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## ANNOTATION

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*Atlas of Egyptian Mummies in the Czech Collections I:*

*Complete Adult Human Mummies.*

Prague, 2016.

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Researchers of different specialties such as the authors of this atlas have collected data during their projects' duration to clarify and make available a general and specific understanding of ancient Egyptian organic remains. Archaeology is the primary tool, however, laboratory work now reveals more important data to be added to the various objective and subjective analytical tools, based on the observations of the remains themselves. This contributes to the overall understanding of the remains as shown by the results presented here.

This substantial volume puts together a history on how Czech collections' items started to get acquired and how they arrived at their final destination, as well as a historical resource to introduce the remains studied. A more unusual kind of resource is represented by the studies of firsthand accounts of the purchase of antiquities in the past two centuries. These studies mostly contain new information about the Egyptian items and remains that were discovered and sold. The fascination bestowed on Egyptian mummies all over the world among laymen could not continue without an inclusion of more recent technological developments, which make CAT scans and isotope analysis available for these old bodies. This volume, which has promised more in its series, is a detailed study of these fascinating subjects in Czech Collections. As an homage volume to Dr. Strouhal (1931–2016), one of the first researchers registering pathological findings in ancient Egyptian bodies, it is indeed an important volume. A brief note here: he was the first to publish cases of cancer detected and studied in ancient Egyptian human material, which proves once again this is not a "modern disease" as stated previously to this review and published by other authors. The contributors to this volume bring in their scholarship as shown in the whole publication; in the preface, after the description of mummification procedures, the authors denote the growing interest of Europeans in bringing along the mummies with them, after their Egyptian trips, and what triggered the first tests done on mummies; Prague being a lead research center for these tests and studies. The book is a great compilation of texts and illustrations

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that illuminate the results from the scientific tests and the items themselves, almost comparable to a museum catalogue.

The largest section of the book is devoted to describing the complex and detailed examinations of all complete adult human mummies in Czech Collections so far. Although this type of examinations began with the x-rayed bandaged child mummy (Senckenberg Museum of Natural History, ÄS 18) by Roentgen in 1896 in Germany and the paleopathological findings by M. Ruffer, in the United Kingdom, only published in 1921, the first extensive study of a collection of Egyptian mummies was only undertaken by Czech researchers in the 1960s and 1970s. This important research was conducted exactly because Czech missions, and later also Austrian and Dutch-English missions understood the importance of having multidisciplinary teams in the field.

This volume represents the work continued from the first catalogue of studies, dated from 1979, and the subsequent work undertaken between 2009 and 2015. The authors attribute the positive omen of the project “renewal” in 2009 as a commemoration of dates; 1969 – the establishment of the collection at the museum in Prague and 1979 – the first publication of these studies.

Parallel to this amazing “return of the mummy-testing” the museum starts an excavation project in Sudan. The mummy project, therefore, went on hiatus and was re-started in 2014. The first two chapters comprise the history of the remains’ research itself, which started in the 1750s with a Franciscan priest, and the ongoing collection of mummies in Czech lands amazingly dated from the Renaissance. The chapters also give us an introduction into the individuals studied, where they came from and how they arrived in Czech collections. For those not familiar with the proceedings; the third chapter briefly describes how ancient Egyptians mummified their deceased in the different periods of time, from natural desiccation in desert grounds to intentional mummification that endured until Christian times, that of which became eradicated from Egypt with the advent of Islam. An interesting detail is mentioned, that the first mummy remains were originally housed in an apothecary (1796), probably destined to be reduced to powder for the benefits of different ailments, so it was thought back then. It came to its present home in 1893 by the hand of an archaeology student, later deceased, whose collection was integrated into the museums.

In chapter four, the most prominent part of the publication, the detailed study of adult mummies is developed (p. 25 lists all studied individuals in a table), complete bodies’ description is made “fiche à fiche” (pp. 26–119), describing probable age-at-death, trauma, traces of diseases found, and other relevant information related to each individual. The items are numerous and this review cannot go over each one of them but the volume presents all data found with interpretation and imaging showing the most important features. Having scanned human remains to search for pathological conditions and other revealing details enhances the need to show these images which are truly explanatory and focused on specific key factors such as: teeth, incisions, lesions, substances’ traces present such as resin, sequels of diseases shown in bones, healed fractures, organ removal, and fillings. Chapter five describes the studies and tests done on scattered human remains. Both chapters four and five picked up where Strouhal left (1979), now using CAT scans and better instruments to observe the minutia of bodies. Page 124 mentions cancer, which is of personal interest, and consequently a valued addition to the chapter. Without forgetting what encapsulates a human body from the New Kingdom to the Ptolemaic Period, chapter six focuses on the adult coffins

in the collection, giving us an overview of different types. Page 131 shows a table listing all studied coffins in this volume.

A final summary of the performed tests is also provided as well as chronologies in page 175, to better associate mummification practices, as well as each individual's state of preservation. A map of Czech locations of collections, and maps of Egyptian locations showing cities where the mummies and coffins may have their provenance from are also a part of this volume, which ends with an important list of references in the bibliography.