

# THE MANIFESTO





Figure 1. Inside the Church of the Redeemer of the World, Lalibela, Ethiopia, 12<sup>th</sup> century.

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# **Manifesto**

**This is a working document**

**strictly for the intended audience**

**for the registration process of**

**the Global Black History, Heritage and Education Centre**

**and**

**The Official Launch Event**

**of Global Black Centre**

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## 1.1 The Vision

So much of Africa's history and heritage has been stolen, destroyed, left hidden, neglected, or forgotten. A large amount of African history, culture and skills has been lost to Africans due to a deliberate policy of destruction of African kingdoms and empires by firstly Arab and subsequently European invaders.

A great deal of African history and heritage has been distorted in the writings and propaganda of the invaders and conquerors of Africa.

Many African countries are unable to focus on preserving what is left of their true history due to war, famine, and other factors that make this difficult.

No other people are going to devote themselves to restoring, reclaiming, preserving, conserving, rediscovering and accurately documenting Africa's true history and heritage. Neither will they spend their time educating Africans about the truth of their origins. Africans must do this for themselves, and each other.

The vision of the Global Black History Heritage and Education Centre (GBHHEC) is to facilitate this for the whole of the African continent and the African Diaspora.

This is where GBHHEC differs from a museum that deals with local artifacts. The centre will be commissioning and/or purchasing artefacts and replicas from around the world.

In Africa, while people may know the history of their own country, rarely do they know the history of other African countries. As well as connecting people to the histories of their African neighbours, GBHHEC will connect the motherland to the histories, struggles and triumphs of Africans in the Diaspora and vice versa.

## 1.2 The Vision Statement

We aim to be the Leading Centre for Black History, Heritage, and Education headquartered in Africa, for Africa, the Caribbean and the Global Black Community.

## 1.3 The Mission Statement of the GBHHEC

The Global Black History Heritage and Education Centre (GBHHEC) is devoted to restoring, reclaiming, preserving, conserving, rediscovering and accurately documenting Africa's true history and heritage. This will include manuscripts, artifacts, ruins, achievements, inventions, and ideologies. The GBHHEC will also culturally bridge African nations among themselves and bind them to the wider African Diaspora. It will also ensure that Africans wherever they live, are educated about the truth of their history and heritage.

## 2. The Map of Africa



Figure 2. While it is important to preserve the history and heritage of the Mother Continent as well as the Caribbean Countries, our vision embraces Black heritage from the Black Diaspora worldwide also.

### 3. The Aims of the GBHHEC

We have identified and stick to the following 8 main aims:

1. To build and/or to acquire a purpose-built site in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, that will be the location for the achievement of all the aims of the GBHHEC. It will serve the entire continent of Africa and Africans in the diaspora.

This will be achieved by enlisting the support of key officials and dignitaries in Ethiopia, initially, followed by architects, skilled museum professionals and educators who will shape the design of the structure.

2. To conserve and preserve African manuscripts, artifacts and ruins that are at risk of being lost for good. This will include digitizing items that are at risk of being lost due to damage or age.

This will be achieved by enlisting the help of conservationists, curators, digital experts, and other skilled museum professionals.

3. To assist all African nations with restoring, reclaiming, preserving, conserving, rediscovering and accurately documenting their true history and heritage.

This will be achieved with the help of professionals such as Archaeologists, Ethnographers, Researchers, Historians, Archivists, Heritage Managers, etc.

4. To assist all African nations with educating their citizens and other Africans on their true history and heritage with the help of accurate Black studies and Black history teaching by qualified teachers. That is, teachers qualified by us.

5. To hold events that will showcase the true history of Africa to counteract the years of false and distorted history that has been disseminated globally.

This will be achieved with the support of the patrons, benefactors, and stakeholders in the GBHHEC.

6. To revive long lost skills and abilities from the manuscripts and ruins that have survived for the benefit of Africa's future. Not all the technology that Europeans have imposed on Africa is of benefit to Africa. The technology should suit the geography of the various parts of the continent and the nature of the people who live there.

This will be achieved by enlisting the help of professionals in the various fields of science who will be encouraged wherever possible to reverse engineer the technology and study old manuscripts for instructions and blueprints.

7. To culturally bridge African nations among themselves and bind them to the wider African diaspora.

The Global Black History Heritage and Education Centre will be an educational and cultural milestone that will help to culturally bind the distinct parts of Africa more closely to each other and will culturally bind the African Diaspora more closely with Africa.

8. To leave a legacy for future Africans both at home and in the African Diaspora that empowers them.

This institution will achieve exactly this aim by being a Centre of intellectual production in the form of books, teaching and learning materials, etcetera. For example, there is much that modern Africans can learn from the science and technologies of the ancestors. By centralising this heritage, Young Black people in STEM can build upon and modernise our own scientific traditions. Moreover, the institution will create satellites of itself in every country that has a significant African derived population.

#### 4.1 What History and Heritage do we want to preserve?

Unfortunately, it is still the case that most Africans and Black Diasporans have little idea what history and heritage we want to preserve, consequently, we shall give an introduction.

Ethiopia is rich in monuments from the time of Yeha, Axum, Lalibela, Gondar and Harar. This heritage covers 3,000 years of achievement but great heritage exists elsewhere. African Architecture includes the Pharaonic architecture from the Nile Valley, Sudanic architecture from the West African deserts, Impluvium architecture from the West African coast, the woven multi-story structures in Central Africa, the so-called 'Cyclopean' architecture from Southern Africa, Swahili architecture from the East African coast and distinctive Christian architectural forms in Sudan.

Pharaonic Architecture represents the oldest architectural tradition in Africa. The most celebrated examples are the Pyramids of Sakkara, Meidum and Giza, the Labyrinth of Hawwara, the Amen Temples in Karnak and Luxor, the Hatshepsut Temple in Deir-el-Bahri and the Colossi of Rameses II at Abu Simbel. Other lesser-known examples are in the Sudanese cities of Kerma, Gebel Barkal, Kawa, Meroë, Mussawarat and Naqa. This architectural tradition exerted a large influence on Greek and consequently, Western architecture. The Greeks borrowed the use of the column.



Figure 3. The Mussawarat Complex in Sudan, 235 BC. This may have been a university.

Sudanic architecture is the clay brick architecture with wooden buttressing from mediaeval West Africa. It includes the Great Mosques, mausoleums, and villas of the Malian cities of Djenné, Timbuktu and Gao. The most celebrated example is the Grand Mosque of Djenné. Related examples are the Great Mosques, churches, villas, and palaces of the Nigerian cities of Kano, Katsina, Daura, Zaria, etcetera.



**Figure 4. City of Djenné, Mali, with the 15<sup>th</sup> century houses and the 13<sup>th</sup> century Grand Mosque in the centre.**

Impluvium architecture is where rooms are grouped around square and rectangular courtyards. Along the West African coast, this was the typical style. It includes the Afins (palaces) of Yorubaland, the traditional architecture of the Ashantis, and the shrines of the Igbos. The royal palace of Benin was the grandest example of this architectural style. It could comfortably accommodate 15,000 people.

So-called Cyclopean architecture from Southern Africa includes the celebrated Great Zimbabwe Temple and Acropolis. There are other equally mysterious and enigmatic sites in the Zimbabwe region including Khami, Dhlo Dhlo and Chisvingo. Other related sites are in Mozambique and South Africa. Scholars estimate that 600 of these sites have survived.

Swahili architecture is the mediaeval architecture of the East African coast. Over 400 heritage sites have survived in Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique. Ruins of Ghost Towns are found all along this coast including Jumba La Mtwana, Gedi and Mnarani in Kenya and Kilwa Kisiwani in Tanzania. There are grand houses, palaces, mosques, and forts. These buildings had bathrooms, toilets and, in one case, even a swimming pool!

Ethiopia and Sudan have a Christian heritage that goes back to the fourth and sixth centuries AD respectively. They built churches, monasteries, cathedrals, and castles. The Ethiopian examples are particularly well preserved and include the Cathedral of St Mary of Zion in Axum, the underground churches of Lalibela, the Lake Tana monastery and the castles of Gondar. The Sudanese examples are impressive ruins. They include the Cathedral of the Granite Columns in Old Dongola and the Archangel Raphael Upper Church also called the 'Miracle of Banganarti'.

Moreover, Africans captured and enslaved in the Americas built great monuments of world class in Haiti, such as the Sans Soucci Palace and the Citadelle Henry, sometimes call the Eighth Wonder of the World. Finally, African American architects built some of the greatest architecture in America including what is today called 'Hollywood Glamour'.

## 4.2 Manuscripts

Historians estimate that Ethiopia has around 250,000 early manuscripts in public and private libraries, churches, and monasteries. There are massive early manuscript and/or papyrus collections in Sudan, Egypt, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Tanzania, and Cameroon. The subject matter covered by this material includes religion, law, history, mathematics, the sciences, divination, and literature and poetry in its widest sense. One epic poem from Tanzania was found to be 45,000 quatrains long! Then we have the literature of Black people outside Africa. Black Arabs wrote literature from at least the 7th century that is still read today. Enslaved Africans captured and sent to Europe and the Americas have a literary tradition going back to the 16th century. Then we have Oral Literature of Africa. The oral tradition carried to the Americas by enslaved Africans produced the folk hero 'Brer Rabbit'. Brer Rabbit influenced Europeans to create Peter Rabbit and Bugs Bunny.

Ethiopia possesses a rich written tradition going back more than 2,500 years. The oldest surviving writings are inscriptions. The oldest of these date from before 500 BC and continued to be inscribed as late as the ninth century AD. From the fourth century during the time of Emperor Ezana, the Ethiopians developed the Ethiopic script also called Ge'ez. This beautiful script influenced the Armenian and Georgian scripts of Eastern Europe. Ethiopia also possesses a rich literary heritage of books written on parchment. Scholars in relatively recent times have found that an Ethiopian manuscript, the *Gospels of Abba Garima*, may well be the oldest surviving illustrated Christian manuscript in world history dating from 330 to 650 AD.



Figure 5. 1053 AD Nubian Manuscript, the *Miracles of St Menas*

The old Nubian Christian site of Qasr Ibrim has thousands of ecclesiastical documents in 8 different languages dating from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. They are in Meroitic, Old Nubian, Coptic, Greek Creole, Greek, Arabic, Latin and Turkish. There are 30 surviving collections of old Sudanese manuscripts in Sudanese public and private collections. Of these, the oldest of the manuscripts identified dates to 1555 AD. The largest public collection is in the National Records Office in Khartoum. It houses 15,000 literary manuscripts.

At the time that the British colonised Northern Nigeria, there were 250,000 manuscripts. Most were in private households and collections. Some huge collections were in the emir's palaces and scholarly households. The most celebrated piece of Hausa literature was written in the late 1400s and entitled *On The Obligations of Princes*.

Swahili is the most widely spoken language in Africa. Some 4,000 old manuscripts are preserved at the University of Dar es Salaam at their Institute of Kiswahili Research. There are collections totalling over 600 manuscripts in Zanzibar in the Museums, Archives and the Antiquities departments. There are also Swahili manuscripts in Germany and in London. Of the manuscripts, the oldest surviving Swahili text is a 1652 document by Bwana Mwengo called *Epic of Hamziyya*. Finally, it is worth noting that the Zanzibar collections have eighteenth and nineteenth century texts that contain medical information. Other manuscripts deal with astronomy and navigation.

### 4.3 Fine Art

Africans everywhere have unrivalled sculptural traditions. The most notable of these are in the Nigeria regions where masterpieces have been produced for the last 3000 years in clay, ivory, copper, zinc brass, and leaded bronze.



Figure 6. Zinc brass portrait of a female Yoruba Oni from Ife, Nigeria. Between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

A great sculptural tradition existed in the lands of the Pharaohs, Egypt and Sudan, of naturalistic portraiture from miniatures all the way up to colossi, and in all materials from wood to gold to granite. Great traditions of church art existed in Sudan and Ethiopia. As well as church paintings, Ethiopia has a unique body of Christian arts known as the illuminated manuscripts. African traditions of painting go back around 29,000 years to the Rock Paintings in Southern Africa.

Sapi artisans In Sierra Leone produced elegant works of ivory. Portuguese traders of the 15th and 16th centuries became aware of this art and purchased these products. In Europe, these pieces became luxury items used by the elites and royalty. The pieces were hunting horns, saltcellars, forks, and spoons. As works of art and objects of prestige, they were exchanged as gifts between the royal courts of Europe. Other splendid ivory works were made in the Empire of Benin.

Benin and Sapi artists were trained through apprenticeship systems. They spent their lives learning their trade in the workshops of masters. There were less than forty of these workshops in both Benin and Sierra Leone.

**Figure 7. Sierra Leone ivory salt cellar with figure smoking a pipe on lid with base sitting figures, dogs, and snakes. Made between 1490 and 1530.**



#### 4.4 Science and Technology

Archaeology has taught us many things about Ancient African technologies. For instance, archaeologists in 1978 found 13 steel furnaces in the Lake Victoria region that dated back to about 500 AD. The archaeologists reconstructed these furnaces to show how they worked. They found that certain peoples in what is now northern Tanzania (such as the Haya) were producing high carbon steel using techniques that were unsurpassed by anybody until the mid 19th century. A second example appeared in 1980. Science magazine published a paper called *Tetracycline-Labeled Bone from Ancient Sudanese Nubia*. The main finding was the discovery that early Mediaeval Nubian skeletons from 350 to 550 AD were found to have had the 'modern' antibiotic tetracycline in their bones. A more recent example appeared on 14 September 2013. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, an Australian newspaper, published an explosive article entitled *Out of Africa*. The subtitle to the article asks: 'How did medieval coins from East Africa end up on a remote island off the Northern Territory?' Moreover: 'It's a mystery that may rewrite Australia's early history.'

Ancient Egypt represents a good place to begin the study of Africa's sciences. There are two Egyptian medical papyri that have attracted curious interest. The *Edwin Smith Papyrus* is now housed in the New York Academy of Medicine. It was one of ten surviving Ancient Egyptian medical texts. It describes 48 cases of bone surgery and of external pathology. It demonstrates a detailed knowledge of anatomy, gives remarkably accurate descriptions of traumatic surgical lesions, and describes their treatments where applicable. The *Ebers Papyrus* is the oldest surviving medical encyclopaedia. It has chapters on intestinal disease, ophthalmology, dermatology, gynaecology, obstetrics, pregnancy diagnosis, contraception, dentistry, surgical treatment of abscesses, tumours, fractures and burns.

In the Mali Empire of the fourteenth century, were two Universities, one at the city of Timbuktu and the other in the city of Djenné. The universities taught law, letters, grammar, geography, mathematical accounting, astronomy and art (which included building and crafts). An astonishing 700,000 manuscripts have survived in Timbuktu. A 2009 film documentary *The Ancient Astronomers of Timbuktu* was made based on the astronomical content of 37 Timbuktu manuscripts. *New Scientist* reported that the makers of the documentary were planning to repeat this feat with research into other Timbuktu manuscripts that covered: “botany, medicine, biology, chemistry, mathematics and climatology.”

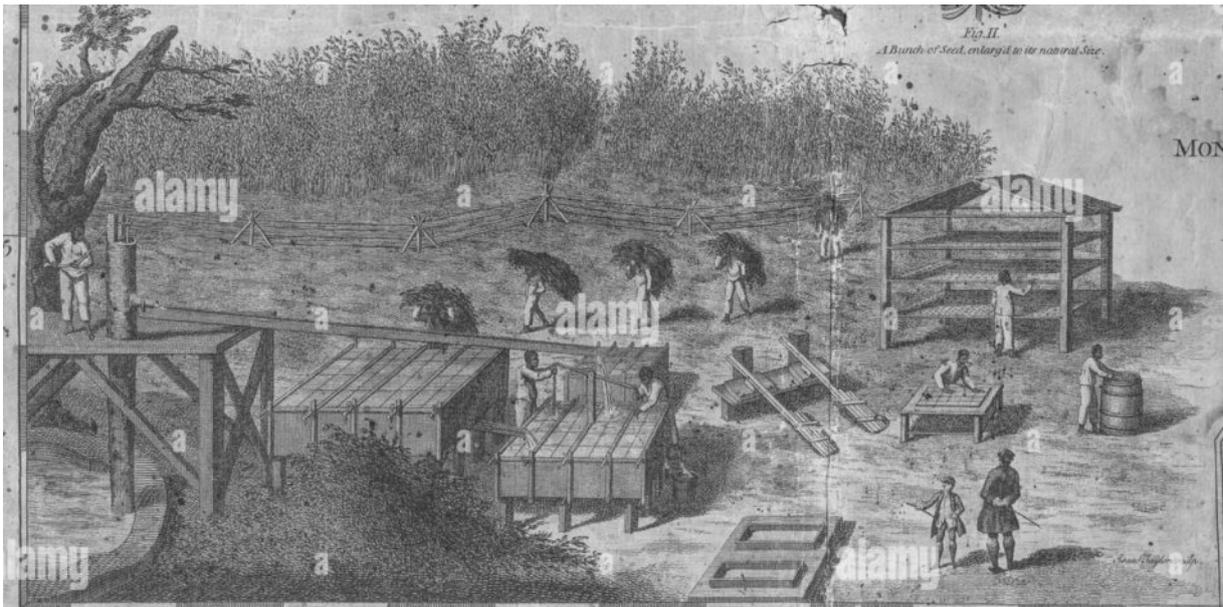


**Figure 8. Sixteenth or seventeenth century astronomical manuscript in a Timbuktu library collection.**

Ethiopia has astronomical and calendrical manuscripts from the fourth to the nineteenth centuries. Some manuscripts show basic knowledge of the five planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter). Others describe the 28 lunar mansions and include diagrams. Other manuscripts mention solar eclipses in 1241 AD, 1528 and 1727. A manuscript mentions a lunar eclipse in 1620. Another manuscript recorded the appearance of a nova in 1618. Ethiopia possesses a small but important number of medical manuscripts. Written in Ge'ez and Amharic, these texts date from the second half of the eighteenth century. Broad in nature, the texts describe treatments for epilepsy, fever, syphilis, rabies, skin diseases, kidney problems, haemorrhoids, constipation, diarrhoea, dysuria, etcetera.

Enslaved Africans brought many African technologies with them to the Americas. Given the choice between using African technologies and those of Europeans and Native Americans, the European colonisers preferred African technologies.

Enslaved farmers brought the cultivation of African and Asian crops including bananas, plantains, rice, sorghum, cocoyam, African yams, ackee, okra, black eyed peas, pigeon peas and watermelons. Africans from the Senegambian region were captured for their skills in horsemanship and cattle rearing. African livestock production was important especially in the areas of the United States, Haiti, Brazil and elsewhere in South America. The first metallurgists to enter the Americas in the wake of 1492 were Africans who accompanied the Spanish. Africans were widely employed as boat builders. They created large ocean worthy canoes and watercraft for the coast, rivers, and for fishing.



**Figure 7. Indigo processing in South Carolina, the United States, in the 18th century. The work was done entirely by enslaved people of African descent and Native American descent. The European enslavers are overlooking the process in the bottom right corner. However, indigo processing was a speciality in the Hausa territories in Nigeria.**

This scientific and technological tradition has continued with Ethiopian scientists and engineers who received patents for new technological developments. Engineer, Ayana Birru, received a patent from London, England, on 9 August 1932. He invented a typewriter adapted for use in Ethiopian languages. Tessema Dosho Shifferaw invented the billion-dollar generating “Bowflex” and “Selectech” exercise equipment trademarks. His company, Dosho, specialises in exercise equipment. He received patents from 1986 to 2016. Some of his patents are for geothermal energy generators. Dr Dagnachew Birru, an artificial intelligence pioneer, received 54 patents including a frequency-domain equalizer for terrestrial digital TV reception and ATSC digital television systems. Some of his patents were assigned to Koninklijke Philips Electronics, Netherlands, from 1999 to 2007. Among the others to distinguish themselves are the pathobiologist Professor Aklilu Lemma, computer scientist Professor Rediet Abebe, and the NASA space pioneer Dr Kitaw Ejigu.

There were developments in science and technology from elsewhere in Africa. Dr Isaac Ghebresellassie of Eritrea, received 23 patents relating to the time release, coating, and stabilisation of drugs. He was involved in the creation of 20 new drug products. Some of his patents were assigned to Warner-Lambert from 1986 to 2003. Samuel Ayodele Sangokoya of Nigeria has over fifty patents in the chemical industry. Many of his patents are assigned to Albamarle Corporation in Richmond, Virginia, between 1992 and 2013. Kofi Afolabi Makinwa of Ghana has over 50 patents for inventions used in computers. Many of his patents were assigned to Phillips Electronics between 1994 and 2007. Among the others to distinguish themselves are botanist Carol V. Ndlovu from South Africa, electric car pioneer Jelani Aliyu from Nigeria, and chemist Clément Kabasele Muamba from Congo, Kinshasa.

## 5. The GHBEC Library

The GBHHEC will create a library of African and Diasporan history and heritage. Books and manuscripts have been written about Africa and its history and heritage since Greco Roman times, Islamic times, the Age of Discovery, the Enlightenment and up to the Modern Period. These books were written by non-Africans and Africans. We will collect the best and most useful of them.

In addition, we will collect books, documents, and literature written by Black people outside Africa. These writers were from the Arab world, and from Europe and the Diaspora in the Americas. Among these writers were Antar, Al Jahiz, Juan Latino, Anthony William Amo, Ignatius Sancho, Olaudah Equiano, Phillis Wheatley, Frances E. Watkins Harper, etcetera.

Moreover, there are new histories, biographies, archaeology books, books on art, architecture, technologies and the sciences of Africa and the Diaspora being produced each year. We will collect the best of this literature.

## 6. A Centre for Education

What do we want the next generation of young people of Africa and the Diaspora to know about their history and heritage?

Our role will be to build pride in African heritage but in ways that do not foster tribalism and ‘my ethnic group is better than your ethnic group’ mentalities.

To do this, the GBHHEC will create a literature for schools and colleges the African nations and Black Diaspora can use. We will produce new high-quality history and heritage books on our history and heritage. We will make these books available in multiple languages.

We also want this institution to create satellites of itself in the different countries where Black people live. These satellites will be accessible and welcoming to young people wishing to learn their history and heritage. The GBHHEC in Addis Ababa will, of course, remain the Mother institution. The GBHHEC will play a major role in teaching and training the next generation of historians and educators to engage with this heritage.

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