

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF “FRANCISC J. RAINER” HUMAN OSTEOLOGICAL COLLECTION

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The “Francisc J. Rainer” human osteological collection, one of the largest in Europe, is hosted at the Anthropology Institute of the Romanian Academy. The purpose of this article is to present a brief outline of how this collection came into being, its composition and its potential for future research. The origin of the collection dates back to the early 1900s, continuing until the 1950s, with a main core originating from the 1930–1940 period. It currently consists of approximately 6800 well-preserved human skulls and postcranial specimens. From the 3585 inventoried individuals’ skulls, 2123 belonged to adult males, 1194 to adult females and there are 214 children ones. Most of the individuals died between 18 and 60 years. The human remains were gathered from 33 institutions – hospitals, and morgues. Most individuals were of lower socio-economic background: peasants, workers, beggars, prostitutes. Due to the large number of specimens of both sexes and ages, as well as the broad range of pathologies represented, the Francisc J. Rainer collection has an important potential for future research.

Key words: osteological collection, skull, demography, pathology, research collection.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to present a brief outline of the history and current state of “Francisc J. Rainer” human remains collection, in order to highlight its potential for future research. Even though it is currently one of the largest osteological collections in Europe, it is relatively unknown.

In nineteenth and twentieth century such collections were created throughout the world. All the current methods employed for demographic and paleopathological studies in physical anthropology are built upon such documented skeletal collections, as is the case of the Terry collection (Smithsonian Institution), Hamann-Todd Collection (The Cleveland Museum of Natural History), or Maxwell Museum Documented Collection (University of New Mexico) just to name a few (Komar and Grivas

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