



Reference Notes

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The Nile River was the lifeblood of ancient Egypt. (Image taken from www.worldbookonline.com)

Digging into Egypt: Our Ancient and Enduring Love Affair with Egypt

Egyptology, as a discipline, grew out of the Enlightenment, though as a people, we have long been enchanted with this ancient culture. True modern Egyptology began with Napoleon’s Egyptian expedition and the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799, which allowed historians to finally understand and translate Hieroglyphics. The tangible artifacts uncovered and the amazing structures left by this culture give us a physical connection to this ancient civilization. Historians who study ancient Egypt, Egyptologists, and those who uncover the physical remains of the culture, archaeologists, have themselves become famous when attached to specific discoveries. Howard Carter, perhaps the most famous Egyptologist of all time, was thrust into the spotlight and annals of history when in November of 1922, along with a team of other historians and locals, he uncovered the tomb of King Tutankhamun. In modern times, Egyptian archaeologist Zahi Hawass (born 1947) has become a figurehead of sorts for the restoration of Egyptian artifacts to Egypt and the continued and scientific

exploration of sites throughout the country.

Egyptologists have separated Egyptian history into unique chronological periods that represent specific eras: the Predynastic Period (5500-3050 BCE), the Early Dynastic Period (3050 -2687 BCE) which includes 2 dynasties, the Old Kingdom (2687-2191 BCE) which includes 4 dynasties, the First Intermediate Period (2190-2061 BCE) which includes 5 dynasties, the Middle Kingdom (2061-1665 BCE) which includes 4 dynasties, the Second Intermediate Period (1664-1569 BCE) which includes 3 dynasties, the New Kingdom (1569-1081 BCE) which includes 3 dynasties, the Third Intermediate Period (1082-725 BCE), the Late Period (724-333 BCE) which includes 8 dynasties, and the Greco-Roman Period (332 BCE – 641 CE) which includes the Macedonian, Ptolemaic, Roman, and Byzantine Era. Though many rulers remain in relative historical obscurity, there are many names from Egyptian history that are as famous today as they were then. While not household names, most people have heard of King Tutankhamun (“King

Tut”), Ramesses II, Alexander the Great, and Cleopatra. These leaders all left their legacy in the sand of Egypt and no small amount of research has been done on their lives.

Beyond historians and archaeologists, Egypt has also attracted conspiracy theorists and individuals with more open perspectives on reality. Though theories no doubt predate the 1968 publication of Eric von Daniken’s *Chariots of the Gods?*, it became the foundation of many of the modern “ancient aliens” theories that claim well-known ancient civilizations were built using alien technology and assistance. These theories are backed up, according to adherents, by evidence in art, literature and by the surges in technological advances made by “primitive” peoples. One of the better known theories regarding the interconnectedness of Egyptian culture and the cosmos is the suggestion by the author Robert Bauval that correlates the positioning of the Great Pyramids of Giza to the constellation of Orion.

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Bauval has also proposed a larger connection between the location of some Egyptian temples and other star formations. Of course, the most famous non-academic theory is the “curse” of King Tut’s tomb; it is also sometimes

known as “The Curse of the Pharaoh” and claims that all who take part in disturbing a tomb (most famously Tutankhamun’s) will come to a bad end. While some who were involved in the 1922 excavation of Tutankhamun’s tomb

did die under unfortunate circumstances, the curse itself remains unsubstantiated by empirical fact.

From history to architecture, literature to dance, religion to myth, our historical obsession with

Egypt is not likely to end any time soon. Thankfully, there is no shortage of resources of all varieties that detail and chronicle this ancient culture. From the academic to the ephemeral, Egypt is at your fingertips.

Pathfinder: Ancient Egypt

Research Notes:

Searching for any topic related to Ancient Egypt, from mummification, to religion and specific historical figures is a fairly painless process. So much has been written about (and sometimes by) Egyptians and Egypt that you will be spoiled for choice. Of course, as with any subject of research, using some discernment in choosing resources is key. First, think about your topic: what do you want to focus on? Because resources abound, you can probably keep your scope fairly narrow. Second, do some research on your authors. Once you have chosen a resource, look at the author or editor. What are their qualifications? Do they have an agenda? Lastly, look at the publication/creation date of your material. Has new research been conducted? With a historical topic you are relatively safe using older sources (sometimes these are the best sources) as our knowledge of the past generally changes slower than scientific, medical, and/or technical areas of

study.

Databases available through Montgomery City-County Public Library:

Gale Biography in Context + Marquis Who's Who® History Reference Center (available through the AVL) EBSCO Host Magazine and Journals National Geographic Magazine Archive FreedomFlix: Ancient Egypt

Suggested Websites:

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/>
<http://www.britishmuseum.org/>
[History.com](http://www.history.com)
[Egyptianmythology.org](http://egyptianmythology.org)
<http://www.thebanmappingproject.com/>

Websites for Children:

<http://discoveringegypt.com/>
<http://www.ducksters.com/history/>

Associations and Universities:

The American Research Center in Egypt: <http://www.arce.org/>

Egypt Exploration Society: <http://www.ees.ac.uk/>
Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology: University of Memphis (<http://www.memphis.edu/egypt/>)

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Romer, John. *A History of Ancient Egypt*. Thomas Dunne Books, New York: 2012.

Fiction:

Given our centuries old fascination with Egypt, it’s no wonder that we can easily see its influence in fiction. Here is a very short list of some fiction with an Egyptian focus.

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