

Publication

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Mummy labels are relics found in large quantities in Egypt, often in an excellent state of preservation (like most woods preserved in arid environments). As a result, they are widespread in Roman Egyptian collections of many museums. These labels reflect funerary practices that possess Egyptian and Roman influences and are an important source of historical and archaeological information. These corpora of mummy labels offer several possibilities for investigation. The inscriptions on these labels have been the subject of an international project (Death on the Nile) in which all accessible objects were recorded in a database. However, the potential of these funerary objects extend beyond the inscriptions to the methods of manufacturing and cutting, the choice of species used, and their dendrochronological potential to better define their chronology and possibly their provenance. The study of mummy labels allows us to propose a new typology, some forms of which seem to be limited to certain necropolises. Mummy labels, whether made by the family of the deceased or by specific workshops, show that their realizations vary greatly, ranging from coarse specimens to others with beautiful detailing. They are made from endemic as well as imported species, which are symbolic of long-distance trade, especially for conifer trees, which are well represented. Their dendrochronological potential has also been demonstrated in numerous studies, some of which have allowed the identification of labels from the same tree, supported by inscriptions attesting to the same family relationship.

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