Egyptomania in the Renaissance
After the Crusades - the port of Alexandria was frequented by merchants from European states that bordered the Mediterranean.

1517 - Egypt lost its independence when Selim I invaded and annexed the country.

Signed a treaty allowing French and Catalan trade.

Extended religious protection - making travel in Egypt safe for Europeans.
Martin Baumgarten
German Knight - stricken with grief over the death of his wife, swore that he would visit Jerusalem.

Landed in Alexandria in 1507 - described Cleopatra’s Needle (which later ended up in Central Park)
Of it, he said that it is:

“full of figures of living creatures, and other things, which plainly show that the Egyptians of old made use of such instead of letters.”

The earliest assertion that hieroglyphics were alphabetic, and not symbolic.
Upon his visit to the pyramids at Giza, Baumgarten notes:

“...the reason why they were built so great, and so many hands employed, was that the people might have no time to conspire against the kings...but none of those kings who designed any of these pyramids for their sepulcher were buried in them for either the hardship that the people endured, or the tyranny and cruelty of the kings provoked their subjects to that degree, that their either tore their bodies to pieces, or threw them out of their monuments. For which reason they ultimately left special orders with some of their servants, to lay their bodies in some mean and obscure place, that they might thereby avoid the fury of the people.”
Dr. Pierre Belon
Primary interest was natural history - exhibited objectivity in describing the sites he witnessed.

He journeyed into the Great Pyramid, and remarked on “a vast tomb of black marble.”

His account of the Sphinx is one of the first made by a European after Muhammad Sa'im al-Dahr had it mutilated it in 1378.
Les observations de plusieurs singularitez et choses memorables trouvées en Grèce, Asie, Judée, Egypte, Arabie et autres pays étrangers (1553)
Mummies and 
Mommia
In the 16th and 17th centuries, mummy was one of the ordinary drugs found in all apothecary shops.

Its import was a regular trade in which speculators invested, tombs were searched, and mummies were pulverized.

Derived from a simple confusion on the part of European travelers and merchants
The word mummy is derived from the Persian word *mommia*, meaning bitumen or mineral pitch.

In the second volume of his Travels, Sir William Ousley wrote that:

“Mummy is a blackish bituminous matter which oozes from the rock, and is considered by the Persians as far more precious than gold, for it heals cuts and bruises, causes fractures to unite in a few minutes, and taken inwardly, is a sovereign remedy for many diseases.”
• Resemblance of the natural bitumen to the bitumen found in many of the Late Period mummies

• Contributed to the mistaken association with the mineral pitch that had, for many hundreds of years serviced as a medicinal substance throughout the Arab world.

• As early as the 10th century Arab doctors were describing the medicinal properties of natural bitumen.
The European desire for the substance created a thriving and amazingly well coordinated traffic in ancient human flesh.

Entire or fragmentary mummies were packaged in Cairo and Alexandria and exported throughout Europe.
On the European addiction with mummy, one Arab writer commented on:

“how people who had made a large pile of human corpses were discovered in Cairo. They were brought before the provost, who had them tortured until they confessed that they were removing the corpses from tombs and were boiling the dead bodies in water over a very hot fire until the flesh fell off that they then collected the oil which rose to the surface of the liquid to see it to the Franks, who paid 25 pieces of gold a hundredweight for it.”
In a book published in 1579, German traveler Johann Helferich recorded his endeavors to unearth mummies at Saqqara.

“It must be understood that the mummies are the dead bodies of heathens...they stay unchanged; they are quite black the limbs are carefully wrapped in small cloths soaked in costly balsam and thereafter the entire body is enclosed in a wide cloth and bound up just like little children...In some of them when they are unwrapped are found within the body little carved men or animals and such like fantasies. The Moors who live hereabouts seek such with great industry which they sell to the merchants in Cairo who intern resell them.”
This account contains two interesting facts:

1. Europeans belief that the ancient Egyptians were heathens and, therefore, fit to have their remains disposed of in any way deemed appropriate.

2. Helferich is the first to record the existence of an antiquities market dealing with objects other than mummies.
Collecting in the Age of Enlightenment & Exploration
In 1638, Ambassador du Houssay wrote to Cardinal Richelieu from Cairo saying that

“...[s]ince the most beautiful monuments of antiquity appear to have survived the perils of so many centuries solely to be judged worthy of a place in your Eminence’s libraries and cabinets, may I assure your Eminence that in order to procure for them so glorious a shelter, that I have already written throughout the Levant to impose the necessary orders in all places where there are Consuls of France that they seek with great care all such things as may be worthy of this honour”
The trade in antiquities, which began as a small-scale personal affaire expanded into a phenomenon of international significance.

In the wake of the Turkish annexation of Egypt, a new breed of visitor ventured into the Nile Valley.

The antiquarian, while interested in “intellectual enlightenment,” was primarily interested in Egyptian antiquities for capitalistic purposes.
New diplomats and transient visitors were led on the well-trodden tourist circuits of Giza, Alexandria, and Saqqara.

The antiquities dealers, both of Egyptian and European, were glad to supply visitors with amulets, scarabs, papyri, or even complete mummies in order to commemorate their “adventure.”
Diplomats were among this new breed of antiquarian.

**Benoit de Maillet** - French consul in Egypt from 1692 to 1708.

In one of his many letters, he reported that "there are still in Upper Egypt temples of which the blue or gilded vaultings are still as beautiful as if they had just been finished; there are idols of a prodigious size; columns without number."
Antiquities on a National Level
European countries were gradually forming their own national collections.

**British Museum** - established by an act of Parliament in 1756.

The core of the British Museum collection came from artifacts collected by Dr. Hans Sloane.

Museums were a source of great nation pride.
Why buy, when you can dig yourself?

Permits were obtained from Turkish authorities to clear entire tombs and excavate around temples for antiquities.

Created fierce rivalry for possession and profit.

Collectors, dealers, local authorities, and the Egyptian government all claimed their stake in a find of any substance.
Napoleon
French interest in the Nile had been on the increase since the 1770s.

Egypt had tremendous commercial potential & fear that British would annex the Nile Valley.

The Ottoman Empire (Istanbul) was growing weaker.

Other European countries were beginning, (by force or by treaty) to detach portions of the empire.
April 1798 - Napoleon is authorized to seize Malta and Egypt

May 1798 - sailed with a fleet of 328 ships and 38,000 soldiers.

His primary political concern was the construction of a canal at the isthmus of the Suez.

The military force was also accompanied by the members of a special Scientific and Artistic Commission hand selected by Napoleon himself.
Déscription de L’Égypt
Consisting of 167 scientists and technicians, the commission’s work culminated in the *Déscription de L’Égypte*.

The *Déscription de L’Égypte* was the most comprehensive treatise on the monuments and antiquities of Egypt.

Consisting of 24 volumes, published between 1809 and 1813.
The Rosetta Stone
Another outcome of the commission’s work was the discovery of the Rosetta Stone.

Discovered by French Army engineer Captain Pierre-François Bouchard in July 1799, while working at Fort Julien near the Egyptian port city of Rosetta.

At a meeting on July 19, 1799, the Rosetta Stone was described as “some inscriptions which may offer much interest.”
Jean François Champollion used the Rosetta Stone to unlock the mysteries of Hieroglyphics. Champollion discovered the key that allowed a pursuit previously restricted to the ultra rich to begin its transformation into an actual academic discipline.
GRAMMAIRE ÉGYPTIENNE,
OU PRINCIPES GÉNÉRAUX
DE L'ÉCRITURE SACRÉE ÉGYPTIENNE
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PAR CHAMPOLLION LE JEUNE;
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PARIS,
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RUE JACOB, N° 16.
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The Fall of Napoleon in Egypt
Admiral Nelson won his naval victory over the French on August 19th, 1798.

Napoleon fled Egypt, abandoning his troops.

Under a clause of the capitulation agreement, the British claimed all antiquities that the Scientific and Artistic Commission had accumulated during their travels.
The British chose to leave Egypt to the Turks rather than annex it outright.

The reins of power were handed back to the Ottoman Empire.

In 1805, Mohammed ‘Ali, a Macedonian orphan who had worked his way up in the Ottoman army, was named Pasha.
The Ottoman Empire was not interested in Egypt beyond its annual taxes

Ali, for all intents and purposes, became the independent ruler of Egypt - wanted to modernize.

Foreigners of all nationalities came to Egypt to develop factories, encourage industry, & design new irrigation schemes.
Egypt was falling deeper into debt to many prominent European nations - would never be able to extricate itself.

Those countries used their position as leverage to extort further antiquities out of Egypt.

Antiquities continued to be used in an international war of academic and museological prestige.
The End