



Egyptian Mummies

John H. Taylor

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Since antiquity, mummies have inspired awe and endless fascination. Part of their enduring appeal lies in their capacity to let us confront people from the distant past as recognizable individuals, and even to look into the faces of some of the great rulers who shaped history 3,000 years ago. Mummies also have much to tell us about aspects of the lives of ancient Egyptians that are not recorded in writing: their appearance, their life expectancy, the diseases they suffered from, and how they died. As survivors from one of the world's most splendid civilizations, they bring us tantalizingly close to a long-lost culture.

In their own times, mummies were treated as objects of reverence, attracting teams of skilled embalmers and priests. But why exactly were mummies created? What did the Egyptians hope to achieve? What did they fear? These and other intriguing questions are answered in this absorbing history.

The story opens with the religious beliefs that lay behind mummification. Individual chapters then explore the evolution of preservation; adornment and magical protection; the symbolism of coffins and tombs; the rituals accompanying embalming and burial; and the role of animal mummies in Egyptian religion. In a final thought-provoking review, John H. Taylor traces our changing views on mummies, alongside the valuable role of modern research in expanding our knowledge, not only of ancient Egypt, but also of human culture as a whole.

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