

ATLAS OF EGYPTIAN MUMMIES

in the Czech Collections II:
Non-Adult Human Mummies



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NON-ADULT HUMAN MUMMIES

Gabriela Vrtalová | Pavel Onderka

National Museum
Prague 2022

Reviewers: Christian E. Loeben, Jakub Nekula

The research on the Egyptian mummies in the public collections of the Czech Republic was carried out in cooperation with Affidea Praha, s.r.o.

This work was financially supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic (DKRVO 2019–2023/18.I.c, National Museum, 00023272).

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Typeset by AGAMA® poly-grafický ateliér

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ISBN 978-80-7036-750-6 (print)
ISBN 978-80-7036-751-3 (pdf)

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Dedicated
to
Jiří Bučil and Lubica Oktábcová

PREFACE

On the bicentennial anniversary of the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs by Jean-François Champollion, the National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, publishes the second volume of the *Atlas of Egyptian Mummies in the Czech Collections*. The book which combines interests of several scholarly disciplines, including biological anthropology, medicine, social sciences, history of collections, and last but not least Egyptology.

After the initial volume dedicated to complete adult human mummies, which was released in 2016, the second volume presents two mummified non-adult individuals, as well as a dozen of isolated parts of sub-adult mummies kept in the collections of the National Museum.

The set of the human remains is accompanied by a catalogue of six containers, which were used by ancient Egyptians for the burials of non-adult individuals, from the collections of the same institution.

The book also discusses, in general terms, burying children in ancient Egypt, as well as examines the provenances of the objects which are subject to the examination, and thus investigates an important chapter of the history of Egyptian collections in the Czech Lands.

The research presented in the second volume of the series has been undertaken primarily by the authors of the book together with their colleagues from both the National Museum, and its partner institution in the project, Affidea Praha (formerly Diganostic Centre Mediscan), mainly by Jakub Nekula.

The book pays tribute to two founding members of the team which has stood behind this project, late Lubica Oktábcová and Jiří Bučil, without whose participation, collaboration and persistent support the present series of the *Atlas of Egyptian Mummies in the Czech Collections* would never materialize.

Prague, December 2022

Ladislav Bareš

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Jakub Nekula | Markéta Konrádová | Romana Fousková | Václav Bouda
Amjad Bani Hani | Marcela Pokorná | Marie Svobodová
Affidea Praha, s.r.o.

Vlastimil Vrtal | Jiří Honzl | Jana Urbánková | Jiří Vaněk | Jana Kadeřábková
Irena Straková | Markéta Klímová
Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague

Vítězslav Kuželka | Petr Velemínský | Silvie Vančurová
National Museum, Prague

Lenka Mazačová
Czech Museum of Silver in Kutná Hora

Magdaléna Bekessová
High Tatra Museum in Poprad

&

Adam Grubner | Michal Švec | Radek Podhorný

&

David Karásek | Veronika Karásková

THE PRESENT PROJECT

Pavel Onderka | Gabriela Jungová

The year 2022 marks two important anniversaries in the history of Egyptology. Egyptologists across the globe commemorate the bi-centennial anniversary of the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs by Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832) in 1822, as well as the centennial anniversary of the discovery of the tomb of King Tutankhamun by Howard Carter (1874–1939) in 1922. To mark these anniversaries, the Náprstek Museum prepared a series of publications, including the present second volume of the *Atlas of Egyptian Mummies in the Czech Collections*.

Most of the information about the present project has already been provided in the preface for the first volume, dedicated to complete adult human mummies. The present publication represents a continuation of the previous volume. It aims to make mummies of non-adults, both complete and isolated parts, accessible to scholarly and general audiences alike. The publication is primarily focused on the material kept in the collections of the National Museum, while a handful of remains of non-adult individuals hosted by other institutions are discussed only in a cursory manner. They will be introduced in detail in one of the upcoming volumes of the present series. This decision was necessitated by the organizational difficulties, stemming from the pandemic situation in the past years.

As a result, the focus of the core team, consisting of specialists from the Náprstek Museum and Affidea Praha, has focused primarily on the collections of the home institution, in order to not make compromises in the quality of the outcome.

In 2017, a report on the study of seven isolated heads, was published in the *Annals of the Náprstek Museum*. The study was meant to compile previously unpublished texts by Lubica Oktáčková (1959–2016), prepared in connection with the exhibition *Egyptian Mummies (Egyptské mumie)*, held in the Náprstek Museum in 2011.



Scanning of non-adult mummies in the premises of Affidea Praha.

Scanning of non-adult mummies
in the premises of Affidea Praha.



Concurrently, the team of the *Atlas* project has engaged in mapping of the Egyptian collections, kept in or associated with cultural institutions in Western Bohemia, including the Kynžvart chateau, the Poběžovice chateau and the former museum in Kraslice. The proceedings will be published in a separate volume, following the framework of the book *In the Shadow of the Pyramid* (Martínková – Onderka *et al.* 2015).

Similarly, the collection of the Buchlov castle has been investigated, and set into the context of travels of European nobility to Egypt in the second quarter of the 19th century.

Besides non-adult individuals, animal mummies, which will be published in the next volume of the series, were examined and studied. Two preliminary reports, focused on fish mummies in the collections of the Náprstek Museum (Onderka – Přikryl 2022) and a shrew mummy from the collections of the Náprstek Museum (Onderka 2022), were prepared for publication in the *Annals of the Náprstek Museum*.

As a matter of chance, the topic of the present volume coincides with the discovery of a children's burial ground by the Archaeological Expedition to Wad Ben Naga, of which both present authors are members (cf. Jungová 2020; Onderka 2021). It is also in line with the growing interest in the social groups hitherto neglected in archaeological research.



Chapter One

BURYING CHILDREN IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Gabriela Vrtalová | Pavel Onderka

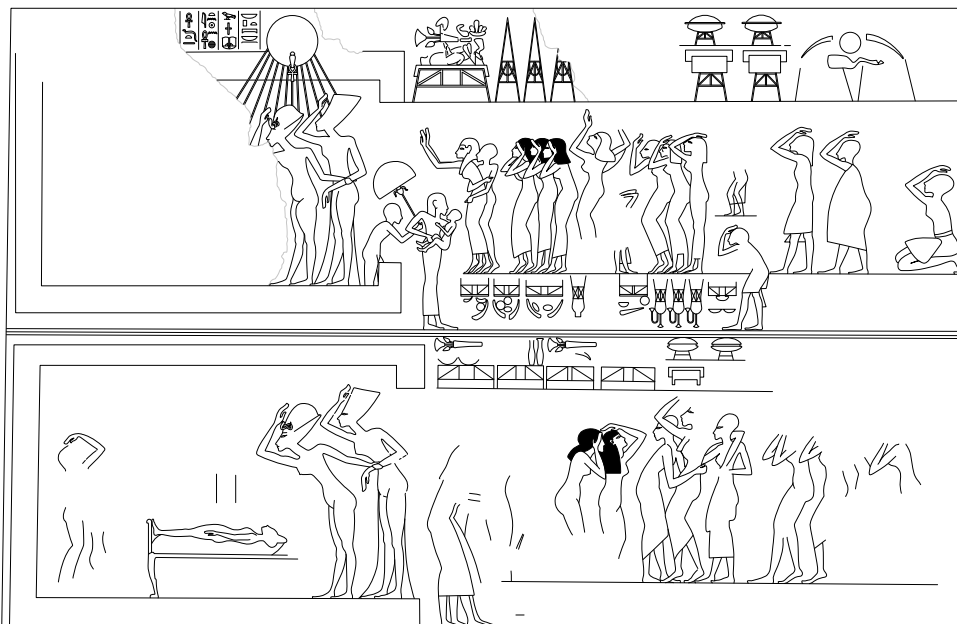
Burying a dead child has always posed as one of the most difficult moments in life for any parent, and the ancient Egyptians were no exception.

A single depiction of parents burying their child is preserved from pharaonic Egypt, namely the depiction of the burial of Princess Maketaten, daughter of King Akhenaten and Queen Nefertiti, in the side chamber of the royal tomb at Tell el-Amarna (Room γ). Here, the royal parents are shown standing at the bier lamenting over the death of their beloved daughter (cf. van Dijk 2009; Fig. 1.1).

A generation later, Maketaten's stepbrother, Tutankhamun, was buried with his two stillborn daughters; small double coffins adorned in gold were prepared for them. Although nameless, they were apparently cherished and mourned by their parents who took great care to facilitate their possible rebirth.

Similarly, although more humbly, the care given and effort spent on burials of non-royal children attest to the affection parents had towards their offspring. To spend much of their wealth to have their children of all ages mummified and buried in small-sized coffins or pieces of furniture, pottery jars, baskets, mats or pieces of textile, sometimes equipped with a protective amulet, must have been a notable affliction to their finances.

The manner in which children were mummified did not lag behind that of adults. Their mummified bodies, along with known medical papyri, are invaluable sources of information on their status of health and well-being.



1.1
Depiction of the burial of Princess
Maketaten in the Royal Tomb
of Amarna (after van Dijk 1974).