

# THE “TABLE OF NATIONS” SCENE

June 2003 by Manu Ampim

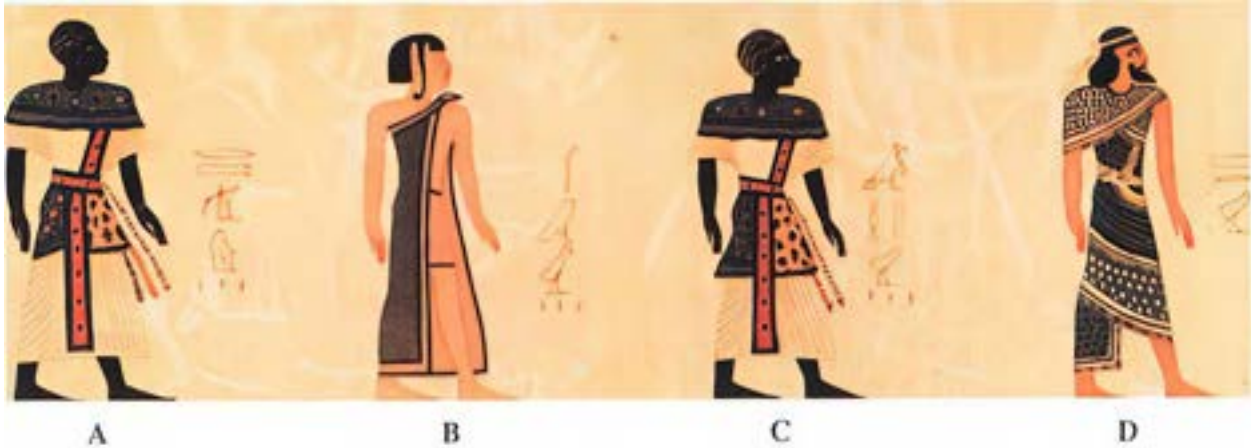


The Scene In the Tomb of Ramses III

**Prof. Manu Ampim**

(This June 2003 essay is taken from the Yahoo discussion group, “Ta-Seti”)

Figure 1



This painting from the tomb of Ramses III (1200 BC) shows that the Egyptians saw themselves as Blacks, and painted themselves as such without possible confusion with the Indo-Europeans (Caucasoids) or the Semites. It is a representation of the races in their most minute differences, which insures the accuracy of colors. Throughout their entire history, the Egyptians never entertained the fantasy of portraying themselves by types B or D.

- A) The Egyptian seen by himself, black type
- B) The “Indo-European”
- C) The Other Blacks in Africa
- D) The Semite

Below I have given an analysis of the “Table of Nations” scene in the Tomb of Ramses III, mainly because there have been several Egyptologists and other writers who have presented false information and have erroneously claimed that this popular scene does not really exist and is the result of a reproduction error made in the 20th century by Kurt Sethe/Richard Lepsius. I will briefly address this erroneous argument as well as address an amazing statement recently made on this forum. The actual photographs from the Ramses III tomb itself presented in this review will show that the “Table of Nations” images are accurately presented in the reproduction color drawings of the scene by Sethe and Lepsius.[1]

This review is an excerpt and modification of my larger forthcoming work on tomb scenes in the Nile Valley.

Read the descriptions for each of the seven photos & drawings referred to in this review of the Ramses III tomb evidence.

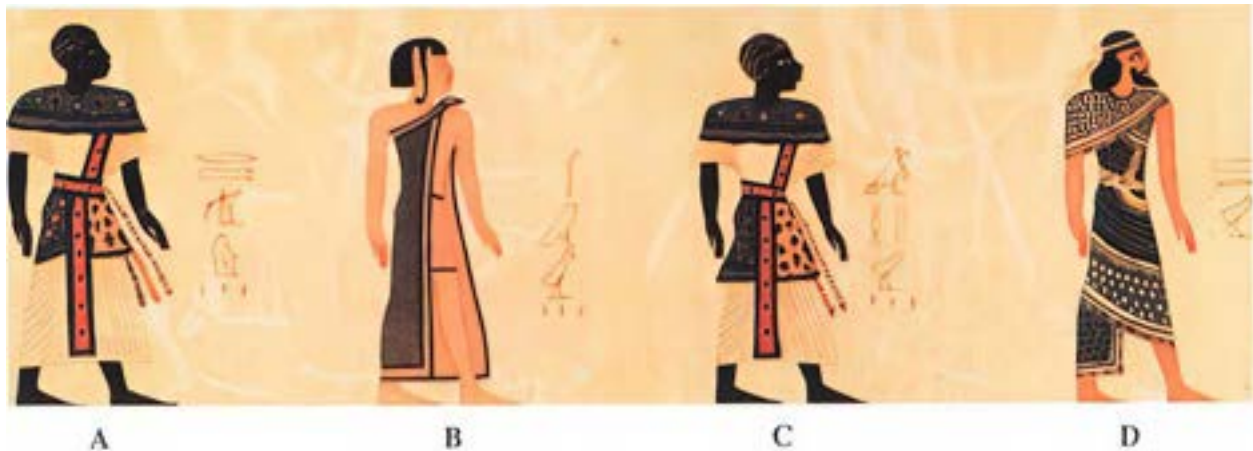
[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta\\_Seti/files/Tomb\\_of\\_RamsesIII/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta_Seti/files/Tomb_of_RamsesIII/)

## Background

I will make a few points in regards to my first-hand observation and documentation in the 20th dynasty Tomb of Ramses III in the Valley of the Kings (KV, Tomb 11), and the general accuracy of the "Table of Nations" scene reproductions of Egyptologists Richard Lepsius (1840s) and Kurt Sethe, et al. (1913). The texts and images of the "Table of Nations" scene show four nations (or groups) of people, including the ancient Kmtjw ("ancient Egyptians") who clearly depicted themselves (on the far left of the scene) as jet *black* in skin tone and dressed IDENTICAL to the other jet black African people (the third group from the left) to the south. This rare 20th dynasty (1200 BCE) scene shows that the Egyptians saw themselves as a Black people.

Figure 1

The "Table of Nations" scene reproduction (1913)



The "Table of Nations" scene in the Ramses III tomb (KV 11) was painted by the ancient *royal artists* themselves and thus it presents undeniable objective evidence of how the African people of Egypt chose to present themselves in this scene. There are black skinned images of ancient Egyptians in every major period and in every region of the country, but only in tomb KV 11 do the Egyptians present themselves as *completely identical* in skin tone AND attire to other black Africans (Nubians). These KV 11 images stunned Euro-American scholars and writers who have tried to falsely separate the Egyptians from other black Africans. The promotion of these Ramses III tomb images by Dr. Cheikh Anta Diop (1981) and others, which show the Egyptians and Nubians as

identical, dealt a serious blow to the fanciful claim that ancient Egyptians and Nubians were “totally distinct” and “unrelated” groups.[2]

The opposition to this objective tomb evidence has caused several Euro-American writers to misrepresent the scene and mislead the public with false statements and cut-&-paste photos of carefully selected sections of this tomb relief. These Euro-American writers have misled the general public to erroneously believe that the scene of the four nations no longer exists and that the color reproduction published by Kurt Sethe/Richard Lepsius (1913) and made popular by Diop are somehow an “error.” I will give a few examples of this opposition below.

## The Kurt Sethe – Richard Lepsius Version

Richard Lepsius conducted research in Egypt from 1842-1845 and his work was originally published in 12 volumes from 1849-1856. However, the KV 11 “Table of Nations” scene and other materials were not published until the later 1913 supplemental edition, which was compiled by Edward Naville and Ludwig Borchardt, and edited by Kurt Sethe.

The so-called 1913 Sethe/Lepsius version is a condensed reproduction of the original tomb scene. Sethe/Lepsius simply condensed the 4 images for each of the four groups to 1 representative for each of the four groups (i.e. the 16 images were reduced to 4 images). Apparently, this was done because all 4 of the images for each group are identical, and thus they simply omitted the redundant images. The texts were also condensed from their original horizontal position in front of each of the 4 images per group to a single vertical column in front of 1 group representative.

Nevertheless, this condensed Sethe/Lepsius reproduction version of the “Table of Nations” is ACCURATE in both the representation of the images and the positioning of the texts:

Figure 1

Kurt Sethe / Richard Lepsius reproduction (description by C.A. Diop):

## Actual Tomb Photographs

I first visited and photographed the “Table of Nations” scene in the Tomb of Ramses III in both 1994 and 1995, and the scene DOES still exist today. The scene is long and thus it is too difficult to photograph the entire scene at once, so it has to be photographed in sections. This difficulty in recording the entire scene with one photograph has allowed

some Euro-American Egyptologists to mix up the images and take the entire scene out of context. They carefully present only two images at a time (instead of ALL FOUR images of each group) in order to never reveal the horizontal texts which runs across the scene and identifies each group.

I have taken a number of photographs from the actual Tomb of Ramses III itself and the two photographs below (figs. 2-3) represent the OBJECTIVE EVIDENCE that the Sethe/Lepsius reproduction is *accurate* and that the Egyptians indeed depicted themselves as jet black in skin color and dressed identical to the other black Africans to the south. The photos show the beginning (far left) of the scene. They show the four images of the Egyptians as they saw themselves, and their name *Rmt* (i.e. "the Kmtjw" or "the Egyptians") is also clearly written. Here is a unique inside view of the tomb, and this photographic evidence is IRREFUTABLE.

**These 2 photos close the books on this case:**

## Figure 2

Manu Ampim photo of 4 Egyptians ("Rmt") in tomb KV 11, 1994:



## Figure 3

Manu Ampim photo of 3 Egyptians ("Rmt") in tomb KV 11, 1994:



These photos from the tomb itself clearly show that 4 of the black skinned people in the Ramses III "Table of Nations" scene are in fact the Egyptians as they saw themselves. The ancient artists made their identity known by placing the text in front of each image as they clearly called themselves, "Rmt" ("the Egyptians"). Any claims to the contrary would be absurd.

## Eurocentric Opposition

Despite the irrefutable photographic documentation of the scene, various Euro-American writers and Egyptologists have made several dishonest and erroneous claims, namely that:

A) The scene doesn't actually exist!

B) Sethe/Lepsius made an error in showing the black skinned Nubian group twice, instead of showing the "brown" skinned Egyptian group in the first position (far left of scene)... [Note: These Eurocentric writers often cause deliberate confusion by mixing in the Seti I tomb scenes and making wild claims that the two tomb scenes are "exactly" alike. See below.]

C) Sethe/Lepsius made an error in positioning the text "Rmt" (i.e. "the Egyptians") next to the Nubian images, or

D) The 1913 edition published by Sethe, et al. is an inaccurate version, based on Lepsius' original research conducted in the 1840s.

Each of these claims are shown to be completely false by the original tomb photographs (figs. 2-3). The tomb photos show that the opponents of Sethe/Lepsius and Diop have made their erroneous argument by NEVER showing ALL FOUR of the Egyptians or ALL FOUR images of the Nubians, so that the entire name (presently horizontally across the scene) of the groups cannot be seen by the public.

These writers and Egyptologists use the ***cut-&-paste photo distortion technique*** to make sure that the images and texts cannot be seen in their entire context. In their deceptive presentation these writers only show 2 images of a group instead of all 4 images, because this would show too much of the text and would reveal the identity of both the black skinned Egyptians and the black skinned Nubians. This is the reason that Eurocentric scholars and writers will never present the *original photographs* of all four representatives of the groups.

## Modern Falsifications

Frank Yurco:

Egyptologist Dr. Frank Yurco is one such person that completely misrepresents the "Table of Nations" scene in the Ramses III tomb. In a 1996 article on the Ramses III tomb reliefs, Yurco makes a number of false statements as he conveniently overlooks the actual tomb evidence.[3]

1. Yurco claims that the Sethe/Lepsius edition "is indeed a pastiche and not at all what actually is on the wall in Ramses III's tomb reliefs. ...Accordingly, all claims based upon the 1913 pastiche...rest upon a nineteenth to early twentieth century copy that is not correct!"

Yurco misrepresents the work of Sethe/Lepsius and does not explain that they simply reduced the scene from 16 figures to 4 figures, and that the image of each group of men and the accompanying texts are condensed but that the reproduction is otherwise ACCURATE, as the actual tomb photographs indicate. Yurco conveniently shows only 2 members per group and does not show ALL FOUR members of the Egyptian or Nubian groups in order to omit their name. For example, see

Figure 4

Yurco shows only 2 members per group

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta\\_Seti/files/Tomb\\_of\\_RamsesIII/Yurco\\_Distortion.gif](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta_Seti/files/Tomb_of_RamsesIII/Yurco_Distortion.gif)

2. Yurco compounds his error by claiming that the "Ramses III reliefs are *exactly* like the Seti I wall reliefs." [emphasis added].

This statement is completely false. From Yurco's own photographs of the two tombs, the Ramses III and Seti I wall reliefs of the four "Table of Nations" groups are obviously different. In each case the appearance and attire of the four groups are shown differently in the two tombs. Not only are there different ethnic groups in the B and D position, but the Egyptians and Nubians are also portrayed markedly different. In fact, several of the groups in the Seti I tomb reliefs are not even wearing shirts! Anyone can compare the images in the two tombs and see that not only are the Ramses III and Seti I scenes obviously different, but that Yurco is openly making false statements. Notice the undeniable contrast between the Seti tomb images (fig. 5-6) and the Ramses III tomb images (fig. 4).

Figure 5

Seti I tomb photograph:

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta\\_Seti/files/Tomb\\_of\\_RamsesIII/Seti\\_BurtonPhoto.jpg](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta_Seti/files/Tomb_of_RamsesIII/Seti_BurtonPhoto.jpg)

Figure 6

Seti I tomb drawing:

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta\\_Seti/files/Tomb\\_of\\_RamsesIII/Seti\\_Minutoli\\_Drawing.jpg](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta_Seti/files/Tomb_of_RamsesIII/Seti_Minutoli_Drawing.jpg)

Vs.

Figure 4

Tomb of Ramses III: 3 groups shown by Yurco

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta\\_Seti/files/Tomb\\_of\\_RamsesIII/Yurco\\_Distortion.gif](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta_Seti/files/Tomb_of_RamsesIII/Yurco_Distortion.gif)

With Yurco's own photographs it is clear that there is a very sharp difference in appearance of each group in the two tombs, yet Yurco boldly makes an amazing claim and states that the two scenes are "exactly" alike!

3. Yurco falsely claims that in Erik Hornung's "photographs of the actual walls of Ramses III's tomb are accurate representations of what Ramesses III had depicted." [4]

The correct order of the four groups of men is shown by Sethe/Lepsius (1913) and followed by Diop (1981), and this is clearly demonstrated by the Ramses III tomb photographs. From left to right the correct order of the groups are A) Rmt B) Aamw C) Nhsyw and D) Tjhnw. See:

Figure 1

Correct order of the images and texts:

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta\\_Seti/files/Tomb\\_of\\_RamsesIII/Lepsius\\_4Groups.jpg](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta_Seti/files/Tomb_of_RamsesIII/Lepsius_4Groups.jpg)

## Errors By Erik Hornung

Yurco presents multiple distortions of the Ramses III "Table of Nations" scene and they are largely based upon the multiple errors of Dr. Erik Hornung.[4] Both Hornung and Yurco misrepresent this scene in three specific ways. Yurco and Erik Hornung in *The Valley of the Kings (1990)* plates 107-109 (p. 148) distort the Ramses III scene in the following ways:

**Distortion 1:** Hornung and Yurco show only "3" groups of men instead of ALL FOUR groups that are clearly shown on the tomb walls. (This distortion conveniently omits showing both the Egyptians AND Nubians in the same set of photographs).

**Distortion 2:** Hornung and Yurco show only "2" representatives per group instead of ALL FOUR representatives of each groups. (This distortion conveniently omits the full name of each group which is written horizontally).

**Distortion 3:** Hornung and Yurco mix up the order of the groups:

Correct order:	A, B, C, D
Hornung order:	D, A, B (C is omitted)
Yurco order:	A, D, B (C is omitted)

Compare Yurco's A, D, B order with Hornung's D, A, B order.

See figure 7 for Hornung's distortion of the group order.

See figure 4 for Yurco's distortion of the group order.

Figure 7

Hornung's distortion of the group order:

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta\\_Seti/files/Tomb\\_of\\_RamsesIII/Hornung\\_Distortion.jpg](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta_Seti/files/Tomb_of_RamsesIII/Hornung_Distortion.jpg)

g

Photo 4

Yurco's distortion of the group order:

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta\\_Seti/files/Tomb\\_of\\_RamsesIII/Yurco\\_Distortion.gif](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta_Seti/files/Tomb_of_RamsesIII/Yurco_Distortion.gif)

Also see:

Figure 2 for text of the scene which identifies the Egyptian group:

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta\\_Seti/files/Tomb\\_of\\_RamsesIII/4Rmt.jpg](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Ta_Seti/files/Tomb_of_RamsesIII/4Rmt.jpg)

Hornung mis-labels the black skinned Group A as "Nubians" even though the text clearly reads **Rmt** (i.e. "the Kmtjw" or "the Egyptians"). It is clear that Hornung both distorts and mislabels the scene and is not a reliable source on the Ramses III tomb scene.

Frank Yurco also misrepresents the Ramses III scene in the same ways as Hornung. Yurco presents the same 3 distortions, and he mis-labels the black skinned Group A as "Kushites," despite the textual evidence to the contrary.

It is obvious from Yurco's citation and by comparing the photographs that he used Hornung's photos of the Ramses III scene, but he decided to change the order of the groups. This indicates that Yurco knew exactly what he was doing as he deliberately re-arranged and further distorted the order of the scene. If Yurco's presentation is sincere why would there be any need to re-arrange the photographs and change the order of the groups as presented by Hornung? Either he was attempting to mislead the readers or he was attempting to cover up Hornung's error? Either way, Yurco's actions of re-arranging the photos are very suspicious. After all, Yurco did state that Hornung's "photographs of the actual walls of Ramses III's tomb are accurate representations." If Yurco really believed that Hornung's photos are "accurate representations," then why did he deliberately change the order of the photographs? It seems clear that Yurco has something to hide.

Yurco not only distorts and misrepresents the Ramses III scene, but he also erroneously criticized the accurate reproductions of Sethe/Lepsius. Yurco's essay on the Ramses III wall relief is careless and questionable "scholarship," as it contains multiple errors and distortions of the "Table of Nations" scene.

## Case Closed

An examination of the actual tomb photographs (figs. 2-3) show that much of the debate about the Ramses III "Table of Nations" scene, has more to do with *ideology* than the actual tomb evidence. None of the Sethe/Lepsius detractors will EVER show *original photographs* of ALL FOUR images of the Egyptians from the Ramses III tomb itself,

because their argument is not based on the objective photographic evidence, it is based on their modern racial positions.

I have seen the "Table of Nations" scene in several Valley of the Kings tombs (KV 8, KV 11, KV 15, KV 17, etc.) and they all have differences and variations. There is NO absolute fixed standard on how the four groups are portrayed, and any claims to the contrary are nonsense. The one thing that is consistent about these scenes is that the *order* does not change: the Egyptians are always shown as the *first group* on the far left next to the god Heru (Horus); then the Aamw second; the Nubians are always the third group from the left; and the Tjhnw are the fourth group from the left. Nothing else is consistent from tomb to tomb in how these groups are portrayed. The attire, headdress, and facial features of the four groups change from tomb to tomb. Beware of anyone who would have us to falsely believe that all tombs had the same "exact" images and thus "if you have seen one tomb you have seen them all."

The Ramses III "Table of Nations" scene is indeed rare, but to claim that it doesn't exist or that Sethe/Lepsius made errors is dishonest. There are several Euro-American writers and Egyptologists who use the distraction approach by focusing on images from other tombs (rather than the KV 11 images themselves), or they use the well known cut-&-paste technique to deliberately misrepresent the scene. However, there are literally countless people in the world who have personally viewed the KV 11 "Table of Nations" images, and I challenge anyone to publish *original photographs* of ALL FOUR Egyptians and Nubians from the Ramses III tomb, and still claim that the scene as reproduced by Sethe/Lepsius is an erroneous "pastiche."

With the evidence of photographs #2-3, which undeniably show the Egyptians as black skinned and dressed identical to the other black Africans, now Yurco and company will have to think of more creative ways to mislead the public. Maybe they will now make other unsubstantiated claims and state that the well-trained ancient Egyptian royal artists had a lapse in memory, forgot their "real" racial identity, and thus made a major mistake in the Ramses III tomb!

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## Notes:

[1] Richard Lepsius (Kurt Sethe et al., editor), *Denkmaler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien, Ergänzungsband* (1913 edition), plate 48.

[2] Cheikh Anta Diop, *Civilisation ou barbarie* (original French edition, 1981) / *Civilization or Barbarism* (English ed., 1991), p. 66 (figure 17).

[3] Frank Yurco, "Two Tomb-Wall Painted Reliefs of Ramesses III and Sety I and Ancient Nile Valley Population Diversity," in *Egypt in Africa* (1996), ed. by Theodore Celenko.

[4] Erik Hornung, *The Valley of the Kings: Horizon of Eternity* (1990), pp. 147-149 (plates 105, 107-109).