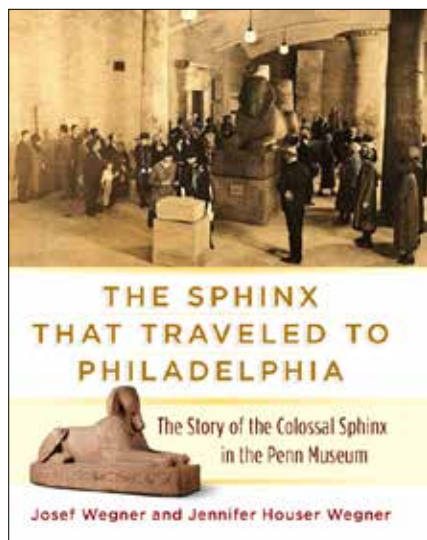


# Bookshelf



Josef Wegner and Jennifer Houser Wegner, **The Sphinx That Traveled to Philadelphia**. Penn Press, 2015 (ISBN 978 1 93453 676 6). Price: £19.50

This study of a single object – the largest sphinx in America – shows just the sort of engaging and rich narrative, which can be relayed by considering an object beyond its ancient Egyptian context. The book is as much about sphinxes located in ancient Memphis, as it is about excavations in Egypt or the creation of collections of Egyptian objects in the early 20th century. Likewise, there is much insight into the history of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, which, in full disclosure, was where the reviewer was first exposed to archaeology as a child.

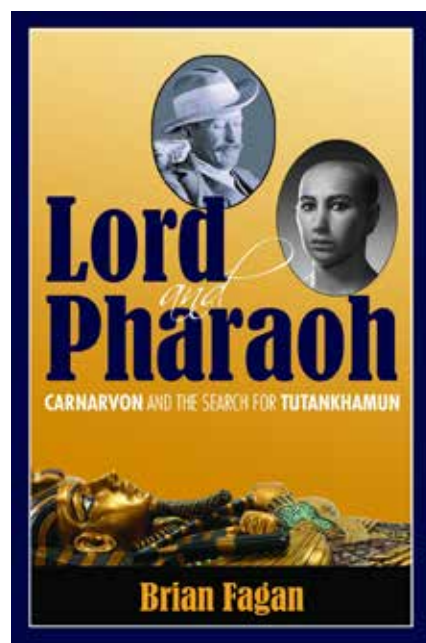
For the Egyptologically inclined the ancient aspect is not ignored: accessible sections focus on ancient Memphis and Memphite theology, a comprehensive overview of sphinxes throughout Egyptian history, and a study of the Philadelphia sphinx that considers its relation to other large specimens of its kind. The thorough and clear investigation into the Philadelphia sphinx closely considers decoration and possible lost attributes and finally the origin of the sculpture before its ‘recycling’ into a monument of Ramesses II. The autopsy is enhanced by questions like: ‘Was the sphinx painted?’, which are fully explained and illustrated for a general audience.

The book’s richness comes from the narrative after the 1912 discovery of the sphinx during Flinders Petrie’s excavations at Memphis – sections focus on the negotiations to bring the it to Philadelphia, all aspects of its travel and transportation to its new home at the University of Pennsylvania Museum and its reception by the public and the students. The sphinx re-ignites the archaeological ambitions of the museum, financed by the patronage of Eckley Coxe, whose generosity was integral in acquiring the sphinx and in sponsoring excavations which provided the museum with the archaeological material it now displays, most significantly from the Merenptah palace in Memphis. Yes, Memphis! More specifically Petrie’s concession at Memphis, temporarily on hiatus on account of World War I,

the resulting public dispute and correspondence is an enjoyable section which reads more like a screw-ball comedy than a dispute between leading academics. Integral to making all these sections vibrant are the numerous illustrations that enhance and clarify the text. It is particularly notable that care has been taken to make the archival documents, like letters and newspaper articles, legible for the reader to enjoy themselves, with only the diabolical handwriting of Flinders Petrie fully transcribed.

These personal letters, newspaper clippings, and photos illustrate the sphinx’s journey and reception in Philadelphia, whether its receipts for exceptional freight due to the its weight or humorous newspaper articles in which the newly arrived sphinx gives his opinion about his first encounter with America. Perhaps best is that digressions which touch upon the sphinx’s story are given space, such as the possible commissioning of a successful Philadelphia-based producer of silent movies to film the disembarkment of the statue. The book was originally intended as a children’s book, and there are some remnants of that origin in the writing style, but it is clear that the wealth and breadth of information the authors had collected was too sophisticated to be contained in a shorter and simpler book. There is a lot of enjoyable and wide-ranging topics covered that shows just how much a single, albeit singular sphinx can inspire both academia and popular culture.

EMMA LIBONATI



Brian Fagan, **Lord and Pharaoh: Carnarvon and the Search for Tutankhamun**. Left Coast Press, 2015 (ISBN 978 1 629 58151 4). Price: £16.50

There is no dearth of books on the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb in 1922, and these will no doubt multiply as the centenary approaches. There are also a number of studies of its discoverer, archaeologist and artist Howard Carter. However, surprisingly little

has been published about Carter’s sponsor, the fifth Lord Carnarvon, without whose money and commitment there would have been no discovery. No biography of Carnarvon exists, nor does *The British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* dignify him with an entry, unlike Carter.

Archaeologist Brian Fagan’s relatively brief *Lord and Pharaoh* aims to fill this lacuna – not with a conventional biography, but with an original and intriguing parallel biography of Carnarvon and Tutankhamun. It mixes fact and speculation, enlivened with occasional novelistic touches, while never ignoring the available archaeological and biographical evidence, even when this contradicts Fagan’s own view. As he frankly admits, the events of Tutankhamun’s reign are ‘a ghostly palimpsest of incomplete inscriptions’, supplemented by a scatter of artefacts; and much of Carnarvon’s correspondence was destroyed in the Second World War. Indeed, Fagan confesses in a final chapter intended mainly as advice to fellow archaeologists groping for ways to justify their recondite research to non-archaeologists: ‘this is about the most speculative book on the past I’ve ever written’.

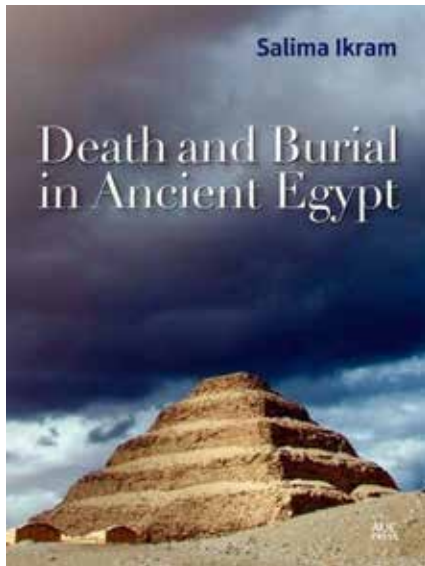
Fagan detects parallels between Carnarvon and Tutankhamun in the preface. ‘They turned out to have much in common – privileged upbringings, frail health, isolation from the real world, ingrained sense of entitlement, and even a common cause of death – from the effects of an infected mosquito bite. And, of course, they “met” in the end with the discovery of the pharaoh’s tomb.’ The shared frail health and the mosquito bite – notorious in Carnarvon’s case and based in Tutankhamun’s case on recently announced DNA evidence of his suffering from malaria – were the deciding factors for Fagan in going for a parallel biography.

Chapters 1 and 2 set the scene historically in the Valley of Kings with the discoveries of Napoleon Bonaparte’s savants, Giovanni Belzoni, Jean-François Champollion and many others, followed by the digging for tombs of the American ‘robber baron’ Theodore Davis, who gave employment to Carter. Chapter 3 then switches to the mid-2nd millennium BC in the time of Akhenaten and describes life in conflict-ridden Akhetaten (el-Amarna), including the early years of Akhenaten’s son, the club-footed Tutankhaten. Then, in Chapter 4, we return to Victorian times, to Highclere Castle, and the aristocratic childhood and youth of Carnarvon, whose failed formal education at Eton College and Cambridge University nevertheless left him with a love of reading and as a confirmed autodidact (evoked in the well-known photo of Carnarvon studying a book in Carter’s house at Luxor), along with a lifelong dedication to gambling and a penchant for dangerous automobiles. Subsequent chapters alternate between Tutankhaten’s ascension to the throne as Tutankhamun while still a boy; Carnarvon’s dilettante digging in Egypt leading to the discovery in 1908 of the Carnarvon Tablet of the pharaoh Khamose; the rise of Horemheb as regent while Tutankhamun comes of age; the arrival of Carter as an archaeologist digging for Carnarvon through long years of failure; the sudden death of Tutankhamun and the violent confusion over his successor; and eventually

the dazzling success of Carnarvon and Carter's gamble in November 1922, followed by their falling out, and the abrupt death of Carnarvon in Cairo.

Perhaps I am prejudiced as a writer of biographies (including Champollion's), but I enjoyed *Lord and Pharaoh*. Ancient Egypt is in many ways alien, but at the same time fascinates us. Understanding the lives of its varied and colourful explorers, such as Carnarvon, is a valuable way to bring the distant past to life.

ANDREW ROBINSON



Salima Ikram, *Death and Burial in Ancient Egypt*. AUC Press, 2015 (ISBN 978 9 77416 687 7). Price: £14.95

This book provides a comprehensive introduction to aspects of death and the Egyptian afterlife, while also exploring the relationship and magico-religious interaction between the living and the dead. Following an

overview of the historical development of Egypt and the topographical and climatic features which gave rise to this civilisation, the author discusses the range of beliefs that pertained to the afterlife, with particular focus on elements of the individual personality, the significance of the Osirian Myth, various deities associated with death, and the funerary books intended to assist the deceased to enter the afterlife.

In a chapter devoted to mummification, the effect of ancient and modern tomb-robbery on the bodies is described, as well as pertinent theories, based on recent discoveries, regarding the origins of mummification and the possibility that some mummies were defleshed. There is also an overview of source material (Egyptian and classical inscriptional evidence and the scientific studies of mummies); the historical development and methodology of mummification; associated gods and specialist priests; and restorations and fake mummies.

The author's personal experience with experimental mummification and funerary archaeology certainly brings new insight to this book, particularly in her discussion of animal mummification. Here, she clearly explains the background of the four main categories of animal mummies (pets, votives, sacred, and votive), and considers the validity of various intriguing theories: for example, to obtain the vast numbers of votive animals that the cults required, were the animals bred in captivity or collected together from different areas of Egypt? Also, were the bodies of Apis bulls cooked and eaten before interment?

Various categories of funerary equipment, including amulets, jewellery, bead nets, cartonnage covers, masks and mummy boards, canopic equipment, shabtis, are described, and there is a detailed chronological survey of the technological and stylistic development of coffins. Methods of provisioning the tomb – from food offerings and objects of everyday use to Corn Mummies and Osiris Beds – are also discussed. Theological and practical

considerations pertaining to royal and private tombs, including their location, financing, construction, and techniques of decoration, are also explored. The concluding chapter identifies the importance attributed to the funeral and the mortuary cults in the pursuit of immortality, and describes the curses, robbery and tomb usurpation that sometimes accompanied burial. It also explains the ways in which the living continued to seek supernatural assistance from the dead.

A statement in the Introduction emphasises that, because of the nature of Egyptology, all analyses are merely an amalgamation of subjective interpretations based on an imperfect data set, and acknowledges that this book represents the author's particular interpretation of the evidence. Nevertheless, despite this caveat, this book provides an excellent introduction to the whole subject area. The material is clearly presented in well-organised sections, and where appropriate, descriptions of specific categories of material (for example, funerary texts, coffin and tomb development) are treated in considerable detail. Some areas of scholarly debate or interpretation are also introduced and discussed, encouraging the reader to pursue these points in further reading.

The book also incorporates some excellent supporting material: a chronological table covering the period from ancient to modern times; a glossary of some important deities and Egyptological terms; and a list of further reading with a good selection of accessible titles which cover general topics as well as the more detailed material presented in the individual chapters. The selection and arrangement of illustrative material used in this publication is another commendable feature. Rather than being scattered randomly throughout the book, the monochrome images, accompanied by extensive explanatory captions, are specifically positioned to complement and enhance the adjoining text.

ROSALIE DAVID

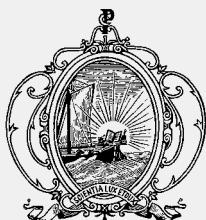
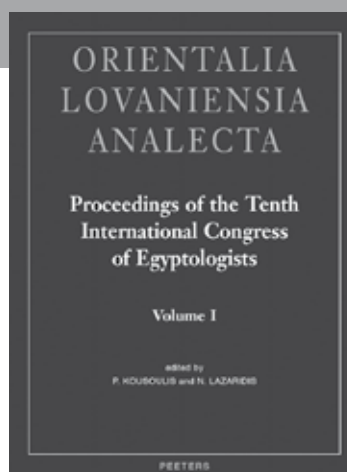
### *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists*

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