

CyberScribe 166 - June 2009

In response to a request from an ARCE Chapter member, the CyberScribe is using a special bit of software to shorten the URL addresses...those long strings of letters and numbers that take you to a special website or news item. These complex web addresses are hard to type, prone to error and rather annoying. Miss even one letter, comma, period or backslash...and you will not get your desired reward.

As indicated, there are ways to shorten them to human proportions. This month the CyberScribe will put in both types of URL addresses, and is asking that you try out the new, short versions and make sure that they actually work for you.

In the items below, the standard URL will look exactly the same as it has in the past. This will be followed by another URL address with the prefix 'SNIPURL'. Just copy the short string of letters and numbers that follow this label...and the program should effortlessly take you to the actual sources.

For example. Here is a short version. 'SNIPURL: <http://snipurl.com/jnuff>'. Enter the string <http://snipurl.com/jnuff> ... ignore the 'SNIPURL' prefix...and you will get to your desired article with much greater ease!

Let's see how it works!

There have not been very many new Egypt discoveries noted in the world press lately...at least not many that really seemed to count, but the CyberScribe will bring you a list of fun topics that may amuse and educate you a bit.

One of the more important finds in recent months was announced recently by the University of Vienna

(<http://idw-online.de/pages/de/news316817>)

(SNIPURL: <http://snipurl.com/jnuff>) when they revealed the discovery of a very ancient cuneiform clay tablet. (The original article was in German, and was generously translated into English for us by Steve Harvey). Shortened for space reasons, it states:

"In the 17th century BC, as the Hyksos conquered all of Egypt from their base in the northeastern Nile Delta, Egypt fell under the control of a foreign dynasty

from the Near East. The capital city of this foreign dynasty was discovered in 1966 in a field of ruins named Tell el-Dab'a in northeastern Egypt by Manfred Bietak, Egyptologist at the University of Vienna. Earlier this year they came across sensational finds: the earliest Egyptian cuneiform document and a female horse buried in a palace.

“Prof. Manfred Bietak worked together with Dr. Irene Forstner-Mueller and a large team on the uncovering of the Near Eastern seat of rule of the Hyksos. In this year's undertakings, an extensive area of the more than 10,000 square meter-large palace complex was revealed. To the surprise of the researchers, the palace conforms not to the plan of an Egyptian palace, architecturally with royal palaces of Syria...the land of origin of the Hyksos.

“In the fill of the palace well of the middle to late Hyksos period, (they) found the fragment of a Babylonian cuneiform tablet from the last decades of the Old Babylonian Period (ca. 1600-1550 BC). "This represents the earliest cuneiform document yet known from Egypt, and attests to the unexpectedly wide-ranging diplomatic relationships of the Hyksos dynasty," explains Manfred Bietak.

“A further surprise was the discovery of a female horse buried in the palace, possibly the beloved pet of the Hyksos Khayan. This would make it the earliest horse burial to have been discovered in Egypt. ”

The CyberScribe suspects that all of us are aware that President Obama recently went to Egypt for a number of important diplomatic efforts, not the least of which was an attempt to begin the healing and reduce the suspicions that divide the Muslim world from the West. During the previous administrations, the Muslim world too often felt it was the target of hatred and scorn by America. Obama tried to suggest that this was not the way we view their world, and his efforts seemed very well received.

While he was there in Cairo, he had to become a tourist...and in the good hands of Zahi Hawass, Obama headed for the Giza pyramids and other sites. He had very little time before it was necessary to head off to other duties, but many news sources reported his Egyptian tourist rambles.

Perhaps the best and most balanced...and most amusing...was the report by the ‘New York Post’

(http://www.nypost.com/seven/06052009/news/nationalnews/bam_in_land_of_phar_o_172651.htm) (SNIPURL: <http://snipurl.com/jnw43>). With a little humor, they told us (abbreviated somewhat here) that:

“Hours after his historic speech at Cairo University, Obama traded his business suit and necktie for sunglasses, a polo shirt, khaki pants and tennis shoes as he got a VIP tour of the only remaining example of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

“At one point outside the Giza ruins, the president spotted a 4,600-year-old hieroglyph of a man's head outside a tomb.

““Hey, this looks like me!” he exclaimed.

“The president pulled over senior aides, including Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel and advisers David Axelrod and Valerie Jarrett, to inspect the stone engraving, which showed a man with oversized ears.

““Look at those ears,” Obama said. No one disagreed with the tourist-in-chief.

“Zahi Hawass, the secretary general of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, told the president he was admiring the likeness of Kar, “a priest, scholar and judge.”

“The visit to the pyramids and Great Sphinx was a rare break from Obama's business-only routine on foreign trips. Hawass said the visit was the result of “unprecedented preparations and security arrangements.” Dozens of security officers in business suits and dark glasses tried to keep up with the president's party. Obama's aides clutched bottles of water, but the president didn't seem to mind the 100-degree heat.

“Hawass, who played personal tour guide, took Obama to the feet of the Sphinx, an area that is off-limits to regular tourists. He said the president, who affectionately put his arm around Hawass' shoulders, showed great interest and repeatedly asked questions about the history of the sites.

“The president recognized that his every move was being monitored by the world's media. If there were no photographers around, he said, “I'd get on a camel.”

“Egypt's tourist tradesmen had been hawking merchandise that compared the president to one of the last pharaohs. The slogan "Obama: The New Tutankhamen of the World" appeared on T-shirts, metal plaques and other memorabilia in Cairo shops last week in anticipation of his arrival.

“At the end of the trip to the Pyramid trip, Obama said, "All right. I guess we got to go back to work." With that, he headed for the US Embassy in Cairo and then his plane to Dresden, Germany, for the next stop on his four-nation tour.”

A much more serious matter has again been brought into the harsh light of modern sensibilities and ethics. It has long been known that some, certainly not all, Swiss art dealers and dealers in antiquities have been providing the routes that allowed the disposition and sale of clearly stolen art works. It has now been shown beyond doubt that even during the Second World War, Swiss dealers were actively and eagerly trading in stolen art with the Nazis and were in collaboration with Hitler himself. Tough less loathsome, even today, stolen and illegally collected materials slide through less than honest Swiss dealer's shops.

Long deliberately ignored, this illicit trade is now being challenged, and Switzerland itself is being forced to close the holes and clean up the Swiss art trade.

A confrontational and forceful source that calls itself the ‘Looting Matters Blogspot’

(<http://lootingmatters.blogspot.com/2009/05/switzerlands-place-in-return-of.html>) (SNIPURL: <http://snipurl.com/jnx3e>) posted this challenging report of the Swiss problem.

“There have been some major returns of antiquities from Switzerland in recent years. The police raid in the Geneva Freeport in the mid-1990s brought to light the major movement of archaeological material from Italy to the antiquities markets of Europe, North America and the Far East. Photographic evidence seized in these raids has been instrumental in identifying objects that passed through the hands of certain dealers; many of the objects returned from museums and private collections in North America over the last few years were known from these Polaroid images.

“Since this initial intervention there have been others. In 2001 a Swiss-Italian raid on a warehouse in Geneva recovered some 100 archaeological items. In May 2002 three warehouses linked with Gianfranco Becchina were raided and some 5000 objects seized. A fourth warehouse in Basel was raided in September 2005. This haul included some 10,000 images of archaeological objects. Three truckloads of antiquities, about 4400 items, were returned to Italy in November 2008. (500 or so antiquities derived from other cultural areas apparently remain in Switzerland.)

“Such returns continue. In May 2009 Italian authorities revealed the fruits of "Operation Phoenix" that had led to the return of 251 items, worth approximately 2 million Euros, from an unnamed gallery in Geneva run by two Lebanese brothers.

“The raids have not all been linked to material derived from Italy. In the summer of 2003 some 280 to 300 Egyptian antiquities were seized in the Geneva Freeport and handed over to Egypt. The subsequent trial in Cairo convicted a number of people; the ringleader is reported to have received 35 years. A Canadian passport holder (and resident of Geneva) alleged to be linked to the case was detained at Sofia airport in September 2008 though he was soon back in Switzerland.

“Individual items have also been returned from Switzerland: the eye from a statue of Amenhotep III from the Antikenmuseum in Basel; an Etruscan bronze from a Swiss private collector; a marble lekythos from a Swiss-based dealer; and a marble statue of Apollo excavated at Gortyn on Crete and stolen in 1991. In 2002 a bronze statue of Dionysos was returned to Turkey (via the United Kingdom) after being seized in Switzerland as part of the assets of a convicted drug trafficker. Other recently returned items had passed through Switzerland. These include the "Morgantina" silver hoard returned from New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art to Italy, and the gold wreath returned to Greece from the J. Paul Getty Museum.

“Since 2005 Switzerland has taken a much more firm line about "illicit" antiquities. How much recently surfaced archaeological material continues to pass through Switzerland?”

A short announcement in ‘China View’

(http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-06/01/content_11470972.htm)

(SNIPURL: <http://snipurl.com/jnxeh>) showcased the ongoing new commitment

that Zahi Hawass has shown toward the research that will need to occur before the ancient Egyptians can have their DNA studied. The main reason for this work is, of course, the hope that the royal mummies of Egypt could at last be definitively identified.

“Cairo University inaugurated a new DNA lab to find clues of mummies' family links here on Monday. The lab is the second of its kind in Egypt.

““It is very important not to use the same lab to analyze the DNA of living and dead people as there may be confusion in the results,” Dr Hawass said. “I used to be against the DNA tests for mummies, because it was done by foreigners, and the mix of DNA of the dead and the alive could lead to inaccurate results”.

““We can not trust results from one lab, so we established another to make comparison and get precise data,” he added.

“Dr Sally, one of the five scientists working at the lab, said the DNA of the mummies is different from that of people alive. “It is very old and fragile, so we have to extract and multiply it before tests.”

“The priority of the new lab, said Hawass, is “to study the family tree of Tutankhamun, as we do not know who his father was, and where his mother's mummy was buried.”

“We will announce key information about Tutankhamun's family link next August, after comparing the results from the two labs, “Hawass said.

“The lab, which cost one million U.S dollars, was sponsored by the Discovery Channel, said Hawass, adding that the channel “will shoot what we will be doing.””

Dr. Emily Teeter of the Oriental Institute...and a frequent visitor to the North Texas Chapter of ARCE...now wears the hat of President of ARCE...the whole thing! In between her various duties, she and others at the Oriental Institute have recently published fine studies on one of the OI's mummies.

One of the reviews of that work was recently published by Emily Teeter and Michael Vannier (‘SPIE’

<http://spie.org/x35066.xml?highlight=x2416&ArticleID=x35066>) (SNIPURL: <http://snipurl.com/jny2q>). Abbreviated here for space reasons, they informed us that:

“We recently obtained two sets of computed tomography (CT) scans of the Meresamun mummy, which had been present at the Oriental Institute since the 1920s but was never opened. In July 2008, we decided to obtain an up-to-date CT scan, in anticipation of a new exhibit featuring Meresamun. The mummy had been scanned at the University of Chicago in 1991 with a single-slice CT scanner, so it was not clear what kind of ‘new’ information, if any, could be extracted. On the basis of an extensive review of the literature on mummy-CT scanning, we are aware of only one paper in which a multidetector row-CT scanner featuring more than 16 channels was used, and then only to examine the mummy's head.¹

“The mummy's casket was carefully placed on the scanner table. Both full-body and local scans were obtained, the latter of the head and shoulders, torso, lower extremities, and feet. Each of these data sets was post-processed using a Philips Brilliance version 3 workstation to generate multiplanar reconstructions (MPRs) and 3D images. The data was archived on CDs and DVDs, and analyzed using an Apple MacBook running the Osirix open-source operating system.

“Based on our experience with the 64-slice scanner, approximately 5000 slices were created, which were used to generate 1000 reconstruction images and sequences. Inspection of the results revealed many previously unrecognized details, including subtle post-mortem fractures of the upper skeleton, dental features, jewelry, radiodense inclusions in the casket, and degenerative changes in the spine.

“In September 2008, a 256-slice CT scanner was installed in the radiology department. The newly constructed room required inspection by the Illinois Department of Public Health for conformance to safety standards. In the meantime, the mummy was crated and returned to the radiology department for a second set of scans and became the first ‘patient’ to be examined with the new scanner (see Figure 1). We acquired seven data sets of the head and neck, torso, whole casket, lower extremities, and feet. The raw projection data sets were saved (~30Gb), together with approximately 25,000 reconstruction axial images. Subsequently, we repeatedly reconstructed the raw projection

data by varying the relevant parameters (e.g., center, magnification, filters, thickness, and matrix size), thus yielding about 100,000 axial slices.

“Using a Philips Brilliance 4.0 workstation (a major upgrade and better suited to the very large data sets acquired with the 256-slice scanner), we generated MPRs and 3D views (see Figure 2), and made numerous movie sequences. Post-processing has yielded edited files of the disarticulated skeleton, local and regional organ studies, overlays, and solid models. We also generated stereolithography files to enable life-size modeling. The results of the 256-slice CT scans far exceeded our expectations, and to date this mummy may have been studied more exhaustively with CT than any other (see Figure 3). Although numerous books, journal articles, reports, and news articles discuss CT scanning of mummies, no comparable examination exists in terms of the details found, number of images generated, technical specifications of the imaging system, and computer-graphics results (see Figure 4).

“The announcement of the new Meresamun exhibit excited significant media interest and resulted in numerous news reports (e.g., on CNN), magazine articles (most notably in *Archaeology*,² which also created a dedicated website), and many other outlets. A special monograph, authored by numerous experts and edited by world-leading authorities in Egyptology, was developed to complement and catalog the exhibit.³

“There are several unusual aspects to this study. Most important, all experts who worked on this project agreed to freely share all data obtained, which will be made available online (see Figure 5). To those who do not have access to a 256-channel CT scanner and unopened mummy in a casket, this therefore offers a unique opportunity to continue and expand our studies.”

“Emily Teeter
Oriental Institute
University of Chicago
Chicago, IL

“Emily Teeter is an Egyptologist and research associate, as well as President of the American Research Center in Egypt. She has authored numerous books and scholarly publications.

“Michael Vannier
Department of Radiology
University of Chicago Medical Center
Chicago, IL

Michael Vannier is professor of radiology and a pioneer in 3D biomedical computer graphics and visualization. He is editor in chief of the International Journal of Computer Assisted Radiology and Surgery. He is a fellow of both the American College of Radiology and the American Institute of Medical and Biological Engineering.

“References:

1. R. Gupta, Y. Markowitz, L. Berman, P. Chapman, High-resolution imaging of an ancient Egyptian mummified head: new insights into the mummification process, *Am. J. Neuroradiol.* 29, no. 4, pp. 705-713, 2008.
2. E. Bonn-Muller, A mummy's life, priestess of Amun, *Archaeology* 62, no. 22009. <http://www.archaeology.org/online/features/meresamun/>
3. E. Teeter, J. H. Johnson, The life of Meresamun: a temple singer in ancient Egypt, Univ. of Chicago Oriental Institute Museum Publ. 29, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-1-885923-60-8.
<http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/catalog/oimp/oimp29.html>”

Last month the CyberScribe related the odd tale of how the current Earl of Carnarvon attended an auction at the venerable auction house of Bonham's. The reason for his attendance was to attempt to buy a package of paper, letters and previously unknown photographs relating to the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun by his great-grandfather, the Fifth Earl.

Things didn't go quite as planned...

“Nearly nine decades after the sudden death of the 5th Earl of Carnarvon spawned the curse of King Tutankhamun, the legendary jinx is still playing havoc with the lives of the Earl's descendants. The latest victim is the current Earl, Geordie Herbert, occupant of the family pile, Highclere Castle in Berkshire.

“Geordie, 52, was at Bonhams auction house in New Bond Street for the sale of rare letters and pictures from his forbear. The £2,000 estimate was well within Geordie's budget, but he and other bidders were astonished to see the price soar to £12,600 before being sold to a casually-dressed Frenchman. Afterwards, however, the purchaser said he had made a mistake. He bid by accident, thinking he had secured the previous lot, a photograph of a Constantine gate, with an estimate of £500.

“Says Eton and Oxford-educated Geordie, who is opening an exhibition next month at Highclere dedicated to Tutankhamun: “I couldn't understand what was going on. I was prepared to go as high as £4,000, but I never got the chance as it soon went past my limit. Then it turns out the chap who bid for it hadn't wanted it after all.”

“The auctioneers cannot recall such an occurrence happening before. 'It's not like James Bond. You can't make a mistake with a nod or a wink. Everyone has a paddle with a number on it,' says a Bonham's aide.

“Bonham's has agreed to place the items in next month's sale where Carnarvon will bid again.”

Well, they are again posted for a sale on June 23rd. The CyberScribe will let you all know how it comes out, but here is a list of the sale contents. You can see why the Earl wants them:

“Papers and photographs of the Egyptologist Rex Engelbach, comprising:

“(i) Letters to Engelbach from Lord Carnarvon (22 March 1921 - "I heard the latest news from Luxor when Carter arrived here yesterday, he told me you would be kind enough to look after the tomb - please accept my best thanks - I hope one will find something. I had hoped to have had a little private conversation with you at Luxor & therefore I hope what I am going to write you will treat as quite confidential... We shall then have to find a new 'Master Digger' & I have hear rumour that Mr. Brunton might like to take it on. I would be no party to taking him away from Petrie if he wanted to keep him... but I should like to know what you think of him..."), Howard Carter ("...I am pleased you have managed to reconstruct the wee marquee. I failed to put it together. There is a small gilt tone which belongs to it - Rather like a box, which had (originally) a feather cushion on top, but which was completely destroyed by insects..."), Sir Aurel Stein (two autograph letters - "I have often thought back with gratitude to all you did make my 'globe-trotting' tour profitable in an archaeological way. Those were glorious days spent between Kala Siman in the North and Deir Sita in the South with ruins of all sorts to provide archaeological 'fests for the eye', as the Indian expression has it. I took considerable number of photos at sites which had remained beyond the area of the Princeton Univ. expedition's operations..."), Rudyard Kipling ("...I greatly want to see the new treasures of the museum: and with whom could I see them better than with you?..."), Flinders Petrie, under whom Engelbach had trained (series, including one written while excavating at Gaza - "I am now hard at it, clearing up all the flow of pots & bronzes that comes in, typing, & drawing all new types; beside

that doing much of the field plans, & the arrangement of the work. My wife does all the book-keeping & pay, so with 300 people slogging away we are kept pretty busy. Our five helpers each take a part of the superintendence. My girl is an omnium, does the best inking of drawings, doctors all the damaged folk, & takes turns at holding the diggers when other people are off..."), Carter's assistant Richard Bethell, George Reisner ("...I am deeply grateful for your intermediation with the Egyptian Army Air Force in securing for us the beautiful photographic mosaic of the Gaza Necropolis..."), Somers Clarke (long illustrated letter about their Egyptian Masonry), the Crown Prince of Sweden (series, about "acquiring duplicates for the Egyptian Museum for the Egyptian Museum in Stockholm out of the store rooms of the Egyptian State Collections" [for which Engelbach was made a Knight of the Polar Star]), P.G. Elgood, Dorothy Mackay, S.R.K. Glanville, General C.W. Spinks ("...glad everything went well with the Royal nocturnal body snatching..."), Enoch E. Peterson, J.I. Craig, Sir Alan Gardiner (series), Percy Newberry, Battiscombe Gunn (series), H.V. Morton (2), and others; together with a series of 16 letters by Engelbach to his wife Nancy ("...I took Ibrahim over to the Tombs of the Kings yesterday and saw Carter. He tells me the Times copyright is still on. They all leave in about a week as the steamboat is to arrive tomorrow. Carter tells me that Derry is to have the examination of Tut. I am glad as I cannot stick Elliot-Smith...")

“(ii) Photographs, including a series of snapshots taken in late in 1922 and early 1923 of the comings and goings around the tomb of Tutankhamun ("Tut's tomb valley of Kings Luxor Rex's back". "Gold Coffin of Tut Ankh Amun lying on sarcophagus", "Carrying box from Tomb of Tutankh Amun", "Luxor 1922 Lord Carnarvon leaving Tomb of Tutankhamun", "Rex & M. Lacan at Tut's Tomb", Engelbach standing outside the tomb, etc.); together with photographs of the burial chamber of Queen Hetepheres at Gaza as first found, of the Cairo Museum staff, the Unfinished Obelisk as discovered by Engelbach at Aswan in 1922, and much else

“(iii) Articles, papers and other documents, including a revised typescript of 'Tutankhamun's Tomb: An Account of its Discovery' ("...Carnarvon arrived on November 23rd, with his daughter, then Lady Evelyn Herbert, and the tomb was actually opened when I was away for the night at Qena...This was, strictly speaking, irregular..."), list of books in his library, various certificates of award for foreign honours, royalty statement for his Ancient Egyptian Masonry, etc.”

(‘Bonham’s’

<http://www.bonhams.com/cgi-bin/public.sh/pubweb/publicSite.r?sContinent=EUR&screen=LotDetails&iSaleItemNo=4313732&iSaleNo=16811&iSaleSectionNo=1&sServer=http://images1.b>

onhams.com/&sPath=2009-05/20/94354380-2-1.jpg)
http://snipurl.com/jnyyn).

(SNIPURL:

And now...we know for certain what happened to cause the demise of that most famous Pharaoh, Tutankhamun! Forget palace intrigue, forget hunting accidents, forget food poisoning from eating a bad hyena pizza. We have the real answer!!!!

‘Weekly World ’

(<http://weeklyworldnews.com/alien-alert/8218/mars-traded-with-ancient-egypt/>) (SNIPURL: <http://snipurl.com/jnz7u>) revealed what was so astonishing a series of events, that the CyberScribe must admit that these were possibilities completely overlooked before. We now know:

“Swiss scientists say they can prove beyond a doubt that the Lost City of Atlantis was on Mars, and its astronauts traded with ancient Egypt for thousands of years!

“Even more incredible, they claim to have the evidence to show that the legendary King Tut died spectacularly in a space shuttle crash with an alien crew.

““The Martian Civilization destroyed itself or was destroyed by a meteor while Egypt was still in its prime,” Dr. Stephan Weisz told a gathering of reporters and scientists in Bern, Switzerland. But the inhabitants left their mark both on Earth and Mars. Top secret photographs taken by America’s Martian probes clearly show the remains of temples on the surface of the planet.

““Egypt’s pyramids and the ability to mummify the human body are definitely the result of technologies that originated not on Earth but someplace else, in this case Mars. It is our belief that the Atlantans traded these technologies to the Egyptians for gold.”

“Dr. Weisz and a colleague, Egyptologist Conrad Vetsch, said that a recently deciphered Egyptian scroll first led them to believe that Atlantis was located on Mars. The scroll describes a technologically advanced civilization existing beyond our own planet “in the vast, black ocean of space.”

“It also alludes to space travel and the use of a shuttle craft to ferry manlike extraterrestrials from a space-bound mother ship to the surface of Earth.

““Researchers have long known that the Egyptians were exposed to flight because an elaborate model of what they called a glider was found in Tut’s tomb,” Dr. Weisz told the group. “In light of information gleaned from the scrolls, we now see that the glider was in fact the replica of a space shuttle. And it was just such a space craft that crashed with Tut aboard.”

“Not everyone attending the conference agreed with the experts’ theories. Dr. Seth Rausch, a German historian, thinks they went too far in calling the Martian civilization Atlantis. “I don’t doubt that the Egyptians were in contact with extraterrestrials,” said the expert. “But until we actually inspect the ruins on Mars, there is no way to know if they are the remains of Atlantis.””

And with that, dear readers, muses the CyberScribe...its time to close this month’s column.

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