

CyberScribe 161 - January 2009

Welcome to 2009! The CyberScribe has a wealth of news for the start of a new year...some silly, some serious and mostly just fun. To begin, let's do something rather silly, something improvable and something that's always fun. What did Cleopatra VII, the famous one, really look like? You know the general arguments: she was a ravishing beauty that made strong and intelligent men throw away empires for her love. Or was she just a chick with a huge bankroll, attractive to Romans who needed her money? And the most unhappy version, was she really a pretty rough looking woman who was a great politician...and who was also willing to sleep with anyone who might help her and her poor country out as she faced a rapacious Rome?

We'll never know, of course, but the arguments are arrayed around a series of supposedly portrait statues and coin images. Some are images of a soft featured and rather pretty face...but others, most notably the coins, show a tough, unpretty face with a huge nose...a nose that was a size that might have impressed even Ramesses II.

This leads up to a newly created 'official' face for dear old Cleo, and of course this new version has also spawned controversy. An item that appeared in the 'Daily Mail' (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1095043/Sorry-Liz-THIS-real-face-Cleopatra.html>) (and abbreviated here) offers this take on the story:

"From Elizabeth Taylor to Sophia Loren, there have been many faces of Cleopatra. But this might be the most realistic of them all. Egyptologist Sally Ann Ashton believes the compute regenerated 3D image is the best likeness of the legendary beauty famed for her ability to beguile.





"The computer-generated 3D image has been pieced together from images on ancient artifacts, including a ring dating from Cleopatra's reign 2,000 years ago, it is the culmination of more than a year of painstaking research. The result is a beautiful young woman of mixed ethnicity - very different to the porcelain-skinned Westernized version portrayed by Elizabeth Taylor in the 1961 movie Cleopatra.



Gold ring used to create Cleopatra's face, courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum

"Dr Ashton, of Cambridge University, reflect the monarch's Greek heritage as well as her Egyptian upbringing. 'She probably wasn't just completely European. You've got to remember that her family had actually lived in Egypt for 300 years by the time she came to power.'



Image of Cleopatra on the temple walls of Dendera

"The picture of the queen contrasts with several other less flattering portrayals. For instance, a silver coin which went on show at Newcastle University's Sefton Museum last year showed her as having a shallow forehead, pointed chin, thin lips and hooked nose. Her lover, the Roman general Mark Antony, fared little better.



Cleopatra VII and Mark Antony...both sides of the same coin

"The reverse side shows him to have bulging eyes and a thick neck. The queen's appearance has long been the subject of debate among academics. While Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra made reference to her youthful looks and 'infinite-variety', many believe she was short and frumpy with bad teeth. A statue of Cleopatra exhibited at the British Museum in 2001 portrayed her as plain, no more than 5ft tall and rather plump.

"Born in Alexandra in 69BC, into a Macedonian Greek dynasty which had ruled Egypt for three centuries, Cleopatra acceded to the throne at 17. Three years later she seduced Julius Caesar, bearing him a son, Caesarion. After Caesar was assassinated she courted Mark Antony before committing suicide on his death."

So, asks the CyberScribe...what do you think? To help you make up your mind, here are a series of contemporary coins with Cleo's face on them. Since she paid for the manufacture of those coins, one suspects that she also approved of their images. The CyberScribe suggests that she was actually that blind date girl who was said to have a 'great personality'...and a lot of ready cash.



In case you missed it, an article in the 'Dallas Morning News' (www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/latestnews/stories/122808dnentkingtut.3af3f3f.html) recently reported the bad news about their latest Egyptian blockbuster show...they are losing their shirts because they are not getting the crowds they expected.

The CyberScribe thinks that part of the problem has been that the DMA has touted the show as being about Tutankhamun. They show that wonderful graphic of what appears to be the golden mummy

mask...but when visitors get into the show, they are underwhelmed. The museum oversold the show. That 'golden mummy mask' is nothing of the sort, it is the face of one of the solid gold canopic coffinettes.

The article (edited for space) tells us:

"When King Tut rolled into town in October, Bonnie Pitman, the new director of the Dallas Museum of Art, predicted that 1 million visitors would see the show, with ticket buyers traveling from hundreds, even thousands of miles away.

"I don't see this as a huge moneymaker," she said at the time. "Our goal is to break even." But neither Ms. Pitman nor the international promoters of "Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs" expected the financial crisis that has the global economy in a tailspin.

"So how is the boy king doing?

"The Tut exhibit has drawn more than 270,000 visitors during its first three months, Ms. Pitman said, with 90,000 of those being schoolchildren, who, like other large groups, purchased discounted tickets. With less than five months to go before the show closes May 17, the DMA would have to draw 730,000 to reach the 1 million mark. That would be an average of 146,000 a month, which exceeds its current average of around 90,000 a month.

"We created that goal in the summer," (Pitman) said. "It was a different environment then. We don't have enough information now to make an assessment, and the reason I say that is, we're headed into the holiday season, and we're looking at exciting sales over the next couple of weeks."

"Phillip Jones, president and CEO of the Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau, echoed Ms. Pitman's optimism, saying he feels "We still have five months left," he said, "and we've already sold more than a quarter of the tickets." When the show opened, Ms. Pitman noted that the museum had sold 125,000 advance tickets.

"At the opening-day news conference, Zahi Hawass, secretary general of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, said his government expected between \$10 million and \$12 million from the Tut stop in Dallas. Asked later to clarify his remarks, Mr. Hawass said: "We get a minimum of \$6 million. After that, we share the success."

"Maria Muñoz-Blanco, director of cultural affairs for the city of Dallas, said she was confident of the DMA reaching its goals. But, she noted, should a shortfall occur, it would not be the city's problem. "I can tell you that the city of Dallas' support of the DMA is not specific to Tut," she said. "The Dallas Museum of Art is an independent, nonprofit organization. So, their financial issues are like those of any corporation – their own. It would not be the city's responsibility."

"Ms. Muñoz-Blanco said the city gives about \$2 million a year to the DMA, with about \$1 million going toward operating expenses and the remainder paying for utilities. When it comes to Tut, "the DMA has entered into a contract with Arts and Exhibitions International," said Ms. Muñoz-Blanco. "The city is not a party to that contract. I can't even tell you the terms, because I haven't seen it."

"Mr. Jones contends that in other cities, much of the attendance "came at the tail end of the exhibition and not at the opening. In a down economy, will we make 1 million visitors? I'm not sure. I hope so, but am I confident that we will make between 800,000 and 1 million? Yes. That will put us on par with other cities that have hosted the show, and I think that's significant considering the downturn of the national economy." He also remains hopeful of reaching the hoped-for economic impact of \$200 million."

Go see the show, says the CyberScribe. While the golden mummy mask is not there, the show is wonderful. Don't miss it!

Speaking of poor economy, downturns in portfolio value have hit one of the great museums. The University of Pennsylvania museum has announced that they are in very desperate straits and are laying off

staff members. No Egyptologists are in the current mess, but who knows what the future holds. The story ('Philly.com' http://www.philly.com/philly/news/local/20081217_U__of_Penn_museum_plans_to_go_popular.html) gives these details:

"Faced with a worsening deficit, the venerable, research-driven University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology is seeking to reinvent itself as an updated "tourist magnet." As an initial step, the director has laid off 18 researchers, though some may stay if grant money can be found to cover their salaries.

"We were living beyond our means," said Director Richard Hodges. He said the museum's finances are unsustainable, and that the museum must refurbish its exhibits and "get its income up." News of the potential layoffs dismayed scholars inside the museum and out. The 120-year-old Penn museum has a worldwide reputation for its scholarship and for supporting expeditions - from the tombs of Egypt to the temples of the Mayans to the remains of Babylon, Gordion and Troy.



The Egyptian room of the U. of Penn museum is a big draw - the kind of draw the new director wants to capitalize on. The venerable museum, he said, needs to "get its income up."



Students from Moorestown thronged the Egyptian exhibit recently. The museum will refurbish such popular installations in a bid to attract more visitors - and generate more revenue.

"Several prominent scientists could soon lose their jobs, including Patrick McGovern, a chemical archaeologist who has made national headlines with his analyses of stains on ancient vessels, some revealing the world's oldest wines and beers.

"I agree it's a bit of a shock to get rid of some," said Hodges, a British archaeologist who took over as the Penn museum's director in 2007. "But we've made it clear to many of them if we can find the funding, we'll keep them." Hodges said he created the new "Five-Year Museum Strategy" last spring, which aims to draw more visitors by "refurbishing the tired exhibits."

"The museum, which is part of Penn, has long relied on the university to shore up its finances. The museum received \$7 million from Penn to balance its \$16.4 million budget in 2008, according to the annual report. Chief operating officer Melissa Smith said she could not disclose the size of the museum's endowment or its deficits. She said the museum has had to dig into reserves, which are eroding fast.

"Associate director and Mediterranean section curator C. Brian Rose says the economic crisis made it necessary to lay off researchers. As president of the Archaeological Institute of America, he said, he has witnessed endowments drying up across the board. "It's happening at virtually every learned society and educational institution," he said. "We're cut to the bone in publications, in exhibits, in security," he said. "If we were to lay off people in any of those areas, we couldn't keep the museum open.""

The CyberScribe also needs to note that the positions lost so far are those that were funded by grants, the so-called 'soft money' that must come from sources outside the institution. These are always the most vulnerable and logically had to be the first items cut. We all wish the Penn museum well.

Last month this column detailed the new arguments that claim that the great sphinx at Giza was actually a much older statue with the face of a lion, and that it had been later recarved with the face of a king. Whether or not that argument holds up remains to be seen, but this spawned an intense debate on some Internet discussion groups. The question? What was the first known representation of a sphinx?

There were a number of comments and suggestions, but the answer seems to be best summarized by correspondent, Collin Reeder, author of the lion-headed sphinx suggestions. He stated (in part):

"Since my last email I have found the reference and recognize the Sphinx that () referred to. I was unaware, however, of the tentative attribution to Hetepheres and thank () for clearing up that this attribution is Hetepheres II, not the mother of Khufu as I had assumed initially.

"I was able to examine this Sphinx under good lighting at the Cairo Museum in 2004 (the lighting wasn't good enough to allow me well-focused photos unfortunately) and noticed that it had been remodeled with various additions to the head and forepaws made in plaster. I'm glad to see that the modifications have been identified by Chassinat and he is also of the view (as seemed apparent when inspecting this Sphinx) that the modifications are ancient.

"Setting aside my ideas on the pre-Khufu origin of the Giza Sphinx (which I believe to be the true 'prototype'), in terms of a contender for the earliest Sphinx, there is also the broken ceramic Sphinx from North Saqqara (see Egyptian Archaeology no 23 p38) which has the cartouche of Khufu between the paws - tantalizingly the head is missing so we don't know whether it was human or leonine. The remains of the Saqqara sphinx have a number of striking resemblances to the 'Hetepheres' Sphinx, particularly the rear quarters and the treatment of the tail, which from a comparison of my rather poor photos, look extremely similar. Richard Jaesche has restored the Saqqara sphinx with a leonine head - drawing on other remains that were found at North Saqqara."

Shortly, Richard Jaesche appeared on the site and added these comments:

" May I clarify the position regarding the conservation and reattachment of the fragments of the terracotta sphinx with the name of Khufu between its paws, excavated by Waseda University at Saqqara North?

"Much of the body and the face remained. The face was definitely a lion's snout and mouth and the shoulders were not wide enough to allow for a human head in the form of any of the human-headed sphinxes with which we are familiar. An almost complete and very similar leonine sphinx had been found in unbaked clay and the angle of the head and face on this sphinx were compared with the shape of the shoulders and neck on the terracotta fragments to enable the face fragment to be attached at the correct angle. The terracotta clay of the fragments of the body and the face appeared to be the same - grain size, color and inclusions. The fragments of the body and the face were, I understand, found close together in the excavation. All the gapfill and reconstruction was undertaken by extrapolation from extant material (e.g. following the curve of the back and sides, the remains of the paws) with close reference to the unbaked clay version as well. The face is original, not a reconstruction, and the areas of gapfill should be identifiable on the photographs (unless they are very small)."

So, muses the CyberScribe, perhaps we can now know the identity of the first sphinx. The sphinx noted by Jaesche is pictured below:





Another mystery may have been resolved. Many have wondered and argued about the possible father of Tutankhamun...and he might have been Amenhotep III, Akhenaten, the mysterious Smenkhkare (now known to have been Nefertiti, in any case), or who knows who. Zahi Hawass had pronounced what he believes to be the answer, based on a rediscovery of some more or less lost data ('Discovery News' <http://dsc.discovery.com/news/2008/12/17/king-tut-father.html>):

""We can now say that Tutankhamun was the child of Akhenaten," Zahi Hawass, chief of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, told Discovery News. Hawass discovered the missing part of a broken

limestone block a few months ago in a storeroom at el Ashmunein, a village on the west bank of the Nile some 150 miles south of Cairo. Once reassembled, the slab has become "an accurate piece of evidence that proves Tut lived in el Amarna with Akhenaten and he married his wife, Ankhesenamun," while living in el Amarna, Hawass said.

"The block shows the young Tutankhamun and his wife, Ankhesenamun, seated together. The text identifies Tutankhamun as the 'king's son of his body, Tutankhaten,' and his wife as the 'king's daughter of his body, Ankhesenaten,'" Hawass said.

"We know that the only king to whom the text could refer as the father of both children is Akhenaten, himself. We know from other sources that Ankhesenamun was the daughter of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. Now, because of this block, we can say that Tutankhamun was the child of Akhenaten as well," Hawass said.

"According to Hawass, the block comes from the temple of Aton in Amarna and the forms of the inscribed names clearly date it to the reign of Akhenaten.

"Doubts also remain about King Tut's mother. Scholars have long debated whether he is the son of Kiya, Akhenaten's minor wife, or Queen Nefertiti, Akhenaten's other wife."

The story is rather old, and has been reported in the column a number of times, but the famous Egyptian art smuggling case of Jonathan Tokeley-Parry has probably been put to bed at last. The legal wrangling is over the items are being returned to Egypt, and the main players have been sentenced. The 'Telegraph' (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3836319/Smuggled-ancient-sculpture-returns-to-Egypt.html>) gave a good short summary:

"The Head of Amenhotep III, a pharaoh who died in 1375BC, was stolen 18 years ago by a British smuggler. Jonathan Tokeley-Parry disguised the stone head as a souvenir, coating it in plastic and painting it black to make it appear to be a tacky copy of a historical artifact. The antiques restorer, renowned in the art world for his skill, later removed the plastic with acetone.



The head of Amenhotep III, the priceless Egyptian sculpture Jonathan Tokeley-Parry smuggled out of Egypt



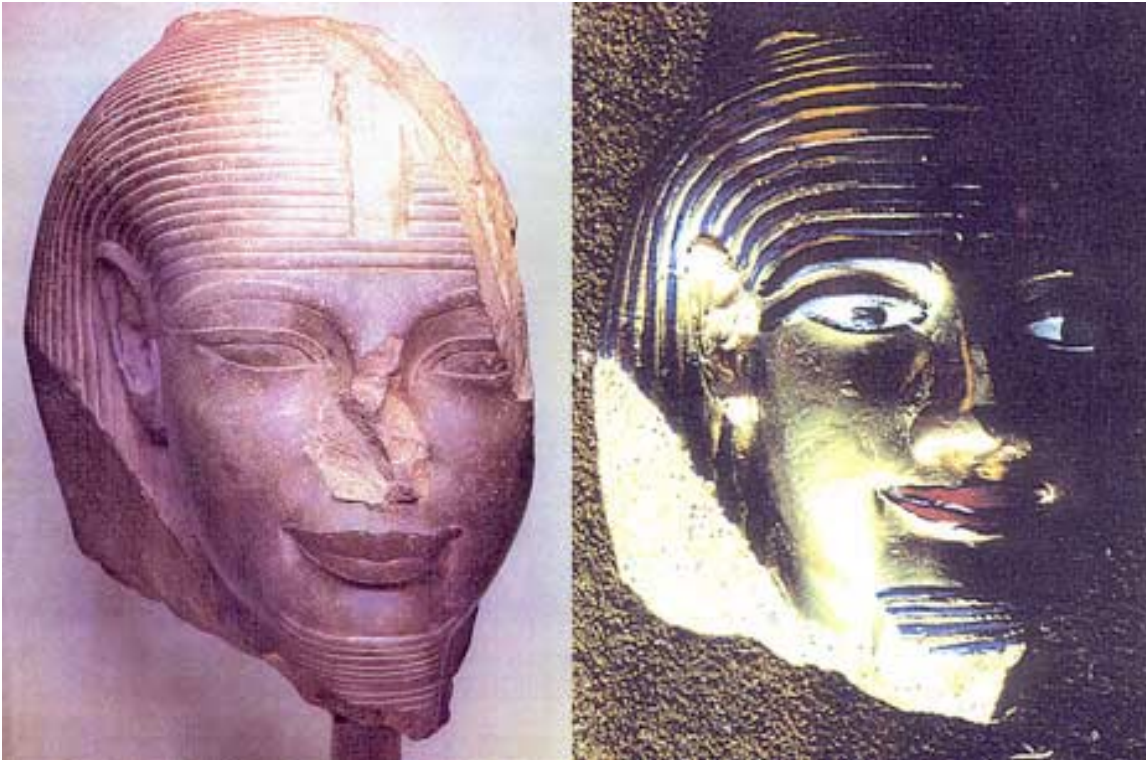
Jonathan Tokeley-Parry was jailed for three years in 1997 for the theft

"Now, more than 10 years after Tokeley-Parry was jailed for his activities, the head is to be returned to Egypt at a ceremony at the country's London embassy. The sculpture's removal from Egypt in 1990 breached the country's law banning the export of antiques more than 100 years old. It was taken to Switzerland and illegally imported into the UK, before being given a false provenance dating back to the 1920s, slashing millennia from its true antiquity.

"The head was marketed through a New York dealer who in 2002 was jailed in the US for conspiring to receive stolen Egyptian antiquities - and was bought and sold on at least two occasions.

"Tokeley-Parry was caught in 1994 when an assistant tried to sell stolen papyrus texts to the British Museum, which called in the police. He was convicted in Britain in 1997 of illegally selling stolen archaeological finds and jailed for three years."

A bit more of the story appears from 'Archaeology'
(<http://www.archaeology.org/online/features/schultz/details.html>):



Tokeley-Parry bought this sculptured head of the 18th Dynasty pharaoh Amenhotep III (ca. 1403-1354 B.C.) from the Farag family in Cairo shortly after it had been looted. He dipped the sculpture in clear plastic and painted it to resemble a cheap tourist souvenir (shown on right) before smuggling it into Switzerland and later to Frederick Schultz. Schultz sold it for \$1.2 million in 1993.

"The productive smuggler was discovered in 1994 when his assistant took 27 papyrus texts stolen from a government storeroom in Egypt to the British Museum, to confirm their authenticity for a potential buyer. A curator recognized them as part of a previously discovered cache from an animal necropolis. He notified Scotland Yard, the Egyptian Embassy in London, the Supreme Council of Antiquities, and the Egyptian Tourist and Antiquities Police.

"Local police and detectives from Scotland Yard traced Tokeley-Parry's assistant to a cottage and barn near a manor owned by Andrew May of North Devon on June 28, 1994. The smuggler had reported the alleged theft of an Egyptian stone head worth £100,000 from the cottage in 1993.

"Stephen Holmes of the Devon-at-Cornwall constabulary and Dick Ellis of New Scotland Yard took the stand at Schultz's trial to describe the incriminating antiquities, forgeries, photographs, and files that they discovered in the estate buildings. Under the cottage's bed, they found a pair of false doors from the tomb of Hetepka, a royal hairdresser, near Cairo. The tomb was later found to have been plundered in 1991 while Tokeley-Parry was in Egypt, and scholarly papers in his possession proved that he knew of the doors' origin. Papers at the estate revealed Schultz's involvement in the smuggling scam and a web of other accomplices in Egypt, England, and Switzerland. For example, the Farag family in Cairo would send goods to Switzerland, where a Swiss accomplice would create false documents to make it look as if they had originated in Germany.

"Schultz and Tokeley-Parry also tried to bypass the 1983 Egyptian law by making freshly looted antiquities look like they had come from an old English collection. They copied turn-of-the-century pharmaceutical labels onto rough paper, baked them in an oven and dabbed them with used tea bags. Then they labeled them with the name of Tokeley-Parry's great-uncle to create the "Thomas Alcock Collection." When Tokeley-Parry wrote Schultz that he had shipped him two Old Kingdom painted reliefs, he added that he was going to send some "Thom Alcock" labels because the tomb from which the reliefs had come was known to the Egyptian government. A research associate at the Brooklyn Museum of Art later saw one of Schultz's stone reliefs and identified it as looted, but the dealer only hid it away in a Zurich vault owned by the Farag family.

"According to the Cairo newspaper Al-Ahram, Tokeley-Parry's and Schultz's antiquities were mostly returned to Egypt two years ago, including:

- * Twenty-seven papyrus texts in Demotic script dating from 300 B.C.
- * Twelve Coptic textiles
- * A sixth-dynasty limestone relief of a seated woman named Se-Chess-Hat
- * A terra-cotta statue of an unknown person
- * Greco-Roman mummy masks
- * A "magnificent" bronze statue of the god Horus
- * An unidentifiable royal head in granite
- * Colored reliefs from ancient Egyptian tombs
- * Thirty-five items from the tomb of Hetep-Ka at Saqqara, including two false doors, three heads of the nobleman wearing a wig and a limestone relief showing a butcher at work."

Yet another source provided damning photos of the destruction of the tomb of Hetep-Ka at Saqqara. This looting produced some of the larger pieces stolen by Tokeley-Parry's accomplices...utterly destroying the tomb in 1991, and shipping the decorated materials to Tokeley-Parry. ('McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research'

<http://www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/projects/iarc/culturewithoutcontext/issue10/watson.htm>):



The tomb of Hetep-Ka, at Saqqara.



Inside the tomb of Hetep-Ka, before it was looted, showing the false doors.



Inside the tomb of Hetep-Ka, after the looting.

Another rather confusing story about an antiquities thief just surfaced. This one seemed to be a tourist taking items from the country, figurines, small statues of gods, etc., but the details were very vague. Now the picture is both more clear...and still confused. The thief is an Australian antiquities dealer who clearly knew what he was doing...but we still don't really know yet what he stole. It may have only been a lot of ancient linen mummy wrappings.

The 'Fairfax Digital' (<http://www.theage.com.au/national/melbourne-man-arrested-over-antiquities-20081225-754o.html>) has produced the best and most informative version of the tale to date (shortened here):

"A Melbourne man has been arrested in Egypt for allegedly trying to smuggle antiquities — two 2300-year-old animal mummies and religious figurines — out of the country.



"Frank Bottaro, 61, who is believed to run the antique and tribal art dealership B.C. Galleries in Armadale, was on his way to Thailand on Tuesday when he was picked up at Cairo International Airport. A security official became suspicious of the figurines, which were wrapped as gifts and placed amid souvenir ceramic pots in a suitcase. Other reports claimed the antiquities, weighing 5.5 kilograms, were ancient linen, used to wrap mummies.

"According to local reports, when security officials opened the suspect suitcase, they allegedly found two mummies of a cat and an ibis, a long-beaked bird, both dating back to 300BC. They also allegedly found 19 figurines of the revered ancient Egyptian gods Horus and Thoth, wrapped as gifts.

"Egyptian antiquities chief Zahi Hawass said the seized artifacts, which he later said were linen, weighed about 5.5 kilograms. An unnamed antiquity official at the airport described the case as rare because of the number of items involved and their age.

"In 2005, Frank Bottaro was forced to hand over seven Egyptian tomb artifacts to the Australian Federal Police after the force claimed they were priceless 2500-year-old items at the centre of an international smuggling racket.

"A Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade spokeswoman yesterday confirmed that a 61-year-old man was arrested for allegedly smuggling but was yet to be charged. She said that under Egyptian law he could be charged only when he appeared before a magistrate. Egyptian courts were shut for Christmas. The charge of smuggling antiquities carries a maximum jail term of 15 years."

One of the North Texas ARCE Chapter's friends, Dr. Sarah Parcak has made the news again with her satellite photography assisted archaeological techniques. She was here and regaled us with her work during one of our invited lectures. The story appearing on 'CNN.com' (http://www.cnn.com/2008/TECH/science/12/23/satellites.archaeology.egypt/index.html?section=cnn_latest) (edited here for length) stated:

"Archaeologists believe they have unearthed only a small fraction of Egypt's ancient ruins, but they're making new discoveries with help from high-tech allies -- satellites that peer into the past from the distance of space. "Everyone's becoming more aware of this technology and what it can do," said Sarah Parcak, an archaeologist who heads the Laboratory for Global Health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. "There is so much to learn."

Images from space have been around for decades. Yet only in the past decade or so has the resolution of images from commercial satellites sharpened enough to be of much use to archaeologists. Today, scientists can use them to locate ruins -- some no bigger than a small living room -- in some of the most remote and forbidding places on the planet.

"In this field, Parcak is a pioneer. Her work in Egypt has yielded hundreds of finds in regions of the Middle Egypt and the eastern Nile River Delta. Parcak conducted surveys and expeditions in the eastern Nile Delta and Middle Egypt in 2003 and 2004 that confirmed 132 sites that were initially suggested by satellite images. Eighty-three of those sites had never been visited or recorded.

"We can see patterns in settlements that correspond to the [historical] texts," Parcak said, "such as if foreign invasions affected the occupation of ancient sites. We can see where the Romans built over what the Egyptians had built, and where the Coptic Christians built over what the Romans had built. It's an incredible continuity of occupation and reuse." The flooding and meanders of the Nile over the millennia dictated where and how ancient Egyptians lived, and the profusion of new data has built a more precise picture of how that worked.

"Surveys give us information about broader ancient settlement patterns, such as patterns of city growth and collapse over time, that excavations do not," said Parcak, author of a forthcoming book titled "Satellite Remote Sensing and Archaeology."

"The vagaries of climate in the region make satellite technology advantageous, too. Certain plants that may indicate sites grow during certain times of the year," Parcak said, "while sites may only appear during a wet or dry season. This is different everywhere in the world."

"For the work I do [in Egypt], I need wet season images as wet soil does a better job at detecting sites with the satellite imagery data I use," Parcak said. "I can pick the exact months I need with the NASA satellite datasets."

"Multispectral imaging encompasses technologies that see what the human eye can't, such as infrared and ultraviolet radiation. Scientists have used it for years to study the Earth's surface for a variety of purposes. Until resolution of these images improved, though, the only way to produce a sharp image was to be relatively close to the ground."

This brings us to the end of another CyberScribe column, but we can't stop without some item that tests our credibility. This next piece will serve very well in that respect. An article (slightly edited for length) in a source called 'Gather Together' (<http://www.gather.com/viewArticle.jsp?articleId=281474977547525&grpId=3659174697241980&nav=Groupspace>) tells what happens to foolish mortals who steal the gold of Tutankhamun...and believe it or not, this wonderful tale relates events that took place right here in our very own land. Read on...and yes, the original spelling has been preserved...

"The sign on the side of the road reads Warning Toxic Area, Keep Out. Well I know the truth it wasn't a toxic spill or a out of control disease here in this place or anything else you mite consider. The reason goes back to 1948 when a Train traveling from New Mexico to Sedona, Arizona caring a Traveler by the name of Simon Dee Macula transported his special cargo to our peaceful little place. The cargo, a suitcase containing several Golden amulets from ancient Egypt. The Amulets were stolen from a museum in Cairo, Egypt but were originally found by Howard, Carter in the Valley of the Kings located around stone statues in King Tut's Chamber. The Amulets are said to hold a curse to be unleashed on anyone that possess them. When Simon reached Sedona he befriended Mr. Whitelaw, owner of the Whitelaw Ranch, and stayed in a guest House. That night Robert Fairchild visited the Whitelaw residence and after drinking several alcoholic drinks with John, Whitelaw decided to pay Simon a visit in the Guest House. For whatever reason, Simon told Robert about the Amulets, and that he had to take them to California to be close to a Museum exhibit in San Diego.

"Robert, Fairchild stumbled his way back to town and into a busy Pub for some drinks then told several Town Folks what he learned out on the Whitelaw Ranch. After some heavy drinking, nine of the Bar Patrons, including a Town Sheriff, decided to pay Simon a visit to see the priceless artifacts. Along the way it was decided that they were going to steal the suitcase of Amulets and test the curse. Simon kept the suitcase handcuffed to his wrist at all times but it was removed by Ted, the Town Sheriff, at gun point. Simon screamed out 'do not put on the Amulets what ever you do or you will die.' He then charged the Sheriff in a last attempt to retrieve the Amulets, but was shot right between the eyes, the look on his face as he fell was complete desperation. The nine decided to head for an old abandoned shack on the southeast corner on the Ranch that was used by Ranch Hands at one time.

"The next morning, four of the nine bar patrons made it back to town hung over and stumbling through town as if nothing was out of the normal. When they were taken in for questioning they told three different stories of what happened to the Traveler, the Sheriff, and the other four. Believed by a Psychologist because of the trauma they seemed to endure and a lack of evidence, they were never arrested. The disappearance remained a mystery for some ten years until David E. Miller one of original nine was arrested robbing a grave in a local cemetery. While David was incarcerated in a Sedona Jail, he wrote in a small diary day and night about what happened that summer night. Then in 1958 July 22, coincidentally the same day in 1948 when the Train came to town with the Traveler, he died in his cell.

"After David's Family was contacted, only his Sister Edith decided to go pick up his belongings. A few days later a story was published in the local News Paper about the disappearance. It stated that when the nine got to the Ranch, they saw many strange things like burning eyes in the bushes and growling animals that seemed very disturbed. The Traveler was buried near the small shack in a shallow grave. Then the nine passed around a Whiskey bottle a few times, and the suit case was opened. The Gold Amulets shined in the night like a camp fire as if to warn a hello. Then they split up the Amulets and when they did five of the nine at the same time put on the Amulets. The Amulets glowed an eerie green and hummed a like the sound of energy. It said all of them were temporary blinded by the light. The ground opened up into a hole, the bottom a glow of fire and the sound of thousands of people screaming in terrible agony in the distance. The five with the Amulets started floating around the fire several times then fell heads towards the hole feet outward. Then they all gasped for their last breath of air and died. Soon the spirits of the bodies appeared and had fangs like the Wolf and used telekinesis to float things around and attack us.

"Later they went back to the Ranch and the bodys and all the Amulets were gone including the hole in the ground. But they could feel something evil lurking everywhere. The Whitelaw Family was asked if they noticed anything strange but they said no. From that time until now very strange occurrences have taken place like items move from here and there. Many camera pictures of visitors show another place all together, Cow mutilations and freezing cold wind sheers. Today this place has an electric fence around it and is protected by the U.S. Government as it was purchased from the Whitelaw's many years ago."

Please note, dear readers, warns the CyberScribe...copious liquor seems to have played a fair part in the progress of the story. The CyberScribe suggests that large amounts of the same fluids will be needed to make the above tale sound credible.

If you would like to contact the CyberScribe (also known as Clair Ossian) to ask a question or to suggest an item for a future column, please send an e-mail to clastic@verizon.net or call (972) 416-5211. Don't forget to look up the North Texas Chapter of ARCE's Internet Homepage located at this address: <http://www.arce-ntexas.org/>.

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Karlene...please add the usual headers, footers and notes. And be sure that we use my new e-mail address: clastic@verizon.net

PLUS...remember that we are going to publish the answers from last month's 'Where the heck is it' contest.

Cheers...
Clair

XX

Where the Heck Is It?

January, 2009



Long thought to have been the location of the secret source of revenue that supported Egypt in the time of the Mameluke Kings, alabaster (calcite) bookends manufactured for the tourist trade, this actually turns out to have been the mysterious factory where all those millions of fake scarabs were manufactured. Alas, the high tech facility was destroyed when a pot of couscous caught fire.

Or is there another possible answer?

1. Who do you think built this place?
2. Where is it?
3. And whose temple lies just over the back of that ruined wall? (The close wall, not that one in the background)

Bring your answers with you when you attend the January North Texas ARCE regular meeting. The correct answer will be divulged at that time.

XX

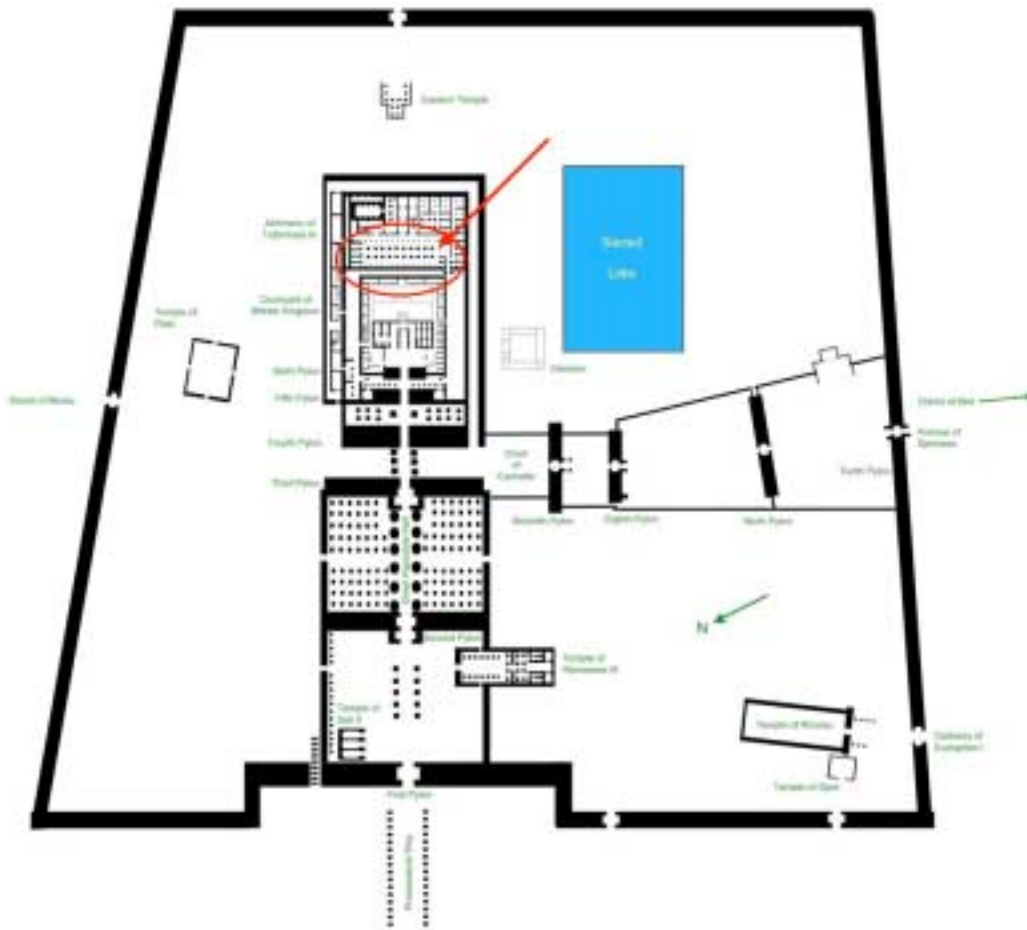
December 2009 - Answers



In the foreground of this month's photo is all that is left of that famed kiosk built for Pharaoh Setihotep II. Although attractive, the column motif of upside down bundles of green onions never really caught on.

Any better ideas?

1. How about your suggestions for where this structure stands? Near the rear (eastern) portion of the Karnak temple complex
2. What is that rather dilapidated structure behind the columns? The temple built by Thutmosis III (see red circle and arrow, below)



Bring your answers with you when you attend the next North Texas ARCE regular meeting. The correct answers will be divulged at that time.

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