

1. The objectiveness of the study

The Project proposes the usage of the modern analytical methods with aim to acquire important information that are being stored in the human remains as well as grave goods associated to these remains. The mummies and skeletons excavated on the desert Cerro Colorado site, which is located on the Andean oceanic shore in Peru. The main hypothesis states that:

The human remains discovered at the Cerro Colorado site preserved the information that allow to reconstruct biographies of the people buried there. Important data on such problems like absolute age, origin, diet, diseases, mortuary customs, cause of death and techniques of mummification can be acquired by studying these remains. The verification of the hypothesis demands interdisciplinary approach. The recognition of the biography of every person allows to reconstruct elements of non-material culture as religion, concepts of the body and personhood and informs about relations the person maintained with the others as well as environment he/she lived in.

The applicant thus proposes, that human remains which can be found in the graves of any archaeological culture are the archive that contains important set of information that were recorded in these remains during life and after death. Skillfully applied analytical methods can extract these information, and the biography of each cadaver can be recognized. This allows to conduct further studies on the sociopolitical organization, mortuary patterns and the spiritual culture which existed in the society.

2. Research project methodology

The Cerro Colorado site belongs to the poorly-known pre-Columbian Chancay culture (800/900 – 1570 AD). During the excavations that were conducted in the 2014 and 2015 yrs for the first time in history the Chancay cemetery has been studied scientifically. We excavated more than 3000 graves that contained mummified and skeletonized human remains, as well as different grave inventory. The proposed studies will allow to create the absolute chronology of the Chancay culture and deliver important data on different cultural customs that are recognized to this moment (mummification and tattooing can be the examples). Basing on the different criteria, the sample containing 30 cadavers: 20 mummies and 10 skeletons will be chosen. These remains will be sampled with aim to conduct laboratory analyses like radiocarbon dating, isotope studies (for the recognition of the origin and the diet) and biochemical analyses. The applicant is a member of the archaeological team that excavated the Cerro Colorado site and knows all excavated material, and the director of the excavations P. van Dalen granted to the applicant all permissions to sample and carry the samples to Poland.

3. Expected impact of the research project on the development of science, civilization and society.

Despite the possibilities that the analytical methods presented in this project provide, with except for the radiocarbon dating they are very rarely used in the studies of the ancient human remains. It has to be emphasized that the very good preservation state of the human remains that can be found on different Peruvian desert sites allows to achieve the proper preparation of the samples and their representativeness with regard to the dietary and biochemical analysis. The complex set of the methods that will allow to recognize the life (and its quality) of the ancient Andean people. This kind of think is consistent with modern European post – processual archaeology practice, where the pre-historic process is being studies by the reconstruction of the biographies of the people who were creating these process.