

Euphemia

IMPACT ID: IMP00035

Institution: Brussels Royal Museum

Designation:

Date of Acquisition: 1901 (Paris)

Contact:

Image Modality: X-ray

Country: Egypt

Site: Antinoe

Time Period: Roman Period

Dynasty: Unknown

Date: 6th century AD (could be 5th or 7th)

Sex: Female

Age: >40 years



Figure 1. The mummy Euphemia

Background: Euphemia was not mummified traditionally in the sense that her body was preserved almost by chance (Art & History Museum, 2020). She was dressed in several tunics and buried without a coffin (Art & History Museum, 2020). There was salt on her skin and the clothing she wore also helped the preservation process (Art & History Museum, 2020). She was identified as an embroideress because the textiles and objects in her grave were considered to be embroideries and embroidery tools (Art & History Museum, 2020). ‘Euphemia’ recently underwent a significant conservation and restoration treatment, through the support of a private sponsor through the King Baudouin Foundation (Art & History Museum, 2020).

2 radiographic pictures of the mummy are available: one showing the skull and shoulder area, and the other showing the thorax (Van Strydonck, 2009). Because of the lack of X-rays for the pelvis and lower limbs regions, the age estimate is not very specific (Van Strydonck, 2009). A combination of good quality diet, the amount of clothes worn and embalmment using plant oils at her death suggest that she belonged to a higher class (Van Strydonck, 2009).

Pathological Features:

Morphological features of the skull such as the hardly pronounced glabella and arcus superciliaris, and the round-shaped orbits suggest that the mummy is female (Van Strydonck, 2009). The epiphyseal union of the medial clavicles indicates that it is an adult person (Van Strydonck, 2009). The X-ray of the thorax shows clear wear marks on the vertebral column (Van Strydonck, 2009). The narrowing of the intervertebral disc space and the prevalence of marginal osteophytes are typical for degenerative disc disease (Van Strydonck, 2009). Based on the limited radiographic data, the skeletal age of the individual is estimated to be more than 40 years (Van Strydonck, 2009).

The wear pattern of the teeth could not be examined. The front teeth from the maxillary have been lost post-mortem (Van Strydonck, 2009). The mandible incisors have been pushed backwards, suggested to be due to a post-mortem action (Van Strydonck, 2009).

Resources

Art & History Museum. (2020, December 10). *The Embroideress Euphemia: an Egyptian mummy with a unique story*. Europeana. <https://www.europeana.eu/en/blog/the-embroideress-euphemia-an-egyptian-mummy-with-a-unique-story>

VAN STRYDONCK, M., VANDEN BERGHE, I., BOUDIN, M. & QUINTELIER, K., Euphemia: a multidisciplinary quest for the origin and authenticity of a mummy's clothes and accessories, in: Dress accessories of the 1st millennium AD from Egypt, Proceedings of the 6th conference of the research group 'Textiles from the Nile Valley', Antwerp 2 - 3 October 2009, Lannoo, p. 236 – 257.

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