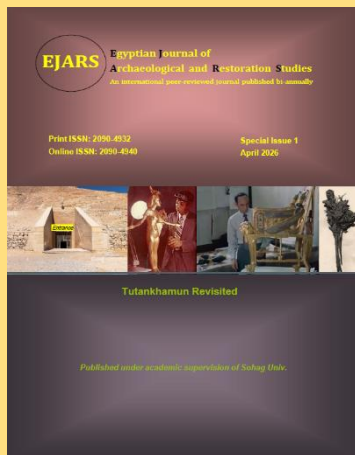


# Issue Preface



The treasures of Tutankhamun have always fascinated people all around the world, and countless stories have been told about the discovery and excavation of the tomb, as well as mysteries surrounding the boy king's life and death. For those working in museums, handling objects on a daily basis can be rewarding. Yet when faced with masterpieces such as the treasures of Tutankhamun, it is difficult to capture the depth of one's fascination. The transfer of the collection from the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir in Cairo to the Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza provided an opportunity, prompting in-depth studies to safeguard these invaluable artifacts. By 2016, many artifacts had been successfully dismantled and transferred to the GEM, leaving conservators challenged with the safe transfer of the shrines. After extensive discussions, it was decided to begin with a careful study of the innermost shrine from multiple perspectives before undertaking the transfer of all four shrines and the pall frame. A multidisciplinary team was formed, composed mainly of conservators, scientists and senior staff from both museums, together

with academic staff from the Faculty of Archaeology at Cairo University. Working collaboratively across scientific and technical backgrounds allowed the team to solve unforeseen challenges. By studying the diaries of Howard Carter and Alfred Lucas, the team gradually gained confidence during the long hours of painstaking work in the limited space inside the shrine. The five-year long project is a reminder of earlier generations who worked on the objects from the Tutankhamun collection. Sadly, much of their work was never published, perhaps because they regarded it as part of their museum duties. In this foreword, we briefly honor some of these individuals whose contributions should not be forgotten, because their words and guidance many years ago remain with us today. In the 1960's and 1970's, restorers and conservators at the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir worked extensively on Tutankhamun's collection in preparation for its international tours. Yet the immense effort required behind the scenes – treatment, packing in Tahrir, followed by unpacking at the exhibition venues abroad – has rarely been highlighted. Saleh Ahmed Saleh (1933–1996) was one of the pioneering figures in the field of archaeological conservation in Egypt and the founder of conservation and restoration studies at the Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University. He graduated from the Faculty of Science in 1956 and began his career as a chemist at the Chemical Laboratory of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization. In 1959 he received a scholarship to study scientific methods of conservation at the Central Laboratory for Conservation in Warsaw, Poland, and earned his Ph.D. in Physical Science from the University of Warsaw in 1964, specializing in X-ray diffraction and crystallography. Back in Cairo, Dr. Saleh played an important international role in the major traveling exhibitions of the treasures of Pharaoh Tutankhamun. As Head of Conservation, he accompanied the exhibition “Treasures of the Tomb of Tutankhamun” during its USSR tour (1973–1975), which visited three major Soviet cities—Moscow, Leningrad and Kyiv and worked closely with Egyptian and Soviet specialists to maintain strict environmental conditions for the preservation of the objects, including the famous golden mask of Tutankhamun. He also accompanied the United States tour of “The Treasures of Tutankhamun” exhibition (1976–1979), which visited six major American cities, beginning in Washington, D.C., and introduced the masterpieces of ancient Egyptian civilization to millions of visitors. Other names in connection with the Tutankhamun collection are Dr Zaki Iskander, a scientist, and the curators Ibrahim el-Nawawy and Ahmed El-Sawy who were photographed examining the mask during the aforementioned world tours. Dr. Nadia Lokma, who devoted her diploma thesis to one of Tutankhamun's totally deformed chariots, also worked for many years at the Tahrir museum, where she was responsible for monitoring the shrines and other important wooden objects, including the wooden statues of Tutankhamun. Likewise, Mr. Samir Abaza, a quiet and meticulous conservator with decades of experience, treated many artifacts from the collection. Although his work was never formally published, it was documented in a 1982 film directed by Shady Abd El Salam, which records his conservation of the throne of Tutankhamun. This special issue brings together insights gained during the work on the innermost shrine, experimental work inspired by years of close engagement with the collection, and complementary Egyptological, botanical and technical research. We dedicate this special edition to conservators, Egyptologists and researchers who, over the decades, worked with devotion to preserve Tutankhamun's legacy at the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir.

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