

Egyptian Tomb

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Coffin and cartonnage of Shep en-Mut

About 2,800 years old

Probably from Thebes, Egypt

The decoration and inscriptions on Shep en-Mut's coffin and cartonnage reveal she was a married woman. She was the daughter of Nes-Amenempit who was a 'carrier of the milk-jar', or a cow-herd.

Her body was carefully embalmed and wrapped in linen bandages. A small wax figurine of the god Duamutef was wrapped in the bandages. On the inside of the coffin is a painted image of the goddess Isis with her arms outstretched to encompass the body.

Scientific study of Shep en-Mut's body suggested she had a rare genetic disorder which caused her urine to turn dark brown, and arthritis in her spine.

1-3 - Fragments of mummy cloth

About 2,700 years old

Unwrapped from a mummy in 1834

Mummified bodies were wrapped in linen bandages which were often recycled strips of cloth from old clothing. The bandaging process took many days to complete.

4 - Canopic jar lid

About 3,300-3,500 years old

Found in Thebes, Egypt

During the mummification process most of the internal organs were removed. They were placed in canopic jars ready to be reinstated in the body in the afterlife. This lid is shaped like a human head and may represent the god Imsety, protector of the liver.

5 - Mummy board of Au-set-shu-Mut

About 2,950-3,050 years old

Found in Thebes, Egypt

Au-set-shu-Mut was a musician of the god Amen-Ra. This decorative board was placed over her body inside the coffin and shows her wearing a black wig and jewellery. The images include a winged scarab with sun disc, and the eye of Horus, which were symbols of resurrection.

The scenes on the lower half of the board show her worshipping Osiris and the Four Sons of Horus.

6 - Eyes of Horus

About 2,700 years old

Made from stone and faience

The Eye of Horus, or *wadjet*, was a symbol of healing and protection. Amulets like this were wrapped into the mummy bandages to protect the body and the soul.

7-8 - Protective amulets

About 2,200-2,700 years old

Made from faience

The *djed* pillar and the scarab were symbols of resurrection and stability. Amulets like this were wrapped into the mummy bandages to protect the body and the soul.

9 - Heart scarab

About 2,500-3,500 years old

Made from stone

Heart scarabs were wrapped among a mummy's bandages near the heart. They combine a sacred text from the 'Book of the Dead' with the powerful form of the scarab, associated with rebirth.

10 - Miniature stela

About 3,200-3,300 years old

Allegedly from the Great Pyramid, Egypt

This stela shows the ram of the god Amun with a bennu bird, or phoenix. The lower part shows the deceased with a text from the 'Book of the Dead', to help his body progress into the afterlife.

11 - Breastplate from a mummy

About 2,200-2,500 years old

Made from lead and silver

This plaque was placed on the chest of a mummy. The images show a sun disc with wings surrounded by cobras, which had protective powers.

12 - Rock cut tomb-chapels

3,400-4,000 years old

Sheikh Abd el-Qurna at Thebes

These tomb-chapels were built into the rock. At entrance level offerings were made to the spirits of the deceased. Their mummified bodies were placed deep inside the rock below, accessed by a vertical shaft.

13 - Mummy mask fragment

About 3,500 years old

Found at Abydos, Egypt

Although very small this face was part of an adult's mask which showed the deceased as the *Ba* spirit. It is decorated with gold leaf and was part of an expensive burial. Abydos was an important religious centre and many wealthy people were buried there.

14 - Coffin mask

About 3,000 years old

Made from wood and pigment

This mask was attached to the outside of a coffin and represented the person buried inside. The hole in the chin shows it originally had a beard.

15 - Mummy mask

About 2,000 years old

Decorated with gold leaf and pigment

Mummy masks were placed over the body inside the coffin. This elaborate mask is made from a mixture of plaster and linen called *cartonnage*. It was made in the Roman period, hundreds of years after Shep en-Mut and Au-set-shu-Mut.

16 - Ichneumon scroll box

About 2,200-2,500 years old

Made from copper alloy

This model ichneumon, a type of mongoose associated with the underworld, was placed in a tomb in place of a mummified animal. It sits on a box which held a rolled papyrus scroll of sacred texts.

17-18 - Mummified falcons

About 1,900-2,000 years old

Found in Egypt

Mummification was used to preserve animals and birds as well as people. Pilgrims to religious sites could buy a mummified bird or animal as an offering to a god. Falcons were one of the sacred animals of Egypt, and closely linked to the god Horus.

19 - Sarcophagus for an ibis

About 2,000-2,500 years old

Made from limestone

This small coffin was made for a mummified baby ibis bird. It was probably an offering to the god Thoth, who was closely linked with the sacred ibis. The text is written in demotic, a simplified version of hieroglyphs.

20 - Coffin fragment

About 2,900-3,000 years old

Made from wood, plaster and pigment

This is a fragment of the lid of a wooden coffin. It is decorated with symbols including the sacred eye, a winged goddess and the *ankh* life symbol disc. These symbols offered protection to the deceased on the journey to the afterlife.

21 - Inside the tomb of Paury

3,400 years old

Thebes

This wall painting tells a story. At the top the dead man, his wife and a group of servants make offerings to Osiris. Beneath this is a funeral procession with oxen and servants, followed by the Opening of the Mouth ceremony which magically reanimated the mummy.

Finally, the deceased is shown on a pilgrimage to Abydos, the holy city of Osiris.

22-24 - Ptah-Sokar-Osiris

About 2,600 years old

Made from wood, gesso and pigment

The powerful god Ptah-Sokar-Osiris was associated with death and the underworld. He was depicted as a mummy figure with black horns and plumes, but these features have later been removed from two of these figures.

25 - Shabti figures

About 2,500-3,400 years old

Made from ceramic, faience and wood

Shabti figures were placed with burials to act as servants in the afterlife. They undertook menial tasks and produced food for the deceased. Shabti are usually decorated with an inscription from the 'Book of the Dead' which instructs them in their role as a servant.

26 - Shabti box fragment

About 2,200-2,500 years old

Made from wood, plaster and pigment

Shabti figures were sometimes stored in the tomb in wooden boxes. This fragment from such a box is decorated with the winged sun disc, which offered protection to the deceased on the journey to the afterlife.

27 - A seated man

About 3,000 years old

Made from wood

This figure has moveable arms and the remains of a pole in his hand. It was probably part of a model representing a task from everyday life, to help the deceased in the afterlife.

28 - Cat figurine

Date unknown

Made from wood

Cats were an important animal in ancient Egypt. They were kept as pets and also symbolised the goddess Bastet.

29 - Figure with a tray of offerings

About 2,200-2,700 years old

Made from copper alloy

This figure shows a person with a tray of offerings on his head. The pose represents the hieroglyph for 'millions', indicating the quantity of offerings provided.

30 - Osiris

About 2,200-2,700 years old

Found in Abydos, Egypt

Osiris was one of the most powerful Egyptian gods. He represented death, resurrection and fertility. This figurine shows him wrapped in bandages as a mummy, holding a crook and flail in his hands.

31 - King making an offering

2,600-2,700 years old

Made from copper alloy

This figurine shows a kneeling pharaoh making an offering.

32 - Anubis

About 2,200-2,700 years old

Made from copper alloy

This figure is from the top of a ceremonial standard. It shows Anubis, the jackal-headed god associated with mummification and the afterlife.

33 - Ceremonial axe blade

About 3,000-3,500 years old

Made from copper alloy

This metal blade was probably buried in the foundations of a building as a ritual deposit. The holes allowed it to be attached to a handle made from wood.

34 - Wall ornaments

About 3,200 years old

Made from faience

Decorative plaques like these were probably a mural on a wall. They are double-sided so it is not certain exactly how they were used.

35 - Stele of Amenhotep I

About 3,200-3,300 years old

Made from limestone

This is part of a commemorative monument called a stela. It shows the pharaoh Amenhotep I and his mother Ahmose Nefertari, who were both deified after their deaths. They were popular deities with the workmen in the Valley of the Kings.

36 - Hieroglyphic text

About 3,200-3,400 years old

Made from marble

The hieroglyphic symbols on this stone were part of a larger text on the wall of a tomb. Hieroglyphs were one of two systems of writing used in Egypt, mainly used for funerary and religious texts.

37 - Tomb relief fragment

About 4,000-4,200 years old

Made from limestone

On this fragment are the head, face and shoulders of a person wearing a decorative collar. It is part of a larger scene from a tomb wall.

38-39 - Funerary cones

About 3,300-3,400 years old

Made from clay

Cones like these were built into the wall above a tomb entrance. The flat end is stamped with hieroglyphs and gives the name and titles of the person buried inside.

40-41 - Inscription from a tomb

About 3,000-4,000 years old

Made from limestone

The hieroglyphic symbols on these stones were part of a larger text from the doorway of a tomb. They give a magical formula to produce food for the dead.

42-43 - Wall tiles

About 2,000 years old

Made from faience

These tiles were part of a decorative frieze in a tomb or room. They show Apis, a sacred bull associated with the creator god Ptah, and are in a Greek style.