

BLACK AFRICA

The Economic and
Cultural Basis for
a Federated State

EXPANDED EDITION

Cheikh Anta Diop

With an Interview by Carlos Moore

Black Africa

Other Books in English by The Same Author

The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality

The Cultural Unity of Black Africa

Precolonial Black Africa

IN PREPARATION

Civilization or Barbarism



Cheikh Anta Diop

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*The Economic and Cultural Basis
for a Federated State*

Translated by
Harold J. Salemson



AFRICA WORLD PRESS EDITION

LAWRENCE HILL BOOKS

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Diop, Cheikh Anta.

Black Africa : the economic and cultural basis for
a federated state.

Translation of : Les fondements économique et
culturels d'un état fédéral d'Afrique noire.

Bibliography: p. 90

1. Africa, Sub-Saharan—Economic conditions.
 2. Africa, Sub-Saharan—Civilization. 3. Pan-Africanism.
 4. Africa, Sub-Saharan—Politics and government.
 5. Africa, Sub-Saharan—Industries. 6. Power resources—
Africa, Sub-Saharan. I. Title.
- HC800.D5613 1987 330.967 87-17704
ISBN 978-1-55652-061-7, previously 0-88208-223-X
ISBN 0-86543-058-6 (Africa World Press)

© Editions Presence Africaine, 1974

Foreword to 1978 edition

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Translation by Harold Salemson

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Interview with Cheikh Anta Diop

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This revised edition jointly published 1987

by Lawrence Hill Books

an imprint of Chicago Review Press, Incorporated

814 North Franklin Street

Chicago, Illinois 60610

ISBN 978-1-55652-061-7

and Africa World Press, Inc., PO Box 1892, Trenton, NJ, 08608

Printed in the United States of America

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Foreword to the English Edition

Since 1960, when the first edition of this work appeared, the specter of South-Americanization that should have been staved off has instead materialized everywhere. African unity has made only limited progress in certain specific domains of economic, cultural, academic or other life. Even in those cases, we have had only regional or continental groupings, never involving any real surrender of an iota of national sovereignty and, therefore, not irreversible. They include: OERS (Organisation des Etats Riverains du fleuve Sénégal; Organization of States Bordering the Senegal River); UDEAC (*Union Douanière des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale*; Customs Union of Central African States); OERM (*Organisation Economique de la Région du Maghreb*; Economic Organization of North Africa); EACM (East African Community and Common Market); CEAO (*Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest*; West African Economic Community); CEDEAO (*Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest*; The Economic Community of West African States).

Most of these groupings died as they were born, about one every two years. Such was the case with the Union of East Africa (including Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda), which had given rise to so many hopes.

The CEAO (including Senegal, Niger, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Upper Volta, Togo and Benin) and CEDEAO (Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal, Upper Volta, Niger, Togo, Guinea and Sierra Leone) are recent creations in West Africa but no less fragile. All of them are giants with feet of clay engaged in trying to square the circle: to achieve meaningful economic unity without political union. No one wants to make the necessary sacrifice to achieve political unity. All hope to gain the benefits of economic integration without sacrificing the selfish interests of their governing groups on

the altar of African unity. That is the fundamental contradiction lying at the base of all these ephemeral constructions and unions.

The subsidiaries of multinational companies established in the countries making up the so-called Union (whether CEAO or CEDEAO) will without difficulty get around the protective laws that have so laboriously been passed. For instance, within the CEAO Senegal and the Ivory Coast harbor most of the subsidiaries of foreign companies there to manufacture cheaply and to export to the rest of the West African zone. These two countries have not used the definition of a national company that other, less-industrialized nations have, such as Mali, Niger, Upper Volta and Mauritania. Whereas Senegal held that even a foreign-financed company operating within the CEAO must be considered a national company if it brought a 75 percent transformation to a homegrown product, the other partners were concerned with the company's origin, the ownership of its capital and the ultimate destination of its profits and, therefore, demanded a better definition of the concept of national companies.

The Organization of African Unity is better than nothing. If only its authority were stronger, if a determinate part of the sovereignty of the various states were transferred to it in specific domains, it would play a more efficacious role. At the moment, this would seem especially necessary in the matter of defense in order to counter the South African peril. Both Pretoria and Israel now possess the atomic bomb without having had to carry out their own nuclear explosions, thanks to Western duplicity.

Let the African peoples not be misled. The nuclear test in the Kalahari that Pretoria recently postponed does not mean it has given up on atomic weapons: it has them already. The test had been intended mainly to intimidate the African states. It was to have been a shattering way of letting them

know that Pretoria had joined the atomic club.

Tomorrow, or in ten years, the German rockets that the OTRAG (Orbital Transport und Raketen Aktion Gesellschaft) Company is beginning to manufacture in Equatorial Africa will be able to deliver Pretoria's nuclear warheads with amazing precision. This will allow South Africa to have the entire Black Continent at its mercy—before Nigeria or Zaïre are aroused or become sufficiently effective.

We may hope that there might yet come into being an international solidarity of peoples to preclude such genocide; demographic pressure is at present the only "atomic weapon of Black Africa."

One is deeply disturbed to read such lines as:

Plans formulated in the United States in 1970 to control birth rates are extremely far-reaching and suggest, for example, the idea of putting sterilizing agents into the water supply of cities or household salt, if need be over the objections of local governments.¹

On another level, in this era of energy crisis there is good reason to redefine what ought to be Africa's energy doctrine, for that action in itself will show that this book, written long before the crisis came into existence, foretold it.

Toward an African Energy Doctrine

The days of the nineteenth-century dwarf states are gone. Our main security and development problems can be solved only on a continental scale and preferably within a federal framework.

Let us just take one example among many to illustrate this

idea. What is the meaning of the rights granted under the Law of the Sea to such tiny landlocked or semiarid states as Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, Niger, Chad, Upper Volta or the Central African Empire? Within two generations, a good share of the customary materials indispensable to our daily lives (including iron, aluminum, copper, uranium, zinc, manganese and cobalt) will have completely disappeared from land areas. Suitable technical equipment will be required to extract them from ocean bottoms exceeding two thousand meters (a mile and a quarter). A right which one has no material or technical way of using is just a dead letter. How would states barely as large as one section of Paris or New York—even if their populations grew—be able to run the risk of sending expeditions on their own into the abyssal depths to secure urgently needed supplies of raw materials? It would be just as easy for a legless man to compete in races at the Olympic Games. An African Kuwait, such as Gabon, in less than sixty years will be an empty shell.

Enlightened self-interest itself argues for the adoption, before it is too late, of a federal system. Belgian-American interests, preparing for the political instability that would prevail in the colonies following World War II, working at maximum rates and beyond, mined all the uranium of the then Belgian Congo in less than ten years and stockpiled it at Oolen in Belgium. The Shinrolowbe mines in Zaïre today are emptied, having supplied the major part of the uranium that went into the Nagasaki and Hiroshima bombs. Until 1952, Zaïre was the world's leading uranium producer; now it ranks sixteenth in reserves and has ceased to be counted among the producers. This one example shows how fast our continent can have its nonrenewable treasures sucked away while we nap.

The upshot is that only a continentwide or a subcontinentwide federated state can offer a safe political and economic area, stable enough for a rational formula covering

the development of our countries with their infinitely varied potentials to be put into effect. Because the federated state involves a real surrender of sovereignty, it is an irreversible structure that has nothing in common with the transitory economic groupings that have proliferated since independence.

Within a federated state, today's political boundaries would become mere local administrative lines, and disagreements—such as the ones which have pitted or presently pit Mali against Upper Volta, Ghana against Togo, Libya against Chad, Morocco against Mauritania in the Polisario, Somalia against Ethiopia—would no longer be conceivable. That, therefore, is the framework within which we have chosen to deal with Africa's energy problems.

The ideas presented in popular form in this work, which was first written in 1960 before the world energy crisis, are topical. In fact, it includes the whole of today's OMVS (*L'Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du [Fleuve] Sénégal*; The Organization for the Development of the River Senegal) program, before the fact.

We would like in these prefatory pages to indicate how we conceive an African Energy Doctrine. What we are proposing is a schema of continentwide energy development that takes into account at one and the same time renewable and nonrenewable energy resources, ecology and the technical advances of the coming decades.

From such a starting point we will try to establish not only on the historical/cultural level but also on that of economic rationality a future African-Arab cooperation in the particular sphere of use of energy resources.

Black Africa will have to find a formula of energy pluralism that harmoniously combines utilization of the following sources of energy: 1) hydroelectric energy (dams); 2) solar energy; 3) nuclear energy; 4) geothermal energy; 5) hydrocarbons (petroleum); and 6) thermonuclear energy.

The first five sources of energy are already utilizable to various degrees in Africa and the rest of the world, while the last has not reached a practically operable stage. There can be no doubt, despite a requisite degree of pessimism, that its applications will become operational within the next forty years—that is, in less than two generations—at the very moment when the reign of oil will be ending with the exhaustion of the last deposits on earth. We cannot here go into technical aspects of the problems; that would make no sense in a text which aims to popularize ideas that are vital to us all. However, if that source of energy were to become available, with effective control of thermonuclear reactions, the energy needs of the planet would be answered for a period of a billion—repeat, one billion—years. The future instruments that produce this energy, whether called thermonuclear reactors or tokomaks (from the Soviet origin of the first experimental prototypes so named), will be fed in their final and truly operational stages by heavy hydrogen, obtained basically through the electrolysis of sea water.

Every country would be able to have its own electrolytic setup which would be more than enough to handle its current needs. But if energy consumption were to increase indefinitely, African dams would be the proper installations for the production of heavy hydrogen by way of electrolysis; at the same time they would supply ordinary hydrogen for stockpiling as eventual replacement for gasoline to fuel a type of internal-combustion engine to be invented.

As far as solar energy is concerned, ongoing research with a view to reducing the cost of solar cells will perhaps allow us on the threshold of the year 2000 to have operational solar powerplants, known as land or space heliovoltaics. We stated in this work that the practical application of solar energy for industry was basically a problem of physical chemistry; events have not proved us wrong. Nevertheless, solar technology is improving daily, and the application of

solar energy to home heating and cooling is well under way. Solar energy has already been put to use in a number of high-rise buildings, and communal solar receptors are in operation.

For a great many reasons which would be difficult to detail here we believe that the continentwide options available to Africa should be the following: first, to bank on the triumph of thermonuclear energy and immediately create a pilot fusion center in an appropriate African country, open to all qualified African researchers willing to follow this line of pursuit; fusion is only very slightly polluting, either radioactively or thermally²; second, to bank supplementarily on solar energy; in the third place to bank on geothermal energy (also producing only slight pollution), especially for the volcanic regions of East Africa.

There is no need here to go into the sources of wind, tidal or other energy which, while less significant, are discussed in the text proper.

The three abovementioned sources (thermonuclear, solar and geothermal) now being domesticated fall into place with three others that are already standard: hydroelectricity (dams); nuclear fission, as opposed to the nuclear fusion just considered; and hydrocarbons.

The intensification of petroleum prospecting each year improves Africa's posture in the realm of hydrocarbons, but it is well known that these are highly polluting and are now being depleted throughout the world. Taking these two factors into account, as well as the imminent arrival of new sources of energy, one can anticipate that hydrocarbons will increasingly be considered only as raw materials for the synthetic chemical industry.

As for nuclear fission, it is regrettable that the political historical context no longer allows us a choice. We are obliged to develop this highly polluting technology on the African continent, because our peoples' survival depends

upon it. We will have to opt for second-generation reactors (that is, breeders or superregenerators), which at their operational stage with all the dangers involved produce more fuel than they consume—as is well known.

The seismic stability of the African continent will allow stockpiling of atomic wastes until a valid efficient method of disposing of these may be found, instead of embedding them in concrete or sinking them in the ocean by pipeline, as some of the great powers with Atlantic seacoasts, such as Great Britain, have been doing.

Finally, hydroelectric power today is the principal source of energy for sub-Saharan Africa. Let us not forget that in colonial days the Belgians had already calculated that equipping the Inga site on the Zaïre River would have been enough to supply all the African energy needs of that day—or to light the entire continent of South America. They at one time considered transporting this power in direct current (because there is less loss) from the Equator to Spain, Portugal and Italy and selling it to power-poor southern Europe. Their calculations showed that it could be sold in Europe at a competitive price per kilowatt, even after having been transported over so long a distance.

Abundant hydroelectric power has allowed Zaïre to undertake the installation of a plant for the enrichment of uranium, a technique requiring vast amounts of electricity.

We might also point to the dams at Kaborabassa, Aawan and elsewhere. Two-thirds of the world's reserves of hydro-electric power are concentrated in Africa.

Black Africa is, therefore, a continent rich in power. Equipping the present sites and connecting them in an African grid would permit the creation of an integrated continentwide electrical-energy market, covering virtually all the energy needs of the African states through rational distribution without waste. The interconnection of grids is so rational a solution that even countries with different

economic systems resort to it. Certain Soviet purchases in Europe, namely, in West Germany, are paid for with electric power, or can be considered to be.

Establishment of the African grid would allow for power from Zaïre to be delivered even to the edges of the desert and, thus, keep the latter from spreading.

At this time, the longest powerline for electrical energy in direct current in the world is being built in Zaïre, between Kinshasa and the Shaba, a distance of 2,000 kilometers. Another line of the same type built by the Portuguese is unfortunately still in operation, between Kaborabassa (Mozambique) and Johannesburg, supplying power to Pretoria's factories of death. We are convinced that the Mozambican authorities will do their utmost to put an end to this as soon as possible.

A private organization, the UPDEA (*Union des Producteurs et des Distributeurs d'Electricité en Afrique*; Union of African Producers and Distributors of Electricity) has been set up in the past few years and is at work to complete the grid. The pitfalls of such a solution are evident. The ideal would be for problems as vital as this to be taken in hand by a continentwide federated state rather than by a foreign financial group. All deviations are conceivable!

We can also understand that such is the prerequisite for self-centered development—as economists employ that term when they emphasize this kind of development—and add that it is possible only by throwing off the (iniquitous) conditions of the international marketplace and making a break for as long as necessary with that kind of system, as was done, for example, by the Soviet Union or China. Economists have never spelled out the conditions that make such a withdrawal possible; this cannot be held against them, for such a definition is outside the framework of economics. Only a continentwide or subcontinentwide federated state can permit realization of such self-centered development.

Bases for African-Arab Cooperation

I have demonstrated in my earlier books all the biological and cultural kinship between Arabs and Black Africans, a kinship so old that it goes back to the fifth millennium BC and the beginning of the fourth with the birth of the Semitic world. I further explored the "genetic kinship between Pharaonic Egyptian and the African languages" within the framework of a chapter on "The Process of Semiticization." This kinship greatly antedates Islam, but all the prejudices inherited during the history of the intervening centuries have obscured it. One day it will come to the fore once again, and it is a factor not to be overlooked in the unifying dynamic of the continent.

These historic reasons are further supported by current reasons which belong to the complementary nature of our economies in the light of the coming depletion of hydrocarbon fossil fuels.

The form of energy eventually replacing oil in the semiarid Middle East will not be nuclear fission, for fissionable resources from the earth will give out at about the time petroleum supplies are depleted—to say nothing of the special inconvenience represented by a nuclear powerplant existing beyond its use. The substitute energy will very probably be thermonuclear, that is, from nuclear fusion, or else solar. We have seen that, if this is the case, Black Africa with its hydroelectric installations might be the inexhaustible source both for heavy hydrogen, which is the raw material for thermonuclear reactors, and for the future vector of energy (i.e., the means of stockpiling and transporting) which is ordinary hydrogen. Hydrogen-fueled automobiles will necessarily replace today's gasoline-fueled vehicles. The solar car, built with photocells, will undoubtedly also come into existence, but it may be less practical because of the alternation of days and nights, even after the problem of

conversion and stockpiling of solar energy is solved. It may be that the photosynthesis reaction creating hydrogen from sunlight—accomplished in laboratory experiments by the Japanese—will soon become a practical reality.

With the future appearance of hydrogen as the energy vector, a whole new technology of internal-combustion engines and various other types of motors must come into existence. It is in terms of that not-so-distant future that we must rethink all of our developmental problems in order to avoid absurd choices that might condemn the next generation—today's sixteen-year-olds—to face the worst kinds of difficulties tomorrow.

March 10, 1978

¹Albert Sauvy, *La Population*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France ("Que sais-je?" Collection), 1975, p. 118.

²See the author's report to the PNUD (*Le Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement*; United Nations Development Program) Ref. DP/TCDC/RAF/11, September 10, 1976, p. 68: "Technical Cooperation among African Countries."

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Introduction

Our ideologists have not succeeded in moving revolutionary theory forward by one step in Black Africa. Indeed, though one be armed with so fecund a scientific method of analysis as Marxist dialectics (assuming it had been sufficiently assimilated), it would be hopeless to try to apply it to a reality of which one is totally ignorant. For a long time many of our compatriots have thought they could get by without any deep knowledge of African society and Africa in all aspects: history, languages, ethnicities, energy potential, raw materials, and the like. The conclusions reached have often been abysmally banal, when not plain and simply wrong. They have thought they could make up for the lack of ideas, breath, and revolutionary perspectives by the use of offensive, excessive, and murky vocabulary; they forgot that the truly revolutionary quality of language is its demonstrative clarity based on the objective use of facts and their dialectical relationships, which results in irresistibly convincing the intelligent reader.

In February, 1952, when I was Secretary General of the Democratic African Rally of Students, we posed the problem of the political independence of the Black Continent and the creation of a future Federated State in an article entitled "Toward a Political Ideology in Black Africa."¹ This article, which was in fact but a foreshadowing of my *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*,² considered political, linguistic, historical, social, and other aspects of the question.

At that time, apart from the Malagasy deputies and the Cameroonian leader Ruben Um Nyobé, there were certainly no French-speaking Black African politicians who dared to voice the concepts of African nations, independence, or, let's face it, culture. Today's after-the-fact state-

ments endorsing such ideas are almost frauds; at the least they are bare-faced misrepresentations.

It would be illuminating to trace the history of the actual positive use (not just as trial balloons to be shot down) of these concepts by the "fathers" of African independence, even if the use preceded their writings.

If the priorities indicated in this book had been taken into consideration in due time, especially insofar as hydroelectric development was concerned, Black Africa today would have nothing to fear from the economic problems created by the oil crisis and the drought.

A rational industrialization program would consist first of all of harnessing the immense sources of energy which nature has given to Africa and thus making possible the whole process of development: In the beginning is energy; all else flows therefrom. While exploitation of such abundant energy might become a marketing challenge for private corporations, to a developing country which must stimulate manifold activities and bring into being the apparatus needed for its emergence into the industrial era, the idea of excess energy is pure nonsense.

¹"Vers une idéologie politique en Afrique Noire," in *La Voix de l'Afrique Noire* (official organ of the Étudiants du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain), February, 1962.

*Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1974, a translation by Mercer Cook of *Nations nègres et culture* (1955) and selected parts of *Antériorité des civilisations nègres: Mythe ou Vérité historique?* (1967), both published by Présence Africaine, Paris.

Part I

Historical Unity: The Restoration Of African Historical Consciousness

The time has come to draw practical conclusions from years of studying African problems, to sum them up in formulas that are as clear as possible and easy to apply.

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Chapter One

Origins and History of the Black World

In all likelihood, present-day African peoples are in no way invaders come from another continent; they are the aborigines. Recent scientific discoveries that show Africa to be the cradle of humanity increasingly negate the hypothesis of this continent being peopled by outlanders.

From the appearance of *homo sapiens*—from earliest prehistory until our time—we are able to trace our origins as a people without significant breaks in continuity. In early prehistory, a great South-North movement brought the African peoples of the Great Lakes region into the Nile Basin. They lived there in clusters for millennia.

In prehistoric times, it was they who created the Nilotic Sudanese civilization and what we know as Egypt.

These first Black civilizations were the first civilizations in the world, the development of Europe having been held back by the last Ice Age, a matter of a hundred thousand years.

Beginning in the sixth century BC (525, when Cambyses occupied Egypt) with the end of the independence of the great Black power base, the African peoples, until then drawn to the Nile Valley as by a magnet, fanned out over the continent. Perhaps they then came upon small pockets of populations descended from paleolithic or neolithic infiltrations.

A few centuries later, around the first century, they founded the first of the continental civilizations in the West and South: Ghana, Nok-Ifé, Zimbabwe and others.

We now know, thanks to radiocarbon methods, that the earliest sites in Zimbabwe do date back at least as far as the

first century of the Christian Era. On the east coast of Africa Roman coins have been discovered at the port of Dunford as well as in Zanzibar, indicating a flourishing sea trade.

The first Nigerian civilization, which Bernard and William Fagg named the Nok civilization, has been traced back to the first millennium BC, the ceramics found there being radiocarbon-dated over a range from 900 BC to 200 AD. The *Tarikh es-Sudan* tells us that the city of Kukia, on the Niger, former capital of Songhay before Gao, was contemporaneous with the time of the pharaohs. However that may be, we do know with certainty that in the eighth century AD the Empire of Ghana was already in existence, extending over all of West Africa, right to the Atlantic. So we can see that the African states of the Middle Ages had come into being practically when Egyptian-Sudanese antiquity came to its close. The Nilotic Sudan was finally to lose its independence only in the nineteenth century, and its old eastern province of Ethiopia would retain its identity until the Italian occupation of 1936, barring which, it never lost its independence. That being the case, Ethiopia is in point of fact the oldest state in the world. Ghana lasted from about the third century AD until 1240, to be succeeded by Mali from that date to 1464 (accession of Soni-Ali, founder of the Songhay Empire).

The dismembering of these nations was effectively completed in the nineteenth century by the European occupation of Africa. The breaking-up went on apace; what we saw then were tiny kingdoms, each jealous of its own independence, such as those of Cayor in Senegal conquered by General Louis Faidherbe under Napoleon III after a fierce resistance. The kingdoms of East Africa with trading cities on the coast prospered from the end of classical antiquity until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when they fell to the Portuguese. These kingdoms maintained a lively trade with India, Siam, and the Chinese Far East, evidenced both by chronicles and by Chinese potteries found there. It is

hard for us today to picture the opulence of the authentically Black trading centers of that period. Father Gervase Mathew, of Oxford, in relating Swahili tradition mentions that in these cities there were silver staircases leading to beds of ivory. Such luxurious furnishing are barely imaginable today. The houses, built of stone, rose to five or six stories. The people were authentic jet-black Africans. Their women had shaven heads as in Ghana.

These civilizations were overthrown by the Portuguese who, in the sixteenth century, altered the old trade routes and sea lanes of the Indian Ocean. The conception of African history just briefly sketched is today to all intents and purposes accepted and endorsed by scholars:

Black African culture set for the whole world an example of extraordinary vitality and vigor. All vitalist conceptions, religious as well as philosophic, I am convinced, came from that source. The civilization of ancient Egypt would not have been possible without the great example of Black African culture, and in all likelihood it was nothing but the sublimation thereof.¹

The history of the Nilotic Sudan, Egypt and present-day Ethiopia is well known. Until recently, however, the past of West Africa was related quite summarily. We have felt it necessary to bring this past to life through documents we have had at our disposal and by establishing a socio-historical analysis covering two thousand years.

The old political, social and economic organization of Black Africa over those two thousand years, the military, judicial, and administrative apparatus, the educational set-up, the university and technical levels, the pomp and circumstance of court life, the customs and mores—all details which had been presumed lost in the deep dark past—we were able to

bring strikingly and scientifically back to life, especially insofar as West Africa was concerned, in *L'Afrique Noire pré-coloniale* (Pre-Colonial Black Africa).²

A similar work should be undertaken for the Benin-Ifé civilization. What would be of special interest there would be the fact that even in its ideological superstructure the civilization of Benin borrowed nothing from either the Semitic or the Aryan worlds. On the other hand, it does display a close relationship with ancient Egypt, as might be expected: Its art, in a certain measure, represents African sculptural classicism.

The same kind of exhumation and revivification work on our history for the period from antiquity to the present can and must be undertaken in a systematic way for all of eastern, central, and southern Africa.

Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Persian, Chinese, and Arabic documents known to exist and with what archeology may add to them allow this to be done in large measure. Nowhere in African history are there holes that cannot be filled in. The empty spaces are only temporary, and the period that affects us runs without a break from Egyptian-Sudanese antiquity and fits right in sequence.

So, historical consciousness is properly restored. The general framework of African history is set out. The evolution of peoples is known in its broad lines, but the research already begun will have to be continued in order to fill the small gaps that still exist, thus reinforcing the framework. One can no longer see "darkest Africa" set against a "deep dark past"; the African can clearly follow his evolution from prehistory to our own day. Historical unity has become manifest.

The psychological unity existing for all those who inhabit the Dark Continent, and which each of us feels, is an elementary fact that needs no demonstration.

Geographical unity likewise is obvious, and it necessarily

implies economic unity. The latter is what we shall discuss in the pages devoted to the industrialization of Africa.

A consideration of the structure of the precolonial African family, that of the State, the accompanying philosophical and moral concepts, and the like, reveals a consistent cultural unity, resulting from similar adaptations to the same material and physical conditions of life. This was the subject of my *L'Unité culturelle de l'Afrique Noire* (The Cultural Unity of Black Africa).³

There is also a common linguistic background. The African languages constitute one linguistic family, as homogeneous as that of the Indo-European tongues. Nothing is easier than to set down the rules that allow transfer from a Zulu language (Bantu) to one of those of West Africa (Serer-Wolof, Peul), or even to ancient Egyptian (cf. *L'Afrique Noire pré-coloniale*, Part II). However, the old imperial languages, Sarakole in Ghana, Mandingo in Mali, Songhay in Koaga (Gao), have had their areas of extension sharply reduced today. At the apogee of these African empires, the imperial tongues, the languages of trade and government affairs, were the African languages themselves; even after the advent of Islam, Arabic always remained only the language of religion and erudition, as did Latin in Europe of the same period.

With European occupation in the nineteenth century the official African languages were replaced by those of the various "mother countries." Local dialects surfaced and vied against the older national cultural languages which had virtually submerged them. It became less and less necessary for civil administration, politics or social intercourse to learn the latter. The demands of daily life required learning the European languages; the disrepute of the old linguistic unities in our day reached its depth.

While we may be able to build a Federated African State covering all of the Black Continent on the basis of historical,

psychological, economic and geographical unity, we will be forced, in order to complete such national unity and set it on a modern autochthonous cultural base, to recreate our linguistic unity through the choice of an appropriate African tongue promoted to the influence of a modern cultural language.

Linguistic unity dominates all national life. Without it, national cultural unity is but fragile and illusory. The wranglings within a bilingual country, such as Belgium, illustrate the point.

¹Professor Georges Gurvitch, Sorbonne, "Message to the Second Convention of Black Writers and Artists," Rome, April, 1959 (in special issue, *Présence Africaine*).

²Paris: Éditions Présence Africaine, 1960. This work for the first time demonstrated the possibility of writing a history of Black Africa free of mere chronology of events. The type of study thus initiated, sometimes called "history of ideas," was immediately taken over by various historians, without benefit of acknowledgment, to be sure. (Cf. also, Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization*, cited above.)

³Paris: Éditions Présence Africaine, 1960.