

**CONTRIBUTIONS
IN NEW WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY**
Volume 15

CONTRIBUTIONS

IN NEW WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY



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IN NEW WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY**

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THE MEXICAN MUMMY AND THE CIRCUS AGENT: THE STORY OF A TRAVELLING MUMMY STARTING IN CUBA

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Abstract

Lorenzo Cuppia, an Italian circus agent, exhibited a mummy in the Calle San Rafael in Havana, Cuba in 1868. The mummy, unearthed in Mexico City, was displayed as a victim of the Spanish Inquisition. The exhibit was recorded in a small booklet and quickly forgotten. In 2015 research into this event revealed a story with several strands revolving around the first mummy ever publicly exhibited in Cuba to entertain an interested public.

In 2015, the *Cuban Mummy Project* was formed. Under the auspices of the CNPC (Consejo Nacional del Patrimonio Cubano, National Council for Cuban Heritage), and in cooperation with the IECIM (Instituto de Estudios Científicos en Momias, Institute for the Scientific Study of Mummies) in Madrid, Spain, with the aim to investigate all mummies that are in Cuba. Even though the Mexican mummy that Lorenzo Cuppia once exhibited may no longer be in Cuba, the story of where it came from and who that exhibitor was, led to research that unfolded the story of a circus agent who exhibited a mummy with a hair-raising story to accompany it, that attracted and entertained the public for several years.

Keywords: Cuba, Mexican mummy, circus agent, inquisition, Havana, mummies, human remains, Convent Santo Domingo

Resumen

En 1868 el agente de circo italiano Lorenzo Cuppia, exhibió una momia en la calle San Rafael, La Habana, Cuba; la cual había sido desenterrada en la ciudad de México y expuesta como víctima de la Inquisición española. El registro de este último acontecimiento se documentó en un pequeño folleto que rápidamente se olvidó.

En el año 2015 se gestó el Proyecto Momias de Cuba, con los auspicios del Consejo Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural (CNPC) de la República de Cuba y el Instituto de Estudios Científicos en Momias (IECIM) de Madrid, España,

con el objetivo de investigar las momias existentes en la isla y su estado de conservación. Las pesquisas sobre este suceso revelaron que aunque la momia de Cuppia ya no se encuentra en la mayor de Las Antillas, si fue la primera mostrada al público. Lo acontecidos en la decimonónica centuria confirma el valor histórico y científico que tuvo la exposición, matizada por pavorosas anécdotas que entretuvieron a los visitantes durante un largo período de tiempo.

Palabras clave: Cuba, momia mexicana, agente de circo, inquisición, La Habana, momias, restos humanos, Convento Santo Domingo

INTRODUCTION

In 1868, Lorenzo Cuppia, an Italian Circus agent exhibited a Mexican mummy in the Cuban capital Havana. The first publicly exhibited mummy in Cuba was announced in a published booklet “Natural Mummy, property of Sr. D. Lorenzo Cuppia.” (Escobar 1868, translation by the authors)¹.

Today, this mummy and its present whereabouts are unknown, and its exhibitor Lorenzo Cuppia has long been forgotten. Research showed, however, that the identity of the mummy, given by Cuppia, was invented for the show. This is important since most mummies from excavations and those already in collections and on exhibit lack information regarding their identity. If not being of noble origin in Ancient Egypt, with a sarcophagus that mentioned the individual’s name, most mummies share the same fate: decontextualized they became objects. Only recently have there been attempts to reconstruct individual life stories with the aid of abundant scientific methods applied to mummies around the globe. But no matter how much data on pathology, traumas and biological information can be reconstructed, all these individuals still lack their name. Cuppia however offered a name, an identity and an interesting life story for the mummy he displayed. Later, as this research showed, however, Cuppia’s story about the identity of the mummy was made up for the purpose of the exhibition, first in Cuba and then as a travelling mummy in the US and Europe.

HAVANA, CUBA: WHERE CUPPIA’S SUCCESS BEGINS

Havana in 1868 was a bustling city, with 398,108 inhabitants and 199 physicians. It is a city where political, economic and social changes are taking place, that influence the whole Island². Parts of the old city wall are taken down and a new area is formed, the *Paseo del Prado*, offering a large variety of entertainment possibilities, with the two big hotels, *Inglaterra* and *Louvre*, having their front windows facing the open and green area of the Central Park. In the Central Park there was the *Museo Estauario*, and some of the artifacts exhibited here, were taken to the Universal Exhibitions in Paris. It is the time of entertainment, entrepreneurs and cabinets of curiosities. This amusement and intellectual area offers the perfect audience for the Mexican mummy Lorenzo Cuppia had purchased for monetary gain. Close to the Paseo del Prado he puts it up on display and awaits its visitors.

¹ The second mummy will be a Guanche mummy, investigated 17 years later, in 1885 (*El canario Miguel Gordillo en la ciencia cubana del Siglo XIX* de Armando Garcia González Publicaciones IDEA, Pag. 48.)

² Cuba. Centro de Estadística. Noticias Estadísticas de la Isla de Cuba en 1862. Guía de Forastero de la siempre fiel Isla de Cuba para el año 1865.

At the beginning of this research there was only one small booklet that mentioned a Mexican mummy, exhibited in Havana in 1868, by a certain Don Lorenzo Cuppia. Today, after months of thorough research, with information gained mostly from newspapers, this publication continues to be the main source describing that event and specimen. Labelled “Natural Mummy, property of Sr. D. Lorenzo Cuppia” (Escobar 1868) it was published in Spanish in 1868, the year of the exhibition in Havana, Cuba.

It comprises a dozen pages in a small format and seems to have been produced for the show in the Cuban capital, “Habana. Imprenta y Librería *El Iris*”, Obispo 20 y 22. It was most probably meant to appear quickly and may even have been paid for by Cuppia himself. A reason for his undertaking can be deduced from the subtitle of the booklet “Scientific paper that said Mr. Cuppia asked Dr. D. Fernando Escobar to write; himself professor of Medicine and Surgeon in Havana, regarding this mummy” (Escobar 1868). The surgeon, at the request of the exhibitor, submitted his scientific analysis close to the 22nd of November of 1868, the date of the publication.

Fernando Escobar Aranza was a medical doctor of Columbian origin. He was required to register in Cuba to be allowed to practice. His file still exists in the archives of the University of La Habana, Cuba³:

“Foreign surgeon with file 181, native of the Republic of New Granada, Doctor of Medicine from the Pontifical University of the city of Bogotá; authorized to practice the medical profession on the island. The entire file is well documented and authorized for his medical practice on January 9, 1862, for which privilege he paid 185 pesos on February 23, 1863”.

How Cuppia found him and why he chose him remains unclear, the doctor certainly is not an expert on mummies, as he himself admits in his report:

“The mummy, brought from Mexico by Mr. Lorenzo Cuppia, which is now on public exhibition, was carefully examined by the subscribing professor, incompetent perhaps” (1868: 4–5, translation by the authors).

In his report, Escobar gives a detailed description of the well-preserved body, male, with an almost intact face and beard. The body in general nicely preserved and firm and interestingly, he makes a direct reference to the documents Cuppia seems to have provided him, stating on page 8:

“The neck has an open wound made by an inquisitorial cord, holy officious, according to the evidence that Mr. de Cuppia possesses [...]”.

³ Expediente del Profesor Titular de Medicina y Cirugía de la Escuela de Medicina, Dr. Fernando Escobar Aranza, Archivo Histórico, Fondo Secretaría General, Universidad de La Habana, No. 4378, Año 1863: *Médico Cirujano Extranjero con el número de Expediente antiguo 181. Era natural de la República de Nueva Granada y Doctor en Medicina por la Universidad Pontificia de la ciudad de Bogotá. Solicitó que se le habilitara el título para poder ejercer la profesión en la Isla. Todo el expediente está bien presentado y fue autorizado a ejercer el 9 de enero de 1862, para lo cual abonó 185 pesos el 23 de febrero de 1863, que era el monto total para legalizar los documentos que lo acreditaban para ejercer como Médico Cirujano. El 28 de febrero de 1863 ya quedó toda la documentación oficializada y comenzó a ejercer en Cuba.*

The rope's impression on the neck stemmed from the Inquisition, at least according to Cuppia. Furthermore, the doctor confirms the individual faced slow strangulation before dying:

“presumably, the strangulation was not completed immediately, and that the heretic must have been hanging alive for a few hours [...], after having received brutal blows to the head, which dislocated an eye [...] The right eye, dislocated from its natural socket, is proof of a strong blow, very strong, received with brutal anticipation” (1868: 7, 8).

Escobar describes the mummified man as a heretic, thus not of catholic faith or with a personal history that made him one in the eyes of the Inquisition. The latter being an institution that was abolished in 1820 (Medina 1905: 386). So, this piece of personal history of the mummified man must have been provided by Cuppia. As this research shows, Cuppia himself revealed the story publicly much later. Did he need that “scientific support” in the beginning to make his already existent story of the man's life and faith more reliable and thus sellable to the interested public?

In the report no further clues are given on that individual, but there is a lithograph showing visitors surrounding the mummy's display which provided the reader with the most important information about the mummy, that it was “found in an ex-convent in Mexico, is 273 years old and can be visited now by men, women and children” (Escobar 1868). The public seems invited to discuss the life the man on display once had, as below the scene one can read a small dialogue of two gentlemen portrayed to the left of the display board to which the mummy is attached, “*What do you make of this?*” – “*I think that this mummy must be some JOURNALIST of the 16th century*” bold letters as in the Spanish original). This emphasis on the word “journalist” by putting it in bold capitals, is most likely a humorous remark referring to the fact that journalists were the first ones to be chased and punished and were still not working without censorship at that time in Havana. Or Cuppia might have been indicating here that his whole story of the mummy's cause of death was made up by clever journalists.

Today the very advantage of both drawings is that we know what the mummy looked like! In 1868 the lithograph may have also been used as a poster in Havana to publicize the exhibit. Newspapers covered curiosities in that time and publicized them, thus functioning like publicity in the streets. One of them is the satirical journal *El Moro Muza*, printed in Havana, which offered – on the 22nd of November 1868 – an almost identical lithograph giving the same information and place of exhibition. The accompanying newspaper article recites the cruel death: as a victim of the Inquisition, strangled, proven by the mark of a rope on his neck and his feet seemingly hanging in the air, looking for ground. A cause of death that the medic Escobar, author of that booklet had confirmed as well (Escobar 1868: 8), (Figure 1a-b).

Both publications repeat the same joke about the mummy's long gone “job” as a journalist, the mummy's age of 273 years, but the one in the *El Moro Muza* publication gives the year “1595” at the end of the quotation. This small addition results in an interesting calculation: the year indicated plus the strange age the mummy is supposed to have (273 years), add up to the year of the mummy's exhibition in Havana: 1868. That very date must have been provided by the exhibitor, Lorenzo Cuppia, and must have been among the “evidence” that included the cause of death that the doctor Escobar confirmed, those “*las pruebas que posee el Sr. de [sic] Cuppia*” (Escobar 1868: 8). However, the occurrences in 1595 that led to this man's death, Cuppia does not reveal in Havana. Both booklet and sketch seem to have gained the intended success, as no second booklet was printed.



a



b

Figure 1a-b. Both, booklet and newspaper caricature, show minor differences in the drawing style, indicating two different artists or maybe purposes: a high quality one in the booklet accompanying Cuppia's show and a quick sketch of the mummy and its visitors for the satirical journal.

Thanks to the publication Escobar and Cuppia created, it was possible to locate the actual place in Havana where Cuppia exhibited the mummy. Escobar mentions the place at the end of his report “That is the mummy that Mr. Cuppia brought with him to enrich the *Museum* of his homeland, the homeland of the first artists, the first poets, and the greatest sages” (1868: 11, italic by the publishers, translation by the authors). The Moro Muza journal specifies: “*In the Street San Rafael, next to the old Louvre*” (November 22 1868, page 26), (Figure 2).

Havana in 1868 was a bustling city with an amusement and intellectual area that offers the perfect audience for the Mexican mummy Lorenzo Cuppia had purchased to gain money. Close to the *Paseo del Prado* he puts it up on display and awaits its visitors.

MEXICAN MUMMIES

To this day, Mexican mummies are less famous and still less abundantly studied than Egyptian or Peruvian ones (Aufderheide 2003: 88–92). Dr. Escobar refers to this at the beginning of his report, when asking the reader for forgiveness that his report on Cuppia’s Mexican mummy might be incompetent in parts (1868: 4–5). But in the huge territory that Mexico today covers, many different types of mummies have been found naturally preserved from pre-Columbian times, like those in the cave called *El Gigante* in Guerrero and those from *Sierra Gorda* in Querétaro, or the ones found in the cave of *la Candelaria* in Coahuila. Naturally mummified humans dating to the 19th century are also known, like the mummies from Guanajuato, once buried in above-ground crypts, that indeed reached worldwide fame for appearing so lifelike and in large number. Furthermore, mummies were found in church crypts, like in the church of *Santa Elena* in Yucatán, or those in the Augustine convent, in the church of *San Juan Bautista* in Tlacayapán, Morelos. Hence, naturally mummified individuals in Mexico in general are not a rare find, but still quite unexpected.

1861: THE CONVENT IN MEXICO’S CAPITAL AND ITS MUMMIES

In 1861 a Dominican convent in Mexico City was demolished (García Cubas 1904: 101)⁴. As a consequence of the so called “Three Years War” (1857–1860), also known as the War of Reform, the liberal forces in Mexico pushed for the implementation of political changes that had been previously established in the constitution of 1857. The aim was to turn the country into a federal and liberal republic. Thus, the Church, that maintained power throughout the last centuries and was also in charge of political indoctrination, stood in the way of this new reform movement. Many monasteries in the country were confiscated, sold and demolished (Leboreiro and Mansilla 2008: 244). A special decree was put in place for convents that couldn’t be sold as a complete entity, to allow for their partial demolition and the sale of the land, as was the case of the convent named Santo Domingo in Mexico City, whose partial demolition began only a month later, in February 1861 (Figure 3).

One of the first parts of the convent’s complex buildings to be taken down was the burial chapel, just beneath the main altar (Leboreiro and Mansilla 2008: 245). The individuals once

⁴ Original scanned document available here: http://cdigital.dgb.uanl.mx/1a/1080012458/1080012458_020.pdf, last accessed 30.09.2020.



Figure 2. The Hotel *Inglaterra* occupies the place, where formerly stood the Gran Café *El Louvre*, next to where Cuppia exhibited his Mexican mummy in 1868 (photo: A. Begerock).



Figure 3. Church and plaza of Santo Domingo (Julio Michaud ca. 1885 Fototeca Nacional).

buried there had mummified naturally, and when unearthed, they attracted a lot of attention as reports *El Monitor Republicano* the day after the discovery:

“Those mummies have been found in a small street above the pantheon that is in the sala de profundis, and only one was found buried in a coffin, the others being placed against the wall”. (20/21 February 1861: 4, translation by the authors).

Earlier that year, on the 11th of February, a mummy of “a friar in a very good state of conservation” had already been found in the crypts of that very same convent (*El Pájaro Verde* 11.02.1861). In 1861 the total number of the mummies added up to 14, as the journal *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* reported:

“The mummies, that have just been excavated by the inspector of this building, can be visited as curiosities in the burial chapel of the aforementioned convent. [...] Their number is 14” (20 February 1861: 3, 4).

That all mummies are on display for the lay public is an unprecedented event in this convent.

In former times, occasionally a mummy had been found in the burial crypts of the convent of Santo Domingo: when new friars were buried, mummified corpses buried there earlier were moved aside to make space. But this fact was known only to those dealing with the dead bodies inside the crypts and close family members were informed. When the General and Friar Mariano Hidalgo was exhumed in 1847, his family asked for permission to dress him anew, as he was so well preserved, and to rebury him. But in February 1861 the political and social climate in Mexico had changed and had become decidedly anti-clerical. The discovery of “13 mummies in one go” had received a lot of attention with visitors streaming in for months and interest in the mummies led to a colloquial renaming of the street passing by to *Calle de los Sepulcros*, today *Republica de Brasil*⁵.

While the demolition of the convent continued, gradually more mummies were found. Among them apparently there were also female mummies:

“In the golden times when the inquisition flourished in Mexico, the ancient monastery of Santo Domingo contained offices of that beneficent institution-council chamber, courtroom, torture chamber, &c. The monastery has now has been confiscated, and certain excavations are being made upon its site. In the progress of this work some secret vaults were discovered, and in them found the bodies of about a score of men and women. They are in a state of complete preservation, and resembled nothing so much as an Egyptian mummy. Around the neck of one of the bodies, that of a woman, was a mark cord which had been apparently used to strangle her”. (*Morning Post*, December 8, 1868, page 6).

By 1868, 18 mummies had been found in total (16 male and only two female ones) as reports the journal *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* (10 November 1868: 3). And later on, in June 1874 again a mummy was found during the works on the demolition of the convent (reported in *The Republican Monitor*, 1874, *The Tenth and Nine*, 1874, *The Radical*, 1874).

⁵ Agustín Sánchez González, “La momia de Fray Servando”, <http://agusanvh.blogspot.com/2018/07/la-momia-de-fray-servando.html>, 10.07.2018, last accessed 25.06.2019.

BETTER WITH A STORY: VICTIMS OF THE INQUISITION

The unexpected find in 1861, several mummies in one single convent across the street from the former seat of the Inquisition, gave way to an immediate birth of a mythical connection. Already the day after their discovery, the *El Monitor Republicano* concluded:

“We are only laymen in the field of medical science, but still their positions seem too forced to us [...] most of them showing signs of despair [...] The violent pose they keep, the sad facial expression and the muscular contractions that they preserve make known that those who were clearly victims of the Inquisition were never buried in any coffin. [...] The curious people coming to the asylum of the inquisitors will be convinced, like us, that the tormented expression is that of asphyxiation and distress connected to the terrible torture of immurement [being enclosed within a wall], that left such frightening marks on those ghosts”. (20/21 February 1861).

Thus, the myth of the individuals dying under the cruelest of circumstances, torture by Inquisitors, was born. The story struck a chord, and made it easy for entrepreneurs like Cuppia to “sell a good show”.

Natural mummification causes the dehydration of the body, like any other mummification process, but ligaments and muscles may contract in ways that cause the body to assume postures different from those of a fresh cadaver just placed to rest in the burial chamber. Therefore, the deformed mouths and postures of feet, hands and legs may have seemed bizarre and shocking to the unexperienced spectator, as it does to this day (see all rumours regarding natural mummies from crypts in Europe, once buried in a coffin and the stories about them “having been buried alive” for example [see Sörries and Knöll 2002: 189, 271]).

The gossip about the torturing to death of these individuals buried in *Santo Domingo* was spread massively in the media, with the few opposing voices receiving almost no attention. The government of Mexico City ordered Doctor Orellana, a member of the military medical corps in the city, to carry out a brief medical review to certify the state of the remains (Domínguez 2004), compiling their characteristics via descriptions and lithographs, and providing their names and a short bibliography for each of the 13 mummies. He published a report the same year of the first discoveries in Santo Domingo⁶. This is the most complete report on the mummies, which helps us to compare the individuals that supposedly came from this convent to the ones in his report (see Leboeiro and Mansilla 2008: 248 doing this). This is the first publication to offer biographies and photographs for each of the mummified corpses. At the beginning of his report, Orellana indicates his intention, to add a neutral observation to the comments that these individuals had mummified due to the torture of the Inquisition or sins they once had committed “The comments made to the public were nothing but lies uttered by charlatans out of ignorance or ill will they spread such mistaken concepts” (1861: 2-3), and that all individuals simply had been friars of the religious order of the Dominicans as was still traceable during his visit by the remains of their religious habit, such as the shoes, cloaks and cord belts (1861: 3). The mummy in question, Cuppia’s Mexican mummy, however seems not to be among them (Figure 4).

⁶ *Apuntes biográficos de los trece religiosos dominicos que en estado de momias se hallaron en el osario de su convento de Santo Domingo de esta capital.* (1861). México: Imp. de Inclán, calle de San José El Real N. 7. Original scanned document available in: <https://cd.dgb.uanl.mx/handle/201504211/12466>, last accessed 25.06.2019.



Figure 4. View into the burial crypt of the Capuchin monks in the basement of the Capuchin Monastery in Brno, Czech Republic. Their way of burying their brothers in faith, in their habit and simply on the ground with no coffin, is comparable to that of the Dominican order (photo: A. Begerock).

In an attempt to publicly explain the burial customs and cause of the natural mummification of his brothers in faith, Friar Tomás Sámano had already published a statement in the newspaper *El Pájaro Verde* in February, a month after the discovery of the mummies:

“All those who attended the funerals of my deceased brothers can testify that they were deposited in the vaults of the chapel known as the Sepulchres, without any box or coffins, but the bodies were only covered with a layer of pulverized lime, the sepulchre then being closed with a masonry wall one third [1/3 of a vara, about a foot] thick. All those niches being quite dry, mainly those of the second and third order, it turned out that after eight to ten years, the corpses there were almost always lean and dry, and even many of them with their clothing intact for the most part; then that mummy was reburied in the presbytery of the same chapel unless the exhumed one was a notable person in virtue or letters, in that case he was placed in the ossuary as place of distinction [...]. All those mummies that are daily exhibited to the public for their solace and amusement, are of very virtuous and wise men, who just a few years ago were the adornment and glory of my sacred religion [...]. I hope that you will have a pious memory today when you see here the names of such venerable priests, the authenticity of which I can prove to anyone who would like with the obituary book of my order that is in my possession [...]” (*El Pájaro Verde* 25.02.1861).

As Leboreiro and Mansilla (2008: 247) pointed out, in order to identify each of the mummies during his visit of the crypt, Orellana would have needed the help of a “local”, such as the Friar Tomás Sámano. However, the possibility of Sámano having taken on the pseudonym of Orellana has been suggested (Domínguez 2004: 685). Both Sámano and Orellana were weak voices and fighting a losing battle against the strong publicity the mummies had received as supposed victims of the Inquisition.

Some months later in 1861 attention to the publicly displayed mummies had died down and they were gradually removed⁷. Three of them were given to the *Escuela de Medicina* (at that time the School of Medicine was part of the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico, which was closed in the same year of 1861), and now occupied the former Inquisition building. Of the once important convent of the religious order of Santo Domingo, only the baroque 18th century church remained on Plaza *23 de Mayo* on the north side of the Plaza de Santo Domingo, a few steps from the historic centre of Mexico City. Its sold mummies however would reach worldwide fame in the decades to come.

Lorenzo Cuppia had a sense of the dramatic. He did not appear without fanfare in Havana with newspapers preparing his well-staged arrival in the capital. Several notes confirmed his departure from Veracruz on the Spanish steamboat “Paris,” stopping at the port of Sisal on the Yucatan peninsula (*La Ibero* 11.11.1868, page 3, *Le Trait d 'Union* 11.11.1868, page 3). A look at the cargo lists reveals that Cuppia did not travel only with just the mummy, but with further objects in tow:

“... IMPORTATION OF OVERSEAS.- By Paris from Veracruz- L. Cuppia, A mummy, 2 large pieces of circus baggage and 2 boxes with framed portraits” (*Diario de la Marina*, 11.11.1868, page 3, translation by the authors, emphasis by newspaper).

The “*circus baggage*” gives a clue to Cuppia’s employment. This will be discussed below. The portraits mentioned indicate that the mummy was not exhibited alone, but within an expository framework, to create a context for the mummy, and a glimpse of Mexico. This is confirmed by the *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*⁸, giving an abundant description of the “show” to come:

“A mummy.- We read in the mail from Veracruz on October 31 last: D. Lorenzo Cuppia brings a mummy that was found in the excavations made in the convent of Santo Domingo, in Mexico, which is in the most perfect state of preservation. Before yesterday it was examined by the Customs officers in the establishment of Messrs. Gómez, Velasco Martínez and Company and there were those who offered five hundred pesos to Mr. Cuppia for three days of exhibition in Veracruz, a proposition that he could not accept for having his trip already prepared. - The body of the mummy that Mr. Cuppia is carrying is perfect, nothing is missing, there are very distinct signs of a rope on the neck and on the hands which are crossed on the chest; the signs of wedges on the knees are also discovered; Pale skin of the body and well preserved, as well as the beard, hair, nails and teeth. The latter are seen by a contraction of the upper lip. The position of one of the legs, in addition to that of the marks that we have already indicated, shows that the

⁷ http://agusanvh.blogspot.com/2018/07/la-momia-de-fray-servando.html__10.07.2018, last accessed 25.06.2019. One of the first biographies of him is González 1876 (see References).

⁸ The Newspaper *El Siglo Diez y Nueve* was a liberal paper that circulated in Mexico between 1841 and 1896 (https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Siglo_Diez_y_Nueve).

victim in his slow agony looked for support in the ground that he could not find under his feet. According to the letters we have seen from Mr. Cuppia, the aforementioned mummy is destined for a museum in Italy; but as the said gentleman before sending it to the point of destination, it will remain a few days in this capital we will not fail to mention that it has been decided to exhibit it to the public, surely there are people who wish to examine that curiosity. The aforementioned steamer had to leave Veracruz on the 5th of this month, and if it did leave that day it should arrive at this port today or tomorrow, and then we will see it and will carry out the exhibition that we indicated". (November 10, 1868).

That very note is almost identically repeated a day later in the Cuban newspaper *Diario de la Marina* (11.11.1868).

This "scheme" still works in our days, as is shown yearly, since 2013, when the German Circus Company Circus Romanza developed a program "of a different kind", to attract a broader and more different audience: the circus of horrors. In 2019 the show offers "insights" into a mental Asylum, the year before it was the Inquisition. A bit of surprise, the unexpected, and a bit of horror – that is the very same mixture people got attracted by at the end of the 18th/beginning of the 19th century. With the rapid economic and technical development of that time people did travel, information about remote areas of the world crossed the continents and the curiosity of the human nature was fed by scurrilous stories of "the other", the strange ones, "them". It was the time when Hagenbeck had the idea to present peoples from the Arctic and whole African villages in "human zoos", and P. T. Barnum gained a lot of success with freak shows⁹. So Cuppia, who had worked for Barnum as part of his employment at Chiarini (see below) only had to add a bit of spice to the exhibition of his mummy, and as the Circus of Horror does today, the Inquisition was a well-functioning horror theme¹⁰.

For those, who wished a more scientific approach to the mummies, the well-educated upper class of Havana in that time, the initially mentioned brochure with Doctor Fernando Escobar's evaluation of the mummified individual was published. But also for folks more interested in art, Cuppia had exhibited his mummy with portraits of the Mexican emperor Maximilian (executed by firing squad a year before by the forces of Juarez, the legitimately elected president of Mexico) and his wife Carlotta (who was driven mad by the incident but outlived him for sixty years).

LORENZO CUPPIA: THE MAIN ACTOR, AND GUISEPPE CHIARINI, HIS EMPLOYER

At the time of the discovery of the mummies in the crypts of Santo Domingo, in 1861, Lorenzo Cuppia, Italian by birth, travelled from the US to Cuba. The application letter for obtaining the visa does not mention any affiliation with a circus (Figure 5). Five years later, he appears on the passenger list of a ship as a merchant travelling from Havana to Philadelphia

⁹ Him being portrayed in 2018 in the movie „The Greatest Showman“, a movie with an interesting turn. In 2012 the exhibition “Zoos Humains” in the Musée du Quai Branly did show the industrial scale of ethnological exhibitions and did portray a negative picture of the people exhibited being exploited. A side phenomenon of this time was the exhibition of “freaks”, people with bodily prominent features, “abnormalities” that were presented mostly in circuses and during fairs. In 2018 the aforementioned movie did take the opposite side, presenting the freak shows as a chance of income and fame.

¹⁰ <http://zirkusdeshorror.de/zdh/>, last accessed 27.06.2019.

(Figure 6). What he is selling is not indicated, however his age is, 36 years. Thus, Lorenzo Cuppia was born around 1830 most probably in Italy before making his way to the New World (Figure 5, Figure 6).

For most of his lifetime though, Cuppia was an agent for Guiseppe Chiarini, owner and director of the famous circus with the same name. Chiarini belonged to the oldest dynasty of the circus owners in the world, with one of his family's first appearances recorded as early as 1580 in France¹¹. Guiseppe Chiarini was trained by his father and by Franconi, an excellent reference at the time, as a horse trainer, high-school rider, and all around equestrian¹². These talents resulted in engagements allowing him to travel through Europe and even imperial Russia¹³. If Lorenzo Cuppia and Guiseppe Chiarini already knew each other in Italy and if they had travelled and worked together in Europe/Russia is unknown, as is Cuppia's arrival date in America. But with Franconi's son and the related Chiarini circus he went to New York in 1853. A year later he started his career as a circus empresario, travelling the United States, Havana and Mexico, then as a business partner with the circus of Sands and Lent & Co. Circus (Kotar and Gessler 2011: 199), (Figure 7).

In 1856 Chiarini left Sands & Lent to open his own circus, the Royal Spanish Circus in Havana in 1856¹⁴. In 1857 the West Indies were added to their touring map, in a partnership with Orrin. The Orrin circus had already become quite popular in the 1850s and 60s, with spectacular and entertaining acrobatic performances¹⁵, travelling to the United States, Mexico and Cuba. In 1859 they performed together at Barnum's Museum in New York¹⁶, thus the circus staff and the agents

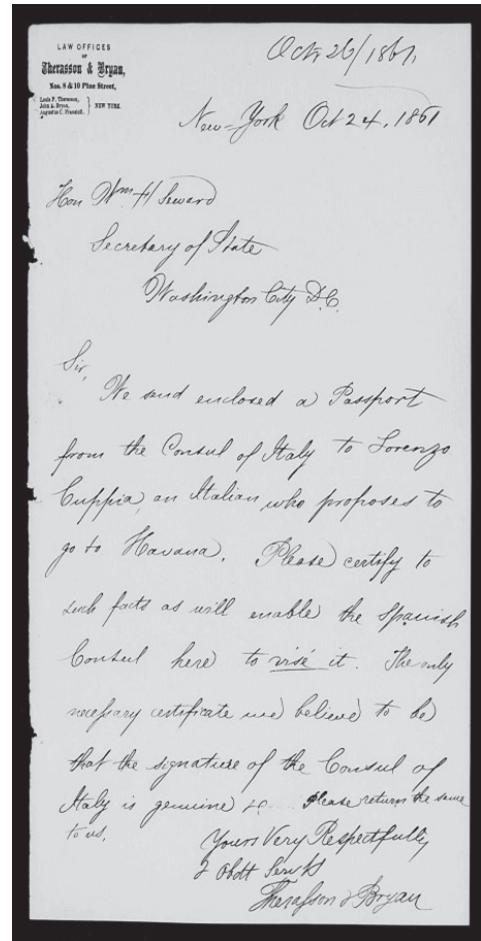


Figure 5. Passport application of Lorenzo Cuppia to travel to Havana, Cuba. Ellis Island, New York. October 26, 1861.

¹¹ <http://www.puntodincontro.com.mx/articoli2014/italianimessico23072014-sp.htm>, last accessed 03.07.2019.

¹² http://www.circopedia.org/Giuseppe_Chiarini, last accessed 04.07.2019.

¹³ http://www.circopedia.org/Giuseppe_Chiarini, last accessed 04.07.2019.

¹⁴ http://www.circopedia.org/Giuseppe_Chiarini, last accessed 04.07.2019.

¹⁵ <https://donduncan.org/circus/orrin.htm>, page 8 citing New York Clipper 23 January 1875, last accessed 10.09.2019.

¹⁶ <https://donduncan.org/circus/orrin.htm>, page 10, citing the New York Clipper from 24 September 1892, last accessed 10.09.2019.

NAME.	AGE.	SEX.	OCCUPATION.	To what Country belonging	Country of which it is their domicile or former habitation.	Number and Names of Passengers who have died on the Voyage.
Mr. Francisco Maria	42	male	Merchant	Spain	Spain	
Mrs. James	36	female				
Mr. J. W. Taylor	13		Merchant	U. S.	U. S.	
Joseph Byrnes	29		Surgeon			
Henry P. Hay	30		Machine			
Ferdinand M. G. G.	17		Clerk			
Joseph M. G. G.	26		Dentist			
Fran. Simpf. Thoms	29		Clerk			
R. Barcener	50		Merchant			
Arthur Stables	41		Lawyer			
Francisco Armaty	40		Merchant			
Lorenzo Cuppia	26		Merchant			
Rafael Caceres	28					
Carlos	21					
Francisco Barkley	33					
Mrs. James	28	female				
Mr. James	17	male				

Figure 6. This passenger list for a ship travelling from Havana (Cuba) to Philadelphia (USA) in 1866 again shows Lorenzo Cuppia as a merchant, not a circus agent, but indicates his age. (“JULIO MICHAUD EDITOR MEXICO, PHOT. JULIO MICHAUD, PLAZA DE SANTO DOMINGO”. Reverso: “Album 6, tomo V, p. 41”, sello: “Inspección General Monumentos artísticos”. Image source available at: <http://mediateca.inah.gob.mx/repositorio/islandora/object/fotografia%3A11536>).

were well acquainted with the entertainment business displaying cultural curiosities and human oddities. Already in 1867 Cuppia is mentioned as Chiarini’s agent (*The Mexican Times* 1867 January 1 and February 13). Chiarini and Orrin performed again together in 1872 in Havana, before joining several new partnerships in the following years¹⁷.

Chiarini’s own circus marked the beginning of a career that made him the most successful circus entrepreneur of the 19th century. His fame and the success of his equestrian shows, as well as his entrepreneurial spirit with changing partnerships and pioneering ideas, made him open the first permanent circus in Mexico City. Had the circus before travelled with a tent, this new permanent one performed in a stone building, offering seats to 3000 people. It was inaugurated in 1865 (Revolledo 2004: 141), in the presence of the Mexican emperor Maximilian and his family. Two weeks before, Chiarini had given a special – almost private- show in the palace of the emperor, called *Chapultepec*, where he showed his circus company’s skills with exquisite equestrian acts. According to legend, Maximilian bestowed on him not only a diamond brooch, but also a wild horse, named Abd-el-Kader, which Chiarini presented to the emperor perfectly tamed just two weeks later, at the opening of the circus in town¹⁸.

The execution of Maximilian in 1867 put an end to his short reign (1864–1867) and caused the court to disintegrate. Right after this historical event, the Chiarini circus profited from

¹⁷ <https://donduncan.org/circus/orrin.htm>, page 10, citing the New York Clipper from 24 September 1892, last accessed 10.09.2019.

¹⁸ <http://www.puntodincontro.com.mx/articoli2014/italianimesico23072014-sp.htm>, last accessed 03.07.2019.

quickly arranged sales¹⁹, by buying the livery of the court's personnel and equipping the staff with them. The orange colour being hence a trademark and giving them the nickname "zanahorias" [carrots], (Seibel 1993: 30). In that year 1867, Cuppia is mentioned as Chiarini's agent (*The Mexican Times* 1867 January 1 and February 13). He may have profited from the estate auctions as well. It might have been the time he purchased one of the mummies – that he exhibited only a year later in Havana²⁰.

At the change of the political climate in Mexico, Chiarini went on tour with his circus, subletting the "home base" to other circus and entertainment companies (Revolledo 2004: 144). In 1865 he visited the island of Cuba again (Revolledo 2004: 144), where he had

¹⁹ The selling of all imperial objects was such an impressive event, that even years later it was the subject of two Mexican novels, the "Phantom Crown" by Bertita Harding in 1934 and "Noticias del Imperio" in 1987 by Fernando del Paso.

²⁰ This "Museo Nacional" in Mexico City had been patronized by Maximilian, who was very interested in ancient cultures and the collection of antiquities. In 1866 he transferred the existing collection from the Archbishop's to the National Palace, where it was opened up for the public (*El Diario del Imperio*, 455. 7th of July 1866, f.292 r. in Opriessnig 2013: 121). It is very probable that already the precursor of Maximilian's Museo Nacional had had these mummies in the collection since their discovery in 1861 (Walsh and Hunt 2018: 42, Note 3). Due to pecuniary problems, the Museo Nacional was closed in January 1867 and parts of the collection were sent to Miramar, Maximilian's caste in Trieste, Italy (Opriessnig 2013: 123), and again some of them in 1884 from there handed over to the Museum of Natural History in Vienna, later *Museum für Völkerkunde* (Feest 1986: 67), and *Weltmuseum* today. Some object convolutes have however remained in Mexico, among them most probably the Mexican mummies. An inquiry of the authors was directed in August 2019 to the *Weltmuseum* and to the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* in Vienna. Both museums confirmed to not have any Mexican mummy in their collection; as well no mummy in an extended supine position of unknown origin that did come from the collection of Maximilian/Miramar. And Boban buys "his" Mexican mummies from that collection as late as 1885 (Walsh personal communication).



Figure 7. This poster shows the immense efforts such an entertainment evening did cost: three stages, eleven equestrian ladies, five clowns and a band, just to name some of the parts offered. Chiarini, as a director, needed the help of reliable agents, like Lorenzo Cuppia, who worked for him for many years.

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been in 1856, 1860, followed by New York and New Orleans in 1866, and the West Indies, Central America in 1867, Panama in 1868, subletting the permanent circus in Mexico City²¹.

In 1868, for a short time, the Chiarini permanent circus in the Mexican capital housed the new Mexican parliament under Benito Juárez²². Besides constantly hiring new actors, and offering exquisite horse shows, it was also adapting to political changes that allowed Chiarini to survive so successfully for such a long time. Sentences that once were spoken to honour the emperor, were now adopted to celebrate the success of the defenders of the Republic and in honour of Juárez, on the day of his arrival, a horse-show was put on just for him, even including the horses of his followers (Revolledo 2004: 145).

Chiarini was not alone in the administration of the business of his circus. Being such a big and prosperous enterprise with so many shows per day and week, choreographies had to be developed, marketing had to be done and new places to play in had to be found with Lorenzo Cuppia at his side as administrator (Revolledo 2004: 145). In 1867 the grand circus in Mexico City on San Agustín Street burned down and had been rebuilt. The announcement for the reopening mentions Lorenzo Cuppia as “active and energetic agent” (*The Mexican Times* 23.02.1867)²³.

The fire that laid the circus in Mexico City into ashes, may well have put an end to the partnership of Chiarini and Cuppia, this being the time he takes off to Cuba with his mummy.

CUPPIA'S MONEY-MAKING, TRAVELLING MUMMY

What Lorenzo Cuppia originally paid for the mummy is not known, but it must have been something comparable to the 2000 pesos that Gómez Velázquez, Martínez and Co. had offered for a much rarer female mummy from that same convent of Santo Domingo (*El Siglo Diez y Nueve* November 10, 1868, page 3). Cuppia, however, was well aware of the money he could make with that mummy, as seen in his declining an offer of 500 pesos for a three-day exhibition (mentioned above) before his departure to Havana. And he was right: his exhibition of the Mexican mummy in Havana was a huge success.

²¹ http://www.circopedia.org/Giuseppe_Chiarini, last accessed 04.07.2019.

²² http://www.circopedia.org/Giuseppe_Chiarini, last accessed 04.07.2019.

²³ Research for this article revealed three more agents working for Chiarini: a certain Tomás Raya, of Spanish nationality, represented the circus in the Mexican capital (Seibel 1993: 140) and in 1865 Luis Donizetti appears “on behalf of the enterprise” advertising the next show for Chiarini in the journal *La Sociedad* (July 17 1865, page 3). Among many advertisements of the “Chiarini Circus”, a name that has then become synonymous with the building itself, Carlos Cuppia is listed as administrator (*The Two Republics*, 08.08.1868, Vol. II – Num. 3), even fighting for special events inside the circus (*El Siglo Diez y Nueve* June 25, 1868 page 3). Meanwhile in autumn that very same year, 1868, his brother Lorenzo is exhibiting the Mexican mummy in Havana, Cuba. Now, it might be his brother who takes over his job as agent for Chiarini.

In 1870 Carlos Cuppia is even legally representing Chiarini in a court trial (*Diario El Derecho* April 16, 1870, page 320 and July 2, 1870, page 6), where he is fighting for financial compensation for Chiarini as the military burned down his other circus building in Puebla to force rebellious groups to leave that structure, where they were hiding (*Diario El Derecho* July 2, 1870, page 6). This journal states Carlos and Lorenzo Cuppia are brothers and replace each other as representatives of Chiarini (Entry from 15.07.1872. The original document can be found in digital format via this link: <https://www.familysearch.org/es/>). When exactly Carlos, 11 years younger than his brother, took over parts of Lorenzo's job for Chiarini remains unclear. As well he may have conducted some side business, as in the opening of a restaurant in Mexico City in 1877 is stated only under his name (*Le Trait d'Union* August 5, 1877, page 3).

This money-making scheme caused some to envy him, but also encouraged other Cuban cities to ask for a display of the mummy. *The Diario de la Marina* on the 22nd of November 1868 reports on such a request and bluntly hints at the growing income of Mr. Cuppia, making their request for a display in their town seem only fair, on the very same day the booklet with Dr. Escobars's report is printed and the *El Moro Muza* published the lithograph showing the mummy.

“Matanzas, November 22, 1868.-[...] In this city it is desired by many people that D. Lorenzo Cuppia brings the Mummy here that he has on display in the capital. We assure a worthy result. Allow us, however, to report the following observation: Mr. Cuppia with the said and for him well found mummy in question, has in this ever faithful city a mine [of money] that is not easily exhausted, since from day to day the number of visitors to his small museum is increasing [...] and as it seems to us that Mr. Cuppia will not ignore the proposal”. (*Diario de la Marina*, November 10, 1868, page 3, translation by the authors).

At the moment the mummy seems not to have made it to Matanzas. Cuppia had enough success in Havana – and Cuppia was well aware of the events taking place in the eastern part of the Cuban island: here, already in October of 1868, under the leadership of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, the first landowners set their slaves free and started small riots, set fire to the town of Bayamo – events that lead later to the Ten Years War. In November 1868, at the time of Cuppia's exhibition in Havana, the revolution is at the doorstep.

Either well aware of the events in Cuba before arriving there or with the attempt to increase the attention of his exhibit, right from the start it was clear that the Mexican mummy in Cuppia's possession would not remain in Cuba, but would continue to travel. The *Diario de la Marina* (11.11.1868) “knew” that the mummy would be brought to a museum in Italy after being presented for a couple of days in the Cuban capital. The departure of Cuppia and his mummy was also taken up by the *El Moro Muza* with a caricature showing Cuppia's appearance for the first time (Figure 8): Lorenzo Cuppia, a middle-aged, well-dressed, nearly bald man with a small beard, is drawn as a “typical foreigner”, but “on the move” with his mummy-cargo (*El Moro Muza* 6. Dec. 1868, p.5). When exactly he leaves Cuba remains unknown. However, on December 11th the same year, the Department of State and of the Treasury in the City of Mexico gets asked by him to permit the exportation of two mummies, an adult and a child. Cuppia publicly reappears in April the following year, presenting his small show in the heart of New York, right on the Broadway:

“...THE CHRISTIAN MARTYR AND CHILD, TWO PRESERVED HUMAN BODIES, Victims of the Spanish Inquisition. 1595 city of Mexico, are now on exhibition, with other unequalled attractions, at the MEXICAN EXHIBITION PARLORS, 765 Broadway, near Ninth street. Open at 9 o'clock in the morning; close at 10 in the evening. Admission 60 cents. Children half price. Read the following OFFICIAL LETTER from GENERAL ROMERO, late Minister from Mexico to the UNITED STATES: -DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND OF THE TRESURY, City of Mexico Dec. 11 1868.

This to-day [sic] received by the customs collector of this capital the following: -'Don Lorenzo Cuppia has asked of the Supreme Government permission to export two preserved human bodies which were taken from the Inquisitorial ex-Convent of Santo Domingo of this city, and requests that they be packed in the presence of the officers of the Custom House, and



Figure 8. This lithography was published on December 6 1868 by the satirical journal *El Moro Muza*, after Cuppia had shown the mummy in the Cuban capital. The dialogue translates as follows: “Mr. Cuppia, where are you going with your mummy?” – “I’ll look for the momio somewhere else.”

The word *momio* leads to a play on words or double meaning, that is humorous in Spanish, as it can either refer to the male parts of a man, here a male mummy or to the search of a quiet place.

sealed so as not to be opened at the Custom Houses between here and Veracruz.’ The Citizen President has directed that the request be allowed. The custom officers will witness the packing of these preserved bodies of the Inquisition and seal them with the government seal, and give them into the hands of the said Don Lorenzo Cuppia. INDEPENDENCE AND LIBERTY. MATIAS ROMERO, Secretary of the Treasury”. (*New York Herald*, April 7, 1869; quadruple sheet, page 4, emphasis by the publishers).

At the new spot, he has expanded his story. The baseline of the biography of the “Victim of the Inquisition” is kept, but now extended to “The Christian Martyr and Child”, adding a nice heart-warming touch. But is the adult mummy the same one he presented in Cuba? The article in the *New York Herald* can be interpreted in such way, that Cuppia may have travelled via Mexico City, bought two more mummies directly from the convent and got them packed, sealed and sent to Veracruz, a port town, from where they are then shipped to New York.

Interestingly there is no register on the Ellis Island databank of that arrival. So, the very official character of this announcement might give prove of the status of Cuppia’s luggage, being almost a diplomatic cargo, not to be opened prior to reaching the final destination. This would underline the social esteem Cuppia had by that time achieved.

The New York exhibition was widely advertised, mentioned in at least 19 newspapers, dating from April 3 to 23, 1869. One advertisement in the *New York Herald* describes the

exhibition in more detail: “Mexican exhibition parlor.765 BROADWAY. Unprecedented wonders of the age. The CHRISTIAN MARTYR AND CHILD, two preserved human bodies, victims of the SPANISH INQUISITION in Mexico of 1595. MAXIMILIAN and CARLOTA. The two grandest pictures from America, painted from life, for the Emperor Napoleon at a cost of 20,000 gold. With many other Wonderful Curiosities from Mexico. Open from 8 A. M. till 11 P. M. Admission 30 cents; children half price.” (*New York Herald*, 13.04.1869, quadruple sheet, page 14).

Again, his sense for creating curiosity in that time is proven: everyone knew about Napoleon and the unsuccessful emperor of Mexico with his wife. Mentioning the cost of getting the portraits painted enhances the paintings’ importance. An experience for the whole family so to speak, with children being admitted at a reduced fare, thus an available experience for everyone middle and upper class.

In one of the 19 advertisements it was added, that “The medical faculty pronounce these the best-preserved human figures in the world.” Like Dr. Escobar’s comments on behalf of Cuppia’s initiative in Havana in 1868, a medical-scientific statement on the mummies increased their authenticity and thus their value and attraction to the educated middle class.

Cuppia left New York that very same year, travelling to London, arriving there in November, where he exhibits at the Royal Polytechnic Institution. Here, however, they are not just on display.

“THE MAXIMILIAN RELICS and the MEXICAN MUMMIES of the SPANISH INQUISITION, which are now on Exhibition at the Royal Polytechnic Institution, are for ‘SALE, separately or together. The relics and the life-size oil paintings of the emperor and Empress form the most interesting exhibition in themselves. The mummies with authentic records of the Inquisition, would prove of great interest and value as the subject of a popular lecture. For terms and particular address Paravicini, Duke, 49 street, St. James’s London, S. W.” (*Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard*, 1869; *London Evening Standard*, 1870; *Daily Telegraph & Courier* (London), 1870; *The Era*, 1870).

The written proofs of doctor Fernando Escobar which had been shown in Havana, the “authentic records” are used again to give proof of the mummies’ story. Those same proofs were used for the child and the adult male mummy. As the Royal Polytechnic Institution was established “for the advancement of science” those supporting documents increased the scientific value of the specimens! The institution’s exhibition catalogue from 1843 shows, it already possessed an Egyptian mummy:

“Specimens of a complete Mummy of a Female, supposed to have been the Wife of a Priest, in the Reign of one of the Pharaohs, 1800 years B. C. Exhibiting in detail the first or more approved method of embalming among the ancient Egyptians, as ascertained and described by Dr. Granville in his Essay on Egyptian Mummies [...]” (inventory number 881 to 891; 1843: 45)²⁴.

Citing this doctor and his investigation of the Egyptian mummy the Polytechnic Institution already possessed, shows how important it was for Cuppia back in 1868 to have scientific/medical proof on the individual’s story Cuppia was aiming to sell to the public.

²⁴ <https://archive.org/details/royalpolytechnic00roya/page/n4/mode/2up>, last accessed 07.04.2020.

But Cuppia didn't sell the mummies or the paintings in London, the show went on, with him exhibiting in Santander (*Boletín de Comercio*, April 19, 1870), Bilbao (*Bulletin of commerce*, May 12, 1870), Bruxelles (*Journal de Bruxelles*, 1870; *L'Independance Belge*, 1870) and other European cities (Figure 9). Eventually in 1873 in the US, a mere five years after the Havana exhibition, the story Cuppia had invented about his mummy is finally revealed, explaining the riddle with numbers on the second frontpage of the publication of doctor Fernando Escobar's report in 1868:

“Pietro Rodriguez, a Portuguese jeweler, pursuing his occupation in the city of Mexico, was, in 1595, accused before the tribunal of the Inquisition, and after suffering a variety of tortures, was condemned to be buried alive in the Convent de St. Domingo in that city. He was then 38 years old. The Convent de St. Domingo was lately demolished in search of treasures supposed to be concealed there, and body of Rodriguez was taken out of the vault exactly as when placed there 270 years before. His daughter, two and a half years of age, was under her father's feet, and as perfectly preserved as himself. These last-mentioned body are in this city. The evidence of torture on the body of the jeweler is fearfully apparent. In one respect, however, the appearance does not coincide with the record which we have given.

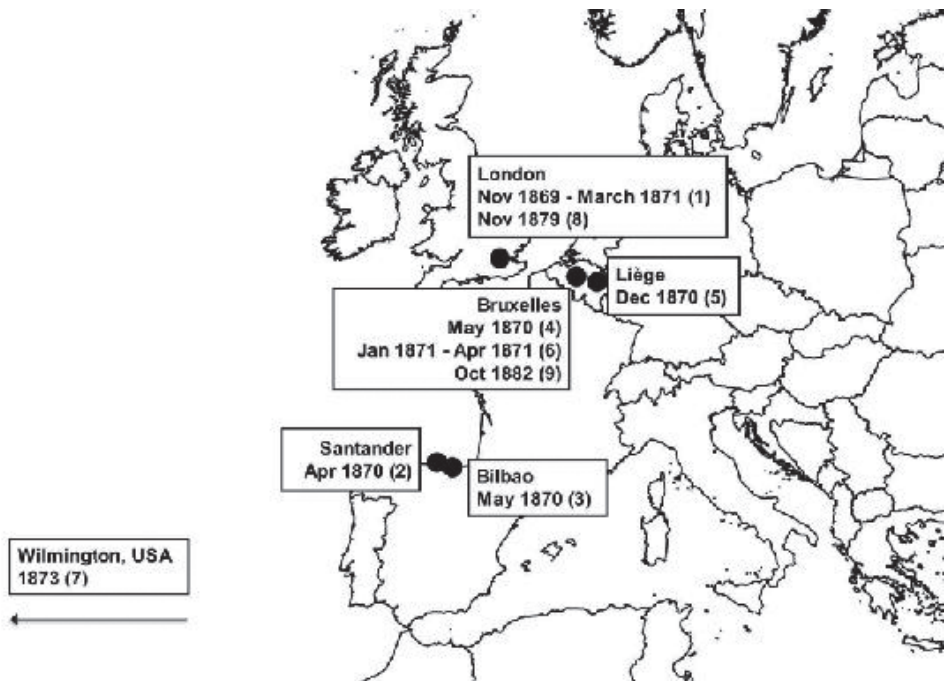


Figure 9. This map shows the European cities and dates Cuppia did present his mummies (Verena Schwartz). 1. *Boletín de Comercio*, April 19, 1870; 2. *Boletín de comercio*, May 4, 1870; 3. *Bulletin of commerce*, May 12, 1870; 4. *Journal de Bruxelles*, 1870; 5. *La Meuse*, 1870, December 7th; 6. *L'Indépendance Belge*, January 12, 1871; 7. *Wilmington daily commercial*, 1873; *The aegis & intelligencer*; 1873; 8. *Le Voleur illustré*, 1879; 9. *Daily Star and Herald* November 14, 1879.

The miserable man must have died in the hands of his tormentors. The positions of his hands show that he was suspended by the body and neck until he died. Marks of the cord and of the burning iron are deeply recorded on parts of his body. His hair and beard are firm, his skin natural in hue and texture, without the least trace of decomposition in any part—Ex.” (Wilmington daily commercial, 1873; The aegis & intelligencer, 1873).

From that piece of information, maybe already provided to Dr. Escobar in 1868, the mummy received its name and year of death! However, in 1873 the age that adult mummy had achieved in that year was not adjusted, it is stated as 270 years, thus the riddle of the 1868 publication got lost.

In 1873, Cuppia is mentioned again as Chiarini’s authorized agent (*El Foro* 5.09.1873, page 310), in 1874 as working for Lent again (Figure 10)²⁵. Furthermore, he appears as vendor of slate boards for *Silicate bookslates* in New York (*El Correo del Comercio* 3.10.1873, page 2). Summarizing, Lorenzo Cuppia, the energetic entrepreneur left many traces in newspapers. About his private life nothing is known, likewise his place and date of death are hidden in the shadows of history. But thanks to the satirical parody on his agility, we know today, what his mummy and he himself once looked like, then in 1868 in the Cuban capital.

PASSENGERS LIST NEW YORK, HAVANA & MEXICAN MAIL STEAM SHIP LINE.
 District of New York, Port of New York.

I, J. W. Reynolds Master of the Steamship Cuba do solemnly, sincerely and truly swear, that the following List or Manifest, subscribed by me, and now delivered by me to the Collector of the Customs of the Collection District of New York, is a full and perfect list of all the passengers taken on board of the said Vessel at Matanzas from which Port said Vessel has now arrived; and that on said list is truly designated the age, sex, and the occupation of each of said passengers, the part of the vessel occupied by each during the passage, the country to which each belongs, and also the country of which each is to become an inhabitant; and that said List or Manifest truly sets forth the number of said passengers who have died on said voyage, and the names and ages of those who died.

Sworn by this 20 1874 at Matanzas J. W. Reynolds Master of the said Vessel.

List or Manifest of ALL THE PASSENGERS taken on board the Steamship Cuba whereof J. W. Reynolds is Master, from Matanzas to U.S.A.

NAME	AGE	SEX	OCCUPATION	The country to which they normally belong	The country to which they intend to become inhabitants	Died on the voyage	Part of the vessel occupied by each passenger during the voyage
Mr. Solida y Berg	21	Male	Merchant	U.S.A.	U.S.A.		Cabin
J. Ketch	17	Male		U.S.A.	U.S.A.		
J. Bohn	10	Male		U.S.A.	U.S.A.		
Lorenzo Cuppia	12	Male		U.S.A.	U.S.A.		
E. H. Muller	39	Male		U.S.A.	U.S.A.		
Herman Meyer	16	Male		U.S.A.	U.S.A.		
Maria Mary Reyes	20	Female		U.S.A.	U.S.A.		

Figure 10. This ship manifest from 1874 reveals that Lorenzo Cuppia worked again for the circus of Lent.

²⁵ <https://heritage.statueofliberty.org/passenger-details/czoxMzoiOTAxMjI0TQzZmZMxOCiI/czo4OiJtYW5pZmVzdCI7>, last accessed 07.04.2020.

We also know that his two mummies were eventually sold in France at the Hotel Drouot in 1879. The buyer was the South Kensington Museum in London (Daily Star and Herald November 14, 1879). The adult male mummy at this sale is described as the “nephew of Motezuma”, i.e., “Cuauhtemoc” and the child, “his daughter” who were both “walled up alive in the Santo Domingo convent”! Same mummies, same convent, different story – made up by businessman Lorenzo Cuppia, circus agent.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Names of mummies are mostly lost forever if not written directly on them, like in hieroglyphs on those from Egypt. This is especially true for Latin American mummies, due to the lack of pre-Hispanic writing systems in most cultures prior to the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors.

This paper presented the entrepreneurial spirit of a circus agent, who, as a side-business, exhibited two Mexican mummies, well equipped with a story and name he made up over time, to offer his visitors “something special”, so they would come and see his exhibition. A meticulous search in newspapers of that time revealed how the initial story was widened over time and how the first mummy even became a parent in later times due to the acquisition of a child mummy by the new owner, Lorenzo Cuppia, to give his show a family touch. Thanks to caricatures of this almost ubiquitous, but now forgotten, agent, we know what he and at least one of his mummies looked like and we were even able to trace where these mummies were sold in the end.

Freak and entertainment shows were well visited at the end of the 19th century, but a Mexican mummy in the centre of the huff-puff, with a personal story was quite rare and assured the exhibitor an envied income.

For any studies on Mexican mummies, this research helped to rediscover what had happened to at least two mummies that were sold from the Santo Domingo convent in Mexico City and may lead to further studies on the other mummies from there, that once were friars, buried in their convent’s chapel, seeking eternal peace until resurrection day.

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