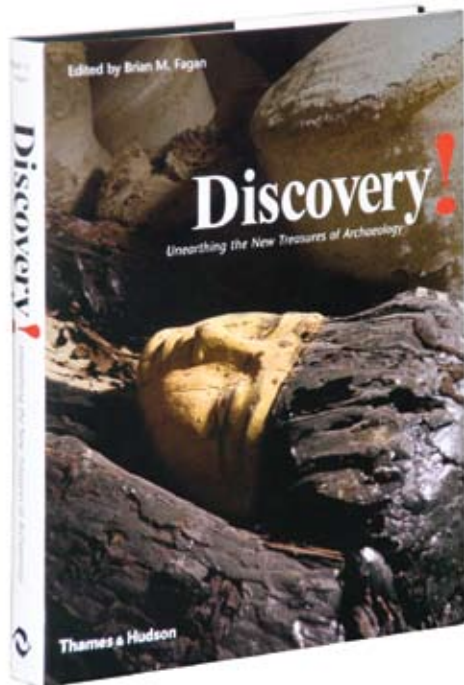


BOOKS

15 Years of Tombs and Test Pits



Few people experience a thrill like the one Zahi Hawass got when he climbed deep into the bedrock of the Valley of the Kings and peered through a tiny hole into an undisturbed tomb chamber containing coffins and pottery jars hidden for more than 3,000 years. But armchair archaeologists everywhere can enjoy 15 years worth of the most important “a-ha!” moments in **Discovery! Unearthing the New Treasures of Archaeology** (Thames & Hudson Inc., \$40). “More archaeological discoveries have been made in the past 15 years than since Victorian times,” says archaeologist Brian Fagan, the book’s editor. He attributes the boost to an increasing number of archaeologists and improving technology.

Most of the book is written by the discoverers themselves. Readers accompany Johan Reinhard and Constanza Ceruti as they climb to the summit of Llullaillaco, a volcano on the border of Chile and Argentina, and stare into the frozen face of a six-year-old Inca girl, who appears to be peacefully sleeping.

But not all of the discoveries take place on archaeological sites. The reconstruction of Neanderthal DNA and the discovery that a 9,000-year-old Chinese jar held the earliest-known alcoholic beverage (“Tapping into the Past and Dreading the Hangover,” November/December 2007) show that some of the most important finds take place in the laboratory, long after the excavation trenches have been filled.

—SARA GOUDARZI

TELEVISION

The Skeleton Sleuth

Scotty Moore is the latest archaeologist to don the Indiana Jones fedora and venture into the wilds of television documentaries in the new series **Bone Detectives** (Discovery Channel, Mondays 10:00 p.m.). The program explores how modern forensic and archaeological techniques are used to unravel the stories of people made anonymous long ago.

Moore, a Ph.D. candidate in archaeology at the University of Washington, journeys around the globe to sites like a cave in Belize known as “Midnight Terror” that holds a Maya mass grave. Moore’s eyes shimmer in the light of his headlamp and his grin widens as he approaches a pile of skeletal remains. “It’s like bone soup,” he enthuses.

Given its technical subject matter,

the show has the potential to baffle audiences with complex science. Moore, however, does a great job of weaving historical facts into the series and providing enough scientific information to put the finds in their proper cultural contexts. In the Belize episode, for example, he points to both the presence of stone blades in the cave and climate data as evidence that people were probably sacrificed at Midnight Terror to appease the Maya rain god during a severe drought around A.D. 750.

Moore’s appeal comes from his goofy candor and refusal to dumb-down the subject matter. It’s rare to find someone who provides intelli-



gent commentary in a TV series that is also extremely entertaining. I can’t wait to see where he takes us next. My bullwhip is already packed.

—ETI BONN-MULLER