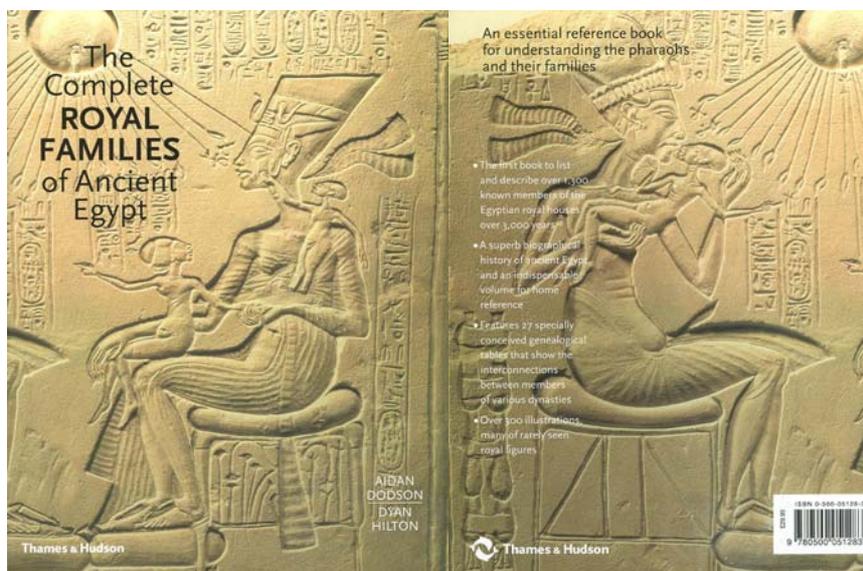


Dodson, A. & D. Hilton. 2004. The complete royal families of ancient Egypt. – London, Thames & HudsonBook review by A.J. Veldmeijer¹

As so many others, my interest in ancient Egypt started at a very early age. Soon I started to read books which I, years later, had to study at university. But I was often disappointed because the majority of the books only told the most exciting stories of the most famous pharaohs. But I wanted to know *everything* about *all* pharaohs. Impossible of course, but hey, I was only 10 years old or so. Anyway, I decided to collect every single bit of information I could find and started with Horemheb. But after a while I realised that the task was impossible for various reasons, not in the least because I needed, of course, to have a good education first. So I stopped ‘the project’ but never really abandoned the idea (and I still have the writings).

Considering this, one can imagine how happy I was when ‘The complete royal families’ by Aidan Dodson & Dyan Hilton appeared. Though not a book that gives every single detail of every pharaoh, a task that will take several lifetimes to fulfil, it is a really good start indeed. The book presents the relationships of all known pharaohs and their relatives as far as science understands it now, with the latest up to date information included. The book is one in a series of ‘The complete...’, among which are titles as ‘The complete Tutankhamun’ (Reeves, 1990), ‘The complete pyramids’ (Lehner, 1997) and ‘The complete temples of ancient Egypt’ (Wilkinson, 2000) and follows the same layout (obviously). The books are lavishly illustrated and textboxes are inserted throughout the text in which specific information is presented. The figures are mixed with the text, the text sometimes enclosing the figures. This prevents the books from becoming ‘sterile’ but on the other hand it might be found a little distracting. However, the more recent volumes, the one that is topic of the present review included, are ‘better’ balanced than, for example, ‘The complete Tutankhamun’. As in all volumes, the quality of most pictures is excellent, although there are some pictures with does not meet the standard the reader would like to see (for example page 13, top; page 83, page 149 and page 163); the editing is faultless.

‘The complete royal families’ is arranged in five chapters following the traditional arrangement of the Egyptian pharaohs in Kingdoms, as firstly presented by Manetho. Manetho, an Egyptian priest, subdivided the Kingdoms in Dynasties, and the subdivision of chapters in this book follows this as well. However, sometimes various Dynasties are lumped (for example the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Dynasty) and sometimes more space has been devoted to one Dynasty (for example the 19th Dynasty). The introduction clearly explains the objectives and various other things, important to know for understanding the book, such as the titulary used in ancient Egypt and the genealogical groupings. It also explains the choice of not being exhaustive in references. Understandable as this may be, sometimes I felt the need of a little more references. Nevertheless, the biography is extensive and the ‘lack’ of references is more than enough compensated.

‘The complete royal families’ is a worthy member of the Thames & Hudson series ‘The complete...’. Undoubtedly much discussion is possible on the content and interpretation leading to various relationships (I am not a specialist in this field), but I think the authors succeeded well in presenting the ties of the royals in ancient Egypt and it is therefore a valuable reference book for the professional Egyptologist and archaeologist of Egypt.

¹ Second version, uploaded 3 April 2006.

But I feel it is of even greater importance for the interested layman. A book that really should find a place on every book shelf and undoubtedly it will be read with as much joy and interest as I have read it.

Dodson, A. & D. Hilton. 2004. The complete royal families of ancient Egypt. – London, Thames & Hudson. 320 pp. ISBN 0-500-05128-3. Price £ 29.85 (hardback). Distributed by Nilsson-Lamm (www.nilsson-lamm.nl).

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