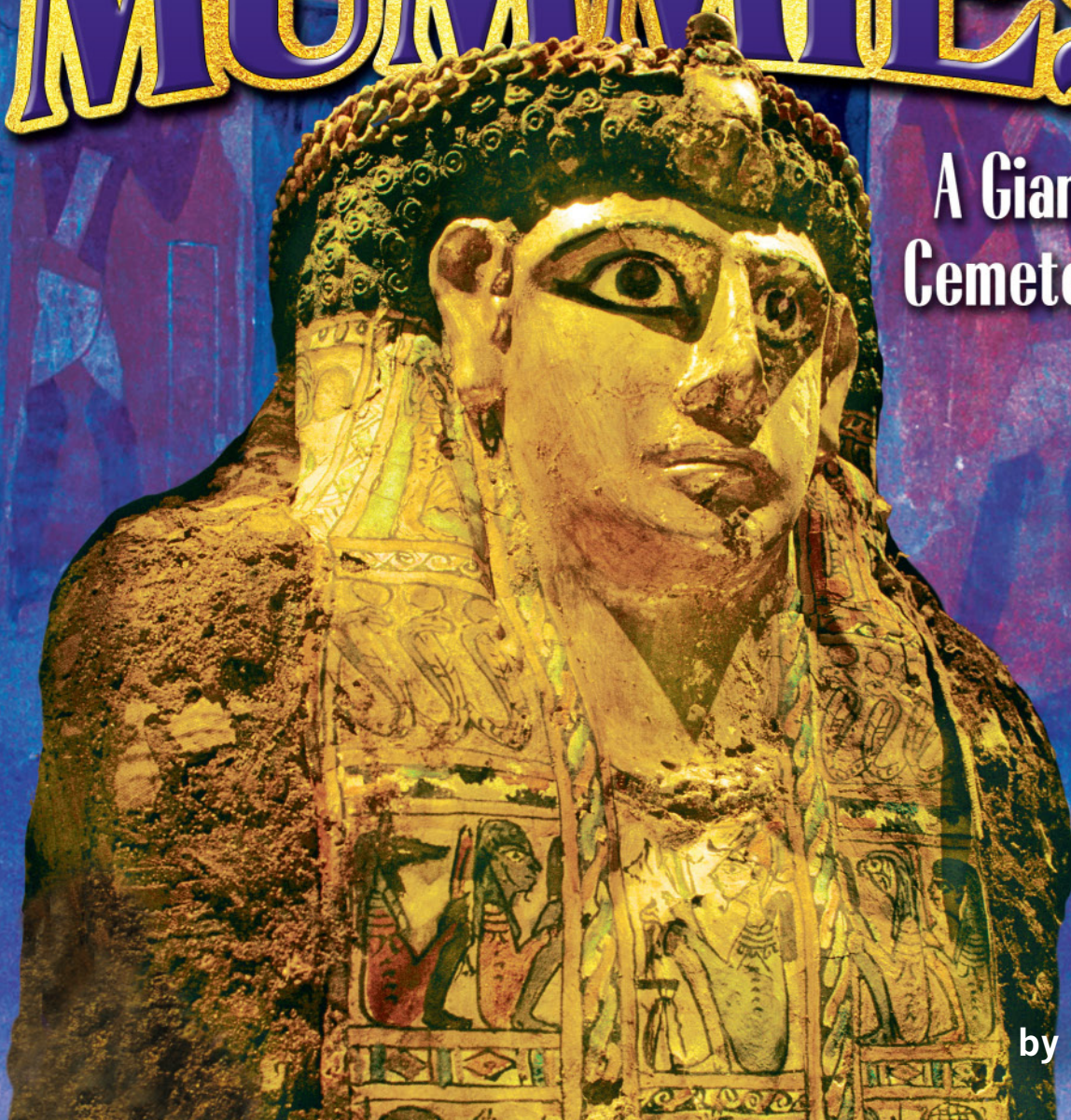




VALLEY OF THE GOLDEN MUMMIES

A Giant
Cemetery



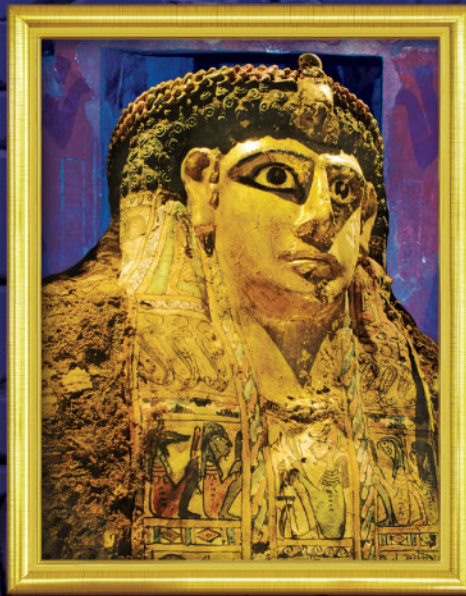
by Ruth Owen

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VALLEY OF THE GOLDEN MUMMIES

A Giant Cemetery



by Ruth Owen

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Eyes in the Sand

It was March 2, 1996. **Archaeologist** Zahi Hawass was **excavating** a skeleton in the Egyptian desert. Suddenly, two coworkers interrupted him. “We have found beautiful mummies,” they said. At first, Hawass thought the men were joking. However, as they began describing the discovery, Hawass put down his tools and listened carefully.

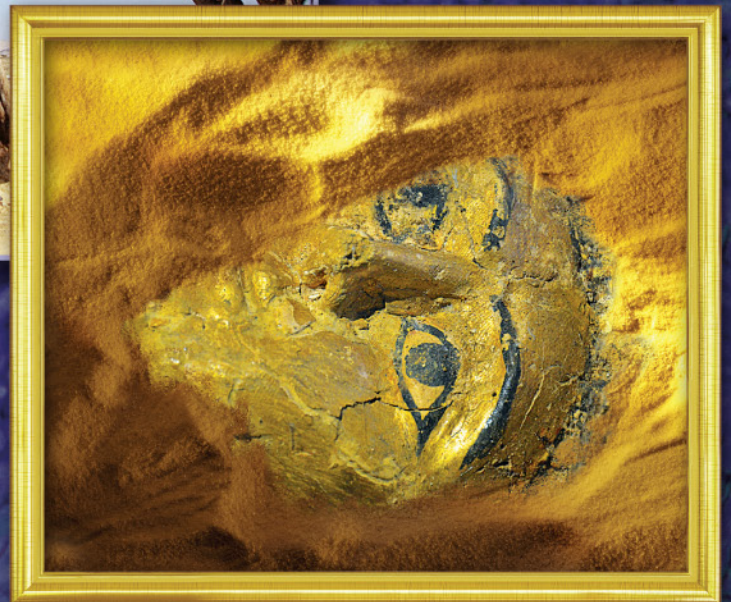


A human skeleton
buried in sand

According to the workers, a local man named Abdul Maugoud had been riding his donkey in a desert valley near the Bahariya Oasis. All of a sudden, the animal stumbled into a hole. When Abdul looked down, he saw a shiny yellow face with lifelike eyes staring back at him. He had found an ancient Egyptian **tomb** containing a golden **mummy**!



Abdul Maugoud, who discovered the gold-covered mummy, with his donkey



An oasis is a place where underground water rises to the surface. The water allows trees and other plants to grow in a hot, dry desert. People often build villages around an oasis.

A Desert Cemetery

Hawass and his team rushed to investigate the discovery near the oasis. They soon confirmed that a huge ancient Egyptian **cemetery** was located there. Many tombs had been cut into the desert rock. Then, over the centuries, they had filled with sand and disappeared from view.

Hawass estimated that the cemetery was the size of about 2,000 football fields!



A modern-day farm at the Bahariya Oasis

The Bahariya Oasis is about 260 miles (418 km) from Cairo, Egypt's capital city.

In 1999, Hawass and his team began excavating the first tomb they had found. As the archaeologists dug down into the sand, they found eight steps leading to a small room. Beyond this room, the team unearthed two burial chambers—both packed with mummies!



Zahi Hawass

One of the excavated burial chambers

Mummies