

## CyberScribe 170 - October 2009

Readers of this column have read many stories over the years concerning the Egyptian government's attempts to get certain ancient objects returned to Egypt from the foreign museums who owned them. This was primarily the crusade of Zahi Hawass, and he has had very mixed success in this drive. Some pieces were willingly returned, some returned before he formally asked for them, while other museums thumbed their noses at Hawass and dared him to make them return their pieces.

Recently, Hawass tried a new and spectacular gambit. With maximum press coverage, he made a power play directed initially at the Louvre Museum in Paris, and indirectly at the entire French Egyptological establishment. There were many news sources who reported this move, but this one, from Google, seemed to be the most informative and complete (<http://tiny.cc/1D8Xi>). Shortened a bit for space reasons, the report stated:

"Egypt announced on Wednesday that it has cut all cooperation with France's Louvre Museum until it secures the return of "stolen" Pharaonic antiquities in the latest row involving the exhibits of a major European institution.

"We made the decision to end any cooperation with the Louvre until they return" the works, antiquities chief Zahi Hawass told AFP. He charged that the renowned Paris museum had bought the antiquities in 1980 even though its curators knew they were stolen.

"The purchase of stolen steles is a sign that some museums are prepared to encourage the destruction and theft of Egyptian antiquities," he said.

"French sources said that the antiquities Egypt was demanding were decorative fragments from a tomb in the Valley of the Kings near Luxor. The Louvre said it was open to the idea of returning the works but that the decision was not the museum's alone.

"The process for returning them has been engaged," a member of the Louvre's executive told AFP on condition of anonymity. "But the decision is not for the museum to take because in order to return the works, we would need the agreement of the National Scientific Commission for the Museum Collections of France," he said.

"Egypt's decision to suspend cooperation will affect conferences organized with the museum, as well as work carried out by the Louvre on the Pharaonic necropolis of Saqqara, south of the capital Cairo.

“Hawass said it had been taken two months ago, implying that it had nothing to do with Egyptian unhappiness over the defeat of Culture Minister Faruq Hosni in the race to become the new director of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) last month.”

A few days later, the French museum and the governmental agencies involved caved in...and gave Hawass what he had demanded. Again there were many sources for the follow-up story, but this one, again from Google (<http://tiny.cc/2cUCC>) seemed to best capture the front story and the actions behind the scenes:

“France's culture minister agreed Friday to return painted wall fragments to Egypt after a row over their ownership prompted the country to cut ties with the Louvre Museum. Experts with France's national museum authority met to discuss the painted wall fragments from a 3,200-year-old tomb near the ancient temple city of Luxor, and recommended that France return them, according to an official with the Culture Ministry. The ministry will comply with the recommendation, said the official, who was not authorized to be publicly named according to ministry policy.

“It was not immediately clear when the works would be sent to Egypt.

“Egypt's antiquities chief took his campaign to recover the nation's lost treasures to a new level Wednesday by cutting ties with the Louvre over the artifacts. It was the most aggressive effort yet by Zahi Hawass, Egypt's tough and media savvy chief archaeologist, to reclaim what he says are antiquities stolen from the country and purchased by leading world museums.

“After Hawass' announcement Wednesday, both the Louvre and France's Culture Ministry said they were ready to return the pieces.

“Culture Minister Frederic Mitterrand, who said the items were acquired by the Louvre in "good faith" in 2000 and 2003, had ordered museum experts to meet first to study the issue.

“Hawass' office described the disputed fragments as pieces of a burial fresco showing the nobleman Tetaki's journey to the afterlife, and said thieves chipped them from the walls of the tomb near the Valley of the Kings in the 1980s.”

While this is undoubtedly a win for Hawass, he does not come off unscathed. There is a great deal of animosity recently aimed at him for the way he has acted...and for the possible reasons for his drastic attack on the Louvre.

What caused this new series of attacks on Hawass...suspicion in some quarters that his attacks were pique at the result of the recent failure of Culture Minister Faruq Hosni to win the coveted position of director of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) last month. It has been widely rumored, but nowhere confirmed, that if Hosni left for UNESCO, Hawass would be able to move up to his Ministerial position after Hawass is forced to retire next year.

Hawass denies this, and perhaps it is nothing but rumor, but Hawass has angered many during his term as head of the Supreme Council of Antiquities. The CyberScribe wonders if some of this fuss is a start by some inside Egypt to get revenge on him.

One of the stories with this new slant appeared in 'Bikya Masr' (<http://tiny.cc/7vILT>). Readers should be very aware that much of this is innuendo and little confirmed fact at this point.

"As part of Egypt's chief Egyptologist's effort to have all artifacts returned to the country, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Antiquities, Zahi Hawass, has cut ties with France's Louvre museum, marking the first time one of the outspoken Egyptologist's threats have been followed through. It comes as Hawass continues to put forward an international effort to return the country's pieces that are currently housed abroad.

"His office told Bikya Masr that this is part of the ongoing pressure to "get all pieces back into the country of their origin. It only makes sense that Egypt have what is historically hers."

"Hawass himself issued a statement saying that no archaeological expeditions sponsored by France's premier museum would be allowed to work in Egypt due to the disagreement, which could put dozens of French Egyptologists out of work.

"It is unfortunate that they would do this because the museum administration is different from us workers who continue to do great stuff and deal positively with the Supreme Council of Antiquities," began one French archaeologist, who had planned to spend the winter excavating a site in southern Egypt, but is now uncertain of their future. "I don't know if I will

be allowed to stay, or if I will be forced to leave the country. We have always worked with Egyptians under Hawass' command, so it doesn't make sense."

"Since 2002, when Hawass took over as head of the SCA, he has been pushing hard for foreign museums to return artifacts to Egypt ahead of the construction of a massive new museum near the pyramids.

"Hawass has been in the spotlight of late, after coming under fire from rights groups, who have accused the chief of attempting to silence those whose views differ from his own."

This last paragraph refers to recent attempts on the part of an Egyptian Egyptologist to seek redress against Hawass in the Egyptian courts. The CyberScribe does not know if there is merit in the case, but the story below shows that some in Egypt are no longer afraid of Hawass, now that they know he will be leaving office soon. No doubt as his departure date approaches, Hawass will find himself opposed more and more.

Anyone who has watched Hawass over the years knows that in spite of being confrontational and abrasive, he has done a very great deal of good for Egypt and Egyptology. It is sad to see the vultures starting to circle.

Abbreviated for space reasons, the item below from 'Bikya Masr' (<http://tiny.cc/nguSV>) offers one of the few published signs of this new unrest:

"Since taking charge of Egypt's antiquities in 2003, the Secretary-General has been an ardent campaigner to have all artifacts taken from the sands of the country returned to Egyptian museums, but his efforts, until recently had been unfruitful. The Louvre's decision to return the artifacts, which appear to have been stolen in the 1980s, is a major victory for Hawass.



“But, Hawass has been under fire from a number of sides in recent weeks from rights groups who accuse the man of dictatorial polices concerning debate and scientific findings. The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) called out Hawass for allegedly pushing aside a researcher for stating views that differed from the SCA Secretary-General’s, which led to dozens of investigations, the rights group said in a statement published last Monday.

“Ahmed Saleh, the researcher in question, told ANHRI that he was “alarmed with a series of investigations and announcements from Hawass in newspapers” that the researcher felt were undermining and ridiculing his work.

“ANHRI claims Hawass – who has become the poster-child of Egyptology worldwide with his cowboy hat – launched dozens of press campaigns against Saleh, after “Hawass would not accept a subordinate who is more knowledgeable, even if the researcher’s propositions are proved to be correct and for the good of the Egyptian antiquities.”

“The Louvre and Saleh’s situation highlight the power Hawass has achieved. He is listed as one of the globe’s most influential persons and has taken it to heart, moving with speed to criticize foreign museums and threaten a suspension of ties with Egypt. Until recently, these threats were met with little fanfare, but the French museum’s acquiescence is likely to spur more demands from Egypt.

“The criticism Hawass is receiving is not likely to change the man’s demands in the near future. He has blamed foreign tourists for much of the destruction in and around the Valley of the Kings in Luxor, which has pushed the SCA to make the area an open-museum, forcing aside thousands of Egyptians who have lived near the relics for centuries.

“But, for all his cheerful spirit – Hawass gave his fabled cowboy hat to American President Barack Obama in June – he has his critics, who claim he searches for fame before truly acting as a caretaker.

““He is paid thousands of dollars for each appearance he makes for the Discovery Channel and every time he writes or appears anywhere. The man makes so much money that it is no wonder he tries to curtail other opinions,” an Egyptian researcher told Bikya Masr. The researcher, who works for the SCA, says that “everyone in the council knows what goes on, but he is the boss and his rules go, so there is little we can do.”

“With the Louvre returning stolen artifacts, Hawass is not likely to slow in his quest to have all artifacts, including the Nefertiti bust in Germany and the Rosetta Stone in London returned. Threats are no longer seen as empty, say archaeologists, and the situation is likely to heat up before it calms down.”

Hawass is not the only one with problems stemming from ancient Egyptian artifacts, but the focus of this next item is very different. This news maker is an admitted thief...a thief who had been a museum director charged with responsibility for their protection and conservation. No matter what problems Hawass has encountered, everyone sees him as a man of complete honesty where his precious artifacts are concerned.

While there were a number of reports in the world press, the best and most complete seems to have been this one from the ‘New York Daily News’ (<http://tiny.cc/sHB83>). Not only was this man a disgrace to his profession, he was not even very smart. Read on.

“Barry Stern, then director of Hillwood Art Museum, in 1999, was charged with stealing Egyptian artifacts and trying to auction them off. The ousted head of Long Island University's Hillwood Museum has been charged with stealing ancient Egyptian artifacts from the and trying to auction them at Christie's.



“Barry Stern, 61, has admitted he took the nine pieces - each more than 2,000 years old. A preliminary search of the museum's collection found other pieces missing. An audit of its entire inventory of thousands of antiquities is underway, a criminal complaint filed in Long Island Federal Court charges.

“The stolen artifacts turned up in Christie's auction catalogue in June -- 10 months after Stern's contract was terminated.

“A worker at the museum became suspicious after the auction house faxed an purchase offer to Stern at his old office. Eight of the objects sold for a total of \$51,500. The catalogue listed the pieces as being from "the collection of Barry Stern," the complaint said.

“FBI agent James Wynne said Stern delivered the objects to Christie's for inspection and claimed his parents had acquired them in 1955. After taking the objects, Stern deleted descriptions of the antiquities from the museum's database, authorities said.

““When I told the defendant that it would be an incredible coincidence if the pieces missing from the museum's collection appeared to be virtually

identical to the antiquities he obtained from his parents, he agreed," Wynne said in an affidavit."

An article in 'Newsday' elaborated on the objects themselves:

"Stern is charged with stealing nine models of Egyptian mythical figures made from wood, bronze, quartz and limestone. The FBI says Stern delivered the pieces to Christie's auction house last year in August and September and made \$26,869 on a December sale of five of them. Three more pieces sold for \$16,200 in June, the FBI's complaint said, but Stern had not yet been paid for that transaction."

Last month, the CyberScribe reported on an odd story declaring that there had been a major 'new' discovery, or rather the rediscovery. Trying to be cautious, since the report accompanied an announcement for a new book, the CyberScribe reported a news item state stated:

"An enormous system of caves, chambers and tunnels lies hidden beneath the Pyramids of Giza, according to a British explorer who claims to have found the lost underworld of the pharaohs. Populated by bats and venomous spiders, the underground complex was found in the limestone bedrock beneath the pyramid field at Giza.

"In his memoirs, British consul general Henry Salt recounts how he investigated an underground system of "catacombs" at Giza in 1817 in the company of Italian explorer Giovanni Caviglia,"

"British explorer Andrew Collins said. The document records that the two explored the caves for a distance of "several hundred yards," coming upon four large chambers from which stretched further cave passageways. With the help of British Egyptologist Nigel Skinner-Simpson, Collins reconstructed Salt's exploration on the plateau, eventually locating the entrance to the lost catacombs in an apparently unrecorded tomb west of the Great Pyramid. Indeed, the tomb featured a crack in the rock, which led into a massive natural cave.

"We explored the caves before the air became too thin to continue," said Collins. "Ancient funerary texts clearly allude to the existence of a subterranean world in the vicinity of the Giza pyramids," Collins told Discovery News."

Hmmmm, mused the CyberScribe, time will tell. Caution seems to be demanded here.



Well, the CyberScribe was right...the whole thing is bogus...or sort of bogus. Several sources chimed in to tell the true story...a long neglected, but nonetheless well-known tomb is what was being reported. No huge subterranean cave system at all.

Zahi Hawass (in his blog) stated:

“I have seen that stories are surfacing on the Internet about the discovery of a so-called cave system under the Giza plateau and I would like to set the record straight.



A satellite image of the Giza plateau with the tomb area marked in red.  
[image: SCA]

“This story shows how people who do not have a background in archaeology use the media and the Internet to make headlines. Unfortunately, when people make statements without knowing the history of the subject, they may mislead the public. For example, if a person did not know the history of the Sphinx and the pyramids of Giza, they might say that it came from a lost civilization, but scholars of Egypt have disproved that. When I saw this Internet story about a new discovery at Giza, I knew it was misleading. The article reports that a huge system of tunnels and caves has been found; however, I can say that there is no underground cave complex at this site.

“Scholars have many resources they can consult about sites in Egypt and the finds from them. For example, we have a book the public should know about called Porter and Moss: A Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings, which contains information about all the sites in Egypt and what has been found there, including the site of Giza. If you consult this resource, it will tell you that this “cave” is a rock-cut tomb that was found and opened in 1816-1817 by Henry Salt. Salt was the British consul in Egypt, not an archaeologist, who worked with Giovanni Caviglia to discover this tomb. When they explored it, they called it a catacomb because it contains some tunnels and corridors cut deep into the rock. Anyone who enters this tomb may feel they are in a maze corridor because of the multiple tunnels, and it seems more than its 35 meters long. Henry Salt and Caviglia noticed that the structure was similar to catacombs known from the Graeco-Roman Period. Years later, Howard Vyse and John Shae Perring came to examine the rock cut tomb. It has also recently been re-explored by my office, the Supreme Council of Antiquities.

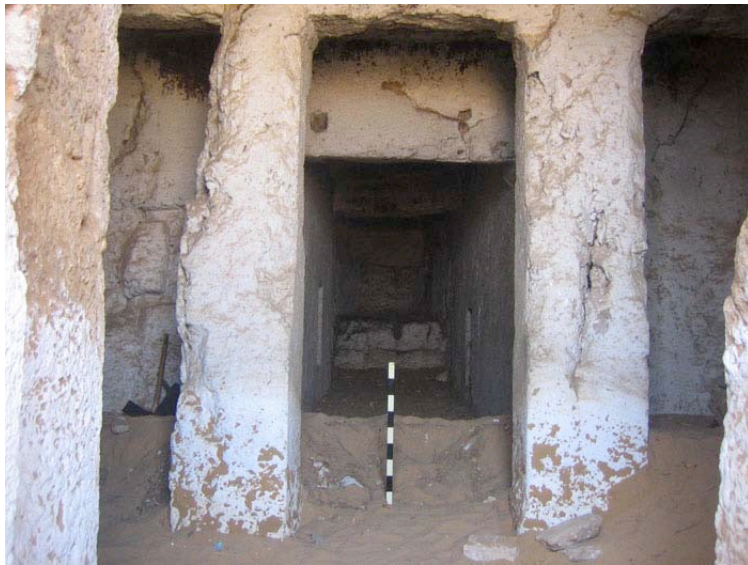


Entrance of the tomb during recent SCA excavation, with the pyramid of Khafre in the background. [photo: SCA]

“Andrew Collins and Nigel Skinner-Simpson came to Egypt in order to rediscover the tomb. They thought that they were the first to fully explore the tomb although it had been found almost two centuries ago and has been explored and reported by many scholars. This rock-cut tomb is about 150



meters from my excavation in the western field and extends from north to south with the entrance in the north. About 3.2 meters high, the entrance leads south into the front hall, shaped like an inverted T. From there two halls are visible, one to the right and one to the left. The left leads to a big room cut into the rock, about 6 meters long, which contained Latin inscriptions on the ceiling, showing that this tomb has been opened throughout the ages. To the right there is another square hole cut into the rock, which leads to a descending passage filled with sand, and contains pottery sherds, bones and other artifacts. There are other passageways cut into the rock from the main corridors, but these are short tunnels.



The first hall of the tomb during the recent SCA excavations. [photo: SCA]

“I hope people who wish to learn more about the Giza tombs will consult academic sources, for example books published by scholars such as myself and not rely on unsupported Internet accounts.”

Zahi Hawass is exactly right on these points, and to further make the story clear, Peter der Manuelian, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, gave the clearest possible rebuttal...from the great archives of his museum. He stated (shortened for space reasons):

“Recently Andrew Collins and Nigel Skinner-Simpson have been in the press concerning “newly discovered” caves and catacombs underneath the Giza plateau. An informative short blog entry by Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of the SCA, has also recently appeared. Dr. Hawass sets the record straight, and indicates the location of the tomb in question, an undecorated rock-cut series of rooms west of the pyramids and the Western Cemetery (see fig. 1; to zoom in on this Quickbird satellite image on the Giza Web site, click here).



Figure 1. Quickbird satellite image of the Giza plateau, showing the location (marked in red) of the tomb in question (January 5, 2009).

“Members of the Harvard University-Boston Museum of Fine Arts Expedition, directed by George Reisner, were indeed aware of the tomb in question during the first half of the 20th century. It lies about 160 meters north of “Harvard Camp,” as the Expedition’s dig house was then called. The tomb is the central one of three rock-cut structures in the cliff, numbered from east to west by the Expedition as NC1 (for “North Cliff”), NC2, and NC3. In fact, Reisner designated NC2 as the air raid shelter for his Egyptian workmen during World War II. (Reisner himself and other crew-members used tombs on the east side of the Great Pyramid when the air raid sirens sounded.) I

recently visited the area with two sons, now in their 70s, of one of Reisner's foremen (see fig. 2).



Figure 2. The facade of rock-cut tomb NC2, looking south (Peter Der Manuelian, January 16, 2006; PDM\_06228).

“The Harvard-MFA Expedition also produced preliminary plans of these North Cliff tombs. Tomb NC2 does not yet have an individual tomb record on the Giza Archives Project Web site, but it will eventually, as will its companions NC1 and NC3. In the meantime, one archaeological drawing at the MFA in Boston, by Expedition draftsman Alexander Floroff, is dated April 29, 1939. The inked version of this pencil drawing (figure 4 below) shows the façade on NC2, the pillared chamber behind, and the long corridor extending further to the south.



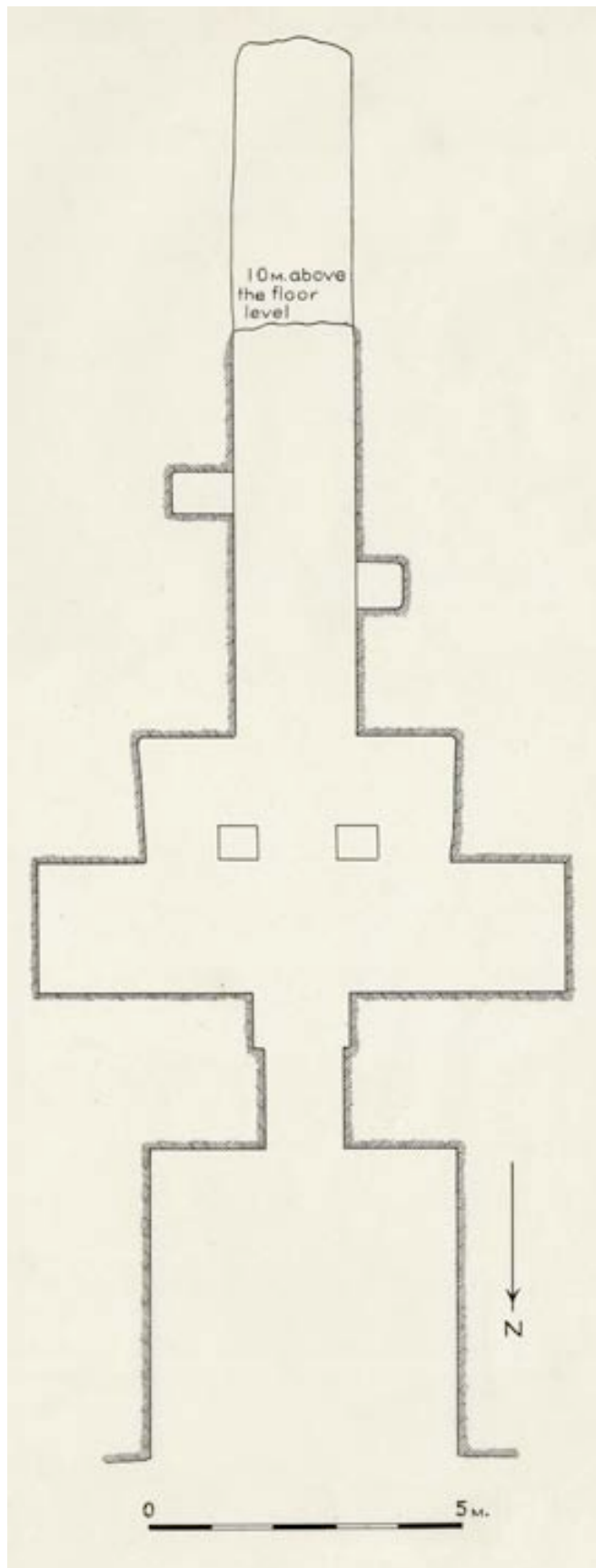


Figure 4. Plan of rock-cut tomb NC2 by Nicholas Melnikoff (1939). Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

“A new clue as to the possible original date of this rock-cut tomb is provided by a pencil note added to the inked version of this plan, drawn by Nicholas Melnikoff. It is written in the hand of MFA Egyptologist William Stevenson Smith, and notes: “Rock cut tombs due north of Harvard Camp. Used as air raid shelters during War. In 1930 I saw traces of painting on columns in central one. Had the idea that this was an 18th Dyn. tomb or N.K. W[illiam] S[tevenson] S[mith] 1946” (see fig. 5 below).

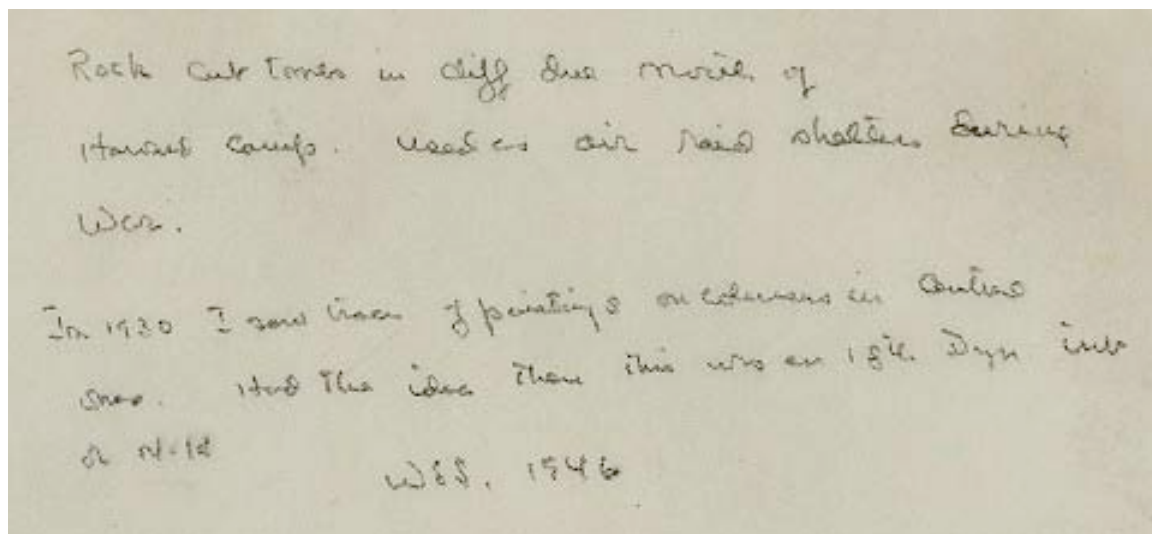


Figure 5. Handwritten notation by William Stevenson Smith added to drawings of tombs NC1, NC2, and NC3 (1946). Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

“Old plans and notes such as these indicate how valuable archaeological archives can be in reconstructing the history of the Giza Plateau. In fact, we are preparing about 5,000 additional archaeological drawings from the MFA for the Giza Web site before the end of 2009. And more documents, from our partner institutions in Berkeley, Berlin, Cairo, Hildesheim, Leipzig, Philadelphia, Turin, and Vienna, are on the way. Our work is an international collaboration that is steadily growing to cover the entire Giza Necropolis, not just the Harvard-MFA Expedition concession.”

On a somewhat lighter note, although it does involve a tragedy for some Egyptian families...here is another take on the ‘Curse of the Pharaohs’ that appeared in a German news source, ‘Die Presse’. Note, the article was translated by the CyberScribe, and while it is believed to be correct, you can always read the original source (<http://tiny.cc/No1rL>).

“The men had dug in the cellar of a house for Pharaonic gold, when the pit collapsed. It was attributed to the "Curse of the Pharaohs". Their greed for the gold decoration and the statues of the Pharaoh cost six Egyptians their life. Within an illicit excavation in a house near the pyramids of Giza at Cairo, a wall collapsed. The soil separated and fell into an eight meter deep hole which the men had dug. The Egyptians, who had been hired by the tenant of the house, suffocated in the earth mass. The Cairo daily paper "Al-Masri Al-Yom" reported Tuesday that police had been summoned last Friday by neighbors, who had become alarmed. It took four days to recover all six corpses.

“Meanwhile the tenant of the house and two presumed accomplices were arrested. The tenant made no comment after his arrest. The cause of death for the six men is " the curse of the Pharaohs".”

And finally, a source called ‘Wales On-Line’ (<http://tiny.cc/iKLVO>) had a delightful little bit on ‘Mummy Worshippers’ in the Swansea (Britain) Museum and the Egypt Centre in Swansea Museum. Abbreviated slightly, the article informed us:

“Chanting mummy worshippers have returned to plague a South Wales museum. The mummy-obsessed visitors deserted Swansea Museum after CCTV cameras were introduced five years ago. But now they are back, sometimes spending hours prostrated before the remains of Tem Hor, a mummified priest who lived on the banks of the River Nile in Egypt more than 2,000 years ago.

“As testimony to an enduring but rather extreme fascination with Egyptology, the mummy worshippers – many wearing robes and head-dresses – stroll into the display room containing Tem Hor’s bandaged body and involve themselves in “unusual practices”.

“Exhibitions officer Roger Gale said, “They were quite a problem before we introduced the security cameras but now they appear to have come back. They occasionally come to the museum on weekends and just seem to want to be in the presence of Tem Hor. They tend to bow low in front of the mummy case and mumble what appear to be prayers or incantations.

““The problem is they can appear quite menacing because they tend to wear strange clothes, behave rather oddly and want to stay for a long time. The display room containing Tem Hor is not big and they put other people off.



We usually manage to get them to leave and it's something we are keeping an eye on."

"It's hard to say whether they are members of a sect or just individuals with particularly strong feelings for our mummy."

"The nearby Egypt Centre in Swansea Museum, which also has an extensive display of ancient Egyptian remains, has also been plagued by mummy worshippers.

"One woman visitor claimed to staff, who are specially trained to deal with mummy worshippers, that she was the mother of a mummified baby who died 2,200 years ago. After approaching visitors to tell them she was also possessed by a dog god, she was eventually persuaded to leave.

"And in another particularly embarrassing incident, a woman chanted before a display case of dusty Egyptian death masks, explaining: "They're possessed by trapped ancient spirits. I must release them."

"The female visitor ignored requests to be quiet and it was only when staff at the Egypt Centre explained these particular artifacts were the modern creations of local schoolchildren taking part in a competition that she made her excuses and left."

The CyberScribe understands these people completely, as he is possessed by over a hundred demons...all of them students who signed up for his classes.

See you next time!

If you would like to contact the CyberScribe (also known as Clair Ossian) to ask a question or to suggest an item for a future column, please send an e-mail to [clastic@verizon.net](mailto:clastic@verizon.net) or call (972) 416-5211. Don't forget to look up the North Texas Chapter of ARCE's Internet Homepage located at this address: <http://www.arce-ntexas.org/>.

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Karlene...please add the usual headers, footers and notes. And be sure that we use my new e-mail address: [clastic@verizon.net](mailto:clastic@verizon.net)

PLUS...remember that we are going to publish the answers from last month's 'Where the heck is it' contest.

Cheers...

Clair

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This rather run down structure is the last remaining retail outlet in Egypt for 8-track car stereo cassettes. Stubborn, proprietor Nabil Massri el Schwartz insists that if he can just hang on a while longer, business will pick up.

Or...perhaps you have another suggestion for the identity of this place? If so...where is it?

Bring your answers with you when you attend the next North Texas ARCE regular meeting. The correct answers will be divulged at that time.

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September 2009 Where The Heck Is It?

Clues for this month



A rather handsome, if out of the way temple, this structure is rather seldom visited. Perhaps this is because the temple is dedicated to the patron goddess of Real Estate agents and Investment Bankers?

Or is it?

Do you think you know where this temple is located? San Jose, California

And what group maintains it in such fine condition? The Rosicrucians