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## The glint of gold: Press coverage of the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb

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THE GLINT OF GOLD: PRESS COVERAGE OF THE  
DISCOVERY OF TUTANKHAMUN'S TOMB

by

Jon S. Arakaki

Bachelor of Arts  
University of Redlands  
1986

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

**Master of Arts Degree**  
**Hank Greenspun Department of Communication**  
**Greenspun College of Urban Affairs**

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**University of Nevada, Las Vegas**  
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## Thesis Approval

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Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

**The Glint of Gold: Press Coverage of the  
Discovery of Tutankhamun's Tomb**

by

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Professor of Communication  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Press coverage of the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, through articles published in the London *Times* and *New York Times* from November 30, 1922 to January 31, 1923, will be analyzed. A contract between the excavators and the London *Times* provided the newspaper with exclusive reports and information, while the *New York Times* and others initially relied mainly on eye-witness accounts and second hand gossip.

This study compares and contrasts different accounts of the same discovery in terms of the themes, tone, and language of relevant articles in the two newspapers. Additionally, the study includes a survey of the relationship between science and journalism during the years prior to the discovery, and offers insights that are applicable to this relationship in the 1990s as well as the 1920s.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

At first I could see nothing, the hot air escaping from the chamber causing the candle flame to flicker, but presently, as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, details of the room within emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues, and gold—everywhere the glint of gold.

—Howard Carter, The Discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamun

The structure, seen from a distance, dominates the skyline as you approach the city. Four symmetrical triangular sides meet at a single point, forming a nearly perfect pyramid. The blocks that form the structure are fitted so closely, the blade of a knife could not penetrate its joints. A massive sculpture with the body of a crouching lion and the head of a man guards the entrance to the pyramid, facing the east and the rising sun. Across flowing water and through palm trees stands a single obelisk, marking the importance of the site and drawing thousands of visitors to the great structure.

The objects mentioned above are not situated on the Giza Plateau in Egypt, but on Las Vegas Boulevard in Nevada. The Luxor Hotel and Casino, positioned at the south end of the Las Vegas Strip, is a formidable sight for the first-time visitor driving into town. At the hotel's official opening in 1994, Sayed Moussa, chairman of the Egyptian Tourist Authority, spoke of "a new cultural bridge between Luxor, Egypt and Luxor, Las Vegas" ("Howard Carter in Luxorland," 1994). A cultural bridge to America, however, had already existed since November 1922 with the discovery of King Tutankhamun's

tomb in the Valley of the Kings by Howard Carter and his financial backer, Lord Carnarvon. The discovery brought to light all the splendors of ancient Egypt and launched a craze called “Tutmania,” which started from the first press report, continued for the next three years, and to a certain extent, continues up to this day (Frayling, 1992).

That a developer would risk \$375 million on an Egyptian theme hotel with the low-key Howard Carter as its personality centerpiece indicates the fascination has indeed continued (“Howard Carter in Luxorland,” 1994). The Luxor holds its own against the castles, roller coasters, theme parks, pirate ships, and white tigers that follow it on the Strip, partly because of the far-reaching effects of the discovery.

The events surrounding the discovery of the tomb captured the public’s imagination as no other archaeological find had, due in part to extensive press coverage. Newspapers were quick to discover that “as a story, Tutankhamun had it all: the thrill of the chase, the lure of buried treasure—and with Lord Carnarvon’s untimely death, a sting in the tail” (Reeves, 1990, p. 10). (The last line referred to rumors of a “pharaoh’s curse” which surrounded the death of Carnarvon and kicked off a craze of its own). Not only did the discovery bring the name of Tutankhamun to public consciousness, it also popularized all things Egyptian. Historian Christopher Frayling wrote:

The phrase “the Egyptian revival” had, of course, been used before of moments in the history of design. The main difference between the 1923-25 revival and the two previous ones of note was, precisely, the fresh impetus given to it by the mass media of newsprint, photography and the cinema. Up until the era of “Tutmania,” the influence of Nile style had, on

the whole, been confined to the worlds of collectors, connoisseurs, art lovers and private interior decorators. (Frayling, 1992, p. 18)

Needless to say, the event has been covered extensively. Hundreds of books, articles, and essays have been written over the past seventy-five years, most dealing with events leading up to the find, the discovery itself, details of each artifact uncovered, and the general archaeological, artistic, and cultural significance of the excavation. There are, however, aspects of the find which warrant further investigation and which have not been analyzed in detail. This study will examine one such aspect: exactly how the arrangement for the release of information affected the news coverage of the event.

The conditions under which the media was handled make this aspect nearly as interesting as the tomb and its treasures. In a decision that considerably controlled the flow of information to the public, Lord Carnarvon sold to the London *Times* world copyright on all news, photography, and drawings of the tomb (Hoving, 1978). The contract gave the *Times* a tremendous advantage in terms of receiving first-hand information as well as exclusive quotes and interviews. Other newspapers had to “content themselves with second hand stories, on-the-spot accounts of the tense atmosphere surrounding the stone parapet at the opening of the tomb, gossip more or less overheard in the bar at the Winter Palace Hotel, and historical surveys by London-trained Egyptologists” (Frayling, 1992, p. 29).

On January 10, 1923, Carnarvon signed the exclusive contract with the *Times* for five thousand British pounds, plus seventy-five percent of all profits from the sale of the *Times*’ articles to other world newspapers (Hoving, 1978). In addition to benefiting the excavators financially, they claimed the contract also made logistical sense. Egyptologist

Alan Gardiner, a member of the excavation team, pointed out “the arrangement would save considerable time for Carter, who would have to deal with only one member of the press rather than with a horde of reporters” (Hoving, 1978, p. 149).

The arrangement was not unprecedented—the London *Times* and the Mount Everest Expedition had a similar contract the previous year. However, Carnarvon’s arrangement produced emotionally charged claims of foreign arrogance and disrespect of Egyptians by the local Egyptian press. It also caused accusations of the commercialization of science by the rest of the world press, because the discovery included the mummified body of a boy king and hundreds of national treasures. The contract is what makes the event worth examining in terms of press coverage and the dispersion of scientific information.

Another factor contributed to the significance of the press arrangement. Once Carnarvon made his announcement of the agreement, Howard Carter wrote *Times* Egyptian correspondent Arthur Merton and asked him to join the excavation team. Merton responded:

I beg to confirm my acceptance of your offer to join your staff in the capacity of publicity agent...as regards the publication on news and data, I shall only communicate such information as you may consent to publish, to such quarters as you may, from time to time, indicate to me. (Hoving, 1978, p. 155)

The fact that Merton was a reporter and not a trained archaeologist or draftsman, as were other members of the team, makes this invitation questionable from a scientific point of view.

Looking forward to more recent archaeological finds of note, it appears the release of information to the public and handling of the press are still issues to be resolved. The 5,000 year-old Tyrolean ice-man, discovered in 1991 by tourists in the Italian Alps, generated national interest and news teams were invited to document the removal of the body by Austrian authorities. Not knowing the age of the body, authorities were captured on video nudging the body with ski poles and generally mishandling the removal, causing outrage in the international scientific community. For twenty-four hours the body lay exposed at Innsbruck University, where it was photographed and fingered by members of the press at a news conference ("Iceman in the Cold Light of Day," 1993). Although the press provided prompt, first hand information, the contamination caused by their handling of the body caused complications when DNA and other tests were carried out.

An Egyptian find in 1995, of the tomb of Ramses II's sons in the Valley of the Kings, caused a mild media frenzy and was commonly hailed as the greatest archaeological find since Tutankhamun. After the discovery, Egyptologist Kent Weeks had to shut down the tomb to make the talk-show circuit and handle the press, and eventually hired an agent from William Morris to handle the publicity ("All the King's Sons," 1996). This delay brought news of the discovery to an international audience, but hindered scientific work in a tomb constantly threatened by environmental factors.

Balancing scientific and public relations duties by the researcher/scientist is a delicate and complicated matter. During this decade, numerous astronomers felt NASA's publicity machine oversold legitimate findings and promoted results to the public before other researchers had time to evaluate them ("NASA PR: Hype or Public Education?," 1993). On the other hand, the public wants news reported on a timely basis, and the more

intriguing the headline and article, the greater the chance of public support for increased government funding.

Nelkin (1988) observed, “Many journalists are, in effect, retailing science and technology more than investigating them, identifying with their sources more than challenging them” (p. 265). When the topic reported is not one easily understood by the journalist, it is his/her responsibility to investigate further and clarify items with potential to confuse the public. Meeting this responsibility is difficult when dealing with information of a technical nature. Nelkin also suggested, “Many accusations of inaccuracy are traceable to reporters’ efforts to present complex material in a readable and appealing style” (p. 265).

The way in which information is communicated to the media also affects how it is reported to the public. In general, findings or discoveries that generate big headlines get launched with a press conference (“NASA PR: Hype or Public Education,” 1993). One or two “experts” are usually in attendance to help answer questions and clarify any points of confusion, although not all journalists agree with this approach. Science journalist Thomas Sigfried of the *Dallas Morning News* stated, “I prefer results to be presented at scientific meetings where you can discuss results with other people. Sure they have experts on hand, but they’re always the same people” (“NASA PR: Hype or Public Education?,” 1993).

Although issues between science and journalism will continue as long as both institutions exist, there are occasions when both have the same agenda and are striving for the same goals. At times, these goals are for the good of all involved: to better educate,



to explain complicated information, to promote better understanding. At other times, these goals are more about fame, glory and money.

The discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb included both the battle and the bond between the two sides. Although other major scientific breakthroughs and archaeological finds have received heavy press coverage, Carter's discovery produced a sustained stream of newspaper articles and enough variables to make it the most interesting combination of science and journalism.

### Purpose

Archaeology under the limelight is a new and bewildering experience for most of us...no power on earth could shelter us from the light of publicity that beat down upon us. We were helpless, and had to make the best of it.

--Howard Carter, The Discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamun

The purpose of this study is to analyze the dispensation of information and media coverage of a singular archaeological find: the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. The focus will be on newspaper articles, as well as letters and diary entries of the excavators from the original announcement on November 30, 1922 until the end of January, 1923.

The unique feature of this event during its first two months was that one media source, *The Times of London* (hereafter, the *London Times*), had exclusive rights to information from the excavation while other sources had to base their reporting on eye-witness accounts and second hand stories. The *New York Times* was chosen as a source to compare with the accounts in the *London Times* because of its reputation as a leader in science journalism, "its widespread circulation," and its "influence...as a trendsetter for topics" (Fursich and Lester, 1996, p. 28).

This study will not examine any of the archaeological aspects of the discovery. None of the ongoing research regarding the artifacts discovered in the tomb will be discussed. Rather, this study will examine how the news was reported by two different newspapers under different circumstances, and how these circumstances affected the end product to the general public. It is hoped the reader will understand that what appears to be a simple, straight-forward process is much more complex, and how behind-the-scenes activities affect the flow of information from scientists to the masses.

Among the questions this study will address:

- 1) To what extent did exclusive access to information assist or inhibit the reporting of news?
- 2) What was the nature of the relationship between the media and those who controlled the information?
- 3) What can be learned from the decisions Lord Carnarvon and Howard Carter made regarding the handling of the press?

An account in the *Daily Telegraph* from January 1923 described the activity outside the tomb during the excavation:

When the last articles had been removed from the corridor today, the newspaper correspondents began a spirited dash across the desert to the banks of the Nile upon donkeys, horses, camels and chariot like sand-carts in a race to be the first to reach the telegraph offices (Hoving, 1978, p. 153).

In the current era of faxes, satellites, and the internet, using the wireless telegraph to transmit news articles may seem as antiquated as smoke signals and town criers. Yet,

though technology has changed the manner in which news is transmitted and received, many of the conflicts between journalism and science have not changed.

It often appears that journalists are at fault when scientific news is inaccurate or incomplete, but Nelkin (1988) concluded, “Problems of scientific communication could easily be attributed to the sources of the information, to suppression of facts, to manipulation of information, or to overeager, promotional public relations” (p. 268).

The media coverage of the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb provides a case study with which to examine Nelkin’s conclusion, and is an area worthy of study because of the amount of international interest it generated. Also, effects of the discovery are still being felt three quarters of a century later. Much can be learned from the decisions Carter and Carnarvon made regarding the press and how those decisions shaped news coverage.

### Review of Literature

Four areas of literature are reviewed for purposes of this study: 1) Primary sources on the discovery; 2) General overview of the discovery; 3) The relationship between science and the press; and 4) The history of science journalism.

#### Primary Sources

The primary sources for this study will be articles from the London *Times* and *New York Times*, and the diary entries and personal recollections of Howard Carter, which are available on the internet through the Oxford University web site and in The Discovery of the Tomb on Tutankhamen. Because Carter never published a scholarly paper on the excavation, the notes and his book are the best source for analyzing his thoughts and ideas as each new piece of information and artifact revealed itself (Hoving, 1978).

### Historical Overview

Historical overview of the discovery was provided by several books, most published since the mid-seventies, after Tutankhamun's treasures had traveled the world in a wildly successful tour. The most fascinating information is revealed by Hoving (1978) in Tutankhamun: The Untold Story. As head of the team from the Metropolitan Museum that organized the exhibition "The Treasures of Tutankhamun" for its American tour, Hoving examined nearly every piece of literature written about the boy king and the excavation of the tomb. His thorough investigation of notes, drawings, observations, and diary entries by the excavators brought to light secret deals, private arrangements, and other revelations unknown to the general public prior to 1978.

In The Face of Tutankhamun Frayling (1992), a cultural historian, presented a collection of published and unpublished essays that deal with neither the history of Tutankhamun and his times, the scientific and artistic significance of the tomb, nor details of the artifacts found in the tomb. Rather, the essays deal with the "craze" surrounding the discovery. Even though Howard Carter thought the discovery was "mainly of interest...to specialists in Egyptology" (p. xiii), the essays collected in this book prove otherwise.

Reeve's (1990) The Complete Tutankhamun: The King, The Tomb, The Royal Treasure provided detailed information on the excavation and the recovered artifacts. Reeves, former curator in the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum, is one of the world's leading experts on the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (the time of Tutankhamun's reign) and co-author of Howard Carter Before Tutankhamun (1993).

### Relationship Between Science and the Press

Several essays, studies, and articles provided general information on the relationship between science and the press. Nelkin (1988) discussed problems which affect how the public receives scientific information through the press in The High Cost of Hype. She cited reporting of NASA events as an example of how reporters simply accept what NASA feeds them, passing on information without questioning where it came from, whether it is accurate, or the credentials of the sources. In addition to addressing the problems, Nelkin attempted to offer solutions. “Scientists,” she wrote, “must restrain the promotional tendencies that lead to controls on information or to oversell, and they must open their doors to more probing investigation. And journalists on their part must try to convey understanding as well as information” (p. 270).

Flam (1993) examined NASA’s publicity machine in NASA PR: Hype or Public Education? Those within the NASA community feel they are providing a public service when their findings are communicated through the popular press and television, but some scientists believe there are other motives. One astronomer is quoted as saying, “What annoys me and other practicing scientists is that they (NASA) exaggerate otherwise interesting results” (p. 1416). The underlying feeling of researchers outside NASA is that more effort should be placed on explanation than promotion. Astrophysicist Gary Steigman states, “NASA may be underestimating the public’s taste by relying on spectacles” (p. 1417).

Fursich and Lester (1996) addressed the cultural significance of science journalism in Science Journalism Under Scrutiny: A Textual Analysis of “Science Times.” The New York *Times*’ science section, “Science Times,” was “examined as cultural text that

establishes a particular discourse created between the poles of scientific culture and popular culture” (p. 27).

### History of Science Journalism

Schudson (1978) provided an overview of the history of the *New York Times* and reasons for its ascent during the early part of the twentieth century in Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers. Additional background information on the *New York Times* and the London *Times* was provided by Berger (1951) in The Story of the New York Times: 1851-1951 and Fisher and Merrill (1980) in The World's Great Dailies: Profiles of Fifty Newspapers.

The formative years of science journalism, surveyed by Nelkin (1987), Burnham (1987) and Foust (1995), were depicted as a period of poor journalistic quality and hype. The consensus among these scholars is that the negative aspects of yellow journalism made its way into the science reporting of the day.

### Methodology

The announcement of the discovery on November 30, 1922, initiated three years of extensive press coverage followed by seven years of periodic coverage. Looking back on this period, Howard Carter noted:

One must suppose that at the time the discovery was made, the general public was in a state of profound boredom with news of reparations, conferences and mandates, and craved for some new topic...the idea of buried treasure is one that appeals to most of us. (Carter, 1977, p. 141)

This study provided a general survey of the relationship between science and the press during the period leading up to the discovery, and utilized Howard Carter's find as a case study of the results of this relationship.

Every article from the London *Times* and *New York Times* pertaining to the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb between November 30, 1922, and January 31, 1923, was read, and attention was given to the different themes that occurred during the coverage, as well as tone and language. The initial two month period was chosen to capture the flurry of journalistic activity that commenced once the discovery was announced. Also, the *New York Times* reported on January 31, 1923:

The *New York Times*, by arrangement with The London Times, has undertaken to distribute to the newspapers and periodicals of the United States and Canada the service of news, articles, and pictures relating to the tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen, prepared under the sanction of the Earl of Carnarvon.

Newspapers and periodicals desiring all or any branch of this service are requested to apply at once to *The New York Times*, Egyptian Service Department.

Once the *New York Times* became the North American "agent" for the London *Times*, many of the articles were duplicated in both newspapers and comparing articles served no purpose. Also, press analysis of the two month time period, as opposed to the 10 year span of the excavation, allowed for a more in depth reading of each article.

The articles were placed into categories, based on the topics covered. This process brought to light the ways in which the same event was covered under different

circumstances. Any similarities and differences between the accounts was reviewed and analyzed and possible reasons for discrepancies was given.

Nord and Nelson (1981) observed that those who study history are basically split into two types: the humanist historian and the social science historian. The first group is “interested primarily in unique events and sequences, and seeks to understand an event by understanding its context in a particular place and time” (p. 282). The second group “uses social science theory and methods to help classify historical phenomena” (p. 282). They also suggest that the two groups should overlap more than they have in the past.

Although it may be less complicated to adhere to either quantitative or qualitative methods, “to explain human history is an awesome challenge that requires the services of both humanist and social scientist” (Nord and Nelson, 1981, p. 299). This study of the press coverage of Tutankhamun’s tomb attempts to bridge the methods to a degree by utilizing simple coding methods (quantitative approach) to assist in the qualitative organization and analysis of the materials.

A child’s game is played where a phrase is whispered from person to person around a circle, and more often than not, the phrase ends up much different than when it started. It seems the reporting in the *London Times* would be much more detailed and extensive than the *New York Times*, because the information was received directly from the original source. There were no middle men to alter or distort this information. Whether in fact, this was the case is one issue, among others, that this study tries to resolve.

Revelations uncovered during the examination of the articles hopefully not only shed light on the relationship between science and journalism and the release and reporting



of information in the twenties, but also brought insight to those same issues in the 1990s. The combination of science, the press, a unique arrangement with the London *Times*, and the discovery of buried gold, treasures, and a royal mummy make the event an interesting case study.

Following this chapter, Chapter Two will survey the history of the relationship between science and journalism during the period prior to the discovery. Chapter Three will examine the press coverage during the first two months after the announcement and Chapter Four will provide analysis of the overall coverage. The conclusion, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research will follow in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER II

### SCIENCE JOURNALISM DURING THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the context in which the press coverage of Howard Carter's find occurred. Science journalism during the periods leading up to the event, the Progressive Era of the early 1900s and the years following World War I, will be reviewed, and background information will be provided on the *New York Times*, and the contract between the excavators and the *London Times*. By reviewing the events leading up to and surrounding the discovery, the reader will be able to better comprehend the factors that shaped the news coverage.

During the decades prior to the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, scientific activity around the globe produced results that would have significant impact on the rest of the century. Einstein developed his special and general theories of relativity. The Wright Brothers made their twelve-second flight at Kitty Hawk. Pierre and Marie Curie discovered radium and polonium, which led to the study of atoms and nuclear physics. Thomas Edison developed the storage battery, phonograph, and talking movies. Marconi's wireless telegraph opened communication across the English Channel, and, later, across the Atlantic. Relatively new sciences such as paleontology, archaeology, and psychology found their way into mainstream society.

In America, this period, stretching roughly between the end of the depression of the 1890s and the conclusion of World War I, was known as the Progressive Era (Gould, 1974). It was a time of optimism and belief in moral standards, and “individuals hoped that scientific and technological advances would improve the conditions of life sufficiently to produce a more enlightened humanity” (p. 9).

Science was at the center of the movement, and was held up as the ideal to which all other professions should aspire. Lewenstein (1994) observed that during the period, “science became a touchstone for measuring the ‘objective’ or ‘rational’ basis for social decisions, a process that enhanced the image of science as an incorruptible source of truth. Science and progress became inextricably linked” (p. 319).

Nelkin (1987) found that scientific values were infiltrating social and political institutions at the beginning of the twentieth century, citing the “increased emphasis on technical expertise in government, the growth of realism in literature and art, and the political reforms of the progressive movement” (p. 94).

The principles that guided journalism of the time were not immune to the effects of the Progressive movement. American journalists had been creating a new form of objectivity since the mid 1800s, “one free of partisan politics and outright news manipulation” (Lewenstein, 1994, p. 320). As the twentieth century opened, journalists were encouraged to base their methods on scientific theories. The *New Republic* stated in 1915, “News-gathering cannot perhaps be as accurate as chemical research, but it can be undertaken in the same spirit” (p. 321).

A neutral, unbiased presentation of the facts was defined as the basis of a responsible press, “for it served the same purpose for journalists as it did for scientists

helping both professions maintain autonomy and independence from public control” (Nelkin, 1987, p. 94). The media was projected as a mechanism to drive progress and social change, and was expected to occupy this role responsibly.

Ironically, at a time when scientific methods and inquiries were held up as the ideal, there appears to be a consensus among scholars and historians that science journalism during this period left a great deal to be desired (Burnham, 1987; Nelkin, 1987; Foust, 1995). The reporting is described by these scholars as being overly sensational, over hyped, and often times, inaccurate, following in the tradition of “yellow journalism.”

Foust (1995) maintained that in the early years of the twentieth century “journalists and scientists had reached something of an impasse. The result was that the science news that did make it to print was often inaccurate and usually sensationalized” (p. 58). Irritated by the “gee whiz” science reporting of the time, scientists were characterized as having little regard for uninformed journalists. “We do not mind being popularized,” noted one scientist, “but we do mind being made ridiculous!” (p. 58).

Burnham (1987) and Nelkin (1987) both concluded that enthusiasm about science in the early years of the twentieth century aided the proliferation of superstition , pseudoscience and anti-science tendencies. Indeed, there was a “revival of astrology and mysticism and the antievolution activities of religious fundamentalists, who saw Darwinism as a threat to their values” (Nelkin, 1987, p. 87).

To summarize the sentiment of these scholars, “Newspaper science reached its nadir at that time, as yellow journalism continued to flourish before World War I, particularly in the notorious Sunday supplements” (Burnham, 1987, p. 172). “Yellow journalism,” developed by publishers Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst,

utilized sensational and scandalous news coverage to attract readership and increase advertising. In the end, Foust (1995) noted, “The science journalism of the early twentieth century seemed to be doing neither the scientific community nor the reading public any real good” (p. 58).

However, it should be noted that these studies rarely provided specific examples of science journalism in the early 1900s, whether good or bad. In forming the basis for their opinion, the authors cite each other’s work and statements are accepted rather than verified. While newspapers such as the *Journal* and the *World* may have provided ammunition for their argument, it would be false to conclude that responsible science journalism did not exist at the time.

An overview of articles by the author of this study from a reputable newspaper such as the *New York Times* during the first fifteen years of this century shows issues such as biology, chemistry, physics, medicine, anthropology and paleontology being handled, for the most part, in an objective and responsible manner. Although the sample taken was relatively small, there were still numerous occasions when the burden was placed on readers to understand the terminology, sort through the details, and, sometimes, come up with their own conclusion about the significance of the science.

An article from the *New York Times* on October 20, 1910, reporting on the growing of cells outside the human body, stated:

Two plasmatic media were inoculated with small fragments of a kidney of a young cat. Twelve hours later fusiform cells were protruding from the tissue. After twenty-four hours a great many cells had invaded the plasma

all about the renal substance. One day later the cultures vegetated wildly.

On the fifth day one of the cultures was fixed and stained with hematoxylin.

A tube had begun to grow from the tissue into the medium.

The article provides just one example of how non-sensational, intelligent science reporting existed prior to World War I and would further be developed in the decades that followed. Indeed, articles such as this discredit the notion that the science journalism of the time did neither the scientific community nor the reading public any good.

### Science Journalism After World War I

Scientific and technological research focused its efforts on military warfare with the advent of World War I. Nelkin (1987) suggested that the role of science during the war, “together with the postwar proliferation of consumer goods, increased the public’s awareness of the social and economic power of science” (p. 87). This role also increased the opportunity for government funding to continue further research.

The use of chemicals during the war (especially Germany’s utilization of chemical research to manufacture explosives), “helped journalists and their bosses recognize that the scientists deserved more serious attention” (Burkett, 1986, p. 21). There was a demand from the general public to know more about science, to better comprehend issues such as “tear gas, TNT, and the staggering health problems of the wounded and disfigured” (Friedman, Dunwoody, and Rogers, 1987, p. xiii).

The public’s effort to comprehend scientific issues received support from newspaper publisher E.W. Scripps, who formed the Science Service, the first syndicate for the distribution of science news, in 1921. In attempting to bridge the gap between

scientists and the general public, Scripps demanded that the service's "output be accessible to the average reader and acceptable to newspaper editors without being insulting to scientists" (Foust, 1995, p. 58).

After the end of World War I, certain scientists were "receptive to the idea of publicizing their research; they just needed someone to provide the funding and expertise to do it" (Foust, 1995, p. 59). Scripps would attempt to fill this role by giving the scientists a public voice, while having the service "maintain its independence and not become a publicity agent for scientists" (p. 61).

Although charges of sensationalism are typically taken as a negative, Scripps felt otherwise. He believed that "a certain degree of sensationalism, as long as it was rooted in scientific fact, would make the service's material more desirable to editors (Foust, 1995, p. 62). The Science Service sold its articles to over 100 newspapers, reaching a readership of nearly seven million (Nelkin, 1987). In addition to proving that science news had an audience, the service "laid the foundation for contemporary science journalism, giving the profession both a purpose and a style" (p. 89).

Caudill (1994) described the steps for interpretation from scientist to public as:

1. The scientist's written work.
2.
  - a) Layman reads scientist.
  - b) The press interpretation of the work.
  - c) The press reporting another person's interpretation of the work.
3. The layman's interpretation of the scientist's idea.

All three alternatives in step 2 were used in the nineteenth century, whether individually or as a combination. Steps 2a and 2b have been eliminated in the twentieth

century—“now, experts talk; the media listen” (Caudill, 1994, p. 231). The Science Service played a major role in this evolution of science journalism and continues to serve as an interpreter of often times complicated material.

### The New York Times and Carr Van Anda

Burnham (1987) noted that science reporting changed at the beginning of the 1920s, with “not only quantitative increases, but a remarkable improvement in the quality of science news as reporters and editors became conscious of new standards of accuracy and responsibility” (p. 174). Due in part to events such as the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb, expeditions to the North and South poles, and the Scopes trial, the volume of science news doubled in major newspapers between 1920 and 1925 (Burnham, 1987).

By the 1920s, the *New York Times* was the standard by which editors across the nation measured their own papers. Thirty-eight-year-old Adolph Ochs purchased the failing newspaper in 1896 and placed it on the track to both financial and journalistic prominence. Schudson (1978) offered two aspects of the newspaper’s rise after 1896:

- 1) The emphasis of “decency” in its advertising, rather than promoting its news coverage, accuracy, or politics.
- 2) Lowering the price of the paper from three cents to a penny.

Ochs explained that many people, if they could afford it, would choose “a clean newspaper of high and honorable aims, which prints all the news that is fit to print, and expresses its editorial opinions with sincere conviction and independence” (Schudson,



1978, p. 115). He saw to it that the inhabitants of New York City would not have cost as a factor in choosing between the *Times*, the *World*, or the *Journal*.

By the early 1920s, “journalists no longer believed that facts could be understood in themselves; they no longer held to the sufficiency of information, they no longer shared in the vanity of neutrality that had characterized the middle class of the Progressive era” (Schudson, 1978, p. 120). As the *New York Times* established its style, the paper attempted to attract “the rational person, or the person whose life was orderly” and “presented articles as useful knowledge, not as revelation” (p. 119).

Merrill and Fisher (1980) proposed that one of Adolph Ochs wisest decisions was to hire Carr Van Anda from the *Sun* to be his managing editor. Like Ochs, Van Anda “believed in ‘hard news,’ thoroughly and accurately presented” (p. 225). A principle established by Van Anda has been maintained through the present day: No expense would be spared in getting and printing the news. An emphasis was also placed on thorough news coverage, and it was determined the newspaper would present longer, more complete articles, while other papers in the same situation opted for a summary.

According to historian Meyer Berger (1951), “When the Times was young it gave more space to news of science than any other New York newspaper” (p. 250). The tradition was maintained by Van Anda, a mathematician with interests in astronomy and physics. Van Anda and E.W. Scripps, the force behind the Science Service, were among the first modern editors to recognize the significance and value of science news to their readers, and were the first to give it any considerable space in their newspapers (Berger, 1951).

The *New York Times*' coverage of the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb should be noted not only for its depth, but also for a little known fact: managing editor Van Anda, in addition to his interest in scientific issues, could read Egyptian hieroglyphs (Berger, 1951). This explains, to some extent, why Van Anda pursued the story with great passion, and often stayed overnight at the office, searching photographs of inscriptions found in the tomb with a magnifying glass for any new information.

The daily coverage was a major contributor to the event's lasting impact. Mainly as a result of the *New York Times*, "the average American came to know Tut-an-akh-Amen, his Queen, their country and their times as well as he knew baseball scores and batting averages" (Berger, 1951, p. 255). Van Anda's interest in the Tutankhamun story undoubtedly led to the coverage of archaeological discoveries in other Near Eastern countries.

Davidson (1996) concluded that "in the decade of the 1920s newspapers were the major sources of information for the American public on archaeological activity in Palestine" (p. 105). Although other major American newspapers reported on the same region, the *New York Times*' coverage was the most consistent and complete—publishing 119 articles on archaeology in Palestine between 1920 and 1929. As the excavations took place, "so did the multifaceted effort to explain the archaeological happenings to an increasingly interested public... and their principal way of communicating with the public was through the newspapers, particularly well-established papers such as the *New York Times*" (Davidson, 1996, p. 105).

Davidson showed how the "dramatic nature of the *New York Times*' reporting not only helped maintain the low Western opinion of the Muslim present and continued a state

of ignorance of the Muslim past, but it also concentrated the reader's attention onto the specifically Old Testament or Israelite portion of that past" (Davidson, 1996, p. 112). In analyzing the articles, Davidson also found that "in telling the story of biblical archaeology, its language created an aura of drama and religious expectation that often blurred the boundaries of fact and fiction" (p. 112).

Although Howard Carter's discovery did not have the implications on Western religion as did the archaeology in the land of the Bible, it will be noted if the *New York Times*' coverage attempts to influence the reader in the same way. By focusing on ancient Egypt's glorious past and ignoring the Muslim present, the reporting may have been a contributor to political unrest in the decades that followed.

#### The London Times and the Exclusive Contract

After the London *Times* was purchased in 1908 by Alfred Harmsworth (Lord Northcliffe), the newspaper recovered from the financial difficulties it had been experiencing and shed the last remaining traces of its economic setback (Merrill and Fisher, 1980). Northcliffe was determined to make his new purchase a success, and he had strong views about journalism—he thought of news as "what someone, somewhere wants to suppress, and all else is advertising" (p. 325).

In Great Britain at the time of the discovery, the *Times* was considered "the 'newspaper of record,' the paper to read for nearly everyone, but especially for the influential opinion maker of government, nobility, ruling class and business and financial circles" (Merrill and Fisher, 1980, p. 30). By the time of his death in 1922, Northcliffe had made "much-needed organizational changes, increased efficiency in certain

departments and kept the paper financially solvent,” allowing the newspaper to maintain its long standing image of “readability, civility, and dignity” (Merrill and Fisher, 1980, p. 320, p. 325).

The *Times*, at this point, was certainly in a position to be a major player in the coverage of the discovery. After the announcement regarding the tomb at the end of November 1922, Lord Carnarvon left Egypt to spend Christmas in England. By this point, “he and Carter decided that they would both gather all press offers and pick the most favorable and lucrative; Carter suggested they ought to establish an informal auction and allow the highest bidder to take the prize” (Hoving, 1978, p. 147). From the initial discussions between Carter and Carnarvon, the *Times* had an advantage in securing an exclusive contract because of Carter’s friendship with Cairo correspondent Arthur Merton and informal discussions between Carnarvon and editor Geoffrey Dawson (Hoving, 1978).

In a letter to Carter on December 24, 1922, Carnarvon suggested “hiring a press agent who would return with him to Egypt and would keep careful financial track of all communications, including ‘bulletins gratis’” (Hoving, 1978, p. 149). In the end, Carnarvon confided in Carter, “Neither of us having much experience of Press sharks one is rather at a loss how to act for the best... I think the Daily Mail would give more, but the *Times* is after all the first Newspaper in the world” (Reeves and Taylor, 1993, p. 159).

Sir Alan Gardiner, excavation team member and personal friend of Carnarvon, also provided input, stating that the *Times* “was virtually the only newspaper in the world which had always written splendidly and accurately about archaeological subjects” (Hoving, 1978, p. 150). Howard Carter agreed, writing in his only published work pertaining to the discovery, “We in Egypt were delighted when we heard Lord

Carnarvon's decision to place the whole matter of publicity in the hands of the *Times*" (Carter, 1977, p. 143).

When news of the exclusive contract became public knowledge, the London *Times* received editorial protest from nearly every major newspaper in the world (Hoving, 1978). Carnarvon and Carter were not spared the wrath of the world press and were accused of "prostituting pure science to commercialism" and making "the sale of the profession of archaeology and world history for cash" (p. 155). Needless to say, the authors of these criticisms would have adopted a different attitude had their newspapers secured the contract.

The contract also did little to deter other newspapers from gathering information and producing their own articles. The headquarters of the Eastern Telegraph Company in Luxor normally received a leisurely flow of tourist traffic, mainly handling messages home, and the booking of rooms, guides, and boat rides across the Nile to the Valley of the Kings (Hoving, 1978). From the outset of the discovery, though, "the daily rush by reporters for the few available telegraph machines frequently touched off a rash of physical confrontations," despite efforts made to install more telegraph lines to Cairo (p. 154).

To gain an understanding of how newspaper correspondents received their information, one must know the procedures the excavation team used in removing the artifacts from the tomb. Each object was given a reference number and was photographed as found. After leaving the tomb, the objects were paraded for the public and the press on a short path to the vacant tomb of Seti II, which served as a conservation laboratory and photography dark room. Once conservation efforts were completed, the objects were wrapped and packed for transport to the Nile, where they began the fifteen hour journey

to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Reeves, 1990). It was during the brief public displays that the objects could be photographed and commented upon.

Howard Carter described the atmosphere outside the tomb:

Round the top wall of the upper level of the tomb there was a low wall, and here they (visitors and the press) each staked out a claim and established themselves, waiting for something to happen. Sometimes it did, more often it did not, but it seemed to make no difference to their patience. Great was the excitement, always, when word was passed up that something was to be brought out of the tomb. Books and knitting were thrown aside, and the whole battery of cameras was cleared for action and directed at the entrance passage. (Carter, 1977, p. 144)

Caught in the middle of the spot light and controversy were the scientists and laborers who attempted to perform their work in an environment in which they were not accustomed. Conservation specialist A.C. Mace wrote his wife, "Things have gotten rather lively the last few days owing to Lord Carnarvon's agreement with *The Times*, which is more drastic now we have seen it, than we ever imagined. It has caused a perfect storm among the other newspapers and made complications of various sorts" (Reeves and Taylor, 1993, p. 159).

These "complications" were due in part to the fact that "a postwar upsurge of Egyptian nationalism coincided with discovery of Tut's tomb" (Brackman, 1976, p. 98). In 1922 the British government, because of violent protests and riots, formally declared Egypt as an independent monarchy under the rule of King Fuad I. The British, however,

reserved the right to intervene “in matters of defense and foreign affairs. The Egyptians denounced this ‘independence’ as a sham” (p. 98).

To further complicate matters, Egypt was politically divided into two groups: The intellectuals, students, and lower classes of the nationalist party, and the wealthy upper and middle classes who supported King Fuad (Brackman, 1976). In the struggle for power, “each side accused the other of permitting itself to be used as a pawn for the British” (p. 98).

Therefore, not only was there tension caused by the resentment towards the British and American foreigners, but there was also tension felt by the local workers, who were perceived as siding with the foreigners. The paradox for the workers was they earned a living during the day by assisting Westerners in the violation of their ancestor’s tomb, while returning home at night to families, and fellow countrymen who sought Egypt’s independence. The exclusive contract with the British newspaper further aggravated tensions.

Ultimately, the problems the contract created outweighed the financial rewards achieved by Carter and Carnarvon. Egyptologist Sir Alan Gardiner wrote to his daughter on February, 16, 1923, “The unfortunate mistake—it was no crime, but it was a mistake—which Carnarvon made in giving the sole rights to THE TIMES has led to dire results, and all the workers connected with the tomb are strung up to the last degree, and one feels on the verge of a volcano the whole time” (Reeves and Taylor, 1993, p. 160).

Thus, all the elements were converging in one location to create a unique situation during a unique event: the developing field of science journalism in America; managing editor Carr Van Anda of the influential *New York Times* and his interest in science and

archaeology; the contract between the London *Times* and Carnarvon/Carter; the politics of the relationship between Egypt and Great Britain; and, the discovery of the 3,200-year-old tomb of a young Egyptian pharaoh, left virtually intact since antiquity and containing enough gold and artifacts to fill eleven galleries at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.



## CHAPTER III

### ARTICLE REVIEW

On November 4, 1922, one of Howard Carter's laborers uncovered the first step of a stairway, buried beneath the foundation of an ancient workman's hut. After working in Egypt for over 30 years, the last seven spent excavating in the Valley of the Kings, Carter found what he had been searching for—the discovery which “put Egyptology on the map,” and made Tutankhamun's tomb “the yardstick by which all archaeological discoveries would in future be measured” (Reeves, 1990, p. 10).

Because Lord Carnarvon was in England and would have to journey through Alexandria and Cairo, and up the Nile Valley to Luxor, the stairway was filled with debris and not cleared until November 23. With Carnarvon present on November 26, Carter made a hole in the sealed doorway, and was greeted by “the glint of gold,” a flash of light which not only characterized many of the objects in the tomb, but also the conditions under which he would have to work throughout the excavation.

During the initial two-month outpouring of press coverage, from the announcement on November 30, 1922, until the end of January 1923, the London *Times* printed 28 articles on the discovery, while the *New York Times* printed 43. The *New York Times'* total included three editorials, and three poems on Tutankhamun written by its readers.

The initial London *Times* article on November 30, 1922, at 1,376 words, contained details of the first objects Carter encountered, along with background information on Tutankhamun's reign and speculation as to what would be found in the other chambers of the tomb. Correspondent Arthur Merton was the only member of the world press invited to the official opening of the tomb on November 29, and the article shows he had begun preparing the article well in advance of the announcement (Hoving, 1978) .

The *New York Times*' initial article, at 211 words, was picked up from the Associated Press, and articles from December 1, December 2, and December 6 are virtually copied from the London *Times*. Chief correspondent for the *New York Times* A.H. Bradstreet "was enraged when he learned of the London *Times* spectacular scoop" ( Hoving, 1978, p. 109). Bradstreet was "a fervent disciple of the full freedom of the press, competitive and totally open" (p. 244), and resented the fact that, even before the contract, the London *Times* had an unfair privilege in obtaining information.

After reading every article from the first two months of coverage in the London *Times* and the *New York Times*, several themes emerged (see Table 1), and simple coding methods were used to separate the themes into different categories. Many of the articles contained overlapping themes, so one article could have contained multiple themes. They can be grouped as follows: 1) London *Times* as public relations agent 2) Western imperialism 3) Slow news days 4) Politics/Controversy and 5) The Artifacts/Science.

Table 1

Occurrence of Themes in the Articles


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	<u>Number of Articles</u>	
	London Times	New York Times

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1) London Times as Public Relations Agent	13	0
2) Western Imperialism	4	8
3) Slow News Days	7	10
4) Politics/Controversy	5	12
5) Artifacts/Science	18	26

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### London Times as Public Relations Agent for Carter/Carnarvon

Perhaps caught up in its role as the official “voice” of the excavators, the London *Times* spent a great deal of time and effort in correcting public misconceptions, and praising and avoiding any criticism of Carter/Carnarvon.

The basis for one early attack on Carter/Carnarvon was the claim that the Egyptian government first learned of the discovery through the foreign press. On December 8, 1922, the London *Times* assured readers this was inaccurate. The newspaper was quick to point out that “this would give the impression that the excavators showed a lack of courtesy to the Egyptian authorities,” and, the report added, “statements that the Egyptian Government had no official information before it appeared in the Press are inaccurate.” Merton, the author of the article, claimed, “I am in a position to state that when the first entrance was opened the Inspector of Antiquities was present.”

On December 15, an article in the London *Times* quoted a leading Arabic newspaper, which stated, “It is the duty of the Egyptian Government worthily and generously to reward, in the name of the whole nation, Lord Carnarvon the highest honour.” The article continued by suggesting that rooms at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo should bear Carnarvon’s name and a statue be built in his image. It also said that Egypt should show its gratitude “by awarding pecuniary and honorary rewards to his collaborators, particularly Mr. Howard Carter.”

The reporting of one incident illustrated the contrasting styles of one newspaper reporting objectively, and one acting as press agent. A rumor had been circulating among the press correspondents that because of interruptions caused by the large crowds, the Valley of the Kings would be closed to the public. The controversy was fueled by the fact

that many visitors had traveled thousands of miles to view the artifacts, and would be denied even a glimpse of the tomb entrance.

Under the headline, “TWO BOUQUETS FOUND IN TUTANKHAMUN TOMB,” the *New York Times* reported on January 12, 1923, that “Howard Carter announced this morning that the rumor originating in London regarding the suggestion that the Valley of the Kings should be closed is not true.” The article said that visitors would continue to view the objects as they were removed, then moved on to describing the floral bouquets.

The *London Times*’ headline on the same day blared, “MALICIOUS RUMORS,” and displayed a much different tone than the *New York Times*’ unemotional reporting of the same rumor. After briefly speculating what might be behind the sealed door, Merton shifted into defense mode:

The rumor that the Valley of the Kings is to be closed to the public is absolutely devoid of foundation. I have the highest authority for stating that there had never been the slightest intention of this, and it is scarcely likely now, when the tourist traffic is at its height.

Moreover, Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Carter have always shown such consideration for tourists’ interests...the idea that they would be party to such a proposal is preposterous, and the circulation of such rumors is obviously malicious.

In another example, on December 12, the *New York Times* announced, “EGYPTIAN TREASURES THREATENED BY FLOOD—Rain Clouds Cause Panic Among Archaeologists at Open Tomb of Tutank-Hamen [sic].” Priceless antiquities, the

report stated, would be destroyed by the following morning if a flood raged through the Valley of the Kings, and if “water enters (the tomb) the result might be catastrophic from an archaeological point of view.”

It took eleven days, but the Merton and the London *Times* responded on December 27 with, “I am in a position to state that the reports about possible danger to the chambers from rain are entirely incorrect and misleading.” The statement was the last line of an article dealing mainly with the transport of the items to Cairo, and seems to be added on as an afterthought. Perhaps the rumor merely irritated Carter or Carnarvon, and it was felt a simple disclaimer would suffice.

Unrestrained by the contract and any loyalty to the discoverers, the *New York Times* appeared to print what it wanted, rather than what was “right” or “proper.” The London *Times* made it a point to constantly praise Carter and his team, and to present them in a positive manner: “An indication of their devotion to the work is that...none went over to Luxor on New Year’s Eve” (1/2/23); “...thanks mainly to the skill of Mr. Howard Carter, whose versatility seems to know no bounds” (1/19/23); “The remarkable progress made testifies to the industry and devotion of the whole staff, whose perfect collaboration is most inspiring” (1/23/23); “This wonderful result is entirely due to the pains and patience of (excavation team members) Messrs. Lucas and Mace” (1/23/23).

In contrast, the *New York Times* was able to state on December 23, “At the same time Lord Carnarvon must bear a portion of the responsibility for this decision as he was unwise enough when in Cairo recently...(in) asserting that his contract with the Egyptian Government did not apply to his find as it had been violated.” The London *Times* would never had made a statement criticizing Carnarvon or his decision-making abilities.

Carter took his work, and Tutankhamun, very seriously, and would not have allowed the London *Times* to present the objects in a crude or undignified way. Conversely, the *New York Times*' headline on January 4, 1923 read, "ROYAL UNDERWEAR FOUND—This Is Said to Be the First Evidence That It Was Worn In the Periods of the Pharaohs." In referring to the "royal underwear," the article suggested, "It probably fitted loosely, else he was hugely built." The London *Times*, on January 5, quietly referred to the same items as "underlinen."

Carter, though lacking formal education, was a man of science and would not have approved of the London *Times* printing any type of anecdote dealing with superstition or the supernatural. Carter wrote that "mischievous people have attributed many deaths, illnesses, and disasters to alleged mysterious and noxious influences...if it be not actually libellous [*sic*] it points in that spiteful direction, and all sane people should dismiss such inventions with contempt" (Reeves and Taylor, 1993, p. 159). The *New York Times* was less scrupulous—its correspondent was given an exclusive tour of the tomb, and in the first reference to a "pharaoh's curse" that appeared in either newspaper, reported on December 22, 1922:

Incidentally, the day the tomb was opened and the party found these golden serpents in the crowns of the two statues there was an interesting incident at Carter's house. He brought a canary with him this year to relieve his loneliness. When the party was dining that night there was a commotion outside on the veranda. The party rushed out and found that a serpent of

similar type to that found in the crowns had grabbed the canary. They killed the serpent, but the canary died, probably from fright.

The incident made an impression on the native staff, who regarded it as a warning from the spirit of the departed King against further intrusion on the privacy of the tomb.

In addition to providing damage control and speaking for the excavators, the *London Times* also indulged in self-promotion and constantly reminded the public of its scoop. The opening paragraph of the December 11 report ended with, "It will be remembered that the first account of this important discovery was published in 'The Times' of November 30." On December 23, the *London Times* really drove the point home, stating in consecutive paragraphs, "the first news of which was published in *The Times* of November 30," and "a description of which was first published in *The Times* of November 30."

### Western Imperialism

Davidson (1996), in analyzing the *New York Times*' coverage of biblical archaeology during the 1920s, concluded that "for Americans, as well as Europeans, the imposition of western colonialism in Palestine was perceived in a positive, God-blessed light" (p. 105). Much focus was placed on Old and New Testament subjects, while the Muslim era sights were virtually ignored. In the end, the "dramatic nature of the *New York Times*' reporting not only helped maintain the low Western opinion of the Muslim present," but also "continued a state of ignorance of the Muslim past" (p. 112).



Traces of this theme could also be found in both the London *Times* and the *New York Times* during the coverage of Tutankhamun's tomb. A month after the initial announcement of the discovery, the Egyptian government proposed a bill that would have prevented foreign excavators from using uncovered artifacts to add to their private collections or fill galleries at museums in their homeland. The Director General of the Egyptian Museum, at his discretion, would decide which artifacts would be retained in Egypt and which ones would be allowed to leave the country.

Naturally, this did not sit well with foreign excavators, who came mainly from Western countries—England, France, Germany, and the United States. On December 23, the *New York Times* quoted excavation team member Herbert E. Winlock, who stated that his own expedition spent \$25,000 annually, and “all this money goes to the miserable Nile villages which for a decade have been growing rich through trade with the excavating parties.”

The January 28 report of the *New York Times*, under the headline “Americans Saved Tutankhamun Treasures, Halting Their Own Work to Serve Science,” continued the idea that Westerners knew what was best for the Egyptian treasures. The article pointed out that, ironically, it was the United States, who “as the youngest civilization in the world, (was) today rendering incalculable assistance in preserving these treasures from the world's oldest known civilization.” It also mentioned that “the attitude of Americans in stopping their own work shows no selfish motive...and they are working for science and education and for nothing else.”

Curiously, the *New York Times* had previously reported on December 29, that the Metropolitan Museum had provided staff and funding because it “also expected that

certain finds would ultimately go to the American museum, where the Egyptian section draws a larger number of sightseers than any other.” This contradicted the romantic notion of sacrificing themselves for science, and seemed self-serving. In referring to the law that would give Egyptians control over their own artifacts, the article concluded, “This would mean that the American museums would simply be working to enrich the Cairo museum, which is absurd.”

The London *Times* and *New York Times* both detailed the visit of three Egyptian ex-ministers to the tomb on January 18, 1923. The London *Times* spoke with one of the visitors after the visit, who “paid the warmest tribute to Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Carter’s perseverance and self-sacrifice, which had thus resulted in the restoration to the world of precious relics, hitherto lost, of Egypt’s ancient artistic and industrial glory.” One interpretation of this statement—and the article—is that the two men from England were giving the Egyptians a past unobtainable on their own, and for that, the Egyptians should be grateful.

In describing the reaction of the Egyptian visitors, the *New York Times* also mentioned that “this period had always been a secret to them, and these treasures help to make it immortal.” In addition to expressing their appreciation for Carter and Carnarvon, the visitors mentioned that they were not prepared “for the grace, finesse and magnificence of these treasures, which had touched their pride, as Egyptians.”

While excavations performed by Egyptians on Egyptian soil were practically non-existent at the time, Carter’s team was notable for its absence of local members. Egyptians did perform most of the manual labor, such as carrying dirt and sifting for artifact fragments, but were not involved in any scientific work. Chemist Alfred Lucas

was borrowed from the Egyptian Antiquities Service, but he was from Manchester, England. In a perfect summary of Western imperialism, at least as it pertained to archaeology in the 1920s, the *New York Times* stated in an editorial from January, 28, 1923:

American geologists, archaeologists, geographers, botanists, are not only cooperating with scientists of other lands, but in some of the notable expeditions are leading them...our government has even demanded, as in the case of Turkey, that we be permitted to continue our excavations in certain places, contending that the earth's past does not belong exclusively to those who happen to be occupying any particular patch of it at the moment.

### Slow News Days

Archaeology was still in its developing stages when the Tutankhamun discovery was made in 1922. New scientific techniques and preservation methods were being attempted, and not all archaeologists adhered to such techniques. In the hands of some archaeologists, the tomb could have been cleared in ten days, rather than the ten years that Howard Carter took to remove and document all the artifacts. While this was fortunate for science and for future generations, Carter's excruciatingly slow, meticulous style did not always work out for the world press. This pace led to idle time for the correspondents, which resulted in gossip and a constant search for article ideas during down times when items were being documented and preserved.

Admitting that it was “a dull week-end outside of Tutankhamen’s tomb,” the *New York Times* headline on January 9, 1923 read, “RAT ENTERS SETI II. TOMB—Prepares to Feed on Tutankhamen Treasures Stored There.” In reporting that the rat had entered the storage tomb “with the intention of making a banquet of the most luscious and priceless objects stored there,” the article concluded that “it would be a most bitter tragedy if some of the objects after being most expensively and most carefully treated were knawed [*sic*] by rats.”

During the same down time, the London *Times* also reported on January 8, 1923, that the staff was busy preserving objects, but “a great event was, however, the arrival of the motor-car which Lord Carnarvon purchased in Cairo...to facilitate communication between the river, Mr. Howard Carter’s house, and the tomb.” For lack of more interesting news, the London *Times* ran the headline, “EXPEDITING WORK AT LUXOR—MOTOR SUPERCEDES DONKEY.”

Other London *Times* articles on slow days covered such topics as the sugar cane plantations leading up to the Valley of the Kings (1/22/23) and the beauty of the hills of Luxor (1/27/23). There were, however, several interesting fillers, including letters to Howard Carter from around the world. The *New York Times* reported on January 12, 1923, that Carter had received several requests to secure hotel reservations at Luxor for visitors, to which he commented that “he is unable to accede to the requests which he characterized as a waste of time and money for those applying to him for this purpose.”

While a steel door was being installed at the tomb of Seti II, the London *Times* headlined its January 19 article, “MR. HOWARD CARTER’S LETTER BAG.” Questions and requests regarding the discovery were received, including those pleading

for a grain of sand from the tomb. A letter from Ireland recommended that “if there is any trouble, to shut the tomb and pour on it oil, wine, and milk, when all will be well.”

### Politics/Controversy

From November 30, 1922, to the end of January 1923, the coverage of Tutankhamun’s tomb contained 5 articles published by the London *Times* and 12 by the *New York Times* dealing with political and controversial issues. Controversial topics covered areas such as press access to the tomb, distractions caused by tourists crowding around the entrance to the tomb, and ownership of the Pharaoh’s mummified body.

In a letter to his wife, excavation team member Arthur Mace wrote, “Archaeology plus journalism is bad enough, but when you add politics it becomes a little too much” (Reeves, 1990, p. 64). The articles in this section deal with issues that added distractions and made working conditions difficult for the excavators.

Dunwoody (1986) wrote that “many scientists don’t know much about either journalism or reporters...scientists-in-training rarely take courses in journalism or have formal training in dealing with the mass media” (p. 11). If this were true in the 1980s, then it certainly applied to the 1920s. Members of Carter’s excavation team, as well as Carter himself, were totally unprepared for the working environment in which they were expected to perform their duties.

Compare Carter’s find with discoveries in biology, physics, or astronomy—tourists do not gather around laboratory doors, reporters do not usually pester physicists for information, and for the most part, the public does not become interested until a formal announcement is made. Gold, the body of a 19-year-old king, and the steady stream of

artistic and cultural artifacts separated the excavation of Tutankhamun's tomb from most other science stories.

One gets a sense of the conditions under which the excavations were carried out by surveying the articles dealing with politics and controversy. On December 29, 1922, the *New York Times* announced, "TUTANKHAMUN TOMB IS BARRED TO PRESS," and mentioned on January 4, 1923, that "Mr. Carter had to request room this morning for the passage of the objects from the tomb of Tutankhamun to the tomb of Seti II."

Apparently, the tomb and area surrounding the entrance had become overly congested, because "the Egyptian Government issued a notice that no strangers were permitted to enter the tomb, and Howard Carter was not allowed to let them go beyond the barrier." Unfortunately for the press, journalists were classified as "strangers."

The Egyptian Government appeared to be caught in the middle of the controversy over press access to information. In attempting to satisfy the needs of both the world press and the excavators, the government at times appeared to please no one. Two weeks after announcing the barring of the press from the tomb, the government performed an about-face. The *New York Times* reported on January 15, 1923:

As a result of strong representations the Egyptian Government has decided that there must be discriminatory treatment of the press correspondents at Tutankhamun's tomb. If one correspondent is allowed in all must be allowed in, either now or in the future.

Orders have been given to the Director General of the Egyptian Antiquities Department to give information concerning the tomb to any correspondent who approaches him.

Carnarvon and Carter circumvented the rule regarding press access by making London *Times* correspondent Arthur Merton a member of the excavation team. Because Merton was not classified as a “stranger,” as were the other correspondents, his entering the tomb did not mean the others had to be allowed access.

Another controversy covered by the newspapers emphasized the fact that although Carnarvon and Carter were heavily criticized for selling science for their own gain, they were not the only ones who benefited financially from the discovery. One might assume that Egyptian residents of Luxor battled for possession of Tutankhamun’s mummy because of the link to their past, and in order to give him a proper reburial. However, the *New York Times*’ account of the situation on January 26, 1923, stated the local Egyptians did not hide their motives for claiming possession of the body, because “the mummy of the Pharaoh would attract thousands of tourists to Luxor and stimulate trade, the hotel business and the sale of antiquities.”

Until this day, Tutankhamun is the only pharaoh known to be residing in his intended resting place in the Valley of the Kings. And as sole resident of the most popular tomb in one of the most popular sites in Egypt, Tutankhamun has indeed stimulated tourism and brought financial gain to his distant descendants.

#### Science/Artifacts

During the first two months of the London *Times*’ coverage, 18 of 28 articles (64%) contained references to the artifacts or the scientific work, while in the same period the *New York Times*’ coverage contained references in 26 of 43 articles (60%).

There may be some question as to whether the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb is considered a science story or primarily a cultural and human-interest story. In a way, it is a combination of both. Without any press coverage and publicity, archaeological discoveries are mainly about scientists recording and preserving information, artifacts and structural remains. As with most scientific information, archaeological findings are mainly published in peer reviewed journals and articles. With press coverage and publicity, however, the event often times takes on political and cultural significance.

The promotion that accompanied this discovery brings the "scientific" interest into question. In general, those involved in scientific work insist on verifying information before it becomes public knowledge. However, in the rush to provide news to an anxious audience, inaccuracies can occur. Both the *London Times* (November 30, 1922) and the *New York Times* (November, 30, 1922) reported the discovery of "papyri," or historical documents, which would clarify details of Tutankhamun's reign. Although this claim added to the excitement surrounding the discovery, no such documents were ever found. Neither Carter's diary nor his book mention the papyri, so this may have been a misunderstanding on the part of the press.

In newspapers, science news can be presented to the public as hard news, or as feature, interpretive, and investigative stories (Friedman, 1986). A prime requirement for hard news is "currentness, or a news peg, something that makes the story immediate, or in journalistic terms, makes it news" (p. 23). This requirement often makes it difficult in covering most scientific breakthroughs, as they do not happen overnight. However, in the case of Tutankhamun, new information and artifacts were appearing from the tomb in a relatively steady manner, providing ongoing opportunities for current news.



Friedman (1986) applied four types of articles to science journalism:

**Hard news:** Written as an inverted pyramid, with the conclusion leading off the article. With most of the information at the top, editors are able to shorten the article by deleting information from the bottom without losing meaning. In addition, hard news contains the 5 W's and H—who, what, where, why, and how.

**Feature:** Science news most often uses the explanatory feature, which explains a topic already in the news or a current controversy. Features are generally longer than hard news, and do not have cuts on the end by an editor.

**Interpretive:** Provide meaning or significance to a development. The articles try to relate various viewpoints, often describing the costs and benefits of a certain action

**Investigative:** Looks below the surface and attempts to uncover information previously undiscovered. These articles take much longer to produce than hard news or features, due to document searches and numerous interviews.

The purpose of this section is to examine the actual science reporting in the *New York* and *London Times* during the initial press coverage of the discovery, and observe how the articles relate to the four categories described above.

### London Times

Of the 18 articles containing references to scientific work or artifacts, 14 (78%) fell under the category of hard news, 1 (5%) was a feature, and 3 were interpretive (17%). There were no investigative articles.

The hard news articles dealt mainly with descriptions of the artifacts, as if the correspondent were observing the removal of items from the tomb along with other members of the world press. This is peculiar, as correspondent Arthur Merton had access to the tomb and excavators before and after the contract was announced on January 10, 1923.

The *London Times* had knowledge of the discovery prior to the official announcement, so it is surprising that more feature and interpretive articles were not produced. Also, more explanation could have been expected with the articles. For example, references were made to the “famous Abbott and other *papyri*” (11/30/22) and the “famous *papyri* at Turin” (12/5/22), without further elaboration. Unfortunately, these ancient documents were only “famous” within the rather exclusive field of Egyptology. The Abbott Papyrus (c. 1115 BC) was the report of a commission looking into the plundering of royal tombs, while the Turin Canon (Papyrus) was a New Kingdom document listing the succession of kings (Lehner, 1997). The average newspaper reader of the time would have no idea of the significance of the documents.

The three interpretive articles contained extensive quotes from the excavation team on the meaning and significance of the discovery and artifacts.

The *Times* provided a useful explanation on the difference between items being gilded in ancient and modern times. Modern gilding is one millionth of a millimeter thick,

while gilding in ancient Egypt was one hundredth to one two hundredth of a millimeter thick. An article from December 20, 1922, explained that “there is no doubt that the quantity of gold—and of pure gold—on the objects found will turn out to be much greater than what might be supposed from the use of the modern expression ‘gilt’.”

#### New York Times

Of the 26 “science” articles, 14 (54%) were hard news, 6 (23%) were interpretive, and 6 (23%) were features. There were no investigative articles.

The *New York Times* had the same number of hard news articles as the London *Times*, but had a higher number of feature/interpretive articles, 12 to 4. The *New York Times* filled in more of the days when preservation work was being done to explain the process or provide background information.

The hard news stories contained the same type of descriptions as the stories in the London *Times*, as an observer explaining how the artifact was carried out of the tomb and across the path to the temporary laboratory. A typical description appeared on December 28, 1922:

The box is about fourteen inches long, twelve high and twelve deep, with a curved top. On one side, in exquisite inlay work, is shown the King leading the court at a lion hunt. The King has discharged two arrows at the nearest lion: one is embedded in the neck and one near the nostrils. The King is ready to launch a third, and the lion has turned around in such a perfect attitude of rage,

pain and royal mortification that one can almost hear his snarling roar.

The interpretive articles quoted Howard Carter in explaining how the objects in the tomb reflected Tutankhamun's religious practices and change of religion during his reign (12/23/22).

Also, quotes by Carter and Carnarvon (12/6/22) emphasized that what made the find "so fortunate and important is that this is the first instance in which a royal tomb has been found with the doorways intact, as sealed by the hands of inspectors of Ramses IX."

The feature articles included an in-depth conversation with chemist Alfred Lucas on his methods of preservation (12/30/22). It is interesting to note that Lucas' explanations are not simplified to cater to the general public and his quotes are just as you would expect in a scientific journal. For example, he described his choice of preservation fluids as follows:

From previous experience and as a result of special experiments the preservative materials from which a final choice must be made are reduced to six, namely (1), a solution of celluloid in amyl acetate; (2) a solution of collodion in ether and alcohol; (3) a solution of parafin wax in benzine; (4) a hot melted parafin wax; (5) solutions of Canada balsam in xylol or benzol, and (6) casin adhesive.

Overall, articles in both newspapers dealing with science or describing the artifacts were written in a manner that avoided sensationalism and depended upon the reader's intelligence to grasp the information. The same could be said for articles dealing with the other themes described in this chapter. It is a testament to the integrity of both the

London *Times* and the *New York Times* that the articles reviewed for this study appeared to inform rather than merely entertain—not an easy task, considering the nature of the discovery and all of its treasures.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS

Amidst the press coverage, the mass of visitors, the controversy over the contract, and the political tensions, it is easy to forget that this was all brought about by a discovery in the relatively obscure field of Egyptian archaeology. During the years following World War I, Egyptology was struggling for its survival. In 1921, the annual report of the London-based Egypt Exploration Society (EES) voiced concerns regarding its future:

[The society] has been existing very much from hand to mouth for some years past, and it seems to be becoming more and more difficult, in fact almost impossible, to excite in the general public that interest in archaeology, and in Egyptian archaeology in particular, which we feel our country should take. (Reeves and Taylor, 1993, p. 155)

The EES is still in existence 78 years later, and had members of the society known of the events that were to take place over the next few years, they would not have suffered anxiety over their future.

Much changed in archaeology and Egyptology in the years following the discovery, in terms of technology, excavation methods, and in the international representation of groups working in the country. Many writers look back nostalgically and refer to every major find as “the greatest archaeological discovery since Tutankhamun.” However, rather than view the event as merely part of the past, it is

hoped that in reviewing the press coverage and handling of the press, information can be obtained to be used in the future. As is written on one of the golden shrines that surrounded Tutankhamun's sarcophagus, "I have seen yesterday; I know tomorrow" (Hoving, 1978, p. 369).

This chapter will address three of the questions posed in Chapter One.

Question #1: To What Extent Did Exclusive Access To Information  
Assist Or Inhibit the Reporting Of News?

Although the London *Times* "scooped" the rest of the world press by having its correspondent at the official opening of the tomb and initially provided the most complete reporting on the discovery, the *New York Times* eventually caught up and actually surpassed the *Times* in total number of articles produced (43 to 28) during the first two months of coverage. There are several possible reasons for this.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Carr Van Anda, managing editor of the *New York Times*, had strong interests in science, and particularly in archaeology. Accordingly, his influence over the content of the newspaper contributed to the high number of articles on the discovery that the newspaper published. His pledge to spare no expense in obtaining and printing news ensured that the *New York Times* would not be surpassed in coverage of the event.

Another possible reason was the local angle to the story, brought about by the contribution of New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art. The brief period of exhilaration following the discovery of the tomb transformed into sobering realization, as Carter fully comprehended the amount of work involved in systematically removing and

recording objects from the tomb without destroying them. Carter sent a telegram to Albert Lythgoe, curator of the Metropolitan Museum's Egyptian Department, stating, "Discovery colossal and need every assistance. Could you consider loan of (Harry) Burton in recording in time being? Cost to us. Immediate reply would oblige" (Reeves and Taylor, 1993, p. 149).

Lythgoe responded the same day: "Only too delighted to assist in any possible way. Please call on Burton and any other members of our staff. Am cabling Burton to that effect" (Reeves and Taylor, 1993, p. 149). Eventually, five members of the Metropolitan joined Carter's staff: Arthur Cruttenden (A.C.) Mace, Harry Burton, Herbert Winlock, Walter Hauser, and Lindsley Hall.

Apparently, Carter and Carnarvon had attempted to photograph the items in the tomb, but these efforts failed. That is why they specifically asked for photographer Harry Burton in the telegram to the Metropolitan. The *New York Times* reported on December 18, 1922, with a touch of national and home town pride, "An attempt to photograph the treasures by flashlight had failed completely...the Americans, who have had much experience in photographing the interior of tombs of kings, then profered [*sic*] their services, which were gladly accepted."

A third possible reason the *New York Times'* coverage exceeded that of the *London Times'* in quantity was the lack of restrictions on what it could and could not print, and the number of sources upon which it could draw. The paper did not have to be cautious in terms of printing anything that would upset or contradict the views and opinions of the excavators.



The *New York Times* was able to combine the work of its own correspondent, along with articles purchased from the Associated Press, and other newspapers such as the *Daily Mail*, and eventually, even the *London Times*. It was able to present different angles, and different “voices,” to present a well-rounded package.

In reviewing passages from Howard Carter’s personal diary during the first excavation season, his book *The Discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamun*, and articles from the *London Times* on November 30, 1922, and December 11, 1922, one understands the advantage the *Times* had in providing detailed information of the initial discovery. The same descriptions of the objects appeared in the different sources, of the “exquisitely painted and inlaid caskets...alabaster vases, some beautifully carved in openwork designs...strange black shrines,” and “a confused pile of overturned chariots, glistening with gold and inlay” (Carter, 1977, p. 99).

One also understands the disadvantage to papers such as the *New York Times*, as the objects were not yet being paraded down the path to the tomb of Seti II. As such, their correspondents did not have the opportunity to describe the objects. The front page article in the *New York Times* on December 1, 1922, duplicated most of the *London Times*’ article from November 30, 1922, while the article in the *New York Times* on December 18, 1922 duplicated an article that previously ran in London’s *Daily Mail*.

However, once the *New York Times*’ correspondent had the opportunity to tour the tomb on December 21, 1922, and especially once the removal of objects from the tomb began on December 27, the quality of the news coverage in terms of complete and detailed information equaled that of the *London Times*. This is surprising, considering the latter’s access to inside information.

As an example, on January 5, 1923, the London *Times* mentioned the removal of several objects from the tomb, and reported that “one of the sticks had a crozier-like [sic] end formed of two interlaced figures, one Asiatic and one African, finely carved. The other sticks are covered with delicate designs in bark.”

The *New York Times*’ description of the same item appeared the *previous* day, on January 4, 1923. The item was described as follows:

...but the most surprising of all is the King’s crosier, which was probably carried by him in his capacity as a god. It is worthy of note that the crosiers used today by the Coptic bishops are practically identical with this one in their main essentials...the end of the crosier is composed of two figures of captives, one an African and the other an Asiatic...the faces are ivory, and Mr. Carter says the carving of the face of the Asiatic prisoner transcends the finest Chinese carving extant.

Based solely on the two descriptions, it is difficult to determine which one came from the newspaper whose correspondent was an excavation team member, and which came from the newspaper who had to find other means to obtain the information. It should also be noted that the *New York Times*’ account included a remark from Carter, probably as he emerged from the tomb and headed for the laboratory.

This is only one example and, obviously, articles from both newspapers emphasized different objects at different times. However, it is indicative of how the *New York Times* appeared to make more effort to provide comprehensive descriptions of the items, perhaps because the information did not come so easily.

The contract, for all the attention it generated both at the time of the discovery and throughout the years, did little to benefit the London *Times* in terms of the quality of news reporting, at least when compared to the *New York Times*. A.H. Bradstreet, correspondent for the *New York Times*, registered a formal complaint against the exclusive contract with the Egyptian Minister of Public Works (Hoving, 1978, p. 245). If his concern was the articles he submitted were less informative and less timely, he need not have worried.

As an interesting aside, one of the most thrilling moments in archaeology was when Howard Carter first held up his candle to peer through the tomb wall and into the antechamber, as Lord Carnarvon, Carnarvon's daughter Evelyn, and excavation team member Arthur Callender waited anxiously for his response. A review of different sources provides three different accounts of that moment. Carter's diary has Carnarvon asking, "Can you see anything?," and his response being, "Yes, it is wonderful" (Carter, 1996). Carter's book, *The Discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamun*, published the year following the discovery, had Carnarvon asking, "Can you see anything?," with his response being, "Yes, wonderful things" (Carter, 1977, p. 96). Carnarvon's recollection of the exchange appeared in the London *Times* on December 11, 1922, two weeks after the event. Carnarvon asked, "Well, what is it?," to which Carter responded, "There are some marvelous objects here."

Of the three responses attributed to Carter, "wonderful things" was the most dramatic and memorable, at least in literary terms. It is the response used in most reenactments of the discovery. However, although no one will ever know the true

exchange, this provides one example of how, even with quotes from primary sources, moments in history can be recounted in different ways.

Question #2: What Was The Nature of the Relationship Between the Media  
and Those Who Controlled The Information?

Dunwoody (1986) wrote that, “In the earlier days of this century, a scientist rarely encountered a journalist...scientists considered reporters to be—quite simply—irrelevant” (p. 4). Howard Carter was no different, and “found it bewildering to meet highly paid correspondents every hour of the day reporting upon his every movement” (Hoving, 1978, p. 110). In The Discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamun, Carter commented, one assumes sarcastically, on the press:

Next came our friends the newspaper correspondents, who flocked to the Valley in large numbers and devoted all their social gifts—and they were considerable—towards dispelling any lingering remains of loneliness or desert boredom that we might still have left to us. (Carter, 1977, p. 142)

One member of the press who appeared to escape Carter’s resentment was London *Times* correspondent Arthur Merton. As part of the excavation team, Merton enjoyed access to the tomb and Carter on a daily basis. It should be noted that Merton’s byline from the initial article until December 8, 1922, was “From Our Cairo Correspondent.” From that point until January 8, 1923, his byline read, “From Our Own Correspondent.” However, from January 13 forward, one day after the announcement of the contract, his byline became “From Our Special Correspondent.” He was referred to as “special,”

perhaps, because he became the only correspondent whose written words were authorized as the official version of the event.

From the beginning, the London *Times* attempted to form a bond with Lord Carnarvon. The headline of the *Times*' announcement on November 30, 1922, referred to "LORD CARNARVON'S LONG QUEST," and the article mentioned that sixteen years of excavations were carried out by "Lord Carnarvon, with the assistance of Howard Carter" before the discovery.

Although it was Carter who actually performed the excavations, perhaps Carnarvon received more prominence in the headline and in the introduction because he was the aristocrat, the financial provider, and the person who would determine which newspaper would receive exclusive rights to the story. Carter's friendship with Cairo correspondent Arthur Merton already gave the London *Times* an advantage, but the initial article still attempted to place the newspaper in a favorable position with Carnarvon.

The article was filled with adjectives and had a self-congratulating tone. The discovery was claimed to be the reward for "patience, perseverance, and perspicacity," and Howard Carter was lauded for his "dogged perseverance," "thoroughness," and "above all his *flair*." Of course, the non-objective tone could be attributed to pride in announcing the accomplishments of their fellow countrymen. In echoing this sentiment, excavation team member Percy Newberry addressed the Royal Society in London shortly after the discovery:

We may congratulate ourselves that Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Carter persisted and that it has fallen to the lot of two Englishmen to make what

may be the last, but is certainly the most important find ever in the necropolis. (Brackman, 1976, p. 102)

It is not known whether Carter sat down with London *Times* correspondent Arthur Merton at the end of the day to discuss the objects, but this did not appear to be the case. Carter released a formal statement in the *Times* on December 5, 1922, regarding his impressions on the discovery up to that point, but did not release that type of information for the next two months. The *Times* articles may have come from inside information provided by Carter, but if that were the case, the articles should have been more detailed and comprehensive than those in the *New York Times*.

The relationship with the *New York Times*, and other members of the world press was more complex. According to Merton, the formation of the “opposition combine” had begun within a week of the London *Times* contract, and, he mentioned, “our rivals began to get restless at getting very little news” (Hoving, 1978). The situation turned from bad to worse with the arrival of *Daily Express* correspondent H.V. Morton, who “held a meeting of all reporters but those of the *Times* in his room in Luxor in order to break the *Times*’ agreement” (p. 156).

The *New York Times*’ initial headline on November 30 proclaimed, “Gorgeous Funeral Paraphernalia of King Tuhank Hamen [sic] Found by British Scientist.” With no ties to either Carnarvon or Carter, the newspaper chose to focus on the discoverer of the tomb, rather than the financial patron.

Also, a review of newspaper articles and books on the discovery shows this to be the only known occasion that Carter is referred to as a “scientist”—although the article also called him an “explorer.”

One sensitive issue to both Carnarvon/Carter and the London *Times* appeared to be the spreading of rumors by the other correspondents. Resentment towards both parties because of the contract was certainly one reason why the correspondents searched for information that would agitate the discoverers. Another reason may have been that denied “official” news of the excavation, the correspondents had to create stories to send back to their newspapers.

Question #3: What Can Be Learned From The Decisions Lord Carnarvon and Howard Carter Made Regarding The Press?

Upon the announcement of the contract, one can presume that no newspaper, other than the London *Times*, was pleased with the decision. It is easy, with hindsight, to criticize the choice to benefit financially by having one authorized source release the information of the excavation. This is especially true when one understands the controversy and backlash experienced by the scientists and laborers. However, there were other factors to consider.

Arthur Weigall, a German archaeologist working in Egypt at the time of the discovery, tried to offer advice to Carter during the storm of protests over the contract:

First, to get Carnarvon to make a public statement that he would not profit from *The Times*. Second, to let all journalists into his workshop so they could publicize the excellent job Carnarvon was doing to conserve the objects. Third, to hand over to all journalists—particularly the natives—

the essential facts at the earliest moment after the opening of the inner chamber, “and *not* one day after the *Times*.” (Hoving, 1978, p. 164)

Weigall’s plea appeared self-serving, as he was hired as a correspondent for the *Daily News* (Hoving, 1978, p. 161). Carter did not follow the Weigall’s advice, nor did he and Carnarvon follow anyone else’s advice to discourage the signing of the contract with the London *Times*.

The third “request” by Weigall referred to the fact that the local Egyptian press received information from the excavators one day after the information was provided to the London *Times*. Carter felt it was sufficient that the Egyptians received, at no cost, what other newspapers would have to pay for.

Although Carnarvon and Carter were accused of greed, there was the matter of the convenience and time savings in dealing with one reporter. The other matter was financing the excavation. It should be noted that, due to mounting expenses, the 1922-1923 season was to be the last financed by Carnarvon for Carter’s work in the Valley of the Kings.

A point often forgotten when caught up in the glamour of an archaeological discovery is that excavations are costly. Expenses include, among other things, salaries, transportation, meals, materials/supplies, housing, and costs associated with publication of the findings. Excavators normally receive funding if they are affiliated with a university or a particular government. If this is not the case, funding has to be secured through private sources. Even those who are affiliated with institutions or governments seek additional private funding.



Currently, excavations are taking place in the harbor at Alexandria, Egypt, with objects being discovered dating to the time of Cleopatra VII (the Cleopatra associated with Julius Caesar and Marc Antony). The excavations are being partly financed by the *Discovery Channel*, which secured rights to film the event for its documentary, *Cleopatra's Palace*, that aired internationally. The arrangement is not much different from the contract between Carter/Carnarvon and the London *Times*. The excavators took advantage of an opportunity to obtain funding for their work and publicize their findings to the world. The *Discovery Channel* does not hide its motives, stating that “in return for broadcast and merchandising rights, it has agreed to fund and film ‘groundbreaking expeditions’ around the world that uncover lost worlds and reveal new scientific discoveries” (“Is Archaeology Ready for Prime Time?,” 1999).

As of yet, however, the excavators have not been accused of greed or prostituting science, and the *Discovery Channel* has not been accused of paying money to create an event. Signing a contract to disperse information of a scientific/archaeological nature to the public is not a “bad” thing, and should not serve as a detriment to any excavation. The Fox Network also recently entered the archaeological entertainment field, signing an agreement with excavators on the Giza Plateau in Egypt. Historian Neil Asher Silberman noted:

Both *Opening the Lost Tombs* and *Cleopatra's Palace* were innovative experiments in which commercial entertainment provided substantial financial support for the archaeological expeditions that would serve as their raw material...one can understand in these days of funding cutbacks

and restricted archeological budgets how welcome those pennies-from-television-heaven can be. (“Is Archaeology Ready for Prime Time?,” 1999)

Although television and live satellite broadcasts did not exist when Lord Carnarvon and Howard Carter were struggling with the issue of handling the media, they should be considered trail blazers in combining science and journalism to financially benefit both parties. Archeologists Franck Goddio in Alexandria and Zahi Hawass on the Giza Plateau owe a part of their recent financial/funding successes to Carnarvon/Carter.

In the case of the discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb and the contract with the London *Times*, there are several lessons which current and future archaeologists can utilize. First, perhaps Carnarvon/Carter could have done more to include the Egyptians in the discovery and excavation. Because of the contract, “the Egyptian press was in the awkward position of relying on an English newspaper for stories about a marvelous discovery in its own country” (Brackman, 1976, p. 99). Also, most of the visitors invited inside the tomb were European VIPs. A random day, picked from the visitor’s log, Tuesday, February 13, 1923, showed that thirty-four celebrities and personalities visited the tomb. Only six were Egyptians (Brackman, 1976).

American Egyptologist Kent Weeks, currently excavating KV 5, the tomb of Ramses II’s son, in the Valley of the Kings, was careful to avoid any potential resentment from the local community when announcing his discovery in 1995. In his book, The Lost Tomb (1998), he wrote, “It’s not an official rule, just a tradition that is very politic to observe, but the first announcement of any archaeological discovery must be made by the Egyptians in Cairo to the Egyptian press” (p. 130).

In contrast to Carnarvon/Carter's announcement of their discovery through the *London Times*, Weeks had his institution, the American University in Cairo, issue a formal press release in Arabic to the Egyptian press. Several hours later, Weeks himself made the announcement in New York City, noting that the two hour difference was "a small enough delay that we were not likely to anger foreign reporters, who dislike being scooped by the local (Egyptian) press" (Weeks, 1998, p. 131).

Second, the contract did not affect the quality or quantity of the news reporting and releasing of information, at least in comparing the *London Times* and the *New York Times*. From the scientist's point of view, life was easier in terms of not having to repeatedly grant the same interview, or having to give daily public press conferences. However, the tensions created by the exclusion of certain groups needs to be factored in when entering into any exclusive media contract and deciding how to most effectively release scientific information.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Egyptologist Bob Brier recently caused a mild controversy among his academic circle as he employed “paleopsychology” to determine motives and possible suspects in his book, The Murder of Tutankhamen. At the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, the Tutankhamun exhibit is undergoing extensive renovations, and is receiving a much needed alarm system, resulting from a failed attempt to steal one of the pharaoh’s daggers. Even after politically motivated shootings in the Valley of the Kings, at Luxor, Egypt, tourists make the trek across the Nile and walk the path up the dusty valley floor, hoping to catch a glimpse of the tomb labeled KV 62, the tomb of Tutankhamun.

Half a world away, at the Luxor Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, tourists can also catch a glimpse of “The Tomb of Tutankhamun,” although this tomb/museum is a replica. One can also choose from a variety of slot machines in an area of the casino designated as “The Valley of the Kings,” or enjoy a meal at Tut’s Hut. At the hotel’s Imax theater, the film currently enjoying an extended run is “Mysteries of Egypt.” The print advertisements for the film feature a single image: the solid gold funeral mask of Tutankhamun.

Why does the name and image of Tutankhamun remain so prevalent nearly seventy-seven years after the discovery? As this thesis has demonstrated, extensive press coverage made the discovery part of people’s daily lives, and bridged time and distance to bring the young pharaoh to life. Photographs and descriptions of the artifacts in the

newspapers not only painted a portrait of his life as king, but items such as gloves, toys, and games revealed an everyday life that all can relate to. An ancient Egyptian proverb states, "To say the name of the dead is to make him live again." If this be the case, thanks to the discovery by Howard Carter and the press coverage, Tutankhamun has outlived other Egyptian pharaohs with longer, more illustrious reigns.

If Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon had decided not to continue excavations in the Valley of the Kings during the 1922-1923 season because of funding issues, and had given up their concession to work in the valley, perhaps the tomb may never have been discovered. Or, perhaps one of the international teams currently excavating the site would have eventually cleared the stairway leading to the tomb entrance.

One wonders what the media reaction would be in 1999 to the discovery of a nearly intact pharaoh's tomb. As indicated in recent broadcasts by the *Discovery Channel* and the Fox Network, perhaps a media mogul such as Rupert Murdoch or Ted Turner would pay for the rights to televise a live opening of the tomb. Maybe, with commercial tie-ins, Tutankhamun action figures would be included in every child's meal at Burger King or McDonalds, and Tutankhamun web sites, t-shirts, and posters would become a part of daily life. Although, the world is a more complicated place in the 1990s than it was in the 1920s, so perhaps the event would receive a few weeks of fanfare through the mass media, then retreat quietly to the pages of scholarly journals and specialty magazines, replaced by reports of political scandal, violence in the schools, and the impending problems that will accompany the new millennium.

However, in 1922, the newspaper headline, "AN EGYPTIAN TREASURE—  
GREAT FIND AT THEBES," began a chain of events which brought the name of

Tutankhamun to every corner of society. Even though technology would have allowed news reports of the discovery to reach more people at a faster rate in 1999, the impact of the event probably owes its longevity to the fact that it took place at a time when it had more meaning in people's lives.

Hannis Jordan, a reader of the *New York Times*, was moved enough by the discovery, and the story of the young pharaoh and his teenage queen, to submit a poem to the newspaper, which appeared in the editorial section on January 15, 1923. It read, in part:

Gem-set and glittering, regal, stately throne,  
 And chariot wheel with many a precious stone—  
 These spake of pomp and panoply from out of the gloom  
 Of Tutankhamen's long forgotten tomb  
 That alien hands now bared to Egypt's sun  
 Long, long ago the dynasty was run!  
 The lid was lifted; there no gem was found;  
 A woman's tresses, once of sun-glint brown,  
 But ere they shorn were, Time had his way  
 And golden strands were faded into gray.  
 Yet, loving to the end, his Queen had buried there,  
 As keepsake for her lord, her wealth of hair!

### Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The main limitation of this thesis is the variety of newspapers that were used as sources. Newspapers such as London's *Daily Mail*, or the *New York Tribune* would have offered different perspectives on the discovery. Also, newspapers with a reputation for sensationalism would have provided an interesting contrast to the more reputable London *Times* and *New York Times*.

Another limitation is that the articles were being read and analyzed from a modern perspective. There is no way to evaluate the extent to which the readers of 1922-1923 assessed the credibility of the newspapers, or whether they cared about the contract.

Future research could involve an examination of the press coverage through the end of the excavation in 1932. As events such as the Great Depression dominated the daily news and excitement of the discovery subsided, perhaps a different type of newspaper reporting emerged.

Media coverage of other archaeological discoveries, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Tyrolean Ice Man, or KV 5, the tomb of the sons of Ramses II, could be compared and contrasted with Howard Carter's discovery, to determine how much has changed and how much remained the same since 1922.

Finally, it would be interesting to examine press coverage from the Egyptian perspective, or in other Arabic countries at the time of the discovery. Newspapers denied access to exclusive information and produced by the descendants of Tutankhamun would definitely have a different view of the events as reported in the pages of the London *Times* and *New York Times*.

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