

# The strange archaeological discoveries

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The screaming mummies



In 1886, Gaston Maspero, the head of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, was doing like he do - just taking mummies out of their sarcophagi, unwrapping them, dictating all kinds of boring notes - when he came across an unusually plain burial box. Unlike the kings and queens he'd been working with for most of his career, this particular box didn't give any information as to the identity of the stiff inside. Even stranger, the body was wrapped in sheepskin, which was considered unclean by ancient Egyptians. When he finally uncovered it, Gaston also found that the corpse's hands and feet had been bound for some unspeakable reason. And then, as he slowly panned his gaze upward -- presumably while violins screeched out a dramatic, building score -- he found this screaming, undead face looking back at him:



Because of the strange coverings, the bound hands and the seemingly tortured expression, experts theorized that the body (creatively named Unknown Man E) had been poisoned, buried alive or otherwise tortured before his untimely death. Now that we've done extensive studies on mummification and seen quite a few more intact examples, however, we understand how silly that theory was. Not because the "screaming mummy" was just a fluke, but because *they're all screaming all the time*. If the jaw isn't strapped shut when a body is mummified, it naturally falls open during the process of decay, leaving a permanent "scream."



"Not without my makeup!"

Sorry not sorry.

# The screaming mummies



Thanks for your attention.



Photograph by Vincent J. Miller