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# **BURIAL AND MORTUARY PRACTICES IN LATE PERIOD AND GRAECO-ROMAN EGYPT**

Edited by Katalin Anna Kóthay

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Proceedings of the International Conference  
held at Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, 17–19 July 2014

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## FOREWORD

The present volume collects papers presented at the international conference 'Burial and Mortuary Practices in Late Period and Graeco-Roman Egypt' organised by the Egyptian Department of the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, and held on 17–19 July 2014. The aim of the conference was to share up-to-date information and research on the funerary culture of Late Period and Graeco-Roman Egypt, addressing both past and current issues and themes. In addition to reconsidering and reinterpreting published text and artefacts, as well as previously known archaeological sites, a special objective was to integrate into the discussion unpublished materials preserved in museum collections, archival records relating to earlier excavations and research, as well as recent archaeological discoveries.

The great majority of the contributions deal with various aspects of the funerary culture of the Late and Graeco-Roman periods (c. second half of the first millennium BC – first half of AD first millennium). Yet the actual time span covered by the volume is broader, extending back to the previous epoch, the Third Intermediate Period (c. first half of the first millennium BC), a time of innovative re-interpretation of old motifs and traditions in funerary culture, which can be seen as a starting point for the semantic changes that took place in funerary symbolism during the second half of the first millennium BC. It is then also essential to investigate aspects of this earlier process, as is done by two papers (Maya Müller; Alain Dautant, Rita Lucarelli, Luca Miatello, Cynthia May Sheikholeslami).

This long period of the funerary history of Ancient Egypt presents a number of contradictory and unresolved issues, such as dating and chronological problems; interpreting old concepts and traditions in changing contexts; reconstructing original burials and burial equipment; interpreting and reconstructing ritual practices; interaction of textual, visual and material representations; distinguishing regional variants of styles; identifying collectives of artists and regional networks of artists producing the surviving funerary artefacts; as well as establishing typologies for various types of funerary objects. These are the main issues addressed by the papers, which provide a list of perspectives on the interpretation of burial practices and funerary beliefs of the period in question. The various approaches, methods and interpretations of the contributors hence offer a comprehensive scope of and a very valuable contribution to the present state of research.

The first chapter (*Texts, objects, iconography and rituals*) sets out to discuss issues concerning the interaction between rituals on the one hand, and their representations in the burial context in textual, visual and material forms, on the other. The opening paper aims at understanding the broader textual and ritual context and roots of the corpus of funerary literature (Martin Stadler). The bulk of the contributions in this chapter interpret specific ritual texts and objects in terms of meaning, function and use (Susanne Töpfer, Nadine Guilhou, Ladislav Bareš, Mandy Mamedow, Silke Grallert), while the semantic and contextual changes of a particular iconographic motif (the image of the papyrus scroll) associated with rituals, is also explained (Mykola Tarasenko).

The papers of the second chapter (*Burial contexts*) are organised in chronological order, and attempt to reconstruct and interpret original burial contexts or parts of contexts (Zoltán Imre Fábián, Orsolya László, Gábor Schreiber, Mélanie Flossmann-Schütze), decoration programmes in particular tombs (Renata Landgráfová and Jiří Janák; Silvia Einaudi), as well as to reconstruct sacred funerary landscape (Nenad Marković).

The third chapter (*Burial equipment: coffins and associated material*) is devoted to coffins and associated objects. The first two contributions are concerned with particular coffins and coffin sets (Maya Müller; Alain Dautant, Rita Lucarelli, Luca Miatello, Cynthia May Sheikholeslami), and demonstrate the high degree of creativity in funerary symbolism during the Third Intermediate Period. A distinct group of the papers identify and examine coffins originating from specific funerary sites in the northern part of Middle Egypt, while also drawing conclusions on certain aspects of coffin production and workshops in that region (Beate Gessler-Löhr, Sabine Schmidt, Katalin Anna Kóthay). A next group of papers focus on certain aspects of the mummy, as well as of particular objects or objects types directly associated with it (Alessandra Colazilli, Adrienn Almásy, Asja Müller, Carlo Rindi Nuzzolo, Piotr Czerkwiński).

The title of chapter four (*Beyond the burial context*) refers back to the key point of the opening contribution to the volume (Martin Stadler), which suggests to see the roots of funerary texts and rituals in a complex textual and

ritual tradition extending beyond the funerary sphere. In the same way, this chapter collects papers discussing funerary object types that are not exclusive to the funerary sphere, but appear in various ritual contexts (Mladen Tomorad; Simone Musso and Simone Petacchi; Grzegorz First).

The staff of the Egyptian Department thank all people who contributed to the organisation of the conference and the production of the volume. We are indebted to the participants and to each of the contributors to the volume. We would also like to thank Dr László Báán, General Director of the Museum of Fine Arts for his substantial support. The publication of the volume was financially supported by the Museum of Fine Arts and the National Research, Development and Innovation Office (grant no. K108S07).

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