
Scanning Sobek: a mummy of the crocodile god

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Résumé

The largest ancient Egyptian mummy in the British Museum's collection is a crocodile, which reaches nearly four metres long, and has over 25 mummified crocodile hatchlings attached to its back. It was excavated at Kom Ombo, Egypt in 1893 and presented to the British Museum by the Cairo Museum in 1895. During its life, it would have been kept in captivity and worshipped by the ancient Egyptians as a manifestation of Sobek, the crocodile god, and when it died, it was mummified with all due ritual.

Scientific analyses were conducted on the mummy. These included C-14 dating and analysis using a scanning electron microscope (SEM). In order to learn more about the life, death and mummification of these large divine reptiles, without endangering the museum's mummy, it was scanned using non-invasive, computer tomography (CT). This captured detailed images of the mummy's internal structure, skeleton, remains of its last meal, and evidence of the mummification process hidden beneath the outer traces of textile, resin and skin. This paper discusses the British Museum's mummy, results of the scientific analyses and Sobek, Egypt's crocodile god.

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