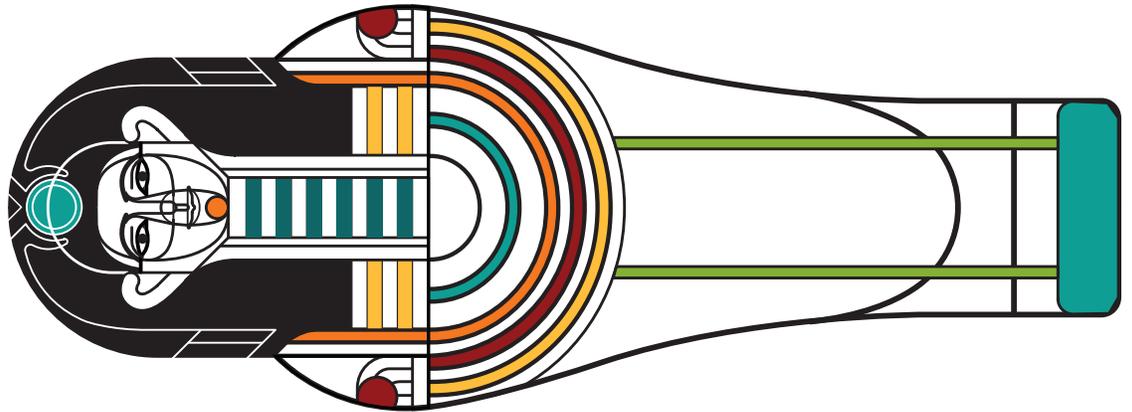


A
n
c
i
e
n
t

E
g
y
p
t
i
a
n

Mummification **EXPLAINED**



What is a mummy?



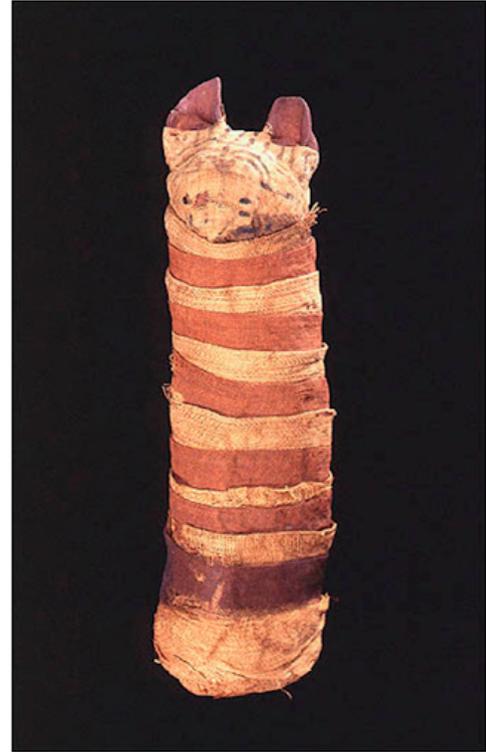
A mummy is a person or animal whose soft tissue has been preserved. Egyptian mummies are intentional, meaning that people performed specific rituals or processes on the remains of a person or animal to preserve soft tissue. Some mummies are unintentional, which means natural conditions preserved the soft tissue (things like skin and muscle).



Other Types of Mummies

The ancient Egyptians mummified lots of animals, including dogs, cats, and birds.

They also mummified food so they would have something to eat in the afterlife. This is known as a “victual mummy.”



Ushabtis

These are *ushabtis* (u-shop-tees), the servants of the deceased, believed to carry out tasks in the afterlife. “Ushabti” translates to “the answerer.” King Tut had several hundred ushabtis.



Valley of the Kings

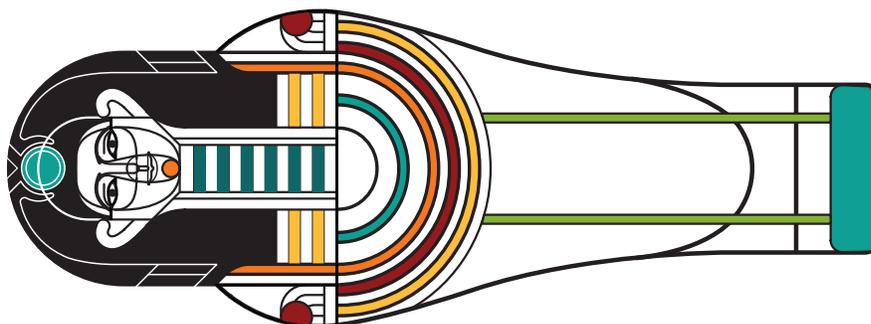
This is the Valley of the Kings in Luxor. It's a burial site including the tombs of almost 70 different rulers, royalty, or other high-ranking people. King Tut was buried here. The Valley of the Kings was meant to hide burial sites so that tomb robbers wouldn't find and loot them.



Who was mummified?

Pharaohs were commonly mummified and buried in elaborate tombs.

Non-royals were also mummified. However, their mummification wasn't necessarily as thorough as royalty, depending on what their family could afford. The mummification of a poor person could be as simple as washing out the intestines and covering the body with natron, then covering them with minimal wrappings and burying them in a shallow grave or cave.



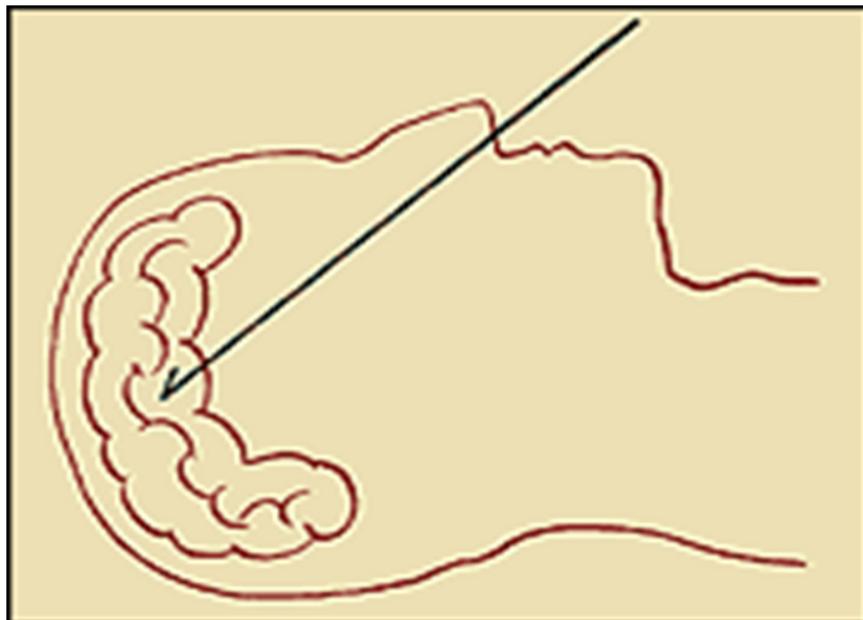
Wash the Body

The first step in the Egyptian mummification process was washing the body with water from the Nile River, which was sacred because it helped their crops grow.



Removing the Brain

The next step was removing the brain, using a brain hook.
They discarded the brain.



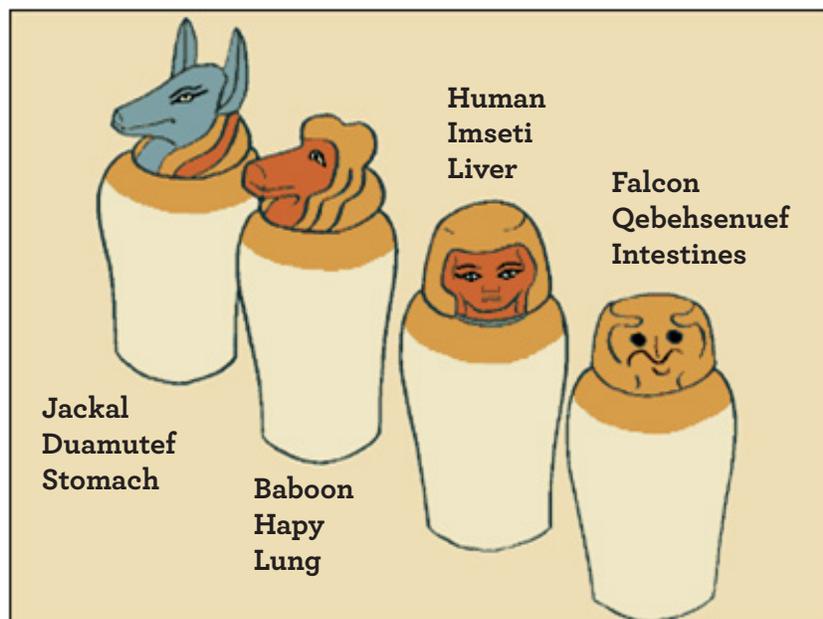
Remove the Organs

Next, the priests would remove other internal organs. The heart was the most important since they believed it was the seat of one's spirit and being.



Canopic Jars - The Four Sons of Horus

Each organ was put in one of four canopic jars to be protected by one of the Four Sons of Horus.



Natron

After the priests removed the organs, they covered the body inside and out with natron. Natron is a naturally occurring salt from the Egyptian desert that absorbs moisture and fat. They had to replace the natron every couple weeks. This portion of the process lasted about 40 days.

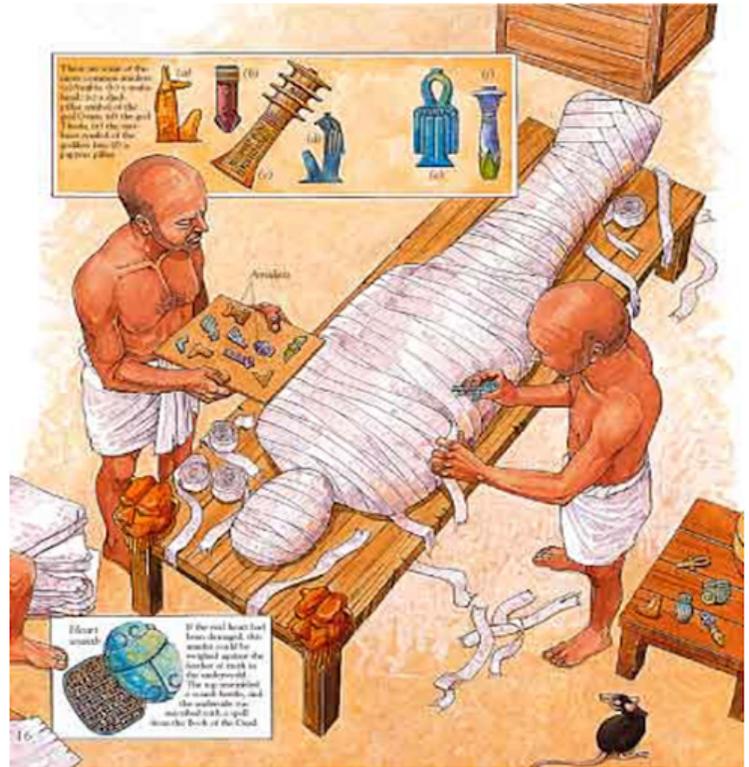


Wrap the Body

Next, it was time to wrap the mummy. Wrapping the mummy was symbolic in many ways. As the arms and legs were wrapped, the priest read spells to protect and re-awaken it in the afterlife.



The priests tucked amulets into the mummy's wrappings. An amulet is an object that people believe will protect the person who carries it. The ancient Egyptians believed the amulets would ensure safe passage and existence in the afterlife. For example, King Tut had over 140 amulets scattered through his wrappings.



The ancient Egyptians would include a heart scarab beetle and pectoral with the wrapped mummy. They would also put a mask over the wrapped mummy's face. They were concerned that the mummy's spirit wouldn't recognize their body because the face was covered with wrappings.



Opening of the Mouth

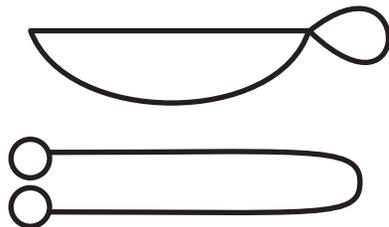


This is the “Opening of the Mouth” ceremony, where the priest restored the mummy’s five senses. The mummy would need their senses in the afterlife.



Place in Coffin

The mummy would be interred in a coffin, which could take several different shapes. This one is an anthropoid coffin, meaning it’s shaped like the human body (wide at the shoulders and then narrowing).



Weighing of the Heart

The ancient Egyptians believed their heart would be weighed on these scales against the feather of the goddess Maat. Maat represented the idea of order, which, in this context, meant “what is right.” This scene also features Anubis, the god of embalming. He has the head of a jackal.



Ammit

Ammit was the devourer. The demon had the head of a crocodile, the body of a lion, and the bottom of a hippopotamus. If someone’s heart was heavier than Maat’s feather, Ammit would devour their heart. When Ammit devoured their heart, they weren’t sent somewhere to be punished; they just disappeared.



Finally, the Ba would be reunited with the physical mummy. The Ba represented the personality of the deceased. In order for the mummy to survive the afterlife, it had to be reunited with the Ba every night.



Research Today

We're still finding mummies today. Preserved in mummy cells is a record of disease, which doctors and scientists can examine to learn about viruses and bacteria. Studying mummies can help us learn more about past cultures and develop improved vaccines and other treatments.

