

**G. P. F. Broekman, R. J. Demarée and O. E. Kaper, eds., *The Libyan Period in Egypt. Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> Dynasties: Proceedings of a Conference at Leiden University, 25-27 October 2007, Peeters, Leuven, 2009.***

**ISBN: 9789042922389**

**Reviewed by Caroline Hubschmann  
(Monash University)**

With little doubt the Third Intermediate Period is one of the more enigmatic chapters in the history of ancient Egypt. It is intriguing, not only because it was a time when foreign peoples - Libyans from the west and then Nubians from the south - were able to gain control of the Egyptian state and initiate significant changes to Egyptian culture, society and political organisation, but also for the very reason that so much about the period remains unknown.

As such, the proceedings of *The Libyan Period in Egypt*, a conference concerning the Third Intermediate Period in Egypt held at Leiden in October 2007, is a very welcome addition to the scholarship of this particular phase of Egyptian history. The conference was the first official gathering concerning the Third Intermediate Period since Anthony Leahy organised *Libya and Egypt* at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London in 1986.

The volume comprises an introduction, a summary of the discussion sessions that were held at the end of each day of the conference, and chapters written by all 24 speaking participants. Approximately half are concerned primarily with a multitude of various unresolved chronological issues surrounding Dynasties 21 to 24. Recent archaeological research relevant to the study of the Third Intermediate Period also contributes to wider historical and cultural issues.

Any chronological discussion concerning the Third Intermediate Period would be remiss if it failed to address the hypotheses of Professor Kenneth Kitchen, author of the seminal *Third Intermediate Period in Egypt* (1972, with revised editions in 1986

and 1996). His chapter 'The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt: An overview of fact and fiction' (pp. 161-201), both challenges his scholarly opponents to disprove his classification of what is 'fact' and what is 'fiction', and forms the cornerstone around which authors such as David Aston, Gerard Broekman, Dan'el Kahn, Anthony Leahy and John Taylor present alternative arguments. For the scholar concerned with a particular aspect of Third Intermediate Period chronological minutiae, as I was with the possible identity/ies of Pedubast Si-Bast and Pedubast Si-Ese, having Kitchen's arguments in the same volume as his scholarly opponents including Aston in 'Takeloth II, A King of the Herakleopolitan/ Theban Twenty-Third Dynasty Revisited: the Chronology of Dynasties 22 and 23' (pp. 1-28) and Dan'el Kahn in 'The transition from Libyan to Nubian rule in Egypt: Revisiting the reign of Tefnakht' (pp. 139-148), is wonderfully convenient. Never before has it been so easy to examine and adjudicate opposing opinions regarding chronology in the Third Intermediate Period.

That being said, chronological debates can be dry, particularly to a reader with only an informal interest, and in this regard the volume as a whole would be of little benefit to those not already immersed in current Egyptological discussions. Nevertheless, while a number of chapters demonstrate that Professor Kitchen has more scholarly opponents than advocates, his colourful language and disregard for scholarly detachment make for entertaining reading. Even if the reader is unfamiliar with the topics of discussion, his pleas for us to resist what he considers 'unsubstantiated ideas', and being 'love-children of the mind [who] are deceiving and deceitful changelings' (p. 199), inserts much-needed mirth to enliven the debate.

There is little doubt that the perceived merits of each chapter will depend on the readers' own curiosity, but the scope of subjects should ensure that everyone is likely to find at least one or two chapters of interest. I was particularly fascinated by several chapters. For example, Susanne Bickel's study of a hieratic inscription located in the court of Amenhotep III in the Luxor Temple demonstrates how a text which utilizes sophisticated language techniques can powerfully elucidate the effects of a catastrophic Nile flood on the inhabitants of Thebes during the reign of Osorkon III. The text is particularly interesting in the way it records the highly emotional reaction of the flood victims to the gods' seeming passivity to their plight, and their

incredulity and doubt over divine motivations. Olaf Kaper's documentation and analysis of Third Intermediate Period artefacts and texts from Dakhleh Oasis demonstrates that the Theban administration maintained control over the oases, regions which were deemed particularly important during the Libyan Period.

The excavations conducted at Herakleopolis Magna, as documented by M. Carmen Pérez Die, reveal a great deal of anthropological information concerning the individuals buried in the Third Intermediate Period necropolis. Andrzej Niwinski's article concerning the finds of the Polish-Egyptian 'Cliff Mission' at Deir el-Bahri is particularly fascinating. It documents the existence of tomb camouflage as a method of protecting tombs and is enhanced by excellent accompanying photographs and plans. Robert Ritner's analysis of the evidence pertaining to Libyan social organisation, specifically what he deems Libyan-influenced political fragmentation experienced during the Third Intermediate Period, is a welcomed and worthy addition to the discussion concerning the potential influences that Libyan rule had on society in the Nile Valley, an issue first explored by Anthony Leahy in "The Libyan Period in Egypt: an Essay in Interpretation" *Libyan Studies* 16 (1985).

The volume concludes with a summary of the discussion sessions held at the conference and this proves to be an excellent addition to a text derived from oral presentations and debates. It is therefore unfortunate that it is poorly written and included without adequate editing, because it detracts from the otherwise exemplary content of the volume. In addition, while the figures and (black and white) photographs throughout the volume are high quality, the typography is not. There is no discernable logic displayed in the assignment of line breaks between paragraphs.

The variety of subjects within this volume is an accurate reflection of the social and cultural diversity experienced in Egypt during the Third Intermediate Period. A significant proportion is concerned primarily with content-rich chronological issues which may be of little interest for the casual reader; however, for scholars and students of the Third Intermediate Period, the discussion of the finer points is compelling and illuminating. A number of issues were unresolved – so many that the bulk of the introduction outlined the continuing debate – but the conference

participants were able to agree on a resolution regarding a uniform scheme for naming and numbering kings previously identified as Shoshenk. The chapters that outlined recently-discovered or reviewed archaeological data also demonstrate that there exists the potential for further study of this enigmatic and fascinating period of Egyptian history. When viewed as a contemporary volume on current issues associated with the Third Intermediate Period, particularly the unresolved chronological tensions, this volume well deserves a place on the shelf next to Kitchen's *Third Intermediate Period in Egypt* (1972) and Anthony Leahy's 1990 collation, *Libya and Egypt*.