



Sankofa Archives

Did You Know? Tidbits #5

“Terence and Tiro”

Terence (c.190 – 159 B.C.) [*Latin Stylists and Great Humanitarian*]

How many of you have heard of Publius Terentius Afer [Terence modern spelling], one of the greatest playwrights in ancient Rome? Now, how many of you know that he was an African? Publius Terentius Afer, or Terentius the African, was a freed African slave born in Carthage. (O'Bryhim and Franko, p.243) His name, “Afer,” in fact means “African.” (Stille, p.235 and O'Bryhim and Franko, p.243) To this day, his works are still studied in Western universities; however, reference to his African heritage is rarely mentioned. (Rogers). Six of his plays are: *The Girl from Andros* (produced in 166 B.C.), *The Mother-in-Law* (produced unsuccessfully in 165, successfully at a third attempt in 160), *The Self-Tormentor* (163), *The Eunuch* (161), *Phormio* (161), and *The Brothers* (160.). (O'Bryhim and Franko, p.243)

One famous quotation by Terence can be found in his play, *Heauton Timorumenos*:

"Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto," or "I am human, and nothing of that which is human is alien to me." (Rogers)



Tiro (died c. 4 BC) [*inventor of Tironian notes*]

Tiro (Marcus Tullius Tiro) was a slave born in Arpium, a city of Latium; he was the inventor of shorthand writing, known as Tironian notes (*notae Tironianae*), ca. 60 BC. He was the slave of Marcus Tullius Cicero, and Tiro developed this unique form of writing while he was Cicero's secretary. According to Cicero, this form of writing allowed Tiro to take down speeches verbatim (Clayton, p. 27). When Cicero died, Tiro founded a school to teach shorthand in Rome. Tironian notes were used well into the Middle Ages (Clayton, p. 27 and James and Thorpe p.510).

Notes for:

Terence

O'Bryhim, Shawn, and George Fredric Franko. 2001. *Greek and Roman Comedy Translations and Interpretations of Four Representative Plays*. Austin: University of Texas Press. [[Click here to read more](#)]

Rogers, J.A. *World's Great Men of Color, Volume 1*. New York: A Touchstone Book. [[Click here to read more](#)]

Stille, Alexander. 2013. *The Future of the Past*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Tiro

James, Peter, and I. J. Thorpe. 1994. *Ancient Inventions*. New York: Ballantine Books. [To know more on the history of shorthand [click here](#)]

Shapiro, Howard-Yana, and Louis E. Gretti. 2013. *Chocolate History, Culture, and Heritage*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

Clayton, Ewan. 2014. *The Golden Thread: The Story of Writing*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, Publishers Group West.