Clarion Review

Science

The First Americans Were Africans
David Imhotep
AuthorHouse
978-1-4520-9128-0
Three Stars (out of Five)

It would be so easy to dismiss or to make light of Dr. David Imhotep's work detailing what he claims is the African exploration and colonization of the Americas before Columbus — or as he states, before anyone else. To do so, however, would be a great disservice both to Imhotep and to archaeology.

While his book may not offer conclusive proof that indeed *the first Americans were Africans*, it is packed with far too much evidence to ignore. At the very least, this slim volume will make the reader take into consideration the possibility of this alternate timeline of history.

Who discovered, or more accurately, who first peopled the Americas is an open issue. Archaeologists and anthropologists at the Smithsonian believe it could have been the Clovis people who skirted the ice from Europe to North America, just as migrants from Asia came over the Bering Straits.

Explorer Thor Heyerdahl proved that Polynesian sailors could have made a Pacific crossing in reed boats. Mormon texts claim that Jews escaping Babylonian captivity made it to the Americas in the seventh century BC. We know that Vikings reached America, and there is some speculation that the Chinese arrived about seven decades before Columbus, when their grand fleet was exploring the oceans.

Imhotep is thus in good company. Whether he is right or wrong in his interpretation of the evidence is not the issue — what is important is that he presents a strong enough case to make the reader think.

That evidence is substantial, at least as interpreted by Imhotep, who rather boldly claims to be “the first person to hold a Ph.D. with a specialization in ancient African history.” Imhotep may indeed hold that title, at least in terms of this thesis, but as his own writing demonstrates, he is building on the work of many who have come before.

Citing such previous work considerably helps elevate Imhotep’s own study from the dust of wishful dreaming. The maps, photos, drawings and reports comparing the construction by Ohio Valley mound builders and New Mexican pueblo cliff-dwellers to the Mandingo of Mali are thought-provoking. So are references drawn from Mexican Olmec legends of dark-skinned peoples arriving in bark-skin boats out of the sunrise.

Imhotep’s collection of evidence is not limited to comparing ruins. He delves into DNA links between peoples of Africa and the Americas, and examines everything from pottery to plants to help prove his theory. That nicotine and cocaine residue from plants native to the Americas has been found in Egyptians mummified three thousand years before Christ also makes the reader take notice. Are these and other points Imhotep makes enough to prove that Africans, and perhaps even Egyptians, explored, settled, and traded back-and-forth across the South Atlantic?

Had Imhotep stuck to such evidence his case would be quite strong. Unfortunately, his interpretation of other ruins, artifacts, and information is, at best, controversial, and at worst suspect, requiring great leaps of faith over distances every bit as vast as the ocean separating the old and new worlds.

Imhotep spends the final third of his short book (under 200 pages, including foreword, afterword, and index) laboring to convince the reader that the massive (now underwater) blocks off the shore of Bimini were built by Egyptian or other African colonists. While a brief exploration of the possibility of such civilizations doing so could plant the question in the reader’s mind, Imhotep stretches the facts so as to hammer, batter, and blast away almost any hope that such a seed could find purchase on Bimini’s rocky shoals. In doing so he greatly weakens the otherwise considerable case he puts forth so meticulously, carefully, and even believably in the other two-thirds of his work.

Will the reader come to believe, as Imhotep does, that the Iroquois are of distant Egyptian ancestry, that the Skraelings the Vikings met in Greenland were black dwarf pygmies from Africa, or that the peoples of Tierra del Fuego came from the Kalahari?

Does his supposition that Pueblo Indians of African descent turned back the invading Mongol horde in the American Southwest a century and a half before Columbus ring true?

Is the very word Bimini a variation on the ancient Egyptian “Ba-min-ini” (which he translates as “we bring homage”), and if so does that provide some evidence that the pharaohs constructed a great port in the Americas?

These are just some of the questions Imhotep raises. Are his answers correct? Perhaps or perhaps not; either way, the evidence he presents will at least make an open-minded reader wonder if indeed *The First Americans Were Africans*.

Mark G. McLaughlin