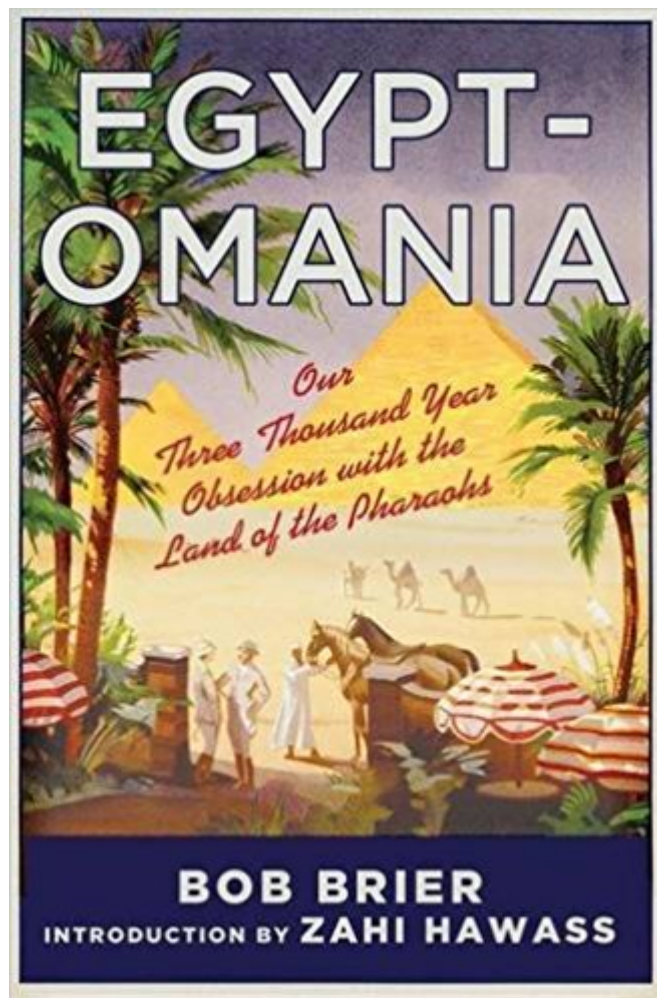


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Egyptomania: Our Three Thousand Year Obsession With The Land Of The Pharaohs



Synopsis

The world has always been fascinated with ancient Egypt. When the Romans conquered Egypt, it was really Egypt that conquered the Romans. Cleopatra captivated both Caesar and Marc Antony and soon Roman ladies were worshipping Isis and wearing vials of Nile water around their necks. What is it about ancient Egypt that breeds such obsession and imitation? Egyptomania explores the burning fascination with all things Egyptian and the events that fanned the flames--from ancient times, to Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, to the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb by Howard Carter in the 1920s. For forty years, Bob Brier, one of the world's foremost Egyptologists, has been amassing one of the largest collections of Egyptian memorabilia--and seeking to understand the pull of Ancient Egypt on our world today. In this original and groundbreaking book, with twenty-four pages of color photos from the author's collection, he explores our three-thousand-year-old fixation with recovering Egyptian culture and its meaning. He traces our enthrallment with the mummies that seem to have cheated death and the pyramids that as if they will last forever. Drawing on his personal collection--from Napoleon's twenty volume Egypt encyclopedia--to Howard Carter's letters written from the Valley of the Kings as he was excavating--this is an inventive and mesmerizing tour of how an ancient civilization endures in ours today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Since before Julius Caesar and Marc Antony fell in love with Cleopatra, Europeans (and, later, Americans) have been fascinated by the culture and fashion of ancient Egypt. Knowledge about Egypt declined after the fall of Rome, but by taking his army to the valley of the Nile in 1798,

Napoleon Bonaparte renewed the Western obsession with pyramids, mummies, hieroglyphs, scarab jewelry, and other Egyptian antiquities. The French general's soldiers combed through ancient sights for exportable goods while his scholars wrote copiously about Egyptian architecture, culture, history, and mythology. By the end of the nineteenth century, Paris, London, and New York had acquired huge obelisks from Alexandria or Luxor, and Egypt-crazy consumers bought cigarettes, soaps, sheet music, and other items with Egyptian trade names and illustrations. Today, the craze continues: Ancient Egyptian-themed museum exhibits and blockbuster movies still attract enthusiastic fans, many eager to buy licensed collectibles. Known for his popular television programs about ancient Egypt, Brier recounts what he calls Egyptomania past and present in this engaging social history. --Rick Roche

"Mr. Brier is proficient at elucidating Egyptology, and his passion is so sincere and good-humored that his book is rather charming." • The Wall Street Journal "Egyptomania does a good job of tracing the chronology with which Egypt fever caught on." • The New York Times "A lively account combining history and popular culture with guidelines for possible future collectors." • Kirkus Reviews "Obelisk-envy, international politics, psychology and the mania generated by the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb all appear, broken into readable chunks by amusing subheadings and illustrations. [Egyptomania] is enjoyable and informative - everything one could want from a history book." • Press Association Review, UK "This is a delightful romp through key formative events that shaped our popular passion for all things ancient Egyptian. Bob Brier's always entertaining style keeps the pace moving, yet manages to inform and educate with historical context as well. Not many scholars today can write with equal comfort about Napoleon's invasion and King Tut's Party Mix, the harrowing tale of towing an obelisk to London and 'Cleopatra had a Jazz Band'." • Peter Der Manuelian, Philip J. King Professor of Egyptology, Harvard University "Ancient Egypt has captivated people from Caesar to Cher and this entertaining and highly readable account by television's "Mr. Mummy," Bob Brier is an informative and engaging overview of the subject. From its engaging forward by none other than Egypt's premier archaeologist, Zahi Hawass to its discussion of the "King Tut" exhibition, Egyptomania chronicles every aspect of the subject including cigarette packs, Boris Karloff and the thrilling and sometimes harrowing efforts to move the great obelisks." • Dr. Peter Lacovara, Senior Curator, Carlos Museum, Emory University

I love Bob Brier. I have watched his TV broadcasts, read some of his other books, and listened to a 50-CD (I think) oral history of ancient Egypt. Heck, I even wrote him a fan letter (OK, a fan email). However, this book is little more than a trifle; a good magazine article blown up into a book. Dr. Brier discusses the history of Egyptomania from beyond 50,000 feet - it's more like 100,000 feet - and focuses on just a few major historical events that prompted it, primarily the transportation of Egyptian obelisks to Paris, London and New York. They're interesting engineering stories, but the Egyptomania that follows the placing of the obelisks is little more than an afterthought. He also discusses a variety of Egyptomania trends in such things as jewelry, cigar and cigarette cases and popular songs, but - again - from a very broad-brush perspective. It's interesting, but only mildly so. I would have strongly preferred less engineering talk and more discussion of the phenomenon of Egyptomania - its causes and so on. Alternatively, coffee table book to go with my other dozen or so coffee table books about Egypt (yes, I am an Egyptomaniac) would have been better.

This could be subtitled "Much Ado about Obelisks" and for good ill. Bob Brier's discussion of the various kinds of crazes between the Napoleon to the 20th century is at a times fascinating and at times tedious. Most of the tedious bits have to do with the level of detail Brier goes into describing the various ways Obelisks were moved out of Egypt. Some of the particular interesting bits were confections of middle eastern culture in the early 20th century King Tut crazes as well as all the Egyptian smoking paraphernalia. I must say though that this book seems to be two different books: one about obelisks and another about various pop culture crazes around Egypt.

It may be a bit too "easy" for the average Egypt fan. But I learned a lot, and I also enjoyed the Egypt themed EVERYTHING from cigarettes to songs. It was also fun to read about how Egypt becomes popular every now and again, sort of a fad. I think about things like English furniture which for a while had crocodiles on their legs. I also now want to go to Wellington's home in London to see the tea service Josephine sent back!

This is a light and funny look at the Egypt craze over the centuries; lots of fun for anyone who is interested in Egyptian archaeology.

Consider it just a fun book to browse through.

This book is an enjoyable and fascinating ride through how the legacy of Ancient Egypt has

manifested in the rest of the world in modern times. The author writes with humour, authority and a clear love of the subject. I disagree with other reviewers that the descriptions of the obelisks somehow detracted from the enjoyment of the book - it is an important part of the Egyptomania tale and I for one found it fascinating. I also appreciated the concluding chapter - a magnificent end to a great read.

Bob Brier is a fabulously interesting author, besides his knowledge and love of ancient Egypt, he brings the complex history into manageable history. I especially loved the detailed descriptions of moving Egyptian obelisks.

Bob Brier has an easy style of writing and he knows how to make history entertaining. You learn a lot and you laugh a lot. His extensive experience in the field earned him the title of Mr. Mummy. I love to recount his stories and that has earned me many a dinner invitation.

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