

Carter Number 480	GH
Museum and Accession Number (if available) JE 61678	GH
Name of Object ‘Straight stick decorated with coloured barks’ (Carter: 48o) ‘Stock’ [‘stick’] (Beinlich and Saleh 1989: 21)	GH
Location in Tomb This stick was found as part of a larger group on “bed 47” (an ebony bedstead, see Carter: 47) in the antechamber It was part of a group of 10 straight sticks, all decorated with coloured bark; they were fastened together by strips of cloth (Carter: 48 ; Griffith Institute). Carter writes that these objects came from “box 50”, a hinged wooden box which contained various cloths, sticks arrows and a mace (Carter: 50).	GH
Measurements L.151.8 cm	GH
Translation (1)  (1) <i>Nb-hpr.w-R^c</i> (1) Nebkheperure	GH
Textual notes	
Notes on the content of the texts The name Tutankhamun does not appear in a cartouche here.	GH
Object description This is a straight stick covered entirely in bark. The pattern of decoration on the stick has been organized by Carter into separate sections, labelled alphabetically A – C. Carter has described these sections top to bottom as follows (Carter: 48 (card one) , 48 (card two)): A. On the top of the stick is the name Nebkheperure written in light yellow on dark red with a green rim. The <i>hpr</i> sign is drawn with wings outstretched. There is a floral pattern on the sides of the stick below this. B. Bands of small pattern in various colours (black, red, green, yellow). C. Plain light yellow-brown. D. There is a band (2 wide) in the centre with cartouches that are flanked by “millions of years”. These are written in light red on dark red. One each side are several narrow bands of small patterns in light yellow-brown on dark red. E. Plain dark red. Below is covered in gold leaf the whole length of the band. F. A band with bound captives back to back. The colours used are red, green, yellow-brown and black. There are small pattern in yellow-brown on dark red either side of the bands. Some details have gold leaf inlays. G. Plain dark. H. Plain yellow-brown.	

Notes on the object type

The ancient Egyptian word for ‘stave’ is first given in the late Old Kingdom as *imyt-r*, which could be understood as ‘that which is on the edge (of a lake or pool)’ (Fischer 1979: 7). This impression of staves representing a waterside reed is confirmed by the inscription found on another stave, 227e (Carter: [227e-2](#)). There are, however, many types of stave and so a variety of explanations could be suggested.

Most depictions of individuals carrying staves would indicate that they relate to the authority of their owner, although staves can also be carried by their retainers (see below). Other sticks relate to occupations and would therefore designate a career role, such as: sounding rods for sailors, fowling sticks for bird keepers and, cattle prods for pastoralists (Fischer 1979: 8). Where actual staves have been found within the burial they are most often deposited within the wooden coffin of the deceased, a position particularly standardised during the Middle Kingdom (Hassan 1976: 74). The body itself rests on its left side, with the head pointing north and facing east, staves are then placed on either side of the body, occasionally also with bows and arrows (Hassan 1976: 110) such as those found alongside the sticks in the tomb (Carter: [048-2](#)). Burials are also often accompanied by a head rest and sandals. It can be suggested therefore that these elements were requirements for the ideal Middle Kingdom burial assemblage. Hassan points out that while staves should have been placed within the coffin itself, it was also possible to deposit them outside the sarcophagus/coffin and either wrap them in cloth or keep them in a wooden box (Hassan 1976: 110). Group 48 were probably originally placed in a box in the antechamber. There is no clear conclusion as to why staves were a part of the ideal burial assemblage but spell 23 of the Coffin Texts alludes to their potential purpose for use in the journey to the afterlife (see CTI: [23] 71h-72c): Take your staff, your loincloth, your sandals, [and] your arrows for the road, so that you can cut off the head and sever the neck of your foe that approaches [when] you are dead.

This text also draws together the various elements located within the coffin; the staff, linen dressings, sandals and weapons. The text also indicates that the staves had protective connotations, as well as providing physical support during the deceased’s travels to the next world (Hassan 1976: 118). A similar reference can also be found in Coffin Text spell 3 (CTI: [3] 10b-f; Bommas 1999: 57-58), and also in the New Kingdom Tale of Two Brothers (Lichtheim 1976: 208).

Staves first appear in private burials during the First Intermediate Period (Hassan 1976: 119). It is also during this period that staves first appear within the equipment frieze on internal coffin decoration (Hassan 1976: 98). Willems has shown that these depictions represent the funerary rites associated with the interment of the deceased (Willems 1988: 208). The presence of staves within these images descended from similar depictions in Old Kingdom royal contexts showing the object offering ritual (Willems 1988: 203-204). The first attested private burial of the Middle Kingdom to have staves deposited within the coffin is that of *ϕnw* at Saqqara and his burial is illustrated by Hassan as an ideal Middle Kingdom coffin assemblage (Hassan 1976: 75, fig. 19). As the process of including staves within the burial assemblage reappeared during the early New Kingdom, little altered from Middle Kingdom traditions, it is unsurprising to find staves preserved from the royal burials of Amenhotep II, Amenhotep III, Ramesses II and Merenptah (Hassan 1976: 131).

Tutankhamun however stands out among New Kingdom examples due to being buried with around 130 staves. According to Hassan's calculations (1976: 131), only about one tenth of these staves have inscriptions; group 227 includes five of these examples. Reeves documents that Carter believed Tutankhamun may have been 'an amateur collector of walking sticks and staves' (Reeves 1990: 178). This statement is however, difficult to confirm due to a lack of complete royal burials from the late Eighteenth Dynasty with which to compare the assemblage of Tutankhamun. 48d can be seen as an example of a curved stick, albeit with a more pronounced curve than in many other examples. Curved sticks first appear in tomb assemblages from the early Middle Kingdom (Fischer 1979: 13). A depiction of three curved staves in a scene from the Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Kenamun at Thebes (TT93) exhibits them among a selection of military equipment (Davies 1930: pl. XXII, A). They are labelled as having curved tops of 'gold', and straight ends of 'silver' (Fischer 1979: 13). 48d, similarly, has ivory decoration along the handle, which could have been used in place of silver, but the curved end is carved to represent bound prisoners and so is not comparable. Another depiction from the tomb of Kenamun show statues of the pharaoh Amenhotep II holding curved sticks. The curved ends face away from the Pharaoh who wears a militaristic uniform and carries various weapons (Davies 1930: pl. XXII, A). Once again the military nature of the curved staves is emphasised and relates to the textual themes preserved on those found in the tomb of Tutankhamun.. Finally, a group of retainers shown in the lower register of the above two scenes also carry very long curved staves over their shoulders.

Both 48d and 48o are carved to represent two bound captives, back to back, at one end. In the case of 48d the captives are carved at the curved end. Zaki (2008: 118) notes that the captives, an Asiatic and a Nubian, are the traditional enemies of Egypt. Similar images can be found elsewhere in Tutankhamun's tomb, for example a footstool with two bound prisoners carved into it (Carter: 30). In the same way that the footstool meant that the king trampled his enemies beneath his feet, the walking stick allowed him to "grind them to dust" (Smith 2007: 223-224); the prisoners were carved on the bottom part of the stick and not the handle.

The large number of staves in the tomb of Tutankhamun allow for a misrepresentative view of sticks in royal burial assemblages of the New Kingdom. It is clear that large numbers of staves should have been expected in other royal tombs, and it is perhaps due to the removal of bodies into caches during the Twenty-first Dynasty that these are no longer preserved in their entirety. It is currently difficult to ascertain exactly why Tutankhamun is buried with such large numbers of the same types of staff (70 in the case of the *mdw*-type), although it is also true that he was buried with at least one of each known example from burial contexts. From this brief overview of staves in Ancient Egypt, and particularly those in the tomb of Tutankhamun, it is clear that the past assumption that these items were 'walking-sticks' (ILN 1925: 524-525) is unfounded and that instead these funerary goods represented the authority of their owners, and related to specific roles and rituals Tutankhamun was involved in. Further work on the inscriptions on other staves found in Tutankhamun's tomb will assist in understanding the purpose of these objects and the reasons for their prevalence in burial contexts from the Old Kingdom to the New Kingdom.

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