

Did the ancient Egyptians migrate to ancient Nigeria?

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Literatures concerning the history of West African peoples published from 1900 to 1970 debate the possible migrations of the Egyptians into West Africa. Writers like Samuel Johnson and Lucas Olumide believe that the ancient Egyptians penetrated through ancient Nigeria but Leo Frobenius and Geoffrey Parrinder frowned at this opinion. Using the works of these early 20th century writers of West African history together with a Yoruba legend which teaches about the origin of their earliest ancestor(s), this researcher investigates the theories that the ancient Egyptians had contact with the ancient Nigerians and particularly with the Yorubas.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: There is an existing ideology amongst the Yorubas and other writers of Yoruba history that the original ancestors of the Yorubas originated in ancient Egypt hence there was migration between Egypt and Yorubaland. This researcher contends that even if there was migration between Egypt and Nigeria, such migration did not take place during the predynastic and dynastic period as speculated by some scholars. The subject is open for further research.

Introduction

The debate on whether the ancient Egyptians¹ influenced or migrated to West Africa has been studied by various scholars for a long period of time (cf. Parrinder 1951:198). Writers of West African history, who have an interest in the Yorubas of Nigeria, are of the opinion that there were migrations between Egypt and Yorubaland, yet others refute this theory. Some say that the Yorubas came from Israel and landed in Yorubaland. However, the theory that the Yorubas originated in Israel has rather made little or no impact on the Yorubas because the Israelites' culture, especially about the afterlife beliefs (cf. Agai 2011:195; Lucas 1970:382–388) and linguistic phraseology differs immensely from those of the Yorubas (Parrinder 1951:199).

Reverend Samuel Johnson has been writing the history of the Yorubas for about 20 years and his manuscript *The history of the Yorubas: From the earliest times to the beginning of the British protectorate* was first sent for publication in 1899 but was published only in 1921 and reprinted in 2001 (Johnson 1921:viii). A number of writers of the Yoruba history especially from the beginning of the early 20th century until the present, rely on the writings of Johnson as a fundamental source of knowledge with regard to understanding the Yoruba connection with ancient Egypt (cf. Akintoye 2004:3). Johnson relied on some cultural similarities between the Egyptians and the Yorubas (Johnson 1921:6–7). He also relied on Yoruba's oral history as his main source of information concerning Yoruba origins; some of his sources are renowned Yoruba oral historians like Josiah Oni, Venerable Lagunju (the Timi of Ede) and many more (Johnson 1921:viii).²

Johnson argues that past historians, including Yoruba oral historians, say that the Yorubas originate from the east and he agrees with these statements as their culture proves. However, Johnson explains that the east, according to the understanding of Yoruba historians did not literally mean Mecca as it was perceived but Egypt in North-East Africa. Johnson regards Sultan Mohammed Bello as one of the earliest writers of Nigerian history, whose writings apparently influenced the Yorubas to begin to think that they originated in Mecca instead of Egypt (Johnson 1921:1:5–6). Johnson maintains that the ancestors of the Yorubas were Coptic Christians from Egypt (Johnson 1921:6–7).

Another prominent writer of West African history, who linked the Egyptians to the Yorubas, is the Venerable Archdeacon J. Olumide Lucas. He was a former Pastor of St. Paul's Church, Breadfruit in Lagos, Nigeria. Lucas discusses the various forms of spirits, gods and ancestors worshipped

1.Ancient Egypt according to this research refers specifically to the predynastic and dynastic periods and all the Egyptians who lived before the emergence of Christianity.

2.Although Johnson died before 1921, this researcher regards him as an early 20th century writer because his book was published in 1921.

by the Yorubas. He argues that these same deities were worshipped in ancient Egypt.³ Furthermore, Lucas believes that ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, emblems, symbols and formulae have survived in West Africa. He claims that some of the survivals are traced back to different periods of ancient Egyptian history: firstly the predynastic period; secondly, the dynastic period as well as the Greek and Roman times. Lucas notes that the survivals are still in use especially in the form of a metaphysical outlook on life, notably amongst the Ashanti, in Togoland, Yorubaland and Ekoiland (Lucas 1970:iii).

On the impact of ancient Egypt on West African thought, Parrinder writes that caution needs to be exercised simply because there is little or no archaeological evidence showing that the Egyptians migrated to Yorubaland except by assumption, otherwise the subject should be left open for further debate (Parrinder 1951:198). He notes that if there were any contact between the Egyptians and the Yorubas, then such contact might have taken place during the Egyptian predynastic and dynastic periods only. Parrinder admits to a possible Egyptian influence on the Yorubas but he believes that the Arab world made more cultural impact on the Yorubas than Egypt did (Parrinder 1951:205–209). An opponent of the Egyptian theory of the Yoruba origin is Leo Frobenius who was a trained anthropologist and explorer. Frobenius thinks that the civilisation or culture of the Yorubas is not of Egyptian origin but Etruscan which was centred in North Africa. He calls this culture or theory the 'Atlantic theory'. By implication, Frobenius is of the opinion that the Yorubas are not of Egyptian origin and hence the Egyptians did not migrate to Yorubaland (cf. Frobenius 1913:336).

One of the implications for the writings of these early 20th century writers of West African history is that the minds of many contemporary Yorubas have been influenced to think that their ancestors originate in Egypt or Arabia.⁴ Folorunso (2003:83) for example, thinks that Yoruba ancestors came from Egypt, in other words, Folorunso believes that the Egyptians migrated to Yorubaland. Agai (2013a:1–2) states, that whilst in Yorubaland, he discovered that many Yorubas attributed their origins to ancient Egypt and other Yorubas he interviewed said they originated in Arabia. Umoh (1971:116) says that even the Yorubas themselves believe that they originated in Egypt. The religions of Christianity and Islam, colonialism, the ideology that Egypt was the cradle of human civilisation, the Yoruba creation of myth and many other factors might have influenced the minds of these early 20th century writers of West African history to begin to think that Egypt had had contact with Yorubaland, yet these factors will not be discussed in detail in this research. This research discusses the theories of the Egyptian contact with the ancient Nigerians especially with the Yorubas. The

3. Lucas says that the Yoruba Olorun will judge the world in the afterlife and that this attribute is connected to Osiris who was thought to have judged the Egyptians in the judgment hall in the afterlife (Lucas 1948:37).

4. Literatures on Yoruban history written from 1900 to 1970 centred their debate on Egypt as having or not having any form of cultural influences on the Yorubas of Nigeria. One of the impacts of these writings is that the Yorubas of today associate themselves mostly with either Egypt or Arabia thinking that they and their cultures originated from these regions (Agai 2013b).

researcher attempts to answer the question: did the ancient Egyptians migrate to ancient Nigeria?

Why did the Egyptians migrate?

The debate on whether ancient Egypt was a part or not a part of the African continent has once more shed light on the relevance of ancient Egypt as 'Africa's dark browed queen'⁵ (Folorunso 2003:84).⁶ The debate demonstrates that Egypt was relevant to the ancient world and that it attracted the attention of many people including the Semitic peoples, other Africans and the Grecians (Adamo 2010:475; O'Connor & Reid 2003:1–5). Other writers regard Africa and Egypt in particular, as the place where human civilisation emerged (Folorunso 2003:89). The role of Africa as the centre of civilisation can be argued, yet there can be no doubt that Egypt played a great role in human civilisation.⁷ The fact that ancient Egypt has been perceived as a centre of civilisation, a commercial harbour, a religious centre of attraction and a refuge for the persecuted, is relevant with regard to understanding the contents of this research.

The search for gold and other minerals

Gold was regarded as a sacred commodity by early civilisations (3000–2000 BCE) and it was used as a symbol for wealth and social status (Le Roux 2008:7). The Phoenicians,⁸ the Egyptians, and the Greeks traded in gold in Egypt since the 6th century BCE.⁹ There was insufficient presence of gold in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa and this prompted trade in other commodities (Clark 1970:219). The commodities that were traded between the ancient Egyptians, the Phoenicians and West Africans included: metals, weapons, ivory and textiles (Boshoff & Scheffler 2000:38; Clark 1970:15). Also, the bronze and brass casting of Nok terracotta (500 BCE – 200 CE) in northern Nigeria, the art from Igbo-Ukwu near Enugu (Shinnie 1965:80–81) in eastern Nigeria, and the Yoruba's famous Ife bronze heads in western Nigeria are similar to those of the Egyptians (Clark 1970:214–216). Johnson (1921) also points out that the 'Ife Marbles' are similar in form to

5. A gateway nation that has brought other African territories into global relevance.

6. Further discussion on why Egypt was not accepted as a part of the African continent is beyond the scope of this research, hence this research is done with a view that ancient Egypt was and is a part of the African continent.

7. The importance of Africa with regard to the search for the origins of man cannot be overemphasised. This is so because many scientists and archaeologists are now beginning to accept that humans could have originated in Africa (Caldwell & Gyles 1966:5; Clark 1970:56).

8. The Phoenicians' enterprising nature is the reason for the spread of their culture around the world (Redford 2006:2). In antiquity, Egyptians regarded the Mediterranean coast as inimical to human activity because of the presence of sandbars in the Nile Delta. In addition, there were treacherous currents in the sea which rendered navigation extremely risky so that only the most skilled sailors could negotiate the Nile Delta (Redford 2006:2). Phoenicians were great sailors and their ability to navigate the Nile Delta may be the reason for Egypt's strong trade ties with the Phoenicians.

9. There has long ago been gold deposit and international trade in gold in Ghana (Clark 1970:16). It has not been documented when Ghana ('the land of gold') began to trade in gold but both Arabs and Europeans depended on Ghana's gold export for their economies via North Africa. An Arab writer, El-Fazari wrote that Arabs' interest in capturing Ghana's gold fields started in the 8th century, precisely sometime around 734 CE (Shinnie 1965:45–47). More so, Lange (2004:279) says that Phoenicians and the Egyptians depended on the gold of West Africa and that they traded in gold with West Africans. Ghana's historical, political, economic and geographical ties with Nigeria could have made that some Nigerians were involved in gold trade with those Egyptians. However, information on Nigeria's gold deposit and on ancient Egyptian gold trade with Ghana and Nigeria are insufficient or not known.

Egyptian sculptures. He reiterated that at present, about three or four of the forms of these sculptures can be seen in the Egyptian Court of the British Museum (Agai 2013a:14), 'showing at a glance that they are among kindred works of art' (Johnson 1921:6–7). There is no evidence at the moment showing that the ancient Egyptians entered into Nigeria strictly for trade in gold and other natural minerals.

The search for black slaves

One of the main attractions of the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Phoenicians to the Central Sudan has been the supply of slaves (Lange 2004:277). In ancient Egypt, slaves were used to serve kings and the kings' family members. Slaves were used to work on farmlands, and during the predynastic periods, kings were buried alongside their slaves¹⁰ (Cavendish 1977:21; Caldwell & Gyles 1966:141; Schwantes 1969:6; Spronk 1986:87, 91, 93; Turner 1993:15). Lange (2004:278) notes that black slaves were highly valuable because of their seemingly extra strength and dexterity at work, and that this provided the rudimentary reason why slave trade dominated the trans-Saharan commercial activities. Egypt was the main supplier of black African slaves however, due to the high demand and an insufficient supply of black slaves, Egypt depended on the regions across the Upper Nile, Darfur and West Africa to supply slaves to them (Lange 2004:279). Nigeria was heavily involved in both domestic and Trans-Atlantic slave trade since 1500 (Omolewa 2008:98),¹¹ and slave trade might have been practiced in Nigeria long before 1500 CE. Nigeria's deep involvement in slave trade could have caused the Phoenicians and the Egyptians to buy Nigerian slaves in Nigeria or in the Darfur region, or even in Egypt. However, information concerning Nigeria's involvement in slave trade before the advent of Christianity is rare or completely unavailable.

Escape from wars

In 700 BCE the Kushite king, Kashta invaded and conquered Egypt, he ruled as far north as Thebes, the capital of Upper Egypt, and his son Piankhy completed the conquest of Egypt; he ruled from all the shores of the Mediterranean through to the borders of modern Ethiopia (Shinnie 1965:23–24, 34). Assurbanipal controlled the territory of Egypt since 721 BCE, and in 664 BCE, Psamtik I Sias escaped Assyrian control of Egypt and founded the 26th Dynasty and won Upper Egypt as a result. Nicho II the successor of Psamtik I Sias defeated and killed Josiah in 608 BCE (Caldwell & Gyles 1966:161). In 589 BCE, Pharaoh Apries of Egypt collaborated with Zedekiah to fight against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar through his chief army captain Nebuzaradan, invaded Judah in 586 BCE (2 Ki 25:8–21; Jr 52:12–14), and this led to the dispersion of the Jews to Egypt and from Egypt to other parts of Africa (Le Roux 2008:15).

10.The use of foreign slaves for certain activities was a normal tradition in the Semitic world (Ashton 1992:18; 2 Ki 18). Also, in Nigeria, slaves were often prisoners captured during wars or they could be purchased from other provinces or states within or outside of the former non-amalgamated Nigerian territories. They were used by their masters for domestic activities (Shinnie 1965:81; Omolewa 2008:97–98). This implies that in Egypt foreign slaves might have been used for domestic activities as well (cf. Ex 1, 2, 3), but there is little or no evidence for the supposition that slaves from Nigeria were used in Egypt.

11.For example, during the 16th century CE, Portuguese colonialists were involved in slave trade and they went to Bonny, a popular slave market in Nigeria. In 1790, 16 000 out of 20 000 slaves sold at Bonny were Ibos (Umoh 1971:166).

Furthermore, in 570 BCE, a war against the Greek colony of Cyrene, which ended in an Egyptian defeat, caused the overthrow of Apries. He was succeeded by the general Amasis (Amosis II) who was the last great Saite pharaoh, and under his reign Egypt prospered, but Cambyses invaded Egypt once more and he finally overthrew the Saite dynasty, and crowned himself pharaoh. Cambyses died in 522 BCE (Caldwell & Gyles 1966:162, 166). Alexander the Great also seized power in Egypt in 332 BCE¹² (Shinnie 1965:23–24, 34). The various alliances of Egypt with militarily weak nations might have led mostly to their defeat, and the foreign invasions of Egypt have also led some Egyptians to migrate to other parts of Africa. It is likely that a relative peace was enjoyed in other parts of Africa, more so than in the Ancient Near East or the Greco-Roman empire which was then concerned about gaining territorial control thus resulting in various wars. It can logically be suggested that some Egyptians may have travelled to West Africa in order to escape the wars.

Who were the Egyptians that migrated to Nigeria?

Predynastic and dynastic Egyptians

It has been speculated that most of the contact between West Africa and the ancient Egyptians took place on the whole during the predynastic and dynastic periods. This theory is mainly propagated by Lucas and Parrinder both of whom accept the view that there was direct communication between Egypt and West Africa during these two periods: 'I imagine that this is not contested. Western black Africa has its communications with the western basin of the Mediterranean, directly, across the Sahara' (Parrinder 1951:200).

Parrinder thinks that only the predynastic and dynastic Egyptians made serious impacts on West Africans, and that these impacts became less, giving way to Islamic and Arabian impacts especially amongst the Yorubas (Parrinder 1951:205–209). He saw similarities of predynastic and dynastic Egyptian cultures with those of the Yorubas, and these cultures included: lack of attempts at mummification, probably no clothing except by ruling families who made knickers of goat and deer skins, used animal skins for clothing, tattooing of their bodies with lines and animal figures, and totemistic beliefs (Parrinder 1951:202–203).¹³

Both the ancient Egyptians and the Yorubas recognised the existence and the supremacy of a supreme deity but worshipped local deities and ancestors. In both cultures,

12.From 671 BCE, Egypt suffered six invasions by foreigners. Egyptians were particularly influenced by ancient Greece. Ancient Greeks disregarded Egyptian culture and made their (Greek) language and culture dominant in Egypt (Redford 2006:XIII).

13.The Yoruba earlier burial practices like wrapping of a corpse in a mat, the lack of burial chambers or pyramids, the lack of complicated rituals during burial, the building of simple tombs, the lack of formal mummification except by natural means, the burial of a corpse with no or few objects, and with the loyalists of the deceased, and the removal of certain body parts of the deceased, have strong Egyptian predynastic similarities. Complicated burials started in Egypt at the end of the dynastic periods and some of these practices of elaborate burials also found their way to later Yorubas. This is the main reason why Parrinder (1951:200–203) believed that migration between the ancient Egyptians and the Yorubas took place during the predynastic and dynastic periods.

kings were regarded as divine authorities, certain animals as sacred, and certain forms of festivals involving dancing and singing were practiced. Magic and the use of amulets were important in the daily lives and in the afterlife beliefs of both cultures. Body mutilations practiced in ancient Egypt also found their way to the Yorubas, these practices included: circumcision, excision, shaving and piercing of ears and nose. These kinds of Yoruba cultures were also practiced during the predynastic and dynastic periods of ancient Egypt (Agai 2013a:14; cf. Lucas 1970:412–413). However, Parrinder (1951:200) admits that archaeological evidence for migration between Nigeria and Egypt, particularly during the predynastic and dynastic periods is lacking. The routes and the means of travel those ancient Egyptians assumedly used to journey to Nigeria cannot be proven. Despite the presence of some Egyptian cultural remnants in western Nigeria, people who could be identified clearly as remnants of predynastic and dynastic Egyptians in Nigeria are lacking.

Oduduwa

This theory is based on a Yoruba legend.¹⁴ The presence of Egyptian culture found amongst some Nigerian tribes¹⁵ and especially the Yorubas, made some writers observe that the Yorubas were of Egyptian origin or that the Yorubas were highly influenced by the Egyptians through some form of physical contact in Yorubaland. If Oduduwa is actually of Egyptian origin, and considering his monarchical and possible genetic influences on the Yorubas, it can be assumed that the Yorubas are mixed remnants of the Egyptians in Nigeria. This is so because Oduduwa met some inhabitants in Yorubaland and interbreeding might have taken place between Oduduwa, his followers and those early inhabitants of Yorubaland. This view is not proven scientifically and the origin and authenticity of the Oduduwa legend itself is still under scrutiny.

Kings of Kukuwa and Gogobir (Gobir)

According to the Oduduwa legend, his two children who left 'Mecca' or the 'east' alongside himself both became kings of Kukuwa and Gogobir in northern Nigeria (Ayandele 2004:122; Umoh 1971:116). There is no historical record to support this assertion and it is not known when the children of Oduduwa began to rule these two Hausa kingdoms, Kokuwa and Gobir. Gobir in particular is rather more significant in the history of the Hausa people than in the history of the Yorubas (Shinnie 1965:62). Historical records support that the Hausas have always been the rulers of Gobir. Recorded

kings of Gobir include Babari, who was succeeded by Bawa Jan Gwarzo and ruled from 1770–1795, and later by his brother Mallam Yakuba(u) (Omolewa 2008:44).

There is no evidence that the children of Oduduwa ever lived in Kokuwa and Gobir and the names of the known kings of Gobir have not any connection with the Yorubas but with the Hausa people. Yorubas indeed did trade with northern Nigeria in exchange for clothes, kola nuts and food as early as 1300 CE (Shinnie 1965:81). The people of Gobir and Kukuwa still maintain distinctive tribal marks as do the Yorubas (Ojo 1999:5) and apart from trade and Islamic influences upon some Hausas and some Yorubas, there is actually not any serious cultural connection between the Yorubas and the Hausas of Kukuwa or Gobir. It is for this reason that Shinnie (1965:79) says 'there is, however, no real evidence to suggest that the Yoruba ever lived in any part of Africa other than the western area where they still live'.

Adventurers and traders

One astonishing report about an early relationship between Nigeria and ancient Egypt is the one presented by Flora Shaw.¹⁶ She noted that there had been an old record which says that Egyptian Pharaohs visited Nigeria long before the advent of Christianity:

I abridge from Macrizi an account of an eleven years' expedition of one of the Pharaohs into the west and south, which seems definitely to confer upon Borgu¹⁷ the honour of connecting the existing territory of British Northern Nigeria with the Egypt known to us in the Old Testament. The expedition took place some 1700 years before Christ. The Pharaoh was king of Egypt when 'a young Syrian, of the name of "Joseph the Truthful", was sold by his brothers into Egypt.' The Pharaoh of Joseph was known by many names. Amongst them the Copts gave him the name of 'Barkhou'.¹⁸ (Folorunso 2003:78)

Folorunso (2003:78) admits that even though Shaw did not expatiate on this statement, yet, the statement suggests that an Egyptian pharaoh visited northern Nigeria – not Yorubaland – for trade or adventure long before the advent of Christianity. It also seems that the purpose of the visit was not to settle in Nigeria. The known periods that Egyptians travelled to Nigeria are after the advent of Christianity; for example, history taught that an Egyptian adventurer Rabeh in 1870 was given Negro soldiers by the Arabs. He led the soldiers towards the shores of Kordofan, Wadai until they arrived at Borno in northern Nigeria. In 1893, Rabeh chased away the Sultan of Borno and held the province in a state of subjugation until he was attacked and killed in 1900 (Lucas 1970:400–401). Other historical records reveal that Nigerians had travelled to Egypt as well for religious reasons. For

14. Oduduwa legend teaches that the original ancestor of the Yoruba people Oduduwa originates in the 'East' or in 'Mecca'. Oduduwa was exiled from Mecca because he refused to accept the state religion which was Islam. Oduduwa left Mecca and arrived at Ile Ife in Yorubaland where he met with Agbo-niregun (or Setilu), the founder of Ifa cult (Agai 2013a:13). Johnson argues that 'Mecca' or the 'East' according to the understanding of past historians did not mean the Mecca in Saudi Arabia but Egypt in North East Africa (Johnson 1921:5). Folorunso like Johnson is also of the opinion that 'Mecca' or 'East' symbolises Egypt and not Mecca in Saudi Arabia (Folorunso 2003:84). Johnson and Folorunso are Christocentric in their approach to the writing of Yoruba history, and this is so because they believe that Oduduwa was a Coptic Christian whose knowledge of Christianity was diluted with idolatry. Both authors maintain that Oduduwa was not a Muslim as it has been speculated by Mohammed Belo, the former Sultan of Sokoto (Folorunso 2003:84; Johnson 1921:7).

15. For example, *O-ru* is an Ijaw (South-South Nigeria) word which means spirit and *Horu* is one of the names of an Egyptian god. *Sua* is an Ibo (South-East Nigeria) word for wash and *Sua-u* is an ancient Egyptian word which means *set aside* by *washing* (Lucas 1948:369–414).

16. Flora Shaw was a British journalist and reporter for the London *Times* newspaper. She was the first person to use the name 'Nigeria' on 08 January, 1897. Frederick Lugard, a British Brigadier-General came to West Africa in 1897 on a special duty for the British government. Lugard got married to Shaw and supported her suggested naming of both the northern – Lagos – and southern protectorates as 'Nigeria'. This amalgamation took place on 1st January, 1914 (Omolewa 2008:12). The reason and origin of Shaw's comments are not known hence subject to criticism.

17. Borgu is the name that people of northern Nigeria referred to as the pharaoh, but Arab writers called him Barkou (Folorunso 2003:78).

18. Barkhou left traces of himself wherever he passed (Folorunso 2003:78).

example, it has been recorded that in the 11th century CE, the people of Kanem Borno, from whom Borno derived its dynasty of kings as well as a large proportion of its population, had a settlement of their own at Cairo. Ever since, thousands of Muslim pilgrims from West Africa have annually visited and even settled in the Egyptian Sudan (Lucas 1970:400–401).

Were there specific migration routes from Egypt to Nigeria?

With regard to the ancient Egyptian journeys to West Africa and especially to Nigeria, only little information is available in this regard, and this information is centred on Egyptian journeys long after the advent of Christianity. The specific routes those Egyptians choose and the exact distances between ancient Egypt and Nigeria either by road or by sea were not known according to modern means of measurement. This is why many researchers rely on cultural similarities between Nigerians and the ancient Egyptians; and to some of these researchers, the presence of certain Egyptian culture in some parts of Nigeria suggests that the Egyptians had inhabited those regions of Nigeria (Agai 2013a:7). Although Lucas did not provide any archaeological evidence, he maintains that it was possible to travel by sea and also by road from Egypt straight to the Sudan and to Nigeria: 'evidence is available that the transmission of the ancient Egypt[ian] culture followed a trans-continental route from Egypt to the western shores of Africa' (Lucas 1948:352).¹⁹

Parrinder (1951:198) also thought about probable routes of communication from the Upper Nile, skirting the tropical forest eastward along the Sudan to the old western Sudanese kingdoms, such as Gao, Ghana, Djene, Timbuktu (in Mali) to the coast of Guinea and to the Bight of Benin (in Nigeria) (Agai 2013a:6). Parrinder thinks that the best route for the ancient Egyptians who came to Nigeria was by sea, yet these means of travel is tampered with today:

The gap of desert between the Upper Nile and Nigerian Sudan is now impassable except by modern means of transport owing to the lack of water, but there are signs of ancient wells, at intervals, that might have allowed a crossing in the distant past. ... hence there may have been earlier communications, possibly in the pre-dynastic and early dynastic Egyptian periods. (Parrinder 1951:198)

Frobenius mentions that Etruscan culture did not pass through the interior (Sudan) to Nigeria. He thinks there is no historical backing that supports a route by land or by sea which shows any convenient form of migration between Egypt, through the Sudan to Yorubaland but he suggests that one exists from North Africa directly to Yorubaland (Frobenius 1913:325–326; cf. Lucas 1970:400; cf. Agai 2013a:6). Frobenius states this because evidence of Etruscan culture had not been found in the Sudan but in Yorubaland (Agai 2013a:8). Lucas (1948:351) on the other hand suggests that the reason why the ancient Egyptians did not live permanently

¹⁹ Lucas says that Herodotus testified that during the Persian wars with Egypt, over 20 000 cities lined the banks of the Nile and that he expressed the opinion that people must have gone west of Africa from Egypt (Agai 2013a:6; Lucas 1948:349).

in the Sudan was because of the unfavourable weather conditions of the Sudan, and hence to him, the Egyptians passed through the Sudan and lived in Yorubaland where the weather encourages permanent settlement (cf. Agai 2013a:8). Lucas and Johnson argue that the Egyptians went to live in Nigeria, and likewise Parrinder admits to this notion but Frobenius states that North Africa and not Egypt influenced Yorubaland. However, none of these writers have succeeded in providing any archaeological evidence showing specific routes of the travels between ancient Egypt and ancient Nigeria.

Conclusion

In conclusion this research accepts the following:

- The Yorubas have a high regard for the Oduduwa legend and many of them see the legend as the most preferred means with regard to understanding their origins, their main influencers and their earliest system of monarchical governance. Oduduwa, his sons Kukuwa and Gogobiri, could not have been the original ancestors of the Yorubas or the Hausas. Yoruba legend teaches that there were people living in Yorubaland before Oduduwa's arrival (Johnson 1921:4), but the identity of these people is unknown. Also, information concerning preferred routes and the exact distances that Oduduwa²⁰ and his followers assumedly travelled to Nigeria and to Yorubaland is not known hence the Yoruba or Oduduwa legend did not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that the Egyptians migrated to Nigeria.
- The ancient Egyptians were not known to be too keen about travelling and to adapt so much to foreign cultures (Burland 1957:62–63). Trade, adventure and escape from wars might have led some of them to travel to other parts of the world, but travelling to stay in other countries seemed not to be one of their preferences. Furthermore, the absence of a known and generally acceptable descendant of Egyptians in Nigeria suggests that the Egyptians did not live in Nigeria permanently. The very few historical records supporting possible visits of very few Egyptians into northern Nigeria and not Yorubaland, show that those possible visits were mostly done sometime from the 11th century CE onwards when humans had already developed advanced means of travel. Yet, there is no evidence that those Egyptians left specific landmarks that indicated their presence in Nigeria.
- No one knows precisely the origins of the methods of specialised bronze and brass castings in Nigeria, and the reasons for the similarities between the Nok terracottas (500 BCE – 200 CE), the art from Igbo-Ukwu near Enugu (Shinnie 1965:80–81), and the Yoruba art that produced the famous Ife bronze heads and those of ancient Egyptians (Clark 1970:214–216). These arts found in Nigeria might have been produced independently of any foreign culture and that is why 'archaeologists are looking at the possibility that West Africans developed iron-working technology autonomously, possibly starting with the Nok' (Atwood 2013:14).

²⁰ The criteria Johnson (1921:4) used to suggest that it took Oduduwa 90 days to migrate from the 'east' or from 'Mecca' to Ile Ife is not known.

- Early 20th century writers of Yoruba history like Johnson (1921), Lucas (1948, 1970) and Parrinder (1951) all suggest that the Egyptians migrated to Yorubaland particularly during the predynastic and dynastic periods and their speculation is based on the existence of certain cultures shared by the Yorubas and the Egyptians. These three authors together with Frobenius (1913) who in particular is of the opinion that Etruscan culture passed through North Africa to Yorubaland, have not been able to provide any archaeological evidence which supports their hypothesis. In the view of this researcher, the cultures shared between the Yorubas and the Egyptians together with the civilisations of the Yorubas might have been developed independently in accordance with their specific environmental formations²¹ or the Yorubas might have learnt and developed those cultures from a specific source alongside the Egyptians.
- It makes sense to believe that the search for gold, other minerals, black slaves and the escape from wars prompted some ancient Egyptians to emigrate temporarily from Egypt to other parts of the Semitic world and to Africa as well. Even if they had temporarily and possibly only visited northern Nigeria, yet, there might have been only very few of them and they did not leave any evidence to this claim. There is clearly no evidence that the ancient Egyptians visited or lived in Yorubaland. This research is open for further interpretation and re-interpretation especially with regard to the search for further evidence that the ancient Egyptians had contact with the ancient Nigerians either in Nigeria or in Egypt before the advent of Christianity.

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Competing interests

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