

AL5

Week 2, Thursday (after lab session)

Mummification across the globe

HPAH5080/6080 Ancient Lives in Death

Dr Katharina Zinn

Associate Professor in Egyptian Archaeology
and Heritage

Mummies

**Seti I (Cairo Museum
CG6107; JE2)**

Abydos



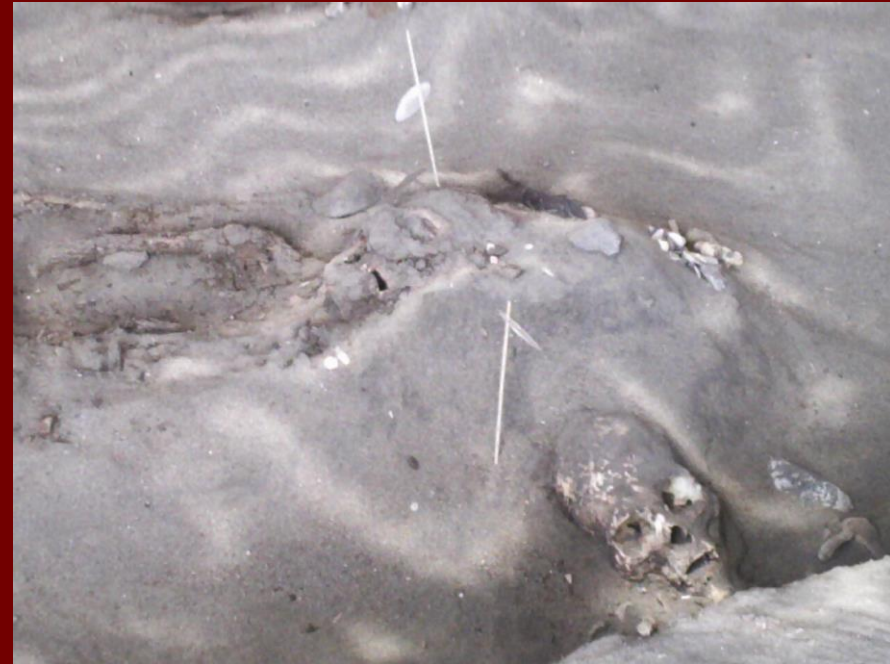
Mummy

- word 'mummy': not of Egyptian origin, derived from the Arabic *mumiyah* مومياء, (= body preserved by wax or bitumen) via the medieval Latin *mumia*
- Applicable to many modern – especially European languages
 - German: Mumie
 - English: mummy
 - French: momie
 - Spanish: momia
 - Russian: мумия

Mummification in different cultures

**Chinchorro mummies
(Atacama Desert, 5000-
1500 BC)**

Chinchorro mummies of
the type site in Arica,
Chile



Chinchorro mummies

- ❑ mummification in South America
- ❑ extremely arid climate of the Atacama Desert: corpses mummify naturally → used purposefully
- ❑ nondiscriminatory practice: all ages + social classes
- ❑ most significant types: ‘red’ and ‘black’ mummies.
 - ‘black’ mummy: take apart, treat, reassemble
 - ‘red’ mummy: small incisions into body, internal organs removed.
- ❑ Both stuffed with sticks, decorated with wigs, coloured clay, jewellery
- ❑ sitting foetal position





Ancient Chinchorro mummies reveal secrets of survival in Chile's Atacama Desert

UNESCO World Heritage List
(since 2021):
Settlement and Artificial
Mummification of the Chinchorro
Culture in the Arica and Parinacota
Region
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1634/>

Chinchorro mummies

Chile's archaeologists fight to save the world's oldest mummies from climate change

The desert graveyard where the ancient Chinchorro decorated and buried their dead is now a Unesco World Heritage site



The mummies of the Chinchorro are being disturbed by unusual weather patterns linked to the climate crisis. Photograph: Panther Media GmbH/Alamy

Jannina Campos walks up a sandy hillside in Arica, a port city on the edge of the Atacama desert, the driest place on the planet.

The slope is dotted with dozens of orange markers placed in December. Each indicates skeletal remains recently uncovered by unusually strong winds and increased rainfall.

Laurence Blair in Arica

Sat 26 Mar 2022 10:00 GMT

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Chinchorro Culture (modern Chile)



- preceramic culture from 9,100 to 3,500 years BP (7,000 to 1,500 BC)
- sedentary fishermen at Pacific coastal region (current northern Chile, southern Peru)



- fresh water in arid region on the coast → human settlement
- Archaeological sites around Arica
- From 2000BC = influences from Andean Plateau → adoption of agriculture
- Later under influence of Tiwanaku Empire

Mummification in different cultures

**Chinchorro mummies
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**Inca mummie:
Llullaillaco, Salta
Province (Argentina).**



Mummification in different cultures

**Девочка (girl) / Очы-
бала (a fairy tale
heroine) / Siberian ice
maiden**



**Ötzi (Iceman), lived
between 3400 and 3100
BC, found 1991 in the
Ötztal Alps (between
Austria and Italy)**



Mummification in different cultures

Anga tribe (Papua New Guinea) – Smoke mummies



Xin Zhui (Chinese: 辛追, also Lady Dai) wife of Marquess Li Cang (利蒼) (d. 186 BCE, Changsha, Han Dynasty); found in 1971



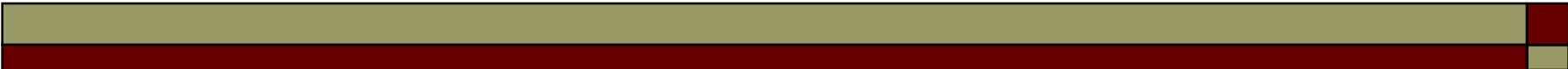
Mummification in different cultures

Christian Friedrich von Kahlbutz (Germany)



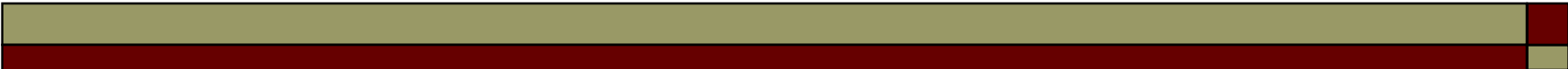
Bogmummies (all over central Europe) – here Tollundman





What is a mummy?

- ❑ a dead body whose soft tissues and organs have been preserved
 - Human
 - Animal
- ❑ Preservation achieved
 - naturally/accidentally (**spontaneous** mummification) or
 - intentionally (**anthropogenic** mummification) by
- ❑ exposure to chemicals, extreme cold, very low humidity, or lack of air
- ❑ body does not decay in the first instance and continues to stay preserved if kept in cool and dry conditions



What is a mummy?

- ❑ Some restrict term *mummy* to bodies deliberately embalmed with chemicals
- ❑ but historically (and logically) also to cover accidentally desiccated bodies
- ❑ Mummies of humans and animals have been found on every continent
 - both as a result of natural preservation through unusual conditions, and as cultural artifacts

Natural or artificial

GUESS WHAT?

Mummification in different cultures

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natural



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natural

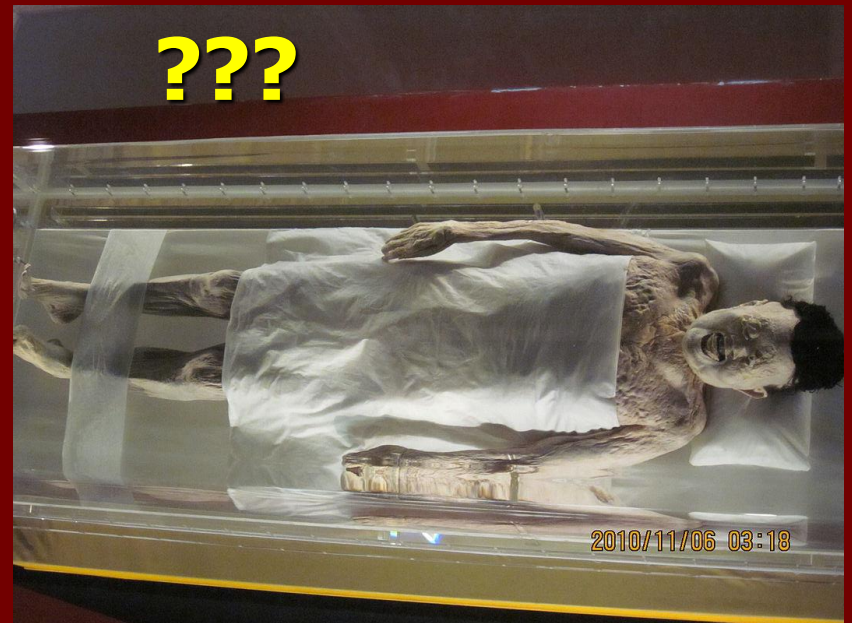
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artificial

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artificial



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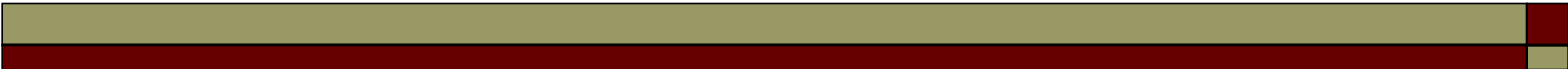


Natural???

Bogmummies (all over central Europe) – here Tollundman



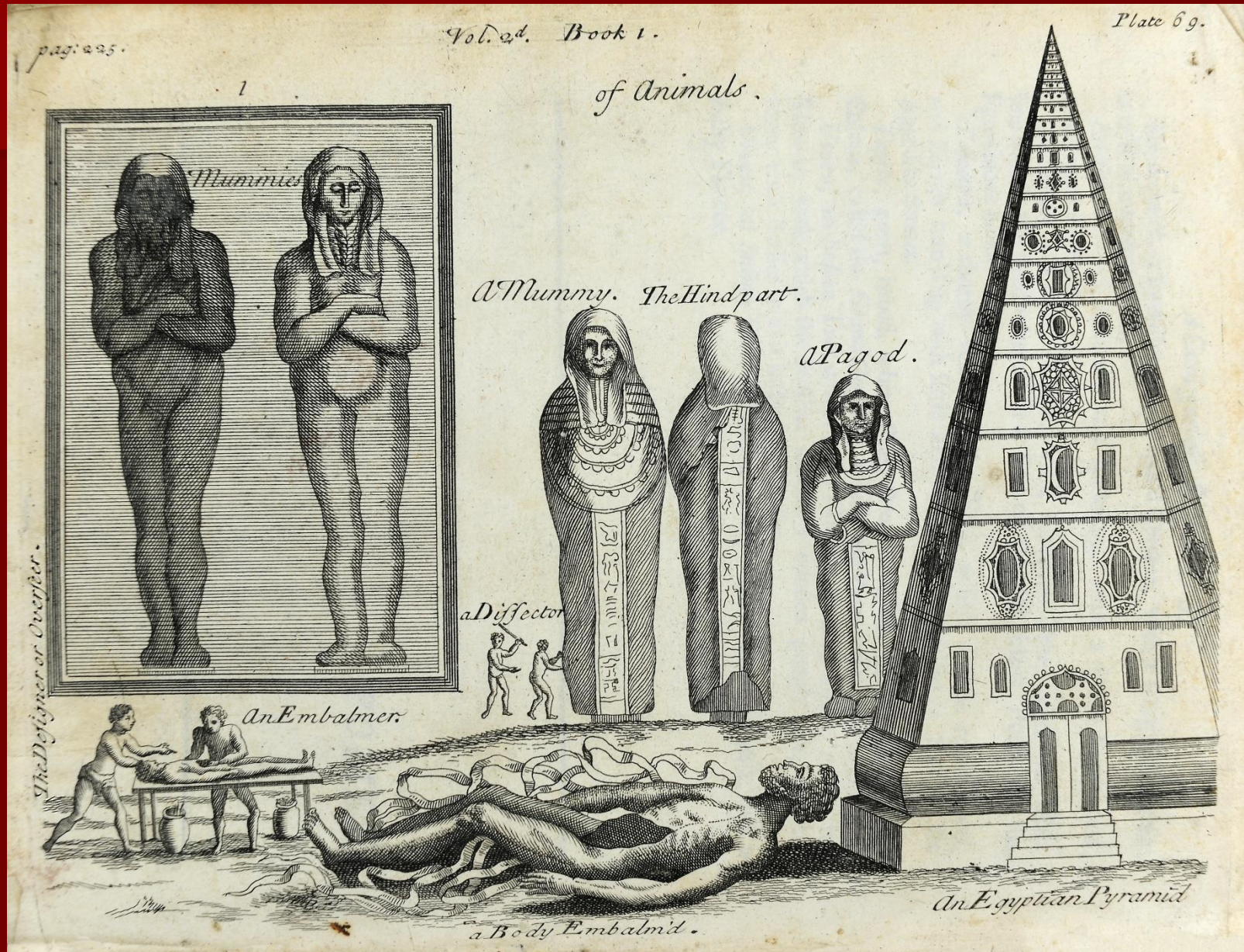
natural



Mummy Studies

- First interest: Ptolemaic Greece
- Mummies as curiosa and pseudoscientific novelties

A compleat history of druggs, written in French by Monsieur Pomet

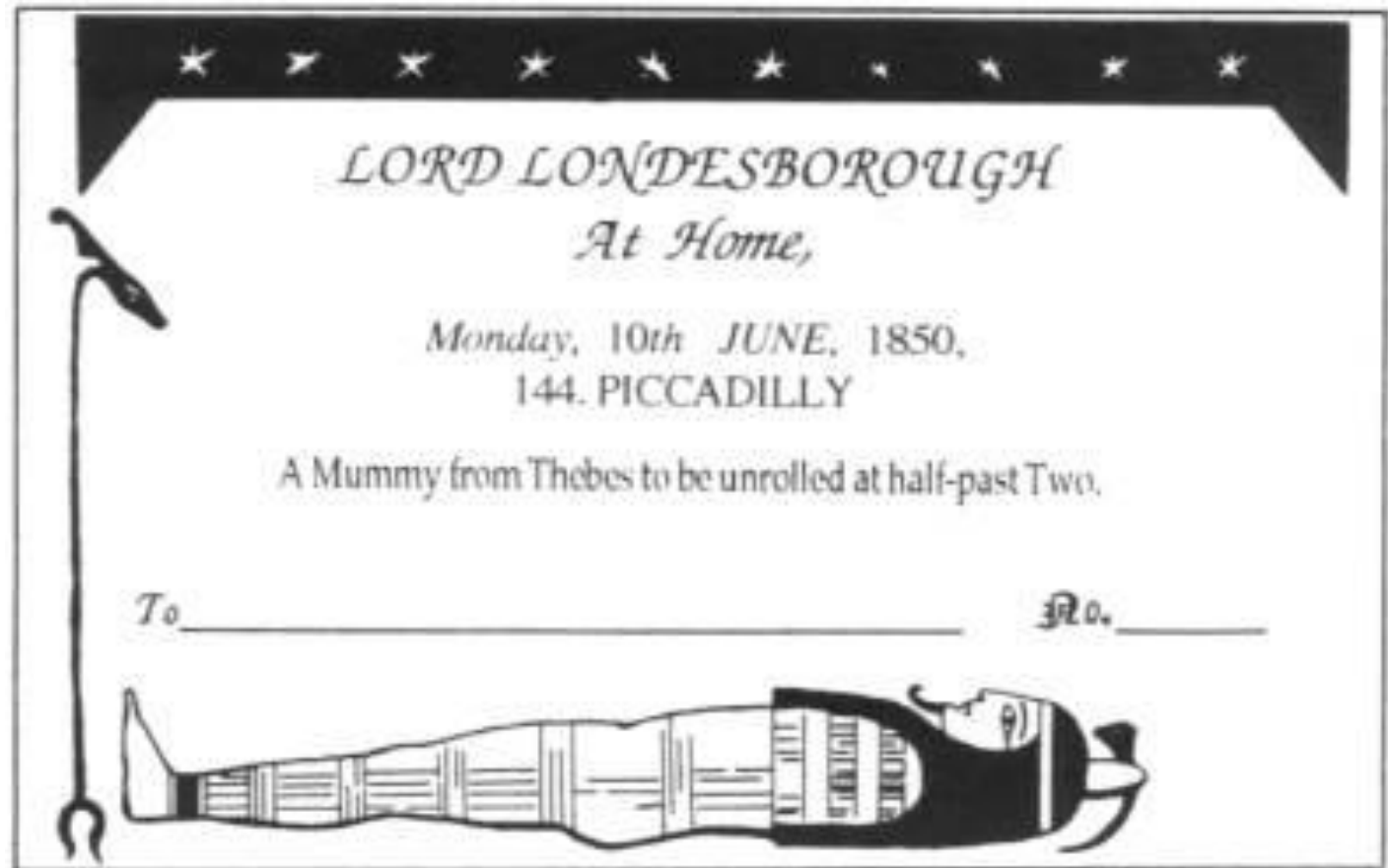


A compleat history of druggs, written in French by Monsieur Pomet : to which is added what is further observable on the same subject, from Messrs. Lemery and Tournefort, divided into three classes, vegetable, animal and mineral, with their use in physick, chymistry, pharmacy and several other arts : illustrated with above four hundred copper cutts : done into English from the originals. . London: 1712.

- Mummies as pseudoscientific novelties

Mummies in the Occident: Mummies as souvenir and curiosa

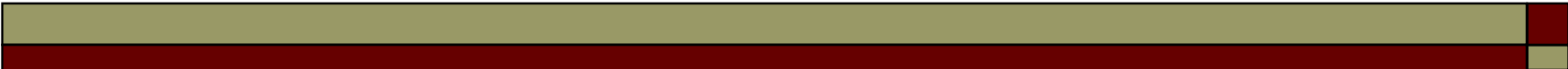
- Unwrapping of a mummy as High Society event



Mummies in the Occident: Mumiyah as (cannibal) medicine

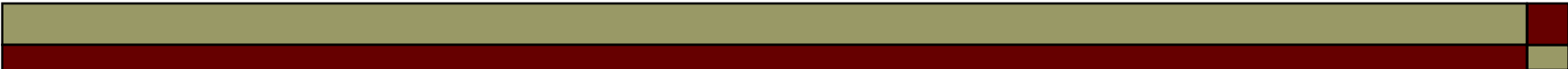
- ❑ Arabic physicians believed mummy resin as being curative and medicamental (knew medicative character of natural bitumen)
- ❑ Good conservation of body → idea: body itself has mustic and preserving powers
- ❑ Trade with mummies to Europe
- ❑ Processed into medicine





Mummy Studies

- ❑ First interest: Ptolemaic Greece
- ❑ Mummies as curiosa and pseudoscientific novelties
- ❑ structured scientific study from beginning 20th cent.:
 - 1901 medical study of Egyptian
 - 1903 first X-ray - Grafton Elliot Smith and Howard Carter – Thutmose IV
 - No CT scanning – digitally unwrap
 - 3D modelling
- ❑ 1992: First World Congress on Mummy Studies (technology and methods)



Mummy Studies

- ❑ Egyptology
- ❑ Medicine / biomedicine
- ❑ Pathology
- ❑ Archaeology / bioarchaeology
- ❑ Forensic studies
- ❑ Anthropology
- ❑ Reception and literature studies