



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Institutionen för arkeologi
och antik historia

Finding Butehamun

Scribe of Deir el-Medina



'I would prefer to go on at Deir el-Medina,' Ramses said... "The site is unique...do you realize what we might learn from it? We've come across a cache of papyrus and a number of incised ostrica; they confirm my belief that the people who lived in the village were craftsmen and artists who worked in the royal tombs of the Valley of the Kings.' (From 'The Golden One' by Elizabeth Peters)

George Wood

Kandidat uppsats i egyptologi 15 hp, VT 2016
Campus Engelska Parken
Handledare: Sami Uljas

Abstract

Butehamun was one of the most famous scribes involved in the building of the royal tombs of the Valley of the Kings, and a member of the most illustrious family of scribes there.

Butehamun presided over the closure of the Valley and the workers' village of Deir elMedina, and the move from building new tombs to the preserving and moving (some would say plundering) of the mummies left behind, marking the transition from the New Kingdom to the Third Intermediate Period, as Egypt splintered into what were essentially two realms.

By studying the primary sources associated with Butehamun, including letters, reburial 'dockets', graffiti, the apparently unique decorations on Butehamun's coffin, and the finds at his excavated house in Medinet Habu, this paper investigates what can be learned about Butehamun and the reburial project.

Some of the sources seem to indicate he experienced some kind of religious crisis, which may have been brought on by feelings of guilt over his treatment of the royal mummies, two of whom were worshipped as gods in Deir el-Medina.

Keywords: Butehamun, Dhutmose, Deir el-Medina, mummies, caches, reburial, Valley of the Kings, crisis of faith

Butehamon var en av de mest kända av de skrivare som deltog i byggandet av de kungliga gravarna i Konungarnas dal. Han tillhörde en av de mest framstående skrivaresläkterna där.

Butehamon övervakade stängningen av dalen och arbetarnas by Deir el-Medinah. Det var han som ansvarade för arbetet när man övergick från att bygga nya gravar till att flytta (vissa skulle säga plundra) de mumier som lämnades kvar till nya förvaringsplatser. Detta skede markerar övergången från det Nya Riket till den Tredje Mellanperioden, då Egypten sönderföll i två separata stater.

Genom att studera de primära källor som rör Butehamon, bland annat brev, etiketter på mumier, graffiti, bilder och de högst ovanliga dekorationerna på Butehamons kista samt fynd från utgrävningarna av hans hus i Medinet Habu, undersöker denna uppsats vad man kan lära sig om Butehamon och projektet att flytta mumierna.

Några av dessa källor tycks tyda på att han upplevde någon form av religiös kris, som kan ha utlösts av på skuld känslor över hur han lät behandla de kungliga mumierna. Två av dessa kungligheter dyrkades som gudar i Deir el-Medinah och bilder på dem och delar av deras familj återfinns på Butehamons egen kista.

Nyckelord: Butehamon, Dhutmose, Deir el-Medinah, mumier, cachar, begravning, Konungarnas dal, religiös kris

Contents

<i>Chronology</i>	3
<i>Introduction</i>	4
Deir el-Medina	4
The Wḥm-Mswt	6
<i>The Sources of Butehamun</i>	6
The Houses	6
The Reburial Project	9
The Letters	10
Graffiti and Dockets	13
The Caches and Butehamun	14
The Ostrakon	20
The Coffins	22
<i>Finding Butehamun</i>	24
<i>Image credits</i>	26
<i>Bibliography</i>	26

Abbreviations

CD	Coffin dockets
LD	Linen dockets
LRL	Late Ramesside Letters
WD	Wall dockets (=graffiti within tombs)

Special thanks to Silvia Mosso of the Egyptian Museum in Turin, Luc Delvaux of the Royal Museum in Brussels, Sue Giles of the Bristol Museums, Hans-Hubertus Münch of the University of Basel, and Daniel Potter of the University of Liverpool for their help.

Denotes reigns or known service as scribe. Royal dates based on Shaw (2000). Non-royal dates very approximate, especially reign of Herihor. Death dates of Dhutmose and Butehamun presumed.

Denotes reigns or known service as scribe. Royal dates based on Shaw (2000). Non-royal dates very approximate, especially reign of Herihor. Death dates of Dhutmose and Butehamun presumed.

Introduction

The workers who built the tombs in the Valley of the Kings lived for many generations in a village that today we call Deir e-Medina. When the kings of Egypt moved away from their religious capital of Thebes and started building tombs elsewhere, that activity eventually ended. But against the background of tomb robbers, attacks by Libyans, and the loss of the resources of Nubia, the High Priests of Amun in Thebes started a new project. The remaining villagers removed royal mummies from their exposed tombs, rewrapped them carefully, removed all the gold and jewels and other valuables from the mummies and their tombs, and reburied the mummies in secret caches.

The project was led initially by the Scribe of the Necropolis Butehamun and his father Dhutmose, whose family had been scribes in the village for many generations.

The earliest definite mention of Butehamun as a scribe is in year 20 of Ramses XI (approximately 1079 BC). He was definitely active at least until year 14 of Smendes, and possibly as late as Year 16 of Smendes. As his son Ankhefenamun (who wrote a graffito mourning the death of his father) held the title of ‘Royal Scribe’ in year 16 of Smendes (approximately 1053 BC), it is possible that Butehamun was no longer alive then.¹ (See Chronology above.)

In connection with his work, Butehamun left more than 100 graffiti around Western Thebes.² He left other traces as well. Some 50 personal letters involving the residents of Deir elMedina have been found, almost all written by or to Butehamun or his father Dhutmose. Their house in Medinet Habu, where the family relocated as the village ended, has been excavated. The scribe wrote a unique letter to the coffin of his departed wife. And his own coffins were painted with images of royals he apparently helped rebury.

This is a textual and material study of evidence surrounding Butehamun. It seeks to put into context what primary sources associated with this individual can tell us about his personal history, especially concerning his major project reburying royal mummies from the Valley of the Kings.

Deir el-Medina

The site we call Deir el-Medina (*Figure 1*) takes its name from a Coptic monastery built in the area after the arrival of Christianity. During the Egyptian New Kingdom it was called ‘St M3st’, ‘The Place of Truth’, and was home to the artisans who worked to build the royal tombs in the nearby Valley of the Kings, and their families. It was legendarily established by King Amenhotep I, who was later worshipped in the village as a deity, although it seems more likely the actual founder was his successor Thutmose I.³

¹ Davies (1999), 138 and (1997) 62 and 67, Häggman (2002) 340, citing a graffito copied by Howard Carter.

² Häggman (2002), 23. Davies (1994) seems to effectively refute the suggestion in Niwinski (1984) that there was more than one scribe in Deir el-Medina named Butehamun.

³ Häggman (2002), 58.

On a cliffside overlooking the village was a temple dedicated to Amenhotep and his mother Queen Ahmose-Nefertari.⁴

The original village seems to have been abandoned under Akhenaten, when the royal tombs were built near his new capital of Amarna, farther north.⁵ But with the end of the Amarna period and the return of the kings to Thebes, the village was reestablished, apparently under Horemheb.⁶



Figure 1, Deir el-Medina, Photo: Steve F-E-Cameron/Creative Commons

There the families of up to 120 craftsmen lived⁷, led by foremen and scribes, while they dug and decorated the tombs of Egypt's royalty, hidden in the nearby valleys. The task of the village continued for many generations, until the depredations of Libyan attackers, and the cessation of the construction of new royal tombs in the Valley when the 21st Dynasty established its capital at Tanis in the north, undermined the need for its existence.⁸

The number of workmen in the village, around 29 during the reign of Ramses X, was down to 16 by year 8 of Ramses XI. But it increased again during the subsequent period of 'rebirth' or 'renaissance' called the Wḥm-Mswt.⁹

⁴ Porter and Moss (1964), 693-694.

⁵ Häggman (2002), 60.

⁶ Demaree, R. in Wilkinson and Weeks (2016), 75-77.

⁷ Häggman (2002), 61-62, 352.

⁹ Häggman (2002), 352.

⁹ Bierbrier (1984), 119.

The Wḥm-Mswt

The term Wḥm-Mswt had been used before, at the beginning of the 12th and the 19th Dynasties to mark a ‘rebirth’ after a period of chaos. This 20th Dynasty ‘Renaissance of the 12th Century BC’¹⁰ seems to have begun during the 19th year of Ramses XI. The nature of the period is unclear but it appears to mark the waning of power of the central monarchy, and the growth in power of the High Priests of Amun in Thebes. Van Dijk says it began when General Piankh, having driven a rebellious viceroy back into Nubia, took power as High Priest of Thebes. Documents around Thebes were dated in years of the Wḥm-Mswt, rather than the regnal years of Ramses XI. After the death of Piankh, Herihor took over as High Priest of Amun and, after the death of Ramses XI, assumed royal titles. In the north, Smendes succeeded Ramses XI as king, initiating the 21st Dynasty.¹¹

The period lasted at least 10 years, and possibly 12, as indicated by a graffito of Butehamun in the hills of Western Thebes.¹² This would make it approximately 1081-1069 BC.

The Sources of Butehamun

The Houses

As part of a long line of Necropolis scribes, Dhutmose and Butehamun’s family had undoubtedly lived in Deir el-Medina for many generations. Černý writes that the house of Dhutmose in the village is mentioned in a register compiled during the reign of Ramses IX.¹³

In a letter (LRL 9) Dhutmose writes to Butehamun about what had apparently been the family’s house in the village:

‘Now you have wished to speak saying, “I am aware of the matter of the documents which are deposited (in) the ‘house of the stairway’”. Now, as for the documents onto which the sky rained in the house of the scribe Horsheri, my (grandfather), you have brought them out, and we found that (they) had not become erased. I said to you, “I will unbind them again.” You brought them down below, and we deposited (them) in the tomb of Amennahkt, my (great grand)father. You have wished to say, “I am aware.”’¹⁴

¹⁰ My phrase, referring to the medieval European Renaissance of the 12th Century proposed in Haskins (1927).

¹¹ van Dijk, J., in Shaw (2000), 309.

¹² The Wikipedia entry for ‘Wehem Mesut’ (accessed April 19, 2016) cites Kenneth A. Kitchen, “The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt: An Overview of Fact and Fiction” in *The Libyan Period in Egypt, Historical Studies into the 21st-24th Dynasties: Proceedings of a Conference at Leiden University, 25–27 October 2007*, G.P.F. Broekman, R.J. Demarée and O.E. Kaper, (eds), Nederlands Instituut Voor Het Nabije Oosten, Leuven: Peeters, 2009, 193.

¹³ *Stato civile* II, 6 cited in Černý (2004), 370, n. 1.

¹⁴ Wente (1967), 38. The exact provenance of the LRL is unknown.

Apparently the family house in Deir el-Medina had fallen into ruin and was damaged by rain. The tomb of Amennakht has not been located, but may have been the place where many of the LRL were found.

Residents of some 13 houses in Deir el-Medina have been identified. The house of Horsheri, Dhutmose's grandfather, has been identified by graffiti and a wooden label bearing his name.¹⁵

During Dhutmose's life, as inhabitants of the village were being relocated to what were apparently considered safer precincts, the family moved into a fine house in nearby Medinet Habu.

In LRL 12, dated by Wentz to year 2 of the Wḥm-Mswt, Dhutmose writes to Hori, Deputy of the Estate of Amun-Re in Eastern Thebes:

‘...We have heard that you have returned and have reached the town of Ne (Thebes), that Amun received you with a good reception and has done for you every (sort of) good. Now we are dwelling here in Medinet Habu (literally, “the Temple”, Černý writes “the Mansion”) and you know the manner in which we dwell, both within and without. Now the young (employees) of the Necropolis (Černý writes “boys of the tomb”) have returned. They are dwelling in Ne, while I am dwelling here alone with the scribe of the army Pentahunakht. Please have the men of the Necropolis who are there in Ne assembled and send them to me to this side...a total of seven men. Place them under the supervision of the scribe Butehamun.’¹⁶

This apparently refers to the same house which Butehamun later took over and rebuilt (*Figure 2*), located near the Western Fortified Gate of the complex,¹⁷ which, Černý comments, ‘as far as remains permit one to judge, the most spacious and decorative of the settlement.’¹⁸

The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago carried out excavations at Medinet Habu in the 1930's. In its report, the Institute noted that the section between the Inner Enclosure Wall and the Great Girdle Wall had turned into a private residence quarter with numerous fairly extensive estates. The House of Butehamun was described as ‘a large manorial house’. Only the two main rooms of the house survived. One was a square living room with four palm-leaf columns. At the rear wall was an elevated platform for Butehamun's seat.

The sandstone columns were plastered with stucco and decorated with inscriptions and scenes relating to the cult of the Necropolis which Butehamun served. This included representations of Amenhotep I and his mother Ahmose-Nefertari in their role as protecting deities of the Necropolis. The owner of the house is described as ‘the royal scribe and overseer of the royal treasury in the Theban Necropolis, Butehamun, son of the royal scribe in the Theban Necropolis and overseer of works on behalf of the tomb endowment Dhutmose’.

¹⁵ Porter and Moss (1964), 702-703.

¹⁶ Wentz (1967), 44 and Černý (2004), 370.

¹⁷ Černý (2004), 370-71.

¹⁸ Černý (2004), 382.

In the anteroom, which was connected to the main room by a wide door, were two unfinished columns. To the right of the platform in the main room was a narrow doorway connecting with the completely destroyed rear rooms. There might have been a similar doorway to the left.¹⁹



Figure 2 The house of Butehamun at Medinet Habu, Photo: Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

A number of items apparently from the house have been located separately. Porter and Moss list ‘Jambs usurped by Dhutmosi, Scribe of the temple of Amun, father of Butehamun’ with invocations of Queens Ahhotep and Ahmose-Nefertari and Amenhotep I, in the Cairo Museum (JdE 48832-3).²⁰

Černý also describes two lintels, apparently from the house, then unpublished and provenance unknown, commenting there are ‘some slight grounds for thinking they come from a house behind the temple of Medinet Habu’. Each lintel was divided into two halves by two vertical lines of inscription. On Lintel A on the left: ‘to the ka of the truthful scribe of commissions in

¹⁹ Hölscher (1932), 29-31, Hölscher (1964), 4-5, and Porter and Moss (1964) 773.

²⁰ Porter and Moss (1964), 777 and Černý (1927), 203. The grandmother and mother of Amenhotep I, who ascended the throne at the age of six. Amenhotep and his mother became the patron deities of Deir el-Medina.

the Place of Truth, Dhutmose, justified.’ On the right: ‘to the ka of the truthful scribe of commissions in the Place of Truth, Butehamun, justified.’

On Lintel B on both the left and the right: ‘to the ka of the scribe of the Place of Truth Butehamun, justified.’

Next to each vertical line were representations of a man and woman receiving offerings from a man and woman facing the couple. Above them were inscriptions giving their identities in short vertical lines. On the right hand half of A and both halves of B, the sitting couple is: ‘to the ka of the scribe of commissions in the Place of Truth Butehamun, justified’ and ‘his lady, lady of the house, songstress of Amun-re, king of the gods, Ikhtay.’

On the left hand of A, the couple are: ‘the ka of the scribe of commissions -----’ and ‘his sister, lady of the house, songstress of Amun-re Baketamun.’²¹

If the lintels are from the house in Medinet Habu, it would seem likely that Butehamun’s (first ?) wife Ikhtay lived there before her death.

The original Oriental Institute excavation at Medinet Habu was in the 1930’s. In 2014 the Oriental Institute returned to the site. Their current project includes the restoration of the House of Butehamun, including a condition study and large-format film and digital reference photography.²²

The Reburial Project

During the 19th and 20th Dynasties the religious capital of Egypt had moved from Thebes to the north, however the kings continued to be buried in the Valley of the Kings. But while a tomb was begun there for the final king of the 20th Dynasty, Ramses XI, it was never used by him. After his death the rulers of the new 21st Dynasty began a new custom of burials within the easier-to-protect precincts of a temple in their capital of Tanis.²³

There was no longer a need for a crew based at Deir el-Medina to create new tombs in Western Thebes. But the rulers of the south, the High Priests of Amun, evolved a new project, which Butehamun was deeply involved in. Old royal mummies were removed from their original tombs, often rewrapped, and moved to hidden caches. In the process of rewrapping, those carrying out the scheme removed the gold, jewels, and amulets from the mummies, along with anything else considered of value in the tombs. Some have called this process preservation, others plundering, or a combination of the two.²⁴

²¹ Černý (2004) 357-358, Davies (1997) 55-56, Kitchen (1989) 399-400. Baketamun was Dhutmose’s (first?) wife. See below for this thorny subject.

²² Johnson (2015), 52, 54, 60, and 70 and <https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/current-season> (accessed April 11, 2016).

²³ Taylor, J., in Wilkinson and Weeks (2016), 360-361.

²⁴ Wilkinson and Weeks (2016), 361, Mertz (2007), 266-267, and Peden (2001), 243-244.

It may have started as preservation and then moved on to plundering (see below). In a way the latter stage paralleled the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII, in providing new wealth to the state.

Butehamun seems to have been in charge of the initial stages of this project.²⁵

The Letters

The ‘Late Ramesside Letters’ (or LRL) is the name given for around 50 papyri containing personal correspondence mostly to and from the Deir el-Medina community. Their provenance is somewhat ambiguous (see discussion of LRL 9 above), although the papyri seem to have been collected by the British consul Henry Salt and others in Luxor in the early 19th Century, and distributed onwards to museums around Europe, from London and Paris to Berlin and Geneva.²⁶

Most of the LRL are letters to or by Butehamun or his father Dhutmose. They seem to date from year 12 of Ramses XI to year 12 of the “Wḥm-Mswt”.²⁷

Many of the letters deal with private issues. For example, they raise the ambiguous question of the apparent multiple wives of both Dhutmose and Butehamun. It is clear that Dhutmose was married to Baketamun, and Butehamun to Ikhtay, and these women mothered at least some of their children. At the same time, in the letters, Baketamun and Ikhtay are scarcely mentioned, and Dhutmose is particularly interested in the welfare of a lady Hemshire and her children. Likewise Butehamun expresses interest in the lady Shedemde. While the latter women could have been second wives after the deaths of the first, some scholars believe all four to be mentioned in the same letters, and thus alive at the same time. Since non-royal ancient Egyptians did not generally seem to practice polygamy, this has provoked much speculation. However, there are some doubts as to whether the Baketamun and Ikhtay mentioned in the letters were the same individuals as the wives of Dhutmose and Butehamun, and it has been suggested that Shedemde may have been Butehamun’s widowed sister.^{28,29}

In the letters one can also read of Dhutmose making at least one journey south to Nubia in the company of the general and High Priest of Amun Piankh. Piankh also sends a number of orders to the workers in Deir el-Medina, and it is one of these letters, or rather the answer to it, dated to year 10 of the “Wḥm-Mswt”, where we can see what seems to mark a radical change in the the reburial project.

The reburial project may have already begun, as graffiti in KV 57 (see below) dates from a year 4 and Seti I underwent a ‘repetition of burial’ in year 6 of the Wḥm-Mswt (see KV 17

²⁵ Wilkinson and Weeks (2016), 364.

²⁶ Häggman (2002), 24-26.

²⁷ The authorities on the LRL are Černý (1939) and Wente (1967, 1990). Their numbering and translations differ somewhat, and unless otherwise indicated, these and the chronology attributed to the letters here are those of Wente.

²⁸ Černý (2004), 366-369, Davies (1997) 57, and Bierbrier (1984), 36. Davies cites Jansen-Winkel in GM 139, 23, 38, for the suggestion that Shedemde was Butehamun’s sister.

below). But in year 10 of the ‘rebirth’ Piankh seems to be asking for something more. In LRL 28 (*Figure 3*) Butehamun replies to Piankh (my italics):

‘...We have noted everything about which our master has written to us (namely): *“Go and perform for me a task on which you have never before embarked and search for it until I come to you”* – so says our lord, “What has happened with (the place) you already know about, where you were before? Leave it (alone), do not touch it” – so says our lord...²⁹

...Now you have written saying *“Uncover a tomb among the ancient tombs, and preserve its seal until I return,”* so said he our lord. We are carrying out commissions. We shall enable you to find it fixed up and ready – the place which we know about. But you should send the Necropolis scribe Tjaroy³⁰ to have him come so that he may look for a marker for us, since we get going and go astray not knowing where to put our feet.’³¹

²⁹ Reeves and Wilkinson (1996), 205. Wente’s translation differs here, with ‘perform for me a task on which you have never before embarked’ replaced by ‘go and carry out a certain (building) commission for me’.

³⁰ Tjaroy is a nickname for Dhutmose. See Černý (2004), 365.

³¹ Wente and Meltzer (1990), 195.



Fig. 3, LRL 28, Papyrus British Museum 10375, written by Butehamun possibly acknowledging the reburial project. Photo: ©Trustees of the British Museum

There are no other obvious references to this project in the LRL, although in LRL 30 (dated by Wenté after LRL 28) Piankh writes to Butehamun:

‘The scribe of the Necropolis Tjaroy and the troop commander and prophet Shedsuhor have reached me; they have rendered report to me of all that you have done. It is all right, what you have (done), you joining up and doing this work with I charged you you to do and writing me about what you have done.’³²

This could refer to the reburial project, but it could of course also refer to some other assignment sent by this High Priest and General to Butehamun. At any rate, the ruler of Upper Egypt seems pleased with Butehamun’s work.

³² Wenté (1997) 65-66.

Reeves and Wilkinson write that the phrase ‘a task on which you have never embarked’ in the letter ‘fixes precisely the date at which the policy of the high priests of Amun changed from restoration and salvage to ruthless exploitation, the inviolability of Pharaoh was no more.’³³

Graffiti and Dockets

Some of the clues to the project come from graffiti, especially that of Butehamun. Peden calls ancient Egypt ‘The classic land of graffiti’, commenting that there isn’t such a rich body of texts anywhere else in the Near East or the Mediterranean.³⁴ Thebes in the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period is a trove of graffiti, and Butehamun and his father Dhutmose were among the most prolific writers.³⁵ Butehamun is referred to by name in more than 100 inscriptions.³⁶

While the reasons for the graffiti are usually not indicated, prior to the Wḥm-Mswt many indicated locations of tombs, possibly so the workmen could avoid breaking into old tombs when they started new ones, as had happened on some occasions.³⁷ With the Wḥm-Mswt, much of the graffiti appears to have been in connection with the reburial project, as inscriptions have been found in and around the sites of several of the caches, as well as in connection with tombs from which mummies were removed. A great number of graffiti during the Wḥm-Mswt record inspections, and the majority carry the names of Dhutmose and/or Butehamun.³⁸

More about the project comes from what are known as ‘dockets’, short notes left in association with the mummies that have been rewrapped and moved. There are two types: Type I dockets contain a record of the deceased’s name, often with details of status. Type II include a date, a record of the work undertaken, and the names and titles of the personnel involved.³⁹ Dockets are found in three places: on the wrappings covering the chest of the mummy (Linen dockets or LD), on the coffin lid (Coffin dockets or CD), or on the walls of the tomb (Wall dockets or WD, which seem to be exactly the same as graffiti).⁴⁰

Remarking on discrepancies between the names on coffins and the dockets on mummies within, some researchers have questioned the veracity of the dockets. Reeves concludes that the reburial personnel didn’t really care what mummy went into what coffin, but were meticulous in getting the right name on the mummy (to the extent that if they didn’t know whose mummy it was they didn’t leave a docket).⁴¹

³³ Reeves and Wilkinson (1996), 205.

³⁴ Peden (2001), xix.

³⁵ Peden (2001) 240: ‘Butehamun scribbled his name and titles in nearly every section of the King’s Valley, although the majority are found in the “Vallon de la tombe de Sethi II.”’

³⁶ Häggman (2002) 23.

³⁷ Häggman (2002) 227.

³⁸ Peden (2001) 240, 244 and Häggman (2002) 227.

³⁹ Reeves and Wilkinson (1996) 203, Reeves (1990) 228.

⁴⁰ Reeves (1990) 228 (the suggestion that the WD are the same as graffiti is my own).

⁴¹ Reeves (1990), 225-227. He cites Winlock who commented that unless there is good evidence against it, identifications on dockets should be accepted.

Together with nearby graffiti, the docket provides insights into the reburial project, including the different kinds of treatment involved. In the simplest case, mummies were rewrapped and left in their original tombs. Other treatments included ‘burials’, ‘repetition of burial’ and ‘Osirification’, which seems to have been a rewrapping of the corpse in the form of Osiris.⁴²

The wrappings of the mummies were stripped of all valuables. Most of the mummies were left inside anthropoid coffins, which made for easier moving, but also reflects the importance of the coffin for the presumed resurrection of the individual. But many of the coffins were stripped of their gold leaf, replaced with applications of yellow paint.⁴³

The funerary equipment, which presumably would have been at least as abundant as in the tomb of Tutankhamun, was also apparently taken by the restorers, leaving behind only items thought to have been of less value, such as shabtis, wooden statues, and canopic jars.⁴⁴

The Caches and Butehamun

A number of the caches and other tombs bear direct evidence of involvement by Butehamun:

KV 57: The royal tomb of Horemheb (who before he became king had had a smaller tomb built in Sakkarā). Possibly the first of the mummy caches, and seems to involve both Dhutmose and Butehamun. Among several graffiti, presumably on one of the door posts⁴⁵ at the entrance to this tomb is:

‘Written in year 4, 4 Akhet 22, by the scribe of the army Butehamun⁴⁶, after he came to cause the order to be carried out in the burial chamber (?) in the tomb of King Djoserkheper(u)re Setepenre l.p.h.’⁴⁷

This possibly refers to Year 4 of the Wḥm-Mswt.⁴⁸

The lower of two graffiti on the left side of the entrance door reads:

‘The scribe Butehamun; the king’s scribe Dhutmose.’⁴⁹

⁴² Wilkinson and Weeks (2016), 361

⁴³ Wilkinson and Weeks (2016), 360 and Häggman (2002), 371.

⁴⁴ Wilkinson and Weeks (2016), 360, Reeves and Wilkinson (1996), 206-207, and Häggman (2002), 371.

⁴⁵ Reeves (1990), 77.

⁴⁶ Černý (2004), 372 n. 2 concludes that the Army-Scribe Butehamun is the same individual as Butehamun son of Dhutmose.

⁴⁷ Reeves (1990), 77.

⁴⁸ Häggman (2002), 228.

⁴⁹ Reeves (1990) 246 (he writes “Dhutmose” using the alternative spelling of ‘Djehutymose’).

Reeves believes this is a record of burial restoration after KV 57 had been plundered, possibly around the time when the burials of Seti I and Ramses II were being renewed (see KV 17 below).⁵⁰

Originally buried in WV 23, the mummy of Horemheb's predecessor Ay appears to have been one of those moved to KV 57. Reeves speculates this might have been between Years 4 and 6 of the Wḥm-Mswt. As KV 57 was heavily plundered, 'the mummy of Ay cannot now be recognized among the human debris discovered there'.⁵¹ Peden writes that it may have been in connection with work in the tomb of Ay that Butehamun and a group of workmen left graffiti next to the entrance of WV 23.⁵¹

Work in this cache would seem to predate LRL 28, unlike what comes next:

KV 35: The tomb of Amenhotep II, and one of the main mummy caches.

Amenhotep II was rewrapped and placed in a crude coffin in his own sarcophagus. He was joined by Thutmose IV, Amenhotep III, Merenptah, Seti II, Siptah, and Ramses IV, V, and VI. Five other mummies, without docket, 'The Elder Lady' (who most believe is Queen Tiye) and two other women, a boy, and a man (who may be Sethnakhte), were also found in the tomb (*Figure 4*). The earliest date for the restorations would be "the repetition of the burial" of Amenhotep III, which according to a docket took place in year 12 or 13 of Smendes within WV 22.⁵²

Among those associated with this cache was Ramses III, whose original tomb was KV 11. Butehamun is known to have been involved in the 'Osirification' of Ramses III's mummy, as a linen docket from year 13 of Smendes (year 2 of the High Priest of Amun Pinedjem I) in the mummy of Ramses III reads:

'Year 13, 2 šmw 27?: On this day the high priest of Amun-Re king of the gods Pinudjem son of the high priest of Amun-Re Piankh commanded the scribe of the place of truth Butehamun to clarify king Usermaat-re-meriamun, he being made firm and enduring forever.'⁵³

⁵⁰ Peden (2001), 208, Reeves (1990) 94, 234.

⁵¹ Peden (2001), 250.

⁵² Reeves (1990), 244-245, 248, Peden (2001), 247, Wilkinson and Weeks (2016), 363-364, Reeves and Wilkinson (1996), 198-199, 'KV 35' Theban Mapping Project database, http://www.thebanmappingproject.com/sites/browse_tomb_849.html (accessed April 13, 2016)

⁵³ Reeves (1990), 235.



Figure 4, the mummy of ‘The Elder Lady’ (presumably Queen Tiye) and two others in the cache of KV 35, photo from TVK/Theban Royal Mummy Project

Graffiti found on a pillar in the burial chamber of Ramses III’s original tomb of KV 11 include the name of Butehamun.⁵⁴ It’s uncertain whether this was left in connection with the Osirification of Ramses III, inspections in the tomb, or to salvage what remained of Ramses III’s funerary equipment after his removal.⁵⁵

The king’s coffin was found in KV 35, covered with the lid from the coffin of Seti II, and containing the mummy of Amenhotep III.⁵⁶ The mummy of Ramses III ended up in the Royal Cache of TT 320, in a room with the mummy of Ahmose-Nefertari, and in her coffin. Reeves believes Ramses III was moved to ‘The High Place of Inhapi’ and later to TT 320 (see below), following a mass removal from ‘The High Place’ after the Year 11 of Shoshenq I.

The mummies of Ramses V and VI seem to have suffered similar fates, and it is unclear whether they were among those placed in KV 14 before being rewrapped and docketed and placed in KV 35.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Reeves (1990), 245.

⁵⁵ Reeves (1990), 115 and 248-249, Peden (2001), 245.

⁵⁶ Reeves (1990), 115.

⁵⁷ Reeves (1990), 249.

KV 49: Some of the work in rewrapping the mummies seem to have been conducted by Butehamun in this tomb with an unknown owner. There are two graffiti in red ink written over the entrance, noting visits to the tomb by officials first under Ramses XI and then under Smendes I. They read:

‘1 Peret 25

Coming and bringing the royal linen, 20 (clothes?). Assorted bedspreads, 5; shawls, 15 total, 20. The Scribe Butehamun, Pakhoir, Pennesttawy son of Nesamenope, Hori, Takany, Amenhotep, Kaka, Nakhtamenwase, Amen(neb)nesttawynakhthe.’

and

‘Finishing on the second occasion; bringing clothing, 3 Peret 5. The men who brought (it):

Pait, the Scribe Butehamun, Iyamennuef, Pakhoir, Tjauemdi... Hori son of Kadjadja, Takairnayu, Nesamenope.

Royal linen, shawls, 45; long shawls, 5; total 50.’

This tomb may have been used as a storeroom by the reburial parties to repair the damaged royal mummies before they were deposited in one of the royal caches. This may have involved the mummy of Ramses III, which underwent Osirification in his nearby tomb of KV 11.⁵⁸⁵⁹

KV 42: Another possible tomb used by Butehamun and his crew, it was built for HatshepsutMeryetre, the wife of Thutmose III, but not used by her. (She may have been buried in the tomb of her son, Amenhotep II, KV 35, above.) KV 42 may have been reused by a mayor of Thebes and his family, or as a cache for materials for their burial elsewhere. A graffito refers to the ‘completion of work in the tomb’, by workmen while Butehamun ‘crossed to town to seeing the coming northward of the general.’ The graffito may date to just a couple of months after the general ordered the workmen to ‘open an older tomb’, which Häggman says this could be in response to the mission referred to in LRL 28 (see above).⁶⁰

KV 19: Tomb of Prince Mentuherkhepshef of the 20th Dynasty. The names and titles of Dhutmose and Butehamun (and five of Butehamun’s sons) are etched into the plaster of the corridor of the tomb. Peden says they might have been in search of the prince’s (now lost) mummy and burial equipment.⁶¹

KV 14: Work was done with an indirect association with Butehamun in the tomb of Tausert, the Royal Wife of Seti II, regent during the reign of Siptah, and independent ruler at the end

⁵⁸ Peden (2001) 248-249, Reeves (1990) 169, 230-231, 248-249, Reeves and Wilkinson (1996) 206.

⁵⁹ ‘KV 42’Theban Mapping Project (http://www.thebanmappingproject.com/sites/browse_tomb_856.html) (accessed April 20, 2016).

⁶⁰ Häggman (2002) 229.

⁶¹ Peden (2001) 246-247.

of the 19th Dynasty.⁶² Her tomb was later taken over by Setnakht. Reeves believes it was used as a cache, before all the mummies there were later moved to KV 35, a tomb definitely associated with Butehamun. Merenptah was found in KV 35 in the coffin of Setnakht. Reeves says its presence might indicate it had earlier been in a cache in KV 14.

The mummies of Seti II, Ramses IV, and Siptah all appear to have been moved to KV 14, and then rewrapped, docketed, and moved to KV 35, sometime after Year 13 of Smendes.⁶³

There was apparently another temporary cache, without evidence linking it to Butehamun, in **KV 17**, the tomb of Seti I.⁶⁴ He was also joined by the mummy of his father Ramses I and his son Ramses II. Dockets on the mummies of all three document their move from KV 17 to 'The High Place of Inhapi', before they were later moved to 'the Royal Cache' (see below) TT 320.⁶⁵

'The k3y of Inhapi':. Several of the royal mummies found in TT 320 had dockets indicating they had previously been hidden in the tomb of the 17th Dynasty Queen Ahmose-Inhapi, approximately a century before they were transferred to TT 320. Described as a 'k3y' or 'high place', it is believed to have been a cliff tomb. WN A, 750 meters from TT 320 in Deir elBahri, seems to best fill the description.⁶⁶

It's unclear whether this cache was created before or just after the death of Butehamun, but a number of royals he associated himself with on his coffin and on his house were apparently reburied in 'the High Place'.

For example, Queen Ahmose-Nefetari seems to have originally been buried in AN B, in Dra' Abu el-Naga, close to Deir el-Bahri. This tomb was later enlarged and is one of the places suspected of being the burial place of her son Amenhotep I. Reeves believes these two patrons of Deir el-Medina may have shared the same fate, rewrapped, with refurbished coffins, and reburied in the 'k3y' before Year 10 of Siamun. Ultimately all the mummies in 'the high place' were reburied in TT 320, following what Reeves believes was a mass removal from the 'k3y' after the Year 11 of Shoshenq I.⁶⁷

TT 320: The 'Royal Cache' in Deir el-Bahri. While this seems to have been first used as a cache long after the period of Butehamun, he does seem to have been involved in inspecting the prospective site. Graffiti in the valley indicate the presence of Butehamun along with the scribe Amennakhte and two of Butehamun's sons.

⁶² 'KV 14' in Theban Mapping Project database,

http://www.thebanmappingproject.com/sites/browse_tomb_828.html (accessed April 18, 2016), Reeves (1990) 247-248.

⁶³ Reeves (1990), 247-249.

⁶⁴ Reeves (1990), 94.

⁶⁵ Reeves (1990), 231 and 256.

⁶⁶ Reeves and Wilkinson (1996), 197.

⁶⁷ Reeves (1990), 249 and 251.

Only two dated graffiti have been found in the wadi leading to TT 320, and both carry the name of Butehamun. He is named in graffiti no. 1311 (a+b) along with his father Dhutmose and five of his sons, in a Year 11. (Häggman says this is probably of Pinedjem I, but Dhutmose would have been dead by then, so likely a different year 11).⁶⁸

The other graffiti (no. 994) is a short prayer to Amun, as well as a record of a visit by Butehamun in order 'to see the mountains' (a common expression to indicate an inspection), dated to a Year 14 (which Häggman also says is probably of Pinedjem I).⁶⁹

Peden suggests that after its location had been lost for much of the New Kingdom, Butehamun or his father was responsible for finding this lost tomb, after a careful inspection of the royal necropolis.⁷⁰

But it was nearly 100 years later before it was then used, first for the burial of Neskhons and later for her husband, the High Priest of Amun Pinedjem II (the grandson of Pinedjem I). Afterwards TT 320 became a cache, housing the mummies and burial equipment of more than 50 kings, queens, and various royals and nobility.⁷¹ As mentioned above, the mummy of Ramses III found in TT 320 contains a docket of Butehamun, so some of his 'work' wound up in TT 320.

⁶⁸ Häggman (2002), 336.

⁶⁹ Häggman (2002), 336.

⁷⁰ Peden (2001), 216.

⁷¹ Wilkinson and Weeks (2016), 360-369. Reeves and Wilkinson (1996), 194.

The Ostrakon

Ancient Egyptians believed in an afterlife, and the ability to communicate with the dead. Generally, the goal was to get the deceased to intercede in connection with some kind of unfortunate situation experienced by the letter writer. Often the deceased was believed to be the source of the problem. Letters to a deceased person were often written on papyrus and placed in a bowl at the tomb.⁷²

There are around 15 letters in the genre, among them a letter from Butehamun, Ostrakon Louvre 698, written in the same hand as his LRL,⁷³ and calling for intercession from his late wife Ikhtay.⁷⁴ But this letter is unusual in many ways. It is the largest letter of the genre, it is the only written on limestone, the only written in red ink, rather than black, and the last known specimen of the genre.⁷⁵

It is also unique among the letters to the dead in that Butehamun addressed his letter, not to his dead wife, but to her coffin, as an intermediary. The significance of this unique measure, communicating through the coffin, is difficult to evaluate but it may underline the importance to Butehamun of the coffin in the afterlife, which in turn might point to the importance to him of his own coffin and its imagery (see below).

The provenance of the letter is unknown. It was presumably placed in the now lost tomb of Ikhtay, on top of her coffin⁷⁶, but as Černý comments: ‘Unfortunately many lines are irretrievably damaged by the rubbing to which the stone was exposed after it had been thrown out of the tomb by impious hands into the rubble of the Theban necropolis’.⁷⁷

The text itself is difficult, and translation in some places uncertain.⁷⁸ Goldwasser contrasts it with the bureaucratic tone of Butehamun’s other letters, saying that with its red writing and verse points in black as found in literary texts it has a ‘superior style bordering on poetry’.⁷⁹

Most of what can be read of the letter is typical for the genre, but a number of lines stand out. Frandsen comments on the line:

‘Send the message and say to her, since you (ie the coffin) are close to her: “How are you doing? How are you?” It is you who shall say to her: “Woe (you) are not sound”, so says your brother, your companion, “Woe gracious faced one”...’⁸⁰

⁷² Wente and Meltze (1990), 210.

⁷³ Frandsen (1992), 38.

⁷⁴ On the basis of the LRL, which prominently mention Butehamun’s new woman (alternatively sister) Shedemde, and not Ikhtay, Davies (1997), 57 and Černý (2004), 366-367 conclude that Ikhtay probably died before the many letters dating to around Year 10 of the Wḥm-Mswt.

⁷⁵ Frandsen (1992), 31, 48 n. 60

⁷⁶ Frandsen (1992), 34 n. 9, citing Černý 2004.

⁷⁷ Černý 2004, 369

⁷⁸ Frandsen (1992), 31.

⁷⁹ Goldwasser 201, 203.

⁸⁰ Frandsen (1992) 34-36.

Frandsen asks if it is possible that this reflects a lack of communication between Butehamun and his wife that could be due to some shortcoming on his part? Alternatively, he suggests that the scribe's alleged polygamy (see above) might be involved.⁸¹

Perhaps more interesting in light of the reburial project is the final section of the letter, which reads (in Goldwasser's translation, italics mine):

'Statement by the necropolis scribe Butehamun to the chantress of Amon Ikhtay: "Pre has departed, his Ennead following him, the king as well.
All humans in one body following their fellow-beings.
There is no one who will stay,
We shall all follow you;
Can anyone hear me in the place where you are?
Tell the lord of eternity, Let my brother arrive.
Make----
Their great ones as their small ones.
It is you who will tell good tidings in the necropolis,
Since I committed no abomination against you while you were on earth;
So grasp my situation,
Swear to god in every manner,
Saying: "It is in accordance with what I have said that things shall be done".
May I not deceive your heart in anything I have said; Until I reach you.
--in every good manner. *Can anybody hear at all?*"'⁸²

This passage seems to indicate that Butehamun is having a crisis of faith, in his belief in the afterlife or whether the gods listen. Goldwasser says the phrase 'does anybody hear?' is 'a unique sceptic contemplation, very rare the Egyptian literature'.⁸³ After saying it was not his intention to turn the symposium session at which his paper was presented into a general discussion of religious issues, such as the crisis in the realm of ideology, Frandsen writes:

'The open skepticism of this passage towards the prevailing view, in the second millennium, of the "ultimate reality" may be seen as a forerunner of the much more pronounced tendency known from documents of a later period.'⁸⁴

Unless further texts turn up, it is impossible to know what led Butehamun to question the afterlife, if that is what this is.

⁸¹ Frandsen (1992), 35-36. In his translation Goldwasser writes "I do not prosper" instead of "(you) are not sound", and continues to use "I" rather than the "you" or "Ikhtay" used by Frandsen (1992) and Wente, arguing that Late Egyptian often left out the first person singular pronoun.

⁸² Goldwasser (1995), 197

⁸³ Goldwasser (1995), 198.

⁸⁴ Frandsen (1992), 48 note 59.

The Coffins

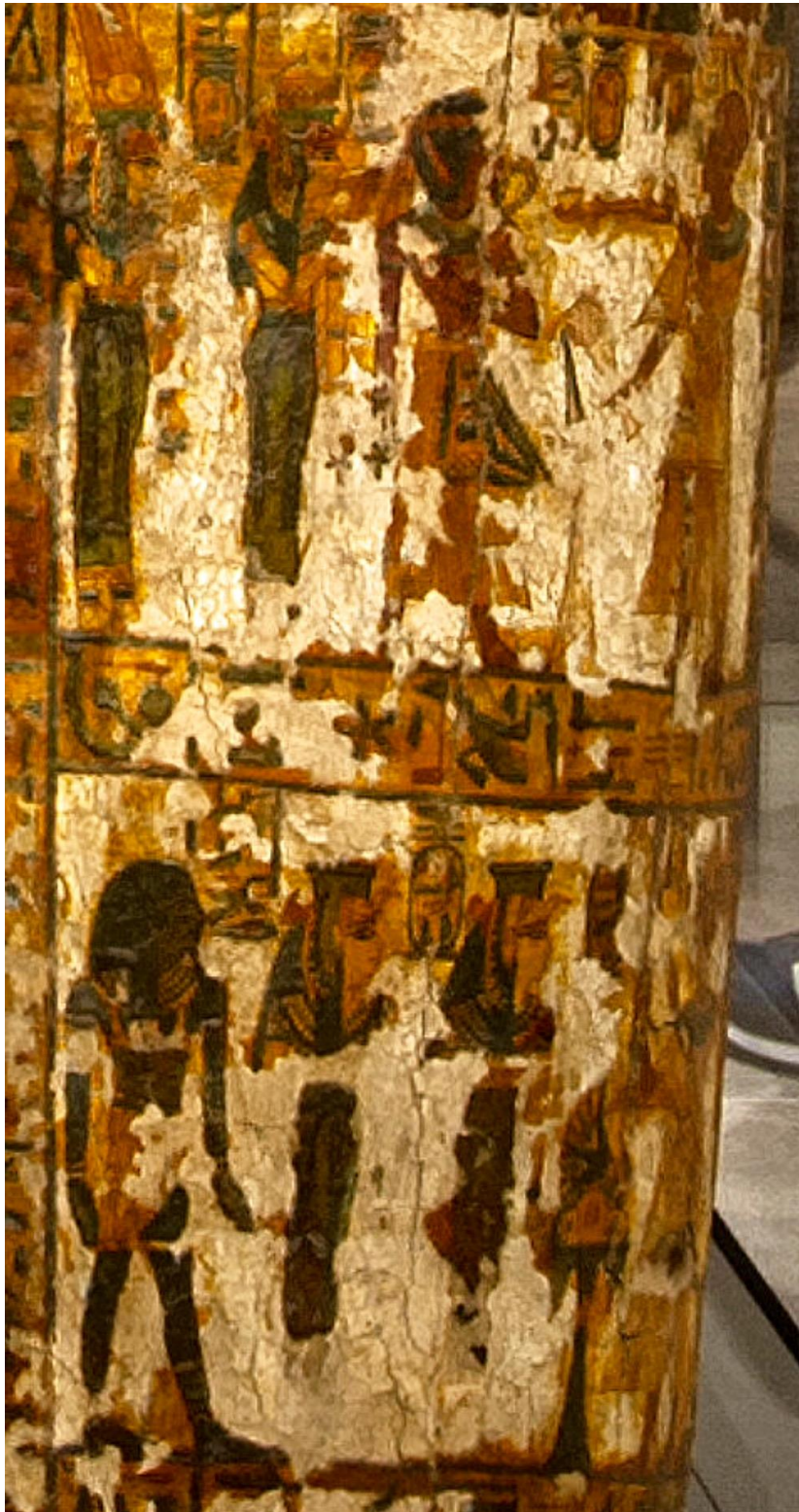


Figure 5, From the outer coffin lid of Butehamun, showing Butehamun as a priest worshipping Amenhotep I, Ahmose-Nefertari, and Ahhotep (above) and Ahmose-Sitamun, Ahmose-Merytamun, and Ahmose-Sapair (below), Photo: © Realy Easy Star / Toni Spagone / Alamy Stock Photo

While Butehamun's tomb is unknown, his grave goods have been found. An outer coffin that was never used is in the *Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire* in Brussels⁸⁵ while another outer and an inner coffin and lid and a number of other items are in the Egyptian Museum in Turin.

Their provenance is unknown and Porter and Moss imply they were brought back by Drovetti from the area around the path from Deir el-Medina to the Valley of the Queens.⁸⁶ The Turin Museum website lists the provenance as TT 291, while in the museum catalog Niwinski writes: 'probalimente dalla tomba n. 291; collezione Drovetti'.⁸⁷

TT 291 is the tomb of Nu and Butehamun's relative Nakhtmin.⁸⁸ While nothing of Butehamun (nor apparently anyone else, except a stela of Nakhtmin) was found in this tomb, the wall in a chapel bears the graffiti:

'Ankhefenamun, son of Butehamun'.⁸⁹

and

'Thine is the West, ready for thee, all blessed ones are hidden in it, sinners do not enter or any unjust. The scribe Butehamun has landed at it after an old age, his body being sound and intact. Made by the scribe of the tomb Ankhefenamun'.⁹⁰

This might indicate that Butehamun was buried in what would have been a village family tomb. (Presumably 'excavated' by Drovetti or those who worked with him.)

The decoration of the lid of Butehamun's outer Turin coffin (*Figure 5*) shows him burning incense before Amenhotep I, Ahhotep, Ahmose-Nefertari⁹¹, Ahmose-Sitamun, AhmoseMeryatamun, and Ahmose-Sapair.⁹²

⁸⁵ Mus. Roy. E. 5288, Porter and Moss (1964) 741. Sadly, Černý (2004), 374 notes that the mummy inside cannot be that of Butehamun, as it shows none of the signs of 21st Dynasty mummies.

⁸⁶ Porter and Moss (1964), 741.

⁸⁷ Silvia Mosso of the Egyptian Museum in Turin was extremely helpful in scanning and sending all the pages in their catalog about the coffins of Butehamun.

<http://collezioni.museoegizio.it/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=102220&viewType=detailView#> and Niwinski (2004), 21. The website of the Egyptian Museum in Turin has rather abbreviated information about the coffins of Butehamun, and lists their provenance simply as TT291 (<http://collezioni.museoegizio.it/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=102220&viewType=detailView>) (accessed April 4, 2016), while the museum catalog adds the word "probalimente". The standard reference Porter and Moss (1970, p. 274), lists nothing about Butehamun in this tomb except for a graffito by his son mourning the father's death.

⁸⁸ The cousin of Butehamun's grandfather according to Chart 9 in Davies (1990). More about the tomb and photos at: <http://www.deirelmedina.com/lenka/Tomb291.html> (accessed April 26, 2016).

⁸⁹ Porter and Moss (1960), 374. The plan of the tomb is on page 370. Porter and Moss do not mention that anything was found in the tomb, besides the graffiti, wall paintings, and a stela of Nakhtmin (also in the Turin museum).

⁹⁰ Černý (2004), 26 and 373.

⁹¹ Representations of two of them, deities worshipped in Deir el-Medina, were portrayed on columns of his house, while invocations to three had apparently been portrayed on the jambs of the house, see above.

⁹² Porter and Moss (1964), 741 and Niwinski (2004), 22.

It is extremely unusual (if not unique) for 21st Dynasty coffins to portray images of anyone other than deities.⁹³ Reeves and Wilkinson say this suggests Butehamun was involved in the restoration of the burials of these royals, that their mummies were all part of the reburial project.⁹⁴

Finding Butehamun

These are the traces Butehamun left behind, the bits used to piece together his life. What do these tell us about his great project, the reburial of the royal mummies? Some kind of preservation project following tomb robberies seems to have been launched as early as a year 4, probably of the Wḥm-Mswt (after Dhutmose, and possibly Butehamun, had moved from Deir el-Medina to the spacious house in Medinet Habu). But that seems to have taken a radical new turn in year 10 of the Wḥm-Mswt, as indicated in LRL 28 (by which time Butehamun's wife Ikhtay seems to have died).

As indicated by the graffiti, Butehamun (initially with Dhutmose's help) seems to have conducted a widespread inspection around the Valley of the Kings. Between the docketts and the graffiti, Butehamun is directly associated with the mummies and the caches in KV 57 and KV 35 (and possibly KV 14 and KV 17). Some of the rewrapping work in the Valley of the Kings he was involved in was apparently done in KV 49. He left signs behind at KV 19 and KV 42.

Butehamun may have been involved in the cache in 'The k3y of Inhapi'. Since we don't know when that cache was created (we don't even know for sure where it was) or exactly when Butehamun died, it's difficult to say. Some mummies he had worked with did go at some point to 'The High Place' before they were all later moved to TT 320.

The TT 320 cache was definitely after his time, but his graffiti indicates he was involved in some kind of inspection in the area, so he may have been aware of the tomb or involved in its rediscovery, facilitating its later use, first by the family of a High Priest of Amun, and then as a cache. The mummies of the royals he portrayed on his coffin all ended up in TT 320. It seems likely Butehamun worked with those mummies in an earlier cache.

It's also interesting to note that the first cache may have been in KV 57, the tomb of Horemhab, the king who may have been responsible for the refounding of Deir el-Medina after the Amarna period. (And that it may have also included Horemhab's predecessor Ay, and thus the final two kings of the 18th Dynasty.)

The letter Butehamun wrote to the coffin of his dead wife is unusual in that it seems to reflect some kind of religious crisis. 'Can anyone hear me in the place where you are...Can anybody hear at all?' may indicate a loss of belief in the afterlife or doubts about it or the gods. Ikhtay

⁹³ In a letter dated May 3, 2016, Hans-Hubertus Münch of the University of Basel writes: 'Soweit ich weiss, gibt es ansonsten keine derartige Darstellung.'

⁹⁴ Reeves and Wilkinson (1996), 205.

very likely had died by the time the reburial project took a new turn in year 10 of the WhmMswt but we don't know when the letter went into her tomb and it is uncertain if this questioning came after the project escalated. What is most interesting, however, is that uniquely the letter was addressed, not directly to the deceased, but to a coffin.

If Butehamun had lost faith before he was asked to rewrap and plunder mummies, activities some might regard as sacrilege, then perhaps like Thomas Cromwell and the Dissolution of the Monasteries he was the right man for the job, and felt no guilt.

On the other hand, if he did experience some kind of crisis of faith, this could have followed the reburials, brought on by the magnitude of what he was doing. Royals who were reburied figure in other aspects of Butehamun's life. The columns of his house in Medinet Habu included representations of Amenhotep I and his mother Ahmose-Nefertari in their role as protecting deities of the Necropolis.

Jambs, apparently from the same house, carry invocations of Amenhotep I and Queens Ahhotep and Ahmose-Nefertari.

Finally there is the outer coffin Butehamun chose to be buried in, rather than his discarded first coffin. The fact that in the letter to his dead wife, Butehamun chose to write to her coffin as an intermediary, may indicate the importance he placed on the coffin in the afterlife.

The lid of the coffin he used carried images of the three royals he honored at his house, as well as three other members of their family. Amenhotep and Ahmose-Nefertari were of course worshipped as deities in Deir el-Medina, but their mummies were also apparently reburied in 'The High Place of Inhapy', before being moved to TT 320.

The other members of the royal family portrayed on Butehamun's coffin, Queen Ahhotep, Amenhotep's sister and wife Ahmose-Meryetamun, his sister Ahmose-Sitamun, and his brother or uncle Ahmose-Sipair were also reburied. While Amenhotep I and Queen AhmoseNefertari were worshiped as patron deities of Deir el-Medina, the other four members of their families were not, and this portrayal of non-divinities on an Egyptian coffin seems very unusual, if not absolutely unique, and seems to make a statement.

On the walls of his home and on the coffin in which he would enter the afterlife, Butehamun honored or appealed to six royals whose mummies were reburied. Was this an expression of remorse or a plea for forgiveness for what he had done? Was his question if there was anyone who could hear in the afterlife an expression of such doubts?

In Part 3 of her BBC TV series 'Immortal Egypt', Joann Fletcher makes Butehamun out to be quite the impious evil-doer, carrying out 'the ultimate violation of ancient Egypt's soul' at the command of the High Priests. But it is possible his situation was more nuanced, and his actions led to remorse and regrets.

Alternatively, the images and texts on his house and on his coffin may just be honoring the deities of Deir el-Medina, along with several other members of their family. In fact

Butehamun could have been expressing satisfaction with what he done to preserve the mummies, perhaps regarding the deified royals as patrons in the afterlife.

Unless further texts turn up, there's no way to know for sure if Butehamun did suffer a crisis of faith. But however his response, the letter to the coffin of his wife and his own coffin seem to indicate that the reburials definitely affected Butehamun in some serious manner.

Image credits

Frontispiece and Figure 5: From the outer coffin of Butehamun, Photo: © Realy Easy Star / Toni Spagone / Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 1: Deir el-Medina, Photo: Steve F-E-Cameron/Creative Commons

Figure 2: The house of Butehamun at Medinet Habu, Photo: Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

Figure 3: LRL 28, Papyrus British Museum 10375, written by Butehamun apparently acknowledging the start of the reburial project, kindly provided by the British Museum Image Service, ©Trustees of the British Museum

Figure 4: The mummy of 'The Elder Lady' (presumably Queen Tiye) and two others in the cache of KV 35, photo from TVK/Theban Royal Mummy Project

Bibliography

Bierbrier, M., 1975, *The Late New Kingdom in Egypt*, Warminster.

-----, 1984, *The Tomb-builders of the Pharaohs*, New York.

-----, 1992 'Genealogy and Chronology: Theory and Practice' in R. Demarée and A. Egberts (eds.), *Village Voices: Proceedings of the Symposium 'Texts from Deir el- Medina and their interpretation'*, Leiden, 1-7.

Brothwell, D. et al, 2003, 'Investigation of the Three Mummies in the Side Chamber of Tomb KV35 in the Valley of the Kings', official report to the Supreme Council of Antiquities, York.

Capart, J., 1905, *Les antiquités égyptiennes des Musées royaux du Cinquantenaire*, Brussels.

Černý, J., 1927, 'Le culte d'Amenophis Ier chez les ouvriers de la nécropole thébaine', in *BIFAO*, XXVII, 203.

- , 1939, 'Late Ramesside Letters', *Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca* 9, Brussels.
- , 2004, *A Community of Workmen at Thebes in the Ramesside Period*, Cairo. (Third edition, originally published in 1973)
- Černý, J. and A.A. Sadek, 1970, *Graffiti de la montagne thébaine, IV Transcriptions et indices*, Cairo; CEDAE Collection Scientifique.
- Davies, B.D., 1997, 'Two Many Butehamuns?', *SAK* 24, 49–68.
- , 1999, *Who's Who at Deir el-Medina*, Leiden.
- Frandsen, P.J, 1992, 'The Letter to Ikhtay's Coffin: O. Louvre inv. No. 698' in R. Demarée and A. Egberts (eds.), *Village Voices: Proceedings of the Symposium 'Texts from Deir el-Medina and their interpretation'*, Leiden, 31–49.
- Goldwasser, O., 1995, 'On the Conception of the Poetic Form – A Love Letter to a Departed Wife', *Israel Oriental Studies* 15, Tel Aviv, 57–69.
- Haskins, C., (1927), *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, Cambridge (Mass.).
- Häggman, S., 2002, *Directing Deir el-Medina: The External Administration of the Necropolis*, Uppsala.
- Hölscher, U., 1932, *Excavations at Ancient Thebes 1930/31*, Chicago
- , 1934, *The Excavation of Medinet Habu Volume I, General Plans and Views*. Chicago.
- , 1954, *The Excavation of Medinet Habu Volume V, Post-Ramessid Remains*, Chicago.
- Johnson, R., 2015, *The Oriental Institute 2014-2015 Annual Report*, Chicago.
- , Current Season, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/currentseason>, accessed April 11, 2016, particularly entries under October 31, 2014, November 28, 2014, February 2, 2015, April 1, 2015, November 2015 and December 2015/January 2016.
- Kitchen, K.A., 1989, *Ramesside Inscriptions VII*, Oxford.
- Mertz, B., 2007, *Temples, Tombs & Hieroglyphs*, New York.
- Niwinski, A., 1984, 'Butehamon – Schreiber der Nekropolis' in *SAK* 11, 135–136, Hamburg.
- , 2004, *Catalogo del Museo Egizio di Torino – Collezione IX, Sarcofagi della XXI Dinastia (CGT 10101-10122)*, Turin.
- Peden, A., 2001, *The Graffiti of Pharaonic Egypt: Scope and Roles of Informal Writings (c. 3100-332 B.C.)*. Leiden.
- Porter, B. and R. Moss, 1964, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic*

Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings, I. 'The Theban Necropolis, Part 2. Royal Tombs and Smaller Cemeteries', Oxford.

-----, 1970, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings*, I. 'The Theban Necropolis, Part I. Private Tombs'. Oxford.

Reeves, C.N., 1990, *Valley of the Kings: The Decline of a Royal Necropolis at Thebes*, London and New York.

Reeves C.N. and R.H. Wilkinson, 1996, *The Complete Valley of the Kings: Tombs and Treasures of Egypt's Greatest Pharaohs*, London.

Seeber, C., 1976, *Untersuchungen zur Darstellung des Totengerichts im Alten Ägypten*, München, Berlin; Münchner Ägyptologische Studien 35.

Shaw, I. (ed.), 2000, *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford.

Speleers, L., 1928, *Recueil des inscriptions égyptiennes des Musées royaux du Cinquantenaire à Bruxelles*, Bruxelles.

Wente, E., 1967, *Late Ramesside Letters*, Chicago; SAOC 33.

Wente, E., 1975, 'Thutmose III's Accession and the Beginning of the New Kingdom', *JNES*, 271.

Wente, E. and E. Meltzer, 1990, *Letters from Ancient Egypt*, Atlanta.

Winlock, H.E., 1975, 'The Tomb of Queen Meryetamun: I The Discovery', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New Series, Vol. 33. No. 2*, New York. (Originally written in 1930).

Wilkinson, R. and K. Weeks, 2016, *The Oxford Handbook of the Valley of the Kings*, Oxford.