

KEMET REPORT UPDATE #4: (March 6, 2011) Prof. Manu Ampim

Since January 25, 2011 we have witnessed the popular uprising of the Egyptian people to get rid of the entire Hosni Mubarak regime, which has ruled Egypt for 30 years. The major demonstrations in the cities of Alexandria, Suez, and Cairo, and the looting during the initial days of the uprising have caused much concern about the welfare of the people and the safety of the ancient African artifacts. Today the demonstrations are not as large and Mubarak himself is gone, but the protesters want a *total* regime change, so this situation is far from over as the activists and various groups, such as the Front to Defend Egyptian Protesters, , continue working towards their goals.

These are some of the developments from this past week:

1. UPDATE: On February 25th the tens of thousands gathered in Tahrir Square and demanding the resignation of the government headed by Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq has brought results.



On Thursday, March 3rd, Shafiq resigned and Egypt's military rulers appointed the first post-Hosni Mubarak prime minister, Essam Sharaf. Ahmed Shafiq was appointed to office by the former dictator Hosni Mubarak after he stepped down on February 11th and handed power to Shafiq and the Egyptian military. The military made the decision in an effort to appease the protesters who had threatened to renew the occupation of

Tahrir Square. Leaders of the popular uprising that forced Mubarak to resign had been pressing the military to fire Ahmed Shafiq, arguing that a prime minister appointed by the ousted Mubarak should not stay in office.

2.

3. On 3/31/11 Armed looters broke in to the Tel El-Dabaa antiquities warehouse on Thursday, stealing artifacts and breaking several pieces of the stored collection. Mohamed Abdel Maqsood, head of the Central Administration of Antiquities of Alexandria and Lower Egypt, said the warehouse was used to store artifacts found at Tel El-Dabaa's archaeological sites by Dutch and German excavation missions over the last 30 years. They include a collection of ancient Egyptian clay pots and amulets. Abdel Maqsood said that an inventory is now being carried out by Egyptian archaeologists to determine the number of missing objects and the cost. The Tourism and Antiquities Police is currently making investigations in an attempt to catch the thieves. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/9034.aspx>

3/30/11 Zahi Hawass, chief of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, announced that he had been re-appointed as Minister of Antiquities following a meeting with Prime Minister Essam Sharaf on Wednesday. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/8906.aspx>

Calls for protection of ancient Egyptian tomb site

Former Egyptian Minister of Antiquities, Hawass, calls on military and PM to defend antiquities, describing locals' encroachment on ancient tombs that UNESCO was appalled by in last week's visit


Nevine El-Aref, Tuesday 29 Mar 2011



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Following his short visit to Abusir and Saqqara necropolises, Zahi Hawass former minister of state for antiquities affairs launched an appeal asking field marshal Hussein Tantawi, head of the supreme council of army to stop all encroachment on Egypt's archaeological sites, which reached 500 encroachments during the past two months.

Abusir sits opposite to the famed city of Memphis on the river Nile just before the delta opens.

Hawass told Ahram Online that what shocked him the most during his visit to both necropolises was the damage inflicted on the archaeological sites by neighbour inhabitants since Egypt's January revolution.

Hawass was motivated by devotion and responsibility towards Egypt's heritage as an Egyptologist, even above his official role. He describes such encroachment as "a brutal crime" towards Egypt's heritage, which belongs to the whole world.

At Saqqara, villagers forcefully moved onto 15 acres next to the Pharaohs' Tomb (Mastaba el Pharaoun) and the pyramids of Pepi I and II. "I am sure that this area contains archaeological remains dating to the Old Kingdom, over 4,000 years ago," asserted Hawass. There, he went on, people constructed a large cemetery with about 500 huge tombs, about 4m high and 6x5m wide.

In Abusir, people encroached onto an area that contains tombs from the 1st and 2nd Dynasties. They took over 10 acres and built modern tombs above these ancient tombs. A mosque has been also built on a neighbouring area that contains the 5th Dynasty causeway of Djedkare-Isesi, South of Saqqara.

Hawass pointed out that all of these illegal structures were seen by the UNSECO delegation during their visit last week. They were really upset and asked for the immediate removal of these encroachments.

Yesterday, top officials at the ministry of state for antiquities affairs sent a similar petition to Prime Minister Essam Sharaf to remove the encroachment and stop any further encroachment on the archaeological site. They also asked him for an immediate appointment of an antiquities leader in order to resume the ministry's archaeological and administrative works.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/8857.aspx>

On 4/2/11 The first group of 190 Russian tourists arrived to Egypt's Sharm El-Sheikh on Saturday after Russia had declared on Friday lifting the travel ban on Egypt.

Russia, which provides Egypt with the largest number of tourists annually, has lifted a travel ban on Egypt put in place at the outset of the revolution.

Russia's ban was immensely significant for Egypt's tourism industry. The number of Russian tourists visiting Egypt in 2010 alone was estimated to be 2,855,723, accounting for 25,037,045 tourist nights and making it the number one country in providing Egypt with tourists.

Yousry Gamaleldin, head of Egypt's airport company, stressed the importance of Russian tourism to Egypt and estimated the inflow of tourists to Sharm El-Sheikh would go back to 50% within this month to how it was before the revolution

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/9108.aspx>

Hawass first took up the newly-created post in the cabinet when ex-president Hosni Mubarak installed him late in January.

After a number of artefacts had been declared missing in the wake of the 25 January revolution the Egyptian archaeologist had stepped down from his post.

4.

3. UPDATE: In the previous *Kemet Report* last week, I indicated that there were demonstrations in front of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) office of Zahi Hawass by unemployed archaeology graduates and SCA workers. The demonstrators accused Hawass of not providing jobs, paying low wages, for overseeing a "system of corruption," grandstanding in front of TV cameras, and claiming credit for the archaeological work of others. Hawass disagrees and says that he has raised salaries three times since he became head of the SCA in 2002. He also claims that, "Under my direction, the



SCA has always been an honest department.” He added, “I hope that I will keep my new position because I believe that the monuments and museums of Egypt need me.” Before leaving office, Hosni Mubarak appointed Zahi Hawass to a new position, Minister of Antiquities Affairs, and Hawass is seen as part of the old corrupt Mubarak regime. Hawass recently indicated that he wrote Egypt’s attorney general to ask him to look into what Hawass calls “false accusations” in order to address these issues and stabilize the Ministry of Antiquities Affairs. On his Facebook page, one of Hawass’ fans echoed the sentiment of some misinformed people when she wrote: “Dr Hawass why dont [sic] you run the country, [sic] Things would be better taken care of, just like you take care of their beautiful pieces of history. You have my vote” (2/24/11).

4. On February 21st, Hawass met a small group of young archaeology graduates who were representatives of the protesters that have been picketing the SCA/Minister of Antiquities Affairs building. Hawass makes questionable claims that defy logic when he says that these graduates “came to offer their apologies to me. The meeting was an impromptu event during which I was offered flowers by the students in a gesture of goodwill. The students made it clear that their protests were only held because previously there had been a lack of information” about the new Ministry, formerly the SCA. Hawass knows that the substantial criticisms against him involve far more than the students having a “lack of information.” To satisfy the students, Hawass indicated that he



has a plan with three phases of recruitment. The first phase would provide newly hired archaeologists and restorers paid training within the Ministry for 5 months. The second phase will provide the same paid training for 500 additional recruits, and in the third phase there will be 500 more graduates who will be hired and trained. However, this seems only a temporary fix to the unemployment problem, because as Hawass says earlier in the same statement, that there are not enough jobs and positions to hire all of the new archaeology graduates.

<http://www.drhawass.com/blog/uplifting-news>

The status of Egyptian antiquities today, 3 March, 2011

When the revolution began on January 25, 2011, and through its first week, there were only a few reports of looting: at Qantara East in the Sinai, and at the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. However, since Mubarak's resignation, looting has increased all over the country, and our antiquities are in grave danger from criminals trying to take advantage of the current situation.

The Egyptian Museum, Cairo

On Saturday, 29 January, I entered the museum the morning after the break-in and I could see through the museum’s monitor, objects were broken and thrown all over the galleries. However, all of the masterpieces seemed to be present. At first glance, it did not seem that objects were missing and I announced that the museum was safe.

After our preliminary inventory, we discovered that eighteen items were missing. Thankfully four of these items have already been recovered. The Heart Scarab of Yuya and the body of the goddess from the statue of Menkaret carrying Tutankhamun were both found on the west

side of the museum near the new gift shop, and one of the missing shabtis of Yuya was discovered under a showcase inside of the museum. The statue of Akhenaten as an offering bearer was discovered by a young protester near the southern wall of the museum in Tahrir Square. His family immediately contacted the Ministry of State for Antiquities to arrange the statue's return to the museum. I am now waiting for the Registration, Collections Management and Documentation Department to complete its final report on what else, if anything, is missing from the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. The General Director of the museum has told me that this report will be completed by Sunday.

Storage magazines in Egypt

Many storage magazines have suffered break-ins; sites from all over Egypt have suffered at the hands of criminals.

- At Qantara East, in the Sinai, looters broke into the magazine and stole several boxes of objects. Fortunately, to date 292 items have been returned.
- Criminals attacked Saqqara several times about ten days ago. The padlocks of many tombs were opened.
- The magazine of Metropolitan Museum of Art's expedition in Dahshur, known as De Morgan, was attacked twice; looters were able to overpower and tie up the guards.
- In Abusir, looters broke into the magazine of a Czech expedition.
- In Giza, on March 1, 2011, criminals broke into the Selim Hassan magazine. These looters were carrying guns and the unarmed site guards quickly surrendered for fear of their lives.
- Magazines in Tell el-Basta and Wadi el-Feiran, near Sharm el-Sheikh, were also subject to breaking and entering.

Site inspectors at each of these locations are still carefully checking the magazine inventories against their databases to assess the full extent of the damage. I am waiting for the inspectors to finish their work and file their final reports with me.

Pharaonic sites

Several pharaonic sites have been subjected to vandalism and looting.



Statue of Ramesses II in Aswan.

- The tomb of Ken-Amun in Tell el-Maskhuta, near Ismailia, was completely destroyed. It is the only known 19th Dynasty tomb in Lower Egypt.
- At Giza, near the Great Sphinx, the looters broke into the tomb of Impy. Vandals also attempted to destroy other buildings and tombs in Giza, but they were unsuccessful.
- In Saqqara, inscribed blocks and parts of the false door were stolen from the tomb of Hetepka.
- Inscribed blocks were also taken from the tomb of Ptahshepses in Abusir.
- The guards of sites in Nekhen, north of Edfu, caught several thieves.
- In Aswan, looters attempted to steal a statue of Ramesses II, but archaeologists and guards at the site apprehended them.
- A site in Northern Sinai was destroyed when looters arrived with a loader.
- Looters have attacked Abydos nearly every night; illegal excavations and trenches, some as deep as five meters, have damaged the site.
- Reports of illegal construction have been reported near the pyramid of Merenre and the Mastaba Fara'un, near Saqqara.

Many sites, including Alexandria, Ismailia, Saqqara, Behaira, Sharqia, Abusir and Dahshur, have reported illegal excavations, some of which have taken place at night.

Islamic Monuments

Islamic monuments have also suffered during this crisis.

- The police station of el-Gamalia was set on fire; this station ensured that no cars drove on al-Muizz Street. This street was recently restored at a cost of one billion Egyptian pounds. Without the police presence, cars have already returned to al-Muizz Street.
- In Tanta, the Sabeel of Ali Bey Al-Kabir, was broken into and three windows of *Msavat* metal framework, furniture and the modern iron gate were stolen. Some pieces of the window were found in the possession of street merchants.
- Near Alexandria, Kom el Nadoura suffered some damage to its doors and furniture.
- At Wekhalit el Jeddawi, in Esna, the local people broke in, changed the locks and are protesting in front of the *wekhalit*.
- Khan el-Zeraksha, a recently restored group of villas, was broken into by about 50 armed thugs, who forced the security team to leave. The criminals are still occupying the site.
- On Monday, February 14, a group broke the door to Wekhalit el Haramin, at Hussein, which falls under the Egyptian Awqaf Authority. The Egyptian army and the Awqaf Authority worked together and had the thugs out by Tuesday, however.

Despite all of the damage and looting that has occurred, I am happy to report that all of the Jewish synagogues and all of the Christian churches and monasteries have remained safe and undamaged.

The antiquities guards and security forces at sites are unarmed and this makes them easy targets for armed looters. The guards and security forces are therefore forced to comply with the criminals' demands. In addition, the Egyptian police force does not have the capacity to protect every single site, monument and museum in Egypt. The situation looks very difficult today and we are trying our best to ensure the police and army restore full protection to the cultural heritage of the country.

5. The tourist industry is still slow to recover from the Egyptian uprising. For example, the Cairo Museum on its second day of opening, February 21st, had only 107 foreigners and 2770 Egyptian visitors.



However, on February 22nd the site of Abu Simbel is reported by *Ahram Online* to have received about 1000 visitors to see the amazing event of the sun shining 180 feet back into the inner sanctuary inside the Ramses II temple. This is a rare astronomical event which occurs only twice a year, on February 22nd and

October 22nd of every year. The ancient African astronomers oriented the temple whereby this phenomena previously occurred on February 21 and October 21, but because the temple was dismantled and rebuilt on higher ground in the 1960s to keep it safe from the rising waters of Lake Nasser, this caused the phenomena to occur one day later. The sun shines into the inner sanctuary just after 6:00 AM and lasts for about 21 minutes.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/6203.aspx>

6. UPDATE: After the January 28th break-in at the Cairo Museum, where at least 70 artifacts were broken, 2 mummies damaged, and 18 artifacts stolen, the press was eager to visit the museum and view the vandalism first hand. Some of these items have now been recovered or restored. Here are images from the Cairo Museum February 16th press tour, which was escorted by the Egyptian military. The museum reopened for the public on February 20th.



One of the 11 stolen ushabti figures of Yuya was found.



The statue of King Akhenaten holding an offering table was returned but the broken off table has to be restored.



The Cairo Museum looters broke this Tutankhamen image on a papyrus boat. While the boat was left on the museum floor, the upper torso of King Tut remains missing.



7. OTHER LOCATIONS: The Step Pyramid, the oldest stone building in the world, will undergo a

.
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"Vanishing Evidence" Part I

http://manuampim.com/Part_I.htm

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