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# Unbundled: European Collecting of Andean Mummies 1850-1930

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# Chapter 7

## The Imagined Versus the Uncovered

The information presented in graphs and numbers in the previous chapter serve to showcase the condition of the remains currently in storage, as well as to delineate the information present –and missing– regarding the mummies that make up this research. The data made apparent the existence of several issues about the current classification of the remains and their state of preservation.

The aim of this chapter is to contextualize in more detail the challenges that these issues with remains classification and preservation pose for archaeologists and museum professionals, when working with the mummies in their collections. At the same time, the following pages attempt to position these mummy collections within a wider scope by briefly comparing this data with that of Latin American museums.

To this end the first section will be dedicated to discussing the most pressing issues found during the overall examination of the remains: the lack of contemporary archaeological data, and the absence of demographic information. The first part will look at the disconnection between the available classifications of Andean mummified materials in contemporary archaeology, compared to what is presented in the mummies' accession books and inventory entries.[78] The second part addresses the lack of demographic information on the remains once they were introduced to ethnological and archaeological collections, such as the ones studied here. The missing demographic information is contrasted with what has been written regarding each mummy from the moment of collecting, in natural history or anatomically-oriented museums.

The second section in this chapter explores the information regarding the way mummies have been stored and altered since their integration into museum collections. It further explores the motivations behind these changes, their consequences on the overall contextualization and positive correlation of the mummified remains with other parts of the collections.

In the third section, the discussion focuses on the comparison between the way remains are stored and exhibited in European contexts that form part of this research, and those museums in the source nations of Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. This comparison looks at the ways these Andean materials have been and are perceived outside of their original contexts, and the stark differences in exhibition policies and storage conditions among them.

## 7.1 Clarifying Data

### 7.1.1 Contemporary Chronologies

Most of the information available on the mummy collections in all of the museums in this research comes from the documentation associated with the remains throughout their

78 For ceramics, textiles and lithic, the museum's inventory and classifications seem to reflect contemporary archaeological classifications more accurately. Perhaps because they are easier to document and the available information is more widely spread in academic networks.

time as museum objects. This means that, since the time when the objects were introduced to the collection, a trail of information was written down, classified and annotated in official museum records.

Collection records are made up of descriptions, taxonomies, and measurements that have been established since the nineteenth century.[79] The categories used to describe an object come, primarily, from the physical aspect of the object itself, observed by the curator at the moment of accession and augmented by their successors. However, once an object has been classified with the help of these descriptions, the written documents that accompany it deter the possibility of it being assigned other meanings. This possibility to inhabit in the past trough documentary information, and in the present as the same object – or at least an object that has not changed a great deal since its accession- refers back to the idea of museum collections as heterotopias. In that sense, the documentation follows traditional views on object classification that sometimes contradict or hinder contemporary classifications.

In practice, this creates a gap between the documentation available and the information required by contemporary standards. In the case of mummies, the fact that the original information has not been updated, in many cases since accession, means this gap is especially evident.



As Kavanagh points out "It is at the individual object records that conventional and totalizing practices take root. The manner in which an object is acquired and documented will, to a large extent, determine how current and future generations understand it" (Parry, 2013:63).

In research such as this, documentation is the first source of knowledge about an object, the databases that compile these documents are transformed into knowledge environments. That transformation, at the museum level, demands that the documentation be kept up to date. That has not happened with most of the information available for the mummies in this research.

Briefly reprising what has been detailed in chapter 3, collection records on mummies, at present, generally include a description of the object, non-textual information such as pictures, and several annotations by curators and collections managers –including restorers if they have intervened in the remains.

Next to and in addition to inventory numbers, date of accession, and collectors names – if available– descriptions of mummies include size, measured in centimeters or inches; whether the entry refers to an object that is made of one or several parts (for example if a head is separated but in the same entry); the most distinctive features, including colorful textiles, small attached bags, the presence of a mortuary mask, feathers, etc.; the position of the body if discernible (crouched or extended); and finally an assessment on provenience (in terms of country, then general region or site), and culture. A period or

79 Further details on how documentation is regarded in this thesis has been described in chapter 3.

date for the object itself is given in very few cases and is always part of a secondary entry originating not at the time of accession but rather after a contextualization effort has been made.[80]

The detail in which the descriptions are made varies from collection to collection. As has been explored at length in the methodology in chapter 3, this constituted an issue in itself when looking at documentation. Nevertheless, the analysis conducted by visual observation of the remains within this project showed that, of the remains seen, at least 48% presented some detail that could be diagnostic. This means that at least 48% of the remains could benefit from the addition of current contemporary information that will aid in its description and classification.

This added information includes, but is not limited to, more detailed descriptions of the textile patterns or more non-textual information such as photography, diagrams, CT or X-ray scans. That information can be found in separate reports or publications and has not always been integrated into the sources available at the moment to researchers visiting the museum.

The work conducted during this research can certainly add to that information, allowing the museum and other researchers to build on it in the future. The type of textile details that are useful for contextualization, as well as the description of burial practices in terms of bundle construction, which have been described at length in chapter 3, are necessary information for the documentation on mummified remains. While it is true that this new information should not replace the historical documentation available, digital databases, which are in use in most museums, should include it within the parameters for description currently used.

Nevertheless, the descriptions of detail in of themselves are not enough to fully contextualize the remains. Some of the constantly missing information is the chronological, relative or absolute, positioning of the remains in the collections. Absolute dating sampling can be destructive and expensive, so it has not been commonly used in the museum collections reviewed here. Relative chronologies are more readily available, though still limited, especially for this type of objects.

In the previous chapter it was mentioned that, at least for Peru and Chile, archaeological chronologies have been created since the early twentieth century and have been refined in time. These chronologies, however, are not reflected in these early collections of remains, neither in the archival data nor for contextualization.

There are several reasons for this absence. The first and most relevant is that the chronologies used in archaeology today are based on ceramic stylistic descriptions. Seriations on pottery are possible because of the quantity of material available, as well as

80 An example of such practice can be seen for the Museo de América collection. The dates included in the description of three of the juvenile mummies which had no associated textiles, have been obtained via C14 testing. The dates given are between 400 and 1000 AD., which situates them in the Early Intermediate to Middle Horizon in Peru's archaeological periodization, according to Lumbreras.

the wealth of knowledge from specific contexts with relative and absolute dates obtained from archaeological excavations.

A good example of this is the chronology created by John Rowe in 1962, which is based on the continuous occupation of the Ica Valley on the south coast of Peru. From observations of ceramic objects, Rowe created a temporal sequence that went from the Paracas occupation to that of the Inca, based on similarities and differences in stylistic features. "As markers of temporal changes, the differences in features established a master sequence of stylistic changes in Ica Valley artifacts from 1400 B.C. to the Inca and early Spanish occupations" (Knobloch, 2005:111-112).

The chronologies cited above, however, are not reflected in museum documentation on mummies. It is interesting to consider that at the same time that pottery was being serialized and classified to create organized chronologies (many of the diagnostic vessels coming from funerary contexts), the human remains themselves were not given the same treatment. The Ica valley is home to necropolises like Paracas, Nazca and several burial contexts associated with Inca occupation. Nevertheless, the mummified remains from those areas have not been described chronologically in detail.



A similar case can be made for the Rimac valley, which includes the modern city of Lima. Here the occupation spans from 1400 a.C to the Spanish conquest. Evidence of occupation from cultures that have been associated with mummified remains includes the Lima, Ychma, Wari and Inca traditions. Even so, few contemporary chronologies for the area have included bundle descriptions or textile changes that could be used to place this type of remain within a chronology.

At the moment, there are at least five main chronologies in use in Peruvian archaeology: Rowe/Lanning, Menzel, Lumbreras, Morales and Kaulicke. Only a small number of the cultures mentioned in these chronologies can be directly linked (especially by textile work) to the mummified remains found in the collections analyzed in this research.

In that regard, the most important works related to mummy chronologies can be found for the region of Atacama, especially the Arica mummies –from the earliest Chinchorro, onwards (Arriaza, 1995), for the Paracas tradition (Dwyer, 1971) and for the Wari burials (Knobloch, 2005). In terms of sites, the bundles found in the necropolis of Ancón have been extensively described and placed in relative chronologies.[81] The efforts of Kaulicke, as well as those of Cockburn, in summarizing what is known of funerary practices are also crucial points of reference (Cockburn et al., 1998; Kaulicke, 1997). Even so, there is no organized presentation of data that allows one to 1) identify and integrate an isolated bundle to a cultural group, and 2) relate the remains to a specific chronology, especially if it lacks diagnostic textiles.

81 This information has been explained in detail in chapter 3 but is worth mentioning again to contextualize the discussion at hand.

The descriptions of bundles, individual layers and burial techniques are not absent in the literature. The problem is rather that the types of descriptions are very localized, sometimes based on one or two individuals considered of importance, either because they clearly present items that belong to someone in a position of power, or because they have been found in an archaeological site that indicates a high social rank or an extraordinary situation (like the Capac Cocha sacrifices) (Mignone, 2010). The missing contribution is a systematization of that information which can be organized from mummification techniques, to descriptions of bundling practices, to associated objects and textiles. This would allow a description of the remains in a collection based on the different characteristics they present, and from there an attempt to identify the most probable cultural and chronological affiliation.

An important question to ask here is: what is the usefulness of chronological or cultural classification of these remains within a museum collection? For one, their association with other parts of the collection that are currently not related to the mummies could be simplified. In the same line, funerary offerings or associated objects that might have been separated from the remains may be more readily linked to the human remains with which they were accessioned. More generally however, the information available can become useful according to what a researcher exploring might be searching for, be it textile or bio-archaeological data.

This consideration applies to curators as well. When parameters of required information are expanded on documentation and database entries, object searches become easier, more specific and narrow the gap between available information and the information needed at different times in a collection's life.

### 7.1.2 Demographic Information

Ethnology collections are the result of the division of collections as consequence of the separation of sciences that took place in the nineteenth century. The reasons for the separation of collections between archaeological, ethnographical and medical have been discussed more in detail in chapter 2. It is apparent from the moment these collections are formed that the objects collected for the completion an ethnology museum, and more so a national ethnology museum, follow the interest of curators in terms of cultural novelty.

Culture can be represented in how practices materialize, and in that sense, burial practices are perhaps some of the most interesting. Both the transformation of bodies into mummies and the dedication of the living to prepare the burial for the afterlife are interests for nineteenth century collectors (Bankes, 1984). The pre-eminence of one over the other in the observable characteristics of the remains, however, are the deciding factors to collect them for natural history museums or for anatomy or ethnology contexts. These distinctions are not always clear and have resulted in human remains that portray a specific cultural characteristic to be classified and collected in multiple types of museum collections.

As has been mentioned in previous chapters, one such example is the presence of evidence of a cultural practice, such as artificial cranial deformation (ACD), or trepanation. These practices can be included in the competences of both a medical/anatomical collection as well as those of an ethnological collection.

For the majority of remains, the association to textiles, for example, as well as the inclusion of artifacts that cannot be separated from the remains without changing the mummies or the objects dramatically (such as rings, necklaces, headdresses or masks), can be counted as ethnological distinctions, especially at the moment of accession.

The presence of unbundled or skeletal remains in ethnological collections can be attributed to them being part of a collection of artifacts that were donated or sold to the museum; the association of such remains with funerary offerings bought or collected by the museum; or because they were transformed, unbundled or separated from their original belongings, once integrated to the collection.

These are marked differences with the remains that are stored and collected in natural history and medical/anatomical museums. In those collections, the remains are almost always unbundled, have also had tissue removed, and do not have close associations with artifacts.



Once remains are unbundled or skeletonized they become easier to describe in anatomical and demographic terms. This is a very important difference among remains, and the documentation available on those remains, in the different kinds of collections. For one, the human remains in natural history and medical/anatomical collections have been described and classified according to a biological profile, which includes ancestry (race), sex, age and, when possible, pathological features. In some cases, these remains have been collected precisely because they present one or several biological characteristics that are of interest to curators at the time of collecting. This information can be then extrapolated to create a demographic profile of the collection.

In contrast, ethnological remains can seldom be assessed for these biological characteristics if not through the use of medical imaging or unbundling. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, only a marginal percentage of remains had any type of description in terms of biological information that can help build demographic profiles. More than the biological sex of the individuals, only a few entries on gender have been noted as present in the information available for the remains. Emphasizing the points made in the previous chapter, the gender information provided with mummies in the collections included in this research is almost always tied to anecdotal information made available by the seller, or by the appraisal of the associated artifacts in terms of a gendered division of labor.

The issues with assigning gender to specific labors in pre-Columbian society have been explored at length in archaeological practice (Geller, 2009). What the literature points to is the importance not of the sex of the individual, but rather of the gendered role in Pre-Columbian society.

One of the questions that arose from looking at the available documentation was: why is the demographic data not relevant in these collections? The answer, guided by the annotations on gender and on gendered labor, seems to be that the individual in itself is not relevant, but rather the role they hold in society. The link between work, placement in the social scale, and the reflection of the activity itself in the description of a culture have also been discussed at length in archaeological theory (Gosden & Marshall, 1999). Nevertheless, age, sex, gender, and social status cannot be separated from one another, they inform and situate each other. In that line, and following the theoretical line that was presented in chapter 2, this dissertation considers that both societal roles, as well as individual biological traits, need to be considered for each mummy. The joint consideration of these factors is fundamental for a biographical approach, as a person and as a member of society in the archaeological sphere, and later for their classification within a museum collection.

In the case of mummies, social status, power, and influence over the people that surround an individual, have been inferred through funerary attire (Degano & Colombini, 2009), the burial site, tomb construction (Dillehay, 1995), and the offerings accompanying the dead (Balachandran, 2009). The first and last of these cultural interaction markers are readily available without the need to observe the human remains inside a bundle. The seller or collector conveys the burial information, when possible. In that regard, the only extra information that can be provided by the analysis of the skeletal or mummified remains in a bundle is the age at death of the individual.

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, when looking at the size of the remains, as well as the classifications by age at death of the remains, as shown in the documentation, ethnology museums take the size of a bundle at face value. Museum documentation generally ascribes adult individuals to big bundles. The opposite also holds true, when a bundle is small or light, it is classified as a possible juvenile or young individual. The use of medical imaging has shown that this is not necessarily the case. Nevertheless, historically, the assumed data has been recorded in the documentation, and has continued to be used to classify remains in museum collections as valid demographic data.

The lack of individual information on the remains held in the collections may account for why they have been objectified. Once an individual's age, sex and condition at death have been described, it is more likely that curators, collection managers and, in case the remains are on exhibit, visitors, will relate to them on a personal level (Andersen, 2010). This has proven true for Egyptian mummies exhibited in Europe (Kilmister, Hugh, 2003), as well as for mummies exhibited in the Andes (Cordova González & Bernal Peralta, 2001). It is possible therefore, that one of the consequences of not reporting demographic data is the isolation of these remains within the collections presented, adding to the lack of research. It is only now, when interdisciplinary tools such as medical imaging and forensic/physical anthropology allow an appreciation of these remains, not only as representations of cultural practices but as individuals, that the demographic data becomes relevant in ethnological museums.

## 7.2. Remains of the dead. Changes to mummies and their belongings after accessioning.

The separation of mummies and their associated objects, be they funerary offerings or artifacts directly associated to the mummies, such as textiles, was not an uncommon practice after accessioning these remains into a museum. The previous chapter showed that the majority of remains were either no longer associated to the assemblages they were sold with, or had undergone some degree of change since their integration into the collections.

The reasons behind object separation are unclear, though the need to classify and store similar artifacts with each other may have played an important role, as it still does today. Mainly, the separation of human remains, and mummified human remains in particular, is done today in relation to preservation conditions. Storage facilities that are cooled, or temperature controlled, are designated for the most sensitive material, and mummies are widely regarded as such. Ceramic objects, textiles and metals all have different needs in terms of storage, and are accommodated within a museum according to those needs.

Storage considerations aside, however, it is useful to see the cases where the objects are not separated from the remains in order to understand the intentionality behind both actions: of separating and of keeping together. As has been pointed out in the previous chapter, in some cases, the keeping together of objects and mummies seem to indicate the intention of the curator to tell a full story of their collecting circumstances, be they as part of a single burial, as part of the same necropolis, or as representative of a particular culture's practice regarding the dead.



Examples of the first case can be found in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum, where two juveniles and an adult are classified as part of the same burial. Unbundled after accession, the textiles that belonged with the mummies have remained stored with the individuals and likewise, the documentation has described their transformation.
Descriptive links in the documentation of the Ancon mummies held in the SMB after the Reiss and Stübel excavation of the site are a good example of the second case. In the Berlin collection, many of the mummies have retained their original masks, false heads and false hair in order to remain linked to the exquisite drawings presented with the remains by the collectors after their travels.

The last case is the hardest to prove. As has been stated in the previous chapter, the complexities of collecting such varied objects as ceramic vessels and human mummies over such a long period of time may also aid in this separation of contexts. In that regard, the best example of keeping human remains and objects together to represent a practice would be, in general, the preservation of fully closed bundles of different sizes within a collection. Especially when dealing with highly decorated bundles, like those of Wari and Chancay, which include false heads, hair, bags, belts and even dolls, it is very interesting to encounter these remains in a generally complete condition. They occur in most of the

collections that have a large number of remains, like the Quai Branly, Weltmuseum Wien, The National Museum of Denmark, and at the Berlin Museum. It is possible that the presentation of the mummies in their full burial attire is considered to be more relevant than the separate presentation of artifacts that make up the bundle. In a sense, in these cases, the sum of a mummy is more relevant than its parts.

The removal of textiles covering bodies, or the opening of bundles, which results in unbundled individuals, is one of the clearest transformations these remains undergo when collected. This indicates that in those cases, the perceived value of the artifact as separated from the individual they belonged to was regarded as higher. Many collections have lost track of those textiles that have been unbundled. Some of them are exhibited as part of funerary bundles but without a direct link to the mummy from which they were taken, if indeed the human remains are still part of the collection.

The greatest issue with the separation of objects in a museum collection lies, in reality, in the consequences it holds for contextualization. Human remains in of themselves cannot be contextualized without destructive chemical analysis. In that regard, only by C14 testing can human remains be placed within a chronology or situated in a general timeframe; and it is with the aid of isotopes for the construction of geoscapes that human remains can be geographically situated during different periods of a person's lifetime, in this case death. By removing the sources of relative contextualization, such as ceramics and textiles, the human remains become untethered to their specific culture. Within the context of an ethnology museum, the remains that have lost this connection to a specific culture may also lose their place within the larger scope of the museum and are therefore less likely to be studied or exhibited.

Admittedly, this inference is very hard to prove, especially with collections where the great majority of mummies have not been exhibited since the early twentieth century. However, the type of remains that are exhibited in those collections where there are a large selection of mummies from which to pick indicate that only those which have context, or present diagnostic traits such as textiles or metal objects in direct association with the body are exhibited.

This is the case even when the contextual information is not proven to be 100% accurate, or where the diagnostic trait has not been linked to a specific culture, as is the case of the Quai Branly mummy, part of the exhibit on hair practices, case 71.1878.54.82 in the inventory.

The discussions presented in this first section of the chapter clarify some of the questions regarding the situation of Andean mummies in the museums included in this research. The lack of certain types of information regarding chronologies or demographics has had to do with the intentionality of creating ethnological museums: showcasing cultures across the globe. However, the separation of remains and their associated artifacts points at the valuation of some of those associated objects as important on their own and

not as reflections of a cultural practice regarding the dead.

In that sense, at the same time that the queries are somewhat answered in this first section of the discussion, their consideration opens the door to a more nuanced discussion on the way Andean human remains are stored and described in European collections in comparison to similar collections existing in the source countries.

## 7.3 Witnesses Left Behind

### 7.3.1 Latin American Collectors and Their Correspondence

Collections of mummified human remains exist today on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. The differences in the way these remains are treated and exhibited help understand how the history of an institution determines the treatment of the objects within it.

To start, it is useful here to recall that the process of formation of European museum collections included not only European travelers who went to the Americas, but also American collectors, correspondents and researchers who guided what the travelers would ultimately collect.

Some of those relationships have been detailed in chapter 2 and chapter 4, but they were far from the only ones. Not all travelers reported whom they met during their stays in the Andes. However those who did have left a trace that allows discerning that there were two important types of contacts: political connections, and those born from sharing interests on archaeological matters.

The biographies and the research conducted on the lives of famous collectors, Latin American and European, have clearly pointed out these connections and closed the perceived gap of knowledge disparities between both sides of the Atlantic. The works on González de la Rosa, Hutchinson, or Macedo are important examples. For the specific collections focus of this research, Hutchinson is perhaps the more relevant and has been mentioned at length in previous chapters. Gonzales de la Rosa is more pertinent for exchanges in North America and Macedo's network extends both to the United States and towards London, Paris and Berlin.

The antiquities collectors circles of which Macedo was part became an influential part of Lima by 1875. The scope of his collections garnered Macedo contacts with collectors, curators, and intellectuals in Europe as well as the Americas, connections which were encouraged by the exchange of artifacts with some of those institutions with which he maintained contact. "Macedo sent antiques from his collection to various museums and scientists: the mummy of a dog, which he had found in a pre-Columbian tomb, to Berlin to support the research of a professor on domestic animals in ancient Peru, some ceramic pieces Recuay and figurines zoomorphic to the Trocadéro Museum in Paris" (Gänger, 2014a:4).

Macedo was visited by none other than Adolf Bastian in Lima in 1876, and it is after this encounter that he will later sell his collection to the Ethnological Museum of Berlin during the War of the Pacific, presumably "to prevent it from falling 'in the hands of Chilean enemies'" (Gänger, 2014a:5).

A frequent traveler to Europe, Macedo often presented his collections in France, Britain and Spain, amassing him a wide network of acquaintances and contemporaries both in Europe and Lima. Back home he cultivated friendships with Wilhelm Gretzer, Antonio Raimondi, and William Hutchinson. These friendships allowed for continuous correspondence and exchanges of ideas between the two continents.

This communications trend continued during the twentieth century. German archaeologist Max Uhle's (1856 - 1944), constant correspondence with the SMB director Adolf Bastian, diaries, and other letters during his time of employment in the Americas, show a network of helpers from Ecuador to Chile. His network allowed Uhle to get not only safe passage between different regions of the Andes by securing lodging, but also sponsored excavations for German archaeologists, including a period of several years of digging in Peru sponsored by the University of California, paid for by Ms. Phoebe Hearst (Uhle, 1998). The results of those interventions are seen in excavations in the northern highlands of Ecuador thanks to his close relationship with Jacinto Jijon y Caamaño. In Lima he excavated contexts for around ten years, including those already researched by Reiss and Stübel, and was named the first director of the Museum of National History in 1905 (Browman, 1999). This appointment highlighted Uhle's relationship with one of the well-known collectors of the time, Luis N. Larco. Uhle later held a similar position in the Museo de Etnología y Antropología in Santiago de Chile in 1912. As part of his stay in Chile, Uhle sent the two mummies still found in the Gothenburg Museum of World Cultures.

During his years of work in the Andes, Uhle excavated some new and some already researched areas in all three countries: Ecuador, Peru, and Chile. Some of those sites are linked to mummies collected earlier than Uhle's presence, such as those of Ancón, mentioned above. Another context is that of "Chunchuri near Calama on the Rio Loa. This site had been partly excavated by Seneschal de la Grange in 1904; but Uhle found a much richer section, which yielded 1,100 objects and more than 200 skulls and mummies in a space of 55 square meters" (Rowe, 1945:14). His work, and his own accounts of the excavations he conducted in all these sites, are peppered with references to previous works that led him to those sites, as well as with the names of the different people who lodged him, who opened their terrains for him, and who would sponsor him.

Having shown the number of intellectual exchanges and archaeological materials' exchanges, it was assumed that a similar trend would be visible in the case of mummies. There is however no indication of such instances in the documentary record of the museums seen. Only the mummies in Gottenburg can be traced to Uhle and his Chilean successor Aureliano Oyarzun.

Given that some collectors delivered the mummies to more than one museum, and that those collections hold similar objects, it was also expected that museums in Europe would exchange mummies with each other in order to widen their existing collections. Though such exchanges have been suggested among national and provincial or municipal museums within the same country (Hoffmann, 2017), international exchanges of mummies do not occur. Indeed, the number of recorded exchanges between museums in Europe is also surprisingly low, especially given the collector and site connections between collections.

There is no clear indication of why mummy exchanges in Europe are not following the same pattern seen in other materials from the Andes. It could be that the areas collected are too similar, and hence there is not enough variety of remains in each museum to warrant the exchanges. The probability that mummies were just not that important to the overall collections also exist, but it cannot be confirmed from current data. This will be further discussed in the conclusions.

### 7.3.2 Witnesses Left Behind. Andean Mummies Collections in Latin America

As was introduced earlier in the chapter, the comparison between the way remains are stored and exhibited in the European contexts involved in this research, and those museums in the source nations of Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina will offer a different view on the collections presented here. The description of how mummies have been exhibited and stored in these different settings leads to look at the ways these Andean materials have been and are perceived outside of their original contexts, and the stark differences on the exhibition policies and storage conditions between them.



Since the focus of this dissertation is not to make an inventory of the existing mummy collections in the Andes, only eight of the most relevant finds will be discussed in this section. Of those, three correspond to large assemblages in well-known archaeological sites in Peru; other two are remains preserved in-situ in a museum in the region of Arica in northern Chile; and the last three relate to the exhibition of Inca Capac-Cocha, or ice mummies in Peru, Chile and Argentina.

The first of the museums of importance is that established on the site of Ancón. Established on the famous site researched by Reiss and Stübel, Uhle, and Julio Tello, and later by his apprentice Rebecca Carrion Cachot, this museum holds an important collection of archaeological artifacts, skeletonized and mummified human remains from the surrounding sites. Founded in 1992, the museum holds around 290 individuals in various states of preservation. Most of the remains are not on exhibit, though full bundles with false heads and complete textile attire can be seen in the main exhibit halls. The history of the site, the importance of the finds and research conducted in the area, especially in relation to the necropolis, is mentioned continuously in the museum. Current research includes bio-archaeological profiles of the objects available, and the director of the museum, Dr. Lucia Watson, has emphasized the importance of the work carried out but Rebecca

Carrión in relation to the mummies from the site.

A second very important collection can be found in the Centro Mallqui Museum in Leymebamba, in the central north highlands of Peru. The Museum was founded in the year 2000 on the basis of the archaeological rescue of over 200 mummies and their associated funerary offerings. The archaeological project that transferred the mummies from the Laguna de los Cóndores to their current location in Leymebamba took place in 1997, with the direction of Dr. Sonia Guillén. The mummies were originally located in caves around the Laguna de los Cóndores and had been looted for at least a year previous to the archaeological intervention. Currently, the Centro Mallqui has classified, described, stored, and examined the majority of the remains. The mummies are exhibited to the public and have been continuously researched through medical images and bio-anthropological methods since their discovery. The remains correspond to the Chachapoyas culture, though the continuous use of the site shows the influence of Inca incursion on the region.

Finally, the Puruchuco Museum dedicated to Arturo Jimenez Borja, is the third largest collection of a site museum in Peru. The collection is situated in the site of Puruchuco, near the modern city of Lima. The collection contains over a thousand bundles from different occupations of the site and surrounding areas, from early Lima to the Inca occupation, the latter being the most numerous. The storage facilities for the mummies have been recently refurbished and new medical images and bio-archaeological data have been obtained from the remains. Textiles and associated artifacts are likewise stored in connection with the bundles. Jimenez Borja has been mentioned earlier in this work as one of the people who organized unbundling viewing parties in Europe and the US as part of his effort to garner interest in the preservation and research of Peruvian mummies. The museum collection named after him no longer continues this practice, relying rather on medical images to describe the internal construction of a mummy bundle. In the museum, a selection of mummies is on exhibit. The storage areas are kept monitored and the natural temperature of the site, which helped mummify the dead in the past, maintains their status today.

In Chile, the largest collection of mummies comes from the Atacama Desert, and within it from the region of Arica. There were several occupations of the area, and with them various mummification traditions. Nevertheless, the most well known is also the oldest in the world, that of the Chinchorro mummies. In the city of Arica, the site museum Colón 10, which stands inside an old building close to the Cerro del Morro, from where the sites of famous nautical battles of the War of the Pacific can be admired. Inside the house, a glass floor has been positioned on top of 32 mummies that remain in situ, with their funerary attires and objects. The site museum has protected the remains from deterioration but allows for a very direct view of what a pre-Columbian burial ground looks like during archaeological excavations.

A larger museum dedicated to the mummies of Arica is located in the small town of San Miguel de Azapa. Here, the mummified remains have been chronologically placed in a big museum, surrounded by funerary offerings and objects recovered in the surrounding areas.

As has been mentioned in earlier sections, the Arica mummy chronology is perhaps the most detailed in the continent. The works of Dr. Fernando Arriaza and the Universidad de Tarapacá have detailed, to a great extent, the changes in the construction of said mummies, and have allowed for a relative classification that enables the placement of any Chinchorro mummy within their scale. Both the Colón 10 museum mummies and the San Miguel de Azapa mummies have been studied and are monitored by the University.

Outside of large mummy groupings, necropolises or burial grounds, the other type of mummy that is exhibited in the Andes, and which attracts the most interest in the international and national community, are the child or maiden sacrifices practiced by the Inca and known as Capac Cocha. These sacrifices always take place in high altitude sites, related to a huaca or center of power. This means that the mummies have gone through a different process than those found in the coastal Andes and have therefore been known as ice mummies or sometimes as ice maidens.



There are three well-known cases of such ice mummies found in contemporary archaeology. The first was that of a young girl in Mount Ampato, near the city of Arequipa in southern Peru. The mummy, known today as Juanita, was discovered in an area of melted snowcap by archaeologist Johan Reindhart, and brought down, with the offerings found near her, to the city below. As of today, around thirteen mummies have been found in the area close to where the sacrifice of Juanita took place. The mummies are stored in cold temperatures at the Museo Santuarios de Altura in Arequipa. At least two of the mummies are on display as of the writing of this dissertation, in controlled temperature chambers, and with their funerary offerings in nearby cases. The Ampato mummies have been extensively studied with medical images as well as dated through C14 methods and other bio-archaeological resources.

Another interesting case is that of the Cerro del Plomo child. Found in 1954, the remarkable state of preservation of the child has made him one of – if not the – most important mummy in Chile. The remains of the eight-year-old juvenile are stored and have been continuously studied by the professionals at the National Museum of Natural History in Santiago de Chile. Because of preservation concerns, and UNESCO recommendations on the display of human remains, the child was taken off exhibit (Durán Serrano, 2004). He had remained hidden from the public for almost 30 years, making a short appearance in 2014 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of his discovery. In 2016, a replica of the remains was again introduced to the main display of the museum.

Finally, the best known Capac Cocha are the trio of juveniles found in the Llullaillaco volcano in 1999, again by archaeologist Johan Reindhardt. The remains were transported to the city of Salta in northern Argentina, where the Museo Santuario de Altura de Salta was created to accommodate them. Two young girls and a young boy make up the original collection. After the founding of the museum, a fourth mummy that had been stored in Buenos Aires, joined the collection. The museum exhibits the mummies and the funerary offerings found around them in specially constructed cases. They have been studied in detail with modern medical technologies and the most complete reports on any mummified remains from the Andes have been produced on the basis of these collections.

As can be gathered from the examples above, most mummy collections found in Latin America are held not in national museums, but rather in site museums. That in itself is a very significant divergence from European collections, where the biggest assemblages of Andean mummies are known to be in national museums. Evidently, the sheer size of the collections found in Latin America makes the movement of a small number of those remains to national collections not very significant for the total, but it is this intention to keep the remains as close to their original contexts as possible that becomes a relevant point for discussion. Perhaps these site museums are becoming a new type of heteropia, one in which the past itself, as a context filled with transformed bodies, is the space of confrontation.

In all of the Andean collections, remains and associated artifacts are kept together, be it through documentation or by physical proximity in the exhibition rooms. The large assemblages would suggest that it could be easier to separate the remains, but except for the case of Puruchuco, no other museum undertakes that separation. Again, this is in stark contrast with the practice at European museums, as shown in this research.

In terms of the number of individuals, it highlights the relatively small number of mummies held outside of source countries versus the local collections. Only in Puruchuco, a collection of over 1000 mummies is held. If mummies held in museums at universities, municipalities, and private collections in Europe were to be inventoried, it would be surprising if the total number reached anywhere near 500. After all, the most significant collections in each country have been included in this research, and they account for a little over 200 mummies.

At least three of the collections in Latin America chosen as points of comparison are situated in areas which were commonly collected during the nineteenth century: Arica, Ancón, and the Lima valley. Therefore, the type of materials available on both sides of the Atlantic is very similar.

An interesting exception to the number of mummies being greater in the Andes is found in Bolivia. Only two museums, one in La Paz and the other at the site museum of Tiwanaku, have mummies on display. Each only exhibits one. While the collections of Tiwanaku (or apparently Tiwanaku) mummies in the MEG and QBL exceed that number.

That exception notwithstanding, because of the lack of separation of materials and the permanence near sites of excavation, the contextual information available for the Andean collections is far greater than even the most documented in Europe (that honor belongs to the Reiss and Stübel collection in Berlin).

This may also lead to the tendency of exhibiting many more remains comparatively in Andean museums than in European collections. The museums listed above all exhibit at least a couple of examples of what they have in their storage rooms. What could this signal? As has been discussed in chapter 2, primarily it could signal a disconnection between archaeological, historical, and modern populations that occupy the same areas. This suggests a lack of historical memory that allows for these remains to become part of a national discourse or trajectory, rather than part of a particular communities' heritage.

Another important difference between the Andean and European collections is the amount of bio-archaeological research conducted on the former. Every single collection mentioned here has been investigated through medical images, biotechnology (population and individual genetics), entomology, and anthropological markers. There is, therefore, a greater cumulus of information regarding demographic data, as well as individual mummy data. Enough that, if carefully systematized, it may be possible to create a more definitive bundle construction descriptive chronology or guide.



The prevalence of the national in Latin America supersedes the individual groups in the Andes. Voices urging not to exhibit the mummified remains have been heard for the Salta mummies, as well as for the Cerro del Plomo child. The later is the only case where UNESCO ethical principles are cited to remove remains from public viewing. However, mummies may be an exceptional case, in that they do not always cause controversy. In other museums, the exhibition of skeletal human remains has caused concern and sparked protests by communities from the area to which the remains belong.[82]

The fact that most mummy collections in the Andes are formed well into the second half of the twentieth century may also contribute to a different public perception of the collection. The remains are presented within their specific burial contexts, with their offerings and, when possible, within their original bundles. As such, the exhibition halls present a full overview of a mortuary practice, rather than only the bodies of the dead.

In contrast, in Europe, the remains exhibited are marginal in comparison to what is in storage. In the cases where the remains are or have been exhibited, the number of associated artifacts is small. Except for the exhibit of the Peruvian mummy at the Museum of Confluences, the exhibition of mummified remains in Europe seems to be tied to what happens to the body itself, rather than to the practice of burial. This could come from the fact that, when exhibited, the remains are commonly still presented in old cases, reminis-

82 A historical perspective of this problem is presented in the work of Alegria, Ganger and Polando (2009) "Momias, cráneos y caníbales. Lo indígena en las politicas de "exhibición" del Estado chileno a fines del siglo XIX." *Nuevo Mundo/Mundos nuevos.*

cent – if not belonging to – their original nineteenth century collection settings (as is the case in the Portuguese museums and the Belgium collection), or in absolutely modern glass cases (as the collection from the Reverte Coma Museum was presented in Granada, or the bundles on exhibit in Denmark and Madrid).

## 7.5 Experiencing the Andes in the Storage Room

The collections of Andean mummies in the museums subject of this research are very different from each other in one important regard: the way they are stored and exhibited. Focusing on the exhibition practices, the previous chapter showed that only a very small percentage of the collected remains are currently on exhibit. Only 13% of the total, or twenty-nine individuals, are exhibited. These account for very different ways of exhibiting, according to the countries where the museum is located.

In France, the Quai Branly museum exhibited one of their mummies in a temporary exhibition in 2012, making it clear that the use of the remains was to showcase the type of hair adornments and designs which existed in pre-Columbian times. The mummy was showcased in a glass case, and given that it was not very stable, precautions were made to secure it to a metal and wire frame in a sitting position.

At the Museum of Confluences in Lyon, one mummy is exhibited amidst a recreation of a tomb. The museum has chosen to make the exhibit case dark, with the remains only visible if the visitor comes close to the case and peers through specific sections. The mummy is located within a room dedicated to the afterlife and mortuary practices and has been surrounded with videos explaining said practices and the associated visible artifacts.

Both French examples indicate attention to a UNESCO guideline regarding respect for the remains and are very much on the forefront of exhibition practices with these mummies.

The biggest collections at the BM and the SMB are not on exhibit and have not been on exhibit for a long time, since the middle/late twentieth century at the latest, with no plans to change this status. The same can be said about the PRM, the RMV, the WMW and the MEG.

The countries where most mummies are exhibited are located in the Iberian Peninsula. In Spain, the temporary exhibit called Mummies: Testigos del Pasado (Witnesses of the Past), held at the Parque de las Ciencias in Granada from October 2014 to January 2016, put on display over fifteen Andean remains from the Reverte Coma museum collection. The remains were displayed in glass cases, without associated objects, but with some information of medical images taken of at least one of the remains.

At the Museo de América, a mummy pastiche representing a burial from Paracas, and a closed bundle, are part of the permanent exhibit at the museum. Both are presented in glass cases but in conjunction with artifacts from the same time periods, and in relation to the rest of the Andean collection of the museum.

In Spain, all Andean mummies on exhibit are showcased with modern technology, in modern cases, and have been monitored in detail. Indeed, the Museo de América has invested a great deal of time and money on researching how to better stabilize their remains, how they became mummified, and as has been pointed out earlier, have dated them through C14 methods when possible.

The two Portuguese collections in this research offer a stark contrast to all the others mentioned so far. Though the remains at the University of Coimbra Anthropology Museum (DAUC) are not precisely part of a public display (the museum is part of the faculty of Anthropology and does not entertain visitors outside of contacts with that faculty), both there and at the Museo do Carmo (MDC), the mummies are still presented in their original nineteenth century display cases, which have not been opened since accession. The heavy wooden cases are well sealed and very sturdy which, in a way, has helped maintain the remains in a stable condition. At the DAUC, two descriptions have been made of the remains as can be seen through the glass cases, one by an Italian researcher, the other by this project. At the Museo do Carmo, the exhibition of these mummies, near Egyptian mummies, and some artifacts probably associated with the burials, attracts a lot of visitors and attention, to the point where educational guides encourage visitors to draw the remains, and postcards are sold of them.



In Belgium, as in Denmark, the remains exhibited have been positioned in relation to the Andean collections of which they are a part. At the RMAH in Brussels, the mummy that served as inspiration in at least one of Hergé's Tin Tin comics is exhibited in an old fashion case but surrounded by videos and artifacts that help contextualize it as an individual.

Altogether, the very different ways these mummies are exhibited obey both curator and museum intentions. What is very apparent, however, is that much of what is done with these mummies happens in the storage rooms and not on the exhibit floors.

The way remains are stored, again, varies significantly from museum to museum. All collections are kept under strict temperature control, a practice that has been instituted for at least twenty years. Apart from that, mummies are very often kept in wooden boxes or cardboard cases where they settle and wait for collections managers to check on them every so often.

At the English museums, standards of practice of how to store human remains have homogenized the types of boxes, base and backups used (Fletcher, Antoine, & Hill, 2014). France has followed similar patterns with a very organized way of string their remains. In fact, at the Quai Branly, special boxes with easy-to-open mechanisms and specific tailor-made requirements for each mummy have been created.

That level of standard and organization is not always common. At the MEG, WMW, RMAH and RMV, the mummies have been stored in different types of containers, including wooden bases and other materials for support. The SMB collection is the most organized

in terms of storage, with sections dedicated to types of remains, that allows for them to be easily seen and located within the storage area.

It has been mentioned that some of the remains have undergone very intrusive practices with the intent to stabilize them. All of those modifications happened under current museum curator's predecessors, so it is unclear why some elements like rods, plastic and the like have been used.

A similar issue arises when considering the odor many of these remains have. The mummy collections visited and seen in the Andes do not present similar odor characteristics. As has been mentioned before, the current odor present is a mixture of ammonia, and could be associated with natural history preserving techniques used in the late nineteenth century. The use of these types of techniques to keep the structure of bundles or unbundled individuals is not uncommon in natural history collecting practice. However, their use on human remains is more rare and should be considered carefully.

Considering the changes undergone by remains once accessioned, in terms of storage and exhibition conditions, it is possible to note important trends that make the connection between them explicit. For one, if the remains have been stored – and still are – in their original cases, there has been no effort to rethink or re-adequate the way they are exhibited. Cases that support this interpretation are found in Portugal, Spain, and Belgium. In those examples, the original case is the portrayal of an original discourse on the remains.

On the other hand, the more challenges for storage and preservation, the more thought has been given to what these remains need in order to be exhibited. Outside of the practical considerations, again citing here the development of a specifically tailored support for the Quai 71.1878.54.82, there is a degree of forward-planning that involves different solutions for mummy exhibition, like the dark case at the Confluences Museum.

That is not to say that current interest in mummy storage and preservation will lead to a significant change on mummy exhibiting practices. However, it does signal that the more a museum has had to do to adjust their storages to suit the conditions in which the remains have been held, the more innovation on discourses and on exhibitions (or rather on the decision not to exhibit), seems to have taken place.

## 7.6 Chapter Summary

With this chapter, we have aimed to clarify and discuss some of the issues presented by the data as seen in chapter 6. From the need to update the documentation associated with the remains, to the differences in available bio-archaeological information, this chapter has pointed out some of the concerns and possible solutions to these issues.

The comparative look at European and Andean mummy collections allows, as well, for some further clarification on the ways these remains are stored and exhibited depending on their locations. Further general conclusions are presented in the following chapter.