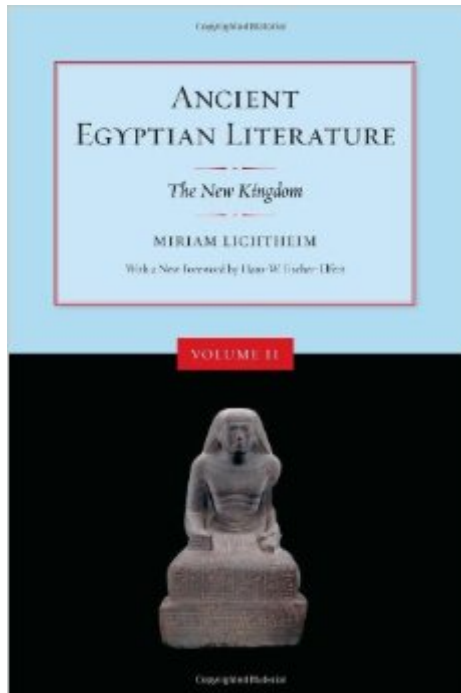


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Ancient Egyptian Literature: Volume II: The New Kingdom



Synopsis

First published in 1973 – and followed by Volume II in 1976 and Volume III in 1980 – this anthology has assumed classic status in the field of Egyptology and portrays the remarkable evolution of the literary forms of one of the worldâ™s earliest civilizations. Volume I outlines the early and gradual evolution of Egyptian literary genres, including biographical and historical inscriptions carved on stone, the various classes of literary works written with pen on papyrus, and the mortuary literature that focuses on life after death. Introduced with a new foreword by Antonio Loprieno. Volume II shows the culmination of these literary genres within the single period known as the New Kingdom (1550-1080 B.C.). With a new foreword by Hans-W. Fischer-Elfert. Volume III spans the last millennium of Pharaonic civilization, from the tenth century B.C. to the beginning of the Christian era. With a new foreword by Joseph G. Manning.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Finally, a collection of good and readable translations of Egyptian literature which both the layperson and the expert will find useful. Lichtheim has given the academic world a much needed reference with the translations of the text and a good introduction to the social history of the creators and the circumstances of the texts being recovered.

Having had concerns about Lichtheim's first volume of ancient Egyptian literature Ancient Egyptian

Literature: Volume I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms, I was wary of the second volume. I am much more pleased with volume 2, particularly with the breadth of the selection Lichtheim's explanation and placement in time of the documents has always been stellar.) The inscriptions from private tombs and royal monuments are pretty standard fare (the Egyptians were predictable in their funerary inscriptions) - although the inclusion of the obelisk inscription by Hatsehsut and the stelae by Thutmose III make for a marvelous contrast. Similarly her inclusion of hymns and prayers from Amenhotep IV (Akhenaton) and Horemheb as well as selections from the Book of the Dead were "must have" documents in any collection of primary documents from the New Kingdom. What sets this anthology apart from others The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry; Third Edition were the final few chapters. These chapters (on "Instructions", "Be a scribe", "Love poems", and "Tales") provide a much more honest look at life in New Kingdom Egypt, and put a much more human (fragile, flawed, and most certainly less idealized) face on the Egyptians, which is so contrary to the "public" face the Egyptians typically showed on monuments and in tombs. While the Middle Kingdom is usually considered the "golden age" of ancient Egyptian literature, I'll take these heartfelt snapshots of life over what was written in the Middle Kingdom anyday.

Ms. Lichtheim has done a wonderful job in her book, Ancient Egyptian Literature: New Kingdom! Her selections cover a wide range. She has a small introduction to each piece, besides the introduction to the book itself. Her placement of notes at the end of each selection is a godsend, no more madly turning to the back searching for the appropriate notes! An excellent choice for those interested in Egyptian history, or simply those wanting a better understanding of ancient literature. Buy it, it's worth it!

This is an admirable volume II, consistent with what made volume I my first choice. In this volume, there are monumental inscriptions, instructional literature (including some very amusing works on the scribal life), hymns (including the great hymn to Osiris, and the Akhenaten hymns to the Sun), selections from the 'Book of the Dead', some prose tales and a factual narrative. Introductions and notes are terrific. Ka's are left untranslated.

Another great collection by Lichtheim. It carries forward with everything that made her first anthology effective : a great introduction, footnotes and clear translations. I have nothing but good things to say about this book, and I look forward to the third volume.

One must bear in mind that this is a book that attempts to present the words of the Egyptian rulers (kings, queens, priests, and other key members of the elite) during the 18th & 19th & 20th dynasties that formed what is known as the New Kingdom period of ancient Egypt (approx. 1570-1070 BC). Not only is there a good organizational presentation of the literature that for obvious space reasons must be selective, there is a decent attempt to provide a good range of all the types of literature composed during that 500 year period. A daunting task that is well done by Miriam Lichtheim. She provides generally good citations of the sources and additional brief explanatory notes. This book is for the reader who has at least a moderate knowledge level of Egyptian history during this period and the personalities that populate it.

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