

TUTANKHAMUN



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TUTANKHAMUN

Black and white photographs by Harry Burton

Color photographs by Lee Boltin

Captions drawn from text by I. E. S. Edwards

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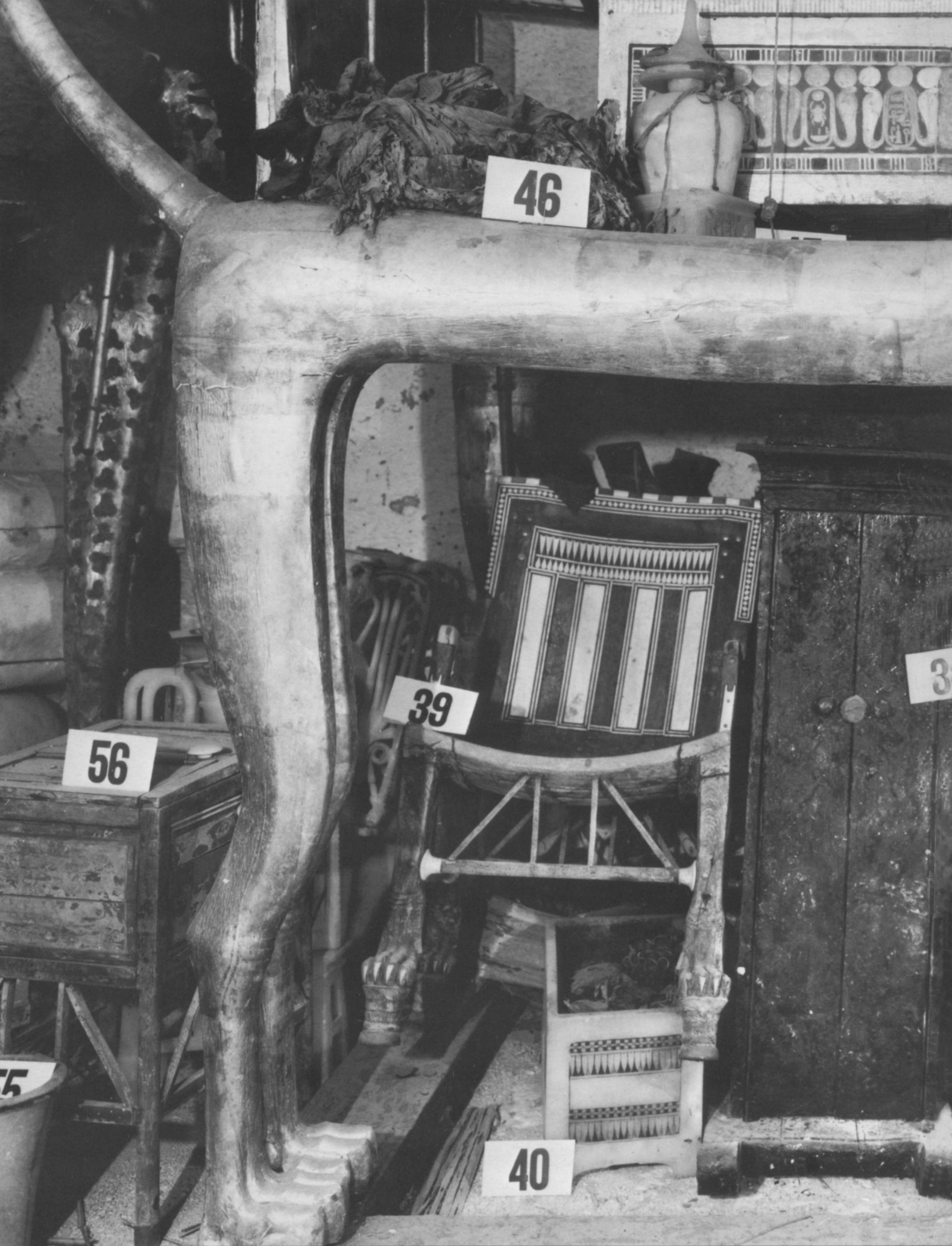
ENTRANCE PASSAGE AND ANTECHAMBER

Tutankhamun's tomb was cut into the bedrock of the Valley of the Kings, the royal burial ground of the Egyptian pharaohs. When Howard Carter discovered it in November 1922, it had not been entered in over thirty-two hundred years, although ancient robbers had broken into it twice, probably fairly soon after Tutankhamun's death in about 1325 B. C.

The lovely head at the left was found in the entrance corridor, perhaps dropped by a thief as he fled. It represents a popular Egyptian creation myth: the sun god emerging from a lotus that floated on the primeval ocean. The features are those of Tutankhamun, and it was included in his tomb to assure, through magic, his rebirth as the sun god. The cup shown below, of alabaster in the shape of a white lotus, is inscribed with a wish that Tutankhamun may spend millions of years "beholding happiness."

The picture overleaf illustrates the sight that greeted Carter's eyes when he first broke down the blocking between the corridor and the Antechamber: enormous animal-shaped funerary couches, mysterious black shrines, and chests containing a jumbled variety of objects both precious and mundane.





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Most of the chests seem to have been emptied by the ancient thieves in their search for loot, and then haphazardly repacked by the priests who resealed the tomb, for their contents were disorderly and often incongruous. The box below contained a linen glove, necklaces, rings, oddments of cloth, and a wooden bowl as well as the two objects illustrated here. The gilded wooden leopard's head at the left was attached to a real leopard skin decorated with golden stars, part of the priestly regalia that Tutankhamun, as high priest of all the gods, might wear in the afterlife. The crook at the right, part of his royal insignia, must have been made very early in his reign since it bears his name in its original form, Tutankhaton, before he changed it to Tutankhamun in honor of the principal god of Thebes. It is possible that Tutankhamun carried this crook during his coronation, when he was about nine years old.





Some fifty alabaster vases held more than a hundred gallons of scented oils and unguents, which were so valuable in ancient Egypt that men were willing to risk their lives for them: the first group of robbers ransacked the tomb in search of precious metals, but the second group came for the costly oils it contained. The robbers transferred the unguents from the heavy vases (left) to water skins, which were lighter and easier to carry. The residue of the contents of jar 61 still retained a faint fragrance.

The chest below is the only surviving example of an ancient Egyptian portable chest. The inscriptions on its ebony veneer promise Tutankhamun that he will be granted all the benefits that can be accorded a king when he is among the blessed dead, and that he will enjoy the sweet cool breeze, wine, and the odor of incense.





It is easy to imagine the archaeologists' amazement as they picked their way through the tomb, finding marvel after marvel. "It was certainly an astounding experience," remarked Carter. "Here, packed tightly together in this little chamber, were scores of objects, any one of which would have filled us with excitement under ordinary circumstances, and been considered ample repayment for a full season's work."

Beneath one of the animal-shaped couches lay two folding stools with duck-head feet (139 and 140 in the picture above) as well as the exquisite chair shown above and illustrated in color at the right. Only twenty-eight inches high, it was probably made for Tutankhamun when he was a child.





Tutankhamun's tomb was very small – it had obviously been made for a commoner and was hastily converted to a royal tomb when Tutankhamun died young, at the age of eighteen or nineteen. The chambers were difficult to work in because they packed with fragile things, often perched precariously on top of each other. The expedition photographer, Harry Burton, photographed each area before anything was touched, and then again after numbered cards had been placed on each piece. The objects were then removed to a nearby laboratory – a converted tomb – where they were studied, photographed individually, and treated to ensure their preservation. For the benefit of the bystanders who clustered around the tomb for hours in the broiling sun, Carter brought the objects to the surface uncovered whenever possible.









One of the greatest treasures of the Antechamber is this little shrine, about twenty inches high. It is covered with thick sheet gold decorated with charming scenes featuring Tutankhamun and his wife. Although the scenes are depicted in the intimate style of the art of the preceding Amarna period, they seem to represent some of the coronation ceremonies. One of the purposes of the shrine may have been to commemorate the king's coronation, and through magic to renew his coronation in the afterlife.

The photograph at the left shows a statuette pedestal inside the shrine. The statuette itself – probably made of gold – had been stolen in antiquity, but the pedestal still bears the imprint of tiny feet.

BURIAL CHAMBER

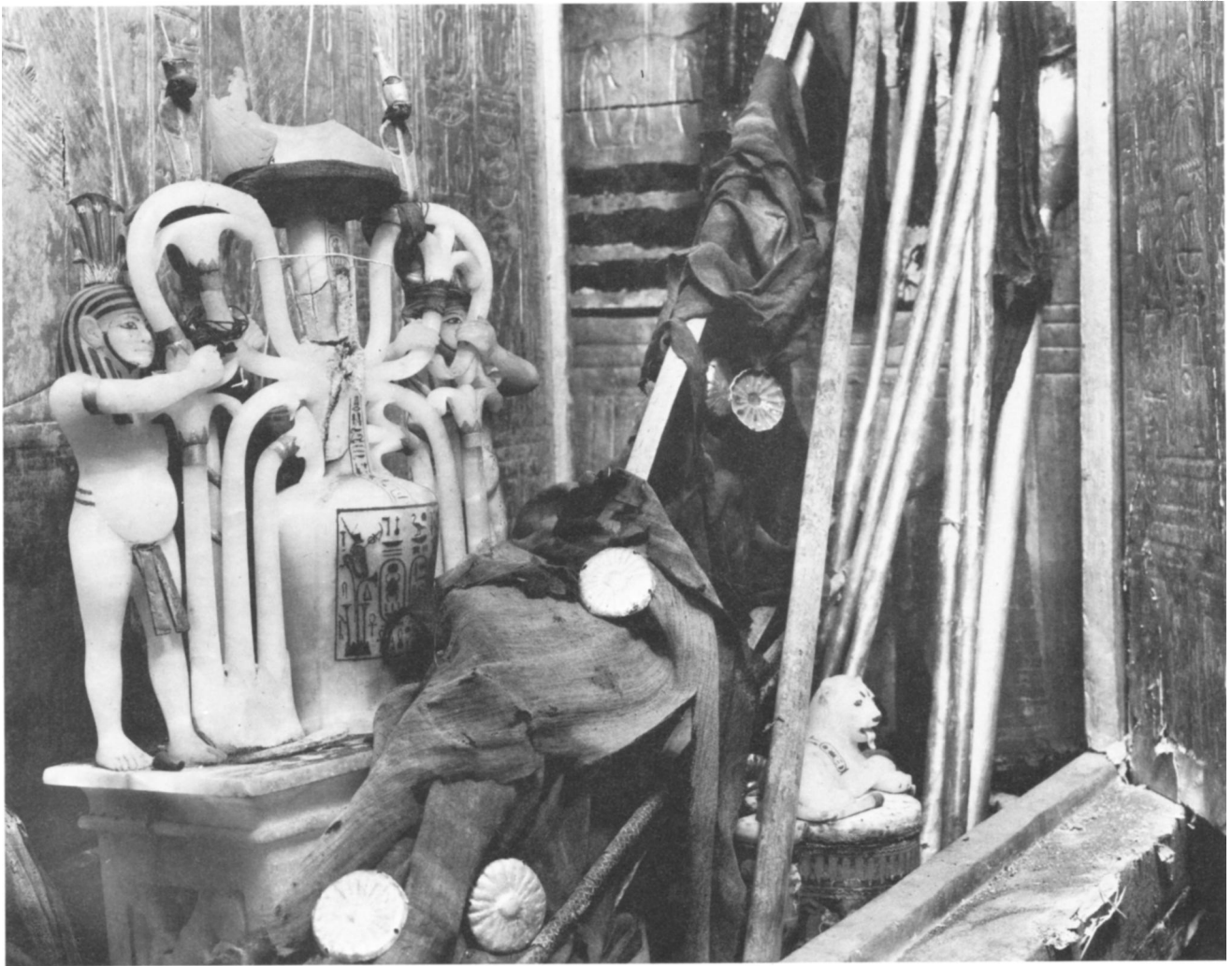




The next room, the Burial Chamber, was almost completely filled with four enormous gilded wood shrines that surrounded the king's sarcophagus. Carter was delighted to find that the seal fastening the doors of the second shrine was unbroken, indicating that this part of the tomb had never been entered since the day Tutankhamun was buried. In the picture on the opposite page, Carter and his crew have squeezed between the wall of the chamber and the outside of the first shrine to study the other shrines within.

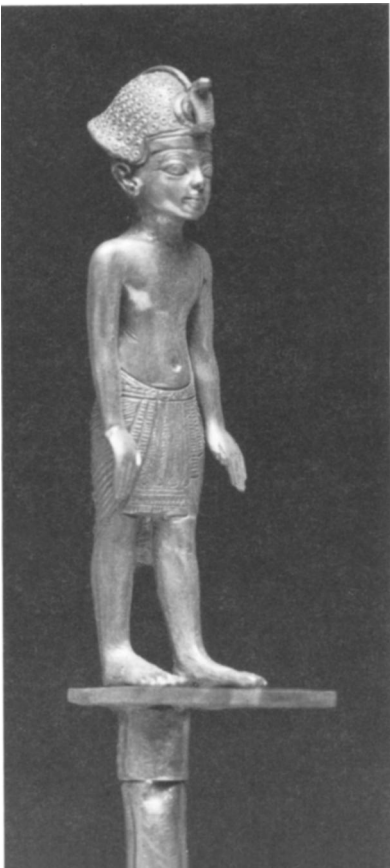
Between the shrines and the wall lay the weird emblem at the top of this page, a symbol of the god Anubis, found in a corner behind some oars that would enable the pharaoh to navigate in the afterlife. Between the innermost shrines lay the magnificent gold fan below: Tutankhamun himself is shown hunting the ostriches whose plumes (now disintegrated) were used to adorn the fan.





In the foreground of the picture above is part of a linen pall decorated with golden flowers, which, darkened by age and torn by its own weight, has fallen from the top of the second shrine. Nestled behind are two alabaster unguent jars; the lion that decorates the one at the right was probably intended to suggest the character of the king, and Tutankhamun's name is written on its body.

Among the many objects from the tomb that remain unparalleled in Egyptian art are two small figures of the king, one in gold (left) and the other in silver, that topped staffs made of the same metals. Their use is unknown, and nothing in the dress of the king indicates their purpose. His crown, sometimes incorrectly called the war helmet, was commonly worn in many different circumstances: in battle, in religious and secular ceremonies, and in private life. He is represented wearing the same kind of pleated kilt in some of the scenes on the small gold shrine and shooting the ostriches on the golden fan. Since the sticks depict Tutankhamun as a chubby child they may represent him at the time of his coronation.







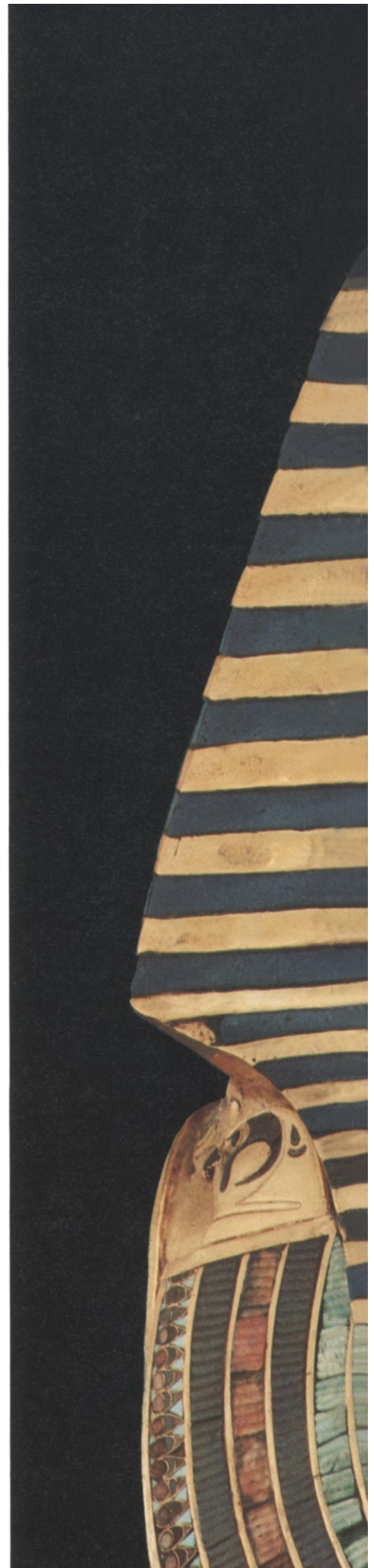


The task of dismantling the shrines and opening the mammoth stone sarcophagus and firmly sealed coffins was enormously complicated, made all the more uncomfortable by the hot, cramped working conditions in the Burial Chamber. This magnificent photograph gives some idea of the moving grandeur of the tomb: "Familiarity can never entirely dissipate the feeling of mystery," Carter wrote, "the sense of vanished but haunting forces that cling to the tomb." Here, surrounded by the scaffolding constructed to hoist the coffins out of the sarcophagus, lies the second coffin within the first. As he lifted them, Carter marveled at the coffins' great weight. He was soon to discover the explanation: the third coffin was made of solid gold.



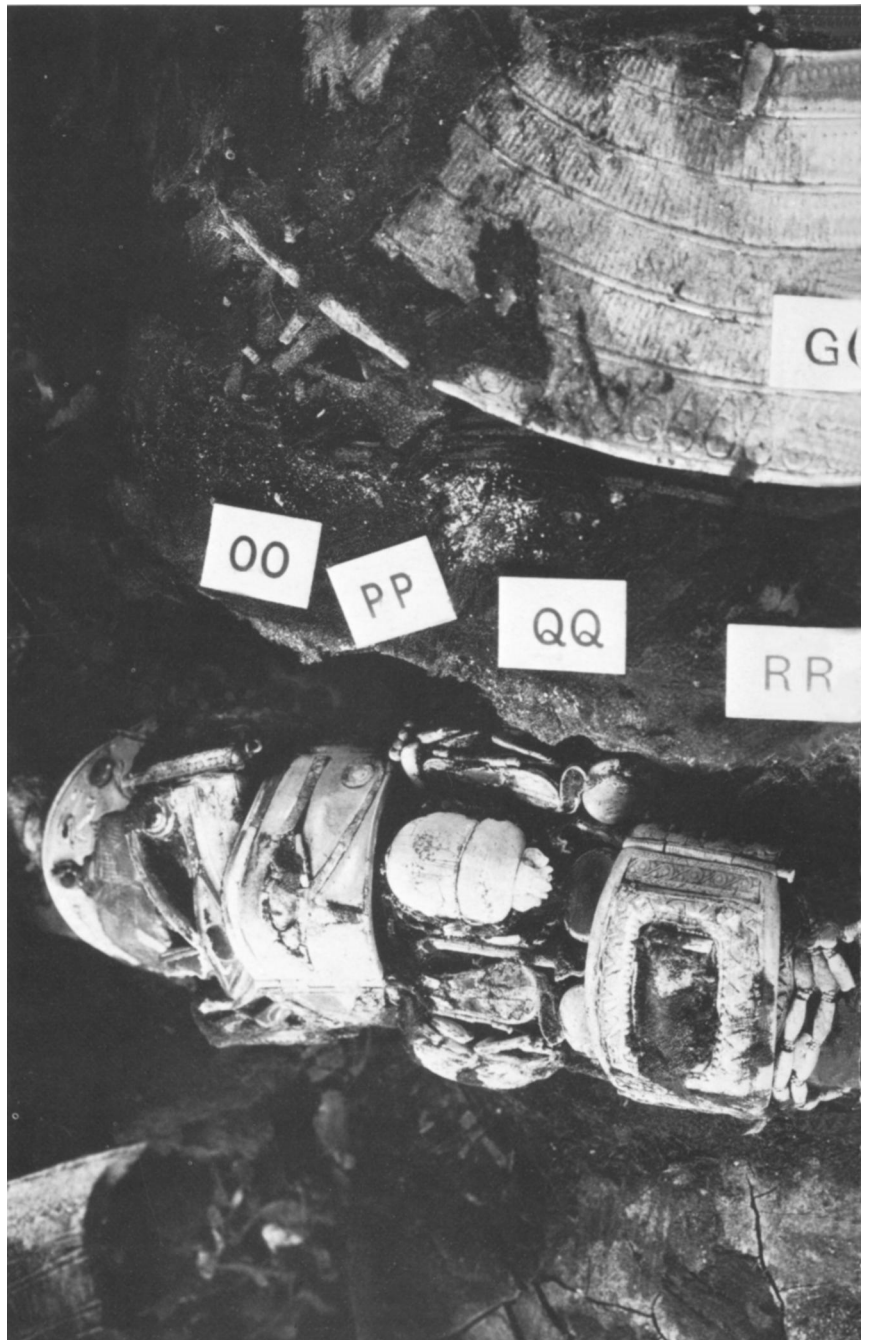
Within the coffins lay Tutankhamun's mummy, wrapped in layer after layer of linen bandages, its head and chest protected by this magnificent mask with its calm, almost mesmerizing gaze. It seems to be a faithful portrait: the rather narrow eyes, the shape of the nose and chin, and the fleshy lips resemble features visible in the mummy. Early in Egypt's history, deceased kings were thought to become identified with the sun god Ra, whose body was made of gold and his hair of lapis lazuli. Tutankhamun's mask, made of gold inlaid with lapis lazuli and blue glass, may preserve a relic of this belief.

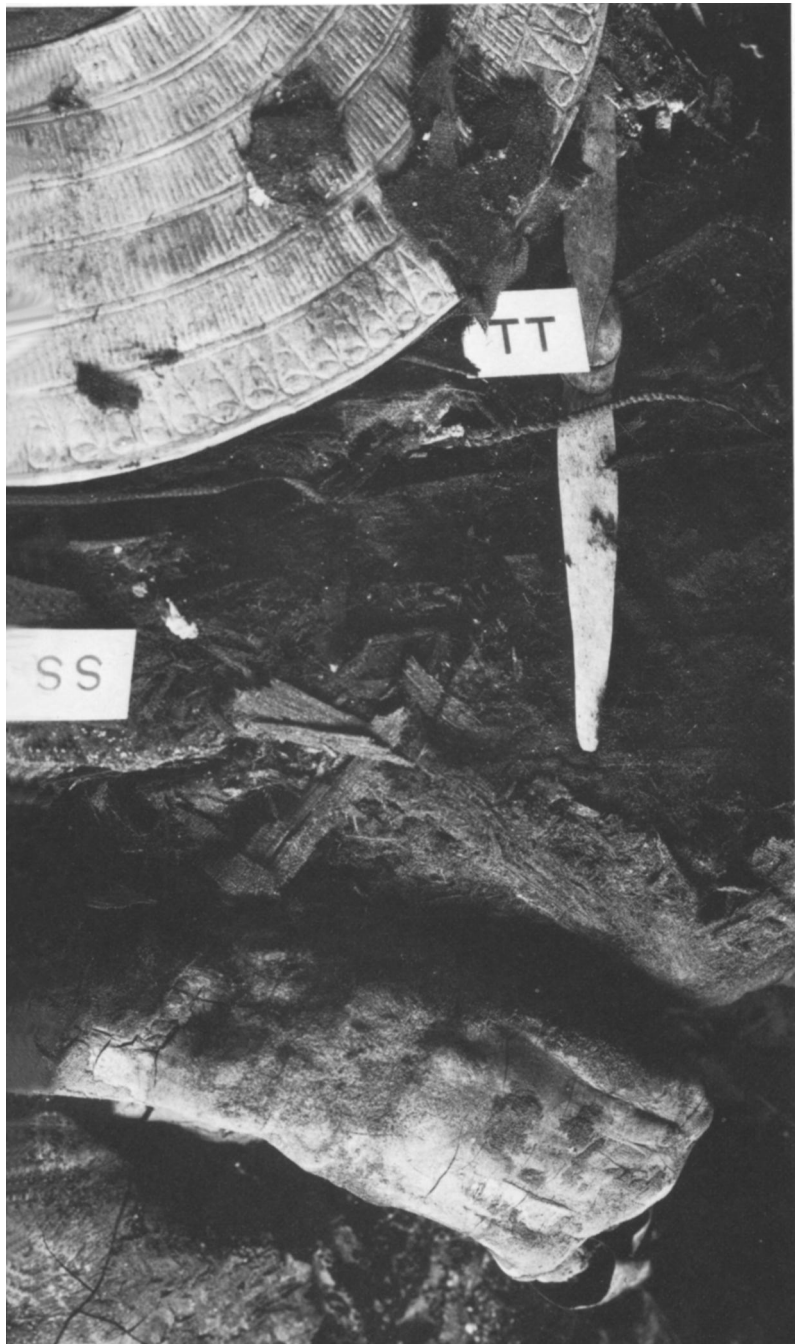
Tutankhamun is portrayed in both figures on the perfume vase above, found in the Burial Chamber. In the left-hand figure he is shown with a black face: it has no ethnic significance, but black was a lucky color in ancient Egypt and the color of the fertile Nile soil, so it may symbolize rebirth.





Tutankhamun's mummy was in poor condition: the precious unguents with which it had been lavishly anointed had carbonized the flesh and linen wrappings to a crumbling residue. The unguents had done relatively little damage to the 143 objects within the wrappings: these were chiefly amulets (protective charms), often made specifically for funerary use. There were, however, several pieces that seem to have belonged to the young king during his lifetime, such as some of the many bracelets (below and left) and the exquisitely crafted dagger at the right, its blade of specially hardened gold. The animals on the sheath show traces of foreign influence; in this period Egypt was a rich, cosmopolitan power, and craftsmen from many countries worked alongside Egyptian artisans in royal workshops.









Among the tomb's finest examples of the technical skill of the Egyptian jeweler, both these necklaces depict the vulture of the ancient goddess Nekhbet. The Nekhbet vulture represented in the spectacular pectoral at the left spread her protective wings over Tutankhamun's chest. This flexible gold collar, fragile and purely funerary, is inlaid with "feathers" of colored glass in imitation of turquoise, jasper, and lapis lazuli.

The pendant below was placed close to the mummy, and since the innermost layers of wrappings contained Tutankhamun's personal possessions, it was probably a piece that he had worn in his lifetime. It is made of solid gold, encrusted with colored glass on the front. On the reverse, the vulture is shown wearing a pendant bearing Tutankhamun's name, just as the pharaoh was wearing a pendant with Nekhbet's symbol.

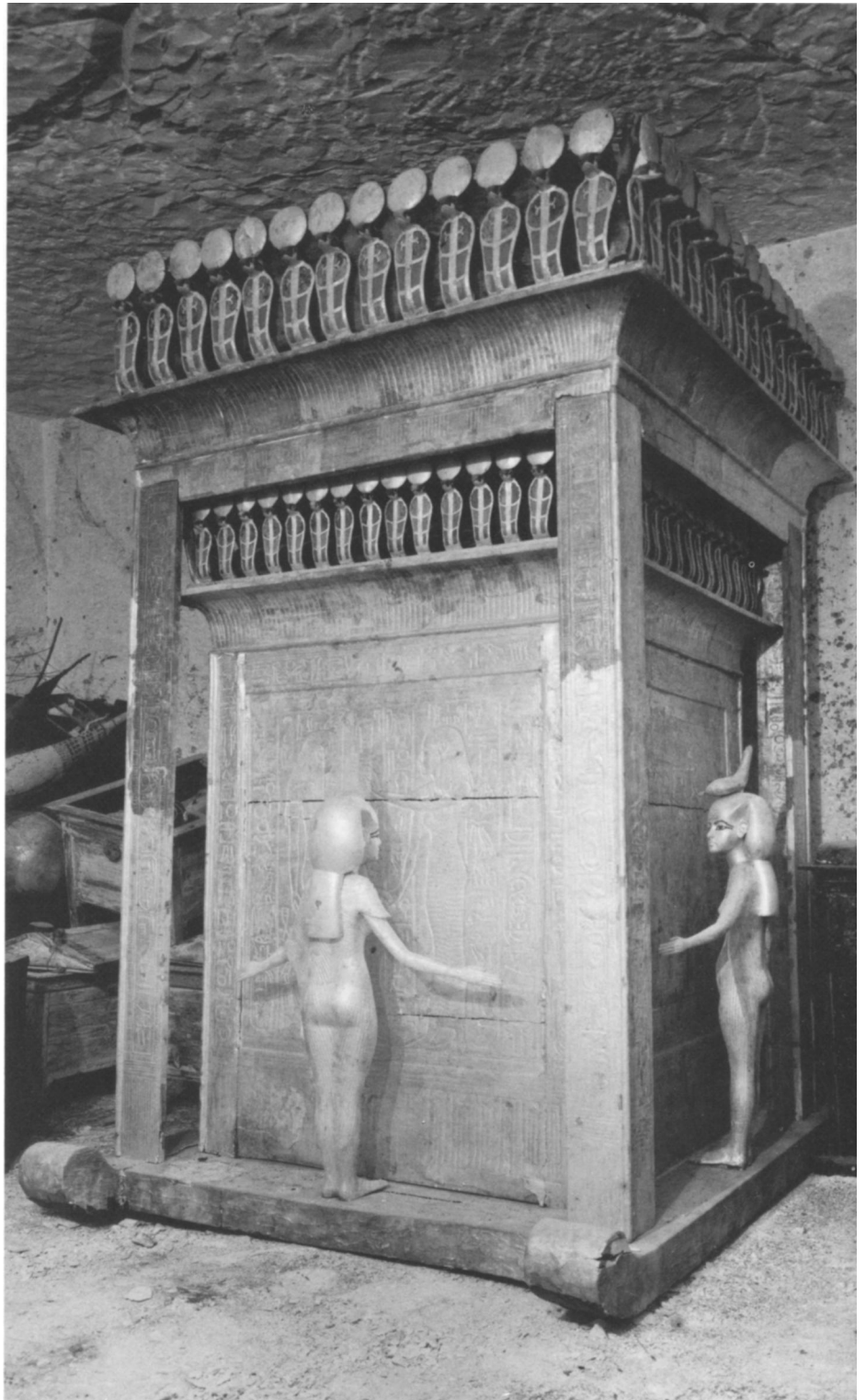


TREASURY

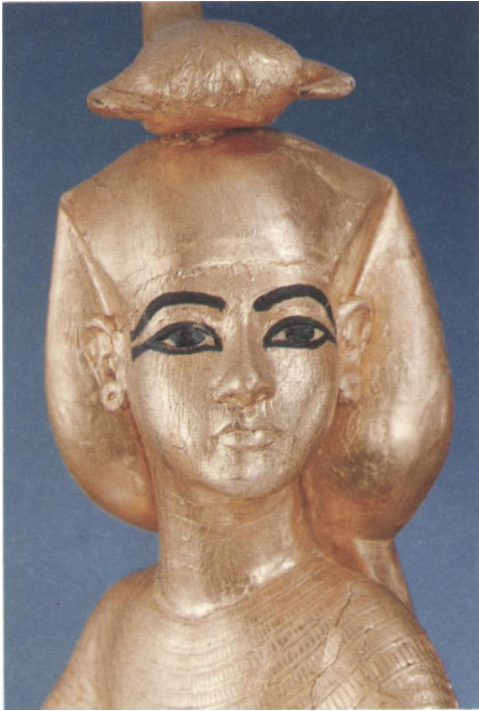




Anubis, the jackal-like god who guards the dead, watched over the entrance to the third room, called the Treasury. Here were placed boxes holding protective deities and symbolic figures to help the pharaoh through the underworld, model boats, chests of jewelry for his use in the afterlife, a large cow head representing Hathor, the goddess of the Theban necropolis, and the breathtaking gilded shrine containing the king's internal organs, which had been mummified separately. Four goddesses stood at the sides, stretching their arms around it to spread their protection over it. "A monument not easily forgotten," wrote Carter. "Its simple grandeur, the calm which seemed to accompany the four gracious little statuettes that guarded it, produced a mystery and an appeal to the imagination that would be difficult to describe."







The lovely statuette shown here – made of wood overlaid with plaster and gilded – portrays the goddess Selket, associated not only with funerary duties but also with childbirth and nursing, and noted for her control of magic, in particular the treatment of scorpion stings by means of magic. Her symbol, a scorpion, is shown on her head.

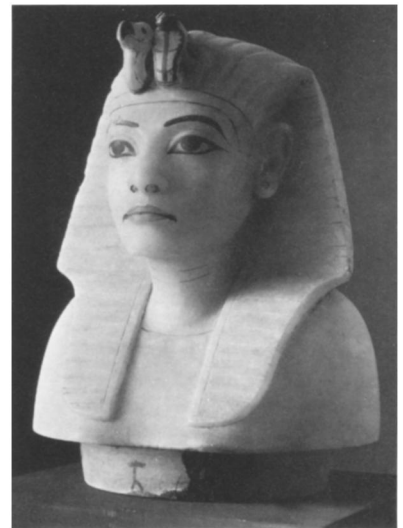
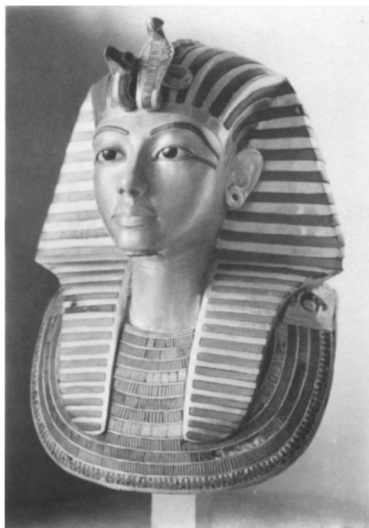
This figure suggests how the naturalism of the preceding Amarna period had infused Egyptian art with special freshness and grace. The turn of Selket's head – as if looking out for intruders – violates the age-old rule of frontality, which had decreed that every three-dimensional figure should be portrayed as if seen from the front. Every detail, from the flowing lines of her pleated dress and shawl to the slenderness of her neck and arms, contributes to the elegance of the piece as a work of art.







Within the gilded shrine, the four goddesses were again portrayed on an alabaster chest (left), which contained spaces for the pharaoh's liver, stomach (or spleen), lungs, and intestines. Each compartment was capped with an alabaster portrait of the king: the photographs at the right show how similar the representations are on one of the lids and on the golden mask, despite their differences in medium and scale. In the picture above, the lids have been removed, and the tops of four miniature coffins, bathed in unguents, can be seen.



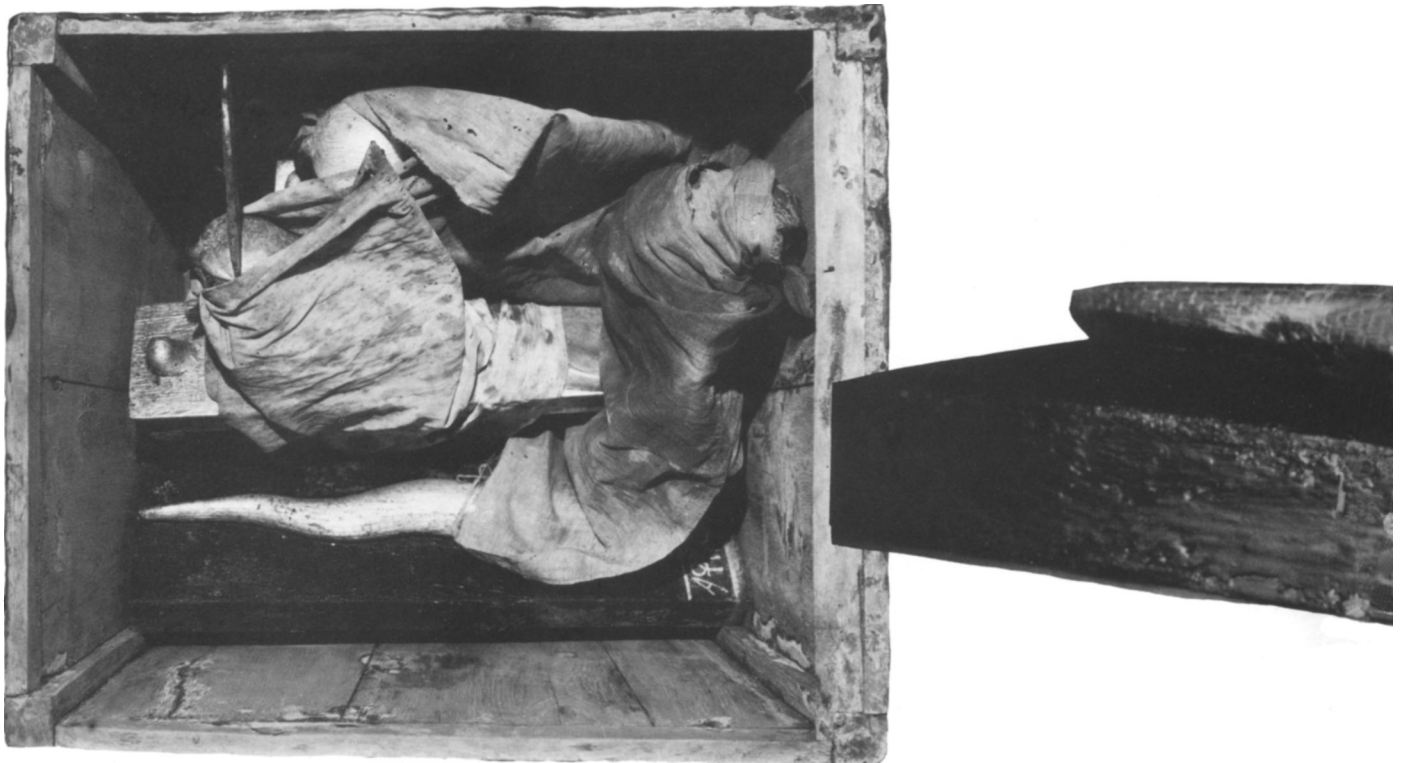


The elaborate miniature coffins (one shown at the left) containing Tutankhamun's internal organs may originally have been made for Smenkhkara, his brother or half-brother. Smenkhkara's name seems to have been erased and replaced by Tutankhamun's name in several places.

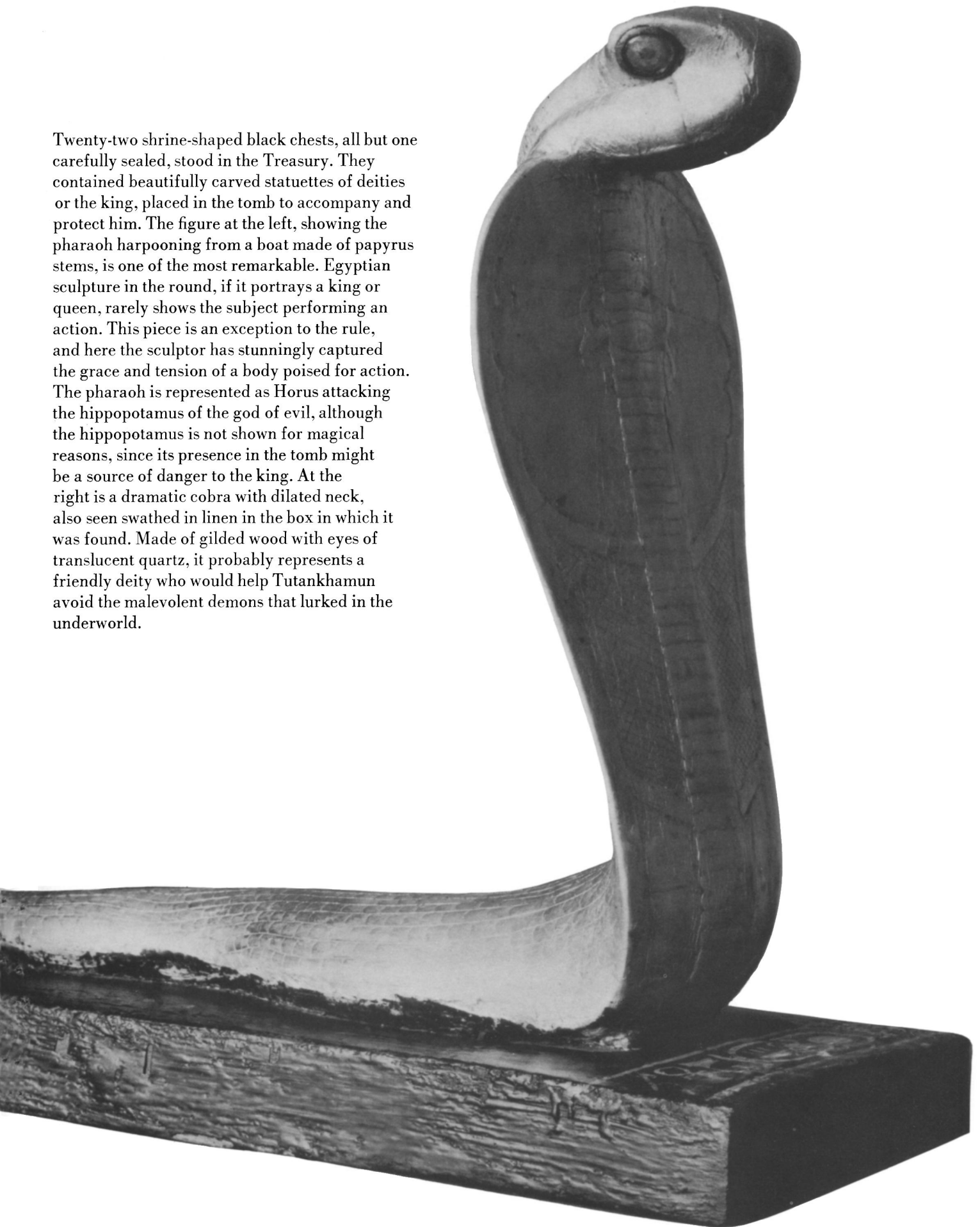
Also found in the Treasury was the gold statuette shown below, only two-and-one-eighth inches high. It was buried in a little wooden coffin together with a lock of hair. It may represent Tutankhamun, although the identification is uncertain and the crouching position is very unusual for an image of a king.

At the left, Tutankhamun's features appear on a *shawabty*, a figure placed in a tomb so it could perform the chores the deceased might be called upon to do in the next world. A spell from the Book of the Dead is inscribed on the front, instructing it to say it is ready to do the work for Tutankhamun if he is commanded "to cultivate the fields, to flood the meadows, or to transport the sand of the east to the west." All the figures illustrated here are carrying the crook and the flail, the emblems of royalty and the insignia of Osiris, god of the dead.

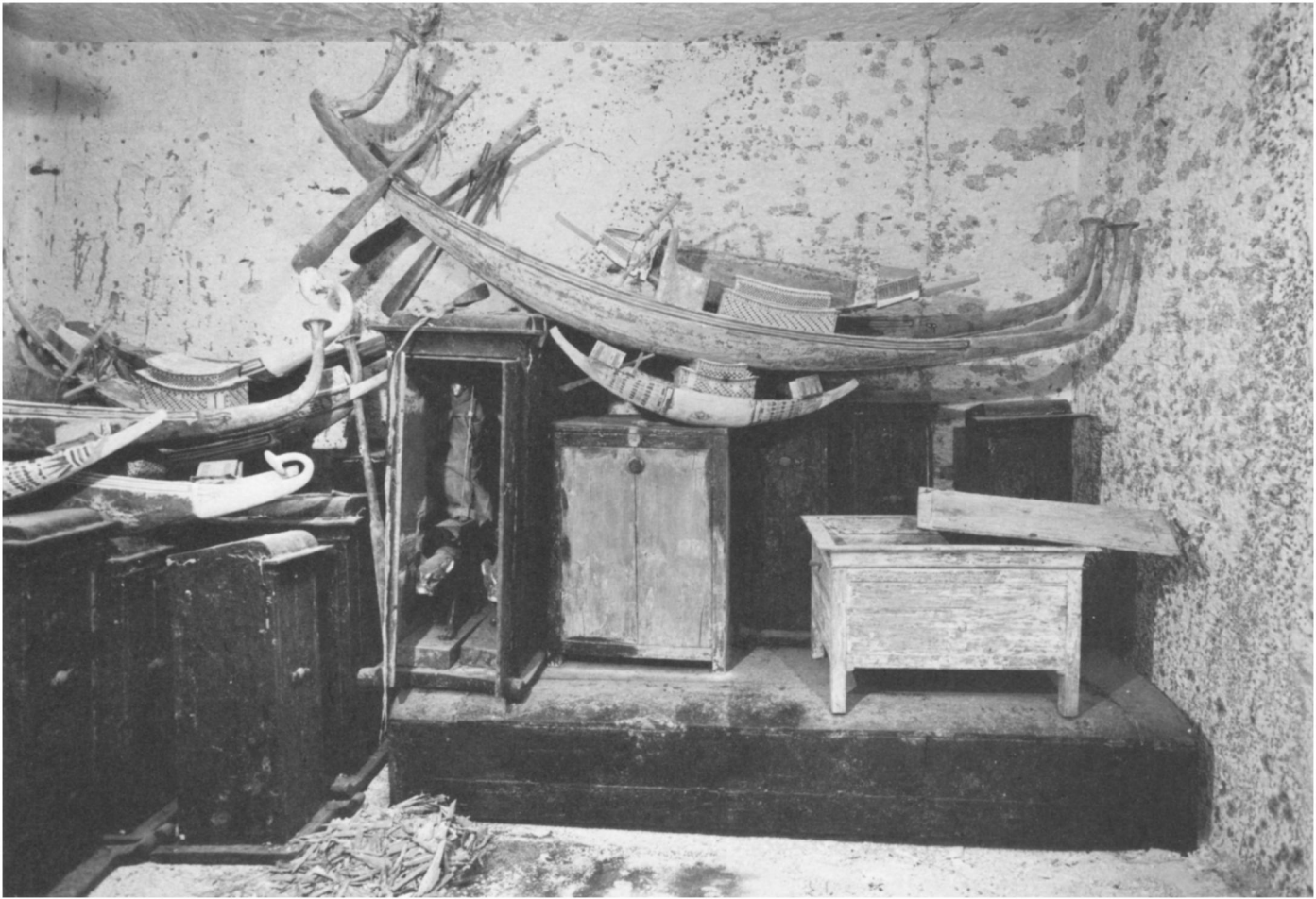




Twenty-two shrine-shaped black chests, all but one carefully sealed, stood in the Treasury. They contained beautifully carved statuettes of deities or the king, placed in the tomb to accompany and protect him. The figure at the left, showing the pharaoh harpooning from a boat made of papyrus stems, is one of the most remarkable. Egyptian sculpture in the round, if it portrays a king or queen, rarely shows the subject performing an action. This piece is an exception to the rule, and here the sculptor has stunningly captured the grace and tension of a body poised for action. The pharaoh is represented as Horus attacking the hippopotamus of the god of evil, although the hippopotamus is not shown for magical reasons, since its presence in the tomb might be a source of danger to the king. At the right is a dramatic cobra with dilated neck, also seen swathed in linen in the box in which it was found. Made of gilded wood with eyes of translucent quartz, it probably represents a friendly deity who would help Tutankhamun avoid the malevolent demons that lurked in the underworld.

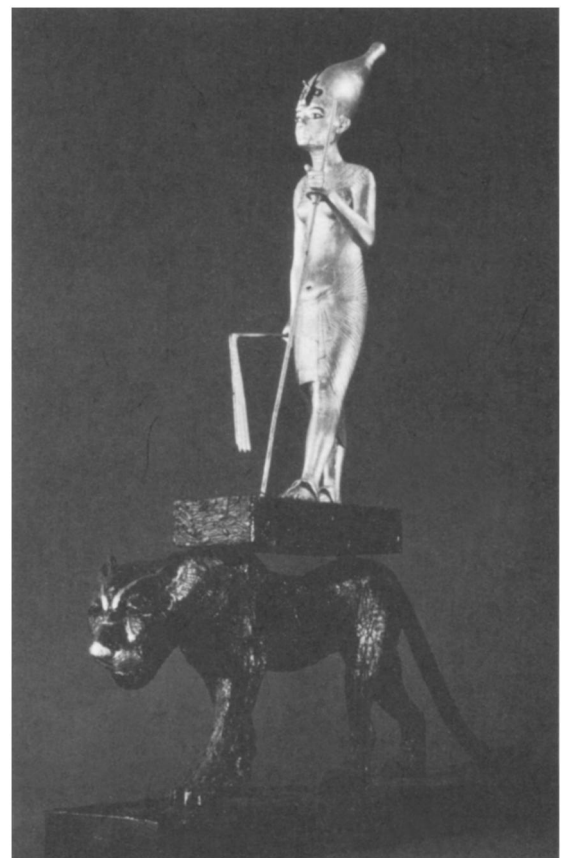




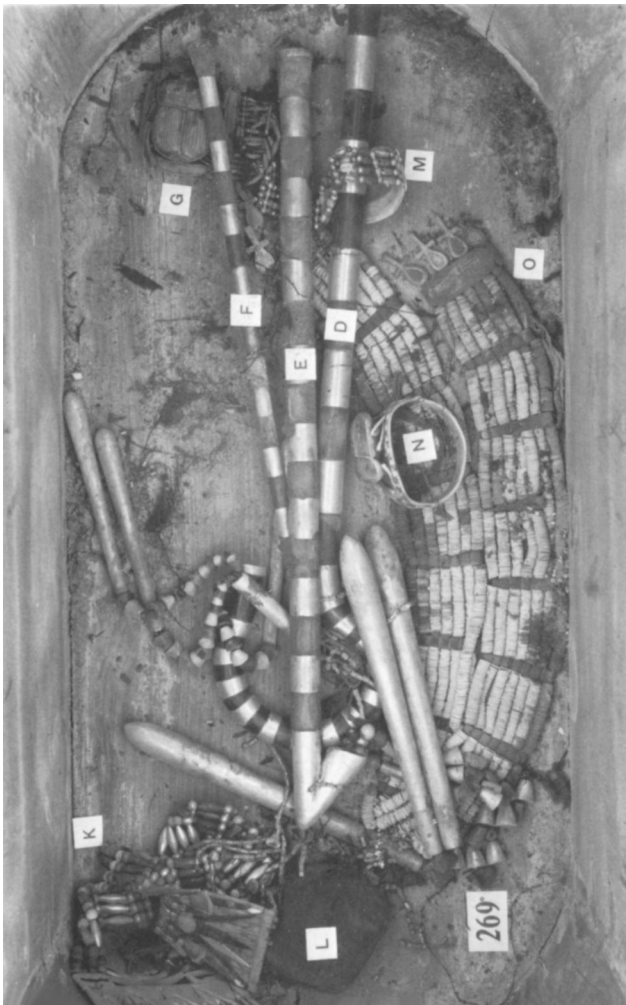


An opulent example of the jeweler's art, the pendant at the left embodies a complex symbol of the sun god. In ancient Egypt, the sun god could be represented by a falcon – perhaps because of its habit of flying high in the air – or by a scarab, because the beetle's custom of pushing a ball of dung (its source of food) suggested the trip of the sun across the heavens. In this jewel the disparate symbols are combined: a scarab made of semiprecious chalcedony has been given the wings, tail, and hind legs of a falcon.

Another symbolic piece, one of two found together in a black shrine (above), is the statue on the right, depicting the king standing on the back of a leopard. Its precise meaning is not known: the leopard may be carrying the pharaoh on his dangerous journey through the underworld. Like all inhabitants of the underworld, the leopard is shown black because he lived in darkness, but the king is painted gold since he represents the sun god, who brought a brief spell of light to the underworld as he passed through it each night.

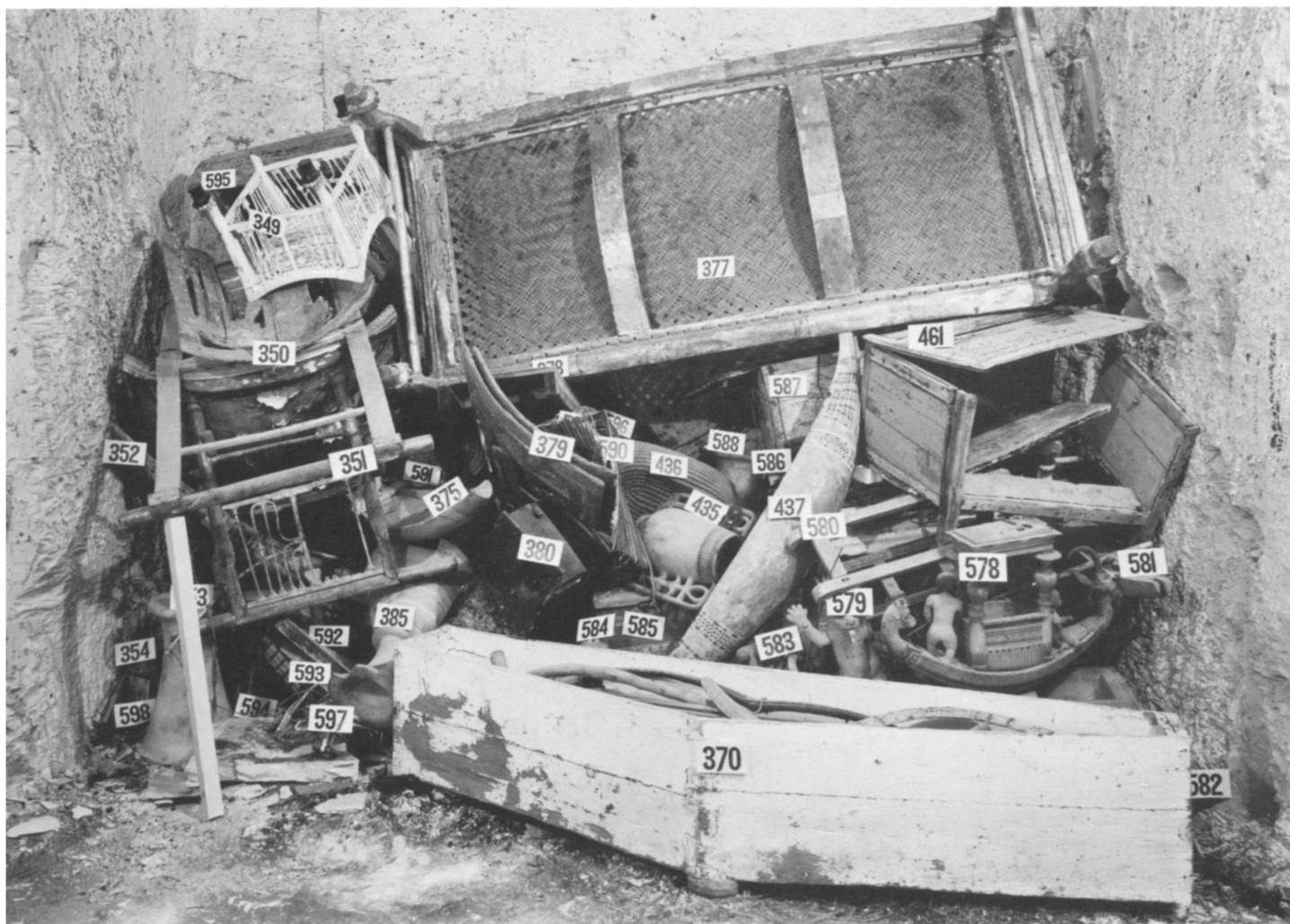






Although ancient robbers had rummaged through the tomb in search of precious metals, many pieces of jewelry had escaped their attentions. Illustrated here is a chest in the shape of the royal cartouche, its top bearing the hieroglyphic symbols of Tutankhamun's name and one of his many titles. Two stages in its unpacking are shown nearby; if you look carefully you will see the pieces on this page as they were found: a delicate necklace representing the moon bark, a mirror case shaped like the hieroglyphic sign meaning both "life" and "hand mirror," and a scarab bracelet and a pair of earrings, both probably worn by Tutankhamun as a boy.





The necropolis guards had made an attempt to bring order to the other rooms after they had been ransacked by robbers, but the tiny chamber known as the Annex was found exactly as the thieves had left it. Stacked against the wall in the photograph illustrated here are a bed, stools, chests, a model boat, and a large white box containing bows and other weapons. Behind the box, near the center, can be seen the alabaster unguent vase in the shape of a standing lion (labeled 579) illustrated in color at the left. Its left front paw rests on the hieroglyphic sign for “protection.” The lid had been wrenched off, but the contents – some black, dried, fatty substance – remained intact.







One of the ancient thieves' footprints can be seen on the lid of the white box in the upper left-hand corner, and amid a jumble of pottery wine jars and food baskets (most containing dried fruits and seeds) lie the top of the gameboard illustrated at the left (345) and the elegant alabaster vase (344) illustrated in the center of this page.

Also found in the Annex was the charming vase shown above. It is unusual in two respects: it is made of silver, much rarer than gold in Egypt, and is in the shape of a pomegranate. Recently introduced from western Asia, pomegranates were probably still prized novelties when this piece was made.





This ivory headrest depicts Shu, the god of the air, who, at the beginning of time, lifted the sky off the earth and thus brought order out of chaos. Here, to indicate that the base represents the earth, the artist has carved two lions, symbolizing the mountains on the eastern and western horizons between which the sun rose and set. Headrests were often placed in tombs since to the ancient Egyptians the head was the seat of life, and a headrest might magically ensure a plentiful supply of air around the head.



Roughly discarded among the woven baskets in the Annex were two of the most beautiful objects in Tutankhamun's tomb: a casket and its lid (551 and 540 in the picture above), made of wood veneered with carved and painted ivory. The panel on the lid (right) portrays the young pharaoh leaning casually on his staff as he stretches out his hand to receive two bouquets of lotus, papyrus, and poppies from the queen. The innovations of the art of the Amarna period are reflected not only in the informal, graceful poses but also in what Howard Carter called the unself-conscious friendliness of husband and wife. A link between us and that tremendous past, such an object from Tutankhamun's tomb "helps us to visualize," Carter wrote, "that the young king must have been very like ourselves."



