

**Alan B. LLOYD (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egypt***, Chichester–Malden, MA: Wiley–Blackwell, 2010 (The Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World), XLVI+1276 pp., 2 maps, 34 plates, 217 illustrations, 4 tables, £ 250.00, ISBN 978-1-4051-5598-4.

Ancient Egypt, its history, culture, religion and art for many years have fascinated scholars: historians, Egyptologists, archaeologists and others. In the series *Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World* a book was published which puts together all subjects concerning Egypt. The book's editor, Alan B. LLOYD, made his name by numerous books and articles on ancient Egypt, especially on history of Late and Greco-Roman Period, ancient warfare and Egyptian epigraphy.

*A Companion to Ancient Egypt* consists of two volumes. The first volume is divided into four parts: "The Land of Egypt", "Historical Narratives", "State and Economic Structures" and "The Social Order". The second volume is composed of three parts: "Language and Literature", "The Visual Arts" and "The Reception of Egyptian Culture". At the beginning of the first volume, just before the main text, readers will find the list of illustrations, notes on contributions, preface, acknowledgments, list of abbreviations, chronology and maps. The bibliography is at the end of the second volume, but after each chapter there are selected books or articles for further reading. Another advantage of the *Companion*... are plates, figures, maps and tables placed between text.

After the preface, the first volume gives a concise chronology of Egypt from the earliest times to the Byzantine period with the names of rulers and the dates of their reign. Chronology relies on the *Aigyptiaka* of Manetho who divided Egyptian kings into thirty dynasties. The chronology of the Late Period in the *Companion* (pp. XXXVIII–XXXIX) is surprisingly conservative. We read (p. XXXIX) that the last king of the XXX dynasty Nectanebo II ruled from 360 BC until 343 BC and the Persian conquest of Egypt began in 343 BC. Hence it does not take into consideration recent research of L. DEPUYDT (one of the authors of the *Companion*!) who, based on careful reading of Greek, Egyptian and Babylonian records, proves that the Second Persian Domination in Egypt started in 340/339 BC.

The first part of the *Companion* concerns physical aspects of Egypt like landscape archaeology from the Napoleonic expedition of 1798–1801 until the newest archaeological excavations across Egypt. It draws on a great variety of sources. Readers will appreciate data on climate and landscape change in ancient and modern times. Satellite images included in this volume help to locate ancient buildings, foundations and much more.

History of Egypt from the prehistory until Roman period was introduced in the second part of the first volume. Authors discuss history of each dynasty and reign. Except for historical information there are quite a lot of archaeological data on prehistoric settlements, graves, pottery decorations, tools and weapons, stone objects and art. A very helpful clear layout of the Egyptian structure of administration of the early period is presented on p. 54. It helps us to understand connections and relationships between the pharaohs, high officials and the rest of administrative organs. The chapters about history of Egypt enclose basic information about Egyptian kings, foreign policy, culture and art, sometimes in a very concise way as in the case of the First Persian Period in Egypt (pp. 150–153). O. PERDU ("Saites and Persians (664–332 BC)") presents times of Cambyses in Egypt on one and a half page (pp. 149 f.), not going much beyond Herodotus. The Second Persian Period receives only half a page (p. 157) and the date of the conquest of Egypt by Artaxerxes III given by PERDU (342 BC) differs both from the stance of the current research and from that given in the chronology section of the *Companion*. In this section there is much reference to the First Persian Period and concentration on Persian atrocities which seem to run against the image of

stability which can be inferred from a few Egyptian sources we have for this period. The last native pharaoh Khababash is mentioned only in a very short and not very informative paragraph.

Part III of the first volume contains information about state and economic structures arranged by pharaonic and Greco-Roman offices, administration, law, priests and temples, economy, settlements, transport, science, technology, military institutions and warfare. Part IV “The Social Order” with social structure, daily life, religion in society in pharaonic and Greco-Roman period is as if a continuation of the previous chapter. Authors explain these disciplines on historical, archaeological and iconographic examples with ample reference to sources. These two parts of the *Companion* help readers to understand daily life of inhabitants of Egypt. The important chapters 21 and 22 “Science and Technology” allow the reader to discover Egyptian knowledge about mathematics and counting system, metrology and geometry, astronomy, biology and much more.

The second volume of the *Companion* starts with part V “Language and Literature” covering language, scripts, and literacy, the literature of the Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom, Late Period, Coptic literature and Greek literature in Egypt. It is a short, but good introduction to phonology, vocabulary and morphology of the Egyptian language with useful facts about grammar, language changes through history, connections with Coptic and Arabic. All phases of Egyptian language are explicated in next three subsections (pp. 646–655). The whole text is comprehensible and based on numerous examples, including a comparison of hieroglyphic, demotic and Coptic writing (pp. 655–660).

Chapters 30–32 cover Egyptian literature: from tales, teachings, discourses, hymns, songs through royal and non-royal monumental inscriptions up to prophecies and scientific, medical, magical texts and much more. Even if no translations of texts are provided, the reader can find references to the best or most often used translations and publications. The rendition of the Late Period literature presents lesser genre: prophecies, legal and scientific literature (astrological, horoscope, dream interpretations, oneiromancy) (pp. 718–722). Another group concerns medicine and its disciplines (gynaecology, internal diseases and others). There are also quite a few examples of cult, ritual and magical texts. Chapter 33 helps us to understand relations between Coptic and Egyptian literature. First there is a short history of these texts, where they come from, what are their similarities, what texts and manuscripts survive to our times. Then there is information about Coptic language and its grammar, Greek loan words and Coptic dialects. The next chapter presents a rather basic introduction to the Greek writing on Egypt.

Part VI of the second volume “The Visual Arts” again is divided both into chapters covering periods of ancient Egyptian art to Late Antiquity and those concerned with select topics, like temple architecture, decorative systems, early dynastic art and iconography, sculpture from the Old Kingdom until Roman Period, pharaonic painting of the New Kingdom, mosaics and painting in Greco-Roman Egypt and Egyptian art of Late Antiquity. Beginning students of Egypt will find there convenient figures explaining Egyptian reliefs (p. 797) and a good explanation on what and why Egyptian inscribed or painted on the walls or statues. An advantage of this part are figures showing schemes of temples, mastabas, private tombs (e.g. pp. 789, 810, 812, 816). One might prefer, however, to have the account of the predynastic art concentrated in one place and dispersed between volumes one and two. A part of chapter 44 portrays Egyptian mosaics (pp. 1017–1022) found mostly in Alexandria and its surroundings. Important as they are, they are usually given less attention than Egyptian reliefs and paintings and hence they might perhaps receive a more ample treatment here.

The last part of the second volume “The Reception of Pharaonic Egypt in Classical Antiquity” starting from chapter 47 “The Reception of Egypt in Europe” is partly a continuation of chapter 45 “Egyptian Art of Late Antiquity”, while chapter 46 “The Reception of Pharaonic Egypt in Classical Antiquity” is somewhat repetitive of what was said in earlier parts of the book. Chapter 47 presents the rediscovery of Egypt by the Europeans from the middle ages to the Napoleon’s expedition which resulted in the much used *Description de l’Égypte* (pp. 1088 f.) to later archaeological works by British, French, German and other scholars. Chapter 48 (“The Reception of Pharaonic Egypt in

Islamic Egypt”) deals with Islamic scholars interested in ancient history of Egypt like 15<sup>th</sup> century al-Maqrīzī, al-Mas‘ūdī and al-Ma’mūn (pp. 1109–1122). The last chapter 49 (“Ancient Egypt in the Museum: Concepts and Constructions”) is partly a continuation of chapter 47. Readers will find there information about the greatest museums (e.g. British Museum, Petrie’s Museum, Louvre and much more), their beginnings and collections.

On general it is a well written and well researched book. Unlike many books about Egypt whose authors or editors use transliterated hieroglyphics without adequate translation and explanation of terminology in its proper cultural context, the *Companion* makes a real effort to bring ancient Egyptian terms to the reader in exemplary clarity. Each volume of the *Companion* is appended with a select bibliography. Every reader will appreciate a good index at the end of the second volume. The index, a good bibliography, sensible endnotes and many good quality figures and plates will certainly contribute to promoting the usage of this books by scholars, students and interested public alike. For many it will rightfully be a reference book for ancient Egypt. Very high scholarly standards, the most up-to-date knowledge and a very good narrative mark this book as a very good monograph of ancient Egypt.

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