



CROCODILE MUMMIES IN ANCIENT EGYPT: A TYPOLOGICAL APPROACH

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INTRODUCTION

Crocodiles are relatively rarely recorded in archaeozoological inventories, which makes each discovery and its context exceptional. The presence of crocodiles in Egyptian cult practices still remains a puzzle for the scientific community.

AIM

The aim of this study was to collect and synthesize all available data and sources concerning these animals, and to develop a typology for the individual mummies and remains discussed. The study used dating of archaeological sites and artifacts in the form of crocodile mummies, with a chronological scope based on the history of ancient Egypt from the New Kingdom to the Roman period.

METHODOLOGY

Both written sources and archaeological material were analyzed. Most finds date to the Greco-Roman period. This indicates the development of funerary practices, including careful mummification of bodies, patterns on fabrics (Fig. 1), squares or rectangles, showing each detail (Fig. 2) and unusual burials closely associated with the cult of Sobek (Fig. 3).

RESULTS

Crocodile remains provide valuable archaeozoological data, enabling deeper analysis of injuries, diseases, and traces indicating causes of death of individual specimens. The proposed typology (Fig. 4) allows distinctions in the mummification process of crocodiles across time and space, demonstrating the importance and development of the cult of Sobek among the population of that period.



Fig.1 Crocodile mummy from the National Museum of Scotland (according to typology Type Ib Variant A)
photo by Aleksandra Jarosz



Fig. 2 Crocodile mummy – close-up of the mummified limb
photo by Aleksandra Jarosz



Fig. 3 Crocodile mummies with a (probably) priestess who cared for them
photo by Alicja Ciesielska

Type	Completeness	Scope of Mummification
Ia	f*	i
Ib	c	i, A and B
IIa	c/f	n
IIb	c/f	n
IIIa	f (b.r.)	unknown – traces of burning
IIIb	f (b.r.)	unknown

Typology of crocodile mummies by Aleksandra Jarosz

**based on the mummies from the collection of the National Museum in Poznan*

ABBREVIATIONS:

i - intentional, **n** - natural, **c** - complete, **c/f** - complete or fragmentary, **f** - fragmentary, **b.r.** - bone remains, **A** - wrapped in textiles, **B** - devoid of textiles



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