

The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt

By Toby Wilkinson

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***NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER**

"Magisterial . . . [A] rich portrait of ancient Egypt's complex evolution over the course of three millenniums."—*Los Angeles Times*

NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY
The Washington Post* • *Publishers Weekly

In this landmark volume, one of the world's most renowned Egyptologists tells the epic story of this great civilization, from its birth as the first nation-state to its absorption into the Roman Empire. Drawing upon forty years of archaeological research, award-winning scholar Toby Wilkinson takes us inside a tribal society with a pre-monetary economy and decadent, divine kings who ruled with all-too-recognizable human emotions. Here are the legendary leaders: Akhenaten, the "heretic king," who with his wife Nefertiti brought about a revolution with a bold new religion; Tutankhamun, whose dazzling tomb would remain hidden for three millennia; and eleven pharaohs called Ramesses, the last of whom presided over the militarism, lawlessness, and corruption that caused a political and societal decline. Filled with new information and unique interpretations, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt* is a riveting and revelatory work of wild drama, bold spectacle, unforgettable characters, and sweeping history.

"With a literary flair and a sense for a story well told, Mr. Wilkinson offers a highly readable, factually up-to-date account."—*The Wall Street Journal*

"[Wilkinson] writes with considerable verve. . . . [He] is nimble at conveying the sumptuous pageantry and cultural sophistication of pharaonic Egypt."—*The New York Times*

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The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt By Toby Wilkinson Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #94302 in Books
- Published on: 2013-01-08
- Released on: 2013-01-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.20" h x 1.50" w x 6.10" l, 1.64 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 656 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Starred Review. Cambridge University Egyptologist Wilkinson (Lives of the Ancient Egyptians) offers a revisionist view of the ugly life hidden by the splendors and dazzling treasures of pharaonic Egypt. He shows in rich detail that it was a brutal society where life was cheap, royal power absolute and established through fear and coercion. Wilkinson finds unequivocal evidence in royal tombs like that of First Dynasty king Djer (c. 2900 B.C.E.), surrounded by 318 buried retainers, probably victims of human sacrifice. Even if construction workers for Khufu's Great Pyramid at Giza ("the ultimate projection of absolute power") were reasonably fed and housed, they were virtual, if not literal, slaves, drafted to perform the perilous work. Later the fanatical, heretic king Akhenaten built a new model city with grand temples where mountains of food were offered to a sun god while his people were starving and severely overworked. The Ptolemies' punitive economic policies unleashed a peasants' revolt that fatally weakened their empire. This is a penetrating and authoritative overview of a violent ancient civilization often revered by contemporary scholars and enthusiasts. 24 pages of color photos; 44 b&w photos; 12 maps. (Mar.)
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From Booklist
Egyptologists constitute a relatively small subspecialty among professional historians. Perhaps that is why many express an almost fanatical devotion to and admiration for the culture of ancient Egypt. Wilkinson, an award-winning Egyptologist who teaches at Oxford, provides a fine single-volume history of ancient Egypt that covers more than 3,000 years, from prehistory to the Roman conquest. He uses a conventional chronological approach that inevitably uses archaeological sources to provide examples. Like his colleagues, Wilkinson expresses admiration for the continuity, stability, and relative harmony of pharaonic Egypt. Yet he is strikingly at odds with other Egyptologists in his efforts to present the darker side of Egyptian life. Egyptian rulers created and maintained the first true nation-state. As Wilkinson shows, however, the price of this stability was regimes based on fear, coercion, and, when deemed necessary, violent military suppression. This superbly written survey is ideal for general readers and likely to engender controversy among specialists. --Jay Freeman

Review
“A magnificent, illuminating and refreshingly readable overview of the entire phenomenon of ancient Egypt.”—*The Washington Post*

“Magisterial . . . [A] rich portrait of ancient Egypt’s complex evolution over the course of three millenniums.”—*Los Angeles Times*

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“Engrossing . . . Readers will find it hard to put down. . . . This book will serve as a standard for general readers and college students alike.”—*Library Journal* (starred review)

“Absolutely divine . . . a thorough, erudite and enthusiastic gallop through an astonishing three thousand

years."—*The Sunday Times*

Users Review

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