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Kenny Mann. *Egypt, Kush, Aksum.* Parsippany, New Jersey: Dillon Press, 1997. 105 pp. Grades 6-12 (ages 12-17). $7.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-382-39657-1.

Reviewed by Michael DiBlasi (African Studies Center, Boston University)
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Teaching Ancient Africa: Egypt, Kush, and Aksum

This book, written for a middle school and high school audience, offers a very well written and beautifully illustrated introduction to the major ancient kingdoms of northeast Africa. A major strength of the book is that it links the kingdoms culturally and historically, pointing out interactions among them and thus providing an integrated, regional picture of ancient complex societies in northeast Africa.

In her Introduction, Mann summarizes the basic geographical and historical background information for the region. Six chapters follow: Chapters One and Two deal with Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt and Queen Hatshepsut; Chapters Three and Four focus on Kush and Meroe; and Chapters Five and Six treat the kingdom of Aksum and the post-Aksumite, Lalibela period, respectively. The text ends with a short Epilogue that very concisely summarizes the history of each kingdom from the period of its decline to modern times.

Mann uses a very engaging style in writing this book. Rather than presenting the information as a dry narrative of dates, dynasties, and cultural traits, she personalizes culture history. This is done by incorporating aspects of the lives of historical figures such as Queen Hatshepsut of Egypt, King Piye of Kush, and King Ezana of Aksum in unfolding the story of these kingdoms. This approach brings history to life, and will undoubtedly hold the interest and stimulate the imagination of the young reader.

Another technique that enhances the educational value of the book is the extensive use of in-text thematic boxes designed to amplify the narrative. Each chapter includes numerous informational boxes that contain chronologies, discussion of important concepts, definitions of key terms, or translations from Egyptian, Greek, Aksumite, or Geez texts that add valuable supplementary information to the topics covered.

The book is lavishly illustrated with over forty color photographs and numerous color maps and drawings of the highest quality; these alone are worth the modest price of the book.

Egypt, Kush, Aksum is an excellent book and will be an effective tool for teaching about ancient kingdoms of northeast Africa at the middle school and high school levels.

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