

# Mehit-em-Wesekht

IMPACT ID: IMP00090

Institution: Te Papa Museum

Designation: FE003200

Date of Acquisition: 1885

Contact:

Image Modality: Video

Country: Egypt

Site: Unknown

Time Period: Unknown

Dynasty: Unknown

Date: ca. 300 BCE

Sex: Female

Age: approximately 18 years

Background:

The mummy is that of an approximately 18 year-old female who lived in Middle Egypt circa 300 BCE (Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (a), n.d.). Her family was associated with the Temple of Min at Akhmim, and her mother was a musician priestess, a position which Mehit-em-Wesekht would have been raised to fill (Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (a), n.d.). In 1885, she was gifted to the Te Papa Museum, then still referred to as the Colonial Museum, by a collector named Charles Rooking Carter (Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (a), n.d.). Carter recorded the mummy's provenance as Akhmin, or Panopolis in the Ancient world, and stated that she belonged to the Ptolemaic Period of Egyptian history (Evening Post, 1885). The mummy was permanently on exhibit at the museum until the 1990s when the mummy required conservation and was removed from display and moved to storage. A hesitance around displaying human remains has kept Mehit-em-Wesekht in temperature regulated storage at the museum since this time (Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (a), n.d.).

When Mehit-em-Wesekht first arrived at the museum, there was some confusion about her identity. Information about the mummy given by Carter had led the museum to believe that she was a man named Petisiris, a priest of the god Khem (Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (b), n.d.). Then in 1933, R. A. Hollands, an amateur Egyptologist, examined the



Figure 1. Mummy of Mehit-em-Wesekht within her cartonnage at the Te Papa Museum (Te Papa Museum, n.d.).

hieroglyphs on Mehit-em-Wesekh's coffin and came to the conclusion that she was actually a priestess named Neith (Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (b), n.d.). However, this conclusion about Mehit-em-Wesekh's identity was also overturned. This time by Dr. Mary S. Palmer in 1957. Dr. Palmer re-examined the hieroglyphs on the Mehit-em-Wesekh's cartonnage and gave us some of the information that we know about her today. This includes her name, her mother's name and occupation (Nefer-ii, musician priestess of the god Min), her husband's name (Nes-Min), and her father's position as a priest of the Temple of Min (Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (b), n.d.).

#### Pathological Features:

X-rays of Mehit-em-Wesekh were taken in 1961. These x-rays revealed unerupted wisdom teeth, which suggest an adolescent age estimate for the mummy (Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (b), n.d.). Images of Mehit-em-Wesekh also showed the presence of resin at the back of her skull and that her arms lie crossed over her chest (Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (b), n.d.). Somewhat unusual is that no amulets are shown on Mehit-em-Wesekh's x-rays (Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (b), n.d.). Additionally, there is no indications of her cause of death on these x-rays (Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (b), n.d.).

### Resources

Evening Post. 1885. The Government Printing. Papers Past [Internet]. Available from: <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/EP18850827.2.12>

Mummy and Sarcophagus. Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (a) [Internet]. Available from: <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/149587>

Identifying Mehit. Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa (b) [Internet].