

New ancient Egypt temples discovered in Sinai

April 21 2009, By HADEEL AL-SHALCHI , Associated Press Writer



This undated hand out picture released Tuesday April 21, 2009, by Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities shows Pharaonic King Ramses II, right and Geb, god of earth, carved on a wall at one of four recently unearthed new temples in Qantara amidst the 3,000-year-old remains of an ancient fortified city that could have been used to impress foreign delegations visiting Egypt, antiquities authorities announced Tuesday April 21, 2009. (AP Photo/Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities)

(AP) -- Archaeologists exploring an old military road in the Sinai have unearthed four new temples amidst the 3,000-year-old remains of an ancient fortified city that could have been used to impress foreign delegations visiting Egypt, antiquities authorities announced Tuesday.

Among the discoveries was the largest mud brick temple found in the Sinai with an area of 70 by 80 meters (77 by 87 yards) and fortified with

mud walls 3 meters (10 feet) thick, said Zahi Hawass, chief of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities.

The find was made in Qantara, 2 1/2 miles (4 kilometers) east of the Suez Canal. These temples mark the latest discovery by [archaeologists](#) digging up the remains of the city on the military road known as "Way of Horus." Horus is a falcon-headed god, who represented the greatest cosmic powers for [ancient Egyptians](#).

The path once connected Egypt to Palestine and is close to present-day Rafah, which borders the Palestinian territory of Gaza.

Archaeologist Mohammed Abdel-Maqsoud, chief of the excavation team, said the large brick temple could potentially rewrite the historical and military significance of the Sinai for the ancient Egyptians.

The temple contains four hallways, three stone purification bowls and colorful inscriptions commemorating Ramses I and II. The grandeur and sheer size of the temple could have been used to impress armies and visiting foreign delegations as they arrived in Egypt, authorities said.

The dig has been part of a joint project with the Culture Ministry that started in 1986 to find fortresses along the military road. Hawass said early studies suggested the fortified city had been Egypt's military headquarters from the New Kingdom (1569-1081 B.C.) until the Ptolemaic era, a period lasting about 1500 years.

In a previous find, archaeologists there reported finding the first ever New Kingdom temple to be found in northern Sinai. Studies indicated the temple was built on top of an 18th Dynasty fort (1569-1315 B.C.).

Last year, a collection of reliefs belonging to King Ramses II and King Seti I (1314-1304 B.C.) were also unearthed along with rows of

warehouses used by the ancient Egyptian army during the New Kingdom era to store wheat and weapons.

Abdel-Maqsoud said the fortified city corresponded to the inscriptions of the Way of Horus found on the walls of the Karnak Temple in Luxor which illustrated the features of 11 military fortresses that protected Egypt's eastern borders. Only five of them have been discovered to date.

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