

# Was King Tut Murdered?



## Background Information

In 1922, a man named Howard Carter uncovered one of the greatest archaeological treasures: he found the tomb of King Tutankhamen, a boy king, almost completely intact. Carter found over 2,000 objects in the four chambers, including the king's coffin, which was made from 22 lbs. of solid gold. Inside the coffin was Tut's body, and scientists concluded from it that he died very young. There are many speculations on how he died, so it is not known for sure if he was murdered, died of a sudden sickness, or died of some sort of accident.

The fact that he died so young and so suddenly have made some suspicious. The very first autopsy was performed in 1925. The doctor performing the autopsy noticed a cut on the left cheek but was unable to find a solution to his cause of death. In 1968, another doctor x-rayed Tut's body. The x-ray showed that Tut did not die of tuberculosis. It also showed that the front ribcage was missing. No other strange injuries were present on that part of the body. Because his arms were crossed over that area, some think it might have been another type of embalming method. But the x-ray did show a mysterious fragment of bone within the skull and a defect that could be a hemorrhage caused by a blow to the head. More recently, CAT scans have been performed in hoping to gain more information into his death. Although not conclusive, these scans imply that he did not die of this injury. Some now believe he was poisoned. Future tests on his organs might be able to provide some proof for this theory. Others believe he might have died from an infection brought on by a badly broken leg.

Most events surrounding King Tut's life are a mystery. Records show that King Tut ruled Egypt from 1333–1323 B.C. He inherited the throne around age 10. Many estimate that he died around age 20. It is believed he was the son of the heretic pharaoh Akhenaten. Akhenaten was known for abolishing the worship of many gods in favor of just one, the sun god, Aten. When Akhenaten died, King Tut rose to the throne. High officials—one the highest deputy army general, Horemheb; the other his chief advisor, Aye—protected him. Tut married Nefertiti's daughter, Ankhesenamun, who had been his childhood friend. Under these generals, King Tut officially returned Egypt to the worship of many gods and also restored many of the temples for worship.

more to follow





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Of particular interest are the paintings on the walls of the tomb. There was only one room that was painted. Most believe that is the case because there was so little time to prepare for the burial. Egyptians believed that the paintings had some sort of power. If a scene were painted, it would happen. It was a magical principle. One scene painted on the wall in the tomb shows his chief advisor, Aye, administering the funeral rites. It is very clear that he is the one performing the rites, because his name is written above his head. This type of painting was common in private tombs, but it was never seen before in a royal tomb.

After her husband's death, Queen Ankhesenamun sent a letter to the King of the Hittites (located in modern-day Turkey). The Hittites had a strong army and were regarded as Egypt's enemy. In the letter Ankhesenamun tells the king that her husband is dead. She says that she does not wish to marry one of her subjects but would rather marry a Hittite prince and make him king of Egypt. She also says that she is afraid. When the Hittite king received the letter, he could not believe it. Why would she ask her enemy for help? The offer seemed almost too good to be true. He sent a messenger to check out the offer. The Hittite king was satisfied that his son would be safe and sent a prince to marry her, along with a large entourage. But as the prince came to the Egyptian border, he was killed. Who could have murdered this prince? He was most likely protected by his bodyguards. When the Hittite king found out, he became very angry and went to war with Egypt.

What happened to Ankhesenamun? A ring surfaced in the 1930s in Egypt that told the story. On the ring was inscribed the cartouche of Aye and the cartouche of Ankhesenamun. The union of both of these cartouches means that they married. Tut's chief advisor Aye married Ankhesenamun, and he became king of Egypt.

Even more mysterious is Ankhesenamun's disappearance soon after the marriage. One thing we do know: she disappeared without a trace. Her tomb is nowhere to be found, and her name is virtually erased from Egyptian history. Even if her tomb were plundered, there would still be some trace of her name in the tomb.

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It is also important to note that Aye already had a wife, Tey. She was the queen painted on the walls of Aye's tomb, and she was given the label of "the great wife." Aye was in his 60s when he became king of Egypt. He had been married to the same woman for more than 40 years. Aye was also a faithful employee of both King Tut's and Akhenaten's reign. He attended to the burial of Tut with care, and many believe he truly loved his young master.

Aye only ruled for four years before dying. Robbers raided his tomb, but there seems to have been a desecration of his tomb even before the robbers took hold. His name was erased from the monuments inside his tomb. This name-erasing was not uncommon in Egypt. If someone wanted another not to fare well in the afterlife, they erased the name. The servant statues were also completely destroyed. Horemheb succeeded as king after Aye's death. It was most likely Horemheb who destroyed Aye's tomb. Horemheb also destroyed Tut's name on many of the monuments and had his own name put in its place. That is also why Tut's history is so difficult to piece together. In fact, Horemheb had Akhenaten's, Tut's, and Aye's names erased from every monument or document, as though they never existed. He took credit for their reign. He also restored order to the courts in Egypt, admonishing the judges to not take bribes. Criminals were strictly punished. Temples and shrines were built, and he restored greatness to the land.

The mysteries in Egypt during this time include two deaths and one disappearance. The death of the Hittite prince was certainly murder. The death of Tutankhamen is suspicious, at the very least; and the disappearance of Queen Ankhesnamun causes one to wonder if there were three murders instead of just one. All three added together makes for a pretty interesting story—maybe even a conspiracy to control the throne.

