

# DESCRIPTION OF THE HUMAN RACES

## A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
لَهُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِينَا وَمَا خَلْفَنَا وَمَا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ  
صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمَ

The period of enlightenment in the 18th century became the period of classification. Carl von Linné (1707-1778) from Sweden and F. Boissier de Sauvages (1706-1767) from France, both medical doctors, may be taken as herald figures. They created the first great attempts at classifying plants and diseases. In the wake of these attempts, anthropologists tried to classify the human species into various subgroups. I should like to mention as examples Christoph Meiners (1747-1810) and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) from Göttingen, Germany and Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) from France. The first differentiated into white and colored peoples, the latter into la race nègre, race mongole and race arabe-européenne ou caucasique. Blumenbach spoke of five "varieties" of man and separated into Caucasians, Mongolids, Aethiopians, Americans and Malays. Still others wanted to have seven or ten different varieties.

Slowly, the term "race" became popular and the color of skin was used as the main characteristic to divide into colored and white peoples (*race* in English and French, *Rasse* in German, *raza* in Spanish, *razza* in Italian, *raca* in Portuguese, *pacca* in Russian.) Colonial America considered somebody non-white even with one black out of

32 great-grandparents. Nazi-Germay (and Austria) considered Jews another "race" and persecuted people with one out of four grandparents, if Jewish, following the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. Differentiation, initiated as a more or less purely systematic attempt 200-odd years ago had turned into a deadly discriminatory weapon of man against man. The Latin proverb of "homo homini lupus" could be changed into "homo homini homo". Up to the second half of last century slavery was legally permitted and millions were held in bondage because of the color of their skin. And millions were killed in this century because they were considered impure, non-Aryan. As you will see shortly, this region between the Black and the Aral Sea is historically linked to the creation of the term "caucasian".

Along the same lines so-called phototypes will be addressed, a quite modern separation of man according to the individual reaction to ultraviolet light, a separation that became necessary due to social developments in this century and may be even more important in the future once the ozone layer in the atmosphere is further diminished.

What I will not do is going into anthropology and try to separate Australian aborigines from

Drawidians or American Indian from Asian Mongolids, nor will I argue for the slogan "out of Africa". I will stick to what is my profession, i.e. dermatology, and deal with whites or Caucasians-designations which are NOT synonymous.

Let me first specify the semantic root of the word Caucasian and follow up its introduction into scientific literature.

Thereafter I will come to what is currently understood under this term and why it became so important.

Finally I will recommend a proper use of this and other terms and advocate the elimination of the word "race" altogether, replacing it with the word CLINE.

Blumenbach wrote of a "VARIETAS CAUCASIA". Nomen huic quidem a Caucaso monte, tum quod vicinia eius et maxime quidem australis plaga pulcherrimam hominum stirpem, Georgianam foveat..."

Jean Chardin (1643-1713), in his travel itineraries of "De Paris à Ispahan" in, "Voyages en Orient", said "Le sang de Géorgie est le plus beau de l'Orient & je puis dire du monde. Je n'ai pas remarqué un visage laid, en ce pays-là, parmi l'un & l'autre sexe: mais j'en ai vu d'Angeliques ...etc. And Chardin stressed the well known beauty of the Circassian slaves in the Orient, "qui font le délice de sérails musulmans."

Oxford English Dictionary definition: Caucasian is a name given to the white race of mankind.

WHAT DO WE CURRENTLY UNDERSTAND UNDER "CAUCASIAN"?

We understand any person who is non-African, non-Mongoloid, non-Amerind, non-Malay, etc. as "Caucasian". So far this is correct. But we imply that this person must be white and of European ancestry. And this is wrong.

From the Sea of Ireland to the Punjab and the gates of India, we have the historical habitat of Caucasians. Their constitutive pigmentation is not very different, their facultative pigmentation however, is markedly different. Sikhs in Rajasthan and Baluchis are well tanned in their homelands, they are darker than urban Japanese or Northern Han-Chinese, nevertheless they are

Caucasians. This must be kept in mind. Once we mean "WHITE" we should say, Caucasians of European ancestry, of Semitic, of Iranian, Afghan, Tajik ancestry etc.

The change in social circumstances brought about the need for UV protection, which necessitated a scale for individual UV sensitivity.

Phototyping was first attempted by Rudolf Schulze 1950 in Germany, later on expanded by Thomas B Fitzpatrick in Boston 1975, BOSTON TYPES I-VI, and eventually modified by Sato and Kawada 1986, JAPANESE TYPES J I-III, corresponding to Boston Types II-IV.

In view of the history of the past two centuries the term "race" should be abolished and be replaced by "cline". This is a neutral designation. It stems from the Greek verb *kyiveiv*, to slope. It was first introduced into biological literature by Julian Huxley in 1938, later by Tucker, for birds' classification, in 1949, by Livingstone suggested for use in anthropology in 1962, by ourselves in 1994. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, cline means "a graded series of characters or differences in form within a species".

It is possible that I confused you rather than conveyed elucidation of a difficult anthropological and medical problem, not to speak of the semantic quagmire. However, circumstances are complicated and too much simplification is not possible.

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