

A FAREWELL TO OUR FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE EUGEN STROUHAL (24.1.1931–20.10.2016)

One of the best in the field of physical anthropology and biological research in Egyptology left us on the 20th of October this year. Despite his ailing health, in the last months of his life he battled to finish a volume on the physical remains of the Austrian excavations of late Roman cemeteries at Sayala in Nubia and he succeeded, thus deserving our great admiration.

Eugen Strouhal was born into an academic family with deep roots in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. His father was a physician and among his forefathers were important personalities at the Charles University as well as judges and high dignitaries.

He studied medicine at the Charles University and graduated with a MUDr. in 1956. At the same time, he studied Egyptology at the Philosophical Faculty, where he graduated with a PhD in 1959. After practicing medicine in Pilsen, he became a member of the Institute of Egyptology at the Charles University in Prague. For three years, from 1961 onwards, he was member of the mission of this institute under Zbyněk Žába, excavating and documenting Nubian monuments at Wadi Qitna, Kalabsha and other sites. This activity was carried out under the patronage of the UNESCO international campaign for salvaging Nubian monuments to be submerged by the Sadd el-Aly high dam-project. He worked at this mission as a physical anthropologist and archaeologist and subsequently published all the results on the human remains.¹

From 1965 to 1967 he continued to study the present population of Nubia after they had been transferred from their homes, which had disappeared under the floods of Lake Nasser, to Kom Ombo. At the same time, he worked for the excavation of his university at the necropolis from the Old Kingdom and later periods at Abusir, again in his capacity as a physical anthropolo-



gist.² During his time in Egypt he got acquainted with the Department of Anatomy at the Cairo University, where he gave courses in physical anthropology and participated in laying the foundations for this field in Egypt. With much personal engagement, he and his Egyptian students secured the preservation of the important collection of the renowned anatomist Ahmed Batrawy.

In 1969 Strouhal participated in founding the Prehistoric Department at the Náprstek-Museum, which belonged to the National Museum in Prague. He was the director of this department until 1992. Because he was a practicing catholic and repeatedly ignored open invitations to join the communist party of his country, he was not considered for a higher ranking position at that time. The position of a director of the museum was offered to him under certain conditions which he did not want to meet. He used to say in the manner of the “good soldier Schwejk” that he does not yet feel mature enough to join the party. Nevertheless, he achieved to obtain the high Eastern Block-grades of a Candidate of Science (CSc.) and a Doctor of Science (DSc.), which equals professorial status. As a passionate scientist he preferred to work in his field and assistants dreaded his work-

¹ E. STROUHAL, *Wadi Qitna and Kalabsha-South: Late Roman – Early Byzantine Tumuli Cemeteries in Egyptian Nubia*. – Prague 1984: Charles University.

² See especially E. STROUHAL & L. BARES, *Secondary Cemetery in the Mastaba of Ptahshepses at Abusir*, Prague: Charles University.

ing hours. With his international ties, especially to the UNESCO, he was able to pursue projects outside of Czechoslovakia, which was not very popular among his superiors. With the help of UNESCO he also came to Vienna in the mid-sixties, in order to deal with the abundant anthropological material of the Austrian excavations at Sayala-Nubia (1961–1965), at first with our anthropologist Johann Jungwirth, who unfortunately passed away too soon. The result was the publication of the Pan-Grave and C-Group-burials.³ Due to many other obligations, the material of the Late Roman cemeteries and the Christian cemeteries had to be delayed for a long time.

For many years, Eugen Strouhal was also member of the British (EES) and later the British-Netherlands Expedition under Geoffrey Th. Martin and Maarten J. Raven in Saqqara, where he had the opportunity to not only examine the physical remains of elite tombs of the 18th and 19th Dynasties, but also to study the osteological material of members of the ruling dynasty⁴, as for example the wife of Horemheb.⁵

After the downfall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, Eugen Strouhal started a second career in the Czech Republic. As he was very

interested in paleopathology, he joined the First Medical Faculty of the Charles University and became university professor and chairman of the Institute of History of Medicine, a position he held from 1993 until his retirement in 1998. Together with colleagues from this faculty he endeavoured to write an *opus magnum* designed for 6 volumes on the medicine of Ancient Egypt, with a new translation of the pertinent texts and detailed commentaries. Unfortunately, he only lived to see the publication of the first volume, written together with the Egyptologists Břetislav Vachala and Hana Vymazalová, which appeared at the American University in Cairo.⁶

Eugen Strouhal had an enormous working capacity. Around 20 books were authored or co-authored by him and he wrote nearly 400 published articles, reviews and contributions. Like no anthropologist before him, he promoted the study of human remains in Ancient Egypt. Besides that, he had a fine sense of humour and was not a man of sadness. He leaves behind his wife, a daughter, a son, seven grandchildren and many friends. He will be missed and never forgotten.

Manfred Bietak

³ E. STROUHAL & J. JUNGWIRTH (†), *Die anthropologische Untersuchung der C-Gruppen- und Pan-Gräber-Skelette aus Sayala, Ägyptisch-Nubien*, Dph 176, Vienna 1984.

⁴ E. STROUHAL et al., Re-investigation of the Remains Thought to be of King Djoser and those of an Unidentified Female from the Step Pyramid at Saqqara, in: *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3-9 September 1995*, ed. by C.J. Eyre, Louvain 1998.

⁵ E. STROUHAL, Human skeletal remains, in: G.T. MARTIN, *The Memphite tomb of Horemheb, Commander-in-chief of Tut'Ankhamūn*, London 2008; E. STROUHAL & G. CALLENDER, A Profile of Queen Mutnedjmet, *BACE* 3 (1992), 67-75.

⁶ E. STROUHAL, B. VACHALA, H. VYMAZALOVÁ, *The Medicine of Ancient Egypt*, vol. I, Cairo 2014: at the American University of Cairo Press, where already Strouhal's book for more general public *Life of the Ancient Egyptians*, Cairo 1993, appeared.