

Mummies and Mummification

For ancient Egyptians, it was very important to preserve the body so that it could be a home for a person's spirit after death. The Egyptians preserved bodies through a process called mummification—making mummies, or preserved bodies.

▲ Hooks used to remove brains through nostrils

▲ The mummy of Ramses II

Bodies were cleaned, bathed with chemicals to preserve them, then wrapped in cloth. ▶

Egypt

Religion played an important role in the life of the people of Egypt. They believed that their gods controlled everything from the flooding of the Nile River to the death of a child. Their gods could be kind or dangerous. To please the gods, Egyptians built them temples and offered them prayers and gifts.

Many Gods

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Egyptian Religion

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Egyptians believed that gods shared the qualities of these animals, such as their strength, speed, or bad temper.

One of the most important gods was Amon-Re, the sun god. Egyptians

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afterlife. Those who had lived good lives would be allowed to live forever, but the sinful would be destroyed.

Preserving the Dead The second way that Egyptians prepared for the afterlife was by having their bodies preserved after death. Egyptians believed that they needed to preserve their body to have an afterlife. They believed that, after death, their spirit would need to recognize their preserved body and use it as a home.

Egyptians went to great efforts to preserve the bodies of their dead. Poor people were buried in the desert, where the hot, dry sand quickly dried out their bodies. Wealthy Egyptians had their bodies made into mummies. A **mummy** is a body preserved by a special process. The knowledge of this process was one of ancient Egypt's great achievements. From mummies, scientists have learned much about life and death in ancient Egypt.

Reading Check Why were priests powerful?



▲ Thoth, the baboon-headed Egyptian god of thought and morality