Egypt

Mummy Case of Paankhenamun

Third Intermediate period, Dynasty 22 (c. 945–715 BC)
Cartonnage (gum, linen, and papyrus), gold leaf, and pigment
William M. Willner Fund, 1910.238

Ancient Egyptians believed that upon their death they would be reborn into an eternal existence similar to the one they left behind. The spirit needed a body to inhabit in the underworld, where the afterlife took place, so the corpse of the deceased was preserved through a process called mummification. Decay was avoided at all costs, as it would signify a separation between the body and the soul. After being packed in salt for 70 days, the corpse was wrapped in linen and amulets for good luck. The heart was left in the body, while the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines were stored in canopic jars (examples of which are in the wall display next to the mummy case in Gallery 154) for placement in the tomb. If the family of the deceased could afford it, a graduated series of cases was constructed to surround the mummy. The innermost was created with a material called cartonnage, in which linen or papyrus strips were joined together using a gummy substance. The entire structure was then plastered and painted. The result was a mummy case, like the one reproduced in this slide, strong enough to withstand wear for almost 3,000 years. This mummy case still houses the preserved body of Paankhenamun (pah-AHNK-ehn-ah-moon), a middle-aged man who is thought to have lived in the city of Thebes along the Nile in central Egypt.

Cases could be specially constructed or purchased ready-made and then personalized with relevant information about the individual. The rules for successful rebirth required that a representation of the person’s face be rendered on the surface of the case, although it was usually a generalized image rather than an exact likeness. The deceased
person's name and title were also mentioned in the inscription because one's job and status would be retained in the afterlife. The coffin's hieroglyphs (the Egyptian writing style using pictures to represent words and sounds) identify Paankhenamun as doorkeeper in the Temple of Amun and state that his father held this position before him. It is also written that Paankhenamun was the grandson of a man named Ankhenfenkhonsu.

Egyptians also believed that scenes depicted on a mummy case would later take place in the afterlife of the deceased (see page 13). The symbolic images on this case relate to Paankhenamun's eventual rebirth to eternal life. The central image is the introduction of the deceased to Osiris, ruling god of the afterlife, by his hawk-headed son Horus. The green face of Osiris symbolizes rebirth, as does the lotus blossom holding four figures that exist to protect the canopic organs seen between Horus and Osiris. Scarab beetles, believed to push the sun into the sky to start each new day, are painted over Paankhenamun's heart and represent his rebirth. Re-Atum, the sun god, was believed to proceed into the underworld each night after setting in the west and to be reborn each morning. The gold face at the top of the case represents the illumination of faces of the dead as Re-Atum's light shines upon them.

Before Paankhenamun could begin his new life, however, his character had to be judged by Osiris and 42 assessors. At Paankhenamun's throat is a representation of Ma'at, the goddess of truth. If his heart balanced with her feather, he would unite with Osiris and live in the Fields of the Blessed in the peaceful, everlasting existence of the Egyptian afterlife. While the painstaking steps taken to preserve bodies of the dead were believed to ensure their everlasting presence in the afterlife, they also make it possible for modern viewers to learn about the lives and beliefs of ancient Egyptians.
CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

[1] Egyptians believed that life after death was just like life on earth. They therefore stocked tombs of the dead with models of items that the deceased would use in the afterlife—houses, furniture, clothing, food, boats, animals, etc. Have students make a list of things that an individual needs to lead a happy and full life. Each student may then select a few items to draw or sculpt in clay.

[2] The mummy case tells us about Paankhenamun through pictures and hieroglyphs. After showing students the figure that represents Paankhenamun and the hieroglyphs above his head that state he was doorkeeper of the temple of Amun (see page 13), have them draw pictures with accompanying words that describe what they look like and who they are. Where do they live and/or go to school? What are their likes and dislikes? What activities do they enjoy?

[3] Paankhenamun’s name is spelled out in hieroglyphs on the mummy case. Distribute the enclosed sheet “Write Like an Egyptian” (page 16) and have each student spell his/her first name with hieroglyphs. Collect their work and redistribute to other students. Can students break the code and determine the name?

[4] When preparing a mummy, the deceased person’s liver, stomach, intestines, and lungs were saved for the afterlife. Discuss with students the important role that each of these organs plays in keeping their bodies healthy. Have students draw their bodies with the organs in their proper locations.
READING THE COFFIN OF PAANKHENAMUN

Decoration of the mummy case, from top to bottom:

[A] Maat with a phoenix bird. Maat, the goddess of truth, was present when the deceased was judged before the gods by the weighing of his heart

[B] "Broad collars" or layers of floral necklaces

[C] Beetle with a hawk head below the sun disk. This is a representation of the combined form of Re, the hawk-headed sun god, and Khepri, the beetle who was thought to push the sun across the sky each day in a never-ending cycle of rebirth. The wings refer to the winged goddess Nut, the deity of the sky who often occupies this position on some other mummy cases.

[D] The shen hieroglyph for "eternity," a reference to the eternal cycle of the sun

Scene of Paankhenamun with the gods:

[E] Paankhenamun, with a cone of scented fat on his wig, is led into the presence of the gods. The hieroglyphs above his head say that he was the doorkeeper in the Temple of Amun, the son of Ainka, the doorkeeper in the Temple of Amun, and the grandson of a man named Ankhefenkhonsu. The remainder of the inscription is a plea for funerary offerings in the afterlife.

[F] The hawk-headed god Horus, son of Osiris

[G] The god Osiris, main deity of the afterlife. He holds the crook, hieroglyph for "to rule," and the flail, the implement used by farmers to harvest grain, which symbolizes the god's ability to provide for his subjects. His long staff is made up of hieroglyphs which promise life, dominion, and stability.

[H] Isis, the sister of Osiris. She and Nephthys (see I) often act as mourners for the deceased.

[I] Nephthys, sister of Osiris. Here she is called "the mistress of the West." There are many "mistresses of the West" because "the West" is an allusion to the area of the setting sun, hence the land of the dead (see K and L). She is also called the "Mother of the God, the Lady of Heaven, Mistress of all the Gods."

[J] The Four Sons of Horus, who protect the organs removed during the mumification process. They stand on a lotus flower, a symbol of rebirth.

[K] The geographic symbol of the city of Abydos, the place where Osiris was supposed to be buried, is depicted as a wig on a pole. Abydos was among the most sacred cities in Egypt. The symbol is flanked by:
L Winged deity: “Hathor, mistress of the West”
M Winged deity: “Maat, mistress of the West.” Both winged deities hold the hieroglyph for Maat in their arms.
N Rams on a standard: this symbol is unclear. It may represent the geographic emblem of Mendes, a city associated with Osiris or perhaps Khnum, one of the creator gods.
O The (mummy) bundle on a standard is another unclear geographic emblem.
P The double-plumed headdress with a central sun disk on a stand are also geographic emblems.
Q Djed pillar: a representation of the backbone of the god Osiris. He holds the crook and flail (see G), and wears a double plumed crown with a sun disk. He stands on the facade of the royal palace.
R The falcon god, “The Behdite, Lord of Heaven,” has his wings outstretched to protect the djed pillar.
S The eye of Horus, udjat-eye (wedjat eye), a symbol of well being
T The shen hieroglyph for “eternity”
U Demons, or genies, who live in the underworld; they hold long knives.
V Another winged scarab pushing the sun’s disk (see C).
W Eyes of Horus (see R)

The back of the coffin is decorated with a single large djed pillar. On either side are hieroglyphs for “the West” (see Cleopatra: www.artic.edu/cleo).
# WRITE LIKE AN EGYPTIAN

You can use the following hieroglyphs, which are rough equivalents of the English alphabet, to write in code.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Letter</th>
<th>Hieroglyph</th>
<th>English Letter</th>
<th>Hieroglyph</th>
<th>English Letter</th>
<th>Hieroglyph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>vulture</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>snake (cobra)</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>folded cloth or door bolt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>foot</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>basket with loop handle</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>bread loaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>basket with loop handle</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>lion</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>quail chick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>hand</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>owl</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>snake (horned viper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>two reeds</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>quail chick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>snake (horned viper)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>quail chick</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>basket with loop handle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>jar stand</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>stool</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>double reed leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>reed shelter or twisted rope</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>hill side</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>folded cloth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>single reed</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>mouth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>