

Kathryn A. Bard, *An Introduction to the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt* (Malden, Ma: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

### Reviewed by Jeff Cutright

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In her preface, Kathryn Bard states the impetus for writing this book was that there was “no one text that covered everything ... in a comprehensive survey.”<sup>389</sup> Attempting to incorporate everything she ever “wanted to know about ancient Egypt” when first beginning her study, Bard’s first three chapters include the background necessary to understand the survey of Egyptian archaeology and history.<sup>390</sup> These initial chapters focus on the ecology, geography, and natural resources available in Egypt. The following seven chapters offer a detailed analysis of Egyptian archaeology on a chronological foundation beginning with the Paleolithic, around 500,000 years ago, and extending through the Greco-Roman Period. While textbooks on Egyptian history discuss the archaeology to supplement the history, Bard explicates the history based in, and extracted from, the archaeology of Egypt, not the other way around. Throughout the book, Bard narrates a thoroughly detailed and thoughtful history of Egypt. Bard devotes the final chapter to a summary of the current applications and potential implications of ancient Egyptian archaeology. In keeping with her stated goal of writing a textbook designed for classroom, Bard includes a set of chapter summaries and review questions in the back. Finally, Bard provides a glossary of terms as well as an extensive “suggested readings” list.

Bard discusses Egyptian history from an archaeological point of view, and utilizes an assortment of tools to aid the reader. She presents the panorama of Egyptian historical periods, which are derived from cultural and political considerations based on the important remains dating from that period. In the section on the pyramid of King Khufu at Giza, Bard provides a detailed map of the Giza Pyramid Complex.<sup>391</sup> The map includes the three largest pyramids built by Khufu, Khafre and Menkaure, and the excavated subsidiary buildings such as mortuary temples, workers’ quarters and the boat pits. Bard gives illuminating descriptions of the buildings and artifacts. She goes into ever-increasing detail on the excavations at Giza and finally explores the statues discovered at the various parts of the site.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> Kathryn A. Bard, *An Introduction to the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt* (Malden, Ma.: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), xvii.

<sup>390</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

One of the most impressive works of art in the ancient world originates from the Giza Pyramid Complex. The life-size statue of King Menkaura and his wife Khamerernebty II is shown in Plate 6.5. Bard notes that the statue bears traces of the original paint, so what we see today is a dull reflection of the original. Bard notes that fifteen statuettes of the king existed at various stages of completion. Indeed, the pyramid itself was not completed. This king was the last to build at Giza and his pyramid is tiny compared to his father's and grandfather's.<sup>393</sup> She further comments that the incomplete pyramid, royal statuettes, and the relatively small size of Menkaura's pyramid point to possible economic difficulties, changes in the religious practices of the time, or space on the Giza plateau. While discussions of the current debates in Egyptian archaeology are outside the primary purpose of her book, Bard believes the value of including such material, if only in passing. This analysis of the implications for Egyptian cultural, social and political history is founded on the examination of the excavated objects. The archaeological discoveries spotlight the content of the book.

To the student of ancient Egypt, justification for its study seems superfluous. Nonetheless, in chapter eleven Bard spends some time and effort illustrating the applications of Egyptology to other questions and problems which lie outside the scope of ancient Egyptian studies. For example, ancient Egypt provides both material remains and textual evidence for the "earliest large territorial state" which "unlike most early states...was a stable one, in existence for over 800 years, from Dynasty 0 to the end of the Old Kingdom."<sup>394</sup> One such link is the study of the unification of Egypt which illuminates the study of primary state formation.

Another example of the applications of archaeology is that it yields information on environmental problems pertinent to the present day. Bard notes that over its long history, Egypt became increasingly arid. The way the Egyptian government and people reacted to, or failed to react to, these environmental changes remains of great interest to modern researchers.

Comparing this textbook to others in the field would be useful. However, as John Baines states on the back cover, no other scholarly introduction to Egyptian archaeology exists that was also intended for classroom use. One might compare Bard's text with Nicholas Grimal's *A History of Ancient Egypt*, which presents Egyptian history as a coherent narrative but does not generally link the history with archaeology in such a direct way.<sup>395</sup> While Bard's text emphasizes the archaeology, she makes a clear connection with the history. Bard has filled the need for a single text integrating Egyptian archaeology and history into a pedagogically useful textbook while maintaining a scholarly approach to the subject matter.

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<sup>393</sup> Kings Khafre and Khufu, respectively.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, 324. The approximate time interval here is about 3100 – 2181 BC. See Bard, 42.

<sup>395</sup> Nicolas Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, (Malden, Ma.: Blackwell Publishing, 1994).

Bard's discussion of the influence of Ancient Egypt on modern day fiction and cinema represents a potential point of contestation regarding the relevance of present-day pop-culture and archaeology. Her rationale was that Egyptian archaeology and archaeologists exert an important influence on society as a whole today. It has the beneficial effect of encouraging the general public's interest in ancient Egypt. Movies such as *The Mummy* series, though obviously intended to entertain and not inform, opened the door to more accurate portrayals of Ancient Egyptian society. Indeed, a Hollywood rendition of *Cleopatra* stirred the first interest in Egyptian history and archaeology in the author of this review.