

THE MUMMY OF CAT, NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM OF PARMA

The mummy was purchased in 1832 by the Museum Director Michael Lopez to the newly-formed Egyptian section, with other finds, from the antiquarian Francesco Castiglioni. He has painted face, eyes made by buttons with application of a loose weave painted fabric. The bandage is made in cloth bandages, linen (?), arranged to form a pattern of squares. The radiological investigation performed by prof. Giacomo Gnudi University of Parma, has allowed us to verify that inside the mummy is a whole cat, not a fetish or part of the animal, as it was found in other mummies. It is a young cat age of 4/5 months, evidently those bred specifically at the temples to be mummified and become an offer of worship. It is a typical use of the period between 332 B.C. and 30 BC, in which these mummies are produced in large numbers and sold to those who went to venerate the goddess Bastet, at his temples, as that of Bubastis, where they were left by the devotees. The cats were mummified with the same technique used for men. The mummy is wrapped in linen bandages in the position more similar to that of a cat sitting. The hind legs are folded on the chest and upper limbs lying on the front just like if the cat was sitting. This position has the advantage to minimize the footprint of the mummy and give the cat the sitting position, as is represented in statues and paintings, in its essence God, just as the hieroglyphic sign which stands for indicate the cat, and shows him seated, since its first appearance in an enrolment of over four thousand years ago. The cat in Egypt was regarded as the incarnation of gods: male, "the big cat" is the manifestation of Ra, the specimen female is linked to the goddess Bastet. From the XXII Dynasty (945-715 BC) intensifies the cult of the goddess Bastet, and temples dedicated to her begin to arise throughout Egypt, such as Bubastis. In the first times, at the time of death, the cat was mummified and buried in mass graves inside the temple but from the third century B.C. were bred specifically the animals near the temples to make mummies that devotees purchased to leave them as offerings.

The archaeological excavations have recovered thousands of mummies of cats died prematurely or in an unnatural manner. In the same period, in addition to the spread of cat mummies, it has abundant production of votive statuettes in bronze depicting a cat with the body or the goddess Bastet and female head of a cat, as well as amulets, scarabs, sistri with the image of the goddess.



Statuette of icneumon purchased from Marguier 1845



Seal Scarab in the shape of a cat purchased from P. Gennari 18-28



Cats statuette purchased from C. Marguier, 1844