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Egypt's monuments reach Italy in a diplomatic container!

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About two months after a stone coffin lid, dating back to the Pharaohs era, was smuggled to Kuwait within a sofa (Mid-March), there are reports that dozens of antiquities were smuggled through the port of Alexandria to Italy in a diplomatic container.

In mid-March, the cameras of the Cairo International Airport showed that while the sofa containing the Pharaonic coffin lid was passing through the luggage scanning machine, the police officer in charge of the machine was busy talking on his cell phone. However, this time the situation is different: a number of 23,700 artefacts, including 118 ancient Egyptian artifacts were smuggled out of Egypt while they were enclosed inside an Egyptian diplomatic container.

Italian newspapers and television stations announced on Tuesday 22 May, 2018, that the customs authorities of the port of Salerno seized an Egyptian diplomatic container coming from the port of Alexandria. The diplomatic container contained a large and precious quantity of Egyptian artifacts dating back to the Pharaonic era. The most important of these artifacts was an Egyptian mask covered with gold, an antique boat with 40 paddles, and a carved stone coffin.

Imola Oggi, an Italian newspaper, said that dozens of other artifacts were seized during the operation that was carried out by the artistic heritage protection police of Naples and Rome. Therefore, what has been seized is a real treasure, as it contains rare archaeological discoveries, according to Italian media.

It is strange that the Egyptian authorities did not make any comment related to the smuggling of the artifacts in a diplomatic container. However, Egyptian Ambassador to Rome Hisham Badr announced on 23 May 2018 that the reports of the Italian press about seizing pharaonic monuments in the port of Salerno, Italy - after they have been

smuggled out of Egypt – took place a month ago, and added that the Egyptian authorities were well-informed of the incident. He added that the Egyptian Embassy in Rome was following up this incident with the Italian authorities. Badr also said the procedures followed to recover these pieces would take a long time until it is made clear whether these artifacts are real or fake, and know how they were smuggled, as well as other investigations required in such cases, ending with issuance of judicial rulings according to which the restoration of these pieces is decided whether positively or negatively, stressing that the process is not simple.

Thus, with this strange statement, the Egyptian ambassador did not tell us how these artifacts were smuggled out of Egypt in a diplomatic container. He did not also disclose any information about the diplomat who was involved. Such questions have not been answered by the ambassador, or even the Egyptian authorities so far, and it seems that they will never be answered.

According to a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs “The Ministry is following up with the Italian side through the Egyptian embassy in Rome to uncover all details related to the incident and to hold accountable those responsible for smuggling the Egyptian artefacts, if their authenticity is indeed proven," the statement concluded.

Also on 23 May 2018, Shaaban Abdel-Gawad, the head of the Egyptian Antiquities Ministry’s repatriation department, said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported the incident to the Ministry of Antiquities, which assigned a special archaeological committee to confirm the authenticity of the seized artefacts by examining their photos. Abdel-Gawad said that the objects were stolen from illegal excavation sites, as they were not registered in any of the existing stores of Egyptian museums and galleries. Underestimating the value of the smuggled artifacts, Abdel-Gawad said the pieces seized by the Italian authorities are a collection of pottery, belonging to different periods of time, and parts of coffins and coins, as well as a few pieces

belonging to the Islamic civilization. On the contrary, the Italian newspapers emphasized the major value of these rare artifacts.

The Italian press also announced that all the pieces have been transferred to Bourbon barracks, which have long been a repository for keeping most important archaeological pieces similar to the smuggled Egyptian artifacts.

While an Italian investigation led by the Prosecutor General in Salerno is under way to determine the origin of these valuable pieces and other valuable pieces in the container, the head of the Egyptian Antiquities Ministry's repatriation department told us that these artifacts were stolen from illegal excavation sites, as they were not registered in any of the existing stores of the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities's museums and galleries!

Here is the link of Italian Channel I and the links of some Italian newspapers that published news stories about the incident while the Egyptian media is still denying it:

1- The link of Italian Channel I's news story about the incident (at the 33rd minute) is [here](#).

2- These are links to some Italian newspapers that also published the news story: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#).

