

**Introduction:**

Welcome to the American Research Center in Egypt's podcast. Each month, we will bring you the latest findings in Egyptological research and host engaging discussions about fascinating topics in Egyptian cultural heritage. Each of our guests are world renowned scholars in the fields of Egyptology, Islamic, Coptic, and modern Egyptian history, archaeology and much more. To suggest a topic for this program, please email us at [podcast@arce.org](mailto:podcast@arce.org). We are also available on Apple, Spotify, Google or wherever you may listen to podcasts. If you enjoy this podcast, you can find out more about our other programs and activities, including virtual lectures and tours by visiting our website at [arce.org](http://arce.org). That's a r c e.org. You can also support our work by joining our mailing list, becoming a member or donating to support this podcast. This month's podcast focuses on King Tutankhamun's court featuring Dr. Fatma Ismail, ARCE's US Director of Outreach and Programs in conversation with our guest, Professor Nozomu Kawai of Kanazawa University in Japan. Thank you so much for joining us today and I hope you enjoy the episode.

**Fatma Ismail:**

Our guest on today's episode on King Tutankhamun is Professor Nozomu Kawai. He's professor of Egyptology at Kanazawa University, Japan, and the director of the North Saqqara project. His research focuses on the history, art and archaeology of the New Kingdom, Egypt, with a particular emphasis on the period from the late 18th dynasty to the 19th dynasty. He obtained his PhD on the reign of Tutankhamun in 2006 and he's currently working for the revision of his original dissertation for publication. Welcome to ARCE's podcast, Professor Kawai.

**Nozomu Kawai:**

It's my pleasure!

**Ismail:**

while we know quite a bit about the tomb and the mummy of King Tutankhamun, we don't know much about the history of his reign. Can you start us off by briefly describing the political situation within Egypt during Tutankhamun's reign? How did his short reign fit into the broader sweep of Egyptian history in the New Kingdom?

**Kawai:**

Well, Tutankhamun comes after Akhenaten, who introduced a new religion centered on the worship of the Aten, abandoning Egypt's traditional religion. After the death of Akhenaten in his 17 years on the throne, the regime was distancing itself from the new religion of the worship of Aten. By the third year of the female King Neferneferuaten, The God Amun proscribed under Akhenaten, was back in royal favor, and the traditional religion had been officially back. This trend would intensify with the accession of Tutankhamun; But paradox remains in plenty. Although Tutankhamun restored the traditional cults and compensate them for the injuries sustained under Akhenaten, element of Amarna legacy would have survived more tenaciously than these externals might indicate. Soon after, Tutankhamun ascended to the throne, he seems to have obtained another name Tutankhamun which indicate the harmony between Aten and Amun as national deity. I mean, Tutankhamun worshipping Amun and Aten simultaneously at the beginning of reign. However, he changed his name to Tutankhamun completely soon afterwards. It seems that Tutankhamun never resided at Amarna after his accession, because

there's no partial remains with Tutankhamun's name there. Instead, he returned to Memphis as the royal residence, while Thebes became the center of religion again. Tutankhamun's new policy is stated in his so-called 'Restoration stela,' which was erected in front of the Third Pylon at Karnak Temple. In this, Tutankhamun announced his intention to restore the traditional God Amun. The stela documents the institutionalization of Tutankhamun's restoration program, describing what had already been affected to the benefit of the traditional cults. Tutankhamun's first imperative was the restoration and reopening of the temples of traditional cults throughout Egypt. Even more important was the fact that three deities—Amen-Ra, Ra-Horakhty, and Ptah—became equally worshiped as supreme state deities. Tutankhamun's initiatives to restore the traditional cult in both the redistribution of the national wealth to the temples of traditional deities and the nobleman. During the reign of his father, Akhenaten; power and wealth had been concentrated in the hands of a pharaoh. Through the restoration of the traditional cult by Tutankhamun, the wealth of Egypt was once again redistributed to the temples and noblemen. Changes from the cult of Aten to the cult of the three deities represent the coexistence of multiple deities and the king. The revival of the traditional cult helped stabilize the social order and empower the ancient Egyptian Kingdom as a thriving nation.

**Ismail:**

Knowing that King Tutankhamun was only a teenager when he ruled Egypt, who do you think was really behind the scene, arranging for these initiatives to restore the traditional cults?

**Kawai:**

The leading figure of the restoration program must have been, the Regent Horemheb. So, Horemheb was not only the commander in chief of the army, but also, he was a regent and the deputy of the king. It is probably that restoration inscription was made by Horemheb himself in the name of Tutankhamun. Ironically, the inscription was usurped by Horemheb when he became king. A scribal statue of Horemheb from Karnak which I examined for the first time, mentioned that he had actually restored the temple of Amun at Karnak and magnified Thebes from its devastated situation without acknowledging Tutankhamun.. It was Horemheb, who aimed to remove the memory of the Amarna kings in order to legitimize himself as a new king since he had no connection with the royal family of the 18th dynasty. This damnatio memoriae and the restoration program were followed by Ramesses I, Seti I and Ramesses II for the same political purpose.

**Ismail:**

So in a way Tutankhamun's reign was a transitional phase from the heretic Amarna period to Ramesside period?

**Kawai:**

Yeah, So I would say it was time for pivotal change in politics, religion, economy and culture in Egyptian history.

**Ismail:**

Beside his tomb, what are the other monuments attributed to Tutankhamun?

**Kawai:**

Actually, there are so many other monuments attributed to Tutankhamun other than his tomb. Tutankhamun's reign was marked by a significant increase in artistic and architectural activities throughout Egypt. Despite its short time, although it is impossible to know Tutankhamun's entire restoration and building activities, the evidence imply that Tutankhamun's restoration and reactivation of the temples spanned from the Delta up to Upper Nubia. Indeed, Tutankhamun was a restorer and the builder, considering the large scale of his restoration and building program within the 10 years of his reign. Tutankhamun's most impressive restoration work was undertaken in Thebes. Tutankhamun continued the unfinished work of Amenhotep III's building project, neglected by his son Akhenaten. By resuming the building program of Amenhotep III, Tutankhamun aimed to legitimize himself as the successor of the last orthodox king before Akhenaten. For example, Tutankhamun decorated the Colonnade Hall of Luxor temple, which was left unfinished and neglected by Akhenaten. On the scene of the Opet Festival, Amenhotep III is represented as the statue of a deified and deceased former king on each divine barque of the procession conducted by Tutankhamun. This suggests that Tutankhamun's association with Amenhotep III was displayed publicly during the festival as political propaganda. My observation of Tutankhamun's monuments in Karnak revealed that he often left his activities in the major parts of the temple and their main processional ways. Also Tutankhamun created numerous statues of Amun in various sizes in Thebes, especially at Karnak. As you know the name Tutankhamun means the living image of the god Amun and Amun statues expressed in their guise the facial features of Tutankhamun, manifesting the meaning of his name. These statues have been studied and just published by Dr. Marianne Eaton-Krauss recently.

**Ismail:**

Do we know where he built his memorial temple?

**Kawai:**

This is a big problem. We don't know the exact location of Tutankhamun's memorial temple, but he seems to have built his memorial temple in Karnak, which was completed by his successor Ay. The temple was demolished by Horemheb and most of the blocks from this temple found in the second and the ninth pylons at Karnak. You can actually see the blocks in the area between the main temple and Khonsu temple at in Karnak.

**Interlude:**

You are Listening to the official podcast of the American Research Center in Egypt. More information about our operations and programs can be found at [arce.org](http://arce.org). And if you would like to support the ARCE podcast please visit [arce.org/podcast](http://arce.org/podcast). Now we will go back to our episode with Professor Nozomu Kawai.

**Ismail:**

We know that King Tutankhamun was surrounded by an elaborate entourage of high ranking officials. You have studied many of them. Who do you believe were the important man or women behind the throne in Tutankhamun's reign?

**Kawai:**

Well, the most important high officials are Horemheb, Ay, and Maya. During the Tutankhamun's reign, a pattern emerges when high officials take on royal prerogatives. Ay, who was the closest courtier to the king, and participated in royal cultic ritual is one. Horemheb takes on some similarly royal attributes by depicting himself as the victorious military leader and an excellent legislator, which are supposed to have been significant role of the king. Maya, Overseer of the Treasury, was responsible for the restoration program in the country. His outstanding role imply that the restoration of the nation's temples and the economy was prime concern during Tutankhamun's reign. He also adopted epithets normally reserved for royalty.

**Ismail:**

Maya is so interesting; he served during King Tutankhamun and continued to serve under Horemheb. When the minor robbery took place in King Tutankhamun's tomb, Maya is the one who ordered the tomb to be resealed, and tunnels made by robbers be filled. Who else besides these three men, Professor Kawai? Who else was beside Ay, Horemheb and Maya, the Treasurer. I read about Nakhtmin; I think he donated a few items to Tutankhamun's tomb, right?

**Kawai:**

Yeah, so Nakhtmin is known to have been a military officer. So he was very close to Tutankhamun as he dedicated, as you said five Shabtis to Tutankhamun's tomb. He seems to have originated from Akhmim, like Ay. In Ay's reign, he must have surpassed the position held by Horemheb as he was designated "King's son of his body" of Ay, clearly indicating that the possibility of Horemheb succeeding the king was prevented by Ay. Instead, Horemheb came to the throne.

There was another important person who took care of Tutankhamun, Senked, Overseer of Tutors under Tutankhamun. His tomb was found on the West bank of Akhmim. He's also from Akhmim and he is depicted as he rides the chariot next to Tutankhamun to show his duty as a chief educator of the young boy King. By the way, as I already said, Akhmim is a very important place, where Ay and Nakhtmin also came from.

**Ismail:**

Isn't it where they think Nefertiti came from as well?

**Kawai:**

Yeah, Nefertiti and Yuya and Tjuyu, the parents of Queen Ti of Amenhotep III. So, you know, the people from Akhmim were very influential. Now we know the High Priest of Amun under Tutankhamun He is Parenefer/wenefer. His tomb was discovered by a German team headed by Friedrike Kammp-Seyfried at the end of the last century. The style and iconography of the tomb decoration clearly belongs to a period immediately following the Amarna Period. In particular, the architecture and the decoration present remarkable parallels to both the royal and private tombs at Amarna. It represents a conscious attempt to assimilate the theology of Amarna into traditional Egyptian conceptions. In the tomb of Parenefer/wenefer, interestingly, the name Parenefer is totally erased and replaced by the name Wenefer. The name Parenefer/wenefer means "He of the Perfect Name," being used during the Amarna period in reference to Akhenaten. But he kept this name during the post-Amarna period and the erasure was undertaken in the reign of Ramesses II.

Parenefer/wenefer's titles include the "Greatest of Seers" in Thebes. He is the first High Priest of Amun to hold this title. Since the Old Kingdom, "Greatest of Overseers" regularly refer to the high priest of Re in Heliopolis. The title, "Greatest of Overseers" was also used by the High Priest of the Aten during Akhenaten's reign. This title is associated with the Re. He also had the title of Sem Priest, normally attributed to the High Priest of Ptah. It seems that from the post Amarna Period, the cult of Amun at Karnak became harmonized with that of Re and Ptah in order to avoid a monopoly of Amun priests. This may be understood as a result of a reaction to Amun's priests immediately before the Amarna Period. This pattern seems to have become common in the Ramsesside period.

**Ismail:**

What about women, Professor Kawai? Obviously his sister wife, Ankhesenamun was important. Recently Alain Zivie discovered that beautifully decorated tomb of the Wet-nurse Maia. Can you tell us more about the women in the King's life?

**Kawai:**

Of course, so Ankhesenamun was Tutankhamun's queen. And she was third Daughter of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. Probably older than Tutankhamun. She's always depicted with her husband with affection in many funerary objects from his tomb and elsewhere. She even outlived Tutankhamun and may have played an important political role after his death. You know, her tomb has not been found yet.

**Ismail:**

Unfortunately.

**Kawai:**

Yeah, someone will discover in the future, I hope. Well, Tutankhamun's wet nurse Maia was probably the most influential lady during Tutankhamun's reign after his queen. In her tomb, discovered at the end of last century by Alain Zivie, Maia is shown holding Tutankhamun on her lap who is facing her. The two strike a beautiful affectionate pose. Tutankhamun is represented as a young boy, with his distinctive profile and fully loyal regalia, while Maia adores him with her right hand and probably has her left arm around his back. In addition, she mentions the phrase in her tomb: "Pacifying the heart of all the gods in order to establish their temple and to be content with your heart every day as your sister, Isis." This text describes Maia being identified with Isis and expresses important phrase for Tutankhamun's restoration program. I believe Maia was an extremely important noble lady at Tutankhamun court.

Also a lady named Taemwadjisy who was probably a descendant of Yuya and Tjuya, the parents of Queen Ti and connected to Ay. She had very influential power in Nubia. She married Amenhotep Huy, viceroy of Kush under Tutankhamun. It was probably due to his marriage to Taemwadjisy that Amenhotep Huy kept his influence in Nubia.

**Ismail:**

So at least three remarkable women existed in King Tutankhamun's immediate circle. The tomb of Taemwadjisy 's husband, Amenhotep Huy is open to the public, right?

**Kawai:**

Yes, it has a beautiful tribute scene with gold from Nubia. And actually, one of the shields and the smiting scene on it look exactly like the one we find from Tutankhamun's tomb. It's definitely worth a visit.

**Ismail:**

I hope archaeologists can find the tombs of Ankhesenamun and Taemwadjisy in the near future.

**Kawai:**

Inshallah .

**Ismail:**

Do we have any insights into the dynamic or relationship between the king and those officials? How did they represent themselves?

**Kawai:**

Well, the most representative depiction of Tutankhamun's entourage of high ranking officials are shown in the tomb of Maia, Tutankhamun's wet nurse, at Saqqara. The twelve high officials behind Tutankhamun are bending down and paying homage to the king. It is noteworthy that the high officials are depicted behind the king, indicating the political situation of Tutankhamun's reign. It is certain that those dignitaries are actual power holders behind the king. The two men with shaved heads in the frontal part must be the two viziers who are normally positioned after the king in the administration. However, before the viziers there are the men who appear to be the most important officials among them: One holds a fan, a cloth, and a battle axe and the other holds a fan, a cloth, and a heqa-scepter. I suggest that the former must be Horemheb and the latter must be Ay, because Horemheb and Ay hold battle axe and heqa-scepter respectively on other contemporary war scenes. This scene demonstrates Ay and Horemheb are the actual power holders during Tutankhamun's reign.

**Ismail:**

What an interesting interpretation! I would like to tell our listeners that they can see this image Professor Kawai is describing on ARCE's podcast page for this episode. The scene is just like a summary of his government.

**Kawai:**

Yeah, in a way, it highlights who are the important men at his court at this time. Not only was Horemheb, the military commander, but he also dominated all other branches of the administration of the country. As the regent of the king, he outranked two viziers, who traditionally served as the prime ministers under the king. He was truly the political leader under Tutankhamun, as his most prominent title *iry-pat* "Hereditary Prince," suggests.

Ay, on the other hand, was the closest courtier to the king. He and his wife Ty had served the royal family since Akhenaten's reign, even when the new royal couple was born. Although Ay did not retain political power as an administrator during most of Tutankhamun's reign, he was the most influential

private adviser to the king. After Tutankhamun's death, Ay ascended to the throne probably due to his cross ties to the royal family for generations.

**Ismail:**

Thank you for being with us today, Professor Kawai.

**Kawai:**

You're very welcome, Fatma.

**Outro:**

Thank you for listening to this episode of the ARCE podcast and many thanks to Professor Nozomu Kawai for sharing his expertise. Please join us for next month's podcast where we will conclude our series on King Tutankhamun with our special guest, Dr. Maggie Bryson to discuss the aftermath of King Tutankhamun's reign. Please visit our website at [www.arce.org](http://www.arce.org) for more information or contact us at [podcast@arce.org](mailto:podcast@arce.org). Again, we are also available on Apple, Spotify, Google, or wherever you may listen to your podcast.

Thank you for listening and we'll see you next time.