



Science Channel's Egypt's Mystery Chamber Reveals New, Significant Information About the Mummification of Pharaohs That May Rewrite This Aspect of Ancient Egyptian History

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Viewers Offered a Unique Look Into a Sacred World Never Meant to be Revealed

SILVER SPRING, Md., April 21, 2009 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Since 2006 the world famous discovery of tomb KV63 in Egypt's Valley of the Kings has been shut to the outside world, the meaning of its remaining unopened relics, blemished inscriptions and delicate artifacts left shrouded in uncertainty. Now, for the first time since the tomb's unearthing, Science Channel exclusively returns viewers to the depths below Egypt's desert as a team of archeologists uncovers the true purpose for KV63, and reveals, for the first time, that the tomb's contents hold several new, important clues about the mummification of Egyptian pharaohs. EGYPT'S MYSTERY CHAMBER world premieres on Sunday, April 26 at 9 PM (ET/PT).

Widely considered to be the most important find in the Valley of the Kings since Howard Carter uncovered King Tutankhamun's tomb (KV62) in 1922, archeologist Dr. Otto Schaden found KV63 less than 50 feet from the tomb of the boy king.

After suffering from several health setbacks over the past three years, Dr. Schaden returned with a team of experts in February 2009 to finish exploring 16 jars that remained sealed. What they uncovered are items that add significant information to what is already known about the process of mummification. The archeologists found several unusual objects including an intricate wooden funerary bed, mud trays with imprints of its creator still embedded in the mud, and a fully intact, large cotton swab tool used in embalming, the first of its kind ever found.

"Our recent KV63 discoveries allow us to really piece together how pharaohs were embalmed and could therefore rewrite this aspect of Egyptian history," said Dr. Salima Ikram, Professor of Egyptology at The American University in Cairo and member of the archeology team excavating KV63. "The finding sheds new light on how important and sacred the embalming tools were to the ancient Egyptians. We are getting an exciting, fascinating glimpse into a clandestine, sacred process the outside world was never meant to see."

EGYPT'S MYSTERY CHAMBER also draws several possible connections between KV63 and Egypt's famous boy king Tutankhamun. Though archeologists can rarely be certain, several items in KV63 provide a link to Tut's tomb including: the proximity of the two tombs; a near identical seal found in both tombs; pottery fragments remarkably similar to those in Tut's tomb; a seal in KV63 bears a symbol for a god worshipped during his reign; and other items of a decorative style pointing to the time period of King Tut.

Science Channel captured each moment as the team descended underground to continue their painstaking search for answers to what the tomb was or to whom it belonged. Each sample of new evidence uncovered allowed the team to piece together a clearer picture of how pharaohs were embalmed, and leads them to believe the tomb was used as a sacred holding place for the tools used in mummification. The finding also sheds new light on how important and sacred the embalming tools were to the ancient Egyptians.

Some of the evidence that leads the team to their conclusion includes:

- * An unusual wooden funerary bed, featuring intricate carvings of lion heads, was packed, piece by piece, in one of the large jars. After reassembling it archeologists believe it could have held a coffin or a mummy off of the ground during the embalming stage.
- * After opening 16 large jars from KV63 during this excavation the total amount of natron retrieved is nearly 500 pounds. Natron is a substance used to embalm the body during mummification. To find natron in such significant quantities is unusual unless it was being stored along with the rest of the embalming materials.
- * Mud trays with the fingerprints of those who had made or handled them were found. The trays were used as temporary containers.
- * A large cotton swab implement with its end covered in oil was found in the jars. The team believes this was used to push oil around the insides of the body after it was dried out.
- * Recently cleaned writing on Coffin A reveals the words "royal nurse." The job of a royal nurse was to raise an Egyptian king's son.
- * Coffin E, initially thought to contain a mummy, has been used for storage. Inside it were found what appear to be the products of an embalming along with other sacred objects for the deceased's afterlife. These may be objects the deceased owned in life or objects used at the funeral, and as a result became sacred and had to be stored for eternity.
- * Some of the large jars contained differently shaped bags of chaff; a material commonly used in packing, but now thought to be

used for drying out the body as well.

* Textiles expert Dr. Elise Van Rooij reevaluated ancient pillows found previously in 2006. At up to 80 threads per centimeter, the pillows are of a quality that was used only in a royal household. The pillows are the only ones of their kind ever found in ancient Egypt.

EGYPT'S MYSTERY CHAMBER is produced for Science Channel by Atlantic Productions. Anthony Geffen is the executive producer for Atlantic Productions. Jack Smith is the executive producer for Science Channel.

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CONTACT: Discovery Communications

Kristin Brown

240-662-5415

Kristin_Brown@discovery.com

Andrew Scafetta

240-662-5519

Andrew_Scafetta@discovery.com