

# *Museum*

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## **Heritage landscape of Egypt**

# Editorial

This issue of *MUSEUM international* has a regional theme that offers a journey through Egypt's heritage landscape, such as it has been appearing over the last ten years. Since the 1992 earthquake in Cairo, we have been witnessing the exponential growth of projects that seek to preserve and enhance the historical diversity of Egypt's heritage, from the remains of the Pharaonic and Islamic periods to today's intangible heritage, as well as its modes of exposure and mediation, from the museums of civilisation to high-tech documentation centres.

What we wish to underline above all – and this comes through clearly in this relatively comprehensive panorama – is the pre-eminently Egyptian nature of the information made available to us here. The authors of this issue are all Egyptian experts, practitioners and high-level cultural officers, bar two notable exceptions, a French archaeologist established in Egypt for the last thirty years and a staff member of UNESCO. This fact summarises the full intellectual intent of this issue, which opens with a contribution by Dr Zahi Hawass, secretary general of the Supreme Council for Egyptian Antiquities.

The fact that the Egyptian heritage landscape is presented by Egyptian authors is doubly meaningful. First of all, it represents an investigation into qualities of knowledge that are different to those deriving from a long tradition, in particular archaeological, related to the colonial past and to the capitalisation of that period. The scheduled transfer of the collections from the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square (founded by the French archaeologist Auguste Mariette), presented here by its director general, Dr Wafaa El-Saddik, and the opening of a Grand Museum of Egypt at the foot of the great pyramids of Gizah, whose object is summarised by its general coordinator, Dr Yassir Mansour, symbolically underscore the break with the past conditions for the production of knowledge. Rethinking the organisation of the art and history collections of ancient Egypt shows a clear determination to establish a diachronic vision of Egyptian civilisation, encompassing both its Pharaonic past and its Arab present. The political significance of this reappropriation of the production of knowledge constructed around objects, is thus backed up, in this specific instance, by a promise to open up new vistas on the consistency and enhancement of a past that is being restored in the continuity of its local expression. This option indicates an obvious inflexion

in the way the country's heritage is managed at the national level, in tune with the orientations adopted at the international level for an integrated approach of categories (between culture and nature on the one hand and tangible and intangible on the other hand), as well as for the restitution of meaningful links between past and present. The initiative taken by the Documentation Centre for Cultural and Natural Heritage (Cultnat), presented by its founder, Fathi Saleh, and its deputy director, Hala Barakat, testifies to the institutional rooting of this option.

The experience drawn from the Egyptian field also makes it possible to reassess the modalities of international cooperation on the issue of heritage preservation and restoration practices. This reassessment was marked by two elements: the taking into account of the lessons learned from the international campaign to preserve the Nubian Monuments and the conditions in which it unfolded on the one hand, and the construction of the Museum of Egyptian Civilisation on the other hand. The Nubian Campaign, which at the time represented a human and technological *tour de force*, no longer carries a particular significance for the international community. Numerous texts in the issue suggest that the current forms of international cooperation leave aside issues relating to the transfer of competencies, in particular technical, and concentrate rather on the transactions surrounding successful concepts and established standards. The establishment, in the Egyptian context, of the concept of a museum of civilisations, such as that presented by the Project Manager, Ayman Abd El-Moniem, clearly shows that the concept reveals its global relevance as it seeks to adapt to local demands and options. In parallel, and initiated by the Burra Charter in Australia<sup>1</sup>, the local negotiation and adaptation of international standards must be understood as the emergence of a capital of expertise that is capable of supporting a diversity of practice in a global context. The models that are being developed from experiences in the field are the expression of a new understanding of standard setting that is transactional and no longer prescriptive. It is with this mindset, which seeks to shed light on the transformation that is underway in terms of practice, that the discussion on the authenticity of restoration work, more particularly in Cairo – which has given rise to highly antagonistic confrontations in past years – has been voluntarily set in a context of reconsideration of current conditions surrounding the production of heritage and its historicisation. Two texts, one by Omnia Aboukorah and the other by Galila El Kadi, deal with these issues. They are completed by the views of a historian and a practitioner.

One final point deserves to be made to complete this bird's eye view of the contents of this issue. Egypt is, in its totality, a heritage icon for the world. Yet this

status does not forbid a timely reassessment of its components, based on contemporary developments and the resurgence of a mythical past. The library of Alexandria, as expressed by Youssef Ziedan and Hoda Elmikaty, is an example of this judicious back-and-forth between the sciences of the past and the sciences of the future, between conditions of conservation and modes of exhibition. The restitution of an overall meaning of the landscape on the left bank of Thebes as proposed by Christian Leblanc, which alone constitutes a challenge both intellectually and in terms of site management, and the systematic recording of intangible heritage on which Ahmed Morsi and Latifa Fahmy are working, are examples that best crystallise the heritage image which today in Egypt bridges the Pharaonic monumentality with the intangibility of knowledge.

This issue of *MUSEUM international* owes much to the support given by Dr Zahi Hawass and to the personal commitment of Ayman Abdel Moniem, as well as to their knowledge of and friendship for UNESCO. Thanks to their efforts, there is a diversity of viewpoints which together make possible the heritage landscape of Egypt presented here. They receive our warmest gratitude.

*Additional editorial note:*

In view of the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Tunis in November 2005, *MUSEUM International* and the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) have undertaken to collaborate editorially in order to ensure the regular publication of the strategic and operational research initiatives undertaken by the Canadian network. The CHIN experience, in terms of digital environments in the field of heritage and of their social impact, makes it one of the key players in the current thinking on the development of knowledge-based societies and the cultural components of that development. The Managing Director of CHIN, Namir Anani, introduces us in this issue to the challenges of increased citizen participation, in particular through the digital cultural contents developed by museums.

**Isabelle Vinson**

| **NOTE**

1. The Burra Charter, drawn up by the Australian National Committee of the International Council of monuments and sites in 1979 and amended several times since, in particular in 1999, is based on the International Charter for the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites (Venice, 1964). The goal of the Burra Charter is to propose guidelines that take into account the expertise and the specificities of the Australian field. See the site [http://www.international.icomos.org/centre\\_documentation/chartes\\_fra.htm](http://www.international.icomos.org/centre_documentation/chartes_fra.htm)

# | A New Era for Museums in Egypt

by Zahi Hawass

*Zahi Hawass is an archaeologist and Egyptologist, and has conducted excavations in Egypt for over thirty years. His most recent discoveries include the Tombs of the Pyramid Builders at Giza and the Valley of the Golden Mummies in the Bahariya Oasis. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, has taught at the University of California in Los Angeles, at Cairo University, and at the American University in Cairo which awarded him an honorary degree this year. Zahi Hawass has written many scholarly articles and academic books, as well as various books aimed at the general public. He has received many awards, including the Golden Plate from the American Academy of Achievement, and is an Explorer in Residence for the National Geographic Society. He is currently Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, whereby he is in charge of all antiquities in Egypt.*

Museums in Egypt have traditionally been storage places for artefacts. Until now, no real philosophy or strategy has been put forward to guide their development. Institutions have been built all over the country to house artefacts from prehistory, the Pharaonic periods, the Greek and Roman eras, the Coptic and Islamic periods, and from modern Egypt until the era of Muhammad Ali. However, the precious objects they contain have been either hidden away in basements or poorly displayed in ways that fail to interest and inform the public. Egyptian museums are also generally lacking in educational programmes for the public. The curators have not devised cultural centres or classes for schools, programmes for children, or programmes for people with special needs.

Ideally, museums should be secure locations to display and preserve artefacts and also educational institutions to teach the public about ancient cultures, with a focus on the ways in which they can learn from and protect our common history. A nation without a past does not have a

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promising future. In Egypt we have a special mission, because our past does not belong to us alone, but belongs to the world as a whole. It is our shared history, our shared heritage.

The Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) and the Ministry of Culture have long recognized the importance of building great museums. However, until now, there has been no written philosophy to set out a vision for the future. No coherent plan was made to create engaging displays or develop cultural or educational messages for visitors. Until recently, only the Nubia Museum in Aswan and the Luxor Museum fulfilled any of these requirements. These two institutions, both designed by the late architect Mahmoud el-Hakiem, feature coherent themes and engaging displays. The Luxor Museum was created to focus on Thebes in the Golden Age of the Pharaohs. Ever since it was opened in 1975, the objects have been elegantly displayed. The Nubia Museum, which was built with the help and supervision of UNESCO, uses elements from Nubian cultural heritage in its design. The artefacts in this museum illustrate Nubian culture from prehistory to the present. The lighting and displays are in keeping with international standards. (The labels are currently being revised.) The circulation of visitors is also carefully planned. Four years ago the Aga Khan Foundation attributed its prize for architecture to the museum. However, neither of these museums has a cohesive educational message to convey to the public.

### **A new strategy**

Over recent decades archaeology in Egypt has been moving from an era of exploration and exploitation

into a new era of conservation, preservation, and education. The SCA has begun to focus on site management plans and drafting, and is beginning to implement these important initiatives at a number of key sites around the country. We are committed to educating native Egyptians about their heritage, so that they will join with us in preserving and protecting the monuments we are privileged to safeguard for future generations.

Egyptian museums are a key to our conservation and education strategy. They can no longer be simply warehouses for storage with outdated displays. Instead, they are being transformed into centres designed to elucidate and protect the past. Egyptian museums are being updated and redesigned, and we are opening new museums throughout the country. These changes will span the entire nationwide system.

As part of this initiative, each museum will have a message along with a written proposal of action for the education of children and adults. The interior design of each museum will comply with international standards. Traditionally, Egyptian museums have displayed their artefacts in ways that focused only on death and the afterlife, but we will now have civilization museums elucidating our culture as a whole and specialized museums revealing specific aspects of life in ancient times.

In general, the people who work in our museums belong to the old era, and need guidance to move into the future. The curators in some of the largest and most frequently visited museums do not even know how many artefacts their museums hold. They do not have an easily

accessible record of each artefact that describes the movement of each item (to the conservation laboratory, to exhibitions inside and outside of Egypt, etc.) and the condition of each item. Plans are currently underway to create an effective computer-based inventory system and to train curators in its use, so that an accurate trace of objects can be kept.

There is a need to keep track of objects within an institution. A recent example is the loss of 387 pieces of jewellery (bracelets dated from the Roman period), which might still be at the Cairo Museum. This is the most serious problem that we face in Egypt because curators currently focus their efforts on helping foreign scholars and photographers. The scholarship of an Egyptian curator, in the eyes of our foreign colleagues, is too often mainly determined by how much assistance he or she is given by the museum. Scholarship of

The basement of the Cairo Museum is another illustration of the lack of global and streamlined organization. The basement is filled with artefacts, some of which have been in storage for more than eighty years. Once they reached the museum basement they were all but forgotten, left to collect dust on their sealed cases. Some boxes were never opened, objects were never examined, and no one recorded or even registered the artefacts. This situation needs to be rectified and is, in fact, being addressed now. An important part of this new initiative is an educational and training programme for curators to help them better understand the variety of responsibilities of curatorship.

Under the new programme, Egyptian museums will fall into one of five categories:

1. Regional civilization museums
2. Site museums



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1. Alexandria National Museum.



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2. Pyramid Complex of Djoser, 3rd Dynasty at Saqqara.

Egyptian curators should be measured in terms of the care they take of the artefacts under their supervision, and by how much they have published from their collections.

3. Specialized museums
4. Greek and Roman, Coptic and Islamic museums.
5. The three great Cairo museums

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### Regional civilization museums

Under the new concept, civilization museums will be dedicated to the entire span of Egyptian history, from the prehistoric period through to the era of Mohammed Ali, and will illustrate the lives of the majority of Egyptians. Museums of this type are being built in Aswan, Sohag, Hargahda, El-Arish, Suez, Alexandria, Qena, and Sharm el-Sheikh. These museums will inform their visitors specifically about the history of the area in which they are built. They will focus on how ordinary Egyptians, not just royalty and the élite, participated in ancient society. These museums will tell the history of the region through artefacts from excavations carried out in nearby sites.

The first civilization museum to be completed is in Alexandria, and is now open to the public. It was originally the villa of the American consul in Alexandria, and was bought and redesigned as a museum by the SCA. The artefacts housed here inform the visitor about the activities of the common people and their culture in Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, Coptic, and Islamic times and also in modern Alexandria of the twentieth century. The museum also displays recent discoveries from underwater excavations.

The new civilization museum in Aswan will be located on the west bank of the Nile, linked with Elephantine Island. The artefacts will concentrate on the history of Aswan – the southern border of ancient Egypt, from prehistory until modern times. The Sohag Museum in the northern part of Upper Egypt, near the ancient site of Abydos, will concentrate on Osiris, the god of the afterlife, the Early Dynastic period and the

development of writing, and will also include the history of the nearby site of Akhmim. The museum is already designed to be built on the east bank of the Nile in Sohag and we have begun its interior design. We are now working on completing the civilization museums in El Arish, near the entrance to Sinai, Suez, and Rashied.

The Qena Civilization Museum will be built on the east bank of the Nile near the site of Denderah; it will focus on the history of the region from predynastic to Graeco-Roman times, highlighting the importance of the temple of Denderah, dedicated to the goddess Hathor. The new museum in Harghadah will elucidate the impact of Sinai on the history of Egypt throughout the ages.

In Sharm El Sheikh, we are now building a museum that will contain masterpieces from the Pharaonic period. This museum will be important for those staying in Sharm El Sheikh and cannot or do not wish to travel to Cairo. It will be open late so people who spend the day at the beach can visit it in the evening. We are considering sending the magnificent golden mask of King Tutankhamun to the museum for a three-month exhibition to attract the public.

### Site museums

These museums will be built near the entrances to specific archaeological sites to house artefacts that have come from local excavations, with a special focus on recent discoveries. They are designed so that visitors will enter the sites they serve with accurate, sound information about the history of the material they are about to see.



There is only one site museum currently in existence in Egypt. This is the site museum at the mortuary temple of Merenptah on the west bank at Luxor. This museum contains artefacts that have come from the recent excavations by the Swiss archaeological mission at this temple.

The first new site museum planned is the Imhotep Museum at Saqqara. Imhotep was the architect who designed the Step Pyramid of Djoser; he became deified in the Late Period and was later associated with the Greek god of medicine. The site of Saqqara is very important, and contains many outstanding monuments from the first Dynasty (c. 3000 BC) to the Late Period. Many Old Kingdom pyramids and elite tombs were built here, and it was the burial place for many leading officials of the New Kingdom. Many foreign and Egyptian missions have excavated at the site and have made valuable discoveries. Most of the artefacts from these expeditions are now stored in two new warehouses that have been built at the foot of the plateau, replacing sixty-five primitive storerooms used previously.

Our plan is not to build any structures within the site, but to remove all of the modern structures which currently impinge on the ancient monuments. The museum will be to the east of the plateau, near the flood plain. In this area, we shall also have the following: an administration building for personnel, which will include lecture facilities; conservation laboratories; a department for architectural restoration; a photographic laboratory; and two new storerooms to house artefacts. These storerooms will allow the display of artefacts, and will be open to scholars. They will be connected with the conservation

laboratory, and will be electronically guarded. This site museum will be unique. It will be small, but capable of housing artefacts that tell the story of the history of Saqqara throughout the Pharaonic period. It will also have a special room to honour Jean-Philippe Lauer, who dedicated his life to the restoration of the Djoser pyramid complex. This will be known as the Lauer Library, and will house his books, plans, notebooks, and his famous hat.

The site of Kom Ombo is a regular stop for tourists, especially those taking Nile cruises. This small temple was dedicated to the crocodile god, Sobek, and features exquisite reliefs, including a unique carving of a set of medical instruments. Sobek was the principal god of this region of Upper Egypt, and the temple also houses many crocodile mummies. Our site management programme for Kom Ombo includes a new museum, a new visitors' centre, and conservation laboratories. Visitors will use the Pharaonic entrance to the temple, and a fence will delineate the site. The site museum will provide guidance to visitors and educate them about the temple and the surrounding area, and will house the crocodile mummies and other interesting artefacts from local excavations.

The Bahariya Oasis in the Western Desert has been the site of a number of major discoveries over the past decade. The most famous of these discoveries is the Valley of the Golden Mummies, an enormous cemetery full of family sepulchres dating from the Graeco-Roman era. We have excavated only a fraction of this site, but have made remarkable finds, including several hundred mummies adorned with plastered and gilded



3. The Temple of Sobek and Horus at Kom Ombo, Greco-Roman period.

masks. In the capital of the oasis, el-Bawiti, we are currently carrying out excavations in an area known as Sheikh Soby. This is the location of a group of 26th Dynasty tombs belonging to the governor of the oasis and his family. There are a number of other important sites in Bahariya, including a temple dedicated to the god Bes, a temple to honour Alexander the Great, the tomb of a high official from the Eighteenth Dynasty, the tombs of merchants from the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, and the temple of Ain el-Muftella. The Bahariya site museum will contain mummies and other artefacts from the excavation of these sites.

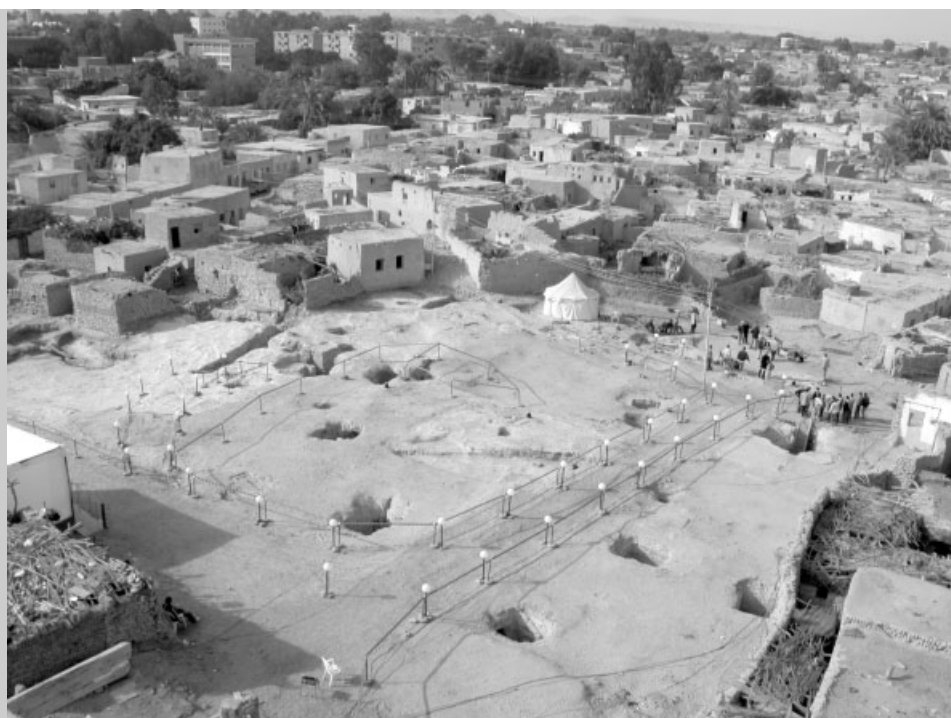
We are also planning to build site museums in Siwa, another oasis in the Western

Desert, best known for its oracle to the god Amun; the Delta site of Tell-Basta, capital city of Egypt for part of the Third Intermediate Period; and Kom el-Shokafa, Alexandria.

### Specialized museums

Specialized museums will focus on some aspects of the history and cultures of Egyptian civilization. For example, we are in the process of building a museum on the east bank of the Nile at El-Minia in Middle Egypt. Shaped like a pyramid, it was designed more than twenty-five years ago by the Hildesheim Museum under the late Dr Arne Eggebrecht, who waited for years for this museum to be built. Now we are making his dream come true. We have solved all the problems that previously held up the construction and have created a museum that will concentrate on the history of the city of Akhenaton, now known as Tell El Amarna. It will also highlight Akhenaton and Nefertiti and their role in the religious revolution that brought their god, the Aten, into prominence. The artefacts mainly come from Amarna and other sites where Akhenaton built temples for the worship of this god.

Another specialized museum currently at the planning stage is the Mosaic Museum in Alexandria. This museum will be built at El Shatby, an area where excavations have revealed many mosaics. Many of the mosaics that have been discovered in Alexandria will be displayed in this museum. The Fayum Portrait Museum will be built at El-Fayum, south-west of Cairo. It will display many of the exceptional Roman period mummy portraits found in the area.



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4. Overview of Sheikh Soby, Bahariya Oasis.

At the Citadel in Cairo, a new Coin Museum will be built to display and describe the history of coins from the Graeco-Roman Period up to modern times. A Medical Museum at Kasr el-Sakkaking, also in Cairo, will display artefacts related to medicine from the Pharaonic period to the present and educate visitors about ancient Egyptian medicine and surgery. This collection will include Old Kingdom surgical instruments recently discovered by the author in the fifth Dynasty tomb of the physician Qar in Saqqara. Other planned specialized museums include the Jewellery Museum in Alexandria and the Textile Museum in Old Cairo, which will feature Egyptian textiles throughout the ages. Another important museum will be the Furniture Museum in Damietta, a town famous for making furniture,

which will display beds, chairs, chests, and the like from the Pharaonic period to today.

Another specialized museum is the Muhammad Ali Museum at Manial el-Roda, which primarily contains artefacts from the royal family. We are working on the development of this museum, creating a new scenario, new installations, modern lighting and other amenities. Similar changes are being made to the Chariot Museum in Boulaq. The modifications to these museums will allow the principal artefacts they contain to interest and inform their visitors in spectacular ways.

Two of the new specialized museum projects have already been completed. The first is

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the Mummification Museum in Luxor. This is an underground facility focused around a large, atmospherically lit gallery that introduces visitors to the history of mummification throughout the Pharaonic period. The mummies in this exhibit are displayed for educational purposes.

The other completed specialized museum recently opened to the public is the extension of the Luxor Museum. This was already one of the most modern museums in the country, with clean, uncluttered displays. We now have a visitors' centre with a film produced by the National Geographic Society to introduce the museum to the public. I would like to present here the scenario of this museum as an example of our new museums and the strategy we are adopting for the permanent collections in regional specialized museums.

The main galleries in the new wing are devoted to an exhibition on the military in the New Kingdom, called 'The Army in the Golden Age'. There are about one hundred masterpieces on display here, transferred from the Cairo Museum, other museums, and storerooms around the country. The new exhibition is designed to complement the original interior of the museum. The space is dramatically lit, and the exhibit is clearly labelled. Two specially designed rooms hold the mummies of Ahmose I, founder of the New Kingdom (c. 1550 BC to 1081 BC), and a king believed to be Ramses I, the first king of the 19th Dynasty (a gift from the Michael C. Carlos Museum in Atlanta, Georgia, USA). Glass cases set into the wall between the rooms hold some of the treasures from the burial of Ahhotep, mother of Kamose and Ahmose: three golden flies and the

ceremonial dagger and axe that belonged to Ahmose.

Another highlight of this exhibition is a seated statue of the great warrior king, Tuthmosis III, found at Deir el-Bahri by the Polish Expedition several decades ago. This statue was badly restored after it was originally found and left in storage on the west bank; it was recently reconstructed by a talented Egyptian conservator. Other important pieces are a hunting chariot from the tomb of Tutankhamun, a group of spectacularly displayed bows and arrows, a colossal alabaster statue of Seti I (son of Ramses I and father of Ramses II), a statue of Nebre, commander of the western border under Ramses II, and the crystalline limestone head of Nakhtmin (an army commander and son of a king).

A ramp leads from the lower galleries to the upper level. At the top of the ramp, the visitor is confronted with three images of Sekhmet, lioness-headed goddess of war. The opposite wall is devoted to an imposing statue of the last great king of the New Kingdom, Ramses III. Part of this was found in the 1930s; more pieces were discovered recently, and the statue was reconstructed for this new exhibit.

The remainder of the upper level is dedicated to an exhibition on technology, art, and writing. There is a statue of May, an architect under Ramses II and Merneptah; a small purple porphyry statuette of Senenmut, the favoured architect and steward of Hatshepsut; and a figure of Ramessunakht, a high priest of Amun during the 20th Dynasty, depicted as a scribe. The cases here contain architect's tools, pigments, palettes, and

objects relating to bronze and faience working. A short film shows the process of making papyrus, and also children learning at a school for scribes.

A ramp then leads the visitor down and out of the exhibit, ending in front of a final niche which will be devoted to new findings from the Luxor area. The first object to grace this display is a master's board, found recently by the Spanish Mission to Dra Abu Naga. This fragmentary board is made of wood covered with stucco, and bears artists' sketches along with three copies of an ancient text, written once by a teacher and twice by a student.

In addition to the exhibition halls, the Luxor Museum now has a museum library, a cafeteria, and a new bookstore, as well as rooms for children's education. Every visitor will see that we are entering a new era, changing our museums from storerooms to centres for culture and education.

### **Greek and Roman, Coptic and Islamic museums**

These three important periods in our history tend to be neglected by the public. The reason for this neglect is that the museums dedicated to these periods have traditionally had uninteresting displays, poor lighting and a lack of available parking. These museums are closed for renovation, so that they can be completely refurbished, with new lighting, new scenarios, libraries, educational facilities, and other amenities for visitors. The new design for the Greek and Roman Museum in Alexandria has one floor set aside for a library, administration offices, and conservation laboratories. The museum will concentrate on showing the artefacts in a new, pleasing, and more

understandable way. We are keeping the façade of the building but renovating the interior completely.

A master plan provides for special treatment of the Islamic period. The existing Islamic Museum in Cairo will be dedicated to the history of Islamic architecture. It is currently closed for renovations. The new design was carried out by an Egyptian architect and a French designer, whose salary was provided by the Aga Khan Foundation as a contribution to the restoration of the museum.

A second Islamic museum is being built at the Citadel. This museum will be devoted to Islamic art. Both museums are scheduled to open in mid 2005 in conjunction with the centennial of the Greek and Roman Museum in Alexandria. The Coptic Museum in Cairo is now under renovation, with a new scenario and displays. Paintings, which are poorly attached to the walls of the museum, are being moved and restored. The work will take one year, and the museum will be re-opened in October 2005. We are planning celebrations to mark the re-opening of each of these museums.

### **The great Cairo museums**

There will be three principal museums in Cairo that will be addressed by our new programme: the Grand Museum of Egypt, to be built near the Pyramids, the National Civilization Museum at Fustat and the existing Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square. Our philosophy is that each museum will have its own character, something special that will attract people. The main feature of the new Grand

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Museum near the Giza pyramids will be the 5,000 artefacts from the tomb of Tutankhamun but its collections will be extensive. The Civilization Museum in Fustat will depict the entire historical landscape of Egypt and will also house the royal mummies. The Egyptian Museum will display the history of art in the Pharaonic period and will also have exhibitions dedicated to the history of Egyptology.

The Grand Museum, scheduled to be completed in 2009, will illustrate the historical, cultural and territorial evolution of Pharaonic Egypt, as documented by archaeological discoveries and historical and epigraphic sources. The collections and individual objects will be used as instruments to illustrate the development of the ancient civilization in its various aspects. Although the main discourse of the exhibitions will not be art history in the traditional sense, objects will still be displayed in ways that highlight their aesthetic value. In addition, the items will be accompanied by related materials such as photographs, drawings, and maps, which will enhance their informational value.

The museum will be organized around five themes: The Land of Egypt, which will focus on the geography and landscape of the country; Kingship and the State, which will focus on the activities and responsibilities of the king, his family, and his highest officials; Man, Society, and Work, depicting the lives of ancient Egyptians; Religion, dealing with gods, their state and folk cults and also including mortuary beliefs; and Culture, Scribes and Knowledge. These themes will be arranged in parallel galleries and will be linked through hypertextual nodes, such as key objects

and special exhibitions. Tours of varying lengths and intensities will be available to visitors.

The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization is being built at Fustat, facing Old Cairo and the Pyramids. This museum will introduce visitors to the sweep of Egyptian history, from the prehistoric period up to the time of Muhammad Ali. Like the Grand Museum, the Fustat Museum will display its artefacts thematically. The Nile, writing, crafts, trades, the arts, agriculture, government, society, beliefs and folklore have already been identified as themes of exhibitions.

The Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square will be dedicated to the history of Pharaonic art. A major renovation of this museum is planned, with newly designed galleries offering facilities for modern displays. The front doors will be used only for entry, and visitors will exit through a new wing to be constructed on the west side of the museum. There will be two additional, underground floors in this wing, where a cafeteria, bookshop, administration offices and a children's museum will be housed. Galleries devoted to the history of Egyptology will feature stories and displays of the major discoveries of Pharaonic monuments.

### Department of Cultural Development

A vital component of the new Egyptian museums is education. A new department dedicated to fostering greater awareness among Egyptians of their ancient past has been opened within the SCA, in liaison with the office of the Secretary General. By educating the public, we both encourage people

to assist us in protecting and understanding the past and help them to acquire skills for the future. A number of significant educational and cultural initiatives have been launched from this office.

### Museum Schools

In 2002, the Cairo Museum School for Adults was opened, offering classes on ancient Egypt. Classes are given in Arabic three times a week in two-hour sessions. Students are given a general grounding in various Egyptological subjects, including language, religion, history, and literature, and graduates are prepared to attend the School of Higher Education. The activities of the Cairo Museum School include visits to the museum itself and to archaeological sites. Part of the tuition goes towards providing each student with a free pass to museums and archaeological sites countrywide. This school is currently functioning at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo; the same concept will soon be implemented in other museums around the country.

The School of Higher Education is an advanced school for graduates, which is part of the Cairo Museum School for Adults. Based at the SCA building in Zamalek, this six-month programme focuses on a specific topic each year (last year was art, this year will be architecture). Classes meet three times a week; in addition, there is a practical session twice a month in which the classes travel to archaeological sites or museums, accompanied by professors or specialized archaeologists.

The Cairo Museum School for Children offers school-age children the opportunity to learn about ancient Egypt. During the summer, we

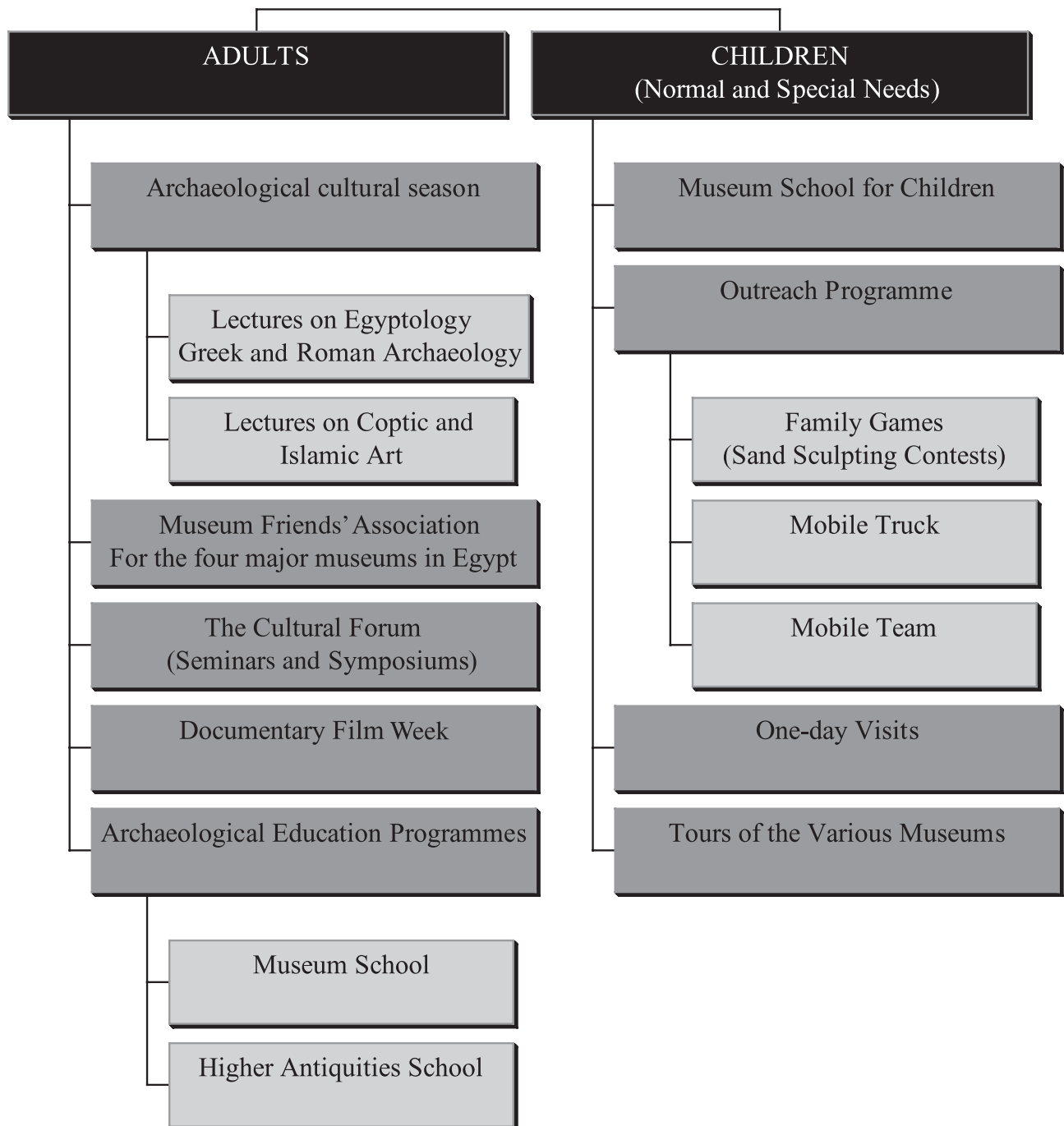
have a special tent set up next to the museum to be used as a workshop where children can learn to draw and sculpt statues. Last summer, the children made a series of plaster dioramas depicting ancient temples and tombs as they would have looked in ancient times. These are lively, colourful scenes, filled with details such as workmen dragging stones or kings visiting their monuments.

Although the Cairo Museum is currently the only museum with a fully functioning school, a number of museums around the country will soon be launching new educational programmes. Here are some examples: the Sharqqiyah museum in the Delta will focus on the customs and heritage of modern Egypt. Workshops will be offered to children to help them understand the material presented in the museum. Here, they will have the opportunity, for example, to make clay statues and write stories and reports about the objects in the museum. The same programme will develop the Museum of San el-Haghar, an archaeological museum in Sharqqiyah that illustrates the history of the region through statues, coffins and other artefacts that have come from excavations in the area.

The archaeological museum in Ismailaya organizes a workshop where children make their own versions of the costumes of Greek kings and Roman emperors. Another workshop enables children to learn about an ancient king of their choice, and another introduces them to the hieroglyphic script.

The Beni Suef Museum is a regional archaeological museum whose collections range

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Cultural Development Strategy





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##### 5. Design for the Museum of San el-Haghar.

from prehistory up to the time of Muhammad Ali. Workshops here focus on ways of understanding the artefacts and history of Egypt through activities such as making an Egyptian calendar, making a pyramid, and learning some hieroglyphs.

The workshops of the archaeological museum in Minia include activities to help children understand archaeological artefacts such as coins and mosaics, drawings and sculptures, masks, and canopic jars. Visits to the site of the Beni Hassan tombs help children to learn about daily life, sports and other activities during the time of the Pharaohs.

The Malawi Archaeological Museum and the Greek and Roman Museum in Alexandria offer workshops designed to teach children the history

of Egypt during the Greek and Roman periods. They teach hieroglyphs and Greek, but also how to make pottery, draw on glass and make models of ships, temples and houses. There is also a workshop for the blind.

##### Museum Friends' Associations

We are beginning to organize a number of Museum Friends' Associations, following models in place at various museums around the world, such as the Louvre in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The principal goal of these networks is to use the resources of civil society to help Egyptian museums reach their full potential. For example, the Museum Friends' Associations will raise money for scholarships to train curators and antiquities staff, enabling them to take courses

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in languages, computers, public relations, and the like. Thus far, the Friends of the Egyptian Museum has been established; it is chaired by the famous actor, Nour al-Sherief.

### Cultural events

Every month we arrange a Cultural Forum on a specific topic. At these gatherings prominent Egyptians and specialists in the field of Egyptology and related disciplines discuss the archaeological problems facing Egypt and its fellow Arab nations. In order to draw large and attentive audiences to these events, the seminar is followed by a cultural or musical performance by a famous artist. The goal of these forums is to open up new channels between the government and civil society, and to provide a place where views can be exchanged and new initiatives can be created to address crucial issues.

The Archaeological Cultural Season offers a series of lectures in English and Arabic by distinguished specialists in Egyptology, Greek and Roman archaeology, and Islamic archaeology. These lectures, given at the rate of two or three a month over the course of three months, highlight major archaeological discoveries and groundbreaking research in these fields.

During the documentary Film Week a selection of the latest documentaries, and other important films about archaeology in Egypt, are shown free of charge to the public. This festival takes place twice a year, first in Cairo and then in another governorate.

The SCA is mounting a number of mobile exhibitions that will travel around the country,

giving the provincial population an opportunity to see entertaining and educational displays. The content of these exhibitions ranges from ancient artefacts to rare archival photographs. These exhibitions are intended to raise awareness of our heritage among children and adults throughout Egypt. Another important initiative is a truck equipped as a museum and classroom, which will travel to rural villages around the country.

A number of other events, now at the planning stage, will raise public awareness of archaeology. For example, celebrations of the solstices will take place at the Temple of Ramses II at Abu Simbel, where the rays of the sun illuminate the inner sanctuary twice a year. The Cultural Development Office is also translating one hundred important books about archaeology into Arabic, giving access to this fundamental information to Egyptians in their native language.

We also have new programmes designed so that children and disabled people can visit various museums and participate in workshops. Two books have been published in Braille and we are working on other programmes for the blind. We are also mounting an exhibition of replicas that will be shown, accompanied by a programme of lectures, at universities, schools, and clubs.

### Conclusion

The museums of Egypt are moving into a new era. The current facilities are being redesigned and upgraded. New displays and visitor amenities will transform our old museums into key educational institutions. At the same time, new museums, planned along modern museological lines, are

being built and will become part of this system. Tourists come to Egypt and stay for a short time and generally visit one museum. In this new era of museums, one of our principal goals will be to encourage tourists to visit many of these new museums, which will enormously enhance their experience of Egypt. Through our cultural development programmes we are reaching out to native Egyptians, offering many new ways and

opportunities to learn about their past, and providing them with new hope and new skills for the future. All these activities strengthen the value of our museums as cultural and educational platforms, and help build our nation. We are working to enhance both the aesthetic and informational value of our museums, offering unforgettable experiences to both foreign tourists and Egyptian visitors.

| Construction and renovation programme of museums

| LIST OF EGYPTIAN MUSEUMS        |                               |   |                                 |                            |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Name                            | Location                      | Museum theme or purpose                           | Construction status             | Planned completion date    |
| Siwa Site Museum                | Siwa Oasis,<br>Western Desert | The archaeology of Siwa                           | Under architectural development | 2006                       |
| Kom el-Shokafa Site Museum      | Alexandria                    | The archaeology of Alexandria                     | Under architectural development | 2006                       |
| Imhotep Museum                  | Saqqara                       | Site museum for Saqqara                           | Objects being chosen            | January 2005               |
| The Document Museum of Abdeen   | Cairo                         | The royal documents of the Abdeen Palace          |                                 | 2005                       |
| Sharm el-Sheikh Museum          | Sharm el-Sheikh,<br>Red Sea   | Pharaonic culture                                 | Beginning second stage          | First stage in 2004        |
| El-Arish Museum                 | El-Arish, Sinai               | Civilization of the area from prehistory to today | Beginning second stage          | First stage 2004           |
| The National Museum of el-Swiss | El-Swiss                      | Civilization of the area                          | Beginning second stage          | First stage completed 2004 |
| The Ikhenaton Museum            | Minia, Middle Egypt           | The Amarna Period                                 |                                 | First stage February 2006  |
| The Museum of Islamic Art       | The Citadel,<br>Cairo         | Islamic art                                       |                                 | May 2005                   |
| Museum of Islamic Architecture  | Babel Khalek,<br>Cairo        | Islamic architecture                              |                                 | May 2005                   |

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| CONTINUED

| <b>Name</b>                           | <b>Location</b>                | <b>Museum theme<br/>or purpose</b>                                   | <b>Construction status</b> | <b>Planned completion<br/>date</b>  |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| The Coptic Museum                     | Old Cairo                      | Coptic art and architecture  |                            | March 2005                          |
| The National Museum<br>of Rashied     | Rashied                        | Civilization of Egypt from<br>prehistory to today                    |                            | February 2005                       |
| The Royal Jewellery<br>Museum         | Alexandria                     | The jewels of Muhammad Ali   |                            | June 2005                           |
| Kafr el-Sheikh Civilization<br>Museum | Khafr el-Sheikh                | Civilization of Egypt from<br>prehistory to today                    |                            | December 2005                       |
| The Chariot Museum                    | Boulaq, Cairo                  | the chariots of Muhammad Ali   |                            | December 2005                       |
| The Harghada National<br>Museum       | Harghada                       | History of the area  |                            | Starting in December<br>2004        |
| The Sohag National<br>Museum          | Sohag, northern<br>Upper Egypt | History of the area  |                            | Starting in October<br>2004         |
| Port Said National<br>Museum          | Port Said                      | History  | In progress                |                                     |
| The Greek and Roman<br>Museum         | Alexandria                     | Art and architecture of the<br>Graeco-Roman Period                   |                            | Started in November<br>2004         |
| Site Museum of Sobek                  | Kom Ombo                       |  |                            | Completion for<br>December 2004     |
| National Museum<br>of Egypt           | Fustat, Cairo                  | Civilization of Egypt from<br>prehistory to today                    |                            | 2007                                |
| The Grand Museum<br>of Egypt          | Giza, Cairo                    | Pharaonic art, architecture,<br>and culture                          |                            | 2009                                |
| The Egyptian Museum,<br>Cairo         | Tahrir Square,<br>Cairo        | Pharaonic art  |                            | Development beginning<br>2006       |
| The Mummification<br>Museum           | Luxor                          | Mummification  |                            | Completed and open to<br>the public |
| The Luxor Museum                      | Luxor                          | The glory of Thebes  |                            | Completed and open                  |
| Site Museum<br>of Merenptah           | West bank,<br>Luxor            | Artefacts from excavations<br>at the mortuary temple of<br>Merenptah |                            | Completed and open                  |
| The Nubia Museum                      | Aswan                          | Archaeology of the Aswan<br>area                                     | Labels to<br>be redone     | Completed and open                  |

| CONTINUED

| <b>Name</b>                              | <b>Location</b> | <b>Museum theme<br/>or purpose</b>  | <b>Construction status</b> | <b>Planned completion<br/>date</b> |
|--|-----------------|---|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| The Civilization Museum<br>of Alexandria | Alexandria      | The history of Alexandria<br>throughout the ages                          |                            | Completed and open                 |
| Aswan National Museum                    | Aswan           | History   |                            | Starting in January<br>2005        |
| The Library of Alexandria                | Alexandria      | The history of the library<br>and of Alexandria in the<br>Greco-Roman era |                            | Completed and open                 |
| The Qena Civilization<br>Museum          | Qena            | Civilization of Qena from<br>prehistory to today                          |                            | Starting in December<br>2004       |
| The Fayoum Portrait<br>Museum            | Fayoum          | Mummy portraits from the<br>Graeco-Roman period.                          |                            | Starting in December<br>2004       |
| The Agricultural Museum                  | Cairo           | Agriculture in Pharaonic<br>times   |                            | Open                               |

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# | The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization

by *Ayman Abdel Moniem*

*Ayman Abdel Moniem obtained his B.A. in archaeology from the University of Cairo in 1989. He is currently director of the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization.*

The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC) is currently the most important project undertaken in cooperation with UNESCO in Egypt. Its significance comes from its theme and collections which are related to one of the most ancient civilizations of the world, one that played a major role indeed in the development of humanity.

The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization is also a significant outcome of the International Campaign to save the Monuments of Nubia. After most of the Nubian monuments had been saved, the International Campaign's Executive Committee decided to crown this great achievement with the establishment of two museums. The first is the Nubia Museum in Aswan whose collections relate to the history of southern Egypt and result from excavations and documentation work for the safeguarding campaign in Nubia. The second museum is the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization which will be a major entry point to Egyptian civilization.

The new International Executive Committee for the establishment of the Nubia Museum in Aswan and the NMEC in Cairo decided to begin with the construction of the Nubia Museum and the preservation of what had been saved during the campaign. The museum opened in November 1997. In the meantime, work on the

NMEC was limited to architectural plans and searching for a suitable location. It was agreed that it could not be in the centre of Cairo where urban constraints would have limited the ambitions of the project. Finally, the joint efforts of the Egyptian authorities and the Ministry of Culture resulted in finding a site which is ideal for the following reasons: firstly, the site is geographically connected with the Al Maa'di civilization, one of the most significant archaeological sites that can be traced back to the beginning of Egyptian history; secondly, it is a part of Al-Fustat, the first Islamic capital, and is linked, geographically and historically, to the Churches Area in Egypt. It is therefore a reflection of tolerance in Egypt: the land where Jews, Christians and Muslims live peacefully together. Thirdly, the site is visually connected to all historical urban sites of Greater Cairo. It is the meeting point of many cultures. In the south, the Helwan and Al Ma'aadi cultures represent the prehistoric period in Egypt. In the far west, the Saqqara pyramid and the Giza pyramids symbolize the Pharaonic period. In the near west, stand the Babylon castle from the Roman period and churches from the Coptic period. Islamic historic Cairo in the north and the nineteenth-century Mohammad Ali Citadel in the north-east complete the cultural and visual landscape of Egypt up until modern times. The site also includes a rare natural lake, Ain Al Seera, the only remaining lake in Cairo. Nested in a network of main roads, the site can be reached in thirty minutes without needing to enter the downtown area.

The site itself was a stimulant for resuming work on the establishment of the NMEC and to review all the plans and policies that had been

prepared for over more than twenty years. The new impetus coincided with the museum's emergence in Egypt on the eve of the twenty-first century. The four years of co-operation between UNESCO's experts and Egyptian experts has also been a key element in the search for expressing Egyptian Civilization with the possibilities of the twenty-first century.

The project has been divided into two phases. The first preparatory phase (studies and an international competition) ended with the launch of work at the site, in June 2004, and the placement of the cornerstone in the presence of Mrs Susan Mubarak, the First Lady of Egypt, Mr Farouk Hosni, Minister of Culture and Mr Abdel Rehim Shehata, the Governor of Cairo. The second phase, the construction of the museum, should be completed in 2008 with the subsequent opening of the museum. This is an ambitious programme with a tight schedule that requires expertise and collaboration with the international community.

### **The philosophy of the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization**

Egyptian civilization is characterized by consistency and stability through immemorial times. The geographical and climatic conditions have hardly changed, except for a slight difference in the winter rainfall. Egypt's land and nature are the main sources of a love of life and a yearning for immortality. Egypt boasts of being the birth place of the most ancient central government in history. Yet Egypt's cultural unity precedes its political unity. This indicates the harmony and steadfastness of the cultural texture of its people since the end of prehistoric times.

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The land of Egypt nurtures a surge of human emotions which has undoubtedly had an impact on its people. The River Nile, which flows

in swamps. Throughout the history of Egyptian civilization, the River Nile has undergone numerous processes of regulation and adjustment



6. Model of the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization by architect El Ghazali Kesseiba, 2004.

through the centre of this land, nourishing it, taught Egyptians how to calculate days and years. The Nile urged them to adapt to a life of order, struggle and peril, at a time of devastating and destructive floods. It was virtually the first impetus behind the unity that was established between Upper Egypt and the Delta. Therefore, it truly deserves to be called the 'Two Lands Wedlock' as ancient Egyptians used to refer to it in their texts. The Nile was a resourceful and permanent source of irrigation and renewable fertility. It was also a waterway which helped people travel and communicate. This communal fledgling society started out by building irrigation canals and filling

to provide the utmost benefit, until it has become not only the principal vein of life, but also the primary source of power in Egypt. Art in ancient Egypt was dedicated first and foremost to serving religious beliefs. This means that artefacts were a practical expression and true reflection of the teachings of religion and faith of a people who lived in a quest for immortality.

### Policies and goals

The National Museum of Civilization has been planned to mirror this philosophy and will be the only museum in Egypt to present an extensive



overview of Egyptian civilization throughout the ages. It should therefore be a priority for visitors and a museum that nobody should miss. In order to accomplish its mission, the museum has established a general strategy. The first component of this strategy is the collection of material evidence of Egyptian civilization throughout history. No Egyptian museum currently holds examples of all such materials in a single place. The Museum of Civilization will shoulder the responsibility of bringing together a complete set of antiquities, illustrating Egyptian civilization from the earliest times up to the present.

The second component of the global policy is to establish an effective policy to link the current location of the museum to the heritage locations surrounding it. These heritage locations can be divided into three spheres. The first sphere includes Historical Cairo, Al-Maadi and Old Cairo and should be linked thematically with the museum's activities so that the museum constitutes a stop on the itinerary of tourists visiting this area. The second sphere covers archaeological sites and museums which are relatively close in proximity: the Memphis Necropolis, the Cairo Museum and the new Grand Museum of Egypt at Giza. The museums should connect their cultural agendas to the activities being developed at these sites so that the visit of the museum becomes an integral part of the typical visitor's route. A joint cultural agenda would be one of the outcomes of a strong scientific communication policy with these institutions. The Museum of Civilization will contain artefacts from all over Egypt and will thus be linked to all heritage sites. This large space constitutes the third sphere. Visitors to Egypt would be informed at a number of key sites of the existence of the

museum, as well as its programmes and goals. Direct contact with the staff working at these sites would facilitate communication on major discoveries and developments at these sites, thus enabling the museum to be an effective partner with these sites.

The search for a comprehensive policy for developing collections is the third element of the global policy. By a comprehensive policy, we mean one that concerns exhibited and stored collections. In order to achieve this policy, we intend (a) to collect objects from archaeological storerooms and museums all over Egypt and to classify them according to the museum's philosophy; (b) to use the museum as a future storage place for all rare and unique pieces, for at least one hundred years, reserving excavation results in close co-ordination with the Supreme Council of Antiquities; (c) to launch a media campaign encouraging Egyptians to donate their private collections to the museum, with mention of their names in the museum records; this campaign would aim mainly at collecting nineteenth- and twentieth-century Egyptian heritage; and (d) to assign an annual budget for purchasing unique collections sold on the art market.

Training in conservation and preservation techniques and in museology is the fourth major component of the global policy. Investment in laboratories and specialized maintenance areas created for the new museum will have a positive impetus in the fields of preservation, maintenance and restoration, both in museums and at sites throughout Egypt. Training carried out at the museum will be offered to archaeologists and conservators with practical applications either at

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the museum or in the field, thus contributing to upgrading the national scientific level in various areas of museum specialization. The museum

national levels. This interaction is a key factor in illustrating the continuity and persistence of Egyptian civilization throughout its different



7. Overview of the NMEC construction site, archaeological diggings and provisional staff facilities with conservation laboratories, El Fustat, Cairo.

intends to play an effective role in continuously upgrading the skills of its personnel, acting as a resource centre for training in museum sciences in Egypt, and ultimately constituting a national training centre for Arab and African countries in the fields of museology, conservation and restoration.

### The museum and society

The global policy set out for the Museum of Civilization intends to reflect an interactive process to be developed with society at both the local and

phases. To achieve this goal, research will be conducted to highlight and document elements that have remained significant up to the present, whether they relate to daily life, customs and traditions, or religion. This interactive process would help preserve these elements through a contextual presentation of their social continuity.

A documentation centre for the tangible and intangible heritage of Egyptian civilization will be the instrument of this policy. This centre will act as a national archiving centre for Egyptian civilization, collecting and studying

documentation through an integrated approach. It will collect material related to (a) architectural, construction and ornamental documentation; (b) intangible heritage and (c) traditional arts and modern heritage of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The vocation of the museum's documentation centre is to be a repository of the cultural memory of Egypt, using advanced documentation techniques and with an impact on the global preservation and conservation process of Egyptian heritage. The Museum of Civilization is also pioneering a comprehensive strategy for the collection and revival of traditional arts and crafts which were once popular in Egyptian society, especially during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These arts and crafts are seriously threatened with extinction. The museum intends to provide the best methods and means of support that would enable skilled craftsmen to continue to practise their crafts and transfer their knowledge to a new generation. This policy will be linked to commercial activities developed at the museum. Regarding intangible heritage, the documentation centre's policy will include action against foreign piracy of Egyptian cultural and traditional assets.

The role of the museum is thus not restricted to the collection and preservation of heritage as it also seeks to revive heritage and spread knowledge of it among the various strata of society in a significant attempt to link society to its ancestral cultural roots. A programme of comprehensive databases will be aimed at different social groups, from researchers to Egyptian citizens and international tourists, and available in different languages in the main exhibition rooms of the museum: in the reception halls to help visitors,

in the education centres for schools and in the libraries for scholars.

### **Communication and educational policy**

The Museum of Civilization will play the role of a communication centre for Egyptian heritage, past and present, and be part of an international network of museums working on collections from Egypt.

The role of the network will be to organize a comprehensive programme of local and international exhibitions in archaeology and in traditional arts and crafts. An annual programme of archaeological exhibitions for a three-month period is planned, based on the museum excavation missions and on the collections in storage. International exchanges will not be underestimated in the exhibition programme and should represent a significant source of income to the museum.

Through the network, the museum will also seek to be a resource centre concerning the most important and most recent research on Egyptian civilization. For many people, a website will be the sole link with the museum. This website will provide access to the websites of other important museums and will be updated on a daily basis to reflect the activities of the museum as well as the cultural activities taking place in Egypt at the same time. This will undoubtedly foster the international scope of the museum and will attract new segments of the public to the museum.

The framework that has been set for the development of a comprehensive education

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programme is ambitious but is aimed at matching the historical significance of Egypt, its people and its civilization since the origins of its various cultures. The educational programme will cover various levels ranging from the pre-school stage up to adults and seniors. It will also take into account people with special needs as well as those with learning difficulties. In doing so, it will conform to international standards by developing wider access to the museum's collections and in turning the museum into an international educational centre. A number of local affiliated educational centres will also be established. These centres will work within the same museum policy framework and will be located in the different districts of Greater Cairo. Vacant buildings owned by the Supreme Council of Antiquities could host these centres which, in the future, could make up an extensive educational network under the umbrella of the Museum of Civilization.

### **Cultural events and entertainment programmes**

The unique location of the Museum of Civilization, easily accessible and providing large parking areas in the urban environment, will be exploited to develop an artistic and cultural programme. Throughout the year, the Museum of Civilization will sponsor cultural events, such as music, drama, cinema and folklore activities, and will hold an annual festival focusing on specific aspects of Egyptian cultural heritage and its different regional characteristics. The Museum of Civilization will also seek to participate in all international and national cultural festivals that take place in Egypt such as the Cairo International Film Festival, the International Festival for Experimental Theatre, the International Folklore Festival, the Arabic

Music Festival, and the Music for All Festival. The museum will therefore become a place that attracts people who are interested in intangible heritage and the performing arts and who will want to visit the museum regularly.

The environment of the museum and especially the presence of the Ain Al-Seera lake will be fully used to turn the area into an attractive spot for cultural leisure and entertainment. Coffee shops and restaurants will be located in the vicinity of the lake to allow visitors to stay longer and also attract a broad section of Egyptian society which enjoys places with these services. The policy of the museum stipulates that it should be provided with an integrated shopping mall to furnish the museum with commercial facilities. Although it will be an unprecedented and independent centre, the mall will fall under the supervision of the museum's administration. This mall will help to increase the number of visitors to the museum, especially Egyptians, and will contribute significantly to the museum's commercial income.

The challenge for the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization is first of all to finalize construction of the museum and its services according to schedule. However, and more importantly, it must also learn lessons from other similar institutions in the world and be able to reformulate successful policies within the Egyptian context.

# | The Egyptian Museum

by Wafaa El-Saddik

*Wafaa El-Saddik obtained her PhD in Egyptology and Archaeology from Vienna University in 1983. Since then, she has worked in different museums and organizations. She was general director of The Scientific Office of The Supreme Council of Antiquities in Egypt from September 2003 to May 2004. She is currently general director of The Egyptian Museum. She has many publications such as – ‘Jar sealings of Hor-Aha with representations of the Seth-Animal’ (English); ‘The twenty-sixth Dynasty Necropolis at Giza’ (English); ‘The Cheops Boat Museum’ (English and Arabic); and ‘Cheops’ Hidden Depth’ in HORUS, the Egypt Air magazine vol.5.1987 (English and Arabic).*

The Egyptian Museum is like an open book on the history of ancient Egypt and a repository of the nation’s memory of that important historical period. The world’s largest collection of Pharaonic antiquities is housed in the wings of the museum, the idea of which was conceived at a time when interest in the ancient civilization of Egypt was increasing, particularly following Napoleon Bonaparte’s Egyptian campaign of 1798, which was accompanied by a group of scholars who painstakingly recorded Egypt’s antiquities and geographical and environmental landmarks in the famous book *Description de l’Egypte* between 1809 and 1828. This interest on the part of Europe coincided with that of the Governor of Egypt, Muḥammad ‘Alī Pāshā (1805–48), who enacted laws to prevent the removal of Egyptian antiquities from the country by foreign consulates, merchants and European collectors of works of art and antiquities, all of them rivalling to loot Egypt’s antiquities and to smuggle them abroad.

In 1828, Muḥammad ‘Alī Pāshā asked the French scholar Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832), who was called the father of

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Egyptology and renowned for his success in deciphering the hieroglyphs, to compile a book on Egypt's Pharaonic antiquities with a view to their preservation. Champollion accordingly produced his well-known work *Monuments de l'Égypte et de la Nubie*. Muḥammad 'Alī also decreed that objects of antiquity should be gathered together in a building in al-Azbakīya Gardens, located in central Cairo, that was to become Egypt's first antiquities museum. The premises of the Al-Azbakīya Museum were, however, unequipped to accommodate any more of the archaeological finds that were constantly being made, and its contents were moved to other premises in the Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Citadel. Then in 1855, when 'Abbās I was Governor of Egypt, the Austrian Duke Maximilian came to Egypt and visited the Citadel Museum. As a collector of antiquities and *objets d'art*, he asked the Governor for some of the ancient artefacts in the museum, and was presented with the entire collection, which became the mainstay of the Egyptian collection in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum. By that time, the French archaeologist Auguste Mariette, a great lover of Egypt, had already begun preparations for the construction of a new museum at Būlāq, right on the bank of the Nile. Appointed Director of Antiquities by the then Governor of Egypt, Sa'īd Pāshā, Mariette drafted laws designed to halt the removal of antiquities from the country and also successfully uncovered numerous relics from different archaeological areas, in particular Saqqāra, in which he was particularly interested. He thus enriched the Būlāq Museum collection, but in 1878, the museum and its contents suffered immense damage as a consequence of a disastrous Nile flood. The antiquities were therefore temporarily moved to another museum, namely the Ismā'īl Pāshā Palace



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8. View of Cairo and of the Egyptian Museum.

Museum in Gīza, where they remained until transferred to the current Museum in Taḥrīr Square in 1902.

### The Taḥrīr Museum

The construction of a large museum to house the vast quantity of ancient artefacts resulting from the growing number of archaeological finds became crucial. The Ministry of Public Works consequently commissioned the French architect Marcel Dourgnon to design the museum, for which he won an award when it was erected in Taḥrīr Square in the centre of Cairo, under the supervision of Dourgnon's successor, the French scholar Gaston Maspero, whose various discoveries and key works enhanced the field of Egyptology. He was the first to keep a record of antiquities, doing so in a series of enormous registers.

The ground floor of the Egyptian Museum has an exhibition area of 5,400m<sup>2</sup> dedicated to the chronological display of Egyptian antiquities. The first floor is set aside for the display of ancient objects of Egyptian civilization, arranged by topic, and also holds

complete archaeological collections, all in an area covering 3,500m<sup>2</sup>. The second floor is devoted to collections of sarcophagi from different eras and is reserved for scholars, although a plan is under way to open it to the general public. The museum also houses a library containing everything hitherto published on Egyptian antiquities since the nineteenth century.

Visitors climb up to the entrance in the centre of the façade of the museum, via a number of steps after walking through the garden of the museum. In the middle of the garden lies a beautiful pool, in and around which are papyrus and lotus plants. The garden also contains groups of important monuments made of solid stone.



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9. Exterior (left) and interior (right) of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

The foundation stone of the museum was laid in April 1897 by the Khedive ‘Abbās Ḥilmī II, and the Museum was officially opened on 17 November 1902.

### Architectural description of the museum

The museum was deliberately constructed in classical Roman style, its façades boasting magnificent curves and harmonious columns and cornices. In addition, they are decorated with statues, relief inscriptions, ornamentations and motifs intended to demonstrate the grandeur and power of the building and its importance to history, culture and civilization.

The ground plan of the Egyptian Museum is T-shaped and the façade is approximately 115 metres long and 22 metres high. There are identical openings on both sides of the entrance, as well as two other entrances on the far right and left, one for staff and the other leading to the library.

Lying on either side of the main entrance are a reception room for important visitors, a public relations room and various stands selling models, gifts and academic books. The visitor then arrives at the distribution and guidance room, which is covered by a semi-spherical dome containing apertures to let in natural light which

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supplement the artificial lighting. This dome is supported by four pillars which extend to the highest part of the museum, thus making a vertical connection between the ground and first floors. Reaching the full height of the museum, the mid-section of the ground floor is approximately  $45 \times 16\text{m}^2$  and sits low on a number of steps leading up from the floor. The display in this section has been made to resemble ancient Egyptian temples, and consists of huge portals and statues, such as those of Amenhotep III and his wife Tiy. This part of the museum has a gabled ceiling covered by glass panels, which let in some of the soft light needed to create the awe-inspiring atmosphere of Egypt's ancient temples. This is the centre of the museum, with galleries and rooms on all sides; beginning to the left of the entrance, continuing round until again reaching the entrance in a historical sequence that starts with the pre- and early dynastic periods and continues on to the Old, Middle and Modern Kingdoms, and finally the late period.

On the ground floor, the height of some of the galleries and rooms ranges between 7 and 8 metres. It reaches 15 metres in various other rooms and a maximum of 22 metres in the main hall mentioned above, which contains objects of immense size. The museum has 107 rooms in all. Unlike the ground floor with its massive statues, the first floor houses statuettes, a collection of relics from Tutankhamun, jewellery and the Mummy Room. Another new room is currently being prepared to accommodate the remaining royal mummies. Most of the upper floor rooms overlook those below to afford visitors a detailed view of the upper parts of the huge statues, thus dynamizing the display. Below the ground floor,

the basement consists of a number of intersecting vaults supported by pillars and bearer walls designed to lessen the heavy load created by the huge objects above. The basement is the main storage room of the museum for major antiquities uncovered during archaeological digs, and contains tens of thousands of artefacts from various archaeological periods and areas.

In constructing the museum, attention was paid to ensuring ease of movement and smooth access between the various sections. Stairways were built in the four corners in order to facilitate access between the ground and upper floors. The museum also has three large and secured side doors through which large heavy objects can be brought in and out. These doors remain closed and are only opened when necessary.

Plans are afoot to build an extension on the western side of the museum in order to accommodate restoration workshops, information and service centres, a cafeteria and gift shops, as well as an education section and administrative offices. The Egyptian Museum is divided into seven sections: Relics of Tutankhamun; Antiquities from the Predynastic period, the Early Dynastic period and the Old Kingdom; Antiquities from the first intermediate period and Middle Kingdom; Antiquities from the New Kingdom; Antiquities from the Late and Graeco-Roman periods; Ancient coins and papyri; Sarcophagi and scarabs.

Generally speaking, the antiquities in the museum are displayed in the chronological order of ancient Egyptian history. Any one section, however, may contain various collections of



artefacts arranged by type rather than period. Such artefacts are displayed in glass cabinets labelled with descriptions of each object and details of its period, origin and the material used in its manufacture. Not displayed in glass cabinets are some of the large heavy objects, which are also labelled with explanations. In addition is the Centenary Room, which was fashioned out of part of the museum basement in order to stage a stunning exhibition entitled 'Hidden Treasures', commemorating, in 2002, the centenary anniversary of the construction of the Egyptian Museum.

As the museum is now crammed with antiquities which need adequate space to allow for the display of each piece, it has become necessary to think of building a new museum in Gīza, close to the hill of the Pyramids. This museum which is to be called the Grand Museum, is intended to alleviate the crowding in the Egyptian Museum in Taḥrīr Square.

An exhibition plan for this Grand Museum has been elaborated, including several main topics, first of all the land, geography and fundamental characteristics of Egypt, such as the Nile, water resources and the desert. The second topic covers kingship and state through the ruling dynasties, the various classes and wars, as well as architecture and construction. The third topic is society and work and will include administration, arts, crafts, homes and daily life, as well as sports, games and music. The fourth topic is focused on religion and its various elements in terms of funerary rites and worship, the sanctification of animals, places of worship, priests and various objects of worship. The fifth subject is knowledge and scribes in

ancient Egypt. A key part of this museum will be dedicated to exhibiting a collection of the relics of King Tutankhamun, all of which are in the Egyptian Museum.

# | The Grand Museum of Egypt Project: architecture and museography<sup>1</sup>

by Yasser Mansour

*Yasser Mansour has been general co-ordinator for the Grand Museum of Egypt project since 2001. He is also Professor of Architectural Design at Ain Shams University in Cairo. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1990 and has taught architectural design in the United States, Abu Dhabi, and Egypt. He has published numerous research papers related to design theories, architectural issues, and museography. He edited a two-volume book on the results of the International Architectural Competition for the Grand Museum of Egypt, published by the Ministry of Culture, Cairo, 2003.*

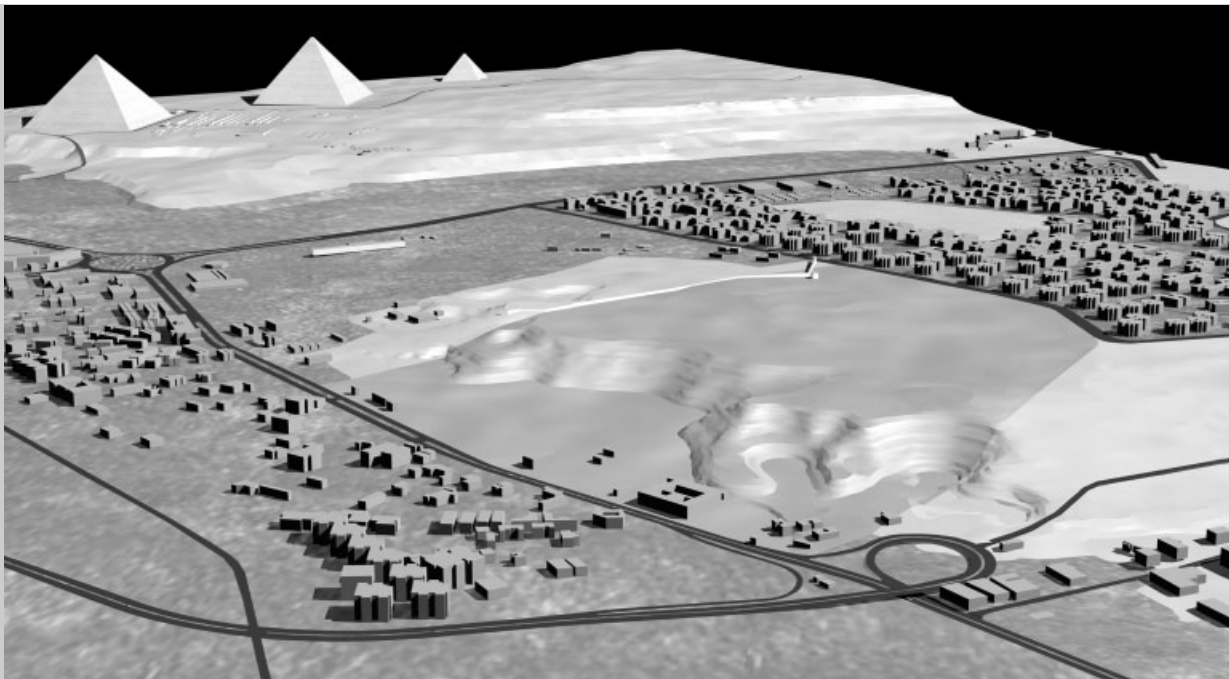
## Introduction

On 7 January 2002, the Egyptian Ministry of Culture launched an international architecture competition for the design of the new Grand Museum of Egypt. The competition attracted 2,227 architects from 103 countries. It was an open invitation to architects and consultants from around the world to engage in a challenging act of creative design that stipulated a unique architecture for the long anticipated Grand Museum of Egypt. Neighbouring the Giza pyramids, the new museum had to pay tribute to the eternal ancient Egyptian monuments, treasures, and history. The project aims at establishing a state-of-the-art museum complex and facilities, providing access to a broad range of information. The complex should provide its visitors with an enjoyable, entertaining, educational and cultural experience.

The architectural design competition comprised two stages. The first stage consisted of a

preliminary conceptual proposal, generally outlining and illustrating the approach to the design theme. In August 2002, 1,550 international architects and firms from 83 countries submitted their conceptual designs. The jury, convened in

culture of the Pyramids. Three significant elements govern the layout of the new museum within the site: first, the plateau edge, which divides the site into higher and lower sections; secondly, the view towards the Pyramids; and



© Technical Committee of the Grand Museum of Egypt

10. Three dimensional view of the site for the establishment of the Grand Museum of Egypt.

October 2002, selected only twenty designs to pass on to the second stage of the competition, which consisted of a preliminary design to be built on site, responding to the requirements of the programme. The jury met once again in May 2003, and selected the winning project. Design and construction details were completed in June.

### The architecture of the new museum

The Grand Museum is located between the modern complexities of Cairo and the ancient

thirdly, the approach from the Cairo–Alexandria Desert Road.

### *‘Architecturalizing’ the face of the plateau*

The design of the Grand Museum begins by forming a new ‘edge’ to the plateau, by creating a gentle slope as a thin veil of translucent stone structured by fractal geometry, opening and closing like folds within the desert sand. As seen from Cairo, this newly inscribed surface of translucent stone constructs a dynamic identity; yet from within the museum, this surface traces a new visual

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trajectory towards the Pyramids. The wall of the museum can be interpreted as a rhythmic pattern of structural (physical) and spatial effective folds within the plateau face, 'architecturalizing' and intensifying its timeless surface.

### *Between the space of the pyramids*

The museum occupies a void within a three-dimensional frame inscribed by a set of visual axes from the site to the three pyramids. The lines that structure the museum are traced along these same visual lines. The museum is structured along the ascent from the entrance and its parks to the Plateau level.

### *Looking towards Cairo*

The New Museum is located at the edge of the desert, between the Pyramids and Cairo. It acts as the intersection between modernity and antiquity, literally re-orienting the traveller from the modernity of Cairo and Alexandria to the ancient heritage of the Egyptians. From the urban design perspective, the museum is an 'inscription', marking the point at which the visitor changes directions from the city towards the Pyramids. The museum traces a new profile for the plateau without competing with the Pyramids, utilizing its location and length to operate within the horizontal flows which are so indicative of modern vision and movement.

### *The Fifth Façade – A New Horizon*

The New Museum is situated at the intersection of two cones of vision, the view towards the Pyramids and the view towards Cairo. The view towards the pyramids is inscribed in the structural outline of the museum and the view to Cairo is traced by the path of the Nile Park,

which extends from the Dunal Park at the plateau level, across the folds in the roof. The structural folds that form the roof extend the dune landscape of the site, maintaining the line of the desert plateau whilst constructing the space for a new horizon to view the city of Cairo.

### *Sculpting with light – movement in a void*

Light carves and defines the spaces of the New Museum complex, from the scale of the site to the scale of the display case, and from its open-air network of parks to its precisely controlled environments of artefacts. Two beams of light divide the site into three bands. The first band is the lower plateau, which is the infrastructural area by the roadside. The second band is the ascent to the plateau representing the cultural area of the Grand Museum. The third band is the upper plateau, which is the natural area of the Dunal Park. Light excavates the primary systems of movement through the plateau, through the light-filled 'Grand Staircase', the void created by the translucent stone wall, and the visual causeway. Digital streams are light voids that carve through the plateau, occupied as needed by the infrastructure.

### *The piazza and sculpture court*

The piazza is an assembly area that begins the transition from the outside to the inside; it draws visitors from the entrance forecourt to the lower level of the entrance lobby. The piazza is an active space both at night and during the daytime, which remains active even when the museum and conference facilities are closed. Extending the transition from the outdoor space into the museum and conference area, the lobby is an in-between space that is a continuation of the piazza's exterior



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11. Plan for the main staircase of the Grand Museum of Egypt.

into the planted shaded space of the lobby. The Nile Park flows through the lobby, further integrating the exterior into the museum's interior.

#### *The Grand Staircase – the chronological route*

The light-filled Grand Staircase ascends from the lobby to the permanent exhibition galleries on the top floor, stopping off at special exhibitions, conservation workshops, temporary exhibitions, and the main archaeological repository. The staircase is the chronological route within the museum, culminating in a view of the Pyramids at the top. The Grand Staircase is an identifiable reference point, which enables visitors to navigate easily through the vast collection.

#### *The hyper-textual nodes of display itineraries*

The permanent exhibition areas on the top floor are arranged in five thematic bands within the structure, constructed by the visual axes to the Pyramids, the sixth band being the chronological route of the grand staircase. Hypertextual nodes and sculpture garden courts provide primary cross-

movement between the thematic bands. The structural roof folds follow the spatial organization of the thematic bands; controlled light is brought in, through the roof folds. A large space is clearly laid out, allowing at the same time flexible modes of display. The hypertextual nodes and sculpture garden courts, which act as points of reference for visiting the collection, operate as rest-points for the visitors as well. One such point of reference is the court dedicated to Tutankhamun. The light court of the Tutankhamun collection is a triangular cut into the building whose façade illustrates the importance of the collection inside. The floor has been excavated in some parts to enable visitors to descend to special rooms under the galleries where special exhibitions are held.

#### *Digital streams*

Paradoxically, the success of technological integration is its eventual invisibility. In order to mesh technology into the new museum, technology has been transformed into an architectural element, in this case into digital streams of light that operate spatially between the spatial bands that define thematic galleries. The walls that define the digital streams become the primary technology infrastructure element in the galleries supporting the interactive display requirements of individual showcases.

The Grand Egyptian Museum is not a singular museum in the traditional sense. It is constructed as a complex of different activities, which contribute to a cultural environment that is centred on Egyptology. By weaving different navigation routes through the complex, the world of ancient Egypt can be explored according to different modes and levels. The museum is both a

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repository of cultural artefacts and an interactive cultural resource.

### **Museography and the cultural message of the museum**

The word 'museum' connotes 'Temple of Muses', which is indicative of its role and utility. In essence, the museum highlights the best of treasures and wealth of the religion, culture, arts and society. It contains the best of what should be preserved and displayed.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the museum as a building hovered over the ideals and aspirations of society and was considered a source of national pride that reflected the best of cultural assets and heritage.

From early experience until recent times, two main facts have remained unchanged in museums. The first is that the content of the museum concerns the display and preservation of works of art and human achievements in general; the second fact is that people visit museums in order to experience their content directly. The interplay between art and people becomes the main vocation of any museum's mission and vision. Architects are challenged to strike a delicate balance in such interaction. For some architects, the architecture of the museum is what inspires visitors; thus, the art of design overshadows the art on display. Other architects resign in humility, allowing the art to display itself. In both cases, the museum has a message to deliver. Being part of the highest cultural aspirations, the message should reach a wide spectrum of people and visitors. The cultural message of the museum can express

pride in national heritage and cultural wealth. It can also tell a story behind the displayed content of the museum such as the interpretation of its messages. But the main social and cultural role of the museum is education which defines the ultimate purpose of the museum. Whatever the cultural message, education is indispensable to the museum and contributes directly to attracting more visitors.

Contemporary historicity is grounded in a framework of tradition that defines the world of today. Ancient civilizations shed light on the future of humanity by showing how, in the episodic course of history, people invented and re-invented their culture in a way that defined the essence of time and place. Changes in social structures and cultural affinity, together with transformations in the nature, control and functions of knowledge, have forced the museum to reinvent itself within a context in which traditional values are no longer taken for granted. The traditional concept of a museum, as the cultural resource place of an educated and sophisticated élite, devoted to the preservation and safeguarding of the cultural messages inherent to the objects it houses but also 'as the repository and arbiter of philological knowledge, as a mono-functional, scientific institution, a source of authority and the sole judge of its specialist practices', is no longer tenable.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for museum design in the new millennium is to create architecture that is congenial to such an interpretation of culture against a background of tradition; architectural design that brings the past into the future, decodes alien symbols within familiar signs, and ultimately provides a place for reflection and critical thinking.

Egypt offers a unique site, in the vicinity of the Pyramids of Giza, for such a cultural and architectural challenge for the world's third and Egypt's seventh millennium. A strong visual link between the new museum site and the Pyramids themselves suggests architectural choices based on formal dialogue. The Grand Museum of Egypt is intended to reflect modern concepts of the 'archaeological museum'. Its vocation is not only to house and display archaeological artefacts and materials, but to furnish a complex with adequate space to communicate culture to visitors. The international architecture competition for the design of the new museum was a challenge to the architectural community worldwide. Participants were invited to submit projects going beyond the consistent succession of subject matters (or rooms) and proposing a cultural message. It has an exceptional position in being culturally and geographically part of the land of the civilization it presents. The museum must therefore, at the same time, be a modern centre of cultural production, transmission, and assimilation. It is a project that aspires to the highest cultural and scientific values.

### Conclusion

A cultural message in architectural design, as proposed in this article, is the result of two main poles. The first pole is the subject matter of the cultural message. The second pole is the architect's comprehension of the subject matter. The design of the Grand Museum of Egypt sought to combine expressive qualities with functional clarity. The poetic statement of the project is strong while the architectural programme suggests a discreet approach to the site. One can easily spotlight the project and its meaning as a new 'edge' to the Giza

plateau. It also displays a high standard of lighting solutions and has addressed the information and communication system adequately in this early design stage. It offers easy circulation through the main lobby, the grand staircase and the other spaces to reach the various galleries of the museum. Yet the staircase itself needs further study to deal with its processional character.

It is beyond doubt that the Grand Museum of Egypt is one of the largest complexes undertaken as a single project. The strength of any vision is expressed in its detail and this complex museum needed guidance from many disciplines. The Ministry of Culture had thus contracted the first prize winner along with a design team from different disciplines to implement the construction drawings. Interdisciplinarity is indispensable in embracing such a vision. As the project grows, its complexity will undoubtedly also grow, and it is imperative that this vision remain strong and unified.

Construction of the project is scheduled to start in January 2005 and the museum is planned to open in the year 2009. The momentum is stronger than ever: everyone is looking forward to the beginning of this journey, the construction of the Grand Museum of Egypt.

### | NOTE

1. The drawings and figures are the original design concept presented during the International Architecture Competition of the Grand Egyptian Museum. The descriptions and illustrations of the designs have been edited and drawn from the architect's responses and reports.

# | The Forgotten Museums of Egypt

by Fayza Hassan

*Fayza Hassan graduated in economics from the American University of Cairo. She was senior writer and editor of the 'Living' page for Al-Ahram Weekly from 1990 to 2000. She has been writing in Egypt Today since 2004.*

*'The term discovery invites us to reflect on the motivation which, since the dawn of human consciousness and history, has led mankind to recognize, preserve and at times study the traces of his predecessors.'*

*Emmanuel Le Roy-Ladurie*

## A short history

Egypt is among the countries in the world where history is encountered at every step. Traces of ancient civilizations were, for countless centuries, ever present in the landscape. Native Egyptians, however, contrary to the opinion of Professor Ladurie, showed only perfunctory interest in them. For a long time, temples, statues and artefacts were destroyed and misused, unless they remained buried, or, as was sometimes the case, were endowed with another, more mythical meaning that had become part of a local tradition as in fertility rites practised in many villages. The recognition of vestiges of bygone times and the idea that they were worth preserving does not seem to have been endemic here. Stories of mummies used to light fires abound. Even after the French Expedition in 1798, not only was awareness not raised to a significant level (if we discard the writings of the Egyptian chronicler of the period, Abdel-Rahman el-Gabarti), but the new wali, Muhammad Ali, followed in the time-honoured tradition of the Mamluks and Ottoman rulers,



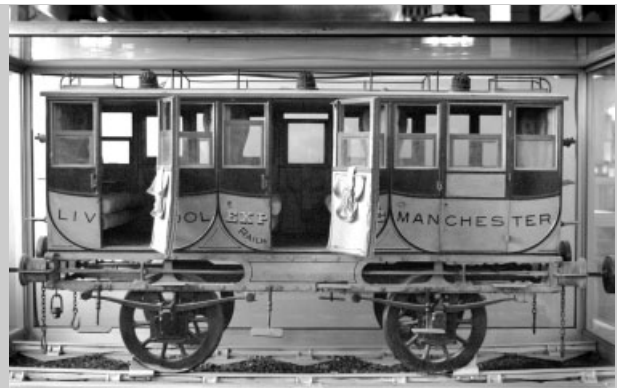
by vandalizing Pharaonic temples to build his own monuments. A popular anecdote has Muhammad Ali thinking of quarrying the Pyramids for stones to be used in the construction of new factories.

in fakes produced by local artists who were particularly adept at copying the real thing.

Egyptians had to wait for the arrival of the Egyptologist, Auguste Mariette (1821–1881), who



12. Model of cargo wagon, 1854.



13. Model of passenger carriage, circa 1980.

He did nevertheless sign a decree for the creation of the first museum in Cairo under the supervision of a certain Youssef Dia Effendi. The project came to nothing, but subsequently inspired Sheikh Rifa'a Rafi' el-Tahtawi (1801–73), a writer and educational reformer, to comment: *'It is well known that Europeans have buildings for keeping antiquities—stones covered with inscriptions and other such objects are carefully preserved there and shown to the inhabitants of the country as well as to travellers. Such institutions bring great renown to countries that have them.'* Still, the time was not ripe for Egypt.

When, towards the end of the eighteenth century, foreigners made it clear that they were in the market to buy artefacts, selling antiquities became a thriving business matched only by a trade

founded the Antiquities Service to begin valuing their own heritage. The practice of the country's rulers to present priceless items to heads of state and foreign dignitaries endured, however, seriously depleting the budding collections of the new museum.

The era of the travelling khedives, beginning in 1850, was more enlightened. Egypt's rulers spent time in Europe and became acquainted first hand with the importance of preserving a country's heritage and by the time Sultan Hussein and, following him, Sultan Fuad – later king – (1868–1936; ruled 1917–36) came to power, the concept of saving relics of the past had become well ingrained. They actually went one step further and established several original museums themselves, concentrating

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sometimes on the not so distant past for their collections.

In 1952, the revolution put an end to the idea of creating pleasing displays of historical and archaeological artefacts and maintaining them. There were other priorities and tourism subsequently ground to a halt during that period.

### The new museums . . .

In recent decades, new museums were established that have attracted a great deal of national and sometimes international attention. The Nubian Museum in Aswan, the Museum of Modern Art in Giza, the Ceramics Museum in Zamalek or the Museum of the Alexandria Library are cases in point. Others, celebrating the life and work of contemporary personalities (the prince of poets, Ahmed Shawki, the writer and pedagogue, Taha Hussein, the famous singers, Umm Kalthum and Mohamed Abdel-Wahab) as well as restored historic houses (Beit el-Sennari, Beit el-Seheimi, the Gayer Anderson, Beit Khatun, etc.) were also highly publicized. These do not need voices raised in their defence. They now enjoy plenty of official support and are well established on the tourist circuit.

### . . . and the small, forgotten ones

At the same time, some attention was paid once more, albeit lackadaisically, to the restoration and revival of the numerous informative indoor and outdoor collections and provincial exhibits commemorating particular events (the Dinshway Museum, for example) that had been painstakingly assembled in the course of the first half of the

twentieth century, especially under the auspices of King Fuad, for his greatest glory, he thought. This was not to be since the teaching of history in Egyptian schools and universities has steered clear since 1952 of celebrating the monarchy's achievements. The younger generations are, more often than not, unaware of who King Fuad was.



14. Peasants tilling the earth, life-size composition in clay.

This latter movement, however, stems more from the endeavours of individual ministers or committed museum directors than from a carefully planned government policy. It must be borne in mind that museums are under the jurisdiction of the various ministries concerned (ministries of Petroleum, Transport, Agriculture, etc.) and not under a single body such as the authority of the Supreme Council of Antiquities.

Progress is proceeding at a snail's pace since there are more pressing priorities coupled with very scant public interest for what lies outside basic needs. The Egyptians have other requirements that have to be addressed before they can forget their difficult present and turn their

attention to the contemplation of past relics. It may be appropriate at this point to remember the words of the Chinese philosopher, Zheng Xie (1693–1765): *‘We spend thousands on manuscripts and paintings and hundreds more on authenticating them. Chipped jade insignia, bronze seals decorated with turtles and dragons, bronze tiles from the Bird-Tower made into ink-stones, all displayed on lacquered shelves; golden incense-burners in the shape of a lion on an ivory stand, a cup, a goblet, any kind of antique vessel – and we comb the ancient texts in order to verify the inscriptions. As if obsessed we search near and far, into our old age. Blood relatives drag each other in front of the courts, close friends mistrust each other. These things are bought for a fortune by the rich, but a poor man would not part with a rice cake for any of them.’*

Notwithstanding the lack of public response, historians, researchers, scientists and intellectuals in general are clamouring for the conservation and development of a number of small, specialized museums which have preserved a wealth of information not readily available otherwise. Similarly environmentalists insist that outdoor museums such as the Japanese Garden of Helwan or the Andalusian Garden of Zamalek must be protected if only as landmarks among the few remaining green spots in a concrete jungle. Interestingly, most of these museums have survived years of neglect more or less intact and offer a sound basis on which to build: advertising their existence, expanding their collections, perfecting their displays, placing them on tourist itineraries and making them by and large more visitor-friendly, would go a long way towards attracting a larger number of interested individuals or groups.

## The Geological Museum

Established and opened to the public in 1904, the Geological Museum was part of the Egyptian Geological Survey founded in 1896. Today, the museum is housed in an old one-storey building in the Athar el-Nabi area near Old Cairo. It can be reached from the Maadi Corniche or from a back entrance, through a construction site on which an apartment block is being erected at present. A dusty alley along which specimens are negligently displayed, leads to an airy large covered space where the cabinets are aligned. They are grimy and the specimens are labelled sometimes in Arabic and English (with spelling mistakes), sometimes in Arabic only with no apparent reason for the discrepancy. The entrance fee is nominal and the employees do not always bother to collect it, nor do they trouble themselves unduly with the rare visitors, complaining that the museum is not on the tourist circuit and is of interest only to concerned scientists. Furthermore, the museum closes daily at 2.30 p.m. and on Thursdays and Fridays (the attendants are government employees who follow the official calendar which is also that of schools, administrations and most businesses) thereby preventing students and working citizens from ever visiting it. While there is no denying that this museum serves an important, specific purpose, only professionals and school children on an organized tour have a chance to peruse its fascinating offerings.<sup>1</sup>

## The Railway Museum

This museum was conceived as a technical and scientific display on the occasion of the meeting of the International Railways Conference, which took

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place in 1933 under the auspices of King Fuad of Egypt. The building, adjacent to the Cairo railway station was completed on 26 October 1932 and opened on 15 January 1933 allowing the delegates to the conference to visit the first museum of its kind in the Middle East.

The museum occupies two floors of its original building and features 600 models and exhibits in addition to an impressive collection of documents, maps, blueprints of several Egyptian train stations, bridges, different types of rails, old

leaves that add to the luxury of the shining brass fittings.

The museum is not visible from the main thoroughfare but the station employees are happy to show the way to visitors. Fees are supposed to be nominal for Egyptians but the attendant at the door charges according to his whim. There are several female guides who are reasonably well acquainted with the exhibits but speak only Arabic. Some of the labelling in English is quite clear but not every item has a label. The catalogue



© Museum of Agriculture/Ashraf Talaat

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15. Beer-making in the Pharaonic period.

and new signalling devices, and up-to-date statistical information. Among the most interesting exhibits is a large collection of models describing the development of the first locomotive in the world, built in 1783.

As a bonus, one can climb into the private railway wagon of Viceroy Said, (who ruled Egypt from 1854 to 1863). The carriage is entirely decorated on the outside with intricate gilded designs of red, green and pink flowers and

sold at the door is of great help to identify the types and models of trains and understand their functioning. The museum is open daily from 9 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. except on Fridays and official holidays.

### The Postal Museum

Situated on the second floor of Cairo General Post Office in Ataba, the Postal Museum was established in 1934 but only opened to the public in 1940. It is

a little gem of a museum: in the historical section, well-tended glass cases contain dozens of small iconic figures dressed in the various postal uniforms that have been in use since mail was distributed in Roman times. Old seals of different sizes and shapes fill two whole cases in a corner. Valuable collections of stamped envelopes from all over the world can be examined at leisure or one can wander around looking at the framed pictures of postal carriers or read about the history of mail by land, water and air. One of the walls features a fascinating collage, representing the Sphinx with the sun behind it. It measures 3 metres by 3 metres and is made up of thousands of identical stamps showing the same scene of the Sphinx and the Sun. A group of documents found in Tel el-Amarna is also on display, as well as the first document forwarded by post in 2000 BC by a government scribe sending his son a message in which he emphasizes the importance of writing.

Here the staff is eager to please visitors and the guide is not only knowledgeable but interested in the historical events surrounding the development of the postal services. One major drawback is the poor lighting of the display cases. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and closed on official holidays.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Agriculture Museum**

As one of the most spectacular achievements of King Fuad, the Agriculture Museum was established on a surface area of 125,000m<sup>2</sup>, comprising the two palaces and splendid garden belonging to Princess Fatma Ismail (daughter of Khedive Ismail and sister of King Fuad) which she had originally bequeathed to Cairo University.

When the university built its own premises, the palaces were given to the Ministry of Agriculture. The rooms of the palaces were transformed into exhibition halls and the museum was opened to the public in 1938 by King Fuad's son, King Farouk. It is the first agriculture museum in the world, created before those of Budapest and Copenhagen, but more importantly, it is the only one which aims at giving a complete picture of agriculture in Pharaonic times.

‘During a period spanning between 1952 and 1987 the museum was left practically unattended, the halls taken over by various government offices and the artefacts stored in rooms on the top floors or in hangars,’ says Mohamed al-Akkad, the present director. Today, the museum has recovered from the years of neglect, the park with its rare imported specimens is in order and the exhibits are back where they belong. ‘A daunting task, and everything was restored without any foreign funding,’ says al-Akkad.

During restoration, a schedule was worked out and the various sections of the museum reopened to the public in sequence starting in 1996 for the ancient Egyptian agriculture section and the Cotton Museum and ending in 2004 with the opening of a new environmental museum.

The attraction of this particular establishment lies in the concept of its presentation: it shows through monumental groups the continuous development of agriculture in Egypt from Pharaonic times to the nineteenth century.

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The museum is now equipped with closed-circuit TV, an audiovisual system and information is computerized. Moreover, a new wing has been added. 'During the work of restoration,' explains al-Akkad, 'we found a makeshift hangar filled with furniture, paintings, sculptures and carpets. They were identified by experts as the original furnishings of the two palaces. A number of items were marked with prices and I discovered that some of the gardeners were selling them on the sly.' Al-Akkad managed, however, to save most of the furniture, paintings and carpets and has decorated a new wing of the museum which is now the Heritage Museum. 'I do not plan to open it to the public,' he says. 'It will be visited only by appointment.' Since the gardens of the museum attract mainly rowdy, mischievous teenagers, al-Akkad's protectiveness is understandable.

Unlike other museum directors, Mohamed al-Akkad has proved that initiative, determination and great devotion to the task at hand can move mountains. He has restored and enriched single-handed one of the most captivating Egyptian museums.

### | NOTES

1. For a detailed description of the exhibits see <http://www.touregypt.net/geo/>.

2. For more details, see [http://touregypt.net/museums/postal/postal\\_museum.htm](http://touregypt.net/museums/postal/postal_museum.htm).

# | Egyptian Music: tradition and 'New Tradition'

by *Latifa Fahmy*

*Latifa Fahmy holds degrees in literature from the University of Cairo and the American University of Cairo. After a brief period working for Egyptian radio, where she covered cultural programmes, she began working at the French Centre of Culture and Co-operation in Cairo where she directs activities concerning theatre and cinema. She initiated the Festival of the Free Image and the Festival of Young Theatre Creators.*

The Egyptian people like to laugh, sing, and dance. Everywhere. At home, in the fields, throughout the day, during holidays, and at family reunions. Their folk songs celebrate life and love. They accompany death and herald the changing seasons, blessing the sky for rain, the flooding of the Nile and the birth of a lamb or calf. They punctuate manual labour, whether individual or shared by different trades. A play on words and wit at the heart of life.

As for many civilizations, the origins of these songs and dances are found in religious practices. They were restricted to religious use before becoming, in the countryside and oases, the songs and dances of peasants, Bedouin and craftspeople. In cities, this music espoused modernity.

## **The supremacy of religious song**

*Inchad, zikr, hadra, mulid* are all occasions for celebrating the sacred. These meetings are conducted by men, for men only. The *zikr* is practised during *hadra* or sessions organized by the Sufi brotherhoods. The ritual, given rhythm by gyratory body movements, consists in reciting the names of God in unison. This ritual contains the

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*inchad* or praise of God, the Prophet and the Saints, repeated until ecstasy or exhaustion is reached. Musical instruments are rarely present, never at least in a mosque where the purifying and salutary trance is officially forbidden.

The *mulid*, more of a folk celebration, takes place around a mausoleum or church. It celebrates a Muslim or Christian saint. This practice, like that of the nights of Ramadan, was revived by the Fatimid caliphs.<sup>1</sup> Like a carnival, where music, lights, and sounds take over a sacred site, the *mulid* focuses on a figure, the *munchid*, who interprets the aforementioned *inchad*; as master of ceremonies, he chooses the poems which are sung and the music that the *takht*,<sup>2</sup> a small group of instrumentalists, will play.

Diverse communities, also sources of inspiration, have contributed to this permanence: peasants from the banks of the Nile, nomads from the desert and mountains, *Bachareyas*, and Arab gypsies, *Al Arbaane*. The latter, men and women, performed, and still perform, in folklore festivals and in market places. In the wake of their dance steps, song and music, *mawawyls* have spread; the essence of *mawal* being the improvisation of sung lyrics, accompanied by a single instrument. This is where Egyptian folk song was born, *chaaby*, a mixture of Arab and African cultures, but more specifically, Egyptian and Bedouin. A harmonic progression develops in keeping with a tonal base, as support for dramatic and humorous games.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars and artists were obliged to pursue their studies at the *kottab*, a religious school, and at Al-Azhar, the university founded in

Cairo by the Fatimids during the tenth century, which has remained the most prestigious university in the Islamic world. Reading Koranic texts and their recitation<sup>3</sup> is the substance of this teaching which is crowned with the title of sheikh. Beginning with this education, the artistic and literary predispositions of the most talented students would enable composition, song and poetry to be developed.

### A pattern of change arising from teaching

Egyptian music, which emerged from religious recitations but also from everyday life in the verdant countryside and the yellow sands of the desert, slowly set the rules that would carry it to its peak. The *al-maqam* scale on which it is based, is composed of whole and half tones as well as quarter, three-quarter and occasionally five-quarter tones. According to the oriental concept, *al-maqam*, much more than a scale, constitutes a group of notes which results in a melodic and rhythmic entity. This group can vary, on condition that its range, form, melodic notation, and style, remain unchanged.

The teachings of urban institutes, divided between conservatism and modernity, stemmed from this basic scale. The principles and systems of Western music guide them while they maintain unchanged the traditional expression and characteristics of the original music. This reform, bringing the various schools closer together, was the work of an Egyptian musicologist, Dr Mahmoud Ahmad el-Hefny.<sup>4</sup> His countless studies, which are very precise and now published together, serve as a basis for teaching oriental music.



### New horizons

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, two great masters, Chehab Eldine and El-Masloub entered by virtue of their talent into the first phase of the development of *recitation* in Cairo and Alexandria: the former, for his repertoire bringing together a hundred Andalusian *muwashah*, and the latter, for having introduced the art of *dour* as a style of singing.

Among the other great sheikhs who began their path to fame through sacred song, we can cite Sheikh Mohamed Rif'at (1882–1950), who was without a doubt the father of the great Egyptian soloists and who, in tune with musical developments, studied the great masters of Western music, such as Beethoven and Mozart. His exceptional melodious voice and the purity of his recitation rose, with Koranic verses, to inaugurate Egyptian Radio on Thursday, 31 May 1934. During the Second World War, the concern to enlarge their audience sparked off competition from foreign stations in Berlin, London or Paris, who sought his recitations to introduce their programmes in Arabic.

Two talented artists, Sayed Darwiche (1892–1923) and the singer Abdou Al-Hamouli (1836–1901), led the art of Egyptian music towards new horizons, which, until then, had been ossified in forms originating from the sacred tradition. The Alexandrian, Sheikh Sayed Darwiche, the people's artist, attributed a more expressive dimension by changing the *dour*. During his short life, Sayed Darwiche composed 39 *muwashah*, 31 operettas, 12 *dour*, 132 *taqtouqa*, 54 monologues and *qassida* poems, and 22 national

songs, as well as *Bilady*, the hymn which Egyptians still proudly sing today.

As for Sheikh Zakareya Ahmed (1896–1961), he turned towards composition from the 1920s onwards. Lyrics were added to one of his compositions by the folk poet, Mahmoud Bayram Al Tounsi, and interpreted by Oum Kalsoum (1904–75), who turned it into a success under the title *Ahl al hawa*. This artistic encounter between religious and secular song paved the way for artists such as Mohamed Abdel Wahab,<sup>5</sup> among others,<sup>6</sup> and raised a new genre to an honourable status, namely Egyptian music from the cities.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the artistic authority of Oum Kalsoum lent a distinctive style to the Egyptian and Arab firmament. Her moving interpretations of neo-classical Arabic poetry, '*Salu Qalbi*', by Riyad al-Sunbati, and those of folk songs, '*Ana fy intizarak*', by Zakariyya Ahmad, contributed to modifying the characteristics of Egyptian music. Structured song, surpassing the narrative style, which when accompanied by the orchestra, sounded like a fugue or a sonata, resulted from her work with these two composers and the famous lute player, Mohamed al-Qasabji, to the point of being effusive! In the 1960s, she was faced with new audiences, so she interpreted simpler love songs, in fashion with young stars like Abdel-Halim Hafiz. Later, and even though her collaboration with the composer Mohamed Abd al-Wahab was not necessarily crowned with the success anticipated by connoisseurs of Arab musicology, songs such as *Inta Umri* guaranteed her an audience, complemented by the success of her six musical films. After the Six-Day War in 1967, her tours of the Arab world, from which she

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donated profits to the Egyptian government, took on the appearance of quasi-official visits, by the welcome she was given by sovereigns and heads of state.<sup>7</sup>

### The preservation of musical heritage

Fortunately, much of Egyptian musical heritage was recorded. The compositions of Sayed Darwiche were carefully recorded by the producer Emile Eryan. More than 300 of Oum Kalsoum's songs, famous throughout the Arab world, such as '*al-Atlal*' by Riyad al-Sunbati, '*Raqq al-Habib*' by Muhammad al-Qasabji, and a significant number of *zajal* by Zakariyya Ahmad, make up the rich musical heritage inherited from this artist. Today, young talented female voices imitate Oum Kalsoum on the stage of the Opera House!

In 1961, Abdel-Halim Hafez, nicknamed 'the dark Egyptian Nightingale', already very popular on the radio, in films and elsewhere,<sup>8</sup> joined forces with the great master of Arab music, Mohamed AbdelWahab, and created along with the businessman, Magdi El Amroussi, the *Sawt-el-fan* record company.<sup>9</sup> Much of this heritage is currently in the hands of a Saudi prince whose production team works mainly with young singers of the latest generation and whose video clips are of questionable quality.

In Egypt, during the time of Nasser, when there were strong nationalist and Arab leanings, artists from the Maghreb and Mashreq alike, such as Warda the Algerian and Fayza Ahmed the Iraqi, among others, arrived in the capital which cinematographic successes had transformed into the Hollywood of the Orient. Cairo continues to be

the obligatory passage to recognition. Today, many artists still choose to live in Cairo, like the Tunisian, Latifa, the Moroccan, Samira Said, the Syrian, Assala, and the famous *oud* musician from Iraq, Nassir Shamma.

### Inspiration from the West

Meanwhile, during the twentieth century, Cairo was introduced to Western musical instruments, completing the scholarly vision that Dr A. M. El-Hefny had contributed to the teaching of musical rules.<sup>10</sup>

The Khedive Ismaïl, who ruled from 1863 to 1879, had erected, for the inauguration of the Suez Canal, a prefabricated theatre to present *Aida*, an opera and libretto commissioned from Giuseppe Verdi. A more open relationship with Western arts continued in the wake of the 1952 Revolution. This was institutionalized by Sarwat Okacha, appointed Minister of Culture, who founded two academies of oriental and Western music, one for drama, another for classical dance, an opera company and lastly, a symphony orchestra.

These institutions opened the door of modern Western music to the younger generation. Today, several of the graduates from these institutions have achieved worldwide fame. However, Egypt, with 70 million inhabitants, and despite the richness of its musical history and its young population, is suffering today from a crisis in musical creativity. Without doubt, masters like Gamal Abdel-Rehim, artists like Tareq Sharara and Mona Ghoneim create works of great spirituality, and the works of Omar Khayrat, Ammar elShere'y, Yasser Abdel-Rahman, and

Ragueh Daoud are popular with the public. But on the eve of the millennium, at the base of the Pyramids, an ecstatic crowd applauded Jean-Michel Jarre's techno-Arab concert, accompanied by twenty traditional Egyptian musicians who played the *rababa*, *mizmar*, *tabla* and heralded a new dimension to music.

A similar phenomenon prevails in the field of song. Younger generations of artists are schooled as much through formal teaching as through external innovations. At the end of the 1970s, Hani Chaker wanted to continue the endeavours of Abdel-Halim Hafez, who had passed away in 1973, as did Mohamed Sarwat. They soon realized that the public hankered after new identities. Ten years later, Amrou Diab, an 18 year-old artist from Port-Saïd, arrived in Cairo. Egyptian song, threatened by the international success of Algerian *raï*, saw him as the Khaled of 'Jeel Music' (the new musical generation). In 1987, the Amrou phenomenon, supported by the first Arabic video-clips, was exported to the Maghreb and throughout the Middle East. In 1992, the cinema confirmed his star status: his lively *Ice Cream in Glym*, a musical comedy by Kheirat Bichara, launched a neo-retro trend in the Egyptian-American style. Today, *jeel music* has become accepted, and other stars such as Hakim and the Nubian Mohamed Mounir have emerged to develop this 'new tradition'.

## | NOTES

1. The famous song *Wahayi ya wahawy* may come from the ancient memory of Pharaonic times, *nohawi nohawi*, celebrating the birth of the moon. Similarly, Faiza Ahmad's song was sung by everyone at the end

of the last century: *Yammal-amar 'alal bab* (Mother, the moon is at the door!)

2. *Takht* instruments have remained the same throughout the past centuries in town and country alike. They are: *al-oud*, the lute with the bent handle, the Turco-Iranian drum, *qanoun*, and two instruments played with a bow: the *rababah*, and the *kamanguah*, which are more and more often replaced by violins.

3. See Taha Hussein *Le Livre des Jours (The Book of Days)*, editions Gallimard.

4. The innumerable studies by Dr M.A. el-Hefny, of great precision and now published together, provide the basis for the teaching of oriental music. King Fuad appointed him director of the Royal Institute of Oriental Music which included a School of oriental music. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the leading artists of Arab music (composers and musicians) were joined by young artists in the cafés of the Abdine neighbourhood, and later, in the small club in Mohamed Ali Street. In 1918, King Fuad decided to offer them their own premises. The Royal Institute of Oriental Music was inaugurated nine years later. In 1995, the present Minister of Culture, Mr Farouk Hosny, decided to renovate the royal building, enriching it with a library of rare musical manuscripts. This Institute of Arab Music (and no longer 'oriental') also includes a museum of musical instruments. It is part of the Cairo Opera, which also decided to reconstitute the Egyptian musical past from the 1990s, organizing the Festival of Arab Music, and appointing as director, Dr Ratiba el-Hefny, professor at the conservatory and opera singer, and daughter of Dr M. A. el-Hefny. She now performs the dual task of archivist and organizer.

5. Born into a conservative family and guided towards the Koranic school at the al-Azhar mosque, he dedicated himself to singing while very young, joining a travelling circus company where he accompanied the opening of the curtains and the pauses, interpreting the repertory of Salama Hegazi and Sayed Darwiche. The most important encounter of his life was with the great poet Ahmad Chawki, who gave him several poems and his permission to sing them. Mohamed el-Kassabji, Oum Kalsoum's lute player, taught him the *oud*.

6. Farid Al Attrach, Mohamed Al Mogui and Kamal Al Tawil should also be mentioned

7. On his death, after a career of more than fifty years, national mourning and a funeral on a larger scale than that of President Nasser were organized for him.

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8. ... up until the last masterpiece; the grandiose '*Kariat al Fingan*' (the fortune teller), a poem by Nizzar Kebbany (Lebanese) masterfully interpreted by an Abdel-Halim possessed by love and death at the same time. A major work set to monumental music by Mohamed El Mougy, the composer from the earliest period.

9. Once both artists had died, the businessman continued to administer one of the most precious Egyptian musical heritages of the twentieth century. Twenty years later, he discovered seven unpublished works in a basement, dating from the romantic singer's early years in Cairo. During this period, the young peasant, recently arrived in Cairo, earned meagre fees from the radio and the cinema, for brief appearances in musical films.

10. See Note 4.

# | Successes and Outcomes of the Nubia Campaign

by Anna Paolini

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The International Campaign to save the Monuments of Nubia from the rising waters of Lake Nasser has been widely recognized as ‘the most successful’ UNESCO International appeal for the rescue of cultural heritage launched so far. The name and image of UNESCO are still associated with it in the collective memory of humanity.

The face of King Ramses II hanging from a crane during the dismantling and repositioning of the Abu Simbel temples made the front pages of newspapers and toured the world. After extensive discussions on preservation of the ‘integrity of the monument’, the adoption of the final choice of transferring the main Nubia monuments to safe locations was the only possible solution. In fact, the preservation of the original geography, particularly the physical relationship with the surrounding landscape, which gave the temple part of its cultural significance, was not feasible in maintaining the ‘integrity’ of the monuments. It took, as a consequence, some four years of discussions and meetings between experts to reach a joint agreement on the best and most feasible way to preserve the Abu Simbel temples, in terms of technologies available and costs. Four-and-a-half more years were necessary to see them reassembled in the new location. This was on 22 September 1968, fourteen years after the Egyptian

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Government made the decision to build the Aswan High Dam.<sup>1</sup> This International Campaign was indeed the largest manifestation of cultural solidarity for a heritage property that was not yet 'officially' recognized as being of universal value, as it was to be a few years later with the creation of the UNESCO World Heritage List. It literally mobilized worldwide attention and fostered willingness and commitments to safeguarding heritage as an objective of international co-operation.

The international appeal not only concerned monumental ensembles such as Abu Simbel or Philae but also resulted in the excavation and recording of hundreds of sites, the recovery of thousands of objects, and the salvage and relocation of a number of temples of importance, though minor in terms of monumentality.<sup>2</sup> The Campaign which ended on 10 March 1980 was considered a complete and spectacular success.

Since then, the Egyptian Government and UNESCO have continued their activities for the protection and conservation of Egyptian cultural heritage. In particular, the Egyptian Government requested UNESCO's assistance in the promotion of the quality and diversity of the cultural heritage and in the development of activities undertaken during the Campaign. While the Egyptian Government mobilized resources for the reconstruction of some of the temples dismantled during the Nubia campaign, such as Gharf Hussein or Kalabsha, and for the management of visitors in others, including Abu Simbel, UNESCO's technical assistance has focused on the establishment of two major museums: the Nubia Museum in Aswan and the Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Cairo.

### The Nubia Museum in Aswan

Following the successful outcome of the first campaign, UNESCO and the Egyptian government reached an agreement in 1982 to use the remaining multi-donor funds of the Safeguarding campaign for a new museum campaign. The only UNESCO campaign for the creation of museums was therefore launched and is still under way. Funds provided by the international community are meant to assist the Egyptian authorities in developing all phases of the creation of the museums, from their conception and museological programme to their architectural design and the development of their management functions. The construction of buildings is instead funded directly by the government.

The *raison-d'être* of the new Nubia Museum of Aswan was the exhibition and storage of the large collection of artefacts coming from excavations of sites in Egyptian Nubia, mainly those surveyed and excavated during the rescue campaign, as happened for the National Museum in Khartoum, which is hosting the collections of Sudanese Nubia. After completion of rescue operations, it was universally felt that recovered objects should be kept as close as possible to their principal places of origin and be made available for the general public and researchers alike. The Nubia Museum in Aswan became a reality after fifteen years and opened its doors in November 1997. The work for the creation of the museum was co-ordinated by the International Campaign's Executive Committee, which was set up by UNESCO and composed of fifteen UNESCO member states, elected every four years, and four observers (ICOM, ICCROM, ICOMOS and IFLA) –

and was implemented by the Egyptian authorities with the assistance of a UNESCO team of experts in various specialized fields. Today, UNESCO continues to work closely with the staff of the museum for the development of conservation and educational activities, and in particular in the establishment of a research centre on Nubian studies. The building, with a surface area of approximately 7,000 m<sup>2</sup>, is set in a semi-arid environment. The architecture of the museum and the enclosure walls, intended to evoke traditional Nubian village architecture, was attributed the Aga Khan award for architecture in 2001. Its garden includes a series of artificial waterfalls and stages for outdoor performances. The museum, visited by tourists and local people alike, is a strong sign of the recognition of the rich heritage of southern Egypt. It is meant to be a sort of introduction to the culture past and present of Nubia and a gateway for exploration of the area. The richness of this cultural institution lies not only in its collections, which are only partially exhibited, but also in its research and educational programmes and sociocultural activities, such as the presentation of folklore performances.

### **The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC) in Cairo**

The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization has had a long gestation. However, a new and final phase started in 2004 and the construction of the building started at the beginning of 2005. The desire to establish a museum of civilization comes from the need 'to tell the story of Egypt', embracing all periods of its history from Neolithic times up to the present day. The general image of Egypt is spontaneously associated only with the spectacular

Pharaonic vestiges, while many other aspects of its history and culture in the wider sense come second. Fields to be explored are none the less numerous and very different, ranging from proto-historic rock-art sites in the desert, early developments of major Islamic cultural institutions (universities and schools of medicine), to living cultural heritage, such as poetry, the performing arts, music and recent underwater archaeological discoveries, as well as great achievements of modern times such as the Aswan Dam and the Suez Canal. These historical landmarks in Egypt are part of the collective memory and of the future of the country. They contribute to the enrichment of the civic fabric of Egyptian society and must consequently be recognized by museum institutions. This new museum will aim to be an active interface with the public and a living cultural centre for Egypt. The ground floor will provide space for the performing arts such as drama, music, etc., will offer a specialized library, a documentation centre for the tangible and intangible Egyptian cultural heritage and space for the presentation of traditional crafts as part of the cultural programmes. The location of the museum is enhanced by the presence of the lake of Ain Sira, the only lake in the urban area of greater Cairo.

Its current location at Fustat is a key point within both the current and planned future development of the Cairo road network and is of great cultural significance. It benefits from a visual outlook on major monuments of the various periods in Cairo: the Islamic cemetery, the Citadel, Coptic Cairo, including a synagogue and the establishment of the first mosque in the city, and the Giza pyramids. Fustat is located between the east bank of the Nile and the steep escarpments of

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al-Muqattam. The site was extensively colonized during the seventh to ninth centuries A.D., following the Arab Conquest of Egypt in A.D. 641. The continued occupation of the large site until at least the first century of the Fatimid period (A.D. 969–1171) is suggested by the presence of the Fatimid *masbagha* or tannery still visible at the western edge of the museum site. Nevertheless, after the abandonment of the area, probably due to the political, economic and social upheavals that affected the Egyptian capital in the eleventh century, the site was used first as a source of building material for the medieval city and then, in turn, as a vast dumping ground. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the area of Fustat covering the current ground dedicated to the museum was occupied by huge quarries. The archaeological findings during the preliminary excavations at the site were minimal but of utmost importance and those allocated outside the area, which were devoted to the building itself, will be fully integrated as an archaeological park within the museum project. The location of the museum building was hitherto located on the quarries in order to avoid the loss of archaeological fields but also to provide solid foundations.

The concept of the museum, developed by an Egyptian interdisciplinary group with the assistance of UNESCO, concerns the main idea of the River Nile linking the north and the south of Egyptian territory and being the main source of life through millennia. A diachronic approach of selected cultural themes has been retained in order to emphasize their historical development and continuity. The programmes of the Museum of Egyptian Civilization are in the development stage and are the result of sustained interaction between

the Egyptian authorities and the UNESCO team. The history of the museum dates back to 1981, when a working group, composed of representatives from the Egyptian Government, ICOM and UNESCO experts, identified a preliminary site for the museum's construction and concurrently developed a preliminary concept for the museum in order to launch a national architectural competition two years later. At the end of the 1980s, the densely occupied urban area initially identified for the project had to be abandoned, as it no longer met the needs of the institution. The choice of a new location as well as the priority given to the Egyptian authorities for the construction of the Nubia Museum in Aswan, put the development of the Civilization Museum on hold until the beginning of the year 2000. At that time, a new location was chosen and the museum project once again became a reality in the making. Since then, a group of international interdisciplinary experts under the leadership of UNESCO, and with the assistance of major intergovernmental organizations (ICROM, ICOM, ICOMOS and IFLA), started working hand in hand with the Egyptian authorities on the programming phases of the museum.

The ceremony of laying the first stone, under the auspices of the First Lady of Egypt, Mrs Mubarak, took place in December 2002 and the museum is scheduled to open its doors to the public in 2008. It will cover 78,000 m<sup>2</sup> out of which 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> will constitute exhibition galleries. Once completed, it will be unique not only in Egypt but also in the Arab region. It is meant to be an interactive museum in continuous development and subsequently represents a challenge for both the local authorities and



UNESCO, regarding its size but also its content and programme. Museums labelled 'museum of civilization', whether local or transboundary, have been developing around the world for several decades: from the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Quebec, to the Asian Civilization Museum in Singapore, to the most recent Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée in Marseilles (France).

Museums have now become active places of culture, where cultural activities are organized to satisfy the need for knowledge of the local and international community and to interact with people. UNESCO's commitment to the establishment of the cultural programme of the museum is significant since the global approach which was adopted, linking past heritage to living cultures, is today at the centre of the organization's agenda. The feeling of cultural identity finds its roots in the past and is reinforced by events in the present. The sense of belonging to the past and making the history of the present while valuing the cultural diversity of the different groups and their cultural links, is what this museum is all about.

## | NOTES

1. Work at Abu Simbel ended on 22 September and the dismantling of the Philae temple and its re-erecting started immediately afterwards.

2. See *Temples and Tombs of Ancient Nubia. The International Rescue Campaign at Abu Simbel, Philae and Other Sites*. General Editor: Säve-Söderbergh, Torgny. Paris, UNESCO; London, Thames & Hudson, 1987.

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16. Gerf Hussein, the Temple of Ptah seen from the Nile.

# | Research and Preservation Projects on Intangible Heritage

by Ahmed Morsi

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Interest in studying folk traditions and maintaining them dates back to the Egyptian modern Renaissance in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This interest in folklore was based on awareness of its role in shaping national culture. It was not, therefore, merely motivated by the desire to safeguard expression of endangered folklore. It was mainly due to an urge to appreciate the role of folklore in establishing the prevalent culture since it interacted with the components of official culture and contributed to shaping the Egyptian cultural structure as a whole. Consequently, efforts were made by individuals and non-governmental organizations and were supported by a number of governmental bodies and authorities, such as the Folklore Committee.

## **The establishment of the Folklore Committee**

The outbreak of the 23 July 1952 Revolution and a rise in national awareness contributed to an interest in national heritage and Egyptian folklore, arts, literature and culture at large. The Ministry of National Guidance, which later became the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance, and then the Ministry of Culture, was the authority responsible for setting up the Folklore Committee.



17. The Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah Epic proclaimed by UNESCO as a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity in 2003.

At the time of the Ministry of National Guidance, the Arts Organization and the Supreme Council for Arts, Literature and Social Sciences were established. The Council was composed of a number of committees specialized in the various disciplines and fields of its mandate. One of these specialized committees was the Folklore Committee, set up in 1956, which issued a recommendation calling for the establishment of a centre for folklore in November 1957. The Folklore Committee was managed by a Board which defined its task as that of collecting, recording and studying materials of folklore in order to make them accessible to artists, scholars, writers and civil society as a whole.

It initially focused its endeavours on dispatching researchers throughout Egypt, to collect folklore materials and establish the Egyptian folklore archives. The committee also

recommended listing folklore under educational programmes and establishing the Chair of National Folklore at the Faculty of Arts of Cairo University. The Supreme Council for Arts, Literature and Social Sciences became the Supreme Council for Culture in the early 1980s, under the authority of the Ministry of Culture.

Over the last fifty years, the Folklore Committee has held numerous scientific and international conferences and called for holding national and international folk art festivals. Awards for folklore were listed among the state incentive and merit awards for popular arts, in addition to incentive awards for specialized research in this field. Egyptian folklore movements also granted medals and certificates of merit to pioneering research efforts. In addition to laying the scientific foundations of a unified system for collecting and classifying material, the Folklore Committee also

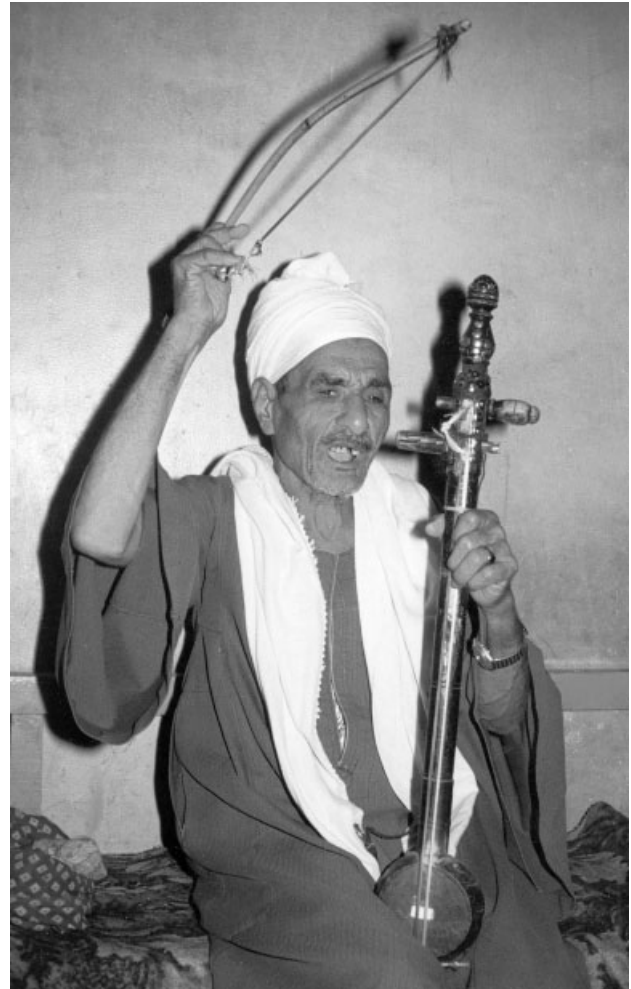
devised several projects, such as the establishment of a national museum for folk arts and crafts and the translation of specialized books into Arabic such as *The Music of Siwa Oasis* by Brige Schiffer.

The committee is aiming to promote the Egyptian folklore movement, academic studies and the creative arts through scientific and technical symposia, conferences and exhibitions, in order to foster a coherent and all-encompassing vision of the preservation and continuation of folk traditions.

#### The Higher Institute of Folklore and its Research Centre

The Higher Institute for Folklore was established in 1981 through the education system of the Academy of Arts, to account for the vital aspect of intangible cultural heritage in Egypt. Its scientific board included a distinguished group of scholars and specialists in folklore and the humanities, which enhanced the educational and research system of the institute. Its scientific curricula and resources were designed to prepare well-qualified researchers for drawing up an inventory of folk heritage. There are currently twelve M.A. students and nine Ph.D.s. The institute's scope of action has been extended to the entire Arab world as well as other foreign countries.

On the scientific research side, the Folklore Studies Centre is affiliated with the Higher Institute for Folklore. It was established in the late 1950s (1957) and since then has had an élite of researchers and scholars who represent a leading group in this field in the Arab world. Its work is considered to be of historical importance and a reference for the memory of Egyptian folk



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18. Ali Mosabah playing the *rabab*, Sahel Selim, Upper Egypt.

traditions and their popular awareness. The centre conducted a scientific survey of folk traditions, including the various aspects of folk creativity, in a large number of Egyptian governorates. The sound and image archives and a number of theoretical studies are among the results of the survey. They also contributed to establishing similar centres in various Arab countries, including Libya, Sudan, Tunisia and other states. The centre currently has four main departments which cover folk

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literature, customs and traditions, material culture and folk music and dance. Co-operation is constantly encouraged between the centre and scholars in the technical faculties and human science universities.

### The Cultural Palaces Organisation

In 1990, the General Cultural Palaces Organisation launched the Egyptian Folklore Atlas project. This project aims at periodically and regularly collecting elements of Egyptian folk heritage, and at presenting the historical and geographical movements of these elements in the form of regularly updated folklore maps. A preparatory step for its implementation was to train staff from various provinces in the field of folklore studies to qualify as field researchers, by obtaining the diploma from the Folklore Higher Institute. Up until 1998, eighty-nine field researchers had graduated, and in June 1998, the first steps of regular work for the Egyptian Folklore Atlas started with defining the cartographic 'data collection areas'. Some 197 data collection areas have now been identified to represent all types of Egyptian living culture. The field collection stage followed accordingly. This stage was directed towards the cartographic representation of the geographic distribution indicators of the folk heritage elements collected. This collection endeavour followed a strategic plan prepared by the project's scientific committee. The field material focused on bread, including customs, beliefs and the types of home-made bread, starting from grain stores, which are part of bread making and from the tools used in the process of production, to the sayings and supplications of people working in this field; meals and mealtimes;

the folklore aspects of the celebration of the month of Ramadan; the customs related to the celebration of Sham Al-Nassim and the musical wind instruments as part of the subject of Egyptian folk music instruments. At the time of publication, preparatory work is in progress to issue the first cartographic displays that concern the subject of bread.

### The Art House for Folk and Performing Arts

Ministerial Decree No. 151/1980 was issued for establishing art houses, including the Art House for Folk and Performing Arts which is mainly concerned with folk heritage in theatre, music and mimed performances. The troupes of this art house take part in most world festivals related to intangible heritage.<sup>1</sup>

In order to include a scientific component in the troupes' activities, the Research, Arts, and Heritage Studies Department was established in 1994. Its aim is to provide troupes with up-to-date knowledge on the performing arts through the organization of studies and meetings, and the collection of journalistic archives. It also monitors the quality of the various popular performances. The art house thus intends to be a field and theoretical heritage research centre to serve the programmes of the art house troupes, helping to revive folk songs, such as *sirahs* which are no longer narrated. Parts of *Abu Zeid El Helali Sirah*, which is still narrated today, were collected and used in the programmes of specialized troupes. In addition to interest in collecting and documenting the aspects of folk life in the family and religious festivals, a number of shadow play texts were also collected directly from living actors.

In parallel with scientific and artistic initiatives, a folklore magazine has been issued as a quarterly since 1965, in order to familiarize people with folk traditions and related studies, thereby helping them to develop and seek inspiration in folk traditions, with emphasis on Egyptian and Arabic folk traditions. In its early years, the magazine selected one of the regions of Egypt to carry out a folklore survey and present samples of its folk traditions and other intangible heritage. Since the first issue in January 1965, and until now, the magazine has presented samples of nearly all of the folk traditions, arts, customs, etc. covering the whole of Egypt.

The magazine has attempted to strike a balance between the theoretical and analytical contributions and fieldwork methods and practices concerning folk material, and also between all the components of folk traditions such as folk art, customs and traditions, folk knowledge and mimic arts, folk music, etc. Equipped with an English summary, the magazine has also gone beyond developing the awareness of local people and has succeeded in eliciting the attention of the international community. It is now one of the oldest quarterly magazines specialized in folk traditions in the Arab world.

More recently, in 2002, a non-governmental society concerned with collecting folk traditions, the Egyptian Society for Folk Traditions, was established to assist in the presentation of intangible heritage. Looting and misuse might be some of the unfortunate consequences of the promotion of living heritage and folk traditions. In addition to scientific issues such as collection and study, adequate measures of

protection must be taken at the same time. The Egyptian Society for Folk Traditions pursues a wide range of activities which will ultimately contribute to the safeguarding of intangible heritage: from the exchange of expertise during conferences, publications and exhibitions, support for research and popular creators, to monitoring handicraft production and the cultural industries.

#### **A concrete example: *Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah***

The society played a key role in the submission of *Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah* to the UNESCO programme of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, and its proclamation in 2003. The *Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah*<sup>2</sup> (epic) is the most important Arabic *sirah*<sup>3</sup> (epic), orally narrated throughout Egypt and also includes excerpts narrated in several other Arab countries. However, the *Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah* is the only *sirah* of *Banu Hilal* in its complete form with all its episodes intact. *Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah* is not only an extraordinary example of long-standing traditional story-telling in the communities of Upper and Lower Egypt, but it also includes the most ancient and popular traditional music with songs and dances of existing tribes.

The *Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah* narrates a historical event related to the migration of a group of Arab tribes known as the Hilali Alliance, and instead of focusing on a single individual, the *sirah* (epic) narrates the story of a whole tribe on its journey from the Arabian Peninsula westwards to Egypt and North Africa. Thus, *Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah* is a historical 'document' as it refers to places and events, in addition to its value as a sociological, artistic and folk document in its references to

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traditional food, customs and practices, as well as poetry and riddles. It is also a reflection of the norms and general ethos of the community. There is no concrete information concerning the beginning of *Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyya*, yet it is believed to date back to the eighth century and was completed during the nineteenth century.

However, the Hilali Epic is rapidly disappearing owing to competition from popular forms of entertainment such as television and radio and to the decreasing number of young people able to commit themselves to the rigorous training process. Moreover, pressured by the lucrative Egyptian tourist industry, young poets tend to forsake the full Hilali repertory in favour of selected brief passages performed as part of folklore shows in restaurants and hotels catering primarily to non-Arab visitors. The few remaining poets who maintain large repertories are now over 70 years old.

The action plan of the Proclamation makes provision for publishing the integral version of the epic and documenting various styles of storytelling as well as musical components of the genre. To ensure that the epic continues to be transmitted orally, funds will be appropriated for training courses in recitation conducted by master poets. Lecture series will be integrated in school curricula with a view to increasing the public's appreciation and understanding of the Hilali epic.

### | NOTES

1. The Reda Popular Arts Troupe; the National Popular Arts Troupe; the National Folk Music Troupe and the Singing & Show Troupe

2. The *Sirah Al-Hilaliyya* consists of four distinct parts: the birth of the hero Abu Zayd (*Mitaa abu-Zayd*); the scouting or reconnaissance mission (*Arriyada*); the westward migration (*Taghriba*); and the book of the orphans (*Kitab Al-Aytam*). An account of the first episode of the *sirah*, the story of the marriage between *Rizq* and *Khadra Ashrafia*, the daughter of the *Sharif of Mecca*, the birth and growing-up of *Abu-Zayd* and part of the *Arriyada* (scouting trip) clearly elucidate the relevance of the *sirah* to contemporary Egyptian society.

3. The *Sirahs* are the first biographic narrations. It is the arabic term equivalent to epic, but it is not epic. It consists of partly prose and partly poetry.



# | The Nubia Museum's Role in the Community

by *Ossama A. W. Abdel Meguid*

*Ossama A. W. Abdel Meguid holds a degree in museology from the Reinwardt Academy, Amsterdam, in the Netherlands. He is director of the Nubia Museum in Aswan (Egypt). He has also worked as curator of the Aswan Local Museum. He has many publications such as 'An Old Nubia Museum at Sehel Island', in Nubia and Sudan, British Museum Magazine, 2003; 'Museums, Civilizations and Development', ICOM Encounter, Amman, 1994; and 'Nubia Museum's Security System', a paper presented at the ICOM General Conference, Seoul, 2004.*

## The museum and community in sustainable development<sup>1</sup>

Museums are products of society and when they are in the mainstream of professional development, they actively serve society. Service involves responding to obvious demands, such as those for education, entertainment and civic pride, as well as to the deliberate affirmation of shared social values.

As a society changes, its culture changes in order to satisfy different needs. Those who would strike new balances call on our social and cultural institutions to address the challenge of the present. The museum must consequently evolve in its role and thereby continue to serve society. To maintain its integrity, however, it must not waver from its main purpose. No other institution preserves significant objects from the past. If this should cease to be its main concern, the museum will no longer exist; it will have become something else.<sup>2</sup> Museums are



19. The Nubia Museum was built with the help and supervision of UNESCO, using elements from Nubian cultural heritage in its design.

unique institutions with potential both to develop and to explain new knowledge and its significance to the general public, thereby maintaining awareness of the social context of its production. Museums have the potential to participate in the shaping of our collective future by contributing their research, exhibition programming and heritage collections to collaborative programmes in the interest of society as a whole. Some may claim that museums do not have the right to participate in shaping society.<sup>3</sup> However, in the face of rapidly growing needs to examine environmental, cultural, and socio-economic problems, people are turning to institutions that might address global problems at the local level. Museums are among those institutions with the opportunity of making a real difference.<sup>4</sup>

### The Nubian Community

Nubians have a much higher proportion of African blood than Egyptians, amounting perhaps to 50 per cent of their total genetic make up. In dress and manner they follow the time-honoured conventions of the Arab world. Although proud of their distinct ethnic identity, Nubians also consider themselves Arabs, and most can trace their descent from the Prophet or from one of the early caliphs. Arabic is the second language of most of the male population, and the only written language. Like most Africans, Nubians are in fact fairly recent converts to Islam. They are not converts from paganism, for they were Christian throughout the Middle Ages, and before that, adhered to a succession of state cults of Egyptian origin. Nubia was called *Balad El-Aman*, the land of safety and

security, as a result of the structure and function of Nubian society and its adaptation to the environment along the shores of the Nile.<sup>5</sup>

An important aspect of the Nubian community is the communal ownership of waterwheels, palm trees, fields and cattle by members of different families and even villages. Limited economic resources forced the Nubians to cooperate rather than to quarrel over rights and shares. This necessity also influenced social relationships and interactions because shares in property could not be sold but were bequeathed. Therefore, it would be in the interest of the owner of part of a waterwheel, who consequently owned a share of the crops it irrigated, to acquire part of the land on which the crops were planted. He would try to achieve this by marrying off his son to the daughter of the landowner; thus, the bride would bring a share of the land to the bridegroom's family. Economic necessity produced a strong sense of cooperation and solidarity in Nubian society.

This people lived hundreds, perhaps thousands of years, south of the city of Aswan, until the High Dam was built, flooding their homes and covering the entire area. The government resettled the Nubians in new communities on new lands north of Aswan near Kom Ombo. The construction of the High Dam made Nubians the object of national attention. At the same time, it permanently separated the Nubians of Egypt from those of Sudan as a result of their resettlement in both countries. Moreover, many families that formerly maintained their physical presence in Nubia were uprooted and re-established themselves in an urban environment.

### **The Nubia Museum and transmission of traditional knowledge**

Since its opening, the Nubia Museum has embarked on a series of programmes designed to make it a dynamic institution and an integral part of Aswan society. Having deliberately moved away from the outdated concepts of a museum being a static place for the exhibition of artefacts alone, the Board and staff are pursuing a strategy to ensure that the museum is part of and responds to the Aswan community. This community strategy includes extensive local and international promotion, the offering of special awards and extended visiting hours for locals, the implementation of a school programme unit that enables children to conduct research on Nubian history, and the community utilization of museum facilities for art, drama and other cultural activities.

Since the resettlement process of the early 1960s, during the construction of the High Dam, the Nubian population has faced innumerable challenges related to the maintenance of its culture and traditional ways of life, as well as earning a livelihood. In this process of re-adjustment the rich cultural heritage of the Nubian community has suffered. Of particular concern is the general neglect of art and handicraft production as the community adapted lifestyles to cope with a new environment. Nubian arts, crafts, and folklore embody and reflect the history and beliefs of this ancient people.

The situation is such that very few people below the age of twenty are knowledgeable in these traditional arts and their associated folklore

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and history. Currently, members of the older generation with knowledge and skills are passing away. The museum has recognized the potential for a major loss of Nubian cultural wealth with the passing of this older generation, and is seeking effective ways of stemming this loss. A feasible approach is to facilitate opportunities for the older generation to educate and train

education and cultural services, and lack of representation in decision-making. With the goal of addressing the root causes of poverty, the museum project focuses on increasing community access to basic services and enhancing human capabilities in order to improve the quality of life of the community's most vulnerable households. In order to address the multi-faceted nature of



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20. Interior of the Nubia Museum with the colossal statue of Ramses II from Gerf Hussein.



© Nubia Museum  
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21. Interior of the Nubia Museum representing a Nubian wedding ceremony.

interested members of the younger generation. In an attempt to resuscitate Nubian handicraft skills, and involve young Nubian women in income-generating activities and improve basic literacy, the museum has proposed conducting a nine-month pilot training programme to transfer skills and traditional knowledge from senior to younger Nubian women.

### **The Nubia Museum, poverty and illiteracy alleviation**

Poverty is not just a matter of low income; its many aspects include inadequate access to health,

poverty, the project works in close partnership with local Community Development Associations (CDAs). The project provides advocacy capabilities and technical assistance in: (a) accessing basic services (water and sanitation health, education and micro-credit) and (b) strengthening the CDA's capacity to represent their constituencies and link with other civil society organizations in order to voice the needs of vulnerable households. Through museum assistance, CDA working teams have received training in project design and resource mobilization and have engaged women in poverty-reduction activities. Community advisers have learned to prepare and share messages to promote

safe pregnancy and delivery. They are also able to empower women who have limited literacy skills to prevent malnutrition for themselves and their children. In addition, some CDAs have been trained to play a pivotal role in leading poverty-reduction initiatives in collaboration with other partners within their local environment or beyond. Partnership makes a difference and a multifaceted approach holds the key to success for everyday victories over poverty.

#### **Towards environmental issue awareness**

The museum, in co-operation with the Environment Studies Unit of the South Valley University in Aswan, supports local CDAs in the districts of Nubian villages in Aswan city to form an environmental network. The network enables communities to become environmentally literate in order to identify needs and develop strategies, and obtain and pool resources to address those needs efficiently and effectively and to strengthen community members' environmental advocacy capabilities. The museum helps to develop solutions to environmental problems such as solid waste disposal, and water and air pollution. It promotes mutually identified strategies. With greater awareness, community members are able to ensure that their solution is effective.

Based on a request from the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs and the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency, the Academy for Educational Development has facilitated the organization of the Agenda 21 Children's National Poster Contest. The Agenda 21 Posters contest, a drawing competition revolving around the theme

of 'Caring For Our World', was organized at national level under the auspices of the First Lady, Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, as part of Egypt's preparation for the World Summit for Sustainable Development in 2002, in Johannesburg (South Africa). The drawing competition involved children between seven and twelve years old. It aimed at raising their awareness of sustainable development, the objectives of Agenda 21 and the Rio+10 preparations. Children were invited through 'the Green Corner Network' to submit drawings that reflected their concerns about the global environment and development issues. The collection of winning entries from all over the world was exhibited at the World Summit. The Museum and Academy for Educational Development have produced a set of materials to publicize the contest and encourage children to participate by creating drawings that reflect their own perspectives and concerns about the Egyptian as well as the global environment. These publicity materials included five posters portraying five main environmental themes and a children's folder containing a sticker entry form, a descriptive flyer and four pages on vital environmental issues. In order to enhance communication efforts regarding the main global environmental and development concerns, a travelling exhibit of the best sixty posters, representing regional and national winners, was displayed on the Nubia Museum premises in May 2003.

#### **| NOTES**

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# | The Global Village of Heritage: the contribution of the Centre for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage (CULTNAT)

*by Fathi Saleh and Hala N. Barakat*

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## Introduction

Recent developments in the field of information technology and telecommunications involving networks, the Internet, multimedia, etc. have played an important role in disseminating knowledge and facilitating the exchange of information. These developments have also changed our knowledge, appreciation and perception of heritage, our own as well as that of other nations worldwide.

Telecommunications and information technology have not only provided tools for the documentation, preservation and management of this heritage, but have also created a sense of closeness between people from various backgrounds, and a feeling of living in a global village where easy access to

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one's own heritage and that of one's neighbours thousands of miles away is possible.

In Egypt, the establishment of the Centre for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage (CULTNAT), affiliated to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and supported by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, marks a unique experience in applying the latest innovations in the world of telecommunications and information technology to heritage issues. CULTNAT's mandate is to document the various aspects of Egypt's tangible and intangible cultural heritage as well as its natural heritage. This heritage encompasses various aspects of human civilization, monitors the development of human livelihood, and represents a cultural and a natural heritage of national and international value. To achieve this goal, CULTNAT is making use of the latest information technology and is working in collaboration with national and international specialized organizations. The centre also aims to increase public awareness of Egypt's cultural and natural heritage through the dissemination of information using all available media, as well as developing the skills of professionals in the field of documentation and management of cultural and natural heritage.

Egypt's wealth in archaeological sites, architectural styles, the arts, folklore and natural beauty is reflected in CULTNAT's various programmes as follows.

### The archaeological map of Egypt

The archaeological map of Egypt is the first comprehensive inventory of all archaeological sites

in Egypt in a Geographic Information System (GIS) linked to a wide-ranging database of the archaeological sites, monuments and artefacts found throughout Egypt.



22. Interior of the Centre for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage.

The information is organized on three consecutive levels: The first is national, showing all sites on a large scale map and providing basic information about each site. At the second level, a detailed map shows the site and its components along with further information, while the third level provides the complete data of the monument with a plan of the structure and images. For a number of monuments, each wall is depicted with the relief or paintings along with the translation of the hieroglyphs, while for others, a 3-D model is available with the possibility of a virtual visit.

The amount of data collected so far and integrated in the programme could also be used for a wide variety of products, including archaeological atlases, guides, CD-ROMs, etc.



### The architectural heritage of Egypt

The purpose of this programme is to document the nineteenth- and twentieth-century architectural heritage of Egypt, starting with the central area of Cairo as a pilot project and continuing with other parts of Cairo and other cities. This project constitutes a Geographic Information System (GIS) with an easy-to-browse database that includes extensive photographic documentation and all published material for each inventoried building, in addition to historical documents, maps and archival material.

This exhaustive database serves a variety of users ranging from decision-makers to architects and historians. In the wealth of studies on architecture in Egypt, this is an unprecedented systematic digital approach that crowns the limited attempts of the dispersed few who have documented one aspect or another of Egyptian architecture. A series of thematic CD-ROMs, books, guides and other publications are extracted from this database thereby serving as very effective cultural awareness tools.

### The natural heritage of Egypt

The documentation of Egypt's natural heritage is a multidisciplinary programme aimed at disseminating information on the natural heritage of Egypt. The programme involves the collection of all data available on protected areas and their components including detailed information on the flora, fauna, geological formations and related cultural features. The data is further used to create a digital natural map of Egypt in the Geographic Information System (GIS). The system is designed



23. The Centre for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage building. Smart Village. Egypt.

to be used as a monitoring, assessment and management tool by various stakeholders in the field of nature conservation and environmental policy-making. It can also be useful for researchers in natural history and environmental studies, visitors to protected areas, and environmental NGOs. For the dissemination of information, a series of books, CD-ROMs and postcards have been produced on various subjects related to the natural heritage.

### Egyptian folklore

Egypt's living traditions are embedded in a deep and colourful source stemming from various cultures that have enriched it over the millennia. CULTNAT is undertaking the task of documenting these traditions. A systematic approach is adopted in the compilation process and is aimed at building up the most comprehensive and inclusive library of scientific and audiovisual material.

The library is designed to include a rich array that covers ethnological activities, popular

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themes, traditional feasts, celebrations, folk tales, proverbs and life cycles. It also includes legends, customs, daily activities, cults of the saints, architectural and agricultural traditions, popular music, arts, crafts, popular superstitions, national costumes, jewellery, and mythological legends from Egyptian lands, deserts, rural and urban communities.

The information is used to publish a thesaurus of Egyptian folklore (*Al-Meknaz*) as well as a series of books and online products on traditional crafts in Fatimid Cairo and traditions and practices during the holy month of Ramadan. Moreover, the programme has produced a national action plan for the documentation of Egyptian folklore.

### **The musical heritage of Egypt**

CULTNAT seeks to ensure a better understanding of our musical heritage and the arts that have greatly developed during the earlier part of the twentieth century and which are in serious danger of being lost forever. This is achieved through documenting, classifying and analysing this heritage. The Arabic music information system comprises three levels: the first level focuses on documenting basic information related to composers, lyrics, singers, modes, forms, and rhythms. The second level compiles the complete works of artists with original lyrics, scores, and audio and video clips whenever possible. The third level is a multimedia upgrade that targets the production of documented audiovisual deliverable material based on collected data as well as a detailed musical analysis of pieces selected by professional critics.

Such a database will assist musical education in music institutes and will provide a tremendous source of edutainment for the general public.

### **The photographic memory of Egypt**

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Middle East and Egypt in particular became a destination that attracted a large number of pioneer photographers. Their works documented such vivid topics as archaeological sites and excavations, local architecture and landscapes, in addition to the social life and daily activities of the local community. The programme aims to make such rare collections available for researchers, curators, and admirers of old photography through a number of publications, including books and CD-ROMs as well as online.

Collections of famous photographers, from local and international archives and from private collections, are digitally documented. Glass-plate negatives, vintage sepia-toned albumen prints and selenium-toned silver sheets from the early twentieth century are classified in Egypt's pioneering photographic heritage database, starting with the exclusive collection of Lehnert and Landrock housing over 1,200 black-and-white thematically assorted quality prints.

### **The Islamic scientific manuscript heritage**

The manuscript documentation programme aims to document Islamic scientific manuscripts available in various institutions and private collections on the national and regional level, in order to build an electronic encyclopaedia of

manuscripts on the sciences and mathematics that were produced during the peak of the Islamic period. A pilot project was carried out at the National Library of Egypt, 'Dar al Kutub', and covered seven manuscripts in their entirety, illustrating the contribution of Islamic civilization to medical science. Currently, the documentation of manuscripts on astronomy and time reckoning housed in al-Azhar University Library is in progress. The programme is also exploring the potential of documenting microforms of manuscripts in special collections as well as creating a portal of Islamic scientific manuscripts on the web. Multilingual publications and CD-ROMs are some of the products that make such documented treasures available to scientists, researchers and the general public, both locally and internationally.

### **Eternal Egypt on the web**

In collaboration with the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the IBM Corporation, 'Eternal Egypt' ([www.eternegypt.org](http://www.eternegypt.org)) is a premier website to display a selection of Egypt's treasures and cultural heritage on the Internet to the global audience, using state-of-the-art technologies. The website covers the various eras of Egyptian civilization: Pharaonic, Graeco-Roman, Coptic and Islamic. It presents events, characters, museum objects, as well as historical sites, through attractive stories. The descriptive information is available in Arabic, English and French, and is supported by an innovative text-to-speech technology to generate the audio narrations, by 2-D high-resolution images, tours and panoramic views of many sites as well as 3-D models of various objects. The website is linked to webcams

installed at the Giza Plateau, Karnak Temple, Qaitbey Fort, and in Islamic Cairo, providing virtual visits of these sites. The rich content of the website was further used to produce the digital guide available to visitors to the Egyptian Museum, providing them with visual, audio and textual information on part of the museum collection.

### **International joint projects**

CULTNAT is a partner in several projects funded by the European Commission, namely: (a) *Euromed Héritage II 'Patrimoines partagés'*: A three-year joint project research programme, aimed at documenting and improving knowledge about the architectural and urban heritage of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the Mediterranean basin; (b) *Traditional Water Techniques: Cultural Heritage for a Sustainable Future (Shaduf)*: This three-year research project aims to develop an information bank on traditional and indigenous technologies and to draw attention to the rich and versatile water and waste-water-related heritage in the Mediterranean region; (c) *Defence Systems in Mediterranean Coasts (SID-LIM)*: a two-year project, aimed at building a website on coastal defence systems and to restore and reuse an ancient defence-related building in each participating country; (d) *Strabon*: a three-year project, devised to offer the Mediterranean world a coherent group of online multilingual information systems dealing with cultural heritage and tourist activities and supported by multimedia. (e) *Unimed Cultural Heritage II*: this three-year project aims to improve co-operation in the field of cultural heritage preservation, restoration and management among the participating countries, by implementing extended cultural heritage

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databases, a dedicated portal and training courses in relevant fields.

UNESCO has been and still is one of the main organizations funding several of CULTNAT's activities and projects.

UNESCO and UNDP funded a study of the present situation of Egypt's cultural heritage with a view to suggesting a strategic approach. The project entitled *Strategic Approach to Egypt's Cultural Heritage* includes the collecting of documentation and the creation of a National Register and databases, but also site management, conservation and restoration strategies and, thirdly, education, ecotourism and capacity-building.

A second project, *the Scientific Islamic Manuscript Heritage*, was initiated in September 2001. The project will document scientific Islamic manuscripts available in various institutions and private collections at national and regional level.

In the field of intangible cultural heritage and in collaboration with the Egyptian Society for Folk Traditions, CULTNAT is documenting *Al-Sirah-Al-Hilaliyya Epic*, recently declared by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity.

Finally, CULTNAT's digital library is being developed with the support of UNESCO to be a model of an e-library.

Following the recent policy of the Egyptian government towards the integration of telecommunications and information technology

in various aspects of life such as education, health, commerce and government, CULTNAT substantially contributes to global e-culture programming in Egypt. Since its establishment in the year 2000, CULTNAT's development objective has been to become a landmark on a regional and worldwide scale, in the implementation of a comprehensive approach towards the use of telecommunications and information technology for documentation of the various aspects of heritage.

# | Research, Development and Management of Heritage on the Left Bank of the Nile: Ramesseum and its environs

by *Christian Leblanc*

*As director of research at the CNRS, Christian Leblanc directs the French Archaeological Mission of Western Thebes. He is president of the Trust for the Safeguard of Ramesseum and a member of ICOMOS as well as a member of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities committee to safeguard the Valley of the Kings. After many years dedicated to the exploration and development of the Valley of the Queens, since 1991, his work and that of his team has focused on Ramesseum and the tomb of Ramses II.*

The ruins of Ramesseum, a temple built during the reign of Ramses II, 1,800 B.C., extend over some ten hectares on the western bank of Luxor, bordering on cultivated land and the piedmont of the Libyan chain. Jean-François Champollion, who visited Ramesseum on 18 June 1829, considered it ‘the loftiest and purest of the great monuments at Thebes’.<sup>1</sup> Since 1991, a Franco-Egyptian team has undertaken systematic exploration of Ramesseum based on three major research objectives: first, to define more precisely the liturgical function of this large structure that belongs to the category of temples said to be ‘funerary’, then attempt to understand its real vocation on a regional scale by studying the group of economic and administrative areas that surround it on three sides, and finally attempt to determine the religious and political reasons that explain why the buildings of these major royal institutions were abandoned at the end of the New Kingdom, and often recovered for other purposes. In addition to this essentially

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scientific programme, other complementary projects have been implemented for the development of this exceptional site.

### The contribution of recent archaeological research

Preserving the memory of the reign of its illustrious founder, who presided over the destiny of Egypt for nearly 67 years (1279–1212 B.C.),

In these outbuildings, built of mud bricks, more than thirty rooms equipped with ovens still concealed pottery dishes and many other vestiges that confirm the function of the rooms. The large scale of the area, which includes four semi-detached architectural units extending over nearly 3,000m<sup>2</sup>, as well as the duration of its activity, show that these premises not only provided for divine and royal worship, but also catered for needs which went



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24. Traditional architecture in Upper Egypt: Gournah housing is an integral part of the history of western Thebes.



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25. Unauthorized concrete constructions in the vicinity of Ramesseum.

Ramesseum was also an administrative and economic centre of great importance, as revealed by numerous documentary sources, found notably in the tombs of government workers or the archives of the necropolis.<sup>2</sup> Current excavations in the field have enriched this data, allowing not only the identification of the various elements of this vast complex, but also revealing something of its organization and management.

In recent years, in the southern part, kitchens, bakeries and supply rooms of the temple were discovered, with numerous remaining fittings.

beyond the confines of Ramesseum. In this respect, we know that towards the end of the reign of Ramses III, and perhaps even later, these kitchens and bakeries provided part of the food rations distributed as a form of payment to the craftspeople of Deir el-Medineh, who were employed on the major sites of the western bank, such as the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens.

More recently, excavations conducted in the south-eastern part of the complex, between the kitchens and the royal palace, helped to establish the site of the Ramesseum school, an institution

where young boys were trained for the profession of scribe. More than 130 inscribed and figurative ostraca that have been discovered until now within a context of mud brick architectural structures, are at the origin of this identification, which is even more important because it is the first time that an

written in hieratic, within one of the groups of buildings which served as a repository for olive oil.<sup>4</sup>

A wide processional alley, lined with sphinxes and used for special rites surrounded the



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26. Portico with Osirian pillars north-west of Ramesseum's second court before (left) and after (right) its restoration.

establishment of this kind has been physically located within a Pharaonic temple.<sup>3</sup>

To the north-west of the temple proper, the 'Treasury' was located, for which several attendants are known, including Tia, the brother-in-law of Ramses II who exercised this function during his reign. This building consists of a long room full of columns still flanked by large, vaulted store rooms where various foodstuffs from the royal domains were stocked. In this area, research undertaken today seeks to reveal the contents of each of these store rooms where luxury products were found, such as wine, oil, fats, and honey, as well as grain which was essential for making bread. Cleaning some of the floors has already revealed 'labels'

sacred space (*temenos*), between the two enclosure walls that had formerly determined its boundaries. This majestic avenue is currently being excavated. This work has revealed, on the northern side, the existence of rectangular limestone foundations as well as the presence of many fragments of clay chacal-sphinx figures, including a magnificent head of Anubis. These unearthed relics shed new light on the peripheral buildings of Ramesseum which had remained little known until now.<sup>5</sup>

#### Research development and the preservation of a prestigious site

In order to highlight the results of this research, which had been conducted over the years, and at

## RESEARCH AND CULTURAL POLICIES

the same time preserve this important site of Egyptian cultural heritage, other actions were implemented from 1991 onwards, thanks to financial support from the Trust for the Safeguard of Ramesseum.<sup>6</sup> In parallel to the excavations, studies and surveys, an ambitious programme for



27. Ramesseum's kitchens and bakeries in 2002 after restoration.

the conservation and restoration of the edifice and its outbuildings was set up, with the assistance of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities. The restoration of the first pylon, which had partially collapsed in ancient times, and the general or more global renovation of Ramesseum, whose romantic charm has not failed to please its illustrious visitors, have been included in ongoing and future operations.<sup>7</sup> Based on the recommendations of the Venice Charter, the options chosen are intended to be as respectful as possible of the monument, while providing an educational presentation of the site and its components.<sup>8</sup> Minimum intervention and reversibility have therefore guided operations which have been undertaken so far, within the accessible areas of the temple or in the

excavated areas of its economic and administrative complex.

In the second courtyard, work has primarily focused on the restoration of walls and porticos which are ornamented with imposing



28. Restitution of the bases of Ramesseum's columns, an example of reversibility in restoration, facilitating a better legibility of the ancient temple's architecture.

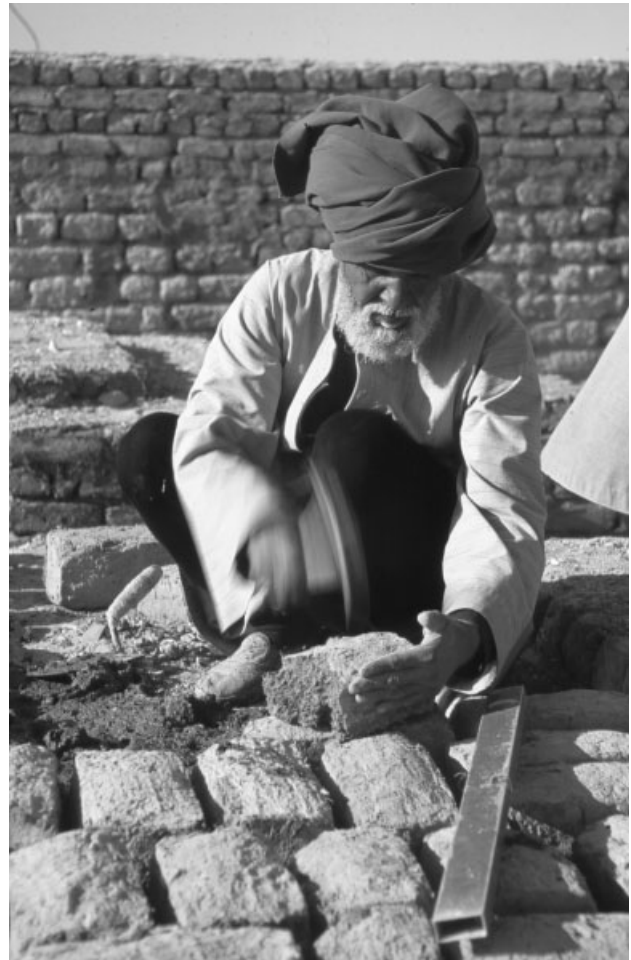
Osiriac colossi of the king, as well as on the restoration of the ancient pavement which had been largely pulled up. Two of the staircases providing access to the large hypostyle hall were also rebuilt, and in order to ensure that visitors have a better understanding of the former space as it was constructed, walls, columns and pillars which had disappeared on the surface, were raised on several foundations. Other actions were aimed at protecting and highlighting monumental statuary: in 1997, the 'Young Memnon' was placed on a new base, whose height corresponds to the supposed level of the original pedestal<sup>9</sup> and, more recently, a magnificent head of Ramses II that had lain on the floor of the second courtyard, was installed on a plinth and braced.



A long and exacting operation was undertaken from 1992 in the large hypostyle room, concerning the sealing of joints, restoration of wall surfaces, as well as the cleansing, through a micro-abrasion process, of the columns and reliefs whose colours were hidden by centuries of dust.<sup>10</sup> Painted surfaces that had already been treated were fixed with the help of an acrylic-type resin,<sup>11</sup> which had been used previously to save the mural paintings of Nefertari's famous tomb, and is recognized today for offering the best guarantees for withstanding light and for reversibility.

The restoration of the sanctuary, whose vestiges were excavated between 1997 and 2002,<sup>12</sup> was begun this year and should lead to the emergence of its architectural layout which has disappeared on the surface. It was decided to re-create the walls on a slight elevation, which would allow connecting this area with the rest of the temple, and additionally, facilitate comprehension of the entire layout.

In areas constructed out of mud bricks, it was also necessary to intervene in order to protect these fragile structures, which are often very damaged and occasionally subject to torrential rain.<sup>13</sup> Under the circumstances, the most suitable solution was to cover the ancient walls with several layers of modern bricks, made out of the same material, indicating this additional elevation with a slight protrusion. In order to ensure the aesthetics of this protection, it seemed preferable to follow the shape of the structure of the ruins rather than make the restoration too rigid by imposing a uniform elevation to the entire structure. The work that has been carried out in the kitchen and



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29. Craftsman working to safeguard the raw brick structures of Ramesseum's kitchens and bakeries.

bakery areas of the temple shows that satisfactory results can be achieved, with the additional advantage of being a reversible process. Less evident, however, are solutions for protecting the ancient vaulted ceilings which were also built out of this perishable material. At the beginning of the twentieth century, E. Baraize had partially resolved the problem in Ramesseum's warehouses by reinforcing the vaults with metal or mud-brick supports. This remains an efficient system



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30. The second court of Ramesseum after restoration.

without detracting from the aesthetics of the architecture, but should be extended to eight other warehouses in the temple. We are perfectly aware of this priority which is on the agenda for our forthcoming missions.

### **Ramesseum and the protection of its environment**

Agricultural expansion and urbanization, which are still too often unsupervised in Egypt, are sectors which harm the environment of archaeological sites and the efforts which have been deployed for their preservation and development. Ramesseum, like the majority of other monuments in western Thebes, is not immune to these threats. While an extension of cultivated land is already visible in front of the first pylon, there is also the chaotic construction

of modern dwellings, several of which were built out of cement, which increasingly surround the temple, to the south as well as the north, and are detrimental to future development of the project. This is why, in close collaboration with the Department of EAIS of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities,<sup>14</sup> an analysis of the risks was studied on the scale of this area, with a view to proposing more balanced solutions.

This pilot action, based on the principles of heritage protection, concerns first of all the temple, strictly speaking, and its immediate periphery. The enormous earthwork which has surrounded it on three sides since 1906,<sup>15</sup> is gradually disappearing, leaving the original walls which, after restoration, will definitively protect the internal structures of the edifice. However, to achieve this, the asphalt

road built behind the temple constitutes an obstacle which must be overcome, either by modifying its itinerary or by eliminating, an entire branch of this modern road which not only encroaches upon the remains of Ramesseum, but also crosses, a little further to the south, the first courtyard of the palace of Thutmose III which is thousands of years old. This road that was originally drawn without taking into account the archaeological spaces that it severs or disfigures, also alters the exceptional panorama of a cultural landscape – that of the Theban mountain, its necropolises and traditional dwellings – which are considered to be among the finest in the world.

On all sides of Ramesseum, aside from prohibiting any new building, the ruins of other temples from the New Kingdom should also be preserved: that of Amenhotep II, to the north, which an Italian archaeological mission has fortunately been in the process of conscientiously excavating for the past several years,<sup>16</sup> and that of Thutmose IV, just to the south, which, on the other hand, was left to decay for decades and is condemned to disappear sooner or later, if no action for safeguarding is implemented. Serving as a thoroughfare for vehicles and transformed into a dump by the inhabitants whose houses are near the remains of the pylon, this temple, like the ancient palatial residence of Amenhotep III at Malqatta, is one of the most endangered sites of western Thebes and urgent intervention is recommended.<sup>17</sup>

Lastly, the extension of cultivated land and its continual irrigation presents, notably on the outskirts of these temples, an additional risk for their preservation. Rising groundwater through

capillarity dangerously affects the sandstone and mud bricks, and has already severely damaged the survival of these several-times-over millenary edifices. The case of the first pylon of Ramesseum constitutes an eloquent example, which can however be mitigated by initially installing a safety perimeter corresponding to the assumed surface area of its ancient parvis, fully hidden today by the agricultural zone.

In the face of these problems which are difficult to resolve because of a secular but unavoidable coexistence between the past and the present, the authorities of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities, fully aware of and even preoccupied by the problem, have already taken several measures. However, the cultural wealth of western Thebes is so vast and diverse that only an exhaustive and more global appraisal, embracing cultural as well as socio-economic aspects, will ensure that realistic serious planning for the protection, development and management of this prestigious heritage can be achieved.

## | NOTES

1. J.-F. Champollion, *Lettres écrites d'Égypte et de Nubie entre 1828 et 1829* [Letters Written from Egypt and Nubia between 1828 and 1829], Paris, Firmin Didot Frères, 1833 (14th letter, sent from Thebes).
2. C. Leblanc, C. Barbotin, M. Nelson and G. Lecuyot, *Les monuments d'éternité de Ramsès II. Nouvelles fouilles thébaines. Les Dossiers du Louvre*, Paris, RMN, 1999.
3. C. Leblanc, 'L'école des scribes de Ramsès II', in *La recherche. L'actualité des sciences*, No. 379, Paris (October), 2004, pp. 70–4.
4. G. Bouvier, 'Le contenu du magasin H 34 du Ramesseum', *Memnonia*, Vol. XIV, (Cairo), 2003, pp. 59–80 and fig. VII.

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5. M. Nelson, 'La voie processionnelle nord du Ramesseum', *Memnonia*, Vol. XV (Cairo) (forthcoming).
6. The Trust for the Safeguard of Ramesseum, sponsored by leading figures in the cultural and scientific world, was created in 1989 in order to participate in the restoration and development of the temple and tomb of Ramses II. It currently has some 800 international members. Headquarters: 173 rue de Charenton, 75012 Paris. Each year it edits a journal of regional history and archaeology (*Memnonia*) devoted to research and work carried out on the sites of western Thebes.
7. Hecatée d'Abdère and Diodore de Sicile described it as the 'Tomb of Ozymandias', while the geographer Strabon described it as 'Memnon's Palace'. Bonaparte's scholars carried out the first scientific surveys for the *Description of Egypt* when they examined the ruins in 1799. Champollion, Nestor L'Hôte, Rosellini, Belzoni, Salt, Ampère, Flaubert and Maxime du Camp are part of a long list of admirers who praised its magnificence, which is celebrated in Shelley's famous poem about its broken colossus ('Ozymandias').
8. C. Leblanc, J.-C. Golvin, A.-A. Sadek et al., 'Le projet de sauvegarde du temple de millions d'années de Ramsés II – Interventions d'urgence, exploration et mise en valeur du site', *Memnonia*, Vol. II, (Cairo), 1991, pp. 27–64 and figs. I–XI; C. Leblanc, J.-C. Golvin and A.-A. Sadek, 'La sauvegarde du Ramesseum', *Atti del Sesto Congresso Internazionale di Egittologia*, Vol. II, Turin, 1993, pp. 133–143 and figs. 1–4.
9. C. Leblanc and D. Esмоingt, 'Le 'Jeune Memnon': un colosse de Ramsés II nommé Ousermaâtrê-Setepenrê-aimé-d'Amon-Rê', in *Memnonia*, Vol. X (Cairo), 1999, pp. 79–100 and figs. XII–XXVII.
10. R. Bougrain-Dubourg, 'Le traitement des peintures murales dans la grande salle hypostyle du Ramesseum', in *Memnonia*, Vol. VII (Cairo), 1996, pp. 43–48 and figs. V–VII.
11. A paraloid B.72, diluted in an aromatic solvent; see R. Bougrain-Dubourg, op. cit., p. 47.
12. G. Lecuyot, 'Le sanctuaire du Ramesseum. Campagnes de fouilles 1997–1999' in *Memnonia* XI (Cairo), 2000, pp. 117–30 and figs. XVIII–XXV; by the same author: 'Le sanctuaire du Ramesseum. Campagnes de fouilles 2000–2002', in *Memnonia* XIV (Cairo), 2003, pp. 93–115 and figs. XI–XX.
13. The most recent, which struck the Theban region (on 2 November 1994), caused significant damage to heritage. See C. Leblanc, 'Thèbes et les pluies torrentielles. À propos de *mw n pt*', in *Memnonia* VI (Cairo), 1995, pp. 197–214 and figs. XXXVII–XXXIX.
14. EAIS (Egyptian Antiquities Information System). The SCA's Department of Archaeological Cartography.
15. After excavations began in 1903 by E. Baraize, the architect working for the Egyptian Service of Antiquities, the construction of this earthwork was completed in 1906. Baraize's aim was to excavate the temple and also provide a panoramic view of the ruins to tourists of the era: see E. Baraize, 'Déblaiement du Ramesseum', in *ASAE* 8 (Cairo), 1907, pp. 193–200.
16. A. Sesana, 'Preliminary Report of the Third Archaeological Expedition on the Area of the Temple of Amenophis II at Western Thebes', in *Memnonia* XII/XIII (Cairo), 2002, pp. 227–43 and figs. XIX–XXI; by the same author: *Temple of Amenophis II. 5th Archaeological Expedition. Preliminary Report*. (Como), 2003; *Temple of Amenhotep II. 6th Archaeological Expedition (2003–2004). Preliminary Report*. (Como), 2004.
17. C. Leblanc, 'Quelques suggestions pour la protection et la conservation du patrimoine pharaonique, à Thèbes-Ouest', *Memnonia*, Vol. XI (Cairo), 2000, pp. 191–9 and figs. XLII–XLVII; C. Leblanc, 'Response to Z. Hawass: Suggestions for the Protection and Conservation of the Pharaonic Heritage in Western Thebes', *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists* (Cairo) 2000, Vol. 3, (Cairo) 2003, pp. 62–8.

# | Highlights of Unknown Collections: samples from the site of Helwan

by Ali Radwan

*Ali Radwan obtained his Ph.D. in Egyptology in Germany. He is the head of the scientific committee of the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization.*

The site of Helwan lies on the eastern side of the Nile, almost directly opposite ancient Memphis and its necropolis at Saqqara. The important site of Helwan lay in the neighbourhood of Heliopolis, one of the key religious centres of Pharaonic Egypt. Its ancient cemetery was excavated during the years 1942 to 1954 by the late Z.Y. Saad. His extensive findings have been stored ever since in the basement of the Egyptian Museum of Cairo.

The project of the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization provides an opportunity to exhibit numerous almost unknown collections including, for the first time, the treasures from Helwan. Most of the cemetery of Helwan (more than 10,000 tombs) belongs to the period from the unification of Lower and Upper Egypt (c. 3100 B.C.) to the third Dynasty (c. 2600 B.C.). I wish to illustrate the significant value of this collection from a selection of items, which will be displayed in the future museum.

The Helwan collection is made up of important material for the documentation and study of the early Egyptian dynasties, such as cosmetic palettes, bowls, and a chalice-shaped vessel of alabaster (photos 31 and 32). They help to understand the techniques and transmission



31. A palette [25.5 by 14 cm] for grinding *kohl* dating from the Naqada III period, in the shape of a tilapia fish.

of shapes from one material (stone) to another (metal), and vice-versa. Other objects facilitate an approach to funerary practices and an introduction to the mental and spiritual space during the transition between archaic and historic times.

A pair of ivory clappers is of special interest in the collection (photo 33). Similar clappers or castanets of ivory, or other materials, usually found in pairs within tombs, had a purely amulet function, that of driving away evil spirits. Such clappers were used in some ritual scenes, especially those accompanied by music and dance, held one in each hand and struck against one another. The Helwan pair can be identified as an early version of such clappers, or could be models of the sort of boomerangs used for bird hunting. Their curved shape is most likely due to the nature of the raw material from which they were carved, namely the tooth of a hippopotamus. The ancient tombs of Helwan have also yielded a group of ivory spoons of different shapes. One example (photo 34) has a handle in the shape of the hind leg of a small animal, perhaps a kind of antelope, and

another has a handle carved in the form of a duck (photo 35). Both served to ensure the eternal presence of two of the most essential offerings to the dead, namely the animal leg and the duck, and were also used to hold, either in reality or symbolically, unguent or oil.

A small ivory amulet (photo 36) takes the form of the well-known *wAs* sceptre (or staff), which was considered the most important insignia for deities throughout Pharaonic history. Such staffs always have a forked lower end, while the top end usually has the shape of the stylized head of an unidentified animal: the jackal, the donkey, the Seth-animal, the gazelle, and even a fabulous creature similar to a giraffe have been suggested. Staffs can be seen in the hands of some deities,



32. Schist cup [diameter 9.9 cm, height 15.8 cm] with thin polished walls, a copy of a metal prototype.

usually gods, but certain specific goddesses can also hold one as early as the Archaic Period (photo 37). An ivory pin from a First Dynasty burial at Zawiet el-'Aryan (photo 38) has almost the same head. Two *wAs* staffs are depicted on the ivory comb of King Wadj of the First Dynasty (now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo) and are usually



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33. Pair of ivory clappers [17 by 18 cm].



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34. Ivory spoon [5.5 by 11 cm].



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35. Ivory spoon [5 by 11 cm].

considered supports (or pillars) of the sky represented as a pair of outstretched wings, above which the solar barque of the falcon god Horus is depicted (photo 39). The Helwan excavations of Z.Y. Saad also produced an elaborate rectangular cosmetic palette of schist, which shows between the two hands of a large *ka*-sign, three signs: *wAs*, *anx*, and *Dd*. These denote the hope of the tomb owner that he would be given dominion (*wAs*), life (*anx*) and duration (*Dd*) in the afterlife (photo 40). This palette can be dated to the very beginning of the First Dynasty.

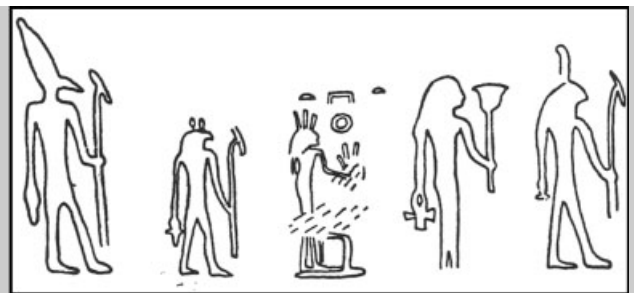
A unique statuette (photo 41) of a naked boy or pygmy in a squatting position, with the fingers of the right hand in his mouth, could

be considered a depiction of the so-called 'Patake' (after the Greek historian Herodotus, who visited Egypt between 449 and 430 B.C.) which was linked with the cult of Ptah (Hephaistos for the Greeks) and was considered a protector of the people in ancient Egypt. This dwarf figure of Ptah (Pataikos) was certainly connected with the well-known skill of dwarfs as artisans, especially as jewellers. As the god Ptah was the patron of artisans, and dwarfs were a major group of craftsmen in Ancient Egypt, the dwarf-figured image of Ptah could be considered a reliable hypothesis. It is also well attested that Ptah himself was considered a master craftsman. Such figures can also be related to the so-called 'Horus-the-Child' (Harpokrates). Herodotus



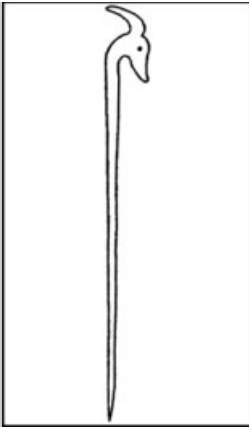
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36. Ivory amulet [height 7.5 cm] in the shape of a *wAs* scepter.



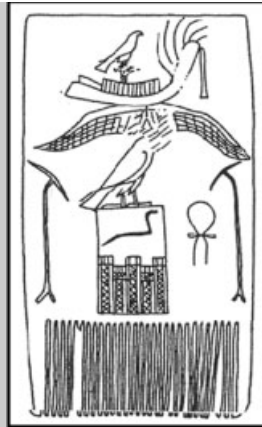
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37. Amulets in the hands of deities.



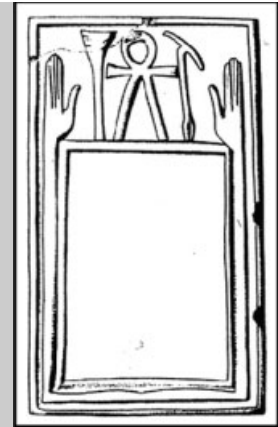
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38. Ivory pin.



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39. *wAs* staffs supporting the sky.



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40. A large *ka* sign: *wAs*, *anx* and *Dd*.

himself (Herodotus III, 37) spoke of them as sons of Ptah. In fact, these figures, which are sometimes called ‘little Ptahs’, can be seen as one aspect of the creator god Ptah of Memphis. The amulet function of such figures was also known by the Phoenicians, who might have adopted them from Egypt.

It is clear that this small figure wears the same tightly-fitting cap as Ptah, although the child-

like pose with the sucking of fingers makes reference to a solar child. This figure can be compared to a similar one in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, which shows King Pepi II of the Sixth Dynasty as a naked boy (also in a squatting position!) with the finger of his now missing right hand on his lip.

The Helwan tombs are famous for having produced a group of funerary stelae bearing reliefs that show the owner of the tomb sitting on a chair before a table, with different kinds of offerings, including the customary loaves of bread. This is the traditional Egyptian offering table scene that can be traced back to the First Dynasty. Such slabs of limestone were fixed inside a niche in the ceiling of the burial chamber of the brick mastabas of Helwan to face the deceased, ensuring that food and drink would be magically and eternally stocked in the tomb. The stela of a woman (photo 42) and that of a man (photo 43) seem to belong to the beginning of the Second Dynasty. A third one, with the so-called offering list, can



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41. Ivory boy statuette [Height: 4 cm].





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42. Stela of a woman [Length: 32 cm, breadth: 16.5 cm, thickness: 5.5 cm].

43. Stela of a man [Length: 60 cm, breadth: 28 cm, thickness: 8 cm].

44. Stela [Length: 51 cm, breadth: 32 cm, thickness: 9 cm].

be dated to the middle of the same dynasty (photo 44).

The broad-beaded necklace, called the *wsx* ('broad one') was the most popular neck ornament in Pharaonic Egypt. It is well attested on statues and tomb and temple scenes from the Old Kingdom onwards, although actual examples from the earlier periods have rarely been found. Two such necklaces have survived from the Helwan tombs. The first one (photo 45) is very simple, as it is composed of carefully arranged tubular faience beads, arranged in a

semi-circular shape with two end-pieces. The second one (photo 46) is more elaborate and has the typical shape with the bottom row composed of drop beads or pendants. The excavator was inclined to date the tomb in which this last necklace was found to the First Dynasty, although its advanced workmanship places it in the Third Dynasty.

The finds from Helwan will be exhibited in the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in order to shed light on the daily and religious life of the Egyptians of the Archaic Period.



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45. Collar from Helwan tombs [25 cm].

46. Collar from Helwan tombs [42 cm].

# | Science Education: on the agenda of the Library of Alexandria

by Hoda S. Elmikaty

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## The Library of Alexandria

The Greek philosopher Demetrius of Phaleron, a pupil of Theophrastus, exercised great influence on Ptolemy I (reigned 305–283 B.C.) and urged him to build the Library of Alexandria which was later augmented by his son Ptolemy II, and his grandson Ptolemy III. The most eminent of ancient scholars flocked to the library whose importance is evident from the roster of its curators: Zenodotus, Eratosthenes, Aristophanes of Byzantium, and Aristarchus guided its destinies in successive periods of the third and second centuries B.C.

The ancient library comprised many scrolls, estimated at 490,000 specimens during the time of Callimachus and 700,000 during the reign of Julius Caesar. However, the ancient Library of Alexandria not only relied on the huge number of scrolls that it acquired, but on the variety of universal knowledge that it collected, and its attempt to establish links between different cultures. Scholars from all over the world took part openly in rational debates, on every imaginable topic.

This ecumenical spirit, with its wholehearted belief in tolerance, diversity, and openness to others, went hand in hand with a strong commitment to rationality, debate and the methods of scholarship. The values of truth, honour, tolerance and the arbitration of disputes

reform in a society, in the new century, is an education system that is founded on a profound grasp of the scientific culture directly related to the natural sciences, the enhancement of scientific research and the dissemination of scientific knowledge among the public at large.



47. Children measuring the Earth's circumference, 21 June 2004.



48. Library of Alexandria.

were much in evidence in the ancient library. These are also the values that should be adopted in any serious scientific community.

The vision of the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina is to recapture the spirit of its predecessor. The aim is not so much to try to collect every book on the planet – a task beyond the means of any existing library, however large – but to recapture the spirit of openness, dialogue, rationality and scientific values that existed in the ancient library, and to encourage the curiosity and exploration that accompanies freedom of investigation and expression.

The new Library of Alexandria was created on the understanding that the core mechanism for

Education, here, can be defined as any process by which an individual acquires knowledge and insight, or develops aptitudes and skills. Formal education can be acquired through organized study or instruction. On the other hand, informal education develops from day-to-day experience or through relatively unplanned or undirected contact with the media, books, periodicals, museums, exhibitions and so forth.

It is worth mentioning here that the relationship between education and reform in a society is far from linear. It is rather interactive. Education changes society as much as it is influenced by it. As every change in society is accompanied by a change in the education system,

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the success of that system is measured by its rapid response to societal developments.

Egypt is taking serious steps towards the implementation of educational reform, that is synonymous with the ability to produce knowledge that enables it to interact with other cultures on an equal footing. The new Library of Alexandria is poised to offer enormous opportunities for scholars in Egypt, by modernizing the manner in which investment in human resources is being made, and by offering new opportunities for university students. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina would help enormously in this area by ensuring a centre of excellence capable of forging partnerships with the very best institutions in the world with a view to mastering the new sciences and the challenges they raise.

### **The Science Centre at the Library of Alexandria**

According to a growing international consensus, a collective commitment to innovation is essential in securing a nation's future in the new century. However, the skills and attitudes that lead to innovation must be developed at an early age. A sustainable culture of innovation will depend on more young people being interested in the future of science and technology.

It is recognized that educational centres will fulfil the primary objective of producing scientifically literate people; there is a need, however, for the population at large to appreciate aspects of science in a leisurely and interesting manner. Although of relatively recent origin, science centres are now equipped with the resources to accomplish this task. They can

popularize science by creating an environment where the audience can be involved in participatory learning.

Science centres can help in creating a generation of innovative thinkers who will be capable of capitalizing on today's technology to solve tomorrow's problems. They can also help to yield a new generation of curious, scientifically literate problem-solvers, namely, people who can understand the link between people and nature and will therefore be able to build a better community.

The Science Centre (SC) at the Library of Alexandria was set up in the belief that curiosity, knowledge and appreciation of the sciences are essential to the health and survival of the individual, the community and the planet. The centre inspires individuals of all ages, cultures and walks of life to appreciate the significance, relevance and application of the sciences in order to understand themselves, one another, and the universe in which they live more clearly.

The SC celebrated its second anniversary in October 2004 and pursues its task of stimulating and cultivating awareness, interest, and understanding of science for all visitors through excellent and dynamic educational exhibits and programmes. It aspires to be a national model for science education; a model that will address a changing world, and build on a prominent history.

Events, workshops, lectures and seminars have been organized in pursuit of attaining our



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49. Science Museum of Alexandria.

goal of disseminating scientific culture, especially among school children and university students. Emphasis has been put on schools in Alexandria in the belief that understanding the needs of a small community like Alexandrian schools will help us better expand our scope of coverage through the coming years.

Schools in Alexandria were systematically visited by our expert staff members, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education office in Alexandria. These visits were aimed at explaining the nature of our centre's activities to school teachers.

The usual question of where to start confronted the management of the SC. *Shall we*

*begin with the teachers or with the students?* The answer was: *Work in parallel*. The first 'Science day' was allocated to school teachers in April 2004, to help us understand the problems teachers are faced with in their classes, and the means by which our facilities can be adapted to help overcome those difficulties. Forty-nine school teachers attended the workshops and round table discussions that took place.

The centre comprises three main sections that cover the history of science starting from Pharaonic Egypt: *The History of the Science Museum*, and for state of the art technology and the exploration of space, *The Planetarium Theatre*, along with the *The Exploratorium*, which can help younger generations to grasp basic scientific

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phenomena, and assist them in building on the history of scientific knowledge and reaching for applications that can make the world a better place to live in.

### **The history of the Science Museum**

An important aspect of our mission is the honouring of outstanding individual achievements in the field of science. Such recognition serves as an inspiration to old and young alike, and encourages excellence in scientific careers.

The museum, with its unique aesthetic display of the history of science starting with Pharaonic Egypt, through Hellenistic Alexandria and the Arab Muslim period, provides a chronological review of science and scientists across time. It helps the younger generations to appreciate the works of their ancestors, and understand the fact that scientific knowledge is a cumulative process that requires patience, perseverance, and vision, as well as curiosity. It reminds visitors of the words of Isaac Newton: 'If I see further, it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants.'

School visits to the museum are organized systematically. Teachers work with the museum curators before the visit to ensure maximum benefit for their pupils. Activities focusing on the themes in the museum take place regularly. One very successful yearly event is the measuring of the earth's circumference by using the same method Eratosthenes chose nearly 2,000 years ago. Schoolchildren gathered in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Plaza with their boards and sticks to take their measurements, and they compared

the results simultaneously, via a video conferencing facility, with their counterparts in Aswan (June 2003) and also in Paris (June 2004).

Models of sundials have been implemented in the Plaza where visitors of all ages can measure time using the shadow of the gnomon on the granite disc. One of the sundials uses the visitor him/herself as the gnomon.

### **The Planetarium Theatre**

The Planetarium hosts visitors from all governorates of Egypt (as far away as schools in Rafah). Systematic school visits are organized with schools in Alexandria, along with regular public attendance.

Observation events have been held by our expert resident astronomers, covering all major astronomical phenomena. Some astrophotos taken by our resident astronomers have been published in international astronomical association newsletters and websites.

Equipped with a tool like the Planetarium Theatre, our team started thinking of how to make the best use of it. It was a challenge to produce our own films that would best suit the needs of our community, disseminating scientific knowledge to the public in a manner appropriate to our culture.

At that point, we started to devise our plan to produce the first Egyptian Arabic planetarium show, 'The Sky of Alexandria'. The script was written by our resident astronomer and peer



reviewed by Dr Farouk El-Baz in Boston. The graphics and animation are being implemented locally. Our team is determined, eager and dedicated to make this first production a world-class show. The work is still in progress and will be completed by December 2005.

### The Exploratorium

The Exploratorium gained momentum, benefiting from the systematic outreach visits by our expert staff to schools, universities and national clubs. Having made up our team, and established our prime goals of reaching out to school children, with emphasis on schools in Alexandria, our Exploratorium has regularly hosted workshops, presentations, films and temporary exhibitions.

A DNA exhibition, celebrating the Watson and Crick discovery of the double helix in 1953, was hosted at the Exploratorium. A number of activities accompanied the exhibition: workshops, a ten-minute film with Arabic subtitles, and various lectures and seminars that covered related topics. 'Forensic fingerprints' and 'GM food, the pros and cons' are some of these activities.

Workshops aimed at schoolchildren aged 6 to 12 have been organized, covering topics ranging from 'Archaeology' to 'Electricity' as well as 'The Human Body', and 'Chemistry'. Summer workshops have also been organized to take advantage of the summer vacation.

The Exploratorium staff participated in international events such as the European Collaborative for Science, Industry and



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50. Interior of the Library of Alexandria.

Technology Exhibition (ECSITE) in Munich, Germany, in November 2003, and Barcelona, Spain, in 2004. In France, they also attended training courses on the preparation of workshops for children.

Co-operation with the PACA (Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur) region has immensely helped in the training of our Exploratorium Explainers (guides). The two resident French volunteers helped us develop many of our workshops as well as establish contacts with similar centres in France such as 'Les Petits Debrouillards' in Marseille, and the 'Expo Sciences project' that took place in France, in July 2004, where schoolchildren from

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Alexandria presented their work along with schools from seven other Mediterranean countries through the project entitled 'Les Enfants Expliquent les Sciences aux Enfants' ('Children explain the sciences to children'). Ten children from Alexandrian schools chose light, colour and optics as subjects to be explained in a book which they presented in France. They came twice a week to the Exploratorium, after school, to work on the ideas to be presented in the book, which won first prize in this contest.

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina management believes in the important role of science centres in the dissemination of scientific knowledge. It has decided to expand the Bibliotheca Alexandrina premises in Cairo, at the 'Smart Village' site. A new building at the 'Smart Village' will be dedicated to constructing a science centre to meet international standards. Collaboration is under way with other European centres to put the project together.

### Scientific conferences

International scientific conferences are systematically organized at the Library of Alexandria. The aim is to bring Egyptian scientists, university professors, scholars and interested youth in direct contact with scientists and Nobel laureates from around the globe.

A bi-annual conference on biotechnology (Bio-Vision) is being organized at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. Nobel laureates such as Sherwood Rowland, Jean-Marie Lehn, Ahmed Zewail and Ryoji Noyori attended the 2004 conference. Free admission to the conference was granted to all Egyptian scholars who benefited from the event.

As an active participant in many scientific events and celebrations around the globe, the Library of Alexandria is organizing the 'Einstein Symposium' in June 2005, to celebrate the centennial of Einstein's Miraculous Year of 1905 when he published his five major papers on special relativity, Brownian motion and the photo electric Effect.

Nobel laureates, as well as world authorities in astrophysics and physics, will join the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in its celebration. Speakers such as Stephen Hawking, Carlo Rubia and Micho Kaku are just a few of the distinguished panel of experts.

The event is co-organized with the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) in Princeton, where Professor Edward Witten is organizing the scientific forum that will take place on the second and third day of the symposium.

The website <http://www.bibalex.com/Einstein2005> is online to promote the event both locally and internationally. The American Institute of Physics (AIP) has donated its Einstein exhibition to be displayed at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. This is already in place and the preparatory process of building public awareness of the event has begun.

A scientific contest has been organized to involve students in the event. Students are encouraged to present a project that explains an application of one of Einstein's theories that he presented in his papers of 1905. The prize for the winning team will be a trip to Princeton, USA, to visit Einstein's office at IAS, and his house in Princeton.



Conferences that address educational reform in Egypt are also organized at the library, where ministers and government officials are invited to discuss their policies with intellectuals and NGO bodies seriously concerned about the implementation of reform. Open discussions and debates result in realistic projects that can be implemented.

### Conclusion

It is the mission of the Library of Alexandria to become a centre of excellence, and a model for the dissemination of scientific knowledge. In the knowledge-based world of the twenty-first century, capacity building in science and technology is a must. Allow me to quote here from the Inter-Academy Council report (January 2004):

‘The study panel is thus convinced that all nations, particularly the developing ones, require an increased level of science and technology capacity to enhance their ability to adopt new technologies – as in those related to the new life sciences – and adapt them to local needs. Enhancing science and technology capacity in the developing nations is truly a necessity and not a luxury.’

# | The Preservation, Study and Presentation of Manuscripts at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina

by Youssef Ziedan

*Youssef Ziedan is a research scholar in heritage and manuscripts who graduated from Alexandria University, where he obtained a doctorate and subsequently was awarded a professorship in Islamic philosophy and the history of science. He has published numerous works on Arab heritage, catalogued 18,000 Arab manuscripts held in various libraries, and launched several Internet sites on the Arab heritage.*

Many of those who have visited the Bibliotheca Alexandrina believe that the Museum Showroom is actually the Manuscript Museum! As its name indicates, however, the room is simply that: a museum showroom. The museum itself is an autonomous academic entity affiliated with the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and our introduction to it will follow shortly. First of all, however, let us acquaint ourselves with the showroom, which is the public face of the Manuscript Museum and the Manuscript Centre. It is also a public meeting place and a place of introduction to the heritage treasures of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

## The Museum Showroom

Located at the heart of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the showroom occupies an area of 400m<sup>2</sup> and comprises twelve display cases (a further ten are on their way) donated by the Government of Italy, with the assistance of UNESCO, in addition to twenty Egyptian-made display cases. These cases are home to some 170 manuscripts, rare books and documents chosen as a reflection of the rich content of the Bibliotheca.



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51. *Talkhis al-miftāh* by al-Qazwini (d.739/1767) is on display in the Museum Showroom.

The walls of the room are adorned with decorative murals, examples of rare manuscripts – not currently on display – and two striking pieces of the *kiswa* (black brocaded cover, embroidered in gold with verses from the Koran) of the Holy Ka'ba, 12 metres in length, an exceptional gift to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina from the grandchildren of the leading Egyptian economist, Ṭal'at Ḥarb, to whom they were presented by King 'Abd-ul-'Azīz Āl Sa'ūd in 1936 as a gesture of appreciation for his early economic projects in Saudi Arabia. The two pieces remained in the Ṭal'at Ḥarb family graveyard (below the Muqattam Hills in Cairo) until his grandchildren decided to bequeath them

to the Bibliotheca, shortly before its official opening. Repaired and restored, the two pieces today adorn the walls of the Museum Showroom.

To coincide with the opening of the showroom (during the trial opening of the Bibliotheca in October 2001), brief descriptions of the displayed items were produced in Arabic, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Greek. Since that time, guided tours of the museum have been conducted in those seven languages. In addition, visitors to the showroom are able to view the electronic publications of the Manuscript Centre via programmes employing

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state-of-the-art digital technology that allows, for example, virtual browsing of manuscripts and selected items from the Digital Manuscript Library project, as well as other works from the Manuscript Centre (paper and electronic), all of which are displayed on touch-screen computers.

Also currently on display in the Museum Showroom is the only surviving relic from the ancient Library of Alexandria, a papyrus which can be viewed using a dedicated browser created by the Manuscript Centre. The original of the papyrus is held at the Austrian National Library in Vienna. The centre has also made facsimiles which can be seen by the public and which are presented as gifts to important visitors. This papyrus bears Ancient Greek texts selected from various books kept at the ancient Library (under the classification system invented by Callimachus). The owner of the papyrus had left instructions for it to be buried with him and it was discovered in the mid-twentieth century among the folds of his mummy!

Hence the showroom – along with the Mobile Museum, which will be described later – is seen as a place in which to learn about and become acquainted with individual items of the ancient Arab heritage. It also acts as a mirror reflecting the treasures acquired by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the publications of the Manuscript Centre and the works in the Manuscript Museum.

### Nature of the museum

The Manuscript Museum is one of the academic centres affiliated with the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, pursuant to Article 2 of Act No. 1 of 2001

concerning the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, which provides that ‘The Bibliotheca Alexandrina shall comprise a library, a celestial sphere and a conference centre and the following cultural and scientific centres shall be established therein: an international institute for information technology studies, a documentation and research centre, a science museum, a calligraphy institute, a manuscript museum, and an archive centre for rare books and documents. (Other cultural and scientific centres may be established or added by decree of the President of the Republic. The President of the Republic shall establish by decree the statute of the centres mentioned in this article).’

Promulgated on 12 September 2002, Republican Decree No. 269 establishing the Manuscript Museum provides as follows:

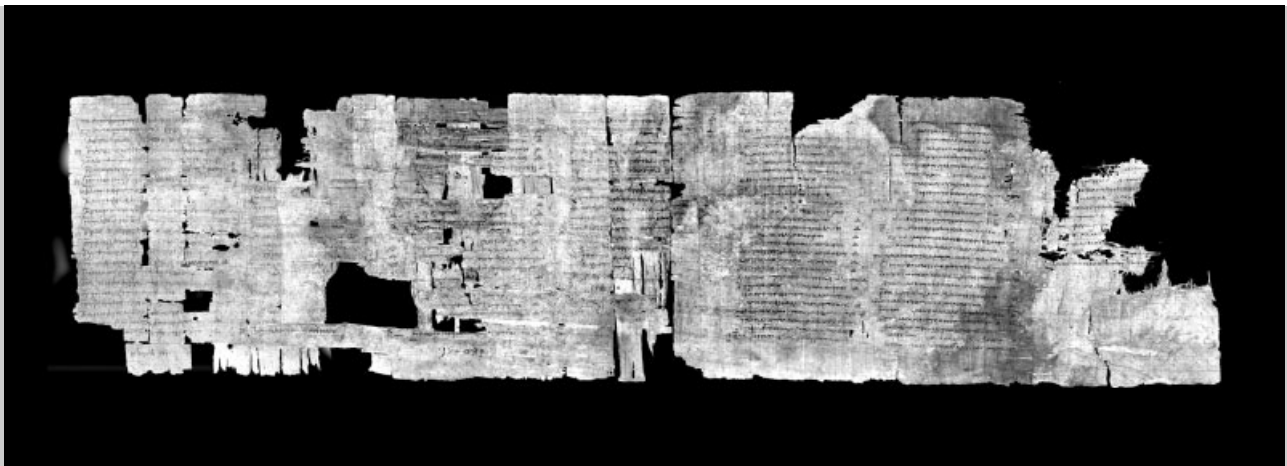
Article 1: A scientific and cultural centre to be known as the Manuscript Museum shall be established in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

Article 2: The purpose of the Museum shall be to present, conserve and take care of heritage treasures and rare manuscripts and books, devoting particular attention to the following: development of the showcasing of manuscripts using the latest possible technologies; scientific co-operation in the field of manuscripts with similar museums and museum departments worldwide; human-resources training in the conservation of manuscripts.

The Manuscript Museum comprises a group of specialist departments which work in conjunction with the departments and units of the Manuscript Centre (the Manuscript Museum’s

academic twin). These departments have gone through various processes of administrative development on the basis of the desired functions. Ultimately, the museum was divided for

*Unit*, which holds original manuscripts, most importantly the Alexandria Municipal Library Collection, and printed heritage sources required by students in various areas of the field; and the



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52. This papyrus is the only relic from the ancient Library of Alexandria on display in the Museum Showroom.

administrative purposes into three departments: the Rare Artefacts Department, the Microfilm Department and the Museum Exhibition Department.

### The Rare Artefacts Department

Rare artefacts refers to the valuable holdings of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina: original manuscripts, rare books, maps, ancient coins, private acquisitions of well-known individuals, precious gifts made to the Bibliotheca, documents and other rare types of support for information. This department is in charge of filing, cataloguing and classifying rare artefacts, a task which is performed by a number of units and working groups, specifically: the *Rare Acquisitions Unit*, which holds various commemorative coins, maps, private acquisitions, stamps and important documents; the *Manuscripts*

*Special Collections Unit*, which holds (complete) libraries donated by major figures, such as: the ‘Abd-ur-Raḥmān Badawī collection (13,000 books and illustrated manuscripts), the Muḥammad Ḥusain Haikal collection (1,400 books), the ‘Abd-ur-Razzāq as-Sanhūrī Pāshā collection (1,738 books), the Buṭrus Ghālī collection (250 books), the Louis Pasteur Institute collection (39,525 books and periodicals), the Alexandria Appeal Court collection (2,000 books), the Muḥammad Sa‘īd Fārsī collection (644 books), the Main Library collection from ‘Ain Shams University (20,571 books) and the Greek National Library collection (576 books). The significance of these collections is related to the importance of those who donated or originally acquired them. The department is also home to a *reading room* for (postgraduate) research scholars and is equipped with the latest means of security and

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environmental control in order to protect the manuscripts from potential damage by using modern equipment to purify the air and regulate temperature and humidity. It is also equipped with a number of SM200 fire extinguishers, which operate by means of oxygen depletion.

The department further comprises a dedicated *reading room* for rare books and special collections, also for use by postgraduate research scholars, where access can be had to 12,000 rare books, the oldest dating back to 1496, in addition to numerous rare maps, personal papers of major authors and a collection of important documents. Research scholars similarly have access to some 50,000 books belonging to special collections.

### The Microfilm Department

The significance of the Microfilm Department lies in the fact that microfilm and microfiches are a key method of conserving manuscripts, rare printed materials and important documents which are liable to loss or damage over time through wear and tear. Moreover, they can be easily examined and handled without the originals being affected.

When microfilm work began at the Bibliotheca, approximately two years before its official opening, a plan of action was drawn up comprising specific tasks, *inter alia*: to collect microfilm images of the world's manuscript collections in order to provide scholars and researchers using the Bibliotheca with access to such collections (target: 100,000 manuscripts); document the holdings in detail; set up a state-of-the-art reading room; and make additional

copies of the films. In the light of this ambitious plan and following successive efforts, the holdings of the department were enhanced by the addition of rare collections of manuscripts and documents (almost 30,000 manuscripts and 50,000 documents), in particular: the complete collection of Spain's Escorial Monastery manuscripts (3,248 manuscripts), the Córdoba and Granada manuscript collection, the collection of the Institute of Arab Manuscripts in Cairo, a collection of key Suez Canal documents, a collection of Arabic, Syriac and Coptic manuscripts from Italy, manuscripts from the University of Tübingen in Germany, manuscript copies of the Old and New Testaments in Coptic and Arabic, the papyrus collection of the Austrian National Library in Vienna, bibliographies from Germany's literary libraries, and United States intelligence reports on Germany during the inter-war period (from 1919 to 1944), as well as a collection of theses and dissertations from 'Ain Shams University, the University of La Laguna in Spain and the Faculty of Sharī'a and Law at al-Azhar University.

Some days before the opening of the Bibliotheca, on 8 October 2002, three large cabinets containing 46,165 microfiches arrived from the United Kingdom. This collection includes a complete copy of the 14,000 Arab, Persian and Turkish manuscripts in the British Library, the largest such collection in the capitals of Europe and consequently the largest collection thus far donated to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. This collection is particularly important given that it was gathered from the countries of the Islamic world by British orientalist over the past three centuries. In the last century, it was kept in two

locations: the British Museum Library and the India Office in London. The British Government then decided to amalgamate the collection in the British Library.

In addition to various rare and important documents, the department has a full microfilm collection of national and pan-Arab newspapers, from first editions up to the present day, thus providing a historical record of major events. It is also home to an outstanding slide collection which includes slides of Picasso paintings and of shrines and historic sites in Turkey, Italy, England, France, Spain, Morocco, the United States of America and Mexico, as well as a comprehensive album of Armenian art.

Users of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina can access the department's microfilm and microfiche collections in a room equipped with special microfilm and microfiche readers (on Level B1), which is one of three rooms set aside for those engaged in various areas of heritage study and research. The room is equipped with an electronic catalogue of the department's holdings and several of the catalogues published in the past two years by the Manuscript Centre, such as the catalogue of Suez Canal documents (in Arabic and French) and the catalogue of the journal *al-Hilāl*.

### **The Museum Exhibition Department**

This department was established during the trial opening of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina as a museum guidance unit. Its activities were subsequently developed over the past three years and it now comprises two working groups: the

Museum Showroom group and the Mobile Museum group. The guides working in each group are fluent in five essential languages: Arabic, English, French, Italian and German.

The Museum Showroom group accompanies visitors across the divide between past and present, offering an introduction to the items displayed in the museum and a presentation of the various heritage publications and software, including a virtual tour of the museum as it was during the first year after the Bibliotheca was opened.

The Mobile Museum Group is in charge of temporary museum exhibitions held outside the Bibliotheca. The components of the Mobile Museum were designed to be easily dismantled and reassembled in various outside exhibition sites. This group was active at the Frankfurt International Book Fair (October 2004), at which the Arab World was the year's guest of honour. The Bibliotheca hosted a special pavilion on the theme of 'Arab culture and the information age'.

To return to our starting point, let us take a look at some of the rare Arab manuscripts and books currently on display in the Manuscript Room, which, incidentally, is the only dedicated manuscript room in the Arab region. Four original manuscripts and three rare books should suffice as a brief introduction.

*Tafsīr al-Bustī (al-Jāmi' aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ)* (Al-Bustī's Exegesis (Compendium of Authentic Traditions))

In the Rare Items Room, which is found in the Museum Showroom, is a stand-alone case



containing a number of millenary manuscripts (Arab manuscripts written 1,000 or more years ago) where visitors can see the oldest manuscript in the city of Alexandria, also one of the oldest manuscripts in the world. According to the title page, it contains Part 13 of *al-Jāmi' aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ* by Imām Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj an-Nīsāpūrī (d. 261/875),<sup>1</sup> who produced the most authentic books of the Prophet's traditions (*ḥadīth*) after the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

Although this ancient manuscript is known worldwide and frequently referred to by researchers and cataloguers as part of the *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, a *ḥadīth* scholar read the first section of the manuscript in the catalogue of the Alexandria Municipal Library manuscripts (Part 2), which I had published some years before, and noticed that the text did not match the part on exegesis of the Koran in the *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*; it is an abridged part of the *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, whereas the manuscript appears in full in the interpretation of the Koran. The manuscript is very probably part of the book *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Abū Muḥammad al-Bustī (Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ismā'īl ad-Dimashqī (d. 307/919). When the researcher 'Ādil Abū Turāb told me about this, I had another look at it, and it turned out that he was right. I therefore corrected this mistake, one also made by other researchers and cataloguers for the same reason, namely, that the copier of the manuscript had written 'Part 13 of the *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*' on the title page. It is true to say that such incidents often occur when manuscripts are checked.

The manuscript was written by Khalaf ibn Ḥakīm in Ṣafar 368/978. Consisting of 233 folios (25 × 15 cm), it is in good condition and the effects of the initial restoration are apparent. Apart

from the importance of the text, this manuscript is one of the main documents to record the historical development of the Arabic script in the fourth/tenth century. The manuscript is kept in the Alexandria Municipal Library collection under No. 836/B *ḥadīth nabawī*.

*Al-Mudawwana fī fiqh al-mālikīya (Corpus of Mālikī Jurisprudence)*

This manuscript treasure is one of the most valuable acquisitions of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. It consists of four volumes on parchment, each of which is kept in a sumptuous red leather box. The four-part manuscript is one of the most important and most famous texts (books) on Mālikī jurisprudence. *Al-Mudawwana* is narrated by Saḥnūn ibn Sa'īd at-Tanūkhī (d. 240/854) by way of 'Abd-ur-Raḥmān ibn al-Qāsim al-'Utaqī (d. 191/807) and Imām Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795).

This manuscript collection comprises 38 books of *al-Mudawwana*, all of which were written in the Maghribī script on various dates in the period 499–530/1106–36. The second volume is in the hand of Yūsuf ibn 'Abd-ul-Jabbār ibn 'Umar al-'Abdarī and dates from 509/1115. Notes written by the famous Ṣūfī, Shaikh 'Abd-ul-Waḥḥāb ash-Sha'rānī appear on parchment folios 114, 153, 154 and 172, measuring 27 × 20 cm. The manuscript is kept in the Alexandria Municipal Library collection under No. 532/B *fiqh mālikī*.

*Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ (Summary of the Key)*

This book has taken a long journey through the Arab heritage, and has innumerable links with other works providing a succession of commentaries, summaries of the text and



commentaries, annotations, notes and so on. The journey began when the great scholar Sirāj-ud-Dīn Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf as-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229) produced his book *Miftāḥ al-‘ulūm* (Key to the Sciences), which he divided into three parts: morphology, syntax and rhetoric. Assiduous efforts to produce a commentary on the book were made by a group of leading language scholars, including Ḥusām-ud-Dīn al-Mu‘adhdhin al-Khwārizmī, who completed the commentary in Gurganj in Khwārizm in 742/1341.

The third section of *al-Miftāḥ* received special attention in that the commentary was produced by a group of brilliant scholars of rhetoric, the most celebrated of whom were: Qutb-ud-Dīn ash-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1310), Sa‘d-ud-Dīn at-Taftazānī (d. 789/1387) and Sayyid ash-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413). The commentaries of each of these three scholars contain an almost infinite number of annotations and comments recorded by the masters of rhetoric and preserved for us by tradition. *Al-Miftāḥ* was abridged by a group that included Badr-ud-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Mālik, better known as Ibn al-Muṣannif (d. 686/1287). He named the abridged version *al-Miṣbāḥ*, and subsequently produced a further commentary in a book entitled *Daw’ aṣ-ṣabāḥ ‘ala tarjīz al-miṣbāḥ*. The group also included ‘Aḍud-ud-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355), whose commentary was entitled *al-Fawā’id al-ghiyāthīya*, and Nūr-ud-Dīn Ḥamza ibn Ṭurghūd, who produced an abridged version of the work in 962/1555 and a later commentary on the abridged version in 970/1562.

The best known of the abridged versions is the one entitled *Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ* by Imām

al-Qazwīnī, the *khaṭīb* (preacher, orator) of Damascus (d. 739/1338). Commentaries on *Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ* were produced by al-Qazwīnī himself, al-Khalkhālī (d. 745/1344), az-Zauzānī (d. 792/1390) and Ibn Ya‘qūb al-Maghribī, (d. after 1108/1696), whose commentary is entitled *Mawāhib al-fattāḥ fī sharḥ talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ*.

Each of these commentaries also contains innumerable annotations and notes. The best known of the commentaries on the *Talkhīṣ* and the one with the greatest number of annotations, notes and surviving manuscript copies is by at-Taftazānī, otherwise known as Sa‘d-ud-Dīn Mas‘ūd ‘Umar (d. 792/1390). At-Taftazānī wrote several commentaries on al-Qazwīnī’s *Talkhīṣ* for the third section of *Miftāḥ al-‘ulūm*. The longest commentary is known as *ash-Sharḥ al-muṭawwal* (The Extended Commentary) and the shortest as *ash-Sharḥ al-mukhtaṣir* (The Abridged Commentary).

There are many annotations to *ash-Sharḥ al-muṭawwal* including those of Sayyid ash-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413), Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad Shāh al-Fanārī (d. 886/1481), Muḥammad ibn Farāmarz, better known as Mullā Khusrau (d. 885/1480), the Indian ‘Abd-ul-Ḥakīm Siyālkōṭī (d. 1067/1657) and Abū-l-Qāsim Samarqandī, and a further twenty or so more. Comments on each annotation appear in such books and treatises as *Kashf az-Zunūn* by Ḥājji Khalīfa (pp. 473 et seq., pp. 1762 et seq.).

We now move on from at-Taftazani’s *ash-Sharḥ al-muṭawwal* to *ash-Sharḥ al-mukhtaṣir*, on which annotated commentaries were produced by Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Ḥafīd (d. 906/1500),

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who also annotated the unabridged version, Ibn Qāsim al-'Ibādī (d. 992/1584), whose commentary is entitled *al-Hawāshī wa-n-nukāt wa-l-fawā'id al-muḥarrirāt*, Aḥmad al-Mallawī (d. 1181/1767), Shaikh al-Jurjī and many others.

The Alexandria Municipal Library collection includes some twenty manuscripts of texts, commentaries and annotations. In the Museum Showroom, an original copy of the manuscript of *Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ* by al-Qazwīnī, the preacher of Damascus (d. 739/1767), is on view to visitors. Highly annotated, this priceless copy is ornamented, gilded and luxuriously bound. It was copied in about the eighth/seventeenth century by a Persian scribe, and has sixty-nine folios measuring 19.5 × 13 cm. The manuscript is kept in the Alexandria Municipal Library collection under No. 5098/D *balāgha*.

### *Al-Mathnawī*

Visitors to the Museum Showroom can see three singular works relating to the *ḏīwān* entitled *al-Mathnawī* by the immortal Ṣūfī poet, Maulānā Jalāl-ud-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273). The first is a rare original manuscript written in 896/1491. It is embellished with decorative work and illustrations, with page margins which serve as a frame. The second is a facsimile of the rare manuscript, kept in the Süleimāniye Library in Istanbul, which was copied in 676/1277 from a manuscript in the hand of Jalāl-ud-Dīn Rūmī. The third is a rare edition of the book *al-Minhaj al-qawwī li-tullāb al-mathnawī* (textbook for students of *al-Mathnawī*), which is a commentary in Arabic by Shaikh Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Maulawī on this Persian *ḏīwān*. The book contains a *waqf* (religious endowment) charter, which reads:

Praise be to God, who gave me success in printing this delightful book, disseminating it in the Islamic countries and endowing this noble copy, which is in six volumes, to the library of the monastery of the Maulawīya order in Cairo to be read by both brothers and friends, on condition that it is not removed from the said monastery, and is neither sold nor pawned. God is All-hearing and Omniscient.

Dated 3 Dhū-l-Ḥijja 1298/1881.

I am the donor of the endowment, Shaikh of the above Maulawīya monastery.

[Seal of Sayyid Ḥusain 'Azmī Dada]

*Al-Mathnawī* is regarded as one of the greatest *ḏīwāns* of poetry in the history of literature. In all, it contains 27,000 verses of exquisite Ṣūfī poetry, which covers a variety of subjects from the Ṣūfī perspective. It has twice been translated from Persian into Arabic: the first translation by Dr Muḥammad 'Abd-us-salām Kafāfī is incomplete (two volumes), but the second by Dr Ibrāhīm ad-Dasūqī Shitā is complete (six volumes).

### *Corpus Juris Civilis*

Published by Christophe Plantin in Antwerp in 983/1575, this book comprises a collection of Greek and Latin laws assembled on the orders of Emperor Justinian (sixth century A.D.), as well as imperial seals and explanatory notes to legal texts. The book is in Greek and Latin. At the beginning is an *ex libris* inscription

dated 1702 identifying the owner as Montagu, Oliver Cromwell's legal adviser, and another *ex libris* for one of his grandsons, Lord Halifax. The book also includes cards containing historical remarks on sailors and sea captains, written in the hand of Professor Dr Muṣṭafā al-'Abbādī, who donated the book to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

#### *Rerum Germanica (Saxonia)*

This is a rare copy of Albert Krantz's book *Rerum Germanica (Saxonia)* (History of Germany (Saxony)), published in Frankfurt in 1575 and edited by the jurist Nicola Cisner. In the book, the author covers the history of the Saxon tribes, as well as their ethnic roots, wars, military expeditions and other historical events, using a language that glorifies the German spirit over the ages, a tendency which continued in the following centuries and was strikingly apparent in the works of German philosophers.

#### *Description de l'Égypte*

The Manuscript Museum holds several copies of the *Description de l'Égypte*, which was compiled by a group of scholars accompanying the French expedition to Egypt (1798–1802). Published on the orders of Napoleon Bonaparte, this book was some twenty years in the making, 1809–1826. The *Description de l'Égypte* consists of several parts, each comprising several volumes; some contain texts and others contain plates which accurately portray all aspects of life and the Egyptian heritage. In all, there are some 3,000 plates, some over one metre in length, depicting the antiquities and cities of ancient Egypt, and there is a geographical atlas.

#### | NOTE

1. Dates separated by a slash (/) are given first according to the Muslim lunar calendar (A.H.), and then according to the Christian calendar (A.D.).



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53. A view from the Citadel of the Madrasa of Sultan Hassan and the Mosque of al-Rifa'i.

# | Historical Introduction to Islamic Architecture in Old Cairo

by Hossam Ismail

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## The Islamic city

For Muslims, the urban layout became firmly established after the flight of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina: at the heart of the city was the congregational mosque and the governor's residence, then the main *sūq* (market) or the main thoroughfare linking the various parts of the city, and finally the homes of the inhabitants and service buildings.

## The city of Cairo (al-Qāhira)

Present-day Cairo stands as an example of the city in Islamic times. It was first developed following the conquest of Egypt by 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, who used the above layout to build the city of al-Fuṣṭāṭ in 21/642.<sup>1</sup> The 'Abbāsids then built the city of al-'Askar to the north-east of al-Fuṣṭāṭ in 132/750, while the city of al-Qatā'i' was founded in 256/870 by Aḥmad ibn Ṭulūn when he settled in Egypt, founding a dynasty that was to be independent of

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the 'Abbāsid Caliphate. Its main thoroughfare, now called aṣ-Ṣalība Street, still survives along with the congregational mosque (the mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭulūn). When Jauhar aṣ-Ṣiqillī conquered Egypt and incorporated it into the Fāṭimid caliphate, based in Morocco, he founded the city of Cairo in 358/969 as the new capital of the Fāṭimids. Cairo thus became the fourth capital of the Muslims in Egypt. The layout for cities generally comprised a congregational mosque and the *dār al-imāra*, or caliph's palace, surrounded by districts of streets and alleys in which soldiers were quartered. Cairo differed from earlier cities, however, by virtue of its surrounding wall, parts of which survive to this day. The first three capitals were linked together when Jauhar aṣ-Ṣiqillī began building the city of Cairo to the north-east. At that time, they were separated from Cairo by the area containing the two small lakes of Birkat al-Fīl and Birkat Qārūn.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, however, Cairo began to expand naturally to the north, south, east and west, most probably as a result of the increase in the armies and men of the Fāṭimid dynasty, particularly after the Caliph al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allah came to Egypt in 362/973 with his household and civil servants, and the increase in army members during the time of his son, al-'Azīz bi-Llāh. The indigenous inhabitants of Egypt lived in the earlier towns of al-Fuṣṭāṭ, al-'Askar and al-Qaṭā'i', whereas Cairo, the royal Fāṭimid city, was inhabited by the Caliph and his government and army.

Medieval historians subsequently reported that the Fāṭimid city of Cairo expanded in all directions until the built-up areas came to border the earlier cities in the south. These built-up areas extended northwards to the present district of al-'Abbāsiya, to as far as today's Ramsīs Square,

with the bank of the Nile to the west, and to the foot of the Muqaṭṭam hills along Cairo's eastern wall. Tracing these areas in the writings of those historians, we come across numerous descriptions of residential buildings, particularly in the south, along with descriptions of gardens and the pleasure houses of *amīrs* (commanders) and notables, particularly to the north and west. In the eastern part of the city, at the foot of the Muqaṭṭam hills, are the burial grounds that were a natural extension of the major cemetery that was the burial ground for the city of al-Fuṣṭāṭ – now the district of Iṣṭabl 'Antar (Stables of 'Antar) – and the minor cemetery, now the district from al-Imām ash-Shāfi'ī to as-Sayyida 'Ā'isha Square. In Fāṭimid times, the southern area was taken up by soldiers' barracks and housing for those who joined the service of the dynasty, with public housing on the outskirts. With the end of the Fāṭimid caliphate in Cairo, the seat of government under the Ayyūbid dynasty was transferred to the Citadel. In 566/1171, Ṣalāḥ-ud-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, at that time still a minister of the last of the Fāṭimid caliphs, al-'Āḍid, constructed a wall, which he continued to work on when he came to power in 569/1172, until it encircled the whole of Cairo and the earlier capitals of Egypt. He also started to build the Citadel up on the Muqaṭṭam hills, approximately midway along the eastern side of the wall.

In the seventh/fourteenth century, the Nile yielded new ground west of Cairo and the city was extended from Ramsīs Square to the present bank of the Nile in the district of Būlāq. The surface area of Cairo remained unchanged until the second half of the nineteenth century, when a new city was established between the Nile bank and the old city. In 1290/1874, Muḥammad 'Alī Street was built to

run between Citadel Square and al-‘Ataba Square and other new streets were similarly built, linking the old city with the new, which was constructed as the Paris of the East, and with the railway station, which still stands today. The Muslims had several types of buildings designed to fulfil their needs in such aspects of life as the religious, the public and the military.

### Religious buildings

The Prophet built a congregational mosque when the Muslims settled in Medina. The function of this building was to enable Muslims to congregate for the purposes of performing the communal Friday prayer, studying the principles of the new religion and learning about the revelations of the Koran. It had a nine-room annexe in which the wives of the Prophet were accommodated. Muḥammad was buried in the room of as-Sayyida ‘Ā’isha (his favourite wife), the first room at the end of the wall of the *qibla*.<sup>3</sup> The mosque comprised an adobe wall and a shaded prayer area constructed from the trunks of palm trees. The remaining area inside the wall was uncovered. The building subsequently evolved during the time of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and the shaded part came to surround an open courtyard. This served as the model for the congregational mosque, which became widespread throughout the Islamic world and of which Egypt has its own examples, the oldest being the present mosque of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and the mosques of Aḥmad ibn Ṭulūn and al-Azhar. In the time of the Prophet, a wooden *minbar* (pulpit) brought from Egypt was added to the mosque and a rod was used to establish the direction of the Ka’ba in Mecca. The Muslims later added the *miḥrāb* (prayer niche), which had gained prevalence in the Byzantine

civilization following the spread of Christianity; the recess which it provided was useful for pinpointing the direction of the Ka’ba, and also as a place where the *imām* could stand without having to occupy a row on his own. In addition, they utilized the dome shape above the *miḥrāb* and the *minbar* to supply ventilation and light to the area and increase amplification of the imam’s voice so that it reached as many members of the congregation as possible. As seen in the mosque of an-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn in the Cairo Citadel, these domes vary in shape. The Muslims also used the roof of the mosque as a stand for the muezzin. With the advent of the Umayyad dynasty, however, they borrowed the towers of earlier religious buildings for the call to prayer. The oldest tower minaret in Cairo is that of al-Jayyūshī Mosque, which stands at the top of the Muqaṭṭam hills and dates back to the Fāṭimid period. The Muslims also imitated the mural decorations they found in earlier civilizations, using either stucco or a variety of mosaic shapes. Later on, however, they dispensed with depictions of humans and animals, but retained vegetal decoration and the natural landscapes of palms, trees, rivers and arches mentioned in the description of paradise in the Koran, which they executed in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. The overall form of the congregational mosque was thus perfected.

In the ‘Abbāsīd period, an additional enhancement materialized in the form of a wall around three sides of the mosque, first visible in Egypt in the mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭulūn. The Fāṭimid period brought with it a new design in the form of an open central courtyard which was either surrounded by arcades or shaded, in both cases on three sides only, as in the al-Azhar Mosque –

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although completed later – and as still extant in the Mosque of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ in Damietta (Damyāt) and the Zaghlūl Mosque in Rosetta (Rashīd).

Another model for mosques originated in Central Asia (cold countries) and gained prevalence in Egypt after it came under Ottoman rule. This style comprised a prayer area consisting of three *īwāns* (vaulted halls, walled on three sides with one side completely open), with a central *dūrqa’a* (a courtyard with a wooden roof and a wooden dome in the centre) and a sanctum in the form of an open courtyard surrounded on four sides by an arcade. The mosque of Sulaimān Pāshā at the Cairo Citadel provides a splendid example of this model, which further evolved in the nineteenth century when the prayer area in the mosque of Muḥammad ‘Alī was made into a square, in the middle of which are four pillars supporting a central dome flanked by four half-domes.

In Islamic times, the education system was linked to the congregational mosque until the fifth/eleventh century, when states arose in Central Asia which were independent of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty. These included the Seljuq Empire, which took over the regions of Iran, Iraq and Anatolia, and which sought to combat and eliminate the Shī‘ī school and spread the various Sunnī rites. It built the Mustanṣiriyya Madrasa (theological school) in Baghdad as the first institution in the Islamic world to specialize exclusively in education, using a system which was subsequently adopted by all such *madrasas*. It consisted of an open central courtyard with four *īwāns* for the members of the four Sunnī schools, flanked by living quarters for students and teachers, premises for a library and other annexes. This same period also saw the

establishment of the *khānaqāh* – from *khāna*, meaning house, and *āqā*, meaning master in Persian, or in other words, the master’s house. This building was designed to accommodate Sūfīs, who were thus able to isolate themselves there for worship. This system also arose as a way of combating the Shī‘ī school, since Sūfism was spread throughout the Islamic world by Sūfī proselytisers who travelled from country to country. A good example of this type of building, which is identical in form to the *madrasa*, is the *khānaqāh* of Sulṭān Baibars al-Jāshnikīr (Chāshnegīr) in the city of Cairo.

The *madrasa* system began to spread in Egypt from the beginning of the Ayyūbid dynasty. Some *madrasas* made use of Fāṭimid houses, as in the case of the Suyūfiyya Madrasa<sup>4</sup> which was established in the house of the minister al-Ma’mūn al-Baṭā’ihī. At that time, the layout of the *madrasa* consisted of two *īwāns*; the house’s reception hall, comprising two *īwāns* opening onto a courtyard, was used for the teaching of two different schools. The only surviving example of this is Dār al-Ḥadīth, which was built by the Ayyūbid King al-Kāmil.

Sultan aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Najm-ud-Dīn Ayyūb, son of King al-Kāmil, then decided to use his *madrasa* for the teaching of all four rites. He therefore built his two-part *madrasa*; each part consisted of two *īwāns* opening onto a courtyard, with rooms for students and staff on the other two sides. The two parts were joined by a single facade, in the centre of which was the main entrance with a minaret above it, leading to a corridor separating the two parts. Only one part now remains, together with the facade. In the Mamlūk period, Sulṭān aṣ-Zāhir Baibars built a *madrasa* comprising four *īwāns*

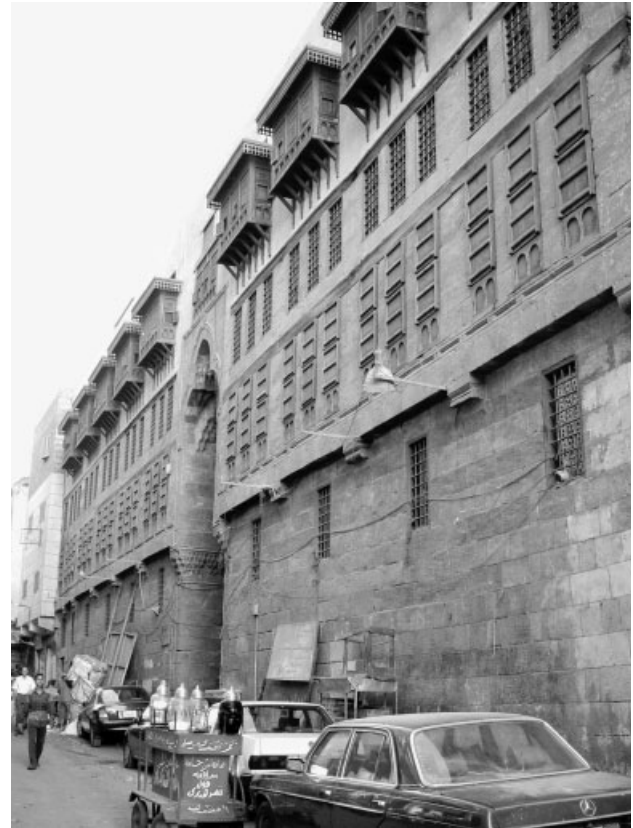


opening onto an open central courtyard. This, however, was destroyed, leaving only a few very small parts. The oldest surviving example of a *madrasa* with four *īwāns* around a courtyard is that of Sulṭān an-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn in al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh Street.

Sulṭān Ḥasan ibn an-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn followed in the mid-eighth/fourteenth century. He built his *madrasa* employing a new system that was not much different from that of the *madrasa* with four *īwāns* flanking a central courtyard. He used this layout, however, as a congregational mosque and added a marble *minbar* in the *qibla* *īwān*. He then built four doors in the corners of the open courtyard between the four main *īwāns*. Each door allowed access to a passage leading to an open courtyard with an *īwān* where one of the schools was taught. Around the courtyard were several floors of rooms for students and staff.

Usually attached to the *madrasas* – beginning with that of Sulṭān aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Najm-ud-Dīn Ayyūb – was a domed shrine where the owner of the *madrasa* would be buried. This was the case until the end of the Mameluke period. Such shrines assumed a number of different forms, however; that of Sulṭān Ḥasan, for example, was built behind the *qibla* *īwān* in a Central Asian style.

The *madrasas* subsequently developed throughout the Mameluke period and the two-*īwān* layout again returned to use. The open courtyard between the two *īwāns* was also covered with a wooden roof which was higher than the roof of the rest of the *madrasa*, the oldest example being the *madrasa* of al-Jauhariya which is attached to al-Azhar mosque. *Sabīls* (public fountains) and



54. Northern façade of the *wīkālā* of al-Ghuri dating from the tenth/sixteenth century.

Koranic schools were also annexed to the *madrasas*, which additionally began to perform the function of the *khānaqāh* (monastery or hostel for Sūfīs or dervishes) and the congregational mosque at times when not being used for teaching, as in the case of the Sulṭān Qāyṭbāy complex. The Mamelukes, on the other hand, devoted attention to ornamenting façades, minarets and domes with geometric and vegetal decorations sculpted on stone.

### Military and Civilian buildings

The Arabs learned how to build and fortify their new cities from the civilizations that preceded

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them, in particular those of the Romans and the Byzantines. In most cases, the function of the city was to house the caliph, the *amīr* or the *sulṭān* and their families, as well as members of their government and armies. This system remained unchanged throughout the Islamic period. The city would be enclosed by a wall which had towers and gates positioned at intervals in order to protect those inside and to delineate the interior and the exterior. The towers punctuating the city walls or surrounding their gates were either square, rectangular or circular in shape, as in the case of the gates of Fāṭimid Cairo and the towers which sit on its walls. Bāb an-Naṣr has rectangular towers and Bāb al-Futūḥ and Bāb Zuwaila have round towers. Different types of towers were similarly used for the Cairo Citadel of Ṣalāḥ-ud-Dīn al-Ayyūbī.

Commercial buildings are generally divided into *wikālas* (buildings facing onto courtyards and consisting of shops on the ground floor and living quarters above), *khāns* (buildings combining the functions of hostel and trading centre), *qaiṣarīyas* (roofed market places) and *sūqs*. Since early Islamic times, Islamic cities also had *funduqs* (small urban shop complexes), which became increasingly prevalent in the Mameluke period, after the menace of the Crusaders and Mongols had been eliminated and international trade routes were secured. They then continued to spread during the Ottoman age, as Egypt was at the centre of the domestic trade routes of the Ottoman Empire and also at the centre of international routes. The word *funduq* is Greek in origin and also appears in Italian. The fact is that historians and authors of documents made no distinction between *funduqs*, *wikālas*, *khāns* and *qaiṣarīyas*. In the main, *funduqs* and *khāns* were probably used to

accommodate traders and visitors to the city. In most instances, each building included was allocated to a specific nationality. The majority of such edifices were built on trading routes outside the city, and were therefore fortified with towers for protection. Those inside the city, however, were not similarly fortified. They also had only one gate. As for *wikālas*, the name of which derived from the fact that they were each entrusted with a specific commodity, they were generally located within the city walls.

In regard to architectural layout, the ground floor of the *wikāla* comprised shops with façades for the display of imported goods. There would be one entrance in the middle of the façade or several entrances if there was more than one façade. The entrances led to an open central courtyard surrounded by storerooms for goods. The staircase leading to the upper floors would be in a corner of the façade, as in the case of the *wikāla* of Sulṭān Qāyṭbāy, which dates back to the ninth century.

Characteristically, *khāns* and *funduqs* had no shops in their façades. They had a main entrance leading to an open central courtyard surrounded by storerooms, occupying two or more floors, in which travellers were able to keep their goods. The staircase leading to the upper floors would be in a corner of the central courtyard, as in the case of the *wikāla* of al-Ghūrī, which dates back to the tenth/sixteenth century.

*Wikālas*, *khāns* and *funduqs* commonly had several upper floors, known as *rab'*, which in Arabic means living quarters. The *rab'* comprised individual living areas, each consisting of several

floors. The first floor had an entrance leading to a corridor with a kitchen and toilet facilities on one side and a staircase leading to the upper floors of the living area on the other. At the end of the corridor would be an entrance to a reception hall comprising a *dūrqā'a* on to which an *īwān* opened. The upper floors of each individual living area contained only toilet facilities and a reception hall, as in the case of the *wikāla* of al-Ghūrī. In some cases, the living area occupied only one floor, with another living area above, as in the case of the Silāhdār *wikāla* in Khān al-Khalīlī, which dates back to the nineteenth century.

Described by the Arabs as a *sūq*, *qaiṣarīya* is a term derived from the word *qayṣar*, the first such type of building having been constructed by a Roman emperor (*qaiṣar* 'Caesar'). *Qaiṣarīya* is frequently used as the name of a town's commercial street, as can still be seen today in many Egyptian towns. It is also used to signify a type of commercial establishment. According to information found in various documents, the *qaiṣarīya* was a rectangular or square building which sometimes had as many as five, six, seven or more entrances. The external façades were occupied by varying numbers of shops, depending on the surface area and the direction of the roads giving on to them. The main entrance led to an open space on to which other shops opened, and accommodation for traders was located above the shops on both the interior and the exterior. As with other commercial premises, the *qaiṣarīyas* differed in surface area, as in the case of Khān al-Khalīlī, which was built by Sulṭān al-Ghūrī in the tenth/sixteenth century. Some also had only interior shops overlooking the courtyard or the central passageway, usually a main thoroughfare,

as in the cases of the *Sūq as-Silāḥ* (arms market) adjoining the mosque of Sulṭān Ḥasan, which dates back to the eighth/fourteenth century and is Egypt's only example of a passageway covered by a stone roof, and the *qaṣaba* (central part of a town or citadel) of Riḍwān Bey, south of Bāb Zuwaila, which dates back to the Ottoman period of the eleventh/seventeenth century.

In Islamic cities, the predominant architectural layout of the *sūq* was one in which shops were crammed tightly together on either side of both main and side streets. In Cairo, the word *sūq* was also used for *qaiṣarīyas* in which shops trading in a particular commodity were grouped together, as in the copper *sūq*, the silk *sūq* and so on. The shops at the front would sometimes form a *sūq* for a particular commodity and the shops around the courtyard of the *qaiṣarīya* would form a *sūq* for another commodity. The main street was often divided into two different *sūqs* on either side on the basis of the various products for which they were known, rather than according to the type of building. Another type of building also emerged within the *sūqs*; it consisted of numerous alleys on either side of the main thoroughfares – of which there were usually three – with shops on either side. Examples are the gold and jewellery *sūq* in Cairo, which was built by Sulṭān Baraka Khān ibn aḏ-Ḍāḥir Baibars in the seventh/thirteenth century, and *Zanqat as-Sittāt* (*zanqa* meaning alley (*zuqāq*) in Maghreb Arabic) in Alexandria, which dates back to the Ottoman period.

### **Ḥammāms (*bath houses*)**

The Muslims were familiar with these buildings from the Byzantine civilization. *Ḥammāms*

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performed various functions relating not only to health, but also to religion and recreation, as in some cases they served as the venue for ceremonies of engagement, marriage and circumcision. *Hammāms* were also enterprises which regularly turned a healthy profit. The wealthy therefore sought to establish *ḥammāms* with public or charitable religious endowments, just as they did for mosques and schools, in an act of pious generosity.

In terms of their architecture, most *ḥammāms* consisted of a façade with a door leading to the different areas inside and another door leading to any living quarters which might lie above. A further door led to the water-heating furnace and the water well, above which was the water wheel supplying water to the *ḥammām*. The door of the *ḥammām* opened onto a passage leading to the changing room, where people removed their clothing. The changing room ordinarily comprised a *dūrqā'a* with a fountain in the middle and four surrounding *īwāns*, often containing rooms where the affluent would rest after bathing. It had two doors; one leading to a passage housing toilet facilities and the warm room, and the other to the furnace of the *ḥammām*. As in the *ḥammāms* of Cairo, the warm room comprised one *īwān*, where bathers could rest after bathing without having to go immediately out into the normal air of the changing room. Still surviving today in the town of Rosetta (Rashīd), the *ḥammām* of 'Azūz has a warm room with two *īwāns*. The warm room would have a door leading to the third part of the *ḥammām*, namely the hot room, which normally consisted of an octagonal *dūrqā'a* flanked by four *īwāns*. Opening out from here and the other four corners completing the octagon were doors leading to

private rooms and plunge baths. The warm room and hot room had domed and vaulted ceilings dotted with circular apertures, usually covered with coloured glass, which were designed to provide light and retain the heat inside the building.

### Houses

The *rab'* system of accommodation used by the middle and poorer classes has already been mentioned. The houses about which information is available from surviving ancient buildings belonged to traders, men of religion and *amīrs* from the upper middle classes. The façade of these houses usually had a door that was fashioned to prevent people in the street from seeing into the house and another larger door leading to the stables of the house. The ground-floor windows overlooking the street road consisted of narrow arrow-slit openings designed to prevent people riding animals in the street from seeing into the house. The upper-floor windows, however, were large and covered with worked wooden shutters – *mashrabīyas* – in order to regulate the incoming light and prevent people inside the house from seeing into the house opposite.

The interior ground floor of the house comprised an open courtyard surrounded by store rooms in which household provisions were kept. It had arrow-slit windows, behind which the kitchen and stables were usually situated. The ground floor sometimes had reception halls, each consisting of a central *dūrqā'a*, two *īwāns* and two *sadlas* (an *īwān* with only a small area), which the owner would use when receiving a large number of visitors, such as students or traders. In the Ottoman period, in

the eighteenth century, a further component known as the *takhtabūsh* (a covered recess in which guests were entertained) was also added to the northern part of the courtyard; opening onto the courtyard in full width, it had a central pillar which supported the upper floor. Broad windows opened on to the northern part in order to let in cool air during the summer.

As for the upper floors, the first floor typically comprised the seating area, the main reception hall and the *ḥammām*. Normally located in the southern part of the house, the seating area opened out in a northerly direction and had a varying number of arched columns, depending on the surface area. The reception hall comprised a central *dūrqa'a*, covered by a wooden ceiling with a *shukhshaikha* (small cupola of carved wood and with small windows) in the middle, and had two *īwāns* and two *sadlas* surrounding it. As a rule, the northern *īwān* contained a *malqaf* (a wind scoop built on the roof for directing cool breezes into the rooms below) for the purpose of conditioning the air in the reception hall. The other floors of the house comprised reception halls and living quarters for the residents.

### Sabils and Koranic schools

The Mameluke and Ottoman periods left us with a number of buildings known as *sabils* (public fountains) and *kuttābs* (Qur'ānic schools). These buildings comprised three floors. Known as the *ṣahrīj* (tank or cistern), the first floor was below ground level and was for storing water. The second floor was above ground level and served as the *sabīl* room, as it contained an outlet for the cistern from which water was drawn off into basins for

passers-by to drink. These basins were behind the windows of the *sabīl* room overlooking the street. The *sabīl* room had one or more windows overlooking the street in accordance with the facades facing the street. The window façades were covered with shutters made of copper and occasionally of both wood and copper. Underneath them were small brass arches allowing passers-by to stretch out their hands and take the copper drinking vessels chained to the *sabīl* window. Above the *sabīl* room was the third floor, which was dedicated to Koranic schools where children learned reading, writing and arithmetic and memorized the Koran. Some of these schools were exclusively for girls. These buildings were often attached to religious buildings – such as the complexes of Sulṭān Qalāwūn, Sulṭān Qāyṭbāy and Sulṭān al-Ghūrī – or civilian buildings, such as the *wikālas* of Sulṭān Qāyṭbāy and Dhū-l-Faqār Bey, the Bait al-Kirīdlīya house (Gayer-Anderson Museum) and the houses in the town of Rosetta (Rashīd). There were also many independent buildings, such as the *sabīls* of Sulṭān Qāyṭbāy and Sulṭān 'Abd-ur-Raḥmān Katkhudā.

### | NOTES

1. Dates separated by a slash are given first according to the Muslim lunar calendar (A.H.), and then according to the Christian calendar (A.D.).
2. These two lakes are now located roughly between as-Sayyida Zainab Square and the Citadel.
3. A recess indicating the direction of the Ka'ba in Mecca.
4. The mosque of Shaikh Muṭahhar is now in al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh Street in the gold and jewellery *sūq*.

# | Between a Secular Management System and International Standards of Protection: the heritage of Cairo's old quarter

by *Omnia Aboukorah*

*Omnia Aboukorah is an architect. Her Ph.D. is on 'The heritage process in old Cairo' and she works at the University of Tours (France).*

The old quarter of Cairo was inscribed by UNESCO on the list of World Cultural Heritage in 1979. As a result, the international community has adopted not only the heritage of the largest group of Arab-Islamic monuments in the world, but also an overpopulated area (the population density in some neighbourhoods has reached 1,200 inhabitants per hectare), which is polluted by the presence of many small industrial enterprises and largely dilapidated housing.

The management of this area of housing, which is nearly a thousand years old, underwent various changes during the course of the last century that have today endangered all attempts at safeguarding or developing architectural and urban heritage in the old quarter of Cairo.

## **Turning Arabic monuments into heritage**

The notion of national heritage emerged in Egypt with the quest for traces of the most distant and inaccessible civilization, that of the Pharaohs. If, however, from the eighteenth century onwards, Pharaonic Egypt constituted an object of desire

and fantasy, vestiges of Arabic Egypt, which were preserved primarily in Cairo and were slow to attract any comparable interest. This is certainly because the civil and religious buildings constructed at the time of its foundation in 969, were still largely in use, and, as such, could not be readily classed as antiquities. This is also certainly because a religious institution, *Diwân al-Ahbâs*, in charge of the management of religious foundations, the *waqf*, had instituted, since the Fatimid era,<sup>1</sup> 'specific jurisdictions' intended to legislate on the maintenance and restoration of these buildings.

When, at the end of the nineteenth century, a Committee for the Conservation of Arabic Monuments was created with the task of establishing an inventory of buildings of artistic, archaeological or historical value, and supervising their conservation and development, many *waqf* buildings acquired monument status. A process of heritage labelling was begun, accompanied by institutional measures for protection. Since then, the Egyptian State has gradually promulgated new laws on the protection of these monuments,<sup>2</sup> and created specialized committees.<sup>3</sup> The 'splendour of the old quarter of Cairo' resulted in its inscription on UNESCO's list of World Cultural Heritage. In 1979, it was internationally recognized as the largest in the Arab world and African continent (with an area of approximately 4km<sup>2</sup>); furthermore, the timelessness of its urban fabric and the density of monuments, which represent all periods of the history of Arab-Islamic architecture (969–1879) make it one of the most important in the world.

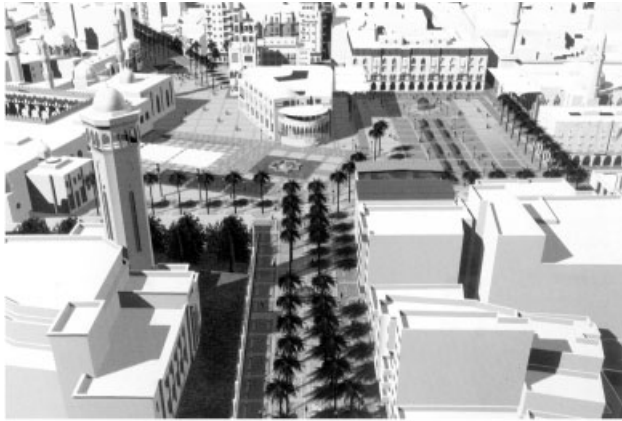
We must nonetheless emphasize that all this has never prevented the steady degradation

of housing in the old quarter, the dilapidation and/or ruin of its monuments, their use for residential, industrial or commercial purposes, the absence of urban waste collection and the deplorable state of basic infrastructures. For a long time this condition, furthermore, served local and international experts as evidence to denounce 'the incredible nonchalance' of the Egyptian government towards universal heritage.

We do think, however, that this situation is less a sign of the Egyptian state's lack of interest in architectural heritage than an institutional dysfunction, typical of the ambiguity of the relationship that has existed since the last century between the role of the Administration of the *Waqf* (heir of the *Diwân al-Ahbâs* created during the Fatimid era), which is both a religious institution and the administrator for the majority of buildings classified as historical monuments in the old city, and the role of the High Council of Antiquities, which is the principal heritage institution and therefore in charge of preserving and developing these same buildings.

Today, this dysfunction appears clearly within the framework for implementing the 'National Programme for the Urban Development and Conservation of Historic Cairo', launched in 1998. This consists of no less than 147 specific restoration operations (more than one third of the classified buildings) that the Supreme Council of Antiquities has agreed to carry out by 2010, in co-operation with various organizations involved in the management of the old city. These operations also include the development of zones surrounding each of these monuments in





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© Medina n° 13, May 2000, p. 64

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55. Proposed redevelopment of al-Azhar square.

order to create tourist sites, as well as numerous town-planning operations (see plan on p. 128).<sup>4</sup>

Our concern here is to show to what extent Egyptian practices for the preservation of buildings are historically linked to the system of managing the *waqf* assets, while the preservation of architectural and urban heritage is deployed today according to international standards and concepts which ignore this link.

### Management of *waqf* assets: social consensus on safeguard practices

The *waqf*, founded during the era of the Prophet in most Muslim territories, correspond to a pious intention manifested in favour of a religious or charitable act, such as the construction and/or management of hospices, hospitals, mosques, public fountains, schools, etc. In order to ensure adequate income for the management and functioning of the foundation, notably for maintaining and repairing buildings, the founder (*wâqif*) thereby established in the *waqf* cultivatable lands or buildings with economic interests, such as caravanserai (*wakâla* and *khan*), public bath houses (*hamâm*), buildings, houses, shops, etc., whose rent and/or management would furnish the necessary funds. The latter – the ‘*waqf* assets which produce income’ – were immobilized in the form of a permanent and inalienable fund – one of the fundamental principles of the *waqf* being the perpetuation of a religious or charitable institution – comparable to a fund whose income was allocated to the designated body.

The act of foundation (*waqfiyya*) also included the methods of preservation of an immobilized asset, by indicating the percentages to be attributed to restoration (*tarmîm*), maintenance (*syâna*) and repairs (*islâh*).<sup>5</sup>

The *waqf* was administered by a manager (*nazîr*), appointed by the founder and in charge of ensuring that the *waqf* assets yield an income according to their nature and circumstances, distributing it or spending it in compliance with the provisions of the deed creating the *waqf* while



supervising the enhancement of the assets in the most advantageous manner.

During the Fatimid era, the system of *waqf* management was governed by a specific administration, *Diwân al-Ahbâs*, led by a judge, and whose role was to ensure that clauses stipulated by the founder in the deed of the foundation were respected.

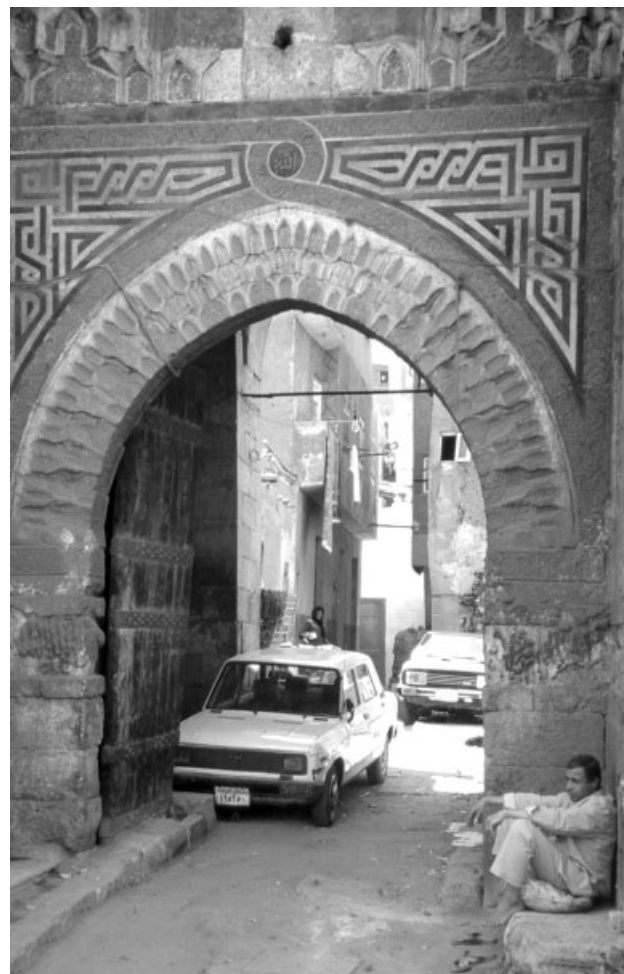
Aside from the religious aspect inherent in the general principles of the *waqf*, this system of managing property and building assets, which contained numerous advantages for founder and beneficiaries alike, had major repercussions on the entire urban landscape of the old city as well as its management.

As the *waqf* assets were not distrainable and imprescriptible, the wealthiest notables found a favourable means of protection in this system against confiscation or taxing of their assets by investing their fortune in *waqf*.<sup>6</sup> In this manner, particularly during eras where changing reigns were not only frequent but also accompanied by violence and reprisals, the wealthy élites as well as the monarchs themselves did not hesitate to transform at least a part of their assets into *waqf*.

In addition to protecting private assets, the *waqf* also constituted a means of assuring founders of the support of the local population which was directly or indirectly concerned by the activities of a *waqf*. Examples included personnel employed in religious foundations, such as teachers or imams; workers, craftsmen and businessmen installed in the *khân* or *wakâla*; and people in charge of maintaining the mosques, schools, public

fountains or hospitals subsidized by the *waqf*. The founder was also guaranteed the support of the population to whom the *waqf* offered services, whether social, religious or health-related.

The combination of these two factors increased the number of *waqf*, giving impetus to the expansion of medieval Cairo. Starting in the Ayyubid era (1175), the number of *waqf* assets considerably increased in Cairo. Today, the old city alone includes several thousand whose surface



56. View of the historic centre of Cairo.

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area varies from several square metres to several thousand.

### Changes in the meaning attributed to practices of safeguarding buildings

The management system of *waqf* experienced a series of reforms during the course of its history, which we will not dwell on. We should simply recall the important fact that the creation in 1881 of the Committee for the Conservation of Monuments of Arab Art constituted an initial change in historical practices related to the preservation of buildings. The management system of *waqf* assets ensured the protection of certain buildings, either for perpetuating religious practices, or for ensuring revenues for the management and maintenance of charitable institutions. Once the committee was instituted, the safeguarding of a *waqf* no longer served only for the perpetuation and propagation of the values of Islam, for which there was a real social consensus, but also for the promotion of historical and commemorative values, which until then had been alien to practices for the preservation of buildings.

The activity of the Committee also contributed to establishing a new category of buildings, namely 'monuments of Arab art', which brings together places of worship (convents and mosques), public establishments (public baths and caravanserai), teaching institutions (Koranic schools), and buildings allocated to housing (palaces and collective residential buildings, *rab'*), etc. Most of these buildings were previously grouped together in the legal category of the *waqf*, also subject to a specific jurisdiction, but

with a clear differentiation of the value attributed to each.

We can say that from 1881 onwards, change was rooted more in the *meaning* attributed to safeguarding practices than to the practices themselves.

A second change took place in 1952, under Nasser, at the time of the wholesale nationalization of *waqf* assets and their integration into a ministry. This amounted to a real upheaval in the relationship which had existed since the tenth century between the founders, administrators and beneficiaries. Henceforth, the Ministry of the *Waqf* was authorized to utilize the revenues of charitable *waqf*, of which it had become both the administrator and owner, for purposes other than those for which the *waqf* had been founded. The Ministry was no longer bound by the wishes of the founder (as laid down in the deed of foundation) and was free designate the beneficiaries of the *waqf* as it pleased.

This subjection of *waqf* assets to government supervision hardly contributed to a more rational administration of urban and architectural heritage in the old city. Today, the Ministry of the *Waqf* remains the administrator of a considerable number of buildings in the old city, most of which are classified as historic monuments and for which the methods of protection remain poorly defined. First of all, during the last century, these buildings with *waqf* status were endowed with the status of 'Arab monument', 'national heritage', and then 'world heritage'. However, while the institutional definition of each status is clear, the administrative systems specific to these



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57. Bab al-Futuh in July 2004, now completely restored.

various classifications are far from being complementary. The Ministry of the *Waqf* is also a service provider, a difficult position, and therefore subject to numerous criticisms relating to its inability to fulfil its mission. In fact, by the nature of its remit, it seeks above all to develop its assets and derive the greatest advantage from the 137 classified monuments it administers in the old city. The Ministry of the *Waqf*'s task is, therefore, to integrate a part of these *waqf* in the property, building and industrial market, thereby granting them an instrumental function (either residential or commercial or as services).

Conversely, the task of the High Council of Antiquities is to limit the use of these same

buildings – which it considers first and foremost as monuments classified as ‘World Heritage of Humanity’ – within a well-defined, regulated framework, through imported international standards rather than through social consensus.

We can discern the degree to which the meaning attributed to traditional practices of administration and protection of buildings has undergone major change. We can also perceive the extent to which divergence in the objectives and interests of the two main institutions in charge of the conservation of buildings in the old city can generate paradoxes and contradictions, and particularly the absence of cumulative results between their actions. Therefore, urban and

architectural heritage which, *a priori*, could be considered as generating a consensus as a factor for the development, affirmation and even production of an inevitably positive cultural identity, can only be the subject of differences and conflicts within the current institutional context.

### Managing an image

The authors of the 'National Programme for the Development and Urban Conservation of Historic Cairo', which was created in 1998 at the request of the President, chose to integrate Arab and Islamic Egypt within the international tourist industry, in order to bring an end to overpopulation, pollution and the dilapidated state of monuments. Their objective is to provide historic neighbourhoods with an image befitting the grandeur of the Arab-Islamic civilization by transforming the old city of Cairo into an open-air museum. According to them, within twenty years, everything will have changed. The old city will reflect the Fatimid, historic and Islamic qualities attributed to them by international experts. The mosques and religious buildings that are falling into ruin will be restored. Palaces and houses from the Ottoman era, occupied at present by the homeless or used as public urban waste dumps will be renovated and will welcome groups of visitors by day, and festivities organized by the Ministry of Culture by night. The *wakāla* invaded by small polluting businesses, craftsmen and workers will give way to cultural and tourist services of all kinds and the historic neighbourhoods, so often dirty and overpopulated, will testify to the permanence, authenticity and components of heritage, both national and international.

There can be no mystery to the many difficulties raised by the implementation of such a programme. Even if we can think that the authors of the programme anticipated increasing *waqf* assets through revenue generated by tourism, it should not be forgotten that most of these interventions for 'development' and 'conservation' not only disrupt walls and streets; they also deeply affect various human groups, causing or hastening change in life-styles and working conditions. Their effects are allied with a particular form of social change. For some users of the old city, the monuments are first of all *waqf* which provide them with either housing or a place to work. However, the new programme carves confidently into a complex and fragile living environment. The reorganization of economic and social space, while taking on several dimensions, is wrought by an external agent, the state, whose objectives are oriented towards a single imperative solution: emptying the neighbourhoods and buildings of their 'undesirable' occupants.

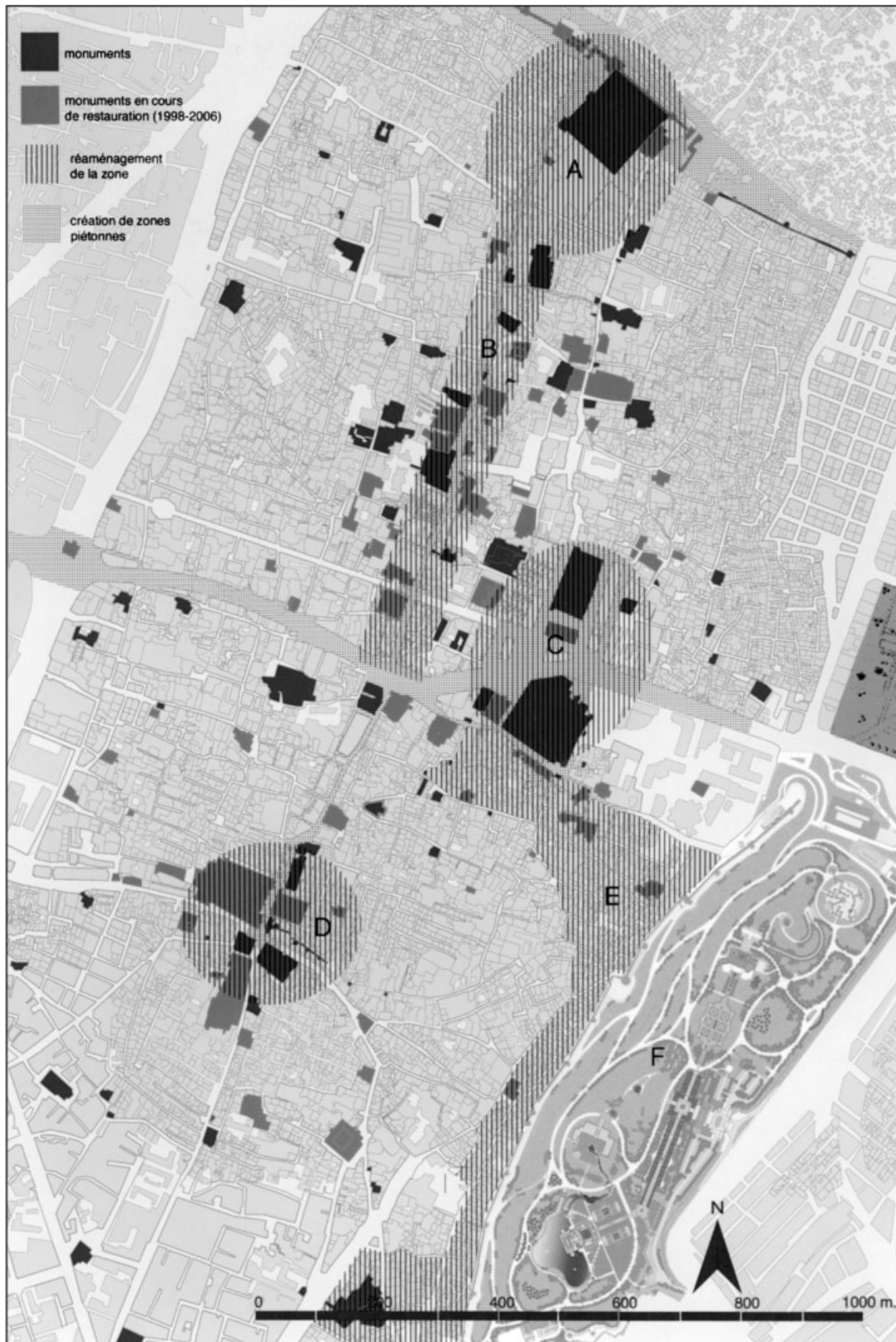
The objectives and management of such a programme cannot be achieved without having involved the local community beforehand. It is because there has always been a social consensus on the role of the *waqf* and the task of their administrators that, for centuries, the community has been able to ensure, somehow or other, their perpetuation and their practice. In the same way, the symbolic significance attributed to monuments or the historic value of neighbourhoods of the old city can only really exist when an effort of cultural construction confers on them a meaning for the community, requiring a different method of administration as well as a significance that is

sufficiently clear and widely shared to justify their protection and the staging of in international exhibition of urban monuments and spaces in the old city of Cairo.

## | NOTES

1. The dynasty derives its name from Fâtima, daughter of the Prophet and wife of 'Ali. The fourth caliph of the dynasty, Al-Mu'izz (953–75), conquered Egypt and founded the city of Cairo in 969.
2. We will only quote here those that were most important: Law No. 8, 13 April 1918 concerning the protection of monuments from the Arab era, *Law No. 215, 31 October 1951 on the protection of Antiquities, Law No. 117 of 1983 on the protection of Antiquities, Decree No. 250 of 1990 from the Minister of Culture on the demarcation and the height of buildings in certain areas of historic Cairo (J.O. No. 32, 6 February 1991).*
3. *Decree of 18 December 1881 creating a Committee in charge of the Conservation of monuments of Arabic art, Law No. 529 of 5 November 1953 organizing the administration of Antiquities, Decree of the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt No. 82, 1994 creating the Supreme Council of Antiquities.* In 1996, two committees were created with a view to encouraging and facilitating the conservation of heritage by playing the role of intermediary between the various institutional actors involved in the protection of the old city: the EARDFM (Executive Agency for the Renovation and Development of Fatimid Cairo), and the PCPM (Permanent Committee for the Preservation of Cairo Monuments).
4. The first phase of this programme followed a set of specific restoration operations, most of which were begun, between 1994 and 1996, either by the HCA or by foreign archaeological missions.
5. Mohamed Afifi, 'Assalib al-Intifa' al-Iqtisâdî bil Awqâf fi Misr fi al-'asr al-'Uthmânî', in *Les Annales Islamologiques [Islamology Annals]*, Vol. XXIV, p. 109, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Cairo, 1988, quoted by Galila El Kadi in 'Éléments de réflexion sur les origines du patrimoine historique bâti en Égypte' ['Elements of reflection on the origins of historic heritage built in Egypt'], *Cahiers de Recherche Monde arabe contemporain [Notes on Research in the Contemporary Arab World]* No. 6, 1998, *Patrimoine, Identité, Enjeux Politiques [Heritage, Identity, Political Issues]*, Group for Research on and Study of the Mediterranean and the Middle East (Gremmo), University Lumière Lyon 2-CNRS-Maison de l'Orient Méditerranée, p. 43.
6. A. Sekali emphasizes that 'the exactions and confiscations were formerly frequent in Turkey as well as in Egypt. Once a minister, chambellan, or other important dignitaries of the state, incurred with or without reason, the displeasure of the sovereign, he could expect the worst: revocation, banishment, exile or even death; in most cases, his assets were confiscated and his family reduced to dire poverty', Sekali A., 1929, *Le problème des Waqfs en Égypte [The Problem of Waqfs in Egypt]*, Excerpts from the *Revue des Études Islamiques [Journal of Islamic Studies]*, 1929, Cahiers I-IV, Paris, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, cahier V, Causes et avantages du Waqf, p. 92. Sekali quotes notably the example of Ismail Pacha El Moufatesh, Khedive Ismail's Finance Minister, whose assets were confiscated from the day which followed his disgrace, except for those that were constituted in *waqf*.

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58. Plan of Cairo, cultural heritage distribution.



# | Modern Heritage in Cairo: history and current outlooks

by Galila El Kadi

*Galila El Kadi obtained her doctorate in urban and regional planning in 1984 at the Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris, and in the same year joined the IRD (Institute for Research and Development). Since 2000, she has been the general co-ordinator of an EC cultural heritage research project entitled 'Heritage Conservation and Management in Egypt and Syria'. Her current, primary research is in heritage conservation, and urban and regional planning in South Mediterranean cities.*

An overview of the origins of heritage in Egypt brings to light three significant occurrences: first, gradual change in legal and institutional frameworks from 1835 to 1983, which ensured better administration of national heritage; second, a dual typological and chronological extension of the notion of heritage that encompasses objects which are increasingly diverse in nature, from historical eras that span pre-history up until 1879; and finally, the transition from monument to historic centre and the adoption of new methods of administration based on the rehabilitation of urban fabric and not the restoration of the monument. The historic centre of Cairo was thus inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1980. However, for the past ten years, urban and architectural forms designated as 'Western' and produced over the past two centuries have been the focus of classification, restoration and renovation projects. These new trends in public policies for heritage, as reflected by a series of safeguard decrees, emerged along with the cultural élite's awareness that it is a question of preserving an asset by claiming it as cultural heritage and not simply as valuable inherited property.

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The emerging interest for this modernity which originated elsewhere, is indicative of surpassing oneself in order to move towards the other, while appreciating the aesthetic values created by a modernity which is alternatively asserted or dreaded.

meaning. But first of all it is important to present the nature of this heritage.

The cities and neighbourhoods built at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century are of great geographic, urban,



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59. The Diplomat Club, Talaat Harb Street by architect Alexandre Marcel, 1907.



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60. Bryan Davis Building, Mohamad Farid Street by architect Robert Williams, 1911.

When did this change occur whereby these 'unauthentic' buildings, produced by a different civilization, became recognized under the noble designation of 'heritage'? At the beginning of Euro-Mediterranean co-operation? Or with new claims for cultural diversity contrary to a collective identity discourse which is characterized by rejection of the other? Is this 'heritage' the result of the failure of 1960s architecture which aroused widespread nostalgia for a *belle époque* and a passion for these material symbols? It is necessary to return to the 1980s in order to recount the facts and understand their

architectural and historical diversity. They include new cities founded *ex-nihilo* as from 1858 such as Port-Saïd, Port Tewfiq and Ismailia; a satellite city (Heliopolis) founded in 1906 to the east of Cairo; new neighbourhoods which have become the modern centres of metropolises and large cities, as well as select residential suburbs; blocks of social housing and housing estates. The architecture represents a diversified typology that includes palaces and villas, rental properties, commercial buildings (cinemas, theatres, banks, department stores and hotels) and public buildings like ministries and



universities, as well as industrial and educational establishments.

Most of these sites and buildings were always proposed by a local élite, prior to and during the British Mandate (1882–1922). Architectural and

light. The hybrid style of certain architectural constructions from the beginning of the twentieth century was emphasized. The suburb of Heliopolis, located to the east of Cairo, and built in 1906 by the Belgian baron Edouard Empain,<sup>2</sup> was held up as an example of a ‘happy marriage



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61. Union de Paris building by architect Georges Parck, 1932.

urban commissions were addressed to European architects who introduced ‘exogenous’ urban models and architectural styles which were adopted and desired by this élite and then spread throughout society via the middle classes. This explains why in Egypt, contrary to the other countries of the Arab world, these cities and neighbourhoods were rarely described as ‘colonial’. This factor has facilitated and legitimized recent campaigns aimed at elevating this recent historic heritage to the level of national heritage. Let us look more closely at the various stages of this process.

In 1984, during an international conference in Cairo, organized by the Aga Khan Foundation<sup>1</sup>, the debate on modernity and tradition led to viewing the usual oppositions between autochthone and allochthone in a new



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62. Buiding in Kasr Al Nil Street.

between the West and the East<sup>3</sup>. The recommendations of the conference included its preservation and placement on the World Heritage List. While this initial cultural rehabilitation of a site which had been planned and built during the British Mandate was not followed by operative measures, it nonetheless produced echoes in the academic world. In Cairo, as in Alexandria, teams of researchers inventoried, selected, conducted surveys, established typologies and even began the restoration of several houses dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>4</sup>

These initiatives, though very limited in time and space, reflected a growing interest in minor forms of architecture, which hitherto had never been taken into account in the heritage

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process. Following the earthquake that struck Egypt in 1992, this interest was to develop into a wide-reaching campaign in favour of the protection of all nineteenth- and twentieth-century heritage. While classified historical monuments were considerably damaged by the earthquake, palaces and villas from more recent eras, which had been confiscated from the fallen aristocracy in the wake of the 1952 revolution and allocated for educational use, also suffered. Poorly maintained for several decades, these buildings were greatly damaged by the tremor and had to be demolished. Part of the memory of the city, of the nation even, was therefore to be erased. Aside from their aesthetic value, these palaces and villas were of obvious historical and symbolic value. They were the residences of leading national figures from the world of politics, finance, art and culture who had played a significant role in Egypt's cultural renaissance during the 1920s to 1940s. To demolish them was to lose the oldest and most prestigious testimony of an era now described as a *'belle époque'*, arousing nostalgia that was expressed in the press, television soap operas,<sup>5</sup> catalogues of photographs,<sup>6</sup> photography exhibitions<sup>7</sup> and literature.<sup>8</sup> The national press and that of the political opposition played an important role in making the general public aware of the need to protect these sites and objects, by re-creating the collective memory through in-depth and well-documented articles on a particular site or building from the era, by warning of the risks that threaten them and by exposing certain misuses. It was thanks to the campaign led by the press that the first decree was issued in 1993 prohibiting the demolition of palaces and villas. In 1997, the awareness campaign gained importance through a committee sponsored by Ms Suzanne Mubarak,

bringing together the Fulbright Commission, the governmental agency of the Mubarak Library and *El Ahram Weekly*. The earthquake therefore contributed to defining a new category of objects said to be of 'significant value' which had been previously neglected and little known, and had not benefited from any particular status. Over the past decade, their protection and development have mobilized many actors: Ministries (of Culture, of Information and Technology, and of Housing), local authorities, university research centres, consultants and even businessmen and tradespeople. All subsequent endeavours have been aimed at elevating the legacy of this era to the same status of heritage as that attributed to the medieval urban fabric. They can be summarized as follows:

At the legislative level, six decrees were issued between 1993 and 1998.<sup>9</sup> The two initial decrees prohibited the demolition or transformation of buildings of great historical or architectural value. The third decree (No. 238 dated 1996) extended this measure to 'certain buildings of a remarkable architectural style'. It stipulates their classification, and recommends restoration within the framework of the law on the protection of historical monuments. The fourth decree, issued by the Prime Minister (No. 463 dated 1998), includes penalties for offenders. This was reinforced by the military ruling (2-1998) that completes the regulations directed at administering the safeguard of these buildings. In order to define more accurately the values that would ideally be attributed to them, public authorities (administrators and ministries) as well as university teams conducted inventories that established lists of buildings to be protected. Some

of these were even classified as historical monuments; there are sixty of them in the city of Cairo alone.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the usual historic monuments such as fountains, religious schools and mosques, there are sixteen palaces and villas, as well as public and commercial buildings such as the Geography Society (1917), Parliament (1923), the Misr Bank (1927), and the Institute of Arabic music (1926).<sup>11</sup>

On the operational level, two sectors in the modern centre of Cairo were renovated: the first, which covers 2.3 hectares, was a pilot project initiated and carried out by the Cairo authorities in 1997. This sector is located on Emad El Dine Street, the 'Broadway' of yesteryear, which remained a place for entertainment until the end of the 1950s. All that was left from this era, for the sector in question, was a cinema (Cairo Palace), a restaurant from the 1930s (El Alf Bey) and a toponym, that of Zakareya Ahmad who was a great music composer. The second initiative was by businessmen, and implemented with private and public funds. It extends over six hectares and includes buildings which constitute important landmarks in the city centre: the Stock Exchange, which is the focal point, the Central Bank, National Bank, Suez Canal Bank, Cosmopolitan Hotel and the former Radio Building. The renovation programme was very similar in both cases. It focused particularly on the development of public space with the renovation of infrastructure networks, the transformation of streets with traffic into pedestrian zones, the installation of street furniture, and landscaping as well as restoration of the principal façades. These operations, though superficial, have nevertheless improved the quality of life in the two sectors involved. The area

surrounding the Stock Exchange and the principal banks of Cairo, which was formerly noisy and more polluted, has become a calm and pleasant oasis with pruned trees and lamp posts in the style of the era. The streets called Zakareya Ahmad and its perpendicular Saray Al, that were once bathed in backwash from the sewers while serving as garbage dumps, are now lined with cafés and restaurants which are full day and night. Now one can sit at a table, take a stroll, look at and appreciate the beautiful buildings that previously



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63. Omar Affendi shopping centre, Abdelaziz Street, by architect Raoul Brandon, 1923.

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were ignored, buildings whose great diversity includes baroque, rococo, neo-classical, art nouveau, and neo-Arab styles.

Aside from these two renovated sectors, fifteen public buildings of diverse typology have been restored in the city centre since 1990. They include six cultural buildings and leisure centres (the Institute of Arabic Music, the Diplomat Club, the Goumhoureya Theatre, the Riche and Groppi Cafés and the Cosmopolitan Hotel); three financial buildings (the Misr Bank, Stock Exchange, and head offices of the Misr insurance companies), two large department stores (Sednawi and Omar Affendi), three chanceries (the Swiss Embassy, and the Italian and German cultural centres); and a hospital. The restoration work that was undertaken required repairs to the fabric of the buildings in order to insulate foundations and reinforce structures. This restoration work was carried out primarily by the public sector, except for the Riche Café and the Groppi Tearoom.

The Egyptian Minister of Culture's decision, at the beginning of the 1980s, to attribute new cultural and leisure uses to palaces and villas dating from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, following their restoration. Fourteen operations of this kind exist in the city of Cairo which has been enriched with three new libraries, nine museums and two large hotels. The hotels have been installed in the palace that khedive Ismail had built in 1863 for the festivities to inaugurate the Suez Canal, which has now become the Marriot Hotel, and in the palace gardens of Prince Mohamed Ali Tawfiq (1929) on the Isle of Rhoda. The attribution of new functions to old buildings constitutes, in present-day Egypt, a new approach

to the process of conservation management. Even if the number of buildings designated for new uses seems insufficient, each inauguration is an event. This is all the more so as these buildings become spaces and channels for the communication of knowledge, the construction of culture and identity, as well as places for aesthetic contemplation, leisure activities, driving forces for local and regional development, and lastly pretexts for tourist activity and for generating income.

On the cognitive level, there is an important contribution of knowledge concerning little known sites and objects, thanks to inventories,<sup>12</sup> university research,<sup>13</sup> academic publications,<sup>14</sup> publications for the general public<sup>15</sup> and websites that ensure the dissemination of this knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

As regards awareness of the value of this heritage, in addition to the media that play an important role, round-table discussions, local seminars and international conferences also take place.<sup>17</sup>

Through the combination of these actions – appreciation, recognition, awareness, selection and documentation – the links of the management chain for the safeguarding of new 'heritage' are slowly being set in place. However, it is still difficult to speak of heritage in the legal sense of the term, and still less of a coherent and continuous system of administration. The Supreme Council of Antiquities, which is supposed to be the only competent authority for managing this heritage, has not been officially entrusted with this task as it has neither the financial nor the human resources for ensuring the protection, restoration and

maintenance of these sites and objects. This series of initiatives is particularly revealing of a sociocultural change linked to the desire for the discovery and appropriation of universal civilization for which René Maheu, the former Director-General of UNESCO, expressed an ardent desire. It is now up to the men and women who adhere to representations of modernity to bring into play the necessary funds to safeguard a heritage which can contribute to the construction of an identity common to all the peoples of the Mediterranean basin.

## NOTES

1. A seminar organized in Cairo by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture within the framework of a series of seminars on *Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World*, Cairo, November 1984.
2. Cf. Robert Ilbert, 'Heliopolis: Colonial Enterprise and Town Planning Succes', in the Agha Khan Award for Architecture, Proceedings of the Conference *The Expanding Metropolis. Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo*, pp. 36–42.
3. An opinion expressed by the renowned Egyptian architect, Hassan Fathi, during the seminar.
4. Cf. 'Citizens' Participation in the Renovation of the Old Town', Goethe Institute Cairo, Faculty of Fine Arts, Cairo, 1977.
5. The huge success of the first television soap opera on the evolution of society in a neighbourhood of Cairo (Helmeya Al Guadida), built towards the end of the nineteenth century, encouraged the producers to launch a series of soap operas on the social life of yesteryear in the various neighbourhoods of Cairo such as Garden City, Azbakeya, Emad El Dine Street and Zizizinia in Alexandria.
6. Cyntia Myntti, *Paris along the Nile: Architecture in Cairo from the Belle Epoque*, Cairo, The American University in Cairo Press, a publication which went out of print after only several months, following an initial printing of 3,000 copies. See also Randa Chaath, *Sous un seul ciel, le Caire (Under One Sky, Cairo)*, Cairo, 2004.
7. Five photography exhibitions were organized between 2000 and 2004, by the IRD and the University of Cairo, two of which were in modern city centre cafés and hotels.
8. Two new novels, which appeared respectively in 2002 and 2003, focus on society in the city centre of Cairo: Alala Al Aswani, *Omarat Yaacoubian*, Merit, Cairo, 2002 and Radwa Achour, *Ket'a men Oropa (A part of Europe)*, Dar al Chorouk, Cairo, 2003.
9. It concerns the following decrees: 300 from 1993, 244 from 1994, 238 from 1996, 118 from 1997, 463 from 1998 and the military ruling of 1998.
10. *Les monuments islamiques et coptes enregistrés depuis 1982 au Grand Caire (The Islamic and Coptic Monuments Recorded in Greater Cairo since 1982)*, Cairo, Centre de Recherche Archéologique de la Citadelle, 2000.
11. Up until 1983, Egyptian legislation on antiquity only took into account buildings built before the end of Khedive Ismail's reign (1879); law 117 of 1983, currently in effect, provides waivers for buildings built at a later date.
12. Three inventories for Cairo, one for Alexandria, one for the city of Mansoura: an inventory for Port Saïd is in progress.
13. The most significant is HERCOMANES, (Heritage Conservation and Management in Egypt and Syria), which was launched in 1999 and financed by the European Commission and co-ordinated by the IRD. See the website: <http://www.hercomanes.com/>.
14. Mohamed Scharabi, *Kairo, Stadt und Architektur im Zeitalter des europäischen Kolonialismus*, Wasmuth, Germany, 1989, 412 pp. A pioneering work that was followed by four local publications in English and Arabic: Tarek Saqr, *Early Twentieth-century Islamic Architecture in Cairo*, Cairo, AUCP, 1993; Nihal Tamraz, *Nineteenth-century Cairene Houses and Palaces*, AUCP, Cairo, 1994; Soheir Hawas, *Khedivian Cairo, Identification and Documentation of Urban-Architecture in Downtown Cairo*, in Arabic, author's edition, Cairo, 2002.
15. 'Restoring Cairo', *Masr Al Mahroussa*, No. 17, February 2002, under the direction of Galila El Kadi and Sahar Attéya, 128 pp., maps and photos, Cairo, 2002. In Arabic and English.
16. The websites of Samir Ra'fat, [egy.com](http://egy.com) and the site of the Hercomanes programme, <http://www.hercomanes.com/>.
17. An international conference organized by the IRD and sponsored by the EC and the WHC of UNESCO, on *Shared Mediterranean Heritage*, is scheduled in Alexandria for 29–31 March 2005.

# | Insights into Current Conservation Practices

by Saleh Lamei

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Cairo is distinguished from other Islamic capitals by the existence of a rich architectural heritage built during the various Islamic reigns in Egypt since the Arab Invasion in A.H. 20/A.D. 622.

Throughout the numerous and various ages in Egypt, such as the reigns of the Umayyads, ‘Abbāsīds, Ṭulunīds, Ikhshīds, Fāṭimīds, Mamelukes and ultimately the Ottomans, Egyptian Islamic architecture retained its own personality and components. This is particularly evident in the era of the Mamelukes, especially that of the Circassian Mamelukes, where the architect was fully aware of the methods for forming façades and spaces, as well as the notion of the human scale in design, whether in buildings or streets. Moreover, the architect was fully familiar with the visual aspects of buildings and emphasized their elements and their interaction with surrounding streets and spaces.

Many medieval Arab and foreign travellers praised the beauty of buildings in Cairo as well as its well-organized streets. Others complained of the crowds in the principal thoroughfare which





64. Drawing by Owen Carter representing Barquq Madrasa and Muhammad 'Ali Sabil.

extends from an-Naşr Gate and al-Futuh Gate to Zuwaila Gate, from the north of Cairo to the south (al-Mu'izzlidīnallāh street at present). This street was the main artery for economic and trade activities and, consequently, a centre of religious activity as well. During the nineteenth century, the state became aware of the serious danger which threatened this precious heritage. A Committee for the Preservation of the Monuments of Arab Art was formed at the end of 1881. Initial legislation for the protection of antiquities was issued in 1883. The committee, in keeping with prevailing concepts, carried out restoration of some historic buildings, with special concern for the buildings themselves rather than the area surrounding them. The

Department of Antiquities, as well as the Egyptian Organization for Antiquities, made some restorations, but did not prevent the continuous deterioration of historic buildings, some of which disappeared. The register issued in 1951 listed the number of historic buildings at 622. In the last forty years about eighty have been lost and those remaining have deteriorated. Recently, the Supreme Council of Antiquities has begun a major campaign to safeguard the historic city.

### Causes of deterioration

There are various causes of deterioration. First of all, it has been stated that public awareness of antiquities is virtually non-existent. The lack of appreciation of the technical, historical and artistic values of the area and buildings may be due to the general feeling that the builders of the monuments never truly belonged to the native land. However, the social and poor economic conditions of the inhabitants of the area are major reasons for this lack of awareness. Furthermore, the buildings, left unused, do not directly benefit the inhabitants and this state of affairs does not encourage residents to maintain them or refrain from throwing waste water and garbage, and from sticking posters on walls.

Accumulated dust on the ceilings and walls causes damage to paintings and decorations, and decay formed on the walls results in chemical weathering. Contaminated and polluted air in the area, due to modern means of transport, and the establishment of new industries inside or near the area have caused serious damage to stonework. There are changing groundwater levels due to an altered irrigation system. The drinking water

© Hay, R.: Illustrations of Cairo. London, 1840

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network is in very poor condition and the sewage disposal system is worn out. Humidity is infiltrating into the walls and ceilings, due to groundwater and rain, as well as to the lack of regular effective maintenance. Heavy vibrations caused by vehicles affect the surface foundations of historic buildings. Dampness within the walls, caused by surface water, can rise to about six metres by capillary action, depending on the wall's thickness as well as the properties of the building materials. Water activates the salt content which moves to the wall surface, leaving behind salt crystals after evaporation. These crystals cause great pressure under the outer layer, damaging the stonework. Furthermore, the use of Portland cement causes some damage as it contains not only calcium and aluminium silicates but also calcium sulphate and some alkaline salts (the alkali content of normal cement is as high as 2 per cent). Therefore, low alkali, low sulphate cements should be specified for mortar or concrete to be used in contact with old materials. In historic Cairo, the soil is landfill and according to our soil investigation it varies between 5 m to 7 m in height, from street level. What is more, chemical analysis of surface water indicates a high percentage of  $\text{SO}_3$  as well as  $\text{NaCl}$ .<sup>1</sup> The salination of Egyptian soil was confirmed by historians: Ibn Faḍlallah al-'Umarī (d. 749/1349), Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418), as well as the Ottoman traveller, Ewliya Celebi, in the seventeenth century, who drew attention to the salinity of well water. All historic buildings have surface foundations, which vary between 3.5 and 4 metres below present street levels. Physical and mechanical tests, as well as chemical analysis of stone samples immersed in surface water, taken from different historic buildings, indicate the poor condition of the

stonework: many wide cracks are filled with clay, with compressive stresses of  $60 \text{ kg/cm}^2$  in wet conditions and  $110 \text{ kg/cm}^2$  in dry conditions, which is very low.

Another factor of the current poor state of conservation of historical buildings is the multiplicity of state departments which supervise historic buildings (some are subject to the Waqf Ministry and others to the Antiquities Organization and Ministry of Education). This results in some inconsistencies in policies and a waste of time in communication between the various governmental bodies. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have put an end to a ten centuries' old tradition of maintenance. Modernity imposed a drastic change on the physical environment and on prevailing aesthetic concepts and values. It has also created a gap between segments of the population and the environment in which they live, which partly accounts for current poor conditions.

Until recently, decisions made in the 1960s regarding the city planning policy resulted in housing great numbers of inhabitants in historic buildings, owing to the collapse of their dilapidated houses. Serious damage has been caused by renting out some historic buildings to the private sector, which has misused them by instituting activities which are incompatible with the original function of the buildings. There is a great number of historic buildings in Cairo but the Supreme Council of Antiquities has limited resources and capabilities. Although a Documentation Centre for Islamic Antiquities exists, some monuments have never been recorded. Present records need to be updated to match international scientific standards.



## Restoration strategies

Restoration was given a specific definition in the Venice Charter (1964).<sup>2</sup> The aim of modern restoration is to reveal the original state within the limits of existing material, differing in that it was



65. The Sabil of the Sultan Qaytbay is restored by CIAH.

once to bring back the original by rebuilding a lost form. Today, the objective of rehabilitation projects should be to identify values (emotional, cultural and use value) in cultural property and to organize these values in order of priority. The essential messages of the historic site will then be respected and ultimately preserved.

The doctrine for analysing, conserving, and restoring the structure of architectural heritage has been formulated in a recent ICOMOS Charter entitled *Principles for the Analysis, Conservation and*

*Structural Restoration of Architectural Heritage* (2003).<sup>3</sup> This new instrument completes the guidelines of the World Heritage Convention that states that systematic monitoring is essential to the ‘*continuous process of observing the conditions of World Heritage sites with periodic reporting on its state of conservation.*’<sup>4</sup> Moreover, rehabilitation projects should comply with the UNESCO Recommendations adopted in Nairobi (1976): ‘*Every historic area and its surroundings should be considered in their totality as a coherent whole whose balance and specific nature depend on the fusion of the parts of which it is composed and which include human activities as much as the buildings, the spatial organization and the surroundings. All valid elements, including human activities, however modest, thus have a significance in relation to the whole which must not be disregarded.*’<sup>5</sup>

Rehabilitation projects should thus pay attention to the relevant historical, socio-economic and cultural issues associated with the site. They should also integrate heritage into the life of the community in order to ensure sustainable development and to match the needs of the inhabitants of an historic town. The social aspect of heritage restoration is clearly expressed in other international instruments, i.e. The Lahore Declaration (1980), the Charter of Historic Towns (1987), the revised Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (1999) and the International Nara Documentation on Authenticity (1994).<sup>6</sup> These principles must enlighten and inform the different phases of restoration work from data gathering and analysis of deterioration to diagnosis, preparation of restoration projects and the formulation of recommendations and treatment measures.

### Public awareness and the search for synergy

The involvement of the public in rehabilitation processes is therefore now widely acknowledged as an essential tool in identifying true needs and priorities. Article 27 of the World Heritage Convention specifies: *'the need to strengthen appreciation and respect of the cultural heritage and undertake to keep the public broadly informed of the danger threatening the heritage and of the activities carried on in pursuance of the Convention.'*

However, efforts are still needed towards increasing public interest in the preservation of cultural heritage through mass media such as press, radio and television, but also through publications and exhibitions. In this campaign for awareness, the public should be given details, such as the scope of works and budget spent or required for any major restoration project. Cultural heritage should also be part of history curricula in schools and ought to be complemented by site visits to familiarize students with their history and civilization. Islamic architectural studies should be included in curricula at the Faculties of Engineering and Arts in order to familiarize engineers with the aesthetic value and visual aspects of traditional urban design. Departments of conservation in the Faculties of Engineering (graduate studies) should be established in order to train engineers for the challenges of deterioration. At the governmental level, a Documentation Centre should be staffed with specialized personnel and should collect and organize all information related to Islamic heritage, such as manuscripts, documents and historical resources available in several departments of the Supreme Council of Antiquities. The capacity

of the engineering department will then be consolidated in order to carry out accurate, comprehensive drawings of the buildings and historic areas with the support of photographs and using modern techniques (photogrammetry and laser scanning). Many buildings have had few drawings made since the last century, during the existence of the Committee for the Preservation of the Monuments of Arab Art.

Established by presidential decree, the new Agency for Conservation of Historic Cairo (*intra* and *extra muros*) should have full authority to preserve, maintain and conserve, not only historic buildings, but also the urban fabric and the urban character and activities of the historic city. It is also important to improve the expertise of contracting companies working in the field of conservation. These companies should be well equipped with conservation architects, architectural conservators, skilled and well trained labour, as well as special machinery. It would be advisable to form an architectural archaeological committee, specialized in Islamic heritage, for the submission of innovative projects in Islamic Cairo. This committee could determine standards and heighten the general appearance of buildings to create a new architecture connected to the Islamic heritage. This should be done with the aim of finding a new urban fabric which can be integrated and harmonized with the earlier one. Such a committee was established in 1973, but without any specialization in heritage, and that is why its effects were intangible and it ceased to exist in 1975.

Issuing a decree which prohibits vehicles and makes all historic areas pedestrian zones (allowing light traffic to serve commercial

buildings in the area at specified times) is regarded by conservationists as one of the important decisions to be taken to preserve such areas. Schools should be established for craftsmen to teach them traditional techniques which were urgently needed during recent restoration work carried out by foreign missions in Islamic Cairo. The training capacity achieved by the handicrafts school at Wakālat al-Ghūrī and Sinnārī house was not sufficient.

There is an urgent need to upgrade the general standard of the whole historic area, rehabilitating the infrastructure of sewers, water supply and electricity, including the improvement of commercial activities and craft industries which should be compatible with the character of the area. Historic buildings should be adapted for appropriate new uses. Shops should be combined with residential buildings in order to maintain the basic feature of the social and economic history of historic Cairo. The development of an adequate tourism should also be one of the major goals of this rehabilitation enterprise with a view to enhancing the distinct quality of the numerous and varied Islamic eras.

A detailed master plan for the conservation of the era with a maintenance programme would significantly help to preserve and ultimately improve the cultural richness and social diversity of the urban fabric. The conservation master plan should address the question of the use of buildings, based on systematic analysis of typology, the condition of buildings and needs, as well as the requirements of the inhabitants. This would strengthen the sustainable use of the existing cultural resources.

Finally, we should ask ourselves the following questions: What is the aim of preserving cultural heritage? How can people become aware of the importance of the task? Is it merely rehabilitation for the sake of preserving historic buildings or renewal of buildings by means of rehabilitation and integrating them into the urban fabric? There is only one answer: historical, social, economic and cultural evidence must be taken into consideration in any rehabilitation project so that heritage is fully integrated with community. This is the only way to ensure urban sustainable development that meets the needs of residents in historic cities.

## | NOTES

1. SO<sub>3</sub> = sulphur oxides and NaCl = sodium chloride.
2. The International Charter for conservation and restoration of monuments and sites (The Venice Charter), ICOMOS, 1964. See: [http://www.international.icomos.org/centre\\_documentation/chartes\\_eng.htm](http://www.international.icomos.org/centre_documentation/chartes_eng.htm)
3. See: [http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/structures\\_e.htm](http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/structures_e.htm)
4. Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, UNESCO, 1972; Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of World Heritage Convention 1999, Article 69 and see also B. Feilden and Jokilehto: *Management Guidelines for World Heritage Sites*, ICCROM, 1993.
5. Recommendations concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas (The Nairobi Declaration), UNESCO, 1976.
6. Statement of Principles Concerning the Conservation of Islamic Architectural Heritage (The Lahore Declaration), UNESCO international symposium, 1980; Charter on the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas (The Washington Charter) ICOMOS, 1987. All Charters in full text are available at [http://www.international.icomos.org/centre\\_documentation/chartes\\_eng.htm](http://www.international.icomos.org/centre_documentation/chartes_eng.htm)

# | DIGITAL HERITAGE NEWS

## Sustainable engagement in digital heritage – The challenges of learning environments for heritage institutions

by *Namir Anani*

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With the emergence of the knowledge society in today's current environment of information globalization, enhancing the public's involvement in knowledge discovery and creation is pivotal to creating a sustainable engagement in digital heritage. The rate at which the public is using new technologies in everyday life is creating an unprecedented opportunity for memory institutions; it suggests that personalized and convenient, content-rich online services will help museums further impassion and engage the public in the coming years.

Time is becoming a scarce commodity and, as a result, the online public is favouring flexible and convenient access to technology services that facilitate regular tasks and cater to specific user requirements. This is evident in the substantial growth of online, self-serve options provided by banking, commerce, communications, and other industries. The public's role online is also changing from that of passive recipient to that of creator and distributor of content. The popularity of 'blogs,' which have developed into a means of content creation, sharing, and cultural commentary, is testimony to the changing dimension of civic participation and self-expression in the digital environment. Several studies suggest that the public searching for knowledge and learning opportunities can be classified as follows:

- Lifelong learners search for answers to specific questions for the purposes of general knowledge and enrichment.
- Discovery learners search not necessarily for answers to specific questions, but for the purposes of general knowledge and enjoyment.
- Formal learners access formal learning settings and create knowledge for formal educational purposes.
- Skill learners access information to create knowledge pertinent to their careers and working environments.

Accordingly, personalized learning tailored to learners' continuously changing requirements is becoming a widely accepted educational model. The emergence of virtual

learning environments as a solution to personalized learning is a subject of much discussion. Learning object definitions and standards, technology know-how, analysis of teacher and student needs, and enabling business models remain as challenges going forward.

At a primary level, a key task of museums is to transmit knowledge to society. The current societal and technological changes highlighted above suggest that increasing this engagement requires a careful analysis of the services currently offered by museums, leading to enhanced online interactivity and participation by the public. Online services that will further increase the public interest in the original objects, include:

- pre-visit experiences (web tutorials) that provide interactive simulations and presentations to increase public interest in and preparation for knowledge discovery surrounding a particular exhibit or museum;
- post-visit online discussion forums to provide continued knowledge discovery and advancement concerning particular exhibits or museums, and to further engage the public in other heritage content or institutions;
- virtual learning environments to share research and create further knowledge; and,
- interactive e-workshops for professionals and the public.

Additionally, as people interact with the above services, their feedback, combined with online tracking and metrics, will allow museums to better respond to the evolving needs of the public and make better use of the virtual medium. In society museums promote cultural expression and heritage knowledge: these are essential ingredients to increasing interactions between people and weaving a stronger social fabric. The ability of heritage institutions to rapidly embrace current trends and amplify their role in the emerging knowledge and services on-demand society is crucial. Their new mandate in knowledge society is to provide societies with an opportunity to imagine and shape the future.