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Mystery of the Mummy

By Steven N. Ng

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Ancient Egyptian mummies have long sparked our imaginations, starring in countless horror films and novels. But what are they? How were they made? Why were they made? That's the mystery of the mummy.

The Egyptian mummification process is basically a means of preserving a dead body. Without preservation, a body will decompose, leaving only the bones. The Egyptian mummification process therefore prevents a body from decomposing, allowing the deceased to resemble what he looked like when he was still alive.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

To the ancient Egyptians, a person is composed of 6 different parts: his body, ba (personality or character), ka (spirit of life), akh (immortal soul), as well as his name and his shadow. A person is not whole if he is missing any of these parts.

The ancient Egyptians believed in the afterlife. They believed that when a person died, he continued living in another plane of life in the underworld. Since he is still considered to be "alive", all 6 parts of that person should be intact for him to live properly. Hence the need for preservation of the body, and the creation of the ancient Egyptian mummies.

An important belief in ancient Egypt, and the source of many Egyptian paintings, is the Final Judgment. It describes what happens after a person physically dies. The paintings show the recently deceased describing his deeds to a panel of judges. He is then led to the scales of balance by Anubis, the jackal-headed god of mummification and the afterlife. Here, his heart, which contains all the evil that he has committed, is weighed against the feather of Ma'at, goddess of truth and justice.

Thoth, the ibis-headed god of wisdom, records the outcome. If the heart is heavier, the deceased is judged too evil and undeserving of a place in the afterlife. The heart will then be devoured by Ammit, the god with the head of a crocodile and the body of a hippopotamus.

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If the feather of Ma'at is heavier, the person is deemed worthy, and is taken by Horus, the falcon-headed god, to the afterlife and the underworld, ruled by Osiris.

THE MUMMIFICATION PROCESS

The details of the Egyptian mummification process has been lost to time. Most of what we know today about the mummification process comes from the writings of Herodotus, the Greek traveler. From what we know, creating the ancient Egyptian mummies is a complicated process. Herodotus' writings indicate that the entire process takes 70 days, from the time of death till the mummy is buried.

Firstly, the internal organs are removed. All organs are removed except for the heart, which the ancient

Egyptians believed to be the center of a person's being.

To remove the organs from the abdominal cavity (such as the lungs, stomach, liver and intestines), a small cut is made in the left abdomen, and the organs removed from there. The organs are then cleansed and stored in 4 canopic jars, representing the Four Sons of Horus. These jars will be buried together with the mummy.

The brain is also removed. A hooked instrument is inserted into the skull via the nose. The hook is then used to pull out the brain in small pieces.

The next step in the Egyptian mummification process is to dry the body. If there is any water remaining in the body, bacteria will grow and cause the body to decompose. The drying agent is natron, a mixture of salts found along the Nile valley. By covering the body with natron for the majority of the 70 days, it will be completely dried.

After the natron is removed, the body is then wrapped using linen and resin. Hundreds of yards of linen are used, and usually covered with holy inscriptions. The finished mummy is then buried in his tomb together with his possessions.

Egyptologists have long wondered if this process as described by Herodotus could really create the ancient Egyptian mummies. In 1994, a team of scientists at the University of Maryland, USA, closely followed the Egyptian mummification process and successfully created a mummy that was free of bacteria and decay. Thus the mystery of the mummy is finally solved.

You can visit www.nekhebet.com for more information about mummies and other mysteries of ancient Egypt.

Steven maintains the informational website Wonders of Ancient Egypt at <http://www.nekhebet.com>. Do visit if you want to find out more about the wonders of Egypt such as the Pyramids and the Lighthouse; or mysteries such as mummification and conspiracy theories; or its religion and history.

Take the "Mystery" Out of Becoming a Mystery Shopper

By Ted Belfour

Many people all over the world are making money as a mystery shopper. Thanks to the Internet, details on how to become a mystery shopper are widely available, taking the "mystery" out of the process.

Mystery shoppers provide a great service to retailers and service businesses. By walking into a business as an unknown $\frac{1}{2}$ the basic, average, every day customer $\frac{1}{2}$ mystery shoppers relate their experiences to corporate headquarters. Why would a big corporation rely on people they don't know? Because their opinion counts! Mystery shoppers can get a more accurate look at the day to day operations of a business than a CEO can on a yearly visit. It's a known fact that employees put their best foot forward when their boss is in the building. Mystery shoppers are an effective way for corporate offices to learn about the service, employee attitudes, and cleanliness of a business. If a customer walks into a fast food restaurant and is greeted by an indifferent employee and the place is a mess, that customer will likely tell other people. Word of mouth from one unsatisfied customer can kill business. That's why mystery shoppers are so important.

There are many mystery shopper programs that enlist the help of average people every day. Some are scams and others are for real. How do you separate the two? Follow that old basic rule of thumb: If they ask you to pay to work for them, it's a scam.

A legitimate company will not expect you to pay them in order to work for them. You wouldn't expect to pay a doctor's office to let you be a receptionist or a convenience store for the opportunity to be a cashier. Mystery shopping is a job, so there is no difference.

There is a mystery shopping certification available. The Mystery Shopping Providers Association of North America offers such certification. With two certifications to choose from, potential shoppers may test online for certification that proves they have the basic skills needed to be a mystery shopper. A more expensive plan also covers some training for mystery shoppers. It is important to note that certification is not required to be a mystery shopper.

So, if you are looking for a way to make money part time, consider a career as a mystery shopper. Assignments might have you sampling yogurt, going to a movie, or eating out at a restaurant you might not normally go to!

Dave is the owner of

and

websites that

provide information on mystery shoppers.



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