Discoveries in Egypt Stir a Bitter Rivalry
By KENNETT LOVESpecial to The New York Times.
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pg. 1

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CAIRO, June 4—Two important archaeological discoveries in ten days have caused a controversy over their relative merits.

The first discovery was made by Kamal el-Malakh, director of works for the Department of Antiquities at the Giza pyramids and in Lower Egypt. The 34-year-old Egyptologist and architect found one and probably two solar boats of the night built by Pharaoh Cheops forty-seven centuries ago and sealed in limestone bedrock beside his Great Pyramid at Giza.

The boat, photographed yesterday by this correspondent, was intended to carry Cheops on a celestial journey with the sun god Ra through the underworld. It is the first solar boat ever found intact and its collection of furniture would be the first ever

Continued on Page 3, Column 2

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Egyptian Discoveries Touch Off Bitter Rivalry

Continued From Page 1

found belonging to Cheops, whose pyramid temples and three other boat chambers were stripped by robbers perhaps thousands of years ago.

The second major discovery was made by Mohammed Zakaria Ghoneim, chief inspector of antiquities and director of excavations at Sakkara, on the edge of the Western Desert, twenty miles south of Cairo. After two years' work, he penetrated on Monday what appeared to be an untouched royal burial chamber of the Third Dynasty, which preceded Cheops'.

This find received greater attention today as a group of newspaper men visited the scene. They were guided down a long subterranean corridor near the entrance of the burial chamber, which lay beneath the center of a recently discovered unfinished step-pyramid.

If the chamber, which contains a sealed alabaster sarcophagus, is what it appears to be to leading scholars, it will be the first unplundered king's tomb dating before the Late Kingdom ever found.

Meanwhile, Mr. el-Malakh, who is suspicious that his senior rivals will attempt to wrest control of the boat find from him, is seeking support in military circles.

With the Sakkara discovery, which is unquestionably important, those who did not know how to halt the rise of Mr. el-Malakh and his identification with what eminent neutral scholars say is one of the most important finds ever made in Egypt are apparently seeking to reduce the Giza sensation by playing up the Sakkara accomplishment.

Eighty laborers continued to work at Sakkara through the three-day Feast of Bairam. They concentrated on clearing a corridor leading to the burial chamber down which the correspondents walked today. Elsewhere in Egypt, including the Giza pyramids, activity has been at a standstill during the Bairam fete, which ends tonight.

In an interview Mr. Ghoneim said the sarcophagus likely contained the remains of Sankhet, also called Nebka, son of Zoser, who built the famous step-pyramid adjoining the new discovery. He said this was the only pyramid with an intact tomb to have been found and that it definitely belonged to the Third Dynasty of Pharaohs.

He said he could open the sarcophagus tonight, but preferred to wait for the formal opening.

A respected archaeologist, Mr. Ghoneim said there had been nothing accidental about his discovery. Asked about the significance of the solar boats, he commented:

"Accidental or not, the discovery of the first intact solar boats is very important. Their meaning, however, is already known from texts of a later period, and knowledge of the solar boats will not be increased by objects in the boats themselves.

"There are never religious texts in boats, only dedicatory, and absolutely no payri. Boats are not a place for papyri. Their place is in tombs. I doubt there will be a statue of the king in the boats, and I doubt there will even be furniture inside

"I want to stress that the Sakkara tomb of a king of the Third Dynasty is something completely different and will shed light on an obscure period.

Replying to these comments, Mr. el-Malakh expressed regret that "jealously had blinded him [Mr. Ghoneim] to the facts. Noting that Mr. Ghoneim had not looked at the boats, he said that models had been found in funerary chambers of a later period that had contained statues of kings. He held it was inconceivable that the Cheops boat would not contain a statue.

The Sakkara discovery is an important one, Mr. el-Malakh conceded, but he held that the boats were of equal if not greater importance.

These are the positions taken by the central figures of the controversy, around whom rival coteries of scholars are gathering to the misfortune of both highly creditable finds.

Virtually all major archeological discoveries evoke heated disputes, but the present case, in which the two finds are only ten miles apart, promises to become the most spectacular controversy yet.

Government architects in the department have already criticized the technical end of the Sakkara excavations, in which a workman was killed earlier this year, while others have protested the "deleterious" reopenings of the Giza Corridor.



Associated Press Radiophoto

Dr. Mohammed Zakaria Ghoneim, left, inspects what may be the oldest intact royal tomb ever found in Egypt. Workman holds light on it amid ruins of a step pyramid in Sakkara.



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Giza and Sakkara (cross) are vying for pre-eminence as archaeological sites.

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