process it has been fascinating to watch throughout) the steady deepening and consolidation of his scholarly expertise in all aspects of Aristophanic studies. For excellent examples see his notes on 197f. (contrasting class reactions to the desirability of naval rearmament), 202f. (Thrasybulus), 652 (shadows and sundials), 729-30 (choral interludes) and 1113 (identity of the δεσποινας, ‘mistress’), a discussion which also reminds us of Sommerstein’s skill at that most difficult Aristophanic game, speech-allotment, something materially aided by his hands-on involvement with play-production. (Any would-be director will find this edition a treasure-trove.) His translation properly aims for *utilitas* rather than *deco* but still manages to achieve the occasional neat rendering, for example, at 720 for ‘the p(r)ick of the young men’. Ten down and one to go: Aristophanes is lucky to have so devoted, erudite and witty a modern celebrant.

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Students of the early history of Africa include romantics ‘who fill their charts of the African past with tales of Sheba and Ophir, of strange Phoenicians building cities in Rhodesia, and mysterious peoples “from the north” who came and stayed but altogether vanished’, enthusiasts such as Emil Torday, who dated the chronology of the kings of Congo by the solar eclipse of 1680, and imperialists who believe that ancient Africa was an island of primitive savagery in a world of ever-increasing enlightenment and progress. Burstein, an ancient historian from Los Angeles with an established publication record in the field of Greek relations with north-east Africa, does not belong to any of these categories; instead he has made the evidence for the kingdoms of Kush and Axum available in readable translations so that English readers can discover for themselves the fragmentary but growing body of source material for these impressive civilisations.

Information about this region in antiquity is tenuous, despite the fact that its monarchs conquered Egypt (Kush between 712-664 BC) and troubled Rome (Axum in AD 298); Burstein’s selection of twenty-seven short texts covers a chronological span of approximately one thousand years and encompasses the historical periods of

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1 The quotation is from B. Davidson, *Old Africa Rediscovered* (London 1960) 21f., who also refers (p. 25) to the researches of Emil Torday, *On the Trail of the Bushongo* (London 1925) and the comments of imperial British governors of Africa (p. 20). The date of the book is underlined by the reference to Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, but similar attitudes to the African past persist.

Egyptian and Greek explorations to the south beginning in the third millennium BC (pp. 23-52), Roman imperial hegemony in the first and second centuries (pp. 55-75), Axumite regional supremacy in the third century (pp. 79-10), and the Christianisation of Nubia up to the end of the sixth century (pp. 103-31). Nevertheless, the present collection represents a significant increase in the range of texts included in it by comparison with what was previously available in various English translations and conveniently gathers rather inaccessible material together under one cover. The book has the added benefit of being produced by an experienced editor with a good knowledge of the Greek sources. There are, inevitably, still omissions; I would, for instance, have liked to have seen the story of the apostle Philip’s conversion of the Ethiopian ambassador (Acts 18.27-40) included. There are also the references to the Blemmyes and Axumites in Vopiscus’ life of Aurelian (33.4), paralleled in Heliodorus’ fiction, the \textit{Ethiopian Story} (10.27.1), though generally the latter should not be taken as a significant historical source for Axumite history. Other collections feature texts not included by Burstein, such as the correspondence between the emperor Constantius and Ezana (Migne, \textit{PG} 25 coll. 636f.). There appears to be a need for greater co-ordination of scholarship relating to the compilation of source material for the history of this region in antiquity.

Interest in cultural relations between the Mediterranean and Africa has increased dramatically in the last decades of the twentieth century. This has been due not only to the heat generated by the debate over Bernal’s \textit{Black Athena}, but also to progress in the archaeology and historiography of the hinterland of the horn of Africa, despite the instability of the area in modern times. Indeed, in his valuable introduction (pp. 3-21), Burstein regards the reconstruction of the history of Kush as

\footnote{3 Compare the dozen or so documents collected by B. Davidson, \textit{African Civilization Revisited} (Trenton 1991) 54-73. The unreliability of African historians in matters of Greek literature may be illustrated by Davidson’s note (p. 59) describing the prose writer Heliodorus as a poet whose work might have illustrated Meroitic life. A full, scholarly edition of the sources for the history of this region is given by T. Eide, T. Hägg, R. H. Pierce and L. Török (edd.), \textit{Fontes Historiae Nubiorum: Textual Sources for the History of the Middle Nile Region between the Eighth Century BC and the Sixth Century AD} 1-2 (Bergen 1996).

\footnote{4 Cf. B. Hendrickx, \textit{Official Documents Written in Greek Illustrating the Ancient History of Nubia and Ethiopia: 3rd century BC-6th Century AD} (Johannesburg 1984). The terms ‘Axumite’, ‘Nubian’, ‘Meroitic’ and ‘Ethiopian’ are, of course, hard to use with precision, but concerns with relevance may have determined the omission of some texts.

\footnote{5 Besides the works mentioned by Burstein in his bibliography, the reader should note D. Phillipson’s authoritative work, \textit{Ancient Ethiopia} (London 1998), which contains much of interest on Meroe and Aksum. Reference to J. Romm, \textit{The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought} (Princeton 1992) would also have been enlightening.

‘one of the triumphs of twentieth-century historiography’ (p. 5). It is no surprise that the civilisations of the Nile and its tributaries should be the main focus of this revival. Not only did this river provide the Mediterranean peoples with economic access to central Africa (and vice versa), otherwise prevented by the Sahara desert, but it is also situated adjacent to the Red Sea, the gateway to the Indian Ocean and the trade routes to the east. Consequently, it is not entirely unexpected, although admittedly rather incongruous, to find a bronze head of Augustus looted from Meroe in 25 BC from the same region as later Indian and even Chinese artefacts.\textsuperscript{7} Archaeology is not the concern of this book but the rulers of Axum from the second to the fourth centuries were clearly aware of the importance of the region for international trade, as Ezana’s inscription recording the punishment of a tribe that had raided a merchant caravan (pp. 89f.) aptly illustrates.

This collection provides many insights into the culture of Kush and Axum. The complexity of relations between the Roman authorities in Egypt and their southern neighbours is neatly illustrated by the fragment of Priscus’ account of the treaty (c. 453 AD) between Maximinus, the Roman governor of the Thebaid, and the Blemmyes and Nobatai, allowing them access to the temple of Isis and its statue of the goddess ‘in accordance with the ancient law’ (pp. 106f.). The hymn to the Nubian Sun god, Mandulis, by Paccius Maximus, a Roman soldier of Nubian descent, uses Greek poetic convention in referring to Calliope, Pythian oracles and the Muses (pp. 66-68). The reader will be reminded of the Greek education of the Axumite king, Zoscales, in the \textit{Periplus Maris Erythraei} (5): ‘miserly in his ways and always striving for more, but otherwise upright, and acquainted with Greek literature’ (p. 81). Local knowledge of Greek is also attested by the many inscriptions in the region that use the Greek alphabet rather than any of the indigenous writing systems. Agatharchides’ description of the harsh conditions in the Nubian gold mines (pp. 31-36) and the contract for the sale of a twelve year-old Nubian slave girl to enable Isidora ‘to acquire, to possess, to use her and, with God willing, her children’ are shocking reminders of the iniquitous and long-standing exploitation of slaves in ancient northeast Africa. The trade in human-beings from Nubia and further south is repeatedly emphasised in this collection.

Some of the translations have been done especially for this book; others are revisions of existing versions, such as Schoff’s in the case of \textit{Periplus Maris Erythraei}.\textsuperscript{8} Occasionally, the use of earlier versions results in quaint English (e.g. ‘wine, beer and flesh’, p. 71; ‘the Nile resembles the letter N’, p. 29: ‘the Nile resembles the Greek letter v’ would be more helpful; and ‘in Aithiopia there are many islands’ has lost the necessary qualification ‘in the river’, p. 35). The translations are clearly aimed at a general readership: line numbers of the original editions have been

\textsuperscript{7} For the importance of Axum in international trade, see Phillipson [5] 63-70.

omitted throughout; details are omitted concerning the exact length of longer documents from which excerpts have been taken—only about half of the sixth century contract for the sale of a Nubian slave girl has been given (pp. 118-20) but this has not been indicated; abridgements, such as those of Strabo and Diodorus of Agatharchides, have been blended together to make a more readable text; and information concerning the source of each document has been relegated to endnotes. The result is a useful introductory text that students will find attractive but they should also be encouraged to discover for themselves the complex transmission of much of the material and the difficulties of its interpretation. Information of this kind might have been provided in the notes, rather than being omitted entirely.

The book could have been improved in a number of ways: the illustrations that accompany the texts appear to have fallen victim to modern publishing technology, with the misleading result that Sidebotham’s photograph of the royal pyramids at Meroe (facing p. 11) looks as though it was taken in moonlight; the map (facing p. 3) is regrettably deficient as it fails (to take just one example) to identify the location of the river Atbara, which is mentioned in the text; I find the renumbering of notes (but not documents) within each of the four sections, without any indication of the change, rather confusing; the notes should possibly be fuller and more numerous; the introduction needs to refer more to the texts that follow; and the bibliography at the end of the book does not include references made in the notes.9 These minor criticisms aside, this is a readable and indeed fascinating collection of texts that should prove to be extremely useful to students entering newly-devised courses (some of which are already running in South African universities) on the cultural linkage between the ancient African civilisations of Meroe and Axum and the Mediterranean. This would appear to be a text to herald the recently much-discussed concept of an African Renaissance to a wide general readership.

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This work consists of an introduction, nine papers read at a conference held in Lampeter in Wales in 1996 and an index. In the Introduction (pp. vii-xv) Hopwood traces some differences between the ancient and the modern (Western) concept of crime. The conference was based on the assumption that important insights can be gained into the structure and development of a society by examining the forms of crime in it. A major conclusion emerges that organised crime flourishes best in a society where there is a large gap between the rich and the poor. The most prominent

9 There are very few misprints in the book, but note ‘in the late first or early first century’ (p. 66).