

Valley of the Kings (Egypt)

The British Museum

The royal necropolis (burial site) of the Valley of the Kings is located on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes. It was used as the burial place for the kings of the New Kingdom (about 1550-1070 BC) from as early as the reign of Thutmose I (about 1504-1492 BC). The last tomb to be constructed was that of Ramesses XI (about 1126-1108 BC), but it is likely that the tomb was not used and that he was buried near Piramesse, the Ramesside capital. The tombs consisted of a series of rock cut corridors and chambers and were decorated with images of the king being accepted into the company of the gods, as well as with scenes from various funerary books.

The Valley of the Kings is actually two valleys. The East Valley is the main cemetery of the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Dynasty (that is, about 1550-1070 BC). The tomb of Tutankhamun is the most famous and was discovered almost intact by Howard Carter in 1922. The larger West Valley was used for only two royal tombs, those of Amenhotep III and Ay. Because the Valley of the Kings was systematically looted during the Twenty-first Dynasty (about 1070-945 BC), the bodies of many of the kings of the New Kingdom were gathered together and hidden in a tomb at Deir el-Bahari. Others were cached in the tomb of Amenhotep II.