Actions toward Museums and Sites Crises: "Archaeology between conflicts and revolutions: Egypt"

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Since the earliest civilizations, art has played an integral role in the development of society. Throughout history, art has been produced and accumulated as a way to understand, influence and provoke. The history of art, on the other hand, has been plagued with theft, deceit and violence.

Under Napoleon, French armies hauled the Pharonic structures of Egypt to Paris, while the English were transporting Greece’s Elgin Marbles to London. During World War II homes were plundered and looted; in the cold war of Vietnam, Cambodian sculptures were being airlifted, and even as recent as the war in Iraq, archaeological sites were pillaged and artifacts have disappeared.

We have greatly appreciated the decisive effort with which the Egyptian authorities have reacted to the critical situation, affecting artefacts protection and security, after the revolution phase, namely:

- The well planned magazine areas compounds, built about 2006 and onward and scattered in the country, are now subject to increased and updated security measures, and/or improved maintenance, in order to receive the artefacts formerly stored in less secure various sites, such as tombs.
- The concentration of the artefacts in secure magazines has led to an improved security situation,
- Local reinforcements have been quickly installed in critical open air. The police presence in some magazines has been increased.
- The fact that many guards, belonging to SCA, are now armed has led to an improved security situation; the number of armed guards will increase, after the appropriate training in use of firearms,
- The rapid, exemplary and ongoing cataloguing of artefacts has led to an improved security situation, as noticed in museums and sites.
- The rapid and effective police action has led to the recovery of many stolen artefacts and to the condemnation of attackers to long jail terms.
- The ICOM publication of Egyptian Emergency Red List at Risk would help to recover more stolen artifacts in the near future.
1 **General Actions**

In order to properly frame the following general actions, it is appropriate to remember the so-called equation of defenses

1.1 **The equation of defences**

To guarantee a satisfactory level of security, a defense should be made up of:

- a physical defense and
- an electronic defense
- a monitoring and rapid intervention team.

The first one shall delay the penetration of the intruder; the second one will act as an early warning detector and will trigger an alarm, to activate the rapid intervention patrol (third step). If the time required by the patrol to arrive on site is shorter than the time required for the physical penetration of the perimeter defense, the attack will be clearly unsuccessful.

*Museum directors, security managers and curators are strongly reminded of the necessity to apply the equation of defences, when planning a security project for a collection or also single items, such as showcases.*

2 **Physical Defences Design**

2.1 **Steel grilles and outside bars**

Steel grilles and bars are a quite effective protection, because they delay the attack and extend the penetration time. However, it is necessary that such defences are of good quality, strongly fixed to the building structure. Also, steel bars shall be anchored in such a way, that divarication of steel bar is difficult.

2.2 **Glass partition protection**

Almost all museums have windows, whereas a glass pane is installed. Such windows are necessary to introduce an amount of daylight, in order to let the visitors better observe the artifacts on display.

A suitable defence be installed with three types of intervention:

- Installing an iron grille)
- Installing a multilayer smash resistant glass (provided the window frame is of sufficient strength
- Applying a polycarbonate self sticking transparent film.

3 **Electronic Defences Design**

According to the equation of defences, it is not enough to install a suitable physical defence, that may delay the intrusion. It is took in account the need to send an alarm to the appropriate authorities, as soon as a physical attack is detected.
3.1 **Wired intrusion detection system**
System is in operation in Giza site.

3.2 **CCTV systems**
Most new or updated CCTV systems now in use:
- High definition – HD cameras, digital video signal,
- Switches, able to reduce substantially the cost of cable installation and offer a very high degree of flexibility
- LCD monitors
- User friendly integrated control systems
- Long term digital data magazine
- Easy retrieval of stored images

3.2.1 **CCTV systems with Video Content Analysis - VCA**
It is install latest technology VCA, with appropriate training of supervisors and operators. Such VCA may be precious to improve the detection quality of video systems, helping the operator to identify a risk, without giving an unreasonable number of false alarm.

3.3 **The transmission of an alarm signal to a remote main control room**
It is imperative that an alarm from an intrusion detection system be quickly, reliably and efficiently sent to a monitoring post. Such post may be:
- A local police post,
- A local military manned post,
- A national control post – we will give more details on such a solution.

3.4 **The opportunity to create a national antiquities security control room- NASCR**
It is quite appropriate to send the signals not to a local police or military post, but to a national antiquities security control room- NASCR. Local police forces may have been neutralized by attackers (the Amenophis III magazine site case), but the fact that the NASCR has been alerted may activate a quick reaction force, such as military troops arriving on site by helicopters, or setting up police road blocks on preferred escape paths.

*On the 19th of March, a gang of about 15 armed criminals attacked the site, with a well planned and coordinated attack; the armed guards on two different posts were neutralized and three of them were injured. Two stone artefacts were stolen (the upper part of the statue of Egyptian goddess Sekhmet and a little black statue of a pharaonic god). The artefacts were quickly found and the criminal were condemned to long jail sentences (25 years) by a military tribunal.*
4 THE PROTECTION OF SHOWCASES
The showcases protection deserved a special attention, due to the fact that both electronic and physical defences are involved.
Actions were split according to reinforcing existing showcases or about building new ones.

4.1 The reinforcement of existing showcases
Especially in the Egyptian museum, existing showcases are mostly built with a wooden frame, with a front door, with an insert in glass pane. The door is “secured” with a poor quality lock and a lead seal. Such a seal may be easily counterfeited.
Apart from the obvious discussions to install latest generation showcases, it is possible to reinforce the existing ones with the following actions:

- apply a transparent film, shatter and smash resistant, on the glass pane.
- apply a vertical metal bar, fastened to two metal brackets, on upper and lower side.
- secure the vertical bar with a good quality padlock.
- all screws to be of security type, activated by a non standard screwdriver.
- apply a security seal, individually numbered.
- activate a procedure for secure opening and closing of showcases, supported by such security seal installation and recording.
- install a combined vibration and opening detector on the door.

All objects temporary removed shall be identified by a written document, inside the show case, with brief description, date of removal, reason of removal, approving authority signature.

5 DIRECTORS, CURATORS, SECURITY SUPERVISORS AND GUARDS TRAINING

A sample training syllabus for museum security officers covers orientation, human relations, enforcement, emergency services, prevention and protection, and special problems.

The objective of the orientation session is to acquaint officers with the training course, the basic expectations of the department, and the lines of internal authority and communication. Another session analyzes the human relations problems encountered by museum security officers and imparts the knowledge and skills required to deal with the various types of persons likely to be encountered in museums. The enforcement session discusses the legal authority security officers have to perform their duties and the correct procedures to follow when an offense has been committed. The session on emergency services not only considers procedures to be followed in an emergency situation but presents methods for preventing situations from escalating to the seriousness of an emergency.

5.1 Security manual and guards training documents
Authority believes that a good support documentation is of utmost importance in setting up policies and procedures for an appropriate security level.
The ample security documents, prepared by UNESCO. Authority submitted sample of such documents.

5.1.1  **Museum and archaeological sites security manual**

Authority has supported the distribution of a museum security manual, able to give to museums and archaeological sites directors and curators a complete guide to set up an appropriate security policy.

Such manual is available in English and Arabic.

6  **CULTURAL ARTEFACTS SALVAGE DURING EMERGENCIES**

It raised more than once the topic of the procedure to be put enforce, should an emergency situation affect the Egyptian cultural heritage.

To raise again the issue, suggesting the following points:

- Egyptian authorities shall plan for such emergencies and salvage activities,
- A squad of young and able people shall be trained do salvage artefacts, of different nature (painting, wood boxes, stone, metal, etc.) and affected in different ways (burned, dirtied, wetted, humid, etc. Egyptian Museum Friend Association (made up of 250 plus associates) could be easily involved.
- Regular simulations shall be carried out to keep the people involved well trained

Therefore, we strongly recommend that such a training programme be planned as soon as possible, pointing out the fact that such a programme also increases the Egyptian people awareness on the need to be involved in the protection of cultural heritage.

Changing attitudes, globalization, and the spread of both international law and civil lawsuits have emboldened aggrieved nations and individuals to demand the return of cultural property seized by military forces or through persecution decades or even centuries ago. Over the past two decades, the world of museums has become politically charged: Does a country that produced cultural property have the right to it, the heirs of the individuals who previously owned the works, or museums and their visitors from around the world who are given the opportunity to appreciate these items that illuminate our shared human history.

Claims for restitution often have a legal and moral aspect, so what is the law’s role in the current judicial paradigm. Are responsible, legal, ethical solutions to disputes possible?