



ANZAAB *Aspects of Book Collecting* Collecting Egyptology & Ancient History

Ankh Antiquarian Books

Background: By definition, books belonging to the Egyptology and genre are those about Ancient Egypt—that is, from Pre-Dynastic times usually through to the last Pharaoh (the Ptolemy Queen, Cleopatra VII). Some people go on and collect books which extend the subject to the present time. Of particular interest these days is 19th century Egypt.

Range: The science of Egyptology commenced in the late 18th century, when Napoleonic troops entered Egypt, fought the Battle of the Embabeh and General Bonaparte, observing the Pyramids, famously stated 'Comrades, forty centuries look down upon us'. Napoleon included *savants* (learned men) in his Egyptian entourage, who described what they saw. This became the famous *Description de la Egypte* which spurred an interest in Egyptology in Europe. Through the *savants'* work and the discovery of the famous Rosetta Stone, the Frenchman, Champollion, was able to directly translate Egyptian hieroglyphics for the first time.

Eventually, the English took control of Egypt and opened it to the world. Early tourist/explorer, Englishwoman Amelia Edwards, travelled in Egypt and penned the famous and very collectable *A 1000 Miles up the Nile*. Edwards founded the Egypt Exploration Fund (later the Egypt Exploration Society) in 1882.

The modern science of Egyptology and, to a large extent, Archaeology developed from these beginnings. From the early, technical books to travel classics like *1000 Miles up the Nile*, Egyptological publications developed over the next 150 years into the plethora of good, general books we know and love today.

Availability: Most good booksellers have small Egyptian sections. However, there are a few specialist dealers (like Ankh Antiquarian Books, the Australian representative of the Egypt Exploration Society [UK]) which stock a more complete range of books on Egypt.

Most people start with either Tutankhamen or the Pyramids and then broaden out into wherever their interests take them. A great area to collect in is the Amarna period of the Pharaoh Akhenaten and his queen, Nefertiti. Other favourites are Hatshepsut and Cleopatra VIII. There are journal reports, novels, art, tombs, mummies, animals, hieroglyphics, literature, modern Egypt, the Turkish occupation, architecture, early photography; really all sorts of areas you can explore within this subject.

Price-range: Books priced as low as \$10 are common, but a fine set of the *Description de la Egypte* would cost you around \$200,000. The average price for a very good first edition of *1000 Miles up the Nile* is about \$650. Depending on rarity, most good quality, collectable books in excellent condition would fall within the \$120–\$250 price range. With time, books on Egyptology do gain in value and can be an excellent investment, with a steady market of interested buyers.

Footnote: Ankh Antiquarian Books actively promotes Australian Egyptological and Ancient History societies. In Melbourne, courses are offered at Monash University (in Egyptology) and at Latrobe University (in Archaeology). In Sydney, Macquarie University has a large Egyptology faculty. For further information contact Ankh Antiquarian Books.