Past and Present Egyptian Views on Pharaonic Archaeology

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Abstract

This paper will compare the modern day Egyptians views of Pharaonic archaeology with those of Egyptians in the recent and more distant past. Past views of Pharaonic archaeology have been mainly guided by belief in different religions. Most modern Egyptians are Muslim, and the Islamic faith considers the ancient Egyptians a pagan society. In the past, antiquities and other items have been taken out of Egypt and sent all over the world. Some of the items were taken out illegally, and other items have been given willingly to foreigners. In the 20th century, the feelings towards giving objects away changed, to an opinion that Egyptian items should stay in Egypt. There were laws enacted in Egypt to protect the country's rich heritage. I will be looking at what caused this change in opinion, and the reasons behind the change. I will also be looking at what items modern Egyptians want repatriated, and why those specific items, and not everything.
Introduction

The Pharaonic period in Egypt starts around 3000 B.C. with the 1st Dynasty and ends with the 32nd Dynasty around 30 B.C. with the death of Cleopatra VII, and left a great amount of archaeological heritage. After the end of the 32nd Dynasty Egypt has changed hands many times, and the buildings and other artifacts from the Pharaonic period were not well cared for and sometimes even destroyed. Today the modern Egyptian do protect and care for their country’s history, and also open up sites and museums to tourists so that everyone can enjoy the items.

This subject is worth pursuing because it is interesting as to why the Egyptians went from not being concerned about Pharaonic archaeology in the 19th century to caring for it in the end of the 20th century. This topic also has repercussions for foreigners because now that the Egyptians value Pharaonic archaeology, they want some of their country’s cultural past repatriated. Understanding why the Egyptians changed their mind about their country’s past might help foreigners be more sympathetic to repatriation. Was there an event or a catalyst that changed their minds? Or was it a lengthy process that took centuries to finally happen? Did it have anything to do with the French and British Occupation beginning in the early 1800’s? Did it have to deal with religion? There are many possibilities as to why their opinion changed, and my goal is to figure out why it changed. I have reviewed literature regarding Egyptian heritage by both foreigners and Egyptians, and I have conducted interviews of Egyptians to see what their views are.
Background

History of Egypt

To begin to understand the problem that is now in Egypt, you need to know the history of Egypt (much of this history was obtained through numerous sources, including ArabNet 2002; Brewer and Teeter 1999; Egypt State Information Service 2005; Encyclopedia Britannica 2006; Wikipedia Contributors 2006). Egypt has been occupied and ruled by many different peoples throughout its history. The age of the pharaohs started around 3000 B.C. with the pharaoh Menes. Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in 332 B.C. taking control away from the Persians who had occupied Egypt for the last 200 years. It was during this period that the city of Alexandria was built. Upon Alexander's death in 323 B.C. Ptolemy, a general of Alexander, was named ruler of Egypt, thus ushering in the Ptolemaic or Greek era in Egypt. During the Greek era many Greeks came to live in Egypt, bringing with them their culture, language and their ideas. In 30 B.C. the Greek era died when Cleopatra VII was killed by Octavian of Rome who would become Caesar Augustus, and thus began the Roman era in Egypt.

The Christian religion was introduced into Egypt during the Roman era. However the Christians were persecuted in Egypt by several Roman Emperors. As Christianity became the religion of the empire under Constantine in the 4th century A.D. the Christians were now accepted. During the reign of Theodosius I the Christian hold in Egypt became stronger. Theodosius I decreed in A.D. 391 that "pagan temples" should be closed and never used again. Because of this decree many temples were closed or destroyed in Egypt. Due to the temples being closed there was no more priest class, and
the priests were the ones who had kept the hieroglyphic language alive. The language now being used in Egypt was that of Coptic.

Around A.D. 640 Egypt was once again invaded, this time by the Muslims. The Muslims brought with them their culture, language and religion. The Muslims would hold onto Egypt until the 1500s, but during this time there was internal conflict. During the Muslim reign of Egypt there would be five different eras of rulers (Egypt State Information Service 2005). The Muslims made Arabic the official language in the 7th century A.D. and the Coptic language was mainly used from there on out as a language of the Coptic church only.

In 1517 Egypt was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans left many Egyptians in power because they knew how to run the country. During the Ottoman rule there was again internal conflict, and Egypt would have many different rulers during this time.

In 1798, then General Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Alexandria, and eventually took control of Egypt. He did this to protect French trade, and to undermine British control. Napoleon promised to be friends of Islam and of the people of Egypt. Besides the soldiers that Napoleon brought with him, he also brought 150 specialists or savants to gather knowledge about Egypt (Brewer and Teeter 1999:6). It was during this time that the French would find the Rosetta Stone, which would lead to the deciphering of the hieroglyphics. The other big achievement made by the French during their short rule was an achievement by the specialists that had accompanied Napoleon. They compiled a book called the *La Description de l’Egypte*, which was the compilation of the information that the specialists had retrieved while in Egypt. The engravings in the book were done
by Dominique Vivant Denon, and his engravings were so accurate that they are still used
by scholars today (Brewer and Teeter 1999:7). However in 1801, the English would oust
the French out of Egypt, and make them leave the Rosetta Stone behind.

The British did not take control of Egypt, but the Ottomans tried to retake it. The
British and the French though were still to have power over Egypt for the next 70 years.
The rulers of Egypt during this time tried to make Egypt a modern country, but because
of this they fell heavily into debt. This debt would then lead the British to have more
control over Egypt in 1882. Egypt would stay as a colony of the British Empire until
1922 when Egypt was granted independence. However this independent Egypt still had
the British controlling parts of the government and the Suez Canal. Finally in 1953
Egyptians would get their freedom, becoming the Arab Republic of Egypt.

History of Egyptology

Egyptology is generally defined as the study of Egyptian archaeology (El Daly:1).
Most western archaeologists believe that Egyptology was officially started when
Napoleon Bonaparte brought specialists to Egypt along with his army. The specialists or
savants produced the first comprehensive account of ancient Egypt, and the expedition
also found the Rosetta Stone which would lead to hieroglyphics being deciphered.
Napoleon also founded the Institut d’Egypte in Cairo, and it brought scholars together to
discuss research about Egypt. This brought more scholars to Egypt, and promoted
research in Egypt. After the savants left Egypt, Egyptology came to a standstill. Most of
the temples, monument and artifacts available had already been studied and documented,
but no one could decipher what the hieroglyphics meant. No one could read the
documents and other pieces showing hieroglyphics that had been recovered. This is a
brief overview of some of the more prominent Egyptologists, or people involved with
Egypt. Doing a paper on every Egyptologist would be a paper in of itself.

Jean François Champollion

Jean François Champollion was only eight years old when the Rosetta Stone was
found, but he would be the first to decipher the hieroglyphics on it. Champollion was an
intelligent child, and taught himself to read at the age of five. At the age of eleven he met
one of Napoleon’s savants, and some credit this meeting with inspiring his interest in
Egyptology, and hieroglyphics. His elder brother Jacques was a historian who
specialized in Egyptology, and he was also his mentor. Before the age of seventeen
Champollion had learned Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, Chaldean, Sanskrit, Zend, Pali, Parsi,
and Persian (David 1993:25). At the age of sixteen he presented a paper to the Grenoble
Academy that claimed that the Coptic language was the same language as the
hieroglyphics, but it was just represented with different characters.

In 1824, Champollion published his Précis du système hiéroglyphique which
presented his idea that the hieroglyphic script combined phonetic and ideographic signs,
and this understanding lead to the language being read. However people did not believe
that Champollion had deciphered hieroglyphics so it wasn’t until 1837 when it was
finally accepted. However he had died in 1832, so he never got the recognition before he
died. His brother, though, published his unfinished works, which lead more
Egyptologists to be able to continue the work that Champollion started. (David 1993, and Bratton 1968).

Auguste Mariette

In 1858, a Frenchman Auguste Mariette, became head of the Egyptian Antiquities Service. In 1863 he established the Egyptian museum, which was to be the first national museum in the Near East. Some scholars liked the idea of a museum because they saw the need to protect Egypt's past, but this interfered with their own goals of making larger Egyptian collections for their own countries. One thing that Mariette did though was to keep the native Egyptian people out of the Egyptian Antiquities Service. Mariette was protective of his hold on Egyptology in Egypt, and he feared that the natives might take it out of his hands. In 1869 the School of the Ancient Egyptian Language was opened and 10 Egyptians entered the school. Mariette was paranoid that the ruler of Egypt would appoint one of these students to Mariette's museum, so he told museum officials to kick any Egyptian out that was trying to copy hieroglyphics (Reid 1985:235). Soon the school closed, because it had no hope of placing them in the Egyptian Antiquities Service. (Brewer and Teeter 1999; and Reid 1985).

Ahmad Kamal

One of the first Egyptian archaeologists was Ahmad Kamal, who actually had been one of the 10 students who had entered the School of Ancient Egyptian Language. Kamal worked hard and on Mariette's death, he persuaded the Prime Minister to give him
a position of secretary and translator at the Egyptian museum. He also seemed to have
gotten along well with Mariette’s successor Maspero, because Maspero let Kamal teach
archaeology and hieroglyphics to a group of students from 1882 to 1886. However this
teaching was stopped a few years later when another Frenchman came to power and
decided to change how things were done at the Egyptian museum. Kamal and some of
his ex-classmates made several attempts between the 1870’s and the 1890’s to garner
native Egyptian interest in Egyptology. They wrote books in Arabic to try to get
attention, but the attempts did not seem to make people more interested. “As Kamal
approached retirement, he worried at the lack of trained Egyptians to follow the career he
had so stubbornly pioneered” (Reid 1985:237). (Brewer and Teeter 1999; and Reid
1985).

*Howard Carter and Tutankhamun’s Tomb*

In 1922 the British gave Egypt independence, and things turned around for
Egyptians in Egyptology. It was this same year that Howard Carter would find
Tutankhamun’s tomb. “The interest aroused by Tutankhamun’s tomb guaranteed a
permanent—if rather limited-commitment to Egyptology on the part of the upper-class
Egyptians who now ran the government” (Reid 1985:237). With the discovery of the
tomb came massive amounts of tourists, and the government was unhappy that this find
was totally in foreign hands. The newly formed Egyptian cabinet urged the Director-
general Pierre Lacau to put more regulations on Carter’s team. Carter was obviously
upset by this, closed the tomb in protest and went to the Egyptian court to fix things.
However Lacau sawed off the locks on the gate to the tomb and confiscated the tomb for
the Egyptian government. "Lacau also voiced the government’s hard line on possession of the treasures: contrary to past practice, everything must remain in Egypt" (Reid 1985:238). Due to the fact that "treasures" were no longer able to leave Egypt, financial support of excavations in Egypt declined and eventually were phased out for a whole generation. This lead to more and more Egyptians becoming involved in Egyptology, and it helped form the way Egyptology is today in Egypt (Brewer and Teeter 1999; and Reid 1985).

Zahi Hawass

The current protector of Egyptology and the man leading the way for Egyptian Egyptologists is Zahi Hawass. Zahi Hawass was born in 1947, and is the current Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities of Egypt. His previous positions include being the General Director of the Giza Pyramids, Saqqara, and Bahria Oasis; and also being the Undersecretary of the State for the Giza Monuments. He received both his Masters and Doctorate degrees from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. He has made many discoveries throughout the years; some of the more famous ones include the Valley of the Golden Mummies in Bahariya, and his CT scan of King Tutankhamun. He is very passionate about conservation, protection, education, and the return of artifacts taken illegally from Egypt. His most famous conservation project is the conservation and restoration of the Great Sphinx. He wants to train the next generation to correctly excavate, and to correctly conserve monuments and artifacts.
Recently he has become more famous for requesting the return of artifacts. In July of 2005, Hawass asked for the return of "5 key items of Egypt's cultural heritage" (El-Aref 2005a). These items include the Rosetta Stone in the British Museum, the bust of Nefertiri in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin, the statue of the Great Pyramid architect Hemiunnu in the Roemer-Pelizaeus Museum in Hilesheim, the Dendara Temple Zodiac in the Louvre, and the bust of Kephren pyramid builder Ankhaf in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. From what I can tell none of these items have been returned and none of them plan to be returned in the near future. The Rosetta Stone and the bust of Nefertiri are one of the main attractions at their museums so it is unlikely that the museums would willingly give them up.

Hawass has appeared on numerous television programs including Good Morning America; and The Today Show. He has appeared in programs on The Learning Channel, the Discovery Channel, National Geographic Channel, and the History Channel. He is currently National Geographic's explorer in residence for Egypt. He has earned numerous awards throughout the years, one of his more recent awards is that of being named one of Time Magazine's 100 People Who Shape Our World for 2005. The article calls him the Guardian of Egypt's Antiquities (Peters 2006). Some people have called him great things, and others don't like his policies. In an interview with Hawass in 2005, he is told about certain accusations,

'Hawass is ruling the SCA with an iron fist and censorious tongue', said the British Sunday Times magazine. 'People are cowering round Hawass...No Egyptologist gets in without his permission and few will
chance his anger. No body crosses Hawass and gets away with it’ (El-Aref 2005b).

His response to this and other accusations is that, “What I do I do for Egypt” (El-Aref 2005b). (Bayuk 2006; El-Aref 2005a, 2005b; Peters 2006).

Mummies as medicine

One of the objects most well known from Egypt is that of the mummy. People are very familiar with Egyptian mummies because there is a good chance that they have seen one in a museum. Mummies are one of the more common items taken out of Egypt. There was a time though when mummies didn’t just go to museums for study. “The great interest in mummies and the money expended on their procurement were not directed to the acquisition of specimens for study and display, because by the time of the Renaissance mummy had become a highly prized drug” (Dannenfeldt 1959:12).

The word mummy actually comes from an Arabic word, and this is due to a case of mistaken identity. In the past bituminous materials have been used for their healing powers. During the medieval ages a specific bituminous material grew popular among the Arabs of Persia. Located in Persia was a black-rock asphalt that became known for its healing ability. This was “given the local name of ‘mumya’ (mum=wax), this appellation was to lead eventually to the use of ‘mumia’ for a drug in Latin and to ‘mummy’ for an embalmed Egyptian corpse in English” (Dannenfeldt 1985:163). The asphalt found in Persia however was very rare, and the demand for the item was still high. Soon people began comparing how the materials that were used to embalm the
Egyptian bodies were very similar to the Persia material. This was the beginning of how mummies came to be used as medicine.

In the 1400s a group of people in Cairo had amassed so many bodies that they were brought to the attention of the ruler of Egypt, and put away in prison for taking the bodies from their tombs. According to some Europeans who traveled to Egypt in 1565 to find mummies, the locals “seek these with all energy, for they sell them to the merchants of Cairo by whom they are further sold. Some of the Arabs eat them out of curiosity” (Dannenfeldt 1985:168). Soon though the demand for Egyptian mummies became too much, and not enough real mummies could be found. This would lead to people making their own mummies for trade. A Frenchman, who went to Egypt inquired about the ancient method of burial, and preservation that had been used on the mummies he was about to buy. The merchant, a Jew, informed him that he had acquired and prepared the bodies himself over the past four years. The merchant marveled that “the Christians so dainty-mouthed, could eat the bodies of the dead” (Dannenfeldt 1959:19).

In the 1500s the government again tried to stop the mummy trade, and this time it seems that the local Muslim population obeyed. However foreigners, and foreign merchants still continued the trade. According to the French surgeon Louis de Paradis(as quoted in Dannenfeldt 1985:170-171),

“the people of the country refuse to permit any of the said bodies to be carried away, saying that the Christians are unworthy of eating their dead bodies. For if they are taken out of the country, it is by means of some
Jews, who strip them and pack them with their merchandise, so that their identity may not be known.” [Dannenfeldt 1985:170-171]

It would seem that the rulers of the country did not like the idea of selling the mummies, however for the lower classes it was a way to make extra money so it seems they were more ok with it (Dannenfeldt 1959; and Dannenfeldt 1985).

**Methodology**

First I conducted library research about the history of Egypt, the history of archaeology in Egypt, international laws regarding antiquities, Egyptian laws regarding antiquities, and what objects the Egyptian want back. The second step was to look for articles that are online at the library, like through JSTOR, that pertain to anything relevant to my topic. I looked on the web for any credible sites like Dr. Zahi Hawass’ website that pertain to modern Egyptian views of Pharaonic archaeology. I reviewed any primary sources I could find that relate to the history of Egypt and to opinions towards the Pharaonic past. I conducted a few interviews with Egyptians to see what their opinions are on Pharaonic archaeology. My questions for the interviews are as follows:

- Who do you consider to be your ancestors? Ancient Egyptians of someone else?
- How do you feel when you see Egyptian mummies or other pieces of Egyptian heritage in another country? Does it bother you or does it not bother you?
- Do you feel Egypt should ask for objects of cultural heritage back from countries who took the items legally or just who took the items illegally?
• Do you feel that Zahi Hawass is doing a good job of promoting Egypt to the rest of the world?

• Was it right of Zahi Hawass to ask for the Rosetta Stone back while he was visiting the British Museum for its 250th anniversary celebration?

Results

As I started to do research for this paper I was having a hard time finding any reference to past Egyptians and their views on Pharaonic archaeology or just how they viewed the ancient Egyptians in general. Sometimes a book would mention one Arab, but I really didn’t find many Arabs or Egyptians mentioned until after Napolean invaded Egypt in 1798. Then I found two books which gave me a little insight into why I was having a hard time finding any mention of anyone besides a European exploring Egypt. These two books paint a very different picture then what I had been reading before. These books are Whose Pharaohs by Donald Malcolm Reid, and Egyptology: The Missing Millennium by Okasha El-Daly. In the introduction to his book Reid has two quotes which he uses to summarize the problem with Egyptology:

“France, snatching an obelisk from the ever heightening mud of the Nile, or the savage ignorance of the Turks…earns a right to the thanks of the learned of Europe, to whom belong all the monuments of antiquity, because they alone know how to appreciated them. Antiquity is a garden that
belongs by natural right to those who cultivate and harvest its fruits” (Said by Captain E. de Verninac Saint-Maur in *Voyage de Luxor* in 1835, quoted in Reid 2002:1).

“It is indeed a matter of deep regret that the monuments should be ours and the history should be ours, but that those who write books on the history of ancient Egypt should not be Egyptians....Nevertheless we cannot avoid expressing admiration for Professor Selim Hassan on his archaeological skill and his continuous finds, the last of which was the fourth pyramid” (Said in The Arabic newspaper *Al-Balagh* on February 26, 1932, quoted in Reid 2002:1).

The first quote sums up what I have found to be the feelings of most of the Europeans who came to Egypt from the Renaissance period to around the 1920s.

Another example of how Egyptians were left out of Egyptology is actually in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The façade of the museum honors heroes of Egyptology since the time of Napoleon, however all the Egyptologists are of European descent, none are of Egyptian descent. Another plaque honors classical writers like Herodotus and Eratosthenes and this leaves out any Arab or Muslim writer that wrote about Egypt.
Figure 1. Western founding fathers of Egyptology, plaque on the façade of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Photograph by Donald Reid (Reid 2002:5).

This is a little deceiving though, because when the façade was put up in 1902 a lot of writings in Arabic had not been translated to a language readable by many Europeans, so they had not had a chance to be influenced by Arabic writers yet. Also after the time of Napoleon to the beginning of the 20th century, Egyptians were really not allowed to be in control over anything that dealt with archaeology. So at the time it was put up the façade was true, however it was biased because the Egyptians had not been allowed to really take part in preserving their country’s history. The other blow to Egyptians regarding the façade is that the text was in Latin, which only a very few Egyptians could read. The makers of the façade did include the Islamic date alongside the A.D. date however the date itself was expressed in Latin and in Roman numerals.
Benedict Anderson the author of *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* says this is what the façade tells the Egyptians.

“Egyptology is a European science which has rediscovered the greatness of ancient Egypt, a forerunner of Western civilization. Modern Egyptians are unworthy heirs of ancient ones and incapable of either national greatness or serious Egyptology” (as quoted in Reid 2002:5).

Okasha El-Daly the writer of *Egyptology: The Missing Millennium*, is himself Egyptian, and he had three objectives for writing his book.

“The first was to demonstrate that medieval Arabs were interested in, had knowledge of and attempted to interpret the culture of Ancient Egypt. Secondly, to show the relevance of these materials
to the study of Ancient Egypt by bridging the gap between the works of
the classical writers and those of later Europeans. Thirdly, to encourage
further study of the medieval Arabic material available, some of which
could help archaeologists with descriptions and with the excavation and
interpretation of sites, and perhaps even to reconstruct monuments which
have long since disappeared” (El-Daly 2005:vii).

He collected as many Arabic sources as he could from around the 7th to 16th centuries.
Few of these works have been translated, which is one of the most problematic areas in
regards to the manuscripts. His native tongue is Arabic so it was easier for him to
translate the Medieval Arabic to Modern Arabic; however, it was very hard to translate
them to English. He makes the claim that there were a lot of obstacles that blocked the
development of Egyptians doing Egyptology, and he also claims that Westerners did not
just block the Egyptians from learning Egyptology but also other sciences as well (El-
Daly 2005:4).

*Interview #1*

The first interview I conducted was with an Egyptian couple who happen to be
my neighbors in my hometown of Fridley, Minnesota and they were more than willing to
answer my questions. The husband’s name is Mahdy and the wife’s name is Hala. They
are both from the Cairo area in Egypt, but they immigrated to America at different times.
Hala has been in the United States since 1979, and Mahdy since 1989. They are
Muslims, which most of the population of Egypt is. The first question I asked of them
was “Who do you consider to be your ancestors? The Ancient Egyptians or someone else?” They immediately answered, “the Ancient Egyptians of course.” They do feel that the Ancient Egyptian religion was a pagan religion, but that does not mean they don’t believe the Ancient Egyptians are their ancestors.

The next question was, “How do you feel when you see Egyptian mummies or other pieces of Egyptian heritage in another country? Does it bother you or does it not bother you?” They said they really didn’t care if other countries had objects from Egypt or not, because it is just a piece of history. However they did say that if the objects were not properly labeled or not properly taken care of, then that is a reason to have them returned to Egypt. They don’t believe that Egypt should just ask for everything back, because they want the objects to be seen by people, not just sitting in a warehouse somewhere, where no one can appreciate it or learn from it. My basis for this question is that in the United States the Native Americans do not want any of their dead on display, and there is a law that protects Native American skeletons called the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

We also discussed how the Muslims treated the cultural objects of Egypt after they had invaded Egypt. Mahdy believes that possibly some of the initial reaction of the Muslim invaders to the history of Egypt dealt with the Muslim religion. In the Muslim religion there is no representation of their god Allah, no paintings or statues are allowed of their god. There were lots of representations of the Ancient Egyptian gods, and he believes that some statues and other depictions might have been destroyed or taken down because of the Muslim belief that there should be no representation of a god. We also discussed a little bit about how they felt about so many objects being taken out of Egypt
by foreigners. They said that when the French invaded Egypt in 1798, the Egyptians felt a distance to the ancient Egyptians, and really didn’t care for their cultural heritage very well, or even have the money to really preserve or take care of it really well. They really didn’t mind that the French and English had taken so many objects, because the objects had a better chance of being taken care of properly in other countries then in Egypt at that time.

My next question was “Do you feel that Egypt should ask for objects of cultural heritage back from countries who took the objects legally? Or should they just ask for objects back that were taken illegally?” They believe that if they were taken legally that is fine, as long as the objects are being taken care of. However if they were taken illegally, then they should ask for the objects back. This lead to a small discussion about laws and about the French and British occupations of Egypt. They believe that what the French and British took was technically legal since there were no laws governing antiquities at that time.

My last 2 questions dealt with Zahi Hawass the head of the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Egypt. My first question about Zahi Hawass was, “Do you feel he is doing a good job of promoting Egypt to the rest of the world?” The reason for this question stems from me asking other people I know about their view of Zahi Hawass, and I was just curious about an Egyptian view of Zahi Hawass. They did think he was doing a good job though, and they did talk about how they have seen him on multiple TV shows, and shows on the Discovery Channel and the History Channel.

The last question I asked was, “Was it right of Zahi Hawass to ask for the Rosetta Stone back while he was visiting the British Museum?” Zahi Hawass spoke at the 250th
anniversary of the British Museum, and during his speech commemorating the event and events happening in Egypt he asked for the Rosetta Stone back. Well the British were not that impressed, and after the event Hawass talked to reporters about how upset he was after he had asked for the Rosetta Stone back (El-Aref 2005a). I just wanted to know whether they thought it was the right time for him to ask or if he should have asked at all. Both agreed it was the wrong time for him to ask for it back, especially since he was an invited guest to the event. However they did differ on whether or not the Rosetta Stone should be asked to be returned at all. The husband, Mahdy, thought that the Rosetta Stone should be asked to be returned, because of its great importance to deciphering hieroglyphics. The wife, Hala, disagreed and thought it was fine where it was, because the British Museum does a fine job of taking care of it.

Interview #2

The second interview I conducted was with a student from Saudi Arabia, who has family in Egypt. His name is Fawaz Alotwi, and he is in the United States to go to school for his whole degree not just a single year. He is a Muslim. I changed all of my questions to be what he thinks the Egyptians believe, because he is technically not Egyptian. His answer to my first question about who do you think the Egyptians consider to be their ancestors kind of confused me to begin with. He went into a story that is from the Koran, and the Bible. He told me that Noah’s son Ham had a son named Egypt. Egypt’s four sons took separate spots around the Nile. I then asked him directly do the modern Egyptians consider the ancient Egyptians to be their ancestors, and he said yes. He does look at it in a different way then I was expecting because he relates the Koran
and the ancient Egyptians to the Koran, rather than considering the ancient Egyptians pagans.

His answer to the question of how do Egyptians feel about Egyptian mummies or other pieces of cultural heritage in other countries, was very similar to the answer given in my first interview. He says that the Egyptians don’t care if the mummies are put on display in other countries. He says they are very proud of their heritage.

His answer to the third question about asking for objects back was very passionate. He believes that everything was taken illegally if the people of Egypt did not know it was taken, which basically means almost everything that was taken out of the country. He believes the British and French stole the items they took, they knew it was wrong but they did it anyways. He said that it is ethically and morally wrong what the foreigners did, however the spread of knowledge is awkward but it is needed, but that does not justify the theft. He believes that everything should be asked back if it was taken illegally.

He is very opinionated when it comes to Zahi Hawass. Fawaz thinks that Hawass is doing a good job so far promoting Egypt to the rest of the world. However Fawaz does not like him, and believes there are better people for the job. Fawaz thinks that Hawass just wants the spotlight.

In response to question #5 Fawaz believes that Hawass does have the right to ask for the Rosetta Stone back regardless of where he is. Personally though, Fawaz does not believe that the Rosetta Stone will ever return to Egypt. Hawass just wanted to make a point because if he had done it in Egypt it would not have been as effective.
Interview #3

My third interview was with Mohamed Hammad, a chef who works for Chartwells on the campus of University Wisconsin-La Crosse. Everyone calls him Moe for short. He is originally from Cairo, and he came to the United States around 1982. One of the first things he told me was that when he goes back to Cairo he feels different because the place has changed so much since he left.

When asked Question #1 about who he considers to be his ancestors, his first response was the ancient Egyptians. He also pointed out that he is Egyptian, and not an Arab, which is a common misconception he says.

His response to the second question was again similar to the other interviews I had given. He is very proud to see Egyptian artifacts in other countries, he is very proud of Egypt’s history. He wants people to realize how technologically advanced the ancient Egyptians were when they built the Great Pyramids, because no one to this day has figured out exactly how the Egyptians did it that precisely. The only thing he said that did bother him was if the objects were sold to make money, he thinks they should be used for educational purposes only.

His responses to Question #3 were similar to his responses to Question #2. He thinks that Egypt should ask for items back if they were taken illegally, and any mummy that is not used for teaching should be sent back as well. He wants people to not make money on Egypt’s cultural heritage, and he wants the items to be on display though and not in someone’s house for personal use. He thinks that Egypt’s cultural heritage should be owned by Egypt but on loan to other museums so that people across the world can experience it. He really liked how the King Tut exhibit traveled to several different
cities. He thinks there should be a similar type exhibit that travels from university to university as a teaching tool. As a side comment he mentioned that if the Great Pyramids were in any other country they would be enclosed within glass. He says that Egyptians do not take very good care of the Great Pyramids, and they should be better taken care of.

When I mentioned the name Zahi Hawass to him it took him a while to know who I was talking about. Once he remembered he had quite a bit to say about him. When asked if Zahi Hawass is doing a good job of promoting Egypt to the rest of the world, Moe’s comment was that he doesn’t know if Hawass is honest enough.

Regarding Question #5, Moe believes that Hawass asked for the Rosetta Stone back to show the rest of the world just how strong Egypt is. Moe believes that Hawass had the right to ask for the Rosetta Stone back, but it wasn’t right of him to embarrass the British Museum. Moe believes though that it was just a publicity stunt, and he believes that Hawass has guts for asking for it back in those circumstances.

**Conclusions**

From what I have discovered it seems that there is a discrepancy between what western scientists have believed in the past about Egyptians, and what the Egyptians actually believe. When I gave my first interview to Mahdy and Hala, I was not expecting the answers that I got. I had created the questions before I had found the books by El-Daly and Reid, so that is why I was not really expecting the answers they gave me. Most of the books that I did look at were older books, so they still had the imperialist view that was very common when the French and British occupied Egypt. I think that the
Egyptians view of Pharaonic archaeology has always been of high interest, until they were prevented from doing archaeology in the middle of the 19th century. Once they got their freedom they really started examining what implications Egyptology had for them.

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