

Transporting Artifacts: The Journey of the Treasures of Tutankhamun to the USA in 1976

Asaad A. Zaki

Department of Tourism Guidance – Faculty of Tourism and Hotels - University of Sadat City

Abstract

When the US Government concluded an agreement with the Egyptian Government in 1975 regarding the “Treasures of Tutankhamun” exhibition to be displayed in six American cities in 1976-1979, it was necessary to think about the transfer of the artifacts from Egypt to the USA. The transportation process of the artifacts was an intricate process which included different procedures in Cairo and in Washington. This paper examines the transportation procedures starting from the packing of works of art in the Egyptian Museum, writing condition reports for each object, shipping them through the US Navy, and receiving the artifacts in the National Gallery of Art in Washington to be unpacked and to begin their tour in the USA for about three years. This article investigates many of the relevant documents which are archived in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives in New York.

Keywords: Transportation of artifacts; Tutankhamun’s Treasures; Packing Tutankhamun’s objects in 1976; Shipment of artifacts; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; The Egyptian Museum

Introduction

The preparations of artifacts to be displayed in another institution far abroad is an intricate process which could begin months before the actual display date. The transportation process of works of arts should be well thought out.

The US Government got the right to display fifty-five pieces from Tutankhamun’s collection in six American cities in 1976-1979. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (the MMA), as the main organizer of this exhibition series, concluded an agreement on November 24, 1975, with the Egyptian Museum which included the procedures and conditions for transferring these artifacts from Egypt to the USA.¹ The Egyptian officials were keen that these priceless pieces arrive safely to the USA, displayed securely, and transferred back to Egypt in their same condition.

This paper focuses on the process of transferring the fifty-five artifacts of Tutankhamun's collection in 1976 from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo to the National Gallery of Art in

¹ Agreement between the Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Director of the Cairo Museum, on November 24, 1975, Box 43, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Contracts. List of objects (1 of 2). 1975-1976, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

Washington as the first stop of the tour of the “Treasures of Tutankhamun” exhibition in the USA.

The research examines the procedures for transporting these artifacts, starting with the packing process, which took place in the garden of the Egyptian Museum, the responsible packing firm for that procedure, and those who attended it from the Egyptian and American parties, passing through writing detailed conditional reports for each object and photographing them from different angles.

The article also investigates the means of transporting these works of art from Egypt to the USA, as deep discussions took place between Egyptian and American officials about the means of transportation. The administrators of the MMA suggested using regular commercial flights to reduce costs, while the officials of the Egyptian Organization of Antiquities insisted on using special flights to transport them.

The research also demonstrates the procedures for unpacking the objects in the basement of the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the press conference that accompanied this procedure to give more publicity to the exhibition. The research also discusses the minor damage that occurred to some artifacts during the transportation process and how to deal with them before starting their show trip in the American cities.

This paper depends on the historical and analytical research methods through deep investigation of many relative documents which are archived in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives in New York.[♦]

Packing the Objects in the Egyptian Museum

According to the Agreement which was signed between the MMA and the Egyptian Museum on November 24, 1975, the cases containing the objects to be displayed should be packed and unpacked in Cairo or at each participant museum in the USA in the presence of representatives of the Egyptian Museum and of the MMA. A protocol should be drawn up recording the condition of each object before the crates closure and on the opening of the cases.²

[♦] The researcher obtained a permission to examine the relevant documents in the Egyptian Museum archives, but the documents are stored in the Museum’s basement and are not classified. After an extensive search in several wooden boxes, the researcher was unable to find the relative documents. In a meeting with the Director of the Egyptian Museum, Dr. Ali Abdel Halim, on December 28, 2023, the researcher proposed a project to classify and digitize the historical documents of the Egyptian Museum to facilitate the task of researchers who are interested in the history of Egyptology and history of museology.

² Agreement between the Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Director of the Egyptian Museum, 3, on November 24, 1975, Box 43, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Contracts. List of objects (1 of 2). 1975-1976, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

The Egyptian Organization of Antiquities should designate an official who would be responsible for writing reports on the condition of the objects and for approving any required restoration or other treatment, "under no circumstances should any treatment be applied by anyone except with the permission or under the direction of this official." The cost of any conservation, restoration, or other treatment performed on objects in the exhibition before they leave Egypt or after they return to Egypt should be deducted from the amount otherwise to be donated to the Egyptian Museum at the end of the exhibition. The cost of such treatment while the objects are in the USA should be shared equally among the American participating museums.³

However, the MMA and the other participating museums split all expenditures associated with packing and unpacking in Egypt evenly, the personnel of each participating museum handled the unpacking and repacking in the USA; this was not a shared expense.⁴ Transportation of the exhibits within the USA should be agreed upon between a representative of the MMA and the Egyptian official in charge.⁵

The MMA officials were keen to benefit from the experience of the British Museum in organizing the Tutankhamun Exhibition previously in 1972 regarding arrangements and the process of photographing, writing conditional reports, packing, and receiving artifacts. When the British Museum had Tutankhamun Exhibition, all pieces were photographed just before its examination, these photographs were part of the official

³ The American participating museums were The National Gallery of Art – Washington D.C.; The Field Museum – Chicago; the Delgado Museum (The New Orleans Museum of Art) – New Orleans; The Los Angeles County Museum – Los Angeles; The Seattle Art Museum – Seattle; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art – New York.

Agreement between the Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Director of the Cairo Museum, on November 24, 1975, Box 43, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Contracts. List of objects (1 of 2). 1975-1976, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

Agreement between the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the other United States museums participating in the presentation of the Exhibition, 9-10, on December 19, 1975, Box 43, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Contracts. List of objects (1 of 2). 1975-1976, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

⁴ Agreement between the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the other United States museums participating in the presentation of the Exhibition, 6, on December 19, 1975, Box 43, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Contracts. List of objects (1 of 2). 1975-1976, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

⁵ Agreement between the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the other United States museums participating in the presentation of the Exhibition, 4, on December 19, 1975, Box 43, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Contracts. List of objects (1 of 2). 1975-1976, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

dossier, and each photograph was signed by all the committee members involved in the checking process.⁶

The British Museum officials advised the MMA administrators to take photographs for the objects from as many angles as possible. The British were credited with one crack in a piece because this crack had not been noted at the checking phase and it was not shown on any of the conditional photographs taken for the object. The British had to find another photograph elsewhere of the object showing the crack, "the Egyptians were very eager to be helpful and did not want to find damage," a British Museum official stated.⁷

In a meeting between the MMA officials and Abdel Qader Selim, General Director of the Egyptian Museum in November 1975, it was agreed that the objects would be photographed just prior to packing, these photos should focus on all views of the objects showing missing parts, damages, cracks, etc.; each photograph was signed by a restorer, a person in charge of packing, and a curator from the MMA. After shooting each object, a conditional report should be written and signed by all the committee members.⁸

A Committee was assigned to write a brief description and condition of each object; the Egyptian authorities appointed Abdel Qader Selim; Ibrahim El Nawawy, First Curator of Egyptian Museum; Salah Ahmed Salah, Director of Scientific Research and Restoration; Mohamed Saleh, Curator; and Aly Hassan, Curator, while the American side assigned Thomas Logan, Associate Curator of the Egyptian Art at the MMA; Rudolf Meyer, the MMA Master Restorer, and a representative of the packing company.⁹

The Egyptian officials requested the use of the British packing and freight forwarding firm W. Wingate and Johnson Limited in the process of packing the Tutankhamun objects in the Egyptian Museum at the cost of the MMA. This company was well known for its work on moving artwork for museums and galleries. It was the same company that

⁶ Letter from the British Museum to Christine Lilyquist, Curator of the Department of Egyptology at the MMA, on September 26, 1975, Box 44, Folder 3: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (2 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

⁷ Letter from the British Museum to Christine Lilyquist on September 26, 1975, Box 44, Folder 3: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (2 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

⁸ Letter from Christine Lilyquist to Thomas Hoving, Director of the MMA, on December 1, 1975, Box 44, Folder 3: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (2 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

⁹ Meeting with Egyptian Museum Personnel, on June 28, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

packed and shipped the Tutankhamun's objects displayed at the British Museum in 1972.¹⁰

On February 26, 1976, the MMA confirmed the use of the British firm W. Wingate and Johnson Limited. They expressed their desire to begin packing in July 1976 in the presence of representatives from the MMA and the Egyptian Museum.¹¹

Although the exhibition was planned to be displayed in November 1976 in Washington, the Egyptian officials advised the MMA administrators that the items should be brought to the USA early because of Ramadan which would start in mid-August, "it would be impossible to work during that time."¹²

Ian Pearson, Director of the firm of Wingate and Johnson, and two packers from the MMA arrived to Egypt in July 1976 to help him packing the Tutankhamun objects. Packing material arrived at Alexandria from the USA and was received in the Egyptian Museum in July 1976. There was no urgent need to wait for all the packing material to be imported from the USA because the packers used nineteen boxes which were used for the Tutankhamun Exhibition in London in 1972. They started packing the objects on July 6, 1976.¹³

The Golden Mask of Tutankhamun was taken out of its case on the second floor of the Egyptian Museum and was carried downstairs by El Nawawy for packing on July 21, 1976, "it was a thrilling and memorable occasion." These moments were filmed by CBS news for the US TV to be broadcasted on one of Walter Cronkite's news bulletin, "what

¹⁰ Application for Indemnification, Box 45, Folder 1: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Indemnity. 1975-1976, Thomas Hoving Records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

¹¹ Letter from John Buchanan, Special Assistant to the Director of the MMA, to Ian A. Pearson, Director of W. Wingate and Johnston, on February 26, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

¹² Application for Indemnification, Box 45, Folder 1: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Indemnity. 1975-1976, Thomas Hoving Records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

¹³ Telex from William Harrison, President of the International Business Associates, to Thomas Hoving on July 5, 1976, Box 1, Folder 11: Egyptian Museum. Reports and correspondence. December 1975-July 1976, Irvine MacManus records related to "Treasures of Tutankhamun" exhibition, 1975-1979, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

♦ Walter Cronkite: He was an American journalist and anchorman for the CBS Evening News from 1962-1981. He died in July 2009 at the age of 92.

"Walter Cronkite, 92, Dies, Trusted Voice of TV News," *The New York Times*, last modified July 18, 2009. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/18/us/18cronkite.html>

a marvelous publicity.”¹⁴ The firm Wingate and Johnson received an amount of \$10,710 for its services.¹⁵

Shipment of the Artifacts

Since November 24, 1975, it was agreed between the MMA and the Egyptian Museum that they would agree on the method of transporting the selected objects to be displayed to the USA and returning them back to Cairo.¹⁶ All shipping costs, from the time the objects left the Egyptian Museum to the USA and their return to the Egyptian Museum, would be borne by the participating museums; each of the six American museums would pay an equal 1/6 share of the shipping costs.¹⁷

The Egyptian Organization of Antiquities asked for an insurance license for the selected objects to be displayed in the USA cities. Thomas Hoving, the Director of the MMA, tried to reassure the Egyptian authorities stating that the exhibition objects would be covered by insurance under the Projected Federal Government Insurance Indemnity Act or under a consortium of Insurance Companies, he emphasized: “the Exhibition, in any event, will be fully insured at your evaluation from nail to nail.”¹⁸

The insurance should be against any loss or damage to the items to be included in the Tutankhamun Exhibition. This insurance should cover the period from the objects leaving the Egyptian Museum until their return to the Egyptian Museum. The MMA should have provided a proof of this insurance before the artifacts left the Egyptian Museum.¹⁹

¹⁴ Letter from Georgia El-Monasterly, Special Assistant to William Harrison, to William Harrison on July 23, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

¹⁵ Letter from Ian A. Pearson to John Buchanan on October 21, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

¹⁶ Agreement between the Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Director of the Egyptian Museum, 1-2, on November 24, 1975, Box 43, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Contracts. List of objects (1 of 2). 1975-1976, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

¹⁷ Agreement between the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the other United States museums participating in the presentation of the Exhibition, 6, on December 19, 1975, Box 43, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Contracts. List of objects (1 of 2). 1975-1976, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

¹⁸ Letter from Thomas Hoving to Gamal Mokhtar, President of the Egyptian Organization of Antiquities, on September 22, 1975, Box 43, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Contracts. List of objects (1 of 2). 1975-1976, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

¹⁹ Agreement between the Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Director of the Egyptian Museum, 2, on November 24, 1975, Box 43, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Contracts. List of objects (1 of 2). 1975-1976, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

The insurance figure of Tutankhamun Exhibition was 9.750.000 English pounds underwritten by the US Government by indemnity Act Public Law 94/158 signed by the USA President Gerald R. Ford (August 9, 1974- January 20, 1977) on December 20, 1975.²⁰ Without this presidential decision, “it would have been extremely difficult if not impossible to have mounted the exhibition,” Hoving stated.²¹

The US Government, represented by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities – the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities, issued a Certificate of Indemnity on September 1, 1976, covering the objects to be displayed in the Tutankhamun Exhibition. This Certificate was issued for the MMA as the indemnitee and the Egyptian Museum as the owner of these objects. The items were indemnified against loss or damage or stealing or suffering damage from any external cause excepting “normal wear and tear”.²²

The amount of indemnification was \$17.247.500 which represented 9.750.000 English pounds at \$1.77 per pound, the conversion rate on July 15, 1976, the day of the application submission to the Federal Council. The indemnity covered the period from July 29, 1976, to May 15, 1979.²³

There was a difference in views of the Egyptian and American officials regarding the transportation mean of the exhibition objects. The MMA officials assumed that the items should be transported through regularly scheduled commercial flights, while the Egyptians presumed the use of special aircraft, either one special charter or by one of the US Government aircrafts. In a meeting included El Nawawy and the two MMA restorers; Christine Faltermeier and Rudolf Meyer, and William Harrison, President of the International Business Associates which was the liaison office of the MMA in Cairo, on June 28, 1976, the Egyptian official clarified that the Tutankhamun objects were transported to London and Paris by special military aircraft.²⁴

²⁰ Telex from Thomas Hoving to William Harrison on May 24, 1976, Box 43, Folder 3: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Chronological. 1976-1977, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

²¹ Foreword to the Tutankhamun Catalogue, 4, on August 19, 1976, Box 1, Folder 14: Catalog. Editorial style sheet, correspondence. April-August 1976, Irvine MacManus records related to "Treasures of Tutankhamun" exhibition, 1975-1979, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

²² Certificate of Indemnity for an Exhibition Known as Treasures of Tutankhamun, on September 1, 1976, Box 43, Folder 9: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Contracts. List of objects (2 of 2). 1977, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

²³ Letter from Thomas Hoving to Gamal Mokhtar on October 19, 1976, Box 43, Folder 9: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Contracts. List of objects (2 of 2). 1977, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

²⁴ Meeting with Egyptian Museum Personnel, on June 28, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

The MMA administrators claimed that Gamal Mokhtar, President of the Egyptian Organization of Antiquities, El Nawawy and Selim knew since the beginning of planning for this exhibition that commercial carriers would be used to transport the objects from Egypt to the USA.²⁵

Mokhtar refused regular flights for reasons related to securing the artifacts and requested cargo flights which would cost \$62,000 per one-way flight totaling \$496,000 for four round-trip flights. Hoving assured Mokhtar that neither the MMA nor the other Tutankhamun Exhibition participants would cover this unexpected expense.²⁶

The MMA officials tried to push Mokhtar for a commercial flight to carry the objects from Egypt to the USA; Pearson, Logan, and Harrison held a meeting with Mokhtar on July 5, 1976, in which Mokhtar insisted on special flights to transfer the artifacts and official Egyptian courier would accompany the exhibits at all times.²⁷ He showed no objection that payment for charter flights be deducted from the exhibition proceeds.²⁸

Although the Egyptian side agreed that the American museums would not bear the cost of shipping artifacts from Egypt to the USA, the American side tried to save the Egyptian Organization of Antiquities as much money as possible. Thomas Hoving and Hermann F. Eilts, the American Ambassador in Cairo, suggested the use of a 6th Fleet naval vessel to pick up the single shipment.²⁹

In the event that the Navy vessel was not available, Hoving suggested the use of Pakistan normal flights; they received quotes from Pakistan Air for two cargo flights for \$50,000 each. Hoving indicated that he would attract the attention of the Ambassador Eilts to ask

²⁵ Letter from William Harrison to Gamal Mokhtar on June 30, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

²⁶ Briefing Paper: Thomas Hoving trip July 12, - July 27, 1976, Cairo, Moscow, Leningrad, Paris, 1, Box 1, Folder 18: General. Briefing paper Hoving trip to Cairo, Moscow, Leningrad, Paris. July 1976, Irvine MacManus records related to "Treasures of Tutankhamun" exhibition, 1975-1979, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

²⁷ Telex from William Harrison to Thomas Hoving on July 7, 1976, Box 1, Folder 11: Egyptian Museum. Reports and correspondence. December 1975-July 1976, Irvine MacManus records related to "Treasures of Tutankhamun" exhibition, 1975-1979, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

²⁸ Telex from William Harrison to Thomas Hoving on July 7, 1976, Box 1, Folder 11: Egyptian Museum. Reports and correspondence. December 1975-July 1976, Irvine MacManus records related to "Treasures of Tutankhamun" exhibition, 1975-1979, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

²⁹ Foreword to the Tutankhamun Catalogue, 4, on August 19, 1976, Box 1, Folder 14: Catalog. Editorial style sheet, correspondence. April-August 1976, Irvine MacManus records related to "Treasures of Tutankhamun" exhibition, 1975-1979, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

Sadat's permission to use Pakistan normal flights with American security officers on board for each one; they would be three flights.³⁰

On July 26, 1976, Eilts informed Hoving with the approval of using the US Naval assets in shipping the artifacts to the USA,³¹ but no Egyptian or American couriers were permitted on the vessel because of security reasons, both Hoving and Mokhtar agreed with this condition.³²

The shipment was handed over to an official of the US Government appointed by the American Ambassador in Egypt, who released this shipment to the US Navy, it was a regulation of the US Navy, which was agreed by Abdel Qader Selim, General Director of the Egyptian Museum, Selim only stipulated that this American employee should come to the Museum to sign the conditional reports of the objects.³³

In the last week of July 1976, the MMA representatives, who were working in the packing process of the objects in the Egyptian Museum with their Egyptian counterparts, were informed that they had two possibilities from the US Navy regarding the departure of the vessel from Alexandria: an August 2 departure or an August 20 departure. The American team including Ian A. Pearson, Christine Faltermeier, the MMA Restorer; Rudolf Meyer, the MMA Master Restorer; and Thomas Logan preferred an August 20 departure. Few days later, the American "embassy pulled the rug from under me," Logan reported and added that the Embassy informed them that August 2 was the only possibility.³⁴

The US Navy vessel planned to onload on August 2, 1976, between 2:00-3:00 PM. The packing team started their work on that day at the Egyptian Museum at 7:00 AM. It was expected that the work would take about one hour and a half to onload on the truck and

³⁰ Letter from Thomas Hoving to Gamal Mokhtar on July 18, 1976, Box 1, Folder 18: General. Briefing paper Hoving trip to Cairo, Moscow, Leningrad, Paris. July 1976, Irvine MacManus records related to "Treasures of Tutankhamun" exhibition, 1975-1979, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

³¹ Briefing Paper: Thomas Hoving trip July 12, - July 27, 1976, Cairo, Moscow, Leningrad, Paris, 2, Box 1, Folder 18: General. Briefing paper Hoving trip to Cairo, Moscow, Leningrad, Paris. July 1976, Irvine MacManus records related to "Treasures of Tutankhamun" exhibition, 1975-1979, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

³² Letter from Thomas Logan, Associate Curator of the Egyptian Art at the MMA, to Richard Morsches, the MMA Vice-Director of Operations, on July 23, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

³³ Letter from Georgia El-Monasterly to William Harrison on July 25, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

³⁴ Letter from Thomas Logan to Thomas Hoving on July 31, 1976 (Received August 6, 1976), Box 44, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." General (2 of 2). 1976-1977, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

the team was allowed an extra hour leeway for screw ups. Thomas Homan, the American Cultural Attaché, Pearson and Logan went to Alexandria by car to make the preparations to receive the truck which followed them with an armed guard and accompanied by a car with Egyptian representatives including El Nawawy. The US Navy gave the team a receipt of the objects.³⁵

The treasures of Tutankhamun were transported from Egypt to the USA shores by two vessels of the 6th Fleet; the U.S.S Milwaukee and the U.S.S Sacramento, which were in the course of normal rotation to the USA and consequently at no expense to the taxpayer.³⁶

Thomas Hoving praised the American Ambassador in Cairo, Herman Eilts, who proposed the possibility of the US Navy assistance in transporting the artifacts to the USA, "the Navy saves the day. My warmest and deepest thanks to you for your enthusiasm, dedication, and creative ideas," Hoving telexed Eilts.³⁷

As the Tutankhamun objects arrived on September 1, 1976, in Norfolk, Hoving asked El Nawawy to come to the USA early in September because the Tutankhamun cases should arrive in the first week of September 1976 in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, "He can come a little late if he wants to," Hoving telexed.³⁸

The Artifacts Arrival to Washington

The US Navy brought 39 crates containing the Tutankhamun objects. Hoving commended the US Navy reporting "the Navy did a superb job,"³⁹ and telexed to the American Embassy in Cairo that "superb work on the part of our great Navy."⁴⁰ The objects of Tutankhamun arrived at the Norfolk Naval Base, they were transported in a

³⁵ Letter from Thomas Logan to Thomas Hoving on July 31, 1976 (Received August 6, 1976), Box 44, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." General (2 of 2). 1976-1977, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

³⁶ Foreword to the Tutankhamun Catalogue, 4, on August 19, 1976, Box 1, Folder 14: Catalog. Editorial style sheet, correspondence. April-August 1976, Irvine MacManus records related to "Treasures of Tutankhamun" exhibition, 1975-1979, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

³⁷ Telex from Thomas Hoving to Herman Eilts, Ambassador of the USA in Cairo, on July 29, 1976, Box 43, Folder 3: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Chronological. 1976-1977, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

³⁸ Telex from William Harrison to Thomas Hoving on September 29, 1976, Box 1, Folder 8: Cairo. Telexes. February 1976-October 1977, Irvine MacManus records related to "Treasures of Tutankhamun" exhibition, 1975-1979, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

³⁹ Telex from Thomas Hoving to Gamal Mokhtar on September 7, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

⁴⁰ Telex from Thomas Hoving to Herman Eilts on September 3, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

convoy to the National Gallery of Art in Washington under the supervision of the MMA officials on September 2, 1976; it was the first place to display the Tutankhamun's Treasures in its tour in the USA.⁴¹

When the boxes were received in Washington, they were in fine shape, the MMA officials praised the work of the firm Wingate and Johnston which packed the objects in Cairo, "there were only minor flakings, etc., of the sort that one might expect." John Buchanan, the Special Assistant to the Director of the MMA, commended the US Navy who "did an excellent job of stowing and handling." Buchanan was surprised only when he noted that the lids of three crates were nailed and not screwed, shut, which led to some difficulty in opening these cases.⁴²

The unpacking process of the artifacts began in the basement of the National Gallery of Art on September 8, 1976.⁴³ Two Egyptian officials from the Egyptian Antiquities Organization attended the unpacking process of the objects; Salah Ahmed Salah, Director of Scientific Research and Restoration, and Ibrahim El Nawawy, First Curator of the Egyptian Museum, who slowly and carefully removed the packing and plastic covering the objects. This process was accomplished in the presence of the MMA representative, Rudolf Meyer.⁴⁴ Salah and El Nawawy were the ones who unpacked the objects, their work was described by Irvine McManus, Coordinator of Tutankhamun Exhibition, as "has gone extremely smoothly," while the conservation staff member from the MMA was available in case he was needed.⁴⁵

Reporters and cameramen from different newspapers, magazines, and television were invited to the National Gallery of Art at a news conference to observe the unpacking process of the treasures of Tutankhamun. The officials of the National Gallery of Art with representatives from Egypt and from the MMA started to unpack the crates slowly, "it took Howard Carter six years of searching and ten years of work to see the objects, so

⁴¹ Letter from Thomas Hoving to E. M. Towe, Norfolk City Police, on September 16, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

⁴² Letter from John Buchanan to Ian A. Pearson on October 5, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

⁴³ "King Tut's Gold Mask Uncrated in America," *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, September 9, 1976, 7.

⁴⁴ "Treasures of Tut arrive in Washington," *Egyptian Gazette*, September 19, 1976.

⁴⁵ Letter from Irvine Mac Manus, Coordinator of Tutankhamun Exhibition, to Rexford Stead, Coordinator of Tutankhamun Exhibition at the Los Angeles County Art Museum, on September 27, 1976, Box 44, Folder 8: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." General (2 of 2). 1976-1977, Thomas Hoving records, 1935-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

if it takes us a few minutes, there's no need to worry," Carter Brown, Director of the National Gallery of Art, stated.⁴⁶

This news conference was attended by Thomas Hoving, Director of the MMA; Mohamed Shaker, Chargé d'affaires of the Egyptian Embassy in Washington; Peter Solmssen, Adviser on the Arts to the US Department of State; and Ronald Berman, Chairman of the National Endowment on the Humanities which was one of the sponsors of Tutankhamun Exhibition in the USA 1976-1979. Shaker stated that these treasures were sent to the USA as a Bicentennial tribute to the warm feelings of friendship between Egypt and the USA and added "to us in Egypt, it is a source of satisfaction that the people of the United States will have the chance to see this unique collection of Egypt's creative contribution throughout history."⁴⁷

Hoving said that he was waiting for the arrival of those treasures with "delight and a brave twisted smile," because the MMA had a concession to excavate the same site of the Tomb of Tutankhamun before its discovery and they missed it until Howard Carter succeeded in unearthing these treasures in 1922. Hoving added that Harry Burton, the official Photographer for the MMA expedition who was working nearby, recorded the objects discovered in the tomb, several of these photographs were part of the exhibition.⁴⁸

Although the MMA representative who attended the unpacking of Tutankhamun objects at the National Gallery of Art, Rudolf Meyer, reported that the objects arrived in excellent condition, the Egyptian representatives, El Nawawy and Salah, had some observations during their examination. El Nawawy and Salah observed few minimum losses on a number of pieces including the "King Harpooning", the "King Standing on a Leopard", and the "Goddess Selket". They found tiny pieces of gold foil were attached to the packing tape and the mylar material.⁴⁹

However, the "Lotus Flower Head" had not been packed perfectly, the MMA representative reported that "nothing happened to the Lotus Flower Head." Referring to the views of the two Egyptian representatives, two new losses of paint, about one square millimeter for each, the MMA representative assumed that one of them could be clearly seen in the Burton photographs which means that this loss was not new, and he claimed that the second loss occurred in Cairo "since nothing could be found in the packing

⁴⁶ Benjamin Forgey, "A Golden Visitor, at Age 3.000: the Mask Unpacking is a Gallery Show," *The Washington Star*, September 9, 1976.

⁴⁷ "Treasures of Tut arrive in Washington," *Egyptian Gazette*, September 19, 1976.

⁴⁸ Grace Glueck, "Egyptian Art Glitters in Capital," *The New York Times*, September 9, 1976, 49.

⁴⁹ Letter from Rudolf Meyer, Senior Restorer – the Cloisters of the MMA, to John Buchanan on September 24, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

material.” Meyer suggested that this piece should be mounted firmly in the bottom of the box and a new and lighter case could be constructed in the future.⁵⁰

The Egyptian representative, Salah, collected some fallen particles of the ancient filling material of the “Cedarwood Chair” which had a tendency to crumble and should be secured. The Model Boat should be restored as it had flaking areas. The miniature coffin lost some of its black embalming material, El Nawawy said that it was common occurrence. One petal of the Pomegranate Vase, which was previously restored in the Egyptian Museum before its removal to the USA, came off during transportation. All the required restorations were carried out by Salah such as attaching gold foil on the mirror case, the pen case, and the papyrus burnisher.⁵¹

Conclusion

The inter-museum agreement of 1975 stipulated that the packing and unpacking of Tutankhamun’s objects should be implemented in the presence of representatives of the Egyptian Museum and of the MMA, the main organizer of the exhibition in the USA, who wrote conditional reports of those objects illustrating their detailed condition accompanied by photographs from different angles for the artifacts.

The packing process was carried out by a British company specialized in packing and freight forwarding firm called W. Wingate and Johnson Limited, which was the same firm that packed the Tutankhamun’s artifacts that were displayed in the British Museum in 1972.

After the insistence of the Egyptian Organization of Antiquities to transport the artifacts by special, not commercial, flights in order to preserve their security and to follow the same steps as the Tutankhamun exhibition in Britain in 1972, when the objects were transferred to Britain by military aircraft, the artifacts of Tutankhamun were transported to the USA in 1976 by US Navy vessels. The US Navy stipulated that the shipment should not be accompanied by any official, whether from the Egyptian Museum or the MMA. The Egyptian authorities agreed to this condition after an official of the US Government signed the conditional reports of the objects.

Although the MMA officials praised the work of the US Navy in transporting the artifacts, it was observed that some minor damages occurred in a number of the artifacts such as the “King Harpooning”, the “King Standing on a Leopard”, and the “Goddess Selket”. These slight losses were restored by an Egyptian restorer who accompanied the exhibition throughout its tour in the USA.

⁵⁰ Letter from Rudolf Meyer to John Buchanan on September 24, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

⁵¹ Letter from Rudolf Meyer to John Buchanan on September 24, 1976, Box 44, Folder 2: "Treasures of Tutankhamun." Exhibition traveling (1 of 2). 1976-1977, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

The study recommends that in the event of organizing external exhibitions for Egyptian antiquities, care should be taken to transport them via a safe mean and accompanied by officials from the Egyptian Antiquities Organization throughout the trip to ensure proper handling of the crates of objects during loading, during the trip, and during unloading upon arrival. The research paper recommends that these priceless pieces should be transported by special flights to ensure their security.

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نقل القطع الأثرية: رحلة كنوز توت عنخ آمون إلى الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية عام 1976

أسعد عرفة زكى

قسم الإرشاد السياحي – كلية السياحة والفنادق – جامعة مدينة السادات

المخلص:

عندما أبرمت الحكومتان الأمريكية والمصرية اتفاقية سنة 1975م بشأن معرض "كنوز توت عنخ آمون" والذي كان مخططاً له استضافته في ست مدن أمريكية بين عامي 1976 – 1979 م، كان لابد من التفكير في عملية نقل القطع الأثرية من مصر إلى الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. لقد كانت عملية نقل تلك التحف الأثرية عملية معقدة تضمنت العديد من الإجراءات سواء في القاهرة أو في واشنطن. تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية إجراءات النقل بدءاً من تغليف القطع الأثرية بالمتحف المصري بالقاهرة، وكتابة تقارير حالة لكل قطعة، وشحنها من خلال سفينتين من سفن سلاح البحرية الأمريكي، وانتهاءً باستلام تلك التحف في المعرض الوطني للفنون The National Gallery of Art في واشنطن تمهيداً لبدء جولة المعرض لمدة ثلاث سنوات تقريباً. يعتمد هذا البحث على دراسة العديد من الوثائق ذات الصلة بالمعرض والمحفظة في أرشيف متحف المتروبوليتان للفنون في نيويورك.

الكلمات الداله:

نقل القطع الأثرية – كنوز توت عنخ آمون – تغليف كنوز توت عنخ آمون 1976م – شحن التحف الأثرية – متحف المتروبوليتان للفنون – المتحف المصري بالقاهرة