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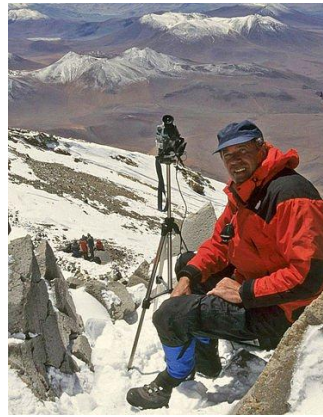
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Dr. Johan Reinhard and his team members have uncovered several Inca mummies in amazingly well-preserved condition. This image depicts him at the summit of Lulllaillaco Volcano on the 1st of April, 1999. Photo by Dr. Reinhard, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

In 1995, several years after a volcanic eruption of [Sabancaya](#) (the highest volcano in the world) melted snow and ice from the top of a nearby Peruvian mountain, [Dr. Johan Reinhard](#) thought a trip to view whatever nature may have dislodged might be a fruitful venture. He and his colleague, Miguel Zarate, discovered the mummified remains of a young girl (referred to by scientists as "Ampato Maiden" or "[Sarita](#)") near the summit of Ampato.

Well-preserved, due to the extreme cold, the "ice maiden" was likely left on the mountain as a sacrifice to an Inca god.

Because she was found in such remarkably good condition, "[Ampato Maiden](#)" is as close to a living Inca (the link depicts an artist's rendering of how she may have appeared before her death) as scientists could ever hope to see. Dr. Reinhard, an American anthropologist who is also a senior fellow at Mountain Institute, has placed many wonderful photographs of his extensive travels on-line.

From his expeditions in the Andean mountains of South America, we can see the type of beautiful (but difficult) terrain where Ampato Maiden was found.

Scenery, in parts of the Incan empire, is staggering to behold. With soaring peaks looming over some of their settlements, and mountain ranges impacting both weather and daily life, one can understand why the Inca people worshiped mountain deities.

One such sacred place may have been [Choquequirau](#) (meaning "Cradle of Gold" in [Quechua](#), the Inca's language). Relatively inaccessible even today, scholars believe it may have been built by Pachacuti's son to rival his father's magnificent estate at Machu Picchu. We are left to speculate about its actual purpose and whether human sacrifices were made there.

Not much speculation was required when the body of a young boy - called the Aconcagua Mummy - was found at 17,400 feet (5,300 meters), on the Western Hemisphere's tallest peak - an Argentinian mountain named [Aconcagua](#). A team of climbers (in 1985) found the mummified child, likely about seven years old when he died (around 450 years before).

The boy had been astonishingly well preserved in the cold, inhospitable climate. Experts think he may have been drugged before he was left as a sacrifice to the mountain god.

Another [Inca boy](#), estimated to be eight or nine years old with hair plaited in more than 200 braids, was found near the top of [Cerro el Plomo](#), in Chile, in 1954. Like other mummies discovered at high elevations in the Andes, he was extremely well preserved and today is maintained by Chile's National Museum of Natural History in Santiago. Artifacts, likely from the same time frame, were found nearby.

Erich Grogg, and members of his 1964 climbing expedition to [Cerro del Toro](#) in Argentina, also found a mummy. At 20,650 feet (6,300 meters), wearing only a kind of breech cloth, the young man of about 20 had frozen to death. He had been placed in a pit, lined with stones, not far from the mountain's summit.

Perhaps most astonishing of all, Dr. Reinhard and his team found three incredibly well-preserved children (two girls and a boy) at the top of [Mount Lulllaillaco](#) (yoo-yeye-YAH-co), an Argentinian volcano near the country's northwest border with Chile. Located at 22,000 feet (6,700 meters), and called the "[Children of Lulllaillaco](#)," all three were sacrificed about five hundred years ago.

Despite protests by indigenous groups, the [Salta Museum of High Altitude Archaeology](#) (in Argentina) has allowed visitors to see the mummified remains of the teenaged girl, referred to as "la Doncella" (the Maiden). Examining the bodies, [Dr. Andrew Wilson](#) (a bioarchaeologist from the [University of Bradford](#)), observed:

The mummies were so extraordinarily preserved, it was impossible not to feel fully engaged with them as human beings. It felt almost as if the individuals were recounting their stories themselves, that was what was so chilling about it.

Mummies also develop naturally when they are buried in peat. Setting out to work the bogs in Britain and Denmark, modern farmers were expecting to merely cut peat, not uncover Iron Age mummies - some of which were 2,000 years old!

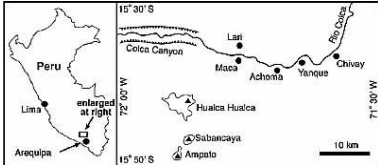
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BODIES-TELL-TALES-Mummies-Bodies-Talk>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/BODIES-TELL-TALES-Mummies-Bodies-Talk>

Media Stream



Sbancaya Located on Map

Courtesy of M. Bulmer, F. Engle, and A. Johnston, CEPS. Online, courtesy "[Global Volcanism Program](#)" at the National Museum of Natural History.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Sbancaya-Located-on-Map>



Sarita Mummy Photo

Image online, courtesy Peru Travels.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Sarita-Mummy-Photo>



Ampato Expedition Photo

Courtesy of [Dr. Johan Reinhard](#)

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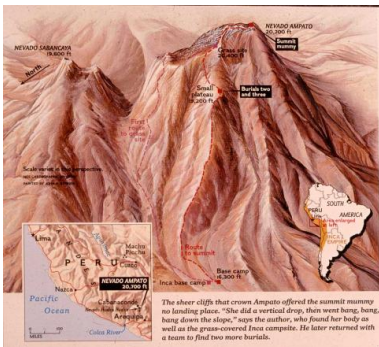


Inca Costume - View and Explanation

Image online, courtesy Academia.edu

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Nevado Ampato Map

Image online, courtesy Academia.edu

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Burial Items - Inca Mummy

Photo by Stephen Alvarez; online, courtesy Academia.edu

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Choquequirao - Aerial View

Image by Bryan Dougherty, online via Wikimedia Commons.

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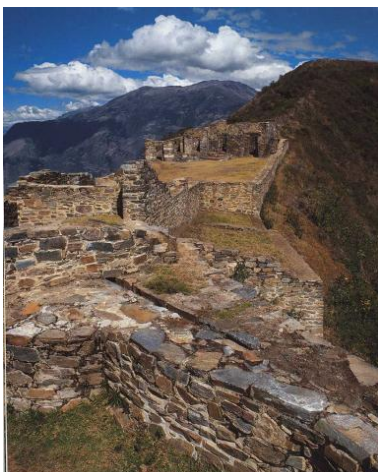


Choquequirao - A Closer View

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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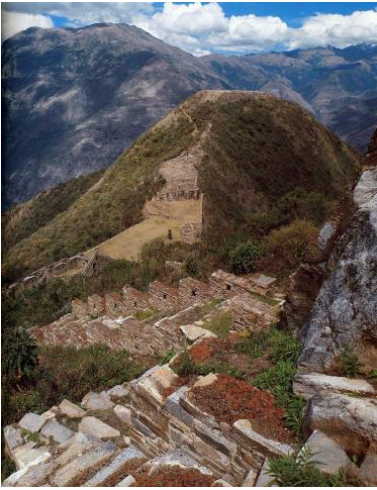
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Choquequirao - Inca Ruins

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Choquequirao-Inca-Ruins>



Choquequirao - Also Known as Choquequirau

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Tallest Mountain Peak - Western Hemisphere

This photo of Aconcagua, taken by Mario Roberto Duran Ortiz, depicts the mountain as it appeared on November 20, 2004. Image online via Wikimedia Commons.

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View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Tallest-Mountain-Peak-Western-Hemisphere>



Cerro El Plomo - Gravesite of Mummy

This photo of Cerro El Plomo - by Tijs Michels - depicts how the mountain appeared on March 8, 2010. Image online, via Wikimedia Commons.

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Cerro El Toro

Image of Cerro El Toro, by RudiPo, depicts the mountain from the air. The view is looking east to the mountain. Image online, via Panoramio.

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Cerro del Toro Mummy

Images of Cerro El Toro Mummy, online via Wikimedia Commons.

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Drawing of Inca Children

Image online, courtesy MAAM (Museum of High Altitude Archaeology) in Salta, Argentina.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Drawing-of-Inca-Children>



Mt. Llullaillaco

Image by Johan Reinhard, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Mount Llullaillaco - Location of Inca Mummies

Photo of Llullaillaco, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

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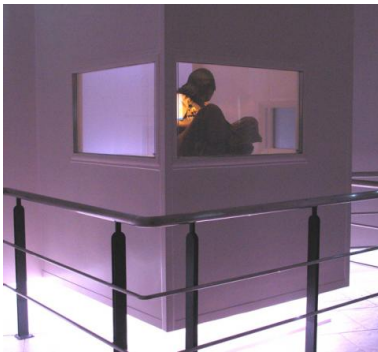


Child Mummy Located on Mt. Llullaillaco

Image online, courtesy Dr. Johan Reinhard.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Child-Mummy-Located-on-Mt.-Llullaillaco>



Inca Mummy - Salta Museum Exhibit

Image online, courtesy MAAM (Museum of High Altitude Archaeology) in Salta, Argentina.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Inca-Mummy-Salta-Museum-Exhibit>



"La Doncella" (The Maiden) - Inca Mummy

Image online, courtesy MAAM (Museum of High Altitude Archaeology) in Salta, Argentina.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/-La-Doncella-The-Maiden-Inca-Mummy>



Machu Picchu - Remarkable Inca Ruins

The video clip is from *Michael Palin's Travels* at the BBC Worldwide (a YouTube channel).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Machu-Picchu-Remarkable-Inca-Ruins>