

Theban Female

Impact ID: IMP00010

Institution: Redpath Museum

Designation: RM2717

Date of Acquisition: 1859

Contact: Andrew Nelson (anelson@uwo.ca)

Image Modality: CT

KVP: 120

X-Ray Tube Current: 280

Acquisition Date: N/A

Manufacturer: Toshiba

Manufacturer Model Name: Aquilion ONE Country: Egypt

Dig Site: Thebes

Time Period: the Roman period

Sex: Female

Age: 30-50 years

Background:

The Redpath Museum acquired two Theban mummies, one male and one female, from James Ferrier in the mid-nineteenth century from Egypt (Lawson, 2016). The museum also acquired several animal mummies with the Theban mummies. All these mummies came from James Ferrier, the fourth mayor of Montreal (Lawson, 2016; Wade et al., 2011). James Ferrier is believed to have most likely acquired the Theban mummies on February 19, 1859 from Mustapha Agha Ayat, a key person in the illegal antiquities market (Lawson, 2016). In 1858 the Egyptian Antiquities Service was formed in an attempt to halt the antiquities market by always having an inspector on site of excavation and all antiquities being offered to the new Egyptian Museum before the excavator can lay claim (Lawson, 2016). However, traders of illegal

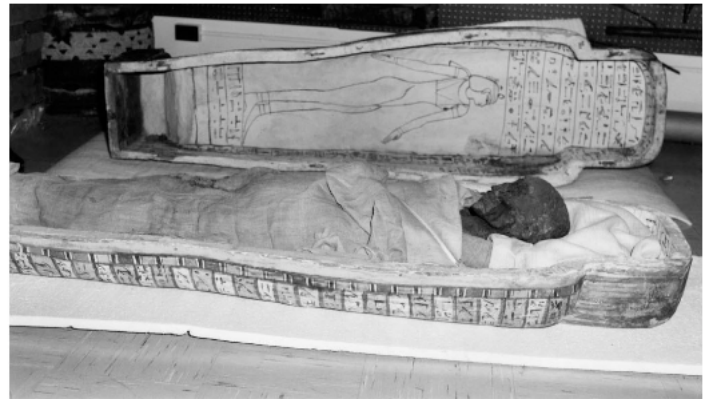


Figure 1. Theban Female displayed at the Canadian Conservation Institute in 1979 (Lawson, 2016)

antiquities usually operated with little trouble throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries due to poor excavation of sites (Lawson, 2016). Ferrier's Theban mummies would have most likely been supplied by a local dealer, and since the trade was illegal and documentation poor, it is impossible to trace exactly (Lawson, 2016). On September 26, 1859, James Ferrier Jr. presented a list of Egyptian artifacts to the Natural History Society of Montreal (NHSM) and the donation was accepted giving James Ferrier Sr. life membership to the society (Lawson, 2016). At an ordinary meeting of NHSM on October 31, 1859, a paper was read called: "Further results of Examination of the Mummies in the Ferrier Collection" (Lawson, 2016). More detail was provided on the female Theban mummy, possibly due to the highly decorated coffin and high status of the individual that is implied as a result (Lawson, 2016).

For the next 65 years there is very little documentation, but there are some surviving exhibit texts that date to 1896 (Lawson, 2016). In 1987, there is brief mention of the Ferrier collection being on display, but no specific mention of the Theban mummies being on display (Lawson, 2016). A photo labelled "Exhibition Hall, Natural History Society Museum, Montreal, QV, ca. 1900" shows the female Theban mummy on display with the lid of her coffin suspended above her and the canopic jars displayed in the corners of her display case (Lawson, 2016). Due to emphasis and local flora and fauna and the economic slump, the Egyptian collection was getting little attention (Lawson, 2016). In 1906, the Natural History Society's collections were packed up in anticipation of construction of a new facility (Lawson, 1906). However, lack of funds, the outbreak of war, and further debt led to the downfall of the organization and all the collections being transferred to McGill University in 1925 (Lawson, 2016). The transfer and organization of the NHSM collections are unclear, but the mummies were officially on display in the new Ethnological Museum by October 1928 (Lawson, 2016). X-rays were carried out in 1928, and although there are no surviving written reports of the findings, glass lantern slides have been found that visually show the radiographic efforts of this time (Lawson, 2016). Some undated x-ray descriptions also related back to these examinations (Lawson, 2016). The space of the museum was required for physiotherapy during the war years, resulting in the artifacts being placed in semi-storage (Lawson, 2016). The Ethnological Museum open briefly in 1947, but closed permanently in 1949, when it amalgamated with the Ethnology Division of the Redpath Museum, dispersing collections between the Redpath Museum, the McCord Museum, and Divinity Hall (Lawson, 2016).

The Egyptian collection was moved to Divinity Hall for an "Ancient World" exhibition on a long-term loan from the Redpath Museum (Lawson, 2016). This exhibit was designed as a background to biblical history and covered from 12,000 BC cave deposits, through the days of King Tutankhamen, to the first century of the Christian era (Lawson, 2016). Although labelled as a loan, the exhibit continued for two decades at Divinity Hall, with only slight changes for display purposes (Lawson, 2016). A photo of RM2717 on display in Divinity Hall circa 1950 shows her displayed vertically, with the lid of the case beside her so the public can view her unwrapped body with canopic jars resting by her feet (Lawson, 2016). In 1969, all Egyptian artifacts displayed in Divinity Hall were removed from the building for planned renovations, and all the Egyptian artifacts were subsequently moved to the Redpath museum (Lawson, 2016).

In 1970 the University recommended the closure of the museum due to financial problems, only allowing the University community and other researchers in by appointment until

1987 (Lawson, 2016). Since it was designed for educational purposes only the exhibits accompanied by long texts, likely bilingual. The Theban female mummy was kept on the ground floor with other cultural objects and was accompanied by her recent x-rays and her description from the Divinity Hall exhibit (Lawson, 2016). During this time, one or two of the Egyptian mummies stored at Redpath were loaned to *Man and His World* between June to September through 1976 to 1981 when it closed (Lawson, 2016). Museum staff had concern for the overall condition and preservation of the mummies, leading to the examination of the Theban female and her coffin by the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa, but they only treated the coffin (Lawson, 2016). December 14, 1979, the female Theban mummy was brought to the Royal Victoria Hospital, McGill's teaching hospital, for an x-ray examination from head to toe (Lawson, 2016). In 1996 the Theban female mummy and her x-rays were included in an art installation called *Time Machine* created by two video artists (Lawson, 2016). In 1997, the mummy was moved to the third floor of the museum to be part of a new material culture exhibit area of an Ethnology gallery, this area brought together the three original mummies from the old Ethnological Museum (Lawson, 1999; Lawson, 2016). The mummies were one of the favoured exhibits of the public (Lawson, 2016). In 2005, a M.Sc. student of McGill's School of Computer Science worked with the curator, Barbara Lawson, to create a high-tech interactive display for the exhibit (Lawson, 2016).

In 2008, the Redpath Museum was approached by Dr. Andrew Nelson about adding scans of the three Redpath mummies to his IMPACT database (Lawson, 2016). To have up-to-date scans of the mummies for entry into the database, all three mummies were re-scanned at the Montreal Neurological Institute (MNI) in April 2011 (CTV News Montreal, 2011; Lawson, 2016). This is the first time the female mummy was CT scanned, aiming to determine the method of mummification, the osteobiography, state of preservation, and overall health (Lawson, 2016). Using the CT scan a facial reconstruction was completed in 2013 (Lawson, 2016). Andrew Wade and Andrew Nelson virtually removed all tissue from the skull and recreated a physical copy using a 3D printer so Victoria Lywood, a forensic artist, could complete the facial reconstruction (Lawson, 2016). The reconstruction is not on display in the Redpath's World Cultures gallery (Lawson, 2016).

Pathological Features:

Undated descriptions of the original 1928 examinations describe the Theban female as an old person with no alveolar process demonstrating tooth removal during life (Lawson, 2016; Wade et al., 2011). These descriptions also noted a female pelvis and the postcranial skeleton exhibiting osteitis deformans, rheumatism, and arterial sclerosis (hardening of arteries) (Lawson, 2016).

The 1979 examination was performed by Dr. Simon Braun at the Royal Victoria Hospital (Lawson, 2016). The results showed the mummy was an old female due to the ovoid shape of the pelvis and the triangular calcified cartilage projecting off the anterior end of the ribs (Lawson, 2016). The spine, hips, and knees present damage from degenerative arthritis from old age as

well (Lawson, 2016). A few years after the exam papers were published about the brain being removed from the nasal cavity and the heart being left in the chest cavity (Lawson, 2016). The organs were also noted as being removed and the skin turned a blackened colour due to the use of bitumen (Lawson, 2016).

The first CT scan of this mummy confirmed she was a tall, 160.9 cm, high-status female between 30 and 50 years old (Lawson, 2016; Wade et al., 2011). Their dental health was in very poor condition, with only the left first and second incisors remaining of her maxillary teeth (Wade et al., 2011). The mandible only contains the incisors, canines, and right first premolar (Wade et al., 2011). All empty tooth sockets show resorption from tooth loss during life (Wade et al., 2011). There are also multiple lesions and abscesses located around her tooth sockets (Wade et al., 2011). The brain and eyes were not removed (Lawson, 2016). The brain lacks much of its original shape from life and appears as a low-density mass with little to no sulci left (Wade et al., 2011). The mouth was packed with resin-soaked linen (Wade et al., 2011). She was eviscerated through her perineum, which was closed by a resin-soaked linen plug (Lawson, 2016; Wade et al., 2011). The heart and lungs are missing from the thoracic cavity and the stomach, intestines, liver, and urinary bladder are absent from the abdominal cavity (Lawson, 2016). There is a resin-soaked linen mass on the right side of the abdomen (Wade et al., 2011). Under the wrappings is a rectangular pad over the left abdominal wall, where a transabdominal incision would be found, but there is no incision (Wade et al., 2011). This may represent a symbolic transabdominal evisceration (Wade et al., 2011). The upper part of the right index finger is missing, which occurred before the embalming process (Lawson, 2016). The arms are extended with palms down on the thighs (Lawson, 2016). Neither arms or legs were individually wrapped (Lawson, 2016). Wrappings were removed from the head and the feet in 1859, leaving them exposed (Lawson, 2016). A sample of linen was taken in October 2011 and dates the mummy to the Late Roman Period (230-380 CE) (Lawson, 2016).

References

Lawson, B. 2016. Egyptian Mummies at the Redpath Museum: Unravelling the History of McGill University's Collection. Prepared for the Redpath Museum. Fontanus. 14: 1-37.

Powell, n.d. Partial Translation of the Inscription on the Coffin of That-A-Nefer-Amun. (May 7, 2011) Montreal mummies reveal secrets from the ancient world. CTV News Montreal.
Lawson, B. 1999. Anthropology at the Redpath Museum (1882-99). Anthropologica. 41: 53-65.

Wade, A., Garvin, G., Williams, L., Nelson, A., & Tampieri, D. Preliminary report on the CT findings of the human and bird mummies from the Redpath Museum. Prepared for the Redpath Museum.