



## Press Release

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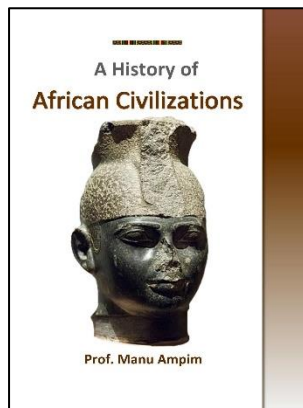
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### **Noted Historian Reveals A Major Omission in College Courses**

#### ***California Community Colleges Omit Africa and Lack Equity in Its Curricula***

OAKLAND, Calif., August 6, 2019 — The California Community College system is the largest educational system in the U.S. serving more than 2.3 million students, yet only 3 of the 114 colleges (2.6%) offer a required course on African history for students obtaining an Associate of Arts Degree. Students majoring in History are required to take U.S. history and Western civilization courses, but African history courses are almost completely omitted from the curriculum throughout the state.

The California community colleges which have a *required* course on African history are San Diego City College and Fresno City College, as both institutions require the course for students majoring in African American Studies. Contra Costa College in San Pablo is the only campus which requires an African history course for *both* History and African American Studies majors, and its “History of African Civilizations” course is the only class in the state which focuses exclusively on *ancient Africa*.



Not only are courses on Africa rare but there is also a scarcity of recent textbooks on African civilizations. The few existing books typically emphasize the modern issues of slavery, colonization, and the 20<sup>th</sup> century independence movement, while minimizing the African civilizations before the continent’s recent decline in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

In his new book *A History of African Civilizations*, historian Manu Ampim, a professor at Contra Costa College (CCC), covers a myriad of contributions from various ancient African civilizations. These contributions include fields such as writing, medicine, mathematics, architecture, solar calendar, and social organization. The book has the

same title as the course he teaches at CCC each semester. It was originally a course reader that Ampim converted into a retail book for the general public and other professors.

Ampim's book is based on his first-hand research in two dozen countries over the past 30 years. He emphasizes the importance of studying ancient African civilizations at the apex of their influence and explains that "these pre-colonial civilizations give us a glimpse into the African past before the advent of slavery, colonization, and foreigners who derailed African development."

<https://advancingtheresearch.org/product/a-history-of-african-civilizations-manu-ampim-april-2019>

Ampim notes in Unit 3 that it was not until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that African Studies was viewed a subject worthy of academic study. In 1922, for example, William Leo Hansberry created the first "African Civilization" section of the History Department at Howard University. However, Hansberry was ridiculed by his peers who claimed that he was focusing on a subject not worthy of scholarly attention. After Hansberry, various Black scholars in the mid- and late-20<sup>th</sup> century wrote pioneering books on African civilizations, but these works are now decades old and do not meet the requirement that textbooks for transferable courses must be published within the last 7 years.

The California college courses on Africa, including the four-year universities, are rare due to disinterest, lack of faculty training, and a scarcity of scholarly textbooks. Ampim's book fills this void and presents detailed information on ancient Africa, beginning with the origins of humanity, and the bulk of the book focuses on civilizations throughout the African continent. The first advanced civilization discussed is Ancient Kush with its political capital in current-day Sudan, and Ampim describes it as "the oldest of Africa's classical civilizations."

The front cover shows a bust of the Kushite King Taharqa, who was the greatest builder in Kush's long history. Other professors have adopted the book to supplement their classroom instruction beginning this fall, and it is distributed by Africa World Press.



Manu Ampim has published 3 books and numerous scholarly articles on his extensive field research. He is noted for his primary research on African civilizations in 22 countries, and his seminars training various people on first-hand research methods in Africana Studies. He is the Chair of the History, Anthropology, and Geography Department at CCC, where he teaches 400 students a year.

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