

The Pharaoh



During the Twelfth Dynasty Senwosret III, or “Khakure”, reigned for thirty-nine years (1870 - 1831 BC). This was the golden age of the Middle Kingdom. As pharaoh he led his people to great military victories that expanded Egypt’s borders farther than ever before. As such a revered leader, 1500 years later he was known to the Greeks as the deity *Senusert*.

According to ancient customs, by ensuring that their pharaoh repeated his life in afterworld, the populous

ensured repetition of their own lives as well. So, it should come as no surprise that when their beloved pharaoh died, no expense was spared.



Unfortunately, the pharaoh’s pyramid was a target for looting and grave robbing over the millennia. Yet, the excavations in AD 1894 revealed great finds, including several boats: transportation for the afterlife.



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The Excavation

In 1894-1895 J.J de Morgan, then Director-General of Antiquities in Egypt, excavated Senwosret III's pyramid complex at Dahshur. The complex yielded one of the most valuable treasure hoards ever found in Egypt.



J.J. de Morgan 1895, plate XXXI

In his excavation report, de Morgan mapped five boats while noting that he sent two to the museum in Cairo. Today, these boats remain on display as they have for over 100 years.

The Importance

The inclusion of boats in the burial goods of such a powerful king underscores necessity of watercraft in ancient Egypt. With the current flowing north and winds blowing south, the Nile River was a perfect natural highway.

Today, only four of the “Dahshur boats” can be located; two are in the USA, one each in the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh and the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago.

The comparison of these boats provides a rare opportunity in archaeology and has contributed to a better understanding of ancient ships and the societies that built them.

Background image after de Morgan 1895, *Faoules à Dahshour*, plate XXXII