

Looted ancient sarcophagus returned to Egypt from US

January 2 2023



Mostafa Waziri, top official at the Supreme Council of Antiquities, takes a look with a magnifier at an ancient wooden sarcophagus during a handover ceremony at the foreign ministry in Cairo, Egypt, Monday, Jan. 2, 2023. An ancient wooden sarcophagus that was featured at the Houston Museum of Natural Sciences was returned to Egypt after U.S. authorities determined it was looted years ago, Egyptian officials said Monday. Credit: AP Photo/Mohamed Salah

An ancient wooden sarcophagus that was featured at the Houston Museum of Natural Sciences was returned to Egypt after U.S. authorities determined it was looted years ago, Egyptian officials said Monday.

The repatriation is part of Egyptian government efforts to stop the trafficking of its stolen antiquities. In 2021, authorities in Cairo succeeded in getting 5,300 stolen artifacts returned to Egypt from across the world.

Mostafa Waziri, the top official at the Supreme Council of Antiquities, said the sarcophagus dates back to the Late Dynastic Period of ancient Egypt, an era that spanned the last of the Pharaonic rulers from 664 B.C. until Alexander the Great's campaign in 332 B.C.

The sarcophagus, almost 3 meters (9.5 feet) tall with a brightly painted top surface, may have belonged to an ancient priest named Ankhennaat, though some of the inscription on it has been erased, Waziri said.

It was symbolically handed over at a ceremony Monday in Cairo by Daniel Rubinstein, the U.S. chargé d'affaires in Egypt.

The handover came more than three months after the Manhattan District Attorney's Office determined the sarcophagus was looted from Abu Sir Necropolis, north of Cairo. It was smuggled through Germany into the United States in 2008, according to Manhattan District Attorney Alvin L. Bragg.



Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, center right, and Mostafa Waziri, top official at the Supreme Council of Antiquities, talk in front of an ancient wooden sarcophagus during a handover ceremony at the foreign ministry in Cairo, Egypt, Monday, Jan. 2, 2023. An ancient wooden sarcophagus that was featured at the Houston Museum of Natural Sciences was returned to Egypt after U.S. authorities determined it was looted years ago, Egyptian officials said Monday. Credit: AP Photo/Mohamed Salah



An ancient wooden sarcophagus is displayed during a handover ceremony at the foreign ministry in Cairo, Egypt, Monday, Jan. 2, 2023. An ancient wooden sarcophagus that was featured at the Houston Museum of Natural Sciences was returned to Egypt after U.S. authorities determined it was looted years ago, Egyptian officials said Monday. Credit: AP Photo/Mohamed Salah



Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, center, standing in front of an ancient wooden sarcophagus, speaks during a handover ceremony at the foreign ministry in Cairo, Egypt, Monday, Jan. 2, 2023. An ancient wooden sarcophagus that was featured at the Houston Museum of Natural Sciences was returned to Egypt after U.S. authorities determined it was looted years ago, Egyptian officials said Monday. Tourism and Antiquities Minister Ahmed Issa, second right, listens. Credit: AP Photo/Mohamed Salah



An ancient wooden sarcophagus is displayed during a handover ceremony at the foreign ministry in Cairo, Egypt, Monday, Jan. 2, 2023. An ancient wooden sarcophagus that was featured at the Houston Museum of Natural Sciences was returned to Egypt after U.S. authorities determined it was looted years ago, Egyptian officials said Monday. Credit: AP Photo/Mohamed Salah

"This stunning coffin was trafficked by a well-organized network that has looted countless antiquities from the region," Bragg said at the time. "We are pleased that this object will be returned to Egypt, where it rightfully belongs."

Bragg said the same network had smuggled a gilded coffin out of Egypt that was featured at New York's Metropolitan Museum. Met bought the piece from a Paris art dealer in 2017 for about \$4 million. It was

returned to Egypt in 2019.

© 2023 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Looted ancient sarcophagus returned to Egypt from US (2023, January 2) retrieved 1 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-01-looted-ancient-sarcophagus-egypt.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.