

Archaeological Discoveries and Developments in Egypt

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Queen Hatshepsut revisited

Egyptian authorities recently identified a mummy discovered a century ago as the remains of Queen Hatshepsut, one of Egypt's most mysterious pharaohs.



Hatshepsut [sketch by Sakulchat Chatrakul Na Ayuddhaya] and Thutmose III ruled together for two years before she appointed herself pharaoh.

The mummy was found in the Valley of the Kings burial site in 1903 but was not identified for decades. In 2007, it was tested at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, resulting in the confirmation of its identity with the use of DNA analysis and evidence of an ancient tooth.

Appointing herself pharaoh in place of Thutmose III, Hatshepsut became a female monarch during a period of prosperity in the 15th century BC. She wore a false beard and dressed as a king, and

reigned with immense power. When the 18th dynasty ended, Hatshepsut (circa 1479 - 1458 BC) was completely erased from Egyptian history, including her mummy.

In 1903, British archaeologist Howard Carter located her tomb, and her part in the history of Egypt was consequently re-established for the first time in 3,500 years. He excavated Hatshepsut's tomb before discovering the tomb of Tutankhamun; however, her mummy was not in the tomb known as KV20 even though her sarcophagus was unearthed.

The sandstone funerary temple of Hatshepsut lies in ancient Thebes, on the west bank of the Nile in what is Luxor today.

The Egyptian team of scientists and archaeologists that made the dramatic identification was led by Dr. Zahi Hawass, secretary-general of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities. They conducted tests on four unidentified royal female mummies, three of which were kept in the Cairo Museum, and one in Tomb KV60 in the Valley of the Kings.

Hatshepsut was one of the pharaohs of ancient Egypt who ordered a large number of buildings to be constructed throughout both upper and lower Egypt. She was more powerful than the more well-known Nefertiti and Cleopatra. Most major museums in the world now have a collection of Hatshepsut statuary.

Tutankhamun

Recently, Egypt arranged for the mummy of its most famous ancient ruler to be displayed in public for the first time. Archaeologists moved the mummy of the boy king Tutankhamun from its stone sarcophagus to a climate-controlled case inside his tomb in Luxor's Valley of the Kings. Until now, only about 50 people has seen the face of Tutankhamun, whose tomb Howard Carter found 85 years ago.

Archaeologists are concerned that the heat and humidity brought into the tomb by the thousands of tourists visiting the underground chamber each month will cause the mummy to deteriorate further.

The mummy of the king was broken into 18 pieces, and damaged when Howard Carter extracted it from its tomb, and attempted to remove the solid gold burial mask of the pharaoh (AP, 5 November, 2007). His team cut the body of the mummy into pieces, separating the limbs and head, and used heated knives and wires to pry the gold mask fused to Tutankhamun's face as a result of the embalming process.

*The mummy Tutankhamun was found with treasures and mummies of two fetuses as well.
Sketch by Sakulchat Chatrakul Na Ayudhaya*



The mystery linked to Tutankhamun has been a centerpiece in the history of ancient Egypt since its discovery in 1922, along with a trove of gold and precious stone treasures.

Attempts to answer many questions concerning the young pharaoh continue to this day. In 2005, his remains were placed into a portable CT scanner for 15 minutes to obtain three-dimensional images, and the first ever scans on an Egyptian mummy.

The results concluded that Tutankhamun was not violently murdered, but the cause of death could not be established. Researchers believe that he suffered a badly broken thigh and a fatal infection, days before he died.

Tutankhamun was the 12th ruler of ancient Egypt's 18th dynasty. He ruled between 1333 and 1324 BC, having ascended to the throne at about nine years of age.

The CT scan also reveals that Egypt's most famous king was well-fed, healthy and slightly built, standing at 170 cm when he died, reports *AP*.

What the scan did not determine was the pharaoh's precise royal lineage. The mystery of whether he is the son or half brother of Akhenaten (the "heretic" pharaoh who abandoned Ancient Egypt's old gods in favour of monotheism) remains unresolved.

Egypt is also currently carrying out DNA tests on the mummies of two fetuses found in the tomb of Tutankhamun to ascertain if they were his offsprings. The study may be able to identify the lineage and family of the boy pharaoh as well as the mother of the fetuses.

The mummified remains of the two still-born children were found during the 1922 discovery by Howard Carter. Some scholars believe that their mother was Ankhesenamun, only wife of Tutankhamun, and daughter of Nefertiti.



Sketch of one of the two mummified fetuses discovered in the tomb of Tutankhamun, based on an undated photo released by the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities. Sketch by Sakulchat Chatrakul Na Ayudhaya

Neferinpu, Egyptian official, priest and politician

Part of the worldwide fame of Tutankhamun is attributed to the virtually intact state of his tomb when it was opened in 1922. Archaeologists have, in 2008, unsealed another intact burial chamber at Abusir, near Cairo; a relatively modest tomb that is reckoned to belong to an ancient Egyptian official, a 5th dynasty priest and politician named Neferinpu.

A Czech team excavated the burial site, and found artefacts that had not been seen or touched for some 4,500 years. The small chamber is about 10m below ground, and measures 2m by 4m. Among the objects yielded are beer jars, miniature limestone vessels, perfume jug, plates and cups.

The mummy in the sarcophagus was severely decomposed, and accompanied by faience beads and a walking stick.

National Geographic News reports that inscriptions on a door to the tomb indicate that Neferinpu served in the administrations of two dynasty rulers, and held both positions of priest and administrative aide.

The find provides important information on the burial customs of the middle class and the strata of Egyptian society.

Ancient Egyptian daily life

Egyptology has often been associated with the royal and high classes of Egyptian history. Study of the other classes of ancient Egyptian settlements has, however, become more common in the last 20 or 30 years, archaeologists say.

The Tell Edfu site in Southern Egypt, for example, is a well-preserved mud-brick settlement that offers insights into almost 3,000 years of ancient Egyptian daily life.

The excavated site includes a public town commerce centre that was also used for tax collection, and documentation of accounts and written



*A part of the delicate false door
of Neferinpu's tomb.
Sketch by Wunnaporn Siangprasert*

documents. A relatively advanced society appears to have existed, with business being part of daily life in ancient Egypt.

Tell Edfu, which lies next to the Edfu Temple (one of the best-preserved large temples of ancient Egypt), was discovered many years ago.

Egypt's ancient basic settlements have mostly been destroyed, and thus not much is known about them.



A shard of rare polished pottery found in Faiyum where archaeologists unearthed evidence of a farm settlement from 5200 B.C. Sketch by Wunnaporn Siangprasert

Excavations by American and Dutch archaeologists recently uncovered layers of Neolithic or Late Stone Age agricultural artefacts and hearths at an oasis in Faiyum, a desert 80 km southwest of Cairo.

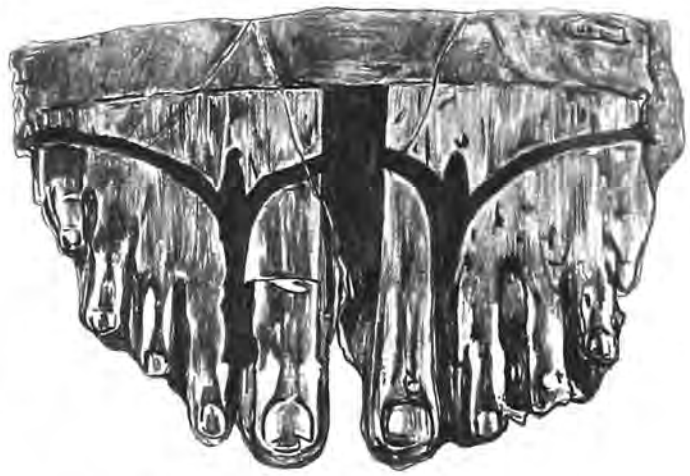
They believe that the area is the earliest known farming settlement in ancient Egypt. Fossils of animals and carbonized grains were also unearthed.

Early agriculture in Egypt can now be examined in a village context, archaeologists said, with the aim of understanding the farmers' life at that time, and how and when Egyptians began to engage in farming.

Evidence suggested that Egyptians grew wheat and barley, and domesticated pigs, goats, sheep and cattle before the emergence of the pharaohs. It is believed that the practice of agriculture occurred over 7,000 years ago.



*A lotus inlay faience in the collection of
Sir William Flinders Petrie.
Sketch by Sakulchat Chatrakul
Na Ayudhaya*



*A painted gold foot case found by
"the father of scientific archaeology".
Sketch by Sakulchat Chatrakul Na Ayudhaya*

Excavating Egypt exhibition

Currently, an exhibition from the collection of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology at University College, London displays ancient objects which are part of the discoveries of Englishman Sir William Flinders Petrie, "the father of scientific archaeology."

Petrie is known to have transformed the treasure-hunting profession into a science. He went to Egypt in 1880, and worked for more than five decades collecting objects that were overlooked by others.

The exhibition, 'Excavating Egypt,' presents more than 220 items, some of which are dated over 5,000 years old, including jars, pots



*Painted dyad sculpture discovered
by Sir William Flinders Petrie.
Sketch by Sakulchat Chatrakul
Na Ayudhaya*

dishes, bowls, jewellery, pieces of games, texts and writing instruments, tools and sculptures.

The pottery on display testifies to Petrie's most significant contributions to archaeology, which is the development of seriation or sequence dating. He raised the importance of using pottery for dating at a time when it has yet to be a major tool for archaeological study.

Other developments

Twelve archaeologists and hundreds of workers are involved in painstaking work to complete the two additional massive statues of pharaoh Amenhotep III at the entrance to the world renowned Colossi of Memnon site.

Located in southern Egypt, the Colossi of Memnon has fascinated visitors for over 2,000 years.

The existing two statues are the only remnants of the funerary temple of Amenhotep, who was the father of the famous pharaoh Akhenaton. Amenhotep reigned between 1391 and 1353 BC during the 18th Century.

Regular excavations at the site have yielded pieces of 4 monumental Amenhotep statues, 2 sphinxes and 84 statues of Sekhmet the war goddess, among other items.

Recently, a 3.62m statue of Amenhotep's wife Tiya was also discovered.

Meanwhile, deciphered documents and modern archaeological research have led scholars to believe that the kingdom of Kush up the



Face on a 3.62m statue of ancient pharaonic queen Tiya, wife of Amenhotep.

Sketch by Wilasinee Siangwan

Nile flourished for five centuries with the power and influence to control a large part of Africa.

Ancient settlements, cemeteries and gold-processing centres are being found, and evidence suggest that the Kush kingdom maintained control or influence over a 1,200 km stretch of the Nile Valley between 2000 and 1500 BC.

During the past years, archaeological projects implemented by Germany, Hungary, UK, Poland, Sudan and the US have carried out excavations, with the search soon to be underwater.

Hundreds of ruins, cemeteries and rock art have been discovered in an area that a report in *Archaeology* magazine described as “so incredibly rich in archaeology.”

Polish and British teams have found substantial evidence ascribed to Kerma, the capital of the Kushites.

As the modern city of Kerma has replaced the ancient site, Swiss archaeologists are involved in efforts to protect the ruins for the purpose of further research. ■