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Son Excellence M. Frédéric Mitterrand,
Ministre de la Culture
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Louvre statuette # 27215
Pink Limestone Amarna Princess
Daughter of Akhenaton and Nefertiti
From the Mansoor Amarna Collection

This letter concerns a matter, which may have some **serious and grave consequences** for some of France's **most celebrated scholars, the laboratoires des Musées Nationaux, the CNRS and the conservators of the department of ancient Egyptian Art of the Louvre and its director.** Indeed, it may well **affect the integrity of the Ministère de la Culture, itself.**

I have been trying to resolve this problem by appealing to **Monsieur Pierre Vimont, Ambassador in Washington,** but he also, in spite of his efforts and several attempts, was unable to find a solution and we sincerely appreciate his efforts on our behalf.

Obviously, the Louvre, the laboratoires des Musées Nationaux. the CNRS , the Louvre director and the conservators of the Egyptian department need no introduction, although they play a major role in this affair. But the individuals involved, i.e. the late **Chanoine Etienne Drioton** **Mme. Christiane Desroches Noblecourt** and the late **Fr. Pierre DuBourguet, S.J/PhD,** although probably known to you, are what makes this whole affair compelling and intriguing and I am pleased to reintroduce them to you.

The late **Chanoine Etienne Drioton,** a giant of Egyptology, was born in Nancy in 1889 and died in 1961. He was Directeur Général du Service des Antiquités Egyptiennes (1936-1952); professor at l'Institut d'Egyptologie à l'Université Fouad 1er in Cairo; Conservateur en Chef du Musée du Louvre (1952-1957); professor at the Collège de France, Chair of Champollion; membre du Conseil Artistique des Musées de France; Director of Research in Egyptology at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS); Médaille d'Or (Officier) de la Légion d'Honneur; recipient of decorations from King Farouk of Egypt and the Shah of Iran. Author of numerous books regarding Ancient Egypt. His book, "*Les Pharaons à la Conquête de l'Art*" with **Fr. Du Bourguet** carries the notation "*Ouvrage Couronné par l'Académie Française*". The "**Who WAS Who in Egyptology,**" 1995 edition, credits him with publishing SCORES of articles and reviews on Ancient Egypt. According to the Panthéon Lorrain, he is considered "*le plus grand Egyptologue de tout les temps*". When Dr. Drioton was Directeur Général du Service des Antiquités in Egypt, he advised the late King Farouk of Egypt to purchase 10 artifacts from

the late M.A. Mansoor 's Amarna Collection. He also, advised the king's mother and the faculty of the Cairo University to purchase additional artifacts from the same collection, as a present on the occasions of the king's accession to the throne and his wedding. Being a dignitary of a foreign church, his tenure was not without political difficulties, especially when he advised a Muslim king to purchase artifacts from a Christian antiquarian. Dr. Drioton was determined to acquire the entire Mansoor collection for the Egyptian Museum. Aware that some jealous dealers were preaching the non authenticity of the Mansoor Collection, Dr Drioton, in 1942, asked the late Alfred Lucas, author of the classic work: "*Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries*" to examine scientifically the Amarna Collection. His report left no doubt that the collection was ancient. World War II stopped Abbé Drioton's efforts to acquire the collection for the Egyptian Museum.

Again, in 1950, he asked Mr. Lucas' successors , Dr Zaki Iskandar and his assistant Dr. Zahira Moustafa to perform another analysis of the artifacts. This more detailed report, also, left no doubt that the collection was ancient. However, before the negotiations to acquire the collection for the Egyptian Museum were completed, the old regime of King Farouk was overthrown in 1952, and the new government was not interested in spending a sizable amount of money to acquire Egyptian antiquities. Abbé Drioton returned to France, where he assumed the position of Conservateur en Chef at the Louvre Museum

You can see that the late Abbé Etienne Drioton, believed in the value of scientific authentication of artifacts.

Here is a quote from the Abbé Drioton's letter of January 3, 1959, when he was a professor at the Collège de France: Referring to the Mansoor Amarna Collection, he wrote: "*Je les connais d'ailleurs fort bien, puisque j'ai eu souvent l'occasion de les étudier chez votre père au cours des longues années en Egypte comme directeur général du Service des Antiquités.....j'estime que ces sculptures sont authentiques.....j'ajoute que, au point de vue de l'art, ces pièces sortent d'un atelier apparenté, mais non identique, à celui qui a exécuté les colosses de Karnak. Leur stylization poussée dans le même esprit est d'une plénitude d'exécution sans défaillance qui ne peut pas, à mon avis, être l'oeuvre d'un faussaire.*"

Christiane Desroches Noblecourt, legendary French Egyptologist, Inspecteur Général des Musées de France; Chef du Département des Antiquités Egyptiennes au Musée du Louvre; Grand' Croix de la Légion d'Honneur; officier de l'Ordre du Mérite; Médaille de la Résistance; Médaille d'Or du CNRS; Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques; commandeur des Arts et des Lettres; Grande Médaille d'Argent de l'UNESCO; Grande Médaille Vermeil de la Ville de Paris and other citations, too numerous to mention here. Author of over twenty five books and publications concerning Ancient Egypt. It is thanks to her that the Temples of Nubia, including Abu Simbel, have been saved.

The late Fr. Pierre Du Bourguet, S.J.,PhD. French Egyptologist; Membre Scientifique de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (IFAO), Professor à l'Ecole du Louvre et à l'Institut Catholique de Paris; Conservateur en Chef au Musée du Louvre. Author of several books on Ancient Egypt.

Père Du Bourguet, wrote :*"Vous ne pouvez pas douter de mon intime conviction de l'authenticité Amarnienne des pièces de votre collection, même si elle peuvent être de valeur artistique inégale mais dont le style est à mes yeux typiquement Amarnien de l'époque, excluant l'oeuvre d'un faussaire. Cet avis, je ne m'en étonne pas, est entièrement corroboré par l'ensemble impressionnant des analyses chimiques et géologiques dont vous m'avez montré le détail."*

In 1980, at the suggestion of Mme. Noblecourt, my family offered the Louvre Museum an Amarna statuete, a princess in pink limestone, daughter of Akhenaton and Nefertiti, as a gift to commemorate the memory and the achievements of the late Abbé Drioton on behalf of his gigantic research in Egyptology. Mme. Noblecourt had been familiar with the Mansoor Amarna Collection, since her excavation days in Egypt, where she was introduced to the collection by the late Abbé Drioton. She was also aware that there was a certain group of jealous antiquarians and egyptologists, who doubted the authenticity of this collection of Amarna art. Like the late Abbé Drioton, she also believed in the value of scientific authentication of ancient artifacts. In her book *"La Grande Nubiade"*, (page 352) she writes: *" Comment une oeuvre d'art entre au Louvre " Il est nécessaire de le faire d'abord analyser au laboratoire des musées nationaux, pour réunir sur lui le maximum de preuves <<matérielles>> de son authenticité..."* What are the scientific qualifications of Mme. Andreu-Lanoë and the other conservators to refute this policy and question the scientists of the Louvre Museum and the CNRS?

In the instance of that artifact, Madame Noblecourt, obtained the blessings , not only of the laboratoires des Musées Nationaux, but consulted with Dr. Pierre Bariand, Conservateur de la Collection de Minéraux de l'Université Pierre et Marie Curie (Sorbonne-Unité Associée au C.N.R.S). who wrote:*"l'examen de l'état de surface des matériaux ayant servi à la réalisation de ces objets montre une patine très ancienne aboutissant à la conclusion que ces objets sont authentiques. L'aspect granulé de la patine respectant d'ailleurs l'état des débris fossiles existant rend peu probable une imitation moderne."* And Dr.Philippe Blanc, micropalaéontologiste, de l'Université Pierre et Marie Curie. Laboratoire de Minéralogie-Cristallographie (Unité Associée au CNRS), went as far as telling us the provenance location of the material used in the artifacts in this collection ." On November 18, 1981, Docteur Hubert Landais , Directeur des Musées de France, Administrateur de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, wrote to acknowledge his and the committee's gratitude for the gift for *"cet enrichissement des collections nationales. "*

Another report, submitted by Mme. Noblecourt to the laboratoires des musées Nationaux, was authored by Prof. Leon T. Silver, of the Geochemistry Laboratory, California Institute of Technology (Caltech). Prof. Silver applied the latest technology available and wrote the following :*".....the surface patina is enriched perceptibly in manganese oxide, barium and copper.....The enrichments are characteristics of enrichment observed in the development of desert varnish.....Although the presence of manganese oxide in desert varnish has long been known, the enrichments in the trace elements barium and copper were first reported in 1958, long after the first appearance of the Mansoor Collection. Their presence in a false patina would be indeed highly fortuitous."* This statement, alone, more than anything else, proves beyond any AND ALL doubts that these artifacts are authentic . PLEASE, be kind

enough to **SUBMIT** this statement to the scientists of the **CNRS** and to the ones of the **laboratoires des musées Nationaux** and ask for their opinion, regarding this statement. Other than the above two entities (the **Laboratoires des Musées Nationaux** and the **CNRS**), the collection was **certified authentic by 19 other world class scientists, including Prof. Leon T. Silver.**

To our knowledge, no other artifacts in the world have been more examined by so many varied methods and certified scientifically to be authentic than the **Mansoor Amarna Collection** has.

After Mme. Noblecourt retired in the 1980s, the artifact was removed from public exhibit and disappeared. Of course, we were concerned and contacted **Mme. Christiane Ziegler**, who at the time was **Conservateur Général, Chargé du Département des Antiquités Egyptiennes**, Her response was : *“Faute de place, malheureusement, nous ne pouvons exposer toute notre collection qui comprend plus de 50 000 numéros, et nous le regrettons infiniment”*. This was a ridiculous statement , in that no museum would “retire” a rare artifact to make room for another less famous. Years passed and I contacted her again to find out if the artifact was in a regular “rotation” program, but I received no answer.

And the Princess ~~is~~ still missing!

More recently, on July 25, 2008, I wrote Dr. Christophe Barbotin, at the time Chief Conservator in the Ancient Egyptian Art Department. I received a response from Mme. Guillemette Andreu-Lanoë, then **Conservateur Général, Directrice du Département des Antiquités Egyptiennes**. Her response was a shocker. Here is what she wrote : *“votre courier du 25 juillet auquel je répons volontier; car le sujet est délicat”*. *“En dépit de l’opinion émise par mes prédécesseurs, je dois vous informer que les conservateurs du département et moi-même émettons quelques doutes sur l’authenticité de la pièce en référence . Par conséquent notre déontologie nous impose de ne pas exposer cette pièce; tant que les doutes ne sont pas tous levés”*. A very commendable posture , but wouldn’t her “ déontologie “ dictate an enquiry regarding the artifact? After all, others have done it : **Drioton** and **Noblecourt** have. This is why the **Louvre** and your **Ministère** have the **Laboratoires des Musées Nationaux**. To do exactly what **Mme. Noblecourt** mentioned, *“pour réunir sur lui le maximum de preuves < matérielles> de son authenticité”*.

With today’s technology, I am sure your scientists would have re certified the artifact as ancient. In any case, *“ émettons quelques doutes”** is not a valid reason. She gives no specifics and is subjective. Moreover, it contradicts the two most celebrated Egyptologists of the 20th century. **Drioton** and **Noblecourt** told us exactly why the artifacts were ancient. Others, **Gabra**, **Du Bourguet**, **Nolli**, and **Pernigotti** have seen, handled and examined the artifacts in the flesh and they have all declared them to be authentic. Please note that her “ *prédécesseurs* ” include **Drioton**, **Noblecourt** and **Du Bourguet**! Of course, *“ le sujet est délicat”*.

To backtrack to the **laboratoires des Musées Nationaux**, **Mme. Noblecourt** wrote on August 11, 1981: *“ Depuis le début des vacances, j’ai pû me pencher sur ce si délicat problème, et mon*

intérêt s'est naturellement porté sur la statuette brisée en quatre morceaux, recollée, et la plus patinée. A propos de ce dernier objet, je voudrais avoir réuni tous les éléments qui me permettraient de la présenter au premier comité des Conservateurs du mois d'octobre. Cependant, cela ne serait possible sans l'avoir complètement étudiée, c'est-à-dire sans avoir pu faire décoller au moins la tête dont les éléments jouxent mal avec ce sur quoi elle est posée." Of course, permission was granted to take the artifact apart and the statue was accepted, because, as she explains in her book(page 352) "*l'objet envisagé doit présenter des qualités exceptionnelles et être dignes d'entrer dans le <cénacle>des représentations de l'art et de la civilisation du département intéressé. En quelque sorte un unica*". So, according to Mme. Noblecourt this gift has some "*qualités exceptionnelles*" and is a "*unica*". And your own scientists took it apart to prove its authenticity.

So, why didn't Mme. Andreu-Lanoë follow the proper déontologie? What is she afraid of ?

The explanation is simple. It is a well known fact that is generally accepted, that **there exists in Egyptology a tightly knit group of associates, controlled by one Dietrich Wildung of Germany.** Professor Claude Vandersleyen of Belgium, wrote in an email, dated June 4, 2003: "*Notre groupe est une vrai MAFIA ou l'on trouve le meilleur et le pire, l'honnête et le malhonnête, le consciencieux et le je-m'en-foutiste*". The late professeur Jean Yoyotte of the Collège de France told the newspaper Le Monde that : "*to change the director of the IFAO was a criminal act, sponsored by the Mafia*".

This Wildung is a self styled Mafia Boss. He has never seen or handled any of the Mansoor artifacts, yet he is intent on destroying the collection. He is jealous, because this collection or any of its individual pieces, placed in any of the world's museums, especially a neighboring one (i.e. the Louvre) would be a strong competition to the Egyptian collection in Berlin, and he intends to not let that happen. Wildung runs this Mafia with an iron fist and wants to surround this collection with *a conspiracy of silence*. Any Egyptologist who handles or even discusses the Mansoor Collection is " *mis à l'index*", i.e. he is ostracized by those of the Egyptological community under Wildung's control, and it seems to me that **the conservators at the Louvre are under Wildung's control and influence.** He has tried to disrupt the two year old, newly formed Cercle Scientifique Etienne Drioton in Nancy, because he does not want to revive the memory of this great French Egyptologist, who died forty eight years ago. The late Honorable George Xanthos, Judge of the Superior Court of the State of California has branded Wildung an "*intellectually dishonest person*". **Monsieur le Ministre, those who claim that no such Mafia exists, are deceiving themselves and you.**

France has been THE leader in Egyptology, since Champollion. In his footsteps, we can count Mariette, Varille, Maspero, Lacau, Du Bourguet , Drioton and Noblecourt and I refuse to believe that the current conservators of the Louvre are subservient to an "*intellectually dishonest person*". Their responsibility, and indeed their allegiance is to the Louvre and not to a Mafioso ! There is no room here for petty politics. **They either work for the Louvre or they don't.**

If allowed to stand, let us see what this action, on the part of the Louvre conservators and director, will do to France's institutions and scholars: it will reduce the reputation of the laboratoires des musées Nationaux and the CNRS to the level of third world institutions; it will desecrate the memory of the late Abbé Drioton and will cloud the reputation of the legendary

Noblecourt, who at 95 is unable to defend her reputation and **we cannot let that happen. YOU, Monsieur le Ministre**, can reverse this action and protect the integrity of the Louvre.

In my correspondence with the Louvre director, I offered to have him examine other artifacts with the new technologies, currently available to your scientists. On December 18, 2009, Dr. **Bruno Laurioux, Directeur par interim du Département des Sciences Humaines et Sociales (CNRS)** asked for a clarification regarding the involvement of the CNRS. I was elated! I thought that finally the Louvre would revise its position. I sent him the testimonials from Dr. Pierre Bariand and Dr. Philippe Blanc. And that was the end of the episode ! So, **what happened ?** Was he just curious and wanted to find out for his personal edification ? NO! He was given a copy of one of my letters to Mme. Guillemette Andreu-Lanoë and was told to investigate. So what did he do about my response? **NOTHING. They shut him up.** They preferred to sacrifice the memory of the late Abbé Drioton and Mme. Noblecourt's reputation, rather than go against Wildung's mafia. **Monsieur le Ministre, this is what is happening in some of the world's museums, and IN THE LOUVRE, and it is your sacred duty to stop it, at least in the Louvre.**

This is a serious accusation, but so is this entire matter. We are talking about the reputations of Drioton, Noblecourt, Du Bourguet, the laboratoires des Musées Nationaux, the CNRS, the Louvre. **They must not get away with it. Please take action.**

At one time, I asked Mr. Loyrette to return the artifact, if the Louvre was not interested in exhibiting it. At first he did not respond, then after I appealed to Ambassador Vimont, Mr. Loyrette responded. He suggested that to do so would involve: "*une telle procédure, nécessairement longue de plusieurs mois, implique la réunion d'une commission nationale, le Haut Conseil des musées de France, composé d'éminentes personnalités scientifique et seul habilité à proposer au ministre la mesure de déclassement d'un objet inscrit sur l'inventaire des collections du musée*". Had I done this request thru him, it would have been like asking the fox to protect the chicken coop ! The matter would have been swept under the rug, and no one would know the difference. And this is why I am writing to you.

I have tried twice to convince M. Loyrette to have the artifact reexamined scientifically by the Louvre Museum scientists, but my requests were rebuffed and for this reason I do not trust him. Therefore, I am asking that Your Excellency, as Ministre de la Culture, appoint an **impartial scientific panel**, who would review **all the scientific documents and artistic evaluations related to this matter** and then make a decision as to the fate of the artifact. I am confident that these "*éminentes personnalités, owing allegiance to the Louvre and NOT to Wildung* , will advise you to **keep the artifact and exhibit it in the Louvre. Because it is authentic.**

Monsieur le Ministre, the art world is full of controversial incidents, pitting scientists, i.e. objective individuals, against so called " eye experts", i.e. subjective ones. In most, if not all of these cases, science has prevailed. At one time, the Louvre was the proud owner of two exquisite " ancient" Egyptian artifacts, a glass " *blue head* " of TutAnkhAmon and a wooden " *tête de harpe* " of Akhenaton and admired by all. Unfortunately they turned out to be forgeries, declared as such by the Louvre's scientists. Recently, a sculpture of an Amarna princess purchased by the Bolton Museum in England, which had been authenticated by the Egyptologists of the British

Museum, turned out to be a forgery, after it had been examined by the scientists of the Museum itself, and this is only one of many examples.

It is understandable that Egyptologists do not want to let scientists make the final decision, but it would be a great mistake to let petty politics interfere with the honor and reputation of a great institution. Indeed, Egyptologists and art historians are eminently qualified to explain to us the art of lost civilizations; unfortunately, like any human being, they may be deceived by their own eyes and make errors in judgments, and this is why scientists help solve many puzzles.

The human eye is not infallible. In contested cases, the last word must rest with scientific findings. Where doubts prevail, scientific tests carefully conducted by qualified scientists should be given pride of place over opinions of a stylistic, aesthetic and intuitive nature. The guiding principle must be that **ONLY** chemical and physical research can, in the last resort, distinguish between genuine and fake. And if the results of exact research are in conflict with art experts' opinions, the latter must reluctantly be regarded as the product of human error.

That an art critic should persist in his opinion when confronted with the results of scientific tests is understandable, but he will **NEVER** be able to justify his stand in "**FACTUAL TERMS**", because, when feelings and knowledge are in conflict, the intangible must yield to the tangible.

Giving in to the group controlled by Wildung, will be a Pyrrhic victory, since it will destroy the reputation of some of France's greatest scholars and institutions, and you, Monsieur le Ministre must not let that happen. You cannot sacrifice, Drioton, Noblecourt, Du Bourguet, the scientists of the laboratoires des Musées Nationaux and the CNRS in order to please Wildung and his clique. Giving in to this clique would only lead to two conclusions, neither one being acceptable:

1. Your scientists committed a blunder when they advised Mme. Noblecourt to accept the artifact as genuine. An unthinkable option.
2. The Louvre, defying all logic, has forfeited its leadership role due to "petty political" considerations, and **TIMIDITY** will only lead to loss of prestige. Another unthinkable option.

As I said earlier, I am confident that the scientific panel will recommend the exhibit of the artifact. However, in the unthinkable event that they decide against it, which will be a severe slap in the face of your scholars and scientists, then we respectfully request the return of the artifact without further delay.

The scientific evidence cited is to be found on our web site: <http://www.mansooramarnacollection.com>. Of course, we are ready to supply you with any documentation regarding this artifact or the Mansoor Amarna Collection. **Please do not let the opportunity to own a rare and noble artifact slip thru your fingers, because of ignorance, jealousy and petty politics!**

Finally, a couple of quotes from Madame Noblecourt's letter dated 17 November, 1981.....

"J'ai pu présenter et faire accepter par le Comité des Conservateurs et le Conseil artistique des Musées de France la petite statuette de princesse amarnienne. Je n'ai pas manqué d'exposer

tout le problème a mes confrères.....Voice la quasi solution d'une longue histoire: il fallait, vous l'admettez, une certaine détermination pour affronter le verdict des uns et la mauvaise foi des autres et prendre ses responsabilités honnêtement vis à vis de la science que l'on désservirait si l'on manquait de courage. J'ai pris cette décision en mon âme et conscience et je sais qu'en ce qui concerne l'objet que j'ai fait entrer au Louvre, mon admirable maître, le Chanoine Drioton aurait agi comme moi. Et je suis heureuse, une fois de plus, d'avoir fait quelque chose pour sa mémoire."

In short, the problem is this : the Louvre accepted a valuable and rare antiquity as a gift from my family with the understanding that it would remain on permanent display. It has been retired and hidden for several years. However, we are eager to see it either returned to public view, or else returned to our family. Our earlier enquiries generated the response that its current lack of public exposure is due to doubts about its authenticity. Such doubts, as you can see from the above, are not at all legitimate and are related to attempts by foreign individuals to control perceptions of authenticity in the egyptological world. **Our preference is to have the Louvre retain and display the artifact, but if that is not possible, then we will insist that it be returned to us.**

That is why we are requesting that Your Excellency initiates **an enquiry**. Such an investigation will be able to ascertain for the Louvre the most responsible and appropriate disposition of the artifact in question. It **may well also uncover some inappropriate behavior on the part of individuals**, and such internal housekeeping is always beneficial to an institution whose public function relies on efficiency, honesty, competence, and common sense.

May I please have an acknowledgment to this letter, no later than May 1, 2010, letting me know the time required to solve this matter

The prestige and honor of France and the Louvre and the integrity of your Ministère de la Culture are at stake and you, Monsieur le Ministre, can do something about it.

**Il n'y a de calme que dans la justice, de repos que dans la vérité.
(Anatole France, dans son Eloge Funèbre d'Emile Zola)**

With my respect,

Alfred Mansoor, for the family of
The Late M.A. Mansoor

cc. His Excellency Ambassadeur Pierre Vimont, Washington D.C
Madame Catherine Brechignac, Présidente, CNRS
Monsieur Arnold Migus, Directeur Général, CNRS

Enclosures:

- 1 Letter from Abbé Etienne Drioton, dated 3 January 1959
- 2 Statement from Dr. Pierre Bariand, Dated 25 June, 1980
- 3 Letter from Mme. Noblecourt, dated 10 August, 1981
- 4 Letter from Mme. Noblecourt, dated 17 November, 1981
- 5 Letter from Mr. Hubert Landais, dated,.....1981
- 6 Letter from Mr. Pierre Bariand, dated 31 May, 1986, including statement from Mr. Philippe Blanc
- 7 Copy of Mme. Noblecourt's , page 352 from "*La Grande Nubiade*".
- 8 Photo of Louvre's pink Limestone Statuette# 27215, daughter of Akhenaten and Nefertiti.
Sorry, no color photo available.