

In Case You Missed

Ancient Granite Statue Found In Egypt

Archaeologists have unearthed the upper part of a double limestone statue of a powerful pharaoh who ruled nearly 3,400 years ago, Egypt's Ministry of Culture said.

A ministry statement said the team of Egyptian archeologists discovered the 4-foot (1.3-meter) by 3-foot (0.95-meter) statue of Amenhotep III in Kom El-Hittan, the site of the pharaoh's mortuary temple in the southern city of Luxor.

The temple is one of the largest on the west bank of Nile in Luxor, Artdaily reported.

The statue portrays Amenhotep III wearing the double crown of Egypt, which is decorated with a uraeus, and seated on a throne next to Theban god Anun.



Amenhotep III, who was the grandfather of the famed boy-pharaoh Tutankhamun, ruled in the 14th century BC at the height of Egypt's New Kingdom and presided over a vast empire stretching from Nubia in the south to Syria in the north.

The pharaoh's temple was largely destroyed, possibly by floods, and little remains of its walls. But archeologists have been able to unearth a wealth of artifacts and statuary in the buried ruins, including two statues of Amenhotep made of black granite found at the site in March 2009.

Gold-Covered Skeleton Discovered

Greek archeologists have found an ancient skeleton covered with gold foil in a grave on the island of Crete, officials said.

Excavator Nicholas Stampolidis said his team discovered more than 3,000 pieces of gold foil in the 7th-century BC twin grave near the ancient town of Eleutherna, AFP reported.

Cemeteries there have produced a wealth of outstanding artifacts in recent years.

The tiny gold ornaments, from 1 to 4 centimeters (0.4 to 1.5 inches) long, had been sewn onto a lavish robe or shroud that initially wrapped the body of a woman and has almost completely rotted away but for a few off-white threads.

"The whole length of the (grave) was covered with small pieces of gold foil—square, circular and lozenge-shaped," Stampolidis told The Associated Press. "We were literally digging up gold interspersed with earth, not earth with some gold in it."

The woman, who presumably had a high social or religious status, was buried with a second skeleton in a large jar sealed with a stone slab weighing more than half a ton. It was hidden behind a false wall to confuse grave robbers.

Experts are trying to determine the other skeleton's sex.

China's Great Wall Crumbles As Tourism Soars

Empty plastic bottles, crumpled cans and tattered food boxes are piled up after a rave in China—perhaps not so unusual, except that the garbage is on the famed Great Wall.

The filthy remains of the full-moon techno party, which drew several hundred foreigners to one of the sections of the wall at Badaling, about 60 kilometers (35 miles) from Beijing, left Colombian tourist Francisco Garcia in a sad mood.

"It's very bad for the environment," Garcia told AFP, summing up a major problem facing Chinese authorities—how to preserve the UNESCO's World Heritage site while allowing visitors to take advantage of its majestic beauty.

The sun rises, gently illuminating the impressive structure snaking over the hills. In a lookout tower, nine brightly-colored tents have been set up for intrepid campers who spent the night in the early autumn chill.

"We've found nails in the wall between the stones, put there by campers for their tents," said Wang Xuenong, a former curator of the Shanhaiguan section of the wall, and a lecturer at Beijing's prestigious Tsinghua University.

But he added: "There is no clear ban on sleeping on the wall."

William Lindsay, a Briton who has spent nearly a quarter-century working on wall conservation, says he thinks camping at a World Heritage site is simply 'unacceptable'.

"People are relieving themselves all over it. In the past few months, I have come across big camping groups, pitching 10 or 15 tents and leaving their garbage from dinner and breakfast the following morning," Lindsay told AFP.

Parts of the wall—which welcomes 10 million visitors a year—are covered with graffiti, with names and phrases scrawled in English and French.

At Badaling, one of the most popular sections of the wall due to its proximity to the Chinese capital, "you have to walk several kilometers before you can find a brick that has not been carved into," Lindsay said.

Surena

An Iranian Hero

Surena or Suren may refer to either a noble family of Parthian era or to a renowned 1st century BC General Surena.

From Ammianus Marcellinus and other historiographers of late antiquity, it appears that Surena was also a title of office.

The highest dignity in the kingdom, next to the crown, was that of Surena, or field marshal, and this position was hereditary, CAIS reported.

Surena remains a popular name in Iran.

> House of Suren

The Surenas or House of Suren is one of two Parthian noble families explicitly mentioned by name in sources datable to the Arsacid period.

For at least the second half of the Arsacid era (which extends from 247 BC to 224 CE), the Surena family had the privilege to crown the Parthian kings. Following the 3rd century CE defeat of the Arsacids and the subsequent rise of the Sassanids, the Surenas then switched sides and began to serve the Persians, at whose court they were identified as one of the so-called "Parthian clans".

The last attested scion of the family was a military commander active in northern China during the



9th century.

It is probable that the Surenas were landowners in Sakestan, that is, in the region between Arachosia and Drangiana in present-day southwestern Afghanistan, where they expelled the aboriginal Sakas who then migrated to the Punjab. The Surenas appear to have governed Sistan (which derives its name from Sakestan and was once a much larger region than the present-day province) as their personal fiefdom.

Ernst Herzfeld maintained that the dynasty of the Indo-Parthian emperor Gondophares represented the House of Suren.

Other notable members of the family include the 1st century BC cavalry commander General Surena and a 6th-century CE governor (satrap) of Armenia who attempted to reestablish Zoroastrianism in that province.

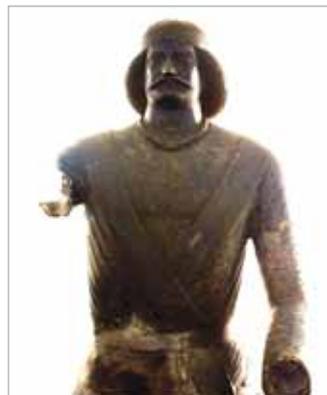
> General Surena

General Surena (84-52 BC) was a famed commander of cavalry during the reign of the Arsacid King Orodes II (57-38 BC).

In Life of Crassus 21, written c. 225 years after the commander's time, Plutarch described Surena as "an extremely distinguished man. In wealth, birth, and in the honor paid to him, he ranked next after the king; in courage and ability he was the foremost Parthian of his time; and in stature and personal beauty he had no equal".

Also, according to Plutarch, there were many slaves in his army, suggesting the general had great wealth.

In 54 BC, Surena commanded troops of Orodes II at the battle for the city of Selucia. Surena distinguished himself in this battle for dynastic succession (Orodes II had previously been deposed by Mithridates III) and was instrumental in the reinstatement of Orodes upon the Arsacid throne.



In 53 BC, the Romans advanced on the western Arsacid vassalaries. In response, Orodes II sent his cavalry units under Surena to combat them. The two armies subsequently met at Battle of Carrhae (at Harran in present-day Turkey), where the superior equipment and clever tactics of the Parthians to lure the Romans out into the middle of the desert enabled them to defeat the numerically superior Romans.

Although this feat of arms took a severe toll on the Roman troops (Plutarch speaks of 20,000 dead and 10,000 prisoners), and produced a mighty echo among the peoples of the East, it did not cause any decisive shift in the balance of power, that is, the Arsacid victory did not gain them territory.

For Surena, it soon cost him his life. Probably fearing that he would constitute a threat to himself, King Orodes II had him executed.

In some ways, the position of Surena in the historical tradition is curiously parallel to that of Rostam in Shahnameh. Yet, despite the predominance of Rostam in the epic tradition, it has never been possible to find him a convincingly historical niche.

The last composition of the 17th-century French dramatist Pierre Corneille, a tragedy titled *Surna*, is roughly based on the story of General Surena.

> Hero of Carrhae

Eran Spalibodh Rustaham Suren-Pahlav, son of Arakhsh (Arash, pers.) and Massis, was born in 84 BC. The name under which he appears in the western classical sources was apparently no more than his hereditary title, that of Suren, which continues to appear as well in the record of Iranian history far into Sassanid times.

His glorious name is preserved amongst the throne, of epic heroes whose deeds are recalled in the Kayanian section of the Shahnameh. In the Iranian national epic, the record of the Arsacids was suppressed at their true chronological point, the instance of Gotarz (Goudarz)



has shown that some at least of its spectacular episodes were transferred to the legendary period of Keikavus, and incorporated there.

The feat of arms performed by Surena was certainly the most celebrated of the whole Ashkanian era. Thus, in some ways, the position of great Suren in the historical tradition is curiously parallel to that of Rostam, the hero of Shahnameh. His figure has been endowed with many features of a historical personality of Rostam.

The latter was always represented as the mightiest of Iranian paladins, and the atmosphere of episodes in which he features is strongly reminiscent of the Ashkanian period.

Plutarch said, "For Surena was no ordinary person; but in fortune, family and honor the first after the king; and in point of courage and capacity, as well as size and beauty, superior to the Parthians of his time. If he went only on an excursion into the country, he had a thousand camels to carry his baggage and two hundred carriages for his concubines."

Suren was attended by a thousand heavy-armed horses, and many more of the light-armed rode before him. Indeed, his vassals and slaves made up a body of cavalry little less than 10,000. He had the hereditary privilege in his family of putting the diadem upon the king's head, when he was crowned.

When Orodes was driven from throne, he restored him; and it was he who conquered for him the great city of Selucia, being the first to scale the wall and beating off the enemy with his own hand. Though he was not then 30 years old, his discernment was strong, and his counsel esteemed the best.

> The Battle of Carrhae

The feudal and decentralized structure of Parthian Empire may help to explain why, though founded on annexation and perpetually menaced by hostile armies both in the east and in the west, it never took a strong offensive after the days of Emperor Mithradates II.

Iran tended to remain on the defensive. The wars between Iran and Rome, therefore, were initiated not by the Iranians—who deeply injured though they were by the encroachments of Pompey—but by Rome itself. Marcus Licinius Crassus, the Roman triumvir in 54 BC, took the offensive against Iran.



Such then were the protagonists in the decisive battle that was about to develop. With regard to the strength of the two armies, that of the Romans was greatly superior in sheer numbers, but ill adapted to the open terrain.

According to the most reliable account, that of Plutarch, Crassus commanded a force of seven legions, of which the total effective strength was estimated by Tam at 28,000 heavy infantrymen.

The Iranian force led by commander of Iranian forces, Surena, which they were opposed, consisted, as the account shows, of a thousand fully armored lancers, the cataphracti, who formed the bodyguard of the general. Nine thousand horse-archers formed the main body and the baggage-train of a thousand camels was available to bring up extra stocks of arrows. The entire force was mounted and highly mobile under desert conditions.

At a superficial reckoning, the Roman force may have seemed sufficient for the task in hand. The event showed, however, that in two critical respects, the Romans had underestimated the Iranian forces. The power of horse-archers' arrows to penetrate the legionary armor had not been appreciated, perhaps because the Roman commanders were unaware that the compound bow which the Iranians employed was a more powerful weapon than the lighter bows found at that time in Rome.

Again, the Romans had anticipated that the Iranian cavalry would quickly exhaust their stock of arrows, but the camel train of the General Surena made it possible for



him to bring up stocks of arrows as the quivers of his men were emptied. But for these two miscalculations, the Roman legionary square might have been expected to hold its own against the Iranian cavalry.

Yet the heat and vast distances of the Mesopotamian Plain (for the battle took place in June) would have put Roman infantry at a disadvantage due to lack of experience to meet such a stoutest military in the East.

Moreover, the Roman means of retaliation against their adversaries were ineffective, since the range of the Roman javelin was obviously limited, and the Gaulish cavalry relied on for a counter-attack were provided only with short javelins.

Despite the crushing defeat of Romans, the Iranians made no attempt to follow up their victory to invade Rome.

Romans after Carrhae learnt from Iranians to introduce cavalry into their army, just as nearly a thousand years earlier, the first Iranian to reach the plateau introduced the Assyrians to a similar reform. But the upshot of the debacle was to win unquestioned recognition for Iran as a superior to Rome and the return of Iranian Empire.