



Name:

Date:

The Mysterious Mummies

Mummies are the preserved bodies of people who have died. The most famous mummies are those of ancient Egypt, but mummies are found in many other cultures as well. Some of these mummies are ones that have been created on purpose. There are other mummies, however, that have been created by chance, usually through extreme dryness. One area where many such natural mummies have been found is the Taklamakan Desert in the Xinjiang region of China.

The extreme dryness of the desert climate means that these mummies are exceptionally well preserved. Their hair, skin and clothes are almost the same as when the people died over 3,000 years ago. However, the mummies have one very surprising characteristic - they all look as though they came from Europe. One of the oldest mummies discovered in Xinjiang, for example, is known as Yingpan Man. He has blond hair and a beard, and he is wearing a death mask similar to those used in ancient Greece. Another mummy, Cherchen Man, is 6 feet tall, has red hair and wears clothes that are unlike anything worn in the area. Instead, they are similar to those worn by the Celtic people in ancient Europe.

There have been a number of theories as to how these European - looking people ended up in China. With the development of DNA testing techniques, however results are becoming more accurate. In 2007, a team from the National Geographic Society took samples of DNA from a group of mummies and started to analyze them. Their first results suggested that the mummies or their ancestors came from a variety of places - Europe, the Middle East and the Indus Valley in India and Pakistan.

Victor Mair, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, has been studying the mummies for many years. He believes that the earliest settlers in the Taklamakan Desert were Western people who moved there 5,000 years ago. It was only about 2,000 years ago that East Asians reached the area. According to Mair, this shows that the early development of Chinese civilization may have been more influenced by the West than has traditionally been believed.

34. What is true about mummies?

- a. They are often created for the purpose of preserving a certain culture.
 - b. Techniques for making them spread from ancient Egypt to other countries.
 - c. Most have been found in the Taklamakan Desert area of China.
 - d. Some have been created naturally as a result of environmental conditions.
-



Name:

Date:

The Mysterious Mummies

2. What is surprising about the mummies found in the Xinjiang region of China?
 - a. They have skin that has changed dramatically over the years.
 - b. They had become mummies 3,000 years earlier than scientists originally thought.
 - c. Their appearance is different from people who currently live in the area.
 - d. Their clothes were too thick and heavy to be worn in a desert area.

3. The National Geographic Society found that
 - a. the ancestors of most Chinese people originally came from the Indus Valley.
 - b. the DNA of the mummies had come from a number of places outside of China.
 - c. many European looking people have DNA that comes from China.
 - d. most of the mummies were created in the Middle East and later moved to China.

4. What does Victor Mair believe about the Taklamakan Desert area?
 - a. The first people to live there originally came from another place.
 - b. The first civilization was developed 2,000 years ago by East Asians in the area.
 - c. The Western people who moved there 5,000 years ago took the land from East Asians.
 - d. The Chinese were responsible for developing its early culture.

5. Which of the following statements is true?
 - a. The National Geographic Society went to India and Pakistan to collect DNA from mummies.
 - b. Cherchen Man is wearing clothes that are different from what would be expected.
 - c. Mair says that Western civilization was influenced by Chinese civilization.
 - d. Famous mummies from ancient Egypt were shown at an exhibition in China.