

Bantu Origins, African Migration, Culture, Language, and the Nile Valley , Identity, and the African Diaspora.

Genetic testing has become increasingly popular. It gives Africans in the diaspora another avenue to identify with the Motherland. From this perspective, there is a renewed attempt to reconnect with African roots and culture. Quite often, in this conversation, the word Bantu comes up. It often appears in the genetic test results. For example, DNA results for African Americans and persons born in the Caribbean typically show significant West and Central African roots. Some results might reflect roots from the Ashanti regions, as well as Yoruba and Igbo ancestry. Often, terms like Western Bantu or Eastern Bantu are used. These are group terms, considering that many groups of people were arbitrarily bordered within the newly formed nation-states that were carved out at the Berlin Conference. The borders would sometimes be drawn straight through long-existing communities. Cultures and Communities formed into countries; therefore, it is, in fact, more specific to identify with culture and a language group than it is to identify with the modern African countries.

In the Western Hemisphere, the genetic tests might also reflect European or Indigenous American ancestry, Taino, Arawak, or Carib. There is also Indian and Asian ancestry. The populations of today, especially in African the diaspora regions, are genetically diverse.

The term Bantu generally refers to a linguistic grouping of people that stretches from southeast Nigeria toward the east and into Southern Africa. Bantu languages are classified within the Niger-Congo language family.

Understanding the Bantu: Anthropology, Anthology.

Who are the Bantu people, and where did they come from? There are two mainstream approaches presented here. One avenue is anthropological, while the other is anthological.

A general rule in anthropology is that the anthropologist must remain objective and, therefore, they remove themselves from the culture to analyze it , and determine what is taking place. Often modern views and beliefs factor in and are imposed when assessing ancient ideas.

Anthology, in this context, has to do with the story of a people. It concerns how people remember their own past, tell their stories and remain connected to their origins.

Anthropology is scientific and often follows a textbook approach, while an anthology frequently takes the form of mythology. It recounts events that might have happened long ago and is preserved through myth.

Understanding these traditions can require an initiated approach.

It often requires initiation and deeper knowledge of the culture to decipher the myths within that culture.

To the initiate, the myth represents a conceptual reality and a higher form of truth. While to the outsider, the same myth either appears to be a literal lie, or an absolute truth.

Every people have a story, and that story seeks to explain their existence. The term Bantu translates to “people,” so saying Bantu is, in a sense, saying “people.” The roots of the Bantu, as told by the people themselves, is that they are descendants of UNtu.

Just as the followers of Christ are called Christians, and followers of the Prophet Muhammad carry his name today, “May peace be upon him,” the name of a people can preserve a connection to an ancestral or spiritual source.

The etymology of the word Bantu is presented as Ba and Untu, meaning people or the soul of a people. UNTU is described as a reference to One who controls nature. Since UNTU controls nature itself, within a Western framework, UNtu could be understood as representing the supreme being. UNtu is likely a transmigration of the same sound that is associated with NeTeR, as written in the hieroglyphs.

Maat was the philosophy and a principle that governed the ancient Nile Valley civilizations for thousands of years.

Ubuntu can be translated to mean, “the children of nature.”

Ubuntu is a popular philosophy in the South, and the concept remains alive in the minds of the people. It acknowledges that UNtu, or nature, is manifested and expressed through human beings. It is the simple idea that human beings are part of a community and are all interconnected. Reflective of the Mos high and each other.

Dr. Taki Dube of South Africa, in her book *Bantu: The Untold History of a People from Creation*, suggests that when foreigners first encountered the people in these areas, they often asked, “Where are we?” or “Who are you?” The response from the people was consistent: “Untu, Untu.” She goes on to explain that when these core African ideas are translated into the European languages, they lose their deeper meaning, causing the ideas to become foreign. A similar story is told in the Ivory Coast. When a few almost shipwrecked Portuguese traders came upon the southern coast of Guinea, the first woman they encountered was carrying a basket on her head. The men asked, “Where are we?” The African woman did not understand Portuguese and, perhaps wanting to get away from the men, quickly responded, “Abidjan, Abidjan.” She was saying that she was going to reap some herbs. Eventually, the city was called Abidjan.

Because of such barriers in communication, many things have been misunderstood. The first sounds that strangers heard in the regions that are called Bantu-speaking today were said to be “Ba” and “Untu.” These were subsequently recorded as referring to the Bantu people. The people along the Kongo River were called the Ba-Kongo, and their language is Ki-Kongo. It is important to establish that the branches of African subgroups are generally classified according to language rather than strictly according to ethnicity. Over

time, anthropologists found it better to classify people according to language rather than phenotype.

Africa's Major Linguistic Families.

The people from the areas around the Bight of Biafra and Benin, through the Kongo hinterlands and along the Nile, as well as people farther eastward and southward, are generally classified as Cushitic, Nilotic, or Bantu. These represent three major linguistic and cultural branches within a much larger African linguistic landscape.

They fall within four larger linguistic families that cover Africa. These groups encompass hundreds of distinct ethnic groups and thousands of languages. This reflects the immense cultural and genetic diversity of the African continent:

Niger-Congo
Nilo-Saharan
Afro-Asiatic
And Khoisan.

These languages are spread across national borders and are also spoken within the same countries. Like people, languages often share a common ancestor.

The Niger-Congo and Bantu Branch.

The Bantu language group is classified within the Niger-Congo branch. It is the largest in terms of the number of languages and speakers. It covers West and Central Africa, parts of East Africa, and Southern Africa.

Examples of Bantu languages include Zulu, Xhosa, Kikuyu, and Swahili.

Bantu-speaking populations are found in countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Angola, Zambia, Malawi, and Rwanda.

The Nilo-Saharan family is diverse and is spread across the Nile Valley and parts of Central and Eastern Africa. Nilotic languages, such as Maasai, Dinka, Nuer, Kanuri, and Luo, are included within this family.

These languages are spoken in Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, and the Central African Republic.

Sudanese and Nilotic peoples are sometimes presented as representing a standard of natural beauty, with descriptions emphasizing tall, dark, slim physiques.

The Afro-Asiatic Branch

is found mainly in North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and parts of the Sahel. This family includes Semitic languages such as Amharic and Arabic, Chadic languages such as Hausa, and Cushitic languages such as Oromo and Somali. Berber is also classified within the Afro-Asiatic family. These languages are

spoken in countries including Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, Israel, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates.

The ancient Egyptian language and script fall within the Afro-Asiatic grouping, although the language predates the other languages in the family.

It also suggests southern origins.

To be properly classified, the hieroglyphic language Mdu Netcher is presented here as the language script of Mother Africa.

It can be pronounced, “Mdu uNtu.” The argument here is that it recorded the sounds and speech that was spoken long ago in the south; eventually, it influenced the dialects to the north, east, and west.

The key point presented here is that Mdu Netcher provides one of the oldest written and decipherable African scripts. It is the only deciphered African Script that dates back thousands of years before the Common Era.

The Khoisan Branch

Khoisan is often presented as the oldest and smallest of the major language families. It is known for its distinctive click consonants and is primarily spoken by Indigenous populations in Southern Africa.

Khoisan languages are primarily spoken in Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa by Indigenous San and Khoikhoi peoples. Khoisan speakers are also found in parts of Angola, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The San are said to be among the first inhabitants of the southern regions.

Later, they and the Khoikhoi would be called the Khio San.

Differences would sometimes develop between agricultural and pastoral lifestyles.

This has been a common cause of disputes among family groups in Africa and in other parts of the world.

Because livestock can damage crops planted by farmers.

This has been a consistent cause for dispute, and when these disputes are exploited by outside entities, it results in the cycle of war.

The Conventional Understanding of Bantu Origins

According to anthropology, genetics, and linguistic science, an area in present-day Nigeria and Cameroon is generally identified as a point of origin for the Proto-Bantu speakers. From there, it is said that the people spread north, east, west, and south.

This understanding may exist partly because genetic tests and other scientific instruments do not reach sufficiently far back into the past.

The oldest stories are often preserved through mythology.

In many cases, African history was documented by the early European writers who documented what they saw and had experienced as anthropologists.

Often, their accounts became primary written sources for the history of these countries. This includes the accounts that were produced before the

independence era.

The results reflect that these writers often did not fully understand the cultures that they were documenting. Neither did they imagine the potential effect that their writings would have on future generations.

For example, if a European writer was accommodated and treated well by one clan, then often that group was portrayed as the first and the best. The host becomes the “good guys,” and rival groups are portrayed as the bad guys; the host clan might be described as being more handsome, while all other peoples under this narrative might become unattractive or backward. These descriptions become tools for subjugation. Eventually, even the people who are the unintended victims of these notions believe it. This allows for a new hierarchical structure to be established by the external forces.

It creates continued confusion and conflict among future generations. It also establishes the instigators as the problem solvers.

This legacy has contributed to tribalism and social stratification in many African societies. The Belgians in the Congo and the German exploitation in Rwanda are examples of springboards for this kind of continued conflict. Also, many outside influences contributed to the Nigerian-Biafran War.

An Alternate View of the Bantu Migration and African Origins

This chapter takes an alternate and at the same time, a popular view regarding the Bantu migration and expansion story.

This approach in general examines the languages, the stories, the interactions, and the developments that formed the various expressions of African culture and its history. One of the earliest peoples on the continent, and by extension on planet Earth, is the Twa. They were described by the ancient Queens and kings of the Nile Valley high civilization as the original people from the Great Lakes region. There is a story that shows King Pepi's the 2nd's Fascination with a Twa man who was brought to meet him from the south. The king said no one should harm, disturb, or upset him on the journey, and stressed that he should be protected at all costs. Pepi the 2nd ruled at the end of the Sixth Dynasty.

The Twa migrated up and down and toward the west and east. They are credited with having influenced and established many cultures across the Red Sea and in the Americas.

The Twa is often described as “the little people,” who are also referred to, unfortunately as Pygmies. As a method to reframe the narrative. Original peoples are typically described by their conquerors and by barbarians as pigs and sometimes associated with Ham as a method of reframing the narrative. This is how the Anu became Pygmies, and the Kushite became Hamites. This program will break down the so-called curse of Ham in the Chapter that deals with Mythology.

An established view is that the Twa, or the little people, migrated across the African continent and throughout the global South and also the North.

We take the view that Many peoples of the global South are descendants of the Twa.

These descendants established cultures and civilizations in different regions of the world, including Mexico and the Ainu people of Japan.. They became the Taino in the Caribbean.

One major civilization in Mesoamerica that was clearly influenced by Africans was the Olmec civilization; it flourished from roughly 1200 to 400 BCE in the tropical lowlands of Mexico. There, they developed important elements of culture and major cities. They created the monumental Olmec colossal heads and laid foundations for later civilizations, including the Maya and Aztec civilizations.

These civilizations spread throughout the Caribbean regions and are presented here as contributing to the development of Taino, Carib, and Arawak cultures. The little people are presented as having developed agriculture and advanced techniques. These ideas were perfected along the Nile and spread to the regions of the world.

Many aspects of modern scientific disciplines were established deep within the African interior long ago. This knowledge and techniques later became known to the wider world through Ancient Egypt.

Art, speech, knowledge of herbs, and the concept of time developed over centuries in the African interior. This may be traced, according to regions that are today part of the Congo.

The Kushites can be considered, within this framework, as descendants of the Twa people; they established sciences, grand architecture, and early writing systems. They gave the world its foundation and established civilizations and writing systems on both sides of the Red Sea.

Some among the little people would eventually become taller, some less tall, some darker, and some lighter in skin. The Twa would become the Bantu as well as other diverse African groups.

Eventually, some would call themselves Kushites and establish ancient Ethiopia as it is called today.

The Maasai lived in the interior.

The Nubians lived along the Nile.

The Ba Kongo and Luba lived along the Kongo-Lualaba River.

The Igbo and the Yoruba people lived near and along the Niger River.

The Ashanti occupied areas around the Volta River.

The Wolof lived along the Senegambia River.

Many Queendoms and kingdoms in West Africa today trace their origins to the North East Africam High Cultured Civilations.

In Southern Africa, the Zulu, Khoikhoi, and San peoples settled around the Limpopo and Orange Rivers.

The original people would spread throughout the continent and eventually across the globe.

The original Twa people lived in regions extending from the east and south to the West and North, from the banks of the upper Nile; they became classified as Cushitic, Nilotic, or Bantu. They would form the different ethnic and language groups that exist in Sub-Saharan Africa.

It is not always possible to place precise dates on these kinds of events.

Likewise, some of these ideas can best be explained through mythology.

The people moved north, west, and east and then returned toward the south.

Those who returned brought new ideas and techniques.

The term Bantu generally refers to a large group of African non-Semitic peoples. The Bantu migration is presented as one of the longest and greatest movements of people in history.

Xhosa Mythology and Creation Traditions

Xhosa myths and creation stories emphasize a living connection between

Gamataa is described as a creator and among the earliest beings.

These languages usually have a Click consonant sound at the beginning -

English language usually replaces the click sound with an X .

X in this case is unpronounceable.

X Thixo represents the sun, while NDe Belle represents the earth.

Together, they fathered Gamatta. These are among the mystical figures credited with creation in Xhosa mythology. The writing is able to introduce these alternative ideas in order to expand our view of the African world; however, it truly requires an initiate to explain it.

Because of the clicks and consonants in the language, translating these concepts into English can be challenging. A common origin point in

Xhosa tradition is a mythical river. It signifies a deep connection to water, spirit, and nature. This can be considered a pre-cosmic cosmology because it seeks to explain the creation process.

African Names, Cultural Knowledge, and Misappropriation

African names and cultural concepts have often been poorly represented and are frequently misappropriated today.

In many cases, deep African cultural concepts are used in the development of artificial intelligence and other technologies. African names are also frequently used to name Western companies and are common within the entertainment industry.

A Google search for the name "Rainmakers," for example, might produce an American rock band.

The original rainmakers, however, are from the southern regions of Africa. The Ndebele people are associated with a culture of rainmaking.

Traditional Ndebele chiefs often hold the responsibility for performing national rituals, including rainmaking, because rain is closely linked to power and the well-being of the community.

When the Northern Ndebele, who are called the Matabele, settled in the area that is now Zimbabwe, they incorporated many existing methods from the

Shona people whom they encountered there.