

CYBERSCRIBE-196

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No doubt everyone already knows of the terrible fire that largely destroyed the Egyptian Institute and its irreplaceable library. On December 18, 2011, a protestor apparently threw a Molotov cocktail during a melee. It struck the Institute and caught the wooden shutters on fire. The fire rapidly spread and in hours the interior had burned and the floors collapsed.

The stories vary about how much was lost and how much can be salvaged. The reports of the burning of the hand written version of the Description d'le Egypte, of Napoleon's time is not true. There is no such book. The greatest tragedy is that the Institute held many papyri, manuscript documents and other 'one-of-a-kind' documents. Plans had been made to start digitizing that material...next year. Now it is lost.

The reports vary widely in their truthfulness, but the item below from 'Science Magazine' (<http://tiny.cc/k2s2p>) reports it as well as any of them (item abbreviated).

'Egypt's oldest research institute caught fire during demonstrations in central Cairo on 18 December, destroying an unknown number of precious books and manuscripts. Shocked Egyptologists call the destruction a "tragedy," and are now trying to locate and salvage the research treasures.

'The Institut d'Égypte was founded as a scientific research academy by Napoleon Bonaparte during his 1798 Egyptian campaign, an invasion which brought the country's ancient history to the attention of Western scholars. The collection includes at least 20,000 documents and books, many of which are irreplaceable.

'Lisa Anderson, president of the American University in Cairo (AUC) which has a campus near the institute, says the Dar al-Kutub, the National Library and Archives, is leading a rescue effort by scholars, library specialists, and archivists. AUC is providing student and faculty volunteers and supplies from its own rare books library.

"It is impossible at this point to estimate what is lost, since some books and other materials were rescued by private individuals, and we do not know where they are," she says. "Presumably they will begin appearing, either delivered to the Dar al-Kutub or in the used books markets, over the next weeks and months."

‘Anderson called the event "a terrible tragedy for the historiography of Egypt," adding that "the response of the scientific and scholarly community has been very heartening." Bernard Valero, the French minister of foreign affairs spokesperson, called the destruction a "cultural catastrophe" and urged the Egyptian government to begin an exhaustive and transparent investigation, in order to find and punish those responsible. He added that France would consider any request from Egypt to help rehabilitate the gutted institute.

‘Late today in Cairo, Egyptian media said that more than 35,000 manuscripts and books had been rescued from the flames, although their condition remains unclear. Anderson expressed hope for the collection, which she characterized as "a wonderful, somewhat eccentric, irreplaceable archive of mostly 19th century history and geography—books, manuscripts, and maps."’

In the wake of this catastrophe, there came an amazing offer from His Highness Dr. Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Member of the UAE Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah. Sharjah is one the smaller Emirates on the Arabian Peninsula, and has a large oil based income.

He is a rather enlightened, or at least educated ruler. The ruler of Sharjah, H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qassimi was born in 1942 and has been the ruler since the death of his brother Sheikh Khaled in 1972. Sheikh Sultan studied agriculture for five years in Cairo University and received his PhD from Exeter University.

The amazing report, below, relates that he is offering to give his own personal library to the restored French Insitute. He states that he has duplicates in his personal collection of most of the published materials burned or damaged.

What an amazing example of generosity, and an understanding that an enlightened ruler must use his wealth to help the needs of the whole world. The source called ‘Gulf Today’ (<http://tiny.cc/d0z6g>) tells this amazing story.



"On December 17, 2011, I witnessed on TV, as millions of people did, flames engulfing an important archaeological building, which I know very well. It was surrounded by boys throwing stones and Molotov's (petrol bombs) at it. I heard a reporter saying, "The Egyptian Scientific Complex is burning." I was overwhelmed with mixed emotions (astonishment, surprise, fear, sadness and bewilderment), all flooding the heart at the same time.

"I could not wipe away the sorrow, so I attempted to assure all who had felt what I felt to announce my readiness to rebuild the Scientific Complex at my own expense. I will provide the original books and manuscripts, as most of them are in my private library. This dedication is not grace, but a gesture of thankfulness we owe to Egypt.

"The complex is etched in my memory, as I was its member a long time ago. I know its contents and possessions, which are unknown even to the people

nearest to this complex. It is counted as one of the oldest and most important scientific institutions not just in Egypt, but also in the entire Arab World."

A much happier story involves those mysterious shafts in the Great Pyramid. There has been another robotic penetration...and the results are very clear, if not as exciting as chambers full of treasure. The story from 'New Scientist' (<http://tiny.cc/phfg6>) (much abbreviated) is very interesting, as it clears up a number of rumors and gives us hard evidence of those shafts and the mysterious 'doors' at the innermost ends. Read on:

'A robot has sent back the first images of markings on the wall of a tiny chamber in the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt that have not been seen for 4500 years. It has also helped settle the controversy about the only metal known to exist in the pyramid, and shows a "door" that could lead to another hidden chamber. Strangely, though, there are two tunnels, about 20 centimeters by 20 centimeters, that extend from the north and south walls of the Queen's Chamber and stop at stone doors before they reach the outside of the pyramid. The function of these tunnels and doors is unknown, but some believe that one or both could lead to a secret chamber.

'Several attempts have been made to explore the tunnels using robots. In 1993, a robot crawled some 63 meters up the tunnel in the south wall and discovered what appeared to be a small stone door set with metal pins. Metal is not part of any other known structure in the pyramid, and the discovery ignited speculation that the pins were door handles, keys or even parts of a power supply constructed by aliens.

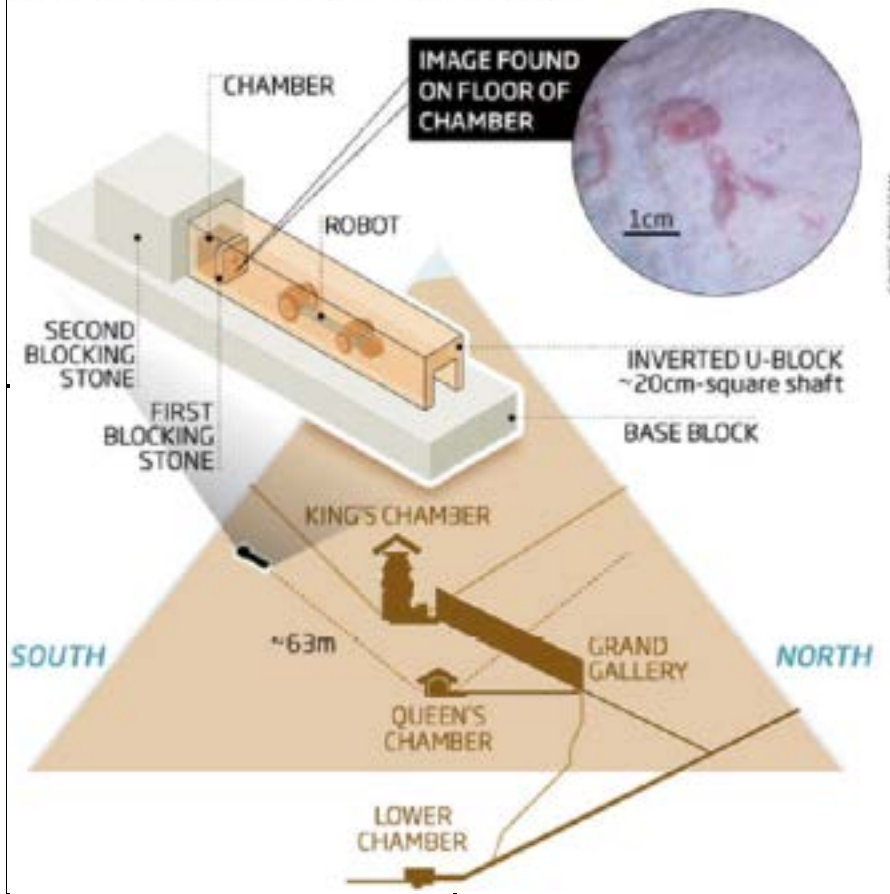
'Then in 2002 another robot drilled through the stone block and filmed a small chamber backed by a large blocking stone, but little else. Now a robot designed by engineer Rob Richardson from the University of Leeds, UK, and colleagues, and named Djedi after the magician that Khufu consulted when he planned his tomb, has crawled up the tunnel carrying a bendy "micro snake" camera that can see around corners.

Images sent back by the camera have revealed hieroglyphs written in red paint and lines in the stone that could be marks left by stonemasons when the chamber was being carved.

## Hidden hieroglyphs

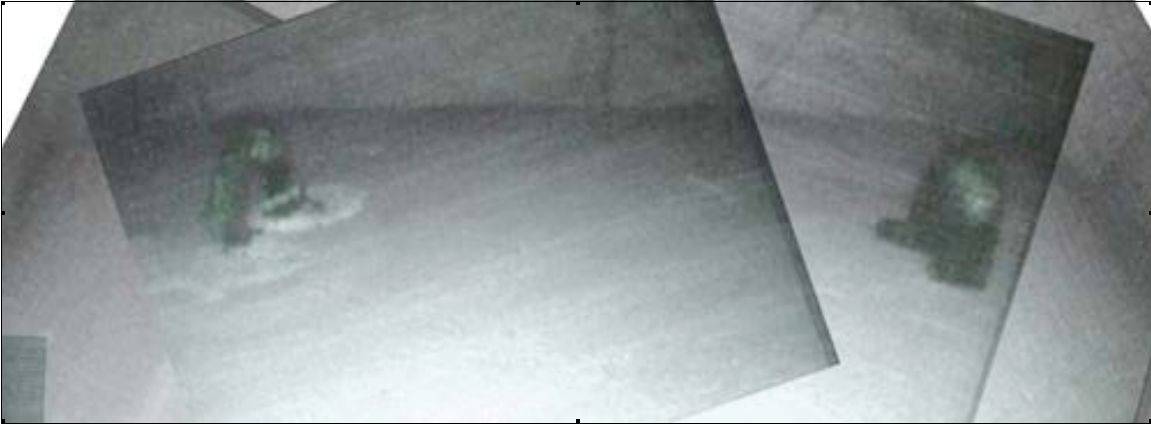
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A robot has peered through a stone door into a chamber in the Great Pyramid of Giza and sent back images not seen for 4500 years



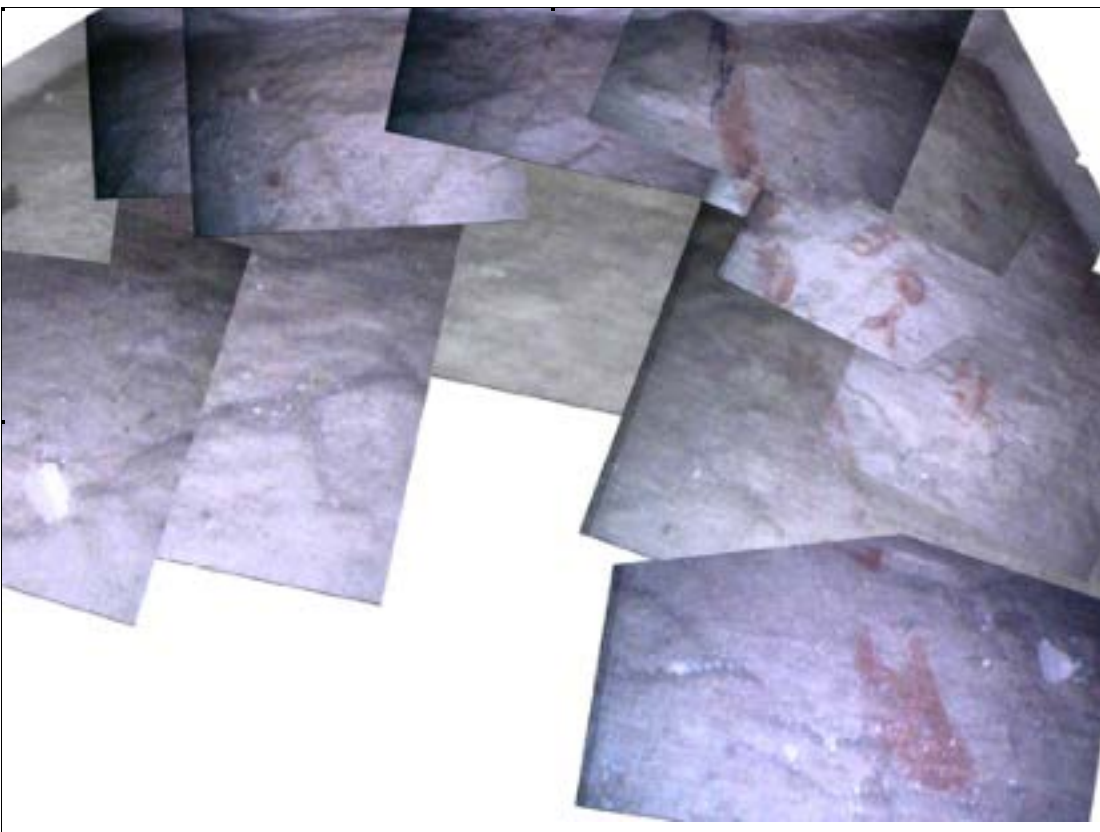
‘As the camera can see around corners, the back of the stone door has been observed for the first time, scotching the more fanciful theories about the metal pins, says camera-designer Shaun Whitehead of the exploration company Scoutek, based in Melton Mowbray, UK. "Our new pictures from behind the pins show that they end in small, beautifully made loops, indicating that they were more likely ornamental rather than electrical connections."

‘Whitehead, who worked in collaboration with Dassault Systèmes in Vélizy-Villacoublay, France, adds: "Also, the back of the 'door' is polished so it must have been important. It doesn't look like it was a rough piece of stone used to stop debris getting into the shaft."



A composite image of the rear of the first blocking stone showing the back of the metal pins embedded in the first blocking stone

‘As for the second "door" at the rear of the chamber, which is rough and unfinished, Spence thinks it is simply the end of the shaft. "It's most likely to be a backing stone - there won't be another chamber behind it, it makes no sense," she says. "However, it's fascinating from a symbolic point of view, and this sort of work will allow us to get at the intention behind the construction of the pyramid."



A close-up view of the red figures on the floor behind the first blocking stone

A composite image of the chamber floor behind the first blocking stone showing red figures to the right of a mason's line.



As this was being written, a new burial shaft with a mummy and other contents has been revealed in the Valley of the Kings. The story from 'Al-Ahram' (<http://tiny.cc/iwsk7>) is brief and enticing:



'A deep burial well was found during a routine cleaning carried out by a Swiss archaeological mission on the path leading to King Tuthmosis III's tomb in the Valley of the Kings. The well leads to a burial chamber filled with a treasured collection of ancient Egyptian artifacts.'

'Mohamed Ibrahim, Minister of State for Antiquities, said that further inside the chamber, excavators stumbled upon a wooden sarcophagus painted black and decorated with hieroglyphic texts, and a wooden stela engraved with the names and different titles of the deceased.'

'Early studies carried out by the Swiss team revealed that the tomb dates back to the 22nd Dynasty (945-712 BC) and it belongs to the daughter of Amun Re, lecture priest in Karnak temples and also the singer of the God Amun Re.'

The CyberScribe was caught by surprise on this next item...an attempt to 'restore' the so-called Colossi of Memnon, the great statues of Amenhotep III. The brief story from 'Al-Ahram' (<http://tiny.cc/yz3gg>). One has to wonder what they

intend to do...remodel the heads and repair all of the cracks and fissures? One hopes that all they will do is stabilize the shattered statues. Read on:



‘In collaboration with the European archaeological mission, the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) is undertaking a comprehensive project to restore the colossi of Memnon on Luxor’s west bank.

‘The project aims to return the 19.5 meters tall colossi to their original appearance when the New Kingdom’s King Amenhotep III built them to decorate the façade of his mortuary temple.

‘SCA secretary-general Mostafa Amin told Ahram Online that the restoration would also return all the missing pieces of the colossi, collapsed during the Roman period, to their original positions.

‘Amin went on to say that the bodies of both colossi would be consolidated, as well as two Amenhotep III’s statues that were unearthed last year by the European archaeological mission, which has been working at the site for more than ten years.’

From time to time we see new announcements of the ability to identify diseases, especially cancers, in mummies. A new ‘first’ was announced when prostate cancer was apparently detected in a mummy. The report (abbreviated) in ‘New Science’ magazine (<http://tiny.cc/f3din>) tells us:





‘A high-resolution CT scan of the lumbar spine region of a 2150-year-old Egyptian mummy has just revealed small, round lesions—the oldest case of metastatic prostate cancer in ancient Egyptians. Some 2250 years ago in Egypt, a man known today only as M1 struggled with a long, painful, progressive illness. A dull pain throbbed in his lower back, then spread to other parts of his body, making most movements a misery. When M1 finally succumbed to the mysterious ailment between the ages of 51 and 60, his family paid for him to be mummified so that he could be reborn and relish the pleasures of the afterworld.

‘Moreover, the new study now in press in the International Journal of Paleopathology, suggests that earlier investigators may have underestimated the prevalence of cancer in ancient populations because high-resolution computerized tomography (CT) scanners capable of finding tumors measuring just 1 to 2 millimeters in diameter only became available in 2005.

‘The low number of cases prompted a theory that cancer only began flourishing in the modern industrial age, when carcinogens became more widespread in food and in the environment and when people began living longer, giving tumors more time to grow and proliferate.

‘But ancient populations, says Albert Zink, a biological anthropologist at the Institute for Mummies and the Iceman in Bolzano, Italy, were no strangers to carcinogens. Soot from wood-burning chimneys and fireplaces, for example,

contains substances known to cause cancer in humans. And the bitumen that ancient boat builders heated to seal and waterproof ships has been linked to lung cancer as well as tumors in the respiratory and digestive tracts. "I think cancer was quite prevalent in the past," Zink says, "more prevalent than we have been able to see."

Another 'medical' report addressed the so-called 'club foot' of Tutankhamun. This report from the newest set of x-rays and other investigations was picked up round the world and a host of medical 'experts' had a great time with the 'deformity'. Unfortunately, the 'deformity' doesn't exist. This report (abbreviated) from 'New Scientist' (<http://tiny.cc/sr9ix>) brings us up to date on this controversy:



Wrong foot, right conclusion?

"It is normal," Robert Connolly exclaims, poring over the faded pages of an obscure, decades-old book. Connolly has found an image that appears to settle the controversy over whether the boy king Tutankhamun had a clubfoot. As with many mysteries related to the famous mummy, the truth is hard to pin down.

‘The argument started last year when a team led by Egypt's then-chief of antiquities, Zahi Hawass, reported that Tutankhamun's left foot was severely deformed. The finding that Tutankhamun was disabled made headlines around the world. But Connolly - a researcher at the University of Liverpool, UK, and part of a team that X-rayed the mummy in 1968 - is convinced it is wrong.

‘The 1968 team was led by the late Ronald Harrison, also of Liverpool, UK. Most of his X-rays were never published, but Connolly says they show that both of Tutankhamun's feet were normal. If Connolly is right, the deformities in the scans are due to damage inflicted since 1968.

‘Connolly knew that the X-ray of the left foot appeared in a book Harrison had contributed to - *Chronicle: Essays from ten years of television archaeology* - written to accompany a TV documentary. *New Scientist* tracked down the book and the image shows a healthy foot. Our excitement was short-lived, however. Though the photo (pictured) is labeled "left foot", it turned out to be a flipped image of the uncontroversial right foot.

Yet other experts share some of Connolly's concerns. James Gamble, an orthopedic surgeon at Stanford School of Medicine, California, says the foot must have twisted after death because the shape of the bones is normal, an impossibility in a club foot.’

For a change of pace, how about a couple of animal stories? The first involves the Nile crocodile, the one that haunted the ancient Egyptians. It seems there were then two species in the main part of Egypt. A new study has straightened out the species problem. The story from ‘PhysOrg’ (<http://tiny.cc/91ut4>)(abbreviated) gives a fine view of a seldom seen animal in today’s Nile:

‘Researchers from the Fordham University in New York have uncovered evidence that the iconic Nile crocodile is actually two different species of crocodile only distantly related. The new research is published in *Molecular Ecology*.

‘The researchers, led by Evon Hekka, began this study when a colleague of hers, Michael Klemens from the Wildlife Conservation Society, sent her a DNA sample of some crocodiles from an oasis in Ennedi Plateau, Chad. The travel guide he had been with suggested that they jump in the water and swim with these crocodiles as they were known for their docile behavior.

‘Because of the odd nature of the behavior, Klemens had taken a tissue sample from a dead crocodile located nearby and sent it to Hekka.



Nile crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*).

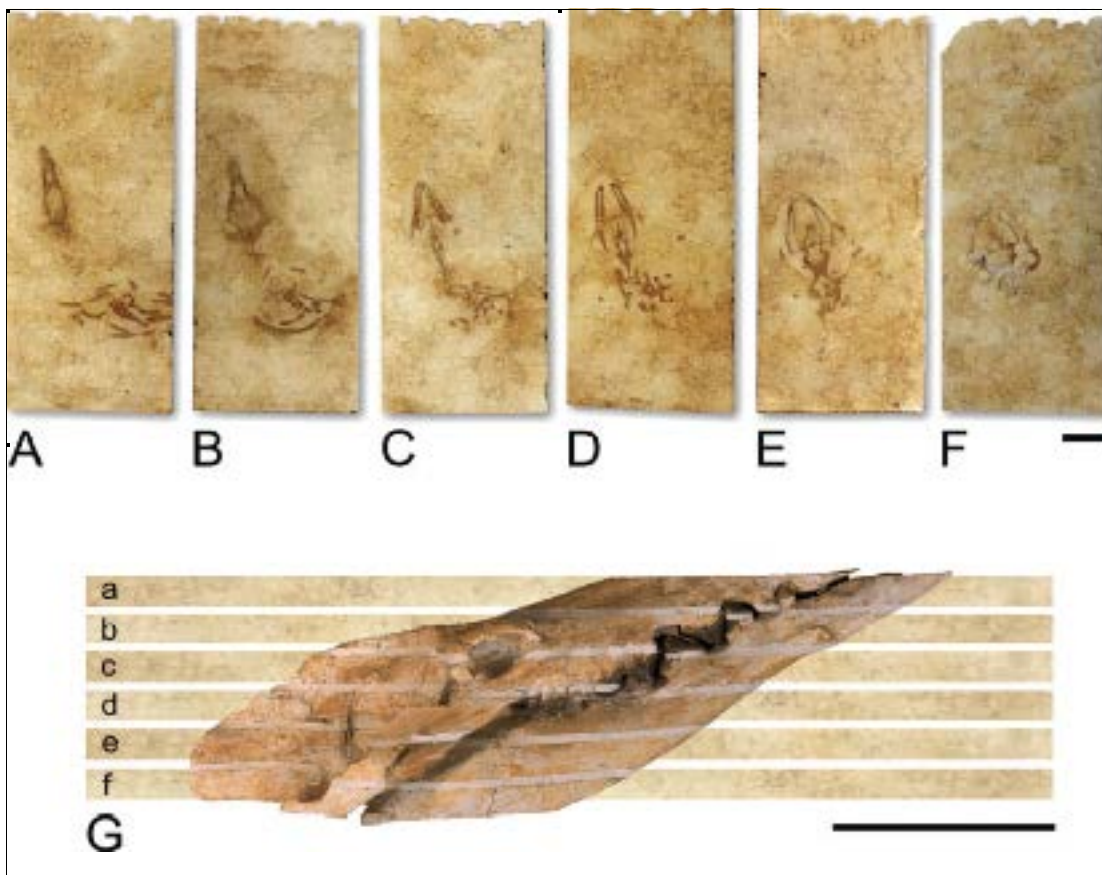
‘Hekka had been working on Nile crocodile samples when she received this one from Klemens and when the results came back from the DNA sequencing, she repeated the test because she was convinced that she had done something wrong.

‘Hekka and her team began collecting various different Nile crocodile samples, including museum samples of some 2,000-year-old mummified crocodiles for a total of 180 different samples. It was determined that there was indeed two different species of crocodile’s known as *Crocodylus niloticus* and *Crocodylus suchus*.

‘All of the mummified crocodile remains were of the *C. suchus* and indicate that ancient Egyptians recognized a difference in species. The Greek historian Herodotus wrote that Egyptians were selective when choosing crocodiles for their ceremonies and generally chose the tamer and more docile crocodiles.

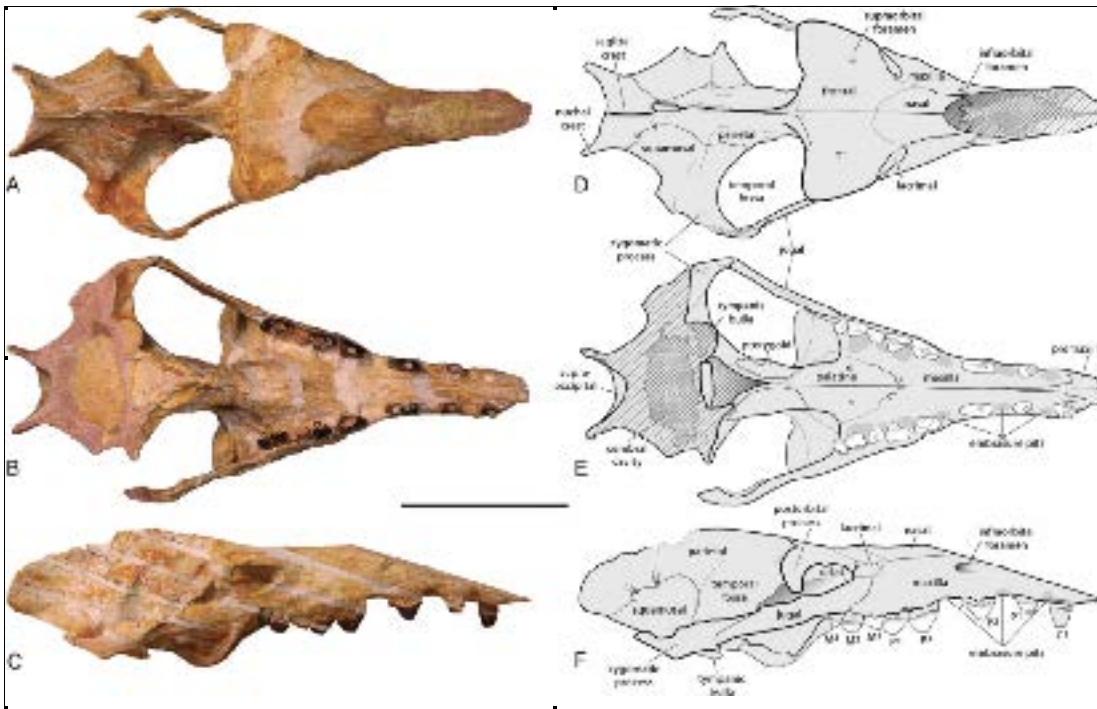
‘This new evidence shows that *C. suchus* is much rarer than what was previously known simply as the Nile crocodile. While some areas in West Africa were hoping to be able to increase their trade in skins to increase revenue, this new study is likely to stop that from happening and may even reduce the amount they are allowed to trade.’

Another animal item appeared in the *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology* (Vol. 31, No. 6, 2012), and describes the discovery of a new species of fossil whale from the Eocene (about 40 million years old). The animal was discovered in a block of marbled limestone that had been sawn into a series of sheets. The researchers were able to get all of the sheets, extract the skull, slip in spacers the width of the saw cut, and, voila...a perfect skull!



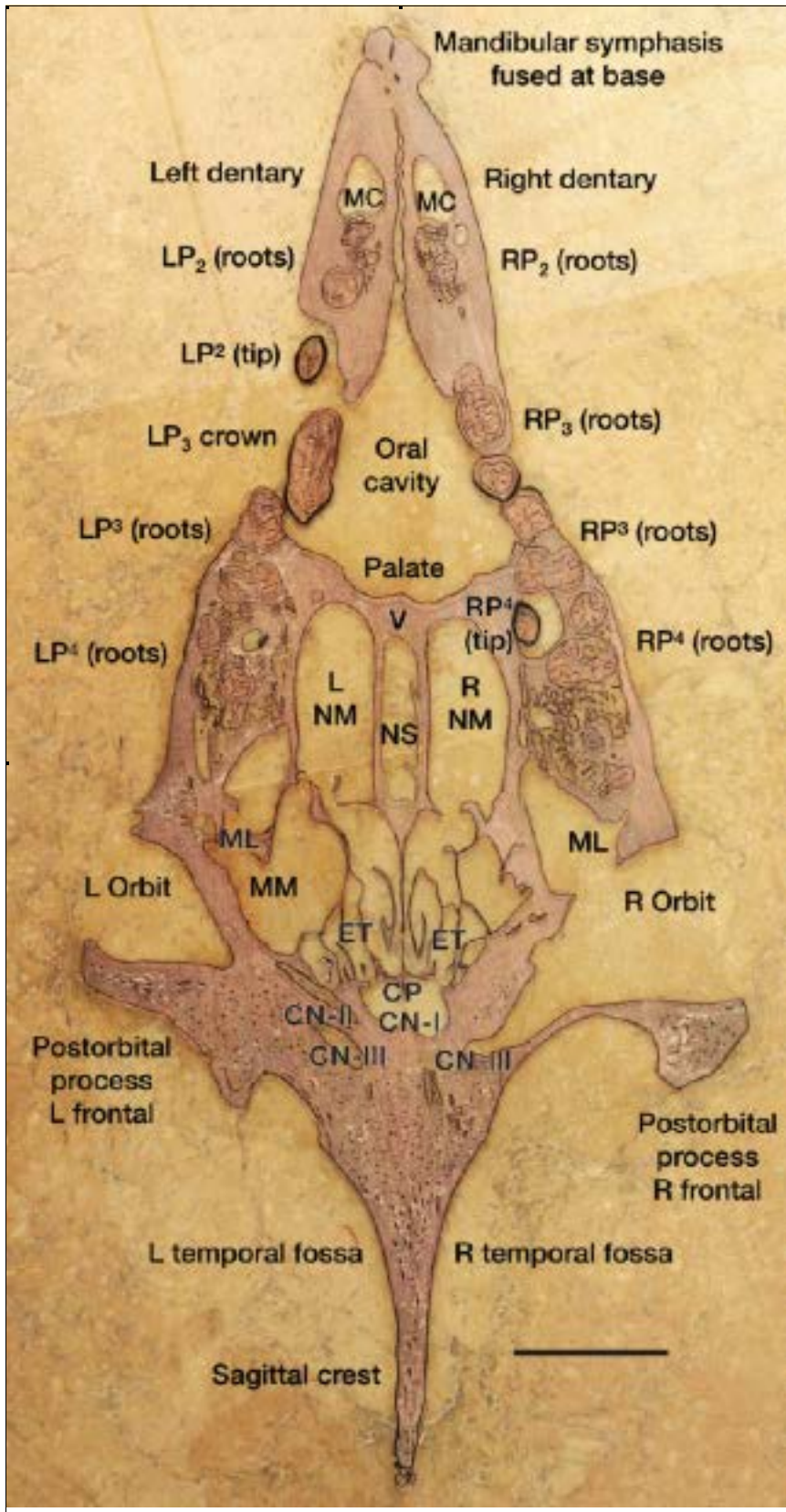
The figure shows the slice orientations and how the slabs looked when first recovered (top). When restored, the specimen looks very impressive!



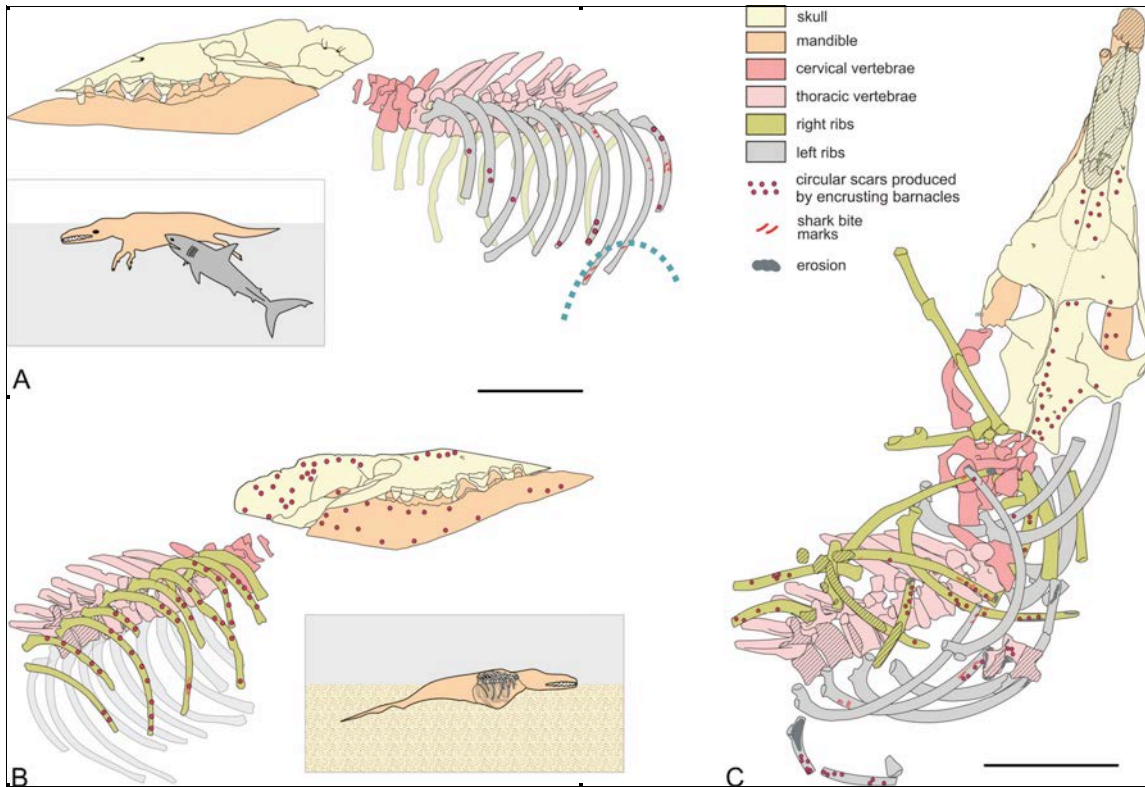


The next figure shows one of the slabs before the restoration:





Ultimately it was possible to collect much of the skeleton as well, giving a good look at the original appearance of this new whale.



Some years ago, the CyberScribe discussed the famous pyramid in the city of Rome, built as a tomb for Gaius Cestius (in about 18-12 BCE). The pyramid has been deteriorating and a Japanese businessman has volunteered the money to restore and stabilize this unique monument. The story appeared in several places, but the best versions seems to be the one below, from 'The History Blog' (<http://tiny.cc/juuv4>) (abbreviated), and makes for interesting reading:



'Japanese businessman Yuzo Yagi will donate €1 million (\$1.3 million) to restore the tomb of Gaius Cestius, a marble-clad pyramid built in Rome between 18 and 12 B.C. The wealthy Gaius Cestius, who in life had been praetor, tribune of the plebs and a member of the Septemviri Epulonum, a religious college responsible for throwing banquets for the gods, left instructions in his will that a pyramid be built in 330 days to house his remains.

‘Built out of brick-faced concrete on a foundation of travertine, Cestius’ pyramid is 100 Roman feet (about 97 imperial ones) square at the base and 125 Roman feet (about 120 imperial ones) high, making it an extremely acute pyramid with a very pointy top. White Carrara marble slabs face the exterior which was entirely sealed with no entrance point after Gaius Cestius’ burial. Inside is a frescoed burial chamber that held Cestius’ ashes; it was looted in antiquity and tunneled into by disappointed thieves during the Middle Ages.



‘The other side of the pyramid abuts the Cimitero Acattolico (the non-Catholic cemetery, also known as the Protestant Cemetery though people of many faiths are buried there) where the Romantic poets Shelley and Keats slumber eternally.



‘Like many of the most beautiful spots in Rome, the pyramid of Gaius Cestius is in dire need of maintenance. The marble exterior is pollution-blackened, cracked and bristling with vegetation. Water is seeping through the walls and damaging the frescoes, already faded and degraded from millennia of looters/hostile elements, in the burial chamber. Past restorations haven’t been kind to it either. The acid used to clean the exterior in the 1970s left the marble vulnerable to attacks from microorganisms and particulate matter.

‘Yugo Yazı is the owner of Tsusho Limited, an Osaka-based chain of 400 clothing outlets. All he asks in return for the donation is that a plaque with his name on it be placed near the pyramid.’

And then there are few silly articles that always end up on these pages. The first involves the hamburger chain McDonalds and some missing mummies. The source is 'The Scotsman' (<http://tiny.cc/jdfoz>) (abbreviated):

'Egyptian authorities have asked for the return of two ancient mummies which are buried in the foundations of a McDonald's restaurant in Britain, it was revealed last night. The mummies were excavated from Egypt along with a number of other artifacts at the end of the 19th Century by the Rev William MacGregor.

'But 70-years on, the cinema has become a McDonald's restaurant and Zahi Hawass (when he was still in power) said they would like to see the mummies returned home.

'The Staffordshire history expert said Mr. MacGregor (1935) had the mummies reburied after walking through the Tamworth town center and deciding that the cinema's foundations looked like the kind of burial sites he had seen in Egypt. Mr. Harper added: "So he asked the foreman if he would mind if he deposited a couple of his mummies in the foundations."

The Palace Cinema and the George Street area has since been redeveloped and the foundations in which the mummies are buried now find themselves supporting the McDonald's restaurant.

'A spokesman for McDonald's said: "It is something we were completely unaware of, but it is fascinating. We understand they are well within the foundations so an excavation is out of the question, unfortunately," the spokesman added.'

And another in the same mode. Remember the 'Curse' that was supposedly activated by the opening of the tomb of Tutankhamun? The one that supposedly killed everyone associated with the excavation. And which was a load of bunk.

Well, surprise, there is now another interpretation of the 'curse'...a series of murders! The 'Daily Mail' (<http://tiny.cc/y6jo5>) (much abbreviated) tells us the 'real truth' of the curse. The article rambles on for quite a bit of text. The CyberScribe thinks its all a bunch of nonsense, but read on:

'The mysterious deaths gripped the nation back in the 1920s and 30s. More than 20 people linked to the opening of Tutankhamun's burial chamber in Luxor in

1923 died in bizarre circumstances, six of them in London. A frenzied public blamed the 'Curse of Tutankhamun' and speculated on the supernatural powers of the ancient Egyptians.

'But a historian now claims the deaths in Britain were the work of a notorious Satanist, Aleister Crowley. Mark Beynon has drawn on previously unpublished evidence to conclude the occultist – dubbed the wickedest man in the world – masterminded a series of ritualistic killings in 'revenge' for the British archaeologist Howard Carter's opening of the boy-king's tomb.

'He accuses Crowley of being responsible for the deaths of:

'Raoul Loveday who died on February 16, 1923. The 23-year-old Oxford undergraduate was a follower of Crowley's cult at a Sicilian Abbey. He died on the same day at the very hour of Carter's much-publicized opening of Tutankhamun's burial chamber after drinking the blood of a cat sacrificed in one of Crowley's rituals.

'Prince Ali Kamel Fahmy Bey who died on July 10, 1923. The Egyptian prince, 23, was shot dead by his French wife of six months, Marie-Marguerite, in London's Savoy Hotel shortly after he was photographed visiting the tomb.

'Aubrey Herbert, died September, 23, 1923, The mysterious deaths gripped the nation back in the 1920s and 30s.

'More than 20 people linked to the opening of Tutankhamun's burial chamber in Luxor in 1923 died in bizarre circumstances, six of them in London.

Captain Richard Bethell, died November 15, 1929. Howard Carter's 46-year-old personal secretary was found dead in his bed at Mayfair's exclusive Bath Club.





Responsible for the deaths? Aleister Crowley, devil worshipper, who allegedly killed six people linked to the opening of Tutankhamun's tomb

Lord Westbury, died February 20, 1930. Bethell's father, Lord Westbury, 77, was believed to have thrown himself off his seventh floor St James's apartment.

Edgar Steele, died February 24, 1930. Only four days after the death of Lord Westbury, Mr. Steele, 57, died at St Thomas' Hospital after a minor stomach operation. He was in charge of handling the tomb artifacts at London's British Museum.

Sir Ernest Wallis Budge, died November 23, 1934. A former Keeper in the British Museum's Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities, he was found dead in his bed in Bloomsbury aged 77.



'Everyone was obsessed with the supposed Curse of Tutankhamun striking down high society victims.

'But until now, no-one has ever realized that they may well have been murdered.'

And finally, have you ever wanted to visit the 'Ark of the Covenant'? A deliciously loony and very long article tells you exactly where it is and how to visit the site not only the Ark, but also Alexander the Great's tomb. There is no room for such a silly business, but if you are interested, go to this site: <http://tiny.cc/xx4yt>.

If you actually want to go, there is a travel agency ready to relieve you of your cash. The 'Huffington Post' (<http://tiny.cc/cz040>), a notoriously unreliable source tells us:

'Reports are cropping up that the fabled Ark of the Covenant, said to contain the remnants of the Ten Commandments, has been discovered along with the Tomb of Alexander the Great on the Greek island of Thasos.

'The Focus Information Agency, a Bulgarian outfit not exactly renowned for accuracy, is reporting that Grekomania.ru, a Russian web portal that purports to be an "official information partner of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Greece," has claimed that a group led by Nikolaos Kumardzis, an archeologist apparently unaffiliated with any other dig, has identified one of the world's great treasures. At least one Armenian newspaper is running a similar story.

'Thasos, which is near Macedonia, has long been rumored as the potential resting place of Alexander the Great, who died in Babylon in 323 BC after conquering Persia and consolidating Eurasian power. The connection between the great military leader and the Ten Commandments -- none of which he could truly be said to have followed -- is unclear, which makes the news that they were discovered together even less credible.'

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).

