

Ancient Egyptian funerary practices from the first millennium BC to the Arab conquest of Egypt (c. 1069 BC-642 AD)

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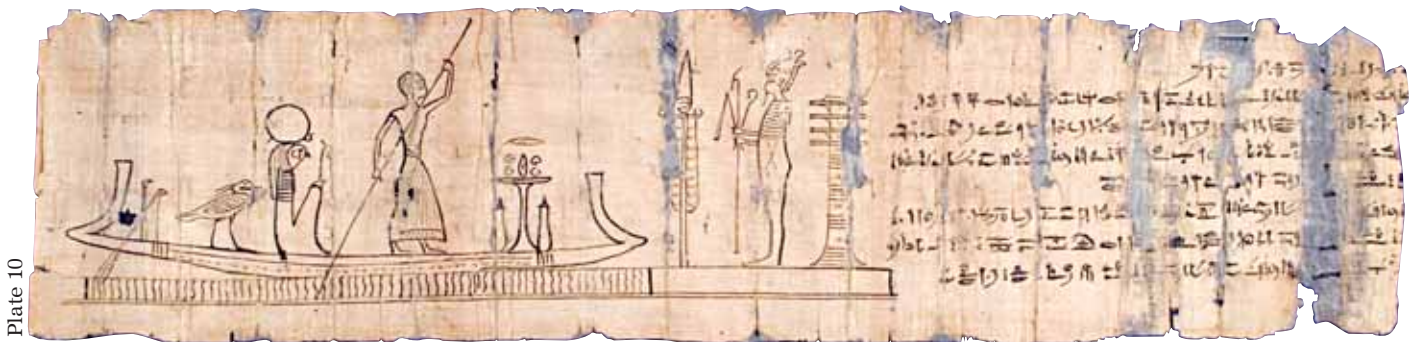


Plate 10

1. Introduction

The Ancient Egyptians changed their burial practices during history mostly as result of changes in religious beliefs and these changes are visible in every period of their long history. The major development of Egyptian burial rites was visible until the Third Intermediate Period when mummification techniques started to be simpler, and funerary practices started to decline. Bigger changes happened during Hellenistic and Roman times when the new elements of funerary practices were added. In the same period the typical Egyptian rites were also adopted by foreigners and new rulers of Egypt (Macedonians, Greeks and Romans).

There are not many literary sources which can give us detailed descriptions about Egyptian funerary customs and burial practices. Most of the details were described by Greek historians, Herodotus¹ (5th century BC) and Diodorus Siculus² (1st century BC). Mostly all other sources came from archaeological excavations of elite and middle class burial tombs. Lower class burials rarely contain more than few objects (usually scarabs, shabtis and amulets).

The archaeological museums in Croatia hold various types of typical funerary equipment which were commonly placed in tombs. I will try to document my work with

such objects mostly because they are not so well known in the world of Egyptology.

2. Death and rituals before the embalming

Today the best preserved descriptions about ancient Egyptian funeral customs came from Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus. Their words well describe how Egyptians treated deceased after his/her death and how their associated rituals looked like for thousands of years.

“As regarding mourning and funerals, when a distinguished man dies all the women of the household plaster their heads and faces with mud, then, leaving the body indoors, perambulate the town with the dead man’s female relatives, their dresses fastend with a girdle, and beat their bared breasts. The men too, for their part, follow the same procedure, wearing a girdle and beating themselves like the women. The ceremony over, they take the body to be mummified.”³.

“When the wife of a distinguished man dies, or any woman who happens to be beautiful or well known, her body is not given to the embalmers



Plate 4a

1- Herodotus, The Histories, II, 85-90.

2- Diodorus Siculus, Library of History, I, 91-92.

3- Herodotus, The Histories, II, 85. Similar description by: Diodorus Siculus, Library of History, I, 91



immediately, but only after the lapse of three or four days. The is a precautionary measure to prevent the embalmers from violating the corpse, a thing which is said actually to happened in the case of a woman who had just died.⁴

“If anyone, either an Egyptian of a foreigner, is found drowned in the river or killed by a

crocodile, there is the strongest obligation upon the people of the nearest town to have the body embalmed in the most elaborate manner and buried in a consecrated burial-place; no one is allowed to touch it except the priest of the Nile – not even relatives or friends; the priests alone prepare it for burial with their own hands and place it in the tomb, as if were something more sacred than the body of a man.”⁵

3. Mummification

3.1 Embalmers



Plate 15 a

From the earliest times preservation of deceased body was the key element for reaching eternal life and the essential part of burial practice in ancient Egypt. In Egyptian religion ka could return to the deceased body only if it would be well preserved from decay. In cases when it was in bad shape and unrecognizable because of the decay afterlife of the deceased will be most likely impossible to reach.

The artificial process of preservation of the deceased body usually is called mummification and it was very well described by Herodotus⁶ and Diodorus Siculus⁷. In

second part of the first millennium when those ancient writers wrote their works mummification techniques already well declined, and embalming was also more widespread and used for burial of all classes if we compare it with previous times. Similarity of both descriptions is also good evidence that whole embalming process didn't change that much during Late and Ptolemaic periods.

Embalmer's profession was very well organized in ancient Egypt. After the death body of deceased was brought to the embalmers. “The embalmers, when a body is brought to them, produce specimen models in wood, painted to resemble nature, and graded in quality; the best and most expensive kind is said to represent a being whose name I shrink from mentioning in this connexion

Plate 20



4- Herodotus, The Histories, II, 89.

5- Herodotus, The Histories, II, 90.

6- Herodotus, The Histories, II, 86-88.

7- Diodorus Siculus, Library of History, I, 91²



Plate 36

(e.g. Osiris); the next best is somewhat inferior and cheaper, while the third sort is the cheapest of all. After pointing out these differences in quality, they ask which of the three is required, and the kinsmen of the dead man, having agreed upon a price, go away and leave the embalmers to their work⁸. Body was then firstly taken to the “Place of purification” (*ibw*). In that structure it was firstly washed with natron and after that was brought to the “House of beauty” (*per nefer*) where body was actually mummified⁹. “Overseer of the mysteries” (*hery seshta*), who took mythological part of Anubis, was in charge of mummification. He was helped by “Seal-bearer of the god” (*hetemw netjer*), who was usually priest of Osiris¹⁰.



Plate 6

3.2 Embalming: types, magic rituals and development of techniques

Egyptians used “three classes of burial, the most expensive, the medium, and the most humble¹¹”. This is how Herodotus described these methods. “The most perfect process ...: as much as possible of the brain is extracted through the nostrils with an iron hook, and what the hook cannot reach is rinsed out with drugs; next the flank is laid open with a flint knife and the whole contents of the abdomen removed; the cavity is then thoroughly cleansed and washed out, first with palm wine and again with an infusion of pounded spices. After that is filled with pure bruised myrrh, cassia, and every other aromatic substance with the exception of frankincense, and sewn up again, after which the body is placed in natrum, covered entirely over, for seventy days – never longer. When this period, which must not be exceeded, is over the body is washed and then wrapped from head to foot in linen cut into strips and smeared on the under side with gum, which is commonly used by the Egyptians instead of glue. In this condition the body is given back to the family, who have a wooden case made, shaped like the human figure, into which it is put. The case is then sealed up and stored in a sepulchral chamber, upright against the wall.



Plate 34



Plate 15 b

When, for reasons of expense, the second quality is called for, the treatment is different:

8- Herodotus, The Histories, II, 86.

9- Shaw & Nicholson 1995, p. 191.

10- Shaw & Nicholson 1995, p. 190.

11 Diodorus Siculus, Library of History, I, 91²



no incision is made and the intestines are not removed, but oil of cedar is injected with a syringe into the body through the anus which is afterwards stopped up to prevent the liquid from escaping. The body is then pickled in natrum for the prescribed number of days, on the last of which the oil is drained off. The effect of it is so powerful that as it leaves the body it brings with it the stomach and intestines

in a liquid state, and as the flesh, too, is dissolved by the natrum, nothing of the body is left but the bones and skin. After this treatment it is returned to the family without further fuss.

The third method, used for embalming the bodies of the poor, is simply to clear out the intestines with a purge and keep the body seventy days in natrum. It is then given back to the family to be taken away.”¹²

Diodorus Siculus well described the details how the body of the deceased was treated after it was brought to the embalmers. “When an agreement has been reached on every detail and they have taken the body, they turn it over to men who have been assigned to the service and have become inured to it. The first is the scribe, as he is called, who, when the body has been laid on the ground, circumscribes on the left flank the extent of the incision; then the one called the slitter cuts the flesh, as the law commands, with an Ethiopian stone and at once takes to flight on the run, while those present set out after him, pelting him with stones, heaping curses on him, and trying, as it were, to turn the profanation on his head; for in their eyes everyone is an object of general hatred who applies violence to the body of a man of the same tribe or wounds him or, in general, does him any harm. The men called embalmers, however, are considered worthy of every honour and consideration, associating with the priests and even coming and going in the temples without hindrance, as being undefiled. When they have gathered to treat the body after it has been slit open, one of them thrusts his hand through the opening in the corpse into the trunk and extracts everything but the kidneys and heart,



12- Herodotus, *The Histories*, II, 86-88.



and another one cleanses each of the viscera, washing them in palm wine and spices. And in general, they carefully dress the whole body for over thirty days, first with cedar oil and certain other preparations, and then with myrrh, cinnamon, and such spices as have the faculty not only of preserving it for a long time but also of giving it a fragrant odour.



And after treating the body they returned it to the relatives of the deceased, every member of it having been so preserved intact that even the hair on the eyelids and brows remains, the entire appearance of the body is unchanged, and the cast of its shape is recognizable.”¹³

Mummification process did not only include embalming. According two survived papyri from 2nd century AD¹⁴ which has been copied from the sources from previous times after each stage specific magical rituals has been made. Magical texts were read by the “lector priest” (*hery heb*), and evisceration and bandaging has been done by the “bandagers” (*wetyw*)¹⁵ as it was described by ancient writers. After the whole process was completed body was returned to the family.

In their works Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus did not state what happened with viscera but archaeological evidences gave us

the answer to that question. During the Late period the whole viscera were placed in four anthropomorphic canopic jars known as Sons of Horus. The liver was protected by human-headed Imsety, the lungs by ape-headed Hapy, the stomach by the jackal-headed Duamutef

and the intestines by the falcon-headed Qebehseneuf. After the burial these vassals were placed in the tomb along with mummified deceased body.¹⁶ During Hellenistic period internal organs were stored in tall wooden canopic chests or placed between deceased legs during the bandaging. During some embalming procedures organs were removed, treated and then returned inside mummy. Also in some cases mummies were stuffed with balls of resin soaked linen, broken pottery or mud, molten resin or bitumen.¹⁷



During the Ptolemaic period mummification was adopted by Greeks as a traditional aspect of Egyptian religion. After 30 BC when Egypt became part of the Roman Empire it was also adopted by Romans.

During the Hellenistic and Roman periods the actual burial was no longer



13- Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, I, 91⁴⁻⁷.

14- Shaw & Nicholson 1995, p. 191.

15- Shaw & Nicholson 1995, p. 191.

16- Tomorad & Urani_ 2006, pp. 93-97.

17- David 2002, p. 336

the most important part of funeral procedure. Older traditions were replaced with more sophisticated appearance of the mummified bodies which were now highly decorated with fancy artistic or rhomboidal patterns on bandages.¹⁸ Ptolemaic mummies of Egyptians were mostly bandaged together with the whole body, but limbs (arms, legs) of Greek mummies were wrapped separately.¹⁹ Head of the mummified body was usually covered with decorated funeral mask made of cartonnage, and body was also wrapped in nicely decorated funeral shroud. The whole body was then put in outer casing made from decorated painted cartonnage, and the body was usually kept in some previously prepared chamber in the house where the body could be seen by living. Such appearances became the most important part of burial practices as it was nicely described by Diodorus Siculus²⁰. Mummies were identified by small wooden label which was usually tied by the neck of deceased. Such labels written in Greek, or bilingual Greek-Demotic usually records the name of the deceased, parents name and age.²¹



Plate 19

Mummification was still in use during the Roman and Byzantine period but the whole process decline even more. During Roman times bodies were mostly covered with thick coating of resinous substance which supposed to prevent decay.²² During Late antiquity bodies were only treated with natron and instead of bandages body was dressed in daily life dress.²³ The Arab conquest of Egypt in 7th century AD also ended common use of mummification in Egypt.

4. Judgement and preparation for the burial

It is well known from the previous times that after the mummification process family of the deceased announces the day of interment to the forty-two judges²⁴ who had to decide if the deceased could be buried or not. Diodorus Siculus described the process of judgement²⁵ during the late Ptolemaic period when the actual judgement of the dead and the final verdict of the gods were mostly based on a virtuous life of the deceased. But still the whole judgement process was still very important and most likely the central element of achieving the afterlife. When the deceased passed his/her judgement relatives and friends “describe this righteousness and justice after he attained to manhood, also his self-control and his other virtues, and call upon the gods of the lower world to receive him

18- Budge 1893. pp. 186-187; Bowman 1986, p. 186.

19- Budge 1893, pp. 181, 186.

20- Diodorus Siculus, *Library of history*, I, 91⁷.

21- Budge 1893, p. 188.

22- David 2002, p. 337.

23- Mummies and Mummification: Late Period, Ptolemaic, Roman and Christian Period at: Digital Egypt for Universities - *A learning and teaching resource for higher education web site* [www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk /mummy /late.html, 13 February 2009].

24- *Book of the Dead*, chap. CXXV.

25- Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, I, 92.



Plate 28

into the company of the righteous; and the multitude shouts its assent and extols the glory of the deceased, as of one who is about to spend eternity in Hades among the righteous.”²⁶

After all these rituals the body was carried to the Nome lake where it was taken to the boat which carried deceased body to the other side to the place where it will be buried.²⁷

5. Burial customs during the Third Intermediate and Late Period

During the Third intermediate Period archaeological evidences starts to document some changes in Egyptian funerary practices which were not typical in previous periods.

Theban officials of 21st dynasty were buried in vast galleries with other Egyptians.²⁸ In northern regions pharaohs, members of royal family and high officials were buried in small tomb chambers mostly built within enclosures of the temples. In elite tombs²⁹ from this period still wide range of grave goods were

found (coffins, shabtis, stelae, funerary papyri, canopic jars, and figures of gods – mostly Osiris). From the 22nd dynasty elite members of Egyptian society were mostly buried in small chambers³⁰ with largely reduced grave goods which only includes coffins, cartonnage, braces and amulets.

Shabtis, funerary papyri and canopic jars are very rarely discovered in tombs from mid-22nd dynasty until the end of period.³¹

In the Late period tombs³² were again equipped with much wider range of grave goods. In some tombs up to for hundred shabtis were found (one for each day and some overseer shabtis). Many figures or statuettes of the gods (e.g. Ptah-Sokar-Osiris; Pl. 2) and goddesses (e.g. Isis, Nephthys) were also placed in tombs. They were made from wood, clay or baked soil.³³

Sometimes bronze votive statuettes of gods and goddesses (e.g. Isis with Horus; Pl. 2) were also discovered in tombs. Scarabs (Pl. 3) and almost all types of amulets (e.g. *ankh*, *djed*-pillar and *udjet*-eye; Pl. 4-5) were wrapped

inside the mummy bandages.

Internal organs were placed in canopic jars (Pl. 7), and the mummified body in coffin or



Plate 31

Plate 23



Plate 7

26- Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, I, 92⁵.

27- Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, I, 92⁵.

28- Dodson & Ikram 2008.

29- Dodson & Ikram 2008.

30- E.g. Tomb of Hereuf – Thebes 192 where the family of Amun priests buried their members. In this tomb sarcophagus with the cartonnage and mummy of Kaipamau was discovered (Pl. 1). Today it is kept in the Egyptian collection of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb. (Pl. 1) Croato-Aegyptica Electronica database (ed. Mladen Tomorad & Igor Uranić) at: www.croato-aegyptica.hr.

31- Burial customs: Third Intermediate Period at: Digital Egypt for Universities - *A learning and teaching resource for higher education web site* [www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/burialcustoms/3inter.html, 13 February 2009].

32- Dodson & Ikram 2008.

33- Burial customs: Late Period at: Digital Egypt for Universities - *A learning and teaching resource for higher education web site* [www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/burialcustoms/lateperiod.html, 13 February 2009].



Plate 32

sarcophagus. Wrapped mummy was very often decorated with an elaborated bead net (Pl. 8). Books of the dead (Pl. 9, Pl. 10) and cartonnage (Pl. 11) were also discovered in some of the elite tombs from this period.

During Third intermediate period and Late period non-elite Egyptian classes were usually buried in oval coffins which were placed in small shaft tombs in non-elites cemeteries. Such tombs were equipped with very few types of grave goods which mostly include few small amulets and scarabs (e.g. Matmar tombs

1223, 1252, 1253, 1270)³⁴

During the 4th century BC there are evidences of further development of burial practices. In tombs and graves much wider range of grave goods were discovered, and sometimes traces of various foreign connections and influences (e.g. Greeks, Etruscans, Jews and other ancient tribes and nations) are also more visible (e.g. the mummy of Nesi-Khonsu and her linen wrappings – *Liber linteus Zagradiensis*, Pl. 11-12).

Very good example for such interconnections is the mummy of Nesi-Khonsu which is today kept in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb (Pl. 12). Her mummy was bought in Cairo in 1847 or 1848 by Mihael pl. Barich. After his death (1859) Barich by his will gifted this mummy with its linen wrappings (*Liber linteus Zagradiensis*, Pl. 13) to Narodni muzej in Zagreb. After long investigations of its wrappings it was discovered that they are written with Etruscan signs and language but why this mummy was wrapped with them is still unknown. Radiocarbon analysis in 1980's dated her death

in the beginning of 4th century BC. During unwrapping of 340 cm long linen wrappings flower wreath, pearls, amulets and head of mummified cat were also discovered. Along with this mummy came the Book of the Dead which belong to the Amun priest Paher-Khonsu and his wife Nesi-Khonsu.³⁵ It is still unsure how this Egyptian woman was connected with Etruscan funeral customs but most likely some Etruscan colonies existed in Egypt during Late period³⁶

6. Burial rites during Hellenistic times

6.1 Type of tombs



Plate 26

During Graeco-Roman periods new elements of funerary rites were added and the typical Egyptian customs were adopted by foreigners. After the Alexander the Great conquest of Egypt in 332 BC Egyptian society were derived in several communities: Ancient Egyptians and foreigners (Macedonians, Greeks and Jews). The types of tomb architecture are mostly connected with each of these communities.

During the Hellenistic period tombs and its arrangements changed and it only kept previous form. The outer chamber with its inscriptions was rarely used and mostly disappeared from tombs along with the old Egyptian religious ideas.

34- Matmar (Al-Matmar) at: Digital Egypt for Universities - A learning and teaching resource for higher education web site [www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/matmar/index.html, 13 February 2009].

35- Tomorad 2003a, pp. 20, 28, 37, 38, 81-89; Tomorad 2003b.

36- Bubenheimer-Erhart 2006.



There are no archaeological evidences about any fusion of architectural styles but some influences are visible in their decorative styles.³⁷ Anyway archaeological evidence proves that tombs with hybrid elements from various communities existed in Hellenistic Egypt³⁸.

In the Macedonian dynasty tomb of priest of Thoth, Petosiris³⁹, discovered in Tuna el-Gebel, painted decorations with mixture of both Egyptian and Greek artistic styles were discovered on the *pronaos* walls. These mixtures of styles can be seen on the painted reliefs with the traditional motifs of harvesting grain (Pl. 13) and other agriculture activities⁴⁰. On these reliefs Petosiris and his family are shown in dresses and appearances with visible Greek influences, in not fully common Egyptian front view but still as profile⁴¹. All these elements documents radical departure from previous iconography characteristic for pharaonic periods.

Diodorus Siculus described burial in tombs during Ptolemaic period. Such burial could be afforded by rich and middle class. "Those who have private sepulchres lay the body in a vault reserved for it, but those who posses none construct a new chamber in their own home, and stand the coffin upright against the firmest wall.⁴²" Rich mummies were mostly laid in stone sarcophagi in nicely decorated tombs. Middle class mummies were

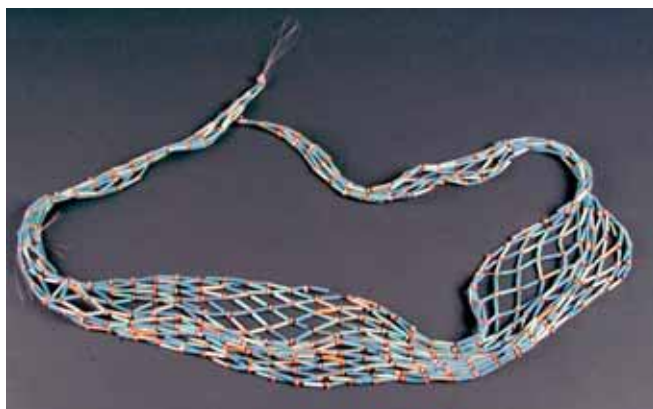
laid in wooden sarcophagi and placed in tombs which were made by more modest and with fewer decorations. The poor were just mummified in most common way and laid in a community graveyard.⁴³

6.1.1 Egyptian types of tombs

Archaeological evidences from Hellenistic period show us that previously plundered and abandoned old New Kingdom tombs at Thebes and Hawara, along with the tombs from Third Intermediate and Late period in other regions, were commonly re-used. The new shaft or chamber tombs were also made.⁴⁴

Most of the discovered Egyptian tombs were made in traditional Egyptian architectural style. Mostly middle or lower Egyptian population without much wealth were buried in them. These tombs were mostly roughly built with the main purpose to accommodate multiple burials for the members of each family. In them decorations like wall paintings and hieroglyphic inscriptions were only made in burial chambers.⁴⁵

The shaft tombs were usually cut in the rock. In some cases tombs were made as shafts open to the sky or in the shafts which descended from the pavement of a chapel. These kinds of tombs were mostly excavated in Gurub, Hawara and the Faiyum region.⁴⁶



37- David 2002, p. 333.

38- Dodson & Ikram 2008.

39- Dodson & Ikram 2008, pp. 293-294.

40- Lloyd 2000, p. 393.

41- David 2002, pp. 335-336.

42- Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, I, 92⁶.

43- Bowman 1986, p. 186.

44- David 2002, p. 334; Dodson & Ikram 2008.

45- David 2002, p. 335; Dodson & Ikram 2008.

46- David 2002, p. 334; Dodson & Ikram 2008.

Chamber tombs were designed like the previous known chamber tombs with the one or two chambers which were cut in the rock. Cut steps usually lead to the vaults. During the Ptolemaic period middle Egyptian classes used these kinds of tombs for the burial of their families. In rare cases the walls of such tombs were decorated with painted inscriptions and funeral scenes.⁴⁷

Not much has been known about the Egyptian tombs in capital city of Alexandria were elite tombs where mostly associated with Greeks or Jews. Most of the burial tombs were destroyed by later building or today has been few meters under the sea. Because of that archaeological excavations did not gave any answer to the question how Egyptian tombs looked like in Alexandria but we can presume that they were built in similar style like in other parts of Egypt.



6.1.2 Greek type of tombs

Greeks who lived in Egypt since the first colonies buried their dead in Greek type of tombs which were discovered mostly in Northern Egypt (Alexandria, Naucratis, Abusir and the Faiyum region)⁴⁸. They were buried in pit or underground tombs.⁴⁹

The pit tombs were dig in the ground and covered with soil and stones or cut in the rock and inside of them various number of burials were found.⁵⁰

Underground tombs

are usually divided in two main groups: kline and *loculus* tombs. Kline tombs were built like the similar tombs discovered in Macedonia, and they were used for the burial of Greek aristocracy. Archaeological evidences indicate that such tombs only existed in Alexandria.⁵¹ Kline tombs were usually divided in an open court, (*prosta* anteroom) with an offering altar and bench for mourning relatives and friends, and the *oikos* – burial room where a sarcophagus of deceased were placed.⁵² In later period they were replaced by *loculus* tombs mostly because of limited burial space in Alexandria.

Loculus tomb, which were discovered in Alexandria and the Faiyum⁵³, most likely had been adopted from Phoenicians and then mixed with Greek and Egyptian influences. They were made for the single and mass burial. Single tombs were cut in the ground with a shallow shaft which leads to the *loculus* room where the actually burial took place. More popular mass tombs had a long narrow corridor with cut rows of *loculi* in which bodies of the deceased were placed.⁵⁴



Both type of tombs were usually decorated with sphinxes, which were placed at the entrance of the tomb, stalae, columns, statues, wall paintings, inscriptions and other carvings on which Egyptian influences can be seen (e.g. decorations of pillars, copies

47- David 2002, p. 334; Dodson & Ikram 2008.

48- Dodson & Ikram 2008.

49- David 2002, pp. 332-333.

50- David 2002, p. 333; Dodson & Ikram 2008.

51- David 2002, p. 333; Dodson & Ikram 2008.

52- David 2002, p. 333; Dodson & Ikram 2008.

53- Dodson & Ikram 2008.

54- David 2002, p. 333.

Plate 12



from temple decorations ...). Some kind of sacrificial animal altars were also discovered in such tombs.⁵⁵

6.2 Grave goods

During the Ptolemaic period most common objects found in elite and middle class Egyptian tombs were: shabtis, wooden statuettes of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, Isis and Nephthys, amulets, scarabs, canopic boxes, stele, painted reliefs,

tombstones, sarcophagus, coffins, cartonnage and the Books of the Dead. Such grave goods were discovered in the burial ensemble of Hornedjtyitef from el-Assasif and ensemble from the Nesmin family tomb in TT32.⁵⁶

Daily life objects were rarely discovered in the tombs during the Late and Ptolemaic period (except in tombs which were related with Greeks), but placing them in tombs will become popular during the Roman period. During the Ptolemaic period daily life pottery and painted vessels were placed in the tombs in some native Egyptian tombs around Thebes (e.g. daily life objects discovered in TT32⁵⁷).

Since the end of 7th century BC Greeks made their colonies in Egypt. With them they also brought their traditional funerary practices and other rites. During the 4th

Plate 13



Plate 1C



century BC and later Hellenistic period Greek population in Egypt became much larger. Archaeological excavations in the Hellenistic capital Alexandria document these burial traditions. There Greek tombs were equipped with urns, Greek style coffins and some objects of daily life.⁵⁸

Shabtis figures which were commonly placed in graves during Late period now became product of the common manual craft without any esthetic or artistic value⁵⁹. In most cases they still hold inscriptions on the back-pillar which still contains complete or only partly formula *shd Wsir hm-ntr*⁶⁰. During the Ptolemaic and Roman period shabtis were involved of diffusion of Egyptian cults all over Europe and Mediterranean (Pl. 15). Usually they were copies of shabtis made in previous times and they were made in workshops in Alexandria or some other place. Sometimes they were buried in Roman graves as symbol of these cults⁶¹. In the end they mostly disappear as religious ideology began to change with various new religious ideas.⁶²

Placing wooden statuettes of the gods and

55- David 2002, p. 333.

56- Strudwick 2006, pp. 294-297; Schreiber 2006, pp. 228-229.

57- Schreiber 2006, p. 229.

58- Burial customs: Ptolemaic Period at: Digital Egypt for Universities - A learning and teaching resource for higher education web site [www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/burialcustoms/ptolemaic.html, 13 February 2009].

59- Tomorad 2004, p. 93.

60- Tomorad 2006, p. 283.

61- Tomorad 2006.

62- Tomorad 2005; Tomorad 2006, pp. 282-285.

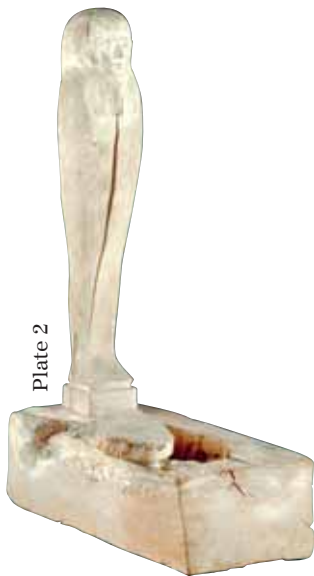


Plate 2



Plate 3

goddesses in tombs was very popular. The most popular was the statuette of Ptah-Soker-Osiris which usually stands on wooden pedestal⁶³. Ichonographically they were made in the shape of mummified figure of the god Osiris. Sometimes it wears typical head horns, the disk and plumes. A figure hand holds the flail and the crook and they were crossed over his breast. Sometimes they are really nicely decorated and well preserved (e.g. statuette from the British museum, inv. no. EA 9736 from the tomb of Hornedjtyitif)⁶⁴ but mostly artistic values of such figures are very poor (Pl. 16). Wooden statuettes of Isis and Nephthys and votive bronze figures (Pl. 17) were also placed in the tombs.

Various types of amulets (*djed*-pillar, *udjet*-eye – Pl. 18, *ankh*, *neha* amulet, papyrus sceptre amulet, etc.), scarabs and heart scarabs were usually placed inside mummy wrappings. They were commonly made from stone, semi-precious stone, coloured faience, baked soil and glass.

Stelae found in tombs from Late and Ptolemaic periods were made in all types of styles. They usually contain hieroglyphic inscriptions with mostly religious formulas (Pl.



Plate 16 b

19-20) or autobiography text about the deceased (e.g. Stele of Taimhotep from the British museum inv. no. EA 147)⁶⁵. Such texts were usually inscribed or cut in wood or stone. In these periods it seems that they were placed in tombs more as matter of form of burial rites than the actual belief. During the Hellenistic period inscriptions on stelae were written in hieroglyphic, demotic and Greek and they were made mostly as the copies of models made in previous pharaonic periods. High relief figures of the gods were also very popular with iconography which contains elements of both Egyptian and Greek

attributes (Pl. 21). During the Ptolemaic times painted reliefs and decorated tombstones were discovered in Greek tombs (Pl. 22) and rare cases in Egyptian tombs (Pl. 23). They were made in Ptolemaic style. Around Alexandria funerary stelae were usually made in Greek style in typical form of a small temple with two pillars and a triangular pediment (e.g. funerary stelae from Egyptian Museum in Cairo)⁶⁶.

Sarcophagi were commonly used during this period. They were made from wood, and consisted two parts: the lower board on which coffin was placed and the rectangular vaulted cover. Both parts were usually colourfully decorated with figures of gods, hieroglyphic inscriptions, sign of the Zodiac, animals, scarabs etc. Greek sarcophagus commonly holds inscription with the name of the deceased and his father.⁶⁷ During Ptolemaic period coffins were rectangular in shape and made from thin pieces of wood. They bare inscriptions but rarely chapters from the Book of the dead. In Lower Egypt stone coffins with

63- e.g. fig 87 in: Nagy 1999, pp. 105-106.

64- Strudwick 2006, pp. 296-297.

65- Strudwick 2006, pp. 302-303.

66- Bongioanni & Sole Croce 2001, pp. 242, 245.)

67- Budge 1893, p. 314.



Plate 30

inscriptions and various figures were also commonly used.⁶⁸

The Egyptian collection of Archaeological Museum of Zagreb (AMZ) has two female sarcophagi with coffins and cartonnage⁶⁹ which nicely documents Egyptian burial rites during Ptolemaic period. Mummified body of Shepenun (AMZ E-667) was placed in beautiful wooden sarcophagus. It is vaulted cover is decorated with several sections inscribed with hieroglyphic inscriptions, images of the gods in-between them (Pl. 24). Bottom board is also nicely decorated with

inscriptions and various images (Pl. 25-27), and inner part is decorated with image of Horus (Pl. 28). Covers of the sarcophagus (Pl. 29) and coffin (Pl. 30) are decorated with various images of the gods and several sections inscribed with hieroglyphs. Bottom side of the coffin board is decorated with middle hieroglyphic pillar with there rows of inscriptions, and various images on both right and left side along with inscriptions (Pl. 31-32). Mummified body of Shepenun was placed inside the coffin (Pl. 33)

During the Late and Ptolemaic periods cartonnage was commonly used as part of mummy decoration. Hypocephalus was placed bellow mummy head to provide rebirth and heat for the deceased (this is usually connected with the 162 chapter of the Book of the Dead)⁷⁰. Mummies were wrapped in nicely decorated funeral shrouds (Pl. 34-35). A bead collars (Pl. 36), mummy trappings⁷¹, decorated masks with idealistic



Plate 5



Plate 16 a

images of the deceased⁷² and a painted foot-piece were also common part of funeral equipment. Mummies were usually covered with the net made from cylindrical blue faience⁷³ which symbolised the sky which the deceased soul supposed to reach after the death.

Shepenun mummy was covered with golden leaf decoration on linen shroud, and wrapped with typical faience cylinder bead net (Pl. 37). Nice golden painted funeral mask was placed above her head (Pl. 38). During the Roman period such masks were replaced

with painted wood panels on which the idealized portrait of the deceased was colourfully painted (e.g. Faiyum portraits, Pl. 39).

It seems that during the Ptolemaic period complete Books of the dead were no longer placed in the tombs. Instead of placing expensive books during the Hellenistic and Roman periods deceased relatives prepared copies of only certain parts of the Book of the dead. Such changes were the result of the new religious beliefs and funerary practices which allow every deceased to achieve eternal life in netherworld. It also seems that such new concepts, which were introduced since the Third intermediate period onwards, "move



Plate 22

68- Budge 1893, p. 310.

69- Shepenun - inv. n. AMZ E-667, Kareset - inv. n. AMZ E-668.

70- Gee 2006, pp. 49-50.

71- E.g. figs. 89-90, Nagy 1999, pp. 108-109.

72- E.g. figs. 69-70, Nagy 1999, pp. 84-85.

73- E.g. fig. 96, Nagy 1999, p. 116.

towards the concept of righteous living as a qualification for the enjoyment of an afterlife”⁷⁴. During the Late and Ptolemaic periods there was the feeling among Egyptians that only the certain chapters of the Book of the dead were really important for the resurrection of the deceased body, and for the actual salvation of its soul. Archaeological excavations of the tombs from Late and Ptolemaic periods proves that Egyptians mostly rejected the old magical aspects of the Books of the dead, and made only copies of the chapters and formulas which were associated with the popular cult of Osiris. Sometimes such texts extracts with magical formulas were inscribed on the mummy bandages, coffins or were written on papyrus and placed in tomb.⁷⁵ During the Ptolemaic and Roman periods the most popular books associated with death were “Book of breathing” and the “Book of traversing eternity”.⁷⁶

7. Summary

In this article author described changes in the ancient Egyptian funerary practices from the Third intermediate period (c. 1069 BC) to the Arab conquest of Egypt in 641/642 AD.

First part of the article contains basic description of burial practices and rites written by ancient writers (Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus) which were also well documented in various archaeological sources (various unearthed artefacts, tombs etc.). Author describes how ancient Egyptians deal with death, various rituals before the embalming process, mummification process, judgement according ancient Egyptian mythology and preparation for the burial after all these rites and rituals.

In second part author describes funerary practices from the Third intermediate period to the Arab conquest of Egypt. In this section various type of tombs and grave goods were described and documented from the findings of various archaeological excavations. Most of the typical funerary equipment mentioned in article was taken from the Egyptian collection of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb. Article also contains original photos taken by Filip Beusan and Mladen Tomorad.

Mladen Tomorad, he was born in Zagreb, Croatia in 1971. He studied history, ancient history, museology and Egyptology at the University of Zagreb – Faculty of Philosophy where he got M.A. degree in history (1997 dissertation entitled: “Shabtis from Roman provinces Dalmatia and Pannonia”), master of science degree (M.Ph.; 2001 - thesis entitled: “Egyptian antiquities in Croatian historical sciences”) in ancient history, doctor of science degree (Ph.D.) in museology and history (2006, thesis entitled “Model of computer-aided analysis and presentation of Egyptian artifacts in museum collections in Croatia”). He also studied Egyptology at the University of Manchester, Faculty of Life Sciences (dissertation “Shabtis from Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, Croatia”). Since 2000 he works at the University of Zagreb (Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy). From 2003 to 2008 he visited various universities and museums around Europe (Belgrade, Berlin, Bologna, Budapest, Florence, London, Manchester, Oxford, Padua, Prague, Rome, Naples, Vienna, Warsaw, ...), USA (Boston, New York, Philadelphia, New Haven ...) and Egypt (Luxor, Cairo, Aswan, Esna, Edfu). His major research fields are: early Egyptian history until the end of Old Kingdom, Egypt in 1st millennium BC, diffusion of Egyptian cults during Graeco-Roman times and Egyptian collections in Croatia.

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