

# KNOT

KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:  
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS  
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

**Museo di Anatomia Umana “Luigi Rolando”**

**Sistema Museale di Ateneo dell’Università degli Studi di Torino**

Corso Massimo d’Azeglio 52, 10126 Turin

*Form compiled by Giacomo Giacobini (scientific coordinator)*

## Introduction

The collection of the Museo di Anatomia Umana “Luigi Rolando”, part of the University of Turin Museum System (hereafter MAU), includes a naturally mummified human body of Andean origin and seven crania from different regions of the Americas (Subarctic; Central America and the Caribbean; Central and Southern Andes). Both the mummy and the crania were originally part of the collection of the Craniological and Phrenological Museum of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Turin, which was transferred in 1913 to the Anatomy Institute of the University of Turin; today they form part of the holdings of the MAU.

## Cultural Areas (tags)

Subarctic; Caribbean; Central and Southern Andes; Austral America

## Collections

**#01**

<i>Name of the collection</i>	<b>Andean mummy</b>
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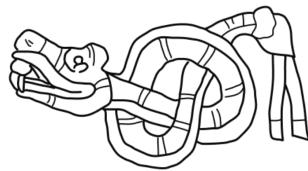
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<i>Collector</i>	Michele Lessona
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Central and Southern Andes
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	Collection consisting of a single specimen, namely a naturally mummified human body of an adult individual in a crouched position. There is no associated funerary assemblage.
<i>History of the collection</i>	A label associated with the mummy reads: "Anthropological collection of the Royal Academy of Medicine / Ando-Peruvian mummy, gift of Prof. Michele Lessona / 1872 / 'Novara' voyage". The mummy was thus collected during the scientific expedition of the SMS Novara, a frigate of the Austro-Hungarian navy which – under the command of Vice-Admiral Bernhard von Wüllerstorf-Urbair (1816–1883) – circumnavigated the globe between 1857 and 1859. The mummy was probably collected during the stopover in Valparaiso (Chile) between April and May 1859. It is not known how the mummy later came into the hands of Prof. Michele Lessona (perhaps a donation from an Austrian institution); at the time he was director of the Institute of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy of the University of

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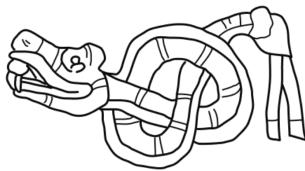
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	<p>Turin and in 1872 donated it to the Royal Academy of Medicine of Turin. The collection of this institution (kept first at Palazzo Madama and then, from 1893, in Via Po) was transferred to the Anatomy Institute of the University of Turin in 1913 and later to the Museo di Anatomia Umana “Luigi Rolando”, which since 2014 has been part of the University of Turin Museum System.</p>
<i>Online Database</i>	No
<i>Web page</i>	
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Giacobini, G., G. Mangiapane, A. Picco. 2023. “Alle origini della museologia antropologica italiana. Il Museo Craniologico della Reale Accademia di Medicina di Torino.” <i>Scientia</i> 1 (1): 101-130.</li><li>• Giacobini, G., G. Mangiapane, A. Picco. 2022. “Il Museo Craniologico e Frenologico della Reale Accademia di Medicina di Torino.” <i>Giornale della Accademia di Medicina di Torino</i> CLXXXV: 93-122.</li><li>• Mangiapane, G., G. Giacobini, G. Malerba, C. Cilli. 2017. “La collezione osteologica del Museo di Anatomia umana ‘Luigi Rolando’ dell’Università degli Studi di Torino: un esempio di riordino di ‘cose di scienza’.” In <i>Cose di Scienza. Le collezioni museali: tutela, ricerca ed educazione - Museologia Scientifica Memorie</i>, eds. G. Malerba, C. Cilli, G. Giacobini, 17: 66-70.</li></ul>

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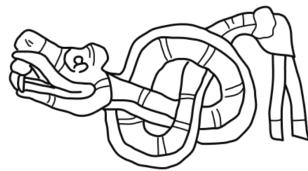
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#02

<i>Name of the collection</i>	<b>Craniological collection</b>
<i>Collector</i>	Pellegrino Strobel (1821–1895); Amedeo Amadio (no information available)
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Subarctic; Caribbean; Central and Southern Andes; Austral America
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	At present this group consists of seven isolated crania belonging to Indigenous Americans. As of 19 September 2024 the following are present: two incomplete crania from Patagonia (donation of P. Strobel); one complete cranium from Canada (donation of A. Amadio); one complete cranium from the Antilles (Havana, Cuba) (donation of A. Amadio); one complete cranium from Chile (donation of A. Amadio); two complete crania from Argentina (donation of A. Amadio).
<i>History of the collection</i>	It is not known how all the crania of Indigenous Americans entered the collection of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Turin. Two of them (Tehuelche, from Patagonia, Argentina) were donated in 1867 by Pellegrino Strobel (1821–1895), who handed them over to

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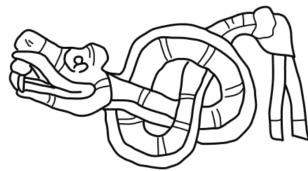
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	<p>the Italian Consul in Buenos Aires. The inventory drawn up in 1886 by Alberto Gamba recorded: "America – No. 7 crania of natives of South America (Paraguay, Argentina, Chile). One cranium from North America (Canada) and one from the Antilles (Havana) (donation of Dr Amedeo Amadio). No. 2 crania of Patagonian natives, Prov. Tualches [sic] (donation of Prof. Ströbel)." The craniological collection of the Craniological and Phrenological Museum of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Turin (kept first at Palazzo Madama and then, from 1893, in Via Po) was transferred to the Anatomy Institute of the University of Turin in 1913 and later to the Museo di Anatomia Umana "Luigi Rolando", which since 2014 has been part of the University of Turin Museum System.</p>
<i>Online Database</i>	No
<i>Web page</i>	<a href="https://www.museoanatomia.unito.it/visita/collezioni/cranici/">https://www.museoanatomia.unito.it/visita/collezioni/cranici/</a>
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Giacobini, G., G. Mangiapane, A. Picco. 2023. "Alle origini della museologia antropologica italiana. Il Museo Craniologico della Reale Accademia di Medicina di Torino." <i>Scientia</i> 1 (1): 101-130.</li><li>• Giacobini, G., G. Mangiapane, A. Picco. 2022. "Il Museo Craniologico e Frenologico della Reale Accademia di Medicina di Torino." <i>Giornale della</i></li></ul>

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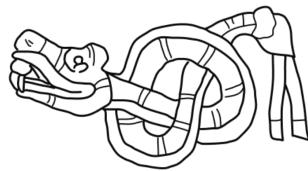
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*Accademia di Medicina di Torino CLXXXV: 93-122.*

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