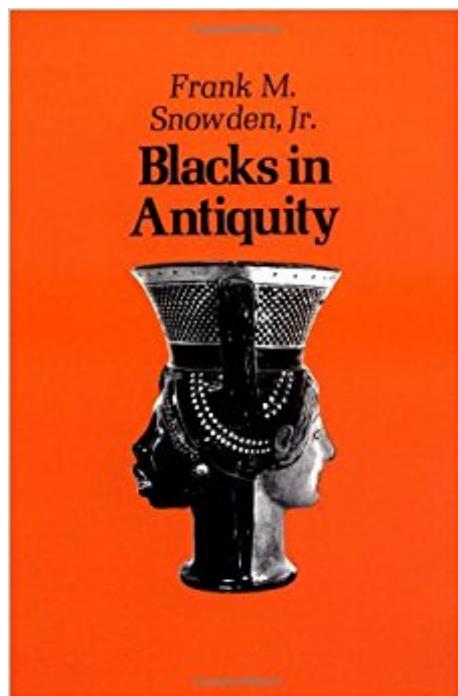


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Blacks In Antiquity: Ethiopians In The Greco-Roman Experience



Synopsis

The Africans who came to ancient Greece and Italy participated in an important chapter of classical history. Although evidence indicated that the alien dark- and black-skinned people were of varied tribal and geographic origins, the Greeks and Romans classified many of them as Ethiopians. In an effort to determine the role of black people in ancient civilization, Mr. Snowden examines a broad span of Greco-Roman experience--from the Homeric era to the age of Justinian--focusing his attention on the Ethiopians as they were known to the Greeks and Romans. The author dispels unwarranted generalizations about the Ethiopians, contending that classical references to them were neither glorifications of a mysterious people nor caricatures of rare creatures. Mr. Snowden has probed literary, epigraphical, papyrological, numismatic, and archaeological sources and has considered modern anthropological and sociological findings on pertinent racial and intercultural problems. He has drawn directly upon the widely scattered literary evidence of classical and early Christian writers and has synthesized extensive and diverse material. Along with invaluable reference notes, Mr. Snowden has included over 140 illustrations which depict the Negro as the Greeks and Romans conceived of him in mythology and religion and observed him in a number of occupations--as servant, diplomat, warrior, athlete, and performer, among others. Presenting an exceptionally comprehensive historical description of the first major encounter of Europeans with dark and black Africans, Mr. Snowden found that the black man in a predominantly white society was neither romanticized nor scorned--that the Ethiopian in classical antiquity was considered by pagan and Christian without prejudice.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Here's a book to raise the spirits of anyone of African descent who feels that he or she has nothing to do with the making of Western civilization. Frank M. Snowden Jr., a world-renowned scholar on ancient Greece and Rome who taught at Howard and Georgetown Universities, details with encyclopedic and painstaking scholarship and research the undeniable presence of Africans in the Greco-Roman world. "The experiences of those Africans who reached the alien shores of Greece and Italy constituted an important chapter in the history of classical antiquity," he writes. Using evidence from terra cotta figures, paintings, and classical sources like Herodotus and Pliny the Elder, Snowden proves, contrary to our modern assumptions, that Greco-Romans did not view Africans with racial contempt. Many Africans worked in the Roman Empire as musicians, artisans, scholars, and generals as well as slaves, and they were noted as much for their virtue as for their appearance of having a "burnt face" (from which came the Greek name Ethiopian). --Eugene Holley Jr.

This book, by reason of its scrupulous, balanced scholarship and quietly reasoned argument, will be of lasting value not only to scholars but to anyone interested in questions of race and historical and social perceptions of race. (Michael Thelwell Boston Globe)The novelty of this book, the fruit of a lifetime's labor of love by a distinguished black classicist, lies in the exhaustive, impeccable scholarship with which it documents and illustrates its conclusion, that there is no evidence for racism or color prejudice in Greco-Roman antiquity. (Paul MacKendrick American Journal of Philology)Solid, important reading, and a landmark in the writing of history. [Snowden] skips secondary sources for the ancient evidence: writings, coins, epigraphs, papyri, pottery, etc. With data gleaned from these, he draws conclusions about the Ethiopian's (black's) place in the Greek, Roman, and early Christian eras, the white man's attitude toward him. What emerges from Snowden's painstakingly thorough study is that it was not a confrontation--that skin color was no obstacle to harmony in the ancient world. (Publishers Weekly)Professor Snowden has assembled an impressive amount of evidence of contacts which Greeks and Romans had with black Africans throughout the classical period; this evidence comes from archeological and literary sources, and in considering it, he has also combed much modern scholarship on individual bits of evidence. The result is a handbook which should prove useful to anyone who is at all interested in social or cultural attitudes in antiquity. (Classical Philology)Snowden has amassed an impressive amount of evidence proving that "Ethiopians" were not regarded mainly as slaves, but were also widely known as warriors, diplomats, athletes, and performers. (Lorna Hahn Saturday Review)One very effective way

to expose the irrational in present-day attitudes is to recall the realities of the past. This is precisely what Frank Snowden has done in this book, a thoroughgoing, scholarly and beautifully illustrated study of the recorded contacts in the ancient world between the Greeks and Romans and that mysterious race of dark-skinned Africans whom they called the Ethiopians...The author is to be congratulated on having made manageable such a mass of pertinent information within the covers of one compact, extremely readable and timely book. (Alan M. G. Little Washington Star)

Frank M. Snowden, Jr. (1911-2007) was an American Professor Emeritus of Classics at Howard University, and one of the foremost authorities on blacks in classical antiquity. He also wrote books such as *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks*. He writes in the Preface to this 1970 book, "I have attempted to set forth the facts as precisely as possible on the basis of the ancient evidence---literary, epigraphical, papyrological, numismatic, and archaeological. The material has been presented topically, each topic chronologically as far as practicable when such an arrangement was necessary for the most effective presentation of my findings." Here are some quotations from the book: "Long ago E. Babelon observed that a comparison of different classical monuments depicting the Negro would demonstrate that the ancients were portraying no uniform type. He believed that a comparative study would be interesting from an anthropological view and would result in an identification of different groups of Ethiopians and subdivision of these groups." (Pg. 23) "Unfortunately the plays involving Ethiopian themes or topics have been lost and are known only through fragments, titles, and the depictions of vase painters. The fragmentary evidence is sufficient, however, to indicate that as early as Aeschylus Ethiopians were presented as black, and speaking a different tongue, and as living in Africa." (Pg. 156) "In the modern world the crucial test of the white man's acceptance of the Negro is the attitude toward miscegenation. Greek and Roman accounts of race mixture between Ethiopians and Mediterranean whites reveal no repugnance at the idea of racial crossings between whites and non-whites." (Pg. 192) "The Ethiopian was the blackest and most remote of men. Yet his blackness gave rise neither to a theory of racial superiority nor to an inferior treatment." (Pg. 196) "There is nothing in the evidence, however, to suggest that the ancient Greek or Roman established color as an obstacle to integration into society." (Pg. 217-218)

Excellent book, good read, very rich in content.

Very good condition

Excellent history

A must read

Excellent book with artifacts to support the books main theses !

I received the product very quickly and was as described

Very enlightening book. I wish I could have thanked Snowden.

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