

# Evidence of religion in tutankhamuns tomb essay sample



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The discovery of King Tutankhamen's tomb in the early twentieth century provided the world of archaeology with an enormous amount of information about Egyptian lifestyles. The items and artefacts that were found inside the tomb revealed the lifestyles of the Egyptian people at the time but they also exposed religious and cultural traditions that the Ancient Egyptians practised. The tomb unmasked an unknown period of Egyptian history and gave an insight to the reign of the famous King Tutankhamen. By observation and analysis of the objects discovered within King Tutankhamen's tomb, archaeologists have theorised possible conclusions of what Ancient Egypt was like during the time period of King Tutankhamen's brief time in power. The Egyptians firmly believed in the afterlife and the illustrations within King Tutankhamen's tomb reinforce this, as well as the idea of the realm of the afterlife. Images and objects within the tomb show the Pharaoh as a divine being that represents the human form of a god. Many other important discoveries such as mummification techniques, spells, amulets, perfumes and canopic jars helped archaeologists draw conclusions about the lifestyle and religion of King Tutankhamen and his people.

Faith and religion played an important role in the Egyptians everyday life, and faith in the life after death was no exception to that rule. The Egyptians believed in the cycle of life, death and rebirth which became apparent in the patterns of nature- the constant movement of the sun and stars across the sky. The belief among the Egyptians was that the sun god Ra died every night in the west and was reborn each morning in the east. This journey was not completed without its difficulties though, the serpent Apopis had to be defeated by the sun god Ra with the help of friendly spirits. Each and every

night the crew on Ra's boat had to overcome enemies of the underworld. Evidence of this in Tutankhamen's tomb is the picture on the western wall where King Tutankhamen is depicted on the sun god Ra's boat, journeying into the underworld. There are twelve Baboons illustrated which represent the twelve hours of the night which King Tutankhamen must travel through before reaching the afterlife. The Egyptians did not hold just one view about the afterlife at any one time, but they were unwilling to simply disregard their old views of the gods in favour of newer ones.

The myth of Osiris, the God of the Underworld, is an imperative part of Ancient Egyptian antiquity. Osiris is illustrated on the rear wall of Tutankhamen's tomb wearing white robes. There are other scenes where King Tutankhamen is depicted as Osiris. On the north wall of the tomb, there are paintings of King Tutankhamen who is again represented as Osiris. He wears the double Atef crown which is a symbol of the ' ruler of the underworld.'The painting also shows the Opening of the Mouth ceremony which is being performed on him by Ay who was Tutankhamen's Vizier. The myth of Osiris is important to the people of Egypt as it supports the notion of the afterlife. It gives the ancient Egyptian people something to put their faith into and to truly believe in life after death as the myth is one of the most widespread stories told in all of Egypt. Other stories have been made around the events regarding the myth of Osiris and have been adapted to modern society. The myth has persisted throughout the ages whereas most other ancient Egyptian beliefs and traditions that were not written down were lost. The Ancient Egyptians believed that the body of an individual was made up of different key parts.

This composed of the physical body, the life force, (Ka) the soul, (Ba) spiritual intelligence, (Akh) the shadow and finally a name. When the individual passed away the Ka, Ba and Akh would be released from the body. If the correct burial practises were carried out, the individual could enjoy afterlife. The Ka is pictured on the north wall of the tomb where King Tutankhamen's Ka is situated standing behind the king. The king is represented in the ' costume of the living' wearing the Nemes headdress but does not yet possess the hooked beard of the gods. The Ka or the ' life force' was represented by a pair of arms stretched out.

The Ka was born with an individual and after their death, remained in the tomb with the body which was shown physically as a statue. The Ka was believed to be able to eat and drink and for this reason offerings were provided by the deceased's family. The soul (ba) was the aspect of the person that the Ancient Egyptians believed would live in the afterlife and is depicted as a bird with a human head. The Ba is said to fly out of the tomb and join the Ka in the afterlife. The Akh, or the spiritual intelligence was often said to be a shining, glowing form which at the passing of the individual, separates all ties with the physical body and joins the Ba and Ka. The evidence found in the tomb reveals some of the thoughts and customs of the Egyptian people at the time.

The mummified King Tutankhamen was found in his tomb, within the burial chamber. On each four corners of the sarcophagus there are four gods who are depicted: Isis, Nephthys, Selkis and Neith. The wings of these four gods are spread over the surface of the sarcophagus to protect it and

Tutankhamen. There are three layers to the sarcophagus which are <https://assignbuster.com/evidence-of-religion-in-tutankhamuns-tomb-essay-sample/>

composed of the outer coffin, then the second outside coffin and finally, the famous gold coffin in which encased the famous Pharaoh. Using the secondary source of Howard Carter's notes, he describes the experience and that the coffin was as heavy " as eight strong men could lift." The inner coffin was made of pure gold and Tutankhamen's face and body were sculpted on the outside of it. Beneath the hands of the King, the two goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet spread their wings to protect the Pharaoh.

The hieroglyphic sign of infinity is being held in each of their talons. Around the waist of Tutankhamen a belt of gold, terracotta beads and a ceremonial dagger was placed by the embalmers who decorated the sarcophagus. The Egyptians interpreted the meaning of the word ' sarcophagus' as a possessor of life which relates back to their firm belief in the afterlife. The ancient Egyptians believed that the spells, prayers and religious symbols inscribed on the coffins were said to increase the effectiveness of the physical preservation and protection. Canopic jars were found within Tutankhamen's tomb which contained the liver, lungs, stomach and intestines of the Pharaoh. Each different jar was represented by a different protective deity. These deities were symbolised by gods - for example the deity for the liver was Isis, for the lungs it was Nephthys, for the stomach it was Neith and finally for the intestines - Selkat. The jars were stored in a box made of alabaster. The tops of the canopic jars were in the shape of a human head, usually wearing a traditional headdress. The jars were usually painted with a formula which identified the dead individual, the organ, its protective goddess and its guardian spirit. The jars were guarded by a statue of Anubis -the god of mummification- in Tutankhamen's ' treasury.'

The chest containing the four jars had each of the four goddesses protecting it: Isis, Nephthys, Neith and Seklis were positioned around the outside of the chest to protect the vital organs of Tutankhamen. Each goddess had a hieroglyph which identified them. These rituals that were carried out on Tutankhamen reveal ancient techniques to guide the Pharaoh into the land of the afterlife. The Egyptians believed that the body needed to be properly preserved so that it could properly journey into the afterlife. They attempted to protect the body by using: amulets, spells and unguents. Amulets were inserted in the layers of King Tutankhamen's bandaging to protect the body and preserve it. There was a strict criteria for the use of amulets which were expressed in funerary texts and that came under: the type of amulet, the position on the body, the material and colour and finally the spell associated with the amulet. Because Osiris - the god of the underworld- seems to be the first person to be embalmed, many of the amulets used on Tutankhamen were associated with the myth of Osiris. Gold was used the greater part of the time as it was believed to be ' non-corruptible.' The parts of Tutankhamen's body sheltered by gold didn't decay. Another type of amulet included in the tomb was a regenerative amulet. These types of amulets were also linked to Osiris and the town of Djedu - the first known centre of Osiris worship.

The Djed amulet was often placed near the spine of the deceased which was supposed to guarantee the resurrection of the individual. An amulet of afterlife was placed on the deceased. The scarab beetle, in the New Kingdom was a symbol of rebirth and new life. This came from the ancient Egyptians belief that the newly hatched scarab beetle, came from a ball of faeces

symbolised the morning sun which was said to be reborn each and every day. During the process of bandaging, one hundred and forty three separate objects were inserted in between the layers of the body of King Tutankhamen.

Four gold cobras protected Tutankhamen's facial region - these kinds of creatures symbolised the two goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt. Twenty different amulets protected the Pharaoh's neck as well as a prayer that welcomed him into the world of the afterlife. Tutankhamen's arms and legs were covered with bracelets made of gold that had scarabs on them. On his feet he was equipped with golden sandals which were used in the afterlife to flatten his enemies. After the body was fully bandaged with linen sheets, prayers and spells were inscribed in texts that related to the rebirth of the Pharaoh. The masterpiece was almost finished- a solid gold death mask was placed on Tutankhamen's face and chest. This mask retained the age of Tutankhamen which set him in stone eternally.

Techniques of embalming were revealed when King Tutankhamen's tomb was discovered. In the New Kingdom, there were important advances in the process of mummification. These advances include the removal of the brain, a lower incision point in the abdomen, the protection of toenails and fingernails, changes in the position of the arms, (King Tutankhamen's arms were crossed as he was royalty) using resin on the skin as a form of insulation and more elaborate methods of packing the limbs and the rest of the body to keep a life-like appearance. The process of embalming King Tutankhamen took approximately seventy days in total. This included the initial washing, removal of the brain, the removal of the stomach and

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intestines as well as the liver and lungs, the dehydration of the body which natron salt played a big part in, the treatment of the skin, cavities being packed and finally the protection and bandaging of the body. The purpose of body preparation and mummification in the ancient Egyptians perspective was to assist their Pharaoh into the land of the afterlife.

The process of mummification purified and prepared King Tutankhamen and many other Egyptian Pharaohs for eternal life. The better persevered an individual was the better path to the afterlife, and eventually the better rebirth. The entry into the afterlife was hard and without proper preparation by the embalming priests or the controller of the mysteries, the Pharaoh perhaps may not have made it into the afterlife. The state of the mummies discovered in the times of King Tutankhamen indicates that the ancient Egyptian people stepped up the standard of embalming in the central period of the New Kingdom. Mummification was performed by necropolis priests in the divine booth that was set up specifically for embalming.

This booth was set up on the West bank of the Nile. As the head priest performed the procedure, he often wore the mask of a jackal which represents the god of embalming - Anubis. Evidence from King Tutankhamen's tomb suggests that the belief of eternal life through mummification was at its highest point in the New Kingdom. The Opening of the Mouth ceremony was held to restore the deceased individual's sight, speech and hearing for their next life. The ceremony was traditionally held on the Ka but in King Tutankhamen's ceremony in the New Kingdom period, the ceremony was performed on the mummy while inside the sarcophagus.

A chisel, an adze and a rod which had a snake head were used to touch the <https://assignbuster.com/evidence-of-religion-in-tutankhamuns-tomb-essay-sample/>



mummy's face which allowed the mouth to speak again, the ears to hear, the nostrils to breathe and finally the eyes to see. Ay, Tutankhamen's Vizier performed the Opening of the mouth ceremony on the mummy of the deceased Pharaoh. This scene is depicted in the 'treasury' of Tutankhamen's tomb. Traditionally the King's son is expected to carry out the ceremony but Ay had to as Tutankhamen did not have a son. Both the Opening of the Mouth and the funeral processions are illustrated on parts of the walls in the tomb.

The evidence inside King Tutankhamen's tomb revealed an enormous amount and shed a light on a dark part of Ancient Egyptian history. The items within the tomb paint a clear picture of the life and times of the ancient Egyptians in the period of King Tutankhamen's reign. Archaeologists have been able to deconstruct each painting, each item and each room of the tomb and educate the world on how Tutankhamen lived his life, even how old he was when he died and the laws and developments that he employed. The tomb took over ten years to clean out the countless treasures and artefacts, and each of these objects had a separate story to be told. It is apparent that Tutankhamen will live forever not only in the after life-but also as one of, if not the most famous Pharaohs in the world.

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