

## Gino Fornaciari

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Gino Fornaciari is Professor of History of Medicine at the Medical School and at Naval Academy, Paleopathology and Funerary Archeology at the Sciences and Humanities Faculties, and is Director of the Division of Paleopathology at Pisa University.

Prof. Fornaciari is of medical and pathological formation, but he has also worked in the fields of anthropology and human paleontology. In addition to paleopathology his main areas of current interest concern the study of mummies, of paleonutrition and identification of ancient bacteria and viruses. In particular, he has employed modern biomedical techniques for the study of soft tissues in Egyptian, Peruvian and Italian mummies.

Among the most important series of mummies studied, there are the Aragonese kings of the Abbey of S. Domenico Maggiore in Naples (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the tombs of Della Rovere family, dukes of Urbino (16<sup>th</sup> century). These studies have made it possible to identify some important ancient pathogens and confirm the presence of cancer during the Italian Renaissance, comparing the pattern of development in ancient and modern age disease.

Very important from a scientific point of view was the discovery in 1986 of smallpox virus in a 16<sup>th</sup> century mummified body (Lancet 1986; 8507:625), and of syphilitic treponemes of the same period in 1989 (Lancet 1989; 8785:614). In 1992 he demonstrated the presence of *Trypanosoma cruzi* in a pre-Columbian Inca mummy affected by Chagas' disease (Lancet 1992; 8785:128-129). In 1996 he identified the mutated K-ras oncogene in the malignant tumor which caused the death of Ferrante I of Aragon, king of Naples, at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Lancet 1996; 347:1272). In 2003 he found a sequence of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) in a Renaissance mummy (Lancet 2003; 362:1160). In 2004 he autopsied the natural mummy of Cangrande della Scala (1291-1329), lord of Verona, revealing digitalis poisoning. In the same year he started the exploration, still underway, of the Medici tombs in the crypt of the Basilica of S. Lorenzo in Florence.

Gino Fornaciari has conducted numerous scientific missions in Italy and abroad.