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Burial Histories, Bodies, and Pots: Mortuary Practices in the Southeastern Rainforests of the Andes during the 1st Millennium A.D. (El Cadillal, Argentina)

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ABSTRACT

Through the control of social memory and the dead, household members in Argentinian Andean early Formative villages often used primary and secondary mortuary practices to negotiate power and identity among the living. In this paper, we explore the material evidence obtained in the large-scale salvage excavations of El Cadillal, Argentina, where 51 burials were recovered from three burial sites. Between A.D. 0 and 900, people living in the southeastern rainforests placed deceased household members in ceramic urns and, less frequently, inside of rock enclosures and pits surrounded by a range of grave offerings. Drawing upon this case study, we attempt to disentangle the complex web of relationships between the dead, the living, and the El Cadillal community in order to assess how social memories were crafted through primary and secondary mortuary events and how the repetition of mortuary rituals created a social landscape and memories of the dead.

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Introduction

Archaeological research can provide glimpses into the sequence of ritual operations for the dead, ultimately aiming to answer anthropologically-oriented questions about the relations between the living, the deceased, and the community. In the Andes, rites and ceremonies linked to the dead held great importance for the maintenance of the social and cosmological order (Dillehay 2012; Gose 1996; Hastorf 2003; Isbell 1997; Kaulicke 2015; Shimada and Fitzsimmons 2015). Mortuary practices fulfilled important social, cultural, and political purposes, performing as an arena where the living negotiated power, identity, and memories (Harris 1982). In most cases, these rites possessed a strong material component, with people actively displaying and manipulating bodies of the deceased (D'Altroy 2015; Eeckhout and Owens 2015; Nielsen 2008). This paper focuses on mortuary practices within Candelaria populations in the southeastern rainforests of the Andes in order to assess how social memories were crafted through the materiality of death, how identities were asserted within these societies, and finally, how the repetition of mortuary rituals created a landscape linked to remembering the dead.

Between 400 B.C. and A.D. 900, people living in the southeastern rainforests (*yungas*) of the Argentinian Andes incorporated new domesticated plants and animals into their diets, increasingly started living in the same place rather than moving seasonally, and adopted new material technologies such as pottery (Heredia 1970).¹ With these changes, people adopted a variety of new, distinctive material practices, including the primary and secondary deposition of deceased individuals in ceramic urns and, less frequently, in stone enclosures and pits surrounded by a rich repertoire of grave offerings (Ambrosetti 1906; Berberíán, Caillou, and García Azcárate 1977; González 1977; Heredia 1970; Métraux 1930; Ryden 1936; Schreiter 1934). Researchers

have viewed these distinctive mortuary practices as identifying shared regional cultural traditions in what has been labeled as Candelaria, geographically dispersed through the rainforests of the Tucumán and Salta provinces from ca. A.D. 200–800 (Alberti 2012; González 1977; Heredia 1970; for a critique of the concept, see Franco 2021).

While previous research on Candelaria mortuary practices has been relatively extensive, it has been largely restricted to the contextual characterization and historical-cultural definition of distinctive material traits such as pottery or inhumation in urns (cf. Alberti 2012; Heredia 1970). Researchers are now recognizing, however, that Candelaria funerary practices are both more varied than previously recognized and much more complex than generally understood. Moving beyond a restrictive descriptive focus requires researchers to adopt a deeper understanding of mortuary practices within Candelaria-affiliated groups from an anthropological point of view (e.g., Lema 2019). This can be achieved by examining how people actively used Candelaria burials as a medium for the constitution of social relations, how people situated and repeated historical practices in space through the burial of the dead, and how distinctive places were created by the living through the placement of the deceased (Joyce 2001, 54).

Creating Death and Social Memory Through Funerary Rituals

Death is a complex phenomenon that confronts us with the social, cultural, political, and emotional dimensions of humanity. Regardless of their ontological status and agentic capability to act in the realm of the living (e.g., Bray 2015; Dillehay 2012; Kaulicke 2015), within non-Western societies, the dead are usually viewed as possessing a different form of personhood than the living and, thus, treatment of the dead

requires socially sanctioned and appropriate ways of disgregating deceased individuals from the living collective (Bloch and Parry 1982; Harris 1982; Hertz 1960; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Van Gennep 1960). Funerary ceremonies act specifically at this level, assisting the living and the dead in the transition of personhood by providing an active, embodied, and practical experience of death.

Central to this is the concept of The Good Death, in Bloch and Parry's terms (1982), that can help people cope with the end of life and restoring the society's dynamics after the death of one of their family members (Baitzel 2023; Chesson 2001, 109; Laneri 2007; Robb 2013). Mortuary rituals and rites also operate as mnemonic devices in creating the social order (Bloch and Parry 1982)—they are not merely a consequence of the underlying social structure. Such rites provide opportunities for the reconstitution of social relations among the survivors and the deceased as an integrative force or to alter, maintain, and/or materialize power dynamics (Chesson 2001; Eeckhout and Owens 2015; Fowler 2004; Gillespie 2001; Joyce 2001; Kuijt 1996; Parker Pearson 1993; Robb 2007, 2013; Sawchuk et al. 2018; Williams 2003).

Thus, funerary rituals are deeply interlinked to a society's power dynamics and identities, and through the study of their organization, archaeologists can reconstruct some aspects of community social organization and look at the material configuration and structure of mortuary practices (e.g., Fowler 2013; Hendon 2000; Kus 2013). The meanings of the social technologies of body processing and handling, however, might not be self-evident or transparent. Nevertheless, researchers recognize that material culture plays an active role in the ways in which social relationships and identities can be constructed, negotiated, and contested in specific mnemonic places, including burials and their locations, which were significant choices of ancient peoples (Chesson 2001; Cortés 2020; Fowler 2004; Gillespie 2001; Hendon 2000; Joyce 2001).

The places associated with the dead should be understood in terms of social placing—a semiotically charged choice expressed in the materiality and emplacement of the funerary context (Cortés 2020; Parker Pearson 1982). Burials can be seen as the result of choices made by individuals in relation to the landscape they live in and, therefore, they are socially constructed and culturally meaningful (Hackwitz and Lindholm 2015, 146). We should not dismiss that these meanings are culturally and temporally specific (Goldstein 1995), and, in this sense, landscapes should be considered a palimpsest of layered historical practices in a constant process of constitution and dissolution (Bailey 2007).

The landscape exists as a locus for memorialization, commemoration, and mourning of the deceased (Goldstein 1995; Semple and Brookes 2020) and plays an important role in the development of new social identities. This is particularly relevant in the Andes where the world is considered animated, inhabited by powerful and whimsical entities that demand proper care and duties (Allen 1998; Bray 2015; Sillar 1996). Thus, landscapes exert “overt physical influence in everyday activities, perceptions, and beliefs” among Andean populations (Cortés 2020, 10). Moreover, the arrangement and physical processing of human remains and the accompanying material culture are pivotal aspects in archiving the social operations of the transformation of the dying person and their eventual memorialization. Although the meanings of all funerary rituals cannot be reconstructed by

archaeologists, human actions can leave material traces that afford avenues of archaeological investigation (Baitzel 2023; Brown 2013; Chesson 2001; Robb 2013; Kuijt 2008).

Working Concepts: Primary and Secondary Practices

In this paper, we use primary and secondary practices as operative concepts to disentangle the variety of funerary rites and their material remains observed within Candelaria-affiliated groups. There is, of course, an almost endless variety of practices for the handling, manipulation, and preparation of the human body after biological death. From a conceptual standpoint, archaeologists often distinguish between primary mortuary practices and secondary mortuary practices. These demonstrate deeply interrelated forms of bodily manipulation that may take place after the death of an individual, and human groups often perceived mortuary practices as being parts of a cohesive, integrated, and broader belief system.

Primary mortuary practices, the social and physical acts associated with the first actions of the living as they deal with the dead, reflect decision-making that conditions and shapes further acts, although not all of the decision-making process can be identified through archaeological research methods. Some, however, can be observed and inferred from the final configuration of burials. Narrowly defined, primary mortuary practices are focused on the permanent burial of the dead after a relatively short period of time (often less than a week). These practices might, or might not, require the bodies to be transported to a final resting location, but primary mortuary practices share the defining element that once the remains are buried, the body and associated remains are left alone and no further disturbances are undertaken by the living.

In contrast to primary burial practices, secondary mortuary practice can be defined as the socially sanctioned movement of part or all of a deceased individual (Hertz 1960; Kuijt 2008; Larsson 2021; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Oestigaard 1999; Parker Pearson 2000). Secondary mortuary rituals are often part of high-profile public ceremonies and serve as spiritual and symbolic acts that have social, political, and personal meanings. As multi-stage, intergenerational events involving multiple participants, secondary mortuary practices are planned, can be scripted in terms of timing, and facilitate a greater level of group involvement (Downs 1956; Metcalf and Huntington 1991). Within this paper, we define secondary mortuary practice as a social act focused on the regular and socially sanctioned removal of objects, parts or all of a deceased individual from some place of temporary storage to a permanent resting place. This can include the intentional removal of select skeletal parts from one location to another location(s) and/or variation in the timing of reburial and the treatment of specific skeletal elements.

Burial Biographies and Life History: Case Studies of the Southern Andes

Archaeological Narratives on Southern Andean Death

Andean mortuary practices are surprisingly varied through time and space. The totality of these practices is beyond this paper, but we aim to provide a comparative context. In this article, we develop a comparative context from

other southern Andean contexts, especially from Northwestern Argentina (NWA), dated to the early stages of agropastoral life (or the Formative period [1500 B.C.–A.D. 900]), with minor references to later periods (Late Intermediate Period [LIP] and Inka period, A.D. 1150–1470).

One of the major ways in which southern Andean people buried their dead was the primary burial of individuals in ceramic funerary vessels. Adult primary urn burials were the predominant choice for Candelaria affiliated burials, employing both plain storage vessels and large, decorated funerary urns (Ambrosetti 1906; Berberían, Caillou, and García Azcárate 1977; Berberían and Salazar 2021; Colaneri et al. 2003; González 1971; Heredia 1970; Métraux 1930; Míguez et al. 2018; Ryden 1936; Schreiter 1934, among others). People frequently used urns for the burial of infants during the Formative period (Bennett, Bleiler, and Sommer 1948; Cortés 2013; Fantuzzi 2020; González 1963; González and Núñez Regueiro 1963; Palamarczuk et al. 2007; Scattolin et al. 2005; Willey 1966). The use of funerary urns becomes increasingly diffused during the LIP and Inka period, with the proliferation of burials in painted urns with regionally shared iconographic motifs (Palamarczuk 2011; Tarragó, González, and Natri 1997). In all cases, some vessels exhibited traces of being used for cooking and/or serving foods before being discarded in a final use as funerary containers for the dead (Lantos et al. 2018; Ryden 1936).

In other cases, people in the southern Andes used to bury their dead by wrapping them in textiles or fine clothes in flexed or seated positions. The well-known *capacocha* ritual during Inka times,² for instance, exemplifies a variation of this practice where child bodies were left in seated positions as offerings to mountain powerful deities (Ceruti 2012). In Argentina, Rex González (1977; but also Baldini and Baffi 1996; Baldini et al. 2003; Lema 2019) argues that the presence of a series of mummified corpses is associated with Candelaria. Bodies were wrapped in textile clothes or other perishable fiber (that did not preserve) to help keep the shape. Similarly, primary burials of individuals in carved pits have been documented in the El Cajón Valley during the early stages of agropastoral occupation, around 400 B.C.–A.D. 400, at Catamarca, Argentina. The corpses were often placed in flexed positions without grave offerings and in some cases covered with slab stones (Cortés 2013). In one case, an individual male was buried in a flexed position without the skull and vertebrae (likely removed before defleshing and placement in the tomb) in a subsurface stone structure at the Cardonal site (El Cajón Valley).

Another mode of burial was the inhumation of corpses inside different size and shaped architectural structures. During the Formative period, people often employed small stone cists combining primary and secondary mortuary practices. Later, the use of big funerary stone towers or *chullpas*,³ is reported for the Bolivian Altiplano during the LIP (Nielsen 2008; Velasco 2023), although in the following, we will mainly focus on the first type of inhumation (cist structures).

Cist burial structures exhibit different degrees of labor investment in their construction. During the Formative period in the Calchaquí Valley, Quebrada del Toro, and Alamito, cist inhumations have been recorded outside residential settlements (González 1963; Raffino 1977; Tarragó 1996), as well as in houses' central patios (Núñez Regueiro 1998). The latter pattern is shared in the broader region of

the intermontane valleys (e.g., Tafi, El Cajón, and Quebrada de los Corrales), where cists were built by digging a pit in the ground, lining them with stones, and finally covering them with slab stones to make them partially visible on the occupational floor (Aschero and Ribotta 2007; Berberían and Nielsen 1988; Franco Salvi 2018; González and Núñez Regueiro 1963; Oliszewski et al. 2020; Salazar and Kuijt 2016; Sampietro and Vattuone 2005). Inside the cist, one or more individuals was placed together with grave goods and offerings such as pots, grinding stones, and items of personal adornment. Although in some cases, people organized cist burials as primary inhumations, in other cases, the body was modified after interment, often with the disarticulation of the body, removal of limbs, and/or addition of new inhumations. In other cases, more informal stone structures were employed for interment. Usually, they were linear or sub-circular arrays of stones that did not fully enclose the burial but rather seem to delimit or mark their existence. This is documented in the Hualfín Valley (Sempé and Baldini 2005; Ten Kate 1896 in Cortés 2013) and, apparently less frequently, in the southeastern yungas (Berberían and Salazar 2021; Heredia 1970; Ryden 1936).

It is now clear that the Andes people engaged in a broad range of secondary treatment of the dead, often focused on the removal, reorganization, and discard of particular skeleton parts (e.g., Babot et al. 2009; Cortés 2013; Santoro et al. 2012). In some cases, this included bundling commingled individuals into a single funerary package (up to 14 individuals) (Arena 1975; Scattolin et al. 2010). In others, certain skeleton parts seem to have been preferred by the living when they selected and moved parts of skeletons. For instance, excavating in an Archaic hunter-gatherer shelter in the Argentinian *puna* (Andean highlands), Aschero (2007) mentions finding bags and wooden containers with mummified lower skeletal parts ready to be transported. These practices echo case studies from several highland sites where people buried bodies without their lower body parts. This most likely highlights how the dead were designed to be transportable as funerary bundles or packages (Arena 1975; Babot et al. 2009; Cortés 2013; Martínez et al. 2020). This practice appears to have been widely practiced among hunter-gatherer Archaic societies (Aschero 2007; Olivera, Vidal, and Grana 2003; Santoro et al. 2012). During the Formative period, people seem to have inhumed their dead accompanied with caches of skulls (and sometimes with scattered fragments of the cranium), which corresponds with the finding of bodies buried without their heads (Arena 1975; Cortés 2013; Gordillo and Solari 2009; Latcham 1938; López 2009; Tarragó 1996; Yacobaccio, Madero, and Reigadas 2001). This may be related to the increasing reduction of mobility.

In early Andean mortuary practices, Aschero (2007, 196) argues that people often buried, unearthened, selected, and took away, leaving (intentionally?) skeleton parts or objects, repeating long-term practices. This reflects how the Andean dead participated actively in the living's affairs, "often being periodically brought out, revered, and reinserted into the tomb on a cyclical basis" (DeLeonardis and Lau 2008, 79; Gose 1996; Isbell 1997; Nielsen 2008; Shimada and Fitzsimmons 2015). The acts of display may have been focused on securing reciprocal relations between humans and nonhuman entities that favored and propitiated agropastoral labor. Indeed, the association of dead ancestor bodies' with

the collective fertility of herds, crops, and human beings⁴ was often reflected in the practices of feeding, dressing, and displaying the deceased corpses in socially sanctioned times and manners (Allen 1998; DeLeonardis and Lau 2008; Harris 1982; Shimada and Fitzsimmons 2015).

Moreover, the secondary practices of bodily manipulation also indicate an attempt to craft a new social identity that erases the individual deceased's one. In northwestern Argentina, this symbolic transfer of the biological death of an individual to the collective is often associated with a suite of devices that seem to both materialize and mark the passage. The placement of stone and metal masks in bundle burials (Scattolin et al. 2010), the finding of stone anthropomorphic sculptures imitating corpses' postures and gestures (*suplicantes* [Pérez Gollán 2000]), and the carved rock monoliths with zoo- and anthropomorphic motifs (called "ancestor lithification" by Duviols [1979]; Franco Salvi 2018; García Azcárate 1996) all indicate a shared practice of material replication of the ancestor aimed to produce a new collective being with powerful capabilities and effects in Andean agro-pastoral communities.

Ethnographic Narratives on Southern Andean Death

The Spaniards' *extirpación de idolatrías* (extirpation of idolatries, the colonial persecutory campaign against non-Christian rites) deeply impacted traditional Andean mortuary rites, especially those related to the materiality of the ancestors' cult. As Harris argues (1982, 49) "control over the dead was a cornerstone of Christian policy for shedding the light of true religion in the lives of the indigenous people." Some earlier funerary beliefs and rituals survived and were modified in colonial and republican times. Collectively, ethnographic and ethnohistoric accounts provide complementary insights to mortuary practices, including funerals and post-interment traditions, and help us to fill some of the gaps seen in the archaeological record.

Ethnohistorical and ethnographic records emphasize the socially sanctioned, formalized, and highly structured character of the passage from life to the afterlife and the overall construction of social memory and development of a collective ethos. Although specific practices and attitudes towards the dead and mourning in more recent case studies cannot be directly mapped onto spatially and temporally distant pasts, they have heuristic potential to help researchers understand archaeological materials and to cast light onto the determining structures that underlay regional mortuary behaviors (Baitzel 2023). While we recognize the usefulness of ethnographic examples from other cultural areas (e.g., Chaco-Guaraní, the Amazon), given space limitations in the following section, we focus on Andean funerary rituals.

In the context of South Andean funerary rituals among modern highland Andean groups in Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia, several accounts record the washing and dressing of the corpse quickly after death by non-kin, often framed as gendered tasks (Fernández Juárez 2001; Van Kessel 2001; Vargas 2021). The wake is usually arranged by a non-kinwoman in charge of preparing and serving food and might take several days depending on individual cases, with relatives and friends visiting and paying their respects to the family (Fernández Juárez 2001; Van Kessel 2001; Vargas 2021). Aymara's ethnographic mortuary practices recall the placing of offerings inside the coffin, usually the

deceased's belongings, food, and drinks (Van Kessel 2001) or items that might be helpful in the convoluted route to the afterlife (Fernández Juárez 2001), a material practice that has striking resemblance with Prehispanic funerary offerings to the dead inside tombs, usually consisting of food and fermented drinks, personal adornment objects, and utilitarian and work-related tools (for example, spindle tools, grinding stones, cooking pots, and bowls).

After the burial of the deceased in the cemetery, several activities take place in order to detach the dead from the realm of the living and their social group. Members of the family wash and dispose of the clothes and other belongings of the bereaved (Baitzel 2023; Fernández Juárez 2001; Van Kessel 2001; Vargas 2021). Additionally, to allow the soul to depart on their journey to the afterlife, family members erase any traces of the deceased from the house, like their footprints, so they cannot come back home (Van Kessel 2001). In some cases, the ritual burning of all (or some) of the deceased's belongings or deeply personalized goods (objects beloved in life or associated with their work) takes place after the eighth day in a small-scale reproduction of a second wake (Fernández Juárez 2001; Van Kessel 2001). For the next three years, highly structured ritual activities will take place on *Día de Todos los Santos* (All Saints' Day) in order to remember, celebrate, and honor the deceased (Fernández Juárez 2001; Van Kessel 2001; Vargas 2021). Plentiful sugary foods, specially-shaped loaves of bread, soda drinks and alcohol, cigarettes, and any other food liked by the person in life will be placed in elaborate altars as offerings to the dead (Vargas 2021) during these celebrations and consumed by family members and non-kin. The degree of elaboration and investment gradually decreases year by year until the third year, when the family will have fulfilled the socially sanctioned commitments to the deceased soul (Fernández Juárez 2001; Vargas 2021).

Nevertheless, there are caveats regarding the use of ethno-historical and ethnographic material for the interpretation of ancient Andean practices. Baitzel (2023) correctly points out the limits of using post-Colonial analogies in the interpretation of mortuary practices among Andean groups, bringing our attention to the critical break between Andean and Judeo-Christian modes of conceptualizing death, personhood, and animacy. Indeed, ancient Andean funerary rites usually involved feeding of the dead, manipulation, visitation and public display of the corpses, offering of sacrifices, and the deceased's participation in divination. Many of these practices were eradicated by colonial rule, especially those regarding the deceased's physicality (Harris 1982).

El Cadillal: Setting and Previous Research

By considering how different material practices and the social and ritual passage from life to the afterlife took place, researchers can develop a stronger and more nuanced understanding of Andean Prehispanic mortuary practices within early agricultural communities in general and the crafting of social memories within Prehispanic Andean groups more specifically. To advance this conversation, in this section, we consider the mortuary practices from the large-scale cemetery of El Cadillal (Tucumán, Argentina). As part of this, we consider how living communities actively employed and developed distinct, yet complementary,

mortuary practices, thereby creating different treatments and pathways of the body after death.

El Cadillal is an artificial lake situated along the southern portion of the Tapia-Trancas Basin, or the Choromoros Valley, in the southeastern rainforests, or yungas (Santillán de Andrés and Ricci 1966) (Figure 1). A cluster of archaeological burial sites was identified near the shoreline in 1971 due to the erosion caused by changing water levels in an extremely dry year. Under the direction of Dr. Berberían, a year-round rescue excavation was undertaken (Berberían and Salazar 2021). Given the massive flooding of the valley and unmonitored construction activities, it is very difficult to reconstruct the total extent of cultural heritage on the ground, damage to mortuary sites, or the location and scale of residential areas.

Large-scale rescue excavations allowed researchers (Berberían, Caillou, and García Azcárate 1977; Berberían and Salazar 2021) to recover a vast assemblage of Prehispanic material remains associated with funerary practices in the Formative period, dating to between A.D. 400 and 900. All of the recovery contexts and the conditions of discovery were carefully recorded with detailed morphological and stylistic descriptions of the objects (i.e., ceramics, lithic artifacts, metals, bone tools, and musical instruments) and of the burials. Unfortunately, after the excavation, collected human remains and artifacts were not properly preserved and were mixed with other collections. Therefore, the research presented here relies upon the written records, preliminary reports, drawings, and photographs of the excavation (for example, Berberían, Caillou, and García Azcárate 1977) and the material analysis carried out later by the researchers, with final excavation publication occurring in 2021 (Berberían and Salazar 2021).

In the summer of 1971, archaeologists conducted a pedestrian survey along the lake shores when the lake was at its lowest level. Pottery sherds and urns, arrowheads, grinding stones, knapped flakes, necklace beads, smoking pipes, and other personal adornments were recovered along the eroding lake shoreline (Berberían and Salazar 2021, 21). Ten archaeological sites (sites 1–10) were recorded, with systematic, detailed excavations being conducted at three locations: Villa Cariño (noted as #1), Entrada al Río Tapia (#2), and Segundo Morro (#8) (Figure 2). In these sites, a range of different mortuary practices were identified, including the use of funerary urns for adults and subadults, stone enclosures, and direct inhumations in pits (Berberían and Salazar 2021). Currently, researchers have no understanding of settlement practices, as no residential sites were identified during the survey (Berberían and Salazar 2021). Excavations identified a series of stone rows near the burials in El Cadillal, but it remains unclear if these are the remains of residential structures, and it is possible that residential areas located at lower elevations were destroyed by the dam activities (Berberían and Salazar 2021). At La Candelaria, Ryden (1936, 136) reported that funerary urns were marked in the landscape with a row of standing stones arranged along their major axis, a pattern that resembles what has been observed in El Cadillal.

The mortuary site of Villa Cariño is located on the southwestern shore of El Cadillal (see Figure 2). It was heavily eroded by water, which exposed a vast material assemblage along the waterline (Berberían and Salazar 2021). Nine trenches were excavated in 1971–1972, but excavations

were constrained by local terrain conditions and repeated lake flooding. Villa Cariño contained 39 human burials, making it the most extensive mortuary site in El Cadillal. Villa Cariño also presents the greatest variation in mortuary treatment practices. Segundo Morro is located south of Villa Cariño (see Figure 2). Four trenches were excavated following the same methodology, and five inhumations were identified. Finally, Entrada al Río Tapia is situated on a smooth bench that slowly descends to the Salí River to the north of Villa Cariño and Segundo Morro (see Figure 2). Excavations were carried out in two sectors of the site (Sectors 1 and 2). These included five test pits and two open area excavations, one next to a slab stone concentration and another in a disposal area. Two urn burials were identified at Entrada al Río Tapia.

Mortuary Analysis of the Human Remains from El Cadillal

The excavations at Villa Cariño, Segundo Morro, and Entrada al Río Tapia provide a unique dataset with which to understand Candelaria mortuary practices. Archaeological excavations conducted at El Cadillal, situated at an elevation of 1300 masl, uncovered the remains of at least 51 individuals and abundant archaeological remains, including ceramics, lithic tools, and bone artifacts (Berberían and Salazar 2021). Mapping of the spatial distribution of material remains helps researchers understand variation in, and organization of, Formative period mortuary practices. Interestingly, it does not appear that there is any spatial patterning of different types of mortuary practices at El Cadillal. In general, burials surrounded by stones appear to occur at higher elevations within burial areas, and at the Villa Cariño site, they are spatially restricted to a single area (Figure 3). Adult urn inhumations appear to be located in the lower areas, but they have been identified in other areas in El Cadillal and outside the lake (Ambrosetti 1906; Campanella 1936; Colaneri et al. 2003; González 1971; Métraux 1930; Míguez et al. 2018; Ryden 1936; Schreiter 1934). Similarly, there appears to be no distinct spatial patterning at other Candelaria-affiliated mortuary sites, except perhaps the vague description from Schreiter (1934) of an infant urn cemetery at the Unquillo site that was separated from adult urn inhumations.

The majority of burials at the El Cadillal sites are primary inhumations (59.3%), with secondary burials being more frequent at Segundo Morro. Primary interments include direct primary interments in pits, often surrounded by stone tombs, and in other cases primary burials placed in urns. In some cases, such as T1.b8, practices of body manipulation (such as the disarticulation and reorganization of skeleton parts) were carried out before placing the dead inside funerary urns. This secondary manipulation of bodies in urn inhumations, however, was not a common practice. Indeed, in several cases, adult individuals were buried in massive ceramic urns without indications of secondary practices. As a result, these are identified as primary burials.

At the broadest level, at the El Cadillal sites, we see three major types of burial practices: the use of stone enclosures for interments, burial in ceramic urns, and discrete burials of single individuals in pits. Stone grave and urn burials can be visualized in a certain way as funerary packages due

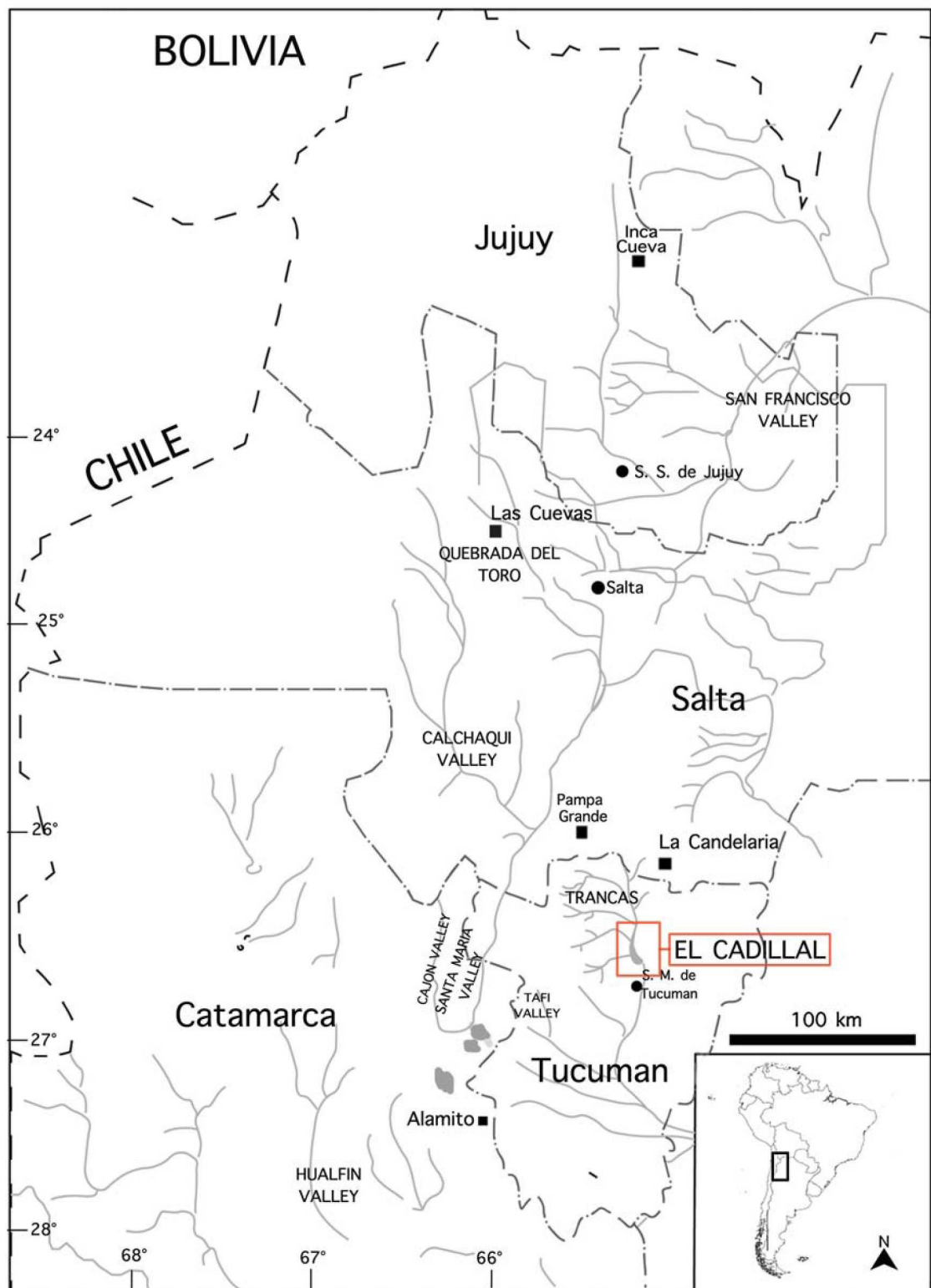


Figure 1. Map of northwestern Argentina locating El Cadillal Lake.

to their complexity and the intertwining of different parts (or pieces) that build up the final grave. In contrast, the discrete burials of single individuals in pits or slightly prepared pits, with or without grave goods, is very different.

Enclosed Burials: Inhumations in Stone Enclosures

At the Villa Cariño and Segundo Morro burial sites, people often constructed simple stone enclosures in which human remains were placed (Figure 4). These are only found in the southernmost higher elevation area of El Cadillal. This

interment practice has not been previously identified amongst Candelaria-associated peoples, although they resemble domestic cist burials of the intermontane valleys' inhabitants (Berberían and Nielsen 1988; Oliszewski et al. 2020; Salazar and Kuijt 2016; Sampietro and Vattuone 2005). In El Cadillal, people buried their dead in oval-shaped structures made of slab stones fixed to the ground, inside of which they placed one or more bodies with a rich assemblage of grave goods, including zoomorphic modeled and plain jars and bowls, necklaces, beads, arrowheads, and metal pliers.

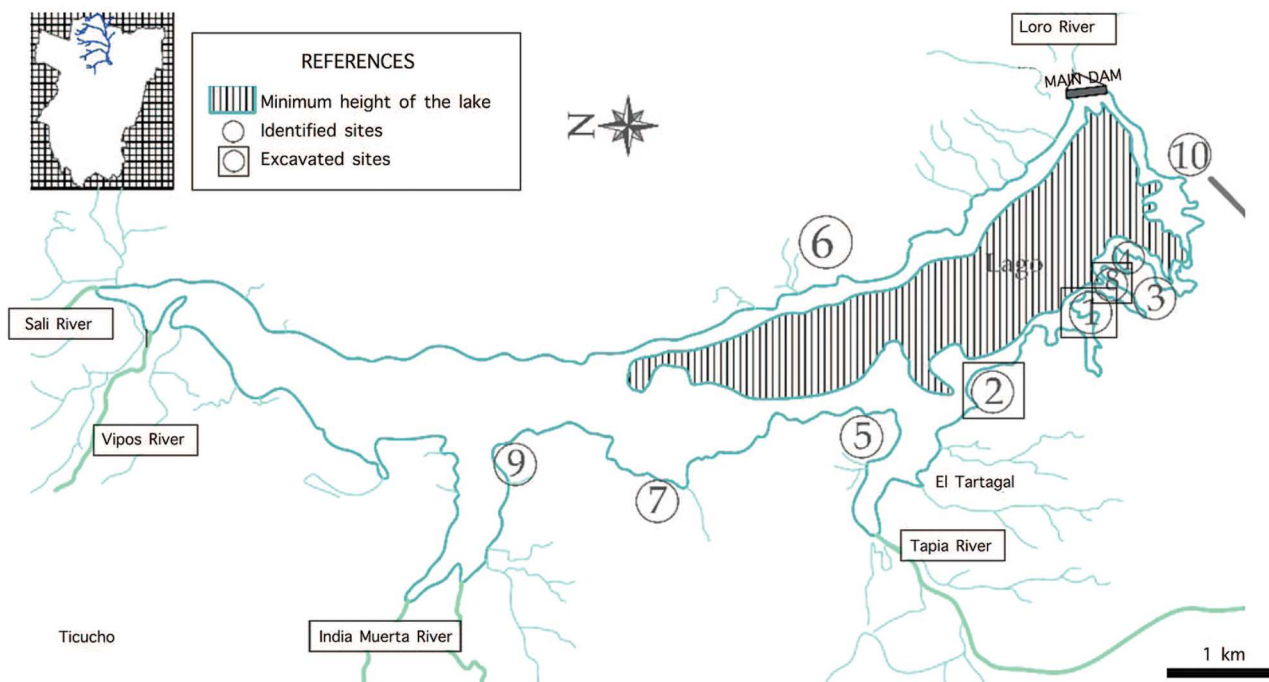


Figure 2. Burial sites identified at El Cadillal Lake. Excavated sites presented in this article: 1) Villa Cariño, 2) Entrada al Río Tapia, and 8) Segundo Morro.

There is a remarkable range of burial practices at Villa Cariño, often with co-existing, different, mortuary practices: primary interment of one (T8.b9) or two individuals (T8.b8 and T8.10) and, at the same time, people also engaged in the secondary manipulation of burials, as seen with commingled skeletons, scattered human remains, and the placement of skulls within the tombs. In the case of primary burials,

people often placed an inhumed individual (or two) in an extended position with the arms placed along the sides and the head facing forward. In one case, adjacent to the primary burial of an adult, archaeologists uncovered a commingled assemblage of remains belonging to two other adult individuals.

Although the practice of burying the dead together with skulls has not been observed in any other recorded NWA Candelaria burials, Núñez Regueiro and Tartusi (2002) report a similar skull cache placed inside of a grave in the Alamito Valley (Figure 5). Given the physical placement of the El Cadillal skulls (e.g., T8.b8, T8.b9, and T8.10), we suggest that, in some cases, they might have been wrapped or stored in a fabric or textile bag (e.g., T8.b8). In other cases, the skulls were placed inside or above jars and bowls (T8.b10). Unfortunately, the exact location of specific items in T8.b9 was not recorded, and therefore, it is unclear if the skulls were wrapped together. In all cases, we observe a variable range of complexity in these grave offerings, which in one case includes 14 skulls scattered across the burial (T8.b10), accompanied by a significant amount of objects (projectile points, service vessels, and personal adornment items). Finally, excavations in Segundo Morro trench 1 revealed two additional burials surrounded by stones, although water had already severely damaged the burials. These burials are primary inhumations without traces of secondary practices and with scarce material offerings.

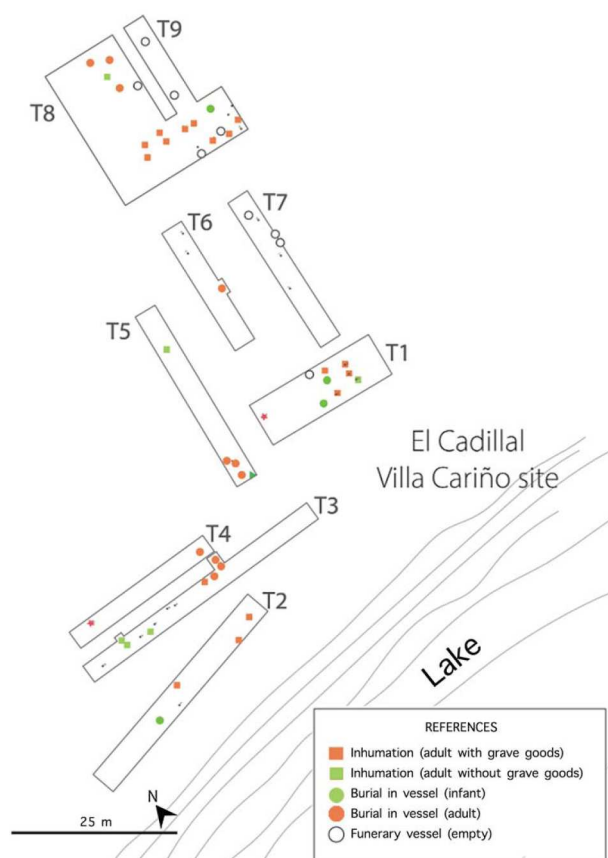


Figure 3. Types of burials identified at Villa Cariño.

Storing and Containing Bodies: Burials in Funerary Urns

A second major mortuary practice seen at El Cadillal is that of urn burials. In contrast to what is observed in other Candelaria sites, at El Cadillal, people only occasionally employed urn burials as part of their funerary practices. In total, only 15 adult funerary urns and seven infant urn burials were found at the Villa Cariño and Entrada al Río Tapia sites. All of the urns appear to be vessel types commonly used during

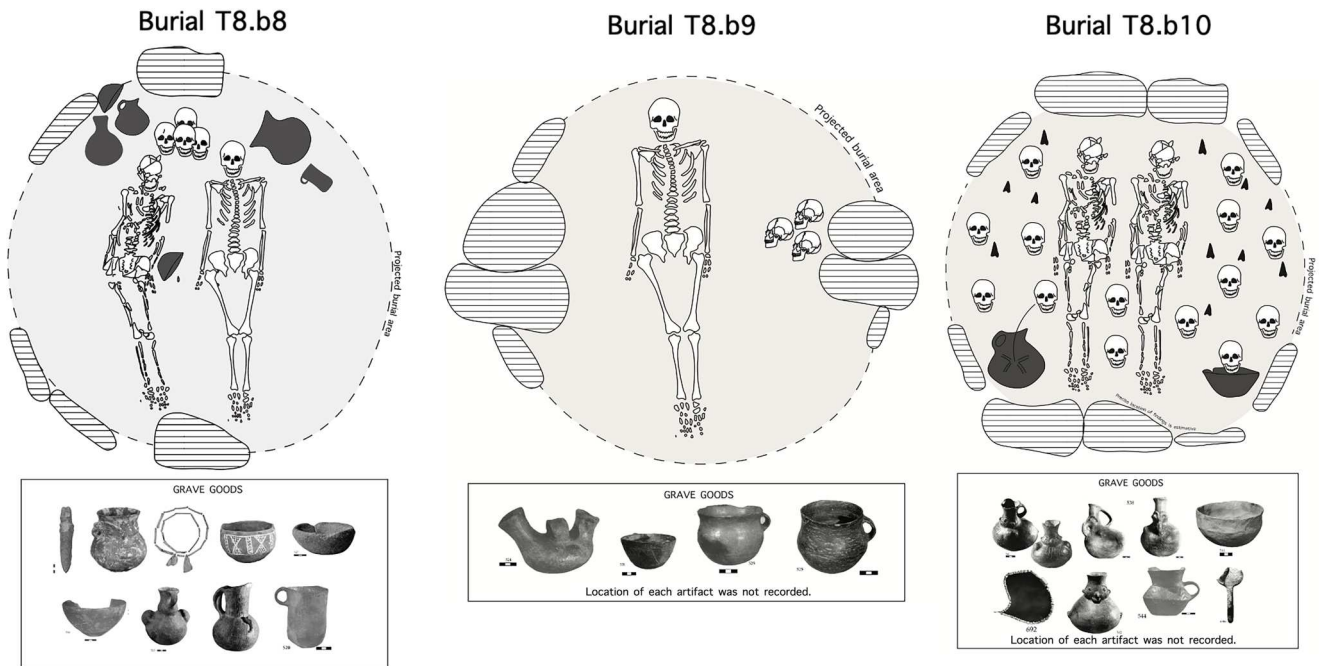


Figure 4. Reconstruction of burials in stone enclosures with their respective grave offerings.

the Formative period, except for the inhumation of an infant in a typical LIP Santa María painted vessel (T1.b8) (Palamarczuk 2011). In most cases, it is uncertain whether the adult burials were primary or secondary inhumations, but it is important to note that complete skeletons could have been placed in these large urns. In some cases, a carved pit was excavated into compacted soil to place the urns. A few clearly secondary burials were identified at the Entrada al Río Tapia site, for instance burial T3.b3, where an adult was buried in an urn commonly used to bury infants, and different personal adornment items and service vessels were placed in the urn.

Along the El Cadillal, people used two kinds of urns for adult inhumations: ordinary plain vessels and gray, smoothed urns (up to 1 m height) decorated with protuberances (*mamelones*) modeled into zoomorphic motifs or with plain decoration (Figure 6). Some of the urns were decorated with incisions and/or with a coarse surface treatment done with a maize cob. Whereas decorated mamelon urns were

frequently used at the Villa Cariño site for inhumating the dead, at Entrada al Río Tapia, people primarily interred adults with plain gray funerary vessels. Infants were only buried in plain vessels.

Infant urn burials at El Cadillal also provide insight into local differential age-based practices (Table 1). Grave objects are rare in these tombs compared to their frequency with adults, but include bowls, modeled jars, and projectile points. The modest offerings placed in these children's graves might be related to Andean notions of birth, death, and personhood, where infant and child deaths were not conceived of as a tragic event but rather as normal and expected (Van Kessel 2001).

In some cases, the deceased adults were accompanied by grave objects (decorated and plain jars and bowls, beads, and grinding manos) inside the urns, a situation that is more frequent in mamelon-type urns. As we mentioned above, there does not seem to have been any manipulation

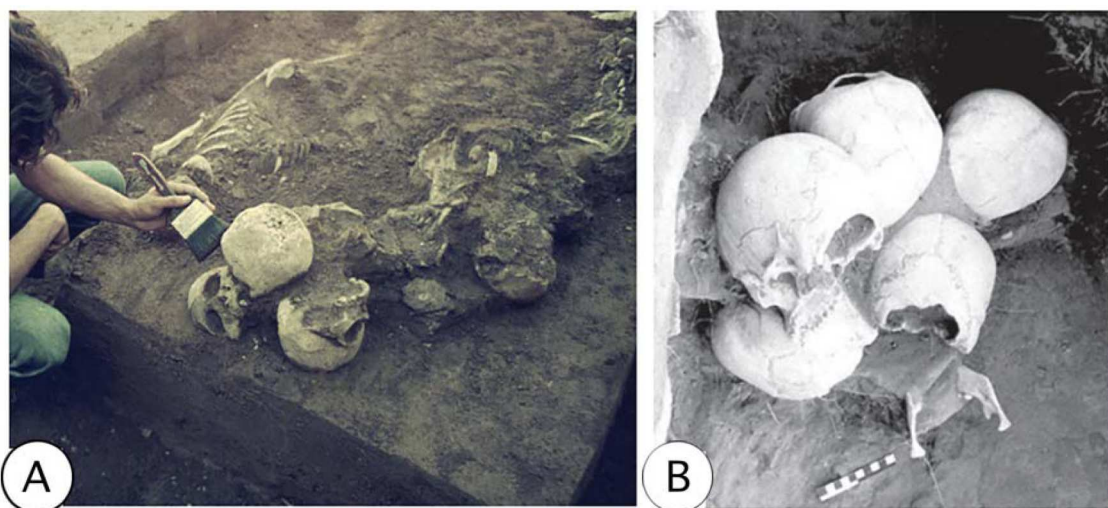


Figure 5. Skull caches. A) Set of human skulls recorded in T8.b8 at El Cadillal. B) Cluster of human skulls found in the Ambato Valley (Núñez Regueiro and Tartusi 2002, fig. 2).

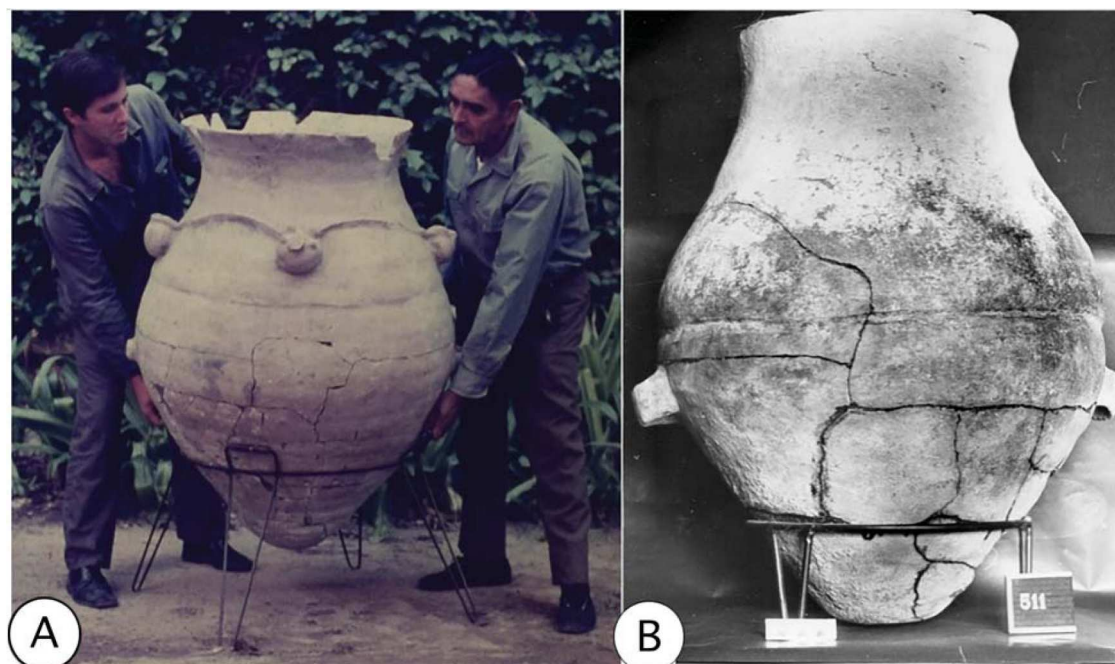


Figure 6. Funerary urns used for the inhumation of adults. A) Mamelon urn, as can be seen from the zoomorphic protusions (mamelon) and B) plain gray funerary vessel.

of the bodies before final deposition inside the urn. In some cases, a slab stone or large bowl was placed as a lid on top of the funerary urn and secured with a ring of clay placed around the mouth of the urn on the outside.

Pit Burials: Subsurface Pit Inhumations

Finally, people in the Argentinian southeastern rainforest employed a third type of burial practice at El Cadillal: primary burials in subsurface pits. A few of these are secondary interments ($n=3$), mostly the ones identified at Segundo Morro site. This includes flexed burials and extended burials. The poor preservation condition of several burials ($n=9$) precluded the identification of the body position and therefore are not presented here. Although a full description of each burial is beyond the scope of this paper, we provide a brief description of the most salient burials, and a short description of all burials recorded in this category in Tables 2 and 3.

Excavations identified six burials where adults were placed in a flexed position in pits (Figure 7A, see Table 2). Two individuals were buried with their arms crossed on their chests and one with the arms on the pelvis. The former had the chin tightened against the chest, which might suggest that the individuals had been wrapped in some kind of fabric or textile to achieve and maintain this shape. Importantly, burial goods were placed only in two of these burials. These burials also seem to be restricted to the lower sectors

of the lake, closer to the river. There does not, however, appear to be a clear spatial restriction or separation from other types of tombs. The two exceptional cases in which these flexed inhumations contained grave goods were found at Villa Cariño, trench 9, and, curiously, most likely related to the cluster of stone enclosures.

The second type of isolated burials at the Villa Cariño site involved five inhumations of individuals in simple pits in an extended position (Figure 7C, see Table 3). Unlike the flexed burials, they all contained some type of grave goods, mainly ceramic serving vessels, personal adornment items (for example, two different burials contained necklaces made of 13 *Strophocheilus oblongus lorentzianus* snail shells and another one made of more than 500 bone and malachite beads), labor-related tools (stone axes), and in a few cases, scattered human bones, probably the result of sediment removal and/or lake action.

At the Segundo Morro site, excavations uncovered three inhumations. In trench 3, an adult was identified with the skull separated from the jaw, and next to it was a second skull without burial objects or offerings (Morro.T3.b1). Also, two secondary burials of adults were recorded (Morro.T3.b2, Morro.T3.b3) with grave offerings such as projectile points and service vessels. Finally, in trench 4, an articulated skeleton was found next to four skulls associated with a few long bones with a substantial grave assemblage (pitchers, jars, weaving tools, bowls, and projectile points).

Table 1. Summary of urn burials of infants.

Burial code	Inhumation type	Observations
T1.b5	Infant in urn	Infant burial, arrowhead inside
T1.b6	Infant in urn	Infant burial, arrowhead and two plain bowls inside
T2.b4	Infant in urn	Infant urn, no burial goods
T2.b5	Infant in urn	Infant urn, modeled jar with protuberance
T7.b6	Infant in urn	Infant urn with bowl
T8.b12	Infant urn empty	Infant urn with incised bowl

Discussion and Analysis

Our detailed consideration of mortuary practices reveals that there was significant variation in how people manipulated, transported, and disposed of bodily parts in El Cadillal during the 1st millennium A.D. Identified mortuary practices reflect different choices made by the living to deal with the death of a member of their social group. Choices in mortuary ritual can be viewed as a sequence of actions and practices involving material culture, bodies, monuments, and the

Table 2. Flexed burial descriptions.

Burial code	Inhumation type	Observations
T3.b10	Burial in pit	Flexed, no grave goods
T5.b4	Burial in pit	Flexed, no grave goods
T8.b3	Burial in pit	Flexed, arms on pelvis, no grave goods
T8.b7	Burial in pit	Semi-flexed, arms on chest, no grave goods
T9.b3	Burial in pit	Flexed, plain bowl
T9.b10	Burial in pit	Semi-flexed, arms on chest, modeled jar and mug

space that transforms the social persona and reconstitutes them in a new form of dead (Williams 2003). The living make choices after the biological death of one or more of their kin, such as when and where to bury the corpse, the placement of objects, and the structures as part of the burials, all of which signify the dead and (re)create social relations (Gillespie 2001; Joyce 2001). By looking carefully at mortuary sequences and the different choices involved in the creation of particular burial histories, we can better understand how people commemorated their dead in structured, distinctive manners and how the repetition of similar funerary rituals materialized a socially charged landscape

Pathways of the Dead

From the point of death of an individual, the living moved the body of the deceased through an increasingly complex process that served to deindividualize them temporally and spatially (Figure 8). This can be visualized as successive, but separated, acts of preparation of the body, transporting, and burying them at El Cadillal. More specifically, we suggest that mortuary rites functioned in such a way as to transform individuals from a singular person embedded in a social network of the living (belonging to a community, a group) into another, different entity, detached from the immediate environment and company of their loved ones, their home, and their community (Chesson 2001; Gillespie 2001; Joyce 2001; Kuijt 2001, 2008).

Table 3. Extended burials.

Burial code	Inhumation type	Observations
T2.b3	Burial in pit	Primary burial, extended. Necklace and fragmented bones
T3.b11	Burial in pit	Primary burial, extended. No burial objects
T9.b5	Burial in pit	Primary burial, extended. Modeled jar, plain bowl, jar
T3.b2	Burial in pit	Primary burial, extended. Incised bowl, vase
T4.b1	Burial in pit	Primary burial, four skulls. Three modeled jars, two incised/composed shape jars
MorroT3.b1	Burial in pit	Secondary burial, one skull
MorroT3.b2	Burial in pit	Primary burial, extended. Incised bowl, vase
MorroT3.b4	Burial in pit	Secondary burial. No burial objects
MorroT3.b3	Burial in pit	Secondary burial. Arrowhead, incised bowl, composed shape jar (red)
MorroT4.b1	Burial in pit	Primary burial, extended, skulls (n = 4), long bones. Jars, mamelon jars (several), stone needle, zoo-/anthropomorphic jars, plain bowl, incised bowls, incised jars, arrowheads
VCariT1.b1	Burial in pit	Unspecified
VCariT1.b2	Burial in pit	Unspecified
VCariT1.b4	Burial in pit	Unspecified
VCariT1.b7	Burial in pit	Unspecified
VCariT2.b1	Burial in pit	Unspecified
VCariT2.b2	Burial in pit	Unspecified
VCariT3.b4	Burial in pit	Unspecified
MorroT3.b1	Burial in pit	Unspecified. Skull
VCariT1.b3	Burial in pit	Unspecified

In El Cadillal, the social separation between the living and the dead was spatially demarcated through the transportation of the dead to a different location from the village, a place that was reused through different generations. Although we do not have conclusive data to rule out that people were living in the El Cadillal area, we suggest that the absence of residential spaces associated with the graves might indicate that the lake was used solely for funerary purposes amongst Candelaria-affiliated groups.

Drawing upon ethnographic research, we suspect that after the physical death of Candelaria, corpses were prepared for burial by washing and dressing them. It is not possible, however, to document these practices with archaeological data. If correct, it is important to consider if this was conducted in the deceased's home, in their village, or perhaps if death occurred off-site. Similarly, it is important to consider how bereavement may have been organized. Was there a wake with associated rituals? The presence of articulated skeletons indicates that at least in some cases the corpses were transported to El Cadillal area relatively quickly after death and were then buried without further manipulation. In those cases, the bodies were buried in shallow prepared pits excavated in the ground and placed in an extended or flexed position. Kin and other members of the group might have traveled with the corpse and conducted the ceremonies associated with the placement of the body in the grave, the offering of significant objects, food, and drinks, and the final closure of the tomb.

After the initial preparation of the body, some corpses were buried and, after an unknown period of time, later manipulated. The presence of skulls in particular graves highlights the practice of secondary bodily manipulation in which select burials were reopened, their skulls removed, and then stored somewhere until used a second time (or perhaps even more) in a different grave. Yet again, it is important to consider time and space: corpses that were buried for a period of time in a different location were later opened, and select body parts were removed at a predetermined, established moment and then placed in a different grave in a different location. This reflects purposeful pathways of the dead, with an understanding of who was buried where, a practice that must have been understood by family and community members. A different pathway can be noted in burials T8.b8 or MorroT3.b2, where the complete skeleton was subjected to manipulation and reorganization before their final deposition. It is possible that these corpses were first buried somewhere else and then later moved to El Cadillal. It remains unclear how much time passed between different events. It may be that part of the body treatment before their inhumation took place in the village and then the disarticulated body parts were taken to El Cadillal.

It is unclear if the massive urns used for the primary interment of adults were made in El Cadillal or elsewhere. It is possible that some of the burials at El Cadillal arrived as funerary packages in ceramic vessels, a context that would not be totally novel in NWA. López Cámpeny and collaborators (2017) used palynological and soil analyses to demonstrate that an urn inhumation of a female adolescent was transported, untouched and sealed, from the eastern rainforests to the puna plateau. Analysis of adult urns at El Cadillal point to two possible explanations. One possibility is that the urns were produced somewhere in the El Cadillal area and stored for later use. Alternatively, it is possible that the

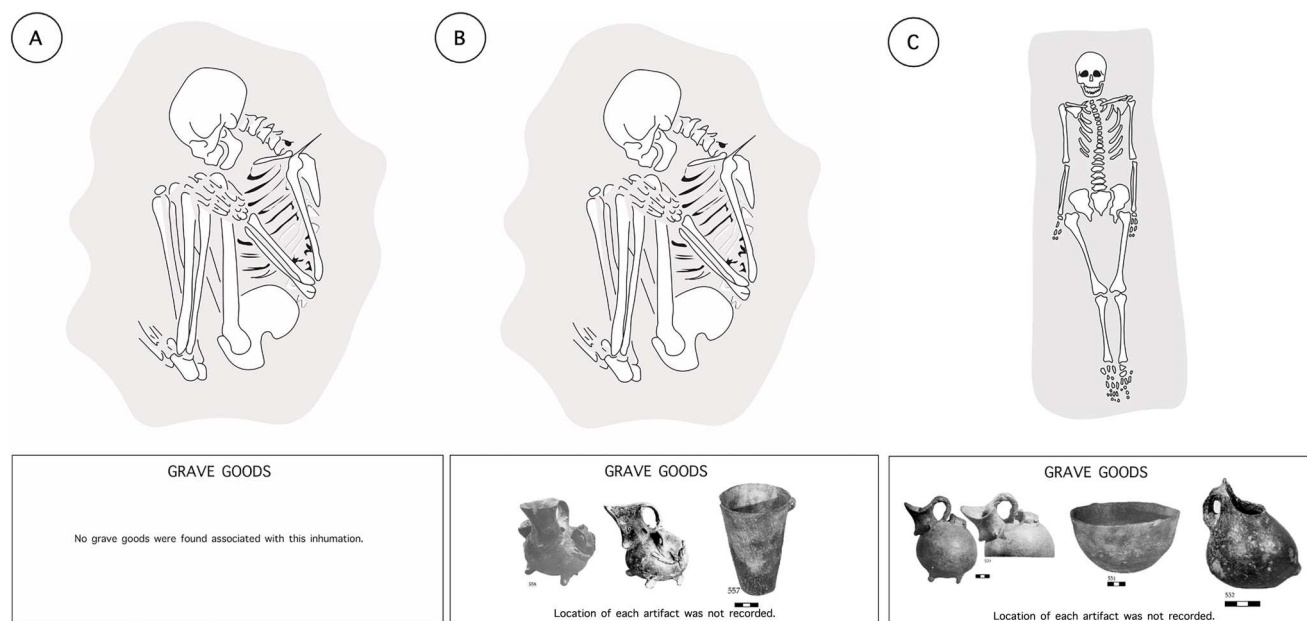


Figure 7. Representation of pit burials. A) Flexed without grave offerings, B) flexed with detail of grave offerings, and C) extended position.

urns were pre-packaged with the burials and transported from another location and were then assembled for their final burial in El Cadillal. From our perspective, the first explanation seems the most plausible one.

Finally, it is entirely possible, if not likely, that people reopened some graves to add new elements with individual burials and, in other cases, to remove and relocate other items. In T8.b10, we see that when the two individuals were placed inside (after the stone structure was built) people added skulls, probably salvaged from other tombs and which had been stored for some time somewhere else. Similarly, in T8.8, skeleton parts and the disarticulated skeleton of an individual might have been added with the skulls when a second corpse was placed in the structure. An alternative explanation for the skull caches could be related to head hunting practices, where severed human heads are placed as offerings in the grave (Acreche 2001; González 2004; Núñez Regueiro and Tartusi 2002) and are not the result of secondary mortuary practices.

Mortuary Practices in the Southeastern Rainforests of Argentina

In this paper, we have started to disentangle the complex web of relationships between the dead, the living, and the El Cadillal community in order to assess how social memories were crafted, how the repetition of mortuary rituals created a landscape linked to the social memory of the dead, and how funerary rites aided to sustain communities through time. In contrast, other researchers have frequently viewed the inhumation of adults in massive funerary urns as the distinctive trait of Candelaria (e.g., González 1977; Heredia 1974; Métraux 1930; Ryden 1936) due to the application of poorly controlled ethnographic analogies from the Chaco-Guaraní region and the absence of similar mortuary practices in other Andean regions (cfr. González 1977). This has hindered our understanding of the variability of funerary rituals within Candelaria-affiliated groups, the role of burials in the constitution of social relations and landscapes, and the relationship between the living and dead in these societies.

As argued earlier, different individuals went through different mortuary treatments. We can assume that variation in burial treatment reflects different ways in which Candelarian people coped with death, developed the identities of dead people, deployed social strategies through funerary rituals, and the overall social contexts in which death took place (Chesson 2001; Fowler 2013; Joyce 2001; Robb 2007). Indeed, all of these were negotiated relationally and contextually to give rise to particular mortuary configurations and rituals. The active performance and manipulation of mortuary rites may have been a crucial element for the biological and social consolidation of emergent early farming communities in El Cadillal, as has been observed in other cases (e.g., the Near East or Central Andes). By conducting similar mortuary rites and deemphasizing individual identities over newly constructed social identities, burying their dead over several generations in the same place, and propitiating “good” (socially accepted) relationships with the dead, Candelarian peoples might have secured their well-being with others while they navigated the novel (and unexpected) challenges of agricultural life.

Given the lack of central pieces of information (e.g., sex and age estimation, pathologies, or isotopic reconstruction of diet and mobility), it is hard to identify and evaluate all of the life histories and osteobiographies of the people buried in El Cadillal. Unfortunately, curation trajectories after the excavations in 1971 make it impossible to undertake bioarchaeological analysis. Despite the absence of these materials, the excavations at El Cadillal provide important insights into the process by which El Cadillal people buried their dead and the social relations that were crafted.

Most importantly, it is striking to recognize that there were varied treatments that involved different decisions and created individualized burial biographies. In general, the physical body of the deceased household members was subject to one or more different treatments: primary burial in a variety of contexts or a series of successive techniques of bodily manipulation. We see these technical stages as embedded in three fundamental socio-temporal processes within different flows and scales. This includes the process

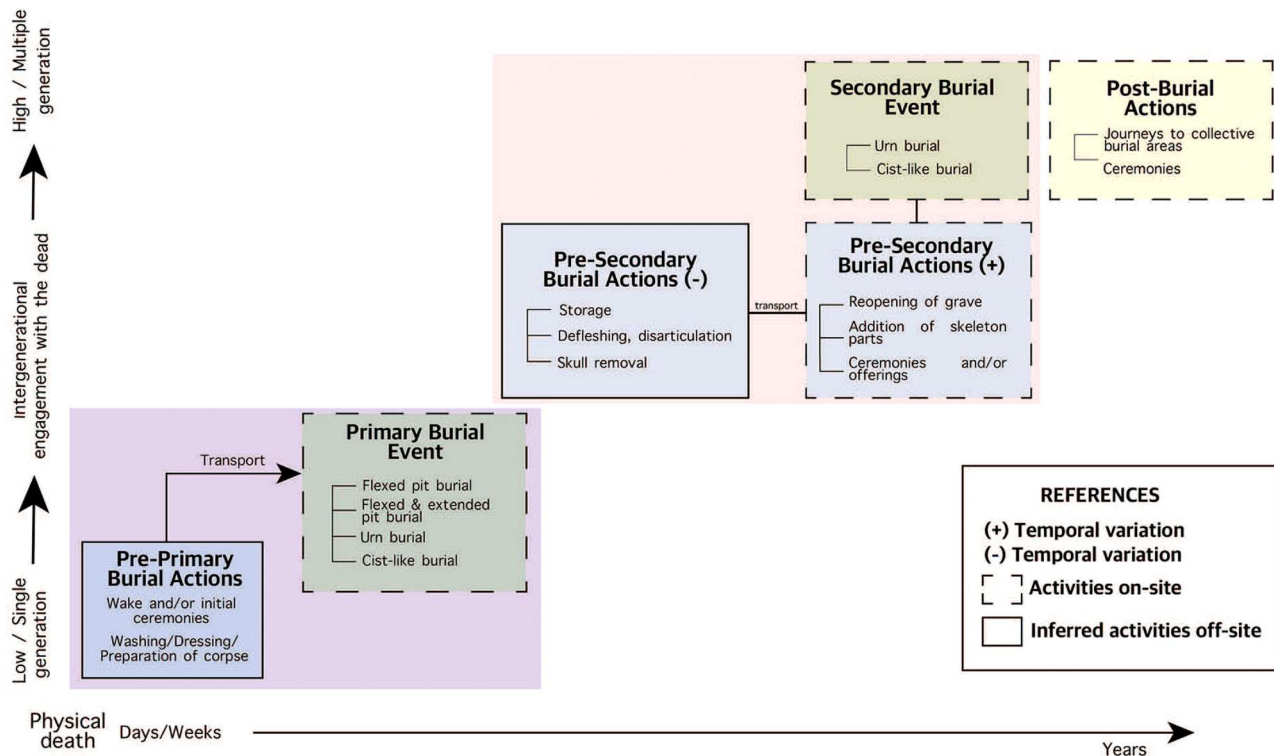


Figure 8. Burial biographies in El Cadillal.

of de-individualization of an individual person, memorialization into a new social persona, and finally, the memorialization of a landscape for the dead through the long-term accumulation of mortuary activities in the same geographical location.

We argue that after the physical death, the living enacted successive practices of bodily treatment and burial that contributed to the biological and social transition of the individual dead person to a new state of being. In El Cadillal, the de-individualization of a physical person in each case was achieved by the consecution of highly structured funerary rites that were repeated to produce very similar end results within each burial type. Viewed collectively, the final picture seems to stress homogeneity within specific burial pathways (despite overall variability at El Cadillal), perhaps strengthening the internal social and political boundaries of community and household members. As a general pattern, the absence of marked differences in the type and amount of grave goods (mostly serving vessels) included with different burial practices highlights the limited internal variability between individuals and groups, with the exception of flexed burials in pits.

In specific cases, rare grave goods, such as bead and shell necklaces, musical instruments, crafting tools, and shells, offer insights into how the living created (or attempted to create) social memories with the aim of developing or redefining some type of relationship or linkages to collective ancestry or the community. For instance, in the burials surrounded by stones, we observe a higher frequency in the amount of grave goods deposited in the tomb, as seen in T8.b10 or T8.b8. These burials might confront us with a multiplicity of combined mortuary practices, both primary and secondary, that are not observed in other graves. We believe that the small number of such burials, the high investment in their construction, and the presence of items such as the inclusion of human skulls highlights that they were

considered the final resting place of ancestors within the community. These mortuary rituals aimed to construct an idealized form of existence after death that linked the newly formed persona of the deceased to the collective identity of the community. Over a lengthy period of time after death, and mediated by material culture, new relationships were established with the deceased being transformed into community ancestors.

In El Cadillal, the collective graves of T8.b8, T8.b9, and T8.10 stand in direct contrast to the other graves. It can be argued that, through separating skulls from bodies, the living purposefully erased the personhood of select deceased individuals and crafted a collective persona materialized in the de-personalized bodies. The El Cadillal bodies went through several technical manipulations after biological death, perhaps over generations, which facilitated the erasing of individual life histories and depersonalization and transformed them from known historical individuals to ancestors in the social memory of the community. The fact that these tombs contain two or more individuals adds strength to the arguments of a collective persona.

The use of stone structures for burying the dead, as well as the use of ceramic urns, might have been organized around an underlying principle that referenced the relationships between life/seed/storage/ancestor (e.g., Hendon 2000). Stone structures or subsurface pits were likely used as storage features in other Formative households (Cremonte 1996; Franco Salvi and Justiniano 2021; Molar and Salazar 2018; Scattolin et al. 2009), and, indeed, burial cists in the intermontane valleys resemble storage pits (Cortés 2013; Salazar 2012). In the Andes, both ethnography and archaeology support arguments that the ancestors secured life and well-being to the community by ensuring good harvests and rains (Allen 1998; DeLeonardis and Lau 2008; Salomon 1998). In that sense, it is possible to propose that the ancestor bodies, their graves, and/or containers became a powerful material

index of the capacity of the dead to secure food for the community.

Furthermore, these mortuary monuments may have been perceived materially and symbolically as a reminder of the presence of the ancestors and the living's obligations to them. Especially, the repetitive use of El Cadillal for successive inhumations highlights how the landscape was remembered and imbued with meaning. The density of burials and the long-term, repeated use of El Cadillal area as a place to bury the dead suggest that this space embodied social memories that enmeshed individual and collective history. What we see in the archaeological record at El Cadillal is a byproduct of making a special place for the dead and the ritualization of this space.

At El Cadillal, people tailored a social space that was separated from everyday contexts and activities. As Chesson (2007, 110) outlines in a different case study, "by creating and performing funerary rituals (re) created over generations people inscribe their histories, identities, claims and rights in the space shaping meaningful, layered, and mixed landscapes." When applied to El Cadillal, we argue that the presence of boundary stones demarcating the burial locations acted as an index of ritualized practices, a marker of a charged social and semiotic place that people could identify every time they returned to the burial ground. Burials and the mutual knowledge of their location (or not) in the space inscribed successive collective stories, relations, and practices that bound people together at the same time they constrained or guided future action.

We argue that the absence of residential spaces associated with burials in El Cadillal, a situation that is repeated in other Candelarian-affiliated sites where only burial grounds have been found (see Ambrosetti 1906; Berberian, Caillou, and García Azcárate 1977; González 1977; Heredia 1970; Métraux 1930; Ryden 1936; Schreiter 1934), strengthens this line of interpretation. Candelarian people buried their dead separated from their everyday contexts of existence in particular spatial locations that might have had attached cultural meanings. We are unable to reconstruct specific meanings, yet some possible questions arise. Did the burial location reflect a connection with the vegetation and fauna of the rainforests (which is widely represented in their material culture)? A borderland between different sociocultural groups? The need to strengthen or maintain territorial claims in certain territories or resources?

Finally, despite demarcating the graveyards as areas for the dead, Candelarian people repeatedly transgressed this demarcation by placing everyday items with their dead, such as bowls, pots, and jars commonly found in domestic contexts and used for eating and sharing meals. We consider these things as part of a mutually constitutive flow between the domestic and the spaces for the dead. These objects went from the everyday to the afterlife, as we see in the use of plain urns or in the proliferation of utilitarian pots placed with the dead. Yet, we argue that people simultaneously practiced a spatialization of objects for the dead, with sets of things that circulated only in networks that refer to the realm of the dead, like the big, decorated urns.

With this combination of the quotidian and the exceptional, the data presented here support arguments that Candelarian mortuary practices constituted a bundle of different, co-existing, and interwoven material practices embedded in successive, repeated burial events performed over

generations. Candelarian people shepherded their dead into the realm of their ancestors and performed, and perhaps even materialized, their connections to other places and peoples of the wider Andean region. El Cadillal's funerary practices provide insight into relationality and sociability within Prehispanic groups in the southern rainforests and beyond and encourage researchers to re-think the spatial scales and analytical categories they use and to embrace more open, boundless, and fluid understandings of social landscapes and social geographies of human action.

Endnotes

1. Archaeological evidence regarding the overall lifestyle of human groups settled in the southeastern rainforests is scarce. Most of the available information comes from funerary contexts and not from large-scale residential settlements, so descriptions of Candelaria's subsistence, mobility, and technology are mostly inferences from burials and grave offerings (Ambrosetti 1906; Berberian, Caillou, and García Azcárate 1977; González 1977; Heredia 1970; Métraux 1930; Lema 2019; Ryden 1936; Schreiter 1934).
2. Inka mortuary practices exhibit a high degree of complexity and variability across regions. In the *Qollasuyu* (the southern part of the Inka empire, but also in other *suyus* [parts]), the practices of the *capacocha* have been the focus of intensive research (Andrushko et al. 2011; Ceruti 2012; Socha, Reinhard, and Chávez Perea 2021, among others). This has somehow occluded other Inka mortuary practices in the southern Andes, such as the reuse of LIP funerary structures and/or their destruction in a highly charged symbolic display of imperial power and domination (Tarragó et al. 2017).
3. Chullpas fulfilled important agentive roles in the materialization of ancestors and their collective cult during the rise and consolidation of hierarchical, competitive, and ethnically-defined regional polities in the southern Andes during the LIP (Arkush, McCool, and Smith 2023; Nielsen 2008; Velasco 2023), but their power as markers of ancestorship had long-lasting consequences (Harris 1982; Nielsen 2008).
4. The contextual relationship between ancestors' materiality and agropastoral labor (and fertility) is observed in several analogical correspondences between the ancestor and life (re)generation, as observed in archaeological and ethnographic sources (Gose 1994; Sillar 1996). Interestingly, Quechua concepts contain elements that consider the indexical and iconical relations established between death, personhood, and vital beings such as seeds, animals, and cultivated plants: *mallki* refers both to an ancestor and to cultivated trees, in which the ancestor-as-tree is perceived as one with the deep roots in the earth that reproduces life in the form of fruit (DeLeonardis and Lau 2008, 80).

Competing Interests

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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