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Thomas Joseph Pettigrew
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A History of Egyptian Mummies

First published in 1834, this work was an important early contribution to the emerging field of Egyptology in Britain. It united the twin passions of its author, the noted surgeon and antiquarian Thomas Joseph Pettigrew (1791–1865), who made a name for himself by unrolling and autopsying mummies: his London home was the scene of well-attended parties during which he would impress his guests with such displays. In the present work, Pettigrew delves into the history, technique and ritual of mummification in a depth that had never been attempted before, notably extending the coverage beyond ancient Egypt to other societies and eras. Describing the beliefs that informed these practices, the work also addresses the Egyptians’ worship and embalming of animals such as bulls, dogs and hawks. Based on numerous examinations and years of study, this work stood as a landmark in the scientific and historical understanding of these funerary rites.

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THOMAS JOSEPH PETTIGREW



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A
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EGYPTIAN MUMMIES,
AND AN ACCOUNT OF
THE WORSHIP AND EMBALMING OF THE SACRED ANIMALS
BY
THE EGYPTIANS;
WITH
REMARKS ON THE FUNERAL CEREMONIES OF DIFFERENT NATIONS,
AND
OBSERVATIONS ON THE MUMMIES OF THE CANARY ISLANDS, OF THE ANCIENT
PERUVIANS, BURMAN PRIESTS, &c.
BY
THOMAS JOSEPH PETTIGREW, F.R.S., F.S.A., F.L.S.,
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GOTTINGEN, MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, CORRESPONDING
MEMBER OF THE ACADEMY OF ARTS, SCIENCES, AND THE BELLES LETTRES OF DIJON, AND OF THE SOCIÉTÉ
ACADEMIQUE DE MEDECINE DE MARSEILLE; SURGEON TO THE CHARING CROSS HOSPITAL,
THE ASYLUM FOR FEMALE ORPHANS, &c. &c. &c.
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Pomponius Mela, lib. i. cap. 9.
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I am animated, and to have the honour of subscribing myself,

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Most loyal and devoted Subject and Servant,

THOMAS JOSEPH PETTIGREW.

SAVILLE STREET,
March 20, 1834.

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INTRODUCTION.



WITHIN the range of archæological enquiry there can scarcely be a subject of greater curiosity or interest than that which relates to the preservation of the remains of mankind of so early a period as were the first inhabitants of Egypt. The practice of embalming the dead is deeply interesting, were it to rest upon its antiquity alone ; but when it is considered in relation to the history of the human species, and to the condition of the arts and sciences of so remote a period, it rises in importance, and it is remarkable that there should not exist in any language, as far as I have been able to ascertain, any work devoted expressly to the treating of this subject in all its branches. The matter to be gleaned from various travellers and enquirers is most extensively diffused, and I trust I am neither trifling with my own time nor that of my readers in having endeavoured to collect together all that I could rely upon in connexion with every branch of the enquiry, and making such humble additions as the objects of research and investigation, which have chanced to fall in my way, have afforded me an opportunity of doing.

I had the gratification of knowing the lamented Belzoni, that most intrepid and enterprising traveller, and by his kindness I was present at the opening of three mummies. I also witnessed the unrolling of a mummy at the Royal Institution, which was presented to the Royal Asiatic Society by the late Sir John Malcolm, and I have lately examined several mummies. The finest and most interesting specimen I have met with is accurately portrayed in the frontispiece to this work, and was brought from Egypt (Thebes, I think) for the purpose of sale, without any history whatever being attached to it, and enclosed in a case not coeval with the mummy, but made up, as I believe, merely for the convenience of transportation into this country. This specimen had even been deprived of its outer rollers and bandages ; but the dry state of those that remained, together with the evidences of their being genuine, induced me to become the purchaser of the mummy, and to be sanguine as to the result of its examination. In this I have certainly not been disappointed ; for, of all the instances on record, there is nothing to compare with it in point of perfection or interest. The

particulars of the examination will be recorded in various parts of this work ; but it may be as well here just to premise a few remarks.

For the convenience of accommodating a few friends whom I had invited to witness the interesting exhibition of bringing to light the form which had been hidden for perhaps two or three thousand years, I undertook the task at the Charing Cross Hospital on the 6th of April, 1833, in the presence of Prince Cimitile, Viscount Boringdon, Lord Hotham, Lord Henley, Sir Henry Halford, Bart., Sir David Barry, Drs. Shearman, Copland, Sayer, Crawford, Richardson, Elliotson, Clutterbuck, Golding, &c., Messrs. Barrow, Lockhart, Gage, Hawkins, Barnwell, H. Bosanquet, L. H. Petit, Cabbell, Ottley, Douce, Delafield, Lemon, Westmacott, Howard, &c. &c. The more immediate envelopes of the mummy, as I have stated, alone remained ; I was therefore unable to observe those peculiarities in the mode of bandaging which have been noticed by M. Jomard, Dr. Granville, and some other writers. It was a task of no little difficulty, and required considerable force to separate the layers of bandage from the body. These consisted of envelopes of cloth extending from the head to the feet, under the soles of which they were wrapped up, and there presented a fringed appearance. Between the cloths, a quantity of pitchy matter had been applied in a heated state, so that it was impossible to separate them from each other, and levers were absolutely necessary to raise the bandages, and develope the body. This, however, was most effectively and perfectly done—the feet were first made out, the soles of which were perfectly soft and yielded to the impression of my nails. The nails of the toes were all entire, and the upper surfaces of the feet were found to have been gilt—the same occurred on the legs, thighs, abdomen, chest, and head. The specimen was ascertained to be that of a male, and from its appearance rather of an advanced age—the beard was perfect and full, the hairs being about half an inch in length. It was of a reddish-brown colour, and similar in appearance to the hair of the head, which was scanty in quantity. The colour of the whole body was of a brownish black, and on various places it could be perceived that a quantity of resinous varnish had been smeared and applied while hot.

By the kindness of Thomas Saunders, Esq., I opened a mummy purchased by him at the same time that I obtained the previous specimen. This was enclosed in two cases. The mummy, a female, was destroyed by the excessive heat with which the applications had been made, and the bandages were literally burnt to tinder.

My excellent friend Dr. John Lee, of Doctors' Commons, also purchased a specimen at the same sale as the former had been obtained at, and with great kindness gave me liberty to do whatever I thought proper with it. Accordingly, on the 24th of June, 1833, and in the presence of Dr. Lee, M. Rifaud, Mr. Fisher, Mr. Bowes Wright, Dr. Forbes, Dr. Richardson, Mr. Davidson, and Mr. Burgon, all of whom had visited

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Egypt, and honoured also by the attendance of the Bishop of Chichester, Viscount Ossulston, Mr. Phillips, R. A., Mr. Douce, Mr. Renouard, Mr. Dawson Turner, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Barnwell, Captain Dillon, the Rev. Mr. Baber, and a few other friends, I examined this mummy. I should premise that it was enclosed in two cases (represented in Plates IX and X), and was in a very sound and dry condition. The bandages were very neatly applied, and were of a fine texture. The unrolling was a work of great ease. Every variety of form best adapted to preserve the shape of the body and fill up all spaces was adopted. Occasionally a whole length would be found passing from the feet along one side, over the head, down the other side, and crossing into the previous fold at the feet. Two portions were even split to allow of the feet passing through them. Between the legs and thighs large portions which surgeons would call compresses were placed, and the two limbs were then bound closely together. In this, as in all the instances I have witnessed, as you approach nearer to the body the bandages become of a coarser texture, and that immediately in contact with the body is the coarsest of all. The body was that of a female, and the mode of embalming by incision into the left flank was apparent.

On the 13th of July, 1833, I assisted my friend John Davidson, Esq., to unroll a mummy that had been brought from Thebes by Mr. Henderson. This was done at the Royal Institution in the presence of the Duke of Somerset, the President, and a very large attendance of the members of the Institution and other literary and scientific characters. Mr. Davidson delivered an exceedingly interesting lecture* on the occasion, to which I shall feel it necessary to refer in the course of this work. The mummy was that of a female, and enclosed within a very highly ornamented case. The bandages were more abundant than in any I had previously seen, and of a fine texture: they were indeed so pure, so dry, and had altogether such an air of freshness about them, that many were disposed to suspect the genuineness of the specimen; of this, however, there can be no doubt, as the references I shall make to it will abundantly show.

A few years since I purchased at a sale by auction a fine specimen of a sycamore sarcophagus, which contained the remains of a mummy. This formerly belonged to that ingenious but eccentric artist Mr. Cosway, R. A., and I have since found that it was the specimen brought into this country by Dr. Perry, and particularly described and figured by him in his *Travels in the Levant*.† Of this mummy he gives an elaborate account. It was found by the Arabs of Saccara in the catacombs of the adjacent mountain two months before he and his fellow-travellers left Cairo, and was looked

* Since printed but not published. It is entitled “An Address on Embalming generally.”
† View of the Levant, particularly of Constantinople, Syria, Egypt, and Greece, by Charles Perry, M. D. fol. Lond. 1743.

upon by some of the oldest dwellers there, who were familiar with the various objects of antiquity, to be the most curious of the kind ever obtained, with but one exception Dr. Perry resolved upon purchasing it, and it was sent to London in the year 1741. I have reduced the 18th Plate in Dr. Perry's work, and corrected the hieroglyphics upon the sarcophagus, in order to give a representation of this truly magnificent case, and to enable the reader to comprehend the references I shall have occasion to make to it. (See Plate VI., *fig.* 4.) Having removed the mummy from the case, I found it in a very decayed state. The flesh had been burnt up by the rapidity with which the process of embalming had been conducted, and the bones were rendered exceedingly brittle. I have obtained only the skull and the vertebræ of the neck entire. The former is remarkable from having a bony tumour (an exostosis) extending along the outer side of the right orbit, and affecting even the cheek (malar) bone.

I have also had the opportunity of witnessing, at the Mechanics' Institution, the unrolling of an adult female mummy belonging to Mr. Reeder, in which the process of desiccation appears to have been adopted previously to the application of the bandages, as there literally remained nothing beyond the dry skin and bones; and, to show that the body had been subjected to heat, I may mention that the bones had all their fatty matter withdrawn from them, and were rendered exceedingly brittle and quite white. The inside of the body was filled with earthy matter. Each limb had been separately handaged.

In addition to these I have had, through the kindness of Mr. Wilkinson, the opportunity of examining three heads brought from Thebes; and I owe to the liberality of the President and Council of the Royal College of Surgeons the permission to examine a mummy brought from Thebes in 1820 by Mr. Henderson, at the same time as that of Mr. Davidson, and, I believe, taken from the same tomb. I notice this circumstance here in order to remark that the mode of preparation adopted in both these instances was precisely similar: both were furnished with artificial eyes, had necklaces of the same materials, and a scarabæus on the breast. They were also unfortunately both much injured by the heated state of the embalming material when applied to them. The cases containing these mummies were also of a similar description. Mr. Davidson has done ample justice to that which contained his specimen. That of the College naturally attracted my attention, and when, from an examination of the hieroglyphic characters marked upon it, I declared its inhabitant to have been a priest of the temple of Ammon, I was assailed by not a few with ridicule, the face painted upon the case being so delicate and strongly resembling that of a female. To satisfy myself upon this subject, I solicited from the council of the College the loan of some drawings of the case which had been some years since very carefully executed by Mr. Clift, jun., under the inspection of his father, William Clift, Esq., the

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very respected and intelligent conservator of the Museum. By the assistance of Mr. Wilkinson I was enabled to make out very satisfactorily, not only that the mummy contained within the case was that of a priest of the temple I have mentioned, but that he was of an inferior order of the priesthood (an incense bearer), and that his name was Horseisi, and the son of Naspihiniegori of the same grade and profession; and, having ascertained this, I was desirous not only on account of my own reputation, but for the verification of hieroglyphical literature, to have the case opened and the matter determined. The council of the College most liberally assented to my request,* and honoured me by their invitation to perform this in the theatre of the College in the presence of the members and a large assemblage of distinguished literary and scientific characters, who did me the honour to attend upon the occasion. One circumstance only dwelt upon my mind as likely to cause a possible disappointment—the occurrence of, by any accident, a body having been substituted for the one originally intended. Upon opening the case, however, the first thing that presented itself was a singular identification of the individual, by having a fillet of linen loosely folded round the legs, on which were inscribed the hieroglyphical characters denoting the name and profession of the deceased. In the course of the unrolling of the mummy I found this inscription repeated, with slight variations, no less than four times; and it is worthy of remark, as showing the hieroglyphics to have been used with great freedom and as a kind of tachygraphy, that in one instance the hieroglyphics denoting some of the letters were left out, thus abridging the name, as would be likely to occur in any rapid writing of the present day. It is sufficient to observe that the result of the examination justified the prediction I had given—the particulars of the investigation will be found in their proper places in this work. †

Although I believe I have acknowledged the obligations I owe to many friends in the different parts of this work for various information they have been so kind as to favour me with, I cannot omit here to express my most sincere thanks in an especial manner to J. G. Wilkinson, Esq., whose knowledge of Egyptian antiquities and hieroglyphical literature exceeds, I believe, that of any other individual of the present day, for many valuable observations and suggestions he has favoured me with. Nor am I less indebted to Dr. Richardson, Mr. Davidson, Dr. Lee, Captain Mangles, Captain

* I regret to have here to state conduct of an opposite nature on the part of the Trustees of the British Museum, to whom I made application to be permitted to examine one or two of the specimens contained in that *national* establishment. The Trustees were of opinion that it would destroy the *integrity* of the collection!

† I wish here to correct one point mentioned in the Postscript to Chapter V., in which it is stated that the viscera were found wrapped up in three portions in the cavity of the belly. After I had drawn up the account, a fourth portion was found imbedded in some of the earthy matter with which the body was filled. These are all preserved in the Museum of the College.

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Henvey, and others who have travelled in Egypt; to Dr. Ure for the communication respecting the textile fibre of the bandages; to the Rev. W. F. Hope for his illustrations of the new species of insects I found in the head of a mummy; to Captain Coke for the (I believe hitherto undescribed) account of the embalming of the Burman priests; and to Mr. Kirkmann and Mr. Burgon for information relative to the medals found in and upon Egyptian and Græco-Egyptian mummies. I am also indebted to the curators of the Royal College of Surgeons for their permission to figure the Peruvian mummy contained in the College Museum, and to the Trustees of the British Museum for the copy of the Portrait in Plate VII. To Samuel Rogers, Esq., my best thanks are due for permitting me to represent the Funereal Tablets and the interesting figures of Isis and the infant Horus in Plate VIII. To Dr. Lee I am indebted for Plates IX. and X. representing the inner and outer cases of his mummy, and to Mons. Passalacqua for the drawings of the Sacred Barge in Plate III., various embalmed animals in Plates XII. and XIII., all taken from the Collection at Berlin; and I must here also acknowledge my obligations to my friend Dr. Alexander Henderson for his kind superintendence of this matter. I am also glad to have an opportunity of expressing my satisfaction at the fidelity with which my very ingenious and talented artist Mr. George Cruikshank has executed the various drawings for the work, and the great spirit with which he has etched them.

After the preceding pages of this introduction had been committed to the press, I received an obliging invitation to attend the unrolling of a male Egyptian mummy in the Museum of the London University, to which collection it was presented by James Morrison, Esq., M. P. The body had not been embalmed in the best manner, but sufficient attention had been paid to its preservation to display the form and features of the individual. According to the hieroglyphics on and within the case in which it was contained, it appears to have been the mummy of KANNOPOS or CANNOPUS, the son of Osiri-Pasht, and Tatiosiri or Tattiosiri or Tattosiri. The name Cannopus has no relation to the word NOUB (gold), but is taken from the word CANOP, which appears to signify *strength* or *power*, *victory*, or something of similar import, being among the beneficent gifts of the gods to the kings mentioned in the hieroglyphics: nor is this name Cannopus related to the city of that name in the Delta. The bandages of the mummy were in good preservation; but presented nothing remarkable, with the exception of the name of the individual, which was repeated in five or six places in various ways, and giving a date of the seventeenth year; but the application of this, either to the age of the individual embalmed, or to the sovereign during whose reign he lived, is uncertain; the latter conjecture I believe to be the most probable. No cartouche to show under what dynasty the Egyptian had his existence appears upon the case to guide us in the enquiry. One of the names on the bandages was written KANNOP, on another

KNNP, and on another *Knps* or *Kanopos* (the final *s* is the Greek termination), followed by the figure of a man. This mode of abbreviating the name agrees with that noticed on the bandages of the mummy of Horseisi, and appears to me to prove very satisfactorily the stages of the preparation of the mummy. Different series of rollers were applied at different times; and, to prevent mistakes, at the end (for it is always at the termination of the bandage), the name of the individual is inscribed either at length or curtailed, to denote the individual subject contained.

In this mummy the intestines and other viscera had been removed by the usual incision in the left flank, and portions of the viscera imbedded in some embalming material were found enclosed within the enveloping bandages both upon the legs and thighs. I have never before met with this. In the mummy of Horseisi at the College of Surgeons, and that of Mr. Davidson (now by the kindness of that gentleman deposited in my collection), the viscera had been returned into the cavity of the abdomen in four distinct portions, each separately enveloped in its proper bandages. The inside of the body of Kannopus was filled with the dust of some wood, probably cassia. The brain had not been extracted through the nostrils, but the residue of it was found as a mass lying at the hind part of the skull. The head had been shaved. The cavities of the external ears were filled with portions of linen cloth, by which their shape was well preserved. The orbits were also filled with linen, and in one it was observed that the transparent part of the eye was attempted to be represented. No amulet, necklace, or ornament of any kind was discovered, nor were there any marks by which the character or profession of the deceased could be ascertained. The body measured five feet two inches.