

KEMET REPORT UPDATE #3: (February 25, 2011) Prof. Manu Ampim

Since January 25, 2011 we have witnessed the popular uprising of the Egyptian people to get rid of the entire Hosni Mubarak regime, which has ruled Egypt for 30 years. The major demonstrations in the cities of Alexandria, Suez, and Cairo, and the looting during the initial days of the uprising have caused much concern about the welfare of the people and the safety of the ancient African artifacts. Today the demonstrations are not as large and Mubarak himself is gone, but the protesters want a *total* regime change, so this situation is far from over as the activists and groups, such as the Front to Defend Egyptian Protesters, continue working towards their goals.

These are some of the developments from this past week:

1. On Friday, February 25th, tens of thousands gathered in Tahrir Square and demanded the resignation of the current government headed by Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq. The gathering has been called the



“Friday of Cleansing and Protecting the Revolution.” Shafiq was appointed to office by the former dictator Hosni Mubarak after he stepped down on February 11th and handed power to Shafiq and the Egyptian military. In his speech at Tahrir, Islamic scholar and member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Safwat Hegazy said, “We don’t want merely a change of names in the government with one thief resigning and another one taking his place.” He added, “Shafiq is Mubarak’s most

prominent student.” Hegazy and the protesters chanted, “State security is standing between us and freedom.” The protesters also called for the release of all political detainees. Bloggers later reported that the Egyptian military removed the protesters from Tahrir by force, and other protesters in front of the Parliament building were beaten by the military police with batons and electric cattle prods. At least 11 people were detained by the police.

<http://tinyurl.com/47ngy89>

2. On February 25th the Students of the Faculties of Archaeology and Tourism and Hotels organized a five-hour rally in front of the Great Pyramid at Giza. The event was held to invite the world and its tourists back to Egypt following the reopening of archaeological sites and museums across the country. This gala event included musical performances as part of the ceremony program.

3. UPDATE: In the previous *Kemet Report* last week, I indicated that there were demonstrations in



front of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) office of Zahi Hawass by unemployed archaeology graduates and SCA workers. The demonstrators accused Hawass of not providing jobs, paying low wages, for overseeing a “system of corruption,” grandstanding in front of TV cameras, and claiming credit for the archaeological work of others. Hawass disagrees and says that he has raised salaries three times since he became head of the SCA in 2002. He also claims that, “Under my direction, the SCA has always been an honest department.” He added, “I hope

that I will keep my new position because I believe that the monuments and museums of Egypt need me.” Before leaving office, Hosni Mubarak appointed Zahi Hawass to a new position, Minister of Antiquities Affairs, and Hawass is seen as part of the old corrupt Mubarak regime. Hawass recently indicated that he wrote Egypt’s attorney general to ask him to look into what Hawass calls “false accusations” in order to address these issues and stabilize the Ministry of Antiquities Affairs. On his Facebook page, one of Hawass’ fans echoed the sentiment of some misinformed people when she wrote: “Dr Hawass why dont [sic] you run the country, [sic] Things would be better taken care of, just like you take care of their beautiful pieces of history. You have my vote” (2/24/11).

4. On February 21st, Hawass met a small group of young archaeology graduates who were representatives of the protesters that have been picketing the SCA/Minister of Antiquities Affairs building. Hawass makes questionable claims that defy logic when he says that these graduates “came



to offer their apologies to me. The meeting was an impromptu event during which I was offered flowers by the students in a gesture of goodwill. The students made it clear that their protests were only held because previously there had been a lack of information” about the new Ministry, formerly the SCA. Hawass knows that the substantial criticisms against him involve far more than the students having a “lack of information.” To satisfy the students, Hawass indicated that he

has a plan with three phases of recruitment. The first phase would provide newly hired archaeologists and restorers paid training within the Ministry for 5 months. The second phase will provide the same paid training for 500 additional recruits, and in the third phase there will be 500 more graduates who will be hired and trained. However, this seems only a temporary fix to the unemployment problem, because as Hawass says earlier in the same statement, that there are not enough jobs and positions to hire all of the new archaeology graduates.

<http://www.drhawass.com/blog/uplifting-news>

5. The tourist industry is still slow to recover from the Egyptian uprising. For example, the Cairo Museum on its second day of opening, February 21st, had only 107 foreigners and 2770 Egyptian visitors.



However, on February 22nd the site of Abu Simbel is reported by *Ahram Online* to have received about 1000 visitors to see the amazing event of the sun shining 180 feet back into the inner sanctuary inside the Ramses II temple. This is a rare astronomical event which occurs only twice a year, on February 22nd and October 22nd of every year. The ancient African astronomers oriented the temple whereby this phenomena previously occurred

on February 21 and October 21, but because the temple was dismantled and rebuilt on higher ground in the 1960s to keep it safe from the rising waters of Lake Nasser, this caused the phenomena to occur one day later. The sun shines into the inner sanctuary just after 6:00 AM and lasts for about 21 minutes.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/6203.aspx>

6. UPDATE: After the January 28th break-in at the Cairo Museum, where at least 70 artifacts were broken, 2 mummies damaged, and 18 artifacts stolen, the press was eager to visit the museum and view the vandalism first hand. Some of these items have now been recovered or restored. Here are images from the Cairo Museum February 16th press tour, which was escorted by the Egyptian military. The museum reopened for the public on February 20th.



One of the 11 stolen ushabti figures of Yuya was found.



The statue of King Akhenaten holding an offering table was returned but the broken off table has to be restored.



The Cairo Museum looters broke this Tutankhamen image on a papyrus boat. While the boat was left on the museum floor, the upper torso of King Tut remains missing.

7. OTHER LOCATIONS: The Step Pyramid, the oldest stone building in the world, will undergo a masonry retrofit to preserve this structure. CINTEC Worldwide, based in Wales, UK, won a \$2.8 million contract to preserve the pyramid. The Step Pyramid was constructed during the reign of King Djoser (3rd dynasty, c. 2700 BCE), and designed by architect Imhotep, who is also the world's first known physician. In 1992, a major earthquake caused significant damage to the pyramid, resulting in the central chamber now being in danger of collapse.



Previous restoration work at the Step Pyramid in Saqqara.

8. A couple weeks ago, two independent investigators visited Saqqara to follow up on reports of looting in the area. They found that other than the tomb of Hetepka (which I reported on in the previous issue of the *Kemet Report*) there does not seem to be any damage to the select areas that they were allowed to visit. However, although the Pyramid of Unis, (the first pyramid which contains writing inside - pyramid text) had not experienced any vandalism, the problem lies with the local Egyptian workers who have no respect for this sacred African structure. For example, these two photos of trash at the entrance of the Unis Pyramid is an unreported problem that threatens the safety of this and other monuments throughout the country. The most shocking trashing of a site with plastic bottles and other throw-away items that I have seen was at Karnak, and there are other locations such as Giza where the local tomb guardians urinate inside the structures! These ongoing dirty and disrespectful practices should be challenged by all visitors who are genuinely concerned about the welfare of the monuments.



Local Arab government workers have trashed the entrance of the Unis Pyramid.

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"Vanishing Evidence" Part I

http://manuampim.com/Part_I.htm

"Vanishing Evidence" Part II

http://manuampim.com/Part_II.htm

"Vanishing Evidence" Part III

http://manuampim.com/Part_III.htm

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