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## • The Petrie Museum

The Petrie Museum has and continues to pioneer the use of digital technologies to make material heritage more accessible to the public.

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# The Future of the Ancient World

## [Guest Digital Curator – Mostafa Allam](#)

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Mostafa Allam

Mostafa is a student at London Business School and founding member of the Association of Graduate Egyptian Students. He has been living in London since 2010, and is planning to return to Egypt upon completion of his studies.

Read Mostafa's essay *My "Return of Sinuhe" to Egypt*

Mostafa's reflections related to object UC32773 'The Tale of Sanehat' in the Petrie Collection and on the experience of being an Egyptian in London:

## My “Return of Sinuhe” to Egypt

From the age of 16, I have packed my bags and set sail to travel the world, not to return home until I have gathered the seeds of knowledge that allow me to cultivate Egypt’s fertile land. On my journey, I have gained wisdom in many realms of life. Simultaneously, the longer I’ve distanced myself from home, the more I began to yearn for my return. I find my inspiration and consolation in the Tale of Sinuhe, the ancient Egyptian whom I follow his footsteps today.

Like Sinuhe, who departed Egypt in approximately 1800 BC for Syria, following the death of Pharaoh Amenemhat, I also sought to leave home to gain a global perspective. My journey has since taken me to the U.S., China, Turkey, and now the U.K. And like Sinuhe, my quest throughout all of my journeys has been to explore the universal nature of humanity and discover what it means to be Egyptian.

The Tale of Sinuhe has become more of a legendary fiction in which the protagonist goes through various struggles likened to those in the Odyssey. But at the same time, the story has various parallels with allegories in Biblical texts. The juxtapositions between freewill and divine foreordination, good and evil, mysticism and the mundane are all themes of Sinuhe’s tale and to which I have tried to tap into during my travels.

But the one notion that really resonates within me is the thought of returning to Egypt. In the Tale, Sinuhe exclaims, “May God pity me...may he hearken to the prayer of one far away! May God have mercy on me. May I be conducted to the city of eternity!” It is this divine longing for Egypt that I have always felt, but have never been able to explain as well as the Tale of Sinuhe does. I remember reading somewhere that an Egyptian may travel the world, but nowhere will be home for him except Egypt. I guess this is part of the divine destiny Sinuhe alludes to in his tale and is part of the ancient wisdom one can take away from this story.

As I look forward to returning to Egypt this summer after completing my graduate education abroad, the sense of elation within me is similar to that of someone who has been in exile for a lifetime and has finally been granted to return home. This elation is splendidly articulated in Sinuhe’s Tale. With Egypt entering a new era, I am hopeful that I will be returning to an Egypt distinguished from what I left five years ago by freedom, justice, and egalitarianism.

I hope this account of how I can connect to Sinuhe does justice to paying a humble tribute to the magnificent work of literature and history housed in London’s Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archeology. And I hope, like myself, many Egyptians can be inspired by the Sinuhe’s love and devotion to his motherland.

Read Mostafa's essay *Egypt's Gifts to the World*

### **Egypt's Gifts to the World**

Despite not being as acquainted with my nation's ancient history as I should, I have always made it a point to connect with it whenever I have the chance to. There's something special about being an Egyptian; wherever you go, there's always a piece of your identity, heritage, and history that seems to be waiting for you. In New York's Metropolitan Museum, it's the Temple of Dendur; in London's British Museum, it's the Rosetta Stone; in Istanbul's Archaeology Museum, it's the Treaty of Kadesh. I've been fortunate to pay a visit to all of these famous Egyptian ambassadors, who always seem to be the highlight of their respective museum.

Although the world always seemed to pay tribute to my ancient ancestors, I always felt disconnected from their great achievements. I think that is beginning to change nowadays though. Since Egypt's 2011 Revolution, I have begun to believe that we Egyptians can revive the magnificence of our ancient civilization. For one thing, this revolution proved that one of the many aspects that unite Egyptians is their history. During the battle for Tahrir Square, Egyptians joined hands to form a human ring around the Egyptian Museum to prevent any looters from robbing them of their history. Even in Egypt, the ancient artifacts that beautify the Egyptian Museum stand as a testimony for all visitors to Egypt of the grandeur of the nation's identity.

Despite the controversy of our history being dispersed all over the world, I don't seem to mind having an Egyptian wing in every major city's museum. First, the treasures that occupy these wings represent a snapshot of what a journey to Egypt has to offer. Second, they are a means of sharing Egypt's gift of civilization with the all people. Third, these artifacts make my history accessible to Egyptologists and Egypt-aficionados all over the world.

I have come to consider Egyptian museums as "a home away from home." It was in the Egyptian wing of the British Museum that we Egyptian students in London held our national association's inaugural meeting. Moreover, my recent discovery of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology has thrilled me to see a whole museum dedicated to Egypt. The curators and staff at the Petrie have made me realise that museums should be much more than a display of one's history. These should be an interactive platform where Egyptians and non-Egyptians meet for an intellectual exchange about history and culture.

During my stay in London, I hope to bring my history to life once more. With the Petrie's effort to digitalize many of their displays and exhibitions, I believe this is a great way to expose Egypt's treasures to the world. With the advent of online social media and networking tools, I hope to see ancient Egyptian history play a greater role in connecting Egypt with the world.

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