
Naguib Kanawati’s volume is intended for the general, interested public. It features a lengthy discursive survey of Egyptian Old Kingdom (Dynasties IV-VI) material, including the basic facets of this great archaic civilization. The non-initiated will learn from the effectively presented outline of Egyptian tomb architecture and the accompanying scenes and decorations (ch.2). Useful colour photographs supplement the text, in addition to a plethora of line drawings. Mummies are arrayed in all of their gruesome glory, pictures included. Thus Kanawati’s approach is straightforward; and if at times it is not intellectually challenging, it will thoroughly satisfy the expectations of the broadest audience for Egyptology.

Here one will not find the German School’s reevaluation—indeed reinterpretation—of Archaic and Old Kingdom Egypt, such as the concept of the ‘Tomb as School’ from Jan Assmann and his Heidelberg colleagues. Personally, I missed a discussion of Old Kingdom narrative relief; but these sequences were not yet *de rigueur* in the private tombs of Dynasties V to VIII. Instead, the author concentrates, partly through drawings but also in the text, upon the later epochs of Egyptian civilization; and that being the case, a firmer structure would have been an improvement.

As is well known, we cannot compare the Old Kingdom with the New. From early Dynasty XVIII onwards, the sun cult redefined the concept of the tomb. The stelae set up by the tomb owners inside their sepulchers manifest their beliefs. (I am referring to the New Solar Theology of Dynasty XVIII and not to the later faith of the Aten.)

Nonetheless, the standard scenes of fishing, fowling, sowing and reaping have been carefully evaluated, although a ‘meta-analysis’ of narrative structure might also have been incorporated. This had been the purpose of W. Stevenson Smith’s *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East* (New Haven, 1965). Though of a limited nature, it was noble in its conservative and museological way. No Panofsky or Gombrich was he!
Subsequently, we have had two German publications covering New Kingdom narrative art, albeit of a military nature and based on the royal depictions rather than representations in private tombs. A gap still remains in our studies, and Kanawati's views on the subject would have been appreciated by those who are familiar with his scholarship.

The concept of the tomb as a 'House of Life' is well-known to the educated public, and it is useful that Kanawati explains how these shrines served both the owners and their descendants. He anticipates and meets a need for general information without which the average reader might have been lost in the myriad streams of Egyptian religious and philosophical thought. Funerary rites are likewise covered, and the onlooker—this work is extensively illustrated—will be left with a heightened awareness of the intensely religious outlook of these people.

However, neither morality nor ethics are Kanawati's concerns. He does not address the latest academic debates. Rather, his interests derive from the archaeological sphere. The aim of this book was to provide a useful, judiciously detailed compendium of material that is accepted within Egyptological scholarship. Since his objective was more than fulfilled, we applaud the author for his ability and perseverance.

Anthony Spalinger
University of Auckland