

Liber Linteus and the Zagreb Mummy

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Archaeological Museum in Zagreb preserves a unique monument - the longest Etruscan text ever found. This extremely valuable manuscript is known in the literature as LIBER LINTEUS ZAGRABIENSIS or the Linen Book of Zagreb, and the mummy associated with it is called the Zagreb mummy.

The history of the Zagreb mummy has been known to us since the time of its acquisition in Egypt in 1847 or 1846 when Mihael Barić, a Croat who lived in Vienna, visited Egypt and bought a mummy for his collection of antiquities. By unwrapping the linen wrappings, Barić discovered the text he believed was written in some ancient script. The mummy and the writings remained in Barić's house until his death in 1859, and then his heirs gave them to the National Museum in Zagreb, where they arrived in 1862. Documents from the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb (Mirnik et al 1996: 95) – one of the four originals of the former National Museum – note that the mummy and *The Linen Book* arrived in Zagreb in 1862, and in 1892 a Viennese Egyptologist Jakob Krall visited the Zagreb Egyptian collection. He was the first to realize that this was not an old-Egyptian manuscript, and the fact that the longest known Etruscan text in the world was kept in Zagreb became known to the public. This is how the manuscript came into the focus of attention of the explorers of Etruscan civilization and linguistic experts around the world. It is a language that is still unknown to science, due to the lack of originals that would allow its complete reconstruction. From the time of their arrival in Zagreb until now, *The Linen Book* and the mummy have been exhibited in museum exhibitions, but they have also been the subject of numerous research and scientific papers that tried to unravel the mystery of their origin, connection, and purpose. It turned out that some of the supplies purchased together with the mummy do not belong to her at all, like papyrus inscribed with the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* dedicated to the married couple Paher-Hensu and Nesi Hensu from the surroundings of Thebes (Uranić 2007: 441, 196), written in hieratic letters. But according to linguistic indicators (Uranić 2006: 197-202), this papyrus is at least one century younger than the mummy.

The rather small number of preserved Etruscan texts led to the ignorance of their language, and the Linen Book of Zagreb was the only preserved ritual text of this kind. *The Linen Book* was found on the Egyptian mummy, and this fact is the very starting point of various possible interpretations of its origin, purpose, and meaning. Each of the interpretations reveals some unusual connections and historical events. Nothing is known of the connections between Etruria and Egypt. ¹⁴C method dates the Book around 390 BC. We know nothing about the Etruscan community in Egypt in the mentioned period (we know, for example, of Greek settlements that precede Alexandria). So the usage of *The Linen Book* as mummy wrappings can be interpreted as a rather unusual connection between the Egyptian custom of mummification applied on a dead woman's body and the re-use of the Etruscan ritual text.

When it comes to the reuse of the text, everything is quite clear. The way the text was cut into strips indicates that its final user did not even look at it as a text, but only as a wrapping material. *The Linen Book* was sliced rather irregularly into long strips used to wrap the mummy with, without paying any attention to the text lines. In the impoverished and crisis-stricken Pharaonic Egypt many funeral gifts, sarcophagi, and other materials were often reused. Therefore, this reuse of *The Linen Book* would not be an exception.

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