**Valley of the Kings**

The Valley of the Kings is a desert valley located on the west bank of Thebes, the political and religious capital of the New Kingdom.

It was first used as a royal necropolis by Thutmosis I, although it was his predecessor, Amenhotep I, who was considered as the patron-god of the valley by the actual builders of the tombs.

The last known king to have built a tomb in the Valley was Ramesses XI, the last king of the New Kingdom, although it is doubtful that he ever used that tomb.

Despite its modern name, a minority of tombs was built for members of the royal family and their entourage.

The valley has two main branches: the East Valley, where most of the royal tombs are situated and the West Valley, that only contains the tombs of Amenhotep III and Ay, and some pits. The tombs of most of the New Kingdom kings have been discovered over the years: some were already open to public during the Greek-Roman era, others have only recently been unearthed.

All of the tombs have fallen victim to one or several visits by tomb robbers, even the famous tomb of Tutankhamun that was discovered almost intact in 1922 by Howard Carter!

In an effort to save the royal mummies from destruction, and to salvage the remaining treasures of the royal tombs, the priests of the end of the 20th and the 21st Dynasty opened the tombs, collected the mummies and buried them in two or more "caches". The first "cache" was a rock tomb high up in the mountains of Deir el-Bahari that was probably intended as the family tomb of the 21st Dynasty king-priests. The second "cache" was the tomb of 18th Dynasty king Amenhotep II. Not every royal mummy of the New Kingdom has been found, so there is room for the hypothesis that there may have been a third "cache" which has not yet been identified as such or which has not yet been discovered.

The only royal mummies to have been found in their own tombs were those of Amenhotep II, who was re-buried in his own tomb by the 21st Dynasty priests, and Tutankhamun, whose tomb lay undisturbed from the middle of the 20th Dynasty on.