

BRIEF REVIEWS

Manana Khvedelidze. Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt. Karchkhadze Publishers, 2014, 603 pp.

The Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt is a belated gift to Georgian readers interested in Egyptian civilization. This comprehensive compendium compiled by a single author is not a mere alphabetical account of historical events and concepts but an analytical overview, as it foregrounds the internal links and conveys to the reader the unique nature of the great civilization. Each article included in the encyclopedia, regardless of the subject, plays an important role in the comprehensive coverage of ancient Egyptian civilization.

Zurab Kiknadze

Kalistrate Tsintsadze. Sermons and Speeches. Prepared for publication, introduced and supplied with a research note by Nugzar Papuashvili. Ed. Zurab Kiknadze. Universali Publishers, Tbilisi, 2014, 303 pp.

Sermons and speeches delivered by Kalistrate (Tsintsadze), Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia at the start of the 20th century, address his contemporary challenges of Christian culture and life and maintain relevance even in the present, in response to ongoing religious controversies.

Tamar Meskhi

Zaal Andronikashvili, Tatjana Petzer, Andreas Pflitsch, Martin Tremel (eds.), *Die Ordnung pluraler Kulturen. Figurationen europäischer Kulturgeschichte, vom Osten her gesehen [The Order of Plural Cultures. Figurations of European Cultural History as Seen from the East], Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung Berlin, Kulturverlag Kadmos, Berlin, 2013, 410 p.*

This anthology aims to explore the broad cultural-symbolic context, resp. foundations of the recent major geopolitical phenomenon called “the shift of Europe towards the East”. While systematically refraining from a socio-political analysis of this shift, the contributors claim that negotiations around borders and, in general, around the ordering and re-ordering of common spaces finds multifarious expressions in most diverse cultural phenomena, whether literary, vestimentary, visual, affective, legal or supra-(or pre-)legal, and that these acts of ordering are not mere cultural “envelopes”. On the contrary, they fully participate in the permanent (re)distribution of spaces and identities to which a purely political perspective could hardly do justice.

On the one hand, the articles reunited in the anthology treat various attempts within Western European cultural history to introduce “order” in the colourful and often frightening plurality of spaces and cultures situated at its southern and eastern margins, be it Arab, Jewish, Slavic, Caucasian or Turkish/Ottoman. On the other hand, they consider attempts within these same eastern, “marginal” cultures aimed at inscribing themselves in or demarcating themselves from the space of whatever may be meant by the highly equivocal term “Europe”. Thus, by providing descriptions of singular cultural facts and artefacts, the contributors of this book present “Europe” and the “European” as something that escapes not only all sorts of filiation to one single, “pure” identity and provenance, but also a facile dualism between Order, i.e. Europe, and Chaos, i.e. its Eastern Other(s). Europe is seen here rather as a simultaneously active and receptive open space of permanent negotiations, a space experimentally approached from the perspective of five (mutually independent) orders – textual orders, visual orders, vestimentary orders, affective orders and ground orders.

Luka Nakhutsrishvili

Alain de Botton. Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer's Guide to the Uses of Religion. Penguin Books 2012, 320p.

Alain de Botton's *Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer's Guide to the Uses of Religion*, a brilliant contribution to the contemporary discourse on religion, has attracted increasing attention from the academic community as well as the wider public since its publication in 2012. Consisting of ten chapters, this book discusses the positive effects of religious mindset and practices, and points out how secular community could benefit from spiritual values religion promotes. While considering himself an atheist, De Botton confronts the so-called 'New Atheists' who see religion only as hampering the development of civilization and neglect the benevolent influence it has.

David Tinikashvili