



New Forensic Evidence Confirms Violent Death of Newly Discovered Pharaoh Senebkay

He may have led a king's life, but forensic evidence gleaned from the remains of Pharaoh Woseribre Senebkay indicates that the previously unknown Egyptian ruler had almost certainly died in battle, simultaneously attacked by several assailants.

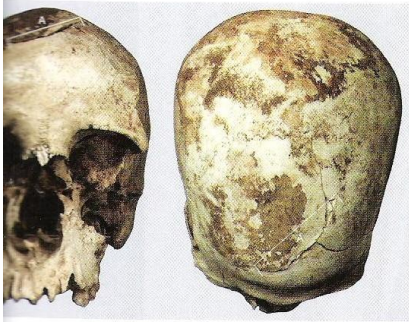
Last year, in January 2014, the Tomb of Senebkay (ca. 1650–1600 BC) was discovered at Abydos by excavators from the University of Pennsylvania Museum, working in association with Egypt's Ministry for Antiquities. The team, led by Dr. Josef Wegner of the Museum, now has completed a detailed study of Senebkay's skeleton, as well as the remains of several other kings whose tombs have been discovered nearby. The 2014-15 research is supported by the Museum, with additional support from the National Geographic Society Expeditions Council.

Above, The cartouche of King Woseribre Senebkay, from his tomb discovered at Abydos in early 2014. The sun disk & goose are glyphs reading "Son of Re."

Photo: Jennifer Wegner, Penn Museum

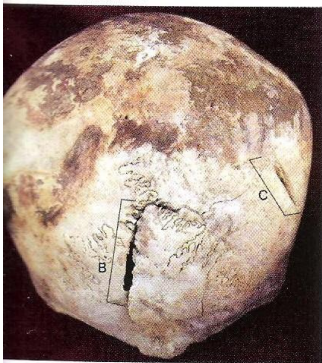
A Warrior-King

Woseribre Senebkay, who lived during the later part of Egypt's Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1650 – 1550 BC), is now the earliest pharaoh whose remains show he died in battle. Detailed analysis by Drs. Maria Rosendo and Jane Hill of Rowan University has documented an extensive array of wounds on Senebkay's skeleton, showing he died aged thirty-five to forty years of age during an attack by multiple assailants. The king's skeleton has an astounding eighteen



above, Front & top views of Woseribre Senebkay's skull, indicating the location of an arrow wound to the front of the cranium. This and two other major blows to the skull are consistent with battle axes used during the Second Intermediate Period. Below, Rear view of Senebkay's skull, indicating two axe wounds to the back of the cranium.

Photos: J. Hill, J. Wegner



At the excavation site, Penn team members excavating the burial chamber of King Woseribre Senebkay in early 2014. Sheets cover a painted wall decoration. Photo: J. Wegner, Penn Museum



The skeleton of King Woseribre Senebkay arranged on a table. The king's originally mummified body was discovered to have been ripped apart by tomb robbers.

Photo: J. Wegner, Penn Museum

wounds that penetrated to the bone. The trauma includes major cuts to his feet, ankles, knees, hands and lower back. Three blows to Senebkay's skull preserve the distinctive size and curvature of battle axes used during Egypt's Second Intermediate Period. This evidence indicates the

king died violently during a military confrontation, or in an ambush.

Emerging Role of the Horse

The patterns of wounds to Senebkay's body suggest he was attacked while in an elevated position relative to his assailants, quite possibly mounted on horseback. Another surprising result



Traumas to the skeleton of Woseribre Senebkay, back view

Both schematics: J. Hill

kay's opponents were. Possibly he was killed in battle fighting against the Hyksos rulers, who at that time governed northern Egypt from their capital at Avaris in the Nile Delta. However, Senebkay may have been brought down in struggles against enemies in the south of Egypt. Historical records dating to Senebkay's lifetime record at least one attempted invasion of Upper Egypt by a large military force from Nubia to the south.

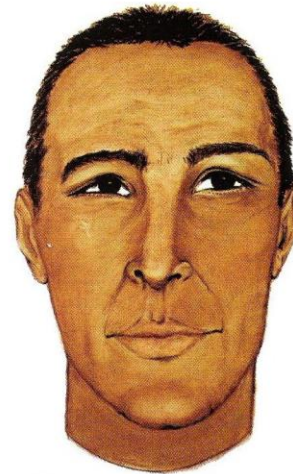
Alternatively, Senebkay may have had other political opponents, possibly kings based at Waset (Thebes).

Who Was Woseribre Senebkay? Tombs of seven other kings have now been excavated at Abydos, opening a new window onto one of ancient Egypt's most-obscure periods. It appears probable that Senebkay and these other rulers form a previously unknown short-lived dynasty who chose Abydos as their burial ground.

Continued excavations of the Penn Museum researchers, in collaboration with the National Geographic Society, hopes to shed light on Woseribre Senebkay and the other kings buried near him.

Abydos and the Penn Museum Penn Museum scholars have been excavating at the site of Abydos since 1967, as part of the Pennsylvania-Yale-Institute of Fine Arts/NYU Expedition to Abydos — located on the western side of the Nile in Upper Egypt. Abydos was a religious center associated with the veneration of the funerary-god Osiris. Dr. Josef Wegner has been excavating at the site of Abydos since 1994. Excavations in the area of South Abydos have revealed a thriving royal cult-center that developed around the subterranean tomb of Twelfth Dynasty pharaoh Senwosret III, located at the area called Anubis Mountain, where Senebkay's and other Second Intermediate Period tombs have been found.

Adapted from U. Penn press release



Facial reconstruction of King Senebkay, based on detailed cranial study by Mireya Poblete Arias. Analysis of the king's skeleton shows that he died at 35-40 years of age.