

Conservation and Rewrapping of Ibis Mummy in the Late Period

Ahmed Mohamed Abedellatif and Ahmed Tarek Abdelaziz and Horya Mohamed

ahmed.

*Conservators at Grand Egyptian Museum – Conservation Center (GEM-CC)
Curator at ministry of antiquities.*

Abstract

The ancient Egyptians believed that new life will be waiting after death by mummification and their mummified bodies could be preserved for eternity. They mummified not only human bodies, but also great variety of animals. The ancient Egyptians mummified more animals than humans. The study of ancient Egyptian animal mummies is varied and extensive. The study informs us on: the animal world of the ancient Egyptians, the relationship between the ancient Egyptians and their animals, and role of animals in ancient Egyptian cult and religion. Animal mummies basically fell into four categories: ١) to allow beloved pets to go on to the afterlife; ٢) to provide food in the afterlife; ٣) animals with connections to specific deities such as baboons and ibises and ٤) votive mummies, that served the same purpose of votive candles burned in churches except they lasted much longer.

The sacred bird, ibis (*Threskionis aethiopicus*) once lived in the land of Egypt and is depicted in many ancient Egyptian wall murals and sculptures. The ibis cult was established primarily during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods and was dedicated to the god of wisdom, Thoth. The number of mummified ibises is extraordinary. It is estimated to contain nearly ٥٠٠,٠٠٠ of these mummies and is also thought to have produced ١٠,٠٠٠ mummified offerings per year in the region of Saqqara alone. In addition, approximately four million ibis burials have been uncovered at the catacombs of Tune el-Gebel. 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 mummies showed different of deterioration and degradation caused by many factors such as, excavation environment, bad storage, microorganisms (bacteria, fungi and insects) such as missing parts, gaps, breaks, tears and thermal degradation in the linen wrappings, and accumulated dust.

This study is focused on conservation and rewinding one of ibis mummy of the Human Remains Lab in the Grand Egyptian Museum Conservation Centre (GEM-CC). This ibis mummy was examined by visual assessment and stereo microscope to help us in conservation process.

Keywords: Rewrapping – Ibis Mummy – Deities - votive - Degradation.