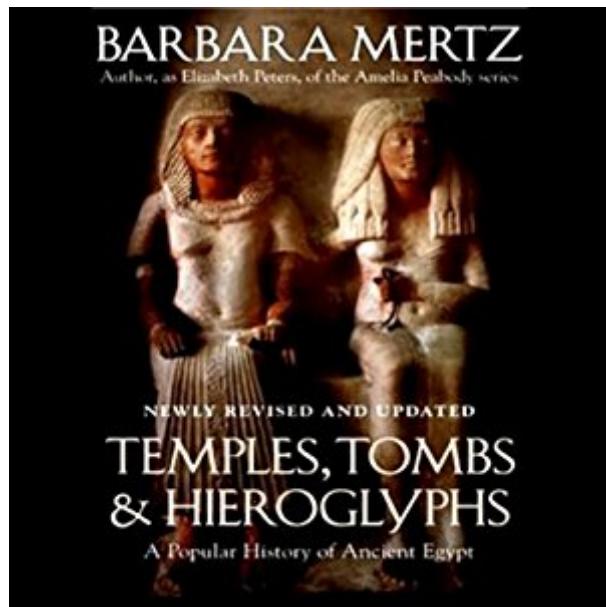


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# Temples, Tombs, And Hieroglyphs: A Popular History Of Ancient Egypt



## **Synopsis**

In this updated version of the classic of popular Egyptology, Barbara Mertz combines a doctorate in Egyptology at the famed Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago with a life-long enthusiasm for ancient Egypt. Her love of the subject is contagious and makes her the perfect guide to ancient Egypt for the student, the layman, and those who plan to visit-or have visited-the Nile Valley. --This text refers to the MP3 CD edition.

## **Book Information**

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 12 hoursÂ andÂ 45 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Tantor Audio

Audible.com Release Date: December 5, 2007

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B0010Z7QCO

Best Sellers Rank: #157 inÂ Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Ancient #467 inÂ Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Egypt #1144 inÂ Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Archaeology

## **Customer Reviews**

As a graduate student in Egyptology/Egyptian archaeology, I have a slightly different perspective on this book than some people. As other reviewers have noted, the text is a bit dated, having been written a few decades ago. However, the basic facts are still solid and Mertz writes so well and brings so much of ancient Egyptian history to life that a few inaccuracies can be excused, especially as one hopes that so well-written a text will encourage people to go on to do more research. Mertz also manages to capture and discuss, though not in detail, a bit of what it is like to study Egyptology professionally in a few humorous off-the-cuff remarks in the texts. If memory serves, she compares demotic to a series of frenetic commas. :) In short, this is a book I re-read on occasion, even as a professional, not for any particular research needs, but more to remind myself what my own writing \*could\* be and, sometimes, to remind myself why I decided to do this for a living.

Firstly I must admit that I am not an expert on this subject. I learnt the basic stuff at High School and

that's about it. My interest was sparked in Ancient Egypt after taking my daughter to watch 'The Mummy' and subsequently reading Bob Brier's book 'The Murder of Tutankhamen'. As it has been previously noted by other reviewer's this book is somewhat dated (originally published in 1964) but that does not detract from the wonderful narrative that the author weaves around the Pharaohs and their place in history. The author does not get bogged down in technical details and you never lose interest in the story. She has a knack of writing about these far away times and people as if it was yesterday and draws you into her story. Overall I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to obtain a decent overview of Ancient Egypt.

I picked this book up in an airport when I was a teenager, and it sparked an interest in Egyptology which has lasted 30 years. Mertz is a graceful writer, deftly mixing scholarship with humor and 'human interest'. The book is not intended for Egyptologists, (Hence 'A Popular History') and bypasses, wisely in my opinion, the wrangling between experts which makes the field so frustrating to the lay reader. Honesty prevails, however; when she is stating a personal opinion, she says so. The result is a fascinating, funny and intelligent look at the ancient culture of which we know so much and understand so little.

Writing under the pen name Elizabeth Peters, Barbara Mertz started the Amelia Peabody series of tongue-in-cheek Victorian archaeological thrillers in 1975. But 11 years before then this trained Egyptologist published the first edition of "Temples, Tombs & Hieroglyphs". Like many other books this traces of the history of ancient Egypt from the pre-dynastic to the Ptolemies. But Mertz brings her sense of humor to lighten what can be a dry series of lists of kings. She brings to life highpoints in the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms, as well as the chaotic periods in between. Moreover, she lifts the veil and lets the reader in on many of the scholarly disputes, like those over the woman pharaoh Hatshepsut and the role of Nefertiti in the succession to her heretical husband Akhenaton. It's also nice to see someone reveal the egomaniac Ramses II for what he was, a poor leader who lost the second Battle of Kadesh, and who covered his weaknesses by pasting his image everywhere. For anyone who has read the Peabody books, including the depiction there of Sir William Flinders Petrie (and his approach to feeding his staff), Mertz' homage here to the founder of modern Egyptology is interesting. In her forward to this Second Edition, Mertz says she thought she wouldn't have to do much to revise the earlier work. But then, she adds, taking into account four decades of new discoveries proved to be a challenge. There are places in this book where she discusses post-1964 work, but the addition of the new material is seamless, with no sense of things just stuck in. This is a

delightful introduction to the fascinating history of ancient Egypt.

If you're new to egyptology and are looking for a good book on the History of Egypt then you can't pick a better place to start than by reading this. Barbara Mertz writes in a conversational style and her wit and personality shine out from the page. Despite the 'light' feel of the text the author is obviously very knowledgeable on the subject and is not afraid of letting the reader know of her own, sometimes controversial, opinions. For example, she is particularly scathing of the New Kingdom Pharaohs that followed Thutmose III (including Ramses II) which might surprise some people but she backs this up with reasoned argument leaving the reader to decide for themselves. This book also contains what I feel to be the classic put-down for 'Pyramidiots' and I quote: "He [the pyramidiot] is not using facts to construct a theory, but is selecting facts to support a preconceived and unshakable belief. Whatever the techniques a historian chooses to work with, he must use them without prejudice and be prepared to revise, or dismiss, his theory when he runs up against a fact his tools cannot handle." Graham Hancock please note! Despite being written some time ago I found this classic work a refreshing and informative read. Well recommended.

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