

This month's offerings will be a bit sparse. Things in Egypt are still in an uproar, with uncertainty everywhere. One day everything is said to be normal...the next day there are strikes and terrible pronouncements. It is said that all foreign missions will be working this winter, but there are no permits being issued. What to do?

As a result, there are not all that many stories about Egypt in the news lately, but here are a few that the CyberScribe found that may be of interest. As before, the CyberScribe will NOT comment on events concerning individuals involved in the problems of Egypt's government. Everything is too fluid, and to comment would only be spreading rumors.

Having said that, it is of great interest to note that not only is there chaos in the new Ministry of Antiquities and the Supreme Council of Antiquities, the whole shebang is incredibly deep in debt! In the article below, it states that the Antiquities Departments are in debt to the tune of £E 1.2 BILLION pounds (about US\$204 million)...money it neither has, nor has the means to acquire at this time.

In addition, the antiquities inspectors and archaeologists are still angrily protesting broken promises and few full time jobs.

It would appear that in his zeal and exuberance, Zahi Hawass committed Egypt to vast projects that were without any means of being funded. The deficit is staggering! Here is a statement concerning this mess, published in Egypt's 'Al-Ahram Online', an unimpeachable source for most items of archaeological import in Egypt (<http://tiny.cc/yur5o>) (abbreviated somewhat for space reasons):

'Archaeologists are still protesting at the front entrances of archaeological sites, and archaeological work is at a stalemate despite the appointment of a new head to hold Egypt's antiquities portfolio.

'Early this week Prime Minister Essam Sharaf appointed Mustafa Amin as the new secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) following the resignation of Mohamed Abdel-Fattah, who had held the post of head of Egypt's antiquities office for less than six weeks.

'Abdel-F Fattah accused Egypt of abandoning its antiquities sector and leaving it in a desperate state, despite what archaeology had done for the

country over the years. He went on to say that the SCA was in debt to the tune of LE750 million to construction companies responsible for restoration work at several sites. It had also borrowed LE61 million from banks to pay the salaries of SCA employees, in addition to a further LE350 million from the government, which will increase to LE400 million after the addition of benefits.

"How can I pay all these debts?" Abdel-Fattah asks. "I don't even have enough money to pay for the restoration work and the delayed salaries."

'Amin, the SCA's new head, is the former director of the Islamic and Coptic Antiquities Department. On Sunday, his first day in office, he met protesters who had been sitting at the front doors of the SCA's Abbasiya building for four days in the hope of reaching a conclusion and ending the sit-in. During the meeting, Amin told the protesters that he and the prime minister agreed that it was necessary to seek an immediate solution by giving permanent appointments to all those temporary SCA staff that had been in the job for more than three years.

'As a first step, Amin told the Weekly, 4,065 temporary staff members would be appointed immediately, and this would continue until all 12,000 temporary employees were given secure appointments.

'At first it appeared that the protesters were appeased by these assurances, but two hours after the meeting 200 of them were again picketing the front entrance of the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square and demanding a quick solution. Ahmed Kamel, a technical director at the museums section, said the latest protest was intended to put more pressure on the government to hold to its promises and meet the protesters' demands.

'Hassan Abdel-Salam, one of the protesters, told the Weekly that the protest was continuing because they would not believe any promises until they materialized. "I have been a temporary employee in the SCA organization for 10 years, and nothing has solved the problem in spite of several promises to appoint me to the permanent staff," Abdel-Salam told the Weekly. He said that since the post-revolutionary Ministry of State for Antiquities reverted to the SCA four months ago, every secretary-general had promised to appoint them. "Three secretary-generals now in four months, and nothing has happened," Abdel-Salam said angrily.'

And speaking of Zahi Hawass, a small item with a Texas twist appeared recently concerning a proposed speaking engagement for Hawass at Midland College. It asks or implies whether Hawass is in a sort of arrest, unable to legally leave Egypt? Read on in the 'My West Texas' account (<http://tiny.cc/3194p>):

'Due to unrest in Egypt, Zahi Hawass' Oct. 6 lecture at Midland College has been canceled.

'The Egyptian archaeologist, former Minister of State for Antiquities Affairs and subject of the reality TV show Chasing Mummies will not be allowed to leave Egypt. He was scheduled to speak as part of the college's Davidson Distinguished Lecture Series.

"He went to the Egyptian government to try and get permission to come to Texas and they would not allow him to come out of the country," said Rebecca Bell, dean of community relations and special events.'

An item that has direct relationship to the founding of our ARCE Chapter is the huge standing statue of Ramesses II outside the glass pyramid at Memphis, Tennessee. It seems that the glass pyramid is to go from being a cultural center...to being a Bass Pro shop. It stands outside the Pyramid Arena, a sports arena in downtown Memphis on the banks of the Mississippi which is no longer in use as a sports venue and will instead be the locus of a new Bass Pro Shops megastore (plus other retail outlets, office space, even a river museum). There are some very vexing problems raised by the suggestion of moving the statue...at least one of them is that there is a treaty arrangement demanding that he stay.

Here, in a source called 'Commercial Appeal (<http://tiny.cc/0cdh3>) (abbreviated somewhat) which summarized the problems:



‘As Memphis City Council members debated Tuesday about what to do with the 25-foot statue of Ramesses the Great that stands in front of The Pyramid, a decades-old pact Memphis made with the nation of Egypt was recalled.

‘Bass Pro Shops plans to turn the vacant Pyramid sports arena into a megastore, and both the city and the company agree that the massive likeness of the ancient ruler of Egypt isn't a good fit for the property.

‘Council Member Joe Brown brought former Memphis mayor Dick Hackett to the Housing and Community Development Committee meeting to talk about the statue's history and the agreement governing its use. Also present was Glen Campbell, the former head of the Wonders series, a cultural program that brought artifacts from around the globe to Memphis for display.

‘Hackett explained that there were actually two statues: an original limestone statue and the replica now in Memphis. Campbell said that he, Hackett and the rest of Memphis delegation first saw the original statue in the Egyptian city called Memphis in 1986. It was lying in a ditch in about three big pieces and about a thousand smaller pieces.

‘So the Memphis delegation agreed to restore the statue with funds from the Coca-Cola corporation, display it in Memphis and send it back to Egypt when they were done. They also won agreement to create a fiberglass

replica to keep in the city. But there were conditions. The Americans had to agree to destroy the mold used to make the statue and send the Egyptians a videotape of the destruction, Campbell said.

‘And there were stipulations that are relevant to the current discussion: They also had to agree to keep the statue on public display somewhere in the city of Memphis, not to sell it and not to give it away, Campbell said.

‘He said that the parties to the agreement were the city of Memphis and the Egyptian antiquities organization and that longtime Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and Hackett signed the document. Campbell said he doesn't know where the document is now.

‘It's unclear that Egypt would be in a position to enforce the agreement if it didn't approve of what Memphis did with the statue because a revolution this spring overthrew Mubarak's authoritarian government.’

The next item on the agenda relates to a common modern problem...how to write down ancient dates. The old ‘BC’ and ‘AD’ are somewhat politically incorrect, being Christian originated, in a multi-religious world. Some have decided to replace these old standbys with these new designations...‘BCE’ and ‘CE’.

What difference does it make? Probably not much, but some folks are quite up tight about the changeover. In fact that grand old source, the BBC, suggested that ‘BC’ and ‘AD’ no longer be used. It ignited a firestorm. Here, in ‘TimesOn Line’ (<http://tiny.cc/uxl09>) you will find a summary and an explanation (condensed somewhat):



‘Let's get this quite straight: the BBC has not banned the use of BC and AD, in favor of the religiously neutral BCE and CE.

“The Corporation has replaced the familiar Anno Domini (the year of Our Lord) and Before Christ with the obscure terms Common Era and Before Common Era” intoned the Daily Mail, while giving a hearty pat on the back to the almost unknown medieval monk, Dionysius Exiguus ("Little Dennis") who invented the BC/AD system. If some people find the BCE/CE terminology a bit obscure, that is nothing compared with the obscurity of Dionysius Exiguus -- who has been enjoying a totally unexpected 5 minutes of fame.

‘No, the BBC hasn't banned BC and AD. So far as I can see, various departments within the organization have advised that BCE and CE may sometimes be more appropriate for a multi-cultural/multi-faith audience. In my world CE and BCE have been around for years, and often used instead of

BC and AD. I would say that some 50% of academic articles in Ancient History now use CE and BCE, more in the USA. And it hasn't brought the Christian church down -- and certainly not in America.

'The issues here are both clear AND tricky. First BC and AD are certainly totally embedded in a Christian worldview, though that may be conveniently concealed beneath the standard abbreviations. In fact, Dionysius did not invent the shorthand "BC" and "AD" in the shortened form, he invented the whole principle of arranging time around the birth of Jesus Christ.

'Imagine if every newsreader spelled it out in full "England's World cup victory, In the year of our Lord 1966 . . ." or whatever. Then there really would be howls of protest, some of them from the very same people who are now objecting to the rumored demise of BC and AD. Dionysius was super successful to the extent that in most circumstances in the west it is now impossible to imagine unpicking the Christian calendar. (Geologists have done it up to a point with BP, "Before Present" -- because with the time periods they are dealing with the line drawn 2000 years ago doesn't matter very much.)

'My particular problem with CE and BCE is rather different though. It's an oral one. If you lecture, then BC and AD are great, as it is so easy for your audience to "hear" the difference. If you use CE and BCE when you are speaking you are always having to over-enunciate to make sure they get the point and the difference. And even then, many a hapless undergraduate fails to register, and gets Nero before Julius Caesar.'

Okay, no more controversy for a while, states the CyberScribe. The next item is a little bit about the ancient turquoise mines in the Sinai...sites used by ancient Egypt and other early cultures. The site is more or less forgotten today, but there is still much to learn here. A source called 'Almasry Alyoum' (<http://tiny.cc/t6527>) gives a nice (abbreviated here) description of the area:



Top of Form



"His majesty of this God has sent the God's treasurer, the assistant and leader of the troupe, Her-Wer-Re, to the mining lands and he said: there is abundant turquoise in the hill."

‘With these words, Chief Her-Wer-Re began documenting the work of his mining expedition sent by the pharaoh (his majesty of this God) to Serabit al-Khadem in South Sinai during the Middle Kingdom Period (ca. 2055-1985 BC). In the inscriptions on his stele at the mine, he boasts of the success of his expedition despite rumors that turquoise ore might be lacking at that particular time of year: "My expedition returned complete in its entirety ... I broke off in the first month of summer, bringing my precious stone ... I accomplished my work with great success without a voice being raised against my work, which I have done excellently."

‘Sinai is often referred to in Arabic as “Ard Al-Fayrouz” (the land of turquoise) after its ancient Egyptian name "Ta Mefkat" or “Khetyou Mefkat”, which means turquoise terraces. Minerals were of great use in ancient times - for making royal jewelry and divine offerings, and more importantly for mummy ornaments and amulets, encouraging pharaohs since the Early Dynastic Period (ca. 3050-2890 BC) to send mining expeditions to extract turquoise and copper from South Sinai.

‘Wadi Maghara, Wadi Kharig, Bir Nasb and Serabit al-Khadem were among the premium mining spots in antiquity, and visiting them today offers a different experience for history and archaeology aficionados than the temples and tombs of the Nile Valley and Delta, which reflect ancient Egyptians’ beliefs in the afterlife.

‘The chief of the expedition would oversee documentation efforts: wall carvings at the mine’s entrance state the date of the expedition, the name of the chief and the group’s achievements. At Serabit al-Khadem, inscription number 56 reads: "Gallery (mine) has been opened by Chief Sanofret and named ‘Admiring the Beauty of Hathor.’” Other inscriptions at mining sites emphasize the power of the pharaoh over regions distant from the ruling capital in the Nile Valley. In Wadi Maghara, the wall carvings executed by miners show a typical Early Dynastic scene of the pharaoh smiting a man with a mace head.

‘Because ancient Egyptians tended to link all their life activities to religion, the miners were also keen on offering chapels and stelae (stone slabs or columns bearing commemorative inscriptions) to the local gods.

‘The site of Serabit al-Khadem still preserves the remains of the largest ancient Egyptian temple in the Sinai Peninsula. Located on an elevation, almost 800 meters above sea level, the temple is built of dozens of stelae inscribed by the chiefs of ancient expeditions from both the Middle and New

Kingdoms (ca. 1550-1295 BC) to honor Hathor. It is surrounded by ancient mining caves.

‘Miners also carved hundreds of bits of graffiti en route to the mines. The actual archaeological spot of Rod al-'Air still acts as a resting point for today's visitors on the way up to Serabit al-Khadem, just as it did for ancient miners. While resting, one can see graffiti of boats, animals and mining tools.

“As an archaeologist who has worked at the area, I think that looking at the archaeological site as stones, inscriptions and statues is a very colonial way of dealing with it, for it reduces its value to a spectacle for tourists and the elite, while it should be seen as part of the region’s local heritage and social history,” says Monica Hanna, a community archaeologist/researcher at the University of Berlin, who has also worked at Serabit al-Khadem.

‘Although not heavily practiced nowadays, extracting turquoise ("tarkiz" in the local dialect) remains a local secret. It is very common in South Sinai, especially around the ancient mines, to find some inhabitants with small turquoise stones for sale. Although these vendors love to chat about everything, they will never mention details about how and where they extract their turquoise. Still, visitors tend to come back with a beautiful blue-green piece of turquoise from these special spots of the blessed land of Sinai.’

And let’s finish with a few items which are just a bit odd. The first involves an amazing house that supermodel Naomi Campbell and her Russian husband Vladislav Doronin plan to build on a beautiful Turkish island. Several sites are on the Internet with detailed blueprints, and especially, plans of the intensive environmentally sensitive house systems. The details are in a source called ‘Almasry Alyoum (<http://tiny.cc/t6527>), and there are spectacular artists representations of the finished house...a house that from above looks like the Eye of Horus! Read on (abbreviated somewhat):

‘They say that Sedir Island is one of the most beautiful places in the world: Cleopatra Beach, considered at the time by Forbes magazine as the most beautiful beach in the world.





‘In this place of memories Roman, Spanish architect Luis de Garrido (Talavera de la Reina, 1967) built the mansion where the Russian tycoon Vladislav Doronin and his wife, the former British supermodel, Naomi Campbell, plans to spend his last days.

‘The main quality of the future mansion Naomi Campbell and her tycoon husband, enriched by the hot real estate sector booming in Russian, is to be eco-sufficient and look like the eye of Horus, according to the wishes of the model, an admirer of Egyptian culture . The eye of Horus is the symbol of protection, the real power and health.

‘As contained in the newsletter for Friends Culture published by the Dutch group EBT, Campbell and Doronin live in a house with a glass dome designed to allow the integration of bioclimatic elements. The dome of various heights will be topped with glazed glass and steel and will serve as natural heating and allow sufficient light to enter the interior vegetation decorate the rooms.

‘The Mediterranean mansion, 25 rooms and five lounges, will collect rainwater and reuse wastewater and grey water. There will also be solar panels and a geothermal heating system to last a generation.

‘Rainwater is also collected for use (although Naomi only drinks Evian) as a biological system is responsible for wastewater treatment.’

And lastly, another story with a Texas connection...a grand mansion with a media room designed to have an overpowering presence of ancient Egypt. The site is Montgomery, Texas, a town on the edges of Lake Conroy, about 50 miles north of Houston. The scarab in the photo was carved by a movie set maker from a huge block of styrofoam. Nothing more needs to be said, check out this report from ‘Houston Culture Map’ (<http://tiny.cc/2b8eb>)...read on:



The scarab is meant to serve as the focal point in the home theater's design

Jane Page Design Group has been recognized by Residential Design + Build magazine's Design Excellence Awards. The results, which were presented in the July/August 2011 issue, revealed that the Houston-based firm won in

two categories: Custom Home (6,000 to 6,999 square-foot) and Media Room.



‘The 6,500-sq.-ft. residence in Kingwood might pass for a scene in a glossy magazine advertisement. The home design, entitled "A Gracious Estate," is a gilded fusion of Greek, English and French architecture styles, injected with "Southern charm."

‘The media room caught our eye. It's difficult to overlook because, well, it's Egyptian-themed. Hieroglyphic murals line the walls and a giant scarab clings to the ceiling.



‘But it was the 400-sq.-ft. media room in a Montgomery, Texas home that caught our eye. It's difficult to overlook because, well, it's Egyptian-themed. Hieroglyphic murals line the walls, the floor is a deep blue carpet patterned with ancient Egyptian symbols, and golden sphinx statuettes flank the movie screen. A gigantic scarab, carved out of Styrofoam, clings to the ceiling.

‘Would you like to watch a movie in this media room? Or would you be scared of a falling scarab?’

And wouldn't this be fun...a home in an ancient Egyptian 'temple'? The source from the 'Guardian' (<http://tiny.cc/93pzh>) reads as follows:



‘In its heyday, Temple Mill was like William Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience set in stone. A thousand workers, many under 13, toiled 72 hours a week inside this two-acre flax mill. Designed by James Combe, a local engineer, and Joseph Bonomi Junior, and completed in 1843, this industrial-era Egyptian temple, with a 396 ft by 216 ft factory floor attached, is Grade I-listed today.

‘It is also, as the Victorian Society has revealed, one of the 10 most endangered Victorian buildings in the country. It does seem extraordinary that such a wonder should be largely unused and neglected. In 2008, one of its exotic lotus columns collapsed. Here is a monument of the industrial revolution marrying an obsession with Egyptology to what was then the very latest in structural design. While the mill office pays homage to the Temple of Horus at Edfu, the factory floor is set under a vaulted and top-lit roof supported by a forest of cast-iron columns doubling up as drainpipes.

‘Temple Mill is privately owned today. It is surely time for this compelling building to be restored to new and innocent life for everyone to experience.’

That's all for this month, says the CyberScribe. See you next month!

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Where the Heck s It? - October 2011



We all fondly remember how Zahi Hawass had a secret tunnel that led from the bathroom of his Giza office to quite a number of secret and mysterious places, all filled with wonderful stuff he refused to show to anyone.

Well, Zahi is now gone from office and has been replaced by SCA's new secretary general Mohamed Abdel Fatah. Because things in Egypt are always somewhat unstable, Fatah has hired 2000 unemployed Egyptian archaeologists. These valiant men and women are working day and night to construct a new network of secret tunnels for Fatah. Time is of the essence! Here is a secret photo of one segment of the new tunnel complex.

Or do you disagree? If so:

1. Which site in Egypt is this?
2. Where (extremely precisely) was this photograph taken?

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Where The Heck Is It? – September 2011



This lovely temple to the goddess Ra-Bastet, and a beautiful mosque, is a rare surviving photo of the seldom-visited Egyptian city of el-Katraz. Unfortunately, many years ago, this city located near Alexandria, sank suddenly beneath the sea. Now only the tip of the minaret can be seen...and today is used to tie up vessels of the Oxyrhynchus fishing fleet.

Or do you disagree? If so:

1. Where do you think this site was photographed?
Paris
2. When do you think the photograph was taken?
Paris 1867 Exposition