Chapter VII

The Negroes

From the sources of the Toumat, from the south-east tip of the Peninsula of Sennaar and the south-west of Abyssinia, reader, I have transported you southward, to the peaks of the so-called Moon Mountains, where all my aspirations have led me. Now being nearly in the middle of the land between the White Nile and the Blue Nile, at the highest point of the Peninsula of Sennaar, whence my gaze penetrates far, far into the country I have already explored, step by step, and where no European has ever trodden—it is from thence that I intend to present to you the Peninsula of Sennaar in all its spacious variety.

In the north, from behind the gentle spurs of the Toumat range, rises the solitary Mount Huli, one of the highest mountains of the Peninsula of Sennaar. By its clearly defined shape outlined against the blue horizon, one could guess its granite formation, which I later was to become quite convinced of. Along with some other mountains, Huli, together with all the negroes inhabiting it, belongs to Idris Adlan as some kind of feoffment, constituting his permanent residence. From thence he sent messengers to invite us to visit him. Being sincerely fond of his son-in-law, Arbab, who had done us favors, I would have willingly accepted the invitation; but the rains were catching up with us—we could
think of nothing but our swift departure from the mountains. One can see nothing beyond Huli. Here the peninsula is locked by the two rivers, becoming ever more narrow and ending at Khartoum, at the point of their confluence. This large space constitutes a raised plain, which lowers very slightly northward; despite having little water, it used to be thickly peopled, but now remains quite deserted outside the river-basin. The close proximity of the headquarters is easily felt. On the plain stand Mount Mouil and several significant hills.

In the east one can see the Toumat range, in which the two granite peaks of Radokah appear to be, if not the highest then certainly the most pronounced of all; to the right of them are Singhe, Andou, and Fandango; to the left, Fadokah, Sodah, Khassan, and Tabi in the south-east; on the other, the south-eastern side of the Toumat, are the mountains of Faronya, Falogut, and Fazangoru. Further eastward, one can make out the blue mountains of Abyssinia, although, of course, not as clearly as one can from the peaks of the Toumat.

In the south we could see most of the mountains we had been close to when atop the Toumat; only a few of them stood out against the horizon with their slate ridges instead of granite boulders, these last visible from the Toumat side; other mountains, previously appearing separate, now coincided with the principal range, some of them concealed, others brought forward; in general, all of them had a more vague aspect, being much further away, yet one could not but recognize the old friends by some clear shapes and outlines.

The horizon opened up the farthest to the south-east and to the east. There, a few hours’ or possibly a day’s journey from Doul, beyond the mountains of Kurmuk-ue-Zerab, lies the plain. Quite elevated (up to 1,600 feet) at the beginning, it lowers eastward and finally, by the banks of the White Nile, gives way to plains overgrown with trees, small and bent, a country meagre in vegetation, extremely unwholesome in climate, and yet, as the reader shall soon see, very populous.

Having seen the land, let us now observe its inhabitants.

The native population of the Peninsula of Sennaar are negroes, its oldest colonists being Arabs. In towns and even in those villages that are situated on the plains, in the northern part of the Sennaar, there are,
needless to say, many foreigners from various countries, people escaped from Egypt, *fellahs*, Berbers, and even some Europeans in Khartoum.

The Arabs, being the most numerous group, can be divided into the latest arrivals from Hejaz and the descendants of Israel, which I am ever more convinced of. We shall talk of the Arabs living here when we commence a general study of this people. Presently let us turn specifically to the negroes, the oldest and most prominent inhabitants of the country.

It is not an easy task to name all the branches of local tribes, for every mountain, even if populated by the same tribe as the next, presents a difference either in customs or in language; however, here is a roster I have compiled with difficulty, gathering, it seems, all the tribes (without branches) that live in the vast space between the Blue Nile and the White Nile. Let me begin at the lower reaches of the Blue Nile before going on to the White Nile.

The Jebel Aouin, on Mount Fazoglu: this is a cross between Arabs and negroes.

The Berta: it is spread extremely far along the Toumat Mountains and the rivers that flow into the Toumat, being second to the Shillook tribe in its population; one can count half a million people in it. They tolerate and even accept Arabs, who are all without exception small traders, and sow *dourra*.

The El-Hassani, on Tabi: a garrulous tribe, recognizes no-one’s power and lives only by raids upon the territories of its neighbors.

The Fung, predominantly on Huli.

The Houmous, for the most part on the right bank of the Blue Nile: they cultivate land.

The Hamed, upstream from Roseires, on the left bank of the Blue Nile: it differs from the other tribes especially in that uncles have more power in families than fathers do, disposing of their sisters’ children—that is, selling them off as they please.

The Amam, on the Yabous.

Next comes the populous Galla tribe, which I have already described in detail.

The Bouroun, beyond Jebel Doul and all the way to the White Nile: a cruel and predatory tribe.
Let us now turn to the White Nile.

The Shillook, predominantly to the left of the Nile and on its isles: a populous tribe, believed by d'Arnaud to have a million people (which number seems to be exaggerated). They live mainly off fishing and banditry, sowing very little *dourra*.

The Dinka occupies places along the Nile upstream from the Shillook, for the most part on the overgrown plains and marshes surrounding the White Nile; they eat roots and seeds of marsh grasses and deal in ivory, sharing the land with elephants almost equally: a weak, bad-looking, though quite garrulous people.

The Nuer is mixed with some of the Dinka tribes; however, they differ in language and rituals.

The Bari occupies rather elevated locations around the Nile: a very tall, handsome people, they smelt iron ores, manufacturing spears (which negroes buy in great quantities), and use bows, applying vegetable poison to arrows. This is the last of the tribes known in the south; it is divided into a variety of clans, such as Shir, Bambar, Boko, and others.

There are some who still, even now, following Monboddo and Rousseau,¹ put the negro on the lowest rung of mankind, the one that serves as an intermediate step between men and apes, an opinion we have only recently seen in foreign periodicals; as the reader shall see, some, overwhelmed with self-respect and pride, are willing altogether to throw the negro off the ladder atop which they have determined their own place. Generally speaking, this ranking of human beings is no prerogative of man, nor is it compatible with the idea of brotherhood bequeathed to man by the words of the Gospels; it does nothing but demonstrate the relentless egotism and complacent fallacy of those who believe themselves to be the privileged caste of mankind.

However, such an opinion must have originated from some source; it must have some grounds, considering that it is so tenacious amongst people. Esquiros² claims that providence itself preserves some tribes under the seal of reprobation, so as to introduce them into mankind.

1 James Burnett, Lord Monboddo (1714–99), British historical linguist; Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), French philosopher of the Enlightenment.

later, as a new element of life. All this, you see, is designed for the ben-
efit of the privileged! Yet we are convinced that providence has no need
to resort to such measures, condemning one group of men to eternal
suffering; it can renew mankind without them, sending it those moral
storms that have often purged the world from prolonged stagnation,
those thunders that have awakened man, warning him of danger. Why,
then, is it the negroes that this cruel fate has fallen to? Does the reason
for such deep humiliation not lie in the people itself, in that the negroes
believe themselves to be creatures of a lower breed, as if marked by
some higher power with their skin-color, hence submitting to slavery
without protest, as if made for it? Our prolonged comparison of free
tribes and those enslaved by foreign powers has convinced us that the
above is not the reason, but rather the consequence of their constant
oppression by people of a different color; we find a similar example
in Europe itself, in a most enlightened state, in the south of France,
where an entire tribe of Cagots,\(^3\) being cast off in the course of several
centuries and oppressed by its neighbors, has been reduced to a state
of cretinism.

They claim that the negro’s body is imperfect, bringing him rather
closer to the ape than to man; this accusation, so crucial and with which
an enormous part of mankind is burdened, requires consideration, not
solely historical but also physiological.

As the first count of this accusation, of course, they adduce skin-color.

 Indeed, the *corpus reticulare Malpighi*, which contains our skin pig-
ment and lies between the epidermis and the skin, is black in negroes,
but its structure is the same as in our race. Whether it is an influence
of climate or an innate quality remains a question far from resolved.
Contrary to the opinion of Aubert-Roche,\(^4\) who makes the latter sup-
position, we shall note that Arabs, when transported to the Peninsula
of Sennaar, acquire a dark-brown color, which makes them little dif-
ferent from negroes. Experience has generally proven that white tribes,
when transported to a hot equatorial climate, as one generation comes

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\(^3\) A persecuted caste in France and Spain in the medieval and early modern period.

\(^4\) Author’s note: Aubert-Roche, “Essai sur l’acclimatement des Européens dans les pays
chauds,” *Annales d’hygiène publique et de médecine légale*, vol. XXXI, 1845.
to replace another and without even mixing with other tribes, eventually acquire a skin-color close to black; yet negroes do not or hardly change even in the North unless they mix with white people by marrying, which explains why some Abyssinian tribes, living in moderate climes, perpetually remain dark-brown rather than black, as Aubert-Roche unjustly claims, struggling to prove a supposition he makes. This last—which Schœlcher,5 with his usual ease, is willing to accept as fact—is that white and black people could have existed in the primal evil times. But here is a question: What historical arguments can one submit contrary to folk tales and which would be confirmed so accurately by local observations? None whatsoever; and as for the physiological question, it in itself is far from having been researched and requires many experiments to be explained. In this case we usually rely upon the influence of climate alone; yet how do we know there are no other reasons, whether they be local or physical, that prevent the black color from turning into white, a transformation one could reasonably expect. If the higher social relations of a people can clearly depend upon the influence of the country’s local character, why cannot the physical fate of a people be determined by the nature of the location it occupies?6

The skull of the negro is compressed at the top, the lower jaw protruding forward—true, yet it does not prove the above conclusion; some negro tribes, such as the Caribs, compress their children’s heads, which could have subsequently turned into a distinguishing feature of the tribe; also, whilst not being followers of Gall, we still agree with Abbé Frère7 in that moral education has some influence on the outline of a human head; yet the amount of brains confined within the skull of the negro is nearly the same as within that of the white man.

The angular character of facial features possessed by a people is obliterated only through its encounter with other peoples. Separately living tribes—such as, for instance, the savages of North America, the

7 Author’s note: M. l’abbé Frère, Principes de la philosophie de l’histoire, Paris: Gaume frères, 1838.
Kyrgyz in Russia, and the Mongols—have protruding cheek-bones and, generally, angular features. Our notion of beauty is quite conventional; in this case superstitions and the habit of the eye often mislead us. I do not think myself deprived of fine taste, and yet I have nevertheless found handsome people among negroes. Below the reader shall find a description of their physical qualities.

It is said that negroes, from birth, exude an unpleasant smell which characterizes their race alone, as well as certain animal species. Odd though the claim is, it is nearly always used as an accusation with a view to denigrating or destroying a particular people; thus the very same poor Cagots had been blamed for the same quality since long ago and reduced by constant humiliation to a most miserable state, until civil laws protected them,8 while the Gypsies and the Jews are still being blamed. To corroborate such an opinion, its proponents cite dogs trained to hunt hapless negroes by scent. I shall forego any discussion of this barbaric habit practiced by European colonists, a business that no negro would dare engage in; let me note instead that the very invention of it required little intelligence: it is easy to teach a dog to recognize a slave, for all negroes rub their bodies with a certain substance containing fat. I used to know a Frenchman who had taught his dog to recognize Jesuits and leap at them at every encounter, that being a somewhat more complicated task. Not only do the dogs of Constantinople know one another, but they also know the inhabitants of their quarter and never attack them; in Cairo, any dog is able to distinguish between a Turk and a European, even at night, attacking the latter. It is claimed that slave traders recognize the quality of their goods by smell.9 It is indeed possible that they might be able to achieve such a recognition to some extent, for the rich add fragrant substances and even rose oil to the fat they use to rub themselves with, and seeing that rich negroes have had a better upbringing, they are, therefore, of a superior quality to other goods. Yet having seen many slave traders, I can confirm that not a single one of them would be satisfied with such

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9 Author’s note: Esquiros, op. cit.
a method when buying negroes; on the contrary, he would subject them to a most meticulous examination, as a Remount Service veteran would do when procuring horses; the trader would even, if there happened to be a doctor nearby, send for him to ensure no mistake in the purchase. I can assure you that a negro taken as a child into a European home is as clean and neat as any European servant, of which a living proof can be found in my own negro valet.

I am far from being a blind protector of all negroes; yet I protect a man whose dignity is being taken away from him while at the same time exposing all his vices, inevitable in any abandoned and despised people, for he is less responsible for his vices than those quite aware of their own are.

Negroes are generally very well built; their limbs, when not subjected to any forced labor or violence, develop in a regular, congruent manner; the body, constantly rubbed with fat, has a smooth, matt skin similar to black kid-skin, being tender and firm, like that of a young woman. Men of many tribes, especially those living closer to the equator, are very tall, some of them being true Goliaths; as for fat people, I have never seen any among negroes nor among Arabs. Negresses, once over 20 years of age, are for the most part plain; their limbs, given complete freedom, roughen under the influence of the white-hot sun; their bodies and, especially, breasts sagging and their stomachs drooping; but girls of 10 or 11 years of age are very graceful, this being the period of their full development. I know very well that Prichard, citing a note by Robertson, claims that genitals in females complete their development by the same age nearly everywhere and that human tribes follow the same law in this respect. What I have said is founded upon my personal experience, upon observations made in the places being considered, and upon the evidence provided by many travelers.

One especially ugly feature in negroes is their projecting teeth, which, in turn, make their lips hang down (the reason being, as we have noted, their protruding low jaw). Yet their teeth, regular and white, as if carved out of ivory, except moist; their large black eyes; and indeed, an aspect of quiet contemplation, of meekness, seen in the lower part of

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their faces—these features conceal the above drawback, which anyhow is not much visible in many.

Negroes are, for the most part, kind and hospitable; unlike any savage tribes, they are not spiteful, blood vengeance being hardly known to them, while their bad qualities result, without exception, from inherent ignorance.

If you catch a negro unawares, your superior skin-color and European weapons shall force him to run away from you, like a wild beast, into the first hole; and if unable to run, he shall prostrate himself on the ground so as not to see a creature whose mere sight is frightening, whereupon you shall never succeed in encouraging him; his perceptive abilities are easily damaged; yet this is an instinctive sense of fear common amongst animals and men. A camel at the sight of a lion shakes violently, prostrates itself, and hanging its head down to the ground, waits for death. The bravest man, whether black or white, involuntarily stops under the charms of some serpents. But if you come to a negro with kind words and deeds, you shall see a completely different man in him. Any primal notions, any primal human ideas are alien to him, and yet, developed under the influence of nature, he knows many of its mysteries, such as the properties of herbs and roots and the movement of some celestial bodies. The negro is accustomed to thought and contemplation; he grasps your question quickly; his memory is bright; he soon learns Arabic, generally being a very fast learner. He remains in a child-like state, and if you behave judiciously with him, you can make much good out of him. We have already seen that negro soldiers learn no worse than other soldiers, even under the kind of teachers they have, their petty officers being deprived of fellahs and their officers illiterate Turks; they owe their development to their kind nature and inherent talents, which, far from being lower than those of others, are indeed higher than those of many. The negro, even in his savage state, not being alien to any human ideas, shall sooner be reasoned with than a Belorussian in our land or a French peasant living far from the high road and the city.

The negroes have an obscure idea of a Supreme Being; the majority of those living on the Blue Nile worship the sun and the moon. When
asked why they did not worship One Supreme Being, they said, “Show us anything that is better than the sun, and we shall worship it”; like children, they need visible objects to admire. Others, such as the Shilluks, have wooden toys in their homes, but those are rather their penates, their amulets, which they love so much as to surround themselves with; some produce images or mere cuts in trees and offer sacrifices to those trees; finally, the Dinka tribes, like the ancient Egyptians, worship the bull—following a certain celebration, the head of a chosen animal, with its immense horns, is placed on a cleared spot, whereupon sacrifices are made to it.

Any religious notions the negroes have consist of some obscure, fragmented myths, resembling in many aspects the religious beliefs of the Egyptians. It has been said that, south of the Bouroun, there is a negro tribe that preserves the bodies of deceased kinsmen from corruption, drying them in the sun and placing them in special caves; moreover, it is familiar with some of the herbs used for mummification. The negroes are not at all devoted to their religious ideas and easily abandon them; and yet the Turks, who hunt them and catch them as if they were wild beasts, do not convert them to their faith on the grounds that a Mohammedan cannot be a slave. Negro soldiers are all Mohammedans, some of them being very zealous worshippers of the Prophet.

Each tribe and each mountain speaks in its own special language, which serves as an even stronger cause for separation amongst the negroes. Their dialects are quite poor; some can only count to five; to express six, seven, &c., they say, “five and one,” “five and two,” &c., sometimes using their fingers or grains to add another number; the majority of them can only count to ten; a hundred is, in their mind, a figure that is impossible to achieve; they express many things by imitating sounds; thus in some of their dialects, a cat is called “neow-neow,” a dog “gow-gow,” &c. It is extremely difficult to get any sense from negroes with regard to the structure of their language; however, as far as I was able to learn, most of their dialects seem to have no cases, while many even lack verb tenses; thus they express the present and the past in the same fashion.

The negroes live in wicker tukkels made from bamboo, nature itself having given them the idea of this kind of house as the only one suitable for
seasonal rains. There are few diseases in their midst, their witch-doctors being rather good healers. I brought with me some of the medicines they use, such as herbs and soil. Smallpox vaccination has been known here, initially among the Arabs, for much longer than in Egypt. Amalgamation and the sale of gold in rings have been preserved here, perhaps since the time of the pharaohs’ rule, in the same fashion as it is shown in pictures one finds in ancient temples. The negroes live in families, making almost no distinction between sexes, ages, or even kinship. While children are small, their parents—particularly their mother—look after them, urged by an animal instinct and, when all is done, see them as a property that can be sold. As soon as a son grows up, any relations between him and his parents cease, which leads, among other things, to one of the most terrible crimes—the murder of the old father and, generally, to the eradication of all old men; yet I hasten to add that this bloody custom is not prevalent among all negroes, and I can only mention with full confidence the Bouroun tribe, where it really does exist; secondly, this is more accurately described as voluntary suicide committed by old men, persuaded to do it rather than violently killed. Here is how it is done. They dig a grave human height deep and, working from its bottom sideways, make a burrow of a size sufficient for a man to lie down without difficulty. Then they bring an old man, who, to quote an expression used by the negroes, has already eaten up all the bread due to him in this world—that is, a man who is no longer able to procure food for himself. They kill a bull, bring some beer, and give the victim some food and drink while also eating and drinking themselves. When the old man is completely drunk, they put grains of gold into his mouth, depending on the wealth and magnanimity of those present at the feast; they say this is done so that he has something to pay for his passage into the other world. Then they lower him into the hole and show him the burrow into which the poor man must climb; whereupon they cover it all with soil and . . . dance on the grave . . . The son is the merriest of all, having ridden himself of the burden . . .

A similar custom existed among the ancient Celts, as well as on Ceos, now known as Zea,11 one of the islands of the Archipelago; some American tribes still practice the suicide of old men to this day.

11 Kea, one of the islands of the Cyclades archipelago in the Aegean Sea.
The Peninsula of Sennaar, up to lat. 4° or 5°, can be said to contain about 2,500,000 negroes, for the most part not dependent upon anyone and governed by their meleks; if one adds those living near and beyond the equator as well as in Kordofan, Darfour, and Dar Bournou, one can, without exaggeration, determine the number of negro inhabitants of Inner Africa to be 10,000,000. There are many divers religious and other charitable societies in Europe: the society of missionaries, the Pope's Propaganda—a powerful society, proud of keeping at their institute, in Rome, one or two boys from every place in the world even though they are nothing but an object of pride (the children, upon returning to their homeland, if ever they do return, lose themselves in the crowd and abide by its customs, as well as their own former notions, having no strength to act against the mass of the people). Apart from those numerous societies, there are also many private individuals in Europe who aim at achieving the same purpose in their activities . . .

Is there anyone among all those societies and individuals who has ever attempted to tell the poor negroes what is good and what is evil? To say the word of faith, of truth to them? No! Definitely no-one until this year; meanwhile, it is very easy to approach some negroes, who cannot wait to see the arrival of someone able to teach them God's word. So how are they to learn what to do and what to avoid? The words of the Holy Scripture, “for they know not what they do,” can verily be applied to them. They follow the sense of animal instinct. One can positively say that many animals kill their infirm kinsfolk (it has been said of elephants and of eagles), and so the negroes, having no communication with other people, follow an example set by animals.

Mohammedan missionaries act differently: some of them, putting their life in danger at every step, have penetrated deep inside Africa, preaching the words of the Quran. One cannot but recall here Sheikh Mohammed el-Touns, a learned man of whom the negroes themselves speak with surprise. Is he not a living blame to the Christian servants of the church? To the shame of the latter, scholarly travelers have acted with much more devotion in this field.

This year, however, as I have said above, a large Propaganda mission arrived on the banks of the White Nile, supported not only by its congregation but also by some royals and many rich individuals from Italy and Austria. It has now been in Khartoum for six months, building houses, yet it is still to commence its business. As far as one can conclude from the Bishop’s words, he wishes to establish colonies among negroes and therefore brings Europeans there. What is it, then? A spiritual mission or a commercial enterprise? Both, I hear some say; the spiritual fathers will become small proprietors, as it happened in America; they will show the natives a new kind of oppression and spiritual tyranny. If so, one can immediately predict opposition; firstly, from the negroes and, secondly, from the Egyptian local governors, who deliberately ignore the bounds of their realm, the missionaries therefore being unable to act beyond them—and that is where their mutual interests shall come together. As for religious tolerance, the missionaries can rest assured in respect of both the negroes and the Turks: there is almost no religion in the Sudan, and the Turks are quite indifferent toward their own. Exceptions, such as the present Hakumdar, are very rare. Let me repeat: it is the word of faith, of peace, and of moral education, unreserved and self-denying, as it used to be preached by Father Makarii on the remote shores of Lake Teletskoye—it is such a word alone that is beneficial for the land and shall, here sooner than elsewhere, bear fruit, while colonial despotism is unworthy of the servants of the Holy Church. Let us hope that the mission quite understands this.

Many say that anthropophagy exists among the negroes. It does not in the Peninsula of Sennaar; although the local negroes themselves claim that yonder in the upper reaches of the White Nile there are people who eat human flesh. Where precisely is that? Most indicate the Bournou Kingdom, even naming the Beni Neam Nam tribe living on the Bahr-el-Ghazel river, which flows into the White Nile from the left. One can doubt the veracity of this fact, although not quite reject it, considering that most negroes and some Arab merchants talk of it. At any rate, this is an exception; forensic medicine shows us examples of similar animal attraction existing among white people; the negroes themselves talk of the anthropophagous with disgust. Finally, it is a
mania, a disease, an unnatural wish, sometimes observed in pregnant women.

Combe\textsuperscript{13} unjustly said some unheard-of things about Darfour. Neither Combe nor any other European, except perhaps Browne,\textsuperscript{14} has ever been to Darfour, although many pilgrims come from thence, especially via Khartoum, to Mecca, as do some merchants; I communicated frequently with both, and was on good terms with one Ali, a rich merchant who had just arrived from Darfour: they all as one laugh and refute the tale told by Combe; God only knows what stories the latter, who shall be remembered for other things, tells of Khartoum, where no-one knows him anyhow. The thing is that he describes in some detail a ritual whereby the people of Darfour annually offer as a sacrifice to some deity a boy and a girl, stabbing them ceremonially, in the presence of the king and the clergy. This information is quite clearly wrong. The people of Darfour belong to the rare Mohammedans who never waver in their faith, oftentimes reducing it to fanaticism; they are not at all like, say, the Egyptians. What deity can they possibly offer human sacrifices to; what justification for such cruelty can they find in the Quran, that civil and spiritual code of the Mohammedans? Even animal sacrifices are mentioned by the Prophet in a somewhat oblique manner. He says, “Their meat shall not reach Allah, nor shall their blood, but what reaches Him is piety from you.”

On the other hand, here is what sometimes occurs in Darfour: the ruler puts his beloved brothers in a cave, whose name escapes me now, and orders his men to guard it most strictly, thus killing the prisoners by starvation, avoiding both blood on his hands and rivals on his throne. This is quite in line with Mohammedan mores; we saw only recently how it was done in Istanbul and still see examples of it in small Mohammedan countries; the aim is clear: troublesome relations bring the ruler’s suspicions upon themselves and would not leave him to rule without distraction.

The same merchant, a friend of mine, told me that once in the mountains of Darfour, a certain negro tribe that lives in no other place than the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] William George Browne (1768–1813), British explorer, the first to describe Darfour.
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upper reaches of the Bahr-el-Ghazel, wishing to give him a good meal, killed a slave and cooked his flesh for dinner. Allow me to further corroborate my point by citing some facts related by Sheikh Zain al-Abidin, the learned man who published his account of his journey in Africa in Arabic, he reports having seen anthropophagy on his way from Darfour to Wadai, in the mountains, prior to reaching the town of Nergh.

Apart from the above-mentioned cruelties—which, however, are only characteristic of some negro tribes—there is generally little in the mores of the negroes that would fill one’s heart with indignation, in which they differ from their Arab neighbors, who are proud of their faith and of their brown-colored skin, for lack of white. Yet the negroes have many rituals that cannot be explained; for instance, children of the Shillook and the Dinka tribes, upon reaching eight or nine years of age, their milk teeth having already been replaced, have, respectively, three or four of their lower teeth knocked out; this is their introduction to society, following which they commence carrying weapons. I have often asked negroes why they do that. Some said, it is so as not to resemble dogs; others that, as the Arabs have circumcision, so they have the knocking out of the teeth instead. Only the mek’s daughters avoid this barbaric custom. Consequently, the negroes do understand all its cruelty, since the privileged family of their ruler is spared it.

The negroes of the White Nile feel religious respect toward their meks, or rulers; those living in the mountains seldom obey them, being generally inclined to unrest and to bloody fights with one another. The former own large herds of bulls and sheep; the latter trade in gold, although never more than necessary to buy weapons and to pay taxes to the Egyptian government—for those who do pay them—as well as to buy wives; in the mountains a wife costs about seven zolotniks of gold, in the plains of the White Nile, seven or eight bulls. The negroes of the White Nile are generally easier to civilize than the negroes of the Blue Nile and, especially, the inner part of the peninsula.

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15 Author’s note: An account of his journey was translated into Turkish and from it into German; the latter translation appeared in 1847 in Leipzig, under the title of Das Buch des Sudan, oder Reisen des Scheich Zain el Abidin in Nigritien. Aus dem Türkischen übersetzt von Dr. Georg Rosen.
16 About an ounce.
The force of habit makes one tolerate customs that appear most odd; never is it more evident than on a journey. Let me ask you, for instance, about our habit of kissing, of pressing our lips together and rubbing them against one another’s: tell me, reader, whether this expression of affection and joy at encountering someone is any better than the rubbing of noses against one another’s, a habit existing among savages, who rub their noses together, while mocking us. Turks touch one another upon meeting, heart to heart, which seems to me the most expressive manifestation of friendship. Negroes sometimes embrace, but for the most part they shake hands as we do, although it is not from us that they have borrowed this habit. There is a tribe, by the bye, whose people express their feelings in a completely different manner. Known as the Bari, it lives quite far up the White Nile. D’Arnaud, who recounted this anecdote to me, had once invited the mek of this tribe to visit him on his barque. Having been warned by his companions, he was not surprised when his guest spat into his face; yet d’Arnaud was not, of course, content with such an expression of special respect for himself, and so rather than claiming his supremacy in the expedition, he announced himself to be a small person of trifling significance, while naming as the principal man a Turk who accompanied him as a military commander. Meanwhile, a great many negroes gathered there, as it usually happens when a barque moors at a populated place; the Turk came too, and the odd scene resumed: the negroes all proceeded to spit right into the face of the effendi, who did not in the least expect such a reception. Enraged, the Turk reached for his saber, but they hastened to explain to him that it was no more than the tribe’s custom, a token of special respect for him, an expression of friendship and love, and so the honorable Turk, anxious to maintain a peaceful relationship with the negroes—which other Turks, unfortunately, have so little concern for—magnanimously subjected himself to being publicly spat at while in his turn spitting back with all his might, lest he appeared less polite and kind than his honorable guests.

In conclusion to everything that has been said here about the negroes, let us recall what they once used to be. I shall not claim that the Ethiopian dynasty, which gave ancient Egypt three pharaohs, was of a negro
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tribe—an opinion that, as the reader shall see below, I do not quite share; however, thanks to Champollion Jr.'s researches and by virtue of my own deep conviction, I can positively say that the negroes played an important political part in the time of the pharaohs. Foregoing any discussion of statues and bas-reliefs preserved in Egyptian temples, which bear a strong resemblance to the negro style, let us merely say that, according to Champollion Jr.'s findings, we know definitely that the mother of Amenhotep III—the wife of Thutmose IV, who went by the name of Mutemwiya—was a negress. Champollion saw a portrait of this queen in a tomb in Thebes and dates her reign back to the year 1687 B.C. Let us, further, mention another fact: the tombs of Biban-el-Moluk in Thebes have a whole series of images presenting figures of apparently different tribes. “Examining them,” says Champollion Jr., “I was convinced that the intention here was to portray the inhabitants of the four parts of the world, situated in accordance with the ancient Egyptian scheme: 1. the inhabitants of Egypt, which, in the modest opinion of the ancients, constituted one part of the world; 2. followed by the inhabitants of Africa themselves, or negroes; 3. Asians, and finally; 4. (I am ashamed to say that our tribe came last in this series) Europeans.”

There is no need to peer closely into the features of the second row of figures, which have, at any rate, been grasped rather precisely: you shall recognize the negroes by the color of their skin; there can be no mistake here. Thus we can see what high regard the Egyptians, at that time the most enlightened people in the world, had for the negroes. Among the Asians the most frequently portrayed figures are the Persians—whom the Egyptians were the most familiar with—in wide dress and with rich black beards. Finally, after everyone else, there follow half-naked figures, a bull’s hide over their shoulders, feathers on their heads, and a mace in their hands. Their light-blue eyes are somewhat dull, their reddish beards thin, and the entire aspect wild and unpleasant: these are the Europeans!