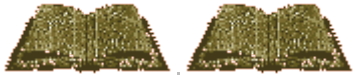
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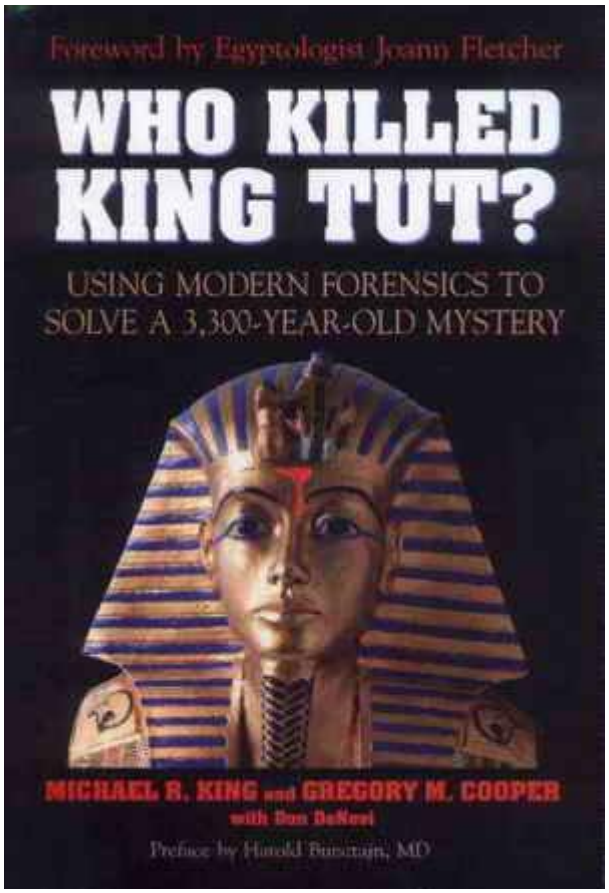
A FASCINATING BOOK, WHICH PRESENTS A "POPULAR SCIENCE" TYPE OF VIEW ON EGYPTOLOGY AND FORENSIC MATTERS

Who Killed King Tut? Using Modern Forensics To Solve A 3,300-Year-Old Mystery by Michael R. King and Gregory M. Cooper with Don DeNevi. Illustrations, Hard Cover, 6" x 9". Illustrations, Notes, Index.
Prometheus Books, 59 John Glenn Drive, Amherst, New York 14228-2197, USA. or . Publication Date 2004. 258 pages, Category: History, ISBN 1-59102-183-9. Price $25.00 [$16.50 from amazon]

Official site of this book: http://www.prometheusbooks.com/catalog/book_1452.html

Please the linked page (page002ex) to read excerpts from this book.

Click Cover to buy from Amazon



There is no doubt that the discovery of the sarcophagus of **King Tutankhamen** (rather irreverently referred to as "King Tut" in this book,.. or so it may seem) was one of the greatest historical discoveries of all time. Most readers would be familiar with the fascinating story of Howard Carter 's 1922 discovery of the tomb and the remains of the boy king whose gold funeral mask still continues to fascinate visitors to the Cairo Museum . Most, including this reviewer, had assumed that Tutankhamen died of natural disease. Several Egyptian mummies show the unmistakable scars of smallpox and tuberculosis. It therefore comes as a surprise to discover that he was murdered!

Or was he?

Fascinated by the brief life and premature death of young King Tutankhamen, the authors of this book set off to unravel a so-called ancient mystery "using a combination of modern forensic archaeological evidence, modern forensic techniques, and psychological profiling" to determine whether or not young King Tutankhamen was actually murdered.

This appears to have been their first visit to Egypt.

What is the evidence?

Michael R. King, the first author of this book



Having carried out many hundreds of second autopsies and exhumations (and I am talking of relatively fresh bodies) I am only too aware of artefacts that are commonly present and are mistaken for ante-mortem injury.

Here, the authors are looking at a death that occurred thousands of years ago, was subjected to rigorous embalming of a degree not seen today and was then subjected to a rather crude autopsy by Carter and his associates.

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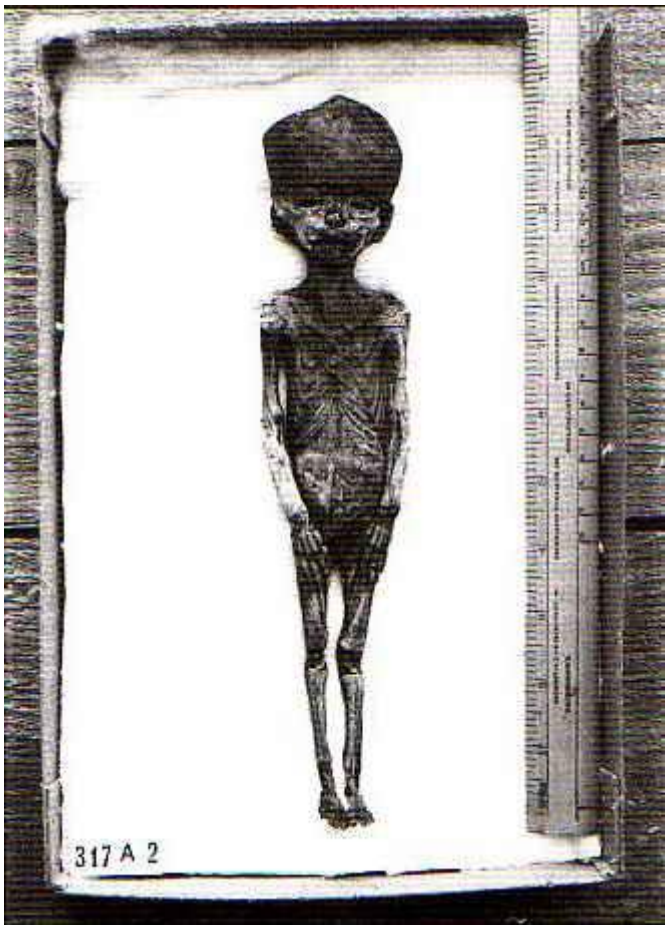
Sadly, I find that I cannot agree with the authors.

The preface informs the reader that the fundamental principles of Cooper and King's inquiry are modelled on the Sherlock Holmes approach to inquiry. That is worrying!

Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character and forensic pathologists, scientists and law enforcement officers should do well to avoid arriving at far-fetched conclusions based on slim and largely artefactual evidence.

As to the presence of the small chip of bone in the skull cavity I wouldn't be surprised if it was part of the ethmoid bone. The embalmers could not have removed the brain without deliberately perforating the ethmoid bone!

The book is full of interesting pictures like this, which make it an absorbing read. This one on page 99 shows one of King Tut and his wife Ankhesenamun's stillborn infants.



View this book on Amazon

To be fair, the authors do admit that all of the radiological findings suggestive of trauma are probably artefactual but they relegate this view to the appendices.

There are a few glaring mistakes, this sentence on page 179 being an example:

"He (Dr Ernst Rodin) mentioned that although the head was clean-shaven, there was a waxy film over it which immediately raised the question of **adipolsia** (*sic*). This is a technical term for a drowning victim."

This is totally incorrect! I presume that by "adipolsia" the authors are referring to "adipocere".

Adipocere is not pathognomonic of drowning and a mere "waxy film" cannot be called adipocere.

Behavioural profiling

The authors of this book are criminal profilers and law enforcement officers. They are not experts on radiological or pathological matters. Whilst they deplore the tunnel vision of experts they unfortunately forget that they are wearing rose-tinted glasses.

It is obvious that at the very start they had decided that Tutankhamen was murdered. With this firmly fixed in their minds they then set off to prove it by clutching at artefactual straws.

Finally they arrive at their conclusion with a total disregard for the legal standard of proving a case "beyond reasonable doubt". Their views do not even qualify for "on the balance of probabilities".

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But that of course is the view of a pathologist or a scientist.

King and Cooper apply principles of behavioural profiling and are going for a prosecution based on "circumstantial evidence".

On this at least their arguments sound compelling. Their investigation becomes more intriguing as they focus on the King's inner circle - his wife, Ankhesenamun; his closest advisors, Prime Minister Ay and treasurer Maya; and the powerful general of the Egyptian army, Horemheb.

...A fascinating book which presents a "Popular Science" type of view on Egyptology and forensic matters... There is no doubt that King and Cooper are full of enthusiasm and are overawed by the grandeur of ancient Egypt... Readers of popular murder mystery type books would love it...
One by one, Cooper and King eliminate the suspects based on the evidence or probabilities.

(Again there is of course the limitation that the "witness statements" are rather old and could be subject to various interpretations.)

Finally, they draw up a modern style "charge sheet" formally charging their suspect with murder of the boy pharaoh.

If I were Ay the accused, I wouldn't bother hiring a lawyer to defend myself against a charge of murder.

There is no compelling proof that King Tutankhamen died of trauma!

Nevertheless it is a fascinating book, which presents a "Popular Science" type of view on Egyptology and forensic matters. Readers of popular murder-mystery type books would love it.

Authors King and Cooper are full of enthusiasm and are overawed by the grandeur of ancient Egypt . In some places their narrative sounds refreshingly like a "Boy's Own" type of yarn!

The book appears to have been the offshoot of a TV documentary (Atlantic Productions/Discovery Channel), which is reflected in the style of writing.

There is no doubt that the book will stir up an interest amongst young readers.

The book is well printed, presented and is complete with a number of good quality monochrome as well as colour illustrations including informative maps.

-Gyan Fernando

Dr Gyan C. A. Fernando is a Forensic Pathologist in the West Country of England. He has thirty years of experience in forensic



matters including exhumations and examination of skeletal remains. He is an inveterate traveller, and it is easier to count the countries he has NOT travelled to, than the ones he has. He is an avid Egyptologist too, so he was uniquely equipped to review this book, being both a forensic pathologist and an Egyptologist. He has visited Cairo and Luxor and was particularly fascinated by the Museum of Mummification in Luxor. Here he is seen at the entry of King Tutankhamen's tomb (Date of pic is 4th March 2002. Location: Luxor). Click

picture to enlarge.

Order this Book by clicking below.

Who Killed King Tut?

A very interesting paper has been written on "The Skull and Cervical Spine Radiographs of Tutankhamen" by Richard S. Boyer, Ernst A. Rodin, Todd C. Grey, and R. C. Connolly in June - July 2003 issue of *American Journal of Neuroradiology*. Full text of this paper can be downloaded free of cost from their site. Interested readers may click here to reach ANJR site, from where this paper can be downloaded. Go to the section entitled "HEAD AND NECK". Seventh paper is the one on Tutankhamen. King and Cooper give the entire text of this paper in their book in Appendix 3.

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