



The Tears of Re: Beekeeping in Ancient Egypt

By Gene Kritsky

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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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Editorial Review

Review

"Readable in a few hours, the book is the sort of unexpected delight one hopes to find in an old hotel, and it deserves to do well. Let's hope the ... buzz spreads." --*The Independent*

"This is beyond doubt the most comprehensive study of honey bees and beekeeping in this most ancient civilization." --*Bee Culture*

"[A] must for anyone interested in cultural entomology." --*Bee Craft*

"Kritsky has created a book that is an enjoyable, engaging read and also contributes meaningfully to our understanding of the cultural significance of the bee and apiculture in Egypt. ... Kritsky's work is an essential starting point for understanding beekeeping and discussions of bees throughout the Mediterranean world, in art, and in history." --*Bryn Mawr Classical Review*

"The is subject matter will appeal to students, beekeepers interested in history, and professors teaching the development of apiculture..." --*American Entomologist*

Featured in *OsirisNet News*.

"Richly illustrated and engagingly written, the monograph will appeal to anyone with a passion for beekeeping, Egyptology, or the ancient world in general. It will become a compelling reference work on the subject for many years to come." --*European Journal of Entomology*

"This well-illustrated book works as a guide for the amateur Egyptologist, 'with step-by-step instructions to the evidence of ancient beekeeping at different archaeological sites and in different museums'. It is a great read for those with an interest in Ancient Egypt and the detective work that has revealed its complex, highly ordered and controlled society. The amateur beekeeper will also be fascinated by this book." --*History Today*

"[W]ell researched and very accessible to the general reader." --*Ancient Egypt Magazine*

About the Author

Gene Kritsky holds a PhD in Entomology and specialized in the history of biology. He was a Fulbright Scholar to Egypt in 1981-2, where he began his research in Egyptology. He has published several papers on Egyptian beekeeping, mythology, Egyptological history, and archaeology. Kritsky is now the Chair of Biology at Mount St. Joseph University.

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