

The Evolution of Museology in Egypt:
An International Comparative Study of Ancient
Egyptian Exhibitions

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes that Egyptian museology and archaeology have been primarily shaped and influenced by foreigners. Because foreigners have dominated the presentation of ancient Egyptian history through archaeology and museum displays, Egyptian cultural heritage has been one that is presented from different viewpoints other than those of the Egyptians themselves. In the past few decades many native Egyptians have become involved in the fields of archaeology and museology. Changes are taking place in the way ancient Egyptian antiquities are being displayed and managed within all museums in Egypt. This project aims to illustrate the development of museum display of ancient Egyptian archaeological antiquities from the earliest development of the Egyptian Museum which was originally built and controlled by foreigners, to other newer museums which have been more influenced by Egyptian professionals, such as the Alexandria National Museum and the Nubian Museum in Aswan. As a corollary, a comparative analysis of the British Museum's ancient Egyptian collection will be used as a comparative means of identifying any differing methods of display in foreign museums. The presentation of these observations will illustrate just how rapidly the science of museum studies is developing in the field of Egyptology.

INTRODUCTION

From the birth of ancient Egyptian society, which according to Egyptologists occurred around 3100 B.C. to the demise of the civilization in 30 C.E., Egypt has been a land of diversity. Its history is characterized by an influx of new peoples throughout its history. During the Second Intermediate Period an Asiatic people called the Hyksos invaded, but were eventually driven out. Again in the 22nd dynasty (c. 1075-715 B.C.) Libyans from the west invaded but were later driven out by the Nubians in the 25th dynasty. In the 27th Dynasty (c. 525 B.C.) the Persians invaded Egypt. They were soon driven out by the young Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.

The Greeks like the other foreigners before them, brought cultural influence into the Egyptian society and caused a change in the ideologies of the past. The Greeks while bringing their own culture with them, also adopted many aspects of ancient Egyptian society. After the death of Alexander in 323 B.C., his successor in Egypt, Ptolemy I, continued the construction of the city of Alexandria as Alexander had dreamed it. As a new innovative part of the city, Ptolemy began construction on a temple dedicated to the *muses*. In ancient Greek mythology the *muses* were nine goddesses who embody the arts and inspire the creation process through remembered and improvised song and stage, musical performance, and dance. The original 3 muses include: *Aoide* (muse of song or voice), *Melete* (muse of practice or occasion), and *Mneme* (muse of memory). Ptolemy I called this temple the *mousaion*, and established the first true museum, where knowledge and artifacts from around the known world could be gathered and shared (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muse>).

The *mousaion* was added onto by his successor Ptolemy II Soter, he turned the building into a repository for knowledge, a library that contained hundreds of thousands of papyrus scrolls and other documents from the ancient world. Although it is not known how the original library was destroyed, it is known that the museum of Alexandria was a center for learning and a place to display material cultural goods, a museum, for over six hundred years.

From the creation of the first museum at Alexandria, ancient Egypt's archaeological history has been dominated by foreign influence and has been presented and displayed in museums built by

foreigners. The presentation of ancient Egypt's past has been organized by foreigners from the time of the Ptolemies to the end of the British Mandate in 1952.

AREA OF RESEARCH

Among anthropologists, folklorists, and historians, there has recently been a spate of writing about the politics of heritage. Much of this work suggests that the appropriation of the past by actors in the present is subject to a variety of dynamics. These range from the problems associated with ethnicity and social identity, nostalgia, and the search for "museumized" authenticity, to the tension between the interests states have in fixing local identities and the pressures localities exert in seeking to transform such identities (Karp et al.1992:37).

The problem in modern day Egyptian museology and archaeology is that its national identity has been primarily shaped from a western perspective, its ancient history is organized in museums built by westerners in western style architecture, the perfect example being the "Egyptian Museum" (Reid 2000). Furthermore the development of Indigenous Egyptology has been slowed due to Islamic identity crowding out feelings of kinship or curiosity about ancient Egyptians (Reid 1985). In recent decades Egyptian national identity is becoming increasingly accepting and fascinated with the ancient pharaonic past, as more and more indigenous Egyptian archaeologists, museum directors, antiquities councils, etc.; have taken control of their cultural heritage. Changes are taking place in the display and exhibition of antiquities within Egypt. Many of these changes can be noticed by comparing the original Egyptian Museum in Cairo, which was built by the French; to other newer museums within Egypt which have been more influenced by native Egyptians.

I suggest that the display of ancient Egyptian antiquities is different all over the world depending on the displaying cultures viewpoint and possible financial gain from the display of ancient Egyptian history. There are many issues involved with the display of ancient Egyptian antiquities within museums around the world, including; exhibition layout, labeling of artifacts, traveling loan exhibits, repatriation, the black market...etc.

The main question I have is, how and why are ancient Egyptian antiquities displayed differently within Egypt and comparatively at other museums around the world? The following section illustrates the methods of analysis I will incorporate in answering this question.

In order to do an analysis of the museums that I have visited it will be important to give a brief history of museums and the development of museum studies. Secondly, I will give brief descriptions of the history of both the National Museum of Alexandria and the Nubian Museum in Aswan, as well as a brief history of the British Museum. Next I will also give a brief history of early exploration within Egypt and the people that were important in the development of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. After giving descriptions of the museums I will present photographs from the Nubian Museum and the National Museum in Alexandria and give descriptions as to the different ways archaeological artifacts are labeled and presented in each museum. I will use personal observations that I documented in a travel journal while in the Egyptian Museum as a means to compare the exhibition to the other exhibitions in the three previously stated museums.

RESEARCH METHODS

In doing analysis of the museums and the way temples and tombs are labeled within Egypt, the AAM (American Association of Museums) museum accreditation checklist that is a part of their MAP (Museum Assessment Program) guidelines will be utilized to document differences and or similarities. Secondly I will use the ICOM (International Council of Museums), mission statement and code of ethics, specifically focusing on the guidelines established on museum facilities layout, conservation, and exhibition management. Internet sources will also be consulted in support of my overall analysis. I will also use my own observations of other museums and sites I have visited in the U.S., Egypt, and Great Britain as a means of comparison.

Finally I'd like to document how the Egyptian Museum is changing, as well as other sites within Egypt and gain insight into the construction of the new Grand Egyptian Museum on the Giza Plateau. Furthermore elaborating on the comparisons in Egyptian museums that harbor and display ancient Egyptian antiquities, I would like to compare those to several examples of museums in the U.S. that display ancient Egyptian antiquities. I have been to both the Milwaukee public museum and the Field Museum in Chicago and have studied their ancient Egyptian exhibits. Both museums had exhibitions that were on loan; these exhibits were very sophisticated and masterfully arranged. The exhibition at the

Milwaukee Public Museum was called “The Quest for Immortality” and the Field Museum housed the “King Tut” exhibit.

I have also visited the British Museum and have observed their Egyptian collection and documented photographically and by personal observation, the differences and similarities that I have noticed in displaying ancient Egyptian artifacts while in Egypt. It would be useful to compare all ancient Egyptian exhibitions and see how each society interprets or displays ancient Egyptian antiquities.

— Thomas Crow argues, “the experience of visiting an exhibition and judging it’s materials is often intensely personal...hence the individual experience of viewing a museum exhibition is also organized by memberships in (that is, identification with) communities”. (Karp, Kreamer, Lavine 1992)

History of Museums and the Development of Museology

The problem with establishing the true beginnings of museums is in the definition of a museum. The most widely accepted definition of a museum comes from ICOM (International Council Of Museums), who defines a museum as “ a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of it’s development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment”.

Most accounts of museum history begin with either the etymological origins of “museum” in the ancient Greek word for cult sites devoted to the muses or the legendary Museum of Alexandria’s founding c.280 BCE. However, the association of “museum” with the systematic collection and study of evidence began some-where in between, probably with Aristotle’s travels to the island of Lesbos in the mid 340s B.C. It was there that Aristotle, in the company of his student Theophrastus, began collecting, studying, and classifying botanical specimens; and in so doing formulated an empirical methodology, requiring social and physical structures to bring into contiguity learned inquiry and the evidence necessary to pursue it. Aristotle’s methodology found expression in the formation of his Lyceum, a community of scholars and students organized to systematically study biology and history, among other

subjects. The Lyceum contained a *mouseion*, and it is probably during this period that the term came to be associated with scholarly investigations.

Ptolemy I Soter in 331 BCE, began construction of the Mouseion of Alexandria. In building Alexandria Ptolemy was legitimizing his claim to Alexander's throne in Egypt, and in building the mouseion he was emanating Alexander's teacher, Aristotle. The Mouseion of Alexandria is one of the most renowned institutions of classical antiquity and the one whose accomplishments resonated most strongly with scholars of subsequent eras. It is unknown what led to the destruction of the structure and when it happened, but the Mouseion of Alexandria could be argued to be the first true "museum".

Museum like practice continued to evolve with the expansion of the Roman Empire. With the advent of Roman expansionism between 211 and the early 60's B.C., and the arrival of looted statuary and paintings from conquered lands coinciding with the inauguration of a massive building program, Greek statuary was used to ornament the exterior of new buildings and monuments throughout ancient Rome. In the words of Jerome Pollitt (1978:157): "Rome became a museum of Greek art." But again, the definition of "museum" can change from person to person and overtime, so it's a matter of personal opinion, based on one's own belief of what a museum should be.

The retrieval of classical learning that shaped so much of Renaissance culture rekindled interests in Aristotle's writings and methods. During the Renaissance, a new passion for collecting developed among a learned elite, and this extended the sites of collection away from royal treasuries or religious collections, and saw the formation of dedicated spaces for collection and display (Macdonald, 2006: 83). A variety of words was employed to characterize these collections, their settings, the encyclopedic ambitions of their creators, and the kinds of objects collected: pandechion, studiolo, gabinetto, or Wunderkammer, galleria, Kunstkammer, or Kunstschränk. However "musaeum" soon became the most widely accepted and broadly applied term for characterizing the physical manifestations of this activity, whether spaces filled with objects or books filled with descriptions.

Whereas statuary and painting were displayed in outdoor or readily accessible settings during the Roman and Byzantine eras, during the Renaissance the presentation of such works moved indoors or to less approachable locations. However by the end of the 16th century, these collections were beginning to be opened to the public, and monarchs began amassing their own collections to display in political meetings with outside dignitaries.

During the seventeenth century the systematic observation and comparison of objects became a key feature of natural science; and the museum maintained and even strengthened their role as principal means of bringing together and organizing objects in order to attempt to map the world's patterns (Macdonald, 2006: 84). Arguably the first true museum according to the modern definition was established after 1675. Elias Ashmole had received a collection from his friend, Tradescant. Ashmole expressed interest in donating his collection, including the Tradescant holdings, to his Alma Mater, Oxford University. In 1677, the university proposed erecting a building with a "laboratory" to house it; the cornerstone was laid in 1679, and it opened in 1683 (Josten 1966:218). Ashmole's 1682 memorandum of gift and his 1686 set of "Statutes, Orders and Rules" specify the museum's governance, operations, and income sources. Though owned by Oxford University and supervised by a university board of visitors, the Ashmolean was intended to be fully accessible to the public from the outset and its operating funds, including two-thirds salary for a keeper (who taught at Oxford for his remaining income) and pay for two half-time assistants, were to be drawn entirely from admission fees. The Ashmolean museum became the landmark example of a well organized and managed museum sponsored by a highly accredited university and was funded by admissions from the public.

During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, collections allowed nation-states to show their possession and mastery of the world- something that colonial powers were especially well able to demonstrate through the accumulation of material culture from the countries they colonized (Macdonald 2006: 85).

The first example of a nationally controlled museum is the establishment of the British Museum in London in 1753. The collection was donated by Sir Hans Sloane, upon his death in 1753, what was unique about his donation is that he willed it to the King. Sloane took careful precautions in his will, appointing a board of trustees to oversee the process. Sloane's first choice as benefactor of his collection was the nation of England. By act of parliament, the British Museum was established in 1753 to function as a public repository of objects and texts that would be maintained in perpetuity by the English government and overseen by a government appointed board of trustees (Miller 1974:28-63)

The discourse surrounding the founding and maintenance of both the Ashmolean and the British Museum reflects subtle but important changes in the institutionalization of collecting and display. While

the “museum” remained closely associated with scholarship, access to the learning it offered was slowly being widened.

The development of museums in the U.S. developed on a different course than those founded on national interests in Europe. Over the course of the nineteenth century there were experiments with museum-like proprietary enterprises designed to entertain and amuse, including “dime museums” and P.T. Barnum’s American Museum (Dennett 1997). Collections were rarely of interest to federal, state, or municipal officials. An exception which proves the rule on the federal level is the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. The United States of America only inadvertently accepted collecting and display as a federal responsibility in the course of implementing the 1835 bequest of French-born Englishman and scientist, James Smithson “to found in Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an Establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge” (Oehser 1983:15).

Aside from isolated instances like the Smithsonian, however, the creation and governance of museums in America were led by private citizens pursuing commonly shared goals in concert. Sometimes museums received state, or more often, municipal assistance in the form of land grants or annual funding. But such assistance rarely amounted to more than a fraction of the institutions’ needs, and it was seldom available for acquiring objects. Accordingly, the vast majority of American museums are privately governed and funded.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, museums became the province of professional associations replete with the organizational accoutrements of journals, annual conferences, and accreditation criteria, the “public museum” acquired a kind of Platonic image- an idealized standard against which individual institutions would be measured. This has led to in depth studies of the ever shifting dynamics involved in the administration and management of museums and their environs, and the creation of the discipline of Museology (Abt 2006:115-132). In the following section I would like to outline some present day concerns among scholars that pursue studies in Museology, specifically focusing on issues that apply to the display of exhibits and the way people perceive and identify with them. I will apply these issues to the display of ancient Egyptian antiquities in the different museums I have visited.

Issues Affecting the Museums of Today

Diversity is one of the great strengths of the museum world. It is for museums, as in evolution generally, a survival mechanism, and to try to fit all museums into one mold is counter-productive (Macdonald 1992:159). My goal in analyzing the display of ancient Egyptian artifacts being displayed in different museums is not to fit them into one mold, but to compare and contrast the way they are being presented. Every museum has its own mission statement and governing guidelines that have been established by the trustees, therefore there is diversity in the way each museum is laid out.

I contend that the way ancient Egyptian antiquities are being displayed varies not solely on the differing governing policies of each museum, but on much more complex relationships with historical methods of obtaining the ancient Egyptian antiquities, old colonial disputes; and with the different way these antiquities are perceived by different cultures, social groups within Egypt, and the emergence within Egypt of a better awareness and responsibility toward their national heritage. The following section outlines issues I find to be relevant to the evolution of ancient Egyptian exhibitions. Since I am not a professional museologist, I will present some issues that professionals have found with museums and try to use them in my overall analysis of the exhibitions.

There is a myriad of recent debates about issues affecting museums today, I focus on the issues concerning exhibitions and the way they are perceived. While original artifacts are inherently objective arbiters of our understanding of the past, how we understand them is inescapably subjective (Macdonald 1992:160). Another way in which museums differ is in what they do with their information or, to resort to current jargon, how they package information. This is my prime focus in assessing the way ancient Egyptian antiquities are being displayed in different museums.

Museums are public spaces in which definitions of cultures and their values may be actively contested and debated. Museums materialize values and throw the processes of meaning-making into sharp relief, and it is for this reason that they are of such interest to cultural theoreticians and museum studies researchers alike (Mason 2006:18). One of the goals of critical and comparative museology is to “liberate” culture- its collection, interpretation, representation and preservation from the management regimes of Eurocentric museology. The liberation of culture is not only about restoring people’s rights to and control over the management of their cultural heritage; it is also about liberating our thinking so that we can recognize museological behavior in other forms (Kreps 2003b). The liberation of culture

allows for the emergence of a new museological discourse that includes multiple voices, representing a broad range of perspectives and bodies of knowledge that have been historically overlooked (Kreps 2006:459).

The notion that the museum is a uniquely modern, Western cultural invention has become deeply rooted in Western museology to the point of neglecting other cultures' models of museums and curatorial practices. The widespread assumption that non-Western peoples are not concerned with the care and long-term preservation of their cultural materials has long been used to justify its collection and retention in Western museums. This assumption has created some tensions and issues with countries that house ancient Egyptian antiquities and with Egypt's quest to have ancient masterpieces of their cultural heritage returned to the country or to be loaned to the country. I will return to the issue of repatriation later in the paper.

Each society can have its own curatorial traditions or patterned ways of seeing, valuing, assigning meaning to and treating objects, which, like all other aspects of culture, change over time. Curation is no longer just about taking care of objects. It is also about cultivating harmonious relationships directed toward redressing historical wrongs, and showing respect for diverse world-views and belief systems as they pertain to people's perceptions of and relations to, objects (Kreps 2006:469). I propose that one of the most important aspects of a museum is how the artifacts are labeled, presented, conserved, and exhibited. The labeling of artifacts within museums provides the museum visitor with an opportunity to learn about the historical significance of the object and where it came from. There are various different types of people that go to museums and not everyone experiences a museum the same way. The way exhibits are labeled is important because it helps draw the museum visitor in, so that they can read about the artifact, and then based on their own personal opinion, education level, nationality, heritage, social standing or knowledge of the object; form their own interpretation of the object being displayed. Without labels on exhibits, the objects within the museum would be simply visual entertainment, unless the museum visitor had previous knowledge of what was being displayed.

Whereas the study of history is dominated by written materials, that is, by textuality, museums are shaped by a fundamentally different presentational mode. Daniel J. Sherman(1995) has shown that the "founding fiction" of the institution of museums is based on an "archaeological epistemology." An extant artifact is both an original and a fragment, and the combination of fragments in an exhibition or a

room in a museum is based on the premise that these fragments or remnants do not stand only for themselves, but are historically significant in the sense that they can create a coherent representational universe. The museum requires the artifacts it displays at once to be original and collectively to explain the meaning of a larger history. In traditional exhibitions, it's the texts that then create connections between the rudimentary objects. They create contexts, allowing something to appear as a whole even if only fragmented objects from the past are known (Beir-de Haan 2006:191-192). The labeling or lack thereof of exhibitions is surrounded by many issues, such as how should they be labeled when the target audience is so diverse and how do people within the community being represented in the museum view their heritage?

Viewers are not likely to be passive and empty receivers of the cultural information contained in exhibitions and museums. Rather, as in all societies, they come with complex ideas of what is likely to be seen, and share this knowledge in highly interactive ways among themselves and with those few "experts" who are cast in the role of explainers (Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1992:50). Currently, museum professionals, drawing on their collections, initiate conversations with audiences and activate the communicative circle. Exhibition makers structure their turns in the conversation with a syntax of objects. Audiences "hear" the messages exhibitions convey, but what audiences say during their own turns can today only be assumed. Talking only to and among themselves, audiences find that their turns in the museum's communicative circle rarely if ever come up. Exhibitions messages are as much constructed by audiences' interpretations as by curators' and designers' intentions (Perin, 1992: 183). Exhibitions can present the internal and differential experiences of various groups, and may even trace how heritage interacts with external history. Museums alone cannot create a sense of cultural identity. The media and entertainment industry have much more impact here (Lavine 1992:155-162). I believe this is the case and that Dr. Zahi Hawass of the Supreme Council of Antiquities has utilized the media for a productive and necessary campaign of creating awareness of the great archaeology and history present within Egypt. Dr. Hawass has also been behind the fund raising campaign Egypt has pursued in recent years with loaning traveling exhibits from various museums within Egypt. It is after viewing one of these traveling exhibits, "The Quest for Immortality", that I thought it would be interesting to compare other ancient Egyptian collections to the amazing presentation of the Quest for Immortality exhibit presented at the Milwaukee Public Museum in 2005. Furthermore, when I visited the Field Museum in Chicago during the summer of 2006, I studied their permanent ancient Egyptian collection. I also went to see the King Tut exhibition. I noticed that the traveling exhibition was masterfully presented with an

audio tour, high tech video projection, exquisite labeling etc. Noticing the differences in the permanent exhibition and the traveling loan exhibits, I began to wonder if ancient Egyptian exhibits were this different within Egypt itself. That has led me to pursue this project.

ICOM (International Council of Museums)

International Council of Museums (ICOM) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that is dedicated to the improvement and advancement of the world's museums and the museum profession as well as the preservation of cultural heritage. ICOM has over 17,000 members in 140 countries working through national and international committees and affiliated and regional organizations and embraces museums of every size and discipline in every corner of the world. ICOM has 111 National Committees which are the fundamental units of ICOM and the principal instruments for administration of membership and communication between ICOM and its members. In the U.S., the National Committee is housed with the American Association of Museums (AAM) forming AAM/ICOM. Thirty specialized International Committees represent different museums types and specific disciplines. ICOM members join one International Committee as a voting member and may belong as a non-voting member to as many committees as they choose. Through these committees, ICOM achieves its major objectives including exchange of information at international levels, development of professional standards, adoption of rules and recommendations, and realization of joint projects. The Paris-based Secretariat coordinates the activities of both National and International Committees and helps carry out ICOM's programs. It also houses the UNESCO-ICOM Information Centre; a collection is available for consultation by all ICOM members that serves as an important source of information related to ICOM's activities as well as the cultural heritage activities of UNESCO. Other Secretariat activities include capacity building, community involvement, cultural tourism, combating illicit traffic in cultural property, working with intangible heritage, and risk management (<http://icom/museum/>).

As a basis for analysis for this project I am first using portions of the ICOM/AAM's Museum Assessment Program (MAP). It provided me with a myriad of criteria by which a museologist would evaluate a museum and its exhibits. The following is a list of the criteria from the assessment critical issues checklist that I find to be most pertinent to my analysis of ancient Egyptian exhibitions and the museums housing them.

1. Are the museums collections and collecting tied to the needs of its audiences?
2. Public Programs: Do the museums's programs make effective and appropriate use of its collections?
3. Do the museum's exhibits make effective and appropriate use of its collections?
4. Is the museum exercising responsible stewardship of the collections?
5. Is the museum making effective use of its resources to provide appropriate care for its collections?
6. Is there an effective process guiding the content of the collections?
7. Is the museum functioning legally and ethically in the way it obtains its collections?
8. Is the museum in good financial health?
9. Is the museum providing appropriate support for the collections use, care, and development?
10. Do the museum's facilities provide appropriate conditions for collections storage and use?
11. Does the museum provide a secure environment for the collections?
12. Does the museum have conservation issues for which it should seek assistance?

Secondly I am consulting ICOM's Code of Ethics For Museums, specifically focusing on the section concerning Exhibitions. The ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums has been prepared by the International Council of Museums. It is the statement of ethics for museums referred to in the ICOM Statutes. The Code reflects principles generally accepted by the international museum community. The ICOM Code represents a minimum standard for museums. It is presented as a series of principles supported by guidelines for desirable professional practice. In some countries, certain minimum standards are defined by law or government regulation. In others, guidance on and assessment of

minimum professional standards may be available in the form of ‘Accreditation’, ‘Registration’, or similar evaluative schemes. The ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums provides a means of professional self-regulation in a key area of public provision where legislation at a national level is variable and far from consistent. It sets minimum standards of conduct and performance to which museum professional staff throughout the world may reasonably aspire as well as providing a statement of reasonable public expectation from the museum profession.

ICOM code of ethics for museums

1. Museums preserve, interpret and promote the natural and cultural inheritance of humanity.
2. Museums that maintain collections hold them in trust for the benefit of society and its development
3. Museums hold primary evidence for establishing and furthering knowledge.
4. Museums provide opportunities for the appreciation, understanding and management of the natural and cultural heritage.
5. Museums hold resources that provide opportunities for other public services and benefits.
6. Museums work in close collaboration with the communities from which their collections originate as well as those they serve.
7. Museums operate in a legal manner.
8. Museums operate in a professional manner.

In doing my analysis I will be focusing on number four in the Code of Ethics, as it concerns display and exhibition. Ethics code 4.2 “Interpretation of Exhibitions” states: Museums should ensure that the information they present in displays and exhibitions is well-founded, accurate and gives appropriate consideration to represented groups or beliefs. Section 4.5 of the Code concerns, Display of Unprovenanced Material, it states: Museums should avoid displaying or otherwise using material of

questionable origin or lacking provenance. They should be aware that such displays or usage can be seen to condone and contribute to the illicit trade in cultural property.

I also find section six of the code to be applicable to the development of museology within Egypt, because recently native Egyptian archaeological and museological professionals are finally beginning to establish their own control of their cultural heritage. Section six states in principle: Museum collections reflect cultural and natural heritage of the communities from which they have been derived. As such, they have a character beyond that of ordinary property, which may include strong affinities with national, regional, local, ethnic, religious or political identity. It is important therefore that museum policy is responsive to this situation. Section 6.1 states: Museums should promote the sharing of knowledge, documentation and collections with museums and cultural organizations in the countries and communities of origin. The possibility of developing partnerships with museums in countries or areas that have lost a significant part of their heritage should be explored. I will return to the issue of repatriation later in the paper.

In the following section I will begin my analysis of the different museums I have visited by giving a background history for each museum, then give a description of the layout of each museum, state my own personal

assessment and opinions of each museum, and finally utilizing the ICOM/AAM criteria for museum assessment and ethics, I will make an overall assessment on how ancient Egyptian exhibitions differ comparatively.



The Nubian Museum

Taking its name from the ancient Egyptian *nbu*, meaning gold, in reference to the area's famous gold mines, Nubia was historically Egypt's gateway to the rest of Africa. From the time of the Old Kingdom, circa 2500 B.C.E, Nubia went through alternating periods of independence and domination by Egypt, and by the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty it was enjoying long periods of stable self-rule and prosperity.

Today, there is no political entity called Nubia. Its lands lie partly in Egypt and partly in Sudan, and most of the northern region was submerged in 1971 when the Aswan High Dam was opened and a section of the Nile Valley flooded to form Lake Nasser. In anticipation of this project, 40,000 Nubians were resettled, and an International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia was formed. Launched by UNSECO in 1960, the campaign conducted forty archaeological missions and rescued twenty-two monuments. To exhibit the finds from the excavations, UNSECO decided, along with the Egyptian government, to establish the Nubian Museum at Aswan (Aga Khan Development Network, http://www.akdn.org/agency/akaa/eightcycle/page_05txt.htm).



The Nubian Museum is located in Aswan, in Upper Egypt. The museum sits in the midst of major pharaonic sites, the granite quarries and the unfinished obelisk, as well as Elephantine Island. The building

has three floors for displaying and housing, in addition to a library and information center. The largest part of the museum is occupied by the monumental pieces, reflecting phases of the development of the Nubian culture and civilization (<http://touregypt.net/nubianmuseum.htm>). The museum was designed by late Egyptian architect Mahmoud al-Hakim, and Mexican architect Pedro Vasquez Ramirez designed the interior display. The building was inaugurated on 23 November 1997 by President and Mrs. Mubarak, with two hundred dignitaries from all over the world. The museum opened to the public in December 1997.

As previously stated, the collections of the Nubian Museum are composed of artifacts found on sites now submerged, during the UNESCO salvage campaign. They are also composed of collections from a variety of museums in Egypt, collected in Nubia during the first half of the twentieth century. (<http://www.numibia.net/nubia/collections.asp>). The Nubian Museum is part of a wider policy of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (formerly the Egyptian Antiquities Organization) to showcase Egypt's many civilizations over the centuries. The museum contains not only 3,000 objects found in the UNESCO expeditions, representing the history of the area from the prehistoric, Pharaonic, Roman, Coptic and Islamic ages, but also a diorama of the daily life of the Nubian people, who sacrificed their homes for the continued progress of the Egyptian nation. In April 2000 the museum was approved by UNESCO as a centre for museology and the preservation and conservation of archaeological remains for Africa and the Middle East. It hosted four workshops in the year 2000, including one for ICOM's Programme for the Development of Museums in the Arab States, attended by fifteen countries (Alamuddin, Hana, 2001, Technical Review of Nubian Museum, http://archnet.org/library/files/one-file.tcl?file_id=466)

Layout of Museum Exhibitions

Through the main entrance the visitor enters into the ground floor where there is a gift shop, and a theatre. To the right of the entrance is a temporary exhibition hall, which while I visited the museum, contained various mummies of individuals from the pharaonic period as well as statues of local dignitaries of the pharaoh. There were also sacrificial animal mummies. After the section of the hall that contained the mummies and statues, the visitor is led to a winding hall way with walls that display the history of archaeological excavations in the region of Aswan and throughout Nubia. The exhibition consists of old excavation pictures and descriptions labeled below each picture. That exhibition leads the visitor back to the main hall and to the steps leading down into the basement floor where the main exhibition lies. The focal point of the basement level exhibition is an 8 meter high Nubian sandstone statue of Ramses II, brought from storage after 27 years. The main exhibition is laid out in chronological order displaying the history of Nubia from the Prehistoric Period all the way to the Islamic and Coptic Era. The visitor is directed in a general clockwise orientation along the chronological path, viewing artifacts in the exhibition associated with different time periods, eventually ending up and the foot of the steps in front of the giant statue of Ramses II. The top floor of the museum consists of a cafeteria, library, administrative offices, and a meeting room



Figure 3. Colossal Statue of Ramses II at the Nubian Musuem, example of poor lighting.

Museological Assessment of The Ancient Egyptian Collection at the Nubian Museum in Aswan, Egypt: Personal Observations Assisted by ICOM (International Council of Museums) Guidelines.

1. Are the museums collections and collecting tied to the needs of its audiences?

The artifacts exhibited in the museum give an excellent overview of the history of ancient Egyptian influence in ancient Nubia. The museum also illustrates the influence of both Coptic Christianity and Islam, the two main religions in the region of Aswan.

2. Public Programs: Do the museum's programs make effective and appropriate use of its collections?

The Museum is an UNSECO approved center for museology and the preservation and conservation of archaeological remains for Africa and the Middle East. Furthermore the museum has an established education outreach program that utilizes the collection in the museum to educate school children about their cultural past. There is also a lecture hall where speeches and presentations are given. The museum also houses a library of over 2000 books and articles concerning ancient Egypt and Nubia. There is also a Documentation center that was established by UNSECO, to collect all documents relating

to Nubia from around the world. The museum is not only just a place to display antiquities, it is also a training center for future museologists and conservators, and it thus promotes the active preservation of the cultural heritage it displays within.

3. Do the museum's exhibits make effective and appropriate use of its collections?

The exhibits within the Nubian Museum are arranged masterfully; utilizing artifacts from the prehistoric era, pharaonic era, early Islam and Coptic Christianity, up through the present day region which was once called Nubia.

4. Is the museum exercising responsible stewardship of the collections?

From my observations within the museum as a whole, it is a very clean and well maintained facility.

5. Is the museum making effective use of its resources to provide appropriate care for its collections?

As previously stated, the Nubian Museum is an approved centre for museology, therefore it's a standard for many other museums in the way it manages its collections.

6. Is the museum functioning legally and ethically in the way it obtains its collections?

Many of the museums artifacts were previously housed in the storerooms of other museums like the Egyptian Museum. A lot of the artifacts being displayed were discovered in UNSECO's campaign to save the monuments after the construction of the Aswan High Dam, therefore the acquisition of them was perfectly legal and monitored not only by UNSECO but by the Supreme Council of Antiquities.

7. Is the museum providing appropriate support for the collections use, care, and development?

In housing an education center for both school children and aspiring museum professionals, the museum is promoting development in the field of museology and creating an exciting environment for the school children, who may one day develop into the future museologists and cultural conservators.

8. Do the museum's facilities provide appropriate conditions for collections storage and use?

The museum facilities are masterfully arranged providing plenty of spacious room to display the artifacts without creating a sense of being too cramped together, this allows enough for visitors to stand near a display case and observe the object being displayed while reading the labels that describe each display item in detail.

9. Does the museum provide a secure environment for the collections?

Yes definitely, in order to enter the museum you must pass through a security gate at the entrance equipped with a walk through metal detector as well as a scanning device for baggage, which is manned by armed guards. Inside the museum I noticed one armed guard at the entrance standing next to the

information desk, and a few throughout the museum in between exhibition areas. The museum is also equipped with all modern security systems and fire alarms.

10. Does the museum have conservation issues for which it should seek assistance?

In my own personal opinion I saw nothing wrong that would cause concern with conservation issues throughout the entire museum.

Ethics code 4.2 “Interpretation of Exhibitions” states: Museums should ensure that the information they present in displays and exhibitions is well-founded, accurate and gives appropriate consideration to represented groups or beliefs.

The Nubian Museum in Aswan does a fantastic job of utilizing a wide array of artifacts and objects to display the ancient past of the Nubian people. The museum is also promoting cultural heritage through its educational center, workshops, and seminars presented within the facilities.

Section 4.5 of the Code concerns, Display of Unprovenanced Material, it states: Museums should avoid displaying or otherwise using material of questionable origin or lacking provenance. They should be aware that such displays or usage can be seen to condone and contribute to the illicit trade in cultural property.

To the best of my knowledge, the Nubian Museum doesn’t house any unprovenanced antiquities, and definitely doesn’t condone or contribute to the illicit trade in cultural property.

Section six states in principle: Museum collections reflect cultural and natural heritage of the communities from which they have been derived. As such, they have a character beyond that of ordinary property, which may include strong affinities with national, regional, local, ethnic, religious or political identity. It is important therefore that museum policy is responsive to this situation.

The Nubian museum is a recognized institution that preserves and promotes with professionalism the heritage of the Egyptian and Nubian peoples.

Personal Opinions and Observations

The museum has a unique design that holds true to traditional Nubian architecture, and the location at the top of a hill overlooking the Nile is ideal. The way the museum is laid out is very spacious and pleasing because it is easy to follow and the visitor knows what each section of the exhibit represents because they are labeled with large poster boards and descriptive diagrams. The artifacts being displayed are exhibited with the utmost care and attention to detail, with signs of acquisition and catalogue numbers on each specimen. The cases housing the artifacts are very clean and well laid out with security alarms and climate control monitors within them. Many small artifacts being displayed within large display cases have their own little stands that bring the objects above the bottom of the case. (See picture).



Figure 4. Artifact Exhibit at the Nubian Museum

The exhibits within the museum are unique because they make good use of the native granite that is found in the quarry near by the museum. Granite pedestals for displaying statues only adds to the character of the stone carving abilities of the ancient Egyptians, and it provides a very sturdy base for the antiquities being displayed (see Figure 5). All of the artifacts, no matter how small, are considered individually and are labeled with descriptions of provenance, date, measurements of the artifact, and its historical significance; written in English and Arabic.



Figure 5. Granite Display stand displaying stone sculptures

The part of the exhibitions I noticed the most, and was happy to see was the large silkscreened informational board displays of background information into the different time periods being displayed, the different locations, different subjects...etc. By placing these large displays next to the exhibited artifacts, it gives the museum visitor a better understanding of what is being displayed and its true significance. The information boards also provide museum visitors, who may not have prior knowledge of what is being displayed, and by providing them with some insight, promotes a more active pursuit of knowledge in studying the exhibitions. In my own personal opinion one of the most interesting features in the museum was a whole entire wall lined with large poster board descriptions of the UNESCO campaign to save the monuments of Upper Egypt that were to be lost after the construction of the Aswan High Dam (See Figure 6.)



Figure 6. Silkscreened Informational Exhibit of the UNESCO salvage campaign during the construction of the Aswan High Dam

The lighting was displeasing. The policy of the museum organizers is to use artificial lighting throughout and they have even closed off the skylight in the main hall, originally designed to illuminate the statue of Ramses II. The objects are lit by fibre-optic light sources, which are completely safe. The level of light, however, is very low- whether due to design or bad maintenance is not clear (internet source)

The lighting in some display cases was virtually non existent and made it difficult to see the artifacts and their labels even when standing very close to them.

Another highlight of the museum was that it didn't only display strictly artifacts; it also had a diorama of traditional Nubian life in a village, as well as models of temples. The most interesting model is one of the Nile River with the locations of all the ancient Egyptian temples that line its banks. (See picture) Another model depicts the result of UNESCO's relocation of the temple of Abu Simbel. The model depicts the original location of the temple, now under the waters of Lake Nasser, and shows where



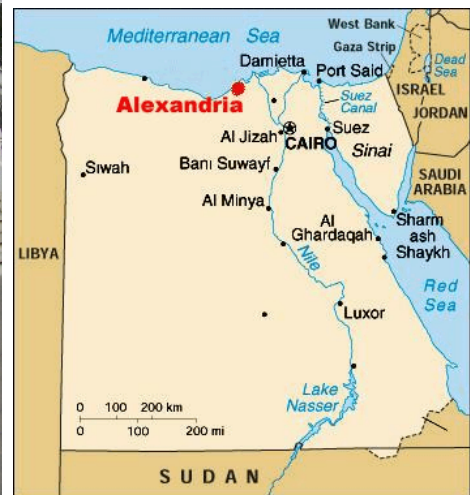
the temple was moved to, above the original location (See Figure 7). It was interesting to see this model, since the previous day I was at the temple of Abu Simbel.

Figure 7. Model of the Salvage Operation to move the temple of Abu Simbel.

My overall assessment of the Nubian Museum in Aswan, Egypt, is the epitome of what a museum should be. Not only is it a centre for museology for the Middle East and Africa, it is also a centre for education. It is the first museum in Egypt that actively incorporates the education of schoolchildren and the general public. It also hosts cultural presentations and speakers. A museum shouldn't just be a place to house antiquities, it should be a place to gain knowledge and insight into the past, and utilize the collections towards the pursuit of knowledge for the future.

The way the ancient Egyptian antiquities were exhibited in the museum, I thought was very professional, well managed and maintained. Each artifact was exhibited with equal importance. Display cases were clean and well organized, and laid out spatially to allow free flow of visitors. The exhibition was laid out to follow the chronological advancement of human habitation in the Nubian region of Egypt from prehistory. The addition of large informative silkscreened boards on the chronology of ancient Egyptian history further contributed to the advancement of the chronological order of the exhibition. The only thing I think the museum is lacking as I stated before, is sufficient lighting

schemes for the interior of the museum and the display cases. If the museum staff were to fix the lighting issues, the Nubian Museum would be one of the finest museums in Egypt, and the world.



Alexandria National Museum

The Alexandria National Museum is housed in a building that was originally the palace of Al-Saad Pasha, one of the wealthiest wood merchants in Alexandria during his lifetime. Construction on the site was first undertaken in 1926. The palace covers an area of 3,480 square meters. It is a white Italian-style mansion that sits in an expansive garden of rare trees and plants. The palace consists of four floors and an underground shelter, which was used during World War II air raids. The palace was designed by a French engineer who used the Italian styles in its construction. His three-store palace was

a gathering place for the upper class people of Egyptian society in Alexandria, including notables such as Egypt's former Prime Ministers, Ismail Sedqi Pasha and Ali Maher Pasha, along with many others.

The building was sold to the Americans as a consulate in 1960, and thereafter in 1997, was purchased by the Ministry of Culture for about 12 million LE (Egyptian Pounds), or a little over 2.1 million dollars. Its conversion to a museum, including up to date audiovisual equipment, security and fire protection, cost another 18 million LE, or over 3.1 million dollars.

(<http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/alexandrianationalmuseum.htm>). The challenge of transforming the interior of the palace into a well laid out museum exhibition fell to Italian designer Maurizio De Paulo. His job was to preserve the unique interior of the building while displaying objects which span the history of Egypt. The designer's unique and highly imaginative concept was that, in order that the objects on display would not have a negative impact on the buildings' interior design, suspended show-cases would be set diagonally across adjacent rooms. De Paulo's idea was unique and nothing like it had ever been envisioned, anywhere in the world. The design says a great deal for Egypt's progressive attitude towards museums that the Ministry of Culture was ready to consider such a project, let alone encourage its execution (Kamil 2005).

Layout of Museum Exhibitions

The Museum was inaugurated by President Hosni Mubarak on December 31, 2003. The museum contains about 1,800 artifacts that narrate the history of Alexandria throughout the ages, including Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, Coptic and Islamic eras. Each floor in this three-storey structure is devoted to an epoch: Pharaonic on the ground floor; Graeco-Roman on the first; Coptic, Islamic and 20th century treasures on the second, and, a final surprise, down a narrow stairway to the basement is a replica tomb, with genuine funerary furniture: canopic jars, anthropoid sarcophagi containing mummies, *ushabti* figures and the deceased's private possessions are all part of this *mise-en-scene* that offers a snapshot of the ancient Egyptian world-view of burial and the afterlife (Kamil 2005). The artifacts within the museum's collection have not been exhibited in the past. They were previously in storage in various other Egyptian museums, and therefore come from the Egyptian Antiquity Museum and the Coptic and Islamic Museums in Cairo.

Items from the Pharaonic Period span each critical period, including the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms. One will notice that the Pharaonic section itself features dark blue walls. This color is meant to portray the journey of the ancient Egyptians to their eternal life. A highlight of the museum is a display on the Graeco-Roman floor of artifacts raised in recent years during underwater excavations in the harbor of Alexandria. To provide a comprehensive look at this new branch of archaeology, huge posters feature activities from various underwater sites over the past few years (www.touregypt.net).

Museological Assessment of The Ancient Egyptian Collection at the Alexandria National Museum, Alexandria, Egypt

1. Are the museums collections and collecting tied to the needs of its audiences?

If a person was visiting Alexandria and they didn't have either a map or a tour guide, it would be difficult to find the Alexandria National Museum. It's located downtown Alexandria amidst a sea of modern buildings. Regardless of this, the museum is unique in that it has artifacts and objects that represent the entire history of Egypt and the city of Alexandria. It also promotes current underwater archaeological excavations in the main harbor, where the Pharos lighthouse once stood, and the ancient city of Heraklion.

2. Public Programs: Do the museums' programs make effective and appropriate use of its collections?

The recent realization that Egypt's museums were originally made not to assume an educational and cultural role, but rather to function as buildings for storing antiquities had led the Ministry of Culture to begin transforming them into places which transmit to the visitor a cultural message about the varied creative products of the Egyptian civilization. The Alexandria National Museum is the first of its kind in Egypt it's the only one which narrates the history of the people of Alexandria through antiquity (<http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/alexandrianationalmuseum.htm>). There is also a lecture hall and an open air stadium outside the museum for educational events.

3. Do the museum's exhibits make effective and appropriate use of its collections?

The exhibits within the museum are unique. They are unique because the museum was not built to be a museum; it was an old palace for the Pasha of Egypt. When the Ministry of Culture purchased the building in 1997 and decided to make it a museum, the interior construction of the building wasn't altered. Because the rooms inside are relatively small the display cases hang suspended from the ceiling at angles which allow the museum visitor to move freely throughout the rooms without being too cramped. The collection within the museum is housed on the three floors of the building, and each floor represents different time periods of Alexandria's history. The exhibits utilize the museums collection very effectively.

4. Is the museum exercising responsible stewardship of the collections?

The museum has a state of the art restoration lab as well as electronic security placed within the exhibits. It is also sending artifacts out on loan to other museums, particularly the artifacts recovered on the underwater archaeological excavations conducted in the main harbor.

5. Is the museum making effective use of its resources to provide appropriate care for its collections?

As previously stated the museum has a high tech restoration laboratory for the artifacts. While visiting the museum I noticed some artifacts missing from exhibitions, in their place were labels indicating that they were either out for research purposes or conservation, therefore the museum is providing appropriate care for the collections.

6. Is the museum functioning legally and ethically in the way it obtains its collections?

The objects being displayed were previously never seen before because they were housed in storage at different museums such as: Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Coptic and Islamic Museums in Cairo and the Graeco- Roman and Jewelry Museums in Alexandria.

7. Is the museum providing appropriate support for the collections use, care, and development?

Based on my observations of the exhibits within the museum, the museum is providing appropriate support for the collections use, care, and development. The addition of a room in the basement where visitors can sit down at computers and look at everything that is being exhibited in the museum in detail is an excellent tool.

8. Do the museum's facilities provide appropriate conditions for collections storage and use?

Utilizing each floor as a separation scheme for different time periods in history, along with the ceiling suspended exhibits, helps the visitor feel like they are advancing in time as they climb the steps to the next floor.

9. Does the museum provide a secure environment for the collections?

To gain entrance to the museum grounds, one must first pass through a gate that has an armed guard on each side. After passing through the gate there is a ticket office to the left and another two armed guards manning a baggage scanner and a walk through metal detector. Inside the museum is electronic security monitoring devices on each display case as well as cameras mounted in the ceiling. In my opinion the museum is very secure.

10. Does the museum have conservation issues for which it should seek assistance?

The museum's exhibits were clean and well maintained, I saw nothing that would lead me to say that the Alexandria National Museum has any conservation issues.

Ethics code 4.2 "Interpretation of Exhibitions" states: Museums should ensure that the information they present in displays and exhibitions is well-founded, accurate and gives appropriate consideration to represented groups or beliefs.

The exhibits present in the Alexandria National Museum were labeled with great care and attention to detail. The labels were easy to read and well placed, each being written in English and Arabic. Many of the collections of small artifacts, contained labels that showed either the acquisition number or the catalogue number labeled individually on each artifact (see picture of rings). The

museum does a great job of representing the emergence of Christianity in Alexandria and the emergence of Islam through the artifacts displayed appropriately with labels.

Section 4.5 of the Code concerns, Display of Unprovenanced Material, it states: Museums should avoid displaying or otherwise using material of questionable origin or lacking provenance. They should be aware that such displays or usage can be seen to condone and contribute to the illicit trade in cultural property.

The museum displays only provenanced artifacts of reputable origin from the storage of other accredited museums throughout Egypt.

Section six states in principle: Museum collections reflect cultural and natural heritage of the communities from which they have been derived. As such, they have a character beyond that of ordinary property, which may include strong affinities with national, regional, local, ethnic, religious or political identity. It is important therefore that museum policy is responsive to this situation.

The city of Alexandria has been a very important city in Egypt since antiquity and continues to be today as it is the second largest city after Cairo. It was once the scholarly center for the known world and continues to be a center for knowledge today with the presence of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The city has been an important melting pot of different cultures for thousands of years. The museum does a good job of illustrating the history of Alexandria from the time of the pharaohs, the presence of the ancient Greeks and Romans, up through the formation of early Christianity and Islam. The museum also houses objects from the 20th century. The exhibitions present illustrate the rich multi-cultural heritage of the city, paying equal attention to each time period and culture that at one time inhabited the city and still does today.

Other Observations

I was very impressed by the Alexandria National Museum. The fact that the building was not originally built to be a museum and that it was modified slightly to house ancient Egyptian antiquities was very fascinating to me. A personal favorite of the museum was walking down into the basement level to a replica of a burial chamber, equipped with funerary goods and a sarcophagus; it was like walking down into a real tomb. Another clever feature was the layout of the museum in a chronological order with the different time periods being separated by different floors in the building. The process of walking from each exhibit level gave just enough time to process that I was entering a different time period of display. Each time period was explained on large description boards accompanied by illustrations. The display cases were very clean glass containers with pedestals of different sizes, so each artifact was raised to its own level creating a sense of separation from the rest of the objects within the display.(see photo below) The exhibitions were exquisitely lit, with separate lighting for different display cases, as well as spot lights on the different statues being displayed. The room that housed the exhibition of underwater excavations was unique in that it had giant pictures of the process of underwater archaeology mounted on the walls (see picture on following page). It was disappointing that the artifacts were on loan to another museum.



Figure 8. Artifact Display Case from the Alexandria National Museum



Overall the presentation of the ancient Egyptian artifacts present in the Alexandria National Museum were presented in a very unique and professional manner. I was very impressed by the lighting present in the exhibitions. The rooms were dimly lit while the artifacts present in the display cases or on separate pedestals were each lit separately, which help to catch my attention and interest in each object. The most modern climate control equipment was readily visible in many display cases, showing that the museum staff is very attentive to the condition of each artifact (see picture). The labels on the exhibits were clear, easy to read, and proportionately sized according to the artifact it was describing.

Out of all the museums I have seen that display ancient Egyptian antiquities, the Alexandria National Museum has done the best job of exhibiting each artifact with equal importance and care. The exhibition display cases and the lighting draw your interest immediately, and make you want to read the labels accompanying each object. The museum is an excellent example of how the preservation and display of ancient Egyptian artifacts is improving with the growing field of native Egyptian professionals in Museology that are taking an active role to preserve their cultural heritage.

Background History of The Egyptian Museum



Figure 10. The Egyptian Museum

Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century reawakened the world to the wonders of ancient Egypt, and created a feeding frenzy of collecting all things ancient Egyptian. This renewed and popular interest in Egypt and its antiquities encouraged many members of the European aristocracy to visit the banks of the Nile in person. Boats outfitted with every imaginable comfort navigated the river. As well as inspecting and sketching the most important monuments, the tourists of the age never failed to acquire a collection of objects to display to friends and relations at home.

Even Jean-Francois Champollion (1790-1832), the decipherer of hieroglyphs, was unable to resist the incomparable beauty of the painted reliefs in the tomb of Seti I and decided to remove a door-jamb (today exhibited in the Louvre in Paris). Thirty years after the Napoleonic expedition, Egypt was thronged with people who, for one reason or another, were interested in the trade in and export of antiquities.

Priceless archaeological treasures and data were being lost as quickly as they were being discovered, and this wasn't being helped by the attitude of the ruler of Egypt at the time. Muhammad Ali (1769-1849), the Pasha of Egypt, launched a wide ranging political strategy designed to open Egypt

to the Western world. Foreigners, especially representatives of the powerful nations, were allowed to satisfy their every whim. There was, therefore, nothing easier for them than to obtain firmans (a Persian word meaning 'orders'), or permits that allowed them to undertake excavations throughout Egypt. These 'excavation', which by modern terms would be considered disastrous, led to the destruction of many archaeological sites, monuments, and antiquities.

In 1828, frustrated by what he saw, Champollion along with his colleague the French consul in Egypt, Jean Francois Mimaout (1774-1837), took action to stop the destruction and pillaging of ancient Egyptian antiquities. Mimaout had no hesitation in sending a strongly worded protest directly to Muhammad Ali in opposition to the proposed dismantling of one of the pyramids of Giza in order to use its limestone blocks as building material for a number of dams on the Nile. It was perhaps Mimaout who also suggested that Muhammad Ali should commission Champollion to prepare a report on the conservation of the Egyptian monuments. Champollion delivered his report towards the end of his stay in Egypt. In it, he emphasized the importance of the monuments from a historical point of view and also noted that their destruction and dispersal was deplored by all important European figures who visited the Nile Valley. Champollion's efforts went unnoticed by Muhammad Ali, as well as the wealthy Europeans he spoke of, because both parties were becoming wealthy from the antiquities market.

The next man to raise awareness about the destruction of Egypt's national heritage was Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), a leading scholar of Egyptian culture who had lived and studied in Paris for some time. His philosophical thinking contributed to the development of a nationalist conscience in Egypt during the nineteenth century and a reawakening of interest in the past and all that related to the former glories of the country. Al-Tahtawi succeeded in increasing public awareness of the value of antiquities and secured the issuing of an ordinance on 15 August 1835, whereby the trade in Egyptian antiquities was regulated for the first time. As well as prohibiting the exportation of 'carved stones and objects', a site in Cairo was designated where the ancient objects could be conserved and displayed, as was the case in all the great European cities.

The first location where the antiquities were displayed was a small building in the Azbakiya Gardens in downtown Cairo. In spite of these initial provisions, the 1835 ordinance was ignored for many years. The trade in Egyptian antiquities and the indiscriminate destruction of monuments proceeded unchecked. Muhammad Ali and his successors continued to regard the newly formed collection of antiquities as a private resource on which they could draw whenever they needed a

prestigious gift for an important guest. After a few years this practice had so impoverished the museum that it was moved elsewhere. A single hall in the Ministry of Education within the Citadel was judged sufficiently large to contain the objects that had not yet been given away. The story of the first Cairo museum drew to a definitive close in 1855 when Abbas Pasha offered what remained of the collection to the Archduke of Austria, Maximilian, during an official visit to Egypt.

In 1850 assistant curator at the Louvre museum in Paris, Auguste Mariette (1821-1881), had undertaken some excavations at Saqqara. He spent three years excavating after discovering the burial place for the sacred Apis Bulls. These excavations didn't happen easily and Mariette faced many difficulties. All the difficulties he had been obliged to tackle in those three years had convinced him that Egypt needed effective legislation to promote the conservation of its monuments. In 1858 the Viceroy authorized the creation of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, a body whose principal task was to supervise excavations throughout the country. The post of director-general was naturally offered to Mariette. In 1863, Mariette was able to open the first true Egyptian Museum to the public, utilizing the premises of the Administration du Transit. The large premises overlooked the Nile in the Bulaq quarter. The Bulaq premises, however, had the serious disadvantage of being exposed to the annual Nile flood. In 1878 the flooding was so severe that many objects were lost. Mariette campaigned for a permanent site for the museum for the next ten years, unsuccessfully.

During the curatorship of one of Mariette's successors', Eugene Grebaut (1846-1915), the situation of the objects conserved at Bulaq became critical. In 1889 the building housing the collections reached bursting point: there was no more room in either the exhibition halls or the stores, and artifacts found during that year's excavations had to be left on boats in Upper Egypt for long periods of time. This catastrophic situation prompted Khedive Ismail to hand over one of his own residences at Giza (where the zoo is now located) as the new home for the museum. Between the summer and the end of 1889 all the collections were transferred from Bulaq to Giza. In January 1890 the new museum was ready to open. A few years later approval was obtained for the construction of a new building. Seventy-three projects were entered in a competition which was eventually won by the French architect Marcel Dourgnon. The building he designed was highly innovative for its time. Above all, it was the first building in the world to be specially designed and constructed for use as a museum, rather than being converted for this purpose. The museum was designed in form to represent classical antiquity. The interior of the museum was laid out like an Egyptian temple, with a vast open central hall surrounded by a series of colonnaded halls. On November 15th 1902 the Cairo Museum of Egyptian Antiquities was

officially inaugurated. The exhibits were laid out according to the late-nineteenth-century conception of Egyptian culture. Halls were arranged chronologically, based on the knowledge of the time (without taking into account the existence of the Intermediate Periods, then considered to be historically insignificant) and the display of the objects was designed above all on aesthetic criteria. Primarily for structural reasons the largest and heaviest works were installed on the ground floor while the first floor housed funerary assemblages arranged in chronological order. Everyday objects were grouped in a number of rooms according to categories. Over the years the museum layout has changed with the ever continuing influx of new artifacts from digs, storerooms have become filled to the max with antiquities that cannot be displayed in the museum simply because there isn't enough room. Currently a project is under way on the Giza Plateau to build a new "Grand Egyptian Museum", which will help open up space in the old Egyptian Museum as well as provide a new more technologically advanced facility to display ancient Egyptian antiquities (Tiradritti 1999).

Museological Assessment of The Ancient Egyptian Collection at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Egypt: Personal Observations Assisted by ICOM (International Council of Museums) Guidelines.

1. Are the museums collections and collecting tied to the needs of its audiences?

Since it's opening in 1902, the Egyptian Museum has been a repository for hundreds of thousands of ancient Egyptian artifacts. The museum is crammed from wall to wall with artifacts representing over 3000 years of ancient Egyptian history. It is virtually impossible to see everything in the museum with just one visit. So I would say the museum exceeds the needs of its audience with the very large collection of ancient Egyptian antiquities.

2. Public Programs: Do the museums' programs make effective and appropriate use of its collections?

Unlike other more modern museums in Egypt, the Egyptian Museum in Cairo does not have an established education center or a public outreach program. It does however have a library that houses over 42,500 books that are available for research by students and researchers at the college or post graduate level.

3. Do the museum's exhibits make effective and appropriate use of its collections?

The problem with the Egyptian Museum is it's simply not big enough to exhibit all of the antiquities that it holds. The exhibits do follow a general chronological order from prehistoric Egypt to the Old Kingdom, then the Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom, the Late Period, and finally the Graeco-Roman period. At the entrance to the museum you turn left and follow the exhibits in a clockwise direction and it follows the progression of ancient Egyptian history. Because there are so many antiquities in the museum, the exhibits are crammed, and poorly displayed.

4. Is the museum exercising responsible stewardship of the collections?

It is a monumental task to manage the collection within the Egyptian Museum and it shows because many of the exhibits in the museum leave a lot to the imagination. I would say no the museum isn't exercising 'enough' responsible stewardship of the collections. Many artifacts being displayed are not labeled. Many artifacts that are labeled were done so in the early 20th century and the labels haven't been changed since. There is no set standard for the labels throughout the museum. Many of the display cases appear like they need to be conserved because they are so old and in a deplorable state. Display cases are dusty and look as if they haven't been cleaned in decades. Security measures surrounding many artifacts on display are inadequate. Overall the museum has major problems.

5. Is the museum making effective use of its resources to provide appropriate care for its collections?

In many ways the Egyptian Museum has not changed much since it opened in 1902. One thing that is continually changing is the amount of artifacts being housed within the building. To care for and manage over 160,000 artifacts it takes a lot of time, people, and the proper facilities to do it. Simply put the Egyptian museum wasn't designed to display that many objects when it was originally built. It also wasn't designed to handle the amount of visitors it sees on a daily basis these days; therefore it becomes even more crowded. I'm sure there is a capable museum staff working as hard as they can everyday to do as much as they can to care for the collections, but the amount of work to be done is enormous.

6. Is the museum functioning legally and ethically in the way it obtains its collections?

When the museum first opened in 1902 many of the artifacts that were housed in it had a questionable acquisition because there were not many strict rules on acquisition prior to the creation of the first Antiquities Service in 1835 by Muhammad Ali. Ethical acquisition of artifacts back then is much different than today, and the same could be said of Archaeology. Many artifacts lost their provenance due to the poor methods of archaeological documentation, if there was any at all sometimes. Many labels of artifacts within the museum indicate “provenance unknown”. The museum with the help of the Supreme Council of Antiquities does obtain artifacts that are recovered from the illegal black market for antiquities, and assists in the reclaiming of stolen artifacts.

7. Is the museum providing appropriate support for the collections use, care, and development?

Currently the Egyptian Museum is evolving slowly in it’s museological approach to managing it’s collections and development of a more modern approach at exhibition, this can be seen in the beautiful display of the funerary mask of Tutankhamun and his funerary treasures located in a separate room that is well lit, with newer display cases that are labeled well and clearly. The museum has also undergone some renovations on the outside, a new paint job, and additions of new lighting on the exterior of the building to illuminate the courtyard in front of the museum. In 2002, for the Centennial celebration of the museum, Zahi Hawass along with other museum staff organized a special exhibit of artifacts from basement storage and other store houses around Egypt of artifacts that were never before seen by the public. In my opinion the museum is providing support for collections use, however, the collection is so large that there are still many improvements that need to be considered in the exhibition.

8. Do the museum’s facilities provide appropriate conditions for collections storage and use?

Simply put, no. As stated before there are too many artifacts and not enough space to properly display the artifacts in a manner that is up to current museological standards.

9. Does the museum provide a secure environment for the collections?

Security at the entrance is sufficient, consisting of a metal detector manned by armed guards. There is also a booth where you have to leave your cameras or baggage, because pictures are no longer allowed within the museum. Once inside the museum the security of the collections becomes a bit questionable in some areas of the museum. I noticed only a few guards in the central atrium on the ground floor, and there are 42 rooms on the ground floor. The security measures in the exhibits themselves is minimal, in particular the masterpiece statue of Khafre is only surrounded by four metal posts holding glass plates that are below knee level high. Anybody could just go up and touch it if they really tried. I didn't notice any sort of security monitoring systems on or inside the display cases of the exhibitions.

The most troubling security concern in my personal opinion would be in the mummy rooms. The cases holding the mummies of some of the most famous pharaohs in ancient Egyptian history are lacking in many ways. The bases are constructed of wood that seems to be pretty old and the mummies are encased in glass. The problem I see is that museum visitors can basically lean right on the cases, and I did see small children doing just that. Furthermore it would only take somebody kicking the wooden base of those cases to cause enough vibration or movement to jar a mummy leading to significant damage. Inside the mummy rooms there were no security guards, therefore anything is possible.

10. Does the museum have conservation issues for which it should seek assistance?

Yes it definitely has many. The need for proper display cases with climate control technology as well as security systems. The updated labeling of all artifacts in a uniform labeling style. New glass display cases that aren't faded and dirt laden. Many of these issues will be solved with the opening of the new Grand Egyptian Museum on the Giza Plateau in the coming years.

Ethics code 4.2 "Interpretation of Exhibitions" states: Museums should ensure that the information they present in displays and exhibitions is well-founded, accurate and gives appropriate consideration to represented groups or beliefs.

The Egyptian Museums' exhibitions are in dire need of accompanying information boards to accompany the different aspects of ancient Egyptian life being represented by the many thousands of

artifacts being displayed. There are some informative signs accompanying some exhibits but they are few and far between.

Section 4.5 of the Code concerns, Display of Unprovenanced Material, it states: Museums should avoid displaying or otherwise using material of questionable origin or lacking provenance. They should be aware that such displays or usage can be seen to condone and contribute to the illicit trade in cultural property.

With the amount of antiquities being housed and exhibited within the Egyptian museum, it is unavoidable to display unprovenanced artifacts.

Section six states in principle: Museum collections reflect cultural and natural heritage of the communities from which they have been derived. As such, they have a character beyond that of ordinary property, which may include strong affinities with national, regional, local, ethnic, religious or political identity. It is important therefore that museum policy is responsive to this situation.

The Egyptian Museum in Cairo houses not only the cultural heritage of the Egyptian people but the heritage of everyone in the world, as it was one of the first civilizations in the world. The legacy of ancient Egypt has been shaped by many different people from many different countries around the world, and the artifacts housed in the Egyptian museum have been discovered by people from many different nations. People from all over the world flock to this building to view the wonders from the ancient past, and the Egyptian museum leaves the visitor with a sense of lacking, and a want to learn more about what is contained inside.



Figure 11. Inside the Egyptian Museum View of Center Gallery

Personal Opinions and Observations

Because pictures were not allowed inside the museum, I recorded my observations in a travel journal. Here is a list of the observations I recorded while inside the museum.

At the entrance I went directly to a copy of the Rosetta Stone which is encased in a very simple wooden case, which appears very old. It is accompanied by a brief description on a paper label that is typed, most likely on a typewriter, the label would be hard to read for some visually challenged.

The Narmer Palette is encased in a wooden case which again appears very old and dusty. The actual palette is supported by a clear plastic composite which is molded to it. Descriptions are written again, by a typewriter, in English, French, and Arabic.

I noticed on the display case of the serdab statue of king Djoser, there are three different numbers. The older metal label, I found out from my guide is the catalogue number, and the sticker on the glass bears the number of the room which the case lies.

In the Old kingdom wing there were four granite sarcophagi and none of them were labeled. The statue of Khafre is again poorly labeled and sits atop a cracked wooden base, as if it could fall apart at anytime. It is surrounded only by glass panes knee high. Labels I noticed in the room displaying Queen Hetepheres funerary objects and the one and only tiny statue of Khufu. The label for the tiny statue was the first label I noticed with the actual dimensions of the artifact. Many labels in this room are simply folded paper place inside the display case. Furthermore in the Old Kingdom section there are random unlabeled wall carvings hung next to labeled antiquities.

The first thing I noticed in the Middle Kingdom hall was the large statue of Nebheptre Montuhotep, it sat again on top of a wooden box which seemed to be constructed of poor ply wood, and it seemed as if the labels hadn't been changed since the museum opened. You could tell which artifacts were new additions to the Middle Kingdom exhibit because they had new bright labels on solid plastic cases. At this point I noticed how horrible the lighting was inside the museum, because the windows in the ceiling had been painted over to try and prevent the rising heat in the summer.

Another bad label I noticed was in the New Kingdom hall, on the case of a statue of Thuthmosis III. The label was simply a piece of paper that was taped to the inside of the glass case, very unprofessional looking.

In the Amarna exhibition there is a lack of labels on displays of paintings and a display case housing copper tools. Where there are labels, they are a mixture of old and new labels, that contrast horribly. The Amarna room housing colossal statues of Akhenaten is very well lit, however the cases are still old wooden ones. There is a large wall case with many unlabeled Amarna period artifacts jumbled together. Off the side of the Amarna room in a hall was a large jumble of sarcophagi and stelae that are unlabeled and strewn about in an un-orderly manner. There was also a white box packaged with an artifact that looked like it just arrived.

On the upper floor at the top of the stairs are the giant horribly dirty glass cases surrounding the golden burial shrines of Tutankhamun. They were so dirty a man was cleaning the cases while hundreds of tourists were passing right next to his ladder, I would figure that job should be done while the museum is closed. The cases had no climate control or labels of any kind. The entrance to the room housing the golden burial goods of Tutankhamun seemed out of place with the rest of the museum, as it has a glass

doorway with bold modern looking label painted over the doorway. The room is painted a navy blue color with nothings on the walls, no pictures, diagrams, descriptions. The funerary mask was smaller than I had expected, but much more impressive than the pictures. The most noticeable part of the room other than the mask was the display case that held the third golden coffin, because it had a mirror in its base so u could see the underside of the coffin's designs. In the King Tut room there were some handwritten labels on some of the floral offerings, however most of the boy-king's exhibit was not labeled. There are so many artifacts from Tut's tomb that they take up a large part of the upper floor.

My visit to the Egyptian Museum was very brief, only two and a half hours. In that time I did not get to see the whole museum. I did however notice many things that the museum needs to improve according to ICOM's museological standards, and the museum staff has plenty of work to do in improving the museum. In many ways the Egyptian Museum could be considered a museum within a museum, because it is a snapshot of the earliest form of a museum in Egypt. It was formed at the end of the 19th century, at a time when archaeology and museology in Egypt were at a very cavalier point in their maturity. The antiquities of Egypt were being traded, sold, stolen, and destroyed at a rapid rate, and the museum was built to stop the destruction of these antiquities and monuments. When the museum was opened in 1902 it contained less than 10,000 artifacts that were labeled and exhibited according to the museological standards of that time. However over the past 100 years the museums collections have grown much faster than the original architects could have imagined, and this is shown in the way the museum exhibits its artifacts.

The Egyptian Museum is an invaluable place to study how museology has developed over the past century. One can see the progression in the standards of labeling exhibits as well as the progression in the actual layout and management of exhibits. With the planned opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum on the Giza Plateau, most of the artifacts present within the Egyptian Museum are going to be transferred to the new state of the art, high tech facility. The collection will be reassessed, established and catalogued in an electronic database and surely re-labeled to the highest museological standards of today. The Egyptian Museum will be maintained as an important museum that showcases artifacts in the first example of a museum in Egypt, the example that has led to the creation of countless number of new modern museums under the management of native Egyptians taking proactive control of their own cultural heritage.

The British Museum

The British Museum was founded in 1753 by Sir Hans Sloane, a former president of the Royal Society, the premiere intellectual institution in Great Britain. Sloane was a great collector and amassed a large collection of curiosities that he had in his private museum. Upon his death in 1753, he willed his collection to the King, who immediately had Parliament pass an act to raise funds to buy a place to house the collections. That place was originally the Montagu House, but eventually the British Museum was built on the site.

At first the ancient Egyptian collection was very modest as Sloane had a collection of 150 artifacts, from shabti figures, divine bronzes, amulets, scarabs, and a substantial piece; the stela of Nekau.(insert footnote 4) Within three years the ancient Egyptian collection was to continue to grow with the death of prominent contributor to the museum, William Lethieullier. He died in 1756 and bequeathed his



Figure 12. The British Museum

antiquities to the museum. They included the first mummy and coffin in the collection. Many other members of the Lethieullier family followed suite and donated other Egyptian artifacts.

The collection of ancient Egyptian antiquities was rather slow in the late 18th century, that is until the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798. The expedition was a military and political fiasco-and it changed the face of the earth: by revealing the splendor of a mysterious and forgotten civilization, it gave birth to Egyptology. The cultural and scientific elite of France accompanied the expeditionary force. Was Napoleon seeking justification for his conquest? Or was this simply the cultural heritage of the Enlightenment? Whatever his motives, 500 civilians accompanied the army, amongst them a group of 167 scholars.(Description De L'Egypte) These scholars documented everything they saw in Egypt, from temples, tombs, monuments, flora, fauna, methods of irrigation, the Nile's course...etc.

The amount of information the expedition catalogued was amazing, and the antiquities collected was vast. The most impressive archaeological find by Napoleon's expedition occurred in the Nile Delta, on the coast of the Mediterranean, on the Rosetta branch of the Nile. The Rosetta Stone was discovered during the reconstruction of Qait Bay Fort by Lieutenant Pierre Bouchard. He recognized its importance and sent it to Cairo to be studied. The stone as well as the other antiquities the French had gathered soon fell into the hands of the British in 1801, after Napoleon had fled Egypt and left his men behind; the British defeated the French at Aboukir Bay. The British forced the French to turn over all antiquities they had discovered, but reluctantly allowed them to keep their records from the expedition, which would later be published as the Description De L'Egypte. The antiquities that were confiscated from the French were shipped to the British Museum. From the time the Rosetta Stone arrived in the British Museum it was an instant race to decipher it, a race between the British scholar, Thomas Young, and young French scholar, Jean Francois Champollion. In 1824 the French gained a sense of retribution, when Champollion announced he had deciphered the ancient hieroglyphs. The early 19th century became the most important time in the field of Egyptology and the pace of collecting antiquities grew at a tremendous rate. Europe became extremely fascinated with the mystery that is Egypt.

Expeditions and Explorers for the British Museum in the 19th and early 20th centuries

Among the more learned visitors to Cairo in the first decade of the nineteenth century was a Swiss, Jean-Louis Burckhardt, who had been sent to the Near East by a British Society to collect Arabic

manuscripts and to undertake explorations into the little known parts of Africa and the Levant. Burckhardt formed an alliance with Henry Salt, the British consul-general in Cairo, to bring from Thebes the great bust of Ramses lying in the Ramesseum, the mortuary temple of the king with the intention of presenting it to the British Museum. Burckhardt and Salt engaged adventurer Giovanni Belzoni, a theatrical strongman and engineer, to remove the sculpture. Belzoni was successful; the sculpture arrived in London in spring of 1818. This only wetted the appetite of the trustees from the British Museum even more. Henry Salt was encouraged further by the trustees of the museum to collect more antiquities. With permission from Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt, Belzoni conducted a huge collecting campaign in 1817-1819, mainly in the Theban area, modern day Luxor. Artifacts were gathered from Karnak, Luxor temple, and the Valley of the Kings. Belzoni's expedition under the funding of Salt, produced a very substantial collection for the British Museum, however they wouldn't be the last contributors. During the 1820's and 1830's large collections of Egyptian antiquities came on the London market and the British Museum bought many of them. The mid 1830's were years of great significance for the Egyptian collections: a new gallery was built for sculptures and other large stone monuments and the museum's first Egyptologist was recruited.

Samuel Birch arrived to the museum in 1836. He had a deep interest in ancient Egyptian language. By 1841 Birch had published the first volume of "Select Papyri in the Hieratic Character from the Collections of the British Museum". Samuel thought of the British Museum as more than a simple storehouse for antiquities, he saw it as an opportunity to gain knowledge through the study of the historical masterpieces. Throughout the next four decades Birch helped the British Museum collect and amass an important collection of ancient Egyptian papyrus texts, such as the king list from the temple of Ramses II at Abydos. Birch neglected nothing in the Egyptian collection, even the most fragmentary artifacts, everything was described in detail, texts were copied, transliterated, and translated on slips now bound in over 100 volumes. Birch's last years were spent in disagreement with the creation of the Egypt Exploration Fund, established by Amelia B. Edwards. Birch saw no benefit to the museum by supporting the Fund and continued to refuse its support until his death in 1885. Birch's successor, Peter Le Page Renouf (1886-1891), was equally unwilling to support the Egypt Exploration Fund.

Renouf's successor, Ernest Wallis Budge, while readily receiving whatever might be presented by excavating institutions, was more inclined to enlarge the collections of his department by regular purchasing, especially in Egypt itself. Budge made his first trip to Egypt in 1886. Up to World War I

he made many trips to Egypt, acquiring for the museum large quantities of funerary material of all periods, many papyri in a variety of scripts, and incidentally works of art in all media, especially sculpture. Some of Budge's most significant acquisitions include: Amarna Tablets, Book of the Dead of Ani, Nu, and Nakht. E.A. Wallis Budge was definitely successful in collecting at a large scale for the museum. Samuel Birch's catalogue of Egyptian holdings in 1870 totaled 10,000 objects, when Budge retired in 1924 the number was 57,000. However Budge is primarily known as the great author of many publications, over 140 (some in several volumes).

In the period between the two World Wars, the focus of growth in the Egyptian collections rested in the yields of excavation. Finds from various sites in Egypt were contributed by the Egypt Exploration Fund, Excavations conducted by Alan Gardiner and William Flinders Petrie.

Publication has remained an important part of the activities of the Egyptian department, and it is now the active policy to involve foreign scholars as well as departmental Egyptologists, in the preparation of object and documentary volumes. Greater specialization on the part of departmental staff leads to better conceived and better planned exhibitions. Excavations undertaken in support of the International Campaign for the Saving of the Monuments of Nubia brought important groups of objects from Saqqara, and from Qasr Ibrim and Buhen, in Nubia itself, during the 1960's and 1970's.

Since the early 1980's departmental staff from the British Museum has mounted excavations in threatened sites in Egypt, at Ashmunein (Hermopolis), in Middle Egypt, the city of the god Thoth, and at Tell el Balamun, in the Northern Delta, a much neglected site of great size and antiquity. The British Museums' Egyptian collection stands currently at more than 100,000 ancient Egyptian artifacts. What Samuel Birch saw as the purpose of the British Museum: "not only a store-house...not only a show-place...but the true home of the proficient master, the proper resort of the enquiring student." (James 2001: 46-63).

Museological Assessment of The Ancient Egyptian Collection at The British Museum in London, England

1. Are the museums collections and collecting tied to the needs of its audiences?

The British Museum is a world renowned museum that was one of the first established museums in the world. It has developed since its creation in 1753 by Sir Hans Sloane, into a very professional institution that houses around 100,000 ancient Egyptian artifacts. The collection contains a representative group of objects illustrating many different aspects of ancient Egyptian life and gives the audience a comprehensive view into the ancient civilization that lasted over 3200 years.

2. Public Programs: Do the museums's programs make effective and appropriate use of its collections?

While I visited the British Museum, I spent over four hours observing the ancient Egyptian collection. Throughout this time I noticed many large groups of schoolchildren that were with their teachers. Each group of kids (aging from probably 6-10 years old), was studying the artifacts present in the ancient Egyptian exhibition. In particular I noticed a group of little girls with clipboards holding papers with Egyptian hieroglyphs; they were going up to different artifacts and comparing their list of hieroglyphs with the ones on the objects being displayed. The Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan in the British Museum also takes enquiries from the public during most days of operation. Access to archival material and photographs of every artifact are granted on an appointment basis. The museum also had public curatorial and exhibition educational programs.

3. Do the museum's exhibits make effective and appropriate use of its collections?

On the ground level floor, the ancient Egyptian exhibit consists of a large hall that houses examples of stone sculpture. The stone monuments are separated based on the different time periods represented. The northern wing holds stone monuments from the New Kingdom and Late Period and the Southern wing holds monuments from the Middle and Old Kingdoms. The center piece is of course the Rosetta Stone, and it is encased in a thick glass case and sits on a pedestal with an accompanying label next to it describing the history of the stone. The ground floor exhibit contains a very nice representative collection of ancient stone work, things such as; stone sculptures, stone sarcophagi, stone stelae, tomb facades, obelisks, pylons...etc. The second floor of the ancient Egyptian collection contains a very nice representative exhibition of ancient Egyptian daily life activities and funerary customs and beliefs. The layout of this exhibition isn't necessarily arranged by chronology, but by different categories like; writing, cosmetics, recreation, funerary archaeology...etc.

4. Is the museum exercising responsible stewardship of the collections?

The British Museum has been a center for Egyptology since its opening. The collections are a vital resource for continuing research. Members of staff of the department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan and other scholars are engaged in studies of particular areas of the collection, which are extending their understanding of ancient Egyptian history, culture and technology. Some of this research has been centered on the production of full catalogues of groups of objects, to make information available to others.

Other research results in articles in journals, and in lectures inside and outside the Museum. More recently, the documentation of the collection has been entered on computer as part of a program to create records of the entire holdings of the Museum in electronic form. This has facilitated the retrieval of information on different classes of material, in order to assist external scholars, students or the public. The museum is definitely exercising responsible stewardship of the ancient Egyptian collection, however it is important that in the future they will consider either loaning or returning some of the masterpieces of ancient Egyptian art to Egypt.

5. Is the museum making effective use of its resources to provide appropriate care for its collections?

Yes the British Museum is staffed by professional curators and scientific teams that focus on the conservation of the antiquities present in the exhibits. This was evident as there were signs placed in some display cases where artifacts once were, stating that they were out for restoration work.

6. Is the museum functioning legally and ethically in the way it obtains its collections?

In the early days of the museum, much of the artifacts were obtained through methods that today would be considered very illegal, however at the time there were no laws against simply taking artifacts from Egypt. Many of the artifacts that lie on the ground floor were gathered by the expedition of Giovanni Belzoni in the early 1800's and by today's standards were plundered and stolen from Egypt, but at the time it was perfectly legal, due to Muhammad Ali's campaign to open Egypt to the west. After

Ali finally established an Antiquities organization in 1835, collecting antiquities by questionable means continued for a few more decades, and many of the antiquities that made their way into the collection at the British Museum were bought on the antiquities market by E.A. Wallis Budge. Active scholarly archaeological excavations by the museum began in the early 1900's, and artifacts began to be collected and researched legally with both the museums' excavations and those by the Egypt Exploration Fund.

7. Is the museum providing appropriate support for the collections use, care, and development?

The British Museum and the Department of Ancient Egypt and the Sudan are doing an excellent job of supporting the ancient Egyptian collection. The greatest care is taken in conservation and research of the artifacts in the exhibitions, and the opening of this information to the public, promotes educational purposes of people interested in ancient Egypt.

8. Do the museum's facilities provide appropriate conditions for collections storage and use?

The British Museums' facilities though old by museum standards, are certainly not lacking in their presentation. The Museum has been renovated with the beautiful addition of a glass atrium or 'Great Court', that links each wing of the museum, with a large open space for two information desks, gift shops, cafes, a restaurant, restrooms, a daycare center...etc. The exhibition areas are very large and spacious and provide state of the art display cases and labels for each object being displayed. Labels with brail are even provided for the visually impaired.

9. Does the museum provide a secure environment for the collections?

The security at the entrance to the British Museum is virtually non-existent; there were no security check points and no metal detectors. There were two guards standing in the entrance hall, but they said nothing. However once inside the museum there are many security personnel in at the entrance to each exhibit and in each room of the exhibitions. I didn't notice any cameras inside the museum however I'm sure they were there. On the ground floor exhibition of Egyptian sculpture the displays were very secure and mounted solidly to the spot they were being displayed. I noticed electronic security devices inside a glass case holding the fragments of the beard of the sphinx.

10. Does the museum have conservation issues for which it should seek assistance?

In my personal opinion based on the standards established by ICOM, the British Museum does not appear to have any conservation issues for which it cannot handle with its own resources.

Ethics code 4.2 “Interpretation of Exhibitions” states: Museums should ensure that the information they present in displays and exhibitions is well-founded, accurate and gives appropriate consideration to represented groups or beliefs.

The British Museum holds in trust for the nation and the world a collection of art and antiquities from ancient and living cultures. Housed in one of Britain's architectural landmarks, the collection is one of the finest in existence, spanning two million years of human history. Access to the collections is free.

The British Museum was founded in 1753 to promote universal understanding through the arts, natural history and science in a public museum. Since its foundation, the British Museum has been guided by three important principles: that the collections are held in perpetuity in their entirety; that they are widely available to all who seek to enjoy and learn from them and that they are curated by full-time specialists.

As a social enterprise the British Museum has exceptional reach. It creates a context in which cultures can be seen, experienced and studied in depth or compared and contrasted across time and space to inspire and delight over five million visitors a year. Through its public, curatorial, exhibition and education programs the Museum engages with the public to advance understanding of the collections and cultures they represent (<http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/aboutus/about.html>).

Section 4.5 of the Code concerns, Display of Unprovenanced Material, it states: Museums should avoid displaying or otherwise using material of questionable origin or lacking provenance. They should be aware that such displays or usage can be seen to condone and contribute to the illicit trade in cultural property.

The main issue I see as it applies to this section of ICOM's code of ethics, is the display of and marketing of the Rosetta Stone. It is a hotly contested issue in the modern day museological world. The Egyptians want it repatriated back to Egypt where it belongs, and there is no bigger a promoter of this attitude than Dr.Zahi Hawass. The British Museum has refused to consider repatriating the national treasure back to Egypt, even refused to loan it to the Egyptian Museum. This continues to be an issue today, because the Egyptian government has no problems in loaning the King Tut exhibition to the British Museum, so why can't they return the favor?

Personal Opinions and Observations

It was very interesting to see the ancient Egyptian artifacts that were obtained by such great explorers of antiquity like Giovanni Belzoni, and Jean-Louis Burckhardt. I couldn't help but think about the way some of the antiquities were obtained that were on display. At that moment the thought of Zahi Hawass campaigning to have all ancient Egyptian artifacts obtained illegally from Egypt to be returned. Thoughts of all the native Egyptians I talked to while in Egypt that shared Dr.Hawass' sentiment.

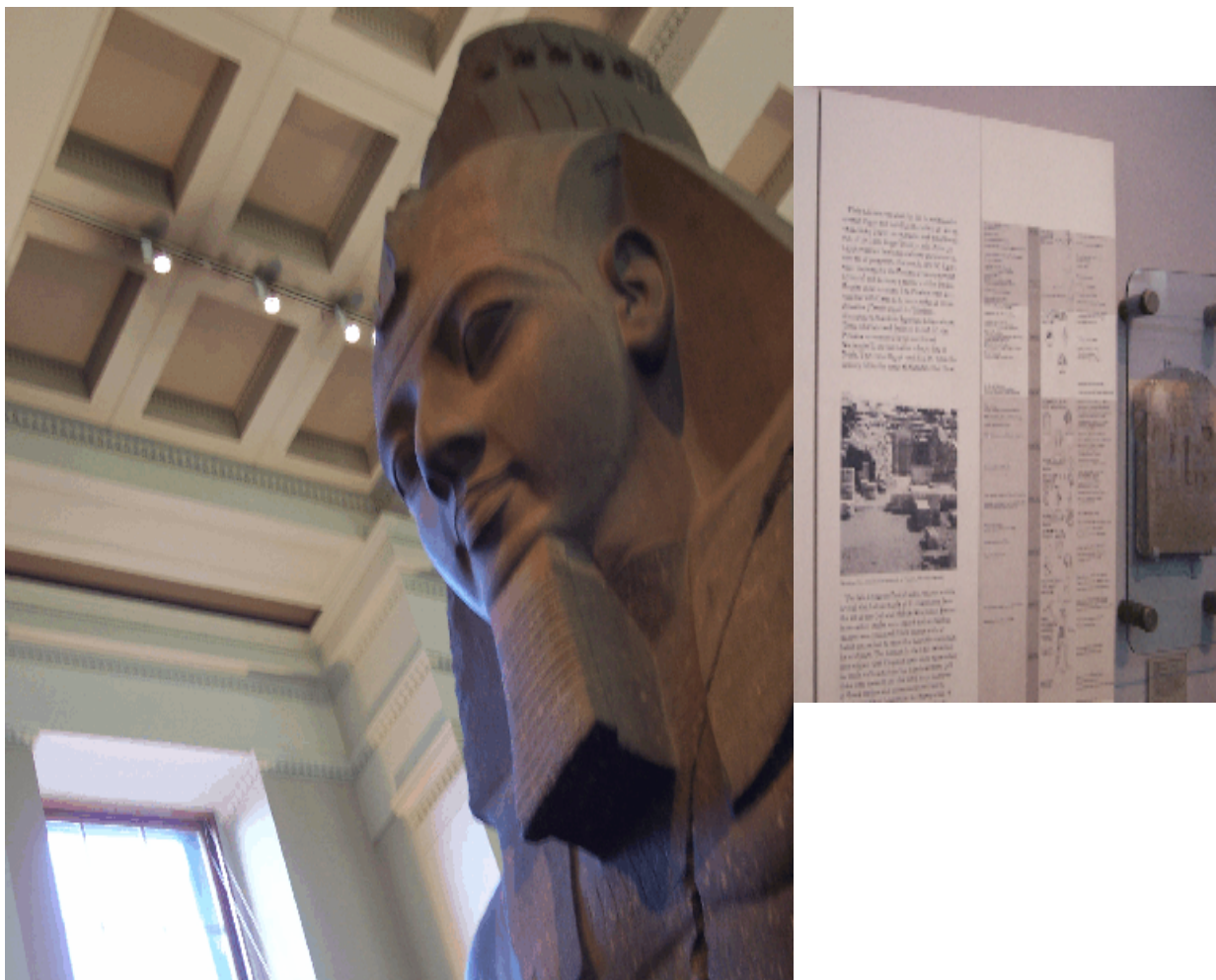
Standing in front of the colossal statue of Ramses II, I imagined all of the great effort Giovanni Belzoni must have exerted in transporting it from the Ramesseum in Egypt to London, what a monumental task. Seeing the Rosetta Stone in person evoked thoughts of Lord Horatio Nelson and the British driving Napoleon's army from Egypt and confiscating the stone monument that would prove to be the key to reawakening the secrets of ancient Egypt, ran through my head. Visiting the British Museum was like hands on history lesson into the development of Egyptology.

Figure 13. The Rosetta Stone



I was very impressed by the way the antiquities were displayed with accompanying labels that were clearly written and descriptive. Many of the statues were labeled with large numbers and a picture of the artifact, to signal those museum goers that had the audio tour technology. Another interesting thing to see was the labeling of some of the larger statues with brail, and signs that clearly stated that it was allowed for the visually impaired to touch and feel the sculptures. It was interesting to see so many school children on field trips to the museum actually studying the artifacts being exhibited and recording there observations on little clipboards. A lot of the lighting on the ground floor exhibition was provided naturally by the windows near the ceiling, other artifacts had their own displays with excellent lighting mounted inside the case. (See Picture of Colossal Sculpture of Ramesses II.)

Figure 14 and 15. Colossal Statue Ramses II taken from Egypt by Belzoni(left)



Descriptive chronological display of ancient Egyptian history (right).



Figure 16.

Mummy Sarcophagi in large display case on second floor of the British Museum

The upstairs exhibition of Egyptian life and funerary archaeology had masterfully arranged display cases that were well lit and labeled, many of the objects in the exhibits on the different aspects of ancient Egyptian life weren't just simply labeled to describe the artifact, there was also accompanying labels describing each aspect of life being represented. This helps the museum visitor gain a better perspective on what they are looking at rather than just reading a description of what it is. One unique thing I noticed in display cases holding many small artifacts was that each artifact didn't have separate descriptive labels in front of it; each one was numbered and described on a large group label individually based on the assigned number. Display cases utilized contrasting colors to separate objects being displayed in the same case, where one object would be placed on a white surface and the other on a raised red surface; an excellent method to gain the viewers attention. The display cases holding the mummies were very large and spacious and put plenty of space between the viewer and the actual specimen being displayed. The lighting in the room with the mummies was mostly natural lighting from the sun; however many cases did have mounted lighting inside them

My overall impression of the British Museum from a museological standpoint is that has an excellent representative collection of ancient Egyptian artifacts that are generally displayed with relative care and attention to detail. The exhibitions are well lit, labeled, and secured and provide the Museum visitor an opportunity to understand many aspects of ancient Egyptian life.

Summary

Since gaining its independence from Great Britain in 1952, Egypt is rapidly developing its own sense of nationalism. Nowhere is this more evident than in the field of archaeology and museology. In traveling to Egypt and observing the tourist business and the museums that harbor archaeological remains of the ancient past, it is definitely evident that the Egyptian government understands now more than ever how important preserving its past cultural heritage really is. Such recognition is beginning to affect the creation of museums, which, by their very nature, usually break the link between object and site. When an artifact is removed from its surroundings and placed within a new taxonomic arrangement with other artifacts, it acquires a different set of meanings, however well intentioned curators may be (Hoelscher 2006: 205). This dynamic differs in the way different museums display ancient Egyptian antiquities in Egypt itself, and furthermore in museums outside of Egypt, such as the British Museum. As stated before there has been a recent shift in the professions of archaeology and museology within Egypt, today many new museums are beginning to be organized and managed by active players in their own cultural heritage.

In visiting different examples of museums housing ancient Egyptian antiquities it was my goal to illustrate just how the exhibition methods and attitudes toward displaying ancient Egyptian antiquities has developed over the past couple of centuries. Based on guidelines of museum assessment from the ICOM/MAP program and its established Code of Ethics for museums my comparative results from all the different museums are the following:

The first museum I visited while in Egypt was the Nubian Museum in Aswan. I was impressed by the amount of security present for this small museum. The road that leads to the museum had a security gate across the road with 3 armed tourist police that stopped me asking me where I was going; when I said the museum they just pointed the way. The museum itself was very clean and modern. The exhibits low not well lit, were arranged with great care and displayed in state of the art display cases, you could tell the museum staff took great pride and care for there cultural heritage. Learning that the museum was the first in Egypt to have an education center for children further illustrates the development of museology. The Nubian Museum is an example of what happens when other countries share resources and money to help preserve the artifacts that are so important to a culture and the future

generations that can benefit from having a true scientific institution to learn from and share that knowledge through cultural events and academic presentations. In my personal opinion the Nubian Museum illustrates what all other museums should strive to do in Egypt, not simply display 'stuff', but display stuff and be a place for people to learn and participate in the preservation of the past.

Next I visited the Alexandria National Museum. Just simply the story of the transformation of the building from a former house of the Pasha of Egypt and hosting place to national dignitaries such as Farouk, to being bought by the Ministry of Culture and transformed into a museum in 1997; illustrates growing interest in taking active control of the cultural heritage present in ancient antiquities. I thoroughly enjoyed the display of the collections and the way they were separated chronologically by the different floors in the building. The method of suspending display cases from the ceiling with superb lighting schemes shows the technological advancement of museology within Egypt and how it creates a much more meaningful experience for the museum visitor. If visiting Alexandria, it would be a great idea to first go to the Alexandria National Museum because it gives an excellent overview of the city's significant history.

The last day I was in Egypt I spent two and a half hours at the Egyptian Museum. I knew before I arrived there, that there were many museological issues inside the exhibitions. I was excited to see the first established museum for housing ancient Egyptian antiquities because I had already seen two examples of modern museums that were established and managed by native Egyptians. The Egyptian Museum being constructed and managed originally by westerners would provide a different perspective and a snapshot into early museology in Egypt, and it definitely did. As previously mentioned, many of the labels and display cases in the museum haven't been moved or appear like they haven't been cleaned in decades, thus illustrating the transition from a British controlled nation to one that is being taken over by native professionals. I don't believe the reasons for many of the museological deficiencies are because the current museum staff doesn't care, I believe it's because the museum is just simply not large enough to handle the exhibition of as many artifacts it has. Furthermore the creation of the new Grand Egyptian Museum in a few years will solve the Egyptian Museums problems of not enough resources to properly handle its exhibitions.

While in London in March I visited the British Museum and studied its ancient Egyptian exhibition. It was important to study the exhibits because they were being presented by people outside of Egypt, where the artifacts came from. It is true that the history of how the collections came to be

housed in the British Museum raise many ethical issues by today's museological standards, and that it is a hotly contested subject in the media. Many of the artifacts present in the British Museum's ancient Egyptian collection were obtained on the antiquities market and most of the antiquities may have questionable provenance and provenience. Even so, I still think it is important to display these ancient relics in a professional manner, no matter what the controversy is. The British Museum does an excellent job of exhibiting in a satisfying manner the ancient Egyptian objects it has in its collection. The one very noticeable difference that was evident in visiting the British Museum, and helped me to better understand the British peoples' reluctance to return or loan the Rosetta Stone to Egypt, was how valuable a marketing icon the stone was to the Museum. There were three gift shops inside the museum, and they sold many souvenirs that displayed the image of the Rosetta stone, it is by far the most popular artifact at the British Museum and undoubtedly draws a lot of its revenue and visitors. In today's museum studies courses, the British Museum is brought up a lot in the conversation of legal acquisition of artifacts and whether or not national masterpieces that represent the identity of another country that are housed in the British Museum should be returned to their home countries (i.e. Elgin Marbles, and Rosetta Stone). This will continue to be a hotly contested subject until each country agrees to sit down and come to some sort of compromise

It is the job of scholars and museums to treat all ancient materials as scientific and educational resources, to take the circumstances of acquisition into consideration, not to refuse to look at art because it lacks the proper parents. Two different arguments-the archaeological position that collecting and the trade destroy archaeological context, and the nationalist position that no object should leave its source country-have become blurred in the eyes of the public and press. There needs to be greater public recognition of the hidden reasoning behind these positions, that only the descendants of those who made the art should interpret it, and only properly excavated art should be subjected to interpretation at all. This is also the subtext of the recent announcement by the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities that foreign excavation will be severely restricted after 2004, and of the increased demands for restitution of art to source countries.

We can benefit society as a whole through honoring our differences and at the same time appreciating that which we share. We must demonstrate the value we place on our neighbors' concerns by crafting policies that support their cultural institutions as well as our own. Having taken much, we should make restitution, not by returning mummies or amphorae but by sharing our own riches:

technology and expertise in management and conservation. A true cultural internationalism is the best hope of preserving mankind's heritage for all (Fitz Gibbon 2005:324-325).

My observations and assessment of the different museums in Egypt and Great Britain illustrate just how significant a development in the exhibition of ancient Egyptian antiquities is currently taking place. It further illustrates that the Egyptian government, especially the Supreme Council of Antiquities is taking very seriously the preservation of ancient artifacts and monuments and how they are displayed. Almost two-thirds of the economic income of Egypt relies on tourism, and the tourism is so great due to the archaeological wonders the country holds. Because the Egyptian Museum in Cairo has become obsolete in many aspects, the development of the new Grand Museum of Egypt on the Giza Plateau will be a state of the art facility that will preserve and display the greatest collection of ancient Egyptian antiquities in the world, while maintaining an authentic connection to the ancient past. The museum is proposed to be very large and open, located on the Giza plateau, with a view of the Pyramids. The cost of the construction is estimated to exceed 550 million dollars, and the museum is planned to be inaugurated in 2009.

Museums are an important case study in displaying this new attitude of nationalism in Egypt as it applies to there national heritage, and the world is being awakened to this awareness through the advancement in the Museums in Egypt and through the Media. The worlds' fascination with ancient Egyptian civilization may never die, and it is important that countries work together with the Egyptians to share the global heritage that is present in the ancient Egyptian exhibitions of museums all around the world.

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