



ANOTHER ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIND IN THE SHAFT TOMB OF IUFAA AT ABUSIR (EGYPT)

During the 2003 autumn season of the Czech National Egyptological Centre at Abusir the still untouched walled up area in the western wall of the auxiliary Shaft A of the Shaft Tomb of Iufaa was opened on October 27, under supervision of Dr. Zahi Hawass.

A small cramped adjoining burial chamber was discovered, containing a double wooden coffin dating from the end of the 26th Dynasty (before 525 BC) and the usual burial equipment. The objects were intact concerning human intervention, but those of organic materials were impaired by high humidity (85 %). After intrusion of dry air from the vicinity of the tomb, they started to disintegrate and it was necessary to subject them immediately to conservation.

The next step, taking out of the coffins, was performed according to Dr. Hawass' instruction in his presence on October 29. Because of lack of cohesion of wooden boards constituting the coffins, they had to be extracted board by board. On the bottom of the inner coffin, which broke into two parts, there laid parts of a disintegrated mummy.

The mummy was lying stretched on its back (length about 175 cm) in east-west axis with its head to the east and upper extremities crossed over the chest. The superficial layer of wrapping was permeated by resin, containing underneath a hollow space and a mass of wrappings changed by moisture into a blackish pulp.

Because it proved impossible to preserve the mummy in its entirety, its skeleton had to be saved by cleaning individual bones. All archaeological artefacts (e.g. gilded bronze sheaths for individual fingers and toes and various small amulets) had to be detected and registered. It proved impossible to detect remnants of soft tissues of the body.

Mummy wrappings and the surface of bones were attacked by the common white mould, which had to be removed mechanically and by coating with aquatic solution of Betadine (1:10). After drying, basic descriptive and metric examination of all preserved bones was performed in order to ascertain basic data on the dead. More detailed study, as well as photographic and/or radiological documentation had to be postponed for a further expedition. During the last day of my stay the surface of preserved bones was coated by Consolidant Paraloid B-72 (5 % solution in toluene).

According to inscriptions on coffins and shabtis, the mummy is of a male called Neko, whose two shabtis were found already in 2001 on the lid of the coffin of Iufaa's sister Imakhetkherresnet in the dead end of the corridor leading west from the bottom of neighbouring Shafts 2/R/01. In places, there occurs another name – Neferibreseneb – that also seems to belong to Neko.

The finding of a male mummy in the adjoining burial chamber is a certain surprise with regard to hitherto anthropological and egyptological notions on the Iufaa's tomb (Strouhal 2002, Strouhal *et al.* 2003). We expected to find a female mummy, either of Iufaa's presumed wife or his mother Ankhtisi.

The following parts of Neko's skeleton (182/R/03) were preserved: the calvarium, fragments of face and mandible, merely 3 teeth, the whole postcranial skeleton (partly defective) and a few tiny structures, like a partly ossified thyroid cartilage, one not fused *cornu major* of hyoid bone and the coccyx consisting of three fused vertebrae (2nd–4th). The male sex of the deceased can be confirmed by secondary sexual features of the pelvis, while cranial and mandibular fragments reveal features of female or intermediate character. The postcranial skeleton of the upper extremities is medium robust to gracile with small humeral heads, while on the lower extremities the bones are medium robust to robust, with a strikingly big preserved head of the right femur (with the exception of very gracile fibulae).

Neko's stature was 166.6 cm (reconstructed according to the table for American Negroes by Trotter, Gleser 1952), which approaches to the mean of the ancient Egyptian males. Determination of the age can be supported by *facies symphysialis* of grade 7 (35–39 years according to Todd 1920) and state of ossification of the thyroid cartilage of stage 6 (40–50 years according to Vlček 1974). Cranial sutures are open, except for a beginning fusion in the sagittal suture. Of the three preserved teeth, one of the upper premolars and upper first molar have on their occlusal surfaces completely exposed dentine to the level of half crown height without opening of the pulpar cavity. One of the lower second molars shows abrasion of the two mesial tubercles only, while the distal ones are still intact, obviously caused by premature loss of the antagonists. *Facies auricularis* of the ilium is slightly bulging, finely granulated and slightly framed. All joints are healthy, only few of them show a just beginning lipping of degenerative origin. Spinal osteophytosis reaches stage 1 on C1-2 and T10–12 and stage 2 on L4–5 (according to Stloukal *et al.* 1970, whose numbering is one digit higher), while all other vertebrae are not yet afflicted. Preliminary estimation of the age at death can be included in the range of 35–45 years.

From the features observed in Iufaa and his relatives (Strouhal 2002), also Neko displays the fluent nasofrontal transition without the usual masculine depression of the nasal root. His profile continues with an oblique forehead and only slightly protruding, partly damaged glabella. Superciliary arches are not developed and the upper edge of orbits is thin and sharp.

Similarly to Iufaa, also Neko has an anomalous number of 6 sacral vertebrae. In closer view, we can discern that the origin is different in both persons. Iufaa has the so-called cranial variation with sacralization of the 5th lumbar vertebra, while with Neko the first coccygeal vertebra has been sacralized (caudal variation).

On the basis of these two features, it can neither be confirmed nor excluded that both males were biologically related. We can only state that Neko, similarly to Iufaa, did not often work physically and painstakingly with his arms and did not load excessively his spine, while he often walked and in big.

The relation of the newly found individual to the proprietor of the tomb and his two ascertained relatives (Imakhetkherresnet and an anonymous old male, originally labelled Nekawer) is not clear. Perhaps it will be detected by the results of epigraphic study of the newly found objects, or possibly by the opening of another still unknown area of the tomb of Iufaa.

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