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The Forensic Facial Reconstruction of

Shep-en-Isis

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The Forensic Facial Reconstruction of Shep-en-Isis



Preface

Shep-en-Isis, the mummy at the Abbey Library of St. Gall, has been an attraction since its arrival here in 1820. The presentation of the body in a wooden coffin with a glass cover goes back to that time. To reflect changing moral standards, the display of the mummy was respectfully adapted in 1995. The coffin was fenced off from the public, and the two original coffins were placed on pedestals to increase their visibility.

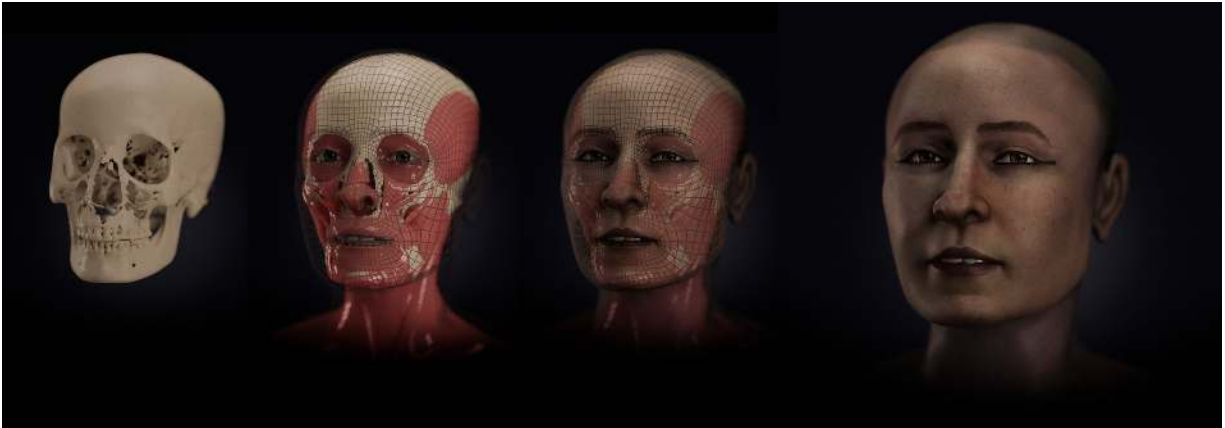
Additionally, in 1998 the Abbey Library published a monograph about the mummy and the coffins by Peter Müller and Renate Siegmann, which I edited. It included many new historical and Egyptological findings. The origin of the mummy and its family relations could be identified in considerable detail, and with the help of a scientific AMS-14C analysis of the coffins, the lifetime of Shep-en-Isis could be dated to the seventh century BCE. Furthermore, historical documents and books shed light on the circumstances of the arrival of the mummy in St. Gallen and on early local research.

This booklet adds wonderfully to what we knew back then. Based on the tomographic data of the skull from 1996, Michael Habicht and his team created a forensic facial reconstruction of high quality. For the first time we now have an impression of what Shep-en-Isis may actually have looked like. This is fascinating.

Additionally, the present booklet sums up other new findings of the past twenty years, especially the rediscovery of the viscera bundles and part of the linen in Aesch in 2010.

It is my pleasure to thank everyone involved in this publication, an excellent new introduction to Shep-en-Isis.

Cornel Dora, Director of the Abbey Library of St. Gall
Epiphany 2022



Arrival in Switzerland

The mummy of Schepenese (Shep-en-Isis) in the Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen (Abbey Library of St. Gall) is the most famous Egyptian mummy in Switzerland, due to her good preservation, beautiful set of coffins and the fact that this mummy was the first Aegyptiaca item in Switzerland presented to the public. Since 1820 it has drawn public attention and several scientific articles have been published [1-3]. Her coffins are described in a book on Egyptian coffins in Swiss collections [4], and a monograph was published specifically on Shep-en-Isis [5]. She is also one of the few mummies featuring in fiction [6].

New technologies such as high definitions digital imaging (CAT-Scan, digital X-ray), new chemical detection possibilities (electron microscopy and optical emission spectroscopy) and information obtained through the facial reconstruction on Shep-en-Isis raised an amount of new data that it seemed most appropriate to publish them in a new monograph.

Only few royal and non-royal mummies under investigation were published as a scientific monograph using the full array of state-of-the-art technologies, e. g. the mummy of Nesperennub in the British Museum [7].

We decided to publish the results in English because of the highly technical nature of the work done and the fact that all previous publications are in German only [1-5,8].

The modern story of Shep-en-Isis started in the year 1820. Philipp Roux (1791-1857), dwelling in Alexandria (Egypt), sent a mummy with a double set of coffins to his friend in St. Gallen, the Landammann (president of the government of the Canton Karl Müller-Friedberg (1755-1836). Roux described the donation in a letter, dated 30th January 1820, that he was able to acquire one of the most beautiful

mummies from Upper Egypt together with two wooden coffins [3-5].

Theology Professor Peter Scheitlin (1779-1848) unwrapped the mummy after the arrival from Egypt in the presence of several scientists, assisted by a local medical doctor, Andreas Sinz [5]. The upper part of the mummy was left unwrapped and every participant of the investigation was allowed to take parts of the wrapping linen as a souvenir. One piece of this linen was returned to the Stiftsbibliothek (Abbey Library) in 1969. Afterwards, the coffins and the mummy were given on loan to the Stiftsbibliothek and were acquired 1836 by the library for the amount of 440 guilders. Shep-en-Isis's mummy was placed in a new glass-coffin in the Biedermeier-style of the 1820s and quickly became an extremely favourite item for the public. Her original coffins are displayed nearby. Neither the mummy nor the coffins had an inventory number, until 2022. This new numbers are now added.

List of Objects

Reference:

The mummy: Müller et al. 1998, Küffer and Siegmann 2007

The coffins: Müller et al. 1998

All the other objects: K. Siegmann et al. 2014

St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Kuriositäten-Sammlung, New inventory No

| Object | New No. | Inventory |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Mummy of Shep-en-Isis | Inv. Nr. 788 | |

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Viscera bundle at upper leg | Inv. Nr. 799 |
| Viscera bundle at pubis | Inv. Nr. 790 |
| Viscera bundle at knee | Inv. Nr. 791 |
| Viscera bundle at feet | Inv. Nr. 789 |
| Remains of wood found between the legs | Inv. Nr. 792 |
| Fabric (linen) | Inv. Nr. 793 |
| Inner coffin of sycamore wood (lid) | Inv. Nr. 795 |
| Inner coffin of sycamore wood | Inv. Nr. 796 |
| Outer coffin of tamarisk wood (lid) | Inv. Nr. 794 |
| Outer coffin of tamarisk wood | Inv. Nr. 797 |
| Biedermeier coffin from the 1820s | Inv. Nr. 798 |

Müller-Friedberg decided to hand over the coffin and mummy of Shep-en-Isis to the Stiftsbibliothek because it already was a cabinet of rarities and curiosities with rare coins, medals, and objects of art, minerals and much more. In many old libraries an Egyptian mummy was a must-have item, because coffins and mummies from Ancient Egypt remained extremely popular in those years.

Meanwhile, Peter Scheitlin tried to translate the inscriptions on the coffins, using François Champollion's works, who had them deciphered in 1822. He did not reach far in his attempts. Egyptology was still in its infancy at that time and another deciphering attempt by Josef Görres (1776-1848) from Munich equally failed. Johannes Zündel (1813-1871) a philologist from Bern published a short notice in the 'Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde' in 1864 and read the name as 'Sepunisi'.

In 1903 the scientist Alexander Dedekind, curator of the imperial Austrian Collection of Egyptian and Assyrian