

12. THE LIMITS OF THE *BLACK ATHENA* THESIS AND OF AFROCENTRICITY AS EMPIRICAL EXPLANATORY MODELS

The *Borean hypothesis, the Back-into-Africa hypothesis, and the Pelasgian hypothesis, as suggestive of a common, West Asian origin for the continuities between sub-Saharan Africa, Ancient Egypt and the Aegean, with a protective new identity for the goddess Athena

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1. Introduction

Having tried to do full justice, throughout the preceding pages of the present book, to Martin Bernal as a visionary scholarly innovator with a strong sense of the transcontinental politics of knowledge in our time and age, it is time to conclude this collection with an examination of the limits of the *Black Athena* thesis and of Afrocentricity as a empirical explanatory models. Here I will not dwell any longer on the merits of Bernal's approach as an etymologist claiming to derive systematic explanation from sound laws that, in his hands, allow exceptions and are further adapted for the occasion; or – on the credit side – as a historian of ideas looking for racism in late 18th and early 19th century CE, when European expansion on a global scale was in full swing (although still far from its full extent, which was reached a century later), and when the bristling trans-Atlantic slave trade was the surest sign of the implicitly racist premises of West European society at the time. As an Africanist seeking to define the place of sub-Saharan Africa and its inhabitants within long-range global cultural history, my focus has been, through the years, on the question whether the *Black Athena* thesis offers a viable model for long-term transcontinental cultural processes between Africa and Eurasia. My argument in Chapter 9 of this collection, on 'Rethinking Africa's contribution to global cultural history' (written in 1995-1997), interpreted the information then at my disposal in

an Afrocentrist sense largely informed by the inspiration from *Black Athena*. In the one and a half decades that have elapsed since, I have further specialised in long-range research, tackling an expanding range of topics, hopefully improving my methodology, finding a congenial and critical network of researchers engaged in similar problematics (e.g. in the Harvard Round Tables around the Arthurian Sanskritist Michael Witzel, and in the International Association for Comparative Mythology), and increasingly familiarising myself somewhat with major ancillary fields of research such as genetics, long-range linguistics, archaeology, and comparative mythology. In the process I have constantly confronted my findings with the *Black Athena* thesis, and the enthusiasm that still characterises my defence of Afrocentrism against Howe, (Chapter 10 in this collection, dating from the year 2000), has gradually given way to substantial doubt.

2. *Transcontinental continuities – but what was the mechanism and the direction of their transmission?*

Already shortly after the 1997 publication of part of the present collection as a special issue of the journal *TAMANTA*, I had started on a book draft with the working title *Global bee flight* (the argument's red line was to trace what I then saw as the global ramifications of Ancient Egyptian royal titlature 'She of the Reed and the Bee' ).¹ This project grew out of a request from Martin Bernal to contribute to a collection of papers by scholars sympathetic to his *Black Athena* thesis. In this connection, however, working on Egyptian royal titlature and on the manifold cultural and linguistic continuities between the Egyptian Delta and West Asia including Anatolia (see below), I soon came to the conclusion that the West Asian / Mediterranean contribution to the Ancient Egyptian dynastic state and culture had to be regarded as independent in its own right, and could not be reduced to a North-bound influence from sub-Saharan Africa in terms of the Afrocentric model. This finding obviously complicated any further close collaboration with Bernal, in an attempt to prove my point my text expanded far beyond article length, frictions arose, and I did not make Bernal's deadline. Frustrated, doubting my provisional results but initially lacking the transdisciplinary resources and inspiration to do better, I allowed the long book draft to be shelved ever since – until I returned to

¹ The two ts  mark the expression as unmistakably feminine, whatever our gender assumptions about ritual or political leaders in predynastic and early dynastic Egypt. On the inveterate habit of attributing male gender to rulers, even when this is not syntactically indicated nor historically likely, cf. van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 1992, *Tears of Rain: Ethnicity and history in central western Zambia*, London / Boston: Kegan Paul International, from the perspective of Nkoya precolonial history.

the text with a revised version of the original argument,² and a recent definitive statement in the form of a long article entitled ‘The continuity of African and Eurasian mythologies’.³


That there were such continuities was not in doubt. For the Nkoya people of Zambia, South Central Africa, with whom I have done intensive oral-historical and ethnographic fieldwork since the early 1970s and with whose language, culture, society and history I am conversant, I could recently list 26 mythemes that play an important role in Nkoya mythology, whilst the parallel attestations of the same mythemes in Eurasia (including, prominently, Egypt and Ancient Greece) took me dozens of pages and hundreds of references. In earlier projects I studied the global distribution of formalised culture systems such as the mankala board game and geomantic divination (*cf.* Chapter 9, above); animal symbolism in clan names and astronomical terminology; leopard-skin symbolism; and the distribution of the belief in a unilateral being. Such transcontinental comparison was also extended to the ramifications of the Niger-Congo linguistic macrophylum as, possibly, a branch of the reconstructed *Borean parent language spoken in Central Eurasia some 25 ka BP.⁴ Most of my empirical research of the last two decades has been aimed at demonstrating transcontinental continuities involving sub-Saharan Africa. In my professional identity as an intercultural philosopher, I have pursued this line of research, ultimately in a bid to demonstrate – in the face of the traumatic insistence on difference or rather on exclusion that is inherent in all thinking in terms of race, ethnicity, nationalism and continentalism – the fundamental underlying unity of all of us, Anatomically Modern Humans – the sub-species that came into being in Africa c. 200 ka BP, and that spread from Africa all over the world from c. 80 ka BP.

In my Nkoya research, recognition of elements greatly reminiscent of Egypt came as a real eye-opener. I only became somewhat familiar with the

² van Binsbergen, Wim M.J, 1998-2006, ‘Skulls and tears: Identifying and analysing an African fantasy space extending over 5000 kilometres and across 5000 years’: Paper read at the conference ‘Fantasy spaces: The power of images in a globalizing world’ (convenors Bonno Thoden van Velzen & Birgit Meyer), part of the WOTRO [Netherlands Foundation for Tropical Research] research programme ‘Globalization and the construction of communal identities’, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 26-29 August 1998, greatly revised and expanded version (2006) at: http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/fantasy_space_2006_expanded.pdf.

³ *idem*, 2010, ‘The continuity of African and Eurasian mythologies: General theoretical models, and detailed comparative discussion of the case of Nkoya mythology from Zambia, South Central Africa’, in: Wim M.J. van Binsbergen & Eric Venbrux, eds., *New Perspectives on Myth: Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference of the International Association for Comparative Mythology, Ravenstein (the Netherlands), 19-21 August, 2008*, Leiden / Haarlem: Papers in Intercultural Philosophy and Transcontinental Comparative Studies, pp. 137-215, preprint at: http://shikanda.net/topicalities/binsbergen_continuity_african_eurasian_mythologies.pdf.

⁴ ka = kiloyear, millennium; BP = Before Present; on *Borean, see below.

literature and language of Ancient Egypt in the mid-1990s, a quarter of a century after I had started my Nkoya research, so there is no chance that my Nkoya data were contaminated with a preconceived Egyptological bias when first collected. Yet I saw⁵ the Egyptian royal titles *nswt-bit*, ‘She of the Reed and the Bee’, and to a lesser extent  *nbty*, ‘The Two Ladies’, narratively enacted by legendary characters in Nkoya royal myths supposedly referring to local Zambian history of the last few centuries BP. Among other Nkoya mythical motifs reminiscent of Ancient Egypt I was particularly struck by the attribution of their kingship to ‘the Tears of Rain’,⁶ while in Egypt after the Old Kingdom humankind, and bees, have been considered to have arisen from the very tears of Re^c.⁷

3. Ancient Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa: Complex interrelationships

The case for continuities between Ancient Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa is much more comprehensive than merely mythological continuities between Nkoya and Egyptian mythology – and what is more, these continuities, whilst particularly striking for Ancient Egypt, turn out not to be limited to Egypt but to extend to the Mediterranean, West Asia, Western and Northern Europe, and even across the Eurasian steppe, all the way to East, South and South East Asia.

In the second half of the 1990s, my research and writing was to a considerable extent preoccupied with the *Black Athena* thesis and Afrocentricity, and it stands to reason that I first looked there for inspiration in order to explain such trans-regional cultural continuities as I believed to

⁵ *idem*, ‘The continuity’, *o.c.*

⁶ Cf. *idem*, 1992, *Tears of Rain: Ethnicity and history in central western Zambia*, London / Boston: Kegan Paul International.

⁷ See *idem*, ‘The continuity’, *o.c.*, for principal Egyptian and global sources and secondary literature. After assuming for a decade that the Nkoya-Egyptian parallel constitutes sure proof of unidirectional (although delayed and indirect) Nkoya borrowing from Egypt in the best Egyptocentric fashion, in that recent argument I finally trace the global ramifications of the ‘creation through tears of the divinity’ mytheme, finding them so wide that the hypothesis of a Pelasgian substrate spreading throughout the Old World from the Bronze Age on could be invoked as explanation – rather than Egyptocentric one-way diffusion. This argument seems to apply less to the *nswt-bit* motif, which remains fairly specific to Ancient Egypt, even though reed and bees with cosmogonic symbolic loading appear throughout the Pelasgian realm (reed even from the Zulu in Southern Africa to the *Kojiki* sacred text of Japan). Meanwhile, as argued at great length in the same article, many transcontinental mythical motifs among the Nkoya turn out to link up, not so much with Egyptian motifs, but with Celtic and West and Central Asian, Altaic steppe motifs, and to a lesser extent with Graeco-Roman and North American motifs: as we shall see, this is a typical ‘Pelasgian’ distribution to be explained by the ‘cross-model’ (see below), and likewise very far from one-way Egyptocentric borrowing.

detect among the Zambian Nkoya. If Egypt had been able to exert a decisive influence on the Aegean (and by extension on subsequent European, North Atlantic and global culture), chances were that Egypt had exerted a similar influence on parts of the continent in which it found itself: Nubia, East Africa, West Africa, and South Central Africa including Nkoyaland. Alternatively, if Egypt is to be considered a part of Africa (and this pet Africanist idea came as an afterthought to Bernal's *Black Athena* thesis, in which he more and more sought to stress continuity between his own Mediterranean-centred analyses, and the vast body of Afrocentrist literature generated especially in North America in the past two centuries), then African influences will have travelled from sub-Saharan Africa to the rest of the world via Egypt. The mythical narrative patterns and socio-political arrangements which I found among the Nkoya and for which I had begun to see trans-regional, even intercontinental continuities, in the mid-1990s I saw as exponents of original, primal African cultural forms spreading to other continents, according to the Afrocentrist adage (towards which I felt considerable sympathy at the time) that initiative in global cultural history was invariably and exclusively the privilege of African societies and of Africans.

Much as recent scholarship has stressed the sub-Saharan contribution to the making of Ancient Egypt (see Chapter 10, above), the West Asian contribution has long been recognised to have been at least equally important:⁸ writing, iconography, cylinder seals, temple architecture, objects marking temple foundations, royal funerary human sacrifice,⁹ are among the more conspicuous items of archaeologically attested material culture bringing out Egypt's kinship with Sumer. Some of the models of transcontinental continuity that we will consider below (notably, the Back-into-Africa hypothesis recently formulated by geneticists, and my Pelasgian hypothesis based on comparative ethnography though with considerable genetic support) allow us to see Egypt's apparent indebtedness to Sumer as more than just a case of one local culture (Sumer) influencing, even triggering, another. The cultural and genetic makeup of sub-Saharan

⁸ Rice, M., 1990, *Egypt's Making: The origins of Ancient Egypt, 5000-2000 B.C.*, London & New York: Routledge; Ray, J., 1996, 'The Mesopotamian influence on Ancient Egyptian writing', in: Celenko, T., ed., *Egypt in Africa, Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art in cooperation with Indiana University Press*, pp. 38-39; Kantor, H.J., 1952, 'Further evidence of Early Mesopotamian relations with Egypt', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 9, 2: 239-250; Moorey, P.R.S., 1987, 'On tracking cultural transfers in prehistory: The case of Egypt and lower Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium BC', in: M. Rowlands, M. Larsen & K. Kristiansen, eds., *Centre and periphery in the ancient world*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 36-46; Blackman, Aylward M., 1924, 'The rite of Opening the Mouth in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 10: 47-59; and references cited in these publications.

⁹ Emery, W.B., 1961, *Archaic Egypt: Culture and civilization in Egypt five thousand years ago*, Harmondsworth: Penguin; Wilkinson, T.A.H., 2001, *Early dynastic Egypt*, London / New York: Routledge, first published 1999.

Africa in recent times was largely determined by the combination of ‘ancient genes’ (the L1, L2 and L3 mtDNA types, dating from before the Out-of-Africa exodus, to which more recent Asian-born (but of course ultimately African-derived) haplo-groups were added through the Back-into-Africa movement) and ‘young myths’.¹⁰ This ‘young’ mythology (the Cosmogony of the Separation of Land and Water, by proto-Neolithic times already largely supplanted by the Cosmogony of the Separation of Heaven and Earth, with all sorts of devices to remedy the undesirable effects of that vertical separation: towers, altars, temples, shamanism, kingship, demiurge, etc.) had developed in Central and West Asia in the course of several dozen ka as innovation and transformation of the embryonic pre-Exodus cultural package of 80 ka BP (‘Pandora’s Box’); subsequently it had re-entered Africa, where it was superimposed upon, and to a considerable extent eclipsed, the pre-Out of Africa mythology and its meantime local developments. Ancient Egypt, and sub-Saharan Africa, participated jointly in this feedback movement; it even had a considerable impact on South and West Europe.

Clearly, Upper Egypt has much of the sub-Saharan African continuity which Bernallian and other Afrocentrist thought would make us expect: (cf. Chapter 10). Williams¹¹ argues convincingly that essential elements in the royal symbolism of early dynastic Egypt were already available many centuries before in Nubia: the royal bark, the tall conical headdress that ended up as Upper Egypt’s white crown, and the *srh* or palace façade as a royal emblem.

However, the Delta has a very different signature in Pre-Dynastic and Early-Dynastic times. In the Delta in the early dynastic period, the goddess Neith occupies an important place. Her temple in the Western







¹⁰ Cf. van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2006, ‘Mythological archaeology: Situating sub-Saharan African cosmogonic myths within a long-range intercontinental comparative perspective’, in: Osada, Toshiki, with the assistance of Hase, Noriko, eds., *Proceedings of the Pre-symposium of RIHN and 7th ESCA Harvard-Kyoto Roundtable*, Kyoto: Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN), pp. 319-349; also at: http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/kyoto%20as%20published%202006%20EDIT2.pdf; *idem*, 2006, ‘Further steps towards an aggregative diachronic approach to world mythology, starting from the African continent’, paper read at the International Conference on Comparative Mythology, organized by Peking University (Research Institute of Sanskrit Manuscripts & Buddhist Literature) and the Mythology Project, Asia Center, Harvard University (Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies), May 10-14, 2006, at Peking University, Beijing, China; in press in: Duan Qing & Gu Zhenkun, eds., *Proceedings of the International Conference on Comparative Mythology, Beijing*; preprint at: http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/Further%20steps%20def.pdf.

¹¹ Williams, B.B., 1986, *The A-group royal cemetery at Qustul Cemetery L: Excavations between Abu Simbel and the Sudan frontier*, Keith C. Seele, Director, Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition volume III, Part 1, Chicago: Oriental Institute; Williams, B.B., 1996, ‘The Qustul incense burner and the case for a Nubian origin of Ancient Egyptian kingship’, in: Celenko, o.c., pp. 95-97.

Delta is depicted¹² on a famous first-dynasty wooden label from Abydos (now in the British Museum), and several names of queens and ladies-in-waiting recorded in Upper Egypt for that period are theophoric on Neith, as if¹³ the ritual blessing of this Lower Egyptian goddess, and marital ties with her priestesses, were essential for the legitimation of the Southern dynasty. Or rather (given the constant war between the Southerners and the Delta with its Libyan and Levantine connotations) as if, in ways we were subsequently to see all over the Mediterranean from the Bronze Age onward, the Neith cult and its central shrine, as a pacifist element of conflict regulation and reconciliation with divine sanction, was a central force of mediation in the process that was to be known as the Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt. The cult of Neith, the bee connotations of both Neith and of the kingship of Lower Egypt,¹⁴ affinities in trade and

¹² Petrie, W.M.F., 1900-01, *The royal tombs of the First Dynasty / Earliest Dynasties, I-II*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trübner, pl. IIIa, 5 and pl. X, 2, complete with bee representation.

¹³ Emery, *Archaic Egypt, o.c.*

¹⁴ The temple of Neith was known throughout Egyptian history as  *ht bit*, ‘House of the Bee’, cf. the equally perennial royal title,  *nswt-bit*, ‘She of the Reed [/ Sedge] and the Bee’,  *bity*, ‘king of Lower Egypt’,  *pr bity*, ‘palace of the king of Lower Egypt’, and  *3h bit*, ‘“Horizon of the Bee”’, Greek: *Chemmis*, birthplace of the first creatures Šw and Tfnt, and of Hr / Horus’ – all with numerous writing variants in hieroglyphic. The literature on Egyptian royal titlature is extensive and cannot be done justice here. Even though half a century old, a valuable study of the *bit[y]* title is still: Otto, E., 1960, ‘Der Gebrauch des Konigstitels bjtj’, *Zeitschrift für die Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, 85: 143-152. Yet some of Otto’s conclusions are contentious, e.g. that *bit[y]* – with religious rather than administrative connotations, and thus complementary to *nsw* which has political overtones – does not refer to any prehistoric reality but was merely a secondary derivation once the *nswt-bit* title was established; and that the feminine morphology of *bit[y]* is likewise derived and does not correspond with a primal goddess. Yet Faulkner, R.O., 1962, *A concise dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, Oxford: Griffith Institute / Ashmolean Museum, p. 79, lists , *bit*, ‘goddess of Lower Egypt’, with three attestations in Caminos, R.A., 1956, *Literary fragments in the hieratic script*, Oxford: The Griffith Institute. As is clear from the extensive corpus of early-dynastic Egyptian documents, the *nswt-bit* title was already fully standard by the 2nd dynasty (Kaplony, P., 1963, *Die Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit, I-III*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, I, 527, 528). Apparently, *bit* was a mythico-religious expression in Lower Egypt, before it became associated, through the *nswt-bit* title and the symbolism of the Unification of the Two Lands, with the formal idea of the kingship of Lower Egypt. There is no indication (*pace* Woudhuizen, Chapter 11, above) that the king of Lower Egypt is conceptualised, not as a bee, but as a bee-keeper; the oldest attestation of beekeeping in Egypt date from the Old Kingdom (Niuserre’s sun temple), 700 years after the onset of the dynastic period. There is no agreement among Egyptologists as to the inherent meaning of the *nswt-bit* title (beyond the formal element of representing the segmentation of the Two Lands – which however in all contexts except the royal title is

material culture, the Libyan connotations of its population and of Neith¹⁵ (which however found their way into the royal symbolism of united Egypt), the Delta's cult of the earth god *3kr*, 'the earth god', attested from the earliest dynastic times and suggestive of Indo-European affinities,¹⁶ and in general its language which in many respects displays not Afroasiatic but Eurasiatic > Indo-European affinities¹⁷ – all this bears witness of Egypt's (specifically, the Delta's) continuity with West Asia / Anatolia, in addition to that with Nubia and sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁸ Kammerzell set


iconographically represented by other means than bee and reed, e.g. Horus vs. Seth, or a papyrus vs. a lotus). Very telling is (cf. Helck, W., 1984, 'Schamane und Zauberer', in: *Melanges Adolphe Gutbub*, pp. 103-108, Montpellier: Institut d'Égyptologie) that the Sm priest (ideal-typically the king's son and heir, who performs the Opening-of-the-Mouth ceremony) in his ritual functions alternates between wearing a leopard skin and wearing a sedge mantle – as if the leopard skin (also symbol of the night sky, of *Ursa Major*, Horus etc., cf. Stricker, B.H., 1963-1989, *De geboorte van Horus, I-V*, Leiden: Brill for *Ex Oriente Lux*, IV, 489f) evokes the bee which has a similar colour scheme. Comparative mythology suggests that the royal title refers to a hybrid notion of Cosmogony (or Second Cosmogony, after a Flood), when the first land in the form of a reed clump (later redefined to be the primal hill) emerged from the primal waters, while the bee represents the celestial and solar element; cf. van Binsbergen, 'The continuity', *o.c.*

¹⁵ Cf. Kaplony, *o.c.*, I, 534: *Nt:thnw-k3*, 'Die libysche Neith ist ihr Ka(?)', a First-Dynasty inscription.

¹⁶ Cf. Kaplony, *o.c.*, p. I, 615. An obvious Indo-European etymology could be given for the theonym *3kr*, from Proto-Indo-European: *ǵr̥s, 'field' (cf. Pokorny, J., 1959-69, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch, I-II*, Bern & Munich: Franke, p. I, 37). However, there is also an equally valid Afroasiatic etymology, from Proto-Afroasiatic: *kwr (Chadic, Cushitic), *ʔkr (Semitic) 1, *ʔakkāʔ (Semitic, Egyptian) 2 'to cultivate 1, laborer 2' (Starostin, Sergei, & Starostin, George, 1998-2008, *Tower of Babel etymological database*, participants: Russian State University of the Humanities (Center of Comparative Linguistics), Moscow Jewish University, Russian Academy of Sciences (Dept. of History and Philology), Santa Fe Institute (New Mexico, USA), City University of Hong Kong, Leiden University, 'Afroasiatic etymology', at: <http://starling.rinet.ru/babel.htm>).

¹⁷ Kammerzell F., 1994, *Panther Loewe und Sprachentwicklung im Neolithikum*, Goettingen, *Lingua Aegyptia Studia Monographica* 1; Ray J.D., 1992, 'Are Egyptian and Hittite related?', in: Alan B. Lloyd, ed., *Studies in pharaonic religion and society in honour of J. Gwyn Griffiths*, London: Egypt Exploration Society, pp. 124-136.

¹⁸ This throws some further light on Fred Woudhuizen's fascinating and excellently documented discussion of the bee-sign in Cretan Hieroglyphic (Chapter 11, above). The idea of iconographic borrowing from Egypt to Minoan Crete, and specifically of interpreting the Minoan sign as representing a bee related to Egyptian royal symbolism, was already advanced by Arthur Evans (1909, *Scripta Minoa, I*, Oxford: Clarendon, p. 212, n.

86, which on p. 240 Pl. XVI is specifically linked to the Egyptian bee sign , Gardiner no. L02, cf. Gardiner, A.H., 1994, *Egyptian Grammar: Being an introduction to the study of hieroglyphs*, rev. 3rd ed., Oxford: Griffith Institute / Ashmolean Museum, this edition first published 1957, first edition published 1927). Demargne reminded us of this state of affairs in 1930, and pointed out that the execution of the bee in the Minoan context is so crude that essential elements have been distorted – which, I would add, makes the identification as bee less compelling (Demargne, P., 1930, 'Bijoux minoens de Mallia', *Bulletin de Correspondence Hellénique*, 54: 404-421). In principle, the idea of symbolic /

iconographic transmission from Egypt to Crete has been accepted in the recent specialist literature, on the basis of well-studied cases that (contrary to Woudhuizen's analysis of the bee sign) do not depend on the decipherment of the script or the identification the specific language that is written in it; cf. Weingarten, J., 1991, *The transformation of the Egyptian Taweret into the Minoan genius: A study in cultural transmission in the Middle Bronze Age*, Göteborg: Paul Åströms Forlag; Weingarten, Judith, & Éric Hallager, 1993, 'The five roundels from Malia: With a note on two new Minoan genii', *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, 117, 1: 1-18; Rehak, P., 1995, 'The "genius" in Late Bronze Age glyptic: The later evolution of an Aegean cult figure', in: W. Müller, ed., *Sceaux Minoens et Mycéniens, CMS Beiheft V*: 215-231. Similar *genii* also appear on the famous Mycenaean golden signet ring, found at Tiryns in 1915, depicting four lion-headed *genii* – dressed as if in bees' wings! – carrying libation vessels to a goddess seated in front of a smallish, perched bird of prey; cf. Persson, Axel W., 1952, *The religion of Greece in prehistoric times*, Berkeley etc: University of California Press, pp. 76f, where that author argues extensive Cretan parallels). Admittedly, in the Middle Bronze Age to which also Woudhuizen's argument refers, *bit* was sometimes used as a term for 'King of Lower Egypt' – albeit largely as a formal or legendary concept at the time, more than a millennium after 'unification'. However, before we can take Woudhuizen's proposed reading of the Cretan bee sign as proof of extensive Egyptian *political* influence on Crete at that time, we need to consider the wider symbolic connotations of 'bee' in the Bronze Age Mediterranean. Woudhuizen is correct in stating that *-bit* has a convincing Indo-European etymology; the proposals to provide the word with an Afroasiatic (i.e. Old Egyptian) etymology (cf. Starostin & Starostin, o.c., 'Afroasiatic etymology') artificially appeal to very few isolated reflexes, and fail to convince. Against the background of such an etymology, we seem justified to postulate a Mediterranean / Pelasgian *bee complex*, surfacing not only in Lower Egypt, but also in the Hittite Kumarbi epic (where it is a bee that saves the world), in the Hittites' emphasis on mead which however is a favourite drink in much of the Old World (cf. South Asian *soma*), in the widespread bee nomenclature (*Melissai*, *Melisseus*) of the priesthood of the Great Goddess throughout the Aegean and Western Anatolia (Cybele), natural beehives represented as a goddess' multiple breasts, other Aegean evidence of a Bee Goddess, and perhaps even the pocked wall decoration of Neolithic temples in Malta may be interpreted as evocations of bee combs. The Neolithic ramifications of this complex in South Eastern Europe have been identified by Gimbutas (1982, *The goddesses and gods of old Europe 6500-3500: Myths and cult images*, London: Thames & Hudson; *idem*, 1991, *The civilization of the Goddess: The world of Old Europe*, San Francisco: Harper). Inevitably, this Mediterranean-Pelasgian complex extended, not only to Lower Egypt with its many West Asian affinities, but also to Crete, as attested in mythology. A famous piece of Minoan jewellery is widely (though not universally, and probably wrongly) considered to represent two bees (cf. Fig. 1, with elaborate caption). Woudhuizen's interpretation of the bee sign in Cretan Hieroglyphic is that the royal bee symbolism was imported from Egypt to Crete along with a term *bity*, 'king'. Let us leave aside the fact that *bit* was not the standard Egyptian word for 'king', and was used in reference to the king of Lower Egypt (a function subsumed under the kingship of the Two Lands since the unification that marked the beginning of the dynastic period, 3100 BCE) mainly when referring to predynastic times (Hannig, R., 2000, *Die Sprache der Pharaonen; Großes Handwörterbuch Deutsch-Ägyptisch: 2800-950 v. Chr.*, Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, s.v. 'König', etc.). In a proposed context of Egyptian political overlordship over Crete, it is important to realise that even if such an Egypt-to-Crete import of concept and word took place, it ended up in a Cretan environment where ritual bee symbolism probably had already been established for centuries. So rather than a simple one-way cultural and linguistic transfer, we would at least have a feedback movement, bringing pan-Egyptian (but initially Delta) bee-related elements back to a

out to analyse leopard symbolism in Ancient Egypt and found continuity, not with Upper Egypt or with sub-Saharan Africa, but with the Palaeo-Levantine leopard symbolism in Anatolian Çatal Hüyük,¹⁹ which for decades was the type site of Pre-Pottery Neolithic in this part of the world – until recent excavation brought to light Anatolian Neolithic cultures that were half a dozen millennia older (Landesmuseum 2007).²⁰

Fig. 1. The Mallia pendant, Minoan artwork, 1700–1550 BCE, from the Chrysolakkos necropolis in Mallia, Crete; inset: *Vespa orientalis*




Vespa orientalis photographed by Matti Paavola at Lindos, isle of Rhodos, Greece, 12 September 2008, with thanks. Although commonly considered to depict two bees

North East Mediterranean environment where they were originally as much at home as in the Delta. Moreover, since Cretan Hieroglyphic still seems to be in the deciphering stage, one might also invoke Occam's Razor (*entia non sunt multiplicanda sine necessitate*) and suggest that a complex geographical and transformational path from (a) ritual symbol in the North Eastern Mediterranean to (b) ritual-political symbol in Lower Egypt to (c) predominantly political symbol in unified Egypt to (d) predominantly political symbol in the North Eastern Mediterranean even though the latter is still geared to bee-centred ritual symbolism, – that such a path as proposed by Woudhuizen requires so many presuppositions to be piled upon each other, that it might be prudent to also consider alternative readings of the Cretan bee sign – or another source for that sign that direct Egyptian borrowing in the context of some postulated Egyptian overlordship over Crete (for instance, even if Egyptian, the sign, and an attending semantics as 'king', may have travelled the long route via Byblos and the Anatolian coast (my model as set out in Chapter 4 above, which Woudhuizen adopted on other occasions) independent from specific Egyptian political relations with Crete; cf. the Cilician / Egyptian royal title *syennis*).

¹⁹ Mellaart, J., 1967, *Çatal Hüyük: A Neolithic town in Anatolia*, New York: McGraw-Hill.


²⁰ Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe, ed., 2007, *Vor 12000 Jahren in Anatolien: Die ältesten Monumente der Menschheit*, Karlsruhe: Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe. There is no reason to assume that proto-Indo-European was the language of Çatal Hüyük, but a discussion on this point is outside our present scope.

gathered around a clot of pollen, more recent interpretations have been advanced in terms of different superfamilies than that of the bee-like *Apoidea*, notably as wasps or hornets. Of course this does not rule out the possibility, yet makes it less likely, that the ‘bee’ sign in Cretan Hieroglyphic, roughly contemporary to the jewel, was meant to depict a genuine bee. If a genuine bee were meant, this would enhance the plausibility of a link with Egyptian *bit*, for the latter without the slightest doubt refers to a honeybee, *Apis mellifera*.²¹ If the ‘bee sign’ in Cretan Hieroglyphic depicts not a bee, but a wasp, the latter’s symbolic and iconographic parallels in Egypt would be useless for Woudhuizen’s purpose. (A stinging winged insect, *midge*, ranks with spider and locust among the Egyptian shaman’s familiar; and the non-stinging housefly – L03 , therefore iconographically, although not always on the ground, easily distinguished from the bee – features²² as an Ancient Egyptian decoration for military prowess,²³ not intrinsically incompatible with the idea of Minoan vassals of the Egyptian king.

There are other signs of cultural, linguistic and religious continuity between the Egyptian Delta and the Levant in the Early Bronze Age. Some of these were brought out long ago by the Armenologist Karst in his

²¹ Cf. O’Toole, Christopher, & Raw, Anthony, 1999, *Bees of the world*, New York: Facts on File, first published 1991; Crane, E., 1983, *The archaeology of beekeeping*, London: Duckworth; Leek, F.F., 1975, ‘Some evidence of bees and honey in Ancient Egypt’, *Bee World*, 56, 4: 141-148; Kuény, G., 1950, ‘Scènes apicoles dans l’ancienne Égypte’, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 9: 84-93.

²² Cf. Helck, *o.c.*; Houlihan, P.F., 1996, *The animal world of the pharaohs*, London: Thames & Hudson, p. 192.

²³ Demargne, *o.c.*, offered the first description and commentary, see footnote above. Niemeier, W.-D., 1979, ‘Towards a new definition of Late Minoan II’, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 83, 2: 212-214, referred to the pendant in an argument concerned with periodisation. Ruttner, F., 1980, ‘The golden pendant of Malia: The Congress badge – prehistoric vestige and early evidence of beekeeping’, in: Harnaj, V., ed., *Proceedings of the XXVIIth International Beekeeping Congress*, Athens, Bucharest, Romania, pp. 191-196, is institutionally compelled to declare the insects to be bees, and even domesticated ones. Kitchell, K.F., 1981, ‘The Mallia “wasp” pendant reconsidered’, *Antiquity*, 55: 9-15 (which Woudhuizen mentions), also sees bees, and once more points out the link with the Egyptian bee sign. Well-informed arguments for a non-bee identification however, have meanwhile come from: Hood, S., 1976, ‘The Mallia gold pendant: Wasps or bees?’, in: Emmison, F.G., & Stephens, R., eds., *Tribute to an antiquary: Essays presented to Marc Fitch by some of his friends*, London: Leopard’s Head Press, pp. 59-72; LaFleur, R.A., Matthews, R.W., & McCorkle, D.B., 1979, ‘A re-examination of the Mallia insect pendant’, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 83: 208-12; Richards, O.W., 1974, ‘The Cretan “hornet” pendant’, *Antiquity*, 48: 222. Davenport, D., & Richards, O.W., 1975, ‘The Cretan “hornet”’, *Antiquity*, 49: 212-213, provisionally identify (the senior author is a zoologist) the species as *Vespa orientalis*, a wasp, and suggest that, given the Egyptian influence upon Crete ‘especially during the New Kingdom’, the granulated ball might be a dung ball, ‘transporting this symbol of resurrection to the heavens’, by (otherwise unattested) analogy with the  *hpr* dung beetle. Blokdown, E. & Bjork, C., 1989, ‘The Mallia pendant: A study in iconography and Minoan religion’, *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici*, 27: 9-68, offered a comprehensive interpretative study, after which silence seems to have descended on this once so hotly debated, magnificent piece of jewellery.

typical unsystematic, truncated, and contentious way. Yet he deserves an extensive quotation, because the following passage incidentally supports, from the viewpoint of obsolete but highly informed linguistics, some of the more controversial points in Bernal's historical reconstruction of Egyptian influence on the Aegean in the Early and Middle Bronze Age (I would replace Bernal's, and Karst's, pan-Egyptian view, by a Pelasgian one; yet it remains remarkable that in hardly any part of the proposed extended Pelasgian realm, or at any period, the incidence of the 80 identified Pelasgian traits has been higher than in Ancient Egypt):

‘....Abart von Musur, Misur (= Ägypten), war einst der Name aller nordöstlichen Küstengebiete des arabisch-ägyptischen Busens und bezeichnete ausserdem noch das östliche Kilikien. Und wenn Retnu oder Rtnu die ägyptoide Bezeichnung von Südostjudäa, Peräa, Coelesyrien und Nordostsyrien war, so müssen ursprünglich dort auch Misraimiten [Egyptians – WvB] gewohnt haben. Die Josephstamme Ephraim und Manasse haben nach unserer Vermutung in ihren Namen, die Westen-Osten bedeuten, eine Reminiszenz an das vorsemitische Ägyptertum Palästinas bewahrt. Manasse = ägypt. koptisch *manesha*, *manshai*, *maensai* (*majnnshai*) ‘‘Osten, Orient’’.²⁴ Ephraim = alban. *mbreme* Abend. Haimonia, der vorgriechische Name Thessaliens, das ursprünglich von einem grossen Binnensee bedeckt war, ist ägypt. koptisch *hoeim*, *hoimi*, *haime*, plur. *hime*, *hmaie* ‘‘Überschwemmung, Sintflut’’. Kilikisch Syennesis als Königstitel: koptisch *ju-en-jise* ‘‘Oberherr’’ Sis und Mesis in Kilikien: koptisch *cisse*, *jisi* ‘‘Höhe, Bergrücken’’. Makedonia hängt zusammen mit ägyptisch *mahet* ‘‘regio septentrionalis’’. Kephta oder Kefte, die ägyptische Bezeichnung für Kilikien, Kappadokien, ist vermutlich Kurzname eines *Ai-kephta, [*]Hay-kephta oder *Aia-kephta: das wäre die authentische Originalbezeichnung eines kilikisch-kappadokisch-kolchischen Ägyptos, das durch Herodots Bericht gewährleistet asiatisch-pontische Ägypten. Mesopotamien erscheint uns unter demselben Gesichtswinkel einer ursprünglich ägyptischen Besiedelung, entstellt aus Medzur (Misur, Mysor)paddan. Dieses Medzur-Paddan ist synonym von Aram-paddan. Also wird vermutlich das spätere Aramäa in prähistorischer Zeit den Namen Medzur (Musuri, Mysur) getragen haben. Vgl. auch die armenische Tiefebene Basorapedon (Vasurakan). Eine einstige Erstreckung der Wohnsitze der Protoägypter bis ins pontische Nordwestkleinasiens hinein wird auch dadurch als kategorische Voraussetzung geboten, dass das ägyptische Glossar mit dem Karthwelisch-Iberischen vieles gemeinschaftlich hat. Wir verweisen auf die diesbezüglichen Forschungen von Nikolai Marr²⁵ und konstatieren, dass jeder Kenner und objektive Vergleicher beider Sprachen einen intimen glossarischen Konnex zwischen Ägyptisch und Karthwelo-iberisch oder Südkaukasisch anzunehmen genötigt ist. Über ein asiatisches oder nördliches Ägypten handelt A.-C. Moreau de Jonnes, *L'Océan des Anciens et les Peuples préhistoriques*. II. Les Egyptiens en Asie, pg. 53-78. – Über kuschitische Kolonien in den pontisch-thrakisch-anatolischen Gebieten vgl. denselben, *ibid.*, Kap. II: Les Colonies Couchites, pg. 79 f. Wichtig ist unter diesem Gesichtspunkte, daß es in

²⁴ [original footnote] ‘Auch das lydische Kleinasiens wird einst Maian-asi(a), Menuasia (Maionia + Asia) geheißen haben. Daraus machten die Griechen ihr *Μειων Ἀσία* = Asia Minor. Wenn nun aber das lydisch-kleinasiatische Binnenland ägyptischerseits der ‘‘Osten, Orient’’ benannt worden ist, so müssen ägyptoide Hamiten in der Ägäis und an der jonisch-lelegischen Küste Kleinasiens angesiedelt gewesen sein.’

²⁵ [Cf. Marr, Nikolai I., 1899, *Sborniki pritch Vardana: materialiy dlya istoriy srednevekovoy armyanskoy literatury*, Sanktpeterburg: Tip. Imp. Akademiy NAUK, first published 1894. – WvB]

grauer Vorzeit als Pendant zum afrikanischen Libyen eine pontisch-asianisch-turanische ‘Libya’ gab. Das älteste Turaniervolk, wie es sich noch in der iranischen Heldensage (*Schahnameh*) spiegelt, ist identisch dem biblischen Kainvolk; Kain-Kainan weist auf das pontisch-libysche Amazonengeschlecht (‘Weibervolk’, arm. kanani ‘Frauen’) hin, unter denen wir Hamiten verstehen müssen. Die Prototuranier oder Kainiten waren entschieden Hamiten. Noch ein so vorsichtiger Ethnograph wie Friedrich Müller²⁶ glaubte daher die Urheimat der Hamiten in Nordiran bzw. Medien ansetzen zu müssen.²⁷

Let us leave Karst’s intriguing but in disconcerting claims for that they are worth.

The general point, then, is not whether sub-Saharan Africa borrowed from Ancient Egypt, or the other way around; the point is that we obscure what may well be the true relationship if we accept that Fairman’s dilemma (*cf.* Chapter 10, above: ‘from Egypt into sub-Saharan Africa, or from sub-Saharan Africa into Egypt’) says it all. It does not: the third and most likely explanation for Egyptian-African continuities is that both sub-Saharan Africa and Ancient Egypt participated in, and as cultural complexes were largely created by, the overall Back-into-Africa movement, which covered a long period of 15 ka, but whose final and culturally most effective part (the last 3 to 4 ka) is covered by the Pelasgian hypothesis. As we have seen in Chapter 10, above, there is no denying that sometimes, in certain respects, sub-Saharan African cultures made a clearly detectable specific contribution to Ancient Egypt; and the other way around; but these were mere local and regional ripples in a process in which Ancient Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa were engaged jointly.

3. Models of transcontinental continuities in Old World prehistory

Not the identification of transcontinental continuities, therefore, forms the problem, but pinpointing the direction, the period and the mechanism of their transmission. Having already taken, in the preceding sections of this chapter, many advances on existing theoretical models, let us now review these models more systematically.

3.1. The Hamitic hypothesis

This theory²⁸ was popular in the early decades of the 20th century because it

²⁶ [Müller, Friedrich, 1876-1888, *Grundriss der Sprachwissenschaft, I-II in 5 vols*, Wien: Hölder. – WvB]

²⁷ Karst, J., 1931b, *Atlantis und der liby-äthiopische Kulturkreis*, Heidelberg: Winters, pp. 58 f.

²⁸ *Cf.* Meinhof, Carl, 1910, ‘Ergebnisse der afrikanischen Sprachforschung’, *Archiv für Anthropologie*, neue Folge, 9, pp 179-201; Meinhof, Carl, 1912, *Die Sprachen der*

seemed to offer an explanation for the racialist ideological dilemma which was posed by African cultures at the height of colonialism: *how is it possible that Africans, whom European colonialism and racialism have denied all capability of cultural and technological achievements, yet display such achievements so unmistakably?* The answer was sought in a model posing an influx of ‘culturally superior’ pastoral ‘Hamites’ (i.e. Afroasiatic speakers, of intermediate somatic traits between Africans and ‘Caucasians’) from West Asia, ‘civilising’ Africa in proto-historical times, in much the same way as Africans were allegedly being ‘civilised’ by Europeans in the early twentieth century CE. The dilemma posed by this model is that its racial implications are unmistakable, yet it was formulated by scholars who ranked among the best Africanists of their time and for whom racialism can hardly have been the main driving force – hence, if it could be cleansed of its racialist overtones, it may deserve to be given the benefit of doubt. We will have to come back to this model towards the end of my argument.

3.2. *Frobenius’²⁹ model of the South Erythraean culture extending from the Persian Gulf and the Red (‘Erythraean’) Sea to East Africa and South West Asia*

This model (although somewhat reminiscent of the pan-Babylonism that haunted scholarship in the early 20th century CE) helped to pinpoint some of the main African-Eurasian parallels that are also brought out by our Nkoya case – in the fields of kingship, female puberty rites, divination, music, and metallurgy. Moreover, considering the times, this model displayed a refreshing recognition of the value and the power of African cultures. However Frobenius was at a loss as to the identification of the mechanisms that could be held accountable for these parallels. Also did he under-estimate the wider extension of these communalities, beyond the

Hamiten: Nebst einer Beigabe über die hamitische Typen von Felix von Luschan, Abhandlungen der hamburgischen Kolonial-Instituts, Bd 9. Berlin: Friederichsen; Seligman, C.G., 1913, ‘Some aspects of the Hamitic problem in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 43: 593-705; and, as later, critical reflections on the Hamitic hypothesis: Greenberg, J.H., 1966, *The languages of Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2nd ed., first published 1963; Sanders, E.R., 1969, ‘The hamitic hypothesis: Its origin and functions in time perspective’, *Journal of African History*, 10, 4: 521 -532; Zachernuk, Philip S., 1994, ‘Of origins and colonial order: Southern Nigerian historians and the “Hamitic hypothesis”, c. 1870-1970’, *Journal of African History*, 35, 3: 427-455; Sharp, Travis, 2004, ‘The Hamitic hypothesis: A pseudo-historical justification for White superiority’, in: Anonymous, ed., *Writing for a real world: A multidisciplinary anthology by University of San Francisco students*, pp. 52-72, at: <http://www.usfca.edu/rhetcomp/journal/sharp2004.pdf>.

²⁹ Frobenius, L., 1931, *Erythräa: Länder und Zeiten des heiligen Königsmordes*, Berlin / Zürich: Atlantis-Verlag.

‘South Erythraean complex’, both on the African continent and in West Asia, Egypt, Southern Europe and South Asia. In actual fact, there is rather more continuity between Ancient Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa, than between the latter and Ancient Mesopotamia. No convincing and lasting explanation is to be expected from Frobenius’ approach.

3.3. Cultural diffusion from Egypt (the Egyptocentric argument)

Confronting the Egyptocentrism that was in fashion in the early 20th century,³⁰ already Frobenius declined the possibility that major traits in sub-Saharan Africa, such as sacred kingship and regicide, could exclusively be due to Ancient Egyptian influence. He stressed that *regicide* (which he considered constitutive of the South Erythraean complex, and which in fact is prominent in Nkoya mythology) also occurs in South Asia.³¹ However, Frobenius may have overstated his point. One can remain critical of the Egyptocentrism displayed till this very day by Martin Bernal, Cheikh Anta Diop, Théophile Obenga³² and other Afrocentrists, and yet admit that for three millennia Ancient Egypt was one of the world’s most powerful states and economies, exerting an enormous influence all over the Mediterranean and West Asia, and inevitably also in the Northern half of Africa, also far South of the Sahara.³³

Some of the Nkoya / Egyptian parallels may be explained in this light, as specific transmissions from Egypt to Nkoyaland in the course of centuries, but others need to be explained by what is often the more powerful model: an appeal to common origins, in this case the idea that both Egypt, and (largely passing via Egypt, admittedly) the cultural inroads from West Asia into sub-Saharan Africa (partly – only from the Middle Bronze Age onward – *chariot*-facilitated, as I suggest), drew from West Asian Neolithic culture. The same, incidentally, applies to Bernal’s insistence on what he takes to be Ancient Greece’s almost total dependence

³⁰ Smith, G. Elliot, 1970, *The Ancient Egyptians and the origin of civilization*, Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, first published 1923; Seligman, C.G., 1934, *Egypt and Negro Africa: A study in divine kingship*, London: Routledge; cf. Meyerowitz, E.L.R., 1960, *The divine kingship in Ghana and in Ancient Egypt*, London: Faber & Faber.

³¹ Frobenius *o.c.*, pp. 325, 331-349, where the obvious connection with Frazer – based on the mytheme of cyclical regicide – is further explored; Frazer, J.G., 1911-1915, *The golden bough: A study in magic and religion, I-VIII* in 12 vols., 3rd ed., rev. and enlarged, London: Macmillan.

³² Diop, C.A., 1954, *Nations nègres et culture*, Paris: Présence africaine; Diop, C.A., 1989, *The cultural unity of Black Africa: The domains of patriarchy and of matriarchy in classical antiquity*, London: Karnak House.; Obenga, T., 1992, *Ancient Egypt and Black Africa*, London: Karnak House; Obenga, T., 1995, *Cheikh Anta Diop, Volney et le Sphinx: Contribution de Cheikh Anta Diop à l’historiographie mondiale*, Paris: Présence africaine.

³³ For details, see Chapter 10, above.

upon Egyptian (and, by a later Afrocentrist twist in his argument, African) cultural including mythical materials: such an overstatement does not take into account the fact that both Egypt, and the Aegean, draw from the same West Asian-Mediterranean-Saharan Neolithic and Bronze Age source on which I have already precluded and which I will define below as *Pelasgian*. This common source seems to be largely responsible³⁴ for the considerable affinities between the Egyptian Delta on the one hand, and Sumer and Neolithic Anatolia, on the other hand.

3.4. Combined cultural and demic diffusion³⁵ from sub-Saharan Africa shaping Egyptian and subsequently Greek mythology (the Afrocentrist position, and Bernal's Afrocentrist afterthought after his Egyptocentrist Black Athena position)

In the course of his *Black Athena* researches, Martin Bernal found that much of what he was trying to say had already been said by Afrocentrist writers such as Du Bois³⁶ and Diop,³⁷ and he gradually situated the epicentre of the cultural initiative decisively shaping Greek classical culture (and hence, to a considerable extent, North Atlantic and global world culture), no longer in Egypt, but in sub-Saharan Africa, of which Egypt was considered to be the oldest and most brilliant child – a common Afrocentrist conception. Whatever the deficiencies of Afrocentrist and Bernallian scholarship, at the empirical level, the main thrust of such studies has been a most timely counter-hegemonic exercise in the politics of knowledge. This makes them important eye-openers in the global politics of knowledge, yet at the same time unmistakably ideological.

³⁴ *Pace* Rice (*Egypt's Making, o.c.*), who insists on a on-way process, from Sumer to the Nile valley.

³⁵ For the term *demic diffusion*, cf. Sokal, R.R., & P. Menozzi, 1982, 'Spatial autocorrelations of HLA frequencies in Europe support demic diffusion of early farmers', *American Naturalist*, 119: 1-17; Sokal, R.R., N.L. Oden, & C. Wilson, 1991, 'Genetic evidence for the spread of agriculture in Europe by demic diffusion', *Nature*, 351: 143-45; Barbujani, G., A. Pilastro, S. de Domenico & C. Renfrew, 1994, 'Genetic variation in North Africa and Eurasia: Neolithic demic diffusion vs Paleolithic colonisation', *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 95, 137-54.

³⁶ Du Bois, W.E.B., 1947, *The World and Africa: An inquiry into the part which Africa has played in world history*, New York: Viking.

³⁷ Which, by an analogy with the history of pop music (where also Elvis Presley – 1935-1977 – was chided for appropriating Black achievements), earned Bernal the undeservedly disrespectful epithet 'the academic Elvis'; Berlinerblau, J., 1999, *Heresy in the University: The Black Athena controversy and the responsibilities of American intellectuals*, New Brunswick etc.: Rutgers University Press.

4. Being confronted with the limits of the Black Athena thesis and of Afrocentricity

On the basis of a kindred knowledge-political position, I have often been a vocal supporter and defender of the moderate forms of Afrocentrism. However, in my quest for scholarly, methodologically and theoretically underpinned valid knowledge I have repeatedly been compelled to appear disloyal to the counter-hegemonic cause of Afrocentrism, and I now reject the ‘strong’ Afrocentrist claim that everything of value in global cultural history has an African origin, not only in the remotest past of the Out-of-Africa Exodus 80 – 60 ka ago (that claim is undeniable,³⁸ but it is not central to the Afrocentrist and Bernallian argument), but also in Neolithic and Bronze Age times down to the present day.

Fig. 2. Global distribution of the spiked wheel trap (as typical of Pelasgian distributions)



for sources of the data points: see van Binsbergen, ‘Spiked wheel’, *o.c.*; and Lindblom.³⁹ *inset* (obscuring a part of the world map where there are no attestations): modern spiked wheel trap from the Acholi people, Southern Sudan⁴⁰

³⁸ Cf. Oppenheimer, S.J., 2004, *The real Eve: Modern man’s journey out of Africa*, New York: Carroll & Graf; Forster Peter, 2004, ‘Ice Ages and the mitochondrial DNA chronology of human dispersals: A review’, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 359, 1442 / February 29: 255-264. Interestingly, in the context of the *Black Athena* debate the phrase ‘Out of Africa’ has obtained a very different meaning, against a very much compressed time scale: there it refers, not to the spread of Anatomically Modern Humans beyond the African continent, from c. 80,000 years ago – but to the alleged Egyptian origin of classical Greek cultural features, in the Late Bronze Age (c. 1200 BCE) and later; cf. Lefkowitz, *Not out of Africa*, *o.c.*

³⁹ Lindblom, Gerhard, 1935, ‘The spiked wheel-trap and its distribution’, *Geografiska Annaler, Supplement: Hyllningsskrift Tillagnad Sven Hedin*, 17: 621-633.

⁴⁰ Sparks, Rachael, 2006, ‘Acholi wheel trap’, Southern Sudan Project, Pitt-Rivers Museum, accession number 1922.25.6, from Acholi, Sudan, collected by C.G. and B.Z.

Thus my extensive empirical, comparative and theoretical research (even though partly informed by the post-modern position on local, multiple, manipulable and transient truths in science), has finally forced me to admit – contrary to the 1995-1997 argument in Chapter 9 above – ⁴¹ an extra-African origin and subsequent transcontinental spread into Africa, for mankala board games (‘the nation game of Africa’, as Culin had it);⁴² for geomantic divination including such famous African systems as Ifa, Sikidy and Hakata; for the belief in an unilateral mythical being;⁴³ and for many aspects of mythology (Late or Post-Palaeolithic) centring on the Separation of Heaven and Earth, shamanism, and the kingship; and – as my research in progress seems to indicate – even for a substantial part of the proto-lexicon of the Niger-Congo > Bantu linguistic family.

Here we hit on a distributional problem that is in fact at the heart of my increasing doubts about the *Black Athena* thesis.

Looking at transcontinental distribution maps, one is inclined to take the region with the greatest incidence as the global origin of a trait, and to postulate historical transmission to other continents from there – or multi-local independent invention, for that matter. I have in recent years identified a pattern of transcontinental distribution that I provisionally term ‘African-Pelasgian’: high African incidence, sporadic Eurasian incidence, yet a probable origin in Eurasia. I consider the *spiked wheel trap*, a simple hunting device (Fig. 2), as the ‘index fossil’ for this kind of distributions, *cf.* the very similar distributions of the mankala board game, of geomantic divination (see Chapter 9, above – it is the earlier interpretation there, not the data points, that I now distance myself from). In some cases it is possible to argue the greater Eurasian antiquity on archaeological grounds; for instance, the oldest attestations of the mankala game derive from the West Asian Neolithic.⁴⁴ My general argument is that, by the Late Bronze

Seligman, 1922, at: <http://southernsudan.prm.ox.ac.uk/details/1922.25.6/> retrieved 6 July 2009.

⁴¹ van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2010b, ‘The spiked wheel trap as a cultural index fossil in African prehistory: An exercise in global distribution analysis based on Lindblom’s 1935 data’, pre-publication version at: http://shikanda.net/topicalities/spiked_wheel_trap.pdf.

⁴² Culin, S., 1896, ‘Mankala, the national game of Africa’, in: The Director, ed., *US National Museum Annual Report*, Washington: United States National Museum, pp. 595-607.

⁴³ von Sicard, H., 1968-1969, ‘Luwe und verwandte mythische Gestalten’, *Anthropos*, 63-64: 665-737.

⁴⁴ *Cf.* Rollefson, G.O., 1992, ‘A Neolithic game board from ‘Ain Ghazal, Jordan’, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 286, May 1992: 1-5; Kirkbride, D., 1966, ‘Five seasons at the Pre-Pottery Neolithic village of Beidha in Jordan’, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 98-99: 8-72, pls. I-XXII. Geomantic divination leaves hardly any detectable archaeological traces, except when a more elaborate divinatory apparatus is used (divining boards and bowls); of the latter we do not seem to have attestations from before the middle of the 1st mill. BCE, from both China (Loewe, M., 1979, *Ways to*

Age of the Mediterranean / West Asia (c. 1400-1200 BCE), sub-Saharan Africa constituted a relatively vacant, defenceless cultural niche, into which already relatively archaic *Pelasgian* traits could be diffused and where they could continue to thrive, while in the Pelasgian core land (West Asia, the Mediterranean) they were already being superseded by subsequent local cultural innovations.

Meanwhile, a similar African-Eurasian continuity with a likely West Asian epicentre manifests itself when we consider the long-range linguistic situation informing African linguistic macrophyla. It is to this topic that we now turn.

5. Linguistic indications for transcontinental continuities

One of today's primary resources for long-range linguistic research is the *Tower of Babel* etymological database, based on Harold Fleming's⁴⁵ and Sergei Starostin's⁴⁶ *Borean hypothesis, comprising most of the language phyla spoken in the world today, and supported by major research institutions (two Moscow universities, Leiden university, the Hong Kong City University, and the Santa Fe Institute). While *Tower of Babel* is defective on the African macrophylum Nilo-Saharan, and selective on another African macrophylum Niger-Congo > Bantu, the African macrophylum Khoisan is amply represented here, and recognised as a

paradise: The Chinese quest for immortality, London: Allen & Unwin; Walters, D., 1989, *Chinese astrology: Het interpreteren van de openbaringen van de boodschappers des hemels*, Katwijk aan Zee: Servire, Dutch. tr. of *idem*, 1987, *Chinese astrology*, Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, p. 80 describes a Chinese divination bowl with 36 zodiacal signs, going back to the 6th century CE and in my opinion a likely prototype for the Venda and Ifa bowl) and Greece (Davis, S., 1955, 'Divining bowls, their uses and origin: Some African examples and parallels from the ancient world', *Man*, 55, 143: 132-135). In the background is however a cyclical transformation system of elements, attested throughout the Old World, and also with oldest attestations in 1st millennium BCE East Asia and the Aegean: van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2010, 'Before the Pre-Socratics: The evidence of a common elemental transformational cycle underlying Asian, African and European cosmologies since Neolithic times', *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy / Revue Africaine de Philosophie*, 24, 1-2.

⁴⁵ Cf. H.C. Fleming, 1987, 'Proto-Gongan consonant phonemes: Stage One', in Mukarovsky, Hans, ed. *Festschrift Reinisch (150th Birthday)*, Vienna: Institut für Afrikanistik, pp. 141-159; *idem*, 1991, 'A New Taxonomic Hypothesis: Borean or Boralean', *Mother Tongue*, 14.

⁴⁶ Cf. Starostin, Sergei A., 1999, 'Methodology of long-range comparison', in: Vitaly Shevoroshkin & Paul J. Sidwell, eds., *Historical linguistics and lexicostatistics*, Melbourne: Association for the History of Language, pp. 61-66; Starostin, Sergei A., 2000, 'Comparative-historical linguistics and lexicostatistics', in: C. Renfrew, A.M.S. McMahon, & R.L. Trask, eds., *Time depth in historical linguistics, I*, Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, pp. 223-265; *idem*, 2007, 'Proving Language Relationship', in: Starostin, Sergei A., *Trudy po yazykoznaniiu*, Moscow: Languages of Slavic Cultures, pp. 779-793; *idem*, 'Tower of Babel', *o.c.* .

branch of *Borean. When the designation ‘Borean’ was chosen, Georgiy Starostin reputedly already objected⁴⁷ that (since that term implicitly refers to the Northern, ‘boreal’, hemisphere) it was based on the prejudgment that the macrophyla Eurasiatic / Nostratic, Afroasiatic, Sino-Caucasian and Austric would be more closely related to one another than to the African macrophyla Nilo-Saharan and Niger-Congo, and possibly Khoisan.⁴⁸ Although I am not a Bantuist by training, this observation prompted me to investigate whether also Niger-Congo – including Bantu – might be seen as the result of local African (to some extent including Palaeo-African) interaction⁴⁹ with incoming transcontinental elements. The results⁵⁰ confirm African-Eurasian linguistic continuity: more than a quarter of all 1,153 reconstructed *Borean roots can be argued to have reflexes in proto-Bantu. Traces of Bantu are found all over the Bronze Age Mediterranean (Table

⁴⁷ Anonymous, n.d. (a), ‘Borean languages’, at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borean_languages, retrieved 3 July 2009; the web text has since been modified, and the citation altered.

⁴⁸ Already two decades ago, leading linguists (Kaiser, M., & V. Shevoroshkin, ‘Nostratic’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 17: 302-329) included Nilo-Saharan and Niger-Congo as branches of ‘Super-Nostratic’, where Nostratic is more or less synonymous with Eurasiatic. The *Borean nature of Khoisan was accepted on formal linguistic grounds (e.g. its affinities with Northern Caucasian are obvious), and concurs with Cavalli-Sforza’s hypothesis of modern Khoisan speakers being the descendants of a hybrid Asian / African population whose Asian ancestors still lived in the Asian continent 10 ka BP (Cavalli-Sforza, L.L., Piazza, A., & Menozzi, A., 1994, *The history and geography of the human genes*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 176; Vigilant however has objected to this interpretation). Nonetheless, I predictably reject Cavalli-Sforza’s view (although shared by many others) of the three now exclusively African macrophyla as constituting isolated and archaic branches of the world genealogy of languages.

⁴⁹ Cf. the comments by Oliver and Simiyu Wandibba in: Oliver, Roland, Thomas Spear, Kairn Klieman, Jan Vansina, Scott MacEachern, David Schoenbrun, James Denbow, Yvonne Bastin, H.M. Batibo, Bernd Heine, Michael Mann, Derek Nurse, Simiyu Wandibba, 2001, ‘Comments on Christopher Ehret, “Bantu History: Re-envisioning the evidence of language”’, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 34, 1: 43-81; in response to Ehret, Christopher, 2001, ‘Bantu expansions: Re-envisioning a central problem of early African history’, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 34, 1: 5-41. Considering the commonly recognised affinities between Austric and Bantu, and the insistence, by linguistic specialists, on the contribution, to Bantu, of non-Bantu elements from *inside* the African continent, the linguistic process of Bantu genesis was probably much more complex than I propose to have been the case (with my appeal to an unoccupied and defenceless niche of cultural ecology) for the spiked wheel trap and similarly ‘African-Pelasgian’-distributed cultural items such as mankala, geomantic divination and the belief in a unilateral being.

⁵⁰ van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2010, *Cluster analysis assessing the relation between the Eurasian, American, African and Oceanian linguistic macro-phyla: On the basis of the distribution of the proposed *Borean reflexes in their respective lexicons: With a lemma exploring *Borean reflexes in Guthrie’s Proto-Bantu*, Papers in Intercultural Philosophy – Transcontinental Comparative Studies; van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., & Woudhuizen, Fred C., in press, *Ethnicity in Mediterranean proto-history*, Cambridge: British Archaeology Reports (BAR) International Series.

2), and the Bantu phylum's homeland emerges from a environmental, phyto-geographical and zoo-geographical analysis of 'the' proto-Bantu lexicon as a well-watered, rather temperate zone.⁵¹

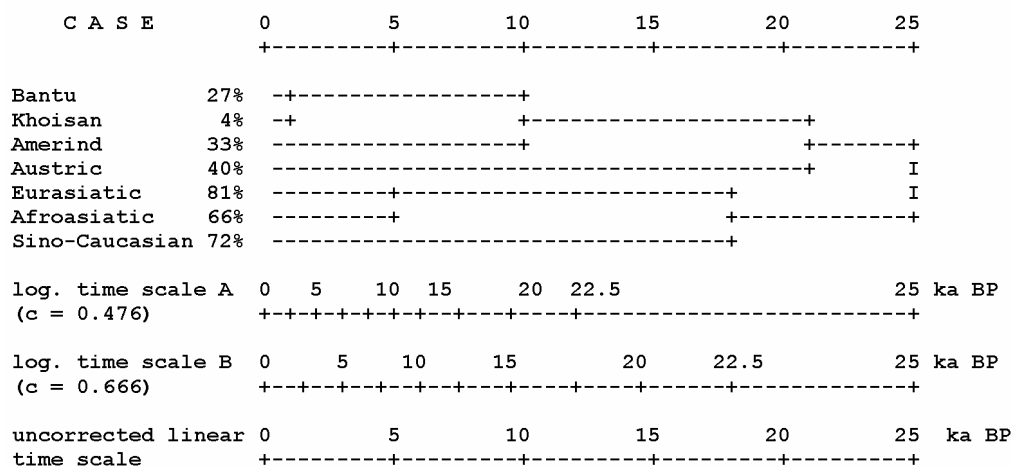
My statistical outcomes⁵² do suggest an initial bifurcation of the *Borean-speaking linguistic, cultural and demographic stock, with

⁵¹ Strictly speaking, the compilation of a proto-Bantu corpus has been too controversial to pretend there is one proto-Bantu lexicon (cf. Dalby, David, 1975, 'The prehistorical implications of Guthrie's Comparative Bantu, Part I: Problems of internal relationship', *The Journal of African History*, 16, 4: 481-501; *idem*, 1976, 'The prehistorical implications of Guthrie's Comparative Bantu. Part II: Interpretation of cultural vocabulary', *The Journal of African History*, 17, 1: 1-27; Meeussen, A.E., 1980, *Bantu lexical reconstructions*, Archief voor Antropologie, 27, Tervuren: Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika; Vansina, Jan, 1979-1980, 'Bantu in the crystal ball, I-II', *History in Africa*, 12: 287-333 and 13: 293-325; Flight, Colin, 1980, 'Malcolm Guthrie and the reconstruction of Bantu prehistory', *History in Africa*, 7: 81-118; *idem*, 1988, 'Bantu trees and some wider ramifications', *African Languages and Cultures*, 1, 1: 25-43; Maho, Jouni, 2003, 'A classification of the Bantu languages: An update of Guthrie's referential system', in: D. Nurse & G. Philippson, eds., *The Bantu languages*, London / New York, pp. 639-651. In the end, however, Guthrie's reconstruction (Guthrie, Malcolm, 1967-1971, *Comparative Bantu: An introduction to the comparative linguistics and prehistory of the Bantu languages, I-IV*, Westmead / Farnborough / Hants: Gregg) offers a useful if far from ideal compromise. Since *Borean is here claimed to account for only a limited part of the proto-Bantu lexicon, and the Pelasgian influx is implied to amount to primarily a cultural influence with only slight demographic impact, we need not enter here into a discussion of the obvious heterogeneity and possible polygenesis of Bantu and the rejection of the Bantu migration model (Bennett, Patrick R., 1983, 'Patterns in linguistic geography and the Bantu origins controversy', *History in Africa*, 10: 35-51; Vansina, Jan, 1995, 'New linguistic evidence and "the Bantu expansion"', *Journal of African History*, 36, 2: 173-195).

⁵² Van Binsbergen, *Cluster, o.c.* The logarithmic scale was experimentally determined so as to fit an estimated age for *Borean of 25 ka (proposed date of the split separating the African-Amerind-Austriac macrophyla from the Eurasiatic-Afroasiatic-Sino-Caucasian macrophyla), and, as a benchmark, the dissociation between Afroasiatic and Eurasiatic at 12.5 ka BP (under the Natufian hypothesis – cf. Militarev, A.Y., 1996, 'Home for Afrasian?: African or Asian: area linguistic arguments', in: C. Griefenow-Mewis & R.M. Voigt, eds., *Cushitic and Omotic Languages: Proceedings of the Third International Symposium Berlin, March 17-19, 1994*, Köln: Köppe, pp. 13-32; Militarev, A.Y., 2002, 'The prehistory of a dispersal: the Proto-Afrasian (Afroasiatic) farming', in: Bellwood, P., & Renfrew, C., eds., *Examining the farming / language dispersal hypothesis*, Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research; Militarev, A.Y. & V.A. Shnirelman, 1988, 'The problem of proto-Afrasian home and culture (an essay in linguoarchaeological reconstruction)', Paper presented at the 12th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Zagreb; Turner II, Christy G., 2008, 'A dental anthropological hypothesis relating to the ethnogenesis, origin and antiquity of the Afro-Asiatic language family: Peopling of the Eurafrikan-South Asian triangle IV', in: Bengtson, John D., 2008, ed., *In hot pursuit of language in prehistory: Essays in the four fields of anthropology in honour of Harold Crane Fleming*, Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 17-23; and references cited there) according to which Afroasiatic emerged in Syro-Palestine in the context of the Mesolithic Natufian culture, c. 14.5 – 11.5 ka BP; and moreover assuming that the middle of the Natufian period marks the dissociation of Eurasiatic and Afroasiatic). The relative length k of each scale unit of 2.5 ka is given by:

1. one, ultimately Peripheral, branch vacating the Central Asian homeland and moving on (being chased? or differentially better equipped with the necessary technology to explore new continents and their own initiative?) to South East Asia, Oceania, the Americas and sub-Saharan Africa, and
2. the other, ultimately Central, branch remaining in the Eurasian homeland, gradually expanding westward to finally occupy most of Eurasia, and the Northern half of Africa.

Fig. 3. Dendrogram setting out the relative positions of the *Borean-associated linguistic macro-phyta in relation to Bantu and Khoisan



Perhaps there is a simple explanation for the bifurcation between the peripheral branch (African languages, Amerind and Austric) and the central branch (Eurasian / Nostratic, Afroasiatic, and Sino-Caucasian) that

$$k = 1 / (a + b * r \log(c * q + d)) = 1 / 10 \log(0.476 * q),$$

where q is the inversed rank of that scale unit, counting from the origin. Other choices for the parameters (the constants: c, here 0.476; a and d, here 0; b, here 1; and r, here 10) would produce a similar logarithmic scale but with lesser or greater acceleration of rate of change towards more recent millennia. The present parameter choice (scale A) gives a greatly accelerated rate of change from the Mesolithic onward. Stipulating a very high rate of acceleration for the most recent millennia, scale A situates the node splitting Austric from the African / Amerind macrophyta at c. 24 ka BP; the node splitting the Eurasian / Afroasiatic from the Sino-Caucasian macrophyta at c. 23 ka BP; and the node splitting African macrophyta from Amerind at c. 20 ka BP. These are excessively high dates, which can be brought down by assuming the split between Eurasian and Afroasiatic to have occurred several ka later, and adjusting the parameters accordingly – as in scale B, with which I am more comfortable (c = 0.666).

strikingly emerges from Fig. 3. When we confront these statistical results with the reconstruction of the global history of mtDNA haplo groups,⁵³ the peripheral branch appears to derive from mtDNA type M, the central branch from type N – the linguistic bifurcation then appears to mainly reflect an initial segmentation, already in the Arabian peninsula as early as 60 ka BP, of the second sally ‘Out of Africa’.

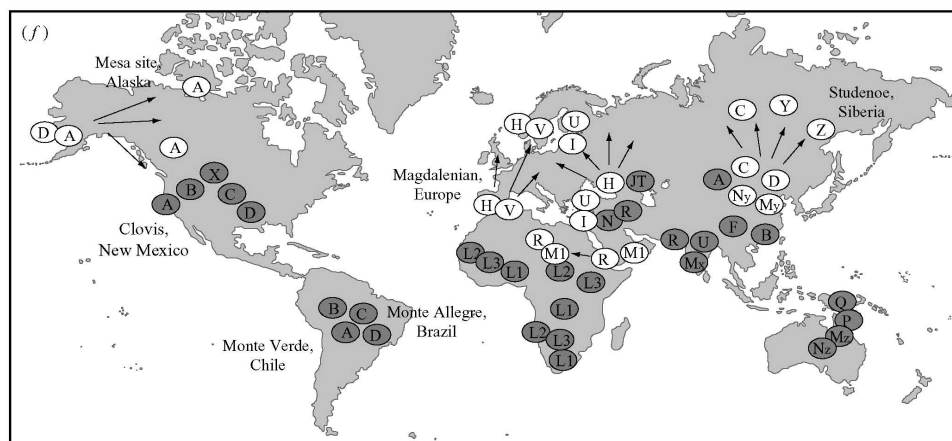
6. *The Back-into-Africa hypothesis*

To make the idea of African-Eurasian continuities a tangible reality, we would like to have something a bit more recent than the Out-of-Africa Exodus, and state-of-the-art population genetics has been good enough to oblige: by identifying, from the indirect and complex evidence of molecular genetic analysis, the ‘Back-into-Africa’ movement,⁵⁴ from East and West Asia, from 15 ka BP on. Population movements massive enough to leave detectable traces, and so relatively recent that they can only have involved Anatomically Modern Humans in full command of symbolic thought and articulate language, – such movements must necessarily have involved (as a form of demic diffusion) a measure of cultural, including mythico-religious, transmission from Eurasia, back into Africa, during the same period. The basic information and the resulting process are rendered in Fig. 4.

The Back-into-Africa movement makes it understandable, not only that Eurasian and African languages are found to be cognate, but also that African cultural forms as recorded in historical times (and with the exception of the iconographic records of rock art and the performative repertoire of ritual and folklore – both of them posing extreme methodological problems of interpretation and periodisation) must be overlaid with, and may even have merged with, Eurasian forms. And this is precisely what we observe, notably in the field of comparative mythology.

⁵³ Forster, *o.c.*

⁵⁴ Cf. Cruciani, F., Santolamazza, P., Shen, P., Macaulay, V., Moral, P., Olckers, A., Modiano, D., Holmes, S., Destro-Bisol, G., Coia, V., Wallace, D.C., Oefner, P.J., Torroni, A., Cavalli-Sforza, L.L., Scozzari, R., Underhill, P.A., 2002, ‘A back migration from Asia to sub-Saharan Africa is supported by high-resolution analysis of human Y-chromosome haplotypes’, *American Journal of Human Genetics*, 70: 1197-1214; Coia, Valentina, Giovanni Destro-Bisol, Fabio Verginelli, Cinzia Battaglia, Ilaria Boschi, Fulvio Cruciani Gabriella Spedini, David Comas, Francesc Calafell, 2005, ‘Brief communication: mtDNA variation in North Cameroon: Lack of Asian lineages and implications for back migration from Asia to sub-Saharan Africa’, *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 128, 3: 678-681; Hammer M.F., T. Karafet, A. Rasanayagam, E.T. Wood, T.K. Altheide, T. Jenkins, R.C. Griffiths, A.R. Templeton & S.L. Zegura, 1998, ‘Out of Africa and back again: Nested cladistic analysis of human Y chromosome variation’, *Molecular Biology and Evolution*, 15, 4: 427-441.



When the period summarised in this figure began, Anatomically Modern Humans had already been in existence for nearly 200 ka, and after their emergence in Africa had already started their spread out of Africa 65 ka earlier.

Fig. 4. Reconstruction of the history and spread of mitochondrial-DNA types from the Upper Palaeolithic onwards (15 – 2 ka BP), showing the overall east-west movement from West Asia, including the 'Back-into-Africa' movement (mtDNA types M1 and R) © 2004 Forster).⁵⁵

To illustrate this point of comparative mythology, I find it illuminating, and in line with the available data,⁵⁶ to hypothesise, in the Eurasian Upper

⁵⁵ From: Forster, *o.c.*, Fig. 2f, relating to the period from 15 to 2 ka BP. As Forster's other maps document, the H-type emerged in the Black Sea area and, before 20 ka BP, migrated to the Iberian peninsula, where it then came to be associated with Basque, and subsequently spread to the North Sea area. Similar westbound and northbound movements can be seen in regard of the mtDNA haplogroups I, U and V. Also cf. Oppenheimer, S.J., 2006a, *The origins of the British: A genetic detective story*, London: Constable & Robinson.

⁵⁶ Inevitably, we have no direct attestation of mythologies before historical times, and my projection into the Upper Palaeolithic derives from two indirect considerations: (a) a detailed analysis of the land and water *Borean vocabulary suggests that the Separation of Land and Water had not yet installed itself as a central motif in *Borean times (van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen, *o.c.*); and (b) themes in Upper Palaeolithic iconography, such as the great preponderance of horses which may be argued to represent the Mother of the Waters. The Babylonian cosmogonic epic *Enuma Elish* (and, obliquely and briefly, *Genesis* 1, 1) constitutes a statement of the ousting of the aquatic Mother of the Waters Tīāmat by the male sungod Marduk (King, L.W., 1999, *Enuma Elish: The seven tablets of creation: Or the Babylonian and Assyrian legends concerning the creation of the world and of mankind*, Escondido CA: BookTree, facsimile reprint of the 1902 edition, London: Luzac). The same motif – Eurynome (with her serpentine consort, Ophion) ousted by a generation of celestial gods – may also be seen in Greek mythology (e.g. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 1.503-506; Lycophron, *Alexandra* 1191 f; and Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 2.563 f; with thanks to: Atsma, Aaron J., 2000-2008, *Theoi Greek mythology: Exploring mythology in classical literature and art*, at: <http://www.theoi.com>, s.v. Eurynome, retrieved 8 July 2010). By the logic of the Pelasgian cross-model (see below), this motif is

Palaeolithic, the succession, c. 5-10 ka apart, of two main cosmogonic schemas:

- a) first the Cosmogony of the Separation of the Waters and the Land (which gave us flood myths – evoking the annihilation of the cosmic order, when that order is based on the separation of the waters), and subsequently
- b) the Cosmogony of the Separation of Heaven and Earth (connected with the rise of naked-eye astronomy, detailed time reckoning, and of shamanism as an unprecedented concentration of symbolic power).

Although massive vestiges of (a) have survived until historical times (notably in the form of the aquatic and marine connotations of the Mother Goddess and of her son-lover, the Hero), (b) has become absolutely dominant, and as a result the central motifs in Eurasian mythologies have now been, probably since early Neolithic times:

- how was the Separation of Heaven and Earth effected,
- how can humankind be compensated for that Separation's traumatic effects (basically, by items coming down from heaven – such as rain, fire, seeds, cattle, humans, angels, Gods son – , or rising up to heaven – such as mountains, poles, spires, towers, altars, sacrifices – , or by re-unifying heaven and earth – such as a demiurge, king, priest, shaman, twin)
- and what eschatological implication does this worldview have for the end of the world?

Well, notwithstanding the prevalence of flood myths also in Africa, this same preoccupation with the effects of the Separation of Heaven and Earth is found throughout sub-Saharan African mythologies, in such a way that I have spoken, in connection with that part of the world, of 'relatively old genes with relatively modern mythologies' – as mentioned above.⁵⁷

also represented in the Germanic-speaking mythology of the primal being Ymir fed on smelt-water and milk, killed, and the world fashioned out of his body (cf. Chinese primal being P'an Ku 盤古) by the celestial Odin and his brothers (*Edda*: Jónsson, B, ed., 1875, *Edda: Snorra Sturlusonar*, Kaupmannahöfn: Gyldendals Bókverzlun; de Vries, Jan, 1952, *Edda: Godenliederen*, Antwerpen: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel); and in the Uralic-speaking context of the *Kalevala* cycle (cf. Tamminen, Maya, 1928, *Finsche mythen en legenden: Het volksepos Kalevala*, Zutphen: Thieme, p. 69 f; Lönnrot, Elias, 1866, *Kalevala*, Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seuran kirjapainossa).

⁵⁷ Michael Witzel contests this African-Eurasian continuity, and makes a fundamental, global distinction between 'Laurasian' (≈ Northern and developed) and Gondwana (≈ Southern and primitive...) mythologies; cf. Witzel, M., 2001, 'Comparison and reconstruction: Language and mythology', *Mother Tongue*, 6: 45-62; Witzel, Michael, 2010, 'Pan-Gaeon Flood myths: Gondwana myths – and beyond', in: Wim M.J. van

However, 15 ka is still a very long time span, and one in which ‘mythological drift’ is likely to play havoc with any empirical evidence of transcontinental transmission. Therefore we are fortunate that the ‘Back-into-Africa’ mechanism can be further narrowed down, in so far as it refers to the Western Old World,⁵⁸ to the much more recent mechanisms postulated by the Pelasgian hypothesis, which moreover is open to direct study by the examination of ethnographic distributions.⁵⁹ In addition to genetics and linguistics, archaeology and comparative mythology, comparative ethnography has been recognised as another venue towards the retrieval of the otherwise undocumented past.⁶⁰ The distribution of ethnographic traits, used with caution, can provide clues as to the extent and boundaries of culture areas in pre- and proto-history, and indicate affinities otherwise overlooked. Although soon my results proved to be supported by genetic distribution patterns as well,⁶¹ it was the analysis of a large number of ethnographic trait distributions throughout the Old World, that has recently made me formulate the Pelasgian hypothesis, with, I believe, considerable implications for the *Black Athena* thesis and Afrocentrism.

Binsbergen & Eric Venbrux, eds., *New Perspectives on Myth: Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference of the International Association for Comparative Mythology, Ravenstein (the Netherlands), 19-21 August, 2008*, Leiden / Haarlem: Papers in Intercultural Philosophy and Transcontinental Comparative Studies, pp. 217-235; *pace* van Binsbergen, ‘The continuity’, *o.c.*

⁵⁸ Underhill however also claims a substantial Eastern Eurasian influx into Africa: Underhill, P., 2004, ‘The South Asian Y chromosome landscape’, paper presented at the 2004 Harvard Round Table, Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge MA; *cf.* the Sunda hypothesis of the British geneticist Stephen Oppenheimer, claiming massive migration from South East Asia in all directions in response to flooding in the early Holocene: Oppenheimer, S.J., 1998, *Eden in the East: The drowned continent of Southeast Asia*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson.

⁵⁹ I apologise that in the present argument I saw no alternative but to repeatedly appeal to the Pelasgian hypothesis preceding the more systematic discussion in the present Section. Bringing together the main strands of my extensive research of the past two decades poses enormous problems of space, composition and auto-reference, but I could not delay the present book any further by investing more time in matters of mere presentation.

⁶⁰ *Cf.* Vansina, Jan, 1968, ‘The use of ethnographic data as sources for history’, in: Ranger, T.O., ed., 1968, *Emerging themes of African history*, Dar es Salaam: East African Publishing House, pp. 97-124; *idem*, 1981, ‘Ethnography as history: The past of the peoples in the equatorial rainforest of Africa’, *Kiabara*, 4, 2: 157-191; *idem*, 1990, *Paths in the rainforests: Toward a history of political tradition in Equatorial Africa*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. Also van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 1981, *Religious change in Zambia: Exploratory studies*, London / Boston: Kegan Paul International.

⁶¹ For these genetic details, see van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen, *o.c.*

7. *The Pelasgian hypothesis*

The Pelasgian hypothesis⁶² is one of the tools promising to create order among, and to make sense of, the unmistakable comparative trends emerging from comparative ethnography, and from the huge global mythological corpus, for that matter. It is an integrative perspective on long-range ethnic, cultural, linguistic and genetic affinities encompassing Africa, Europe, and Asia. This hypothesis proposes an original, primary Pelasgian realm in Neolithic West Central Asia, which due to westbound and eastbound population movements in the Early and Middle Bronze Ages (greatly facilitated by Central Asian pastoralists' achievements the rise of horse-riding and of chariot technology – the spoke-wheeled chariot was invented in what is now Kazakhstan, c. 2,000 BCE) led to the establishment of a secondary Mediterranean-Pelasgian realm by the Late Bronze Age. Although linguistically and ethnically heterogeneous,⁶³ the primary and secondary Pelasgian realms stood out by a package of traits. Individual 'Pelasgian' population groups never displayed anything near the entire package, but selectively adopted a (usually very limited) number of them, also as the basis for ethnico-political identification with other such groups, e.g. in the context of the Sea Peoples episode at the very end of the Bronze Age. Nor were these traits systematically integrated as they might have been when occurring within a single culture – hence a mother goddess may appear with bee connotation, with aquatic connotations, and as part of a twin sibling pair, yet already under the shadow of a solar god. As many as 80 Pelasgian traits have meanwhile been identified. A full list is presented elsewhere.⁶⁴ A selection of proposed Pelasgian traits includes (order is arbitrary): gold mining and metallurgy; relatively early adoption and transmission (if not invention) of iron-working technology; veneration of a Mother goddess associated with bees; male genital mutilation in at least part of the realm; territorial cults centring on earth shrines, often in the form of stone piles (*herms*), with divination function; a central flood myth and a creation mythology centring on the primal emergence of Land from Water, with the Primal Waters personified as a virgin Creator Goddess; military prowess and pre-marital sexual license of women; veneration of a

⁶² van Binsbergen, 'The spiked wheel trap', *o.c.*; *idem*, 2010c, *Towards the Pelasgian hypothesis: An integrative perspective long-range ethnic, cultural, linguistic and genetic affinities encompassing Africa, Europe, and Asia*, Leiden: Papers in Intercultural Philosophy and Transcontinental Comparative Studies; van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen, *o.c.*

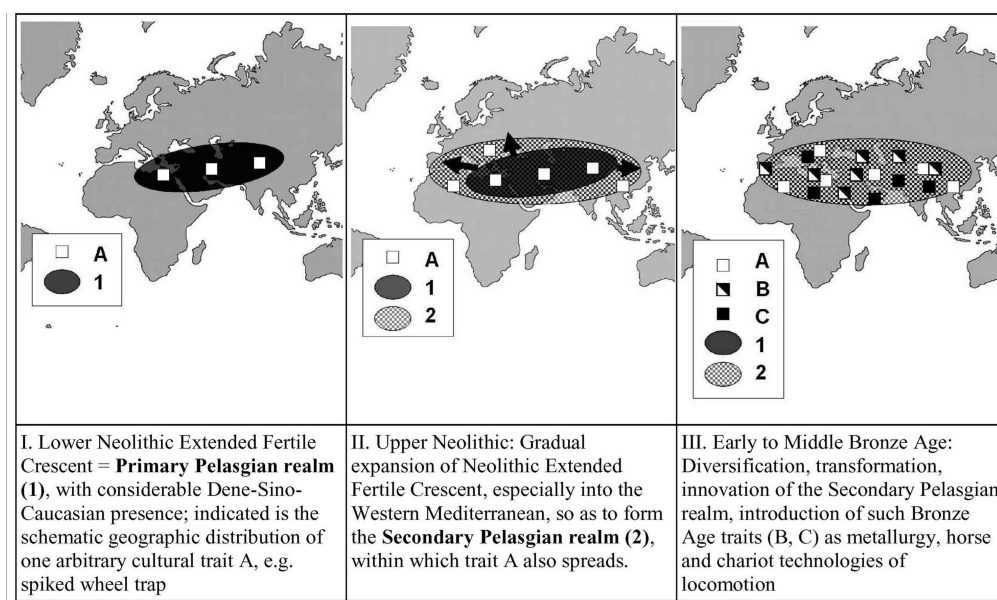
⁶³ As a result, the term 'Pelasgian' can only be employed as an analytical label, without any one-to-one correspondence with the ethnic distinctions the historical actors themselves were making, even if when doing so they employed the Greek, Latin, Egyptian etc. equivalents of our English term 'Pelasgian'. The latter have been taken up by modern students of ancient languages and ethnicities; for an overview of such ancient uses of 'Pelasgian', see van Binsbergen, *Towards the Pelasgian...*, *o.c.*

⁶⁴ Van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen, *o.c.*: chapter 28.

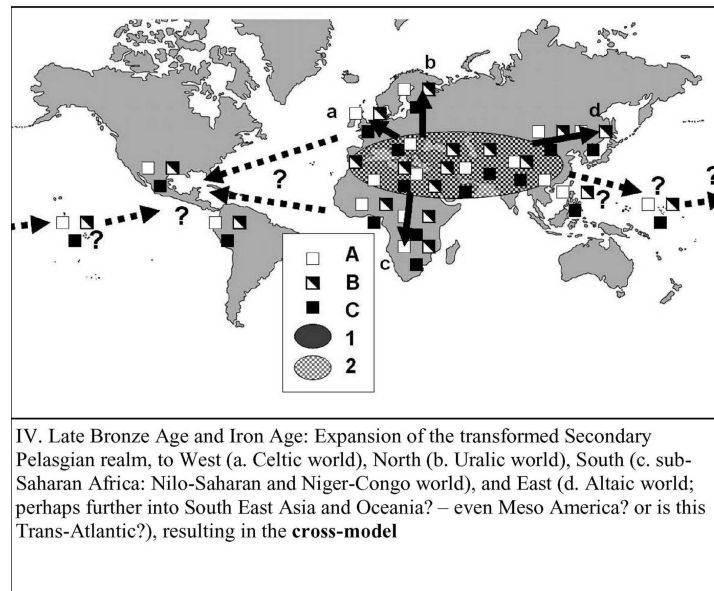
divine (often sibling and / or twin) pair of opposite gender (*e.g.* Athena and Poseidon, Athena and Hephaestus, Tfnt and Šw, Nü Wa 女媧 and Fu Xi 伏羲) associated with the installation of culture and world order;⁶⁵ relatively early adoption and transmission of chariot technology; the hunting technology of the spiked wheel trap; veneration of a solar god; headhunting and skull cult; common genetic background in respect of specific markers; boat cult, often associated with the afterlife.

The distribution of these heterogeneous and unintegrated traits brings out one of the essential features of the Pelasgian hypothesis: the ‘*cross-model*’. From the Middle Bronze Age on, and largely on the wings of horse-riding and chariot technology, Pelasgian traits have been selectively transmitted in all four directions: west to the Western Mediterranean and the Celtic World; north to the Uralic and Germanic world; East across the Eurasian Steppe to East Asia, with diversions to South and South East Asia; and south across the Sahara into sub-Saharan Africa – notably the area where Niger-Congo (> Bantu) has been spoken in historical times.

Fig. 5. Diagrammatic representation of the Pelasgian Hypothesis



⁶⁵ Towards the end of this chapter we will encounter indications that the Graeco-Roman claim of *Lacus Tritonis* / *Šot al-Jerīd* (in modern Southern Tunisia) as birth place of Athena (and Poseidon?) mirrors an earlier, more eastern, Central Asian birthplace by a major inland lake, and such mirroring occurs in other ancient place names including (H)Iberia, Libya, and Africa / Ifriqā; Karst, J., 1931, *Origines Mediterraneae: Die vorgeschichtlichen Mittelmeervölker nach Ursprung, Schichtung und Verwandtschaft: Ethnologisch-linguistische Forschungen über Euskaldenak (Urbasken), Alarodier und Proto-Phrygen, Pyrenaeo-Kaukasier und Atlanto-Ligurer, West- und Ostiberer, Liguro-Leleger, Etrusker und Pelasger, Tyrrhener, Lyder und Hetiter*, Heidelberg: Winters).



Reviving an idea that was popular among ancient historians in the second half of the 19th century and that has a certain basis in the (utterly muddled) use of ‘Pelasgian’ terminology by authors in Graeco-Roman antiquity, one should not be surprised that something like my Pelasgian theory has been in the air for some years,⁶⁶ and in fact is becoming prominent among the common-sense ideas informing amateur explorations that are so popular on the Internet. Explicitly Pelasgian themes now even appear on disreputable sites reflecting the Extreme Right’s fascination with *Blut und Boden*. Pelasgians also feature with alarming incidence among the self-made motion pictures of the popular *YouTube* website, and in that connection are pressed into service to boost the ethnic consciousness of Albanians, Cappadocians, etc., even Atlanteans. The Pelasgian theory of the origin of the alphabet and of Judaism, advanced by the British poet, critic, and mythographer of doubtful reputation among specialists, Robert Graves, does not contribute either to the respectability or credibility of any Pelasgian hypothesis that is now being formulated.⁶⁷ I am aware that theories are often judged by name

⁶⁶ E.g. the pedestrian Campbell-Dunn, G.J.K., 2008, *The African origins of classical civilisation*, Bloomington: AuthorHouse.

⁶⁷ Graves, R., 1964, *The Greek myths, I-II*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, first published 1955; *idem*, 1988, *The White Goddess: A historical grammar of poetic myth*, London / Boston: Faber & Faber, first published 1948. Graves, an independent scholar with nothing but a ‘gentleman’s [secondary-school] education’ and a B.A. training in English literature (*cf. idem*, 1929, *Goodbye to All That*, London: Watt & Son on behalf of Mr. Robert Graves), is commonly chided, shunned even, for his many inaccuracies, his unprofessional etymologies, and his ‘wild’ theories, often based on scholarly works now considered to be outdated. Yet, while on my guard, I have found him immensely inspiring and insightful (e.g. he pinpointed as a matter of course the continuity between West African and Greek myths, *Greek myths*, I, 22f), – one of the few students of myth who managed to transcend

and reputation only, but if that could bring me to discard an idea I have found illuminating, I would never have entered the *Black Athena* debate in the first place.

8. *Uninvited guests*⁶⁸ and disconcerting interactions in the Bronze Age Mediterranean

Against this background of hypotheses suggesting transcontinental continuities, let us finally return to Bernal.

One of my points of criticism addresses Bernal's mechanical juxtaposition of the Indo-European and the Afroasiatic language families as if this would sum up all there is to be said about linguistico-cultural interactions in the ancient eastern Mediterranean. The juxtaposition springs from Bernal's obsession with language as a key to cultural history, which is also responsible for the misnomer 'Afroasiatic roots of classical Greek civilization'.⁶⁹ The juxtaposition creates a sense of 'either / or' which befits the political rhetoric underlying the *Black Athena* debate (Black – at least, 'U.S.A. Black', which includes any shade of skin pigmentation in excess of 'standard Caucasian'... – versus White; radical and liberation-orientated

stilted scholarship, and to steer a confident course between rupture from, and fusion with, myth – as is the mythographer's calling; cf. van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2009, 'Rupture and fusion in the approach to myth: Situating myth analysis between philosophy, poetics and long-range historical reconstruction', *Religion Compass*, 3 (2009): 1-34.

⁶⁸ To avoid misunderstanding in this age of transcontinental and cross-continental migration and identity politics: I mean *uninvited* from a point of view of the paradigm which which mainstream (and implicitly Eurocentric) scholarship has looked at the Bronze Age Mediterranean, without in the least questioning the rightful claims or good fortune that brought these theoretically unexpected groups to their destinations.

⁶⁹ Let me spell out, probably superfluously, why it is a misnomer. *Afroasiatic* is exclusively a linguistic term, denoting the Afroasiatic macrophylum as one of the four language phyla found in Africa at the onset of modern globalisation (the others being Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, and Khoisan). Contrary to the other three African macrophyla, in historical times Afroasiatic (whose African branches include Ancient Egyptian, Berber, Chadic, Cushitic, Omotic, Semitic) has also been represented in West Asia through its Semitic branch, to which languages belong such as Arabic, Hebrew, Phoenician, Ugaritic and Akkadian. When Bernal speaks of 'Afroasiatic roots', he does not mean (or should not mean) cultural influences coterminous with the extent of Afroasiatic; he means:

- a. in the first place: Egyptian roots (Egyptian being one of the branches of Afroasiatic; but the very obvious influences from Mesopotamia upon the Aegean, especially in religion, myth, science and technology, are systematically underplayed by Bernal; when the Revised *Black Athena* thesis began to focus on sub-Saharan Africa, the other African branches of Afroasiatic were implied, but hardly studied in detail as far as their cultural and religious contribution to Egypt and the Aegean is concerned), and
- b. in the second place, more loosely, 'African and Asiatic roots', again concentrating on Ancient Egypt and ignoring the rest.

versus ethnocentric; the rest of the world versus Europe or the North Atlantic at large) but which obscures such continuity yet diversity as may underlie (in Sumerian, Nostratic, Niger-Congo etc.) the actual cultural and linguistic dynamics in this region.

In all likelihood many of the cultural, religious and mythological correspondences between Egypt and the Aegean are to be explained, not in the first place by Late Bronze Age north-bound diffusion across the Mediterranean, but by a common West Asian Neolithic origin.

The field of Neolithic communalities which becomes discernable for West Asia and the Mediterranean, with extensions deep into Europe and Africa, displays a high linguistic diversity,⁷⁰ including

- Afroasiatic (Eastern and Southern Mediterranean, probably in west- and south-bound expansion into North and West Africa);
- North Caucasian / Basque involved (like most other population and language groups in that region and period) in a westbound expansion;
- the emerging Indo-European phylum initially probably concentrated around the Black Sea;
- westbound, shamanism-associated Uralic elements which chariot technology allowed to spread deeply into Central and Northern Europe but also to leave traces in Mesopotamia (where chariots and shamanism appear in the middle of the second millennium BCE), Egypt (the etymology of the theonym Neith as Mother of the Waters – including the Waters Above, i.e. Heaven – is probably Uralic; shamanic elements in the tomb of Tut-^cAnkh-Amon in the form of chariots and a royal diadem indistinguishable from a shamanic one),⁷¹ and the Aegean (where Pythagoras, Empedocles, Abaris the Hyperborean, are essentially shamanic figures suggestive of ancient Asia-derived continuities).⁷²
- African languages: Niger-Congo (of which Bantu is a well-known sub-branch) has left traces in West Asian toponymy (notably the Palestinian hydronym *jabbok*, which means ‘fordable place’ in proto-Bantu, cf. Genesis 32: 22f; and *kana’an*, *Canaan*, proto-Bantu ‘to refuse’ – perhaps the refusal to board the Ark before the Flood (as related in

⁷⁰ Cf. McCall, Daniel, & Harold C. Fleming, 1999, ‘The pre-classical circum-Mediterranean world: Who spoke which languages’, in R. Blench & Matthew Spriggs, eds., *Archaeology and language, III*, New York / London: Routledge, pp. 231-248, where further language phyla are considered, with emphasis on Sino-Caucasian along the Northern shores of the Mediterranean; also see van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen, *o.c.*, ch. 4.

⁷¹ van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen, *o.c.*

⁷² Dodds, E.R., 1951, *The Greeks and the irrational*, Berkeley/ Los Angeles: University of California Press.

some Islamic and Hebrew sources),⁷³ but probably refusal – rather typical of segmentary pastoralism – to accept the overlordship of the states in the Nile Valley and Mesopotamia, with several parallels in South Central Africa),⁷⁴ and in the various linguistic elements listed in Table 2.⁷⁵

Thus involved in an overall westbound (and, for the African languages, also southbound) movement, and in ways that modern molecular genetics can now reconstruct in detail (Fig. 4), the scope and direction of the main elements in the *Black Athena* thesis take on a very different shape than that claimed by Bernal. *The Aegean region looks similar to Ancient Egypt, not primarily because of diffusion from Egypt in the Late Bronze Age, but primarily because both were the recipients of the ‘Pelasgian’ demic, linguistic and cultural movement from West (ultimately Central) Asia; and this movement also extended to sub-Saharan Africa, producing the same similarities there. Ancient Egypt displays many cultural and religious similarities with sub-Saharan Africa, not primarily because of diffusion from sub-Saharan Africa to Egypt in Neolithic times, but the other way around: because the Back-into-Africa movement, carrying a significant share of Asian genes, as well as cultural, religious and linguistic elements (including the *Borean-associated elements towards Niger-Congo / Bantu) passed via Egypt on its way from Asia to sub-Saharan Africa – particularly in the most recent forms which the westerly strand of the Back-into-Africa movement took: as the South-bound arrow of the Pelasgian cross-model, from the Late Bronze Age on.*

⁷³ Cf. Heller, B., 1993, ‘Nūh, the Noah of the Bible’, in: C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs & G. Lecomte, eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., Leiden: Brill, pp. VIII, 108-109. Michael Astour, one of Bernal’s intellectual heroes, has proposed a different though not incompatible etymology of the place name Canaan, cf. Astour, Michael C., 1965, ‘The origin of the terms “Canaan”, “Phoenician”, and “Purple”’, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 24, 4: 346-350; and: van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen, *o.c.*, p. 82 f.

⁷⁴ Cf. Lancaster, C.S., 1974, ‘Ethnic identity, history, and “tribe” in the Middle Zambezi Valley’, *American Ethnologist*, 1: 707-730.

⁷⁵ In this Table, the selection of cases in columns I.a and I.b was suggested by: Karst, *Origines*, *o.c.*, pp. 245f. Karst however, although a pioneer of modern long-range comparative and historical linguistics, is often obsolete or obviously wrong in his specific interpretation of these long-range connections. Therefore I base the identifications in columns II.a and II.b, in terms of proto-Bantu, on more recent authoritative sources: Guthrie, *Comparative Bantu*, *o.c.*; Guthrie, ‘Guthrie’s Proto-Bantu forms’, at <http://www.cbold.ddl.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/Docs/Guthrie.html>; Meeussen, *Bantu lexical reconstructions*, *o.c.*; Meeussen, ‘Proto-Bantu Reconstructions’, at <http://www.cbold.ddl.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/Docs/Meeussen.html>; and (for column III) Starostin, *Tower of Babel*, *o.c.*

Table 2. Proposed connections between (a) proto-Bantu, (b)Mediterranean divine names, religious concepts and ethnonyms

I. Connections proposed by Karst		II. Proto-Bantu		III. remarks	
I.a. Mediterranean	I.b. Bantu	II.a. Guthrie, with Guthrie number	II.b. Meeussen, with noun classes		
1	Phoenician/ Punic Moloḡ	muluku / m-luko, mlungu, mulungu, 'God, Heaven	-dÓk-, to rain, 650, > ? mulungu, God?	-dók-, rain, drip, 5.4., [> S.C. & S. Bantu mulungu, God]	Proto-Bantu *-d- often changes into -l- in historic attestations. To relegate the West Semitic form to Bantu is certainly possible, but this is a case where there is an overriding *Borean etymology with near-global; application: <i>cf.</i> *Borean (approx.) : *TVKV 'to pour, drop' (> Eurasianic : *tUKV ; Sino-Caucasian : *[t]Hänkó; Austic : Proto-Austronesian *itik, Proto-AustroAsiatic *tvk 'drop'; Amerind (misc.) : *tok ^w 'saliva; spit' ⁷⁶ .
2	Canaanitic El / Bel, <i>cf.</i> Sardinian / Aegean Julius, Jolos, Jolaos	Bantu y-ulu, e-ulu, wilu 'God, Heaven'	-*gòdò 5-, top; sky, 880, [>-ilu- in S.C. & S. Bantu]	-*gudu 5 L LH, sky, above, 6.3.,	<i>Cf.</i> Germanic <i>god</i> , whose etymology is unclear – both semantically and phonologically the Bantu connection is more convincing that Old Indian <i>huta</i> , 'the one who is invoked'. No obvious long-range etymology available
3	Aegean Abantes	<i>Abantu</i> , 'people'	-*ntò 1/2, person, 1798	-*ntu L 1, person, some (or other), any, 6.4.	<i>Cf.</i> Austronesian <i>-taw</i> , 'human'. ⁷⁷ No consensual long-range etymology available, however, <i>cf.</i> Indo-European : *-nt-, 'under', 'underling', proposed ⁷⁸ as etymology of Ancient Greek <i>anthrōpos</i> ('human being') and

⁷⁶ *Cf.* Ruhlen, Merritt, n.d., 'Amerind Dictionar', no. 590, unpublished, available in Globet data base and incorporated in Starostin & Starostin, *Tower of Babel*, o.c.; Peiros I., 1989, 'The Austric macrofamily: Some considerations', in: Shevoroshkin, Vitaly, ed., *Reconstructing Languages and Cultures. Abstracts and Materials from the First International Interdisciplinary Symposium on Language and Prehistory in Ann Arbor*, 8-12. Nov. 1988, Bochum: Englisch Seminar, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Vol. 20, pp. 66-69: 128.

⁷⁷ Adelaar, A., 1995, 'Asian roots of the Malagasy: A linguistic perspective', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 151, 3: 325-356.

⁷⁸ Ode, A.W.M., 1927, 'Reflexe von "Tabu" und "Noa" in den Indogermanischen Sprachen', *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde*, 63, A, 3: 73-100.

					Athē na (as underworld goddess); Afroasiatic: tʃ, ‘land, ground’ (Ancient Egyptian); Sino-Tibetan: *dōIH, Chinese: 底 *tāj? ‘bottom’, 柢 *tāj? ‘root, base’; Tibetan: <i>mthil</i> bottom, floor; the connection with ‘human’, and with this entire complex, is hypothetical; Khoisan: ‘person’ in the following reconstructed <i>Proto</i> -languages; Central Khoisan: *khóé ; Khoikhoi: *khoe ; West Central Khoisan: *khóé ; East Central Khoisan: *khóé ; South Khoisan (Taa): *ta^, *tu^ ; North Khoisan: *ž ù
4	Loḥios (Apollo), Meiliḥios (Zeus), molo, magical herb in Homer	Bantu m-logi, m-lozi, moloki, m-rogi, ‘magician, sorcerer’,	-*dŌg-, to bewitch, 644, [> -roθ - in S.C. & S. Bantu] / *dŌgi 14, witchcraft, 646, [> S.C. & S. Bantu - roθ i-]	-*dog- L, bewitch, 5.4., / -*dog-L 1, witch, 5.4.,	No consensual long-range etymology available, so Karst’s Bantu proposal has a point
5	Chaldaean Ōwan, Cappadocian Omanes, Aegean primal god Okeanos.	Bantu ô-wāngi, uwingo, uwingu, ‘God, Heaven’,	-*gāNgà 9/10, medicine man, 786, / -*gāNgà 14, medicine, 787	-ganga L 1, 9, doctor, medicine man, 4.3. / -*gang-L, wrap up, bandage, heal, 4.3.	Dolgopolsky, one of the pioneers of the Nostratic hypothesis, identifies <i>nganga</i> as a proto-Nostratic root which therefore cannot merely be counted as originally Bantu. ⁷⁹
6	Minos, Menuas [Urrartean king]	Bantu m-ngu, mu-ungu, mu-ingu, ‘God’,	? -*nÉnĚ DP, big, 1350; ? -*dŌk-, to rain, 650, > S.C. & S. Bantu mulungu, God	-*néne, big, 3.3.; -dók-, rain, drip, 5.4., > S.C. & S. Bantu mulungu, God	

⁷⁹ Dolgopolsky, A., 1998, *The Nostratic macrofamily and linguistic palaeontology*, Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

7	Basque. yinko 'God' ⁸⁰	Bantu-Zulu Nkulu, God; Massai ngai, en-gai.'	-*yiNk-, to give, 2085, ? ; -*kódò DP, old, 1197, /- *kódò 1/2/14, old person/old age, 1197, [> -kulu, in S.C. & S. Bantu]	-*nink-, give, 2.3.; -*kúdu 1, big, senior, adult, 6.3. [> - kulu, in S.C. & S. Bantu]	Not necessarily Bantu-related, <i>cf.</i> : *Borean (approx.) : *KVRV 'old' (> Eurasianic : *gwVrV 'old'; Afroasiatic : *gVrV - 'old' (Cushitic, Chadic and Berber *gVr- 'be bigger, older'); Sino-Caucasian : *xq(w)VrV 'old'; African (misc.) : Bantu *-kúdu 'old'; Ijo kUrai 'year'. (?); San karē 'full grown person'. ⁸¹
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9. Not a revamped Hamitic thesis

I realise that my Pelasgian hypothesis comes uncomfortably close to the now discarded Hamitic thesis. I have no use for a racist Hamitic thesis, – I consider myself to be reasonably, and demonstrably, free from the delusions of colonialism and racialism. However, that very same freedom allows me to ignore the pressures of political correctness. If the Hamitic thesis had an unmistakable colonial and racist origin, and implies to deny the cultural creativity of modern Africans, *that does not mean that no major transfer could ever have taken place*, since the Upper Palaeolithic, of genetic, linguistic and cultural material from Central and West Asia to sub-Saharan Africa via Egypt and the rest of the Mediterranean. Sometimes scholars (prompted by an intuition informed by specialist knowledge, where they can discern patterns of connectivity without already being able to properly separate cause and effect) are right for the wrong reasons – as seems to be often the case, for instance, with Bernal, and with the scholars from around 1900 whose ideas he often seeks to revive. The inroads south,

⁸⁰ *Cf. Tower of Babel, o.c.*, Basque etymology: Proto-Basque: *iainko 'God'; Bizkai-an: Jainko; Gipuzkoan: Jainko; High Navarrese: Jainko, (Baztan) Jinko; Low Navarrese: Jinko; Lapurdian: Jainko, Jinko; Zuberoan: Jinko. To this *Tower of Babel* adds the following comments:

'Azkue also cites Jaungoiko (...), but possibly this longer word ('lord who is on high') is a "folk-etymology which attempts to rationalize the old name [Jainko] into something more obviously Christian" (Trask, R.L. 1997, *The History of Basque*, London: Routledge, p. 323). The etymology remains mysterious.'

Entry 7 in Table 2 appears to go a long way towards solving the mystery and revealing the Bantu affinities in the Basque theonym Yinko.

⁸¹ Illich-Svitych, V.M., 1971-84, *Opyt sravnenija nostraticheskix jazykov*, I-III, Moscow: Nauka; Dolgopolsky, n.d., 'Nostratic dictionary', unpublished but incorporated in data bases Globet, Nostret and in *Tower of Babel*, 2005: 664 (SH - Turkic), 670 (SH - Kartvelian).

along the Nile valley and the Sahara routes⁸² have been recognised as such for a long time.

This influx should not be regarded as *imposing, in sub-Saharan Africa, an alien package*, onto ‘Africans’ as we know them today. The Palaeo-Africans of 15 ka BP probably displayed, both genetically and culturally, a considerable level of continuity with the Palaeo-African groups (characterised by mtDNA types L1, L2 and L3) that constituted the whole of Anatomically Modern Humans, and their ancestral culture, before the Out-of-Africa exodus from 80 ka BP onward. But today’s Africans are substantially different, both culturally, linguistically and even genetically: they are largely a product of the interaction between Palaeo-Africans and the Back-into-Africa movement, and as such fairly continuous with the populations and cultures of West Asia and Europe. The considerable affinities between Bantu and *Borean makes us look with a different eye at the early theorists on Bantu who suggested that *major elements towards Bantu* (I am not saying: the Bantu phylum as a whole) came into being, not on African soil, but in Asia. In that case, these contributive elements (a 27% *Borean proto-Bantu lexicon) were transferred to sub-Saharan Africa in the very process of the ‘Back-to-Africa’ migration, notably⁸³ in the form of the Southbound, African-Pelasgian extension of the ‘cross-model’. Major cultural themes besides language came under the same dynamics, and this explains the very considerable continuity (in mythology, kingship, kinship, patterns of reconciliation and adjudication, religion, etc.) between West Asia, Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa.⁸⁴ The same may also apply to metallurgy, whose invention is still being contested between West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa⁸⁵ – but we can settle that argument by invoking a model where it was proto-Bantu speaking groups in West Asia, carrying a proto-African culture on their way to sub-Saharan Africa, who invented

⁸² Marked by abundant rock art depicting chariots – a technology invented 2000 BCE in Central Asia; and very nicely visible in the distribution map of the spiked wheel trap, Fig.1.

⁸³ However, we must not forget that part of the *Borean lexical roots (and other cultural themes, for that matter) towards the proto-Bantu lexicon may also have been contributed in the context of the *Eastern* Eurasian branch of the Back-into-Africa movement (Underhill, *o.c.*), hence affinity between Bantu and Austric. A discussion of the possible Eastern Eurasian (e.g. South East Asian) cultural contribution to modern Africa is beyond our present scope, but cf. Oppenheimer, *Eden, o.c.*; and van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., in collaboration with Mark Isaak, 2008, ‘Transcontinental mythological patterns in prehistory: A multivariate contents analysis of flood myths worldwide challenges Oppenheimer’s claim that the core mythologies of the Ancient Near East and the Bible originate from early Holocene South East Asia’, *Cosmos: The Journal of the Traditional Cosmology Society*, 23: 29-80. Oppenheimer himself makes no specific claims concerning Africa; yet outside the field of mythology, his General Sunda hypothesis appears to have considerable African applicability.

⁸⁴ Cf. van Binsbergen, ‘The continuity’, *o.c.*

⁸⁵ Cf. Alpern, S.B., 2005, ‘Did they or didn’t they invent it? Iron in sub-Saharan Africa’, *History in Africa*, 2005 32: 41-94.

and transmitted metallurgy – like the specialist blacksmiths, the Sinties, on the fire-god Hephaestus’ special island Lemnos;⁸⁶ or like the iron-working, music-oriented Gypsies (a major subgroup of which is also called Sinti) of which we find traces as far inside Africa as Sudan and Zambia.⁸⁷

The Hamitic thesis was predicated on an obsession with difference, with absolute and discrete distinctions between Africans, Europeans and West or Central Asians. The reality of cultural history is much more fluid, transitional, interconnected, and simply makes sub-Saharan Africa, like Europe and on very similar terms, part of the world at large. Once more, we have to admit that the notion of ‘African’ as a distinct identity is (like the concept of Africa itself) mainly an invention,⁸⁸ first of colonialism and racialism, but subsequently internalised by the latter’s Black victims.

10. Going far beyond the Black Athena thesis

*In the newly emerging picture, Ancient Egypt can no longer be regarded as the child of sub-Saharan Africa and nothing more; nor can Ancient Greece be regarded any more as simply the grandchild of sub-Saharan Africa and nothing more.*⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *Ilias*, I. 594; *Odyssea*, VIII. 294.

⁸⁷ As far as the diffusion of metallurgy is concerned, the proposed Pelasgian, overland Southbound movement along the Nile valley and through the Sahara, may be complemented by a seaborne movement from South Asia; cf. Hromník, C.A., 1981, *Indo-Africa: Towards a new understanding of the history of Sub-Saharan Africa*, Juta: Cape Town, which was initially discarded (appearing at the height of South African apartheid, and apparently denying, once more, Africans all cultural initiative; cf. Hall, Martin, & C.H. Borland, 1982, ‘The Indian connection: An assessment of Hromník’s ‘Indo-Africa’’, *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 37, 136: 75-80), but was recently positively reconsidered at a high-powered South African archaeological conference.

⁸⁸ As exposed in: Mudimbe, V.Y., 1988, *The invention of Africa: Gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press / London: Currey; specifically on the *Black Athena* debate, this leading African / American philosopher has made the following enthusiastic contribution: Mudimbe, V.Y. 1992, ‘African Athena?’, *Transition*, 58: 114-123.

⁸⁹ Even though recent genetic research by Arnaiz-Villena *et al.* (Arnaiz-Villena, A., Dimitroski, K., Pacho, A., Moscoso, J., Gómez-Casado, E., Silvera-Redondo, C., Varela, P., Blagoevska, M., Zdravkovska, V., Martínez-Laso, J., 2001, ‘HLA genes in Macedonians and the sub-Saharan origin of the Greeks’, *Tissue Antigens*, 57, 2: 118-127; Arnaiz-Villena, A., Iliakis, P., González-Hevilla, M., Longás, J., Gómez-Casado, E., Sfyridaki, K., Trapaga, J., Silvera-Redondo, C., Matsouka, C., Martínez-Laso, J., 1999, ‘The origin of Cretan populations as determined by characterization of HLA alleles’, *Tissue Antigens*, 53, 3: 213-226) concurs with, for instance, iconographic analysis of the Thera / Santorini frescoes from Minoan times, in suggesting an unexpectedly great African element. Cf. Marinatos, S., 1969, ‘An African in Thera’, *Analekta Archaikologika Athenon*, 2: 374-375; Knapp, B., 1981, ‘The Thera frescoes and the question of Aegean contact with Libya during the Late Bronze Age’, *Journal of Mediterranean Anthropology and Archaeology*, 1: 249-279; de Graft Hanson, J.O., 1976, ‘Africans in heroic Greek royal families?’, *Legon Journal for the Humanities*, 2: 51-59. Arnaiz-Villena *et al.* incidentally

The emerging picture is complex, and suggests intensive and creative interaction and feedback along the North-South axis. Since the influential synthetic work of Hoffman⁹⁰ on the Saharan antecedents of Ancient Egypt, and Williams' impressive identification of Egyptian central royal symbols (royal bark, white crown and palace façade) on a Nubian incense burner from pre-dynastic times,⁹¹ there is no possibility of denying the constitutive contribution made to Ancient Egypt from the Saharan region south and west of the pharaonic territory. However, the Africa involved in such feedback is not in the least the primordial Africa of the pre-Out of Africa Exodus; on the contrary, it is an Africa that is already deeply involved in the Neolithic revolution, that makes its own contributions to that revolution by the local domestication of specific food crops and animal species. It is an Africa that has already massively absorbed the demic, linguistic and cultural material brought from West Asia by the Back-into-Africa migration, including the Southbound component of the Pelasgian cross-model. As a result, on essential points of cosmology (dominated by the separation of Heaven and Earth), kingship (as the principal re-connection of Heaven and Earth), and ritual / mythology primarily organised around these themes of cosmology and kingship, it would even more than ever (*cf.* above, Chapter 9) be tempting to speak of an Extended Fertile Crescent, far exceeding the narrow West Asian confines that gave its name to this presumed cradle of the Neolithic, and in fact extending from the fertile Sahara and the Ethiopian highlands, via Egypt, West and Central Asia, to China, with extensions to North Africa and Europe.

11. A new, long-range reading of Athena and Neith

In this surprising, new context of the Extended Fertile Crescent and its Upper Palaeolithic prehistory, also Bernal's central icon, that of the theonym Athena as a barely disguised Athenian import from Egypt, takes on a very different shape. Athena and Neith together belong to a vast belt, extending from the Sahara to West Asia (with extensions into South and East Asia, thus encompassing the entire 'Extended Fertile Crescent) and dating back to the Neolithic, displaying goddesses associated with young womanhood / virginity, military prowess, and feminine arts (especially

suggest, on the basis of their genetic research, an African influx into the Aegean as a result of forced resettlement of an 'Ethiopian' population under the pharaonic state c. 2000 BCE – which again is grist for Bernal's mill, even whilst slightly upsetting my own applecart.

⁹⁰ Hoffman, M.A., 1979, *Egypt Before the Pharaohs*, New York: Knopf, rev. ed. 1991.

⁹¹ Williams, 'The A-group Royal Cemetery', *o.c.*; *idem*, 1996, 'The Qustul incense burner', *o.c.*

weaving) and with spiders; other goddesses in this belt are Anahita,⁹² Anat,⁹³ Anatu (perhaps also Inana; but more specifically *cf.* the Sumerian sun goddess Uttu, also with spider connotations), Sumerian Inanna, the Libyan goddess Antinea, the West African spider-god Nzambi / Nyambi, *cf.* the West African spider trickster hero Anansi, etc.

Ultimately, I would be inclined to interpret these goddesses as transformations of the proposed Upper Palaeolithic creator goddess, the parthenogenetic Mother of the Waters, under a cosmology based on the Separation of Water and Land. Still in the Upper Palaeolithic, as part of the verticalisation of the world image associated with the rise of shamanism and of naked-eye astronomy, this cosmology was supplanted by one based on the separation of Heaven and Earth – which then became the dominant cosmology throughout the Old World, Oceania, and part of the New World, from the proto-Neolithic on. Verticalisation brought institutionalised social and symbolic sources of power leading to a male-dominated world-view,⁹⁴ in which the ancient creator goddess was dethroned by a celestial male creator and her creative powers reduced to domesticity, although she was allowed to retain her connotations of virginity and her implicit association with water. Neith is still in many respects the Mother of the Waters,⁹⁵ whereas the aquatic epithets of Athena, although understudied, are massive:

- Athena Hippias ‘of the horses’ – in the Aegean context, horses are in the first place sacred to Poseidon, the god of the sea; and even though classicists tend to consider his association with the sea a relatively late development, Poseidon may well be considered a masculinising transformation of (or, if late and with a different earlier trajectory of his own, a masculinising imposition upon) the Mother of the Waters, – to whom, as pointed out above, horses were probably sacred
- Athena Halea ‘of the sea’

⁹² *Cf.* Cumont, F., 1911, ‘Anahita’, in: *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Hastings, J., with Selbie, J.A., & Gray, L.H., eds., Edinburgh: Clark / New York: Scribner, pp. I: 414-415; Frederic Giacobazzi, F., n.d. (2003), ‘Anat, Anath, Anit (Syria), Anatu (Mesopotamia), Anahita (Persia, Armenia), Neith (Egypt), Athene (Crete), Athena (Greece)’, at: <http://www.kirtland.cc.mi.us/honors/goddess/anat.htm>.

⁹³ Fontenrose, J., 1980, *Python: A study of Delphic myth and its origins*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press; paperback edition, reprint of the 1959 first edition, pp. 139, 244, 253 n. 48. Of course (but irrelevant in the present context), the goddess Anat was an established member of the Egyptian pantheon in the Ramesside times, *cf.* Bonnet, H., 1971, *Reallexikon der Ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, Berlin: de Gruyter, reprint of the first edition of 1952, pp. 37 f.

⁹⁴ This is not merely an attempt to sound politically correct and woman-friendly, or to emulate the great woman archaeologist Marija Gimbutas. Throughout the literate civilisations of the Bronze Age, all over Eurasia, we see female divinities being supplanted and relegated to subaltern, domestic statuses. For a detailed table, *cf.* van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen, *o.c.*

⁹⁵ A point well appreciated by Bernal, *cf.* *Black Athena II, o.c.*, pp. 87f. The otherwise unattested Nestis (= Neith?) appears with Empedocles as the element *water*.

- Athena Aithuia, ‘the sea bird’ (stormy petrel, sea-gull)
- Athena Glaukopsis, which at school we learned to translate as ‘Owl-Eyed’, but which may simply render the colour of the sea – Glaukos is the name of various mythological figures all of which have a relation with the sea
- Athena Nauta – ‘mariner’ or ‘shipwright’ – she is credited with essential help in the construction of the legendary ship Argo
- in Athens, Athena is mythologically and ritually paired with Poseidon, who in historical times is the dominant male sea god
- Athena’s counterpart or alter ego, Pallas, is a daughter of the sea god Triton.

All these maritime dimensions make Athena stand out as what to my mind, despite all the much later accretions of prowess and fine arts, she is more than anything else: a transformation of the Virgin Mother of the Primal Waters. This was keenly seen by Fauth when he wrote:

‘Auf die weitverbreitete Lallwurzel **at-* greift auch van Windekens zurück, wenn er der göttlichen Jungfrau (Pallas) in Athene den sakr[alen] Titel der ‘Mutter’ zugesellt findet.’⁹⁶

Viewed thus, there is no question any more of Neith engendering Athena, or the other way around. Both are closely related specimens of a cosmologico-religious system which, throughout the vast belt thus identified, has produced Great Goddesses with connotations of underworld, death, violence, sea and sky, and ultimately of the Primal Waters – connotations which were often (although only obliquely so in Athena’s case)⁹⁷ emblematised in bee symbolism, and which reflect the triple quality

⁹⁶ Fauth, W., 1979a, ‘Athena’, in: K. Ziegler and W. Sontheimer, eds., *Der kleine Pauly: Lexikon der Antike*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, cols. 681-686.

⁹⁷ When Zeus’ companion, the shape-shifting Metis, ‘Reflection, Counsel’ (Eury-nome’s sister, if not alter-ego) was pregnant, he swallowed her (as is probably implied: in the shape of a *bee*) so as to prevent her giving birth to a son that would oust him as king of heaven, as predicted by Gaia / Earth (Hesiod, *Theogonia*, 886 f). The story is related to that of Erichthonius (*cf.* the long footnote at the end of chapter 4, above), for after Metis’ child, Athena, had been born from her father’s head with the aid of her brother Hephaestus’ hammering, it was sperm from the latter aimed at Athena that engendered Erichthonius as child of Gaia / Earth – Athena’s reluctance to acknowledge the child which her stimulating appearance had caused to be conceived, may have derived, not just from disgust at Hephaestus’ ejaculation (as stressed by the mythographers), and not even from the incestuous connotations of the situation, but from her fear that – as predicted by Gaia – the child would dethrone her beloved father, Zeus. But the real threat for Zeus lay not in another celestial deadly rival (as he had been his father’s, Cronus’, and the latter, his father’s again, Uranus’) but in the continuing, albeit subdued, vigour of the Cosmogony of the Separation of Land and Water and of its primal virgin goddess, the Mother of the Waters, which no reduction to domesticity (Athena, like Neith, Anahita, the West African cognates of Nyambi, and Japanese Amaterasu, was a spider-associated goddess of weaving) could permanently contain. Two millennia later, the implied Mother goddess would be largely rehabilitated on the Northern shore of the Mediterranean, as the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Star of the Sea, and Queen of Heaven. Another millennium later, in our own time, women’s massive rejection of imposed domesticity begins to bring back a

of the Primal Waters as the waters of the sky, of the sea, and of the underworld.

In this light one must also view the question – so central to the *Black Athena* debate – as to the etymology of the names of Athena and Neith. The two female deities, and their names, are not derivations from one another, but both are derivations from a theonym *-[a]n[a][n]- which is not so much Egyptian or (as Bernal is fond of thinking, admittedly on the ground of ample Egyptian sources) Libyan, but West Asian, subsequently Pelasgian, and subsequently (through the mechanism of the ‘cross-model’) implied in the goddesses of half the Old World.⁹⁸

12. Conclusion: Lessons for Afrocentrists

My alternative theory, in the first place, is still very provisional and raises enormous problems in its own right; and, in the second place, it could only have been conceived thanks to Martin Bernal. Yet, if this theory cuts wood, it more or less explodes the *Black Athena* thesis, since it totally distances itself from Bernal’s key contradiction between Indo-European and Afroasiatic (his quest for ‘Afroasiatic roots’) as the possible source of the Aegean classical civilisation, and instead draws on heterogeneous and fragmented ‘Pelasgian’ continuities that could hardly be relegated to a primal and exclusive African origin.

The lessons for Africa and for Afrocentrists are clear, and although disappointing at first glance, are ultimately illuminating and even empowering. Contrary to the essentialising and the othering which has been the standard modern approach to Africa world-wide⁹⁹ (and which has also been Bernal’s approach, incidentally, as well as that of many Afrocentrists), Africa turns out to have always been an integral, and important, part of the

mythical era of female leaders in the ritual (media / entertainment), political and even military fields.

⁹⁸ Cf. Karst, *Origines*, o.c., p. 95: ‘Bei Diodor, Sic., Kap. 56-68, wird von einer Göttin Tritonis Athena berichtet, deren Kult in der Gegend des libyschen Tritonissee heimisch war. Diese tritonische Göttin Athena ist sicher identisch mit der arisch-iranischen und pontisch-kappadokisch-armenischen Anahit. Tritonis oder Triton ist als Göttesattribut, als Theophorname derselben Gottheit zu fassen und direkt zu identifizieren mit der eranischen Gottheit Thritha oder Thraetaona (Thraetana), bzw. dem indischen Trita, dem wassergeborenen Gotte Aptya, der iranisch als Athwya erscheint. Dies wäre ein weiteres Argument für eine einstige ostarische Besiedelung Kleinafrikas, vorausgesetzt, daß, nicht schon in der Diodorquelle eine Verwechslung des hesperisch-libyschen Tritonensees mit einem homonymen irano-turanischen und der afrikanischen Libya mit dem innerasiatisch-turanischen Libyerlande vorliege. Hierfür sprache die bei Diodor, Kap. 68, erwähnte “libysche” Dionysosinsel mit Stadt Nysa in der Tritonissee, wo es sich vermutlich ursprünglich entweder um die “indische” Nysa (Nyssa) handelte, die Heimat des jungen Dionysos, bzw. um das medisch-hyrkanische Nisäa oder um die Nisäischen Gefilde in Medien Kaspien, also um Lokalitäten des innerasiatischen Libyen.’

⁹⁹ Cf. Mudimbe, *The invention.*, o.c.

world at large, and thus of global cultural history. It is true that the essential cultural repertoire of Anatomically Modern Humans came from Africa, but that was at least 60 ka BP, and makes all of us humans today, or none of us, Africans in the primordial (and meaningless) sense. The Afrocentrist claims however refer to a much more recent past, the Bronze Age, or the Neolithic Age at the very remotest. If for these relatively recent periods they claim an exclusively African origin of global cultural initiatives, whether via Egypt (as Bernal and many Afrocentrists have it), or bypassing Egypt, they are mistaken. Moreover, they risk ripping Africa loose from the texture of transcontinental continuities in which it has always thrived, also during the past few millennia (despite the setbacks of the last few centuries), in which Africa has made its own global contributions, and in which Africa can be recognised and can affirm itself as a major player, instead of (as is the global reality of the last few decades) a disqualified outsider.

In the light of my present argument, I cannot applaud the consensus that has developed in the 2008 Warwick conference on Martin Bernal's work, where the once so controversial *Black Athena* thesis was ushered into academic mainstream respectability, almost as part of the canon of proto-history. What we owe to Martin Bernal is a vision, an incessant drive, a passion to steer away from Eurocentric complacency, a clever insight into the hegemonic mechanisms of the global politics of knowledge. That already is far more than we owe to most students of transcontinental cultural protohistory; and in this awareness, we are justified to regard the *Black Athena* thesis itself as another Wittgensteinian ladder,¹⁰⁰ to be cast away once it has served us to get a wider and better view.

¹⁰⁰ Wittgenstein, L., 1964, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus: Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, first published 1921; Eng tr. 1922, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1922), 6: 54.