

Egypt's cultural heritage in conflict situations: examination of past and present impact



Abstract: In recent decades, the remarkable cultural heritage of Egypt has been threatened by loss or damage due to many conflict situations. These have led to looting, smuggling, vandalism, encroachment, illegal activities, and many more threats which put the fate of Egypt's heritage in jeopardy of disappearance and demolition. The loss of Egyptian heritage is not only a loss of history, but of cultural identity, memory and existence. These types of threats are by no means a recent phenomenon, but have been going on for centuries. This paper presents a research into the history of Egyptian heritage in times of conflict especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. Furthermore, it also examines the severe crisis that endangered Egyptian heritage in the 21st century, notably the aftermath of the 2011 Revolution and the subsequent, widespread pillaging of archeological sites and museums. These recent conflicts highlighted concerns about the future of Egyptian antiquities and their protection, and raised serious concerns about how to protect Egyptian patrimony and preserve the collective cultural memory of Egypt. A comprehensive, comparative analysis of Egyptian and international legislation pertaining to cultural heritage protection has been conducted in order to examine its efficiency in protecting Egypt's cultural heritage.

Keywords: conflict, cultural heritage, legislation, threats, protection

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1. CULTURAL HERITAGE: CONTEXT AND CRITICAL ISSUES

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines cultural heritage as “the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generation” (UNESCO n.d.). As indicated in this official definition and illustrated in the table below [Table 1], cultural heritage is a widely encompassing, multi-dimensional phenomenon that includes tangible assets from movable artifacts to immovable historical properties, and monumental remains along with intangible heritage that is expressed in tradition, folklore, social practices, and oral heritage (UNESCO 2003; Loulanski 2006: 209; Girton 2016: 32).

Table 1. Types of cultural heritage

Cultural heritage sites
Historic cities
Cultural landscape
Natural sacred sites
Underwater cultural heritage
Museums
Movable cultural heritage
Handicrafts
Documentary and digital heritage
Cinematographic heritage
Oral traditions
Languages
Festive events
Rites and beliefs
Music and song
Performance arts
Traditional medicine
Literature
Culinary traditions
Traditional sports and games

Furthermore, heritage testifies to a past that is “cared for by the community [and] passed on to the future to serve people’s need for a sense of identity and belonging” (Loulanski 2006: 209). It is “part of our expressive life that tells us where we came from” (Ivey 2010: 55–56) and reflects accomplishments of mankind. Heritage is a synonym for multifaceted aspects of our past: its physical manifestation, collective memory, inherited culture, indigenous values, and cultural identity (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996: 1–2, 8). It is also defined by the “heritage industry” which has become synonymous for the commercialization of cultural heritage in the interest of economic wellbeing (Loulanski 2006: 209). Heritage is not only a significant part of our present, but it is also an essential part of building for tomorrow.

Increasingly, the world heritage institutions and cultural professionals are struggling to preserve cultural heritage against deterioration processes, natural disasters and other environmental forces (Teijgeler 2006: 133; Sullivan 2016: 617). Next to natural hazards are human-induced threats that remain out of control. Looting, encroachments, deliberate destruction of heritage, terrorism, vandalism, civil unrest, neglect, even aggressive urbanization and building development are destructive forces for cultural heritage around the world (Teijgeler 2006: 133; UNESCO World Heritage Centre n.d.). Of these threats war and armed conflicts are the most devastating. It is a purposeful military strategy to neglect cultural heritage in order to deprive people, both contemporaneous and future generations, of

their cultural identity (Teijgeler 2006: 133; Vlastic and Turku 2016: 1373).

It is hardly suprising then that cultural heritage may be the cause of conflict. In recent years, ongoing events of cultural heritage destruction in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA),

notably in Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, has increasingly become a global issue (Tassie, De Trafford, and van Wetering 2015: 15; Girton 2016: 3–4). It is the worst wave of heritage crisis since World War II (Hadingham 2016). Cultural heritage protection threatened

Table 2. The cultural-historical periods of Egypt (* – periods mentioned in the text)

Date	Dynasty	Period
Before 8000 BC		Paleolithic
About 8000–4000 BC		Neolithic
About 4000–3100 BC	Maadi Culture	Predynastic
About 4000–3500 BC	Naqada I Culture	
About 3500–3150 BC	Naqada II Culture	
About 3150–3000 BC	Naqada III Culture	
		Pharaonic Dynastic
About 3000–2584 BC	Dynasties 1–2	Early Dynastic
About 2584–2117 BC	Dynasties 3–6	Old Kingdom
About 2117–2160 BC	Dynasties 7–10	First Intermediate Period
About 2161–1781 BC	Dynasties 11–12	Middle Kingdom
About 1781–1549 BC	Dynasties 13–17 (including the Hyksos period: dynasties 15–17)	Second Intermediate Period
About 1549–1069 BC	Dynasties 18–20	New Kingdom
1069–664 BC	Dynasties 21–25	Third Intermediate Period
664–332 BC	Dynasties 26–31	Late Period
332–304 BC	Macedonian period	Graeco-Roman period*
304–30 BC	Ptolemaic period (Greek)	
30 BC–337 CE	Roman period	
337–641 CE		Byzantine (Coptic) *
641–1798		Islamic period *
661–750	Umayyad Caliphate	
750–969	Abbasid Caliphate	
969–1171	Fatimid Caliphate	
1171–1252	Ayyubid Sultanate	
1252–1517	Mamluk Sultanate	
1517–1798	Ottoman rule*	
1798–present		Modern era*
1798–1801	French occupation*	
1805–1892	Khedival period Mohamed Ali Pasha Dynasty	
1882–1952	British occupation*	
1919–1953	Monarchy – semi-independence	
1953–present	Republic	

by conflict situations has become a global humanitarian issue due to the impact it has on the social, cultural, economic, and political stability of nations. Starting

in the 1990s, new strategies have been initiated to employ heritage for post-conflict reconciliation, peace-building and social cohesion (Winter 2017: 7).

2. EGYPT'S HERITAGE

Egypt is one of the world's earliest and greatest civilizations, its cultural heritage reflecting six millennia of recorded history, spanning eras from the Pharaonic, Graeco-Roman, and Byzantine (Coptic), to Islamic and Modern (Bagnall

and Rathbone 2004: 11–19) [Table 2]. This diverse array of Egyptian historical periods has produced a rich legacy of priceless monuments and irreplace-



Fig. 1. Map showing Egypt's richness in heritage sites (MOA, GIS Center, 2019)

able cultural properties [Fig. 1]. According to criteria set forth in the UNESCO Convention of 1972, landmarks or sites of exceptional cultural, historical, scientific or aesthetic significance are considered to possess “Outstanding Universal Value” (OUV) and can be registered as a “World Heritage Site” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2017: paras. 49–53). Egypt abounds in high-quality historical sites, but only seven of these have been recognized as OUV and listed among World Heritage Sites.

Unfortunately, Egypt's heritage has fallen victim to diverse conflicts. These conflicts are not recent threats. They reflect thousands of years of human activities and a multitude of incidents including: iconoclastic campaigns against pre-Islamic monuments of mediaeval Islamic Egypt; destructive plundering and removal of the nation's cultural

properties under colonial occupation; scattered incidents of terrorism and civil unrest in the 1990s; and the incentive to looting and damage of archeological sites during and in the aftermath of the 2011 Revolution.

In the Pharaonic era, tombs were built in hidden places and secured to protect them against human and natural threats (Mahmoud 2012: 3). Robberies and tomb raiding occurred nonetheless. The plunder of royal tombs and mortuary temples is well documented in the archeological record. The state authority set up varied degrees of punishments for robberies and vandalizing of the Pharaoh's tombs (Goelet 2001). During the Coptic period, Pharaonic monuments were affected by religious conflict, several tombs and temples being demolished and converted into churches and monasteries (Mahmoud 2012: 3).

3. ICONOCLASM IN MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC EGYPT

During the medieval Islamic period in Egypt (predating the Ottoman period), Pharaonic heritage suffered considerable damage due to destructive acts of iconoclasm. The pyramids, temples, obelisks, colossal statues and other monumental ruins of ancient Egypt—a testament of the outstanding cultural achievements of the past—were attacked by Muslims during medieval Islamic times as recorded in Arab textual sources (Colla 2007: 75–91). According to Jamal al-Din Idrisi, Abd al-Latif Baghdadi and other medieval Arab scholars, Muslim rulers attempted to destroy, disfigure or quarry ancient Egyptian monuments (Colla 2007: 87; Mahmoud 2012: 3).

The earliest and most famous incident linked with Abbasid Mamun's visit to Egypt around AD 820, is the breaching of the Great Pyramid in search of hidden treasure. A 7 m long tunnel penetrated the pyramid, above the base, near the original entrance. This “Robbers' Tunnel”, as it was known later, is today the visitors entrance to the Great Pyramid (Lehner 1997: 41; Tyldesley 2005: 38–40). Another account stated that Ahmed Ibn Tulun (AD 835–884), one of the early Muslim rulers of Egypt, attacked the pyramids attempting, in vain, to break inside (Colla 2007: 87; Mahmoud 2012: 3).

The 12th-century Arab writer Abd al Latif Baghdadi reported that Al-Nasir

Salah al-Din (AD 1137–1193) systematically demolished and quarried ancient Egyptian monuments, in particular “small pyramids, step pyramids, [and] non-step pyramids” in order to obtain building material for mosques, walls, and the other Islamic buildings of medieval Cairo (Al-Idrisi 1991: 39; Lehner and Hawass 2017: 85).

Another incident of this type, initiated by the governor of Egypt Al-Malek Abd al-Aziz Othman, Salah al-Din’s son and heir (1171–1198), aimed at an overall destruction of pyramids, occurred in 1196 when the first attempts at destroying the Menkaure pyramid, the third pyramid in Giza were undertaken. According to Baghdad’s text, eight months of oppressive labor and considerable expenses ended in failure. He stated that “so far all they did was to spoil the pyramid and exhibit manifest proof of their inability and failure” (Lehner and Hawass 2017: 85–86). While this iconoclastic act left the pyramid with a large vertical hole in its north façade, it also evoked admiration for the expertise of ancient Egyptian builders (Lehner 1997: 41).

An iconoclastic act defaced the head of the Giza Sphinx. The incident was recorded in the writings of a 15th-century historian Maqrizi, who reported that in AD 1378 a Muslim Sufi called Mohammed Sa’em al-Dahr destroyed a meter-long part of the statue’s nose (Lehner 1997: 41; Lehner and Hawass 2017: 86). His reasons were religious, an attempt to erase the symbolic significance of the sphinx for its neighbors. His destructive act upset the residents to the point that they hanged him for the crime of vandalism (Holmberg 2015). In the 18th

century, the face of the Sphinx was further damaged by the Mamluk rulers of Egypt who used his figure as a target for gun practice (Holmberg n.d.).

There is no doubt that the reasons behind such iconoclastic tendencies were influenced heavily by the religious opposition against pre-Islamic customs. In the early Islamic tradition, there was a series of acts of destruction and removal of what is known as “the Jahiliyya idols” of Arabia, because of their religious pagan meaning (King 1985: 296–270). According to Islamic textual resources, early Islamic teaching prohibited any portrayals or figurative motifs that were considered to be associated with idolatry and represented religious symbolism that was against the Islamic tradition (King 1985: 267–277).

In this respect, the iconoclastic campaigns of modern Muslim rulers against pre-Islamic monuments referred to the negative perception of Pharaonic relics as a form of paganism. The pharaoh’s statues and other figurative representations were misinterpreted as pagan idols (Colla 2007: 78–87).

It is important to note that these iconoclastic acts were carried out by the Muslim rulers of Egypt who, however, were not themselves of Egyptian origin. They found it necessary to fight idolatry, unlike the ordinary Egyptians who avoided these issues. In fact, Arab and Western historians recorded in their writings the admiration and appreciation that Egyptian Muslims professed for the Pharaonic monuments which held for them important intellectual inspiration and their recognition of an authentic past.

4. ERA OF COLONIZATION AND APPROPRIATION OF EGYPT'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Throughout history Egyptian cultural heritage has been subjected to looting, plundering and other forms of damage. It is a painful fact indeed that the collections of the world's great museums are composed of Egyptian antiquities looted under colonial occupation, either as war booty or presented as diplomatic gifts. As a matter of fact, "Egypt has suffered more destructive plundering of its cultural property than any other nation" (Cohan 2004: 13), with enormous quantities of antiquities excavated from Egypt's archeological sites being seized and shipped to major museums around the world, such as the British Museum, the Louvre, Neue Museum in Berlin, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and other museums of international renown.

Not only were the most valuable showpieces of these collections acquired without any documentation, but also these instances took place prior to the adoption of any ethical policies safeguarding Egypt's cultural property "(Cohan 2004: 4–5; Mahmoud 2012: 4). At the time, this heritage was viewed as the rightful patrimony of the West, being fraudulently validated through the superior techniques of display, representation and preservation available in the countries to which it was taken.

This European interest in assembling Egyptian cultural material was not a new phenomenon as it occurred already before the colonial era. In the Renaissance, Egyptian antiquities were sought to fill the collections of European cabinets of

curiosities from the 16th and 17th centuries onward (Moser 2006: 15–32; Stevenson 2015: 2–3). Cabinets were introduced to the royal courts and aristocratic homes of Italy, Germany, France and England, and formed the core of the collections of most of the major museums in Europe (Bierbrier 1995: 9; Moser 2006: 5–7, 15–32). For instance, the cabinet of Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), Irish physician and collector, contained 150 items from Egypt. These items served as a core collection for the British Museum when it was founded in 1753 (Bierbrier 1995: 9; James n.d.).

Seizure and removal of Egyptian antiquities increased exponentially in the era of imperialism and colonialism. As the French and British extended their control over Egypt, they considered themselves entitled to possess cultural materials from their colonial territory. A considerable share of Egyptian heritage was subsequently removed over the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries (Bierbrier 1995; Cohan 2004: 13; Ikram 2011: 141) [Fig. 2]. Most of the irreplaceable treasures of Egypt's national patrimony was sadly plundered. The looted materials ranged from portable artifacts, such as mummies, sculptures, coffins, figurines, scarabs, and papyri, to colossal statues, tomb walls, ceilings and temples. Obelisks are among the famous Egyptian monuments that were taken out of Egypt to decorate urban space in various cities worldwide: Central Park in New York, Place de la Concorde in Paris, and the Victoria Embankment of London (Cohan 2004: 13; Ikram 2011: 141).

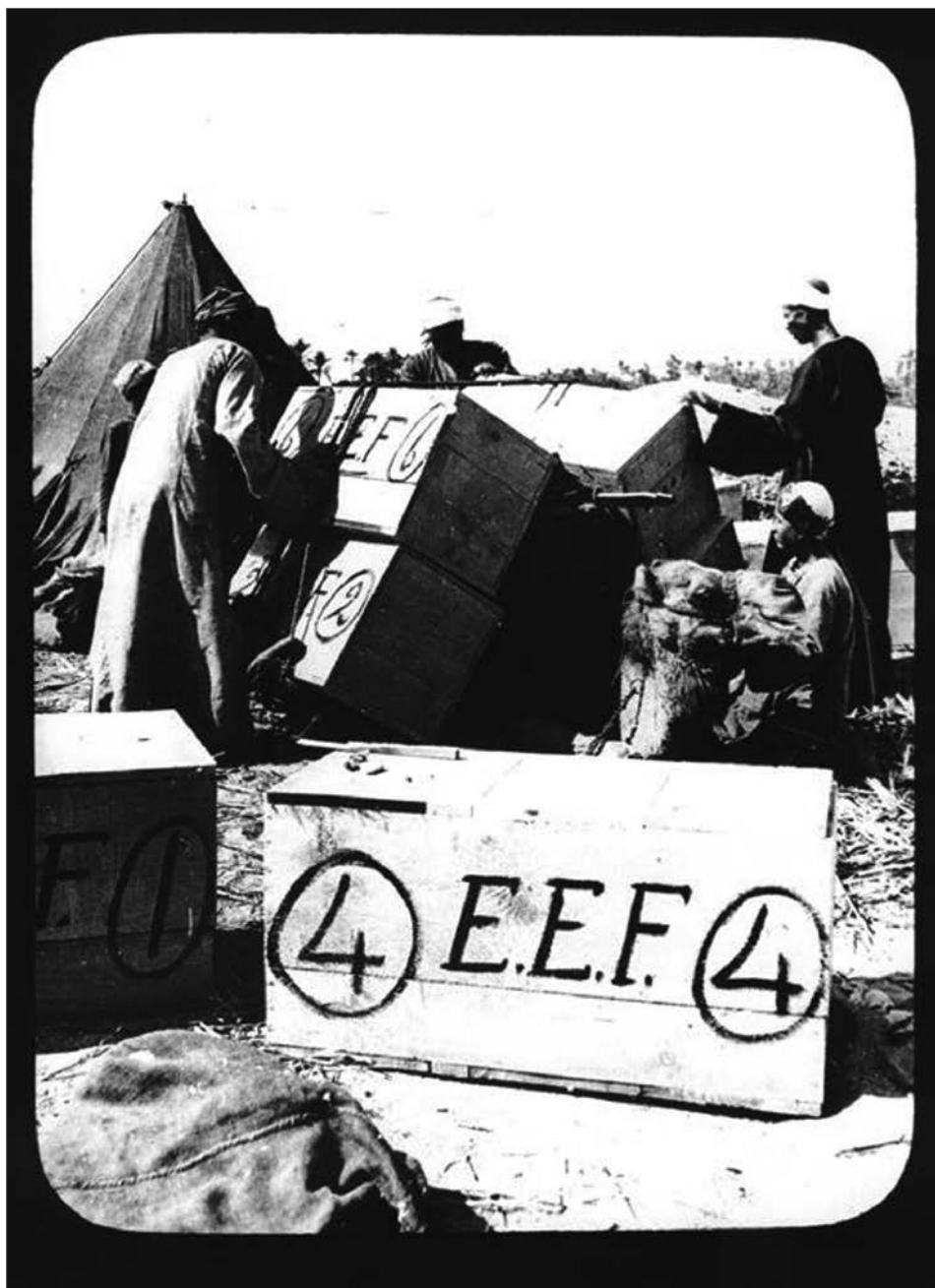


Fig. 2. Archaeological finds being packed on a camel for transport (After Stevenson and Libonati 2015: 27)

4.1. THE FRENCH CAMPAIGN AND ANGLO-FRENCH ARCHAEOLOGICAL RIVALRY

In 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt to threaten British interests in the Mediterranean and India (Reid 2002: 31). As part of his military campaign, he commissioned a group of scholars, scientists and artists to accompany the French expedition to Egypt (1798–1801) in order to record the main archeological sites and monuments of the country. This led to the establishment of the Institut d'Égypte that served as an instrument of colonization aiming to protect French interests in the region (Beaucour, Laissus, and Orgogozo 1993: 81). The outcome of the first systematic study of Egypt's monuments, the *Description de l'Égypte*, was published.

As part of Napoleon's official policy towards colonized Egypt, a specialized unit managed by Dolomieu was created to assemble art, treasures and iconic artifacts from Egypt's monuments on a large scale (Cohan 2004: 14–22). These treasures were systematically appropriated in compliance with proposals issued by the Institut d'Égypte and designed particularly for the "Selection, Conservation and Transportation of Ancient Monuments" to be shipped to France and deposited at the Louvre (Cohan 2004: 16).

The Louvre, which was known in 1803 as the Musée Napoléon, was intended as a National Museum to be filled with the works of art of conquered nations for the glory of France (Cohan 2004: 16; Mahmoud 2012: 44). An Egyptian antiquities section was supposed to be established within this scheme (Bierbrier 1995: 9). It seems therefore that the Napoleonic campaign viewed the looting

and appropriation of cultural property of the invaded nations as an acceptable and legal practice, unlike the ethical principles of contemporary international law which condemns removal of cultural properties in times of war and even considers it tantamount to their destruction. The French characterized the cultural material that they had pillaged from Egypt and other vanquished nations as *bona fide* acquisitions, not spoils of war (Cohan 2004: 16).

In 1801, the situation changed: the French were defeated by the joint British Ottoman forces, thus the bulk of looted Egyptian antiquities came into the possession of Great Britain as war trophies, under the terms of the 1801 Capitulation Treaty, and with the approval of the Ottomans (Bierbrier 1995: 9; Cohan 2004: 18). Eventually, most of Napoleon's Egyptian booty ended up at the British Museum. New galleries were founded, authorized by the British Parliament, to accommodate the massive influx of Egyptian treasures. Not surprisingly, after the Capitulation Treaty of 1801, the French tried to smuggle the famous Rosetta Stone out of Egypt, but William Hamilton, who oversaw the French evacuation, prevented it (Reid 2002: 37).

Interestingly, legal provisions for the restitution of cultural properties were included in some of the treaties of 1814–1815, notably the 1815 Congress Treaty of Vienna that required France to restore European art taken during the colonial domination to the 'country of origin', (Cohan 2004: 14–22). Despite the considerable share of Egyptian cultural property plundered by Napoleon's army, there was however no mention of the restoration of

Egyptian antiquities ceded by Napoleon to Great Britain nor any legal provisions related to the restitution of Egypt's cultural property.

There is no doubt that the Napoleonic expedition stimulated world enthusiasm towards ancient Egypt and its treasures. The cultural campaign of the savants and the publication of the *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–1828) had an enormous impact on enhancing Western interest in Egypt's cultural materials, which unfortunately led to further loss and plundering of Egyptian heritage. Moreover, the French invasion paved the way for Mohamed Ali Pasha (1769–1849), who was sent by Sultan Selim III to assist the British in driving the French out of Egypt and later became the Viceroy of Egypt in 1805 (Reid 2002: 32).

Incidents of removal of Egyptian antiquities continued profusely after Napoleon's expedition. The goal was, however, to supply national museums and public collections of western European countries rather than private collections. Many archeological expeditions were conducted by countless Europeans for the purpose of obtaining antiquities. They sought to bring as many artifacts as possible to their countries for display.

New arrangements were made in the mid-1810s between Mohamed Ali Pasha, and the European powers—mainly the French and the British—concerning excavations in Egypt under new terms granted only to diplomatic representatives of Europe (Colla 2007: 27).

Trafficking in archeological artifacts was growing exponentially. It reached new levels of institutional practice involving many key actors and diplo-

matic negotiations. Consul-collectors employed by European governments worked through Ottoman high officials in order to get permits for collecting, acquiring, and shipping antiquities (Colla 2007: 26–33). The British Consul-General Henry Salt (1780–1827), appointed in 1815, and his French rival Bernardino Drovetti (1776–1852) appointed in 1811 competed to gain control over significant sites in Egypt (Reid 2002: 37). They split the archeological sites between them and kept on excavating, collecting and shipping out the best antiquities (Reid 1997: 37–39; Tyldesley 2005: 102–103). Other consul-collectors paid local agents in Egypt to collect antiquities on behalf of their countries and ship them to their destinations (Bierbrier 1995).

The Italian explorer Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778–1823), who worked for the British to remove the colossal bust of Ramses II Memnon and send it to the British Museum, also made discoveries and conducted several excavations in Upper Egypt. He hired local residents and bribed officials to assemble valuable finds (Colla 2007: 31–44). His methods of dealing in Egyptian antiquities tended to be that of profitable commerce (Colla 2007: 42–43). He discovered royal and non-royal tombs at Luxor and competed with Drovetti's agents in plundering and emptying the contents. His accounts provide insight into the nature of excavation techniques and removal of antiquities, which without scientific regulations of any kind were akin to vandalism. Hammers were used to strip paintings from tomb walls in order to ship them abroad (Tyldesley 2005: 88–95).

The Frenchman Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832) cut fine bas-reliefs from the tomb of Seti I and sent them to the Louvre, claiming that it was to save them from being destroyed by a flood. And Karl Richard Lepsius (1810–1884), who led the Prussian expedition to Egypt, approved of using dynamite to dismantle architectural elements, again supposedly for conservation purposes (Tyldesley 2005: 95–96).

In 1850, August Mariette, a French Egyptologist (1821–1881), was sent to Egypt to acquire Arabic and Coptic manuscripts for the Louvre. During his visit to Egypt, he conducted many excavations (Haikal 2003: 124). In 1851, he discovered the famous Serapeum of Memphis and other tombs with thousands of statues and other valuable finds (Haikal 2003: 124; Mahmoud 2012: 49). He shipped most of his discovered treasures (more than 7,000 objects) to the Louvre without even getting permits from the Egyptian authorities (Mahmoud 2012: 50).

4.2. EGYPTIAN RULERS AND THE RISE OF ANGLO-FRENCH CONTROL OVER EGYPTIAN HERITAGE

Egyptian rulers, in particular Mohamed Ali Pasha and his successors, the Khedives (viceroys of Egypt under Turkish rule), encouraged Europeans to acquire large quantities of Egyptian antiquities. They authorized excavations by European missions and the removal of innumerable Egyptian antiquities (Reid 2003–2004: 3), apparently not concerned with the historical value of the cultural heritage favoring instead political and economic profits. Antiquities were used

extensively as gifts and souvenirs in diplomatic bargaining with the Europeans and other official guests to Egypt (Reid 2003–2004: 3; Ikram 2011: 141; Mahmoud 2012: 53).

Although some attempts at drafting legislation safeguarding the cultural property of Egypt were undertaken, the law has actually never been enforced. In 1835, Mohammed Ali issued a decree for protecting Egypt's heritage (see below), still this did not have any impact on the difficult situation of Egypt's antiquities. European missions continued their excavations (Wood 1998: 63), while Mohamed Ali himself did not refrain from presenting Egyptian antiquities as gifts and rewards for his official guests. Not surprisingly, he blew up the ninth pylon of the Karnak Temple with dynamite to provide blocks for one of his modern factories disregarding his own decree (Reid 2002: 56). His successor, Khedive Abbas I, presented the entire collection of the Egyptian museum to an Australian Archduke as a gift after the Archduke declined to accept a horse (Rizk 1999: 5–7; see below).

Throughout the first half of the 19th century, Mohamed Ali Pasha instituted major projects for the industrialization and modernization of Egypt. His plan was to lay the foundation for an independent Egyptian state (Reid 2003–2004: 1–3). In the second half of the century, Mohamed Ali's hereditary dynasty followed in his steps to develop Egypt's infrastructure and carry out large-scale economic, cultural, and military reforms in an effort to modernize Egypt to the standards of European civilization (Bowen 1886; Toussaint 2016). This was the

beginning of a new era for Egypt; an era of severe external debts and unstable financial conditions imposed by European bankers. Gradually, European powers, in particular Great Britain and France, used Egypt's debts as a powerful weapon for colonial intervention, particularly after the Suez Canal opened in 1869 (Reid 2002: 57). Consequently, this led to British military control over Egypt, culminating in the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 (Mak 2011: 10).

During these years, the British and the French competed to seize control over Egypt and its cultural heritage. Egypt was the theater of the Anglo-Franco archeological rivalry, and certainly its heritage was one of the key vectors of the conflict that commenced in the late 18th century (Reid 2002: 32). Both states used their consul-generals to collect antiquities, control archeological sites of Egypt, and facilitate permits for their missions. In addition, new foreign institutions were founded in Egypt to survey and excavate archeological sites, such as the French Archeology Mission in 1882, that was known later as the French Institute of Oriental Archeology (IFAO 2018), and the Egyptian Exploration Society that was founded also in 1882 to explore sites and monuments in Egypt and Sudan (Egypt Exploration Society n.d.).

At this time, most western museums, institutions and universities were providing funds and support to their missions in Egypt in order to acquire Pharaonic/Egyptian antiquities. Seizing the antiquities was important for the formation of western museums and the development of new disciplines of

archeology, egyptology and museology, but it was also a "crucial instrument for the colonial intervention" many years before the British occupation (Colla 2007: 10).

Nevertheless, over the 74 years (1882–1956) of British occupation of Egypt, it was France that enjoyed the status of a leading cultural power in Egypt (Haikal 2003: 124). Its position stemmed from the appointment, in 1858, of the French Egyptologist Mariette to the post of the newly established Director of the Egyptian Antiquities Department responsible for the protection of Egyptian antiquities, which was also known as the Antiquities Service (*Service des Antiquités*; Wood 1998: 181). Mariette and his successors maintained the French grip on the Egyptian Antiquities Service until the second half of the 20th century (Reid 2003–2004: 4). This resulted in shipping away hundreds of crates of the country's unique heritage to France (Mahmoud 2012: 64–65).

In the early 20th century, the political status of Egypt increased the Anglo–Franco domination over Egyptian heritage. A diplomatic agreement between Britain and France, known as the Entente Cordial of 1906 or the Franco-British Declaration, aimed to resolve a number of disputes between the two countries relating to their colonial territories. While the first article of the agreement asserted French dominance over Egyptian heritage, stating that "the post of the Director General of Egyptian Antiquities will be entrusted to a French Savant", the other articles recognized British political and economic control over the country (Duffy 2009).

There is no doubt that this agreement set back the development of Egypt's antiquities policy. The country was divided into two zones by the Anglo-French officials, who issued permits for their re-soective excavation missions. Westerners disregarded indigenous Egyptians, claiming them to be unfit to protect their own cultural heritage (Reid 2003–2004: 3).

The Americans entered the field of the archeology of Egypt in the first decade of the 20th century, in response to an increasing western interest in the Pharaonic heritage. The Metropolitan Museum of Art conducted large-scale excavations at several sites along the Nile, and acquired large numbers of important collections. So did the University of Chicago Oriental Institute (Reid 2003–2004: 7). The American Egyptologist James Henry Breasted even suggested an international board overseeing Egyptian Antiquities for 30 years until the Egyptians be trained to take proper care of their heritage (Reid 2003–2004: 7).

Significant changes have occurred in Egypt since the 1950s, accompanied by a new sense of national identity, notably after the 1952 Revolution. After 94 years of French directorship, Mustafa Amer was appointed the first Egyptian director of the Antiquities Service (Haikal 2003: 124; Reid 2003–2004: 8). Progressively, Egypt introduced restrictions on shipping antiquities abroad and issued several laws regulating excavations. In 1983, Egypt declared that Egyptian antiquities belonged to the state and permissions would not be given for objects to leave the country.

Thus, from the 16th century through the mid-20th century, countless items and assemblages disappeared gradually from Egypt and were scattered across the museums of Europe and North America. The Egyptian collections in national museums of the West were formed through the purchase of antiquities collected by diplomatic consuls and traveling merchants, as stated above. The “partage” system, that is, sharing artifacts from excavations with foreign missions, was also a means of acquisition by foreign nations (Stevenson and Libonati 2015: 28), in addition to donations made by wealthy tourists, auctions, gifts from the rulers of Egypt, and the spoils of war seized during the Napoleonic occupation (Bierbrier 1995; Ikram 2011: 141–142).

On the other hand, the acquisition of Egyptian artifacts by the West had a positive impact, such as the establishment of new scholarly disciplines like egyptology, archeology and museology, as well as development of museums worldwide. Egypt and its archeological heritage owes a great deal to any number of western excavators and scholars who played the most prominent role in uncovering the country's landmarks and preserving its heritage for future generations. These men and women have greatly contributed to increasing world fascination with Ancient Egypt and fostering an appreciation for its legacy. Thanks to their efforts, people worldwide could appreciate the well-known architecture of ancient Egypt and experience long periods of Egyptomania.

5. LOOTING AND DESTRUCTION OF EGYPT'S CULTURAL HERITAGE AT TIMES OF CONFLICT

The looting and alienation of artifacts from archeological sites are identified as two of the greatest threats to heritage preservation worldwide (Hart and Chilton 2014: 1). Although the most prominent incidents of antiquities looting are reported in locations of armed conflict, Egypt has witnessed large-scale antiquities looting and theft during times of peace. Artifact collection and looting from heritage sites in Egypt is a common phenomenon, just as theft of artifacts from ongoing archeological excavations (Ikram 2013: 366; Brederova 2014: 38).

Over the years, Egypt's archeological sites have always been a target for digging, looting, and trafficking in antiquities. Security is difficult to maintain at these sites and no special skills are required to dig holes and loot artifacts. They are readily accessible and available for sale, and thus used as a source of income for locals (Fabiani 2018: 1–4).

5.1. A BRIEF HISTORY OF CONFLICT IN EGYPT (1990–2014)

From 1990 till 2014, Egypt witnessed two major types of conflict together with scattered incidents of terrorist attacks and civil unrest (Fabiani 2018: 5). Starting in the 1990s, the Egyptian state faced a deadly insurgency by Islamist extremists affiliated with the Egyptian Islamic terrorist group known as al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya (Dunne and Williamson 2014). They targeted political leaders, governmental officials, tourists, and

Christian minorities in an attempt to implement the *Sharia*, traditional Islamic teaching (Cook 2013). Terroristic attacks have occurred in ancient tombs and temples between 1993–1998, including the infamous incident at the Deir al-Bahari temple in Luxor killing many civilians and tourists (Jehl 1997). Islamist extremists did not fully disappear from Egypt, but they merged with other Islamist groups like al-Jihad, forming an alliance that continued to conduct terrorist attacks and violence in 2004–2005 (Cook 2013; Fabiani 2018: 5).

The second conflict in Egypt started in 2011, when Egypt was involved in a period of civil unrest stemming from the Arab spring and the uprising of 2011, in addition to many incidents of armed conflict that took place particularly in 2013 (Ikram 2013: 366; Fabiani 2018: 6). The Egyptian revolution of 25 January 2011 brought the regime of Hosni Mubarak to an end (Tassie, De Trafford, and van Wetering 2015: 14). In 2012, the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) took over (Brederova 2014: 35). From 30 June 2012 to 3 July 2013, the new president with a religious background, Mohamed Morsi, was elected and then removed from his position in the 2013 revolution as a result of protests against his inability to withstand the Islamic State as well as to improve people's daily life by advancing Egypt's social and economic systems (Brederova 2014: 35; Fabiani 2018: 7). General Abdul-Fattah el Sisi is president of Egypt since 2014.

5.2. THREATS TO EGYPT'S HERITAGE

During the 2011 revolution and in its aftermath, Egypt experienced a security vacuum due to civil unrest and armed conflict (Teijgeler 2013; Brederova 2014: 38–41). National law enforcement including the Tourism and Antiquities Police disappeared from their posts throughout the country. Large numbers of prisoners were released from jails across the country (Fabiani 2018: 5–8). Unsurprisingly, most archeological sites were attacked daily by organized gangs. They took advantage of the lack of security to pillage, steal, vandalize. Land was also encroached on illegally. The rate of loss of cultural property was thus on an exponential rise. Each of these threats during times of conflict will now be examined.

Looting

In the context of archeological and heritage sites, looting refers to the act of digging up and collecting artifacts (Hart and Chilton 2014: 4). Looting has always occurred in Egypt, but never on the scale seen during and after the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, when a large number of archeological sites and important museums were systematically looted (Brederova 2014: 39). The prevalence of looting is certainly connected with the lack of security, the economic depression that Egypt has experienced since the 2011 uprising, and simultaneous high unemployment rates, particularly after the decline of the tourism industry (Brederova 2014: 38; Tassie, De Trafford, and van Wetering 2015: 15). Some scholars indicate that a significant increase in looting started in 2009, and



Fig. 3. The archaeological site of El-Hibeh pockmarked with looting pits (After Redmount 2014: 16)

that it was driven by the worldwide economic crisis, only to intensify with the Arab Spring of 2011 (Parcak et al. 2016).

These incidents of looting affected Egypt's cultural heritage extensively, whether Pharaonic, Coptic, Islamic, or contemporary altogether (Hanna 2015: 47). Damage and theft extended to museums and repositories as a result of riots and violence. Still, looting archaeological sites had a far more serious impact on Egypt's heritage than raids of museums, because it led to the sites being stripped of contextual information, thus impairing future investigations (Tassie, De Trafford, and van Wetering 2015: 14). With the withdrawal of police and the lack of effective enforcement of regulations concerning

the looting of antiquities, artifacts were being channeled into the global antiquities markets and disposed of through trafficking networks, sold at high market prices, making them a source of revenue for extremism and conflict (Hanna 2015: 47; Fabiani 2018: 3).

Since the uprising, the looting of archaeological sites and monuments has risen dramatically. Satellite images document a shocking array of illegal digs and looting pits. Some areas within sites were damaged to the extent that they now resemble "Swiss cheese" (Teijgeler 2013; Redmount 2014: 14) [Fig. 3]. Data from satellite images have been looked at in order to quantify the looting and damage done to archeological sites in Egypt [Table 3].

Table 3. Intensive looting and encroachment on archaeological heritage sites in 2011–2013 (After Parcak et al 2016: 195)

Year	Sites count	Total looting pits	Pit area (km ²)	Total encroachment (km ²)	Total area (km ²)
2011	161	58207	0.34	3.95	4.29
2012	140	45706	0.175	2.116	2.29
2013	182	59548	0.243	3.297	3.54

Significantly, the loss of an item or a unique piece of cultural property creates a considerable gap in the sense of collective memory and identity (Cohan 2004: 7). Thus, looting destroys important aspects of the nation's past and consequently its future.

Theft

Although "looting" and "theft" seem to be synonymous, their meaning, in fact, differs in the context of cultural property (Fabiani 2018: 8). Basically, theft refers to the removal of objects from a museum, private collection, or storage facility at an archeological site

after they had been discovered and registered (Fabiani 2018: 8), while looting is the extraction and alienation of artifacts from un-spoiled archeological sites for the purpose of selling them (Hanna 2015: 48). Museum professionals may take advantage of a situation and steal artifacts that are under their custody (Simpson 2004: 201). The only positive aspect, if one may say so, of "theft", since it pertains to objects already documented and registered, is that there may be a chance of claiming back the stolen goods. Needless to say, this is dependent on the stolen objects resurfacing and being recognized.

Egypt has witnessed a major increase in theft at this time of conflict as well. Storage magazines have also been attacked and plundered. Many incidents of robbers attacking storage facilities on archeological sites through their roofs, or by using geo-sonar machines have been reported (Ikram 2013: 369). Sadly, unlike museum objects, most objects in storage are not catalogued; records are modest, making these objects a good target for thieves (Tassie, De Trafford, and van Wetering 2015: 14). Islamic and Coptic sites were not immune to this threat, many items from prayer niches, lamps, censers, doors, ceilings and more were dismantled and sold (Ikram and Hanna 2013: 36).

The frequency of these activities increased rapidly in museums. The Egyptian Museum lost 42 items, not to mention the objects that were deliber-

ately damaged (Brederova 2014: 39). In July 2013, the entire collection of the National Museum of Malawi was stolen. The museum lost 1050 of 1089 artifacts in an incident which was described as one of “the biggest museum thefts in the history of the country” (Brederova 2014: 40; Girton 2016: 25) [Fig. 4]. Also in the same year, 96 artifacts were stolen from the Aswan Museum on Elephantine during a break-in into the museum’s storage facilities (Brederova 2014: 39).

Encroachment vs. destruction of archeological sites

After the events of 2011, many of Egypt’s archeological sites suffered from various types of encroachment: illegal building activities, urban settlements, agricultural expansion, cemetery building, and flooding, whether natural or intentional (Redmount 2014: 13; Parcak et al. 2016: 196).



Fig. 4. Damage to displays at the Malawi museum (Photo Roger Anis, National Geographic) (© Roger Anis, 2013, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/8/130823-museum-mallawi-egypt-looting-artifacts-archaeology-science-antiquities>)

Rapid acts of encroachment and land grabbing took place throughout Egypt following the 2011 revolution as the state failed to fight this phenomenon. Land grabbing is identified as “when a person or a group of people illegally take over land belonging to the Ministry of Antiquities for agriculture or building projects” (Ikram and Hanna 2013: 35). Land-grabbing activities are mostly carried out by contractors who seize significant amounts of land to be built over or to be divided for sale for different purposes. Also, people who live in the neighborhood of an archeological area may illegally acquire patches of land (Ikram 2013: 366), claiming they are empty and unused, and ignored by the national government. As part of the acquisition process, a wall may be built around the newly acquired land, and the land either tilled for planting or used as a cemetery.

Incidents of land grabbing escalated dramatically. Residents bulldozed the archeological structures to make way for illegal construction and agricultural investment. During the civil unrest, Tarkhan, one of the most important sites dating to the time of Egyptian state formation, was covered by a modern cemetery, two houses and an agricultural field (Tassie, De Trafford, and van Wetering 2015: 20). A regular plan was aimed at seizing the ancient site of Heliopolis, and efforts were made to convert the Masalla region in Matariya district into a parking lot and a car wash (Tassie, De Trafford, and van Wetering 2015: 21). Further encroachments and land appropriation destroyed many valuable sites in Egypt. Additionally, grabbing of historic urban lands also occurred at that time, ruining the historic landscape. Many historic monuments (defined as structures

that are over a hundred years old) were damaged and dismantled, to be quickly replaced with modern buildings (Ikram and Hanna 2013: 36; Tassie, De Trafford, and van Wetering 2015: 23).

Such building activities not only lead to loss of contextual information about the past, impairing our sense of historic identity, but also erase segments of history, not to mention violating antiquities laws (Cohan 2004: 8). Extant laws, No. 117 of 1983 amended by No. 3 of 2010, have failed to prevent these illegal activities.

Cultural heritage vandalism

Vandalism is one of the main threats to heritage sites and museum collections. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, vandalism is defined as “willful or malicious destruction or defacement of public or private property”. Looting is vandalism in that it erases irretrievably information about sites and artifacts alike. It disturbs or destroys site stratigraphy, the archeological context of its monuments and artifacts, and results in the loss of other contextual data (Hart and Chilton 2014: 5).

Many sites in Egypt have been affected by vandalism. The ancient archeological site of Abusir al-Meleq has been extensively plundered since the 2011 uprising. Grave robbing and looting have destroyed most of the site. Many burials have been lost, and human remains, broken and scattered, lie everywhere (Brederova 2014: 40) [Fig. 6]. The same took place in el-Hibeh, where mummy wrappings and human bones were scattered across the site. Many other sites were vandalized during this time as well (Redmount 2014: 14).

Those who loot, collect and cause damage to Egypt's monuments and archeological sites by "removal of artifacts", "destroying inscriptions" or "appropriating the site" are viewed as destroying heritage values. These are assaults on our common right to history and memory. Such incidents result in wiping out the contextual setting of the site along with destroying irreplaceable archeological data. This deliberate damage, vandalism, is changing the identity of sites that should be passed down intact from generation to generation.

Iconoclasm

Iconoclasm is traditionally defined as "image-breaking, or destruction of icons", viewed as pagan idols to be destroyed, usually because of religious, political or cultural differences (Girton 2016: 3, 32). In contemporary use, iconoclasm is defined as "the doctrine, attitude or practice of an iconoclast; a person who destroys religious image or attacks settled beliefs or institutions" (Merriam-Webster 2018). While the actual act of attacking is physical, the term can be used to refer to verbal attacks using iconoclastic terms.

In the aftermath of the 2011 uprising, the new president of Egypt was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, which adopt-

ed a new policy aimed at islamizing the country. In a dramatic turn, fanatic Sufis called for the destruction of the pyramids and all "non-Islamic heritage". To make matters worse, Egypt's Salafi party, one of the political parties that was created after the 2011 Revolution, known as "The Light" party, proposed a ruinous plan to cover the pyramids with wax as a statement against their "idolatry" (Burleigh 2011). They appealed to the Egyptian population to reject ancient Egyptian monuments, describing the culture that made them as "rotten", one which contradicts Islamic tradition (Hanna 2015: 47).

This attitude against pre-Islamic heritage is attributed to the fact that Islamists "do not identify with nation, culture, or heritage, but only with the Islamic nation, 'the Umma'" (Ibrahim 2012), unlike most Egyptians, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, whose identities are tied in with their national identity.

There is no doubt that the weakness of the socio-economic situation in the country, deficiencies in management of cultural heritage, as well as failure to apply enforceable legal measures for the protection of heritage property, present a different type of threat, all leading to further loss of Egyptian heritage.

6. EGYPT'S NATIONAL LEGISLATION FOR PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

The first legal instrument for the protection of Egyptian antiquities was Mohamed Ali's decree of 15 August 1835 which placed Egyptian antiquities under the authority of the Egyptian state and prohibited their export without permits

(UNESCO 2009). This act was solicited by Champollion who was concerned over the loss of Egyptian monuments and the vanishing of 13 temples in 30 years as indicated in his plea of 1830 to Mohamed Ali Pasha (Reid 2002: 54; Haikal 2003:

123). The decree was formulated to put an end to the removal of Egyptian antiquities by dealers and unauthorized excavations. It also prevented the quarrying and pillaging of Egyptian monuments by the local people (Reid 2002: 21; Ikram 2011: 142).

Under the regulations of this decree, Mohamed Ali appointed inspectors in archaeological sites to prevent looting (Wood 1998: 180). He authorized the founding of a museum in the Ezbeqieh, akin to those in Europe, to house all archaeological finds from future excavations and also to control the antiquities traffic (Haikal 2003: 123; Reid 2003–2004: 3). The Ezbeqieh building is considered to be the first antiquities service, entrusted to Yusuf Dia Effendi and supervised by Sheikh Rifa'a el-Tahtawy, mandated to preserve Egyptian heritage (Haikal 2003: 123; Reid 2003–2004: 3; Mahmoud 2012: 61–63). Both Effendi and el-Tahtawy tried to enlarge and protect the collections, but lacked the resources (Haikal 2003: 123; Mahmoud 2012: 63). Sadly, in 1855, Abbas I, the Viceroy of Egypt, presented a part of the collection deemed as a suitable diplomatic gift to Sultan Abdel Aziz of Istanbul, and the rest was presented to the Austrian Archduke Maximilian as a souvenir of his visit to Egypt. These objects are currently on display in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum (Reid 2002: 58; Haikal 2003: 124).

In 1869, the Egyptian Government issued further laws for "antiquities items" with a regulatory framework for excavations and to prevent smuggling (ICOM n.d.). In March 1874, specific bylaws were drafted addressing the ownership

of undiscovered antiquities (i.e., that had not yet been unearthed). Article 34 of this bylaw stated that objects seized in smuggling were to be confiscated (UNESCO 2009).

Later on, several laws and bylaws prohibiting sales, unauthorized excavations, and the trafficking and exporting of antiquities without permits from authorized agencies, were issued (UNESCO 2009). In 1891, a decree specifically prohibited excavations without permit from the General Director of Museums and Excavations and approved by the Permanent Committee of Antiquities (Ikram 2011: 143). As a part of the excavations agreements, the "partage" system was adopted from the late 19th century onward. This practice, introduced by the Egyptian Antiquities Service, allowed antiquities excavated from archeological sites to be officially shared with foreign-led expeditions sponsoring the excavations (Stevenson and Libonati 2015).

At the end of the 19th century, in August 1897, another bylaw was drafted banning the trafficking in artifacts particularly at local level (Ikram 2011: 143) and providing penalties against smuggling artifacts and illegal excavations. Furthermore, looted antiquities were to be returned to the Egyptian government (UNESCO 2009). This act is considered the earliest piece of national legislation for the restitution of the Egyptian antiquities.

Later, in 1912, all the binding legal measures concerning excavations, state ownership, and pillaging and smuggling of antiquities were incorporated into Law No. 14 of 1912, issued in June 1912 (Ikram 2011: 143). This law was re-

inforced by Ministerial Decrees Nos 50 and 52 that were issued in December of the same year. This law prohibited the export of any object from Egypt to any country without a special license granted only by the Egyptian antiquities department which became the only authority entitled to issue or withhold such permits (UNESCO 2009). It also formulated the rights and responsibilities of excavators, as well as the rules for official antiquities shops to comply with (Ikram 2011: 143).

Further laws and decrees were issued during the first half of the 20th century revising and strengthening existing national regulations regarding the protection of cultural heritage, including Law No. 14 of January 1931 (UNESCO 2009).

In response to the growing number of thefts and illicit trade in antiquities, the government passed, in 1951, Law No. 215 imposing harsh penalties on violators. This law strictly prohibited the removal of antiquities from the country unless Egypt owned multiple objects similar to those being exported. Furthermore, no artifact could leave the country without the approval of the antiquities department in writing, reviewed and signed by relevant agencies and museum experts (UNESCO 2009). Shops affiliated with the government were permitted to sell antiquities that were approved by the Antiquities department (Ikram 2011: 143). More laws were issued later revising and updating the previously passed regulations on the protection of antiquities such as Law No. 529 of 1953 and Law No. 24 of 1965.

To keep up with the growing number of international cultural campaigns

aimed at preventing illicit trade in antiquities and other prohibited activities, the Egyptian Archaeological Organization and the Minister of Culture passed, in 1979, a crucial decree: "Cessation of granting of license to individuals for export of antiquities, irrespective of their source, outside the Arab Republic of Egypt" (UNESCO 2009).

In line with legal measures for combating illegal trafficking in antiquities, the state passed a promulgation of the Antiquities Law No. 117 of 1983. By this law, all antiquities, movable and immovable, discovered or undiscovered, are strictly the property of the state (Law No. 117 of 1983, article 6). All trade in antiquities was completely prohibited, and the law provided a period of one year for authorized antiquities traders to dispose of their possessions, but only within Egypt (Law No. 117 of 1983, article 7). The law also prohibited the removal of any antiquities that were owned by individuals or registered by the state without written permits from the Antiquities authority clarifying its legitimate disposal, and such permits for disposal would not allow their removal outside of Egypt (Law No. 117 of 1983, article 9).

Since the law stipulated that all antiquities discovered by foreign archaeological missions were state property (Law No. 117 of 1983, article 35), the earlier practice of "partage" was abolished. The law criminalized smuggling and increased the penalties to prison terms with hard labor and a fine of no less than 5,000 and no more than 50,000 Egyptian pounds for any violator in addition to the confiscation of the smuggled items

(Law No. 117 of 1983, article 41). The enactment of this law abolished all licensed trade in antiquities (UNESCO 2009).

In an effort to stiffen the penalties and cease the ongoing wide-scale trafficking in antiquities, this law was amended by Laws 3 and 61 of 2010 to prevent and criminalize all antiquities trading, and to set up the necessary regulations to register, document, preserve and conserve the country's heritage. Under this law, the foreign missions' agreement of the 10 percent ownership of their excavation discoveries was abolished (Law 3 of 2010).

Severe penalties and extensive regulations were formulated by this law to prohibit trade in antiquities. The possession of antiquities was restrained,

requiring any owner of Egyptian antiquities to submit them to the Supreme Council of Antiquities, which became "the exclusive authority concerned with all that relate to antiquities affairs" (Law 3 of 2010, articles 5, 29, 30).

Owing to the high value of Egyptian cultural objects in trade markets and the urgent need to prevent trading in looted antiquities on both local and international markets, new amendments were endorsed in Law No. 91 of 2018 in order to update Laws Nos 117 of 1983 and 3 of 2010 to further protect the cultural heritage of Egypt against illicit antiquities trading and looting, which had increased exponentially in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution. Under this new law, penalties and fines have been increased

Table 4. International conventions and instruments ratified by Egypt in the field of cultural heritage

Cultural heritage international conventions	Accession form	Date of ratification
1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict	Ratification	1955
1st Protocol of the Hague Convention	Ratification	1955
2nd Protocol of the Hague Convention	Ratification	2005
1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property	Acceptance	1973
1972 Convention for the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage	Ratification	1974
The 1977 Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions	Ratification	1992
The 1977 Additional Protocol II to the 1949 Geneva Conventions	Ratification	1992
Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court	Signature	–
2001 UNESCO Convention on Underwater Cultural Heritage	Ratification	2017
2003 UNESCO Convention on Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage	Ratification	2005
2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Heritage	Ratification	2007

extensively to reduce the scale of illegal excavations, pillaging of archaeological sites, and smuggling of antiquities. The penalty consists of a prison term of 25 years and a fine of no less than 50,000 and no more than 250,000 Egyptian pounds.

Egypt's current constitution of 2014, asserts the state's full commitment to: "protecting and preserving antiquities and their areas, and to maintaining them, renovating them, working to retrieve those that have been taken, and organizing and supervising excavations thereof. It is prohibited to give away any of them as gifts or exchange them. Attacks upon them and trafficking in them is a crime for which there is no statute of limitations" (Article 49; Government of Egypt 2014: 20).

On the international level, Egypt has ratified the most important international agreements on the protection of cultural heritage. It became party to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, in addition to its

accompanying protocols: the first of 1955 and second of 2005. It joined the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property in 1973, as well as the 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1974 (ICOM n.d.). Egypt also attended other major conventions addressing cultural heritage preservation and entered into bilateral agreements [Table 4].

In an effort to restitute stolen cultural properties, a new department for the repatriation of Egyptian antiquities was established in 2002. Its mission is to survey the artifacts that were smuggled out of Egypt and retrieve them through international law enforcement agencies like the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol). Over the past years, Egypt had successfully repatriated over 15,000 artifacts and large numbers of coins exceeding 21,000 (Sh. Abdel Gawad, personal communication, 15 March 2019).

7. PATH FORWARD

Prevention of looting and illicit excavation is crucial for the protection of Egypt's cultural heritage. In view of the fact that the majority of threats to Egypt's heritage have been linked to a disassociation between local communities and their heritage, it is particularly essential to raise their cultural awareness in order to fight these crimes. Most of the state's efforts are oriented toward foreign tourists and their privileged access to monuments and heritage sites, while large walls

are constructed to seal off these same heritage sites from communities in the neighborhood.

Local community perception and awareness of national heritage has been negatively affected by this dissociation, heritage being commonly regarded as a potential source of income, as testimony to a pagan past, or even as governmental property which is not part of people's memory and identity. Generally, individuals involved in looting and illicit ex-

cavations to procure saleable Egyptian antiquities are motivated by poverty, seeing cultural artifacts as a good source of financial gain. Many justify these actions, arguing that their ancestors' property belongs to them by extension. Many are unfortunately influenced by local stories about ancient hidden treasures that would make them wealthy very quickly. For many of those who have profited from illicit digging of cultural objects, it is not even a crime.

A profound change in how the public views its heritage is urgently needed. Their knowledge, understanding, awareness, values, and feelings toward their heritage need to be deepened through heritage education programs and special projects. Education and raising cultural awareness are crucial components in heritage preservation and management. Integrating heritage education into the education system and school curriculum will support students' understanding of the intellectual value of their past, history and identity, which in turn will reflect on their values and attitudes. Moreover, museums can play a role in raising local awareness of Egypt's cultural heritage and reshaping the inherited identity through various programs and activities that will keep people informed of their legacy and generate their engagement with and appreciation of Egypt's past in order to see themselves as "heritage safeguards".

Egypt needs to utilize the soft power of community archeology in transforming its locals from their current state of disassociation from their heritage to one of participation in archeological practices. This can be achieved through

community outreach programs, archaeological missions and other stakeholders involved in archeological excavations. The goal is to integrate communities living in the vicinity of a site into the daily work and promote their skills from random workers into field experts capable of protecting their heritage, raising awareness about issues surrounding it, and contributing to its management (Moualla and McPherson 2019). In terms of cultural tourism, this approach will undoubtedly contribute to the social-economic development of local communities.

Community archeology can also be extended to provide the community with publications and various types of media about archeological knowledge. This might include books, pamphlets, school-booklets, websites, public lectures, television shows, radio-programs and other methods that engage the interest of the public towards their heritage.

Gradually, this long-term goal of civic engagement of the community with archaeological resources will not only reduce incidents of vandalism, looting and illicit excavation, but also contribute to the preservation and interpretation of archeological resources and their sustainable development. Potential looters will become protectors.

At the international level, special education campaigns can play a positive role in raising people's aspirations towards their heritage and promote interest in the past. A primary example is the UNESCO World Heritage Education Programme, which gets young people involved in the protection and conservation of heritage sites (UNESCO n.d.).

Moreover, the World Archeological Congress campaign, which was founded in 1986, encourages public participation in archeological practices and supports archeological education (World Archeological Congress n.d.).

Both national and international authorities need to undertake awareness-raising campaigns against the purchasing of cultural property, classifying it as a penalized crime, but also informing the public of the ethical issues involved.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This paper provides a comprehensive overview of all types of threats affecting Egyptian cultural heritage. Rather than on natural hazards, the focus is placed on man-induced threats, traceable thousand years back: from medieval Islamic Egypt to the colonial occupation of the 18th and 19th centuries, not to mention the crises of the 20th and 21st centuries. After the 2011 revolution, and due to political changes, poverty and other factors associated with developmental challenges, the rate of loss of Egyptian heritage reached its peak. A major increase in looting and plundering of archeological sites and museums after 2011 is attributed to the economic downturn, security vacuum and the inefficiency of national and international legal measures.

Despite the fact that the current threats to the preservation of Egyptian heritage have captured the attention and concern of both local and international communities with many efforts being in-

vested in law enforcement, recovery of stolen objects, repatriation of pilfered items, and the improvement of museum and archeological site security, Egyptian cultural heritage still faces many challenges.

The protection and preservation of Egypt's cultural heritage requires a long-term strategy with preventive measures focused on the establishment of effective management systems, trained staff at museums and sites, proper application of legislative measures, and revitalization of the economy through cultural tourism, and most importantly, educating people and reinforcing their sense of identity by getting them involved in archeological and cultural activities. Intersectoral cooperation between heritage institutions and museums, national and international governing bodies, civic society organizations and the private sector is strongly recommended for the protection of our shared heritage and its preservation for future generations.

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