

## **The Pharaohs By Joyce Tyldesley**

**2009 Quercus Publishing Ltd**

**General** – As with all Joyce Tyldesley books it was well written and researched, as well as being incredibly easy to read with numerous text boxes and quotes from contemporary texts. However, as with most books of this ‘coffee-table type’ they are not evenly weighted in regard to the history they cover. The blurb which came with the book states it is “narrating the stories of 30 dynasties” which it does, but with a greater focus on the New Kingdom; a full 79 pages on dynasties 18 and 19, with the inevitable chapter on Akhenaten, and yet the third intermediate period and late period has only 20 pages. This is to cover 500 years of history and ten dynasties of kings. The latter would have benefitted from more information and the New Kingdom section would be just as interesting without an entire chapter on the Valley of the Kings, Amenhotep III, Akhenaten and the late 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty which could have been condensed into one chapter. However, publishers like the glossy images associated with the New Kingdom and will be regurgitating Akhenaten and Tutankhamun *ad infinitum* often at the detriment of the thousands of years of history of which they are a part.

**Pharaohs and Foreigners** – This chapter although well written did not flow well, and left one as confused about the king changes and politics at the end of the chapter as at the beginning. It read a little like “ X ruled for 14 years to be followed by X2 who was succeeded by X3” without giving any real content about what is a particularly interesting and politically active time in Egyptian history with Libyans, Nubians and Persians ruling Egypt, each in their own way.

**The Final Pharaohs** – Tyldesley deals with the final years of Egyptian history, from Alexander to Cleopatra VII in a straightforward and concise manner. This is a time which is confusing and somewhat repetitive, with Ptolemy murdering Cleopatra/Ptolemy/Arsinoe or Berinice (all that needs changing is the number of the ruler of each name) but this is presented in a clear way, picking out the important aspects of each of the reigns. The text boxes are interesting, containing texts from contemporary authors as well as time-lines which are invaluable.

**The Epilogue** – a brief summary of the Roman annexation of Egypt, and the gradual loss of knowledge to read the language of the Egyptians. She makes an interesting point about the Egyptian view of their own past which was a series of cycles rather than a linear progression of kings, which is the modern take on history,