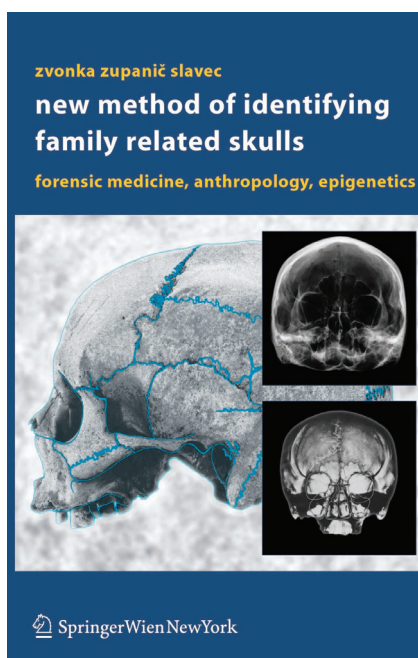


Zvonka Zupanič Slavec

NEW METHOD OF IDENTIFYING FAMILY RELATED SKULLS: FORENSIC MEDICINE, ANTHROPOLOGY, EPIGENETICS.

Wien/New York: Springer, 2004.

People often wonder about the usefulness of medical history. It is true that pathography can provide us with a better insight into certain historical events and personalities, but, deprived of the possibility of exact confirmation, medicohistorical speculations most often remain just an interesting but vague constructions. Therefore, especially appreciated have to be those attempts that combine medical-history knowledge with physical



and biochemical arsenal, as it was done at recent investigations of the remnants of the Nephertiti mummy or of the mystery of Napoleon's death. In our region, such attempts are extremely rare, not only because there are very few persons skilled at such an interdisciplinary task, but also because there are few centers equipped at performing more complex physical-anthropological analyzes.

Zvonka Zupanič Slavec, the tireless head of the Ljubljana Institute for the History of Medicine, the organizer of a series of the Pinter's Days symposia and the authoress and editor of at least

a dozen books on medical history, proved that at least Slovenia can boast to have one interdisciplinary medical historian the “usefulness” of whose work cannot be argued.

Zupanič Slavec's PhD thesis, later developed into a book, presents a research of 18 skulls presumably belonging to the Counts of Celje, a family that reached its top in the 15th century. The skulls were buried in the Minorite church in Celje and even survived a fire in 1811. The research by Zvonka Zupanič Slavec combined the methodologies of epigenetics, roentgenology, dentistry, paleopathology, physical anthropology, forensic science, and, of course, historiography. After collecting historical and genealogical data, the identification by gender and age followed and compared to other results. A planned comparison of the genetic material from the skulls with that of the descendants of the Counts of Celje, still living in Germany, however, was not possible, since the isolation of the mitochondrial DNA from the skulls did not succeed. The comparison of certain epigenetic traits among the skulls (facial cavities dimensions, for instance), did indicate the co-relatedness of the skulls. The painter Rudi Španzel even made portraits of the Celje Counts family, based on the identification analyzes.

The research performed and published by Zvonka Zupanič Slavec proved not only the identity of the Celje Minorite church skulls, but also that the interdisciplinarity lead by medical historian abundantly pays.

Amir Muzur