



The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt

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Book Review

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The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt

By Aidan Dodson and Dyan Hilton. Pp. 320, b&w figs. 213, color figs. 88, tables 12, diagrams 27, plans 2, map 1. Thames & Hudson, London 2004. \$50. ISBN 0-500-05128-3 (cloth).

Reviewed by 111.3

Gregory Mumford

The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt is a thorough and valuable introductory and detailed reference work for the general public, students, and scholars. The introductory sections provide coverage of the pharaonic state in general, discussing the king, state administrators, temples, and military. This discussion provides an up-to-date assessment of various theories and more recent views regarding such issues as the status of different royal family members and the line of succession. It also outlines changes in such roles throughout the pharaonic and Ptolemaic periods. A subsequent section discusses the royal family, the king's wife, mother, son, daughter, and sister, God's father, and the harem. The authors emphasize the conspicuous absence of the title of King's Brother, which appears only at the end of the Late period. This reviewer would add to their bibliography Jean Revez's 1998 doctoral dissertation on the role of the king's brother in ancient Egypt ("Les frères du roi," University of Paris, Sorbonne). The next part contains a guide to the titles, abbreviations, and remarks on the genealogical information covered in chapters 1-5. The provision of transliterated hieroglyphs is especially useful in addition to the translated titles of high-ranking Egyptians.

The successive chapters are subdivided chronologically into (1) the Early Dynastic period and Old Kingdom, (2) the First through Second Intermediate periods, (3) the New Kingdom, (4) the Third Intermediate period, and (5) the Late and Ptolemaic periods. Each chapter is subdivided into smaller chronological groupings with a brief historical background, discussion of the royal family, useful genealogical tables and charts, and summaries of the particulars known for the royal family members of each dynasty. These summaries give identified names, titles, relationships, selected illustrations of monuments, and other useful data. Aside from summarizing the known and postulated relationships between each royal family member within and between dynasties, the authors give an overview and up-to-date arguments regarding genealogical reconstructions and their inherent problems. The genealogical tables are especially useful aids for a quick reference to each royal family member's status in relation to one another and the current ruler (indicated in boldface and capitalized lettering).

The book ends with a map, 183 endnotes to the text, a detailed chronological table of Early Dynastic to Ptolemaic rulers, a bibliography, and index. Although more endnotes would be useful for scholars, it must be remembered that this book and the series aim at maintaining a balance between catering to laypersons and a more academic readership. However, the bibliography does have a useful section-by-section listing of sources, followed by more than 400 sources consulted for this book. The index is also useful, listing rulers (in boldface with parenthesized throne names), their royal family members (with their title abbreviations), and relevant sites. The only section conspicuous by its absence might be a general conclusion to the individual treatments on the pharaonic through Ptolemaic periods.

Overall, this book represents the culmination of extensive research work and data, establishing a much needed and excellent overview, insights and crucial information regarding both known and postulated relationships between rulers, royal family members, and dynasties. The scope of this work is quite impressive and it should remain a standard reference for many years.

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