

# Penu

IMPACT ID: IMP00086

Institution: Boston Museum of Fine Arts

Designation: 72.4839c

Date of Acquisition: Unknown

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Image Modality:

Country: Egypt

Site: Thebes

Time Period: Third Intermediate Period

Dynasty: Dynasty 22, reign of Sheshonq III

Date: 825 BCE – 712 BCE

Sex: Unknown

Age: Unknown

Background:

The mummy is that of Penu, a temple doorman (Arnold, 1988) who worked at the temple complex of Karnak (Marx & D'Auria, 1986). The individual rests within a painted cartonnage and is thought to likely have come from Thebes (Museum of Fine Arts, n.d.). Robert Hay purchased the mummy for his collection in Scotland in 1836 before passing possession on to his son, Robert James Alexander Hay, in 1863. In 1868, Samuel A. Way purchased Penu's mummy in London through some dealers, and the mummy remained within his collection until 1872. In 1872, the mummy of Penu was donated to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts by Way's son, C. Granville Way (Museum of Fine Arts, n.d.). Penu's mummy and cartonnage were accessioned into the museum's catalogue on June 28, 1872 (Museum of Fine Arts, n.d.).

Pathological Features:

The preservation of Penu's mummy is poor, showing a significant amount of decomposition and disarticulation (Marx & D'Auria, 1986). However, the mummy's wrappings and cartonnage remain intact, and protection amulets continue to rest on the body (Marx &



Figure 1. Penu's mummy inside their cartonnage at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Museum of Fine Arts, n.d.).

D'Auria, 1986). This intactness of the wrappings and cartonnage suggested to Marx & D'Auria (1986) that the damage to the individual occurred before they arrived at the necropolis to be mummified. This would not have been an uncommon occurrence during this time, as death could take place long distances from where mummification was performed (Marx & D'Auria, 1986). Marx & D'Auria (1986) also report the retention of the rectus muscles and sclera outlines of the eyes, with resin having been introduced into the eye orbits to preserve them. However, Buckley (2001) reports the placement of artificial eyes, potentially made from wax, within the sockets. Penu's mummy also displays metal lips. Though not a common feature, it is thought to have served a similar purpose to the metal tongues present in a number of ancient Egyptian mummies – an aid for speaking in the afterlife (Marx & D'Auria, 1986).

### Resources

Arnold, D. 1988. Egyptology; Here's the inside story on mummies CT scans of Boston museum's Egyptian collection uncover some grisly and fascinating tidbits. The Boston Globe.

Buckley, S. A. 2001. Chemical Investigations of the Organic Embalming Agents Employed in Ancient Egyptian Mummification. Thesis. University of Bristol. Available from: <https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/files/34498395/396674.pdf>

Marx, M., D'Auria, S. H. 1986. CT Examination of Eleven Egyptian Mummies. RadioGraphics. 6(2): 321-330.

Museum of Fine Arts. n.d. Mummy case and mummy of Penu. Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Available from: <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/32/mummy-case-and-mummy-of-penu?ctx=ed35aa8b-d026-4560-b8d5-2871f54c9e86&idx=0>