PALEOPATHOLOGY OF TWO MUMMIFIED BODIES FROM THE TAKARKORI ROCK SHELTER (SW LIBYA, 6100-5600 YEARS BP)

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INTRODUCTION

The Italian-Libyan Archeological Mission in the Acacus and Messak by the University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’ studied the rock art and human civilization in this area.
The area licensed to the Italian-Libyan Archaeological Mission in the Acacus and Messak - University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’
Takarkori is considered a key site to understand Holocene human occupation in the central Sahara, giving insights on the funerary practices of pastoral groups in the region.

*Takarkori rockshelter viewed from the dried river valley*

*The rockshelter during the excavation (viewed from W)*
Two naturally mummified individuals from Takarkori, dating back to the Middle Pastoral period (ca. 6100-5000 years BP), were unearthed together with the skeletal remains of thirteen further individuals. All burials belonged to adult women or infant/juvenile subjects.
Holocene cultural sequence and climate in the Acacus Mts. and surroundings
The partially mummified bodies of two females (TK-H1, TK-H9), respectively dating back to 6090±60 and 5600±70 years BP, underwent radiologic, CT scanning, and macroscopic examination.
Selected samples of bones, tendons, intervertebral disks, skeletal muscles, vessels, skin and bowels underwent stereomicroscopy and were rehydrated with Sandison solution (24-72 hrs) to be submitted to histologic examination.

Fulcheri E, Ventura L. Pathologica 2001; 93: 700-706
RESULTS

TK-H1 was a 30-35 years old woman, showing cranial vault porotic hyperostosis, a repaired left ulnar fracture, a sclerotic lesion of the femur consistent with enostosis (bone island), and multiple Harris’ lines of proximal left tibia.
Recently, Prof. Alessandro Franchi suggested the possibility of a sclerosing bone dysplasia, namely an OVERLAP SYNDROME (osteopoikilosis + osteopathia striata + progressive diaphyseal dysplasia)

TK-H9 was a skeletally mature individual, largely incomplete, without significant radiologic findings.
Histology highlighted fibrous tissue with taphonomomic changes...
... striated skeletal muscle...
... regular compact and lamellar bone...
... and visceral walls with endoluminal vegetal fibres and ectoparasites
Diffuse fungal colonization was also noted
CONCLUSIONS
Along with the exceptional findings at Uan Muhuggiag and Fozzigiaren...
La cosiddetta "mummia" infantile dell'Acacus
nel quadro delle costumanze funebri preistoriche mediterranee e sahariane

Fig. 2 — La mummia infantile di Un Mahuggig sul suo giaciglio.
...the Takarkori bodies represent extraordinary mummified examples from that area

Although largely incomplete, they showed evidence of trauma and carential alterations / genetic disorders

These individuals represent the oldest examples of mummified tissues successfully submitted to histologic examination

Fungal spores, not to be confused with erythrocytes, are a constant finding in paleohistology, with no pathologic significance
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