

IMP00075 – Liverpool 20 (Hand)

IMPACT ID: IMP00075

Institution: World Museum Liverpool

Designation: M11438

Date of Acquisition: 1855

Contact: Dr. Ashley Cooke (ashley.cooke@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)

Image Modality: x-ray

Country: Egypt

Site: Thebes

Time Period: Roman

Dynasty: Unknown

Date: 30 BCE – AD 100

Sex: Female

Age: Young adult



Figure 1. The mummified hand of Liverpool 20 at the Liverpool World Museum (World Museum, n.d.).

Note: See below for the x-ray taken of Liverpool 20's hand.

Background:

The hand comes from the site of Thebes and was collected by Reverend Henry Stobart. He obtained the hand during a trip to Egypt from 1854 to 1855 and sold it along with the rest of his collection to James Mayer in 1857 (World Museum, n.d.). It was later gifted to the Liverpool World Museum by Mayer (World Museum, n.d.). The hand is dated to the Roman period based on the rings which it wears (World Museum, n.d.).

Confusions of Provenance:

While the hand comes from Thebes, it has been erroneously reported by multiple sources that it is from the site of Saqqara at Memphis (World Museum). After James Mayer took possession of the hand from its original collector, Reverend Henry Stobart, Mayer's curator created a label for the hand's exhibition which listed it as "The hand of a Royal Priestess of Temple at On. Found at Thebes" (World Museum, n.d.). Despite this label, the hand is recorded as coming from Saqqara or Memphis in later sources for more than a century (World Museum, n.d.). Sources that have recorded the provenance as Saqqara or Memphis are 'Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire', Gray & Slow (1968), and Charles Gatty's catalogue entry while he was the Liverpool Free Public Museum's curator for the Joseph Mayer

collection (World Museum, n.d.). Gatty even acknowledged the original label recorded by Mayer's curator but disregarded it, as he believed it must be erroneous due to the other reports of the hand coming from Memphis (World Museum, n.d.). In 1933, T. Eric Peet wrote an article for *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, in which he discusses the provenance of the Ramesses Girdle, also held at the Liverpool Museum, which was thought to have been associated with the hand. He provides evidence that both these items should be considered to have at least been acquired by Stobart in Thebes, if not originating from there (Peet, 1933). Unfortunately, even with this paper, curators and other sources continued to publish that the hand comes from Saqqara (World Museum, n.d.).

#### Pathological Features:

X-rays of the hand were taken by PHK Gray in 1966 (World Museum, n.d.). These x-rays revealed that the hand had been separated where it left the carpal bones intact and retained a small portion of the distal ends of the arm bones (Gray & Slow, 1968). Gray & Slow (1968) originally described the hand as belonging to a "young adult, almost certainly female" (p. 66), though they give no reasoning behind this estimation. Peet (1933) expresses doubt over this estimation, stating that sex estimation of female came from the fact that the hand wore rings and that there was likely no available evidence about the individual to which the hand belonged after it was separated from the rest of the body and sold as just a hand.

In terms of mummification techniques, fine linen wraps the hand, which was then coated with a thick layer of resin (Gray & Slow, 1968). There is evidence that the wrappings were guilded in the past based on the traces which are present today (World Museum, n.d.). The wrappings leave the fingers exposed (Gray & Slow, 1968), and the hand wears four rings – on the pointer, middle, ring, and little fingers – which are made of gold and lapis lazuli, and the obelisk rings are deemed to be rather unusual (World Museum, n.d.). More details about the construction and material used for the rings can be found on the Liverpool World Museum website (World Museum, n.d.).

Figure 2. Anteroposterior x-ray of the Liverpool 20 hand (World Museum, n.d.).



### Resources

Gray, P. H. K., Slow, D. 1968. Egyptian Mummies in the City of Liverpool Museums. Liverpool Bulletin. 15: 1-74.

Human Remains; Mummified Hands with Four Rings. World Museum [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/artifact/human-remains-mummified-hand-four-rings>

Peet, T. E. 1933. The So-Called Ramesses Girdle. The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology 19(3/4): 143-149.