

The World Congresses on Mummy Studies

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Seven World Congresses on Mummy Studies have been held at the time of writing this contribution. The first occurred 1992 on Tenerife (Canary Islands, Spain), followed in 1995 in Cartagena (Colombia), 1998 in Arica (Chile), 2001 in Nuuk (Greenland), 2004 in Torino (Italy), and 2007 in Lanzarote (Canary Islands, Spain). The 2011 Congress was the first to be held in the United States (San Diego) and coincided with the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Pacific Division. The subsequent Congress is planned for Rio de Janeiro in 2013.

These Congresses have been of tremendous importance in focusing scientific attention on mummy studies, and particularly in bringing scientists interested in mummies together. On a broader scale, the Mummy Congresses have played a part in underlining that studying mummies is a truly scientific endeavour (Chapter 65). Before the Mummy Congresses, the scientific results of mummy studies extended over a plethora of medical, anthropological, and archaeological meetings and publications. While this may be very appropriate in some instances, e.g., presenting paleopathological evidence of a specific disease at a medical conference discussing the epidemiology of that disease, it also atomized the field. Often lost was the context of the rituals and taphonomy leading to the preservation of the mummy and, very importantly, the context in which the person once lived; those features were commonly published elsewhere or not at all. Due to their strong emphasis on being an interdisciplinary enterprise, the Mummy Congresses have become the venue of choice for presenting the results of mummy analyses because they ensure a

holistic approach. Indeed, the cross-disciplinary discussions arising from the presentations are perhaps some of the most prominent features of these congresses.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN: THE FIRST MUMMY CONGRESS

It would not be possible to write about the history of the mummy congresses and their significance without mentioning Art Aufderheide. Although a chapter is dedicated to him elsewhere in this volume (Chapter 2), we would like to give a more detailed and personal account of his engagement in initiating the remarkably successful mummy congresses. Art's interest in paleopathology, and that particularly which related to mummies, began in the early 1980s. This interest led him to his first field studies in Chile and Peru, as well as in Alaska in 1982. Since then, in the company of his wonderful wife Mary, Art continued to travel around the world seeking more knowledge about mummies, diseases, and ancient ways of life. One of these trips, in October of 1988, introduced Art and Mary to Tenerife (Canary Islands, Spain). Art had read a short article on Guanche paleopathology (the aboriginal population of Tenerife) written by Conrado Rodríguez-Martín and María García in the *Paleopathology Newsletter*, and was interested in learning more about the Guanche mummies. In Tenerife he met a group of enthusiastic individuals representing the local Archaeological Museum and the local University of La Laguna.

Along with Conrado, who at that time was curator of paleopathology and physical anthropology, and Rafael González-Antón, director of the museum, Art was shown the collection of human skeletons and mummies, and visited several

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important archaeological sites on the island. After this visit, Art suggested organizing a small project on Guanche mummy paleopathology and, during the first months of 1989, they all worked together on the idea. With the active participation and strong financial support of the Cabildo de Tenerife (the government of the island), this small study group launched the idea of organizing a much more comprehensive research project on Guanche mummy bioanthropology, including an international mummy exhibit, the creation of an institute devoted, among other things, to the study of paleopathology, and a World Congress on Mummy Studies. Such a congress would have as its ambitious aim to gather all the scientists working on the mummies of the world. Shortly thereafter (March 1990), a full team of experts on mummies from the Canaries and the United States formed a working group. At the same time, hundreds of letters were sent to different persons and institutions around the world, most of them known by Art, announcing the “First World Congress on Mummy Studies” to be held in the tourist city of Puerto de la Cruz, on the northern shore of Tenerife, in February 1991. However the Persian Gulf War in January and February of that year forced the postponement of the congress exactly one year.

The congress was held on February 3–6, 1992. Art was president of the Scientific Committee, and more than 300 persons attended the event, which was organized in different parallel sessions: Guanche Mummies Bioanthropology, Paleopathology, Research Methods, Museology, Conservation, Mummification, and Free Communications. The official languages were Spanish and English, with the use of simultaneous translation. On February 4th the exhibit entitled “Mummies, the Secrets of the Past” was officially opened in Santa Cruz, Tenerife, showing mummies and archaeological artifacts from the Canaries, Egypt, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, the United States, and other parts of the world. Art took responsibility for contacting curators and directors in different museums in many countries, and the team that the museum formed to prepare the exhibition. The congress was a combined environment of science and pleasure, with dinners on the shore of the Atlantic and in the hall of the main theater of Santa Cruz. The grand finale was an excursion to the Teide, the highest peak in the island and indeed the Iberian Peninsula, almost 4,000 meters over the level of sea.

It is often the case that the first event in a series sets the scope for activities and indeed the whole atmosphere for the next events. As such, the idea that paleopathology needed to be seen in light of

the archaeology and the cultural history of the once-living populations was strongly emphasized from the outset. Another characteristic of the Mummy Congresses was the perception that the mummy conference should be held in places close to contexts where mummies had been discovered and exhibits that included mummified remains.

WILL THERE BE ANOTHER CONGRESS? THE SECOND MUMMY WORLD CONGRESS

One of the most frequently asked questions during the days of the first World Congress was whether there would be a Second World Congress on Mummy Studies. An informal group of researchers, under the name of the World Committee on Mummy Studies, was soon formed to facilitate the continuation of this nascent tradition. Its goals were to help in organizing and supervising the scientific content for the next Congress. Art was the honorary president, Conrado the president, and Felipe Cardenas the vice president. All the organizers of future Congresses were included in the committee as active members.

Having been coaxed by Art and Conrado, Felipe was persuaded to assume responsibility for the next Congress. Indeed, Felipe announced, at the closing dinner for the First World Congress, the city of Cartagena de las Indias, an historic place on the shore of the Caribbean Sea in Colombia, as the venue for the Second Congress. There we met on February 6–10, 1995, to attend a meeting that was held in the Convention Centre located in the heart of Cartagena, a true jewel of Spanish colonial architecture, supported by the Universidad de Los Andes. The meeting was organized in two parallel sessions with simultaneous translation. Again, the official languages were Spanish and English. The sessions were attended by more than 200 persons and dealt with the following subjects: History of Research in Mummies, Paleogenetics, Bioanthropology of Chinchorro Mummies, Mummies and Ancient Parasitism, Arctic Mummies, Medicine and Diet: The Mummy’s Perspective, Paleoimaging in Ancient Mummies, and Free Communications.

The Cartagena World Congress on Mummy Studies was an unforgettable meeting, as was that in Tenerife. Many of the attendees from the previous Canary Islands meeting were also there, and initial contacts made in Tenerife in 1992 were pivotal for organizing the Cartagena meeting. As usual, Art was fundamental in bringing people together and encouraging all our colleagues to attend. He not only was one of the first to arrive, but also presented several papers. You could see

him during the coffee breaks and at lunch and dinner periods talking with colleagues, making new contacts, thinking of new projects, and finding ways of helping others to make their research with mummies more rewarding. Thanks to his effort and interest, a research activity eventually resulted in the positive identification of Chagas disease in ancient Chinchorro mummies (Chapter 2). The Second World Congress was essential for the survival of the World Mummy Congresses. Had it failed, the future of our group of people and meetings would have been much less certain.

AND SO IT WENT ON: THE THIRD WORLD CONGRESS ON MUMMY STUDIES

The venue for the Third World Congress on Mummy Studies was Arica, northern Chile, near the border with Peru. Arica is a city of eternal spring due to its mild climate. This Congress was organized by the Department of Archaeology and Museology of the University of Tarapacá under the direction of Calogero Santoro, director of the Museum of Azapa, and Bernardo Arriaza, then from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Between May 18 to 22, 2001, 200 people attended the sessions that were held in la Hosteria Arica, by the shores of the Pacific Ocean where so many Chinchorro mummies had been found in the past.

The Third World Congress was organized much as the two preceding congresses, with Spanish and English as official languages. Arica had many symposia arranged: Mummy Paleopathology, The Study of Human Hair and Archaeology, Human Sacrifices in High Elevation Shrines, Clothing and Iconography of the Dead, Coprolites, Diet, and Parasitological Studies of Mummies, Animal Mummies, Mummies and DNA Studies, Archaic Mortuary Patterns in South America, Plants for the Dead, Syphilis in the Americas, Conservation of Human Mummified Remains, Contemporary Andean Mortuary Rituals, Mexican Mummies, and Free Communications. Honorary president once again, Art was also the chairman of the Human Paleopathology Symposium. This Congress had a very special meaning for Art and Mary because they had visited Arica eight times previously to carry out research on disease and health in Andean mummies, and they had many good friends there.

FROM THE SOUTH TO THE NORTH: THE FOURTH WORLD CONGRESS

During the closing dinner, Conrado announced Nuuk (Greenland) as the venue for the Fourth

Congress to be held in 2001. Therefore, for the first time in the history of the mummy congresses, we ventured out of the Spanish-speaking, subtropical world. However, this congress did have something in common with the previous three conferences, as this remote northern location was also near places where mummies had been found and were currently the subject of a museum display.

However, prior to the Congress, sad news shocked us like lightning. Jens Peder Hart-Hansen (Chapter 5), a pioneer in mummy studies in Denmark and the true soul of the Greenland concept of a Congress, who had fought to have Nuuk chosen as the venue for a mummy congress since that in Cartagena de las Indias, died suddenly soon after the Arica Congress due to a malignant disease. It was a terrible surprise for all of us, not least because Jens Peder had just attended the Third World Congress. Niels Lynnerup, Jens Peder's successor as head of the Laboratory of Biological Anthropology at the University of Copenhagen, then became responsible for the organization of the Greenland Congress. The Greenland National Museum & Archives as well as all the Greenland authorities supported the event, and the venue was the Greenland Cultural Centre *Katuaq* at Nuuk. Nearly 200 people attended the event. As in Arica, there was only one session divided in different symposia: Greenland and Arctic Archaeology, Greenland and Arctic Mummies (a symposium in memory of J.P. Hart-Hansen), Mummification Methods, Bog Bodies, Hair in Archaeology, Conservation and Museology, Paleopathology, Applied Technology and Analytical Methods, Mortuary Archaeology, Mummies from Mount Llullaillaco (Argentina), and Free Communications. Art was, as in the previous conferences, the Honorary President of the Scientific Committee, and the cochairman of the Mummy Paleopathology Session.

For the very first time, and after some debate, English was the only official language, although the abstracts were printed both in English and Spanish. Having Spanish in addition to English had a specific aim: to encourage scientists in Europe and Latin America, who otherwise might not have participated due to language barriers. Deciding on English as the sole official language was in fact a consequence of the growing internationalization of the mummy study field. In a sense, one could argue that thanks to the initial success of the mummy congresses, based also on soliciting presentations from Spanish-speaking colleagues, we now had a truly international congress, where translation was no longer necessary, or was even an encumbrance to the discussions and presentations.

Art, as usual, gave several excellent presentations. Sitting in on the panel at the closing debate, he stressed, as before, the special significance of mummy studies. He emphasized the need to secure mummies and mummy tissue as a way that extended our knowledge of disease and conditions of human life in antiquity, and establishing mummy tissue databanks and databases on mummy finds. The attendees were also able to see the famous mummies from Qilakitsoq (Chapter 5), at the Greenland National Museum.

The terrible events of September 11 in New York and Washington shocked us as they did the rest of the world. Many were flying back to different parts of the planet at that moment, and it was especially difficult for those traveling back to Canada and the United States, as they had to stay in Greenland for an extra period of several days due to the cancellation of all flights. In addition, their being in remote Greenland limited news from home, others, participating in a tour of Norse archaeological sites in Greenland, learned of the tragic events in a remote village and tranquil environment where it was especially hard to believe that such evil existed in the world.

EGYPTIAN MUMMIES IN ITALY: THE FIFTH WORLD CONGRESS

Torino, Italy, was the venue of the Fifth World Congress on Mummy Studies, with Emma Rabino-Massa of the University of Torino responsible for its organization. The Egyptian Museum in Torino is considered to be the second most important Egyptian artifact collection in the world after the Cairo Museum, which served as a strong motivating factor in choosing the venue.

Symposia covered the “expected” topics of Applied Technology in Mummies; Paleopathology, Paleoparasitology (note that parasitology was now meriting a special session, reflecting the growing awareness of the significance of this topic; Chapter 75) Methods of Mummification, Funerary Archaeology, Conservation of Mummies and Mummies in Museums, and Frozen Mummies. In addition, there were also more local symposia, reflecting current issues: Forensics, Tattoos, Hair and Teeth, Mummies and the Public, and a symposium drawing attention to specific developments around the world, and in this case, *Advances in Mummy Studies in Brazil*.

In Torino, the World Congress was held for the first time in a major European city, with all the accompanying amenities. Initial fears that some delegates might feel a bit disappointed at not

having to “rough it” amongst Canarian beaches and volcanoes, Greenlandic glaciers, or Andean deserts, were completely put to rest, not least by the enchanting atmosphere at the university with its historic halls and buildings. The level of attendance was equivalent to that of other congresses, gathering approximately 200 scientists from all over the world. Of course, the highlight was the visit to the Egyptian Museum, with its incredible collection of artifacts and mummies.

At the creation of the Mummy Congresses, it was specifically argued that we needed to show that mummies and mummy finds were so much more than the Egyptian mummies. We wanted to really open up the field globally, pointing to important mummy finds around the world, all reflecting exciting scientific possibilities and potentials for new knowledge about many cultures and peoples. On the other hand, our aim has never been to avoid Egyptian mummies, and many papers from across the Congresses have focused upon Egyptian finds. Thus, it was invigorating to have a Mummy Congress where Egyptian mummies were center stage.

BACK TO THE CANARY ISLANDS: THE SIXTH WORLD CONGRESS

There were several bids for the sixth World Congress, but the informal board of Elders (the World Committee on Mummy Studies) decided to support Lanzarote, the Canary Islands, as the chosen venue due to considerations of Congress facilities, availability, infrastructure, costs, and so on. So in February 2007 we were back on the Canary Islands, hosted by Pablo Atoche and Ángeles Ramírez, his wife and research collaborator. It must be said, however, that the Canary Islands represent very different biotopes and where Tenerife, with its volcano (Teide, and actually officially the highest peak in Spain), represents a very fertile island with very developed urban centres and old colonial style city centres, Lanzarote represents a more arid and harsh environment. Most delegates were lodged in a major tourist hotel by the sea, but the actual Congress was held in the beautiful town of Teguiise, meeting at the local theater (for workshops) and the hall of an old convent (for presentations). Auspiciously, the list of attendees counted almost 300, indicating a strong interest and support of the mummy congresses.

Sessions included Conservation of Mummies, Museums, Funerary Archaeology, Beliefs and Funerary Rituals, Problems About Recovering Mummified Remains, Paleopathology and Parasitology, Applied Technology, Hair, and Paleodiets.

New additions to the standard session list included Sub-adult Mummies and other sessions reflecting various geographical locales: Mummies of Mexico; The Mummies of Altamira Cave and High Mountain Archaeology: Mummies in the Andes. As in the first three Congresses, Spanish and English were again the official languages.

Once again, the advantages of having a close-knit Congress in a rather remote place became clear. Unlike so many huge, international meetings, where people tend to be lodged across many hotels, with the presentations extended over a multitude of competing parallel sessions, the Mummy Congress on Lanzarote brought the delegates close together. Pairs and groups of scientists were prone to wander around Teguise during breaks, or around the hotel facilities in the afternoons, deeply engaged in discussions and making plans for new projects.

The prompt publication of the papers from these Congresses presented as books or issues of scientific journals, always prior to the celebration of the next meeting, is one of the most important features and reflects the true success of the six Congresses held to date. This, we repeat, constitutes true success because it guarantees to the attending scientists that their work will not be lost, and attracts more participants.

NORTH AMERICA: SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA (THE SEVENTH WORLD CONGRESS)

In 2011 the Mummy Congress was held in North America for the first time. Again, the choice of venue, San Diego, aside from the usual preconditions, relied on proximity to truly archaeologically interesting areas. Furthermore the Mummy Congress was able to collaborate with another meeting (American Association for the Advancement of Science, Pacific Division).

The meeting was held on the Spanish Plateresque style campus of the University of San Diego, in its Institute for Peace and Justice. The Congress was organized by Alana Cordy-Collins and Rose Tyson of the Anthropology Department into 16 symposia, a paleoimaging workshop—held at the San Diego Museum of Man—two sessions of contributed papers, and a poster session (40 posters presented). David Hunt of the Smithsonian Institution's Natural History Museum gave the Plenary address. Ethical issues have always been discussed at the Congresses, and probably no one better understands and respects these issues than the participants. These are people who locate,

excavate, handle, conserve, and study the mummies, but this work can be controversial in the United States, due to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), and the many political and judicial issues emphasized by Native American groups at both national and regional levels. Having the Mummy Congress in the United States, and in conjunction with a AAAS meeting, was a chance to not only present scientific data for a larger community, but also to show that mummies are indeed handled with respect, and that associated ethical issues are taken seriously by all. This underscores the founding principle of the Mummy Congresses: that we learn so much about ourselves, our ancestry, and our cultural history by investigating mummies. A highlight of the Congress was an evening reception hosted by the San Diego Museum of Man which showcased its new exhibit, "Modern Day Mummy: The Art and Science of Mummification" The Congress was attended by almost 200 registrants from 27 countries, 25 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

THE FUTURE IN RÍO DE JANEIRO (THE EIGHTH CONGRESS)

FIOCRUZ (Fundación Oswaldo Cruz) at the Escola Nacional de Saúde Pública (National School of Public Health) in the large Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro will host the Eighth World Congress on Mummy Studies in 2013.

CONCLUSIONS

The steady level of attendance and the quality of the published proceedings of all the Mummy Congresses clearly underscore how farsighted Art was back in the early 1990s. There was indeed a need for a special forum for presenting mummy studies, a forum that would ensure that mummies are seen in their cultural, historical, and archaeological contexts, linking paleopathology inextricably with archaeology, and natural science with cultural history. Furthermore, from the beginning, the special relationship between the Congress venue and its geographical location near to, or curating, actual mummies and mummy finds, gave these congresses their own special feel. As such, the Mummy Congresses have always stood slightly apart from the many other annual, biennial, or triennial more specialized medical, archaeological, or anthropological meetings, usually held in more "characteristically" urban convention centers. Emerging trends in mummy studies have also always found a receptive Congress organization. New sessions focusing on new investigative

techniques, or simply new mummy finds from a specific locality, have often served to secure due recognition and discussion.

The level of attendance at the mummy congresses has been quite stable, and it will be interesting to follow the future of congresses. However, whatever the future, it is certain that all of us who have been fortunate to attend one or more of the Mummy Congresses will always think about that occasion as something special; a congress not quite like the others.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

All the Mummy Congresses have resulted in scholarly proceedings volumes, a treasure trove for any scientist interested in mummies.

Proceedings of the I World Congress on Mummy Studies. 1992. Santa Cruz de Tenerife (Canary Islands, Spain): Museo Arqueológico y Etnográfico de Tenerife. Organismo Autónomo de Museos y Centros. Cabildo de Tenerife. 1995.

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Chungará. Revista de Antropología Chilena, 32. *Actas del III Congreso Mundial de Estudios sobre Momias.* 1998. Arica (Chile). 2000.

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Journal of Biological Research. Proceedings of the V World Congress on Mummy Studies. 2004. LXXX, I. Torino (Italy). 2005.

Mummies and Science. World mummies research. Proceedings of the VI World Congress on Mummy Studies. 2007. Edited by Pablo Atoche-Peña, Conrado Rodríguez-Martín, and Ángeles Ramírez Rodríguez. Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Academia Canaria de la Ciencia, Ayuntamiento de Teguiise, Cabildo de Lanzarote, Cajacanarias, Fundación MAPFRE Guanerteme, and Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. 2008.