Excavators find tombs buried in Bolivia 500 years ago
17 November 2018, by Paola Flores

The remains, which were found about 12 miles (20 kilometers) from La Paz, belong to more than 100 individuals from an indigenous civilization and were buried with more than 30 vessels used by the Incas for performing death rites, said an archaeologist involved in the excavation.

"The vessels are whole and are Incan," said Jedu Sagarnaga, an archaeology professor at Universidad Mayor de San Andres in La Paz who led the investigation.

The site near the modern-day town of Viacha also contained elongated skulls that may have been stretched to differentiate the social rank of individuals, he said.

The cemetery carved into limestone appears to have been built by the Pacajes people, whose cities were conquered by the Incas toward the end of the 15th century. The Pacajes formed part of the Aymara kingdom and developed around the year 1200 after the decline of the Tiwanacu people in the Andean highlands.

"This finding reaffirms our identity and culture and shows that not only was there an influence from the Incas, but from other people as well," said Julio Condori, an archaeologist who runs the Archaeological and Anthropological Research Center in Tiwanacu and was not involved in the excavation.

Archeologists say they found tombs at a Bolivian quarry containing remains from more than 500 years ago that give an insight into the interaction of various peoples with the expanding Inca empire.
Jedu Sadarnaga shows an elongated skull on Thursday, Nov. 15, 2018 from one of the tombs found at a Bolivian quarry near the capital of La Paz. The tombs contained remains belonging to more than 100 individuals and were buried with more than 30 vessels used by the Incas. (AP Photo/Luis Gandarillas)

Bolivian Minister of Culture Wilma Alanoca called it an "unprecedented discovery."

The site was excavated months ago, but the findings were not made public until this week.

Sagarnaga said that in addition to the bones, the burial site held more than 150 decorative bronze objects including necklaces, bracelets, ornaments for women’s hair, large broaches, and two horseshoe-shaped headbands used by nobles.

"These were personal favorites of the deceased, whereas the vessels were more for the community," Sagarnaga said.

The archaeologist said the site had been looted in the past, but the tombs are interesting because they held the remains of men and women from different social strata.

The remains were taken to an archaeological center for further study and will eventually be returned to a museum in Viacha.
An elongated skull is shown on Thursday, Nov. 15, 2018 from one of the tombs found at a Bolivian quarry near the capital of La Paz. The tombs contained remains belonging to more than 100 individuals and were buried with more than 30 vessels used by the Incas. (AP Photo/Luis Gandarillas)

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