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The Tumi

The Inca ceremonial scalpel that became the symbol of Peruvian medicine

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ABSTRACT

This brief text addresses the practice of trepanation, the surgical perforation of the skull, common in certain regions of Peru during the period of the Inca Empire, formed by peoples such as the Quechua and the Aymara. It explains that, to perform such procedures, instruments of bronze and obsidian were used, combined with anesthetics extracted from indigenous plants. Among the main surgical instruments, it highlights the 'tumi,' a scalpel made of a copper alloy called champi, which today is regarded as the symbol of Peruvian medicine. It is a short, informative historical note on pre-Columbian cranial surgery and its emblematic instrument.

KEYWORDS: *tumi; trepanation; inca empire; history of medicine; surgery; peru*

Surgical perforation of the skull (trepanation) was common in certain regions of Peru at the time of the Inca Empire (made up of the Quechua, Aymara, and other peoples). For this purpose, they used instruments of bronze and obsidian, together with anesthetics extracted from indigenous plants.

One of the main surgical instruments was the "tumi," a scalpel made of a copper alloy called *champi*, which today is regarded as the symbol of Peruvian medicine.

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