

**BULLETIN NO. 1: A DESCRIPTION  
OF THE DESICCATED HUMAN  
REMAINS IN THE CALIFORNIA  
STATE MINING BUREAU**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649267842

Bulletin No. 1: A Description of the Desiccated Human Remains in the California State Mining Bureau by Winslow Anderson

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Cover @ 2017

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**WINSLOW ANDERSON**

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## INTRODUCTORY.

*To the honorable Board of Trustees of the California State Mining Bureau:*

GENTLEMEN: In compliance with your invitation, I have the honor to submit the following article on the mummified human remains now on exhibition in the Ethnological Department of your Bureau.

Subjoined to the description and measurements of these ancient bodies I have made a few observations on: The infancy of the intellectual races and their ethnological classification; some of the habits and foods of the savages now inhabiting different parts of the globe; the probable origin of the aborigines of the Pacific Coast, their historical traditions, burial ceremonies, myths, etc.—all relating more or less to the existence of a once flourishing race—the ancestors of our present mummifications.

In the preparation of the paper I have availed myself of the many interesting and valuable anthropological and ethnological data from the pens of some of the most renowned scientists and writers the world has ever produced, and it is desired to make due acknowledgment here to all those who have not been mentioned in the body of the article. Prominent among these are the names of Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Haeckel, Cortes, Acosta, Clavigero, Duran, Sahagun, Diaz, Chaves, Karl, Snell, Hale, Flint, Farrar, Herrera, Bancroft, Prescott, De Bourbourg, Powell, and many daily, weekly, and monthly journals.

94310.

Acknowledgment is also due to Mr. W. S. Keyes for his valuable services in taking the photographs of the bodies from which the arto-type plates were secured.

It may be confidently predicted that when the Pacific slope—so rich in prehistoric remains—shall have been thoroughly explored, many interesting and valuable discoveries will be made relative to the origin of the Pacific Coast aborigines and their relationship to the European anthropophagous cave-dwellers.

I have the honor, gentlemen, to subscribe myself your obedient servant,

WINSLOW ANDERSON, M.D.  
829 Broadway, San Francisco, May 1, 1888.



## NATURALLY MUMMIFIED HUMAN BODIES EXHUMED IN THE SIERRA MADRE MOUNTAINS.

Through the liberality and untiring energy of Mr. J. Z. Davis, President of the Board of Trustees of the State Mining Bureau, a valuable collection of desiccated human remains has been added to the archæological department of this institution.

### HISTORY OF THE DISCOVERY.

While the Mexican archæologist, Signor S. Margheri, was exploring the eastern side of the Sierra Madre Mountains in Mexico, about two hundred miles south of Deming, between Coralitos and Casas Grandes, and at an elevation of nearly seven thousand feet, a hermetically sealed cave was discovered and explored. The floor was nearly smooth, the sides rough and rugged, and the vault covered with stalactites. The cave was of considerable dimensions, and proved to be a veritable sepulchre, for at the far end of this cavern, four mummified human remains were found. The caves which this people sanctified by the inhumation of their dead, are generally situated in the cliffs, on the banks of some large river, or high up some precipitous and almost inaccessible mountain. (See the writer's article in "Science," September 23, 1887.)

The bodies were found in a sitting posture, hands crossed on the breast and knees approaching the chin, with the head inclined forward. They were all carefully shrouded in their burial garments, and accurately

placed facing the rising sun—the source of all light—presumably ready to rise at a moment's warning, shake the dust from their heads, and walk out of their sarcophagus. The male and the female (see Figures 1 and 2) probably husband and wife, were seated side by side, the elder child, a boy (Figure 3), was placed to the right of the father, and the younger child, a little girl (Figure 4), to the left of the mother. In addition to the burial shrouds the little girl was enveloped in the skin of an animal, similar to the method used on the islands of Fuerteventura, the better to preserve its tender frame.

Entombed in their cave sepulchre could be found no trace of any implements, utensils, or personal effects. No hieroglyphics or pictographs to indicate their history or give a clew to their identity.

The floor of the cavern, and the remains, were covered with a fine, impalpable dust, probably the accumulation of ages. No footprints of man or beast had desecrated the sepulchre since the time of the interment. Only one sign remained to indicate the advent of man to these now barren and desolate regions (besides the ruins of cities and casas to be noticed elsewhere), and that was the sealing of the opening of the cave. This had been accomplished by means of sun-dried, adobe bricks, and adobe paste, or plaster, together with natural rocks from the mountain. So carefully are these caves sealed that none but an acute observer would notice its artificial closure.

Professor Marghieri and party having determined to convey the bodies to San Francisco, the utmost secrecy was necessary, for it would have been all their lives were worth to have the Indians discover the contents of





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their parcels. The aborigines of this, and many other localities, entertain the greatest superstitious veneration for their departed ancestors, amounting, in many cases, to actual worship, believing the spirits of the dead, of whom they cherish fabulous accounts, hover over them and their dead bodies, and protect the community from evil. Should the bodies be removed, the spirits would also follow, and the Indians would lose their guardians and spiritual advisers. Indeed, some tribes believe that the spirit resides in the bones of the dead. Hence, whilst the Indians did not know specifically the place of interment of the mummified bodies, their legends teach them that the mountains and caves are peopled with the spirits of some great nation of whom they are pleased to call themselves descendants.

Accordingly, the bodies were carefully wrapped in such cloth as they had, and packed in sacks and strapped on the backs of the pack mules, and conveyed some two hundred miles to the nearest railroad station, where they were carefully repacked in suitable cases, and transported to San Francisco.

Having ascertained their whereabouts, Mr. J. Z. Davis lost no time in purchasing the bodies, and generously presented them to the State Mining Bureau, where they form one of the many notable attractions that are daily viewed by hundreds.

Aside from their great curiosity, as being among the first natural mummifications discovered on this coast, these well preserved human remains present a great many points of general and scientific interest.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE BODIES.

These naturally mummified bodies differ from mummies proper, in the general acceptation of the term, inasmuch as no embalming process for their preservation was used. They were desiccated in their cave sepulchre by the natural elements. The dry hot atmosphere extracted all the moisture from the tissues, and the bodies literally dried up as we would dry jerk-beef, or as the Indians of to-day dry the bison (buffalo) meat which keeps for years.

There is no evidence of these bodies having undergone any preparatory process. The brain, heart, lungs, abdominal, and pelvic viscera are all intact and dried to a solid consistency.

Figure 1 (*a and b*) represents the powerful frame of a male body, about five feet eight inches tall and well proportioned. The bones are large, and he must have had an excellent physique. He probably weighed between one hundred and eighty and two hundred pounds. All the body now weighs is fourteen pounds!

The integument is well preserved, and presents the appearance of dried hide, or thick parchment, of a dark gray color, and all that remains between it and the bones are the dried muscles, tendons, nerves, and fascia. The body is well developed, the shoulders measuring from one acromion process to the other, three hundred and ninety millimetres (about fifteen and a half inches); the hands are small, and the fingers tapering; the feet are also small, measuring two hundred and forty millimetres (about nine and a half inches), and highly arched. The phalanges of the digits are perfect, each having the



Fig. 1 a.