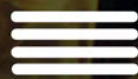
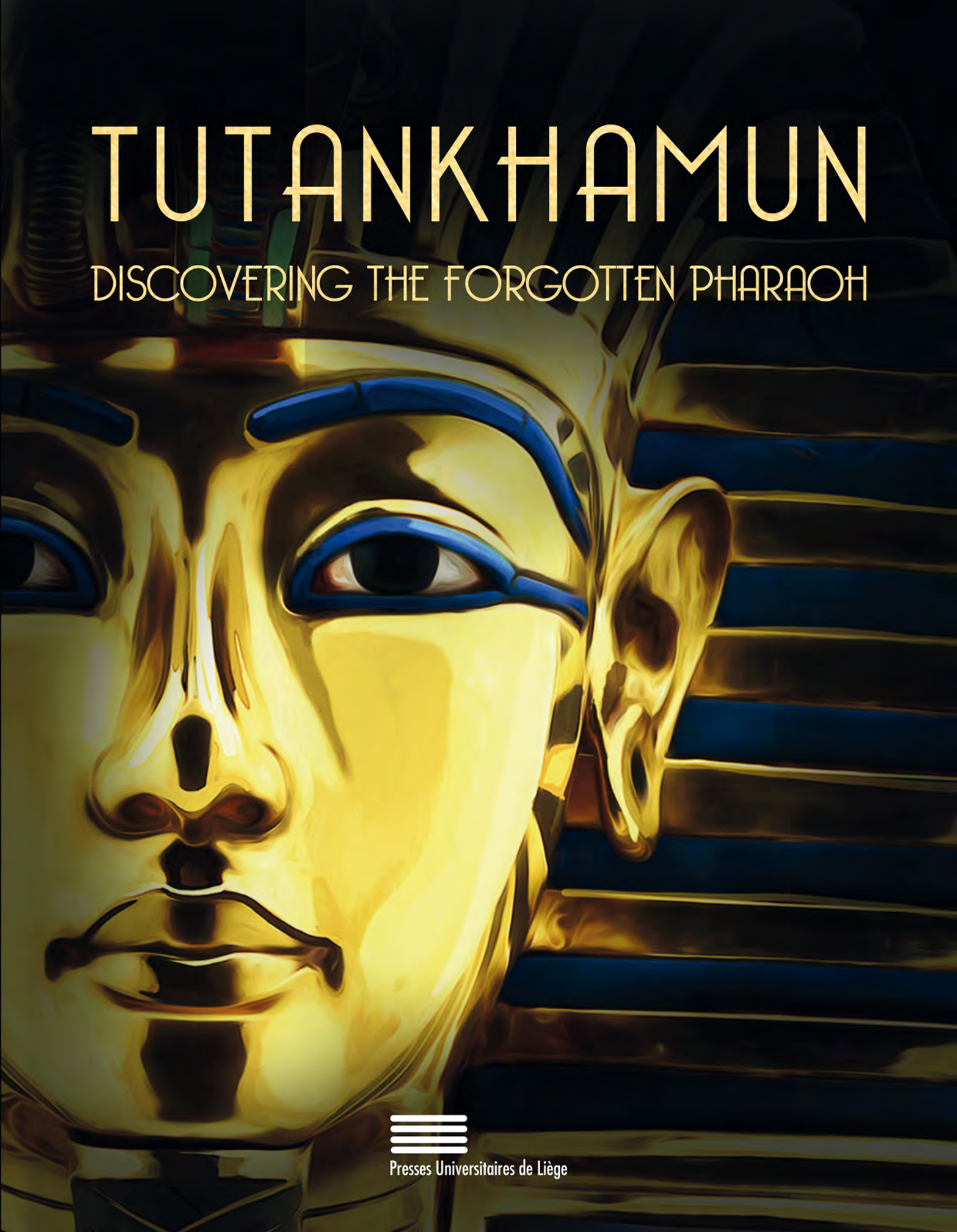


TUTANKHAMUN

DISCOVERING THE FORGOTTEN PHARAOH



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TUTANKHAMUN
DISCOVERING THE FORGOTTEN PHARAOH

Catalogue edited by

Simon CONNOR and Dimitri LABOURY

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Agostinho da Cunha, untimely seized by the Abductor, as ancient Egyptians called it.

Table of Contents

THE EXHIBITION	15
Tutankhamun. Discovering the Forgotten Pharaoh [Simon CONNOR, Dimitri LABOURY, Alain MAGER and René SCHYNS]	16
Behind the Scenes: How to Set up an Exhibition [ALIX NYSSSEN].....	22
Replicas on Display [Simon CONNOR and Eid MERTAH].....	24
THE CARTER ADVENTURE	31
The Discovery of Tutankhamun’s Tomb [Dimitri LABOURY]	32
Carter’s Palette [Hugues TAVIER].....	38
Tutankhamun’s Tomb: The Exception or the Rule? [Dimitri LABOURY]	42
Reconstructing the Tomb: Copying as a Method of Technical and Scientific Learning [Hugues TAVIER].....	48
Photography and the Media at the Tomb of Tutankhamun [Christina RIGGS]	52
Carter’s Papers and the Archaeological Record of Tutankhamun’s Tomb at the Griffith Institute, University of Oxford [Francisco BOSCH-PUSCHE, Elizabeth FLEMMING, Cat WARSI and Anne-Claire SALMAS]	62
Buying and Selling Tutankhamun [Tom HARDWICK]	68
THE TREASURE	73
A True Icon: Tutankhamun’s Gold Mask [Katja BROCHAT and Christian ECKMANN]	74
The Artist Who Created the Most Famous Funerary Mask in the World? [Dimitri LABOURY]	76
The Throne of Tutankhamun [Dominique FAROUT]	78
Beauty in Detail. Glass from the Tomb of Tutankhamun [Katja BROCHAT].....	82
Boxes and Coffrets [Christian LOEBEN]	86
Sticks and Staves [André J. VELDMEIJER and Salima IKRAM].....	90
Brothers-In-Arms. The Two Daggers of the Tomb [Katja BROCHAT, Eid MERTAH and Christian ECKMANN]	94
Weaponry [André J. VELDMEIJER and Salima IKRAM].....	98
Chariots [André J. VELDMEIJER].....	102
The Gold-Sheet Appliqués of Tutankhamun’s Tomb [Katja BROCHAT and Christian ECKMANN]	106
Almost Friends. The Ancient Near East in the Tutankhamun Era [Vera E. ALLEN]	110
Tutankhamun and the Land of the Bow. Egyptian-Nubian Relations during the Eighteenth Dynasty [Faïza DRICI].....	116

THE PROTAGONISTS	121
Amenhotep III [Christian BAYER]	122
Tiye [Christian BAYER].....	122
Akhenaten [Dimitri LABOURY]	124
Nefertiti [Dimitri LABOURY].....	124
Meritaten [Dimitri LABOURY]	125
Ankhesenamun [Dimitri LABOURY].....	126
Tutankhamun [Dimitri LABOURY]	127
Ay [Dimitri LABOURY]	128
Horemheb [Dimitri LABOURY]	129
Focus: Plaquette Featuring Akhenaten, Nefertiti and Two of Their Daughters [Dimitri LABOURY]	131
 AMARNA OR THE KING’S CHILDHOOD.....	 133
The City of Akhetaten: Amarna [Robert VERGNIEUX]	134
Focus: A Fragment of Face, Royal Museums of Art and History [Héloïse DEPLUVREZ].....	137
Focus: Head of a Princess, Fitzwilliam Museum [Dimitri LABOURY]	138
<i>Talatats</i> Blocks [Robert VERGNIEUX].....	140
Focus: A Royal Behind [Tom HARDWICK]	143
Focus: A <i>Talatat</i> Block Showing a Group of Royal Nurses [W. Raymond JOHNSON]	144
Statuary from the Great Aten Temple [Harsha HILL]	146
Focus: A Statue Torso, University of Tübingen [Dimitri LABOURY].....	148
Focus: Fragment of the Face of a Statue of Akhenaten [Dimitri LABOURY]	150
Focus: Arm Fragment of a Colossal Statue of Nefertiti [Dimitri LABOURY]	152
Focus: Wrist Fragment of a Royal Statue [Dimitri LABOURY].....	153
The Reproduction of an Amarna Palace Room [Hugues TAVIER]	154
The Workshop of the Sculptor Thutmose: “In the Studio of an Artist” [Dimitri LABOURY]	156
The Reconstruction of a Sculptor’s Workshop [Hugues TAVIER]	161
“The Beautiful One Has Come.” The Creation of Nefertiti’s Perfect Portrait [Dimitri LABOURY]	162
On Atenist “Realism”. Virtual Reality, the Ancient Egyptian Way [Dimitri LABOURY]	166

LIVING AT THE COURT OF TUTANKHAMUN.....171

Life at Pharaoh’s Court [Claudia VENIER]	172
Focus: Mechanical Toy in the Shape of a Dog, Metropolitan Museum of Art [Dimitri LABOURY].....	176
“Show Me Your Chair, I’ll Tell You Who You Are.” Palace Furniture [Claudia VENIER]	178
Tutankhamun’s Pottery [Tom HARDWICK]	186
Focus: Two Mycenaean Greek Pottery ‘Stirrup Jars’, Manchester Museum [Claudia VENIER].....	190
Focus: Two Fragments of Ceramics with Hathoric Figures [Alisée DEVILLERS].....	191
Glass Production in the Amarna Period [Paul NICHOLSON]	192
The Basketry [André VELDMEIJER and Salima IKRAM]	196
Focus: Lot of Baskets [Alisée DEVILLERS].....	199
Eating at the Court of Tutankhamun or Feasting with the King. What Did Tutankhamun Eat? [Salima IKRAM]	200
Tutankhamun’s Wine Cellar [Pierre TALLET]	204
Tutankhamun’s Linen [Nagm HAMZA]	208
Tutankhamun’s Gloves [Dominique FAROUT and Amandine MÉRAT]	214
Sandals and Shoes [André VELDMEIJER]	218
Looking Good in the Time of Tutankhamun [Guillemette ANDREU-LANOË]	222
Enchanted Trumpets [Sibylle EMERIT]	228
Some Musical Peculiarities of the Amarna Era [Sibylle EMERIT].....	232

RELIGION AND POLITICS.....237

Aten vs Amun. Religious Politics and Political Religion under Tutankhamun and His Father, Akhenaten [Dimitri LABOURY].....	238
Focus: Two <i>Talatats</i> Representing Nefertiti Praying [Jacquelyn WILLIAMSON].....	244
Popular Devotion in Amarna [Alisée DEVILLERS]	246
Focus: Two Moulds for Amulets Showing Dwarfish Figures [Alisée DEVILLERS].....	248
Focus: Mould for an Amulet in the Shape of Taweret [Alisée DEVILLERS]	249
The Spectrum of Belief. Amulets in the Time of Tutankhamun [Tom HARDWICK].....	250
The Life, Lives, and Death of Images [Simon CONNOR]	254
After Amarna. Restoring the Cult of Amun [Marianne EATON-KRAUSS].....	260

DEATH COMES AS THE END	269
The King Is Dead! CSI Biban el-Moluk [Angelique CORTHALS].....	270
Suffering from Malaria in the Age of Tutankhamun [Bernard LALANNE]	273
Mosquitos in Egypt [Stéphane POLIS].....	275
The Chromosomes of Tutankhamun [Marc GABOLDE].....	276
The King’s Funeral [Alisée DEVILLERS]	282
Tutankhamun’s Tomb, or the First Botanical Reference Collection in Egyptology [Gersande ESCHENBRENNER-DIEMER].....	286
Reconstructing Tutankhamun’s Floral Collars. Some Lessons from an Experiment in Flowers [Jean-Lou STEFAN]	289
The Looting of Tombs in the Valley of the Kings [Susanne BICKEL]	290
Papyrus Leopold II-(Amherst). An Ancient Investigation into the Plundering of the Theban Necropolis [Stéphane POLIS]	294
Focus: A Funerary Deity in Gilded Cartonnage [Tom HARDWICK].....	298
Focus: Canopic Vases with the Name of Ipy [Dimitri LABOURY]	300
RESURRECTING TUTANKHAMUN	303
“King Tut” and the Worldwide <i>Tut-mania</i> [Jean-Marcel HUMBERT].....	304
A Queen, an Egyptologist and a Pharaoh [Jean-Michel BRUFFAERTS]	310
Welcome to Tutankhamun’s! A Belgian Touch of Egyptomania in the Roaring Twenties [Jean-Michel BRUFFAERTS].....	314
Belgians Cursed by Tutankhamun [Jean-Michel BRUFFAERTS].....	318
Tutankhamun and Akhenaten at the Musée du Cinquantenaire [Luc DELVAUX].....	322
Tutankhamun. The Man behind the Mask [Simon CONNOR and Dimitri LABOURY]	326
BIBLIOGRAPHY	328



The Carter Adventure

Dimitri LABOURY

Tutankhamun's Tomb: The Exception or the Rule?

On November 24, 1922, after he had finished clearing the entrance to Tutankhamun's tomb, Howard Carter, who had just been rejoined by his patron, Lord Carnarvon, already knew that the hypogeum he was about to open had been broken into and resealed twice during antiquity. In light of the several objects and fragments still lying in front of the walled-up door, the two men feared that they had not discovered the untouched burial of the elusive king they had been searching for since 1915, but rather a looted and modestly sized cache, comparable to that of Tomb 55 in the Valley of the Kings, excavated by Theodore M. Davis and his archaeologist Edward R. Ayrton in 1907.

Despite the name given to it in modern times, Biban el-Moluk (in English, "Valley of the Kings") does not contain only royal burials, but during the half-millennium of its use as a royal necropolis hosted quite a large number of tombs which, like the one now numbered 55, were originally intended for private individuals, distinguished by the extraordinary honor of being able to accompany their sovereign into the afterlife. This was also the case with tomb KV 46, discovered by James E. Quibell on behalf of Davis in 1905, that yielded the sumptuous burial treasure, virtually intact, of Yuya and Tuya, the parents of Queen Tiye and great-grandparents of Tutankhamun.



Fig. 1: head of the lid of the second gilded wood coffin of Tuya (KV 46; Cairo, CG 51006). Photograph D. Laboury.

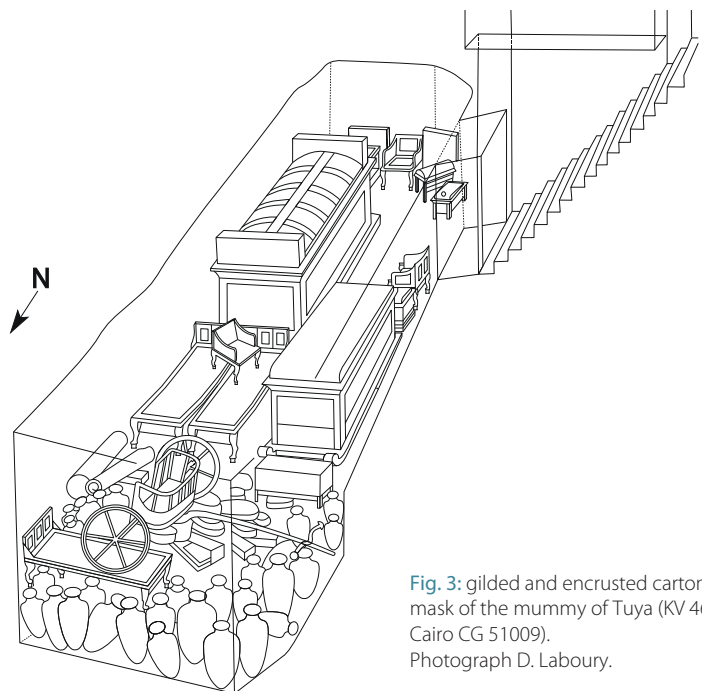


Fig. 2: axonometric rendering of the tomb of Yuya and Tuya (KV 46). Drawing C. Venier.

Fig. 3: gilded and encrusted cartonnage mask of the mummy of Tuya (KV 46; Cairo CG 51009). Photograph D. Laboury.



These late Eighteenth Dynasty tombs of prominent courtiers have a fairly regular typology, with underground access by stairs or a ramp (sometimes both) that leads to a single, transverse burial chamber. This plan is in stark contrast to that of the much more elaborate royal burials of the same period that can reach a depth of more than one hundred meters. Any observer of Tutankhamun's tomb is struck by the fact that it is more akin to the first, non-royal type, supplemented by a couple of rooms. As someone deeply familiar with the necropolis, Carter soon realized that the royal tomb he had so ardently sought was in fact a tomb originally intended for an individual and hastily fitted to accommodate the remains of a sovereign who had died unexpectedly.

Several clues betray this hasty adaptation. First, returning to the entrance of the tomb itself, Carter observed that the last six steps of the staircase leading to the tomb proper, as well as the lintel and door jambs at the end of that staircase, had been shaved

back to allow the passage of objects whose size had not been foreseen during the digging out of the hypogeum, before being built up again for the sealing of the tomb. In addition, the tomb, which consists of four rooms, respectively called by Carter the "antechamber," the "annex," the "burial chamber," and the "treasury," has poorly finished walls surfaces. Many limestone fragments from the walls still littered the ground at the time of the discovery. By all indications, only the antechamber was planned and already in existence, and the quarriers arranged the other three rooms off of this room during the period of mummification of the king's body to accommodate his funerary equipment, necessary for his rebirth in the afterlife, while trying to achieve the minimum structure required for a royal burial.

The decoration is also quite unusual. Concentrated exclusively in the burial chamber, it presents an unprecedented iconographic program, which combines a minimalist evocation of the usual

Fig. 4: virtual reality rendering of the structure and contents of Tutankhamun's tomb (KV 62). Excerpt from F. Wilner's film, *Toutankhamon. Le trésor redécouvert*, 2019.





Fig. 5: view of the northwest corner of the burial chamber in Tutankhamun's tomb with an excerpt from the *Book of the Amduat*, depicting the solar bark and the twelve baboons of the first of the twelve hours of the night. Photograph D. Laboury.



Fig. 6: view of the northeast corner of the burial chamber of Tutankhamun's tomb with the "Opening of the Mouth" ritual performed by Ay on the mummy of the deceased king and the front of the funerary procession. Photograph D. Laboury.

funerary compositions relating to the nocturnal rebirth of the sun and the late king who accompanies it (the *Book of the Amduat* or "Book of what is in the Beyond," summarized by the first twelve hours of the night on the west wall) with scenes quite unique for a royal tomb, representing the transporting of the sovereign's remains in his bier (east wall) and the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth performed by his successor, Ay, on the mummy of Tutankhamun in the form of Osiris. The decorated walls are speckled with fungi, which Carter suspected were ancient, a fact confirmed in recent analyses by the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles, which showed that they were the result of closing the tomb too quickly, before the paintings had dried properly. The paintings are arrayed on a solid yellow background, also exceptional, that evokes the description of the king's burial chamber in the texts of the time as "the house of gold." This is in principle supplemented by at least one small adjacent room (here, the "treasury" in Carter's nomenclature) intended to accommodate the canopic equipment, where the internal organs of the late monarch are preserved. The burial chamber is also usually preceded by a room called the "chariot room," which appears to be the equivalent of the "antechamber" in Tutankhamun's

tomb, where several disassembled chariots were found. In short, the burial of the child king appears to be the scaled-down, simplest expression of a royal hypogaeum of the time.

But what about its impressive furnishings? Are they representative of the funerary provisions of a ruler of the New Kingdom? Can they be used to imagine what has been irrevocably plundered from all the other pharaonic tombs in the Valley of the Kings? The few scattered remnants of systematic looting show that a substantial part of the funerary furnishings of Tutankhamun's tomb conform to the usual practices of a royal burial worthy of this appellation as it was conceived of at the time. It was customary during the Eighteenth Dynasty for the monarch to be accompanied by a set of ritual wood statuettes covered with bitumen, whose type for the most part dates back to the dawn of Egyptian history; that his viscera be placed in a limestone chest with four compartments, whose lids are of the pharaoh's likeness; and that his mummified body be protected by several gilded wood coffins that fit one inside the other in a quartzite sarcophagus, normally enclosed by gilded wood shrines. But ongoing study of the originally gilded and encrusted wood coffin of Thutmose III by the UCLA Coffins Project suggests



Fig. 7: view of the funerary furnishings along the west wall of the antechamber of Tutankhamun's tomb. Photograph H. Burton. Private collection, UK.



Fig. 8: view of the funerary furnishings in the so-called "treasury" room of Tutankhamun's tomb. Photograph H. Burton. Private collection, UK.

that the solid gold coffin that housed Tutankhamun's mummy (what the texts of the late New Kingdom seem to call the "golden egg") would have been an innovation of its time or at least of the end of the dynasty, no doubt a sign of the extraordinary wealth of the crown of Egypt at that time. Moreover, study of the inscriptions on the objects discovered in Tutankhamun's tomb has revealed without doubt that a significant part of the young king's personal funerary equipment was appropriated from the furnishings of his predecessor (including the canopic equipment, the second coffin, and the inscribed gold bands that were wrapped around the mummy). This appropriation was probably owing in part to political reasons, but perhaps also to the unexpected death of the sovereign, at a time when it did not yet seem necessary to prepare all of his provisions for the afterlife, no more than his tomb itself. Finally, Tutankhamun's funerary "treasury" contains multiple childhood mementos, ranging from a strand of hair from his grandmother, Queen Tiye, to fabric

bearing his father's name, to objects bearing the names of several of his sisters, and numerous chests labelled "belonging to his Majesty, when he was still a crown prince" (in ancient Egyptian, *inpu* "crown prince," [see C. Loeben's article on the chests]). However, as it currently stands, no evidence found in other tombs in the Valley of the Kings allows us to confirm that these types of more personal objects were an integral part of the funerary furnishings of any ruler of the New Kingdom, even if the hypothesis seems quite plausible.

The tomb of the young king thus appears unique in many respects. Certainly, on an archaeological level, it is the only one that has reached us in such a state of preservation. Yet, from a historical point of view, if it seems at best to conform to the customs of the time for a royal burial, it bears, as Carter had perfectly understood, all the signs of a hastily improvised burial, following the improbable and unexpected death of a sovereign who had not yet reached his twentieth birthday.



Fig. 9-10 : painted alabaster lid from the canopic equipment from the tomb of Horemheb (left; KV 57; Cairo JE 46826), similar to those found in Tutankhamun's tomb (below). Photographs S. Connor and D. Laboury.

