

Aegyptus et Pannonia VI.



Acta Symposií anno 2019

B U D A P E S T

Aegyptus et Pannonia VI.

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AEGYPTUS ET PANNONIA VI.

Health and Life in Ancient Egypt. Mummies in Focus

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INTRODUCTION TO THE “HEALTH AND LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT” CONFERENCE-VOLUME

Dr. Hedvig Győry PhD

Earlier readers of *Aegyptus et Pannonia* will surely be surprised by this volume. It has been more than 10 years since we organised our last conference for the fifth volume, and the theme has changed completely. Therefore, as an introduction, we would like to briefly summarize the recent events and the activities we have carried out in the professional field. This is also the reason for the structural change: the conference presentations will be followed by detailed articles resulting from the work of our Society.

The Hungarian-Egyptian Friendship Society and the Ancient Egyptian Committee

The Hungarian-Egyptian Friendship Society (HEFS) has been a non-governmental organization operating since 1995, which strives to acquaint and promote Egyptian culture; scientific activities and research are essential elements among its objectives. We discuss actual and earlier Egyptian topics from historical, artistic, literary, touristic or even economic points of view in our lectures. We also organize other programs according to the demand of situations and suggestions of our members. Thus, in the recent period our programs included Egyptian days and festivals, workshops, excursions, experience reports, public meetings and quizzes, as well as literary and photo competition. We also share other news and curiosities on our website and in our radio programs. Our activities are carried out partly in collaboration with other organizations, as was the conference organized in 2019 “Health and Life in ancient Egypt. Mummies in Focus”, presentations of which are published in this volume.

Particular emphasis is placed in our efforts to raise awareness of ancient Egyptian monuments, which is why an independent Committee (Ancient Egyptian Committee / AEC) has been set up to coordinate this. It plays a key role in the life of the Society and has done much work both in dissemination and research in recent years.

Part of our work is aimed at pupils who are taught ancient Egyptian knowledge through competitions in a playful way. There were also children’s classes and lectures in schools and community places (often called house of culture in the Hungarian language). Here, we primarily work through manual skills to develop on visual culture. We have been writing out fine art competitions (drawing/painting, puppet, digital

storytelling) for years. In the last two years, an adult category was also launched for the competition at the public's request, and we have organized some exhibitions with the paintings in Hungary, but had already a children's drawing/painting exhibition in Cairo. The committee has published a book on several occasions, most recently with children's drawings/paintings about the ancient Egyptian myth on the Eye of the Sun, and the next such volume is processed. Our radio programs belong also to this activity; there we present various faces of ancient Egypt and report on the latest news ("On the field of the Pharaohs"), resp. we draw attention to exhibitions in Hungary ("From Exhibition to Exhibition").

In the research field, the Ancient Egyptian Committee was initially involved in the excavation and reconstruction works of the Isis Temple in Szombathely (Savaria), focusing primarily on the religious, social, lifestyle, and artistic aspects of Egyptian religious cults. In co-operation with the archaeologists of the Savaria Museum in Szombathely and the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest, it also organized five international conferences. At that presentation, national results, discussion of controversial cases, and lectures on international professional results took place. A significant part of the lectures appeared in the form of articles in the volumes of *Aegyptus et Pannonia*, founded by AEC, representing the diversity of relevant scientific researches.

The medico-history research group

Already in the early 1990s, we contacted the Semmelweis University II, Clinic for Internal Medicine. With the support of the then director, Professor János Fehér, we published several publications in the *Orvosi Hetilap* and other Hungarian medical / medico-historical periodicals. In 2003 under the auspices of the Kriterion Publishing House in Cluj-Napoca, the book "Health and Lifestyle in Ancient Egypt" was published with the assistance of a biochemical researcher at the University. Besides the articles, lectures were also given on request.

The medico-history research group in the AEC was established with such antecedents in 2010 to examine herbs of ancient Egyptian medicine that can still be used currently in today's life, in the knowledge that ancient Egyptian science has reached such a high standard that it has become an outstanding and exemplary professional skill for the surrounding peoples, and later became one of the cornerstones of modern medicine — through the mediation and further development of Greek and Roman and then Arabic medicine. A significant part of the substances used in prescriptions are of vegetal origin, so reviewing and examining their effects and the data on them may provide new uses for current pharmacology. In this field, we collaborated primarily with researchers from the Semmelweis University of Medicine, under the direction of Professor Anna Blázovics.

A few years ago, I was also invited to contribute to the work of the editorial staff of *Kaleidoscope, Journal of Culture, Science and Medical History* at the Semmelweis Uni-

versity. Last year a lecture was given with the staff of the University and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on the occasion of the Science Day of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. We thus also maintain an excellent relationship with Professor Judit Forrai, who headed the Institute of Public Health at Semmelweis University, and with the Life Sciences and History Working Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences under her leadership.

Over time, we contacted the HNM Semmelweis Museum of the history of Medicine, which also houses some Egyptian medical material, and the mummy of Zoltán Arányi, whose mummification method raises questions concerning the afterlife of this practice. Documents on this topic were encrypted for the conference, published in this volume.

Initially, our goal was to present international results to Hungarian people, which is why we have given several lectures inside and outside the Society on herbs known and used in ancient Egypt, from the point of view of phytotherapy, aromatherapy, and other medico-historical topics, some of which are summarized in our *Egyiptomi Füzetek* (Egyptian Booklets). We aimed to make aware as many people as possible of the newly acquired pieces of knowledge; at the same time these lectures provided us opportunity for a kind of summary and systematization, for reviewing the still immature results, and for expanding the professional consultation.

After years actively pursued in-depth research on *materia medica*, we have found interesting, even currently valid discoveries in the case of figs, sycamore, Christ's thorns, or coniza. In doing so, we collaborated with the Institute of Pharmacognosy at the Semmelweis University and the Hungarian Free Radical Research Society (Magyar Szabadgyök-Kutató Társaság), also involving pharmacist students at the University, focusing on free radical researches. It has led to a significant change in attitudes and approaches. Our research has yielded results that are as valuable from a medico-historical point of view as from a medical point of view, because they may provide solutions to broaden boundaries in the field of pharmacognosy and to discover newer therapeutic indications. It has been proven that the use of the ingredients listed in ancient Egyptian recipes studied so far can be proven to be effective drugs even today. One of our articles¹ was awarded the Lajos Markusovszky Prize by the *Orvosi Hetilap* (Medical Weekly, May 2017). The student, we worked with, took also a 2nd place prize for her work made for the rector's competition in the frame of the Scientific Students Body (TDK).

Scientific publications were thus produced and the need for wider dissemination of the results arose again. The idea of a public meeting or dissemination conference

1 Katona, Júlia – Győry, Hedvig – Blázovics, Anna: „Azon orvosságok kezdete, melyeket a májra adnak”. [The beginning of the medicaments given for the liver]. *Orvosi Hetilap* 157/48, 2016, 1926-1933.

was raised, where ancient Egyptian medicine could be approached from a historical, cultural, ethnographic and pharmaceutical historical point of view, while drawing attention to the diverse uses and health-preserving and improving roles of these plants. In the course of these researches, the study of the contemporary treatment of the liver came to the fore again, which is also reflected in the current volume, building on our previous results. In the course of this investigations, it was suggested that it would be worthwhile to follow the *jns.t* / anise identification more thoroughly. The results of the researches can be found in this volume, significantly expanded compared to what was presented at the conference. Another direction of research is the mineral analyses, which we recently launched with the participation of Dr. Klára Szentmihályi.

The year 2018 then gave our research team a new impetus and members. In addition to phytotherapy and pharmacognosy, there was an anthropological direction, as can be seen from our article in the volume, which is an expanded material for the 2019 conference presentation. At the same time, we have relaunched the series of *Aegyptus et Pannonia* scholarly symposia with a new direction: mummy research. That year namely, a PhD student Enikő Szvák, who has been investigating the Egyptian mummies of the Hungarian Natural History Museum, asked us to help with our expertise in ancient Egyptian culture by participating in the research of these mummies. We already made some insight into this field as we have continually monitoring the publications concerning ancient Egyptian mummies, but made some practical steps only in 1996, with the help of Ildikó Pap, the than director of the Anthropological Department, when a publication was issued for the 90th centenary of the Hungarian excavation at Gamhud, Middle Egypt. It included the human remains kept in the Hungarian Natural History Museum, taken out from the coffins published at that time.²

We have now embarked on a much wider range of activities, as indicated by our joining to the Nephthys Project. The new, exciting topic added new colour to the palette of our research team, and brought our earlier conference plan to the forefront. It was a natural consequence of organizing this conference together with the Hungarian Museum of Natural History. Still, since there are also ancient Egyptian monuments in the Hungarian National Museum's Semmelweis Museum of Medical History in Budapest, we wanted to draw attention to them as well. The fact that this conference remained not just a plan is due to the active participation of the two partner-institutions, and also to the National Cultural Fund (NKA), which not only made possible to organize the conference, but also contributed to the publication of this volume. We received further help from Ibisz Bt.

² Győry, Hedvig, *Az első magyar ásatás Egyiptomban, 1907. Válogatás a gamhudi ásatás anyagából, 1997.* [The first Hungarian Excavation in Egypt, 1907. Selection from the material of the Gamhud excavation. 1997]. Budapest 1998.

The Nephthys Project

Enikő Szvák

The Nephthys Project was launched in the fall of 2018 as part of a PhD dissertation. The aim of the research is a comprehensive series of studies on Egyptian human and animal mummies and mummy remains kept in Hungary. A particularly important aspect is to implement a multidisciplinary investigations that involves the least invasive procedures possible.

The research began with the biological anthropological reconstruction of the Egyptian mummy collection preserved in the Anthropological Department of the Hungarian Museum of Natural History. Based on the preliminary results, the investigation of the pathologically most promising pieces continued with industrial CT examination, electron microscopy and 3D digital microscope analyses. Radiocarbon dating was also performed, aiming to get a more precise age-determination of the mummies. We wanted to learn the age of death, the possibility of diseases, general health conditions, and materials used in mummification for the deceased individuals, and the period from which the remains originate.

In the course of our research, we found that not only human remains, but also the organic and inorganic chemical analysis of the materials used for mummification can add a lot of new and exciting information to our knowledge about mummies. Thus, the identification of mummifying substances is also treated as a priority area during the project.

We are also experimenting with new procedures. Our goal is not only to realize a multidirectional research, but also to advance in the field of innovation in the future. Therefore, we also performed non-destructive ion beam studies on mummy remains with the help of ATOMKI employees in Debrecen. The preliminary results of the procedure are encouraging, and it is believed that the method may be suitable for a preliminary assessment of the bones at a later stage. This could make further chemical analysis on remains in future safer and easier.

The project resulted in several conference-presentations and professional posters at renowned national and international conferences. These successes gave us the chance to find new research partners and bring new mummy remains under investigation. Currently, the research material of the project includes the remains of the Egyptian human and animal mummies of the HNM's Semmelweis Museum of Medical History and the Török Aurél Collection in the Eötvös Lóránt University, Budapest, as well as the fish mummy of the Déri Museum, Debrecen.

Some of the test series have been completed, and other ones are still ongoing, as the evaluation of the results is. The first scientific publications were scheduled for 2020, which is unfortunately severely hampered by the limitations due to COVID-19.

With the scientific conference we organized, we want to create a tradition. We want to encourage renowned international researchers to participate in the mummy conferences held in Hungary every few years to become an integral part of the circulation of the Egyptian mummy research. In our opinion, it is essential to maintain old professional relationships and make new acquaintances also for the sake of research and to increase our professional knowledge. To maintain the research's smoothness, from time to time, the partial results available to us should be presented to the general public and the narrower profession in the framework of scientific lectures and professional posters. It makes it easier to clarify the issues before the publications appear, so we also organized a mummy workshop on one of the afternoons of the "Health and Life" conference. We presented our results in front of a forum of excellent researchers.

We are pleased to announce that there are currently more than twenty Hungarian and international institutions and more than thirty colleagues working free of charge for the success of the research. We hope that this number will get higher over time and that even more will join us.

At present, we hope that our relatively recent research will stand the test of time and enrich the positive image of Hungarian anthropologists and researchers abroad as a long-term project.

Health and Life in Ancient Egypt conference

In 2012, our conference "Cultures and Therapies. Ethnography and Science" failed due to financial reasons, so it was a special pleasure for us to successfully apply in 2018/2019 for an international conference with the Hungarian Natural History Museum and the HNM's Semmelweis Museum of Medical History. The conference entitled "Health and Life in Ancient Egypt. Mummies in Focus" was held in August 2019. Its program could be followed on the conference's website to make it available to those interested.

The conference was preceded by a press reception organized by the Hungarian Natural History Museum, for which a separate promo spot was created. The participants of the conference were greeted by dr. Ildiko Pap PhD, the honorary director of the Department of Anthropology of the Hungarian Natural History Museum and dr. Gábor Tomka, the deputy general director of the Hungarian National Museum and the Egyptian Embassy. In the introductory speech the three organizing institutions presented their respective research and plans. During the lectures, we enjoyed the hospitality

of the two partner institutions for three days. An exhibition was also organized in the Semmelweis Museum of Medical History in honour of the conference, which was presented to the participants by the museum staff on the occasion of a reception. During the conference, lectures, a poster section and two workshops were held, which provided opportunities to get to know the new results more thoroughly, also on the situation of the research in ancient TB, and discuss the issues that arose during the research of the examined mummy material in the Museum. Many of the presentations were held as introduction to discussions and consultations, which provided an opportunity for exchanges of professional experience.

The program ended with a visit to the Egyptian exhibition in the Museum of Fine Arts and another one to the Holy Right preserved in St. Stephen's Basilica. It was also possible to visit the periodical exhibition "Gold of Mexico" and try out the "Escape Room" of the Hungarian Natural History Museum.

Acknowledgement

The publisher of this volume would like to thank all the organizations and individuals, who made possible the conference and the publication of the volume, as well as the speakers and the volunteers involved in organizing and conducting it, who contributed to the success of the conference by their work.

We want to emphasize the work of Krisztina Scheffer and Enikő Szvák, who not only contributed to the lectures, but also took part in eliminating many of the pitfalls of the organization process.

We also say special thanks to the members of the Scientific Committee: Prof. dr. Rosalie David (University of Manchester), dr. Dina Faltings (Heidelberg Universität, Sammlung Ägyptologisches Institut), dr. Győry Hedvig PhD (HEFS), Prof.dr. Salima Ikram (American University of Cairo), habil. dr. György Pálfi (University Szeged, Anthropology Chair), dr. Ildikó Pap PhD (Hungarian Natural History Museum), Prof. dr. Wilfried Rosendahl (Reiss Engelhorn Museum), Stephanie Zesch (Reiss Engelhorn Museum), habil. dr. Albert Zink (Eurac Research), who took part in the scientific preparation of the conference.

We want again thank the authors of this volume for their professional contributions, and also for their patience and cooperation.

Also, special thanks for Hedvig Király for her assistance in editing work, and for Almamag Bt's work in graphic editing and for its understanding and flexibility during these times burdened with COVID-19.

We then are greatly indebted to Rosalie David in Manchester for her invaluable help by proofreading almost every article in the volume, despite her many other tasks and the situation in Manchester, severely affected by the virus.

We hope you will be as happy to read this volume as the AEC has released it.

PARTIALLY MUMMIFIED REMAINS FROM EGYPT: SPECIAL BURIAL CONDITIONS AND A RICH PALEOPATHOLOGY

György Palfi¹, Hélène Cuvigny², Zsolt Bereczki¹, Jean-Pierre Brun³

1 Department of Biological Anthropology, University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary • **2** CNRS, Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, Paris, France • **3** Collège de France, Paris, France

Abstract

Our study deals with the partially mummified remains of an adult individual recovered in the Eastern Desert of Egypt in 2007, during the excavations of the Roman *praesidium* of Dios. The grave was discovered in the rubbish dump of the fortification. Several elements of the lower limb are mummified. However, the lack of mummification or more precisely the partial state of mummification of some parts enables the direct observation of the bones and the identification of several paleopathological conditions. Among others, dental pathologies and associated maxillary infection, severe osteoarthritis and a very advanced stage, OPLL-associated DISH¹ have been identified.

Introduction

In 2007, partially mummified remains of an adult individual were recovered in the Eastern Desert in Egypt, during the excavation of the Roman *praesidium* of Dios. The fort belonged to a series of small fortifications built by the Romans along the road from Koptos to Berenice (Figure 1). The excavation of this fort (Figure 2) is included in a large archeological program with duration of several years². To the surprise of all members of the archaeological excavation, a grave was discovered in the rubbish dump of the *praesidium* (Figure 3). The human remains were not simply 'scrapped' to the dump: the body has been wrapped in a pitched shroud, presumably to prevent decomposition, and a trench had been dug in the garbage on purpose to lay the body into it (Figure 4).

As no anthropologist was present at the excavation in 2007, the remains were re-buried, and re-excavated for further investigations in 2009.

1 RESNICK ET ALII 1978.

2 CUVIGNY 2003, 2008.

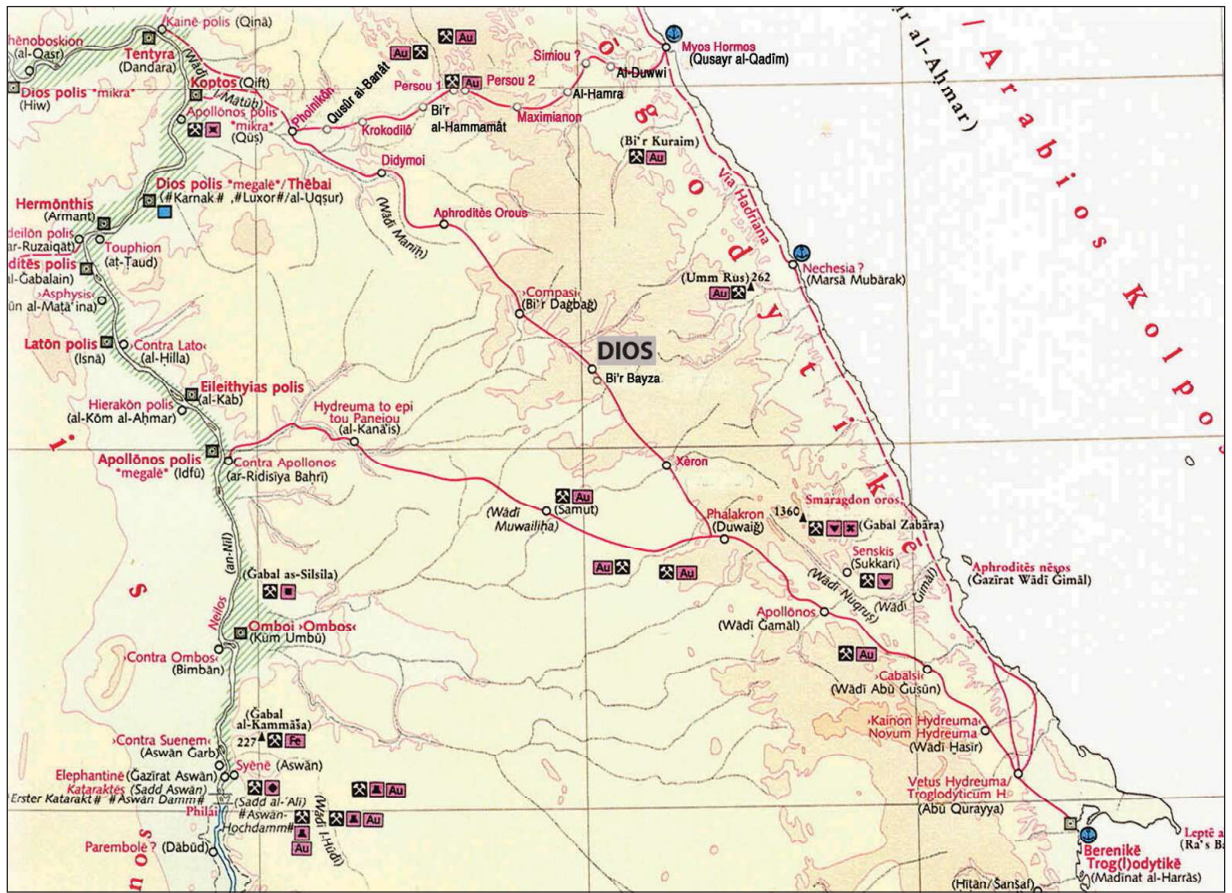


Figure 1. Geographical localisation of Dios along the road from Koptos to Berenice, in the Eastern Desert in Egypt.



Figure 2. The excavation of the Roman praesidium of Dios and its environment

Figure 3. The grave was discovered in the rubbish dump of the praesidium



Material and methods

The subject of the current case study is the re-excavated human skeleton. Several elements of the lower limb are mummified (Figure 5). Remains of the hair and the beard

had been in a better state during the first excavation, but the reburial and the second excavation damaged the mummified parts.

The anthropological study of the material was carried out in *'quasi in situ'* conditions at the Dios archaeological site. To estimate sex, age at death and height, we used accepted anthropological methods.³ The identification of paleopathological conditions was performed using macromorphological observations and the classical paleopathological and medical literature.⁴



Figure 4. Remnants of the pitched shroud used for prevent the decomposition of the body

Because of the special conditions of this 'field paleopathological' analysis, there was no possibility to support the diagnosis of the observed lesions with specific laboratory investigations (e.g. medical imaging or molecular techniques).

Results and discussion

Our preliminary anthropological and paleopathological study deals with the partially mummified remains of this

approx. 160 cm tall male, who died in his sixties. The skeletal material is well preserved and quite complete (Figure 6). The lack or the partial state of mummification of some

3 E.g. Workshop of EAA 1980; RÖSING 1988; UBELAKER 1989.

4 E.g. Ortner – Putschar 1985; RESNICK – NIWAYAMA 1988; ROGERS – WALDRON 1995; ORTNER 2003.



Figure 5. Mummified part of one of the lower limbs



Figure 6. The relatively well preserved skull of the approximately 60-70 years old man



Figure 7. Traces of periapical abscess periodontitis on the left maxilla



Figure 8. Lower extremity of the left femur presenting traces of knee arthrosis



Figure 9. Severe arthrosis of the left knee: the partial mummification of the left lower limb don't mask the advanced stage eburnation and remodelling of the left superior epiphysis of the tibia



Figure 10: Thoracic spine with ossified spinal ligaments (DISH)

body parts enabled direct observation of the bones and the identification of several paleopathological conditions. Traces of periapical abscesses, periodontitis, sinusitis and periostitis were observed on the maxillae, indicating very poor dental hygiene (Figure 7). The right shoulder and the right sternoclavicular joint were affected by degenerative articular processes. Osteoarthritis affected several articulations of the hands and the feet. In spite of the better-state mummification of the left lower limb, direct macroscopic observation could reveal eburnation on the left femuro-patellar joint surface, due to severe osteoarthritis of the knee (Figures 8 and 9).

The most spectacular pathological condition is the ligamentous ossification of the anterolateral aspect of the spinal column (Figure 10). Two third of the vertebral column is completely fused (Figure 11). The

thoracic region is the most seriously affected. The phenomenon of ligamentous ossification is not limited to the spine; exuberant ossification at sites of tendon, ligament, or joint capsule insertions is also observed (Figure 12). Morphology of the vertebral and extravertebral lesions suggests the etiology of a very advanced stage diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis (DISH)⁵.

The paleopathological analysis also revealed extensive ossification of the posterior longitudinal ligament (OPLL) in the cervical spine (Figures 13 and 14). This phenomenon being an additional skeletal manifestation of DISH⁶ is relatively rarely described in non-oriental populations. In OPLL, ossification of the ligament running behind the vertebral bodies in front of the spinal cord can compress the spinal cord and may cause severe myelopathy, occasionally complete quadriplegia.⁷ In our case, relative robusticity of the limb bones and the observed degenerative joint changes contradict a long standing paraplegic condition, but we cannot totally disclose the possibility of a sudden quadriplegia close to the death of the individual.

5 RESNICK ET ALII 1975; RESNICK – NIWAYAMA 1988; PÁLFI ET ALII 1992; ORTNER 2003.

6 RESNICK ET ALII 1978.

7 POUCHOT ET ALII 1987; EPSTEIN 2002; CRUZEIRO ET ALII 2007.



Figure 11: Two third of the vertebral column is completely fused by DISH



Figure 12: Calcified/ossified entheses on the posterior face of the right tibia



Fig:13: Ossification of the posterior longitudinal ligament (OPLL) in the cervical spine

In this short case history only a brief overview of the main pathologies of this male skeleton was given. Seeing the presented alterations we can conclude that our subject individual had suffered for a long time before his death from several serious conditions, especially because of the dental diseases and the severe osteoarthroses of the right shoulder and the left knee. Probably the most serious conditions could have been the associated DISH and OPLL. But neither the degenerative joint changes, nor the ossifying metabolic disorders could explain the observed special burial conditions. We cannot explain why this man was buried in the dump, few meters from the gate



Figure 14: Traces of extensive OPLL and degenerative articular changes on the second cervical vertebra

of the fort. It is difficult to avoid the idea that this special burial was aimed to humiliate the body of this individual. Even though our anthropological and paleopathological investigations furnished a large amount of information, the latter question will remain an enigma for archaeology.

Acknowledgement

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