

Image in cardiology

Mummified Heart of an Ancient Egyptian



Corazón momificado de un individuo del Antiguo Egipto

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Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

Heart mummification, whether due to natural or human causes, was not uncommon in ancient Egypt. Whatever the process of mummification, such hearts are unlikely to have a normal morphology and more detailed studies such as histopathology require rehydration techniques.

We present the case of a mummified human remains, excavated in a dig in 2012 by the author in the necropolis of Kom al Ahmar/Sharuna (middle Egypt). The individual, baptized “UE-4322-Lady in Red” was an adult woman (aged 25 to 35 years) who belonged to the upper classes (Figure 1). Dating was based on her clothing, which was very well preserved both in terms of texture and pigmentation (mainly red), placing it in the early Coptic period (5th-8th century AD).

The mummy was very well preserved and, although the abdominal cavity was badly damaged as a result of tomb raids, when the content of the thoracic cage was studied, the heart had a strangely intact morphology (Figure 2), probably because it had been saturated with preservatives shortly after her death.

On simple inspection, we see that the anterior part of the heart is intact, whereas the posterior face has a hole. The anterior interventricular branch of the left coronary artery along with the coronary sulcus can be seen on the anterior face. Vascularized tissue can also be seen within the hole in the posterior face. This tissue originates from a higher level and is probably epicardial remnants (Figure 3).

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