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KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

Palazzo dei Musei - Museo Calderini

Via Pietro Calderini, 25, 13019 Varallo (VC)

Form compiled by Marta Coloberti (Conservatore Museo Calderini, Palazzo dei Musei, Varallo (VC))

Introduction

It is thanks to Pietro Calderini (1824–1906), a figure of outstanding importance in Valsesian society in the later nineteenth century, that the Museo di Storia Naturale was established in Varallo in order to support the study of the sciences through the direct observation of specimens taken from nature and made available to students.

The Museum was inaugurated in 1867, and around twenty years later the natural history collections were joined by archaeological, ethnographic and humanistic collections, turning it into a kind of Wunderkammer.

Objects considered “exotic” began arriving at the Museum from the time of its foundation in 1867. This was thanks to individuals who, during their travels abroad and in constant contact with the founder Pietro Calderini, purchased objects of various kinds to be left to their hometown museum. In this way, today it is possible to admire objects that are heterogeneous both geographically and thematically, such as African and Oriental musical instruments, vessels of Chinese origin and Indian terracotta dolls.

As early as 1868 a Peruvian mummy, belonging to the Chancay cultural sphere, arrived at the Museum.

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Cultural Areas (tags)

Central and Southern Andes

Collections

#01

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Ethnographic collection of the Museo Calderini. Peruvian mummy.
<i>Collector</i>	Calderini, Pietro (1824–1906)
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Central and Southern Andes
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Chancay
<i>Description of the collection</i>	Mummified human body of an adult female individual. It is devoid of ornaments and grave goods, in a crouched position with the brachycephalic head bent forward; the right arm is bent at chest level and the left arm is extended over the pubic area. The lower limbs are strongly flexed.
<i>History of the collection</i>	The Peruvian mummy is the only object in the Museum that can be attributed to the American area: sources report that it was excavated on the orders of the Italian Consul in Bolivia and that it reached Italy aboard the steam corvette Magenta in 1868. It was then donated to

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	the Museum by Mr Francesco Fuselli from Arboerio (VC).
Online database	
Web page	
Bibliography	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mainardi, M. 2006-2007. <i>Una mummia sudamericana nella Collezione Etnografica del Museo di Storia Naturale "Pietro Calderini" di Varallo Sesia</i>, Tesi di laurea, Università degli Studi del Piemonte Orientale "Amedeo Avogadro."

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