



Afterglow of Empire: Egypt from the Fall of the New Kingdom to the Saite Renaissance

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REVIEW

Dodson, A., *Afterglow of Empire: Egypt from the Fall of the New Kingdom to the Saite Renaissance*, 2012. Pp. xxviii + 343, numerous illustrations. Cairo/New York: The American University in Cairo Press. ISBN 978-9-77416-531-3. Price: £18.95.

Afterglow of Empire joins Aidan Dodson's ever-growing series of books covering various periods and aspects of Egyptian history and archaeology. This volume treats the Third Intermediate Period (21st to 25th Dynasties), with opening and concluding chapters on the last Ramesside rulers of the 20th Dynasty and the Egyptian 'renaissance' under the 26th Dynasty.

Handsomely produced, the book is well bound, with proper stitching and a cover which does not curl back on itself! The paper is of good quality which, given the constraints of page size, allows the excellent reproduction of some 150 illustrations — mainly the author's own photographs. My only complaint about the production is the lack of running heads both with the chapters and page numbers in the end-notes section. These lapses make the book very difficult to work through, especially as the notes are so vital to the complex issues discussed.

The reader should not expect any social or economic history of the period covered: for example the present reviewer has not yet found the word 'trade' anywhere in the volume or, for that matter the art historical evidence provided by coffins and other funerary equipment, on which Aidan is a specialist.

Still, such is the nature of the Third Intermediate Period which, at the risk of sounding hackneyed, is a historical jigsaw puzzle. Part of its attraction to so many researchers (including the present reviewer) is that due to the myriad (often scrappy) pieces of evidence at our disposal there seem to be endless ways of reconstructing the political history of Egypt — during a period when royal power fragmented from one overall pharaoh (under the 20th Dynasty, conventionally 12th century BC) to the 7th century BC when the Assyrian conquerors of Egypt list well over 20 local kings ('sharru'). How rapidly this disintegration occurred, with increasing overlaps between dynasties and kings — with concomitant lowering of chronology — is a matter of acute importance not only for Egypt but far beyond.

'Dead reckoning' backwards is the method by which Egyptologists aim to calculate the span of Egyptian chronology (as defined by Kenneth Kitchen, the doyen of TIP chronology) between the well established accession date of the 25th-dynasty king Taharqo, 690 BC, and that of Shoshenq I, founder of the 22nd Dynasty. A key character in the calculations is the well attested Osorkon III. Early Egyptologists (such as Petrie and Breasted) had no problem in identifying him as the pharaoh Osorkon mentioned on the stela of the Kushite conqueror Piye (late 8th century BC), the 'king So' of Egypt to whom Hoshea of Israel paid tribute in order for help against Assyria c. 725 BC and the Shilkanni king of Egypt who sent a present of horses to Sargon II in 716 BC. Yet later Egyptologists such as Kitchen and his acolytes have replaced Osorkon III in these roles with an Osorkon IV, who fills the over-extended chronology between Taharqo and Shoshenq I. The evidence for an Osorkon 'IV' is paltry (Morkot and James 2015, 33–36). Most of the objects attributed to him have now been assigned to Osorkon 'the Elder' of the 21st Dynasty, as Dodson (pp. 73–74) agrees. In 2011 (see Dodson p. 150) photos of some beautifully carved blocks from Tanis were published of a king Osorkon. His depiction and titulary are in a style which unmistakably belongs to the 'archaising' style of the late 8th century BC (Morkot and James 2015, 36). Dodson (p. 150) argues that the presence of a 'nw' at the end of the name distinguishes him from Osorkon III — hence the reliefs finally provide evidence for the nebulous Osorkon 'IV'. Porter (2011) showed that the 'nw' is known from Osorkon III. Still, Dodson (2014) continues to argue against the case for Osorkon III, invoking a tiny detail involving the character used for the letter 'l'. (NB, pharaohs frequently used varying orthography in different inscriptions.) It is hard to avoid the feeling that some Egyptologists are looking through a special glass with no Alice to help. The desire to cling to the idea of an Osorkon 'IV' (given an entirely imaginary 14–18 years by Kitchen) is surely due to the need to fill up the time-span back to Shoshenq I and his alleged identification with the biblical 'king Shishak'.

Unsure radiocarbon results aside, the chronology of the Bronze to Iron Age Levant (and well beyond in the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean) *still* relies mainly on Egyptian connections, through scarabs and inscriptions, but also on assumed historical links, mainly the equation of Shoshenq I, founder of the 22nd Libyan Dynasty, with the biblical Shishak who cowed Jerusalem into surrender c. 925 BC and looted the Temple of its treasures. By return, the biblical date for Shishak is used to provide a fixed point for Shoshenq I, and hence for the whole of the Egyptian Third Intermediate Period (see most recently James and van der Veen 2015, esp. ix.). The fragile nature of TIP chronology was raised by the present reviewer and colleagues in open discussion and then numerous publications since 1985 (see James *et al.* 1987, 1991, etc and most recently Morkot and James 2015). Dodson has continued to reflect on the problems we raised and the need to reduce Egyptian New Kingdom chronology. Early on Aidan took up the case of the rather shadowy king Psusennes 'II' (last ruler of the 21st Dynasty) in a number of publications (1987; 1998a; 1998b; 1993, 2000). The question raised was whether his reign was entirely contemporary with Shoshenq I, which would reduce Egyptian chronology by some 14 years. Dodson (p. x) now feels that his idea has been "disproved" by a publication by Payraudeau (2008). The new fragment of the priestly annals published by Payraudeau needed a great amount of restoration. More importantly, the unqualified assumption is made by both him and Dodson that the Osorkon mentioned after Psusennes 'II' is the first of that name. There is no reason why he should not be Osorkon II, which would change the picture entirely.

Despite his over-hasty retreat on this point, Dodson still hankers after a lowered Egyptian chronology. He allows some overlap between Psusennes II and Shoshenq I. He also argues that the latter's campaign (as famously recorded at Karnak) may not have occurred in his 21st year (as usually assumed), but much earlier in his reign (see now Dodson in James and van der Veen eds 2015). This could allow Shoshenq's date (following the conventional identification of his Karnak campaign dates with that of Shishak c. 925 BC) to have occurred a few years later. Dodson further accepts the overlap of Ramesses IX, X and XI that has been convincingly argued by Ad Thijs — with a consequent shortening of 20th-dynasty chronology by some 12 years. While Aidan is not precise here on this matter (wisely) he adds up these small revisions and argues for a lowering of Egyptian — and consequently Mesopotamian chronology — by some two decades.

The opening chapters of the book are the most sound, and highly recommended. Dodson navigates with care through the choppy waters of late 20th and 21st-dynasty chronology and genealogy and is open to (much needed) alternatives to the standard model as well as making some novel suggestions of his own. While accepting Thijs' compression of the late 20th Dynasty, he avoids the latter's separation of Pinudjem I into two characters, one a king the other a High Priest of Amun. The greatest controversy at this point concerns the challenge made by Jansen-Winkel (1992; 1997; 2006, 225–26) who argued a reversal of the standard order of the two HPAs Herihor and Piankh. Thijs has accepted this but realises that it raises problems. The present writer (James and Morkot 2010) has argued that Herihor and Piankh were contemporary — but that Herihor was a fully-fledged king (see e.g. Dodson, p. 24, Fig. 12) and hence could have co-opted Piankh as working HPA. Here Dodson (pp. 24–32) offers yet another alternative worth consideration: that Piankh temporarily ousted Herihor from the high priesthood.

In a work of this scope, involving a prosopographic mosaic with a bewildering number of (possible) individuals, mistakes will naturally creep in. Some of the sloppier ones might have been caught by a careful copy editor. Pages 39–40 give a table of 21st-dynasty Tanite rulers and Aidan rightly notes the difference between the Manethonian lists and the attested regnal years for these kings (see James and Morkot 2013, esp. p. 222). Yet, oddly, Dodson's table omits Amenemope, the first certainly Tanite ruler to be attested at Thebes with a regnal year. On p. 96 HPAs Iuwelot and Nesibanebdjet (III) are presented as sons of Osorkon I (as generally believed). Yet, on p. 101, Nesibanebdjet (III) is called a brother of Osorkon II, which would make him a grandson of Osorkon I (via the intervening pharaoh Takeloth I).

With respect to Mesopotamia, Dodson should have taken even more care. Here he repeats a number of unfortunate clichés, including the old chestnut, without any caveats, that Akhenaten corresponded with Assuruballit of Assyria. The tablet in question (EA 16) has not been examined since the 1970s, leaving the reading of the pharaoh's name still unclear (see Gordon *apud* Moran 1992, x, 39, n. 1). Things do not improve with the following remark: '... Assur-uballit's father Eriba-Adad I is linked to Amenhotep III via the latter's Babylonian correspondents Kadashman-Enlil I and

Burnaburiash II'. There is no point at all mentioning Eriba-Adad I as we have none of his correspondence. Repetition of text-book 'synchronisms' like this, based on assumptions rather than cuneiform sources, completely devalue the point of this Appendix (1).

There are many other errors of judgment or fact. Chapter 6, which deals with the 26th Dynasty, betrays either the author's lack of interest in this period or, a fair guess, that he was under the cosh by the publishers to get the book finished. It is doubtful, given our limited sources, that Egypt suffered a "short-lived invasion by Nebuchadrezzar in 582" (p. 177). Dodson's account of the usurpation of the throne from Apries to Amasis is fanciful. There is not a shred of evidence for the idea that pharaoh Apries (Wahibre) went to Babylon where he was "welcomed as a guest by his erstwhile foe, Nebuchadrezzar II" (p. 177). It has been *suggested* that Nebuchadrezzar supported the deposed Apries, but this is a very different matter from receiving him at Babylon — and actually extremely unlikely given the long antipathy between the two. A more likely scenario is that Nebuchadrezzar marched to Egypt *c.* 567 BC in support of Amasis' usurpation of the throne from Apries (for references and discussion see (James 2015, 356). Worse, we are told (p. 176) that Pharaoh Neko II killed Josiah king of Judah at Megiddo in 609 BC, while on the very facing page (p. 177) the *same incident* is related under the reign of the following pharaoh, Psammetichus II (595–589)!

A more accurate and interesting account could have been offered for the wider role played by Egypt in Levantine history. For example, the manner in which Psammetichus I achieved autonomy from the ailing Assyrian empire is dealt with in a cursory manner. And while Dodson wisely avoids the old faults of many Egyptian 'histories' in treating the 'Late' period as one of increasing military feebleness, it could have been mentioned that Psammetichus I is the only documented pharaoh to have sent Egyptian troops as far as central Mesopotamia (further than any of the 'great' New Kingdom kings).

In short, the scope of the book would have been best restricted to the Third Intermediate Period *per se*, ending with the period of the Assyrian conquest of Egypt. This may have avoided many mistakes and hasty judgments. Having said that, the book is an essential read for anyone interested in the TIP. With respect to Levantine chronology, it is very welcome to have these words from a well-known Egyptologist (Preface, p. xi): '... it seems clear to me that the current view of strict orthodoxy concerning the absolute dating (i.e. in terms of years BC) of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period is no longer viable, and that some degree of adjustment of dates—downward—is both necessary and desirable.'

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