

Egypt announces find of ancient cat goddess temple

January 19 2010, By HAMZA HENDAWI , Associated Press Writer



This undated photo released Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2010, by Egypt's supreme council of antiquities shows the ancient cat-goddess Bastet found amongst the temple's ruins in the Kom el-Dekkah area of the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria. Egypt says its archaeologists have unearthed a Ptolemaic temple dating back more than 2,000 years and which may have been dedicated to the ancient cat-goddess Bastet. (AP Photo/EGYPT'S SUPREME COUNCIL OF ANTIQUITIES, HO)
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(AP) -- Archaeologists have unearthed a 2,000-year-old temple that may have been dedicated to the ancient Egyptian cat goddess, Bastet, the Supreme Council of Antiquities said Tuesday.

The ruins of the Ptolemaic-era temple were discovered by Egyptian [archaeologists](#) in the heart of the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great in the 4th century B.C.

The city was the seat of the Greek-speaking Ptolemaic Dynasty, which ruled over Egypt for 300 years until the suicide of Queen Cleopatra.

The statement said the temple was thought to belong to Queen Berenice, wife of King Ptolemy III who ruled [Egypt](#) in the 3rd century B.C.

Mohammed Abdel-Maqsood, the Egyptian archaeologist who led the excavation team, said the discovery may be the first trace of the long-sought location of Alexandria's royal quarter.

The large number of statues depicting Bastet found in the ruins, he said, suggested that this may be the first Ptolemaic-era temple dedicated to the cat goddess to be discovered in Alexandria.

This would indicate that the worship of the ancient Egyptian cat-goddess continued during the later, Greek-influenced, Ptolemaic period, he said.

Statues of other ancient Egyptian deities were also found in the ruins, he added.

Zahi Hawass, Egypt's chief archaeologist, said the temple may have been used in later times as a quarry as evidenced by the large number of missing stone blocks.

Modern Alexandria was built squarely on top of the ruins of the classical-era city and many of its great temples, palaces and libraries remain undiscovered.

The [temple](#) was found in the Kom el-Dekkah neighborhood near the city's main train station and home to a Roman-era amphitheater and well preserved mosaics.

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