

ANTIQUITIES OF EGYPT

SCA's Monthly Newsletter

July 2006

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The Coptic Museum Restored

On Monday, June 26, 2006, President Hosni Mubarak inaugurated the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo, accompanied by Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif and scores of Egyptian ministers and top governmental officials. The private opening of this landmark building was well attended, with a tour given by Farouk Hosni, Minister of Culture, and Dr. Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), around the museum's 26 halls displaying 13,000 splendid artifacts relating Egypt's Coptic history from the 4th century AD until modern times. In fact, Coptic art is the amalgamation of artistic expressions from vastly different traditions: Pharaonic, Greco-Roman, Christian, and Islamic cultures. Although the Coptic period in Egypt dates from 451 (Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon) to 641 AD, Coptic art began to emerge in Egypt around 300 AD and was still produced well into the Islamic period. Artistically, it is divided into two phases, each absorbing iconographic elements from the culture that dominated Egypt at the time. First, from the 4th to the 10th century AD, Coptic art is mainly comprised of Hellenistic and Byzantine decorative influences ranging from the naturalistic representation of humans, animals, fish, and vegetal forms to compositions including hunting, sport, and music and dancing scenes. Second, from the 10th century AD to the modern period, animal and human representations were gradually replaced by geometric configurations.

The first exhibition of Coptic art was at the Boulaq Museum in the late 19th century. In 1908, to accommodate the needs of having a center specifically devoted to the Christian art of Egypt, Marcus Samaika Pasha founded the current museum on behalf of, and using land donated by, the Coptic Church. The site within the Fortress of Babylon was chosen due to its archaeological, historic, and religious significance. More importantly, it was selected because the area houses Cairo's oldest churches, namely the church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus (Abu Sarga), the church of Saint Barbara (Sitt Barbara), the Hanging (al-Mo'alaqa) church, and the church of Saint George (Mar Girgis). With the support of Pope Kerolos V, artifacts from churches, monasteries, private collections, and houses throughout Egypt were acquired for the museum.

The collection has been considerably added to since 1908. In 1931, realizing the museum's importance, the state took over its management without violating the endowment rights of the church. Subsequently, the Coptic artifacts from the Egyptian Museum were appropriated into the collection mandating that the museum be enlarged to accommodate the generous transfer. In 1947 a larger New Wing was opened, perfectly complementing the style of the Old Wing and employing all of the same unique features: *mashrabiyya* (turned wood) windows, carved wooden ceilings, stained glass, and fountains. Additionally, the museum acquired artifacts through excavations and from rescue efforts associated with areas in Upper Egypt affected by the building of the Aswan Dam.

Unfortunately, the Old Wing was closed in 1992 to insure the safety of the artifacts after an earthquake had damaged that part of the building. Its closure halted the completion of several important projects designed to provide additional services for aficionados and scholars of Coptic art: the *General Catalogue of the Coptic Museum*, a complete and up-to-date catalogue of

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all the museum's objects, and the *Coptic Studies Center* for researchers. The New Wing has been closed since 2003 when the very necessary renovation, restoration, and reorganization program began.

Under the direction of Dr. Hussein El-Shaboury with a budget of LE 38 million, the Coptic Museum has undergone a massive restoration and reorganization plan. It has involved the creation of a new scenario contributed to by an impressive team of Egyptian experts such as Dr. Gawdat Gabra, former director of the museum, and the museum's curators and restorers. Unlike the old scenario, the current one is organized geographically (the Ahnasia, Bawit, and Saqqara halls), chronologically, and by material or subject. Other new features include the updated translation of labels from Arabic into English and French. Following the success of the audio-guide service piloted at the Egyptian Museum, El-Shaboury mentioned that the Coptic Museum would also feature narrated guides translated into seven languages.

The building has undergone some structural changes as well. A new pathway was built connecting the Old and New Wings

together allowing the museum to be treated as one visit; whereas, previously, visitors had to exit one wing before visiting the second. The courtyard of the New Wing has been masterfully converted into a space housing the Saqqara collection. Although



now covered, the transparent ceiling panels allow for the circulation of light, beautifully recreating the outdoor experience one would have enjoyed in the collection's natural environment. The ancillary rooms around the courtyard of the Old Wing now accommodates a temporary exhibit space, an education center for children and students, a permanent exhibition space holding artifacts from churches in Old Cairo, a cafeteria, a lecture

hall, and the future *Coptic Studies Center*. In keeping with efforts to adhere to international standards, a clinic has also been worked into the plan of the museum.

The walls of the museum have been cleared of objects, only displaying well-conceived graphics and maps with a description of the areas where the artifacts were taken from. This allows visitors to appreciate the objects and beauty of the building, which are in perfect harmony with each other, and have a clear

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view of the carved, wooden ceilings and *mashrabiyya* windows. Discoveries have also been made as a result of the renovation program. Dr. El-Shaboury explained that a comprehensive study of the 1984 restoration was carried out leading the 2003 team to execute a more comprehensive plan. As a result, original painted ceilings were revealed and are now part of the display.

In addition to the involvement of the Ministry of Culture and the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) funded the [Italian] restoration of nine niches (seven from Saqqara and two from Bawit) and one fresco (Adam and Eve).

Today, the Coptic Museum is one of Egypt's four major museums, owning the largest and most comprehensive collection of Coptic art with approximately 13,000 registered pieces (approximately 1,200 will be part of the new scenario) and 3,000 square meters of exhibit space. Prior to the current renovation efforts, the museum received anywhere between 500-800 visitors daily, a generous figure considering that between 1992 and 2003 only the New Wing was open. After this renovation, Dr. El-Shaboury anticipates that the museum will receive approximately 2,000 visitors daily.

AUC Press intends to update and revise the 1993 guide to the Coptic Museum and neighboring churches, which will be written by Gawdat Gabra.

Phone number: 362-8766

Location: Old Cairo, Mar Girgis metro station

Hours of Operation: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Admission Fees: Egyptians at 2 LE and foreigners at 40 LE



DISCOVERIES

Kings ... at the Valley of the Kings



No one would expect to find a new treasure in the Valley of the Kings, 84 years after the original discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb (1333-1323 B.C). Up until last February, the Valley of the Kings was known to consist of about 63 tombs, 26 of which were for kings while the others were for top officials, who lived during the New Kingdom (1550-1070 B.C), or servants who worked in the royal court and were honored with a burial in the Valley.

The Valley of the Kings began as a royal cemetery in the New Kingdom when King Tuthmose I (1504-1492 B.C) was buried there. Following him, other kings chose to be buried in the Valley. In an attempt to protect their souls and bodies from tomb robbers, the kings of the 18th Dynasty chose this rocky site, located on the west bank at Thebes, which enabled them to meet Osiris, the god of the Afterlife, in a safe and sound condition.

In addition, this location was easy to reach from the Nile, and it was easily secured by the high hills and the large amount of limestone blocks. The existence of the pyramid-shaped mountain on the southern side of the Valley was also another means for the deceased kings to join with the sun god.

The newly discovered tomb (KV63) was accidentally found by The University of Memphis mission lead by Otto Schaden while cleaning the burial shaft of the 19th Dynasty King Amenmesse. At approximately five meters deep, a shaft leading to a room with seven wooden coffins and a variety of pottery and alabaster vessels was discovered. This tomb is about fourteen meters away from the famous tomb of Tuankhamun.

The coffins are in a very bad state of preservation, except for one anthropoid coffin with a beautiful mask. The great surprise is that the coffins do not contain any mummies nor bear any inscriptions. The first five coffins, which have been restored by Nadia Lokma, contain a collection of embalming materials along with pottery sherds and linen wrappings used in the mummification process. A collection of papyri written in

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hieratic were also discovered. An official necropolis seal with a jackal over nine captives was found as well as a long seal with the sun disk, Osiris, a crocodile, and a lion. One of the coffins has a very beautiful mask, which belongs to the 18th Dynasty. The objects found in the tomb indicate that it was probably used as a storeroom for embalming materials.

The sixth coffin was also opened and revealed another small gilded coffin inside along with six cousins. Dr. Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), believes that it belongs to an infant, but other Egyptologists think that it was used for the burial of ushabti figures.

The seventh coffin is inscribed but is still covered with black resin. Inside were embalming materials, different from what was previously found. It contained collars ornamented with flowers that were put on the deceased, sticks, gold squares, pottery sherds, and fragments of linen. Resin and natron were also found.

Dr. Hawass believes that this tomb originally belonged to Tutankhamun's mother, Kiya, who probably died giving birth to the boy king. The tomb was robbed in antiquity and then used as a storeroom for embalming materials. Hawass' theory is based on the initial findings of seals and inscriptions, a ceremonial bowl that exactly matches one found in King Tutankhamun's tomb with an identical hieroglyphic text. In addition, Hawass added that the face on one of the coffins is similar to that of the boy king, especially the nose and cheeks.



Hawass asserted that such a tomb would never belong to Tutankhamun's wife, who would have taken the time to carve a large, beautifully decorated tomb suitable to a royal queen. She was the wife of Tutankhamun for ten years and then wife to King Aye for several more years.

In September, after the completion of cleaning, all hieroglyphic texts engraved on the coffins will be studied in an attempt to reveal more secrets about the tomb and its owner, which could solve one of the mysteries surrounding Tutankhamun.

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LISTINGS

From the 15th of July to the 1st of September 2006:

The “Young Golden Pharaoh” festival will be held in museums all over Egypt, including the Egyptian Museum, the Suzanne Mubarak Children’s Museum, the Palace of Amir Taz , the Mubarak Public Library in Cairo, the National Museum in Alexandria, the Nubian Museum in Aswan, the Luxor Museum, and the Beni Suef Museum.

On the 24th of July at 7:30 pm:

Opening ceremony of the Coptic Museum.

NEWSREEL

Saint Catherine:



From October 2006 to March 2007, Los Angeles and Washington D.C. will receive two Coptic exhibitions telling the history of St. Catherine’s Monastery in Sinai. The exhibitions will feature a collection of icons, manuscripts, and other instruments used during Mass.

Under the title “ Holy Figures from the Holy Land: Icons from Sinai”, the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles will exhibit 53 Coptic artifacts from St. Catherine’s Monastery, including six manuscripts, four silver chandeliers, bronze crosses, and incense burners as well as 43 icons dated between the 6th and 13th centuries AD. One of the most important icons on display is made out of mosaics depicting the Virgin Mary holding the child Jesus, while another shows Moses holding the plaques of the Ten Commandments.

The second exhibition will be held in Washington D.C. in two gallery halls at the Smithsonian Institute. Nine manuscripts selected from the Coptic Museum in Cairo and St. Catherine’s Monastery will be on display.

Alexandria:

In collaboration with the French Institute for Oriental Studies (IFAO), the Alexandrian Studies Center commenced its archaeological survey in the area in front of the Qaytbay Fortress. The mission will excavate the site, draw an archaeological map, and document all its findings. It will also carry out an underwater archaeological survey in the zone west of the fortress to Ras Silsila as well as document the inscriptions engraved on all archaeological blocks currently under the sea.

At IFAOs request, the Permanent Committee headed by Mr. Magdi El-Ghandour will permit the mission of the Alexandrian Studies Center to continue its archeological survey in two storehouses in Alexandria: one in the al-Nahaseen area in Shalalat; and the second in the Orthodox Patriarch zone.

Assiut:

In collaboration with the Institute of Egyptology and Coptic Research at the Mut Center University in Germany, the Department of Egyptology in Ganoub El-Wadi University, located in Sohag, Upper Egypt, will continue their archaeological survey on the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom tombs in Sohag. According to the project, all the burial shafts in the tombs will be cleaned and restored, and the inscriptions will be documented.

Deir El Bahari:

From the 1st of July 2006 to the 3rd of April 2007, the mission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York will continue its excavations and cleaning of the tomb of “Irtarau” the female scribe and the first follower of the prayer during the reign of King Psamtik I, and the tomb of “Karakhamun” the first priest of the 26th Dynasty, located in the Assasif in Deir El Bahari, Luxor. The mission will also restore the tomb of Nespekashuti, the mayor of Upper Egypt and a vizier in the 26th Dynasty.

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ADMISSION FEES LIST

Culture minister Farouk Hosni approved the delay of the application of the SCA's new admission fees list to 1-11-2006 upon the request of Tourism Minister Zohier Garana, in an attempt to allow the tourism agencies enough time to Re-Structure their pricing.

| Archaeological sites | | | | | Cinema & video | | | | | | Photo | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|--------|--------|------------|----------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|------------|--------|--|-------|-----------------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Areas | Site | Prices | | Visit time | Advertising | | Novelist & Commercial | | Documental | | Advertising | | Novelist & Commercial | | Documental | |
| | | Egy | Foreig | | Egy | Foreig | Egy | Forei | Egy | Forei | Egy | Forei | Egy | Forei | Egy | Forei |
| Alexandria area | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mustafa kamel tombs | Alex | 1 | 15 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Roman theater | Alex | 2 | 15 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Sawari column | Alex | 2 | 15 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Birds villa | Alex | 2 | 10 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Sunken antiquities- Egyptian coasts | Alex | 35 | 50 | — | 4000 | 4000\$ | 4000 | 4000\$ | 4000 | 4000\$ | Commemorative video shooting costs 300 L.E & photo costs 100 L.E . | | | | | |
| Asiut | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mer tombs | Asiut | 1 | 20 | 9: 5 | * | * | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| El hamamia tombs | Asiut | 1 | 20 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Aswan & Nubia | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nobles tombs | Aswan | 2 | 25 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Abu simbel temple | Nubia | 4 | 70 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Kom Ombu temple | Kom Ombu | 2 | 25 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Edfu temple | Edfu | 2 | 40 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Kharja Oasis | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dush temple | Kharja | 1 | 20 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Luxor | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mina & Nakht tomb | West bank | 2 | 20 | 9: 5 | * | * | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Seti I temple | West bank | 2 | 20 | 9: 5 | * | * | * | * | * | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Valley of the queens | West bank | 2 | 25 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Habu temple | West bank | 2 | 25 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| El der El Behari | West bank | 2 | 25 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Esna temple | Esna | 2 | 15 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| El Tod temple | Luxor | 1 | 20 | 9: 5 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 500 | 1000 |
| Islamic & Coptic antiquities | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Beshtak palace | El -Moez St. | Free | Free | 9: 4 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 250 | 500 |
| Al nasr gateway | Al Gamalya | Free | Free | 9: 4 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 250 | 500 |
| Mohammed Ali dynasty tombs | Al Imam El shaf'e | 2 | 15 | 9: 4 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 250 | 500 |
| Saladin castle at Taba | Taba | 2 | 20 | 9: 4 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 250 | 500 |
| Kaitbay castle | Alex | 1 | 20 | 9: 4 | 7000 | 7000 | 3000 | 5000 | 600 | 1000 | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 250 | 500 |

All prices in L.E Pound / shooting fees inside the tombs per hour/ archeological sites opened for visiting only
*fees defined after the SCA secretary general agreement.

| Museums | | | | | Cinema & video | | | | | | Photo | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|--------|-------|------------|----------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|------------|-------|-------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|------------|-------|
| Museums | Site | Prices | | Visit time | Advertising | | Novelist & Commercial | | Documental | | Advertising | | Novelist & Commercial | | Documental | |
| | | Egy | Forei | | Egy | Forei | Egy | Forei | Egy | Forei | Egy | Forei | Egy | Forei | Egy | Forei |
| local museums | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Khufu's boats museum | Pyramids | 4 | 40 | 9: 5 | * | * | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 250 | 500 | 250 | 500 | 150 | 300 |
| Ismaelya museum | Ismaelya | 1 | 6 | 9: 5 | * | * | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 250 | 500 | 250 | 500 | 150 | 300 |
| Beni swef museum | Beni swef | 1 | 10 | 9: 5 | * | * | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 250 | 500 | 250 | 500 | 150 | 300 |
| Mummification museum | Luxor | 2 | 40 | 9: 5 | * | * | 1000 | 2000 | 1000 | 2000 | 250 | 500 | 250 | 500 | 150 | 300 |

All prices in L.E Pound / shooting per hour without opening the showcases or using flash
* fees defined after the SCA secretary general agreement.