



How and Why has the Heritage Found at Luxor Temple Been Preserved, and What Challenges Does This Preservation Face?

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Literature Review

There are many books, online articles and journals that talk about the infamous Luxor Temple in the ancient Egyptian city of Thebes, which is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This temple played a significant role during the Opet Festival, which was carried out in dedication to Ka, Amun, Mut and Khonsu. The first book that I will be discussing which mentions the infamous Luxor Temple is 'The Egyptians' (**Aldred, 1961**). This is the earliest source that I have that mentions this temple, and it mainly focuses on the architecture of this site and how well it has been preserved- which in turn allows us to see how significant it has been to Egyptian heritage due to it being preserved effectively- as well as mentioning how this temple has provided archaeologists with both information and physical artefacts that show vast amounts of ancient Egyptian life- so much so that a 'Theban bias' needs to be avoided when describing Ancient Egyptian life as a whole (**Aldred, 1961**). It is also clear from this source that the remains of the Luxor Temple, as well as the Temple at Karnak, could be interpreted as being a 'city of giants' which has been destroyed. Another key aspect of Egyptian heritage that this source mentions is how many important leaders throughout history have come to find and discover remains of 'Pagan Egypt' (16). It is also clear that this source is a reliable source to use and reference throughout my report, as the author- Cyril Aldred- is an English egyptologist, meaning he would have a good understanding of the history of Ancient Egypt, and would know what he's talking about. Another source that touches upon the significance of the Luxor Temple to the people of Ancient Egypt is 'The British Museum Book of Ancient Egypt' (**Quirke and Spencer, 1994**). Although this source doesn't go into as much detail as the last source on the use and purpose of this infamous site, it does still mention how the temple played a key role during the sacred Opet Festival, as previously mentioned, so significant in fact that the Egyptians used to call it 'Ipetreset' (77), which translates to 'the southern ipet'. Although this doesn't seem that significant at first, it is clear that this shows the importance of the Luxor Temple to the Egyptian people, as they are directly linking this site to the Opet Festival, which was a significant part of the Egyptian calendar. It is also clear that this source could be seen as reliable to use throughout my project, as it is written for the British Museum itself, meaning that it clearly has to be factually accurate in what it's portraying. Another book that mentions how significant Luxor Temple was towards Egyptians is 'Egypt and the Egyptians' (**Brewer and Teeter, 2007**). It is quite clear that this source mentions Luxor Temple in great detail, including how restoration work on this temple took place under Horemheb (54), and building activity at Luxor shows how the resources of the temple were completely re-established. This will be very useful throughout my report as it shows how the temple was restored at least once throughout its lifetime, which clearly shows that it had significance to their heritage. Also, this source will be important for me to use as it is arguably the most-reliable of my sources, as it was published under Cambridge University, which clearly shows how well-written this source is, as well as how it covers a large amount of detail about Luxor, clearly showing how much they know about this ancient site. It is

also apparent that the book entitled 'The Egyptian World' (**Wilkinson, 2007**) uses the Temple at Luxor as one of the various examples to show how the Egyptians used their Temples for processional reasons, as this book mentions how there was a 'processional route' (376) found at the Temple, and processions were very significant to the heritage of the Ancient Egyptians.

Report

There are many temples that were built during the Ancient Egyptian time period. These include infamous temples such as the Temple of Horus at Edfu and the Temple at Karnak. However, arguably the most famous of these temples is the Temple at Luxor, which is situated merely 1.7 miles south of the Karnak Temple in the Ancient Egyptian capital city, Thebes. Although the Luxor temple isn't as well preserved as the others previously mentioned, it does provide us with vast amount of knowledge about various aspects of Ancient Egyptian life and heritage. The temple itself was under construction in 1393BC under Amenhotep III, but was added to throughout the reigns of 3 other Egyptian pharaohs (Tutankhamun, Horemheb and Ramesses II) (**Millmore, 2018**) and is one of Egypt's largest temples, standing at 850 ft long and 213ft wide (**Sullivan, 2001**).

As stated in my literature review above, it is apparent that there are many sources that express how valuable this infamous temple is to archaeologists, for many reasons. Firstly, it is clear that it provides us with a tremendous amount of knowledge about Egyptian life- from the temple's key role in the Opet Festival, which was a very important festival throughout Ancient Egypt (**Quirke and Spencer, 1994**), to how both the Luxor Temple and the Karnak Temple were seen as a 'city of giants' (**Aldred, 1961**). Another way in which it is clear that this site is valuable to archaeologists is the fact that it was declared a UNESCO site in 1979 (**UNESCO.com, 2018**) This clearly shows how it can be seen as a valuable asset to archaeologists as UNESCO's aim is to preserve sites that have historical value, so that they don't get destroyed through either government choice or vandalism. It is also clear from UNESCO's website that this site was preserved as it could be seen as 'cultural', meaning that it can tell us about various aspects of cultural themes and purposes during Ancient Egypt, as previously mentioned. It is also worth noting, however, that Luxor Temple itself hasn't been declared as a UNESCO site itself, rather it has been categorised under 'Ancient Thebes with it's Necropolis' along with the Temple at Karnak. Thebes was seen as the capital city of Ancient Egypt, so the fact that the whole city has been declared a UNESCO site shows not only how both of the temples are valuable to archaeologists, but how significant the surrounding area is too. The city itself is roughly 36 square miles in size (**Dorman, 2002**) and was split into two sections, this split being done by the River Nile. The eastern side of this city was dedicated to temples to the gods- including my mentioned site of Luxor and Karnak, which were both dedicated to Ra,

Amun, Mut and Khonsu during the Opet festival- as well as being the main part of this ‘city of giants’ (Aldred, 1961). However, the western side of this city was dedicated to death and the afterlife. This was known as the Theban Necropolis and features many famous mortuary temples, including those of Ramesses II (also known as the Ramesseum) and Amenhotep III (which also features the Colossi of Memnon). This city division could also be linked to the Egyptian thesis of the ‘afterlife’ being in the west, meaning that when people passed away in Ancient Egypt, their soul would travel through to the west, as long as it passed through the Underworld. It is clear that the world heritage site of Ancient Thebes and its Necropolis has been deemed valuable appropriately by UNESCO, as it has helped archaeologists to gain a large insight into Ancient Egyptian life and culture.

There are many ways in which the Temple of Luxor itself is valued to archaeologists and people of the wider community. For example, it is apparent that this temple is very valuable towards the general public and tourists as, firstly, it has been described by many as one of Egypt’s most beautiful temples (**Gebriel, 2018**). This clearly shows how it is valuable as, once people hear it has been given this title, they are more likely to want to visit the site, thus bringing in more money from tourism for the Egyptian government. This point could also be supported by the fact that there is a ‘Sound and Light show’ hosted at the Temple every night, in order to further show off its divine beauty and ancient heritage. It is also clear that this site is valuable to the general public and tourists due to there are guided tours of the Temple itself being sold to tourists for anything between \$10 (**egypt.travel, 2017**) and \$40 (**emotoursegypt.com, 2018**). The fact that the Egyptian government are able to profit from an ancient site alone also supports the point of it being valuable to tourists, as they are also willing to pay these prices to receive a tour of the temple, and to say they’ve been there. Although it is possible for visitors to access and walk around the temple complex without the assistance of a guided tour, these tours provide the payers with a greater knowledge of the site from experts, which they most likely would not receive if they don’t hire a tour guide. This clearly shows how the site is valuable towards the public as these tours provide them with extensive knowledge on Ancient Egyptian heritage and lifestyle choices. It is also clear that this temple complex could also be valuable for archaeologists and professionals who focus on learning about the Ancient Egyptians. This could be for a variety of reasons. For one, it is apparent that this temple holds many features that can be seen across all Ancient Egyptians temples, such as those of Horus at Edfu and Hathor at Dendera. This clearly shows that the aspects that went into building and creating an Egyptian temple is similar and constant, and Luxor Temple has many greatly-preserved features that help archaeologists and egyptologists to see what a typical temple looked like. For example, this temple features 2 25m tall obelisks and 2 24m high pylons (**Millmore, 2018**). From my own work, I know that these features are two of many that are consistent across Egyptian temples. This shows that Luxor temple is seen as being very valuable to professionals who want to gain an even deeper insight into what Egyptian temple complexes looked like. Another way in which

it is apparent that this site is valuable to archaeologists is the fact that it was built and adapted throughout the reigns of 4 different emperors. This means that, throughout the temple's construction and modification, styles from 4 different eras in Egyptian life were added to it. For example, from my personal knowledge I know that the styles of tomb and temple wall paintings changed between the reigns of Amenhotep III and Tutankhamun, who were both emperors that oversaw changes and adaptations being made to the temple, so it is possible that this temple would feature artwork styles from both time periods. This would allow studying professionals to gain an insight into the various different artwork styles of the ancient world, which all make up Ancient Egyptian heritage.

It is also clear that in modern times, the use and purpose of Luxor Temple has changed significantly since its creation. This is apparent as Luxor Temple was initially built to be a key feature during the Opet Festival in Ancient Egypt. However, since the decline of the Egyptian Kemetic Religion climaxed in the 4th century AD when Constantine made Christianity the only legal religion in Egypt, the temple has been seen as more of a tourist attraction and museum, rather than being used for its original purpose. Despite this, various organisations have worked together alongside the Egyptian government in order to ensure that this ancient site maintains its heritage and as authentic as possible. On the other hand, it is also clear that this site has been used as the grounds for a handful of other religious buildings since its initial creation. For example, in the Christian era of Egypt, the Hypostyle Hall of Luxor temple was converted into a Christian Church, and another Coptic church was built to the west of this infamous site. The remains of both of these can still be found today (**Millmore, 2018**). Another key religious building that remains on the site of the Luxor temple is an Islamic mosque that was situated on top of the rubble that the temple was buried under. The remains of this mosque also are still there to this day (**Millmore, 2018**), highlighting just how significant this site is not only to the heritage of the Ancient Egyptians, but to the heritage of the people who lived on that land throughout history. A key moment that emphasised the significance that this historic site has on people flourished in 2013 when a young Chinese tourist published a picture online showing how he had carved his name into a sculpture found at this temple. This sparked global outrage across both professionals in the field and amateurs with an interest in Egyptian life, amassing over 90,000 online interactions (**Wong, 2013**) and leading to a debate on whether the Egyptian government should put increased limitations on tourism throughout their ancient sites, but this debate has come with no prevail as of yet. Since its discovery, many experts have tried to remove this carving completely from the structure, but some remnants of the vandal's work still remains to this day, as the usual form of cleaning isn't possible in this case, due to the extreme age of the temple. However, it could be argued as to whether this carving could also count as heritage towards the site, as it marks a moment that happened in history, and that marking will remain for as long as the site itself does, despite all of the backlash that it brought along with its creation. It is also worth noting that there are still a small portion of people across the world who still are

heavily involved with and follow the Ancient Egyptian religion. These people are known as Kemetics and the contemporary practice of kemetism began in 1988 and has amassed over 100,000 followers online (**Krogh and Pillifant, 2004**). It is clear that these people would still also see the Temple of Luxor as being a place of worship rather than just a museum for Egyptian heritage, despite the fact that the people who follow kemetism generally practice this religion in the comfort of their own homes, and tend not to venture out to carry out their religious practices as the Ancient Egyptians would have. Despite this, it is rather clear that they would too be aggravated by the defacement of such an important aspect of their born-again religion, as this temple is a prominent feature of Egyptian heritage. Since this defacement occurred, there have been tighter restrictions put in place as to where and what the tourists can do at this site to ensure that this doesn't happen again, without also completely removing the tourists' rights to see as much of the ancient site as they can. This involves increased security and observation at the site, as well as more opportunities for tours being issued.

It is quite clear that modern viewpoints of this ancient heritage site generally revolve more around tourism and 'showing off' the temple, and many people want to be associated with both this site in particular and Ancient Egyptian heritage all together. This is apparent in many aspects. Firstly, it is clear that one of the two Obelisks that were originally found at this heritage site has been moved and can now be found on display in Paris, in the centre of Place de la Concorde. This was transported in 1833 and was moved into its current location under King Louis-Phillipe of France (**archaeology-travel.com, 2018**). This is similar to what has happened with Cleopatra's Needle in London, which was taken from Alexandria in 1877. This Obelisk can be found in the centre of Paris and is a remarkable tourist attraction, so much so that the Obelisk itself has been named a *Monument Historique* in France, which is a procedure where National Heritage is named to a site due to its importance to France's cultural heritage (**Bady, 1998**). The fact that this obelisk is described as being a part of France's heritage could raise some questioning, as it is clearly apart of Egypt's heritage also, and there could be arguments as to whether the obelisk should be given back to Egypt, despite the fact that it was given to France by the ruler of Egypt at the time, Muhammad Ali Pasha. However, this man was clearly in charge of Egypt 3000 years after the Luxor Temple was built, so some would argue that he had no right in choosing what was done to the heritage that wasn't from his culture at all. On the other hand, some would disagree with this and say he had every right to do so, as it was the heritage of the country he lived in and ruled, so would be able to dictate what happened to anything Egyptian at the time of his reign. This brings up the conversation about repatriation, and whether a country-like 19th century Egypt- has a say in what happens to historical artefacts from their country's past- in this case Ancient Egypt (**dictionary.cambridge.org, 2018**). Another clear example of people wanting to be associated with this historic site is the fact that a statue and shrine dedicated to Alexander the Great from the 4th century BC. This clearly shows how he wanted to be associated with such an infamous ancient culture, as he was arguably the most powerful man of

his time, and if he wanted to be associated with such a culture and its heritage, then it clearly shows how valuable this association could be. Another modern trend that could be seen as

There are many challenges, however, that the Temple of Luxor and all of its integral heritage faces. For example, in 2015, there was a suicide bombing that occurred outside of Karnak Temple, which is only 1.7 miles north of Luxor Temple. This clearly brought an eye to the aspect of terrorism affecting the infamous temple and causing it to lose all of its heritage. Luckily, this suicide bombing caused no fatalities to tourists or policemen, and none of Karnak Temple was damaged or lost (**Loveluck and Samaan, 2015**). However, this still stirred uproar in the Egyptian community, and led to heightened security and decreased tourism levels to the site, which have still yet to rise back to what they were. It is also clear how some archaeological organisations- such as Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA)- carry out various forms of desktop survey such as satellite imagery in order to record information about archaeological sites in this area that are under threat from agriculture, conflict, construction, looting and natural erosion (**eamena.arch.ox.ac.uk, 2016**). Hopefully, with the works of these organisations together alongside the Egyptian government, there is a low chance of anything like this event happening again, and potentially cause us to lose centuries of cultural heritage. The aspect of terrorism causing the loss of heritage isn't as far-fetched as it first seems however, as there are many examples of where terror attacks like the 2015 one led to heritage being lost. For example, in 2001 the Taliban completely destroyed the Buddha statues that were found in Bamiyan, which had been there since around 500 CE. This sparked major outrage worldwide, as obviously once they were destroyed, the physical statues couldn't be brought back, so the heritage was lost. However, in 2015, a Chinese couple donated a projector in order to cast a 3D light projection of what the Buddha statues would have looked like upon their creation, complete with their original colour and size (**Russon, 2015**). Although this was only projected for one night, it goes to show the impact that modern technology has provided archaeologists in order to prevent past cultural heritage being lost completely, even if the physical site gets destroyed. This is also apparent at Luxor Temple, where various virtual 3D reconstructions of the infamous site (**Millmore, 2018**) allows hobbyists to explore the ancient temple from the comfort of their own home, which also ensures that- if another event such as the one that occurred in 2015 were to happen again at Luxor, but to a more catastrophic degree- then the heritage of the site would not be completely lost.

It is rather clear that there have been many actions and phases put in place in order to preserve both the tangible and intangible heritage that Luxor Temple has to offer, ranging from various archaeological organisations such as UNESCO and EAMENA keeping an eye on the site to ensure no damage is done to it, whether that be human made or natural, to an increasing amount of guided tours being taken around the temple daily, or to the attempted removal of vandalism or damage if it has taken place. These have been carried out as it is rather clear- from

what has previously been said- that Luxor Temple has provided archaeologists with increased information about Ancient Egyptian heritage, tourists with the chance to see Egypt's 'most beautiful' feature (Gebril, 2018) or maybe even providing a small handful of Kemetic followers with a sense of *communitas* upon visiting or even talking about the site. With all of this being taken into account, it is obvious that no matter what happens to the physical site itself, various virtual 3D reconstructions have made it possible for the site to live on for as long as possible, providing us with endless amounts of insight into the heritage of not only the Ancient Egyptians themselves, but of the many communities that have resided on the east bank of the River Nile in one of the most historically impactful places on Earth.

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