

# Nesi-Hensu

IMPACT ID: IMP00092

Institution: Archaeological Museum in Zagreb

Designation:

Date of Acquisition: 1885

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Image Modality: X-ray



Figure 1. Mummy of Nesi-Hentu at the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb (SpeedyGonsales, 2008).

Country: Egypt

Site: Upper Kingdom

Time Period: Late or Ptolemaic

Dynasty: Unknown

Date: 390 BCE +/- 45 years

Sex: Female

Age: 30-40 years

Background:

This mummy, referred to as the Zagreb Mummy or Nesi-Hensu, is a 30 to 40 year-old female. The mummy's original collector was Mihael Barić, who acquired the mummy while he was staying in Egypt in 1848-1849 (Uranić, 2006). After acquiring the mummy, Barić brought her back to his house in Vienna. After his death in 1859, the mummy was found unwrapped in his house, and the mummy and her wrappings – which contain the longest known Etruscan text and the only remaining linen book from antiquity, *Liber linteus Zagrabiensis* – were displayed separately (Uranić, 2006). The mummy was then gifted to the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb in August of 1862 by Barić's brother, who had inherited the mummy after his brother's death (Scukanec Reznicek, n.d.). This decision was in line with his brother's wishes according to his last will (Uranić, 2006). When Nesi-Hensu arrived at the museum, she was accepted by the curator at the time, Mijat Sabljar.

Since 1967, the mummy has been on permanent display at the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb (Tomorad, 2003, cited in Scukanec Reznicek, n.d.). During her time on display, Nesi-Hensu has received a fair amount of damage due to touches of museum visitors (Scukanec

Reznicek, n.d.). This issue has since been remedied by placing the mummy within a sealed, temperature-controlled case in the museum's Etruscan Room. Full restoration work on Nesi-Hensu was undertaken in 1998 by a member of the Institute for Scientific Research of the Vatican Museums, Nazzareno Gabrielli, in order to save the mummy from this damage (Archaeological Museum of Zagreb, n.d.).

Due to the presence of the Etruscan text bandages with the mummy when she was discovered, many questions have been posed about Nesi-Hensu's identity and her relationship with these wrappings (Scukanec Reznicek, n.d.). It is possible that Nesi-Hensu was an Etruscan individual who was buried in accordance with Egyptian traditions, or it could have been that her demise was unexpected and cloth unaffordable, so she was buried with whichever were available for the process (Scukanec Reznicek, n.d.).

Imaging and radiocarbon dating has been performed for Nesi-Hensu. Imaging of the mummy was completed in 1986 at the Medical College of Zagreb in their Department of Radiology KBC (Scukanec Reznicek, n.d.). Radiocarbon dating was carried out in 1986 on the mummy and the other materials present from the mummification process, such as embalming ointments and botanical material (Uranić, 2006). The mummy and mummification agents were carbon dated at the Ruđer Bošković Institute in Zagreb, while the botanical materials were dated by Dr. Behre Niedersächsisches Landesinstitut für Marschen und Wurtenforschung at the Wilhelmshaven in Germany and Dr. Paula Ruddal at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond in England (Uranić, 2006). Carbon 14 dating revealed a date of 2290 +/- 45 years, which when corrected with dendrochronology is approximately 390 BC (Uranić, 2006). This puts the individual as a mummy from the Late or Ptolemaic Period in Egypt (Uranić, 2006).

#### Pathological Features:

Nesi-Hensu has been estimated to have been about 30 to 40 years of age at the time of her death based on the condition of her bones (Tomorad, 2003, cited in Scukanec Reznicek, n.d.). From his examinations, Tomorad (2003, cited in Scukanec Reznicek, n.d.) also concluded that it was likely that Nesi-Hensu died from natural causes. Other examination of the mummy have given a sex estimation of female and stature estimate of 164 cm (Uranić, 2006). In terms of artefacts present with the mummy, Nesi-Hensu also had bandages absent of writing, small chunks of balm, blue beads, jewelry, a funeral wreath around her head (Tomorad, 2003, cited in Scukanec Reznicek, n.d.), and a funeral papyrus in poor condition containing multiple chapters from the Book of the Dead with her (Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, n.d.). Included within the funeral wreath were several objects, including the mummified head of a juvenile cat, the bones of small bird, and a mummified crocodile (Scukanec Reznicek, n.d.). The funeral papyrus, while badly degraded, was able to give her name as Nesi-Hensu, the wife of a Theban "divine tailor" named Paher-hensu (Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, n.d.). Additionally, imaging revealed a small resinous mass within Nesi-Hensu's head (Tomorad, 2003, cited in Scukanec Reznicek, n.d.). Nesi-Hensu's teeth and nails remain intact and well preserved (Uranić, 2006).

## Resources

Archaeological Museum in Zagreb. n.d. The Egyptian Collection. Archaeological Museum in Zagreb [Internet].

Reznicek, P. n.d. The Egyptian Collection of the Archaeological Museum of Zagreb and its Mummies. Academia.edu. Available from:  
[https://www.academia.edu/6437122/The\\_Egyptian\\_collection\\_in\\_the\\_Archaeological\\_Museum\\_in\\_Zagreb](https://www.academia.edu/6437122/The_Egyptian_collection_in_the_Archaeological_Museum_in_Zagreb)

SpeedyGonsales. 2008. Nesi-Hensu [Image]. Wikipedia. Available from:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liber\\_Linteus#/media/File:Zagreba%C4%8Dka\\_mumija.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liber_Linteus#/media/File:Zagreba%C4%8Dka_mumija.jpg)

Uranić, I. 2006. Contributions to the Provenance of the Zagreb Museum. *Acta Antiqua*. 46: 195-200.

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