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# Study of some types of different Wrapping on Ibis mummy from catacombs of Tuna-el-Gebel, Hermopolis

Ahmed Tarek\*<sup>†1</sup>, Mohamed Abdel-Rahman , Nesma Mohamed , and Ahmed Abedellatif

<sup>1</sup>Grand Egyptian Museum - Conservation Centre (GEM-CC) – Égypte

## Résumé

Three species of ibis were found in ancient Egypt, the white bodied Sacred Ibis, Ibis religiosa (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*), with a black head, neck and black wing feather tips, the Glossy Ibis, Ibis comata (*Plegadis falcinellus*) with dark iridescent plumage and the *Hermit Ibis* seldom depicted in ancient times. The ibis cult was established primarily during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods and was dedicated to the god of wisdom (Thoth). A small number of sacred ibises were chosen as ‘sacred animals’, based on physical markings, and were reared for the temples. However, the majority of the mummified Sacred Ibis were ‘*votive animals*’ that were given as offerings to the deities by pilgrims, and then buried in catacombs associated with the temple. Mummification of the ibis included desiccation and evisceration. Usually, the head and neck of the bird were bent backwards and pressed on the body. The body was then dipped in tar and wrapped tightly with linen; the mummified bodies were placed in ceramic pots, coffins and sarcophagi.

In late period the mummies of sacred ibises were buried in large numbers at the archaeological site at Saqqara, about 1.75 million ibis remains were interred and at Abydos there are thousands more. Another four million were found in the catacombs of Tuna-el-Gebel, Hermopolis. According to an account given in Herodotus’ Histories, Mummification techniques were classified into three types: Perfect method which was the expensive one; the second was inferior to the first; the third was the cheapest of all. Mummification is the process of preserving the body after death by rapidly removing water from the tissues. Animal mummification is thought to have occurred for varying reasons. Sometimes it was because the individuals were ‘beloved pets’, interred with or near their owners. Others, known as food or ‘victual mummies’, were served as funerary food supplied for the deceased in the afterlife, and formed part of the grave goods. Still others were ‘sacred animals’ that represented the presence of gods in the temple.

Animal and birds mummies are a rich and unique source of information for understanding the environmental as well as the religious and cultural history of ancient Egypt. They were often elaborately wrapped in bandages printed with magical spells and carefully painted.

This study is also showing that the ibises were covered in linen decorated with appliquéd images of Thoth, the god whom the ibis represented; some animals have layers of different wrapping in addition to their linen bandaging. There are several instances when the body was first wrapped in a papyrus or reed mat, perhaps to provide extra protection and bulk

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\*Intervenant

<sup>†</sup>Auteur correspondant: a.tarek.a@hotmail.com

to the desiccated creature, and then covered with the conventional linen wrappings.

Finally, this study also show that what were several techniques used to wrapping ibises, why were applied these techniques. This study is the first step of a big project to make an Archeometric and conservation study for animals' mummy in - Grand Egyptian Museum - Conservation Centre (GEM-CC).

**Keywords:** Wrapping – Ibis – Mummification - Sacred animals - Votive animals – bandages.