

CyberScribe April 2012, number 199

Let us begin this month with a very pleasant announcement. After being closed for a long time for reorganization and refurbishing, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford is open again and welcoming visitors. The article below (abbreviated) penned by Sean McLachlan, allows us to see some of the display. Not everyone is pleased, because the displays are in spacious galleries, but there are far fewer artifacts on display than there were in the old arrangement. This bit of news comes to us from a site called 'Gadling' (<http://snipurl.com/234kok8>). Take a look and see what you feel about the displays in this grand museum.

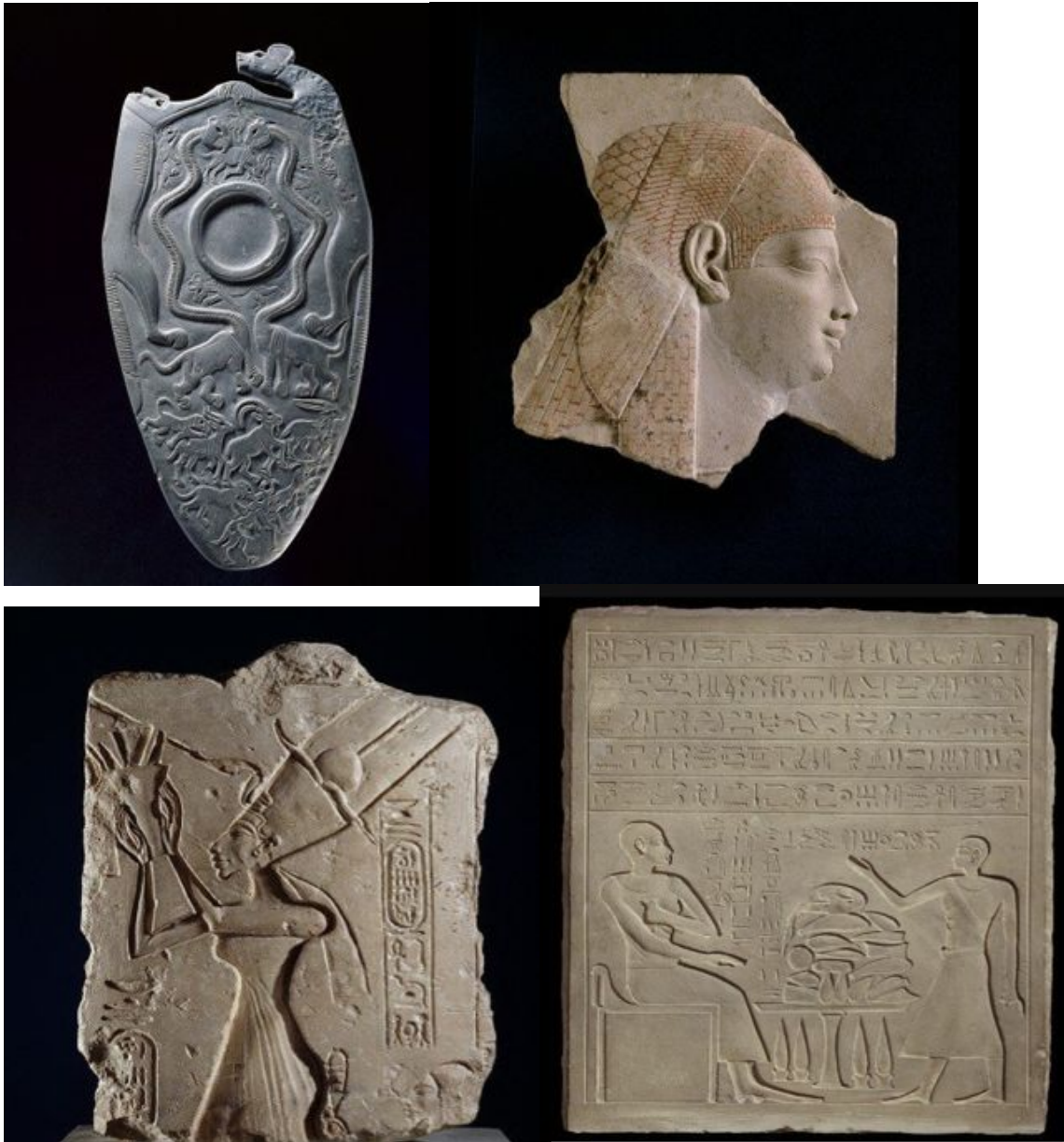
“The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford has always been famous for its collection of art from Ancient Egypt and Nubia (Sudan). It recently revamped these galleries as part of a major remodel.



I didn't want to write it up until I got to see it for myself. The old galleries were dark, cramped and had endless cases crammed with artifacts. In other words, they were arranged in the old style. Museums are changing, though. The trend these days are to have brighter, more open and inviting

spaces that reduce museum fatigue. Most of the Ashmolean got this treatment back in 2009, and after a big fund raising effort the famous Egyptian and Nubian galleries have also been revamped.

As you can see from the above picture, the gloomy old galleries have been opened up. Signage has been improved with lots of detailed information about each piece. The Ashmolean has become the poster child of new museum design, and its impressive collection certainly helps make it a world-class destination



“Personally I walked through the galleries with mixed feelings. Creating more space means displaying fewer artifacts. The crowded cases filled with

dozens of figurines or amulets are gone, replaced by displays showing single pieces or at most half a dozen. As one of my friends complained, this slants the displays towards the best objects, while the more day-to-day objects familiar to the common people aren't represented.

“On the other hand, the new galleries are definitely a more user-friendly experience. All the objects for which the galleries were famous are still there, like the phallic statue of the god Min, the Shrine of Taharqa and a Roman-era female mummy complete with golden XXX's. While obsessive archaeology buffs will be a bit disappointed with the new look, most visitors will **roll** find it a pleasant change.”

This is the

There has been a rather surprising discovery in the Valley of the Kings. A deep burial well was discovered, and when cleaned out was found to contain a well preserved mummy and a beautiful small stele. The discovery of this most unexpected find by the University of Basel is detailed in one of their preliminary reports, accompanied by some very nice photographs. The report can be found at this site: <http://tinyurl.com/6wkw29f> , but unfortunately the site described had to be abbreviated a little because of the space considerations.



The principal event this season was the discovery of a new tomb in the Valley of the Kings.

‘During the season of 2011, three edges of an unknown man-made feature were revealed on the first day of the Egyptian revolution. Due to the situation, work was stopped and the feature was covered with an iron door.

‘As this structure is so close to KV 40 and since it was impossible to know whether it was merely an unfinished shaft or a real tomb, we gave it the temporary number 40b. As soon as it became apparent during this year’s work that the structure was actually a tomb, the Egyptian authorities decided to give it the final designation KV 64.



'KV 64 consists of a rather small shaft and a burial chamber. The walls are roughly hewn (Fig. 2). The shaft contained the original fill from Pharaonic times. The entrance to the chamber was blocked with stones but not sealed. Underneath this blocking were remains of an earlier wall covered with plaster, in front of which there was a flowerpot of Nile silt from the 18th dynasty. This indicates that two burials took place in the tomb at two different times.

'In the northern half of the room a black painted coffin with yellow inscriptions and figures still stood in situ top of the debris. At the foot end of the coffin a wooden painted stele was leaning against the western wall. The coffin and the stele belong to a chantress of Amun called Nehmes-Bastet.



'The coffin is made of sycamore wood with acacia pegs and nails, its length is 1.92 m and width at the shoulders 53.5 cm. The stele shows Nehemes-Bastet in the attitude of prayer in front of the god Ra-Harakhte. The typology of both the coffin and the stele as well as the lady's name and title indicate a 22nd dynasty date. The carefully wrapped and quite well preserved mummy lay directly in the coffin. As the blocking of the entrance indicated, the tomb had never been opened since the 22nd dynasty, when Nehemes-Bastet was buried in KV 64.



'Underneath the thick layer of debris on which the 22nd dynasty burial was placed were found remains of the original 18th dynasty burial. This first

burial had been thoroughly looted. Most of the objects had been robbed or were left behind in a very fragmentary state. The coffin, parts of the canopic equipment, pottery, and possibly pieces of furniture were missing. At the bottom of the debris fragments of three limestone canopic jars and two lids in the shape of human heads were found. Along the north wall on the floor were remains of a mummy without linen bandages. This badly broken mummy is probably the original first owner of the tomb.

“Tomb KV 40 lies on the slope on the east side of the path leading towards the tomb of Thutmosis III, to the north of KV 59 and northwest of KV 26. The tomb consists of a deep shaft and a corridor with a length of approx. 6m. The central room measures 8m by 3m. From room C two square side rooms open to the south and one to the north.

The floor of the room was covered by a layer of debris to a height of approx. 0.40 m. The remains of the burials were in a very bad condition due to fire and looting. It seems that the tomb has been robbed several times before and after the fire. The tomb was used for numerous burials, some of which date to the 18th dynasty and others to the Third Intermediate Period. The 18th dynasty remains are mainly big pottery jars, broken and scattered all over the floor of the tomb with their original contents of embalming materials, especially linen and natron bags. Despite the fire, many human remains are preserved and among the mummy fragments there are many bones of children. Fragments of different wooden objects and coffins as well as of cartonage and even textiles have survived, but they all need special cleaning and restoration.



‘The entrance consists of 10 precisely cut and well-preserved steps.



Behind the entrance door is a large chamber with two smaller side rooms.

‘The entrance between the steps and chamber was blocked with debris to a height of approx. 1.20 m. All three rooms had been cut very accurately and all walls show original chisel marks on their white limestone surface. Another chamber was filled to half its height with limestone debris, and on the surface lay many big stone boulders that probably belong to the blocking and original filling of the entrance corridor with steps. The tomb has been robbed and many pottery fragments were left on the surface of the debris.

'The upper part of the debris consists of loose flood fill. The harder limestone debris close to the floor contained alabaster jar fragments and pottery fragments of big Nile silt jars, dating to the 18th dynasty and probably the reign of Thutmosis III.'

The CyberScribe suspects that quite a few of his readers have visited the wonderful Temple of Deir Al-Bahri, examined the wonderful carved reliefs, and climbed up the monumental staircase for the upper Terrace to visit the enclosed sanctuary that you found there. If you were like most people, you looked into the dark entrance to the hidden chapel carved back into the cliff. Unless you are someone with a special need to visit this area, it is completely off-limits.

An article recently appeared that talked about an interesting solar event that occurred in this temple. During a magic couple of days in December, the sun shines directly into the hidden Chapel. This article, which appeared in 'Al Ahram' (<http://tinyurl.com/cnanpn2>) describe what could be seen during those unusual days (condensed somewhat):



"This natural phenomenon occurred on 21 December of each year", says Moustapha Waziri, Director of the Department of archaeological documentation in upper Egypt. The rays of the sun light a scene of the deity Amun before which is crouching King Tuthmosis III. The event lasts only for 120 seconds, two minutes.

"To achieve this, the rays of the Sun race 1 000 metres, starting with the main door of the temple of Karnak across the Bank of the Nile to illuminate the statue of Amun and then pass him him two obelisks carved by Queen Hatshepsut, cross the Nile and penetrate into the third deck of the Deir Al-Bahari, to finally illuminate the scene of Amun.

“The history of the discovery of this phenomenon began in 2005, when former Chief of Antiquities, Zahi Hawas, ordered an Egyptian team to observe the movement of the sun and its rays perpendicular on the stage of Amun, in the sanctuary of the temple of Deir Al-Bahri.

““This study lasted more than five years. Our problem was to know its duration, if it lasted two days or a single day” says Waziri.

“This documentation took into account solar tour from the door of the temple of Karnak to the sanctuary of Amun at the temple of Hatshepsut. Indeed, Hatshepsut decided to install her temple on the same line of the temple of Karnak. Waziri connects this natural phenomenon to the legitimacy of the reign of the Queen herself. Indeed, not having the right to be inducted, Hatshepsut had invented a legend to convince the people of its legitimacy. It is a marriage sacred between the deity Amun and her mother that lasted one night. Hatshepsut was the result. Thus she announced to the people of its legitimate right to the Egyptian throne. The announcement could be reflected and commemorated by the annual phenomenon. "But it is not yet certain", says Waziri.

“According Professor Zbigniew Szafranski, Director of the Polish mission operating in Deir Al-Bahari for more than 40 years, Hatshepsut decided to make a window to the scene of Amun, followed by another, so that the Sun's rays penetrate twice per year, to illuminate the face sacred. Why? A big question which Egyptologists seek the answer.

““The essential fact is that this solar line enters through windows to light the sacred face, and this happens only twice per year,” resumed the Director. To determine the correct date of this phenomenon, Szafranski cooperated with the French Egyptologist Luc Gabolde, which has operated for years on the temple of Karnak. They calculate the angle of the solar line passing through the Windows with the horizontal line of the floor of the sanctuary. The teacher focuses on the current place of the temple has changed compared to the time of its construction. This difference is due to earthquakes that have shaken the country over these long years.”

One of the “must do” things in Egypt is the wonderful 'Old Cataract Hotel' in Aswan. For over a century this wonderful structure has housed royalty, major politicians, and a host of us ordinary beings. It is a little costly, but the luxury of sitting on your private balcony, looking west across the river to the distant hills, to watch the sunset... This must be experienced, for the magic cannot be easily described.

The interior has been preserved almost like a time capsule. In many of the rooms there is still furniture that is nearly a century old, letting you enjoy an original Art Deco room. The hallways and restaurants are a maze of Moorish arches, bright colors, formally dressed desk attendants, bellmen in liveried costumes directly out of the Arabian nights, and a terrace where everyone who was anyone enjoyed their tea.

The hotel has just undergone another period of restoration and has reopened in all its glory. Nevine El-Aref, writing in 'Al Aram' news (<http://tinyurl.com/cna8oub>) reviews this event. Read on and see why you must visit this wonderful place.



“On the banks of the Nile in Aswan stands the Old Cataract Hotel, welcoming visitors after three years of closure for comprehensive restoration. As a historical building on Egypt’s Islamic antiquities list, the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) closed the Old Cataract in 2008 to restore its building and its archaeological elements.

“Mohsen Sayed Ali, Head of the Islamic and Coptic Antiquities Department at the SCA, told Ahrām Online that the restoration includes the consolidation of all the building’s walls, its domes and wooden ceilings. All the Oriental engravings and Arabesque decorations have been cleaned and restored, together with the mashrabeyas (woodwork windows).

“The Old Cataract was built in Victorian style on a hilltop facing the distinguished Elephantine Temple, while Islamic style predominates its interior. The Old Cataract was inaugurated by Khedive Abbas Helmy II in 1899 to a host of aristocratic clientele.

“The hotel was always a favorite among the elite during Egypt's colonial period, and with the release of the movie written by Agatha Christie and starring Anthony Shaffer, "Death on the Nile", in 1978, interest in the hotel was hugely revived.”

Many people who read this next item will be very familiar with the great statue that is being described. Yes, this is a huge fiberglass copy of the statue of Ramesses II who was the star of that fabulous exhibition that was held so long ago in Fair Park. Quite a few of the people who formed this chapter were among those who worked at the fair during the exhibition.

The fiberglass copy ended up in Memphis, Tennessee, after the traveling exhibition was closed. There is an enormous glass pyramid in Memphis supposed to be the focal point for interest in Egyptology. The pyramid was used for many things but over the years, interest faded and the pyramid fell on hard times. Today's plans involve a new focus for the pyramid, and it does not involve Ramesses.

So what to do with him? There were numerous debates, but most people favored relocating the statue on the grounds of the University of Memphis. An article in the news source 'Daily Helmsman' (<http://tinyurl.com/8yzstu4>) provides a quick overview of the battles over the statue.

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A photo illustration of the Memphis Pyramid's Ramesses statue on The U of M campus outside the theater and communications buildings south of Central Avenue.

“The University of Memphis will soon be the final resting place of a replica of Egyptian pharaoh Ramesses the Great, as Memphis City Council members voted on Tuesday to move the statue from the Pyramid to The U of M campus. The statue has stood at its current location since the Pyramid was erected in 1991.

“City Councilman Joe Brown argued that the Memphis Zoo was a better choice as the statue's new home because of its prominent Egyptian

theme. There, he said, more people could see the Egyptian replica. Brown postponed the decision two weeks ago to consult a lawyer about the legality of the transfer. At Tuesday's meeting, Brown said that in accordance with an agreement with the former Egyptian government, the City could lease, but not sell, the statue to The University, as part of their collection of Egyptian artifacts and educational items.

“According to Lorelei Corcoran, director of The U of M's Institute of Egyptian Art and Architecture, The University of Memphis secured a \$50,000 donation to move the 50-ton statue to the Central Avenue location between the Theatre and Music buildings.

“Tony Poteet, assistant vice president of U of M Campus planning development, said there is currently an art sculpture, located where the Egyptian pharaoh will soon rest, that must be moved before The University can bring the fiberglass replica of Ramesses to campus.

““Once I get the other sculpture moved, and the new foundation poured, and the lease in place, then I will get it moved,” Poteet said.

“The contract allows The University of Memphis to pay \$1 for a 99-year lease on the statue and have the option to renew its contract in 2110 for another 99-year term.”

There was a brief flash of interest concerning a sale of Egyptian artifacts that were part of a cosmetic kit. The items are very handsome, have a perfectly legal pedigree, and they been put on sale by a London antiquities dealer. The asking price of £8000 pounds is not all that startling, and the CyberScribe suspects that they were sold rather quickly. If they did sell, the sale did not make the news.

There were many items in the news on this topic, but the one below, abbreviated somewhat, appeared in the newspaper 'Mail Online' (<http://tinyurl.com/67swhc9>). Enjoy the article, and especially the beautiful photographs that accompany it.

“An incredibly rare 'vanity kit' that belonged to an ancient Egyptian and includes a razor, hair pins and a pot with traces of eye make-up has gone on sale. The 3,500-year-old grooming kit dates from the time of the child king Tutankhamun and was probably buried with the owner. It's not clear whether the kit was intended for a man or a woman - but it was made for someone of high status. The deceased would have been keen to look his or her best in the afterlife.



“The 'vanity set' included a razor (pictured) as well as curling tongs. It was buried alongside its owner - to ensure that they were looking their best when they arrived in the afterlife



“These ferocious-looking implements were actually hair curlers: Use of styling tools was a mark of rank among Ancient Egyptians

“Now the well-preserved artifacts have been valued at £8,000 by Rupert Wace, the London dealer who is selling them. They will go on sale on December 2.

“The razor is bronze and the wooden pot is for the eye make-up - kohl, ground from lead sulfide and other ingredients, and worn by Egyptian

aristocracy - was imported. Kohl was applied to the eyes and was thought to have medicinal benefits and give protection from the sun.

“The set dates from the New Kingdom 18th Dynasty (1540-1295 BC).

“Mr. Wace said: 'these items come from about the same time as Tutankhamun. The wooden Kohl pot still has traces of residue in it. The black pigment was used around the eyes as decoration but also for health benefits.’”



The Kohl in the pot was used by Egyptian aristocrats to black around their eyes. The pot was made from imported wood - a clear sign that the person who would have worn it was of high rank

'It is not clear whether they belonged to a man or a woman - they all wore wigs and would have used razors. It is likely that these things were placed in a grave to accompany the dead to the next life.'

'They are wonderfully personal things and they might well end up in a museum.'

Sometimes a news story comes along that at first seems oddly humorous, but on second thought it records an act of extreme courage. Among the many acts of bravery that took place during the Egyptian Revolution, twenty-year-old Egyptian woman did something that could have caused her death.

What did she do? She felt it was important to protest against the limits on free expression of ideas inside Egypt, and she arranged to have herself photographed in the nude. She then posted her nude photographs on the net. Predictably this caused a great outdoor in Egypt and was condemned by all sides in the revolution.

She and her boyfriend, who took the photographs, have been hunted down, and charges have been filed accusing them of “violating morals, inciting indecency insulting Islam”.

Then another astonishing event occurred when forty young Israeli women made a counter protest. They have themselves photographed naked holding a sign in English, Hebrew, and Arabic, showing that they appreciated the bravery of Egyptian woman and felt that they needed to show their solidarity and to support her.

There were many articles in the international news that called attention to this pair of events, but the presentation in an Internet news source called 'Pyramidion' is among the most straightforward and newsworthy sources (<http://tinyurl.com/76wekfo>).

Read the item carefully and see where you might stand relative to this brave woman's movement. Don't be alarmed. There will be no indecent images.



'Love without limits' Forty Israeli women in solidarity with Egyptian blogger, Aliaa el-Mahdy

'As an act of solidarity with Egypt's Aliya el-Mahdy, 40 Israeli women posed for a nearly naked photo in protest of limited expression in Egypt.

“Girls, let’s give the world a good reason to see the unique beauty of Israeli women. Regardless of whether they are Jewish, Arab, straight or Lesbian – because here, as of now, it doesn’t matter. (...) Let us show the doubters that our international discourse doesn’t depend on governments,” the Israelis wrote on their Facebook page in solidarity.

‘Or Tepler, an Israeli 28-year-old woman, opened a Facebook event inviting women “to show support in a non-violent and legitimate way for a woman who is just like us – young, ambitious, full of dreams and evidently has a developed sense of humor.” Tepler was inspired by el-Mahdy, a 20-year-old Egyptian university student, who shocked Egyptian society last week when she posted a naked photo of herself in protest against the limits on free expression in the country.

‘For Tepler it seems to clear: “When a liberal, enlightened woman in Cairo cannot express herself and gets threats from her state, we should show solidarity.”



Aliaa el-Mahdy in the full nude photo posted on her blog.

'Mahdy's nude pictures triggered an uproar in Egypt and was condemned from conservatives and liberals alike. While liberals criticize her of casting a damning light on them ahead of the elections on November 28, fundamentalist Islamists accuse her of "violating morals, inciting indecency and insulting Islam."

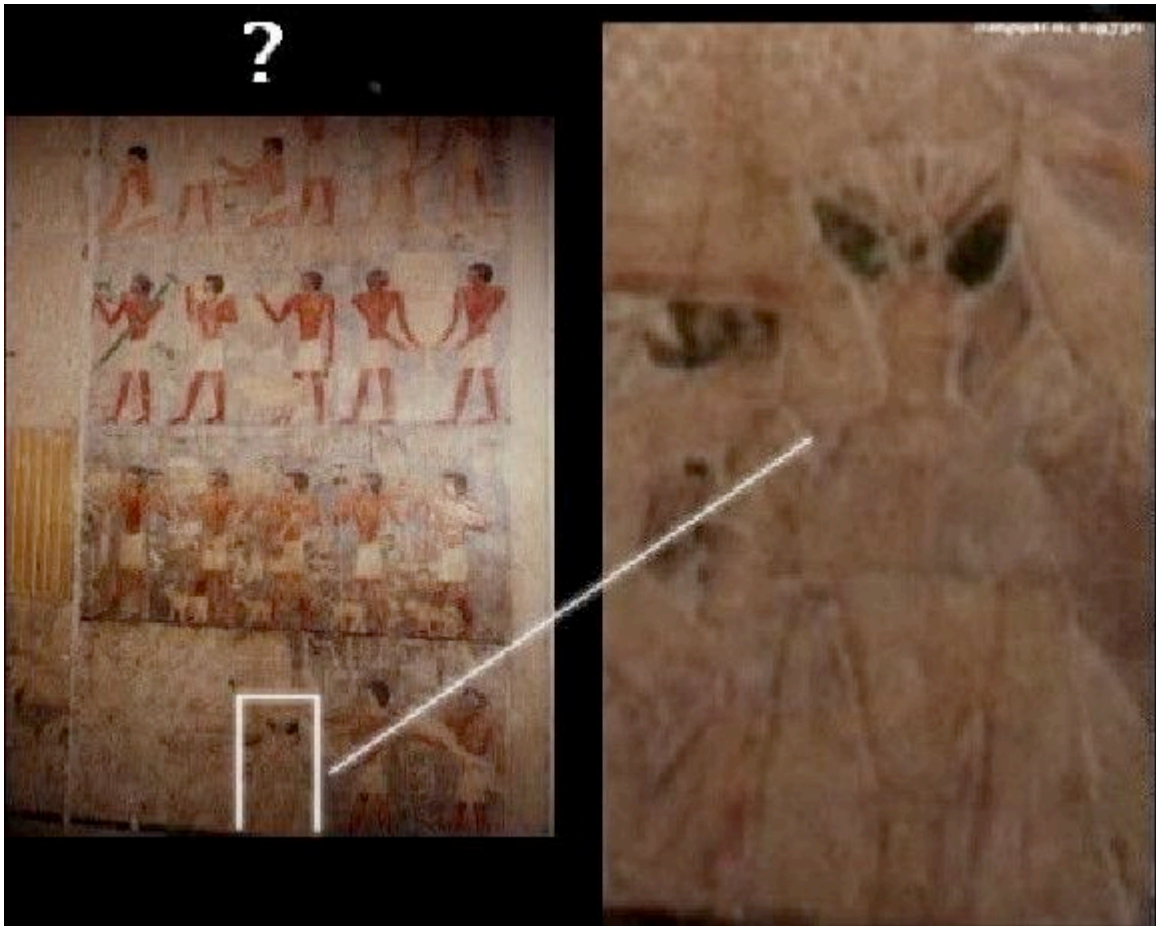
'Mahdy received threats and harsh criticism for her actions. On Thursday the first legal move against her revolutionary pictures have occurred. The coalition of Islamic law graduates filed a case against her and her boyfriend and blogger, Kareem Amer, accusing them of "violating morals, inciting indecency and insulting Islam.'

Let's wrap up this month's column with a mention of something that many of us believe to be true.

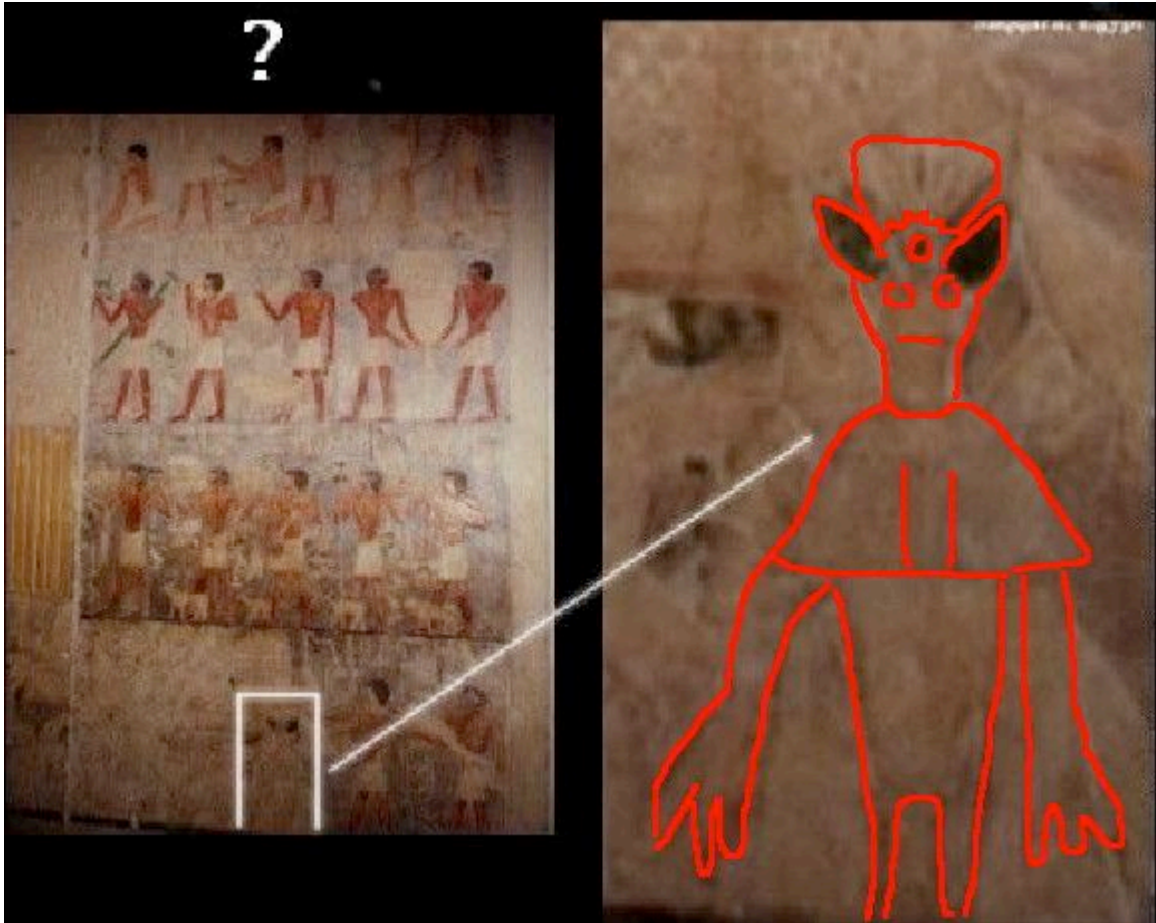
Many people seem to sincerely believe that the ancient Egyptians were unable to build their giant monuments and pyramids without outside help. Of course the outside help being considered, is help from extraterrestrial sources.

These ideas are generally debunked due to lack of hard evidence, but now that evidence has been spotted and documented. The pictures below, from an authentic ancient Egyptian tomb, clearly show the presence of an alien life form preserved by carving its image into a stone wall. The

CyberScribe does not need to give the source of this picture. Because it is so self-evidently true, you will not need any more information.



Unmarked image on a tomb wall.



Same image highlighted to show an the of an extraterrestrial being. Please note that this alien individual is wearing a cape, has hands with three fingers, oversized ears, and three eyes. He also appears to be wearing some sort of crown.

In fairness, it must be pointed out that a few scoffers have suggested that this interpretation of an alien life form is bogus. They claim that the image actually represents a bouquet of flowers topped by three blue water lily flowers. However, we true believers know better.

That's all for this month, says the CyberScribe. See you next time!

(The CyberScribe reminds you that if you ever wish to see the entire, unabbreviated, text of one of these stories, contact him and he will provide that access).