Anthropological facial reconstruction is a method, which is used to rebuild lost or unknown features of person’s face over the skull. The aim of this process, especially in forensic area, is to promote recognition and identification of the unknown individual.

The method is based on the fact that particular relationship between morphology of a face and morphology of a skull beneath it exists. On one hand we use average values of soft tissue depths measured in defined points of the face and on the other hand we, following skull morphology and facial anatomy, apply various prediction guidelines to determine size and shape of facial features (eyes, nose, mouth, …).

The facial reconstruction method comprises a few more or less different techniques. With regards to process of creation of facial reconstruction we can distinguish an outline, drawing, sculptural or computerised facial reconstruction. With respect to subject, or more precisely general approach, we can differentiate separate “schools” of facial reconstruction method (Russian, American, British technique), which doing a facial reconstruction prefer a particular procedure and prediction guidelines of particular authors (for example Lebedinskaya 1998, Taylor 2001, Neave 1997).

It is important to mention, that using the facial reconstruction method we didn’t acquire a precise portrait of the person in any case. Contemporaneous limitations of this method didn’t allow it. Even if an approximated face bears a particular amount of individuality (there is uniquely shaped skull under it!), in general it represents a type of the face, which that person might have. However, this method is a very useful aid, which enables us to look at the face of a man dead a few thousands years ago and to breath a “life” into him.

“… the reconstruction practitioners must be experienced and have a thorough understanding of facial anatomy, anthropology, physiology and related pathology. In addition, the reconstructor must have practical skills in sculpture and a specialized knowledge regarding the relationship between the soft and hard tissues of the face. It is clear that it is possible to train someone in the technique of facial reconstruction very quickly, but that accuracy of characteristic facial reconstruction only develops with extensive study, experience and rigorous scientific method.” (Wilkinson 2004, pp. 218–219).

References