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When the Greek historian and traveler Herodotus marveled at the Great Sphinx in the fifth century BCE, it was already nearly 2,000 years old. One of the common themes in this compact history of both ancient and modern Egypt is the sheer antiquity of Egyptian civilization. Tignor is professor of modern and contemporary history emeritus at Princeton University. Given the incredible length of Egyptian history, he has wisely chosen to concentrate on broad themes of continuity and change. He avoids, for the most part, a who-what-where-when chronology, which would have been inappropriate and interminable in a short survey. Still, Tignor does provide interesting profiles and speculations on some seminal figures, including the failed monotheist Akhenaten, the fabled Cleopatra VII, the nationalist leader Mustafa Kamil, and, of course, Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak.