

# Kings Valley – from Amenhotep III to Horemheb

by Antonio Crasto

## The royal necropolis

The western area on the left bank of the Nile opposite the ancient city of Waset / Theban was dedicated to the necropolis and the temples of the millions of years, in which it was celebrated the cult of the kings after their death.

During the eighteenth dynasty, a different religious outlook led the pharaoh woman Hatshepsut to open a new royal necropolis, the Kings Valley, at the foot of the sacred mountain, whose top *Dehenet* "The top" assumes, view from the Valley, the pyramidal form. The mountain was sacred to the goddess with the head of cobra Mertseger, protector of the necropolis and syncretic form of the mother goddess Hathor.

Hatshepsut wanted to be buried in the "belly" of the mother goddess, the goddess who, as a celestial cow, had protected her at birth and nursed symbolically.

The necropolis was used during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth dynasty ensuring the burial of about thirty kings.

Made except two kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Amenhotep III (1433 - 1394 BC <sup>1</sup>) and Ay (1373 - 1368 BC <sup>1</sup>), whose graves were dug, by choice of the sovereign or after their death, in the secondary Kings Valley, the West Valley.



The "Top" which overlooks the Kings Valley

## WV 22 e 23

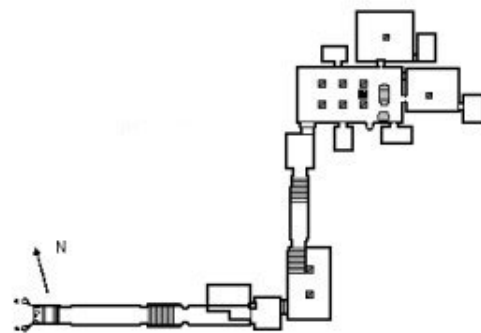
Most Egyptologists consider it natural, but others believe that the West Valley has been a last resort, not having the two pharaohs been allowed for a burial in the main valley or not having the priesthood of Amun, keeper of the Valley, granted the permission for burial in the tomb they had dug in the main valley.

It is therefore possible that Amenhotep III did dig his underground in the Kings Valley, but at the time of burial, the former co-regent Akhenaten (1403 - 1386 BC <sup>1</sup>) has been prevented or advised not to use the burial, as it could be subject to vandalism, suggested by the priests of Amen, the guardian of the necropolis, annoyed by the heresy of Akhenaten, that had seen the secure involvement of his father Amenhotep III.

It is therefore considered likely that Akhenaten had to temporarily bury his father in a small tomb in the West Valley (WV A), waiting to dig into itself a proper royal tomb, WV 22.

Different seems to be the story of the other royal tomb in the West Valley (WV 23).

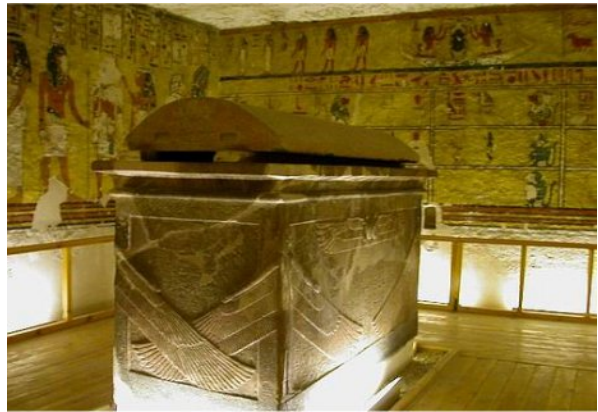
The frescoes similar to those of the tomb KV 62 of Tutankhamen (1385-1373 BC <sup>1</sup>) tell us that it was carved and painted during the reign of this pharaoh or during the reign of the pharaohs following: Ay and Horemheb (1368-1317 BC <sup>1</sup>).



Tomb of Amenhotep III (WV 22)



Sailing boat of the sun, Kheper, in the hours of the night (baboons) KV 62

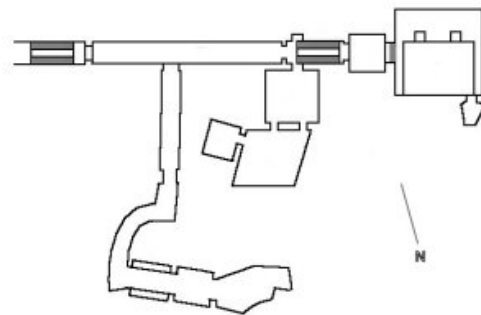


Sailing boat of the sun, Kheper, in the hours of the night (baboons) WV 23

Most Egyptologists believe that the WV 23 has been dug for the successor of Tutankhamen, Ay, but its linear form is strongly reminiscent of the tomb of Akhenaten at Akhetaten, of course, without the appendices.



Tomb of Ay (WV 23)



Royal tomb of Akhenaten at Akhetaten

These two graves were the first to have a linear and not a right angle development, so it is conceivable that their project was linked to the new cult of the sun disk Aten.

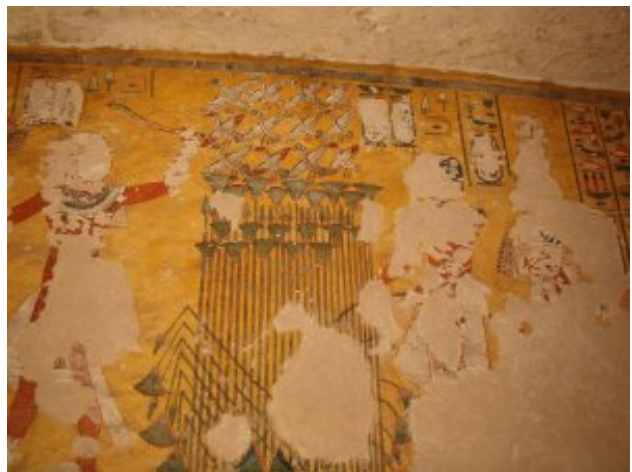
They represent a true architectural revolution intended to enable the rays of the sun, at the Winter Solstice, to reach the burial chamber and somehow "kissing" each year the mummy of Akhenaten. The day of the Winter Solstice would have been the beginning of the rebirth of the Sun and in parallel a heavenly rebirth of the soul of the sovereign.

Therefore, we can be almost sure that Tutankhamen dug the new tomb in the West Valley to Akhenaten, which reproduce that he had hewn out in the real wadi at Akhetaten.

On the direction of the two tombs, we can assume that it has been chosen to allow the entry of the rays of the sun, source from the high hills of the wadi at Akhenaten and of the West Valley, with an azimuth slightly more southern than rising of the Sun at the Winter Solstice at the same latitude, but on a flat land.

We have said that most Egyptologists believed and believes the tomb of the West Valley WV 23 excavated for Ay, thanks to some cartouches and / or instructions that you can pick up in parietal representations and on the sarcophagus, although these have been heavily hammered.

Remained so for them to locate the tomb of the reburial of Akhenaten. When it was discovered the tomb KV 55 in the main Kings Valley, seemed to have found it, but medical examinations of the mummy found in it obliterated this hypothesis, having established that the personage had to be less than 25 years <sup>2</sup>, far too few to Akhenaten, who reigned 17 years.



WV 23

All Egyptologists had thus hypothesize that the KV 55 was the tomb of Smenkhkara (1386-1385) BC <sup>1</sup>), the short-lived successor of Akhenaten, who died after about a year of his reign, most likely at an age of 18-20 years.

Recently Z. Hawass has decided to contradict the old estimate of the age of the personage, on the basis of major bone deformations detected by CT, deformations that leave to think about a man of about 60 years <sup>3</sup>. The dubious bonus of age assumed by Egyptian doctors has not satisfied the desires of Hawass, who suggested arbitrarily an age of 35-45 years in the article about DNA of mummies of the period <sup>4</sup> and moved the sarcophagus of KV 55 in Akhenaton room of the Cairo Museum, as if the identification was reliable.

It wasn't considered that the deformations could be related to Marfan syndrome deforming, which seems to have marked the bodies of many personages of the period: Nefertiti, Akhenaten, some daughters of Akhenaten, Smenkhkara and Tutankhamen <sup>5,6,7</sup>.

It seems, however, impossible for the reburial of Akhenaten, the maximum charge of heresy of Aten and who, having suffered the humiliation of the burial of her father out of the royal necropolis, decreed the *damnatio memoriae* of the god Amen, could be authorized by the priests of Amen in the main Valley.

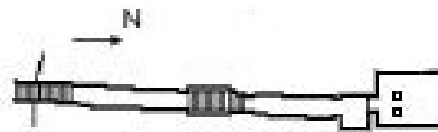
## Tomb of Ay

It is very likely that the situation of WV 23 remained stable throughout the reign of the pharaohs Tutankhamen and Ay.

References to pharaoh Ay in the representations on the walls and on the sarcophagus, though hammered, suggest a possible usurpation of WV 23.

The translation of the mummies of the kings of Akhetaten and the excavation of two new burials, KV 55 to Smenkhkara and WV 23 to Akhenaten, had to dissuade the young Tutankhamen from the realization of his burial.

It is therefore likely that, given his young age, he has begun only after a few years of his reign the excavation of his tomb in the main Valley, perhaps the KV 57, whose initial part is linear and follows the design of the tombs of Akhenaten at Akhetaten and in the West Valley.



Tomb of Horemheb – first part (KV 57)

It is possible that, during the about nine years of his reign, Tutankhamen was not able to complete the KV 57 (first part), so that he can be buried there. I consider very likely that Ay has opted for a burial of his predecessor in a tomb usurped some major (KV 62), a tomb already used or over but not yet used. The tomb was adapted and painted in a hurry during the seventy days of the period of mummification of the king.

Ay, for me the divine Father Yuia, father in law of Amenhotep III, was very old and had no hope of completing a new tomb. He would therefore decided to complete the tomb started by Tutankhamen (KV 57), as seems to witness the well (KV 58) in which it was found material referable to the burial of Ay <sup>8</sup>.

However, it is possible that his successor Horemheb, in the face of protests from the clergy of Amon since Ay was too involved in heresy of Aten, decided to bury again the old pharaoh in West Valley, usurping the tomb WV 23 of Akhenaten.

In this regard we know that Horemheb usurped the years of reign of the pharaohs involved with heresy of Aten: Akhenaten, Smenkhkara, Tutankhamen and Ay, adding them to the actual years of reign.

It is then very likely that Horemheb has provided:

- the usurpation of the tomb of Akhenaten (WV 23);
- the moving of the mummy of Akhenaten in a nearby tomb unfinished of West Valley, perhaps the WV 25;
- the personification of the frescoes for Ay, in the period of seventy days of mummification of the king;
- the burial of Ay in the WV 23.

## Damnatio memoriae di Ay

We know that the general Horemheb found justification for his coronation marrying the daughter of Ay, Mutnedjemet. He would still decided to keep for himself and his new wife his beautiful tomb that he had hewn out in Saqqara, but he changed his mind at a later time, perhaps after the death of Mutnedjemet.

He then decided to create his own new tomb in the Kings Valley, completing that unused which had been started by Tutankhamen and Ay. It would, however, changed the project by making a second stretch from the burial room of the initial project.

The late start of work did not allow, however, despite his many years of his reign, the completion of the frescoes.

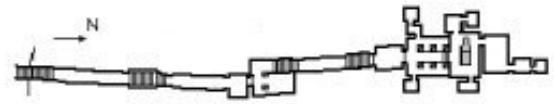
The pounding of the representations of the WV 23 leads us to hypothesize that Horemheb has also decided, after the death of his wife Mutnedjemet, the *damnatio memoriae* of its predecessor, making his cold revenge against Ay, who had taken charge of commander in chief to assign it to his son, Nakhtmin.

After "deleted" Akhenaten and perhaps Smenkhkara, whose tomb (KV 55) suffered a similar action of *damnatio memoriae*, Horemheb decided to "delete" also this pharaoh, hammering his representations (faces, cartouches and titles) and moving the mummy in the tomb that Yuia / Ay had hewn as an important courtier (KV 46).

The walls of the tomb were hammered to delete any reference to Ay, so it seems strange that two copies of the Horus title and some cartouches on the sarcophagus were left.

This was found broken, so he was brought to the Cairo Museum to be restored.

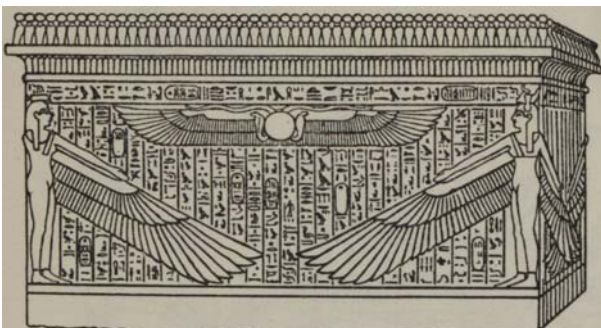
Rearranged in WV 23, it no longer presents the upper band of ureus, inside of which the lid got stuck



Tomb of Horemheb (KV 57)



The sovereign with the Horus title






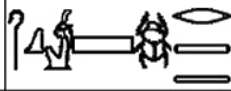

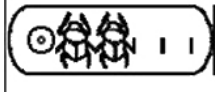




Sarcophagus (drawing of Loret)




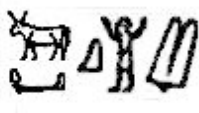




Restored sarcophagus

## Ay titles

Ay's titles		
Horus		
		Mighty bull, shining in the manifestations
The two Ladies		
		Dominates the Asian great power
Golden Horus		
		The two Lands reborn with possession of Maat
King of Upper and Lower Egypt		
		The manifestation of the manifestations of Ra
Son of Ra		
		The divine father Ay

However, there are some versions of the Horus title of Ay.

By way of example, it shows the changes, reported by some authors, on the basis of some archaeological finds.

Autore	Geroglifici	Significato
F. Cimmino, Donation stele <sup>9</sup>	 	Mighty bull, horns wonderful
William J. Murnane, Donation stele <sup>10</sup>	 	Mighty bull, whose manifestations are bright or shining in the manifestations N28 - Sun at dawn
Tomb of West Valley WV 23	 	Mighty bull, whose transformations are bright or shining in the transformations L1 - beetle

The first version "Mighty bull, horns wonderful" is similar to "Mighty bull, high-feathers / horns", also attributed to Amenhotep IV, so it is possible that Cimmino has been confused and has given a wrong title.

The version in the tomb WV 23 "Mighty bull, whose transformations are shining" is similar to that of the Donation Stele of Ay "Mighty bull, whose manifestations are shining" (as reported by Murnane).

For the Horus titles we could therefore hypothesize that the workers have had a list of titles from chipping, in which the Horus title was different from that used in the representations of the tomb.

In this regard I believe that the two versions of the Horus title can be found in a probable

co-regency of Ay with Tutankhaten, immediately after the death of Smenkhkara and perhaps the brief reign of Marytaten.

Ay then would take the Horus title "Mighty bull, bright transformations", a title that would have changed to "Mighty bull, shining in the manifestations" at the time of his second coronation after the death of Tutankhamen.

This co-regency of Ay and Tutankhamen should be endorsed by the discovery, in the filling of the 2nd pylon of Karnak, of nine lintels which was engraved the remnants of the titling of Tutankhamen, preceded by that of another sovereign, most likely Ay <sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusione possiamo riassumere le probabili fasi di scavo e sepoltura delle tombe della Valle dei Re, principale e secondaria:  
conclusion

In conclusion we can summarize the likely stages of excavation and burial of tombs of Kings and West Valley:



1. Amenhotep III digs his grave, perhaps the KV 46;
2. Akhenaten does not get the clearance of the clergy of Amen for the burial of her father;
3. Akhenaten digs a well in West Valley, perhaps the WV 25 A for a temporary burial of her father;
4. Akhenaten digs the grave of her father, WV 22;
5. Akhenaten or Tutankhamen buries Amenhotep III in WV 22;
6. Ay / Yuia turns in his grave the KV 46 and buries his wife Tey / Tuia;
7. Tutankhamun digs the KV 55 and buries there his father Smenkhkara;
8. Tutankhamun digs the WV 23 and buries there Akhenaten;
9. Tutankhamun start digging his grave, KV 57 (1st part);
10. Ay usurps the KV 62 and buries there Tutankhamen;
11. Ay continues the excavation of KV 57 (1st part);

12. Horemheb buries Ay in KV 57 (1st part);
13. Horemheb move Akhenaten to WV 25 A;
14. Horemheb Ay moves in WV 23;
15. Horemheb continues the excavation of KV 57 (2nd part);
16. Horemheb decrees the *damnatio memoriae* of Smenkhkara and Ay and deletes images, names and titles of these rulers in KV 55 and WV 23;
17. Ramses I buries his stepfather Horemheb in KV 57.

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HASSALEH – L'OCCHIO DI HORUS. Manetone aveva ragione!

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