



JAKUB LIKOVSKÝ, EUGEN STROUHAL

POST-TRAUMATICALLY DEFORMED FINGERS OF A HAND ON THE PAINTING "RESURRECTION" FROM THE ČÁSLAV PANEL

ABSTRACT: The Čáslav Panel was found in 1883 in the town hall of Čáslav, Eastern Bohemia. It dates back to 1530. The right hand of the man sitting on the left side of the "Resurrection", depicted on the inside of the Čáslav Panel, has a shortened and deformed fourth finger. Such an appearance can be caused by an injury in childhood – a fracture of the proximal phalanx with a pseudoarticulation and arrested growth of the more distal parts of the finger. Taking this single finding into consideration, it can be assumed that the Master of Čáslav Panel used – at least for some persons depicted in his paintings – real live models.

KEY WORDS: Iconography – Injury – Painting – Palaeopathology

The Čáslav Panel was found in 1883 in the town hall of Čáslav, Eastern Bohemia. It comes from the deanery church of Saints Peter and Paul in Čáslav, where it hung in the Čermák chapel located under the tower. It dates back to 1530. It was restored by J. Hlavín in Prague in 1929. It is a wooden board (147 x 101 cm) painted on both sides, originally perhaps the right wing of a dismantled altar (Pešina 1950).



FIGURE 1. Master of Čáslav Panel: Čáslav Panel, "Resurrection" (detail). Taken from Pešina 1950.

The faces of the persons depicted on the inside of the Čáslav Panel "Resurrection" bear signs of conventionalization, but in spite of it they can be considered relatively realistic. Other works of the author called the *Master of Čáslav Panel*, the "Panel with Captivity of Christ" and "The Ascension of Christ", representing more persons, reveal the author's efforts to depict the faces of particular figures from various angles. Some



FIGURE 2. X-ray picture of the left hand of an 86 year old man, whose second finger was injured at the age of 3 years. Radiodiagnostic department, Hospital Říčany near Prague.

of these faces are considerably deformed. This concerns mostly persons with raised heads and it is, therefore, not possible to draw from that any conclusions of pathology. Other persons are depicted with similar credibility as these in the "Resurrection". On the outside of the Čáslav Panel, depicting "The Washing of the Feet", 12 people are portrayed. Their faces are, on the contrary, rather conventional and bear several common features (shape of their eyebrows, upper eyelids, etc.).

All the quoted paintings show that, unlike the depiction of the faces from different angles, depiction of hands did not cause any difficulties to the Master of Čáslav Panel. A contrasting finding is the right hand of the man sitting on the left side of the "Resurrection" (*Figure 1*).

The hand, resting on the shoulder of the person seated lower, has a shortened and deformed fourth finger. Also the shape of the crooked fifth finger of the same hand is not quite normal. Such an appearance can be caused by an injury in childhood – a fracture of the proximal phalanx with a pseudoarticulation and arrested growth of the more distal parts of the finger (*Figure 2*).

Taking this single finding into consideration, it can be assumed that the Master of Čáslav Panel used – at least for some persons depicted in his paintings – real live models.

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Jakub Likovský
Institute of Archaeology
Academy of Sciences
Letenská 4
118 01 Praha 1
Czech Republic
Tel.: +420 2 57 533 782
Fax: +420 2 57 532 288
E-mail: Likovsky@arup.cas.cz

Eugen Strouhal
Institute for the History of Medicine
and Foreign Languages
First Medical Faculty
Charles University
Kareinská 32
121 08 Praha 2
Czech Republic
Tel.: +420 2 93 151 292
Fax: +420 2 90 051 064
E-mail: Eugen.strouhal@lf1.cuni.cz