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# Chronology of a Series of animal Mummies from the Collection of the Confluences Museum, Lyon (France)

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## Résumé

The multidisciplinary research project MAHES - French acronym for "Egyptian mummies of animals and humans" - aims to better understand the cult organized around sacred animals through its funerary and ritual practice. Researchers make use of the collection of animal mummies of the Confluences Museum in Lyon (France), the largest one in the world kept out of Egypt. This exceptional collection, comprised 2,500 specimens, includes a wide range of mummified animals over a large period, from the New Empire in the first centuries of our era.

At present, we are not able to accurately determine the beginnings and evolution in the time of this cult. Thus, a more precise dating of well selected specimens, will allow:

- to identify the temporal origin of this cult by species,
- to understand the chronology of sites of mummification through specific workshops or throughout Egypt,
- and to understand the evolution in time and space of the preparation of animal mummies.

This is why, as part of this project, we have realized radiocarbon dating of a large series of animal mummies. Thus, several dozen specimens were taken (cattle, rams, gazelles, cats, dogs, foxes, shrews, baboons, ibis, crocodiles, fish, etc.). The varied nature of samples, such

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as biological tissues (hair, bones, cartilage, horn, ...) or vegetal materials (textiles,...) has required the establishment of special sample preparation protocols.

The results show that certain correlations can be made between species and the Egyptian dynastic periods. For example, monkeys appear to have been among the first mummified species (from 800 years BC) while gazelles appear to be later (Roman period from 30 years BC to third century AD).

Key words : Sacred animals / Mummies / Egypt / Radiocarbon dating / Confluences Museum