THREE GUANCHE MUMMIES FROM THE UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID

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Abstract. Three Guanche mummies stored in the basement of the Civil Government of Santa Cruz de Tenerife were sent to Madrid in an unknown date of the 19th century, being exhibited in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in the 20th & 21st century. During the 70’s were sent to the Museo Reverte de Antropología Médica-Forense, Paleopatología y Criminalística (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) and from there, in 2011, to the Museo Arqueológico de Tenerife (Museo de la Naturaleza y el Hombre) in Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

The story and bioanthropological study of the three mummies are presented in this paper.

HISTORY

The mummies were deposited in the Museo Nacional de Antropología and then were taken in the decade of the 70s of the last century to the Escuela de Medicina Legal of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid for their anthropological and forensic study along with other dozens of mummies belonging to different cultures from South America, Egypt, etc. that also belonged to the Museo Nacional de Antropología.

In 1994, Reverte Coma, Professor of Legal Medicine in that school, founded the Museo de Antropología Médica-Forense, Paleopatología y Criminalística at the Escuela de Medicina Legal (Madrid) and since that date the three mummies were stored in that museum.

On November 4, 2009, a collaboration agreement was signed between the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the Organismo Autónomo de Museos y Centros of the Cabildo de Tenerife (government of Tenerife) in order to repatriate the specimens to the island for their study and exhibition in the Museo de Naturaleza y Arqueología (former Museum of Nature and Man) in Santa Cruz de Tenerife) belonging to that organization.

A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE MUMMIES

MG-001 (2.2011)

The specimen is an almost complete mummy presenting the following anatomical and anthropological characteristics:

Anatomical description
- Both, the skull and the mandible, are present. It lacks of ears and eyeballs (Fig. 1)
- The mummy preserves the cervical spine, thoracic spine, lumbar spine, part of the rib cage and sternum; right pelvis and upper and lower limbs, including complete hands and feet.
- There are no signs of viscera or other structures in the trunk.
- CT study demonstrates remains of mummified meninges inside the skull.

Anthropological data
- Sex: female
- Age: 25-29 years
- Stature: 1.54 - 1.55 m
- Robusticity: high
Pathology

At a dental level, the pathology observed in the specimen MG-001 consists of antemortem teeth loss of almost all the upper arcade with alveolar bone resorption (severe periodontal disease).

The only pathological condition at the skeletal level is the presence of light degenerative joint disease involving the left hip.

MG-002 (2.2011)

This mummy is an incomplete specimen as can be observed in the anatomical description.

Anatomical description

- Skull, mandible, torso - including the right clavicle - and part of the rib cage, upper right limb and left humerus (Figs. 2 & 3). The right foot (that is isolated of the rest of the body) seems that does not correspond to the mummy.
- Fragments of some viscera are present (pericardium and tongue) in thorax and mouth without traces of other internal organs in the natural cavities.
Fig. 2. In MG-001 there is no signs of viscera in the thoracic cavity.

Fig. 3. The mummy has black hairs on its beard and sideburns. He also has red mud on her cheek that could have part of the mummified ritual.
- Remains of temple and beard (of black color) are also observed on the right side of the head.
- Vestiges of the eyes and infraorbitarily muscles are still present in the orbits.
- Remains of red mud can be detected at the level of the right cheek and it is very probable that the substance could be used in the mummification process.

**Anthropological data**
- Sex: male
- Age: 30-34 years
- Stature: 1.76 m
- Robusticity: mid

**Pathology**
No pathological conditions were found during the examination of the specimen.

**Observations**
It is probable that the mummy MG-002, whose description coincides with the mummified remains found in La Camellita (Guajara, Las Cañadas) on August 1855, was sent by Fernando López de Lara, on December 1857, to the Real Academia de la Historia (Royal Academy of History) in Madrid, where was present on April 1858 (Eff-Darwich, pers. com.). Along with the mummy, a foot and animal leathers from the same site were sent too. A war mace from the aboriginals of Lanzarote was in the same box.

**MG-003 (2.2011)**

The specimen is an almost complete mummy presenting the following anatomical and anthropological characteristics:

**Anatomical description**
- Trunk, upper limbs, sacrum, both pelvis and lower limbs are present. Most of the internal organs are located inside the mummified torso as it was demonstrated by radiography and endoscopy. The head is the only mummy part that is absent.
Anthropological data

- Sex: female
- Age: 25-29 years
- Stature: 1.55 - 1.56 m
- Robusticity: mid

Pathology

No pathology was observed during the examination of the specimen.

Observations

This specimen is one of the most clear cases of natural mummification among the Guanche population of Tenerife as it is demonstrated by the position of the corpse, specially the upper and lower limbs (Fig. 4).

On the other hand, it seems to be a case of handling in the Museo Nacional de Antropología or in the Reverte Museum for unknown purposes. The disarticulation of the head, upper and lower limbs is not natural and it has the characteristics of an anthropogenic case.

Fig. 4. The mummy preserves vestiges of most of the internal organs within the thoracic cavity.