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Gold, Meira

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## BRITISH EGYPTOLOGY (1822 – 1882) (علم المصريات البريطاني (1822 إلى 1882))

*Meira Gold*

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## BRITISH EGYPTOLOGY (1822 – 1882)

## علم المصريات البريطاني (1822 إلى 1882)

Meira Gold

Britische Ägyptologie (1822 – 1882)  
Égyptologie britannique (1822 – 1882)

*Between 1822 and 1882, British Egyptology grew in tandem with increasing informal colonial influence in Egypt. In the aftermath of the Anglo-French Napoleonic Wars (1803 – 1815), British fieldwork in Egypt was led by diplomats who aimed to sell their collections, most often to the British Museum, and by Orientalist expatriates seeking to understand and differentiate between ancient and modern Egyptian cultures. A second phase of fieldwork developed from mid-century whereby experts in Britain relied on colonial networks of collectors and informants in Egypt to communicate field observations over long distances. British Egyptology was not yet a distinct field, and like other nascent scientific specializations, developed with porous disciplinary boundaries. It thus encapsulated a wide variety of approaches, which included chronology, philology, exegesis, ethnology, anthropology, museology, astronomy, and geology. British Egyptomania and academic Egyptology also grew in tandem as popularizers brought their work to the Victorian public and British tourists flooded into Egypt producing travel accounts. Egyptology was marketed for its ability to shed light on biblical historicity, while public exhibitions highlighted the spectacle of British imperial victories in the East.*

بين عامي 1822 و1882، نما علم المصريات البريطاني مع تزايد النفوذ الاستعماري في مصر. في أعقاب الحروب الأنجلو-فرنسية النابليونية (1803 - إلى 1815)، قاد العمل الميداني البريطاني في مصر دبلوماسيون كانوا يهدفون إلى بيع مجموعاتهم، في أغلب الأحيان إلى المتحف البريطاني، ومن قبل المستشرقين الذين حاولوا إجراء مقارنات بين الثقافات المصرية الحديثة والقديمة. في منتصف ذلك القرن، تطورت مرحلة ثانية من العمل الميداني اعتمد فيها الخبراء في بريطانيا على هواة جمع الآثار والمخبرين في مصر لتوصيل ملاحظاتهم إلى الخارج. لم يكن علم المصريات البريطاني قد أصبح تخصصاً رسمياً بعد، ومثل غيره من التخصصات العلمية الجديدة، فقد تم تعريفه بشكل فضفاض. ومن ثم فقد اشتمل على مجموعة متنوعة من المناهج، والتي تضمنت التسلسل الزمني، وعلم اللغة، وعلم الأعراق، والأنثروبولوجيا، وعلم الفلك، والجيولوجيا، وتحليل النصوص. كما نما الهوس البريطاني بالمصريات، بالإضافة إلى علم المصريات الأكاديمي وذلك بسبب الهواة الذين قدموا أعمالهم للجمهور الفيكتوري، وإيضاً بسبب السياح البريطانيين الذين تدفقوا إلى مصر وكتبوا تقارير عن رحلاتهم. تم تسويق علم المصريات لقدرته على تسليط الضوء على تاريخ الكتاب المقدس، وسلطت المعارض العامة الضوء على نجاحات بريطانيا في الشرق.



he growth of British Egyptology in the nineteenth century must be understood in the contexts of imperialism and global industrialization. Semicolonial Egypt was a unique locus of overlapping empires. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Expedition to Egypt (1798 – 1801) and the Anglo-French Wars (1803 – 1815), Egypt remained a contested region off-limits to formal European colonization. From 1805 to 1848 the Viceroy Muhammad Ali Pasha ruled Egypt as a semi-autonomous state within the Ottoman Empire while increasingly seeking independence from Istanbul. Recent scholarship tends to refer to Egypt’s long nineteenth century as the “Late Ottoman Era” to emphasize this imperial subjugation, and similarly refers to the Viceroy by the Turkish rendering of his name, Mehmed, rather than the Arabic, Muhammad, to reflect the very gradual Egyptianizing of the royal family and ruling elite. Reforming policies throughout this period were designed to enhance the reigning Viceroy’s short-term powers by positioning Egypt as a direct intermediary with the European market (Hunter 1999: 4). Mehmed Ali’s modernizing efforts from the 1820s included the founding of a conscription-based army, the restructuring of schools and training programs, and numerous state construction and irrigation projects effectuated through *corvée* labor (Al-Sayyid Marsot 1984; Mitchell 1991; Hunter 1999; Fahmy 2002). The Pasha launched military campaigns in the Hijaz, Sudan, and Syria, and effectively turned the Egyptian state into “colonized colonizers” (Fahmy 2002: 12; Troutt Powell 2003: 6). Britain sought to settle the so-called “Eastern Question”—i.e., how the fate of the Ottoman Empire might disrupt the balance of powers in Europe.

Most transformative in the second quarter of the century were the introductions of steam power and the global cotton-trade economy, which Mehmed Ali pushed Egypt to enter through the cultivation of long-staple cotton (Owen 1969, 1999; Mitchell 1991: 15-16). The gradual development of the Egyptian overland trade route to India from the 1830s and the extended network of railways, roads, telegraph systems, bridges, canals, and coal depots

constructed throughout Egypt accelerated the country’s raw cotton production for the European textile industry. The industrialization of Egyptian agriculture and cotton cash crops and the development of new transportation and communication technologies were mutually reinforcing processes. British “coal depots” established on the Egyptian shores of the Mediterranean and Red Sea serviced steamships on either side of the overland route and also supplied inland Egypt. British coal was combusted through Nile steamers, steam engines for water pumps and irrigation, cotton mills, and railways. East-West trade thus provided the infrastructure for Egypt’s transition to fossil fuels in the nineteenth century (Barak 2013: 28-29; 2020: 30) and for the movement of British military personnel, colonial officials, travelers, and antiquarians throughout the region.

Anglo-Egyptian political relations reached a crossroads during the second Turko-Egyptian War (1839 – 1841). Mehmed Ali’s Syrian campaign in the 1830s extended Egyptian territory along the Mediterranean coastline, constituting a direct threat to British interests. Egypt had control of both overland routes to India as well as Britain’s military footholds in Port Said, Suez, and Aden (Fahmy 2002: 47-75; Barak 2013: 27; 2020: 4). Egypt’s growing textile industry also monopolized the commercial markets in the Near East when the British Empire needed access to them. In cooperation with the Ottoman Porte (the central Ottoman court in Constantinople), Foreign Secretary Palmerston made several tactical interventions to thwart Egypt’s expansionism, which put Britain at war with Egypt. Finally, under British pressure, an Ottoman firman (i.e., edict), passed in 1841, stripped Egypt of its territorial acquisitions and reduced its army. In exchange, Mehmed Ali was recognized as the hereditary Pasha of Egypt (Al-Sayyid Marsot 1984: 236-247; Fahmy 2002: 291-305).

Thus, in 1841, Britain solidified its imperial presence in the Near East, which was integral to the growth of Egyptology. Egypt subsequently grew into an “informal empire” controlled by the dual elite of local Ottoman-

Egyptian notables and European expatriates (Cole 1993: 20). Following the collapse of the Pasha's monopoly, Egypt became a supplier of raw cotton to Britain and an importer of cheap British goods (Al-Sayyid Marsot 1984: 246-250; Fahmy 2002: 13-14, 292). British investment in Egyptian cotton also increased after the American Civil War, when the abolition of slavery disrupted the cotton supply from the southern American states. The Industrial Northwest of England became one of the primary benefactors of the Egyptian "cotton boom" in the 1860s (Owen 1969; 1981: 135-148; 1999; Beckert 2004). This increasingly led to the entanglement of Egyptology with the colonial cotton trade (Forrest 2011; Riggs 2014: 109-114; Gold *fc. b*). Between 1852 and 1858, British engineers oversaw construction of the Alexandria-to-Cairo railway—the first British railway built on foreign soil—followed by the quick completion of the railway from Cairo to Suez (Barak 2013: 29-32). Between 1859 and 1869, a French company led the digging of the Suez Canal. In 1871, Britain formally shifted its India traffic away from the Egyptian State Railways to the Canal, and the former reinvented itself as an internal means of transportation for the centralized state from which Britons also benefited (Barak 2013: 53).

During and after the cotton boom, Said and Ismail Pasha (the son and grandson, respectively, of Mehmed Ali Pasha) borrowed large sums of money from European investors for agricultural and infrastructural development. Ismail, who ruled as Khedive from 1863 to 1879, announced his government's bankruptcy in 1876 (Hunter 1999: 38-40). The increasing indebtedness encouraged gifts of antiquities, among other things, to foreign diplomats and political figures to secure economic relationships (Reid 2002: 58). The financial crisis led to Franco-British Dual Control of the Egyptian budget, and in 1879, Khedive Ismail was deposed and succeeded by his eldest son, Tawfik, who became a kind of tax collector on behalf of the colonial powers. The cotton boom also brought tens of thousands of Europeans into Egypt as colonial agents, engineers, scientists, tourists, scholars, and merchants, and a mixed court was established that allowed expatriates

to acquire land and pursue commerce on a larger scale. The Egyptian crisis known as the 'Urabi Revolt (1879 – 1882) culminated from decades-long anti-colonial sentiments. British military forces occupied Egypt in 1882 to preserve the political order of the Ottoman Khedivate, and consequently, to protect British privileges, prosperity, and financial investments (Cole 1993: 14-20).

*Philology, Surveys, and Diplomatic Collectors (1816 – 1849)*

Once the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815, neither France nor Britain wished to destabilize the region through further military intervention and therefore pushed for prestige, influence, and knowledge creation via antiquities collections. Egyptology was thoroughly entangled with Orientalist propaganda that claimed pharaonic civilization as ancestors of the "West" while promoting, in sharp opposition, present-day Egypt as part of the degenerate Muslim world, or the "East." The European appropriation of Egypt's prestigious ancient past, alongside its presumed degraded present, thus became equally crucial tenets of the colonial platform. The supposed decline of Islamic civilization was legitimized by the corresponding belief that modern Egyptians were antipathetic to the relics of the country's ancient past and required timely European intervention (Said 1979; Larsen 1995; Reid 2002; Colla 2007; Lockman 2010). Napoleon's long shadow ensured that Egyptology remained Franco- and Prussian-oriented for decades. The French savants' multi-volumed *Description de l'Égypte* (1809 – 1820) initiated a new era of scholarly Egyptology and remained the *de facto* encyclopedia on ancient Egypt across Europe, including Britain (Gillispie 1989; Bednarski 2005). Until 1816, Egyptian archaeology was primarily the domain of France, with Britain focused more on the archaeology of its possessions from India (Jasanoff 2005: 276). Thereafter, British scholars, collectors, and diplomats displayed increased interest in establishing their authority in the emerging European science of Egyptology.

Anglo-French hostilities re-emerged over the Rosetta Stone, unearthed by Napoleon's savants in July 1799 in the port city of Rashid (Rosetta) in the Nile Delta, and subsequently captured by the British military. The broken granodiorite stela, now in the British Museum, was an ancient copy of a decree of Ptolemy V Epiphanes (205 – 180 BCE). It was prized by Europeans because the bilingual text was inscribed in three different scripts: hieroglyphic, Demotic, and Ancient Greek. Knowledge of the Greek aided translation efforts; however, it was not the sole key to decipherment of the hieroglyphs, which would take at least two further decades (Parkinson 1999). The common belief that the ancient Egyptian language was purely ideographic was overturned very gradually as new evidence emerged that it was also phonetic. In 1818, the British polymath (i.e., a scholar with wide-ranging knowledge) Thomas Young was the first to show that the hieroglyphs in the cartouches of the Rosetta Stone spelled the name of Ptolemy phonetically (Young 1819). New tensions arose around 1822, when the French philologist Jean-François Champollion expanded on Young's observations by analyzing copies of two additional inscriptions (Champollion 1822). The first was a bilingual inscription from the Philae Obelisk, recently arrived in Britain, which recorded the names of Ptolemy and Cleopatra in Greek and hieroglyphs, and the second comprised the cartouches of Ramesses and Thutmose from the Great Temple at Abu Simbel. Champollion recognized that the hieroglyphs recorded the sound of the Egyptian language and were used to write the names of non-Egyptian and Egyptian rulers alike (ibid.). Champollion's breakthrough, assisted by his knowledge of Arabic and Coptic, created the foundation for the subsequent full decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs. Young also made great strides in translating the Demotic script and conceived his own hieroglyphic alphabet. In his publication of 1823, Young accused Champollion of borrowing his Egyptian alphabet without giving him due credit (Young 1823; Parkinson 1999; Robinson 2012; Thompson 2015; Buchwald and Josefowicz 2020). Some British scholars resisted or

rejected Champollion's achievements, while others worked amicably with him (Maitland 2015; Buchwald and Josefowicz 2020: 399-403). Ultimately it was Champollion, not Young, who would win recognition as the "father of Egyptology."

National rivalries also manifested in diplomatic collecting networks in Egypt from 1816—when European consuls and collectors first arrived in Egypt—through the 1830s. The period was later branded with the problematic sexualized-Orientalist idiom "the rape of the Nile" (Fagan 1975). In the absence of direct imperial rule, European agents undertook to collect Egyptian antiquities. They were frequently commissioned by wealthy patrons to collect privately, and often concurrently collected to sell wholesale to museums, with mixed success. The resulting national collections in the British Museum and Louvre became symbolic substitutes for direct colonial control. The Italian diplomat turned French Consul, Bernardino Drovetti, along with a handful of French agents, had already amassed a large collection of antiquities when the British Consul in Egypt, Henry Salt, arrived in 1816, setting off a decade-long contest between the two men over wealth, social status, and national prestige (Jasanoff 2005: 213-216, 247-256). Although state-sponsored collecting and science were common in France, there was in Britain no simple dichotomy between private and public collecting, but rather, different and overlapping modes of acquisitions. While British national antiquity collections were funded by wealthy patrons, the combination of international competition alongside collectors' reliance on British diplomatic and military resources amounted to "a substantial programme of public patronage" (Hook 2007).

Henry Salt was particularly representative of these overlapping imperial collecting agendas. Having taken his first secretarial position aboard the British East India Company's ship *Minerva* to India and Ethiopia, he was then appointed British Consul General to Egypt in 1815. He acquired objects for the private collection of the Earl of Mountnorris, was recruited by the president of the Royal Society,



Sir Joseph Banks, to procure antiquities for the British Museum, and quickly grew his own collection to sell to the highest European bidders (Manley and Rée 2001: 155). Salt succeeded in these tasks through his collecting agents Giovanni D'Athanasì and Giovanni Battista Belzoni. Between 1816 and 1819, Belzoni directed hundreds of Egyptian workers to open the entrance to the great temple of Abu Simbel, uncover the tomb of Sety I in the Valley of the Kings, and locate the entrance to the Pyramid of Khafra at Giza. Belzoni was also celebrated for removing and shipping some of the best-known Egyptian antiquities in Britain, including the colossal head of Ramesses II and the red granite head and arm of Amenhotep III in the British Museum, the sarcophagus of Sety I in the Sir John Soane Museum, and the seven-ton sarcophagus lid of Ramesses III in the Fitzwilliam Museum. Salt was particularly successful in gaining Mehmed Ali's cooperation in allowing these exports. His three major collections removed from Egypt between 1816 and 1827 were sold primarily to the British Museum (Jasanoff 2005: 211-274).

During the 1820s and 1830s, several wealthy British expatriate "copyists" initiated surveys of ancient sites (Reid 2002: 42-43). Among this group were Robert Hay, James Burton, William John Banks, Frederick Catherwood, Joseph Bonomi, Edward William Lane, and John Gardner Wilkinson. Their projects included surveying, sketching, architectural and topographical mapping, and philology. Sacred geography was a popular practice, whereby holy places named in the Old Testament were identified and marked on maps for future exploration. Hay and Bonomi's novel architectural sketches were deposited in the British Museum, where they were subsequently consulted by writers throughout the century. It was Lane's ethnographic *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836) and Wilkinson's *Topography of Thebes and General Views of Egypt* (1835) and ethnographic *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1837) that made the most immediate impressions on British audiences. The novelty of the latter texts was their focus on everyday material culture and visual representations. John Murray's lavish publication of Wilkinson's book allowed for

images of tombs and paintings of daily life in ancient Egypt, otherwise inaccessible to readers, and cultivated widespread British interest in the spectacle and biblical relevance of ancient Egyptian civilization (Gange and Ledger-Lomas eds. 2013: 79-89). Wilkinson was likely the most eminent traveling scholar of this era in Egypt, and a polymath. He made significant contributions to the study of hieroglyphs, Egyptian chronology, surveying and copying techniques, as well as ethnography, zoology, and geology. He was a prolific publisher, a considerable benefactor of the British Museum, and an honorary member of several early scientific societies. These numerous achievements may warrant his reigning title as the "real founder of Egyptology in Great Britain" (Thompson 1992; Bierbrier ed. 2012: 579-580).

These gentlemanly antiquarians were "proto-Egyptologists" as much as "proto-anthropologists" (Jasanoff 2005: 298). Their self-fashioning and self-imposed Egyptian exile led them to settle into an Orientalist mode of life in Cairo, studying Arabic, wearing Turkish clothes, and buying women from Cairo's slave markets. Some lived for months in Theban tombs. These men's careers contrasted with that of Salt. All were born into wealthy families, and most were educated at Anglican Oxford and Cambridge. Their interests were not exclusively in antiquities collection or philology per se (though several did amass large personal collections), but rather in immersing themselves in Egyptian culture while ethnographically documenting both modern and ancient peoples and places through descriptions and visual aids. These British scholars, alongside Champollion and the American Consul George Gliddon, advanced an Orientalist rhetoric to justify Western safeguarding of Egyptian material culture. Criticizing Champollion's removal of reliefs from the Valley of the Kings in 1829, Salt, Hay, Bonomi, Wilkinson, and Burton introduced a paternalistic justification for the preservation of antiquities that continued for decades. Champollion defended his actions, claiming that he was "saving [the reliefs] from imminent destruction" and that his method was superior as he was "taking [the reliefs]

away only to preserve and not to sell” (Jasanoff 2005: 287-299; Reid 2002: 43, 54-58; Colla 2007: 109-113). This debate, as Jasanoff argues, reflected the new dichotomies that arose around the established Anglo-French rivalries: new disputes were “between state-sponsored and private collecting initiatives, between going home and going native, and—most enduringly—between taking away and preserving in place” (Jasanoff 2005: 288).

*Archaeological Networks and Fieldwork at a Distance (1849 – 1882)*

Mehmed Ali employed many Europeans as technical experts in developing his reform schemes. After mid-century, due to the rapid development of British designed and fueled railway networks, British engineers were particularly numerous in the Department of Public Works (Reid 2002: 68; Barak 2013: 29-32). Although Mehmed Ali avoided giving them high administrative positions in favor of Turkish officials, this changed under his successors Abbas Pasha (r. 1849 – 1854), Said Pasha (r. 1854 – 1863), and, as noted above, Ismail Pasha (r. 1863 – 1879). For the first time, Europeans were appointed as directors of major government departments in Egypt. This created new tensions amongst the bureaucratic elite, in part because Egyptian officials possessed European ties, sympathies, and patronage (Hunter 1999: 93, 98-99, 112-117). Abbas favored British projects under pressure from British consuls, while Said and Ismail unequivocally favored the French. Many of the elite Egyptian technocrats in their administrations, such as Rifa’*a* al-Tahtawi, Ali Mubarak, and Mahmud al-Falaki, received their scientific education in Paris, spoke French, and collaborated with French scholars and diplomats. These French-trained Egyptian reformers attempted to connect their pharaonic ancestry with a new national identity (Hunter 1999: 89-92; Dykstra 1994; Reid 2002: 96-98; Colla 2007: 121-142; Stolz 2018: 96-107; Gold *fc. a*).

One consequence of these French affinities was that French officials had the most influence in the administration of Egyptian antiquities. This evolving department can be

traced back to 1830, when Mehmed Ali presented an obelisk to King Louis-Philippe. Rifa’*a* al-Tahtawi, recently returned from Paris, protested the removal of antiquities as diplomatic gifts, proclaiming “it would be better to preserve the ornaments and works which their ancestors have left them” (Reid 1985: 235; 2002: 53-54). Champollion’s concurrent plea to protect ancient monuments, alongside al-Tahtawi’s, motivated the Viceroy’s *Antiqakhana* decree in 1835, which sought to restrict the European exportation of pharaonic materials and established a short-lived national museum in the Ezbekiyeh district of Cairo. The ordinance was more idealistic than actual implemented policy, though there is limited evidence that it was enforced against the British at mid-century (Reid 2002: 54-63; Colla 2007: 116-120; Maitland 2021). Two decades later, in 1858, French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette was appointed the first director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service with a mandate to establish the Egyptian Museum, which opened in Boulaq in 1863. Mariette severely restricted British and other foreign fieldwork through the 1860s and 1870s. Until his death in 1881, a year before the British Occupation, Mariette held a virtual monopoly over Egyptian archaeology by refusing firmans and corvée labor to large-scale British excavations (Reid 2002: 99-103).

Egypt differed from other regions of the Ottoman Empire, such as the Maghreb, Iraq, and Turkey, where British archaeologists were able to conduct large excavations and send their collections to the British Museum (Larsen 1996; Challis 2008). British Egyptologists, therefore, became particularly reliant on private patronage, colonial networks of collaborators, and field records to communicate information from Egypt. Much of what constituted British archaeological fieldwork between 1850 and 1880 was directed at a distance. Long-distance investigations relied on a division of labor between informants and theorists, whereby much of the analyzing, systematizing, debating, and writing about Egyptian sites took place in Britain. This was common practice in other nascent Victorian field sciences, such as geography and anthropology. However, the antiquated term “armchair archaeologist” inaccurately



describes the full range of activities conducted, or the tremendous authority held, by such British figures. A more apt description might be “long-distance archaeologist” (Gold 2020).

The most archetypical of these individuals was Samuel Birch, the first Keeper of Oriental Antiquities and, later, Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum. Birch was a renowned philologist learned in Chinese and Hebrew, cuneiform, Egyptian hieroglyphs, and cursive hieratic. He edited and published translations of Egyptian texts, museum catalogs, and, in 1857, a manual for the study of Egyptian hieroglyphs. Birch made the British Museum a center of Egyptological scholarship from the mid-nineteenth century. Despite his eminence, Birch never traveled to Egypt. The authority of long-distance Egyptologists stemmed from their locality in Britain. Birch was at an intellectual advantage by working from the museum, where he could easily access the requisite manuscripts for analyzing newly purchased objects and collating information. Birch depended on an ill-defined and informal hierarchy of collaborators in Egypt and Britain. Between the 1840s and 1860s, he relied most heavily on the British artist, explorer, and “hieroglyphicist” Joseph Bonomi, who was a “serial collaborator” with other long-distance archaeologists, such as Samuel Sharpe (Gange 2013: 90-92). Birch asked Bonomi to collect antiquities and convey information from Cairo to London, including drawings, translations, and descriptions of sites.

Two Scottish-directed excavation programs from mid-century stand out in terms of advanced recording practices. The first was exemplary of long-distance fieldwork: the prominent London-based Scottish geologist Leonard Horner conducted large-scale excavations in Memphis and Heliopolis between 1851 and 1854 with the help of the Cairo-based Egyptian-Armenian civil engineer Joseph Hekekyan Bey, who oversaw the operations. While their initial objective was to measure the Nile’s annual sedimentary increase, their resulting geochronology sparked controversy amidst the Victorian human antiquity debates due to Horner’s speculative

conclusions about human origins in the Nile Valley and racist objections of British reviewers towards Hekekyan and the Egyptian fieldworkers (Horner 1858; Gold 2019). Hekekyan’s subsequent esoteric research on the topic also received little support (Hekekyan 1863; Gold *fc. a*). Nonetheless, his comprehensive observations, drawings, recordings, and communications for Horner were substantial and marked the first time that geological stratigraphy was explicitly adapted to archaeology, in Egypt or elsewhere (Jeffreys 1999, 2010; Gold 2019).

Conversely, the Scottish archaeologist Alexander Henry Rhind is a noteworthy exception to the long-distance rule. Rhind excavated extensively in Scotland in the early 1850s, advocating a novel concern for archaeological context. His subsequent excavations in Egypt, while wintering there for his health, were inspired by his shock at the careless treatment of monuments, as documented in an 1856 article for the *Archaeological Journal* (Rhind 1856; Gilmour 2015: 430-431). His seminal monograph, *Thebes: Its Tombs and Their Tenants, Past and Present* (1862), meticulously documented the geography, topography, stratigraphy, objects, and local inhabitants of New Kingdom tombs (Dodson 2008; Gilmour 2015; Irving and Maitland 2015). Before his untimely death, Rhind began systematic Nile observations for a proposed chronological project on the rate of alluvial deposits in relation to human antiquity at Thebes and Memphis (Stuart 1863: 37, 45-54). Despite the remarkable similarities, Rhind seemed unaware of Horner and Hekekyan’s prior excavations. Both Hekekyan and Rhind deserve recognition for independently implementing recording techniques that were not equaled for decades. However, the insistence that Rhind was the first “educated” and “professional” archaeologist to work in Egypt is anachronistic for this nascent period (Gilmour 2015; Irving and Maitland 2015). These excavations indicate evolving field practices at mid-century and, moreover, illuminate why only certain sources and figures are featured in early histories of Egyptology: Hekekyan’s unpublished work was dismissed or overlooked, while Rhind’s numerous

publications directly influenced subsequent archaeologists like William Matthew Flinders Petrie.

The full breadth of colonial long-distance networks in this era included many more figures who are similarly often excluded from disciplinary histories of British Egyptology. Like British classical archaeologists working throughout the Ottoman Empire, several “traveler-archaeologists” operated as intermediaries (Challis 2008). Frequent go-betweens included British consuls in Egypt Henry Salt, John Barker, Samuel Briggs, Charles Murray, and Frederick Wright-Bruce, as well as the Alexandria-based merchant and antiquary Anthony Charles Harris and the prolific antiquities collector and seller Greville Chester (Seidmann 2006; Bierbrier ed. 2012: 40-41, 80, 83, 119-120, 243, 393, 484-485). There were also stationed in Egypt an assortment of colonial officials and engineers who participated in archaeology, such as John Fowler and Justin Charles Ross (Bierbrier ed. 2012: 198, 474; Gange 2015: 79-80). Two further examples were the Scottish medical officer turned antiquary, James A. S. Grant, and the British railway engineer Wayman Dixon, who together uncovered the air passages in the so-called “queen’s chamber” of Khufu’s pyramid in 1872 (Bierbrier ed. 2012: 155; Gold 2020: 79). Another notable, though problematic, figure was the Cairo-based British collector Henry Charles Abbott, a self-professed medical practitioner, who by the 1850s had amassed a private collection of over 1200 objects. Abbott is best known for the important New Kingdom papyri that bear his name, which he acquired from Harris before selling them to the British Museum in 1857 (Bierbrier ed. 2012: 1-2).

Numerous local intermediaries also became crucial informants and advisors to British practitioners. Osman Effendi (born either Donald Thomson or William Taylor) was a Scottish prisoner of war turned slave and Muslim convert, who became an interpreter-guide for the British Consulate, assisting Salt, Lane, Wilkinson, and numerous travelers and colonial agents (Thompson 1992: 38-40; 1996; 2010: 117-139; Reid 2002: 76; Jasanoff 2005:

290). Joseph Hekekyan, being British-educated, was an important go-between who utilized his multilingual fluency, training in the natural sciences, and unique status to broker relationships with European elites. Hekekyan also co-founded the Egyptian Society (est. 1836), which was meant to be a rendezvous for European, particularly British, travelers (Reid 2002: 59-63; Gold 2019; *fc. a*). The notable Egyptian assistant and dealer Ali Gabri was a crucial guide for three separate British Giza-pyramid surveys in 1837, 1865, and 1880. From 1856 onward, Egyptian Copt Todros Bolous was a prominent dealer, as well as the consular agent at Luxor for Prussia. Similarly, Mustafa Aga was a prominent antiquities dealer in Luxor starting in the 1850s, and simultaneously a consular agent for Britain, Russia, Belgium, and the United States (followed by Ali Murad in 1871), Russia, and Belgium. He supervised numerous excavations and workers in Thebes, including two digs in 1855 and 1868, respectively. Like Hekekyan, Aga was multilingual, extremely influential, and well known to European and American travelers, having hosted the Prince of Wales during his visit to Luxor in 1862. Both Bolous and Aga exploited their consular status to excavate, despite Mariette’s restrictions, and to control the antiquities market in Luxor; they also sold an abundance of antiquities to British collectors, dealers, and tourists at mid-century (Hagen and Ryholt 2016: 249-253; Bierbrier ed. 2012: 394, 542). There were undoubtedly many more such intermediaries who provided crucial linguistic translations, cultural guidance, and tacit knowledge and experience.

Equally significant in these colonial networks was the vast number of unknown *corvée* laborers who assisted and excavated on British projects. Foreign archaeologists hired hundreds, if not thousands, of laborers at a time from local villages for large projects. By mid-century, workforces included several experienced foremen (*ru’asa*) representing “a new class of go-betweens with a kind of diplomatic status” (Doyon 2015: 145). While first-person accounts from early archaeological laborers are scarce, historians are now increasingly reading against the colonial archives to highlight modes of exploitation

and, significantly, workers' agency and indispensable contributions to the field. Belzoni's own colonial account of the management of local workforces in Thebes, Giza, Abu Simbel, Karnak, and Edfu, for example, contains numerous episodes of resistance and reflects "the workforce laying claim to the products of their knowledge, skills, and manual labor, and fighting against a sense of alienation from their work and their identity" (Mickel 2019a: 190-193). Kees van der Spek similarly reads against the ethnographic descriptions of foreign travelers, collectors, and excavators at Qurna to recover the lived experiences of the Qurnawi community and their important work with foreign archaeologists, including several mentioned in the present contribution (van der Spek 2011, esp. chapter 4). Despite all the many individuals who participated in British financed archaeological fieldwork in Egypt, it was, until very recently, mainly the long-distance Egyptologists in Britain who were recognized for new archaeological discoveries.

#### *Egyptian Chronology and Institutionalization in Britain*

The terms "Egyptology" and "Egyptologist" (borrowed respectively from the French *égyptologie* and *égyptologue*) were slowly introduced into Britain in the late 1850s through 1860s (Reid 2002: 113), though most practitioners did not identify themselves as Egyptologists until the end of the century. Many more were designated Egyptologers, chronologers, hieroglyphicists, hierologists, or antiquaries (Gange 2013: 46-47; Gold 2019: 196). The plethora of titles is indicative of porous disciplinary boundaries at mid-century and the non-linear growth of Victorian Egyptology amongst contemporaneously emerging scientific specialities. Diverse representatives from the intellectual elite looked to ancient Egypt to support their research agendas. These specialists included naturalists, geologists, phrenologists, ethnologists, philologists, anthropologists, physiologists, chemists, and astronomers.

The Orientalist search for the "Cradle of Western Civilization" in Egypt was closely tied

to Victorian science and religion (Larsen 1995: 231; Mickel 2019b: 140). Egyptology thus allowed for several controversial theories throughout the first three quarters of the century. The most prominent were Victorian pyramidologies that theorized the age, construction, and purpose of the Giza pyramids (e.g., Gange 2013: 131-135). Imperial surveyors used scientific instruments to reveal what was believed to be the metrological precision preserved in a variety of Egyptian monuments. These were ambitious projects to recover the lost sciences of ancient "weights and measures" and politically repurpose data towards the legitimization of new national standards in Britain and France that could be linked with the colonization of Oriental territories (Schaffer 2017). The Great Pyramid (i.e., that of 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty ruler Khufu) had become a particularly potent symbol since Napoleon's engineers explored it. In 1837, British military officer Howard Richard Vyse investigated Khufu's pyramid with civil engineer John Shae Perring. Their infamous use of gunpowder to blast open the structure revealed four new chambers (Vyse 1840). The new pyramid-data paved the way for global pyramidologies written by scholars in Egypt and the Continent. The best known of the British publications were publisher and author John Taylor's *The Great Pyramid* and *The Battle of the Standards* (Taylor 1859 and 1864, respectively; Schaffer 1997; Reisenauer 2003). Taylor directly influenced the "sacred cubit" theory of the Astronomer Royal for Scotland, Charles Piazzi Smyth, in *Our Inheritance in the Great Pyramid* (1864) and *Life and Work at the Great Pyramid* (1867). Smyth used pyramidology to campaign against the adoption of the "atheistic" French metric system in Britain (Smyth 1864: 217-218; 1867: 598; and see Schaffer 1997; Reisenauer 2003; Barany 2010; Gange 2013: 131-133; Nall 2020). Archaeologist William Matthew Flinders Petrie set out for Egypt in 1880 to reassess the claims made by Smyth—a friend of his father, the evangelical engineer William Petrie—through his own trigonometric survey of the pyramids (Petrie 1883; Drower 1995: 27-64).

Traditional "experts" most commonly brought disciplinary perspectives from

chronology, philology, biblical exegesis, and classics. During the 1840s and 1850s, philologists moved beyond decipherment to translating and publishing texts. Egyptology became increasingly divisive with renewed debates over historical chronologies, particularly the relative authorities of the Old Testament, classical writers such as Manetho, Herodotus, and Josephus, and Egyptological sources (Gange 2013: 96). These arguments were connected to Victorian debates about human antiquity, fueled by new geological and ethnological evidence out of Europe that humans were older than Bishop James Ussher's creation date of 4004 BCE. Ancient history and prehistory were not yet distinct subjects and were united by biblical scholarship (Gange 2013: 25-27). The Anglophile Prussian diplomat-chronologist Christian Charles Josias von Bunsen took up the dispute. In his five-volume *Egypt's Place in Universal History*, Bunsen proposed a monogenist theory (that is, a theory espousing human descent from a single pair of ancestors) for civilizational development and maintained that humans had lived in Egypt for 20,000 years (Bunsen 1848–1867; Champion 2003: 176-178; Gange 2013: 98-101; Gold 2019). Bunsen's geological colleague, Leonard Horner, contended that the date for "civilized" humans in Egypt was closer to 13,000 years (Bunsen 1859: xxiii-xxviii; Champion 2003: 176-178; Gold 2019; 2020: chap. 1). While Bunsen and Horner's theories were adamantly rejected by many, they also found wide support among members of the Victorian elite, including Samuel Birch, who posthumously edited Bunsen's fifth volume (1867), as well as ethnologist James Cowles Prichard, historian John Kenrick, and geologist Charles Lyell (Champion 2003: 176-178; Gange 2013: 104, 223; Gold 2019).

Any perceived conflict between archaeology and the Bible within these debates was most accurately over intellectual authority. As with the contemporary evolutionary debates, evangelical British scholars initially resisted the suggestion that Egyptian civilization could be older than 6,000 years. Bunsen and Horner were very publicly defended by liberal churchman Rowland Williams in the immensely popular collection *Essays and*

*Reviews*, published in 1860, yet subsequently attacked by Bishop Samuel Wilberforce (see Gange 2013: 101; Gold 2019: 221). Their most vocal Egyptological adversary was the young, British Museum numismatist (i.e., coin specialist), and later co-founder of the Egypt Exploration Fund, Reginald Stuart Poole, whose chronological book *Horae Aegyptiacae* supported a traditional pharaonic timeline informed by the Old Testament (Poole 1851; Gold 2019). Poole was a biblical apologist and avid polygenist (i.e., one who believes humanity to have derived from multiple origins), believing "civilized" and "primitive" races had distinct human origins (Poole 1863). Poole edited a popular book written, though anonymously, by his uncle Edward William Lane, titled *The Genesis of Earth and of Man*, which proposed an evolutionary-ethnological theory of "pre-Adamite" civilization to explain the geological evidence for remote human antiquity along the Nile (Poole ed. 1860; Livingstone 2008: 100-103; Gold 2019: 222-223). Other attempts to extend Egyptian civilization were made by the geological-anthropological "flint hunters" John Lubbock and Augustus Pitt-Rivers, whose efforts to confirm a Paleolithic age in Egypt were hotly debated in the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain throughout the 1870s and early 1880s (Stevenson 2011; 2015: 21-22). Disagreements over prehistoric cultures in Egypt continued for decades and only began to be resolved in the late 1890s (Gange 2013: 231-243, 259-262).

The British Museum also played a key role in elevating the cultural status of Egyptian antiquities. The arrival in London of booty confiscated from the defeated French catalyzed the museum's transformation from a cabinet of curiosities into a public-facing institution that fundamentally shaped Egyptological knowledge. The first purpose-built wing, the Townley Gallery, opened in 1808 to showcase the pharaonic "trophies of war" (Moser 2006: 65). British audiences were accustomed to regarding Greek and Roman antiquities as aesthetically superior to Egyptian antiquities, which were still considered impressive but odd curiosities (Jasanoff 2005: 216-226; Moser 2006: 65-92). The Egyptian



displays were reorganized in 1823 to accommodate the pieces procured by British consular agents, particularly the bust of Ramesses II and Salt's first collection of sculptures. The new layout was indicative of the changing valuations of pharaonic monuments, which had been transformed in the public eye from "colossal monstrosities" to "monumental masterpieces" (Moser 2006: 93-124). This represented an important cultural shift—namely, the European invention of the pharaonic artifact and its transformation from a thing of curiosity to an object of scholarly study. Elliot Colla terms this process "artifaction" and argues that it was instrumental to colonizers in their claim of scientific authority over Egypt (Colla 2007: 16-17, 19-20, 24-71). The growing collection prompted two new architectural additions in the 1830s: The Smirke Gallery opened in 1834 to showcase the sculptures, while the upper-level Egyptian Room opened in 1837, displaying smaller antiquities according to object type, subject, and size (Moser 2006: 125-170).

The British Museum was, moreover, instrumental in standardizing pharaonic history. The chronological focus at mid-century, reflected in the scholarship of Bunsen, Pool, Kenrick, Wilkinson, and Sharpe in Britain, and of Karl Richard Lepsius and Emmanuel de Rougé in continental Europe, also affected the museum keepers' display and acquisitions strategies (Moser 2006: 177). When the Smirke Gallery was extended in 1854, Birch reorganized the Egyptian sculptures—chronologically for the first time—presenting antiquities as "historical documents" rather than works of art inferior to those of classical collections (Moser 2006: 171-215). Egyptian authorities increasingly limited the removal of monumental pieces from the country, and consequently, Birch developed a new collections policy focusing on smaller objects that filled the chronological gaps in the existing collection (*ibid.*). However, the Victorian public held little consensus about the status of Egyptian artifacts well into the late nineteenth century. Antiquities could bolster competing chronologies, but they were also prized for their artistic, domestic, spiritual, and biblical values. Porous disciplinary boundaries,

both within and outside museum settings, led to disagreements over their taxonomic classifications as objects of historical art, ethnology, or archaeology (Stevenson 2019: 44-55).

Privileged Egyptological knowledge was informed through personal networks made from close friendships, familial ties, and institutional interactions (Riggs 2015: 131). The earliest British Egyptological societies served as important spaces of exchange and debate. The Syro-Egyptian Society of London (1844 – 1870) brought travelers together with a host of writers, philologists, biblical scholars, geologists, and astronomers (Gange 2013: 102, 111-117). Most of their active members, such as the Unitarian banker and biblical scholar Samuel Sharpe, never traveled to Egypt or the Levant, but at society meetings could hear second-hand the observations of those who had. This set a precedent for the London-based Society of Biblical Archaeology (SBA), founded in 1870 by Birch and Bonomi. The SBA absorbed the earlier society's members as well as those of the Anglo-Biblical Institute, the Chronological Institute, and the Palestine Archaeological Society (Legge 1919; Beckingham 1979; Gange 2013: 116). British Egyptologists, Assyriologists, and biblical scholars joined the society, as did anthropologists and members of the clergy and Parliament, and continental Egyptologists. The society's *Transactions* featured analyses of the Near East in relation to biblical chronology (Legge 1919; Beckingham 1979). A more significant output, however, was the twelve-volumed *Records of the Past*, a popular series of up-to-date English translations of Egyptian and Assyrian texts by philological members, edited by Birch between 1873 and 1881 (see Gange 2013: 139-140).

### *Public Reception and Popularization*

The later divergence between academic Egyptology and popular "Egyptomania" (i.e., the European fascination with all things ancient Egypt) was less pronounced in the nineteenth century. Popular interests in ancient Egypt were tied equally to the spectacle of the British Empire, Judeo-Christian religion, and



Western appreciation of the classics, as Egyptology was believed to shed light on ancient biblical and Greek texts (Gange 2013; Gange and Ledger-Lomas eds. 2013). Public enthusiasm grew exponentially upon Britain's defeat of France at the Battle of the Nile in 1798 and with the subsequent arrival of Egyptian antiquities in London. Egyptomania influenced numerous facets of British arts and culture, for example, through "Egyptianizing" architecture (Werner 2011; Curl 2013). The Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly was the earliest example of Egyptian revival architecture in Britain. The space was originally commissioned in 1812 by the antiquarian William Bullock to house his collection of antiquities and was designed after the Temple of Hathor in Dendara. It became a venue for a range of rotating art and anthropological exhibitions before becoming a more general entertainment venue by mid-century.

The entanglement of Egyptomania, imperial spectacle, and popularization is reflected in Belzoni's rising celebrity status in the early 1820s. The burly six-foot-eight Paduan-born traveler had previously enjoyed a brief career in Britain as a pantomime actor and circus strongman. His raw strength alone convinced Henry Salt to hire him—a virtual unknown—as a British agent to hunt for antiquities in Upper Egypt, where French agents posed a threat (Jasanoff 2005: 247-256; Colla 2007: 29-45). Belzoni returned to Britain in 1819 as a household name. The arrival at the British Museum of the head of Ramesses II, also known as Young Memnon, coincided with the publication of Romantic poet Percy Shelley's sonnet *Ozymandias* (Jasanoff 2005: 262-263; Colla 2007: 45-60, 67-71). Belzoni's best-selling narrative of his expeditions went through three editions in three years (Belzoni 1820; Jasanoff 2005: 247-256; Gange 2013: 74-79). His book was not only an enthralling tale of exotic adventure and Oriental exploration but also a chronicle of his rivalries with French collecting agents under Drovetti. The Egyptian antiquities in London were thus symbolic examples of Britain's victory in the East. Belzoni, the self-made outsider, made a yet bigger splash in British high society with his exhibition at the Egyptian Hall between 1820

and 1822, which featured his personal collection of antiquities and showcased scale models of Egyptian temples and pyramids (Jasanoff 2005: 247-256; Gange 2013: 74-79).

The 1820s also saw an exceptional rise in the acquisition of Egyptian mummies as imperial souvenirs for collection and display. Mummies were marketed for a range of scientific, pharmaceutical, and commercial purposes. They were harvested for "mummy wheat" and allegedly for mummy paper, and were used in mummy brown oil-paint, archaeological chemistry, nitrogenous fertilizer, and even as fuel for Egyptian railway steam-engines (Barak 2013: 36; Elliott 2017; Moshenska 2015a, 2017; Gold *fc. b*). Mummies were thus de-humanized as both commodities and scientific objects. Egyptologists and popularizers alike displayed, unwrapped, dissected, and harvested the ancient bodies in the name of English science. More esoteric spaces in Britain, such as medical museums, operating theaters, playhouses, pharmacies, and drawing rooms became stages where anatomical mummy unrollings were performed (Rogers 2012; Moshenska 2014, 2015b). The English-Italian surgeon Augustus Bozzi Granville described the first mummy autopsy at the Royal Society in 1825 (Riggs 2016a), while Thomas Pettigrew popularized the practice. Some dismissed the activities of "Mummy Pettigrew" as mere entertainment; however, his public persona was predicated on his scholarly ability to read hieroglyphs (Gange 2013: 80-82). His *History of Egyptian Mummies* (Pettigrew 1834) was widely read, and his demonstrations drew hundreds of spectators, including members of Parliament, men of science, and Egyptologists such as Wilkinson and Birch (Moshenska 2014, 2015b; Riggs 2014: 49-76; Gange 2013: 80-82). With the establishment of academic Egyptology and the expansion of museums in the second half of the century, mummies became increasingly classified as artifacts for scholarly study (Riggs 2014: 44, 57-58). However, mummy unrollings remained so popular that, in 1908, Egyptologist Margaret Murray became the first woman to stage a public unwrapping at the Manchester Museum (Sheppard 2012).

Mummy-mania was also reflected in Victorian science fiction. Like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Jane C. Loudon's anonymously published *The Mummy!* featured the use of scientific developments in electricity and galvanism to contemplate corpse reanimation (Loudon 1827). Mummy fiction gradually incorporated further Victorian themes of degeneration, spiritualism, romanticized imperialism, and sexualized Orientalism towards the *fin de siècle* (Deane 2008; Dobson 2017, 2018). The mummy craze was facilitated by the fact that ancient Egypt loomed large in the growing field of British race-science, itself entangled with theology, philology, anthropology, evolutionism, colonialism, abolitionism, collecting, display, and art. Biblically infused racial geographies formed a key aspect of the monogenist-polygenist development debates mentioned earlier, as well as eighteenth-century racial typologies by late eighteenth-century physiologist Johann Blumenbach and anatomist George Cuvier (Livingstone 2008, 2010). Racial typology and the related practice of craniology were taken up most publicly in early Victorian Britain by the Scottish comparative anatomist, ethnologist, and polygenist, Robert Knox. Knox, a controversial yet popular lecturer, authored the notorious *The Races of Men*, which made, among other racist claims, comparisons between ancient Egyptians and modern-day Coptic and Jewish peoples (Knox 1850; Challis 2013: 21-40). Similar paths were followed by American polygenist-ethnologists Samuel George Morton, George Gliddon, and Josiah Nott, all of who utilized pharaonic depictions of racial types and measurements of ancient skulls and mummified bones (Nelson 2003; Champion 2003: 168-175; Challis 2013: 40-42). Mummified Egyptian skulls had long been collected as "tokens of British imperialism" (Poskett 2021: 43-41). Their ongoing study and display, in and outside museums, were deeply imbedded in mid-Victorian racial ideologies and early physical anthropology (Champion 2003; Riggs 2016b, esp. 258-260). These developments further shaped Egypt's role in the human antiquity debates, particularly for polygenists Poole and James Hunt in the

Ethnological and Anthropological Societies of London (Challis 2013: 42-44; Gold 2019: 221-224), and for eugenicist Francis Galton and his University College London colleague, Flinders Petrie (Sheppard 2010; Challis 2013).

Visual representations of moving scenes called "panoramas" were popular at mid-century and brought millions of onlookers annually to the Egyptian Hall. This phenomenon marked a new mass medium for popular Victorian entertainment (Hyde 1988). Panoramas in the 1850s highlighted Britain's imperial authority over Egypt, past and present. Popular exhibits included the "Diorama of the Route of the Overland Mail to India," which featured the desert route between Cairo and the Suez, "The Great Moving Panorama of the Nile," which by 1852 had been exhibited in England over 2,500 times, and the photographic "Cairo Panorama," which debuted in 1859 (Barak 2013: 32). Other popular exhibits highlighted ancient Egypt's connections to the Bible. Between 1842 and 1849 the painter David Roberts, known for canvas paintings like *The Departure of the Israelites* (1829), published a series of lavishly illustrated lithographic prints of Egypt and the Near East, resulting from watercolors of his tour of the Holy Land (Gange 2013: 62; Moser 2020: 25-26). Romantic biblical exploration of ancient Egypt also influenced the "archaeological genre painting" in the works of British history-painters Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Sir Edward Poynter, and Edwin Long. As Moser (2020) argues, there was a two-way sphere of influence between Egyptology and British visual arts. These painters did not merely appropriate ancient Egyptian themes for Victorian aesthetics: their artistic representations of the past contributed to knowledge formation within academic Egyptology.

Also in the 1850s, world fairs began to play a vital role in exposing millions of European exhibition-goers to an Orientalist interpretation of ancient Egypt (Reid 2002: 125-128). The 1851 Great Exhibition in Hyde Park presented Egyptian antiquities as part of its celebration of British industrial technology

and design. The longer-standing Crystal Palace reopened in Sydenham in 1854, double the size of the original and featuring a new catalog of exhibits. The Palace was designed as a national venue for entertainment and moral education. Visitors were taken through a grand historical linear narrative and were invited to understand the evolutionary progress of Western civilization in relation to Victorian superiority (Qureshi 2011: 193-208; 2014: 271). The architect Owen Jones collaborated with Joseph Bonomi to design the Palace's spectacular Egyptian Court, the first in a series of fine arts courts (Moser 2012; Gange 2013: 92-95). The columns were adorned with the names of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in hieroglyphs. Jones authored a poorly received descriptive guidebook, with historical explanations of the monuments written by Sharpe (Jones 1854). It was quickly replaced by Wilkinson's edition supplied with commentary by Birch (Wilkinson 1857). Both guidebooks highlighted ancient Egypt's grandeur and connections with biblical history. However, they reinforced two opposing civilizational narratives—the first, of Egypt's artistic ingenuity followed by continuous decline, and the second, of Egypt's non-progressive civilizational status. Both were equally Orientalist and denied Egypt a progressive framework until the arrival of the “Western races” (Gange 2013: 92-95).

In the second half of the century, Egyptology's prestige grew further through the popularization of the discipline in the British cultural marketplace—in exhibitions, as well as popular books, periodicals, and public lectures. Egyptological experts increasingly sought the active participation of non-specialists. This came hand in hand with the growth of an informed and literate British public prompted by the Industrial “communications revolution” (Secord 2000: 24-34; Lightman 2016) and the expansion of the British tourism industry in Egypt. The Orientalist contradiction of the “world-as-exhibition,” as Timothy Mitchell argues, saw European tourists observe modern Egypt as if it were also on display; Western representations of the East created a distorted notion of the “real” Egypt (Mitchell 1989; 1991: 10-33). From 1843, the Peninsular and

Oriental Company (the P&O) offered steamship voyages out of Southampton to Alexandria in as little as fifteen days, and express trains on the Alexandria to Cairo railway were added in 1873. When Thomas Cook began offering guided trips up the Nile in 1869, thousands of British tourists added Egypt to their “Grand Tour.” Egypt was marketed for leisure and, commonly, as a European health resort (Reid 2002: 64-92; Hunter 2004; Hazbun 2007). The flow of British tourists in Egypt was increasingly augmented by British colonial personnel stationed in South Asia who used the overland trade route for travel, postal services, and the movement of supplies.

Such developments during this period encouraged the proliferation of Egypt-guidebooks for travelers. These pocket-sized books offered practical information for tourists, Arabic-English dictionaries, sections on hieroglyphs, lists of cartouches, a chronology of rulers, and information on Egyptian sites and monuments (Reid 2002: 69-73). John Murray's guidebooks dominated the British market from the 1830s and set a long precedent for handbooks authored or edited by Egyptologists. In 1847, Wilkinson wrote Murray's first Egyptian handbooks, which ran through several revised editions in the following decades (Wilkinson 1847, 1858, 1867; Eaton ed. 1873, 1875; Eaton and Loftie eds. 1880). Further handbooks followed: in the 1870s, the travel firm Thomas Cook published its first handbook for tourists, and the publishing firm Karl Baedeker published its traveler's handbook in English (Cook ed. 1876; Baedeker ed. 1878; Reid 2002: 72). Britons consequently produced hundreds of travelogs, paintings, photographs, and postcards in this era, publishing at least 114 travel accounts of Egypt between 1798 and 1850—well ahead of their French, German, and American counterparts (Reid 2002: 43). Women were particularly active travel writers from the 1840s, including, most famously, the sociologist Harriet Martineau and nurse Florence Nightingale (Frawley 1994; Melman 1995; Rees 1995; Harper 2001). Ultimately, the most influential travelog authored by a woman was Amelia B. Edwards' *A Thousand Miles up the*

*Nile*, which resulted from her six-week stay in Egypt in 1873 (Edwards 1877; Rees 1998; Lanoie 2013). The initial volume of 1877 was a heavy and expensive coffee-table book, lavishly illustrated with engravings from her own watercolors, and was followed in 1888 by a “new and cheaper” edition (Edwards 1888; Gold 2020: 143-144). The travelog launched Edwards’ Egyptological career and she was quickly taken up as an authority on the topic. From 1877, she wrote regularly for periodicals on various aspects of ancient Egypt, most often in the monthly review *The Academy* and in the popular science weekly *Knowledge* (see Gange 2013: 157, 175-208; Gold 2020: 142-153). Significantly, her 1877 book promoted the tragic destruction of Egyptian antiquities by tourists, archaeologists, and Egyptian *fellahin* (the Arabic term for peasants, often farmers). Reviving the earlier paternalistic preservation arguments, Edwards ushered in a new era of “conservatory Egyptology” through the rhetoric of urgent British intervention (Gange 2015; Gold *fc.* b).

In 1881, Edwards described the surge in Egyptological interests among the widening British middle class: “Histories of Egypt, Letters from Egypt, Rides in Egypt, Nile Notes, Nile Journals, Nile Gleanings, Nile Novels, books about Obelisks, books about Pyramids, Guide-books, new editions of old standard works, and the like,” she wrote, “all issue from the press at a rate which increases rather than declines” (Edwards 1881). This analysis appeared in her review for *The Academy* of a popular book *The Egypt of the Past*, written by the wealthy surgeon Sir Erasmus Wilson (1881), who had personally provided £10,000 for the removal of Cleopatra’s Needle from Alexandria to the Thames Embankment in 1877 (Wilson 1877; Elliot 2022). British engineers Benjamin Baker and brothers Waynman and John Dixon worked together on the removal of the needle from Egypt (Bierbrier ed. 2012: 155; Elliot 2022). The procurement, transportation, and installment of the obelisk was a monumental undertaking first conceived in 1801 at the conclusion of the Napoleonic expedition (Wilson 1877: 187). The re-erection of Cleopatra’s Needle in London became a symbolic reminder of Britain’s subsequent

conquests in Egypt and of the religious connections between Britain, Egypt, and the Bible. As with the removal of Egyptian obelisks to Paris in the early 1830s, and to New York in 1880, classically trained Victorians were also consciously emulating the imperial precedents set by the ancient Romans.

British Egyptomania and Egyptology in these decades thus prepared audiences for both the political and scientific developments to come. In the summer of 1882, when British forces descended onto Alexandria, Edwards co-founded the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF) in London, with Poole as co-founder and Wilson as the first president. The ensuing imperial protectorate in Egypt facilitated British access to Delta sites, while Victorian interests in the Bible and classics drove further archaeological advancements (Gange 2006; 2013: 151-196). The EEF gradually, yet irrevocably, transformed archaeological fieldwork in Egypt following the British Occupation and shaped the discipline’s institutionalization in Britain (see Sheppard 2021).

#### *Concluding Remarks*

Histories of British Egyptology increasingly reveal how the imperial politics of the nascent discipline in the nineteenth century shaped subsequent and modern academic practices. Egyptology grew under the power of the British Empire and the authority of the Bible. To date, most scholarly attention has focused on archaeological developments after 1882, when Egyptology grew in scale, visibility, and institutional and colonial authority. However, there was no sudden revolution in British Egyptology. The previous decades witnessed the development of crucial imperial technologies and precedents for later fieldwork, particularly in labor regimes, communication networks, field practices, visualization and chronological tools, and popularization. Attempts to retroactively apply divisions between “science” (archaeology) and the “arts” (philology, religion, art), or between Egyptology and pseudo-Egyptology, are likewise ahistorical, as disciplinary boundaries were still permeable. It is similarly not meaningful to distinguish “amateur” from



“professional” Egyptologists before the term, let alone concept, were widely adopted in Britain. British Egyptology between 1822 and 1882 must be understood within the wider political, economic, social, religious, and scientific developments of the era, rather than as an isolated antiquarian specialization. Archaeological fieldwork was typically a colonial survey-science characteristic of geography, architecture, geology, and anthropology; Egyptian philology was a shared focus of chronology and ethnology; museology and antiquities collections were offshoots of coordinated institutional and imperial networks; and British Egyptomania was not passive reception but the calculated popularization of the discipline and the Orientalist appropriation of pharaonic history and Egyptian heritage.

Decolonizing nineteenth-century British Egyptology is a challenging project that historians are now addressing. Current attempts to situate British Egyptology within the colonial Egyptian context and widen the

perspectives from which histories are told have focused mainly on the colonial collections of museums in Britain, with more work to be done. Historians have largely banished the European “discovery” narrative of ancient Egypt that marginalizes Egyptian agency and contributions in favor of more pluralistic and transnational accounts. Future research might incorporate Ottoman and Egyptian interlocutors, including accounts of cooperation and resistance, and traditionally invisible forms of labor, such as those performed by go-betweens, informants, fieldworkers, women, and popularizers. Other important perspectives could investigate how British Egyptologists were entangled with other forms of British and Egyptian science, industry, and modernization, including agriculture, railways, and the colonial cotton trade, or could focus on Egyptological practices—namely, how British knowledge of ancient Egypt was constructed, communicated, and mobilized towards different agendas.

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### *Bibliographic Notes*

The history of British Egyptology in the nineteenth century prior to 1882 has a long and popular tradition of biography, site histories, and grand narratives highlighting the Orientalist work of British men (Ceram 1952; Bratton 1967; Wortham 1971; Tyldesley 2005; Thompson 2015). Some of these works provide problematic criticisms of the colonial nature of the discipline (Fagan 1975). Biography has remained an important genre with useful information detailing discoveries and pioneering approaches of early Egyptologists and archaeologists (Thompson 1992, 2010; Rees 1998; Bierbrier ed. 2012; Robinson 2012; Seyler 2015). These narratives are changing as historians strive to contextualize British Egyptology within the broader political, social, scientific, and religious developments of the period. The best summaries of colonial Egyptology focus on the imperial and Egyptian contexts (Reid 2002; Jasanoff 2005; Colla 2007). Newer scholarship has examined the active reception of Egyptology in Britain (Moser 2006, 2012, 2020; Gange 2013) and the Victorian objectification, racialization, and popularization of mummies (Rogers 2012; Moshenska 2014, 2015b; Riggs 2014, 2018, 2016a). A related branch of scholarship has explored the entanglement between Egyptology and other Victorian sciences, including transnational controversies (Schaffer 1997, 2017; Buchwald and Josefowicz 2010, 2020; Moshenska 2015a, 2017; Gold 2019, 2020, *fc. b*). There has also been a shift towards edited volumes that offer a comparative framework for histories of Egyptology (Jeffreys ed. 2003; Carruthers ed. 2013). While for the years subsequent to 1882 several accounts have now emerged of local histories, field practices, Egyptian labor, and women in Egyptology, the earlier period from 1822 – 1882 requires further scholarly attention.



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