WERE SERVANTS SACRIFICED WHEN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN KINGS DIED?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A new study has reopened a disturbing question about the first kings of Egypt. At Umm el-Qa'ab, a royal cemetery near Abydos, hundreds of people were buried close to the tombs of rulers from around 3000 BC. These people may have been court officials, craftspeople and servants who were expected to continue serving the king in the afterlife. For more than a century, historians have argued about whether they were killed or died naturally before being buried. Researchers have now examined the skulls of 46 people from the cemetery. Eighteen showed signs of serious injuries, including fractures that may have happened shortly before death. One skull had an injury near the eye. The evidence suggests that at least some of the people may have been violently killed, although the researchers warn that the sample is small and cannot answer every question. The practice appears to have ended early in Egyptian history, when statues began to replace living servants in royal burials.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

This discovery shows how new scientific methods can change ideas that historians have debated for generations. It also gives a more complicated picture of ancient Egypt. Royal tombs were not only about impressive buildings and famous pharaohs. They may also reveal the fear, power and violence experienced by ordinary people who lived under a king.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

"What can these injuries tell us about royal power in ancient Egypt?"

Source: The Guardian

https://www.theguardian.com/science/2026/oct/05/skull-fractures-suggest-servants-of-egypts-ancient-kings-were-sacrificed