

**A TRIBUTE TO DR. ASA GRANT HILLIARD, III
NANA BAFFOUR AMANKWATIA, II**

**By Dr. Conrad W. Worrill
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In my view, a fitting tribute to Dr. Asa Grant Hilliard III, Nana Baffour Amankwatia II who recently made his transition into eternity on August 13, 2007, is for all African scholars, intellectuals, and activists concerned with the reclamation of African history, culture, and civilization (particularly as it relates to the African presence in the Nile Valley) to join the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC) under the current outstanding and dynamic leadership of its International President, Nzinga Ratibisha Heru. At the time of his transition, Dr. Hilliard served as 1st Vice President of ASCAC and was a founding member of the organization.

Dr. Hilliard, while leading a study tour for Trinity United Church of Christ in Kemet (Egypt) was also participating in the commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of ASCAC's 1987 study tour to Kemet. This 20th anniversary celebration also included ASCAC's annual conference at which there were over 250 participants in attendance from throughout the African world. Dr. Hilliard lectured on various aspects of ancient Kemetic civilization and was a major presenter at this and each of the ASCAC conferences.

When a giant in our struggle like Dr. Hilliard makes his transition, it is vitally important for us to review our history as we move forward with our work. Therefore, what follows is a paper, "Reflections on the Founding of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations," written by the late Dr. Jacob H. Carruthers, founding President of ASCAC that chronicles the history, origin, and development of this most important international African-centered organization. In the article Dr. Carruthers mentions the representation of African-

centered scholars from various regions of the United States who helped bring ASCAC into existence and propelled the African-centered Kemet thrust of the world wide African-centered Education Movement.

However, I will note that in addition to what Dr. Carruthers cited in his chronicling of ASCAC's history from the West coast representation of Maulana Karenga, there were other contributors who helped lay the foundation for the work of this movement in the western region. LeGrand Clegg had written extensively in the 1970s about the African presence of Kemet and had been a key player in the sponsoring of the African Peoples conferences at Compton College from 1981-1993. These conferences featured and highlighted consistently the role of Kemet in African civilization. The Black King Tut Committee came into existence in 1977.

The emerging scholarship of Runoko Rashidi was developing in Los Angeles. In the 1970s the State of the Race conferences were being held in Los Angeles under the leadership of Yemi Toure. These conferences featured discussion on Kemet at which Dr. Yosef ben Jochannan and the late Dr. John Henrik Clarke were consistently invited presenters. I might add that Dr. Wade Nobles and Vulindlela Wobogo from Oakland, California were engaged in the research and study of Kemet in the 1970s also. I cite this to point out the collective nature of the rise of the African-centered Movement and its scholarly and intellectual battles to reclaim, revive, and restore the rich and profound contributions of ancient Kemet to the world.

At the founding of ASCAC, Dr. Carruthers presented a paper entitled, "A Memorandum on an African World History Project." Dr. Carruthers pointed out in his paper that,

The time has now come when Black scholars must come together and design a massive project which will culminate in a multi-volume history of the world. Since strong archeological evidence indicates that African people were the original inhabitants of the habitable parts of the world, it is appropriate that African scholars develop such a history. Certainly Black scholarship would be enhanced by such a

project. It should be noted that the Europeans have already developed such project; witness the Cambridge and Oxford histories of practically every area of the world. Unfortunately we have to rely on these sources all too often.

Such a project must be carefully planned and developed in stages so that effective utilization of resources and division of labor may be determined. The project would depend in the first place on the establishment of a broad range of consensus among leading African scholars. The consensus could be achieved through a series of working conferences with foci on theoretical foundations and historiography.

The call to establish ASCAC by its six founders— Dr. Yosef ben Jochannan, Dr. John Henrik Clarke, Dr. Asa G. Hilliard III, Dr. Leonard Jeffries, Dr. Maulana Karenga, and Dr. Jacob H. Carruthers— was a profound step in our march in the battle to reclaim the African mind. It is in this context and in the ancestral spirit of Dr. Asa G. Hilliard III, Nana Baffour Amankwatia II that we should recharge, rekindle, and revitalize our efforts to build ASCAC as the major army in our battle to help liberate African people from the yoke of white intellectual supremacy that hovers over the world and perpetuates the intellectual warfare on African history and its people. Asa’s spirit should encourage is to “step-up” our work on our collective projects.

Revisiting the paper written by Dr. Carruthers is my attempt to help us have a healthy reflection on one of our most important organizations in the African-centered Movement, ASCAC. This paper, “Reflections on the Founding of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations,” which was written in December 1990 and first appeared as an article in the *Kemetic Voice*, Vol. 2, No. 4, a publication of the Kemetic Institute in March 1994. It is reproduced here, in its entirety with the permission of the Kemetic Institute:

On February 26, 1984 over five hundred African Americans from all over the United States attended “The First Annual Ancient Egyptian Studies Conference” in Los Angeles, California. At this conference, Yosef ben Jochannan, John Henrik Clarke, Asa Hilliard, Leonard Jeffries, Maulana Karenga and I met and developed a proposal, framework and schedule to establish an association to study and promote African Civilizations. It was thus at that meeting that the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC) was founded. For my part,

I was a representative of the Chicago group which included among others Anderson Thompson, Harold Pates and members of the Kemetic Institute. It was my understanding that Maulana Karenga represented The Institute of Pan African Studies which was the host organization for the conference. I also understood that Drs. Clarke, ben Jochannan and Jeffries represented a broader New York community. Since Asa Hilliard was (and still is) a professor at a university in Atlanta, Georgia, the founding group was representative of four major geographical regions in the United States— the Eastern, Midwestern, Southern and Western.

During the following year, the six founders worked together to extend an invitation to join ASCAC to the African American community in the United States at large and to a relatively large number of individuals thought to have similar interests in promoting and studying African Civilizations. At the second Ancient Egyptian Studies Conference held in Chicago and hosted by the Kemetic Institute in March of 1985, approximately four hundred charter members of the Association adopted a constitution and elected a slate of national officers.

The paths taken to the founding of ASCAC by its six founders as well as the four hundred or so charter members were doubtlessly similar in many respects, but probably different enough to warrant several individual accounts. This note is a reflection on one road taken.

For the Chicago group, the idea of an association for the study and promotion of African history and culture was synonymous with the conceptualization of the founding of the Kemetic Institute. The idea for the Kemetic Institute had emerged from the quest in which we had been engaged since the late 1960's. In short, our project was the development of an African-centered analytical framework for examining world history and culture. Not only was this the priority of our community based "avocation" which resulted in the establishment of the Communiversity and the Association of African Historians, brainchildren of Dr. Anderson Thompson who, along with Lorenzo Martin and Harold Pates, forged the foundations of the Chicago group. This is also the context in which we conceptualized and published issues of the *Afrocentric World Review* from the winter of 1973 through the fall of 1975. While we did not invent the term "Afrocentric," we did use the term to express our insistence that African scholars must speak (and write) from an African Worldview.

The African-centered prospective was also the focus of our "vocation" as members of the faculty of Northeastern Illinois University's Center for Inner City Studies as we searched for the appropriate curriculum philosophy and the relevant content for our formal academic program.

This quest led us to the elder champions of African Civilization—Chancellor Williams, John G. Jackson, John Henrik Clarke and Yosef ben Jochannan. These elders responded to our invitations and came to Chicago to share their wisdom. Indeed, Drs. Clark and ben Jochannan came many times, sometimes by way of their own resources. Professor John Jackson answered our invitation and moved to Chicago to join the faculty at the Center. These mentors not only inspired, encouraged and supported our project, they provided the historical framework which was necessary for its development. John Clarke connected us with others similarly interested, and above all things he connected us to Cheikh Anta Diop.

The quest obviously led us to the great treasury of our intellectual ancestors. The deep thought of

Prince Hall, Paul Cuffe, Prince Saunders, David Walker, Hosea Easton, Henry Highland Garnett, Martin Delaney, Edward Wilmot Blyden and Henry McNeal Turner provided the fertile waters which produced the foundation of our project. The casting of their liberation struggle on the foundation of the ancient African heritage of Egypt and Ethiopia was a constant inspiration. Our quest also led us to the African continent. Our travels began in the early 1970's, and by 1976 we launched our annual African study tour with an emphasis on archaeological sites, especially the Nile Valley. In the meantime, Dr. Thompson attended the Sixth Pan African Conference held in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania in 1974, and I had a series of conferences with Dr. Cheikh Anta Diop in 1975. Diop's influence on our thinking was quite decisive, especially in encouraging us to study and command the domain of world history and the role of Africa therein. His insistence on the Kemetic (ancient Egyptian) foundation was the formal cause of the conceptualization of the Kemetic Institute at the local level and an international association of scholars and promoters of African history and culture at the international level.

In 1974 and 1975, a group of us including Harold Pates, Anderson Thompson, Bobby Wright, Conrad Worrill, Leon Harris, and Iva Carruthers published four issues of our theoretical and methodological essays. The project enabled us to convey our ideas in a more or less systematic manner and to convey them to a wider arena. The project was temporarily abandoned because of the poverty of resources needed to publish a first class journal of African thought.

In the fall of 1976, we planned a grand research and study expedition to the African continent. The tour started in Dakar, Senegal, where our group of forty-five met Dr. Diop and other African scholars, and ended with a rather extensive tour of Nile Valley archaeological sites. In preparation for the expedition, we organized a class which explored African antiquity and began studying the Kemetic language (hieroglyphs). Each of the forty members of the class had a research project related to African civilization or historiography. During the class, Professor John Jackson was brought in as a guest lecturer for which he was provided fully paid travel and land accommodations for our expedition. The historic expedition galvanized in commitments by several of the participants to continue the project of restoring African civilization.

Those were the major events which resulted in the establishment of the Kemetic Institute and the conceptualization of the idea of an international association of African people to study and promote African civilization. The necessity for such an association was first argued in meetings between some members of the Chicago group, including the founding members of the Kemetic Institute, Ivan Van Sertima and certain of his Chicago based supporters. Van Sertima asked our group to cooperate in the establishment of a *Journal of Pre-Columbian History*. After several heated meetings, we convinced Van Sertima and his supporters that a journal of African Civilizations was more appropriate. We also argued somewhat less successfully that a journal required an association of African scholars to direct its mission. When Van Sertima broke off the meetings and took the name *Journal of African Civilizations* for the journal, which he began to publish, some of us felt our movement had been temporarily set back. We therefore began to develop the Kemetic Institute and plan for a more favorable context for the launching of the association.

In February of 1982 at the annual conference of the Association of African Historians, the Kemetic Institute introduced the proposal for a World History Project, which called for a

conference of African historians and scholars to develop a consensus on matters vital to their common interests. Besides the Chicago group, those in attendance included Drs. John Henrik Clarke and Yosef ben Jochannan and Professor John Jackson. At this time our push in this direction was dampened by the illness and subsequent death of one of the key members of the Chicago group, Dr. Bobby Wright.

In the meantime, the Kemetic Institute had begun to teach Medew Netcher as well as the history, culture and literature of Kemet on a regular schedule. We had also begun to develop a framework for the World History Project. In the cultural domain we had produced a play, "The Expulsion of the Hyksos," based on primary Kemetic (Egyptian) texts. Our efforts, in the area of African spiritual development, had culminated in the founding of the Temple of the African Community of Chicago. We were also planning a rather ambitious project of translating several of the most significant documents from Medew Netcher into English. This was necessary we felt because of the bias found in some of the standard translations. Finally, we had written and circulated on a limited basis the essays which were later published as *Essays in Ancient Egyptian Studies*. These ideas set forth the basic thrust of the project and communicated our proposals to some of the relevant scholars.

We were also becoming aware that other groups were engaged in projects similar to ours. Dr. ben Jochannan had begun his famous Kemetic Study Tours as had Dr. Asa Hilliard. Dr. Leonard Jeffries had begun his West African Study Tours. The First World Alliance under the leadership of Drs. Clarke, ben Jochannan, Leonard Jeffries and Brother Bill and Sister Kefa Jones, had been established in Harlem. The Fanon Institute under the leadership Dr. Richard King had also made the African connection. The Institute of Pan African Studies under the leadership of Dr. Maulana Karenga had come to our attention too. Thus, the idea for an association seems to have been emerging among several groups and thinkers. The study tours, classes and lectures were vital preparation for the receptivity by Africans in the United States to the ideas.

The project to establish the association began to take concrete form in the fall of 1982 when Dr. Karenga contacted us regarding Kemetic studies. During the next year we shared ideas, dreams, plans and problems. Among other things, we pointed out that we did not have the resources to pull the interested community together to dialogue about the issues raised in the proposal for a World History Project. In the early fall of 1983, Dr. Karenga suggested that we call the conference in 1984 because he and the Institute of Pan African Studies could mobilize the resources necessary for such a conference. This was an invaluable contribution to the project. We decided to meet in Detroit on the occasion of the annual conference of ASALH later that fall to plan the agenda for the conference. That meeting was attended by Harold Pates, Anderson Thompson, Maulana Karenga and me, Jacob Carruthers. It was at that meeting that we decided to issue the call for the association and issue special invitations to representatives from four geographical areas and the elder scholars Drs. Clarke and ben Jochannan and Professor Jackson. We also invited Dr. Chancellor Williams. However, he declined because of health and age. We decided at the time to submit "The Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations" as the name of the proposed association. According to my recollection, Dr. Karenga suggested the addition of the word "Classical" to the proposed name. The general format of the conference was also planned at the Detroit meeting. It was decided that all sessions of the conference would be plenary so that all participants could listen to all presenters.

Based on the consensus achieved in Detroit, Dr. Karenga and the Institute of Pan African Studies, in consultation with the Kemetic Institute, organized what was called “The First Annual Ancient Egyptian Studies Conference.” The call for papers resulted in an over-supply of presentation proposals. The selection of presenters was based upon the quality of the accompanying proposals, and the result was a relatively high quality set of presentations. The invitation to prospective participants was widely distributed and resulted in attendance by over five hundred African Americans.

At the closing session of the conference the proposal for the establishment of the association was submitted, and it received unanimous approval. The challenge before the ad hoc founding board of directors was to develop a constitution and agenda for the newborn association. That mission was undertaken in the spirit of the Pharaoh Amenemhat who founded the great Middle Kingdom in Kemet. When he ascended to the throne, he chose as his Horus name The Horus Wehem Mesu which means the “Repetition of the Births,” or to use a more familiar European concept—Renaissance. ASCAC is truly a rebirth of the very ancient African Ideal.

Once again, our challenge is quite clear. This history by Baba Jake, reminds us that we should use the ancestral spirit not only of Dr. Asa Grant Hilliard III, Nana Baffour Amankwatia II but also that of Jacob Carruthers and John Henrik Clarke, to renew, with all vigor, our work to continue to build the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC) and the African-centered Education Movement at this hour in history.

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