History, Culture, and Analysis of the Fayum Mummy Portraits

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1. Introduction

Within the 1st-3rd centuries in the Fayum Basin, Egyptians developed a practice of painting portraits of their loved ones on either wood or linen panels; later they would be attached to their mummified bodies. These Fayum mummy portraits have intrigued historians for centuries. Since the beginning of time humans have sought to recognize their deceased family members, and the Egyptians were no exception. Yet, because of the many nations that conquered and influenced Egypt, the portraits were clearly driven by the influence of multiple cultures, religions, and values. Identifying the exact reasons behind the portraits has proven difficult as a result of the many influxes. This paper will introduce the historical, religious, cultural, and the mummification background to the portraits in addition to a thorough analysis of the portraits themselves. Our research questions included who were the people depicted in the portraits? Why were these portraits created? What motivated the burial habits of these ancient people?

2. History of Ancient Egypt to the Conquest of Alexander the Great

"The Egyptians have always been a peasant people, since the wealth of the country lies in the cultivation of the soil. Peasant culture and peasant character are the fundamental features of their life in all periods … they are of the earth" (Worrell 1). These simple earthy people have a recorded history dating back to 3200 B.C. as white men of the Mediterranean race, distinct from

the traditionally dark-skinned people of Africa (Worrell). Historically, the last of the great

pharaohs, Ramses III, died in 1151 B.C., leaving way for the priests of Amon to grow in power

and finally seize control in 1080 B.C. (Kamil, "Coptic Egypt" 16). This led way to an onslaught

of shifting power as the Lybians under Sheshonk took leadership in 950 B.C., followed by the

Kushites (people of lower Sudan) under Piankhi in 720 B.C., then the Assyrians in 671 B.C.

(Kamil, "Coptic Egypt" 16). Egypt was briefly liberated in 664 B.C. by the Egyptian Psamtik, a

period known as the Saite Period, though fell again to the Persians in 525 B.C. (Kamil, "Coptic

Egypt" 17).

Each wave of leadership brought with it different desires and influences. With the

exception of the Assyrians, who were known for their ruthless rule, and the Persians, each of the

conquering nations after the Amon priests sought to reinstate a Pharaoh, presumably to create the

position of a god-king (Kamil, "Coptic Egypt" 16-18). Intermingled within the shifts of

leadership, however, there remained a relatively constant set of Egyptian culture and beliefs.

Within the traditional Egyptian beliefs of the time period, two of the more prominent and

pertinent gods were Osiris and Isis. The myth behind Osiris is as follows:

> According to the myth, Osiris, after ruling over the Egyptians in a beneficent
>
> manner, was plotted against by his brother Set (Gk., Typhon). The latter made a
>
> chest and at a banquet promised to give it to anyone who exactly fit into it. As had
>
> been planned, when Osiris entered the chest, Set's men closed the chest and threw
>
> it into the Nile. Isis set out in search for the chest and her brother-husband. She
>
> found it at Byblos on the coast of Phoenicia and brought it back to Egypt. Typhon
>
> succeeded in getting possession of the body and cut it up into fourteen parts,
>
> which were scattered about Egypt. Isis then went through the country collecting

the parts. She recovered all but the genitals, which she replaced by a gold image

that was carried in procession. (This seems to combine two different traditions of

the death of Osiris – that he was drowned and that he was murdered and

dismembered.) Osiris became king of the underworld and helped his son Horus to

gain a victory over Typhon. Osiris did not return to this world or experience a

resurrection properly speaking; his continued existence was in the nether-world.

The burial rites to make the deceased into an Osiris were a preparation for life in

the underworld where Osiris ruled. (Ferguson 215)

Worship of Osiris grew to be very popular by the Middle Kingdom (2040-1781 B.C.);

priests began to claim that their temple physically possessed a part of Osiris' body, buried in

their province (Kamil, "Christianity in the Land"16). While the most thorough account of the

Osiris myth is found in Plutarch's writing, the oldest sources are found in the Pyramid Texts

(2345-2181 B.C.) (Kamil, "Christianity in the Land" 16). As Ferguson observes, Osiris is king of

the underworld (Ferguson 211); other sources point to him as being the "judge in the court of

justice, gateway to the afterlife" (Kamil, "Christianity in the Land" 16).

"The goal of artificial mummification was to preserve the body eternally so that it could

be animated in the afterlife by the deceased's soul of mobility … be nourished by its soul that

accepted offerings … and be a vehicle for transformation into a divine being" (Oxford,

"Mummification"). Up until the Ptolemaic age, Egypt continued in a very similar fashion of

mummification, for very similar reasons. The deceased were mummified and buried with goods

wrapped within their cartonnage to protect their body in the life to come (Oxford,

"Mummification"). Mummification ensured a sure transportation and lasting afterlife with Osiris,

whom they worshiped during life and dedicated themselves to in death.

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3. Mummification Process

While the purpose of mummification has remained relatively constant, the process itself has evolved over time; the earliest burials date to the Neolithic period, which was the beginning of the fifth millennium. During this time, tombs were simple rectangular or oval pits dug shallow in the ground. Bodies were laid in fetal positions and were wrapped in bandages or basket work (Dunand, Lichtenberg 5). Some items placed in the tombs were jewelry, especially necklaces of shells and glazed beads of a brilliant blue, that were made of minerals like copper malachite or azurite. Other common treasures found were arrowheads, ivory or wooden combs and cosmetic palettes. Tombs revealed several pictures of hunting, warfare and boat motifs, which was an image thought to represent the journey to the afterlife (Dunand, Lichtenberg 7-8). Although by the fourth millennium bodies were being placed more frequently in wooden or terra cotta coffins inside mastaba tombs, it is comical to note that the most well-preserved mummies were those that were simply buried in the sand (Dunand, Lichtenberg 10). Called "natural mummies", these bodies became dried out from the sand and held up rather well, as long as wild jackals of the desert didn't dig them up first (Dunand, Lichtenberg 9-11). One famous example of such a mummy is "Ginger", a mummy dated back to Predynastic Egypt (3500-3200 B.C.) that was nicknamed for its red hair. Ginger's body was incredibly well preserved; the intense heat of the sand extracted all moisture from the body and left the skin in a tanned, leather-like state (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 33). In contrast to these shallow pits, mastaba tombs were cool, moist chambers that encouraged decomposition and left nothing but bones (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 35). The Egyptians did not realize this at the time; they simply wanted to protect the bodies from robbers or animals (Dunand, Lichtenberg 11). Hunters and fishermen knew the trick

of preserving animals through gutting, salting and drying, and they soon discovered this essential practice of mummification, too.

The word "embalm" stems from the Latin word "in balsamum", which means to put into balsam, a combination of various aromatic resins (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 36). The practice of embalming, also known as mummification, began in Dynasty 4 (2561-2450 B.C.). Essentially, the components of mummification include an abdominal evisceration, a natron cleansing, the application of unguents and resin, and the wrapping of the body (Dunand, Lichtenberg 12).

Evisceration, or the removal of one's organs especially in the abdominal area, was a new process that was tabooed, most likely for religious reasons. Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian, went so far as to claim that the performer of abdominal evisceration "flees at a run, while those present pursue him hurling stones," after performing the operation (Dunand, Lichtenberg 11). Despite the taboo, the Egyptians practiced evisceration for years to come and found it very helpful in the process of mummification. In fact, the first person to have their viscera, or internal organs, removed was a Queen named Hetepheres (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 35, 45). In order to remove the internal organs, the deceased were first brought to the ibu, a place of purification. Next they were brought to the wabt, the place of embalming. Often times these first two steps were combined and performed in a room called the pr-nfr. An incision was made on the abdomen, and the entrails, or the stomach and intestines, were removed and set aside to be coated in scented oil and molten resin. They were then wrapped in linen and put into canopic jars, which were buried alongside the mummies (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 44-46). During Dynasty 21 (1069-945 B.C.) the viscera was wrapped and then placed back into the abdominal cavity (Dunand, Lichtenberg 61). The heart was of great importance to the Egyptians, as they believed that it was the center of intelligence. Thus, the brain was not particularly cared for until

Dynasty 18 (1550-1292 B.C.). In order for the brain to be removed, a stiff hook was made and inserted through the nose or in some occasions the side or back of the head. The brain was cut into pieces using the metal hook and was then spooned out through the same entrance. As one can imagine, this process could be quite violent and didn't always leave the head completely intact. Brains were not preserved like other organs and the empty skull was filled with some sort of stuffing, whether it was resin, sawdust or resin-soaked linen (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 44).

Following evisceration or the "gutting" of the deceased, the bodies needed to be dried out in order to preserve well and maintain their shape. This is when natron, a mineral salt, came into play. During the summer when small pools of water from the Nile floods evaporated, the naturally-occurring salt crystallized. Being hygroscopic, it had the ability to absorb moisture (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 37). At first, the Egyptians used liquid natron on the bodies, which didn't have lasting effects. This explains why some of the mummified bodies were found damaged (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 37). Nowadays, it is thought that dry packing (with natron) became the preferable method to dry out the body. This was tested and proved true by an Egyptologist when he experimented with both dry packing and the coating of natron solution on chickens and pigeons. He found that dry packing yielded the results most similar to that of the Egyptian mummies (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 42-43). Once bodies were eviscerated, it was customary that they were put into natron, transported to another area, and left to dry for forty days (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 43, 48).

After the forty days, the bodies were taken back to the embalmers to be prepared for their families. At this point a mummy would look fairly grotesque and needed to be beautified. To add shape and form to the bodies, they were stuffed with various products, such as clay, sawdust,

sand, resin or linen (Dunand, Lichtenberg 59). The abdomen was sewn shut and the entire body was coated with various spices and substances, such as juniper oil or beeswax. Following this, the body was completely covered in molten resin to toughen the skin and make it resistant to water (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 49-51).

The final step of the embalmers was to bandage the body in strips of linen or cloth. It was common for papyrus text from the Book of the Dead and amulets, or trinkets thought to give protection against evil, to be wrapped in between layers of linen (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 49-51).

These are the basic principles of mummification, lasting a total of seventy days to eviscerate, dry, embalm and bandage the body. According to Hamilton-Paterson and Andrews, though mummification had spiritual significance, the embalmers were just there to do their job. He writes:

> Imagine a hall with several large tables like wooden fishmonger's slabs, each with a corpse on it in a different stage of embalming and decomposition, and each with its attendant team of embalmers ... If an epidemic were raging the embalmers would be working hard to clear a backlog of dead bodies which were not getting any sweeter while they waited. Almost certainly the hall would have echoed the noise of chatter punctuated with loud outbursts of laughter. Yet this would hardly be surprising, since although the age-old procedure of mummification held religious significance, the embalmers themselves were merely doing a job of work, and like anybody engaged in macabre or unpleasant occupations they would probably have acquired a kind of gallows-humour to carry them through. (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 46-47)

One can imagine how crowded it would get if there was an epidemic causing the death of several hundreds of people. For this reason, bodies were not always handled properly and were sometimes damaged without the families knowing. This became especially prominent in the later dynasties, when the mummies looked well preserved on the outside but were found poorly prepared on the inside (Hamilton-Paterson, Andrews 53).

By Dynasty 12 (1938-1756 B.C.), anthropoid coffins, or coffins representing the form of a human being, had become widespread and were becoming more detailed and well made. At times they were painted with the eyes of Horus to assure protection and most always contained the name and title of the deceased (Dunand, Lichtenberg 29-30). Originally stemming from the Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts were also written on the inside of the wood. Pyramid texts date back to Dynasty 5 (2450-2321 B.C.) and were the first detailed outline of Egyptian beliefs. They contained magical formulas, songs, and special ceremonies, such as the Opening of the Mouth ritual, which was performed to restore the senses in the afterlife. The original Pyramid Texts were only found in royal tombs, however, leading to the conclusion that they were meant for the King (Dunand, Lichtenberg 21-22). By the New Kingdom (1550-1069 B.C.), the Book of the Dead slowly replaced the Coffin Texts (Dunand, Lichtenberg 47). Another change involved the introduction of cartonnages, or mummy cases made of tightly bound and glued linen or papyrus. These new containers came about in Dynasty 22 (945-730 B.C.) and were probably less expensive than wooden coffins (Dunand, Lichtenberg 63-64). Yet, only a few dynasties later anthropoid wooden coffins and stone sarcophagi made a resurgence and replaced the cartonnages (Dunand, Lichtenberg 66-68). An important burial tradition that was introduced was the inclusion of funerary masks. These masks were made of stuccoed cloth and were sometimes gilded or painted yellow to imitate the "flesh of the gods" (Dunand, Lichtenberg 29). It is

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important to note that these masks did not reflect the deceased individual, but often popular styles and fashion of the time period, such as men with bearded jaws and mustaches (Dunand, Lichtenberg 29).

4. History of Alexander the Great to the Christian Era

In 332 B.C. Alexander the Great freed Egypt from Persian control and was confirmed a legitimate successor to the ancient pharaohs by the oracle of Amon (Kamil, "Coptic Egypt" 18). After persecution and the destruction of temples by the Persians, the second Greek leader after conquering Egypt, Ptolemy I, created the god Serapis (also spelled Sarapis) (Kamil, "Coptic Egypt" 20). Serapis replaced Osiris in the Greek world, originating from a combination of Osiris and Apis (Ferguson 211). While Serapis had "sweeping success" in Greece, Asia Minor, Sicily, and Rome, he was only worshiped in Alexandria and Memphis of Egypt, while Osiris seems to have remained popular in the remainder of Egypt (Kamil, "Coptic Egypt" 20). Ptolemy I, however, also identified Egyptian deities with the Greek's deities, bringing Egyptian and Greeks to worship the 'same' god together in the same temple, which only served to accelerate religious syncretism (Kamil, "Coptic Egypt" 21).

In 31 B.C. after much political scandal and upheaval, the Romans took control of Egypt under the leadership of Octavianus (later known as Augustus) (Ferguson 17). Augustus ushered in the *pax romana* (Roman peace) which led to further religious freedom and in turn allowed Christianity to spread like wildfire (Ferguson 22). Under Roman rule, Egypt found itself united with every other country surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, and likewise it received influence from the various other countries and peoples under Roman rule.

The Greeks and Romans earnestly desired a pleasant afterlife, which led to the creation of rituals such as post-death care by family members to ensure a secure post-death journey

(Toohey, Johnston, and Garland). Augustus' willingness to let local religions and culture remain as they were, combined with the Greeks' and Romans' desires, led to an evolution in Egyptian mummification. During the Greek reign of Egypt, the emphasis within mummification practice tended towards a five-piece suite of cartonnage and burial within a decorated coffin (Oxford). During the Roman reign, however, the mummification process centered less on the process and more on decoration of the cartonnage (Oxford). Presumably because of the Greek and Roman post-death desires, the mummies began to be buried directly in the ground or placed in mausoleums (Oxford).

5. Changes to Mummification

Under the *pax romana*, Egypt was subject to Roman rule; however, there was not an immediate decline in religious practices or burial customs. Despite the new mix of culture, the practice of mummification continued and even Romans started practicing traditional Egyptian practices (Dunand, Lichtenberg 72). Hellenized families, or people who adopted Greek customs, spoke and wrote in Greek yet honored Egyptian gods, especially those who were supposed to be healers or saviors such as Osiris (Shore 18). Mummification became a widespread practice; it was generalized and simplified so that everyone had the opportunity to be mummified (Dunand, Lichtenberg 87).

A new style of mummification was introduced in the Greco-Roman period (30 B.C.-A.D. 642), that of coating the body in a black substance. Many "black mummies" have been found from this period, though it has been debated on what exactly the substance was. Some studies say vegetal products such as cedar oil were used and simply became black due to chemical changes over time. Nonetheless, the majority of people believe the substance was bitumen, a substance imported from the Dead Sea (Dunand, Lichtenberg 74). In an investigation of Greco-Roman and

Byzantine period mummies found from Antinoe, a site in Egypt, the bodies were found to have a

coat of bitumen, not only testifying to the use of bitumen, but also showing that this practice was

used up until the 7th century A.D. (Richardin 7). Bitumen was particularly useful because it

preserved bodies incredibly well, even without evisceration; nails and hair were still in place and

organs were identifiable (Dunand, Lichtenberg 74). The downside to the use of bitumen was that

it left the people looking unflattering.

The mummies from the Greco-Roman period also had unique "puffy" appearances. This

puffiness was perhaps due to the gap between the skeleton and the skin. When the bodies became

extremely dry, it interrupted the decomposition process (Dunand, Lichtenberg 75).

Burial practices, on the other hand, did not reflect the traditional Egyptian manner.

Bodies were simply laid to rest with maybe a biblical or magical text (Kamil, "Christianity in the

Land" 147). There was no longer an elaborative and expensive process to be held; techniques

were simple and efficient so that even the poor could be mummified (Shore 27; Dunand,

Lichtenberg 72). Burial sites of mummies from the Greco-Roman period were found not only

with mummies from this time period but earlier periods as well, suggesting the reuse of old

tombs. Because mummification was generalized and available to a greater population, they

lacked the necessary space to bury their dead (Dunand, Lichtenberg 87-88). When nothing else

was available, shallow pits were dug in the desert to bury groups of bodies altogether (Shore 27).

As rulers became stricter on not allowing mummification, many families sought to

mummify and bury their loved ones quickly. Because of this urgency and the fact that

mummification was now generalized to a much greater population, the quality of mummification

decreased (Dunand, Lichtenberg 75). When the embalmers accidentally lost or destroyed the

bodies, "pseudo-mummies" were made as replacements. These "mummies" were simply

wrappings of mixed bones and non-human artifacts, made to appear as bodies when in reality they might have been a combination of many different things (Dunand, Lichtenberg 76). One can imagine the stress of losing or damaging a body as an embalmer, but it is quite sly that they were able to fool the families into thinking they had done a good job. Despite the poor quality of the body care, the bandaging became incredibly artistic during the Greco-Roman period. Narrow bandages or strips of cloth were folded lengthwise and wrapped carefully around the body, making sure that the new layers hid any frayed edges. Geometric shapes and patterns were formed using the strips and sometimes different colored cloth was used. Recycled cloth or old clothing was layered underneath the topmost strips to add shape and volume, and amulets were still of use, although not as many as before (Dunand, Lichtenberg 78).

Another new custom that came into practice was gilding. During the Greco-Roman period, small leaves of gold were applied directly to the skin, mostly on the hands, head and feet. For example, they would gild eyelids, nails and lips (Dunand, Lichtenberg 77). The gold color represented the "flesh of the gods" and was mostly reserved for notables, though this extended to children as well (Dunand, Lichtenberg 78).

The highly popular Egyptian masks made of thick stucco were still being used, but a new variation was introduced: mummy portraits. These portraits were painted on cloth or wood and unlike past mummy masks, they actually resembled the deceased person. Nicknamed Fayum portraits due to their finding in the Fayum area of Egypt, these paintings give evidence of the large impact of the Greek and Ancient Egyptian culture on Egypt (Dunand, Lichtenberg 82).

6. Christianity and the Religious Culture

As stated earlier, the *pax romana* allowed Christianity to expand rapidly through the Roman territories. Coptic Christianity's foundations date back to the flight of the Holy Family

through Egypt in 7 B.C., while the foundation of the Coptic Church is credited to Saint Mark the Evangelist between A.D. 41 and 44 (Meinardus 28). Copts are proud of their apostolic heritage and maintain many traditions similar to that of the Catholic Church. After Saint Mark was martyred in A.D. 68, relics of him and even body parts have continued to be valuable possessions to this day (Meinardus 30).

According to Meinardus, "the outstanding contribution of the Egyptian Church to world Christianity was the monastic movement" (35). This monastic movement gave birth to hermits, those who withdrew to the desert, and cenobites, who sought an ascetic lifestyle within a community. This monastic lifestyle was in a sense idolized by other Egyptian Christians as the masses witnessed what they thought was a carrying out of Jesus' teaching (though doctrinal accuracy was not necessarily present). The monastic lifestyle was most likely the outcome of the Egyptian's ancient religious ideologies enlivened by Jesus' teaching and the powerful oncoming wave of Christianity – the monks could not help but want every aspect of their life to be wholly devoted to God and believed the best way to do this was to retreat to the desert and focus on living an ascetic, spiritual life.

It is important to keep in mind that the term Copt, now used to identify this people group (Egyptian Christians), was not coined until A.D. 640 (Kamil, "Coptic Egypt" ix). The word comes from an Arabic corruption of Greek, which was derived from the Egyptian word Hikaptah, a name for Memphis (Kamil, "Coptic Egypt" ix). When the Arabs developed the term, Christianity was the official religion of Egypt, though in the time periods discussed within this paper that was not the case (Kamil, "Coptic Egypt" ix). So although the term 'Copt' is used loosely to refer to Egyptians during the centuries following the shift to Anno Domini, the implication of all Egyptians being Christians at that time is simply not true.

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This leads to a common confusion surrounding the Fayum Portraits. They have been referred to as 'Coptic' portraits, and speculated to be a Christian phenomenon. Though not an academic source, Brad Holland suggests in his blog that the portraits were a result of Christians' desire for God to reunite their souls with their bodies at the Second Coming of Jesus. Mr. Holland states that the Roman painting style, Hellenistic ideals, and mixture of resurrection beliefs stemming from a Pharaonic background and recent Christian influence resulted in the paintings (Holland). Were these portraits motivated by Christianity, though? Research into the topic suggests that Mr. Holland is incorrect, and that the portraits actually have little to do directly with Christianity and much more with the changing tide of culture.

Further research into the topic reveals ample historical information to suggest the portraits were a part of the final practices surrounding mummification, though not necessarily a Christian practice. "Initially misidentified [referring to the Fayum portraits] by him as Christian, [Herbert] Winlock described these "bedizened grand[children] of the final years of paganism" as "atrocities of hideousness" (Oxford). Berger states, "They [the portraits] served a double pictorial function: they were identity pictures – like passport photos – for the dead on their journey ... to the Kingdom of Osiris; secondly and briefly, they served as mementoes of the departed for the bereaved family" (54). This correlates the previous Osirian cult beliefs with the more recent Roman and Greek mentality to care for the family. Kamil suggests, "the Fayoum [Fayum] portraits, with the full face and large obsessive eyes – a feature of Roman medallions and much early Christian art – are now regarded by art historians as the prototypes for the Byzantine icons," in other words, the Fayum portraits influenced Christian artwork rather than the other way around (Kamil, "Coptic Egypt" 73).

Furthermore, Christianity brought the final end to mummification, indicating that it was not the driving force behind the Fayum Portraits. In A.D. 392, the first Christian Roman emperor, Theodosius (A.D. 347-395), ordered a decree in which he branded non-Christians as heathens, forbade all forms of traditional worship, ordered temples to be closed, destroyed pagan writings, and most pertinent to our topic, outlawed mummification (Kamil, "Christianity in the Land" 135). This decision may very well have been influenced by Saint Antony, who on his deathbed ordered his friend Athanasius to not embalm his body; he simply wanted to be buried unobserved (Kamil, "Christianity in the Land" 142).

What did lead the Egyptians to attach portraits of the mummy's faces to their wrapped body? Following the progression of mummification from the time of the Great Pharaohs and closely evaluating the religious and societal trends, the answer appears to be mixed well into a melting pot of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and perhaps bits of Christian ideology. The practice of mummification was likely contributed from the traditional Egyptian burial practices. The method of wrapping and emphasis on certain important areas of the body were likely influenced by the Greeks and Romans, as well as the lack of a coffin burial. The desire to preserve the body for an afterlife is presumably driven by worship of the Egyptian god Osiris. And finally, the portraits most likely stemmed from Greco-Roman influence and painting techniques, acting as a 'passport' and reminder to the family.

Imagine life as an Egyptian during this time period. Mummification has been a standard practice for thousands of years in hopes of an afterlife with Osiris. Although many nations have reigned over your country, burial practices and general cultural ideology have held relatively firm. Within the last few hundred years the Greek intellects have influenced your culture while their gods have been integrated in with your gods. More recently the Romans have brought peace

across all the land and are now stressing that the family must continue caring for the deceased in order to guarantee a good afterlife for them. Is it surprising that the Egyptians desired to remember their deceased family members more explicitly?

7. The Fayum Portraits

In order to preserve memories of the deceased, lasting mediums were used to paint the portraits, the two most prevalent of which were encaustic and tempera. The word encaustic means to "burn in" in Greek (Mayer 3). It was a medium that was invented by the Greeks and used in much of their society's art and architecture. This medium is essentially a mixture of colored powder pigments with beeswax or occasionally tree resin, and this was all kept heated on a molten palette (Mayer 3). This meant the artist needed to paint quickly before the wax began to harden. Almost instantaneously after the wax was removed from the heated surface, the mixture would cool, and it would have to be reheated if an artist wished to make a correction. This medium was first introduced into Egypt when Alexander the Great conquered Egypt, and established the city of Alexandria. Much of the artwork that has been salvaged from the Greco-Roman civilizations is still in very good condition because the wax made encaustic paint a very durable medium. The wax was so impervious to water damage that it was even painted on ships in the ancient world (Mayer 6). The encaustic medium also aids in the preservation of the wood that it was painted on (Mayer 6). Encaustic paint does not yellow or darken over time. When first discovered, some of the mummy portraits were in such good condition that many were considered fakes (Doxiadis 12). An excellent example of mastery in encaustic medium can be seen in the appendix (Figure 1). As one can imagine, encaustic was an incredibly difficult medium to work with. In addition to being difficult, it was a very slow, tedious process. This is why it was rivaled by another medium, tempera.

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Tempera is a medium that consists of powder pigments that are mixed with egg yolk, egg whites, or occasionally animal glues. It gained popularity because it was a cheaper method than encaustic artwork. Tempera paintings are characterized by a distinct freshness to its colors (Figure 2), which is all the more impressive considering some of these paintings are nearly two centuries old (Shore 22). The tempera medium, however, was not as durable as the encaustic medium. Tempera paintings could be spoiled by exposure to water; thankfully many survived due to Egypt's arid climate. In order to prevent possible damage from occurring, tempera was occasionally coated with a light layer of wax (Shore 22). One of the difficulties of executing a tempera painting was that the paint does not spread very easily along a canvas, and therefore it could not be painted the way oil mediums were painted. A specific technique called hatching was used. Hatching is a technique used by artists and craftsmen who are using a medium that does not allow the blending of substances (Encyclopaedia Britannica). What results is a series of parallel and perpendicular lines that vary in length to indicate different lighting, texture, and shading effects. Hatching can be seen in many tempera mummy portraits.

Although tempera was a relatively easy medium to prepare, the wax used in encaustic work needed to be specially treated. Yellow beeswax was boiled in salt water with the addition of the mineral salt natron (Shore 23). Once the water was boiled, a thin layer of liquid white wax would separate, and this would be skimmed off into a jar filled with cool water (Shore 23). As soon as the mixture was re-boiled and exposed to the sunlight, this white, high quality wax became punic wax. This was mixed with powder pigments to produce a variety of colors (Shore 23). There were four basic colors used to produce Fayum images: white, yellow ochre, red earth, and black (Doxiadis 98). Powder pigments in these four colors were most plentiful while other colors such as purple, green, and blue were much more difficult to come by. In general, these colors were

painted beginning with the darkest shades first, and later the lightest colors to produce the most ideal aesthetically pleasing end result (Berger 54). None of this would be possible however, without the proper preparation of the painting surface.

Preparation of the image surface differed depending on the medium and material used. Wood was one of the more common painting supports, although linen was also used frequently. In some rare occasions, the Fayum mummy portraits were painted directly onto the mummy wrappings. When using the encaustic medium, wood was generally treated with distemper but occasionally was left bare (Doxiadis 94). Distemper is an artistic preparation primer where a thin coat of gum or glue is layered over the canvas. Tempera portraits needed to be prepared with distemper, otherwise the medium would be absorbed by the wood. Wooden portraits imply wealth of an individual, as wood was scarce and therefore expensive in Egypt (Doxiadis 94). Common types of wood used were lime, sycamore fig, and cypress, though it was rarely found flat in nature, and therefore it would often need to be bent (Doxiadis 94). To make it more flexible, wood could be boiled so it would not break when being molded and shaped (Doxiadis 94). Linen also required distemper; otherwise it would not be a stiff enough surface to paint on. The preparation process of preparing a mummy portrait was extensive and required a great deal of work.

Many of the portraits were discovered damaged, giving evidence that these portraits were not merely created to be attached to coffins but to be displayed as well (Kamil, "Christianity in the Land" 144-146). Some were found with the string and cord still attached, leading one to believe they were hung as portraits around people's homes (Dunand, Lichtenberg 83). This may have been an imitation of the Roman cult of the imagines, in which wax images of ancestors were placed around the atrium or open court of a person's house (Shore 26).

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Based on the conditions of the mummy cases and portraits found in the Hawara cemetery, it is thought that the mummies were placed around the open courts of people's homes (Shore 27). Kamil also speculates that this was done in atriums and thinks they were stood in niches of houses or large colonnaded courtyards (Kamil, "Christianity in the Land" 146). Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian from Sicily, quotes: "Egyptians keep the bodies of their ancestors in costly chambers and gaze face to face upon those who died many generations before their own birth, so that, as they look upon the stature and proportions and the features of the countenance of each, they experience a strange enjoyment, as though they had lived with those on whom they gaze" (Kamil, "Christianity in the Land" 142). Although these speculations have been made, evidence is minimal and cannot ensure that mummy cases were placed in homes before burial. Not every household contained a Roman-style atrium or courtyard for the mummy case to be kept. In addition, there seems to be no other literary evidence in favor of the idea (Shore 27). One can conclude, however, that the Fayum portraits were hung around homes, as there is both physical and literary evidence to prove such practice (Shore 27).

The art by itself is intriguing, yet there is a great deal of history that intertwines itself with the mummy portraits, and gives these paintings much more meaning.

8. The Fayum People

Although the Romans occupied Egypt in the 1st through 3rd centuries B.C., the people were still very much a hybrid of Greek and Egyptian culture. Many of the people, in fact, wanted to be seen as Greek (Doxiadis 35). To understand why, the Egyptian social class system must be briefly explained. The ruling upper class consisted of the Romans, followed by the Greeks, who were still fairly wealthy considering the Roman occupation. Jews also enjoyed wealth, as they were trade merchants, banker, and landowners (Doxiadis 35). The middle class consisted of a

mixture of Greek and Egyptians, and the lower class consisted of the Egyptians. The group that was responsible for the Fayum mummy portraits is most likely the Greek/Egyptian middle class, although some portraits portray people with significant wealth, and these people were most likely Greek.

Who could afford to hire an artist to paint their portrait? Unsurprisingly, many portraits are painted of people who display considerable wealth. Fortunately, some of the portraits have an engraving or writing of the name of the person who is being painted. Almost all of the paintings with lettering are written in Greek (Walker 98), leading researchers to believe these people were Greek. One unique portrait is titled *Hermione Grammatike* (Figure 3). This translates from Greek into Hermione the schoolteacher. In this picture, we can tell that her family is very wealthy due to the intricate and expensive wrappings that bind her portrait to her corpse (Doxiadis 50). It is speculated that a schoolteacher coming from a poor family may not have been able to afford this type of quality. Another indication of wealth is the earrings that she is seen wearing. Hermione is the only known mummy portrait of a female schoolteacher. Professions that were common in Fayum mummy portraits were soldiers and athletes. Due to the widespread military success of the Greek and Roman empires, some soldiers were depicted wearing gold to signify their victorious wealth (Doxiadis 60). Athletes would have also enjoyed wealth and a certain degree of fame, and could therefore afford to hire the best artists to paint a mummy portrait (Doxiadis 60). The easiest way to differentiate soldiers and athletes is that soldiers were usually drawn wearing a sash (Figure 4), while athletes were painted with their shoulders bare (Figure 5). Some members of the lower class would also have portraits painted, but in these paintings no jewelry is worn, and the overall quality of the painting is much lower than those of the upper class. Since paint was also expensive, sometimes portraits of lower-class citizens had bare, unpainted

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backgrounds (Doxiadis 24). Another interesting characteristic of many of the Fayum mummy

portraits is that many of the portraits appear to be slightly smaller than life size. The prevailing

theory is that since the artist is sitting or standing a couple of meters away from the person whose

portrait is being drawn, the artist is therefore viewing the person from a distance, and that

person's physical features will appear slightly smaller (Doxiadis 93).

The peoples' Greek origins can be identified within their artwork. One of the easiest ways

to identify the portrait subjects as Greek is the fact that many of the men and women wear gold

wreaths on their heads (Figure 5). Even though wreaths were a Greek fashion, the reason these

wreaths are gold is because gold is the color of eternity in Ancient Egypt (Doxiadis 114). This is

a perfect example of why art historians have such difficulty in defining the specific culture that

produced the Fayum mummy portraits; many of their cultural beliefs are intermingled between

Greek, Egyptian, Ancient Egyptian, and Christian beliefs. Other Greek techniques include light

shining down from the top left corner of the portrait and a speckle of light upon the nose (Figure

1) (Doxiadis 32).

Although many were, not every portrait was painted in Greek fashion. There were many

different cultural groups living in Egypt during the 1st through 3rd centuries A.D., and although

many of the people were both Egyptian and Greek, there were certainly other groups of people

who had different cultural backgrounds. There is no one particular style of mummy portraits. For

example, some artists would show shadows caused by the subject's hair in their portraits while

others did not. There are even Fayum mummy portraits that are drawn in a style that reflects

Persian art (Figure 2). Typical characteristics of Persian art are bold black lines, and pale, flat

looking faces. Many art historians believe that the Fayum mummy portrait period is not as well

known as other art movements due to the variety of art styles that are present in portraits. Since

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there is not one overlaying feature to characterize all mummy portraits, and there are no big

names of mummy portrait painters, this art period is far more mysterious, and not as well known

as other art periods.

Although the Fayum mummy portraits are sometimes referred to as the Coptic Christian

mummy portraits, this terminology is somewhat misleading for reasons previously explained.

Within the Fayum group of portraits, there are religious references. For example, the boy in

Figure 7 has styled his hair so that he wears the Lock of Horus. Horus was the God of Kings in

Ancient Egypt, and was worshipped when one wanted to be shown mercy. The bags under the

eyes of the boy and his pale-blue skin suggest mortal illness (Walker 100). This boy likely wore

his hair this way as a form of prayer in which he hoped Horus would cure him of his sickness.

Another item reoccurring in many mummy portraits excavated from the city of Antinoopolis is

the Ankh Cross (Figure 6). This cross stems from Ancient Egyptian belief, and symbolizes the

gods' abilities to breathe life into things (Doxiadis 118). In some paintings, however, the cross

has been warped to look more like a monogram of Christ. At the time, people needed to disguise

their worship of Christianity as the Romans outlawed the religion. This is yet another example of

merging Egyptian and Christian beliefs. Antinoopolis later became an early center of

Christianity, and it is apparent through the artwork.

There is debate as to what purpose the Fayum mummy portraits served. Even though the

vast majority of the Egyptian population at the time was a mixture of Greek and Ancient

Egyptian, the Romans were the people that ruled the land. They were the ones who imposed new

laws, many of which forbid the practice of Christianity and others that forbid the worship of

Ancient Egyptian gods. During the middle of the 2nd century A.D. under the rule of Roman

Emperor Decius, Christianity was deemed incompatible with the theories of Roman government,

and therefore was considered dangerous (Breasted 295). A *libellus*, a document issued by the

Roman government, was salvaged from one of the Fayum excavation cites and it explains some

of the laws regarding Christianity (Breasted 296). One of the laws was that any citizen suspected

of being a Christian was brought before a committee of local magistrates and was asked to

perform a sacrifice. If the person refused to sacrifice in the name of the accepted gods of the

time, then this person was sentenced to death (Breasted 296).

The most prestigious form of Roman art were the sculptures, however sculptures mainly

consisted of gods and emperors. The Fayum people had no interest in Roman gods or emperors

and did not want their artwork to be compared to Roman art, therefore they rejected sculpting.

Sculptures were also far too expensive to create for the average person. The form of painted art

that was most popular in the Roman Empire was still life paintings. The Fayum people wanted a

way to preserve loved ones through art, and therefore perhaps chose portraiture.

By the latter half of the 2nd century A.D., much of Egypt had become Christian, yet the

country remained under Roman rule. When an accused Christian, during periods of persecution,

was going to be put on trial, occasionally the family of the accused would leave their homes and

relocate. This meant that the form of artwork needed to be transportable, which is why many of

the portraits are painted on small wooden or linen panels (Doxiadis 95). The Fayum people

would gather their portraits and most precious belongings and then flee to another town or

village. This is only one theory regarding the purpose of the Fayum mummy portraits.

Another theory regarding the purpose of the Fayum mummy portraits is that the portraits are

recognition tools, to aid God in finding the physical body of a soul that has reached heaven. To

serve as a recognition tool, a portrait needed to be an accurate portrayal of the person that it

depicts. Dark circles and bags were drawn under the eyes when necessary; wrinkles were

certainly included too (Figure 8). There are some instances of paintings that have been repainted, to more accurately depict the way a person has aged. If a portrait was painted of someone when he/she was twenty five years old and that person lived to be sixty five years old, a painter may have been hired to do some retouching to the painting, to make the original portrait look more like the person did when he/she reached sixty five years old (Walker 48). The more accurate the portrayal, the more likely God would be able to identify the person in the afterlife. This seems to relate Ancient Egyptian beliefs of the afterlife with the idea of a Christian heaven.

9. Conclusion

The Fayum people were a mix of multiple cultures, ideas, and religions. As a result, the changes to mummification and introduction of mummy portraits are not surprising. The history, mummification practices, and styles of portrait painting are well known, while the exact motives behind the portraits remain subject to speculation. After a multiple-century spree, the portraits likely came to an end in A.D. 392 when Theodosius, the first Christian Roman Emperor, banned the practice of mummification. Around the same time, much of Egypt's ancient beliefs were abandoned, giving way to a new generation of beliefs and practices. The Fayum mummy portraits serve as a spectacular display and preservation of Egypt's rich history during a tumultuous time period, capturing much of Egyptians' prior religious and cultural practices.

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Appendix
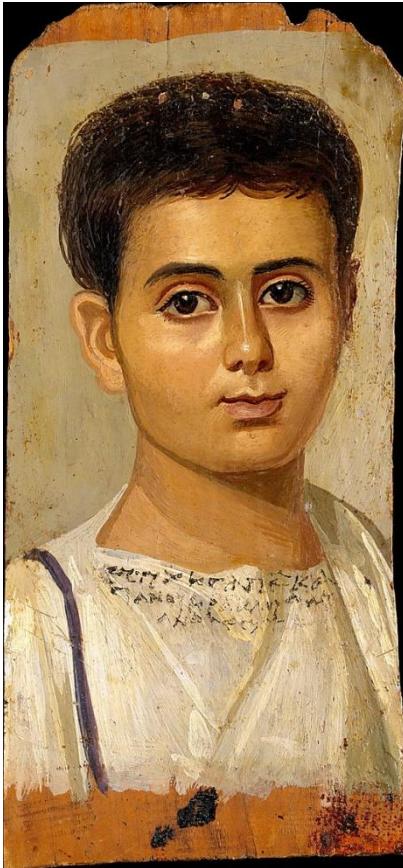
Figure 1
"Eutyches, the freedman of Kalianos.".
Musee du Louvre, Paris. (Doxiadis 40).
Encaustic on wood. This portrait contains no
distemper, and is painted directly on the
wood (Doxiadis 40). Light falls from the top
left, and there is a bright speckle on his
nose; this style is common in many Greek
paintings to show someone of virtue
(Doxiadis 40).
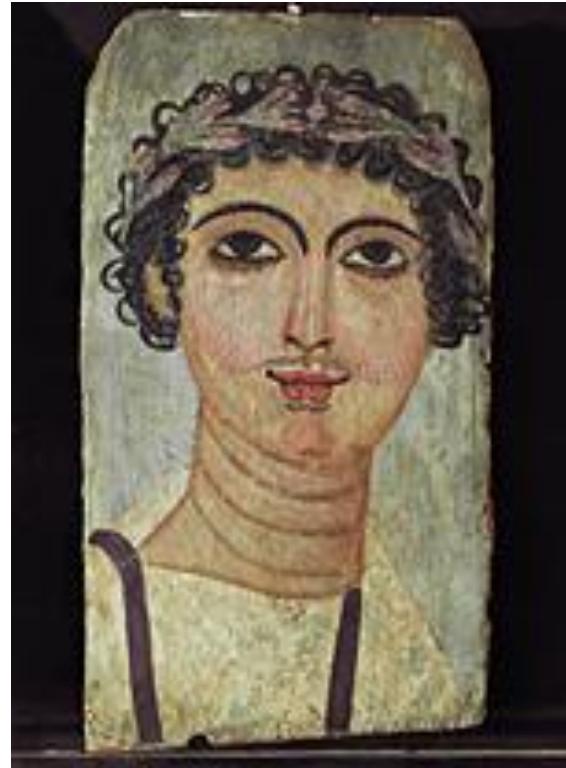
Figure 2
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. (Walker
62). Tempera on linen. The contrast of pale
skin and dark bold lines in addition to the
structure of the face are similar to what
could be found in ancient Persian and Indian
art (Walker 62).
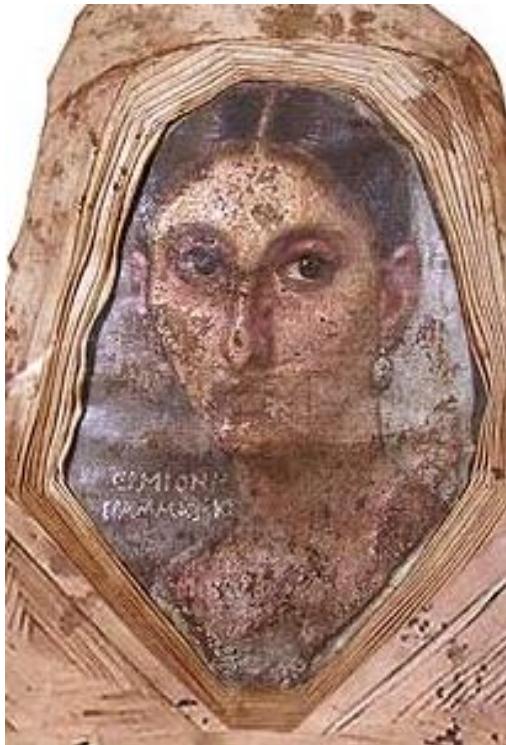
Figure 3

'Hermione Grammatike*.' Girton College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge*. (Doxiadis 50). Encaustic on linen. Her name translates to Hermione the schoolteacher. Hermione's painting is wrapped eloquently with hundreds of yards of expensive, high quality linen. To afford this quality of work she must have come from a wealthy family. (Doxiadis 50).
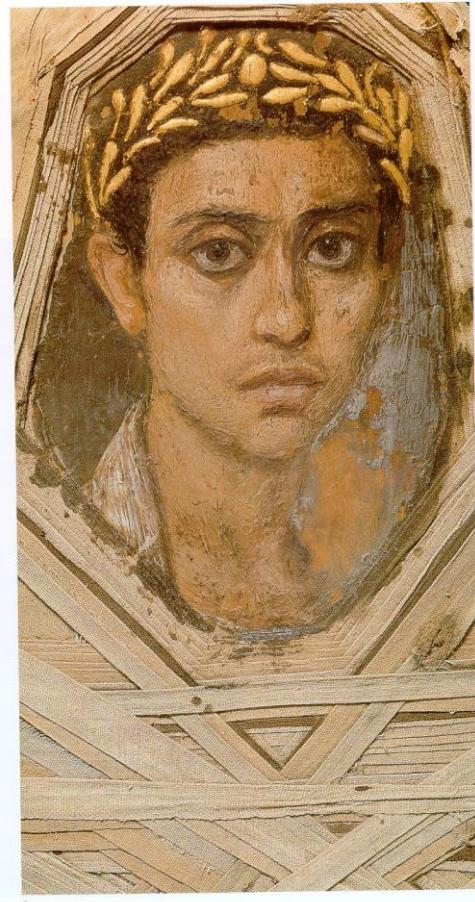

Figure 4

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (Doxiadis 60). Encaustic on limewood. Although this portrait has paint missing from the right side of the painting, it is in otherwise good condition. The painting is of a rather young looking man of wealth a power, as interpreted by his elaborate gold wreath. The sash on his shoulder implies he was a soldier (Doxiadis 60).
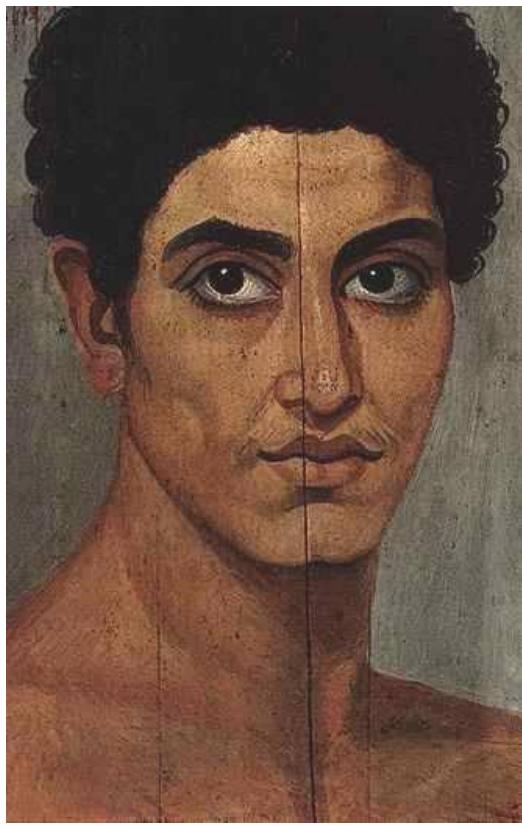
Figure 5
British Museum, London. (Doxiadis 60).
Punic wax mixed with oil and/or egg on
wood. Due to the lack of jewelry and high
quality of painting, this man was likely a
great athlete, or initiate of a cult (Doxiadis
60).
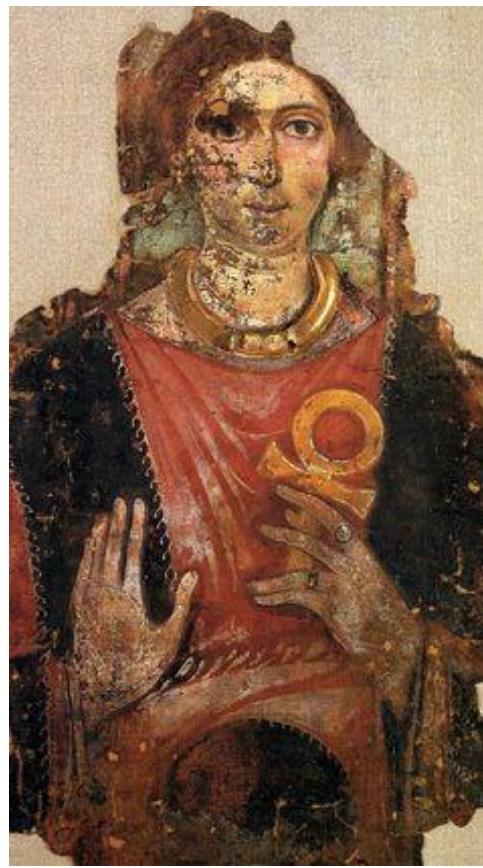
Figure 6
Benaki Museum, Athens. (Doxiadis 118).
Tempera on linen. The woman is shown
holding an Ankh cross with one hand raised.
This is later seen in Christian artwork, but
with the hands reversed (Doxiadis 118).
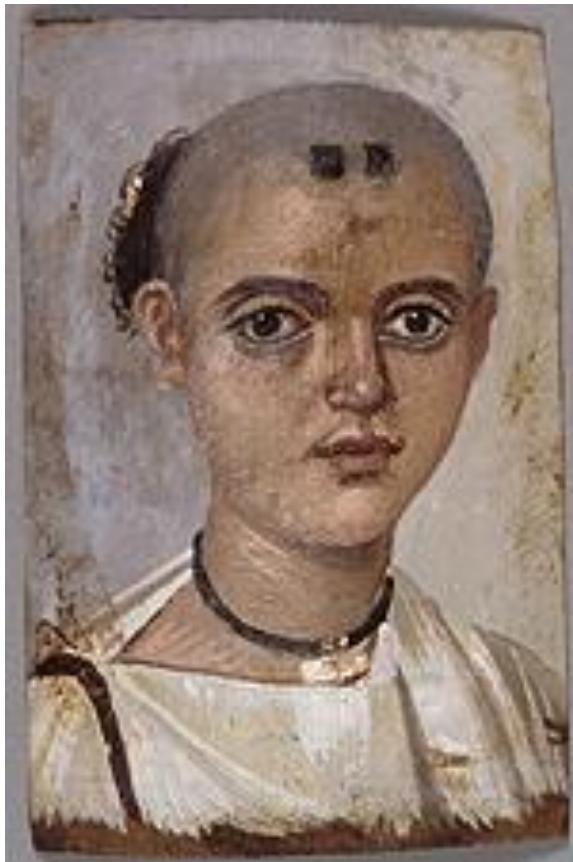
Figure 7
Paul J. Getty Museum, Malibu. (Walker 100). Encaustic on wood. The boy is shown with a shaven head, with a Horus lock on the right side. The shadows beneath his eyes and pallor of the skin suggest mortal illness. (Walker 100).
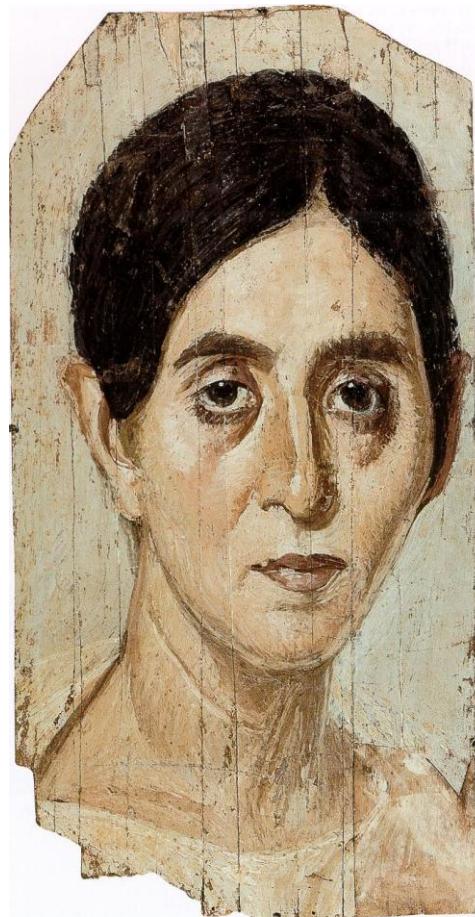

Figure 8
'The Jewish Woman.' *Staatliche Museen, Berlin*. (Doxiadis 67). Encaustic on wood. This portrait displays how life-like these paintings could be. The portrait needed to be an accurate representation of the subject to serve as a passport photo on the way to the afterlife.

Works Cited

Berger, John. *The Fayum Portraits*. Bloomsburg Publishing 1 (2001): 51–60. Print.

> The largest take away from this book was the 'passport photo' idea. The author asserts
> that the portraits were essentially passport photos for the deceased person to enter into the
> afterlife. The passport idea is backed up by a melding of culture between Greek and
> Egyptian beliefs which agrees with many other sources. The article provides a
> considerable amount of information regarding the technical aspect of the Fayum portraits.
> With the absence of modern art supplies, ochres and pigments had to be mixed very
> carefully to produce an ideal texture. Generally artists would paint from dark colors to
> light. There is also discussion of the materials (and in particular, different types of wood)
> that were used in the portraits, and what these materials can tell us of the time period.
> Certain types of wood signified wealth, for wood was scarce in many areas of ancient
> Egypt.

Breasted, James Henry. *The Lastest Discovery From Egyptian Fayum*. Royal Museum 3.4
> (1894): 295–298. Print.

> The vast majority of this article discusses an artifact found in the Egyptian Fayum region.
> This artifact is a papyrus document that is dated June 26, A.D. 250. The papyrus contains
> records of bills, official complaints, and other litigious documentations that help identify
> legal issues of the time. This article has been used to discuss the outlawing of Christianity
> and what the consequences were to those who were followers of Christ. In respect to the
> Fayum mummy portraits, there is evidence of Christian belief in some of the paintings,
> which leads researchers to believe that the Fayum mummy portraits were a Christian

practice. It is apparent at the time of this legal document, that in this particular area of

Egypt, Christianity was not the dominant religion, and it was not tolerated.

Dorman, Peter F. *Egyptian Art and Architecture*. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc (2014): 12. Print.

Though the bulk of this article focuses on Ancient Egypt, on the twelfth page is a sub-

article dedicated to Greco-Roman Egypt. The article states the Fayum mummy portraits

primarily portray Greek people living in Egypt. Although this explains why many of the

portraits display the person being painted with a gold leaf wreath around his or her head,

this would contradict the popular belief that the Fayum mummy portraits were solely

Christian portraits. This information is used in the discussion of whether the models in

the portraits are Christian, not Christian, or partially Christian.

Doxiadis, Euphrosyne. *The Mysterious Fayum Portraits, Faces from Ancient Egypt*. London:

Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995. Print.

Doxiadis is a Greek artist and writer, and has studied art in Austria, the USA, and the

UK. He provides an in depth overview of much of the Fayum people. His commentaries

of the portraits are particularly useful in determining the importance of specific painting

techniques. There is information regarding how the artist has portrayed the subject,

certain lighting, and angling techniques that were Greek. This information is used in

identifying patterns or trends in many of the different painting not just from the Fayum

region, but also in other paintings from different sites in 1st- 3rd century A.D.. This

illustrates how cultural ideals differ between the different areas of ancient times.

Dunand, Francoise, and Roger Lichtenberg. *Mummies and Death in Egypt.* New York: Cornell

University Press, 2006. Print.

This book provides details on the tradition of mummification from the earliest dynasties

to the Greco-Roman Era. Beginning with the practice of "natural mummies", where the

deceased were buried in the sand, the authors discuss the gradual mastery and art of

mummification. Eventually, the Egyptians began to perform abdominal evisceration, a

process that helped immensely in the preservation of the deceased. Other practices that

carried on through the centuries were natron "baths" and bandaging, though bandaging

techniques changed in style. The authors write in such a way as to compare and contrast

the techniques of burial and mummification from the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms, as

well as the Greco-Roman period. They also make sure to allude to the different gods that

influenced burial practices and mummification, such as Osiris and Isis.

Encyclopedia Britannica. "Hatching." (2012): n. pag.

This short entry was crucial in the understanding, and explanation of the terms "hatching"

and "cross-hatching," a technique prevalent in many tempera mummy portraits.

Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989.

Print.

Backgrounds of Early Christianity addresses the political and religious backdrop of Egypt

prior to Christianity's arrival; Alexander the Great's influence on the area is outlined, as

well as the Egyptian-Greek gods of Osiris and Serapis. Serapis is said to have replaced

Osiris in the Greek world, originating from a combination of Osiris and Apis. However,

this does not seem quite so evident in other sources – perhaps Serapis was a combination

of the two gods, but it seems that worship of Osiris still continued. The similarities

between the Egyptian gods of Osiris and Serapis and Christianity are many; the

background given in this book helps to identify them. Likewise, the explanation of the

gods helps to give a better understanding of why Copts might desire to mummify and

paint portraits of their faces as they had for a long time prior to Christianity's arrival

believed in an afterlife.

Hamilton-Paterson, James and Carol Andrews. *Mummies: Death and Life in Ancient Egypt.*

London: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd, 1978. Print.

Hamilton-Paterson and Andrews present an informative yet humorous approach to the

practice of mummification in ancient Egypt. In giving the explicit details on

mummification, such as the removal of the entrails and brain, the authors give readers a

clear idea of what it was like to be an embalmer. Similar to other books, most of the

information came from the Greek historian Herodotus , though the authors suspect that

his Greek bias may have led to exaggerations in his recordings. Altogether, this source

provided extra details on the process of mummification and supported other sources.

Holland, Brad. "The Mysterious Fayum Portraits." *Poor Bradford Almanac.* 3 Dec. 2009. Web. 2

Apr. 2014.

Mr. Holland suggests that the portraits were made of Christians expecting the second

coming of Christ, that they desired their souls and bodies to be properly identified and

reunited. The author cites a mixture of religion and culture to be the motivation behind

the portraits and mummification practice: Christianity, Roman citizenship, influence from

Alexander's Hellenistic culture, and being an Egyptian descendent of Pharaoh are all

thought to have melded into the unique portraits. This source is not an academic source,

which is noted in the paper. The reader agrees with Mr. Holland regarding the mixing of

beliefs and culture, but is not as convinced of the Christian motive due to a lack of

evidence uncovered through other research.

Kamil, Jill. *Christianity in the Land of the Pharaohs.* London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

Print.

This book provides a fountain of history on the first through fourth centuries and how the

emergence of Christianity impacted the culture of the Egyptians. The author links the

diminishment of mummification with the death of Saint Antony as well as the reign of

Theodosius, the first Roman emperor to be baptized into the Christian faith. Due to the

mixing of cultures, Christian martyrs and saints were depicted in art and were often

idolized, similar to how the Egyptians worshiped their own gods and represented them in

paintings. Thus, portraits became popular, being hung in houses and even replacing

funerary masks. This information was particularly important as it related the use of

mummy portraits to the practice of worshiping saints or gods. The author holds an

interesting perspective on how this melding of cultures was reflected in art.

Kamil, Jill. *Coptic Egypt - History and Guide*. The American University in Cairo Press, 1987.

Print.

Kamil explains the origin of the word "Copt" - an Arab corruption of Greek, derived from the name Memphis (a city), coined in 640 during the Arab invasion of Egypt. The author points out that it came to be associated with Christianity because it was the official religion at that time (A.D. 640). The book gave a brief overview of the buildup to Christianity's entrance: the importance of personal piety in Egyptian beliefs, merging of Greek culture beginning in 332 B.C., the introduction of Serapis as a (political) god, merging of Greek and Egyptian gods, emergence of Coptic language (Egyptian transliterated into Greek), and introduction of Roman rule in 30 B.C.. This book was read while still under the impression that Christianity had a major effect on the mummy portraits. Background information, especially a high-level view of the history of Egypt, is useful to build a backdrop for the mummification practices. Also to note is that the term Copt was not adopted until well after the mummy portraits were painted, i.e. "Copt" is essentially superimposed upon the portrait origins due to location, but the original subjects of the portraits may not have been Christian.

Mayer, Ralph. *The Artist's Handbook*. New York: Viking Press, 1981. Print.

Ralph Mayer was originally a chemical engineer, worked in a painting manufacturing plant, and became very familiar with the physical aspect of painting. His book is devoted to explaining different painting styles, encaustic and tempera, the two techniques most prevalent in Greco-Roman Egypt.

Meinardus, Otto Friedrich August. *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity*. American University in Cairo Press, 1999. Print.

The background of Coptic Christianity is detailed throughout this book. Coptic Christians trace their roots to the flight of the Holy family through Egypt, and in much the same ways Catholics highly esteem church tradition, the Copts esteem the places and traditions of the Holy Family and Jesus. The Coptic Church traditionally began with the arrival of the apostle Mark, whose body remains in one of the Coptic cathedrals. The Coptic Christian's primary contribution to Christianity as a whole is monasticism; they established the first monastery and essentially began the hermetic/ascetic Christian lifestyle. Upon initial reading a comparison to the monastic/hermitic lifestyle and mummification was thought to exist, but that was discredited upon further reading and recognizing the lack of impact Christianity had upon the mummy portraits (save, perhaps, their eradication). This book is used to describe the arrival and formation of Christianity.

"Mummies." *The Oxford Encylopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome.* 2010 : n. pag. Print.

This encyclopedia article suggests that mummification ensured an eternal preservation of the body such that the soul could likewise be eternal. Around the shift to A.D. the Egyptians tended towards being less concerned with material possessions contained within a mummified body's wrappings and more concerned with their identification, i.e. paintings of the deceased person. This led to the introduction of mummy portraits, a substitute for mummy masks. The desire to have an eternal life hints at religious influence and cultural ideology. A.D. 392 marked the end of the mummification process when it was outlawed by the first Christian Roman emperor.

Richardin, Pascale et al. "Radiocarbon Dating of Mummified Human Remains: Application to a

Series of Coptic Mummies from the Louvre Museum." *Radiocarbon* 55.2 (2013): 345–

352. Print.

This article presents the findings and evidence of a set of Coptic mummies found in

Antinoe, a site in Egypt, that were brought to the Louvre museum. In testing hair

samples, as well as funerary objects such as leaves or wood pieces, the researchers dated

the mummies to the Roman and Byzantine periods. A surprising result showed that the

use of bitumen to coat the mummies was still being practiced until at least the 7th century

A.D.. This evidence provides further proof for the use of bitumen for preservation during

the Roman period and gives a glimpse of what mummification looked like during that

era.

Shore, A.F. *Portrait Painting from Roman Egypt*. London: The British Museum, 1972. Print.

This source clearly distinguishes the two most prevalent painting techniques (encaustic

and tempera) and what significance these mediums had during the 1st- 3rd century in

Roman occupied Egypt. The author outlines some of the most common fashions of this

particular era, and how they are portrayed in Fayum mummy portraits. The author also

addresses the mix of the Hellenistic culture with Egyptian beliefs. Shore speculates about

the uses of mummies in Roman Egypt, drawing from evidence such as the quality of

portraits and the mummy cases themselves. A convincing argument is made that the

mummies and portraits were placed both in open courts and homes to put the deceased on

display, either in painting or in their mummy cases.

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Toohey, Peter, Sarah Iles Johnston, and Robert Garland. "Death: Explanations of and Attitudes

toward Death." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome.* 2010 : n. pag.

Print.

The Greeks and Romans sought a good afterlife, subsequently leading to the creation of

rituals to ensure this. Family members would care for the dead as they believed this care

would lead to a good afterlife. Cults likewise offered promises of blessings in the life to

come upon membership and devotion. Motivation behind mummification and especially

keeping the mummies in the home may be found in looking at the family members'

obligation to the dead.

Walker, Susan. *Ancient Faces, Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt.* New York: The

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000. Print.

This book is primarily a compilation of several mummy portraits. It contains an

interpretation of what each one can tell us about the time, and what each individual

portrait says about the person who is depicted. The collection of portraits also discusses

the significance of particular artistic elements that are effective and typical of the era.

Many of the portraits displayed in the book were used when referring to different artistic

techniques, mediums, and styles. The Primary author and editor, Dr. Susan Walker,

currently works at the University of Oxford. She previously worked in the British

Museum as a curator while writing *Ancient Faces,* which gave her direct access to several

ancient Roman and Egyptian artifacts.

Worrell, William H. *A Short Account of the Copts.* University of Michigan Press, 1945. Print.

This book outlines the beginnings of the Egyptian people as a peasant nation which was slowly Hellenized after the Greeks invaded and founded Alexandria. This led to the development of the Coptic language, which is Egyptian vernacular transliterated into Greek. The mixture of Oriental religion and Greek intellect is documented, as well as the introduction of Serapis as a god. The author then points out the similarities between the Osirian cult and Christianity, suggesting a few reasons as to why Christianity in Egypt spawned hermits and monasteries.