

Body politics: famous preserved corpses

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This file photo taken on July 2, 2014 shows former Philippine first lady Imelda Marcos kissing the glass case bearing her late husband and former president Ferdinand Marcos

Filipinos paying their respects to the preserved body of dictator Ferdinand Marcos were looking at a wax mask, his mortician has told AFP.

The divisive strongman died in exile in 1989 after he was booted out in a "People Power" revolt, but his embalmed body was returned to his ancestral home where it lay on display for over two decades.

His burial in Heroes' Cemetery last week sparked controversy in the Philippines, and removed him from the relatively exclusive global club of famous bodies on display.

Here are some of the others:

Vladimir Lenin

Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin was the original communist leader to be embalmed, starting a trend among hard-left regimes around the world.

Lenin died in 1924 aged 53, and had wanted to be buried with his mother in the former imperial capital of Saint Petersburg, but was instead preserved in a mausoleum on Red Square, where he remains, attracting visitors curious to see the Bolshevik founder of the Soviet Union.

Debates on whether to remove the body started after the collapse of the USSR in 1991 but Russia's Communist party has vehemently lobbied to keep Lenin in situ.

Egyptian mummies

Say "Ancient Egypt" to any schoolchild and the first thing they'll think of is the mummies—preserved remains of important figures.

Embalmed leaders

Selected leaders whose corpses have been preserved



Graphic showing selected deceased leaders whose bodies have been preserved

The British Museum in London houses a collection of 120 human mummies from Egypt and Sudan, which count as one of its biggest draws for many visitors.

The museum also has 300 mummified animals, including dogs, cats and even a crocodile.

None of the mummies has been unwrapped since the 1790s and museum experts have used x-rays and CT scans to carry out research on them.

Mao Zedong

The Chinese revolutionary leader, who died on September 9, 1976, has been embalmed and on show since 1977 in a glass cubicle in the Mao Zedong Memorial Hall in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

Mao's body was placed in formaldehyde and other preserving fluids, according to an account in the People's Daily newspaper, and today the parts of Mao's body which cannot be seen are bathed in liquid.

When the mausoleum is closed, the cadaver is lowered into a container maintained at a low temperature, the paper said.

Eva Peron

Eva Peron, Argentina's emblematic first lady of the 1940s and 50s, was embalmed when she died of cancer in 1952 at age 33.



Crowds line up to view the embalmed body of late Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on September 9, 2016, the 40th

anniversary of his death

"Evita" was as adored by her husband's poor and working-class base as she was reviled by the military and elite.

After Juan Peron was toppled in a 1955 coup, army officers secretly removed Evita's corpse from its resting place at a pro-Peron trade union headquarters and hid it.

Worried Peronist militants would find it, then-dictator Pedro Aramburu had the body taken to Italy and buried in Milan under a false name.

Peron's third wife and successor, Isabel, finally struck a deal: Evita's body was returned to Argentina in 1974 and she has rested ever since in her family mausoleum in Buenos Aires, a place of pilgrimage for her admirers and fans of the musical and movie about her life.

Ho Chi Minh

Although he wanted his ashes to be scattered over the country, the father of modern Vietnam was embalmed upon his death on September 2, 1969.

His body, preserved in the cold under a glass sarcophagus, has been on show since 1975 in a mausoleum in Hanoi.

The country has regularly called in help from Moscow in preserving the body, reflecting Soviet-era ties.



Tribe chief Eli Mabel holds the mummified remains of his ancestor, Agat Mamete Mabel, in the village of Wogi in Wamena, the long-isolated home of the Dani tribe high in the Papuan central highlands on August 7, 2016

Papuan smoked mummies

The Dani people in the highlands of Indonesia's remote, easternmost region of Papua used smoke and animal oil to preserve important elders and local heroes.

The desiccated, blackened figure of Agat Mamete Mabel, a chieftain who ruled over Wogi village some 250 years ago is one of the most notable—decorated with pig tusks slung around the torso, a feathered headpiece, and a traditional penis gourd.

The corpse is kept in a thatch-roofed hut, where it is tended by a select few villagers.

Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il

The bodies of North Korea's founding president Kim Il-Sung and his son Kim Jong-Il are on permanent display at the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun mausoleum in Pyongyang.

When Kim Il-Sung died of a heart attack in 1994, Russian scientists helped preserve the body of North Korea's "eternal president", who now lies in a glass coffin with filtered lights to keep his face looking rosy.

The Russian team assisted with the embalming of Kim Jong-Il's [body](#) when he passed away in December 2011—also from a heart attack—and is believed to be in charge of the maintenance of the bodies.

Present-day leader Kim Jong-Un and his close aides visit the mausoleum on key national holidays—such as Kim Il-Sung's birthday—to pay their respects to his late grandfather and father.

Foreign visitors are allowed in the cavernous mausoleum twice a week—Thursdays and Sundays—but must dress according to a strict code and bow before the bodies.

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