

**A BIOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF NATURAL MUMMIFICATION:
THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVATION ON THE
EXAMINATION OF BIOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL EVIDENCE**

by

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ABSTRACT

Natural mummification occurs on every continent and in various environments. While the oldest preserved human being was discovered in the Swiss Alps, the high altitude mountains of Peru and Chile have also produced almost perfectly preserved human remains as well as a myriad of cultural artifacts. The bogs in Europe have also provided hundreds of preserved humans who appear to have fallen victim to ancient sacrificial ceremonies or capital punishment. The arid desert environments of Egypt and parts of Asia have also preserved the remains of individuals in their graves, buried in brightly colored clothing and given personal artifacts to be taken with them into the afterlife.

Because the corpses and the cultural artifacts are so well preserved, natural mummies have yielded an enormous amount of previously unknown information. The purpose of this study is to provide a biocultural analysis of naturally mummified individuals and associated evidence to illustrate the lives of the people including information about status, health, diet, wealth, age, and sex of those individuals. To accomplish this objective, this study will focus on the environments responsible for preservation as well as numerous mummies and artifacts that have been found in them.