

Black Pharaohs? Egyptological bias, racism, and Egypt and Nubia as African Civilizations

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A Zoom Lecture. Register at ARCE-NW.weebly.com

Professor Smith, who has been excavating the ancient site of Tombos in modern Sudan (Nubia) since 2000, has focused his research on questions of identity, especially ethnicity, and intercultural interaction between ancient Egypt and Nubia.

In the 8th century BCE, he noted, Kushite rulers were crowned as Kings of Egypt, ruling a combined Nubian and Egyptian kingdom as pharaohs of Egypt's 25th Dynasty. Those Kushite kings are commonly referred to as the "Black Pharaohs" in both scholarly and popular publications. That terminology, Smith



said, is often presented as a celebration of black African civilization. But it also reflects a longstanding bias that holds the Egyptian pharaohs and their people weren't African — that is, not Black. It's a trope that feeds into a long history of racism that traces back to some of the founding figures of Egyptology and their role in the creation of "scientific" racism in the U.S.

Drawing on some of his own research in Sudanese Nubia, Smith said he will first discuss the question of ancient Egypt as an African civilization.



Dr. Stuart Tyson Smith is the Director of the Institute for Social Behavioral & Economic Research in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He received his Ph.D. at the University of California, Los Angeles and his MS Ed. at the University of Southern California. Professor Smith's research centers on the civilizations of ancient Egypt and Nubia. He is particularly

interested in the identification of ethnicity in the archaeological record and the ethnic dynamics of colonial encounters. Ancient Egyptian colonialism, intercultural interaction and the origins of the Napatan state, whose rulers conquered Egypt, becoming Pharaohs of the 25th Dynasty, provide the focus of his current archaeological research. He has published on the dynamics of Egyptian imperialism and royal ideology, the use of sealings in administration, death and burial in ancient Egypt and Nubia, and the ethnic, social and economic dynamics of interaction between ancient Egypt and Nubia.

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