

Four examples of mummy wrappings with depictions from the Book of the Dead in the Cadbury Research Library

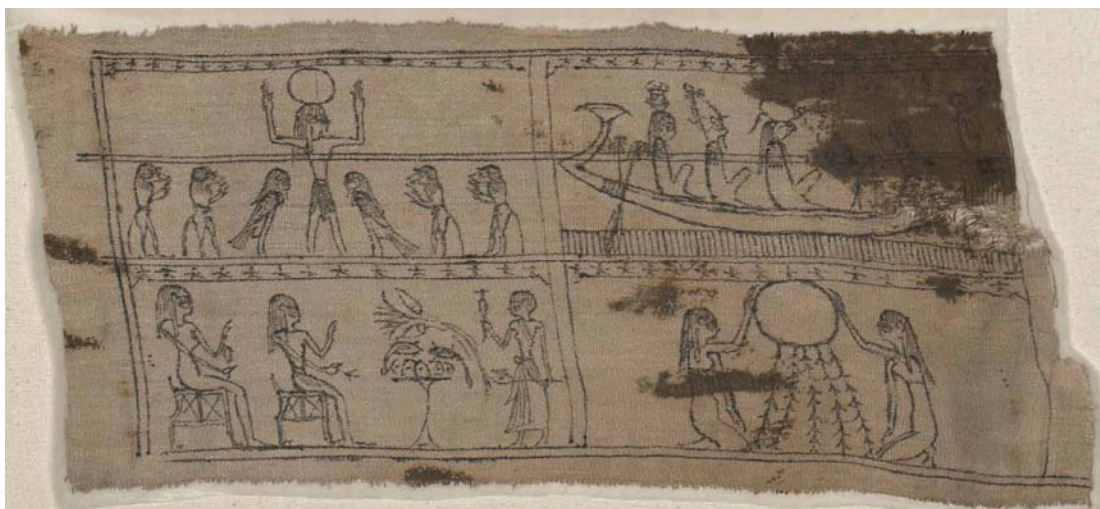
Dr Martin Bommas

Amongst the treasures of the Mingana Collection which came to be cared for by the Cadbury Research Library at the University of Birmingham (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/cadbury/index.aspx>) are mummy wrappings bought by Iraqi priest Alphonse Mingana in Cairo in the 1920s.



Section of the Book of the Dead, Chapter 125.
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The Birmingham mummy wrappings, which were on show for a month from October to November 2013 in the foyer of the University Main Library, are divided into four short fragments all containing texts in the hieratic script and elaborated vignettes. Whether or not these four artefacts belonged to only one individual cannot be established with certainty at the moment.



Vignette from the Book of the Dead, Chapter 15 (previously considered to be Chapter 16).
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During the Ptolemaic Period, spells from the Book of the Dead that were formerly written on papyrus and added to the funerary assemblages as handbooks increasingly appeared on mummy bandages. These bandages made part of the wrapping of mummies to enable the dead individual to be in easy reach of these texts on his journey to the beyond.

The surviving fragments in the Mingana Collection contain sections from chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead, the vignette from chapter 15 (previously regarded as chapter 16), the beginning of chapter 1 and finally a large section of chapter 17. Bitumen stains are visible in particular on the second and third fragments.



The beginning of the Book of the Dead, Chapter 1.
Image © Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections

Further research is needed to ascertain the context of the Birmingham mummy wrappings. The Department of Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology, of which Egyptology is a part, together with CRL are currently looking into a multidisciplinary approach to the understanding of these exciting artefacts, hopefully leading to a publication.



Section from the Book of the Dead, Chapter 17.
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