

KEMET REPORT UPDATE #2: (February 20, 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. The large demonstrations have mainly stopped and Mubarak himself is gone, but the protesters want a *total* regime change, so this situation is far from over.

These are some of the developments from this past week:

1. In a recent *The New Yorker* article, “Speaking with the Sphinx” (2/18/2011), Jenna Krajeski indicates the reasons why Dr. Zahi Hawass, Minister of Antiquities Affairs, draws so much public scorn. The title of Krajeski’s article refers both to her conversation with the self-absorbed Hawass and his statement on his blog that he looked into the eyes of the Sphinx (Heru-em-akhet) and imagined that he saw tears because the statue is sad about the billions of dollars that Egyptian tourism will lose.



<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2011/02/speaking-with-the-sphinx.html>

2. On Friday, January 28th, looters broke into the Cairo Museum and damaged 70 artifacts and two non-royal mummies from the Late Period. Restorers have now repaired 25 of these 70 items found damaged inside the museum after looters left them. Exactly how and where the break-in occurred is under suspicion because Zahi Hawass and Tarek El-Awady, Director-General of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, have given contradictory statements about these matters and also about what was stolen and damaged. For example, Al Jazeera video footage clearly shows an artifact on the floor that El-Awady claimed is “stolen.” Also, some argue that the break-in was an inside job, but Hawass denies this allegation because the most important artifacts were not stolen.

3. In the January 28th break-in, the Cairo Museum looters stole at least 18 artifacts. Zahi Hawass first stated that *nothing* was stolen, and then soon after Hosni Mubarak stepped down Hawass changed and said that 18 items were stolen. However, three small artifacts that were reported stolen were retrieved from a trash can and other areas of the museum grounds, including the partial recovery of a Tutankhamen statue of him being carried by the goddess Menkaret. Also a fourth artifact, a statue of King Akhenaten wearing a blue crown and holding an offering table in his outstretched hands was returned to the museum after a teenager found it near the museum and later reported it to officials. The offering table was broken off the statue and thus has to be restored. Hawass has since tried to clarify his earlier misinformation about the stolen artifacts, but it would have been best if he followed the practice of making definitive statements only after he has verified the facts.



www.drhawass.com/blog/update-current-state-antiquities

4. There were also demonstrations by unemployed archaeology graduates and Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) workers who called on Zahi Hawass to resign from his new position because of

corruption, nepotism, and his tight one-man control of the Egyptian antiquities field, among other criticisms. Hawass was appointed to a new position, Minister of Antiquities Affairs, and is seen as part of the old corrupt Mubarak regime. There was a march on February 16th from the Cairo Museum to Hawass' SCA office in the Zamalek district. The demonstrators criticized Hawass for a long list of reasons, such as: his irresponsible comments that *no* artifacts had been stolen from the Cairo Museum, which allowed the thieves time to probably smuggle the artifacts out of the country; that he is an actor and showman and behaves as if he is the personal owner of the antiquities; his taking over the discoveries and excavation work of other researchers without giving them credit; and not allowing foreign archaeologists to speak freely about their ideas and research work for fear of not receiving security clearance in order to be granted an excavation permit. Hawass' response to the demands for him to step down is that "I cannot leave my job for some kids in the street. If I feel one day that I'm not doing something good for my country, I will resign." He added, "Once you would not dare to show no respect to a government minister, now they come and spit in your face if they do not like what they hear."

However, Hawass has also received support from foreign archaeologists who praise his work in modernizing the antiquities bureaucracy, and allowing visitors to have more appreciation of the antiquities in Egypt. In addition, some of his local Egyptian supporters love to see Hawass tell foreign archaeologists and Egyptologists what to do and when to do it.

5. AN UPDATE: On February 11th, robbers broke into a storage magazine in Dahshur, near the mud-brick pyramid of King Amenemhet III, and thus far it appears that only 8 small amulets were stolen.

6. AN UPDATE: In late January, at the Qantara East site in the Sinai area there was a total of 6 boxes taken from the storage magazine, but it is not yet known how many artifacts were stolen. Thus far, a total of **298** artifacts (5 more since my first report last week) from this site have since been located and returned.

7. Unfortunately, other sites were recently broken into. At Saqqara, the tomb of Hetepka was broken into and the false door and other objects may have been stolen. This tomb was previously excavated and published by Geoffrey Martin. There are also reports that a storage magazine was broken into, and at the Abusir site (located between Giza and Sakkara) part of the false door was stolen from the Rahotep tomb. This is not the same Rahotep that I am writing about in my forthcoming book, *Modern Fraud*). Other locations also had attempted break-ins, and a committee has been formed to investigate all of these incidences. Hawass stated, "The rats have come out of their holes...The revolution may have been a good thing, but it has also caused the thieves and vipers to come out."

8. On February 15th, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova called for increased vigilance from art dealers and collectors to verify the origin of cultural items from Egypt that could have been recently stolen and that might be imported, exported and/or offered for sale, especially on the internet. However, this is nothing new that there are stolen artifacts from Kemet. All of the artifacts from Kemet are stolen in one way or another. For example, even licensed archaeologists are engaged in professional tomb robbing, and art dealers, collectors, and museum officials already know that new artifacts are acquired through shady deals and activities.

http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_calls_on_art_dealers_and_collectors_to_be_on_the_alert_for_stolen_egyptian_arte_facts/back/18256/

9. Regarding stolen artifacts, on February 15th, the St. Louis Museum of Art filed a federal lawsuit asking a judge to order that the U.S. government has no claim on a 3,200-year-old mummy mask that officials in Egypt say was stolen from their country two decades ago.



The Ka-Nefer-Nefer mask, with its inlaid glass eyes and plaster face, has been on display since the museum purchased it in 1998 from a New York art dealer for \$499,000. It has been a source of controversy since at least 2006, when a top Egyptian antiquities official demanded its return, saying it had been stolen in the early 1990s from a storage room near the Step Pyramid of Saqqara, where it was excavated in 1952.

http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/article_6a5937bc-0ea6-50ca-94ab-aa45697af009.html

10. Since the January 25th uprising the archaeological sites have been closed due to security measures, although some locations in the south stayed open eventhough there were no tourists to visit them. Other sites reopened in early February. As of today, all of the sites around Egypt are again open to the public. According to reports written a few hours after the reopening, small groups of between 20 to 50 tourists, including some Egyptians, visited the Giza plateau, Saqqara, and Luxor. *Ahram Online* newspaper reported that Ali El-Asfar, head of the Giza plateau monuments, said that in the last week the number of tourists who came to the plateau was about 800 people a day (which is a tiny fraction of the usual number of tourists during this peak period in the tourist season). In Luxor, Mansour Borak, supervisor of antiquities, pointed out that by noon today the Karnak temples had only 93 tourists.

Also, a total of six museums have reopened, including three in Cairo: the Egyptian (Cairo) Museum, Coptic Museum, and Museum of Islamic Art; also open are the Luxor Museum, Mummification Museum in Luxor, and Nubian Museum in Aswan. However, the remainder of Egypt's 24 museums remain closed until security measures are worked out. It will take some time before the tourist industry can recover from this severe blow to the industry during this peak season.

11. *The Daily News Egypt* (2/19/11) reported that in an effort to crackdown on corruption three former ministers under the Mubarak regime were arrested on February 17th. These were the Minister of Interior Habib El-Adly, the Minister of Housing Ahmed El-Maghraby, and the Minister of Tourism, Zuheir Garannah. Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour was appointed as the new Minister of Tourism by the interim government. Tourism is the main industry of employment in Egypt, and the country attracted more than 12.5 million visitors in 2009, with the revenue from this industry generating \$11.6 billion.

12. Since they are still relevant, I will end this update with the same comments that I ended my first report with last week:

“It is interesting to see the recent widespread concerns throughout the U.S about the safety of the ancient Egyptian monuments. Few people realize that the safety of the monuments has been in great jeopardy for years, and they have suffered from systematic and deliberate defacement and de-Africanization at the hands of local Egyptian government workers. Since 1994, I have documented these crimes in my essay series, ‘The Vanishing Evidence of Classical African Civilizations,’ and yet almost all Africentric tour leaders and travelers have chosen to ignore this major problem.*

“Maybe now that the Western media is focusing on the crisis in Egypt and the threat to the artifacts, more people in the African-centered community will address the crimes against the artifacts that I have been documenting for years. Indeed, as I have often stated in the past, it is not possible to effectively argue about ancient Kemet being an African civilization if there is the destruction of all of the physical evidence. In the realm of serious research, ‘Documentation beats conversation’ and thus it is in the interest of the Black community to preserve and protect the sacred physical remains of our history and heritage, regardless if CNN or Al Jazeera reports on this matter or not.”

[*The only reference to this ongoing major problem by a tour leader that I am aware of is a short scene in the video tape presentation by Ashra Kwesi entitled, “African Origin of Civilization,” dated 1985.]

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"Vanishing Evidence" Part I

http://manuampim.com/Part_I.htm

"Vanishing Evidence" Part II

http://manuampim.com/Part_II.htm

"Vanishing Evidence" Part III

http://manuampim.com/Part_III.htm

“Primary Research is the greatest weapon against the distortion of African history and culture.” - MA