

The meaning of wine in egyptian tombs: article analysis



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The find of Tutankhamun's tomb is significant in its being one of a few intact royal tombs to have been discovered in Egypt thus far. Many of the artifacts in the tomb were spectacular, but the three amphorae found in Tutankhamun's burial chamber raised many questions. Maria Rosa Guasch-Jané's article looks at the amphorae found within the tomb, and attempts to answer some of the questions surrounding them. Using inscriptions found in the tomb as well as residue analysis, Guasch-Jané is able to identify the wines and argue for their symbolic meaning in the context of not only Tutankhamun's era, but wine in general throughout Egyptian history. This paper will provide a summary of the article "The meaning of wine in Egyptian tombs: the three amphorae from Tutankhamun's burial chamber", as well as identify the problem in trying to solve the claim. This paper will also identify the methods used to solve the claim as well as state how this article might be useful to others with related research.

According to the article, upon discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun 23 amphorae were found placed within the annexe chamber of the tomb. Within the burial chamber itself, 3 more amphorae were discovered appearing to have been intentionally placed towards the west, east and south of Tutankhamun's sarcophagus. This find therefore caused the author to ask: "why were these wine jars not stored in the annexe chamber with the rest of the wine, but placed instead in the burial chamber?", "Does the position of the three wine jars have any meaning?". Along with this, the author notes that no amphora was found on the northern side of the chamber. As a result, Guasch-Jané identifies the purpose of this article as being "to use the residue to identify the nature of the wine that had been in the amphorae and

investigate their symbolism in the context of what is known[1]" in Egyptian mythology.

According to Howard Carter, there were signs of intruders in the tomb but little damage was actually done to the tomb. Although the seals on the wine jars had been broken, the amphorae were found to have had residue wine left inside. Along with residue, hieratic inscriptions on the jars showed differences in the vintage, origin and production of the wines. This evidence may be used to identify signs of trade and distribution in Egyptian society. Using chromatography mass spectrometry, it was determined that a white wine was present in the eastern amphorae, a red wine in the western amphorae, and a red grape wine with elaborate preparation marked "*shedeh*" was present in the southern amphorae. According to Guach-Jané, the *shedeh* was a much appreciated beverage with a high value and as a result, Guach-Jané is led to ask " Was this for symbolic reasons?"

In order to answer the many questions, Guasch-Jané explores the historical background of wine in ancient Egypt. According to the author, large quantities of storage jars were found in Egyptian tombs at Abydos and Saqqara and " were interpreted to be for the sustenance of the deceased in the afterlife[2]" as funerary offerings to the spirit of the dead. Tombs dating to the Middle Kingdom depict offerings of wine made to the dead and placed in front of the tomb's false door from which the buried person was supposed to emerge, thus showing evidence of a belief in resurrection. Guach-Jané further states that in ancient Egypt, wine was mainly consumed by the royal family and the upper classes, and served as an offering to the gods by the pharaoh or priests in a daily temple ritual. In order to further understand the <https://assignbuster.com/the-meaning-of-wine-in-egyptian-tombs-article-analysis/>

ancient Egyptian behaviour, the author ventures to understand the symbolism of wine in ancient Egypt. Guach-Jané employs cognitive archaeology in order to understand the Egyptian behaviour and attitude towards wine. By looking at cosmology and ancient Egyptian mythology, this understanding becomes more fervent. According to ancient Egyptian mythology, the god Osiris was known as being the “ lord of wine”. The grape harvests coincided with the Nile flood and the red colour of the Nile and as a result[3], grapes became the symbol of resurrection. Furthermore, the god Ra’s transformation from the red of sunset to the yellow of sunrise may be an explanation for the amphorae. Guach-Jané suggests that the positioning of amphorae of red wine in the west and white wine in the east of the burial chamber may be seen as part of the ritual which symbolises the king’s journey into the afterlife; the red wine at sunset and the white wine at sunrise. To explain the amphorae placed to the south, and the lack of an amphorae to the north, Guasch-Jané notes that in the southern sky there are stars that rise and set. According to mythology, the critical part of the king’s renewal after death took place when the union of Ra and Osiris occurred. As a result, the Guach-Jané suggests that the supply of *shedeh* on Tutankhamun’s south wall may have been intended to strengthen the king in his trip through the southern sky.

Guach-Jané employs Ethnoarchaeology by retracing Egyptian history to the Eighteenth Dynasty and analysing the behaviour of the people of the time whose beliefs were centered upon the course of the sun and asserted that all life was created by the sun. This is represented through finds such as tombs in Amarna where everything is oriented towards the east. Furthermore, finds,

such as artifacts found in the tomb of Tutankhamun, show great attention to the combination of Ra and Osiris. According to mythology, Osiris became Ra at night and becomes that constellation of Orion in the southern sky and in the morning Ra arises again. This belief is represented in a text on the exterior of Tutankhamun's shrine which describes the rejuvenation of the sun in the east by the figure of the unified Ra-Osiris. As a result, the *s hedeh* found on the south wall may be representative of the pharaoh's journey whilst no wine was needed on the north.

Guasch-Jané concludes liquid offerings may have had considerable symbolic meaning in ancient Egypt. She suggests that there is a symbolic purpose for the positioning of the amphorae. The red wine to the west was representative of Tutankhamun's transfiguration as Osiris-Ra; the white wine to the east was the transfiguration to Ra in the morning, and the *shedeh* to the south may be representative of the king's most difficult step of rebirth. Ultimately, Guasch-Jané concludes that the wines found in the annexe were undoubtedly offerings of the usual king for sustenance in the afterlife. By analysis of the residue found in the amphorae along with the ideological thinking of the time, it may be concluded that Guasch-Jané's conclusion is well supported. Although it may be argued that the research is inconclusive due to the inability to determine what ancient societies were actually thinking, analysis of writings and artifacts outlined in the article are sufficient to rule out any problematic assumptions or logical errors. Ultimately, I believe that the research done is significant as it eliminates the ambiguity surrounding the placement of amphorae in tombs, and it allows for a greater insight into the behaviour of the ancient Egyptians.

Reference(s)

Guasch Jané, Maria Rosa. " The meaning of wine in Egyptian Tombs: the three amphorae from Tutankhamun's burial chamber." *Antiquity* 85 (329), (2011): 851-858

[1]Guasch Jané, Maria Rosa.

[2]Guasch Jané, Maria Rosa

[3]Guasch Jané, Maria Rosa