

 **MOMIAS**
DE EGIPTO REDESCUBRIENDO
SEIS VIDAS



CaixaForum Madrid

From 14 July to 26 October 2022

The exhibition explores the lives of six people who lived in ancient Egypt and examine themes, such as beliefs, health and medicine using objects from the British Museum's collection.

CaixaForum Madrid reveals the lives of six Egyptian mummies

- In a new collaboration with the British Museum, the exhibition *Mummies of Egypt: Rediscovering six lives* illustrates the hidden history behind six ancient Egyptian mummies and provides an insight into how people lived and died along the Nile Valley between 800 BC and 100 AD.
- The show explores the identity of these six individuals who lived in ancient Egypt thanks to new discoveries made by state-of-the-art, non-invasive technology, virtually unwrapping their fragile remains.
- Focusing on an official, two priests, a married woman, a young boy and a young Greco-Roman man, the exhibition illustrates the processes of mummification, the ancient Egyptians' view of death, and the concept of afterlife in this ancient civilisation.
- Using computed tomography techniques, researchers have unearthed personal information about each individual, including their age, beliefs, illnesses and diet. The show revolves around these findings, which cast new light on life in ancient Egypt.
- The exhibition, which will be open from 14 July to 26 October 2022, is the seventh collaboration between the British Museum and "la Caixa" Foundation.

Mummies of Egypt: Rediscovering six lives. Dates: from 14 July to 26 October 2022. Organised and produced by: "la Caixa" Foundation, in collaboration with the British Museum. Curated by: Marie Vandenbeusch, Project Curator, Department of Egypt and Sudan, British Museum; and Daniel Antoine, Keeper of the Department of Egypt and Sudan, British Museum. Place: CaixaForum Madrid (Paseo del Prado, 36).

 [@FundlaCaixa](#) [@CaixaForumMAD](#) [#CaixaForumMummies](#)

Madrid, 14 July 2022. At CaixaForum Madrid on Thursday, **Ignasi Miró**, Corporate Director of Culture and Science at "la Caixa" Foundation, **Hartwig Fischer**, Director of British Museum, **Isabel Fuentes**, Director of CaixaForum Madrid, and the curators **Marie Vandenberg** and **Daniel Antoine**, presented the exhibition ***Mummies of Egypt: Rediscovering six lives***. The fruit of a new collaboration between "la Caixa" Foundation and the British Museum of London, the show investigates the idea of mummification and the concept of death and the afterlife in ancient Egypt. Six mummies are at the heart of this exhibition and are displayed with some of their coffins and more than 260 objects found in tombs and archaeological sites, all from the London museum's collections.

The exhibition focuses on these six people who were mummified, recreating their lives based on research carried out at the British Museum on their mummified remains and funerary assemblages using state-of-the-art scientific methods. Each mummy has a story to tell. The six individuals who feature in the show are an official in charge of an estate, two priests, a married woman, a young boy and a young Greco-Roman man, all of whom lived in ancient Egypt at different times between 800 BC and 100 AD. Each is the protagonist of a particular section in the show in which, apart from the great themes of death and the afterlife, consideration is also given to questions such as healing practices, cultural exchanges, religion, family, music, cosmetics, hairdressing and body adornment, as well as the role of women and children in that rich civilisation which flourished along the Nile Valley. Along with the mummies, objects on display include masks, coffins, vases, sculptures, jewellery and cosmetic tools, all helping us to better understand daily life and beliefs among the ancient Egyptians.

The latest advances in computed tomography and three-dimensional imaging have made it possible to virtually unwrap mummified remains without damaging the mummy. As a result, previously unknown details about the lives of these people have been revealed. This recent research enables us to give a better account of the beliefs, illnesses, body care and diet of individuals whose bodies were mummified and to gain unique insights into life and death in one of the most fascinating civilisations of Antiquity. The show also features 3D and digital images of the layers hidden under the wrappings.

The exhibition is formed of eight sections: an introduction, a conclusion and, between them, six central spaces, each corresponding to one of the mummies. These spaces also feature thematic content illustrating life and death in ancient Egypt. The mummies are presented along with a digital interpretation and objects that reveal new information on the theme of each different section.

The ancient Egyptians believed that the presentation of the body was necessary for the deceased to continue to live in the afterlife. Through mummification, each individual would follow the path of Osiris, god of the afterlife, and the first to be mummified. It is believed that the earliest mummies in Egypt were those of people who lived around 4000 BC. Their bodies were buried in the dry hot sand and seem to have dried and mummified naturally. Some Egyptologists think that, during this early period, some of these mummies were unearthed by chance and that the discovery strengthened the Egyptians' conviction of the need to preserve the body after death.

Mummies of Egypt: Rediscovering six lives is the seventh collaboration between "la Caixa" Foundation and the British Museum, brought to fruition thanks to the strategic alliance established between the two institutions.

This partnership has made it possible to present to audiences in our country exhibitions on medieval art and culture, the idea of competition in ancient Greece, the figure of the pharaoh, luxury in Antiquity and the art of engraving in the United States since the 1960s, among other subjects.

After closing in Madrid, the exhibition, which comes to Spain for the first time, will be on tour for a long period, stopping at CaixaForum Barcelona, CaixaForum Sevilla, the new CaixaForum València and CaixaForum Zaragoza.

THE MUMMIES: WHO'S WHO

Ameniryirt, a Theban official

26th Dynasty, c. 600 BC.

Probably Thebes, Egypt

Relatively little is known of Ameniryirt's story before his arrival at the British Museum in 1839. Inscriptions on his three coffins reveal that he was an official working for the estate of the Divine Adoratrice of Amun, Amenirdis. Amenirdis was the daughter of King Kashta (about 760–747 BC), who was originally from Kush (modern Sudan). As the Divine Adoratrice, she was at the head a powerful office intended to secure royal authority in Thebes (modern Luxor), then a major religious centre.

As a 'Servant of the Income', Ameniryirt oversaw this very wealthy estate – more than a century after Amenirdis' death – placing him in a position of power. He certainly belonged to the local elite and his wealth meant he could afford to be mummified. This is confirmed by his carefully preserved body, which is an excellent example of ancient Egyptian mummification.

The mummy is wrapped in linen up to 12 cm thick and his outer shroud was dyed dark pink or red.

Computed tomography has revealed that **Ameniryirt** was around 164 cm in height, and the wear and tear on one of his pelvic joints suggests that he was between 35 and 49 years old when he died. It has also been discovered that **Ameniryirt** suffered from soft-tissue cancer which had spread to his bones. This is a rare archaeological example revealing what an ancient disease cancer really is. The priest also suffered from atherosclerosis. Either illness might have caused his death.

Nesperennub, a priest from Thebes

22nd Dynasty, c. 800 BC.

Probably Thebes, Egypt

Inscriptions on Nesperennub's case identify him as a priest in the temple of Karnak, the most important religious complex in Thebes (modern Luxor). A member of a high-status family, he would have taken part in daily rituals

performed in front of the statue of a god, most likely that of Khonsu. His duties would have included opening the doors of the statue's shrine and pouring libations (liquid offerings).

Nesperennub's mummy illustrates how the preservation of the body was only one element of the ancient Egyptian response to death. The CT scans show that many amulets and other ritual trappings were placed under the wrappings. They were believed to have magical powers that would protect the deceased and help him to gain immortality. The clarity of the scans allows us to identify most of the amulets by their shape. CT data also tells us which materials they were made from.

This section focuses on the importance of amulets and images of gods placed on or inside the body. These were considered magical objects protected their owner and assisted his rebirth.

The ancient Egyptians worshipped thousands of gods, some of them linked to daily life, others to the afterlife. The most important funerary god was Osiris who, after his own death and rebirth, was made lord of the underworld. As the first mummy, Osiris was a model to imitate as the deceased aspired to be reborn like him. The gods Osiris, Isis and their son Horus frequently appear on funerary objects and grave goods. Nesperennub's cartonnage case is decorated with several representations of these gods.

Penamunnebnestawwy, a priest from the north

25th Dynasty, c. 700 BC.

Probably Thebes, Egypt

The inscriptions on Penamunnebnestawwy's coffins identify him as a priest. His titles reveal that he probably came from the Nile Delta. Like his father, he served several gods, dividing his time between different temples. These might have included a temple dedicated to the lion gods Bastet and Mahes in the ancient town of Taremu, in the Eastern Delta. Although he probably lived in Northern Egypt, Penamunnebnestawwy seems to have died further south as his coffins and mummification suggest that he was embalmed in Thebes.

CT scans reveal that Penamunnebnestawwy's body was carefully mummified. Unlike the previous two mummies, the embalmer did not remove his brain. Although this organ was frequently taken out, these different approaches suggest

some flexibility in the treatment of the body. The techniques could vary over time and by region, with embalmers developing their own methods.

This section explores some of the diseases that people suffered from in ancient Egypt. Most are often difficult to detect using CT scans. On the other hand, very poor dental health has been identified in mummies, as in the case of **Nesperennub**. Atherosclerosis has been found in the arteries of all four adult mummies, including that of **Penamunnebnestawwy**. The fact that this disease is found in so many mummified individuals may be because members of the elite – the only ones who could afford to be mummified – had a diet rich in animal fats, although it could also be caused by genetic factors.

Food remains found at archaeological sites and depictions in tombs and temples tell us what the ancient Egyptians ate. They suggest a rich and varied diet, at least for the upper classes. Bread and a thick, nutritious barley beer were staples. Wealthy people also drank wine. Meals included beans, fish, fowl and a wide range of fruit and vegetables, such as dates, figs, date palm nuts, pomegranates, cucumbers, garlic and spring onions. Meat was a luxury that most people probably enjoyed only on special occasions.

Takhenemet, a married woman from Thebes

25th Dynasty, c. 700 BC.

Thebes, Egypt

Takhenemet lived around 700 BC and was a 'Lady of the House', identifying her as a married woman. She was buried in three coffins nested into each other, the style and quality of which suggest they were made in Thebes (modern Luxor) where Takhenemet probably lived. At the time, Thebes was a major religious centre in ancient Egypt but we do not know whether she took part in local religious life. Her father, Padikhonsu, officiated as a doorkeeper for a temple dedicated to Amun, most probably the temple of Karnak.

Although she was 35-49 years old when she died, Takhenemet is portrayed on her inner coffin as a young woman. Wearing a semi-translucent dress, she is holding a musical instrument known as a sistrum. The CT scan reveals that her body was carefully mummified, and her hair was gathered into a bun on top of her head.

The fact that Takhenemet was buried with a sistrum – a musical instrument like a rattle – indicates the importance of music in ancient Egypt. Although we do not

know exactly what ancient Egyptian music sounded like, many percussion, wind and stringed musical instruments from the period are conserved.

Both ancient Egyptian men and women were greatly concerned with their personal appearance of. For this reason it was common for cosmetics, oils and perfumes to be buried with mummies. Men and women would also wear all kinds of jewellery and beads, such as necklaces, bracelets and rings. The hair was a highly symbolic element, and both men and women of high rank wore wigs made from human hair as a symbol of their status.

A young boy from Hawara

Roman period, c. 40-55 AD

Hawara, Egypt

Few children appear to have been mummified in ancient Egypt but the practice seems to have increased during the Roman period. Many examples have been uncovered at the cemetery at Hawara. Located at the entrance to the Fayum oasis, Hawara was used intensively during the periods of Greek and Roman rule as a cemetery for the nearby city of Arsinoe. This young boy was discovered with other mummies, including a woman and two children.

The boy was around four years old when he died. His spine and ribs were displaced, probably during mummification, but his small body was wrapped with great care in many layers of bandages. His delicately painted portrait suggests that he came from an elite family. On the lower part of his body, the shroud depicts traditional scenes, such as priests performing rituals and presenting offerings to gods. The child appears on the lower register as a fully gilded figure.

This mummy was discovered at Hawara in 1888 by Flinders Petrie, one of the first archaeologists to study the ancient past using scientific methods. Shortly afterwards, he wrote in his diary that it was "the most interesting of all", because the portrait was painted on textile. He appears to have rated this decorative style more highly than gilded masks. Numerous mummies with portraits painted on linen have been discovered at Hawara. The remains of a woman was found in the same tomb as the young boy, while a girl and a boy were mummified with gilded cartonnage masks.

In ancient Egypt, the family was a fundamental pillar of society, which is why the deceased were often depicted surrounded by members of their family. As infant mortality and that of women in childbirth was very high, a complex system of

magic existed for the protection of women and children. Perhaps because so many children died at a very young age, they were not given particularly sumptuous burials. Toys, such as balls and dolls, very similar to those we know today, have been found in some tombs.

A young man from Greco-Roman Egypt

Late-Ptolemaic or early-Roman period, c. 100 BC - 100 AD

Probably Hawara, Egypt

When Greek and then Roman rulers took over Egypt, mummification continued to be practised but techniques and styles evolved. This young man, whose name is not known, appears to have lived during the end of the Greek (Ptolemaic) or early Roman period. The presence of a cartonnage mask helps narrow down when he lived and where he may have come from. The style of his mask and external wrappings suggest he was buried in the necropolis of Hawara, in the Fayum.

Although he is remarkably preserved, CT scans of the young man's body reveal that the contents of his chest and abdominal cavities are highly disorganised. Unfortunately, his body was accessed after his mummification from the mid-back, perhaps in an attempt to search for valuable amulets. Scans also show that many of his bones were completing their growth and that he was around 17–18 years old when he died.

Unfortunately, the young man's name is not inscribed anywhere visible and his identity remains a mystery.

Greek and later Roman rule brought many changes to Egypt, from the way the country was governed to certain funerary traditions. During the Greco-Roman period, much of Egyptian society continued the ancient custom of embalming and burying the dead, although many newcomers remained faithful to their own beliefs and funerary practices. Mummification itself survived, but often resulted in a fusion of Egyptian, Greek and Roman funerary customs. While embalming methods were largely unchanged under Greek rule, the Roman period saw a greater emphasis on the external appearance of the mummy, and statuettes of gods and papyrus rolls from the Book of the Dead gave way to less traditional, more everyday objects such as jewellery and toys. Despite these changes, funerary practices retained their essential purpose: to help the deceased to be reborn in the afterlife and follow the footsteps of Osiris.

During this period, mummy portraits were very realistic and provide a very vivid picture of people. Various types of wood were used for the portrait panels. The most common – lime wood – was not indigenous, but came from Europe. Lime wood could be sawn into very thin panels that were delicately curved around the mummy's wrappings. Some pigments may also have been imported from Europe.

MUMMIES OF EGYPT: REDISCOVERING SIX LIVES

From 14 July to 26 October 2022

CaixaForum Madrid

Paseo del Prado, 36
28014 Madrid
Tel. 913 307 300

Times

Monday to Sunday, from 10 am to 8 pm

"la Caixa" Foundation Information Service

Tel. 900 223 040
Monday to Sunday, from 9 am to 8 pm

"la Caixa" Foundation Communication Department

Cristina Font: 608 582 301 / cristina.font@fundaciolacaixa.org

Press Room: <http://prensa.fundacionlacaixa.org/en>

 @ FundlaCaixa @CaixaForum #CaixaForumMummies