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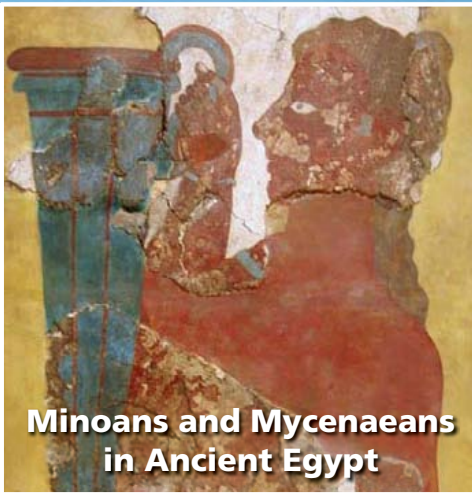
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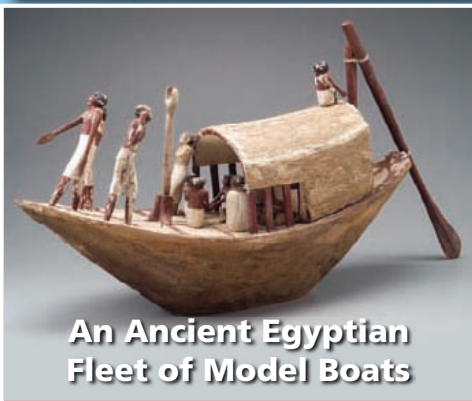
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The History, People and Culture of the Nile Valley

Temples, Tombs and Tourists



Minoans and Mycenaeans in Ancient Egypt



An Ancient Egyptian Fleet of Model Boats



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Family
Tickets to the
Tutankhamun
Exhibition
Dorchester



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The story of the moving and re-erection of the obelisks is well known but always worth re-telling. Introductory chapters cover the symbolism of the obelisk and how they were cut; further chapters look at twenty-eight standing obelisks.

These include the well known Roman obelisks, in Istanbul, Paris, New York and London. It is especially good to see that the obelisk at Kingston Lacy in Dorset in the UK is included, and I was intrigued to see a recently-discovered obelisk now re-erected in Caesarea in Israel.

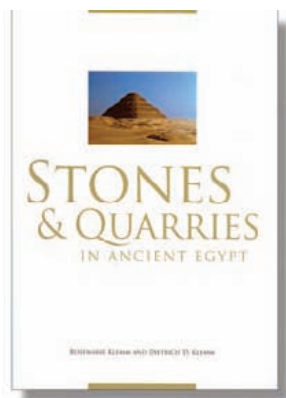
The standing obelisks in Egypt are also included: at Luxor, Karnak, Heliopolis and the one in Cairo, though the obelisk that can be seen at Cairo Airport is, for some reason, not included.

This is a good general guide on the subject, but it is a great shame and a disappointment to me that the illustrations are somewhat sparse. In a book such as this I would expect to see photos of all the obelisks mentioned, especially the one at Caesarea.

Stones and Quarries in Ancient Egypt by Rosmarie and Deitrich Klemm.

Published by The British Museum Press, 2009.

ISBN 978 0 7141 2326 4
Hardback, price £85.



This book, now available in English for the first time, is a comprehensive look at the geology of Egypt and an in-depth study of ancient Egyptian stone quarries.

The ancient Egyptians made the most of their natural resources and every type of stone was used, from the very hardest of rocks to the softest.

This volume begins with an introduction to the geology of Egypt and continues with a chapter on the identi-

fication of rock types, often a problem for Egyptologists.

Succeeding chapters look at each type of rock in turn and at all the quarries known, so, for example under 'Limestone', after a description of the limestones used in Pharaonic times and how and where they were formed, the ways of determining if a rock is limestone are described, along with many illustrations of microscopic examination of the various limestones found. Then a total of forty-four limestone quarries are identified and described in some detail. Maps of the quarries are included and many black-and-white photos of the quarry workings too.

Blocks of stone left *in situ* at many of the sites and/or only partly cut reveal much about the ancient quarrying techniques and how the stonemasons planned their work.

I was especially intrigued by a large block, partly cut out of the rock at Zawiet Sultan in Middle Egypt, where there is an unfinished monumental statue, and only the outline of the standing figure has been inscribed in the prepared rock surface. This work probably dates to the reign of Amenhotep III. Had it been completed, the statue would have been one of the largest monolithic sculptures in Egypt at around twenty metres tall.

The same format is then used for sections on Calcite Alabaster; Sandstone; Granite, Granodiorite and Tonalite from south of Aswan; Rocks of the Eastern Desert; Basalt and Dolerite; Gneiss, Gneissic Anorthosite and Gneissic Gabbro, Gneissic Diorite; and Stones of the Western Oases.

Unfinished work can be seen at many of the quarries and adds to our knowledge of quarrying techniques and how the blocks were moved on land. Shrines and inscriptions at the sites help to date when quarries were in use. Some quarries were used right through the Pharaonic period and indeed some are still in use today.

This book is written with the geologist in mind, but I have found it to be a really fascinating read and not too technical for a non-geologist like myself. The information on how various stones weather is most interesting and this will be of huge interest to those involved in the conservation of stone buildings and objects.

It is a great shame that the majority of the illustrations in this book are in

black-and-white, which means the colours of the rock at the quarries cannot be appreciated. However, there is a section of colour plates, firstly showing a range of objects from ancient Egypt made from the rocks described in the book and then an important series of colour illustrations of the many rock types, where the rock samples are shown at their actual size. These are good enough to enable types of rock to be easily identified.

The ancient Egyptians quarried huge blocks of stone and moved them the length and breadth of the country, often in very difficult conditions. A few of the quarries, such as those at Giza, Gebel el-Silsila and Aswan will be known to visitors to Egypt, but there are quarries literally everywhere and all are fascinating from the geological and archaeological point of view.

This book will undoubtedly be a well-used publication for anyone who wants to understand the use of stone in ancient Egypt. In fact, for anyone interested in ancient Egyptian buildings, then this should be an essential read too.

Giza Mastabas Volume 8: Mastabas of Nucleus Cemetery G 2100

by Peter Der Manuelian.
Published by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2009.
ISBN 978 0 87846 754 9.
Hardback, price £110.



The area at Giza covered in this publication was excavated in the early years of the last century by Harvard/Boston MFA, and in particular by George Resner in 1905-06. Resner had a reputation for being slow with his publications, so this new volume is long overdue; but this is, as it turns out, all for the best, for this new oversized publication is a superb example of what an

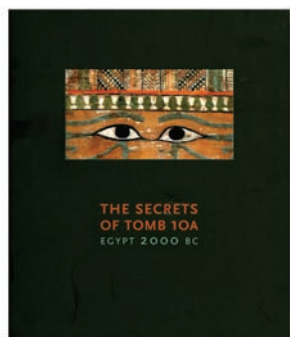
archaeological publication should be and how the delay has actually been advantageous.

Based firmly on the original excavators' accounts and illustrations, this is the publication that Reisner himself should have produced ... but with the advent of new technology, the author has taken the opportunity to include many colour images of items and reliefs from the tombs, now scattered in museum collections around the world, including some excellent photomontages with the museum pieces from many collections re-connected to the remains still *in situ* at Giza.

With new computer reconstructions of the appearance of the tombs and many line drawings and plans this state-of-the-art Egyptological publication presents all the available information. Whilst it is clearly an academic work aimed at specialists, there is much here also to interest and inform the more casual reader, especially anyone interested in the architecture, decoration and contents of Old Kingdom elite tombs.

This is a superbly produced book, printed on fine paper and lavishly illustrated and it will undoubtedly give producers of archaeological reports a new standard to strive to equal.

The Secrets of Tomb 10A: Egypt 2000 BC
 by Rita E. Freed, Lawrence M. Berman, Denise M. Doxey and Nicholas S. Picardo.
 Published by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2009.
 ISBN 978 0 87846 748 8.
 Paperback, price £42.95.



In 1915, a tomb was discovered at el-Bersha that yielded the largest assemblage of material from a Middle Kingdom Tomb ever found. Although the tomb had been robbed, the contents included decorated coffins and a

huge number of tomb models depicting scenes of daily life (see the article on pages 32-37 in this issue of *AE*).

The majority of the material from the tomb was sent to Boston, and whilst a number of the key pieces were placed on immediate display in the Museum of Fine Arts, most could not be shown, as they had suffered badly from the ravages of tomb robbers and the passage of time.

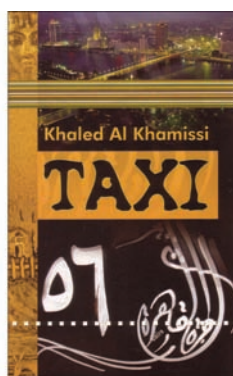
Almost a hundred years later, after a huge amount of conservation work, all the objects from the tomb were placed on display in a special exhibition at the Museum.

This splendid publication is the catalogue of that exhibition. The objects are beautifully illustrated and described and the introductory chapters give their historical, funerary and artistic context.

This book is ideal reading as a souvenir for those lucky enough to have visited the exhibition, but even better for those who could not.

RP

Taxi
 by Khaled Al Khamissi,
 translated by Jonathan Wright.
 Published by Aflame Books
 (aflamebooks.com), 2006.
 ISBN 978 1 906300 02 9.
 Paperback, price £7.99.



The majority of the readers of this magazine will have visited Egypt, and have travelled in one of the ubiquitous taxis, in Cairo or Luxor. At the very least, they must have been aware of the constant background refrain to any street-scene in the tourist areas of Egypt: "Taxi?", "Calèche?", "Felucca?". Yet how many of those visitors have paused to reflect on why it is that there are so many taxis vying for business, what it is like to try to scratch a living as a poor working man in a Middle Eastern country surrounded by 'fabulously wealthy' tourists and Arab visitors from the Gulf States, and what the ordinary Egyptian really thinks of those European, American and Saudi visitors?

This slim volume is neither novel nor text-book on political science, and yet it is both. It comprises a set of individual dialogues between the author, a middle-class Egyptian, and the taxi drivers he meets every day as he travels around the streets of Cairo.

The conversations convey an unmistakable ring of truth, and make amusing but disturbing reading. Apparently the book quickly became a best-seller in Egypt. It will certainly make the Western reader question some of his comfortable prejudices and give him pause when next he tries to haggle over the price of a taxi journey or a souvenir.

One is left with a sense of admiration for the resilience, irrepressible spirit and good humour of these hardworking and downtrodden people and with a clearer picture of the harsh realities of Egyptian society. Perhaps most worrying of all are the glimpses that the author unwittingly gives us of his own opinions about the West.

This book should be essential reading for all regular visitors to Egypt.

Peter Phillips

Peter is Deputy Editor of *AE*

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