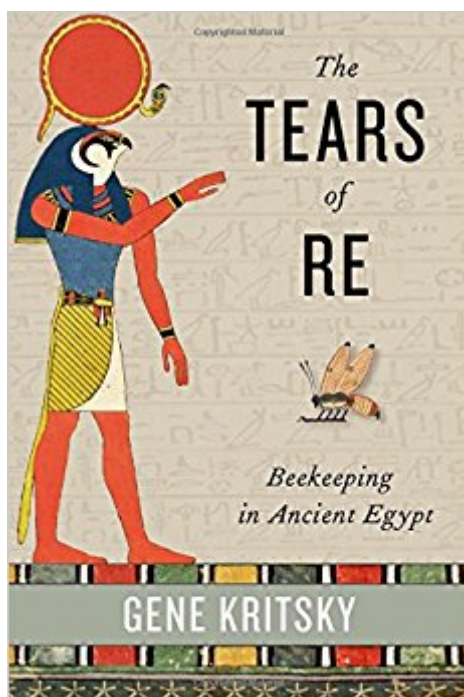


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The Tears Of Re: Beekeeping In Ancient Egypt



Synopsis

According to Egyptian mythology, when the ancient Egyptian sun god Re cried, his tears turned into honey bees upon touching the ground. For this reason, the honey bee was sacrosanct in ancient Egyptian culture. From the art depicting bees on temple walls to the usage of beeswax as a healing ointment, the honey bee was a pervasive cultural motif in ancient Egypt because of its connection to the sun god Re. Gene Kritsky delivers a concise introduction of the relationship between the honey bee and ancient Egyptian culture, through the lenses of linguistics, archeology, religion, health, and economics. Kritsky delves into ancient Egypt's multifaceted society, and traces the importance of the honey bee in everything from death rituals to trade. In doing so, Kritsky brings new evidence to light of how advanced and fascinating the ancient Egyptians were. This richly illustrated work appeals to a broad range of interests. For archeology lovers, Kritsky delves into the archeological evidence of Egyptian beekeeping and discusses newly discovered tombs, as well as evidence of manmade hives. Linguists will be fascinated by Kritsky's discussion of the first documented written evidence of the honeybee hieroglyph. And anyone interested in ancient Egypt or ancient cultures in general will be intrigued by Kritsky's treatment of the first documented beekeepers. This book provides a unique social commentary of a community so far removed from modern humans chronologically speaking, and yet so fascinating because of the stunning advances their society made. Beekeeping is the latest evidence of how ahead of their times the Egyptians were, and the ensuing narrative is as captivating as every other aspect of ancient Egyptian culture.

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Customer Reviews

"The Tears of Re" described the currently available information about bees, honey, and beekeeping in ancient Egypt. Apparently, we know very little about ancient beekeeping practices, though we know they did it and they even had an administrative structure based around it. The author gave detailed descriptions of the existing visual evidence in tombs and temples related to bees, honey, and beekeeping. He described what can still be seen, what parts have been destroyed, and the different theories about what, exactly, the scenes depict. He also included what ancient written sources say about beekeeping, the worth of honey, how honey was used in food and medicine, how beeswax was used, and the various myths about the origin and purpose of bees. He provided several translations of various texts that he quoted so we could get a good feel for what was meant. He also talked about beekeeping practices that were used in Egypt until recently which look very similar to the ancient visual record. It's a short book, but it did a nice job of presenting the available information about beekeeping practices and bee products used in ancient Egypt. I'd recommend it to those seriously interested in the topic. I received an ebook review copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley.

Because I enjoyed reading Dr. Kritsky's book "The Quest for the Perfect Hive" I looked forward to reading "The Tears of Re". I was not disappointed. The story of beekeeping in ancient Egypt across the millennia is very interesting and the inclusion of a chronology in the beginning of the book made the long Egyptian history easy to follow. The chapter on the honey bee hieroglyph and the chapter on healing are probably my favorites. The use of photographs and drawings of specific archaeological sites detailed in the writing is most helpful. The fact that there are many illustrations is wonderful.

As a compendium of beekeeping as recorded in Ancient Egypt this gets four stars. But as a read? It is just too dry. And that is sad since the author's interest and expertise come through here and there. Amid what is nothing more, too often, of list after list of tomb inscriptions and records, there is some wonderful writing by Kritsky that underscores the enthusiasm that prompted such a book. But for me it was mere sentences. Maybe a paragraph at most. And then the return to rote citation. And that is a disappointment. Particularly at a time when the importance of bees and their place in the environment still gets ignored at our peril. Getting a glimpse of how long and how important bees have been in one of the oldest and most enduring civilizations that impacted the rest of the world and its growth was fantastic. Unfortunately I just feel we barely get even a glimpse through an expert's eyes. Maybe a hint instead; it almost felt more like I was reading a great book's

bibliography and notes.

The symbolisms brought down to us in the art and architecture of the Ancient Egyptian's with the hope of perpetuating their identity and beliefs is fascinating to me. Not surprising the Egyptians would see the Bee and its complexities as a gift from god. I most enjoyed reading Mr. Kritsky work with my morning tea mit honey.

I was expecting a quick easy read from this book that is so short it would have been called a novella had it been fiction. It proved to be neither quick nor easy. I like to think of myself as an amateur Egyptologist, though that might be pushing it; it's one thing to memorize the gods, but to remember every pharaoh and hieroglyph seems silly. The problem here is the author assumes the reader does know all that, so I had to keep looking through other books and/or the internet to understand the context. It's really too scholarly to enjoy, reading like a grad school paper; most lay people would probably be bored quickly. The most interesting part was the chapter on the honeybee hieroglyph, which was completely unexpected. Can't help but wonder if this actually was some grad school term paper where someone had the bright idea of selling it to the public without revisions. 1/10th of this already short book is bibliography.

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