



Cheikh Anta Diop spent much of his life analyzing the relationship between ancient Egypt and West Africa, especially Senegal.

also contributed to the effort to see African history through the African experience.¹⁹

Cheikh Anta Diop

Cheikh Anta Diop was born in **Senegal** and educated in an Islamic school that followed the **Murid** teachings of **Amadou Bamba**. He carried out his advanced academic work at the University of Paris. Like Martin Bernal, Diop drew upon his deep interdisciplinary knowledge of history, linguistics, sociology, archaeology, colonialism, and Egyptology. Unlike Bernal, Diop also earned degrees in chemistry and worked in nuclear physics. He spent much of his life analyzing the relationship between ancient Egypt and West Africa, especially Senegal. His compatriots thought so highly of him they changed the name of Senegal's national university, Université de Dakar, to Université Cheikh Anta Diop.

Much of Diop's research was driven by his desire to disprove Eurocentric notions that whites, not Africans, created the Egypt of the **Pharaohs**. In many

different published and unpublished works, Diop successfully overturned racist myths about Pharaonic Egypt's alleged white origins. Diop's scholarship was complex and covered many disciplines, which he summed up in UNESCO's *General History of Africa*, the first multi-volume encyclopedic series about Africa from Afrocentric perspectives.²⁰ While not all scholars agree with Diop's findings, he certainly removed Egypt from Eurocentric myth and placed it firmly within Africa.

Martin Gardiner Bernal

Martin Gardiner Bernal, who like Diop sought to work against the legacies of European racism, imperialism, and colonialism, argued that some of the great wisdom of Pharaonic Egypt contributed to the glory of ancient Greek civilization—the Athens of **Socrates**, his student Plato, and Plato's student Aristotle. Using linguistics, ancient manuscripts, and archaeology, Bernal challenged Eurocentric academics to revise their understanding of the relationship between Pharaonic Egypt and Greece.²¹ Many classicists and **Egyptologists** argued that there had been no substantial Egyptian contribution to Greek civilization. Countering that view, Bernal argued that ancient peoples had noted the connection between Egypt and Greece, but during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Europeans severed that link because of notions of European imperial supremacy and pseudo-scientific racism, not because of new evidence. Bernal's arguments were quite provocative, in part because he inferred that his academic opponents supported a racist interpretation. His critics also challenged his use of linguistics and his interpretation of art.

Like Diop before him, Bernal helped place Egypt among the great civilizations of the world, one created by Africans. Together with other academics, Diop and Bernal helped to restore respect for Africa and its peoples, recovered significant portions of the African past, and enhanced African contributions to our common humanity. Cheikh Anta Diop and Martin Bernal spent much of their academic lives exploring the relationship between humans and Africa. Now that it is clear that all humans are descendants of Africans who migrated out of Africa about 70,000 years ago, humanity itself can now be "centered."

Section I of your Resource Guide has introduced