulership.
- 69 – 30 Cleopatra VII born and rules Egypt until her death.

Roman Period (30 B.C.E. – 323 A.C.E.)

- 30 B.C.E. Augustus Caesar claims Egypt as a province of Rome.
[Degenerate](#) elements of the ancient Kemetic religion are popularized in Rome.

Byzantine Period (323 – 642 A.C.E.)

- 323 Constantine becomes the first Christian Emperor of Rome and convenes the first Nicaean council in Nicaea, Turkey, in 325 and declares Christianity the official state religion in 333.
- 391 Christian Emperor Theodosius bans the ancient religious systems of Egypt and orders the closing of all Egyptian temples.

- 394 Last recorded date of Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions.
- 527 Christian Emperor Justinian finally succeeds in closing the last Egyptian temple in Philae.

Islamic Period (651 A.C.E. – Present)

- 642 Conquest of Egypt by Arabs and the introduction of Islam.
- 1250 The Mamelukes (former Turkish and Circassian slaves) conquer Egypt.
- 1517 Egypt conquered by the Turks of the Ottoman Empire.
- 1798 Egypt conquered by Napoleon of France.
- 1881 British and Ottoman troops seize control of Egypt.
- 1952 Egyptian officers force King Faruk to give up the throne.
- 1953 General Muhammad Naguib becomes the first Nubian to rule Egypt since 342 B.C.E.
- 1954 Muhammad Naguib overthrown by General Gamal Abdel Nasser who forms the United Arab Republic in 1958.
- 1970 Anwar el-Sadat becomes president after death of Nasser.
- 1981 Hosni Mubarak becomes president after assassination of Sadat.

Summary (66 – 69)

With the discovery of the ancient city of Ta-Seti, it can now be said with **impunity** that the “oldest monarchy in the world” and indeed the **progenitor** of the monarchies of Kemet were of **indigenous** African (black, Negroid, etc.) stock. The first 12 dynasties (3150 – 1783 B.C.E.) were also African. It was during this time period that Kemet was unified as one nation. All the pyramids were built and the great literary texts (which comprise the *Book of the Dead*) were written.

The first military and foreign occupation of Kemet was the Hyksos invasion, 1783-1550 B.C.E. The Hyksos were foreigners from Palestine and surrounding areas who immigrated into Lower Kemet and gradually seized control. The word Hyksos is of Kemetic origin and means “chieftain of foreign countries.” Historians credit them with introducing the horse and chariot into Kemet, but it is important to note that this foreign conquest was totally destructive, and that no architecture, art or literature was produced during the period that Kemet was under siege. After approximately 233 years of rulership, the Hyksos were driven out of Kemet by native African forces from the south, who not only moved the seat of government back to Waset (Thebes/Luxor), but extended their border into Asia to minimize the possibility of further invasion from the north. It was during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties of the Middle Kingdom that Kemet instituted the greatest architectural and military invasion in its entire history. The wonderful temples at Luxor and Karnak are a living testament to this grand **epoch** in human civilization.

For the next 500 years Kemet experienced **unprecedented** growth and development, which was followed by 300 years of internal turmoil and political instability. While teetering on the brink of uncertainty, the ruling body of Kemet looked to the south for leadership. Salvation came in the personage of the Nubian King Piankhi, who secured the northern borders and once again unified the two lands, thus paving the way for Kemet to experience what would inevitably be her final years of glory.

In 525 B.C.E., Kemet experienced the first of two devastating invasions by the Persians. The Persian rulers were merciless and after a brief defeat by the army of Kemet in 380 B.C.E. From that fateful day onward, Kemet would never again be ruled by an [indigenous](#) African population.

The Persians were driven from Egypt by Alexander of Macedonia in 332 B.C.E. After securing the country, Alexander began developing plans to build a great city on the Mediterranean coast in honor of his latest conquest, but died before his dream was realized. All of the lands that had been conquered by Alexander's troops were subsequently divided among his generals. Egypt fell into the hands of the general Ptolemy who honored his fallen commander by completing the plans for the construction of the new city, which he named *Alexandria* in honor of his commander-in-chief.

The rulership of the Ptolemaic kings was unique because of their desire to [immerse](#) themselves into the traditions of Ancient Kemet. Following an age-old custom, these Greek rulers married into the Egyptian royal families in an attempt to maintain dynastic rulership, which was passed on by the queen to her offspring. The last of the Ptolemies to rule Egypt was Cleopatra VII, who wooed both Julius Caesar and Marc Antony in an attempt to maintain Egypt's sovereignty, which became a colony of Rome in 30 B.C.E. after her death.

The Romans, like the Greeks before them, saw great value in the civilization of Kemet and incorporated those elements most easily [discernible](#) into their culture. Egypt's greatest gift to Rome was her ability to supply unlimited food to her mighty army. During this period, Egypt was referred to as the "Bread Basket of the Roman Empire." But in the final analysis it was not the Roman army that ultimately brought Egypt to her knees and destroyed her, it was the newly emerging religion of Christianity. From its earliest beginnings, Christianity was embraced more readily in Egypt than anywhere else worldwide, primarily because of its similarity to the ancient religion of Kemet. Coptic, which became the official language of the early Christians, is essentially nothing more than the language of Kemet (hieroglyphs) written in Greek letters. In 333 A.C.E., Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire and ordered the closing of all Egyptian temples, in an attempt to eradicate any and all competing religious systems. The *African Trinity* of Ausar, Aset and Heru (Osiris, Isis and Horus), which existed for more than 4,000 years, which was replaced with a Trinity, which consisted of *The Father, Son, Holy Ghost*. In 325 A.C.E., the Christian bishops who met at the Council of Nice introduced a new religious theology which contained doctrines similar to the African concepts of *a virgin birth, resurrection, and salvation*. This new version of Christianity lacked significant African elements, which were viewed as competitive and were subsequently outlawed by the Byzantine emperors.

Sometime during the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-565 A.C.E.), the last of the Egyptian priests were driven out of the Temple of Philae in Upper Egypt. The structure was then converted into a Christian church. During this same time the written languages of the ancient Kemites (Medu Netcher and demotic) were so totally repressed that the ability to read them would remain shrouded in mystery for more than 1,300 years.

During the next 1,500 years, Egypt was systematically raped and [pillaged](#) by an untold number of foreign rulers and explorers, who destroyed monuments, robbed tombs and wreaked havoc throughout the land. Napoleon's conquest of Egypt in 1798, and the subsequent publication of *Description de L'Egypt*, ignited a new interest in ancient history which led to the development of the science of *Egyptology*.

More has been learned about ancient Kemet within the last two hundred than any other time within the past two millennium. No other nation has had the privilege of 3,000 years of cultural and historical continuity, nor has been the object of such international scrutiny. Modern archeologists, geologists and other scientists are constantly uncovering treasures and reevaluating their knowledge of ancient Kemet. Based upon their findings, it is certain that the length and breadth of this great civilization is yet to be fully realized.

Many reputations have been made, and others shattered, with the discovery of every new tomb and artifact or reinterpretation of ancient papyrus texts. Very few scholars are willing to relinquish old views in light of newly discovered data which contradict the norm. Ancient artifacts not only have to be unearthed, they sometimes have to be rescued from contemporary misinterpretations. John Antony West discusses the [reticence](#) some scholars express when they are exposed to new theories:

Nobody likes being proven wrong, but in the case of the scholar or scientist, a sound theory that contradicts views held and pursued for a lifetime pulls the rug out from under his or her ego and a familiar paradoxical situation develops. The people professionally engaged in discovering the “truth”, are those, psychologically, least capable of accepting the “truth” if it happens to contradict what they already believe. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Egyptology. As we examine the many controversial theories, it will become obvious that most of them could easily be tested, and either accepted or refuted, if only the parties involved, be they in the orthodox camps, would take the trouble to consider the evidence presented by the opposition.

The modern Egyptian is the by-product of countless peoples who have occupied, invaded and traded in North Africa for thousands of years. The Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks, French, British, Germans and countless other nationalities, have intermingled with the native African population to produce a new people who have inherited, by right of possession of the land, the legacy of African peoples. The Egypt of today is the Kemet of yesterday. Yes the land is still the same and the monuments [evoke](#) of ages long gone, but the people and their spirit are profoundly different.