

## News & Comments

# Egyptian Mummies were First Eaten Because?

*Fariha Asghar*

History has seen periods where Egyptian mummies were eaten, and Marcus Harmes, a Professor of Pathways Education at the University of Southern Queensland and in a blog post on The Conversation shed light on the reasons behind consuming mummies.

It all started with the belief that mummies have the potential to cure illness. Mumia is a substance created from the mummified bodies and was consumed as a medicine. It was made from the remains of Egyptian Mummies, that are brought to Europe. They were consumed as medicine for treating headaches, swellings, and plague 500 years from the 12th century onwards.

Though not all physicians at that time believed in the healing potential of mummies, and many thought that people were being conned. But the mummies became more popular for treating neurological conditions, after King Charles II, consumed medicine made up of human skulls to treat his seizures. It even sparked the idea that "royalty ate royalty" as mummies were deemed a royal approach to medicine.

Later in the 19th century, the royals started a tradition of hosting "unwrapping parties" of mummies, for fun. Though most of the unwrapping was celebrated at private parties, in 1834 the surgeon Thomas Pettigrew unwrapped a mummy at the Royal College of Surgeons for the sake of doing an autopsy in public. Thus, the people gathered around either in public or on the streets to see dried human flesh and bones as they are unwrapped.

It all came to cease in the 20th century as people realized that they are inevitably destroying the archaeological remains.

### **KEYWORDS**

History; mummies; Tutankhamun; early modern humans; archaeology; archaeologist; unwrapping.

