

EDITORS NOTE

Connected worlds, Africa, Asia and the Greco-Roman Mediterranean

“Quand deux peuples se rencontrent, ils se combattent souvent, ils se mélangent toujours”

Paul Rivet

The ancient history of African and Asian peoples was of little interest to Westerners. The existence of these peoples in antiquity was frequently perceived by means of their relations with the Greeks and Romans. Far from establishing an understanding of interactions and cultural exchanges, such a perception frequently naturalized hierarchical discourses on the domination of the other peoples by the Greeks and the Romans.

The goal of this publication is to provide a new space not only for original studies about antiquity's Afro-Asian peoples, but also about their relations with the Greeks and Romans beyond any normative ideas of a Greek and/or Roman predominance, which became present, for instance, in the concepts of Hellenization and Romanization. This new perspective is based on a recognition of the several complex and heterogeneous societies that flourished and were interconnected in the different situations and environments that existed along their borders. These situations and environments were decisive for some of the technological and social innovations of these peoples, which became at times either closer or more distant from each other, with their unique and complementary contributions.

The experiences of modern imperialism and colonialism not only produced (Western) disciplinary fields aimed at the study of Afro-Asian peoples (Africanism and Orientalism), but they also established specific approaches that can only be comprehended within the contexts in which they emerged. Yet, this fact must not reduce one's understanding of Africanism or Orientalism – both of which are considerably wider and more complex fields of study nowadays – to the broad ideological debates that lied at their foundation.

Martin Bernal's seminal work *Black Athena. The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, which inspired us to create this journal and our study and research group,

has been a target of much criticism (Lefkowitz, 1996; Moore, 2001; Binsbergen, 2011). Whether pertinent or not, these critical approaches do not obscure Bernal's great merit of bringing the discussions on the circulation and cultural exchanges between Greece, Rome and the Middle Eastern, African and Asian peoples to the center of the academic debate – significantly expanding the field of current scientific researches, on the one hand, and collaborating, on the other, to the great actuality of the contemporary discussions on identity, which continually recognize classical antiquity at the basis of their investigations.

The oceans, seas, rivers, gulfs and deserts have been spaces of connection between peoples who maintained contact since their origins long before the expansion of the Hellenic world and of republican Rome in a vast junction of languages, cultures and religions. Either by the recurrent crossing of the frontiers in the course of the human experience, or by promoting commercial exchanges, the world divided into East and West never really knew absolute limits. The existing Greek or Latin literatures, along with the material evidences, indicate the extent of such interactions. As a space of dialogue among the cultures, the Mediterranean became the great stage of these intersections and a long-standing privileged place of human miscegenation.

The Senegalese poet and writer Léopold Sédar Senghor – an intellectual who has been committed to the cause of the recognition of non-European cultures – recalls the teachings of Paul Rivet to indicate the role played by the Mediterranean in the history of mankind. Senghor synthesized them with the following words:

“Paul Rivet – my old professor of Anthropology at the Paris Ethnological Institute – said that all initial historical civilizations were born in the altitudes of the Mediterranean Sea along the meeting lines of the black, white and yellow peoples. And he added the Mediterranean civilizations – from the Egyptian to the Arab, including the Greek – to the Iranian, Indian, Chinese and Maya civilizations¹”.

During this human saga, the cultural and biological miscegenation defined the experiences of the peoples of antiquity as a fruit of their inalienable contact zones.

¹ *Les noirs dans l'Antiquité méditerranéenne*. Léopold Sédar Senghor's lecture delivered on May 11th, 1977, during his visit to Principality of Monaco. Available at: <http://ethiopiques.refer.sn/spip.php?article560> Access February 17th, 2016.

With its ambitious editorial project, this journal seeks to disseminate the Brazilian production on Antiquity (not only within its thematic scope), while also promoting a circulation of international studies in this field for Brazilian readers.

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