

merveilleux, sa dignité au niveau national et un certain rayonnement hors frontières.

Il est impossible de s'arrêter ici sur les différentes questions soulevées par la recherche patiente et intelligente de B. Voile. Permettons-nous toutefois quelques observations de détail. Dans les quelque 23 pages de la *Bibliographie* (pp. 259-282), dû à la concentration de noms et de titres arabes, on note mieux les lacunes de la translittération. Par ailleurs, qui connaît le système de l'anthroponymie arabe moderne et l'importance du nom propre pour identifier les personnes, ne peut pas abrégé systématiquement ce dernier. De plus, on ne devine pas le critère du choix du deuxième ou troisième élément onomastique pour l'ordre alphabétique des auteurs. Signalons, en passant, que la communication sans date du regretté René-Georges (*sic*) Coquin à la Société E. Renan, signalée en page 254, note 7, doit être celle publiée dans *POC*, 38 (1988) sous le titre de « Réflexions sur le lexique arabe biblique des coptes ». A propos du Synaxaire, si important pour les questions soulevées au chapitre 4, on ne peut comparer tout simplement les deux éditions autochtones modernes en excluant les éditions savantes antérieures de la *PO* et du *CSCO* (et même la version éthiopienne qui se base sur une tradition manuscrite différente...), ou encore négliger les études critiques sur sa composition et les successives éditions, telle que l'expose, p. ex., R.-G. Coquin dans la double entrée « Synaxarion, Coptic Arabic » et « Synaxarion, Ethiopian » de la *Coptic Encyclopedia* (1992). Un article publié de la plume du même auteur, paru postérieurement (in *Études Coptes I*, éd. par J.-M. Rosenstiehl, Leuven, 1994), montre toute la complexité de la question. Dans la nomenclature des saints, le fait de retenir la forme arabe de certains d'entre eux contre l'usage régulier de la forme française pourrait faire penser à des saints autochtones, alors qu'il s'agit de saints universels. Nous regretterons, finalement, que l'index se réduise à deux pages.

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WELSBY, Derek A., *The Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia. Pagans, Christians and Muslims along the Middle Nile* (London: The British Museum Press, 2002), 296 pp. ISBN: 0-7141-1947-4

Derek Welsby, Assistant Keeper in the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum with special responsibility for Sudanese antiquities, Honorary Secretary of the Sudan Archaeological Research Society (S.A.R.S.), field director of excavations at Kawa, Soba East, the SARS Northern Dongola Reach Survey Project, and the SARS Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project, is perhaps the most qualified person to undertake the task of compiling

a handbook of the History and Archaeology of Medieval Nubia. So, after publishing *The Kingdom of Kush* (1996), he also composed the *Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia*, with the subtitle *Pagans, Christians and Muslims along the Middle Nile* (2002).

Welsby's handbook about Medieval Sudanese History and Archaeology is divided into 11 chapters that follow the chronological order of events while structuring at the same time the contents according to functional criteria.

The first chapter is a general *introduction* to the subject of the handbook: which is the geographical area concerned and who are its inhabitants; what is the climate and environment of the place; what are our sources for its past and how can we establish chronological patterns in order to understand the time we are referring to? In other words, Welsby achieves in 7 pages to clear the time and space of his research, as well as the restrictions imposed to it by the nature of the object treated. The first conclusion is that archaeology is the main path to understanding the medieval kingdoms of Nubia, but also that there is no abrupt change between the ancient and medieval cultures of Kush and/or Nubia.

Thus, Chapter 2 deals with *the emergence of the Nubian kingdoms*, touching upon the origins of the Nubians and the end of the Kushite state, as a result of the struggles of the Meroitic central power against the Blemmyes and the Nobadae as well as of the concurrence to the powerful and wealthy Roman Empire. Despite the problems posed by the sources, the formation of the states of Nobadia, Makuria and Alwa and the transformation of the Nubian hegemony can be detected by the archaeological record bearing upon the so-called post-Meroitic culture and its subsequent evolution into an Early Christian culture by the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In this subchapter one can find some of the most detailed territorial maps of the medieval kingdoms of Nubia.

*The arrival and impact of Christianity* is the subject of the third chapter. The introduction of the new faith to the Middle Nile Region is the best recorded event for all the centuries of the medieval kingdoms of Nubia. This is mainly due to the fact that the Mediterranean Christian Empire of Constantinople played a very prominent role in the official integration of the Sudan into Christianity. So, although already in the Acts of the Apostles there is mention of a high official of the Kushite state being a Christian (the famous story of the eunuch of Candace) and subsequently rulers of the Northern provinces and states of the Middle Nile seem to have developed a sympathy for the Christian faith, it is only at the time of Justinian and Theodora that, according to our sources, the conversion of Nubia must have taken place. Still, most of them seem to be subservient to political or doctrinal parties of the times and it is thus through the archaeological evidence for Christianity in Nubia that one can secure the correctness of the speculations deriving from the

written sources. Although it is difficult to be certain whether the latest pagan and the earliest Christian graves pre- or post-date the arrival of the official missionaries, it is the construction of churches and the changes in burial customs that are the clearest indicators of the arrival of Christianity. The typology of graves and rituals presented derives mainly from the sites excavated in the North and the capitals of the two southern kingdoms (Old Dongola and Soba), and is heavily based on comparison with the post-Meroitic context, but it still holds great value for anybody trying to have some strong points of reference for their work on the field.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the relations of *the Nubians and their neighbours, from the seventh to the early thirteenth centuries*. It is a chapter consisting of information deriving mainly from the *Oriental Sources Concerning Nubia*, collected and translated by Fr. Giovanni Vantini, published in 1975 as field-manual for excavators at the request of the Society for Nubian Studies and sponsored by the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw and the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. The first Arab invasions and the Baqt are perhaps the most discussed matters of the medieval history of Nubia. Until today certain questions are still left unanswered, such as whether the Nubians helped the Byzantines defend Christian Egypt against the Arab invasions [cf. Welsby's negative opinion with the positive one expressed by Gamal Mohamed Ahmed El-Tahir in his unpublished doctoral thesis in Greek, *Byzantino-Nubica; the contribution of Sudanese in the defence of Byzantine Egypt*, Ioannina 1994). As for the military conflicts in the eighth to twelfth centuries Welsby was obliged to refer only to events concerning Makuria and the annexed kingdom of Nobadia, now a province of Makuria under the name Maris. The main episodes are the story of Mohammed Abdallah El-Omari in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and the campaign of Shams Ed-Dawla Turanshah in 1172-1173. Nubia has also been recorded in the Arabic sources because it had served as a refuge for the Muslim outcasts and threatened princes of Islam. A very interesting aspect of the medieval kingdoms of Nubia but one that can hardly be touched upon is the relations with the peoples to the east and west of the Nile. Even about the army of the Nubians, this most important factor in the societies of the medieval Middle Nile, the information is scant and mainly derives from the graves of the X-Group and post-Meroitic cultures; and once again Makuria is much better documented than Alwa.

These societies are best mirrored during *the heyday of the Nubian kingdoms*. This period concerns the 400-500 years between the Baqt treaty in 652 and the rise of the Ayyubids in the later twelfth century and is the subject of chapter 5. After a detailed discussion on the frontiers of the Nubian kingdoms, Welsby ventures to describe the people exercising control in these territories: the royal families and their symbols of power, the administration

and the officials, the churches and monasteries. The population of Nubia is examined last but not least, since the general idea conveyed from the sources is that in the heyday of the medieval kingdoms Nubia was a much more prosperous country than the one observed by the earliest European visitors in the nineteenth century.

Chapter 6 is thus logically concerned with the *settlements* organized by this population. After some general rules about settlement patterns and their application in the case of Nubia, with all its peculiarities such as climatic changes, geographical restrictions or partially excavated sites, Welsby proceeds to the most famous cases of excavated or located settlements of the Middle Nile Region, namely the metropolises of Faras, Old Dongola and Soba East; the major centres of Qasr Ibrim and Jebel Adda; among the lower-ranking settlements in Nobadia and in the Makurian province of Maris, Arminna West, Debeira West, Abdullah Nirqi, Meinarti and Serra East; finally, Hambukol as the exception from the kingdoms of Makuria and Alwa, since it is the only settlement south of the Second Cataract –apart from the metropolises– that can be discussed in some detail. The existence of sites away from the river can only be speculated through the location of “medieval” cemeteries. Thus, the function of urban settlements as a system, as well as the function of an urban centre and its rural hinterland, are very hard to evaluate,. The main aspect of a settlement that can be examined closely, both individually and in a system form, are the fortifications; these have been subdivided into two categories, according to the two most turbulent periods of the Christian kingdoms of Nubia: that of sites fortified during the early medieval period and that of sites fortified during the late medieval period.

Fortifications are indeed among the most impressive monuments to have survived from medieval Nubia, the other main category being the churches. In Welsby’s introduction to chapter 7, dedicated to *Architecture*, a very fine analysis is being given for the absence south of the Second Cataract of monumental architectural remains in great numbers; but in no way does his analysis accuse the cultural mentality of the Nubians. One way or the other, the architectural remains are the major attractions to the archaeologist and undoubtedly for the Christian kingdoms of medieval Nubia the churches were the most prominent feature on the landscape. Thus, starting with the pre-Christian Nubian temples and examining the impact of Christianity, the architectural layout of a ‘typical’ Nubian church is being explained. Then, the classification proposed by Adams is being exposed (cf. Figure 62 on p. 156), namely the Type T of the converted temples, the earliest free-standing churches in Nobadia or Type 0, the basilican form Type 1 and 2 churches – Type 2 being called Early Nubian –, the 3 subcategories of Type 3 churches of Classic Christian – more often than not with a centrally placed dome –, the

smaller Late Nubian church form of Type 4 and finally the Epitype 5, whose aisles are barely wide enough for a man to turn around, according to Adams' description. Since the end of the Aswan High Dam rescue campaign, the focus of archaeological activity has shifted southwards. So, being aware that in a sense he is testing the validity of Adams' classification which was based on findings from Lower Nubia, Welsby presents the churches of Makuria and Alwa. It becomes clear that Old Dongola was a major architectural center exercising great influence on Nobadia and perhaps also on Alwa, although in the latter case it might have been the other way round. As far as foreign influences on Nubian church architecture are concerned, it is readily recognized that Egypt, Syria/Palestine, Armenia, Constantinople and Ethiopia must have played such a role for the Christian kingdoms of the Middle Nile. Welsby then proceeds to examine the functional church types in Christian Nubia. He recognizes: a) community churches; b) cathedrals; c) monastic churches; d) memorial churches; e) double cathedrals and churches; f) chapels; and g) baptisteries. Later on, he briefly examines the architecture of the monastic complexes, but this is already part of his presentation of the 'official' buildings in medieval Nubia, where he also includes the 'palatial' buildings, such as the famous mosque at Old Dongola. Domestic architecture in medieval Nubia is characterized by diversity and thus it is very difficult to be classified. Nevertheless, as is shown on figure 168, Welsby tries to describe the Nubian house types and initiate the reader to one of the most interesting and useful parts of his handbook, the one consecrated to the building techniques. This, together with the concluding subchapter on metrology, can make of the *Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia* a most useful tool in the hands of any excavator in the Sudan.

After examining the Nubian environment, the people and their material creations, Welsby turns to the understanding of the laws governing the Nubian society of medieval times: Chapter 8 deals with *The Economy* in the Middle Nile Region. The mainstay of the Nubian local economy was agriculture. The different methods of irrigation, the variety of fertile lands along the Nile and the balance of international trade are all factors interrelated with the crops in fashion in the ancient and medieval Sudan. Animal husbandry was certainly practiced and livestock would have been the mainstay of the nomadic economy. Fishing and hunting were certainly common and the mention that "the evidence from the service area of the monastery on Kom H at Old Dongola indicates that the main source of meat there was the gazelle and that domesticated species were less well represented", is characteristic of Welsby's way of offering to his readers insights into the medieval Sudanese life. Manufacturing has been an important factor for the economies of all the ancient and medieval societies and such is the case for Nubia as well. Welsby

discusses textiles, pottery, mineral resources and metalwork, glass, jewellery, basketry, mats, cordage, gourds and woodwork, footwear and leather goods, clothing and other textiles. He then proceeds to theoretical matters concerning trade in general, so as to integrate in a well-understood pattern the information deriving from the sources concerning Nubia: literary and archaeological. Finally, there comes some sound speculation about the sources and volume of Nubia's international trade and about trade with Southern Sudan, Kordofan, Darfur and the Ethiopian Highlands.

Chapter 9 is dedicated to *art, language and literacy*. Welsby accurately describes the lack of continuity in artistic expression, bringing as examples the new forms in architectural sculpture: bases, columns and capitals, lintels, arches and jambs, balusters, window grills and friezes; the new symbols decorating tombstones; the rarity of sculpture in the round. The use of mosaics was also something new, although the most characteristic works of art from Christian Nubia were undoubtedly the wall paintings, either in churches, in monasteries and other religious structures or in secular buildings. Some portable works of art and manuscript illustrations that have survived until today exhibit an elevated degree of artistic creation in medieval Nubia. Finally, he presents in some length the pottery decoration since this is by far the most common artistic finding coming from excavations of any period in the Sudan. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the linguistic situation in medieval Nubia, with an effort to comprehend the different functions of languages (Old Nubian, Greek and Coptic), the degree of literacy and the materials for writing in the medieval kingdoms of Nubia. The only thing to be regretted is that his book has the character of a general introduction and thus there is not enough space for a richer photographic documentation (this remark is also valid for other chapters of the book, mainly 7 and 8).

After the rise in power of the Ayyubids, the situation in Nubia seemed to be in a constant decline. Welsby discusses the sources for the late thirteenth century in chapter 10, which he characteristically entitles *The collapse of the Nubian kingdoms*. The main events are given in a chronological order that clarifies the disintegration of Makuria (Table 5). Some last touches of grandeur seem to color Welsby's narration, when he discusses the fate of the kingdoms of Dotawo and of Alwa.

Finally, Welsby concludes his handbook with a Postscript, where he discusses some points of continuity between the medieval and modern Nubia as experienced by an archaeologist or a discerning traveller. This postscript does not mention the continuity in architecture along the Nubian Nile.

For the quality of Welsby's work in general, it is characteristic that we have noted only three mistakes in the English text (all after page 231). Besides, there are two more in the transcription of some Greek words: in page 52 Hagia

Ioannes must be corrected to Hagios Ioannes, and in page 66 the name of Michael is of course MIXAHA and not MIXAEA, which could never give the value of the cryptogram XIIΘ=689. Nevertheless, these are small and unimportant details in such a work. What is important is that Welsby produced a well-structured, clearly expressed, accurate and detailed introduction to the culture of the medieval kingdoms of Nubia, that could serve both as a first step to the understanding of the Christian era of Sudan, and as a handbook for the excavator of the Middle Nile Region. An appendix with the Kings of the Blemmyan and Nubian kingdoms in the Nile Valley, as well as the necessary compartment of notes, a glossary, a full bibliography and an index, conclude perfectly this priceless publication.

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YOUNG, Frances – AYRES, Lewis – LOUTH, Andrew (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 538 pp. ISBN: 0-521-46083-2

La producción literaria cristiana de los s. II-V, escrita mayormente en griego, latín y siríaco marca el período más importante de la patrística, no sólo por la calidad y autoridad de sus escritores, sino también por ser los siglos en que se configura y consolida la sabiduría cristiana en un medio social cuyas grandes y diferentes vicisitudes la hacen en extremo paradigmática. A este período se refiere el presente volumen, en el que han colaborado, junto a sus editores, un buen número de patrólogos de diferentes universidades anglosajonas: Lewis Ayres (Emory University), John Behr (St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary), Sebastian P. Brock (University of Oxford), Henry Chadwick (University of Cambridge, Emeritus), John David Dawson (Haverford College), Susan Ashbrook Harvey (Brown University), Ronald E. Heine (Puget Sound Christian College), David G. Hunter (Iowa State University), Andrew Louth (University of Durham), R.A. Markus (University of Nottingham, Emeritus), Oliver Nicholson (University of Minnesota), Richard A. Norris, Jr. (The Union Theological Seminary, Emeritus), Karen Jo Torjesen (Claremont Graduate University), Mark Vessey (University of British Columbia), Frances Young (University of Birmingham).

La obra está precedida de un prefacio de los editores, a lo que siguen dos listas de abreviaturas, y una muy breve tabla cronológica de la literatura cristiana (pp. XXII-XXV) distribuida en tres columnas en las que aparecen los escritores, las obras y algunos de los principales acontecimientos sociales, políticos y religiosos. A ello sigue un mapa, a dos páginas, del Imperio romano a finales del s. IV d.C.