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978-1-108-08290-7 - A History of the Pharaohs: Volume 1: The First Eleven Dynasties

Arthur Weigall

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A History of the Pharaohs

The career of Arthur Weigall (1880–1934) encompassed Egyptology but also stage design, film criticism and journalism, as well as fiction and books about ancient Egypt. After studying in Germany, he worked at Abydos with Flinders Petrie, but in 1905 he was unexpectedly promoted to Chief Inspector of Antiquities for Upper Egypt, when Howard Carter was forced to resign. His work in Egypt, especially in the area of Luxor, focused on the conservation of monuments and the prevention of shipping of artefacts abroad, until 1911, when he returned to London. In the preface to this illustrated two-volume work, published in 1925, Weigall likens the writing of a history of Egypt to the piecing together of a jigsaw puzzle consisting of thousands of pieces, but intends to present a chronological narrative at a level to satisfy both the scholar and the interested amateur. Volume 1 covers the first eleven dynasties.

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A History of the Pharaohs

VOLUME 1:
THE FIRST ELEVEN DYNASTIES

ARTHUR WEIGALL



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A HISTORY *of* THE PHARAOHS

VOLUME I
THE FIRST ELEVEN DYNASTIES

BY
ARTHUR WEIGALL

Late Inspector-General of Antiquities, Egyptian
Government, and Member of the Catalogue Staff
of the Cairo Museum



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THE writing of a history of the ancient Pharaohs of Egypt consists, in the main, of the assembling and marshalling of vast numbers of isolated facts, and fitting them into a complete picture, in the manner of a jigsaw puzzle; but since the faded and often fragmentary condition of the thousands of separate pieces sometimes makes possible more than one arrangement, the historian is confronted, at the outset of his task, with the difficulty of deciding whether to present without comment the picture as he thinks it should be, and to let it go at that, or whether to cover it with notes and comments in explanation and justification of his arrangement. In fact, he has first to decide whether he shall write for the student or for the layman, or, greatly daring, shall attempt to write for both.

Most Egyptologists seem to take the view that the mechanism of their study is, in a manner of speaking, the secret of their calling, and is beyond the range of interest of the general reader, who, it is thought, desires only to look at the final picture, right or wrong; and hence, of the two best known histories of Egypt, the thoughtful study by Professor Breasted is very definitely written for the layman, most of the arguments therefore being omitted, the obscure periods passed over, and the controversial subjects avoided, while the painstaking work by Professor Petrie is entirely for the student, a useful compilation of facts and figures being all that is aimed at.

In my opinion, however, there is no cause for this extreme difference in the methods of presentation. In the first place, I think that Egyptological discussions can, and should, be made intelligible to the ordinary reader, the sources of information made easily available, and the difficulties and stumbling-blocks made apparent, so that there may be as many amateurs at work as there are in other fields of art and science; and, in the second place, I believe that the

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ordinary reader, if interested at all, is generally glad to apply his brains to the little puzzles which confront the historian, and has no wish to be presented with a picture of Egyptian history the correctness of which he is asked to take on trust. In a word, I regard neither the public as dolts nor Egyptologists as magicians; and in this book my object is to write a consecutive story which will be intelligible and readable to the layman who has no particular knowledge of Egyptology, and which, at the same time, will aid both him and the actual student in a closer study of the subject.

My arrangement and interpretation of the facts, however, is in very many cases new, and it is not an easy task to present the arguments in a manner acceptable to my fellow-workers and also to the general reader, and at the same time to keep the story running smoothly along its varied course. In the first chapters of this book, in particular, I find it difficult to avoid lengthy technical discussions; for there is so much that is still open to question in regard to these remote times, and there are so many matters upon which I find myself in some disagreement with my colleagues. But the reader must bear with me if my first pages are full of controversial matter; and he must here endeavour to apply his brains to the problems presented, remembering that these riddles are capable of being solved almost as readily by him as by an Egyptologist. He will, indeed, best interpret the spirit in which this history is written if he will bear in mind the fact that I regard myself and other Egyptologists as men of very ordinary intelligence, drawn to the subject by its fascination, and grappling with its problems as best we can, sometimes with inspiration and success, sometimes with stupidity and failure, and always in need of the help and criticism of fresh brains, to aid us to give to the world once more the wonderful story which was lost when the ancient civilization of the Pharaohs collapsed.

There are certain Egyptologists, past and present, to whom I desire here to express my indebtedness, and, in doing so, it will perhaps be as well to write with candour. Without hesitation I would name Professor Breasted of

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Chicago as the leading Egyptologist of the day, for he is both philologist and historian, a rare combination not possessed by the great German scholars; and without his four volumes of *Ancient Records of Egypt*, I doubt whether my history could have been written. To the collection of data in Professor Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie's *History of Egypt* I am much beholden, although I disagree with him so widely in the matter of chronology; and his volumes which deal with his excellent excavations in *The Royal Tombs of the Earliest Dynasties* and elsewhere must remain the basis of all study of that period. He is the father of scientific excavation in Egypt, and if a younger generation has now somewhat out-Petried Petrie, so to speak, he may rest content upon his laurels, in the knowledge that such is the law of progress, and that it was he himself who, in this instance, set it going. The two best excavators of the modern school are, in my opinion, Dr. Reisner of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, U.S.A., and Mr. Winlock, of the Metropolitan Museum of New York, U.S.A., the latter being exceptionally brilliant; and their discoveries have thrown much light on the Fourth and Eleventh Dynasties respectively. Dr. Alan Gardiner, of London, is one of the leading, and surely one of the most laborious, authorities on the subject of the ancient Egyptian language and hieroglyphic script, and to his studies of many of the historical documents I must record my debt. Mr. N. de G. Davies is the most careful copyist, and a first-rate interpreter, of the material to be found on the ancient monuments; and though I have not had reason to use his books in preparing the present volume of my history, the later volumes will owe much to him. The works of my late chief, Professor Sir Gaston Maspero, have been of the greatest use, and his volume entitled, in English, *The Dawn of Civilization*, is a most scholarly book. In dealing with the Ninth Dynasty I used, with much profit, the work of Dr. Griffith of Oxford, whose contributions to the philological side of Egyptology are of great importance. Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, late Keeper of the Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum, has contributed an enormous number of volumes to Egyptological literature, which reveal his industry rather

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than his reliability ; and although my opinion will possibly be qualified in earnest scholastic quarters, I venture to record with gratitude the usefulness of his *Egyptian Dictionary*. The chapters by Professor Eric Peet of Liverpool, and Dr. H. R. Hall, the present Keeper of the Egyptian Antiquities in the British Museum, in *The Cambridge Ancient History* have been of much use ; and the other works of both these men are of great importance. Professor Peet is a scholar who is rapidly rising into eminence. The *Livre des Rois* of Monsieur Gauthier is essential to any student of Egyptian history ; and none can dispense with the *Urkunden des Alten Reichs* of Professor Sethe of Göttingen, which is a collection of carefully collated hieroglyphical texts, or, in fact, with any of his works. The *Denkmäler aus Ägypten* of Lepsius, although published in 1849 in huge, unwieldy volumes, remains the finest collection of material yet issued. The memoirs dealing with the excavations of Professor Garstang at Bêt Khallâf and elsewhere, and of Mr. J. E. Quibell at Hieraconpolis, Sakkâra, and other places, have been of great use ; and those of Dr. Borchardt and Professor von Bissing recording their work at Abusîr, are the basis of all study of the Fifth Dynasty. In my next volume I shall make use of material supplied by the excavations of Mr. Howard Carter, who, though not an Egyptologist in a scholastic sense, is a first-rate field-worker, a fine artist, and a most careful handler and recorder of his material. Professor Newberry's papers on various subjects relating to the early dynasties have been most enlightening, as have the articles of Professor Sayce ; and the books of Professor Capart, of the Musées Royaux du Cinquantenaire of Brussels, are of great value. I wish to tender my especial thanks to the latter scholar for his kindness to me while working in the fine library which is in his charge : it is perhaps the most convenient workroom for Egyptological students in the world. I must also record my indebtedness to the editors of the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, *Ancient Egypt*, the *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache*, and the *Recueil des Travaux*, the four leading journals of Egyptological studies ; for the hundreds of articles published in them in recent years have been of the

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greatest use. Also *Les Annales du Service*, which are the bulletins of the Egyptian Department of Antiquities, contain much valuable material. To Professor E. Meyer's *Ägyptische Chronologie*, Professor Schäfer's many works, and the studies of several other German Egyptologists, I owe much; but the Teutonic mind is stronger on the philological side of our subject than it is on the historical, and, my personal interests being more concerned with the latter, I do not regard these members of what is known as the Berlin School, fine scholars though they be, as anything like so infallible in this province as their achievements in philology might have led one to expect. They are, in fact, just as liable as any of us to make what the schoolboys call "howlers," a conclusion which I state with the frank purpose of shocking certain of my colleagues. French Egyptologists, as a whole, are not first rate, but Monsieur Lacau, now Director General of Antiquities to the Egyptian Government, is a sound scholar, to whose labours part of my next volume of this history will be much indebted. I shall then also have to refer to the excellent works of Dr. Blackman, of Oxford, who is a close rival of Mr. Davies as a copyist and interpreter of ancient inscriptions and drawings, and is a fine scholar as well.

I ought to speak of the work of many others, such as Mace, Wainwright, Gunn, Engelbach, Junker, and Miss Murray; but it would not be easy to prepare a complete list, and many names remain unmentioned.

In regard to the renderings of texts given in this volume, those of Breasted and Gardiner have become the standard translations in the English language, and I have used them freely; but in every case I have had the hieroglyphic originals before me, and I have ventured to give my own version wherever I thought it would help the sense. I ought to mention that the dates which I have given in my *Ancient Egyptian Works of Art* and *Guide to the Antiquities of Upper Egypt* are not quite in agreement with those used in this volume; and I must add that the chapter on Egyptian Chronology in my *Tutankhamen and Other Essays* is also put out of court by the conclusions arrived at in the first chapter of the present history.