

Archeologists Discover Thutmose II's Tomb in Biggest Archaeological Find in a Century. It's The First Royal Tomb Discovered in Egypt Since King Tut

Story by Tibi Puiu



The mummified head of Thutmose II (left) and relief of Thutmose II in Karnak Temple complex. Credit: Wikimedia Commons. © ZME Science

In the shadow of Luxor's sun-baked cliffs, where the Nile's ancient whispers still echo, archaeologists have cracked open a tomb hidden for 3,500 years. Hidden beneath rubble and flood-swept silt, the long-lost tomb of King Thutmose II—a lesser-known pharaoh overshadowed by his legendary family—has finally been found.

This is the first royal burial unearthed since Tutankhamun's in 1922; one that could help archaeologists learn more about Egypt's golden age.

"This is the last missing tomb of the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty," said Dr. Mohamed Ismail Khaled, Secretary-General of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, in a statement. For over a century, archaeologists had discovered

Thutmose II's mummy but not where he was originally laid to rest. Finally, his original resting place, battered by time and water, has emerged from obscurity.

A Royal Egyptian Tomb Misplaced by History

The story of Thutmose II's tomb is one marked by confusion, mistaken identity, and natural disaster. In 2022, a joint Egyptian-British team began excavating a nondescript site west of Luxor, designated Tomb C4. Nestled near the tombs of Thutmose III's wives and Queen Hatshepsut's original burial site, it was initially thought to belong to a royal consort. But as archaeologists inched deeper, new and exciting clues overturned their assumptions.

The smoking gun was the discovery of fragments of alabaster vessels, etched with hieroglyphs naming Thutmose II as the "deceased king" and his wife, Hatshepsut. Mortar scraps bore blue engravings and yellow stars—celestial motifs from the *Book of Amduat*, a sacred text guiding pharaohs through the underworld. "These are the first funerary objects ever tied to Thutmose II," said Khaled. "No such artifacts exist in museums today."

The tomb's simple design—a plaster-lined corridor leading to a burial chamber 1.4 meters below—suggests it became a blueprint for later Eighteenth Dynasty rulers. But its grandeur was short-lived. Floods deluged the site shortly after Thutmose II's burial, forcing ancient Egyptians to relocate his funerary treasures. Only scattered fragments survived: stucco flakes from collapsed walls, jar shards, and other small ancient bits and pieces linked to Hatshepsut.



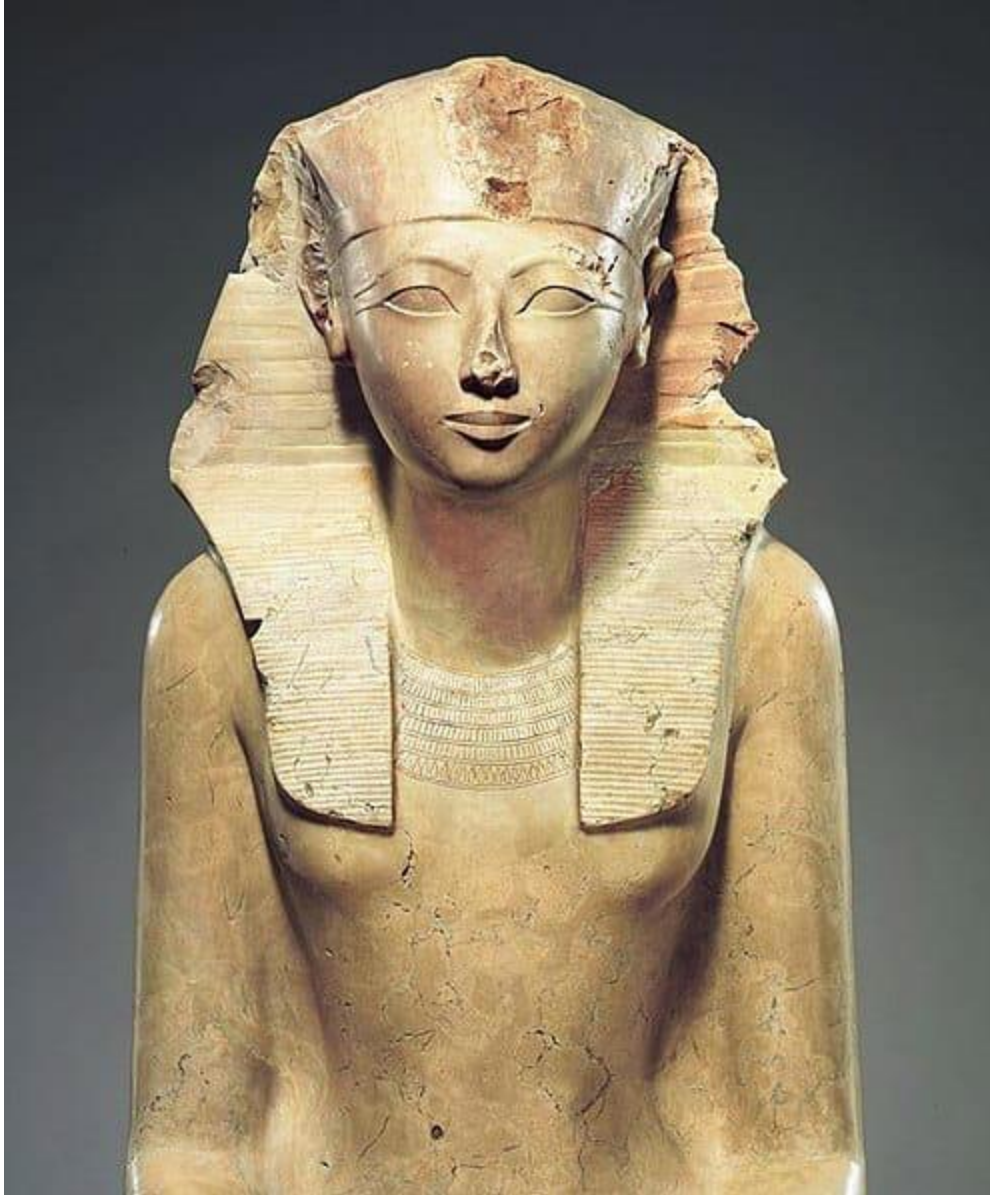
Image from inside the newly discovered original tomb of Thutmose II. Credit: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Egypt© ZME Science



Thutmose II's tomb was badly damaged by flooding. Credit: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Egypt.© ZME Science

After Thutmose II's death around 1479 BCE, his infant son, Thutmose III, inherited the throne—but true power rested in the hands of Hatshepsut, the boy's stepmother and aunt. For decades, scholars dismissed her as a mere regent keeping the seat warm for the young king. But modern research paints a bolder portrait. By Year 7 of Thutmose III's reign, Hatshepsut had shed the role of caretaker. She crowned herself pharaoh, equal in title and authority, and retroactively claimed her reign began the moment her stepson took power. Queen Hatshepsut — arguably, the only woman to have ever taken power as king in ancient Egypt during a time of prosperity and expansion,” according to historian [Kara Cooney](#) — most likely oversaw Thutmose II's burial.

She wasn't just his wife. She was his half-sister and the power behind his reign. Her fingerprints are all over this burial.



Statue of Hatshepsut on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.© ZME Science

Thutmose II ruled for just 14 years, dying before age 30. Historians often reduce him to a footnote between his father, Thutmose I; his son, Thutmose III; and Hatshepsut, who seized power as one of Egypt's rare female pharaohs. Yet the discovery of his tomb may redeem him.

"He was a pivot point," said Dr. Piers Litherland, head of the English team at the site. "His reign bridged two eras of imperial expansion." The Eighteenth Dynasty (1550–1292 BCE) marked Egypt's zenith, its pharaohs stretching the empire from Sudan to Syria. Thutmose II's brief rule saw military campaigns in Nubia and the

Levant, but his legacy was eclipsed by Hatshepsut's 21-year reign—an era of monumental building projects and trade flourishing.

Ironically, it was Hatshepsut who ensured his burial rites survived. "She anchored his place in history," said Khaled. Her name alongside his in the tomb underscores her role as both widow and successor.

Thutmose II's mummy is on display, among those of other ancient pharaohs, at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization.

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