

# Egyptianising Canary Islands Mummies<sup>1</sup>

Daniel M. Méndez-Rodríguez – Universidad de la Laguna  
dmendezr@ull.edu.es

[Many descriptions about the embalming procedures of the aboriginal population in the Canary Islands have been preserved since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Their transmission is a complex process full of modifications, omissions and/or additions of information. One remarkable phenomenon is the influence of certain details extracted from texts describing the Egyptian practice of mummification. The aim of this article is to focus in this Egyptianising view that has led to wrong or inaccurate received wisdom in the historiography even until nowadays.]

**Keywords:** Canary Islands, *mirlado*, mummification, textual transmission.

The Canary Islands are a Spanish archipelago composed by seven islands in the Atlantic Ocean in the northwest coast of Africa near Morocco. Before the European conquest, these islands were inhabited by different indigenous groups of people who came from the north of Africa in not entirely clear circumstances<sup>2</sup>. One of the most remarkable features of their culture was the funerary practice of artificial conservation of the bodies (fig. 1). Mummification in the Canary Islands, called *mirlado*, has been hitherto found in three of the seven islands: Tenerife, Gran Canaria and La Palma<sup>3</sup>.

Information about the Canarian mummification comes from two main types of sources. Analyses from the modern Physical Anthropology focusing specifically on this topic were developed above all since the end of the 80s with the setting up of an extensive interdisciplinary research project called “Cronos. Physical Anthropology of the Guanche mummies” (in Spanish “Cronos. Bioantropología de las Momias Guanches”)<sup>4</sup>. Their first results were reported at the First

---

1. The core of this paper was originally presented as a communication in the International Conference on Comparative Mummy Studies in Hildesheim (7th-9th April 2016).

2. For the mitochondrial DNA analysis about the aborigines’ origin, *cf.* Maca-Meyer *et alii*, 2004. For the different theories about the prehistoric colonization in the historiography, *cf.* Farrujia 2014.

3. The vast majority of the embalmed bodies currently preserved come from archaeological sites of Tenerife and Gran Canaria. Additionally, partial human remains with soft tissues wrapped in goat fur have been attested in La Palma (Pais Pais and Tejera Gaspar, 2010: 251-254; Tejera Gaspar *et alii*, 2010: 84).

4. Previously, some observations about the embalming procedures based on the examination of the corpses were already recorded during the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, Juan Bethencourt Alfonso (1994 [written –henceforth abbreviated w.– 1884-1912]: 296) verified the presence of incisions for evisceration in embalmed bodies. This information is denied by other authors as Gregorio Chil y Naranjo (Chil y Naranjo, 2006 [1876]: 123) and Luis Diego Cuscoy (Diego Cuscoy, 1976: 250) who found no evidence of abdominal incisions for this purpose.

World Congress on Mummy Studies held at Puerto de la Cruz in Tenerife during February 1992<sup>5</sup>. Accounts written by many authors since the 15<sup>th</sup> century provide another really invaluable type of information. This is the result of the great interest shown at the very well preserved mummified bodies of the aborigines by many individuals of quite different historic context and professional profile: explorers, merchants, priests, text compilers, astronomers, naturalists, politicians, doctors... etc. Around forty authors from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century have been attested. But this number increases until more than seventy authors if the scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are taken into account in order to achieve a more extensive historiographic perspective.

Information recorded in these texts includes embalming procedures and/or mummies' descriptions. The origin of their information was diverse: oral data from the aborigines' descendants or peasants (found only exceptionally in the oldest texts, *eg.* Alonso de Espinosa's account (1980 [1594]: 45); and also their proper experience visiting archaeological sites as burial caves. The overwhelming majority of the authors used previous accounts, mentioning or omitting their sources. Texts used for their descriptions were not only those providing information specifically about the *mirlado* itself, but also, in order to achieve a comparative view, texts from the Antiquity about the Egyptian mummification written by the classical authors Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus.

Descriptions about the Canarian embalming procedures include many different topics<sup>6</sup>. One important aspect is the geographical context, that is, the island(s) where this funerary custom took place. The embalmers are described as a group of specialists dedicated exclusively to this activity, and they were men and women with sexual division of labor depending on the sex of the corpse that was going to be treated. They were said to be a separate community of the aboriginal society regarded as outcasts due to their contact with the dead bodies. Perhaps the most interesting information is related to the different processes related to the *mirlado* or mummification. The accounts specified: the place where it took place; duration (around 15 or 20 days); different kinds of washing; the corpse preparation, with information about thorax and abdomen evisceration –if it was undertaken, as both kinds of mummification has been attested– and also excerebration<sup>7</sup>; the body manipulation with the insertion or the application of different types of substances of animal, vegetal and/or mineral origin (for example: ovicaprid fat, heather, pine tree bark, astringent herbs and pumice stones); different drying processes; the wrapping, done using different layers of ovicapids skins girded tight with leather thongs. Also different practices related to the social status of the deceased as to the use of coffins or certain funerary equipment are described. Finally, the burial practices<sup>8</sup>, which inform about the use of coffins, the deposit of the corpses and their position (laying down, sitting down or standing up against a wall) and the custom of the bodies orientation to the north in Gran Canaria. The final resting place of the deceased was commonly inaccessible caves or, in the case of Gran Canaria, also tumular funerary constructions<sup>9</sup>.

---

5. The proceedings were published in *Actas del I Congreso Internacional de Estudios sobre momias. Proceedings of the I World Congress on Mummy Studies 1992*. Tenerife, 1995.

6. The following information from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1482-1803) has been organised in Méndez Rodríguez (2014).

7. This practice has never been found in any mummy from the Canary Islands up to now, but it is mentioned by several textual sources (Méndez Rodríguez, 2014: 54-55).

8. Even when it is called "burial" many corpses were not really literally buried but deposited.

9. The environmental conditions of the burial places played a key feature in the preservation of the corpses as much as the mummification procedures. On one hand, in Gran Canaria traces of embalming processes have been attested in

Information transmission between texts during centuries involved processes of modification, addition, elimination, and (re)elaboration<sup>10</sup>. One of these consisted in modifying the received information or adding new one. But in this case it was not based on knowledge about the Canarian indigenes but on information or notions related to the Egyptian mummification or, more generally, to the Egyptian culture. The aim of this article is to focus on how certain details of the descriptions about the Canarian mummification have been Egyptianised during centuries. This has led to some misconceptions, some of which has been accepted and transmitted in the historiography even until the present day<sup>11</sup>.

The earliest text including both types of mummification was included by the French naturalist Louis Jean Marie Daubenton, who collaborated with Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, in their *Histoire Naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du Cabinet du Roy* (1749). In the third volume different kinds of natural and artificial mummification from different parts of the world are described (Egypt, Canary Islands, South America... etc.). This universal perspective is a perfect feature of the enlightened character of the work. Daubenton was the first to suggest the possibility that if the prehispanic population of the Canary Islands came from Africa, then this tradition could have been borrowed from the Egyptians<sup>12</sup>. José de Viera y Clavijo, one of the most important enlightened erudites from the archipelago during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, used Daubenton's account and extrapolated certain data from the Egyptian mummification applying it to the aborigines as will be indicated below<sup>13</sup>. It is quite remarkable that this happens quite before Napoleon's campaign in Egypt, and consequently, before a recent modern knowledge about Egypt was widespread in Europe.

The origin of the Canarian mummification was treated by other authors as the French naturalist Jean Baptiste Geneviève Marcellin Bory de Saint Vincent (1803). He thought it came from the Atlantes of Africa, who lived between Egypt and the Canary Islands. The mummification was transmitted by both societies in different ways, being improved by the Egyptians<sup>14</sup>. This idea was later copied, for example, by the officer of the French army Sylvain Meinrad Xavier de

bodies skeletonised due to unfavorable conditions (Alberto Barroso *et alii*, 2016). On the other hand, very low levels of air moisture and temperatures and the presence of certain dehydrating salts in caves in the highlands of Tenerife enhanced the preservation of soft tissues (Arnay-de-la-Rosa *et alii*, 2017).

10. The intertextual relationships and interdependences have been studied using the methodology of textual criticism in Méndez Rodríguez (2014).

11. A preliminary research related to this topic can be found in Méndez Rodríguez (2011), specially focused in the influence of Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus' texts in the accounts of the mummification from Canary Islands.

12. "Si les Guanches ont été originaires d'Afrique, ils auroient pu avoir appris des Égyptiens l'art des embaumemens" (Daubenton, 1749: 288).

13. "En efecto, los Guanches, á fuerza de experimentos, y de repetidas observaciones consiguieron descubrir el secreto de eternizarlos en cierto modo, y hacer sus *Xaxos*, comparables á las Momias, o famosos cadáveres, embalsamados por los antiguos Egypcios." (Viera y Clavijo, 2004 [1772] : 175).

14. "«On trouve les momies, dit M. Daubenton, couchées sur le dos, la tête du côté du nord, les deux mains sur le ventre». N'est-ce pas ainsi que nous avons trouvé celles des Canaries; et cette direction, toujours la même, qu'on leur donne, ne revient-elle pas à ce que nous avons déjà dit de l'origine des peuples Atlantes, et de l'Empire des morts qu'on plaçait dans le septentrion ? (...) Avec leurs armes, leurs lumières, leurs arts et leurs autres usages, les Atlantes portèrent celui des embaumemens et des pyramides sur les rives du Nil. Si la préparation des corps eût été en vogue sur le Plateau de la Tartarie, on la retrouverait chez tous les peuples qui en sont descendus; mais elle ne se rencontre que chez deux nations, dont, au rapport de l'antiquité, l'une a envahi l'autre. Elle y est accompagnée de circonstances si pareilles, que le hasard ne produit pas de telles ressemblances, et qu'on ne peut douter que les hommes qui la pratiquent, n'aient eu communication, et ne la tiennent les uns des autres." (Bory de Saint Vincent, 1803: 502-503).

Golbérry (1802)<sup>15</sup> and the physician Juan Bethencourt Alfonso (*ca.* 1884-1912)<sup>16</sup>. Bory de Saint Vincent (1803: 54-64, 495-504) emphasised three common archaeological elements to both cultures in order to perceive a connection between them. These features were the mummification, the use of funerary equipments and the presence of architectonic structures with pyramidal shape (Farrujia de la Rosa and Arco Aguilar, 2008: 30).

Richard Francis Burton's view at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is quite remarkable. He explained that the "*treatment of the corpse shows a queer but interrupted connection with Egypt*" (Burton, 1863: 118). In another work, written also by Verney Lovett Cameron, they described:

"...the practice was common to the archipelago. It at once suggests Egypt; and possibly, at one time, extended clean across the Dark Continent (...) According to some authorities, the Guanche menceys (kinglets or chiefs) were boxed, Egyptian fashion, in coffins; but few are found, because the superstitious Christian islanders destroy the contents of every catacomb" (Burton and Cameron, 1883: I, 124).

The development of racial anthropological theories during the 19<sup>th</sup> century also influenced the perception of the Canarian aborigines' mummification. In his anatomy research, physiologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1808) compared the differences between the crania from Egyptian mummies and those from the Canary Islands<sup>17</sup>. Several authors used Blumenbach's work in order to deny physical and/or cultural analogies. Geographer Alexander von Humboldt (1808) perceived certain apparently resemblance between both types of mummies but agrees with Blumenbach<sup>18</sup>. Similarly, Thomas (1860: 362) wrote:

"...The dead bodies of princes were embalmed, and, with the nobles, were buried in caves. Several of these mummies have lately been found, in a state of perfect preservation, and so light, that a denuded body weighed but a few pounds. Their manner of embalming was like that on the banks of the Nile, from which

15. "Des témoignages incontestables de la pratique de l'embaumement des corps morts, qui se trouvent encore actuellement en Afrique, dans deux contrées situées à la distance de près de dix-huit cents lieues l'une de l'autre, presque sous le même parallèle, ne donnent-ils pas lieu de conjecturer, que l'art et l'usage d'embaumer les morts, remontent aux temps obscurs d'un peuple intermédiaire et primitif, que ce peuple ne pouvait être que les Atlantes d'Afrique, qui habitaient un pays situé entre l'Égypte et les îles Canaries, et entre le vingtième et le neuvième parallèle, et que c'est d'eux que venait cet usage, pratiqué sans doute par les peuples de l'Atlantide submergée, conservé par les Guanches leurs descendants, et transmis aux prêtres de l'ancienne Égypte qui l'ont perfectionné?" (Golbérry, 1802: 96).

16. "Se pretende, según M. Bory («Essais sur les Isles Fortunées et l'antique Atlantide»), que un pueblo antiguo atlante del África Occidental, fue el intermedio entre guanches y egipcios..." (Bethencourt Alfonso, 1985 [w. *ca.* 1884-1912]: 55).

17. "Caput mumiae quod hic solum exhibemus, faciali parte latius est, non quidem vt in mongolica varietate iugalibus oslibus fere in eodem horizontali plano vtrinque extantibus, attamen vt in eo vulgari veterum Aegyptiorum vultu quem alias a binis aliis quem in istius gentis monumentis videre licet distinximus, quorum quidem alter propius ad Aethiopicum alter ad Indicum accedit." (Blumenbach, 1808: 7-8).

18. "Je n'ai vu des momies guanches que dans les cabinets de l'Europe : à l'époque de mon voyage elles étoient très-rares à Ténériffe; on en trouveroit cependant en grand nombre si, par le travail des mineurs, on tâchoit d'ouvrir les cavernes sépulcrales qui sont taillées dans le roc sur la pente orientale du Pic, entre Arico et Guimar. Ces momies sont dans un état de dessiccation si extraordinaire que les corps entiers, munis de leurs intégumens, ne pèsent souvent que six à sept livres, c'est-à-dire un tiers de moins que le squelette d'un individu de la même grandeur, dépouillée récemment de la chaire musculaire. Le crâne offre, dans sa conformation, quelques légers rapports avec celui de la race blanche des anciens Égyptiens, et les dents incisives sont émoussées chez les Guanches comme dans les momies trouvées sur les bords du Nil. Mais cette forme des dents est due à l'art seul; et, en examinant plus soigneusement la physionomie des anciens Canariens, des anatomistes habiles [footnote: Blumenbach Decas quinta Collect. suae Craniorum diversarum gentium illustr., 1808, p. 7.] ont reconnu, dans les os zygomaticques et la mâchoire inférieure, des différences sensibles avec les momies égyptiennes." (Humboldt, 1816 [1808]: 427-428).

some have inferred their Egyptian origin; but Blumenbach has shown that the conformation of the skull denies the identity”.

However, other authors as captain James William Gambier (1896: 547-548) pretended to see certain Egyptian physical features even in the Canarian society of that moment. In a cave-dwellers community, he differentiated between women of “Egyptian” type from others of “Spanish” type. The Egyptian was used in this case as synonymous of non-European or African origin (fig. 2)<sup>19</sup>.

Comparison between both embalming procedures was common during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bory de Saint Vincent (1803: 499) stated that:

“Ce n’est donc pas seulement les momies, c’est encore la manière de les préparer, qui nous offrent des rapports frappans entre les Guanches et les Égyptiens. Chez les uns et chez les autres, ce sont des gens odieux qui dissèquent les cadavres. On a plusieurs sortes d’embaumemens; l’incision pour les riches, l’introduction d’une liqueur corrosive pour les gens moins aisés, et pour les pauvres. Les Égyptiens sont, comme les Guanches, obligés, selon le sentiment manifesté dans l’Encyclopédie, de faire encore sécher les cadavres à l’air ou dans une étuve, qui remplace le soleil. Le terme de la préparation est fixé. Au bout du temps nécessaire, les parents redemandent la momie, parce que chez les Égyptiens le natrun l’eût consommée; et que chez les Guanches, qui n’avaient pas de natrum, le soleil l’eût trop desséchée. On met les gens en état de payer les embaumemens les plus chers dans un cercueil d’une seule pièce, et d’un bois réputé incorruptible<sup>20</sup>. Les embaumeurs ont différentes fonctions dans la préparation des corps; et ce que je vais tâcher de rendre frappant, c’est qu’en Égypte, où le fer fut connu dès long-temps, c’est une  *Pierre d’Éthiopie* qui sert à faire l’incision”.

Similarities detected between both funerary practices were explained with different theories. One of the best known specialists in Egyptian mummification, surgeon and antiquarian Thomas Joseph Pettigrew (1834) saw certain parallelisms but focused on the geographical distance which exists between both. Philological features of the aborigines could relate them with populations near Egypt<sup>21</sup>.

Some authors shared the vision that mummification was an Egyptian tradition taken to the Canary Islands. However, they differed in the way it was introduced. Some believed it has been

19. “We would draw attention to the peculiarly Egyptian type of face of one of the women given in our sketches (...). Both these women belong to cave-dwelling families, and though neither can be said to be a real Guanche, as none of that race now exist, still it can easily be seen in comparing them that the type has been transmitted in a much higher degree in the one than in the other. No one with ordinary observation can fail to be struck by the peculiarly “native” gait and gesture of the present dwellers in the caves. There is distinctly something un-European in all their gestures, and they seem to have reverted to the modes of sitting, the expression of face, and possibly the voice of their Guanche ancestors, precisely as in the United States we see people of pure British descent developing or reproducing the features and walk of the red Indian –the high cheek bone, thin hooked nose, arched instep, slouching gait, and nasal intonation. But alas! If the physical qualities of their Guanche ancestresses have been transmitted, their purity and sweet gentleness have not been so successfully handed down.” (Gambier, 1896: 547-548).

20. (1) Nous avons vu que les Guanches employaient pour remplir les grandes cavités du corps, des plantes aromatiques. Dans l’ancienne Encyclopédie, il est question d’une momie d’Égypte, dans laquelle on trouve une branche de romarin à peine desséchée.

21. “That the inhabitants of the Canary Islands should have adopted a practice of embalming in some measure similar to that of the Egyptians is rather singular, seeing that they were separated from each other by the entire breadth of Northern Africa; and it is not a little surprising that Mr. Marsden should have traced an affinity between the language of the Berbers or Numidians, where the remains of the Guanche tongue are to be found, and the language of the Tuariks, near Egypt, as shown in a vocabulary collected by M. Hornemann.” (Pettigrew, 1834: 237).

imported directly by the Egyptians, *eg.* La Harpe (1825)<sup>22</sup>, Gambier (1896)<sup>23</sup>, Reutter [de Rosemont] (1912)<sup>24</sup> and Bosch Millares (1962)<sup>25</sup>. Their idea was justified by some of them alluding to the circumnavigation journey around Africa supposedly undertaken by pharaoh Necho II (*ca.* 610-595 BCE). Other authors believed that the mummification technique was brought in indirectly by Phoenician, Carthaginian or Libyan people: *eg.* José Agustín Álvarez Rixo (1991 [*w. ca.* 1847-1860])<sup>26</sup> and Gambier (1896: 544)<sup>27</sup>. Obviously, these ideas have been rejected by the lack of any archaeological evidences and they are not accepted anymore in the academic sphere.

22. “Comme les anciens navigateurs connaissaient les Canaries, on peut conjecturer que cet art d'embaumer les corps a été enseigné aux Guanches par les Égyptiens, qui l'ont conservé chez eux jusqu'à nos jours.” (La Harpe, 1825: 191 n. 1).

23. “The mummies of the Canary Islands present some very interesting peculiarities, and have been found in great numbers in the caves that have been used indifferently as places of sepulture and as the abodes of the living. The art of embalming must have been learned from stray Egyptians or Phoenicians, and there is a legend that in the thirteenth century before Christ the then Egyptian ruler sent a colony to these islands, who settled here. The Guanche mummies, however, differ from the Egyptian in several respects.” (Gambier, 1896: 544).

24. “Sous le règne du Pharaon Nécho de la XIV<sup>me</sup> dynastie, la flotte égyptienne entreprit la circumnavigation de l'Afrique. Partie de la mer Rouge, elle longea les côtes du continent noir, doubla le Cap de Bonne Espérance, remonta le littoral africain occidental, passa le détroit de Gibraltar pour retourner à son point de départ par la Méditerranée, après avoir probablement fait relâche aux Iles Canaries, que les vaisseaux marchands visitaient déjà.

Sans cela, comment expliquer que les Guanches aient pratiqué l'art de l'embaumement, comme le prouvent les momies bien conservées, que l'on retrouve dans leurs îles habitées par des populations pauvres et sauvages. Les Guanches, dépourvus de culture artistique, n'eussent pu eux-mêmes arriver à pratiquer cet art de façon à conserver en si parfait état leurs cadavres. Cette coutume se répandit si rapidement parmi eux, qu'elle devint même nationale.

Ils remplaçaient le natron, qu'ils ne connaissaient ni ne possédaient, par la dessiccation lente, plaçant à cet effet leurs cadavres pendant quinze jours dans des étuves ad hoc.” (Reutter [de Rosemont], 1912: 138).

25. “Los egipcios transportaban las mercancías por el Nilo en barcos y lanchones, llevando sus mejores productos industriales por mar a otros países, hasta el punto de que en tiempos faraónicos sus flotas navegaban por el Egeo, entraron en el Mar Rojo y conocieron el Océano Indico. No es de extrañar, por lo tanto, que, contando con estos medios, los egipcios ocuparan el mismo puesto que los fenicios en el conocimiento de los mares, al llevar a cabo empresas que les pusieron en comunicación con los demás pueblos. Dígalo si no la noticia, referida por los historiadores, de que por encargo de Nechos o Nechao II, rey de Egipto, hicieron en el año 610 antes de Jesucristo un viaje de circunnavegación en torno al Africa que duró tres años, durante los cuales pasaron por el canal que separa las costas occidentales de esta parte del mundo de las Islas del grupo oriental de Canarias, después de doblar el Cabo de Buena Esperanza y atravesar el Estrecho de Gibraltar y regresar a Egipto. Nada de particular tiene que los marinos de esta expedición las bautizaran con el nombre de Afortunadas y el que no haya podido aclarar la historia si llegaron o no a visitarlas.” (Bosch Millares, 1962: 16).

“En la historia de la Medicina prehispanica canaria, uno de su capítulos más interesantes es el que se refiere a los embalsamamientos y enterramientos, toda vez que si al historiador resulta fácil darse por enterado de lo que nos cuentan nuestros cronistas, al médico puede dejarle sumido en un mar de vaguedades, ya que los materiales de que nos hemos valido poco resuelven sobre el procedimiento que llevaron a cabo para practicar esta operación. Deducimos, en conclusión, que si los primitivos pobladores tuvieron relación con los egipcios, según hemos visto en el estudio antropológico referido en uno de los primeros capítulos de este trabajo, aprendieron de ellos los métodos que emplearon para embalsamar, pues es un hecho demostrado que los egipcios conocían las virtudes antisépticas de la sequedad extrema y en algunas sustancias químicas como el nitro y la sal común. Y si recordamos cómo lo practicaban, no nos llama la atención el que los aborígenes, sobre todo los que vivían en Tenerife y Gran Canaria, efectuaran los mismos procedimientos que usó aquel pueblo.” (Bosch Millares, 1962: 40).

26. “Y considerando yo que nadie ignora que el Egipto y la Libia son dos grandes extensiones de país de la misma África, y que, según queda demostrado N. 2 y 3, los africanos poblaron en estas Islas, está visto que a algunos de ellos inteligenciados en el uso y secreto de embalsamar, les pudo haber tocado de quedar de colonos en Tenerife y de ahí el principio de los xaxos o momias, hallados principalmente en esta isla...” (Álvarez Rixo, 1991 [*w. ca.* 1847-1860]: 8, n. 8).

27. *Cf.* above Gambier (1896: 544).

The relevance of all these authors from the point of view of this article is that many of them (and others) share some clearly Egyptianised view in some elements that do not correspond to the actual embalming procedures performed in the Canary Islands.

Probable earliest example is the idea that Canarian embalmers were priests. This statement was firstly pointed out by Thomas Sprat, an English churchman, dean of Windsor and bishop of Rochester. He recorded some information an English physician called Evan Pieugh orally provided him, which in its turn was given to him by some of the eldest inhabitants of Güímar<sup>28</sup>. Sprat wrote:

“...they had of old one particular Tribe of men that had this Art amongst themselves only, and kept it as a thing sacred, and not to be communicated to the Vulgar: These mixt not with the rest of the Inhabitants, nor married out of their own Tribe, and were also their Priests and Ministers of Religion: That upon the Conquest of the Spaniards they were most of them destroy’d, and the Art lost with them, only they held some Traditions yet of a few Ingredients, that were made use of in this business...” (Sprat 1667: 210).

No text before this one detailed such information. This idea was, however, later copied during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by many authors, *eg.* Antoine Phérotée de La Croix (1688)<sup>29</sup>, Louis Feuillée (1724)<sup>30</sup>, Antoine François Prévost (1746)<sup>31</sup>, Louis Jean Marie Daubenton (1749)<sup>32</sup>, Joseph de Laporte (1773)<sup>33</sup>, Thomas Salmon (1776)<sup>34</sup>, Tomas Bankes (1797)<sup>35</sup>, Sylvain Meinrad Xavier de

28. “...Town inhabited for the most part by such as derive themselves from the old Guanchies...” (Sprat 1667: 209).

29. “Suivant le raport des plus anciens habitans de cete Ile ce secret d’embaumer les corps & de faire durcir le bois n’étoit anciennement connu qu’à une famille ou race particuliere, qui le tenoit caché comme quelque chose de saint & de sacré, sans l’avoir jamais voulu communiquer au peuple. Ces gens-là n’avoient aucun commerce avec le reste des habitans; ne se marioient point hors de leur famille & étoient comme Prêtres ou Ministres du Service divin, mais lors que les Espagnols se rendirent maitres de ces Iles, ils furent la plûpart dissipez; le secret perit presque avec eux, à la reserve qu’ils retinrent seulement quelque tradition d’une partie de ce dont ils se servoient pour cet éfet en cete manière.” (La Croix, 1688: 695-696).

30. “...les Naturels des Canaries tiennent par tradition qu’une seule famille particuliere avoit le secret d’embaumer les corps et de durcir le bois, elle en faisoit un mistere sacré. Ceux de cette famille ne se marioient pas hors de leur race, on les regardoit comme prêtres et ministres du service divin. A la conquête de Canaries par les espagnols, cette famille se dissipa presque entierement et des merueilleux secrets, dont nous venons de parler, il ne resta que ce que nous venons de raconter” (Feuillée, 1724 in Puig-Samper and Pelayo 1997: 136-137).

31. “... Si l’on s’en rapporte aujourd’hui aux plus anciens Guanches, il y avoit parmi leurs Ancêtres une Tribu particuliere qui avoit l’art d’embaumer les corps, & qui le conservoit comme un mistere sacré qui ne devoit jamais être communiqué au vulgaire. Cette même Tribu composoit le Sacerdoce, & les Prêtres ne se mêloient point avec les autres Tribus par des mariages. Mais après la conquête de l’Isle, la plûpart furent détruits par les Espagnols, & leur secret perit avec eux.” (Prévost 1746: 287).

32. “...ceux qui furent épargnez par les Espagnols lorsqu’ils firent la conquête de cette Isle, leur apprirent que l’art d’embaumer les corps étoit connu des Guanches, et qu’il y avoit dans leur nation une tribu de Prêtres qui en faisoient un secret, et même un mystère sacré.” (Buffon and Daubenton 1749: 287).

33. “Si l’on s’en rapporte aux descendans de ces anciens Guanches, il y avoit parmi leurs ancêtres une tribu particulier, qui possédoit seule l’art d’embaumer les corps, & le conservoit comme un mystere sacré, qui ne devoit jamais être communiqué au vulgaire. Cette même tribu composoit le sacerdoce; & les prêtres ne se mêloient point par des alliances avec les autres ordres de citoyens. Mais après la conquête de ces isles, la plupart furent détruits par leurs vainqueurs; & leur secret périt avec eux.” (Laporte, 1773: 211-212).

34. “Se si vuol prestar fede oggidì a’ più antichi Guanchi, avevano tra’loro antenati una Tribù particolare, che possedeva l’arte d’imbalsamare i corpi, conservata da essi, come un mistero sacro, chei mai non dovevasi comunicare al volgo. Questa medesima Tribù componeva il Sacerdozio; e i Sacerdoti non si mescolavano punto con le altre Tribù ne’maritaggi.” (Salmon, 1776: 622-623).

Golbérry (1802)<sup>36</sup> and Jean-Nicolas Gannal (1838)<sup>37</sup>. It cannot be known to what extent did Sprat reproduced literally Pieugh's words or garnished his description<sup>38</sup>. Sprat's text perception of the embalmers as priests that shared a sacred and secret knowledge restricted only to this group of initiated people may be based on his conception of ancient Egyptian and Middle East societies. This can be seen in another part of his work, where he wrote that

“...we should attribute the original of *Astronomy, Geometry, Government*, and many sorts of Manufactures, which we now enjoy, to the *Assyrians, the Chaldeans, and Egyptians*. And as to them we owe the *Invention*; so from them proceeded the first *Corruption* of knowledge. It was the custom of their Wise men, to wrap up their Observations on Nature, and the Manners of Men, in the dark Shadows of Hieroglyphics, and to conceal them, as sacred Mysteries, from the apprehensions of the vulgar...” (Sprat 1667: 5).

A direct parallelism between the specialists who performed both practices and the secrecy and mystery related to it was explicitly mentioned by Golbérry (1802: 92): “Les prêtres guanches, comme les prêtres égyptiens, embaumaient aussi leurs morts, et faisaient de cet art un secret et un mystère religieux”. Parallel to these authors, others rejected this idea since the 18<sup>th</sup> century as for example Viera y Clavijo (1772)<sup>39</sup> and later, copying his information, Bory de Saint Vincent (1803)<sup>40</sup>. They argued that oldest sources did not refer to the embalmers as priests.

Terminology applied to the embalmed corpses of the Canary Islands shows clearly also an Egyptian perspective. Four main terms are used to mention them. The oldest concept is *xaxos*, which is how the Guanches –the ancient inhabitants of Tenerife– called them; but also *mirlados* or *enzurronados*, Spanish words describing them as dried corpses or alluding to how they were wrapped; and finally, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century they were called mummies, when they were first compared with those preserved bodies of Egyptian origin<sup>41</sup>.

Textual influence from the classical authors Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus –who wrote about the Egyptian mummification– is essential to understand this Egyptianising phenomenon in the production of new information or modification of the traditional data about the Canarian

35. “By the relation of the most ancient among them, there was a particular tribe who had this art only among themselves, which they kept as a thing sacred, and not to be communicated to the vulgar. The people of this class were likewise priests, and did not marry out of their own tribe. But when the Spaniards conquered the place, most of them were destroyed, and the art perished with them.” (Bankes, 1801 [1797]: 422).

36. “Suivant la tradition accréditée dans le pays, les prêtres guanches suivaient pour leurs embaumemens la méthode suivante.” (Golbérry, 1802: 95).

37. “C’est donc mal à propos que Sprats a avancé que les embaumemens étaient confiés à une tribu de prêtres qui en faisaient un mystère sacré, et que le secret s’est perdu avec ces prêtres. Il y avait plusieurs sortes d’embaumement et plusieurs emplois parmi ceux qui en était chargés.” (Gannal, 1838: 62-63).

38. Perhaps this may also be the explanation for the presence of excerebration (see below) and a special procedure to harden the corpses (“He saw about three or four hundred in several Caves, some of them are standing, others lie on beds of Wood, so hardned by an art they had (which the Spaniards call Curar, to cure a piece of wood) as no Iron can pierce or hurt it.” (Sprats, 1667: 209).

39. “Sin embargo, nuestros Antiquarios, lejos de hacer a una Tribu de Sacerdotes la depositaria del Arte de embalsamar los cuerpos muertos, atribuyen aquel oficio á ciertos hombres, y mugeres, que cuidaban de sus respetivos sexos; advirtiendo, que este era un empleo vil, inmundo, y sumamente despreciable” (Viera y Clavijo, 2004 [1772]: vol. I, 176).

40. “C’est donc mal-à-propos que Sprats a avancé que les embaumemens étaient confiés à une tribu de prêtres qui en faisaient un mystère sacré, et que le secret s’est perdu avec ces prêtres.” (Bory de Saint Vincent, 1803: 59).

41. For a specification about the concepts used by each author until the beginning of the 19th century, cf. Méndez Rodríguez, 2014: 33-36.



*mirlado*<sup>42</sup>. Bory de Saint Vincent (1803: 57) already overestimated data provided by classical authors in order to learn about the Guanche *mirlado*: “Quelques écrivains ont cependant laissé des détails à ce sujet, mais peut-être ne sont-ils pas plus exacts que ceux qu’Hérodote nous a transmis sur les embaumens des Égyptiens”.

At least a couple of authors during the 20<sup>th</sup> century considered –but not studied– this issue from a critical approach. Anthropologist Earnest Hooton (1925: 41-42) wrote that “One of the difficulties standing in the way of an implicit faith in the statements of the early historians on the subject of Guanche embalming is the fact that we do not know to what extent their explanations and views were colored by the analogy of Egyptian embalming, and more especially by the passage in Herodotus in which the methods of embalming are described”. Similarly, researcher Diego Cuscoy (1976: 265) stated that “It can be also supposed that the authors of Canarian texts had information about the embalming and mummification practiced by the Egyptians; and perhaps through the Egyptian ritual known by readings tried to explain the Guanche funerary ritual. And this could reach also the embalmer [lit. “mirlador”], his vile trade and his repudiation and discrimination by the society he served...” (translation by Daniel M. Méndez-Rodríguez).

One example of this Egyptianised perspective is the idea that the embalmers were organised into different types of specialists related to different activities. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, José de Viera y Clavijo supposed that the embalming procedures were done similar to the Egyptian way. He thought there were two kinds of persons involved that he transcribed as *Paraschistes* and *Taricheutoe*<sup>43</sup>. These concepts clearly come from Diodorus Siculus’ text in which three different types of employees or performers in the Egyptian mummification are mentioned: the scribe (γραμματεὺς), the slitter<sup>44</sup> (παρασχίστης) and the embalmers (ταριχευταί) (D.S. I, 91, 4-5). This idea influenced directly or indirectly other 19<sup>th</sup> century authors as Jean Baptiste Geneviève Marcellin Bory de Saint-Vincent (1803)<sup>45</sup>, Philip Barker-Webb and Sabin Berthelot (1842)<sup>46</sup>, P. Conil (1856)<sup>47</sup> and even several others during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as Juan Bosch Millares (1962)<sup>48</sup> and

42. A preliminary study was done in Méndez Rodríguez (2011).

43. “Como quiera que combinemos estas noticias, yo me inclino á creer, que la preparación de los cadáveres corría por cuenta de dos diferentes clases de personas, como se practicaba en Egipto. Unas diseccionaban con sus *Tabonas*, ó cuchillos de pedernal los cuerpos, y los despojarían de los sesos, intestinos, y demás entrañas: Empleo necesario en el mismo Egipto, pero reputado por tan infame, que apenas hacían estos oficiales su operación, procuraban huir, temiendo que los circunstantes los apedreasen, así como los maldecían. Estos eran llamados *Paraschistes*. Otras cuidarían del embalsamamiento (tarea de suyo más piadosa, y más susceptible de honor) y á estos los llamaban en Egipto *Taricheutoe*.” (Viera y Clavijo, 2004 [1772]: vol. I, 176-177).

44. Translation from C. H. Oldfather *Diodorus of Sicily: in twelve volumes*. London – Cambridge (Massachusetts) 1960, vol. I 311.

45. “...un opérateur lui faisait une ouverture au bas-ventre avec un caillou affilé (...) on en retirait les intestins, que d’autres opérateurs lavaient et nettoyaient ensuite...” (Bory de Saint-Vincent, 1803: 58).

46. “Suivant la tradition, il existait à Ténériffe une classe d’hommes et de femmes qui exerçait le métier d’embaumeurs. «Ces gens-là, dit le père Espinosa, ne jouissaient d’aucune considération; ils vivaient isolés, on fuyait leur contact, car on les regardait comme immondes, n’étant employés qu’à vider les cadavres. Ceux, au contraire, qui se chargeaient spécialement d’embaumer le corps avaient droit au respect de leurs concitoyens.»” (Barker-Webb and Berthelot, 1842: 140). Berthelot stated he based his opinion in Espinosa’s text, but indeed this specific information about the specialised work within the embalmers group is not included in his text.

47. “...un opérateur lui faisait une ouverture au bas-ventre avec un caillou tranchant (...); on en retirait les intestins, que d’autres opérateurs lavaient et nettoyaient ensuite...” (Conil, 1856: 35).

48. “Existía también en las Islas, al decir de nuestros historiadores, el cuerpo de embalsamadores, constituido por personas pertenecientes a uno y otro sexo. De estas gentes, los que se dedicaban a vaciar los cadáveres, no gozaban de consideración alguna, vivían aisladas y se evitaba su trato y roce con ellos por considerárseles inmundos; pero, en

Martín (1982)<sup>49</sup>. Their texts show how this tasks differentiation was still considered as proper of the Canarian mummification.

Another case is the different social consideration of the specialists. The oldest texts about Canarian mummification explain how they were set apart from the rest of the society because they were seen as filthy due to their contact with the dead bodies. However, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, several texts show a direct influence of Diodorus Siculus' text. He wrote that in the Egyptian context there were two different reactions to the activities performed by the different specialists. The slitter was chased by persons who pelted him with stones and cursed him. He was the object of hatred because he had applied violence to the body of a man. However, the embalmers were seen undefiled, related somehow with the priesthood and esteemed worthy of every honour and consideration<sup>50</sup>. This idea is clearly found in at least two texts describing the *mirlado*. Barker-Webb and Berthelot (1842) included in their text that those persons in charge of embalming the body were respected by their people<sup>51</sup>. Much more recently, Martín (1985: 109) supposed –based in Diodorus's information– that there were two different social reactions to two different activities performed: those who made the evisceration moved away from the bodies once they finished their task fearful they could be stoned, while those who embalmed were respected by their fellow citizens because their activity was considered pious and honourable.

Textual sources mentioned several substances used during the mummification processes. Between these there is one that should be highlighted in this context: salt. It doesn't appear in any text before the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>52</sup>. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Juan Abreu Galindo (*ca.* 1594-1602) wrote that certain specific parts of the corpses were washed everyday twice with cold water<sup>53</sup>. Abreu Galindo's text was later used and almost copied literally by José de Viera y Clavijo

cambio, los que se encargaban especialmente de embalsamar el cuerpo tenían derecho al respeto de los demás.” (Bosch Millares, 1962: 42).

49. “Xaxos llamaban los guanches a sus momias y, al igual que en Egipto, la preparación de los cadáveres para preservarlos de la corrupción corría por cuenta de dos diferentes grupos de personas. Unos vaciaban con sus tabonas o cuchillos de pedernal los cuerpos, despojándolos de los sesos, intestinos y demás entrañas. Quienes se ocupaban de este cometido no gozaban de consideración alguna, vivían aislados, se evitaba su contacto y apenas concluían su operación se alejaban ante el temor de que los apedreasen. Su trabajo era necesario, pero reputado de tan infame que quedaban para siempre malditos, sin poder ejercer otro oficio que el de vaciar cadáveres. Correspondía a otros individuos, conocedores de los secretos del arte de embalsamar, el momificar o mirar propiamente los cuerpos, ungiéndolos y amortajándolos. Para ellos era el respeto de sus conciudadanos pues se tenía por piadosa y honorable su tarea.” (Martín, 1982: 109).

50. “...The first is the scribe, as he is called, who, when the body has been laid on the ground, circumscribes on the left flank the extent of the incision; then the one called the slitter cut the flesh, as the law commands, with an Ethiopian stone and at once takes to flight on the run, while those present set out after him, pelting him with stones, heaping curses on him, and trying, as it were, to turn the profanation on his head; for in their eyes everyone is an object of general hatred who applies violence to the body of a man of the same tribe or wounds him or, in general, does him any harm.

The men called embalmers, however, are considered worthy of every honour and consideration, associating with the priest and even coming and going in the temples without hindrance, as being undefiled.” (D.S. I 91, 4-5; English translation by C. H. Oldfather (1960)).

51. “Suivant la tradition, il existait à Ténériffe une classe d'hommes et de femmes qui exerçait le métier d'embaumeurs. «Ces gens-là, dit le père Espinosa, ne jouissaient d'aucune considération; ils vivaient isolés, on fuyait leur contact, car on les regardait comme immondes, n'étant employés qu'à vider les cadavres. Ceux, au contraire, qui se chargeaient spécialement d'embaumer le corps avaient droit au respect de leurs concitoyens.»” (Barker-Webb and Berthelot, 1842: 140). As previously mentioned, this information based on Espinosa's work is not accurate.

52. Francisco López de Gómara, a 16th century Spanish clergyman and chronicler, wrote that the deceased were bathed in the sea (López de Gómara, 1554 [1552]: 299v). He did not mention explicitly the salt and, anyway, this sea salt is not the type Viera y Clavijo will write later as will be seen below.

53. “...y cada día los lavaban dos veces con agua fría las partes débiles, sobacos, tras las orejas, las ingles, entre los dedos, las narices, cuello y pulso.” (Abreu Galindo, 1977 [w. 1594-1602]: 300).

(1772)<sup>54</sup> but he surprisingly added the salt as an ingredient. We found the answer to this addition in another of his works, his Dictionary of Natural History. He (*ca.* 1799-1810) defined the word ‘natron’ and explained that Herodotus wrote that the Egyptians used it for the embalming of their corpses and, because of this, perhaps the Guanches also used natron from Teide –the highest mountain of Tenerife– for the preservation of their mummies<sup>55</sup>. Therefore, Viera y Clavijo didn’t know that the aborigines used salt but he supposed they did because of the information written by Herodotus<sup>56</sup>. Many authors followed directly or indirectly Viera y Clavijo’s supposition. Therefore, salt as a substance used in Canary Islands’ mummification became received wisdom, that is, information assumed as true and not questioned, and in this way it was included in many descriptions<sup>57</sup>. Quite the contrary, for example, Berthelot went as far as criticizing the historian and poet Antonio de Viana’s account (1604) for omitting the use of salt in the embalming procedures:

“Viana, qui a décrit la manière d’embaumer d’après les renseignements d’Espinosa, suppose que la pâte aromatique et astrigente qui servait à oindre le corps extérieurement était aussi introduite dans l’intérieur; mais il a omis les bains d’eau saline qui rapprochent si essentiellement la méthode des Guanches de celle des Egyptiens, décrite par Hérodote.” (Barker-Webb and Berthelot, 1842: 141).

Warren R. Dawson (1927: 851) went even further and stated that “...The washing of the interior of the body and the use of salt encountered among the Guanches are typically Egyptian...”. Transmission of this information considered as accurate continued. One remarkable case is the translation of William Robert Wilde’s work, originally published in 1840, which reproduced an excerpt of George Glas’ description, a Scottish merchant. Wilde did not mention salt at all as a substance used in the embalming procedures. However, it was included in an explanatory note in a Spanish translation published in 2000 (Wilde, 2000 [1840]: 66 n. 39). In spite of being a data

A translation into English of Abreu Galindo’s text was later published by George Glas (1764: 151): “...then twice a day they washed the porous part of the body, viz. the arm-pits, behind the ears, the groin, between the fingers, and the neck, with cold water...”.

54. “Lavábanle después dos veces cada día, con agua fría y sal todas las partes mas endebles del cuerpo, como son orejas, narices, dedos, pulsos, ingles, &c.” (Viera y Clavijo, 2004 [1772]: vol. I, 177).

55. “Sin embargo, es menester publicar que en el Teide de Tenerife se encuentra una sal natrón sumamente pura, y mucho más digna de aprecio que la decantada de Egipto, pues ésta es una sosa fósil, terrosa, puerca y de un blanco rojizo; la de nuestro Teide es muy alba, pura, fina, ligera y suave, como el yeso mate. (...) Heródoto dice que los antiguos egipcios se servían del natrón para el embalsamamiento de los cadáveres y quién sabe si se servirían también nuestros guanches del natrón del Teide para la incorruptibilidad que comunicaban a sus xaxos o momias.” (Viera y Clavijo, 2005 [w. 1799-1810]: 452).

Some studies on human remains identified different substances used in the embalming procedures but natron has not been found between them (Mathiesen, 1960; Aufderheide *et alii*, 1995; Sánchez Pinto and Ortega, 1995). However, natrium salts –sodium carbonate decahydrate– may have been indirectly used due to their drying properties. There is “a clear-cut relationship between the existence and/or amount of natrium salts present in caves, and their use as burial sites by the prehispanic population, suggesting an intentional use of caves containing this mineral as burial caves, at least in the central highlands of Tenerife” (Arnay-de-la-Rosa *et alii*, 2017).

56. “...they conceal the body for seventy days, embalmed in saltpeter; no longer time is allowed for the embalming...” (Hdt. II 86-88; English translation by A. D. Godley (1975 [1920])).

57. Estala (1797: 170); Bory de Saint-Vincent (1803: 59); Pettigrew (1834: 233); Gannal (1838 : 63); Barker-Webb and Berthelot (1842: 141); Conil (1856: 32); Leclercq (1880: 164); Bethencourt Alfonso (1994 [w. *ca.* 1884-1912]; Parcelly (1891 : 48); Verneau (1891: 80); Reutter (1912: 139); Smith (1915: 61-62); Dawson (1927: 837); Jiménez Sánchez (1941: 257); Bosch Millares (1962: 41); Diego Cuscoy (1968: 49); Martín (1985: 109); Navarro Mederos (2005: 85).

introduced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century based on analogy with the Egyptian mummification, salt relate to *mirlado* can still be found in more recent publications.

Excerebration is a problematic issue. This kind of procedure has not been applied in any mummy from the Canary Islands hitherto found. The only traces of human intervention that can be seen in the mummies' crania are those related to trepanation. But this technique has a therapeutic purpose and is obviously not related to mummification. Nevertheless excerebration was described in several texts since the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Antonio Sedeño (*ca.* 1575 - beginning 17<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>58</sup> and Thomas Sprat (1667)<sup>59</sup> specified that the brain was removed from the body. These texts were later copied by other authors as Thomas Arias Marín de Cubas (*ca.* 1687-1694)<sup>60</sup>, José de Viera y Clavijo (1772)<sup>61</sup>, Sylvain Meinrad Xavier de Golbérry (1802: 95)<sup>62</sup> and Burton and Cameron (1883)<sup>63</sup>. Finally it was criticised from a physical anthropological point of view in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Gregorio Chil y Naranjo (1876-1880)<sup>64</sup> and the information didn't continue being spread without being questioned<sup>65</sup>. But the origin of the information still remains unknown. Is it a mistake introduced in one of the texts and then copied by other authors? This cannot be easily proved since Sprat's dependence from Sedeño is quite uncertain. Could it be then another introduced Egyptinised element? Obviously Herodotus mentioned brain evisceration for the Egyptian mummification<sup>66</sup>, but the removal procedure described by Sprat seems to be different. Not through the nostrils but somehow through the back of the head. Therefore, brain removal cannot be easily said to be an Egyptianised feature added to the texts.

Some descriptions include the allusion to a lithic sharp tool used to make an incision in the body which was called *tabona* by the aborigines. It is first mentioned related to this topic<sup>67</sup> in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Viera y Clavijo<sup>68</sup> (1772) and seems undoubtedly a parallel to the Ethiopian stone

58. "...en la caueza sacaban los sesos, i hacían lo mismo, i lo ponían tan dicumuladamente ajustado que parece no hauerle auierto." (Sedeño (2008 [1978]; w. 1575- beginning 17th century: 380).

59. "...they first unbowelled the Corps (and in the poorer sort, to save charges, they took out the Brain behind..." (Sprat, 1667: 211).

60. "...abríanle el vientre por la parte derecha debajo de las costillas á modo de media luna, sacaban todo lo de dentro y por lo alto de la cabeza sacaban los sesos, y quitado todo hasta la lengua..." (Marín de Cubas, 1993 [w. 1687-1694]: 212).

61. "...y los despojarían de los sesos, intestinos, y demás entrañas..." (Viera y Clavijo (2004 [1772]: vol. I, 176).

62. "Tout l'humide de la tête et les entrailles se tiraient;..." (Golbérry, 1802: 95).

63. "This prepar'd, they first unbowel the Corps (and in the poorer sort, to save Charges, took out the Brain behind..." (Burton and Cameron, 1883: I, 123).

64. "Viera y Clavijo (...) entra en consideraciones que no puedo aceptar. (...) Dice el autor citado que los despojarían de los sesos con sus tabonas o cuchillos de pedernal y supone debía ser por la nariz. El que tenga el más vulgar conocimiento de anatomía comprende lo imposible que es extraer la masa cerebral, aunque sea en pedazos por ese punto. Sería necesario fracturar la región nasal, y eso no es tan fácil. Además en los cráneos que conservo debían existir fracturas en esa u otra parte, y no las he visto; en los osarios donde he andado he examinado muchísimos cráneos, y pedazos de ellos, y jamás he observado nada que me indique la perforación de esta caja ososa para extraer el cerebro por el medio indicado." (Chil y Naranjo, 2006 [1876-1880]: 123-124).

65. There are some exceptions, for example: Martín (1985: 109).

66. "...If they do this in the most perfect way, they first draw out part of the brain through the nostrils with an iron hook, and inject certain drugs into the rest..." (Hdt. II 86, 3; English translation by A. D. Godley (1975 [1920])).

67. This term appears in much older works not related to the embalming procedures as those of Abreu Galindo (1977 [1594-1602]: 295, 303) and Espinosa (1980 [1594]: 39, 52) (Hernández Gómez and Galván Santos, 2008: 154 n. 2).

68. "...Como quiera que combinemos estas noticias, yo me inclino á creer, que la preparación de los cadáveres corría por cuenta de dos diferentes clases de personas, como se practicaba en Egipto. Unas diseccionaban con sus Tabonas, ó cuchillos de pedernal los cuerpos..." (Viera y Clavijo (2004 [1772]: I, 176).

from Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus' texts<sup>69</sup>. In fact, the context was an explanation about the *mirlado* supposing it was practiced likewise the Egyptian custom. In older texts, *tabonas* are usually described as black stones of a material similar to flint (Abreu Galindo, 1977 [1594-1602]) or dark and smooth stones as jet (Espinosa (1980 [1594]: 52) with sharp edges used for cutting. Obviously, if incisions were made to the Canarian mummies they were done with these obsidian stones. However, the significance here is that its introduction in the mummification accounts is due to the Viera y Clavijo's comparison with the Egyptian procedure. Indeed, for example Berthelot compared both descriptions and perceived a clear resemblance between Viera y Clavijo's *tabonas* and Herodotus' Ethiopian stones<sup>70</sup>:

“L'auteur des Notices croit que l'ouverture des cadavres se faisait au moyen de pierres tranchantes qu'on tirait de ces obsidiennes désignées sous le nom de tabona par les anciens habitans, ce qui rappellerait en quelque sorte les pierres éthiopiennes employées pour ouvrir le corps sur le côté, et dont il est aussi fait mention dans Hérodote.” (Barker-Webb and Berthelot, 1842: 142).

Once again, many authors copied direct or indirectly Viera y Clavijo's text during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries making reference to the *tabona* as an instrument employed in the *mirlado*<sup>71</sup>. In this sense, several authors considered it as another parallelism between Egyptian and Guanches. Alfred Burdon Ellis (1863: 204) wrote that “...when preparing their mummies, the islanders opened the body at the side, as did the Egyptians, with the same kind of sharp stone that was used in Egypt”. In a more explicit way, Olivia Stone (1889 [1887]: 230) described that “The incision for extracting the entrails was performed with a stone, or tabona, as it was in Egypt; both the Egyptian and Guanche stones were of basalt. Food was always placed beside the dead, another custom common to the Egyptians”.

Finally, bowels washing is another procedure that only appears in the textual sources since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bory de Saint Vincent (1803) specifies that the bowels were removed and then washed<sup>72</sup>. His description is quite similar to Diodorus Siculus' text<sup>73</sup>. Consequently, Bory

69. “...Then, making a cut near the flank with a sharp knife of Ethiopian stone, they take out all the intestines, and clean the belly, rinsing it with palm wine and bruised spices...” (Hdt. II 86, 4; English translation by A. D. Godley (1975 [1920])).

“...then the one called the slitter cut the flesh, as the law commands, with an Ethiopian stone...” (D.S. I 91, 4; English translation by C. H. Oldfather (1960)).

70. Previously Bory de Saint Vincent (1803: 501-502) draw an analogy between both elements referring to what kind of stone were they made of: “Ce qui prouve le plus le rapport de la pierre d'Éthiopie n'est rien autre chose qu'un basalte excessivement dur et compact. Greaves nous dit que la petite pyramide est bâtie en basalte, espèce de marbre d'Éthiopie plus dur que du fer. Il est bien vrai que ce voyageur ne s'accorde pas sur la couleur de son prétendu marbre, avec Pline et Strabon; mais ces derniers n'en disent pas moins que la petite pyramide est bâtie, jusqu'à la moitié de sa hauteur, en marbre d'Éthiopie couleur de fer, tirant sur le noir. Pline ajoute ailleurs que les Égyptiens trouvent en Éthiopie une pierre nommée basalte, qui a la couleur et la dureté du fer, etc. La statue de Memnon, qui est, selon le même auteur, dans le temple de Sérapis, et qui rend des sons aux premiers rayons du soleil, est de ce même basalte qu'on emploie par conséquent aux usages sacrés. Voilà le basalte comparé à du fer qui vient d'Éthiopie, et la pierre d'Éthiopie employée dans les incisions au lieu d'acier, transformée en tabona, qui n'est lui-même qu'un basalte très-dur et à grain serré.”

71. Bory de Saint Vincent (1803: 58); Gannal (1838: 63); Conil (1856: 35); Ellis (1863: 204); Haigh (1869: 112); Chil y Naranjo (2006 [1876-1880]: 122-123); Burton and Cameron (1883: I, 132); Stone (1889 [1887]: 230); Parcelly (1891: 48); Verneau (1891: 80); Reutter (1912: 139); Álvarez Delgado (1955: 54); Bosch Millares (1962: 41); Martín (1985: 109).

72. “...on en retirait les intestins, que d'autres opérateurs lavaient et nettoyaient ensuite...” (Bory de Saint Vincent, 1803: 58).

de Saint-Vincent's account seem to have –directly or indirectly– obtained information from both classical authors to describe Canary Islands mummification applying specific elements from the Egyptian practice: he used indirectly Herodotus' text (copying Viera y Clavijo) including the *tabona* and he may have consulted Diodorus Siculus' and therefore included his information about the bowels washing. Other later authors as pharmacist and chemist Gannal (1838: 63) and also Conil (1856: 35) copied literally Bory de Saint Vincent in their descriptions promoting the transmission of this idea.

This direct comparison of cultural features between Egyptians and Canary aborigines was still done by the scholars until the 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as philologist Álvarez Delgado (1945: 1955) and physician Bosch Millares (1962: 16, 40). Álvarez Delgado highlighted the presence of mummification, the use of beads necklaces and bracelets, and philological similarities. He even compared the Canarian wrestling or “Lucha canaria” with the fight techniques depicted in the reliefs from Beni Hassan in the Middle Egypt<sup>74</sup>.

All these elements also favored the theories of the Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl who inspired in 1998 an Ethnographic Park in the south of Tenerife called Güímar Pyramids (in Spanish “Pirámides de Güímar”). He saw Canary Islands as the perfect geographic link between Africa and America in order to apply his diffusionist model of development. Some cultural parallels –as mummies and pyramidal structures– were used to justify long sea voyages, which were criticised by some scholars as Navarro Mederos and Jiménez Gómez (2000). Nevertheless, as a result of the research done by the University of La Laguna, it has been proved that these structures were not built by the aborigines but by peasants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to pile up stones to clean the cultivation areas (Jiménez Gómez and Navarro Mederos, 1998). They should be called “morras”, molleros or majanos and not pyramids in order to avoid the perception of that false direct relationship because of its terminology (Molinero Polo 2001; 2002; 2005). This false direct connection between Egypt and Canary Islands was indeed spread during the late 90s and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and can still be seen in the names and images of some shops' signs in the streets of Güímar created at that moment. The concept pyramid or the adjective pyramidal are used in the textual sources as a reference to the shape of some aboriginal structures. It is only mentioned with a cultural connotation related to Egypt since the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Bory de Saint Vincent (1803: 503) uses it to find similarities comparing both cultures (Molinero Polo 2001; Méndez Rodríguez, 2014: 72-74).

73. “...When they have gathered to treat the body after it has been slit open, one of them thrusts his hand through the opening in the corpse into the trunk and extracts everything but the kidneys and heart, and another one cleanses each of the viscera, washing them in palm wine and spices...” (D.S. I 91, 5; English translation by C. H. Oldfather (1960)).

74. “Los guanches de Tenerife practicaban la momificación, como los egipcios, por un procedimiento no bien aclarado en la práctica y medicamentos empleados (...) Y que entre los guanches persistía esa idea de vida ultratumba, que animaba su afán de momificación, lo comprueban los gánigos o vasijas de leche y otros alimentos, las marcas o pinta de las pieles con que los envolvían y las cuentas y objetos de barro y madera que colocaban junto a los cadáveres; como en mayores cantidades, lujo y valor ponían los egipcios, pueblo de mayor cultura y riqueza que el guanche.

Y no es sólo esta práctica de la momificación y esta misma colocación de alimentos y utensilios junto a la momia el único punto de contacto estrecho entre estos dos pueblos.

Fuera de ciertas relaciones legendarias y de analogías raciales y onomásticas y lingüísticas, apuntadas por ciertos escritores, si bien no totalmente comprobadas, hay que señalar otra notabilísima: la llamada lucha canaria. (...)

A continuación se insertan grabados y fotografías de los relieves de Beni-Hassan tomada de la pág. 111 de G. Maspero: Egypte, y fotos de las luchas canarias, celebradas hace poco en la Plaza de Toros de Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Llamamos la atención del lector sobre la coincidencia hasta en los detalles de cada una de las poses del relieve egipcio y las actuales canarias que siguen.” (Álvarez Delgado, 1945: 30-32 and pls. I-II).

A comparative perspective is still applied even in recent publications for dissemination for the general public, and both funerary practices are presented together in order to describe them. It is undeniable their importance in the dissemination of this information to enable the Canarian society to know the ancient traditions of their aborigines. However, a comparative view without a reasoning explaining why it is done and providing any explicit conclusions lead easily and inaccurately for the lay public to establish direct connections between both cultures<sup>75</sup>.

### Conclusions

Mummies from the Canary Islands have beyond any doubt become an icon of the aboriginal cultures due to an increasing interest among locals and foreigners mainly since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Comparison with the ancient Egyptian mummified corpses has produced during several centuries the addition or modification of some details in the information transmitted by many authors. Consequently, this has favored to a certain point an Egyptianised vision that has lasted in some details to the present day. One of the main causes was the information transmission extrapolated from classical sources: Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus. José de Viera y Clavijo was the main responsible for some cases of this phenomenon. His thoughts and suppositions were exported, introduced and rapidly spread in an international sphere by Bory de Saint Vincent. Mummification was also used as a cultural feature to solve another problematic issue in the islands' history: the origin of the inhabitants that settled them. Certain authors and scholars have tried during the centuries –even in the last decades– to link the aborigines directly with the Egyptians and with other Mediterranean cultures as Phoenicians, Carthaginians or Romans in order to provide what some consider a “prestigious” historical origin for the islands current population. Mummification was in this sense one of the first cultural elements used to justify this historiographical tendency.

### List of cited references

- Abreu Galindo, J. de (1977 [1594-1602]): *Historia de la conquista de las siete islas de Canaria*. Santa Cruz de Tenerife.
- Actas del I Congreso Internacional de Estudios sobre momias. Proceedings of the I World Congress on Mummy Studies 1992* (1995). 2 vols. Tenerife.
- Alberto Barroso, V.; Delgado Darías, T.; Velasco Vázquez, J.; Santana Cabrera, J. (2016): “En la ambigüedad de tu piel. Sobre momias y tumbas”, *Tabona* 20, 33-60.
- Álvarez Delgado, J. (1945): *Teide. Ensayo de Filología tinerfeña* (Monografías. Sección II: Literatura, Artes Plásticas y Música. Vol. VIII (sección II, 3<sup>o</sup>)). La Laguna.
- Álvarez Delgado, J. (1955): “¿Semitismos en el guanche de Canarias?”, *Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos* 1, 53-89.
- Álvarez Rixo, J. A. (1991 [w. ca. 1847-1860]): *Lenguaje de los antiguos isleños*. Puerto de la Cruz – La Laguna.
- Álvarez Sosa, M. (2014): *Momias. El secreto de su vida eterna*.
- Álvarez Sosa, M.; Morfini, I. (2014): *Tierras de momias. La técnica de eternizar en Egipto y Canarias*.
- Arnay-de-la-Rosa, M.; González-Reimers, E.; Pou-Hernández, S.; Marrero-Salas, E.; García-Ávila, C. (2017): “Prehispanic (Guanches) mummies and sodium salts in burial caves of Las

75. Recent examples are Álvarez Sosa (2014); Álvarez Sosa and Morfini (2014).

Cañadas del Teide (Tenerife)”, *Anthropologischer Anzeiger. Journal of Biological and Clinical Anthropology* 74 (2), 143-153.

Aufderheide, A. C.; Rodríguez Martín, C.; Estévez González, F.; Torbenson, M. (1995): “Anatomic findings in studies of Guanche mummified human remains from Tenerife, Canary Islands”, *Actas I Congreso Internacional de Estudios sobre Momias*. Santa Cruz de Tenerife, vol. II, 113-123.

Bankes, T. (1801 [1797]): *A modern authentic and complete system of universal geography. ... Also, a particular description of the improved state of the new colony formed at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island, where the convicts are now settled. Including a particular account of the excursions and discoveries made in the interior parts of New Holland*. London.

Barker-Webb, P.; Berthelot, S. (1842): *Histoire Naturelle des Iles Canaries*. Tome premier. Première partie. Contenant l’Ethnographie et les Annales de la conquête. Paris.

Bethencourt Alfonso, J. (1985 [w. ca. 1884-1912]): *Los aborígenes canarios*. Santa Cruz de Tenerife – Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

Bethencourt Alfonso, J. (1994 [w. ca. 1884-1912]): *Historia del Pueblo Guanche*. Vol. II. Etnografía y Organización socio-política. La Laguna.

Blumenbach, J. F. (1808): *Decas Qvinta Collectionis svae craniorm diversarvm gentivm illvstrata*. Goettingae.

Bory de Saint-Vincent, J. B. G. M. (1803): *Essais sur les Isles Fortunées et l’antique Atlantide, ou Précis de l’Histoire générale de l’Archipel des Canaries*. Paris.

Bosch Millares, J. (1962): “La medicina canaria en la época prehistórica”, *Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos* 8, 538-620.

Buffon, G. L. L. count of; Daubenton, L. J. M. (1749): *Histoire Naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du Cabinet du Roy*. Tome Troisième. Paris.

Burton, R. F. (1863): *Wanderings in West Africa. From Liverpool to Fernando Po*. London.

Burton, R. F.; Cameron, V. L. (1883): *To the Gold Coast for gold. A personal narrative*. 2 vols. London.

Chil y Naranjo, G. (2006 [1876-1880]): *Los guanches: estudios [Libro III, Segunda época, §III y tomo II, continuación del Libro III, segunda época, §111]*. Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Conil, P. (1856): *Études historiques et comparatives sur les embaumements*. Paris.

Dawson, W. R. (1927): *Contributions to the History of Mummification*. In: Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine 20, part 6, April, 832-854.

Diego Cuscoy, L. (1968): *Los guanches: vida y cultura del primitivo habitante de Tenerife*. Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Diego Cuscoy, L. (1976): “Glosa a un fragmento de los «Apuntes» de Don José de Anchieta y Alarcón (Necrópolis y Momias)”, *Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos* 22, 233-270.

Ellis, A. B. (1863) *West African Islands*. London.

Espinosa, A. de (1980 [1594]): *Historia de Nuestra Señora de Candelaria*. Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Estala, P. (1797): *El viagero universal, ó noticia del mundo antiguo y nuevo. Obra recopilada por los mejores viageros*. Vol. XI. Madrid.

Farrujia de la Rosa, A. J. (2014): *Ab Initio. Análisis historiográfico y arqueológico sobre el primitivo poblamiento de Canarias (1342-1969)*. Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Farrujia de la Rosa, A. J.; Arco Aguilar, M. del C. (2008): “Momias, textos y teoría en Canarias: Fuentes etnohistóricas e historiografía”, in P. Atoche Peña; C. Rodríguez Martín and M. A. Ramírez Rodríguez (eds.). *Mummies and Science. World Mummies Research. Proceedings of*



the VI World Congress on Mummy Studies (Teguise, Lanzarote. February 20th to 24th, 2007). Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 27-36.

Gambier, J. W. (1894): "The Guanches: the Ancient Inhabitants of Canary", *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution showing the operations, expenditures, and condition of the institution to July*, 541-553.

Gannal, J. N. (1838): *Histoire des Embaumements, et de la préparation des pièces d'anatomie normale, d'anatomie pathologique et d'Histoire Naturelle*. Paris.

Glas, G. (1764): *The History of the Discovery and Conquest of the Canary Islands translated from a Spanish Manuscript, lately found in the Island of Palma with an Enquiry into the Origin of the Ancient Inhabitants to which is added a Description of the Canary Islands, including The Modern History of the Inhabitants, and an Account of their Manners, Customs, Trade, &c.* 2 vols. London.

Golbérry, S. M. X. de (1802): *Fragmens d'un voyage en Afrique, fait pendant les années 1785, 1786 et 1787, dans les Contrées occidentales de ce Continent, comprises entre le cap Blanc de Barbarie, par 20 degrés, 47 minutes, et le cap de Palmes, par 4 degrés, 30 minutes, latitude boréale. Avec une Carte générale d'Afrique, rédigée d'après les observations les plus authentiques et les découvertes les plus récentes et des plans et des dessins gravés en taille douce.* 2 vols. Paris.

Hernández Gómez, C. M.; Galván Santos, B. (2008): "Estudio Geoquímico de dos centros de producción de obsidias en la Prehistoria de Tenerife: El Tabonal de los Guanches (Icod de los Vinos) y el Tabonal Negro (Las Cañadas)", *Trabajos de Prehistoria* 65 (2), 151-168.

Humboldt, A. von (1816): *Voyage aux régions équinoxiales du Nouveau Continent fait en 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803 et 1804, par Al. de Humboldt et A. Bonpland*. Vol. 1. Paris.

Jiménez Gómez, M. de la C.; Navarro Mederos, J. F. (1998): "El complejo de las Morras de Chacona (Güímar, Tenerife): resultados del proyecto de investigación". In: F. Morales Padrón (ed.). *XII Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americana*. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, vol. I, 523-538.

Jiménez Sánchez, S. (1941): "Embalsamamientos y enterramientos de los 'canarios' y 'guanches', pueblos aborígenes de las Islas Canarias", *Revista de Historia* 55 (vol. VII, year XIV), 257-268.

La Croix, A. P. (1688): *Relation Universelle de l'Afrique, ancienne et moderne, où l'on voit ce qu'il y a de remarquable, tant dans la Terre ferme que dans les Iles, avec ce que le Roy a fait de memorable contre les corsaires de Barbarie, &c.* 4 vols. Lyon.

Laporte, J. de (1773): *Le voyageur François, ou le connoissance de l'ancien et de nouveau monde*. Vol. 15. Paris.

Leclercq, J. (1880): *Voyage aux Iles Fortunées. Le pic de Ténériffe et les Canaries par Jules Leclercq*. Paris.

López de Gómara, F. (1554 [1552]): *La Historia general de las Indias, y todo lo acaescido en ellas desde que se ganaron hasta agora y La Conquista de Mexico y de la nueva España*. Anvers.

Maca-Meyer, N.; Arnay, M.; Rando, J. C.; Flores, C.; González, A. M.; Cabrera, V. M.; Larruga, J. M. (2004): "Ancient mtDNA analysis and the origin of the Guanches", *European Journal of Human Genetics* 12, 155-162.

Marín de Cubas, T. A. (1993 [w. 1687-1694]): *Historia de las siete islas de Canaria*. La Laguna.

Martín, S. (1985): *Ritos y leyendas guanches*. Madrid.

Mathiesen, F. J. (1960): "Resultado del análisis del contenido intestinal de una momia guanche", in L. Diego Cuscoy (ed.). *Trabajos en torno a la cueva sepulcral de Roque Blanco (Isla de Tenerife)*. Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 43-45.

Aula Orientalis 36/2 (2018) 279-299 (ISSN: 0212-5730)

Méndez Rodríguez, Daniel M. (2011): “La influencia de Heródoto y Diodoro Sículo en las descripciones del mirlado de los aborígenes canarios”, in R. J. González Zalacaín (ed.). *Actas de las III Jornadas Prebendado Pacheco de Investigación Histórica*. Tegueste, 119-132.

Méndez Rodríguez, Daniel M. (2014): *Momias, xaxos y mirlados. Las narraciones sobre el embalsamamiento de los aborígenes de las Islas Canarias (1482-1803)*. La Laguna – Tenerife.

Molinero Polo, M. A. (2001): “La importancia de llamarse pirámide”, *El Pajar: Cuaderno de Etnografía Canaria* 9, 37-43.

Molinero Polo, M. A. (2002): “Les majanos canariens: des structures agricoles en pierre sèche devenues des «piramides»”, *Trabajos de Egiptología. Papers on Ancient Egypt* 1, 69-90.

Molinero Polo, M. A. (2005): “Morras, molleros, majanos, paredones... El debate sobre las pirámides canarias quince años después”, *I-identidad Canaria. Los antiguos*. La Laguna, 169-228.

Navarro Mederos, J. F. (2005): *Los aborígenes*. [La Laguna].

Navarro Mederos, J. F.; Jiménez Gómez, M. de la C. (2000): “El difusionismo atlántico y las pirámides de Chacona”, in M. A. Molinero and D. Sola (eds.). *Arte y sociedad del Egipto antiguo*. Madrid, 241-253.

Pais Pais, F. J.; Tejera Gaspar, A. (2010): *La religión de los benahoaritas*. Santa Cruz de La Palma.

Parcelly, Dr. (1891): *Étude historique et critique des embaumements avec description d'une nouvelle méthode*. Lyon – Paris.

Pettigrew, T. J. (1834): *A History of the Egyptian Mummies, and an account of the Worship and Embalming of the Sacred Animals by the Egyptians; with remarks on the funeral ceremonies of different nations, and observations on the mummies of the Canary Islands, of the Peruvians, Burman Priests, &c*. London.

Puig-Samper, M. Á.; Pelayo, F. (1997): *El viaje del astrónomo y naturalista Louis Feuillée a las Islas Canarias (1724). Seguido de la transcripción y traducción del manuscrito “Historia antigua y moderna de las Islas Canarias”, redactado por Louis Feuillée*. San Cristóbal de La Laguna.

Reutter, L. (1912): *De l'embaumement avant & après Jésus-Christ avec analyses de masses résineuses ayant servi a la conservation des corps chez les anciens Égyptiens et les Carthaginois*. Paris – Neuchatel.

Salmon, T. (1766): *Lo Stato presente di tutti i paesi e popoli del mondo naturale, politico, e morale con nuove osservazioni, e correzioni degli antichi e moderni viaggiatori. Volume XXVI. Continuazione dell’Africa in cui si descrivono. Gli altri Stati della Costa Occidentale, cioè, il Regno del Congo, la Nigrizia, il Zaara, o sia Deserto, e il Biledulgerid: gli Stati della Costa Settentrionale, o sia della Barbaria, cioè, il Regno di Fez, e Marocco, il Regno di Algeri, il Regno di Tunisi, il Regno di Tripoli, il Regno di Barca; e le Isole adjacenti all’Africa*. Venezia.

Sánchez Pinto, L.; Ortega, G. (1995): “Análisis del material localizado en la cavidad abdominal de dos momias guanches”, in *Actas I Congreso Internacional de Estudios sobre momias*. Santa Cruz de Tenerife, vol. I, 145-150.

Sedeño, A. (2008 [1978; w. 1575 – beginning 17th century]): “Breve resumen y historia muy verdadera de la conquista de Canaria scripta por Antonio Cedeño, natural de Toledo, vno de los conquistadores que vinieron con el general Juan Rexón”, in F. Morales Padrón (ed.). *Canarias: crónicas de su conquista*. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 343-381.

Smith, G. E. (1915): *The Migrations of Early Culture. A study of the Significance of the Geographical Distribution of the Practice of Mummification as Evidence of the Migrations of Peoples and the Spread of certain Customs and Beliefs*. Manchester – London – New York – Bombay.

Sprat, T. (1667): *The History of the Royal-Society of London, for the Improving of Natural Knowledge*. London.

Stone, O. M. (1889 [1887]): *Tenerife and its six satellites or The Canary Islands Past and Present*. London.

Tejera Gaspar, A.; Galloway, D.; García, D.; Delgado, J. F. (2010): *La cueva de las mil momias*. [Santa Cruz de Tenerife].

Thomas, Chas. W. (1860): *Adventures and Observations on the West Coast of Africa, and its islands. Historical and descriptive sketches of Madeira, Canary, Biafra and Cape Vert Islands; their climates, inhabitants and productions. Account of places, peoples, customs, trade, missionary operations, etc., etc., on that part of the African coast lying between Tangier, Morocco and Benguela*. New York.

Viera y Clavijo, J. de (2004 [1772]): *Noticias de la historia general de las Islas Canarias*. Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Viera y Clavijo, J. de (1982 [w. 1799-1810]): *Diccionario de historia natural de las Islas Canarias: índice alfabético descriptivo de sus tres reinos, animal, vegetal y mineral* [M. Alvar (ed.)]. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

Verneau, R. (1891): *Cinq années de séjour aux Iles Canaries*. Paris.

Wilde, W. R. (1840): *Narrative of a voyage to Madeira, Teneriffe, and along the shores of the Mediterranean, including a visit to Algiers, Egypt, Palestine, Tyre, Rhodes, Telmessus, Cyprus, and Greece with observations on the present state and prospects of Egypt and Palestine, and on the climate, natural history, antiquities, etc. of the countries visited*. 2 vols. Dublin.

Wilde, W. R. (2000 [1840]): *Viaje a Tenerife*. Translated by Carmenchu Jahrbeck. Santa Cruz de Tenerife.



Fig. 1. Mummified Guanche foot. Museo del Instituto de Canarias Cabrera Pinto. Sala de Arqueología y Antropología “Anatael Cabrera Díaz”. Photo: Daniel M. Méndez Rodríguez.

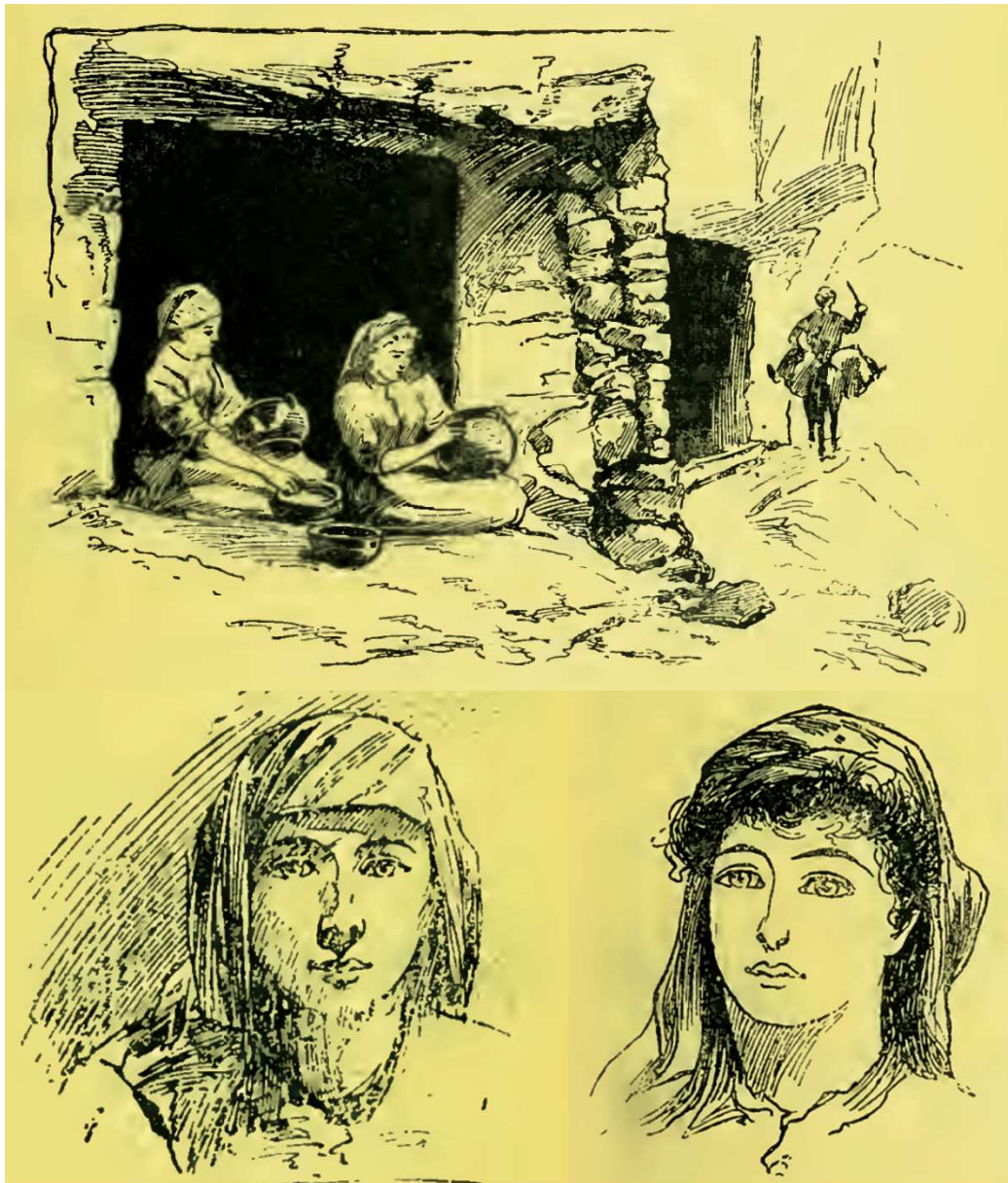


Fig. 2. Above: Pot-making by cave dwellers. Below: physiognomic comparison between Egyptian (left) and Spanish type (Gambier, 1896: 551 fig. 11; 547-548, figs. 9-10).