

Mummification

Mummification is the process during which the body is dried out. Mummification occurs in a dry, warm and ventilated environment such as the catacombs of churches - this is mummification by nature. First the skin dries out, then the internal organs. The body gradually loses bodily fluids and salts, thus reducing the body weight. The average weight of an adult mummified body is 5 to 7 kg. Mummification is facilitated by hygroscopic substances, which are used in the artificial mummification of bodies in religious ceremonies. This process takes several years for an adult human body, and approximately one year for children.

The mummified body cannot be dissected due to the considerable hardness of the tissues; we are only able to identify injuries to the skeleton. The contours of the body are preserved. The skin is distinctly dark brown pigmented and folded. The subcutaneous fat has disappeared and the skin is directly overlying the skeleton. The internal organs are rigid and reduced in size. It is easier to mummify the corpses of newborns, thin people and anaemic persons.