2013

My visit to Egyptian Museum in Turin

Fathi Habashi
My visit to the Egyptian Museum in Turin, Italy in 2013

Turin (Italian: Torino) is located on the left bank of the Po River. The Taurini were an ancient Celto-Ligurian people who occupied the upper valley of the river Po. In the 1st century BC, the Romans created there a military camp. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the town was conquered by the Lombards, then by the Franks of Charlemagne in 773. At the end of the 13th century it was annexed to the Duchy of Savoy and became its capital from 1563, then of the Kingdom of Sardinia ruled by the Royal House of Savoy. The House of Savoy established its residence in Turin, where it remained until the unification of Italy.

Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663-1736) in 1706 led the Austrian army and defeated the French forces besieging Turin. The victory marked the beginning of Austrian rule in Lombardy. Prince Eugene was one of the most successful military commanders in modern European history. He was born in Paris and grew up around the court of King Louis XIV. Based on his poor physique he was rejected by Louis XIV for service in the French army. He moved to Austria and transferred his loyalty to the Habsburg Monarchy. He fought against the Ottoman Turks at the Siege of Vienna in 1683. He gained further success at the Battle of Turin and other battles.

Turin was annexed by the French Empire in 1802. After the fall of Napoleon in 1814, the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia was restored with Turin as its capital. In the following decades, the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia led the struggle towards the unification of Italy. Turin is the birthplace and home of notable politicians who contributed to the Risorgimento, such as Cavour. In 1861, Turin became the capital of the newly proclaimed united Kingdom of Italy until 1865, when the capital was moved to Florence and then to Rome after the conquest of the Papal States in 1870.
In 1899 Fiat was established in the city, followed by Lancia in 1906. The Universal Exposition was held in Turin in 1902. After World War I, a wave of strikes and workers' protests took place. In 1920 the Fascist regime put an end to the social unrest, banning trade unions, subsidised the automotive industry to provide vehicles to the army. In World War II was heavily damaged. Turin was captured by the Allies at the end of 1945.

In the postwar years, Turin was rapidly rebuilt. The population soon reached 1.2 million in 1971. In the 1970s and 1980s, the oil and automotive industry crisis severely hit the city, and its population began to sharply decline, losing more than one-fourth of its total in 30 years. In 1980, the Fréjus Tunnel connecting France and Italy was opened, making Turin an important communication center.

Turin is characterized by the straight lines of her streets, the unique arcades, the presence of replicas of Egyptian statues in many places in the city, and Via Lagrange in front of the railway station which leads to the Egyptian Museum as well as to other important museums and squares. Giuseppe Luigi Lagrange (1736-1813) was an Italian mathematician who was born in this street where his house was marked.
Arcades in Piazza San Carlo
The Sphinx at the entrance of Turin by car

One of the replicas of Sekhmet god in front of the railway station

Replica of Ramses II statue in Via Lagrange
The Museo Egizio

The Egyptian Museum is one of the largest collections of Egyptian antiquities outside of Egypt. In 1630, a temple to Isis was created in Rome and in 1753 King Charles Emmanuel III acquired 300 pieces recovered from Karnak and Coptos, which became the nucleus of the collection. In 1824, King Charles Felix acquired 5,268 pieces, including 100 statues, 170 papyri, stelae, mummies, and other items from the French General Consul, Bernardino Drovetti, who had collected during his stay in Egypt. In the same year, Jean-François Champollion used the huge Turin collection of papyri to decipher the hieroglyphic writing. In 1833, over 1,200 pieces were added from the collection of Giuseppe Sossio. The Egyptologist Ernesto Schiaparelli added to the collection during his excavation campaigns between 1900 and 1920. Its last major acquisition was the small temple of Ellesiya, which the Egyptian government presented to Italy for her assistance during the Nubian monument salvage campaign in the 1960s.
Entrance to the museum
Book of the Dead

The Egyptian Museum owns three different versions of the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, including the most ancient copy known. An integral illustrated version and the personal copy of the First Royal Architect Kha, found by Schiaparelli in 1906.

The Papyrus Map

The Turin Papyrus Map is an ancient Egyptian map considered the oldest surviving map from the ancient world. It is drawn on a papyrus reportedly discovered at Deir Al Medina in Thebes, collected by Bernardino Drovetti in Egypt sometime before 1824 AD. The map was drawn about 1160 BC and was prepared for Ramesses IV's quarrying expedition to the Wadi Hammamat in the Eastern Desert. The purpose of the expedition was to obtain blocks of sandstone to be used for statues of the king. The map shows a 15-kilometre stretch of Wadi Hammamat and the surrounding hills, the stone quarry, and the gold mine, and settlement at Bir Umm Al Fawakhir. It also includes numerous annotations identifying the features shown on the map, the distance between the quarry and mine, the location of gold deposits in the hills, and the sizes of the stone blocks quarried.
The map measures 2.8 m long by 0.41 m wide. The draughtsman clearly and carefully distributed distinctive features in accordance with the reality of a particular area, adding clarity by the use of legends and contrasting colors. In this respect, the Turin Papyrus may be regarded as the earliest known Geographic Information System. The location of the map on the ground has been identified and has been shown to be accurate. The map is not on display.

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