

Situation of Egyptian Government and Monuments after the Revolution, 2011

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First, I would like to thank Kansai University, Institute of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Properties, Professor Hiroshi Suita in particular, and all of you for giving me the opportunity to speak about the recent developments in Egypt, that took place after the revolution in January 25th, 2011.

Ten years ago I was living in Tokyo and working at the Al-Ahram branch about 4 years. At that time we were celebrating 140 years of exchange between Egypt and Japan. Now, Egyptian Air is making preparations to restart the flight from Egypt to Osaka directly, so we expect many Japanese people will come to Egypt. Because of this, many Japanese people want to know what is going on in Egypt, and whether or not it is safe to visit after the revolution. As same as Japanese people faced disaster from a big earthquake and Tsunami in 2011, and we faced big changes in 2011.

About the situation of Egyptian government and monuments after the revolution, there are some great changes. We currently have a new government and a newly elected President, Morsi, and we are celebrating this great change in our country. On the other hand, we are also in a difficult situation because the politics in Egypt is not stable yet and politicians are still competing with each other for power. Nonetheless the situation is better than what we had faced 3 or 4 decades ago during the time President Mubarak ruled. There are some problems we have to face in Egypt. Japan also has problems after the disaster. The difference between Egypt and Japan is that Egyptians enjoy the great change and new era.

During the flight to Osaka, I found a very useful report written by Marina Ottaway, Senior Associate, Middle East Program, published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington on October 26, 2012. The name of the report is "Slow Return to Normal Politics." I respect the writer and her article because what is written in the article is what I also think is the real situation in Egypt. We are inching closer to normal politics.

As I described, we have the new president and the government. One day, I was asked my friends what was happening in Egypt and I explained the developments in Egypt. On the day, there are three topics discussed in Egypt. Two of them are related to Egyptian cultural properties.

1. The Egyptian Tourism and Antiquities Police found 4 artifacts stolen from the store of the mission of Cairo University in Saqqara.
2. Police force prevented from a major theft: a failed attempt to the statue of Ramses II.
3. Morsi's first 100 days.

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About the political situation in Egypt, there have been huge battles between liberal and civilian parties and the Islamists. The civilian and liberal parties have failed to make progress so that civilians and liberals will be forced to compete directly with Islamists for popular support in order to gain power, or even to become a viable political opposition. But the Islamists are organized very well. When we voted on March 19th, 2011, there was a trend toward constitutional revision. Since then, the Supreme Council and Islamists have encouraged the Egyptian people to vote and change the constitutional law. At that time, about 74 percent of people agreed to change the constitutional law.

I want to show the difference of how the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) treats people. The picture (Fig. 1) shows a side of the confrontation between the Egyptian Army and the demonstrators at Tahrir Square. A woman is seen being dragged on the ground by the SCAF. At that time, people were treated roughly by SCAF.



Fig. 1 Confrontation between SCAF and the demonstrators

However, people started changing their feelings and thoughts little by little. In the picture below (Fig. 2), which was taken at Tahrir Square, you can see how one of the top generals is treating people. In the next picture (Fig. 3), protesters and the SCAF are celebrating the revolution together at Tahrir Square. Through these events, emotional ties between SCAF and the people developed.

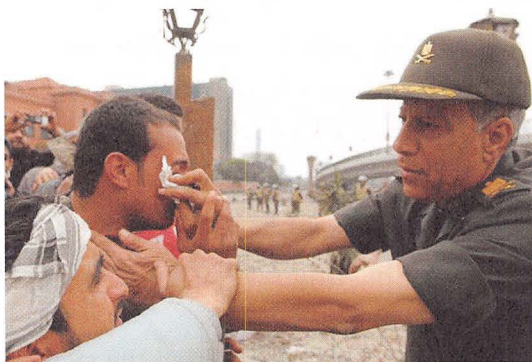


Fig. 2 The general treating people



Fig. 3 Protesters and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF)

After the revolution in Tunisia, which was the beginning of the Arab Spring, the revolution in Egypt and further revolutionary movement spread to other Arabic country such as Syria, Libya and Yemen. In terms of the price Egyptian paid, if we compare the situation in Egypt with other Arabic

countries, we paid less than Syria and Libya.

As I explained earlier, Egypt is in the midst of dynamic political change. It means the situation in Egypt is changing every day. Now there are two sides to the Egyptian people. One is the liberal and civilian party. The other side is the Muslim brotherhood and Islamist's party. During the revolution, we did not have any one leader because the Egyptians all acted as leaders. But after Mubarak left as President, both sides started fighting in terms of who would be the leader of Egypt.

There is an upper house and a lower house in Egypt. Before the revolution, the majority in both the upper and lower houses was the liberals so that we could find only a few Islamists in the parliament. However, 74 percent of people voted for the Islamists and not the liberals this time. The Muslim brotherhood has more than 80 years of history and they finally got the chance to lead Egypt. The reason they could get such a high vote rate is that Islamists are very organized and they have close relationship with people in each village. On the other hand, the liberals did not make a close enough relationship with the people in Egypt, which I believe was the liberal party's biggest mistake. Currently, the liberal politicians are paying the price and the majority of the upper and lower house has become the Islamists.

President Morsi received more than 50 percent of the vote. There were many candidates such as Ahmed Shafiq who was Prime Minister during the Mubarak era, Hamdeen Sabahi, Abdel Moneim Abo Elfetoh and Amr Mousa, who is most famous Egyptian Foreign Minister. From my point of view, the reason Egypt has faced problems after the revolution is that not one candidate represented Tahrir Square and not one was a revolutionary. Hamdeen Sabahi is one of the greatest candidates. He is also my colleague and we have known each other more than 40 years. He was always against the Mubarak administration and therefore, other people also supported him. Unfortunately he lost at the second vote.

I would like to show some pictures about the revolution in other countries. The revolution in Egypt was influenced by Tunisian revolution that ousted Zein El Abden Ben Aly. The Egyptian revolution took place on Tuesday, 25 January 2011. It was non-violent with civil resistance that featured demonstrations, marches, acts of civil disobedience and labor strikes. Each picture shows the revolution in Arabic countries. These events are connected to each other. Many people took to the street and raised objections.



Fig. 4 Revolution in Tunisia



Fig. 5 Revolution in Libya



Fig. 6 Revolution in Yemen



Fig. 7 Revolution in Syria

When Japanese say, “Arab Spring,” they may imagine something good. However, this feeling is not the same as in Egypt. The Arab Spring is dusty and people are facing many problems. Some people say the Arab Spring is different from what they expected. If the Arab Spring goes to the Islamists, it is not what most Egyptians wanted. As the Islamists position rose, protestors chanted throughout revolution, “Civilian rule, we want civilian rule. No to a military or religious state!” This is what Egyptians want and what Egyptians are looking for. People do not welcome that the Islamists take Egyptians to a religious state. Likewise, most people do not accept a military state either.

What is more, after the revolution, the rate of crime has increased such as excessive violence, torture, bank robberies, constant kidnappings, and many other human rights violations. In other words, most Egyptians have not received much benefit from the Arab Spring. But there are some points you can see in a positive way, which means there are both good and bad.

The Guardian, British news paper, says “Arabs are new pioneers for democracy.” We are now on the way to building an institute of democracy. Many of worldwide strikes are inspired by the Arab Spring nowadays. So there is a good image about the Arab Spring everywhere in the world. But people in Arabic countries do not feel as same as people in other countries feel.

I want to show a part of timeline of the revolution. This is the famous picture of camel (Fig. 8). There was a big fight between former regime of Mubarak and people who were against Mubarak. Fig. 9 was taken on the voting day. There are many people waiting to vote for constitution revision.



Fig. 8 Famous picture of camel



Fig. 9 Long queue for the vote

Next, I would like to talk about monuments in Egypt after the revolution. The main place of the revolution was Tahrir Square. The square is near the Egyptian museum. The head office of the formal regime was also close to the Square. That's why many people around the world were worrying about the Egyptian monuments and cultural properties. From these pictures below, you can see how dangerous the Square was. There was a battle between protesters and the army at the Square.

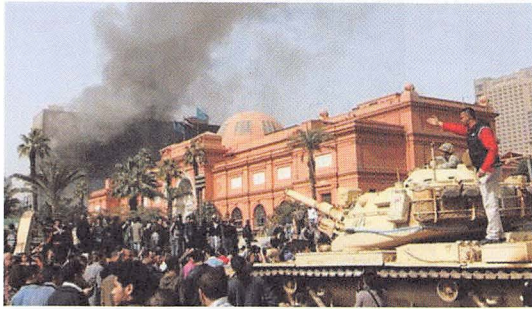


Fig. 10 Egyptian Museum



Fig. 11 The battle between protestors and the army

But I also want to say how much Egyptians are taking care of the Egyptian monuments. In Fig. 12, you can see Egyptians standing up and defending their monuments. During the Revolution, the former regime used the Egyptian monuments to show how dangerous the revolution was. But it was civilians who have protected a lot of monuments and cultural properties. That's why most of monuments and cultural properties are still safe.



Fig. 12 People protecting cultural properties

Unfortunately there are some bad cases. When you compare Figs. 14 and 15, you may realize there is a difference between them. The logo of Barkuk is gone in Fig. 15, which means someone stole the logo during the revolution. These things are actually happening in Egypt. But most of cultural properties are still safe.

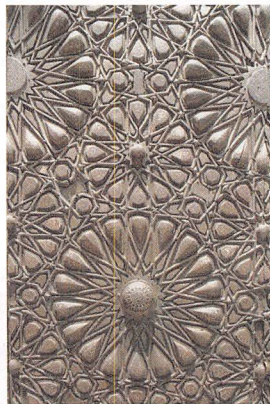


Fig. 13 Barkuk logo at the gate before the revolution

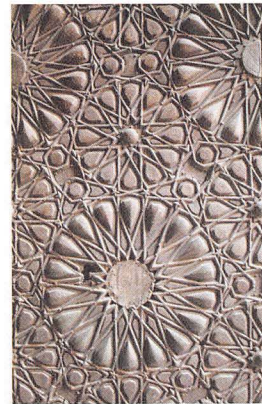


Fig. 14 Barkuk logo at the gate after the revolution



Fig. 15 Relief at Karnak

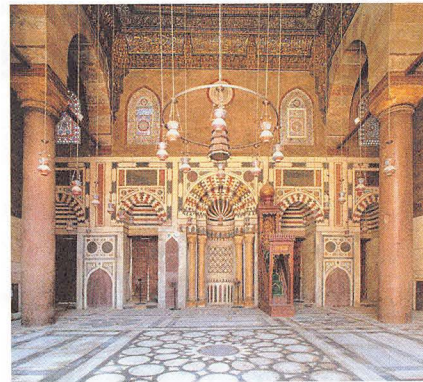


Fig. 16 Barkuk Mosque



Fig. 17 White Monastery - Sohag

I have spoken about the situation in Egypt after revolution, 2011 so far. At the end, I want to speak only a few words about the current situation of Egypt.

There are debates in Egypt at the moment whether Morsi succeeded the promises or not. During the election, Morsi said 100 days presidential program. He promised to deal problems below:

1. The continuous traffic crisis.
2. Mounting garbage and waste.
3. Fuel and bread shortages.
4. Lack of safety and security.

The biggest progress that Egypt has had is the security and the biggest problem we have faced is the former regime. There is no more place for the former regime but they still continue to fight for power.

Frankly speaking, I feel very proud of this revolution and Egypt. Ten years ago, when I came to Kyoto to join an international economic conference, no Egyptian attended the conference. When I asked why there was no Egyptian at this conference, they said Egypt is for the history not for the recent event. That was true. Many people around the world respect the history of Egypt, but not for the situation we had at that time. I am ashamed of that and former Mubarak regime at that time. But now we are very proud of what we have done. We are looking forward to seeing our future. Something changes every day. Although we have to pay the price like tourists and economic sometimes, it is still less than what other Arabic countries are paying for.

Thank you very much.

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