

SYMPOSIUM IN MEMORIAM. ARTHUR C. AUFDERHEIDE
THE SCIENTIST, THE FRIEND (1922-2013)

NATURAL SCIENCES AND MUMMIES

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LYNNERUP, N. (2021). Natural Sciences and Mummies. *Canarias Arqueológica*, 22: 37-39. <http://doi.org/10.31939/canarq//2021.22.06>

Abstract. Art Aufderheide saw mummies as unique archaeological finds, with the implications of that view, including ethical issues, but he also approached them as a natural science based doctor would approach a patient or a medical diagnostic challenge. Namely that the advances in natural sciences should be brought to bear, and conversely, that natural science, and health science, could learn from these studies and the past.

This presentation will draw on the natural sci-

entific developments in mummy studies since the first Mummy Congress in 1992. While stable isotope analyses was really being applied full scale, other issues in advanced imaging and aDNA were only just beginning to be applied.

Of course the presentation will also be somewhat personal, as I will dwell on some of the encounters I had with Art, and in that I will underscore the huge impact Art has had on our meetings and our scientific research.

Keywords. aDNA. Imaging. Mummy Congress. Art Aufderheide.

I first met Art when I attended the 1st World Mummy Congress in Tenerife in 1992. I had just started out in the field of mummy studies, having some months before received a PhD scholarship. My project would focus on Greenland human remains, including mummies, so naturally I wanted to attend the Congress in order to quickly come up to speed on the latest developments, methods and data in mummy studies.

My supervisor, now deceased, Chief Pathologist Jens Peter Hart Hansen had specifically asked me to say hello to Art and give him his regards, as Hart Hansen himself could not participate. I felt this a bit daunting, but Art was very gracious and immediately took a great interest in my proposed studies and Hart Hansen's work on the Greenland mummies. That congress, organized of course also thanks to Conrado, did in fact give my research a huge boost. When I came back to Denmark, I started focusing on CT-scanning techniques and mummies, and stable isotope studies, the latter inspired not least by some presentations Art gave at the congress (Fig. 1).

I have since attended all the World Mummy Congresses (except one), and until Art passed away, it was always a great pleasure meeting him. I arranged the fourth World Congress in Nuuk, Greenland, and Art was of course there with Mary. As always very enthusiastic, even though that congress was marred by the 9/11 calamity, which not least made for a very difficult trip home for the North American attendees, who basically were stranded in Greenland for several days and finally had to fly back to Canada, Art and Mary among them (Fig. 2).

I felt a special affinity to Art, because we both came to mummy studies as medical doctors. Somehow, I think that the experiences of once having treated patients, and seen their diseases, as well as later medical pathology work, including autopsies, gave us an added dimension when we looked at mummies. As other researchers, we concentrate on our analyses, our techniques and the data we assemble, but I think we had a (rather undefinable) doctor-patient relationship somehow for the person who once was. For sure, Art had that "medical touch" when he carried out his studies. On the other hand, having both also been trained as pathologists, we perhaps also had a more "operative touch", when it comes to looking inside a mummy by not being squeamish about making an incision for getting samples and biopsies.

But as Art always said, that was the major *raison d'être* of the mummy congresses: that it connected medical doctors, natural science researchers, as well as, importantly, anthropologists, museum curators and archaeologists, so that the mummies were viewed from all sides so to speak. A prehistoric or historic mummy is not just an item to be examined, it is not just an anatomical specimen, nor is it just a corpse to be autopsied. It is a once-living fellow human being, almost certainly having a special meaning for the now-living descendants of a community, group or country, including religious and ethical dimensions. And we must always be aware of this. That is why a congress, embracing so many venues of science and community, is important. That is what, I think, Art envisioned.

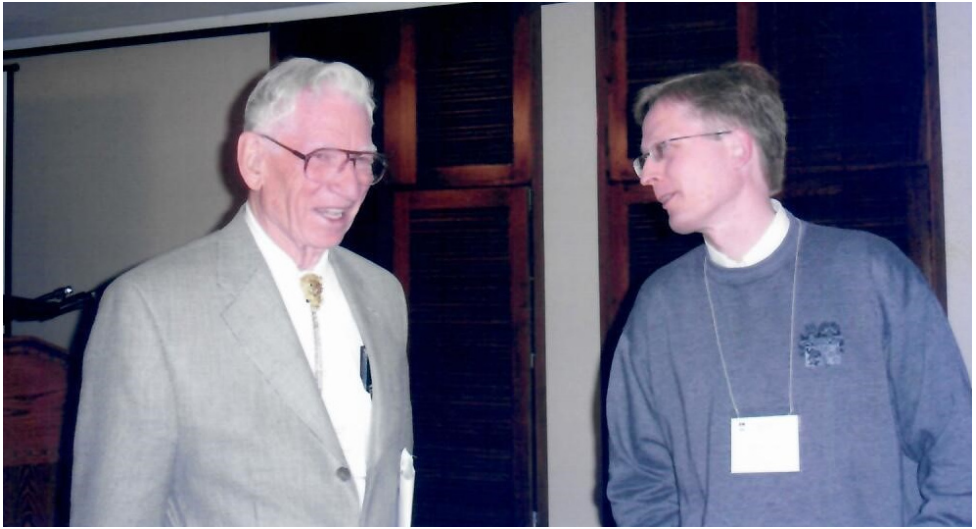


Fig. 1. Art, Tenerife, 1992.



Fig. 2. Art and Mary, Greenland 2001.

