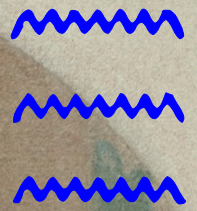


NILE

BECAUSE YOU LOVE ANCIENT EGYPT



HARPS

OLDER THAN THE GREAT PYRAMID

SAIS

THE HOUSE OF NEITH

THE AMARNA LETTERS

CANAAN CRIES FOR HELP

WHAT IS IT ABOUT KADESH?

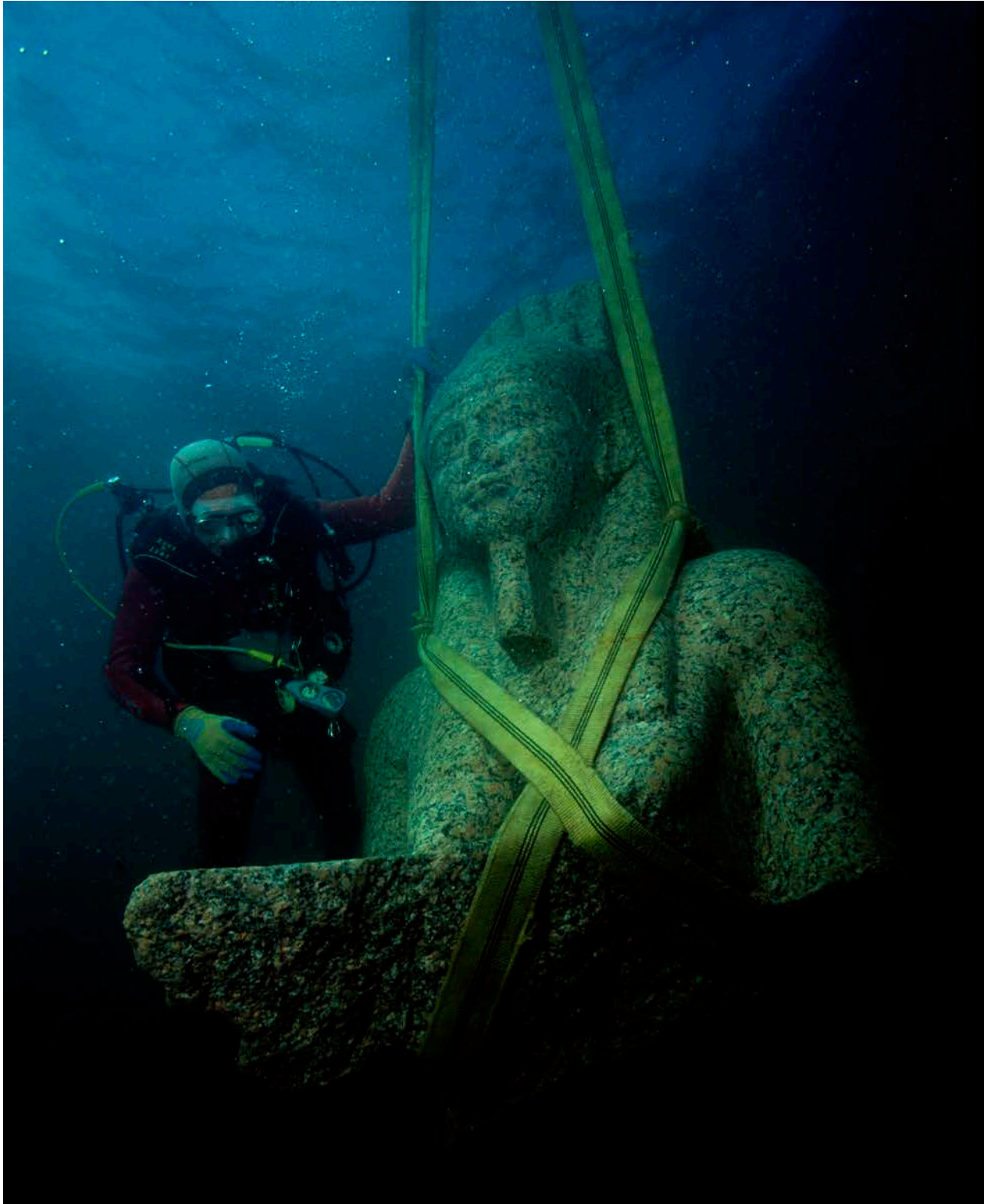
THE KADESH OBSESSION

2020'S NEWEST DISCOVERY

HUNDREDS OF COFFINS FOUND AT SAQQARA

**HOWARD CARTER
AND MR. & MR. MARRS
JEWELS OF THE NILE**

NILE



One of the most astonishing underwater discoveries ever made is this red-granite statue of the fertility god Hapy. He personified the engorged, flooding Nile, which foreshadowed a bumper harvest. When reconstructed, this sculpture became the largest stone statue of a god recovered from ancient Egypt.

Hapy is part of an exhibition of artefacts that were lost beneath the waters of the Mediterranean Sea for more than twelve-hundred years. They were retrieved

from the ruins of Thonis-Heracleion and Canopus—two Egyptian cities that were once mighty centers of trade and thronged with merchants from around the known world, but sank below the waves in the 8th-century A.D.

Treasures of Ancient Egypt: Sunken Cities is showing at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, until 18 January 2021. And check out more exhibitions and events—hopefully near you—from page 64 of this issue of NILE Magazine.

PHOTO: CHRISTOPH GERIGK © FRANCK GODDIO / HILTI FOUNDATION



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SAQQARA DISCOVERY

Jeff Burzacott

Saqqara is the gift that keeps on giving. Close to 200 Late Period coffins have been discovered there over the last three months. And there is more to come!

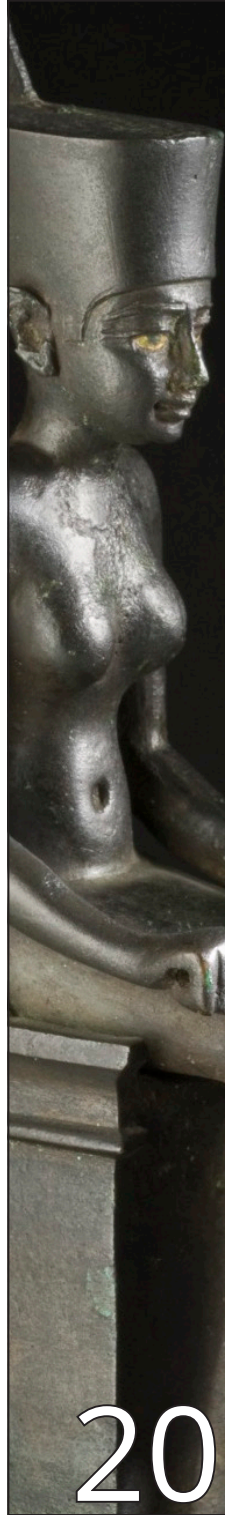


8

HARPS

Heidi Köpp-Junk

The harp was played by soloists, ensembles and even by gods. **Heidi Köpp-Junk** explores whether the harp was an Egyptian invention, and uncovers its very first depiction.



20

SAIS

Nicky Nielsen

The final article in a five-part series on royal capitals in the Nile Delta. **Dr. Nicky Nielsen** explores Sais, the cult centre of the goddess Neith.

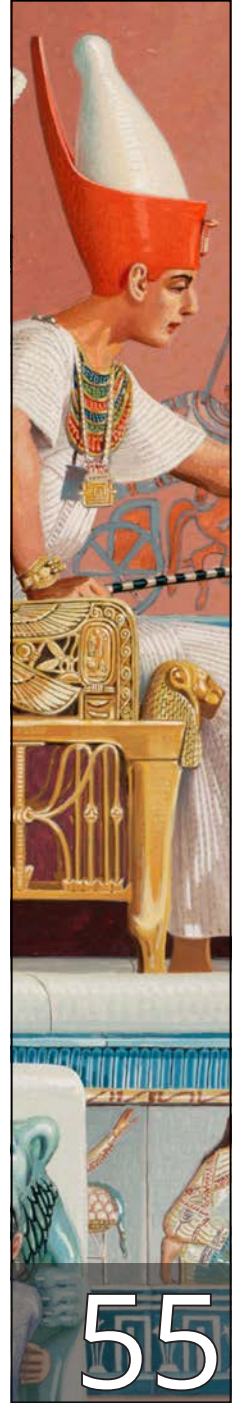


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THE KADESH OBSESSION

Patrick van Gils

Akhenaten, Tutankhamun, Seti I and Ramesses II all embarked on campaigns to seize the Syrian town of Kadesh. What was the reason behind this Egyptian obsession with Kadesh?



55

THE AMARNA LETTERS

James Bowden

Want to read the private correspondence between Egypt's pharaohs and their vassal states? **James Bowden** explains what the Amarna Letters reveal to us.

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COVER STORY



JEWELS OF THE NILE

Peter Lacovara

Laura and Kingsmill Marrs were guided in their acquisitions by Howard Carter, with much of their collection later donated to the Worcester Art Museum. This article celebrates the first time that the Worcester's collection of Egyptian jewellery and artefacts has been shown together.

#27,
SEPT.–OCT. 2020

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FROM THE EDITOR

IT'S GREAT TO SEE A RESURGENCE in Egyptian-led archaeology in Egypt, which has continued steadfastly throughout the year, despite Egypt, like the rest of us, falling prey to the coronavirus scourge.

The announcements over the last couple of months have been sensational, with scores of colourful coffins being unearthed at Saqqara in excavations led by Dr. Mostafa Waziry, Secretary-General of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities (see page 6).

You can imagine how busy Dr. Waziry must be, so it was a delight to see that his office indulges in a little NILE time, now and again.

This photo was sent in by Khadija Hammond, NILE contributor and co-director of Team Bastet (www.teambastet.com). She is seated in the photo. Left of Khadija is Dr. Nadia Khedr, Director of Lower Egypt, and on the right, Dr. Mohammed El-Seaidy, Director of the Office of Dr. Mostafa Waziry.

If you have a copy of NILE issue #25 (May–June 2020), being held here by Dr. El-Seaidy, you might like to know that it is also enjoyed by some of Egypt's most respected Egyptologists.

Welcome to NILE Magazine issue #27. I hope you are staying safe—and sane—during this crazy year.

Jeff Burzacott 
editor@nilemagazine.com.au





© EGYPTIAN MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES

Egyptian Minister of Antiquities Khaled El-Enany opens one of the recently-discovered coffins. Happily, the coffins had escaped the attention of tomb robbers.



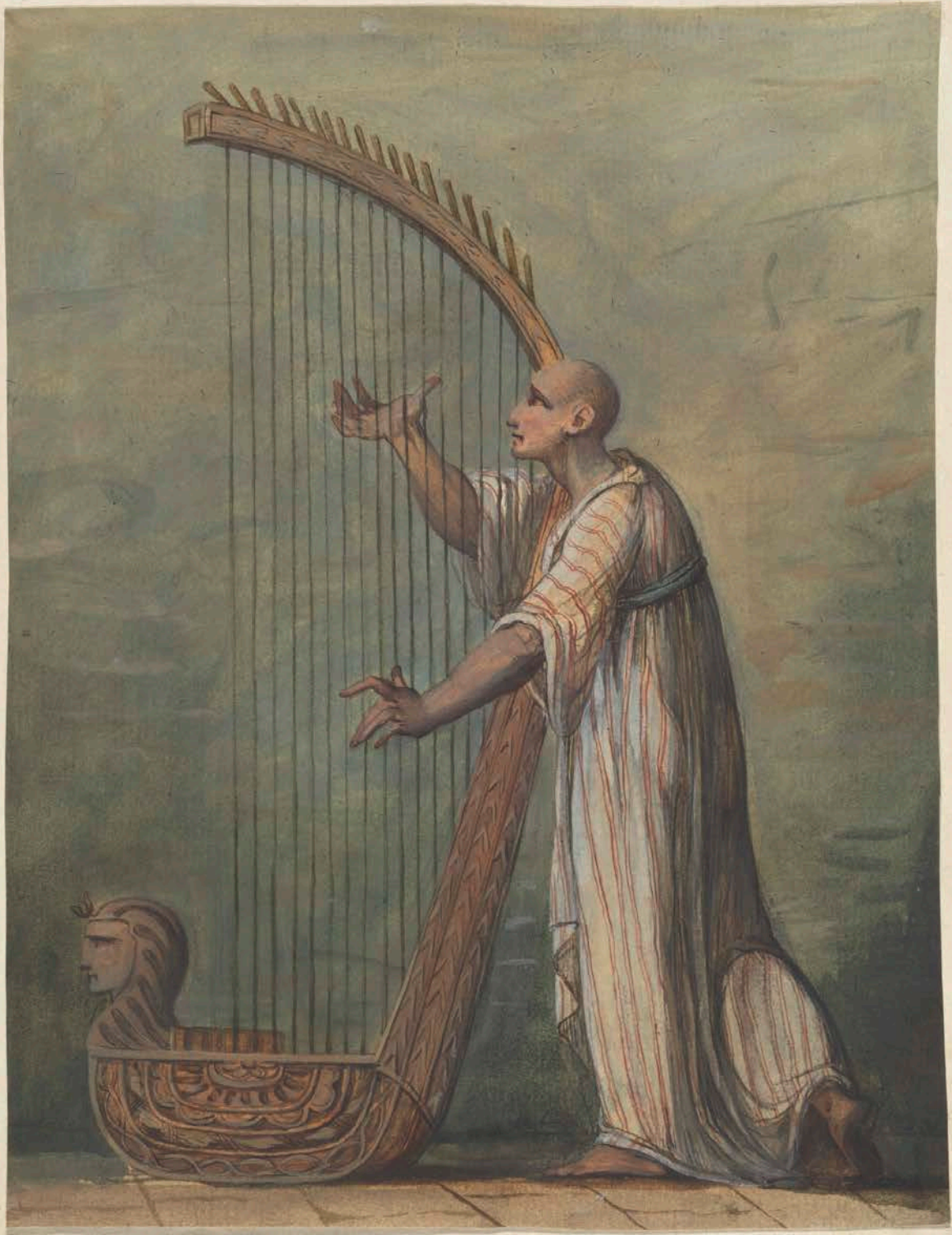
© EGYPTIAN MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES

This Old Kingdom funerary statue was already 1,500 years old when it was reused for the 26th-Dynasty burials. Tomb reuse was a common practice in ancient Egypt.



© EGYPTIAN MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES

The spectacular setting for the announcement of the discovery of 100 intact coffins at Saqqara. In the foreground are Late Period and Ptolemaic Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figures and canopic boxes. In the far background, the restored enclosure wall and entrance to the sacred precinct of Djoser's Step Pyramid.



*Paintings in Fresco in the great Sepulchre
at Thebes
Supposed to be the Tomb of Osimandias*

IMAGE: YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART, PAUL MELLON COLLECTION. ACC. NO. B1977.14.8706

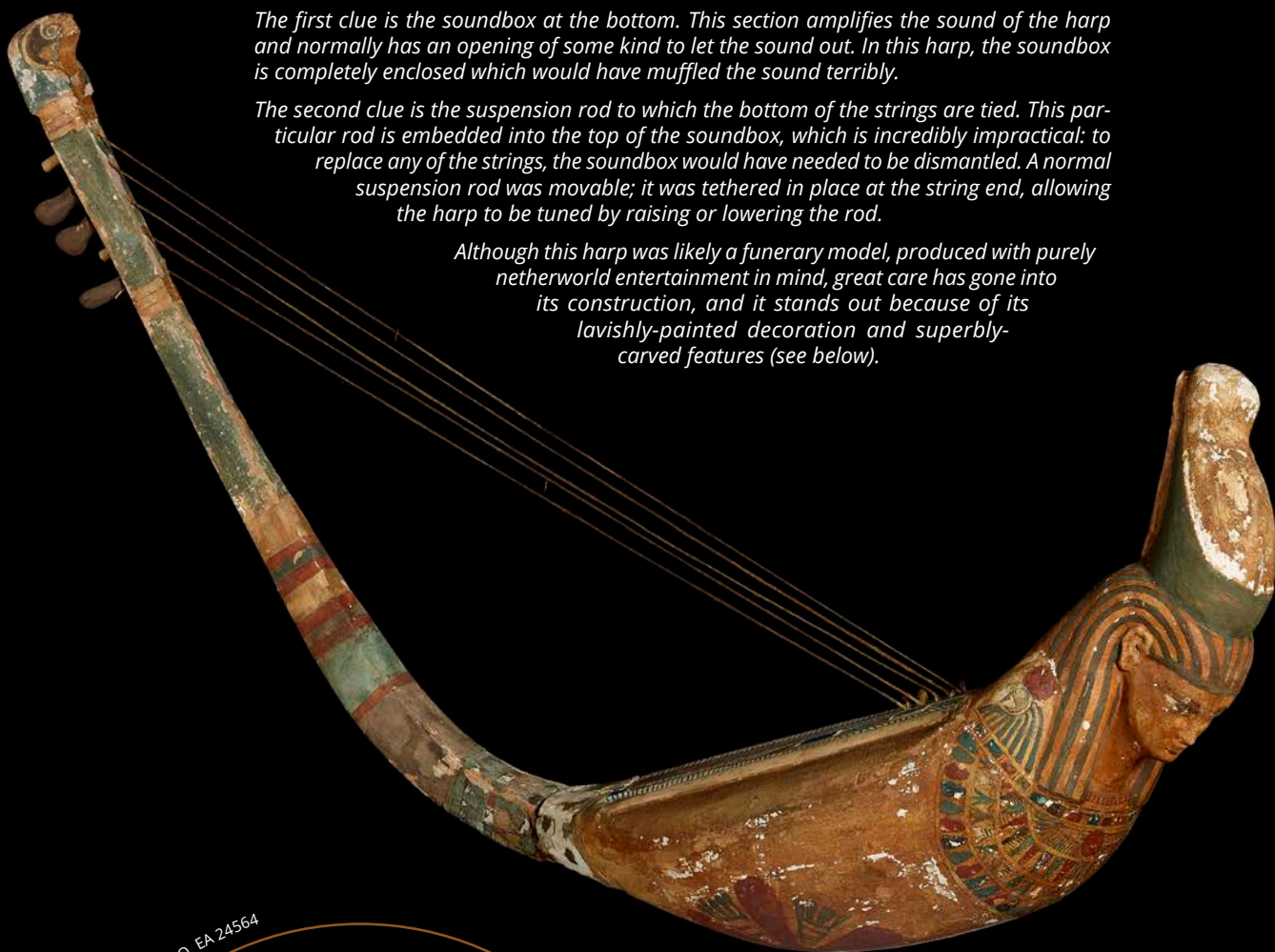
A HARP THAT WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE PLAYED

This elaborately-decorated arched harp dates to the New Kingdom's 19th Dynasty. It was discovered in the Theban tomb of Ani in the late 1800s and purchased for the British Museum, where it resides today. While it looks spectacular, and has all the parts that a harp needs, this particular example may have been a model purpose-built for Ani's tomb.

The first clue is the soundbox at the bottom. This section amplifies the sound of the harp and normally has an opening of some kind to let the sound out. In this harp, the soundbox is completely enclosed which would have muffled the sound terribly.

The second clue is the suspension rod to which the bottom of the strings are tied. This particular rod is embedded into the top of the soundbox, which is incredibly impractical: to replace any of the strings, the soundbox would have needed to be dismantled. A normal suspension rod was movable; it was tethered in place at the string end, allowing the harp to be tuned by raising or lowering the rod.

Although this harp was likely a funerary model, produced with purely netherworld entertainment in mind, great care has gone into its construction, and it stands out because of its lavishly-painted decoration and superbly-carved features (see below).



© THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM, ACC. NO. EA 24564



(LEFT)

The harp's curved neck is rectangular in section and ends in a carved hawk's head. There are holes on the underside for five pegs, three of which survive intact.

© THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM, ACC. NO. EA 24564



(RIGHT)

The soundbox ends in a kingly human head, with a lengthy, striped wig and double crown. Below the wig is an elaborate floral necklace with a winged sun-disc in the centre and a Horus head at each end, surmounted by a sun disc.



© MANNA NADER

In the Tomb of Inherkhau (TT 359) at Deir el-Medina, Western Thebes, the deceased and his wife, Wabet, listen to the song of a blind harpist. Inherkhau was a "Foreman in the Place of Truth" and Wabet performed as a Chantress of Amun at Karnak Temple during the reigns of Ramesses III and Ramesses IV in the 20th Dynasty.

This scene is unique in that the pedestal that he kneels on is the only example of a harpist using a stage to perform on. The harpist's fat rolls tell us that he has

enjoyed a comfortable life, which points to the high regard in which a harpist must have been held.

The text behind the harpist is another example of the Harper's Song, urging Inherkhau to make merry here on earth, and, as the text says (not shown here):



"Let songs (play) before you."



METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART. ROGERS FUND, 1915. ACC. NO. 15.5.19d, j-k

In the Theban tomb of Nakht (TT 52) a blind harpist sings to the tomb owner and his wife Tawy (not shown) as part of a funerary banquet.

Was every blind harpist actually blind? Probably not. Egyptologist Lisa Manniche, who studies ancient Egyptian music and musicians, estimates that only one quarter of the known representations of the blind harpist were shown with unusual eyes that indicate a visual impairment. It may be that the harpists simply had their eyes closed with the intensity and emotion of their music and song—or simply to help them focus—just as modern musicians do.

Another theory is that because tomb chapels were a threshold between this world and the next, where the reborn tomb owner could be present in a pure, elevated state, a harpist wasn't permitted to look upon them.

Alternatively, some of them may actually have been blind. We don't know for sure.

Nakht was a temple scribe and part-time priest during the 18th Dynasty reign of Thutmose IV (ca. 1400 B.C.). This scene from his tomb was copied in the early 20th century by Norman de Garis Davies during his survey of the tomb for the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



COLLECTION AND PHOTO © RIJKSMUSEUM VAN OUDHEDEN, LEIDEN, NL

This superbly-sculpted relief featuring a musical ensemble led by an elderly, blind harpist comes from the Saqqaran tomb chapel of the royal butler Paatenemheb and his wife, Tipuy. It dates to the late 18th Dynasty.

Discovered in the early 1800s, this was one of the many tombs built for the wealthy and well-connected in the necropolis of ancient Memphis, and has since been lost again beneath the sands. The remains of the chapel have been part of the collection of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden since 1828.

Although Paatenemheb's name contains the name of the Aten, the deity par excellence for the 18th Dynasty's maverick pharaoh Akhenaten, his wife was a Chantress of Amun, and scenes in the chapel show them both worshipping the traditional god of the underworld, Osiris. This

suggests that Paatenemheb lived during the tumultuous Amarna period and the return to orthodoxy under the reigns of Nefertiti, Tutankhamun, Ay or Horemheb.

There are four musicians performing for Paatenemheb and Tipuy: two playing the flute (we can see one of them in this photo), one harpist, and one playing the lute.

The harpist's fuller figure and his large, pleated tunic tell us that he was wealthy and well-fed; perhaps this guy was in demand for Memphis funerals.

The harpist is shown with his lips slightly apart, which indicates that he is also singing, with the lyrics carved above the heads of the musicians. This is the Harper's Song (see boxed text, opposite), which reminds the deceased that promises of a successful afterlife are shaky, and that one should make the most of life on earth.



𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑

"I have come from Heliopolis

𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑 𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑

together with the great ones of the temple,

𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑 𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑

the Lords of Protection, the Rulers of Eternity.

𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑 𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑

I have also come from Sais,

𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑 𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑

together with the mothers of the gods (including Neith).

𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑 𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑

They have given me their protection,

𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑 𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆑𓆑𓆑

I have utterances that the Lord of All has composed. . ."

(Ebers Papyrus, University of Leipzig Library, Germany.
Reign of Amenhotep I, 18th Dynasty, ca. 1515 B.C.)

The city of Sais was famed in the Greek world for its science and medical knowledge. In the Ebers Medical Papyrus, written a thousand years earlier, Sais' "mothers of the gods" (no doubt including Neith) are credited as one of the sources of the physicians' healing power (above).

Neith, the patron deity of Sais, was the only Egyptian goddess who was self-created, and so it is likely that the above text—"mother of the gods"—is referring to her.

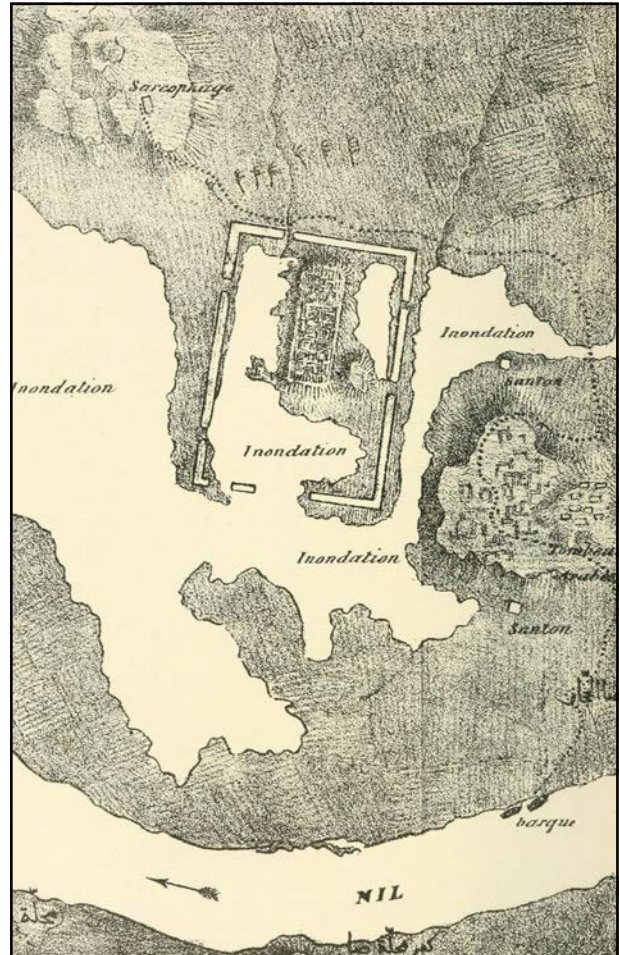
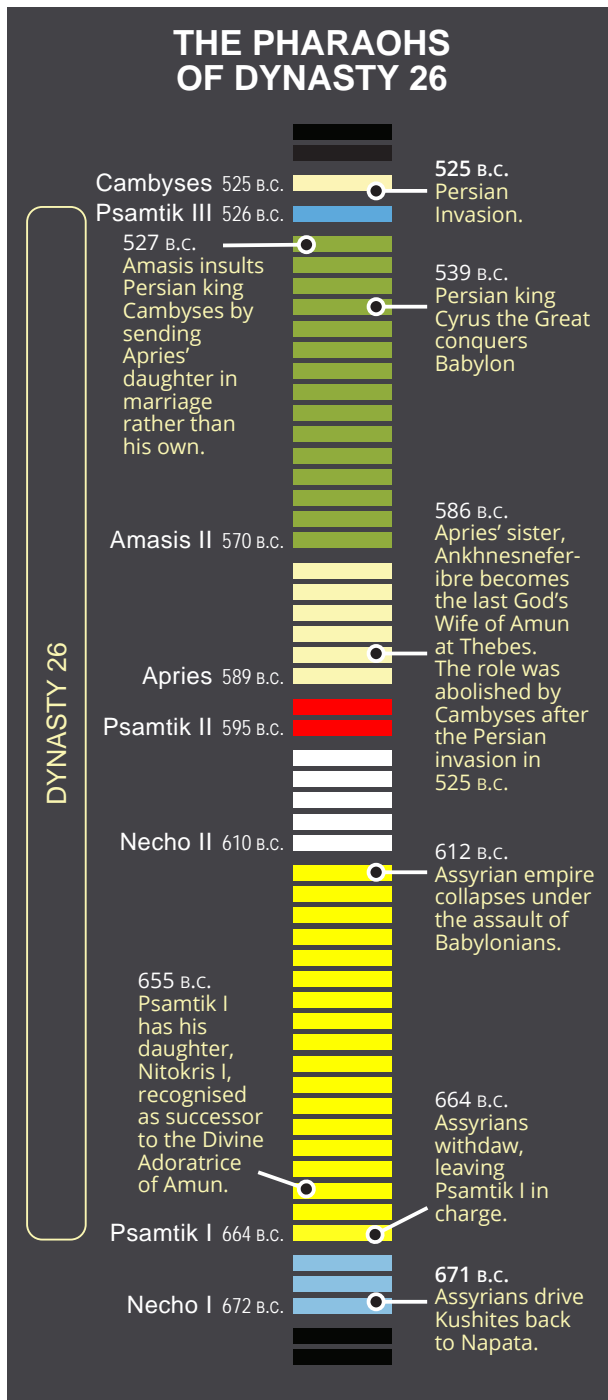
Perhaps it was Neith's creative and regenerative force that led to her cult city becoming a centre of healing.

This Late Period bronze statuette, just 16 cm tall, shows Neith as a golden-eyed goddess wearing the red crown of Lower Egypt.

The base is inscribed with the name Hor-Khonsu, who may have commissioned the piece to call on the goddess for her healing powers.

© LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART, WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST FOUNDATION. ACC. NO. 50.14.1

THE PHARAOS OF DYNASTY 26



"This first visit to Sais will not be the last."

Jean-François Champollion visited Sais in September 1828, six years after he "cracked" the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic system.

His journal of the trip was published as *Lettres écrites d'Égypte et de Nubie* in 1828 et 1829. As well as including Champollion's map of the site (above), it also recorded the impact that the ruins of ancient Sais had on the 38 year-old:

"We headed towards a large enclosure that we had been seeing in the plain since morning. The flood, which covered part of the land, forced us to make a few detours.... and I picked up some fragments of funerary figurines. The large enclosure was accessible only through a completely modern forced door. I will not try to convey the impression that I felt after passing this door, and finding before my eyes enormous masses of 80 feet in height, like rocks torn by lightning or by earthquakes...."

"The dimensions of the large enclosure... are truly astonishing. The... small sides are not less than 1440 feet, and the large ones 2160.... its measured thickness is 54 feet: we could therefore count the large bricks by the millions. This giant circumvallation seems to me to have contained the main sacred buildings of Sais."

Realising the site's potential, Champollion intended to return to Sais and excavate it, but he never got the chance. Champollion died just four years later.

tombs were copied, Old Kingdom texts were reinscribed on tomb walls, and even old-fashioned administrative titles were reintroduced.

Psamtik and his successors ruled from Sais and the city again became the capital of Egypt, as it had been (briefly) under Tefnakht. Sais remained the royal capital throughout the 26th Dynasty and was most likely also the place where the rulers of this dynasty chose to be buried. Archaeological evidence suggests a teeming metropolis with palaces and temples, as well as industrial quarters.

After 140 years, the rule of Sais ended abruptly in 525 B.C. with the Persian invasion by Cambyses. The Egyptians faced the Persians at Pelusium, a Delta fortress on Egypt's eastern frontier. They were comprehensively defeated and forced to retreat to Memphis. It wasn't long, however, before Memphis fell too, and the Egyptian ruler



METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART. ROGERS FUND, 1907. ACC. NO. 07.229.1a,b

This is Horkhebit's sarcophagus as it was discovered in Saqqara by the Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte in 1902. The sarcophagus was purchased from the Egyptian Government five years later by New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In the Met's 1907 publication of "Recent Egyptian Acquisitions, the founder of the museum's Egyptian Department, Albert M. Lythgoe, described their new prize:

"The sarcophagus comes from a tomb in the pyramid-field of Sakkara, about 150 yards due east of the Step Pyramid.... In [this] photograph by J.E. Quibell... the sarcophagus may be seen in its original position in the tomb, with its lid moved aside by those who anciently plundered the tomb."

(OPPOSITE and ABOVE)

This greywacke sarcophagus belonged to the Royal Seal Bearer Horkhebit. While Horkhebit's sarcophagus was discovered at Saqqara, it is in a style that was fashionable for a time during the Saite Period.

The 26th Dynasty is often labelled the Saite Revival, as older art styles once again came into vogue. Huge, hard stone sarcophagi of anthropoid shape, which hadn't been used since the New Kingdom, were popular again, although with a 26th-Dynasty twist. Horkhebit's Saite sarcophagus is a good example. Horkhebit appears on the lid in mummy form: fully bundled with no arms or hands showing. The sarcophagus appears quite stocky—it is very wide in relation to its height, and the head is disproportionately large. The deceased has a distinctly round flat face, with a broad nose and full lips. The stone is polished to such a high sheen that it almost looks metallic.

Horkhebit's other roles such as Chief Priest of the Shrines of Upper and Lower Egypt, and Overseer of the Cabinet meant that he could afford a tomb that would protect him from thieving hands. A great shaft over 18 metres deep was sunk into the solid limestone bedrock near Djoser's Step Pyramid at Saqqara. At the bottom, a rectangular block was left standing and hollowed out to house Horkhebit's magnificent stone sarcophagus (see above photo).

When the tomb was excavated by the Egyptian government in 1902, Horkhebit's hopes were shown to have been dashed. His tomb has been tampered with. The colossal stone lid that had sealed the sarcophagus within the hollow block had been battered away by robbers. The leftover remnants of Horkhebit's burial showed that he had been interred in style, wearing a gilded silver mask.

Compared to pharaohs such as Amenhotep III, Tutankhamun, and Ramesses II, Psamtek I is relatively little known, yet his actions during Egypt's Late Period certainly earn him admittance to the elite ranks of Egypt's greatest rulers. Psamtek I led Egypt to independence after many years of war. During this time, the country was the stage for a custody battle between the Kushite and Assyrian armies.

Psamtek I managed to wrest the country from Assyrian control and found Egypt's 26th Dynasty, with Sais as its royal residence.

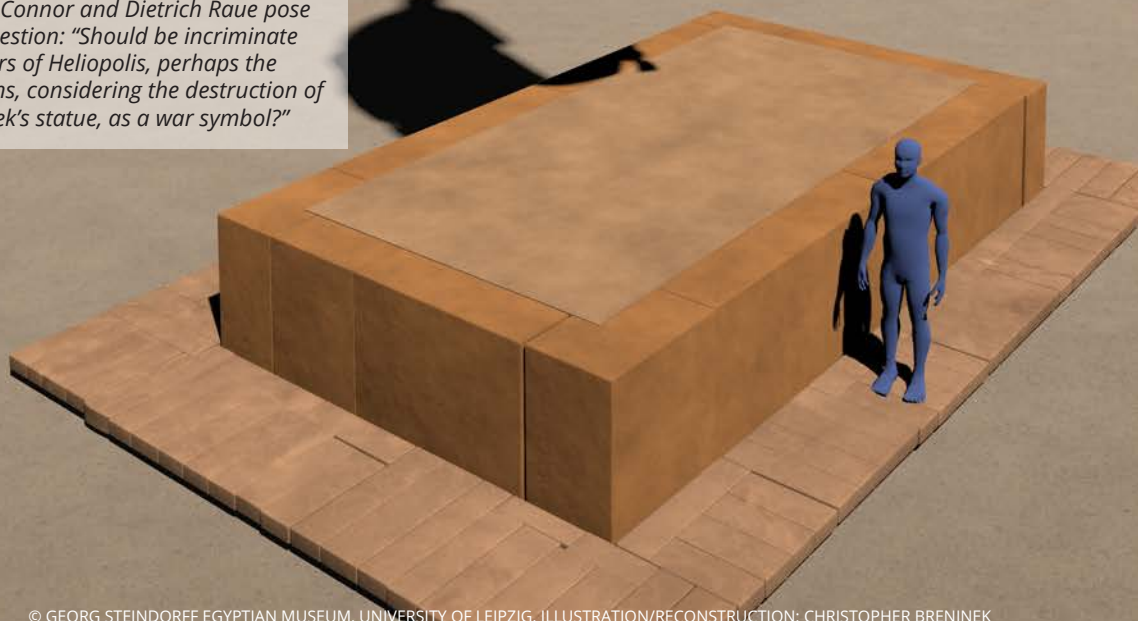
In March 2017, the Heliopolis Project, a joint Egyptian-German mission led by Drs. Aiman Ashmawy and Dietrich Raue, uncovered a fragmented, colossal statue of Psamtek I in the muddy ruins of Heliopolis, now the crowded Cairo suburb of Matariya. At 10.5 metres tall, Psamtek's standing colossus is the largest Late Period statue ever discovered.

Such enormous sculptures hadn't been raised since the Ramesside period, and Dietrich Raue explained to NILE Magazine that "by starting again to commission colossal statuary after 600 years without such sculptures, Psamtek I strove to connect his reign to the 'glory days' of Egypt's great empire."

So far, more than 6,400 quartzite fragments of Psamtek I's statue have been recovered, which have enabled this digital reconstruction.

It appears that the statue was broken-up deliberately. Many of the fragments show evidence of being subjected to extreme temperatures—heating with fire and then dousing with cold water was an effective way of breaking up stone by ancient masons.

But who destroyed the statue? Writing in the Egypt Exploration Society's Egyptian Archaeology (Autumn 2019), Aiman Ashmawy, Simon Connor and Dietrich Raue pose this question: "Should be incriminate invaders of Heliopolis, perhaps the Persians, considering the destruction of Psamtek's statue, as a war symbol?"



© GEORG STEINDORFF EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF LEIPZIG. ILLUSTRATION/RECONSTRUCTION: CHRISTOPHER BRENINEK

Peter Lacovara

JEWELS *of the* NILE

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN TREASURES FROM THE WORCESTER ART MUSEUM



THE WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS ART MUSEUM has among its many masterpieces, a collection of ancient Egyptian jewelry and artefacts that for the most part, haven't been displayed in almost a century. The material is remarkable not only for its breadth and quality, but also for its history. The collection was largely given to the museum by Laura Norcross MARRS (1845–1926), the daughter of Boston mayor Otis Norcross and wife of amateur photographer Kingsmill MARRS (d. 1912).

It was during a trip to Egypt in 1908 that the MARRSES met Howard Carter. As the son of an English genre painter, Carter had, from a young age, shown artistic talent and an interest in antiquity, and so was originally offered work in Egypt by the Egypt Exploration Fund (later Society) to be an epigraphic copyist. To supplement his income, Carter also sold beautiful watercolours that he had painted from scenes in Egyptian tombs and temples.

Laura MARRS had a keen interest in prints and watercolours, many of which she would eventually donate to Worcester, so it is not surprising that she would acquire a number of Carter's paintings.

The MARRSES also struck up a friendship with Carter, writing letters and visiting one another in Luxor and at the MARRS' residence in Florence, Italy. Kingsmill and Laura MARRS purchased six watercolours by Carter, more than any other single collector, and all now in the Worcester Art

Museum. Carter also took an active role in advising them on collecting antiquities:

"I trust seeing you all well installed in [Luxor] in late autumn—I shall have the place well salted with beads, scarabs, antiqas and etc. . . ."

In addition to Howard Carter, the MARRSES were also advised on their purchases by Mohamed Mohassib, one of the principal antiquities dealers in Luxor. In those days, the trade in antiquities was legal but regulated by the government. Of particular interest are the prices Mohassib charged, which are preserved in the records of the collection kept in Worcester. In a receipt dated November 1909, he charged the MARRS for the following:

- 1 gold ring: £E (Egyptian Pounds) 25
- 1 necklace: £E 65
- 1 amethyst scarab: £E 6
- 2 blue figures (shabtis): £E 4
- Set of "blue figures (shabtis)": £E 5
- Carnelian scarab: £E 5
- Winged scarab: £E 10
- Carnelian beads: £E 50

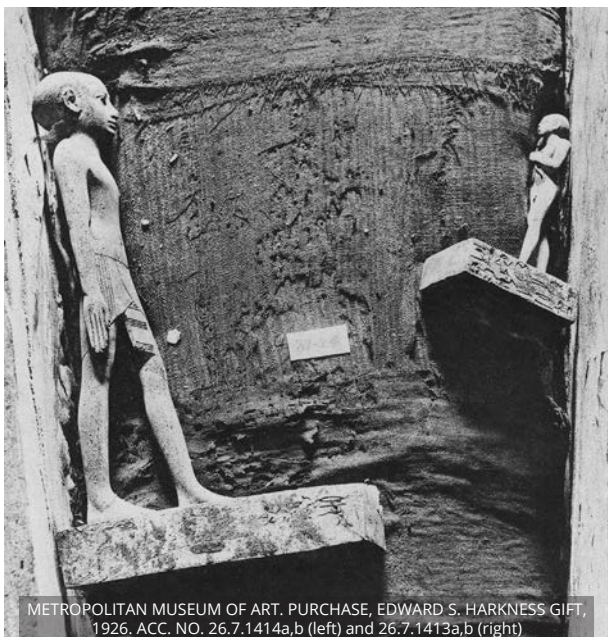
Mohassib also noted the provenance of some of the material the MARRSES would buy, including a set of Middle Kingdom anhydrite cosmetic vessels from Abydos, a number



© WORCESTER ART MUSEUM, MRS. KINGSMILL MARRS COLLECTION (ACC. NO. 1926.86)

The Marrses also had some of their Egyptian ornaments set by Boston jewellers into brooches and stickpins. Scarabs were powerful magical amulets in their day and

represented the mystery and glory of ancient Egypt to 19th- and 20th-century travelers. This blue-glazed, steatite Egyptian scarab has been set in a winged gold mount.



METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART. PURCHASE, EDWARD S. HARKNESS GIFT, 1926. ACC. NO. 26.7.1414a,b (left) and 26.7.1413a,b (right)

Howard Carter's 1911 photo from Asasif tomb CC 37 showing the funerary figures of Amenemhab and his brother, Huwebenef, placed inside their mother's coffin.

The inscriptions on their bases tell us that the statues were dedicated by their father, Djehuty. It appears then that what Carnarvon and Carter had discovered was, what American Egyptologist William C. Hayes described as “an ancient family tragedy involving the premature deaths of two youths much beloved by their parents.” Both statuettes are today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In addition to excavating, Carter continued to paint, and his beautiful watercolors were much in demand. He wrote to Laura on December 15, 1911:

“I have been and am hard at painting since my Return from England the 25th of September and I think I have some good work very near completion. They are nearly all commissioned already and I find it difficult to keep up.”

The Marrses eventually settled in Florence, Italy, where, after a prolonged illness, Kingsmill Marrs died on May 20, 1912. Sadly, this was less than two weeks after he and Laura had moved into their newly-purchased villa in the Florence hills. He was buried in Florence’s Cimitero Evangelico degli Allori. Laura Marrs eventually returned to Boston, where she lived with her bachelor brother Grenville.

In May of 1919, Mrs. Marrs gave the photographs and books that she and Kingsmill had gathered during their life



© WORCESTER ART MUSEUM, AUSTIN S. AND SARAH C. GARVER FUND (ACC. NO. 1949.42)



PETER LACOVARA is director of The Ancient Egyptian Archaeology and Heritage Fund. He was previously senior curator of Ancient Egyptian, Nubian, and Near Eastern Art at the Michael C. Carlos Museum, and served as assistant curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. His fieldwork has included excavations at the Valley of the Kings and the Palace city of Amenhotep III at Malqata in Western Thebes. Currently he is also Consulting Curator for the Egyptian Collection at the Albany Institute of History and Art and directing the survey and restoration of the site of Deir el-Ballas.

Aside from the Egyptian antiquities donated by the Marrs family, the Worcester Art Museum contains some superb pieces, such as this tomb relief fragment of the Fan Bearer (and soon to be pharaoh) Ay.

Ay was a favoured courtier of Akhenaten and became vizier under Tutankhamun. Here Ay is depicted as a powerful royal advisor, holding the fan, crook, and folded scarf that symbolise his fidelity to the king.

This fragment comes from his Amarna tomb (TA 25) which was left unfinished—presumably on the coronation of Tutankhamun and the return of the royal court to Thebes. After Tutankhamun's death, Ay became pharaoh and was interred in a tomb more befitting his status, in the Western Valley of the Valley of the Kings (tomb WV 23).

This gold signet ring, dated to the New Kingdom, is chased with a seated figure of the lioness-headed goddess Sekhmet. As the daughter of the sun-god Ra, and the manifestation of his occasional fury, Sekhmet is shown with a sun-disk above her head.

The scattered silver-coloured spots, probably platinum-iridium, are characteristic of alluvial gold deposits. It suggests that the gold used for this ring was rinsed from the sand and gravel of river beds, rather than the back-breaking process of mining veins of gold in open pits or galleries.

The Egyptians were masters at packing a lot of detail into a tiny space; the face of this ring is just over two centimetres high.

© WORCESTER ART MUSEUM, MRS. KINGSMILL MARRS COLLECTION
(ACC. NO. 1926.97)



This gold spacer bead inscribed with the cartouche of Amenhotep III's great royal wife, Queen Tiye, is just 1.9 cm tall and would have come from a bracelet or necklace. The loops would attach to strings of beads and perhaps acted as one half of a clasp to secure the ornament.

The hieroglyphic text on this spacer reads "King's Wife, Tiye". She was the mother of Akhenaten and grandmother of Tutankhamun.

Mrs. Marrs' records noted that this piece was reported to have come from the Valley of the Kings.

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(ACC. NO. 1926.106)

T H E K A D E S H O B S E S S I O N



IN THE LATE BRONZE AGE, Syria was the center of world commerce. Aegean products arrived in Syrian ports from where they were transported to Egypt, the Levant and Asia across a vast network of trade routes. These same routes were used to bring products from faraway lands such as Iran and Afghanistan to be sold on Syrian markets.

The trade routes, fertile lands and a wealth of natural resources made Syria a very desirable region. At the start of the Egyptian New Kingdom, the world powers of Egypt and Mitanni came into conflict over Syria, and both countries managed to seize considerable parts of it.

The Egyptians depended on the Eleutheros valley,

which ran through a coastal kingdom known as Amurru, to connect Egyptian-held Mediterranean ports with the Egyptian-controlled regions in central Syria. The valley could also be used to launch attacks against the Mitannian territories in northern Syria. The city of Kadesh controlled the eastern end of the Eleutheros valley and could block or aid an Egyptian advance into Mitannian-held Syria. Kadesh also provided access to the Wadi Sirhan, through which an army advancing south, towards Egypt, could bypass all major cities and military concentrations to the west. For all of these reasons the Egyptians wanted to seize control over Kadesh.

But according to reports from neighbouring Egyptian vassals, the new leader of Kadesh wasn't that loyal to pharaoh after all. Aitakama repeatedly attempted to make his neighbours switch allegiance and become Hittite vassals. Akhenaten, reluctant to take action against Kadesh, ordered Aziru, the new leader of Amurru, to protect Egyptian interests. Aziru exploited the situation and at the expense of his neighbours expanded his own boundaries. To make things worse, Aziru was allegedly flirting with the Hittites.

Found amongst a collection of diplomatic messages, known today as the Amarna Letters, is a letter from Akhenaten to Aziru which demonstrates that the Egyptian king had grown tired of Aziru's actions and his friendliness with Hittite-siding leaders such as Aitakama of Kadesh. The pharaoh wrote to King Aitakma:

"YOU ARE AT PEACE WITH THE RULER OF KADESH. THE TWO OF YOU TAKE FOOD AND STRONG DRINK TOGETHER. WHY DO YOU ACT SO? WHY ARE YOU AT PEACE WITH A RULER WHOM THE KING IS FIGHTING?"

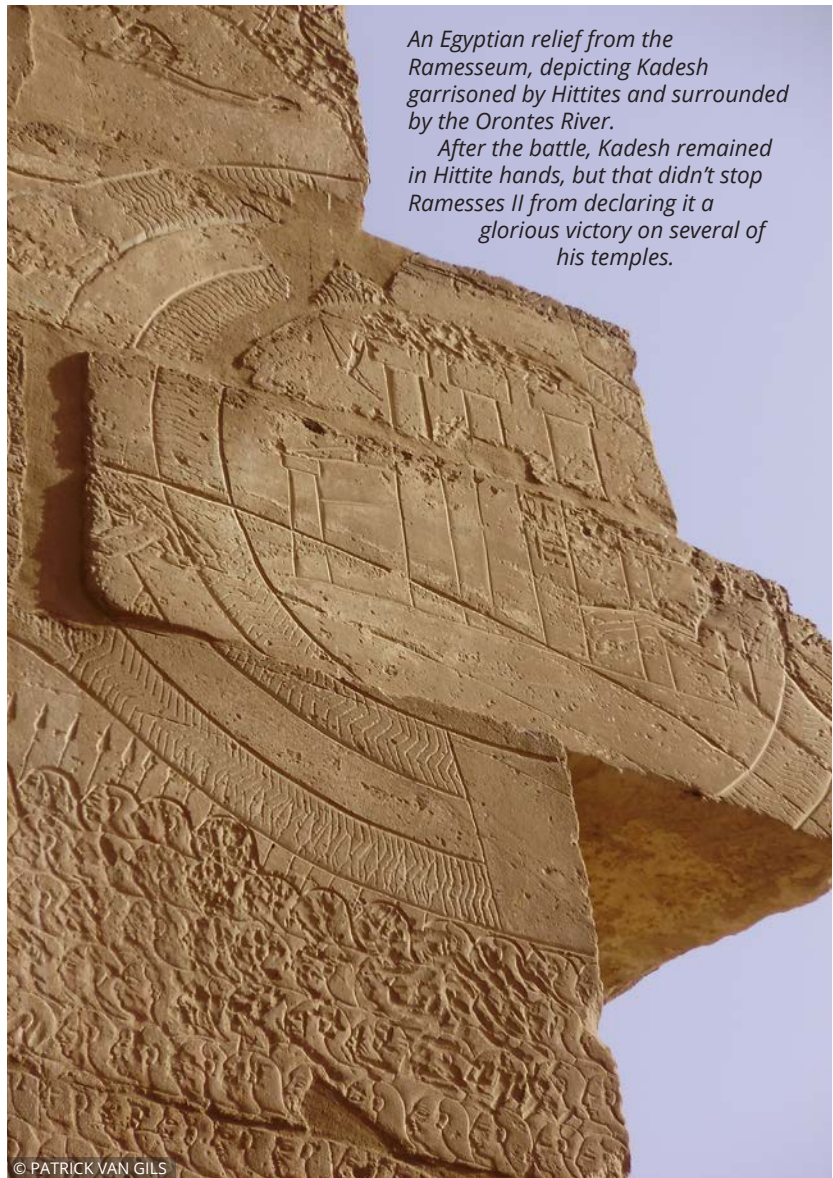
Aziru was then summoned to the Egyptian court to explain his actions. At the same moment, about five years after the initial Hittite seizure of Kadesh, Akhenaten ordered his army to take action against the rogue city. No direct Egyptian reports of this expedition are known, but several of the Amarna letters request Syrian vassals to prepare for the arrival of the Egyptian army.

Akhenaten's attack on Kadesh was probably a failure. Hittite sources mention a Hittite retaliation attack on Amki, an Egyptian-held territory to the south of Kadesh. If Akhenaten's action had been successful, the Hittites wouldn't have been able to safely attack this region.



TUTANKHAMUN

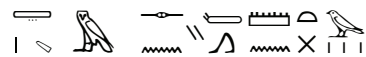
The Restoration stela of Tutankhamun, written in Year One of the young pharaoh's rule, describes the ruinous neglect that he inherited, and poetically describes Akhenaten's military failure to emphasise the poor state of affairs under that king's reign:



An Egyptian relief from the Ramesseum, depicting Kadesh garrisoned by Hittites and surrounded by the Orontes River.

After the battle, Kadesh remained in Hittite hands, but that didn't stop Ramesses II from declaring it a glorious victory on several of his temples.

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"The land was in distress,



The gods were turning away from this land,



If an army was sent to Djahy (Syria)



to widen the borders of Egypt,



Not any of their successes happened."

(Tutankhamun's Restoration Stela, Cairo JE 41504)

Tutankhamun made at least one attempt to seize Kadesh. As no contemporary sources from his reign provide us with clear information about this attack, we again have to rely on Hittite sources for an insight into the outcome of the battle. The Hittites report another retaliatory attack on the



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(ABOVE and LEFT) The Hittite infantry, as depicted in the Ramesseum, watched how the battle of Kadesh unfolded, but did not take part in the fight. The above copy of the scene was made in 1827 by Italian artist Giuseppe Angelelli. The Orontes River is highlighted in blue.

Ramesses II a false sense of security. He now had the chance to gather his whole army, select the most preferred terrain to strategically deploy his troops, and his forces could be well rested before having to do battle.

It has been claimed that because of this feeling of comfort, Ramesses forgot to send out sufficient reconnaissance parties to scout the terrain around Kadesh. But critical reading of the Egyptian reports shows that the pharaoh did send out scouts who provided him with intelligence; unfortunately, the information wasn't the news that pharaoh had wanted to hear.

The leading Amun division had crossed a ford in the river Orontes and had marched towards the northwest of Kadesh. While camp was being set up Ramesses II received news that two Hittite scouts had been captured. After being

interrogated, the scouts told pharaoh that the Hittite army was battle ready and lying in wait behind the old city of Kadesh, on the other side of the river Orontes, to the west of the Egyptian camp. This news would have been a shock to Ramesses II. His enemy had outmatched him and had gathered their entire army at the location of their choice. To make matters worse, this was while the majority of the Egyptian army was still on the march. Messengers were hurried to the Egyptian divisions to order them to proceed to pharaoh's location at the highest possible speed.

The next morning, while speed-marching towards the Egyptian camp, the Re division was attacked by a large Hittite chariot force. The division was unprepared and its troops fled in disarray. When this news was brought to Ramesses II he immediately launched a counterattack. Ramesses claimed that he stood alone against 2,500 enemy chariots and that his bold and courageous actions repulsed the Hittite attack.

The Hittite chariot action is often explained as being part of the Hittite war plan which was aimed at ambushing



Seeking refuge from Ramesses' reinforcements, desperate Hittites fled across the Orontes River. Not all of them were strong swimmers, and some are shown being rescued

from the water by fellow Hittite troops. This scene is from the Second Pylon at the Ramesseum—Ramesses II's cult temple on the west bank at Luxor.

the Egyptian forces. But during the late Bronze age, it was the custom that both combatants deployed their armies before commencing hostilities. Ambushing your opponent and attacking an unprepared enemy was uncommon.

The attacking Hittite force consisted solely of chariots with no infantry dispatched to support them. This suggests that the attacking Hittite force was actually a large chariot reconnaissance force. Because of the known presence of Egyptian forces in the area, Muwatallis had sent a large unit. In the event of running into Egyptian troops, they would be able to fend off the Egyptians.

The large reconnaissance force was sent across the Orontes river. According to the Egyptian record, the Hittite attack force consisted of 2,500 chariots. To cross the river with such an amount of chariots would have likely taken the Hittites a few hours. Besides this, the exposed riverbank could never have concealed such a vast number of chariots so as to ambush the enemy. The number of 2,500 chariots was most likely an Egyptian exaggeration.

After crossing the Orontes, the large Hittite chariot reconnaissance force accidentally ran into Egypt's Ra division. The only thing the surprised Hittite charioteers could do was to engage their unprepared opponents.

The Hittite attack against the Egyptians wasn't part of a planned ambush, but an unexpected event. While chasing the surprised Egyptian troops, the Hittite chariots charged the camp of the Amun division. In the confinement of the Egyptian camp, the Hittite chariots lost their momentum and met an Egyptian counter attack led by Ramesses II.

According to the Egyptian report, Muwatallis observed the hostilities from the other side of the Orontes, and quickly dispatched another chariot force across the river to support his battling chariots. The Egyptian record claims this second attack consisted of 1,000 chariots, manned by the brothers of Muwatallis and the leaders of various Hittite allies. Again we see Hittites not deploying their infantry to fight the Egyptians. This reinforces the idea that the attacking Hittite chariot force met the Egyptians by chance.

When Muwatallis realised that his scout charioteers had run into trouble, the only reinforcements he could muster were those in his personal retinue. If the initial Hittite attack had been planned, then reinforcements would have been deployed in a location where they could be sent into action without delay.

This second wave of Hittite chariots were stopped by the arrival of the fifth Egyptian division. Fortunately, the

James Bowden, M.A.

THE AMARNA LETTERS

THE FORGOTTEN MILITARY HISTORY OF EGYPT



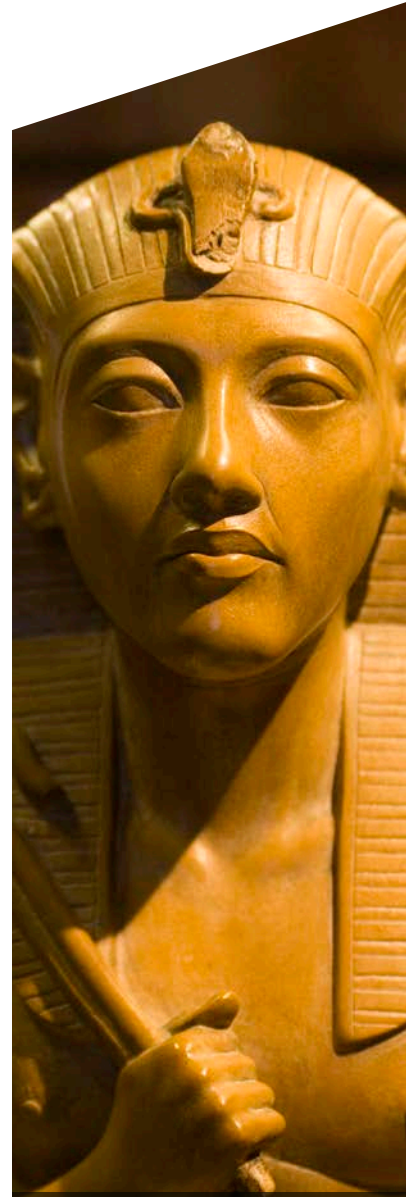
Queen Tiye

KRAFT STOFF/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Amenhotep III

© LAURENCE BURRIDGE



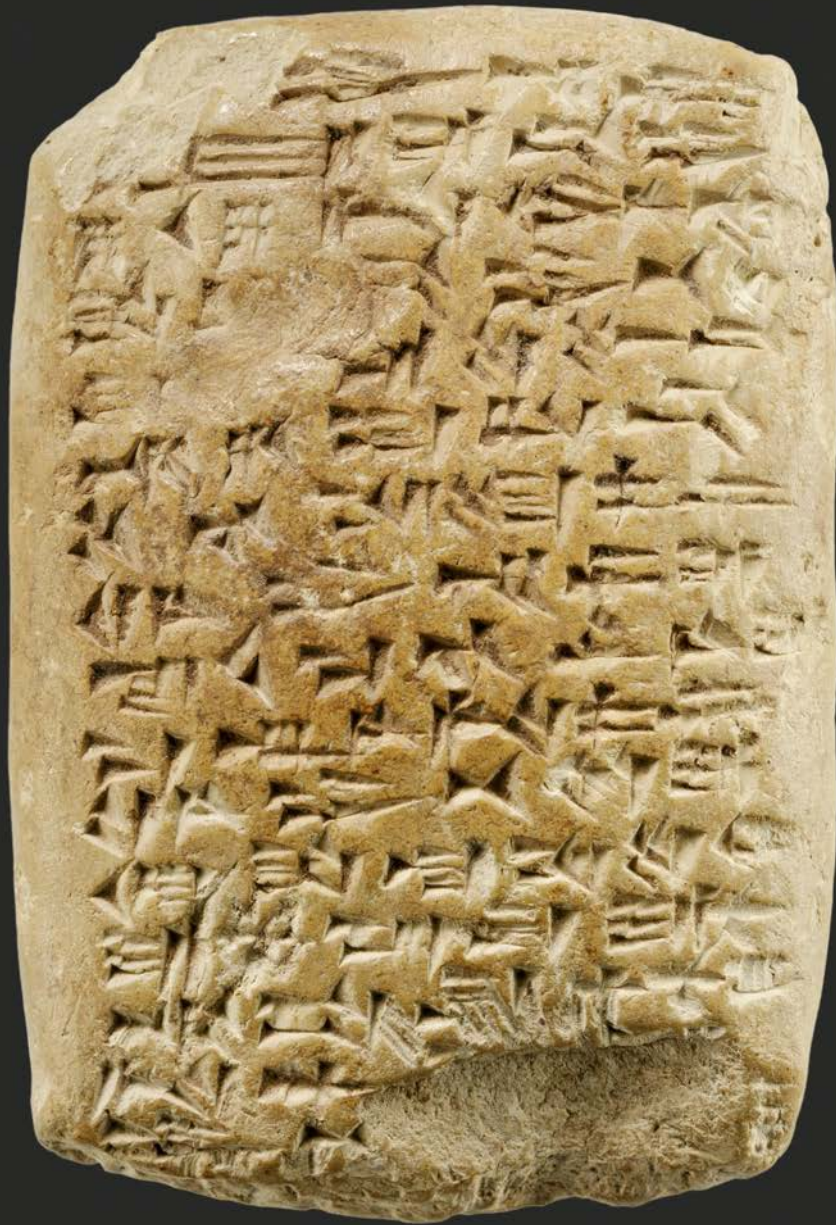
Akhenaten

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THE EGYPTIAN ROYALS of the AMARNA LETTERS

The Amarna Letters have long been labeled as a long series of diplomatic exchanges between New Kingdom Egypt and various vassal states and allies around Canaan and the Near East. This article demonstrates how much that perception and description is wrong, and may have led to the Amarna Letters falling into an unfortunate and unnecessary obscurity.

The real nature of the majority of the letters is much more fascinating: a compilation of military dispatches that were issued by desperate vassal kings, pleading for pharaoh's help. Here we see the complex and chaotic military and social situation in which Canaan found itself during the period that saw the end of Amenhotep III's reign and the start of Akhenaten's kingship.



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ASHUR-UBALLIT, WELCOME TO THE SUPERPOWERS CLUB

Many of the Amarna Letters record the desperate pleas for help from rulers of vassal states around Canaan, besieged by rivals and bandits—and the ensuing complaints when pharaoh seemingly turns a deaf ear. Other letters come from the kings of the great powers of the Near East to foster the bonds of brotherhood between rulers. The letter above records the very beginning of one of those relationships.

In the 14th century B.C., Assyria rose as a dominant power in the northern part of Mesopotamia, in modern Iraq. In this letter, Ashur-uballit, the king of Assyria (ca. 1365–1330 B.C.), reaches out with a personal message and offers gifts to the Egyptian pharaoh (probably Akhenaten) to establish relations, seek recognition for his status, and find out what Egypt was like. The letter (EA 15) reads in part,

"I HAVE SENT MY MESSENGER TO YOU TO VISIT YOU AND TO VISIT YOUR LAND... I SEND YOU A SPLENDID CHARIOT, TWO HORSES, AND ONE DATE-STONE OF GENUINE LAPIS LAZULI AS YOUR GREETING GIFT.

DO NOT DELAY THE MESSENGER... HE SHOULD VISIT AND THEN LEAVE FOR HERE. HE SHOULD SEE WHAT YOU ARE LIKE AND WHAT YOUR LAND IS LIKE, AND THEN LEAVE FOR HERE."

Ashur-uballit's "friend request" worked. A later letter (EA 16) records the Assyrian king's pleasure at having received an Egyptian envoy, as well as him asking for gold as a measure of their friendly relations: "If your purpose is graciously one of friendship, send me much gold." Yep, Ashur-uballit was getting needy.

Looking down onto the Amarna plain from the city's North Tombs. In ancient times the desert plain looked just as desolate, and foreign messengers, after travelling for hundreds of kilometres, must have wondered why on earth would anyone want to build a city here.

The building that locals identified as the findspot of the Amarna Letters was Akhenaten's records office. Its mudbricks were stamped with this text:



*"The Place of the Correspondence of Pharaoh,
Life, Prosperity, Health."*

The tomb in the foreground (TA 4) belongs to Meryra I, who had the title of "High Priest of the Aten in Akhet-Aten".

PHOTO: TRAVELDIA / ADOBE STOCK.COM

The Canaanite Amarna Letters hinge on three main themes: 1) a deep and palpable sense of military abandonment, 2) military need and the desperation of their situation, and 3) limited responses from pharaoh showing minimal care or sometimes apparent indifference. All of these themes emerge from the multiple crises that were descending on Canaan at the time.

The forces of the Hittite kingdom was moving south from their Anatolian home and advancing along the Levantine coast. As they descended, the Hittites were gathering up local allies and pressuring Egyptian vassal states in the north. At the same time, the Habiru were described as being throughout the land of Canaan and in league with various rulers, often setting one against the other. The identity of the Habiru is still largely debated but are thought to represent various bands of Canaanite outlaws. The letters describing this activity were messages begging for military help and requesting the urgent attention of Amenhotep III and his son, Amenhotep IV (later named Akhenaten).

THEME 1: ABANDONMENT

The feeling of abandonment comes through the Amarna Letters explicitly and deserves first mention due to its emphasis. The letters reflect a nation in retreat, with an elderly Amenhotep III increasingly passing along the affairs of state to his son, Akhenaten. The kings in Canaan appear baffled; they had been under Egypt's wing for all of their lives, and in many instances, had also been raised in the Egyptian royal court, being taught Egyptian protocol, dress, speech, and political skills. They simply could not understand what was in many ways a sudden reversal of policy on the pharaoh's part. Given their level of Egyptian upbringing, they may have also felt as though their very family and personal relationships were being tossed aside.

Since the earliest days of the emergence of the New

Kingdom it had been policy to expand and then to hold a very firm line north of Byblos, at times reaching into what is now northern Syria. But that was abandoned and the line crept slowly southward as the Hittites applied pressure to the smaller, petty rulers in the area.

Examples of the appeals for help that came to the pharaoh are numerous and the following are just a very small sample. The first (EA 299), comes from the governor of Gazru, a city-state now in Israel, and is one of the milder, less agitated pleas:

"MAY THE KING, MY LORD, THE SUN FROM THE SKY, TAKE THOUGHT FOR HIS LAND. SINCE THE APIRU ARE STRONGER THAN WE, MAY THE KING, MY LORD, GIVE ME HIS HELP, AND MAY THE KING, MY LORD, GET ME AWAY FROM THE APIRU (HABIRU) LEST THE 'APIRU DESTROY US."

This text (EA 273) comes from a queen named Nin-urmahmes who is thought to be from the Canaanite city of Beth Shemesh:

"MAY THE KING, MY LORD, KNOW THAT WAR HAS BEEN WAGED IN THE LAND, AND GONE IS THE LAND OF THE KING, MY LORD, BY DESERTION TO THE 'APIRU. MAY THE KING, MY LORD, TAKE COGNIZANCE OF HIS LAND."

A final example comes from Jerusalem, where King Abdi-Heba wrote a very long letter (EA 287) which concludes with this very powerful appeal:

"AS THE KING HAS PLACED HIS NAME IN JERUSALEM FOREVER, HE CANNOT ABANDON IT—THE LAND OF JERUSALEM."

There appears to have been an Egyptian garrison stationed in Jerusalem, and though it is not clear if this was



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Seated on a throne, Ramesses II receives an envoy from a Hittite king. Unlike modern heads of state, kings of the ancient world rarely met face-to-face. Instead, messengers carried letters back and forth between the rulers' courts.

As representatives of their king, these messengers would arrive in court in their finest, traditional dress, often bearing tribute or lavish gifts. The letters they brought for the king would have been read aloud and translated for the pharaoh.

The men wearing the horned-crested helmets are Sherden warriors, first mentioned in Amarna Letters from Rib-Hadda at Byblos during the reign of Amenhotep III. Later, in the second year of Ramesses II's reign, Sherden raiders attacked the Nile Delta and were trounced by Ramesses's forces. The Sherden impressed the Egyptians, however, and the survivors were pressed into the Egyptian army, eventually becoming Ramesses II's personal guard in the famous Battle of Kadesh.

"MAY THE KING, MY LORD, KNOW THAT SINCE THE RETURN TO EGYPT OF THE ARCHERS, LAB'AYU HAS WAGED WAR AGAINST ME. WE ARE THUS UNABLE TO DO THE PLUCKING: HARVESTING, AND WE ARE UNABLE TO GO OUT OF THE CITY GATE." (EA 244).

Rib-Hadda discusses how a group led by a pair of brothers, on behalf of, or in alliance with Hatti, had taken about six cities from him and that they were moving along the coast in the direction of Byblos. Rib-Hadda mentions several rulers who had been successfully co-opted by the Hittites and drawn into a new confederacy whose aim was to attack and reduce any power loyal to the pharaoh. Byblos was one of the furthest north city-states under control of the Egyptians at this time. Rib-Hadda's correspondence becomes increasingly frantic the longer that he appeals for help against his enemies, and the longer pharaoh ignored them:

"WHY DO YOU NOT SEND BACK WORD TO ME THAT I MAY KNOW WHAT I SHOULD DO? I SENT A MAN OF MINE TO MY LORD, AND BOTH HIS HORSES WERE TAKEN. A SECOND MAN—A MAN OF HIS—WAS TAKEN, AND A TABLET OF THE KING WAS NOT PUT IN MY MAN'S HAND. LISTEN TO ME!" (EA 83).

THEME 3: PHARAOH'S INDIFFERENCE

The last theme to explore is that of the pharaoh's indifference to the situation in Canaan. A group of letters from an unidentified pharaoh constitute the only evidence we have that at least one Egyptian king was aware of what was happening in Canaan. There are only a handful of these letters, yet there is the possibility that more responses were issued but have been lost or remain undiscovered, since references to letters and possible responses are occasionally made by foreign rulers.

However, it seems that the rate and quality of these responses by the Egyptian king was not in proportion to the amount of correspondence that was pouring into Egypt from all corners of Canaan. The subject matter in the pharaonic letters was also not in direct reply. None of the responses articulates a clear policy of interceding, and none indicate that a response in substantial terms was going to be forthcoming. The responses carry a tone of business as usual rather than concern.

SALUTATIONS AND CHARIOTS

We can see in the responses of the pharaoh where the emphasis was placed in regards to military strength and the primacy of the chariot. This was expressed in the diplomatic language of salutations.

Salutations in the ancient world were very important



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This is a scene from the exquisitely-decorated Theban Tomb of Ramose (TT 55), vizier (chief minister) during the transitional period from the reign of Amenhotep III to that of Akhenaten. Shown here is May, thought to be Ramose's brother, who was the commander of chariotry for Amenhotep III and royal messenger to all foreign lands. Beside May (but shown behind in the Egyptian style) is his wife, Werel, a priestess of Mut at Karnak Temple.

Charioteers made effective envoys, given that they often saw active service in foreign countries and became acquainted with the local customs and native language.

May could well have carried Amarna Letters to and from Amenhotep III's royal court. The hieroglyphic text around his figure translates as follows:



"Superintendent of the horses of the Lord of Two Lands,



Messenger of the King throughout all foreign lands."

parts of the letter—much more important than they are today. The opening and closing salutations were the first and last moment to express loyalty, friendliness, blessings, re-establish a relationship hierarchy, and smooth over any prior offenses.

The salutations reach very complex levels of expression the further we get into the Amarna letters, and especially with the rulers who are under the most threat from the Hittites and the Habiru. In one response to a Canaanite ruler (EA 367), the pharaoh provides instructions on how to prepare for the arrival of king's archers ("plenty of food" and "plenty of wine") but concludes with a formulaic ending salutation that states:

"AND KNOW THAT THE KING IS HALE LIKE THE SUN IN THE SKY. FOR HIS TROOPS AND HIS CHARIOTS IN MULTITUDE, ALL GOES VERY WELL."

This mirrors a feature of the letters from the major foreign powers, both in their letters to the pharaoh and

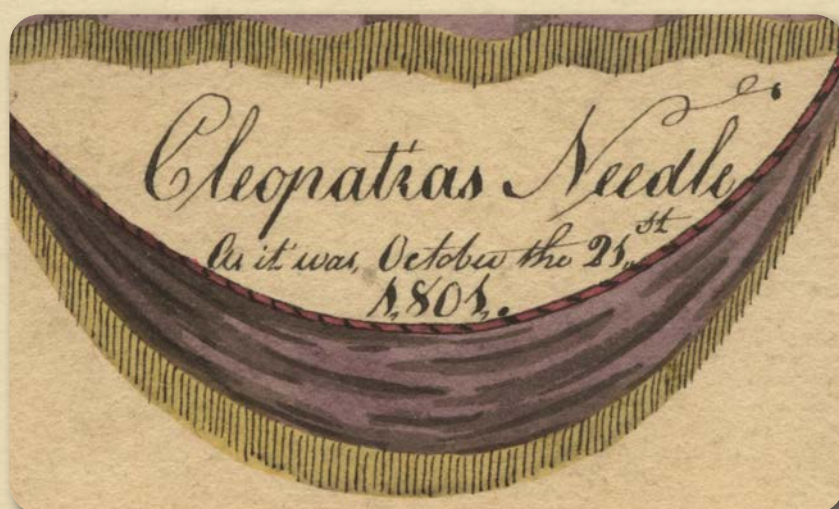
the letters that originated with him. In the opening salutation of EA 1 (Amenhotep III writing to Babylonian King Kadašman-Enlil I), the pharaoh writes,

"FOR ME ALL GOES WELL. FOR YOU MAY ALL GO WELL. FOR YOUR HOUSEHOLD, FOR YOUR WIVES, FOR YOUR SONS, FOR YOUR MAGNATES, YOUR HORSES, YOUR CHARIOTS, FOR YOUR COUNTRIES, MAY ALL GO VERY WELL."

Amenhotep's words clearly emphasize how important chariots were to the pharaoh—their measure of success included how well the chariot corps were functioning.

Chariots arrived in Egypt during the Hyksos occupation of the north of the country, around 1650 B.C. By Amenhotep III's time, some 250 years later, armies without a chariot division were seriously disadvantaged. Of the king's many different types of soldiers and corps, the ones that garnered significant enough worth to mention in the Amarna Letters were the chariots.

Vintage Images of Ancient Egypt



Art historian William Joy points out that there was a severe lack of hard currency available for the British soldiers in Egypt. Even something simple like a watermelon could only be bought for the troops if the commanding officers paid for such things out of their own pockets. So when the unit left Egypt at the end of 1801, if they wanted a souvenir to take with them, without money they had to be creative. "I rather think this is how and why the painting by Mills came about," William Joy suggests. "It was a souvenir that cost nothing to make, but serves today as a reminder of an interesting period of history."

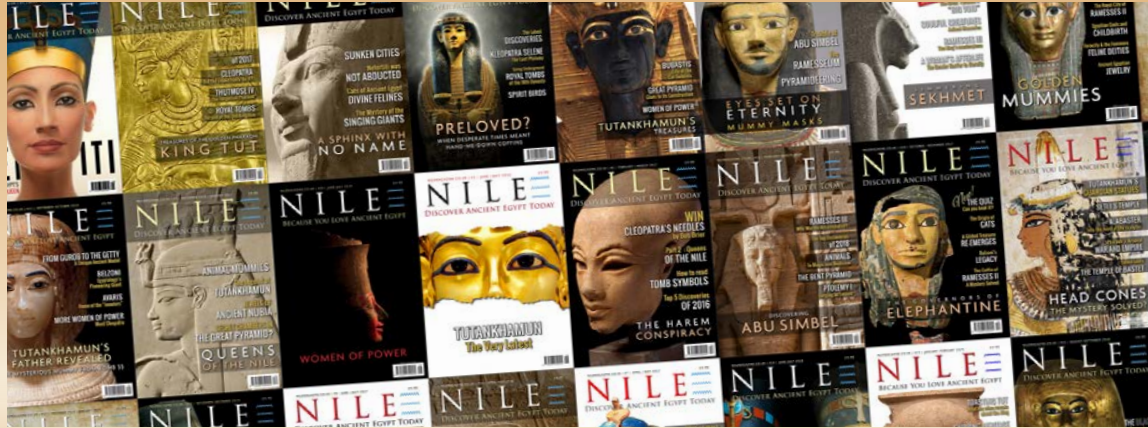
This "Needle", by the way, was shipped to New York's Central Park in 1880.



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