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Robert B. Jackson. *At Empire's Edge: Exploring Rome's Egyptian Frontier.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. xxv + 350 pp. $37.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-08856-4.

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Edge of Empire

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Jackson focuses his up-to-date work on the period from 29 BCE to the end of the 5th century CE, or the main period of the Roman occupation of Egypt until early Byzantine times and the collapse of the Roman Empire. He briefly addresses the late Ptolemaic times in his introduction. Within this historical and regional framework he studies the frontier of Roman rule in general.

Jackson's writing is smooth, easy, and engaging, and his scholarship soundly reasoned. The large number of photographs, maps, and detailed site descriptions, some of less well-known but interesting and important places too often overlooked, make this a worthwhile scholarly resource. Access to deeper levels of knowledge is afforded by thirty-four pages of notes. As one who both leads tours to Egypt and teaches about Egypt and Nubia, I found this book to be a valuable regional history as well as a field guide for the sophisticated traveler.

Jackson's very solid survey includes not only the familiar geographical core of Egypt, but also Lower Nubia (and some sites in Upper Nubia). It explores the eastern and western desert regions, including all of the oases. The sites discussed range from quarries, strategic forts, tombs, temples, and villages to cemeteries, wells, desert tracks, coastal encampments and ports, riverine forts, ceramic traditions, petroglyphs, and funerary objects. Though his emphasis is rightly on the archaeological evidence, he also includes discussion of written documents that help place the material evidence in context.

My only perception of a deficiency was the lack of an integrating conclusion. I found myself eager to tap his expertise about the realities of imperial peripheries in Egypt when my reflections turned from Roman days to my own.

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