

DVD Contents



THE ORIGINS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE

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001	<u><i>Main Menu</i></u>	0:00:00
002	<p data-bbox="358 422 1276 789"><u><i>Geographic Areas</i></u></p> <p data-bbox="358 422 1276 789">Evidence for advanced knowledge of astronomy, mathematics, engineering, metallurgy, music, literature, and medicine is fairly abundant over a period that began more than 40,000 years ago in Africa. For example, Moorish schoolteachers used globes and taught students the sphericity of the earth several centuries before Magellan supposedly proved the world was round. There is ancient Kemetic (<i>Egyptian</i>) literature of 2200 - 2300 B.C. I know of no other claims of any body of literature dating 3000, 2000 or even 1000 B.C. For many hundreds of centuries thereafter, Africa was in the forefront of all world progress.</p> <p data-bbox="358 835 1276 1163">Dr. John Henrik Clarke notes that there are many things in the manners and customs and religions of the historic Egyptians that suggest that the original home of their prehistoric ancestors was in a country in the neighborhood of Uganda and Punt, (The biblical land of Punt was in the area now known as Somalia.) to establish the southern origins of North African civilizations. The civilization of Egypt lasted longer than any other civilization known to man--about 10,000 years. This civilization reached its height and was in decline before Europe was born.</p> <p data-bbox="358 1209 1276 1430">Today, the study of geography is based on a system of latitude and longitude, which is used to measure the earth and chart its surface with accuracy. Most people think of this system as an invention of the modern world because it requires a working knowledge of spherical trigonometry. This exact knowledge is incorporated into the interior and exterior measurements of the Great Pyramid.</p>	

<p>003</p>	<p><u><i>Western Empires</i></u></p> <p>The cultural and philological evidence to support the claim that Africans on the west coast attained a high level of culture and maritime skill is out of the realm of pure speculation. It can now be said with a high degree of certainty that Africans braved the roaring waters of the high seas and established relationships with the Indians of the Americas well over a thousand years ago.</p> <p><i>“It is more important to note here that voyages across the Atlantic were resumed, or continued, during the reign of Askia. Proof of this is evidenced by the fact that Columbus was informed by some men, when he stopped at one of the Cape Verde Islands off the coast of Africa, that Negroes had been known to set out into the Atlantic from the Guinea coast in canoes loaded with merchandise and steering towards the west. The same Christopher Columbus was further informed by the Indians of Hispaniola when he arrived in the West Indies that they had been able to obtain gold from black men who had come from across the sea from the south and southeast. The dates of these accounts coincide precisely with the time that Askia the Great held sway over Songhay. It must also be added that Amerigo Vespucci on his voyage to the Americas witnessed these same black men out in the Atlantic returning to Africa.”</i></p> <p>(Historical Oration by Dr. John Henrik Clarke from “<i>World’s Great Men Of Color</i>”, J. A. Rogers)</p> <p>In the magazine <i>West Africa</i>, for Saturday, June 7, 1969, there is an article by Basil Davidson with the title "Africans Before Columbus?" In this article we are told that:</p> <p><i>“Columbus and other early Europeans' arrivals in the Americas came back with quite a bit of evidence, suggestive but inconclusive, that black peoples from Africa had already reached these shores. Various writers have pointed, from time to time, over the past twenty years and more, to the likely West African origins of these black explorers. Columbus infers that they were people from the coast of Guinea (West Africa).”</i></p> <p>Perhaps the most remarkable astronomers in Africa since the time of ancient Kemet are the Dogon of Mali. Their astronomical knowledge involved the binary star system, Sirius <i>A</i> around which orbits a companion star - Sirius <i>B</i>. The precise knowledge of these and other terrestrial bodies were derived from a people who had never seen a telescope.</p>	
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027	<p><u>Black Sacred Music Development</u> <i>(Music: “Hold On” Performed by The Sounds Of Blackness)</i> The Black church is among the most vital institutions to African Americans in this country, and Black Sacred music is an important phase of that experience that must be preserved, taught, and respected.</p>	
028	<p><u>Black Sacred Music Development In America</u></p> <p>This chart is a continuation of Wyatt Tee Walker’s “<i>Time Bar</i>” of the period of development and dominance of Black Sacred music. The verbal utterances that came out of the West African rituals of worship ceremonies were emotional shouts and moans, in which music and rhythm were more important than words. This was primarily due to the diverse language back-grounds of the enslaved Africans. Eventually, the shouts and moans evolved into the songs that are now called spirituals. As the charted progression illustrates, the spirituals are followed by the periods of meter music, hymns of improvisation, and gospel music which is still evolving.</p>	
029	<p><u>African Musical Roots</u></p> <p>Having traveled extensively in West Africa in 1993 and 1996, the African tribal dances and accompanying chants in their form and melody are Africanisms that we often observe in many African American worship services in the United States. In many cases, the structure of the model is European with a transfusion of African traditional participatory worship style service in terms of repetition, lilt, rhythm and shouting.</p> <p>“The content of the songs that evolved from the ring shout eventually came to include material drawn from the Bibles of the singers’ captors, and especially from stories of the Old Testament... It is important to understand that spirituals are not the same as gospel music, a twentieth-century composed art form that evolved from the spirituals tradition.”</p> <p><i>(Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands, by: Lydia Parrish)</i></p>	
030	<p><u>Work Songs / Game Songs: “Draw Me A Bucket Of Water”</u></p>	

<p>031</p>	<p><i>“The Songs Are Free”</i> <i>(Music: “I’ve Got A Right To The Tree Of Life” Performed by Bernice Johnson Reagon)</i></p> <p>This spiritual covers the period of “Folk Spirituals” The creation process of the spirituals was a gradual conversion resulting in a creative blend of African traditions and Christianity, creating a new, transformed sound. Also, the religion of the enslaved Africans was different in form and substance from the religion of the slave holder. A new religious orientation was created in slavery <i>(by Africans)</i> with themes from the Judeo-Christian religious traditions. The major difficulty experienced by the Africans was their inability to separate the secular from the sacred. To the African, all of life was sacred and they believed that what was proclaimed must be practiced. If the principles of Christian doctrine espoused by the slave holder were actually lived, they would have been thoroughly consistent with the traditional belief system of the West Africans. The slave holder called Him the Everlasting God, Jesus Christ, El-Shaddai and Jehovah. To the African He was Meketa <i>(The One who remains and does not die, the Everlasting One)</i>, Onyame <i>(The Supreme Being, God the Creator of all things)</i>, Osa-Nudazi <i>(God the Impregnable)</i>, and Olodumare <i>(The Almighty, Supreme God)</i>.</p> <p>The Africans were very much aware of the hypocrisy of slave masters, whose active participation in slavery was in itself fundamentally contradictory to the beliefs they espoused in Sunday church services. One of the most well known of spirituals comments on this contradiction:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>I got a robe, You got a robe, All God's children got a robe. When I get to Heaven gonna put on my robe, Gonna shout all over God's Heaven, Heaven, Heaven! Everybody talkin' 'bout Heaven ain't going there, Heaven, Heaven. Gonna shout all over God's Heaven!</i></p>	
<p>032</p>	<p><i>“Folk Spirituals And Hymns”</i></p> <p>Timeline features Folk Spirituals and Hymns by Mr. Dewy Williams of Coffee County, South Carolina.</p>	

<p>033</p>	<p><i>“Folk Spirituals And Hymns 1700's thru 1890's”</i> <i>(Music: “Amazing Grace” Performed by Mr. Dewy Williams, a-capella)</i></p> <p>John Newton was a troublesome sailor. He was kicked out of the British navy due to his behavior. He became a captain of a slave-trading ship. Newton was a cruel ship master who profited from the selling of human flesh. In his coarse life, the voice of God kept calling him to a higher way. Nothing he did could suppress that voice. Ultimately he gave in to the unrelenting voice of God and became a Christian. Newton became a minister in the Church of England. He wrote this hymn (<i>Amazing Grace</i>) in which he describes the richness of God's grace.</p>	
<p>034</p>	<p><i>“Folk Spirituals And Hymns”</i> <i>(Music: “Amazing Grace” a-capella Performance by family of Mr. Dewy Williams used as a work song)</i></p> <p>“It was inevitable that Africans in bondage would find a way to continue, somehow, their deeply ingrained Pan-African tradition of integrating spiritual consciousness into everyday life (<i>as noted in the video clip</i>). The historical record indicates that they succeeded admirably in this goal; their religious consciousness remained high and thoroughly integrated into their daily struggles. As our knowledge increases about the evolution of religion in the enslaved community, we are discovering that early black American religion was infused with strong elements of a core African cosmological and experiential perspective, even stronger than previously thought. The songs associated with religious experience during slavery must therefore be viewed in that light.”</p> <p><i>(Wade In The Water: The Wisdom Of The Spirituals, by: Arthur C. Jones)</i></p>	