

# Analysis of howard carter's diaries

Profession



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Tahirih Osborne 11. 16. 11 HHIS 101 Jeff Bibbee Tutankhamen: Anatomy of an Excavation. Howard Carter's diaries. The first excavation season in the tomb of Tutankhamen. Part 1: October 28 to December 31, 1922 © Griffith Institute, Oxford OX1 2LG Otter Box This document provides an in-depth description of Howard Carter's initial discovery of the ante-chamber to King Tutankhamen's tomb. November 26th describes the discovery of an unidentified room filled with artifacts, while November 27th describes the initial excavation of this room and identifying it as Tutankhamen's tomb.

Howard Carter's passion for Egypt and archeology is prominent in his careful description of the excavation of this tomb. While written in a diary format, it is obvious that he intends to later share his findings with his academic community (which was indeed later published. ) His use of exacting language and in-depth description of what he experiences, down to a laundry list of items the ante-chamber contains, is included for those scholastically inclined, but his personal awe still shows through. Howard Carter was a dedicated egyptologist, and this excavation became the hallmark of his career.

Discovering Tutankhamen's tomb was an explosion to the Egyptology community. With only two minor robberies to its name (thought to have happened shortly after the paraoh's death), the tomb stood as a virtual time capsule. No other tomb is thought to be as complete. This gives a very good insight into the climate of the period. Having such a number and range of artifacts from the same time period allows scholars to draw conclusions about everything from the religious practices of the period, to the way

furniture was made, and to make guesses about the wealth of the pharaoh and of Egypt itself.

These artifacts went on to be some of the most-exhibited and well known works of art from the period, and are now synonymous with one's mental image of Egypt. What is perhaps most overlooked and most interesting about Howard Carter's recordings is his care during excavation. Each detail of each piece was put down to paper. Carter's meticulous record keeping and care of individual pieces meant that the tomb took nearly ten years to fully excavate, document, and transfer. Despite onstant media coverage of the excavation, Carter only permitted a single reporter to visit the site. Carter was obsessed with keeping the excavation complete, and unharmed, and the exacting nature of his proceedings made it so. Though Egyptomania had already begun spreading with the discovery of Queen Nefertiti's bust in 1912, it was largely Tutankhamen's tomb that was responsible for the obsession's peak in the 1920s. During and after full excavation and documentation, Howard Carter published his diary into three volumes, in 1923-1933.

They quickly became best-sellers, and, along with the artifacts being put on exhibition, started to influence popculture. Egyptian art influenced jewelry, clothing, architecture, and was a big part of the art deco movement. Women became obsessed with dressing and looking like Cleopatra, and hotels, restaurants, and theaters all decorated their buildings with pyramids and hieroglyphs. Even literature took a page out of Egypt's book, with tales of African adventure becoming best-sellers, and most memorably, Agatha Christie writing her seminal mystery *A Death on the Nile*.

Egyptomania still has currency. For instance, look at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which in 1978 began to resurrect the Temple of Dendur. See also the Louvre, which in 1989 built its own glass pyramid. And in 1993, Luxor Las Vegas opened, a multi-million dollar casino built thirty stories high in black glass to resemble the pyramids of Giza, with its own replica tomb of Tutankhamen. Songs like the Bangles' "Walk Like an Egyptian" play through the heads of the masses, and Liz Taylor's Cleopatra has become a cult favorite.

Egyptomania has even descended to such depths as to remake Boris Karloff's *The Mummy*, with parts one, two, and three. Few other events have infiltrated the public conscious the way the discovery of King Tut's tomb has. One clear example in my life has been the events of September 11th, 2001. If the side effects of Tutankhamen's discovery has infected us for one hundred years, 9/11 will surely do the same. The consequences of that attack are part of my daily life, and it is difficult for me to think of a time when it wasn't.

Instead of Egyptomania, there is now terrorist-mania. Since the plane crash at the World Trade Center, our public and private image has changed completely. A whole new department was created by executive authority- the Department of Homeland Security. Instead of going from check-in to boarding the plane in thirty minutes, airport security takes hours because of high intensity screening. People are no longer free to enter and exit public buildings, most especially governmental buildings.

The attacks spurred a rise in hyperpatriotism and a social climate that is dependent on "being an American." Immigration has been tightened down

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until it is almost impossible for some people to enter the US. Arabs especially are discriminated against because of the perceived terrorist threat by the Muslim fringe. Strangers no longer smile at each other on the streets. The American obsession with terrorism has even led to acts such as the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and the passing of the Patriot Act, which allows warrant free wire-tapping of suspected terrorists.

Americans have been giving up their civil liberties to feel safe, arguably without any increase in safety at all. Instead of opening the paper and reading fantastic stories about the discovery of ancient tombs and grand exhibitions, we open the paper and read yet another story about a dictator being ousted or a terrorist being taken down. While Egyptomania was a positive cultural phenomenon, we are now living in an entirely different world of war and strife caused by an attack that our country can never let go of.