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Discovering Tut : The Saga Continues

Explanation -

In his defence, Carter really had little choice. If he hadn't cut the mummy free, thieves most certainly would have circumvented the guards and ripped it apart to remove the gold. In Tut's time the royals were fabulously wealthy, and they thought — or hoped — they could take their riches with them. For his journey to the great beyond, King Tut was lavished with glittering goods: precious collars, inlaid necklaces and bracelets, rings, amulets, a ceremonial apron, sandals, sheaths for his fingers and toes, and the now iconic inner coffin and mask — all of pure gold. To separate Tut from his adornments, Carter's men removed the mummy's head and severed nearly every major joint. Once they had finished, they reassembled the remains on a layer of sand in a wooden box with padding that concealed the damage, the bed where Tut now rests.

Circumvented – find a way around; thieves would have found a way to tackle the guards and remove the gold from the tomb

Inlaid – a decorative pattern on a surface

Amulet – an ornament or small piece of jewellery thought to give protection against evil, danger, or disease.

Apron – a protective garment worn over the front of one's clothes and tied at the back

Sheaths – a close-fitting cover

Iconic – something or someone who is a symbol or it represents some other thing

Adornments – ornaments

Concealed- hid

According to Carter, he had no choice other than to cut the mummy. He believed that if he hadn't done that, thieves would have removed the gold from the tomb and would have looted it. During Tut's time, the royal people were very wealthy and they had a belief that after death, they could take the wealth along with them. For his life after death, he was given precious collars, necklaces with decorative patterns, bracelets, rings, amulets, ceremonial aprons, sandals, sheaths for fingers and toes and now, an iconic inner coffin and a mask. His men removed his head and every joint of his body. After they finished, they reassembled the remains in a wooden box with padding filled with a layer of sand to conceal the damage. It was his new resting place.

Archaeology has changed substantially in the intervening decades, focusing less on treasure and more on the fascinating details of life and intriguing mysteries of death. It also uses more sophisticated tools, including medical technology. In 1968, more than 40 years after Carter's

discovery, an anatomy professor X-rayed the mummy and revealed a startling fact: beneath the resin that cokes his chest, his breast-bone and front ribs are missing.

Intervening – occur in the time between events

Intriguing – to arouse one's curiosity

Startling – unexpected or surprising

In the past few decades, archaeology has changed as it now focuses on the details of life and the mysteries of death. Earlier, it was about focusing on the treasure. Now, it uses more advanced medical technologies and tools for research. In 1968, an anatomy professor X-rayed King Tut's mummy and revealed that the front limbs and breast bone were missing.

Today diagnostic imaging can be done with computed tomography, or CT, by which hundreds of X-rays in cross section are put together like slices of bread to create a three-dimensional virtual body. What more would a CT scan reveal of Tut than the X-ray? And could it answer two of the biggest questions still lingering about him — how did he die, and how old was he at the time of his death?

King Tut's demise was a big event, even by royal standards. He was the last of his family's line, and his funeral was the death rattle of a dynasty. But the particulars of his passing away and its aftermath are unclear.

Computed Tomography – Also called a CT scan, it is a three-dimensional scan of a body with the help of hundreds of X-Rays in cross-section together

Demise – death

death rattle – the gurgling sound produced in the throat of a person who is about to die

Aftermath – after-effects of an unpleasant event

Now with the advancement of technology, CT scan or Computed Tomography can give a virtual image of the whole body. With the help of this technology, King Tut's body would be scanned to find answers to two questions – How he died and how old was he at the time of his death.

His death was a shock to the royals also as he was the last person of his family and his funeral indicated the diminishment of his dynasty. However, what happened after his death is still not clear

Amenhotep III — Tut's father or grandfather — was a powerful pharaoh who ruled for almost four decades at the height of the eighteenth dynasty's golden age. His son Amenhotep IV succeeded him and initiated one of the strangest periods in the history of ancient Egypt. The new pharaoh promoted the worship of the Aten, the sun disk, changed his name to Akhenaten, or 'servant of the Aten,' and moved the religious capital from the old city of Thebes to the new city of Akhetaten, known now as Amarna. He further shocked the country by attacking Amun, a major god, smashing his images and closing his temples. "It must have been a horrific time," said Ray Johnson, director of the University of Chicago's research centre in Luxor, the site of

ancient Thebes. “The family that had ruled for centuries was coming to an end, and then Akhenaten went a little wacky.”

Wacky –amusing in a slightly odd way

Tut’s father or grandfather, Amenhotep III, was a very powerful Pharaoh who ruled over a period of forty years. His son, Amenhotep IV, succeeded him and began the strangest period in the history of Egypt. He promoted the worship of Aten (the sun disk). He changed his name to Akhenaten meaning servant of the Atens. He also shifted the religious capital from Thebes to the new city of Akhenaten, called Amarna. Further, he attacked Amun, a god, smashed his images and closed his temples. Ray Johnson, director of the University of Chicago said it must have been a bad time for the empire as the family who ruled for centuries came to an end and Akhenaten moved in an odd direction.

After Akhenaten’s death, a mysterious ruler named Smenkhkare appeared briefly and exited with hardly a trace. And then a very young Tutankhaten took the throne — King Tut as he’s widely known today. The boy king soon changed his name to Tutankhamun, ‘living image of Amun,’ and oversaw a restoration of the old ways. He reigned for about nine years — and then died unexpectedly.

Regardless of his fame and the speculations about his fate, Tut is one mummy among many in Egypt. How many? No one knows. The Egyptian Mummy Project, which began an inventory in late 2003, has recorded almost 600 so far and is still counting. The next phase: scanning the mummies with a portable CT machine donated by the National Geographic Society and Siemens, its manufacturer. King Tut is one of the first mummies to be scanned — in death, as in life, moving regally ahead of his countrymen.

Another mysterious ruler, Smenkhkare, succeeded him and died soon. Next, Tutankhamun, also known as Tut, sat on the throne and ruled for nine years. He worshipped god Amun in the old ways. However, he died mysteriously.

Tut is one of the mummies in Egypt. Whereas, until now with the help of the Egyptian Mummy Project which started in 2003, almost 600 mummies have been recorded so far. King Tut’s mummy was the first one to be scanned by CT under the next phase of scanning the mummies with the machine donated by the National Geographic Society and Siemens.

A CT machine scanned the mummy head to toe, creating 1,700 digital X-ray images in cross-section. Tut’s head, scanned in 0.62-millimetre slices to register its intricate structures, takes on eerie detail in the resulting image. With Tut’s entire body similarly recorded, a team of specialists in radiology, forensics, and anatomy began to probe the secrets that the winged goddesses of a gilded burial shrine protected for so long.

Eerie detail – strange image of Tut’s head as visible with the help of CT scan  
Forensics – the application of the scientific method to investigate a crime

Anatomy – the branch of science which deals with the bodily structure of humans, animals or other living beings

Burial – burying the dead

Shrine – holy place

The CT scan machine scanned the body by creating 1700 digital X-rays in cross-sections. Tut's head was scanned in 0.62 mm slices to record the tiny details. The resulting image was very strange. A team of Radiology, Forensics and Anatomy experts started examining the secrets of the grave that had been protected by flying goddesses for a long time.

The night of the scan, workmen carried Tut from the tomb in his box. Like pallbearers they climbed a ramp and a flight of stairs into the swirling sand outside, then rose on a hydraulic lift into the trailer that held the scanner. Twenty minutes later two men emerged, sprinted for an office nearby, and returned with a pair of white plastic fans. The million-dollar scanner had quit because of sand in a cooler fan. "Curse of the pharaoh," joked a guard nervously.

Eventually the substitute fans worked well enough to finish the procedure. After checking that no data had been lost, the technicians turned Tut over to the workmen, who carried him back to his tomb. Less than three hours after he was removed from his coffin, the pharaoh again rested in peace where the funerary priests had laid him so long ago.

Pallbearers – a person who helps to escort a coffin at a funeral

Swirling – to spin or twist

Hydraulic lift – a lift that uses a machine to lift or move heavy objects with a pressure

Sprinted – ran at a high speed

During the night, workmen climbed up on the ramp and the flight of stairs to carry the body from the tomb into the spinning sand outside. They rose the body onto a hydraulic lift, then into a trailer where the scanner was kept. After twenty minutes, two men ran towards the office nearby to bring two fans. The scanner was not working as the sand had entered a cooler fan. The guard joked that it was because of the curse of the pharaoh because they had removed his body.

Once the fans worked, the procedure was finished. The data was checked in case of any losses and then technicians returned the body to the pallbearers who carried him back to his tomb. In less than three hours, he was resting at the same place where the priests had laid him many years ago.

Back in the trailer a technician pulled up astonishing images of Tut on a computer screen. A grey head took shape from a scattering of pixels, and the technician spun and tilted it in every direction. Neck vertebrae appeared as clearly as in an anatomy class. Other images revealed a hand, several views of the rib cage, and a transection of the skull. But for now the pressure was off. Sitting back in his chair, Zahi Hawass smiled, visibly relieved that nothing had gone seriously

wrong. "I didn't sleep last night, not for a second," he said. "I was so worried. But now I think I will go and sleep."

By the time we left the trailer, descending metal stairs to the sandy ground, the wind had stopped. The winter air lay cold and still, like death itself, in this valley of the departed. Just above the entrance to Tut's tomb

stood Orion — the constellation that the ancient Egyptians knew as the soul of Osiris, the god of the afterlife — watching over the boy king.

Astonishing – amazing

Pixels – a pixel is a single point in a graphic image

Spun – to turn around

Vertebrae – series of small bones which form a backbone.

In the trailer, the technician showed a beautiful image of Tut on a computer screen. He showed the grey head which was scattered in pixels and he spun it around. Next, the vertebrae, hand, rib cage, and transection of his skull were shown. As the work was done, the pressure was finally off from the shoulders of Zahi Hawass. While sitting in his chair, he smiled and said that he was relieved that nothing went wrong. He had not slept the previous night and now, as the work was done, he would go and sleep.

By the time they left the trailer, the wind had stopped and the winter air was like death itself. Just above the tomb the Orion constellation shone in the night sky, watching over the boy king.