L’année se termine sur un bilan mitigé. Le CSA est agité de mouvements internes divers ; les archéologues tentent, en vain, de créer un syndicat qui puisse les protéger, alors que les promesses d’embauche et de titularisations se multiplient, sans que les moyens suivent. Les multiples difficultés de trésorerie viennent manifestement contrecarrer les ambitions du Secrétaire général.

2010 a vu le centenaire du Musée copte et du Musée d’Art islamique, tandis que momies et sensationnel tiennent toujours le haut du pavé ; l’ADN de Toutânkhamon continue d’alimenter la polémique, tandis que ses trésors poursuivent leur tour du monde.

Du côté des missions étrangères, la presse salue la venue de Béatrix Midant-Reynes à la tête de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale. Tanis et Tell al-Dab‘a retiennent l’attention de la presse, même si Giza reste avant les autres sites sous les feux des projecteurs des médias, moins pour la belle tombe de Roudj-ka, que pour les désormais trop fameux « conduits » de Chéops. Le dégagement et la restauration du dromos de Louqsor continuent également à soulever commentaires et discussions, tandis que le Secrétaire général détaillle les découvertes du temple funéraire d’Amenhotep III sur la rive ouest. On signalera, enfin, un unicum découvert en Arabie saoudite : un cartouche de Ramsès III !
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Après l’échec de toutes les tentatives visant à créer un syndicat pour les archéologues, un certain nombre d’entre eux a créé une page sur le réseau social Facebook intitulée « Syndicat des archéologues ». 767 membres ont rejoint ce groupe jusqu’à présent. « Ce groupe virtuel n’est qu’un pas vers la création réelle d’un syndicat dont nous rêvons en tant qu’archéologues,
précisent les fondateurs. Ensemble nous comptons défendre la cause, discuter et examiner les droits et les revendications des archéologues qu’ils soient restaurateurs, administratifs, agents de sécurité ou simple étudiants en archéologie ». Les fondateurs de ce groupe ont fixé une série de sujets à débattre parmi lesquels figurent la titularisation des archéologues, la séparation entre le CSA et le ministère de la Culture, ainsi que la couverture médicale des travailleurs dans le domaine archéologique. Soulignons que cette démarche n’est pas la première entreprise par les archéologues sur Facebook. Un autre groupe avait déjà créé une page intitulée « Syndicat des guides touristiques et des archéologues sur Facebook ». Ce groupe, qui a recruté environ 1 255 membres, milite en faveur d’une fusion entre les guides touristiques et les archéologues au sein d’un seul syndicat ; puisque le rêve d’un syndicat exclusivement consacré aux archéologues demeure irréalisable. De même, un autre groupe avait créé sur ce même réseau social une page intitulée « campagne pour la création d’un syndicat pour les archéologues ». Il vise à recueillir l’adhésion d’un maximum de membres en vue de faire pression sur le gouvernement égyptien pour la création d’un syndicat. (Dînâ ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « Les archéologues se tournent vers Facebook pour créer leur syndicat », al-Yawm al-Sâbi‘ du 30 octobre 2010).


A group of tourists are believed to have drawn red Stars of David on the walls of the Seti I ruins in the Abydos area of Sûhâg Governorate. Temple officials said the defacements were new but Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities Zâhî Hawwâs said they have been there for three decades. “The fact that the Star is incomplete and unclear proves that it is old and time has erased a part of it,” Hawwâs said after seeing the defacements. Temple officials are yet to identify the perpetrators, sources said, who added that visitors were denied access to the chamber where the drawings are located. Temple officials attempted to remove the drawings, according to the sources, but instead damaged some of the Pharaonic sculptures in the chamber during the clean-up process. A restoration team has been designated to remove the drawings, Hawwâs said. (Fathya el-Dakhakhni, “Star of David drawings found on walls of Egyptian temple”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, December 22, 2010).

Minister of Culture Fârûq Husnî announced that the New Year will witness the inauguration of several cultural and archaeological projects in addition to a number of intellectual events. Husnî said that year 2011 that
witness the establishment of the expanded conference of intellectuals to discuss key issues and put an integrated map of the Egyptian culture during the coming period. Husni pointed out that the New Year will also witness the return of Art Day in implementation of the directives of President Husni Mubarak, in addition to the opening of the Cairo International Book Fair. The minister said that the Museum of Egyptian civilization will be opened on an area of 25 acres in al-Fustat in Old Cairo. The Museum narrates the story of the Egyptian civilization through the various eras noting that the museum cost is about LE 600 millions. Husni said that the New Year will also witness the completion of many archaeological museums in Cairo and other governorates including: Museums of Sharm al-Shaykh, Hurghada and Suhag, as well as finishing the restoration project of the national theatre in 'Ataba. He added that the New Year also will witness the opening of the Hanging Church in Old Cairo after restoration and development at a total cost of LE 85 million. (“Culture Minister: Integrated Map for Egyptian Culture”, Egypt State Information Service, 30 December 2010).

This year, 88 years after the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb, scientists have decoded the DNA of one of the most powerful royal houses of the New Kingdom, which included Akhenaten and the famous Boy King. Through analysis of five royal 18th Dynasty mummies, several perplexing questions about the genealogy and physiology of the Amarna-period family have been answered. The mummy from tomb KV55 in the Valley of the Kings found by archaeologists in 1955 turned out to belong to the monotheistic Pharaoh Akhenaten. DNA tests also showed that Akhenaten was Tutankhamun’s father, not his brother as some had claimed. The stylised male/female physique characteristic of representations of Akhenaten was found to be an iconographic convention bearing no relation to the Pharaoh’s actual appearance. According to Amarna religious belief, Aten was both male and female, and therefore Akhenaten, as his representative, was depicted as having both male and female form. The mummy of Queen Tiye, wife of Amenhotep III and mother of Akhenaten, was also identified. Her mummy, known as the Elder Lady with Hair, was in KV35 alongside the remains of a younger woman now identified as Tutankhamun’s mother. Significantly, studies by the Supreme Council of Antiquities proved that Tutankhamun died of a combination of malaria and vascular bone necrosis, a condition that diminishes the blood supply to the bone and leads to serious weakening or destruction of tissue. There were also major developments in studies of Egypt’s Coptic era. The only known copy of the gospel of Jesus’s favourite disciple, Judas, which casts an unorthodox light on events leading up to the Crucifixion, returned to Egypt. The fragile codex – made up of 13 papyrus leaves – was handed over to the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo by most recent owners, the Basel-based Maecenas Foundation for Ancient Art. Written in Coptic in the third or fourth century, the codex is believed to be a translation of an original Greek text dating from sometime before AD 180. It was found in the late 1970s by a farmer near the village of Banî Mazâr, near Minyâ in Upper Egypt, but was later stolen and smuggled abroad. In 2000, after 16 years in a New York bank and in a deplorable condition,
it was sold again before being authenticated and restored. On Luxor’s west bank, archaeologists uncovered a cachette of red granite statues that once stood at the forefront of Pharaoh Amenhotep III’s mortuary temple. It contained a large number of statues featuring Amenhotep III accompanied by various ancient Egyptian deities and by his wife, Queen Tiye. Excavations carried out in the funerary temple area came within the framework of the project to produce a virtual reconstruction of the temple. Eventually an open-air museum will be established at the site and the statues will go on permanent display.

The night landscape on Luxor’s west bank has totally changed with the installation of a new lighting system that provides a dramatic view of the famous monuments. The lights were provided by the Ministry of Culture, the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), the Egyptian Sound and Light Organisation and the French lighting company, Architecture Lumière. Visits will now be paced between 7am and 8pm, thus reducing the damaging humidity levels inside the tombs that lead to deterioration of the mural paintings. This is one of several development projects to transform Luxor into an open-air museum. Plans include the restoration of Howard CARTER’s rest house with a view to making it a museum, a new visitor centre at Dayr al-Bahārī and the restoration and reopening of the Yūsuf Abū al-Haggāg Mosque.

This year also witnessed the celebration of the centenary of both the Islamic and Coptic museums. The centennial of the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) followed the completion of seven years of rehabilitation. The master plan for the renovation and the new exhibition design was drawn up by French designer and museographer Adrien GARDÈRE in cooperation with the Islamic Department of the Louvre Museum in Paris, which advised on the reorganisation of the museum’s collections. The MIA is divided into two large wings, the first devoted to the chronological exhibition of Islamic artefacts taken in the main from monuments in historic Cairo, and the second to objects from other parts of the Islamic world. These include calligraphy; manuscripts; ceramics; mosaics; textiles; gravestones; mashrabiyya (latticed woodwork); wooden objects; metal and glass vessels; incense burners and caskets; pottery; metalwork and glass lamps dating from various periods in Islamic history. These objects are displayed according to chronology and theme, provenance and material. The renovated museum has state-of-the-art security and lighting systems, a fully-equipped restoration laboratory, a children’s museum and a library.

The Coptic Art Museum, situated next to the Hanging Church in Old Cairo, was founded in 1910 by an influential Copt, Marcus Pasha Simaika, as a permanent home for Coptic Egypt’s heritage artefacts. To celebrate the museum’s centenary the SCA held the first-ever locally-curated exhibition of Coptic art. The Coptic Art Revealed exhibition in the Amir Tāz Palace highlighted the contribution Egypt’s Copts made to the nation’s heritage. The 205 artefacts chosen to represent the period in the exhibition were arranged either chronologically or thematically. They began with an event of the utmost importance for the history of Christianity in the country: the Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt. With the help of artefacts chosen to demonstrate the overlap of Pharaonic, Graeco-Roman and early Christian motifs, the exhibition showed how the new religion survived in Egypt while
older religions and cults did not. Recent discoveries from Bâwît (Dayr Abû Abullû, north of Asyût) formed the highlight of the exhibition. Copts produced some of the beautiful crafts in the early Christian world, and the exhibition displayed some of these items that were at one time in daily use. The objects were selected from several museum collections in Egypt and included treasures from the Coptic Museum; the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation in Fustât; the Museum of Islamic Art in Bâb al-Khalq; the National Museum, the Graeco-Roman Museum and the Museum of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria; and the Banî Swayf and al-‘Arîsh museums. All in all, 2010 was a good year for Egyptologists; and with most missions still at mid-season point, next year could yield more surprises. (Nevine El-Aref, “Discoveries unearthed”, Al-Ahram Weekly, December 30, 2010).

« L’Ifao tient une vingtaine de chantiers de fouilles archéologiques qui se développent sur le territoire égyptien depuis la préhistoire jusqu’à l’époqueislamique. Il y a eu beaucoup de belles découvertes. Citons les fouilles franco-égyptiennes de ‘Ayn al-Sukhna, avec la découverte des fours qui servaient à fondre le cuivre. Je pense que c’est une découverte très importante. Une autre découverte importante datant de la dynastie égyptienne se trouve à Siràbît al-Khâdim dans le Sinaï et qui montre que dès le début de l’Égypte ancienne, les
premiers pharaons allaient très loin dans le Sinaï. Un chantier également important est celui de la muraille du Caire qui permet de mieux comprendre l'histoire de la ville. Il y a aussi des programmes de recherches qui sont importants avec de nouvelles données, comme celui fait à Dûsh sur « la relation entre l'homme et l'eau de la préhistoire jusqu'à l'époque romaine ». On peut aussi citer les travaux de Balât qui continue de donner une richesse extraordinaire montrant l'établissement du pouvoir pharaonique à la porte du désert. En effet, c'est difficile pour un archéologue de dire ce qui est plus important. C'est comme si vous demandiez à une mère : quel est l'enfant que vous préférez ?

« L'Ifao a aussi un rôle de formation. On favorise sur nos chantiers la venue de jeunes étudiants égyptiens en archéologie. Cette année par exemple, à Dûsh, on avait un doctorant égyptien qui travaillait avec nous sur le chantier. On est aussi attentif à la formation des inspecteurs égyptiens qui travaillent avec nous, quand ils le souhaitent. Je pense que c'est très important. Il y a des gens très compétents au Conseil Suprême des Antiquités (CSA). Je vais vraiment conduire une politique plus forte de formation, offrir des terrains de fouilles et de formation archéologiques à de jeunes Égyptiens, parce que l'avenir de l'archéologie égyptienne doit être construit avec sa jeunesse. Je voudrais vraiment offrir à des archéologues un terrain de formation sur nos chantiers. Cela fait partie de mon plan. J'ai beaucoup d'ambitions.

« Développer des axes scientifiques forts pour faire que l'Ifao soit dans les quelques prochaines années un pôle scientifique d'excellence, et que ce développement se fasse en collaboration avec l'Égypte, autant le CSA que les universités égyptiennes. C'est déjà une grande ambition.

« Les points forts de l'institut sont l'imprimerie et la bibliothèque qui est une des grandes bibliothèques d'archéologie en Afrique évidemment, et même une des plus importantes dans le monde, avec des documents précieux comme la Description de l'Égypte, et d'autres publications plus anciennes qui sont considérées comme des bijoux. L'imprimerie de l'Ifao va acquérir une presse numérique en couleur. C'est un investissement et un développement qui permettront de publier plus d'éditions et de séries et de s'ouvrir vers un grand public. C'est vrai que nos publications sont très spécialisées. Nous avons des revues de très haut niveau scientifique et il faut garder ça, c'est très important. Mais je pense qu'il faut effectivement s'ouvrir à un plus large public. Cette idée était même évoquée lors du précédent mandat.


« L'Ifao est un établissement autonome. Le directeur porte son projet devant le ministère qui donne une enveloppe budgétaire globale. Et c'est le directeur, aidé par tous les collaborateurs administratifs et scientifiques, qui décide de la politique. On peut même chercher ailleurs
du financement, du sponsoring pour nos projets. On peut doubler le financement. Là on est libre. Le ministère doit juste donner de l’argent et c’est pareil partout.

« Ce sont en général des colloques réservés à des scientifiques de haut niveau. Ce ne sont pas des colloques ouverts au public. Le public peut assister, mais il n’est pas intéressé. On fait des annonces mais pas pour un large public.


Le ministre de la Culture, Fârûq Husnî, a nommé Walîd ‘Abd al-Khâliq directeur exécutif du projet du musée national de la Civilisation égyptienne actuellement en construction dans la zone archéologique de Fustât. Il est chargé de suivre le bon déroulement des travaux de construction de ce musée. (Dînâ ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « Le ministère de la Culture nomme un superviseur des travaux du musée de la Civilisation », al-Yawm al-


Le secrétaire général du CSA, Dr Zâhî Hawwâs, a affirmé qu’une étude sera soumise prochainement au Premier ministre, Dr Ahmad Nazîf, visant la titularisation définitive de 12 mille contractuels travaillant pour le compte du CSA. Quant au nouveau projet de couverture sociale, il bénéficiera à 32 mille fonctionnaires titulaires et contractuels du CSA qui y participe à hauteur de 5 % déductible de leur salaire au profit de la Sécurité Sociale. Les frais restants sont entièrement assumés par le CSA et proviennent des revenus des expositions archéologiques et des dons reçus par le CSA. (Muhammad ‘Abd al-Mu’tî, « Prochaine titularisation de 12 mille contractuels travaillant pour le compte du CSA », al-Ahrâm du 24 décembre 2010).

Arabie Saoudite
Le Manuscript Center (MsC) de la Bibliotheca Alexandrina a pour but d’étudier la naissance de l’écriture et l’histoire de la calligraphie à travers les différentes époques. Dans ce but, il a lancé un grand projet pour l’enregistrement numérique des inscriptions et écritures anciennes de différentes langues. Il s’agit du projet de « la bibliothèque numérique des inscriptions et des calligraphies antiques ». C’est toute une base de données documentant le patrimoine inscrit à travers les différentes époques historiques de différents pays du monde. Et c’est dans le cadre de ce grand projet qu’intervient en fait la numérisation des inscriptions et des calligraphies de La Mecque. Plus de 850 inscriptions et écritures antiques de la ville sainte de La Mecque ont été déjà enregistrées sous forme numérique par l’équipe des chercheurs et des spécialistes du MsC. « Ces inscriptions racontent en effet l’histoire de la ville sainte. À travers ces inscriptions, on peut surtout réaliser les plus grands travaux exécutés...
à travers les différentes époques pour la restauration, la conservation et la reconstruction des différents éléments architecturaux de la mosquée al-Harâm de La Mecque ainsi que des autres constructions de la ville sainte », explique Dr Khalid ‘Azab, directeur adjoint du MsC. 150 autres inscriptions et écritures sont en cours de numérisation pour atteindre le nombre de 1000.


Inauguré en 2003, le MsC de la Bibliotheca Alexandrina est plus qu’une institution traditionnelle. Animateur de différentes activités et de projets de recherche, il se présente comme une académie moderne et ouverte sur le monde. « Le centre organise, entre autres, un forum sur la calligraphie, des expositions qui retracent l’histoire de l’écriture dans les différentes langues et cultures, ainsi que des stages concernant les hiéroglyphes et la calligraphie arabe. Un autre projet du MsC est réalisé sous forme de CD visant l’enregistrement numérique d’un millier de calligraphies qui font partie des plus belles connues. Ce projet est réalisé en collaboration avec le Fonds du cheikh Zâyid des Émirats arabes unis », explique Ahmad Mansûr, directeur de la section de la langue de l’Égypte ancienne aux Émirats arabes unis. Le MsC publie, édite et réédite des livres traitant de la calligraphie et des inscriptions. (Amira Samir, « Un travail sur les joyaux », Al-Ahram Hebdo du 17 novembre 2010).
Chine

Egypt and China inked a cooperation deal on the protection of heritage and cultural property in Cairo on Tuesday. Egypt’s secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities Zâhî Hawwâs said the deal will help returning those antiquities, which were smuggled outside both countries. “Egypt and China are convinced of the importance of protecting their heritages and to fight antiquity theft,” Hawwâs added. For his part, China’s director of State Cultural Heritage Administration Shan JIXIANG said that Egypt and China have suffered heavily from thefts, illegal excavating and trafficking of cultural heritages. “Thus the common destiny and obligation of our two countries serve as solid foundation of cooperation between us in the field of cultural heritage,” Shan said. “The agreement is not only to prevent smuggling of cultural heritages between us, but also to show our two countries’ resolution to jointly protect human cultural heritages for the world,” Shan added.

According to the deal, it is forbidden to export, import or transfer the ownership of cultural properties. Also, the country has the right to ask for its stolen pieces according to the formal and diplomatic channels without violating the local laws. “Customs in both Egypt and China should receive the information of the stolen properties to make sure they will not be smuggled abroad,” the deal said. Egypt and China have signed the UNESCO convention under which signatories can ask for the return of cultural objects found in other countries. The UN convention signed in 1970 requires the unconditional return of any cultural properties obtained through illegal means, but items obtained prior to the signing of the treaty, regardless of how they were obtained, can lawfully be registered as national assets. (Xinhua, “Egypt signs cooperation deal on heritage”, The Egyptian Gazette, October 13, 2010. Voir également Mushîra Mûsa, « Convention sino•égyptienne pour lutter contre le trafic archéologique », al-Ahrâm du 13 octobre ; Fathiyya al-Dakhâkhni, « Hawwâs annonce la restitution par les États-Unis d’une collection archéologique importante dans deux semaines », al-Masrî al-Yawm du 14 octobre).

Ligue arabe /MWNF

Un mémorandum d’entente a été signé dernièrement entre la Ligue arabe et l’organisation internationale Museum With No Frontiers (MWNF), dans le but de conjuguer les programmes des deux institutions dans différents domaines. Un protocole qui cherche à réaliser des projets dans les domaines de communication, d’éducation, de culture et de tourisme. Une idée qui a surgi en mai dernier quand la Ligue arabe a invité MWNF pour contribuer à son pavillon dans l’exposition universelle de Shanghai. « Nous avons fourni à la Ligue arabe tout ce que l’organisation MWNF a produit sur le patrimoine du monde arabe, à l’instar des différentes publications, des livres et des périodiques », se souvient Eva SCHUBERT, présidente et directrice du MWNF. Et c’est dès ce temps que la coopération entre les deux parties a commencé. En fait, l’objectif essentiel de ce protocole est de contribuer au dialogue et à l’alliance des civilisations à travers une meilleure connaissance de l’histoire et de l’héritage culturel du monde arabe. SCHUBERT estime que le domaine de la communication est le plus important à traiter. Il s’agit de
la meilleure méthode de présenter le patrimoine culturel avec un objectif précis. Ceci sera réalisé non seulement à travers les médias, mais aussi à travers les sites Web et l’organisation des réunions et des conférences. Dans ce contexte, la Ligue arabe va jouer un rôle primordial en transmettant aux institutions auxquelles elle est liée toutes les activités du MWNF. Bref, la communication doit être un engin. Vient ensuite le domaine de l’éducation qui est d’une importance majeure et auquel le protocole d’entente prête une attention ultime. Il vise à créer des programmes de développement didactiques organisés par les propres moyens que l’on possède pour que ceux-ci soient ensuite employés comme matériel de références. Ces informations pourraient ensuite être transmises au grand public, surtout aux enfants et aux jeunes, à travers des conférences, des expositions et des visites virtuelles. D’ailleurs, le protocole cherche à installer des programmes avec tous les musées du monde arabe afin d’attirer les enfants. Et pour garantir leur continuité, il faut « former des équipes de chaque musée essayant d’exploiter ses moyens pour valoriser et améliorer nos programmes éducatifs », poursuit-elle. Quant aux troisième et quatrième domaines abordés par le protocole d’entente, ce sont la culture et le tourisme, étroitement liés. Au fur et à mesure, MWNF organise des voyages culturels dans différents sites touristiques, archéologiques et naturels.

Pour SCHUBERT, la Ligue est censée mettre en contact les différentes institutions arabes de même que les expatriés du monde arabe avec les activités du MWNF. « En général, les deuxième et troisième générations des émigrés ne connaissent rien de leur pays natal. En revanche, MWNF leur offre ce genre de voyages, afin de leur faire redécouvrir le patrimoine arabe », affirme-t-elle. Si d’un côté, la Ligue arabe va diffuser les activités du MWNF et mettre en contact les différentes institutions et les expatriés avec cette association, de sa part, MWNF va diffuser les activités de la Ligue arabe. De plus, il y aura certainement de nouveaux programmes à réaliser visant toujours la valorisation du patrimoine arabe. (Doaa Elhami, « Mariage entre politique et culture », Al-Ahram Hebdo du 1er décembre 2010).

Royaume-Uni

Preserving and protecting Egypt’s great cultural heritage of manuscripts was the theme of a recent training course held at the Supreme Council for Antiquities (SCA) and organised by the Egyptian General Authority for Books in cooperation with the Levantine Foundation. The Levantine Foundation, a charity chaired by the former British ambassador in Egypt, Sir Derek PLUMBLY, aims to record and preserve the written heritage of the Middle East that has come down to us on papyrus, vellum and related materials. Such manuscripts bear witness to human history, and Egypt has been one of the first countries in the region to value the importance of restoration. The Egyptian manuscripts in the scheme begin with the Greek period and go through the Roman and Coptic eras to the Islamic. Some 120 trainee restorers who attended the course were from the SCA’s museums sector, while several were nuns and monks from a number of Egyptian convents and monasteries including al-Suryân in Wâdî al-Natrûn in the Western Desert and al-Muharraq in Asyût, Upper Egypt. The lectures were presented by
specialist professors from Leiden University in the Netherlands, while the practical training was given by experts in the field of museums from England, and supervised by the executive administrator of Levantine Foundation Elizabeth SOBCZYNISKI. The training course was funded by a number of foundations and societies including the Sawiris Association for Social Development. (Samia Ayad, “Written history”, Watani, June 20, 2010).


Robert TEMPLE:
Egyptian Dawn:
Exposing the Real
Truth Behind Ancient
Egypt

“In recent years, the Osiris Shaft has been studied by Zâhî Hawwâs. He was responsible for lifting the lid of the sarcophagus. Hawwâs was unable to be certain of a date for the shaft. When suggested to him that we might be able to date the stone sarcophagi in the shaft by our new techniques, he was enthusiastic and gave us permission to descend into the shaft in order to obtain samples. We are very grateful to Hawwâs for allowing this access personally”. Professor Robert TEMPLE has written a persuasive scientific paean to the antiquity of pyramids in ancient Egypt for the uninitiated amateurish Egyptologist. This book, however, will horrify professional Egyptologists. Like THUCYDIDES or TACITUS, TEMPLE combines perspicacity and an eye for telling detail with an ear for ringing. Re•dating key monuments is a topic that tires Egyptologists, though. They have heard it all before and are not in the least convinced of its relevance to their labours. Yet these aspects are precisely part of TEMPLE’s saga’s compelling readability for the gullible and ingenious unprofessional Egyptologist. The monarchs given most attention are the confusing kings Khasekhem (alias Hedjefa) and Khasekhemui (alias Bebti) as well as the equally confounding Khufus – Khufu conventionally known as Cheops of the Great Pyramid, and the lesser-known and rather mysterious Khnumu-Khufu, also associated with the Great Pyramid of Gîza.

Such mystification is a vital part of TEMPLE’s narrative. His prose is
throughout disconcerting, though excellently paced and inlaid with gems that take us to the heart of ancient Egyptian civilisation. TEMPLE intriguingly presents the baffling torsions of the tale of the ancient Egyptian state – the Two Lands – as the Delta and Upper Egypt draw together and strain apart. There is no doubt that TEMPLE himself is partial to Lower Egypt, or rather to the races presumably whiter and more sophisticated that established themselves in the Delta. He is equally dismissive of the “southern kings” supposedly blacker whom he routinely designates as uncivilised chimpanzees. This is when I began to suspect that Egyptian Dawn was something of a potboiler. The passion that drove TEMPLE to produce his legendary The Sirius Mystery, perhaps his greatest work, prompted him to froth at the mouth in Egyptian Dawn. TEMPLE writes his case studies as though they were short stories necessarily fuelled by an insatiable curiosity.

If the numerous royal personages with confusingly similar names – the Khasekhems and Khasekhemuis, the Khufus and the Khnum-Kufus – and the mass of pseudo-scientific detail sometimes overwhelm TEMPLE’s tome, nonetheless his vivid narrative makes a curiously engaging read. These often overlooked figures of the past hint at how ancient Egypt has become such a global addiction. Egypt is ingrained in the international psyche. An enthusiastic tale about how it all began is beguiling and always sells. TEMPLE’s Egyptian Dawn can be summarily dismissed by professional Egyptologists as trash. But TEMPLE urges us to consider carefully the provision of proper latitude for the exercise of individual judgement of the exotic Egyptian past. There are two ways to do this. First, and contrary to the zeitgeist we should not take the word of professional Egyptologists as gospel truth. Second, we can employ scientific methods to delve into the depths of ancient Egyptian mysteries. Optical thermolunescence “perfected by my Greek colleague” Professor Ioannis LIRITZIS, “previously a nuclear scientist”, TEMPLE postulates, is the cornerstone upon which he constructs his theory of the founders of ancient Egyptian civilisation and the wonders they created. Temple has been on this trail for some time. Once TEMPLE’s tale gathers momentum it is difficult not to put the book down. Still, TEMPLE’s tome is definitely not designed to be read from beginning to end. I personally couldn’t. Partly, it is because the author’s thread of explanations of the origins of ancient Egyptian civilisation becomes tangled amid the sheer weight of his accumulated documentary evidence. Huge in scope and energetically argued, TEMPLE’s latest bombshell is incapable of permanently altering Egyptology as we know it. The answers to the pressing questions posed by the author in Egyptian Dawn are not adequately answered. To cite one example, who was the monarch who actually united Egypt – the Two Lands? “In the fragments that survive of the history of Egypt written by the Egyptian priest with the Greek name of MANETHO, the first pharaoh is stated to have had the name Menes. But the names, given by MANETHO are Grecianised, and are often difficult to match with Egyptian names, especially since the pharaohs all had more than one name anyway. So one of the great questions that has haunted Egyptology is: Who was Menes?”

We may dismiss TEMPLE’s tome as tiresome, trifling and trumped-up. But
TEMPLE conjures up deeply paradoxical questions. “It has been suggested that Hor-Aha was Menes, it has been suggested that his father, Narmer, was Menes, and it has been suggested that neither was Menes. For decades, no one knew for certain. There were bits of evidence, tantalising, tempting but not conclusive.” TEMPLE goes on to suggest that James ALLEN’s article published in 1992, entitled Menes the Memphite, is in his opinion the most convincing explanation. “ALLEN points out that it is most probable that Menes was never a name. He believes that it comes from the Egyptian word for the ancient city of Memphis near Giza, which was supposed to have been founded by the first pharaoh of the First Dynasty. This was the tradition believed in by the time of the New Kingdom, when no one clearly remembered the actual fellow who did it.” TEMPLE asks the contemporary reader to articulate the mental assumptions that led the ancients to act as they did. TEMPLE rants and rages about the “chronological chaos” of Egyptologists, but I am afraid that his own hypothesis is not quite convincing either. “I think we were all lucky to miss predynastic Egypt, as many of us would have ended up with our heads bashed in.” So what does TEMPLE’s bestseller have to do with contemporary Egyptian culture? Does it really matter who constructed the pyramids and what race they belong to? The author appears to think so. “We return to the problem: Who really built the pyramids? If we find it difficult to believe that Smasher, Subjugator, and Mace Man were quite what we had in mind, we can take comfort in one thing: the demonstrable fact that a whole dynasty of 13 kings can vanish without a trace.” These kings were caught in a squeeze. A new political bargain was forged between the kings of the south and the potentates of the north. The northern aristocracy initially might have been great masons, but they failed to conquer the south. Such a conquest required a level of statecraft that they lacked. Or so TEMPLE seems to imply. The southern monarchs, on the other hand, ruled by brutish force. The southern aristocracy was obliged to strike a grand bargain. In exchange for technological innovation and sophisticated masonry, they literally ruled with an iron fist. The mace-brandishing monarchs were the menacing emblem of southern military might. They personified black power. They abhorred the pyramid structures that were a constant reminder of the foreign roots, the mountainous terrain, from which the northern kings emanated. The southern potentates preferred the mastaba, type of flat-roofed, rectangular ancient Egyptian tomb, a typical Egyptian artefact to this very day. The word mastaba means stone bench in Arabic and it is a common feature of contemporary rural Egyptian architecture. The author makes much of the rivalry and symbolic value of foreign pyramid and indigenous mastaba. In fact the prevailing theory among Egyptologists, which TEMPLE does not subscribe to, that pyramid is merely a collection of mastabas piled on top of one another. While the ascendancy of the south lasted, the rules of funerary structures initiated by the northerners could be broken with impunity. Even after the northern-influenced pharaohs preferred to be entombed in pyramids, the Egyptian nobility continued to be buried in mastaba tombs, much to the consternation of the kings. TEMPLE notes that King Enezib, the fifth king of the First Dynasty, was perhaps the first ancient Egyptian monarch to build a pyramid, albeit a primitive one. Enezib’s pyramid was not made of stone, but rather of mud
bricks. Enezib appears to be associated with the norther elite. His successor, Semerkhet, clearly a southerner, made every effort to efface Enezib’s memory. He had Enezib’s pyramid decapitated. “This was certainly a pretty drastic thing to do, and suggests a violent hatred of pyramids by the southern kings, who had established the First Dynasty.”

Thermoluminescence dates pottery and TEMPLE has plenty of evidence to support his curious theory. Binding former enemies together in a common kingdom was Egypt’s historic political achievement. Today these ties are being tested as never before since the days of the pharaohs. The north of the country, the Delta, is relatively more prosperous and the south is the least developed part of the country. Distinct cultural cleavages remain. The north is more open to foreign influences, the south is authentic, the true harbinger of autochthonous Egyptian culture.

Though TEMPLE’s unorthodox theories may be disparaged as hogwash, his Egyptian Dawn reads like a thundering thriller skewered by his crisp prose. TEMPLE explicates on Egypt’s peculiarly propitious geology. The myth of Menes, ostensibly the unifier of Egypt, I find particularly gripping. Indeed, as TEMPLE rightly point out, one of the great questions that has haunted Egyptologists is: Who was Menes? Here TEMPLE refers to the mesmerising theory of James ALLEN entitled Menes the Memphite published in 1992. Menes, according to ALLEN was never a personal name. “For the first 1500 years of its existence, Memphis was called White Walls. Memphis, in its Egyptian form of course, only came into use in later times, during the New Kingdom.” According to ALLEN, Menes began to be referred to as the Memphite, much like Jesus the Nazarene, and TEMPLE subscribes to this theory. “This clever resolution of the problem of Menes by James ALLEN is one of the great clarifying and cathartic acts of Egyptological thought of our time, in my opinion,” the author argues. “And by the time the Greeks came to Egypt, when they expressed this name as Menus, everybody believed that this was the genuine name of the first king of Egypt. In other words, all the evidence of any royal name remotely resembling Menus in the First Dynasty or before has been discredited.”

TEMPLE goes on to extrapolate further. “Memphis has ceased to be the capital during the New Kingdom. And Thebes had taken its place; all the more reason, therefore, to invoke ‘the Memphite’ as an ancestor, to prove the legitimacy of succession and justify the new location of the capital by honouring the founder of the ‘original capital’ of a united Egypt,” TEMPLE stresses. An engaging study, TEMPLE’s Egyptian Dawn touches on the very foundations of the Egyptian state. The irony is that the political entity created by the pharaohs survives to this day. TEMPLE takes a peremptory look at some of the current archaeological research trends, but he draws attention to his groundbreaking study. TEMPLE’s tome is a happy parade of the inexplicable exploits of an eccentric inventor. But it is an uneven read. Certain parts are more convincing than others, but all are absolutely riveting. The pleasure lies in the steady unfurling of breathtaking scientific discoveries. “Until now, it has not been possible for archaeologists to date stone structures directly. All the dates for buildings and structures that one reads about are based on indirect methods. Pieces of pottery scattered around a site, or a bit of wood or
other organic matter, can be dated.” Wood and organic matter are dated by the well-known Carbon 14 method.

TEMPLE’s tome elaborates on sophisticated new techniques of dating. “The conclusion is drawn that perhaps a building is of the same date as the bits and pieces found around or within it. At least the archaeologist hopes so! For what else can he do? He can’t date the building itself. But now it can be done.” TEMPLE delves into the intricacies of the new techniques.

“Suddenly he realised that the flooding of the limestone crystal with sunlight (which he calls ‘bleaching’), and the emptying of its electron traps, could be considered as setting a ‘stone clock’ to zero. Then when the crystal was covered in darkness again and could begin swallowing its medicine once more, with the electrons creeping in as normal from the ambient radiation, the crystal’s clock would be set ticking afresh. And if one removed the crystal again (not exposing it to the light) and counted the electrons which were in it, one could know how many years had elapsed since it had been ‘bleached’ by the sun.” Mind-boggling revelations? “In fact, there are no hieroglyphics in the Giza pyramids, no inscriptions, and not one shred of evidence was ever found inside any of the three pyramids to associate them with the Fourth Dynasty pharaohs, apart from some daubings in red paint inside some chambers above the King’s Chamber of the Great Pyramid,” TEMPLE postulates. “If this sounds sensational, it is. Nor should we be afraid of change. If we have to change our ideas, that’s good. I start from the premise that no one is ever correct. We are often mistaken about many matters. But what we should all aim to do is continually try to reduce our errors, try to get nearer and nearer to the truth. If we see that we are wrong, we must abandon the false path and try and find the true one. This book explores many paths.”

Cheops, Chephren and Mycerinus are Greek names of Egyptian kings who reigned long before the arrival of the Greco-Roman world. The Old Kingdom chronology is suspect because the political intrigue involved is not taken into account. TEMPLE, best known for his masterpiece The Sirius Mystery, teaches history and the philosophy of science at Tsinghua University, Beijing, China. A prolific writer in Nature and New Scientist, TEMPLE has struck a raw nerve. Some of his views smack of racism. Others appeal to common sense. Egyptian Dawn is prey to some of the vices of both. Reading Egyptian Dawn from cover to cover can seem at times like perusing a strident polemicists’ rant. So back to the question: “Who could these people be? If they were from a date earlier than the Third Dynasty (conventionally dated 2686-2575 BC), then they could clearly in any case not be the kings of the south, who were not able to hack a limestone block any better than a chimp,” speculates TEMPLE. To put TEMPLE in his place, chimpanzees are indeed quite capable of hacking at limestone, which is a soft stone.

TEMPLE speaks of a mysterious race, presumably white, of megalith builders who not only constructed the largest megalithic ring in the world “in the deepest wilds of Morocco” but fostered an “Atlantic Coastal civilisation” which “was later inherited from about 1550 BC by the Phoenicians. It thrived on trade.” Preposterous, I hear you say. However, we sometimes underestimate the great length our ancestors travelled to barter and trade.
TEMPLE’s most provocative theory revolves around the supposedly superior race of masons and megalithic builders whose closest descendants are curiously the Basques. He maintains that these supermen constructed megalithic structures throughout the eastern Atlantic shores and the Mediterranean basin. “In other words, the builders of the earliest version of Stonehenge and Avebury in Britain are directly connected with the builders of the pyramids of Gîza.” “The story presented in this book therefore embraces and unifies traditions of the origins of Egyptian civilisation, the construction of the pyramids of Gîza, the builders of Stonehenge, and event gives a possible full explanation of the myth of 'Atlantis'.

After a great deal of time spent tracing the civilization of the megalithic•builders, TEMPLE comes to the conclusion that they are Basques, Libyans, Phoenicians or some other disparate peoples that contributed constructively to Egyptian civilization. These are all sea-faring people. “This leaves open the possibility raised originally in my Sirius Mystery that the connection with the Star Sirius was not just an accident.” But what about the stone structures that they left behind? “So let us begin. Everything starts not with substance but with shadow, which is my little joke as you will soon understand.” TEMPLE obviously takes pleasure in prising up the sidewalk slabs of “Golden Gîza Plateau” to find what lies beneath. “I cannot describe the details of this ingenious physical shadow procedure here, as the very short equinoctial shadow is of no concern to us in considering the Gîza Plan, which was based on the longest shadow of the winter solstice.”

The case TEMPLE makes is powerful and is illustrated with telling examples. “It is important to realise, therefore, that the ancient Egyptians did not themselves necessarily distinguish between the First and Second Dynasties, or between the Fifth and the Sixth. This was all invented by someone writing in Greek in the third century BC, whose works are not properly preserved anyway.”

It therefore makes far greater sense, TEMPLE assures us, to seek the true identity of ancient Egypt in its earliest beginnings. “It was MANETHO who first 'created' the division of dynasties One to Six. There was no early tradition of this numbering. Egyptologists have taken over these dynastic creations of MANETHO lock, stock and barrel.” Egypt’s antiquity is sometimes a distinct drawback. The ancient system of bureaucracy is still pretty stifling. The author’s encounter with the “dreaded Hawwâs” corroborates the difficulties of dealing with Egypt’s red tape. “With the intention of showing politeness and respect to Zâhî Hawwâs in his role at that time as director of the Gîza Plateau, I made an appointment for Olivia [the author’s wife and research assistant] and myself to see him at his little office near the Great Pyramid on the Plateau,” TEMPLE muses. Hawwâs’s strong personality, the author asserts, has been crucial in getting him this far as an internationally-acclaimed superstar. “After some time his female secretary led us into his office, and she sat beside him throughout our meeting. I said we had come to have a few preliminary words with him about the sampling we would be doing at Gîza in the future. He
looked enraged rather than pleased, and would not look at me.”
Hawwâs, according to TEMPLE, symbolizes power and the triumph of bureaucratic red tape over propriety. “I was deeply puzzled, as I had gone to see him with the intention of establishing friendly and cooperative relations. Thinking that perhaps he did not understand, or doubted what we were saying, I handed him the archaeological permission form signed by the authorities of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, including the then director Gâballah Gâballah, with whom I had very amicable relations, and who is a most congenial, cultured and polite person. Gâballah is precisely the person who gives Egypt a good image abroad.” The clash of civilization comes into play. “Hawwâs looked at this form for a moment, screwed it up into a ball and threw it across his desk at my face, saying impatiently: 'This means nothing!'”. We need say no more about this rather unfortunate altercation.

One of the great merits of this work is that it firmly puts the emphasis on the latest scientific discoveries. “For the full series of colour photographs of the adventure described in the next chapter [The Osiris Shaft at Gîza and its Mysteries], please consult this book’s website

www.egyptiandawn.info, www.egyptiandawn.info, as the economics of book publishing

make it possible to have only a limited number of photographic plates in the book itself. The book’s website, maintained by the author, should always be treated as an extension of the book, and consulted by the reader when he wants to see more illustrations of anything discussed in the book.”

Egyptian Dawn reveals many secrets of the distant past. But perhaps the most curious revelation is the so-called “Osiris Shaft”. TEMPLE makes it clear that he sees it as key to understanding ancient Egypt. “The Osiris Shaft is the name now generally used to designate a deep burial shaft directly beneath the Chephren Causeway at Gîza,” the author extrapolates. “Like Jesus, according to the Egyptian myth, Osiris died, was buried in a tomb and rose from the dead. And also like the Christian story, the open and empty tomb itself symbolised the resurrection that had taken place.” The parallels are intriguing. “Hawwâs also claims that the two sarcophagi in Level Two are made of red granite, but that is not true, for they are not even red.” And yet the current imagination continues to run to control, towards ancient stones - dacite for one, and new discoveries and endless horizons. “Egyptologists are seldom very clear about stones and minerals, and many Egyptian artefacts in museums throughout the world are wrongly described in terms of the materials of which they are supposedly composed.” Be that as it may, the bookshelves offer bright assistance to amateur Egyptologists. (Gamal Nkrumah, “Temple’s tome”, Al-Ahram Weekly, November 25, 2010).
Lise Manniche: The
Akhenaten Colossi of
Karnak

You will want to read this book — but perhaps not in the order in which it is published. In The Akhenaten Colossi of Karnak, Lise MANNICHE examines the colossal statues of the pharaoh Akhenaten erected at the beginning of his reign (1353 -1335) in his new temple to the Aten at Karnak. Fragments of more than 30 statues are now known, and show paradoxical features of the king combining male and female, young and aged. Akhenaten was one of the most controversial rulers of Egypt. Soon after his death his monuments were taken apart and hidden inside or under subsequent buildings. His statues were overturned, mutilated or destroyed. His name was included on none of the subsequent king lists carved in stone or recorded on papyrus by his successors. In other words, the art of the so-called Amarna period, and the life of the pharaoh Akhenaten and his wife Nefertiti, were all but stricken from the record and would have been obliterated were it not for modern scholars. In 1925 the first two colossal statues of Akhenaten were found in the temple of Karnak, and they were extremely surprising. The king's strangely feminine body and elongated face were perplexing and set off a flurry of opinion and debate that continues until today. Among the adjectives used by early scholars to describe them were “monstrous”, “sexless”, “bisexual”, “naked”, and “an individual whose member has been cut off”. Later scholars considered the possibility that the so-called sexless colossi were executed in haste and that a garment was perhaps tied to or painted on the statue. The fact that his body was shown with the swelling shapes of a male-female creator•god, and that the pharaoh’s role was as mother-and-father of all humanity, even suggested to one scholar that the hidden Osirid-statues of the pharaoh were executed early in Akhenaten's reign and rejected by him.

The art of the Amarna period, as it is known after the king's new capital near Tell al-Amarna in Middle Egypt, is the most fascinating of all Egyptian artistic achievements for the very reason that it is different from the rest, and that it was produced during a reign of just 70 years. From the moment of its discovery it accelerated a debate on the king's physical imperfections — his soft, pendulous belly, his overly-thick thighs and buttocks, his spindly arms and legs, his brooding eyes exaggerated into heavy-lidded slits, his receding forehead, thin neck, elongated skull, drawn-in cheeks and arching neck. With the discovery five years later, in 1930, of a colossus of a male deprived of sexual characteristics, everyone was perplexed. There has been an ongoing debate ever since about their artistic merit, their purpose, and the pathology of the king who erected the “sexless” statues. Some scholars have called the statues “unrealistic” or a “caricature”. Others have argued in favour of their being of a woman — Nefertiti — dressed “in a perfectly normal way” in a clinging outfit. And there are those who refer to them as “ethereal, if not haunting”.

Lise MANNICHE, painstaking researcher and author of numerous books and articles on ancient Egypt (art, music, sexual life and perfume), has
presented a history of their discovery from 1925 to the present day. Carrying out a study of more than 30 colossi of the same size and material found in the same location at East Karnak, a more in-depth study was possible, and MANNICHE presents a profusion of opinions on the appearance of the king and his alleged medical conditions, as well as various suggestions for an interpretation of the perplexing evidence. She draws conclusions on the basis of current research and on the appearance of Akhenaten, but with the focus of interest away from the genital area to settle on the shape of the belly-button, corrections in the area of the eyes, details of the knees, and so on. Half a century ago the “sexless” statues were regarded as obscure, laden with symbolic meaning. No pharaoh had ever been sculpted in this way. The only deity similarly represented was Hapi, the Nile god associated with water and fertility, who had bulbous breasts but who always wore a kilt so an association was made. Studies on the colossi have come a long way since then. Some have attributed homosexual inclinations to the king; others have noted (for what it is worth) that his bulbous breasts are carved with male nipples. It has been noted that the beard is in its original position on a number of colossi, being made in one piece with the rest of the statue, but that on one “sexless” statue there is a deep cavity under the chin, “carved so carefully that it cannot be a mark of a beard having been chopped off, but rather a beard having been affixed separately; either as an afterthought, or because of some damage or change in plan during the initial stages of the work”. The depth of the research carried out by MANNICHE is little short of amazing.

“The Karnak colossi have been subject to an astounding degree of negative comment ever since they resurfaced some eighty years ago”, observes MANNICHE, who continues that scholars are faced with a dilemma that affects their aesthetic criticism. Are we, she asks, to judge them by today’s standards and limit ourselves to admiring form, material, colour, size and craftsmanship? Or may we attempt to transport ourselves back into the company of those Egyptians who lived three thousand five hundred years ago? The element of novelty, undoubtedly experienced in antiquity, may be dimmed by the fact that we cosmopolitans of today have seen faces faintly reminiscent of Amarna art before, for example in the paintings of MODIGLIANI and distorted bodies in the bronzes of GIACOMETTI...but in the context of ancient Egypt this has helped neither the appreciation nor the understanding of Akhenaten’s intentions. MANNICHE writes in her introduction that her book had, as its starting point, an ongoing study on sexuality in ancient Egyptian society, and that this necessitated an attempt “to disentangle not just the mythology of the colossi, but also the fundamental issue of their number”, which turned into a project in itself. And a remarkable project it has proved to be, well worth publication. It seems that 3,500 years after the event, we continue to live with the fact that there is no final answer to our questions about the meaning of the colossi.

My only criticism is that the information in MANNICHE’s extremely valuable catalogue, derived from various sources, painstakingly recorded, and accompanied by appropriate images, comes at the beginning of the book, and
not where catalogues belong, at the end. This is what I meant by the first sentence of this article. Had Chapter I, on the Discovery of the sculptures, been followed by their Interpretation, Aesthetics, and Pathology, rather than picking up the story only after plowing through 70 pages of Catalogue after the Introduction, it would have made for better understanding. MANNICHE’s book is more than a valuable record; it is a worthwhile story. My recommendation to potential readers, however, is to read the first 15 pages of the book, then skip to page 85 and read on, flipping back to the Catalogue (in Chapter 2) for photographs, line drawings, excavation report(s), location, place(s) where exhibited, bibliography, and description. (Jill Kamil, “Controversial issues”, Al-Ahram Weekly, October 28, 2010).

Marie-Cécile BRUWIER
Héliopolis

The Fond Mercator, a renowned Belgium publishing house specializing in art books, has recently published “Heliopolis,” a 240-page richly illustrated coffee table book that studies the different historic stages of Cairo’s north-eastern neighbourhood. Edited by Marie-Cécile BRUWIER, a Belgian archaeologist, Egyptologist and art historian, and Anne VAN LOO, architect and urban planner, the book presents a number of research papers by contributors from France, Belgium and Egypt to illustrate the evolution of Heliopolis through three main stages of its history: ancient times, the Middle Ages and the beginning of the 20th century’s new Heliopolis. BRUWIER explained at a press conference last month that she envisioned this publication as “a global and coherent presentation of Heliopolis, which since time immemorial, has been a place for cultural exchange and meeting.”

In Pharaonic times, Heliopolis, which was called “Iounou,” had religious importance as it housed the country’s largest sun temple. The city’s major god was Re, the sun god. This later gave birth to the Greek appellation of the city as Heliopolis, the “City of the Sun.” “All the great philosophers and travellers of the era – PLATOON, PYTHAGORAS and HERODOTUS just to name a few – paid a visit to Heliopolis because the temple hosted one of the world’s most important libraries,” said BRUWIER, whose acute interest in the neighbourhood led her to collect data and archives on Heliopolis for the past 20 years. Unlike most cities in Egypt, Heliopolis was not built on the banks of the Nile, but rather in the middle of the desert along a channel that ran from the Nile to the North Eastern part of the country. The neighbourhood was abandoned at the end of the Pharaonic era, it is assumed owing to earthquakes and fires that ravaged the city at the time. “The religious importance of Heliopolis continued beyond the Pharaonic period,” explained BRUWIER. “An area in Heliopolis called Matariyya is believed to have provided shelter for the Holy Family, and since then it became place for pilgrimage for Western Catholics.”

Contemporary Heliopolis is late Belgian entrepreneur and industrialist Edouard EMPAIN’s magnificent project. He decided, at the beginning of the
20th century, to build a city-garden in the middle of the desert linked to the Cairo metropolis through an efficient network of transportation. The influential Belgian industrialist, who created the Paris metro, partnered with Bosho Nubâr Pasha, an Egyptian-Armenian property owner residing in Cairo, to establish a company under Egyptian jurisdiction through which they acquired land for their new city. “The surface they bought was equivalent to the size of Cairo at the time,” explained BRUWIER, pointing out that Empain hired a Belgian Egyptologist, Jean CAPART, to excavate the area to make sure that the new Heliopolis would not be built on fragments of the ancient city. “EMPAIN had this idea of an Oasis town, a haven of peace that would disgorge the bustling capital,” said BRUWIER. The architecture of the new city offered an unprecedented hybrid of a European conception and a clever interpretation of Islamic architecture. “A new material was used to build the city, the sand-lime brick, which is composed of up to 90% of sand mixed with water and chalk, materials that were plentiful in this desert area,” explained BRUWIER.

The two buildings that have become landmarks in Heliopolis – the Palace Hotel and the Baron EMPAIN or “Hindu villa,” that became later known as the “Hindu Palace – were built at an early stage. The first became the most luxurious hotel in Africa and had a fantastic view of the pyramids from the dining room, while the second became the most original and aesthetically accomplished villa in the neighbourhood. BRUWIER explained that EMPAIN visited Paris’s Universal Exhibition of 1900, which featured a complex of several buildings by the Orientalist French Architect Alexandre MARCEL. It included three towers: a Japanese tower, a Portuguese tower and the Hindu tower. EMPAIN instructed MARCEL to build his Hindu villa in Heliopolis as an exact replica of the Hindu tower exhibited in Paris. This house, which remains a beacon of architectural history, had been neglected for 50 years before it was acquired by the Egyptian State only a few weeks before the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of Heliopolis in 2005. Negotiations are already ongoing with the head of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, Zâhî Hawwâs, to define the role that the Hindu Palace could play in the future. The restoration works are already underway, and BRUWIER hopes that the villa will be opened to the public soon, or even turned into a museum on the history of Heliopolis. (Louise SARANT, “Heliopolis, now and forever”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, December 2, 2010).

Donald P. RYAN : Egypt 1250 BC. A Travelers Companion
(…) For those who have ever wondered what life was like when the Egyptian empire was the heart of the civilized world, some answers can be found in Donald P. RYAN’s book, Egypt 1250 BC: A Travelers Companion. Published this year by AUC Press, Egypt 1250 BC takes the reader back in time to an age when Egypt was “prosperous, energetic, and full of ambition.” Written in the style of a contemporary travel guide, RYAN’s book describes the sights and sounds of a theoretical journey up the Nile River during Ramesses II’s fifty-fourth year of reign. The expedition begins with crossing Egypt’s borders with Canaan (Palestine) and continuing along the Ways of Horus, a desert trail used frequently by merchants and soldiers, extending west to
the Nile delta. Along the way, stops are made at major points, such as Pi-Ramesses, Iunu (Heliopolis), and Men-Nefer (Memphis), continuing south to Upper Nubia and the Nile cataracts. On each of the stops, RYAN, an established Egyptologist, describes notable sightseeing opportunities and regional traditional customs, especially in terms of religious practices and local deities. There isn’t much in the way of elaborate detail; Egypt 1250 BC is a travel book, not an archaeology textbook. Marketplaces and major temples are all given an obligatory mention, but too often RYAN only describes the physical appearance of a given location or lists facts, such as that armed guards would never allow a lowly tourist into the sacred temples or that upper-class citizens would never invite a “wretched” outsider into their home, without exploring their implications.

Despite these shortcomings, Egypt 1250 BC is still an entertaining and informative read, and does manage to provide some intriguing insight into a different age. The opening chapters serve as an accessible and practical introduction to the old-world setting, with RYAN explaining the barter-based economy – you can, for example, trade two new skirts for a donkey and a jug of beer, depending on the quality of the donkey – as well as local customs and fashion trends, like tubular sheath dresses which were “popular with fashionable ladies.” RYAN also includes helpful tips on what to pack, whom to avoid, and how to deal with constant police interrogations and military checkpoints, of which there are many. Apparently, some things never change.

Overall, Egypt 1250 BC seems like an alluring and wildly fun time. With annual riverside festivals that last for three weeks, an unprecedented appreciation for the arts, and massive orgies in honour of a cat-headed goddess, it's unsurprising that people back then modelled their conceptions of the afterlife on the lives they were already leading. RYAN also duly notes the dangers of the time (disease, war and, of course, crocodiles) but understandably spends little time dwelling on them. The goal is to entertain and educate, in that order, and when it comes to the former, the book is hard to fault, with RYAN filling the pages with ancient remedies, poetry, and amusing historical anecdotes, such as the following royal summon, written by king Pepi II (Neferkare) upon hearing that one of his scribes has captured a “dancing pygmy” while on an expedition to Nubia: “When the pygmy goes down with thee into the vessel, appoint excellent people, who shall be beside him on each side of the vessel; take care lest he fall into the water. When he sleeps at night appoint excellent people, who shall sleep beside him in his tent, inspect him ten times a night. My majesty desires to see this pygmy more than the gifts of Sinai and of Punt.”

Although it contains some good information and comes from an authoritative writer, Egypt 1250 BC is not meant to be taken too seriously. RYAN, for example, repeatedly gets a kick out of the male fertility god and his exaggerated genitalia. His book may not uncover any secrets of the ancient past, or solve any of the mysteries behind the legacy of enigmatic and eccentric pharaohs, but it will teach you how to say “beer for everyone!” in Ancient Egyptian, and “my donkey is ill” for the mornings after those wild orgies. (‘Ali ‘Abd al-Muhsin, “The good ancient days: Donald P. RYAN’s ‘Egypt 1250 BC’”, al-Masri al-Yawm, October 20, 2010).
Just imagine: a world without cancer. It’s a tantalising thought, recently floated by researchers at Manchester University in the UK. That world may well have existed, but in the distant past, according to their survey of hundreds of mummies from Egypt and South America. The researchers found that only one mummy had clearly identifiable signs of cancer. The study suggested that industrialization, pollution and the ills of modern life are to blame for the epidemic of cancer now seen sweeping around the globe.

Monday morning I went to the mummy room in Cairo’s cavernous Egyptian Museum to have a look for myself. They looked pretty rough, more than 3,000 years after their prime, and not being an expert I just gawked like the tourists who were filing through. But top Egyptologist and head of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities Zâhî Hawwâs, never at a loss for words, said the Manchester University study focused on non-royal mummies, and left out the people who lived the good life. “If you were a pharaoh,” he told me, “you would get lots of diseases, because you ate well, you ate meat all the time, it’s fat food, and you never took care of your health.” He pointed to the desiccated mummy of the famed Queen Hatshepsut, who masqueraded as a male pharaoh due to popular prejudices at the time. Poor Queen Hatshepsut suffered from arthritis, diabetes and bad teeth, and is believed to have died of bone cancer. Ancient Egyptian physicians were renowned for their skill, but those skills only went so far. Cancer or no cancer, the Grim Reaper came often and came early in Ancient Egypt. Although the pharaohs and others at the top of Egypt’s social pyramid tended to live longer, the average life expectancy for men was less than 40, and women tended to die even younger because of childbirth. The common folk survived on simple fare, said Hawwâs: “It was a good diet because they were eating bread and garlic and drinking beer, beer all the time.” Which to some might sound like an attractive set of staples, but as Salima IKRAM, an Egyptologist at the American University in Cairo, points out, the lot of the ordinary Egyptian was hardly idyllic. “They suffered from all kinds of parasitic diseases, including schistosomiasis (a water-borne disease still common in Egypt). And you can see it depicted in tomb decorations, because the men, particularly men who deal with water, particularly fishermen and collectors of reeds, you see them with distended bellies, enlarged penises, and receding hair lines.” There was little regard for workplace safety. Back then, you worked, then you died. “If you’re working in a tomb, for example, all that dust is going to get to you, as you grind down limestone, as you carve statues, as you inhale the smoke either from cooking fires or little lamps that help illuminate your work as you build temples or decorate them,” says Dr IKRAM. “So all these things were real killers for the ancient Egyptians.” Other hazards, she said, included venomous snakes and stampeding hippos, the latter reincarnated in the taxi drivers of modern Cairo who, I suspect, have a higher kill ratio than their four-legged antecedents. So, yes, cancer may not have been a common cause of death in Ancient Egypt. There were plenty of other fatal options. And as much as I’d like to jump into a time machine and see what life back then was really like, I think I’ll take my chances with modern Egypt, taxi drivers notwithstanding. (“Cancer rare among
ancient Egyptian”, The Egyptian Gazette, October 26, 2010).

Momie de
Toutankhamon

Legendary pharaoh Tutankhamun was probably killed by the genetic blood disorder sickle cell disease, German scientists said Wednesday, rejecting earlier research that suggested he died of malaria. The team at the Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine in the northern city of Hamburg questioned the conclusions of a major Egyptian study released in February on the enigmatic boy-king’s early demise. That examination, involving DNA tests and computerized tomography (CT) scans on Tutankhamun’s mummy, said he died of malaria after suffering a fall, putting to rest the theory that he was murdered. But the German researchers said in a letter published online Wednesday by the Journal of the American Medical Association that closer scrutiny of his foot bones pointed to sickle cell disease, in which red blood cells become dangerously misshaped.

“We question the reliability of the genetic data presented in this (the Egyptian) study and therefore the validity of the authors’ conclusions,” the letter said. “(The) radiological signs are compatible with osteopathologic lesions seen in sickle cell disease (SCD), a hematological disorder that occurs at gene carrier rates of nine percent to 22 percent in inhabitants of Egyptian oases.” Tutankhamun’s death at about 19, after 10 years of rule between 1333 and 1324 BC, has long been a source of speculation. One of the most common genetic disorders, sickle cell disease causes blood cells to take the shape of a crescent instead of being smooth and round, thereby blocking blood flow and leading to chronic pain, infections and tissue death. The researchers called for further DNA tests on Tutankhamun’s mummy for a definitive cause of death. (AFP, “King Tut died of blood disorder, say German researchers”, The Daily News Egypt, June 24, 2010).

California Science Center : Mummies of the World

The mummy of a man from Egypt and dated around 408 B.C. is on display at the media preview for the world premiere of the Mummies of the World exhibition. (AFP Photo/ Robyn Beck)

From an ornate Egyptian sarcophagus to the striking preserved remains of a howler monkey wearing a feathered skirt, a new exhibition in Los Angeles is unraveling the mysteries of mummies. The “Mummies of the World” exhibit at the California Science Center is being billed as the largest single showing of mummies in history and aims to throw new light on ancient funeral rituals and the work of “mummyologists.” The exhibition comprises dozens of mummified men, women, children and animals drawn from all four corners of the globe – some embalmed, some naturally preserved – as well as a treasure trove of archeological artifacts. The exhibition was conceived shortly...
after the creation of the German Mummy Project, when 20 long-forgotten mummies were discovered gathering dust in a vault of the Reiss Engelhorn Museum in Mannheim in 2004. More than 20 European institutions have contributed artifacts to the exhibition, which opened in Los Angeles on Thursday and will later tour the United States for three years.

“This exhibition represents an extraordinary blend of science and history,” Jeffrey RUDOLPH, president of the California Science Center, said. “It's a great example of how cutting-edge, hands-on science can give us a better understanding of both the past and the present, and of how nature and culture have come together all over the world.” The exhibition also places emphasis on the techniques used to glean information on mummies, such as genetic analysis, carbon dating, magnetic resonance imagery (MRI) scans. Those research techniques allow scientists to learn about “the anatomy, health, food or causes of death of the mummies,” as well as their lives, history, and culture, said Albert ZINK, director of the Institute for Mummies and the Iceman in Bolzano, Italy. But the analysis of mummies is not only of historical value, according to ZINK, insisting it has concrete applications which can be used today. “What we have learned through mummies about the mutation and change of the tuberculosis bacteria may help scientists eliminate the deadly disease in the future,” ZINK said.

The exhibition also seeks to emphasize the use of mummies as a global practice found on five continents, running contrary to the popular public perception of it being a technique exclusive to ancient Egypt. Some of the most extraordinary exhibits hail from Peru, notably a baby dating from 4,500 BC and a seated woman dating from 1,400 who still has a mane of thick, black hair. “There have been more studies and interest about Egyptian mummies because there is a lot of documentation about death rituals in Ancient Egypt. But we have scientific proof that mummification took place in South America before Egypt,” said Heather GILL•FRERKING, Director of Science and Education for the “Mummies of the World” exhibition. Among the more unusual exhibits is a Hungarian family discovered in Hungary in 1994 in the crypt of a church north of Budapest. The bodies of three members of the family, born between 1765 and 1800, were preserved naturally because of the cold, dry air of the crypt and the pine oil used to make their coffins. (Romain RAYNALDY, “Secrets of Mummies unraveled in California”, The Daily News Egypt, July 4, 2010). ---

II -MUSÉES

Le secrétaire général du CSA, Dr Zâhi Hawwâs, annonce que les musées cairote ouvriront – à la suite des congés du Bayram – des classes d’apprentissage de l’art inspiré des vieilles civilisations, de la musique et des langues anciennes. Dans un communiqué adressé par le CSA aujourd’hui, Hawwâs précise que ces activités visent à encourager les enfants et à les inciter à visiter les musées et les sites archéologiques.

Le ministre de la Culture, Fârûq Husnî, a débloqué la somme de 150 millions de livres égyptiennes pour financer la construction du musée archéologique de Hurghada dont l’inauguration est prévue fin 2012. Le secrétaire général du CSA, Dr Zâhî Hawwâs, a souligné la nécessité de créer sur la mer Rouge un musée de haut niveau reflétant l’importance de la civilisation égyptienne à travers les siècles. À l’occasion de l’inauguration de ce musée, le masque de Toutankhamon y sera exposé durant 3 mois. La conception architecturale de ce musée est inspirée par la forme des fossiles marins. (‘Imâd Rashîd, « 150 millions de L.E. pour la création du musée archéologique de Hurghada », Watani du 24 octobre 2010). Le secrétaire général du CSA, Dr Zâhî Hawwâs, a approuvé le déblocage d’une somme de 8 millions de livres égyptiennes destinée à parachever les travaux de construction du nouveau musée archéologique de Kafr al-Shaykh. Ce musée, dont le coût global s’élève à 15 millions de L.E., sera prochainement inauguré après dix ans d’attente pour recueillir les pièces archéologiques dispersées sur plusieurs sites et entrepôts archéologiques du gouvernorat. La directrice générale des Antiquités de Kafr al-Shaykh, Qadriyya Kîlânî, souligne la difficulté de rassembler et de transférer les pièces antiques en provenance de 78 tell archéologiques dans les villes et villages de Kafr al-Shaykh. (Muhammad Sulaymân, « 8 millions de L.E. pour achever le musée archéologique de Kafr al-Shaykh », al-Yawm al-Sâbi‘ du 25 octobre 2010).

Le ministère de la Culture a décidé de transférer d’ici à six mois 10 mille pièces pharaoniques du Musée Égyptien vers le musée national de la Civilisation égyptienne en cours de construction. Ensuite, le ministère procédera au transfert d’autres collections d’Antiquités romaine, grecque, copte et islamique, afin d’être exposées dans ce futur musée qui retracera l’évolution de la civilisation égyptienne à travers les différentes époques. Soulignons que le ministre de la Culture, Fârûq Husnî, a nommé il y a environ un mois Walîd ‘Abd al-Khâliq directeur exécutif de ce projet. Il est chargé de suivre le déroulement des travaux de construction de ce musée dont le coût s’élève à 600 millions de livres égyptiennes entièrement financées par le ministère de la Culture via le Nubian Antiquities Salvage Fund. (Dînî ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « Transfert de 10 000 pièces antiques vers le musée national de la Civilisation », al-Yawm al-Sâbi‘ du 17 novembre 2010).

Dans une première déclaration journalistique depuis sa nomination à la tête du Musée Égyptien, Dr Târiq al-‘Awadî a souligné l’encombrement du sous-sol du musée par des milliers de scellés qui y sont entreposés par les différentes autorités judiciaires depuis des dizaines d’années. Al-‘Awadî souhaite la levée de ces scellés qui entravent la poursuite du projet de réaménagement entrepris actuellement dans le sous-sol. Ce projet englobe aussi bien l’enregistrement de toutes les pièces archéologiques que l’installation de nouveaux bureaux pour les archéologues. Al-‘Awadî a précisé qu’en accord avec le secrétaire général du CSA, Dr Zâhî Hawwâs, une attention particulière sera accordée aux conservateurs du musée qui déploient d’énormes efforts et dont la rémunération ne correspond pas à l’accueil quotidiennement de 10 milles visiteurs et dont le flux s’intensifie notamment au cours des congés et des fêtes, ce qui constitue une pression sur tous les employés du musée. (‘Alâ’ al-Dîn Zâhir, « Le nouveau directeur du Musée Égyptien : l’entassement de milliers de scellés dans le sous-sol du musée reste un problème non résolu », Ruz al-Yûsuf du 26 décembre 2010).

Musée Égyptien

Following 16 months of fundamental reconstruction, the third phase of the Egyptian museum development project was inaugurated last week. The aim of the project is to provide more services and facilities for the museum’s patrons, including the addition of a new visitor’s route and extension of the hours of operation until 10pm. The museum is now equipped with a brand new visitor centre that includes a striking bookstore, cafeteria, restaurant and a children’s museum. This centre is located on the west side of the museum building and will be accessible by means of the museum’s new tour route. A permanent open-air exhibition on the east side of the museum has also been established, displaying a number of sarcophagi and statuary and architectural elements from ancient Egyptian tombs and temples. On completion of this development project visitors will enter the museum from the main entrance gate in Tahrîr Square and exit via the side gate next to the Mariette mausoleum. This phase of the Egyptian Museum Development Project is one part of a multi-phase plan to transform the museum into a beautiful space for the display of ancient Egyptian art. The project will be complete after parts of the existing Egyptian Museum collection have been transferred to the Grand Egyptian Museum overlooking the Gîza Plateau, which is now in its initial stages.
The man responsible for the museum section at the Supreme Council of Antiquity's secretary-general's office is Muhammad Mahmûd, who says that the Egyptian Museum basement has also been given a welcome face-lift as part of the project. It has been transformed into a research centre for scientific testing, equipped with a DNA processing laboratory, documentation centre and administrative sector. New, high-tech showcases are also provided, as well as sensors to control security and humidity levels. Since it opened in 1902, the neoclassical edifice of the Egyptian Museum has been the home of all ancient Egyptian artefacts unearthed at the nation's archaeological sites. This has led to the overcrowding of its various galleries, even down to the basement, which for most of its history was used as a storeroom.

Fârûq Husnî, the minister of culture, told Al-Ahram Weekly that the redesigning project would transform the Egyptian Museum into a “cultural lighthouse” that would help Egyptians to “rediscover the meaning of their identity and the features of the Egyptian personality”. It will also refresh the museum’s role as an educational institution that will help revive the cultural awareness of the Egyptian people. Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), said the project aimed at redesigning the museum both inside and out. “Redesigning the Egyptian Museum in Tahrîr will re-envision the space in which the museum’s collection will be displayed, and develop exhibitions with maximum educational impact on the public,” Hawwâs said.

A new scenario will be organised and a detailed plan of the new displays within the exhibition space will be implemented. The renovation will accommodate the modernisation of the museum’s technological and structural facilities. Improvements to the museum’s facilities will include the installation of new security and fire safety systems, as well as an air-conditioning system and a lighting system to include natural and artificial light sources. Updated communications technology will encompass connections for access to external and internal data networks. Hawwâs said that the project would also include the implementation of a number of training courses to enhance the professional skills of the museum’s curators and restorers. The former director of the Egyptian Museum, Wafâ’ al-Siddîq, said areas of the project would give more attention to personnel working in the museum’s library and administration, and would help enhance their skills in cataloguing procedures, services to patrons and the conservation of library materials. (Nevine El-Aref, “Revamping Tahrîr’s treasure house”, Al-Ahram Weekly, December 23, 2010. Voir également Dinâ ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « Ouverture du musée jusqu’à 22 H à partir de demain », al-Yawm al-Sâbi’ du 14 décembre ; Muhammad ‘Abd al-Mu’tî, « Le Musée Égyptien accueille ses visiteurs jusqu’à 22 H », al-Ahrâm du 15 décembre).

Grand Musée Égyptien

Egypt’s massive new museum for its famous antiquities now has a power plant, a fire station and its own conservation center, and over the next two years it will become home to some 100,000 artifacts, officials said Monday. A partial opening for the 120-acre museum complex, which will house
King Tutankhamun's famed mummy and golden burial effects and a replica of his tomb, is set for the fall of 2012. Plans for the museum, which will replace the century-old building visited by millions annually in Cairo's heaving downtown, were first conceived in 2002 and it will display more than twice as many artifacts as its predecessor. The museum will eventually house 100,000 artifacts, said Muhammed Ghunaym, the project's technical consultant said. Tens of thousands of artifacts are currently locked away unseen in the old museum due to lack of space to display them. Egypt's first lady Suzanne Mubarak on Monday inaugurated the first two phases of the $600 million Grand Museum of Egypt, which is located at the foot of the Giza pyramids.

The main achievement so far is the construction of the new conservation center to restore damaged antiquities and already 122 conservators are restoring and preparing 6,800 artifacts that will one day be showcased in the Grand Museum. A documentation unit is also working to create a computerized database for all the artifacts. The conservation center is "designed to be the largest such center in the world, in terms of the services it offers and the number of laboratories," Ghunaym said. "It is built to restore Egyptian antiquities but also to be a regional conservation center." Established with Japanese technical assistance, the center includes 12 laboratories for restoring, scanning and studying mummies as well as artifacts made from pottery, wood, textiles and glass. Staff are also receiving training in Japan. Shâdya Kindîlî, the head of the committee overseeing the museum, said Japan has provided a $300 million loan for the museum, while the Egyptian culture ministry will provide $150 million. Some $27 million were donated to the museum, she said. Over 30 firms have already submitted tenders for building the main galleries of the museum. (Sarah El Deeb, "Initial stages of new Egypt museum completed", The Daily News Egypt, June 15, 2010. Voir également Muhammad 'Abd al-Mu'tî, « Husnî : achèvement en 2012 du plus grand musée archéologique au monde », al-Ahrâm du 7 novembre ; Dinâ 'Abd al-'Alîm, « Le ministère de la Culture lance un appel d'offres pour la réalisation de la dernière phase du GEM », al-Yawm al-Sâbi' du 8 décembre).

The Ministry of Culture opened a bid early this week for the four specialised companies that won an international competition to carry out the third and final phase of the construction of the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM). This phase includes the construction of the museum's main building and its inner galleries. Culture Minister Fârûq Husnî expects that the construction work, which will begin in February following approval by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), sponsor of the GEM, will last for 26 months. He says that in order to choose the best and most qualified company for the GEM's construction, bid files will be distributed among the four chosen companies to be studied and to help them in proposing their offers.

In June this year, in partnership with JICA, the first two phases of the project - including a power plant, fire station and fully-equipped conservation centre with 12 laboratories and four storage galleries - were launched by Mrs Suzanne Mubarak. Husnî described the museum as a mega project for
Egypt, one of the “world’s most ambitious projects” and “the museum of the century”. Building a state-of-the-art museum near the Pyramids of Giza, Husni adds, will create the best environment for the display of the priceless treasures of ancient Egypt. There will be more space, better lighting and more information available “to do justice to our heritage”.

Fârûq ‘Abd al-Salâm, supervisor of the culture minister’s office, pointed out that the $600-million GEM project would also encompass a conference centre with an auditorium for 1,000, catering to theatrical performances, concerts, conferences and business meetings. The main auditorium will be supplemented by seminar rooms, meeting halls, a multi-purpose hall suitable for a variety of events, along with an open plan gallery for accompanying exhibitions. A special section for children will be created in order to encourage young people to learn about their heritage. The galleries will display objects drawn from the prehistoric up to the early Roman periods.

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of Tutankhamun; Hetepheres, mother of King Khufu; Yuya and Thuya, the grandfathers of Pharaoh Akhenaten; Senedjem, the principal artist of Pharaoh Ramses II; the royal mummies and the treasures of Tanis will all be on permanent display. A 7,000-square-metre commercial area with retail shops, cafeterias, restaurants, and leisure and recreational activities is planned for the ground floor level. There will also be a 250-seat cinema.

Development of the 117-feddan GEM site overlooking the Giza Plateau is designed to make more than a nodding pass to the surrounding desert landscape. The museum complex will centre on the Dunal Eye, an area containing the main exhibition spaces. From this central hub a network of streets, piazzas and bridges will link the museum’s many sections. The design is by Shih-Fu PENG of the Dublin firm Heneghan, winners of the international architectural competition held in 2003. According to PENG, the museum, which will be partly ringed by a desert wall containing half a million semi-precious stones, will act as a link between modern Cairo and the ancient Pyramids. (Nevine El-Aref, “A gem in the landscape”, Al-Ahram Weekly, December 16, 2010. Voir également Reuters, “Firms vie to build Egypt's $550m museum”, The Egyptian Gazette, July 13; Dinâ ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « Le ministère de la Culture sélectionne une entreprise pour la IIIe fase du Grand Musée Égyptien », al-Yawm al-Sâbi‘ du 23 octobre; ‘Isâm ‘Umrân, « 4 entreprises internationales dans la compétition finale pour la création du GEM », al-Gumhûriyya du 24 octobre; Fathiyya al-Dakhâkhînî, “Culture Ministry solicits bids for Grand Egypt Museum’s final stage”, al-Masîrî al-Yawm, December 8).

Musée national de la Civilisation égyptienne

The scene as one steps into the 33-feddan site of the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation (NMEC) overlooking ‘Ayn al-Sira Lake in the heart of Egypt’s first Islamic Capital, al-Fustât, is totally different from how it was only a year ago. The NMEC’s main building is nearing completion along with its galleries, corridors and various exhibition sections. Despite still showing some concrete underlay, the floors and staircases are encased in gray marble and the lighting and security systems are all installed. To
check on the progress of the latest construction and organising the work phases at the NMEC, the culture minister, Fârûq Husnî, the project supervisor Fârûq 'Abd al-Salâm and Muhammad Abû Si‘ayda, head of the Cultural Development Fund, embarked last Tuesday on a tour of the museum's various sections. During the tour Husnî said that work was going according to the time schedule drawn up in collaboration with technical and museological assistance from UNESCO and the NMEC official inauguration scheduled for July 2011. He described the museum as “an exploration of Egypt’s history through a display of the history not only of the monuments but the human beings as well.” On display will be 150,000 artefacts carefully selected from the principal museums in Egypt: the Egyptian, Islamic and Coptic museums in Cairo; the Graeco-Roman and Alexandria National museums in Alexandria; and the Luxor Museum; as well as major archaeological storehouses such as those on the Gîza Plateau and at Saqqâra.

Husnî told Al-Ahram Weekly that the exhibits featuring the skills and achievements that Egypt’s history has witnessed over the ages would be organised within the museum’s walls. In addition to the chosen collection, the NMEC will house a whole set of monuments, among them are the Seboua Temple of Ramses II — now on Lake Nâsîr; a complete façade of a Fatimid sabil; two columns from King Djoser's temple at Saqqâra; the collection of royal mummies; and the mummy of the ancient Egyptian artist Sanejem which is now on display at the Egyptian Museum in Tahrîr Square. Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, told the Weekly that the royal mummies will be displayed in such a way to illustrate the different personalities and achievements within the social context. These would include models of relevant temples, tombs and obelisks. ‘Abd al-Salâm explained that the River Nile, handwriting, handicrafts, society and faith were the five main component themes of the new museum. As Egypt’s source of life and stability, the Nile effectively gave birth to the Egyptian civilisation, which was based essentially on agriculture. In the Nile pavilion, he continued, visitors would be able to traverse the various epochs beginning with pre-history right through the Pharaonic, Coptic, Islamic and modern periods. One of the most important subjects will be the section giving the history of Lake Nâsîr; its creation, its importance and its role in changing the irrigation system and agricultural methods of Egypt. The irrigation system exhibition, ‘Abd al-Sâlâm said, would start with the reign of King Mena, founder of the First Dynasty, and continue until the time of Senusert III of the Middle Kingdom. In this pavilion, a section will be dedicated to Egypt’s flora and fauna. In the handwriting section visitors will see the scientific aspects of the nation’s evolution in science through astrology, mathematics and medicine. Successive eras have witnessed Egypt’s economic prosperity, which helped expand the Egyptian market and developed industrial life in Egypt. Various kinds of handicrafts will be on show relating to copper and other metals as well as sculpting, carving and architecture. The various echelons of Egyptian society and its governmental system will be explained in the ethnographical section, along with the different faiths. The outdoor exhibits, ‘Abd al-Sâlâm said, would include several of the discoveries made
during the inspection digs. Among these were a Fatimid laundry found in the 1960s by Le Service Égyptien des Antiquités; the oldest existing plan of an Islamic house dating back to 75 AH; and blocks bearing hieroglyphic inscriptions. These blocks were eventually used in the construction of other edifices on this site. The oldest dyeing factory ever found with more than 100 clay dyeing pots will be displayed in the outdoor exhibition. As for ancient Egyptian artefacts found in the debris, such as the udjet (eye of Horus) and scarab amulets, these will be placed in a special showcase for objects recovered from the sand. To attract more Egyptian visitors a commercial zone along with a cafeteria, restaurants, a cinema and a theatre will be installed in the museum garden. Bazaars and shops are also planned. Plans for the NMEC were in fact drawn up in 1990, but the first phase of the project began only in 2002 after the laying of the pyramid-shaped foundation stone. The museum has grand ambitions — it is intended to address several periods of Egypt’s great past. Space was originally allowed for a museum of civilisation in what is now the parking area of the Cairo Opera House, but since this proved too small the idea remained dormant until 1997 when, during an Iftār (Ramadan breaking of fast) with the minister of interior, Husnî was so impressed with the panoramic view from the edge of the ‘Ayn al-Sîra Lake that he suggested to archaeologists and experts from UNESCO that it might make a suitable location for the museum. All the authorities concerned agreed, describing it as a perfect site not only because of its attractive backdrop but also its distinguished history. In addition to being at the core of the former city of Fustât, beside neighbouring religious and antiquities-rich Old Cairo with its ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Âas Mosque, Hanging Church and Bani Ezra synagogue, it is close to Ma‘âdî, an important site in the pre-dynastic epoch, as well as to the Citadel of Salâh al-Dîn. The stage for the NMEC was set in 2000, with the Cairo governorate removing all encroachment on the site and offering the Ministry of Culture the 33 feddans they needed. In 2002 Mrs Suzanne Mubârak laid the foundation stone, and in 2004 the first phase of the project was completed. This aimed at preparing the site for construction work by carrying out a routine but extensive pre-building inspection to check if any antiquities were buried below ground. In addition, an up-to-date storehouse, similar to the ones at the Louvre in Paris and the British Museum in London, has been built on site. Such museological storage, with a very sophisticated security system connected directly with the police commissariat, says Sally Halâwa, coordinator of the NMEC project, is the first of its kind to be built in Egypt. To access it magnetic cards from two inspectors are required. To tighten security measures and abort any attempt at theft, each showcase has its own code connected to a special device, which in turn registers the time and the ID code of the curator who opens it. A laboratory to restore pieces in the museum’s chosen collection was also among the achievements in the first phase. The second phase of the project, the actual construction, began in 2007. (Nevine El-Aref, “Civilising mission”, Al-Ahram Weekly, August 19, 2010. Voir également Dinâ ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « Le ministre de la Culture inspecte demain les travaux du musée de la Civilisation », al-Yawm al-Sâbi’ du 8 août ; “Civilization museum to be opened in July 2011”, Egypt State Information Service, August 10 ; ‘Isâm ‘Umrân, « Inauguration fin 2011 du musée national de la
Musée des Carrosses royaux
Whether it is a future museum, an attempt to disguise a nuclear plant, a secret government building, or a permanent construction site, the constant scaffolding around downtown’s theoretical Royal Chariots Museum always made me ask the same
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question: when will I get to see the chariots? As a kid growing up in the area and riding in the back of my father’s Peugeot in constant traffic jams on the way home from school, I would observe the project daily. It was, without fail, under construction, and progress was very, very slow. With the active imagination of a middle school boy I envisioned the supposed contents of the building: fancy, colourful chariots driven by men with pointy moustaches and baggy Ottoman pants. Ornaments decorating the carriage windows rattling as the uniformed doorman stops the horse and pulls down the extra steps for the king or the queen. I could imagine streets of cobblestone trodden by horse-drawn carriages on a much more spacious commute than the now-crowded streets of Cairo. Each year, my journeys to school remained the same, and so did the museum. But the snail’s pace of the construction only made me more curious about the contents that was being so cruelly held from me, and more frustrated. Semester to semester, I’d stop to check the progress of the museum covered in scaffolding. Constant workers, a hill of sand, wheelbarrows, cement mixers, and a huge sign with the name of the contractor were the elements of the museum's daytime scene, its only exhibition.
In high school, the museum was still not complete. But I was older and more mature, and so was my imagination. I no longer imagined bare-chested pharaohs wielding their bows, racing through a cloud of falling arrows. Now, I favoured government conspiracy. Why was it taking ten years to renovate or build such a small museum? The so-called Royal Chariots Museum must not be a museum at all, I decided, but posing as a museum-to-be. In reality, it is most certainly an intelligence operation unit in place to secure the neighbouring 39-story Ministry of Foreign Affairs skyscraper. Surely secret detectives chose a brilliant spot to protect the government building from the crowds of noisy, working class inhabitants of Bulāq Abū al-‘Ilā. Back in the nineties, Egypt was swept by a series of bombings and assassinations. Attacks took places in schools, cafes, and official locations. Egypt’s former house speaker was one victim. All this seemed proper justification for the camouflage fortress. How many chariot-obsessed Cairenes would be asking about the museum’s opening day, anyway? This Bond•flick theory made a lot of sense to me until I graduated from high school. Away from the construction site, I forgot about the museum for years. I moved houses and sometimes cities and my route was missing its landmark mysterious kingly chariot
Now, more than twenty years since I was first acquainted with this museum under renovation, little has changed. The same scaffolding, the same mounds of tools inside the lobby and maybe even the same signs are there. The day before writing this story I passed by the museum. It was the same white it had been stained a few years ago. Some dozen gypsum horse heads now decorate the outer walls of the building, probably to reassure the public that someday the place will indeed have chariots. But now there are hints that the museum is coming to life. And now I know a little bit of the real story. As it turns out, instead of the pharaonic chariots I dreamed of as a boy, the Royal Chariots Museum holds carriages from the time of Muhammad 'Ali, housed in the very stables where the chariots and horses were kept from the time of Khedive Ismâ'îl in 1863. In the 1960s, the place was expropriated by the governorate of Cairo to be used as a car garage. It’s unclear when the serious renovation began. According to the Ministry of Culture, construction has been ongoing for three years and cost LE25 million.

When it is, finally, complete the museum will hold a collection of 67 chariots from the era of Muhammad ‘Ali. The most valued chariot was given as a gift to Khedive Ismâ’îl in celebration of the opening of the Suez Canal by Empress Eugenie and Napoleon III, in 1869. Some of the chariots are semi-motorized, according to statements by Nabila Habib, the head of the Historical Museums of Cairo. The museum will include, in addition to the chariots, collections of uniforms and accessories, which may or may not include the baggy Ottoman pants I had imagined. The Royal Chariots Museum site is located on 26th July street, in the area of Bulâq Abû al-‘Ilâ, before the 15th of May bridge to Zamalek. It is expected to open in early 2011. (John Ehab, “Egypt’s Museums IV: Royal Chariots Museum”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, October 20, 2010).

Musée d’Art islamique
To the slightly incongruous beat of a military march, hundreds of government officials, prominent figures, writers, journalists and photographers assembled on Monday in the garden of the Manial Palace to celebrate the centenary of the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA). It was a glamorous occasion that could have rivalled events at the palace when it was a royal residence. The street outside the main entrance gate was crowded with security guards jostling shoulders with guests in tuxedos or elegant gowns as they emerged from their cars, leaving them to be parked by attendants wearing a uniform of blue trousers and yellow shirts. The mood of the quiet and serene gardens and the palace entrance was enhanced by blue, flower-shaped lamps. Soft Oriental music filled the evening air of the spacious palace garden, where the Fursân al-Sharq (Knights of the East) Modern Dance company and the National Folk Music band performed a variety of dances illustrating religious dancing in the styles of ancient Egypt and the Mawlawî dance. For those not able to visit the MIA for a special showing earlier in the day, a 15-minute documentary film was screened showing glimpses of the recent restoration work at the MIA. Culture Minister Fârûq Husnî expressed his pleasure at what had been achieved, and
spoke about the development project carried out by the ministry to upgrade Egypt’s museums and the forward plans to build new ones, as well as the procedures taken to safeguard all the museums in Egypt and their priceless collection.

Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), delivered a speech on the SCA’s restoration of the MIA. It has taken eight years to rehabilitate the museum’s galleries and showcases and to restore the display scenario of its precious collection. Hawwâs distributed special awards to those who had sacrificed their time and effort to preserve the valuable heritage of Islamic art. Earlier in the evening Mrs Suzanne Mubârak held her own celebration for the MIA’s 100th anniversary. At the request of Husnî, Mrs Mubârak paid a special visit to the museum where she toured the galleries and admired the 2,300 priceless artefacts. She said she was delighted with the work that had been achieved at the MIA. During her visit Hawwâs presented Mrs Mubârak with a luxury edition of a book celebrating the MIA’s centennial and its official guidebook, as well as a paper knife engraved with the museum's logo. Now that refurbishment is complete, would-be visitors to the museum need wait no longer to roam the spacious galleries showcasing its wooden, metal, ceramic, glass, rock crystal and textile objects from across the Islamic world. Following years of neglect, the Museum of Islamic Art has undergone comprehensive rehabilitation not only of its building and interior design, but also of its exhibition design and displays. Before it closed in 2003 the galleries were dark and dusty and the showcases were overstuffed with 100,000 objects.

“Restoring the Museum of Islamic Art was an ambitious and challenging task that illustrates Egypt’s commitment to preserving one of the country’s Islamic institutions, in addition to its Pharaonic and Coptic heritage,” Husnî told Al-Ahram Weekly. The renovation project has been a lengthy and dedicated one. “The restoration of the Museum of Islamic Art is an extraordinary achievement, executed by some 15 specialists, 20 SCA restorers and 150 workmen with all the work executed to the highest international standards,” Hawwâs said in an interview with the Weekly. “Now that the museum meets the international standards set out by the International Committee of Museums, it is in a position to compete with its counterparts in Europe and America,” he said, adding: “Following its reopening, the museum will once again stand as proudly as it ever did.” Hawwâs said reopening the MIA sent a political massage to the whole globe showing that Islam was not a religion of terror as some tried to put about, but that it supported the arts and encouraged skills and crafts. “This is really shown in every object on display,” he said.

The MIA was first opened in 1881 with an initial display of 111 objects gathered from mosques and mausoleums across Egypt. Its first home was in the arcades of the mosque of the Fatimid caliph al-Hâkim Bi-Amr Allah. Because of the rapid increase in the size of the collection, however, a new building was constructed in the courtyard of the mosque in 1883. In 1899 construction began on a building in Bâb al-Khalq, a stone’s throw from the centre of Islamic Cairo, that would give the museum its own space. This opened its doors in 1903 with a collection of 3,154 objects. Since then the
The museum has become the main abode for the national collection of Islamic art, which had reached that huge number of 100,000 objects by 2003. That was when the Ministry of Culture launched its comprehensive restoration project for the museum in an attempt to reinstate its original function and grandeur. The master plan for the renovation and the new exhibition design was drawn up by French designer and museographer Adrien Gardère in cooperation with the Islamic Department of the Louvre Museum in Paris, which has advised on the reorganisation of the museum’s collections. The restoration places the museum’s main entrance at its original point on Port Sa’âid Street, and from there visitors first encounter an introductory gallery that presents Islamic arts and the Muslim countries of the world and their locations in a mixed display made up of panels, maps and objects from the collection. Visitors will also take a look into the geography of historic Cairo and the early Islamic city of Fustât, the oldest Islamic settlement in Egypt. The MIA is divided into two large wings; the first is devoted to the chronological exhibition of Islamic artefacts taken in the main from monuments in historic Cairo, just a few steps away from the museum. This wing will follow a broadly chronological approach in its presentation of the collection, progressing through the Umayyad, Abbasid, Tulunid, Fatimid, Ayubid, Mamluk and Ottoman periods while also including various thematic displays. The second wing displays materials from other countries in the Islamic world. These include calligraphy; manuscripts; ceramics; mosaics; textiles; gravestones; mashrabiyya (latticed woodwork); wooden objects; metal and glass vessels; incense burners and caskets; pottery; metalwork and glass lamps dating from various periods in Islamic history. These objects are displayed according to both chronology and theme, provenance and material. The renovated museum has state-of-the-art security and lighting systems, a fully-equipped restoration laboratory, a children’s museum and a library.

Muhammad ‘Abd al-Fattâh, head of the museum department at the SCA, says one of the most impressive items on display is a Mamluk water fountain that has been renovated by Spanish restorer Eduardo Porta, who was also a member of the restoration team working on the tomb of Nefertari in Luxor’s Valley of the Queens. The fountain, made of semi-precious stones, green onyx and coloured mosaic pieces, was originally bought for the Museum of Islamic Art in 1910 and placed in the museum garden. Owing to ill use and faulty restoration of work carried out in the 1960s and 1970s, the fountain fell into disrepair and it is only now being properly restored. Porta described the fountain as unique in the world, and said it was one of the most important objects in the MIA.

Hawwâs told the Weekly that the overall museum restoration project had achieved three goals. It had brought light into the museum’s galleries by enlarging the size of the windows; it had replaced old display cases with new state-of-the-art cases providing a far better display environment for the artefacts; and third, the project had reorganised the display of the collection and highlighted a successful example of international cooperation. The work was carried out jointly with the Islamic Department of the Louvre in Paris and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, which helped with the restoration of several larger items. (Nevine El-Aref, “A century of Islamic art for all”, Al-Ahram Weekly, October 28, 2010. Voir également...
If anyone were to ever ask me the question, “What is the most difficult project that you have had to work on as the secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities?” I would have to answer, “The Islamic Museum.” This is the story. The Islamic Museum in Cairo, now on Port Saʿîd Street, was first opened in the al-Hākim Mosque in 1881 with 111 objects on display. When I began my current job in 2002, the Port Saʿîd Street museum was closed and the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) intended this lovely neo-Mamluk building to be used to display Islamic art and a building in the Citadel to be used to display architectural objects. I thought that this division was counterintuitive. How would it be possible truly to distinguish between art and architecture? The two complement each other. I decided that the existing museum should continue to display both and that we should find an alternative use for the building in the Citadel. When I had visited the Islamic Museum years earlier, when I was still the director-general of antiquities at the Gîza Pyramids, a job I held from 1987 to 1997, I discovered that it was not up to the standard of other museums and few tourists visited it because there were no parking facilities. I asked myself, “How can it be that these beautiful objects are displayed in such a primitive way like this?” The museum contained unique artefacts from different periods of Islamic history and from all over the Islamic world.

It was with this in mind that we began to restore the museum. We contracted a company to do the work and began to consult ʿAlî ʿAbd al-Rahmân, a great scientist on soil mechanics, who looked into the physical stability of the building. I cannot express to you enough the difficulties that we encountered. The first big problem that we needed to accommodate was that another institution, the Dâr al-Kutub al-Masriyya (the Egyptian National Library), was located on the floor above the Islamic Museum and shared the basement with it. We discovered a problem with this basement and tried to fix it, but as soon as we did, another problem came up. It was as if the Islamic Museum was an old man. No sooner had the physician been called in to perform an operation on the old man's stomach, another problem with his kidneys would be found. We fought and fought until we had resolved each of those problems in turn, tackling especially the instability of the museum's floor.

Then came the next issue, that of how to make the museum beautiful. I approached my friend Louis MONREAL, the secretary-general of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, which was founded in 1988 in Geneva, Switzerland, to support projects in the Islamic world, especially in Asia and Africa, and Prince Karim. Louis and Prince Karim agreed to support the museum and approved of an expert museum designer from France, Adrien GARDÈRE. This was a great decision and reflected a wonderful cooperation between our team and
the Aga Khan Trust. GARDÈRE came to do the work, contacted the Louvre Museum in Paris and received support from the Islamic Department there in drawing up the plan for the renovation work and writing the new labels for the objects on display. Thus began seven years of work. Îmân ‘Abd al-Fattâh was my right hand on the project, providing me with daily updates. Every month I would also hold a meeting to review the plan’s progress and try to resolve any problems that came up, especially those conflicts between us and the Dâr al-Kutub. We began to buy great display cases from Italy and restore all the objects. One of the biggest challenges was how to restore the Mamluk-period fountain bought by the museum in 1910 and placed in the garden. It was difficult for anyone to safely dismantle it, but thanks to the wonderful work of the Spanish restorer Eduardo PORTA, who was also recommended by my friend Louis and who worked on the tomb of Nefertari in the Valley of the Queens, it too was taken to the restoration laboratory in the Citadel.

The next surprise problem was that GARDÈRE chose white paint to be the colour of the museum’s walls. Fârûq Husnî, the minister of culture and himself a fine artist by training, suggested that dark grey would in fact be the perfect colour. We gave this some consideration, but worried that repainting the museum would cost too much in terms of both time and money. The minister gave me a simple choice: “This is just my opinion, I am an artist and my job is colours, but it is up to you to choose the colour, or not.” I did decide to change the colour, but was afraid it would not work. However, when the repainting was finished I sent some friends to take a look before I did, and then went myself and could not believe the beauty of it. The minister was right and now the museum is both incredible and beautiful. It turned out that although white paint may be a good background for fine art paintings, it is not so good for displays of archaeological objects. Now, after an LE58 million refit and with more than 2,000 objects on display, the Museum of Islamic Art is going to be one of the most beautiful museums in the world. It is ready to be opened to the public and awaits its impending rededication by President Husnî Mubârak (Zâhî Hawwâs, “Dig days: The Islamic Museum”, Al-Ahram Weekly, August 19, 2010. Voir également Mirvat Fahmî, « Le Président inaugure le musée d’Art islamique », Ruz al-Yûsuf du 15 août).

(…) In general, a museum collection is arranged in one of two ways. Either the pieces unfold chronologically, according to the year they were made, or with narrative, attempting to tell a story or teach a lesson. These days in Egypt, chronology is out and narrative is in, at least as long as Zâhî Hawwâs, the secretary general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SAC), has anything to say about it. “Chronologically is bad. It doesn’t teach people,” Hawwâs said from behind his desk in the SCA building in Zamalek as countless assistants materialized from various doors. A red plastic button with the word “bullshit” sits on his desk. One gets the sense that the official makes frequent use of this toy. The Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo certainly has a story. It is one, of course, of the artifacts it holds – the largest collection of Islamic art in the world, covering 1400 years of Islamic history from Umayyad to Ottoman. It is a story of advances in medicine and the spread of religion, of funerary traditions and science, of
changing social mores.

(…) It is also the story of an arduous seven years of renovation, of crumbling walls and poorly-maintained artifacts, of arguments and last-minute changes, of definitions and limitations of Egyptian cultural heritage, of what Hawwâs called “the most difficult job of my life.” The Museum of Islamic Art was first established in 1881 in al-Hâkim mosque and moved in 1903 to the building that houses it today, a grand neo-Mamluk structure overlooking Old Cairo whose second floor is home to the national library, the Dâr al-Kutub al-Masriyya. As the collection grew, the museum became less welcoming, its objects thoughtlessly compiled and the building poorly maintained. By 2002 there were plans for two separate museums – one for architecture at the Citadel and one for art in the current building – but Hawwâs, who had just been appointed to the SCA, rejected this separation, arguing that Islamic art and architecture are far too intertwined.

It was obvious to Hawwâs that, in order for the museum to compete on both a local and international level, there had to be serious changes. The entire building, not just the collection itself, would be renovated. Each success exposed new challenges. “Like a sick man, you try to change the liver and the stomach appears,” Hawwâs said. Hawwâs asked himself, “How can I make the museum brilliant?” The answer was outside of Egypt. Hawwâs hired French designer and museographer Adrien GARDÈRE — who had worked on several successful temporary exhibits in Cairo including “Parfums d’Égypte” — and secured funding through the Agha Khan Foundation (AKF). He also hired a Spanish restorer Eduardo PORTA to head one of the museum’s most challenging projects: the complete renovation of a central Mameluk fountain which involved disassembling the mosaic and restoring it off sight before painstakingly reassembling it in one of the museum’s central galleries. GARDÈRE was scheduled to work on the museum for three years, but it would be twice that before he would leave the project, and not without the sense that he had overstayed his welcome. GARDÈRE assumed what he thought would be full artistic control of the collection’s redesign and the building’s renovation in early 2004. Determined to “respect the architecture as the part of the collection itself,” he began tearing down walls, restoring light and streamlining the display which was overcrowded with works he considered “irrelevant” to the story of Islamic art. Interiors in Cairo are often kept dark in order to shield inhabitants from dust and heat. GARDÈRE opposed this, feeling that natural light is “a key element of Islamic art and architecture.” By covering the windows with ornate, mesh screens, he incorporated the city into the space. He worried that the high ceilings and open rooms would create a series of hallways, hurrying visitors past the pieces, so he arranged the artifacts beneath the natural crossings of the ceiling beams, central in each room. According to GARDÈRE, his proposal was approved by Hawwâs, the curators, and the Agha Khan Foundation.

The museum seemed destined to take over Port Sa‘îd Street, in the name of beautification and gentrification. According to Hawwâs, a neighbouring gas station became a garden and other buildings, some of them private homes, were converted into a parking lot for tourists visiting the notoriously congested area. “The museum will be the jewel in the heart of Cairo,”
Hawwâs exclaimed. But first, it seemed, that heart would need a slight tune-up. The design is meant to entice visitors who, once there, will feel that they can access the art. We want “everyone to understand, whether they are educated or not educated,” explained Silîm. This popular approach is important to Hawwâs, whose impression of his own notoriety is realistically two-fold. On his reputation as a reclaimer of Egyptian artifacts abroad Hawwâs admits, not without pleasure, “People hate me all over the world.” In Egypt, “I walk past bawabs and they stop me, ask me about archaeology.” This pride in Egypt’s past and interest in improving its present is complicated both by Hawwâs’s overseas hire of GARDÈRE and his own admission that his know-how comes not from his time in Egypt but the US, where he studied at the University of Pennsylvania.

The intercontinental collaboration had its troubles. Hawwâs, who calls himself the “owner of the place,” characterized it thusly: “You, as a designer, cannot tell me what to think.” And, like the extent of the building’s disrepair, the clashing visions would show themselves most clearly not in the exhibitions, but in the walls. GARDÈRE’s final step to brighten the museum was to paint it white. “Islamic art deserves light,” he said. Any colour in the building would come from the diverse artifacts. But this starkness did not appeal to Minister of Culture Fârûq Husnî, who withheld his approval of the renovation until the walls were repainted, which they were this past summer, to a slate gray. GARDÈRE, speaking from his studio in Paris, admitted that it was within the rights of the Egyptian government to make the change, although he considers it to be a mistake. Gray walls “lowered sense of height and volume, and eliminated the artifacts. I think darkness has nothing to do with Islamic art.” But Hawwâs, unsurprisingly, supported the minister of culture. “Husnî is an artist,” he said. Changing the colour was a “brilliant idea.”

After GARDÈRE left, Mahmûd Mabrûk, a local artist and advisor to Hawwâs, took over, leading a team to rethink the exhibits and the accompanying labels. Some of what GARDÈRE cut was restored, including a collection of swords and textiles. The label copy is still in the process of being fact-checked and revised. Hawwâs has invested in local talent; he is currently training 2000 people who can “be better than me,” and to whom he can entrust projects in the future. “If you can be good,” Hawwâs said, “you can compete.” The museum’s official reopening will be celebrated with a lavish party on 25 October, complete with musical performances and the First Lady. GARDÈRE said he would be happy to go, if he is invited. (Jenna KRAJESKI, “The Museum of Islamic Art”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, September 29, 2010. Voir également Hassan Saadallah, “Museum of Islamic Art ready to reopen”, The Egyptian Gazette, July 5 ; Amira Samir, « Une restauration interminable », Al-Ahram Hebdo du 11 août ; Fathiyya al-Dakhâkhnî, « Le Président inaugure le musée d’Art islamique après sa restauration », al-Masrî al-Yawm du 15 août).

Musée national d’Asyût
Asyût’s new museum is taking shape. The governorate recently announced that all the financial and legal procedures to acquire the palace of Alexan
Pasha and use it to house the city's first museum have been completed. A budget of EGP18 million has been allocated to convert the 7,000-square-metre into a museum. A museum committee will steer the plans through red tape and bureaucratic procedures. This committee includes deputy ministers from the ministries of tourism, residential planning, and State property. Asyût Governor Nabîl al-‘Izabî says the palace will be divided into two parts: interior galleries for antiquities and an open-air garden section. “Alexan Palace will house all Asyût’s predynastic, Pharaonic, Roman, Coptic and Islamic antiquities for the last seven thousand years,” says Muhammad Rashâd, the general manager of antiquities in Asyût. “The governorate is contacting museums and archaeological storehouses all over the country to collate Asyût’s antiquities from,” Dr Rashâd says.

Fortunately, the palace does not need restoration. All that is necessary is some preparation to bring it into accordance with the latest international museum systems. Dr Rashâd affirmed that the palace is one of the most luxurious monumental palaces in Egypt, surrounded by magnificent gardens. “The palace was built at the end of the 19th century by Italian, French and British artists, and that's why its style is unique,” Dr Rashâd says. It has two floors, each decorated with distinctive inscriptions and ornamentation. The façade is beautifully ornamented with Greek inscriptions – sure to draw people to view the treasures within. (Basma William, “Upper Egypt’s capital gets a museum”, Watanî, September 19, 2010).

Musée de la Nubie
Head of the Supreme Council of Antiquities Zâhi Hawwâs announced Wednesday the reopening of the Nubian Museum following a comprehensive upgrade of its security and surveillance system. The museum was closed for two weeks following the theft of VAN GOGH’s “Poppy Flowers” from Cairo’s Mahmûd Khalîl Museum on Aug. 21, for which lax security was blamed. Hawwâs said that he had received a report from the head of the museums’ sector informing him that maintenance and surveillance cameras were installed and all display rooms were being closely monitored. More security personnel have been posted inside display rooms and at the various gates. According to a previous statement released by the SCA, the Nubian Museum’s security system, which has been operational ever since the museum opened in 1997, had broken down several times before. The theft of the $55 million VAN GOGH prompted the Ministry of Culture to hike security in all museums. Culture Minister Fârûq Husnî even told the official Middle East News Agency that the security control rooms will be manned by Egyptian intelligence officers. (Enas El-Masry, “Nubian Museum reopens after a comprehensive security system upgrade”, Daily News Egypt, September 8, 2010. Voir également Dînâ ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « Husnî décide la fermeture du musée de la Nubie pour améliorer le système de surveillance », al-Yawm al-Sâbi’ du 25 août ; « Le CSA ferme le musée de la Nubie après la découverte de la panne du système de sécurité depuis des années », al-Dustûr du 26 août ; Mirvat ‘Ayyâd, « Inauguration du musée de la Nubie après des travaux de maintenance », Watanî du 19 septembre).
III – RESTAURATIONS, PRÉSERVATIONS


Le président de l’administration centrale des Antiquités du Caire et de Giza, ‘Âtif Abû al-Dahab, a annoncé que le CSA a résolu le problème des eaux souterraines dans la zone des pyramides et poursuit actuellement son travail dans la zone du Sphinx en coopération avec l’American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) et le Centre des études hydrauliques de la faculté de Polytechnique du Caire. Par conséquent, les mises en garde lancées par l’architecte italien [Giuseppe FANFONI] contre l’effondrement la pyramide de Chéops d’ici quelques années à cause de la montée du niveau des eaux souterraines sont dénuées de tout fondement. Le directeur des Antiquités de Saqqâra, Kamâl Wahîd, a qualifié d’illologiques et de non-scientifiques ces mises en garde lancées par cet Italien, qui aurait dû effectuer des études
de terrain avant d’arriver à de telles conclusions. Ce qui est loin d’être le cas. Wahîd a précisé : « Loin d’être néfastes, les eaux souterraines accumulées dans la zone des pyramides contribuent à l’équilibre du sous-sol. Le pompage de ces eaux effectué par le CSA doit se dérouler d’une manière précise et calculée ». (« Le CSA : les supputations britanniques concernant l’effondrement de la pyramide de Chéops d’ici quelques années sont illogiques », Ruz al-Yûsuf du 2 décembre 2010).

Authorities in Alexandria are preparing plans for the restoration of the city’s only Jewish monument. The synagogue on Nabî Daniel Street is one of Egypt’s most important Jewish historical sites. The scheme will be carried out by Cairo University’s Center for Antiquities and Environment Studies, with the assistance of various experts. ‘Alî Hilâl, project manager at the Supreme Council for Antiquities, said it is among the most notable current preservation plans for Egyptian monuments. Pointing out that the building is the only Jewish monument in Alexandria, he said there are eleven other sites spread throughout country. Hilâl unveiled a plan to renovate all Egyptian Jewish monuments, considering them a part of Egypt’s heritage. (Mena, “Alexandria’s only Jewish monument eyed for restoration”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, December 20, 2010).

Dans le cadre du plan de réaménagement du plateau de Gîza, le ministre de la Culture, Fârûq Husnî, a soumis au Premier ministre, Dr Ahmad Nazîf, un projet visant à transférer les habitants de Nazlat al-Sammân et à les reloger ailleurs. L’idée du ministre consiste à préserver quelques boutiques et bazars qui servent cette zone touristique et à transférer les résidants de Nazlat al-Sammân vers une autre zone d’habitat située à proximité du futur Grand Musée Égyptien sur l’autoroute Le Caire-Alexandrie. Ainsi les habitants de Nazlat al-Sammân pourront-ils continuer à profiter de la manne touristique drainée par ce futur musée, ce qui est de nature à les inciter à accepter le relogement. Le ministre s’insurge que « les habitations actuelles de Nazlat al-Sammân s’étendent jusqu’aux pieds du Sphinx ». (Fathiyya al-Dakhâkhnî, « Fârûq Husnî propose à Nazîf un projet de transfert des habitants de Nazlat al-Sammân », al-Masrî al-Yawm du 23 décembre 2010).

Following a comprehensive study and inspection of its building the ‘Abbâsiyya psychiatric hospital was declared an Islamic monument. Culture minister Fârûq Husnî pointed out that the report, prepared by the scientific and archaeological committee that checked the hospital’s buildings, will be submitted to the permanent committee of Islamic and Coptic monuments at its next meeting, in order to list the hospital on Egypt’s Islamic heritage list. Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) explains that during his reign (1280-1296 of Hijra) Khedive Ismâ‘îl built a large edifice called Sarâya al-Malik. Unfortunately a large part of it was burned and replaced with the recent building, except for a few historical elements that remain. Placing the hospital on the Islamic monuments list could settle the controversy surrounding the future of the hospital, which has been the subject of rumour lately. Situated over several acres of prime Cairo real estate, there were indications that the government had plans to relocate the hospital in Badr City, 80Km north of Cairo. The rumoured relocation caused an outcry among the hospital’s staff, and the Egyptian psychiatric community as a whole. (Nevine Al Aref, “‘Abbâsiyya psychiatric hospital to be listed an Islamic monument”, Ahram onLine, December 29, 2010).

Mârîna al-‘Alamayn
Holidaymakers to Egypt’s northern coast will have more to entertain them than sun, sand and sea later this summer. Starting in mid-September they can end a day spent on the beach by taking a virtual trip back to the Graeco-Roman era and exploring the archaeological site of Mârîna al-‘Alamayn, which 2,000 years ago was a major town and port known as Leucaspis. Following years of restoration and development, the Mârîna archaeological site, situated not far from the World War II memorials at al-‘Alamayn, will open in the evenings from the middle of next month. The site is 196km west of Alexandria and 6km east of al-‘Alamayn. The site of the town stretches for 1km and is 0.5km wide, making it the largest archaeological site on Egypt’s north coast. Although historical records existed of the site of Leucaspis, as well as rudimentary plans of its layout, these were forgotten by the time construction began on the giant Mârîna holiday resort. Fortunately preliminary construction work revealed marble columns and other debris, and archaeologists stepped in to preserve the ruins. The site is now well developed and is equipped with a high-tech lighting system throughout its entirety, which will permit visitors to enjoy it all night long. In a bid to encourage local tourism, the entrance fee for the site will be LE5 for Egyptians and LE2.5 for Egyptian students.

Over the last 10 years, the Polish Archaeological Institute in Cairo and the American Research Center in Egypt have unearthed remains of more than 50 different structures in the town and necropolis. The ancient town of Leucaspis was a good natural harbour. Adjacent to the harbour was a commercial quarter, and further south was the town centre, which included baths, markets and a civic basilica. The earliest archaeological remains, which date from the mid-second century BC, were found in the town’s
necropolis. It is thought the town was occupied until the seventh century AD. Zâhi Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), marks Leucaspis as an important port during the Greek and Romans eras in Egypt. He also points out that it is the first archaeological site on the north coast to be developed as a tourist friendly site. The Greek name Leucaspis means “white shell” or “shield”. “It acquired this name because of the softness and white colour of its sand,” Muhammad ‘Abd al-Maqṣūd, director of the Central Administration of Lower Egypt Antiquities, told Al-Ahram Weekly. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, was worshipped there, and the statues found of her on the site show her emerging from a white shell in reference to its name. The Romans later called the town Locabsis. The Polish Centre of Archaeology in Cairo began systematic excavations in the western part of the site in 1986 under the direction of Wiktor A DASZEWSKI, conducting a survey and documentation of all the monuments. The ancient site is located between the slope of an ancient beach and a lagoon, separated from the open sea by a narrow strip of sand and the modern Alexandria-Marsa Matrûh highway. In the part of the town at the northern area of the site, near the sea, several buildings were partly cleared of sand by the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation in the 1980s. The upper part of the site was extensively used as a cemetery. Fieldwork by the Polish Mission was concentrated in the cemetery, where a series of important discoveries was made. Some well-preserved tombs were uncovered, of which there were four main types: some were rock-hewn tombs covered with limestone slabs; some were cut in the bedrock but with step-pyramid shaped superstructures; while in a third type tombs of cubic structures were built on the rock surface with two or four loculi, frequently surmounted by funerary monuments such as a column or sarcophagus. ‘Abd al-Maqṣūd explained that investigations determined that some of these tombs consisted of a loculus covered by a structure similar to a huge sarcophagus and were similar in type to tombs found in Turkey and Cyrenaica. Others contained two loculi and were surmounted by a huge pillar decorated with two capitals in the so-called “Nabatean” style. Tombs of the fourth type were hypogea, or underground tombs, consisting of superstructures with monumental entrances leading to vaulted staircases with burial chambers cut in the bedrock. Large vertical shafts provided the burial chambers with air and light. The chambers were designed with rock-cut benches, loculi and stone altars on the floor. These four groups of tombs can be dated from the late second century BC to the late first century AD.

The Polish excavations yielded a vast collection of finds, including lamps, glass vessels and pottery from Cyprus, the Aegean, Asia Minor and Italy. Several sculptures were also found and among the most remarkable discoveries were a lead coffin and mummies in one of the side chambers of a tomb. “These are similar to the well-known Fayyûm examples. The mummies from Mârîna have portraits painted on wooden panels,” ‘Abd al-Maqṣūd told the Weekly. In 1988 the joint Polish-Egyptian Preservation Mission began a restoration programme. Three monuments in the necropolis that had been toppled by an earthquake were restored, and several other excavated tombs were reinforced and repaired. In the area of the town a series of buildings, both private and public, were excavated by the SCA. Several vaulted large houses in a good state of preservation were located in the
central part of the site. They comprised rooms grouped around one or two peristyle courtyards. Each house, ‘Abd al-Maqsûd said, was equipped with underground cisterns and a well-developed system of aqueducts. In the central part of the site a circular or tholos -shaped bath was discovered, as well as structures located close to the lagoon that seem to have served as storehouses. Lamps, coins, statues and pots were also unearthed.

Based on these finds, ‘Abd al-Maqsûd said, the chronology indicated that most of the excavated structures could be dated to the first and third centuries AD. The ancient town must have been a very prosperous community in those days. A wide range of imported pottery, particularly amphorae, suggests flourishing trade relations with the entire Mediterranean region. The settlement of Leucaspis was probably destroyed by an earthquake in the late third century AD, but was partially inhabited again in the fifth and sixth centuries AD. A small basilica church uncovered in the eastern sector is considered the best evidence of this later occupation. (Nevine El-Aref, “White shell of an ancient town”, Al-Ahram Weekly, August 26, 2010. Voir également “Al-‘Alamayn archaeological site to open for visitors in September”, Daily News Egypt, August 17 ; AP, “Al-‘Alamayn archeological site to open for visitors in September”, The Daily News Egypt, August 17 ; Fathiyya al-Dakhâkhnî, « Mârînâ al•’Alamayn s’apprête à accueillir les touristes jour et nuit à partir de septembre prochain », al-Masrî al-Yawm du 18 aout ; Mervat Ayoub, “Mârîna shimmers in light”, Watanî, August 22).

(…) The history of the two Marinas is inextricably linked. When Chinese engineers began cutting into the sandy coast to build the roads for the new resort in 1986, they struck the ancient tombs and houses of a town founded in the second century B.C. About 200 acres were set aside for archaeology, while everywhere else along the coast up sprouted holiday villages for Egyptians escaping the stifling summer heat of the interior for the Mediterranean’s cool breezes. The ancient city yielded up its secrets in a much more gradual fashion to a team of Polish archaeologists excavating the site through the 1990s. A portrait emerged of a prosperous port town, with up to 15,000 residents at its height, exporting grains, livestock, wine and olives to the rest of the Mediterranean. Merchants lived in elegant two-story villas set along zigzagging streets with pillared courtyards flanked by living and prayer rooms. Rainwater collected from roofs ran down special hollowed out pillars into channels under the floor leading to the family cisterns. Waste disappeared into a sophisticated sewer system.

Around the town center, where the two main streets intersect, was the social and economic heart of the city and there can still be found the remains of a basilica, a hall for public events that became a church after Christianity spread across the Roman Empire. A semicircular niche lined with benches underneath a portico provided a space for town elders to discuss business before retiring to the bathhouse across the street. Greek columns and bright limestone walls up to six feet high (2 meters) stand in some places, reflecting the sun in an electric blue sky over the dark waters of the nearby sea. Visitors will also be able to climb down the steep shafts of the rock-cut tombs to the deeply buried burial chambers of the city’s necropolis.

It is from the sea from which the city gained much of its livelihood. It
began as a way station in the coastal trade between Egypt and Libya to the west. Later, it began exporting goods from its surrounding farms overseas, particularly to the island of Crete, just 480 km away – a shorter trip than that from Egypt’s main coastal city Alexandria. And from the sea came its end. Leukaspis was largely destroyed when a massive earthquake near Crete in 365 A.D. set off a tsunami wave that also devastated nearby Alexandria. In the ensuing centuries, tough economic times and a collapsing Roman Empire meant that most settlements along the coast disappeared. Today, the remains of the port are lost. In the late 1990s, an artificial lagoon was built, surrounded by summer homes for top government officials. “It was built by dynamite detonation so whatever was there I think is gone,” said Agnieszka DOBROWLSKA, an architect who helped excavate the ancient city with the Polish team in the 1990s.

However, Egyptian government interest in the site rose in the last few years, part of a renewed focus on developing the country’s Classical past. In 2005, DOBROWLSKA returned as part of a USAID project to turn ancient Marina into an open-air museum for tourists. It couldn’t have come at a better time for ancient Marina, which had long attracted covetous glances from real estate developers. “I am quite happy it still exists, because when I was involved there were big plans to incorporate this site in a big golf course being constructed by one of these tycoons. Apparently the antiquities authorities didn’t allow it, so that’s quite good,” recalls DOBROWLSKA.

Redoing the site is part of a plan to bring more year-around tourism to what is now largely a summer destination for just Egyptians – perhaps with a mind to attracting European tourists currently flocking to beaches in nearby Tunisia during the winter. Much still needs to be done to achieve the government’s target to open the site by mid-September, as ancient fragments of pottery still litter the ground and bones lie open in their tombs. But if old Marina is a success then similar transformation could happen to a massive temple of Osiris just 50 km away, where a Dominican archaeological team is searching for the burial place of the doomed Classical lovers, Anthony and Cleopatra. “The plan is to do the same for Taposiris Magna so that tourists can visit both,” said Khâlid Abû al-Hamd, antiquities director for the region. These north coast ruins may also attract the attention of the visitors to the nearby al-‘Alamayn battlefield and cemeteries for the World War II battle that Winston Churchill once called the turning point of the war. In fact, there are signs the allied troops took refuge in the deep rock cut tombs of Marina, just 10 km from the furthest point of the Axis advance on Alexandria. Crouched down awaiting the onslaught of German Gen. ROMMEL’s famed Afrika Corps, the young British Tommies would have shared space with the rib bones and skull fragments of Marina’s inhabitants in burial chambers hidden 25 feet (8 meters) below ground. (Paul SCHEMM, “Ancient city by the sea rises amid Egypt’s resorts”, Daily News Egypt, September 12, 2010).

Le Caire historique
Rue al-Mu‘izz

From the 10th to the 18th centuries al-Mu‘izz Street, which runs through the heart of Fatimid Cairo, gloried in its splendid Islamic architecture. In the years following it became badly run down. It has taken almost 20 years of restoration and rehabilitation for the street to regain much of the splendour it saw in the days of the Fatimids, Ayoubids, Mamluks and Ottomans. Formerly the street resounded with the cacophony of shouts as traffic – both motorised and horse or donkey-drawn – battled with vendors and pedestrians for right of way. Now by day it is a pedestrian zone, not quite in keeping with the past but rather more suited to the nature of today’s visitors. At the invitation of Culture Minister Fârûq Husnî, Mrs Suzanne Mubârak attended the opening on Saturday and was given a tour of four of the 34 architectural monuments lining the street. The buildings showcased were the Egyptian Textile Museum, the school of Ruqayya bint Qalâwwûn, the Sultan Barqûq mosque and the school and complex of al-Mansûr Qalâwwûn. Mrs Mubârak, who has long championed the arts, has lent her support to several such projects that cultivate awareness of Egypt’s heritage, both old and modern.

The buildings in al-Mu‘izz Street, like other any Islamic monuments in Mediaeval Cairo, have been encroached on and misused by residents to the extent of causing irreparable damage. Environmental pollution – ranging from particulates from petrol fumes to a rising underground water table – has undermined foundations in the historical zone, while the 1992 earthquake left visible structural marks. The project to protect, conserve and preserve al-Mu‘izz Street with a view to developing it as an open air museum falls within the ministry’s remit to restore Egyptian cultural heritage whether Pharaonic, Coptic, Islamic or Jewish. Fârûq ‘Abd al-Salâm, first undersecretary at the Ministry of Culture and supervisor of the project, said that as well as the fine architectural restoration, appropriate treatment of road surfaces and street furniture enhanced the full length of al-Mu‘izz Street. Ground height has been lowered to its original level, paving has been kept simple and direct to express the urban quality of the street, and the original irregular pattern has been retained. Residential houses have been polished and painted in an appropriate colour. ‘Abd al-Salâm said that, to accord with the development project, every day between 9am and midnight al-Mu‘izz Street would be a pedestrian zone to enable the people to experience the living traditions and customs of those who lived during the various ages of the Islamic era. Outside these hours traffic will be allowed so that merchants can transport goods in and out of the area. Entrance to the street is controlled by 11 electronic gates, which prohibit daytime admission, although emergency vehicles are allowed access at all times.

“Rescuing al-Mu‘izz Street and developing it into an open air museum has been a dream for all archaeologists, and making it come true has been a challenge for me,” Husnî told Al-Ahram Weekly. He added that the street would be the most important touristic zone in Cairo, rather like the old part of Geneva, and would combine the tangible and intangible heritage of Islamic Egypt. One major adverse effect on the buildings was caused by industrial waste from workshops and small factories being dumped against
the walls. These establishments have now been moved, except for those that agreed to change their activities. “Skilled workers and their handicraft stores are essential to the distinct character of al-Mu‘izz Street, since they provide the vivid atmosphere of the area and the government is keen on settling craftsmen in their original locations, but in a manner that complements the splendour of the area,” Husnî said. Other small enterprises have been transferred elsewhere. The government helped the labourers involved and provided them with training courses and materials for new businesses. “We want to bring back the area of the silk market, the tent market and other enterprises that are part of the Islamic heritage,” the minister added.

Because of Husnî’s belief that these Islamic monuments are living entities inhabited by people who must remain a part of the total environment, the sabîl (water fountain) of Muhammad ‘Alî in al-Nahhâsîn, which was encroached on by a primary school, has been vacated of its pupils, desks and blackboard, and has been restored and redesigned as Egypt’s first textile museum. The sabîl was originally built on the order of Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha to commemorate his son Ismâ‘îl, who died in Sudan in 1822. It consists of a large rectangular hall opening onto the Tassbîl hall, with a rounded, marble façade and four windows surrounding an oval marble bowl. The “logo” of the Ottoman Empire featuring a crescent and a star decorates the area above each window. The sabîl’s wooden façade and the top of the frame are decorated in a rococo and baroque style, the main style seen in several of Muhammad ‘Ali’s edifices. One of those overseeing the restoration was the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA’s Islamic monuments consultant ‘Abdallah al-‘Attâr). The museum displays 250 textile pieces and 15 carpets dating from the late Pharaonic era through the Coptic and Islamic ages. Among the collection on display are tools and instruments used by ancient Egyptians to clean and wash clothes, along with illustrations demonstrating the various stages of laundering clothes in ancient time. Monks’ robes, icons and clothes from various times in the Islamic era are also exhibited. According to Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the SCA, one of the most beautiful items on show is a red bed cover ornamented with gold and silver thread, said to have been a gift from Muhammad ‘Alî to his daughter on her marriage. Another is a large cover for the Ka’ba in Mecca sent by King Fu’âd of Egypt to Saudi Arabia. This is a black velvet textile ornamented with Quranic verses and woven with gold and silver thread.

The Sultan al-Mansûr Qalâwwûn complex, comprising a kuttâb (Quran school), mosque, mausoleum, madrasa (school) and mârîstân (asylum), was built in 1284 and is typical of Mamluk architecture with columned windows reminiscent of the Gothic style. Beyond the masonry entrance, a long corridor gives onto the mosque and kuttâb to the right. To the left, the mausoleum retains its original beam and coffered ceiling, ending with the entrance to the mârîstân. The mausoleum is known to be among Cairo's most beautiful buildings; its main courtyard is shielded from the corridor by a screen and all is finished in stucco; the soaring dome, carved in arabesques, is finished in luminescent coloured glass. And yet it was in the time of Mansûr’s son Nâsir Muhammad Ibn Qalâwwûn, who ruled intermittently from 1293 to 1340, that Mamluk art reached its zenith;
Nâsir’s complex, built in 1295 and similar on the whole to his father’s, boasts Cairo’s first cruciform kuttab; the entryway is taken from the Crusader Church of St John of Acre and may be the finest extant example of its kind. (Nevine Al Aref, “More than just a street”, Ahram Online, November 10, 2010).

Quartier al-Gamâliyya


Bayt al-Sitt Wasîla
Last month saw the opening of the house known as Bayt al-Sitt Wasîla — the house of Lady Wasîla — in Fatimid Cairo as a poetry centre. The move came in response to a proposal by the poet Ahmad ‘Abd al-Mu‘ti Higâzî, who heads the poetry committee at the Supreme Council for Culture. Dr Higâzî’s idea was to use the house as an establishment to promote poetry by holding literary and poetry symposia, usually accompanied by music. A few years ago it would have been hard to contemplate that this house might ever have metamorphosed in a centre for radiating culture. For 80 years no one even thought of restoring Lady Wasila’s House, since the problems involved were
too great to contemplate. The entrance had almost fallen apart; the large court had collapsed; and the house had, over the centuries, lost two of its original four storeys. The building had caught fire more than once, and had been turned into a dumping ground.

The house was built in 1664 in Qutama Alley and was once one of Cairo’s most magnificent Mamluk residences. It is situated in the vicinity of the al-Azhar mosque in the neighbourhood of several such splendid Islamic houses including Bayt al-Harrâwî and Bayt Zaynab Khattûn. Lady Wasîla’s, like the other houses in Islamic Cairo, was triangular in area and was divided into two main wings. The first, which was for the reception of guests, stretched from the main door and included the courtyard, water tanks, a well and outer courtyards. The second wing was accessed through a narrow door and included the grain mill and upper courts. The house has four façades, of which three are close to the buildings surrounding the house. The main façade is 53 metres long.

More than 20 frescos of various locations; one is of Medina al-Munawwara, while another is the gate of a fortified town set in a green landscape, had been added a century after the house was built and reflect the artisan style that dominated the Ottoman Empire. In July 2005 Sitt Wasila’s house was officially opened following a five-year restoration process. Among items found by the restorers was a love amulet inside a room on the first floor. This consisted of two papers and contained talismans and some texts from the Qur’an, together with the name of ‘Lutfî’, one of the owners of the house, as well as prayers to safeguard the mutual love between him and his wife Safiyya. (Sanaa’ Farouq, “The House of Poetry”, Watani, September 5, 2010).

Aqueduc

The Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) recently launched a major project to restore Cairo’s ancient aqueduct, the Migra al-‘Uyûn, to protect it from random vandalism — it had become a dump for garbage — and at the same time to enable it once again to carry Nile water up to the Citadel. The SCA is determined to eliminate all abuse of this historical landmark, where irresponsible behaviour has led to blockage of the aqueduct’s water channels. Sultan al-Malik ibn Qalâwûn constructed the aqueduct in AD1311 to carry water to the gardens of the Citadel built by Salâh al-Dîn (Saladin) in 1176 to protect Cairo, which Qalâwûn had expanded. Two hundred years later in 1507 Sultan al-Ghûrî extended it westward to meet the new channel of the Nile, as with every flood the watercourse shifted slightly to the west. Al-Ghûrî intended simply to enhance the pleasures of the Mamluk rulers in the Citadel, leaving ordinary people to the mercy of charitable or commercial drinking fountains. Eventually, however, the water was put to public use and the aqueduct remained in use supplying potable water to the people of Cairo until 1872.

The waterwheel pumps were run by oxen. Since cattle do not readily walk down stairs, it is assumed that the beasts were brought up to work and kept at the working level all their lives. A similar pattern was followed at the Citadel, where oxen were born and bred on the well-pump labour floor. The
aqueduct runs from Fumm al-Khalîg on the bank of the Nile to the Sayyida 'Aysha area of Cairo. Six wheels were installed, and water flowed through the 4km-aqueduct for 2.2km until it reached the Citadel. Following a population boom, the need for more water became imperative and a plan was instigated to construct waterwheels linking up the great barrages at Qanâtir north, of Cairo, and channelling water to the Citadel and its environs.

The general manager of Fustât and Old Cairo antiquities, Muhammad Mahgûb, said repairs carried out to the aqueduct so far amounted to EGP25 million. The aim was to turn it into a tourist attraction, and the total cost is estimated at about EGP35 million. The first phase entailed cleaning the stones, replacing those that were damaged, demolishing houses and workshops that had encroached on the structure, and clearing away refuse in the surrounding area. It also involved replacing the old wheels. The project was partially completed, but some buildings and workshops still remained. The second phase of the project, Mr Mahgûb continued, would centre on lowering the underground water level, which works to deteriorate the base of the structure. This would be achieved by creating a drainage network so the underground water would flow into public drainage pipes. A seating platform will be installed parallel to the aqueduct. The SCA in cooperation with Cairo governorate has offered the 80 families living in the historical zone alternative accommodation. According to Mr Mahgûb, the 90 houses and workshops at present encroaching on the area will be demolished and their inhabitants relocated in Heliopolis. The SCA has already spent some EGP5 million on the new houses. (Sanaa' Farouq, “Waterway to the Citadel”, Watanî, June 20, 2010).

Sama' Khâna
« À la première vue de la Sama' Khâna, vers la moitié des années 1970, j'ai dit à Carla BURRI, responsable des antiquités au Centre culturel italien à l'époque, qu'il faut sauver cet édifice monumental », assure le professeur Giuseppe FANFONI. À cet âge, les directions concernées préféraient la restauration de l'Institut de la musique arabe dressé à la rue Ramsès. Mais FANFONI voyait les choses autrement. Pour lui, l'état lamentable de la Sama' Khâna assurait l'urgence de la restauration. Ainsi, en 1976, il a obtenu le permis de restauration du secteur des monuments islamiques auprès de l'Organisme des antiquités. « Je n'avais aucune idée sur les derviches et leur doctrine, ni de son fondateur, Jalaleddine al-Rûmî », raconte-t-il. Depuis, FANFONI est parti en quête de Tikiyya mawlâwiyya à Turquie. Il y a étudié l'architecture de tous les Sama' Khâna désertés suite à l'ordre de Kamal Ataturk en 1925. Ensuite, en étudiant les documents, il a fait la connaissance de Jalaleddine al-Rûmî et sa doctrine. « C'était essentiel de connaître par cœur l'organisation de la communauté des derviches et leur doctrine avant de commencer la restauration. En général, en Turquie ou en Égypte, la Sama' Khâna n'est que le reflet architectural de cette doctrine », explique l'archéologue. Raison pour laquelle FANFONI a dépensé quatre ans de sa vie dans des études profondes pour les restaurer en se basant sur de bonnes références. Il a commencé vers 1980 pour inaugurer son chef-
d’œuvre en 1989. Au fur et à mesure et au cours des fouilles, des restaurations et des travaux de nettoyage, FANFONI a constaté que la Sama’ Khâna du Caire est l’unique « qui incarne à la lettre la doctrine des derviches, grâce à la disposition de l’axe horizontale qui relie le mausolée du cheikh Hasan Sadaqa à la Qibla », renchérit-il.

Actuellement, la Sama’ Khâna est devenue un centre de formation de restaurateurs. Aussi, il est transformé en centre culturel où sont organisées plusieurs conférences internationales à l’instar du Congrès international sur l’héritage culturel qui a eu lieu en décembre 2009.


Patrimoine architectural des XIX e et XX e siècles
Héliopolis
It’s not so painful, perhaps, when a villa is pulled down in the Cairo district of Muhandisîn and replaced by a high-rise. But when the same thing happens in Heliopolis, it is more distressing. Muhandisîn is a new suburb, one that took shape in the 1970s with the resurgence of the luxury housing market. But Heliopolis is an older neighbourhood and an architectural treasure, and it is being ravaged. The demolition of old villas built in the distinctive style of the beginning of the last century when Baron Edouard EMPAIN created the suburb is nothing short of criminal, according to Muhammad ‘Abd al-Bâqî Ibrâhîm, a prominent architect who has recently carried out research on Heliopolis. The architectural model on which Heliopolis was based offers a damning contrast to the random development to which we have since grown accustomed, Ibrâhîm says, pointing out that the suburb was built at the beginning of the 20th century to answer to the rising demand for housing in Cairo.

The story begins with Baron EMPAIN, a Belgian investor and industrialist, who bought some 6,000 feddans of land from the Egyptian government at a price of one Egyptian pound per feddan. EMPAIN liked the site because of its location in the desert northeast of Cairo where the air is dry and crisp. EMPAIN’s idea was to create an attractive town, not just a dormitory suburb, and to achieve this a tramline connecting the suburb to downtown Cairo was inaugurated in December 1910. Other features of the new suburb included an amusement park at the entrance, later dubbed Grenada Town, though this park, which featured a cinema and promenade, has since disappeared and unsightly high-rise buildings now stand in its place. A horseracing track was also built to attract the country’s financial and cultural elite, and this is now the Heliopolis Merryland Park. According to Ibrâhîm, the developers of Heliopolis followed the principles that inspired the creation of various Paris suburbs, where entertainment and train
connections to the city centre were also built. The Heliopolis Company hired Ernest JASPAR, a Belgian architect, to design the Heliopolis Palace Hotel, now Egypt's Presidential Palace. JASPAR also designed the suburb’s main church, known as the Basilica, to serve as a religious focal point. The inimitable Baron’s Palace with its Indian motifs added a grandiose touch to the scheme.

However, Heliopolis was primarily meant to be a residential suburb, not a recreational resort, so the developers built ample housing for middle-income employees. The suburb was divided into two areas, with the southern section, close to the intersection of al-Ahrâm and Ramses Street, being dedicated to middle and upper-middle-income housing. Curved streets were introduced into the original plan, the aim being to avoid the visual boredom of a grid pattern. The suburb's northern section, the area surrounding Midân al-Gâmi‘, was originally dedicated to low-rent accommodation for workers. Green areas were also provided in public spaces as well as at the peripheries of the building plots. Once the population of the suburb had grown, and an airport had been built to the east, further expansion was required, and Heliopolis grew into the semi-independent suburb of Cairo that we know today with several distinct residential areas. The commercial area was originally mostly around Ibrâhîm al-Laqqâni Street, while the horseracing track moved to the north to make way for the creation of Merryland Park. In the suburb’s various residential areas the developers provided affordable housing for different income groups, coupled with entertainment and transport facilities. They also enforced building codes to ensure that each area retained a distinctive architectural character. In the original scheme, 46 per cent of the area was dedicated to housing, eight per cent to services, five to industry, 29 to streets, and 12 to gardens.

The focus was on creating a development that had a distinctive architectural character and would have open spaces and wide streets. Arcaded promenades were attached to the sides of commercial streets, and the height of the buildings was strictly regulated. EMPAIN personally approved the architectural blueprints and the decoration of the façades. Private builders had to comply with regulations established by the Heliopolis Company and were asked to keep buildings under five storeys high, to a maximum height of 20 metres. The first buildings built in the suburb were those surrounding the development’s core. Built in an Arabesque style and with shaded colonnades, these established a style that was later followed by private builders who bought land from the company and had to comply with regulations governing decoration, height and other details. However, all this was 100 years ago. Today, visitors to Heliopolis are greeted by buildings of 20 storeys or more, together with nondescript shopping malls and design-challenged government buildings and hospitals. Heliopolis is being denuded of its original beauty. The suburb’s villas, once the hallmark of elegance in this well-planned district, are being pulled down by developers seeking to make a quick profit and oblivious to
the area’s history and architectural heritage. Entire buildings have disappeared, replaced by architectural atrocities. The enchanting al-Huriyya cinema, for example, has now vanished, replaced by an unsightly shopping mall. This decline, which began in the 1970s with the high-rises at Roxy, has gone on unabated. Will the government ever take action to save Heliopolis? Baron EMPAIN must be turning in his grave. (Mohamed Mursi, “Saving Heliopolis?”, Al-Ahram Weekly, October 8, 2010. Voir également Nadine El Sayed, “City of the Sun Under Destruction”, Egypt Today, July 2010. Voir également Milad Zaky, “Heliopolis Palace Hotel. Lap of luxury”, Watanî, November 28).

Sérapeum
The Sérapeum at Saqqâra is a vast underground catacomb where the sacred Apis bulls were entombed in enormous granite sarcophagi after mummification. This huge complex to the north-west of the Third-Dynasty Step Pyramid of Djoser was in use from the Eighteenth Dynasty, which began in 1554BC, to the Ptolemaic era, which ended in 30BC. Apis was originally thought of as the herald of Ptah, the chief god in the area around Memphis. As a manifestation of Ptah, Apis also embodied the qualities of kingship and was a symbol of the pharaoh. The Sérapeum was discovered in 1851 by the French Archaeologist Auguste MARIEette, the then head of Egyptian antiquities, who was excavating at the Saqqâra necropolis south of Cairo. MARIEette also found 1,200 ancient manuscripts depicting the worship of Apis. One of the burials was undisturbed and is now in the Agricultural Museum in Cairo. The other 24 sarcophagi had been robbed. For the past ten years, the Sérapeum has been closed to the public for repairs. Now Zâhi Hawwâs, secretary-general of Egypt’s Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), has announced the discovery of a part of a ceremonial procession road dating back to the Ptolemaic period, which remained in use for about 300 years until the Roman conquest in 30BC. The road runs from the recently discovered ‘missing’ pyramid of the obscure king Menkaouhor and leads from a mummification chamber towards the bulls’ final resting place. Louis Kâmîl, general-manager of antiquities of Saqqâra and Gîza, says the Sérapeum suffered severe architectural damage caused by leaking drainage water from neighbouring houses and heavy rain. This has led to weakening of the soil round the tomb and to widening the cracks in the stone structure of the walls, ceilings, corridors and supports. Mr Kâmîl said the SCA had launched a project to save and support the tombs, renovate the ground, the cracks, treat the joints, restore the walls architecturally and make metallic buttresses. A new central air-conditioning system will improve the atmosphere of the tomb, and additionally there will be new lighting and wooden flooring to replace the sand floors. Atmospheric changes within the Sérapeum will be monitored by systems to measure cracks in three dimensions, measure temperature and humidity and determine the presence of underground water. (Sanaa’ Farouq, “Spruced up for sacred bulls”, Watanî, August 15, 2010).
Lac Qârûn
Fayyûm’s Lake Qârûn protectorate is one of Egypt’s richest and most treasured natural landmarks. It is also on the brink of destruction. Lake Qârûn received its protectorate status, not only because of its obvious beauty and importance for birds and people, but also for its unparalleled historical, natural and scientific importance. The northern side of Lake Qârûn, around Gabal Qatrânî, hosts one of the world’s most complete fossil records of terrestrial primates and marshland mammals, critical to our understanding of human evolution. Discoveries continue to be made and studied by scientists. UNESCO is currently considering this area as a World Heritage site. Until now only three percent of the area has been excavated. Last year the excavations uncovered a complete fossil of a prehistoric whale species. This has not been found elsewhere in the world. In a couple of years this area, which scientists say is so rich in fossils, will be under concrete.

Lake Qârûn is also an internationally designated “Important Bird Area,” where thousands of migratory birds rest during their winter migration pattern south. Flamingos, grey herons, spoonbills and many duck species, to name a few, flocked to the lake during the fall. The lake provides food, shelter and breeding grounds for a wide variety of resident and migrating birds, including several endangered species. Egypt is a signatory of many international, environmental conventions including the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and has an obligation to address those bodies with its environmental policies, including the protection of bird life as an integral element in global biodiversity. But at Lake Qârûn, a wave of tourism development is destroying the shoreline. Pollution is degrading its prized animal and bird habitats. According to Egypt’s law protecting nature reserves, it is illegal to destroy, remove or pollute a reserve’s natural resources – its wildlife, plants, rocks, even soil. This law, however, is subject to a final clause that states “...unless permission is obtained from the relevant authorities.” Often enough, the Egyptian government has given and continues to give this permission at Lake Qârûn.

Despite all this, however, Egypt’s Tourism Development Authority (TDA) has plans to build on hundreds of acres along Lake Qârûn’s northern shore — even though this area of rolling, untouched desert is meant to be a protected area. On the southwestern shore, development currently underway will cover around 300 acres of prime lake property. A huge cement embankment already protrudes into the lake, covering the shoreline while destroying a key bird habitat and denying local fishermen access to the lake. The Fayyûm Governorate is keen to promote development because of the promise of jobs and improved infrastructure in what is one of Egypt’s poorer areas. Analysts say, however, these developments are unsustainable and will destroy the very things that attract more adventurous tourists to the area. Italian researchers have spent five years developing a plan for eco-friendly tourism, which would both help protect the environment by forbidding hunting, building a bird sanctuary, restricting water sports and providing fishermen access to the lake. The plan would also aide economic growth in the area by providing jobs related to eco-friendly lodges as well as eco-guiding for bird watching and desert safaris that only locals do
best. But to date none of these options are being seriously considered. By maintaining the status quo, a protected area of international scientific and historical importance is about to be destroyed for what seems to be the short-term profit of a few rich developers. (Hala Barakat, “Protectorates not Protected: Lake Qârûn”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, November 25, 2010).

La construction par le CSA d'une clôture de sécurité d'au moins 3 mètres de haut autour de toutes les zones archéologiques d'al-Qurna à l'Ouest de Louqosor suscite le mécontentement et la colère des citoyens, des touristes et des membres des missions archéologiques. Sayyid Farrâg, membre du Conseil municipal à Louqosor estime que les clôtures édifiées dans les zones de Malqata à proximité de Dayr al-Muhârib, du temple de Shalwit, de Nag' al-Sawâlim à Dhirâ' Abû al-Nagâ, à Madinat Hâbû, à Qasr al-'Agûz et jusqu’au village al-Mudîra au Sud, ces clôtures constituent un massacre caractérisé de la beauté et de la nature. Le forfait du ministère de la Culture, représenté par le CSA, est comparable au mur de Berlin et à la clôture de séparation érigée par les Israéliens. Sans parler du coût excessif pour les finances publiques qui revient à 400 livres égyptiennes par mètre pour les sous-traitants et jusqu’à 1 600 LE pour l’entrepreneur officiel. Sayyid Farrâg accuse les responsables du CSA de gaspillage des fonds publics. Comment ose-t-on construire des murs et des piliers en béton armé d’une telle hauteur au milieu et autour des zones archéologiques ?, s’insurge-t-il. Il ajoute qu’à présent la construction de telles clôtures n’a plus aucune justification après le succès du transfert des habitants d’al-Qurna vers la nouvelle ville al-Târiq. Par ailleurs, des murs aussi hauts donnent une mauvaise image des riverains comme s’ils étaient des hordes de voleurs constamment prêts à piller les trésors de leur pays sans aucune conscience de leur valeur civilisationnelle. Enfin, Sayyid Farrâg annonce son intention de soulever cette affaire devant le Conseil municipal en vue de la destruction immédiate de ces clôtures et leur remplacement par des murs en briques crues ou en calcaire d’une hauteur ne dépassant pas 1,5 m.

De son côté, le directeur de la zone archéologique de la rive Ouest, Mustafa Wazîrî, affirme la nécessité de telles clôtures pour protéger les zones archéologiques contre le vol et les divers empiétements. Il nie que ces murs, qui seront repeints à la demande du Dr Zâhî Hawwâs d’une couleur comparable à la boue, portent atteinte au charme des sites archéologiques. Quant aux clôtures basses érigées en briques crues ou en calcaire, elles ne sont pas de nature à protéger correctement les zones archéologiques. Wazîrî dément la soi-disant gorgne des membres des missions archéologiques qui, selon lui, ont fourni l’aide nécessaire en plans et en dessins architecturaux pour préciser le tracé de ces clôtures. Enfin, Wazîrî demande qu’on juge ce projet uniquement après l’achèvement total des travaux engagés depuis plusieurs mois. (Ahmad al-Sa’did, « Les clôtures de Louqosor coupent la vue et fâchent les touristes », al-Gumhûriyya du 5 septembre 2010).

Réaménagement de la ville de Louqosor

New Gourna

Although the heat makes work in Luxor over the summer difficult, a committee of international architects gathered early last week on Luxor’s west bank in order to inspect Egyptian architect Hasan Fathî’s New Gourna village, launching a comprehensive scheme to help preserve this village consisting of mud-brick domiciles for the poor. Constructed between 1946 and 1952 by pioneering architect Fathî, New Gourna aimed to provide housing for the population of the village of Old Gourna. Villagers from the latter had lived for generations above ancient Egyptian tombs, and they were moved in order to prevent damage to the tombs and to provide a model for low-cost and sustainable housing. The main characteristic of New Gourna consists of its reinterpretation of the traditional village setting, using local materials and techniques that are extraordinarily sensitive to the climate. The type of architecture Fathî developed at New Gourna was recognised internationally as an appropriate solution for housing low-income rural communities, and it was presented in a major architectural work published in 1976, Architecture of the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt. Fathî’s ideas inspired a generation of architects and planners worldwide through his integration of vernacular technology with modern architectural principles. In 1980, Fathî was awarded the Aga Khan Award for Architecture Chairman’s Award for his architectural design at New Gourna.
However, since then time has taken its toll on the village, and some people from Old Gourna always refused to be relocated to the new setting. As a result, parts of New Gourna were sparsely populated, and the village as a whole has been subject to a lack of maintenance and environmental problems, leading to the loss of some dwellings. Cracks have spread in the walls of some buildings, and concrete buildings commissioned by the local authorities are even being constructed just a few metres away from the magnificent mud-brick theatre designed and built by Fathî. Although New Gourna is situated within the boundaries of the World Heritage Site of Ancient Thebes with its Necropolis, added in 1979 to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO’s, World Heritage List, its outstanding nature was not fully recognised when the site’s nomination dossier was prepared.

International efforts have been made to safeguard New Gourna, but few concrete measures have been taken. Since the village is a key reference for architects, engineers and specialists in earthen architecture worldwide, an international association was set up in 2008 in Geneva in order to try to safeguard Fathî’s architectural work. However, little work took place until 2009, when the village was declared a protected heritage site by prime ministerial decree, and a committee from the Ministry of Culture, the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), the National Organization for Urban Harmony and the Luxor governorate was formed to identify the perimeters of the village and the legal measures that could be taken to protect the site. It was in this context that UNESCO set up a committee of experts in the field of sustainable and earthen architecture to help efforts to safeguard New Gourna. Last week, some two dozen international experts met in Luxor in order to make recommendations on a project aiming to safeguard New Gourna.

“The safeguarding of New Gourna would be a dream come true,” said Luxor Governor Samîr Farag at the meeting, adding that the development of the village was also within the city’s development plans, including turning the area into an open-air museum. Under the plan, the 70 homes in the village would be restored along with the mosque, theatre and market. The house lived in by Fathî during the village’s construction would also be restored. An international centre for sustainable architecture would be established, as well as a Hasan Fathî visitor’s centre. One of the main goals of the initiative, Farag said, would be to draw attention to the pioneering ideas and philosophy of Fathî himself and to demonstrate their contemporary relevance in the international centre. According to UNESCO, Fathî’s tenets derived from his humanistic values, which set high store on the connections between people and the places in which they lived, arguing for the use of traditional knowledge and materials and especially the advantages of earth as a construction material. New Gourna was an important experiment in the implementation of Fathî’s philosophy. Safeguarding the village is not only about preserving its original design and fabric, but also about promoting Fathî’s ideas and educating the public about them.

“We are here to begin a new adventure that fulfils the dream of a great man, Hasan Fathî, that his life did not see,” Francesco BANDARIN, UNESCO assistant director-general for culture, told reporters at a press conference held to
launch the $1 million rehabilitation project for New Gourna, which will last two years. BANDARIN said that Fathî had seen the future shape of architecture before others, a future that he had made concrete at New Gourna. “We are here to make this project a flagship for Luxor, Egypt and the world as a whole,” BANDARIN said, explaining that the planned International Centre for Sustainable Architecture (ICSA) aimed to provide training and research facilities for Egyptian and international students in order to promote Fathî’s humanistic vision. The project would have shorter and longer-term components, BANDARIN said. The short-term component would last for a year and would include a geotechnical and infrastructural assessment of the site, its sewage system and road network, as well as documentation of the village’s history. A project master plan would be drawn up, and this would include a management map and details of the architectural task force. The shorter-term activity would also seek urgently to consolidate the most-threatened buildings and restore the empty houses in order to set an example for later interventions. “We are here to help the local community,” BANDARIN added, explaining that buildings built in concrete in the village would be demolished under the plan and replaced by new ones similar to those in Fathî’s original design. The inhabitants of the demolished houses would be given new ones under the project, he said. In the longer term, the project would include the construction of the proposed international centre in a central position in the village. The mosque would be restored, as would Fathî’s former residence. The centre would include a guesthouse for teachers, scholars and students, and the project as a whole would include an important environmental component and sewage treatment scheme. Overall, those living in New Gourna would benefit from the plan in the form of better housing conditions, and they would be able to capitalise on the national and international attention focussed on the village. Local businesses could develop as a result of the new emphasis on mud-brick conservation, and villages could become entrepreneurs renting out rooms, running local eateries and shops and setting an example to surrounding communities of the social and economic gains to be made through the conservation and adaptive reuse of their own heritage. (Nevine El-Aref, “Architecture for the poor”, Al-Ahram Weekly, October 14, 2010. Voir également Ashraf Mufîd, « Congrès international à Louqsor en faveur du développement du village de Hasan Fathî », al-Ahrâm du 23 septembre ; Sayyid Hanafi, « L’Unesco tente de réparer la négligence dans le village de Hasan Fathî », al-Ahrâm du 3 octobre ; Mayy ‘Azzâm, « L’Unesco restaure le village de Hasan Fathî à Louqsor », al-Masrî al-Yawm du 17 octobre).

Rive Ouest
Luxor’s night scenery now looks completely different. The city’s visitors can easily admire Hatshepsut’s temple, the Valley of Kings and Queens, as well as the noblemen’s tombs while strolling along the east bank of the Nile at night. With a budget of LE56 million, the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), in collaboration with Egypt’s Sound and Light organization and French lighting company Architecture Lumière, succeeded in installing 922 lighting units in different locations along the city’s west bank mountains, offering a new service to Luxor’s visitors, stated Culture
Minister Fârûq Husnî. Zâhî Hawwâs, Secretary General of the SCA, stated that the aim of the project is to preserve the tombs and temples located on Luxor’s west bank. The large number of visitors that flock to these monuments will now be distributed throughout the day, from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm. This, Hawwâs added, will reduce the level of humidity inside the tombs, which negatively affect paintings inside them. Hawwâs explains that the new lighting system will also provide a beautiful and dramatic scene at night for pedestrians walking along the Nile boardwalk on the east bank in Luxor.

Major General ‘Isâm ‘Abd al-Hâdî, Head of the Egypt Sound and Light organization, says that the 922 lighting units have been carefully installed on Luxor’s west bank using a GPS system in order to navigate Luxor’s rocky west bank. The lighting units can withstand high temperatures and dryness and are erosion resistant. Sabrî ‘Abd al-‘Azîz, Head of the Pharaonic Antiquities at the SCA, says the project covers the west bank mountains, the Valley of the Kings, the Valley of the Queens, the noblemen’s tombs, the northern side of al-Gurna, and Hatshepsut’s temple.


Dayr al-Baharî

(...)

The Polish-Egyptian mission has been excavating and restoring the temple of Dayr al-Bahrî for 30 years and has recently come upon remarkable evidence on which to hypothesise more about Hatshepsut’s life and times. Back in 1969, the team unearthed a small temple built by Tuthmosis III to the south-east of the upper terrace of Hatshepsut’s stepped structure, and a year later they found another terrace. Scattered around were hundreds of blocks and fragments of statues from the temple of Hatshepsut, along with plaster casts of blocks from the temple that were taken to the Metropolitan Museum between the years 1911-1931. This enabled enthusiasts to set about reconstructing 26 colossal Osirid statues, many bearing traces of the bright colours with which they were originally painted. Also discovered — or should one say excavated from beneath the rubble — was a temple that Hatshepsut herself appears to have built to the south of the upper terrace. It includes what Zbigniew SZAFRANSKI, director of the Polish Institute in Cairo, called “a family chapel” dedicated to her parents, their mothers and their grandmothers. “Reading between the lines, this complex subtly reveals a cult of parents,” he added.

It was in the seventh year of her reign that Hatshepsut decided to present herself as “King of Upper and Lower Egypt”. Indication of this appears in her image, carved in relief, honouring Amun at the entrance to the main sanctuary on the upper terrace, which was first painted pink (the usual skin tone of women), and then overprinted in red, denoting that the god
was being honoured by his son. “Her images are beautifully sculpted, even those carved on such high registers on the wall that they could not possibly be seen from the ground. Evidently she employed the most talented artists in her workshop,” SZAFRANSKI said. Indeed, it was her most talented architect, Senmut, who designed the terraced temple for Hatshepsut. “[It] was dramatically different from New Kingdom temples because it was meant to function as a memorial monument, sharing such components as gates, pillars, columns, Osirid statues and sphinxes,” SZAFRANSKI said. In fact, when approaching the temple from the east one becomes aware that, far from belittling the temple, the stark purity of the cliffs to its rear—water-worn for thousands of years by hot winds and flash floods forming deep cracks and crevices—forms a dramatic backdrop.

The structure appears to have been inspired by the adjacent 11th-Dynasty temple built by Hatshepsut’s distant predecessor Pharaoh Mentuhotep II (whose temple has also been restored), but it was carried out on a very much larger scale. Senmut adopted the idea of the terrace and added an extra tier, so that the whole temple comprised courts, one above the other, with connecting, inclined planes at the centre. The Polish mission has recently been hard at work on the upper terrace, a festival courtyard and two chambers which were added later—one in honour of Hathor and devoted to the cult of the queen and her parents, and the other devoted to Anubis. These will soon be open to the public. “Examining the innovative architecture, especially the large statue of Hatshepsut herself in the form of Osiris in what is known as the Coronation Portico, and also the reliefs on each side of a doorway showing her wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt (to the left), and the Double Crown (to the right), one gets the impression that Hatshepsut herself influenced the project, and may indeed have personally designed her chapel towards the end of her reign,” SZAFRANSKI said.

The sanctuary of Hatshepsut has a vaulted ceiling and some of the wall paintings bear a marked resemblance to those to be found in Old Kingdom tombs at Saqqâra. Here are such scenes as Hatshepsut in front of an offering table, and registers of offering bearers. One cannot help but feel, along with SZAFRANSKI, that a little of Hatshepsut’s whim and fancy went into the elaboration of this most magnificent of mortuary temples. Hatshepsut had two tombs. The first she had dug in the Valley of the Kings, where all members of the royal family were laid to rest in the 18th Dynasty. The second was in Taket Zayd Valley, to the south of Dayr al-Bahri overlooking the royal valley. Hatshepsut’s mummy was found in neither. It has been suggested that her body may be one of the couple of “unknown woman” found in the shaft at Dayr al-Bahri, but this is by no means certain. (Jill Kamil, “Queen Hatshepsut King of Upper and Lower Egypt”, Al-Ahram Weekly, September 23, 2010). - - -
Last week Cairo’s Saliba Street was even more crowded than usual. Cars by the dozen edged their way through the hundreds of pedestrians swarming in the street to buy and sell goods. However, around the corner in the Suyûfiyya alley just off Saliba Street, where the Mamluk Palace of al-Amir Tâz is situated, the atmosphere was serene and enchanting. Soft Oriental tunes filled the evening air of the open court at the centre of this vintage palace and a light winter breeze frisked the softly-lit trees and foliage. In the open courtyard of the palace Culture Minister Fârûq Husnî and Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) Secretary-General Zâhî Hawwâs welcomed guests who included the Grand Mufti of Egypt ‘Ali Gum‘a; Father Hânî ‘Azîz, the representative of Pope Shinûda; the famous Egyptian actor ‘Umar Sharîf and a number of foreign ambassadors, businessmen and officials. The occasion was the inauguration of the “Coptic Art Revealed” exhibition, which had been set up in three rooms of the palace to celebrate the centennial of the Coptic Art Museum.

The museum was founded in 1910 by an influential Copt, Marcus Pasha Simaika, who created it as a permanent home for some of Coptic Egypt’s heritage artefacts in a building next to the Hanging Church in Old Cairo. The Coptic Art Museum was renovated by the SCA and reopened to the public in 2006. “This exhibition shows Egypt’s cultural diversity as well the nation’s unity, as it is a Coptic exhibition in an Islamic monument,” Husnî told reporters at last week’s opening ceremony. He denied that there was any link between the timing of the exhibition’s opening and the recent sectarian violence in ‘Umrâniyya. Husnî told Al-Ahram Weekly that the organisation of such a notable exhibition was not a predetermined event to demonstrate that there was no crisis between Muslims and Copts in Egypt; on the contrary it was planned six months ago - well prior to the trouble at ‘Umrâniyya - to highlight the splendour of Coptic art and civilisation.

“This exhibition is a beautiful, artistic picture of Egypt’s cultural diversity and the influence of Coptic art in society. It also highlights Egypt’s continuous and linked heritage,” Husnî said. He added that the exhibition was a good opportunity to show Egyptians an aspect of their heritage. “The exhibition is a message to show how to protect a nation,” Husnî stressed.

Hawwâs told the Weekly that the exhibition was a call for all Egyptians, both Muslims and Copts, to show their love of and support for their country. It also illuminated the importance of the Late Antiquity period of Egyptian history. From Cairo, the exhibition will go on to Austria and Germany before returning to Egypt for a local tour to Alexandria and Aswân. Nâdyâ Tomoum, the exhibition’s creator and director, told the Weekly that the Amir Tâz Palace was chosen as the venue for the Coptic Art Revealed exhibition not only because it was a very splendid building, but also because it gave a clear indication of the diversity of Egypt’s history.
What was so unique about Coptic art, Tomoum continued, was that on the one hand it showed the multi-cultural character of Egypt in Late Antiquity, and its extensive exchange with the Mediterranean region, and on the other it showed that the Copts managed to reshape and maintain the local artistic tradition. “I am overwhelmed and really happy with the result,” Tomoum said. She said that working on the project for the past 18 months had not been an easy task, but that the success of the evening when she could finally see the exhibition come together, and witness the appreciation of the assembled guests, was a very special moment.

Visitors to the exhibition will be taken back in time to the early centuries of the Christian era in Egypt, where they will be introduced to the most significant features of Coptic culture and art. They will have the opportunity to admire colourful icons painted by renowned icon-painters; stone and wooden friezes with intriguing designs recovered from ancient monasteries and churches; illuminated manuscripts from the archives of the Coptic Museum – among them an excerpt from the famous Nagâ Hammâdî Library; ancient letters which open a window to social and monastic life in the Coptic era; precious metalwork and pottery ware; beautiful textiles and other splendid objects of daily life. The 205 artefacts chosen to represent the period in the exhibition are arranged either chronologically or thematically. They begin with an event of the utmost importance for the history of Christianity in the country: the Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt. Two thousand years after the event this biblical story is still commemorated by Copts, and the sites that are said to have been visited by the Holy Family have evolved into focal pilgrimage centres. The Holy Family’s journey through Egypt has led to the Virgin Mary’s being afforded a special place in the Coptic liturgy and in the daily lives of the faithful. The Flight into Egypt, and the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child, have become the most popular motifs in Coptic art. The exhibition continues to relate how this new religion survived in Egypt while older religions and cults did not, as is illustrated by some striking artefacts chosen clearly to show the overlap of Pharaonic, Graeco-Roman and early Christian motifs.

Coptic art drew upon the visual language of preceding eras to help represent the concepts of the new religion. One of the remarkable features of Coptic art is the blending of influences from a multicultural milieu and its intensive exchange with the Mediterranean region, while maintaining and reshaping its local artistic traditions. As a consequence, the Coptic Egyptians created a unique identity and a distinct artistic style. The early years of Christianity form a major part of the exhibition. The gospel is said to have been brought to Alexandria by St Mark, who in 68 AD became the first martyr to lose his life on account of his Christian faith. Egypt was then a province of the Roman Empire, and Egyptian Christians were persecuted by their Roman masters. During the reign of Emperor Diocletian the persecutions were so severe that the Copts chose Diocletian’s accession to the throne in 284 AD as the first year of their calendar, also known as Anno Martyrum (AM) or Year of the Martyrs. Until this day the Coptic Church commemorates its martyrs, and Copts believe that the martyrs can actively intervene in the life of faithful believers and serve as their guardians.
and protectors. The most popular martyrs venerated by the Copts are represented by some refined artwork.

The exhibition also sheds light on the lives of the Desert Fathers, the early hermits and men of spiritual wisdom who moved to the desert to live in solitude and devote their lives to God. St Antony is called “the father of all monks”, and is credited with initiating the monastic movement in the Christian world in the third century AD. From textual sources we also know that even women chose an ascetic life and lived in convents. Some of the first monasteries in Egypt were founded in the early fourth century by Pachom, an Upper Egyptian Christian convert, who during his lifetime established 11 monasteries and two convents. Depictions of the early hermits are represented in the exhibition by famous pieces from the Coptic Museum’s permanent collection. Coptic Egypt was inextricably interwoven in the pilgrim routes to the holy land. There were many sacred places in Egypt that offered pilgrims a place for worship, Christian teaching and renunciation of their worldly goods. As they are today, sacred places were a gateway to heaven for pious believers. Remains from ancient Coptic monasteries and churches reveal a splendour quite contrary to anything that could be imagined for a life devoted to asceticism. Impressive remains from the monasteries of St Jeremias at Saqqâra and St Apollo in Bâwit (Dâyr Abû Abûllû, north of Asyût) exemplify the outstanding skills of Coptic artists and architects. Recent discoveries from Bâwit form the highlight of the exhibition and vividly attest to the many fascinating Coptic monuments still to be recovered from Egypt’s monastic sites.

Stories from the Bible played a crucial role in the life of the faithful and were used to decorate liturgical equipment, manuscripts and the walls of churches and monasteries. Biblical stories were even worn as decoration on garments. Popular narratives of the Old Testament include the sacrifice of Abraham and the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace. New Testament stories comprise miracles performed by Jesus such as the healing of a blind man and the raising of Lazarus. Stories from the holy books were to give hope for mankind and strengthen the believers in their Christian faith. Biblical stories are represented in the exhibition by precious manuscript illuminations, as well as decorated textiles and other items. The Coptic Divine Liturgy is one of the oldest celebrated religious services in the world. From an early date it was carried out through the performance of fixed symbolic gestures. Prescribed prayers and benedictions and selected scriptural readings accompanied the Coptic Divine Liturgy. The intensive use of incense and the visual effect of the icons decorating the walls of a Coptic church were to engage all the senses of the faithful. Relying primarily on the human voice for melody, the Coptic liturgy is chanted, with minimal use of musical instruments. Cymbals and triangles maintain the rhythm and beat. Diverse pieces of liturgical equipment, icons and manuscripts from various centuries are displayed to create the ambiance of a Coptic church.

The exhibition provides a kaleidoscope of items that were at one time in daily use, since Copts produced beautiful crafts, far more than in any other part of the early Christian world. They developed a refined skill in textile manufacturing and produced beautiful metal and pottery ware,
luxurious toiletry articles and items of personal adornment made of various materials. Personal letters were written on papyrus, parchment, paper or limestone and pottery shards. After the Arab conquest of Egypt in 642 AD, Tomoum said, Coptic artefacts were exposed to the culture of Islam, and by the 11th century manuscripts were written bilingually in Coptic and Arabic. “This Islamic influence can clearly be seen on some of the artefacts displayed,” she said. The objects on display have been carefully selected from several museum collections in Egypt. They include treasures from the Coptic Museum’s storage department and significant artworks from its permanent display, as well as pieces from the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation in Fustât and the Museum of Islamic Art in Bâb al-Khalq. Items from the National Museum, the Graeco-Roman Museum and the Museum of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria were also selected, as well as others from the Banî Swayf and al-‘Arîsh museums.

The geographical setting of the Coptic era is illustrated in the exhibition by maps pointing to the location of important religious and economic centres throughout the Eastern Mediterranean region as well as renowned monasteries and towns in Egypt during Late Antiquity. “A timeline gives an overview of crucial events that shaped the history of the Coptic period,” director-general of the scientific affairs and graphics at the museum department, Ilhâm Salâh said, adding that in each thematic section of the exhibition a special atmosphere was created by a unique exhibition design. Objects are displayed individually, in separate showcases, to emphasis their uniqueness. Detailed text information in the banners and labels give the broader context of all the artefacts displayed. A 240-page illustrated catalogue has been issued to accompany the exhibition. (Nevine El-Aref, “Egypt's illustrious Coptic heritage”, Al-Ahram Weekly, December 16, 2010. Voir également Dinâ 'Abd al-'Alîm, « Le CSA célèbre le centenaire du musée Copte », al-Yawm al-Sâbi‘ du 6 décembre ; Nevine El-Aref, “In celebration of Coptic art”, Al-Ahram Weekly, December 9 ; Muhammad 'Abd al-‘Mu’tî, « Husnî et le Muftî de la République inaugurent l'exposition archéologique copte », Al-Ahrâm du 9 décembre ; Névine Lameï, « L'Égypte copte célèbre son impact », Watanî du 19 décembre).

Musée Égyptien : Coins Through the Ages

The Egyptian Museum is holding a temporary exhibition on “Coins Through the Ages”. Over the past eight years the museum has hosted a series of temporary exhibitions, the most recent of which focussed on five artefacts that had been repatriated to Egypt. The temporary exhibition gallery in Room 44 has also hosted a series of exhibitions on excavations under the direction of foreign missions, including teams from America, France, Poland and the Netherlands. “Coins Through the Ages” includes a vast collection of gold, silver and bronze coins dating back to historical eras from the late Pharaonic right through the Mameluke period. Also featured in the exhibition are a gold belt of Ptolemy III Euergetes and a number of gold bullion pieces from the fourth century AD. These objects were previously placed on display in the coin and papyri section of the museum. To highlight the distinguished collection, says Sayyid Hasan, co-director of the Egyptian Museum, the museum will use the exhibition to show how Egypt’s
political, economical and religious history can be traced through its coinage. Wafâ' al-Siddîq, the director of the Egyptian Museum, says the exhibition is the first of its kind and will include early coins bearing hieroglyphic symbols.

Muhammad ‘Abd al-Fattâh, the head of the museum department at the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), says that before the invention of a monetary system people bartered their surplus crops and cattle amongst themselves to obtain the necessary commodities. The invention of coins provided the means of transition from a barter system to a monetary system. Metal coins are divisible, variable in form, convenient for trade with foreign markets and can be saved for use at a later time. The first people to invent a coinage system were the Lydians of Asia Minor in the second half of the seventh century BC. The rich Greek merchants trading in the city-states on the western coast of Asia Minor adopted the Lydians’ weight-system and began to issue oval ingots stamped with seals to guarantee weight and purity. After about 600 BC the use of coinage spread rapidly to Greece, and there, owing to improved techniques, coins developed into a splendid quality. Croesus, King of Lydia (560•546 BC) was the first ruler to strike coins in gold and silver.

During the Pharaonic period, gold, silver and bronze rings and large bronze ingots were sometimes used in the barter system. When the Persians first came to Egypt in 525 BC they brought their coins with them. The Egyptians treated these coins as ingots, valuing them based on their weight in metal and sometimes melting the coins for other uses. In the 30th Dynasty the Egyptians revolted against the Persians, and Nectanebo and his son, Tachos, struck Athenian coins to pay the Greek soldiers who helped them fight the Persians. The coins were also used in transactions with Asian merchants. These famous coins were called nwb-nfr, based on the two hieroglyphic signs on the obverse (or front surface), meaning “fine gold”. These rare coins, which have a picture of a horse on the reverse (or back surface), are now representative of the transition from barter to coinage in Egypt. The nwb-nfr coins were still likely to have been used in the barter system as well as in a monetary fashion with foreigners, since the ancient Egyptians had not yet adopted a monetary trade system.

When Alexander the Great came to Egypt in 332 BC he considered himself a successor to the Pharaohs. During his reign, the typical coin bore depictions of deities or religious symbols. Alexander’s image appeared on coins after his death in 323 BC. In this image he was portrayed as a deity or a hero on the obverse, while Zeus was represented on the reverse. In approximately 306 BC the Greek governor became an independent ruler, and shortly thereafter the first coinage of an independent Egypt was created. When Ptolemy I Soter proclaimed himself to be the king of Egypt, he struck his own coins in gold, silver and bronze. On the obverse was the head of Ptolemy I and on the reverse was an eagle on a thunderbolt, both symbols of Zeus. Around the edge of this scene appeared the king’s name in Greek characters. During the Roman era beginning with the reign of Augustus Egypt had special coins known as Alexandrian coins. These coins were named after the city in which they were minted and were restricted to use within Egypt. These Roman coins also had Greek inscriptions. The obverse showed a
depiction of the emperor’s head; the revers, beginning in the third century AD, bore representations of various Egyptian, Greek and Roman deities. After the Arab conquest of Egypt in 641 AD the name of the minting location on the coins was changed to the Arabic script. (Nevine El-Aref, “Coins bring great change”, Al-Ahram Weekly, August 26, 2010. Voir également Dinâ ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « Hawwâs inaugure une exposition des monnaies en or et en argent au Musée Égyptien », al-Yawm al-Sâbi’ du 9 août ; Amira Samir, « L’argent au fil du temps », Al-Ahram Hebdo du 18 août).

Visual Arts and Restoration, currently on display at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura per la R.A.E. (iiccairo), is a complex exhibition that chronicles the career of the renowned Italian architect and director of the Italian-Egyptian Center for Restoration and Archaeology, Giuseppe FANFONI. Combining architecture and environment, but also painting, sculpture, restoration and city planning, the fascinating exhibition takes philosophy of religion as its main theme. The photographs on display show the prolific activities of FANFONI, who has been working as an expert of restoration at the University of Rome, as a Professor of Design at the Professional School of the Arts in Rome, and as a Professor of Methodology and Restoration Technique at Cairo University. The works presented span from his early years, even before his artistic studies, to the more recent restoration of the Sama‘Khâna (Hall of Listening), a monument at the feet of the Citadel also known as the Sufi Theater, which has recently been opened to the public after a restoration that began in 1979. Visual Arts and Restoration is a demanding exhibition for laypersons, but inspiring to anyone interested in architecture and restoration.

FANFONI explained, “I preferred setting up an only-photographs exhibition because the transportation of the original works would have been too difficult.” As a consequence, the spectator can only imagine the life-size pieces in methacrylate-neon, polyurethane, ceramic and clay. But, as the artist underlined, “The technique is only an instrument, even though the modern society is concerned with that. The content is important, while the technique varies according to the content.” FANFONI’s artistic philosophy is expressed in three main projects: the war memorial in Sicily’s Barcellona Pozzo Gotto square, Cairo’s Sama‘Khâna, and the Sicilian Villa Finocchiaro.

(…) The Sama‘Khâna, dating from around 1800, is significant for its geometrical proportion. It has been restored according to the final adjustments made in the mid-1800s, and according to the symbols of the Sama‘, the performance of the Mevlevî. “The first time I entered the Sama‘Khâna, I wasn’t surprised by the beauty of the place. On the contrary, I noticed a pillar pressing on a shelf, and I perceived the pain of the pillar, and the stimulus to help it,” FANFONI explained. The restoration followed the worksite method that aims at teaching while working. “This is a way to experience the object beyond the notion, avoiding it becoming speculation and commodification of culture. The conservation shouldn’t be appropriation of the object but rather conservation of contents, which we, as modern people, should admit to not completely get,” FANFONI added.

(Valentina CATTANE, “Giuseppe FANFONI's 'Visual Arts and Restoration'”, al-
An exhibition at the Dick Institute in Kilmarnock, Scotland, compares and contrasts beliefs about life and death in two very different corners of the world: ancient Egypt and prehistoric southwest Scotland. The exhibition features Neolithic, Iron Age and Bronze Age artefacts from the local area, including a replica Iron Age cist burial. Photographs based on the adventures of ancient Greek explorer Pytheas will also show connections between geology, archaeology and history.

Yet the main attraction is surely the coffin and mummy of Iufenamun, a 21st-22nd Dynasty Egyptian High Priest, who was a top-ranking name at the Temple of Karnak in Upper Egypt. His highly-decorated coffin and remains show how the Egyptians held strong views about the afterlife, and provides a fascinating juxtaposition to the beliefs held by Scotland’s own early inhabitants. The exhibition runs through August 28, 2010. (Hassan Saadallah, “Exhibition of contrasts in Scotland”, The Egyptian Gazette, June 30, 2010).

Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities Zâhî Hawwâs said that the last displaying trip of Tutankhamun hit dLrs 100 million. Hawwâs said that the authority’s income has increased to reach one billion Egyptian pounds from the revenues of museums inside and the antiquities’ displaying tours abroad. The remarks came during the forum of “Egypt between past, present and future” which was organized by Al-Samra Institution for Environment and Development at the Innovation Centre. (“Hawwâs: Revenues of Tutankhamun last displaying trip hit $100m”, Egypt State Information Service, August 07, 2010).

The Cincinnati Museum Centre in the US state of Ohio has unveiled a new and unique display that looks back on the life of the most notable queen of Egypt... Cleopatra, a news release said Friday. “Cleopatra: The Search for the Last Queen of Egypt” will open its doors on February 18 and run through September 5, it added. The exhibition features nearly 150 artifacts from Cleopatra’s time. It features statuary, jewellery, daily items, coins and religious tokens that archaeologists have uncovered from the time surrounding Cleopatra’s rule. (“Cleopatra visits US in Feb”, The Egyptian Gazette, December 4, 2010).

Australie

Melbourne Museum : Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs

In April 2011 Australians will be able to visit the treasured collection of the boy king Tutankhamun, along with some of the priceless artefacts of his ancestors. It will be the first time for such a collection to be shown in Australia. Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs has now been touring the globe for six years. It has already travelled around Europe and the United States, and now it will fly to Australia and descend on the Melbourne Museum to enjoy the scenic atmosphere of the Carlton Gardens. Six months ago the director of the Sydney Museum, Frank HOWARTH, told the
Sydney Morning Herald that the show’s $100 million price tag and its size were too big for Australian institutions to handle. However, the Melbourne Museum stepped in to allow the Australian exhibition to go ahead in a joint venture with Victoria State and its major events company, the sports and entertainment management company IMG, and the Australian government. Stephen Flint WOOD, managing director of IMG Arts and Entertainment, said that bringing an exhibition that holds such historical significance throughout the world to Australia for the very first time was a great privilege. He also expressed his gratitude to the Victoria government, the Melbourne Museum, Arts Victoria and Tourism Victoria for making the event possible.

The 140 priceless objects in the exhibition – 50 of which belonged to Tutankhamun himself – tell the story of one of the most interesting and perplexing eras in ancient Egyptian history: the period before and during the Pharaoh Tutankhamun’s reign 3,300 years ago. Each section showcases the dazzling craftsmanship of the ancient artisans that characterised this fascinating period of history. Each section of the exhibition will focus on a specific theme, such as “Daily Life in Ancient Egypt”, “Traditional Religion” and “Death, Burial and the Afterlife”. These build up to the final section, which displays Tutankhamun’s treasures. These include the five items on tour that were found on the Pharaoh’s body when Howard CARTER entered his tomb in 1922. The room also includes the visual effect of superimposed items on a projection of Tutankhamun’s body to depict where they were positioned when the coffin was opened. All the treasures on show are between 3,300 and 3,500 years old. The final gallery features scans of Tutankhamun’s mummy that were obtained as part of a landmark five-year Egyptian research and conservation project, partially funded by National Geographic, that is examining the ancient mummies of Egypt by CT-scan. The scans were captured through the use of a portable CT scanner donated by Siemens Medical Solutions, which allowed researchers to see through the mummy’s wrappings and compile the first three-dimensional picture of Tutankhamun. This is also on display.

Zâhi Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), told Al-Ahram Weekly that the Melbourne exhibition would contain objects that had never been previously put on display, including a statue of Pharaoh Akhenaten. “This statue is being added to the exhibition as a result of DNA analysis, which proves that Tutankhamun was the son of Akhenaten and the grandson of Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye,” Hawwâs added. He continued that the statue depicted Akhenaten in the Amarna style with the physical features of a man and a woman. Many scholars previously thought that these statues were a realistic depiction of the Pharaoh and that he may have suffered from a disease, which caused him to exhibit severe physical deformities. Hawwâs explained, however, that after the CT scan and DNA analysis carried out by the Egyptian Mummy Project (EMP) it was determined that Akhenaten was a completely healthy individual. “The statuary of the king represented a religious concept of the Amarna age,” Hawwâs told the Weekly. He pointed out that during this period the Pharaoh was supposed to exhibit the qualities of the Aten, or sun disk, which was both male and female. “I believe that the statues of Akhenaten are not
realistic depictions of the Pharaoh,” Hawwâs said. Pharaoh Tutankhamun’s chariot and an impressive 3D replica of his mummy, currently exhibited at New York, will also feature in the Melbourne exhibition. Among the collection on show are artefacts from the tomb of Yuya and Tuya, Tutankhamun’s maternal grandparents, the 40-centimetre-high gold coffin that contained the viscera of Tutankhamun, the gold diadem from his mummy, a gold fan featuring an ostrich hunt, a small gold canopic coffin ornamented with faience, a silver trumpet used for religious ceremonies, the gilded wooden sarcophagus of Tuya, the gilded mask of Yuya, the painted wooden throne of Princess Satumun and a carved face of Akhenaten. The exhibition is one of two featuring the Tutankhamun’s spectacular possessions doing the rounds, both sponsored by National Geographic. The second exhibition, Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs is currently at the Denver Art Museum. Proceeds from all the tours will go towards the construction of the new Grand Egyptian Museum currently being built in the shadow of the Pyramids at Giza. This new museum is expected to be opened to the public at the end of 2012, and the artefacts from Tutankhamun’s tomb will be the stars of its collection. Some of the unique artefacts that visitors will see will include a mannequin statue of the boy king, which would have been used in antiquity for hanging ceremonial robes and jewellery, a beautiful gold dagger, a small coffinette used to house one of Tutankhamun’s internal organs, and other statues of the Pharaoh.

The exhibition is expected to attract up to 70,000 visitors from all over Australia, and Hawwâs believes that it will be one of the most important events of 2011. The minister for the arts, Peter BATCHELOR, also announced in Australian newspapers that Melbourne had seen off a number of international competitors to secure the exclusive exhibition for Australia. BATCHELOR says the exhibition is an outstanding cultural coup for Victoria, and is arguably the biggest prize in the global exhibition market. “Hosting Tutankhamun highlights Melbourne Museum’s place as Australia’s leading museum,” BATCHELOR said. Hawwâs says the exhibition gives a whole new generation a chance to experience the wonders of ancient Egypt. He is encouraging people from all over Australia to come to Melbourne to discover the magic and mystery of the boy king. (Nevine El-Aref, “Australia receives the boy king”, Al-Ahram Weekly, November 4, 2010. Voir également “Tutankhamun heading to Australia”, The Egyptian Gazette, October 29 ; Dinâ ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « L'exposition de Toutankhamon passe des États-Unis en Australie », al-Yawm al-Sâbi‘ du 30 octobre ; Mervat Ayad, “King Tut goes to Australia”, Watani, November 14; Mohssen Arishie, “King Tut wants to visit Japan too”, The Egyptian Gazette, December 5).

États-Unis

Discovery Times Square Exposition: Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs

One of the chariots found in the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun travelled to New York last week to meet up with other relics of the golden boy king at the Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs exhibition, Nevine El-
Aref reports. The gilded chariot arrived to be part of the blockbuster exhibition at the Discovery Times Square Exposition. “This is the first time that the chariot has travelled outside Egypt,” Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), told Al-Ahram Weekly. “This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the people of New York to see something of such great significance from the boy king’s life.”

The chariot is unique and stands out among the five other chariots found among what Howard CARTER called the “wonderful things” that made up Tutankhamun’s burial equipment. CARTER found the chariot in the south-east corner of the antechamber, along with three others. It is completely lacking in decoration and has a very light, open sided construction. The wheels are extremely worn, which suggests that the chariot was “used frequently in hunting expeditions by the young king”. CARTER described the chariot as “of more open, lighter construction, probably for hunting or exercising purposes”.

A recent medical report detailing tests carried out on Tutankhamun’s mummy, as well as those belonging to members of his family, was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. The article, entitled, “Ancestry and Pathology in King Tutankhamun’s Family”, describes how Hawwâs and his team uncovered the long-debated members of Tutankhamun’s family tree, as well as the cause of his death. Members of a research team from Hamburg’s Bernhard Noct Institute for Tropical Medicine, however, have disputed the claims that Tutankhamun died of malaria, and instead believe that sickle-cell disease was to blame for his death. While some of the symptoms of malaria and sickle-cell disease are similar, Hawwâs and his team stand behind their findings and reaffirm that Tutankhamun died of complications from malaria and Kohler’s disease, an ailment that affects blood supply to the bones. During recent CT scans and DNA tests, the medical team discovered that Tutankhamun had suffered an accident a few hours before his death which caused a fracture in his left leg. This makes the inclusion of Tutankhamun’s chariot to the New York exhibition even more interesting, as it might have been this chariot that the young king was using. “As we discover more about Tutankhamun’s death, we may find that this very chariot is an important piece of the puzzle that we’ve been trying for decades to solve,” Hawwâs pointed out. (Nevine El-Aref, “Tutankhamun’s chariot goes to New York”, Al-Ahram Weekly, August 5, 2010. Voir également Hassan Saadallah, “King Tut’s chariot goes to NY”, Egyptian Mail, July 27).

Culture Minister Fârûq Husnî on Sunday issued a list of new regulations to be adopted by his ministry in line with guidelines laid out in the recently approved Egyptian Antiquity Protection Law. The 199-article antiquities law was ratified by the People’s Assembly on 15 February. Supreme Council for Antiquities (SCA) Secretary-General Zâhî Hawwâs stated that some of the new regulations specifically pertained to the SCA. New directives, according to Hawwâs, include guidelines for defining what constitutes an “antiquity” per se; determining ownership of antiquities; regulating archaeological excavations; and specifying how antiquities should be inventoried, preserved and restored. Other regulations touch on tourism management at sites featuring antiquities and at Egyptian museums. The regulations also specify the fees to be charged for visiting these sites and photographing antiquities.

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SCA legal adviser Ashraf al-‘Ashmâwî said the new list of directives represented the first of its kind pertaining to the new antiquities law. Hawwâs chose al-‘Ashmâwî to head a commission specifically mandated with developing the regulations. The commission, consisting of the directors of various SCA departments, along with financial, legal, management and antiquities experts, reportedly met 15 times within the last three months in order to finalize the new set of rules. (Fathiyya al-Dakhâkhnî, “Minister announces new antiquities guidelines”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, July 5, 2010).

A group of Egyptian citizens have filed a complaint to the office of the attorney general demanding the cancellation of a Salafi preacher’s television program after he issued a fatwa (a religious edict) on the sale of antiquities. A Facebook group has been set up by those concerned on which they say that they have filed a complaint to attorney general ‘Abd al-Magîd Mahmûd to ban the live television program presented by Sheikh Muhammad Hassân. Hassân, a prominent preacher, currently presents a program on the Salafi-affiliated al-Rahma channel. The program, which is aired live, features inquiries via phone calls and he answers them on the spot. In response to a telephone call regarding Islam’s position on selling antiquities, Hassân said, “If it is found on land that you own, or in your house, then it is yours by right and you are not doing anything wrong.” As
for antiquities, which are found on a public land, Hassân explained, a Muslim is prohibited from selling them, advising that he should re-bury them. The people who filed the complaint argue that this fatwa means that all antiquities discovered on private land are the possessions of the owner of that land, and that he has the right to sell and profit from them. This contradicts the law, which punishes any private circulation of antiquities. They argue that the fatwa poses a serious threat to Egyptian history and its national heritage. They consider the ruling as an affirmation of the looting and theft of Egyptian antiquities, which are by extension, a part of the world’s heritage. Extremist Islamic movements have often taken a hostile stance against statues and other antiquities from pre-Islamic eras. In 2001 in Afghanistan, the Taliban movement destroyed many ancient monuments in the country including a statue of Buddha and some unique examples of early Buddhist art, in accordance with religious rulings. In Egypt the trade in antiquities, especially those found on the land of private citizens has been traditionally a common practice although it’s punishable by law. (“Public outcry after Salafi preacher’s fatwa on antiquities”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, October 8, 2010. Voir également Huda Zakariyâ, « Des archéologues exigent la comparution de Hassân devant la Justice à cause de sa fatwa sur la vente des antiquités », al-Yawm al-Sâbi‘ du 8 octobre ; ‘Alî Abû al-Khayr, « Fatwas pour la destruction du patrimoine », al-Masrî al-Yawm du 11 octobre).

The confession by the alleged gunman of the bus carnage a fortnight ago in connection with the illegal excavations of ancient Egyptian antiquities was not big news in society. The initial shock caused to the nation when Mahmûd Suwaylam, a bus driver working for a large construction company, gunned down seven of his colleagues, quickly subsided after it was disclosed that the victims and the suspect were involved in the illegal excavation and sale of antiquities. In his inconsistent story, the suspect confessed that he made up his mind to kill his colleagues after they refused his appeals for his share of a large antiquities find they unearthed beneath his home in the Hilwân province. He also claimed to have been insulted by his friends and neighbours when they heard that his collaborators in the illegal excavations had betrayed him. Illegal excavations of antiquities have taken place in Egypt since the ancient Egyptians sealed their tombs on their dead and their possessions. Many individuals rushed with their pickaxes to dig in the ground after rags-to-riches stories began to circulate in society. Unconfirmed reports mentioned allegations that a number of powerful officials and businessmen have been involved in masterminding the illegal excavation and trade in antiquities. It has also been alleged that once such thriving illicit business was behind a campaign in parliament by a powerful member of the ruling National Democratic Party to have a bill passed that would tolerate the trade in illegally excavated antiquities. A stormy opposition led by the Minister of Culture and the secretary-general of the Supreme Council for Antiquities compelled the
campaigner, MP and iron and steel magnate Ahmad ‘Izz, to withdraw his bill. A life sentence and a fine have been approved instead to deter antiquities thieves.

Economists think that the illegal excavations of antiquities have increased in correspondence with people's deteriorating economic circumstances. Stories about people who struck it rich by dealing in illegal antiquities persuaded counterfeiters and forgers to circulate fakes allegedly discovered in tombs in Giza, Luxor and Aswān. This scam led buyers to seek the aid of experienced people, including archaeologists, in inspecting these find before negotiating the price and concluding a sale. Unconfirmed reports said that it was not surprising for a 20cm tall marble or granite statuette to claim tens of millions of Egyptian pounds in the antiquities black market. Foreign agents living abroad and at home are said to be the masterminds behind the smuggling of priceless antiquities to individuals and official museums overseas. According to police reports, like drug cartels, criminals involved in this illicit trade are defiantly toting automatic weapons to defend themselves from attack by rival gangs in the area. (Mohssen Arishie, “Illicit antiquities trade thrives in hard economic times”, The Egyptian Gazette, July 24, 2010).

Antiquités égyptiennes
Les douaniers du port de Nuwayba’ ont intercepté un chauffeur jordanien, ‘Umar Dayf Allah Hasan, au volant d’un poids lourd chargé de cartons de fromage. 3 735 pièces archéologiques étaient dissimulées dans divers endroits du camion : monnaies en or d’époques pharaonique, gréco-romaine et islamique et des statuettes. Après examen des saisies, le comité d'expertise diligenté par le CSA a conclu qu'il s'agissait de pièces antiques d'une valeur inestimable. Il est de notoriété publique que les Antiquités qui quittent frauduleusement Nuwayba’ atterrissent le plus souvent dans les salles Christie’s à Dubaï au bonheur de nombreux étrangers et richissimes amateurs. Le directeur des douanes de Nuwayba’, al-Sayyid Nigm, révèle qu’il s'agit de la neuvième tentative de vol avortée au cours de ces dernières années. (‘Âtif al-Kîlânî, « Échec de la plus grande tentative de vol de 4 mille pièces archéologique via le port de Nuwayba’ », Ruz al-Yûsuf du 17 juillet 2010).

Temple de Sirábit al-Khâdim
(….) Last year the whole site [of Sirábit al-Khâdim] was subjected to restoration and documentation in order to make it more tourist-friendly and accessible to visitors. Muhammad ‘Abd al-Maqsûd, head of the central administration for Lower Egypt antiquities, said that the restoration, which took about a year on a budget of LE500,000, removed all the signs of time that marred the temple’s walls and reliefs. It also consolidated them and strengthened the fabric and colours of the wall paintings. Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), said that every relief had been photographed, drawn and videotaped on all four sides and then returned to its original position. A site management project is now being carried out.

Early this month, however, with the site almost ready for its official inauguration, the archaeologist in charge of the temple reported that one
of the six remaining sandstone statues of Hathor was missing from its original display inside the open court of the temple. The statue, which was erected during the reign of the New Kingdom Pharaoh Amenhotep III, features the lower part of the body of Hathor seated on a chair and holding the ankh symbol in her hand. Six hours after the reported theft, with the help of the antiquities and tourist police and members of the local resident Bedouin community, the statue was found inside one of the mines tunnelled into the mountains during the ancient Egyptian era to extract turquoise. Investigations revealed that the statue had not been stolen as was first thought, but had been hidden as part of an ongoing feud between two rival Bedouin tribes. It was the Bedouin themselves who led the police to the hiding place.

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‘Abd al-Maqsûd confirmed that it was impossible to steal a statue of this description for three reasons. First, the temple was located 1,100m above sea level and is difficult to reach. Second, the statue was too heavy to carry over the rocks to reach the road. Third, ‘Abd al-Maqsûd said, the site was protected by local Bedouin who did not allow strangers to enter the site, and furthermore the temple was guarded by a team of 24 guards and 10 archaeologists who made daily tours of inspection. The SCA is currently removing the six statues in the temple to Qantara Sharq galleries for restoration and to await a second removal to the new Sharm al-Shhaykh National Museum, which is planned for completion in 2011. (Nevine El-Aref, “The miners’ goddess”, Al-Ahram Weekly, October 21, 2010. Voir également « La pièce antique perdue du temple de Sirâbit al-Khâdim a été retrouvée », Al-Ahrâm du 1er octobre ; Usâma Fârûq, « Des zones archéologiques ouvertes au vol », Akhbâr al-Adab du 10 octobre ; Marcel Nasr, « Après une tentative de vol : projet urgent de restauration du temple de Sirâbit al-Khâdim », Watanî du 17 octobre).


Antiquités islamiques

Mosquée Qânîbây al-Rammâh

Le minbar de la mosquée Qânîbây al-Rammâh inscrit sur la liste du patrimoine sous le numéro 136 a disparu de la mosquée Sultan Hassan où il a été entreposé. Commis il y a environ un mois, ce vol n’a pas été déclaré ni dénoncé aux autorités judiciaires qu’après la découverte fortuite de sa disparition. Ce qui a finalement contraint le CSA à ouvrir une enquête.


Le ministère des Waqfs a nié toute responsabilité dans le vol du minbar de la mosquée Qânîbây al-Rammâh. Celle-ci est fermée depuis 1993 par le CSA qui y avait installé des étais en bois et des échafaudages pour les besoins de la restauration. En outre, le CSA avait tout mis sous clé. Dans un communiqué de presse publié aujourd’hui, le ministre des Waqfs a souligné que l’ouverture et la fermeture de cette mosquée pour restauration sont gérées par le CSA représenté par le superviseur qui en détient les clés.

Un certain nombre d’experts d’archéologie islamique ont appelé à traduire devant la Justice les responsables du vol du minbar de la mosquée Qânîbây al-Rammâh commis le mois dernier et découvert tout à fait par hasard. Cet incident constitue un affront réel pour le patrimoine égyptien et une preuve du laisser-aller et de la négligence dont sont victimes les Antiquités islamiques. L’ex-président du secteur des Antiquités islamiques et coptes, DrAbdallah mil, a souligné que ce n’est pas la première fois qu’un tel pillage soit perpétré. Il a souligné que la protection du patrimoine islamique nécessité davantage de contrôle et de coordination entre les différentes autorités responsables que ce soit le CSA ou le ministère des Waqfs. Kâmil a ajouté que les inspecteurs du CSA doivent être honnêtes, consciencieux et bien maîtriser les procédés de sauvegarde et de sécurisation des Antiquités qui leur sont confiées qu’elles soient islamique, pharaonique ou copte, afin d’empêcher la répétition de ce type d’incident. (Bilâl Ramadân, « Des archéologues appellent à traduire devant la Justice les responsables du vol du minbar de la mosquée Qânîbây al-Rammâh », al-Yawm al-Sâbi’ du 28 décembre).

Le secrétaire général de l’Union des Archéologues arabes, Dr Muhammad al-Kahlâwî, a déclaré que le patrimoine islamique égyptien est victime du ministère des Waqfs et du CSA. Ces vols à répétition prouvent que la relation entre ces deux organismes ressemble beaucoup au jeu du chat et de la souris, dans la mesure où celles-ci ne cessent, après chaque catastrophe, de s’en rejeter mutuellement la responsabilité. al-Kahlâwî invite Dr Zâhî Hawwâs à assumer la supervision des mosquées historiques à la place du ministère des Waqfs, afin de mettre un terme au pillage des minbars. (…) Le pilleur sait pertinemment que les accusations seront diluées et dispersées entre les différents organismes de tutelle et que, par conséquent, son crime restera toujours impuni. Il est grand temps que le CSA reprenne en main ces mosquées qu’il ne convient pas de laisser ballottées entre les ministères. (Huda Zakariyâ, « al-Kahlâwî : les Antiquités islamiques sont victimes des Waqfs et du CSA », al-Yawm al-Sâbi’ du 26 décembre).

Zâhî Hawwâs has never exactly been afraid of making enemies. Egypt’s 63-year-old antiquities chief (a man who cheerfully refers to himself as “The Pharaoh”) has, over the years conducted public feuds with fellow Egyptologists, prominent international museums and a host of alternative archaeologists who he cheerfully dismisses as “pyramidioits.” Hawwâs’ latest target isn’t exactly new; for years he has railed against foreign museums holding onto treasured Egyptian artifacts that he believes should be returned home. At the top of this list is the Rosetta Stone, currently housed in the British Museum in London. “I believe that unique
artifacts and masterpieces should not be away from their mother countries,” Hawwâs said in an interview with al-Masri al-Yawm. “Even if some of the artifacts left legally, still I want them back!”

Some of the institutions targeted by Hawwâs have argued that they can better preserve and protect the priceless antiquities that home countries like Egypt could – an attitude that the foreign archaeologist calls, “a slightly dubious colonialist excuse.” But recent events may serve to add ammunition to that argument; as more details emerge about the apparently nonexistent security measures that allowed a $50 million VAN GOGH painting to be stolen in broad daylight from a local museum last week, it’s hard not to wonder whether the Rosetta Stone might just be better off in London. Now Hawwâs is expanding his campaign and raising the stakes – recruiting other like-minded countries and seeking to turn up the international pressure. In April of this year, Hawwâs hosted a conference bringing together representatives of two dozen countries around a common cause: jointly seeking repatriation of national treasures, most of which were removed by European powers during the colonialist era. The conference ended with the formulation of a joint wish-list of items each country wanted back. Beyond the Rosetta Stone, Egypt’s wish list includes a bust of Nefertiti in Berlin’s Neues museum and a statue of Ramses II on display in a museum in Turin, Italy. Several other countries, including Libya, Greece and Nigeria submitted their own lists, with many of the most desired items being held in either the British Museum or the Louvre in Paris.

Hawwâs said he plans to make the conference an annual event, and steadily increase the public pressure on countries and institutions. “It is a very big deal. It’s not just Egypt, other countries are getting together which is something that hasn't happened before,” said Salima IKRAM, an American University in Cairo Egyptologist who has worked with Hawwâs for years. “There are no precedents for most of this. The precedents are pretty much being made now.” But IKRAM also admits she understands why institutions like the British Museum are unlikely to ever give in to Hawwâs’ demands. “If one object is given back to Egypt, then maybe Benin will want something and all the museums of the world will empty out,” she said. It remains to be seen whether Hawwâs’ campaign will succeed, but if he fails it certainly won’t be for a lack of trying.

In addition to the museum campaign, Hawwâs’ staffers closely track the world’s auction houses with an eye on stolen antiquities. In one case – a particularly bitter dispute with the St. Louis Art Museum in Missouri – Hawwâs has tried to rally armies of children through his online fan club to boycott the museum and write angry letters to the administration. “I’m going to fight. I’m going to go and tell the world that these countries have no right to these antiquities,” he said. “I don’t understand how they can claim to educate children with stolen goods.” He boasts that he has personally secured the return of more than 5,000 artifacts to Egyptian soil. Just last week the Canadian government announced it would return a small marble bust seized by customs officials in 2007. And last year, Hawwâs won a very public battle of wills with no less an institution than the Louvre over five ancient wall frescoes. The French agreed to return the paintings last fall after Hawwâs played his ultimate trump card: cutting
off ties and banning that institution from working in Egypt. “When (the Louvre team) applied to work in Saqqâra, I refused,” Hawwâs recalls proudly. “These museums have an interest in working here. But we don’t have to work with them.”

Of course that kind of tactic can easily spiral into a diplomatic incident if Hawwâs does it haphazardly, and it only works if he has the full backing of his own government at the highest levels. Fortunately for Hawwâs, that seems to be the case. Last fall, President Husnî Mubârak appointed him a vice-minister of culture, meaning Hawwâs no longer faced mandatory civil servant retirement this year and could serve indefinitely. Hawwâs has more than his share of critics, who regard him as more showman than scientist—a media-hungry tyrant who cares more about good television than good science. It’s telling that very few archaeologists with any ambitions to continue working in Egypt are willing to speak on the record about him. “I think Egyptologists kind of laugh and shrug their shoulders at Zâhî,” said one foreign archaeologist who has worked extensively with Hawwâs and requested anonymity so as not to jeopardize their relationship. “There is a lot of bluster involved, but I think a character like him is sort of needed.”

For those critics, Hawwâs often makes it too easy; his current History Channel reality show “Chasing Mummies,” often verges on self-parody. Hawwâs is depicted as a sort of barrel-chested Indiana Jones, personally risking his safety as he rappels into unexplored caves and dig-sites. In a rather obvious bit of staged drama, Hawwâs rushes to rescue a naïve young foreign assistant who somehow managed to get herself locked inside a Saqqâra tomb. The show also depicts Zâhî at his most boastful and imperious. He is shown berating underlings in both English and Arabic, talking about himself in the third person and generally acting like a bit of a cartoon. Perhaps the most amazing thing about the Zâhî Hawwâs reality show is that it took so long for someone to think of it. “On so many levels, he’s just ludicrous. He’s beyond even self-parody. And yet the job he does is so important,” said Dan LINES, a former Egyptologist and one of the founders of Egyptastic, a website largely dedicated to lampooning Hawwâs. Among the top stories currently on the Egyptastic site: “Hawwâs to play ‘bullying tantrum-prone buffoon’ in new comedy show.”

LINES no longer works in archaeology, which makes him unafraid to speak on-the-record about Hawwâs without fear of being blackballed from Egypt. But despite calling him, “a completely out of control buffoon,” even LINES can’t help admiring some grudging admiration for Hawwâs. LINES, who worked in Egypt on archaeological digs for several years, recalls Hawwâs’ influence on the Supreme Council for Antiquities, when he took over in 2002. “There was a sense of an organization being whipped into shape,” he said. “The SCA has become more professional on his watch.” (Ashraf Khalil, “The Pharaoh” goes to war”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, August 27, 2010. Voir également Zâhî Hawwâs, “Egypt’s Stolen Artifacts must be returned!”, al-Sharq al-Awsat, December 10).
Early this week, in a scene which could have been taken from The Da Vinci Code, the Ahly National Bank of Egypt (NBE) handed over to the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) 200 artefacts that had been deposited there since early in the 20th century. This collection includes pieces from the ancient Egyptian, Graeco-Roman, Coptic and Islamic eras. Among them are limestone statuary heads of ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman deities such as Horus, Hathor and Ptah, as well as Roman terracotta figurines and 20 Islamic and modern coins, including gold coins. Husayn ‘Abd al-Basîr, head of the legal and technical committee that checked the authenticity of the objects, says the most significant item in the collection was the diary of an Armenian man called Oying ALEXANIAN which contained the names and telephone numbers of antiquities dealers of the time, as well as the number of antiquities sale contracts. “These two things gave us a vision of how the antiquities trade in Egypt was rum at the time, especially that antiquities trading was legal,” ‘Abd al-Basîr said.

The story of how these artefacts came to light began several years ago when an Armenian antiquities dealer and a British collector, who both lived in Cairo during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, rented two vaults at the NBE to store some of their antiquities collection. The rental for the vaults was paid for several years, but eventually payments ceased and no one came forward to inquire about the vault contents. After receiving no information or rent for two years the NBE opened the vaults and, in compliance with Egyptian law, confiscated its contents. Also according to the law, these remained in the bank’s care for 15 years in case someone came back to claim them. This brings us to early this year, when the NBE’s executive board carried out an inventory of the bank’s special and long-term possessions. No one knew exactly what was inside the two vaults as the contents were the private deposits of the two foreigners. The NBE chairman, Târiq ‘Âmir, personally contacted Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the SCA, who sent a team of lawyers and archaeologists to inspect the authenticity of the items. When the SCA team confirmed their authenticity, the NBE offered the collection to the SCA as part of Egypt’s tangible heritage. These objects are now being restored at the Egyptian Museum before being placed on special display at the museum next month. Over the last seven years, and within Egypt’s commitment to preserving its heritage, more than 10,000 stolen and illegally-smuggled artefacts have been returned from abroad to the SCA. The most recent were 19 objects from the tomb of Tutankhamun formerly in the private collections of Howard CARTER and Lord CARNARVON, which were offered by the Metropolitan Museum in New York. (Nevine El-Aref, “From home to home”, Al-Ahram Weekly, November 25, 2010. Voir également Muhammad ‘Abd al-Mu’tî, « Découverte archéologique dans les coffres de la NBE », al-Ahrâm du 22 novembre ; Fathiyya al-Dakhâkhni, « Le NBE remet au CSA 200 pièces antiques », al-Masrî al-Yawm du 22 novembre ; Amira Samir, « D’un dépôt à
Canada
This is perhaps one of the best pieces of news that I have received over the past few months. I am, of course, talking about the return of an ancient statue from Canada to Egypt. The story of this statue begins with the Canadian authorities arresting a foreign traveller arriving in Canada from Egypt. This traveller had a Greek-era statue in his possession, which he had bought from an antiques dealer in Egypt. The Canadian authorities contacted Egypt’s Supreme Council of Antiquities [SCA] in order to pursue this case and complete the procedures in order to return this statue back to Egypt. This was around three years ago. The statue is a marble bust approximately 13 cm in height. The Canadian Heritage Foundation looked after this statue, however after the Canadian authorities confirmed that the traveller in question had no legal right of ownership of this statue, the SCA had the right to claim it in accordance with 1970 UNESCO convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. We sent an official letter to the Canadian authorities asking that they hand over the statue of Egyptian Ambassador to Canada, Mr. Shâmil Nâsir. Ambassador Nâsir did indeed receive this statue [this week] and has supervised its shipping back to Egypt.

This story reminds me of something else that also happened in Canada. A Canadian woman living in the city of Toronto heard me talking about the SCA’s efforts to restore and return Egypt’s stolen antiquities. She sent me a letter saying that she had purchased an ancient Egyptian statue from London for £10,000, and that she would like to return this statue to Egypt. I replied with a letter thanking her for her kind gesture, and extended an invitation for her to visit Egypt and meet with me so that we could thank her in person and take her on a tour of Egypt’s most important antiquities and archaeological sights. But I was in for a big surprise. The woman sent me another letter saying that she would gladly return the statue if Egypt would reimburse her for the sum that she had originally paid for it, even including her address in Canada so that we could send her a cheque for the required sum. I could see that this was a difficult situation, especially as the statue that this women had in her possession was a very beautiful one of a maiden with a snake entwined around her. However it is impossible for us to pay money for the return of an artefact. This would only encourage anybody still in possession of such treasures to ask for money in order to return them. There was no other solution but to send a letter to this woman explaining the grave consequences of provoking the curse of the pharaohs and how such a curse befalls anybody who dares to exhibit a Pharaonic statue inside their home, as such statues are more usually placed in graves, and how placing a statue such as this in one’s home angers the pharaohs and provokes their curse. The funny thing is that as soon as my letter reached the woman, she rushed to the Egyptian embassy in Toronto and
handed over the statue, which in turn returned it to Egypt. I have not heard anything from this woman following this incident, however it seems that the curse of the pharaohs worked in our favour this time and spared us from paying a ransom in return for a stolen statue. (Zâhî Hawwâs, “Curse of the Pharaohs restores Statue to Egypt”, al-Sharq al-Awsat, October 23, 2010. Voir également Dinâ ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « L’Égypte récupère une statue du Canada après 3 années de négociations », al-Yawm al-Sâbi’ du 19 août ; AP, “Stolen Greek statue to return home to Egypt”, The Daily News Egypt, August 20).

Espagne
Pieces of an ancient Egyptian necropolis that was pillaged in 1999 have been found in Spain by an expert in Middle Eastern antiquities who spotted them in a shop, Spanish police said Wednesday. The eight pieces of limestone carry hieroglyphic inscriptions dating from the third century BC, police in the northeastern city of Barcelona said in a statement. They were discovered by an expert from Barcelona University’s department of Middle Eastern antiquities. He spotted them in an antique shop and noticed they “bore inscriptions that made him suspect they came from” the Saqqâra burial ground in the ancient Egyptian capital of Memphis, which was pillaged in 1999, the statement said. The fragments were on sale for between €2,000 and €10,000 ($2,600 and $13,000). The shop’s owner was unaware of the “illegal origin” of the pieces, which are to be returned to the Egyptian government, the statement said. (AFP, “Pieces of ancient Egyptian necropolis found in Spain, says police”, The Daily News Egypt, September 15, 2010).

États-Unis
Egypt’s chief archaeologist says the United States will return a number of sarcophagi smuggled out of the country 50 years ago. Zâhî Hawwâs says US authorities seized the sarcophagi on American soil and will return them to Egypt in the next two weeks. He didn’t provide any further details about the antiquities or say what sites they were taken from. Thousands of antiquities were spirited out of Egypt during the colonial period and afterward by archaeologists, adventurers and thieves. Hawwâs has made recovering the artifacts the centrepiece of his tenure as antiquities chief. Hawwâs’ Wednesday statement lauded US efforts, saying America is the “first country in the world that cooperated with Egypt on the return of antiquities.” (“US to return smuggled sarcophagi-Egypt”, The Egyptian Gazette, October 13, 2010. Voir également “US to return smuggled sarcophagi to Egypt”, The Daily News Egypt, October 14 ; « L’Égypte récupère des sarcophages pharaoniques des États-Unis », Watani du 24 octobre).

Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art : 19 objets de la tombe de Toutankhamon

It seems that the spell of the Golden King Tutankhamun will last forever. While the Americans are admiring some of his treasured collection in two touring exhibitions now in Denver and New York, the Metropolitan Museum of
Fine Art (MET) has offered Egypt 19 objects attributed to Tutankhamun’s tomb. These small-scale objects are divided into two groups. Fifteen of them have the status of bits or samples, while the remaining four are of more significant art-historical interest and include a small bronze dog and a small sphinx bracelet-element. The pieces were acquired by Howard CARTER’s niece after they had been probated with his estate and were later recognised to have been noted in the tomb records, although they do not appear in any excavation photographs. Two other pieces include a part of a handle and a broad collar accompanied by additional beads, which entered the collection because they were found in 1939 among the contents of CARTER’s house in Luxor. All of the contents of that house were bequeathed by CARTER to the Metropolitan Museum.

The story of these artefacts started as early as 1922 when Howard CARTER and his sponsor, Lord CARNARVON, discovered Tutankhamun’s tomb with all its distinguished and priceless funerary collection in the Valley of the Kings on Luxor’s west bank. At that time, according to laws applied in Egypt, the Egyptian government generally allowed archaeologists to keep a substantial portion of the finds from excavations that they had undertaken and financed. However in 1922 when CARTER and his team uncovered Tutankhamun’s tomb it became increasingly clear that no such partition of finds would take place in this particular case. The splendour of the treasures discovered captured the admiration of the whole world, and it soon began to be conjectured that nevertheless certain objects of high quality dating roughly to the time of Tutankhamun and residing in various collections outside Egypt actually originated from the young Pharaoh’s tomb. Such conjectures intensified after CARTER’s death in 1939 when a number of fine objects were found to be part of his property.

When the MET acquired some of these objects, which had been subjected to careful scrutiny by experts and representatives of the Egyptian government and to subsequent research, no evidence of such a provenance was found in the overwhelming majority of cases. Likewise, a thorough study of objects that entered the MET from the private collection of Lord CARNARVON in 1926 did not produce any evidence of the kind. There was some discussion between Harry BURTON (a museum photographer based in Egypt, the museum’s last representative in Egypt before World War II broke out, and one of CARTER’s two executors) and Herbert WINLOCK (an American Egyptologist employed at the MET) about the origins of these works and about making arrangements for BURTON to discuss with a representative of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo whether these works should be handed over to Egypt, but the discussion was not resolved before BURTON’s death in 1940. When the MET’s expedition house in Egypt was closed in 1948 the pieces were sent to New York, where they stayed for more than six decades.

Recently, following the issuing of Egypt’s new antiquities law and its project to restitute illegally smuggled antiquities, two of the MET’s curators embarked on an in-depth study to substantiate the history of the objects. They eventually identified them as indeed originating from the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun. The MET’s director, Thomas P. CAMPBELL, consequently contacted Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), to offer the 19 objects from the famous tomb to Egypt. “This is a wonderful gesture on the part of the MET,” Hawwâs
commented, expressing his delight at recovering part of Egypt’s ancient Egyptian treasure. “These 19 objects from the tomb of Tutankhamun can now be reunited with the other treasures of the boy king.” He pointed out that for many years the MET, and especially its Egyptian Art Department, had been a strong partner in Egypt’s ongoing efforts to repatriate antiquities that had been illegally exported. Through their research they have provided the SCA with information that has helped to recover a number of important objects. Last year, Hawwâs said, the MET gave Egypt a granite fragment that joined with a shrine on display in the Karnak temple complex.

The newly-recovered objects will now go on display with the Tutankhamun exhibition currently in Times Square, where they will remain until January 2011. They will then move back to the MET where they will be shown for six months in the context of the MET’s renowned Egyptian collection. Upon their return to Egypt in June 2011 they will be given a special place in the Tutankhamun galleries at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo before being moved with the rest of the Tutankhamun collection to the Grand Egyptian Museum at Giza, which is scheduled to open in 2012. (Nevine El-Aref, “CARTER’s souvenirs to come home”, Al-Ahram Weekly, November 11, 2010. Voir également AFP, “New York museum to return Tutankhamun relics”, The Daily News Egypt, November 10 ; Mervat Ayad, “Back from the Met”, Watanî, November 21 ; Georges Edward, « Le MET restitute 19 pièces appartenant à la tombe de Toutankhamon », Watanî du 21 novembre ; “New York museum to return Tutankhamun relics”, Ahram onLine, November 26).

VI – RECHERCHES & DÉCOUVERTES

Scientists have established for the first time clear dates for the ruling dynasties of ancient Egypt after carbon dating plant remains, according to research published earlier this month in the US Journal of Science. Led by Professor Christopher RAMSEY of Britain’s Oxford University, an international team tested seeds, baskets, textiles, plant stems and fruit obtained from museums in the United States and Europe for the landmark study. “For the first time, radiocarbon dating has become precise enough to constrain the history of ancient Egypt to very specific dates,” said RAMSEY. Dates for Egypt’s Old, Middle and New Kingdoms had been based on historical documents or archaeological findings, but estimates were notoriously uncertain, as each dynasty would reset the clock. The new data showed the reign of Djoser, among the best known pharaohs in the Old Kingdom, was between 2691 and 2625BC, some 50 to 100 years earlier than the established wisdom. The study also concluded that the New Kingdom started slightly earlier than thought, between 1570 and 1544BC. The research team included experts from the universities of Oxford and Cranfield in Britain, the National Centre for Scientific Research in France, and experts from Austria and Israel. (Mervat Ayad, “Egyptian dates”, Watanî, June 27, 2010).
Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) last week announced that an Austrian team has used radar imaging to find the outlines of the 3,500-year-old capital of Egypt. According to Irene FORSTNER-MÜLLER, the head of the Austrian mission, the radar imaging shows the outlines of streets, houses and temples underneath the green farm fields and modern towns in Egypt’s East Delta region. It reveals that a Nile branch passed through that region back then; two islands were spotted by the radar as well as a port.

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SCA secretary-general Zâhî Hawwâs said that the area could be part of Avaris, the summer capital of the Hyksos, invaders from Asia who ruled Egypt from 1664 – 1569BC. Such non-invasive techniques, he said, are the best way to define the extent of the site. Aerial photographs show several modern towns in the area. (Mervat Ayad, “Radar find”, Watanî, June 27, 2010).

Egypt’s Ministry of Environment announced yesterday that a huge valley, which contains many prehistoric whale skeletons have been recently discovered in a valley north of Lake Qârûn in Fayyûm governorate. On its website, the ministry said that a whole skull, two jaws, 20 vertebrae and some ribs were found. The discovery enriched the whales’ historic record in Egypt and the whole world. Ten vertebrae, which belonged to a bigger whale believed to be new species, were found in the same place in addition to some of its teeth, it added. Lake Qârûn was a freshwater one in the prehistoric period but is today a salt-water lake. It is a source of tilapia and other fish in the local area. Ancient Egyptians used to live around this lake, fishing and hunting animals. (Hassan Saadallah, “Prehistoric whale skeletons unearthed”, The Egyptian Gazette, July 11, 2010. Voir également « Découverte d’une nouvelle vallée des baleines au Nord du lac Qârûn », al-Waf’d du 11 juillet ; Thanâ’ al-Kurrâs, « Découverte au lac Qârûn d’une vallée contenant des squelettes de baleines », al-Ahrâr du 11 juillet ; Hâni Mubâshir, « Mise au jour d’une grande vallée renfermant de nombreux squelettes de baleines », Âkhir Sâ’a du 21 juillet).


Le secrétaire général du CSA, Dr Zâhî Hawwâs, a nié l’existence de toute collaboration archéologique entre l’Égypte et l’Iran. À la demande de l’État et en présence du ministre de l’Aviation, Ahmad Shafîq, Hawwâs reconnaît avoir reçu une délégation iranienne en visite actuellement au Caire. Il a démenti la présence de missions archéologiques étrangères fouillant les monuments de la famille du Prophète, qualifiant ces rumeurs...

Les travaux de fouilles archéologiques entrepris dans la rue Sulaymân Yusrî sur le terrain situé en face de l’amphithéâtre romain d’Alexandrie ont mis au jour des vestiges d'ateliers de verrerie d'époque romaine. Deux fours de verriers et un four de potier, ont déjà été découverts, en plus de couches archéologiques de 4 mètres de profondeur remontant à l'époque byzantine et des vestiges d'un mur d'époque romaine. Preuve qu'il s'agit d'un secteur industriel complémentaire de la zone du souq ou l'agora entourant le temple découvert il y a quelques mois. Le directeur général des Antiquités de Basse-Égypte, Dr Muhammad ‘Abd al-Maqsûd, s'attend à de nouvelles découvertes à 9 mètres de profondeur retraçant l'histoire du quartier royal de la ville. Surtout que ce site se trouve dans le prolongement naturel de l'amphithéâtre romain découvert dans les années 1960. Le secrétaire général du CSA, Dr Zâhî Hawwâs, précise que ce terrain est situé à 70 mètres à l'Ouest du temple de Bubastéon mis au jour il y a environ un an et dont les vestiges se prolongent sous la rue Isma‘îl Fahmî. (Amal al-Gayyâr, « Mise au jour d'ateliers de verrerie en Alexandrie », al-Ahrâm du 11 octobre 2010).

The Ministry of Culture today announced that an Egyptian archaeological team has discovered an ancient tomb near the pyramids in southern Cairo. The tomb dates back to the fifth dynasty and is located next to burial places for the workers who built the three pyramids. It is believed that this discovery will lead to other discoveries. Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the head of the excavation team, said in a statement that the tomb, which belongs to an esteemed religious personality, is the “first of its kind.” Hawwâs said the tomb combines two styles of architecture, as parts of the tomb are sculpted in the rocks while other parts are built outside. The walls of the tomb carry colored engravings depicting, among other things, scenes from daily life, the birth of a calf, fishing activities, and some dances. (John Ehab, “24-centuries-old tomb discovered near Pyramids”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, October 18, 2010).

Last Wednesday, ancient met modern at al-SA wî Culture Wheel when the band Wilâd al-Farâ’na (Children of the Pharaohs), wearing jeans and t-shirts and playing pharaonic and Nubian instruments, resurrected the music of their Egyptian ancestors. Wilâd al-Farâ’na signals a trend in contemporary Egyptian music, which has steadily begun welcoming pharaonic and Nubian music back into the scene. Currently, the National Project for Reviving Ancient Egyptian Music — headed by Khayrî al-Malt, a music archaeology researcher and the band leader — seeks to unearth ancient Egyptian music, revive its sound, and spread it all over the world via university courses and the manufacturing of instruments in the ancient Egyptian styles. That night at al-SA wî Culture Wheel, a flier advertising a Diploma of Ancient Egyptian Music was being circulated through the audience.

“Modern and ancient Egyptian society is not only discernible through daily life and general behaviour; it can be detected in instrumental and vocal music, as well as dance,” said al-Malt, the spotlight highlighting his excited smile. “Among the most important features of pharaonic culture is the role that music, song, and dance played to induce religious feeling inside temples,” he explained. “Because religion is fundamental to ancient Egyptian culture, music's association with religion grants it a certain sacred quality.” “But music also existed outside the temple, in the fields and between lovers,” al-Malt continued. By dissecting old pharaonic songs, he unearthed ideas very similar to those that appear in modern Egyptian music. This discovery made him feel connected to the past, as a musician and as an Egyptian. “We are a natural extension of the ancient civilization,” he said.

Likewise, Nubian heritage is a vital element of Egyptian society. Nubia refers to the area in the south of Egypt along the Nile and in northern Sudan. When the Aswân Dam was constructed in the 1960s, over 100,000 Nubians became displaced. Some moved north into Egypt, and others south into Sudan. Nubian sounds are kept alive today by artists like the Salâmat band, Sayyid Gayer, Ahmad Muneib, and Muhammed Hammâm. Hamza al-Dîn, a Nubian composer famous for semi-classical oud (lute) compositions, and ‘Alî Hasan Kuban are beloved worldwide. On that summer night at al-SA wî Culture Wheel, many melodies — tunes rising and falling as softly as calm breathing — transported listeners to ancient Egypt. The instruments, in earth colours and primitive designs, looked better-suited for a museum than the al-Sakia stage, which normally hosts electric guitars and hip-hop. But the two worlds were connected that night. The pear lute, sleek wood with threads of fabric artfully dangling down from its side, showed itself to be the ancestor of the electric guitar, and the deep, rhythmic echoes reverberating from the Nubian doffs (drums) were reminiscent of modern hip-hop beats.

One pharaonic song in particular, called “Reincarnation,” seemed timelessly Egyptian. It skilfully and poignantly reflected life’s melancholy, the twinge of death, and the gift of rebirth. The sound, varied and unpredictable as waves on a stormy day, was a departure from the repetitious nature of the previous songs. The pear lute, the ancient
Egyptian nây (very similar to the modern flute), and the harp evoked different feelings. The heartrending lute brought to mind the river Nile and the essence of life. The nây stirred feelings of loneliness, a yearning for a lover’s attention, and the love of your country. The harpist’s swiftly dancing fingers also inspired feelings of love, particularly from one audience member—a man old enough to be a pharaoh himself—who asked if the ancient Egyptians were all as beautiful as the “queen of the harp,” as al-Malt dubbed her. Another pharaonic song called “Constructing the Pyramids” matched its steady rhythm to the choreographed steps that workers must have followed while building the massive structures. An instrument made of strands of turquoise beads called to mind the crackle of the desert sand. Slightly less captivating were the hieroglyphic songs. Unlike the previous soft, rhythmic music, they were bizarre—the language unrecognisable—and difficult to imagine listening to again.

Nubian songs were more upbeat and also more familiar, enthusiastically received by the audience. One of the songs, “al-Shamandûra,” is very popular, performed by mainstream Nubian singers such as Muhammad Munîr. “Even though we hear this song a lot, the difference is that we will play it using its original instruments, those used 4,000 years ago,” explained al-Malt. To the audience’s delight, four Nubian dancers in colourful dress—two men and two women—began gliding across the stage. One of the drummers moved to the lower part of stage, enthusiastically striking his drum while other members of the band happily clapped their hands in celebration of Egyptian music, past and present. (Sara Elkamel, “The Children of the Pharaohs: Egyptian music’s ancient past resurrected”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, August 7, 2010).

Sharqiyya
Tanis
Le professeur Philippe BRISSAUD, directeur de la mission française à Tanis et fondateur de l'Association des amateurs de Tanis à Paris, évoque la passion et les efforts scientifiques des membres en faveur d’un site qui n’est pas connu à sa juste valeur :
« La mission de fouilles est financée en principe par le ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes ainsi que par l’École pratique des hautes études qui fournissent les locaux de la mission à Paris. L’année dernière, la mission a été primée de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles
lettres. Ce prix témoigne de la distinction de notre travail et de nos résultats. Et pourtant, il est difficile de trouver des sponsors. C'est parce que Tanis n'est pas un site attractif pour le tourisme comme Saqqâra ou Louqsor par exemple. Ici il n'y a que la campagne. Même les journalistes, comme ceux de l'AFP, personne n'est venu pour publier la découverte du lac sacré l'année dernière. Pour eux, Tanis est le bout du monde.

« On propose une notoriété suffisante pour le lac sacré du temple de Mout mis au jour l'an dernier. C'est-à-dire que le lac soit parrainé. Le lac était couvert et dallé de blocs dessinés et colorés. On veut alors développer ce secteur en continuant les fouilles aux alentours. On cherche aussi à restaurer et consolider les blocs fragiles du lac tout en espérant découvrir un lac plus ancien. Tout cet énorme travail exige une grande somme d’argent qu’on espère obtenir ». (Doaa Elhami, « Malgré son importance archéologique, Tanis n'est pas un site attractif », Al-Ahram Hebdo du 7 juillet 2010).

Tell al-Dab'a

Austrian archaeologists have located an underground Egyptian city which they believe to be Avaris, the capital used by the Hyksos who ruled 3,600 years ago, the culture ministry said on Sunday. The Austrian mission carried out a geophysical survey of the area allowing them to identify parts of Avaris in the Nile Delta near the modern town of Tel al-Dab'a, northeast of Cairo. “The pictures taken using radar show an underground city complete with streets, houses and tombs which gives a general overview of the urban planning of the city,” antiquities chief Zâhî Hawwâs said in a statement. “The aim of the geophysical survey was to identify the size of the ancient city and the mission managed to identify a large number of houses and streets and a port inside the city,” said Irene FORSTNER•MÜLLER who heads the Austrian mission. “The mission also identified one of the Nile river tributaries that passed through the city, as well as two islands,” she was quoted as saying in the statement. The Hyksos were an Asiatic people who invaded Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period (1569-1664 BC) and ruled for more than a century from their Nile Delta capital. The Hyksos, whose name means “foreign rulers” in ancient Greek, were so hated that when Egyptians eventually returned to power, they destroyed all Hyksos monuments and records. (AFP, “Ancient Egyptian city located in Nile Delta”, The Daily News Egypt, June 20, 2010).

Plateau des pyramides

Friends of the Gîza Geomatrix Team

There will always be people who cause disturbances in the world with their lies. People who refuse to learn from their predecessors; “pyramidiots” who spread rumours that the Pyramids and the Sphinx belonged to lost civilisations. Whenever newspaper reporters from all over the world asked me for my opinion, I told them that these ideas were hallucinations and these theories will go with the wind. Sadly though, another group has recently popped up which is trying to revive the same old rumours. This new group, called the “Friends of the Gîza Geomatrix Team”, claims that there
is an undiscovered temple near the Sphinx. I have directed projects to drill, carry out radar surveys and photograph the Sphinx and all the area around it, all of which have shown nothing. It is not possible to excavate solid bedrock, but we have drilled 20 deep in five strategically chosen locations around the Sphinx, where nothing was found. It is beyond me as to why this group wishes to deceive the world with its nonsense, and why it asks people to send petitions. They want to excavate, but what they want to excavate I do not know. They are also amateurs, and antiquities laws do not permit those without professional affiliations to work on excavations in Egypt. We only deal with scientific institutions by law.

In their petitions the Friends of the Giza Geomatrix Team claim that recent talks were established by this team and by several officially approved agents working with the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA). They also claim that negotiations are underway for them to be granted an official excavation permit. These people are being sadly deceived. The supposed talks and negotiations are simply not true, and no one has approached me with such proposals. The only committee that can grant permission to work in Egypt is the SCA’s Permanent Committee, and there is no way at all that this committee would permit amateurs to do this. If they have been told otherwise, then they have been misinformed. The petition also says that the Geomatrix Team carried out similar, private investigations using ground-penetrating radar (GPR). They included the area inside the village of Nazlat al-Sammân and claim that their results show the existence of tunnels and structures. I do not understand how they can claim to have carried out this GPR work without having been granted permission by the SCA. Without the approval of the Permanent Committee and national security, this could not have happened. If the work was carried out without permission, then this team has acted illegally.

Incidentally, we have already excavated parts of Nazlat al-Sammân. While the sewerage system for the village was being completed we dug in every street of it and were able to discover the whole route of the causeway of the pyramid of Khufu. We recorded limestone blocks in situ and also the base of the causeway in many locations. We discovered that the causeway runs for 700m from Khufu’s funerary temple and then turns for 129m until it reaches his valley temple. We recorded limestone blocks to the south of the valley temple that could be the remains of a palace from which Khufu ruled Egypt, as well as a settlement about 3km south of this that could be a 4,500-year-old Downtown!

There are two important issues here. First, if these people really did carry out a survey of Giza, they did so illegally. I believe therefore that they should be punished for this by law. Second, all that they claim is completely wrong. I would like to advise people not to waste their time listening to the hallucinations of the Giza Geomatrix Team because we are also looking out for those who are misinforming the public. Our authorities also know that the SCA is ruled by scientific institutions and that work permits are not granted by one person but by a whole committee consisting of 60 scientists, including ‘Abbâs Mahmûd. These ceaseless petitions are useless, and those who send them are wasting their time as well as ours. Incidentally, I do not read petitions anymore, but I do want everyone to know that the claims of the Geomatrix Team are not correct. (Zâhî Hawwâs,

The following is a quote taken from the beginning of the petition by the Friends of the Giza Geomatrix Team: "I am a Friend of the Giza Geomatrix Team. I recognise and fully support the following Petition. Respectfully I call for you to give it your positive consideration, and thereby, the involvement of The Geomatrix Team to assist you in this matter.” I have mentioned this in my last two articles for Al-Ahram Weekly and, as I explained before, the area around the Sphinx is solid rock and none of the claims of this team is true because we have already drilled here and proved that there is nothing underneath it. These people are also dishonest, because they claim to have used ground-penetrating radar on the Giza plateau without having sought the permission of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA). The nearby village of Nazlat al-Sammán has also already been excavated and we discovered the causeway and valley temple of Khufu, as well as the possible remains of a palace and evidence of a settlement.

The Friends of the Geomatrix Team claim that there are no excavations in the area around the Sphinx and the SCA will not allow any to be conducted. However, if anyone were to come and visit the Giza plateau today he or she would see that a major excavation there is in fact underway. The type of work being conducted there has never been done before. We have found that in front of the valley temple of Khephren, the son of Khufu and the owner of the second pyramid on the site, there is a paved limestone ramp about 12m long. The ramp slopes down at the end, but about half way along it we have found tunnels. Evidence has also been discovered that shows that the harbour that used to serve Khephren's pyramid was at the end of this ramp. Each entrance to the valley temple was protected by a goddess; the lioness-headed Bastet for the north entrance, and the cow-headed goddess, Hathor for the south entrance. We also found evidence of where the embalming tent might have been that was used to purify and wash the king's body when he died. Nearby, a mud-brick stand was found that could have been a platform from which the widowed queen and her children, including the crown prince, watched these purification rituals taking place.

As well as this ongoing excavation work at Giza, a site management plan for the plateau is being developed. The area south of the pyramids is being prepared for horse and camel stables, a new visitor centre and a car park. Another area will be used to park the electric trams that will take tourists up to the site, like those at the Valley of the Kings in Luxor. These trams will be the only mode of transport permitted to enter the site. The area of the Sphinx will be fully developed in a unique way, which is why we are carrying out all this large-scale excavation work. We are using a front-end loader to take all the loose sand away and to move large stone blocks. To our surprise, during the course of this work we found a huge mud-brick wall standing to a height of one metre above the ground surface. It is very similar to the wall built in the reign of Tuthmosis IV to the north of the Sphinx, which was built to protect it from wind-blown sand. Until that discovery no one knew that the wall had been extended to the east, but the new wall contained pottery that also dated to the New
Kingdom, the period of Egyptian history during which Thutmose IV ruled, so they may be contemporary. It could also indicate that originally the wall also turned south, in front of the Sphinx temple and valley temple. I believe it might then have turned again to the west and run along the south of the valley temple as well. Other, separate mud-brick walls that have been found and examined are believed to have been part of a settlement in front of the valley temple, maybe the city of the priests and others who maintained the funerary cult of Khephren.

Now, would those people who persist in sending me these ill-informed petitions please read this and come to Egypt to witness for themselves all that I have said in these articles over recent weeks? In the future, I am not going to read any more petitions from the Friends of the Geomatrix Team. I will close the subject and not answer any more of these hallucinations. (Zâhî Hawwâs, “Dig Days: Saving Gîza again”, Al-Ahram Weekly, November 25, 2010).

Pyramide de Chéops

Many others have had a go before, but can the Djedi team unravel the secrets of the Great Pyramid? Nevine El-Aref has been looking at the progress made by Djedi, a joint international-Egyptian team so named after the magician whom King Khufu consulted when he planned the layout of his pyramid. Djedi recently began making a study of the world’s most famous monument in an attempt to uncover some of its mysteries. Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), told Al-Ahram Weekly that the purpose of the project was to send a robotic tunnel explorer inside the two airshafts of the Great Pyramid in an attempt to gather evidence to determine the original purpose of the shafts. Hawwâs continued that he selected the Djedi team by means of a competition to find the best possible robot to explore the shafts. The team is sponsored by Leeds University in the United Kingdom and supported by Dassault Systems in France, in addition to independent researchers in space robotics. The international team is experienced in the development and deployment of systems to meet real world challenges, including systems for space, search and rescue and medical devices, as well as inspection of stone structures. “With the help of the Djedi team, we hope to uncover the meaning of these airshafts by drilling through the doors that are blocking them,” Hawwâs said.

Djedi made preliminary examinations of the airshafts in July and December of 2009. “The team is hoping to gather as much evidence as possible to try to piece together the purpose of the air shafts, while at the same time ensuring that the Great Pyramid is not damaged in any way,” Hawwâs said. He added that he was looking forward to sharing more results about the Djedi project in the future. Two similar drillings were carried out in 2002 and 2004, but archaeologists were even more perplexed than before since when they moved forward through the shafts they were halted by a sealed door with two iron handles. (Nevine El-Aref, “Taking stock of the air”, Al-Ahram Weekly, July 8, 2010. Voir également Rîm ‘Abd al-Hamîd, « Nouveau robot pour explorer les secrets de la pyramide de Chéops », al-Yawm al-Sâbi’ du 8 août ; Muhammad ‘Abd al-Shâfî, « Nouveaux secrets dévoilés en mars prochain sur la pyramide de Chéops », al-Ahrám du 23 décembre).
(...) Now technicians at Leeds University are putting the finishing touches to a robot which, they hope, will follow the shaft to its end. Known as the Djedi project, after the magician whom Khufu consulted when planning the pyramid, the robot will be able to drill through the second set of doors to see what lies beyond. Dr Robert RICHARDSON, of the Leeds University School of Mechanical Engineering, said they would continue the expedition until they reach the end of the shafts. “We have been working on the project for five years,” he said. “We have no preconceptions. We are trying to gain evidence for other people to draw conclusions. There are two shafts. The north shaft is blocked by a limestone door and nothing has penetrated that door. With the south shaft a previous team has measured the thickness of the stone, drilled through it and put a camera through it and found there was another surface. We are going to determine how thick that is and we could drill through it. We are preparing the robot now and expect to send it up before the end of the year. It’s a big question, and it’s very important not to cause unnecessary damage. We will carry on until we find the answer. We hope to get all the data possible which will be sufficient to answer the questions.” (Andrew JOHNSTON, “Robot to Explore Mysterious Tunnels in Great Pyramid”, Watanî, August 22).

Tombe de Rudj-Ka

@ Meghan E. STRONG, SCA
A painted tomb of an important member of the ancient Egyptian court was recently discovered on the Giza Plateau, reports Nevine El-Aref. Archaeologists stumbled on the tomb while excavating at the southern end of the pyramid builders’ necropolis at Giza. The team from the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) believes it to be the Fifth-Dynasty tomb of Rudj-Ka, who primarily served as a purification priest for King Khafre and his mortuary cult. Culture Minister Fârûq Husnî says that the Khafre pyramid complex and mortuary cult continued to function well after the king’s death thanks to an assembly of priests and administrators who were provisioned through royal endowments. Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the SCA, said the tomb was the first to be found in this area, and added that its distinguished architectural design made it unique. Its superstructure is constructed of limestone blocks, which create a maze-like pathway to the main entrance. The burial chamber itself is cut directly into the cliff face. Rudj-Ka held several positions in the ancient Egyptian governmental echelon, among them “the well known to the king” and “the priest in charge of King Khafre’s purification and King Khafre’s pyramid complex purification”.

Hawwâs continued that the tomb walls were beautifully decorated with painted reliefs featuring Rudj-Ka and his wife before an offering table laden with gifts of bread, geese and cattle. Scenes from daily life depicting Rudj-Ka fishing and boating are also shown. “This tomb could be just the first of further tombs in a necropolis created for other categories of people different from the pyramids’ builders,” Hawwâs told Al-Ahram Weekly. He said there were hopes of finding similar tombs in the area, and suggested that this could be a continuation of the western necropolis at Giza, which may have resulted from overcrowding on the Giza Plateau itself. (Nevine El-Aref, “New tomb may be one of many”, Al-Ahram
Egyptian archaeologists from the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) working in front of the valley temple of King Khafre on the Giza plateau are currently occupied brushing the sand off a newly-discovered mud brick wall dating from shortly before Pharaoh Tuthmosis IV came to the throne (ca. 1398-1388 BC). The wall is in two parts: the first part is 75cm high and stretches for 86m from north to south along the eastern side of Khafre’s valley temple and the Sphinx, while the second part is 90cm high and is located in the area north of the valley temple. This section is 46m long and runs from east to west along the perimeter of the valley temple area. The two parts of the wall converge at the south-east corner of the excavation area. Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary general of the SCA, explained that initial studies carried out at the site show that the newly-discovered wall is a part of a larger wall found to the north of the Sphinx. This wall was constructed by Pharaoh Tuthmosis IV as an enclosure to protect the Sphinx from wind-blown sand.

According to Hawwâs, ancient Egyptian texts show that the wall was constructed as the result of a dream which the prince had after a long hunting trip in what is now Wâdî al-Ghizlân (Deer Valley), an area next to the Sphinx. The prince dreamt that the Sphinx asked him to remove the sand that surrounded his body because it was choking him. The Sphinx promised that if he fulfilled this favour he would become ruler of Egypt. Tuthmosis accomplished the task, removing the sand that had partially buried the Sphinx and building an enclosure wall to protect it. Hawwâs pointed out that archaeologists had previously believed that the enclosure wall only existed on the Sphinx’s northern side since a section three metres tall and 12 metres long had been found there. “This theory has now been disproved thanks to the discovery of the two new wall sections along the eastern and southern sides of the Sphinx.” In addition to the two sections of the enclosure wall, the SCA team found another mud brick wall on the eastern side of the valley temple of King Khafre. Hawwâs believes that this wall could be the remains of Khafre’s pyramid settlement, which was inhabited by priests and officials who oversaw the activities of his mortuary cult. This cult, he continued, was begun while the king was on his deathbed and continued right up to the Eighth Dynasty (ca. 2143-2134 BC), which was the end of the Old Kingdom.

‘Isâm Shihâb, supervisor of Khafre’s valley temple excavation, told Al-Ahram Weekly that the mission had also dug a six-metre deep assessment trench in the area located in front of the temple in a search for any activity dating from the Middle Kingdom. Initial inspection did not reveal

Gisr al -Mudîr
Tombes de Sen Dwa & Khonsou
Minister of Culture Fârûq Husnî has announced the discovery of two of the most important tombs ever found at Saqqâra. The tombs dating from the Old Kingdom, which are a part of the necropolis to the west of Djoser’s Step Pyramid known as Gisr al-Mudîr, were discovered during routine excavations by an Egyptian mission that has been working in the area since 1968. Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) and the team leader, says early studies have revealed that the tombs belonged to a man named Shendwa and his son, Khonsu. The upper part of the father’s tomb consists of a painted false door depicting scenes of the deceased seated before an offering table. The door also bears the various titles of office of the tomb’s owner, an important governmental official during the Fifth Dynasty (2465-2323 BC). He was head of the royal scribes and supervisor of missions, as well as bearing other honorary titles. The tomb’s burial shaft is located directly beneath the false door, 20 metres below ground level. “When I descended into the tomb I realised that it was intact and had not previously been plundered by tomb robbers,” Hawwâs told Al-Ahram Weekly. He pointed out that unfortunately Shendwa’s wooden sarcophagus had disintegrated owing to humidity and erosion. Beside the sarcophagus was a collection of limestone jars including five offering vessels carved in the shape of a duck. When the vessels were opened the bones of the ducks were found still intact.

‘Abd al-Hakîm Karâr, co-director of the excavation mission, said that inside the burial shaft were a painted relief and a 30cm tall obelisk made of limestone. “This obelisk is a symbol of worship of the sun god Re,” Karâr said, adding that the ancient Egyptians of the Old Kingdom used to erect small obelisks in front of their tombs and inside temples related to the tombs of the queens’ pyramids. Next to Shendwa’s tomb the archaeologists discovered that of his son, Khonsu. This is a beautifully painted tomb with a false door bearing Khonsu’s various titles, indicating that Khonsu apparently inherited the same titles as his father. Just opposite the false door the team located an offering table, together with a
stone lintel on the floor. Hawwâs said the lintel was engraved with symbols that dated it to the Sixth Dynasty. Over the false door was a small lintel in coloured relief depicting the deceased in various poses. (Nevine El-Aref, “Grave find for father and son”, Al-Ahram Weekly, July 8, 2010. Voir également DPA, “2 new Pharaonic tombs unearthed in Saqqâra”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, July 7; Hassan Saadallah, “Ancient father-son tombs unearthed”, The Egyptian Gazette, July 8; Ibtihâl Ghayth, « Mise au jour à Saqqâra de deux tombes décorées d’un père et de son fils », Uktubar du 11 juillet).

Tombe de Ptahmes
Archaeologists from Cairo University’s archaeology department have discovered the 3,300-year-old tomb of Ptahmes, the mayor of the ancient Egyptian capital Memphis, who also served as army chief, overseer of the treasury and royal scribe under Seti I and his son and successor, Ramses II, in the 13th century BC. The discovery of Ptahmes’s tomb earlier this year in a New Kingdom necropolis at Saqqâra, south of Cairo, solves a riddle dating back to 1885, when foreign expeditions made off with pieces of the tomb, whose location was soon forgotten. Some of the artifacts ended up in museums in the Netherlands, the United States and Italy as well as the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, providing the only clues about the missing tomb. The inner chambers of the large, temple-style tomb and Ptahmes’s mummy remain undiscovered.

In the side sanctuaries and other chambers they uncovered, archaeologists found a vivid wall engraving of people fishing from boats made of bundles of papyrus reeds, as well as amulets and fragments of statues. (Mervat Ayad, “Lost tomb found”, Watani, June 6, 2010).

Lac Qârûn
Des experts du Conseil Suprême des Antiquités (CSA) ont commencé à explorer les profondeurs du lac Qârûn, au Fayyûm, au sud-ouest du Caire, sur la base de données fournies par satellite, afin de détecter la présence d’objets engloutis. Les fouilles ont débuté il y a quelques jours, selon Zâhî Hawwâs, secrétaire général du CSA. « C’est la première fois que le département des antiquités mène une mission archéologique dans le lac Qârûn », a-t-il précisé. Khâlid Sa’d, à la tête du département des affaires préhistoriques au CSA, a précisé que l’équipe qu’il supervisait espérait mettre le doigt sur « de gros rocs de basalte » sur le fond du lac Qârûn. Selon Sa’d, la découverte de ces roches est le fait du scientifique américain•égyptien Fârûq al-Bâz, vétéran du programme Apollo de la Nasa, il y a cinq ans. C’est au cours d’une topographie satellitaire du désert de l’ouest de l’Égypte que M. al-Bâz, qui dirige désormais le Centre des études spatiales à l’Université de Boston, et son équipe ont découvert dans la région du lac Qârûn « un grand nombre de blocs de roches ». « Je pense que ces grosses plaques sont constituées de basalte (roche volcanique) et ont fini par être emmenées (...) jusqu’au plateau de Giza pour la construction de la Grande pyramide », a avancé Sa’d. Des équipes de plongeurs passent au peigne fin
Parmi les découvertes inédites de l'époque préhistorique figure celle des abris bâtis en pierre se trouvant dans les alentours, assurant une vie stable à l'homme préhistorique.

Quant à l'époque prédynastique (3150 av. J.-C.), la mission a découvert une stèle du roi Scorpion sur laquelle est inscrit son « serekh », en plus d'un pilon à broyer les aromates et un groupe de pointes de flèche. « Cette quantité d'outils suggère la présence d'une communauté centrale dans cet endroit pendant la dynastie 0 (4500-1150). La stèle du roi scorpion l'indique fortement », renchérit Sa'd. De cette époque y ont été mis au jour 5 colliers complets formés de coquilles d'autruches, mettant en relief l'aspect esthétique et l'habileté de l'homme préhistorique. De même la mission a dégagé des tombes creusées dans le roc et datées de l'époque gréco-romaine. Elles avaient été pillées par les voleurs. Ont également été trouvées des monnaies grecques en bronze de l'époque de Ptolémée III, ainsi que d'autres pièces romaines de l'époque de la princesse Arsinoé II et des rois Hadrien et Vespasien. À ceci s'ajoutent des colliers formés de pierres de couleur marron, verte et rouge, en plus d'un nombre de graines de colliers en verre raillé. « La région a été transformée à cette époque en une station commerciale qui comprenait des services pour ceux qui y travaillaient », explique Mustafa Rizaq, membre de la mission.

La présence humaine a continué aussi à l'époque islamique et surtout à l'époque mamelouke. De cet âge, la mission a trouvé des bagues incrustées de pierres précieuses et des monnaies en bronze et cuivre. De même, on a trouvé un pèse-alcool, des poids de balances et des instruments médicaux ainsi que de l'argile. Le plus surprenant c'est la découverte de monnaies de l'époque de Muhammad 'Ali. Selon le directeur de la mission, le lac lui-même comprend des éléments archéologiques. Raison pour laquelle des membres du département des Antiquités submergées y ont participé. « Les conditions de travail étaient très dures à cause de la forte pollution du lac due aux eaux de l'irrigation qui y sont versées », explique Ibrahim Mitwalli, membre de département des antiquités submergées. En revanche, les archéologues ont dégagé une grande quantité d’outils préhistoriques et d'argile.

Et ce n’est pas fini. À 1 Km, au nord-ouest du lac, la mission a dégagé un village complet de pêcheurs datant de l'époque arabe. « Nous avons relevé une grande quantité de poteries appartenant à l'époque islamique dépassant celle de l'époque gréco-romaine. Ainsi nous avons classé ce village comme appartenant à l'époque arabe. De même, nous n'avons pas pu y continuer nos fouilles à cause du temps limité qui nous était imparti », reprend Khalid Sa'd. D'ailleurs, Sa'd, suite à des examens préliminaires, assure la présence de témoignages géologiques et archéologiques dans les alentours de la région. Un héritage naturel et culturel qu'il faut préserver au lieu de le démolir. (Doaa Elhami, « Une région à préserver », Al-Ahram Hebdo du 10 novembre 2010).

Soknopaiou Nesos
A Roman cache of demotic ostraca, small clay artifacts, has been discovered at the Graeco-Roman site of Soknopaiou Nesos (Dime es-Seba), located two
kilometers north of Qârûn Lake in the southern Egyptian town of Fayyûm. Minister of Culture Fârûq Husnî said on Sunday that the cache was uncovered during an excavation carried out by an Italian archaeological expedition from Università del Salento. Zâhî Hawwâs, the Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), said that 150 ostraca were found. Each ostracon was inscribed with the name of a priest who worked at Soknopaiou Nesos in a temple dedicated to the god, Soknopaios. The texts written on the ostraca date back to the Roman period and have been very helpful in illuminating the religious practices and the prosopography of Graeco-Roman Egypt.

Mario CAPASSO, the Director of the mission, suggests that the newly discovered ostraca were originally kept in a storeroom situated in a courtyard in front of Soknopaios’ temple. CAPASSO believes that the ostraca were thrown out of the temple during a clandestine excavation at the end of the 19th century. Soknopaiou Nesos is very important for understanding Graeco-Roman society in Egypt because of its excellent state of preservation and the amount of papyri and other inscribed material found at the site. Civilisation at the site reached its peak during the first and second century AD as it sat along a major trade route. In addition to the Ptolemaic temple of Soknopaios, the site is well known for a collection of sphinxes, as well as Roman and demotic papyri. (Hassan Saadallah, “Cache of ostraca found in Fayyûm”, The Egyptian Gazette, December 27, 2010. Voir également Muhammad ‘Abd al-Mu’tî, « Découverte d’archives antiques révélant les secrets des époques romaines », al-Ahrâm du 27 décembre).

Wâdî al -Hîtân
An Egyptian team has discovered a large number of prehistoric whale remains just north of Lake Qârûn in Fayyûm south of Cairo. One of the whale skeletons is smaller than a basilosaurus, but bigger than a dorudon atrox, scientists say, making reference to the remains of other now extinct whale species already found in the vicinity. The most interesting skeleton of those found, believed to be some 40-45 million years old, is characterised by its remarkably long vertebrae. The skull and the lower jaw of the skeleton have also been found intact, as have several ribs and some 20 vertebrae. Scientists have also found 10 vertebrae from a whale slightly larger than a dorudon atrox, and they are now investigating whether the bones belong to a new species. Part of a dorudon atrox has also been uncovered, consisting of 15 vertebrae and a few ribs, as have several other partial skeletons of the same type, containing a total of 20 vertebrae, all in a well-preserved condition. Whale teeth discovered nearby are being fitted inside gypsum encasements in preparation for display to the public. A partial skeleton of a dorudon atrox, containing 10 vertebrae and some ribs, has been found arranged in a circle during the excavations, with, inside the circle, the vertebrae of a small whale and some small ribs, suggesting the possibility of a pregnant whale and embryo. If this turns out to be the case, this would be the first such remains of a pregnant whale found in what has been dubbed Whale Valley in Fayyûm. About 22 sea lion vertebrae have also been located near Lake Qârûn, as well as a well-preserved crocodile skeleton and the remains of a basilosaurus.
The area, in which the remains were found, just north of Lake Qârûn, is a natural extension of Whale Valley. The dry depressions it contains used to be marshland in pre-historic times, and Stone Age hunters preying on marsh animals have left behind them arrowheads, blades, knives and grinders. The team responsible for the finds is now continuing its search for other animal and human remains in a 10km stretch of land running from Yellow Island to Brown Mountain in Fayyûm.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs has received a model whale skeleton made at the University of Michigan in the United States. The model, of a 20m-long basilosaurus, an ancient type of whale that could walk on land like a lizard, will be placed in a museum that is currently under construction, remaining there until the real skeleton is returned to Egypt. Scientists in Michigan are currently examining the original skeleton, and the model was released from customs after the authorities waived duties on the shipment. The skeleton is due to be returned to Egypt in three months’ time, once the research work is complete. (Mahmoud Bakr, “Finds from Whale Valley”, Al-Ahram Weekly, August 26, 2010. Voir également AFP, “Egypt archaeologists find statue of Tutankhamen’s granddad”, Daily News Egypt, October 3).

Madînat Mâdî

(…) The site [of Madînat Mâdî] came into recent focus at a conference held in Cairo by Italy’s Embassy in Cairo, the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) and the Italian Cooperation Office. “Madînat Mâdî. The Past, the Present and the Future. Shedding Light on the Scientific Work in the Archaeological Site of Madînat Mâdî”. The conference was organised in line with the Egyptian-Italian project (Institutional Support to Supreme Council of Antiquities for Environmental Monitoring and Management of the Cultural Heritage Sites (ISSEMM). Opening speeches were presented by Claudio PACIFICO, the Italian ambassador; Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the SCA and a vice-minister of culture; and Galâl al-Sa‘îd, governor of Fayyûm. The ISSEMM project aims to improve the management of archaeological sites in Egypt and its efforts have been applied in the North Saqqâra Necropolis and Fayyûm Oasis. This conference focused on the project’s efforts at the site of Madînat Mâdî in Fayyûm Oasis.

Activities at the Madînat Mâdî archaeological site have focused on opening the site to the public and have consisted of sand removal, an archaeological survey, consolidation and restoration of monuments, tourist walkways, and plans for a visitor centre and eco-lodge. More than 180 people from local communities worked at the sand removal project, while 90 restorers from the SCA worked for a year on the ISSEMM project to create the Madînat Mâdî Archaeological Park.

During the Ptolemaic period Dja became known as Narmouthis, a Greek name meaning “the city of Renenutet-Hermouthis”. The temple flourished and more monuments were built north and south of the Twelfth-Dynasty temple. Madînat Mâdî saw intense settlement during the Coptic period, and life continued in the site into the ninth century. The University of Pisa has carried out exploration work at Madînat Mâdî since 1978. They focused on the southern
or Coptic area, and to date have identified ten churches dating from the fifth to seventh centuries. These finds have been extremely important in understanding the history of Fayûm’s ecclesiastical architecture. Thanks to a contribution from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2004, the Pisa mission was able to rescue blocks containing four Greek hymns to Isis. These were fully restored and are now on display at the Karanis Museum in Fayûm. Archaeological expeditions conducted between 1997 and 2004 in collaboration with the University of Messina uncovered a new Ptolemaic temple (Temple C) dedicated to the worship of two crocodile deities. A unique feature of the temple is a barrel-vaulted structure adjoining the temple, which was used for the incubation of crocodile eggs.

In recent years a methodical topographical survey, photographic interpretation of the site and geophysical exploration have contributed to an understanding of the urban tissue of the ancient village. These surveys created a chronological stratification of the site from the Middle Kingdom to the Late Byzantine Period. The primary focus of the ISSEM Project in Fayûm is to create the first archaeological park. This park will connect the sites of Madînat Mâdî with Wâdî al-Rayyân along a 27-km track. This route will be unpaved so as to respect the landscape in the area, and the route will provide the best panoramic views of the site. Work on the archaeological park will also allow for appropriate conservation and site management of both areas. The ISSEM project is entirely funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Directorate-General for the Development Cooperation, which allotted 3,500,000 Euros to the budget. The project is directed on the Egyptian side by Hawwâs and on the Italian side by Claudio PACIFICO through the director of the Development Cooperation Office in Cairo. The Scientific Committee is chaired by Professor Edda BRESCIANI of the Accademica dei Lincei and Professor ‘Alî Radwân.

The University of Pisa has been appointed with the task of giving technical and scientific assistance to the SCA, which is the Implementing Agency of the project. Administrative support for the programme is provided by UNDP. The ISSEM project began in 2005 and expanded in January 2009 to include training courses and onsite administration. Madînat Mâdî represents the integration of an archaeological site within the nearby Wâdî al-Rayyân National Park. Italian Cooperation is active in Egyptian national parks, in particular in Gabal ‘Ilba, Wâdî al-Rayyân, the White Desert, the Gilf Kebir and Siwa Oasis.

From 2000 to 2002 ISSEM performed a risk management assessment of north Saqqâra. This assessment resulted in the creation of the Risk Map of North Saqqâra (RMNS), with which the ISSEM project planned the second phase of its work focusing on monitoring the environmental conditions in 15 tombs. The installation of these monitoring systems provided training opportunities for SCA personnel between 2005 and 2006. The monitoring system recorded variations in temperature, relative humidity and carbon dioxide levels. These environmental factors will play an important role in developing a conservation strategy to save the fragile wall paintings in the tombs. (Mary Fikry, “The city of the past comes to life”, Watanî, December 5, 2010. Voir également ‘Alâ’ al-Dîn Zâhir, « Hawwâs : 3,5 millions d’euros pour ressusciter Madînat Mâdî », Ruz al-Yûsuf du 15 octobre).
al-Lâhûn

I thought that the days of the “pyramidiots” were over and that they had finally left us to carry out some serious archaeology in peace. Over the last decade, many people have contacted me thinking they have located lost civilisations and imagining rooms under the Sphinx at Gîza giving evidence that would solve these mysteries, but I have worked hard to demonstrate to them that these ideas are not true and to put a stop to this nonsense. In debates with them, I would show them the real evidence of how the Pyramids were constructed and that the Sphinx belonged to the ancient Egyptians, not to Atlanteans or aliens. I have excavated at Gîza for a long, long time, and I have discovered a wealth of information about the workmen, nobles and officials who built the marvels at this site and who maintained the religious cults there.

Two years ago, however, I began to hear about those people who believe that in year 2012 evidence will be discovered at Gîza and al-Lâhûn that will save the world! I found out that an expedition was working at al-Lâhûn that was funded by those who believe in this hallucination. The expedition leaders collected money from those they had convinced to follow them and began to spend huge amounts of it without keeping records of their expenditure. Even worse was the discovery that they were conducting their work without using any scientific methodology. I had to stop this work! In addition to this, there is no archaeological evidence for the so-called “labyrinth” of Amenemhet III’s 20th-Dynasty pyramid that they were trying to find at al-Lâhûn.

Now another team has appeared to deceive the world with a new crackpot theory. They say that ‘Abbâs Mahmûd of the National Research Institute of Astronomy and Geophysics (NRIAG) has published an article in a scientific journal that shows there is a temple or a palace in an area near the Sphinx. Our natural response to this is that when a radar survey picks up an anomaly, it does not automatically mean that there is a temple or palace there waiting to be discovered. The Gîza Plateau is in fact full of such anomalies, and we have tested them. Over the last 10 years, for example, several radar surveys have been carried out, especially around the Sphinx and also along the eastern side of the Great Pyramid. Where anomalies were found in the survey near the Great Pyramid, we excavated and found nothing at all. In addition to this, in 1977 the Stanford Research Institute drilled under the right paw of the Sphinx and also found nothing. Later, Joe SHORE and others like John Anthony WEST funded a radar survey of the Sphinx’s left paw and discovered anomalies. These findings were also supported by a Japanese team.

These people, who call themselves the Friends of the Gîza Geomatrix Team, insist that there is a palace or temple in the area behind the Sphinx. They keep petitioning me and other people in authority to excavate this area, believing it to hold remains from the Third Dynasty. This is a joke. Nothing in this area dates to the Third Dynasty. The oldest evidence we have of human activity on the Gîza Plateau dates to the Fourth Dynasty. Another thing these people do not know is that we have recently drilled
into the bedrock around the Sphinx to investigate the rising groundwater level that was threatening the site. We drilled five small holes about 20 metres deep in strategic places around the Sphinx – two metres away from each of its paws, one between its paws and two at the back of it. Again, nothing was found. We even brought in a drill that could cut down at an angle and drilled from the left paw of the Sphinx all the way across to its right paw. We found nothing.

I cannot understand why these people continue to send these petitions. What they think is there on the Giza Plateau is completely wrong, and even ‘Abbâs himself rejected what they wrote at a meeting with the Supreme Council of Antiquities’ Permanent Committee. The Friends of the Giza Geomatrix Team have no evidence. How do they think they can excavate through solid rock and, moreover, how can they do this with no credentials whatsoever? (Zâhî Hawwâs, “Dig Days: Save Gîza before 2012”, Al-Ahram Weekly, October 14, 2010).

Dromos

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Twelve sphinx statues from the reign of the 30th-Dynasty Pharaoh Nectanebo I were unearthed last week in Luxor, reports Nevine El-Aref. Archaeologists have unearthed a set of 12 limestone sphinx statues near the road known as the Avenue of the Sphinxes. The discovery was made during routine excavations within the framework of the Ministry of Culture’s plan to develop and revitalise the ancient religious path that once connected the temples of Luxor and Karnak. Unlike other sphinxes found in the area, these latest statues were not located on the Avenue of the Sphinxes but at the end of a newly-discovered road built in the reign of Pharaoh Nectanebo I (380-362 BC). This road also stretched from the Karnak temples to Luxor Temple, ending at the temple dedicated to the goddess Mut. Mansûr Burayk, supervisor of Luxor antiquities, says another ancient Egyptian road that ran from east to west towards the Nile has also been located to the east of the newly-discovered sphinxes. “This is the first time a road like this has been found,” Burayk told Al-Ahram Weekly. He added that although only 20 metres of the road had been found so far, it had been revealed to be a very elegant path and was paved with sandstone blocks brought from the Gabal al-Silsila quarries north of Aswân.

Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), said that the road was originally the path along which priests carried the sacred boat bearing the god Amun from Karnak to Luxor Temple during the Festival of Opet. This annual journey took place so that the god could visit his wife Mut in Luxor temple. The discovery of this avenue means that the route of this journey, which was often referred to in ancient texts, has been revealed for the first time. Besides the sphinx statues, which are inscribed with the name of Nectanebo I, the excavation team uncovered Roman objects including an oil press and some pottery. Excavations will continue to search for the rest of the road, which it has been suggested could be 600 metres long.
The excavations are part of the Ministry of Culture’s programme to restore the ancient monuments of Egypt with a view to developing the entire Luxor governorate into an open-air museum, a project that it is hoped will recover the lost elements of the avenue, restore the sphinxes and return it to how it was in the days of ancient Egypt. The procession to mark the Festival of Opet, which included priests, royalty and the pious, is being rekindled. Many of the 1,350 human-headed sphinxes with the bodies of lions that once lined the 2,700-metre-long Avenue of the Sphinxes have been restored. The Avenue of the Sphinxes was built during the reign of Pharaoh Nectanebo I to replace an earlier one built in the 18th Dynasty, as recorded by Queen Hatshepsut (1502-1482 BC) on the walls of her red chapel in Karnak Temple. According to this, she built six chapels dedicated to the god Amun-Re on the route of the avenue during her reign, emphasising that it was long a place of religious significance. Sadly, however, over the span of history the avenue was lost. Much of it was destroyed as were some of the sphinxes, and those sections of the avenue that were far removed from both temples were covered with sand and buried under random housing.


Chicago House
“Preserving Egypt’s ancient records for present and future generations is what we strive to do,” says Ray JOHNSON, director of Chicago House, the iconic home of the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute archaeological team in Luxor. JOHNSON says that the documentation techniques pioneered by founder James Henry BREASTED, while now augmented with new digital tools, have never been surpassed. “When a photograph or a scan is not clear enough, or the wall surface is terribly damaged, we use non-invasive photographic and digital images as the basis for precise line drawings that continue to set the standard for epigraphic recording everywhere,” he says. “This technique has become known simply as the Chicago House method, and it still sets the disciplined and meticulous course of the work of our documentation teams.” “We use many different techniques for recording inscribed stone surfaces, depending on the condition of the stone. In hard-to-reach areas aluminium-foil rubbings have proven to be tremendously useful, as is tracing with film on well-preserved surfaces when photography is not possible. We have lots of important projects in the pipeline,” JOHNSON adds. “Among the primary sites where we work with the SCA are the Madīnat Hābū temple complex; the Eighteenth-Dynasty sections of Luxor Temple; Khonsu Temple at Karnak and even a private tomb from the time of Amenhotep III.”

Having conscientiously followed work in progress in Luxor over decades, and having perused the published results of the work completed by the
Epigraphic Survey, all of which, by the way, are now available for free PDF
download from the Oriental Institute Publications website, (just click
“Egypt” for all the titles), I quite naturally asked myself what remained
to be done. JOHNSON must have anticipated such a question because he
proceeds to tell me that “there are literally kilometres of inscribed wall
surfaces in Luxor that have never been properly recorded.” He also tells me
about Chicago House’s “exciting new collaboration with the American
Research Centre in Egypt, part of its USAID-funded East Bank Groundwater
Lowering Response Initiative.” Does my face register a blank at his words?
Perhaps, because he goes on to explain that after the Luxor east bank
dewatering program (sponsored by the SCA, USAID, and Sweden) was activated
in 2006, the system effectively lowered the groundwater passing beneath
Luxor and Karnak Temples by as much as three metres, thereby slowing down
the groundwater salt decay of those structures. “This has enabled follow-up
conservation at the sites,” he says, adding that the training of Egyptian
SCA conservators has been coordinated by ARCE during the last few years
with a special grant from USAID.

“Chicago House is currently assisting ARCE in a floor restoration project
at Khonsu Temple in Karnak, which involves replacing missing paving stones
along the main axis of the temple that were quarried away in late antiquity
-and which made visiting the site difficult.” JOHNSON explains that
Ramesses III built this temple out of the blocks from half a dozen temples
that he dismantled and reused for this purpose, and that, “luckily for us”,
in the interests of construction speed his workmen intentionally neglected
to erase their original inscribed surfaces. “As a result almost every block
in the temple has earlier decoration preserved on one or more faces, and
the floor and foundation stones are no exception. When an area where paving
stones are missing is cleared, and earlier inscribed blocks are exposed, my
team carefully records the earlier carving before the new paving stones go
in and conceal that information forever.”

JOHNSON’s keen interest in the work in hand registers in the enthusiasm
with which he speaks. “It's a once in a lifetime opportunity and there have
been lots of surprises,” he says, “For instance the team has discovered
that most of the floor blocks appear to be from an earlier Eighteenth-
Dynasty Khonsu temple, thus providing a new and hitherto unknown chapter in
the history of mighty Karnak”. It strikes me that BREASTED would have been
inordinately happy to know of this re-cycling process, and the care with
which the Chicago House team is recording every scrap of information while
it is accessible.

But that’s not all. With support from ARCE, USAID, and now the World
Monuments Fund, Chicago House has sponsored what is known as the Luxor
Temple blockyard conservation programme. “It has been going on for almost
20 years,” says JOHNSON. “As environmental conditions changed in Luxor,
with increasing humidity and higher groundwater, the decay of the monuments
we were documenting accelerated and we recognised the need to expand our
programme to include conservation and restoration. So we applied for
special grants for that purpose”. The culmination of the Luxor Temple
fragment programme is a new open-air museum display area along the eastern
side of the temple that opened to the public last March. “Here samples of
inscribed fragments selected from tens of thousands have been reassembled
and arranged in a chronological display by Chicago House. The joined fragment groups represent all periods of Egyptian history: Pharaonic, Ptolemaic, Roman, Christian and even Islamic,” JOHNSON says. “The captioned displays add a valuable educational component to the temple visitors' experience. You can actually watch the style of the art change through time before your eyes.”

The passion for Egyptology, and the desire to preserve for posterity all that remains before it is too late, is a cumulative process. All displays in the blockyard, including a section that features inscribed stone recovered during the USAID-sponsored Luxor Temple dewatering programme, is protected by chain-link guardrails and by specially-built stone walkways. “The displays are also lit for night-time viewing,” says JOHNSON, who adds, “At the culmination of the blockyard museum, where one re-enters the great court of Amenhophet III, we have restored an entire wall section made up of 111 fragments to its original location on the wall. It is an amazing scene. The carving shows the barque of Amun on a pedestal being offered to, and followed, by large figures of Amenhophet III. The barque itself was carved by Amenhophet III, hacked out by his son Akhenaten, restored by Tutankhamun, appropriated by Horemheb, and finally enlarged by Seti I, who inscribed his own name in the restoration inscription.” “I put that scene together on paper more than 25 years ago,” says JOHNSON with a half-concealed smile of pride. “It's a dream-come-true to see it physically restored to the wall.”

When William MURNANE’s book United with Eternity: A Concise Guide to the Monuments of Medinet Habu was published by the Oriental Institute in Chicago, and in a paperback edition by AUC Press in 1980, I thought that all the work by the Epigraphic Survey at that monument was at an end. Far from it! Members of the team are hard at work on documentation of the small Amun temple of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III in the precinct, as well as digital drawings of miscellaneous pharaonic and mediaeval graffiti throughout the complex, “primarily on the roof and upper walls of the Ramesses III mortuary temple, as well as various, mostly demotic graffiti in the ambulatory of the small Amun Temple”. It is quite hard to keep up with the work being carried out in Luxor, especially in view of the fact that while restoration and documentation continue, nature (and man-made activities, such as agricultural expansion and urban development programmes) continue their counter attack. For instance, who knew that a second USAID/SCA dewatering program was recently activated on the west bank of Luxor, designed to protect three kilometres of west bank monuments – from Madinat Hābū to the Seti I Gurna Temple – from groundwater salt decay? The system was activated in October, and word has it that the destructive groundwater at those sites has already gone down by a metre. And how many people have heard of the 11-kilometre, four-metre high wall recently completed by the SCA on the west bank to protect and safeguard Egypt’s cultural heritage sites south of Madinat Hābū. I was pleased to hear that a small collection of books from the library of the late Henri Riad now forms the Henri Riad Memorial Library at Chicago House. Riad was a close friend of Labib Habashi (whose photographic archives are already in the Chicago House library). Riad and Habashi both feature in my AUC publication Labib
Archaeologists from the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) found the incomplete statue on the north-western side of Amenhotep’s funerary temple on Luxor’s west bank. Only the upper part of the double red granite statue was unearthed, but it is identified as Amenhotep III, the grandfather of Tutankhamun, accompanied by the falcon headed sun god Re-Horakhti. The statue is one of several found on the site. Two weeks ago the mission unearthed a red granite statue of the Pharaoh with the Theben god Amun-Re. Amenhotep is wearing the double crown of Egypt, which is decorated with a uraeus. Over the last six months the mission has found several statues depicting Amenhotep with the solar god, Amun-Re, as well as a granite colossus featuring Thoth, the god of wisdom, in the form of a baboon.

“This is the first time that we have found a standing statue of the god Thoth,” said SCA Secretary-General Zâhî Hawwâs, who led the excavation team. Amenhotep III, whose long reign in the 18th Dynasty lasted from 1389 to 1351 BC, is known for his overwhelming amount of statuary, particularly group statuary featuring the Pharaoh with such deities as Amun-Re, Re-Horakhti, Bastet, Sobek and Sekhmet, the goddess of healing. The Amenhotep III Temple Conservation Project under the direction of Hourig SOUROUZIAN, an authority on Egyptian royal statuary, has unearthed more than 80 statues of the goddess Sekhmet during excavations at the temple. It has been suggested that the Sekhmet statues were erected because Amenhotep III was very sick during his final years. “The newly discovered statue is one of the best finds in the area because of its expert craftsmanship, which reflects the skill of the ancient Egyptian artisans,” Hawwâs said.

According to Mansûr Burayk, general supervisor of the Luxor Antiquities Department of the SCA, a number of group statues of Amenhotep III are still partially buried under private farmland that surrounds the temple. The SCA and Samîr Farag, governor of Luxor, are trying to reach an agreement with the farmer to buy this section of land so that the statues can be fully excavated. In the future the area will be converted into an open-air museum that will display the objects found in the mortuary temple complex. (Nevine El-Aref, “Farmland yields another statue”, Al-Ahram Weekly, November 11, 2010. Voir également Sâmih ‘Abd al-Fattâh, « Découverte d’une statue royale d’Amenhotep III sur la rive Ouest de Louqsor », al-Masrî al-Yawm du 3 octobre ; AFP, “Egypt archaeologists find statue of Tutankhamen’s granddad”, The Daily News Egypt, October 3 ; Mervat Ayad, “King in granite”, Watani, October 10 ; Hala Fares, « Le rêve de Thoutmosis IV », Al-Ahram Hebdo du 10 novembre).

(…) “The work we are doing here is not only about advancing historical knowledge, but also about saving the last remnants of a temple that was once very prestigious but that has unfortunately been badly damaged,” SOUROUZIAN said. The team aimed to produce a virtual reconstruction of the temple using the latest computer programmes, she added, saying that this
reconstruction would show the original position of every surviving piece within the original temple. Eventually an open-air museum would be established in the area, where the statues of Sekhmet, Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye could be put on display. (Nevine El-Aref, “New finds at Luxor”, Al-Ahram Weekly, October 8. Voir également AP, “Egypt unearths 3,400-year-old statues”, The Egyptian Gazette, October 3; ‘Isâm ‘Umrân, « Amenhotep III révèle ses secrets à Kom al-Hîtân », al-Gumhûriyya du 3 octobre; Nevine El-Aref, “More ancient statues revealed”, Ahram online, December 16).

(…) In early 2000 a European Egyptian mission led by Egyptologist Hourig SOUROUZIAN began to excavate in the Kom al-Hîtân area northeast of the temple. There the mission unearthed several statues of Amenhotep III and his wife Queen Tiye, as well as statues of the lion-shaped war goddess, Sekhmet. Six years later an Egyptian mission led by Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, started excavating on the northern side of the temple and unearthed a large number of statues featuring Amenhotep III accompanied by various ancient Egyptian deities such as Re-Horakhti, Khepri, Horus, Thoth and Hapi. The team is ultimately aiming to produce a virtual reconstruction of the temple using the latest in computer technology. This reconstruction will show the original position of every surviving piece within the original temple. Eventually an open-air museum will be established in the area and the statues of Sekhmet, Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye will be placed on permanent display.

“Due to the large number of statuary found in this area I believe that the north side of the temple may have served as a burial spot for broken and damaged statues,” Hawwâs suggests. He adds that because the statuary was ritually significant it could not be destroyed, and instead the ancient Egyptians gathered the fallen statues and buried them in a cachette beside the temple. ‘Abd al-Ghaffâr Wagdî, the supervisor of the excavation team, said archaeologists were now focusing on unearthing any remaining pieces of statuary, and are also working on uncovering more statues from the agricultural land surrounding Amenhotep III’s mortuary temple. (Nevine El-Aref, “Luxor’s latest bequest”, Al-Ahram Weekly, December 23. Voir également Dinâ ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « Découverte d’une statue double d’Amenhotep III », al-Yawm al-Sâbi’ du 2 octobre; AP, “Egypt uncovers 3400-year-old statues”, The Egyptian Gazette, December 16; “Dig finds statue pieces in pharaonic temple ruins”, The Daily News Egypt, December 17).
tomb could be damaged. Kent WEEKS also mapped the tunnel as part of the Theban Mapping Project. The only non-scientific work on it was carried out by the ‘Abd al-Rasûl family in 1960. Sheikh ‘Ali ‘Abd al-Rasûl explained his work to me and told me that he had reached a depth of 130 metres, but he was sure that the secret burial place of Seti I could be located there. My own visit to the tomb in 2002 was the most exciting one, and really allowed me to experience the adventure of this tunnel. I was able to penetrate 252 feet into it. I will never forget the excitement I felt as for more than three hours I crawled through the stone rubble of the tunnel. When I reached the end I noticed an impressive relief on the wall. It was the scene of a descending ramp, and at the end of the ramp were three snakes with their heads turned upward.

(...) After 130 metres the tunnel began to reveal its purpose when we uncovered 54 steps. The pounding inside my chest was amazing as I descended the ramp for seven metres. This second ramp was cut in the rock and had the same dimensions as the first ramp. At the end of this second ramp was another staircase containing 49 steps, which is where the tunnel ended. The tomb is 98 metres long and the tunnel is 174 metres long. I spent hours inside this long tunnel and I still cannot walk well because my knee was injured by the stone rubble. I still dream of receiving a message from my assistant, Târiq, on my mobile phone. “Great things are happening, 'yâ ganâb al-mudîr' (Mr Director),” he said. “I believe we are in front of a great discovery: a royal tomb inside a royal tomb!” The next day at 5am I flew to Luxor and began my adventure. We knew that the tunnel indeed ended completely and that there was nothing further. I wish that Sheikh ‘Alî were alive today to see our great work and how we excavated the whole tunnel for the first time.

We knew that the great Pharaoh Seti I, father of Ramses II, planned to make the most unique tomb in the Valley of the Kings. Seti planned to make a dummy tomb to deceive everyone and decorated the entire 98 metres of it. But he made another tomb, which he could not finish because he only ruled for 12 years. It seems that his architect concentrated on the construction of the tomb and the tunnel at the same time. If we look at the tomb of Ramses II we will see how he tried to do the same as Seti had done. He made a tunnel with a chamber and a small tunnel for about 20 metres. Did Ramses II do what his father could not do? This is what I am now trying to understand. However, it is great news that we were able to reveal all there is to know about the tunnel of Seti I, and Sheikh ‘Alî should be resting in his grave. (Zâhî Hawwâs, “Dig Days: Seti, please tell us your secret III”, Al-Ahram Weekly, September 23, 2010. Voir également Taha ‘Abd al-Rahmân, « Révélation des secrets du corridor de Séthi 1er à Louqsor », al-Ahrâr du 1er juillet ; Hassan Saadallah, “Secrets of Seti I tunnel unlocked”, The Egyptian Gazette, July 1 ; « Découverte des secrets des galeries Ier du roi Seti dans la vallée des rois », Watani du 11 juillet).

Following three years of excavation inside the tomb of the 19th-Dynasty Pharaoh Seti I, archaeologists have found that a mysterious tunnel cut into the bedrock near the end of Seti’s tomb is 174-metres long, much longer than was previously believed. They also found that it comes to an abrupt cut at a second staircase. On reaching the end of a 136-metre section,
which was partially excavated in 1960 by workmen employed by Sheikh ‘Alî ‘Abd al-Rasûl, the excavation team led by Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), uncovered a descending passage measuring 25.6 metres in length and 2.6 metres in width. The mission also discovered a 54-step descending staircase cut into the rock. At the beginning of this passage the team found a false door bearing a hieratic text that reads: “Move the door jamb up and make the passage wider.” “This written instruction must have been left by the architect to the workmen who were digging out the tunnel,” Hawwâs says. He told Al-Ahram Weekly that when he first went inside the tunnel he noticed that the walls were well finished and that there were remains of preliminary sketches of decoration that would be placed on the wall. Hawwâs said he was very surprised to find a second staircase inside the tunnel, and added that the last step was apparently never finished and the tunnel ended abruptly after the second staircase. The mission has also unearthed a number of ushabti (model retainer) figures and pottery fragments dating from the 18th Dynasty. (Nevine El-Aref, “Make it wider”, Al-Ahram Weekly, July 8. Voir également AP, “Egypt finds evidence of unfinished ancient tomb”, The Daily News Egypt, June 30 ; « Révélation des secrets du corridor de Séthi 1er », al-Wafd du 1er juillet ; Usâma Fârûq, « Séthi 1er déçoit Hawwâs », Akhbâr al-Adab du 4 juillet).

al-‘Asâsîf
Tombe de Karakhamun (TT 223)

On Luxor’s west bank, amidst the magnificent tombs of the Valley of the Kings and Queens and ancient Egyptian nobles and priests, several excavation missions are digging up the sand searching for more burials in an attempt to decipher the secrets enveloped in Pharaonic history. One burial spot this week was unearthed. At al-‘Asâsîf, the site of tombs of New Kingdom nobles as well as those of the 25th and 26th dynasties, an American-Egyptian mission led by Elena PISCHIKOVA stumbled on what is believed to be the burial chamber of a 25th Dynasty priest called Karakhamun. The chamber was found inside an eight-metre deep shaft inside Karakhamun’s tomb while carrying out restoration work inside it as part of the South Assassif Conservation Project (ACP). Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) Zâhî Hawwâs said the chamber was very well preserved and contained “beautifully astronomical painted scenes”. He added that the entrance to the chamber was decorated with an image of Karakhamun while the ceiling was painted with several astrological scenes, including a depiction of the sky goddess Nut, circumpolar stars and decans. PISCHIKOVA said the tomb of priest Karakhamun was discovered in the 19th century in an unstable condition. It continued to deteriorate, and only parts of it were accessible to visitors in the early 1970s. Later it collapsed and was buried under the sand. In 2006 the ACP mission rediscovered the tomb and since then has been carrying out conservation work. “Karakhamun’s tomb is one of the most beautiful tombs of the 25th
Dynasty because of the preservation of the colour and the unique quality of the scenes,” PISCHIKOVA said. “Now,” she continued, “the team is consolidating every fragment of the decoration found in the debris. The rest of the tomb must then be cleared of debris, the decorations consolidated and cleaned while the pillared are reinforced. Our final goal is to reconstruct the tomb in situ after restoring and placing all its fragments back to its original place.” PISCHIKOVA told Al-Ahram Weekly that one of the most beautiful scenes inside the tomb is found under Karakhamun’s chair carved on the north section of the tomb’s east wall. It features a dog skillfully carved with sharpness and precision.

According to the ACP website, Karakhamun is described as the most enigmatic figure in the al-‘Asâsîf necropolis. Nothing is known of his family and even he himself did not seem to have any important administrative positions. His priestly title does not signify any particular importance. His Nubian name is one of the reasons why studies that mention Karakhamun date his presence in Thebes to the 25th Dynasty. The tomb’s architectural features as far as they are known also confirm this date. Karakhamun’s serpentine ushabti is of Nubian style with facial features that suggest a pre-Taharqo date, probably Shabaqo. “It is possible to suggest that it is the largest tomb in the necropolis with two pillared halls and multiple burial chambers,” the website wrote, adding that it was built for a person of no important position who must have had close connections to the royal court or the royal family itself. Further exploration of the tomb could shed more light on its date and the identity of Karakhamun himself. (Nevine El-Aref, “Taken from below”, Al-Ahram Weekly, September 23, 2010. Voir également Dînâ ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « Découverte sur la rive Ouest d’une tombe antique de la XXVe dynastie », al-Yawm al-Sâbi’ du 15 septembre ; “Burial shaft of tomb of priest Karakhamun discovered at Assasif”, Daily News Egypt, September 15 ; ‘Alâ’ ‘Abd al-Hâdî, « Découverte de la chambre funéraire du prêtre Karakhamun », al-Akhbâr du 15 septembre ; ‘Isâm ‘Umrân, « Mise au jour de la chambre funéraire d’un prêtre de la XXVe dynastie », al-Gumhûriyya du 16 septembre ; Mervat Ayad, “Fit for a priest”, Watanî, September 26).

Oasis de Khârga
Umm al-Mawâgîr
An American-Egyptian mission from Yale University has discovered what is believed to be the remains of a substantial settlement in Khârga Oasis in the Western Desert. The archaeologists were carrying out routine excavation work within the framework of the Theban Desert Road Survey when they made the discovery. The survey aims to investigate and map ancient desert routes in that portion of the Western Desert. The settlement, which is laid out on a grid pattern, is 1,000 years older than previous ancient remains found in the Umm Mawâgîr area in Khârga Oasis. The find was announced by Culture Minister Fârûq Husnî, who said that the settlement could be dated to the Second Intermediate period (1664•1569 BC). Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), said that the newly-discovered settlement was one kilometre long from north to south and 250 metres wide.
from east to west. It sits astride the bustling trade routes that connected the Nile Valley of Egypt and the desert oases with points as far as Dârfûr in western Sudan. He continued that archaeological evidence on the site indicated that the inhabitants of the settlement belonged to an administrative and provision centre and were engaged in baking on a massive scale.

John Coleman DARNEL, head of the mission, said that during excavations the mission found remains of large administrative structures in mud brick consisting of rooms and halls similar to the type of official architecture previously found in sites in the Nile Valley. These may have been used as lookout posts and were part of the administrative centre of the settlement. Part of an ancient bakery was found containing two ovens and a potter's wheel used to make the ceramic bread moulds in which the bread was baked. The sheer volume of remains and debris dumped outside the bakery suggests that the settlement produced a food surplus and may have even been feeding a passing army. “From the orthogonal planning to the administrative and food-supply areas, this new settlement in the desert reveals the incredible organisational abilities of the ancient Egyptians,” Coleman DARNEL suggests. “We have identified a major north-south road leading through the Umm Mawâqîr city, the most ancient version known of the famous Darb al-Arba‘in Road (the Forty Days Road) linking Egypt with Dârfûr and points beyond,” DARNEL told Al-Ahram Weekly. He continued that broken pots along this road indicated activity as early as 3300 BC and revealed the passage of vessels from as far away as the Levantine coast and Nilotic Sudan. “Roads such as these could be used for trade and religious activities as well as for military manoeuvre,” Coleman DARNEL said.

Deborah DARNEL, co-director of the mission, says early studies of the site reveal that the settlement was founded during the Middle Kingdom (2134-1569 BC) and lasted until the beginning of the New Kingdom (1569-1081 BC), but that it was at its largest extent and saw the greatest amount of activity during the Late Middle Kingdom between the 13th Dynasty (1786-1665 BC), the Second Intermediate Period and the 17th Dynasty (1600-1569 BC). “The discovery of a major urban site with associated caravan routes which flourished primarily during the Second Intermediate Period is key to understanding an obscure, but important phase in Egyptian history,” DARNEL says. (Nevine El-Aref, “Bread for an army”, Al-Ahram Weekly, August 26, 2010. Voir également AP, “Egypt discovers 3500-year-old oasis trading post”, al-Masrî al-Yawm, August 25; Dînâ ‘Abd al-‘Alîm, « Découverte des vestiges d’une zone d’habitat dans l’oasis de Khârga », al-Yawm al-Sâbi‘ du 25 août ; Sarah Daoud, “Remains of settlement found in al-Khârga Oasis”, The Daily News Egypt, August 25 ; « Mise au jour de la plus ancienne zone d’habitat dans les oasis », Watanî du 3 octobre).
royal artefact to be unearthed in Saudi Arabia. The object, a rock engraving endorsed with a dual cartouche of Pharaoh Ramses III, was found at the northern town of Tabbūk in Taima Oasis, 400km north of Medina. A Pharaoh of the 20th Dynasty, Ramses III ruled from 1185 to 1153 BC. The discovery was made during routine excavations carried out within the framework of an SCTA archaeological survey being conducted on several sites in the kingdom to establish relationships with other civilisations in different historical periods. Taima is the largest archaeological site in the kingdom and the Arabian Peninsula. The remains of ancient walls reveal that habitation of the oasis can be dated to as far back as the Bronze Age. Taima is mentioned in ancient texts dating from the eighth century BC, and excavators recently found the royal complex of the last king of Babylon, Nabonidus (556-539), who spent 10 years in Taima. Last year they also discovered a fragment of a cuneiform text mentioning Nabonidus.

‘Alî Ibrâhîm al-Ghabân, vice-president of antiquities and museums at the SCTA, says initial studies have uncovered evidence that the direct trade route used during the reign of Ramses III connected Taima to the Nile Valley. Both Taima and the neighbouring oasis, Madyan, were famous for their excellent incense, copper, gold and silver, which were in demand in ancient Egypt for religious ceremonies and in the production of jewellery and funerary objects. The trade route started in the Nile Valley and passed through what is today the port of Suez, where inscriptions of Ramses III have been found. It then crossed the Sinai Peninsula, passing through Wâdî Abû Ghada and Nakhl Oasis, where there was another cartouche of Ramses III. “Discovering the route will be a turning point in studying the routes of civilisation between Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula,” Ghabân says. He adds that he is expecting more cartouches of Ramses III and other ancient Egyptian rulers to be discovered, especially along the section from al-Hasmi to Taima.

Ghabân points out that some ancient Egypt relics have been found at a number of archaeological sites in Saudi Arabia. Among them are the burial sites in southern Dhahran in the kingdom’s eastern province and in al-Fau, capital of the Kindah Kingdom in the southwestern part of the Najd Plateau. In Taima itself, Ghabân says, most of these pieces are pottery and ceramics with a turquoise coating dating back to various periods of antiquity. “This discovery is one of a series of new discoveries that will be announced following further study and investigation,” Ghabân told reporters at a press conference held at the National Museum in the King Abdul-Aziz historical centre in Riyadh. He added that in view of its geographic location the Arabian Peninsula had long been a land of dialogue and peaceful exchange. He said that the call of King Abdullah of Jordan, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, for dialogue between faiths and cultures was a manifestation of this deep-rooted tradition in the Arabian Peninsula. Zâhî Hawwâs, secretary-general of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), says he is delighted with the discovery. He told Al-Ahram Weekly that it reflected ancient Egypt’s dedication to extending its civilisation to reach its neighbours; Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria and North Africa. It also highlighted the trade route in the area. Hawwâs explained that Egypt extended its empire outside its boundaries during the 18th, 19th
and 20th dynasties, an era known as Egypt's golden age. Hawwâs has expressed his willingness to help the SCTA in restoring the new find and excavating more sites.

Ahmad Sa'îd, professor of the ancient Egyptian civilisation at the Antiquities Department of Cairo University, told the Weekly that several ancient Egyptian artefacts had previously been discovered in the Arabian Peninsula, including an ancient Egyptian amulet found in the area of Felka in Kuwait. He continued that this discovery highlighted the alliance between Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula. Pharaoh Tuthmosis III mentioned cities in the Arabian peninsula when he drew up the king list at Karnak, and in the Egyptian Museum is the sarcophagus of a merchant from South Arabia (now Yemen) named Zayed Zayed, who in his day was a famous trader of incense and stones. This merchant lived a long life in Egypt and was buried in the Saqqâra necropolis. Sa'îd says that this highlights the probability that the Egyptian empire extended eastwards beyond its boundaries well before the reign of the legendary South Arabian queen of Sheba in 900 BC, and at least as far back as the 20th Dynasty in the 12th century BC and perhaps even longer to 2000 or 3000 BC. He told the Weekly that next to the cartouche newly discovered in Taima Oasis was a Thamudi text with drawings of the Arabian moon god Capricorn. Sa'îd suggests that there could be three reasons for finding a cartouche like this in the area. First, it suggests that Ramses III may have gone towards the east to build trade bridges to replace its alliance with northern countries that were threatened by the appearance of the sea people and their attacks on Egypt. Second, it could indicate individual transport, and that Egyptians who travelled to Taima drew a cartouche to pay homage to their gods. Third, it could represent a royal journey, with the Pharaoh engraving his logo to reconcile with the principle god of the region.

Since the site is close to the Egyptian capital at the time, which was in modern Sharqiyya, the ancient Egyptians may have used the rocky northern Arabian Peninsula as a quarry for materials for their gigantic monuments rather than journeying on towards the south. It could take time to find the truth. “This will not be decided until the deciphering of the Thamudi text,” Sa'îd says. (Nevine El-Aref, “Ancient Egyptians in Arabia”, Al-Ahram Weekly, November 11, 2010. Voir également AFP, “Saudi uncovers first-ever pharaoh-culture antiquity”, The Daily News Egypt, November 8 ; ‘Alâ’ al-Dîn Zâhir, « Hiéroglyphes de Ramsès III à Tabbûk », Ruz al-Yûsuf du 8 novembre ; « Hawwâs : les vestiges de Ramsès III exhumés en Arabie Saoudite confirme l'extension de l'empire égyptien », al-Gumhûriyya du 9 novembre).

VII – CONFERENCES & COLLOQUES

Zâhî Hawwâs, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, was hosted by Queen Sofía of Spain in her royal palace in Madrid, where he
presented his newest book “Secret Voyage.” According to a press statement by the SCA, the Queen was impressed by the content of the book and decided to present it as a masterpiece to the visitors of the royal palace. Hawwâs will send his first copy of the book to President Husnî Mubârak to show his appreciation for what Mubârak accomplished for Egypt and its people, the SCA said. The next copy will be sent to President Barack OBAMA, followed by a plethora of other worldwide influential figures thereafter. Hawwâs was in Spain to give a lecture in the conference room inside the Royal Palace of Madrid, discussing Egyptian monuments to over 1,700 attendees. The ambassador of Egypt in Spain Ayman Zayn al-Dîn delivered the opening remarks for Hawwâs’ lecture. The President of the Spanish Repairers announced that Hawwâs was chosen to deliver this lecture due to the excellent service he has provided both Egypt and the world at large, the SCA said. (“Hawwâs visits Queen of Spain, lectures at Royal Palace”, Daily News Egypt, September 28, 2010).


Throughout three days last month, Coptic studies were the star performers at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA). The BA Calligraphy Centre organised, from 21 till 23 September, a conference on “Life in Egypt during the Coptic Period: Towns and Villages, Laymen and Clergy, Bishops and Dioceses”. The conference was held jointly with the Supreme Council for Antiquities (SCA), and the Society for Coptic Archaeology. This conference is the first of its kind to be held at the BA, and witnessed the participation of more than 120 researchers from 13 countries, the main theme dealing with life in Egypt during the Coptic period, the different aspects of Egyptian society and history then. ‘Abd al-Halîm Nûr al-Dîn, former Chairman of the SCA and president of the conference, said the papers presented in the conference would be revised by a scientific committee and published in a book by the BA in two months time. Dr Khâlid ‘Azab, manager of the calligraphy centre, divulged that, on the sideline of the conference, a partnership was held between the centre and the association of Coptic archaeology in Cairo, by which the BA will digitalise all the association’s publications, and will be accordingly on the BA website.

The coordinator general of the conference Lu’ayy Mahmûd Sa‘id drew the participants’ attention to the fact that this was not the first instance of interest in Coptic Studies by the calligraphy centre. Last year it issued a book in English entitled Coptic texts relating to daily life. The centre also held its first course in Coptic language and is preparing for the second. The opening lecture on “Coptology and its Importance to Egypt and the World” was delivered by Jacques VAN DER VLIET, professor at the Egyptian archaeology department in Leiden, the oldest university in Netherlands. Dr VAN DER VLIET explained that the Coptic era, which extended over some seven or eight centuries throughout the Roman and Byzantine rule of Egypt and well into the Arab rule, represented the middle phase in Egypt’s history. This phase, which saw a turning towards Europe, he said, was witnessed by the linkage between Biblical and Hellenistic studies. He shed light on Egypt’s ties with other Mediterranean civilisations, in which Alexandria was instrumental, and which shows clearly in Coptic art, especially in the monasteries of Suhâg in Upper Egypt. Coptic language, Dr VAN DER VLIET pointed out, was also among the most significant elements of connecting Egypt with the countries across the Mediterranean. It was written in Greek script with some letters added from the original Coptic, and borrowed not a few Greek words. As such, it was a potent tool for Egyptian Mediterranean integration, he said. Coptic Studies is a varied branch of knowledge, Dr VAN DER VLIET remarked. It involves studies on history, literature, art and architecture, social history, linguistics, geology, and many others. It thus links various fields of knowledge, and warrants a special place in human history.

Dr Peter GROSSMANN, Professor of Coptic Studies and Chair of the German Institute for Antiquities gave a presentation on “New Discoveries in the Town of Antinopolis”, and focused on the role played by Alexandria in the Coptic era. Dr Nûr al-Dîn explored Coptic Language with a research paper entitled “Coptic as a Stage in the Development of Ancient Egyptian
Language”, while Dr Sa‘îd participated with a paper on “The Use of the Cross within Muslim Tribes in the Egyptian-Libyan Desert”. Ahmad Mansûr, Head of the BA Ancient Egyptian Language Unit lectured about “Coptic Typography in Egypt: Origin and Development (1860–1883 CE)”. The remains of the Coptic-era town of Marea, some 45km south west of Alexandria, was the focus of a paper by SCA researcher Fahîma Ibrâhîm. Ibrâhîm aimed to draw attention to the importance of the town and Maryût, the area it lies in, and to sound an alarm that the town is today threatened. Marea is one of the rare examples of a harbour town on the shores of Lake Maryût that is essentially untouched since antiquity, and accessible for archaeological studies. It was only in 1977 that the site known as Marea was first excavated. Until 1981, these digs were undertaken by a team from Alexandria University led by Fawzi al-Fakharâni and they were concentrated in the port area. The port is composed of a quay more than 2km long divided into basins by four jetties some 100m long that jet out into the lake. The old town holds the remains of the port, houses and inns, a large market, a winery, and public baths. Ibrâhîm said the site was now being subject to encroachments that threatened what remained of the town. The increase in water level of Lake Maryût is already inundating a considerable part of the town and threatens to destroy it but, worse, investors hungry for land on which to build luxury tourist resorts are carving large slices of the land for that purpose. About excavations of Bâwît in Asyût, Upper Egypt, Watanî met the researcher Dominique BÉNAZETH, head of Coptology at the Louvre, who talked about the history of excavations in Asyût launched earlier in the 20th century. But they were pended because of the World War I, and resumed in the mid 1970s. The latest finds in this area archaeologically, according to BÉNAZETH, is the northern church of the Bâwît monastery. On the social life level, Dr Pauline ALLEN, head of the Australian Catholic University ACU’s centre for Early Christian Studies, discussed it through the “Festal letters of the Patriarchs of Alexandria: Evidence for Social History in the fourth and fifth centuries CE”. The researcher Youhanna Nessim, at the early centre for Christian studies in Australia, presented his paper on the features of the everyday life according to the old Coptic texts, such as asking for tips and marriage traditions. In one of these texts, for instance, it is mentioned about a work owner and how he cruelly treated a young apprentice, a situation we can encounter until today. This text, which is among the manuscript no. 129 in Paris, dates back to 7th century. Coptic murals and the dire need to preserve them were the topic tackled by Father Maximous al-Antouni who told Watanî that there are not enough samples of Coptic murals in Egypt in a condition good enough to be studied. A project for the restoration of the murals of St Antony’s Monastery, Red Sea, launched in 1996, he said, yielded rich information that was published in the two books Monastic Vision and The Cave Church of St Paul. Other projects then were implemented to restore Coptic murals of several churches and monasteries, such as Abû Sirga Church in Old Cairo; the White Monastery in Suhâg, and the Fakhûrî Monastery in Isnâ, Qinâ, Upper Egypt.
Implementing such projects revealed a clear idea about the art of Coptic icon, which has its roots in ancient Egyptian.
The closing lecture was delivered by professor of Coptology at the American University (AUC) in Cairo, Stephen EMMEL on “The Future of Coptic Studies in Egypt”. Dr EMMEL sent out a cry for the establishment of Coptic Studies in Egyptian universities and institutes. Universities around the world are under a lot of pressure financially, he said, and thus preferred to focus on studies that would be economically viable. Coptic Studies is thus threatened worldwide, he said, which makes it a matter of utmost importance that it should be offered here, in its homeland, at the hands of its children. “I am sending a petition to the Egyptian government (state),” Dr EMMEL said, “to assign a department of Coptic studies in the Egyptian universities.
Coptic studies at the AUC were presented among the department of Egyptology, but this year the AUC assigned a department of Coptology. I am glad to be the first professor of Coptology at the AUC.”
Alexandria University, according to Dr Sa'id, has approved offering a programme for post-graduate studies of Coptology at the Greco-Roman archaeology department. Anba Martirus, bishop general of churches of Sharq al-Sikka al-Hadid, told Watani that, as far as Coptic Studies is concerned, the Institute of Coptic Studies which was established by the Coptic Church back in 1954 has yet to gain official accreditation. A lot remains to be discovered and studied on the Coptic era, hence the dire need for graduates of Coptic Studies. (Samira Mazahy & Nevine Kameel, “A special place in history”, Watani, October 10, 2010. Voir également Jacqueline Munir, « Un congrès sur les études coptes réunit plus de 120 chercheurs à la BA », al-Yawm al-Sâbi‘ du 24 août ; Hála Ahmad Zakî, « Premier congrès pour les études coptes organisé par la BA », al-Ahrâm du 18 septembre ; Radwâ ‘Âdil, « Le congrès sur les études coptes critique les agressions commises contre les églises du Vieux-Caire », al-Masri al-Yawm du 24 septembre).

Role of the universities, NGOs, the SCA, and the media, in preserving Coptic antiquities during the period from 1976 to 2009

A conference on the “Role of the universities, NGOs, the Supreme Council of Antiquities, and the media, in preserving Coptic antiquities during the period from 1976 to 2009” was recently held in Cairo. The conference was organised by the Italian Institute for antiquities and restoration in cooperation with Tantâ University, which is the first university in Egypt to establish a department for Coptic antiquities (studies). The conference included screening a documentary on the remarkable landmarks of Old Cairo – Islamic and Coptic. Dr Haggâgî Ibrâhîm, the conference supervisor, said, “Since Coptic literally means Egyptian, so I am a Coptic
Muslim. This conference is the most recent of a series that started back in 1976 with one sponsored by Anba Selwanus, the Papal deputy for Old Cairo Churches and Fustât, and was attended by the pioneer archaeologist ‘Abd al-Rahmân ‘Abd al-Tawwâb. It is odd,” Dr Ibrâhîm added, “that only one Egyptian university – Tantâ University – includes a department for Coptic antiquities, neither does the Supreme Council for Antiquities include such a department. It only includes a department for Islamic and Coptic antiquities; the name itself is an aberration since the Coptic historically preceded the Islamic.”

Dr Ibrâhîm Ghânim, deputy dean of Tantâ University, talked about the Monastery of St Sam‘ân (Simon) the Tanner in Muqattam Mountain east of Cairo. It is not, strictly speaking, a ‘monastery’, but a conglomerate of churches and services situated in the heart of the mountain and serving the local community of garbage collectors. Mâgid Fahmî Zâki, the vice manager of the Italian Institute reminded how the local community first started when, in 1969, Cairo governor moved the Cairo garbage collectors to Muqattam where they built makeshift tin houses to live in. In 1974 they built their church and, in 1976, Pope Shinûda III made a monetary contribution to the community. With financing from the World Bank in 1984 and infrastructure erected by the government, the tin houses were replaced with concrete buildings and the site became what it is today. As for the ‘monastery’, it now includes six rock-hewn churches and some 40 rock artistic reliefs sculpted in the limestone rocks of the mountain. Tantâ University was responsible for publishing and printing the various research papers presented at the conference. The conference recommended holding such conferences regularly to discuss Coptology, and recommended to establish a specialised department in Coptic archaeology affiliated to the Supreme Council for Antiquities to register and update Coptic antiquities. (Antoun Milad, “Talking of Coptic antiquity”, Watani, August 1, 2010).

Natural and Cultural Landscapes in Fayûm

« Faire du Fayûm un centre de tourisme culturel et écologique tout en préservant et valorisant ses sites et en même temps intégrer la population de la région dans cette mission en l’informant de l’importance de cet héritage était un des objectifs de cette conférence. Il est certain que les citoyens peuvent participer à la promotion touristique de ces sites en distribuant des brochures touristiques dans les motels écologiques qui seront installés dans le Fayûm », affirme Rosanna PIRELLI, organisatrice du colloque et directrice du Centro Archeologico Italiano. Pour elle, cette conférence est le résultat de plusieurs années de présence italienne forte et coopérative avec les Égyptiens sur les plans archéologique, écologique et même socio•économique dans le Fayûm. La manifestation a été l’occasion pour annoncer de nouveaux programmes sur le plan scolaire, ainsi que de nouveaux projets arché-écologiques et l’installation de nouveaux musées spécifiques pour le Fayûm. « C’est une bonne occasion pour réunir les experts de tous ces domaines qui se complètent », explique PIRELLI. En fait, ce n’est pas la première mission italienne qui opère dans le Fayûm, puisque les Italiens y sont présents depuis bien longtemps. Ils ont
commence à travailler dans cette oasis en 1936 à Madînat Mâdî. Ensuite, les missions se sont succédé. Cinq missions en fait représentant des universités italiennes renommées. La plus importante est celle de l'Università di Pisa opérant à Madînat Mâdî. Étant le plus ancien et très vaste, ce site comprend, en fait, plusieurs éléments archéologiques de différentes époques. « Le plus intéressant c’est la présence de l’unique temple pharaonique intégral qui remonte au règne d’Amenemhat III », explique Ahmad ‘Abd al-‘Âl, directeur général des antiquités égyptiennes au Fayyûm.


Outre ces relevés, le projet ISSEMM a valorisé Madînat Mâdî, afin de mettre l’accent sur l’aspect touristique. En effet, tout le sable du site a été dégagé. Et afin d’empêcher son ensablement, « nous avons élevé les murailles de briques crues du temple lui-même avec des planches de bois », affirme Edda BRESCIANI, directrice scientifique du projet et de la mission de l’Università di Pisa. La mission a de même restauré tous les édifices et les éléments archéologiques se trouvant sur le site. Et pour faciliter la tournée touristique, les experts ont bâti quelques marches d’escaliers. En plus, ils ont installé des bancs en pierre pour le repos des visiteurs. Le site comprend un centre d’accueil avec des copies des statues relevées du site et se trouvant dans les grands musées internationaux. D’après la directrice, ce centre d’informations va aider les visiteurs à mieux comprendre le site archéologique, notamment les enfants.

Tout cet ensemble est actuellement relié à la réserve naturelle Wâdî al-
Rayyân par une route de 27 Km, où la coopération égypto-italienne est aussi fortement présente. Là, se trouve un autre centre d’accueil écologique qui comprend tous les éléments géologiques que renferme la réserve. Ce projet sera inauguré prochainement dans le cadre d’une cérémonie internationale. Ensuite, les visiteurs pourront se rendre sur deux sites archéo-écologiques renommés du gouvernorat du Fayûm: Madinat Mâdî et Wâdî al-Rayyân. D’autre part, afin d’assurer les besoins des sites archéologiques, on a proposé de fonder un centre de restauration de briques crues à Madinat Mâdî, « puisque les régions du Fayûm sont bâties en gros de cette matière fragile », commente Hishâm al-Laythî, le directeur égyptien auprès du CSA du projet de l’ISSEMM.


3 Miguel John VERSLUYS, [Leiden University], “Isis on the Nile. Egyptian gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt”, Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 14/06/2010.
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International Colloquium on Geoarchaeology: Landscape Archaeology. Egypt and the Mediterranean World, Cairo, 19th•21st September 2010 :

3 RIEGER Anna-Katharina, VETTER Thomas, MÖLLER Heike, NICOLAY Alexander,
3 EVELPIDOU Niki, PAVLOPOULOS Kosmas, VASSILOPOULOS Andreas, TRIANTAFYLLOU Maria, VOUVALIDIS Konstantinos, SYRIDES George, “Holocene Palaeogeographical reconstruction of the western part of Naxos island (Greece)”, 19/09/2010.
3 Barbara WORONKO, “Accumulation of aeolian dust within the ancient town of Marea (coastal zone of the South Mediterranean Sea, Egypt)”, 19/09/2010.
3 FLAUX Clément, MARRINER Nick, TORAB Magdy, ROUCHY Jean-Marie, SOULIE•MARSCHIE Ingeborg, MORHANGE Christophe, “Environmental evolution of the Máryût Lake
(Nile Delta) since 3,000 years BP: natural forcings and human impacts”, 19/09/2010.
3 MUTRI Giuseppina, Mohamed HAMÅDN, “Lithic raw material in the Farâfra Oasis (Egypt): location, procurement and use from the Middle Stone Age until the Neolithic period”, 19/09/2010.
3 VÉRON Alain, FLAUX Clément, POIRIER André, MORHANGE Christophe, “Middle Bronze Age settlement in the NW Nile delta (Egypt) revealed by pollutant lead”, 19/09/2010.
3 ZYCH Iwona, HERBICH Tomasz, SIDE botham Steven E., “The urban landscape of the Berenike harbour (Egypt) over time: geophysical research”, 20/09/2010.
3 BIA XLII — Juillet/Décembre 2010
3 TRONCHÈRE Hervé, FLAUX Clément, EL AMOURI Mourad, PETITPA Marie-Christine, under the direction of BOUSSAC Marie-Françoise, CALLOT Yann, GOIRAN Jean-Philippe, MORHANGE Christophe, TORAB Magdy, “Archaeological and geomorphological evidence for harbour structures at Taposiris, Lake Mareotis, NW Nile delta, Egypt”, 20/09/2010.
3 MÜLLER Wolfgang, DE DAPPER Morgan, “The urban landscape of Aswân (Egypt) from the Predynastic period to present times: a geoarchaeological approach”, 20/09/2010.
3 GHILARDI Matthieu, TRISTANT Yann, BORAIK Mansour, “Nile River evolution
3 Maciej PAWLIKOWSKI, “Geology and geomorphology as reasons for locating of archaeological sites in Egypt”, 20/09/2010.
3 A. Mahmoud ABDEL MONEIM, “Will the head of the Sphinx (Giza, Egypt) fall down during this century? Geoarchaeological studies around the Sphinx”, 20/09/2010.
3 ALEXANIAN Nicole, BEBERMEIER Wiebke, BLASCHTA Dirk, RAMISCH Arne, SEIDLAYER Stephan Johannes, SCHÜTT Brigitta, “The discovery of the lower causeway of the Bent Pyramid and the reconstruction of the Ancient Landscape at Dahshûr (Egypt)”, 20/09/2010.
3 Marsia BEALBY, “We journey up the storied Nile; the timeless water seems to smile: Why Nilotic landscapes inspired Minoan Art”, 20/09/2010.
3 Ghada EL GEMAIEY, “The role of environment on civil architecture in Rosetta (Egypt) during the ottoman period: a comparative study with Istanbul (Turkey)”, 20/09/2010.
3 KLOSE Ilka, SEIDLAYER Stephan J., DE DAPPER Morgan, KELANI Adel, “The rock inscriptions of Bigga and Shellal (Aswân, Egypt): archaeological and
3 LESPEZ Laurent, LE DREZEN Yann, LOPEZ-SAEZ Jose Antonio, DAVIDSON Robert, TSIRTSONI Zoï, “Middle to Late Holocene landscape changes and geoarchaeological implications in the Lower Strymon valley (Greece)”, 21/09/2010.
3 CAROZZA Jean-Michel, PUIG Carole, ODIOIT Thierry, VALETTE Philippe, “Little Ice Age impacts on fluvial dynamics in the Lower Roussillon coastal plain (Gulf of Lion, Western Mediterranean) and its consequences on Medieval to Modern societies”, 21/09/2010.
3 CASTANET Cyril, DESRUELLES Stéphane, RAGALA Rachid, ARHARBI Rachid, BROUQUIER-REDDÉ Véronique, LENOIR Éliane, “Fluvial landscapes dynamics and societies environment interactions in the lower Sebou River plain during the Late Holocene (Gharb, Morocco)”, 21/09/2010.
3 SIART Christoph, GHILARDI Matthieu, FORBRIGER Markus, CORDIER Stéphane, “The mountainous karst landscapes of Crete (Greece): Ancient settlement regions of high geoarchaeological interest”, 21/09/2010.
3 PARASCHOU Theodoros, GHILARDI Matthieu, PSOMIADIS David, “Pyroclastic deposits from the Thera volcano (Greece) and its hazards for the surrounding islands”, 21/09/2010.
3 FIORENTINO Girolamo, D’ORONZO Cosimo, PRIMAVERA Milena, ORONZO Simone, CALDARA Massimo, MUNTONI Italo M., RADINA Francesca, “Climate changes and human/environment interaction in Puglia region (south east Italy) during the Neolithic”, 21/09/2010.
3 FORBRIGER Markus, SIART Christoph, GHILARDI Matthieu, “Use of Terrestrial Laserscanning in Geoarchaeology: a case study on Bronze Age findings from East and Central Crete (Greece)”, 21/09/2010.
3 Harald KLEMPF, “Identification of river courses and floodplains in the area around the ancient city Tegea, Greece”, 21/09/2010.


3 Karol MYSLIWIEC, “Nyankhnefertem, Dynasty, his Family and his Tomb in Saqqâra”, Supreme Council of Antiquities, 18/10/2010.

3 Sylvain DHENNIN, [Ifao, France], « Occupation du territoire dans le Delta occidental, l’exemple de Kôm Abou Billou », Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 20/10/2010.

3 Current Research on Baths in Egypt: New Archaeological Discoveries. Conference, Ifao-CSA, Cairo, 26 October 2010 :

3 Marie-Françoise BOUSSAC, [Univ. Paris 10, France], “Introduction to the Bâlneorient Program”.

3 Bérangère REDON, [Ifao, France], “Presentation of the Conference”.

3 Mansûr Burayk, [SCA, Egypt], “Two Baths newly discovered in Karnak”.

3 Karol MYSLIWIEC, [Univ. Warszawa], « Les bains ptolémaïques d’Athribis (Tell Atrib) ».

3 Wolfgang MÜLLER, [Swiss Institut, Cairo], “A Hellenistic Bath in Syene”.

3 Cornelia RÖMER, [DAIK, Cairo], “The Greek Baths in the Fayyûm – Who
attended them?".

3. Paola Davoli, [Univ. Lecce], “A New Public Bath in Roman Trimithis (Amhida, Dakhla Oasis)”.

3. Bérangère Redon, [Ifao, France], “Reflexions on the Lack of Thermae Buildings in Egypt (1st-2nd c. A.D.)”.


3. Roland-Pierre Gayraud, [Cnrs, France], “Un bain privé de la fin du Xe siècle trouvé à Istabl ‘ Antar ”.


3. Thibaud Fournet [Ifpo], with the contribution of Ahmad ‘Abd al-Fattâh (Graeco-Roman museum of Alexandria), « Présentation of the Balnéorient Architectural Database ».


3. Sylvie Denoix, [Ifao, France], “Conclusion”.


3. ‘Âdil Farîd Tubia, [Fayûm University], Muhammad Hamdân, Fikrî Hasan, Roger FLOWER, [Cairo University -University College London], “The Geologic History of the Fayûm Depression: the Last 10,000 Years”, 31/10/2010.


3. Irene Bragantini, [Università di Napoli, l’Orientale], “Fayûm Painted

3 Samîr Riyâd, [Asyût University, Ministry of Higher Education], “Geoparks and Prehistoric Human Cultures in Egypt”, 1/11/2010.
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3 Gabriel MIKHAIL, [Image House], “Conservation through Design & Architecture: Methodologies, techniques and applications ... an integrated approach”, 1/11/2010.
3 Jochem KAHL, [Egyptology, Department of History and Cultural Studies,

VILLAGE EGYPT. Continuity and Change in Regional Milieus. German Archaeological Institute Cairo, 4-5 November 2010:

3 Claire SOMAGLINO, [Ifao], “Frontières et zones de marge durant le Nouvel Empire : gestion et perception d’espaces singuliers », Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 10/11/2010.
3 G. FANFONI, [Director of CIERA], “The recovery of the Mausoleum of Sunqur Sa’dî and the Takiyya Mevlevi”, Faculty of Arts -Department of Archaeology -University of Tanta, 13/11/2010.
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Les mystiques juives, chrétiennes et musulmanes dans l'Égypte médiévale. Interculturalités et contextes historiques. Colloque organisé par Giuseppe CECERE (Ifao), Mireille LOUBET (Cnrs-Cpaf), Samuela PAGANI (Università del Salento). Centre français de culture et de coopération, Mounira, Le Caire. 22 – 24 novembre 2010 :
3 Johannes DEN HEIJER, [université catholique de Louvain], « La transmission des récits sur les mystiques (moines, ermites) coptes et leurs rapports avec la société égyptienne à l'époque fatimide », 22/11/2010.
3 Luca PATRIZI, [univ. de Torino], Mariachiara GIORDA, [Univ. de Torino], « Direction spirituelle et règles de conduite dans le monachisme chrétien oriental et dans le soufisme », 23/11/2010.
3 Sandor FODOR, [Eotvos Lorand University, Budapest], “Sufism and Magics and possible Jewish backgrounds in popular religion”, 24/11/2010.
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3 Ahmad G. Fahmi, [Professor of Archaeobotany, Hilwán University], “Archaeobotany of Food Production at Predynastic Hierakonpolis, Upper Egypt”, Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, 23/11/2010.


3 Andrea ROSSI, [Italie], “How to read and write hieroglyphics”, Italian Archaeological Centre, 2/12/2010.

3 Marilina BETRO, [University of Pisa, Italie], ”Ippolito ROSELLINI: New Results from the Researches in the Pisa Archives”, Italian Archaeological Centre, 5/12/2010.


3 Sabine SCHÜLTING, [Freie Universität Berlin, Institut für Englische Philologie], ”An Ideal Spy ? Henry Blount in the Ottoman Empire (1634-1635)”, German Archaeological Institute, 7/12/2010.

3 Menahem BEN-SASSON, [professor of the history of the Jewish people at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem], “Maimonides as a Unique Jewish Leader to His Generation and to Future Generations”, Israeli Academic Center in Cairo, 7/12/2010.

3 David LORAND, [Ifao, Belgique], Ier « La statuaire royale de Sésostris . Nouvelles problématiques, nouvelles avancées », Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 8/12/2010.

3 Giorgia CAFICI, [Italie], “Cleopatra: Queen of Egypt between Myth and History”, Italian Archaeological Centre, 12/12/2010.

3 Monika DOLINSKA, [Director of the Polish Mission of the Tuthmosis III Temple at Dayr al-Bahari, Pologne], “Tuthmosis III Temple at Dayr al-Bahari”, Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology in Cairo, 14/12/2010.

3 Culture and Politics in Egyptian European Relations in the reign of Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha. International Conference, German Archaeological Institute Cairo, 14-16 December 2010 :


3 Éric GADY, “French Egyptologists in Egypt from CHAMPOLLION to MARIETTE: Cultural Action or Cultural Diplomacy?”, 15/12/2010.

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3 Hartmut MEHLITZ, “From Private to Public Institution. Richard LEPSIUS: 50 years of working for the German Archaeological Institute”, 16/12/2010.
3 Andrew BEDNARSKI, “Publishing CAIILIAUD’s Arts and Crafts”, 16/12/2010.
3 Christiana KÖHLER, [Chair of the Institute of Egyptology, The University of Vienne], “Excavations at Hilwân – A Summary”, Supreme Council of Antiquities, 20/12/2010.
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VIII -WHO'S WHO ?
Voici la liste alphabétique des principaux responsables égyptiens régulièrement cités dans le BIA :

Wagdî ʿAbbâs  Directeur de la zone archéologique de Bâb al-Wazîr
Ahmad ʿAbd al-ʿÂl  Directeur général des Antiquités du Fayyûm
Fahmî ʿAbd al-ʿAzîz  Directeur des Antiquités de Râs Sidr
Muhammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzîz  Directeur des Antiquités d’al-Buhayra et de Rosette
Saʿîd ʿAbd al-ʿAzîz  Directeur de la zone archéologique de Sayyida Zaynab
Sabrî ʿAbd al-ʿAzîz  Président du Secteur des Antiquités égyptiennes
Ahmad ʿAbd al-Fattâh  Superviseur général des Antiquités d’Alexandrie
Nûr ʿAbd al-Ghaffûr  Directeur de la zone archéologique d’al-Qurna
Sayyîd ʿAbd al-Ghaffûr  Directeur du Secteur des projets de Haute-Égypte
Walîd ʿAbd al-Khâliq  Directeur exécutif du projet de construction du musée national de la Civilisation égyptienne
Muhammad ʿAbd al-Latîf  Directeur général du Comité permanent des
Antiquités
islamiques et coptes
Ibrâhîm ʿAbd al-Magîd  Directeur général de l’administration des Antiquités restituées
Muhammad ʿAbd al-Maqsûd  Président de l’administration centrale des Antiquités de
Basse-Égypte
Ayman ʿAbd al-Munʿim  Ex-directeur du projet de développement du Caire historique ; ex-président du Fonds du développement culturel
Hasan ʿAbd al-Munʿim  Directeur du Centre de documentation archéologique de la Citadelle
Muhammad ʿAbd al-Râfiʿ  Directeur général des Antiquités de Kafr al-Shaykh
Muhsin ʿAbd al-Rahmân  Directeur de l’administration générale des Antiquités juives
Nûr al-Dîn ʿAbd al-Samad  Directeur général de l’administration des sites archéologiques

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Muhammad ʿAbd al-Samî  Directeur général des Antiquités du Nord-Sinaï
ʿÂtif ʿAbd al-Wahâb Abû al-Dahab  Président de l’administration centrale des Antiquités du Caire et de Giza
Ahmad Sâlih ʿAbdallah  Directeur général des antiquités d’Abû Simbil et des temples de Nubie
ʿAbd al-Salâm Hasan ʿAbdallah  Directeur général de l’inspectorat d’Idfû
Muhammad ʿAbdallah Abû Rî’î  Inspecteur en chef de l’Unité archéologique à l’aéroport du Caire
Magdî ʿAbdîn  Directeur général des antiquités islamiques et coptes d’Aswân
Amîra Abû Bakr  Directrice générale des restaurations en Alexandrie
Muhammad Abû Siʿda  Directeur du Fonds de sauvetage des monuments de la Nubie
Bahgat Abû Sidayra  Directeur de la zone archéologique de la Nouvelle Vallée
ʿAbdallah Abû Zahra  Inspecteur en chef de la zone archéologique d’al-Munûfiyya
Nâdî ʿAdli  Directeur de l’administration architecturale des Antiquités d’Alexandrie et de Basse-Égypte
ʿAbd al-Sattâr Ahmad  Directeur général des Antiquités d’Asyût
Magdî Sulaymân Ahmad  Directeur général des Antiquités d’al-Ghûriyya
Nûbî Mahmûd Ahmad  Directeur général des Antiquités de Suez
Ashraf al-ʿAshmâwî  Conseiller juridique auprès du CSA
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