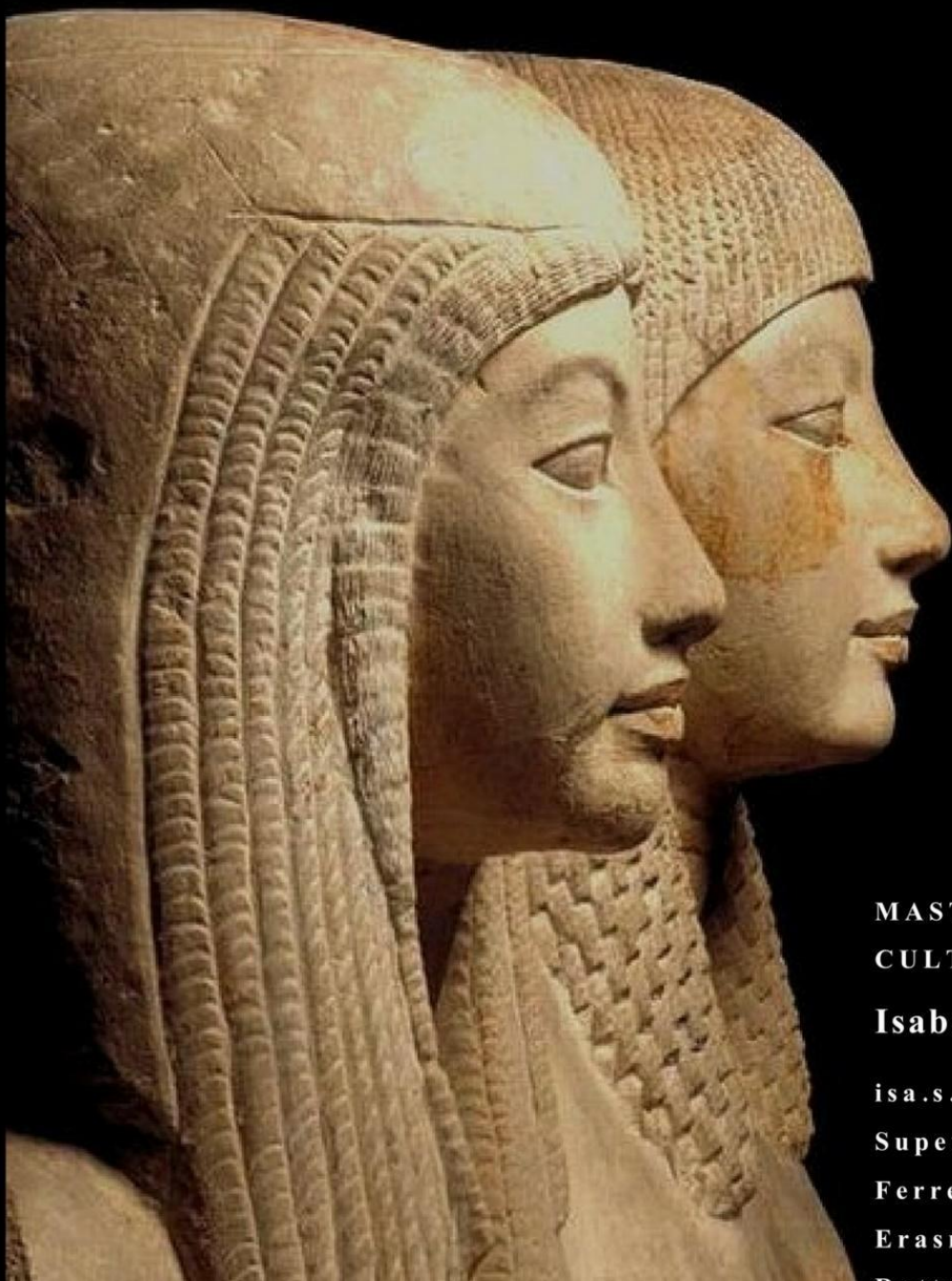# Curating Ancient Egypt :

Examples from the Netherlands

MASTER THESIS - ARTS, CULTURE AND SOCIETY

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Curating Ancient Egypt : Examples from the Netherlands

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Abstract

This study addresses the persistence of a colonial gaze employed by Western European archaeological museums in their current process of curating Ancient Egyptian exhibitions. This "colonial gaze" is related to the concept of "othering", as defined by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which presents a critical outlook on Western conceptions and representations of cultures in the Middle and Far East. My study was focused on two Dutch museum with significant Ancient Egyptian collections, namely the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden and the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam. The data for this study was gathered through a content analysis of the museum's mission statements, their choice of collection highlights, in addition to an in-situ observation of each of the permanent exhibitions and interviews with the head curators of the Egyptian departments of the two museums. Through this mixed methods approach, I have arrived at different conclusions which not only address the question of to what degree this colonial gaze is still employed by museums, but which also sheds light on a range of issues regarding the contextualization of the artifacts, the museums' acquisition histories and policies, and post-colonial debates regarding the ownership and repatriation of artifacts.

Keywords: Orientalism, Ancient Egypt, Curatorship, Post-Colonial Studies, Acquisition Policy

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1. Introduction

The discipline of Egyptology in Western academia can be interpreted as a reflection of the colonial gaze employed in the Victorian Era to grasp and represent the culture and identity of a region and its people. According to Said (1978), this colonial gaze towards North Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East is defined as "Orientalism". Said argues that the West has long portrayed the "other" in the form of the Orient: "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences, [the West's] source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant...its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (1978: 1-2).

As Said's theory of Orientalism (1978) covers a broad spectrum of disciplines, this study will be shedding light on the field of museology. Thus, the starting point for this thesis' discussion is the establishment of ethnographic museums in Western Europe throughout the Modern Era, a practice which I argue that is deeply rooted in the colonial enterprises of European nation-states. Kriegel (2006) advocates the latter statement, alluding to Duncan and Wallach (1980), claiming that the activity of going to a museum can be characterized as a civic ritual that especially in the 19th century reinforced the socio-political culture cultivated by the agendas of European empires and their process of building a strong national identity. Thus, in light of the definition of Orientalism by Said (1978), Ancient Egyptian collections in museums established by former colonial powers put forward an interesting case study, as it can be argued that they act as a foil to Western civilization and its history, namely by portraying the Orient as a contrasting – and contending - character to the West.

Based on the aforementioned concepts and theories, the main research question of this thesis is the following:

> *"In what ways is the practice of collecting and curating Ancient Egyptian artifacts in the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam and the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden still reminiscent to the one employed during Western European colonialism?"*

With this question I shall address whether in contemporary times there is a stronger presence of multi-dimensional or alternative narratives by the colonized, or whether these versions are still covert in the curatorial narratives employed by Western European museums to portray Egyptian cultural heritage and its legacy. The questions posed by this study and the theoretical framework it will draw upon will be put into practice in a research conducted in two Dutch

archaeological museums with prominent Ancient Egyptian collections, namely the Allard Pierson Museum at the University of Amsterdam and the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden.

Furthermore, the objective of this study is to provide a critical, yet nuanced analysis of the musealization phenomenon which Ancient Egyptian cultural heritage has been submitted to by European institutions. The presence of an Egyptian collection in the most traditional European museums, such as the Louvre and the British Museum, has embedded the artifacts on display in the core identity of these institutions. It is evident that these museums have devoted a large share of expertise and financial means for the conservation and exhibition of these collections. In contemporary times, the turmoil occurring in the Middle East and its direct threats to its cultural heritage have been reinforcing the idea that Europe should partake in coordinated interventions for the sake of protecting heritage sites and archaeological artifacts. However, as Riggs (2013) highlights, this current discourse has been deeply rooted in European colonialism and its agenda. Thus, colonial pasts have proved to result in complicated aftermaths which are still unfolding in various parts of the world. Although cultural heritage is now portrayed as global property, the complex relation between displaced artifacts and their host institutions has only started to be scrutinized. Examples of modern efforts to address this debate are the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Transfer of Ownership of Objects and the re-vitalization of institutions such as the Grand Egyptian Museum, the Library of Alexandria, and the Cairo Museum. Measures such as these have proven useful in re-establishing Egypt's grasp upon its own cultural heritage, which subsequently leads to the re-claiming of their own history and identity. However, the roots to this process of re-visitation lie much deeper historically and politically, in which the cultural heritage of Egypt is but a gateway to a broader and highly sensitive debate between the former colonizers and the colonized.

2. Literature Review

In *Colonising Egypt* (1988), Mitchell establishes that Ancient Egyptian artifacts on display at European museums, even if distanced from their original context, bore the function of not only pictorially representing a foreign past and civilization; they also served as tools for acknowledging colonial advancements towards Egypt and its "lost" heritage, which implied that Europe had not only the capability to rescue these treasures from remote and forgotten lands, but also that the West had a justifiable entitlement over these findings. In relation to this argument, Moser's study *Wondrous Curiosities: Ancient Egypt at the British Museum* (2006) recognizes the deep impact that such exhibitions have brought upon the Western grasp of the culture of Ancient Egypt. Moser zooms into five exhibitions at the British Museum held in the years of 1759-1880, critically analyzing the approaches used by the institution to display its collections on Ancient Egypt. The first museum display taken into account is the Sloane collection of Egyptian artifacts in 1759, in which the antiquities were portrayed as what Moser calls "wondrous curiosities". In 1808, the Townley installation displayed both fragments and entire constructions of colossal proportion in size. Furthermore, 1823 saw the exhibition of Henry Salt's collection which counted with the finest "masterpieces" of the Pharaonic era. The exhibition held in the Egyptian Room in the years 1834-1837, however, showcased objects of more modest nature and smaller scales, characteristics which were also present in the museum's Smirke Galleries in the years 1854-1880, where historical documents were also incorporated into the exhibition.

As a result of her extensive research, Moser (2006) theorizes that as reflected by these major exhibitions, the British Museum has developed two crucial curatorial features which are still predominant in representing Ancient Egypt: the first being the wide gap between Egypt's and Europe's societal and cultural developments, illustrated by visually contrasting objects and materials from Ancient Egypt with samples from classical antiquity, predominantly Greco-Roman. Following a shared timeline, pieces from these distinct civilizations were displayed side by side, at first highlighting the commonalities between advancements in fields such as architecture, agriculture, and crafts in both Egypt and in Greek and Roman territories. This approach therefore establishes that these empires fostered the birth of modern intellect and progress, which would explain the emergence of technologies and cultural features which have sprawled across different civilizations and time periods. On the other hand, as Moser (2006) concludes, this particular narrative also leads to a distinct point in time which not only illustrates

the permanent downfall of Egyptian civilization, but also the fact that Rome has outlived its counterparts, which symbolizes the consolidation of the European continent as the backdrop for the most well developed and politically dominant civilizations.

The second key feature found by Moser (2006) in regards to the modus operandi of Victorian curators at the British Museum is that Ancient Egypt has become a synonym to archaeological artifacts, meaning that in many archaeological and ethnographic museums, Pharaonic Egypt is far more represented than other Ancient civilizations and regional groups. This can be partially explained by the increasing amount of artifacts and objects being excavated by British-led expeditions at the time, which has resulted in the culture of Ancient Egypt becoming more accessible to European audiences in a variety of ways. Thus, Ancient Egypt became a popular topic of interest and curiosity, which has led to the building of its reputation as the core example of an exotic and mysterious period of Antiquity in the imagination of Europeans, which is illustrated by the large scope and popularity of Ancient Egyptian collections in contrast with collections concerning other civilizations.

Accurately narrating the past while still portraying it in an alluring manner to an audience which stands on a different cultural and temporal stance has proven to be a major challenge for museum curators then and now. In the work *Curating African Worlds*, Shelton (2000) expands on this obstacle for curators of antiquities, stating that "nothing again can ever be like the conditions under which these objects were once used, venerated, worn, bartered, treasured or reviled by those who collected them." (2000: 5) Thus, this vacuum created in between objects and their original context can become problematic, as it may facilitate the fabrication of narratives which might have vested political and social agenda points, with the colonial discourse of the Oriental "other" being a prime example of this. While these ethnographic displays still rely on historical evidence and the expertise of museum staff to be presented as scientific representations to the audience, these descriptions often miss the bigger picture, meaning that they sometimes erase the historical and societal relations between Egypt and former European colonial powers. Thus, with this selective memory approach used by traditional European ethnographic museums, facts and back stories regarding the provenance of Ancient Egyptian antiquities and their journeys from their origins to these exhibition rooms are completely wiped out, as Shelton (2000) problematizes.

Furthermore, Shelton (2000) underlines a common approach in both ends of the representational spectrum employed to bring the Orient - particularly Egypt - to European audiences: as realistic and objective some displays and spectacles might have been, there was still an "alienation" between visitors and the subjects of the exhibition. This so-called alienation can be defined as the displacement of the objects on display from their original function and

socio-historical context, which in return shapes the audience's perception of the meaning of these objects and the narrative being conveyed versus their past individual histories. Once an artifact is removed from its primary setting, its meaning goes through a process of hybridization, as its history and significance become laced with the narrative imposed by current predominant social and political stakeholders, in addition to the content devised by museum curators and specialists.

To the issues of alienation and de-contextualization faced by artifacts once they are displayed at a museum, Shelton (2000) highlights that assembling an exhibition can be likened to a dialogue, in which the knowledge employed is inclusive of different perspectives which can be represented by individual items or the collection itself as a whole. He points out, however, that some criteria must be chosen by the curator in order to pick the best suitable key points to be included in the underlying narrative of the exhibition. This is not an one-time procedure though: according to Shelton, different narratives must be tested and alterations regarding the choice of objects should be made in this process of rationalizing a collection's discourse. In the case of collections which represent other cultures, this process is defined by Shelton as the de-colonization and re-colonization of imagination, where addressing the narrative's coherence and historical accuracy are paramount to assembling an intelligible exhibition, which in turn also requires the moderation of deeper moral stances.

Another crucial point to be noted is that the most prominent and spectacular displays were almost exclusively reserved to Pharaonic Era artifacts, while antiquities from Egypt's rich Coptic, Byzantine, and Islamic societies had a different treatment. Following Doyon's article "The Poetics of Egyptian Museum Practice" (2008), this approach still holds true to this day not only for the Egyptian display at the British Museum, but can also be seen in the most popular cultural heritage museums in Egypt - namely the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the Nubian Museum, the Luxor Museum, and the Egyptian Museum. Overall, displays focused on the pre-historical, late antique, and Islamic periods tend to have a repetitive and curtailed presentation, with brisk transitions between eras and a smaller allocated space. Most items have little written information about them, consisting instead of basic catalogue notes such as time period, material, and function. Greater emphasis is placed on objects of monumental proportions and art historical significance or "typically Egyptian" aesthetics. Examples of such are Pharaonic jewelry, illustrated papyri, or sculptural works. Items displayed in highest prominence pertain to the subject of mummification. Funeral masks, mummies, and sarcophagus have entire sections devoted to the theme of life and death in Ancient Egypt, especially during the Pharaonic dynasties. Doyon (2008) critically notes, however, that for most of these items there is little information presented with the display, which often lack or condense chronological facts

and details regarding the items' original location, history, and provenance, the latter meaning when the artifact was removed from its origins and/or to which collector or institution it belonged to prior to being displayed at that particular museum.

3. Theoretical Framework

It can be stated that concepts deeply rooted in the European colonial enterprise in Egypt have left a legacy in museological practices, which might still be employed in current times for curating and displaying Ancient Egyptian collections. Thus, a narrative reminiscent of the colonial approach would consist of certain markers which pictorially and philosophically arrange a collection in a manner which resembles the theory of *Orientalism* (Said, 1978). In this framework, the Orient is represented by fixed recurring images which are opposites to the ones embodied by Western society. These images are therefore accepted as true and scientific, as they are validated by Western knowledge and in the past put into practice by colonial agendas. Moreover, the Orient is always seen as the "other", while the West is seen as the "self", the latter having the justified entitlement to define, explore, and reconstruct the "other", which is portrayed as stale and passive. Thus, if related to "Orientalized" Egyptian collections, it can be theorized that there is a tendency to utilize display devices and storylines which rely on the constant highlighting of stereotypical items and narratives. This would entail mainly mummies and Pharaonic treasures, while having no consistent representation nor timeline of Egypt's different time periods and various ethnic and religious groups throughout antiquity. As a result, Egyptian civilization is reduced to a cohesive, yet one-sided narrative in which stereotyped and recurrent images are used to define the "other", while also contrasting it to European history and society. These "markers" of Orientalization therefore reflect the concepts identified by Doyon (2008), Shelton (2000), and Riggs (2013). Namely, all of the authors have found Ancient Egyptian museum displays to follow a similar narrative which indirectly heightens the dominance of Europe over Egypt in various fields. In addition, there is a strong tendency to condense Egyptian history and culture into a single track which does not build any connections to Egypt's modernity.

3.1 Representing the "Other"

As Riggs states in *Colonial Visions: Egyptian Antiquities and Contested Histories in the Cairo Museum* (2013), Egypt has been throughout the ages represented as a complex and paradoxical character in Western narratives and collective imagination. In one hand, Ancient Egypt is a source of admiration due to its advanced techniques for writing, agriculture, arts and crafts. In addition, a sequence of political achievements have led to the longevity of Ancient

Egypt's opulent dynasties, which have greatly contributed to much of the progress taking place in society throughout that timeline. On the other hand, based on grounds of ethnicity and religion, some of Egypt's ancient and modern civilizations alike have long provided a sharp contrast to the West, thus fitting Said's definition of the Oriental "other" and fueling an exoticised characterization of Egypt by the West, often intertwined with colonial discourses with vested political interests and supported by a common Eurocentric mentality.

Riggs (2013) critically states that it is incontestable that the largest and most popular Egyptian collections in the Western world, namely the one at the British Museum in London, the Louvre Museum in Paris, and the Egyptian Museum in Cairo still focus on the Pharaonic period of Ancient Egypt as they did when they were first assembled. She highlights that this monopoly is not only a result of curiosity sparked by Egypt's "otherness"; what seemingly is a strong factor is that Ancient Egypt has provided the West with artifacts which help narrating human progress, a core topic embraced by the Enlightenment in 18th century Europe, which coincided with the birth of modern museums and disciplines such as archaeology. Due to the West's - especially France and England's - political and intellectual dominance at the time, antiquities from colonized regions were subject to a particular gaze, which reflected "modern relationships of power, identity, and commoditization, and always underlying these was the certainty that significant antiquities belonged in a museum, and hence to the West, which was uniquely able to care for, conserve, and study them." (2013: 79)

A core aspect of the theories presented by Mitchell (1988), Shelton (2000), Moser (2006), and Riggs (2013) lies within their analyses and reflections upon 19th century, Western museology and curatorship towards Egyptian cultural heritage. The authors determine that from the wide, yet highly entangled notions of Oriental "otherness" in contrast to Eurocentric colonial values, it is evident that Ancient Egyptian collections in Western Europe have served a multi-purpose role. Namely that they were used to validate colonial agendas of Western powers; in addition, these representations emphasized an opposite cultural and societal character to the one found in the West, thus facilitating an exotic and romanticised view of the "other". It is also important to note that Western representations of Egypt prove to be laconic in regards to its Islamic and Ottoman society, as the identity chosen by imperialist states to characterize Egypt is heavily inclined towards its ancient Pharaonic past rather than its Arabicized ethnic, religious, and cultural reality at the time (Doyon 2008). Moreover, one can pinpoint some cues in the predominant curatorial discourse for exhibitions on Egypt, which reinforces the political, intellectual, and social dominance of Modern Age Europe, underlining the "ignorance" of Egyptians at the time towards their ancient heritage. An example of this practice is perhaps best illustrated by the historical document *Description de l'Egypte*, a

Napoleonic-era encyclopedia of Egyptian history spread among 24 volumes, originally displayed at the Institute d'Egypte until its destruction by a fire in the Revolution of 2011. The works consisted of illustrations of Napoleon's conquering of Egypt and other victories by the French army, in addition to records by French historians and scholars which recalled real life events in a positive light to the French, while highlighting cultural contrasts between Egyptians and the French and establishing racial theories which have been used as stepping stones for colonial discourses reinforced in the years to come. (Bednarski, 2005) Thus, these literary and artistic depictions deemed as historical and accurate established that differently from Europeans, Modern Era Egyptians were bluntly inferior on intellectual, racial, political, and social grounds, which completely distanced modern Egypt from its glorious Pharaonic past in common Western imagination.

3.2 Curating Egyptian Heritage - Conflicting Narratives

In order to address the curatorial discourses employed in the two major archaeological museums in the Netherlands, namely the Royal Museum of Antiquities and the Allard Pierson Museum, it is key to expand on the definition of a curator and the implications of this practice on ethnographic representations by museums. According to Shelton (2000), curators have the function to put their expertise into practice by conciliating meaning and knowledge without compromising qualities such as ethics and sensitivity, which for antiques curators reads as historical prudence and the ability to translate a certain culture to a wider audience. In the case of Ancient Egypt, according to the findings by Doyon (2008), the most common representations in museums almost exclusively highlight the Pharaonic period, superficially touching upon themes of polytheism, writing, mummification, agriculture, and aristocracy. Throughout the centuries these representations have had a significant impact on the internal and external identity of Egypt, which Doyon (2008) points out, has been re-shaping curatorial discourses and practices in a post-colonial environment.

Preziosi and Farago (2004) theorize that the curatorial narrative applied to Ancient Egyptian antiquities and heritage discussed by the aforementioned authors was crucial for establishing a colonial identity in Egypt and for reinforcing this image among European audiences at the time. The core of this construct lies on the crisp ideological and cultural differences among Western and Oriental societies, namely which suggested that Europe had the intellect and means to not only conquer these lands, but also to seize their material cultural past, while Egyptian Ottomans of Islamic faith were deemed as transgressors who had brought Egyptian society to decay. In practice, this narrative was brought to light by the manner in

which Ancient Egyptian collections were assembled and displayed, reducing an entire civilization and its history to objects with a scientific, yet highly exoticized aura. This approach, according to Preziosi and Farago (2004) as well as Doyon (2008), not only became the norm for European museums, but also can be seen in Egyptian museums established by the British during their colonial rule, a major example of which being the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. As Doyon notes, "by simulating European exhibition styles in Egyptian museums, these colonial institutions reframed a hybrid Egyptian identity into a progressive, evolutionary account according to the nationalist interests of France and Britain, and the Orientalist interests of European scholars and tourists." (2008: 2)

With the birth of archaeology in the Victorian Era, a new methodology was introduced to European curatorship of Egyptian antiquities, as Doyon (2008) highlights. From the more systematic method utilized by archaeology from the early stages of operating on the field to arranging a museum collection, a specific discipline pertaining to the study and exploration of Ancient Egypt was born, which is known as of today as Egyptology. Furthermore, in the second half of the 19th century, Egyptology aligned the principles of colonial archaeology with standard museum aesthetics which followed the typically European salon display. This would have a lasting impact on museum displays devoted to Ancient Egypt, as this approach entailed a higher emphasis on not only chronology, but also on geology, ethnography, history, and biology. Thus, the narrative presented for Ancient Egyptian collections shifted to an encyclopaedia-like form.

In *Colonial Visions: Egyptian Antiquities and Contested Histories in the Cairo Museum* (2013), Riggs theorizes that this partition amongst the narratives and displays of different time periods and cultures of Egypt is a piece to a larger puzzle, namely the one which comprises the ideology put forward by the British and French in the colonial era. Museum displays of Ancient Egyptian finds were advocating the idea that Egypt's Pharaonic and Greco-Roman culture and society was worth preserving, as it could be intellectually compared to the Classical Age in Europe. This notion had been previously explored by the European movements of the Renaissance in the 14-17th centuries and Romanticism in the 18th century; however, the full exploration of this comparison by the arts and especially by museums is tied to the birth of 19th century archaeology and Egyptology. Parallel to this, displays on the other sides of Egyptian civilization throughout distinct time periods were supporting the idea that Egypt's other eras governed by different socio-ethnic and religious groups did not equal their Pharaonic precedents on political, social, and technological advancements. Therefore, the overarching message of these displays, as scientific and accurate as they may have seemed, was that the West had a

legitimate entitlement over the intellectual and cultural property of Ancient Egypt, and that European society was more capable of grasping and fully exploring this type of heritage.

3.3 Cultural Colonialism in the Museum, Then and Now

"England is at present the greatest Oriental Empire which the world has ever known. She knows not only how to conquer, but how to rule." [1]

With these words the president of the Orientalist Congress opened its 1892 edition. This very statement illustrates the British overall sentiment and sense of entitlement over the Orient, with Egypt being one of its most valuable gems. Mitchell (1988) asserts that this colonial certainty had a direct impact on how representations of the culture, society, and history of Oriental civilizations were comprehended as objective, and therefore accurate. Parallel to museums, which now had monumental displays of recent archaeological finds from Ancient Egypt, the turn of the 19th century saw the apogee of fairs such as the World Exhibition, which not only reinforced the ethnographic, scientific representations of the "other", but also popularized them by using interactive tools of display which turned these exhibitions into lush spectacles. Arabic accounts of these 19th century World Fairs and Orientalist Congresses describe this European phenomenon of the spectacle, narrating in detail their peculiar exhibition techniques and pictorial orders. Landmark features consisted of large crowds of spectators, object-based exhibits, the presence of merchandising and displays of new technologies, lectures and publications, and exhibition rooms which attempted to mimic narrow and colorful alleys assembled in iron and glass-made buildings. Perhaps, the most remarkable characteristic of these exhibits was that objects were "collected and arranged to stand for something, to represent progress and history, human industry and empire; everything set up, and the whole set-up always evoking somehow some larger truth." (Mitchell, 1988: 6)

Riggs (2013) identifies similar patterns to the ones highlighted by Mitchell's analysis of accounts of Victorian Orientalist spectacles and congresses. In what Riggs (2013) defines as "colonial visions", representations of the Egyptian Antiquities Museum in Cairo in visual art and literature dating from the height of French and British colonial influence in Egypt are scrutinized.
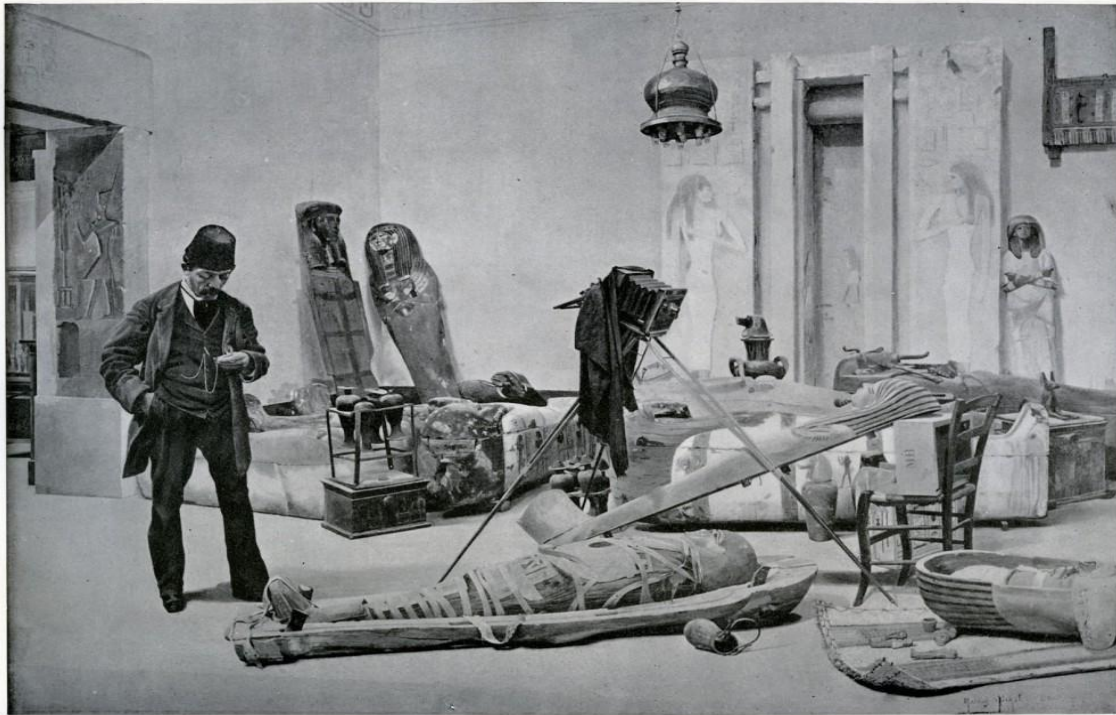
PHOTOGRAPH OF A MUMMY, by Marius Michel (*French Section World's Columbian Exposition*).—It would be impossible to put antiquity and the present into more striking juxtaposition than in this picture. A lot of Egyptian mummies and mummy cases have been opened and set around, and an artist, or at least a photographer, has come in with his camera to make a picture of these extinct subjects of the Pharoah. Suppose that these effigies out of a dead world could have seen the future four thousand years ago ! Suppose they could have seen a new world beyond the Western Ocean ! Suppose they could have seen themselves raised from the repose of their burial chambers and set against the marble walls to be photographed with a three-legged camera, while a modern adventurer holds the watch to count off the seconds of the sitting ! To what uses may we come ! The Shakespearian imagination which fancied Cæsar's lordly dust converted into a mud-plug for a bunghole was not equal to the grotesque and instinctive juxtaposition of dead and living things illustrated in this quaint conceit of Michel. Certainly it may be alleged that this is the most silent, if not the most orderly, photographic chamber in the world. This picture is reproduced in this work by special permission of the artist.

Photograph of a Mummy (1891), engraving by Marius Michel, leaf removed from the bound volume World's Best Art (1894), publisher unknown.

As she theorizes, these accounts are snapshots of the "exhibitionary and experiential imagination of a much larger Western audience than could visit Egypt in person—and that these imaginations from afar remain influential in museological practice and heritage discourse." (2013: 79) One of the "colonial visions" used by Riggs (2013) to exemplify this theory is the engraving by Marius Michel, titled *Photograph of a Mummy* (1891) and commissioned by the French-established Institut d'Égypte, the most prominent cultural and scientific institution in Egypt at the time. In the image, Michel depicts the Egyptian Antiques Museum in the backdrop, while German head curator Emile Brugsch photographs an Egyptian mummy inside its open coffin. Engravings such as this one were widely published in European magazines, thus painting a picture in the imaginary of the wider public of what an Egyptian museum would look like and how Western technology was paramount for unraveling the mysteries of past civilizations. Furthermore, *Photograph of a Mummy* (1891) represents many of the juxtapositions which can still be found to this day in regards to the engagement between Egyptian antiquities and Western

institutions. As Riggs (2013) systematically presents, the high contrast between old and new of such depictions and real life displays seem to be the most solid foundation underneath Western conceptualizations of Ancient Egypt, which in turn highlight Western progress and expertise while completely removing contemporary Egypt from the context.

Moreover, the process of appropriation of Egyptian history and identity via the display of its antiquities at Western museums might not be a characteristic only of Victorian Era exhibitions and curatorship; instead, as Doyon (2008) suggests, it can be theorized as a museological legacy from that particular period and the socio-political agendas of European colonial powers. Thus, the possibility of a lingering colonial attitude in contemporary curatorial practices of Western museums will be the focal point of this research, which will zoom into two archaeological museums in the Netherlands which count each with an Ancient Egyptian department.

4. Methodology

This study will follow a qualitative research approach as it proves to be in this particular thesis the most suitable for highlighting, analyzing, and comprehending the underlying values and potential colonial influences which might be present in the curatorship and display of two Ancient Egyptian collections in the Netherlands.

Following a qualitative model, samples for this study were of a small scale, meaning that it focused only on the Egyptian permanent collection displays of the Royal Museum of Antiquities in Leiden and the Allard Pierson museum in Amsterdam. Matters of allocated time and funding for this study, as well as the geographical location of the collections have also played a significant role in this decision. Furthermore, the data gathering procedure for this research consisted of three different steps in order to draw a complete and comprehensive image of these two collections and their relationship with the theoretical framework of this thesis. Prior to physically visiting the museums and interviewing their respective curators, I have analyzed their English websites in order to obtain the following information: a) The museum's history, b) The museum's mission statute, and c) Collection highlights for Ancient Egypt. These were important data to consider as they indicate how the museums wish to present themselves to the public and what sort of visitors' expectations they wish to build when they visit their permanent exhibitions on Ancient Egypt. The following step consisted of an ethnographic observation at each of the museums and thirdly, a semi-structured interview with the head curators of each museums, namely Dr. Maarten Raven on behalf of the National Museum of Antiquities and Dr. Willem van Haarlem on behalf of the Allard Pierson Museum.

Focusing on the two main Dutch museum collections of Egyptian antiquities allowed in-depth observations to occur, where different aspects of the display were taken into account in order to be thoroughly discussed in the analysis section of this study. The observation units were based upon the theoretical framework used as the core for this study, which has provided me with a set of diverse characteristics to consider while visiting each of the exhibitions. These were namely the time periods of the collections, materials of artifacts, thematic sections, history and provenance of the collections, layout of the exhibitions, and additional materials used alongside the displays. Thus, the aim of this procedure is to arrive at final conclusions which embody all of the nuances of the main themes investigated by this study, namely the images and techniques commonly used by professionals to represent the "other", curatorial

characteristics for Egyptian artifacts, and a lingering cultural colonialism in museums and/or collections devoted to Ancient Egypt.

Complementary to the data gathered via each of the museum's websites and the ethnographic observations of their permanent exhibitions at their Ancient Egyptian sections, semi-structured interviews with the respective head curators of the Egyptian department in each of the museums took place. The aim of using qualitative interviews as a research method for this study is to obtain a first-hand account by the curators of the exhibitions themselves on their reasoning behind the display and their views on a range of relevant themes and topics for the study. The interviews were conducted only once, both were done in person and lasted approximately one hour each. As they were semi-structured, both Dr. Maarten Raven, the head curator of the Royal Museum of Antiquities, and Dr. Willem van Haarlem, the head curator of the Allard Pierson Museum, answered to the same set of questions (see interview guide on Appendix E).

In some cases throughout each of the interviews, there were a few times when some questions were not directly posed as their answers had been provided already; or, there were instances in which some additional follow-up questions were posed in order to get the interviewee to expand on his answers. The advantages of this method have proven to be that interviewees could expand more on answers and ask for clarifications regarding the questions presented to them. In addition, via a semi-structured approach it was possible to obtain further insights on the topics discussed that were not directly or primarily touched upon by the questions from the guide. On the other hand, disadvantages of conducting these semi-structured interviews consisted of having the interviewees spending a different amount of time answering each of the questions and addressing some topics in more or less depth than the other interviewee. However, in most occurrences both curators mentioned overlapping concepts and topics, which has enabled me to identify patterns while analyzing both the interviews.

In regards to the observation results, the data was openly coded through a content analysis process, in which recurrent and/or key themes were identified in each of the exhibitions. As a result, these themes were placed onto a table in which they are exemplified by concepts which were seen in the exhibition and relate back to the theoretical framework (see Table 1 below). For the interview results, similar approaches were taken in order to analyze and organize the data, as the same table was utilized for the open coding of the interviews. Through open coding, the content of each of the interviews was broken down into the different thematic sections pertaining to the three overarching themes from the theoretical framework chapter. Each of these themes were related to topics addressed by the interviewees and supported by direct quotes from the interviews, which help strengthening the link of the concepts identified

in each of the interviews and their relationship with the theories I delve into throughout this research.

Table 1 – Codes for analysis of the observations and interviews

Theoretical Concept	Topics
Representing the "Other"	1. Chronological period 2. Thematic sections 3. Stereotypes of Ancient Egypt
Curating Ancient Egypt: Conflicting Narratives	1. Ethnic and religious groups 2. Contextualization of objects
Cultural Colonialism in the Museum	Colonialism

5. Data & Findings

5.1 The National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden

5.1.1 Website Presentation

About the Museum

The National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, the Netherlands, was established in 1818 by King Willem I. At the time, the Netherlands lacked archaeological museums of the same caliber as the British Museum, the Louvre, and the Berlin Museum, which counted on already vast collections and continuous acquisitions from commissioned archaeological expeditions. (van Haarlem, 2015) In the case of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, most of its collection was acquired via art dealers and traders rather than from in-situ excavations. The museum would only partake in its own archaeological expeditions following the Second World War, which has led to a significant increase in its Egyptian collection. As of today, the National Museum of Antiquities has one of the top ten Ancient Egyptian collections in the world, counting with over 1400 artifacts in its permanent display. ('Egypt', National Museum of Antiquities)

Mission Statement

According to its official website, the National Museum of Antiquities is an independent, non-profit organization established to manage the archeological department of Dutch national collection. In addition, the institution vocalizes its aim as the following:

> To be the central platform in the Netherlands for bringing antiquities and archaeology to a diverse range of people. Through exhibitions, education, public activities, scientific study, and national and international exchange, [telling] stories that shed light on the relevance of the ancient world to our past and present.
> ('Museum's mission', National Museum of Antiquities)

Based on the museum's mission statement, it is possible to establish a parallel with the theories established by Moser (2006) and Riggs (2013), as they shed light on the Western establishment of archaeological museums as ideal settings for narrating human progress through artifacts on display. Thus, given the museum's statement and the message it conveys,

it is possible to identify its roots on notions revolving around progress, science, and the humanities established in the 18th century Enlightenment in Europe, which Moser (2006) identifies as the incubator for European museology and archaeology. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the museum's mission statement does not address each of its departments individually. Instead, it presents a broader perspective which assigns a similar purpose to all regions and time periods represented in the museum. By taking this approach, the ancient world is portrayed as a cohesive whole which can be placed within the same timeline which leads to our current world and society. As a result, there is more relatability between contemporary audiences and the ancient civilizations being introduced by the museum, despite there being great differences in the individual geo-political, cultural, and temporal aspects in the collections from each individual department.

Collection Highlights

According to its official website, the first highlight of the National Museum of Antiquities' Egyptian collection is the Temple of Taffeh (see Figure 1 on Appendix H). Standing at approximately eight meters of height, the Temple of Taffeh is the first glimpse visitors have of the Egyptian collection, as the building is installed at the main hall of the museum. The temple was a gift from the Egyptian government to the Netherlands in 1960, due to the efforts of the Dutch to protect monuments in Abu Simbel endangered by the construction of the Aswan High Dam. Dated from 25 b.C. and built in pure limestone, the temple consists of "traditionally Egyptian" archaeological features, such as symbols of cobras, the sun, and symmetric columns. In addition, it is believed that the Temple was built by Roman conquerors of Lower Nubia (a former Egyptian colony) to worship the originally Egyptian gods Osiris, Isis, and Horus. Later in the Medieval period, the temple was used by Nubians as a shelter for humans and livestock. ('Temple of Taffeh', n.d.)

The second highlight is a blue wine bowl made of faience from 1400-1300 b.C., considered to be an archaeological treasure due to its well-preserved deep blue glaze, which is seen as a rarity amongst Ancient Egyptian pottery (see Figure 2 on Appendix H). On the bottom of the bowl, a female figure playing the lute - a string instrument similar to a guitar - is depicted in sitting position, surrounded by sinuous vines. She wears an Egyptian-style wig embellished with a headband and a lotus flower, while on her right leg there is a visible drawing, perhaps a tattoo, of the god Bes, the patron of music, dance, and sexuality. From these details, it has been theorized by head curator Dr. Maarten Raven that the young woman is a courtesan, which

relates this seemingly mundane object to the themes of eroticism and femininity. ('Wine Bowl with Female Lute Player', n.d.)

The following highlight is a granite statue of a scribe (circa 2465-2323 b.C.) found in the burial grounds of Saqqara, which symbolizes the importance of writing for the development and thriving of Ancient Egypt (see Figure 3 on Appendix H). In the past, scribes had the task to record all data regarding tax collection, food distribution, and land measurements. From these records projects such as waterways and the pyramids could be executed. ('Statue of a Scribe', n.d.)

The website also depicts the statues of Maya and Merit (c. 1320 b.C.) as one of the collection highlights (see Figure 4 on Appendix H). These statues are originally from Saqqara, where they used to ornate the tombs of this elite couple whom was buried together. It is known that Maya was a high-ranking official in the times of Pharaoh Tutankhamen and likely occupied the post of Director of Treasury. The tomb for him and his wife Merit consists of a high gate leading to an inner section with three large chambers. A second courtyard counted of three chapels centers around a shaft where a labyrinth of corridors leading to a narrow staircase going 22 m deep, where the chambers with the mummies and the sculptures were found. It is also believed that they are depicted in the sculptures wearing their most opulent clothes and that the statues were once painted, having their colors fade as a result of time.

The last selected highlight on the website is the Mummy of Peftjauneith (c. 650 b.C.), found in Saqqara. He is believed to have been a temple inspector in the Nile Delta (see Figure 5 on Appendix H). The mummy still has its original painted sarcophagus in solid wood, which is decorated with symbols that indicate the deceased's high societal status. This well-preserved coffin can be seen as a luxury article in the Ancient times, as that type of wood was not native to Egypt, meaning that it was imported from abroad. Peftjauneith is depicted on the outside of the coffin as the god Osiris, embellished with jewels and painted green, which in Ancient Egypt symbolized a new life. On the inside of the coffin, there is a portrait of goddess Nut, the patron of the sky and the representation of day and night, while at the bottom there is a portrait of the West goddess, patron of the area on the map where the land of the dead was believed to be located.

Based on the collection highlights established by the official website of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, some connections to this study's theoretical framework and points for analysis can be established. Furthermore, although the highlight choices present different aspects and time periods of Ancient Egyptian society, it can also be stated that these artifacts illustrate characteristics which can be deemed as "stereotypical" and "Orientalized", following the definitions and frameworks of Said (1978) and Mitchell (1988). Examples of this

can be found in the types of objects and the one monument chosen, as they are of a more "impressive" nature due to their proportions, aesthetics, or their relationship with Ancient Egyptian mysticism and in the case of the wine bowl, with ancient notions of sexuality. Thus, the message conveyed by this small snapshot of the museum's Egyptian collection is that Ancient Egypt was a progressive, yet superstitious civilization, a combination which leads to the establishment of a mythical and sensualized aura around current conceptions of Ancient Egypt. Nevertheless, these highlights are successful in showcasing the collection's diverse content while also presenting the audience with intriguing pieces, or so-called "wondrous curiosities" (Moser, 2006) which can be strategically used to attract visitors to the museum's physical space. Moreover, the highlights on the website were found to be in line with the collection's overall narrative and content as displayed in the museum. This point shall be addressed in the following section focused on the observation results of the exhibition.

5.1.2 Observation Results

The observation of the Ancient Egyptian permanent display at the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden consisted of taking into account different aspects of the exhibition while writing field notes throughout the procedure. Following the observation, I have written a report (see Appendix A) which has served as the basis for a thematic analysis conducted via an open coding of the data (see Appendix B). As a result, I have found some points to be recurrent throughout the exhibition and highly linked to the theoretical framework of this study.

Representing the "Other"

The first major characteristic of the exhibition is the broad time span it follows. Within the timeline presented by the objects on display, six distinct time periods can be pinpointed: Early Egyptian civilization (6000 b.C.), Old Kingdom (3rd-6th Dynasties), Middle Kingdom (11-12th Dynasties), New Kingdom (18th-20th Dynasties), Intermediate Periods: 10 following dynasties by foreign rulers, and the Greco-Roman Era: 2nd Century - 639 AD. The exhibition does not follow a strictly linear narrative, however, as the themes presented by the different sections in the exhibition are presented by objects from different time periods.

The exhibition is divided among five different broad thematic sections which each have a set of sub-sections. The first one is Sculpture, split into a) The Saqqara Tombs, b) Mortuary temples, c) Funerary sculptures, d) Jewelry. In the Sculpture section there are temple fragments, various inscribed stellaes, tomb treasures such as embellished pottery, jewelry, and ornaments,

and large-scale columns and sculptural works from the burial grounds of Saqqara, which in total sums up to 279 objects. The highlights of this section are an entire mausoleum from Saqqara that visitors can walk into and the funerary sculptures of elite couple Maya and Merit (1335-1310 b.C.).

The second section is titled Inspiration and although allocated in the smallest room of the exhibition, covers the broadest content of objects. Its sub-sections are a) The Nubian Kingdom, b) Christian Egypt, c) Daily life in Late Antiquity (395-639 AD): Coptic-Greek civilization, d) Monastic life, e) Writing, f) Ptolemaic scholarship, g) Egyptology, h) Egyptomania. Each of the sub-sections has a small cabinet allocated to displaying their objects, which do not comprise of works of monumental sizes as the ones presented in the Sculpture department. Most of the artifacts in all of the subsections consists of scriptures in the Coptic, Greek, and Latin alphabets, daily life utensils, and religious icons and miniatures. In addition, the sub-section devoted to Egyptology and Egyptomania focuses mainly on the Napoleonic campaign in Egypt (1798-1801), identifying it as a starting point for Western interest in Egyptian scholarship, archaeology, and aesthetics. Artifacts in this section consist mainly of early works of French archaeology and Egyptology, in addition to a wooden desk which uses Pharaonic motifs as embellishments. Thus, the common ground between the broad subsections in the Inspiration category lies on the fact that they were, in different degrees, linked to or influenced by one or many aspects of Pharaonic Egypt.

The third section is the largest in size and scope, titled The Afterlife. This segment of the exhibition attempts to draw a picture of funerary practices in Ancient Egypt, presenting a large collection of funerary utensils, canopy jars, religious sculptures, and scriptures such as Books of the Dead and sets of prayers for the afterlife, summing up in total approximately 395 artifacts. Moreover, this section is also devoted to mummification, presenting six animal mummies (two crocodiles, two snakes, one beaver, one falcon) and entire mummies or body fragments, sometimes with their original coffins. Leiden possesses the largest mummy collection in the Netherlands, with approximately 30 wrapped mummies on display. The mummification segment of this thematic division also provides a comprehensive overview of mummification throughout the periods of Ancient Egypt, presenting material from the Pharaonic, Christian Coptic, and Greco-Roman eras. As a result, it exemplifies how tombs and the artifacts placed inside them became more sophisticated, as well as how mummification techniques improved, which has resulted in their preservation up until today.

The fourth section concerns Religion in Ancient Egypt, but focuses only on three aspects of it and is split in between the following subsections: a) Polytheism, which addresses the wide variety of gods worshipped by Ancient Egyptians by displaying various sculptures, inscribed

stones, scriptures, and small-scale worshipping objects which depict different gods and narrate stories about their divinity and their specific powers. The artifacts in this section relate mainly to Pharaonic Egypt, with a few inclusions of Nubian artifacts which depict Egyptian gods. The most recurrent gods in the Polytheism sub-section are Osiris (god of the underworld and death), Isis (goddess of love and fertility), Ptah (god of the sun), and Horus (god of heaven). The following subsection is b) Greco-Roman gods, whose artifacts on display illustrate the influence of and the appropriation of some Egyptian gods into the Greco-Roman pantheon of gods. Artifacts in this section are of similar nature to the ones presented in the Polytheism segment, meaning that they comprise mostly of smaller scale worshipping objects and artifacts with religious iconography. The third subsection on religion is c) Roman and Coptic Christianism, focusing mainly on religious scriptures, as icons were not as common in the Egyptian branches of these religions. These scriptures are written in either the Coptic alphabet or Latin and belong to the Late (650-332 b.C.) and Greco-Roman Era (332 b.C. - 639 AD) of Ancient Egypt.

Lastly, the fifth section is named Egyptian Civilization and provides yet another overview of different societal aspects throughout different time periods. The first subsection, a) Early Nile Settlements, focuses on Egyptian prehistory (6000 b.C. - 3.000 b.C.) and displays fragments of objects found along the river Nile, mainly consisting of pottery and utensils for agriculture. The second subsection, b) Military, presents fragments of warfare items such as spears and arrows and sheds light on some key political and military figures in Ancient Egypt, namely Julius Caesar, Marc Anthony, and Alexander the Great. The following section is c) Foreign Kings, presenting busts of pharaohs from the Ptolemaic Dynasty, which was of Greek and Macedonian origin. In prominence in this subsection is the bust of Cleopatra, the last queen of Pharaonic Egypt. The following subsections d) Beauty and Cosmetics and e) Music and Furniture are smaller in scope, being presented in glass cabinets on the side of the exhibition hall. Each of the cabinets contain objects of daily life from different time periods. In d), most artifacts consist of embellished cases for cosmetics and hair combs, while in e) highlights are a harp and a lounging bed from the Greco-Roman period.

The manner in which how the overall exhibition display and storyline represent the "other" is deeply rooted in characteristics of Pharaonic Egypt above all other areas in the collection's timeline. This is manifested through a greater representation of Pharaonic dynasties through the artifacts on display, in addition to the direct connection to the sphere of influence of Pharaonic Egypt on generations and cultures to follow. Moreover, with the strong grasp of Pharaonic Egypt in the overall image portrayed by the exhibition's content, other recurrent stereotypes such as mummies and tomb treasures become then complimentary to this narrative in which Ancient Egypt's pharaohs are in the leading roles. Another point of critique found

after observing the collection's representation of Ancient Egypt is in the manner in which its advancements and contributions to world civilizations are addressed. While the progress in various fields ranging from architecture to writing are acknowledged, there is the underlying presence of a wide gap between these Ancient Egyptian achievements and their contemporary counterparts and/or Western appropriations. Thus, it can be stated that such approach conveys the argument that although Egyptian civilization has excelled in Antiquity, it has not maintained

the same pace as Western civilizations in the time periods to follow, which have resulted in the inequality between social, cultural, and political achievements in the Orient and the West.

Curating Ancient Egypt: Conflicting Narratives

In regards to Ancient Egypt's different religious and/or ethnic groups, the narrative of the overall collection includes some artifacts and content which mentions groups such as the Christian Copts, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Nubians. However, the content presented is laconic of representations of Byzantine Egypt (4th century - 639 AD) and Islamic Egypt (since 639 AD), In addition the Byzantines are highly overlapped with the Copts in the display presented at the "Inspirations" section, where 34 objects - mainly scriptures -, from both groups are presented. On the other hand, the collection for Greco-Roman Egypt is larger in size, consisting of 102 objects such as sculptures, papyruses, stellaes, and daily life utensils. The exhibition's manner of addressing Nubia, a former colony of Egypt during Antiquity, also assimilates Nubian artifacts into a greater context which presents artifacts found in different regions of Egypt. Although both cultures greatly overlap in some aspects such as religion and alphabet, other individual aspects of Nubian civilization are not touched upon.

The overall contextualization of objects throughout the exhibition follows the traditional model used by museums, having objects being accompanied with captions with basic catalogue details. In the National Museum of Antiquities, all captions follow the same format: title, material, date, location of excavation, provenance and acquisition date. Only collection highlights such as the sculptures of Maya and Merit and the mausoleum from Saqqara contain longer captions with background information about their origins and significance. In addition, digital interactive tools are used, but not in large. These can be found only in the "Afterlife" section in the segment focused on mummification. Through this technology, visitors can have access to CT scans conducted on some of the mummies in the collection, which illustrate what is behind their wraps and give further information on their origins and theories revolving around the identity of the corpses. Furthermore, the exhibition follows a systematic order with the aim of contextualizing the pieces on display.

Thus, although the exhibition provides visitors with a general timeline of Ancient Egypt, artifacts are mainly grouped according to themes which relate to their original function or to one of the aspects of Ancient Egyptian civilization. This approach proves to be highly pragmatic, as it follows a standardized method of organizing the pieces in accordance to a couple of given themes. However, from a sociological perspective, there are certain problematic points to the method of grouping artifacts in accordance to broad, overarching themes which

mostly have to do with their previous function. For instance, many historical and cultural details of some artifacts might be obscured or diminished for the sake of the greater narrative the display aims at telling. Parallel to this, during the contextualization process of the pieces, there is an unavoidable alienation from their original setting and societal relevance, as the final result – in this case, the display the audience is presented with – was found to often comprise many time periods and different ethnic, social, and/or religious groups within the same section.

Cultural Colonialism in the Museum

Although the "Inspiration" section in the exhibition has a small subsection on the European presence in Egypt in the 18th-19th centuries, the content of the display relates only to the Napoleonic Campaign (1798-1801), excluding information and artifacts related to the French and British period of dominance in the centuries to follow. In addition, the Ottoman Period in Egypt (16th-20th centuries) is never mentioned. Another interesting point of observation is that the word "colonialism" and its derivatives are never mentioned in the exhibition texts; instead, the effects of the Napoleonic presence in Egypt are portrayed in a positive light, as they are related in the exhibition to the foundation of the disciplines of archaeology and Egyptology, as well as attributed to the rise in European interest in Ancient Egypt which has not only affected Western academia and museology, but also popular culture and aesthetics.

Despite the exhibition having subsections dedicated to Ancient Egypt's role in archaeology and Egyptology, these subsections do not delve into excavations and key findings from the past, nor on technical details of both disciplines and how they are applied to the archaeological artifacts on display. Instead, these sub-sections consist of 34 drawings and engravings depicting Egyptian landscapes in the 19th century.

Based on the manner how the exhibition addresses the European colonial presence in Egypt, it can be stated that the approach taken by the National Museum of Antiquities in contemporary times is comparable to depictions seen as commonplace of the Napoleonic and Victorian Eras. These similarities can be seen in the following aspects: first, although there is the acknowledgement of how Egypt has served as an inspiration to Western societies, these two cultures are purposefully contrasted in order to portray a more alluring and exoticized image of Egypt, while the West is depicted as capable of interpreting and appropriating the culture of the "other". Secondly, while there is a minor, yet existing narrative linking Christianity in Egypt to Eastern and Roman Christianity in Europe, the Islamic influence and presence in Egypt from antiquity until the present day is completely excluded, which ultimately results in a large disconnect between Egypt's society and culture in antiquity and now. These two

aforementioned points are aligned with the theory presented by Doyon (2008), who criticized the manner how in a museum setting the West has consistently portrayed the Orient as its complete opposite socially and culturally, justifying the influences from Ancient Egypt by linking them to its affluent Pharaonic past, while neglecting Egypt's Arabicized society as an indirect effort to convey Western superiority. Thus, the National Museum of Antiquities' manner of addressing the relationship between Europe and Egypt in the colonial period can be likened to the format seen in depictions such as *Description de l'Egypte* (1809), which Bednarski (2005) points out to have been one of the blueprints of European colonial discourse.

5.1.3 Interview Analysis

The interview with Dr. Maarten Raven, head curator of the Egyptian department at the National Museum of Antiquities took place after my visit of the museum's permanent exhibition. Thus, the questions posed to Dr. Raven were based upon the theoretical concepts employed in this study in addition to concepts noticed by me while visiting the museum's Ancient Egyptian display. Throughout the interview, all questions of the guide were addressed in addition to further questions and comments which have emerged in the course of the interview (see interview summary on Appendix F). Furthermore, some recurring themes and ideas related to the three main theoretical concepts of this thesis were reinforced by Dr. Raven in his answers and shall be further addressed in the following sections.

Representing the "Other"

In the words of head curator Dr. Maarten Raven, the permanent display for Ancient Egyptian artifacts at the National Museum of Antiquities aims at covering "the whole chronological period and about most of the kinds of objects that are available from Ancient Egypt." Thus, the collection presents objects which date from the pre-history of civilizations along the Nile river (circa 6000 b.C.) until 639 AD, the official historical date for the Arab conquest of Egypt, thus bringing to an end the period of Greco-Roman political, social, cultural, and religious dominance in the region. As a result, the curator acknowledged the broad perspective in which the objects represent Egypt to the audience, as the exhibition covers a vast time spectrum. However, Dr. Raven also recognized that in this attempt, some periods, regions, and aspects of

Ancient Egypt are more represented than others, stating that "there are some certain periods that are very weakly represented in our collections and sometimes we just skip it." Furthermore, the most strongly represented topics in National Museum of Antiquities are Pharaonic (3rd-20th Dynasties) and Greco-Roman Egypt (2nd century - 639 AD) and the afterlife, especially in regards to mummification and burying rituals, as exemplified by an extensive amount of mummies and objects provenant from the burial grounds of Saqqara. On the other hand, the religious and cultural heritage of Byzantine (395-639 AD) and Coptic Egypt (42 AD-present) are briefly represented by a smaller selection of objects and Islamic Egypt is not represented at all.

In light of the concept of "othering", Dr. Raven sees Ancient Egypt as an alluring civilization to Western audiences, as it still holds to this day a mythical magnetism which he believes is rooted to beliefs held by Ancient Greeks and Romans, whom perceived Egyptians as holders of "a magical disposition" which justified the magnitude of their civilization. Thus, recurrent stereotypes linking Egypt to its mummies, pyramids, and hieroglyphs are seen by the interviewee as something that "has become part of our heritage", even if these conceptions of Ancient Egypt might not run as deep into other aspects of its civilization. Thus, romanticized views in popular culture of Ancient Egypt throughout the centuries seem to have kept the public's interest consistent. As Dr. Raven stated, "there are still many people who are very superstitious and believe that there's something behind all this, and that certainly explains the massive interest in our displays."

Thus, based on the interviewee's remarks it is possible to conclude that to a certain degree, Egyptian antiquities are still presented by museums and received by the public as "wondrous curiosities" (Moser 2006). As a result, the culture and heritage of Ancient Egypt is still subject to an Orientalized gaze which has emerged in past centuries but is still dominant in establishing certain images and stereotypes that lure audiences for their exotic, different, and mythical characteristics. However, while the gaze employed to conceptualize the "other" in the present day is not an active part of a greater colonial agenda, it has become a sort of tradition in Western museology and imaginary, whose origins and discourse are undeniably rooted within a colonial setting and philosophy.

Conflicting Narratives

According to the interviewee, one of the core practices within the job of curating an archaeological exhibition consists of thorough research in order to accurately fill knowledge gaps and provide a context to various artifacts which are often fragmented or damaged.

Moreover, curators are presented with the additional challenge of ensuring that artifacts on display are protected and kept in their original state. To the interviewee, this is one of his main criteria when deciding on which artifacts to exhibit, stating that over-restored items and replicas are avoided to the maximum, while fragile objects call for a strict regulation of lighting sources and acclimatization in the museum.

Another technical issues curators for antiques constantly face relate to the provenance of objects, as the grand majority of Ancient Egyptian collections in European museums was acquired over a hundred years ago "without any documentation", as at the time the regularization of the trading of antiques was practically nonexistent. Thus, the originality and provenance of the artifacts are two key points of concern for museums, as they not only ensure the originality of a piece, but also are based upon ethical codes which museums are obliged to follow. In previous times when these collections were acquired, the originality of pieces was less difficult to prove as many of them had been come directly from excavation sites organized by museums and commissioned archaeologists. However, as objects changed hands overtime and the exploration of antiquities grew to an extent in which many pieces were forcefully taken or illegally traded, provenance became a complex, yet increasingly important issue to address. In the present day, provenance certificates of artifacts do not only inform the geographical origins of the pieces, but also by who they were excavated, traded, and acquired.

However, the interviewee identified the biggest challenge in curatorship as being the public demand for curators to constantly adapt to societal changes. According to him, museums serve a role as means of communication in which, Raven states, "you must take the interest of your partner in the discussion seriously." Thus, curators must comply to the interests and expectations of the broader public, which pushes for a greater emphasis on artifacts related to mummification and Egypt's Pharaonic dynasties, which create the image of Ancient Egypt as a mysterious civilization from which tomb treasures, enigmatic writings, and mythical gods have emerged. One of the main concerns expressed by the interviewee was that archaeological museums face the challenge of attracting younger generations, which entails the incorporation of new displaying methods and curatorial techniques.

Another major concern is related to ethics, especially in regards to displaying human material, which in this case refers to overtly presenting unwrapped mummies to the public. This element was a surprising outcome from the interview, as the display of mummies might provoke different reactions from the audience and is in reality dealt with differently by curators if the collection possesses unwrapped mummified bodies. The interviewee mentioned different occasions in which the display of such items created significant backlash and in some circumstances, led to a content withdrawal from the exhibition. Thus, the ethics of displaying

human material became an important factor to consider in this section of the research, as this illustrates the extent to which contemporary societal values can overrule a museum's decision to display content which in a different context and time period was not regarded negatively. Consequently, narratives constructed by museum displays must take into account a variety of factors which cannot be directly controlled by curators. Instead, a much more sensitive approach must be taken, in which the audience's feelings and societal paradigms must be highly prioritized in the process of contextualizing Ancient Egyptian artifacts in a museum setting.

From the viewpoint presented by head curator Dr. Raven, it can be stated that it is aligned with Shelton's (2000) argument which describes the process of colonizing and de-colonizing one's imagination during the establishment of a curatorial narrative for archaeological objects. This procedure of curators engaging in an on-going dialogue as a mediator between the artifacts and their histories in one hand and the audience and their interpretations on the other, as described in the work by Shelton (2000), was also addressed by the interviewee. He emphasized this process as vital to making curatorial decisions which are received positively by the public while not compromising aspects from the other end of the dialogue. However, conciliating between societal values, ethical norms, and historical aspects which often differ greatly is still a challenge for curators that is not close to being completely solved. Instead, as the interviewee pointed out, curators in contemporary times must be as adaptable and open to discussion as possible.

Cultural Colonialism in the Museum

In as much as the gaze employed by museum audiences has been greatly affected by ideas and ethical codes which have emerged from a contemporary, post-colonial landscape, the disciplines of archaeology and Egyptology have seen similar shifts since their beginnings in the early 19th century. Dr. Raven acknowledged that the majority of the first Egyptologists consisted of European diplomats and officials who saw the trading of Egyptian antiques as a profitable side business. However, there was a growing need for understanding the artifacts they came across, their dates, functions, materials, and origins, which in turn transformed Egyptology in a science of its own, able to provide answers which are to this day used as references for archaeologists and Egyptologists when doing research and cataloguing artifacts.

Another major change in the field of Egyptology from its origins in the 19th century to the present day, the interviewee underlined, is the following:

> "There were no Egyptian Egyptologists, and when they started working on the subject already on the 19th century they were assistants of the French professor such and such, but they could never be a professional themselves."

This, according to Dr. Raven, has gradually changed as Egypt transitioned into an entirely independent state, although the interviewee also stressed the fact that "colonial attitudes [towards Egyptian professionals] have persisted for quite a while."

When faced with questions about contemporary Egypt and its archaeological organizations and museums, the interviewee expressed deep concern regarding the political unrest in Egypt in the past decade and the threats it poses to its cultural heritage institutions and archaeological sites. However, he sees the West's overall attitude towards this particular issue as too condemning, stating that "Egypt is still a third world country and there's tremendous problems and they can't always generate the money that we would say that is necessary to protect their heritage." On the other hand, Dr. Raven also expressed the dissatisfaction of European museum professionals towards the current approach used by Egyptian authorities towards the excavation of archaeological material and the loan of artifacts from Egyptian museums to institutions abroad. The procedure for cooperating with Egypt for museum exhibitions was described by the interviewee as "expensive", "difficult" and "bureaucratic", which are the main reasons behind the lack of dialogue and cooperation between Egyptian and European curators and institutions.

While collection loans might still occur despite the high costs, contemporary archaeological excavations are heavily regulated by the Egyptian government, meaning that they must be conducted for scientific purposes only and the exportation of any sort of found material is strictly forbidden. Therefore, Dr. Raven stressed that no further acquisitions shall be made by the National Museum of Antiquities, as the museum has abided to the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Transfer of Ownership of Objects. However, this Convention does not pose any threats for the permanent collection of the museum. As expressed by the interviewee, the "collection has been acquired mainly in 1818, and at that time there was no legislation." When presented with questions regarding restitution battles among former colonized states and European museums, Dr. Raven shared his view that if such claims were to be made, they would not have a strong case, emphasizing that "the core of [the] collection was acquired when Egypt did not have a national museum, did not have an antiquities organization, did not care about its antiquities."

With his answers surrounding these particular topics, the interviewee has provided an overview of the current legislation surrounding the transport of antiquities and on-going excavations, as well as a comprehensive snapshot of the social and political scenario at the time when the collection was acquired. However, on a critical note, his viewpoints can be related to the critique presented by Shelton (2000), which highlights the tendency that archaeological museums in the West have of distancing the artifacts on display from another side of their history, especially the chapter in which colonial dominance of European powers over Egypt was at its prime. As a result, a broader picture with adjacent debates is denied access to the public, rather being addressed as something of the past which is no longer holds true nor accountable to contemporary stakeholders. Moreover, Doyon (2008) directs a part of her critique to a similar tangent, underlining European colonial discourses towards Ottoman Egypt which validated Western involvement in the exploration and trading of Egyptian antiquities based upon the viewpoint that modern Egyptians did not have the interest in those. While this attitude was the case to some degree, as many artifacts were exported with full consent and traded for large sums of money, many transactions could have been judged today as forceful and illegal, as the interviewee himself has acknowledged. Despite the contemporary recognition of a colonial dominance over Egypt and its antiquities, as Doyon (2008) has criticized and based upon the interview with Dr. Raven, it can be concluded that Egyptian perspectives on these stances then and now are still dismissed or consistently argued against.

5.2 The Allard Pierson Museum

5.1.2 Website Presentation

About the Museum

Officially established in 1934, the Allard Pierson Museum is the archaeological institution of the University of Amsterdam. Named after the first archaeology professor at the university in 1977, the Allard Pierson Museum first started with a collection of didactic books and antiques which were primarily displayed at the Institute for Mediterranean Archaeology in Amsterdam. The grand majority of the Ancient Egyptian artifacts part of the museum's permanent collection were excavated by British pioneer archaeologist W.M.F. Petrie in the 19th century. Petrie was a key figure in Egyptology as he not only established the British School of Archaeology in Egypt, but also developed a distribution mechanism available for museum and private collectors at the time to register. Via this method, according to the financial contribution of stakeholders, they would receive a proportional amount of objects. ('Encounters with the Orient - Flinders Petrie', 2016) These artifacts first made their way to the Netherlands via private acquisitions by Lunsingh Scheurleer, a banker and Egyptologist who founded his own private museum in the Hague. Between the years of 1921-1924, Scheurleer acquired approximately 350 items, ranging from pottery to jewelry. Due to the Great Depression of 1929, Scheurleer's bankruptcy forced him to sell his collection to the Allard Pierson Foundation. (van Haarlem, 2015)

Mission Statement

The official website of the museum declares their vision and mission as the following:

> The museum is displaying original antiquities and other objects as one of the sources of Western tradition to put the present in a culture-historical perspective by means of insight in and understanding of the past (...) We show the significance of ancient civilizations to contemporary European culture in a challenging way. We do this for the widest possible interested public, on the basis of an archaeological top collection in collaboration with talented students, excellent researchers and fellow institutions. ('Collections and research', 2014)

The Allard Pierson's mission statement highlights the institution's didactic nature, which is reflective of the museum's ties to the University of Amsterdam. In addition, there is an emphasis on the broad audience the museum hopes to cater to, a fact that was confirmed by my own observation of the museum space and its collection, followed by views expressed by one of this study's interviewees, the head curator of the Egyptian department, Dr. Willem van

Haarlem. While the museum's statement expresses its wish to remain a relevant vehicle for both learning and leisure through the exposure to archaeology and its relationship with the contemporary world, in both theory and practice there are some points of criticism which can be raised.

For instance, the fact that the museum relates archaeological artifacts to European civilization can be justified by aspects such as its geographical location, audience demographics, and extent collections from Medieval Europe and Ancient Rome. However, as Mitchell (1988) criticizes in *Colonising Egypt,* European museums with "Oriental" collections have the tendency to attribute meaning to artifacts in an Eurocentric framework. This implicates that civilizations such as Ancient Egypt can only be represented as their own now because Western societies have outlived them all, thus advancing to a point in which they had the entitlement and means to re-discover and re-contextualize the legacies of the "other".

Moreover, Riggs' (2013) theoretical analysis and critique of *Photograph of a Mummy* (1891) can be applied to the case of the Allard Pierson's mission statement, as alike the Victorian engraving, the text is centered around the juxtapositions between antiquities and Western culture and institutions. While the museum's Egyptian collection is not addressed individually by the statement, it can be affirmed that along with the other departments in the museum, these collections are regarded with certain cultural colonialism: by displaying these artifacts, the museum showcases its ability to study and conserve pieces of world heritage; however, while doing so, as the statement points out, the histories of diverse civilizations and time periods is channeled down only to points of interest for European narratives and audiences. Thus, this can also prove to be problematic as many of the contemporary societies where these artifacts are originally from are completely removed from the context and the parallels being drawn with the exhibitions.

Collection Highlights

In similar fashion to the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam also counts with a section on its website focused on highlights of its Ancient Egyptian department. The first featured artifact is an illustrated Book of the Dead of Sema Tawy (circa 1st century AD) written in a well-preserved papyrus (see Figure 1 on Appendix I). The text consists of a series of 17 spells in fine handwriting, which narrate details about the life of the deceased and provide a set prayers to guide him in the afterlife. It is believed that the book

belonged to Sema-Tawy, credited as being the painter of the Amon Temple in Thebes. ('Egypt', Allard Pierson Museum, 2014)

Another highlight is the figurine of Ptah-Sokaris-Osiris (see Figure 2 on Appendix I), which is believed to have been commissioned as a grave ornament in the Late Period (650-332 b.C.). The image is a combination of three gods, Ptah, patron of Memphis and god of the Sun, Sokaris, the god of the burial grounds of Saqqara, and Osiris, the god of death in Memphis. The hybrid figure is depicted standing on a primeval hill basis with a shallow space for a Book of the Dead papyrus. ('Egypt', Allard Pierson Museum, 2014)

Also highlighted is the mummy portrait of a young girl from the Greco-Roman Period (see Figure 3 on Appendix I). These portraits are considered to be precursors of icons as seen in religious art. Unlike funeral masks, mummy portraits were actually painted in textile while the individual was still alive. Upon the death of the portrait's subject, the textile would be pasted on the mummy's bandaged face. This particular artifact showcases an interesting painting technique developed in Ancient Egypt, which developed lasting paints made of diverse pigments which were mixed with wax from bees. Thus, this mummy portrait showcases the advancements which were seen in not only funerary procedures, but also in the arts and crafts throughout antiquity. ('Egypt', Allard Pierson Museum, 2014)

Two of the collection's sarcophaguses are on the highlights list: The first is the top part of a sarcophagus which belonged to a female from the elite (see Figure 4 on Appendix I). Her skin tone is golden and she is dressed in fine colorful clothes, wearing jewelry which includes an embellished diadem. The item is believed to be from the 2nd century AD and was discovered in Achmim, Middle Egypt. The second sarcophagus on the list is the Sarcophagus of Theuris (see Figure 5 on Appendix I), which depicts the woman's face, hands, and breasts in relief. The coffin's original colors have not faded away completely, as seen in the shade of pink still present on the material. In addition, the sarcophagus is embellished with symbolic motifs which depict the crossing of Theuris to the afterlife, showing her both as a living person and as a mummy.

Based upon the Ancient Egyptian collection highlights featured by the website of the Allard Pierson Museum, it is possible to identify some recurrent themes which here are used to draw a broad, yet distinctive image of the collection. It can be stated that these themes are polytheism, the afterlife, mysticism, and aesthetic opulence, as all of the objects are related to funerary sites and/or rituals. Their impressive craftsmanship is another common element, as some of these artifacts can be considered early forms of visual art and can be found in a great state of preservation in which original materials and colors are still visible. On a critical note, however, these highlights of Ancient Egypt face the same issues as the top picks presented by the National Museum of Antiquities in its website, which can be defined by the term

"Orientalized", as coined by Said (1978) and supported by Mitchell (1988) in his argument that Oriental cultures, especially Egypt, are often portrayed in the West in a spectacular, romanticized, and stereotypical form.

While the Allard Pierson's picks cover a broader time period and represent objects with certain aesthetic features which are not automatically assimilated with Pharaonic Egypt – for instance, the mummy portrait and the sarcophagus of Theuris, both from the Greco-Roman period -, the highlighted artifacts still add onto the narrative of Ancient Egyptian society as highly mythical and above all concerned with matters of the afterlife. Furthermore, as the collection observation and the interview with the department's head curator will illustrate in the following chapters, as these collection highlights online are to a certain degree representative of the exhibition's content, it can also be stated that these choices were done strategically, as they present themes and aesthetics which resonate with a broader public.

5.2.2 Observation Results

The observation of the Ancient Egyptian permanent collection of the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam followed the same format as the one conducted at the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. From the field notes taken, I have produced an observation report (see Appendix C) which has become the source for my thematic analysis (see Appendix D). It is important to note that the observation at the Allard Pierson Museum took place in the end of February 2018, prior to the temporary closure of the Egyptian section of the museum as of March 2018 for renovations. Therefore, conclusions drawn from this observation apply only to the previous display, as a reopening date for the collection has not been scheduled yet.

Representing the "Other"

The permanent display at the Ancient Egyptian department at the Allard Pierson museum covers the time span of Pre-Dynastic Egypt (circa 3000 b.C.) until 639 AD, when Greco-Roman Egypt fell to Islamic conquerors. Within this broad timeline, the following time periods are pinpointed: Early Dynastic Time (3000-2650 b.C.), Old Kingdom (2650-2200 b.C.), 1st Intermediate Period (2200-2000 BC), Middle Kingdom (2000-1800 b.C.), 2nd Intermediate Period (1800-1550 b.C.), New Kingdom (1550-1100 b.C.), 3rd Split Time (1100-650 BC), Late Period (650-332 b.C.), and the Greco-Roman Period (332 b.C. - 639 AD). In addition, the display also includes another thematic section focused on Egypt during French and British rule (18th-20th century).

The collection is split into five sections large in scope, namely 1) Daily Life in Egypt (all time periods), 2) Pharaonic Egypt (2650 b.C.-332 b.C.), divided amongst the subsections a) The Afterlife, b) Mummification, c) Grave Gifts and d) Gods and Temples. The third section is on Greco-Roman Egypt (332 b.C.-639 AD), split into a) Military, b) Religion, c) Mummification, and d) Arts and Culture. Section 4 represents Coptic Christians in Egypt (from 452 AD) and the fifth and last section of the collection is focused on the European presence in Egypt (18th-20th century), divided into a) The Napoleonic Campaign (1798 1801), b) The British Mandate (19th-20th century), c) The Petrie Excavations (19th century), and d) Egyptology and Egyptomania.

The two most emphasized themes throughout the collection display are related to the afterlife and the daily life in Ancient Egypt. Although these two sections are split and opposite in essence, their content constantly overlaps, as many of the objects in the daily life section are indicated by their captions to have been excavated from tombs. By drawing this connection, both sections emphasize the concern of Ancient Egyptians for preparing for their afterlife, as according to their beliefs would mirror the lives they led in the world of the living.

However, differences in content amongst these two major thematic sections can be split into three categories. The first consists of objects labeled as "tomb treasures", which consist of the deceased's favorite items or artifacts commissioned especially for being placed in tombs. Examples of this are decorative items such as vases, pottery and icons, jewelry, Books of the Dead, and sculptures depicting gods or the deceased. These items could be found in both the daily life and the afterlife sections. The second category consists of agricultural tools, pottery fragments, household utensils, and papyruses with non-religious scripture. These objects are related to Ancient Egypt's classes of officials, artisans, architects, and builders, thus being exclusive to the daily life display. However, these are also to some degree related to the afterlife, as most commissioned monuments and buildings consisted of temples, mausoleums, pyramids, and tombs. The third category of items is related to mummification, therefore it is reserved to the museum's small collection of human and animal mummies, including some mummy portraits and coffins. Although being pertinent to the afterlife section, the segment on mummification is displayed as its own section, taking up a prominent place at the very start of the exhibition as visitors walk into the Ancient Egyptian department.

Judging by the analysis of the collection highlights presented by the museum's website, it can be affirmed that the scope of the Ancient Egyptian collection was of a somewhat surprising content, as it also encompassed many daily life utensils and crafts such as pottery and jewelry. These elements were helpful in portraying Ancient Egyptian society in a wider frame, which in turn stirs the narrative away from usual stereotypes. On the other hand,

however, a trait identified by Doyon (2008) in her own research of Ancient Egyptian collections in Western museums could also be identified in the Allard Pierson display. Namely that mummies and objects related to mummification rituals also have a place of greater prominence in the exhibition, which as a result promotes the importance of the concept of the afterlife as the most "memorable" aspect of the exhibition's narrative and content.

Curating Ancient Egypt: Conflicting Narratives

Regarding the size, scope, and content of the exhibition, the Greco-Roman Period is the most represented. The section on this particular era in Ancient Egypt attempts to highlight the cultural hybridity which took place in the merging of these civilizations, addressing the intellectual, military, and cultural creations and improvements which took place as a result. It also enhances the similarities between Greco-Roman Egypt and the rest of Mediterranean Europe, which promotes the idea that both areas were situated on a similar level at that point in time in regards to their civilizations. While some of the artifacts presented in this section are similar to objects typical to Pharaonic Egypt, such as engraved stones, scriptures in papyruses, mummies, and icons depicting Egyptian gods, other objects can have their usage and aesthetics likened to items found in Western Antiquity, such as spears, helmets, shields, furniture, clothing, jewelry, and decorative items. In addition, many of the collection's highlights according to the Allard Pierson Museum website are concentrated in this section: "Mummy Portrait of a Girl" (50-75 AD), "Sarcophagus from an Elite Woman" (2 AD), "Book of the Dead of Sema Tawy" (1 AD), and "Sarcophagus of Theuris" (2 AD). Thus, it can be affirmed that this point of the observation can be likened to Riggs' (2013) finding that Western displays on Ancient Egypt often support the idea that culturally, politically, and intellectually, Pharaonic and Greco-Roman Egypt were on a similar level to Classical Europe, mainly due to the presence of some traits which now are attributed to Western progress.

While Greco-Roman Egypt is largely represented, other ethnic and religious groups in the history of Ancient Egypt are represented, although in a lesser amount and not in full completion. The exhibition portrays religion in Ancient Egypt as a changing throughout time periods, as it has undergone the influence of the rulers and cultural characteristics of each of the time periods represented. The display touches upon three major subjects concerning religion, namely a) Pharaonic polytheism, illustrated by engraved stones, religious icons, and religious scriptures, b) Greco-Roman polytheism, which has an overlap of gods and items as found in the Pharaonic period and is illustrated by religious icons, scriptures, and objects used for rituals, and c) Coptic Christianity, represented by a collection of religious scriptures,

clothing and artifacts used in rituals. While the contrast between these three religions is evident and each of them have their history and defining characteristics represented by artifacts, it was observed that there is no mention or representation of Islamic Egypt in the collection.

A mixed approach is used to contextualize the artifacts on display, mainly through standard captions, curatorial texts for each section and sub-section, and some visual and/or digital tools. All captions state objects' title, material, original geographical location (if known), time period, and inventory number. Additional texts are more concerned with highlighted items and in providing further information on a particular time period or theme represented collectively by the objects in that given section. This feature was found by Doyon's (2008) analysis of Victorian-Era exhibitions of Ancient Egypt, in which textual context alongside objects was not of deep extent, thus condensing or fully excluding elements such as historical periods, aesthetic styles, and practical details surrounding the origins of the artifacts. On the other hand, each section counts with a digital interactive panel which provides maps and illustrations of excavations and the original settings of some pieces. In addition, two small-scale models of Pharaonic temples and one medium-scale model of a standard stone grave are displayed alongside objects in the daily life and afterlife sections respectively.

Cultural Colonialism in the Museum

In the last room of the exhibition there is a section on the European presence in Egypt, which also overlaps with the display's addressing of the history of archaeology and Egyptology as disciplines and briefly sheds light on Egyptomania in popular culture. While this connection between Europe and Egypt is emphasized by the objects on display and the additional texts provided, political terms such as "colonialism" are never used. Instead, the focal point of this last assemblage of objects lies on the fascination European scholars, artists, and rulers had with Egypt, but mainly in regards to its mythical Ancient past immortalized by the pyramids and mummies. Thus, cultural and academic interests from Europe towards Egypt are highlighted, while political interests are not touched upon by the content of the exhibition.

Within this last section, which is focused on the time frame between the 18th and 20th centuries, there are further thematic divisions, namely: a) The Napoleonic Campaign (1798-1801), which illustrates the French involvement and interest in Egypt which resulted from these years by presenting a small series of landscape illustrations and engravings, French history books on the subject, and fragments of excavation reports; b) The British Mandate (1822-1922), which presents the Victorian interest in exploring and documenting Egypt via illustrations, travel writings, photographs, and excavation reports; c) The Petrie Excavations (1887-1892),

which focuses on early archaeological methods, excavations, and some of the Allard Pierson Museum's acquisition history by presenting excavation reports and manuscripts by Petrie as well as some original excavation tools used in that time period. Lastly, the relevance of Ancient Egypt in popular history and culture is shown in section d) Egyptology and Egyptomania, where comic books, artistic illustrations, souvenirs, film posters, and novels depicting - somewhat stereotypically - Ancient Egypt from a Western perspective are exhibited, thus showing how

the image that has being built of Ancient Egypt in the common Western imaginary has inspired famous works in the arts.

It can be therefore affirmed that the last section of the Ancient Egyptian department at the Allard Pierson Museum is more of a "spectacle" as described by Mitchell (1988) when referring to 19th century World Exhibitions and Orientalist Congresses. In fact, it can be argued that this section highlights the same types of objects and materials which were produced or influenced by exhibitions such as these, rather than by only Ancient Egypt and some of its cultural traits. However, while this section bridges the archaeological material and the context displayed with contemporary popular culture and its interpretations of Egypt, it still does not employ a critical gaze to look upon these colonial-era objects and publications. Instead, it places them in a narrative where there is a rather naïve dialogue between the West and Egypt where more sensitive and controversial themes within post-colonial discourses are completely avoided. Moreover, this tendency was evident not only in the display at the National Museum of Antiquities, but also evident in some of the viewpoints expressed in the interviews with the head curators of both museums.

5.2.3 Interview Analysis

The interview with Dr. Willem van Haarlem, head curator of the Egyptian department at the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam followed the same set of questions as the ones posed to Dr. Raven. However, upon Dr. van Haarlem's request, he had previous access to the interview questions. Nevertheless, the interviewee answered all questions of the interview guide in addition to questions which have emerged during our conversation. (see transcript on Appendix G). The answers generated by the interview have been analyzed in the framework of the most recurrent topics in Dr. van Haarlem's answers and their relationship with the three major theoretical concepts this study is based upon.

Representing the "Other"

According to Dr. Willem van Haarlem, head curator of the Egyptian department of the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam, the display of the permanent collection attempts to cover "as many regions and time periods as possible." Thus, some of the objects are from as early as the Pre-Dynastic Period (3000-2650 b.C.), while the rest of the collection is distributed amongst different time periods in Ancient Egypt until the Arab invasion of 639 AD. The curator himself acknowledges that some periods are better represented than others: the Late Period (650-332

b.C.), the Greco-Roman Period (332 b.C.-639 AD) and the Middle Kingdom (2000-1800 b.C.) are the most prominent, while the Early Kingdom (2650-2200 b.C.) is outnumbered.

In addition, the interviewee highlighted that the afterlife is the biggest overarching theme of the collection and shall be even more present in the new display to be unveiled later in 2018. In the words of Dr. van Haarlem, this choice by the museum came to be as they "realized that almost every object we get from the daily life [section] came from tombs… so we decided just to scrap these daily life elements and return, so to speak, the objects to their original context." As a result, it can be affirmed that the museum is making decisions based on a more socio-historical perspective which highlights the object's previous functions and crafting purposes, illustrating the development of a concept such as the afterlife throughout different dynasties and time periods of Egypt.

In regards to different religious groups throughout the history of Ancient Egypt and their representation in the Allard Pierson permanent display, there is a strong presence of artifacts related to Coptic Christianism and Pharaonic and Greco-Roman polytheism, while Islam is completely excluded. Dr. van Haarlem justified this decision with the following statement: "We don't have an Islamic collection, Leiden doesn't have one. Actually we don't have a museum in Holland at all that specializes in Islamic antiquities." This particular viewpoint expressed by the interviewee can be analyzed under the lenses of Bednarski (2005) and Riggs (2013), namely in the sense that Western museology makes a clear distinction between Ancient, especially Pharaonic Egypt, and Islamic Egypt. Due to this, the timeline of the Ancient Egyptian collections studied ended at 639 AD, the year of the Muslim conquest of Egypt. This is justifiable due to the focus of the museum's collection and historical definitions of Antiquity in Egypt. However, the issue in this case is that within these narratives, the history of Egypt seems to be either interrupted after the end of its Ancient period or related to Western history and culture rather than to Islamic and/or modern Egypt. Thus, it can be argued that to a certain degree the lack of interest and expertise of some Western museums towards Egyptian Islamic artifacts is fostered by the conception that this aspect of Egypt is not at all relatable to Ancient Egypt as defined by exhibitions such as the one at the Allard Pierson Museum.

While any representations of Islamic Egypt lack completely in the exhibition, the timeline covered by the artifacts on display sprawls across many different periods and cultural aspects of Ancient Egypt. Dr. van Haarlem identified giving a broad overview of Ancient Egypt with the artifacts available in the museum collection was as one of his most important goals as a curator. Also, alike Dr. Maarten Raven from the National Museum of Antiquities, van Haarlem also confirmed that the museum still makes use of stereotypical images of Ancient Egypt, especially mummies, in order to attract and satisfy its audience, which comprises mainly

of school children and elderly generations. Therefore, while curating the display for Ancient Egypt, the interviewee emphasized that he always must take into account the prior knowledge of the overall audience, which he defines as basically consisting of the "pyramids, mummies, Tutankhamon, that's about it… Cleopatra maybe." Thus, the interviewee has identified the museum's collection of mummies as the main attraction for the Ancient Egyptian department,

which in turn obliges him as a curator to place them in a leading role within the display's narrative.

Based on the views expressed by the head curator for Egypt at the Allard Pierson Museum, Dr. Willem van Haarlem, it is possible to relate some of his statements to issues of representing the "other", as illustrated by the theoretical framework of this study. In one hand, it can be concluded that there is a persistence of a both internal and external Orientalist gaze (Said, 1978), as curators are aware of Egyptian stereotypes which can be enhanced by some of the artifacts, consciously using some of them as tools to attract audiences and cater to their expectations. On the other hand, emphasizing the didactic aspect of the collection was also a major concern, as in contemporary times archaeological collections are no longer used to establish an image of past civilizations as they did in the Victorian times (Doyon, 2008); instead, curators now aim at enriching one's understanding of the "other". Nevertheless, it can also be concluded that museums such as the Allard Pierson still do not take a stance towards bridging its Ancient Egyptian department to Arabicized Egypt. As a result of this, the content of the exhibition and social, historical, and cultural aspects represented within its timeline evoke the impression that there is a clear and wide gap between Egypt's Ancient past and Egyptian civilization since 639 AD. Therefore, not addressing this side of a broader narrative is justified as a practical matter by curators such as Dr. van Haarlem; however, attitudes such as this can be seen as reflectors of colonial legacies in museums (Riggs, 2013).

Conflicting Narratives

Dr. van Haarlem identified his main challenge as a curator as the complex task of finding a middle ground between the interests and knowledge of the museum's largest audience groups, which lie on opposite ends of the age spectrum. Thus, as also highlighted by Dr. Raven, conciliating between the broader audience's expectations while providing an accurate overview of the collection requires some degree of compromising for curators. There is a demand for displaying objects which can both be visually appealing and informative, offering some historical and technical details which do not require an extensive knowledge of a particular aspect of Ancient Egypt, but that still have didactical properties.

Another significant challenge expressed by the interviewee related to the contextualization of objects, a process which has been greatly improving in the past decades with the incorporation of digital and interactive tools. Van Haarlem labeled these exhibition tools as highly useful for placing the artifacts into an intelligible perspective and offering further details about the pieces that cannot be shown only with the object itself and standard museum

captions. Furthermore, while technology has been a crucial tool for museum curators to implement in their exhibitions, Dr. van Haarlem is highly avoidant of displaying replicas and over-restored pieces, defining these objects as "misleading" to the public. Meanwhile, the display contains a model of the Pyramids of Giza, of a temple, and of a Coptic monastery. These are justified as visual aid tools which are used mainly to give the audience an idea of important locations for Ancient Egyptian society, which also come in useful in contextualizing the original settings of some of the objects in the collection.

As Shelton (2000) has highlighted in his study *Curating African Worlds*, the contextualization of archaeological artifacts always faces issues, as their original context can never be the same again once they are placed into a museum. However, as indicated by the interviewee, placing high importance on presenting original artifacts only is a basic step that must be taken for presenting an accurate display. Instead of replicating the context of objects in some sort of "spectacle" (Mitchell, 1988), technology is now used by museums to visually and interactively present the facts which are known about an artifact's history and original function and setting. Furthermore, it can be concluded from this section of the interview that curators are increasingly becoming more concerned and capable of tackling issues of representation and contextualization for archaeological displays.

Cultural Colonialism in the Museum

Regarding the provenance of the Ancient Egyptian collection of the Allard Pierson Museum, head curator Willem van Haarlem identified the following as the main acquisition sources: private collectors, antiquities auctions, art dealers, and subscriptions from the Petrie excavations in the 19th century. However, due to Egyptian legislation, the UNESCO Convention of 1970, and financial limitations, the museum no longer acquires new pieces for its collection. Dr. van Haarlem emphasized the difficulties established by Egyptian authorities upon archaeological excavation and the transporting of antiques, which in one hand ensures that these artifacts will remain in Egypt, but on the other hand also impose difficulties for research in the region, as it also forbids the export of soil and DNA samples found in excavations. As a result, Dr. van Haarlem explained that museums are allowed to conduct excavations closely inspected by Egyptian officials, but all of their findings have to remain in Egypt with their next destination likely being the storage rooms of museums, as "there's simply no room in the museums in Egypt to exhibit everything that has been found."

Thus, from a museum perspective, the interviewee expressed a significant degree of dissatisfaction with the current system in Egypt, mainly as a consequence of issues such as "the capacity of research laboratories in Egypt is not good enough", obtaining excavation permits

has become "more strict and complicated.", and "exhibitions from Egypt are always very, very expensive, and even if you have a contract you are never sure if the object actually comes here." When confronted with questions regarding whether some of the roots of such dissatisfaction from Western museums may be related to a loss of dominance over Egyptian antiquities, the interviewee defended the viewpoint that "The Egyptian Antiquities Organization was in the hand of foreigners [the French] but they were very strict about the safeguards of Egypt, so it was not very easy to export, they really took care of Egyptian heritage."

In regards to cases of antiques restitutions, the interviewee also presented a nuanced perspective, stating that potential claims do not have a strong stand as Egyptians would only be interested in having high profile artifacts back, such as the Zodiac of Dendera at the Louvre and the Rosetta Stone in the British Museum, which European museums will never agree to, as the interviewee stated that returning these world-famous objects would be "suicide" for these museums. Furthermore, restitution claims from contemporary Egypt would not be valid according to van Haarlem, as "there were different ethical considerations then", and "all these objects were legally exported then from Egypt, and in retrospect they were stolen from Egypt, but the [Ottoman] Turks didn't care about these objects."

When asked questions pertaining to the theme of cultural colonialism, Dr. van Haarlem presented a discourse which was strikingly similar to the one expressed by the previously interviewed curator. Therefore, the second interviewee's viewpoint can also be related to Shelton's (2000) critique directed at Western archaeological museums, namely that there is still an absence of addressing the colonial period in Egypt and its relationship with the acquisition histories of many major archaeological collections in Europe. Instead, as confirmed by both interviews, curators prefer to address the issue as something that does not pertain to them nor the museums which they work on behalf. In addition, Dr. van Haarlem justified the Western colonial involvement with Egypt's antiques as a positive endeavor, as he argued for a clear Ottoman disinterest then on the cultural property of Ancient Egypt. Furthermore, this discourse can be related to Doyon's (2008) observation that it has become a commonplace argument by Western institutions to advocate their past acquisitions and explorations of the area as completely legal and justifiable, as otherwise many of these monuments and artifacts would have been neglected by Ottoman hands.

6. Conclusion

The research question of this thesis was "In what ways is the practice of collecting and curating Ancient Egyptian artifacts in the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam and the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden still reminiscent to the one employed during Western European colonialism?"

Thus, the aim of this study was to investigate to what degree these museums still operate with remainders of an Orientalized gaze (Said, 1978) which was of common practice in the colonial societies which have fostered the establishment of these museums and facilitated the acquisitions of large sums of their collections. Markers of this gaze common in the early archaeological exhibitions of the 19th century can be defined as various stances in which there is a constant process of "othering" towards Egypt, in which contrasting values are presented in order to highlight the gap between a static and exotic Orient, whose most significant legacies belong to an Ancient past, and a progressive West, which possesses the intellectual, cultural, and financial superiority to advance but also to dominate over the "other". In such paradigm, the narrative presented is a single interpretation of the colonizer rather than a variety of accounts from the colonized, which ultimately leads to a leniency towards recurrent stereotypes and exoticized images or concepts.

It can be concluded that the question posed at the start of this study does not lead to a single, solid answer. Instead, different conclusions were reached, in which different aspects of the contemporary approach by museums on an Orientalized, colonial gaze upon their Ancient Egyptian collections are brought to light, as they were significant and recurrent themes throughout the research data and findings.

6.1 Representing the "Other"

As established in the theory by Riggs (2013), the Western gaze employed upon Oriental cultures, Ancient Egypt more specifically, can be seen as an outcome of colonial dominance over Egypt. Aligned to this, ideas of dominance over the colonized, ownership and entitlement over the exploration and representation of their identity, and a certain sense of obligation to re-discover and protect the legacy of the once mighty Ancient Egyptian civilization from the then crumbling Ottoman Egyptian state. Therefore, it can be said that European museum professionals and archaeologists throughout the 18th and 19th centuries shared this belief and envisioned to guard and represent the image of Ancient Egypt through their expanding

collections, which soon became deeply rooted in the identity of many of Europe's most prestigious museums. The first conclusion that can be made is that the National Museum of Antiquities and the Allard Pierson Museum acknowledge the existence and importance of re-visiting Egypt's colonial past and its relationship with their collections; however, both institutions are not active in these dialogues, taking a more neutral position instead in the manner how their displays and curators address the subject. When compared to the perspective presented by the two Ancient Egypt curators interviewed for this study, ties to any colonial agendas are no longer existent in the curatorial processes employed by these archaeological museums.

There is a sense of duty to present the audience with a broader, yet accurate image of Ancient Egypt, which has both its advantages and downsides. These museums are successful in entering a dialogue with a diverse audience, drawing a picture that uses stereotypes and common knowledge of Egypt as gateways for introducing different aspects of society and culture via less monumental or well-known artifacts. On the other hand, this selection process excludes some aspects of Egypt's past and present in order to present a sensitive display which does not raise questions which might touch upon the realm of Egypt's colonial past and the acquisition history of these collections.

Nevertheless, in the process of re-contextualizing artifacts and placing Ancient Egypt within a time frame with key events and characters, it was found that some aspects of Egyptian history, religion, and culture are still "othered". The latter definition follows the framework of Said (1978), which refers to the representation of the Orient, especially of its Arabicized and Islamic societies as inferior and contrasting to the values shared by Western cultures, while other elements of Oriental cultures might be represented in a romanticized light. In the case of Ancient Egyptian collections in Dutch museums, the time span covered by artifacts on display covers the beginning of Egyptian civilizations by the Nile river as early as 6000 b.C., sprawling across different eras and regions up until 639 AD, when Greco-Roman Egypt fell to Arab conquerors. This choice regarding the timeline of the exhibition was justified by both the curators on behalf of the National Museum of Antiquities and the Allard Pierson Museum as a voluntary choice to give a broad and as complete as possible overview of Ancient Egypt; while artifacts from the Christian, Coptic, and Greco-Roman periods are present in both collections in Leiden and Amsterdam, Islamic Egypt is not included by either. In the case of the National Museum of Antiquities, this was justified as a matter of avoiding a weak representation of the period due to a lack of objects from that time in the museum's existing collection. On the other hand, the curator of the Allard Pierson Museum justified the choice as a matter of common

practice amongst Dutch museums, not precisely due to a lack of interest in Islamic Egypt, but mainly due to a lack of museums specialized in Islamic history and art in the Netherlands.

As museums no longer have the power to export archaeological finds from excavations and often do not possess the financial means to purchase new artifacts through private dealers and auctions, curators must construct a narrative for the permanent Ancient Egyptian collections based upon the objects available to them at the museum. In addition, it is also important to note that when these collections were first assembled, their acquisitions were made based upon different factors, such as the personal interests and preferences of the primary owners, the locations where the excavations were conducted, and the content of the crates and already-assembled collections, which was often determined accordingly to a proportionality principle based on the amount of money invested in the purchase. All of these factors can provide explanations for the current content of the studied collections and the reasons behind some time periods and themes having a higher representation than others.

As pointed out by Bednarski (2005), the European distancing of Ancient Egypt from its modern aftermath in literary, artistic, and museological representations manipulate the imaginary of audiences in a manner in which Egypt has two facets, namely the one best represented by features predominant in the Pharaonic period in Antiquity, while the other is selectively overshadowed and vaguely defined, in which there is no consistent narrative or pinpointed historical events and characters, which are fast-forwarded in the common imagination and conception of the outside public to the contemporary image of Egypt as a developing Arab state.

While in the Napoleonic and Victorian eras, newly established archaeological museums counted with a wide influx of recently excavated objects which gradually established a particular image of Egypt in the imaginary of European audiences, in the contemporary times the case is much more different, which from a curatorial perspective can be a great challenge when constructing displays and narratives which are both accurate and attractive to the public. As Dr. Raven highlighted, Ancient Egypt has become "part of our heritage", meaning that the concept of Ancient Egypt has been intertwined with Western museology, academia, and culture. However, it can be affirmed that a significant amount of that image has been built upon Western accounts of the "other" and certain stereotypes which are still persistent to this day. When confronted about this, both head curators from the National Museum of Antiquities and the Allard Pierson Museum confirmed that it is impossible for them to break free from common stereotypes for representing Ancient Egypt while contextualizing the objects on display and deciding which artifacts to bring out to the public eye. As one of them stated, archaeological museums "can't do without mummies", as those are perhaps the most widely recognized and

used images of Ancient Egypt, which have for centuries now been associated with what is expected to see at an Ancient Egyptian collection and have been reinforced by numerous works of literature and film in Western popular culture. As a result, both museums had mummies as their leading attractions for their Egyptian departments, which are mostly visited by school children who long for seeing real mummies and an overall public that relates Egypt exclusively to "pyramids, mummies, Tutankhamon...Cleopatra maybe" (van Haarlem). Furthermore, mummification is portrayed as a common practice for all time periods which encompass Ancient Egypt, which in addition is useful in portraying different mummification techniques and developments throughout history. In the National Museum of Antiquities, there are approximately 395 objects related to mummification, which not only include mummified animal and human bodies, but also original coffins, mummification tools, and Books of the Dead used as religious and practical guides for the procedure. At the Allard Pierson Museum, the quantity of mummies is relatively small; however, the collection counts with some interesting artifacts related to the topic. For instance, seven mummy portraits from the Greco-Roman period which can be classified as early forms of Egyptian art and provided some additional insights regarding the age and appearance of the deceased.

Moreover, a somewhat stereotyped representation is supported by collections of Egyptian cultural artifacts in European museums, with the afterlife and mummification being the biggest themes explored by the content of the displays analyzed in this study. This can be exemplified by the occurrence of large sections devoted to the afterlife in both museums in Leiden and Amsterdam. In the National Museum of Antiquities, the burial ground of Saqqara is one of the major sources of the objects on display, such as the funerary sculptures of Maya and Merit (1335-1310 b.C.), a collection of approximately 279 artifacts found in and around tombs, and a mausoleum. Through this display, visitors are able to acquire an overall knowledge of aspects such as funerary practices, religious beliefs and rituals, and the very close relationship Ancient Egyptians had with the afterlife and the preparations for it. Interestingly enough, while the former Ancient Egyptian colony of Nubia is briefly defined by a small display in the "Inspirations" section at the end of the exhibition, there are over 1500 artifacts and object fragments throughout the exhibition which are provenant from Nubian burial grounds. However, due to some overarching similarities with some Ancient Egyptian funerary practices and cultural values, Nubian artifacts related to the theme of the afterlife are widely assimilated into displays of funerary objects and monuments from Saqqara and Abydos. Therefore, from such practices one can conclude that the theme of the afterlife is utilized broadly to embody and represent elements related to various times periods and groups of Ancient Egypt in regards to their daily life, traditions, culture, and religion. The underlying reason for this was justified by

both interviewees as a consequence of having a larger quantity of objects which originally belonged to tombs and graveyards, which ultimately drove the contextualization of objects to focus on a greater degree on the afterlife, thus employing this one word to represent an array of other various themes which would be too weakly represented if displayed in a wider variety of themes and contexts. In the Allard Pierson Museum, this was the major reason behind an alteration in the new display which will condense the afterlife and daily life sections.

In brief, in the process of representing and contextualizing Egypt's heritage in a museum setting, contrasting values and characteristics of its Ancient civilization have been brought to light as efforts to convey a narrative which is not only intelligible to broader Western audiences, but also attractive. While in the colonial times this "othering" process can be found to be deeply rooted in Eurocentrism, as theorized by Said's *Orientalism* (1978), the contemporary romanticization and stereotyping of some of Ancient Egypt's societal traits and material legacies is done by contemporary museums as efforts to attract audiences and to match visitors' expectations. Examples of this were acknowledged by the interviewed curators themselves, whom stressed the importance of including mummies and coffins on their displays in order to take the interest of their audiences seriously and to upkeep with visitor rates. This very practice by curators can be interpreted as contemporary take on the concept of Orientalism (1978), as it selectively employs a few recurrent images to continuously represent a broad timeline of a multicultural society. Thus, in the general overview constructed by these museum displays, the strongest image of Egypt relates to its pharaohs, mummies, and pyramids, which in turn excludes other perspectives or representations which might emerge from the legacies of Egypt's Coptic, Byzantine, Nubian, Christian, and Islamic societies. However, an array of practical factors must be taken into account, such as the collection's scope, financial matters, and the availability of certain information, which in turn directly affect the decision-making process of curators when attempting to present a comprehensive overview of Ancient Egypt through the artifacts they have available.

6.2 Curating Egyptian Heritage - Conflicting Narratives

As Shelton (2000) highlights, curators in the field of archaeological heritage have the challenge of translating their knowledge into a visual narrative in which an overall meaning is conveyed to the audience. Therefore, unlike works of fine art, archaeological artifacts have a need for further contextualization, meaning that pieces of information such as time period, function, material, and geographical region are paramount for the audience's understanding of the display and the storyline it aims to narrate. Thus, both the National Museum of Antiquities and the Allard Pierson Museum follow the same format for object captions, which cover practical cataloguing details of each object rather than delving into their individual histories. This is done for a variety of reasons - first of all, as pointed out by the interviewed curators, the complete information of a piece are not always known, as in the past they might have changed hands often and not all excavation finds were catalogued in detail. Another factor is that artifacts such as pottery, jewelry, and utensils were found in great quantity, which in turn would make zooming into their individual characteristics a very time consuming task for researchers and a not very interesting display for the audience. Nevertheless, some pieces in the collection are picked as highlights due to their historical relevance, aesthetic qualities, or peculiar details about their history or acquisition. Also, they serve as markers in the narrative told by the collections, as they are emphasized individually in order to represent larger themes within the context they are originally from.

In addition, despite chronology being the backbone of the narratives of each of the displays, function still plays a larger role in the grouping of objects, as most themes represented by them, such as mummification, the afterlife, and religious practices are recurrent in all time periods covered by both museum exhibitions. While curatorial methods for archaeological collections are still deeply rooted in more static and traditional practices, curators now have a significantly larger amount of tools to be incorporated into the display in order to further inform audiences about the content being presented to them. Thus, new technologies and interactive features can be seen as new allies for curators of archaeological collections. As one of the interviewees commented, "with something like archaeology, you have to convince the audience that this is not boring and out of date." In the National Museum of Antiquities for instance, individuals have access to a panel which shows CT-scans of the mummies on display, revealing what is behind their bandages and further background information about that particular mummy and delving into the practicalities of mummification. Head curator Dr. Maarten Raven expressed his satisfaction with the inclusion of this technology in the exhibition, stating that "the scanning has totally added to the interest in mummies." Thus, given the current limitations

faced by curators nowadays, such as knowledge gaps and regulations forbidding the transport of material and samples collected in excavations, the method adopted to showcase original artifacts and what is known about them through the incorporation of technology in some sections can be seen as a large step towards more appealing and didactic archaeological displays.

With the introduction in new methods of curatorship for archaeological artifacts, it can be affirmed that the discipline of Egyptology, alike the one of archaeology, is not a static science. It has changed facets throughout time periods: from an "accidental discipline" when cataloguing and investigating the history of excavated artifacts was merely for commercial purposes to a science which not only has aided researchers and museum professionals in their tasks of understanding the objects brought upon them, but also a science which now can use modern technology to further realize its potentials and solve questions about Ancient Egyptian civilizations which have remained unanswered. On the other hand, Egyptology is still a discipline deeply rooted in the times of French and British colonialism in Egypt, which in turn has affected its some of its practices and entailed implications that Europeans were more suitable for exploring and understanding Ancient Egypt, as unlike the Ottomans, European professionals were able to develop a science devoted only to Egypt (Preziosi and Farago, 2004), (Doyon, 2008). Examples of this given by one of the interviewees are a long-lasting absence of native Egyptian Egyptologists operating in the field, in addition to the fact that most of the first Egyptologists in the 19th century were not archaeologists themselves, but rather European diplomats and businessmen seeking additional profits during their campaigns in Egypt. Perhaps due to this sensitive history, Egyptology is nowadays conceptualized as more of a niche under the umbrella of archaeology. Interestingly enough, the interviewed curators employed the term "archaeologist" to describe themselves and only utilized the term "Egyptology" when answering questions addressing the discipline.

Another conflicting point of Ancient Egyptian museum collections is the often found comparison between Greco-Roman Egypt and Europe in the Classical Age, which as Riggs (2013) points out, is done with a positive connotation as this was Ancient Egypt's most "Westernized" period. While these comparisons are based on historical accuracy, they can still be detrimental to how different periods and cultures in Ancient Egypt are seen, as in this narrative they are constantly "othered". The Allard Pierson Museum provides an interesting case on this stance, as Greco-Roman Egypt has a strong presence in the display. The museum's head curator for Egypt justified this as a result of the high number of artifacts in the collection which belong to that period. But also, he justified his choice of dedicating a large section of the

exhibition to Greco-Roman Egypt as a way of linking the Egyptian department to the museum's permanent exhibition on Antiquity in Rome and Greece.

6.3 Cultural Colonialism in the Museum, Then and Now

Mitchell (1988) scrutinizes the Orientalist fairs from the Victorian Era, labelling them as "spectacles" aimed at drawing a picture of the Orient, especially Egypt, as a timeless land which was then recently made accessible to European imagination and exploration due to the colonial advancements in the region. Riggs (2013) sees a resemblance in the manner how archaeological museums in the Victorian Era utilized this type of discourse, creating spectacles with curiosities of the "other", which due to their success with European audiences, validated further Western archaeological expeditions in Egypt which have resulted in the exportation of thousands of artifacts to European museums. In the case of the museums analyzed for this study, namely the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam and the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, their Ancient Egyptian permanent exhibitions are rid of colonial undertones found in the "spectacles" of 19th century exhibitions and fairs; however, they do not directly touch upon the topic of colonialism in Egypt, instead alluding to the European involvement in the region as a scientific effort in regards to the handling of archaeological expeditions and collection acquisitions.

While both of museums studied are based in the Netherlands, a nation which did not have a colonial presence in Egypt unlike Britain and France, completely banning cultural colonialism from the content presented by their collections is somewhat of an impossible task. Both museums in the present day operate independently from any political agendas or ideologies, which in theory are rooted in the unequal balance between the West and Egypt propelled by a colonial mindset. However, their collections were acquired in these times, meaning that ethical values were shaped by a colonial framework and transactions and exportations of objects were completely legal. The last point proves to be particularly problematic, as even the interviewed curators themselves acknowledged that in retrospect, many artifacts are likely to have been forcefully taken from Egypt. This viewpoint is perhaps a reflection of cultural colonialism in the present day, as it deems opposing arguments to the legal status of these objects as invalid. Post-colonial debates on the ownership of cultural heritage and the colonial backdrop of many museum collections worldwide can be responded to from many different viewpoints, as seen in the theoretical framework of this study and discussed in the interviews with two museum curators. As a result, a significant range of solutions for issues of ownership have emerged. However, a more diplomatic and feasible approach still has not been reached, as in order to do so, there is the growing need for a more extensive dialogue

between Egypt and Western institutions. While the complete return of all Ancient Egyptian artifacts in Western museums to Egypt is likely to never occur, as there also has not been a particular demand from Egypt for this, there is still room for improvement in the manner how Western museums such as the Allard Pierson and the National Museum of Antiquities address Egypt's colonial past and its relationship with their collections. Thus, in the same manner as these museums have embraced the duty to accurately present Ancient Egypt to European audiences, they should also place more importance in shedding light on the colonial past of the majority of their artifacts on display in order to present the public with a more nuanced and less Orientalized discourses.

It can be concluded that the biggest difference in the conduct of archaeological museums in contemporary times in contrast to museums in the 19th and early 20th centuries is the presence of strict, international legislation which regulates excavations and acquisitions. This is not emphasized to the audiences who visit the exhibitions; in the case of the museums analyzed in this study, their acquisition history and details were only disclosed while in conversation with their respective head curators for Ancient Egypt. In reality, archaeological museums face the issue of having static collections, as there is a limited number of original artifacts available and they are no longer allowed to export any material from Egypt. Due to the UNESCO *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* (1970), museums no longer have the power to acquire excavated objects nor to conduct field research without close supervision by Egyptian authorities. A direct result of this is the limitation faced by curators of museums such as the Allard Pierson and the National Museum of Antiquities in assembling a new display based on the museum's existing collections, which are relatively smaller than the world renowned Egyptian collections from the British Museum, the Berlin Museum, and the Louvre. However, on the other hand, regulations such as the 1970 UNESCO Convention have been responsible for restoring Egypt's grasp upon its own cultural heritage, while helping to combat the illicit trade of antiques, an issue which is still present in the region.

Riggs' response to this matter brings out an interesting argument for the subject of contemporary cultural colonialism in Western museums. She states that "the assertion that antiquities in Egypt belong to a 'global' heritage is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, foreign interest leads to foreign investment, but on the other, colonial legacies leave neo-colonial hangovers." (2013: 80) This point was evident when interviewing the curators of the collections analyzed in this study, whom expressed a dissatisfaction with the current system in Egypt which has turned conducting excavations in archaeological sites a bureaucratic and costly affair, while collaborations with Egyptian museums and curators are nearly impossible with the

budget available for Western museums to loan any pieces for exhibitions. However, they also acknowledged Egypt's right to handle its own cultural heritage on their own terms, as there is a high degree of sensitivity surrounding the fact that European museums are still to this day in possession of high-profile Ancient Egyptian artifacts. The current legislation and demands imposed by the Egyptian government can therefore be labeled as what Riggs (2013) describes as "neo-colonial hangovers", as re-claiming a nation's cultural heritage is an effective tool for re-building its identity and fully departing from colonial legacies.

In the 19th century at the height of the British and French colonial enterprises, the sense of entitlement over Egypt's antiques was justified by Europe's interest and means to explore, study, and display these artifacts, in opposition to the Ottoman disregard for Ancient Egyptian cultural heritage. It can be stated that to the present day there is still a sense of entitlement of Western museums and cultural organizations over the ownership and conservation of these artifacts. Whereas this attitude in the past can be seen as a stance of cultural colonialism, nowadays it is seen as a relevant point for discussion and consideration, as the discourse advocating this viewpoint has been shaped by the political unrest in contemporary Egypt, which has taken great proportions as seen in the Revolution of 2011. In the aftermath of the outbreak of the Revolution, some of Egypt's largest excavation sites were plundered, many of its museums were broken into and saw their objects destroyed or looted, in addition to a large sum of antiques being lost to private transactions in the black market (Riggs, 2013). Both curators interviewed for this study expressed their deep concern regarding this matter, as they stress that Egypt at the time does not have the financial means nor a stable political scenario to effectively protect its cultural heritage. Thus, the current reality validates arguments which have their origins in cultural colonialism theories, which basically state that the West can provide better for Ancient Egyptian antiquities, while their nation of origin seems to not have yet reached its full potential for extinguishing such crimes. On the other hand, it can be argued that further involvement of the West in affairs in the region can lead to more negative consequences and might have impacts of larger and lengthier proportions. Therefore, given the current situation in Egypt, the treaties which museums must abide to, and the current distribution of Ancient Egyptian artifacts amongst museums both in the West and Egypt, it is possible to affirm that cultural colonialism will always be present to some degree, while discussions aimed at minimizing it or coming to different terms have been gaining momentum as pressing debates worldwide which touch upon highly delicate and complex topics.

7. Discussion

The findings of this study are useful in providing a critical overview of the two major Ancient Egyptian collection in the Netherlands, analyzing the extent to which they might be rooted in European colonial discourses and their subsequent gaze over the Orient. This is reflected both in the manner how they were acquired in the past and are displayed in contemporary times. In addition, this research provides readers with an original analysis, as study of Ancient Egyptian collections in the Netherlands under a post-colonial framework has not been conducted before. Another relevant aspect of this research is that it provides a nuanced perspective on controversial issues concerning the ownership of cultural property, such as repatriation debates, the colonial backdrop of many museum acquisitions, and the manner how contemporary museums and their curators address topics such as cultural colonialism and Orientalism via their Ancient Egyptian displays.

There are several key points in the findings of this study which allow for a greater understanding of how Ancient Egypt is portrayed by the National Museum of Antiquities and the Allard Pierson Museum. First, the image reinforced by these exhibitions is that Ancient Egypt was a progressive, yet mythical society. This allows for several parallels to be drawn between Ancient Egypt and Classical Europe in the West, while there is a remaining Orientalized gaze towards Egypt in order to maintain an exotic allure that proves to be highly attractive to Western audiences. However, as this approach makes Ancient Egypt more in line with European timelines and civilizations, it also widens the gap between the image the audience might have between Egyptian society and culture in antiquity and in modern times. A second important factor is that contemporary curators are faced with demands for higher sensitivity in their practice. In a globalized society with ever-changing paradigms and different perspectives to be taken into account, factors such as the audience's feelings, background, and societal context must always be considered and taken seriously. Another important factor to note is that the gaze upon which current representations of Ancient Egypt are based is not a recent construction, as it has its roots in colonial discourses which were dominant in time of establishment of these museums. As a result, images produced by this gaze are still present in the conceptions the public has of Ancient Egypt, which explains expectations of encountering some stereotypes through the objects on display. However, the current ties between this gaze and a colonial agenda are faint, as museums have adopted a didactic rather than political standpoint in post-colonial times. Lastly, another key point in the findings is that current cooperation and dialogue between Western and Egyptian cultural institutions has been strained due to legislation and bureaucratic procedures established by Egyptian authorities. Thus, as a

result, temporary loans and exhibitions, as well as collaboration between Western and Egyptian curators and museum specialists are rare. Thus, it can be argue that this current situation poses an additional obstacle to a more nuanced and inclusive representation of the "other" in exhibitions concerning Ancient Egypt.

Some limitations for this study consisted of factors such as time and funding, which required the research to be done only in the Netherlands and during a fixed period of approximately five months. In addition, there is a limited amount of data available for this topic, especially in English. All of the exhibition catalogues and museum documents were available only in Dutch, which in turn resulted in their exclusion from the study as sources of data. Another important note is that the Netherlands only has two archaeological museums with Ancient Egyptian departments, therefore as a result of this, this study could only be conducted in two locations, namely the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden and the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam.

Further research concerning the topic of this thesis can encompass more museums in other geographical locations, such as the British Museum in London, the Louvre Museum in Paris, and the Egyptian Museum in Berlin. By conducting the same research in these museums, a larger picture could be drawn in which there would be more solid conclusions and correlations to the theoretical framework of this study. Furthermore, this study could also be conducted in archaeological museums located in Egypt in order to pinpoint similarities and differences with European museology and curatorship, especially in regards to how Egypt's colonial past is addressed by these exhibitions.

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Appendix A - Observation Report

Leiden Museum of Antiquities - Ancient Egyptian Permanent Collection

20.03.2018

General striking features:

- At the main hall by the entrance of the museum there is an Ancient Egyptian temple in which visitors can walk into. The good condition of the monument and its display raise questions on whether it is a replica or if it is real. In addition, there is no information (ex: captions) accompanying the temple.

- Most captions and content are written in Dutch only and there are no brochures available with background information about the collection. However, each artifact contains a caption next to it following the same format.

- The largest part of the collection has its origins in the region of Saqqara, where burial grounds and temples were excavated in the 19th century.

- Other cultures/ethnic/religious groups in Egypt are presented under the section titled "Inspiration", along with a small section on Napoleonic Egypt, Egyptology, and Egyptomania. Islamic and Byzantine Egypt are almost never mentioned and not represented by any of the objects.

1) Time periods of collection

- Early Egyptian civilization (around 6000 b.C.)

- Old Kingdom (3rd-6th Dynasties)

- Middle Kingdom (11-12th Dynasties)

- New Kingdom (18th-20th Dynasties)

- Intermediate Periods: 10 following dynasties by foreign rulers; no unification

- Greco-Roman Era: 2nd Century - 639 AD (Arab Invasion)

2) Materials of objects

- Sculptures: limestone, granite, marble

- Documents/pieces of writing: papyrus

- Jewelry in gold, eggshells, and various stones

- Daily life artifacts in clay, wood, stone, bone, terracotta, and iron

- Sarcophaguses in wood and limestone

- Mummified human and animal bodies in various states of preservation/decay

3) Division of thematic sections and sub-sections

- Sculpture
- Saqqara Tombs
- Mortuary Temples for the Elite
- Funerary Sculptures
- Jewelry

b. Inspiration

- The Nubian Kingdom: Kings and Burial Grounds
- Christian Egypt
- Daily Life in Late Antiquity (395-639 AD): Coptic-Greek civilization
- Monastic Life
- New writing systems: Latin, Greek, Coptic
- Ptolemaic Scholarship
- Egyptology
- Egyptomania
- Origins of the Museum Collection

c. The Afterlife

- Animal and human mummies
- Mummification throughout the periods (Pharaonic, Christian, Coptic, Greco-Roman)
- Funerary rituals
- Funerary utensils

d. Religion

- Polytheism in the Pharaonic Period
- Greco-Roman Gods
- Roman & Coptic Christianity

e. Egyptian Civilization

- Early Nile Settlements

- Military

- Foreign Kings

- Beauty and cosmetics

- Music and furniture

4) Provenance of objects:

- Collection of Jean Baptiste de Lescluze (acquired in 1826-1828)

- Collection of Maria Cimba (acquired in 1827)

- Collection of Giovanni d'Anastasi (acquired in 1828)

- Funerary Temple from Saqqara: gift from Egypt to the Netherlands in 1904

- Nubian Temple of Taffeh: gift from Egypt to the Netherlands for archaeological efforts in Abu Simbel

5) Exhibition Layout

- No cohesive timeline throughout the exhibition space: most objects are grouped by themes related to their function rather than by time period

- Each thematic section is located in a different room

- The most prominent objects are the sarcophaguses and mummies and the two temples, mostly due to their size than to the content displayed alongside with each of the items

- Constant references to the Greco-Roman period are made and nearly half of the collection is from that period and aesthetics. Confusing and often non-existent distinction between Coptic and Roman Christian objects.

- Smaller or more mundane objects tend to have their individuality lost due to crowded displays with very little information about their function and history

- Very scarce information on the discipline of archaeology, excavations in Egypt, and the period in which most of the collection was acquired. The only reference to Europeans in Egypt refers only to the period of Napoleon's exploration of Egypt

6) Additional material (i.e. brochures, captions, visual tools, etc.)

- All object captions are written in Dutch and follow the same format: title of object, material, time period, location of excavation, provenance & acquisition date, map outline indicating object's original location

- Each section and subsection contains a brief text with background information about that particular theme written in Dutch and English

- There are no brochures, catalogues, or publications in sight

- There's no general timeline on display with specific dates and dynasty/time period's names

Theoretical Concept 1 - Representing the "other"

Topic	Findings	Examples
Chronological period	• Early Nile Civilizations (6000 b.C.) - Arab Invasion (639 AD) • Objects on display fit within that time frame • The exhibition follows and refers to this timeline	Exhibition timeline: 1. Early Egyptian civilization (6000 b.C.) 2. Old Kingdom (3rd-6th Dynasties) 3. Middle Kingdom (11-12th Dynasties) 4. New Kingdom (18th-20th Dynasties) 5. Intermediate Periods: 10 following dynasties by foreign rulers; no unification 6. Greco-Roman Era: 2nd Century - 639 AD
Thematic sections	• The Afterlife as the most important concept • Objects are related to funerary practices • Gods and religious practices are related to death and/or the afterlife • Original locations of objects were tombs and burial grounds • Information about daily life in Ancient Egypt is focused mainly on funerary rituals	• Temple of Taffeh (25 b.C.) to worship Osiris (god of the underworld and death), Isis (goddess of love and fertility) and Horus (god of heaven) • Mausoleum from Saqqara • Funerary sculptures of elite couple Maya and Merit (1335-1310 b.C.) • 279 large gravestones, sculptures, religious papyruses, and daily life objects from the Saqqara tombs • 1597 small objects and fragments from Nubian burial grounds
Stereotypes of Ancient Egypt	• Mummies comprise most of the collection • Emphasis on mummification procedures and/or objects • Mummification throughout periods/societies: Pharaonic, Christian, Coptic, Greco-Roman	• 6 animal mummies: 2 crocodiles, 2 snakes, 1 beaver, 1 falcon • 395 objects related to mummification; includes human mummies, coffins, and Books of the Dead • Mummification procedure is explained in detail by various objects, captions, and side information

		• Other inventions/ technologies originated in Ancient Egypt are not addressed

Theoretical Concept 2 - Conflicting Narratives

Topic	Findings	Examples
Ethnic and religious groups	• Little or no representation of Byzantine (4th century - 639 AD) or Islamic Egypt (639 AD-present) • Little or no information about Ancient Egyptian ethnic and/or religious minorities • Ancient Egyptian societies are portrayed as a cohesive whole • If represented, only the contrasting aspects of these groups are shown • Individual cultural aspects of these groups are overpowered and/or assimilated	• Greco-Roman Egypt has its own section and has 102 objects including sculptures, papyruses, stellaes, and daily life utensils • 34 small objects and fragments from Christian Copts and Byzantines • Nubian, Coptic-Greek, Byzantine and Christian objects are all located in a small section titled "Inspiration", alongside with a few European-made objects from the 18-20th centuries • The "Religion" section concerns only Pharaonic polytheism, Greco-Roman gods, and Christianity • Documents in writing systems other than hieroglyphs (Greek, Coptic, Latin) are displayed in the "Inspiration" section • The "foreign kings" segment in the "Egyptian Civilization" section only concerns Greek or Roman rulers
Contextualization of objects	• Only prominent pieces are accompanied by some background information • Objects are grouped in a systematic order • Information alongside objects addresses "what" but not "why" or "how" questions	• All captions follow the same format: title, material, date, location of excavation, provenance and acquisition date • Objects are sorted according to function rather than in a timeline • Interactive displays only concern mummification • Longer captions or pieces of information concern highlighted pieces only and

		each of the thematic sections of the exhibition

Theoretical Concept 3 - Cultural colonialism in the museum

Topic	Findings	Examples
Colonialism	• European presence in Egypt as a positive scientific/academic endeavor • Word "colonialism" is never used in exhibition texts • Underlying messages of European entitlement over Ancient Egyptian heritage	• "Inspirations" section refers only to the period of Napoleon's exploration of Egypt • Very scarce information on the discipline of archaeology, excavations in Egypt, and the period in which most of the collection was acquired • Egyptology, Egyptomania, and Archaeology are presented in a general form through a few small objects • 34 drawings and engravings of Egypt in the 19th century

Appendix B - Observation Report

Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam - Ancient Egyptian Permanent Collection

21.03.2018

General Striking Features:

- Not all additional information accompanying items are translated to English. However, all object captions are in English and Dutch

- The museum makes use of various interactive, digital tools and devices for some parts of its collection

- The museum devotes an entire small section to the European presence in Egypt, especially highlighting its impact on popular history and culture

- The museum does not have an extensive collection of mummies and sarcophaguses, rather focusing on smaller items such as pottery and decorative objects

- The museum takes a stand on the provenance of its objects, devoting an entire section of its building to informing visitors about the origins of its collection (mainly on from who they were acquired)

Time periods of collection

1. Early Dynastic Time (3000-2650 BC)

2. Old Kingdom (2650-2200 BC)

3. 1st Intermediate Period (2200-2000 BC)

4. Middle Kingdom (2000-1800 BC)

5. 2nd Intermediate Period (1800-1550 BC)

6. New Kingdom (1550-1100 BC)

7. 3rd Split Time (1100-650 BC)

8. Late Time (650-332 BC)

9. Greco-Roman times (332 BC - 639 AD)

10. Egypt during European rule (18th-20th century)

Materials of objects

- Sculptures: limestone, granite, marble

- Documents/pieces of writing: papyrus or textiles

- Clothing in linen and/or wool

- Jewelry in gold, eggshells, ruby, sapphire, jade, and lapis-lazuli

- Daily life artifacts in clay, wood, stone, bone, terracotta, and iron

- Sarcophaguses in wood and limestone

- 19th-20th century brochures in paper, photographs, newspapers, souvenirs and replicas in wood and steel

- Mummified human and animal bodies in various states of preservation/decay

Division of thematic sections & sub-sections

Daily Life in Egypt (objects from all periods)

- Various small tools for agriculture

- Pottery (entire pieces and fragments)

- Coins

- Two miniature models of a typical city

- Various fragments of household items

- Engraved stones

Pharaonic Egypt

- The Afterlife

- Funerary vases in stone or clay

- The Book of the Dead in preserved papyrus

- Stones, sculptures, and objects engraved with funerary prayers and rituals

- Life-sized reconstructed grave

Mummification

- Sarcophaguses in stone or wood

- Mummification tools in iron or wood

- Animal and human mummies

Grave gifts

- Furniture

- Clothing

- Jewelry

- Weapons

- Figurines of the deceased

Gods & Temples

- One miniature model of a typical temple

- Sculptures of various gods & goddesses

- Engraved stones from temples

Greco-Roman Egypt

- Military

- Spears, helmets, and shields

- Engraved utensils and tools

Religion

- Sculptures depicting gods & goddesses

- Pottery

- Engraved temple stones

- Scriptures and religious documents

- Clothing

Mummification

- Mummy portraits

- Coffins & sarcophaguses

- Human mummies

Arts & Culture

- Pottery

- Sculpture

- Clothing

- Jewelry

- Daily life objects

Coptic Religion in Egypt (from 452 AD)

- Coptic bible fragments and scriptures in papyrus or textile

- Coptic art (calligraphy and portraits with symbolic motifs) in wood, textiles, and stone

- Coptic clothing (robes and headpieces)

<u>European Presence in Egypt</u>

The Napoleonic period: Illustrations, books and reports

The British Mandate

- Illustrations/scriptures from books and reports

- Victorian photographs

The Petrie Collection

- Archaeological methods

- Realized excavations

- Reports and manuscripts

Egyptology & Egyptomania: Illustrations, books, souvenirs, film posters

<u>Provenance of objects</u>

- Collection of Constant Willem Lunsingh Scheurleer (sold to the museum after the Great Depression)

- Greco-Roman period items: collection of Friedrich Wilhelm Freiherr von Bissing (primarily sold to Scheurleer)

- Archaeological finds by Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie (distributed to various collectors and later acquired by the museum)

<u>Exhibition layout</u>

- The exhibition starts with objects from the Pharaonic period in the subjects of mummification and funerary rituals

- Each of the rooms is dedicated to a particular time period and divided into individual topics, following a linear narrative

- At the end of the exhibition there is a general timeline with all of Egypt's time periods and their respective dynasties/ rulers

- Object captions follow the same format: title, material, original geographical location (if known), time period, inventory number

- Prominently displayed items: mummy portrait of a girl, sarcophagus of an elite woman, Book of the Dead of Sema-Tawy, sarcophagus from Theuris, cup of Thutmosis III, basalt stone sarcophagus, Saqqara grave wall, sham door of Anchef

Additional material (i.e. brochures, captions, visual tools, etc.)

- There are no brochures on the Egyptian collection

- Each object on display is captioned accordingly

- Each section contains an introduction text and sometimes additional information on a highlighted item or theme

- Each section counts with a digital/ interactive panel with information such as maps and illustrations

- Replicas of locations, buildings, and graves illustrate the context in which some of the objects were used

Theoretical Concept 1 - Representing the "other"

Topic	Findings	Examples
Chronological period	- Objects on display belong to that particular time span - Ancient Egypt consists of Pre-Dynastic times (3000 b.C.) until 639 AD - Modern Egypt (19th-20th centuries) has a small section of its own	Collection timeline: 1. Early Dynastic Time (3000-2650 BC) 2. Old Kingdom (2650-2200 BC) 3. 1st Intermediate Period (2200-2000 BC) 4. Middle Kingdom (2000-1800 BC) 5. 2nd Intermediate Period (1800-1550 BC) 6. New Kingdom (1550-1100 BC) 7. 3rd Split Time (1100-650 BC) 8. Late Time (650-332 BC) 9. Greco-Roman times (332 BC - 639 AD) 10. Egypt during European rule (18th-20th century)
Daily life and society	- Objects from different members and classes of society - Sections on the afterlife and daily life are split but highly related - Ancient Egypt is portrayed as a sophisticated and progressive civilization	- Decorative objects, jewelry, and sculptures from tombs - Agricultural tools, utensils, and papyruses from the working classes - Sarcophaguses and mummies of high-ranking officials and elite members

Theoretical Concept 2 - Conflicting Narratives

Topic	Findings	Examples
Thematic sections	- The Greco-Roman period is the most represented - Emphasis on cultural hybridity between Greco-Roman Egypt	- The Greco-Roman section is divided into a) Military, b) Religion, c) Mummification, d) Arts & Culture - Many of the collection's highlights are concentrated in this section: "Mummy Portrait of a Girl" 50-75 AD, "Sarcophagus from an Elite

		Woman" 2 AD, "Book of the Dead of Sema Tawy" 1 AD, and "Sarcophagus of Theuris" 2 AD,
	and Mediterranean Europe • Addresses intellectual, military, and cultural aspects	• 7 Greco-Roman mummy fragments and mummy portraits • 23 tomb treasures (jewelry, sculpture, daily life utensils)
Contextualization of objects	Information is given through object captions, additional texts, and digital tools	• Object captions follow the same format: title, material, original geographical location (if known), time period, inventory number • Each section contains an introduction text and sometimes additional information on a highlighted item or theme • Each section counts with a digital/ interactive panel with information such as maps and illustrations • 2 models of temples and 1 model of a grave illustrate the original location of some objects
Religious groups	• Religion as a changing aspect throughout different periods of Ancient Egypt • Different religious groups are presented • No mention of Islamic Egypt	Three major sections: • Pharaonic Egypt - polytheism and various objects from temples • Greco-Roman Egypt - overlapping gods, religious scriptures/artifacts/clothing • Coptic Egypt - scriptures, clothing, artifacts for rituals

Theoretical Concept 3 - Cultural colonialism in the museum

Topic	Findings	Examples
Colonialism	• Origins of Archaeology, Egyptology, and Egyptomania are highlighted as products of European contact with Egypt • Word "colonialism" is never mentioned in the exhibition texts • Highlights sources of European fascination with	The thematic section on Europe and Egypt is divided and displayed as the following: • The Napoleonic period: Illustrations, books and reports • The British Mandate Illustrations/scriptures from books and reports, Victorian photographs

	Egypt - mainly related to mummies and pyramids	• The Petrie Collection Archaeological methods, realized excavations reports and manuscripts • Egyptology & Egyptomania: Illustrations, books, souvenirs, film posters

Appendix E - Interview Guide

Name of the interviewee:
Function of interviewee:
Date and location of the interview:

1. In which areas and/or time period(s) of Ancient Egypt are you specialized in?

2. In the process between an archaeological excavation and the final museum display, what are in your opinion the most important steps? How do you make the audience aware of these?

3. What are the main difficulties you usually face when cataloguing an artifact?

4. What is your process when describing artifacts' physical properties or attributes?

5. What message did you want museum visitors to take away from the permanent Egyptian exhibition?

6. What were the most important decisions you had to make while being the curator of the Egyptian department? (This can be in regards to the artifacts, the display, the information available, etc.)

7. What are the main challenges in showcasing Ancient Egyptian artifacts to a broader audience?

8. Do you believe that the audience might first come to the museum with a stereotyped vision of Ancient Egypt? If yes, do you consider this to be problematic? How do you as a curator avoid supporting some of these views?

9. Does the exhibition follow a particular narrative? If so, how would you characterize it?

10. Some particular time periods and types of objects from Ancient Egypt seem to have a larger representation in the museum's collection. How would you justify this choice?

11. How often is the display of the collection changed? And on basis on which elements (ex: new discoveries, borrowed items, etc.) does this change occur?

12. How do you decide as a curator which objects shall be put on display at the museum?

13. Do you believe in incorporating new technologies and interactive tools in the exhibition? If so, can you think of any benefits of this? Could you give me a particular example from the Egyptian department at the museum?

14. What do you believe has made Ancient Egypt a source of fascination to the public for many centuries now?

15. In your opinion, in theory and practice, what are the main differences between Egyptology today and when it became a discipline of its own in the 19th century?

16. Given the colonial backdrop in which many excavations in Egypt took place, do you believe that this particular time context has affected how museums display and contextualize Ancient Egyptian artifacts? How so?

17. Has any of the items in this collection ever faced restitution claims? If so, how was that handled by the museum?

18. Do you ever work in partnership with Egyptian institutions? If so, which ones and for what purposes?

19. Have you ever collaborated with Egyptian curators? If so, for which exhibitions and/or assignments?

20. Are you working at the moment on any particular excavations and/or projects for the museum's Egyptian department? Could you maybe tell me a bit about it?

Appendix H - Collection Highlights, The National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden
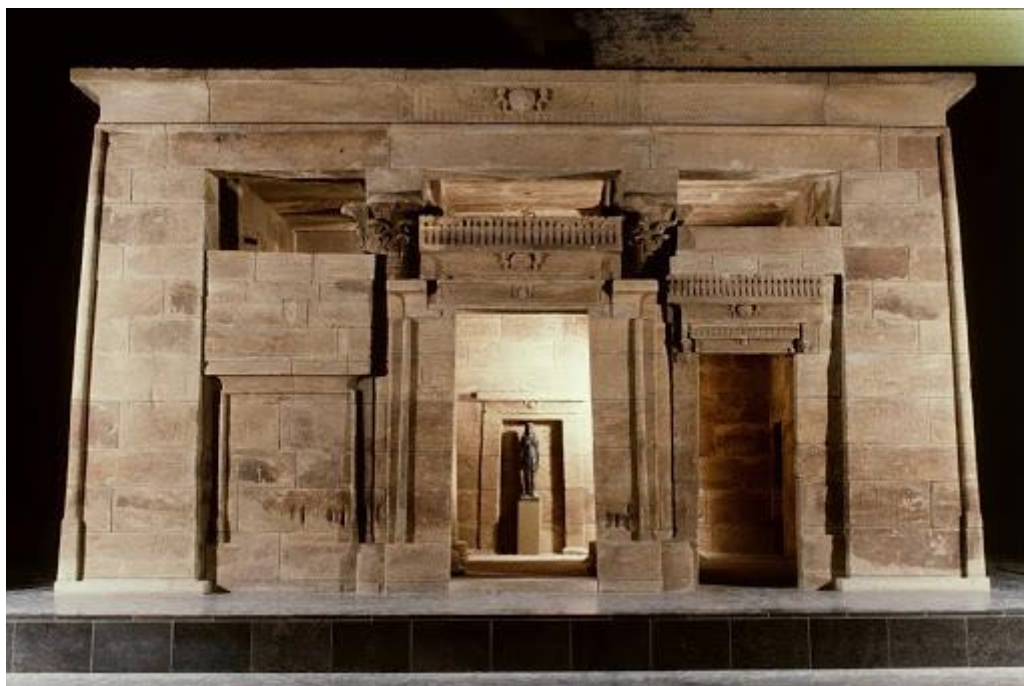

Figure 1 - Temple of Taffeh, 25 b.C., limestone, 450x825x630 cm.
© National Museum of Antiquities

Figure 2 - Wine Bowl with Female Lute Player, 1400-1300 b.C., faience, 4.5 x 14 cm.
© National Museum of Antiquities

Figure 3- Statue of a Scribe, 2465-2323 b.C., granite, 32 x 20 x 21.5 cm.
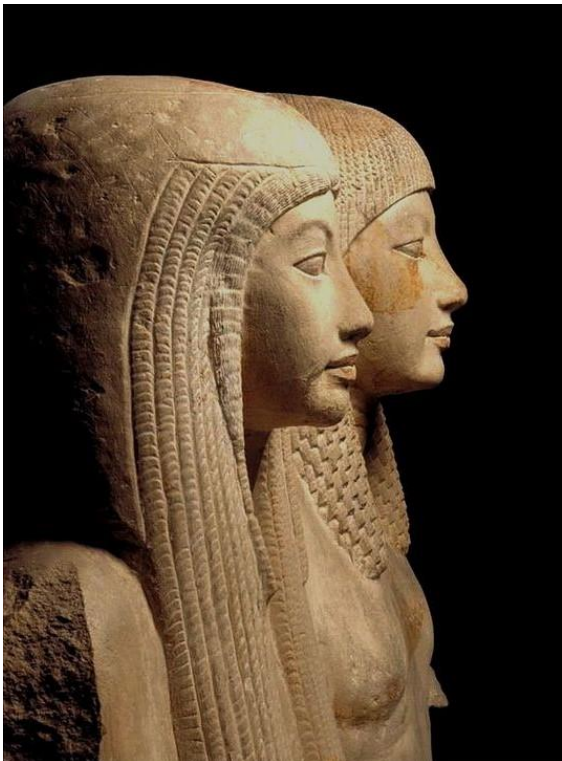© National Museum of Antiquities

Figure 4 - Statue of Maya and Merit, 1320 b.C., limestone, 158 x 90 x 120 cm ; c. 1000 kg.
© National Museum of Antiquities

Figure 5 - Coffin for the mummy of Peftjauneith, c. 650 b.C., wood, 36 x 63 x 240 cm.
© National Museum of Antiquities

Appendix I - Collection Highlights Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam

Figure 1 - Book of the Dead of Sema Tawy, 1 AD, papyrus.
© Allard Pierson Museum

Figure 2 - Ptah-Sokah-Osiris figurine, date unknown, wood.
© Allard Pierson Museum

Figure 3 - Mummy portrait of a girl, Greco-Roman Period, paint on wood.
© Allard Pierson Museum

Figure 4 - Lid of sarcophagus of a woman, 2 AD, painted wood.
© Allard Pierson Museum

Figure 5 - Sarcophagus of Teuris, date unknown, painted wood.
© Allard Pierson Museum