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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Neil Morris. *Ancient Egypt.* Art and Civilization series. New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 2000. 36 pp. Ages 9-12. $16.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87226-617-9.

Neil Morris. *The Atlas of Ancient Egypt.* New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 2000. 61 pp. Ages 9-12. $19.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87226-610-0.

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Published on H-AfrTeach (June, 2001)

With the recent return of yet another mummy to the silver screen, the topic of ancient Egypt is once again in the air, and one supposes teachers throughout North America will have to dig into their schools' libraries to come up with answers to their students' questions about this fascinating civilization. The two books under review, by the prolific author Neil Morris, should go a long way toward helping them. Beautifully illustrated by Paola Ravaglia, Matteo Chesi, and Sudio Stalio–and well laid out in clearly designed short sections–both books deal with a wide range of topics in an engaging manner.

The shorter book, *Ancient Egypt*, begins with an introduction that tells us about Egypt's humble beginnings in the fourth millennium B.C.E. and the unification of the southern and northern parts of Egypt under King Narmer around 3100 B.C.E. The story is richly illustrated with drawings and photographs, some of which are accompanied by useful sidebars with keyed line drawings that clearly identify the various parts of the images. This feature is one of the book's strengths. The introductory section also contains general information on the ancient Egyptian calendar and farming techniques. Next comes a chapter on pyramids and their builders. The brief description of the full pyramid complex here is very well done, although the estimation of "200,000 people" taking part in the building of a pyramid is the sort of information that simply cannot be corroborated and should probably be left out.

Next comes a segment on gods and goddesses, which contains a very nice synopsis of the events at the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty in the description of King Horemheb's tomb in the Valley of the Kings. A good selection of various divinities is described and illustrated, with the information short and to the point. After this comes a section on death and the afterlife, with commentaries on mummification and tomb paintings, as well as a wonderful drawing of the various coffins of King Tutankhamun.

This is followed by remarks on "Ruling Egypt", which includes descriptions of the pharaoh, the taxation system, and the empire during the Sixteenth to the Twelfth centuries B.C.E. Accounts of daily life, entertainment, art, science and trade, and writing and literature close the book.

The second book, *The Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, is similar in content, although much more detailed. After a general introduction, the topics covered are the various periods of ancient Egyptian history, from prehistory–which contains a useful, and rare for this kind of book, list of the various ancient words used by the Egyptians to refer to their country (*kemet*, "the black land") or even themselves (*remetch en kemet*, "people of the black land")–all the way to Graeco-Roman Egypt. The latter contains useful information on the little known Christian, or Coptic, period, from 395 C.E. to the Islamic conquest of 642. These historical chapters are broken up by accounts of life on the river; agriculture and food; writing and literature; gods and goddesses; craftsmen; kings and queens; Egypt and its neighbors; administering the country; trade; women; death and the afterlife; and the rediscovery of Egypt, with the latter containing up-to-date information on the discovery of mummies in Kharga Oasis in the late 1990s. In fact, the author must be congratulated for doing his homework properly and finding the latest information on some of his topics (see, for example, the wonderful reconstructed head of Queen Tiye shown on p. 45 of the *Atlas*, with its recently added crown properly shown).

There is little need to detail all the material found in the book, but a few comments are in order. The particularly successful sections in the *Atlas* are: the descriptions of the pyramids, how they were built and why (pp. 14-

15); the methods of traveling up and down the country (p. 16); the account of the creation of the gods and a map showing the cities where the more important divinities were worshiped (pp. 24-25); the temples, their building and their uses (pp. 26-27); the detailing of the five names of a king and what they meant (p. 31); the map showing the products found, and traded, in Egypt and Western Asia (p. 39). These will offer the readers well written information, and will also be most useful to the teachers using the book in a classroom situation.

Apart from a few inaccuracies that have crept into the manuscript, most of the comments from the reviewer are offered in the hope of fleshing out the author's story for the benefit of his readers, and not meant as criticisms. The list will begin with *Ancient Egypt* and then go on to the *Atlas*.

P. 2, we are told that a certain high official named Washptah was "so overcome when allowed to kiss the pharaohs' feet (rather than the ground he walked on) that he died on the spot!" Although this is a most dramatic rendering of Washptah's fate, the latter's own autobiography is much more circumspect. It is not exactly clear what happened to him while he was conducting the king through a new building; all that is certain is that he did die in the end [1].

Pp. 16-17, in the list of divinities: the original creator god is not Amun-Ra but Atum (as properly stated on p. 25 of the *Atlas*); the goddess Maat should not be described as "a kneeling woman" (the same information is given on p. 25 of the *Atlas*), as she is not always shown in this posture; regarding the goddess Uto of Lower Egypt, the more modern rendering of her name, Wadjet or Wadjyt, should have been given, as this is the name under which readers wishing to discover more information on her will find in other books (the same can be said of p. 23 of the same book, and cf. p. 50 of the *Atlas*, where the name is given as Wadjyt); the god Khnum's main temple is in southern, not northern Egypt; the description of King Akhenaten outlawing "the priesthood" should add "of other gods", since there was certainly a priesthood of his god Aten. As well, Akhenaten's city, Akhetaten, is not properly speaking "later el-Amarna" but more accurately "modern" el-Amarna; the text as it stands makes it look as if the ancient Egyptians themselves renamed the city at a later period, which is not the case.

P. 19, King Ramesses II was not put into a "simple wooden coffin", as the unassuming coffin shown in the illustration is simply what the Theban priests used to rebury Ramesses II after discovering that the royal burials had been robbed (see p. 46 of the *Atlas*, where this fact is mentioned).

P. 20, an opportunity was lost to point out the close relationship between the pictures and the accompanying hieroglyphic captions. On one of the lower registers of the painted wall, we see a man named Sennedjem plowing a field with the help of a team of oxen. Between the figure of Sennedjem and the oxen, written over the plough, is a hieroglyphic caption that simply reads "by the Servant in the Place of Truth Sennedjem, true-of-voice". Thus, to get a full sentence, we are meant to add the image of the oxen pulling the plough, which then gives us the full "Plowing by the Servant in the Place of Truth Sennedjem, true-of-voice", with the image of Sennedjem completing the full picture and text.

P. 21, the goddess Maat is not "the ibis-headed goddess of truth", which contradicts the information already given on p. 16 about both Maat and Thoth (the same information is given on p. 48 of the *Atlas*).

P. 22, King Tuthmosis III was not Queen Hatshepsut's son but her stepson. Hatshepsut is only attested with one daughter, the princess Neferure.

P. 23, more than parts of "a chariot" were found in Tutankhamun's tomb; rather, six chariots were found. In the sidebar describing the same king's golden coffin, note that the beard he wears is curved at the end, indicating full divinity on the part of the now-dead king (kings wore straight beards while gods wore curved beards). It should also be pointed out that the famous gold throne of Tutankhamun bears a different name for both the king and his queen: rather than his more famous name, the text on the throne shows the king's name before his counter-reformation, which is Tut-ankh-ATEN, while his queen's name is not Ankhesenamun but rather Ankh-es-en- PA-ATEN (the same information is given on p. 41 of the *Atlas*).

P. 24, in the list of measurements, and purely for additional information, a *khar* is 75 litres. And we should point out that the collected grain was not put into jars but rather into baskets.

P. 25, the empire was not at its largest during the reign of Tuthmosis I, who initiated much of the empire building, but rather Tuthmosis III, or even more likely, under King Amenhotep III (the same information is given on p. 33 of the *Atlas*). In the caption showing the model soldiers, mention might have been made that the soldiers shown are in fact Nubian auxiliaries (see also p. 35 of the *Atlas*).

P. 33, in the description of a *deben*, one might add that this was the equivalent of 91 grams.

P. 34, the caption describing the hieroglyphic sign for "writing" shows a reed brush attached to a water pot, not a bag (the same information is given on p. 20 of the *Atlas*).

P. 35, the sidebar giving the translation of the captions written over King Tuthmosis III and the god Amun is confusing and misleading. Switch the numbers (4) and (5) in the translation to match it with the illustration: the epithet "son of Ra" (the goose and the sun disk) is written over the king's cartouche (5) and should therefore have been given the number (4). The same can be said about numbers (6) and (7) in the text: the epithet "king of Upper and Lower Egypt" should be number (6) while the coronation name, written inside the cartouche, is number (7). The caption that applies to the god should read: "Amun-Ra, lord of the thrones of the Two Lands and lord of the sky. Words spoken: "I have given you all life, all power, all stability, and all joy before me, like Re eternally'".

P. 8 of the *Atlas* shows a First Dynasty figure with large blue eyes. It might be worth mentioning to students that the eyes are made of lapis-lazuli. Since this semi-precious stone came from as far away as modern-day Afghanistan, it shows that, as early as the late fourth millennium B.C.E., the people from north-east Africa had a trading network that spanned the distance between these two modern countries, a remarkable achievement for so long ago.

P. 10, the caption over the slate palette showing the row of animals is misleading: instead of reading "The animals were probably taking away loot after a successful battle", we must surely be meant to read "The animals were taken away as loot..."

P. 21, in the caption describing the Rosetta Stone, read "which is over three feet high" for "which is over a three feet high". The caption describing the text on the Thirteenth Century B.C.E. seal is not quite accurate: the officer's name Ka-nakht is not simply written with a bull sign, but with both the bull ("Ka") and the sign beneath it, an arm with a hand holding a stick ("nakht").

P. 22, the relief shows King Mentuhotep II, not the First of that name. In the section on the First Intermediate Period, add "Egypt" to line 6 ("During this period *Egypt* was divided..."). The description of King Senusret III's administrative reforms (mid-Nineteenth Century B.C.E.) is not quite accurate: the country was indeed divided into three sections, but not placed under the jurisdiction of "three regional viziers". Local officers were appointed but there were never more than two viziers at any one time, which, at any rate, did not happen until the Sixteenth Century B.C.E.

P. 24, the map showing the gods and their cities of worship has a slight error: the third god worshiped at Memphis is not "Neferteti" but Nefertum.

P. 27, the caption describing a festival of the ram-headed god Khnum is inaccurate. What is shown is not Khnum but rather the god Re being towed through the various hours of the underworld (see, in fact, p. 56 of the *Atlas*, where a similar image is correctly identified).

P. 30, the statue of a king holding an offering table is not that of King Amenhotep I but rather Akhenaten; the whole caption, which describes Amenhotep I, is therefore incorrect.

P. 34, the author has been misled by the artists who drew and colored the wall painting from Beni Hasan. The Egyptians should not be said to be "shown with red skins". The proper color of the Egyptians' skin in this illustration is reddish brown, which contrasts nicely with the Semites, who are shown with much lighter skin. In fact, I always use this particular scene to illustrate the question of whether the ancient Egyptians were black. I tell my students that the answer to that question is an unequivocal "Yes!" but urge them to not take my word for it; I add "Let's ask the ancient Egyptians themselves", and show a slide of this wall, among others.

P. 36, a minor quibble: the date of the stela showing the Nile flood level, from Regnal Year 23 of King Amenemhat III, is closer to 1820 B.C.E. than the "1831 BC" indicated.

P. 37, the vizier Ramose, shown at the top right, lived under King Amenhotep III, not Tuthmosis III. Another very minor quibble dealing with dates: the caption from the tomb of the vizier Rekhmire gives us the date of the tomb as "around 1430 BC", but on p. 39, the same tomb (the scene showing Nubians bringing their wares into Egypt) is dated to "around 1450 BC".

P. 39, regarding the goods exchanged between countries, it might have been nice to point out that our word "ebony" comes from the ancient Egyptian word *hebny*.

P. 41, the statement that the famous gold mask of Tutankhamun's "...magnificence ... made it a work of art that has lasted more than 3,000 years" is not worded quite properly. Surely it's simply the serendipity of having found it, and not its magnificence, that has made it last all this time.

P. 44, the relief of the woman picking fruit from a tree and holding her baby in a shawl is not actually "from about 1400 BC". Rather, what is shown is a Seventh Century B.C.E. "copy", done in relief, of the original Fifteenth Century B.C.E. painted scene. The original can still be

seen in the tomb of Menena (Theban Tomb no. 69) in Western Thebes (modern Luxor), while the relief shown in the book is in the Brooklyn Museum today (Brooklyn Museum No. 48.74).[2]

P. 45, the goddess Nephthys was not simply "called the "lady of the mansion'"; this is what her name actually means.

P. 51, although I realize I am repeating myself here (see my review of Anne Millard's *The World of the Pharaoh* [New York, 1998] published on H-NET Book Review, June, 1999 [http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/reviews]), a notable fact about the Twenty-fifth Dynasty might be mentioned again. These are the Nubian kings who conquered Egypt in the Eighth Century B.C.E. but were driven out of Egypt by the Assyrians (as pointed out on p. 50). They returned to Napata, their capital city at the Fourth Cataract in modern-day Sudan, and went on to establish a dynasty there that was to last until the mid-Fourth Century C.E.–around 1200 years–one of history's longest living dynasty.

P. 52, the statement that the Egyptians were "forced to endure" Persian rule between the Sixth and Fourth Centuries B.C.E. is somewhat exaggerated. Although it is true that Alexander the Great was hailed by the Egyptians as a welcome change when he drove the Persians out of Egypt in 332 B.C.E., the fact is that Persian rule in Egypt was no worse than that of any other occupying nation. Let us never forget that, until recently when modern scholars have been reconstructing Persian history by properly using contemporary Persian and Aramaic sources, most of our information about the Persians came from Greek historians, and that the Greeks happened to be at war with Persia. To say that the Persians suffered from "bad press" in the ancient (western) world goes without saying. To his credit, the author does go on to mention in a subsequent caption that a Greek description of some of the Persians' behavior was "perhaps … an attempt to discredit the Persians".

There are also some curious inconsistencies between the two books, where one will offer a comment or a piece of information, which is then contradicted by the other book. Examples of this are:

P. 9 of *Ancient Egypt* tells us a man is being punished for "some wrongdoing which we will never know", while p. 36 of the *Atlas* tells us this is "probably for trying to forge the count" in a caption about the same model of cattle counting.

P. 28 of *Ancient Egypt* tells us that a humorous ink drawing shows a cat driving "a flock of geese", while p. 41 of the *Atlas* tells us the same illustration has the cat herding "a flock of ducks".

This sort of inconsistency will confuse readers who have access to both books, and it is my experience as a teacher that once our students lose confidence in their textbooks, it is very difficult to get that confidence back. This is the sort of minor inconvenience that an editor should have caught.

And this brings up the final comment I have about these books. One wonders what marketing strategy was at work here to simultaneously publish two books about ancient Egypt by the same author, who sometimes uses the same copy in both books, and using the same design and many of the same illustrations (though some of these are reversed from one book to the other, for example King Akhenaten offering to the Aten [p. 17 of *Ancient Egypt* and p. 33 of the *Atlas*] and the previously mentioned kneeling image of the goddess Maat [p. 16 of *Ancient Egypt* and p. 25 of the *Atlas*]). I am sure the publishers know their business much better than I do, but which book does one recommend and to which market? The *Atlas* has significantly more information but perhaps a smaller budget will only allow for the purchase of *Ancient Egypt.*

In the end, I hope I have not sounded too negative. Apart from the few errors pointed out, most of my comments were simply offered as additional information to two very useful books. Richly illustrated and with well-researched material that is easy to find, both books should go a long way to help satiate the appetite for information on ancient Egypt.

Notes.

[1]. For the full text, see J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (New York, 1906), pp. 111- 13.

[2]. See R. A. Fazzini et al., eds., *Ancient Egyptian Art in the Brooklyn Museum* (Brooklyn, 1989), catalogue no. 71.

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Citation: Ronald J. Leprohon. Review of Morris, Neil, *Ancient Egypt* and Morris, Neil, *The Atlas of Ancient Egypt.* H-AfrTeach, H-Net Reviews. June, 2001.

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