The adventures of Mary and Mery at the Griffith Institute

1. Objects used in daily life in king Tutankhamun's tomb



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Introduction

Tutankhamun and the discovery of his tomb

Tutankhamun lived from around 1341 BCE to 1323 BCE. That was almost 3400 years ago! The period spanning from 1550 to 1292 BCE was known as the 18th Dynasty, which was the beginning of the New Kingdom Period. A *dynasty* is a sequence of kings belonging to the same family; there are 31 dynasties in Egypt, which are then organised into groups called *periods*. The 18th Dynasty was a time of great wealth and artistic creativity in Egypt.

Tutankhamun was only nine years old when he ascended the throne of Egypt, probably in 1333 BC. At the time, he was called Tutankhaten, but he changed his name shortly after becoming the king, since at that time, the most important god to the Egyptians was Amun, and the king had to be aligned to him.



King Tutankhamun and his wife Ankhesenamun depicted on the back panel of a throne made of gilded wood and semi-precious stones
(Burton P0163c)



Head of king Tutankhamun emerging from a lotus flower, symbolising his rebirth in the afterlife
(Burton P0479a)

Tutankhamun was married to a queen named Ankhesenamun. They had two daughters, but they were born prematurely and did not survive. They were both buried with their father. Tutankhamun's reign was short: we don't know exactly when or how he died, but he was probably no older than 19.



Introduction



Howard Carter, Arthur Callender and an Egyptian team member preparing one of the two 'guardian statues' for transport (Burton P0491)

His tomb was discovered in 1922 by an expedition led by British archaeologist Howard Carter and his sponsor and friend Lord Carnarvon. Although these are the most famous names in the excavation team, it was also comprised of a few women and many Egyptians, even children.

Sadly, those Egyptians were rarely named in the records, but today we know how significant their contribution was. It was, after all, their homeland and their history. They also had a long experience of excavating in Egypt, especially in the Valley of the Kings.

Although we don't know much about the actual life and death of Tutankhamun, he is today the most known and famous of all ancient Egypt's rulers, and is given the endearing nickname "King Tut". The discovery of his tomb is so unique as most royal burials had been looted by tomb robbers in antiquity; but even though we know that King Tut's tomb was entered by robbers shortly after he was buried, these break-ins were quickly discovered and the tomb resealed by necropolis officials. His tomb was eventually lost to memory.



Workers, including children, at the excavations in the Eastern Valley of the Kings, taken on 17 January 1921 (Carter i.J.335)

Introduction

It was due to a fortunate set of circumstances that Tut's tomb was found almost intact, and the team of people who discovered it was careful to preserve all the objects and to document the position they were originally found in. It actually took them ten years to clear the tomb and clean, conserve and record all of the almost 6,000 artefacts discovered in the four small rooms of the tomb!

Howard Carter created a clever system to keep track of all the objects and this careful system helped the team stay organised. The pictures taken by the mission's photographer, Harry Burton, were used to illustrate this document and the Mary and Mery game. Altogether, the archaeologists produced nearly 20,000 documents during this process, including copies of ancient Egyptian writing. Today these records are in the Griffith Institute Archive, at the University of Oxford, and they still help historians to understand the tomb today.



Howard Carter and an Egyptian team member examining the innermost of the three coffins of Tutankhamun (Burton P0770)



Percy Newberry (an expert on botanic remains) and his wife Essie Newberry (an expert on textiles) working on the pall that covered one of the burial shrines of Tutankhamun (Burton P0622)

The discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb has provided a wealth of knowledge about ancient Egypt, with researchers constantly studying and re-evaluating Tutankhamun, his tomb and the objects. Access to the original excavation records created by Carter and his team is vital in producing new insights and discoveries that continue to attract worldwide interest. The objects from the tomb are now all on display in the Grand Egyptian Museum at Giza, close to Cairo, and today Tutankhamun is considered, by the Egyptians, as both a beloved ancestor and an icon of national independence. ■

Tomb objects



Amphora

This is an **amphora**, which was used like a bottle, to store and transport liquids such as wine or oil.

This **basket** was woven in reed fibre and contained fruit of the dom palm, a type of date. Food was deposited in tombs as the ancient Egyptians considered it essential in the afterlife.



Basket



Bed

This is one of six **beds** found in the tomb of Tutankhamun. It is made of gilded ebony, a very precious wood. The footboard of this bed has three panels containing a figure of *Bes*, protector of the home. On either side of Bes there is a lion standing on a hieroglyph that means “protection”. And look closely, even the bed’s legs are in the shape of lion paws, a symbol of royalty.



Tomb objects



Bowl

Simple **bowls** have a variety of uses. This bowl is made of wood and its rim is decorated with gold leaf. The hieroglyphs painted on it spell one of Tutankhamun's names: *Nebkheperure*, meaning "Lord of all Manifestations of *Ra*", the sun god who is associated with kingship.

This **gold bracelet** is decorated with what the Egyptians called a *Wedjat eye*, or the *Eye of Horus*. Many people wore it as a lucky charm and believed it had healing powers and also protected both people who were alive and those who had passed away. The *Wedjat Eye* also stood for healing, being made whole again, and the magic of the moon.



Bracelet



Bread

This is one of several semi-circular **bread loaves** found in the tomb of Tutankhamun. They could be made from emmer wheat or barley, while others contained fruits from the Christ's-thorn plant.

Tomb objects



Chair

Many **chairs** and thrones were found in Tutankhamun's tomb. It is constructed from cedar wood and decorated with gold foil. On the backrest is a representation of *Heh*, god of eternity and he is kneeling on the *nwb*-hieroglyph, which means gold. Like the bed, the chair's legs are in the shape of lion paws.





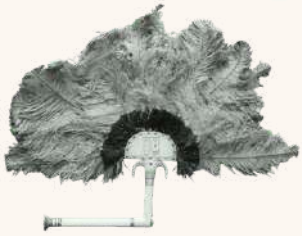
Crook and flail

The **crook and flail** were attributes of the god *Osiris* that became symbols of pharaonic authority. The shepherd's crook represented kingship and the flail, the fertility of the land.

This jar is carved in *calcite*, a kind of whitish stone similar to limestone. Stone vessels in ancient Egypt were commonly employed for the storage of precious oils and cosmetics. There were many vessels buried in King Tut's tomb, ranging from simple ones like this to elaborate vessels in the shape of animals or flowers.



Stone jar



Feather fan

This is one of the king's fans, a **handheld fan** with 15 white and 15 brown ostrich feathers. The handle is made of gilded ivory and inscribed with the king's names. Fans provided shade and a cooling breeze, and they were very important in Egypt because of the hot climate.

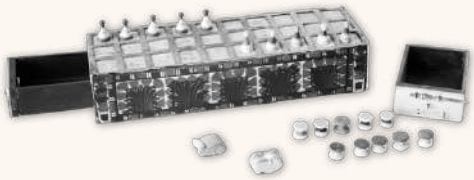
Tomb objects



Food boxes

These are **boxes for food offerings**. Food was deposited in tombs as the ancient Egyptians believed they needed it in the afterlife.

This is a **Senet** board made of wood and decorated ivory panels. Senet was a traditional Egyptian board game with 30 squares, and played by two people. The game-box has a drawer at each end for the playing-pieces.



Games box



Gloves

Gloves in ancient Egypt were not used to keep the hands warm, like in cold countries, but were worn to protect the hands while riding chariots and using weapons. Altogether 20 pairs were found in Tut's tomb made from linen, tapestry and leather.



Headrest

This is a **headrest**, and was used like a pillow. Its shape supports the head and neck while sleeping. Some people still use this kind of object today.

Tomb objects

This is a **loincloth** and it was used as underwear, wrapped around the waist and between the legs.



Loincloth



Necklace

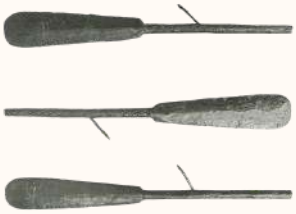
The Egyptians were masters of jewellery making. Tutankhamun was buried with many different necklaces, as well as rings and bracelets. This **necklace** consists of beads made of resin and a dark blue stone called lapis lazuli, and they are strung on a cord with tassels.

These are **measuring rods**. They were used to measure lengths and calculate area size, like we do with rulers and other instruments today.



Measuring rods

Those are **oars**, used to row a boat. In Egypt, boats were used on the river Nile. Placed in a tomb they were meant to protect the king's journey in a boat through the afterlife.



Oars

Tomb objects



Oil lamp

This elegant **triple lamp** is delicately carved, incised, and polished from one block of calcite. The cup would once have contained wicks floating on oil, traces of which are preserved inside. The lotus shapes were commonly used in Egyptian art and symbolised rebirth and regeneration.



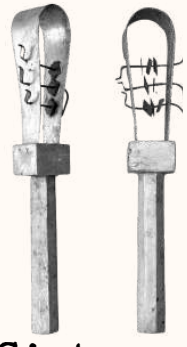
Perfume bottle

This looks like a lion statue but is actually a 60cm high **perfume bottle** made of calcite. It shows a lion standing on a pedestal, his left paw resting on the hieroglyph for "protection". The "crown" – the plants on his head – are actually the lid of the bottle which was still full of ointment when it was found!



Sandals

Egyptian **sandals** are made of a flat sole with straps at the left and right side of the ankle. This pair of inlaid sandals depicts bound African and Asiatic foreign prisoners which the king is literally trampling on. The sole is made of wood and covered with a layer of leather.



Sistrum

This is a **sistrum**, a percussion instrument with small rings or loops of thin metal that produce a tinkling sound. In ancient Egypt they were used in dances and religious ceremonies.

Tomb objects



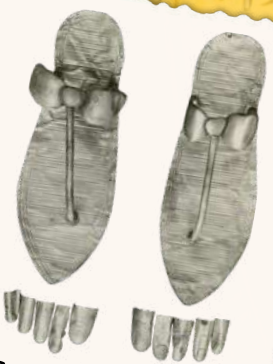
Stool

12 stools in total were found in King Tut's tomb, with different shapes. This is a foldable travelling stool. The seat looks like cow skin, but it's actually made of a black wood called ebony, with white ivory inlays. There's even a fake cow tail!



Throw sticks

These are **throw sticks**, or boomerangs, used in hunting birds like wild ducks or geese. However, this kind of hunting stick did not return to the hunter after being thrown.



Toe stalls

Toe stalls are pieces of gold jewellery used in ancient Egypt to protect toes before the mummified body was wrapped. These stalls were made of sheet gold with incised details including the toe nails.They were made so as to fit each individual digit and thus accordingly vary in size.

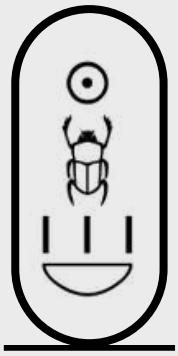


Trumpet

This is one of the two **trumpets**, that were discovered in the tomb of Tutankhamun. This one is made of silver embellished with gold. The upper object is a protective wooden core which fits inside the trumpet

Some hieroglyphs

Sometimes, Mery says things that look more like funny drawings than words. That's because ancient Egyptians wrote in this way! Those drawings are called **hieroglyphs** and they are the letters that ancient Egyptians used. Many hieroglyphs stand for different sounds, while others help us to understand the meaning of a word.
These are the hieroglyphic words we saw during this adventure.



Nebkheperure (*Nb-ḫpr.w-Rʿ*)
This is the *Throne Name,* or *Prenomen*, of Tutankhamun, and it appears in different objects of his tomb. Kings of Egypt had five different names, representing different parts of their powers. Two of these names (The Birth Name and the Throne Name) were written inside an oval shape called a *cartouche*. **That's how you can easily spot where a king's name is written down!**



Un (*wn*)
This word means "open". The last symbol has no sound, and it represents a door. This is called a *determinative*, and it was often used in hieroglyphics to help understand the meaning of a word.



Nedj-her-ek (*nḏ ḥr=k*)
The hieroglyphic phrase for "Greetings", ou "Hello".

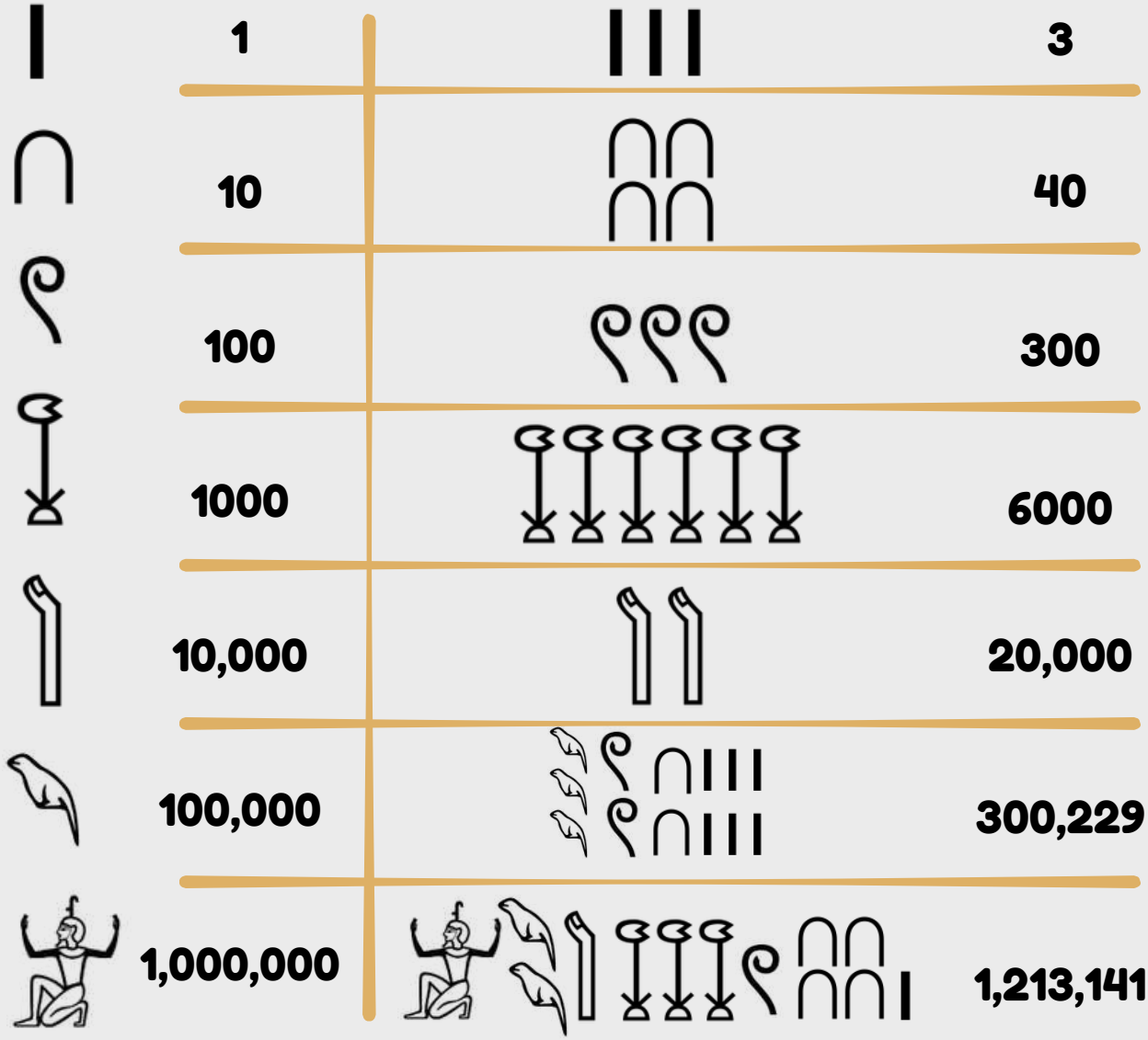


Shem-em-hotep *(šm m ḥtp)*
This is the Egyptian "Good-bye" formula and it means, literally, "Go in peace".

Count like an Egyptian

In the roulette game, if you paid attention, you could see some examples of Egyptian **numerals**, which are specific symbols used to indicate numbers. Ancient Egyptians counted in multiples of 10, just like us. This means they counted in ones, tens, hundreds, thousands, and so forth. They also wrote numbers with numerals rather than by spelling out the words for each number, just like we do: instead of spelling out “A hundred”, for example, we just write “100”.
In ancient Egypt, each numeral was repeated the necessary number of times to indicate the number.

Here are the Egyptian numerals and some examples of how to count with them:



What did you learn?

Mary learned so much about the life of Mery during the reign of Tutankhamun! And luckily, you were there to help them understand each other and accomplish all the missions.

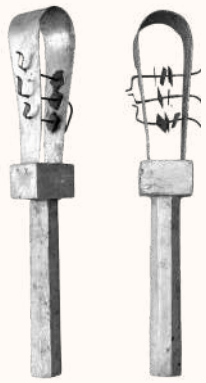
What was the most important thing you learned?

Do you know how to recognize the name of a king in an inscription written in hieroglyphs?

If you want, you can copy the throne name of Tutankhamun here:

What did you learn?

Can you recognise these objects?





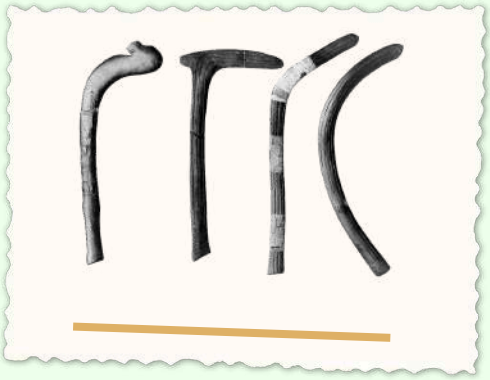


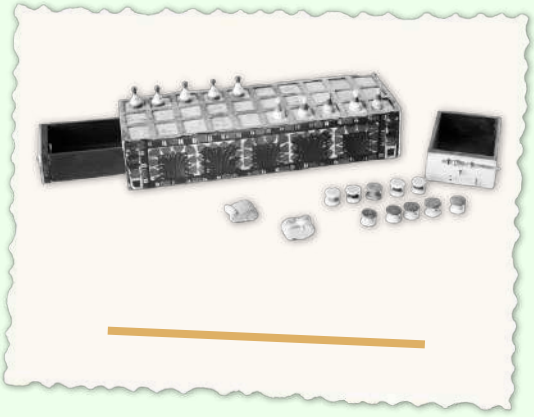
What was it used for?

What did you learn?

Can you recognise these objects?







What was it used for?

What did you learn?

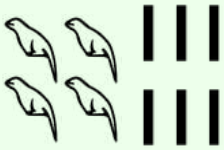
Can you count like an Egyptian?

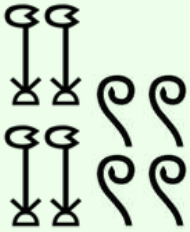
Write the following Egyptian numbers as English numerals:

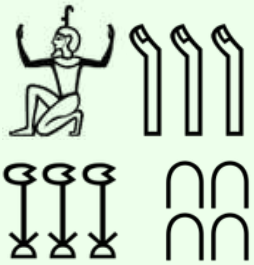












Now, write these numerals in hieroglyphs!

12	423,002
67	74,000
1250	2,222,222

Glossary

You may not know all the words we used in this game.
Here is the explanation for some of them!

Archivist

An archivist is a person who looks after important records from the past. These records can include letters, photographs, maps or drawings. Archivists organise, protect, and store these items so they are not lost or damaged. They also help people find and understand these records, so we can learn about history and remember what happened long ago. Archivists often work in places like museums, libraries or universities.



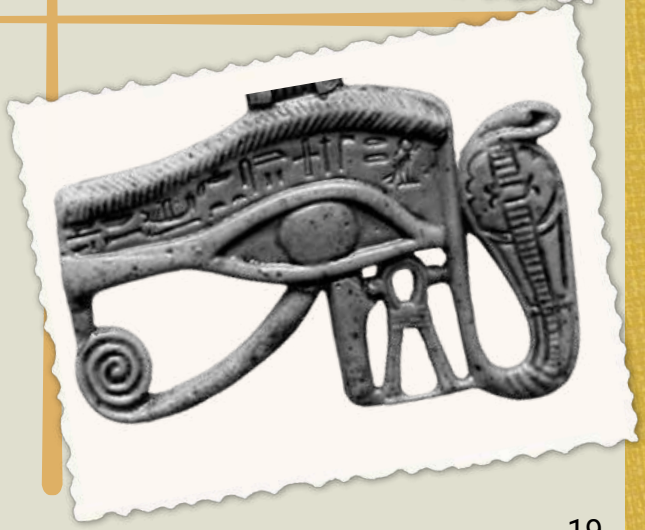
Bes

Bes was an ancient Egyptian god who protected homes and families. He had a very peculiar appearance with a big belly, a lion-like face, a beard, and his tongue sticking out. This was meant to scare off evil spirits. *Bes* helped keep children safe, especially babies, and watched over people while they were sleeping. He was also linked to music and dancing, so people believed he brought happiness as well as protecton.



Eye of Horus (Wedjat eye)

The Eye of Horus, also called the Wedjat eye, was an important ancient Egyptian symbol of protection, healing, and safety. It is shaped like a stylised hawk's eye with special markings. According to a myth, the god *Horus* lost his eye in a battle with his uncle *Set*, but it was magically restored, making the eye a symbol of being made whole again. People wore the Eye of Horus as an amulet to keep them safe and bring good health.



Glossary

Heh

Heh was an ancient Egyptian god who represented endless time – his name can even be used to write a number (have a look at your handout!) and means “million” or “millions”! People believed he helped keep the world going forever. He was often shown as a crouching man holding palm stems which were used to count time, and sometimes with a frog’s head, a symbol of life and new beginnings. *Heh* reminded people that time never ends and continues eternally.



Osiris

Osiris was the ancient Egyptian god of the afterlife and the ruler of the underworld. People believed he judged the souls of the dead and decided if they could have a happy and peaceful afterlife. He was also linked to plants and agriculture, so he represented new life and rebirth. *Osiris* was often shown in the form of a mummy wrapped in linen bandages, with a crown and holding a crook and flail which were symbols of kingship.



Pharaoh

A pharaoh was the ruler of ancient Egypt. People believed the pharaoh was both a king and a god, chosen to lead and protect the country and its people. Pharaohs are often shown wearing the double crown symbolising Upper and Lower Egypt, and holding special symbols of power like a crook and flail (see picture of *Osiris* above!). Ancient Egyptians also believed the pharaoh would continue to rule in the afterlife after they died.



Glossary

Ra (sun god)

Ra was the ancient Egyptian god of the sun. People believed that he carried the sun across the sky each day in a magical boat (called a solar barque), while at night he travelled through the underworld to be ready to rise again in the morning. *Ra* was one of the most important gods in ancient Egypt and often shown with a human body and the head of a falcon, wearing a sun disk on his head (on the right).



Valley of the Kings

The Valley of the Kings is the place in Egypt where pharaohs were buried for almost 500 years from the Eighteenth Dynasty (when King Tut lived) to the Twentieth Dynasty (about 1550 – 1080 BCE). It is a dry, rocky valley on the west side of the river Nile opposite of Luxor. Earlier kings were buried in pyramids, but the tombs in the Valley of the Kings were carved deep into the hills to keep their bodies and grave goods safe. Many of the tombs were decorated with paintings and texts and filled with objects for the pharaoh's afterlife.



Who are we?

The Griffith Institute

The Griffith Institute is the heart of Egyptology and Ancient Near Eastern Studies at the University of Oxford for over eighty years. The Institute provides vital resources for the study of the history and culture of ancient Egypt and the Near East.

BLOG

The TAA Archive

The Tutankhamun (TAA) Archive is the most significant collection held by the Griffith Institute at the University of Oxford.
It preserves the complete archaeological records of Howard Carter and his team's ten-year excavation of the tomb of Tutankhamun, including maps, plans, object cards, drawings, journals, diaries, notes, correspondence, and Harry Burton's iconic photographs.

The adventures of Mary and Mery at the Griffith Institute

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Music: Youtube Music
Sound effects: Zapsplat
Genially add-ons: S'Cape collective



Thanks for playing with us!
Come back soon!

